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## **ON THE DIVERSITY OF ATTITUDES IN THE FOREIGN MASS MEDIA TOWARDS THE REFORMS IN UZBEKISTAN**

Ўзбекистон каби жаҳон геосиёсий харитасида янги пайдо бўлган мустақил давлатлар медиа-имижи масаласи билан боғлиқ тадқиқот олиб борилар экан, мамлакатга нисбатан муносабатларнинг бир-бирига ўхшамаслиги жиддий муаммолардан эканлиги кўзга яққол кўринади.

Ушбу мақолада хорижий ОАВда Ўзбекистонда амалга оширилаётган ислохотларга нисбатан муносабатларнинг хилма-хиллиги муаммоси атрофлича таҳлил қилинади. Ана шундай мураккаб шароитда давлатнинг ижобий имижини мустаҳкамлаш учун муайян илмий назариялар, конструкт ва қонун-қоидалар ишлаб чиқиш давр талабидир.

При проведении исследования, связанного с изучением условий формирования медиаимиджа новых независимых государств, недавно возникших на мировой геополитической карте, таких как Узбекистан, в настоящее время становится ясным, что проблема в различии подходов по отношению к таким государствам является одной из серьезных.

В статье автор анализирует разное отношение к реформам, проводимым в Узбекистане, отображаемым в зарубежных средствах массовой информации. Учитывая такое состояние дел, пришло время для разработки определенных научных теорий, конструкций, правил и положений для закрепления положительного имиджа государства.

With the research now underway in terms of shaping the media image of the newly independent states emerged in the world geopolitical map as Uzbekistan, one can clearly observe that differences in attitudes towards states stand now as an outstanding problem.

In this story the author shall scrutinize in detail the diversity of attitudes towards the reforms being accomplished in Uzbekistan in the foreign mass media. Given such complex state of affairs, the time asks for elaborating the certain scientific theories, constructs, rules and provisions to consolidate the positive image of a state.

**Калит сўзлар:** жаҳон геосиёсий харитаси, медиа макон, мустақиллик, мамлакат, имиж.

**Ключевые слова:** геополитическая карта мира, медиапространство, независимость, страна, имидж.

**Key words:** world geopolitical map, media space, independence, country, image.

As the research now underway with regard to shaping and establishing the media image of the newly independent states emerged in the world geopolitical map such as Uzbekistan, it becomes obvious that the differing attitudes towards the reforms being accomplished in our country stand as one of the outstanding problems.

It is an open secret that now the world is managed by the globe's largest information centers. It should be underscored that given such state of affairs, the information, apart from the high possibility of being targeted to a certain goal and being one-sided, the news are disseminated to world public in the shape and substance as desired by the very owners of the news agencies.

In addition, here emerges one logical question to ask: to what extent the globe's largest news disseminators gathered under a certain powerful "hand" observe the rules of fairness in their activities? What interests, firstly, do the international "news tanks" serve? At a time when the news and information-communication technologies are turning into an instrument of managing the minds and consciousnesses of infinite number of people, manipulating, bringing about various socio-economic turbulences, breaking up the minds, propagating the shameless products, endorsing the terrorist groups, exporting the revolts and overthrow of state powers by interfering in domestic affairs of other independent states and triggering the disorders on the territories of weaker states it won't be necessary to prove how dangerous and hazardous is the "digital inequality".

Along with this, if it is proceeded from the fact that these countries got also hold of comprehensively monitoring the technological processes of disseminating the news through Internet, television, radio and other channels, it shall be vivid that the danger and hazard that I have just spoken about turns out to be yet more dodgy.

Such circumstance may do a harm not only to country's external image, but also its domestic one. Since such fabricated news flows nurture in citizens the mood of uncertainty in future and social discord, negatively influences the consciousness of youth and derails their spiritual world.

