



Images of Russia in the Cantonment Series of the Early Twentieth Century (1903-1912)

Xiao Ma

Sichuan University, Chengdu 610000, China

13546383864@163.com

Abstract. *The Universal Progressive Journal* has been an important window through which Chinese society has observed the world, as one of the most important newspapers in modern Sichuan and Chongqing. Russia was always an important object of its coverage. The newspaper's main images of Russia were of a 'brutal country', an 'enemy of the north' and a 'despot'. An analysis of the newspaper's coverage of the image of Russia shows that the fear of losing the country under the threat of Russia, the dissatisfaction with the emergence of sovereignty consciousness, and the expectation of 'using Russia as a metaphor for China' were the internal motives for the *The Universal Progressive Journal* to end up portraying the image of Russia in this way. This is of profound significance for understanding the awareness and thinking of intellectuals in the Chinese southwest region about the national crisis at that time.

Keywords: *The Universal Progressive Journal*, Russia, Image, Sino-Russian relations.

1 Introduction

In 1903, under the auspices of Yang Shukan and other progressives, Chongqing Guangya Bookstore compiled all kinds of books and newspapers from home and abroad into a newspaper named *The Universal Progressive Journal* to 'establish a new wind and revive the people's spirit. From its inception in 1903 to its closure in 1912, the newspaper issued a total of 277 issues, and was an important window for the people in the southwest region and many Chinese nationals to learn about the society and observe the world at that time.[3]The newspaper paid close attention to the political dynamics of the major countries in the world at that time. Russia, as an important neighbour of China, was in a long-term relationship of invasion and aggression in modern times. During the period of publication of *The Universal Progressive Journal*, Russia has always been one of the important objects of the newspaper's attention.

At present, studies on Sino-Russian relations in the academic world are relatively comprehensive. However, these studies either focus on a specific aspect of Sino-Russian relations[4][5][6][7], or conduct macro studies from a national perspective[8][9][10], with fewer studies focusing on the history of social thought. In the study of Sino-Russian relations from the perspective of history of ideas, some scholars have

analysed the attitudes and ideological conditions of the people of the time towards Russia through the newspapers and magazines of the time. [11][12] However, most of the existing studies focus on national publications such as *The Globe Magazine*, and pay less attention to provincial newspapers.

In this paper, through collating and analysing *The Universal Progressive Journal*, a local newspaper in Sichuan and Chongqing, and combing it with relevant historical materials, we sort out the editorial policy and stance tendency of the reports on Russia, analyse the image of Russia in the newspaper, and explore the motivation for the newspaper to portray Russia in such a way, in order to better understand the knowledge and thinking of the Southwest intellectuals on the national crisis in the late Qing Dynasty and early Republican period.

2 Distribution of Reports on Russia in *The Universal Progressive Journal*

The relationship between China and Russia in modern times has consistently been characterised by an inherent imbalance of power. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, the Tsarist Russian government pursued a strategy towards China that could be broadly defined as 'peaceful conquest'. This entailed the acquisition of territories and rights through a combination of political and diplomatic means, primarily through the use of treaties and covenants. Following the eruption of the Boxer Rebellion in 1900, the Russian Empire pursued a military strategy as the primary instrument for invading China. In addition to acquiring rights and interests, including war reparations, as did other powers in the aftermath of the Boxer Rebellion, Russia also deployed troops to occupy the northeast region of China. This action significantly undermined the integrity of China's sovereignty. The attempt by Tsarist Russia to occupy the northeast of China prompted resistance from other powers, which ultimately resulted in the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War between 1904 and 1905. Following the conclusion of the Russo-Japanese War, Tsarist Russia was compelled to acquiesce to the division of the Northeast with Japan. In order to reinforce its influence in China and expedite its invasion, Tsarist Russia progressively shifted the focal point of its political and economic aggression towards Outer Mongolia, while simultaneously consolidating its control over Xinjiang and the north-eastern region of China. During this period, Russia inflicted significant territorial and political losses on China, which led to a perception among the Chinese public of Russia as a formidable adversary posing a threat to China's survival. This perception was shaped by the belief that Russia had ambitious intentions, meticulous planning, and a malevolent approach.[2]

