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MASHA AND THE BEAR” IN THE CONTEXT OF THE NEW COLD WAR: THE QUESTION OF THE ROLE OF CINEMA IN SYMBOLIC POLITICS⁴

Annotation. The paper is focussed on the current discussions on the cartoon “Masha and the Bear” as a factor in geopolitics and international security. The authors show that using the frame of symbolic politics as a methodology for analyzing the problem of “cinema and politics” has a great heuristic potential.

Key words: “Masha and the Bear”, the “Russian bear”, popular geopolitics, symbolic politics, soft power, the image of Russia, Cold War.

The study of the “Cinema and Politics” problem, which has a decade long history, has recently received a new impetus due to the fact that the concept of symbolic politics and popular geopolitics began to fulfill the role of theoretical frames. In Russian political science, interpreting it as an activity aimed at the production and promotion / imposition of certain ways of interpreting social reality is most popular in understanding symbolic politics [Malinova, 2010]. We share this interpretation, but at the same time we would like to draw attention to another characteristic of symbolic politics – politics whose goal is not so much to appropriate a certain material good, but to achieve emotional satisfaction [Dallek, 1983; Sharp 2000]. Focusing on the emotional component of symbolic politics seems to be very heuristic, since it contains not only the cognitive, but also the affective component. This is all the more relevant in the case of cinema, whose emotional impact on the audience is extremely great.

We believe that popular geopolitics as a form of symbolic politics emerged in Western social and humanitarian knowledge as a result of problematization of the classical geopolitics. The works of the founders of this direction (J. Dittmer, K. Dodds, R. Saunders) justify the idea that it is necessary to investigate not only political decision-making by elites, but also ways of perception of world politics by ordinary citizens, including through such forms of mass culture, as television series, caricatures, souvenirs, comic books, photographs, etc. In them, images of “ours” are constructed through the images of “theirs”. As Dittmer noted, the key to geopolitics is

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the concept of identity; geopolitics is about the assignment of value to places. It constructs hierarchies of peoples and places; some places are considered geopolitically more important than others; some matter, some do not [Dittmer, 2010: xviii]. Such cultural hierarchies contribute making real inequality of cultures, peoples, countries and civilizations.

Within the frames of popular geopolitics, the cinema plays the special role in the formation of an imaginary world map. For example, in 2005, the *Geopolitics* journal devoted a special issue to the “Cinema and Popular Geopolitics”, which later served as a basis to the collective monograph. The most notable period in the history of cinema as an instrument of foreign and domestic policy was the Cold War, and its role in the “struggle for hearts and minds” is being studied intensively both in Russia and abroad [eg: Shaw, Youngblood 2010; Fedorov, 2017]. Among the works performed in the methodology of popular geopolitics, the recent book by L. Funnell and K. Dodds on the role of James Bond movies in shaping the picture of the world [Funnell, Dodds, 2017] deserves mentioning, since today many journalists and some experts talk about exacerbation of relations between Russia and the West as a “new Cold war”. A prominent feature of this aggravation was the accusations of Russia of organizing hybrid wars, which included the use of “soft power” [Ryabova, Ryabov 2017] - and the cartoon “Masha and the Bear” was named as one of the manifestations of this hybrid war. And if attention to spy movies in the context of current relations between Russia and the West is understandable, then what’s the cartoon about the little girl and her bear friend (which, we note, is the favorite toy of children all over the world since at least the beginning of the 20th century) geopolitics – we will try to answer this question.

The aim of the study is to analyze today's discussions on the impact of Masha and the Bear on Russia's perception of the world and, more broadly, on international security. What do western experts and journalists see the danger of this cartoon? How do the assessments of this cartoon correlate with those interpretations of the soft power of Russia by the Western media that relate to other cases? What does this case help to understand about the role of cinema in symbolic politics? Thus might be stated the sum of the research questions. The sources for the study are the domestic and foreign press, 2015–2019.

Speaking about the ways in which Western analysts evaluate the role of “Masha and the Bear” as a tool of Russian “soft power”, we can distinguish two layers. One is connected with the well-established understanding of soft power as representations of the positive aspects of the country and its representatives; the second is with conspiracy theories, in the center of which lies the idea of the Kremlin manipulating world public opinion with the help of a the positive image of the bear.

Referring to the bear image of Russia, we note that although the bear is often called the unofficial symbol of Russia, the bear as a metaphor for the country is largely a Western invention. Comparing Russia with a bear goes back to the sixteenth century. Later it occupied an important place in representations of the country, appearing in travelers’ accounts, political rhetoric, and graphics. Outstanding representatives of Western cultures, including famous writers, artists, medalists, sculptors, journalists,

and directors, used the image of the Russian bear in their works. The placing of this image in newspapers and satirical maps, postcards and stamps, medallions and toys, movies and animated films indicated its significance [on the history of the image of the Russian bear see: Lazari et al 2019].