Dwelling on this pressing problem, President Islam Karimov wrote in particular the following: "Above all, at present it becomes clearer that behind these actions there are evil intentions of certain political centers to exert an influence skillfully using philosophical, ideological and information tools to the states which are independently building their life and future, and particularly Uzbekistan, making our sons and daughters with immature worldviews go astray of their

chosen path, imbibing into their hearts the views deemed to be totally alien and hazardous for us, and depriving us of our spiritual roots and foundations”(1, 6).

Today it is also clear that the image of a state created by another one has a large impact on the attitude shown to it on the part of both the international community and nationals of this state. Especially, the information threat posed by external forces armed with powerful information technologies creates a profound danger.

Since, such situation may bring about the so-called psychological crisis not only in the international community, but also in the public inside the country, where the news supply is deemed to be weak (due to poor technologies; closeness of information; censorship). Therefore, there should be certain constructs, rules and provisions in shaping state’s positive image.

It is right though that the positive image of a country nurtures in citizens the feeling of patriotism. In addition, it mobilizes the population to actively participate in addressing various important and urgent problems, particularly, the issues of modernization. However, adding to that, the people must have an opportunity to know their past, acclaim and realize their present day, and clearly see their future.

The problem of diversity of attitudes in the foreign mass media to the reforms being accomplished in the Uzbek society is among such issues.

I have served for almost 25 years overseas – in more than 20 countries round the world busied both in short and long-term business trips. For over the span of such opportunity I have had the very chance to personally observe, undertake research and analyze the coverage of the topic of Independent Uzbekistan in the mass media of those countries.

The outcomes of immediate observation revealed that the media in the West (*the United Kingdom, Germany and the United States*) seem to be offering the one-sided critical stories, the CIS (*Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Azerbaijan*) reporters place their attitudes in the stories changing alike the weather, whilst the Asian states’ (*Japan, China, South Korea, India, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt*) newspapers print, mainly, the positive articles.

Generally speaking, the news and stories about Uzbekistan are regularly published in the periodicals of the CIS states and countries of the East, particularly, Russia, Kazakhstan, China, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Malaysia, India, Turkey, Egypt and the UAE.

However, there is not sufficient amount of media coverage in the media space of the countries of the West – the U.S., Germany, Great Britain and Romania. In addition, here is just one example. From April to May 2000 the U.S.

State Department initiated the meetings and talks with local reporters from about 10 states in the country who served in the local large newspapers, magazines and television studios. During the conversations most of our American counterparts admitted that they had lacked sufficient information about Uzbekistan(3).

What was the reason for such situation though? Since, by then despite that Uzbekistan had traversed almost 10 years of its path of Independence, there were few news and information about the life in our country disseminated in the world media space. The news services established at some ministries and agencies, state bodies and companies, and later – as a part of Uzbekistan embassies abroad didn't operate well in line with world standards.

Unfortunately, by now such situation (10-15 years have passed since then) did not relatively change for better.

It should be specially underscored that Uzbekistan's socio-political life, particularly, the elections and the processes related to them are well covered by foreign mass media. For instance, a large attention was paid in the world media space to the presidential elections held on March 29, 2015. In this regard, the Information Agency "Jahon" at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan gave a number of announcements and news stories.

The Japan-based "Nippon-Evrasia" newspaper published the story headlined as "Uzbekistan – On the Path of Consistent Democratic Development" in which it had offered a comprehensive analysis of social and political gains achieved during the years of independent progress of Uzbekistan.

At the same time, the Japanese newspaper informed its audiences that Uzbekistan had paid a special attention to holding elections – the most important institution of democracy and form of expression of people's will. "The elections in Uzbekistan are conducted in correspondence with national legislation requirements and standards of international law, in the condition of openness and transparency, in general, alternative and equal basis with voters enjoying the right of direct voting through secret ballot. The interference of bodies of state power in the election process shall not be allowed. The effective normative and legal basis of elections was created in the country, the "Nippon-Evrasia" newspaper further wrote.

