

THE IMAGE OF RUSSIA FORMED BY WESTERN MASS MEDIA*E.A. Volgina**Southern federal university. Rostov-on-Don, Russia
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The article considers the image of Russia formed by western mass media with the help of various journalistic techniques and stylistic resources. The image of Russia is formed by western mass media through the analysis of her political-economic situation, home affairs, reforms, and the leading figures in politics and economics. The thematic unlimited range of the questions discussed by modern western mass media defines the use of various technologies of forming the required image. Among such techniques of forming the image of Russia are the contrast between the future and present of the country, subtle criticism and objection under superficial consent (the so-called fly in the ointment), a consistent and undoubtedly deliberate input of the negative factual information into the structure of the text, doubt about the reliability of a personality, the opposition of seeming and true realities, and others. The stylistic resources used for forming the image of Russia involve emotionally colored words, neutral and expressive means, verbal collocations and metaphorical expressions, epithets, repetitions, antithesis, insertions and others. The topicality of the subject discussed makes the journalists look for the ways of expressing their negative, seldom positive attitude towards Russia as well as of making a skillfully veiled impact on the readers' mind to receive specific responses.

Key words: mass media, stylistic, resources, image, formation, positive, negative, impact, expressive, evaluation, evaluative.

Our modern society lives in the world of new technologies, among which are mass media. The purpose of mass media is not only to inform the readers but also make an impact on their minds and feelings, their mood and attitude to the problems discussed. To realize these purposes the western mass media use all possible technologies. Among them are various programming techniques and stylistic resources for creating a certain image, be it a man, a country or a whole continent. It is a well-known fact that it is enough to select and use only one apt expression in order to build a positive or negative image of a person, a country often depending on the position and manner of expression of the journalist. However the image of Russia formed by western mass media with the help of stylistic resources and various journalistic techniques is not studied enough in our native linguistics; hence this subject still remains of interest for the scientists and needs further exploration.

The materials for exploration were taken from such journals and newspapers as Executive Intelligence Review, Economist, and The New York Times. Unfortunately some journalists often collect the information about Russia from the articles already published in mass media. Hence, it is hard to rely on the objectivity of the opinion and truthfulness of the facts given by such authors who had apparently never visited Russia. Suffice it to remember the words of a well-known Russian linguist N.I.Klushina, who writes "the information which is collected and processed by concrete people for certain groups of readers can't be absolutely objective by itself. The reader always receives a certain interpretation of the information, no matter in what way its objective character might be emphasized" [1, p. 94]. The main subject of the newspaper and journalistic articles of the beginning of the XXI century is the political-economic situation, home affairs, reforms and leading personalities in politics and economics of Russia.

The western journals amply publish the articles in which Russia is always pictured from a seamy side with the help of various stylistic resources and journalistic techniques. For instance, confident statements about the possible changes in Russia lose their optimism due to the effect of failed expectation and a contrast between the future and present of Russia "Russia *will look different next year, but not where it matters*", repetition of the attribute "new" and the contrast between new leadership and old problems, " ... *Russia will have a new president, a new government, a new parliament and a new image. Its problems, however, will be much the same as before.*"

The statement that Russia will be governed more confidently and logically is realized by means of comparing two State Dumas. The hope that a new Duma will be a more serious and working one

than the old Duma which has already made its certain contribution to forming a negative image of the main legislative organ of the country is stressed by the use of epithets “less cantankerous and silly”.

A skillful resort to a parenthetical construction containing subtle criticism under the mask of assertion renders an additional, seemingly, positive opinion about the state of economics, its attractiveness for the potential western investors in the future but for the dramatic irony which is traced in this context through the phrase *at least at first* “this will not bother the stock market - *at least at first*”.

Further on the journalists voice their hope for the country to carry out a more rational tax code because the current one is a joyless choice between insolvency and bribes “*the current one offers a bleak choice between insolvency if followed, and bribes to the tax inspectors, if not*”. The epithet “bleak” and a categorical opposition “*if followed ... if not*” describe the tax policy as unsatisfactory and drastically in need of reforms.

