

MEDIA'S IMAGE MANAGEMENT AS A MECHANISM OF EXPANSION OF CROSS-CULTURAL INTERACTION OF INDIA AND CHINA WITH TAJIKISTAN

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Introduction

In the contemporary period, in every society there is a problem of finding a balance between two mutually exclusive directions of development. The first direction is caused by the participation of the majority of states in the global integration process and involves the influence of interacting cultures. The second direction aims at the preservation of one's own cultural and civilizational identity, customs and traditions.

An additional factor that complicates the search for the optimal balance between the openness of the country and its insularity is the tendency of people to engage more and more in cross-cultural interaction. In cultural interaction, not only are government officials involved but also society as a whole. The extent of such participation is clearly growing.

In these circumstances, the state and the active social groups (in business, media, culture) can either keep themselves aloof, allowing cultural integration to take place spontaneously and uncontrollably, or conversely can try to control such processes. Spontaneous integration shows lack of balance between openness and insularity of a society. At the same time, there are unimagined consequences for "small" cultures that have a risk of being assimilated by the more powerful ones. The unmanaged intercultural interaction carries a risk of inter-ethnic, inter-religious and inter-cultural conflicts.

From our perspective, the integration processes can be really effective if they are predictable and manageable to some extent. And the efficiency of prediction and control depends on the adequacy of the monitoring of the dynamics of cultural and information space (in other words, in order to effectively make changes in any system, it would be useful to have some ideas about its current state).

In this paper we briefly describe the main ideas which reflect a possible approach to dealing with media images based on the images of the two leading Asian powers—China and India, as they are presented in the mainstream media of a small Asian country, i.e., the Republic of Tajikistan, which has just made a mark in global processes.

In order to avoid different interpretations of key terms, we will specify how they have been used in this paper.

The image which is assessed is a fictitious set of characteristics about a particular object that is formed in the mind. This set of characteristics with respect to a country can be formed under the influence of impressions after visiting the country and also after communicating with its citizens, under the influence of fiction and non-fiction literature and under the influence of the views of other persons. Media also has serious impact on the image of the country due to the fact that they largely shape the information space around us. The information space is part of the reality within which information circulates. The difference between the information space and other forms of social space is that the rise and development of the information space are entirely related to information exchange between the social actors.

Media reports often contain evaluation features of a described object. For example, the article

may contain some words of admiration for the values of the country or may have some derogatory epithets. The total evaluative background of the article is generated under the influence of these characteristics. The evaluative background of the article determines the positive or negative portrayal of the object in the text.

For a detailed analysis of the text it seems important to take into consideration the so-called secondary meanings of words used by the authors of the articles. The secondary meaning of the word is: (1) an additional, not relevant in the current context, and often refers to an ambiguous word; (2) a meaning of a homonym to a given word.

Methodology

The primary method of research we have chosen here is the content analysis. At the same time we have used a quantitative version of the content analysis (focused on the frequency of appearance in the text of certain characteristics (variables of content) and qualitative version (which allows us to make the

conclusions based on only the presence or absence of certain characteristics).

Thus, we have identified the main topics, in connection with the case studies mentioned here, i.e., India and China. We have allocated 17 such topics. In our opinion, there is a good description of the themes in relation to India and China in the Tajik media.

For a more in-depth study of context, which refers to India and China, we picked out the secondary meanings of linguistic units used by journalists to describe these two countries. Analysis of the frequencies of the selected secondary meaning gave us the possibility to identify the main topics not directly related to the factual content of the article, but which can be perceived by readers. We relied on the research of psychologists who have demonstrated the significant effect of secondary meanings on the images that have been formed during the perception of the text by the reader.

In our research we analyzed the publication in nine leading media of Tajikistan (in Russian language) for the period January 1-December 31,2012, in which India and/or China has been mentioned.

Media List

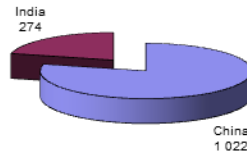
1. "Asia-Plus"—an independent news agency and a newspaper,
2. *Khovar*—the state national news agency.
3. *Nezavisimoyemnenie*—independent news aggregator.
4. *Avesta*—an independent news agency.
5. *Pressa.tj*—an independent website that publishes the content of *Tojikiston*, "Crime- Info," *Oila* newspapers.
6. "Business and Politics"—an independent information resource and a newspaper.
7. *Vecherka*—an independent newspaper.
8. *Vecherniy Dushanbe*—an independent newspaper.
9. "News Digest"—an independent newspaper.

