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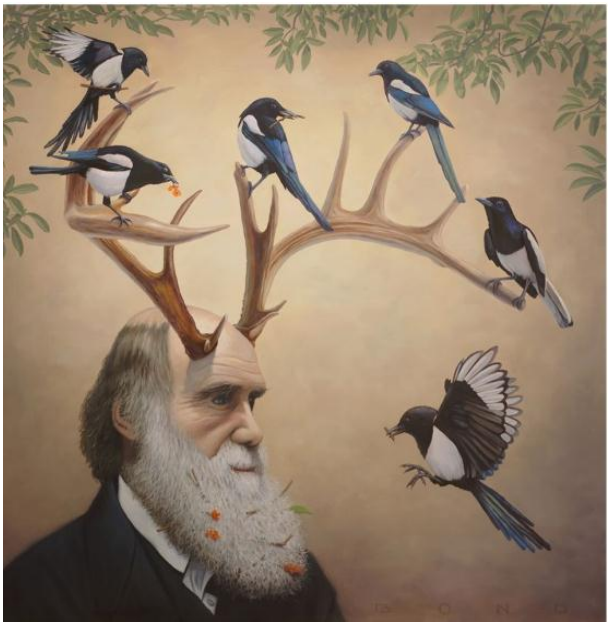

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Information policy of the people's Republic of China in Xinjiang-Uyghur autonomous region

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Abstract

The purpose of the article is to study and analyze the information policy of China in the Xinjiang Uyghur autonomous region, as one of the striking examples of information policies' implementation. The leading approaches to the study of this problem are the system-structural approach and comparative-comparative analysis. The main result of the study is the identification of new mechanisms of influence, features of digital diplomacy and information policy of the PRC. Also, the conclusion was made that at present China needs to focus on the formation of a positive image in the global information field as a single, integral state.

Keywords: Policy, International, Relations, Information.

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Política de información de la República Popular de China en la región autónoma de Xinjiang-Uyghur

Resumen

El propósito del artículo es estudiar y analizar la política de información de China en la región autónoma uigur de Xinjiang, como uno de los ejemplos más notables de implementación de políticas de información. Los enfoques principales para el estudio de este problema son el enfoque estructural del sistema y el análisis comparativo. El principal resultado del estudio es la identificación de nuevos mecanismos de influencia, características de la diplomacia digital y la política de información de la RPC. Además, se llegó a la conclusión de que actualmente China debe centrarse en la formación de una imagen positiva en el campo de la información global como un estado único e integral.

Palabras clave: Política, Internacional, Relaciones, Información.

1. INTRODUCTION

The People's Republic of China has recently reached an influential state that, according to numerous forecasts, is fully capable of becoming a superpower – a strong subject in the international arena. After the PRC economy became one of the most powerful in the world, and the influence of the ruling Communist Party of China secured the status of the country's main political force, new challenges to the rising power came to the fore. One of them was global digitalization, strengthening the role of information technologies, including political ones. The PRC is beginning to apply modern technologies everywhere in domestic

and foreign policy (BRADY, 2012). A typical example of that is the relation between the PRC and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of the PRC, national minorities living on its territory.

2. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Main methods of this research are descriptive and comparative methods. They help to overview the problem posed as a whole. In addition, the methodology of research approaches allows us to see the main trends in the development of China's foreign policy, to evaluate the diverse mechanisms of China's foreign and domestic policy initiatives, as well as to analyze the prospects for the development of information policy in terms of digital diplomacy (SHAN, 2009).

The theoretical and methodological basis for the study was the conceptual position of scientific research in the field of studying modern international relations. Using the methodology of existing researches contributes to a better understanding and in-depth analysis of the impact of global digitalization on the political decisions of the PRC (PANTUCCI & PETERSEN, 2012: JHA & PAUDEL, 2018: LAUREANO, FERNANDES, HASSAMO & ALTURAS, 2018: MARDANI & FALLAH, 2018).

3. RESULTS

In 2012, The Communist Party of China and its leader Xi Jinping issued a statement that they would fight for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation (中华民族伟大复兴). This expression has acquired the status of a national idea, the Chinese dream (中国梦), of what all modern Chinese should strive for. This idea, in essence, is the reason for the rapid growth of the PRC, its formation as a strong, powerful state (KOPLOWITZ, 2014).

The Great Rejuvenation includes several main ideas: building a powerful army, fighting environmental problems, promoting national culture globally, and preventing various social upheavals that began to take place in different parts of the world more and more often. In other words, the Chinese CP and Xi Jinping believe that without strong, reliable protection from conflicts within their state, the Chinese dream will be impossible to achieve. It is hard to argue with that (HUGHES, 2018: UYGUR, YELKEN & AKAY, 2018).

Internal social conflicts in the PRC take their place, as in any multinational country. In addition to the most numerous ethnic group, the Han (汉族), which in Russia is commonly called the Chinese, Manchurians, Uyghurs, Tibetans, Zhuans, Miao, and many

others, totaling more than 100 million people, live in the People's Republic of China. And the government of modern China pays great attention to the formulation and implementation of policies towards national minorities. Since the second half of the XX century, information policy on national minorities is handled by the Central Propaganda Department of the CPC (中央宣传部), together with such bodies as the Patriotic United Front of the Chinese People (爱国统一战线) and the State Committee for Nationality Affairs (中华人民共和国民族事务委员会). This policy is governed by the Law on National Autonomy (中华人民共和国民族区域自治法) of 1984 (FEIXIANG, MARTYNOV & ALIKBEROVA, 2018).