In this context, *The Universal Progressive Journal*, as the earliest general publication in Southwest China, accorded significant attention to Russia and dedicated a substantial portion of its content to Russia over the course of its publication. *The Universal Progressive Journal* comprised a multitude of columns, which were classified into the following categories: political affairs, academic affairs, articles, and serials. Information pertaining to Russia was predominantly disseminated in two sections: the national section and the foreign section of the chronicle of the political affairs section.

Additionally, a considerable amount of reference to Russia was observed in the articles of a critical nature, the soul of the country, and the notes from the records section.

The Chronicle is primarily a vehicle for the dissemination of information pertaining to contemporary events. The national section is divided into provinces. The sections pertaining to Russia are primarily located within the Beijing, Eastern Provinces, Mongolia, and Xinjiang sections. The Beijing section addresses messages from Russia at the national level, including treaties and meetings between the Beijing government and Russia, as well as interactions with the Russian diplomatic service. The messages pertaining to Russia in the local sections, such as the Three Eastern Provinces, pertain to Russian activities within the interior of China, including exploration, trade, and military activities.

In the section devoted to foreign news, *the Universal Progressive Journal* is classified according to country of origin. The section also included Russian news from other major countries, such as Britain, France, America, Japan, and Russia. It covered a range of topics, including personnel changes, diplomatic activities, and political and military events. Examples of such events include the '*Mutiny in Russia*' and '*Russia Prepares to Hold First Representative Assembly*'. It is noteworthy that, although this section was used for the presentation of news reports, *the Universal Progressive Journal* would subsequently offer a commentary on the facts presented, thereby indicating the newspaper's attitude towards the news. For example, following the reporting of the news that the Russian Academy had learned Chinese by heart, it was commented that this was 'honourable and fearful'.^[1]

Additionally, *the Universal Progressive Journal* features a dedicated section for commentaries on Russia, which are organized into three principal categories. The initial category pertains to the author's personal experiences and subjective sentiments pertaining to Russia. This is exemplified by "A Certain Gentleman's Travels in Russia," which can be found in the "Talks" section. The second category comprises commentaries on Russia's behaviour, with Russia as the main target. Examples include 'Prediction of the Future of the Russo-Japanese War', 'On Russia's Accidental Attack on a Fishing Vessel', and 'The Original Defeat'. These are thematic commentaries on Russia. The third category comprises articles that employ Russian reporting as a vehicle for discussing other topics. For instance, the article "Russia Builds a Navy" appears to focus on the progress of Russia's naval expansion. However, it actually delves into the necessity and feasibility of China's own naval development.

3 The Image of Russia in *The Universal Progressive Journal*: An Analysis of its Principal Characteristics

3.1 'Brutal as Tigers and Wolves' - a Nation of Consistent Brutality

The period during which the Broad Series was in operation saw Russia under the rule of Tsar Nicholas II. This period encompassed significant events such as the Russo-Japanese War and the Stolypin Reforms. *The Universal Progressive Journal's* comprehensive coverage of Russia consistently portrayed the country as a cruel and tyrannical

state. In particular, it can be distinguished between two distinct emphases: the inhuman cruelty and the unreasonableness.

