

## ИСТОРИЧЕСКИЙ, ИДЕОЛОГИЧЕСКИЙ, СОЦИАЛЬНЫЙ АСПЕКТЫ В ФОРМИРОВАНИИ АМЕРИКАНСКОГО ПОЛИТИЧЕСКОГО ДИСКУРСА И ЕГО МАНИПУЛЯТИВНОГО ПОТЕНЦИАЛА

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**Аннотация.** В сложившейся системе мировых взаимоотношений американский политический дискурс оказывает значительное влияние на адресатов по всему миру и имеет высокий манипулятивный потенциал, в связи с чем можно констатировать высокую степень актуальности данной работы. Речевое воздействие – это основная цель коммуникации в политическом дискурсивном пространстве, на достижение которой ориентируется выбор лингвистических средств. Понимание скрытых смыслов и намерений отправителя, заложенных в лексических единицах политического текста, требует достаточно обширных фоновых знаний о культуре и политической системе Соединенных Штатов, а также о менталитете американцев. В статье анализируются исторический, идеологический и социальный аспекты в становлении США, которые предопределили высокий манипулятивный потенциал американского политического дискурса. История и идеология рассматриваются как неотъемлемая часть языкового сознания. В качестве ключевых факторов выделены: уникальность исторического пути (на территории Северной Америки была осуществлена первая попытка построения демократии в масштабе государства), установление модели парламентаризма (необходимость публичного представительства конкурирующих элит), тесная связь процесса формирования политических институтов с религиозными догмами (сакрализация политических институтов и всей национальной истории), развитие капитализма и, как следствие, империалистические амбиции (обретение статуса сверхдержавы и необходимость легитимизации агрессивной политики в массовом сознании), многонациональный состав населения (спрос на политкорректность).

**Ключевые слова:** политический дискурс; манипуляция; речевое воздействие; история; идеология; Соединенные Штаты.

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## HISTORICAL, IDEOLOGICAL, SOCIAL ASPECTS IN THE FORMATION OF THE AMERICAN POLITICAL DISCOURSE AND ITS MANIPULATIVE POTENTIAL

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**Abstract.** American political discourse has a significant impact on people around the world and has enormous manipulative potential in the current system of world relations. This

fact gives us reason to assert that the subject is relevant. Persuasion is the main goal of communication in the political discourse space. This feature of political discourse directly affects the choice of linguistic units. A large background knowledge of the culture and political system of the United States is required in order to understand the implicit meanings and purpose of the sender of the information contained in the lexical units of the political text. The article provides an analysis of the US historical, ideological and social background as a precondition and indication of the high manipulative potential of the American political discourse. History and ideology are considered as an integral part of the linguistic consciousness. The key factors are highlighted: the uniqueness of the historical development (the first attempt at building a nationwide democracy was carried out in North America), establishment of parliamentarism (the need for public competition among elites), close connection between the formation of political institutions and religious dogmas (sacralization of political institutions and all national history), the development of capitalism and, as a result, imperialist ambitions (transformation into a superpower and the need for legitimization in the mass consciousness of an aggressive policy), multinational population (demand for political correctness).

**Keywords:** political discourse; manipulation; persuasion; history; ideology; The United States.

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Undoubtedly, a very thoughtful analysis of such a complex communicative phenomenon as political discourse and its manipulative potential is impossible if the researcher does not have the appropriate background knowledge. This necessary store of knowledge includes information about the ideology, history, and social characteristics of the communicants.

The traditions of the English-language political discourse are based on the peculiarities of political systems, the dynamics of which contributed to the change and evolution of political communication towards greater openness and demonstrativeness. Establishing a model of parliamentarism, including, inter alia, holding public debates, can be highlighted as a key factor. In the British Isles, as is known, the parliament was established in the 13th century as a necessary body of estate representation, and for a long time became the political and legal tradition of a state with a monarchical form of government. If we talk about the United States, the establishment of

parliament was carried out against the backdrop of revolutionary transformations, as a consequence of the War of Independence, in 1776 [1].

