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## Russian Topic on BBC and Media Manipulations

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### Abstract

This article is part of the larger research “Media education of pedagogical profile students as a tool to resist media manipulation” (2020–2022). The aim of this work is to further current knowledge of the problems inherent in coverage of Russian news in foreign media, namely, the BBC Russian Service in 2020–2021. As distinct from some other Western media, where the majority of media texts on “Russian topic” contain signs of manipulation of the public opinion, BBC is characterized with a more balanced position. 689 media texts were analyzed based on the theoretical framework of key questions developed for media literacy education activities. The conclusions about the level of trustworthiness, bias, and some recurring manipulation techniques are made. It was found out that two-thirds of media texts from the examined sample contained mostly objective information, not accompanied by manipulative techniques. Nevertheless, in about a third of *BBC Russian Service* materials signs of manipulation and propaganda clichés were detected to one degree or another. In particular, the most common manipulative techniques used by *BBC Russian Service* authors reporting on Russia were “silence”, “selection”, “labeling”, “framing” facts and “references to authorities”. Clearly, a greater variety of sources and voices of experts was missing.

**Keywords:** media manipulation, media, press, BBC, Russia, fake news, analysis, media studies, media literacy, propaganda, ideology.

### 1. Introduction

BBC declares its mission as “to act in the public interest, serving all audiences through the provision of impartial, high-quality and distinctive output and services which inform, educate and entertain”. The Royal Charter which is the constitutional basis for the BBC sets out five public purposes of the media agency: “1. To provide impartial news and information to help people understand and engage with the world around them. 2. To support learning for people of all ages. 3. To show the most creative, highest quality and distinctive output and services. 4. To reflect, represent and serve the diverse communities of all of the United Kingdom’s nations and regions and, in doing so, support the creative economy across the United Kingdom. 5. To reflect the United Kingdom, its culture and values to the world”. The first purpose is also emphasized in company’s values: “Trust is the foundation of the BBC. We’re independent, impartial and honest” (BBC, n.d.). Do these principles apply to coverage of topics related to Russia? To try and answer this question we have analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively several hundred media texts on the BBC Russian Service website.

### 2. Materials and methods

The material for analysis is 689 media texts by the BBC Russian Services, posted in the

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Russian language during the period of 2020-2021. BBC as a powerful news agency has been critically examined by media and social studies scholars (Seul, 2015, Taylor, 1986, etc.). It has been pointed out that "the BBC's employment for official propaganda, especially in peacetime, raised delicate issues of its independence from government control and of the objectivity and credibility of its broadcasts" (Seul, 2015). The criteria for selecting the texts to be included in the study were the keywords "Russia" and "Russian". The main method is textual analysis, analysis based on key questions of media literacy activities aimed at identifying and evaluating media manipulative techniques (Levitskaya, Fedorov, 2021: 323-332).

### 3. Discussion

In the last few years more attention has been given to the problems of propaganda, misinformation, media manipulations and fake news in scientific research (Azzimonti, Fernandes, 2021; Balmas, 2012; Bean, 2017; Berghel, 2017; Bertin et al, 2018; Bharali, Goswami, 2018; Bradshaw, Howard, 2018; Bradshaw et al., 2021; Carson, 2021; Colomina et al., 2021; Conroy et al., 2015; Dentith, 2017; Derakhshan Wardle, 2017; Farkas, Schou, 2018; Figueira, Oliveira, 2017; Goering, Thomas, 2018; Hofstein Grady et al., 2021; Howard et al., 2021; Janze, Risius, 2017; Marwick, 2018; Mihailidis, Viotty, 2017; Quandt et al, 2019; Ruchansky et al., 2017; van der Linden et al., 2021; Vargo et al., 2018 and others).

As pointed out by Carson, "a lack of consensus among policymakers, media practitioners and academics on working definitions of fake news, misinformation and disinformation contribute to the difficulties in developing clear policies and measures to tackle this global problem" (Carson, 2021).

