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Media Literature and Its Impact on People's Culture

Tatyana Anatolievna Spirchagova^{1a}, Svetlana Evgenevna Nikitina^{2a}, Maria Nikolaevna Spirchagova^{3a}

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Abstract

Due to its nature and content, the media is related to almost all different economic, social, cultural, and political dimensions of societies and can be claimed to be one of the influential variables in today's societies. The formation of a country's image in foreign media is a direct reflection of the attitude of the world community to its foreign policy and economic course and the activities of its power structures in terms of coincidence with the political and economic interests of hegemonic states that dictate the conditions for the functioning of states within the framework of world space. The relevance of this work is due to the position of modern Russia on the world stage and the foreign policy and economic factors that have a strong influence on the formation of the image of the Russian state in foreign media. The chronological framework of the study covers the foreign policy of the Russian Federation from 2014 to 2018.

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¹ Associate Professor, Email: ta.science@yahoo.com (Corresponding Author)
Tel: +7-843-2337504

² PhD Candidate, Email: svetlana.nikitina@ksu.ru

³ BA, Email: maria.nikolaevna@yahoo.com

^a Kazan Federal University, Russia

1. Introduction

Due to the very rapid developments in the field of media technology in recent decades and years, we can see the impact of this significant growth on the cultural, religious, and social characteristics of societies. The increasing speed, ease, and breadth of the media have had different consequences in the cultural-religious and national spheres in societies, in which identity, especially in the linguistic-literary dimension, can be considered as one of the influential spheres. It can be said that the same messages from this type of media can lead to turmoil in different societies and a crisis of religious identity. Definitions such as globalization, integration, and cultural invasion, which are common in the social and cultural literature of different societies, indicate the threat of identity by these media. In today's world, the media forms a large part of the nature of public opinion and has a direct impact on the values and norms of society because the media covers a large part of society in such a way that it is able to provide new ways of life. On the one hand, the media is effective in shaping the mental structure of people in society. On the other hand, it regulates people's behavior and causes people to express a completely calculated behavior about a social phenomenon.

Between 1991 and 2019, Russia's position on the world stage has radically changed, mainly due to its stable economic growth (Gabidullina, Zhundibayeva, Makarova, Galiullin, & Mubarakshina, 2018). The growth of Russian influence occurred not only due to the buildup of military power but also due to the increase in oil and gas power (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000). The period from 2014 to 2019 is of particular interest for the authors of the paper since it was marked by several major geopolitical events with the participation of Russia, and, as a result, the growing interest of foreign media in the Russian state. Let us single out a series of events that influenced the formation of Russia's image in the Euro-Asian and American media:

1) The main foreign policy event of 2014 is the return of Crimea to Russia. For the first time after the Second World War, Russia annexed but did not surrender territories, which came as a complete surprise to Western countries (Buckingham, 2003). The reunification of

Russia with Crimea caused open political threats and the introduction of economic sanctions against Russia.

2) In 2015, the Euro-Asian Economic Union (EAEU) was created, which currently includes five participating countries: Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Armenia, and Kyrgyzstan. The Eurasian Union envisions an integrated market with 183 million consumers and four trillion dollars of GDP at purchasing power parity (PPP). The creation of the EAEU was the response of Russia to the European Union project and the Chinese initiative of the New Silk Road.

3) In 2015, Russia successfully opposed US geostrategic plans to capture key regions of the world, Syria (Abbas & Chragh, 2020). Western media claimed a need to protect the Syrian people from the "bloody dictator" Bashar al-Assad. However, the main goal of the United States was the capture of oil, gas, and a strategically important region in the Middle East, as well as encircling Russia from the south and exerting pressure on the Caucasus region. Russia initiated military operations on September 30 at the request of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in order to support government troops. For three months, the Russian military destroyed more than two thousand command points, warehouses, and training grounds for terrorists (Kuhiwczak, 2014).

4) The year 2015 was a period of the emergence in Russia of a new type of troops - the Aerospace Defence Forces, which were combined with the Air Force. The ADF guards outer space, manages the air forces on duty, air defense and missile defense, military spacecraft, and a missile attack warning system (Amponsah, Kwesi, & Ernest, 2019; Coker, 2014).

