



Internarrativity of Authoritarian Rule: A Narrative Analysis of Vladimir Putin's Speeches between 2012 and 2019

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Abstract

This article examines the concept of internarrativity in Vladimir Putin's speeches from 2012 to 2019, focusing on how interconnected narratives legitimize authoritarian governance. Using discourse analysis and qualitative coding of 201 speeches, the study identifies 40 key narratives, emphasizing their interplay in constructing a cohesive "web of meaning." The analysis reveals that the "strong hand" narrative, central to Putin's rhetoric, is reinforced through interrelated themes of historical resilience, sovereignty, external threats, and moral superiority. These narratives collectively justify centralized leadership as essential for Russia's domestic stability and international influence. By linking internarrativity to broader fields such as international relations, public diplomacy, and narrative theory, the study highlights the dynamic nature of political discourse in shaping national identity and geopolitical positioning. It also identifies gaps for future research, including the socio-cultural resonance of narratives and their adaptability in evolving political contexts. This work advances understanding of narrative strategies in authoritarian regimes.

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Introduction

Since the beginning of its conflict with Ukraine in 2014, Russia's political elites have crafted a range of narratives to justify their actions and strengthen domestic and international support (Claessen 2021; Fridrichová 2023; Khaldarova 2019). Like many states—though to varying extents—Russia employs a combination of communication strategies, including public diplomacy (PD), propaganda, misinformation/disinformation, and “fake news” to advance its objectives. While the boundaries between these terms are often blurred, they collectively form a puzzle of how narratives are constructed, disseminated, and received. Despite extensive attention to the mechanisms of these strategies, less focus has been given to what makes Russia's communication narratives compelling and effective both domestically and abroad.

This article argues that much of the scholarship on Russia's communication strategies conceptualizes narratives narrowly as standalone “stories” created for propaganda purposes, rather than as dynamic and interconnected components of broader social meaning-making processes. This limited view tends to prioritize “what”-type questions—such as “What narratives does Russia use?” or “What reactions do they elicit?” Consequently, many studies implicitly adopt a universalist logic that portrays Russian narratives as relatively stable constructs, such as those emphasizing “great power” status, sovereignty, or external threats (Dajani et al. 2021; Götz and Staun 2022; Maksimmon and O'Loughlin 2017). While these works offer valuable insights, they often overlook more nuanced, post-structuralist inquiries into the how—that is, how are these narratives constructed and how their meanings emerge.

Existing literature often provides valuable insights by deconstructing narratives into elements or components and examining their connections (Claessen 202; Miskimmon et al. 2014; Roselle et al. 2014). While these approaches have significantly advanced the understanding of narrative structures and their functions, this article suggests that they might not fully capture the complexity of narrative production and influence in certain contexts. Specifically, it argues for complementing these methods with an approach that views narratives as mutually connected and legitimized through their interplay rather than as isolated units. To contribute to this ongoing discourse, the article introduces the concept of internarrativity—a framework for analyzing narratives as interconnected webs of meaning that reinforce and legitimize one another. By building on and extending traditional notions of intertextuality, this approach emphasizes the dynamic and relational nature of narratives within broader discursive systems, offering a deeper understanding of their construction and impact.

The study focuses on Vladimir Putin's public discourse from 2012 to 2019, a period encompassing his third presidential term and the pre-pandemic years. This timeframe allows for an analysis of narratives that laid the groundwork for justifying key geopolitical actions, including the annexation of Crimea and tensions with the West, while avoiding the narrative shifts prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic. By qualitatively analyzing 201 of Putin's speeches, the article highlights how internarrative connections—such as the “strong hand” narrative—construct and legitimize authoritarian power² through appeals to historical resilience, sovereignty, and external threats.

This article aims to contribute to the literature on narrative analysis and Russian political communication by addressing two primary gaps: the methodological challenge of analyzing narratives as dynamic and interconnected, and the empirical need to understand the specific mechanisms of influence within Putin's rhetoric. The subsequent sections discuss shortcomings in contemporary approaches to narrative analysis, introduce the concept of internarrativity, and outline the research methodology, which emphasizes inductive coding and discourse analysis. Finally, the article demonstrates the application of internarrativity through the case study of the

² Here “authoritarian power” and “authoritarian rule” are defined by Vladimir Putin through the narrative of a “strong hand” rather than as a compilation of objective characteristics that define “authoritarian” countries.

“strong hand” narrative—a key element in Russia’s portrayal of its domestic and foreign policies under authoritarian rule.

Narratives and Propaganda

Russian narratives, especially as part of its propaganda, have been a topic of scholarly focus for decades, with their roots often traced back to the Soviet era. In recent years, this focus has intensified due to Russia’s interference in the 2016 US presidential election, its military operations in Syria, and the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict. As a result, analyses of Russia’s communication strategies often concentrate on narratives tied to geopolitical conflicts. Scholars have identified various adversarial narratives employed by Russia, including the promotion of the “superiority of Russian values and institutions” (Gerber and Zavisca 2016), conspiracy theories (Yablokov 2015), portrayals of an “aggressive NATO” (Pynnöniemi and Rácz 2016), anti-establishment sentiments (Fisher 2020), and narratives designed to foster disruption (Cull 2016). These studies have greatly advanced the understanding of Russia’s narrative strategies, particularly in conflict contexts. However, many approaches tend to conceptualize narratives in ways that may not fully capture their relational and dynamic nature.

A dominant trend in the literature has been to frame Russian narratives through the lens of state-centred propaganda, disinformation, or the distortion of reality. Scholars have developed concepts such as strategic narrative (Hagström and Gustafsson 2021; Miskimmon et al. 2014; Schmitt 2018) to emphasize the role of governments and political elites in shaping public opinion. Combined with a conflict-oriented focus, this has provided fertile ground for studying Russia’s strategic narratives (Götz and Staun 2022; Hansson et al. 2023; Popkova 2020; Roselle 2017; Szostek 2018). At the same time, these approaches often reduce narratives to measurable and observable binaries, such as reality versus the story. As Dajani (2021, 18) notes, Russia’s strategic narratives are far more complex and adaptive, often shaped by ongoing interactions with audiences and socio-cultural contexts. This dynamic nature is sometimes overlooked in favour of seeing narratives as fixed systems with predetermined meanings.

This issue is evident in how social contexts are often omitted from analyses of Russian state narratives, with an overemphasis on the state-to-media model. For example, Tyushka (2022, 4) claims that “media...always echoes the Kremlin-set discursive frames,” one of which is “Gayropa”—a homophobic slur used in narratives opposing LGBTQ+ rights. While the Kremlin undeniably employs this narrative, reducing it to a weaponized frame overlooks the deeper societal meanings attached to sexuality and gender in Russia (Morris and Garibyan 2021) and Ukraine (Shevtsova 2020). A broader analysis is needed to fully understand how such narratives resonate with or challenge existing societal norms and values.

Similarly, while many scholars analyze Russian narratives as combinations of elements, components, or themes (Bacon 2012; Khaldarova 2016; Berzina 2018; Götz and Staun 2022; Fridrichová 2023), fewer explore the ways these narratives interact to construct broader systems of meaning. Tolz and Hutchings (2023, 6), for instance, examine how narratives often reference shared discourses, a perspective aligned with the approach of this article. However, their framework risks conflating narratives and discourses, as Derek Hook (2001, 16) critiques, potentially obscuring the specific relational dynamics of narratives within discursive systems.

Recent scholarship underscores the importance of aligning strategic narratives with local political myths (Schmitt 2018) and analyzing them within broader discursive contexts (Pamment 2014). For example, Faizullaev and Cornut (2017, 598) highlight that narratives must be understood as part of the processes that enact and compete with other narratives. These perspectives reflect a growing interest in poststructuralist approaches, which emphasize the relational and contingent nature of narrative construction and meaning-making. This article contributes to this ongoing

discussion by exploring how narratives collectively construct social reality, with a specific focus on their interconnectedness.

To advance this understanding, the concept of internarrativity is introduced as a framework for analyzing narratives as interconnected, dynamic, and mutually reinforcing. Unlike approaches that isolate narratives as standalone constructs, internarrativity highlights how their meaning and effectiveness depend on their relationships with one another. For example, the narrative of strong Russian leadership is not an independent construct; it is continually reinforced by interrelated narratives, including those of historical resilience, Western aggression, and moral superiority. By analyzing these narratives as interconnected webs of meaning, this article seeks to provide deeper insights into how they gain legitimacy, adapt to shifting political realities, and influence domestic and international audiences.

