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Armed violence in the system of state image formation

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Abstract

The purpose of the article was to analyze the impact of armed violence on shaping the image of democracy, the image of foreign policy and the image of information policy of Ukraine. In the context of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, a real fact is the transformation of Ukraine's image in the perception of the world during the processes of European integration. Methodologically, dialectical, systematic, structural-functional, institutional, conflictological, political-cultural and axiological approaches were used in the study. It is concluded that the definition of state image presents many variants, since each scholar interprets this concept according to his or her subjective experience. However, the study of the image of a state in the context of international relations makes it possible to assume that the image of a state may arise under the influence of spontaneous (unconscious) factors, armed violence, geopolitical position and other characteristics; as well as a result of the selective influence of the mass media. A positive image of the state is formed through the proper functioning of three components: internal image, foreign policy image and information image.

Keywords: armed conflict; total war; state image; positioning in the European space; political semiology.

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La violencia armada en el sistema de formación de la imagen del Estado

Resumen

El propósito del artículo fue analizar el impacto de la violencia armada en la configuración de la imagen de la democracia, la imagen de la política exterior y la imagen de la política de información de Ucrania. En el contexto de la agresión de Rusia contra Ucrania, un hecho real es la transformación de la imagen de Ucrania en la percepción del mundo durante los procesos de integración europea. En lo metodológico se utilizaron en el estudio los enfoques dialéctico, sistemático, estructural-funcional, institucional, conflictológico, político-cultural y axiológico. Se concluye que la definición de imagen de Estado presenta muchas variantes, ya que cada estudioso interpreta este concepto según su experiencia subjetiva. Sin embargo, el estudio de la imagen de un Estado en el contexto de las relaciones internacionales permite suponer que la imagen de un Estado puede surgir bajo la influencia de factores espontáneos (inconscientes), la violencia armada, la posición geopolítica y otras características; así como resultado de la influencia selectiva de los medios de comunicación. Una imagen positiva del Estado se forma mediante el buen funcionamiento de tres componentes: imagen interna, imagen de política exterior e imagen informativa.

Palabras clave: conflicto armado; guerra total; imagen del estado; posicionamiento en el espacio europeo; semiología política.

Introduction

In the context of European integration processes in Ukraine, the issue of the importance of forming a positive image of the country while preserving national identity and distinctive culture for the effective functioning of its foreign policy interests has arisen. After the full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022, Ukraine's foreign policy course towards the unification of the European Union only intensified. On June 23, 2022, the European Council granted Ukraine the status of a candidate for membership in the European Union (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2023).

Accordingly, there is a need for the effective functioning of information and communication tools to shape the state's image. It is thanks to the frequent news of a full-scale war in the media that Ukraine has become the focus of discussion at the national and international levels. Today, an important factor in shaping the country's foreign policy image is building a diplomatic strategy based on soft power rather than hard power. The former

does not involve the use of coercion, but the ability of the state to improve its image in the European space through culture, values, and foreign policy.

On August 26, 2021, the Decree of the President of Ukraine No. 448/2021 “On the Strategy of Foreign Policy of Ukraine” (Decree of the President of Ukraine No. 448/2021..., 2021) was enacted. According to this document, we emphasise paragraphs 12 and 13, which guarantee the use of soft power in public diplomacy to create a positive image of the state and protect the rights of Ukrainian citizens, preserve national and cultural identity outside the state. Burlaka *et al.* (2023) emphasize that public policy should be flexible, universal, and based on the principles of humanism and social consciousness of citizens.

In the context of the armed conflict that has been going on since 2014 and the martial law since 2022, the problem of armed violence, which is an instrument of power of a non-democratic state, arises. The international law categorically prohibits the use of armed violence, but there are cases when a state exercises its defence right during aggression or acts in accordance with a UN Security Council resolution. In times of war and war crimes, there is an urgent need to develop the military law (Gorinov and Mereniuk, 2022). Another problem is the absence of a separate legal system for military personnel.

It mostly does not respond to threats to national security and defence capabilities of the state. In European countries, such a legal system is developing at a high level that indicates the awareness and guarantee of the implementation of legal provisions on military security during hostilities (Gorinov and Mereniuk, 2022). In the context of Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, the study of armed violence in the system of state image formation is an urgent task.

