

## TO THE ISSUE OF THE IDEOLOGICAL FUNCTION OF THE STATE IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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### **Article info**

Received –

2023 October 25

Accepted –

2023 December 29

Available online –

2024 March 20

### **Keywords**

State ideology, state, society, digitalisation, freedom, safety, ideological function, totalitarian state, digital totalitarianism

**Introduction.** With the development of scientific and technological progress and the gradual increase in the popularity of digital technologies, the state was forced to adapt to changing conditions and search for new ways of the informational impact on society. Modern technologies allow the state to successfully fulfil its ideological function through various Internet resources, social networks and other services. Nevertheless, in case of misuse and excessive ideological influence on society, there is a threat of establishing a totalitarian state, which, using modern technologies, will be able to establish full control over society and the individual.

**Purpose.** The purpose of this paper is to examine the impact of digitalisation on the ideological function of the state, and to describe the probable threats that this process may bring.

**Methodology.** The following methods were used: comparative-legal method, formal-logical, analysis, synthesis.

**Results.** The main aspects that show the impact of digitalization on the fulfilment of the ideological function by the state are outlined, the threat of building digital totalitarianism is described.

**Conclusion.** The state, exercising its ideological function aimed at forming value orientations, preserving unity within society and increasing the legitimacy of the state itself, has acquired significant opportunities in modern conditions. However, on the opposite side there is threat of establishing a totalitarian state with the only accepted and permitted ideology and a multitude of tools, including digital ones, for its dissemination and protection. Authors' contributions. Sections 1, 4, 5 prepared by A.E. Evstratov; sections 2, 3 prepared by Zh.A. Shugulbaev. In all other respects, authors made equivalent contributions to the publication.

## 1. Introduction

In the 21st century, scientific and technological progress has led to the emergence of many different technological products, gadgets and other computer devices, which gradually, along with the improvement of these products and devices, have been integrated into social life and covered an increasing number of spheres of human life, starting with applications in highly specialized professional and scientific fields, and over time developing into other, more "mass" areas.

While digitalization and virtualization are still gaining new dimensions, regular interaction with technology has already become an integral part of everyday life. Nowadays, various processes taking place in society, including communication between population groups, cultural communities, individuals and society as a whole, are inextricably linked to and largely dependent on technologies, as the latter makes it possible to simplify and speed up communication, as well as to increase the potential range of people with whom one can interact and influence. The above-mentioned could not remain unnoticed by the state, which also began to use technologies to interact with society and the individual in the framework of a wide range of its tasks, among which the implementation of the ideological function takes a special place.

Therefore, for the purposes of this study, we believe it is necessary to provide a general characteristic and describe the features of the implementation of the ideological function of the state in the era of digitalization, outlining the main directions, highlighting the key aspects and justifying the practical significance of the issues chosen for the study.

## 2. The concept and general characteristics of the ideological function of the state

First of all, it is necessary to clarify what we mean by "ideological function", and give some of its essential characteristics and distinctive features. Ideological function is an independent type in the classification of state functions, the allocation of

which is caused by an inseparable connection with ideology. The ideology of the state can be interpreted as a systematized set of concepts, ideas, perceptions, which can be provided in order to justify the legitimacy of public authority [1, p. 9], and the ideological function itself - as an activity to form, maintain, promote, strengthen a certain ideology of the state [2, p. 63]. At the same time, there is no unified and harmonized definition of the concept of ideological function, as well as a set of its main directions, signs and features in the doctrine at the moment. For example, A.L. Bredikhin, disagreeing with the identification of the concepts of "function" and "activity" sets out a slightly different understanding of the ideological function of the state from the understanding given above, noting that it does not always mean real activity, but also the potential possibility of this activity, which is based on the state's ability to exercise ideological activity [3, p. 52]. In addition, the author emphasizes that the ideological function is also a state's necessity, and the very content of the ideological function goes beyond one of the areas of the state's activities [3, p. 52]. In this case, since the problems considered in this paper are not directly devoted to the conceptual framework and other theoretical aspects, we believe it is feasible not to go into a detailed consideration of this issue, limiting ourselves to a brief description of the key features and the main forms of implementation of the ideological function by the state.

The typical features of the ideological function of the state include the following: it is an activity of state power, a managerial, substantive-political, objective and determined by the objectives of the state. Through them its interrelation with other functions of the state can be traced, to which these features are also inherent. The implementation of the ideological function often takes two forms: legal and organizational [4, p. 333]. The former is commonly understood as both directly normative legal regulation coming from the state in terms of proclaiming and consolidating the main ideological postulates, values and patterns of behaviour approved by the state, and law enforcement activities to counter attempts of ideological intervention on the part of both external and internal ideological enemies and opponents.

