

## COGNITIVE PROCESSES OF THE POLITICAL PSYCHE

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This article is an attempt to briefly describe the cognitive processes, which are viewed as one of the political psyche components, along with emotional-volitional and behavioral components. The idea of the political perception is given in the article. A brief description of the political memory and its importance in the preservation of the historical memory of the people is exposed. Particular attention is paid to the political thinking and such of its characteristics as independence of thinking, its criticality, depth, flexibility, width, speed and creativity. In the characteristics of the political imagination the importance of its most common forms – political myths and political utopia – are emphasized.

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Political psyche is a reflection of a particular form of the active subject of social and political processes and phenomena occurring in the social and political interaction of the subject with the outside world and it performs in his behavior (activity) regulatory function. The political psyche opens to the subject not the political situation (political processes and phenomena) as it is, but the field of its action, i.e., those objects of the politics and those of their features which are important for the life of the subject. The psyche in the political and psychological analysis consists of three main blocks: cognitive, emotional-volitional and behavioral. We will focus on the brief analysis of the cognitive block, which includes the political perception, political memory, political thinking and political imagination.

**The political perception** is the perception of politics as such, the perception of political leaders, political groups, political power, political information, and other objects which are directly related to the politics. Back in the 1920–1930s, in the numerous experimental studies of the American psychological school «New look» it has been proved that our perception depends on the attitudes and stereotypes of our consciousness, and in the political terms – of the political consciousness, political self-consciousness and political culture. Moreover, it is evident impact on the unconscious level. If we impose contour images of the car and the horse one on another, and then show this seemingly meaningless set of the lines to the Americans and Mexicans, most Americans surely see in this “picture” a car, and most Mexicans – mustang. The same can be done by putting images of a violin and Kalashnikov one on another. Most Palestinians, Afghans, representatives of any other long-combatant community will see only a Kalashnikov (today it is depicted on the national flag and national emblem of Mozambique), on the contrary the majority of Europeans see a violin [5].

Political perceptions, as well as the perception itself, is comprehend and selective. This

selectivity is being formed in the process of the political socialization – “growing” the younger generations in the adult, political world. These features, being formed, are related to the perception of political culture, political consciousness, political self-consciousness, as well as other functions of the human psyche.

**Political memory** is characterized by the processes of remembering, preserving and reproducing political events, social and political processes and phenomena by the individual, group, and society. The value of the political memory as a psychological phenomenon, is, firstly, that a good memory is a necessary feature of the political leader’s personality who has to pass through his mind vast amount of information that has a direct or indirect relation to the different political events of the society. And we are talking not just about imprinting, memorizing, but about ability to select and store certain blocks of information directly related to the nature of the activities. Secondly, the memory of the certain groups of people and historical memory of the people in common are interesting for political psychology. If, for example, in the Soviet period of our history, especially in its first decades, some people had to hide their aristocratic origins, in the post-Soviet period there were descendants of the noble families, who claimed their “noble” origin [6].

Historical memory indicates that some events with time fade in the memory of the people (the death of Stalin, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the economical default in Russia of 1998), while others are stored in the memory without losing their political relevance (Victory in the Great Patriotic War, the Chernobyl catastrophe, the collapse of the Soviet Union), and the value of some even increases eventually (the flight of Yuri Gagarin). And it is important that it happens not because of absolute time range, but because of the political relevance of an event at any given point in time for the historical memory of the people.

**The political thinking** is a key and determining component of the political structure of

the psyche. It is socially conditioned and inextricably linked with the speech process of indirect and generalized reflection of political reality in the course of its political and psychological analysis and synthesis. The political thinking includes not only cognitive, but also emotional-evaluative mechanisms with its own ontological status. Basically it is an important feature of the political thinking is its extreme lack of logic. G. Lebon wrote about the crucial role of the irrational mechanisms, emotional evaluations in the actions of the masses at the turn of XIX–XX centuries. The cause of the social dynamics at that time he saw in the constant change of ideas: being originally the intellectual and spiritual heritage of one man, a certain idea “via infecting” penetrates in “the soul of the masses”, finding more and more adherents. The idea itself in this case is being inevitably simplified, almost losing its original intellectual originality, becoming a dogma, ie, absolute truth on the emotional basis. Strictly speaking, only in this converted, almost irrational form the idea can provide social regulating effect on masses [3].

It is clear, however, that the ability to think politically have not only politicians, but also any person, any subject of public relations, even not deliberately engaged in the political activity. The implementation of this capability in one or another person depends on the existence of his interest in the political processes and phenomena; on the level of political participation in the life of society; on the level of his political culture; on how a person perceives the political reality, and how he refers and evaluates it, etc. From this point of view, it follows that the political thinking is peculiar to any person – any member of society.

The political thinking is characterized by almost the same intellectual actions and operations, like any other thinking: such as analysis, synthesis, comparison, generalization, abstraction, classification and systematization. The same applies to the forms of thinking, because the results of the thinking process (thoughts), as it is known, exist in the form of judgments, reasonings, conclusions and concepts. Particularly the individual characteristics of the political thinking should be noted: independence of thinking, its criticality, depth, flexibility, latitude, speed, creativity.

*Independence of the political thinking* is inherent in the people who able to set their own goal and achieve certain purposes and solve tasks without any help from other people. Such individuals are quite actively and effectively take into account and use in addition to their own experience, experience of other people, they process this experiences creatively; they critically approach to the analysis of the theory and practice of public life.

