

**САЯСИ ҒЫЛЫМДАР ПРОБЛЕМАЛАРЫ
ПРОБЛЕМЫ ПОЛИТИЧЕСКОЙ НАУКИ
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**CANCEL CULTURE AS A PHENOMENON OF MODERN POLITICS
AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

Abstract

The article analyzes the peculiarities of the phenomenon of cancel culture in politics and international relations using the methods of sociological analysis and conflict theory. The article considers the specificity of the cancel culture as an informal method of social control in social networks through mass mobilization. As a means of social control, the cancel culture can reduce the gap between stated values and social practices. Also cancel culture can be a tool for political struggle, competition and harassment for expressing opinions. The authors compare examples of the cancel culture in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Russia, which allows them to conclude that the scope and effectiveness of common action depends on the practice of responding to the violation of accepted norms and values, which, in turn, varies in a particular collective.

In politics and international relations, the cancel culture is a supplement to the actions of political institutions and states its main goal as undermining authority and reputation. It is also worth noting that in the political sphere, the cancel culture, being a means of informal control, follows formal sanctions. In international relations, there is no single political center and no single understanding of norms, which allows for a selective approach in choosing the means of influence. In this context, the cancel culture is a tool of political struggle.

Keywords: cancel culture, politics, international relations, USA, United Kingdom, Russia, Durkheim, sanctions

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**ЖОЮ МӘДЕНИЕТІ ҚАЗІРГІ САЯСАТ ПЕН ХАЛЫҚАРАЛЫҚ
ҚАТЫНАСТАРДЫҢ ФЕНОМЕНИ РЕТІНДЕ**

Аңдатпа

Мақалада әлеуметтанулық талдау әдістері мен қақтығыс теориясы арқылы саясат пен халықаралық қатынастардағы жою мәдениеті құбылысының ерекшеліктері талданады. Жою мәдениетінің ерекшелігі жаппай жұмылдыру арқылы әлеуметтік желілердегі әлеуметтік бақылаудың бейресми әдісі ретінде қарастырылады. Әлеуметтік бақылау құралы ретінде жою мәдениеті жарияланған құндылықтар мен әлеуметтік тәжірибелер арасындағы алшақтықты азайта алады. Сондай-ақ, жою мәдениеті саяси күрестің, бәсекелестіктің және пікір білдіруге қысым жасаудың құралы бола алады. Авторлар АҚШ, Ұлыбритания және Ресейдегі жою мәдениетінің мысалдарын салыстырады, бұл өз кезегінде оларға жалпы әрекеттердің ауқымы мен тиімділігі

қабылданған нормалар мен құндылықтарды бұзуға жауап беру тәжірибесіне байланысты белгілі бір ұжымда әр түрлі болады деген қорытынды жасауға мүмкіндік береді.

Саясат пен халықаралық қатынастарда жою мәдениеті саяси институттардың іс-әрекеттеріне қосымша болып табылады және өзінің басты мақсаты-беделге нұқсан келтіру деп мәлімдейді. Сондай-ақ, саяси салада жою мәдениеті бейресми бақылау құралы бола отырып, ресми санкцияларға сүйенетінін атап өткен жөн. Халықаралық қатынастарда бірыңғай саяси орталық және нормалар туралы бірыңғай түсінік жоқ, сондықтан осы жағдайда әсер ету құралын таңдау үшін сайлау тәсілін қолдануға мүмкіндік береді. Бұл тұрғыда жою мәдениеті саяси күрестің құралы болып табылады.

Түйін сөздер: жою мәдениеті, саясат, халықаралық қатынастар, АҚШ, Ұлыбритания, Ресей, Дюркгейм, санкциялар

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КУЛЬТУРА ОТМЕНЫ КАК ФЕНОМЕН СОВРЕМЕННОЙ ПОЛИТИКИ И МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫХ ОТНОШЕНИЙ

Аннотация

В статье анализируются особенности феномена культуры отмены в политике и международных отношениях с помощью методов социологического анализа и теории конфликта. Рассматривается специфика культуры отмены как неформального метода социального контроля в социальных сетях посредством массовой мобилизации. Как средство социального контроля культура отмены может уменьшать разрыв между заявленными ценностями и социальными практиками. Также культура отмены может быть инструментом политической борьбы, конкуренции и притеснения за высказывание мнения. Авторы сравнивают примеры культуры отмены в США, Великобритании и России, что позволяет им сделать вывод о том, что масштаб и эффективность общих действий зависит от практики реагирования на нарушение принятых норм и ценностей, которая, в свою очередь, различна в конкретном коллективе.