The author pictures positive almost optimistic perspectives for Russia which will open due to the good intentions of the western investors. They are always ready to give Russia the last chance “*to give Russia one’s last chance*” and will probably negotiate new terms even a write off of a multibillion state-to-state debt “*even a write off*” inherited from the previous regime. But it’s not that optimistic as it may seem at first sight. E.g.” *Foreign direct investors, in industries ranging from consumer to forestry, will reckon that Russia’s 140 m population and wealth of raw materials are worth a punt – especially if their investments are underwritten by western governments*”. Suffice it to use the verbs “*reckon, underwrite*”, a phrase “*be worth a punt*”, as quite a different picture emerges accentuating an accurate, pragmatic, and by no means disinterested calculation of the western investors to receive maximum revenue from the Russian market.

But in spite of the possible good perspectives for Russia, the western journalists see a rather gloomy future of the country “*But the boomlet will be deceptive. Although international goodwill, solvency and sensible laws may be necessary conditions for Russia to prosper, they are certainly not sufficient ones*”. The biggest problem is still deeply rooted in domestic laws “*ingrained lawlessness*” which is the result of centuries-old governance of the state “*bad government*” (*first feudal, then communist*). Using the epithets “*deceptive, bad, ingrained*”, the modal verb “*may*” “*may be necessary conditions for Russia to prosper*” the author gives a bleak assessment of the boom connected with foreign investments, his distrust of the very established system in Russia which will take a long time to change “*will take a generation or more to change*”, thus presenting the country and her potential as unreliable and unpromising.

The image of an isolated Russia from the rest of the world “*Russia’s isolation*” and that gulch which will “*inexorably*” arise between the eastern and western halves of the post communist world is depicted in the following example: “*another crash will underline Russia’s isolation from the rest of the world and highlight the gulch opening up, seemingly inexorably, between the eastern and western halves of the post-communist world*”. The interaction of the veiled simile “*seemingly*” and the epithet “*inexorably*” in the parenthetical phrase contributes to the evaluation of the modern situation and an impact on the reader’s mind so that he might apprehend the facts described from the point of view of the journalist.

Describing bleak prospects of Russia for the nearest future the authors give the analysis of three levels of difficulties which can hardly be overcome and which will continue to hit Russia.

First, there is an alarming overlap between corrupt officials, gangsters and industrialists. The epithets “*alarming, growth-killing idea, deeply rooted*”, an ironical play on a proverb “*a guaranteed big slice of a small pie is much better than a possible small slice of a much larger one*” (*A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush*) which is based on contrasting the attributes “*guaranteed and possible, big and small*”, a nonce word “*oligopolistic*”, containing an associative-figurative component as the ground for the evaluative qualification and stylistic marking, first and foremost criticize and blame the corruption of officials, politicians and their overlap with oligarchs.

Characterizing the position and behavior of the judges as the indecisive people, low-paid officials and rather favoring the interests of the local authorities the author resorts to the epithets “*timid, underpaid, inevitably*”, stressing an absolute lack of belief in the improvements of the jury system and development of Russia. Such stylistic resources and newly-coined words do not only color the texts

but also render a certain attitude of the author to the subject of speech. They emphasize a bleak, ironical assessment of the situation and certainly can't but make a negative impact on the reader's mind.

Second, the author's description of the inability of Russian banking system to use the potential of the country for the development of the industry "*unable to channel the country's savings into its industry*", then the inability of the legislative system to provide banks with a reliable legislative base for returning loans "*a legal system in which a bank can reliably collect the collateral on a bad loan... is still many years away*" present the main state organs of the country as absolutely inefficient and eventually contribute to forming distrust of the country.