For interpreting the main traits and functions of that metaphor, one should take into account that it emerged when the image of a bear as such had strong negative connotations in Western Europe. In analyzing the functions performed by the uses of the bear metaphor, we should note above all that the metaphor contributed to ascribing Russians traits, which modernity discourse used to mark as Otherness, including barbarity, backwardness, laziness, sluggishness, inability to progress, and unpredictability. This image has also positive connotations; not only rivals but also allies kept in mind the strength of the bear [Lazari et al., 2019]. However, the main feelings that the Russian bear evoked among Western observers were belief in their own civilizational superiority, fear and respect for its enormous power, apprehension of awakening a ferocious predator, and a desire to tame it or even chain it up.

Besides that, the bear metaphor, by arousing fear, helped substantiate certain politics towards Russia and the USSR. It is hardly surprising that wartime propaganda machines exploited this metaphor to support military conflicts with Russia, from the Napoleonic Wars to the Crimean War, the Russo-Japanese War, and both world wars to the Cold War, as well as the military conflicts of the twenty-first century [Riabov, Lazari 2009].

Let's turn to the analysis of negative assessments of the cartoon in the foreign press. First of all, the concern itself is the popularity of the product of mass culture produced in Russia among children. Indeed, this animated TV series, being produced by the Russian company "Animaccord" since January 2009, is one of the most popular in the world. By February 2019, the series was viewed 44 billion times just on YouTube.

Of particular concern is the positive image of the bear. The Estonian expert [Hõbemägi, 2015] considers the promotion of the cartoon "Masha and the Bear" in the West to be part of the "hybrid war" of Russia; since the bear, according to him, is clearly associated with Russia, the positive image of the hero of the same name is a threat to the security of Estonia. The author of the article in the Lithuanian newspaper emphasizes that Medved symbolizes Russia and is intended to replace the negative image of the country with a positive one in children's minds [Kunnas, 2017]. Western observers point out that the bear is endowed with only positive traits – such as strength, good nature, caring, calm, and wisdom.

It is significant that such expert assessments serve as a certain basis for political actions. So, activists of the Odessa public organization proposed to ban the cartoon to broadcast in Ukraine. "In this seemingly ordinary cartoon for young viewers, Russian propagandists send a clear message to children: the bear, which is traditionally considered a symbol of Russia and is associated with this country, appears as a big strong hero who seizes other people's property, house, land with impunity." According to experts, "the above-mentioned cartoon was filmed for the sole purpose – to

convey to the world a peculiar message in which the cruel image of Russia (the Bear) is replaced by a soft and kind” [Vimoga ...].

Close attention is paid by *The Times* to the episode “No Trespassing” (episode 12). The journalist states that Russia guards its borders reliably. The Estonian author goes even further and connects Masha’s border guard cap with the NKVD uniform [Krutov, 2018].

This, however, is not the only ideological diversion associated with the image of a three-year-old girl. The most insightful critics of the cartoon (for example, Anthony Glees, an intelligence expert from The University of Buckingham) believe that Masha is “Putinesque” because she does not follow the rules with due respect and violates them easily [Bridge, 2018].

Most Western media see Russia's “soft power” as a threat. At the same time, the values with which Russia today is associated also evoke sympathy among the inhabitants of the West. In particular, for some supporters of Eurosceptic parties, Russia embodies genuine European values (national sovereignty, national identity, Christianity, traditional family values), which they blame the EU authorities for neglecting [Ryabova, Ryabov, 2017]. It is significant that this aspect is highlighted by the author of the article in the *Il Folio*, who notes that the cartoon is based on the image of traditional family relations: the relationship between a child and a caring father [Pompili, 2016]. Finally, we note another important aspect of the positive assessments of “Masha and the Bear.” The Serbian-Russian Movement Serbian political party used the toys of Masha and the Bear in the campaign video for the 2016 parliamentary elections. The video claimed that the Russian children possessed genuine and healthy values because they were raised with the help of this cartoon [Đurđev, 2016].

Let's sum up. First of all, in a symbolic politics, it is not only the content of the film and the intention of its creators that matter. The political being of film production continues after its release on the screens; in the production of values and assessments of social reality, such forms as film criticism, the organization of film festivals, awarding prizes, ranking, and even, as we have seen, articles of national security experts are used.

On the whole, the assessments of Masha and the Bear correlate with the perception of today's Russia. Among the negative assessments of the cartoon made in the Western media are accusations of legitimizing aggressive foreign policy, apology of militarism, and rehabilitation of the Soviet past; among the positive ones is the promotion of the idea of a traditional family and reliance on popular culture.