В политике и международных отношениях культура отмены является дополнением к действиям политических институтов и заявляет своей главной целью – подрыв авторитета и репутации. Также стоит отметить, что в политической сфере культура отмены, являясь средством неформального контроля, следует за формальными санкциями. В международных отношениях нет единого политического центра и единого понимания норм, что позволяет использовать избирательный подход в выборе средства воздействия. В данном контексте культура отмены представляет собой инструмент политической борьбы.

Ключевые слова: культура отмены, политика, международные отношения, США, Великобритания, Россия, Дюркгейм, санкции

MAIN PART

The main provisions of the article cover the analysis of the phenomenon of cancel culture as a modern phenomenon in the context of politics and international relations. The article examines cancel culture not only as a manifestation of social disapproval on the Internet but also as a modern tool of political influence. The authors aim to identify the functional features of cancel culture in politics and international relations using methods of sociological analysis. The study highlights the features of cancel culture in the USA, Great Britain, and Russia, where it has become a significant part of political and social life.

Beginning with an overview of the term and its definition, the article describes the spread of cancel culture from the American context to other countries. Particular attention is paid to the analysis of society's reactions to the phenomena of cancel culture, both political and cultural, identifying different points of view and perspectives on the phenomenon. It is also important to consider cancel culture

through the lens of economic and political processes, including its impact on the market and international relations.

The article considers multiple perspectives on cancel culture, including critiques, linguistic studies, psychological and educational analysis, and economic and political implications. Various studies and approaches are presented by both foreign and Russian authors, which allows us to get a complete understanding of the multidimensionality and complexity of the phenomenon of cancel culture in the modern world.

In addition to the main provisions of the article, for a better understanding of the functions that cancel culture performs, it is proposed to apply a sociological approach and conflict theories, which allow us to consider the phenomenon of cancel culture in the system of socio-political relations at the macro level. The choice of this approach is due to the fact that cancel culture has become a phenomenon whose assessment is often polarized, reflecting existing contradictions regarding the norms themselves and the ways in which they are observed.

As a key element of the analysis, we use the concept of “social fact” proposed by Emile Durkheim, one of the founders of the structural-functional approach. In his work "Method of Sociology" (1895), Durkheim defines "social fact" as a methodological technique that makes it possible to identify such "ways of thinking, acting, and feeling" that exist "outside individual consciousness" and have a "coercive force" that forces a person to act or feel in a certain way. Durkheim believed that when explaining a social phenomenon, it is necessary to examine separately its real cause and the function it performs. He preferred to use the term "function" instead of "goal" or "intention" because social phenomena do not usually exist for the purpose of achieving the specific results to which they lead. It is also important to note Durkheim's remark about the need to consider "the correspondence between the fact in question and the general needs of the social organism", neglecting the question of whether there was intent, since all questions related to intent are too subjective for scientific consideration. According to conflict theory, social order reflects a dynamic situation of stability in which there is a constant struggle and compromise between large social groups. It is assumed that assessments of the legitimacy and effectiveness of cancel culture, viewed as a collective action, correspond to different points of view on the nature of social order and the ways in which it can be legitimately changed. The phenomenon of cancel culture represents, in our view, a fascinating example of the mutual influence of the cultural practices of open societies, with this openness enhanced by the existence of social networks and the transfer of a significant amount of communication to the digital environment.

INTRODUCTION

Cancel culture as a phenomenon is a relatively recent phenomenon among active social media users. The Merriam-Webster American Dictionary defines the term "cancel culture" as follows: "The practice or tendency of engaging in mass canceling as a way of expressing disapproval and exerting social pressure" [1]. This phenomenon has emerged as society's response to unfavorable behavior of celebrities who violate accepted behavioral norms or do not meet the expectations of a particular society. Many TV presenters, actors, writers, and politicians have experienced the cancel culture, which led them not only to social disapproval, but also to job loss, contract termination, and deterioration of reputation.

