



Section 1. Cultural studies

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FORMATION OF THE MEDIA IMAGE OF V.V. PUTIN

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Abstract

The article examines the mechanisms of formation of the media image of Vladimir Putin, the role of traditional and digital media in this process, as well as the influence of communication. The article states that the media is one of the main tools in the formation of public opinion about a political leader, and through various discourse strategies, certain characteristics of the leader come to the fore. V. Putin's media image is presented as a strong leader, defender of national interests, and a decisive politician.

Keywords: *media image, political discourse, V. Putin, political communication, public opinion, political image*

Introduction

The Daily Express is a British national tabloid with a daily circulation of approximately 409,248 copies and a readership of over 775,000. In recent years, the newspaper has sponsored the UK Independence Party (a British political party calling for Britain to leave the European Union and adhering to conservative and right-wing populist views).

The newspaper was founded in 1900 by Arthur Pearson, with the first issue published on April 24, 1900. In 1927, the newspaper moved to Manchester and broke circulation records in the 1930s. The average age of its readers is 65, of which 49% are women. 56% of its readers are upper-middle class, middle class, and lower-middle class, holding conservative and right-wing populist views.

The newspaper positions itself as a modern, women-friendly publication that champions middle-class values and traditions, leading it to be often called "the voice of middle Britain" (URL: <http://www.northernandshell.co.uk.s3.amazonaws.com/media/ststic-files/ns-plus/Daily-Express-Media-Pack-2015.pdf>). To characterize the media image of Russian President Vladimir Putin in the British newspaper The Daily Express, we analyzed eight articles published between 2013 and 2015. We note the time of writing for these articles. This was a period of instability in southeastern Ukraine, which left its mark on the articles themselves, which described events on the global political scene.

The analyzed articles discuss the following topics:

- the political actions of Vladimir Putin. Putin's global presence (e.g., military support for Bashar al-Assad in Syria, relations with neighboring Ukraine, the annexation of Crimea; Putin's plans to militarize the Arctic by 2020);

- the war in Ukraine and the varying attitudes of Western countries toward it;

- Putin's leadership characteristics and athletic achievements (e.g., Putin's "spy" career; the political leader's hobbies and sports interests).

Overall, we noted that this periodical evaluates all of Putin's actions negatively, which can be explained by the newspaper's political focus. The Daily Express creates the following negative images of the Russian president: "Coldest warrior," "Kremlin grandmaster," "Emperor," and "Macho." Regarding lexical identification in the analyzed articles of the aforementioned newspaper, it is worth noting neutral official addresses of Vladimir Putin such as "Mr. Putin," "President Vladimir Putin," "President Putin," "Vladimir Putin," "Putin," "Russian president," "The leader," and "Russian leader." Lexical identification such as "The 62-year-old Russian leader" emphasizes the president's mature age.

Of particular interest are such means of lexical identification of the image of V. V. Putin as "Kremlin grandmaster", "Kremlin chief", "former KGB agent", "The son of a policeman, Putin", emphasizing the leadership characteristics of a talented politician and his experience as a KGB agent in the past.

In newspaper articles, we encounter such references to the president as "action man" (a man who prefers to do things rather than think about and discuss them) and "macho man" (a man behaving forcefully or showing no emotion in a way traditionally thought to be typical of a man). Articles often identify with the categorical feature of assessing an image from the position of the article's author. In most cases, the image of V. V. Putin is negatively assessed, for example: "the autocratic ruler" (autocratic – relating to an autocrat who is a ruler with unlimited power, or someone who demands that people completely obey them), "the Russian Bear," "the coldest warrior," "not the sort of democratically-elected politician," "a guy with an avery sardonic sense of humor"

(a guy who shows little respect in a humorous but inappropriate way, often because you think that you are too important to consider or discuss a matter). These methods of lexical identification of the Russian President in the articles of this periodical reflect the journalist's subjective attitude toward Vladimir Putin as a tough, authoritarian political leader (Baranov, A.N., 1991).

Let's examine the above-mentioned images of Vladimir Putin in The Daily Express and the means by which they are created in more detail. Let's begin with the image of the "Coldest Warrior." In an article published on June 18, 2013, titled "Vladimir Putin: The Coldest Warrior," the president is portrayed, on the one hand, as a "cold-blooded politician," while, on the other, the image of a supporter of the Cold War, which took place between 1946 and 1989 between the two most powerful countries, the USSR and the USA, is read between the lines.