Third, the negative image of Russia is formed through the description of the events in everyday life with the help of the following epithets "*miserably, backward, inefficient*" giving examples of such elementary things as receiving a driving license, passport, registering a car, taking an exam, avoiding military service, starting business – all these spheres remain hopelessly inefficient, almost unrealizable, and unattainable because of the bureaucracy, i.e. if one doesn't bribe an official "*or slip someone a bribe*" he won't solve his problem. "*Everyday life in Russia will remain miserably backward and inefficient. You want a passport? Then go and queue for a couple of days (or slip someone a bribe). You want a driving license. The same. Or to register your car, pass an exam, avoid military service, start a business? The same.*" The repetition of the word "*the same*" referring to bribing an official is purposefully aimed at forming an image of corruption penetrating all the layers of the society.

The hopelessness of a man in everyday life is enhanced against the background of human rights in happier countries where the people have more opportunities to defend their rights, and solve their problems. "*In happier countries, the public complains by writing to lawmakers or the newspapers – or there may even be an ombudsman, free legal advice or easily accessible courts*". Comparing two types of everyday life the author categorically states that there is nothing of the kind in Russia even in its initial form "*no much sign of that starting in Russia*".

Speaking about some changes for the better, the author defines them as superficial with the help of an epithet "*the changes are superficial*". Russia, in his opinion, remains a moral and financial bankrupt as before. The formation of the distrust of the readers to the positive changes in Russia is directly and openly underscored by the grammatical construction in the Present Indefinite Tense "*remain at heart*", comparison "*as morally and financially bankrupt as before*", as well as an emotionally colored verb "*stampede for the exit*" showing a hasty retreat of the investors from the Russian market remembering how they were caught out in 1998. The tonality of the author's words clearly shows his irony describing a short period of illusion and disillusion of the people in their life after the collapse of economics in 1998 "*a short cycle*", "*new law-abiding era*", "*show-trials*".

Characterizing the Russia's foreign policy as well as its economy the author calls it "deceptive". But the style of governing under a new President will be "*vigorous and assertive*". At the same time, in the authors opinion, the new personal ideas of the President in the sphere of foreign policy "*will be something of a shock*" for the western politicians because the latter used to look upon Russia as a grumpy, unreliable, but largely untroublesome force in the world affairs. The use of such stylistic resources as antithesis, epithets for the characterization of Russia on the international arena "*deceptive, grumpy, unreliable, largely untroublesome*" or for the description of the leading politicians of the country "*steely, inscrutable, very intense, strong man*" confirm a certain ideological trend and bias in the works of the western journalists who are called to present a negative image of Russia for the international community.

Describing those nuclear resources which allow Russia to become aware of her superiority over weaker neighbors the journalists use an epithet "*captive nations*", thus stressing a lack of goodwill of the former soviet republics in Middle Asia and the Caucasus in accession to the treaty with Russia.

The image of Russia as a menacing monster who can extend her military actions over the most part of the planet is instilled into the minds of the readers at the expense of a detailed enumeration of the types of the weapon and its fighting efficiency "*tactical nuclear weapons, fuel-air bombs, non-conventional weapons, chemical weapons*".

An attempt to calm the alarmists in the West about the possibility of a new cold war is realized through a rather soft negation, "*Bad news? Not really*" and an epithet "*weak*", explaining that Russia is too weak for it but at the same time not excluding it if the West loses its patience "*lose its nerve*".

The thorough and skillful selection of the linguistic means is aimed at forming a condescending, indulgent attitude of the West to Russia until a certain time. Opposing two worlds and using the epithets to depict Russia from a negative side the author underscores the factor of the money which is of paramount importance for the Russian avid rulers "*money matters most for Russian rulers*". The word "ruler" with its subtle and derogatory implication is used to negatively characterize the leaders of the country, severely criticize their allegedly dictatorial regime which cancels the democratic system of the country.

The enumeration of the factors allowing the country to be integrated into the world economy "*to sell oil, gas, gold and diamonds*", as well as the direct evaluation of the negative processes taking place in Russia "*to borrow and launder money and to pay for imports of consumer goods*" seem to sound as an accusation of the country in her disability to explore her natural resources allowing a small group of oligarchs to take advantage of them instead of using them for the general welfare. So the author forms a palpably negative image of Russia for the reader under a predetermined point of view.