Meanwhile, the organizational form of implementation of the ideological function can include factual activities and specific actions on the part of state bodies and officials aimed at the formation of "proper" from the point of view of the state public opinion, certain values and principles of an individual and the protection of them from external negative ideological influence.

Therefore, the ideological function of the state for the purposes of this paper can be understood as the activity of the state administration aimed at the implementation of state ideology, which is associated not only with the development, consolidation and maintenance at the official level of ideological attitudes and values, but also with other actions on ideological influence on society and the individual to achieve the objectives of the state.

### **3. Ideological function of the state: goals and modern ways of their achievement**

The ideological function has long been of crucial importance for the state functioning, as it affects various aspects and processes - both external and internal. Among the internal aspects, first of all, we can highlight the previously mentioned maintenance of interaction between different social groups and individuals. A split in society can lead to disintegration of the latter, which means that it is necessary to take measures to consolidate it, among which ideology takes an important place [5, p. 31]. The ideological component can help to ensure the consolidation through the articulation of such narratives and the formation of public opinion that would help to unite people and prevent the emergence of conflict situations within society. This also implies another positive effect of the state's realization of its ideological function - increasing the legitimacy of the state itself. T.N. Radko writes the following about this aspect: "Ideas that find support among the population, increase its legitimacy and legitimization, strengthen state power and, accordingly, increase the effectiveness of social and state transformations" [6, p. 12].

Among the external aspects, in turn, we can distinguish the provision of security and

preservation of state sovereignty, strengthening of geopolitical position and expansion of possible spheres of its political and cultural influence in international relations. It seems that even with a more detailed classification of the external functions of the state (the function of national defence, the function of ensuring peace and maintaining order, the function of integration into the world economy, the function of protecting its own citizens abroad, the function of cooperation with other states [7, pp. 48-49]) the importance of the ideological function will be noticeable in any of the above.

As Y.I. Strelezky and V.A. Kashin note, "the most developed countries are those that have a state ideology, relying on which they became such" [8, p. 193]. We believe that O.E. Kutafin's opinion is also justified: "Society and the state cannot exist without ideology. In order to develop, they must have a concept of development, which is the choice of certain ideological attitudes" [9, p. 378]. In addition, regarding sovereignty and the very existence of the state as such, it is noted that ideology is recognized by most state scientists as a feature of the state along with territory, authority and others [10, p. 97]. We also agree with N.A. Bobrova, who compares the state without ideology to a person without thoughts [11, p. 137].

Finally, to other, more complex aspects that are influenced by ideology, but no less important and largely related to the above-mentioned, researchers include the following: the formation of values and ideals (for example, traditional values, family - in a society with a conservative ideology, freedom - in a society with a liberal ideology), which the population is guided by and strives to achieve; assistance in determining the needs of society and the state, as well as ways to achieve the goals set by the state [12, pp. 21-22]. In general, it can be argued that the state ideology, especially well formulated, is an indispensable condition for the effectiveness of both domestic and foreign policy of the state, ensuring its stability and strength [13, p. 211].

Further, after describing the main directions of the state policy, in which the ideological function plays an important role, it seems appropriate to cite and characterize the main "digital tools" through which the state influences public life in order to

implement the goals and objectives in the directions listed above.

A characteristic of the modern world and a striking feature of the past few decades and especially of recent years is the progressively simplifying access to information. With the emergence and gradual improvement, as well as with the popularization of the Internet, portable computer devices, voice assistants, other gadgets and technologies, more and more people are becoming involved in one global information and media space. Information about different events, whether they are of regional, state or global importance, is constantly available in the news feeds of browsers and discussed in messengers and social networks. All this opens up qualitatively different opportunities for the state to interact with society and influence it. As E.Y. Dugin notes, "Ideological influence is strengthened by mediatization processes that spread through the entire system of social relations" [14, p. 109]. In relation to the thesis mentioned above, we can distinguish several key forms of its manifestations.

First, with the emergence of social media, many people began to openly post information about themselves, share personal photos and talk about their lifestyles. As a consequence, this led to a transformation of political life, with statesmen and politicians also creating accounts and blogging on social media. At the same time, social networks were not so much a way for them to share events from their lives with others, but rather an opportunity to broadcast the ideas they needed and, at the same time, to increase their political capital, to become more and more famous, and, as researchers note, to form a positive image [15, p. 213]. In this aspect, it is also worth mentioning the phenomenon of "twitter diplomacy", the emergence of which is associated with the election campaigns of Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, during which they actively used social media [16, p. 51].