In the realm of politics, the cancel culture spread quite quickly and became a topic of discussion in the media. Politicians, political movements and parties seek to publicize their activities on the internet and social media to attract as many supporters as possible. Clear examples of active users among politicians are former US President Donald Trump and former President of the Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev.

This article analyzes the phenomenon of cancel culture not as a way of condemning celebrities on the Internet, but as a modern tool of political influence. The authors aim to identify, using the methods of sociological analysis, the functional features of the cancel culture in politics and international relations. For the consideration of the features are chosen such countries as: USA, UK and Russia, as it is in these countries that the cancel culture has become a significant part of politics and society.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The very phenomenon of the cancel culture first appeared in the USA and gradually spread to other countries. In the United States, the cancel culture was viewed as a negative phenomenon that did not hold the perpetrators of misconduct accountable, but instead created more problems in society. One example illustrating this attitude is the publication in Harper's magazine "A Letter on Justice and Open Debate", which was supported by many famous scientists, writers, journalists, including F. Fukuyama, J. Rowling, N. Chomsky and others. This letter condemns "a new set of moral attitudes and political preferences" that "undermine the foundations of free discussion and tolerance in favor of ideological conformity." In response to this letter, a "More Specific Letter on Fairness and Open Debate" was published, which saw the cancel culture as a way to combat the silencing of racial and other types of discrimination.

There are many publications on the cancel culture, most often of a critical nature. Sean Phelan notes that the cancel culture is condemned both by its critics and by those who deny the existence of the phenomenon [2, p. 4]. Linguists play a special role in studying cancel culture as a communicative practice. Psychologists and educators also conduct research, focusing on identifying the reasons why social network users participate in mass actions, often without having personal acquaintance with the object of cancellation and without realizing the consequences of collective action. Researchers often view the cancel culture as an expression of the emotional reaction of the crowd, noting the irrational and manipulative behavior of anonymous participants who bear minimal responsibility for their collective actions, while bringing real harm to well-known personalities [3, p.131].

Foreign and Russian authors most often consider the cancel culture as a tool in the economic and political sphere. A. Demshina emphasizes that cancel culture and new ethics have gained importance as economic tools that use cultural identity to form a "new sensitivity" among consumers [4, p. 104-109]. The practice of "cancelation" now applies to companies that have expressed ambiguous opinions about the "Special Military Operation" in Ukraine and have left the Russian market. This leads to changes in the market structure, with the departure of Western brands and an increase in the share of domestic and Chinese companies. Similarly, under the influence of sanctions and the practice of "cancellation", Russian higher education loses its position in the sphere of educational services in favor of educational institutions of other countries.

K.Punina and G. Fadeev conducted an analysis on the example of social movements such as #MeToo, #JeSuisCharlie and "I/We Golunov" and investigated how the organizers of these movements use events that cause "moral turmoil" to mobilize the public through social networks [5, p. 92]. The researchers note that all three cases developed according to a similar scenario: an event that stimulates political action; an active reaction in social networks, expressed in spontaneous expressions of support, which then turned into organized movements [5, p. 85]. T. Rabowin emphasizes that the cancel culture, used through the media, serves as a stimulus for outrage, attracting the attention of the audience, and in politics often becomes a tool of "marginal political forces" [6, p. 7].

K. Koktysh and A. Renard-Koktysh focus on the peculiarities of the cancel culture, considering it as a phenomenon of social networks, which, in their opinion, creates preconditions for cognitive vulnerability, especially in the sphere of politics. They argue that social networks form "false zones of competence" and become a tool for organizing "colored revolutions", as "the mass population perceives complex reality as simple and understandable", and "it is no longer the elites, but the mass people easily demonstrate their readiness to engage in the active promotion of the understanding of the only right offered to them from the outside" [7, p. 39]. Yves Ng emphasizes the instrumental character of the cancel culture in US politics, where the threat of "cancelation" has become a means of unconstitutional control over conservative voices [8, p. 9].

The sanctions regime against Russia in 2022 has intensified the growth of interest in cancel culture among Russian researchers. One of the most popular electronic libraries Elibrary counts more than 300 titles for 2020-2023. Most of the publications relate to political and legal sciences, sociology, economics and philosophy.

