

## **Pro-Conservative British Media: Language Features**

**By**

**Gennadiy Raisovich Sharafutdinov**

Lecturer, Department of Foreign Languages in the sphere of International Relations, Institute of International Relations, Kazan Federal University,

Email: [genesharafut@mail.ru](mailto:genesharafut@mail.ru).

### **Abstract**

The paper raises the problem of studying the linguistic features used in major British newspapers to create a media image of Tony Blair. Blair is a prominent political figure, the longest-serving Labour Party prime minister in the history of the United Kingdom. He is the first prime minister to win three elections in a row, occupying the head of government's Downing Street residence for 10 years from 1997 to 2007.

The paper deals with the linguistic material using lexical and syntactic means in order to influence the reader when creating the image of Labour Party leader Tony Blair. The material of the work were the newspaper articles from pro-Conservative British national newspapers published during the premiership of Tony Blair (1997-2007).

**Keywords:** International relations, media stylistics, political discourse, media image, media text, political linguistics, lexemes, metaphors

### **1. Introduction**

In recent years, creating media image of a politician has become an object of serious research in the United Kingdom and around the world. The image of a politician is symbolically projected onto various spheres of social life and is designed to meet the expectations of a mythological, national identification, social and aesthetic character. The notion of a political image determines the appeal to it as an object of research by scholars in the field of discourse theory (T. van Dyk), theory and practice of speech influence (R. Keller and J. Link), among other things. The works and papers which have been written by now are mainly focused on studying certain aspects of the phenomenon. In general, information and data on the political image and the implementation of the methods and means of its formation within the framework of discursive practices are characterized by fragmentation and highly specialized orientation. Currently, there are no comprehensive studies that would reflect the linguistic and extralinguistic features of the formation of media image of a politician.

The topicality of the research is determined by its inclusion in the communicative and pragmatic paradigm of linguistic research and the current trend towards a comprehensive analysis of the process of forming the image of politicians by means of media discourse. To a certain extent, the problem of analyzing the ways that discourse affects public consciousness is significant, especially in the field of constructing the image of a politician using metaphorical conceptualization and interaction of the visual and verbal components of the media text.

Anthony 'Tony' Blair is one of the most famous and popular British politicians of the

last thirty years. He was the leader of the Labour Party from 1994-2007, and during that time Blair succeeded in winning three consecutive general elections resulting in him being Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. His continuous ten-year tenure serving as Premier made him second in the list of longest-serving prime ministers, after Margaret Thatcher, in more than 150 years. Blair was also the youngest politician to be elected for office since 1812.

According to Andrew Marr, Tony Blair's government "was the most media-obsessed government Britain had had in modern times." [Marr, Andrew. "How Blair put the media in a spin". BBC, May 10, 2007].

Traditionally, Prime Minister has been a very significant figure in Britain, and, therefore, researchers have focused on studying the characteristics and traits of a political leader. Prime Minister's background has always been very important, as well. In terms of Tony Blair's premiership, the British press highlights his attractiveness to voters, his personal charisma and his ability to please.

In the British media, a considerable amount of attention has been paid to the biography of Tony Blair. Most authors emphasise the fact that he followed in his father's footsteps and became a barrister. However, Tony has always seemed to be far more ambitious than his father. After graduating from Oxford, where Tony Blair studied law, he got involved with Labour politics and, by convincing leading members of his party that he is the right candidate to run for the parliamentary seat of Sedgefield, he was elected to the House of Commons in 1983. This success established his reputation and by 1988 he had a breakthrough and was selected for the Shadow government. In 1992 the freshly elected Leader of the Labour Party, John Smith nominated him as Shadow Home Secretary. With Smith's sudden death in 1994, Tony Blair seized the opportunity to be the leader of the opposition as he was chosen to lead the Labour Party. It gave him the chance to fulfil his aims in reforming socialists. He realised that time had gone through traditional left policies and he set up New Labour. This basically meant the proclamation of centrist policies and the use of the term of democratic socialism, and led to Blair starting to advocate for free markets, and for deeper involvement and cooperation with the European Union. Furthermore, he managed to weaken the influence of the trade unions on the party, which was previously dominating. While all of these showed Blair's will, the most outstanding action of his, regarding New Labour, was the replacement of Clause IV in the Party's Constitution. Previously, Clause IV stated as a goal "the common ownership of the means of production and exchange" but the new Labour Party leader changed this to the concept of democratic socialism. This caused plenty of problems for the party as left wing and traditional socialism supporters did not like the idea of centrism, and so as it divided journalists. Francis Wheen, who wrote for the Guardian, used a simile to criticise, stated that "When Randalph Churchill had benign tumour extracted from his lung, Evelyn Waugh commented that it was a typical triumph modern science "to find the one part of Randalph that was not malignant and remove it". It is likewise a typical triumph of modern politics that Tony Blair has taken the one part of the Labour Party constitution which is written in plain readable English and put his blue pencil through it". [Wheen, Francis "Bible according to Tony", The Guardian, March 15, 1995]. However, the move to centrism was ultimately successful which resulted in the Labour Party winning the next election.