Ukraine’s image requires significant transformations, as it is characterised by an unstable economy, corrupt government, social insecurity of certain groups of the population, and a long-term armed conflict in eastern Ukraine, where Ukraine has taken the position of a “victim”. However, since the beginning of martial law in Ukraine, the European community’s attitude toward our country has changed.

According to the “Report on the Perception of Ukraine in the World in 2022” compiled by the NGO BRAND UKRAINE, 71% of respondents supported Ukraine in the war. Russia’s aggression against Ukraine has shaped a favourable attitude toward our country, particularly, because of the unity in society, the revival of Ukrainian culture, and national consciousness. Many European countries have become an asylum for refugees. 66% of respondents approved of Ukraine’s accession to the European Union, which is a record figure in the history of European integration processes (Brand Ukraine, 2022).

The purpose of this study is to analyse the formation of Ukraine's image in the context of armed violence. The realisation of this goal requires the fulfilment of the following tasks: 1) to study the impact of armed violence on the image of democracy of the state; 2) to analyse the foreign policy image of the country during a full-scale war; 3) to find out the role of the image of information policy in the system of forming the image of the state.

1. Literature Review

Shaping the image is an important strategic task for the state. When developing a unique image for long-term positive positioning, it is important to develop the government, society, economy, and culture in an interconnected manner. The topic of forming the image of the state in the context of management and marketing aspects was studied by Musienko *et al.* (2020). The researchers identified the key factors (economic freedom, competitiveness, human development, and digitalisation) of the state image formation through a comparative analysis of the brand in the world rankings of developed and developing countries.

Raev and Minkman (2020) examined the concept of branding (state image, policy image, and image of policy instruments) in diplomatic relations. The authors concluded that branding is effective only if all three images are developed. The concept of branding is an effective tool in international communication, but not universal. Savon (2019) studied the strengths (favourable geopolitical position) and weaknesses (war, corruption, scandals) of Ukraine's international image. The author concluded that the image is influenced not only by government officials but also by the citizens of Ukraine.

Kosheleva (2021) studied the image of the state in the cultural system. The author concluded that an important condition for Ukraine's effective international positioning is the creation of a positive image to protect the national interests of the state, to achieve the strategic goal of joining the European Union, to be successfully competitive in the global sales and investment market; to popularise Ukrainian traditions in European culture.

Lisovskyi (2022) in his study revealed the concept of "foreign policy image" in the context of Ukraine's national security. The author emphasised that during a full-scale war, Ukraine's image is dynamic and requires constant foreign policy support and correction.

Horbachenko (2022) analysed the Decree of the President of Ukraine No. 448/2021 "On the Strategy of Foreign Policy of Ukraine" (Decree of the President of Ukraine No. 448/2021..., 2021). The main idea of this legal document is to ratify Ukraine as a strong and authoritative state in Europe,

which can guarantee favourable external conditions for the sustainable development of the state, ensure the independence and state sovereignty of Ukraine, restore territorial integrity, and counter Russian aggression.

Eremeeva (2022) studied and systematised theoretical approaches to the definition of the concept of the “international image of the state”. She identified the formative factors of the state’s image (standard of living, legal framework for regulating social relations, functioning of social policy, use of mass media, and state means of influence on society). The author classified the directions of modern state image-making (geopolitical, marketing, brand).

Buinityskyi and Yakovets (2019) analysed the role of the media in shaping the image of a politician through the creation of stereotypical political images and myths (“conspiracy myth”, “golden age myth”, “saviour hero myth”, “unity myth”). Identified the means used by the media to create a political image (combination of three facts: truth, falsehood, fiction; repetition of news, non-recognition of pluralism of opinions; “mudslinging” the enemy).

Rudnieva and Malovana (2022), studying the image of the state in the context of the development of the information society and digital technologies, noted the need to develop an information image. The constant mention of the state in the information field of national media will lead to mention in international media. In addition, the authors focused on improving the “Digital State”, as receiving public services online is positively perceived by society, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic and during martial law.

