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**Image of the United Kingdom in Russian media in the
context of Brexit**

Master's thesis

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Year of the defence: 2022

Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on 25.07.2022.

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References

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Abstract

The withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union was a significant global issue that attracted the attention of experts in politics and international relations, as well as the general public and mass media. Since the Brexit referendum, the world has been focused on the situation in the United Kingdom. Mass media in all countries have covered this event in different ways. Thus, this diploma thesis “Image of the United Kingdom in Russian media in the context of Brexit” examines the image of Great Britain in Russian pro-governmental media Russia Today and opposition media Dozhd. This study is based on a critical discourse analysis of the articles from both sources in the period from June 23, 2016 to 2018. Based on this analysis, the image of the UK in each of these media was subsequently constructed. Particular attention is paid to the coverage of Russian interference in the Brexit referendum through an emotional appeal to British voters using the social network Twitter and disinformation. The image of the United Kingdom in the context of Brexit in opposition and pro-governmental media was then compared to identify how the image of the UK was changing under the circumstances of Russian interference, as well as to determine the views held by these media on Russian interference in the Brexit referendum.

Keywords

Brexit; referendum; media representation; media image; media and society; Great Britain; Russian Media.

Abstrakt

Vystoupení Spojeného království z Evropské unie představovalo významnou světovou událost, která přitahovala pozornost jak odborníků v oblasti politiky a mezinárodních vztahů, tak veřejnosti a médií. Po referendu o brexitu se pozornost celého světa soustředila na situaci ve Spojeném království. Média všech zemí informovala o této události různým způsobem. Diplomová práce “Obraz Spojeného království v ruských médiích v kontextu brexitu” proto zkoumá obraz Velké Británie v ruských provládních médiích Russia Today a opozičních médiích Dozhd. Práce zahrnuje kritickou diskurzivní analýzu článků z obou zdrojů z období od 23. června 2016 do roku 2018. Analýza byla následně použita k vytvoření obrazu Spojeného království v každém z těchto médií. Zvláštní pozornost byla věnována informování o ruském vměšování do referenda o brexitu prostřednictvím výzvy k emocím britských voličů přes sociální síť Twitter. Obraz Spojeného království v souvislosti s brexitem v opozičních a provládních médiích byl následně porovnán s cílem zjistit, jak se obraz Spojeného království změnil v kontextu vměšování Ruska, a jaké jsou názory dvou médií na ruské vměšování do referenda o brexitu.

Klíčová slova

brexit; referendum; mediální reprezentace; mediální obraz; média a společnost; Velká Británie; ruská média

Název práce

Obraz Spojeného království v ruských médiích v kontextu brexitu

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Introduction

On 23 June 2016 the referendum on the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union was held in Great Britain. Despite the preparations for this referendum, its results were unexpected for the public, especially considering the fact that the gap between the voters was minimal. Undoubtedly, this event caused a huge amount of debates and discussions both inside and outside the country, both among experts in politics, international relations, economics and the public. Following this, a long process of negotiations between the United Kingdom and the European Union began. During the negotiations, the countries had to determine the conditions under which the UK would leave the union, the documents on the basis of which further cooperation between the two sides would be conducted and many other issues. However, the process turned out to be quite long and complicated, as the EU and the UK could not come to a common agreement. The whole world was following the development of the situation in the UK. Undoubtedly, media attention was focused on Brexit. Mass media, however, may have different ways of providing information on world events to their audience, thereby influencing the perception of a certain event by their readers. By emphasising specific issues and using particular language units and structures, media manipulates their audience's attention and creates a certain image in the minds of their readers. Thus, the diploma thesis "The image of the United Kingdom in Russian media in the context of Brexit" examines the image of Great Britain in Russian pro-governmental and opposition media in the period from June 23, 2016 to 2018. The articles after May 2017, which address the issue of Russian interference in the Brexit referendum, were paid particular attention to.

The interest in identifying the image of the United Kingdom precisely in the Russian media derives from the fact that shortly after the results were announced, the first suspicions and comments by British politicians about possible Russian interference in the Brexit referendum by means of propaganda and influence on voters' opinions on the social network Twitter emerged. Undoubtedly, this fact has worsened the already difficult relations between the two countries. Russian officials have certainly denied any involvement but the British authorities and social media executives have been investigating whether there was any influence on British voters. Thus, the interest of this thesis is that in addition to the overall image of the United Kingdom in media, it explores how the allegations of

interference have been reflected in articles and therefore affected the image of the country under these circumstances. Additionally, the study focuses on the opposition and pro-Kremlin media, as the opposition in Russia is quite widespread and their views differ from those of the Kremlin not only on domestic issues but also on foreign policy. It should be noted that in the process of the research the Russia Today channel, selected for the analysis as the pro-governmental one, was disconnected from broadcasting and blocked on the territory of the Europe Union. The Russian authorities also banned and blocked almost all Russian opposition media, including Dozhd, which was selected for the study as the opposition one.

This Master's thesis has the following structure. The introductory part is followed by the chapter 1, which introduces the theoretical framework of this study. First, this chapter provides the key theoretical concepts relevant for the topic: media and society, the role of media, special attention is paid to news coverage in media and the relationship of media and politics. This chapter then presents the research question. The first chapter concludes with the methodology chosen for the study, then it explains the choice of concrete Russian media for the study and the concrete time frame. The chapters 2, 3 and 4 represent the empirical part of the study. They introduce the results of critical discourse analysis of articles from opposition and pro-governmental Russian media. The second chapter is devoted to the analysis of the opposition media and the identification of the image of the United Kingdom in it. The third chapter provides an analysis of the pro-government media and also the identification of the image of the United Kingdom in the given media. Having composed the two images of the UK, the chapter 4 represents a comparison and reveals the main differences in them. The final part of the thesis is the conclusion.

State of the Art

It is essential at first to examine already existing academic literature on the topic. Thus, the state of the art covers three major topics that are relevant for the research. First, it looks through the literature which is dedicated to the study of Brexit in general. Then there is an overview of studies concerning the involvement of Russia in the Brexit referendum. And the last set of secondary literature covers media representation of Britain in the context of Brexit in foreign and local media.

The issue of the UK's membership in the European Union and its withdrawal has been examined by many researchers. As a rule, they analyse possible consequences and challenges both for the United Kingdom itself and for the European Union and other states.

As for the future and possible challenges, the authors can be divided into two groups according to their opinions. So, such scholars as Tim Oliver, Richard Whitman, Silvia Lazari, Virginia Cojocaru and Martin Kovář suggest that Brexit presents a threat to the European Union but not to the United Kingdom. Tim Oliver writes that the main focus for the EU after Brexit will be to preserve European unity and European integration, as some countries may follow British example.¹ Silvia Lazari and Virginia Cojocaru believe that Brexit will have a negative impact on the European Union. Even though the situation will affect all the countries, including the UK, the EU will be under a greater pressure. Firstly, because other states may follow Britain's example, which would lead to the disintegration of Europe and the rise of separatism, as well as subsequent loss of European values and ideas. Secondly, Silvia Lazari and Virginia Cojocaru also refer to the economic situation, noting that the gap between the EU countries could be intensified because of the refugee flow and also due to tough relations between creditor countries and debtor countries within the euro area.² Martin Kovář also stands by his view that Brexit is a threat to the European Union, as it will cause a fragmentation of the union, dividing it into a large union and a small one. The position of France and especially Germany will strengthen in comparison to other European states. Germany will promote its political and economic interests which other European states may not always agree with. In addition, Kovář points out that Brexit will also change the structure of the European Union.³

Richard Whitman as well as the researchers noted above, concludes that the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU may undermine European integration and the ability of the European Union to cope with the subsequent challenges. However, Whitman also underlines that Britain would lose the ability to transmit within the EU its international objectives in the fields of security, development, trade and the environment, i.e., it would lose its leverage in the united European space.⁴ Thus, Richard Whitman doesn't

¹ Tim Oliver, "European and international views of Brexit", *Journal of European Public Policy* 23 no. 9 (2016): 1321-1328.

² Silvia Lazari and Virginia Cojocaru, "Risks and confidence in the european area after Brexit", *Relații internaționale. Plus* 2, no. 12 (2017): 291-296.

³ Martin Kovář, "Brexit. Nejen "bitva o Británii", ale i o Evropu", in *Na rozhraní: Krize a proměny současného světa*, ed. Miroslav Bárta, Otakar Foltýn and Martin Kovář, Vyšehrad, 2016, 88-100.

⁴ Richard Whitman, "Brexit or Bremain: What future for the UK's European diplomatic strategy?", *International Affairs* 92 (2016): 509-529.

strictly support this or that point of view but he presents both scenarios and metaphorically compares Britain's possible future with either the "Phoenix" or the "Titanic" and concludes that the issue is highly controversial and no one knows for sure how Britain will perform on the world stage when being apart from the European Union.

Among those authors who see more negative effects on the UK itself than on the EU are Ondřej Svoboda, Markus Johansson and Shahroo Malik. Ondřej Svoboda in his research states that despite the fact that the EU and the UK are in a mutually beneficial economic relationship, the UK's position in the economic situation is a bit worse and more unsafe than that of the EU.⁵ According to Markus Johansson, integration in the European Union will be improved after Brexit. This is due to the fact that those states which have been closely cooperating with the UK will be looking for new allies in the Council. Cooperation within the European Union will change for the better reinforcing the importance of common ideology and integration.⁶ Shahroo Malik also disagrees that a domino effect will emerge in the EU after Brexit. On the contrary, the author believes that Brexit has shown with its example that leaving the EU will lead to chaos and economic and political instability. Thus, Brexit has increased support for the EU and European values in other states within the union and it also reduced the influence of populist parties in Europe.⁷

The Brexit referendum attracted a lot of attention of academics. One of the most debated issues was Russia's attempts to influence the result of the referendum through the social network Twitter with the help of the Internet bots. These political bots had a strategic role and posted a large number of tweets containing "Leave" context. This matter raised a considerable degree of interest among researchers as it was quite provocative. However, scientists were divided in their opinions. For example, scholars from Oxford University, Vidya Narayann, Philipp N. Howard, Bence Kollanyi and Mona Elswah conducted a quantitative analysis and found that indeed a large number of automated accounts were active in the period before the Brexit referendum, some of these accounts were registered in Russia. However, a study revealed little evidence that the majority of active accounts were based in Russia. To be exact, according to their study, only 0.3% out of total traffic of tweets

⁵ Ondřej Svoboda, "Spoutaný brexit: Kdy může začít Spojené království sjednávat obchodní dohody?", *Časopis pro právní vědu a praxi* 1, (2018): 101-116.

⁶ Markus Johansson, "Explaining Cooperation in the Council of the EU Before and After the Brexit Referendum", *Politics and Governance* 9, no. 1 (2021): 5-15.

⁷ Shahroo Malik, "Post-Brexit Scenario: The European Union under Threat", *Strategic Studies* 38, no. 4 (2018): 90-109.

about Brexit were published by bots from Russia.⁸ Clare Llewellyn, Laura Cram, Robin L. Hill and Adrian Favero also emphasise the existence of accounts created by the Russian Internet Research Agency. At the same time, however, they also note few number of tweets in relation to the total number of publications and comments.⁹ The researchers stress the existence of the Kremlin's approach of disinformation, which is widely used by Russia to instigate mistrust, instability and insecurity in Western countries.

More critical point of view is supported by Ewan McGaughey and Julian Richards. Ewan McGaughey notes that Theresa May, Philip Hammond and David Cameron have openly stated that Russia was involved in the Brexit referendum. The author argues that Russia has repeatedly initiated cyber attacks, especially during the Ukrainian conflict, so after the failure during the Scottish referendum Russia's main target to disunite the European Union and damage international trade was the Brexit referendum.¹⁰

Julian Richards in his research on disinformation also addresses the issue of the Brexit referendum and Russian interference. He refers to Theresa May's statement that Russia "weaponises information" to undermine Western stability, thereby threatening the international order. The researcher concludes that one of the tools of Russian interference in the politics of other states are cyber-attacks and the Soviet tradition of spreading disinformation but now it is spread through social networks.¹¹ Thus, during the Brexit campaign, Twitter accounts linked to the Russian IRA (Internet Research Agency) were discovered but Julian Richards also notes that the number of posts and comments on Brexit published by these accounts is relatively small compared to the overall flow of information.

Thus, while the researchers have different views on the plausibility of Russian accounts having influenced the result of the referendum, they agree that indeed there were accounts that were active in the period before the voting.

A significant set of literature to look at is media representation of Brexit and Britain in general as it directly refers to the topic of the diploma thesis. However, due to the fact that the scholars studied certain cases there's no division into groups by opinion but by the

⁸ Vidya Narayanan, Philip N. Howard, Bence Kollanyi and Mona Elswah, "Russian Involvement and Junk News during Brexit", in *COMPROP Data Memo*, 1- 5. Oxford, UK: Project on Computational Propaganda, 2017.

⁹ Clare Llewellyn, Laura Cram, Robin L. Hill, and Adrian Favero, "For Whom the Bell Trolls: Shifting Troll Behaviour in the Twitter Brexit Debate", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 57 no. 5 (2019): 1148-1164.

¹⁰ Ewan McGaughey, "Could Brexit Be Void?", *King's Law Journal*, no.29 (2018): 331-343.

¹¹ Julian Richards, "Fake news, disinformation and the democratic state: a case study of the UK government's narrative", *Icono* 14, no.19, (2021): 95-122.

approach. It is worth mentioning that every scholar emphasises the role of media in framing public opinion.

In general, media reflect the position of the state itself. Based on this, many researchers have already questioned the representation of the UK and in particular the representation of Brexit in media. Media are known to shape mass consciousness and opinion about a particular event. Interestingly, some publications in different states describe the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union in different ways. For example, among the researchers who carried out a comparative analysis of the representation of Britain in media are Tatiana Vladimirova, Marina Vinogradova, Andrey Vlasov and Alexander Shatsky, who studied several media sources of the countries that are not directly involved in the Brexit process, which are Russia, Ukraine and the United States of America. The researchers conducted a content analysis of the articles and confirmed their initial hypothesis that the media in different countries describe the process of the UK leaving the EU is based primarily on the political attitude of the country.¹² Hence media of one country or another interpret the facts in their favour. The same events can be depicted in different ways and with completely different emotional colouring. Thus, mass media shapes public attitude towards the situations in the world. For example, having analysed the Ukrainian news source, researchers found that Brexit is covered more neutrally. The US media source "CNN" takes a negative stance on the exit of the UK from the European Union. In terms of the representation of the UK in Russian media, its evaluation of Brexit is mostly positive.

This group of researchers who carried out comparative analysis also includes Franco Zappettini & Michał Krzyżanowski, who confirm that international press perceives Brexit as a real and future crisis, focusing on economy, politics and society.¹³ A comparative analysis is also present in the study of Ivan Palitay. Like the authors above, he emphasises the importance of media in shaping certain political image in the public mind. In the research, the author revealed that the image of British authorities had undergone some changes, regardless of the country.¹⁴ Thus, in European media the characteristics of weakness prevail

¹² Tatyana N. Vladimirova, M. V. Vinogradova, A. I. Vlasov and Alexander A. Shatsky, "Assessment of News Items Objectivity in Mass Media of Countries with Intelligence Systems: the Brexit Case", *Media Watch* 10, no. 3 (2019): 471 – 483.

¹³ Franco Zappettini and Michał Krzyżanowski, "The critical juncture of Brexit in media & political discourses: from national-populist imaginary to cross-national social and political crisis", *Critical Discourse Studies* 16 no. 4 (2019): 381-388.

¹⁴ Ivan S. Palitay, "Трансформация образов власти и политических лидеров Великобритании под влиянием Brexit (на материалах европейских и американских СМИ за 2014-2017 гг.)", *Polis: Politicheskie Issledovaniya* 2 (2018): 150-162.

but the cabinet of T. May is characterized by a slight reinforcement of the "strength" component due to the charismatic leaders in its structure. As for the US media, neutral characteristics prevailed before the official announcement of the referendum results. The author, however, notes that while the images of the government and political leaders are transformed, the general image of the country itself mostly has neutral traits.