Results

General Data

We analyzed 1,194 articles in which India and/or China were mentioned. China was mentioned in 1,022 articles, India was mentioned in 274 articles. In 102 articles there was reference to both countries.

Diagram 1. The ratio of the number of articles that mention China and India



However, there were only 163 articles in which the main theme was China, and 27 articles where the main theme was India (15.95% and 9.85% respectively).

Diagram 2. The articles in which with China is connected the main or a secondary theme, %

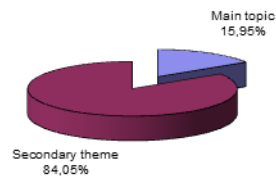
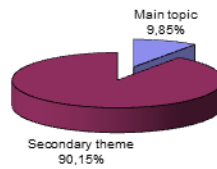
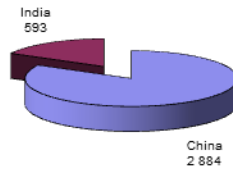


Diagram 3. The articles in which with India is connected the main or a secondary theme, %



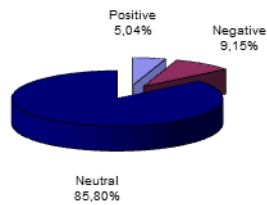
The total number of mentions is 2,884 for China and 593 for India.

Diagram 4. The ratio of mentions of China and India



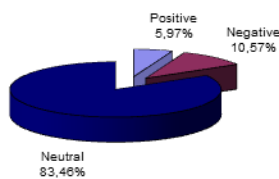
Around 85.80% of references to China and India do not carry the obvious emotional colouring, and 5.04% of mentions are accompanied by pronounced positive assessment, 9.15% by negative.

Diagram 5. The evaluative background of mentions of India and China



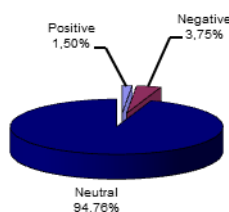
There are statistical differences between the evaluative background of China and India as mentioned categories. In the case of China, the positive references are 5.97%, negative references almost twice as much, i.e., 10.57%.

Diagram 6. The evaluative background of mentions of China, %



For India, the corresponding figures were 1.50% and 3.75% respectively.

Diagram 7. The evaluative background of mentions of India, %

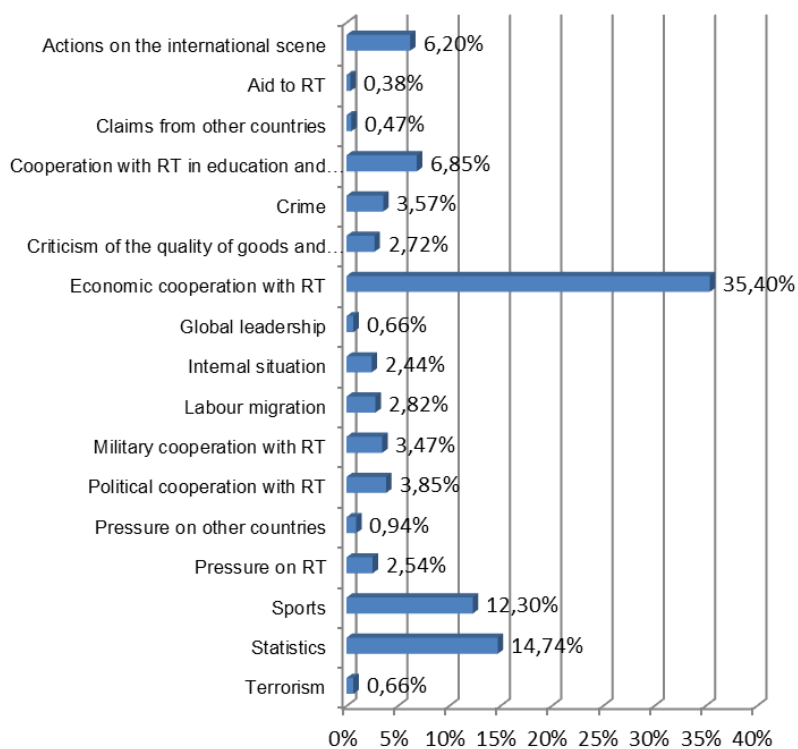


China

The main theme of the publications that mention China in the Tajik media is that of bilateral economic cooperation (35.4% of total mentions). China's soft loans and China's investment in major projects, especially in infrastructure (roads, tunnels, power plants, etc.) are main subjects of discussion.