5) In connection with its gradual regaining of a world power status, Russia began to strengthen cooperation with the countries of Asia, namely China, India, Korea, Japan, etc., to reduce dependence on Western Europe and the United States. The establishment of strategic cooperation with China undoubtedly makes serious changes in international relations. In addition to severe trade and economic projects between Russia and China, which reduce dependence on the US dollar, the partnership is also being implemented at the political level (Erofeeva & Ushnikova,

2017). For example, China supports Russia in Syria and Ukraine, and Russia, in turn, provides support to China in a dispute over the South China Sea. One of the signs revealing the growth of strategic cooperation between Russia and China was the launching of a joint initiative for a peaceful settlement of the Korean Peninsula's nuclear issue.

2. Theoretical Framework

It is difficult to overvalue the role of mass media discourse in creating and changing individual worldviews. The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another. It is difficult to overvalue the role of metaphors in political mass media discourse, “[...] where the choice of metaphoric construals is determined by various factors, from purely decorative rhetoric to ideological stance” (Tsirkunova, 2016, p. 407). Melnik, Misonzhnikov, and Vojtik (2019) were devoted to establishing the image of a country, in this case, Russia, through the media, in which either a positive image of the country is created or negative characteristics are affirmed. They believe that since today the media is one of the main resources by which the public learns about political events, images of the state and government are being formed. Through various channels of information transmission, representations, stereotypes, and myths about the state are broadcast. The combination of these factors makes up the image of the country, which is represented in the media.

So far, many studies have been done on the media and the images they show of different countries, especially Russia. Vinogradova (2020), in her article, examines the image of Russia in American digital media. The analysis of the mutual perception of Russia and Belarus, formed with the help of publications in the media of the Union State, is based on the classical model of communication by G. Lasswell, the theory of political perception and political identity. The first makes it possible to identify the role of the media in the communicative space of the Union State, the second – to identify the mechanisms of perception of images of Russia and Belarus, the third – makes it possible to identify the identity of the peoples of Russia and Belarus. Also, this study is based on the development of political

geographers, which allow assessing the spatial factor of the political perception of the country (Vinogradova, 2020).

Zheltukhina and her colleagues (2017) worked on the images of Russia based on the media. The major methodology applied was the content analysis of a corpus of Spanish, American, French, German, and British published media texts from 2000 to 2018. The result of these media was that the image of Russia in Western countries is negative. This image is based on the perceptions that were developed over the last century. Russia is characterized as a revived Empire, regaining its lost role of great power by all means. Russia is often specified as a country that hopes to be a global power, as an Empire, rather than as a global power. In the international arena, the strengthening of the role of Russia can not be denied. Nevertheless, we can not ignore the fact that its foreign policy is defined as aggressive, threatening global stability and security. It can also be concluded that there is a clear possibility that Western media criticism of Russia will grow in the coming years. In addition, the issue here is not only in the nominations and evaluations but also in the actual actions and events that can be evaluated from different perspectives. The result of all this is Russia's rejection of it as an integral part of the civilized world, as a country ready to share world values as seen by Western society (Zheltukhina, Popova, & Caselles, 2018).

Vinogradova and Denisova (2018) point out in their article that this study analyzes the formation of Russia's image through media focused on the countries of the Asia-Pacific region of South Korea, Japan, and China. Based on the investigation of bilateral relationships between Russia and the Republic of Korea, Russia and Japan, Russia, and the Republic of China, a communication model has been built between our country and the countries of the Asia-Pacific region. The purpose of this study is to conduct a quantitative content analysis of the Russian image that is disseminated through media focused on the countries of the Asia-Pacific region (South Korea, Japan, and China). In this research, the content analysis method, theoretical communication model, and image theory have been used. The mechanisms of state image formation in political psychology are described.

Ksenia Pavlovna Posternyak and Natalya Borisovna Boeva-Omelechko attempt to reveal the range of means for surfacing the nucleus and layers of the concept “Russia”, used by British journalists. These means demonstrate ideological values of the discourse in question and stereotypes, which it forms in the minds of British people. According to their research, the British political mass media discourse contributes a lot to the creation of the mainly negative image of Russia as a hostile, aggressive, unpredictable, and dangerous state, alien to principles of democracy (Posternyak & Boeva-Omelechko, 2018).