The Cruelty of the Atrocities. It is undeniable that during the Russo-Japanese War both the Japanese and the Russians were guilty of cruelty towards the inhabitants of the Three provinces in northeast China, and these facts are mentioned in H Zachary's study.[14] But at the beginning of the Russo-Japanese War, *The Universal Progressive Journal* believed that Japan's occupation of all of Manchuria would not be beneficial to its own country because 'the sting of a bee is poisonous, not to mention the cruelty of Russia, which is like a tiger and a wolf'. It only lamented that the Chinese nationals under Russian occupation 'will never be relieved of the Russian abuse'. During the Russo-Japanese War, reports about the three eastern provinces, almost always without the Russians added to the atrocities in the Northeast. 'Zhejiang merchants more than ten people goods for the Russian soldiers looted, the cost of the axe is exhausted and not allowed to take the train in dire straits suffer from this evil do not know how many people.' 'Suspecting that the natives had been hired by Japan to destroy the iron bridge, they used artillery to bombard all the villages inside and outside the three-mile radius, killing thousands of men, women, children and the elderly'. The Russian army lost the war and then vented their anger on the Chinese people, after the Battle of Fengtian forced relocation of the Chinese people, 'those who do not go all shot, crying all the way to be unbearable to hear.' That is why the newspaper commented that it was 'disastrous'. [1]

The report published by *the Universal Progressive Journal* on the attitudes of the people of north-eastern China towards the Russian army highlighted the contrast between the brutality of the Russian army and the hope of the expelled inhabitants for the defeat of the Russians. 'The residents of Shenyang generation were expelled by the Russian army, the people's grievances were boiling, and they wished for the defeat of Russia, and Russia's rebellious relatives could be seen.' There was even an agitation for vengeance against Russia, 'Some people posted Russophobic notices, arguing that today, when Japan and Russia are carrying out their work, it is the right time to take revenge on the Russians.' Even the local bandits are considered by the newspaper as 'the most hated Cossacks' and 'if used properly, they are undoubtedly brave and tenacious'. Although there were also a number of bandits employed by the Russians. The northeastern civilian groups that resisted and attacked the Russian army were described by the newspaper as 'volunteer armies', and the results of the volunteer armies were strongly emphasised, as 'the Russians could do nothing about it'. [1]

The Universal Progressive Journal narrative also constructed an image of a brutal Russia in international reporting on Russia. In the case of the Russian Navy's mistaken attack on a British fishing boat, British sources were quoted as saying that 'the fleet mistook the fishing boat for a Japanese mine destroyer and did not have time to identify it'. However, the newspaper still considered the Russian fleet's 'outrageous brutality and insolence' in attacking an innocent fishing boat 'in line of battle for 20 minutes' and 'not rescuing those who were sunk'. During the Russo-Japanese War, he also drowned Russian officers and soldiers by shelling a Japanese ship that was trying to rescue Russian soldiers who had fallen into the water. [1]

The Universal Progressive Journal, in its nine years of publication, hardly ever reported on the well-being of the Russian people, and the few reports on Russia's strengths were only before the Russo-Japanese War, when it was regarded as 'the great nation of the day.' The capital of the palace was so luxurious that 'the golden walls were resplendent, and the colours of the palaces varied.' Reports that speak more of Russia's inner workings are of the Russian government's brutality towards its citizens. With regard to ethnic minorities in the border provinces, 'the culture of abuse has spread to the whole province, and the expulsion of the Muslims is like a hunter's hunt for live-stock'. Social movements in their own countries are treated as unscreened massacres. 'The Russian Government's manhunt for the riots in the Russian Baltic Oblast, where all suspects were executed without trial, and the inhumanity of the numerous innocent juveniles in the upper Bahraini localities who were sentenced to death on behalf of their fathers who had fled the country'. Even European countries were 'greatly displeased with the attempt to deter Russian atrocities'. The treatment of the Jews was 'so cruel and crippling' that Britain demanded a thorough investigation by its minister in Russia.[1]

Avaricious and Unreasonable. *The Universal Progressive Journal's* coverage of Russia's reckless trampling of rules and brute-force manoeuvres is everywhere, constituting an image of greed and irrationality.

