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THE FILM INDUSTRY AS A POLITICAL PERSUASION TECHNOLOGY

Abstract

Informatization and digitalization of society lead to the emergence of new political technologies of persuasive communication. The authors propose to consider the political manipulation of mass consciousness during the organization of leisure. The topic touched upon in the article is of a complex interdisciplinary nature. According to the authors, the study of political technologies of persuasive communication in the film industry deserves attention not only from political scientists, sociologists, but also psychologists and educators.

Keywords: *film industry, communication, information impact, information war, information society, digital trace, political technologies.*

There is a complex relationship between world cinema and world politics. Politics is often compared to art. Among the many definitions, there are even those that identify these two phenomena. But politics as a phenomenon is often described in the works of art. Sometimes it is not done very well, but there are pictures that accurately capture a variety of aspects of politics: from the terrible things that people are capable of for the sake of power, to the beautiful, subtle and cunning moves of politicians that change the fate of the whole world.

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A number of film critics and political strategists have compiled a list of the best films about politics. Here is one that was mentioned by several experts: *Wag the Dog* 1997, *House of Cards* 2013, *All the King's Men* 1949/1971, *A Man For All Seasons* 1966, *The Lion In Winter* 1968, *Primary Colors* 1998.¹

Global digitalization opens up a wide range of opportunities for managing public consciousness and behavior, which attracts the attention of political strategists. Modern information and communication platforms are becoming new tools of persuasive communication and are seen as leverage for manipulating society.

There are theories that demonstrate how one or another previously unacceptable idea can be introduced into society. These approaches are in agreement with the concept of the 'Overton Window', which consists in latent acceptance and approval by public opinion of previously unacceptable phenomena and actions.²

The implementation of the idea usually takes place in several stages:³

At first, the new idea is denied by traditional norms of morality and is negatively perceived by society. But numerous publications are beginning to appear in the media about the naturalness of this or that phenomenon, which causes what is called 'habituation' to thought.

Further, this idea begins to be considered as possible. International conferences are organized at which the imposed idea is explained as a natural phenomenon; various historical precedents are given as an example. A database of reviews and positive assessments of the proposed position accumulates in a person's mind.

Then the idea begins to be widely discussed, most of society gets used to it, and the people who live in harmony with the old idea are presented as intolerant. In some cases, the idea is popularized, new concepts and directions arise.

In the end, the ultimate consolidation of the idea takes place, including the legislative level. Opponents of the idea begin to be persecuted and pressured.

Television/cinema and social networks are the main forms of leisure for Russian citizens. The Levada Center study shows that 79% of Russian citizens watch films and TV series at least once a week. (For

¹ M. Lolo (2013), *Cinema and world politics: Simulacra or reflection of reality*.

² V. Sorochenko (2002), *Encyclopedia of propaganda methods*.

³ S. V. Volodenkov, S. N. Fedorchenko (2015) "Overton window - manipulative matrix of political management", *Observer*, №4 2015 (vol. 303), 83-93.

comparison: 2/3 of fellow citizens meet with friends at least once a week, 42 and 43% of survey participants visit friends or receive them).⁴

Visual images determine most of a person's reactions – he receives 90% of all information about the outside world through the organs of vision, therefore, visual means of persuasive communication are used for the most effective impact on consciousness.^{5 6} With their help, it is possible to form the necessary image of both a single politician and the political situation as a whole.

Political cinema has the utmost ability to influence public opinion, in fact, performing the function of political programming, as if explaining the world order from the right angle. For a wide range of ordinary people, the boundaries of perception of the 'necessary' reality are expanding, due to a special montage of reliable material and facts with fiction.

This method of material processing is commonly known as 'fact editing'.⁷

Often, films are perceived by viewers as a kind of integral system: the viewer, captured by the images on screen, experiences the fate of the protagonist as his own. A person ceases to be an observer of events, but becomes a participant in them; modern film production technologies have repeatedly strengthened this aspect. It is this opportunity that is used in political cinema, "when there is an ideologization of reality, the sacralization or overthrow of leaders, the glorification of individual events and persons, or there is an appeal to the base instincts and psychology of the masses, reliance on hard power or the struggle against the "common enemy".⁸

The main methods of persuasion are various convincing arguments, causal constructions, scientific concepts, etc. But in the film industry, they also use spectacular and effective methods of transmitting information using associations, artificially created images, and so on.⁹

In addition to the visual effect, the filmmakers pay attention to the musical accompaniment, which helps to have an additional emotional impact on the subconscious and imagination of a person.¹⁰

⁴ N. P. Ilyin (2017), "Persuasive communication", *News of the St. Petersburg State Agrarian University*, №4 2017 (vol. 49), 216-220.

⁵ F. Jamison (2000), "Postmodernism and consumer society", *Logos*, № 4. 2000, 63-77.

⁶ I. M. Dzyaloshinsky (2012) *Communication impact: targets, strategies, technologies*, Moscow: Higher School of Economics, 572.

⁷ D. Vilensky, "On the issue of composition of contemporary political art", *Art Magazine*.

⁸ L. Malkova, *Modernity as history: the implementation of myth in documentary films*.

⁹ M. Martina (2023), *Political cinema as a means of forming a socio-political worldview*.

¹⁰ V. Sorochenko (2002), *Encyclopedia of propaganda methods*.