Mass media are closely related to the linguistic aspects; therefore, some studies have a more linguistic approach. For example, Irina Dulebová, Linda Krajčovičová and Nelly Tincheva investigate the use of metaphors in the construction of the British image. Irina Dulebová and Linda Krajčovičová study the metaphor "theatre" in the context of politics. Such expressions underline the theatricality, insincerity and ineffectiveness of Brexit policies.¹⁵ Thus, the metaphorical phrases do not appeal to logical but to emotional perception. As for the general media evaluation of Brexit, the authors conclude that in Russian media the UK's withdrawal from the EU is not always presented in a positive way, as other authors above report. The use of the metaphor of "theatre" with ironic and satirical connotations makes it clear that Brexit is sometimes criticised by Russian media.

Nelly Tincheva's study is also based, like the one above, on the study of metaphors in Brexit discourses. Tincheva, however, analyses articles from the major UK newspapers in the first few days after the referendum. In the article the author reveals that the most frequent sources of metaphors in the British media are the following concepts: divorce, natural disaster and journey.¹⁶ Nevertheless, the predominance of negative connotations does not necessarily reflect a negative evaluation of the referendum result. On the contrary, Brexit as a disaster is presented not in the context of the UK but in relation to the European Union. Thus, even though these studies are more of a linguistic nature, they are still relevant to the state of the art because the metaphors carry semantic evaluations, which appeal to public emotions.

In conclusion, after examining the existing literature on the subject, it can be seen that the topic of media image of the United Kingdom in general and in the context of Brexit is of a research interest to scholars from different countries. Furthermore, the literature on the UK-Russia relationship in the context of Brexit explores Russian involvement in influencing the referendum results. Given this, it is worth noting the high level of interest in

¹⁵ Irina Dulebová and Linda Krajčovičová, "Metaforický obraz Brexitu v ruskom mediálnom diskurze (na príklade metafory divadla)", *Annales Scientia Politica*. vol. 9, no. 1 (2020): 18-28.

¹⁶ Nelly Tincheva, "Good Brexit, Bad Brexit: Evaluation Through Metaphoric Conceptualizations in British Media", *Baltic Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture* Vol. 10 (2020): 149-167.

this issue. However, during the research of the literature there wasn't found a single study that combined both the image of Great Britain in media and Russia's interference in the referendum. Thus, by bringing together uneasy relationship between the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation, laden with the theory of Russian interference in the referendum, and the British image in Russian media, the diploma thesis explores the evaluative image of the UK in the process of Brexit in Russian media overall and in the context of Russian interference in the Brexit Referendum.

1 Research framework

1.1 Media, journalism and society

The functioning of media in modern society can be explained in terms of the basic assumption of sociology, where social institutions serve as mechanisms for social regulation and assist the individual to deal with certain situations. Media is also a social institution and plays an important role in modern society. In a liberal democratic society, the media represent an institution of freedom of public communication and occasionally an institution of non-formal education that helps to broaden one's horizons.¹⁷

Media is closely linked to the notion of journalism, since journalism is the source of material for publication in the media. Right after its emergence, journalism attracted not only readers, but also businesses and other non-governmental organisations. In addition, over time, journalism drew the attention of authorities at the city, regional or national level. They perceived journalism and media as well as an instrument of control and influence.¹⁸

Journalism plays an essential role in the social life of a society or nation, as it is the dominant tool for expressing public opinion in the media, informing citizens about a particular event or issue of discussion, thereby giving them the opportunity to form their own opinions about the matter.¹⁹

While the media was initially considered first and foremost in the context of an individual's or society's information needs, today external factors are also taken into account, for instance, the influence of the political and economic system and commercialisation, the way power affects the transmission of that particular information, from which perspective.

As Denis McQuail points out, society's relationship with the media is now problematic. Firstly, the media has a strong potential to influence society in both positive and negative ways. Secondly, the media is changing so rapidly that existing regulatory rules are becoming obsolete and irrelevant to current demands. The main challenge is to regulate the media under conditions of increased media influence and a lack of reasonable and adequate control of them in order to contribute to the common good.²⁰

¹⁷ Jan Jiráček, *Masová média* (Praha: Portál, 2015), 108-109.

¹⁸ Denis McQuail, *Žurnalistika a společnost* (Prague: Charles University in Prague, Karolinum Press, 2016), 22.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 31.

²⁰ Denis McQuail, "Accountability of Media to Society: Principles and Means", in *Communication theory & research: an EJC anthology*, ed. by Els de Bens, Peter Golding and Denis McQuail (London: Sage, 2005), 89.

Society is the main recipient of media information. Receiving information involves not only consumption of the media message itself, but also subsequent processing of this information. Thus, both the intentions of the information producer and the possible recipients' reactions matter.²¹ However, society should not be understood as simply the mass of recipients. Media products are accessible to a large number of completely different recipients. Accordingly, the impact of media information on different groups can vary greatly. Thus, the public is not heterogeneous; on the contrary, various groups in society are interested in different information and generate specific responses to media messages. The theory of use and contentment identifies the factors that determine the audience's interest in certain media content. For some, the media serve as a way to escape from everyday life and personal problems; for others, the media provide an opportunity to socialise. In addition, the media introduce a variety of roles, so that individuals can define their own role and thereby identify themselves in society. Finally, the media provide information about the community, which assists individuals to adapt.²²

Thus, the same media message may have a distinct meaning for each viewer. Individuals possess semiotic power, that is, basing on their cognitive, psychological and professional experience, they can activate one or another connotation of the media message. It is worth mentioning that this semiotic power is not absolute and is influenced by the context of the message. The message that news editors put into a report will not always be perceived exactly that way.²³

1.2 Roles of media

The most common approach to defining the role of media in society is the functionalist one. According to this approach, society is a developing system that consists of interconnected subsystems. One of these subsystems is the media. Each subsystem assists in the societal development and meets the needs of the society. From a functionalist point of view media fulfills several functions in the society. The first one is informing, i.e. providing information on current events and circumstances and preparing population for the changes. The second function is socialization, which includes giving explanations and comments

²¹Angela Keppler, "Media communication and social interaction: Perspectives on action theory based reception research", in *Action Theory and Communication Research: Recent Developments in Europe*, ed. by Karsten Renckstorf, Denis McQuail, Judith E. Rosenbaum and Gabi Schaap (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter Mouton, 2008), 106.

²²Tomáš Trampota, *Zpravodajství* (Praha: Portál, 2006), 129

²³Ibid.,133

about the meaning of certain events, explaining the present situation, as well as creating a consensus and certain priorities in society. The next function can be called continuity - supporting cultural patterns, the emergence of new subcultures and trends in culture. Next is the function of entertainment. And the last function is engagement, which aims at shaping important political and economic goals within society.²⁴

The position of the media in society is strongly reflected in their socialising function, as media resources broadcast information every day in all the households; they provide the recipients with large amounts of both information and entertainment material; establish political, cultural and economic agendas; assist in maintaining present power structure; and prepare society for possible changes.²⁵

The media is a source of information, it transmits certain knowledge or facts to the people, i.e. the media is an agent through which communication happens between the public and the government, organisations, institutions, other individuals, etc. Communication as a social phenomenon, in turn, has its functions.²⁶ The first one is the function of surveillance, which includes observing events in society/country/world. The events of particular importance are those that may be dangerous or harmful to the common good. The next function is correlation. This function involves providing information on the reactions or opinions of others about a particular event or phenomenon. Generally, function of correlation balances the opinions about a particular situation. The last one is transmission. Communication transmits the norms and values of the social system. This function is particularly relevant for the younger generation to transmit to them certain rituals and knowledge about how society functions.

1.3 News

As noted above, media is meant to inform the population. This function is performed via news reports. The majority of news reports correspond to a particular style and form that is easy to follow. Common features of news reports are: relevance of the issue; serving the public interest; clear facts to provide accurate and credible information about reality. Key characteristics of news reports are neutrality and objectivity, avoiding explicit evaluation and personal opinions on an issue. Moreover, objective reporting should be

²⁴ Jirák, *Masová média*, 83.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁶ Carroll J Glynn, Susan Herbst, Mark Lindeman and Garrett J. O'Keefe, *Public Opinion*, (Boca Raton, FL: Routledge, 2018), 331.

independent from the interests of other organisations. This is how the ideal model of news report should look like.

However, news about the same event can differ significantly in form, in the way the content is communicated and in the overall emotional tone of the report. This is achieved by providing a personal point of view on the events, be it witnesses, interested parties or the journalist himself. Therefore, it can be concluded that news is not always a statement of true facts; the subjective opinion of the participants might be reflected in the report. Media is also influenced by the state and governmental organisations on the one hand and media owners on the other. Even though in democratic theory the authorities do not have an absolute power over the media, they are sources of so-called rewards and punishments (e.g. economic, regulatory, etc.). In the period of crisis in a country, media will willingly cooperate with the authorities and select positive news or withhold certain undesirable for the public facts claiming to protect the national interests.

News reports transmit to the public not only current information about events, but also values, attitudes and certain ideas. They indicate what is important and what is not, what is normal and what is a deviation. Thus, from this point of view, news is never completely neutral; it constantly broadcasts the dominant ideology existing in society.²⁷

In general, the four roles of the news media overlap and complement each other. They are: monitoring, helping, radical and collaborative roles. Monitoring role involves both collecting and publishing information on current issues, relying on sources of various kinds. This role is unlimited in terms of intent, and it is driven only by potential interest and usefulness. Helping role is more specifically related to the providing of information that serves social institutions, especially political, economic, juridical and educational ones. Radical role focuses on prevention, observation and criticism of certain aspects. This role is essential in open democratic societies. The collaborative role describes the relationship that might emerge between media, powerful authorities and sources of information. This role is particularly visible in emergencies or threats, such as during public unrest, war or rebellion. The collaborative role aims to ensure that the media and the state cooperate to prevent conflict.²⁸

The organisation of global or international news is determined not only by its structure, but also by the extent to which news production relates to a global logic, which

²⁷ Trampota, *Zpravodajství*, 163.

²⁸ McQuail, *Žurnalistika a společnost*, 112.

version of an event is presented in the media, how and on which basis a particular narrative is formed.²⁹

Media also plays a central role in defining the ethics of the contemporary global system, namely the formation of global values. In the context of global society, media also transmits collective memory. In this sense, media acquires a civil function by constructing a certain image of the individual, the society and the nation.

Despite the globalisation of media, there is an opposing view that perceives media globalisation as a myth, arguing that media content, and especially news, is created for domestic audiences within a country, not for other parts of the world. And the developments in technology, introduction of satellite television and the internet have not changed the situation fundamentally. Undoubtedly, local media is able now to broadcast their material to other audiences as well, but the real impact on them or even the interest in a certain foreign source remains questionable. In addition, there is great emphasis on the national centrism of the journalists themselves.³⁰

Interested groups such as governmental organisations, lobbying groups, corporations and other institutions use the news media space to introduce their own agendas and strategies of influence. It can be observed that some media resources are strictly controlled by institutions. Media are highly dependent on their sources - government and business. Therefore, they often broadcast the views of these sources and thus, serve the interests of the elite rather than public.³¹

Two types of control are distinguished: allocative and operational. Allocative control implies decisions from above related to general policies, distribution of resources, defining the editorial line, i.e. the purpose and the way of communication in the media. Operational control implies efficient use of resources and adherence to political decisions that have been dictated. Thus, operational control affects the process of news production and greatly limits media freedom because it determines the message of a news report in advance.³²

²⁹ Lina Dencik, *Media and Global Civil Society*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2012), 34.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 153-154.

³¹ Carroll J Glynn, Susan Herbst, Mark Lindeman and Garrett J. O'Keefe, *Public Opinion*, 334.

³² Dencik, *Media and Global Civil Society*, 43.

1.4 Media and Politics

Media are the main source of information about politics and politicians for the public. The influence of the media on politics emerges in the way certain political processes or events are portrayed. The media becomes an actor in political communication and influences the process of such a communication by presenting political actors and political events differently, depending on the political, historical and social context.³³

Normative media theory is primarily related to the relationship between media and politics, specifically the position of media in a particular political regime in which they function. Media in an ideal type is an organization that reflects the needs and interests of society and that is not influenced by the state. However, such a normative theory of media functioning has not gained ground in any society. Due to the specific historical and regional characteristics, societies have developed distinct normative theories, which share the idea of liberalised media, but differ according to the social and political context in which they function.³⁴

The political role of the media can be defined through the notion of the public sphere. Thus, the public sphere is an area of social life where information can be exchanged on the basis of common interests, thereby shaping public opinion. So, media have become the main institution of the public sphere. Often media are closely linked to the interests of the political elite and to the direction of state foreign policy. This model is called propaganda and implies that news passes through filters such as elite interests and ideological compatibility.

Thus, there might be an element of untruth in the media, caused either by the level of influence of the authorities or by the subjective comments of the journalist or by the interests of the owner of the media resource. Such untruth has three forms that are considered to be the most problematic. The first form is subjectivity. It refers to a systematic but not always intentional tendency to deviate from a neutral manner of communication. This phenomenon can take various forms: focusing on certain topics and ignoring others, one-sided interpretation or the expression of implicit negative or positive evaluation. The untruth may be present in the form of propaganda, which relates to the use of the media to promote the communicator's ideological intentions without regard to the others' truth or the audience's

³³ Jirák, *Masová média*, 324-325.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 116-118.

need for accurate information. Propaganda often uses covert means: omission of the facts and misinterpretation. The last form is ideology. News analysts often note the spread of ideology in news reports. By ideology they mean a certain focus of information based on a belief or value system.³⁵

In the context of politics, it is worth considering media policies. Media policy usually involves political welfare objectives and focuses on newspapers, broadcasters and other means of transmitting information to the public. The main elements of media policy are the goals that should be achieved; the values and criteria that help to recognise these goals; the content and information services to which the policy is directed; and the specific political means of implementation, reflected in laws, regulation, etc.³⁶

1.5 Models of the relationship between the government and the media

Differences in the functioning of the media also reflect differences in political systems. These variations are captured in the nature of formal legal and regulatory mechanisms, as well as in informal relationships between politicians and journalists. Even among democracies there are systemic differences that have historical and cultural roots. Three main types of relations between political and media systems in democracies are:³⁷

- Liberal model: Media themselves and the public determine the level and type of political influence on journalism, i.e. the government itself is kind of "apart".
- Democratic-corporatist model: The authorities can intervene in the media sphere in order to guarantee a fair approach and quality of political journalism.
- A model of competitive parallelism between media and politics: Political parties have close links to certain media or journalists and influence the focus of political journalism.

This classification is not absolute because in some democracies it is possible to observe a fusion of several models or the introduction of other elements in the government-media relationship. Elena Vartanova, for instance, identifies the correlation between paternalism and commercialism in post-communist Russia. She suggests that Russian

³⁵ McQuail, *Žurnalistika a společnost*, 77.

³⁶ Jan van Cuilenburg and Denis McQuail, "Media Policy Paradigm Shifts", *European journal of communication* 18 no.2 (2003): 183-186.

³⁷ McQuail, *Žurnalistika a společnost*, 138.

citizens still accept their obedience to the political elite.³⁸ However, this by no means limits journalists from following certain universal professional values.

Despite the widespread perception that the media influence opinions, attitudes, values and beliefs, the nature of this influence remains uncertain. The media is a source of belief and can shape the attractiveness and popularity of political or other public figures. Those who control the bodies of media can use their power to damage or favour their political enemies or partners. Concerns about unintentional and implicit bias in reports often depend on the political or ideological perspective of the observer.

