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# CUESTIONES POLÍTICAS

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# Formation of the ethnic symbolic politics as the mechanism of interaction between society and the political elite: Impact of information technologies

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## Abstract

The purpose of the article was to examine the role of information technologies in the formation of symbolic politics through the prism of mass media, communications and new Internet technologies. The methodological basis of the study is formed by legislation and historical literature, using dialectical and comparative methods, as well as general methods of scientific analysis. Symbolic politics is one of the mechanisms of information interaction between society and the political elite; in a new form, it allows solving social and socio-political problems. It has been established that full communication between the political elite and the population is impossible without elements of symbolic politics, such as public relations agencies, Internet blogs and social networks, etc., whose purpose is not only to form a positive image of politics and leaders, but also, it serves to establish an agreement of understanding in society. The authors conclude that new mechanisms of interaction between the elite and society, such as e-receptions, destination portals and digital government, lead to greater government transparency and increased efficiency of its activities.

**Keywords:** symbolic politics; information technologies; digital government; political elite; political image.

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## Formación de la política simbólica étnica como mecanismo de interacción entre la sociedad y la élite política: impacto de las tecnologías de la información

### Resumen

El propósito del artículo fue examinar el papel de las tecnologías de la información en la formación de la política simbólica a través del prisma de los medios de comunicación de masas, las comunicaciones y las nuevas tecnologías de Internet. La base metodológica del estudio está formada por la legislación y la literatura histórica, utilizando métodos dialécticos y comparativos, así como métodos generales de análisis científico. La política simbólica es uno de los mecanismos de interacción de la información entre la sociedad y la élite política; en una nueva forma, permite resolver problemas sociales y sociopolíticos. Se ha establecido que la comunicación plena entre la élite política y la población es imposible sin elementos de la política simbólica, como agencias de relaciones públicas, blogs de Internet y redes sociales, etc., cuyo propósito no es solo formar una imagen positiva de la política y de los líderes, sino también, sirve para establecer un acuerdo de entendimiento en la sociedad. Los autores concluyen que los nuevos mecanismos de interacción entre la élite y la sociedad como las recepciones electrónicas, los portales de destino y el gobierno digital, provocan una mayor transparencia del gobierno y un aumento en la eficiencia de sus actividades.

**Palabras clave:** política simbólica; tecnologías de la información; gobierno digital; élite política; imagen política.

### Introduction

In modern society, the media and communications, as well as new media and Internet technologies, have a significant impact on the thoughts and actions of people and thus play a large role in the life of society (Kuzmenkov *et al.*, 2021). The interaction of power and society, in particular in the information field, is a common and necessary component of the current political situation. In turn, the most important tool for ensuring information and communication interaction between the government and society is symbolic politics. Such interaction is manifested, firstly, in the development of communications between ordinary citizens and the political elite, which ensures stable management of society and allows solving many social, socio-political problems.

For example, such as maintaining and improving the welfare of citizens, improving the administrative system, as well as promoting the

implementation of large-scale ideas and projects in the social sphere, economy and other areas. Secondly, information interaction ensures the exchange of valuable symbols, meanings and ideas necessary for the functioning and development of society (Buhaychuk *et al.*, 2022). Thus, symbolic politics is one of the mechanisms of information interaction between society and the political elite.

Modern politics is considered to be symbolic, due to the fact that the mass media have acquired the status of one of the most significant socio-political institutions in any modern society, regardless of the level of its socio-economic development.

The relevance of the research topic is also emphasized by the fact that at the moment, among researchers there is still no consensus on the phenomenon of symbolic politics.

Questions about the subjects, functions, mechanisms and types of manifestation of symbolic politics are debatable. This circumstance indicates the need to continue theoretical and practical research on this form of interaction between government and society, including the example of certain social groups and local authorities.

The need to analyze the role and place of mass consciousness in the process of political decision-making still remains relevant. In particular, the definition of tools and mechanisms for the influence of mass consciousness on the development of the agenda for the work of state institutions of power. It is necessary to study the perception by the mass consciousness of the place and role of various groups of the political elite, as well as the translation of political requests from the population, the prospects and opportunities for increasing the impact of public interests and needs on the content of the domestic and foreign policy pursued by the authorities.

## **1. Methods**

In the framework of the study authors used general scientific research methods including specialized research methods of comparative history science, logical and legal analysis, and concretization. The methodological basis of the study, first of all, consists of dialectical and comparative methods, as well as general and special methods of scientific analysis, acting as tools of scientific knowledge, such as socio-philosophical analysis, structural-functional method.

## 2. Results and discussion

The theoretical foundations for the study of symbolic politics were laid by the American political scientist Murray Edelman (1985) and the German scientist W. Sarcinelli (1998), whose main achievement is the designation of the subject field and the main subjects of symbolic politics. Subsequently, the theory of symbolic politics became a fairly popular topic in the works of well-known specialists in the field of philosophy, sociology, political science and other areas of social knowledge.