The topic of elections in Uzbekistan was actively covered in the Chinese print media, as well. In particular, one of the respected newspapers in this country – "Jinmin Jibao" placed a story in its pages headlined as "Islam Karimov collected more than 90 percent of vote in the presidential elections". According to the newspaper, in line with preliminary results, 90,39 percent of voters cast their votes

in favor of Islam Karimov – the candidate from the Movement of Entrepreneurs and Businessmen – Uzbekistan Liberal-Democratic Party.

“Jinmin Jibao” has also underscored that the representatives of 43 countries and nearly 300 experts from five international organizations took part in the elections of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan as observers. Among them there were the representatives of national parliaments and heads of election bodies, public organizations and mass media, scholars and political scientists.

Besides, the “Xinhua” News Agency, while reporting on this topic, published a story under the headline “Xi Jinping Congratulated Islam Karimov on Election to the Post of Uzbekistan President”. The story told about how on March 30 this year the Chairman of the People’s Republic of China Xi Jinping sent a congratulatory letter to Islam Karimov on his being elected to the post of President.

Indeed, the foreign reporters also play a significant role in shaping the image of our country in the global media space. I believe that we need to further engage in paying more attention to both theoretical and practical aspects of bettering the endeavors in this direction, learn it deeper and draft the necessary proposals.

Although, I don’t embrace the idea of saying that the British print media publishes only the negative stories on Uzbekistan. Oftentimes, it concentrates on such neutral topics as the rich history and tourism opportunities of our country, or ecological problems related to drying up of the Aral Sea. For example, in its March 31, 2015 issue “The Guardian” newspaper published the article “Timur’s Registan: Noblest Public Square in the World”(4).

Journalist Srinath Perur, on visiting Uzbekistan, wrote about his impressions of our world-famous cities as follows: “The day was bright clear when I have arrived in Registan and started touring the center of this fairy venue, as I have found myself encircled with magnificent and picturesque minarets and buildings”.

In his article the journalist wrote how the master architects, who came from various corners of the empire during the reign of Temur’s dynasty in late 14th century, erected the Registan Complex comprising of these buildings and other wonders of Samarkand. According to the author, a peculiar architecture pertinent to these buildings impacted the one of faraway from Samarkand – Iran, numerous cities in India, and especially, the architecture of mosque erected in Saint-Petersburg in early 20th century.

Besides, the British online journal “Earth Times” placed a story in its webpage headlined as “A Future for Aral Sea is Hopefully Assured”(6). The story tells about today’s deplorable state of the sea, its negative impact on the region’s environment and population’s health, as well as the measures undertaken by

Uzbekistan and international community to address the consequences of the Aral tragedy.

According to the “Earth Times”, prior to 1960s the Aral Sea, alongside with the Caspian Sea, Victoria and Superior Lake, was the world’s four largest inland water bodies. With no access to the outer seas that water reservoir had rare species of fish and they used to trigger a great interest in the world scientific community.

At the moment, Uzbekistan and other countries of Central Asia are sounding the alarm about that they have made the United Nations aware of this catastrophe’s economic, social and environmental consequences. By now the volume of water stream from Amudarya and Syrdarya rivers flowing into the Aral basin equals 12,7 cubic kilometers, which means it is by far as low as 4,5 times compare to the 60s of the last century.

The story concludes with the information on the International conference “Developing International Cooperation on Mitigating the Consequences of Ecological Catastrophe in the Aral Sea Region” held in the city of Urgench on October 28-29, 2014. According to the British journal, the event served for increasing the volumes of international aid rendered to the countries of Central Asia and Uzbekistan, in particular.

Certainly, it needs to be emphasized that there are other positive elaborations in the British press related to the life of Uzbekistan. The London-based Russian-language “Profile Russia” news web-portal is well-known media outlet for its fair and objective materials on Uzbekistan. In its February 27, 2015 issue the portal placed a news story headlined as “The Representatives of the Great Britain on Uzbekistan’s Modern Development and Achievements”(7).