In violation of the rules, during the Russo-Japanese War, Russia repeatedly violated the boundaries of the belligerent zone defined by China; in 1904, documents such as the 'Message from the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Neutrality' made it clear that western Liaoning was not a belligerent zone. Russia has been unhappy about this from the beginning, 'The Ministry of Foreign Affairs states that Russia does not recognise the 120 miles west of the Liao River as a neutral area.' The Russians attempted to occupy Qinhuangdao, which was stopped by British intervention. Then Russia intervened in China's internal affairs, demanding that Shenyang 'be left to be patrolled by Russian troops.' Russia also interfered in the personnel arrangements of the Qing government, because General Zengqi 'was too cowardly to resist anything' and 'asked the government to keep his post on his behalf'. This country also occupied the Imperial Tombs in Fengtian in violation of the neutrality agreement and 'ignored' the efforts of Chinese officials. Its troops have repeatedly taken the initiative to provoke, in the non-war zone, looting, 'Russian troops in the Liaohe River looting loaded with grain and rice of the Hwachuan several seem to be intent on provoking the destruction of neutrality of the situation'.[1]

After the Russo-Japanese War, Russia also repeatedly failed to comply with Chinese regulations and made unreasonable demands. In the case of the Russian-Chinese trade in Kulun, for example, Russia first prevented the opening of a commercial port in Kulun simply because it was 'detrimental to the interests of Russian merchants'. When the two countries on the issue of Kulun trade tax has been 'with the Russian ambassador in Beijing,' but there are still 'Kulun Russian leather merchants in Mongolia do not comply with the new chapter of the tax,' the note to the Russian officials are still 'ignored!' In addition, Russia continued to interfere in personnel issues, 'the Russian ambassador

went to Beijing to request that Zhou Mian be sent to handle the Heilongjiang negotiation, claiming that General Cheng's lack of understanding of the negotiation would impede Sino-Russian diplomatic relations,' *The Universal Progressive Journal* believes that this matter, 'his heart can be seen'. (其心可知) On the question of withdrawal after the war, Russia first delayed the evacuation on the grounds that it was inconvenient to march, After Japan had already withdrawn its troops from Southern Manchuria as agreed, and both Britain and the United States had assisted China in urging the Russians to do so, it still delayed in doing so, and 'did not have any sincerity in withdrawing its troops from Northern Manchuria', and 'wanted to be remunerated by China before withdrawing its troops'. The image of his insatiable greed is evident.[1]

3.2 The Northern Enemy, 'Coveted at all times'

Overall, in *the Universal Progressive Journal's* reporting narrative, Russia is presented more as an enemy than a friend, always as a threatening and powerful northern foe, an image shaped through narratives of Russia's rights to industrial railway profits, land leases, population colonisation, religious influence, and so on.

In the industrial railway rights, before the Russo-Japanese war, the newspaper is concerned about China and Russia in the mines and other industrial negotiations, such as the 'Sino-Russian new treaty', 'Tibet Mining Treaty', etc., which are embodied in the Russian intervention in China's industrial, especially mineral and other interests of the vigilance. After the war, it paid more attention to the demands made by Russia on China in terms of rights and interests. In 1906, the newspaper reported that Russia had offered China 'five terms', which included exclusive lease rights, the right to exploit the forests and mines of Mongolia and Manchuria, and the joint operation of a branch line of the Dongqing Railway by Russia and China. Later, the newspaper argued that the eastern part of Mongolia, Yaonan Province, had 'very fertile land' and 'many coal mines', which the Russians had 'coveted for a long time and motivated Mongolian merchants'. Russia also took Mongolia as a new business direction after the defeat of Russo-Japanese War. 'Russia since the Russo-Japanese war lost Manchuria right to devote all their efforts to Mongolia' in Mongolia on the one hand, a lot of requirements, "mining gold", "demand Zhangjiakou Kulun between the construction of the right of the railway", 'Tacheng and other places to exploit oil mining rights'; one side of the strong and reckless, "ordered to circulate in order to grasp the right to currency", "Russian merchants should pay all taxes refused to pay", 'forcibly imposed the transport of goods on packhorses and other vehicles', and "all kinds of rapes are countless". The Chinese government negotiated with the Russian Minister, but the Russian Minister demanded that Russia should have the same rights in Mongolia as Japan had in Manchuria and Britain had in Tibet, and that 'the princes of Mongolia should be treated with a soft and gentle policy', so that the intention of appropriating Mongolia was obvious. *The Universal Progressive Journal* was deeply worried that 'Russia's violence was incomprehensible and could not be undone by peaceful means'.[1]