The journalists also focus their attention on the regional problems, in particular, on the decentralization of the foreign policy which "*will become more visible*" in the near future. The efficient selection of the epithets for characterizing the governors of Russia as "*unsavory and incompetent (or both)*" and calling them "*powerful*" regional barons help draw an image of the governors in gloomy, sarcastic tones. One can notice a very frequent resort to the antithesis in order to oppose the intellect of the governors, some of them are "*unsavory and incompetent (or both)*", others are "*the brighter ones have already begun to realize the benefits of foreign investment*" or the governors and the central leadership not to the credit of the latter, because it is the governors who possess the real power "*the men who matter in a country, the governor's words will count more, and the central government's for a lot less*".

However the negative image of Russia is not often imposed openly but insinuated to the reader by means of a skillful selection of stylistic resources, negative facts, making an accent only on one side of the problem described. At first sight it does not seem to be shocking but if one deeply reads into the text pumping the meaningful implication of the above-mentioned techniques it becomes clear that the journalist skillfully orientates the public opinion for the perception of the negative image of modern Russia. A detailed description of the inevitable financial collapse of Russia is realized not only at the expense of very emotionally strong epithets "*precarious economic and financial situation, looming disaster*" but also by means of a consistent and undoubtedly deliberate input of the negative factual information into the structure of the text and consequently into the reader's mind "*a new wave of economic and financial crisis is on the horizon, a marginal industrial production recovery is running out of niches for expansion, the outbreak of economic chaos, a wave of bankruptcies and factory closings, the threat of financial, formal default*".

The journalists also write about an uncertain balance of political forces in the country "*the highly uncertain balance of political forces*" and an uncertain future of some influential Russian oligarchs, intentionally drawing the readers' attention to this fact repeating the word "*uncertain*" "*uncertain balance, uncertain future*". The position of the oligarchs depends, in their opinion, on the President Putin, who is characterized both with a feeling of respect for him and misunderstanding of his personality at the same time by means of such epithets as "*a careful, highly disciplined, but intense and inscrutable personality*", "*will move quickly to rein in and even break the power of oligarchs*". The verb "*to rein in*" acquires the meaning of "*curbing, checking, restraining*" the forces which impede the democratic reforms.

The implicit assessment of the events, personalities is meant to form the public opinion, and bright, visible images of the political leaders. The authors speak about paradoxical and incomprehensible things taking place in Russia, and which might be fraught with serious consequences and surprises in the near future. In connection with it there is a frequent repetition of the lexical unit "*imponderables*" (*multiple paradoxes and imponderables, some of the imponderables, the imponderables of the*

Russian situation, another imponderable, and the “imponderable” of Putin) characterizing the situation in Russia and her President as inconceivable, and incomprehensible thus imposing the idea of distrust to such a personality upon the reader’s mind.

On the other hand, such characteristics of the president as his prudence and extraordinary discipline, his adherence to high technologies, and persistence in achieving goals help form an image of a modernizer who has a significant potential for independent action. The proper evaluative words of the journalist “*derigistic rebuilding of the Russia’s productive economy, an avowed “dirigistic nationalist”, to take on not only “Russian oligarch” structures, the course of that battle”, “favor a cut in interest rates to boost business and markets”* is certainly an efficient publicist device for forming an image of a determined person who is concerned to provide reforms for the benefit of Russia.

One can notice a certain change of tonality of journalistic publications which makes one think that Russia is the country who can appear in her proper character of a common peacemaker. They stress the necessity of Russia to be that coordinating link between the European civilization and the East, Southern and South-Eastern Asia which can bring peace and harmony to the world “*Russia, as the only truly Eurasian nation, is the necessary and essential link, between globally extended European civilization as a whole, and East and South and Southeast Asia. Without this coordinating role by Russia, the kind of realization which I indicate is needed would not be possible”*.

