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**CHARACTER ASSASSINATION AS A TOOL IN  
INTERNATIONAL POLITICS (A CASE STUDY OF UNITED  
STATES - RUSSIAN FEDERATION RELATIONS)**

**SPECIALTY 562.01 - THEORY AND METHODOLOGY OF  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND DIPLOMACY**

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## THE CONCEPTUAL BENCHMARKS OF THE RESEARCH

**The research theme relevance.** In the contemporary world that is ever more complex and interdependent, international relations take place within the permanent confrontation of states; we are witnessing the more frequent use of character assassination as a tactic of international relations. International actors have used diverse tools to defame political leaders in different countries. Of the many ongoing examples are the numerous attacks on US President Donald Trump, those of Russian President Vladimir Putin and other political leaders in France, Great Britain, etc. Character assassination is sometimes used as a political strategy in international relations and by new independent states as Republic of Moldova or Ukraine, manifesting new approaches and tools with a strong influence on interstate relations.

Today's world has shown that the increasingly popular and effective mechanism for defamation is via electronic media resources, such as Twitter, Facebook, etc. through which massive attacks on individuals are internationally executed. It is worth noting that though the instruments of character assassination may differ as time passes, some have existed for many generations. Today there is an entire industry built around finding humor in attacks (e.g. the French publication *Charlie Hebdo*), or the multitude of video materials produced daily that have the purpose of attacking and destroying the reputation of political leaders in the international arena.

The proposed topic for research is current and relevant as it occupies a special place in the research of international political processes, coming in the current international context as a frequent political strategy, and as a complex instrument of destroying the reputation of global political leaders, but it also leaves its mark on the international image of states themselves. The necessity of research is via the prognostic and influential potential of character assassination itself.

**Description of the situation in the research field and identification of the problems of the research.** Character assassination is comparably new concept in political science, especially on the international level. Among the most prominent researchers of character assassination and its adjacent concepts, American scientists M. Icks [1; 2], E. Shiraev [2; 3; 4] and S. Samoilenko [2;5;6] should be singled out as the pioneers of conceptualization and classification of character assassination phenomena and its types to the political sphere. M. Haselmayer [7; 8] and M. Jenny [7; 8] provided the negative campaigning approach to the definition of character assassination. C. Schultz [9] and M. Pancer [9] conducted one of the first studies of character attacks in politics.

Among other western researchers, the following should be highlighted: T.L. Budesheim [10], D.A. Houston [10], S.J. DePaola [10], J. Johnson [11], J.A. Thurber [12], C.J. Nelson [12], R.R. Lau [13;14], L. Sigelman [4;13;15;16], I.B. Rovner [13;14], M. Kugler [15], R.A. Jackson

[17], J.J. Mondak [17], R. Huckfeldt [17], F.H. Jonas [18]. The evolutionary theoretical basis was built according to the works of N. Machiavelli [19], F. Bacon [20], I. Kant [21], G. Tarde [22], W. Lippmann [23].

In the Russian and Moldovan scientific community, the topic of character attacks is covered by such authors as S.V. Gorin [24], A.U. Trubetskoy [25], V.I. Ivanov [26], O.N. Yanitsky [27], I. Klovov [28], V. Vera [29], O. Issers [30], O.N. Parshina [31], A. Vujma [32], A. Ledeneva [33], I. Yablokov [34;35], E.V. Kablukov [36].

In addition to the aforementioned authors, post-Soviet researchers' works contributed greatly to the historiography of the proposed topic. This includes Moldovan scientists such as: G. Rusnac [37-39], V. Saca [37, 40], C. Solomon [38], V. Teosa [41-43], G. Vasilescu [44-45], P. Varzari [46-48]. In their works, these researchers do not directly consider defamation as a political tool, but they allow the author to understand the nature, values and traditions that influenced the formation and evolution of the post-Soviet political context and the nature of the studied phenomenon. The research topics in Moldova also include works by V. Moraru [49-51], C. Marin [52], V. Moşneaga [53-54], A. Peru-Balan [55-58], L. Braga [46], I. Bucataru [53-54], A. Ejov and C. Ejov [59-62], A. Solcan [63-65] and others, which make it possible to understand the formation of modern approaches to communication technologies, PR strategies, means of manipulation, information wars and "fake news" during the pre-election period and in the political parties struggle of these countries, both in theory and practice, which is necessary for the analysis of the use of modern political technologies in international politics.

As politics is a fight for obtaining a scarce resource (i.e. power), character assassination is a valuable tool at the disposal of the politician to not physically kill his opponent, but to socially destroy him. Thus, political character assassination typically takes the form of negative campaigning, where the politician seeks to destroy the public's positive view of his opponent.

**The purpose of the thesis objectives** is to investigate the theoretical and conceptual basis of character attacks as a tool in international politics, thereby evaluating the framework of character assassination in the context of relations between the United States of America and the Russian Federation. **The research objectives are:** analysis of existing theoretical sources and fundamentals of character assassination study; defining of the study methodology; to establish specific of the Russian tradition of character assassination in internal and foreign policy; to evaluate the contrasts between U.S.A. national approaches to character assassination in politics of 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> centuries; to define successes, failures and specific of character assassination strategies

in foreign policy of U. S. A. and Russian Federation; and resources of character assassination in mass media attacks.

**Research methodology** is based on principles and approaches of interdisciplinary research using methods of political science, history, psychology, and sociology. This approach helps to investigate character assassination differences between countries using scientific universal and specific methods: *the dialectical method, descriptive method, historical method, counterfactuals, and sociological method*. Political science methods were applied through the theory of international relations implementing following approaches (*the paradigmatic, the structural-functional, institutional*) and methods - *comparative, the behaviorist and projection*. Empirical methods usage covers both *primary and secondary historical sources analysis*, located in digital archival research and *content analysis of historical documents and news reports* for qualitative research. Moreover, quantitative data found by *the use of Google algorithms* to detect correlations between historic events and character attacks and *correlation analysis methods* are used for quantitative part of the research.

**Scientific novelty and originality** exists in the author's conceptualization of character attacks as a tool in international relations and in realization of comparative analytical study of the U. S. A.'s and the Russian Federation's utilization of character attacks as instruments against each country's leadership. **The important scientific problem** tackled in the PhD research is the adaption of the character assassination concept to the international politics sphere, via the evaluation of the degree to which each country uses character attacks against the other country's leadership in the context of contemporary international relations based on the analysis of the U.S.-Russian Federation relationships during a defined period to demonstrate how character assassination as a political tool, being evolved on the transnational level, influences the relationship between the states.

**The theoretical significance** derives from the theoretical and conceptual presentation of character attacks as a tool and as a strategy in international relations; promotion of understanding the nature and the role of character attacks in international relations as an interdisciplinary academic field of study; determination of the specifics of the tradition of character attacks in Russia's internal and foreign politics; a comparative evaluation in contrasting the American national approaches to character assassination in politics of the 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> centuries; comparison of successes, failures, and specifics of character assassination strategies in the foreign policy of the U.S. and Russian Federation; and identification of mass media resources of character assassination as aggressive political tool in bilateral relations.

**The practical significance of the study.** Results, conclusions, and recommendations of the research could serve as an analytical tool for governmental and non-governmental decision-makers in understanding the nature, place, and role of character assassination as a strategic instrument in international politics; to assess the effects of applying this phenomenon in bilateral relations, and in developing strategies and instruments appropriate to existing foreign policy threats to independent states, including the Republic of Moldova.