Simple examples and comparative analysis of films allow us to identify one or another goal is being achieved, for example, a negative image of Russia in action movies or the popularization of army service in military opuses. A classic example of a stereotypical approach in cinema is the film *Armageddon* starring Bruce Willis, released in 1999, collecting, perhaps, all the stereotypes about Russia. During the docking of the American spacecraft to the Russian station, the American characters are met by a Russian cosmonaut, Lev Andropov, dressed in a hat with earflaps, of course, in a drunken state, and for the repair of complex equipment, 'our' protagonist uses a wrench.

Another historical fact: the United States was defeated in the Vietnam War. However, today a generation of Americans admiring the courage and bravery of heroes like Rambo has grown up. These films have become classics of world cinema, and the real story has faded into the background.

Not only does the film industry deserve attention, but TV series do as well. Social media has a direct impact on ordinary citizens; TV series are inserted into the real life of society. The description of political events is as close to reality as possible. Political leaders in the series are a role model for an ordinary person. And through the humor and charisma of the actors, the idea of the legality of all actions of the political elite is implanted in the population. Therefore the state, through movies and TV shows, says what is allowed and what is forbidden.

This approach, combined with the skill of the actor, forces the viewer to subconsciously agree with the arguments and actions of the character. The entertaining nature of the series, laid down at the very beginning, bypasses all possible types of protection and makes a person susceptible to relevant information flows.

Various political actors have learned to use mass culture as a tool of manipulation and are able to plant the necessary ideas and patterns of behavior.

Modern TV series even resemble a news release: both the series and the news will continue tomorrow, and events, as a rule, do not end; both the series and the news are systemic (they praise friends, condemn enemies); both the series and the news exaggerate or downplay the significance of what happened (earthquakes, fires, floods – they are far away, and the authorities are not responsible for them).¹¹

¹¹ V. Sorochenko (2002), *Encyclopedia of propaganda methods*.

Modern animation deserves special mention. Now there are more and more studies devoted to political animation and the influence of animation on the consciousness of a person, and especially a child. According to teachers, cartoons have a direct impact on the feelings of a child who subconsciously identifies with the cartoon characters. In this case, animation can be used as an educational tool or to form false ideas about the world among the younger generation.¹²

In Lolo M. (2013), persuasive communication technologies were considered as political technologies. The most effective methods of manipulation, which were noted in the table are (see Table 1):

Table 1. Methods of persuasion

Method of persuasion	Comment
Humor, irony, satire	The most common and, perhaps, one of the most effective methods of influence, allowing to consolidate stereotypes and ridicule objectionable political decisions
Visual accompaniment, false analogy, creation of associations	Visualization creates associative images that are retransmitted in specific situations
Music Effect	Providing additional emotional impact
The effect of presence	The illusion of reality, providing a strong emotional impact
Half-truth	The understatement, part of the ‘unprofitable’ information remains hidden from the broad public masses
Anonymous authority	The method of misleading, resorting to the opinion of: a source close to the situation / scientist / political scientist / expert. This gives solidity to the information, but often in such cases there is nothing and no one behind these “authorities”; a formal phrase

¹² E. S. Shchuklina (2013), “The role of modern animation in raising a child”, *Bulletin of Penza State University*, №4. 2013, 12-14.

Everyday story	Adaptation to negative information. The method is used to get used to any ideas or events
Distraction (‘chattering’, shifting accents)	Hiding real goals and solutions under visually attractive images
Falsification of historical events and creation of a ‘hostile image’	Changing attitudes to the events of the past, shifting emphasis from the general to the particular, redistribution of the outcome of events, reproduction of historical myths, etc.
Repetition	Repeated presentation of information in different sources with a certain periodicity. Society is reminded of how to behave and how to react to specific events
Contrast	The most effective method that uses visualization to reinforce the news agenda (for example, the gloomy image of Russian cities in cinema)
Information wave	Active dissemination of the same type of information through all distribution channels. Cinema in this case is passive in nature, since its creation takes time.

TV and modern mass culture wean the viewer from critically perceiving information, the so-called ‘political protection’ (which allows a person to think rationally, analyze, distinguish political information from political science) at the time of watching a movie or TV series is powerless.

The modern education system and the teacher, in particular, are not able to withstand such a large-scale informational impact that children and young people are exposed to now.

It may be necessary to reconsider the teaching format, which will help to prevent and protect the modern generation from information aggression.

Every year the issue of protection from the information press becomes more relevant. Political technologies of persuasive communication are able to achieve their goals without the use of the ‘force effect’. The danger is that the authors of political cinema can arbitrarily create the image they need, form a sense of justice and moral rightness of a

character, thus political cinema can be considered as a means of ideological struggle and a way of forming a new reality.¹³

As the researchers of political cinema note, cinema is “a flexible art form that quickly responds to the demands of society, the spiritual level of which does not matter much.”¹⁴ Cinema influences the emotional sphere of consciousness, forms clear images that later replace old attitudes. It can be said that cinema latently creates in the viewer’s imagination an illusory picture of the world in a mythologized form.

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¹³ Shestakov V., Introductory article to the book “New Essays on the Psychology of Art”.

¹⁴ Malkova L., *Modernity as history: the implementation of myth in documentary films*.

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