In 1997 the Labour Party won the general election with a 179 seat majority which was the biggest win they have ever hit. Blair declared that he would govern with the so called "Third Way" policies. He claimed that social democracy would deal with the challenges of market economy and globalization. One of his first acts was concerning the stabilization of the country. There were deep divisions within the British society. The most complicated and

dangerous problem of the time was the conflict in Northern Ireland, with Republicans who wanted unification with Ireland, and Unionists, who desired to stay in the UK. There were thousands of victims of the atrocities. In the negotiating process Tony Blair had a huge role. Getting both sides to sign a contract was not an easy task but the results were longstanding and positive. Northern Ireland has been working in accordance with the so-called 'Good Friday Agreement' ever since. The importance of the agreement was early recognised, for instance by Jonathan Freedland, a journalist of *The Guardian*, who wrote "Britain also needs this document to work, and not solely because we benefit from peace across the Irish Sea. The Agreement is model for devolution ..." he also wrote "we're not the only ones who need it to succeed. The world's trouble spots have come to regard the Ulster peace process as a model of conflict resolution. ... President Clinton tells to Israelis and Palestinians to learn from Ulster's example ... The mechanisms designed in the Agreement are almost beautifully clever... It is a recipe for fairness and a way out from fear." [Freedland, Jonathan. They've made one Good Friday. Let's hope they can make another, *The Guardian*, March 31, 1999].

It is worth mentioning though, that there were other opinions as well regarding the agreement. A good example of this was an article published in *The Telegraph* by Peter Foster who, with the help of emotive adjectives stated, "TOMORROW more than 80 of Northern Ireland's most feared and reviled terrorists will walk free under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement... By the end of this week, however, nearly 430 convicted terrorists will have been freed while the main loyalist and republican paramilitary groups have not yet handed over a single gun, bullet or pound of explosive in return." [Forster, Peter. Full list of terrorists who walk free tomorrow. *The Telegraph*, July 27, 2000].

Another crucial issue of the time was the independence movement of the Scots and Welsh, though mostly the Scots. Looking for ways to solve the problem, Tony Blair decided to decentralize the United Kingdom applying devolved administration, with the creation of the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly (nowadays the Welsh Parliament). The government organised referendums in both countries to decide about the existence of devolved administration. Naturally, there were voices against the proposal but it was eventually accepted. In 1997 when the proposition came into effect, an article was published in *The Guardian* to gain support for the idea. The author was Jonathan Freedland who, generally speaking, thought that decentralization should be an example all over Britain. "The arrangements the Welsh are now considering are much likelier models for the rest of Britain. In short, some day we may all be governed this way. [Freedland, Jonathan. A kinder, gentler nationalism for Wales, *The Guardian*, September 8, 1997].

Blair's dominant position has been fueled by successful government performance, personal popularity, a well-constructed image and well-built political communication [Heffernan, 2003]. The popularity of 43-year-old Tony Blair, with both the general public and the Labour members of Parliament, was incomparably higher than that of his predecessors and therefore required a different level of support from professionals, - observed *The Guardian* in its editorial on April 27, 2002. A key role in this was played by Tony Blair's director of communications and strategy Alastair Campbell, who skillfully managed the British media at the time. Campbell was Blair's most trusted adviser and confidant, as well as one of the principal architects of New Labour [The Guardian, April 4, 1998].

In the New Labour Manifesto [The Third Way: New Politics for the New Century], published in the newspaper "The Independent" [September 21, 1998] social and economic tasks were declared a priority area of the policy of the New Labour Party. There were several occasions, though, when Blair was claiming that the economy was prospering, but on the

same day there would be a rapid fall on the stock markets. This happened in 2003 when The Telegraph published: “It would be better if the Prime Minister kept quiet about the economy. Every time he trumpets how well it is doing, the news gets worse. He was at it again yesterday, when his official spokesman said that Tony Blair believes Britain is in “a better position than virtually any other country. The Bank of England had just surprised almost everyone by cutting interest rates, warning that demand “both globally and domestically” is weakening. As is customary on a day when Mr. Blair tries to talk it up, the stock market fell.” [Blair should take interest. The Telegraph, February 07, 2003]. The author uses “customary” to describe Blair as a political leader losing his credibility with voters.