The issue of armed violence as a socio-political phenomenon has been studied by Balatska (2018), Bader (2020), Balcells and Stanton (2021), and other scholars. However, the topic of studying the impact of armed violence in the system of forming the image of the state is poorly understood, which determines the scientific novelty of the study.

2. Methodology

The methodology of studying the impact of armed violence on the formation of the state image is characterized by pluralism, which incorporates various methods of general philosophical, general scientific and special levels.

The main approach used in the study concerning armed violence in the system of socio-political relations is the dialectical approach. It is due to this approach that the article examines the impact of armed violence on the system of forming the image of the state and the relationship between internal and external images. In addition, the dialectical approach was

used to consider the phenomenon of armed violence and the concept of the image, which are not unambiguously interpreted. The systematic method was used to study the foreign policy image of the state.

This method was evaluated in order to determine the transformation of the country's image in the minds of the international community; to identify the main changes in legal documents after the introduction of martial law; to find out that the image of the state is formed through the interconnected functioning of not only the political, social, and economic spheres but also the cultural one.

The structural-functional method helped to clarify the structure of armed violence and the image of the state. The functional purpose of armed violence in the system of forming the country's image and its impact on Ukraine's integration into the European Union was determined. Using the institutional method, the author analysed the image of the state as part of the state institutions that create it. The role of socio-political institutions in shaping the image was analysed. The conflictological approach was used to study the image of democracy and autocracy and to find out public attitudes towards the implementation of effective policies in Ukraine. The political and cultural approach led to the study of the impact of armed violence on the system of forming the state's image through the media, the active use of the Ukrainian language in all spheres of life, and the formation of the original culture.

The axiological approach was used to identify the destructive values of armed violence and to highlight the constructive values that are part of a positive image of the state. The main materials used in the research were Ukrainian and international legal documents, reports of social institutions that study the reaction of society to the armed aggression against Ukraine, and articles by Ukrainian and foreign scholars.

When searching for information sources, the main tags were: the formation of the state image, political image during an armed conflict, European integration in times of war, international image of the country, the image of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the image in the cultural system, Ukraine's perception by Europe in 2022.

3. Results and Discussion

The image of the state is formed by the targeted influence of PR specialists on the country's citizens. The purpose of the image is to create a positive image within the country and abroad. An image is a reflection of the reality created by the media. The main components of the image are imagination and sensuality, so the image of the state cannot be considered objective.

The history of Ukraine's integration into the European Union (EU) began in the 2000s, but it was only in 2022 that the EU granted Ukraine the status of a candidate for membership.

One of the reasons for the long-term European integration processes is the negative image of Ukraine, characterised by investment unattractiveness, an unstable economy (the COVID-19 pandemic played a special role in this aspect), a protracted armed conflict, and a low level of culture. However, since the full-scale invasion, the country's image has begun to change for the better.

Armed violence is a form of political violence that necessarily affects the lives of citizens. The structure of armed violence is as follows: a set of subjects (individuals, groups, associations, and other socio-political institutions) □ influence on the object of violence □ establishment of a strategic plan for armed violence □ constitutional and conceptual grounds for the use of armed violence (Bader, 2020).

The subject of armed violence that initiates this act (Russia) against the object (Ukraine) seeks to seize, maintain and change a democratic regime into an autocratic one in order to fully control the economic, social, and spiritual spheres of society.

A similar opinion on armed violence in the system of socio-political relations is shared by Bader (2020). In this system, Ukraine has taken the position of a counterparty defending its freedom. Europe supported Ukraine in the war by providing military, humanitarian, and financial assistance. In contrast, tough sanctions measures were imposed on Russia (The European Commission, 2022).

A similar study on the European Union's solidarity with Ukraine was conducted by a team of authors from the Razumkov Center (2023), who noted the EU's condemnation of Russian aggression, non-recognition of the annexation of Crimea, and the forced annexation of occupied Ukrainian cities to Russia. The scientists also confirmed the author's thesis on comprehensive support for Ukraine in the war and added two more aspects of assistance: ensuring the protection of the rights of refugees from Ukraine; promoting reforms in Ukraine (Razumkov Center, 2023).

