

Strangers among Us? Post-Soviet Immigration Through The Lens of The New York Times

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Abstract

Around half a million Russian immigrants were naturalized in the United States between 1991 and 2004. How did the New York Times cover this phenomenon? Is there a cohesive narrative in the New York Times reports concerning the Russian immigration? Is the coverage of the country of origin different from that of the New York Times? Analysis of the New York Times articles reveals the immigration narrative from the point of view of the New York Times. The immigrants' country of origin is being denounced because it is failing the democracy test. Putin's authoritarian regime is being painted in a bad light. The tone of the articles with respect to the original societies depends on the extent to which they attributed the absence of democracy in Russia to the societies. Reporters who saw a certain society as a victim of the regime tended to describe it in a positive light, while on the other hand, reporters who saw the society as responsible for the Putin's rise to power, blamed it for the regime's injustices and crimes. Russian immigration itself was described in a positive light, as a catalyst for growth in American society. Commentaries aimed at preventing resentment on the part of the readers for the illegal activity, in which some of the immigrants were involved, were sometimes added. To avoid contradictions in the positive immigration narrative, the articles were edited simplistically. There were no opposing opinions, and when focusing on the contribution of the immigration, they refrained from covering the complexity of the issue, which also includes negative aspects.