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SPACE AND POPULAR CULTURE IN THE «SOFT POWER» CONCEPT

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This article deals with the relationship between space and popular culture in the context of the concept of "soft power". Culture is an important aspect of the promotion of the State's "soft power". We can observe these processes on the example of activities of the Russian Federation in space policy. Past experience and achievements in space policy have a cultural dimension that enables people to dream of great goals and to familiarize themselves with space culture.

Keywords: space exploration, popular culture, soft power, space policy

The idea of human conquest of space has been a source of inspiration throughout history, eventually finding its expression in architecture, literature, art, and cinema [1]. Culture is an integral part of many processes both within and beyond the state, and in this case, the space industry is no exception. Various tools are used to promote the popularity of space exploration, which "popularize" science and the phenomenon itself in order to attract a wider audience. The developed cultural component of space policy is one of those directions of «soft power», which also creates a positive image of the state, making it recognizable, attractive, and media-friendly [2]. In addition to the propagandistic use of the first innovative successes in the media, the motives and symbolism of space travel have been applied in many ways and variations to create artifacts in the public and private spheres. It is worth noting that in this regard, Russia continues the tradition of the USSR, promoting space science in museums, various centers, architectural objects, photographs, music, literature, and art [1].

It is also worth noting that a significant characteristic of the space culture in Russia is its nostalgia, as even at the state level, the achievements of the past are remembered: «the first artificial satellite in Earth's orbit», «the first human in space», «the first woman cosmonaut», and similar narratives are still used to this day. This is likely done to shift the focus from the current realities of the space industry, which have significantly changed due to crises and turning points in the country's history, and to motivate the population to dream about space and make contributions to space science.

In addition to this, space culture has a multinational direction, since science and technological progress do not belong to any specific nation, and during Soviet times, everyone could identify themselves with space and become carriers of this culture.

Currently, there is a revival of interest in space, largely promoted by the state itself. In the last century, we could see bright examples of foreign performers, such as David Bowie with his song «Space Oddity», Elton John's «Rocket Man», Pink Floyd with their album «The Dark Side of the Moon», or Soviet performers such as the group «Zemlyane» with their famous song «Grass at Home», Lev Leshchenko's «Attraction of the Earth», Muslim Magomayev's «A Girl Called Seagull», Maya Kristalinskaya's «Tenderness», and others. During Soviet times, these compositions had an ideological character and inspired people to heroic deeds.

Currently, we are observing the continuation of a tradition in our space culture, which in one way or another relies on past experience, but at the same time tries to adapt to modern realities. This can also be seen in the composition «Open Space» [3], which is written in the spirit and style of past years. Another question is how well this arrangement fits the realities of 2018, when it was recorded? There is also an example of a song by the band «Mumi Troll» - «Alien Guest», released in its new arrangement in 1997. It can be noted that reflection on the topic of space remains relevant to this day, but its dissemination beyond the country is hindered by the language aspect, as the majority of people simply do not understand the Russian language, and in this sense, examples of musical compositions in English are in a more advantageous position.

Currently, various educational centers dedicated to the history and achievements of domestic space exploration are actively developing. The main center, supervised by the state corporation «Roscosmos», is the Moscow Museum of Cosmonautics, located on the territory of Exhibition of Achievements of National Economy (VDNH). Another important center for promoting space culture and science is the V.P. Glushko Museum of Cosmonautics and Rocket Technology in St. Petersburg.

In addition to everything else, an important tool for promoting space culture is the magazine "Russian Space" - it is an industry publication of the state corporation «Roscosmos», the first issue of which was released in 2018, and it is the successor to the magazines «Space News» and «Russian Space». Issues were published monthly, and a total of 47 issues were published by December 2022, and from 2023 it is expected to transition to a digital format, as it was unable to find its audience physically, remaining a semi-corporate publication for their employees.

Space cinema is also an important direction for the implementation of «soft power» in Russia. This trend has developed as a kind of response by the state to space blockbusters in the United States, where such space blockbusters have been developing for decades and have been successful, as many of the films are well-known worldwide.

It is worth noting that watching films on space themes is a brief immersion into a culture foreign to foreigners, which can have a positive influence on the emerging values and views of the foreign audience, instilling a sense of admiration and interest in the subject of space.

Despite attempts to make films on space themes dating back to the very beginning of the Russian space program in continuation of the Soviet tradition, these film products began to gain momentum and spread in the 2010s, as the internet started to be actively used as a distribution channel. Thanks to this, foreign users had the opportunity to get acquainted with representatives of Russian space films and, by comparing them with American ones, draw their own conclusions about the peculiarities of the Russian film industry.

It is also important to note the characteristics of this phenomenon, namely the retrospective nature of the films - the plot directly or indirectly relates to the Soviet period and the achievements and difficulties of those years. It is for this reason that the main films that have the potential to be examples of the manifestation of «soft power»: «Gagarin: First in Space» in 2013, «Salyut-7» and «The Age of Pioneers» in 2017, «Mira» in 2022, «The Challenge» in 2023.

A notable example is the movie «Salyut-7», released in 2017. Of course, in media publications, one can come across completely opposite opinions regarding the reaction of the foreign audience. Some publications (such as «Kinoafisha») note that the film was not appreciated by foreigners and was literally «trampled», and they pointed out the overt ideological bias made in the spirit of a «political thriller».

One of Russia's important projects in promoting space exploration is the feature film «Challenge», released on April 20, 2023. This film officially became the first film shot in space with the participation of real theater and film actors on the International Space Station. If previously all films about space had a documentary and popular science character, and visual effects and so-called «green screen» technology were used in films for mass audiences, new horizons have now been opened. Thus, the state has created an occasion, indicating that a new era of creating space films of an entirely new level has begun.

To promote «The Challenge» at the global level, it was decided to organize film screenings in 20 countries, which, in particular, included Egypt, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Palestine and other states of North Africa and the Middle East [5]. As we can assume, the choice of these countries is not accidental: it is probably done both for financial reasons and the desire to attract new investments and people who are just beginning to develop in the field of cosmonautics to the Russian space industry.

Thus, mass culture and space are interconnected in the context of the "soft power" concept and are actively used by Russia to promote its achievements on the world stage.

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КОСМОС И МАССОВАЯ КУЛЬТУРА В КОНЦЕПЦИИ «МЯГКОЙ СИЛЫ»

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В данной статье рассматривается взаимосвязь между космосом и массовой культурой в контексте концепции "мягкой силы". Культура является важным аспектом продвижения «мягкой силы» государства. Мы можем наблюдать эти процессы на примере деятельности Российской Федерации в области космической политики. Прошлый опыт и достижения в области космической политики имеют культурное измерение, которое позволяет людям мечтать о великих целях и знакомиться с космической культурой.

Ключевые слова: освоение космоса, массовая культура, «мягкая сила», космическая политика

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