Avramova (2020), in his article (reception of the image of Russia in the Bulgarian mass media) deals with the interstate relations between Russia and Bulgaria, which are reflected in the modern Bulgarian media. The author analyzes the topics that touch upon the historical relations between Bulgaria and Russia, namely the Russian-Turkish war 1877-1878, the liberation of Bulgaria from fascism at the end of World War II, and the socialist development of Bulgaria in the period 1944-1989. Attention is drawn to the division of civil society into Russophiles and Russophobes and their interpretation of the mentioned historical events and their attitude towards them, which found a place in the mass media. The article analyzes the materials of the authors who have a polar attitude towards the interpretation of Russian-Bulgarian relations as the most striking case of negative relations. The reasons for the negative assessment on the pages of newspapers are closely related to different interpretations of the history of Bulgaria and its relationship with Russia over the centuries. The stylistic aspect of the empirical material is considered, and the stylistic methods used by the authors to express their attitude to the subject are highlighted.

Social and political practices prove that the attitude towards Russia is dictated more by ideological than by pragmatic guidelines. Analysis of the material shows that in some newspapers, a sharply negative attitude is formed towards Russia and Russians. In the linguistic aspect, these newspapers use the invective vocabulary, and in general, they are characterized by the creation of an image of the occupier and the enemy. This attitude is in sync with the actions of Russia's enemies on a European and global scale. However, sociological

research and mass media practice in modern Bulgaria indicate that in public space, the image of Russia remains close to Bulgarians (Avramova, 2020).

Some researchers have achieved significant results by detailing the issue of Russia in the media, as Ozornina did in his article. His research focuses on the ambiguity in Russia's perception of the English media during the 2018 FIFA World Cup, based on the theory of frames competed by J. Druckman. Content analysis of 751 articles about Russia was conducted from English wide-page pages and newspapers to highlight five frames: “Russia as a British enemy”, “Russia as a potential partner of Britain”, “Russia as an insecure country”, “Russia as a worthy host of the World Cup”, “Russia as a country with a rich culture”. The results show that there is a negative perception of Russia in the context of the British media, especially on the big pages. Despite the positive dynamics during the World Cup, at the end of the games, the frequency of the frames returns to pre-championship values (Ozornina & Mannin, 2020).

3. Methodology

As mentioned earlier, the formation of the country's image in foreign media is a direct reflection of the attitude of the world community to its foreign policy and economic course and the activities of its power structures in terms of coincidence with the political and economic interests of hegemonic states that dictate the conditions for the functioning of states within the framework of world space. The relevance of this work is due to the position of modern Russia on the world stage and the foreign policy and economic factors that have a strong influence on the formation of the image of the Russian state in foreign media. It is advisable to observe the trends in the formation and transformation of the modern Russian image in the Eurasian media space and the media space of the United States of America. The chronological framework of the study covers the foreign policy of the Russian Federation from 2014 to 2018, which is due to several major geopolitical events with the participation of the Russian Federation, which fundamentally affected the position of Russia in the world community, as well as the attitude of the countries from the West European and

Asian region to the new status of Russia as a world power.

The methodological basis of the study is a synthesis of traditional approaches that have stood the test of time (historical-literary, systemic-typological, comparative-historical) with the involvement of relatively new research practices (the opposition “European – American” within the framework of imageology and theory of image formation). The methodological principles of these areas are used depending on the specific material and tasks.

4. Results

The mass media are closely associated with the concept of soft power in international relations. Joseph Nye states that information is power and that success in the information age depends not only on whose army wins but on whose story wins. As the idea of soft power has caught on in policy-making circles around the world, so governments have come to believe in the media's potential to affect their nations' success in the international arena. It is thought that the media shape foreign public sentiments, which in turn affect the acquiescence or resistance of foreign elites to particular foreign policy goals. The validity of this assumption is very hard to test. Nevertheless, states are devoting considerable resources to reaching foreign publics via the media, hoping thereby to improve their chances of obtaining positive results in international affairs (Szostek, 2014).

Media discourse does not always reflect the exchange of emotional support, politeness, and impartiality in the presentation of events. Conversely, it often shows aggression, negativity, verbal pressure, suggestion, and so on (Zheltukhina et al., 2017). The above-mentioned foreign policy events with the participation of Russia for the period from 2014 to 2018 have influenced the formation and transformation of the image of the Russian Federation in the Euro-Asian and American media space (Frankenstein et al., 2020). Specific topics have become most attractive to foreign media (Bignell, 2002), especially Euro-Asian and American, as they are most actively involved in the formation and transformation of the image of Russia (Bryant, Thompson, & Finklea, 2012; Curran & Morley, 2007).

