

## Artículo de investigación

**Image of The Communist Party of The Russian Federation as Viewed by Russian Students: Factor Semantic Reconstruction****Образ Коммунистической партии Российской Федерации в представлении российской студенческой молодежи: факторная семантическая реконструкция**

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[https://elibrary.ru/author\\_items.asp?authorid=773491](https://elibrary.ru/author_items.asp?authorid=773491)**Abstract**

The article presents the results of the semantic reconstruction of the image of a political party (the Communist Party of the Russian Federation) as viewed by students of classical and technical universities. This reconstruction allows determining the structure of political thinking typical of the Russian youth.

To study students' beliefs and ideas, the authors of the article use the method of semantic differential. The article is based on a unipolar 50-scale semantic differential entitled "political party" and developed by V.V. Kalita and E.B. Marin to evaluate the properties of political parties. The evaluation results were subject to factor analysis in conformity with the method described by V.P. Serkin.

The factor analysis of the data determines the evaluation structure used by respondents in

**Аннотация**

В статье представлены результаты семантической реконструкции образа политической партии - Коммунистическая партия Российской Федерации в представлении студенческой молодежи классического университета и технического вуза. Данная реконструкция позволила выявить структуру политического мышления российской молодежи

Для изучения представлений студентов был использован метод семантического дифференциала. В настоящем исследовании был использован униполярный 50-ти шкальный семантического дифференциала «политическая партия», разработанный Калитой В.В. и Мариным Е.Б. для оценки свойств политических партий. Результаты оценки были подвергнуты процедурам

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relation to the Communist Party of the Russian Federation.

The key axes for evaluating parties are the axes of "pride" and "fear". They contain basic criteria for evaluating parties. These axes, or evaluation criteria, reflect the key categories of political thinking common to the Russian youth.

The study results can help develop youth policies of parties and government, as well as contribute to the further study of political ideas common to the Russian youth.

**Keywords:** Political party, psychosemantics, party image, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, political psychology, semantic differential, students.

факторного анализа по методу, описанному В.П. Серкиным.

Проведенный факторный анализ данных, позволил выявить структуру оценивания группой испытуемых Коммунистической партии Российской Федерации.

Ключевыми «осями», для оценивания партии, являются оси факторов «гордости» и «страха». Они содержат базовые критерии оценки партии. Данные «оси» или критерии оценивания, как нам представляется, отражают ключевые категории политического мышления российской молодежи,

Результаты исследования могут быть применены при разработке молодежной политики партий и государственной власти, а также использованы в дальнейших исследованиях семантического пространства представлений российской молодежи о политике.

**Ключевые слова:** политическая партия, психосемантика, образ партии, КПРФ, политическая психология, семантический дифференциал, студенты.

## Introduction

**Relevance.** In recent years, Russian politics has experienced a whole series of new phenomena. After the elections to the State Duma in 2011 and 2016, the reformation of the Russian party system intensified. The existing party system started to develop and party competition increased. By 2017, the number of parties had reached 70.

It is noteworthy that the youth reclaimed its role in politics after a long break. The street protests of March 2017-2019 demonstrated that the Russian young people reclaimed their political activity and political forces increased their struggle for winning the hearts of the youth.

Currently, there is a change of political generations, i.e. the leaders of the 1990-2000s are being replaced with new political figures. Under these conditions, the younger generation of Russians starts to play a more prominent role. The development of Russian politics and the future of the whole country will largely depend on their choice and priorities. At the same time, the Russian youth is still a mystery: its values, way of thinking and ideas about politics are understudied. The whole psychological

dimension of politics remains insufficiently explored.

The relevance of this topic to political institutions, including parties, is conditioned by their need to build communication with the youth and receive feedback.

To better understand the political consciousness of the Russian youth, we studied the images of the leading political parties in Russia, including United Russia and the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, as viewed by a group of students in Vladivostok.

**Theoretical aspects of the article.** In the 1990s, Russian scholars began to use the methods of psychosemantics to study political mindset. For instance, V.F. Petrenko and O.V. Mitina developed their approach to study political mindset with the help of psychosemantics (Petrenko, 2017). They reconstructed the semantic space of political parties (Petrenko, 1991; 1997) and the state image (Petrenko, 2009).