**The main scientific results submitted for defense:**

- Throughout history, character assassination has witnessed a significant evolution from a mechanism mainly used inside the country, to becoming a complex strategy that has overcome the sovereign state's borders, being widely used in international relations;
- Significant relationship exists between the worsening of countries' diplomatic relations and the intentional attacking of the other country's leadership by means of official government organs, or the government-backed press;
- Though both countries engage in character attacks, the United States and Russia typically attack each other's leaders on different issues and as a rule, each state has its own specificity in implementing character assassination as a political strategy.

**Implementation of the results** was realized through examination and approval at the Department of International Relations, and Profile Seminar, of Moldova State University, by the presentation of reports and contributions at 7 scientific conferences, within the participation of the author in the European Commission Project FP7 Marie Curie Acțiuni (IRSES), international consulting of political actors from Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Russia, the U. S, and other countries, as well as through his experience as a Senior Researcher at the International Society for the Study of Character Assassination (ISSCA, Virginia, U.S.A. at George Mason University).

**Publications on the research topic.** The results of the research were briefly presented in 9 scientific articles in scientific journals and national and international publications, as well as in the national and international conferences dedicated to this issue.

**The structure of the thesis** consists of introduction, 3 chapters, conclusions and recommendations, the bibliography from 429 sources, 18 appendices, 125 pages of the basic text.

**Keywords:** international relations, foreign policy, bilateral relations, character attacks, character assassination, image, propaganda, international politics, strategy, political technology.

## CONTENT OF THE THESIS

The structure of the present thesis is correlated in conformity to the established purpose and objectives. The thesis includes annotation, the list of abbreviations, the introduction and three chapters. Every chapter ends with a conclusion. The final part includes general conclusions and recommendations followed by bibliography and appendices.

In the **Introduction**, the actuality and importance of the studied topic are argued, the aim and objectives of the research are formulated, the scientific novelty of the obtained results, the scientific problem solved by the author, the theoretical importance and the applicative value of the thesis are presented.

**The first chapter, “HISTORICAL AND THEORETICAL FUNDAMENTALS OF CHARACTER ASSASSINATION IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS,”** is an analysis of the character assassination research history and of the theoretical fundamentals of the character assassination in terms of political science and international politics studies.

**The first subchapter, “*Character Assassination in Political Science: A Historical Study*”**, represents a thorough scientific sources review from the Western and post-soviet states to compare and contrast how the scholars from different countries studied the topics of character assassination. The first attempts to study character assassination were performed in the political sphere, supplemented by the knowledge from the realms of social psychology and communication theory. Individuals can stop being positively recognized by their professional community, or their social environment, as a result of character assassination campaigns. That is why this concept requires study and its social and political impacts must be demonstrated. It should be done not only on behalf of a particular “victimized” individual or group, but also to show the possible global impact of varying attitudes towards specific public personas and opinion leaders, particularly in the era of globalization and “information society,” where news spreads with the speed of light and public opinion changes by the moment.

Among the most prominent researchers of character assassination and its adjacent concepts, American political scientists of Russian origin M. Icks, E. Shiraev and S. Samoilenko [1-6] can be singled out as the pioneers of conceptualization and classification of the phenomena of character assassination and the forms it takes in the political sphere, being the members of The Laboratory for Character Assassination and Reputation Politics (CARP) housed at George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia, U. S. A. and The International Society for the Study of Character Assassination (ISSCA). M. Hasselmayer and M. Jenny contributed the negative campaigning



approach to the definition of character assassination. [7-8] C. Shultz and M. Pancer conducted one of the first studies of character attacks in politics. [9]

Among other western researchers, the following must be highlighted: T.L. Budesheim [10], D.A. Houston [10], S.J. DePaola [10], J. Johnson [11], J.A. Thurber [12], C.J. Nelson [12], R.R. Lau [13;14], L. Sigelman [4;13;15;16], I.B. Rovner [13;14], M. Kugler [15], R.A. Jackson [17], J.J. Mondak [17], R. Huckfeldt [17], F.H. Jonas [18]. Evolutionary theoretical basis was built according to the works of N. Machiavelli [19], F. Bacon [20], I. Kant [21], G. Tarde [22], W. Lippmann [23].

In the Russian scientific community, the topic of character attacks is covered by such authors as S.V. Gorin [24], A.U. Trubetskoy [25], V.I. Ivanov [26], O.N. Yanitsky [27], I. Klovov [28], V. Vera [29], O. Issers [30], O.N. Parshina [31], A. Vujma [32], A. Ledeneva [33], I. Yablokov [34;35], E.V. Kablukov [36].

A careful review of existent political science literature relating to this subject also shows that there are no universal norms in defining these terms and that the range of opinions on the matter vary considerably. It is important to note that the character assassination itself deals with the field of political reputation. A new scientific direction in the study of reputation management, called “reputiology,” is on the rise according to S. Gorin. Reputiology studies the patterns in the creation and management of the reputations of people and legal entities and explores it as a phenomenon in society. [24]

The works of such Moldovan researchers as Gh. Rusnac [37-39], V. Saca [37,40], V. Moşneaga [53-54], V. Ţurcanu [39], V. Teosa [41-43] do not show character assassination and defamation as a political tool, but allow the author to understand the nature, values and traditions of this phenomenon better. Other Moldovan researchers, like Gr. Vasilescu [44-45], P. Varzari [46-48], L. Braga [46] reveal the features of the ethical and politico-cultural dimension of the democratic transition of the Republic of Moldova, considering it along with the history and traditions of the Eurasia, which allows for fresh approaches to understanding the topic in the context of the Russian Federation.

At the same time, some aspects of defamation as policies or means in the political struggle noted in the works of V. Mosneaga [53-54], C. Solomon [38], I. Bucataru [53-54] P. Varzari [46-48], A. Solcan [63-65], and they are linked to the theoretical and practical studies of the political elite and political parties in election campaigns, shaping the image of political leaders and political parties. It should be emphasized that the works presented by A. Ejov and C. Ejov [59-62] are extremely useful for the research, as they deal with the analysis of the history, theory, methodology

and practice of forming the image of the state, emphasizing the role of political image in international relations.

In the Moldovan political science field, the works of V. Moraru [49-51], C. Marin [52], A. Peru-Balan [55-58], attention is paid to the interaction of political reality, the mass media and international communication. These studies examine modern approaches to communication technologies, PR strategies, means of manipulation, information wars and fake news during the pre-election period and at various stages of the political struggle in theory and practice.

Overall historical study was formulated **the problematic of the research** - is to discover the relationship between the countries' bilateral relations and character attacks on the country's leadership defining a nature, role and tools of character attacks strategies, to re-emerge understanding of the typology of character attacks, and to enlarge the possibility to make prognoses onto states' relations according to the usage of such practices.

This bibliography study is continued **in the second subchapter, “Theoretical Fundamentals of Character Assassination Study in Political Science,”** analyzes the theoretical fundamentals of character assassination via political science approaches to this phenomenon. It highlights the prerequisites of applying character assassination to the international politics, and describes the differences in the approaches to defining the character assassination, its forms, instruments and policies.

Though the origin of ideas about reputation and its blackening (character assassination), deriving from public opinion, date back to antiquity; even in classical Chinese philosophy the importance of studying public opinion was discussed as an element of governance, [66] the concept of character assassination as a subject of scholarly study was originally introduced by Jerome Davis in 1950 [67] in his collection of essays about political smear in political campaigns.