Thus, researchers note that the cancel culture becomes an informal tool of control, which complements, but does not exclude the possibility of applying formal mechanisms, including sanctions. The initiators of the use of the cancel culture often act to mobilize society through social networks in order to attract the maximum number of supporters and have maximum impact on people, companies or formal institutions of power. Researchers also point out that it creates an image of a "mass person" in the digital space, which forms a new political environment.

RESULTS

To understand the functions that the cancel culture performs, we propose to apply the sociological approach and theories of conflict, which allow us to consider the phenomenon of the cancel culture in the system of socio-political relations at the macro level. The choice of this approach is conditioned by the fact that the cancel culture has become a phenomenon whose assessment is often polar, which reflects the existing contradictions regarding the norms themselves and the ways of their enforcement.

As a key element in the analysis, we apply the concept of "social fact", which was introduced by Emile Durkheim, one of the founders of the structural-functional approach. In his work "The Method of Sociology" (1895), Durkheim defines "social fact" as a methodological technique that allows us to identify such "ways of thinking, acting and feeling" that exist "outside individual consciousness" and have a "coercive force" that makes a person act or feel in a certain way [9, p. 30]. Durkheim believed that when explaining a social phenomenon, it is necessary to investigate separately its real cause and the function it fulfills. He preferred to use the term "function" rather than "purpose" or "intention" because social phenomena do not usually exist for the purpose of achieving certain results to which they lead. Durkheim's observation that it is necessary to consider "the correspondence between the fact in question and the general needs of the social organism" is important, neglecting the question of whether it was intentional, since all questions related to intentions are too subjective for scientific consideration [9, p. 112].

According to conflict theory, social order reflects a dynamic situation of stability in which there is constant struggle and compromise between major social groups. It is suggested that assessments of the legitimacy and effectiveness of the cancel culture, seen as collective action, correspond to different views on the nature of social order and the ways in which it can be legitimately changed. The phenomenon of the cancel culture presents, in our view, a fascinating example of the mutual influence of cultural practices of open societies [10, p. 38], with this openness intensifying with the existence of social media and the transfer of a significant amount of communication to the digital environment. Consequently, we can put forward two hypotheses expressing different approaches to the nature of cancel culture.

Hypothesis 1: The cancel culture is seen as a reaction to the violation of norms and values in society, performing the function of social control and maintenance of social order. The collective "energy" of this culture is directed at violators of norms and values in order to restore justice and punish deviants. It is important to determine who are considered violators, what specific norms and values have been violated, and what goals are pursued by those who join cancellation campaigns.

Hypothesis 2: Cancel culture is seen as a violation of social order, norms and values, representing deviance. Consequently, it is necessary to analyze the causes of such deviation and society's reaction to this type of deviation [11, p. 5].

DISCUSSION

The phenomenon of the cancel culture has become an integral part of US politics. The phenomenon was actively promoted as part of the #MeToo movement to combat sexual violence against women. A clear example was the case of movie producer Harvey Weinstein, against whom a campaign of informal allegations was launched, which subsequently led to a criminal trial in 2017 and his conviction in March 2020 for up to 23 years in prison. Other cases followed and a trial was held in December 2022 to discuss the possibility of an increased prison sentence. The example of Harvey Weinstein illustrates how the cancel culture that began with informal accusations on social media leads to active judicial involvement. Over the past thirty years, the issue of sexual harassment has been a key theme in US political culture, with legislation and repeated political scandals.

In Russia, the #MeToo movement has not generated a large-scale offline movement or a political agenda supported by political parties or government bodies. Instead, it ran under the hashtag #Гмнотафрайдтосай (#yaneboyus'skazat') and aimed to combat the silencing of sexual violence against women in the workplace or in everyday life. The campaign created social groups where victims of sexual violence could share their experiences and receive psychological and moral support. These groups were formed in the Russian-language segment of international social networks, attracting participants from Russia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Belarus and Kyrgyzstan.