The model of American democracy was formed in specific historical and cultural conditions, and attempts to reproduce it in other geopolitical conditions were unsuccessful. This is also largely due to the fact that the federal government was created by the states, which for many years were colonies with a wide degree of autonomy. This is what contributed to the establishment in America of such a progressive, at the time of its creation, political system, which is characterized by ideological flexibility and the absence of strict party discipline [2]. E.I. Sheigal noted that “the more open and democratic the life of society, the more attention is paid to the language of politics” [3, p. 5]. It was the public competition in the process of forming the elite and, in particular, the election of the president that determined the high manipulative potential of American political discourse, since speakers and speechwriters representing various influential circles needed to outstrip their competitors. Sergei Karamura, a well-known expert in manipulative technologies, writes that “the fathers of the nation and the well-off section of the society in the United States had an urgent need to control a huge crowd of free individuals without using state violence (it was impossible and contradicted the very ideological basis of American individualism)” [4]. Edward Bernays, one of the most famous practitioners of manipulative influence in the United States, wrote in his book “Propaganda”: “The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society” [5]. In the above-named book, he also argued that the current political leader should be well versed in both propaganda technology, political economy, and civil law. He believed that only with the help of skillful propaganda, the US government – a group of people exercising constant control over the country – will be able to maintain the connection with the people necessary in a democratic society [6].

Thus, the conditions of political pluralism and the existence of mixed forms of institutions of mass communication have contributed to the creation of a discourse environment in the United States, where politicians, acting on behalf of various

stakeholders, need to skillfully advertise the provided political services, demonstrating remarkable oratory skills. All of the most popular US leaders, whose names are cited to this day as examples of worthy service to the nation, have been masters of public speaking since the Founding Fathers. With the development of technical equipment, politicians were able to transmit information, speaking not only on radio, but also on television. Now the oratorical skill of the speaker and the ability of speechwriters to build a message with the highest impact potential have become even more in demand. Among the most brilliant masters of the oral style in American history are A. Lincoln, F.D. Roosevelt, J. Kennedy, B. Clinton, who established the standards of political rhetoric and consolidated in the mass consciousness the unspoken rule that the President of the United States is an outstanding orator [7, p. 60].

Since, as noted by M.Yu. Ryabova, “ideology naturally materializes in language and with the help of language”, the progressiveness and uniqueness of the system that began in 1776 have forever become an integral component of political communication in the United States. This led to a significant role of the primary ideological concept – “democracy”, as well as a number of secondary ones, such as “freedom” and “equality”. [8, p. 65]. M.A. Filippova identifies the following differential features for these concepts:

- have a high degree of pragmatic potential;
- are distinguished by the dominance of the value component over conceptual and figurative;
- are a symbol of adherence to a particular ideology.

Filippova also states that the concept of “democracy” in American culture of language has all the features of the primary ideological concept and is characterized by the presence of ideological connotations in all components of its structure [9, p. 6].

It must be emphasized that in the naive picture of the world, characteristic of the American linguistic consciousness, certain norms of behavior in society correspond to the democratic ideal. This led to the use of the term “Homodemocraticus”,

characterizing this type of personality. A detailed definition of this concept was given in the work of M.A. Filippova: Homodemocraticus is a person who recognizes the equality of others, who not only has deep respect for other people's views, different from his own, but also admits his mistakes, believing that others may be more aware. He also believes that the majority of the society to which he belongs can be generous towards the minority, and the minority, in turn, is loyal to the voters who voted against him. His worldview is largely based on a belief in a generally accepted and consistent benevolence (at least over time and among most of society). Homodemocraticus is characterized by the advanced intelligence and imagination that are required to generate the invaluable understanding (empathy) that is necessary to create effective compromises. He also believes in rational dialogue and has the courage to participate in it, since democratic discussion means the existence of the privilege of publicly expressing one's opinion and being appreciated. On the basis of the definition, in the above-mentioned work, six key semes were identified that characterize the behavior of the subject of democracy:

- 1) respect for other people;
- 2) admitting mistakes;
- 3) recognition of the other persons' rightness;
- 4) generosity, loyal, benevolent attitude towards others;
- 5) desire to reach mutual understanding, agreement to compromise;
- 6) willingness to dialogue [9, p. 9–10].