The story offered the views of the representatives of the British socio-political and business circles in terms of the March 29 presidential elections. “Uzbekistan is indeed a democratic country. Last year I participated as an international observer in the parliamentary elections and had witnessed that the elections were conducted in full accordance with democratic principles. As a businessman I want to especially note that there are profound opportunities to extend the bilateral cooperation. In this respect, Uzbekistan is a peculiar and unique country for Britain”, said the chairman and chief executive officer of the “Pathfinder Trade and Investment” company Michael Thomas.

**The representatives of the Chinese media.** The observations show that the “Jinmin Jibao” newspaper and “Xinhua” news agency actively cover Uzbekistan’s domestic life and its foreign relationships. Besides, both media outlets place a number of news stories on the course of economic reforms in Uzbekistan, the

successes achieved along the road as much as the plans for the future. The Chinese reporters prepare the materials on Uzbekistan on a positive tone. Such materials, mainly, are of a news genre along with delivery of facts broadly followed up with confirmative information. For example, the news stories offer detailed information about a certain event, the persons participating at it, the venue, the set goals of holding the event and other.

The “Jinmin Jibao” newspaper places more than 100 materials on Uzbekistan per year and “Xinhua” news agency – about 80. It should be noted though that the “Xinhua” news agency has set a goal for a near future to turn into the largest one in the world. For that reason, it is expected that the amount of news offered by the agency on Uzbekistan will be on the rise.

When I speak about the Chinese journalists, who actively served in Uzbekistan, I deem it necessary to dwell on the many-years-long activity of the correspondent of the economic newspaper “Jingji Shibao” Li Chuyfa. He used to mainly author the articles and news stories on the course of economic and social reforms in Uzbekistan. Besides, Mr. Chuyfa has actively covered the multifaceted cooperation ties ever developing between Uzbekistan and China.

In 2012 Li Chuyfa was awarded the National Prize “*Oltin qalam*” in the nomination “The best material by a foreign journalist on Uzbekistan”.

**The representatives of the Turkish media.** The “TRT” television of Turkey, the “Cihan” and “Anadolu” news agencies aiming to inform the foreign audiences on various aspects of Uzbekistan’s life disseminate versatile information on the related topics. Most of the news aired and printed by the said media outlets is fair and true. There are no negative trends in the news. Vice versa, these outlets pay a special attention to the information gathered from official sources. The materials aim the positive propaganda.

The correspondent of the “Cihan” News Agency Atif Ala, who has served for many years in Tashkent, had prepared on average 500 materials a year. Mr. Ala participated in the immediate coverage of important political and cultural events. In particular, this correspondent, apart from offering only the news text, used to manage to air exclusive photo and video footages on the elections of President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Navruz and Independence Day celebrations(8; 9).

For many years the “TRT” television channel in cooperation with Uzbekistan National Television and Radio Company has been airing from Tashkent the life coverage of national holiday festivities.

The special correspondent of the “Anadolu” News Agency Bakhtiyor Abdukarimov is ranked among the successful journalists, who showed excellence

in his foreign journalism service. He prepared nearly 1000 news stories per year. In 2012 Mr. Abdukarimov was awarded the National Prize “*Oltin qalam*” in the nomination “For the best articles on Uzbekistan published in the foreign mass media”(10; 11; 12).

On the eve of elections of President of the Republic of Uzbekistan held on March 29, 2015, the “*Tükiyenin sesi*” (“*The Voice of Turkey*”) international radio broadcasted the air show on the topic of socio-political and socio-economic reforms in Uzbekistan, and their outcomes(12). The experts from the Center for International Strategy and Security Research of Turkey participated in the show.

It is worth mentioning that the shows produced by the “*Tükiyenin sesi*” international radio, which is a part of the “TRT” State Television and Radio Company, are also aired to a number of foreign countries beyond Turkey.

