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**FUTURE OF RUSSIA IN METAPHORS (RETROSPECTIVE  
ANALYSIS OF XIX CENTURY AMERICAN DISCOURSE)**

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*Abstract*

The future is one of the implicit categories of political discourse. Any event occurs in the course of a very long duration of time through the structuring effects of social and political relations. Time is inseparable from human beings: it models them as social beings, and they, in turn, model time, so there is always a desire to foresee or to anticipate future events. In political discourse, forecasts, scenarios and models of the future are powerful means of influencing the addressee. Models of the future and their interpretation require certain conceptual operations. Linguistic political prognostics is a new branch in the study of political discourse that involves the integration of future studies, political science, and cognitive linguistics. The material for the construction of models of the future is prognostic texts of various chronological periods. The key unit of knowledge is considered to be a cognitive metaphor. The article presents a piece of the study of the retrospective models of the future of Russia. The material is prognostic texts of American political discourse of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century (1855–1881). Retrospective analysis allows one to penetrate into the past and study it, as well as to look through the text at the part of the past reality that lies behind the text. Historical analogies can help in solving the problems facing the modern state.

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**Keywords:** Retrospective analysis, political discourse, linguistic political prognostics, future, metaphor.



## 1. Introduction

The possibility of forecasting the future has been at the centre of attention of philosophical conceptions since ancient times. The reflection of humanity on the knowledge of the future in philosophy, synergetics, future studies, prognostics, political forecasting, social and political thought is based on the past experience and present trends, that is, it is invariably correlated with the past and the present, which makes the future meaningful, directed, time perspective and retrospective (Helmer, 1983). In political discourse, forecasting future events is based on the analysis of previous states: “societies mobilize their memory and reconstruct their own past to ensure their functioning in the present and resolve actual conflicts” (Schmitt, 2008, p. 132). The value of ideas about the future lies in the fact that they give historical meaning to the human activity: the future always lives in the present not only in the form of a certain perspective, but also in retrospect, filling it with historical meaning. Moreover, the past, the present and the future of various systems are interconnected by indissoluble bonds as distinctive phases of their evolution. (Evans, 2013; Fitzgerald, 1980; Giddens, 1996). Thus, the prognostication of political discourse is inextricably linked with the retrospection. The reversibility of political discourse towards the future does not exclude its orientation to the past, but, on the contrary, actualizes the meanings, facts and events that have already happened. Historical analogies accentuate the reversibility of time in political discourse and the possibility of human society to return to any state that has already occurred. Linguistic political modeling of the future is based on historical facts, it takes into account historical parallels, mutual penetration of the time horizons ‘the past – the present – the future’.

## 2. Problem Statement

One of the essential epistemological tenets of any science is its ability not only to describe the past experience, but also to be aimed at the future, that is, prediction is connected with the world of the potential or with a trend towards an endless continuation. In the modern scientific paradigm the main linguistic categories are studied on the basis of the unity of cognitive schemas and their verbal expressions (Evans, 2007; Fauconnier, 1994). Therefore, the movement of linguistics from the study of futurity semantics of parts of speech to the analysis of discourse prognostication seems reasonable and natural. Political institutionalization of the future is a systemic process where textual markers of futurity are subordinated to specific geopolitical values and ideological goals. Political discourse is related to the results of human activities accumulated in the form of readable, understandable and systematized data (political texts) which reflect our knowledge that operates with mental or cognitive images. Linguistic political prognostics is considered a methodological field of operations designed to study the phenomenon of ‘running ahead,’ or anticipating and predicting the future status of a certain state. In the methodological aspect, the study of the future contributes to a more complete perception of historical events and facts, taking into account the possibility of their modeling by helping to look at the object to be analyzed as a whole, since the study strives to find universal characteristics. These characteristics are embodied in the tools of linguistic political prognostics: static and dynamic matrices, systems of metaphorical models involved in the representation of the future, static and dynamic linguistic prognostic scenarios. The relevance of linguistic political prognostics is due to:

- the importance of forecasting both ontologically (anticipation is one of the basic cognitive functions; the possibility of long-term anticipation is the fundamental difference between the human and animal psyches) and socially (prediction is the basis of any administrative process including public administration);
- the insufficient knowledge of metaphorization as a forecasting tool;
- the complex nature of political forecasting, which is both a product of analytical activity and a discursive means of self-positioning in the political sphere.