In accordance with the above mentioned, it can be stated that Russia's armed violence against Ukraine has begun to shape the positive image of our country for the European community. An image is an image that is created with the help of virtual information and communication tools. It can be constantly adapted to political demands and rooted in the public consciousness through the media.

Eremeeva (2022) gave a similar definition of the concept of "image" with some clarifications. From the point of view of an international PR

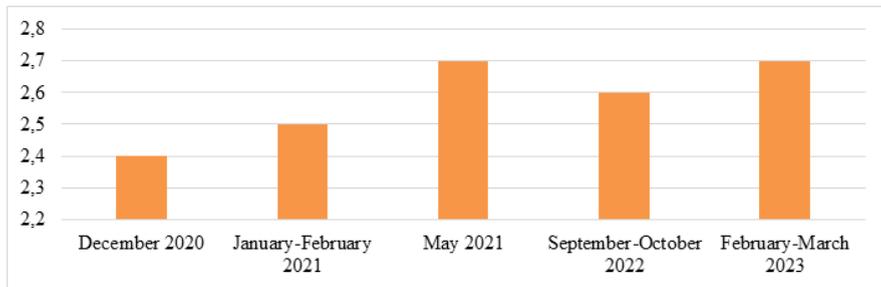
service, the image of a state can be created spontaneously or artificially, which realises the functions of a stable position of the state in the political and global information space.

The image of the state cannot be formed alone; there are always two addressees - the country's society and the world community. Accordingly, a distinction is made between the domestic and foreign policy image of a country.

Chumak (2020) identifies internal and external factors in the formation of the state image. The author considers the general welfare of society, respect for the rights of the Constitution, the absence of corruption, crime, the shadow economy, and favourable social well-being to be positive internal factors. The external factors include Ukraine's foreign policy, EU membership, development of diplomatic relations with strategic partner countries, the conclusion of international documents, etc. Lisovskyi (2022) defines the concept of "foreign policy image" as a set of ideas about the state that are formed in the external environment.

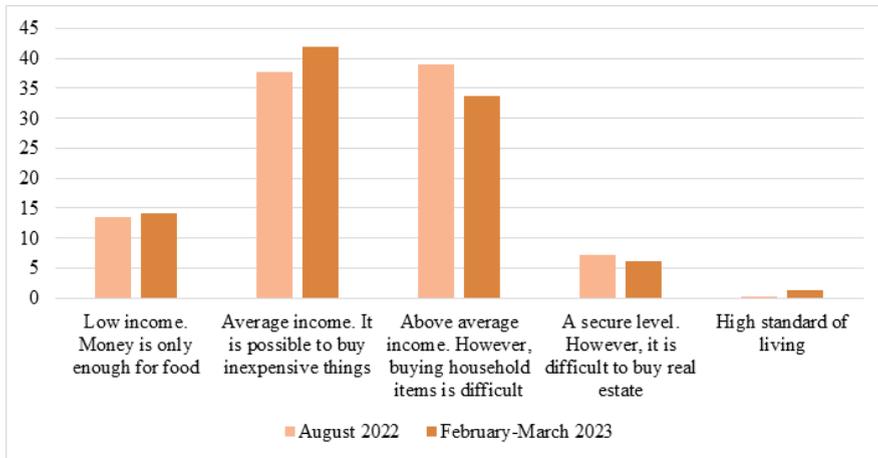
Changes in the internal image of the state during 2020-2022 (Fig. 1).

Figure No. 01: Comparative analysis of well-being indicators on a 5-point scale.



Source: Created by the author based on the source (Razumkov Center, 2023).

According to Figure 1, martial law did not have a significant impact on the level of well-being of the population. The financial situation of society has mostly changed in a negative direction (Fig. 2).

Figure No. 02: The financial situation of society during a full-scale war.

Source: Created by the author based on the source (Razumkov Center, 2023).

According to the analysis of internal factors of Ukraine's image, it cannot be unequivocally considered negative or positive, but rather neutral in terms of citizens' perception. As for the foreign policy image, the following changes are observed (Table 1):

Table No. 01: Public attitude to foreign policy under martial law.

