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The Politics of International Relations

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**PECULIARITIES OF FOREIGN POLICY DISCOURSE OF MODERN RUSSIA
(paper in progress)**

Abstract: Political discourse (PD) – theory and practice of political communication and political linguistics. The importance of the study of PD is dictated by the need to find optimal ways for politicians to understand the true intentions and hidden tricks of language manipulations. The public purpose of PD is to impress the recipients – the citizens of the community – the need for a "politically correct" actions and assessments. National foreign PD is a strategy of national foreign policy, it consists of political metaphors. Russian national foreign PD uses political metaphors mainly based on historical memory, which unites people. It focuses on the transformation of the concept of the "new world order" as military, ethical and legal unity of the West. Its main goal is the integration and association of non-Western worlds by means of political communication.

The goals, methods of construction and peculiarities of modern Russian national foreign PD, its potential and the limits of efficiency are in the focus of this paper.

Key words: communication management, political communication, political discourse

In 50-s and 60-s of the XXth century in the common perception of individual and world events and in “talking” about them occurred so called rhetorical turn or turn to rhetoric, that means a move from “cold logic” and monological statement of the truth. The idea of communication as an exchange of information generally came out on top and the truth was suggested to be found in dialogue as a free share of opinions, regardless intellectual and political positions of dialogue participants. The reason was the “realization that life, disputes and disagreements always existed cause of the fact that various individuals and groups of people as well as political classes, possessed different conceptions and emotions towards life, different

fundamental values, world views and different views of how one should live the life. **Thus, “cultural wars” as well as other wars cannot be overcome simply by a course of joint cooperative activity.**

Basically, related viewpoint was presented by Zen-Buddhism – *kung-an* as alternative discourse. It prescribes to think to rules that differ from formal logic rules, to move to the space of other argumentation – e.g. snow is white and not white at the same time.

It means that there is no one right way of speaking about the world, language is free in its attitude towards it. The truth is determined by rhetoric and power. Meanings and notions of the world don't lay somewhere in a cool place and wait for being found, they are created and constructed during the discourse process. We gain an access to reality through the language, speech and discourse. Discourse is a linguistic behavior, its core is the concept, personal knowledge and it is directed on the other and demands constant corrections, explanations and discusses.

The concept creates an emotion as estimation of the situation or phenomena. That is why Political Discourse (PD) is able to “form emotional attitude to one or another phenomenon, social groups and events. The point is, what emotions it creates, for what purpose and how it can influence the society life”¹. Discourse is grounded on the viewpoint of the speaker, that is why the addressee, situation and structure are so important. Discourse pays attention to the whole composition – author way of speaking, rhetoric, key words. The society transformations often happen as the result of discourse innovations but not the economic or social upheavals. For example, Pope Francis in 2014 compared Europe with an “infertile woman that is unable to have a child”² and provoked resentment of the entire EU political class.

The way of PD realization is metaphors. The human race would have never survived if perceived reality straight. Only by metaphors and other tropes of poetic language physical objects could find its notions. National PD is characterized by its own political metaphors that constructs metaphoric picture of the world appropriate for its nation.

In the foreign policy context national PD creates such “textual” picture of the system of international relations, that gives the opportunity to realize its strategy of the national foreign

¹ Способы репрезентации беженцев в российском публичном пространстве. Беженцы в российских СМИ: не своя катастрофа? URL: <http://gefter.ru/journal/debate> [Accessed 03 June 2016]

² Папа Римский рассказал о гневном звонке Меркель после его слов о Европе// <http://www.tvc.ru/news/show/id/86204> [Accessed 17 April 2016]

police. For example the US National Intelligence Council in its report of the Global Trends 2030 uses such metaphors as “Stalled Engines”, “Gini-Out-of-the-Bottle”, “Nonstate World”³, etc.

We will focus our attention only on one element of foreign policy discourse of contemporary Russia – its microstructure that implies general topic of the discourse, meanwhile with the specific attention to context knowledge – cognitive, social and political. The type of the language – enmity, good, historical memory, culture wars, etc. – is also very important.

The microstructure in current Russian foreign policy discourse is the realization of the idea of establishing the great world power, that aims to form multipolar world and break the world order that was created in 1990-s: political and ethical unity of the West and spreading of its standards on the whole world.

The basis of this microstructure is a reference to the historical memory, collective memory and historical culture of Russia that in its basic parameters is identical to the European Christian civilization.