### 3. Research Questions

Is there a significant relationship between metaphors used to describe the future of the country, the scenarios they tend to produce (best-case scenarios / worst-case scenarios) and the discursive factors of the retrospective period analyzed?

### 4. Purpose of the Study

In the linguistic prognostic scenario the core of the evaluation is political metaphors (Frank, 2009; Goatly, 1997; Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). The tasks of the researchers within the present article are

- to show how the metaphor organizes the prognostic text / context;
- to draw attention to metaphors that act as binding, constitutive elements of the content of the prognostic text determining its direction either to the optimistic 'best-case' scenario or to the pessimistic 'worst-case' scenario;
- to prove that other linguistic units with the semantics of the future serve as formal means that organize the prognostic text / context and complement its 'best-case' / 'worst-case' metaphorical prospect of the future;
- to illustrate different types of the prognostic text / context organization.

### 5. Research Methods

The three-level method of analysis (matrix – system of metaphorical models – linguistic prognostic scenario) (Solopova, 2016) allows us to identify the static and dynamic aspects of forecasting in connection with the implicitness / explicitness of the prognostic text: from minimal dynamics on the first level through implicitly expressed dynamics of the second level to the explicit dynamics of the third level.

- **The matrix** (*the first level of analysis*) describes the external world – social, political, cultural, and historical, it represents a set of factors of the present capable of influencing the future development of the country. The matrix focuses on the basic, general parameters, factors, and circumstances that influence future events, as well as on modeling cognitive structures of the most general level of categorization of the world of politics.
- The analysis of the **systems of metaphorical models** and other linguistic means functioning in political discourses (*the second level of analysis*) allows one to recognize the dominant trends, the actualization or prevalence of specific metaphorical models, the relevance of certain

linguistic means used to produce the image of the future of Russia in a certain historical period; to find out universal trends and nationally specific characteristics in political discourses of different countries.

- **The linguistic prognostic scenario** (*the third level of analysis*) represents a logical order of events, which shows the ‘growth’ of the future from the political situation of the present, and involves the analysis of linguistic representation of actors, temporal and local characteristics, cause-and-effect relations (the Frames “Participants”, “Time and Space”, “Consequences”). Each scenario is a generalized summary of the future as a fragment of reality, particularly, of the development and changes of the political system reflected in the political text. In describing the conceptual model of the future of the selected chronological period, two scenarios are analyzed: the best-case scenario and the worst-case scenario that represent ‘extreme’ ideal images of the future.

The reduction of the political world model makes it possible to reduce the world of the future to its black and white version, the relative poles of the reduction, its ‘extreme’ alternatives being the best-case scenario and the worst-case scenario. As the researchers note (Issers, 2008; Sheigal, 2004), this ‘two-valued orientation’ is effective in modeling the socio-political situation in the temporal aspect and in metaphorical comprehension of reality. Moreover, the scenario method in political prognostics, modified to study the linguistic representation of the future, is also aimed at fixing the ‘extremes,’ limiting numerous alternatives of the present trends to their absolute ‘plus’ and absolute ‘minus’.

## 6. Findings

The present article analyzes the frame of the linguistic prognostic scenario “Consequences” based on the material of American political discourse of the retrospective chronological period (1855–1881). The images of the future of Russia are constructed in black and white and almost mirror-like. Russia exists in several hypostases, therefore, its probable future is interpreted and evaluated in different ways. On the one hand, it is a huge and mighty power worthy of a great future (*the great Slavonic power, the great Slavonic empire, the Eastern Giant, Russia’s gigantic power, the rising colossus, richness of Russia, a brighter day for Russia, Russia is prosperous, Russia’s world mission, Russia’s ambitious dream, Russia’s great political future, etc.*). On the other hand, its alter ego is a narrow-minded, official, destructive, uncooperative, antinational ‘old’ state whose place should be the backyard of Europe, and whose fate is death, decay, and collapse (*a hostile and aggressive empire, a complete autocracy, barbarous Russia, cold, cruel Russia, troublesome Russia, aggressive Russia, etc.*).