The Guardian tried to defend Blair’s government by mentioning the warnings of the Conservatives and stating why they are not true. “Business leaders and the Tories warned that a statutory wage floor would lead to widespread job losses and an upsurge in inflation. Contrary to this, however, the labour market is flourishing and prices are rising at their slowest rate for 36 years. Office for national statistics data show that the number of people in work hit a record high of more than 27m in the latest quarter. Economists say there is a very real prospect of unemployment falling below 1m next year. ... estimated 1.9m people who have enjoyed a pay rise averaging 30% as a result of the legislation. ... The minimum wage meant a 4.8% increase in pay for workers in the personal and protective services”. [Atkinson, Mark Minimum fuss, The Guardian, October 15, 1999].

Respecting the Constitution, Tony Blair’s government rewrote some articles and clauses. One of them was the abolition of the Office of the Lord Chancellor. According to some authors, that old tradition gave a lot of people mostly negative emotions. “Tony Blair swept away 1,400 years of constitutional history last night in a Cabinet reshuffle which paved the way for the abolition of the Office of Lord Chancellor and the creation of a supreme court.” [Jones, George and Rozenberg, Joshua, Blair casts aside legal history in radical reshuffle, The Telegraph, June 13, 2006].

Another example: “So, what could he (the Lord Chancellor) have done in the face of Mr Blair's implacable resolution to bring in constitutional reforms? Well, he could at least have promised yet another consultation paper as a way of buying time. ... On the other hand, is a shake-up of the legal system such a bad thing? It was high time for the Lord Chancellor to hang up at least one - and preferably two - of his three wigs”, sarcastically says the author. [Rozenberg, Joshua, 2006]. The usage of a rhetorical question as well as some sarcasm implies that Tony Blair could have at least considered a consultation paper before changing the Constitution.

What is interesting, Blair was once dubbed ‘Teflon Tony’ for his ability to shrug off political dirt and for repeatedly emerging unscathed from political rows, because “nothing sticks to him” [Mirror, October 10, 2004].

As collaboration with the European Union was one of priorities for Tony Blair’s government, to meet with the Human rights requirement of the EU, Britain accepted the Human Rights Act and the Freedom of Information Act. There were different points of view (mostly positive) about the Freedom of Information Act. One regular reader of The Guardian wrote: “Yes, the Freedom of Information Act will be inconvenient for the Government - indeed, for any government. But that’s the point. This legislation would provide protection for the public against any future government, whatever its political persuasion.” [Tom Deve Matthews How to set Britain free, The Guardian, May 9, 1997].

During his three continuous terms as Prime Minister, Tony Blair conducted an exceptionally active foreign policy. The objectives included, among other things, getting more integrated into the European Union and working closely with the United States of America globally. Under Tony Blair, the United Kingdom participated in several major armed conflicts or wars: in Kosovo (1999), Sierra Leone (2000), Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003). Top government officials in London believed that the West has to spread its main values and standards to the not so developed nations or, as Blair himself said in his famous political speech in Chicago, “to establish and spread the values of liberty, the rule of law, human rights and an open society the spread of our values makes us safer” [Simms, Brendan, *Britain’s Europe: A thousand years of conflict and cooperation*, Penguin UK, 2016].

The public opinion about having close relations with the USA and getting involved as initiators into several wars was divided. Concerning the relations between London and Washington, *The Guardian* published an article entitled “Under Blair, Britain has ceased to be a sovereign state” (2003). The usage of exaggeration makes the opinion of the author of the article very clear. It states that “What it means to be an independent nation is a question that touches the wellsprings of a people’s being. Yet it is one that our leader, as regards this war, has simply disguised from his people, egged on by sufficient number of North American papers and journalists.” [Young, Hugo under Blair, *Britain has ceased to be a sovereign state*, *The Guardian*, September 16, 2003].

Though on the other side, not all Americans liked Blair or Britain, as was declared by John Kampf: “Blair believed in his special relationship with Bill Clinton. But the President tired of being hectored by Blair to use ground forces in Kosovo, and the White House team, who disparagingly referred to the Prime Minister as "Winston", were annoyed by "Blair's 'God thing' " and accused him of sprinkling adrenaline on his cornflakes.” [Kampfer, John. *Tony Blair, the forces' sweetheart*. *The Telegraph*, October 07, 2003].

The war in Kosovo was sanctified by saying that there was the massacre of Albanians. The result of this conflict was not an ultimate success. “The war in Kosovo was supposed to last 72 hours but went on for 78 days. It precipitated harrowing scenes as a million refugees took flight. At the end, Milosevic was still in power. ... Blair's failures have always been made worse by his overblown rhetoric. The government compared Milosevic to Hitler. At the end of the Kosovo campaign we made peace with this "Hitler", leaving it in the lap of the gods how long he would remain in power,” continues John Kampf in his article. By using exact facts the author makes his statement stronger.