The implications of the fake news and manipulations of media extend to all spheres of life and are quite disturbing, "fake news can have serious societal consequences for science, society, and the democratic process. For example, belief in fake news has been linked to violent intentions, lower willingness to get vaccinated against the coronavirus disease..., and decreased adherence to public health guidelines" (van der Linden, Roozenbeek et al., 2020).

"Success" of manipulation efforts on the audience depends on the latter's ability of critical thinking and evaluation of media messages, meanwhile, "research on the continued effects of misinformation on memory have pointed out that the reason corrections are often ineffective is that the original information has already been accepted as legitimate and true, and corrections are least effective when the information fits strongly with a person's worldview. As negative effect toward opposing political parties increases, negative information about opposing candidates and their immoral behavior is likely to be accepted readily by partisans, even when in a skeptical mindset. In a practical sense, this shows how difficult it is to encourage rejection of politically congenial fake news; the news that people want to believe is likely to be accepted over time, and the rest rejected, leading to a self-fulfilling cycle of partisan expectations" (Hofstein Grady et al., 2021).

The belief that media's manipulation of people's worldview is something that only "non democratic" governments do or only "foreign countries do" is an illusion. "The impact since the mid-nineteenth century of the communications revolution, combined with developments in the size, significance, and role of public opinion, meant that governments of all kinds have increasingly had to devote themselves to the struggle for hearts and minds in an age of the politicized masses, in peace and in war...the "munitions of the mind" have become no less significant to the survival of the state - or, alternatively, to its destruction - than more conventional weapons" (Taylor, 1986).

Therefore we believe that contributing to the research of credibility of mass media (on the example of the BBC Russian Service's coverage of Russia) is a valuable contribution to promoting media literacy in any civil society, both Russian and Western.

### 4. Results

Implementing our model of media education activities aimed at identifying and critically evaluating manipulative techniques of media (Fedorov, Levitskaya, 2020; Levitskaya, Fedorov, 2021: 323-332) we have used the set of key questions that aid to understand the aims and techniques of the media texts' agencies and/or authors (Wilson, 2019). Using this framework we have analyzed 689 materials of the *BBC Russian Service* related to Russian topics.

Unlike many Western news media, where the vast majority of the materials on the Russian topic contain signs of media manipulation, the BBC Russian Service is significantly more balanced:

about two-thirds of the materials analyzed by us from this agency, to one degree or another related to Russia, gave a neutral or balanced an assessment of the events in 2020-2021.

However, unlike, for example, *Euronews*, there were virtually no positive messages in the materials of the *BBC Russian Service* concerning Russia or Russians.

Following are the examples of media texts' headlines of the *BBC Russian Service* related to Russian topic: "Russia suspends the work of its mission to NATO" (Aksenov, 2021), "Russia called the United States an "unfriendly country." The American embassy will not be able to hire Russians" (BBC, 2021), "Moldova and Gazprom agree on gas supplies for five years" (BBC, 2021), "Putin and Lukashenko have agreed on the integration of Russia and Belarus. About what exactly?" (BBC, 2021), "Saving a Neighbor. How much does Russia lose by supporting Belarus" (Churmanova, 2021), "Russia updates the maximum number of deaths with Covid-19 for the second day in a row" (BBC, 2021), "Non-working days instead of holidays: what is the danger of the "fourth wave" of coronavirus in Russia" (Ilyin et al., 2021), "The Russian research vessel *Akademik Ioffe* was detained in Denmark " (BBC, 2021), "Shooting at Perm University: six people dead" (BBC, 2021), "Chukotka" of ducks and massacre of hares: high-profile scandals with Russian officials on the hunt" (BBC, 2021), "Case of thong photo in front of St. Isaac's Cathedral: court rejected the investigation" (BBC, 2021).