Character assassination involves different types of defamation attacks, which will be discussed later in this dissertation. Those attacks are akin to the *argumentum ad hominem* attacks, abusing context in political ads in order to redirect the attention from the real topic of the debate to an opponent's characteristics. *Ad hominem* more often refers to the human “characteristics, while character assassination can resemble *ad personam* arguments used to point to “personal” attributes and traits. But unlike *ad personam* and *ad hominem* attacks, character assassination can be applied beyond debates and dialogues as it is “one-sided.”

In this dissertation, the term “character assassination” was operationalized as per the definition in The Lab for Character assassination and Reputation Politics' (CARP) *Glossary of terms related to character assassination* as meaning the “deliberate destruction of an individual's

reputation. Character assassination is the result of successful character attacks. The word can also be used to refer to the process of reputation-destruction.” [2]

Political communication becomes a competition for credibility of the information and a battle for the good public image of the candidate and bad public image of opponent. Well-created and well-thought out propaganda is designed to manipulate the target audience. Over the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, the increase of media platforms has given politics an increase of character assassination techniques and has given politicians new methods and opportunities to “play dirty.”

In the *Conclusions to Chapter 1*, the historical analysis and the theoretical literature study made it possible to reach the following generalizations and conclusions:

1. The term “Character assassination” was coined in 1822 and the academic study of it in political science began in the middle of 20<sup>th</sup> century, though the examples of it can be found throughout ancient and modern history. Character assassination can be defined as “a deliberate and sustained effort to damage the reputation or credibility of an individual.” This term can also “be selectively applied to social groups, institutions, and corporations, which could all experience loss of reputation due to character assassination.” In order to execute a character assassination, there must be the presence of three actors: the agent (“assassin”) who is interested in destroying someone’s reputation, the target (“victim”) who suffers from an attack and the public (“audience”) whose assessment of the victim must have been changed by the attack.

2. As the literature review demonstrates, such terms as “libel,” “slander,” and “black PR” are analogous to the concept of character assassination but have key differences. The difference between “slander” and “libel” lies in the form in which the attack is delivered: libel is done by some written form (i.e. newspaper, internet, magazine, etc.) and slander is spread by spoken word (i.e. in-person, over the radio, or via television broadcast). Black PR is the creation and dissemination of information aimed at creating a “cold” attitude of the audience towards certain phenomena, events, processes, products, etc. It is any attack or even the whole process of “information war” aimed at destroying the image of the subject of the attack - such as a movement, a company, or a nation. Character assassination itself refers to both the process and result of it and its realization via character attacks. Character assassination throughout the history has already been described and analyzed. Intrastate attacks on public figures are a normal part of a society’s political discourse throughout most of recorded human history.

3. The concept of character assassination as a separate subject of study derived from the concept of negative campaigning. There are two types: attack ads, which focus only on the negative attributes of the opponent and lack “warm” content, and contrast ads, which give the “warm”

information about the agent in the contrast to negative information about the victim. Character assassinations differ in terms of their scope, timing and momentum. Scope refers to the level of character attack application and can be against an individual, or a collective. As for timing, this can take place against both the living, or the deceased “victims.” In terms of momentum, character attacks can be planned, or spontaneous.

4. The classification of methods of character attacks include seven main types, including anonymous lies (falsifications of biography facts), misquoting (omitting details from the opponent’s quote context), silencing (“erasing” an opponent from the collective memory), acts of vandalism (performed on the objects symbolizing the victim), name-calling (application of short negative labels), appellation to mental illnesses (stigmatization about psychological disorders) or to sexual deviance (accusation in inappropriate sexual behavior).

5. The problem of character assassination in the modern world remains, especially on the international political level, so it requires greater analysis and study, thus in this dissertation we seek to examine the re-adaption of the character assassination concept to the international politics sphere, specifically by evaluating the degree to which either country uses character attacks against the other country’s leadership in the context of contemporary international relations, specifically U.S.-Russian relations, during the determined time period. The comparative and systemic research and evaluation form the theoretical basis of the nature of character attacks, their role, and as instruments in international relations, thus evaluating the effect and degree of intentional character attacks launched against Russian and American presidential leadership in 21st century.

**The second chapter, “CHARACTER ASSASSINATION IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS: THE EVOLUTION OF APPROACHES IN RUSSIAN AND AMERICAN HISTORY”,** is a comparative investigation carried out by methodological aspects of studying the phenomenon of character assassination and analytical explanation of its attributes. The main accent is put on identifying the difference in character attacks tradition in Russia and the United States.

The first subchapter, *“The Dissertation’s Methodology of Researching Character Assassination in International Politics,”* is focused on defining analytical methodology applied to the study conducted by the author who includes a set of methods aimed to analyze, interpret and explain the evolution, new trends and prospects of character assassination in international politics. This subchapter analyses and selects feasible methods of research due to the subject and context. Different methods are applied to determine the academic thinking of different scholars - representatives of the main schools of international relations theory, thinking of researchers,

experts and politicians at different stages of development of international relations applying to character assassination in different eras. At the same time, it demonstrates existing paradigms of international relations theory, which addresses the methodology and methods selected as the context of the given research subject. A methodological framework of character attacks studying is created, allowing discovering the particularities of the object for conducting a comprehensive research on the theoretical hypothesis testing.

As an effective analysis requires definitions of different possible types of character attacks, the terms were applied as were earlier operationalized by J. J. Smart and E. Shiriaev [68]:

*Cheap shots*, where attackers' goals are to annoy and distract their opponents so that the attacks create cumulative damage or push the victim to overreact, forcing defenders to decide to ignore or address the cheap shots. There are two undesirable outcomes: appearing weak and overreacting. [68, p.220]

*Falsifications*, based on lies, which as they spread become difficult to distinguish from real facts. Attackers attempt to deliberately associate the opponent's political message with his or her alleged immoral acts or other serious character flaws. [68, p.220]

*Character assassination attempts*, which are serious and direct accusations, claims, charges, statements or other information based on known facts. Attacks result in damage, but not necessarily the political defeat of their opponent. The main question the target faces is how to defend without appearing defensive, aggressive, or weak. [68, p.220]

This theoretical approach is presented in author's chapter in the textbook "Character Assassination Throughout the Ages" [68], where it concludes, that a successful character attack should negatively impact not only the victims but also their close associates and supporters. They too could be distracted, frustrated, and even confused, for at least some time. They may have to mobilize additional financial resources and consult with their associates about an effective response to the attacks. Others may respond quickly, yet inappropriately, thus creating more problems for the victim of the attack. Attacks may increase a candidate's public visibility and bring backing from interest groups or political donors. Relatively unknown or so-called independent candidates (in the United States they do not belong to Democratic or Republican parties) commonly launch character attacks against their powerful opponents simply to get noticed.

In this subchapter, is argued application of the *selective case study* of events and Internet (media) reactions to them as expressed by different sources. The interdisciplinary character of the study allows for the research methodology of several sciences to be applied. Sociological methods are applied in order to obtain objectivity through media opinion testing, which influences policy

and public opinion about the persona of president and the whole country's reputation. The empirical part of the research will be fulfilled by the use of *content analysis* of online sources via searching keywords with using online content analysis (using Google's Advanced Search feature).

Therefore, the historical analysis of events contains *discourse analysis* elements, such as the analysis of publication style, auditory characteristics, criticism, genre and stylistic attributes of message, etc. Also, an *ethnographically-based approach* to analysis allows the process of character assassination to be described according to cultural specifics, which are closely examined in the following subchapters, putting character assassination into the realm of cultural concepts (e.g. in terms of "west" and "east").

The application of the methodology of the research on the scientific phenomena of the concept of character assassination helped to compare both Russian and American traditions to character attacks, and gave the prerequisites to the analytic study of the "modern" character assassination.