The Concept of Internarrativity

Narratives are more than mere stories; they represent structures of meaning-making that are crucial for constructing realities, enabling individuals and societies to “know, understand, and make sense of the social world” (Somers 1994, 606; see also Hayden 2013). These narratives are deeply embedded in social, political, and historical contexts that shape both their creation and reception. On the one hand, narratives facilitate the formation of collective identities and shared meanings (Adler 2013; Groulier and Tordjman 2020; Neumann 2002). On the other hand, the power to construct narratives is unevenly distributed, allowing certain actors to exert disproportionate influence, which can result in narratives that are forceful (Mattern 2001) or even oppressive (Dutta-Bergman 2006). Within states, governments and political elites hold significant, though not uncontested, power in shaping dominant narratives.

The ability of states to project narratives internationally, however, is less absolute. Domestically constructed narratives often lose efficacy abroad due to the state’s limited capacity to influence foreign audiences or divergences in intersubjective knowledge—widely shared meanings formed through social interaction (Finnemore and Sikkink 2001; Heylighen 1997; Berger and Luckmann (1967, 24) aptly highlight this issue: “The others have a perspective on the common world that is not identical with mine.” This underscores how narratives’ acceptance and legitimacy vary across societies and groups, depending on their compatibility with pre-existing meanings.

Traditional positivist approaches to narrative analysis frequently overlook the socially constructed and contingent nature of narratives. Such approaches often assume that external realities can be objectively known (Patomäki and Wight 2000; Morçöl 2001, 382), which risks imposing a “taken-for-granted” worldview on the analysis (Durkheim 2013; Pouliot 2007, 364). This can obscure the role of social and cultural contexts in shaping narratives. In contrast, post-structuralist approaches, such as the one employed in this study, emphasize the dynamic, socially constructed nature of narratives, acknowledging that they evolve through the interplay of historical, cultural, and political factors. This research adopts a post-structuralist perspective to examine how narratives in Vladimir Putin’s discourse are constructed and reinforced, building on existing studies while addressing gaps in their methodologies. Unlike analyses that treat narratives as isolated units, this approach delves into the relational dynamics between narratives. Hansen (2016, 107–108) observes that post-structuralist approaches are particularly valuable for exploring how texts connect to each other, recognizing that narratives are deeply rooted in past discourses and thus exist within a limited range of potential interpretations.

This study extends the concept of intertextuality, first introduced by Kristeva (1980) in linguistic studies, to the analysis of political narratives. Kristeva demonstrated that texts do not exist in isolation but are situated within webs of meaning that challenge or reinforce cultural norms and values. Hansen (2006) brought this concept into International Relations (IR), arguing that texts

within political discourse rely on one another to construct authority and legitimacy. Texts, Hansen (2006, 49) notes, work together to create cohesive discourses by mutually reinforcing each other. In this study, the goal is to explore how narratives interact similarly, drawing on facts and knowledge from one to another to construct foreign policy discourses (Hansen 2006, 51). Moving beyond intertextuality, this study introduces the concept of internarrativity, which examines how narratives themselves interact within shared social contexts to reinforce mutual legitimacy (Hagström and Gustafsson 2021). While intertextuality addresses the relationships between texts, internarrativity focuses on the dynamic interplay between narratives as interconnected elements of broader discursive systems. As Kristeva (1980, 66) states, every text is an absorption and transformation of others; similarly, narratives are shaped by pre-existing cultural, historical, and intersubjective knowledge.

Although the term “internarrativity” has been employed in feminist and critical studies (Maan 2009; Way 2015), these applications often focus on the expression of identities. This article makes a step toward expanding the concept into the realm of politics and international relations. Responding to Hagström and Gustafsson’s (2019, 400) call to broaden its empirical and theoretical applications, this study explores how narratives derive their power from interconnections with other narratives. Internarrativity is particularly relevant in the context of political narratives, where its relational nature is essential for understanding legitimacy. Such interconnectedness ensures that narratives are not isolated but are co-constructed within webs of meaning, enabling them to adapt to shifting political realities. For researchers, internarrativity offers a nuanced tool to analyze how narratives interact and shape public opinion. In areas such as propaganda and public diplomacy, it reveals how governments, media, and civil society actors construct and disseminate narratives that resonate with audiences. By uncovering the relationships between narratives, scholars can provide deeper insights into political communication strategies and their impact. For policymakers, understanding internarrativity enables the crafting of more effective communication strategies. By accounting for how narratives interact with pre-existing beliefs and social contexts, policymakers can identify contradictions and craft counter-narratives to challenge or subvert unfavourable depictions. Recognizing internarrativity also allows authors to create more persuasive narratives by linking them to historical or cultural traditions that resonate with target audiences.

Methodology

The study develops a methodological approach to utilize the term “internarrativity” and demonstrate its complexity. Firstly, it focuses on public speeches made by Vladimir Putin between 2012 and 2019, which marks Putin’s third term in power, and includes the period before the COVID-19 pandemic, as the latter brought about significant changes in communication that involved fewer public events and a shift in some of the dominant narratives. While Putin is not the only person who defines how Russia is presented, his speeches are crucial, as he is both the primary face of the nation and the authorized voice of its dominant discourse (Milliken 1999, 233). In that sense, both constitutionally and politically, Putin serves as the principal figurehead of the nation..

The decision to focus on public speeches over printed texts or documents is explained by the necessity to analyze discourse and narratives in a “day-to-day context” (Wiener 2009, 188) and “where society is being made” (Cruikshank 2012, 43). This approach is in line with the constructivist view that “social recognition stands to be constructed by social interaction” (Wiener 2009, 179) and that it is important to recover meanings from agents directly (Pouliot 2007) rather than analyzing their reflection in the media. Furthermore, given the main goal of analyzing communication narratives, the data collection was limited to speeches or public interactions that involved journalists or were addressed to both the foreign and domestic public. The data was collected from the official government website [Kremlin.ru](http://kremlin.ru) for Russian-language documents and en.kremlin.ru for English-language documents. First, all Vladimir Putin speeches were collected

with some documents being omitted, such as official announcements, ceremonial/protocol documents, expressions of sympathies (e.g., in response to earthquakes, terrorist attacks, etc) or congratulatory statements. Speeches were excluded if they were purely procedural and lacked significant narrative elements.

In a second step, the speeches were analyzed using NVivo software, a qualitative software tool for capturing, collecting, coding, and analyzing large amounts of text. The analysis followed an inductive approach with no pre-established codes. Coding took place in three stages. First, the documents were read to identify and label the main narratives—those that appeared consistently. Second, the documents were read again to assign these codes. Third, as narratives function as “collective memories” (Wendt 2004, 313) and help construct a “common lifeworld” (Risse 2000, 10) or notions of “self” and “other” (Campbell 1998), they were organized into “Self” and “Other” categories to reflect their socially constructed nature. The description of Russia, the Russian government, culture, and history were categorized as “self.” The description of other countries, political and non-political actors associated with politics, constituted the construction of “others.”

The subsequent stage involved identifying narratives through an interpretative approach and discourse analysis, following Wiener’s (2009) framework, which involves a skeptical reading and interrogation, coding, and the formulation of tentative hypotheses. The approach taken here views discourse as the realm where shared meaning is generated, sustained, altered, and thus fundamentally shapes our understanding of the social world (Holzscheiter 2014, 144). To differentiate it from ordinary written or spoken text, discourse is seen as encompassing “ideas, knowledge, beliefs, and practice” (Sunderland 2004, p. 31), which are brought to life through narratives. Consequently, the primary focus of this research centers on identifying discourse through narratives, which serve as the underlying structure for making meaning and constructing our perception of the world around us, allowing us to comprehend, interpret, and give meaning to the social fabric (Somers 1994, 606). Narratives are delineated as specific stories or interpretations of social reality, encompassing the perspectives of entities such as the state or political elites, their self-concept, portrayal of others, and depiction of events. This study also underscores the concept of internarrativity, highlighting the interconnected nature of narratives generated by various actors within the context of their social reality. These connections are illuminated through the examination of the historically grounded backdrop against which these narratives unfold.

The research involved gathering and scrutinizing 201 textual sources (Appendix 1), encompassing interviews, press conferences, meetings of the All-Russian Youth Educational Forum “Seliger” and expert forum “Valdai,” yearly Direct Lines with the Russian president, and similar events. From these materials, 40 primary narratives (Appendix 2) were distinguished, encapsulating the discourse on Russia from 2012 to 2019. Among these narratives, 21 depicted a self-representation. Conversely, 19 narratives depicted “others.” In addition, three narrative groups were also identified. However, due to space limitations, it is not feasible to provide detailed descriptions and examples for each individual narrative within the main body of this article. Therefore, all essential information is included in Appendix 2.

In order to operationalize the concept of internarrativity, an additional methodological approach was used. After collecting data and identifying narratives, the research examined how these narratives relate to one another, focusing on their intersections and reinforcing mechanisms. It was done by identifying points of convergence, such as thematic overlap, rhetorical continuities, cross-referential themes, and temporal sequencing.