Another conclusion concerns the image of a bear – although it was invented in the West, and until recently did not play the role of a national symbol in Russian society, it is Western analysts who see in it the danger of creating positive associations with Russia. A Western invention is turning into a headache for Western experts on international security. One may involuntarily recall an old saying – “I caught a bear! – So take him here! – He won't go. – So come yourself! – He won't let me... ”.

Finally, let us suggest that in the “struggle for the hearts and minds” of the “new cold war” the key role is played not by the competition of ideas, but by the

competition of attractive symbols and images. This assumption needs to be checked on more representative material, and in this we see the prospects of this study.

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МЕДИАГРАМОТНОСТЬ КАК ФАКТОР ФОРМИРОВАНИЯ ПОЛИТИЧЕСКОЙ КУЛЬТУРЫ ИНДИВИДА

Аннотация. В статье обосновывается значение медийной грамотности в контексте формирования политической культуры человека. Показана важность медиаобразования для политического развития социума. Названы основные субъекты, которые потенциально могут быть заинтересованы в повышении уровня медиаграмотности общества.

Ключевые слова: медиаграмотность, медиаобразование, политическая культура, политическое участие, политическая осведомленность, массмедиа.

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MEDIAGRAPHY AS A FACTOR OF THE FORMATION OF INDIVIDUAL POLITICAL CULTURE

Annotation. The role of media literacy within the context of an individual political culture formation is substantiated in this article. Importance of media education for the political development of society is shown. Key subjects potentially interested in developing media literacy level of society are listed.

Key words: media literacy, media education, political culture, political participation, political awareness, mass media.

В современной науке различным аспектам политической культуры традиционно уделяется достаточно много внимания. Российские [Глебова, 2006; Завершинский, 2002; Зевина, Макаренко, 2010; Малинова, 2006; Соловьев, 2002; Шатилов, 2002] и зарубежные [Almond, 1994; Johnson, 2001; Scott 2003; Wiarda, 2014] ученые весьма продуктивно исследуют многочисленные проявления данного феномена, уточняют его структуру, сопоставляют его «национальные» модели и т.д.

Как это часто бывает со столь популярными категориями, определений политической культуры очень много. Одним из наиболее удачных среди них мы считаем то, что было сформулировано Э. Я. Баталовым, – «система исторически сложившихся, относительно устойчивых репрезентативных убеждений, представлений, установок сознания и моделей поведения индивидов и групп, а также моделей функционирования политических институтов и образуемой ими системы, проявляющихся в деятельности субъектов политического процесса, определяющих ее основные формы и направления, тем самым обеспечивающих воспроизводство и дальнейшую эволюцию политической жизни на основе преемственности» [Баталов, 2002, с. 10]. На наш взгляд, подобное понимание политической культуры адекватно отражает ее внутреннюю структуру, обозначает основных носителей и подчеркивает ее изменяющийся характер.

Исходя из предложенного определения, можно сказать, что к числу ключевых составных единиц политической культуры относятся представления человека о политике, испытываемые им по этому поводу чувства и переживания, разделяемые ценности, нормы и идеалы, а также приемлемые для индивида форматы участия в политическом процессе. Очевидно, что применительно к конкретному индивиду каждый из этих элементов находится под влиянием большого количества факторов: семьи, школы, традиций, национального менталитета, СМИ. Благодаря последним каждый из нас получает большую часть того, что мы знаем о политике. Массмедиа влияют на каждый из элементов политической культуры. И по мере того, как современные информационные технологии все глубже проникают в нашу жизнь, это влияние становится все более ощутимым.

Стоит заметить, что воздействие прессы на политическое сознание общества может быть различным. Разные информационные источники формируют у человека различное отношение к политике, фокусируют внимание на отдельных сегментах повестки дня, поощряют различные формы участия в политическом процессе. Как следствие, уровни политических культур представителей аудиторий различных изданий будут также различными.

В этом плане дополнительную значимость приобретает медийная грамотность, под которой в данном случае мы предлагаем понимать способность человека находить в массмедиа интересующую его информацию, критически ее осмысливать, проверять достоверность и – при наличии соответствующей необходимости – самому создавать элементарные информационные сообщения. Убеждены, что медиаграмотность можно рассматривать в качестве своеобразного фильтра между многочисленными обрушивающимися на человека информационными потоками и его политическим сознанием (как частью политической культуры): будучи медийно грамотным, индивид понижает степень собственной уязвимости перед журналистскими манипуляциями и тем самым защищается от пагубного информационного воздействия.

Более того, мы убеждены в том, что медиаграмотность способна повысить уровень политической осведомленности и участия людей: чем лучше личностность разбирается в том, как эффективно декодировать информацию, трансли-