**In the second subchapter, "*The Russian Tradition of Character Assassination in Internal and Foreign Politics*,"** the methodology and selected methods are applied to the historical comparative and descriptive study of the usage of character assassination throughout Russian history. In the in-state cases comparison, there were several major topics that routinely came up in attempted character assassinations. Some of the most prevalent attacks are those that question the loyalty of the leader to the country and attacks about the person's sexual behavior, which seem culturally universal in this context, are analyzed. The cases of Maria Alexandrovna, Grigorii Rasputin, Leon Trotsky and more modern political leaders of Russia such as Mikhail Gorbachev, Vladimir Putin and Dmitriy Medvedev are examined. Conspiracy theories, though outside the scope of this research, have been one of the surprising finding of this research's historical section.

In summary, the historical research shown that there are many similarities between the attacks against Tsaritsa Catherine the Great, Grigorii Rasputin, Lev Tolstoy, Mikhail Gorbachev and Vladimir Putin. Many of these attacks followed along the traditional lines of character attacks: sex in the case of the Tsaritsa and Rasputin, and "foreignness" is frequently a point of attack. There are also some major differences: The attacks against Rasputin led to him being mortally assassinated and being remembered as "the mad monk;" Catherine, on the other hand, lived into old age and now is known as Tsaritsa Catherine "the Great." Trotsky, likewise, was attacked for his "foreignness" and was character attacked like Rasputin, but the attacks against him are largely forgotten today. Similarly, Gorbachev is currently blamed by Russian society for the collapse of

the U. S. S. R. and allegations that he was serving the United States' interest are still a popular subject of attack against him.

As mentioned earlier, it is interesting that the attacks for generic, heterosexual misconduct are in decline in Russia today. Though the more concrete and dangerous area for attack is that of foreignness. The outcome in terms of attacks of foreignness between our case studies was also far different: the foreignness of the Tsarina may have been funny, in terms of her linguistic abilities or her personality, but she remained the queen who was actively expanding Russia. Cheap shots at her did not succeed and the mocking she faced because she was “not really Russian” did no long-term harm and did not hamper her quest to build the Russian empire. On the other hand, attacks against Rasputin's character were successful as not only was he perceived as so diabolical that a posse mustered to murder him, but that today rumors about his licentiousness continue to swirl whenever his name comes into conversation.

The author also discusses the difference between the sexual scandals of the two was the intended outcome and the realistic outcome. The intended income in both was to tarnish them: But for Rasputin, a monk, this would defame him to the point of no longer being able to serve as a monk. For the Tsaritsa it would have simply been embarrassing. Likewise, the actual outcome was similar: The Tsaritsa was perhaps gossiped about, but she was able to continue with her work. In the case of Rasputin, it created a stir in the royal palace and it caused his employers to worry about his misbehavior. In terms of foreignness, it is also a classic means to attack the loyalties to one country or the other. For the Tsaritsa, this was simply gossip and did not seriously harm her: The Russian Empire expanded and increased during her rule.

The German born of the Tsaritsa was able to lead the country to new heights – whereas the government which was advised by Rasputin suffered greatly and eventually, disgracefully, quit the War under the Bolshevik leadership which had swept the Tsar from power. On the other hand, attacks against Rasputin were so successful that the Russian elites decided he needed to be murdered. True to this, the attack against his character was wholly successful and was a character assassination – which led to his eventual bodily assassination, as was discussed in the author's article on the subject [69].

**In the third subchapter, “*Contradictions within American Approaches to Character Assassination in Politics*,”** the historical descriptive study is continued by examining the cases from the American side. The cases of George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, George W. Bush and Barack Obama are analyzed. This examination is prolonged by the comparison of Russian and American traditions of character assassination practices and the

examination of differences between them. The specific of the practice of character assassination in the history of American politics is analyzed on the basis of comparative content analysis of the formulation in the website U. S. Legal and other well-regarded U.S. law dictionaries, with intent of applying the findings to social and political actions.

It is found that the same goes for all five cases of American presidents – George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama –strong similarities are found, though differences exist. In all five cases, charges regarding the actual character of the man involved questioned his essence of being “real man”, or cowardly and weak; honest, or not. These kinds of charges are very common in political attacks and are some of the most basic. Interestingly, sexual misconduct was alleged only in the case of Thomas Jefferson. The religiosity of both Obama and Jefferson was often brought into question by opponents.

A common part of campaign strategy is to look at any positive that one’s opponent has and to try to turn it into a negative. As was earlier mentioned, in the case of Obama this was done by mocking how popular he was and insinuating that he believed himself to be “godlike.” In the case of the then American President, Barack Obama, we see that the intensity of attacks against public leaders has greatly increased. This is probably for several reasons, including that given the rise of electronic communication it is readily possible for most anyone to disseminate their views and beliefs, no matter how uncommon or radical. Obama had been, at the time of his election, likely the most defamed and attacked person to ever assume the presidency, but as we have seen, he is certainly not going to be the last politician to face such scrutiny. One should understand that when entering the public arena – or seeking to fight for power – there are few limits on what people will do to make sure that their opponents lose.

Another common feature between the attacks is those about the perceived “Americanness” of the men. For example, in the case of Jefferson, it was subtler, but for Obama and Washington it was particularly clear and overt. The objective of his attackers was very clear: To cause those around him to lose faith in him and to encourage his followers to become disheartened through questioning their legitimacy and patriotism.

In **Conclusions to Chapter 2**, the findings highlighted are:

1. The application of the research’s methodology to the phenomena of character assassination helped to compare both Russian and American traditions of character attacks, and gave the prerequisites to the analytic study of the “modern” character assassination, which will be described with the use of elements of such methods as discourse analysis and ethnographic content



analysis. It also has been shown that the typology of character attacks consists of three main types: cheap shots, falsifications, and direct character assassination attempts.

2. Specific to the context of Russia in this chapter, it is interesting that despite a strong history of using generic, heterosexual misconduct as a means to attack someone, these types of attack are now in decline today in Russia. Though, historically and today, the more concrete and dangerous area for attack is that of “foreignness.” The outcome in terms of attacks of foreignness between the studied case studies was also far different: the foreignness of the Tsarina may have been funny, in terms of her linguistic errors, or her personality, but she remained the Tsarina who was actively expanding Russia. Cheap shots at her did not succeed and the mocking she faced because she was “not really Russian” did no long-term harm and did not hamper her quest to build the Russian Empire. On the other hand, attacks against Rasputin’s character were successful as not only was he perceived as so diabolical that a posse mustered to murder him, but that today rumors about his licentiousness still continue to swirl whenever his name comes into conversation.

3. Traditional forms of Russian character assassination is contrasted to the American forms over the cases of five American presidents – George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama – we see strong similarities, but also large differences. In all five cases, there were charges regarding the actual character of the man involved, and questions of whether he was a “real man,” or cowardly and weak; honest, or not. These kinds of charges are very common in political attacks and are some of the most basic. Interestingly, sexual misconduct was alleged only found in the case of Thomas Jefferson. However, opponents of Obama and Jefferson attacked their religiosity multiple during their political careers.

Another common feature between the attacks are those about the perceived “Americanness” of the men. For example, in the case of Jefferson, it was subtler, but for Obama and Washington it was particularly clear and overt. The objective of his attackers was obvious to any audience: To cause those around him to lose faith in him and to drive his followers to becoming disheartened.