Thematic overlap

The “misrepresented” narrative and the “disrespected” narrative both emphasize the idea that Russia is unfairly treated by external actors, particularly Western countries. Together, these narratives overlap thematically in portraying an external world that undervalues or distorts Russia’s role and intentions. This thematic alignment reinforces a shared sentiment of grievance and victimization, bolstering the argument that Russia must assert itself internationally to combat these injustices.

Rhetorical Continuities

The “defensive” narrative and the “enemy need” narrative reinforce each other through consistent rhetorical patterns that emphasize external threats and the necessity of protective measures. The “defensive” narrative frames Russia’s actions as necessary responses to aggression or destabilizing influences, while the “enemy need” narrative suggests that Western countries manufacture hostility against Russia to consolidate their own power. Shared rhetorical constructs, such as the idea of external forces targeting Russia, create a continuity that strengthens both narratives.

Cross-Referential Themes:

The “natural place” narrative, which argues for Russia’s rightful position as a global power, intersects with the “Russian necessity” narrative, which emphasizes the indispensability of Russia in resolving global challenges. Both narratives share the theme of Russia’s pivotal role in international relations, with the “natural place” narrative providing the aspirational vision and the “Russian necessity” narrative offering pragmatic evidence of Russia’s contributions. By cross-referencing Russia’s historical significance and current geopolitical actions, these narratives collectively assert Russia’s indispensability and legitimacy on the global stage.

Temporal Sequencing:

The “sovereignty” narrative and the “betrayal” narrative align through temporal sequencing. The “betrayal” narrative recounts instances of perceived Western duplicity, such as NATO expansion, as historical precedents that validate the “sovereignty” narrative’s emphasis on independence and self-determination. By framing sovereignty as a response to past betrayals, the narratives are temporally linked, with one providing the historical justification for the other’s forward-looking claims about the necessity of safeguarding Russia’s autonomy.

Internarrativity and Webs of Meaning

To more clearly illustrate the value of an internarrative approach, it is helpful to contrast it with Hutchings and Szostek (2015, 236–237), who briefly described the sources of Putin’s legitimacy. They identified several key elements that contribute to this legitimacy, such as the maintenance of internal order following Russia’s near-collapse and the protection of Russia from external threats and humiliation. These observations point to a master narrative of Putin’s legitimacy, built from several distinct narratives that each play a role in constructing this overarching image. While Hutchings and Szostek highlight the presence of multiple legitimating elements, their analysis, like much of the literature, treats these narratives as separate factors, loosely contributing to a common theme. What this misses is the interconnected nature of these narratives and how they work in concert to reinforce each other. An internarrative or intertextual approach would emphasize how these narratives are not just parallel but mutually legitimating. For instance, the narrative of internal order does not simply coexist with the narrative of protection from external threats; instead, the two interact and reinforce one another, weaving a more cohesive and persuasive portrayal of Putin as both a domestic stabilizer and a protector against foreign enemies. This relational perspective adds depth to our understanding of how such grand narratives are constructed and sustained over time.

Regarding the application of the internarrativity concept, the narratives should be viewed within the social context in which they are enacted and in close interrelation with each other. This allows not only to access the intended meaning behind narratives, which the literature predominantly ignores, but also to understand the process of meaning/knowledge legitimization. Among the prominent narratives, the “strong hand” is one of the central narratives that legitimize Vladimir Putin’s power and could, arguably, serve as a legitimizing element for future Russian leaders as well. Its significance has been evident since the start of Putin’s first term, when calls for a “strong hand” response (Russell 2002, 85) during the Chechen wars resonated with the Russian public and played a crucial role in legitimizing his presidency.

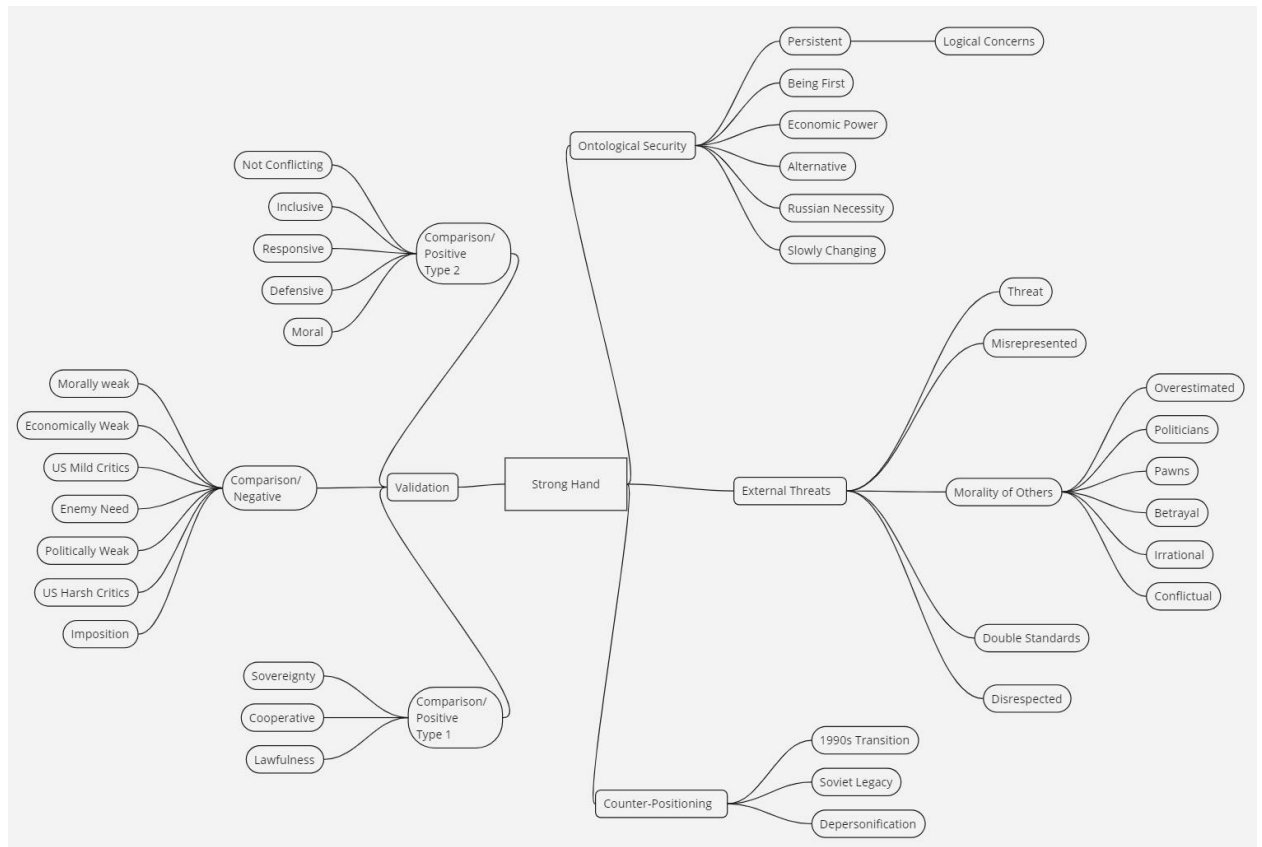
The political system is one of the major characteristics of a state. It defines how a country engages in the international arena, governs itself domestically, and is perceived by the rest of the world. Accordingly, discourse surrounding the political system constitutes a central element of the country’s communicative efforts. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia’s political system was often characterized as authoritarian or as an autocracy (Gel’man 2015; Hassner 2008; Safire 1994). Even before Putin’s Munich Speech in 2007,³ the Western media generally treated Russia as “the authoritarian, imperial power; the bully; the aggressor” (Macgilchrist 2007, 76). However, the external imposition of authoritarian meanings should be separated from the internal definition of being “authoritarian” presented by the Russian political elites.

The “depersonalization” narrative aims to challenge the international characterization of Russia as an authoritarian state. Nevertheless, this effort often falls short, as Russia under Putin is widely viewed as de-democratizing or nation-consolidating—rather than distancing itself from—its authoritarian identity (Gunitsky and Tsygankov 2018). While Russia is classified as authoritarian by international standards, this article focuses on examining how Russia’s political elites construct and articulate their understanding of political power, which is encapsulated in what this study terms the “strong hand” narrative.

The analysis of Putin’s speeches gives insight and information on how Russia’s political elites construct a “regime of truth” (Foucault 1977, 2014)—a dominant understanding of the political system. This perspective is disseminated through media and other communication tools to domestic and foreign audiences in an attempt to justify and garner support for preserving Russia’s political system. This narrative is central to portraying Russia, as it embodies the model of both its external and internal behaviour. The main purpose is to demonstrate Russia’s sovereignty, independence, integrity in decision-making, adherence to principles, effectiveness, and, most importantly, the stability that it provides. To ensure all this, a strong hand is required to guide the country’s development and foreign policy. Nevertheless, especially from the position of liberal democracies, those narratives seem ineffective in taking into account historical and sociocultural contexts. There are several elements of Putin’s discursive practices or webs of meanings that legitimize the need for a “strong hand” (Figure 1).