In recent years, special attention has been paid by the government of the PRC to the situation in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, where ethnic Uyghurs (Sunni Muslims) make up about half of the region's population, outnumbering the Han. The issue of internal security and the integrity of the state, in this case, become fundamental (ALIKBEROVA & MUHAMETZIANOV, 2016).

The Uyghur region is a territory with its own ancient history. The region took several attempts to create an independent national state of the Uyghurs - the Uyghur kaganat. It is not surprising that

this territory attracts the heightened attention of the authorities. Any possible attempts to assemble the national Uyghur movement are seen as a threat to the future of a holistic and strong China (BOYDEN, 2013).

In addition, the geographical position of the region plays a special role. The great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation in the eyes of the Chinese government (and the rest of the world) goes hand in hand with the implementation of the geopolitical megaproject One Belt One Road (一带一路倡议). Xinjiang Uyghur region turned out to be a key territory, the initial logistic hub of potential trade routes from China to Europe (GLUSHKOVA, LOMAKINA, SAKULYEVA, 2019).

The information policy of China in XUAR is evaluated differently by international experts. The official position of the Chinese authorities is quite firm: The Uyghurs can develop the national culture and language in their region. However, the all-Chinese political line has a significant impact on minorities, including the Uyghurs: informational influence there is applied at all levels: print media, television, the Internet. For example, the transmissions on the Uygur TV channel Xinjiang TV were obliged to be conducted in Chinese, and only then translated into other languages. In addition, all national rules for censorship of the media and the Internet apply to XUAR. During crisis events, the

authorities have the right and opportunity to disconnect the area from the world web, as well as block the operation of any media. Such international social networks and media as Facebook, Twitter, CNN, The Guardian, Voice of America, Wikipedia, Gmail, YouTube, South China Morning Post, New York Times, BBC are subject to full or partial blocking.

China's national media seeks to create a positive lifestyle for Uyghurs and other minorities in the state. Their image is romanticized and at the same time simplified – the Uyghurs for the rest of China's population are few happy people who enjoy the fruits of socialism under the leadership of the Han Chinese, and are quite loyal to the political line of the PRC authorities. In general, in the Chinese media, the Uyghurs are people wearing national clothes, living in traditional houses on lands that are, above all, a good tourist destination. A striking example of the government information campaign aimed at building a positive image of the Uyghurs and other national minorities is the performances of the Chinese Central Song and Dance Ensemble of National Minorities, dedicated to the beneficial influence of China on the life of minorities; the development of ethnic theme parks that have become popular in the PRC in recent years; the spread of bilingual poster painting, also dedicated to the life of ethnic minorities.

A completely different point of view is presented by the mass media of the global West. The situation with XUAR underwent a particularly strong and focused attack during the period of aggravation of relations between the PRC and the USA, with the advent of President D. Trump. For the most part, the negative attitude of China's domestic policy towards XUAR is characterized by the media blocked in China.

Often, materials on the Uyghurs appear in the media, extending their broadcasting to other countries, including Russia, such as Radio Liberty, Current Time, Radio Free Asia and others broadcasting the so-called Western values. In the news bulletins, they focus on the rigidity of the Chinese leadership's methods of interacting with the Uyghurs. Crisis situations are described in detail, as well as a picture of China's total control over the Uyghur minority — the multiple control bodies and methods of surveillance, repression, and even Muslims're-education camps for loyal citizens of the PRC. News about the Uyghurs is traditionally given in the spirit of tragedy and at the same time contrasted with the situation in democratic liberal states.

Official China expresses indignation at this coverage of events. In response to the recent threat of sanctions by the United States, China declares that it intends to respond mirror-like, and also calls it an interference in the internal affairs of the state,

accusing the United States of defamation and politicization of official measures of the PRC government in the XUAR.

4. DISCUSSIONS

The topic of the information policy of the PRC in relation to the Uighurs was raised in the scientific works of both domestic and foreign researchers. Abroad, this problem is mainly dealt with by scientists from the USA and Europe. Their position runs counter to the official line of the PRC – the Uyghurs in them researches appear as a disadvantaged minority suffering tight information control of the Chinese government. Russian researchers take a neutral position in relation to this issue, limiting themselves to simple coverage of the PRC's information policy in the XUAR.

5. CONCLUSION

Globalization leads to the structural change of the modern world. Undoubtedly, the goals of official China are clear and quite natural. The state in the concept of the leaders of the PRC should be strong and integral, which means that national minorities should follow the general course of China. The information policy of the PRC in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region is aimed not only

at ensuring that the Han Chinese perceive the Uyghurs as an integral part of China, but also at making the Uyghurs themselves realize that they are Chinese. Official China still has a lot of work to do on this path, since not all Uyghurs, according to polls, recognize themselves as part of China.

In addition, the achievement of this goal is strongly hampered by the position of well-known global media, which often highlight the situation with the Uyghurs in a negative way. Although they are fully or partially blocked in China, their influence extends to neighboring states, in cooperation with which China is strongly interested. That is why it becomes vital for the Chinese government to go beyond the internal information policy and present themselves in the global, international information arena, creating a favorable positive image of a strong and integrated state.

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