To some extent, the #MeToo movement influenced the drafting of a bill on domestic violence in the State Duma of the Russian Federation in September 2016, but this law was never passed. The discussion of the bill in the Duma and the public space vividly emphasized the peculiarities of the political culture on gender politics and sexual violence in Russia. In light of the fact that the country continues to inherit the policy of emancipation and equality between men and women established during the Soviet period, in post-Soviet Russia the issue of gender equality expresses the contradiction between the principles of Soviet egalitarianism and the demands of traditional family values.

An example of the cancel culture in the UK was the widespread condemnation of Joanne Rowling, the famous author of the popular Harry Potter books, due to her critical statements on gender issues. Prompted by mass outrage, in June 2020, Rowling published an essay on her official website explaining her position. The consequences of this cancel culture for Rowling, according to some estimates, resulted in approximately \$2 million in lost profits from the sale of her books [12].

The BlackLivesMatter movement has actively utilized the cancel culture on social media since 2013. The initiative aims to combat racial discrimination and police violence against the black population. The movement peaked in the US and around the world after the killing of African American George Floyd by police officers in May 2020.

The challenge of overcoming racism in the US presents a particular dimension in terms of normative regulation, political context and social relations. This explains why a movement that spreads outside the US often does not gain the same scope or receives a different interpretation that does not always fit the US context. An example of this alternative interpretation was the social media hashtag #AllLivesMatter, which appeared in 2016 in response to #BLM, sparking a heated debate in which former US President Barack Obama participated.

It is interesting to note that in Russia, the hashtag #AllLivesMatter received significant support in social media, although there were no mass offline actions in support of this slogan. Instead, social media communities with slogans such as "Russian lives matter" emerged, and these slogans themselves began to gain offline support.

In the UK, the cancel culture has intensified discussion of the imperial past, reinforcing anti-colonial discourse and the emergence of so-called 'memory wars'. Opposition to the legacy of colonialism manifested itself in widespread renaming of streets and the dismantling of monuments. For example, statues of E. Colston in Bristol and R. Milligan in London were demolished. In the case of the monument to S. Rhodes on the territory of one of the Oxford colleges, some students were in favor of its demolition, but the university administration first allowed and then suspended this process [13, p. 7]. It should also be noted the attempt to oppose this activity by the group "Save Our Statues", which began collecting signatures in defense of the monuments. Scholars and museum directors spoke out against the destruction of the monuments. Thus, the cancel culture has sharpened the debate in British society about historical figures in the context of anti-colonial discourse.

Margot Finn, former chair of the Royal Historical Society of United Kingdom, suggests that the cause of the cancel culture is a "superficial understanding of the past" and a denial of the role of the British Empire in development. According to her view, the retrospective application of the cancel culture leads to the stigmatization of certain groups and individuals who are deprived of justification and condemned according to current principles and norms [14, p. 2]. While previously the erasure of certain individuals, groups or classes from history was initiated by the authorities, now any social media user can do so. The most notable manifestation of the cancel culture in politics was the blocking of former US President Donald Trump's social media accounts in January 2021. This measure was taken after

Trump refused to admit defeat in the presidential election and called on his supporters to attack the Capitol, which led to the storming of Congress.

According to journalist Daniel Dale, although Trump has criticized the cancel culture as a practice of the left [15], he himself has often resorted to this tactic against people with whom he disagreed. This included the use of various forms of isolation such as social media blocking, boycotts, and other methods. Thus, although Trump criticized this approach, he used it in his own communication and influencing public opinion.

The case of D. Trump does not represent an example of an informal cancel culture, but rather serves as an illustration of formal sanctions adopted by company management for violating the rules and regulations of social media use. For social networks, blocking dangerous content and users is part of their daily work under national law. The management of companies that operate social networks constantly monitor and discuss what content should be blocked, working directly with law enforcement agencies in the countries where these social networks are registered and operating.

In the sphere of international relations, the most significant event at the moment is the calls for the "Cancellation of Russia". In 2022, these calls manifested themselves in the cancellation of tours by Russian cultural representatives, changes in the posters of foreign theaters and the exclusion of works by Russian authors from the repertoire. Particularly resonant were the cases of canceled concerts involving orchestra conductor V. Gergiev and opera singer A. Netrebko.