³ In his speech at the 43rd Munich Security Conference in 2007, Putin condemned US unilateralism and NATO expansion, marking a clear break with post-Cold War cooperation and a significant turning point in the reassertion of Russian geopolitical ambitions globally.

Figure 1: Putin's Discursive Practices



Empirical Findings

There are several major points that need to be highlighted. Firstly, Putin employs a range of narratives, building a positive view not only of Russia's "self" but of authoritarian rule as well. Using Russia's experience in the 1990s (the "1990s transition" narrative), he argues for the necessity of implementing a firm and stable policy to combat existing instabilities. In this context, he uses the political systems of other countries as an example of a volatile decision-making process, which is associated with democratic institutions and elections that could lead to significant changes in policy. This narrative is further supported by references to the policies of former US President Donald Trump during his first term in office, illustrating how partisan struggles can damage policies. Putin portrays the authoritarian tone of Russia's political system as being in line with the old-style democracy of majority rule. However, to mitigate the authoritarian tone of the old-style Soviet power, Putin presents the narrative of "depersonalification," which is counter to the political elite's positioning of Russia's "self" to the Soviet Legacy. Since Soviet history is often depicted through the image of authoritarian society and Joseph Stalin, depersonification was used to create a distance between Putin and Stalin, as well as the modern Russian state and the Soviet past. Those three narratives together counter-position the desired identity to an external (through the narrative of depersonification) and previously existing internal images (through the narratives of Soviet legacy and 1990s transition).

Secondly, three types of comparative narratives (comparison/positive type 1, comparative/positive type 2, and comparative/negative) are used to validate a Russian approach to governing and authoritarian rule. The two types of positive comparison are somewhat contradictory. The first of these emphasizes normativity while the second highlights exceptionalism. The normativity theme is reinforced through the narratives of "cooperative," "lawfulness," and "sovereignty," which position Russia in a positive light within the international community. The exceptionality theme highlights Russia's uniqueness, supported by the narratives of "responsive," "not conflicting,"

“moral,” “inclusive,” and “defensive.” Finally, the negative comparison reinforces Russia’s exceptionalism by counter-positioning it to mostly, but not exclusively, Western countries, using the narratives of “US mild critics,” “US harsh critics,” “morally weak,” “politically weak,” “imposition,” “enemy need,” and “economically weak.”

Thirdly, Putin successfully leverages the issue of ontological security, which refers to “experience oneself as a whole” or the continuation of identity over time (Mitzen 2006, 342). Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia’s national identity faced a crisis, as its former self-image as a central or great power was disrupted. While modern Russia lacks the Soviet Union’s former economic and political influence, the pursuit of ontological security remains difficult, as constructing a stable identity in the post-Soviet context is a complex and ongoing process. The narrative of Russia’s “natural place” reflects this struggle, highlighting that ontological security has not yet been achieved and continues to fuel nationalist sentiment. At the core of this ontological framework is the “persistent” narrative, where Putin represents the “strong hand” unyielding in the face of adversity, offering an image of unwavering stability. This persistence is framed as essential for ontological security, ensuring the nation’s continuity as it moves forward. For instance, Putin’s firm stance on international issues like Crimea or Syria is depicted as evidence of Russia’s consistent identity, signalling the strength of its leadership in protecting national sovereignty.

Closely linked is the narrative of “Russian necessity,” where Putin asserts that Russia plays an indispensable role in the global order. Here, the “strong hand” is positioned as the mechanism through which this role is fulfilled. By presenting Russia as vital not only to its own population but to global balance and stability, Putin strengthens the argument that only centralized, decisive leadership can safeguard Russia’s unique position, especially as a counterweight to Western influence. The “slowly changing” narrative further reinforces this ontological vision by portraying Russia’s transformation as deliberate and tightly controlled. Putin emphasizes that the “strong hand” ensures reforms proceed cautiously, preserving core national values while adapting to shifting global conditions. This portrayal supports a sense of stability and strategic coherence, allowing Russia to pursue economic and military modernization without compromising its internal unity or cultural integrity. The accompanying “logical concerns” narrative acknowledges the real challenges facing the country, while reinforcing a steady and calculated approach to overcoming them under strong leadership.

The “economic power” and “being first” narratives celebrate Russia’s economic performance and historical greatness, with Putin positioning the “strong hand” as the driving force behind Russia’s resurgence as a global leader in areas like space exploration and military technology. By highlighting Russia’s leadership in cutting-edge sectors, Putin reinforces a sense of national pride and progress, essential to the construction of a confident and continuous identity.

Finally, the “alternative” narrative contrasts Russia’s governance model with the perceived failures of Western liberal democracies. Putin presents the “strong hand” as a necessary corrective to the “outdated” liberal order, offering a viable alternative to the West’s approach to governance and international relations. This narrative reinforces Russia’s sovereignty, asserting its right to define its own path without external interference. Together, these narratives weave a cohesive ontological strategy in which the “strong hand” becomes essential to preserving and evolving Russia’s national identity. Through the interconnected ideas of “persistent,” “Russian necessity,” “slowly changing,” “being first,” and “alternative,” Putin justifies centralized leadership as the cornerstone of Russia’s ontological security, portraying it as vital for the nation’s survival and resurgence on the global stage.

Fourthly, a distinct group of narratives centers on the construction of the “other,” positioning external actors as morally and strategically oppositional to Russia, or as “external threats.” This group includes the “threat” and “double standards” narratives, which complement earlier narratives such as “misrepresented” and “disrespected.” The “threat” narrative focuses on external

dangers, predominantly NATO, while the “double standards” narrative highlights the unequal treatment of Russia and other non-Western countries compared to Western nations. These narratives collectively amplify the portrayal of external forces as unjust and antagonistic, reinforcing the necessity of a strong, centralized leadership to protect Russia’s interests. Putin employs these narratives to construct a sense of external threats, instability, and injustice in international politics. This framing ties into the historical pattern of perceiving Russia as a nation under siege, requiring a resolute defence against external hostility (Tsygankov 2016). These discourses are echoed in previous studies, such as Kragh and Åsberg (2017), who highlight the persistent narrative of external manipulation and hostility toward Russia. While critics may view this as a “paranoid and zero-sum worldview” (Herd 2019, 21), the focus here is on how Putin uses these narratives to justify authoritarian measures and consolidate power.

The sense of an embattled “self” needing protection is particularly evident in the context of international sanctions, especially following the escalation of the Russo-Ukrainian war in February 2022. The Levada Center (2022b) reports that 67 percent of Russians believe sanctions primarily target the population, and 56 percent feel that many countries condemning Russia’s actions exhibit elements of “misrepresented” and “disrespected” narratives. The “threat” and “double standards” narratives intersect with these perceptions, painting a picture of a hostile and manipulative international community.

By emphasizing the dual notions of external threats and unequal treatment, these narratives bolster domestic support for the “strong hand” regime. They serve to legitimize the political elite’s actions, portraying authoritarianism as a necessary response to a world fraught with hostility and manipulation. These interconnected narratives reinforce the need for strong leadership as essential for safeguarding Russia’s sovereignty and identity. Putin’s discursive practices frame “others” with volatile policies as threats to both Russia and the international system, warranting a “responsive” narrative and “strong” approach. This creates a sense of external instability and justifies the need for Russia to adopt a “strong hand” regime. The “others” are also depicted as actors who rely on the US—depicted as pursuing imperialistic policies—and as those who “misrepresent” or view Russia as an “enemy” to justify their policies. This serves to delegitimize Western narratives and reinforces Russia’s self-legitimation.

Within this broader narrative framework of external threats, a particularly significant discursive move involves the moral characterization of “others.” Putin’s use of discursive practices that frame external actors in terms of morality or immorality enables him to portray their actions not as rational or strategic, but as stemming from intrinsic, even essential, traits. Through the narratives of “irrational,” “conflictual,” and “overestimated,” Putin crafts an emotional framework that not only legitimizes Russia’s political elite but also delegitimizes opposing or Western narratives. These discourses suggest that it is not the people of foreign countries who seek bad relations with Russia but rather their governments (“politicians” narrative), reinforcing the notion that Russia’s adversaries are driven by irrational or conflictual impulses. In this way, Putin portrays his leadership as rational and resolute in the face of a hostile external environment, framing Russia as a victim of unjust governmental actions rather than the target of widespread international antagonism.