In his article called “Is Tony Blair's liberal imperialism working?”, Alasdair Palmer agrees with the previous quote by saying “His starting point was the bombing of Serbia - a use of military force that did not have the sanction of the UN but which was, according to the Prime Minister, fully justified because "we cannot let the evil of [Milosevic's] ethnic cleansing [of Kosovo] stand". [Palmer, Alasdair. *Is Tony Blair's liberal imperialism working?* *The Telegraph*, May 30, 2004]. You should ‘never make any hasty decisions in politics’ sums up the journalist writing about the government’s foreign policy.

Although the general public accepted the wars in Sierra Leone and Afghanistan, there was still a critical view on them expressed in several British pro-Conservative newspaper articles. “The despatch of troops to Sierra Leone in 1999 lacked any clear purpose. The West Side Boys militia kidnapped a number of our soldiers. Paratroopers and Special Forces performed a heroic rescue, but that doesn't explain why we were there in the first place..... The coalition against Afghanistan failed to capture Osama bin Laden. ... Blair promised the

Afghanis "we will not walk away . . . we will stay with you to the last". Today, the warlords control most of the country outside Kabul, the Taliban is said to be regrouping and many of the women have again donned their burkhas." [Palmer, Alasdair. Is Tony Blair's liberal imperialism working? The Telegraph, May 30, 2004].

There was strong public opposition to a war with Iraq that damaged Blair's reputation as a global statesman. Officially, the coalition armies invaded Iraq because of its possession of weapons of mass destruction. The problem occurred when military inspectors failed to find them or even proof of their existence. According to John Kampfner, "The war on Iraq has, at the time of writing, brought neither order nor self-government to that country. We have found neither Saddam nor his weapons of mass destruction". So it is no wonder the general public didn't accept it. "Yet he was at pains to insist that the invasion of Iraq - an invasion that, like the bombing of Belgrade and the invasion of Afghanistan, was not mandated by the UN, but which, unlike the bombing of Belgrade or the overthrow of the Taliban in Afghanistan, had proved deeply divisive and unpopular with the British public - was justified because it promoted our values." Seeing that the war is not having the desired results, Blair tried to emphasize the importance of Western values, but he has been condemned. The author of the article goes even further stating that "Many of the people of Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq appear to hate the West more than they did before they were "liberated" by our invasions. Their societies show no signs of mutating into liberal, tolerant, law-governed and uncorrupt democracies." [Kampfner, John. Tony Blair, the forces' sweetheart. The Telegraph, October 07, 2003]. As reported by Andrew Alexander, a Daily Mail political correspondent, at least half of Britain's population disagreed with the war. "These are extremely difficult times for those like me - which appears to include about half the population - who disapprove of the war with Iraq." [Alexander, Andrew. Must the critics of war now be silent? The Daily Mail, April 13, 2004].

Another important area of Blair government's policy was immigration. Tony Blair allowed millions of mainly low-skilled migrant workers to settle in the United Kingdom. The reason was labour shortage. The government reckoned that the economy was rapidly developing and needed more workers. Economists did not necessarily agree, like Ruth Lea who wrote "On the basis of data from the Office for National Statistics which show that there are still 1m unemployed, the answer is 'no'. And these data ignore the 2m plus "discouraged" workers who don't look for work but would, if suitable jobs were available. ... Even if we had generalised labour shortages, then the "textbook" macroeconomic policy would be to reduce demand by tightening fiscal and/or monetary policy. But the Government seems to be implying that the appropriate response is large-scale immigration. This has to be questioned. Surely the only economic justification for this policy is the belief that more populous societies have higher average standards of living. But there is no evidence for this. On the contrary, there is evidence that large-scale immigration, while it increases GDP, actually depresses GDP per capita." [Lea, Ruth. Personal view: Large-scale immigration has prompted a flood of shoddy economic thinking. The Telegraph, April 19, 2004].

## **2. Methods**

We have selected the methods of content analysis, stylistic and semantic analysis. We have studied the articles about the linguistic features of creating the public image of Tony Blair as a way of spreading information about the British Prime Minister in 1997-2007, creating a symbolic image of the political leader of a superpower. Research methods are determined by the goals and objectives of the work. The metaphors and keywords of 'Blair's Britain' have been considered and analyzed.