4. The contrast of the Russian and American examples show that with national political leaders, questioning their allegiance to the country, or how “national” vs. “foreign” they are is an important form of attack as people do not want leaders who are not fully invested in the country’s future. Citizens want leaders who are going to uphold the best interests of the nation without divided loyalties. Likewise, it is a conspiracy theory, which might also hold elements of a character attack or be part of a character assassination plot, if there is reference to an international, centuries

old plot that is secretly controlling world events, so this concept should also be closely examined while studying the character assassination topics.

The United States and Russia have long histories of character attacks, cheap shots, name-calling and attempted character assassinations. In both cases, the national populations are open to hearing new allegations about foreign leaders and are willing to try to destroy their opponents via character attacks when it is politically expedient. Importantly, as a conclusion, character assassination is a means for a country to sway both its own and foreign citizens' views.

**The third chapter - CHARACTER ASSASSINATION STRATEGIES AND INSTRUMENTS IN CONTEMPORARY INTERNATIONAL POLITICS** – is the analytical and prognostic application for testing the hypothesis, namely that there is a relationship between the worsening of political relations between country and the increase of attacks against the reputation of the other government's leaders. Character assassination is also considered within the scope of new trends, thus analyzing it within mass media and nongovernmental actions.

**In the first subchapter, “*Character Assassination in Foreign Policy of the U. S. A. and the Russian Federation*,”** the similarities and differences of problems and new trends of character assassination are explored. The purpose of subchapter is the methodological analysis of the main problems of the studied phenomenon and identifying the systemic causes that will help to define the necessary conclusions for hypothesis testing in the dissertation. The methodology of the findings and the methods is tested on modern Russian and American bilateral relations. Character attacks are analyzed during both “warm” and “cool” periods of inter-states relations using examples of attacks on both countries' leaderships' personas.

The research on the relationship between countries has revealed an interesting and important tendency: The Russian President apparently believed that he “understood the system”: The idea that the U. S. press was truly free to run whatever stories it wanted and that the government did not order the firing of journalists was impossible and ridiculous to him. From then on, the relationship between Bush and Putin was nearly destroyed, and its zeal and warmth never came back, as it was demonstrated through a careful analytic study using content analysis of contemporary news reports using mixed methodology of approaches taken from both discourse analysis and ethnographic content analysis and the advanced search tools of Google.

The relationship between the United States of America and Russian Federation has a long history of ups and downs. Successes and failures over the past 30 last years, since the collapse of U. S. S. R. were carefully analyzed and demonstrated. There were several long-term “warm” and

“cool” periods in the two countries’ relations. For this dissertation the periods from 2001 to 2003 was defined as a “warm” period, and 2003 to 2005 was determined to be a “cool” period.

The results are from the author’s analysis of another period presented in one of the articles [70]. There is explained that one of the largest changes, was the decline of US – Russian relations. Moreover, the very personal relationship between Putin and Bush had changed in dynamics. The United States had become a frequent critic of Putin’s regime and specifically of the authoritarian nature it had taken – as Russia experienced further backsliding on democracy. The fact which is difficult to explain is that the press changed its perception in regards to the situation in Russia in short time. The author posits that Russia was not tremendously more democratic or freedom oriented in the early 2000s, as it was in the late 2000s.

Rather, the press was no longer running stories talking about the endearing name that Bush used for Putin, nor was it discussing their recent fishing trip or how they seemed to be having a romantic relationship. Now the press was interested in covering a story of a new type: That of problems in the country that had become a frequent critic of US foreign policy. There is certainly clear evidence that the 2002 – 2003 period was one of unusual closeness between the Russian and American governments, in sharp contrast to the 2007 – 2008 period, which saw the rise of a much stronger “critical-of-Russia” paradigm. This paradigm shift represents a serious change as to how the East and the West interacted with each other from then on.

The second subchapter, **“Character Assassination as a Tool in U. S. State Strategies and the Russian Federation’s Foreign Policy,”** analyzes the evolution of character assassination into the internal politics for the interstate level. Accordingly, it evolves the instrumental nature of character assassination, regarding it as a tool in state strategies and policies. This subchapter is amended by case studies of character attacks on Russian and American presidents overall and during chosen time periods with the help of Google analytics and elements of discourse and ethnographical content analysis in order to show the difference between the frequency and content of attacks in times of “warm” and “cold” relationships between countries.

In the course of the analysis it is shown that in comparison to 2001 (the so-called, "warm period"), in 2003 (the beginning of the "cold period" - the war in Iraq) clearly more negativity towards the United States and specifically about George W. Bush was visible. Research found that many of the results with the “cold” assessments about President Bush, especially in 2001, were in fact not from that time, but they merely discussed 2001 (often about September 11 attacks), because Google returned them as references for 2001. In the “warm times” Bush rarely appeared in a “cold” light, even among the comments of users of sites, because the press almost always

refrained of “cold” assessments. But on those rare occasions when the media made defamatory statements, it happened during the “cold period,” in this case, in 2003. In addition, references to “Bushisms”, unconventional statements, phrases, pronunciations, malapropisms, and semantic or linguistic errors in the public speaking of Pres. George W. Bush, were first seen in the year 2003.

The American press can freely write their genuine opinions, and in 2003 level of negativism towards Vladimir V. Putin increased in comparison to 2001, when Putin was presented as “honest” leader, and only a few user-edited sites shown cynicism towards him.

Russian media sources developed a strategy of presenting mostly the good news, and when a “cold” thing was said about the American President it was often referring to some expert or other sources. Many articles noted that the “thoughts of redaction committee may differ from opinions, expressed in an article.” Though it is believed that Russia “hired their own character assassin,” Vladimir Zhirinovsky, who represents an official position in cases where the government and media can’t directly say. Also, attacks usually came from user-edited blogs and sites, meaning that the “cold” attitude towards Bush and America was present on the “individual” level, thus highlighting the differences between character attacks from the Russian and the American sides.

During this research, the concept of political mimicry is brought up, which is also presented in one of author’s articles. [71]

**The third subchapter, “*Resources of Character Assassination in Mass Media Attacks,*”** describes the media nature of the phenomenon of character assassination, supplied by the analysis of differences of character attacks presentation in Russian and American press. This subchapter uses Google analytics to determine the nature of attacks. The case study of the Pussy Riot incident and a few similar incidents were examined.

In the Pussy Riot analysis, the differences between the “Western” and “Eastern” narratives can also be seen in regards to the arrest, detention, and sentencing of the Pussy Riot activists. One side saw Pussy Riot as vulgar, illegal protestors, while the other viewed Pussy Riot as heroic freedom fighters standing up for free speech in a totalitarian regime. Because of this the international community criticized and attacked Putin for the arrest of the women. At home Pussy Riot members were jailed and insulted by the Prime Minister, in the United States Senators and Congressmen were excited to meet them and the press thoroughly covered their visit.

Adding weight to the Russian view is that the Pussy Riot members violated local mores and laws and would have been arrested and sent to prison in Russia for any kind of political or apolitical commotion in a church and the new laws that were proposed, and passed, after the fact to defend the sentiments of religious believers were passed in 2013. Evidence that the Russian

government reacts to sacrilegious behavior with the full force of the law is seen. It is worth noting in both the case of the Pokémon playing man and the cigarette smoking woman, that there was no element of politicization, or feminism to their actions. However, they were both prosecuted for violating the legally codified Church's norms of behavior.

The Pussy Riot case has the trappings of a classic example of character assassination by the Americans against the Russians by attacking the Russian Federation's prosecution and sentencing of these women and serves as the powerful example of character assassination as a tool in mass media attacks.