To illustrate the predictive potential of political metaphors, the authors analyze the prognostic texts / contexts focusing on:

- the intersection of the time horizons ‘the past – the present – the future (the past crosses the present as it moves towards the future)’;
- the existence of the future in the present;
- the subjective perception of Russia’s future;
- the ‘self-orientation’ of any model of the future;
- the dependence of the perception of Russia’s future on the discourse and the period analyzed;

- the power and ability of metaphors to convey a variety of semantic shades, to realize positive and negative connotative meanings, choosing an alternative to the future, organizing a prognostic text / context as a coherent whole and ‘dictating’ the choice of other linguistic means involved in representing the future of Russia.

### 6.1. Best-case scenario

The discourse of the historical period under consideration is saturated with metaphorical units when modeling a bright alternative of the future of Russia. The future component can be integrated into a physiological metaphor representing a model of the natural development of an individual organism from infancy to maturity; age gradation (childhood, adolescence, youth) orients the metaphor and the text to the future: *Russia is the one youthful empire of the Old World. The Russian race grows and gathers silently and swiftly within its mighty cradle for the overshadowing, as every Russian in his heart devoutly believes in the absorption at the appointed day of all that now strives and struggles in Europe. The progress of Russia is the march of civilization. The world is benefitted by its great movements. The manifest destiny of Russia is sure to be in its ultimate domination over Europe and Asia* / Malone Palladium, 28.07.1870. The metaphor of ‘the youthful empire’ is at the beginning of the paragraph, it opens the prognostic context, sets the tonality and determines its orientation: the youth of the empire presupposes its activity, vitality, energy, and stamina (*youthful*). The youth of the country is what makes the Russian Empire unique, it distinguishes the state from other European powers, which is emphasized by introducing the adjective *one* into the context (*the one youthful empire; one (adj) – unique in its kind* (Webster’s, 1996). The opposition of the young Russian Empire and the Old World, which is one of the discursive factors that contributed to the bonding of Russia and the United States in the historical period under consideration, models the development of any state as a life process that passes through a certain sequence of stages (birth, childhood, adolescence, youth, maturity, old age, death). The metaphorical units that symbolize the youth of the Russian Empire (*the youthful empire, the cradle*), have a positive evolutionary charge, they strive for the future, for development and maturity: the Russian Empire has every chance to get what she is anxious for, to become the leading empire of the Old World. The metaphors of Russia’s youth, her aspirations for the future, and her gradual steady development are supported by the lexical units that verbalize the growth of the state (*to grow, to gather*); which, in turn, are accentuated by the choice of the tense and aspect forms of the verb. The meaning of the Present Continuous form (a prolonged action in the present, an action going on at the present moment) is conveyed by the Present Simple forms for the accentuation of the fact, rather than the process, that of the continuous growth of the Russian Empire (*The Russian race grows and gathers silently and swiftly*). The situation denoted by the present forms of the verb is reinterpreted as occupying a continuous temporal interval regardless of its actual distribution in time. The processes of growing and gathering of the Russian Empire are modified by the adverbs in the functions of adverbial modifier of manner: the adverb *swiftly* indicates the speed of the country’s formation, her rapid movement from the present to the future. The adverb *silently* stresses the transformation of the state into a great mighty empire that can significantly affect the interests of the European powers. Fascinated by intra-European conflicts and struggles for new colonies Europe doesn’t notice the process (*all that now strives and struggles in*