In psychosemantics, subjective mental maps are an operational model that describes the categorical structure of consciousness and the subject's personal meanings relating to certain content. They generalize the original description language common to the subject (respondent), where primary descriptors (scales as defined by Ch. Osgood) or constructs (in terms of J. Kelly) are grouped using multivariate statistics (factor, cluster, discriminant analysis and multidimensional scaling) into more capacious categories of factors (Petrenko, 2015, P. 30).

This approach was applied to the analysis of political parties. V.F. Petrenko highlighted that mental maps built over the "scaling" of political parties expressing political attitudes of society can act as an operational model of the political consciousness of any given society (Petrenko, 1995, P. 109).

There are three possible directions of studying parties through the methods of psychosemantics (Petrenko, 2015, P. 30-32).

1. Forming the semantic space of political parties (Petrenko, 1991). To solve this issue, the questionnaire we have developed comprises judgments of the current political discourse. Interviewees (respondents) from the leadership of political parties evaluate the judgments included in the list.
2. The semantic space of party images (Petrenko, 1997; Petrenko, 2010). When building the images of political parties, common voters observing their political activities from the outside act as respondents. Their task is to evaluate the political parties presented according to the range of descriptor scales. This aspect of analysis is the most relevant for this study.
3. Assessing the electoral power of political parties. The degree of social support of a particular party is evaluated by placing voters' positions into the semantic space of the above-mentioned parties (Petrenko, 1997).

The images of political parties in Russia are also investigated within the framework of Russian political psychology. A number of studies were conducted at the Department for Social and Political Psychology of the Faculty of Political Science, the Moscow State University. Such scholars as E.B. Shestopal, I.S. Palitai, A.V. Zatonkikh, A.L. Zverev and N.V. Smulkina developed their own methodology for studying

the images of political phenomena, including the images of politicians and parties (Shestopal, 2008; Palitai, 2016; Palitai, 2012; Zverev, 2016). E.B. Shestopal and I.S. Palitai created a set of unique methods for studying the images of parties. They proceeded from the idea that the image of parties contains a rational and an unconscious component. The rational component was studied by the method of focused interviews, while the unconscious component was analyzed with the help of projective methods. As a result, the scholars concluded that party images reflect motives, knowledge, opinions, stereotypes, emotions and demands of mass consciousness to the above-mentioned parties. Furthermore, visual and verbal structural elements should be distinguished within the images of political parties and studied individually (Shestopal, 2014, P. 33).

During the recent study of the mass political consciousness of Russians conducted in 2016, the above-mentioned scholars analyzed both rational (using in-depth interviews) and unconscious (using projective methods, associations and the method of incomplete sentences) components within the images of Russian politicians and authorities. After summarizing the study results, the researchers concluded that the Russian population considered the images of the current government in terms of its moral attractiveness (Shestopal, 2016).

In addition to experts in the field of psychosemantics and political psychology, sociologists also consider the images of political parties. Nowadays, the sociology of the Internet has become one of the newest and most promising areas of political research. For example, D.V. Chizhov's article presents a substantial overview of online tools forming the image of parties. The author analyzed the available metadata and showed how the Internet and mass media represent the leading Russian parties (Chizhov, 2016).

This article semantically reconstructs the image of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation as viewed by students and cadets attending the Far Eastern Federal University and G.I. Nevelskoi Maritime State University (Vladivostok, Russian Federation). According to Russian political psychology, a political image usually means a reflection of various political phenomena, including political institutions of society, political power and personalities of political leaders, in the mass and individual

consciousness of citizens (Shestopal, 2008, P. 12-13).

### Materials and Methods

In total, 145 people participated in the study: 71 students and 74 cadets. The first group is represented by attendees of the classical Far Eastern Federal University studying at the School of Arts and Humanities and pursuing their degrees in "Psychology", "Social work" and "Advertising and public relations" (hereinafter referred to as "students").

The second group of respondents is represented by cadets of the sectoral G.I. Nevol'skoi Maritime State University pursuing their degrees in "Ship navigation", "Operation of ship power plants" and "Operation of ship electrical equipment" (hereinafter referred to as "cadets").