The performance nature of Pussy Riot's actions was discussed in author's article [72], along with the deeper analysis of Pussy Riot itself, leading to conclusions that "further studies must be conducted to compare and contrast Russia and Western European / American views on contentious issues to see how former Soviet Republics typically react. It would also be interesting to separately study Russian news and popular reaction to these events to determine what the popular national sentiment was towards Pussy Riot", [73] which led to the creation of this dissertation.

Also, given that the narratives about Eurasia come in two varieties, Moscow's and Washington's, post-Soviet states must now decide for themselves which narrative they wish to support and endorse, and which narrative they will reject. It would seem that for those who are seeking closer relations with the West, support for President Putin or the policies of the Russian Federation is not an acceptable alternative. In fact, it would seem that Putin is always "the bad guy on the international stage", while American presidents, when attacked, are mostly regarded through the lens of their personal imperfections.

It is shown that with the examples of character assassination practices in the U. S. A. and Russia, it is important to underline the current reality of such processes in Post-Soviet world, including the Republic of Moldova. For instance, according to V. Portnikov, the success of Dodon (the pro-Russian candidate for the presidency of Moldova from the Party of Socialists) in the presidential election is "part of the Russian political plan to destabilize... Ukraine," where Moldova is "a proving ground" and does not interest the Kremlin itself. This is the place where "technologies are experimented with". For example, according to Portnikov, "the discrediting of pro-European political forces - has already been "successfully implemented in Moldova" and is now beginning to be implemented in Ukraine." [74] This example shows the growing power of mass media in character attacks aimed at specific political parties or candidates, which has

become a common tool in international relations not only in the Western culture, but on the Post-Soviet ground, too.

*In **Conclusions to Chapter 3***, the use of character attacks by the Russian and American governments is rather predictable and there are several conclusions that can be drawn from this research:

1. Strategically, for major scandals that affect both the US and Russia, it seems that an “eastern” and “western” narrative appears as both sides seek out evidence that supports their claims of the opposite country’s leaderships’ failings, as we saw in both the Iraq War invasion and in the Pussy Riot case. The United States is much less likely to raise questions of human rights abuses in Russia when the relationship is in a “cool” phase, and more likely to pay less attention to human rights abuses when the relationship is “warm.”

2. The instruments that are used by the governments of the United States and Russia differ as the US has frequently issued official statements decrying the poor human rights conditions in Russia; However, Russia is less likely to make use of their official organs and instead to rely on Kremlin-backed press to attack the American leader. The Russian attacks are less commonly associated with things like human rights abuses, and instead focus on the personal failings of the President or an over-dramatization of “how bad” the situation is in the US, or world, specifically because of the American President.

3. A change has occurred during the last generation as contemporary attacks tend to be transmitted through things like viral videos, social media, and other electronic means that did not yet exist when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. Thus, we can say that the speed by which attacks spread is much faster now than it has ever been before. Moreover, attacks today engage the population (e.g. retweeting, posting on Facebook, etc.) which allows for attacks to reach a larger audience. Historically, the only analogy to was if someone gossiped by repeating a character attack that they had heard.

## GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

*The research results obtained* in the presented dissertation corresponds to the main aim of this work, which is to investigate the theoretical basis of character attacks in international relations, evaluating the effects and degree of intentional character assassination attempts launched against the other country's leadership in 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> century as well as to study the framework of character assassination in international politics in the context of relations between the United States of America and the Russian Federation.

1. *Theoretical study results* are presented through the following achievements:

- Re-emergence of character assassination as the object of a multidisciplinary study within theories of international relations and diplomacy research; understanding of the nature, main features and role of character assassination in international politics was reflected in elaboration of the methodology of the case study of the specific of the Russian tradition of character assassination in internal and foreign policy and from evaluation the contrasts between U.S.A. national approaches to character assassination in politics of the 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> centuries and realization of comparative study of causes and effects of influence of character assassination policies upon American – Russian Federation bilateral relations; [68]
- The conceptualization of character attacks in large understanding as a political strategy in international relations and in narrow approach as a tool in international politics. This is the basis of the literature review that formulated the main fundamentals of the study's concept; [68]
- The character attacks strategy is based on conclusion that there is a correlation between character attacks and worsening or improvement of interstate relations; [69]
- the role of mass-media in the character attacks strategy promotion is to present an opposing leader as a "barometer" of the direction relations between the countries is headed; [70]
- Instruments of character attacks in international relations vary and can include published or written articles and statements, interviews, books, cartoons, rumors and the spreading of other forms of real or fake information. [70; 71; 72]

2. The following are functions of character attacks application in international politics:

- Character assassination was defined as the deliberate destruction of an individual's reputation. Character assassination is the result of successful character attacks. The word can also be used to refer to the process of reputation-destruction. This applies to the international level as states and their leaders can also become victims of character assassination; [68]
- Character assassination strategies and tools can be a part of warfare, even if those wars are only

informational. They involve the use of information in order to gain advantages over an opponent. Character assassination may include negative propaganda or disinformation to cripple the "rival" by manipulating public opinion, thereby undermining the credibility of information and lowering the chances of success by the opponent. Disinformation is intended to manipulate people at the "objective level" by support of discrediting information or making false conclusion both on governmental and nongovernmental levels; [68]

- The structures of the attacks differ both in political and social layers for both the American and Russian attempts of character assassinations. Speaking of difference, for instance, a lot of sources from the Russian side were just "individuals" (blogs, user sites and "official" media sources remained silent and didn't show direct negativity towards the American President), but from the American side, the large numbers of search results shown consisted of newspapers articles. [68]

3. *The important scientific problem tackled* in the dissertation research is evaluation of the degree to which either country uses national traditional and modern strategies and tools of the character attacks against the other country's leadership in the context of contemporary U. S.-Russia relationships. Character assassination concept in the international politics sphere was evaluated by analyzing the degree to which the United States and Russian Federation used character attacks against the other country's leadership during over periods of time. Given that character assassination has evolved on transnational level, the structure of this phenomenon was defined and closely examined as strong political tool and component of the defamation strategies directed against political leaders aimed against their international and national reputation, image and finally to negative influence on bilateral state relations. [68; 73]

4. *The achieved advantages of the analytical applied study* are argued by realization of the historical review of character attacks as used domestically in Russia and the United States, followed by an in-depth scientific analysis using quantitative data of early twentieth century U. S.-Russian relations, and comparative analytical study of the U. S. A.'s and the Russian Federation's utilization of character attacks as instruments against each country's leadership in 21<sup>st</sup> century. [69]

5. With reference to results of the study of character attacks done by the Russian Federation and the United States of America, against each other's leadership, the following are noted:

- Different reasons for rhetoric attacks against leaders: American rhetoric more frequently engages in attacks on the human rights violations of the Russian government. Thereafter the American press frequently attacks the leader of the Russian Federation for his barbarism and lack of respect for his citizens' human rights. The Russian Federation's attacks are more focused on attacking



American leaders for personal failures and personality related complaints. [73]

- Mass media portrays the foreign leaders during times of warm and of stressed bilateral relations: The rise of open source information gathering, and the incredible resource of the internet, it would be possible, via content analysis, to create algorithms that search for an increase in specific types of attacks in foreign media. By establishing what kinds of attacks typically precede the improvement or worsening of relations between countries, it would be possible for diplomats and leaders to know and act on an impending change in relations. It would also allow leaders to act on this knowledge in order to be certain that they do as much as possible to improve relations between the countries. [70]
- Instruments and mechanisms used: Attacks against the President of the Russian Federation tend to be done by the upper class, high-brow newspapers and news media, and at times by senior officials appointed by the White House. However, the President of the United States does not directly attack the President of the Russian Federation; Attacks against the President of the United States tend to be done from the Russian side by those from the lower social classes of the society and less by the mainstream media. There were no cases found where President of the Russian Federation directly attacks the President of the United States of America, but Russian Members of Parliament are often aggressive in their expressions. [68; 73]