### 3. Results and Discussion

As noted above, many scholars identify the key words of Tony Blair era, which have been implemented in the political discourse of the British media. The premiership of Tony Blair was all about the idea of reforming and change in the UK's domestic and foreign policy. This is what makes the word 'reform' one of the most essential words of Blair's era (reforming various areas of British society). Another significant word is 'war' (military conflict in Iraq and in Kosovo – something that the British Prime Minister was widely criticized for). Next on the list is the word 'terrorism' ('counterterrorism', to be precise), 'New Labour' ('New Labour Party policy'), 'constitution' ('constitutional reform'), 'European integration' (the issue of European integration and the role of Great Britain in the European Union, 'peace' (a peaceful solution to the conflict between Great Britain and Northern Ireland). These keywords reflect the most relevant events and phenomena of the period of Blair's premiership and determine its linguistic features. Let us have a look at some more examples: 'welfare reform'. This group of words is made up of: 'effective', 'wonderful', 'promising', 'invaluable',- 'beneficial', 'successful', - 'dangerous', 'catastrophic', 'tragical', 'unnecessary', 'risky', 'needless' - «Mr, Howard said that the welfare reform had a 'cancerous' impact on people's lives» [The Guardian, August 19, 2000], «Mr Field said that the welfare reform has achieved far more than almost anybody dared to hope back in 1997» [The Times, Dec 11,2000]; the 'New Labourism' group of words contains the following: crafty, insidious, sleazy, incestuous, incompetent, stealthy, -«Mr Blair New Labourism will lead Britain towards a new and better life» [The Guardian, May 29, 2001]. Another group of words is 'Iraq war' that includes 'wrong and evil', 'illegal', 'immoral', bloody, brutal, unnecessary, ferocious, unjustified, - «And there are two begetters of threat Saddam's tyrannical regime with WMD and extreme terrorist groups » [Blair, March 18, 2003]; The 'constitutional reform' group of words can be represented by these adjectives – remarkable, refreshing, ingenious, healthy, welcome, worthwhile, - dangerous, shameful, disastrous, destructive, catastrophic,- «Mr. Blair /The constitution reform is a Big Idea for a new Britain » [The Guardian, March 6,1998], «The constitution reform is a real danger to the British law» [The Independent, November 18, 1998]. The European Integration group is represented by such words as "positive, overwhelmingly beneficial, benefits, virtues, merits, dangerous, perilous" – "Mr Blair Britain will benefit from the European integration, it is in Britain's interests" (The Daily Telegraph, Sept 14, 2004); "unnecessary, undesirable, damaging, dishonest", - "Mr Howard European integration is bad for British citizens, bad for British culture and bad for Britain" [The Guardian, Feb 12,1999];, - 'of great value an achievement', 'long-lasting, "Ulster Peace Memories Mean Hope is Mixed with Scepticism" (The Financial Times, April 25, 2001).

Tony Blair's style of leadership is often described as 'cocky and overconfident'. Some authors believe that that the elements of Tony Blair's success are his interest in the family values and his ethical standards [Gaffney, 2001]. Many British media outlets highlight the politician's personal charisma: "Once upon a time a young charismatic politician named King Tony announced the start of his progressive reforms in the world of New Labour" [The Independent, July 29, 1998].

The premiership of Tony Blair is occasionally considered in the context of a radical programme of reforming the country, which predetermined the direction of thought in the metaphorical area of construction of a new building and destruction of an old building: "Work is to be the structural wall of welfare reform, with the welfare state offering security to

those who cannot take a job” [The Financial Times, August 8, 1997]. The metaphor for magic used by some authors evoked positive emotions in readers: “The welfare reform has some magical properties across the political spectrum” [The Guardian, April 28, 2006].

In addition, we see the widespread use in newspaper and magazine articles of the metaphor for game, which met the requirements of the reality: «Tony Blair playing 'fast and loose' with the constitution reform damaged the balance to a country» [The Financial Times, January 17, 2000]. There were quite a few secret intrigues and tricks in British political life: “Tony Blair embarked on the biggest political gamble when he paved the way for the European integration” [The Financial Times, November 24, 2001]. What is more, in the discourse of the studied era, metaphors for conflict were used to characterize the politician (J. Lakoff and M. Johnson (1980), A.N. Baranov (2001), A.P. Chudinov (2001), which testify to the crisis of power of the British political elite.

Blair's path to political achievement is often described using the metaphor for journey that reflects consistent and confident progress. «But we have, at last, reached a milestone on the long road to peace in Ireland» [The Financial Times, March 14, 2005]. By the irony of fate, Tony Blair's engrossing memoir called 'A Journey' was published in 2010, and became instant bestseller.