Russia began to prepare for the colonisation of the Three provinces in northeast China at an early stage. 'The Russian government agreed to have a part of the Russian supplementary troops stay in the Far East to strictly repair the army and operate the

colonial land, with the Ussuri area along the Heilongjiang River and the East Qing Railway along the road there are many places suitable for colonisation, and along the railway the land is fertile and the Chinese and Russian borders are strictly guarded'. Russia also quickly formulated a corresponding colonial policy: 'The Emperor of Russia has mobilised the reserve troops belonging to the Manchurian army to move to the land attached to the East Ching Railway as a colony', in which each person was able to share the land and the family immigrants also had the corresponding subsidies. In addition to Manchuria, Kulun in Eastern Mongolia was also regarded by Russia as the main direction of colonisation, and it was thought that 'the western part of Liaozi and the coast of the Songhua River were the most suitable for colonisation'. *The Universal Progressive Journal* was also concerned about the Xinjiang issue. 'It is said that the Russian Minister wants to negotiate for the lease of Xinjiang', although it is not known whether the news is accurate or not, but the newspaper speculated that "if the government will have the special rights of Tibet with the British, then Russia will also demand to obtain the same rights as the British in Xinjiang", and worried about Xinjiang. The newspaper was worried that 'the item of the soldiers in the cantonment area is only in name but not in reality', and 'if the Russian government has the will to annex Xinjiang, China can only give up its hand and let it do what it wants'.[1]

In terms of religious influence, it was mainly reflected in Russia's influence on Mongolia and Tibet through its softening of Tibetan Buddhism. *The Universal Progressive Journal* began to pay attention to the Anglo-Russian rivalry in Central Asia and Tibet at an early stage. It pointed out that 'Russia indirectly influences Tibet through its control of Mongolia and religion Tibet is generally pro-Russian. The Tibetans firmly believe in seeking Russian support to preserve Tibet Tibet has almost become Russia's Tibet.' After the signing of the Anglo-Tibetan Treaty, the newspaper argued that Russia, in order to confront Britain, had 'embraced the Dalai Lama's entry into Tibet and taken advantage of the Tibetans' admiration for the Dalai Lama to win over the hearts and minds of all Tibetans.' The newspaper then reported that Russia wanted to 'seek to recover the Tibetan rights lost to Russia by the Sino-British Treaty on Tibet on religious grounds, and therefore sent a large number of Russian monks to follow the Dalai Lama in Outer Mongolia, and used them as a means of enlisting and bribing him', which was considered to be 'ill-intentioned'.[1]

3.3 'Wishing Strong Russia Defeat' - A Dictatorship with Internal and External Troubles

The Universal Progressive Journal's image of Russia, which for a short time before the Russo-Japanese War had maintained the image of a great nation 'in the far north, stretching across two continents,' gradually became a stumbling giant after the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War. Fierce social conflicts at home, hostility from the East, and complex attitudes of Europe and America combined to form the image of a Russia that had lost its way and was unable to help itself.

In the Russo-Japanese War, the reporting tendency of *The Universal Progressive Journal* was significantly less in favour of Russia than Japan. The people of the Three provinces in northeast China hated Russia. The inhabitants of Shenyang 'wished Russia

defeat.'In the face of the Russian information blackout and false claims of victory in the north-east, the local Chinese were 'unmoved, still believing that the Japanese had won the war'. The Poles and Jews in Manchuria expect the defeat of the Russian army, 'and the Russians who resent their government are numerous, and all wish the Russian army defeat The people of the dictatorship will not be defeated.'There is also civil strife in Russia, 'the leaders of which have endeavoured to gather together a total of 25,000 foreign rabble-rousers and Chinese absentee labourers and bandits to attack the Russians.'Europe and America also did not support Russia and repeatedly persuaded Russia to accept mediation. Even the horses were not on Russia's side, and the Russian general's favourite horse 'galloped off towards the Japanese camp', which looked 'ominous'. In the newspaper's report, Russia was in the midst of an unjust war and defeat was inevitable. In the newspaper's report, Russia was undergoing an unjust war and defeat was inevitable.[1]