It should be noted the role of movements for the rights of women, ethnic and sexual minorities in the development of the influencing potential of the political language in the United States. The prerequisites for the growth of demand for political correctness appeared in the late 19th – early 20th centuries, when there was an increased interest in socialism, which seemed extremely attractive to the poor, oppressed social groups, largely because the idea included internationalism. In the middle of the XX century there has been an increase in African American countermeasures in response to traditional racial discrimination. Between the 1950s and 1970s, a

series of legal proceedings took place that resulted in the abolition of legally mandated racial segregation in most states [10, p. 31]. Thus, in the postcolonial era, the need for the support of certain social groups, positioning themselves as oppressed elements, grew rapidly. The paradigm of political correctness has a profound effect on the writing of American politicians. This “has led to significant changes in the vocabulary of the English language over the past decades” [11]. “Almost everything that falls into the field of practical application of political correctness can be a subject of political discussion, that is, a means for manipulating public opinion” [10, p. 29].

The close connection between the establishment of political institutions and religious dogmas was of great importance in the formation of sacred symbols. Biblical tenets became the ideological basis for democratization and the establishment of parliamentarism, just as it once took place in revolutionary England. Since everyone is inherently sinful, the power of one is unacceptable. This was a good explanation and a driving, consolidating force in the establishment of a republican system, which is characterized by the separation of powers, as well as the formation of a federal model that should allow individual states to restrain the ambitions of the central government [1]. The ideological rationale behind the formation of the American state contributed to the sacralization of political institutions themselves and the entire national history throughout the existence of the United States [12, p. 82]. This fact allows us to say that the American civil religion is the ideological basis of the state, legitimizing its power in the mass consciousness. According to V.R. Legoyda, civil religion is “a sacred non-confessional structure that integrates society and sets the value system” [13, p. 14].

It is from the civil religion, as well as from the political, social and cultural novelty inherent in the newly formed democratic system, that the idea of being chosen largely follows, which is reflected in linguistic realities, including the lexical means used by politicians to create a certain communicative effect. The national consciousness of Americans is characterized by the idea of the special, messianic role of the United States as the custodian of the values of freedom and democracy through-

out the world. The idea of being chosen determines the idea of US superiority over a certain hostile force, which became especially popular in American political discourse after the country's establishment took a course for more active actions in the foreign policy arena and the growth of political and economic ambitions of the financial elite. An unprecedented economic crisis for the American state at the time of the onset, which erupted in 1893 and lasted for five years, led the United States to the need to look for new sales markets abroad, where it would be possible to more effectively sell surplus goods. It was the aforementioned crisis that became the starting point for fundamental changes in the country's policy, both external and internal [14, p. 18].

At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, with the acquisition of the first overseas territories and the building of a powerful fleet, which made it possible to establish dominion in the adjacent ocean waters, the United States switched to empire-building, implementing a policy of colonial expansion and ousting the European colonial powers from the Western Hemisphere. Remarkable is the fact that by 1900 the territory of the United States had increased tenfold, which confirms the expansionary nature of the policy being pursued [15, p. 136]. The imperial doctrine of the United States was formed gradually and was directly reflected in the texts of political discourse, influencing the nature of the information presented to the audience in explicit and implicit forms. The goal of spreading American hegemony was carried out in combination with appropriate measures to legitimize this foreign policy course in the minds of the masses.

The First World War became only an introductory stage for the United States in European politics, which later allowed them, as one of the victorious countries, to take part in the post-war influence on the world order on an equal footing with Great Britain and France. But participation in World War II was a key step for the state, which allowed it to achieve decisive superiority and become the flagship of the Western world, the main capitalist superpower. The United States owned about 60 % of the world's industrial production and about 61 % of the merchant marine by the

end of hostilities [15, p. 138]. However, there was still a tangible threat to American hegemony posed by the Soviet Union and the rest of the socialist world. In this regard, during the period of confrontation between the two world superpowers, known as the Cold War, the use of enemy image and demonization has become especially demanded in the political discourse space of the United States.