For example, the symbolic aspects of the political sphere were considered in detail in the works of such foreign thinkers as J. Baudrillard (1992), P. Berger (1995), C. Manheim (1994), S. Moscovici (2011), P. Ricoeur (1995), P. Champagne (1997), A. Cohen (1969), Russian researchers S.G. Kara-Murza (2003), O.A. Karmadonov (2004), N.I. Shestov (2005), L.G. Fishman (2006) and others.

Subsequently, several models of symbolic “staging” were formulated: theatrical, dramatic and performance (Meyer, 1992). A special approach to the study of symbolic politics is considered to be cultural-anthropological, which pays more attention to the socio-psychological aspects of symbolic acts. Symbolic politics, despite being a subject of study for a long time, is still in the focus of modern political philosophy and political science. In domestic political science, this is a relatively new subject of study.

Such attention to symbolic politics is explained by the fact that at present this phenomenon is the main mechanism for the translation of meanings and interpretation of political events. The method of influence of power on the formation in the minds of the masses of the desired value norms and attitudes. The effectiveness of symbolic politics is determined in the construction of the emotional state of the population in the political process. Although this is not the only understanding of the meaning and purpose of symbolic politics.

The classical political and philosophical idea assumes the main provisions in the understanding of politics, pointing to its social characteristics, which means that any modifications in the political sphere will be conditioned by modifications of sociality. In the second half of the 20th century, a revolutionary upheaval took place in the history of mankind: the emergence of virtual reality and the global information space in human society (Lyubutin and Pivovarov, 1993).

This change is a natural result of the expansion of various spheres of human life, i.e. evolution of his scientific thought and creative abilities. First of all, we are talking about the transformation of the mode of legitimation of power in a democracy. Mass democracy is not so much a thought process of decision-making as feelings, emotions and experiences. A sort of new political style based on the principles of performance and show.

Modern power, unlike past eras, dramatizes itself through television, radio, photography and film production, which leads to an increase in the possibilities of symbolic politics. Today, visual information acquires a special role, changing the traditional, academic and bookish discourse for mosaic and iconographic imagery.

The technique of rational-rhetorical “persuasion” of the public is replaced by visual suggestion and advertising “temptation”, which qualitatively increases the demand for symbolic politics (Potseluev, 1999: 138). The influence of the media and new digital technologies on modern society has led to a change in the perception of the world and man. A countless number of scenarios for the development of social processes taking place in the world have appeared. These authors in their works in different perspectives, the process of the impact of mass media on a person and society as a whole. At the same time, they all noted that the effect of the media on a person’s worldview depends not so much on his personal characteristics: gender, age, education, political position, but rather on the individual’s sense of his belonging to society.

Today, it is impossible to study society, ignoring virtual reality, where information technologies are not just a means of communication and information, but a formative and transformative construct of the relationship between a person and society. The perception of virtual reality as a form of manifestation of social life is limited only by the capabilities of computer technology.

In fact, a new social space has emerged, where there is no traditional space-time continuum. New social platforms have appeared and are actively functioning, where there are no borders and closed zones, where there is unlimited freedom and lack of control. A parallel reality arises, where, as in a “normal” society, there is money or means of exchange (cryptocurrency), labor is increasingly intellectual in nature, and the result of labor is a product of design and modeling (Prilukova, 2004).

Not surprisingly, the political sphere of activity is also undergoing significant changes. Its content today is determined by the communication strategy, and the form is increasingly reminiscent of a show with its mandatory attributes - entertainment and attractiveness. Politicians become the “stars” of the show, while sports, stage, movie stars, etc. in various capacities are involved in politics. Socio-political activity in all its forms is transferred to cyberspace and television. At the same time, it acquires the features of a business based not on the values and interests of the masses, but on the laws of entrepreneurship and marketing, which, in turn, are regulated and implemented by a narrow circle of professionals: consultants, image makers, political technologists, etc.

Politics is increasingly becoming a symbolic activity, it includes design, modeling and construction. Today, not a single serious politician, political movement or party in their activities can do without such important components as “creating a political image”, “modeling elections”, “political design”, etc. Moreover, if until recently the formation of the image of a political leader was determined, first of all, by his personal qualities. That today is the construction of the image, the media, based on the expectations of the electorate.

Often both things happen at the same time. All this is possible if there is a political elite that has not only financial capital, but also resource capital: a management structure that makes it possible to put pressure on opponents, connections and influence on the adoption of political acts, the ability to control and manipulate public opinion.

In practice, there is a representation of political processes and power, which is based on the media image - there is a reincarnation of power, the image itself is not politics, it only “reveals” politics. The images of politics are formed by high-tech means of describing an object - modern technologies that assume the role of “creators of prototypes”.