Direction	Positive	Negative
General implementation of foreign policy	78 %	6 %
Strengthening Ukraine's relations with European countries and international organisations	85,6%	14,4 %
Dissemination of unbiased information	86,2 %	13,8 %
The favourable attitude of Europe to Ukraine's international image and authority	86,2 %	13,8 %
Providing external support to counter external aggression	86 %	14 %
Popularisation of Ukrainian initiatives on international platforms	85,6 %	14,4 %
Integration into the EU	81,2 %	18,8 %
Integration into NATO	77,6 %	22,4 %
Protection of the Rights of Ukrainians abroad	72,4 %	27,6
Promotion of Ukrainian business in the international market	67 %	33 %

Source: Created by the author based on the source (Ukrinform, 2023).

The analysis of the results concerning internal and external image factors showed that the former is paid less attention than the latter, which is a wrong position. Horbachenko (2022) emphasised the formation of the internal image first, which indicates the self-development and competitiveness of society, and only then the foreign policy image.

Armed violence in the system of forming the image of the state is present in Russia in the form of aggression against Ukraine, which creates an unattractive foreign policy image and contradicts the principles of democracy. Ukraine has gained experience over many years of fighting Russian aggression and hybrid threats and uses soft power to develop secure, political, and legal relations with other countries. This, in turn, creates a positive image of the state (Horbachenko, 2022). On February 24, 2022, the President of Ukraine declared martial law from 05:30 a.m. for 30 days (Decree of the President of Ukraine No. 64/2022, 2022).

The martial law is extended due to military operations. In connection with the introduction of martial law in Ukraine, the rights and freedoms of a person and a citizen provided for in Articles 30, 34, 38, 39, 41, 44, 53 of the Constitution of Ukraine, as well as temporary restrictions on the rights and legitimate interests of legal entities within the limits and to the extent necessary to ensure the possibility of introducing and implementing measures of the legal regime of martial law, as provided for in Part 1 of Article 8 of the Law of Ukraine “On the Legal Regime of Martial Law” and Decree of the President of Ukraine No. 64 of February 24, 2022 “On the Introduction of Martial Law in Ukraine” (Decree of the President of Ukraine No. 64/2022, 2022).

According to the documents “On the Legal Regime of Martial Law” (part 10, article 9), the Regulations of Local Councils, “On Access to Public Information” (part 6, article 22), “Some Issues of Ensuring the Functioning of Information and Communication Systems, Electronic Communication Systems, Public Electronic Registers under Martial Law”, there is a limitation of interaction between local governments and the public.

This is confirmed by a study conducted within the framework of the Council of Europe Project “Strengthening Public Participation in Democratic Decision-Making in Ukraine” (Council of Europe, 2022). 42.2 percent of respondents are aware of cases of restrictions on public influence by local governments, while 57.8 percent are not aware of this issue.

An effective tool for addressing this issue is the principle of subsidiarity, which involves the transfer of competencies to higher authorities and the EU (Kumar, 2021). The main problems include the inaccessibility and secrecy of information, ineffective communication between society and the state, and restrictions on the use of civic participation tools. On the one hand, this is a violation of the principles of a democratic regime, which is

more like an autocracy where all decisions are made by the head of state, and on the other hand, these temporary restrictions are part of democracy to ensure the national security of citizens and society.

This is confirmed by a study conducted by the Kyiv International Sociological Institute in 2022 (Democracy, rights and freedoms of citizens..., 2022), according to which 58% of respondents want a strong leader in the person of the President, 27% prefer a democratic regime, and the remaining 14% abstained. Therefore, we can conclude that the restriction of citizens' rights under martial law is fully justified and does not harm the image of democracy.

The main problem that spoils the image of democracy is the inability of the state to fully protect society from war crimes. Today, law enforcement and judicial authorities need special training in collecting evidence of the war crime of Russian aggression against Ukraine (Baladyiha, 2022). However, the unification of the democratic regimes of Ukraine and Europe will lead to a victory over the autocratic regime of Russia, as it is built on unity, solidarity, peace, security, inviolability, honour, dignity against violence, coercion, weapons, injustice, inequality, fear, etc. The article by O. Kalynovskyi *et al.* (2023) discusses the means used by EU countries to improve the effectiveness of law enforcement in Ukraine. These results can be used to improve and optimize crime analysis.