*Censoriousness of the political thinking.* Individuals with such feature of thinking are not just critically evaluating everything they know, see, are able to do themselves and other people, they can not be blindly influenced by other opinions, other people’s motives. As a rule, these people (politicians) are well mastered in the art of identifying differences between “for” and “against”, in making decisions. Both these features of thinking, as a rule, are formed with the acquisition of not only knowledge, but also the relevant experience by a person.

*Depth of the political thinking.* This feature of the political thinking is characteristic for politicians, who are able to penetrate deeply into the essential features of the certain maxims, phenomena, events; to separate the important from the secondary, to identify causal relationships and characteristics of the social phenomena, etc.

*Flexibility of th political thinking.* This feature of the thinking is rare. It is characteristic for those people who know how to change quickly their thoughts, getting rid of what is already stuck in them, in their minds as a result of life experience, or what is deficient, outdated, inaccurate. Such politicians can quickly master the various, especially progressive, political technologies and perfectly possess them. The ability to choose unconventional, innovative techniques and solutions of the specific political problems helps these politicians to adapt themselves quite well to the specific political situation, to act rationally and efficiently.

*Width of the political thinking.* If a person (politician) is able to cover a wide range of issues, link them, separate the main and secondary things, and then take the alternative optimal solutions, it means that he thinks out of the box (widely). This feature is most common for people highly knowledgeable, open-minded.

*The speed of the political thinking.* This feature is inherent in individuals (politicians) who are able to quickly understand complex situations, taking the most thoughtful, accurate and optimal solutions. To some extent, speed of thinking depends on the psychological state of the individual, on mobility of the nervous processes, however, as a rule, people get such quality as a result of thorough training, training of mental activity.

*Creativity of the political thinking.* This feature is especially important for person involved in spiritual, artistic, political activity. It is connected, first of all, with the ability to think out of the box, widely, originally, to have knowledge and experience of the other people’s work, to make unconventional decisions.

These individual peculiarities of the political thinking are being developed and improved only in the process of constant mental

and practical activity of a person. Any political action is the result of sensory perception, appropriate interpretation of the specific situations, events and actions for the different political subjects.

**Political imagination** is considered, as a rule, in the context of the political views which are quite rare in its “pure” kind. Most people use different ways to develop their political views, and these views may differ drastically depending on the object or area of the reality. In spite of the ignorance of many ordinary citizens in particular matters of the internal and foreign politics, it does not mean that these people do not have rational ideas or ideological stereotypes affecting their socio-political problems of life [1].

Collective creative imagination is the form of the political views. Political imagination can be considered as the process of creating a complete image of the new political reality on the basis of processing and creative transformation of the political ideas. You can select different ways to transform these ideas into images of the imagination: the analogy, emphasis, exaggeration.

Political imagination is sometimes seen as a sudden “revelation”, leading to the creation of the new political image, the opening of which is being prepared in the process of finding solutions.

Political imagination can be *involuntary* (futile fantasy, which leads person far from reality) and *arbitrary* (conscious formation of the political images, in accordance with the purposes and tasks of the activities). The latter is divided into *recreating* (the construction of the political images on the basis of mediated symbolic information) and *creative* (creation of the new political images).

The most common forms of the political imagination are political myths and political utopia.

Political myth is illusory imagination which is perceived uncritically. It replaces and displaces understanding of the political reality. Political myth as a form of illusory comprehension of the political world includes either insight or misleading. Political myth may implement intimate human desires and aspirations, his hallucinatory political experience and features of both individual and collective unconscious. Political myth arises when people are faced with a daunting task, solving of which exceeds their natural features. The symbolism of the political myth defines it’s most important features – weak articulation, lack of internal compartmentalization of thinking. It is a feature of the mythological imagination – an implicit division, and occasionally fusion

of the political subject and political object; object and sign; word and deed; creature and it’s name. As a rule mythological thinking operates situational-specific and individual external features of the political object.

In the analysis of the political utopia it is necessary to distinguish two cognitive traditions, one of which is based on axiological, and the other – on the substantive aspects. From the position of the first approach political utopia is seen as the certain desire, which can not be done under any circumstances, and therefore acts as unattainable political ideal. In line with the second approach, political utopia is interpreted through the concept of transcendental knowledge: critical in relation to the present and “advancing” the future [4].

Psychological basis of utopias, as well as the myths, performs the tendency of people to illusions – a distorted perception of the political reality. One of the sources of the political illusions is subjectivism, leading to deformation of the time perspective, when the realization of the political ideal is transferred to the other periods. Illusions of different kind are not excluded: typical illusions of turning historical points. There may be political illusions related to “running too far ahead”, creating political ideas which achievement is unrealistic. Utopianism is manifested in the substitution of the real with unreal. Substitution of the epochs often leads to illusory notions, to a shift of the object’s form of the time being. Bearers of the political illusions are not so much individuals but certain groups of people. Some of them seek to eliminate the formed political norms of life, while others – to keep them in any way [2].

Cognitive block, of course, does not give a complete picture of such complex phenomenon as the political psyche. It is included in the complex processes of the cooperation, complementarity with emotional-volitional, value-orientation, need-motivational sphere of the political psyche.

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