Moral characterization plays a crucial role in convincing the public that although official statements from others may appear peaceful, their “true” intentions are hidden and hostile. The “betrayal” narrative, rooted in the 1990s, amplifies this perception. Building on the notion of a broken promise about NATO expansion eastward, Putin justifies the perception of “others” as inherently capable of betraying Russia again. The narrative of “betrayal” is closely tied to Russia’s historical and cultural understanding of international relations, where the experience of perceived deceit feeds into a broader sense of vulnerability. This moral framing, which casts external actors as untrustworthy, plays a critical role in legitimizing the “strong hand” narrative—a key tool for

justifying Putin's political system. As Tsygankov (2016) notes, the narrative of betrayal helps solidify the justification for a powerful, centralized state capable of safeguarding Russian interests in an unforgiving global environment.

The "strong hand" decision-making system is presented as a necessity to deal with both tangible and intangible threats. To effectively respond and protect itself, Russia must first ensure stability and unity from within. For Putin, domestic polarization and political party struggles undermine decision-making and signal the weakness of political systems. He argues that democracies, with their volatile election cycles and partisan conflicts, are ineffective in countering immediate threats. Therefore, only a centralized political system under strict control can restore Russia to its rightful place and defend it from both internal and external challenges. This belief in the necessity of a "strong hand" reinforces the legitimacy of Putin's centralized rule, casting it as the only viable response to the complexities of both domestic politics and international geopolitics.

Fifth, the predominantly negative framing of "others" in Putin's rhetoric, some narratives, such as "cooperative," "allies," "partners," and "people," introduce a more positive dimension, focusing on collaboration and shared values. These narratives, however, do not perfectly fit into the overarching justification for a "strong hand" regime. Instead, they present a nuanced layer to the discourse, portraying Russia as a constructive and cooperative actor but only when "conditions" align. The "cooperation" narrative suggests that foreign citizens, as opposed to their governments, seek partnerships with Russia, reflecting a natural alignment of interests. Similarly, the "allies" narrative emphasizes shared goals with like-minded states, casting Russia as part of an alternative, balanced global order. The "partners" narrative extends this view to the West, recognizing mutual achievements and celebrating successful collaborations grounded in respect for sovereignty.

While these narratives project a softer, more diplomatic image, they stand somewhat apart from the usual portrayal of a hostile international environment necessitating centralized control. Instead of directly reinforcing the "strong hand," they reflect an aspirational vision of global cooperation. However, their coexistence with narratives of threat and opposition highlights the duality in Putin's messaging, where moments of constructive engagement are framed as contingent on a secure, stable, and strong Russia. The legitimacy of Putin's regime is increasingly intertwined with these internarrative connections, wherein sanctions and foreign criticisms are reframed as proof of the narrative construction of the "other." As international sanctions are seen as a form of external aggression, they serve to reinforce Russia's self-construction as an embattled nation resisting foreign interference. The "strong hand" becomes the necessary response—a symbol of resistance against an unjust world order. This not only legitimizes the current regime but also strengthens the political elite's ability to maintain power through the manipulation of these interwoven narratives.

However, this dynamic also raises questions about the role of the public in sustaining these narratives. The construction of narratives by political elites, especially Putin, is not merely an act of imposing propaganda on the masses but rather a socially constructed discourse that evolves over time. The debate surrounding whether Russians, in the absence of a powerful authoritarian regime, would still pursue ontological security and a stronger sense of "self" underscores the complex relationship between elites and the public. Would the internarrative connections that sustain the construction of Putin's discourse weaken if the political elites' power were diminished, or would the underlying narratives retain their force? Analyzing internarrativity allows us to explore not only how elites and the public legitimize certain narratives but also how these interconnected narratives form a web-like structure that sustains legitimacy even in the absence of direct intervention by political elites.

Internarrativity reveals that sets of narratives do not exist in isolation but rather reinforce each other to create a comprehensive and coherent picture of reality. The effectiveness and appeal of propaganda narratives, especially in convincing foreign publics, depend on how well these narratives resonate with the existing webs of meaning held by target audiences. Countries or

groups that share similar conceptual frameworks—such as viewing the US as an aggressive power or Western countries as “pawns”—are more likely to accept Russia’s “regime of truth” and its justification for the “strong hand” narrative. Keating and Kaczmarzka (2017, 19) argue that the “centralization of decision-making processes...appeal[s] to several political actors in the democratic world.” This concept can be applied to the global arena where Russian narratives might resonate particularly in regions or with groups that perceive the international system as unjust. Authoritarian governments, emerging powers, or dissatisfied populations within democracies that question the legitimacy of Western decision-making may find these Russian narratives more convincing.

In analyzing the corpus of Putin’s speeches, it becomes evident that the narrative of the “strong hand” is not created in isolation. Rather, it is reinforced through the invocation of interconnected narratives that appeal to Russia’s historical, cultural, and geopolitical identity. For instance, references to Russia’s role in defeating Nazism during the Second World War or its survival through the turbulent post-Soviet years are frequently used to justify the need for strong, centralized leadership. These historical narratives contribute to the legitimacy of the “strong hand” by positioning it as a necessary force for maintaining stability and protecting the nation. As such, the internarrative approach allows us to understand how these historical and cultural narratives interlock to create a robust justification for the centralization of power in Russia.

While intertextuality refers to the ways in which texts reference one another, the concept of internarrativity captures the active and evolving nature of narratives within Putin’s discourse. In this context, the “strong hand” narrative is not merely a reflection of past political traditions or a static construct; it is continuously reshaped through references to Russia’s geopolitical struggles, cultural values, and national identity. These speeches construct a network of meaning that draws on both historical triumphs and contemporary challenges to justify the concentration of power in the executive. For example, appeals to external threats—whether from NATO, Western countries, or internal dissidents—are woven into a broader narrative framework that positions authoritarianism as a necessary response to ensure Russia’s security and integrity. Thus, internarrativity highlights how Putin’s narratives are embedded in ongoing social and political realities, reinforcing the “strong hand” by linking it to deeply rooted intersubjective knowledge.

Conclusion

This study has explored the concept of internarrativity and its application to the analysis of Vladimir Putin’s political discourse, particularly in relation to the “strong hand” narrative. By examining how narratives function as interconnected webs of meaning, this research reveals the dynamic and relational nature of the narratives that legitimize Putin’s regime. While previous scholarship has focused on the components or elements of these narratives, this article underscores the importance of understanding how these elements interact and mutually reinforce each other. The findings offer key contributions to the fields of International Relations (IR), public diplomacy, Russian foreign policy, and narrative theory. First, the study demonstrates that the conceptual lens of internarrativity is useful for unpacking the layered complexities of political discourse. By illustrating how interconnected narratives collectively construct legitimacy, this work extends the scope of narrative analysis in IR, enriching the understanding of how states craft and sustain influence domestically and abroad. Second, it highlights the strategic use of narrative interconnectedness in Russian public diplomacy, offering insights into the mechanisms through which authoritarian regimes legitimize governance models and assert geopolitical identity. Additionally, the study identifies several gaps and unresolved questions, providing a foundation for future research. While this analysis emphasized the interrelations of narratives within Putin’s discourse, further exploration is needed to understand the socio-cultural underpinnings that enable these narratives to resonate both within Russia and abroad. Specifically, research could focus on

how different audiences, including dissenting domestic groups or international actors, interpret these narratives, potentially challenging their coherence or legitimacy.

Future studies might also examine the adaptability of these narratives over time, particularly in response to changing geopolitical dynamics or shifts in leadership. How might these narratives evolve post-Putin, and to what extent will their interconnectedness remain a source of legitimacy for future Russian elites? Furthermore, the potential application of internarrativity to other authoritarian or hybrid regimes could shed light on comparative strategies for narrative construction and maintenance in global politics. In conclusion, this study highlights the importance of internarrativity in understanding the legitimacy of authoritarian regimes, particularly in the case of Russia. By examining how these narratives interact and sustain each other, it offers deeper insight into how authoritarian leaders construct legitimacy both at home and abroad. This research underscores the value of studying the relational dynamics of narratives to comprehend the broader implications for IR, public diplomacy, and authoritarian communication strategies.