*The genre of the media text: news coverage.*

*Analysis of the media text for accuracy (identification of the political, ideological position of the authors of the media text, identification of its possible commissioners, political and other groups, who are served by or benefit from the message):*

*What is the source of information? What facts are presented to support it?*

The *BBC Russian Service* article "Russia suspends its mission to NATO" (Aksenov, 2021) objectively states that "a strong deterioration in NATO–Russia relations occurred after 2014 – then Brussels completely froze military cooperation, leaving only a diplomatic channel. They improved slightly in 2016, when the practice of holding council meetings at the level of permanent representatives was resumed – it was necessary to solve the current problems of the situation in Afghanistan and Ukraine. However, both ways reciprocal claims have not only not gone away, they have only aggravated. ... Russia's attitude towards the Alliance is no better. The parties conduct exercises where they practice military operations against each other, military aircraft constantly fly near the borders. In the end, this confrontation led to the suspension of diplomatic relations" (Aksenov, 2021).

The article "Russia called the United States an "unfriendly country." The American Embassy will not be able to hire Russians" (BBC, 2021) states the fact that the President of the Russian Federation "signed a decree according to which states "committing unfriendly actions" against Russia will be limited in the right to hire Russian citizens: their number will be determined by a quota. The President also provided for the possibility of a complete ban on the employment of Russians in the embassies of such states: if it is introduced, they will be able to provide their work only at the expense of their own citizens" (BBC, 2021). The article quotes the speech of the Director of the Information and Press Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, the official representative of the Russian Foreign Ministry, M. Zakharova, and her comments on the presidential decree.

The article "Moldova and Gazprom have agreed on gas supplies for five years" (BBC, 2021) contains trustworthy and widely information replicated by various media that the Government of Moldova and the Russian company Gazprom have signed a contract on gas supplies for five years from November 1, 2021 (with reference to the following sources: the Government of Moldova, Gazprom PJSC, Moldovagaz JSC and Intefax).

The materials "Putin and Lukashenko agreed on the integration of Russia and Belarus. About what exactly?" (BBC, 2021) and "Saving a Neighbor. How much Russia loses on the support of Belarus" (Churmanova, 2021) quite objectively speak about the modern political and economic relations between Russia and Belarus.

In particular, it is reported about the visits of the President of Belarus A. Lukashenko to Russia for talks with the President of the Russian Federation V. Putin to coordinate joint programs in the economic and military spheres. The *BBC Russian Service* objectively states that "while European countries, the United States and Canada impose restrictions on the Belarusian president, his entourage and various sectors of the economy, Vladimir Putin promises Lukashenko multilateral assistance, including financial one. In exchange, Putin can count on political and

military support. Russia is not only the main trading partner of Belarus, but also the main creditor. ... In addition to interstate loans, Russia helps Belarus in other ways: she gives her discounts on gas, and also supplies oil and petroleum products duty-free" (Churmanova, 2021). The sources of this information are the words of V. Putin and A. Lukashenko, spoken by them at a press conference, statements by the press secretary of the Russian President Dmitry Peskov, data from the Reuters agency.

Materials related to the coronavirus pandemic are based on facts: "Russia updates the maximum number of deaths with Covid-19 for the second day in a row" (BBC, 2021), "Non-working days instead of holidays: what is the danger of the "fourth wave" of coronavirus in Russia" (Ilyin et al., 2021). They report that at the end of October 2021, "on the eve of non-working days announced in Russia by presidential decree, the authorities record the maximum daily mortality from coronavirus for the entire time of the pandemic," and significant restrictions are introduced in the Russian Federation related to visits to cafes, restaurants, shopping centers and other crowded places (BBC, 2021; Ilyin et al., 2021).

These materials contain references to statements by Prime Minister of the Russian Federation M. Mishustin and Deputy Prime Minister T. Golikova, Mayor of Moscow S. Sobyenin, President of the Federation of Restaurateurs and Hoteliers of Russia I. Bukharov, head of the Association of Cinema Owners O. Berezin, head of the Association of Operators of the Fitness Industry of Russia O. Kiseleva, Ombudsman for the Protection of Small and Medium-sized Businesses A. Tatulova, the newspaper *Kommersant*, the chief physician of the hospital in Kommunarka D. Protsenko and doctors who preferred to remain anonymous.