1.5.1 The Russian Model

The Russian media model has been heavily influenced by both the cultural context and the nature of Russian social institutions. The main agents influencing the media system are the state, the market, and civil society. Traditionally, Russians viewed the state through the prism "we - them". At the same time, they regarded the state as a force, the guarantor of the unity and existence of Russian nation and society. The paternalistic relationship between the citizens and power elites, between the people and their leader, is deeply rooted in the Russian character and determines the nature of Russian political and media culture.³⁹

In the early 1990s, Russian media system was transformed in the framework of changes in the country's political system. It seemed that the Russian media were adopting many features of the ideal 'Western' model, including the abolition of censorship, the concept of freedom of press, the privatisation of the media, and a shift towards more objective reporting. However, the political and cultural conditions in Russia – for example, the set of informal rules – differed significantly from those in Europe and North America. Therefore, the transformation of post-Soviet media systems cannot be defined as a universal movement towards the so-called ideal Western media model. The role of the state in Russian media system can be described as paternalistic. It was the state that defined special forms of journalism, such as court journalism, imperial journalism, Communist Party journalism, and so on. In modern Russia, however, the government left the role of economic regulator but did not lose its control over content. Thus, the link between public broadcasting and the political system in Russia is more of a governmental character. This model is characterised

³⁸ Elena Vartanova, "The Russian Media Model in the Context of Post-Soviet Dynamics", in *Comparing Media Systems Beyond the Western World*, ed. Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 131-132.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 131-132.

by governmental control and control by the political majority.⁴⁰ Moreover, as political and business elites in Russia are closely interdependent, they both regard media resources as means to achieve political capital.⁴¹

Thus, the Russian media system model differs from the typology presented in the previous section above. So, involving political and business elites, the Russian government has become the main driver of media policy.

1.6 Research question

The withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union is one of the most debated political issues around the world. Brexit is certainly causing numerous debates both within the United Kingdom and in other states. Undoubtedly, mass media play a crucial role in shaping and transmitting public opinion and/or the opinion of the government. Russian media was chosen for the study because two countries have long been in a difficult relationship. In addition, since 2016 global news articles have often raised the issue of Russia's interference in the referendum via the social network Twitter. The diploma thesis examines the image of the UK in the context of Brexit in Russian media. More specifically, how is the United Kingdom in the process of Brexit presented in Russian pro-government and opposition media overall and under the circumstances of the accusations in Russian interference in the referendum?

In order to analyse the articles during the research it was decided to look for the main thematic lines that appear in the articles during the chosen period of time. The identification of the main topics allows to trace the evolution of the image of the United Kingdom in the Russian media.

The second research criterion are emotionally coloured words and phrases. The emotions which a particular text evokes can significantly influence the reader's perception of a particular situation or phenomenon. Thus, the recipient, after reading a text, forms a certain image in his or her mind, in our case, that of Great Britain. Undoubtedly, the emotions that the author of a text puts into certain words also affect the emotions of the recipient.

The third research criterion is the intertextual context. In order to define an image of the UK, it is necessary to analyse not only the situational context, but also, and especially,

⁴⁰ Vartanova, "The Russian Media Model in the Context of Post-Soviet Dynamics", 121-130.

⁴¹ Olessia Koltsova, "News Production in Contemporary Russia: Practices of Power", in *Communication theory & research: an EJC anthology*, ed. by Els de Bens, Peter Golding and Denis McQuail (London: Sage, 2005), 224.

the intertextual one. At the level of intertextuality hidden intentions of the journalist and the overall message of the article are revealed.

1.7 Methodology

This research will be conducted on the basis of a critical discourse analysis of Russian media resources. Critical discourse analysis is one of the forms of application of discourse analysis, which allows to examine the relationship between production and perception of the text; it helps to explore group identities, ideologies and motivations.⁴²

The most prominent figures in critical discourse analysis are Norman Fairclough and Teun Adrianus van Dijk. Fairclough addresses the concept of critical discourse analysis in his book “Language and Power”. He argues that language should be understood and analysed as social interaction through the lens of discourse. Thus, critical discourse analysis according to Fairclough should include the following steps: description of the text, interpretation of the relationship between the text and the communication and explanation of this relationship.

The first stage of the analysis is text description.⁴³ This stage is directly related to the analysis of the text as a whole unit in terms of linguistics. At this stage the attention is focused on experiential, relational and expressive values of linguistic items. Word’s experiential values refer to the ideological and semantic content of a word. That is, the same phenomenon can be described by words with different connotations, depending on the author's experience. Relational values of the words point out that the choice of a particular word may depend on the social relations between the participants. While examining expressive values it is essential to pay attention to the vocabulary containing a negative or positive evaluation of an event or phenomenon, taking the public's attitudes into account. At this step it is also very important to examine metaphors as they can perfectly convey ideological affiliation.

The second stage of critical discourse analysis is interpretation. The formal characteristics of the text analysed in the first stage of the study cannot be isolated from the social factor. The relations between the text and society are indirectly mediated by discourse. The text is interpreted by the audience through the set of common-sense assumptions. Interpretation is a combination of what is in the text itself and what is in the background of

⁴² Tomáš Trampota and Martina Vojtěchovská, *Metody výzkumu médií* (Praha: Portál, 2010), 181.

⁴³ Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power*, (London: Longman, 2001), 109-138.

the interpreter, the recipient.⁴⁴ The stage of interpretation refers to the interpretation of text and the interpretation of context. The text interpretation is related to the previous stage of analysis and refers to different meanings of lexical units. The interpretation of context refers to understanding the meaning of the discourse as a whole. Thus, the context in this case can be divided into situational and intertextual one.

The situational context defines the facts. The intertextual context allows to define presupposition. Presuppositions are not properties of texts, they are an aspect of what is the interpretation of the text producer, what he or she means by writing the text. The presuppositions can be sincere or manipulative. They also may have *ideological* function. Intertextual context involves analysing discourse not from a linguistic perspective, but from a historical one, taking into account other texts in order to fully perceive the situation or the phenomenon.

The stage of interpretation makes evident what is generally covered for the participants. However, it does not explain the relations of power and the ideologies which common-sense assumptions are based on. For this, the final stage of discourse analysis is needed.

The third stage of critical discourse analysis is the explanation. While interpretation is concerned with how the background and the assumptions influence the processing and understanding of discourse, explanation is concerned with social constitution and the change of assumptions.⁴⁵

Fairclough's approach to critical discourse analysis is used for the study as it allows to come to reliable and deeper results. Fairclough's approach involves not only linguistic part of the research but also a social and ideological one. However, to the present research we will add a concept of power from van Dijk's approach to critical discourse analysis as this concept is a significant one while analyzing media discourse. Teun van Dijk, like Fairclough, suggests to analyse discourse through the societal lens and social interaction but stresses the concept of power. Thus, the aim of critical discourse analysis by Van Dijk is to identify the relationship between the micro and macro level approach to the analysis of discourse. Where the micro level is the use of language, verbal communication and discourse itself, and the macro level is about power, domination and inequality.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 141-162.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 162-166.

⁴⁶ Teun A van Dijk, "Critical Discourse Analysis", in *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, ed. by Deborah Schiffrin, Deborah Tannen, and Heidi E. Hamilton (Chichester, England: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 467.

Power, according to Van Dijk, can be different, depending on the resources that are used to use this power: the coercive power of the military sphere is based on force, the power of rich people is based on financial resources, the power of academics and journalists is determined by knowledge, information and authority. By means of power, certain groups can control other less powerful groups.

The members of the more powerful group who have access to the discourse and power within a particular discourse have control over the context, the structure of the spoken or written text, and the topic that they are also able to change.

Control over discourse is the form of power exercising; meanwhile the control of people's minds is a fundamental way of reinforcing and exploiting dominance and hegemony. Firstly, recipients tend to adopt beliefs, knowledge, and opinions by means of a discourse that is credible for them. Secondly, in some situations, recipients ought to adopt the content of the discourse. Thirdly, a public or media discourse transmits particular values or knowledge with no opportunity for alternative discourse to emerge. Fourth, recipients may not have enough knowledge on a topic to oppose the discourse or information they receive and therefore they adopt the knowledge and values on themselves.⁴⁷

Critical discourse analysis presented by Fairclough combines necessary aspects for the research and is not limited to linguistics but perceives the discourse in the context of the society. In addition, interpretation and explanation are of great importance for the paper, as the intertextual context needs to be taken into account in the study of media discourse. In addition, the concept of power described by van Dijk is taken into regard as in the context of media power can be exercised by different agents – government, business, owners of the media resources. Thus, the present research implies determination of lexical features, which mostly contain emotional connotations, subsequent identification of their semantic meaning, distinguishing of the situational context and its intertextual meaning which is reached both by lexical features and the message itself. Last, it implies explanation of what all these meanings present, how they are used and what is achieved by means of them regarding the way editorial offices exercise their power or the power of the officials to influence not only the agenda of the articles but also the way they are covered.

As stated above, the diploma thesis uses critical discourse analysis of the material from the official websites of the pro-government TV channel Russia Today and the TV

⁴⁷ Teun A van Dijk, "Principles of critical discourse analysis", *Discourse & society*, 4, no.2 (1993), 254-255.

channel *Дождь* (Dozhd), which is perceived to be opposition one. These particular media are chosen for the study because in addition to domestic policy, they also cover the international sector. The choice of *Russia Today* can be explained by the fact that it is an international channel funded by Russian government and it is also considered to be propagandistic. The choice of the *Дождь* (Dozhd) news channel is determined by the fact that it is one of the popular opposition media in Russia which is familiar to a large number of Russian citizens. *Дождь* (Dozhd) covers those events in Russia and worldwide which the federal channels may not even mention. However, it is worth mentioning that *Дождь* (Dozhd) is not as popular as federal channels due to the fact that in Russia opposition media is not enjoying full freedom.

It is also essential to note that in August 2021, *Дождь* (Dozhd) was added to the Register of Foreign Mass Media Performing the Functions of a Foreign Agent in Russia. A foreign agent in Russia is a person or organization which, from the Russian state's point of view, receives funding from abroad and is involved in political activities, spreading information as a mass media or collecting military and technical information. In March, 2022 the channel as almost all opposition media was forced by the Russian government to stop transmitting. These facts that a selected media has been placed on this list are a confirmation of its oppositional nature.

Articles from the time period from June 23, 2016 to 2018 will be selected for this research. This timeframe is suitable for the study as the Brexit referendum took place in 2016, and later the Great Britain and EU states accused Russia in interference in the referendum.

The analysis will rely on news articles covering the process of the UK's exit from the European Union; local experts' comments and analysis on Brexit and their reflections on future scenarios. The research analyses 200 articles (69 from the channel Dozhd and 131 from Russia Today). The amount of articles from these two sources is not equal as the opposition channel does not tend to cover international news a lot; it is mostly concerned with domestic politics.

2 Opposition Media “Дождь” (Dozhd)

This chapter of the thesis represents the results of the research dedicated to the image of Britain in the Russian pro-governmental and opposition media. However, in order to analyse Russian media sources, it is necessary to understand the exact model adhered to by the media in Russia.

Dozhd, as an opposition media, covers mainly domestic problems in Russia, criticising the current authorities and covering those local events in the country that are usually omitted in the federal media. However, the channel also reports on international events and news, especially those that have a major impact on the rest of the world. Brexit is certainly one of them. As the channel does not specialise in foreign politics, the number of articles on Brexit is significantly lower than those in the pro-governmental Russia Today. Thus, in order to analyze the image of Britain in the context of Brexit in the opposition media, 69 articles were selected. These articles then were divided into the following categories depending on their content: referendum results and consequences; the EU-UK negotiation process; and Russian interference in the Brexit referendum.

2.1 The referendum results and consequences

In the articles of the opposition media informing about the results of the referendum, predominant characteristics of the events are “*тотальное разделение*” (“total division”)⁴⁸, “*политический хаос*” (“political chaos”)⁴⁹ and “*паника*” (“panic”).⁵⁰ One of the key threats to the UK is its fragmentation and inability to keep its territories: “*что будет дальше неизвестно, но решение о выходе из ЕС породило серьезные проблемы относительно будущего соединенного королевства*” (“what happens next is unclear, but the decision to leave the EU has caused serious problems about the future of the United

⁴⁸ Maksim Trudolyubov, „Как можно смягчить результаты брэксита“, *Дождь*, June 24, 2016, https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/here_and_now/kak_mozhno_smjagchit_rezultaty_breksita-412032/ (accessed March 25, 2022).

⁴⁹ Yana Litvinova and Yuri Vendik, “Что будет, если Соединенное Королевство начнет распадаться”, *Дождь*, July 2, 2016, https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/bbc_na_dozhde/cto_budet_esli_soedinennoe_korolevstvo_nachnet_raspadatsja-412529/ (accessed March 25, 2022).

⁵⁰ Yana Litvinova, “Британия стала моим домом: что жители ЕС думают о грядущем Брексите и чего стоит получение британского места жительства”, *Дождь*, March 28, 2017, https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/bbc_na_dozhde/bbc_27_marta-430895/ (accessed March 25, 2022).

Kingdom”).⁵¹ The journalists therefore see the salvation in preserving the status quo, which is “действительно сохранением” (“indeed the preservation”)⁵² of the United Kingdom.

The results of the referendum are perceived as a grave mistake from which a "major lesson" should be learned. “Люди должны прийти к осознанию, как им нужен ЕС” (“People need to realize how badly they need the EU”)⁵³ – the article emphasises that despite the mistake, there is still an opportunity to rectify the situation. But “эксперты скорбно покачивают головой” (“experts shake their heads mournfully”)⁵⁴ which means that even though the majority of parliamentarians do not support the decision, they will be obliged, to their great regret, to implement the people's decision. However, this is not a problem only for the UK, but also for the EU, as the withdrawal of one country is “a giant shock to the system that was built in Europe” and undermines the concept of European integration – “нарушена логика развития европейского континента за последние десятилетия” (“the logic of the development of the European continent over the past decades has been broken”).⁵⁵ In one of the articles, Brexit was described as “the twilight of Europe”, referring to the domino effect and subsequent withdrawal of other countries from the European Union.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, the tough negotiation process between the two sides and the economic consequences demonstrate an unfavourable example for other countries, as summarised by the correspondent of the Dozhd: “Брексит не выглядит как то, что захочет повторить какая-либо страна” (“Brexit does not look like something that any country would want to repeat”).⁵⁷ There is also the matter concerning EU citizens who live and work in the UK - how their residency will now be regulated is unclear, which brings shock anxiety.⁵⁸

⁵¹ Litvinova, Vendik, “Соединенное Королевство начнет распадаться”.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Konstantin Eggert, „Это победа английского романтизма“, *Дождь*, June 24, 2016, https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/here_and_now/eto_pobeda_anglijskogo_romantizma-412009/ (accessed March 25, 2022).

⁵⁴ Grigorii Aleksanyan and Yana Litvinova, “Два самых ярых сторонника отделения Британии от ЕС ушли в отставку. Брексит отменяется?”, *Дождь*, July 10, 2018, https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/bbc_na_dozhde/dva_samyh_jaryh_storonnika_otdelenija_britanii-467442/?from=incut_wide (accessed March 22, 2022).

⁵⁵ Daniil Sotnikov, “Выход Британии из ЕС: что это значит для нас всех”, *Дождь*, June 24, 2016, <https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/notes/brexit-412017/> (accessed March 21, 2022).

⁵⁶ Aleksandr Koksharov and Maria Makeeva, “Сумерки Европы. Что британский референдум всего за неделю сделал с ЕС”, *Дождь*, June 30, 2016, https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/kruglyj_stol/sumerki_evropy-412443/ (accessed March 25, 2022).

⁵⁷ Andrei Movchan, “Брексит вместо санкций: что еще грозит тем, кто уехал жить в Лондон”, *Дождь*, March 15, 2018, https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/movchan/brekzit_vmesto_sanktsij-459566/ (accessed March 25, 2022).

⁵⁸ Litvinova, “Британия стала домом”.