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Appendix 1. List of Events

Name	Date	Link
2012		
Пресс-конференция по итогам российско-итальянских переговоров	23.07.2012	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/16047
Заявления для прессы и ответы на вопросы журналистов по итогам российско-сербских переговоров	11.09.2012	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/16465
Интервью телеканалу Russia Today	06.09.2012	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/16393
Пресс-конференция Владимира Путина	20.12.2012	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/17173
Саммит «большой двадцатки»	20.06.2012	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/15698
Совместная пресс-конференция по итогам российско-германских межгосударственных консультаций	16.11.2012	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/16852
Совместная пресс-конференция с Премьер-министром Люксембурга Жан-Клодом Юнкером	25.09.2012	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/16533
Пресс-конференция по итогам форума АТЭС	09.09.2012	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/16432
Заявления для прессы и ответы на вопросы журналистов по итогам встречи с Президентом Финляндии Саули Ниинистё	22.06.2012	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/15722
Совместная пресс-конференция с Председателем Европейской комиссии Жозе Мануэлом Баррозу и Председателем Европейского совета Херманом Ван Ромпёем	04.06.2012	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/15541
Совместная пресс-конференция по итогам встречи на высшем уровне Россия – Европейский союз	21.12.2012	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/17178
Заявления для прессы и ответы на вопросы журналистов по итогам встречи с Премьер-министром Турции Реджепом Тайипом Эрдоганом	18.07.2012	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/16014
Заявления для прессы и ответы на вопросы журналистов по итогам встречи с Президентом Армении Сержем Саргсяном	08.08.2012	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/16180
Заявления для прессы и ответы на вопросы журналистов по завершении заседания Российско-Украинской межгосударственной комиссии	12.07.2012	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/15945
Петербургский международный экономический форум	21.06.2012	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/15709
Заседание Совета по межнациональным отношениям	24.08.2012	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/16292
Встреча с участниками международного дискуссионного клуба «Валдай»	25.10.2012	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/16717
2013		
Интервью южнокорейской телерадиокомпании KBS	12.11.2013	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/19603
Интервью Первому каналу и агентству Ассошиэйтед Пресс	04.09.2013	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/19143
Интервью немецкой телерадиокомпании ARD	05.04.2013	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/17808
Интервью информационному агентству «РИА Новости»	12.06.2013	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/18338
Интервью информационному агентству ИТАР-ТАСС	22.03.2013	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/17723
Пресс-конференция Владимира Путина	19.12.2013	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/19859
Молодёжный форум «Селигер-2013»	02.08.2013	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/18993
Посещение телеканала Russia Today	11.06.2013	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/18319
Прямая линия с Владимиром Путиным	25.04.2013	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/17976
Заседание Совета по межнациональным отношениям	19.02.2013	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/17536

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2013		
Пресс-конференция по итогам рабочего визита в Германию	08.04.2013	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/17846
Пресс-конференция по итогам заседания Совета сотрудничества высшего уровня между Россией и Турцией	22.11.2013	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/19677
Пресс-конференция по итогам заседания Высшего Евразийского экономического совета	24.10.2013	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/19485
Пресс-конференция Владимира Путина по итогам саммита «Группы двадцати»	06.09.2013	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/19168
Пресс-конференция по итогам встречи глав государств и правительств «Группы восьми»	16.06.2013	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/18361
Пресс-конференция по итогам встречи на высшем уровне Россия – Европейский союз	04.06.2013	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/18253
Пресс-конференция с Федеральным канцлером Германии Ангелой Меркель	21.06.2013	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/18386
Заявления для прессы и ответы на вопросы журналистов по итогам российско-нидерландских переговоров	08.04.2013	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/17850
Пресс-конференция Президента России по итогам рабочего заседания глав государств и правительств стран – участниц Форума стран – экспортёров газа	01.07.2013	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/18441
Пресс-конференция с Президентом Финляндии Саули Ниинистё	25.06.2013	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/18407
Заявления для прессы и ответы на вопросы журналистов по итогам российско-японских переговоров	29.04.2013	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/18000
Пресс-конференция по итогам переговоров с Президентом Франции Франсуа Олландом	28.02.2013	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/17597
Пресс-конференция по итогам российско-армянских переговоров	02.12.2013	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/19741
Заявление для прессы и ответы на вопросы журналистов по окончании саммита АТЭС	08.10.2013	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/19382
Российско-итальянские межгосударственные консультации	26.11.2013	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/19701
Встреча с Премьер-министром Великобритании Дэвидом Кэмероном	16.06.2013	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/18350
Заседание международного дискуссионного клуба «Валдай»	19.09.2013	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/19243
Ответы на вопросы журналистов	31.08.2013	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/19113
Ответы на вопросы участников Петербургского экономического форума	21.06.2013	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/18387
2014		
Интервью информационному агентству ТАСС	24.11.2014	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47054
Интервью Владимира Путина радио «Европа-1» и телеканалу TF1	04.06.2014	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/45832
Интервью немецкому телеканалу ARD	17.11.2014	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47029
Интервью турецкому информационному агентству «Анадолу»	28.11.2014	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47104
Интервью информационному агентству ТАСС	14.11.2014	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47009
Интервью российским и иностранным СМИ	19.01.2014	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20080
Интервью индийскому информационному агентству РТИ	09.12.2014	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47209
Интервью ведущим китайским СМИ	06.11.2014	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/46972
Интервью газете «Политика»	15.10.2014	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/46806
Интервью ведущим СМИ Китая	19.05.2014	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/21031
Интервью в преддверии Паралимпийских игр в Сочи	05.03.2014	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20374
Интервью представителям телеканалов «Первый», ВГТРК, НТВ, РБК	25.02.2014	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20336

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Интервью российскому информационному агентству ИТАР-ТАСС	15.07.2014	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/46218
Интервью латиноамериканскому агентству «Пренса Латина» и российскому агентству ИТАР-ТАСС	11.07.2014	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/46190
Интервью российским и иностранным СМИ в преддверии Паралимпиады	06.03.2014	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20384
Заявление для прессы и ответы на вопросы журналистов по итогам саммита «Группы двадцати»	16.11.2014	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47027
Владимир Путин ответил на вопросы журналистов о ситуации на Украине	04.03.2014	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20366
Большая пресс-конференция Владимира Путина	18.12.2014	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47250
Совместная пресс-конференция с Президентом Турции Реджепом Тайипом Эрдоганом	01.12.2014	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47126
Заявления для прессы и ответы на вопросы журналистов по итогам российско-сербских переговоров	16.10.2014	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/46813
Заявления для прессы и ответы на вопросы журналистов по итогам российско-австрийских переговоров	24.06.2014	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/46060
Заявления для прессы и ответы на вопросы журналистов по итогам встречи с Президентом Швейцарии, действующим председателем ОБСЕ Дидье Буркхальтером	07.05.2014	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/20973
Саммит Россия – Европейский союз	28.01.2014	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20113
Ответы на вопросы журналистов	17.07.2014	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/46236
Петербургский международный экономический форум	23.05.2014	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/21080
Заседание Международного дискуссионного клуба «Валдай»	24.10.2014	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/46860
Ответы на вопросы журналистов по итогам визита в Китай	21.05.2014	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/21064
Прямая линия с Владимиром Путиным	17.04.2014	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20796
2015		
Интервью Владимиру Соловьёву	12.10.2015	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50482
Интервью американскому журналисту Чарли Роузу для телеканалов CBS и PBS	29.09.2015	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50380
Интервью швейцарским СМИ	27.07.2015	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50066
Интервью итальянской газете Il Corriere della Sera	06.06.2015	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/49629
Интервью ВГТРК	23.02.2015	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47730
Интервью информационным агентствам «Интерфакс» и «Анадолу»	13.11.2015	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50682
Интервью информационным агентствам ТАСС и «Синьхуа»	01.09.2015	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50207
Интервью телеканалу «Россия»	09.05.2015	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/49454
Интервью ежедневной египетской газете «Аль-Ахрам»	09.02.2015	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47643
Заявления для прессы и ответы на вопросы журналистов по итогам встречи с Президентом Франции Франсуа Олландом	26.11.2015	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/50792
Заседание Международного дискуссионного клуба «Валдай»	22.10.2015	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50548
Ответы на вопросы журналистов	29.09.2015	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50394
Большая пресс-конференция Владимира Путина	17.12.2015	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50971
Заявление для прессы и ответы на вопросы журналистов	30.11.2015	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50850