In the article "The Russian research vessel *Akademik Ioffe* was detained in Denmark" (BBC, 2021), it is impartially reported that "the Danish authorities detained the Russian scientific research vessel *Akademik Ioffe*." ... A lawsuit against the Russian vessel ... was filed by the Canadian company One Ocean Expeditions Ltd, which organizes small private expeditions and sea cruises to the Arctic, Antarctica, Svalbard, Greenland and other remote regions of the world" (BBC, 2021). *BBC Russian Service* relies on the following sources: the website of the Center for Marine Expeditionary Research of the P.P. Shirshov Institute of Oceanology, the opinions of the Russian Academy of Sciences, the Embassy of the Russian Federation in Copenhagen and the message of the Interfax agency.

The article "Shooting at Perm University: six people dead" (BBC, 2021) highlights the tragic situation that occurred at Perm University when a student opened fire on people (the news report contains reference to: the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation, the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation, the press service of the Ministry of Health of Russia, the statements of State Duma Deputy A. Khinstein).

In the article ""Chukotka" of ducks and the massacre of hares: high-profile scandals with Russian officials on the hunt" it is stated that in October 2021, "Valery Rashkin, a State Duma deputy from the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, was caught in the Saratov region with the carcass of a dead elk in a car. A criminal inquiry into illegal hunting was launched" (BBC, 2021). Further, the BBC material cites other real life cases related to illegal hunting, which involved high-ranking officials which had taken place in Russia (sources: United Russia website, Novaya Gazeta, Komsomolskaya Pravda, KP-Ryazan, Rise, statements by N. Nikolaev, the head of the State Duma Committee on Natural Resources).

In the article "Case of a thong photo in front of St. Isaac's Cathedral: the court rejected the investigation" it is reported that "The Oktyabrsky District Court of St. Petersburg refused a measure of restraint to Irina Volkova, accused of insulting the feelings of believers. Volkova was detained after social media users drew attention to a photo of a woman in a thong posing at St. Isaac's Cathedral, she was charged with a crime under Part 1 of Article 148 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (public actions expressing obvious disrespect for society and committed in order to offend the religious feelings of believers)" (BBC, 2021). This material contains links to the statement of the Department of the Investigative Committee for St. Petersburg).

*Can the source be verified?*

All sources of the media texts mentioned above are available for verification, the information presented is quite objective and based on real facts.

*Does the message appeal to logic or emotions?*

In the first place, the messages appeal to logic.

*What is the main objective of the text?*

The media texts are aimed at providing the audience of the *BBC Russian Service* with objective information related to the Russian topic.

*Is there any information (ideas, alternative perspectives) left out?*

In media texts, in many cases, the points of view of different parties are presented, which creates the effect of a balanced presentation of materials. However, in some cases (for example, in materials related to the pandemic in Russia) there are no references or comparative analysis to similar phenomena in the UK itself and other countries.

*Whose point of view does the text reflect?*

These messages reflect the perspective of the media agency *BBC Russian Service*.

*Who will profit if the text's message is accepted? Who won't?*

As a result, supporters of objective information, without biased politicization of situations and conflicts, benefit.

*The evaluation of the text's credibility:* the media texts contain mostly objective information.

The second sample of media texts of the *BBC Russian Service* comprises materials where manipulative techniques are detected. Unlike some other Western media agencies, the *BBC Russian Service* prior to 2022 generally, did not stoop to open Russophobic propaganda and obvious distortion of facts. Media manipulations are used more subtly – in the form of silencing "uneasy" facts and selection. Examples of this kind: "Russia is in decline, but still dangerous" – NATO's strategy report for the decade" (Vendik, 2020), "Russia intends to "de facto integrate" Donbass, says EU" (BBC, 2021), "Sputnik didn't make it. Contracts to supply Russian vaccines are being frustrated around the world" (BBC, 2021), "The State Redeemer" and His "Innocent State": Did Russia Have a Chance for Democracy?" (Golubeva, 2021), "Soviet or Russian? How the symbols of the USSR became part of modern Russia" (Kornienko, 2021), "My Russia sits in prison". Street protests of Navalny's supporters took place in the regions" (Pushkarskaya et al., 2021), "Deputies of European Parliament about Russia: enough illusions, we need tough sanctions" (Vendik, 2020).