A large group of British newspaper articles describing Blair's policy contain metaphors of war, which is due to the tense political situation in the country during the period under study (1997-2007). Discussions were held between the two political parties on the International agenda and domestic issues. For instance, «He has spent much of his time tiptoeing through the minefield of the welfare reform» [The Independent, December 14, 1999]. «New Labourism is as well provisioned with humbug and fudge as ever» [The Independent, May 19, 2002]. What should also be noted is the use of the metaphor of the "sea route", probably due to the centuries-old maritime history of Britain: «The report mentions constitution reform as a flagship Government's policy» [The Times, October 12, 1997]. It is noteworthy that metaphor is often manipulative. - «Blair Steps Up A Gear of Integration» [The Daily Telegraph, December 13, 2002]. We think we have to agree with the researchers and authors who believe that all this most certainly influenced the perception of the political situation in the UK at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries: «Blair's much-vaunted 'Third way' between capitalism and communism is at the heart of New Labourism» [The Independent, May 31, 1997]. Metaphors of animal images are used by the media: «The lion of the constitution reform has roared» [The Times, July 3, 2000]. The positive results of Blair's political activities are described using metaphors for 'harvest': «The benefits of Ulster peace have at last reaped» [The Independent, May 2, 2007]. Negative potential and crisis are shown using the metaphors for death and dying: «Morbid integration is now enveloped in its full-blown crisis» [The Independent, May 27, 2003]. As a result, a negative attitude towards such integration is formed in the public consciousness or public eye.

In the political discourse of Blair's era, there are also specific metaphors including the metaphors for a product or merchandise that can be sold and achieve some political goals: «That might be a reasonable price to pay for a full-scale reform of the British constitution» [The Times, March 12, 2001].

Thus, in the British media, Tony Blair's premiership is often analyzed using metaphors. It is common to use contextual antonyms, methods of antithesis, gradation in media texts in order to express contrast and make comparisons.



**Table 1.** The spheres (sources) of metaphorical expansion in the construction of the image of Tony Blair in the British media discourse

Metaphor type	Implemented metaphor subtypes	Notes
Anthropomorphic metaphor	Family	The metaphor of "family" is refracted into the sphere of "inheritance". The metaphorical parallel "power - heir" is observed.
	Disease (morbial)	Productive in terms of the political life of the British Prime Minister
Nature-morphic metaphor	Nature	This sphere is characterized by extremely low productivity
	War (agonal)	A politician is viewed as a military leader, an equal and strong participant in a political battle; in a certain context as a victim of war or a lone warrior. The battle metaphor is especially relevant on the eve of an election.
Sociomorphic metaphor	Sports and play	One of the most productive areas (politics is associated with striving, fighting and competing). Absence of a negative evaluation, including when describing elections (the exception is the image of a dishonest player or athlete who breaks the rules or commits fouls)
	Money turnover	Politics is associated with financial transactions (negative connotation)
	History	This sphere is not used much but it has positive connotations
	Jobs / Occupations Possessions (Wealth)	It is actively realized, particularly in relation to 'creative' professions. Presented mainly in a negative way Being a politician is metaphorically associated with a comfortable life
Artifact metaphor	Building	The realization of the metonymic comparison of a politician with his / her official residence, the place of receiving an education at an elite university
	Tool	The actions of the politician are endowed with the functions of a tool

## 4. Summary

The materials presented in the British media perform the function of informing and influencing readers, and are aimed at manipulating their minds. The focus on the general reader is determined by the use of metaphors, allusions, phraseological units by the mass media when creating the image of Tony Blair. A meaningful analysis of the articles reviewed allows us to single out thematic groups of lexical units: demonstration of strength and power, rivalry, opposition, war and conflict etc. At the substantive and stylistic level, the coverage of the biography and directions of Tony Blair's activities plays an important role. Media articles combine oppositional, complimentary and neutral content. With the help of media interpretation of events during the period of Tony Blair's activity, public opinion is formed, an image of a politician is created, and in addition, an ideological influence on the reader is exerted. Revealing the influencing potential of stylistically coloured vocabulary determines the theoretical and practical significance of the study.

Thus, the given examples of keywords of Blair era can be seen as specific labels. For example, the welfare reform is presented either as 'freedom' or as 'dependency' in accordance with the speaker's beliefs, the euphemism "a conflict in the Middle East (an affair against Iraq, an attack on Iraq)", hiding the negative effect produced by the lexeme "war". Used in media texts and historical allusion (events in Vietnam): "W Hague said welfare reform could be new Labour's Vietnam" (Tms, Sept 9,1998). Used in media texts literary allusion (myth) "Their love of power and unprecedented control can become New Labor's Achilles' heel" (The Independent, July 29,1998). You can also see the precedent text "Blair will have to search hard to find a silver lining in the European integration" (The Times, June 17,1997) and others.