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Пресс-конференция Владимира Путина по итогам саммитов БРИКС и ШОС	10.07.2015	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/49909
Совместная пресс-конференция с Председателем Совета министров Италии Маттео Ренци	10.06.2015	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/49677
Совместная пресс-конференция с Президентом Финляндии Саули Ниинистё	16.06.2015	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/49714
Заявления для прессы и ответы на вопросы журналистов по итогам встречи с Федеральным канцлером Германии Ангелой Меркель	10.05.2015	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/49455
Пресс-конференция по итогам переговоров с Премьер-министром Греции Алексисом Ципрасом	08.04.2015	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/49220
Заявления для прессы по итогам заседания Высшего Государственного Совета Союзного государства	03.03.2015	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47775
Заявления для прессы и ответы на вопросы журналистов по итогам российско-кипрских переговоров	25.02.2015	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/47739
Заявления для прессы и ответы на вопросы журналистов по итогам российско-венгерских переговоров	17.02.2015	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/47706
Встреча с главами ведущих мировых информагентств	19.06.2015	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/49740
10-летие вещания Russia Today	10.12.2015	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50911
Прямая линия с Владимиром Путиным	16.04.2015	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/49261
2016		
Интервью международному информационному холдингу Bloomberg	05.09.2016	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/52830
Интервью Владимира Путина телекомпании «Ниппон» и газете «Йомиури»	13.12.2016	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/53455
Интервью китайскому информационному агентству «Синьхуа»	23.06.2016	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/52204
Интервью немецкому изданию Bild. Часть 1	11.01.2016	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/51154
Интервью немецкому изданию Bild. Часть 2	12.01.2016	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/51155
Интервью Владимира Путина МИА «Россия сегодня» и информагентству IANS	13.10.2016	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/53082
Интервью Азербайджанскому государственному информационному агентству «АзерТАдж»	05.08.2016	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/52650
Большая пресс-конференция Владимира Путина	23.12.2016	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/53573
Заседание Международного дискуссионного клуба «Валдай»	27.10.2016	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/53151
Восточный экономический форум	03.09.2016	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/52808
Владимир Путин ответил на вопросы журналистов	16.10.2016	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/53103
Ответы на вопросы французских журналистов телеканала TF1	12.10.2016	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/53081
Встреча с руководителями международных информагентств	17.06.2016	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/52183
Пленарное заседание Петербургского международного экономического форума	17.06.2016	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/52178
Пресс-конференция по итогам переговоров с Президентом Турции Реджепом Тайипом Эрдоганом	09.01.2016	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/52673
Пресс-конференция по итогам переговоров с Президентом Армении Сержем Саргсяном	10.08.2016	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/52684
Совместная пресс-конференция с Премьер-министром Греции Алексисом Ципрасом	27.05.2016	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/52024
Пресс-конференция по итогам саммита Россия – АСЕАН	20.05.2016	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/51954
Заявления для прессы и ответы на вопросы журналистов по завершении российско-израильских переговоров	07.06.2016	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/52125

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Заявления для прессы и ответы на вопросы журналистов по итогам российско-финляндских переговоров	22.03.2016	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/51551
Заявления для прессы и ответы на вопросы журналистов по итогам российско-финляндских переговоров	01.07.2016	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/52312
Пресс-конференция по завершении российско-венгерских переговоров	17.02.2016	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/51352
Совместная пресс-конференция с Председателем Совета министров Италии Маттео Ренци	17.06.2016	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/52181
Прямая линия с Владимиром Путиным	14.04.2016	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/51716
Ответы на вопросы журналистов	23.11.2016	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/53317
2017		
Интервью Владимира Путина французской газете Le Figaro	31.05.2017	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/54638
Интервью американскому телеканалу NBC	05.06.2017	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/54688
Интервью телерадиокомпании «Мир»	12.04.2017	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/54271
Большая пресс-конференция Владимира Путина	14.12.2017	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/56378
Заседание Международного дискуссионного клуба «Валдай»	19.01.2017	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/55882
Совместная пресс-конференция с Президентом Финляндии Саули Ниинистё	27.07.2017	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/55175
Пленарное заседание Петербургского международного экономического форума	02.06.2017	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/54667
Пресс-конференция Владимира Путина по итогам саммита БРИКС	05.09.2017	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/55535
Пресс-конференция по итогам саммита «Группы двадцати»	08.07.2017	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/55017
Совместная пресс-конференция с Президентом Франции Эммануэлем Макроном	29.05.2017	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/54618
Заявления для прессы и ответы на вопросы журналистов по итогам встречи с Федеральным канцлером Германии Ангелой Меркель	02.05.2017	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/page/96
Заявления для прессы по итогам встречи с Президентом Италии Серджо Маттареллой	11.04.2017	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/54267
Пресс-конференция по итогам российско-турецких переговоров	03.05.2017	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/54444
Совместная пресс-конференция с Президентом Турции Реджепом Тайипом Эрдоганом	10.03.2017	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/54023
Совместная пресс-конференция с Президентом Киргизии Алмазбеком Атамбаевым	28.02.2017	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/53964
Совместная пресс-конференция с Премьер-министром Венгрии Виктором Орбаном	02.02.2017	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/53806
Совместная пресс-конференция с Президентом Молдовы Игорем Додоном	17.01.2017	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/53744
Заявления для прессы и ответы на вопросы журналистов по итогам российско-итальянских переговоров	17.05.2017	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/54511
Заявления для прессы и ответы на вопросы журналистов по итогам российско-словенских переговоров на высшем уровне	10.02.2017	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/53861
2018		
<u>Интервью американскому телеканалу Fox News</u>	17.07.2018	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/58019
<u>Интервью Медиакорпорации Китая</u>	06.06.2018	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/57684
<u>Интервью австрийскому телеканалу ORF</u>	04.06.2018	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/57675
Интервью американскому телеканалу NBC	10.03.2018	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/57027
Интервью телеканалу Russia Today	11.11.2018	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/59091
Пленарное заседание Восточного экономического форума	12.09.2018	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/58537

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Международный форум «Российская энергетическая неделя»	03.10.2018	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/58701
Совместная пресс-конференция Владимира Путина и Реджепа Тайипа Эрдогана	03.04.2018	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/57192
Большая пресс-конференция Владимира Путина	20.12.2018	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/59455
Совместная пресс-конференция с Премьер-министром Греции Алексисом Ципрасом	07.12.2018	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/59349
Пресс-конференция по итогам встречи лидеров России, Турции, Германии и Франции	27.10.2018	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/58935
Пресс-конференция по итогам российско-итальянских переговоров	24.10.2018	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/58889
Пресс-конференция по итогам российско-венгерских переговоров	18.09.2018	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/58586
Пресс-конференция по итогам встречи с Президентом Ирана Хасаном Рухани и Президентом Турции Реджепом Тайипом Эрдоганом	07.09.2018	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/58483
Совместная пресс-конференция с Президентом Финляндии Саули Ниинистё	22.08.2018	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/58347
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Совместная пресс-конференция с Канцлером ФРГ Ангелой Меркель	18.05.2018	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/57497
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Пресс-конференция по итогам встречи президентов России, Турции и Ирана	04.04.2018	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/57201
Совместная пресс-конференция с Федеральным канцлером Австрии Себастианом Курцем	28.02.2018	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/56952
Пресс-конференция по итогам российско-болгарских переговоров	30.05.2018	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/57608
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Пресс-конференция Владимира Путина	29.06.2019	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/60857
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Встреча с главами мировых информагентств	06.06.2019	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/60675

Name	Date	Link
Пленарное заседание Восточного экономического форума	05.09.2019	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/61451
Совместная пресс-конференция по итогам встречи в «нормандском формате»	10.12.2019	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/62277
Пресс-конференция по итогам российско-сербских переговоров	04.12.2019	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/62240
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Пресс-конференция по итогам российско-турецких переговоров	27.01.2019	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/61388
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Пресс-конференция по итогам переговоров с Федеральным президентом Австрии Александром ван дер Белленом	15.05.2019	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/60527
Пресс-конференция по итогам российско-турецких переговоров	08.04.2019	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/60247
Пресс-конференция по итогам встречи президентов России, Ирана и Турции	14.02.2019	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/59830
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Совместная пресс-конференция с Президентом Сербии Александром Вучичем	17.01.2019	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/59693
Совместная пресс-конференция с премьер-министром Италии Джузеппе Конте	4.07.2019	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/60920
Пресс-конференция по итогам рабочего визита в Китай	24.04.2019	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/60396
Пресс-конференция по итогам российско-северокорейских переговоров	25.04.2019	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/60370
Российско-венгерские переговоры	30.10.2019	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/61936
Ответы на вопросы журналистов	28.02.2019	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/59914
Заседание дискуссионного клуба «Валдай»	03.10.2019	http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/61719
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Appendix 2. Narrative Table

Narrative Group

Name	Description	Examples
Comparison/ Positive Type 1 <i>Narrative Group</i>	Is intended to show the presence of similar elements, laws, orders, and other features between Russia and other countries.	“Such laws have long been adopted in all developed countries” [1]; “The Russian judicial system is an integral part of the international, global judicial system” [2].
Comparison/ Positive Type 2 <i>Narrative Group</i>	Is intended either to demonstrate the superiority of Russia in comparison with other countries or to whitewash its negative characteristics through comparison	“First, we do not do this, unlike you. Do not judge others by yourself.”[3]; “But as usual – this is something that is true both for Russia and any other country in the world – there is not enough money to deal with what seems to be of the first importance” [4].
Comparison/ Negative <i>Narrative Group</i>	Reflect on ways to paint Russia in brighter light or deny wrongdoings by direct blame, emotional answer, or negative characterization	“Your presidents were not killed, or what? Have you forgotten about it? Where was Kennedy killed, in the USA or Russia? What happened to King...? You have many problems of your own.”[3]; “they themselves are doing exactly what they are accusing us of doing. This is unbelievable cynicism.”[5]

