REPORTS

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IMAGES OF RUSSIA AND IRAN IN THE GLOBAL MEDIA SPACE

Mass Media as a Globalization Institute in the Postindustrial World

Today globalization is a process of unidirectional expansion of world integration in field of geopolitics, global economy and culture. It exerts a significant impact on political and economic institutes and has an effect on nature and dynamics of national cultures by constricting space and time and multiplying the volume of information. On the one hand, globalization reinforces integration processes in field of geopolitics, establishment of supranational political and economic structures; it results in tangible success in technological development of the global economy, establishment of the global household as a complete organism. On the other hand, globalization poses problems related to erosion of state sovereignty fundamentals and bases of confessional and civilizational identity, disintegration and chaos of the regulatory environment of national cultures, stratification of society and expansion of the poverty social base. It destroys a traditional hierarchy of peoples and nations, places viability of national states as historically sustainable institutional way of residence in question. Consequences caused by globalization become key challenges for national states and cultures.

A leader of the global world is the USA that doesn't hide its pursuance of the total control over the world. A negative effect of the global expansion of the West is deformation of traditions, customs and culture not of the Third World countries only, but of developed states as well. It's a threat of cultural homogenization that has sparked great concern of some developed countries; for example, governments of Japan and France had to ensure preservation of national culture and language at the legislative level.

Globalization is a controversial issue which is reflected in estimation of this phenomenon. Some scientists are sure that globalization leads the humankind to the democratic and unified world based on the global culture. According to other researchers, globalization doesn't lead to the unified political and cultural identity that could become a base for stronger global solidarity [12, p. 147]. Opponents of the global project are sure that globalization with its "culture of dominance" and total consumerism, as well as superpowers' control over the world empire of mass media leads to homogenization of national and local cultures [1]. A negative result of globalization is westernization of the world fraught with destruction of fundamentals of national and cultural identity. The global culture ignores traditional mental experience of nations underlying their national cultures. Its primary influence resource is technological power and world domination [2]. Levelling of national cultures in developing countries along Western lines ignoring linguistic, religious and ethical diversity can lead to the split of the Third World countries [6, p. 56]. Expansion of western cultural patterns provokes backlash in the form of preservation of national and cultural identity reinforced by recognition of the depth of cultural differences [7, p. 52]. Globalization affected principles of panhuman morality in a destructive manner. With international markets and world media the global capital, which establishes the dominant idea of consumption in the image of modern life, significantly depreciated such values as kindness, justice and patriotism, national traditions and national history.

The global expansion assumed special proportions in the context of development of communication means and emerging global communication space. The information age changed the essence of communication radically by turning information and communication into the main source of power. Globalization of communication caused by information revolution and destruction of borders in information distribution makes the forecasted vision of the world as a global village a reality. Modern communication tools (Internet, satellite technologies, television) reduce cultural borders and financial restrictions to a minimum; they overcome common geographic and cultural borders providing unlimited access to information. Today key actors of mass media become major players in cultural, social, economic and political processes on national and international levels. Dynamically developing global communication space becomes a tool in the political struggle, in healthy lifestyle promotion and forming public opinion. A positive effect of this process is an opportunity to take part in the global culture for every person and every society.

However, while encouraging development of the global culture, new information technologies distort conventional socialization mechanisms, destroy legal frameworks of local cultures through modification of their worldview bases. Information expansion of global project leaders results in deindividuation of the humankind and destruction of national and cultural singularity, a weaker role of national languages and erosion of fundamentals of local and national identity. An extra risk zone includes states with weak infrastructure in field of communication technologies that are bound to be defeated in the context of global competition. Weak resource base of national mass media is an important reason of irreversible economic, political and cultural damage.

Information revolution and new communication technologies create specific space for development of new sources of political power and force defined by opportunities in field of production, control and distribution of information [11]. Owners of this force use global communi-

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cation space as a political solution on national and international levels.

Mass media become the most important institute of world domination for the power source not to ensure its domination only, but to obtain the agreement of societies under its control as well. Advocates of globalization appreciate the role of mass media institute, while national elites level criticism at communication media that deprive national cultures of their individualities turning a member of culture into a "one-dimensional man" (H. Marcuse), enable development of society, members of which have no opportunity to feel their own importance and to contribute into stability of the society [5, p. 28]. The process of unbalanced information flow caused by technological inequality of developed and developing countries leads to dominance of the West and results in impact of western culture on south countries [8].

Barriers and Challenges of Relations between the Russian Federation and Iran

Today public opinion becomes an important part of the decision making process in politics. That's why states need efficient communication tools to reach common citizens and obtain support of national elites in order to promote their ideas and implement socially significant programs. In the furtherance of this goal countries of the world use different methods and means. A key asset of geopolitical influence in recent years is "soft power" with the structure formed of three sources: national culture, political values (if they correspond to inner attitudes and international opinion) and legitimately and morally justified domestic and foreign policy [8, p. 26].

Iran and Russia, considering vast experience of their relations, have a great potential for development of mutually beneficial cooperation, but, as it has been mentioned already, media in hand of dominating countries are used as a tool to implement geopolitical projects that contradict interests of our countries. Unfortunately, the Russian Federation and Iran don't possess adequate resources to provide them a dominating status in field of information technologies. As a result, citizens of both countries are exposed to information attacks from the outside.