The Dozhd clearly supported the campaign against Brexit, noting that the arguments of David Cameron and his allies were “абсолютно рациональные” (“absolutely rational”), while the campaign for leaving the EU was based on an emotional appeal: “победила на референдуме идиллическая Англия, Англия зеленых пастбищ, церквей на холмах, Англия викторианской эпохи, когда Великобритания рулила половиной мира. На этой ностальгической ноте противникам ЕС получилось выиграть” (“it was an idyllic England that won the referendum, an England of green pastures, of churches on the hills, an England of the Victorian era, when Great Britain ruled over half of the world. On this nostalgic tone, the opponents of the EU managed to win”).⁵⁹

Great emphasis is put on the economic consequences, and the stabilisation predictions for the future are, as the media notes, disappointing: “предбрекситного состояния британской валюты будет достигнуто сложно, если вообще возможно” (“a pre-Brexit condition for the British currency will be difficult, if not impossible to achieve”)⁶⁰. It proves the unfavourable economic environment in the UK. “Фунт рухнул” (“The pound has crashed down”)⁶¹ - it represents the instability of the currency and its extremely steep decline. The first economic consequences are described by journalists with rather harsh phrases that carry clear negative connotations: “рынки лихорадит” (“the markets are shaking with fever”), “биржи в шоке” (“the stock exchanges are in shock”)⁶².

The Dozhd channel, being in opposition to the Kremlin, stresses that such an outcome is very welcome in the Russian government, that it is in the interests of the current Kremlin, of the current political leaders, concluding that “в кремле не любят Брюссель, не любят ЕС” (“the Kremlin does not like Brussels, it does not like the EU”).⁶³ The Kremlin expresses its hope for a bilateral regulation of relations between Russia and the UK after the country leaves the EU.⁶⁴

Thus, the first articles after the announcement of the referendum results, dealing with the analysis of the vote, the initial consequences and the possible future, are highly

⁵⁹ Eggert, „Гобета английского романтизма“.

⁶⁰ Oleg Antonenko, “Британцы столкнулись с дефицитом продуктов в интернет-магазинах”, *Дождь*, October 13, 2016, https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/bbc_na_dozhde/brexit-418906/ (accessed March 25, 2022).

⁶¹ Daria Merinova, “Как миллиардер Джордж Сорос заработал на брэксите”, *Дождь*, June 28, 2016, https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/koroche/kak_milliarder_dzhordzh_soros_zarabotal_na_breksite-412206/?from=incut_wide (accessed March 25, 2022).

⁶² Sotnikov, “Выход Британии из ЕС: что это значит”.

⁶³ Trudolyubov, „Как можно смягчить результаты“.

⁶⁴ „В Кремле прокомментировали итоги референдума о выходе Великобритании из Евросоюза“, *Дождь*, June 24, 2016, https://tvrain.ru/news/kremlin_exit-412011/ (accessed March 21, 2022).

negative and possibly disapproving. The dominant characteristics are “chaos”, “panic”, “shock” and so on. The image of Britain in the context of Brexit at this stage contains instability, an inability to predict what will happen next, a lack of public awareness of the EU's functioning, and uncertainty about the future of the United Kingdom itself, since Scotland actively supports the EU. The UK's position in these circumstances is characterised as precarious and losing. Furthermore, the uncertainty, according to the discursive analysis of the articles, is also evident in the attitudes of the people who voted for Brexit themselves. Their decision is sometimes presented as impulsive, as a kind of protest without giving much consideration to what it might actually lead to. It is also worth noting that in the articles, the Dozhd channel often refers to foreign sources and quotations of UK and EU representatives. In this way the channel tries to cover the issue from both sides as much as possible, but both UK and EU representatives have a similarly negative view on Brexit.

2.2 The EU-UK negotiation process

The next thematic block includes articles covering the process of negotiations between the UK and the EU and the difficulties each side has encountered. It is worth mentioning here that one of the articles refers to the process of leaving the EU as “*порочный круг*” (“vicious circle”)⁶⁵ highlighting how complex, unclear and confusing the process of negotiation between London and Brussels is.

It is curious to note that the process of Britain's withdrawal from the EU, which is marked with difficult negotiations and internal misbalance in the United Kingdom, the Dozhd compares to the cinematography of Alfred Hitchcock.⁶⁶ The director was known for his ability to create an atmosphere of anxiety and suspense, to whip up tension. Thus Brexit, according to the opposition media Dozhd, is unpredictable making people follow the situation with considerable apprehension. This characterisation is reinforced by the following phrases: “*разворот на 180 градусов*” (“a 180-degree turn”), “*нарастание напряжения*” (“tension escalates”) and “*предсказуемость британской политики осталась далеко в прошлом*” (“the predictability of British politics is a thing of the

⁶⁵ Yana Litvinova, “Эпохальный вердикт: как Высокий суд Лондона затрудняет выход Британии из Евросоюза”, *Дождь*, November 3, 2016, https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/bbc_na_dozhde/vyjti_iz_es_ne_tak_prosto-420327/ (accessed March 25, 2022).

⁶⁶ Daria Polygaeva and Yana Litvinova, “Зачем Великобритании досрочные выборы, и как «брексит» становится похожим на фильм Хичкока”, *Дождь*, April 18, 2017, https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/bbc_na_dozhde/breksit_hichkok-432682/ (accessed March 21, 2022).

past”).⁶⁷ In this thematic block of articles, the UK and Brexit are further given a cinematic image: *“вся история превращается в лихо закрученный триллер с неизвестным концом”* (“the whole story turns into a dashing twisted thriller with an unknown ending”).⁶⁸

In addition to this, another very vivid comparison that Brexit has acquired is the divorce of two spouses: *“как брошенный супруг ЕС говорит, что Британия по-прежнему должна вносить средства в проекты, которые были приняты до того, как они решили уходить. Лондон уже заявил, как и положено при разводе, что это слишком много”* (“as an abandoned spouse, the EU says that Britain still has to contribute to the projects that were undertaken before they decided to leave. London has already declared, as it should in a divorce, that it is too much”).⁶⁹ In other words, using such a metaphor, the author of the article once again emphasises the complexity and desperation of the process and further adds: *“хлопнуть дверью, забрать детей и уйти к маме конечно можно, но потом придется долго-долго таскаться по судам и вести переговоры, результата которых никто предсказать не может”* (“you can slam the door, take the children and go to your mother, but then you will have to go to court and negotiate for a long, long time, and no one can predict the outcome”).⁷⁰ The metaphor of “divorce”, which describes the EU-British relationship, appears quite often in the articles and sometimes it acquires a more striking tone: *“перепалки между расстающимися супругами в семье”* (“the skirmishes between divorcing spouses in the family”).⁷¹ At this point it is no longer just a question of divorce, as *“перепалка”* (“skirmish”) connotes a hysterical dispute, without any of the sides reaching an agreement.

Particular attention in these articles is paid to Theresa May. The image of the country's political leader tends to correspond to the image of the state itself. In this situation, Theresa May, as well as the UK itself, finds herself in a very difficult position: *“между молотом и наковальней – дома требуют изменить условия, ЕС – не хотят менять”*

⁶⁷ Polygaeva, Litvinova, “Зачем Великобритании досрочные выборы“

⁶⁸ Evgenia Voskoboynikova and Yana Litvinova, “Брексит начался: как Великобритания будет «разводиться» с Евросоюзом”, *Дождь*, March 29, 2017, https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/bbc_na_dozhde/bbc_brexit_chno_budet-431032/ (accessed March 25, 2022).

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Voskoboynikova, Litvinova, “Брексит начался“.

⁷¹ Yana Litvinova, “Развод — дело дорогое: сколько Великобритании придется заплатить за выход из Евросоюза”, *Дождь*, August 28, 2017, https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/bbc_na_dozhde/skolko_velikobritanii_pridetsja_zaplatit_za_vyход_iz_evrosojuza-441655/ (accessed March 25, 2022).

(“between a hammer and an anvil - there are demands at home to change the terms, and the EU does not want to change them”).⁷² But the situation is not just difficult, but rather hopeless and desperate: “Тереза Мей в Брюсселе пытается, точнее мечтает добиться хоть каких-то гарантий от лидеров ЕС” (“Theresa May is trying, or rather dreaming, of getting some kind of guarantee from EU officials in Brussel”).⁷³

The situation in the British parliament also reflects the situation in the state itself: “ситуация в состоянии хаоса” (“the situation is in chaos”), “в парламенте разбита палата общин на множество фракций” (“the House of Commons is split into many factions”), “англичане расколоты пополам и потом на четвертинки” (“the English are split in half and then in quarters”).⁷⁴ This once again conveys Britain's instability, both among citizens and at the level of the political elite. The country is divided and politically in crisis: “против Мей и парламентарии. Не верят ей и англичане” (“the parliamentarians are against May. And neither do the British people believe her”).⁷⁵ The Dozhd repeatedly stresses that some ministers are resigning because of deep disagreements with the Prime Minister.⁷⁶ And even the most passionate Eurosceptics are beginning to express frustration with how negotiations between the EU and the United Kingdom are now proceeding: “эта мечта умирает, задыхаясь от бесполезной неуверенности в себе” (“this dream is dying, suffocated by futile insecurity”).⁷⁷

Therefore, following the announcement of the referendum results and the start of negotiations between the EU and the United Kingdom, the image of the UK has slightly changed, taking on new nuances. Previously, the image of the UK in the context of Brexit had been correlated with words such as “chaos” and “panic”. Since the start of the negotiations, this characterisation has only intensified, as fears of the collapse of the United Kingdom have been supplemented by the real problems faced by the government. Namely,

⁷² Oleg Antonenko, “Новости «Би-би-си»: Тереза Мэй остается британским премьером. Но надолго ли?” *Дождь*, December 13, 2018, https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/bbc_na_dozhde/novosti_bi_bi_si_tereza_mey_ostaetsja_britanskim_premierom_no_nadolgo_li-477016/ (accessed March 25, 2022).

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Pavel Lobkov and Andrei Ostalskii, “Мэй отменила голосование в парламенте по брекситу. Что происходит?”, *Дождь*, December 10, 2018, https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/vechernee_shou/mej_otmenila_golosovanie_v_parlamente-476785/ (accessed March 25, 2022).

⁷⁵ “Вся суть британских разборок о «брексите» за две минуты”, *Дождь*, November 15, 2018, https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/vechernee_shou/breksit-475182/ (accessed March 25, 2022).

⁷⁶ “Британский министр по «брекситу» ушел в отставку на фоне разногласий с Мэй”, *Дождь*, July 9, 2018, <https://tvrain.ru/news/ministr-467348/> (accessed March 22, 2022).

⁷⁷ “Борис Джонсон предупредил о движении Великобритании к статусу колонии ЕС”, *Дождь*, July 9, 2018, https://tvrain.ru/news/boris_dzhonson-467407/ (accessed March 22, 2022).

an internal split in the country's political elite. In addition, Britain has acquired a rather 'capricious' image of a spouse during divorce. Overall, at this stage, Britain has acquired the image of a stressed state, unable to come to an agreement not only with its external partners, but also with its own parliament. The future of the United Kingdom here still remains uncertain.

2.3 Russian interference in the Brexit referendum

In 2017, the first statements were made by the UK about Russia's probable interference in the Brexit referendum. It is considered that Russia tried to influence the referendum result by means of internet bots on Twitter, which influenced the opinion of British citizens through emotion. Undoubtedly, statements by the UK politicians and the issue of Russia's possible involvement in the voting itself were reflected in media articles.

The Dozhd channel highlighted the harshness and radicality of the prime minister's first statements about the cyber-attack by Russia: *“она действительно ни разу не высказывалась так резко”* (“she has really never expressed herself so harshly”).⁷⁸ The harshness of the statements only intensified throughout the time.⁷⁹ The Kremlin's response was also reported in the articles. However, the Dozhd channel tends to cite Russian politicians and disassociate Russia, and hence itself, from the Russian government. This impression is created due to the fact that when presenting Russia's response statement, it is the Kremlin or the particular person who made the statement: “Zakharova said” or “in Zakharova’s opinion”.⁸⁰

As mentioned above, Dozhd explicitly states that Brexit is in the interests of the current Russian government. Consequently, there could be various actions undertaken by the Kremlin to motivate the United Kingdom to leave the EU. For instance, the Dozhd, referring to a foreign source, reports that "Businessman Arron Banks, one of the most well-known sponsors and supporters of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union, has frequently

⁷⁸ Yana Litvinova, “Мы знаем, чего вы добиваетесь, и у вас ничего не выйдет”: Тереза Мэй впервые обвинила Россию во вмешательстве в выборы в других странах”, *Дождь*, November 14, 2017, https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/bbc_na_dozhde/tereza_mej_vpervye_obvinila_rossiju-450202/?from=incut_wide (accessed March 25, 2022).

⁷⁹ Oksana Vozhdaeva and Rivshina Olga, “Джонсон едет в Москву, но депутаты в Лондоне называют Россию угрозой безопасности”, *Дождь*, December 21, 2017, https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/bbc_na_dozhde/dzhonson_edet_v_moskvu-453478/?from=incut_wide (accessed March 25, 2022).

⁸⁰ “МИД ответил на слова Мэй об угрожающей мировому порядку России”, *Дождь*, November 14, 2017, https://tvrain.ru/news/mid_otvetil_na_slova_mej-450230/ (accessed March 21, 2022).

been in contact with Russian officials"⁸¹ and has been involved in “business schemes” with Russia.⁸² Here the word “scheme” in combination with business implies a rather suspicious and negative context, as in Russia business schemes are sometimes associated with something that is not pure and fair. According to the sources, the Russian side was interested in supporting the Brexit sponsor so that the referendum would favour the Kremlin.⁸³

However, it should be noted that the channel is rather objective about the information it publishes. The articles do not include specific statements from the side of Dozhd and do not confirm the interference. They use such lexical units as “заподозрил” (“suspected”)⁸⁴, “допустила, что на результаты голосования могли повлиять иностранные государства” (“admits that the voting results could have been influenced by foreign states”).⁸⁵ Nevertheless, as the investigations and examinations of Twitter accounts went on, more concrete information emerged which was backed up by quantitative data, which is considered reliable as these are concrete numbers: “около 150 тысяч твиттер-аккаунтов из России” (“about 150 thousand twitter accounts from Russia”)⁸⁶, “ко дню референдума 24 июня они публиковали уже 39 тысяч твитов” (“by the day of the referendum on 24 June they had already published 39 thousand tweets”).⁸⁷ Further, one of the articles stresses that it raises questions about the true scale of the propaganda campaign in Russia⁸⁸, which operates not only inside the country, but also abroad; and one of the goals of such accounts is to influence teenagers, who are most frequently affected by the emotional factors online.

⁸¹ “Sunday Times рассказала о связях спонсора «Брексита» с Россией”, *Дождь*, June 10, 2018, https://tvrain.ru/news/sunday_times_rasskazala_o_svjazjah_sponsora_breksita_s_rossiej-465550/ (accessed March 22, 2022).

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ “The Observer узнала об 11 встречах спонсора «брексита» с российским послом”, *Дождь*, July 8, 2018, https://tvrain.ru/news/the_observer-467332/ (accessed March 22, 2022).

⁸⁴ “Парламент Великобритании заподозрил российских хакеров в возможной атаке на сайт по Брекситу”, *Дождь*, April 12, 2017, <https://tvrain.ru/news/brexit-432124/> (accessed March 21, 2022).

⁸⁵ “Глава МИД Великобритании рассказал о неудачных попытках России вмешаться в Brexit”, *Дождь*, December 22, 2017, https://tvrain.ru/news/popytkah_rossii_vmeshatsja_v_brexit-453547/ (accessed March 21, 2022).

⁸⁶ “В НАТО посчитали ботами 60% русскоязычных твиттер-аккаунтов”, *Дождь*, November 25, 2017, <https://tvrain.ru/news/twitter-451168/> (accessed March 21, 2022).

⁸⁷ “Около 150 тысяч твиттер-аккаунтов из России заподозрили во вмешательстве в Brexit”, *Дождь*, November 15, 2017, https://tvrain.ru/news/twitter_russia_brexit-450273/ (accessed March 21, 2022).