To carry out the hard analytical tasks, the Chinese title of Huanqiu Shibao, the Japanese titles Mainichi Shimbun and Asahi Shimbun were chosen among the Asian media. Huanqiu Shibao is a daily title in which most of the materials are devoted to international politics. An analysis of the texts in Huanqiu Shibao for the selected chronological period from 2014 to 2019 showed that this publication strongly emphasizes the friendly partner relations between Russia and China, thus creating a positive image of Russia on its pages. The tone of the articles can be described as respectfully positive. The headings of the articles provide direct evidence of building a positive image of Russia: A joint statement by Putin and Xi: to defend the interests of mankind, America began to copy the weapons of China and Russia, Do not threaten Russia with your fist, Agriculture - a new oil for the Russian economy, Russian lessons of courage, and many others. The authors of the articles support the foreign policy of Russia, and put emphasis on mutually beneficial cooperation of Russia and China in the military-economic sphere (<http://osvita.mediasapiens.ua>).

Huanqiu Shibao sees the joint role of Russia and China in maintaining stability in the world and opposing the monopolar system imposed by the United States. Asahi Shimbun is a daily Japanese title. A chronicle presentation of the material characterizes it. The newspaper avoids the “yellow” headlines; it has pronounced liberal views. The way Asahi Shimbun positions Russia and forms its image on its own pages is fully consistent with the liberal orientation of the newspaper. Throughout the entire period from 2014 to 2018-19, one can notice a negatively critical attitude towards Russia and its foreign policy activities. The negative policy of building the image of Russia is directly reflected in the headlines of the published articles: “No compromise on the Kuril Islands”, “Asymmetry of Putin's power”, “Real Putin: a standing ovation for the tsar”, “Is it true that Russians are drunkards?”, and others. A critical attitude is also characteristic of such aspects of life in Russia as sports, culture, gastronomy and restaurant business, tourism, and other things. Asahi Shimbun pays excellent attention to the personality of Russian President Vladimir Putin, characterizing him as an authoritarian leader striving to maintain his

power and strengthening his position in the world in any way.

The topic on the return of the Kuril Islands is continually being touched upon, with particular emphasis on the uncompromising and challenging Russian authorities regarding this issue and their reluctance to return Japan to its territory, rightfully and historically, in the opinion of the Japanese side. *Mainichi Shimbun* is a Japanese national daily, being one of the largest in the country. For the period from 2014 to 2018, the publications of the *Mainichi Shimbun* newspaper have shown a clear interest in Russia's foreign and domestic policies, as well as a tendency to form the image of Russia from negative to neutral-positive as Russia's position in the world arena strengthened. The newspaper expressed its negative attitude towards the murder of opposition leader Boris Nemtsov.

However, as Russia's position on the world stage grew stronger, the tone of publications by *Mainichi Shimbun* has gradually acquired a neutral and even positive connotation. The change of attitude is visible not only in the description of foreign policy events but also in events in the field of culture and sports. A significant resonance in the Japanese press in general and in *Mainichi Shimbun*, in particular, was caused by the holding of the World Cup in Russia in 2018, as evidenced by the headings of such articles as "The Unimaginable is in Russia, but I Like It", "Don't Believe the West: Russia has it's better".

An analysis of the data in such American media as **Project Syndicate** showed that the frequency of mentioning Russia is much lower than, for example, in the Asian press. The issue of relations and confrontation between the USA and China most clearly stands out among the issues that concern American titles. We can see that the problem of US-Chinese relations prevails among others following the bright headlines, for example, "The Sino-American Cold War threatens to destroy the world", "The trade war with China will cost a lot for the United States", and many others. The American media forms the image of a weak adversary who is unable to solve not only external but also domestic economic problems. Therefore Russia is rarely mentioned in the American press. Sometimes, *The New York Times* and *Project*

Syndicate are ironic over Russia, which also helps build the image of Russia as a weak political opponent (<http://osvita.mediasapiens.ua>).

Project Syndicate directly points in its publications to the weakness of the Russian economy, indirectly negating Russia's ability to conduct a full-fledged foreign policy due to the inability to cope with internal problems. Speaking about the Western European media and their strategies for building the image of Russia, special attention is paid to the press of such countries as Great Britain, Germany, and France in view of their most tremendous political weight among the countries of Western Europe. *The Guardian* presents the British press in the study, which is characterized as prestigious and high-quality and as one of the most respected in the world. According to political views, the title is classified as left-liberal.

