

The Man of the World—The Orbits of the Information

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The attitude of people to a particular country is formed as a cultural background—centuries-old accumulations of folk art, literature, art in general, and more operational sources, especially mass media, that respond to complex relationships between countries, connected with each other by economic, military, cultural ties. A number of sociological cases and the results of public opinion polls in Russia say that the nature of coverage of current events television brings to the public opinion the same tonality that the most consumed TV channels adhere to, which today remain outside of competition among other sources of information for the population and, moreover, top to list those sources, which it trusts to the greatest extent.

Keywords: other country, public opinion, sources of information, trust to the media

Today it has become commonplace to talk about the saturation of information space of modern man. In particular, this refers to information about other countries. Here, speaking of the present, we cannot do without history. Today's man fits into the process of self-knowledge of his nation, its place between others, means, figuratively speaking, and two dimensions—vertical and horizontal. The first is provided by culture; the second—by real mutual relations between countries (economic, military, cultural, etc.).

The content of the most ancient layers of folk art—fairy tales, myths, epics, ballads, sayings—has a foundation, rooted in the depths of centuries, almost to the genetic level. So, the specialists in language as a means of communication display relationship of people to their surroundings, to “another country” from the very beginning of human evolution. So, an American sociologist T. Parsons, speaking about the very early moment of appearing language as code, writes:

The basic orientation which animals have assumes that there are signs or, at least, the beginning of symbolization. On the human level the step was made to authentic symbolization. Apparently, it is impossible that the true symbolization, as opposed to the use of signs, could appear or function without the interaction of the *actors*. The meaning of signs should remain constant for a very broad set of circumstances which covers the area of the wide alternative—not only of “I”, but also “other”, as well as the possible changes and combinations of relationships between them. Stabilization of symbolic systems, spreading to all individuals at all times, probably could not be maintained if it was not in the process of communication in cooperation of many actors (Parsons, 1968, pp. 45-47).

The problem is especially become relevant as soon as society has grown beyond a “herd”, when there appeared tribes, when human society is become to function as a complex system: the need for a communications/not in communication with the “other” appeared.

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Let me quote from the source, which considers the genetic roots of the relationship of nations and peoples, raising ... the upper Palaeolithic transition:

Until the Upper Paleolithic there was still sufficient population density, to have permanent mutual friction of human groups and cross-group opposition, thus starting the phenomenon of speech and consciousness. One human horde is not biologically different from another. The new, social opposition changed biological one and it could find expression and be objectified only in symbols. Such symbols have become the first socio-processed sound complexes, the first words. They indicated roughly what we are label now the pronouns “we”, “our”, as opposed to “non-us”, “non-our”. In these first socio-symbolic designations cognitive moment was inseparably merged with evaluative-emotional distress—“our” meant “good”, “not-our”-“bad”. All duplicated in consciousness of the first human groups, all was divided into “our” and “not-our” ... (Abaev, 1974, pp. 237-244).

This quote in the quote is owned by V. I. Abaev, Soviet linguist, and another very famous historian quotes him in his book about the beginning of human history:

Than V. I. Abaev says: Maybe we must to begin the history of the human race not with the appearance of the first stone tools, but from the time when the relations between human groups became a regular phenomenon, from the very time, when their “rubbing each other” (as our writer A. Gertsen—XIX century—said) were regular too. The first and the second have left a mark on the life of primitive society, the mentality and behavior of the primitive people. The Word as a symbol of the team loses all meaning if it is not contrasted with another symbol of another team. In one, a single isolated human community, speech was not able to conceive, any progress the isolated human community has achieved in other ways. The Word can be born only in contact two human groups, as fire cut the collision of two stones. Initial human speech is “a set of socio-different means, i.e. signs that served to distinguish one group from another” (Abaev, 1974, pp. 239-244).

The author was far from to use these findings straight-forward for analyzing the present situation of people’s attitudes to each other, but we must keep in mind that genetic memory. So much is that this memory is supported by a long history of world and local wars.

In the latter cases, the situation worsens. And we have an empirical confirmation of this. In 1927 G. Lasswell published the book *The Technique of Propaganda in the First World War* (Lasswell, 1927).

The author posed the task to analyze what social models of behavior manipulate the propaganda of the belligerent countries, what goals she sets herself in time of war.

Many of the possible propaganda channels of America, Britain, France, and Germany were subjected to analysis: newspapers, centralized newsletter bulletins, propaganda materials in magazines, sermon texts, etc. In the analyzed materials of the propaganda of each of the belligerent countries, the author discovered the prevalence of the following statements: “we” are defending ourselves, “the enemy” is an insidious aggressor; “the enemy” destroyed the paradise of prosperity and must therefore be destroyed; “we” will win, “the enemy” will be destroyed. Each of the countries here gave more detailed options: English propaganda was characterized by the arguments of humanity; German propaganda appealed to the great German culture, as needing protection.

All the statements call for actions that were contained in these materials; G. Lasswell generalized to the ultimate strategic objectives of propaganda—one of the methods of generalization, characteristic for the analysis of content. As a result, these basic goals of propaganda of the belligerent countries looked like this: incite hatred for the enemy, strengthen friendship with the allies, strengthen friendly relations with neutral countries, and demoralize the enemy.