6. The practical significance of this paper is argued by the fact that it's results can be applied in practical policies elaboration, in the form of scientific discussion political material, can be used by political class from different countries, including from Republic of Moldova, seeking to understand announcements made by U.S.A. or Russian Federation Government representatives, and de facto proxies of the government. Last but not at least the achieved results are useful for all academic studies of bilateral U. S.- Russian relations, and for understanding the nature of character attacks in international relations as an independent academic field of study of the contemporary international relations. [68]

7. The importance of proposed study for American Political Science development as well as for international scientific community could be argued by the fact that the study of character assassination within the political science theory is still in its nascent stage. The Lab for Character assassination and Reputation Politics (CARP) housed at George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia, U. S. A. and The International Society for the Study of Character assassination (ISSCA), founded by scholars in the United States and Holland, have led the way in studying the phenomena of character assassinations in politics. The theoretical approach, methodology and results of the comparative analysis of the methods and types of character attacks between the leaders of state in

the United States of America and the Russian Federation, study of their impact on bilateral relations in 21<sup>st</sup> century has allowed for the formulation of principles and directions upon which international character attacks can be further analyzed. [68]

According to the conclusions outlined are proposed following **recommendations**:

- *Ministry of Foreign Policy and European Integration* of the Republic of Moldova to provide for national grants for the scientific study of the character assassination in the context of international politics and in bilateral relations between states.

- *Academic structures, universities, civil centers of research* to organize national and international scientific studies, conferences, and round tables on relevant important subjects, such as: Character attacks and traditional diplomacy; The role of internet resources and mass media; International dimension of character assassination in the context of reputation theory; Character attacks against State Image in international politics; The ethical dimension of character assassination in international relations in the context of the expansion of informational technologies; International law in regards to character assassination in international relations globally. [69; 70]

- *Diplomatic Institute of the Ministry of Foreign Policy and European Integration* of the Republic of Moldova in collaboration with Association for Foreign Policy (NGO) should create a network of scholars, civic experts, and professional politicians and carrier diplomats for elaboration of the proposals for National and Global Code on International Law regarding the usage of character assassination as instrument in international politics.

**The perspective scientific research of the studied problem** has to be interdisciplinary, and initiated on the national, regional, and international levels by academics and civil society associations from the field, as for example, International Society for the Study of Character assassination (ISSCA), which is headquartered in Fairfax, Virginia, U.S.A. at George Mason University and aimed to research and expertise different aspects of the subject in the context of the theory of international relations, diplomacy studies, public policy, communication sciences, social psychology in order to enhance the increased monitoring and tracking of open-source medias within the Russian Federation and the United States in order to create algorithms that can more accurately predict the worsening of bilateral relations, so that preventive measures can be undertaken to successfully prevent the relation from worsening.

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## ADNOTARE

la teza *Denigrarea ca instrument în politica internațională (Studiul de caz al relațiilor dintre Statele Unite și Federația Rusă)*, elaborată de către **Jason Jay Smart** pentru gradul de doctorat în științe politice, specialitatea 562.01 - Teoria și metodologia relațiilor internaționale și a diplomației, Chișinău, 2019.

**Structura tezei:** introducere, 3 capitole, concluzii și recomandări, bibliografie din 429 surse, 18 anexe, 125 de pagini text de bază. Rezultatele tezei au fost reflectate în 9 articole științifice, publicate în reviste academice internaționale și din Republica Moldova.

**Cuvintele cheie:** relații internaționale, politica externă, relații bilaterale, atacuri la persoană, denigrare, defăimare, imagine politică, propagandă, politică internațională, strategie, tehnologii politice.

**Domeniul de cercetare** - știința politică, teoria relațiilor internaționale, studiile diplomatice.

**Scopul principal al acestei teze** Scopul acestei teze este de a investiga din punct de vedere teoretico-conceptual denigrarea ca instrument în politica internațională, evaluând, în acest fel, cazul relațiilor dintre Statele Unite ale Americii și Federația Rusă. În baza scopului propus, au fost formulate următoarele **obiective:** analiza surselor teoretice existente și a fundamentelor studiului de denigrare a caracterului; definirea metodologiei de cercetare; stabilirea specificului tradiției rusești de denigrare a caracterului în politica internă și externă; evaluarea contrastelor dintre abordările naționale ale SUA, privind denigrarea caracterului în politica secolelor XX-XXI; proiectarea succeselor și eșecurilor strategiilor de denigrare a caracterului în politică externă a SUA și Federației Ruse; caracterizarea specificului denigrării caracterului ca instrument al strategiilor de stat ale Statelor Unite și al politicilor Federației Ruse; identificarea resurselor de denigrare a caracterului în atacurile mass-media.

**Noutatea și originalitatea științifică** rezidă în conceptualizarea de către autor a atacurilor de denigrare a caracterului ca instrument în relațiile internaționale și realizarea unui studiu analitic comparativ al influenței denigrării de caracter asupra relațiilor bilaterale dintre SUA și Federația Rusă, ca instrumente împotriva conducerii fiecărei țări.

**Problema științifică importantă soluționată în lucrare** constă în adaptarea conceptului de denigrare a caracterului la sfera politicii internaționale, evaluarea gradului în care fiecare țară folosește atacuri de caracter împotriva conducerii celeilalte țări, în contextul relațiilor internaționale contemporane, analiza relațiilor dintre SUA și Federația Rusă pe parcursul unei perioade determinate pentru a demonstra modul în care denigrarea caracterului, ca instrument politic, evoluând la nivel transnațional, influențează relațiile dintre state.

**Semnificația teoretică a studiului** derivă din prezentarea fundamentelor teoretico-conceptuale ale denigrării ca instrument și strategie în relațiile internaționale; determinarea specificului tradiției rusești de denigrare a caracterului în politica internă și externă și a contrastelor dintre abordările naționale ale SUA, privind denigrarea caracterului în politica secolelor XX-XXI; proiectarea succeselor și eșecurilor strategiilor de denigrare a caracterului în politică externă a SUA și Federației Ruse; caracterizarea specificului denigrării ca instrument al strategiilor de stat ale Statelor Unite și al politicilor Federației Ruse pe arena internațională; identificarea resurselor de denigrare a caracterului în atacurile mass-media în politică externă.

**Valoarea aplicativă a lucrării** Rezultatele concluziile și recomandările acestei cercetări pot servi drept un suport politologic pentru factorii de decizie guvernamentali și nonguvernamentali de a înțelege natura, locul și rolul denigrării ca instrument și strategie în politica internațională în vederea evaluării efectelor aplicării acestui fenomen în relații bilaterale, precum și elaborarea strategiilor, instrumentelor adecvate amenințărilor existente pentru politică externă a statelor independente, inclusiv Republicii Moldova, la etapa contemporană.

**Implementarea rezultatelor științifice.** a fost realizată prin examinarea și aprobarea lor în cadrul ședințelor Departamentului Relații Internaționale și ale Seminarului Științific de profil al USM, prin rapoarte și comunicări la 7 conferințe științifice, în calitate de participant al Proiectului Comisiei Europene FP7 Marie Curie Acțiuni (IRSES) și în cadrul activității a autorului în calitate de consultant internațional al actorilor politici din Republica Moldova, Ucraina, și altor state și cercetător superior al Organizației Internaționale de profile ISSCA, Fairfax, Virginia, U. S.A. at George Mason University.