Historical memory is an important mechanism that constitutes history through the mental procedures of connecting the past, present and the future, in order to form a connected continuum of these temporal patterns. **But it is mainly focuses on our past rather than the future prospects of life. History is always more than just past events.** The latter does not simply preserve the meaning in the present, but also influence the establishment of contours of the future. At this point the historical memory as a sole base of history finds its identity. Thus arises the need to supplement the knowledge, formed on the basis of memory, with stronger arguments. They can be found **in historical culture** (official historical culture includes study books, museums, memorials, exhibitions, etc.).

Unlike historical memory the historical culture *synthesizes* past experience and prospects of the future. It allows not just for simple varied manifestations, as in case of historical memory, of symbols, which define, what people take as a reality of the world around and their own reality, but actually for *correct understanding* of such symbols. There are many such symbols in cultural life: experience, behavior, tradition. Historical culture is based on national, regional and local components. Any nation can only have a general future when it preserves its past in the form of general traditions, suitable for their transmission into the future. Past, becomes the moving power of the future. So what is the most adequate foundation for the formation of socio-cultural identity: historical memory or historical culture? In my opinion,

³National Intelligence Council, 2012, Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds. *US Government Printing Office*. Available from: https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/GlobalTrends_2030.pdf [Accessed 17 May 2016]

“strong” historical identity is formed, first of all, in the cultural process, i.e. in the historical culture. If socio-cultural identity is based solely on historical memory than it is a “weak” identity, unable to truly unite the nation and causing such nation to live with its head eternally turned back. However in the context of historical culture means for the formation of historical identity is characterized by logic of ethnocentrism that is the logic of nationalistic conceptualization of historical identity.

J. Rusen identified three fundamental logics of this matter.

1 *Asymmetry* in setting differences between own people and outsiders. The historical image of “us” is always filled with positive values: “we are the God’s children; we have reached high standards of civilized development; we are the true believers, etc. Rusen proposes to name this model of ethnocentrism as “negative ethnocentrism”. Positive evaluation of “us” seems very sound only if “we” positioned ourselves as the victims of violence of others. A halo of innocent suffering gives "us" an indisputable moral supremacy over “others”. Thus the general trend of victimization in the historical culture of our time. This trend, inter alia, partially explains the fact why cruelty and violence charmed the western thinking and practice throughout the entire 20th century.

2. *Origin-oriented teleology*. A history of any nation starts with some wonderful source, note with bright, positive meaning. Its further history illustrates the expansion of the content of this bright beginning, its preservation, multiplication and transition into the future.

3. *Spatial monocentrism*: “we” live in the center of the world, and “others are marginal”. Quite illustrative, for this matter, is the name of PRC as Zhongguo, literally meaning: “middle state”.

It is clear that ethnocentrism logic is followed by almost all ethnicities: “we” place the “others” onto the dark side, and “others” do the same to “us”, and this inevitably causes problems and conflicts. However one factor especially intensifies this conflict: many cultures conceptualize its identity through the use and absolutization of universalistic attributes for themselves. They perfect the distinctness and individuality of its identity through the universal values, leading to mutual exclusion of cultures. Thus state power often looks upon culture as a mean of increasing its image, creation of favorable conditions for the influence of the public opinion of foreign countries, implementing, through culture, certain attitudes and beliefs.

Often the instruments of culture are used for political demobilization of the population. From the mid past century cultural diplomacy became ever more used in essence for destructive purposes, in order to manipulate the public opinion, introducing the public consciousness with profitable, for certain political forces, views and representations. However this was no longer

cultural diplomacy, but rather cultural expansion aimed at suppressing the seemingly weak cultures and also for cultural unification. Wide distribution of mass cultural products, conducted with the aid of these instruments, including commercial television and film products, simply put, “cultural imperialism” aimed to depolitize the society. To a certain extent this is a natural process. Global technical and economic progress, as well as a process of global integration leads to a decreased value of national culture. Thus it would be wrong to point the guilt for global development for any one particular country or nation. It is actually completely opposite. All countries are exposed to influence of changes in the global culture.

There are no incorrect statements in the Russian foreign policy discourse, yet the Mass Media, esp. daily information programs admits the context that is approve and not condemned by the journalists and might be considered as negative. In such a way references telling that Europeans “deserves” the migration crisis connected with unsuccessful EU decisions, generates the language of enmity. However at the same time the reference to a probable Europeans’ loss of their culture and basic values creates the language of empathy. The core of the microstructure of the Russian foreign policy discourse could be described as a clear, accurate and unequivocal positioning of the country as the leading world power.

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