⁸⁸ “Wired рассказало о доказательствах вмешательства интернет-троллей из России в Brexit”, *Дождь*, November 13, 2017, <https://tvrain.ru/news/wired-450102/> (accessed March 22, 2022).

Also, the rain channel emphasises that the United Kingdom intends to defend its interests as well as those of the EU and to resist disinformation from other states.⁸⁹ The correspondent described this as *“намекнула, что у них есть общий недоброжелатель, с которым лучше справляться сообща”* (“a hint that they have a common enemy that is better dealt with together”).⁹⁰ The channel also notes that “Britain doesn't want to revert to the Cold War or to be in a constant confrontation which represents the UK as a country that aims for global cooperation in the world.”⁹¹

Despite the Kremlin's denial of any cyber-attacks, the Dozhd channel published an interview with a former employee of a so-called “troll factory” who was involved in writing comments on US media websites: *“была цель – повлиять на мнение, вывести на дискуссию”* (“the aim was to influence opinion, to generate discussion”).⁹² Thus, the opposition channel confirms the existence of such organisations and reveals their key methods, which could have been applied not only in the US, but also in European countries. Applying mass psychology to their approach, the “trolls” may influence the voting results not only abroad, but also actively use this technique in their own countries.⁹³

London-Moscow relations are weighed down not only by Russia's interference in Brexit, but also by several other factors. For example, the oligarchy or the Skripal poisoning, around which a “sudden scandal” between Russia and the UK has erupted. The Dozhd channel points to the already fiery dialogue between London and Moscow, which is escalating as the situation evolves.⁹⁴ There are some rather harsh words on the subject: *“криминальные деньги из России”* (“criminal money from Russia”), *“отсюда люди и дела, которым не очень рады”* (“hence people and affairs that are not very welcome”), *“деньги русской мафии”* (“Russian mafia money”).⁹⁵ It is worth noting that the channel

⁸⁹ “В правительстве Британии создадут структуру по борьбе с фейковыми новостями”, *Дождь*, January 23, 2018, https://tvrain.ru/news/v_britanskom_pravitelstve_fejkovymi_novostjami-455814/ (accessed March 22, 2022).

⁹⁰ Litvinova, “Мы знаем, чего вы добиваетесь”.

⁹¹ “МИД ответил на слова Мэй”.

⁹² Evgenii Kotlyar, “У нас была цель... вызвать беспорядки”: интервью с экс-сотрудником «фабрики троллей» в Санкт-Петербурге”, *Дождь*, October 14, 2017, https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/bremja_novostej/fabrika-447628/?from=incut_wide (accessed March 25, 2022).

⁹³ “Парламент Великобритании заподозрил российских хакеров”.

⁹⁴ Michail Fishman, “Либо доказательства, либо война»: как поссорились Москва и Лондон и почему это крупнейший политический кризис в новейшей истории”, *Дождь*, March 16, 2018, https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/fishman_vecheree_shou/libo_dokazatelstva_libo_vojna-459736/ (accessed March 25, 2022).

⁹⁵ Olga Gladysheva, “Тектонический сдвиг в Лондоне: как в Британии всерьез и надолго взялись за деньги российских олигархов”, *Дождь*, March 13, 2018, https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/fishman_vecheree_shou/russkie_dengi-460853/ (accessed March 25, 2022).

Dozhd, being in opposition to the government and the people close to it, covers these issues quite neutrally, in some cases accepting the accusations as well.

Thus, the articles of the Dozhd channel, which deal with Russia's involvement in Brexit, are mostly informative in their nature. Such articles mainly contain references to political officials of both sides or to foreign sources. The Dozhd channel does not openly state that the Russian government interfered in the referendum but provides data that confirms the existence of a "troll factory" in the country. It is worth noting that at this stage the image of Britain in the opposition media has slightly changed. It does not address the United Kingdom's fragmentation, which was highlighted in previous articles. Now Britain is acquiring the image of a certain "protector" of the European continent from the common threat - Russia. Moreover, it addresses the EU as an ally whose security they will also defend despite Brexit. In addition, by citing different British personalities they create an image of the UK's honesty and objectivity on this issue. That is, initially they were only suppositions; it was claimed that there was no concrete evidence, only opinions. But over time, as more confirmations of the interference were announced, the British side adopted a tougher stance on Russia.

2.4 The overall image of Great Britain in the opposition media Dozhd

Thus, having traced the three major thematic lines in the Dozhd articles from June 2016 to 2018, we can see how the image of the United Kingdom has evolved. Initially, following the announcement of the results and the early consequences, Britain was characterised as a divided state that had made a fatal mistake. In fact, it was the mistake that could bring great losses for the country - both economically and even territorially. However, this image was dominated by a sense of regret for what the consequences of this mistake would be. Then there were the negotiations between the UK and the European Union about how exactly Brexit would happen, and on what terms the two sides would cooperate. In this part, the image of a divided Britain was only reinforced by disagreements within the country's political elite. Britain has an uncertain future and a tense atmosphere both domestically and at the negotiating table with the European Union. In addition, Britain acquired "capriciousness" to its overall image, as there were "skirmishes", countries failed to reach an agreement, some ministers resigned - an atmosphere of chaos and anxiety in the country was intensified. Russia's interference in Brexit is regarded as a separate issue. As noted above, the focus through which one looks at the UK has slightly changed in such

articles. There is no longer an emphasis on panic and chaos. Much of the content is informative and based on citations. Nevertheless, the United Kingdom here takes on a more just and somehow heroic image. It is a nation that will defend its own interests and those of its neighbours. Due to the fact that in the first articles on Russian interference in the referendum the channel pointed all the statements as suppositions and opinions that have no concrete evidence yet, Britain gets the image of a fair and objective state. As the investigations evolved, the claims became more radicalised.

It is worth noting that the opposition channel Dozhd definitely uses emotionally coloured words in its texts (chaos, panic), as well as a rather large number of metaphors and comparisons - Hitchcock movie, England of green pastures and etc. Such lexical features clearly convey the opinion of the channel's editorial office about the situation and influence the readers' perception as they evoke certain emotions. Moreover, with the help of these features, not only the situational context is evident, but most importantly, the intertextual one - in addition to communicating information, the authors create a certain image of the country during this period. The intertextual context is particularly clear in the thematic block devoted to Russian interference in the referendum - the Dozhd does not openly state the interference as the fact, but by means of certain articles and citations implicitly admits that it was possible.

In sum, the image of Britain in the opposition media Dozhd has not changed dramatically over the two years, but has acquired new shades and characteristics, depending on how exactly the country's leaders have expressed themselves, what actions they have undertaken and how they have reacted to the challenges.

3 Pro-governmental media Russia Today

This section of the thesis contains the results of the analysis of articles from the pro-Kremlin media outlet Russia Today. Russia Today is a Russian channel broadcasting in different languages in different countries and funded by the Russian government. The channel is considered propagandistic because it pursues Moscow's agenda. At the end of February 2022, due to Russia's invasion on the territory of Ukraine, the broadcasting of this channel on the territory of the European Union was blocked.

As one of the fields of focus of RT is international news, the number of articles on Brexit in the selected timeframe was significantly higher than in the opposition channel Dozhd. Thus, 131 articles were selected to analyse the image of the UK in the pro-governmental media. The articles of RT channel were further divided into the same thematic blocks as those of the opposition channel Dozhd, namely referendum results and consequences; the EU-UK negotiation process; and Russian interference in the Brexit referendum.

3.1 The referendum results and consequences

RT portrays the process of voting on Brexit as a kind of game or competition: *“уже не смогут их догнать”* (“they can't catch up”)⁹⁶, *“вперед вырывались то евроскептики, то еврооптимисты”* (“once the Eurosceptics, once the Eurooptimists, were ahead”).⁹⁷

The decision of the British to leave the European Union is quite positively evaluated by RTs. This is especially highlighted when reporters justify the reasons that influenced the decision of the population of the country: *“регулярные траты Лондона на общеевропейские нужды”* (“regular London expenditures on common European needs”).⁹⁸ “Furthermore, the principle of European integration is, as RT notes, confusing and uncomfortable⁹⁹. In this context Britain is seen as a victim of an all-powerful European Union, which is very restrictive towards its members and unable to provide the right level of security in the countries that comprise it. Calling Britain a proud Albion, RT stresses that

⁹⁶ “Великобритания проголосовала за выход из ЕС”, *Russia Today*, June 24, 2016, <https://russian.rt.com/article/309259-velikobritaniya-progolosovala-za-vyход-iz-es> (accessed April 12, 2022).

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ “Константин Косачёв: Брексит показал, что евроинтеграция непонятна населению”, *Russia Today*, June 24, 2016, <https://russian.rt.com/article/309293-konstantin-kosachyov-brexит-pokazal-что-евроинтеграция-непонятна> (accessed April 12, 2022).

the country can no longer be under EU control, but rather seeks institutional benefits and freedom of decision-making.¹⁰⁰

RT, just like the channel Dozhd, expresses the possibility of future EU instability: *“может подстегнуть евроскептиков и спровоцировать аналогичные меры со стороны других стран”* (“could encourage Eurosceptics and provoke similar actions from other countries”).¹⁰¹ However, this possibility is expressed here without fear, but rather as the will of the people. Furthermore, the so-called domino effect is seen by RT as a very likely scenario. The channel lists a number of countries which have their own complaints against Brussels and particular national ambitions, as well as justifying the reasons that might motivate countries to leave the EU.¹⁰² RT even gives the names of future EU exit processes: Grexit, Frexit, Quittaly and others, referring to this as an *“парадом выходов”* (“exit parade”).¹⁰³ The word “parade” generally carries a positive connotation and implies pride, which indicates a certain approval of both Brexit and possible other exit processes by the Kremlin. RT thus criticises the EU itself, stating that the unifying principles of the EU become the reason for countries to leave the union.¹⁰⁴

In addition to the possible collapse of the EU, RT also points to instability and difficulties within the UK itself: *“единство страны окажется вновь под ударом”* (“the country's unity will again come under attack”).¹⁰⁵ Brexit itself is perceived as the will of the population, with which the country's governing elite does not agree. The image of the UK in this context is therefore quite complex: on the one hand, there is a population that is fighting for their rights and fairly rejects membership in the European Union. On the other hand, a government which, for the most part, is against Brexit and wants to preserve membership ignoring the will of the population, according to RT.

¹⁰⁰ Nadezhda Alekseeva, “Лондон, гуд-бай: что значат заявления Мэй о выходе Британии из европейского рынка”, *Russia Today*, January 17, 2017, <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/351119-breksit-tereza-mey> (accessed April 12, 2022).

¹⁰¹ “Великобритания проголосовала за выход из ЕС”.

¹⁰² “Washington Post назвала ещё шесть кандидатов на выход из ЕС”, *Russia Today*, June 25, 2016, <https://russian.rt.com/article/309435-washington-post-nazvala-escho-shest-kandidatov-na> (accessed April 12, 2022).

¹⁰³ “Парад выходов: как назовут следующие референдумы об отделении”, *Russia Today*, June 25, 2016, <https://russian.rt.com/article/309492-parad-vyhodov-kak-nazovut-sleduyuschie-referendумы-ob> (accessed April 12, 2022).

¹⁰⁴ “Эффект домино: объединяющие принципы ЕС становятся причиной выхода стран из союза”, *Russia Today*, March 25, 2017, <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/372172-italiya-franciya-es-breksit> (accessed April 13, 2022).

¹⁰⁵ “Экс-мэр Лондона в интервью RT: Выйдя из ЕС, британцы поставят под удар единство страны”, *Russia Today*, June 27, 2016, <https://russian.rt.com/article/309767-eks-mer-londona-v-intervyu-rt-vyidya> (accessed April 12, 2022).

Instability in the UK not only implies different views of the population and the political elite, but also regional disagreements. For example, the issue of Scottish independence has become more critical after Brexit. Scotland's intentions are expressed firmly: “*Эдинбург требует сохранить для Шотландии рынок ЕС*” (“Edinburgh demands to preserve the EU market for Scotland”)¹⁰⁶, but London continues to ignore Edinburgh's voice.¹⁰⁷ Listing the problems the Kingdom would face in case of Scottish secession, RT concludes that it is dangerous for the British authorities to completely ignore Edinburgh's discontent.¹⁰⁸ And Edinburgh itself is “*находится на распутье*” (“at a crossroads”).¹⁰⁹ Despite this, the channel again criticises London for not caring about the domestic situation in the country: “*для королевы Елизаветы II и Терезы Мэй вопрос отделения Шотландии — не первостепенный*” (“for Queen Elizabeth II and Theresa May, the issue of secession of Scotland is not a primary concern”).¹¹⁰ Moreover, the articles are quite negative about London's policy on Scotland: “*в очередной раз решив за скоттов их судьбу*” (“once again having decided the destiny of the Scots on their behalf”).¹¹¹

The channel uses the phrase “the Kingdom is storming”¹¹² to describe the general internal situation in the UK or “the crack in the crown”¹¹³, highlighting the country's uncertain and fragile position. However, it seems that the pro-governmental channel will also support the internal split in the UK and take the side of Scotland, calling the independence referendum a great achievement.¹¹⁴ Apart from Scotland, attention is also paid to separatist sentiment in Northern Ireland, as it is very important for the region to maintain the status quo regarding the border. There is also an emphasis here on the incompetence of

¹⁰⁶ Nadezhda Alekseeva and Kristina Khlusova, “Случится ли “мини-брексит”: что может заставить Шотландию покинуть Соединённое Королевство”, *Russia Today*, January 31, 2017, <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/355039-breksit-shotlandiya-velikobritaniya-vyhod> (accessed April 12, 2022)

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Viktor Astafev, “Попытка номер два: в Шотландии собираются провести новый референдум о независимости”, March 13, 2017, <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/367918-shotlandiya-referendum-nezavisimost-britaniya> (accessed April 13, 2022).

¹¹⁰ Пяа Ogandzhanov, “Остаться в ЕС: к чему приведёт повторный референдум шотландцев о независимости”, *Russia Today*, March 28, 2017, <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/373099-shotlandiya-velikobritaniya-referendum-breksit-es> (accessed April 13, 2022).

¹¹¹ Valeria Maslova, “Тень независимости: как брексит обострил противоречия между Шотландией и Англией”, *Russia Today*, June 24, 2017, <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/402869-shotlandiya-denezavisimosti> (accessed April 13, 2022).

¹¹² Alekseeva, Khlusova, “мини-брексит”.

¹¹³ Dmitrii Fedorov, “Трещина в короне: почему Шотландия и Уэльс намерены препятствовать брекситу”, *Russia Today*, July 17, 2017, <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/409565-shotlandiya-uels-breksit-london> (accessed April 13, 2022).

¹¹⁴ Maslova, “Тень независимости”.

the authorities regarding certain issues: “Неспособность Терезы Мэй заключить сделку с Евросоюзом и Дублином” (“Theresa May's failure to make a deal with the EU and Dublin”).¹¹⁵ The fact that London is unable to negotiate with the European Union in a way that does not conflict with Northern Ireland's interests is precisely the reason for the rise of nationalist sentiment, according to RT: “растущее недовольство неспособностью властей провести переговоры по брекситу может стать политическим козырем” (“growing dissatisfaction with the authorities' inability to negotiate on Brexit could become a political trump card”).¹¹⁶ Calling this situation a political trump card, the channel once again creates the image of some kind of card game between London and the opposition, in which the latter now have the best chance of winning.