Afterwards, an increasing number of politicians began to actively talk about themselves and their activities on social networks, which made it possible to simplify communication with the audience and expand the potential range of people

to whom certain information could be addressed. "Twitter diplomacy" also affected the international component of political life, as it allowed to enter into discussions with foreign politicians, comment on their statements and make one's own, ideologically influencing the population of foreign countries. The latter has become increasingly important over time, as many social networks, media and websites already have an integrated translator, which makes international communication easier, including by "removing" the language barrier.

Secondly, as it was said earlier, the ideological function of the state is important for the implementation of domestic policy, and appears, among other things, in the formation of certain values and ideals in society. Technological progress has led to the gradual displacement of previously widespread means of communication and information (TV and radio broadcasts, newspapers) by new, more modern ones (websites, social networks, etc.). Their popularity, as it is noted, was largely due to the fact that for a long time the Internet media and other digital resources were independent from state influence and, in particular, from censorship, were formed in competitive conditions and preserved the users' right to freedom of speech [17, p. 160]. Over time, they have replaced for a significant part of individuals previously habitual sources of information and interaction, which, at the same time, were not deprived of state intervention, and therefore the state in order to maintain its influence on these individuals had to adapt to constantly changing conditions due to the development of technology and look for new ways of ideological influence on society.

The Internet community is characterized by the availability of information and the ability of users to independently determine the sources of information they need. This is also reflected in the existence of many different influencers. For the state, however, this means the existence of difficulties associated with the need to overcome possible contradictory points of view in the implementation of its ideological function. This problem can be partially solved by state regulation

of the Internet space, especially necessary in terms of countering various extremist and other destructive ideologies disseminated to destabilize society.

However, the effort to preserve moral and ethical standards, values and ideals, cultural norms, which together constitute what is commonly understood as ideology, is not limited to legal regulation and law enforcement activities. As noted by researchers, law enforcement alone is not able to prevent the spread of extremist content [18, p. 12]. Consequently, other ways of influencing society are also required. In this context, we believe it is appropriate to refer to the thesis about the need for state propaganda in the meaning in which this term is understood as the activity of information influence aimed at preserving the consolidation of society, the formation of certain values among the population, respect for the state and its history, as well as precautionary work to prevent unlawful behaviour [19, p. 12].

For this purpose, the state has to resort to the usual, open ways of influencing the population, including through official statements published in online media and messengers or, on the contrary, denials or clarifications of certain issues of interest and discussion. At the same time, it is also possible that the state may use other digital means of influence, including manipulative ones, for ideological purposes. These include the use of "bots" to promote a point of view that corresponds to the state point of view. Bots are understood to be certain automated programs that are capable of disseminating information while making it seem as if a real Internet user is doing so. Especially if they are used on a large scale, real users may be persuaded, for example, that there is wide public support for a certain point of view.

If the use of such digital technologies is aimed at protecting against the influence of the previously mentioned destructive ideas, in particular, to criticize them, and at spreading common human values, as well as ideas that unite society and increase the legitimacy of the state, then perhaps such use of digital technologies for ideological purposes can be justified to some

extent. However, bots and other similar technologies are often used not for the defence of values, ideals and moral rules, but as part of political confrontation, and are most actively used during the intensification of contradictions in society and the aggravation of social and political conflicts.

Thirdly, with the development of digital technologies, the state has fundamentally different opportunities to collect information about the demands and needs of society and the prevailing points of view. By collecting and analysing statistical data collected, in particular, on the basis of search requests in browsers, conducting sociological surveys among respondents on a large number of various Internet resources, the state gets the opportunity to monitor and study the interests and needs of individuals and social groups. Consequently, possessing such information, the state can fulfil its ideological function and influence society in the most effective way.

Therefore, we believe that with the development of digital technologies, the state in the implementation of its domestic and foreign policy has obtained such large-scale opportunities for information influence on individuals, which were previously unavailable for objective reasons. Modern person is a part of the global information space, through which he receives information about the world around him and communicates with other people. At the same time, however, he becomes an object of ideological influence of the state, which over time has adapted to the changed conditions, mastered and began to actively use digital technologies to disseminate certain ideas and to counter views that contradict the official doctrine.