*The genre of the media text: news coverage.*

*Analysis of the media text for accuracy (identification of the political, ideological position of the authors of the media text, identification of its possible commissioners, political and other groups, who are served by or benefit from the message):*

*What is the source of information? What facts are presented to support it?*

The article "Russia is in decline, but still dangerous" – NATO Strategy Report for the Decade" (Vendik, 2020) comments on the NATO document which emphasizes that although "While Russia is by economic and social measures a declining power" (NATO, 2020: 16), it is still dangerous, and the NATO bloc must confront it in cohesion and without attempts to cooperate with Moscow, ignoring the problems...The report's authors suggest strengthening NATO's capabilities to counter threats from Russia, expand cooperation with Ukraine and Georgia wishing to join NATO, and also be ready for tougher sanctions against Moscow" (Vendik, 2020). The sources of information used are: the report of NATO experts (NATO, 2020), statements by NATO Secretary General J. Stoltenberg, reports of the Reuters news agency.

In the article "Russia intends to "de facto integrate" Donbass, says EU" (BBC, 2021), it is reported that while "the EU believes that Russia is trying to take in the unrecognized "People's Republics" in eastern Ukraine, "The Kremlin, rejecting these suspicions, said that Russia has never done any acquisitions". The references include the Bloomberg Agency, the EU Memo, the Interfax Agency, anonymous experts, statements by the Press Secretary of the President of the Russian Federation D. Peskov, Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration of Russia D. Kozak, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine D. Kuleba, Commissioner of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine for Human Rights L. Denisova (BBC, 2021).

The text with the eloquent headline "Sputnik didn't make it. Contracts to supply Russian vaccines are being frustrated around the world," reports that the Russian authorities have achieved registration of the Sputnik V drug in almost 70 states and have concluded dozens of supply agreements around the world. A year after the vaccine was triumphantly presented by President Vladimir Putin, it becomes obvious that it is difficult to fulfill Russia's supply agreements" (BBC, 2021). The sources are: Minister of Health of Bolivia A. Flores, President of Guatemala A. Giammattei, Russian Ambassador to Guatemala, Russian Direct Investment Fund (BBC, 2021).

The article "The State Redeemer" and His "Innocent State": Did Russia Have a Chance for Democracy?" presents opinions on the political situation in Russia in the XXI century and states

that although Russian officials still call the country a successful and free democracy, however, it is obvious that it is not such (Golubeva, 2021). To support this opinion, the BBC correspondent retells expert opinions: a researcher of Russian politics, professor of Berkeley University M.S. Fish, Professor of Yale University T. Snyder, the economist E. Yasin and political scientist V. Gelman.

In particular, M.S. Fish holds the opinion that by the end of the Yeltsin era, democracy in Russia had turned into an oligarchy. ... the economy's dependence on oil and gas may contribute to the failure of democratization plans. ... resource wealth creates a large-scale network of corruption in any country where there are no well-established and well-established laws. ... Therefore, the conclusions about the possibility of building democracy are disappointing - significant changes are needed in the system of elections and laws and the restriction of presidential power, which clearly will not happen under Putin" (Cit. by: Golubeva, 2021).

T. Snyder states that Russia had no chance for democracy after the USSR, but argues this not due to the lack of strong democratic institutions like elections and laws, but due to the philosophy that underlies the political thinking of Russian leaders. Thus, Snyder sees in the way politics was formed in Russia, a literal reflection of the philosophy of the Russian thinker of the early XX century, Ivan Ilyin. ... The thing is that Ilyin considered Russia an "innocent" state that has faced threats and seizures throughout its history. ... That is why, according to Ilyin, in the Russian state the role of the "sovereign redeemer", who will assume the leading role in this timeless self-defense is very important (Cit. by Golubeva, 2021).