During the air program the experts have scrutinized the topic of parliamentary elections conducted in December 2014 in Uzbekistan. They have emphasized that the elections were held in line with standards of democracy, transparency and fairness. Also, it is worth a special mentioning that the Turkish experts believed that the presidential elections then due on March 29, 2015 would take place in correspondence with the same principles.

Apart from the journalism materials analyzed above, some works by foreign experts cannot either be sidelined here.

The book named “Uzbekistan between the Past and the Future” by the Russian expert on Middle Asia and Caucasus and historian scholar Zurab Todua (goes by the journalistic penname – *Vakhtang Sheliya*) is also a piece of work with a peculiar significance(2, 76).

The book offers the analytical thoughts on Uzbekistan’s history, geographic location and security issues. In particular, the author of the book focuses on how the religious extremism and terrorism stand as a serious danger – the acute problem which knows no borders.

For many years Mr. Todua served as a scientific fellow at the Moscow-based Institute of Religion and Politics. He has authored over 10 books about various conflicts, political and military confrontations on the CIS space.

**The negative articles.** The print media in some countries of the West, particularly, the U.S.-based “The New York Times” newspaper and the German “Der Spiegel” magazine are characterized in publishing the one-sided, non-objective and sponsored articles. For example, in its December 2013 issue the “The New York Times” placed a story that has criticized the alleged engagement of children in Uzbekistan in forced labor. While the “Der Spiegel” alleges that the

events taking place in the Ukraine could recur in Uzbekistan, as well. Apart from this, in the news resources such as the United States' "Voice of America", "Liberty" and catholicculture.org web-portal, the British "BBC", the Russia's "RIA Novosti" and "Golos Rossii" (*"Voice of Russia"*) one can observe various fabricated and negative materials on Uzbekistan(13).

In lieu of conclusion, it is worth underscoring that the need to elaborate the methods and rules of shaping the image of newly independent states in global journalism and realize them in practice in line with fitting into the period of today's information globalization period becomes urgent. Meanwhile, it is also worth mentioning that the differences between the materials published in the global media space and national mass media remain vast.

However, there is a lack of sufficient attention paid to the issues of requirements and standards of fairness in creating the image of newly independent subjects. A number of examples were given earlier to substantiate the aforesaid.

For that reason, the problem of diversity of attitudes in the foreign mass media towards the reforms in Uzbekistan must be timely and effectively addressed. To do that there is need to expand the scope of work with foreign correspondents and usefully exploit the modern PR-technologies.

The analysis of problem of differences in the attitudes in the foreign mass media towards the reforms being accomplished in Uzbekistan allows for the opportunity to make the following general conclusions and put forward the following proposals:

– the outcomes of immediate observation made during the past 25 years at more than 20 countries of the globe reveal that the media in the West (*the United Kingdom, Germany and the United States*) offer the one-sided critical stories, the CIS (*Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Azerbaijan*) reporters place their attitudes in the stories changing alike the weather, whilst the Asian states' (*Japan, China, South Korea, India, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt*) newspapers print, mainly, the positive articles. For over the span of years such a kind of trend continues to remain unaltered;

– at the moment the world media space is managed by the globe's largest information centers. Given such difficult state of affairs, the information, apart from the high possibility of being targeted to a certain goal and being one-sided, the news are disseminated to world public in the shape and substance as desired by the very owners of the news agencies;

– such circumstance may do a harm not only to country's external image, but also its domestic one. Since various fabricated news flows nurture in citizens the

mood of uncertainty in future and social discord, negatively impacts the consciousness of youth and derails their spiritual world;

– the information threats posed by external forces armed with powerful information technologies will continue to create a profound danger. Since, such situation may bring about the so-called psychological crisis not only in the international community, but also in the public inside the country, where the news supply is deemed to be weak (due to poor technologies; closeness of information; censorship). Therefore, there should be certain constructs, rules and provisions in shaping state's positive image.

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