After analyzing the texts presented in the newspaper for the period from 2014 to 2019, one can notice certain trends in the formation of the image of Russia. (Gabidullina et al., 2018) First of all, articles about Russia very often appear on the pages of *The Guardian*, unlike, for example, the same American press. This happens because the UK does not consider Russia as a weak and undeveloped country but recognizes it as a strong power whose interests run counter to the interests of the UK itself. If we leave aside the question of the real influence of Russia ..., the very fact that people believe in his power and ability to give impetus to broad popular movements delights the electorate, splits the allies. Therefore, it is already a victory for the Kremlin. It is a kind of hypnosis. Russia first tested it on its own population and only then began to export it abroad. This finds expression in such aspects of coverage of the image of Russia as Russia's desire for the collapse of the European Union through its support of Brexit. In addition, allegations of homophobia and the conduct of policies against LGBT people are one of the trends in building a negative image of Russia.

5. Discussion

Analysis of the media space of Western Europe (Great Britain - *The Guardian*, France - *Le Figaro*, Germany - *Der Spiegel*), America (USA - *The New York Times* and *Project Syndicate*)

and Asia (China - Huanqiu Shibao, Japan – such titles as Asahi Shimbun and Mainiti Shimbun) shows that the frequency of mentioning Russia in the US media space in the pages of American media is much lower than in the Asian and Western European press (Bertrand & Hughes, 2017). The most widespread problem for the USA is the issue of relations and confrontation between the USA and China, which constantly appears on the pages of American publications. The US is also preoccupied with European integration, globalization, domestic policies, global climate change, etc. The image of Russia is interpreted as the image of a weak adversary (sometimes with a touch of irony) unable to solve not only external but also domestic economic problems. Therefore, the mention of Russia in the American press is infrequent.

The UK does not see Russia as a weak and undeveloped country but recognizes it as a strong power whose interests run counter to the interests of Great Britain itself. In this regard, the image of Russia is built up as negative, which is supported, in particular, by accusations of Russia of homophobia and pursuing a policy directed against LGBT people.

In the German press, the image of Russia is built on the principle of “from negative to neutral-positive”, moving from the image of an authoritarian state to the image of a partner state. At the same time, for a number of obvious reasons, it is difficult for Germany to unconditionally accept Russia's return to the status of world power. Therefore there are reservations in the articles, and they express doubts: the headings often take the form of a questionnaire. German media is afraid to openly express its approval of Russia's actions, given the leading role of Germany in the European Union, which is under the influence of the United States. Nevertheless, the German media unconditionally recognizes Russia's achievements in high technology.

When building the image of Russia, the French *Le Figaro* adheres to a positive tone and, in general, speaks of Russia with respect. Russia is represented as an equal partner in the field of foreign policy, with which cooperation should be established and which Europe needs. The image of the President of Russia is the image of a smart and wise politician whose opinion

should be taken into account when solving foreign policy issues.

Politics in the media space of Japan builds the negative image of Russia, which is directly reflected in the headlines. For the period from 2014 to 2018, the publications of the Mainity Shimbun newspaper show a clear interest in Russia's foreign and domestic policies, as well as a tendency to form the image of Russia from negative to neutral-positive as Russia's position in the world arena strengthened. During the Ukrainian crisis of 2015, one can clearly find the critical attitude of the Japanese newspaper towards Russia. However, as Russia's position on the world stage grows stronger, the tone of publications by Mainity Shimbun gradually acquires a neutral and even positive connotation.

The Chinese media space in every possible way emphasizes a friendly partnership with Russia, thus creating a positive image of Russia on its pages. The tone of the articles can be described as respectfully positive. Headings of articles are direct evidence of building a positive image of Russia. Obviously, the overall media trend can be described as a shift from building a negative image of Russia to the formation of a positive image when moving from the West to Asia (<http://osvita.mediasapiens.ua>). The media space of each country has its own vision of Russia and is characterized by its own focus when forming the image of Russia on the pages of its publications. The formation of a negative image of a state in foreign media has the task of introducing certain stereotypes of a "world enemy" into the minds of foreign readers.

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