Of course, the need to coexist peacefully with other countries has already generated more complex relations

between countries.

But the main thing is that the objectively existing interest in other countries was strengthened, becoming more multifaceted.

Even the history of the press, a newspaper, as a space for information, we can deduce from this fact: The 17th century there is such an abundance of this new information—about other countries—that needed the new informational site to regularly provide the society such information. That is—many professionals, associating myself, agreed that the potential interest of different countries, to what is happening in other countries, is one of the factors of appearing newspapers in general—as a way to accumulate a variety of information to their audiences (in addition to the economic, political, and social factors) (Fedotova, 2009, pp. 46-62).

And here we do not avoid talking about globalization, which means some complex phenomena: economic (market is becoming more international; he literally leaps national boundaries; private industry organizations were entering the international market, the activities of transnational corporations (TNCs), international financial conglomerates, immigration); political (the emergence of inter-state alliances, some of which are stronger than others); social (activities of international non-governmental organizations, education in other countries, international tourism, touring theatres, circuses, etc.); information process.

The processes, which we noted, influenced the attitude of the people towards another country.

What sources there are for individuals, for groups, for people to form their perceptions of other countries? With what of them does the system of mass media compete?

It seems that they should be divided by the speed of the two groups: broadcast, so to speak, on long time waves—literature, art, education, educational system, etc.; and broadcast on short time waves—cinema, mass communications, advertising. Let's add the last row by an individual experience.

Of course, long-term sources are most constant, even before the newspapers appeared (then radio and TV); information about the “other” neighboring countries or the world as a whole was circulating. Before appearing mass media there were sources about the “other” countries—the religious system, mythology, and the movement of troops in warfare, personal experience, trade, anecdotes etc. We should add here school, education in general. In addition to relations to other countries, they are the breeding ground for their own identification, developing of the cultural code of the nation, in which we will find the origins of opinions we are interested in. That is and up-to-date communication media in the minds of the members of the society there were persistent stereotypes of ethnic orientation. The people had not read newspapers, but had a strong opinion about other countries, and moreover broadcasted that view in the available communications media often in the interpersonal.

Nevertheless, the information world system provides today's people with great opportunities to receive information on a global scale (spreading major national newspapers outside the country, global TV channels—CNN, Al Jazeera, Russia Today, BBC, Chinese television channels, France 24 and others; The Internet).

Of course, there is particular demand with mass media. A large part of the world has a single source of information about other countries—mass communication. They intensively create value configuration of world in national information flows, as, in their view, most preferred to public opinion of the country.

The choice (and information and assessment tools) depends usually on the political paradigm (“friends-enemies”, variation of military power, etc.), economic (trade, imports, raw materials oriented economy

and its dependence on external demand, etc.) and social (educational consumption, tourism resources, the use of banking capital for storage, etc.).

Let's start from the postulate that the mass media is particularly effective in influencing its audience precisely on these issues, because for most people it is virtually the only source of information about the "other". Really for the most population group the only source of alternative views is the actual, individual practice (tourism trips, trips abroad for study, work, and communication with the citizens of other countries at home). But this layer is low: This is a mobile group of politically active people with a wide range of interests, with the financial capacity to meet them.

It is clear that the impact on audience in this process is *pulsating*: it is greatly due to the change of government policy towards a country; on the consumer side, it depends on the number of information sources, and on the ability to appear in these sources of alternative points of view.

Consider the Levada Center survey data¹ about the attitude of Russians to some countries, as a result of these processes, is such (see Table 1-3):

Table 1

How Do You in General Consider Now to the United States of America?

	Very good	Basically good	Basically bad	Very bad	Found it difficult to answer
Dec. 17	2	22	44	16	16
Jan. 17	2	35	40	9	14
Jan. 16	2	21	39	26	13
Jan. 15	2	11	42	39	7

Table 2

How Do You in General Consider Now to Ukraine?

	Very good	Basically good	Basically bad	Very bad	Found it difficult to answer
Dec. 17	2	25	39	17	17
Jan. 17	2	31	39	15	13
Jan. 16	2	26	37	22	14
Jan. 15	4	20	36	28	13

Table 3

How Do You in General Consider Now to the European Union?

	Very good	Basically good	Basically bad	Very bad	Found it difficult to answer
Dec. 17	2	26	39	15	18
Jan. 17	2	37	38	9	14
Jan. 16	1	26	39	19	14
Jan. 15	2	18	43	28	9

As we can see, in the tables mainly good grades dominated, while the jump in them recalls many events in our history over the last quarter of the XX century.

¹ The poll was conducted on representative all-Russia sample of rural and non-rural areas among 1,601 individuals (18 years of age and older) in 130 cities, towns, and villages of 45 regions of the country. The distribution of answers is in percentage of all respondents together with data from the previous surveys. Sampling error is not large than 3.4%. Available at https://www.levada.ru/2017/12/18/otnoshenie-k-stranam-i-sanktsiyam/?utm_source=mailpress&utm_medium=email_link&utm_content=twentyten_singlecat_18246&utm_campaign=2017-12-18T07:00:56+00:00 (5 June, 2018).