Throughout the article, the journalist cites situations that support this image. First, the author of the article discusses Russia's military support for Bashar al-Assad in Syria, citing the following figures: nearly 100,000 people have died in Syria, including 1,700 children under the age of ten. Second, the article emphasizes that Vladimir Putin brings his Labrador to his meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, knowing full well her phobia of dogs. All these facts contribute to the creation of a negative image of an unfeeling, cold person.

Let's consider the lexical, grammatical, and stylistic means used to create the image of "Coldest Warrior," which can be presented in the following table:

Lexical and grammatical means:

Noun phrases- icy press conference with Putin, no smiles;

Verb phrases- to sadistically ask.

Stylistic means: Metaphors – coldest warrior, no trace of a twinkle in his eye, -a thaw in the personal permafrost. Epithets- harsh, cold. Allusion- Rambo.

The analysis showed that noun and verb phrases, as well as epithets and metaphors that create a negative assessment of the Russian president, play an important role in creating the image of "Coldest Warrior," as they have a negative connotation. For

example: 'icy press conference with Putin' (icy – unfriendly and showing no emotion), 'sadistically asked' (sadistically – in a particularly horrible or brutal manner, as painfully as possible), 'harsh' (unpleasant, unkind, cruel, or more severe than necessary), 'cold' (not showing kindness, love, or emotion and unfriendly). These tools create the image of a warrior, the "Coldest Warrior," who is tough and unfeeling, like any warrior, in order to fight and win. The metaphors in the following sentence also emphasize the president's cold-blooded image: 'Even when asked about his alleged girlfriend, Alina Kabaeva, the former gymnast 30 years his junior, whom he is rumored to have been seeing for years, there is no trace of a twinkle in his eye or a thaw in the personal permafrost.' Using the metaphors "no trace of a twinkle in his eye" and "a thaw in the personal permafrost," the author of the article emphasizes that when the name of the woman with whom he was rumored to have had an affair is mentioned, the president's gaze shows no emotion, a characteristic characteristic of a cold-blooded person. Conversations about love usually excite people, and therefore, when the name of the woman they love is mentioned, anyone typically reacts emotionally. To demonstrate how cold the president is, the article emphasizes his emotionless reaction, comparing him to a glacier (permafrost).

It should be noted that the very title of this article—"Vladimir Putin: The Coldest Warrior"—conceals the conceptual metaphor "politics-war." The use of such terms as "coldest," "icy," and "thaw" suggests the precedent-setting phenomenon of the Cold War. The author of the article also refers to other precedent phenomena, in particular, he cites the precedent name – Rambo: 'He has carried this carefully cultivated Rambo image'.

One article uses the metaphor of the "Russian bear." The noun "bear" has two meanings that create a factual image. The first is "a large, strong, wild animal with thick fur," which has become a symbol of Russia. The second meaning is "a difficult person to deal with." Thus, one can conclude that Vladimir Putin is a strong leader with whom political negotiations are difficult. The use of phrases such as "to carry out plans," "Putin's actions," "his vision," and the noun "empire" suggest that the journalist is comparing Putin to a self-confident leader seeking to expand his empire. The articles employ idioms that support this image, such as "on alert" and "to eye up" (in the sentences "Actions in the Crimea by Putin have already put those five nations, America, Norway, Iceland, Denmark, and Canada, on high alert" and "Putin eyes up the Arctic for empire"). The verb phrases "to be in power," "to afford to disappear," and "to militarize the Arctic" also demonstrate the president's power. The president's autocratic stance is vividly reflected in the following sentence: "He's not the sort of democratically-elected politician." Here, the journalist expresses his viewpoint on the method by which the president was elected. The verb "afford to disappear" reinforces the idea of Vladimir Putin's confidence in his own power.

Conclusion

Through various expressive devices (metaphors, epithets, allusions, idioms, and irony), the reader develops a negative attitude toward the Russian president as a political leader. British readers are presented with Vladimir Putin as a self-assured, cold-blooded, and tough figure, like a strong, self-assured leader during the Cold War, who instills anxiety and fear in ordinary people in Western countries.

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