Brexit is presented as a mistake, but not a mistake in the decision itself, but a mistake made by David Cameron.¹¹⁷ RT accuses the UK government not of Brexit, but of failing to satisfy the population and correctly understand the mood in the country.¹¹⁸

Nevertheless, despite the generally positive attitude towards Britain's exit from the EU, RT is quite clear about the negative consequences that will affect the Kingdom after Brexit: “время затянуть пояса” (“time to tighten the belts”)¹¹⁹, “униженные брекситом” (“humiliated by Brexit”).¹²⁰ Solving all these problems will be a “costly affair” for London.¹²¹

Despite the negative consequences, RT reports the results of a poll showing that the British are happy about the launch of the Brexit procedure.¹²² In the context of the negative effects that the kingdom's citizens will face or have already faced, the publication of this

¹¹⁵ Nadezhda Alekseeva and Aleksandr Bovdunov, “Один большой знак вопроса: как брексит может повлиять на ирландское движение за независимость”, *Russia Today*, October 23, 2018, <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/566621-breksit-irlandiya-granica> (accessed April 14, 2022).

¹¹⁶ Alekseeva, Bovdunov, “Один большой знак вопроса”.

¹¹⁷ “Британский экс-министр: Брексит — следствие политического просчёта Дэвида Кэмерона”, *Russia Today*, July 8, 2016, <https://russian.rt.com/article/311325-britanskii-eks-ministr-breksit--sledstvie-politicheskogo> (accessed April 12, 2022).

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Maria Bukharova, “Время затянуть пояса: из-за брексита в Британии могут повесить пенсионный возраст до 75”, *Russia Today*, February 26, 2017, <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/359091-velikobritaniya-breksit-pensii-uroven-zhizni> (accessed April 13, 2022).

¹²⁰ Maria Bukharova, “Униженные брекситом: выход из ЕС ударил по самым незащищённым британцам”, *Russia Today*, April 19, 2017, <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/380371-unizhennye-i-oskorblyonnye-breksit-sostoitsya-za-schyot> (accessed April 13, 2022).

¹²¹ “Эксперт рассказал о возможных последствиях брексита для Британии”, *Russia Today*, August 21, 2018, <https://russian.rt.com/world/news/547156-evropa-london-ekspert> (accessed April 14, 2022).

¹²² “Опрос: половина британцев счастливы из-за запуска процедуры брексита”, *Russia Today*, March 29, 2017, <https://russian.rt.com/world/news/373349-opros-britancy-schastie-breksit> (accessed April 13, 2022).

survey constructs around Britons an image of commitment and a willingness to endure these effects for the sake of the future.

Speaking about the UK itself, RT notes that London is planning to regain its lost influence.¹²³ However, the channel views London's ambitions with a slight degree of irony and scepticism: *“вернуть себе статус независимой державы и хотя бы часть былого величия. Однако Лондон не просчитал заранее ущерб”* (“to regain its status as an independent power and at least some of its former greatness. However, London has not calculated the losses in advance”).¹²⁴ Great emphasis is also placed on London's relationship with Washington, in which the UK once again falls under a strong influence: *“Лондон всегда пристраивался в фарватере Вашингтона”* (“London has always aligned itself with Washington”)¹²⁵, *“Британия традиционно выступала в роли троянского коня Соединённых Штатов в Евросоюзе”* (“Britain has traditionally been the Trojan horse of the United States in the European Union”).¹²⁶

The pro-governmental media also highlights the fact that this outcome of the British referendum is favourable for Russia. However, unlike the channel Dozhd, RT writes with a certain amount of irony and refuses the Kremlin's interest in the UK withdrawal from the EU.¹²⁷ Britain is already acquiring the image of a kind of accuser, who seeks any attempt to "whitewash" itself. While Russia is put in the position of a victim or a distraction.¹²⁸

Thus, the articles of RT channel dealing with the results of the referendum, its first consequences and reactions are more neutral in nature with a slight degree of approval of the population's decision. It is worth noting that Brexit itself is presented as a game - a game between Eurosceptics and Eurooptimists, as well as a game between the centre of the country and the regions. Britain, in the context of relations with the EU, has the image of a victim who has finally decided to get rid of the EU and pursue an independent and autonomous policy. However, when it comes to contradictions within the country between the population and the government or the centre and the regions, then RT criticises the government and

¹²³ Nadezhda Alekseeva, “Королевские амбиции: как Великобритания намерена бороться за статус лидера на мировой арене”, *Russia Today*, September 4, 2017, <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/426376-velikobritania-imperskie-ambicii> (accessed April 13, 2022).

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Alekseeva, “Королевские амбиции”.

¹²⁶ Oksana Solomatina, “Закат “русофобской группы”: в британском парламенте спрогнозировали уменьшение поддержки антиросийских санкций в ЕС”, *Russia Today*, October 11, 2018, <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/562939-britaniya-sankcii-podderzhka-es> (accessed April 14, 2022).

¹²⁷ “Винюват Путин: как Запад отреагировал на британский референдум”.

¹²⁸ Solomatina, “Закат “русофобской группы”.

writes about the incapacity and incompetence of the political elite to satisfy the residents of the kingdom. And, consequently, in the context of relations London vs. regions and population, the role of a victim is taken over by the latter. Moreover, when it comes to the negative consequences that the population will face, RT seems to appreciate the commitment of the people and empathise with them. Thus, the UK is presented in the pro-governmental RT media as both oppressed and oppressing at the same time.

3.2 The EU-UK negotiation process

The next thematic block of articles focuses on the process of negotiations between the United Kingdom and the European Union as well as the difficulties experienced by the parties in reaching an agreement on how and under what conditions Britain will leave the EU.

In general, the pro-government RT channel presents the negotiation process as a kind of theatrical play: *“громкие заявления по-прежнему будут звучать, играя роль ширмы и звуковой завесы”* (“loud statements will still be made, playing the role of a screen and a voice curtain”).¹²⁹

It is also noted that the process of the UK leaving the EU will be very difficult for both sides: *“насколько болезненным может стать развод”* (“how painful a divorce can become”).¹³⁰ But at the same time RT justifies this risk by arguing that by going through these difficulties Britain will become a free from the EU state.¹³¹ In Russia, there is a rather strong belief that in order to achieve a "bright future" and any successes, it is necessary to sacrifice yourself and "suffer", and then that success will be more significant and prominent. Given this, the difficulties faced by Britain are perceived by the pro-Russian media as something necessary that the people have to go through for their own future.

In the process of the Brexit negotiations, RT creates an image of a relationship between a child and a teacher or mentor, with the EU being the elder and "punishing" the UK for its mistake: *“чтобы больше никому повадно не было”* (“so that everyone else will be disciplined”).¹³² Thus, Brussels also intends to "educate" other countries: *“Брюссель своей бескомпромиссной позицией намерен преподать урок другим странам*

¹²⁹ “Всё по-взрослому: зачем Олланд грозит Мэй жёстким сценарием брексита”, *Russia Today*, October 21, 2016, <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/327504-olland-mei-zhyostkii-breksit> (accessed April 12, 2022).

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ “Эксперт оценил ситуацию в Великобритании на фоне брексита”, *Russia Today*, December 13, 2018, <https://russian.rt.com/world/news/582862-breksit-ekspert-mei> (accessed April 14, 2022).

¹³² “Всё по-взрослому”.

Евросоюза” (“Brussels intends to teach other EU countries a lesson with its uncompromising position”).¹³³ However, over time the EU just got tired of dealing with London.¹³⁴ Media emphasises that the EU is indeed treating the UK as its capricious, annoying, and unpredictable child, which is now only making life more difficult, therefore they want to end the Brexit deal as quickly as possible. But at the same time, the EU is “*подливает масла в огонь*” (“pouring oil into the fire”), that is, it aggravates the already tough situation for British politicians.¹³⁵

In this thematic block, the UK-EU negotiation process is also dominantly characterised as “divorce”.¹³⁶ Maintaining the image of divorce, RT also characterises the supposed solutions of both sides: “*лишившись финансовой поддержки своего континентального супруга, островная Великобритания вынуждена будет искать утешения в объятиях других государств*” (“having lost the financial support of its continental spouse, Britain will be forced to seek solace in the arms of other nations”)¹³⁷, where those lovers on the side are Saudi Arabia and the Middle East, “*но при этом бывший европейский муж может начать ревновать и «предпринять какие-либо действия, чтобы этого не произошло*” (“However, the former European husband may become jealous and “take some action to make sure this does not happen”).¹³⁸ This description of the future situation portrays the EU rather negatively as a “tyrant husband” who is preventing the UK from becoming independent and starting a new life - building bilateral relationships with other countries.

Continuing the divorce rhetoric, RT raises the issue of Scotland, Gibraltar and Northern Ireland which do not support Brexit, rather pejoratively calling them the offspring.¹³⁹ Gibraltar, for example, has been taken hostage by the current situation between

¹³³ Aleksandr Karpov, “Педагогический аспект: к чему может привести отказ ЕС пересматривать условия брексита”, *Russia Today*, December 12, 2018, <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/582073-mei-breksit-net-sdelki> (accessed April 14, 2022).

¹³⁴ Nadezhda Alekseeva, “Прививка от попыток покинуть ЕС: к каким последствиям может привести брексит без сделки между Лондоном и Брюсселем”, *Russia Today*, November 11, 2018, <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/572515-london-breksit-peregovory-mey> (accessed April 14, 2022).

¹³⁵ Roman Shimaev and Anastasia Rummyantseva, “Брюссель играет с британцами: Суд ЕС подтвердил право Лондона отказаться от брексита”, *Russia Today*, December 10, 2018, <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/581512-sud-es-otmena-breksit-britaniya> (accessed April 14, 2022).

¹³⁶ Valeria Maslova Polina Dukhanova and Ilya Sokolov, “Внебрачный контракт: как Лондон и Брюссель разводиться будут”, *Russia Today*, April 29, 2017, <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/384457-breksit-velikobritaniya-es-razvod> (accessed April 13, 2022).

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

the UK and Spain.¹⁴⁰ The views of the RT and the EU differ on this issue. RT is quite strict that the question of Gibraltar is non-negotiable, while the EU representative states that now they intend to support the EU member state.¹⁴¹ It stresses once again that the EU is "punishing" Britain intentionally ignoring the British side and trying to blackmail London by supporting statements of various autonomies that could take on a separatist character.¹⁴²

Overall, the pro-Kremlin channel continues to pursue a line of approval of Brexit. RT notes, as in the section above, that some actors want to obstruct Brexit and do not respect the choice of the people also within the country.¹⁴³ However, RT seems to warn what the consequences would be: *“своим отказом палата лордов подписала бы себе смертный приговор”* (“with its refusal, the House of Lords would sign its own death warrant”).¹⁴⁴

As noted above, the image of a country can often be conveyed through the image of the political elite, the political leader. In this case, the image of Theresa May in the media is a reflection of the image of the UK, especially in the process of negotiations. Thus, the decisions of the Prime Minister of the country during this time period are characterised by RT as unexpected, especially May's announcement of pre-term parliamentary elections, which was *“самым необычайным политическим разворотом за последнее время”* (“recently the most extraordinary political u-turn”).¹⁴⁵ RT emphasises May's instability but at the same time offers a valid explanation: *“британский парламент стал ареной политических игр для различных партий, которые подрывают стабильность правительства”* (“the British parliament has become an arena of political games for various parties, which undermine the stability of government”).¹⁴⁶ RT notes that the prime minister's decision could strengthen her position both in the country and during the Brexit negotiations.¹⁴⁷ The situation itself, as RT describes it, is quite risky and dangerous; it has been compared to gambling, where you either come out as a winner or lose it all – *“Мэй*

¹⁴⁰ Valeria Maslova, “Между трёх огней: как Великобритания, ЕС и Испания делят Гибралтар на фоне брексита”, *Russia Today*, April 3, 2017, <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/374919-gibraltar-velikobritaniya-ispaniya-breksit> (accessed April 13, 2022).

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Maslova, Dukhanova, Sokolov, “Внебрачный контракт”.

¹⁴³ Polina Dukhanova, “Дорога к брекситу: правительство не сможет начать выход из ЕС без согласия парламента”, *Russia Today*, January 24, 2017, <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/353126-velikobritaniya-breksit-sud> (accessed April 12, 2022).

¹⁴⁴ Dukhanova, “Дорога к брекситу”.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Nadezhda Alekseeva and Daniil Lomakin, “Мэй идёт ва-банк: что стоит за решением о досрочных выборах в парламент Великобритании”, *Russia Today*, April 18, 2017, <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/380129-tereza-mehy-dosrochnye-vybory-parlament-velikobritaniya> (accessed April 13, 2022).

идёт ва-банк” (“May goes all-in”).¹⁴⁸ May herself has been characterised as controversial and sudden, but at the same time her decision is a powerful political move, which would help to counter the weak opposition.¹⁴⁹ May will have to confront not only the opposition but also the EU, which is trying to reverse the Brexit process and influence the results of the pre-term parliamentary elections.¹⁵⁰ This means that Europe will obstruct May in every possible way. But, according to RT, the Prime Minister has “показала Евросоюзу свою устойчивость” (“shown the EU her strength”).¹⁵¹

Over time, however, Theresa May's image acquires more negative and weak characteristics: “с трудом верится в то, что она как-то сможет преодолеть сложившийся кризис” (“it is hard to believe that she will be able to overcome the crisis”)¹⁵², “она показала себя как неэффективный переговорщик” (“she has shown herself to be an unsuccessful negotiator”)¹⁵³, “Не хватает таланта” (“Lack of talent”)¹⁵⁴. The Prime Minister is then portrayed as a selfish politician who ignores the rest of government in her favour.¹⁵⁵ At the same time, RT attributes May the role of a “political suicide bomber”, as her situation is a desperate one.¹⁵⁶ This metaphor is used to illustrate the extent to which the EU has tied London's hands while Theresa May has been unable to cope with the pressure.

As events unfold, the narrative of Brexit in RT has become increasingly controversial, which is conveyed through the use of harsher statements that emphasise that none of the sides can define their aspirations, aims and opinions on the issue – “клубок

¹⁴⁸ Alekseeva, Lomakin, “Мэй идёт ва-банк”.

¹⁴⁹ Pavel Svyatenkov, “Противоречивая Тереза”, *Russia Today*, April 19, 2017, <https://russian.rt.com/opinion/380398-svytenkov-breksit-vibori> (accessed April 13, 2022).

¹⁵⁰ “Отвечающий за брексит министр обвинил европейские СМИ в попытках его сместить”, *Russia Today*, May 12, 2017, <https://russian.rt.com/world/news/388841-ministr-breksit-uvolnenie-es-chinovniki> (accessed April 13, 2022).

¹⁵¹ “Эксперт оценил победу Мэй на голосовании консерваторов”, *Russia Today*, December 13, 2018, <https://russian.rt.com/world/news/582891-britaniya-mei-golosovanie> (accessed April 14, 2022).

¹⁵² Roman Shimaev, Anastasia Rummyantseva and Anna Lushnikova, “Отставки министров и недовольство парламента: как идут обсуждения черного варианта сделки по брекситу”, *Russia Today*, November 15, 2018, <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/573739-velikobritaniya-es-otstavka-breksit> (accessed April 14, 2022).

¹⁵³ Shimaev, Rummyantseva, “Брюссель играет с британцами”.

¹⁵⁴ Eduard Limonov, “Квазимода”, *Russia Today*, December 14, 2018, <https://russian.rt.com/opinion/583077-limonov-britaniya-mei-parlament-partiya-golosovanie> (accessed April 14, 2022).

¹⁵⁵ Anna Lushnikova, “В Совфеде оценили назначение нового министра по брекситу в Великобритании”, *Russia Today*, November 16, 2018, <https://russian.rt.com/world/news/574027-ministr-naznachenie-breksit-post> (accessed April 14, 2022).

¹⁵⁶ Anna Lushnikova, “Политолог оценил инициирование голосования по вопросу о вотуме недоверия Мэй”, *Russia Today*, December 17, 2018, <https://russian.rt.com/world/news/584481-mei-breksit-golosovanie-angliya> (accessed April 14, 2022).