Rarely is China mentioned in the statistics (e.g., background information and the ratings, number of Internet users or world ranking in terms of press freedom) and in relation to sports (14.74% and 12.30% respectively).

Diagram 8. The themes of mentions of China



The theme of bilateral cooperation in the fields of education and culture is placed in the fourth position (6.85%). Most articles on this topic describe Tajik students being educated in Chinese

universities. Also joint cultural projects are mentioned.

Discussion of China's actions on the international stage, not directly related to Tajikistan (6.2%) comes in the fifth place. Most of the articles are devoted to the analysis of contradictions between China and the United States on the main themes with global attention, i.e., the Iranian and North Korean nuclear programs, the situation in Syria, etc. Significant is the discussion about underlying tension between China and Russia in the Central Asian region.

Not much attention is given to the political cooperation between Tajikistan and China (only 3.85%). In this case, the theme is reduced mainly to statements of high-level talks, rhetorical statements about mutual trust and strategic partnership.

The theme of crime acquires the seventh position (i.e., 3.57%). Here two themes are mostly discussed—the fact of abduction of Chinese businessmen in Tajikistan, as well as fraudulent measures by the Chinese, from which employees of joint factories suffered. Despite the fact that the Central Asia is a leader in the Eurasian region in the production of drugs, the drug topic is mentioned only in reports of the round tables with the participation of antidrug agencies from different countries.

The mentioned percentage (3.47%) is followed by a discussion of military cooperation with Tajikistan within the framework of the SCO. One of the most pressing issues for the media in Tajikistan is the topic of labor migration. However, in most cases the discussion of this topic involves only Russia and Kazakhstan. Therefore in our study only a 2.82% percentage that mentions of China is related to this topic.

The issue of quality of Chinese goods and services is in the tenth place in terms of the frequency of discussion (i.e., 2.72%). A wide range of items— from pens to transplantation surgery is criticized. In 2.54% of cases, the Chinese publications hardly mention the political and economic pressure from China on Tajikistan. They discuss the factual details amounting to this pressure (e.g., transfer to China of the large part of Tajikistan's territory) and hypothetical threats which are growing proportionally to the financial debt.

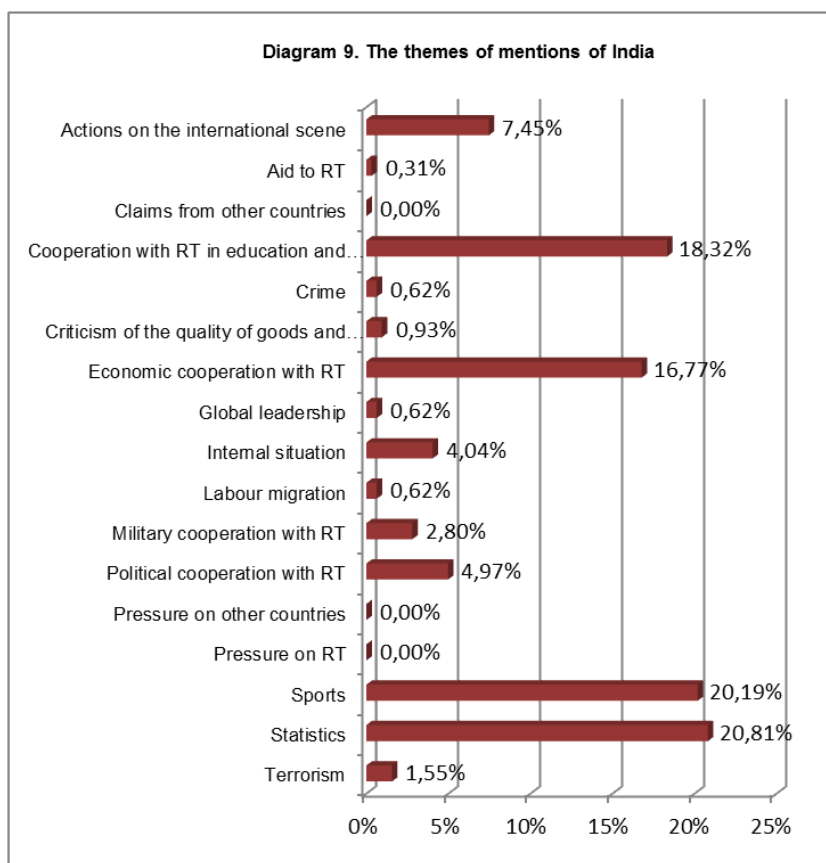
Only 2.44% of the discussions are related to various aspects of the domestic situation in China (politics, social condition, etc). Less than 1% is on themes like the pressure of China on other countries (especially on Tajikistan's neighbours in the region—which is 0.94%), the issue of terrorism, the dominance of China in the world's economy and politics (each at the rate of 0.66%), claims by other countries on China (of about 0.47%), as well as the provision of grant aid to Tajikistan (0.38%).