After the Russo-Japanese War, turmoil became a new keyword in *The Universal Progressive Journal's* coverage of Russia, with assassinations, strikes, rebellions, revolutions, and all sorts of tumultuous developments. During this period, assassination was a recurring theme in Russia-related reports. General Kozhirov attacked by assassins in Peterhof Local Park. Additionally, the following individuals were assassinated: the Minister of Foreign Affairs, a Russian officer who had sought refuge in Wuhan, a Russian inspector, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Russian Prime Minister, and numerous others. This 'wave of assassinations' reflects the fact that 'Russia is more chaotic today than ever before.'*The Universal Progressive Journal* in 1906 reported more than a dozen Russian strikes, army rebellions, and other events, almost in every issue, so much so that it appeared as if Russia was on the verge of collapse.[1]

Russia embarked on democratising reforms after the Russo-Japanese War, and 'depressed by the new defeat, the bigwigs and the Russian Emperor began preparations for the establishment of a House of Representatives.'But the newspaper argued that 'there are so many restrictions that the royal power remains unshakeable, no different from the previous Senate.'Instead of reporting on the positive role or efficient functioning of the Russian parliament, the newspaper reported from time to time that 'the royal family sent troops to dissolve the parliament'. As you can see, in the view of *The Universal Progressive Journal*, Russia was still nothing more than an autocracy out of step with the times.[1]

4 Crisis and Expectation: An Analysis of the Dynamics of Russia's Image-Making in *The Universal Progressive Journal*

Over the course of nearly a decade of publication, the Cantonal Gazette portrayed Russia as a powerful enemy trapped in an authoritarian regime, but still ambitious and threatening to China. The motivation behind this portrayal was closely related to the domestic and foreign political context of the early twentieth century.

4.1 Concerns about the Crisis of the Demise of the Country

At the end of the 19th century, China's national crisis became more and more serious with the continued encroachment of the Great Powers on Chinese territory, especially after the Sino-Japanese War and the invasion of China by the Eight-Power Allied Forces. [7]After entering the 20th century, Russia's ambition and threat to China did not weaken with the defeat and turmoil; on the contrary, after reaching a compromise with Japan and Britain, it strengthened its invasion and control of the northern part of northeastern China on the one hand, and focused its aggression on Outer Mongolia on the other hand, and attempted to spread the scope of its invasion through Outer Mongolia to Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, and other parts of China. On 30 July 1907, Japan and Russia concluded the Russo-Japanese Agreement, which delineated the spheres of influence of the two countries in northeastern China.[12] On 21 June 1910, a second secret pact was concluded between Russia and Japan, which further consolidated the content of the first pact. 1906 to 1911, Tsarist Russia used various means to cultivate pro-Russian forces in the Trans-Mongolian territories, and achieved great results.[7]

The Universal Progressive Journal showed great concern about Russia's ambition, raising it to a crisis of the end of the country and the end of the race. Xinjiang and Mongolia are always 'afraid that these two places will not be mine', because Russia has a 'high position' over China, once Mongolia is occupied by Russia, then Russia can 'gather a large army to attack BeiJing directly. South to Wuhan and pressure Xiang Yue', China's demise of the crisis is close at hand, "the situation is unimaginable". In the face of the threat of the Russian near at hand, the domestic society but lack of sufficient understanding, 'in recent years my countrymen for the external danger of its eyes focused on Manchuria, how would you know that Mongolia is now the second of Manchuria'. In order to 'warn my government and arouse my compatriots' and to avoid 'the sigh of the poor at the end of the day', the report constantly focuses on Russia's invasion of China's frontiers and tries its best to show readers 'the history of the Russian invasion of China', in the hope of obtaining a better understanding of the history of the Russian invasion of China and of the Russian invasion of China. 'in the hope of finding 'a way to deal with Russia'.[1]

The Universal Progressive Journal's reports presented an ambitious image of Russia with the objective of directing readers' attention to the survival of the nation and the threat posed by Russia to China. This was done in order to increase awareness of the gravity of the situation, both for the purpose of awakening the nation and for seeking ways to save it and ensure its continued existence.