противоречий” (“a tangle of contradictions”)¹⁵⁷, *“интересы всех сторон запутаны настолько”* (“the interests of every side are so confused”).¹⁵⁸ The blame for these difficulties is no longer attributed only to the European Union, which has previously been accused of trying to blackmail the United Kingdom, but also to Britain itself, whose ruling elite is on the verge of splitting up.¹⁵⁹ This is evidenced by the numerous resignations of ministers, which has caused intrigues within the government.¹⁶⁰ The whole situation is referred to as a *“политическим штормом”* (“political storm”), which emphasises the dramatic and rapid turnover of events and decisions.¹⁶¹ Despite the resignation of some ministers criticising Theresa May's decisions, the RT openly excuses the prime minister and states that *“из правительства уходят люди, которые не готовы брать на себя ответственность за эти решения”* (“people who are not prepared to take responsibility for these decisions are leaving government”), which stresses the courage and commitment of those politicians who continue to negotiate Brexit.¹⁶²

The victimisation of the UK's image is reinforced by expressions such as *“давление со стороны Евросоюза”* (“pressure from the European Union”)¹⁶³, *“Лондон оказался в уязвимом положении”* (“London finds itself in a vulnerable position”)¹⁶⁴, *“Великобритания считается главной жертвой фискальной политики Евросоюза”* (“Great Britain is considered to be the main victim of the EU's fiscal policies”).¹⁶⁵ In addition, the EU is ignoring London's interest, benefitting from the unstable situation within the British government.¹⁶⁶

¹⁵⁷ Aleksandr Bovdunov, “В поисках выхода: чего ждать от официальных переговоров Великобритании и ЕС по брекситу”, *Russia Today*, June 23, 2017, <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/402436-velikobritaniya-es-breksit-godovshchina-peregovory> (accessed April 13, 2022).

¹⁵⁸ Alekseeva, “Прививка от попыток покинуть ЕС”.

¹⁵⁹ “СМИ: В Консервативной партии Великобритании назревает раскол из-за законопроекта по брекситу”, *Russia Today*, September 3, 2017, <https://russian.rt.com/world/news/425805-konservatory-velikobritaniya-raskol> (accessed April 13, 2022).

¹⁶⁰ Georgii Mosalov and Anna Lushnikova, “Критическая масса накоплена: почему глава МИД Великобритании Борис Джонсон подал в отставку”, *Russia Today*, July 9, 2018, <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/534715-djonsom-otstavka-london-tereza> (accessed April 13, 2022).

¹⁶¹ Mosalov, Lushnikova, “Критическая масса накоплена”.

¹⁶² Rummyantseva, Anastasia and Polina Poletaeva. “Эксперт объяснила отставку британского министра по вопросам брексита”. *Russia Today*, November 15, 2018, <https://russian.rt.com/world/news/573580-britanskii-ministr-otstavka-breksit> (accessed April 14, 2022).

¹⁶³ “Борис Джонсон призвал сопротивляться давлению ЕС на переговорах по брекситу”, *Russia Today*, October 15, 2018, <https://russian.rt.com/world/news/564113-boris-dzhonson-es-breksit> (accessed April 14, 2022).

¹⁶⁴ Alekseeva, “Прививка от попыток покинуть ЕС”.

¹⁶⁵ Viktor Astafev, “Развод по полной: за что Брюссель готовит Лондону счёт на €60 млрд”, *Russia Today*, February 26, 2017, <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/362802-breksit-bryussel-kompensatsiya-nalogi> (accessed April 13, 2022).

¹⁶⁶ Shimaev, Chursina, “Нельзя получить всё”.

Nevertheless, one cannot say that the pro-Kremlin media feels sorry for the UK and supports it in this difficult position. RT is quite harsh and slightly arrogant about the country: “она, потеряв реальное влияние в мире, ведёт себя как империя” (“having lost real influence in the world, it is acting like an empire”).¹⁶⁷ RT also refers to the fact that politicians in the UK are looking only for power.¹⁶⁸

According to RT, due to such complicated and long-lasting Brexit negotiations, the contradictions in Europe are intensifying. So, “брексит и все, что с ним связано – это лишь первые ласточки обвала ЕС” (“Brexit and everything connected with it are just the first signs of the collapse of the EU”).¹⁶⁹ RT repeatedly refers to states that might wish to cut their ties with the union if the new terms of cooperation between the UK and the EU are more beneficial. Thus, the topic of the decline of European integration and the domino effect continues.¹⁷⁰ A rather vivid metaphor applied by RT to the EU is “*рассыпавшийся карточный домик*” (“the crumbling house of cards”).¹⁷¹ This metaphor highlights the instability of the European Union and its fragility. However, according to RT, in order to distract public attention from these problems, the countries shift the focus to Russia, and the channel describes it in a rather satirical manner: “уже успевшая набить оскомину «русская проблема» используется как панацея от внутренних проблем любого демократического государства” (“the already overused 'Russian problem' is exploited as a panacea for internal problems of any democratic state”).¹⁷² Such rhetoric represents both the EU and the UK as unable to take responsibility for a mistake but looking for a way to “whitewash” themselves and blame a third party.

Thus, the image of Britain in the negotiation process is concluded with the fact that the country has been left alone.¹⁷³

Therefore, it turns out that at this stage the image of the UK in the pro-governmental media RT is still ambiguous. Initially, covering Brexit and its negotiations, the channel made

¹⁶⁷ Roman Shimaev, Marianna Chursina, Anna Lushnikova and Oksana Solomatina, “Без вишенки на торте: почему Мэй заявила о тупике в переговорах с ЕС по брекситу”, *Russia Today*, September 21, 2018, <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/556801-mei-es-breksit-tupik> (accessed April 14, 2022).

¹⁶⁸ Лимонов, “Квазимода”.

¹⁶⁹ Aleksandr Bovdunov and Natalia Nikitina, “Пришло время выхода: как переговоры по брекситу усиливают противоречия внутри Европы”, *Russia Today*, March 14, 2018, <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/490120-es-brexit-london> (accessed April 13, 2022).

¹⁷⁰ “Всё по-взрослому”.

¹⁷¹ Maria Katasonova, “Карточный домик Терезы Мэй”, *Russia Today*, November 14, 2018, <https://russian.rt.com/opinion/573384-mei-rossiya-breksit-problemy> (accessed April 14, 2022).

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ “Юнкер призвал британцев не ждать решения по брекситу от ЕС”, *Russia Today*, December 30, 2018, <https://russian.rt.com/world/news/588537-breksit-evrokomissi-yunker> (accessed April 14, 2022).

the UK look like a "hostage of the situation", which is experiencing the pressure from the European Union. The image of Theresa May as a representative of the country also initially had stronger characteristics - courage and commitment to face difficulties. As noted above, the rhetoric of self-sacrifice for a "brighter future" is strong in Russia, so in this context the problems are primarily presented as essential challenges on the way to freedom. However, over time, as the negotiation process went on for too long and there was no sign of an agreement being reached, the image of Britain, like that of Theresa May, appeared to be weak and incapable of managing Brexit. Marking that there has been a split within the British political elite, RT presents Britain as being confused. Thus, the image of Britain in this thematic block is not stable but it changes depending on the context and the time. So, in the context of relations between London and Brussels, Britain is still presented as a victim of the EU, which will overcome all difficulties despite external and internal problems. But at the same time, in a domestic context, the UK is presented in a slightly ironic way, with a certain degree of derision about having great ambitions but not enough potential to achieve the desired results. This rhetoric is particularly strong when Britain is put in opposition to Russia.

3.3 Russian interference in the Brexit referendum

One of the key issues in the relationship between the United Kingdom and Russia is the interference of the latter in the Brexit referendum through the emotional influence on British voters via Twitter and through media propaganda. Undoubtedly, the accusations made by the UK have had an impact on the image of the country in the pro-Kremlin RT media, especially when the claims of disinformation were directly related to this channel.

So, the RT articles on accusations of Russia's possible interference in the referendum are dominated by irony and counter-accusations against Britain for its failure to focus on its own problems and distracting the public's attention.

Covering the claims made by Britain and the EU, RT refers to Russian government representatives and calls the claims "*страшилкой*" ("a horror story")¹⁷⁴ for the British public, as well as "*мифическими*" ("mythical").¹⁷⁵ Moreover, RT is extremely disrespectful

¹⁷⁴ "Песков назвал «страшилкой» заявления о вмешательстве России в британский референдум", *Russia Today*, December 14, 2016, <https://russian.rt.com/world/news/341429-peskov-strashilka-zayavleniya-o-vmeshatelstve-rossii> (accessed April 12, 2022).

¹⁷⁵ Anastasia Ivanova, "Уловка для отвлечения внимания: Facebook и Twitter примут участие в расследовании «вмешательства России» в брексит", *Russia Today*, November 29, 2017,

in referring to these accusations as “*пьяным трёпом*” (“drunken blather”)¹⁷⁶ and “*кучей откровенной лжи*” (“a bunch of blatant lies”) due to the fact that there is no evidence of interference.¹⁷⁷ RT denies any Russian involvement in the British electorate's decision. And such harsh expressions highlight the extreme discontent of the Russian authorities. RT is even describing the investigation seeking evidence of interference in the referendum as a witch hunt, stressing the unrealistic nature of the incident.¹⁷⁸

In addition to discontent coming from the Russian side, the articles are dominated by irony and derision over statements from the British political elite: “*она заявила, что пара твитов и фотопшоп могут положить конец западной демократии*” (“she claimed that a couple of tweets and photoshop could put an end to Western democracy”)¹⁷⁹, “*Центру правительственной связи следовало лишь нанять несколько девочек-подростков*” (“The Government Communications Centre should have only hired a few teenage girls”).¹⁸⁰ Here one can see the channel's sarcasm that Western democracy might be destroyed by social media. If so, the pro-Kremlin channel believes that democracy in Europe is already unstable and weak. RT also frequently refers to how much, according to Facebook, Russia has spent on influence in the internet sphere: “*обвинения на \$1*” (“\$1 accusations”)¹⁸¹, “*Ничтожность «российских затрат» на политическую рекламу*” (“The worthlessness of Russian expenditures on political ads”)¹⁸², emphasising this as the main proof of their innocence. Such accusations make RT laugh – “*доказательства, над которыми мы уже довольно повеселились*” (“evidence that we have laughed at already”).¹⁸³

Besides ironising the accusations made by Britain, RT puts a lot of emphasis on the reason why they think these accusations are made. Thus, the pro-Kremlin channel said the

<https://russian.rt.com/world/article/454168-facebook-twitter-rossiya-vliyanie-breksit> (accessed April 13, 2022).

¹⁷⁶ “В России что-то написали в Twitter — весь Западный мир в опасности, предупреждает Тереза Мэй”, *Russia Today*, November 15, 2017, <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/449949-mey-rossiya-breksit> (accessed April 13, 2022).

¹⁷⁷ Boris Mezhuев, “Тёмные тайны брексита”, *Russia Today*, November 20, 2018, <https://russian.rt.com/opinion/575079-mezhudev-breksit-vybory-tramp-rossiya> (accessed April 14, 2022).

¹⁷⁸ “Охота на ведьм 2.0: в Facebook намерены расширить расследование “российского вмешательства” в брексит”, *Russia Today*, January 18, 2018, <https://russian.rt.com/world/video/471633-ohota-na-vedm-2> (accessed April 13, 2022).

¹⁷⁹ “В России что-то написали в Twitter — весь Западный мир в опасности”

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ “Обвинения на \$1: Лондон назвал стоимость «повлиявшей на брексит» российской рекламы”, *Russia Today*, December 14, 2017, <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/460106-rossiya-breksit-vmeshatelstvo-feysbuk> (accessed April 13, 2022).

¹⁸² Иванова, “Уловка для отвлечения внимания”.

¹⁸³ Maksim Kononenko, “Меньше доллара”, *Russia Today*, December 15, 2017, <https://russian.rt.com/opinion/460881-kononenko-rt-britaniya-twitter> (accessed April 13, 2022).

main reason was to distract attention from domestic problems.¹⁸⁴ Moreover, when explaining what kind of problems the rhetoric about Russia helps to hide, RT is already describing them as extremely negative, which has not been seen before: “*Брексит грозит обернуться полной катастрофой*” (“Brexit risks to turn into a total disaster”).¹⁸⁵

In addition to the problems, there is another reason for anti-Russian sentiments - The US influence: “*в угоду Вашингтона*” (“to please Washington”).¹⁸⁶ In RT's view, by accusing Russia of interfering in the referendum, Britain supported anti-Russian rhetoric in the US, hoping for approval from America, which also characterises Britain as a dependent state, no longer on the EU but on the US.

RT presents the UK and its political elite as naive and willing to accept only their own truth, ignoring the evidence: “*В британском парламенте обиделись, что Twitter не подтвердил им наше вмешательство в брексит*” (“UK parliament is offended that Twitter hasn't confirmed our intervention in Brexit”).¹⁸⁷ The channel uses "our intervention" here, which means it does not separate itself from Russia and its politicians, proving once again the pro-Kremlin nature of the media.

RT supposes that all the accusations are directed towards Russia simply because it is Russia which is suitable to be blamed: “*лёгкая мишень*” (“an easy target”)¹⁸⁸, “*Лондону выгодно искать “российский след”*” (“London benefits from looking for a Russian footprint”).¹⁸⁹ Russia was not surprised by such accusations, and even expected them: “*демонизация Москвы укладывается в общую антироссийскую линию правительства консерваторов*” (“demonisation of Moscow fits in with the general anti-Russian stance of the Conservative government”)¹⁹⁰, “*это далеко не единственное обвинение в адрес Москвы*” (“this is not the only accusation against Moscow”).¹⁹¹ Moreover, Russia seems to tolerate and ignore these attacks, trying to appear, as they say, "better than that", showing its

¹⁸⁴ “В России что-то написали в Twitter — весь Западный мир в опасности”.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Anastasia Ivanova, “Жаль вас расстраивать: посольство РФ ответило на заявление YouTube об отсутствии следов влияния России на брексит”, *Russia Today*, February 10, 2018, <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/479138-posolstvo-rf-youtube-vmeshatelstvo> (accessed April 13, 2022).

¹⁸⁷ “Симоньян: в британском парламенте обиделись, что Twitter не подтвердил вмешательство RT в брексит”, *Russia Today*, December 15, 2017, <https://russian.rt.com/world/news/460501-simonyan-britanskii-parlament-twitter-rt> (accessed April 13, 2022).

¹⁸⁸ “В России что-то написали в Twitter — весь Западный мир в опасности”

¹⁸⁹ Ivanova, “Жаль вас расстраивать”.

¹⁹⁰ Anastasia Ivanova and Marianna Chursina, “Ожидаемый вброс: посольство РФ в Лондоне ответило на заявления о влиянии «российских ботов» на выборы в Британии”, *Russia Today*, April 29, 2018, <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/508151-posolstvo-rf-boti-vibory-britaniya> (accessed April 13, 2022).

¹⁹¹ Alekseeva, “Мышление истеблишмента”.

superiority.¹⁹² Referring to Russia's political leaders, RT also highlights Moscow's benevolence towards London.¹⁹³

To confirm its innocence and add credibility to its justifications, RT cites politicians: “*Брексит невозможно было навязать извне, поскольку сами британцы выступали за выход из ЕС, полагает Арвин Вохра*” (“Brexit could not have been imposed from abroad because the British themselves were pushing for leaving the EU, argues Arvin Vohra”)¹⁹⁴, “*Вы не можете принять мысль, что кто-то в Европе может выступить с других позиций. Вы непременно будете усматривать руку Москвы*”, — *сказал Стив Бриуа*”, (“You cannot accept the fact that some people in Europe might take a different stance. You will be certainly looking for the hand of Moscow, said Steeve Briois”)¹⁹⁵; “*представитель Великобритании Джерард Баттен дистанцировал себя от европейцев, призвав коллег перестать винить Кремль в собственных проблемах*” (The UK representative Gerard Batten distanced himself from the Europeans, urging his colleagues to stop blaming the Kremlin for their own problems”)¹⁹⁶.