India

In the case of India, the distribution by the number of mentions is of a fundamentally different nature. Here there is clearly no single dominant context.

Of the mentions 20.81% are connected with statistics and ratings. The authors have noted India's position in the rankings of the population, the level of welfare of the inhabitants, the level of Internet censorship. It can be seen that the journalists' attention to sports was almost the same (i.e., 20.19%).

Slightly behind the above category come the topics of bilateral cooperation in the field of education and culture (i.e., 18.32%) and economics (i.e., 16.77%). In journalists' perceptions, bilateral cultural interaction basically consists of international celebrations of Nowruz and of the participation of Tajik actors and directors in film festivals held in India. Interaction in the economic sphere is often discussed in the context of India's plans to participate in the projects of modernization and construction of hydropower plants in Tajikistan.



Much less attention (7.45% of total mentions) is paid to the descriptions of India's actions in the international arena, not directly related to Tajikistan. For example, a lot was said about the consistency of India's foreign policy towards the United States.

Of the references 4.97% are related to the description of the political cooperation between the two countries, India and Tajikistan. First of all, we mean here the publications of the official press releases, communiqués and statements after the talks and summits. Fewer mentions (4.04%) refer to discussions of the internal situation in India. And the greatest attention here is paid to road and rail disasters, crimes against sexual integrity, and so on.

The theme of military cooperation with Tajikistan accompanies 2.80% of mentions of India in the studied media. The Indian interest in the reconstruction of the Aini military airfield and the potential possibility for a similar reconstruction of the airfield in Farkhor are often discussed. The problem of terrorism (1.55%) is discussed from the standpoint of regional threats posed by religious terrorist organizations, which is a common worry for both India and Tajikistan.

A number of topics in the research study are related to isolated cases. These topics include, for example, the critical approach to Indian goods and services (0.93%). Criticism here is of non-specific nature. Cheap Indian goods as well as the Chinese and Turkish goods are opposed in comparison to high-quality European and American ones. The theme of crime (0.62%) in Tajik press is in no way linked to the bilateral relations—it is a more global issue. Also the topics of labor migration (0.62%), India's leading position in the world (0.62%), India's assistance to Tajikistan (0.31%) in various international programs find rare mention.

Such topics as the India pressure on Tajikistan and on other countries as well as claims to India from other countries are not present in the material under study. It is also necessary to note the complete absence of articles on the history of China and India, on the mentality of their citizens, as well as the almost non-existent material on the cultural features in India and China (maybe there is only one study on either country).

Analysis of Secondary Meanings

Analyzing secondary meanings of linguistic units used in the descriptions of India and China, which are not directly related to the factual content of the article can have an additional impact on the reader. The following results were obtained:

1. In describing the interaction between Tajikistan and India, journalists show the past matters more. Similar is the frequency in describing the interaction between Tajikistan and China. Also they predict that the future lies with China. Thus, in the case of China, we can speak about some kind of a balance—they associate with China not only the past but also the future. But with regard to India the future orientation looks rather thin.
2. The descriptions of the interaction between Tajikistan and China in the Tajik press are usually accompanied by a discussion of very specific fields and objects of interaction. The descriptions of the relationship with India are often vague and are described in rather general terms.
3. The mentions of India usually relate to competition. In the case of China the competitive profile is significantly less.
4. The descriptions of the relationship with China are usually accompanied by doubt, sometimes by risk. This is not a typical description in the case of India.
5. One of the most significant topics that accompany the mention of China in the sources is the ever-increasing theme of growth. This topic is not so relevant for India.
6. The mentions of India are often accompanied by characteristics of originality, individuality, uniqueness. In the case of China this trend is not seen.
7. In the case of China there is focus on the creation of tangible and intangible objects from zero level. For India the typical focus is on the development and modernization of what already exists.