To study ideas of the Russian youth, we used the method of semantic differential initially developed by Charles Osgood. The application of this method and methods of statistical data processing was described by E.Yu. Artemeva, V.F. Petrenko, A.G. Shmelev and V.P. Serkin (Artemeva, 1999; Petrenko, 2010; Serkin, 2000; 2008; Shmelev, 1983).

To assess the incentive "the Communist Party of the Russian Federation", the students and cadets were provided with the form of an individual semantic differential entitled "political party". This unipolar 50-scale semantic differential was developed by E.B. Marin and V.V. Kalita for evaluating properties of political parties (Marin, 2013).

The results of the party assessment were collected in the table of primary data and then subject to factor analysis (Serkin, 2008).

The data recorded were factorized using the SPSS program and principal component analysis (Extraction Method: Principal Component

Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization).

The factors identified in the course of factor analysis are represented as groups of scales with a significant correlation between them. Each factor is the axis of assessing a political party. The identification of these axes allows reconstructing the evaluation structures of political parties used by the students and cadets.

### Results

#### Comparative analysis of the evaluation of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation by the cadets and students

The factor analysis of the evaluation of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation by the students of a classical university has revealed eight interpretable factors, with the cumulative% of variance 61% and eigenvalues = 1.2.

At the same time, the factor analysis of the assessment of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation by the cadets of a sectoral university has revealed nine interpretable factors, with the cumulative% of variance 77% and eigenvalues = 1.3.

While comparing the factorial structure of the evaluation of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation by the cadets and students, we revealed some similarities and differences. Many factors have a complex structure and comprise several integral characteristics, i.e. groups of descriptors connected by a common meaning.

**Table 1.** The factorial structure of the evaluation of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation by the cadets of the G.I. Nevelskoi Maritime State University and the humanitarian students of the Far Eastern Federal University. *The matching factors are highlighted.*

Factor number	Data selection	
	Humanitarian students of the Far Eastern Federal University	Cadets of the G.I. Nevelskoi Maritime State University
<b>1</b>	<b>1. Pride</b>	<b>1. Pride</b>
<b>2</b>	2. Strong leadership	<b>2. Fear or corruption</b>
<b>3</b>	3. Fair communism	3. Public concerns
<b>4</b>	<b>4. Elite and dignity</b>	<b>4. Elite</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>5. Fear or corruption</b>	<b>5. Crime</b>
<b>6</b>	6. Dependencies	6. Religion and modernization
<b>7</b>	<b>7. Crime</b>	7. Patriotic opposition
<b>8</b>	8. Conservatism	8. Strong-willed leadership
<b>9</b>		9. Charisma

Table 1 and Table 2 below demonstrate that four factors are present in both groups of respondents. They include the factors of "pride", "fear or corruption", "elite" and "crime". These data indicate the stable assessment of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation in the students' consciousness.

The analysis of the **"pride"** factor revealed its three stable and integral characteristics: "pride", "progressiveness" and "ability to do something". Since these evaluation structures were used by all the respondents, they seem to be of great significance. We believe that this factor is mostly conditioned by the need to feel pride in the country and the associated self-esteem. Therefore, the structure of party evaluation includes such important scales as "to evoke pride in Russia" and "can make Russia great".

Such characteristics as "pride in the country" and "the greatness of Russia" have many parallels in history, art and politics. Their presence in the minds of modern young people shows that they have not lost their significance yet.

Integral characteristics of the "pride" factor are as follows: "progressiveness" and "ability to do something". Their presence testifies to the importance of the party's ability to solve social problems and lead the country into the future.

We believe that the **"fear or corruption"** factor expresses the fear of one's security and disappointment in the existing politics, as well as the fear of corruption and selfish policies.

The structure of this factor differs among the cadets and students. In addition to the integral "fear" characteristic, the students pointed out descriptors with the meaning of "crime". The

cadets complemented the semantic core with such integral characteristics as "corruption and selfishness" and "the country's dependence".

The **"crime"** factor is closely related to the "fear" factor. It combines the meanings of crime and social stratification. This factor indicates the importance of political crimes for young people. Both students and cadets included the integral characteristic **"the country's dependence"** into the structure of the "fear" and "crime" factors. In our opinion, this trend is explained by their concerns for the sovereignty of Russia and, accordingly, the importance of the relevant features in the structure of party evaluation. Such a characteristic as "the country's dependence or independence" is historically determined, has deep roots in national consciousness and is still vital today. Therefore, any political force and politician should consider these ideas when addressing the Russian youth.