#### **4. The threat of digital totalitarianism as a consequence of abuses in the exercise of the ideological function of the state**

Despite the fact that earlier in this paper the issue of the ideological impact of the state on society through digital technologies was mainly revealed in the context of beneficial influence: in order to preserve order, stability and well-being in society, as well as the protection of values and ideals, attention should also be paid to the threats that could potentially become a reality if abuses are

allowed. Such threats include various forms of restrictions on the right to freedom of speech and other rights and freedoms, the suppression and active opposition to any form of dissent, and, finally, the emergence of a totalitarian society, which in the digital age will be under full state control. Let us consider this threat in more detail.

The desire to form certain value ideals, establish moral principles and create conditions for harmonious coexistence of individuals in society can certainly be considered a necessary direction of the state's activity. Nevertheless, looking at examples of practical implementation of this activity, we can come to the conclusion about the danger of excessive control by the state and beyond reasonable imposition of certain rules of behaviour on the population.

In support of this thesis, let us look at the example of the introduction of the social rating system in the People's Republic of China. This system itself, as researchers note, is "ranking of an individual depending on the rating assigned to him and, based on this, granting special preferential treatment or restriction of rights to a citizen" [20, p. 44]. As the goals for which such a system was originally conceived and subsequently introduced, they call the increase of trust among the population [21, p. 94], as well as the desire to form honesty, integrity, a sense of responsibility, sincerity and moral principles [22]. While the declared objectives of the introduction, on the one hand, can, to a certain extent, justify such state intervention in the lives of individuals and ideological influence on them, however, on the other hand, it is impossible not to note the negative aspects and disadvantages of such control and governance of human behaviour and lifestyle.

Firstly, the most probable of the perceived disadvantages is the threat of a gradual increase in ideological influence on the individual, which will be carried out everywhere in the digital space: from control over news posted on information resources to the use of the previously described bots to manipulate public opinion. Over time, such ideological influence may lead to the complete displacement and prohibition of other, non-state-sanctioned points of view. Second, as a

consequence, another possible disadvantage may be embodied, which is the loss of freedom of the individual or its significant restriction, because the ideological influence of the state in the system under consideration will go far beyond recommendations about the preferred behaviour of the individual - it will directly dictate it and take actions in case of disobedience. The desire to achieve trust and honesty within society in a totalitarian state can rapidly take the form of complete control over people's movements, communication and other activities.

In the digital age, however, the state has a wide range of devices and technologies as tools for exercising such control, which allow it to monitor the activities of an individual throughout the day and, in case of non-compliance of his behaviour with the accepted and approved in the state, to take action. Under such a system, people with low social rankings are restricted in their rights, including opportunities for employment and career development, social networking and other elements necessary for life in society. For example, in the People's Republic of China, social ranking determines a person's position in society: in particular, the choice of study institutions for education, opportunities to get certain jobs and freedom of movement [23].

Consequently, the ideological function of the state in the digital age can carry significant threats to the freedom of society and the individual. These threats consist in the possibility of large-scale information influence on the population, as well as control over the compliance of human behaviour with the disseminated ideology. Both of these shortcomings may result in the establishment of a digital totalitarian state in which people will be significantly limited in the ability to exercise their rights and freedoms.

## 5. Conclusion

Scientific and technological progress has significantly affected the relationship between the individual, society and the state. With the development of digital technologies, the state has new large-scale opportunities for ideological influence on the population in the realization of its domestic and

foreign policy. Ideology is necessary for the state because it fulfils an integrative function, uniting the population of the country into a single entity [24, p. 37], and also forms the direction of people's lives and activities and determines the values [25, p. 62]. Modern digital resources, gadgets and other devices make it possible to reach various social groups, communities and individuals, spreading the necessary concepts for preserving public welfare, increasing legitimacy and trust to the authorities, and play a significant role in counteracting

disintegration and illegal ideologies. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind the possibility of abuse by the state in the exercise of its ideological function, and to prevent it, because otherwise the ideology disseminated and protected by the state with the help of digital technologies can lead to the creation of a totalitarian state, in which ideology will be aimed not at ensuring the safety and harmonious existence of individuals in society, but at complete control over their activities and obedience to established rules.

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Evstratov A.E., Shugulbaev Zh.A. To the issue of the ideological function of the state in the digital era. *Pravoprimerenie = Law Enforcement Review*, 2024, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 15–23. DOI: 10.52468/2542-1514.2024.8(1).15-23. (In Russ.).