Another factor that has a negative influence on relations between Iran and Russia is a language barrier. As it is known language is a tool of communication and mutual understanding for different peoples; constructive and mutually beneficial cooperation is impossible without a common language. A sphere of concepts of a national language shows wealth, cultural capital and mental treasure of peoples. Unfortunately, there are very few people in Russia and in Iran who speak both Farsi and Russian. Multiple problems in the process of development of bilateral relations, including economics and culture, are connected with this factor. Most of the Russians and the Iranians receive information about each other through western global sources – that's how a huge part of stereotypes that reign in Iranian and Russian social networks appeared. In 2003 President V.V. Putin's Administration requested to hold a survey for the Americans to tell 10 things they associate with Russia. Most of answers were the following: communism, KGB, snow and mafia [3]. The situation in Iran is similar, so the Iranians know very little about Russia too.

Therefore, a key problem in development of bilateral relations is a language barrier. That's why today it's more important to develop the Russian language in Iran and Farsi in the Russian Federation than ever, and leaders of our countries must see language development as a key element of the fight against disinformation. The Iranian side states openly that it's necessary to develop the Russian language in Iran for further development of bilateral relations. In his interview Eshaq Jahangiri, Vice President of Iran, commented on importance of development of Persian language in the world: "The Persian language is a crucial factor of our national identity, and its development is considered an important component of public democracy of Iran" [10]. Currently the Russian language is studied in six universities in Teheran, Ferdowsi University in Mashhad, as well as in universities of Gilan and Mazandaran. There's no official statistics regarding a number of Russian speaking people in Iran, but according to estimations, this number can amount to 4.5 thousand people [4, p. 156]. A set of measures aimed at promotion of the Russian language indicates that it's considered an important element of public diplomacy. Thus, in 2007 the Russky Mir Foundation was established "for the purpose of promoting the Russian language, as Russia's national heritage and a significant aspect of Russian and world culture" [9]. Russian centers operate in 45 countries of the world with support of the Foundation and in partnership with leading educational structures, including centers in the University of Tehran and the Ferdowsi University in Mashhad.

Linguistic Factor of Perception of the Country Image

So does development of the Russian language has a real impact on Iranian citizens' vision of the Russian Federation? In order to clarify this question authors of this work have conducted a research in three Iranian universities with Russian language departments (the Allameh Tabataba'i University, the University of Tehran, the Ferdowsi University in Mashhad). 20 students of the Russian Language Department from the Allameh Tabataba'i University, 15 students from each of other universities, as well as students that don't speak Russian (20 students from the Allameh Tabataba'i University, 15 students from the University of Tehran and the Ferdowsi University in Mashhad) took part in the survey. Respondents were divided by age categories (17–20, 21–25, 26–30) and by knowledge of the Russian language.

Major results of the survey: more than a half of respondents said they knew the history of relations between Russia and Iran. The same number of participants of the survey answered, "We're similar in some aspects, and in some we are not". Most respondents stated a need to develop relations with Russia. Results were particularly interesting when they depended on age: the group aged 17–20 noted all parameters as positive: the youth know more about the Russian Federation, supports relations with the Russian Federation and think that the Russians are very similar to the Iranians. A positive vision of the Russian Federation the younger generation born after 2000's has can be explained with influence of the virtual space and the Russian information policy aimed at optimization of its image in the world. Most positive attitude was shown by respondents who study the Russian language. Answering the question "Do you know the history of relations between Russia and Iran?" 70% of them answered "Yes". Almost 80% of respondents who study the Russian language are sure of a need to develop bilateral relations with the Russian Federation. Results of the survey are one more evidence

that for the Iranians knowledge of language leads to a more positive perception of the Russian Federation. So to develop bilateral cooperation steps need to be made to promote the Russian language as one of the most important factors in relations between our countries. Development of Farsi and the Russian language is meaningful to improve the image of Iran and Russia in the minds of our peoples, since language development gives citizens access to information sources that are not controlled by western institutions.

Development of a dialogue between languages and cultures of our nations will be a real counter-force against extremist ideologies. Today extremism and religious radicalism does not threaten Caucasus only, but pose a common threat for Iran and Russia. Considering the fact that Iran and Russia hold common positions in the fight against terrorism, it may safely be said that in case of promotion and development of the Russian language in Iran, the Iranian side will have a chance to present its true ideas to the Russian speaking population, and Russia will be able to provide data about its projects in the region to population of Iran directly without these projects being distorted with propagandist technologies of the West. It should be noted that similar benefits are provided for Russia with Farsi development in universities of the Russian Federation. Lowering language barriers will allow both sides establishing a contact on the social level, and social dialogue is known to be a crucial factor for development of bilateral relations in all areas.

In the globalized world an epicenter of conditions for survival and development of civilization lies in a spiritual component of society, aside from economic and military capacity development. As Iranian and Russian experience shows, the increasing globalization process aimed at domination of the western civilizational model can be opposed by the policy of preservation of national cultural traditions and building a constructive dialogue. Moreover, an essential for information security is establishment of strong and independent media that can react to challenges of the time appropriately providing protection of national cultures and preservation of spiritual health of peoples.

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