Further on one can see that the author stresses the growing role of Russia on the international arena, e.g. “*can make Russia a mediator between the Islamic world and the West...., In the Islamic world, Russia is viewed as a friendly power”*. The use of the verbs and phrases expressing a high assessment “*make a mediator, viewed as a friendly power”* speak about the growing respect of the West for Russia. However the western journalists would not have honored their commitments if they had not added a fly in the ointment. The very title of the article “*Russia and The Mideast: Talk, No Walk”* and the beginning of the first paragraph in the form of a question “*Is Russia the new powerbroker – even peacemaker – of the Middle East? It certainly aspires to be”* can be viewed as a means of the ironical assessment of Russia’s role in the international affairs. The noun “*powerbroker*” meaning an influential person in politics who acts secretly, i.e. “gray Your E.” (Gray Cardinal), is changed by the author for the seemingly positive noun “*peacemaker*”. But the noun “*peacemaker*” as an insertion together with an adverb “*even*”, the answer containing the introductory word “*certainly*”, the evaluative verb “*aspire*”, realizing the connotation of something lofty, noble, undergo a stylistically different interpretation and render an ironical assessment of Russia. In particular, the author makes an accent on the allegedly unfulfilled initiatives and commitments taken by Russia, e.g. “*its (Russia) Defense Ministry has also balked at sending peacekeepers to join a new United Nations force; Mr. Putin... has hinted... that Russia has been reaching out ...to free two Israeli soldiers whose capture in July off Israel’s incursion into Lebanon; Mr. Putin’s tactics have frequently put Russia at odds with the United States and Israel”*. Such an ironically derogatory evaluation of Russia’s political course on the international arena as an ambitious, much promising state but to no effect is clearly seen through 1) the laconic arrangement of the syntax of sentences, rather short simple syntactic colloquial constructions presenting the so-called “chopped prose”; the short, abrupt sentences draw the attention of the reader by their expressiveness, and stress the negative evaluation of the country’s reliability as a partner. “*But one thing is lacking so far: results”, “That was a month and a half ago. The soldiers remain captives”, “Now Russia is promising Lebanon support for reconstruction, but so far it has offered only \$1.75 million”, “other Russian diplomatic efforts have sputtered as well”, 2) the rhetoric question generalizing the strategy of Russia *What exactly is Russia after? Most of all, it is a quest for prestige*, 3) the use of the lofty words “*emboldened, forum*”, 4) a veiled simile “*seems to be using*”, e.g. “*Emboldened by an economic boom and seeing an opening caused by Muslim anger at America, the Kremlin seems to be using the Middle East as a forum to reach with new confidence for an independent global role”* 5) the epithets “*resurgent, deep*” 6) insertions “*Russia’s deep interest in the region is also driven by economics -- including arm deals with Syria, Iran and Algeria – and by hope that good relations with the Muslim world may cool any support for Russia’s own Islamic insurgences in and around Chechnya; The Middle East is one of their historic bastions of influence. “ I think they see their old contacts and their history there as an opening for a resurgent Russia to return to the world stage”*. The content of*

these examples is obviously aimed at forming the reader's negative assessment of the role of Russia on the international arena.

Thus, the image of Russia is formed by western mass media through a thematic variety of the articles which amply use a number of journalistic techniques and stylistic resources for instilling the schemed plans into the reader's mind. Among the various journalistic techniques aimed at forming specific responses of the readership are a contrast between the future and present of Russia, subtle criticism and objection under the superficial consent or assertion (the so-called fly in the ointment), ironical assessment of the situation, a consistent and undoubtedly deliberate input of the negative factual information into the structure of the text, doubt about the reliability of a personality, the opposition of seeming and true realities, etc. Among the stylistic resources one can point out the use of the emotionally colored words, verbal collocations and figurative expressions, epithets, repetitions, antithesis, similes, irony, specific syntactical sentence structures. Both journalistic techniques and stylistic resources are selected by western mass media to build a negative image of Russia influencing the reader's values and attitudes to the country and her political course, purposefully and subtly programming the reader's mind to produce mainly a predetermined negative response.

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