According to the BBC correspondent, E. Yasin is trying to find a "democratic tradition" in Russian history as to show that the Russian state is not alien to an open and competitive policy. However, he characterizes this "democratic tradition" not as involving all segments of the population in politics, but as historical periods during which it was possible for various political forces to struggle for the ability to make state decisions. ... "Yeltsin made a strategic choice: he sacrificed the norms of democracy to reforms. It's pointless to deny it. Even if by necessity, for the sake of lofty goals, but already in the new democratic Russia, a precedent was created for the violation of the basic law by the executive power to the detriment of the legislative power." ... Managed democracy already at the beginning of the 2000s was on the verge of becoming an authoritarian regime. In conclusion, Yasin tries to explain the non-viability of democracy in Russia by the "national character", which is both accustomed to submission and distrust of the state. According to Yasin, it is possible to eliminate these character traits only by changing the state institutions (Cit. by Golubeva, 2021).

According to V. Gelman, "Yeltsin and his team effectively eliminated their competitors who lacked public support; the very idea of accountability of the executive branch to the legislature was buried, as was the idea of checks and balances." ... Nevertheless, Gelman finds that it was still difficult for Yeltsin to establish "any kind of order": a weak economy, the weakening influence of the "center" on ethnic republics, the decline in the work of law enforcement agencies and the flourishing of criminal groups. ... Gelman sees how all these negative results of Yeltsin's rule have become lessons for the new president Putin. ... "The loyalty of various layers of the Russian elite to the regime and personally to Putin has given them access to huge opportunities to receive benefits in exchange for their support of the political status quo. This mechanism, based on general corruption, enriched those who were part of this imposed consensus, but it also allowed the Russian rulers to dismiss disloyal subordinate subjects at any time, accusing them of abuse or negligence." ... If Yeltsin's personalist rule was based on the principle of "divide and conquer", which he practiced in relation to various regional and oligarchic groups, then Putin and his entourage "sought to create long-term foundations for the stability and continuity of their regime" (Cit. by Golubeva, 2021).

The article "Soviet or Russian? How the symbols of the USSR became part of modern Russia," it is emphasized that many of the former Soviet republics have adopted laws on de-Sovietization, prohibit the symbols of the USSR and demolish monuments to leaders," and "in Russia, Soviet symbols are still found everywhere - from state symbols and monuments, ending with clothes and souvenirs for tourists. ... and the authorities often use nostalgia for the Union as a way to strengthen their own popularity (Kornienko, 2021). However, the single opinion of a sociologist L. Gudkov, is given as reference.

In the article "My Russia is in prison." Street protest of Navalny's supporters took place in the regions" it is reported that "in dozens of Russian cities on January 23 (2021), people took to the streets in support of opposition leader Alexei Navalny. The most crowded one was held in Moscow,

but large-scale protests also took place in the regions. For the first time in one day, people rallied in a hundred cities" (Pushkarskaya et al., 2021).

It is claimed that in St. Petersburg there were 5-10 thousand protesters out in the streets, in Yekaterinburg – three thousand people, in Irkutsk "several thousand people", in Vladivostok, Krasnoyarsk and Rostov-on-Don – a thousand people each, in Chita – 300 people (Pushkarskaya et al., 2021). This article refers to the following sources: OVD-Info, the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation, the Baza telegram channel, the Stolitsa Yuzhny telegram channel, the Fontanka newspaper, Znak, statements by anonymous protesters and reports by BBC correspondents.

The article "Deputies of European Parliament about Russia: enough illusions, we need tough sanctions" (Vendik, 2020) reports that Josep Borrell was badly reprimanded for his visit to Moscow: in the eyes of many MEPs, he became the embodiment of the conformist policy of old Europe towards Moscow; the behavior of the Russian authorities during the visit of EU representative Josep Borrell should teach a lesson for those who had so far advocated cooperation with Moscow, and the EU should impose sanctions against Putin and his entourage - this was said by almost all speakers in Tuesday's debate in the European Parliament. ... However, Borrell himself stated that "even before the visit he had no illusions about Moscow's course, and the results of the trip allowed him to fully convince himself that official Russia does not want cooperation with Europe and does not want to be a democratic state governed by the rule of law" (Vendik, 2020). It is further added that "of the 46 MEPs who participated in the debates on Russia and Borrell's visit on Tuesday, only four spoke in defense of Moscow, and even those did not justify what was happening in Russia, but talked about imaginary or real harassment of the opposition in the EU countries and that the EU, respectively, has no moral right to preach other nations" (Vendik, 2020). The references include opinions of deputies of the European Parliament and the head of the EU Foreign Policy Department J. Borrell.