Representation takes place in politics - the process of replacing the original, sample, original, a kind of demonstration of a reproduction of something, but not the original itself, that is, this is the representation of one in the other and through the other. Although this is not surprising, even Plato said that “the image of an idea and the idea are not the same thing, the idea is the prototype” i.e. the mode of representation begins to give meaning to what should be represented, and as a result, what is represented (represented) becomes represented and, conversely, what is represented is what is represented.

In this connection, one of the most prominent French theorists of postmodernism, J. Baudrillard, proposed replacing the term “representation” with “simulation” (Baudrillard, 2000: 64-70) because the sign and meaning are identical in it. He called society a “society of simulation” or a society not of things, but of their images. At the same time, what conveys a sign does not have to be real.

Studying this phenomenon, we can conclude that the representation and its perception occurs with the help of consciousness, i.e. the combination of the individual’s sensory abilities and knowledge, in the process of creating all kinds of collective images, sensory experiences and knowledge begin to intertwine, which has a significant impact on the process of forming an essential component of the image of power and politics.

A person who receives information will not think about the fact that there is an intermediary between him and the image on the screen. These can be: an editor, screenwriter, commentator, director, etc. Therefore,

the state needs step-by-step testing of all stages of the implementation of manipulations that lead to success.

This is especially important when the scenarios of the “color” revolution are threatened, since it is manipulative technologies that form an “alternative reality” among the population, a different vision of what is happening, form a distorted idea of what is right and what is not. In modern “color” revolutions, there are four information fields in which a fierce struggle is being waged: “Television, the press, the street and the Internet” (Morozova and Miroshnichenko, 2011: 56).

Human intervention can be carried out by technically changing the image in the process of shooting, set in a certain place by the camera, using neuropsychological mechanisms of influence, for example: information transfer rate, eye hypertrophy, etc. All these aspects make the image more attractive and more realistic than the prototype itself .

It follows from this that the direct instrument of image formation is the human brain at the mental-operational level. Therefore, the state and power structures, creating huge semiotic machines, constantly need a specialized mechanism. The vast growth of screen culture and the possibility of reaching a huge audience create favorable conditions for the existence of symbolic politics. The provided images are perceived emotionally convincingly, and the events are built into the everyday life of a person, making it impossible to rationally analyze the socio-political situation.

The information provided through the mass media has become the main form of manifestation of symbolic politics. Information has ceased to be just a message; it has become a carrier of various meanings and symbols that form the discourse of political situations. The power elite and the state stage themselves with the help of a computer and television, using, at the same time, the mass media, covering large masses of the population and actively influencing their consciousness.

The avalanche-like growth of incoming information, absorbed by ordinary consciousness through electronic sources and transmitted almost at the speed of light, leads to an increase in the possibilities for the manifestation of symbolic politics. Theoretically, symbols are necessary to maintain social order, but the current situation in society, through television and computer screens, translates authenticity into something artificial. The message about some event becomes more important than the event itself, the latter comes into existence only because it was reported.

The modern world is filled with virtual communication, which requires high-tech tools and organization principles. Entire social institutions have lost their role and place in the hierarchical structure of the culture of society: “Turning into a mass for which the habitat is the street, where people wander aimlessly, being subjected to police control” (Sirota, 2011: 23).

States and societies, regardless of the socio-economic level of development, are involved in virtual reality. The modern world has become fragile and transparent, filled with symbols that have no basis in any reality. The real world has become a world of simulacra, an exact copy of the reality that never existed. The current system of communications provokes a person to “fabricate” reality, information is transformed into an independent entity, and the mass media is transformed into a political institution (Cobba and Elder, 1983: 131).

### **Conclusions**

Thus, in modern society, in ensuring the interaction between authorities and the population, the decisive role belongs to the media and communications. It is they who increase the efficiency and effectiveness of symbolic politics.

The use of symbolic policy methods contributes to the formation and consolidation of the community, the awareness and expression of public interests, and the political enlightenment of citizens. At the same time, the use of symbolic politics may be accompanied by negative phenomena, such as the manipulation of public opinion, a discrepancy between promises and real actions of the authorities.

An important component of symbolic politics is the information and communication interaction between the political elite and society. Known forms of communication between the authorities and the population, which are based on unilateral influence on the part of the authorities, are no longer sufficient and relevant today. There is a need for information exchange, which implies the conjugation of the interests of the political elite and society.

Today, full-fledged communication between the political elite and the population is impossible without elements of symbolic politics, such as PR agencies, Internet blogs, social networks, etc., the purpose of which is not only to form a positive image of political leaders, but also to establish an agreed mutual understanding in society.

New mechanisms for the relationship between the elite and society: electronic receptions, target portals, digital government and others, cause greater transparency of power and increase the efficiency of its activities.

The dissemination of positive information about the decisions of the authorities through official websites and blogs contributes to the awareness of the population about the intentions of the governing bodies, thus forming an information contact between the authorities and society. The technological means of symbolic politics are also important tools in the process of population mobilization.

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