## ANNOTATION

of the dissertation *Character Assassination as a Tool in International Politics (A Case Study of United States - Russian Federation Relations)*, written by **Jason Jay Smart** for the degree of Ph.D. in Political Science, specialization 562.01 – Theory and Methodology of International Relations and Diplomacy. Chisinau, 2019.

**Work structure:** introduction, 3 chapters, conclusions and recommendations, the bibliography from 429 sources, 18 appendixes, 125 pages of the basic text. Thesis results have been stated in 9 scientific articles, published in academic national and international journals and editions.

**Keywords:** international relations, foreign policy, bilateral relations, character attacks, character assassination, political image, propaganda, international politics, strategy, political technology.

**Area of research:** political science, theory of international relations, diplomacy studies.

**The main aim of this work** is to investigate the theoretical and conceptual basis of character attacks as a tool in international politics, specifically evaluating the framework of character assassination in the context of bilateral relations between the United States of America and the Russian Federation. The research goal involved the following **objectives:** analysis of existing theoretical sources and fundamentals of character assassination study; defining of the study methodology; to establish specific of the Russian tradition of character assassination in internal and foreign policy; to evaluate the contrasts between U. S.A. national approaches to character assassination in politics of 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> centuries; to define successes and failures of character assassination strategies in foreign policy of U. S. A. and Russian Federation; to characterize specific of character assassination as a tool in US State Strategies and Russian Federation Policies and resources of character assassination in mass media attacks.

**The scientific novelty and originality** exists in the author's conceptualization of character attacks as a tool in international relations and in realization of comparative analytical study of the U. S. A.'s and the Russian Federation's utilization of character attacks as instruments against each country's leadership.

**The important scientific problem** tackled in the dissertation research is the adaption of the character assassination concept to the international politics sphere, via the evaluation of the degree to which each country uses character attacks against the other country's leadership in the context of contemporary international relations based on the analysis of the U. S.-Russian Federation relationships during a defined period to demonstrate how character assassination as a political tool, being evolved on the transnational level, influences the relationship between the states.

**The theoretical significance of the research** derives from the theoretical and conceptual presentation of the character attacks as a tool and as a strategy in international relations; promotion of understanding the nature and the role of character attacks in international relations, as an interdisciplinary academic field of study; determination of the specifics of the tradition of character attacks in Russian internal and foreign policies; comparative evaluation the contrasts between the U. S. national approaches to character assassination in politics of the 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> centuries; comparison of the successes, failures, and specifics of character assassination strategies in the foreign policy of the U. S. and Russian Federation; and identification of mass media resources of character assassination as a tool in bilateral relations.

**The practical significance of the study.** Results, conclusions, and recommendations of the research could serve as an analytical tool for governmental and non-governmental decision-makers in understanding the nature, place, and role of character assassination as a strategic instrument in international politics; to assess the effects of applying this phenomenon in bilateral relations, and in developing strategies and instruments appropriate to existing foreign policy threats to independent states, including the Republic of Moldova.

**Implementation of scientific results** was realized through examination and approval at the Department of International Relations, and Profile Seminar, of Moldova State University, by the presentation of reports and contributions at 7 scientific conferences, within the participation of the author in the European Commission Project FP7 Marie Curie Actions (IRSES), international consulting of political actors from Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Russia, the U. S, and other countries, as well as through his experience as a Senior Researcher at the International Society for the Study of Character Assassination (ISSCA, Virginia, U.S.A. at George Mason University).

## АННОТАЦИЯ

к диссертации *Очернительство репутации как инструмент в международной политике (на примере отношений между США и Российской Федерацией)*, автора Джейсона Джея Смарта, на соискание ученой степени доктора политологии. Специальность: 562.01 - Теория и методология международных отношений и дипломатии. Кишинэу, 2019.

**Структура работы:** введение, 3 главы, общие выводы и рекомендации, библиография из 429 источников, 18 приложений, 125 страниц основного текста. Результаты диссертации были изложены в 9 научных статьях, опубликованные в научных журналах.

**Ключевые слова:** международные отношения, внешняя политика, нападки на репутацию, очернительство, билатеральные отношения, политический имидж, пропаганда, международная политика, стратегия, политические технологии.

**Область исследования.** Политические науки, теория международных отношений, дипломатические исследования.

**Основная цель данной работы** состоит в изучении теоретико-концептуальных основ очернительства репутации как инструмента международной политики и, таким образом, в оценке концептуальных рамок очернительства репутации в контексте отношений между Соединенными Штатами Америки и Российской Федерацией. **Цель исследования включала следующие задачи:** анализ существующих теоретических научных источников и теоретических основ исследования очернительства; определение методологических подходов к изучению очернительства; сравнение российских и американских традиций правительственных и неправительственных репутационных атак в истории; демонстрация инструментального и медийного характера очернительства; анализ американско-российских отношений в 20 и 21 веках, определение успехов и просчетов стратегий очернительства во внешней политике США и РФ; характеристика нападков на личность как инструмента в стратегиях США и политиках РФ; выделить ресурсы очернительства в атаках масс-медиа.

**Научная новизна и оригинальность** заключается в авторской концептуализации репутационных атак как стратегии в международных отношениях, и в реализации сравнительного аналитического исследования использования инструмента очернительства в США и России против руководства каждой из стран. **Важная научная проблема**, решенная в диссертации, состоит в оценке степени, при которой каждая из стран использует очернительство против руководства другой страны в контексте современных международных отношений и американско-российских отношений.

**Теоретическая значимость исследования** обусловлена теоретическо-концептуальным представлением атак на репутацию как инструмента и стратегии в международных отношениях; содействием пониманию природы и роли атак на репутацию в международных отношениях как междисциплинарной научной области; определением специфики традиций атак на репутацию во внутренней и внешней политике России; сравнительной оценкой контрастов между национальными подходами США и Российской Федерации к определению очернительства репутации в политике XX-XXI веков; сравнение успехов, неудач и специфики очернительства во внешней политике США и Российской Федерации; идентификации ресурсов СМИ, характеризующих очернительство как агрессивный политический инструмент в двусторонних отношениях.

**Практическая значимость исследования.** Результаты, выводы и рекомендации исследования могут послужить политологической поддержкой и помочь государственным и негосударственным лицам, принимающим решения, понять характер, место и роль атак на репутацию как инструмента и стратегии в международной политике; оценить последствия применения этого явления в двусторонних отношениях и разработать стратегии, инструменты, соответствующие существующим угрозам внешней политики независимых государств, включая Республику Молдова, на современном этапе.

**Имплементация научных результатов** осуществлялось путем экспертизы и утверждения на кафедре международных отношений и профильного семинара Молдавского государственного университета, представления докладов на 7 научных конференциях, в рамках участия автора в проекте Европейской комиссии FP7 Marie Curie Acțiuni (IRSES), международного консультирования политических деятелей из Республики Молдова, Украины, России, Cîna și alte State, а также опыта в роли Старшего исследователя Международного общества по изучению очернительства (ISSCA), в Фэйрфаксе, Вирджиния, США в Университете Джорджа Мейсона.

**SMART JASON JAY**

**CHARACTER ASSASSINATION AS A TOOL IN  
INTERNATIONAL POLITICS (A CASE STUDY OF UNITED  
STATES - RUSSIAN FEDERATION RELATIONS)**

**SPECIALITATEA 562.01 – TEORIA ȘI METODOLOGIA RELAȚIILOR  
INTERNAȚIONALE ȘI A DIPLOMAȚIEI**

Autoreferat tezei de doctor în științe politice

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