We can assume that the respondents found the **"elite"** factor so important because they considered it significant to evaluate the human potential of parties.

Does it embrace the best people and the cream of Russian society? The answer to this question seems to be important for young people today.

Moreover, the students gave this factor a more complex structure. They found a connection between the importance of party elitism and positive emotions, such as self-esteem and confidence in the state.

In addition, the students named such an integral characteristic of the "elite" factor as "modernization" which the cadets did not use.

The "**fair communism**" factor reveals the youth's ideas about a patriotic party similar to the Communist Party of the Russian Federation. Its structure intersects with the factor of "patriotic opposition".

The "**patriotic opposition**" factor reflects the ideas about the opposition and other patriotic aspects of the party. The opposition and authoritarian style of the party defending the moral foundations of society is supposedly expressed as a component of the "**conservatism**" factor.

The social orientation of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation is mostly reflected in the "**public concerns**" factor. It contains an almost complete set of socially oriented characteristics of any political party.

Besides four coinciding factors, we also identified five cross-cutting factors for two samples of integral characteristics.

The integral characteristic of "strong leadership" is conveyed as the factor of "strong-willed leadership" reconstructed by the students and named as a part of the "pride" factor by the cadets.

The cadets referred to the topic of leadership (the integral characteristic of "strong leadership" as a part of the factors of "pride", "charisma" and "strong-willed leadership") three times (Table 2). At the same time, the students manifested this characteristic only once in the factor of "strong-willed leadership". This fact suggests that the cadets tend to think in leadership categories. This peculiar feature can be related to the gender and professional specifics of their consciousness.

The generalized characteristic of "strong leadership" in both groups of respondents proves that it is one of the key components in the structure of party evaluation. The sustainability of this characteristic is due to the youth's need for leadership. Considering this phenomenon in a broader context, we should say that Russian society always recognizes the importance of "strong leadership". It is connected with the historical model of autocratic power and geopolitical conditions for the development of the Russian people.

The integral characteristic of "the country's dependence" is repeated in the "fear" factor of the cadets and the "crime" factor of the students.

The "dependence" factor named by the students has a clear analogy with the integral characteristic of "the country's dependence". We can say that these structures describe the existence of two dependence types: internal (a party depending on the executive branch) and external (Russia depending on other countries).

The integral characteristic of "progressiveness" is present in the structure of the "pride" factor among both groups of respondents. It shows that the youth pays attention to the party's ability to propose new things and keep up with the times. This characteristic intersects with the integral characteristic of "religion and modernization". The topics of progress and modernization reflect the importance of the future for young people.

The students associated the integral characteristic of "religion and modernization" with the "elite" factor, while the cadets connected it with the factor of "religion and modernization". Both associations have two related scales: "to strengthen the role of religion in society" and "to bring Russia closer to Western countries".

The role of religion in connection with modernization was quite unexpected. It might reflect the idea of "modern" religion in the respondents' consciousness. This issue is worthy of further research.

The integral characteristic of "legitimacy" is represented as a part of the "pride" factor among the cadets and within the "strong-willed leadership" factor among the students. The presence of this characteristic shows that young people lay emphasis on observing human rights and freedoms in Russia.

Comparing the factorial structures we obtained with the factorial structures of political parties reconstructed by V.F. Petrenko and O.V. Mitina, we noted that the categorical structure of party evaluation has significantly changed over the past twenty years (Petrenko, 1994, 1997). However, common elements are still present.

Thus, the factors of "crime" and "fear or corruption" we identified have much in common with the factor of "socially oriented economy with elements of populism/criminalized economy" reconstructed by V.F. Petrenko. The scholar revealed it while analyzing the attitude of voters to the main political parties of Russia on the eve of the 1995 parliamentary elections. This factor included the following key descriptor: "expresses the interests of the shadow economy

and mafia formations associated with the criminal world" (Petrenko, 1997, P. 145-146). This descriptor is similar to such scales as "contributes to the growth of crime due to its policy", "protects only its own interests" and "corruption is associated with its policy" within the two factors we identified (Table 2).