Discussion

The results of the study show that the images of India and China in the media of the Republic of Tajikistan firstly, are spontaneously formed, and secondly, are lopsided and often erroneous. Thus, the image of China as a country that pursues in Tajikistan only its own economic interests, the presence of topics connected with the criminal record in Chinese business naturally raise many doubts and fears about the success of bilateral cooperation. The Chinese are desirous of economic success, concrete and businesslike mentality, intent to build infrastructure in Tajikistan by themselves, using their own equipment and at their own expense. In the eyes of Tajiks, their actions tend to validate such fears in the society.

Generally speaking the image of India is quite blurred and unstable. Against the background of the presence of India in the information space, the prospects of bilateral cooperation are limited to several projects in the field of hydropower, the potential presence in Tajikistan of the Indian Air Force group and joint participation in the celebration of religious holidays and festivals.

Unfortunately we can state that only a very small portion of the examined 1,194 articles may give the readers some information about the culture, traditions, way of life and mentality of the peoples of India and China. A considerable amount of material is devoted to the tragic accidents and incidents that have occurred in these countries.

Undoubtedly, the overwhelming dominance of the official information in the materials on India and China cannot be justified by the features of the examined media. The reason rather lies in the absence of other newsmakers and events connected with these two countries. In the media that is examined here, which is formally political and social, considerable space is allocated for regular interviews with scientific and cultural personalities, for discussing actual social, domestic, and religious issues. Even fragments from prose and poetry are published there. However, India and China are too often referred in the texts of official communiques and press releases, which are hardly read until the end by the majority of readers.

Can this situation suit India and China? Yes, it can. It is possible that self-removal from the targeted formation of image of the country is voluntary and has good reasons.

However, in our view, this strategy is not effective. Mutual incomprehension and hostility can be a major obstacle to the integration of different levels— from the individual level to the level of

the state. As a result, various spheres of cooperation can suffer—from the economic sphere to cultural exchange and environmental protection measures. For China, it will also affect the quality of life of tens of thousands of migrants working in Tajikistan.

The filling of the information area of Tajikistan can be offered as the primary method of adjusting and supplementing the media images of the two countries. This on the one hand, must demonstrate openness and attractiveness of the Indian and Chinese cultures, and on the other it must use very available and easily understood forms of presentation.

For this purpose it is advisable to establish the extensive information involving different sectors of society. The most actively used areas are those in which India and China are the leaders in Asia, and perhaps in the world. For example, modern and traditional medicine, health practices, education, science, modern technology, tea culture, traditional cuisine, etc. Research carried out by us in Russia, shows that among the materials published in the media, those of them are in demand for most readers that contain information to enable the reader to solve an actual problem for him. In our view, this strategy will be successful in Tajikistan too. Materials that prove to be options in India and China are solutions to the urgent problems of Tajikistan (eradication of poverty, improvement of public education, access to quality healthcare, development of agriculture in challenging conditions, methods of prevention and settlement of inter-religious and inter-clan conflicts, the light against extremist religious movements and so on) will undoubtedly attract the attention of readers. From our point of view, the solutions to these problems are in demand at the state level and also at the levels of the region, municipality and family.

Finally we want to emphasize once again that media images' management with a relatively small financial and organizational cost can significantly improve the effectiveness of intercultural communication, which in its turn will give impetus to the further development of bilateral relations in the humanitarian, economic and political spheres.

Notes

1. A. In Agafonov, "Priming effect as a result of the nonconscious activity of consciousness," *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology*, vol. 48, no. 3, 2010, pp. 17-32.
2. McGarry and B. O'Leary (eds.), *Vie politics of ethnic conflict regulation* (London: Routledge, 1993).
3. A. V. Mozolin, *Image analysis methodology and the position of image in the information space* (in Russian), 2004. Retrieved from <http://www.rc-analitik.ru/file/%7Bcaldd929-lac5-46af-bf15-6db844ee7al4%7D>