4.2 Awakening of Sovereignty

After the defeat in the Sino-Japanese War, the awareness of sovereignty based on the system of international law began to spread and be valued among some of China's educated people.[15] *The Universal Progressive Journal* has always been sensitive to national sovereignty. During the Russo-Japanese War, it was pointed out that at least the Three provinces in northeast China should be given 'the empty name of sovereignty with me'. After the Russo-Japanese War, the newspapers also praised Chinese officials

for 'gradually recovering sovereignty'. In addition, the newspaper pointed out that in Three provinces in northeast China after the retreat of Japan and Russia, 'the local sovereignty still belongs to China', and that 'all mines have the territorial sovereignty of our country', and that industrial minerals are also part of the sovereignty, and so on. *The Universal Progressive Journal* had begun to use and disseminate the concept of sovereignty in a clearer way.[1]

In addition to the image of Russian ambition, another feature and 'character' of Russia's image in *The Universal Progressive Journal* is a tyrannical, brutal and irrational posture. Unlike the crisis of territorial usurpation, the narrative of *The Universal Progressive Journal* is one in which Russia's brutality and irrationality are strongly emphasised, even in matters that do not involve obvious territorial disputes. In this case, the unreasonableness is mainly highlighted by Russia's intervention and usurpation of China's sovereignty. The intervention is in the form of interference in China's independent ruling power, and the usurpation is in the form of usurpation of mining and railway rights.

On the issue of trade in Xinjiang, Russia took advantage of its treaty and financial power to carry out unequal and even illegal trade, trying its best to escape Chinese official control and taxation, monopolising trade and finance in Xinjiang, and reaping huge profits.[7] It also demanded that Chinese officials put a stop to the spontaneous opposition of the Ili residents to the Russian merchants, which *The Universal Progressive Journal* described as 'truly unreasonable'. [1]

In the industrial rights, Russia's industrial rights to Mongolia and other places of 'interference', 'tyrannical and violent and aggressive'; had also put forward to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to share the Heilongjiang route, the Russians in Kulun can be exempted from the jurisdiction of the princes of Mongolia, the revitalisation of Mongolia's industrial debt raised by the Russians to borrow a part of the unequal demands, such as 'look at the Russians' unreasonable demands'. *The Universal Progressive Journal* called 'look at the unreasonable demands of the Russians'. [1]

On other sovereignty issues, the paper was outraged by Russia's demand that China agree to the Mongolian princes' borrowing from Russia, which it described as 'justice lost to violence'. The opening of a Russian university in China was seen as 'an attempt to seize China's right to education.' Reports of the Russian ambassador's representations calling on the Beijing government to replace officials involved in Russian-Chinese dealings were keenly pointed out as 'further interference in China's personnel rights' and 'ill-intentioned'. Russian merchants in the Kulun refused to pay taxes, private construction of tea hoarding and other illegal trade practices the newspaper also clearly pointed out that it is 'violent behaviour', 'violence'. [1]

It can be seen that *Guangyi shangbao* had a clear position on the defence of China's sovereignty and interests. In the face of Russia's countless infringements of China's sovereignty, it used the newspaper as a 'microphone' to repeatedly convey to society and the public what sovereignty is, why it should be defended, and how to defend it. Avoiding the demise of the country and trying to save the nation became an important motivation for *The Universal Progressive Journal* to portray Russia.

4.3 Using Russia as a Metaphor for China

At the beginning of the 20th century, China was beset by internal and external difficulties, and the national crisis was becoming more and more serious. *The Universal Progressive Journal*, in its coverage and portrayal of Russia, had the expectation of using Russia as a metaphor for China and seeking a way to save the country. By describing why Russia failed and why it went against the axioms of the world, and by learning the lesson of authoritarian Russia's 'loss of the way and little help', the newspaper seeks to find out how China can achieve change and move towards salvation and self-improvement.

