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Leader in politics and governance: Russian aspect

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Abstract

The paper analyzes the nature of the political leader's image; interaction of the political leader with different faces, sides and aspects of political life is considered; distinctness of its manifestations is identified. Analysis of the political leader's image formation, comparison of models and comparative analysis of political leaders' characters are made with reference of Russia.

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1. Introduction

The aim of this study is to determine the relationship between the concept of "leadership" with the phenomenon of power and analyze its interaction with the different sides of political activity in the case of Russia. This article examines the impact of the leader on the society, defines the political leader image and studies different interpretations of political leader image components; also a comparison is made and comparative characteristics of political leaders are given; perception of political leaders by Russian electorate is analyzed

The concept of "leadership" has a strong connection with the phenomenon of power, when an individual has the ability and opportunity to perform his will with help of certain resources and technologies. We mean here is a long lasting, not a random exercise of power, mainly associated with personal characteristics of a subject; when one or some leaders have social impact on the society. We consider social impact as a specific process, in which one or more individuals generally affect the state of other people. Such an impact affects motivation, values and feelings. Under the pressure of a strong personality individuals can change their attitude to certain things (Stephen R., 2008; Zhuravlev S., 2014; Zhuravlev S., 2014; Kellerman B., 2009; Kets de Vries M., 2001).

2. Terms and theoretical framework

How is authority of the political leader exercised over the society? American psychologist W. Stone says that the political leadership is a "remote leadership."

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P. Tarantsov says that it is a feature of the XXI century power when leaders interact with a huge number of people using different means of communication rather than directly. There appears a new component that is the image, the reputation of a political leader. Not a real person performs the function of the leader, but his image of the leader who inspires people to heroism, courage, construction or destruction of something, etc (Tarantsov V., 2001; Blondel J., 1992).

P. Bourdieu expresses the idea that "the field of politics is a market where there is a demand for production and supply of the product of a special kind - political agendas, opinions and positions" (Shcherbinina N., 2004; Cohen W., 2005). Competition is a main feature of the political market, leading politicians and their programs and ideas are the product of the market. The success of a political leader in this "market" is defined for many reasons; one of the main is his image.

The image of a politician is a purposeful construction of his image. Every politician in practice tends to conform to social perceptions of people. After all, the political capital, according to Bourdieu, is a loan that is based on expectations of social groups.

3. Results and discussion

The word "image" is borrowed from the English language. It means "purposefully formed appearance"; "a set of certain qualities that people associate with a certain personality"; "established in the public mind and having the nature of a stereotype, emotionally charged image." (Machiavelli N., 2008).

Many sophists throughout the history of mankind directed their attention to the ideal image of the state and the sovereign. Plutarch, Herodotus, Titus and other historians in their writings described outstanding abilities of political leaders.

However, they often created a perfect image and gave instructions how to approach it. In the Bible, writings of Confucius, Plato, Machiavelli and other sophists, dependence of fate and welfare of people on compliance or noncompliance of the sovereign with the perfect image is emphasized (Weber M., 2001; Weber M., 2010; Hanna David P., 2007; Lisova N., 2009).

As it was considered in the Ancient East from Egypt to China, a sovereign must have a divine origin. From the viewpoint of N. Machiavelli people despise sovereigns who are indecisive and cowardly. Crowd likes stability, decisiveness and courage. Each sovereign must have a "mask". G. Le Bon in his work also indicates that masses do not need kindness, they consider it to be a sign of weakness, and they respect only power. Friedrich Nietzsche in his works argues that the main feature of the "Superman" is anger.

In the XX century the art of image making peaked. In the middle of the XX century, American scientists had presented the concept of political leadership based on mechanisms of manipulation of consciousness and behavior. Representatives of the Chicago School H. Lasswell, C. Merriam, B. Skinner and others identified the following types of leaders. The "agitator" provokes opponents, uses the rhetoric and gestures; his goal is to be seen at all costs. The "administrator" manipulates a certain group and does not irritate citizens. The "theorist" is interested in grandiose impractical projects to the detriment of everyday and urgent cases.

In the works of national researchers E.V. Egorova, V.G. Zazykin, A.Yu. Koshmarov, E.I. Manyakina, D.V. Olshansky, G.G. Pocheptsov, R.F. Romashkina phenomenon of leadership is studied on the basis of images of politicians. There are two approaches to the concept of image. The first historical approach considers the images reflected in the nicknames of historical persons: Yaroslav the Wise, Ivan the Terrible, St. Louis, Charlemagne, etc. The second approach appeared in the beginning of XX century; it considers creation of the political image in the media (Pavlova L., 1991; Zaitseva I., 1997).