## 5. Conclusions

Having analyzed dozens of newspaper articles and books published in 1997-2007, we have come to the conclusion that the key words of Blair's reign are aimed at activating certain metaphorical models that reconstructing social and political ideas about reality. The public image of Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair is presented to the mass addressee in modern British media discourse using linguistic means and reflects the ethnic and cultural characteristics of British linguistic consciousness. The image of Tony Blair in the British media is often formed through three parts: the background of his premiership (biography, religious beliefs, marital status, hobbies, awards), current position (party, position, values, relationships with other politicians, charisma, manners) and predictions for the future (plans for political activities). The methods of metaphorical understanding of its activity are used. The main thing is that all materials serve a common goal - to bring the politician closer to the people and create an image which is attractive to the voters. Media texts perform the function of informing, influencing, aimed at manipulating the minds of readers. The analysis of the reviewed articles about Tony Blair makes it possible to distinguish the following thematic groups of lexical units: rivalry, demonstration of power, opposition, war and conflict. The focus on the general reader determines the widespread use of well-known concepts, events, allusions based on images from literature and mythology. Lexico-semantic and stylistic means play an important role in influencing the reader. The most common is the use of contextual antonyms, methods of antithesis, gradation in order to express contrast, and emotionality of illumination and perception, which makes it possible to effectively influence the consciousness of the recipient [Harr, Andrew].

Tony Blair wielded tremendous personal power and, using his position in the government to implement his own political agenda, has was a man who "makes other people think that he himself runs the country" [The Sunday Times, April 26, 1998]. Richard Heffernan highlights the following resources to help politicians strengthen their position [Heffernan, 2003]: skills and abilities, present or future political success, popularity, high post and clout within a political party. Comparing Harold Wilson and Tony Blair, British media observe that some prime ministers have more managerial talent than others, and are more charismatic to lead others. One cannot deny that prime ministers are talented politicians. They are quite flexible, easily adaptable and often have a certain amount of freedom. The British government is not only made up of supporters of the Prime Minister, but also his or her opponents. Therefore, collaborative or group decision-making is a sort of obstacle for the prime minister, since he or she must be able to skillfully negotiate and build alliances with the government ministers. Through such alliances, the prime minister is able to pursue his agenda and ignore opponents (Heffernan, 2003). Tony Blair was the favourite of society [Heffernan, 2003]. Blair ruled in the wake of the economic recovery: inflation was low, wage growth was stable [Toynbee and Walker, 2001]. The favourable external environment allowed Blair to win not only in 1997, but also in 2001. Tony Blair's personal level of political success went up and, despite the fact that in addition to the Prime Minister, all the ministers of the British government were involved in strengthening the overall favourable economic and political situation, Tony Blair's dominance in public opinion polls was solely. Labour won all levels of elections (with the exception of the parliamentary elections for Wales and the European Parliament in the spring and summer of 1999).

However, it would be wrong to view politicians only as pliable puppets in the hands of the media people. On the contrary, political leaders not only adapt information, but also use the media to communicate directly with voters in order to gain more popularity and

increase their influence within the party and the government. [16; 17] Secondly, the media allows ambitious politicians to communicate with those who have little interest in politics; it is also a good way for politicians to promote their political standings. Thus, with different goals, the media and political leaders are more or less dependent on each other, complementing and strengthening each other's power [Ana Ines Langer, 2007]. As for the relationship between Tony Blair and the Queen, they have always left much to be desired.

Many researchers believe that by expanding his influence within the party and the government, campaigning for an increasing number of voters, Tony Blair exploited the media to create an image of a political leader that could replace the image of the political institutions he headed. When voting for the party, people associated it with the image of its leader, approving or disapproving of the government's actions. The electorate tended to associate the decisions made with the personal will of the prime minister.

The media have certainly played an important role in personifying the political field of Great Britain. This reality was accepted by political strategists. Simple and engaging information that was relayed to the media through Blair's press office became part of a long-term strategy to promote Tony Blair's image. English media texts have a high degree of cultural significance in the realization of opposition. Representing stereotypical representations of British national culture in relation to a politician, on the one hand, media communication is capable of meaningful expansion and transformation of the constructed image, on the other. The axiological orientation of the created image is based on national and cultural characteristics, but its formation depends on the ideological purpose of a media message.

A strong media portrait and support from the media added broader influence to the Prime Minister in the government, increasing his political power. By using PR and marketing tools, Tony Blair pursued his policy, which was certainly commented on in the British media and which was identified as the policy of the entire government.