At the end of March 2018, the Levada Center examined the attitude of Russians towards the case of poisoning in the UK of a former GRU employee Sergey Skripal and his daughter Julia. The majority of Russians—81%—are more or less informed about this matter, 9% of them closely follow this topic, and 37% have heard a lot. Only about 20% first heard about the scandal during the survey.

Of those who heard about the “Skripal case”, only 9% consider Western statements about Russia’s involvement in poisoning to be justified. 31% found these accusations rather unfounded, and another 41% consider them completely unfounded. As a result, more than half of Russians began to feel bad about the UK (05/04/2018): It is rather bad—32%, very bad—19%. Only 1% of respondents told about a very good attitude to this country, and another 24% expressed a rather good attitude. According to the December poll of the Levada Center, Britain was in the top five of Russia’s main enemies.

According to the penultimate survey concerning this country, conducted in January 2008, the majority of respondents (61%) favored Britain, and only 21%—poorly. Similar figures in March led VCIOM. According to his data, 82% of respondents heard about the poisoning of Skrypal. Of these, 81% do not trust UK accusations against Russia, and only 5% believe in Moscow’s involvement in the attempt.

But nevertheless leave room for the opinions for the need to enhance good-neighborly relations with countries or groups of countries.

So, on the question: “Do you think that Russia should establish relations with USA and other countries in the West”, the Russians replied as follows (% to the number of respondents): The answers “Definitely yes” and “Rather yes” were: in September 2014—66%, in September 2015—66%, in September 2016—62%, in December 2017—75%.

A positive attitude to favorable relations with countries predominates. Whose achievement is here—mass communication or the wisdom of the people—it is very difficult question. We shall think that mutual merit.

But still the fluctuations of opinions over the years clearly demonstrate the dependence of the attitude to the “other” country from involvement people in the networks. Because otherwise, this ratio would be more constant.

The most recent Levada Center research about opinions of our population said that in the first place in the informational field of Russians is TV² (Analytical Center of Yuri Levada, 2017, p. 149):

Table 4

Where Do You Most Often Learn About the News in the Country and in the World? (% of respondents) (Might Be Some Answers)

Sources of information	2016, July
Television	86
Friends, family, neighbors	27
Online publications (newspapers, magazines, news portals), including the web sites of the electronic and print media	33
Social networking on the Internet	23
Newspapers	19
Radio	22
Magazines	4
Difficult to answer	2

² The poll was conducted on representative all-Russia sample of rural and non-rural areas among 1,601 individuals (18 years of age and older) in 130 sites, towns, and villages of 45 regions of the country. The distribution of answers is in percentage of all respondents together with data from the previous surveys. Sampling error is not large than 3.4%.

And television, unlike all other sources of formation of the views of ordinary citizens, listed above, most movably—more or less promptly paints a picture of the world by changing the event grid.

It is important to note that the audience greatly appreciated the Russian television as a window to the larger world Levada Center gives us their polling data. To the question “What sources of information do you most trust in covering news in the country and in the world” in 2016, the Russians responded as follows: television—59%, friends, family, neighbors—12%, online publications—20%, newspapers—9%, radio—9%, social networking on the Internet—12%, magazines—1%, I do not trust anyone—9%, difficult to answer—6% (Analytical Center of Yuri Levada, 2017, p. 150).

Next, we must emphasize that to the extent the individual has a certain frequency to an information channel; it becomes a party to the communication *process*, and not a single communications *act*. And then he fully becomes a consumer of policy information channel, if you like its ideology.

Because the factual series, which we mentioned, acquire all of the features of the process: like the communicator, the audience begins to realize (or do not realize, but to have this case) of *priorities*, the *prevalence* among certain individuals, parties, events, countries, which greatly increase the probability of meeting specific customer with these mentions. The communicator can use to describe these facts with lexical value ways, and, if necessary, address to the audience utilitarian, pragmatic interpretation of it. That is, in the language of marketing, to use some means to promote certain ideas, values, or ideological complex. This situation becomes a breeding ground for the mental-emotional shifts in audience: So you can create the informed pessimists and uninformed optimists.

But not only. This situation tells us that the audience starts to appreciate more and more its own vision about the factual series, actors; awareness of them as important/not important in its own picture of the world, not just in the communicator’ picture of the world.

It is clear that this can lead to very significant differences in these pictures of the world. However, you can build this into law of mass communication: the further described the situation is from the ordinary experience of the consumer, the more likely that its world and communicator’s world will be the same.

But there is another variable is the extent to which the palette of the information channels has the characteristics of a pluralistic, how about monochrome description of reality they provide. Not country carries out any action condemned by the world community, but certain forces, certain structures, certain personalities. At the end of the day they can go, but the country and the people will remain ... Mass media should fairly and, as much as possible, to reproduce international practice, including expert opinion. We note that one of the characteristics of the modernization of society is that a society in general splits the value and importance of diversity in socio-cultural patterns and is ready for integration into the common social and cultural space. The priority of universal human moral standards in a common set of values was shared by the public.

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