In foreign media, discussions have erupted over the question of whether Russian culture is part of world culture or whether "everything Russian belongs to Russia." This dialog causes controversy regarding the opposition of Russian and Ukrainian cultures and the renaming of musicians' and writers' works from Russian to Ukrainian, which stimulates hostility between the two cultures. In the countries of "new Europe" the idea of "Canceling Russia" is seen as a possible "historical victory" [16, p. 98]. As Professor N. Khrushcheva from New York University notes, the case of Russia stands out by the fact that the culture of an entire nation is being abolished, which has not happened before with Germany after the two world wars - despite formal sanctions and reparations, no attempt was made to "cancel" the German classics.

In general, it is worth noting that the complete "cancellation of Russian culture" has not happened, and a boundary has been established between what is being cancelled and how. The cessation of cooperation with official Russian authorities, including state structures related to art and culture, has led to a reduction in interaction with Russian groups. However, there has been no universal cancellation of performances, ban on music and books by Russian authors or classic works of Russian culture, although such measures are supported by supporters of the "canceling Russia" campaign.

CONCLUSION

Thus, the cancel culture represents a paradox in the context of liberalism, where both its proponents and opponents rely on liberal values as the cause and limitation of its effectiveness. On the one hand, the cancel culture becomes an informal mechanism of social influence on those who violate established norms and expectations, especially those with high social status. In this interpretation, the cancel culture serves as a means of overcoming the shortcomings of formal institutions of social control. On the other hand, it is often criticized for its supposed restrictions on liberal freedoms under the influence of public opinion. Conservatives express this as "excessive liberalism", whereas for liberal and creative communities it is perceived as limiting freedom of speech and creativity.

The cancel culture can be seen as a means of combating elitism and social inequality, where people of high social status are subject to informal judgment and ultimately formal accountability for their questionable actions. This approach counteracts the tendency for individuals to avoid responsibility due to their social status. The cancel culture is also a manifestation of informal control by people responding to violations of norms and values by people with high social status and social capital.

Nevertheless, specific incidents in which informal control was reflected in company actions and court decisions show that the actions of the canceled individuals were found to violate established norms and rules in accordance with existing legislation (formalized norms). As a result, they were penalized, which restores social order. In situations where no violation of established norms and laws was

confirmed, formalized proceedings led to the restoration of the individual's reputation and, in the long run, to the restoration of their social capital.

Analyzing the cancel culture as a social phenomenon allows us to formulate conclusions regarding its different functions in different political contexts. The cancel culture serves as a means of drawing attention to social problems, revealing the gap between stated values, norms and social practices. From a functional perspective, it serves as a means of adapting society and preserving social order. According to neo-Marxist theories, the conflict inherent in this phenomenon is resolved by identifying the existing contradiction and transforming social practices in accordance with the stated values. The cancel culture is used as a mechanism to mobilize society to overcome the inconsistency of stated norms and values with actual practices. This process leads to changes in collective consciousness and formalization of norms through changes in legislation, as manifested in the #MeToo and #BLM movements.

It should be noted that the cancel culture manifests itself in different ways and is realized in different societies, indicating the existence of different normative and value systems, as well as cultural practices of responding to the violation of norms and values.

In politics and international relations, the cancel culture sometimes manifests itself as an example of the actions of formal political institutions with power and acting in accordance with established norms. For example, the blocking of D. Trump's account was carried out at the request of the US authorities in order to prevent possible mobilization of his supporters and to prevent violent actions against the authorities. In the case of Russia, "cancelation" occurred on two levels: formal, expressed through sanctions and direct bans, and informal, through the refusal of various professional communities to cooperate with Russian representatives. In both cases, the countries that imposed sanctions against Russia and the professional communities that broke off cooperation with Russian colleagues were guided by their own understanding of the norm and permissible means of influence.

In politics, the cancel culture acts as an additional tool to formal sanctions, representing a method of influence aimed at undermining the authority and reputation of a politician, most often with regard to national legislation. In international relations, it also complements formal sanctions aimed at isolating a country and breaking ties with it in various spheres of interaction, which can undermine the legitimacy of an international actor. However, the problem in implementing and assessing the acceptability of the cancel culture in international relations is its indiscriminate nature and the lack of a unified value-normative and institutional system within which to define the perceptions of the norm and its violation.

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