In addition, the integral characteristic of "religion and modernization" we reconstructed is similar to the factor of "strengthening the role of religion – atheism" (Petrenko, 1994, P. 37-39).

The integral characteristic of "the country's dependence" also has clear parallels in earlier reconstructions.

**Table 2.** Comparing the factorial structure of the evaluation of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation by the cadets and humanities students.

No.	Factor name	List of the key descriptors	Students	Cadets
1	<b>Pride</b>	Can make Russia great Evoke pride in Russia Increase trust in the state Contribute to self-esteem- Can solve the problem of terrorism Can restore order in the country- Can ensure economic growth- Its policy conditions fear for one's safety	(27.9%)	(13.3%)
2	<b>Fear or corruption</b>	Cause disappointment in democracy Increase tension in society Protect only their own interests Its policy is associated with growing corruption	(6%)	(10.4%)
3	<b>Elite</b>	Include the cream of Russian society Can adapt to the demands of time	(6%)	(6.2%)
4	<b>Crime</b>	Aggravate crime rates through its policies Increase social stratification	(5.2%)	(5.1%)
5	Dependencies	Depend on the executive branch Speak in layman's terms Help to feel confidence in the future Can turn Russia into a mere supplier of raw materials Promote new political candidates	(5.6%)	-
6	Strong leadership	Have outstanding leaders Have strong-willed leaders Have competent managers Support social justice Listen to the opinion of common party members Remind of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Can create new vacancies	(13.1%)	-
7	Fair communism	Firmly adhere to the current law Growing corruption is associated with its policies (-) Be pro-nation state Can increase population welfare Protect only their own interests (-) Support the idea of authoritarian power	(8.2%)	-
8	Conservatism	Form opposition Committed to the economic development of Russia Protect the moral foundations of society Have outstanding leaders Can increase population welfare	(5.1%)	-
9	Charisma	Be pro-nation state Increase the dependence of Russia on other countries due to its policy (-) Protect the moral foundations of society	-	(3.8%)
10	Respect	Support the development of the Russian economy Enjoy the respect of society	-	(10.1%)

		Support social justice		
		Respond to pressing issues of society		
		Serve the state interests		
		Ensure human rights and freedoms		
		Promote the unity of people		
		Have competent leaders		
11	Religion and modernization	Try increasing the role of religion in society		
		Promote new political candidates	-	(4.6 %)
		Bring Russia closer to Western countries		
12	Patriotic opposition	Form opposition		
		Speak in layman's terms	-	(4.5 %)
		Be pro-nation state		
13	Strong-willed leadership	Have strong-willed leaders		
		Can create new vacancies	-	(4 %)

## Conclusion

Having considered the semantic differential "political party" using the method of factor analysis, we have defined the meanings derived by the cadets of the G.I. Nevolskoi Maritime State University and the humanitarian students of the Far Eastern Federal University in the process of evaluating the "Communist Party of the Russian Federation". The comparison of these factorial structures has proved that four factors (the assessment scale for parties) are used by both groups of the respondents. The factors are as follows: "pride", "fear or corruption", "elite" and "crime".

In addition, we have determined evaluation factors (assessment scales) unique to each group. The cadets used such evaluation factors as "public concerns", "religion and modernization", "patriotic opposition" and "strong-willed leadership".

The students used the following evaluation factors: "dependencies", "fair communism" and "conservatism".

While analyzing the consciousness of the Russian youth, we have revealed evaluation structures of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation. Some of these structures are associated with the image of the party itself, the others are more deep-seated and reflect the basic categories of Russian political thinking.

Further study can be concerned with the differentiation of deep evaluation structures and focused on one specific party.

The key axes for evaluating the party are the "pride" and "fear" factors. They reflect the key categories of political thinking common to the Russian youth and contain the basic criteria for

evaluating the party. They also express the most powerful emotions associated with politics.

Therefore, the semantic reconstruction we conducted through factor analysis has helped us determine the main categories of party evaluation as exemplified by one of the leading Russian parties. We believe that these axes, or assessment criteria, reflect the key categories of the political thinking typical of the Russian youth.

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