On the one hand, *The Universal Progressive Journal* highlighted the decline of authoritarian politics in the present day by portraying the image of Russia as an authoritarian state in which all the people had turned against each other. During the Russo-Japanese War, the newspaper reported that many ethnic minorities in Russia wished for Russia's quick defeat because 'the hearts and minds of the people of the dictatorship will not be defeated'.^[1]

In 'The Original Defeat', the historical background of Russia's strategy in the Far East is analysed to show that Russia's failure was self-inflicted and that the root cause was that 'the autocratic government was on its last legs', which led to 'the Russian people's loss of confidence in the Tsar'. The newspaper, reporting on why the Russian royalists supported the Tsar, noted that it was because 'the Tsar has renounced his despotic imperial power and has become a constitutional monarch' and looked to the Russian parliament to 'protect liberty'. *The Universal Progressive Journal* narrated that Russian autocracy brought inevitable failure, and that only the renunciation of autocratic power and the introduction of a constitution could bring Russia out of its predicament. Taking into account the attitude of the Guangyi shangbao towards the current affairs of China, although China's military power was weak, the training of the army was not the most important thing, for 'even a strong army will fail if the autocracy is not reformed'. Now that the Qing government 'prefers the kingdom to a reformed government' and the whole nation is in danger, 'how can there be only one Russia when the enemy comes'.^[1]

To sum up, the motive of *The Universal Progressive Journal* in constructing the image of Russia as an authoritarian state was inseparable from the political and social background of China at that time. *The Universal Progressive Journal* itself was one of the positions for the dissemination of new ideas, and in the later period, it shifted from the propaganda of constitutionalism to the propaganda of revolutionary ideas and became the organ of the League. Therefore, by reporting and commenting on the Russian dictatorship, it intended to propagate the legitimacy and necessity of abandoning the dictatorship. It seems that Russia is the subject of the description, but in fact it is a kind of mapping of the self.

5 Conclusions

China at the end of the Qing Dynasty and the beginning of the People's Republic was beset by internal and external difficulties, political turmoil, the country was torn apart,

and the people at the bottom of the ladder were in dire straits. Under the triple oppression of imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucratic capitalism, people with insight realised that it was necessary to arouse national awareness of the current situation and crisis. The editors, represented by Yang Shukan, also developed the idea of rescuing the nation from peril against the backdrop of the national tragedy, and then demanded to change the authoritarian rule and seek democratic progress. *The Universal Progressive Journal* was thus born and became a platform for the dissemination of new ideas, the transmission of new current affairs, and the 'opening of the eyes of the nation to the world'. [3]

The geographical distance from Russia did not allow public opinion in the southwest of the country in the late Qing and early Republic to ignore the Russian question. In its nine years of coverage, the newspaper successfully portrayed the image of Russia as a brutal, tyrannical and tyrannical country. Combined with the background of the time, it can also be found that behind the image of Russia portrayed in the *Universal The Universal Progressive Journal*, there was an implicit concern for the survival of the nation and the integrity of national sovereignty on the part of the editors and writers, as well as a desire to seek a way out for China through Russia.

Through the analysis of *The Universal Progressive Journal's* portrayal of Tsarist Russia and its motivation, we can further understand the current state of national crisis, the path to national salvation and self-improvement, and the hope for China's future of the intellectuals in Chongqing during the late Qing and early Republican period.

The Universal Progressive Journal's portrayal of Russia may have differed from the true and complete image of Russia in history due to the limitations of the newspaper's length and the tendency of its content, and it is worthwhile to further study and examine whether some of the reports on Russia in the newspaper were in line with the truth of history, and whether some of the evaluations of Russia's initiatives were biased or not. The impact of such a Russian image on the readers of *The Universal Progressive Journal*, especially on the Chinese society, is also a question that deserves further investigation.

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