There are three points of view on the image of a political leader. First, image is not related to the actual characteristics of the person. Second, image is a reflection of a certain essence of the person. Third, double determination of the image, that is, it depends on both reality and purposive construction of the image (Karasyev V.I., 2000).

Authors such as E.V.Egorova, O.V.Ivannikova, A.I.Kovler, G.G.Pocheptsov, E.B.Shestopal give different interpretations of image components of the political leader:

- Personal characteristics: physical, psycho-physiological features; type of personality; character; individual style of decision-making;
- Social characteristics: status as a leader; role behavior models; communication with different social groups whose interests the leader represents; relationships with allies, opponents and antagonists;
- Symbolic characteristics: signs of a particular ideology of a possible future or a course of actions (Goleman D., 2005).

G.G. Pocheptsov defines the elements of political leader image formation: life events, family, sports, pets, hobbies, weaknesses. These components bring the political leader and ordinary people together.

O.V.Ivannikova has developed a political leader model consisting of moral and professional qualities of a strong and caring leader. Main factors of political image are highlighted such as real features of the political leader (appearance, age, health, style of dress, gestures, facial expressions, charisma, temperament, character, motivation to participate in the political process, party affiliation, election program, political activities). Also important is the way and form of obtaining political information, value of information and its consistency while interacting with other people; also features of the electorate at a particular stage of development of society are considered.

According to personal qualities, people have confidence to a political leader, faith in him, and devotion to him.

A.Galkin, E.Noel, D.M.Durnin, E.Shestopal, Yu.Tolstov, M.Kosolapov express the idea that perception of political leaders by Russian electorate is diverse. Voters differentiate their understanding of the leader based on confidence and dynamics. Namely emotional confidence is the basis of personal rating of the political leader. For any change in the image of a political leader population immediately gives the reaction. Certain technologies can change the image of a politician, such as strengthening his personal characteristics. Followers and close associates of any leader extol his trust, reliability, emotional warmth. However, the image of the leader is never in the area of maximum allure. This happens because of his specific actions and hidden characteristics.

D.M.Durnin gives the following data: in Russia emotional attitude and confidence are the main components that define public attitudes to a politician. This means that people constantly monitor their confidence in authorities and rate politicians in terms of this indicator.

Dynamics is the second pillar of the political leader image; it exists on the opposition of power and intelligence. This point of view is caused by both traditions of Russian society and multidirectional value hierarchies. So intelligence is often mistaken for caution and, sometimes, weakness. The author compares and gives a comparative description of some Russian political leaders.

Among all politicians V.Zhirinovsky's image particularly stands out in terms of dynamism. He is characterized by a high coefficient of activity and power combined with some emotional non-confidence. Voters understand Zhirinovsky as a strong personality, as an active, straight, strong-willed, authoritarian, tough and ambitious politician.

Conversely, G.Yavlinsky's image is characterized by absence of dynamism and power, but presence of emotional confidence. Finesse, passivity, daydreaming, intelligence and relaxation - these are his characteristic features in the opinion of the voters.

When evaluating the image of Boris Yeltsin neither emotional confidence nor dynamics and strength and nor intelligence and passivity were not expressed. Yeltsin seemed to be a bright personality because of his authoritarianism, snobbery, poise and diplomacy.

G.Zyuganov has less voters' emotional confidence. His qualities are isolation, cynicism, individualism, authoritarianism, arrogance, unreliability, emotional detachment. He has no clearly manifested dynamism; indicators of power and intelligence, activity and passivity are average. Society's attitude towards the Communist Party itself has affected the image of Zyuganov.

The following personal qualities of the politician are important in creating the political image: a political leader's self-perception; needs and motivations that influence political behavior; a system of the most important political beliefs; a style of political decision-making; a style of interpersonal relations; stress resistance.

Philosopher L.A. Myasnikova believes that attitude to the political leaders in Russia has a socio-cultural foundation. She notes that this attitude is caused by appropriate requirements, interests and often unwitting socio-cultural stereotypes of mass consciousness.