It was easy for a strong and authoritarian leader like Tony Blair to achieve a dominant position as prime minister within the Cabinet, and thus further increase his influence within the party. Blair's 'honeymoon' in opinion polls lasted much longer than any other political leader's in Britain. That changed, however, in the summer of 2000 when the country's economy faced a recession and Blair's overall image was tainted by his personal failures. Although he and his closest advisors took serious steps (such as appearances on TV) to restore the government's former popularity, many elements of previous success - his interest in his family, his ethical standards, his church commitment - began to be perceived as constructed elements in the manipulation of public consciousness. [Gaffney, 2001].

The general opinion of a lot of British journalists about Tony Blair, both as a person and as a politician during his premiership seemed to be positive. They considered him talented, reliable and charismatic, but at the end of his third term the public seemed to be disappointed with his performance. According to Hugo Young, "This is a great tragic figure. Tony Blair had such potential. He was a strong leader, a visionary in his way, a figure surpassing all around him at home and on the continent. His rhetorical power was unsurpassed, as was the readiness of people to listen to him. He had their trust. He brought creditability back to the political art. It is now vanishing". [Young, Hugo. "Under Blair, Britain has ceased to be a sovereign state". The Guardian, September 16, 2003]. By using exaggeration, he tries to show Blair's role as a politician in an even more extraordinary way. Another opinion, from Daily Mail from 2004 stated that "Entire chunks of government policy are now embodied solely in

his persona and not supported by his own party. The man who could charm any doubters now finds his charm is wearing as thin as his hair. His self-belief really is extraordinary but in assuming that we share it, such belief looks increasingly delusional. He remains a remarkable politician but, as the casualties lie all around him casualties of war, casualties of truth, casualties of principle it is clear he has lost his magic touch.” [Moore, Suzanne. “You’re not fooling us Tony... just yourself”. The Daily Mail, March 15, 2004].

## Acknowledgements

This paper has been supported by the Kazan Federal University Strategic Academic Leadership Program.

## References

- Foley, Michael "The British Presidency", Manchester University Press, 2007
- Gaffney, John "Imagined Relationships: Political Leadership in Contemporary Democracies" *Parliamentary Affairs*, vol. 54, №1, pp.120 – 133, 2010.
- Heffernan, R. and Stanyer, J. ‘The Enhancement of Leadership Power: The Labour Party and the Impact of Political Communications’, in Pattie, C. et al. *British Parties and Elections Review*, volume 7, 2011.
- Heffernan, R. Prime ministerial predominance? Core executive politics in the UK. *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, Vol. 5, 3p. 347 – 372- 2009
- Ilikova, L.E., Kochkin, Á.A. Contemporary politics in Latin America: Anti-political Bolsonaro’s speech | *Política contemporánea en América Latina: Discurso antipolítico de Bolsonaro/ Utopia y Praxis Latinoamericana*, 2020, 25(Extra 7), pp. 264–269
- Jones, N. *Soundbites and ‘spin doctors’*. London: Cassell, 2012.
- Jones. N. *The sultans of spin: The media and the new Labour government*. London: Orion, 2013.
- Kavanagh, D., Richards, D., *Departmentalism and joined up government*. *Parliamentary Affairs*, vol. 54, № 8, pp. 71-104, 2007.
- King, Anthony "Conclusions and implications", in Anthony King (*ed.*) "Leaders' personalities and the Outcomes of Democratic Elections (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2012.
- Langer, Ana Ines A *Historical Exploration of the Personalisation of Politics in the Print Media: The British Prime Ministers (1945 – 1999)* *Parliamentary Affairs* (2007) vol. 60, No. 3, Pp. 371 – 387.
- Meyrowitz J. *No sense of place: The impact of electronic media on social behavior*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Mughan A. *On the Conditionality of Leader Effects*. London: Macmillian, 2009.
- Mumford, Michael D. et al. *Leadership Skills for a Changing World: Solving Complex Social Problems* *Leadership Quarterly*, vol. 11, pp. 11-35, 2010.
- Panbianco, Angelo, *Political Parties: Organization and Power*. Cambridge, Melbourne and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Peele, Gillian *Leadership and Politics: A Case for a Closer Relationship*. *Leadership*, vol. 1 (2), pp. 184 – 204, 2008
- Rawnsley, Andrew, *Servants of the People: The Inside Story of New Labour*, London: Penguin Books, 2010.
- Tushev, A., Bushkanets, L., Letyaev, V. *Complex analysis of political speech/ Journal of Sociology and Social Anthropology*, 2019, 10(4), pp. 170–174

***Sharafutdinov Gennadiy Raisovich***

G. R. Sharafutdinov graduated with honours from Kazan State University in 1995. He is currently a lecturer at Kazan Federal University. Teaches English at all levels from introductory to graduate. His professional academic interests include 20th century American culture, British Studies, and History of International Relations.