*Can the source be verified?*

The statements of officials contained in the above-mentioned materials can be verified, since they have been widely replicated by the media of different countries, including video segments. The statements of anonymous sources, of course, are much more difficult to verify, and sometimes impossible.

*Does the message appeal to logic or emotions?*

To a greater extent, these materials are addressed to the emotional perception.

*What is the main objective of the text?*

The aim of these media texts is to form the image of Russia as a non-legal state that poses a military threat to the West.

*Is there any information (ideas, alternative perspectives) left out?*

As a vivid example, in the text "Russia is in decline, but still dangerous" – the NATO Strategy Report for the Decade" (Vendik, 2020), only anti-Russian opinions of the NATO leadership and its experts are given, but the factual information about NATO military bases moving closer and closer to the borders of the Russian Federation is left out or "silenced". Neither opinions of Russian military experts nor non-members of NATO alliance on the issue are provided for readers.

In the article "Russia intends to "de facto integrate" Donbass, says EU" (BBC, 2021), the political position of the EU clearly dominates.

The text "Sputnik didn't make it. Contracts to supply Russian vaccines are being frustrated around the world" (BBC, 2021) carefully selected negative facts and opinions about the supplies of Russian vaccines abroad are given and positive facts of the Sputnik vaccine's effectiveness are omitted.

The article "The Sovereign Redeemer" and his "Innocent state": did Russia have a chance for democracy?" (Golubeva, 2021) provides expert opinions, generally united by a negative assessment of the modern Russian state structure. The opinions of neutral analytics or supporters of the Russian President's course are not presented.

The text "Soviet or Russian? How the symbols of the USSR became part of modern Russia" (Kornienko, 2021) is only based on the opinion of the journalist and a sociologist L. Gudkov. There are no references to a wider research on the issue (by cultural studies experts, for example).

In the article "My Russia is in prison. Street protest of Navalny's supporters took place in the regions" (Pushkarskaya et al., 2021) it is claimed that the opposition protests at the end of January 2021 were massive, although this is refuted even by the figures given in the same text, as the sum total of protesters did not exceed 20 thousand people, that is, about one hundredth of a percent of the 145 million population of the Russian Federation. Moreover, opinion polls show that the

number of the protests' critics was by far greater, yet, the opinions of opponents of these rallies are not represented in the text.

In the article "Deputies of European Parliament about Russia: enough illusions, we need tough sanctions" (Vendik, 2020) negative anti-Russian opinions of EU Parliament deputies dominate.

*Whose point of view does the text reflect?*

These media texts represent the point of view of the opponents of Russian foreign and domestic policy.

*Who will profit if the text's message is accepted? Who won't?*

If the audience uncritically accepts the viewpoint of these media texts, anti-Russian political forces will win, and supporters of the constructive dialogue between Russia and the West will lose.

*The evaluation of the text's credibility:* media texts contain manipulative techniques intervened with facts.

## 5. Conclusion

Based on the theoretical model of anti-manipulation media educational activity developed earlier (Levitskaya, Fedorov, 2021: 323-332), we have analyzed 689 materials on the *BBC Russian Service* website related to Russia for the period 2020-2021 using a set of key questions. It was found out that two-thirds of media texts from the examined sample contained mostly objective information, not accompanied by manipulative techniques. Nevertheless, in about a third of *BBC Russian Service* materials signs of manipulation and propaganda clichés were detected to one degree or another. In particular, the most common manipulative techniques used by *BBC Russian Service* authors reporting on Russia were "silence", "selection", "labeling", "framing" facts and "references to authorities". Clearly, a greater variety of sources and voices of experts was missing.

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