According to A.A. Maximov, in Russia the political market formed character types of politicians such as "Humanist" E. Primakov, G. Yavlinsky, S. Mironov; "Business Executive" Yu. Luzhkov, Yu. Skokov; "Libertarian" Yu. Glaz'ev, V. Zhirinovskiy, Yu. Rogozin; "Militant" S. Shoigu, Yu. Gromov; "Technocrat (manager of the Western type)," A. Chubais, S. Kiriyenko; "Scientist" A. Chilingarov; "Cultural professional" I. Kobzon.

The political leader of Russia, the Great Power, should aggregate lands, using a variety of means: peaceful incorporation, help the oppressed peoples, force area incorporation. A leader who loses territories is perceived critically. So, Lenin was accused of "Treaty of Brest-Litovsk", Gorbachev and Yeltsin - of disintegration of the USSR. In public opinion Stalin was the defender and aggregator of lands; that neutralized his negative characteristics.

Over centuries, in the public consciousness power and kingship of Russia are determined by military victories, so the name of Dmitry Donskoy recalls about the salvation of Moscow from Mamai, Kutuzov - the defeat of Napoleon's army, Stalin and Zhukov – the Victory in the Great Patriotic War. Russian people are always in the fight (with Nature, for harvest, for temperance, for leadership in the space, etc.) Therefore such image of a leader-warrior as "Lenin on the armored car", "Yeltsin on the tank", "Putin on the military cruiser" has a strong emotional impact. In the public mind the leader is a mythologized hero that promises miracles (resurrection, rebirth, creation). This is the "miracle" of Nikita Khrushchev about the building of communism in 1980, the "miracle" of Mikhail Gorbachev about the revival of democracy, the "miracle" of G. Yavlinsky about restoring Russia for 500 days, etc.

Russia is passing its historic journey with ups and downs, so the perception of a political leader in Russian mentality changes according to the historical experience of people. Each historical period requires a different leader. In the pre-revolutionary period legitimate power had religious and mystical nature: the head of state (tsar) was the Lord's Anointed One. The sacred character of the Tsar-Autocrat mutated into an authoritarian-totalitarian power of "proletariat dictators" Lenin and Stalin and their followers, postwar leaders such as Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Andropov, Chernenko. After them Gorbachev, Yeltsin, Putin appeared as leaders of the perestroika. Among Russian leaders of the twentieth century Lenin, Stalin, Khrushchev and Yeltsin, who were in demand in turning historical periods, had special charismas.

Since 1985, the government has become more open; thus, acceptance of the leader by people is valued more than ever. For example, Mikhail Gorbachev gained popularity thanks to his eloquence and "meeting the people". Power has come closer to the masses. There has been a convergence of the images of pop stars and political leaders. A striking example is the image of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy.

The post-perestroika period requires a leader-creator; so the image of President Putin, serious, European-educated, intelligent and inspiring confidence, meets the requirements of the majority.

Leader's appearance reflects changes in his inner world and the relationship with the social environment. N. Machiavelli points out that people are more afraid of appearance than of substance.

Facial expressions, voice, communication style, physical characteristics, clothing, and accessories - these are the main characteristics of the visage of a politician. B.L. Borisov gives examples of stereotypical images of well-known political leaders who possessed the art of image formation and used it successfully in domestic and foreign policy areas.

Signs of J. Stalin image are a field jacket, knee-high boots, mustache and a pipe, slow and compelling manner of speaking.

N.Khrushchev's characteristic set of signs are: an embroidered peasant shirt, the bald head, warts, the expression «Kuz'kina mat'».

Leonid Brezhnev had a posture of an opera singer, a set of orders and bushy eyebrows, slurred and prolix manner of speaking.

M.Gorbachev is characterized by a certain roundness of appearance, behavior and speech, mispronunciation of some words.

V.Zhirinovskiy poses his preparedness as spontaneity, while exploiting the image of a showman as a part of the Russian culture of laughter.

V.Ledyayev identifies the following definition of image optimization: authority of a political leader is effective so far as the image of a political leader has the regulatory function (image becomes a regulator of electorate's behavior and choice) and corresponds to social expectations and interests of people and the State.

4. Conclusion

The image of a political leader is an integral formation and depends on:

- individual personal qualities and psychological characteristics;
- outer living conditions (social, cultural, economic) of the leader and his environment.

The image of a political leader should be consistent with national traditions and social patterns of the population. It affects the electorate and public opinion, using special psychological techniques that increase the attractiveness and interest. The image of a political leader is one of the main factors in the development of a political culture of the country, as better image of politicians contributes to better prestige and reputation of the country itself.

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