Since the second half of the 20th century, the concept of «communism» has become typical for American political texts against the background of irreconcilable ideological contradictions between the two systems, the need to reinforce the primacy of liberalism in the mass consciousness, the main exponent of which is the United States, and to legitimize the increased expansionary aspirations in foreign policy [16, p. 22]. These processes were implemented through the creation of a close connection between the expert and analytical community and official departments. In the post-war period, a number of research centers were created on the basis of leading American universities, engaged in the ideological and analytical support of US foreign policy. Representatives of the modernization theory, such as Walt Rostow, Samuel Huntington, Seymour Martin Lipset, Gabriel Almond and their followers, promoted the understanding of liberal democratic market development as a universal standard of the natural evolution of countries [17, p. 31–32]. Thus, during the Cold War years, a negative attitude of the addressees to the primary ideological concept of “communism” was created and strengthened. Proving the superiority of the capitalist system was seen as the primary goal of American political discourse at the time. In the era of unipolarity, the United States did not have such serious ideological opponents, however, the image of the enemy was still cultivated in political language. The primary ideological concepts “terrorism” and “extremism” were used with high frequency.

In the wake of the above tendencies during the Cold War, the “theory of totalitarianism” began to gain wide popularity in Western scientific thought and, as a result, the political space. The origin and popularization of this theory at an early stage should be associated with Hannah Arendt and her work “The Origins of Totalitarianism”, published in 1951. The theory was used to emphasize the common fea-



tures between fascist and communist states and was reflected in the scientific works of many researchers who widely used the term “totalitarianism”. It was regularly criticized for being ideological, linear in the representation of the state and trend chasing, however, it was firmly entrenched both in science and in the political language of Western states. The primary ideological concept “totalitarianism”, like the concepts of “despotism”, “dictatorship”, “tyranny”, was opposed to democracy as the highest ideal of statehood. The concepts presented above, although they are described in detail in scientific works, are used in the political language of the United States without semantic detailing. The function of these concepts in American political discourse narrows down only to serve as linguistic units with a pronounced deteriorative semantic meaning and to be opposed to democracy. Anything that did not correspond to the interests of the American political elite was expressed through these concepts. They also act as a password when evaluating “friend or foe” [9, p. 10].

Based on the foregoing, we can conclude that when studying the manipulative influence realized in the political discourse space of the United States, it is necessary to have an idea not only about the nature of the situation in the sphere of life we are interested in at the moment, but also about the factors that predetermined the specifics of persuasion in this environment, as well as the underlying choice of primary (stable in the imposed interpretation) and secondary (partially changing depending on the context) ideological concepts. These factors include:

1. The state formation in North America in 1776 was the first attempt at nationwide democracy. The proclamation of civil liberties meant a rejection of the open imperative influence that was implemented in the monarchical states of that and earlier period. However, inequality still existed in American society, and the elite needed new technologies to maintain their position with the formal equality of all before God and the law. In this regard, the United States became the first state where manipulation supplanted direct imperative influence, physical violence, be-

coming the dominant control technology. This fact testifies to the richest experience of using manipulative influence on the part of the establishment in the United States, which had a strong impact on the political language and linguistic norms of political communication.

2. Competing elites are forced to publicly defend their interests and win citizens over to themselves. The element of competition has contributed to the strengthening of the influencing potential of political texts and the growth of requirements for the level of oratory.

3. Religious rationale for the establishment of a democratic model and, as a result, the sacralization of political institutions and the entire national history, as well as the formation of an idea on the special messianic role of the United States. The legitimization of foreign and domestic policy is carried out with reliance on civil religion.

4. Long-term dominance in world politics, the growth of foreign policy ambitions and opposition to the ideological enemy. The need to demonize the ideological enemy and stimulate the population's support for the foreign policy ambitions of the elite is expressed in American political texts in the form of entrenched contrasts (democracy-totalitarianism, democracy-communism, freedom-tyranny, etc.). The status of the United States in the international arena and the elite's need for its preservation determine the goal to legitimize aggressive policies in the mass consciousness, by creating sharp contrasts between the United States and its opponents.

5. The multinational composition of the population, the serious influence of groups fighting for the rights of women, ethnic and sexual minorities on the media space. The movements for the rights of African Americans, women, and then sexual minorities generated a demand for political correctness in American society, which had a strong impact on the language and was reflected in the implementation of manipulative technologies by politicians.

Further study of the historical, ideological, and social factors that determine the formation of the American discursive political space, as well as the manipulative potential of its texts, is of undoubted interest.

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