Europe). The vast territory and natural resources of Russia represent a ‘powerful cradle’ (*its mighty cradle*) where the empire is formed, the very cradle that determines her place and significance in the world, her role, unique civilizational mission, prospects and opportunities that the country can realize in the future. The positive evaluation of the physiological metaphor can be explained by the fact that any political prognostic text / context is self-orientated: the United States is a young power by the standards of the Old World, therefore, the ‘adolescence’ of the state organism is treated in a positive way. The mission of the Russian Empire is determined by the very nature of the state, which seeks to express its potential capabilities; they are in expanding the influence and in dominating both Europe and Asia (*the overshadowing, the absorption, the ultimate domination*). The ambitious aspirations of America whose goal is to dominate the international arena predetermine the meanings conveyed by the verbal noun ‘overshadowing,’ modifying and transforming its basic meaning, leveling the negative emotional color: the Russian Empire will become more influential, it will outweigh and overshadow the European powers in the future. The youth of the country embodies the desire for self-realization and indicates the way to be followed, which actualizes the metaphor of the path (*the progress of Russia, the march of civilization, its great movements*). It is given special significance in the prognostic text due to the fact that, firstly, the metaphor represents the unity of the temporal triad ‘the past – the present – the future’, thus, it models the future as the country’s movement along its natural trajectory. Secondly, in the context of political reality, it lays foundations for understanding the direction, and it is connected with the expediency of the state’s movement. In American political discourse, the metaphors of the source sphere are aimed at conceptualizing the bright and majestic future of the state whose path and development influence the destinies of the world. The metaphorical units ‘the progress of Russia’ (*progress, development, advancement*), ‘the march’ (*path, evolution, development, progress, its great movements*) have a positive charge actualizing evolutionary changes and a way of development, producing an image of the bright future of Russia that is to become a great and powerful country. The brilliant future of Russia is predetermined, the dominance of the Russian Empire over Europe depends directly on her own desire, the future will come at the appointed day known to her (*at the appointed day*). The semantics of a predetermined future, the author’s belief in future events that are likely to happen are expressed by the modal expression «to be sure» (*The manifest destiny of Russia is sure to be in its ultimate domination over Europe and Asia*). The expression has the meaning of ‘supposition bordering on assurance’, ‘future action with a high degree of probability’: the fate of Russia is obvious – her final dominance over Europe and Asia. The analyzed context illustrates the main tendencies typical for modeling the best-case scenario in American political discourse of the retrospective period: despite her youth and thanks to it, Russia turns out a leader, an agent of expansion. Her weight in international affairs is huge. The country is a bearer of certain values, and therefore she is different from the others. Russia’s unique internal potential – geographical, raw materials resources, intellectual, spiritual – makes it possible for the state to be a system that fixes its sight on the future, a system of development and self-sufficiency that is destined to be a great empire of the future. It is the metaphor that defines the ‘extreme’ alternative of the future, constructing a semantic theme of the prognostic text / context, arranging the meanings expressed by the other linguistic means into a whole semantic unit.

## 6.2. Worst-case scenario

The historical evolution faces the possibility of the other development alternative, the worst-case scenario ('a gloomy future'). The interweaving of light and dark shades of the future is typical of the image of the future as a whole. On the one hand, one can see a romantic utopia in an attempt to fly ahead of history, foreseeing a positive transformation of the political and economic components of the country's life. On the other hand, the use of metaphors filled with negative connotations is obviously connected with the desire to reduce the extent of influence of the geopolitical rival, to form a negative attitude to the events and phenomena of the social and political life of the country. The following example illustrates a type of prognostic context where the alternative of the worst-case scenario is presented in its final part: *Should it become evident, however, hereafter, that Russia really intends to make the war one of contest, England will most assuredly become an active ally of the "sick man" of Europe. The future is big with interest. We Americans occupy the highest seat around the gladiatorial arena, and can safely look on and reap what profit there is in the struggle. Russia is to become the autocratic colossus among the nations in the Old World within eighteen months from this date, and then precipitately tumble into a vast and wonderful ruin* / Geneva Courier, 18.11.1876. The metaphors of war, competition, and battle conceptualizing the future of Russia, on the one hand, reflect the strangeness and tension of the situation; on the other hand, America's close attention, exciting interest and expectancy in relation to the present and future events (*The future is big with interest*). The Russian Empire and the British Empire, two hardy, dexterous, powerful gladiators specially trained for a battle, are going to start a violent confrontation, an exciting duel that is to be swiftly fatal. They must entertain the audience, damage their opponent and choose the right tactics for defense. The forthcoming battle will make the fate of the two gladiators: the match will be won by the gladiator who will overcome his opponent or kill him outright. The victor will get an award – the future; in case the gladiator loses, he risks his life, his legal and social standing and 'gets' an ignominious defeat and death in the fullness of his years. America is the very spectator who watches the show that is going to be played out, occupying the 'highest' seat in the gladiatorial arena (*We Americans occupy the highest seat around the gladiatorial arena*). It should be noted that there were rules that prescribed the arrangement of the seating in the amphitheater. The first rows of seats (the lowest) were reserved for senators, members of the city council, magistrates, respected citizens and honored guests; the middle rows were paid; the upper seats assigned for the people and women (the highest) were free. It is unlikely that with her idea of being exclusive the ambitious America, who believed her mission to be world dominance, took her place among the people of the lower class that occupied the upper seats. Probably, the adjective 'the highest' (located far above the ground or another surface (Webster's, 1996) situated above the ground or some base (Cambridge Dictionary, 2009) is used in the figurative meaning of 'the best' seats and it points to the remoteness of the US from the continent where the battle is going to take place, and to the fact that future events will not influence the security of America's national strategic interests: (*We Americans*) *can safely look on and reap what profit there is in the struggle*). Occupying an observational position, that of non-interference, America is waiting for the outcome of the battle and the benefits that can be gained from its results (*We Americans*) *can safely look on and reap what profit there is in the struggle*). Attention must be drawn to the evaluation grades of the events probability. At the beginning of the prognostic context, the suppositional mood is used in the adverbial clause of condition