The main structural components of the state's image are official information about Ukraine countering Russian aggression; general perceptions of the state as a social institution that protects the rights and freedoms of citizens; and daily reports on specific actions of the authorities and political figures in the media that create the state's domestic and foreign policy image. There are 20 ministries, 24 state services, and 15 agencies in Ukraine that directly influence the formation of the country's positive image.

The information policy in the media plays an important role in spreading the image of the state and forming a certain attitude towards it. This position is supported by Volotko (2019), who argues that modern information and communication tools used to shape the image of any country are based on a number of actions to protect and promote its interests in the international community, as well as to present information to the world community about geography, politics, features of the national economy, the state of development and major achievements of culture and science. An information image is an image created with the help of language in the media in accordance with requests. It is through language tools that contain emotional colouring that public opinion is formed.

When developing an information image, it is important to constantly update the information situation in the context of Ukraine's national

interests; to seek ways to influence a certain situation to maintain a positive image, implement Ukraine's foreign policy strategy; to block hostile information campaigns against Ukraine in advance, etc.

During martial law, an effective information policy is a component of national security. Currently, there is a News Marathon that unites all national TV channels, which are mostly filled with news and/or information and analytical programs. At the initial stage, when the martial law was in effect, this information policy was effective and helped reduce public panic.

However, now that the vast majority of Ukrainian citizens have adapted to the martial law, society is interested in entertainment content, learning news from social networks and YouTube, which can significantly distort information. A similar position is supported by Denysiuk (2021). According to a study conducted by the Gradus Research Company in 2022, 77% learn information from social media, 60% receive information from websites, 42% - from news on national television, 37% receive information about events from relatives, friends, colleagues, 16% of respondents watch local and regional television, and 13% listen to the radio (Gradus Research Company, 2022). Accordingly, it is important to revise the strategy of the state's information image.

Thus, the main recommendations to improve the image of the state are: protecting the rights of Ukrainian citizens within the country and abroad; strengthening Ukraine's information presence in the international media space through the broad participation of Ukrainian state institutions, active cooperation with local media and organisation of information events; focusing more attention on cooperation with foreign journalists working in Ukraine, informing them about the innovative, scientific, technical, industrial, agricultural and tourist potential, and cult.

Conclusions

The definition of state image has many varieties, as each scholar interprets this concept according to his or her subjective experience. However, studying the image of a state in the context of international relations allows concluding that the image of a state can arise under the influence of spontaneous (unconscious) factors, armed violence, geopolitical position, and other characteristics, as well as a result of targeted media influence. A positive image of the state is formed through the successful functioning of three components: internal image, foreign policy image, and information image. Russia's aggression against Ukraine has had a positive impact on Ukraine's image in the European space.

For Europe, Ukraine has become a brave state that defends law, freedom, and territorial integrity. With the introduction of martial law, a number of restrictions were introduced at the legislative level that violates the principles of a democratic regime. However, the overwhelming majority of citizens support such restrictions as they contribute to the national security of the state. In addition, during the full-scale war, a large number of war crimes were recorded that violate International Humanitarian Law. It was found that the judiciary does not have enough specialists to investigate such crimes.

It is determined that the image of the state is flexible and can be changed in accordance with political and economic demands. In the context of Ukraine's foreign policy strategy, which is focused on European integration processes and assistance from European countries, it was determined that the formation of a positive image of the state is aimed at protecting human rights, preserving Ukrainian culture, and using soft power. Since the beginning of the full-scale war, the European community has been favourable to Ukraine's image.

Ukraine's image needs constant correction in line with the socio-political situation in the country and the world. The media play an important role in shaping the image of the state, as they can cover the country's actions in both positive and negative ways. It is through the media that the perception of reality and public opinion are formed. Currently, the information policy is based on a news marathon, which is ineffective because the news is presented in a standardised and monotonous way. The vast majority of people get their news from social media, which is uncontrolled and uncensored. Accordingly, a promising area for further research is the impact of social media on information policy in the context of armed violence.

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