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## ON THE METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEMS OF IMPROVING THE PUBLIC IMAGE

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### Abstract

The article examines theoretical approaches to understanding the image of a state in international relations, its functions, structure, and main components. Special attention is given to the technology of image formation based on social and psychological principles, as well as its significance in the context of globalization and informatization. The author analyzes the role of image as a tool for achieving strategic goals, protecting national interests, and strengthening international cooperation, emphasizing its importance for realizing a state's potential on the global stage.

**Keywords:** Image, strategic goals, national interests, cooperation.

### Introduction

For many years, numerous Western scholars have paid special attention to the category of “image” as a socio-political, economic-technological, and cultural phenomenon in human, social, and state life. It is no coincidence that the renowned American sociologist Kenneth Boulding proposed a completely new and unconventional concept, according to which image is understood as a certain behavioral stereotype that influences the actions of an individual, a group of people, or a nation, as outlined in his book “The Image: Knowledge in Life and Society.”

The image of a state represents a complex interweaving of two main components: an idealized perception of the country rooted in mass consciousness, and the actual characteristics of the state itself. Positioned at

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the intersection of objective reality and the audience's subjective expectations, this image forms a kind of bridge between what the state is and how it wishes to be perceived. This intermediary position not only broadens the perception of the object but also allows for managing that perception, directing it in a desired way. Thus, the image becomes a tool through which reality is not merely reflected, but positive emotional and psychological associations are actively shaped, strengthening the state's competitive position on the international stage.

The creation of a state's image is not just a process, but an entire technology grounded in specific social, psychological, and cultural patterns. This process involves leveraging attitudes, trends, and properties of mass perception to achieve defined goals. In the context of rapid development of information technologies and global societal integration, the image of a state becomes an important instrument for addressing key challenges.

It serves not only to promote strategic interests and protect national priorities, but also to create a positive environment that fosters the realization of a country's potential. An effective image helps strengthen cooperation with the global community, develop international partnerships, and attract resources for sustainable development. Thus, shaping an image is not merely a reflection of a state's current condition, but also a means of actively influencing global perception to achieve long-term national and global objectives.

The scholar argued that an image is formed not on the basis of real facts, but on prestige, opinions, and illusions that people create about themselves, on a mythologized perception of the past, and an imagined vision of the future. Such an image is capable of influencing the actions of individuals or groups, as well as the behavior of entire nations. After decades of studying this phenomenon, another researcher will give a more precise definition: "Image is reputation, perception, attitude, message, evaluation, recognition, trust, support, communication and attitude". A significant contribution to the study

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of the phenomenon of “image” was made by the English political scientist Graham Wallas, who argued that not rational motives, but behavioral attitudes formed over many years, constitute the basis of voters’ behavior patterns.

The German sociologist K. Hillmann defined image as a set of feelings, ideas, and evaluations that are subjectively perceived by individuals or groups and become the foundation of their perceptions of other people and social institutions.

Thus, image, as an interdisciplinary phenomenon, represents a combination of stereotypical opinions, subjective perceptions, behavioral attitudes formed over time, and irrational notions.

From a political science perspective, the image of a state is understood as “the imagined representation of a given state among its citizens and foreign audiences”. Meanwhile, Professor of International Marketing Philip Kotler writes about the concept of “place image,” meaning that this term can refer to the image of a city, province, region, or the state as a whole. In describing the term “image,” he reiterates the well-known idea mentioned above as “the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that people have about a place”.

Many modern researchers fully accept the position of the last two aforementioned terminological approaches to the concept of state image, considering these definitions to be quite accurate, which reflect the essence of state image, since here the authors’ attention is focused on spontaneity and on the component of targeted work, since “rumors are launched specifically for a specific purpose”.

The essence of state image lies in the integration of several key components. The first component is the country's geographic characteristics, including its location, territory, climate, and other parameters. The second is the state's international position, reflecting its degree of friendliness or confrontation on the global stage. The third component is the country's level of power and influence. Thus, the researcher identifies a state's geographic image and its

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ability to effectively combine "hard" and "soft" power, utilizing so-called "smart" power.

A state's image is formed through interstate relations, combining both the unique characteristics of the country itself and the interaction of objective conditions and subjective factors. The perception of a state by various societies, as well as the success of its image, are largely determined by the expectations and attitudes existing within these societies.

Undoubtedly, a positive perception of a country, both among its citizens and in the public consciousness of foreign audiences, becomes a significant strategic resource, contributing to its development.

This factor provides an advantage in a competitive environment, strengthens its position in cooperation with business and the media. The perception of the country is closely related to the idealized ideas that exist in the minds of the audience. Thus, the effectiveness of image formation is determined by the reaction of the population to the images that are transmitted through the information transmission mechanism aimed at the mass consumer.

Summarizing the existing approaches, it can be determined that the image of the state is a complex perception consisting of a set of beliefs, assessments and ideas (both conscious and unconscious) that are formed by social actors – whether individuals, groups or a mass audience – relative to a particular country.

This perception is created both inside and outside the State, largely through communication channels and the deliberate efforts of stakeholders seeking to shape a certain image of the State. The country's image does not just reflect its current state, but becomes an integral projection of impressions, opinions, and relationships, representing a complex structure that affects perception and interaction with the outside world. Such an image is becoming an important tool of soft power, capable of influencing international and domestic processes.

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Analyzing the key approaches to understanding the nature of image, it can be noted that each of the concepts focuses only on individual aspects, not giving the opportunity to see the full picture of this phenomenon. Such a fragmented view does not allow us to form a complete picture of the essence of the image, which requires a more integrative approach.

The image of the state is a complex interweaving of two main components: an idealized view of the country, ingrained in the mass consciousness, and the real characteristics of the state itself. Being at the intersection of objective reality and the subjective expectations of the audience, the image forms a kind of bridge between what is and what the state would like to appear.

This intermediate position allows not only to expand the perception of the object, but also to control this perception, directing it in the desired direction. Thus, the image becomes a tool with which one can not only reflect reality, but also form positive emotional and psychological associations that strengthen the competitive position of the state in the international arena.

Creating the image of the state is not just a process, but a whole technology that relies on certain social, psychological and cultural patterns. This process involves using attitudes, trends, and properties of mass perception to achieve your goals. In the context of the rapid development of information technology and the global integration of societies, the image of the state is becoming an important tool for solving key tasks.

It serves not only to promote strategic interests and protect national priorities, but also to create a positive environment that helps unlock the country's potential. An effective image makes it possible to strengthen cooperation with the international community, develop international partnerships and attract resources for sustainable development. Thus, image formation is not just a reflection of the current state of the state, but also a means of actively influencing world perception aimed at achieving long-term national and global goals.

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