describing the intentions of the Russian Empire. The suppositional mood is used for the future when the fulfilment of the condition is unlikely though possible, and it is associated with the indicative mood in the principal clause (*Should it become evident, however, hereafter, that Russia really intends to make the war one of contest, England will most assuredly become an active ally of the “sick man” of Europe*). The author of the text is certain in advance of both: the strategic positioning of Great Britain in the forthcoming war that is accentuated by the use of the modal word *most assuredly* in the principal clause (*England will most assuredly become an active ally of the “sick man” of Europe*); and the unexpected fate of the Russian Empire that is shown at the grammatical level by means of the modal expression ‘to be to’ in the meaning of an action ‘fated, or destined to happen’ in the final part of the context (*Russia is to become the autocratic colossus among the nations in the Old World within eighteen months from this date, and then precipitately tumble into a vast and wonderful ruin*). To point out the negative connotations of the ‘destruction’ metaphor the author uses the verb *to tumble* whose definition includes the semes of ‘rapid destruction’, ‘turning into ruins’ (to fall suddenly and helplessly; to suffer a sudden downfall, overthrow, or defeat; to fall into ruin (Webster’s, 1996), in combination with the lexemes *precipitately* (to cause (something) to happen quickly or suddenly (Webster’s, 1996) and *ruin* (a state of complete destruction (Webster’s, 1996), explicitly duplicating the meanings of the decay rate and annihilation. The time frame for the events to happen is limited and equal to a year and a half (*within eighteen months from this date*). That is the time fixed for the Russian Empire to prove her superiority over the European powers, hence Russia is the very gladiator America bets on in the forthcoming battle. Nevertheless, the likely success of the Russian Empire will not be able to prevent it from destruction. The prognostic context with neutral and favourable estimation ends unexpectedly with a negative forecast motivated neither by the previous context, nor by the arguments and reasons for the chosen alternative.

## 7. Conclusion

A prognostic political text is subjective and personal in nature. Never being neutral or objective, it is formulated within a certain ideological interpretation frame, often being a product of immediate diplomatic and international relations, and of the current political situation and environment. The evaluation aspect is revealed extremely expressively, emotionally, and diversely, metaphors being the core components of prognostic texts / contexts. They serve as basic elements organizing various linguistic means around the leading idea of the ‘extreme’ alternative (the best-case and the worst-case scenarios), linking those means, pointing explicitly or implicitly to the symbolic characteristics of the future, forecasting by analogies with models of the past. Charged with positive and negative connotations, they complicate the prognostic text with special shades of emotional, evaluative, and aesthetic nature. They make the meaning of the prognostic text more complex than it is required by the objective and logical content of the forecast that theoretically must be based on the revealed and fixed objective laws, regularities, and tendencies of the country’s social and political development. Thus, the interpretation of the ‘present’ and its possible future outcome depend greatly on the historical situation of a specific epoch, on the distribution of global power, on the strategic goals, intentions and relations of the countries whose discourses are subject to analysis. In general, it should be noted that the discursive factors (the alliance between the Russian Empire and the United States that lasted for a long time; the intensity of Russian-



American contacts, the absence of significant contradictions between the two countries in any regions of the world in the historical period under consideration) noticeably influence the model of the future of Russia in American political discourse of the retrospective period, getting the author of the prognostic text to oftener choose metaphors modeling the best-case scenario of the future rather than those that aim at constructing the other alternative (the worst-case scenario).

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