It is worth noting that after the first accusations of Russian involvement in the Brexit referendum, RT increasingly used sarcasm in its articles, even when the topic was not related to Russia. For example, after Theresa May spoke out about possible European media interference in the parliamentary elections, the pro-Kremlin channel ironically and even with a degree of surprise wrote “*обошлись без русских хакеров*” (“They made it without “Russian hackers”)¹⁹⁷, “*когда закончились русские для обвинений*” (“when you ran out of Russians to blame”).¹⁹⁸

RT also puts great emphasis on the fact that no evidence was ever provided: “*в документе не содержалось никаких прямых доказательств*” (“there was no direct

¹⁹² Mezhuев, “Тёмные тайны брексита”.

¹⁹³ “Путин оценил возможные последствия брексита для России”, *Russia Today*, December 20, 2018, <https://russian.rt.com/world/news/585380-putin-posledstviya-breksit-rossiya> (accessed April 14, 2022).

¹⁹⁴ Иванова, “Уловка для отвлечения внимания”.

¹⁹⁵ Пуга Sokolov and Anastasia Romyantseva, “Мы должны мобилизоваться”: в Европарламенте обсудили “российскую пропаганду”, *Russia Today*, January 17, 2018, <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/471289-evroparlament-rossiiskaya-propaganda> (accessed April 13, 2022).

¹⁹⁶ Ibid..

¹⁹⁷ Vladimir Smirnov, “Обошлись без «русских хакеров»: Мэй обвинила ЕС в попытке повлиять на выборы в Британии”, *Russia Today*, May 4, 2017, <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/385877-mei-es-vliyanie-vybory> (accessed April 13, 2022).

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

evidence in the document").¹⁹⁹ Constantly emphasising the lack of direct evidence, RT influences the perception of its public and creates an image of mendacious Britain

Very often RT uses the word "allegedly" that connotes untruth and an incorrect assumption: *“Россия якобы проводит такие операции по всему миру”* (“Russia allegedly conducts such operations all over the world”)²⁰⁰, *“данные об аккаунтах, якобы связанных с Россией, которые занимались политической агитацией”* (“data on accounts allegedly linked to Russia that were engaged in political agitation”)²⁰¹, *“якобы именно Москва приложила усилия”* (“allegedly it was Moscow that made the effort”).²⁰² So, denial of any involvement is achieved not only contextually, but also linguistically.

In addition to accusations of Russian interference in the Brexit referendum, the articles include another topic that has affected the UK-Russia relations. It concerns the poisoning of Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia, which occurred in Salisbury. The British side accuses Russia, while the latter denies it. Moreover, RT notes that London, just as in the case of Brexit interference, benefits from blaming Russia – *“зачем Лондону сценарий с отравлением Скрипаля”* (“why would London need a scenario with Skripal poisoning”)²⁰³, *“пытаясь определиться, как быть дальше, Великобритания решила присоединиться к антироссийской кампании”* (“trying to decide what to do next, Britain has chosen to join the anti-Russian campaign”).²⁰⁴ According to RT, anti-Russian rhetoric improves political ratings.²⁰⁵

Generally, characterising the UK in this context, RT is rather negative and gives the country an image of a messed-up state – *“Соединённое Королевство определённо чему-то предано — только не очень понятно чему”* (“The United Kingdom is definitely committed to something - but it's not very clear to what”).²⁰⁶ Furthermore, it creates the impression that British politicians are unable to think critically, and they are just following so-called trends: *“это уже параноидальные мысли, но такое мышление стало*

¹⁹⁹ Aleksandr Karpov, “Пишу тебе, дорогой Марк”: британский политик попросил Facebook раскрыть информацию о “связанных с Россией” аккаунтах”, *Russia Today*, October 24, 2017, <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/442762-tsukerberg-facebook-breksit> (accessed April 13, 2022).

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Roman Tikhonov, “Цензура в глобальном масштабе: какие меры Facebook и Twitter принимают в поисках “российского вмешательства””, *Russia Today*, January 21, 2018, <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/472524-twitter-facebook-tsenzura-vybery> (accessed April 13, 2022).

²⁰² Alekseeva, “Мышление истеблишмента”.

²⁰³ “Посол России рассказал, зачем Лондону “сценарий” с отравлением Скрипаля”, *Russia Today*, March 16, 2018, <https://russian.rt.com/world/news/492587-posol-rossiya-london-scenarii> (accessed April 13, 2022).

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Alekseeva, “Дело Скрипаля тянет рейтинг вверх”.

²⁰⁶ “В России что-то написали в Twitter — весь Западный мир в опасности”.

мейнстримом для современного британского истеблишмента” (“this is getting paranoid, but such thinking has become mainstream in the modern British establishment”).²⁰⁷ After the launch of the investigation on Russian interference in British politics, RT no longer sees post-Brexit Britain as a prosperous state.²⁰⁸

Thus, in this thematic block, the attitude of Russia Today towards Britain is more negative. The dominant characteristics in the image of the country are chaos, attempts to distract the population with the "Russian problem", as well as unfounded accusations. RT repeatedly emphasises the lack of evidence, which presents the UK as if it has slandered Russia. Nevertheless, Russia, according to RT, takes the position "better than that". RT is extremely ironic about the statements of the British political elite, which creates a hysterical image around the United Kingdom. The country, according to the pro-Kremlin channel, seems to follow the USA in adopting the general anti-Russian rhetoric in order not to become an outcast.

3.4 The overall image of Great Britain in the pro-governmental media Russia Today

Thus, having analysed the three main thematic lines in the articles of the pro-governmental Russia Today channel, namely referendum results and consequences, EU-UK negotiation process, and Russian intervention in the Brexit referendum, the image that this channel created around the United Kingdom was identified. It is worth mentioning, however, that this image is not permanent but has changed over time, depending on the news agenda. For example, initially Russia Today supported Brexit and the British in their decision to leave the EU. Britain was given the role of a victim of the European Union. However, when articles mention the views of British politicians who oppose Brexit, RT refers to the decision of the people and the fact that politicians, despite their opinions, are obliged to implement it. The difficulties faced by the UK and its people were also viewed with a degree of regret but presented as the price that the people are willing to pay for their freedom from the European Union.

Further, when the UK-EU Brexit negotiations began, the image of the United Kingdom became even more complicated. Thus, in the context of relations with the EU, Britain is still given the role of victim, whose freedom is obstructed by the EU which makes

²⁰⁷ Alekseeva, “Мышление истеблишмента”.

²⁰⁸ Alekseeva, “Способ шантажа общественности”.

the exit process more difficult, demanding large amounts of compensation and so on. However, in the context of Britain's internally divided political elite, RT criticises the government for its instability, inability to make decisions and its irresponsibility, again stating that Brexit ought be done because the people have decided so. The problems the UK has encountered are still perceived by RT as a sacrifice for liberation from the EU. As noted earlier, this sacrifice is common to the Russian mindset - "one has to suffer to become stronger and happier". Based on this, the problems are presented as a natural phase on the way to the final exit from the EU.

In the third part of the analysis of the pro-governmental media, the channel's rhetoric has changed dramatically. The problems that were previously perceived as natural are now described as a "disaster"; and the UK itself is now responsible for these difficulties. The reason for this change of image lies in politicians' statements about Russian interference in the Brexit referendum. According to RT, these accusations are only made to hide serious problems within the country and to distract the British people. Britain is now presented in an extremely negative way. Firstly, as a hysterical state due to politicians speaking harshly about Russia and, according to RT, not backing up their speeches with any evidence. Secondly, it is seen as a guided country which does not have an opinion of its own but rather follows the US lead for the sake of benefits. This conclusion is drawn by RT due to the fact that Britain has "adopted the anti-Russian hysteria". Thirdly, a feature of weakness and inability to solve the problems emerged. RT has repeatedly pointed out that Russia is blamed only because it is very convenient to blame it as a third actor which is not involved in the process. Thus, the image of Britain in the selected timeframe was initially ambiguous and depended on the context, but over time, when statements about Russia's involvement in the voting results started to appear, it changed dramatically, and the image became extremely negative and "ridiculous" for the pro-governmental channel Russia Today.

In general, RT articles include a huge number of emotionally coloured words that depending on the context and the topic of the article present the UK in a certain way - as a victim of the EU or as a hysterical accuser. Moreover, the intertextual context of articles in the pro-government channel clearly carries a division into "us" and "them", especially in the articles on possible Russian interference in the referendum. Russians reading these articles immediately put themselves, as representatives of Russia, in opposition to Great Britain, as the latter is presented as an enemy in this context. Thus, on a psychological level, the media has influenced people and created an image of the United Kingdom as a foe.

4 Comparison of the images of the United Kingdom in the opposition media Dozhd and the pro-governmental media Russia Today

Based on the results of this study, it is possible to compare two apparently different images of the United Kingdom. As the media articles were divided into three thematic groups, the comparison is also carried out on the basis of these thematic blocks, namely - referendum results and consequences; the EU-UK negotiation process; and Russian interference in the Brexit referendum.

Taking into account the research criteria, it is worth noting that the Russian media, both opposition and pro-governmental ones do not avoid using emotionally coloured words to create a certain image of the country and a more colourful and vivid description of the situation. However, despite the same purpose of using such words and expressions, the two media convey different connotations and create two opposing images of the UK for their readers. Regarding the intertextual context, it is obvious that the two media have different hidden intentions and, indeed, the very message of the articles. In addition to providing information to the audience through their publications, the media provide different evaluations of the events and actions of the one or the other side at the level of intertextual context.

So, in the articles covering the announcement of the referendum result and the initial aftermath, Dozhd and RT have different views on Brexit and the future of the United Kingdom. The channel Dozhd describes the event as a big mistake, a disaster and a shock. Whereas RT is not surprised by the result and even slightly supports the decision of the British. The pro-governmental media is creating an image of a victim of the EU who will finally become independent. The image that Dozhd has created does not include such narrative. As for the future of the UK, the opposition channel sees it as uncertain and unstable, and explains the choice of the British people by their lack of awareness of the European Union and its functioning. RT, in its turn, also notes the uncertainty of the future of the United Kingdom but does not express any concerns in this regard, instead, appreciates the fact that the people are ready to face difficulties. The lexical expressions used by the Dozhd channel evoke an emotion of some regret and sadness about the choice that the people of the UK have made. There is also the emotion of anxiety and fear about the future of both sides. Thus, in this thematic block, the Dozhd articles are dominated by generally negative

emotions, while the RT channel, on the contrary, describes the events in a positive way. In the articles the emotions of national pride, recognition and approval are evident, even in the context of future difficulties.

In terms of coverage of the negotiation process, the two media outlets also maintain a different image of the UK. The Dozhd channel still follows such characteristics as chaos and panic, but meanwhile, the UK has acquired a feature of being capricious due to the decisions of its political elite and its inability to negotiate. When the negotiation process began, the nature of the emotional appeal in the Dozhd articles did not change - the negative ones still dominate here, but more strongly, as the Great Britain had already encountered difficulties - fear, anxiety, worry and confusion. The image created by RT is more complex - as noted above, it depends on the context of the news agenda. On the one hand, Britain is still a victim of the European Union, on the other hand, due to internal contradictions and instability, RT sneeringly notes the country's excessive ambitions while not having enough resources and the inability of the authorities to carry out their duties. The emotions that RT's articles convey also depend on the context. RT simultaneously expresses both pity for the UK for having been and still being oppressed by the EU, but also a sentiment of encouragement and pride that the country is about to be liberated. Nevertheless, in the context of domestic problems, RT conveys an emotion of a certain contempt for the country, specifically for its government. The UK-EU negotiations regarding their future have been the most covered subject in both the pro-government and opposition media. This is due to the fact that the negotiation process has not only lasted for a long time, but also has been marked by various changes in the UK political arena.

The third thematic block dealing with Russian interference in the Brexit referendum is marked with the most obvious differences. The pro-Kremlin RT dramatically changes its attitude towards London. Now the channel is giving the United Kingdom extremely negative characteristics, describing the country as unable to take responsibility for its own mistakes, constantly looking for someone to blame on a third side, hysterical and influenced by the opinion of the United States. RT obviously denies any attempts by Russia to interfere in the referendum, referring to the accusations as rubbish and nonsense. Dozhd, for its part, covers the topic trying to keep a neutral line and quoting both foreign sources and Russian government representatives. It is worth noting, however, that during this period Dozhd conducted an investigation about the Internet Research Agency, the so-called troll factory. Of course, there was no explicit evidence of Russian involvement in the referendum in that

investigation. However, the very fact that the investigation was carried out and the interview of a former employee proves not only the methods of this organisation, but also that Dozhd implicitly admits the possibility of Russian influence on the choice of British citizens by means of social networks. In RT, however, this agency was never mentioned. Moreover, any statements by the British representatives about Russian hackers and influence through the internet were met with irony about the fragility of the democratic system in the West. The issue of Russian interference in the referendum was mentioned the least number of times in the articles of RT compared to other thematic lines, which suggests that this topic is not very pleasant for the state channel; and mostly, these articles contain refutation of any Russian involvement. According to the number of articles on the website of the Dozhd channel this topic is in the second place, and the articles themselves tend to contain statements of one and the other side. As for emotions in the articles, RT is now dominated only by negative ones - arrogance, gloating, insult, contempt, indignation. These emotions in the minds of Russian readers are evoked by the language used by RT as well as the context as the channel tries to prove that the accusations against Russia have no confirmation and are groundless. Dozhd also slightly changed the emotional palette in this thematic block. In its coverage of the allegations and the development of the investigation, the channel shows some indifference. It does not openly take the sides. But at the same time, as mentioned above, the context of some articles makes it clear that it was possible, and it conveys an emotion of some degree of regret.

Conclusion

This Master's thesis, "Image of the United Kingdom in Russian media in the context of Brexit", explores the image of Great Britain in the Russian pro-governmental and opposition media. The aim of this research was to answer the questions: how is the United Kingdom in the process of Brexit presented in Russian pro-governmental and opposition media? And did the image change after accusation in Russian interference in the referendum? In order to answer these questions, a critical discourse analysis of articles from Russia Today and Dozhd was carried out, based on which the image of the United Kingdom was identified.

During the research it was revealed that the media image of Britain in the opposition media is very different from the image in the pro-governmental media. Thus, Dozhd throughout the timeframe presents Brexit itself as a big mistake of the United Kingdom, which was made due to the citizens' lack of awareness about the functioning of the European Union and because the campaign for exit was based not so much on rational arguments but rather on the appeal to emotions. As the country was divided over its opinions, and the stances on Brexit and options for terminating EU membership differ even within the government itself, Dozhd media sympathised to some extent with the UK, but nevertheless presented the country as slightly capricious due to its instability and dissatisfaction with the proposals coming from the European Union. The pro-governmental RT, on the other hand, supports Britain in its decision to leave the EU. The channel presents the United Kingdom as a victim of EU policy, which has finally made the right decision to free itself from the European boundaries. The problems faced by the UK on the way to Brexit are perceived by RT as the price of freedom, and the EU, according to the pro-government channel, obstructs Britain from starting a new life and tries to hinder the implementation of the Brexit procedure. Nevertheless, the image of the United Kingdom in RT is not positive. The channel criticises the country's authorities for not being able to reach an agreement with each other or with the EU, as well as for not implementing the will of the population. RT sneeringly notes the weakness of the country and its too exaggerated ambitions.

Following the first allegations of possible Russian interference in the Brexit referendum, the two media outlets also adopted different positions. In the Dozhd media the image of Britain has not changed much but it has acquired a feature of justice and intention to uncover the truth. Dozhd itself implicitly admits the possibility of Russian involvement.

The image of the UK In the pro-governmental RT has changed dramatically. Apart from denying any Russian involvement, the channel characterises the UK in an extremely negative way, as a country that is unable to cope with its problems trying to blame others. RT seems to be ironic about the allegations of politicians because they do not provide concrete evidence.

Thus, this paper answers the research question and confirms the media's ability to manipulate the public's perception through the use of certain linguistic units that convey intercontextual meanings and hide the author's intentions. This paper could be extended by analysing other media or by conducting a public opinion poll in Russia to find out which image of the UK dominates the public perception, given the contradictory images in media.

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