The Descriptions of "Self" Narratives

Narrative	Description	Examples
1990s Transition	Negative description of Russia in 1990-s	“Of course, some younger people do not remember or do not even know what was happening here in the 1990s and the early 2000s. So they cannot really compare it to the present situation.” [6]; “...But the government should not act like a bearded peasant idly picking at cabbage pieces in his beard and watching the state turn into a muddy puddle where oligarchs fish out goldfish for themselves, like it was in the 1990s or in Ukraine today.” [6]
Alternative	It embodies those ideals or models of international relations that Russia can offer. Presented as an alternative to Western hegemony	“There is also the so-called liberal idea, which has outlived its purpose.” [7]; “But we have gained unique experience, and I believe there is demand for it around the world.” [8]

Narrative	Description	Examples
Being First	It highlights Russia's superiority	“Clearly, we have overtaken all our, so to speak, partners and competitors in this sphere, and this fact is acknowledged by the experts.” [9]
Cooperative	It reflects Russia's willingness to cooperate even under harsh criticism	“If our partners wish, we are ready to develop active relations on a bilateral basis with any of the countries in the G7.” [10]; “We have common threats, as we wanted, and today we want, we strive to unite the efforts of all states of the world” [11].
Defensive	It emphasizes Russia's desire to protect itself and its population from external and internal threats	“What’s important for me is not to criticise Western values but to protect Russians from certain quasi-values that are very hard for our people to accept.” [12]; “Personally, I think that children should be left alone, they should be given an opportunity to grow up, to become aware of themselves and decide themselves who they are: men or women.” [13]
Depersonification	It attempts to reduce the emphasis on Vladimir Putin as a cornerstone or a symbol of Russia’s political system	“But this doesn’t mean that all is related to me. That’s an unsound opinion, a misconception. It’s not like that. On the contrary, absolutely not like that!” [14]
Disrespected	Russia is undermined/disrespected by other international actors	“I think that speculations about other countries, an attempt to speak disrespectfully about other countries is an attempt to prove one’s exceptionalism by contrast. In my view, that is a misguided position.” [15]; “They are walking all over us, chewing gum. They are just having fun.” [16]
Economic Power	It emphasizes Russia’s economic power and potential	“...But our economy – I can say this with full responsibility – has been able to adapt to external shock...” [5]; “But we are moving forward and will continue to do so. I am confident that we will build a strong, open and prosperous Russia.” [17]
Inclusive	It presents Russia as equal to other players that should be involved in IR	“Moreover, Russia does not aspire to be called a superpower, understanding that as a claim to world or regional hegemony.” [18]; “I Neither Russia nor its partners in the Customs Union and the Common Economic Space have any intention of imposing anything on anyone.” [19]
Lawfulness	It refers to Russia following the rule of law or established international norms	“..our position is that we will act within the framework of international law...” [20]; “I would like to say that the outcome of World War II is unchangeable and it has been fixed by a number of international legal documents.” [21]

Narrative	Description	Examples
Logical Concerns	It responds to criticism by accepting it as such with elements of mitigation, or a pragmatic/rational approach	“We have no shortage of problems of our own in this area and we ourselves are far from always finding effective solutions, even though we all live within one unified country”; [22] “As usual, a question arises: where is the money? Probably stolen. Or they miscalculated something when planning its construction.” [23]
Misrepresented	Russia is misrepresented by the West and the media	“Despite the attempts - your attempts, the attempts of your colleagues - to spoil our relations with the help of the media and anti-Russian propaganda, it seems to me that it still failed to be done the way you would like.” [11]; “Never mind, these are double standards and we have got accustomed and pay little attention to it.” [24]
Moral	It describes Russia’s “moral” characteristics: compassion, tolerance, and pursuit of justice.	“Russia is a multinational and multi-confessional country, and we feel a friendly atmosphere everywhere.” [25]; “After all, you cannot simply, say, listen to a telephone conversation, for example, in Russia - I can certainly tell you - without appropriate court sanctions” [24]
Natural Place	It highlights that Russia has or has to hold its natural place in IR	“We have failed to assert our national interests, while we should have done that from the outset. Then the whole world could have been more balanced.” [11]; “...to ensure unfettered movement forward and to strengthen our country from the inside, above all, so that it can take its rightful place in the international arena as an equal among equals.” [26]
Not Conflicting	It describes Russia as a country that will try to avoid confrontation by all means	“e are ready to do this in a non-confrontational manner, to look for compromise but, of course, based on international law, which must be understood uniformly by all.” [11]; “ussia has a peaceful foreign policy, and this is no exaggeration.” [27]
Persistent	Russia is not backing down on its promises	“What have they accomplished? Did they think we would just pack up and go? They could not have thought that of course, Russia is not that kind of country.” [28]
Responsive	It reflects passive, nonconflicting characteristics of how and why Russia acts in the world.	“We remember how it all started. Russia did not initiate the current breakdown, disruption, problems and sanctions. All our actions have been exclusively reciprocal.” [29]
Russian Necessity	It argues that the world and the actors need Russia	“I can say with no exaggeration that Russia makes a significant contribution to the settlement of the situation around the Iranian nuclear programme..” [30]

Narrative	Description	Examples
Slowly Changing	It reflects the desire of the state to solve problems gradually	“It is clear that we must really strive for de-offshorisation, and the measures to bring it about should be careful, civilised.” [31]; “But if we admit that there were mistakes in the past, why should the prospects [of an intervention] be considered infallible now? All this should make us think about why we must not rush into such decisions.” [32]
Sovereignty	Russia emphasizes sovereign rights' importance	“Such an independent policy pursued by Ankara to meet its national foreign policy interests deserves great respect.” [33]; “Second, coming back to Iran. It is not up to Russia to persuade Iran to leave Syria. After all, both Syria and Iran are sovereign countries, and they should build their own relationship.” [9]
Soviet Legacy	Negative description of the Soviet Past	“We have learned very well the lesson of one-party rule – that of the Communist Party (CPSU).” [15]; “The Moral Code of the Builder of Communism, if you read it, is just a pathetic copy of the Bible: Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife.” [12]
Strong Hand	It refers to certain characteristics of Russia, which could be described as ideas of authoritarian/centralized government	“Russia, as well as any other country, does not need dictators, but it needs equitable principles of organizing the state and society” [13] “Just like in the human body: if your immune resistance is down you immediately catch the flu. These bacilli and bacteria are seeded in the organism and reside there all the time but if the organism is strong you suppress the flu with your immunodefence.” [14]

The Descriptions of “Other” Narratives

Narrative	Description	Examples
Allies	It concerns building "self" through the demonstration of common interests, values, and goals with countries that can be considered like-minded or allied states	“Amid the continued increase in the production and export of Afghan drugs, it would make sense to increase the interaction of the SCO with specialised UN agencies and relevant international organisations. We are all interested in forming a broad anti-drug security belt in the region.” [34]
Betrayal	It focuses on events or actions that were made openly in violation of rules or agreements	“Sanctions are about something else entirely: the desire to halt Russia’s progress, to contain Russia. This policy of containing Russia has been pursued for decades, on and off. Now it is back.” [35]; “Regarding whom you can believe and whom you can’t, you shouldn’t believe anyone.” [36]

Narrative	Description	Examples
Conflictual	It describes others as initiating conflict for the same conflicts	“Firstly, we asked them not to withdraw from the treaty, not to destroy it. But the US pulled out. It was not us who did this but the US.” [35]; “At the same time, some of our partners demonstrate no desire to resolve the real international problems in the world today.” [37]
Cooperation	The second part of the “Politicians”, reinforces the idea that people inside foreign countries want to cooperate with Russia	“I think that ordinary Americans have absolutely nothing to do with it, they do not understand what is happening.” [1]; “We need to be heard by all of Ukraine’s people. We have no enemies in Ukraine. Let me say again that Ukraine is a friendly country.” [38]
Double Standards	It emphasizes different treatment of Russia or non-Western countries and others, predominantly Western	“Now I want to ask you this: if the Kosovans in Kosovo have the right to self-determination, why don’t the Crimeans have the same right?” [11]; “Well, they lecture everyone on how to live and on democracy. Now, do you really think presidential elections there are democratic?” [29]
Economically Weak	It describes others as economically insufficient	“The problem has a different nature, which was clearly shown by the crisis in certain European countries. The key word here is inefficiency.” [39]; “On the contrary I am even glad, to some extent, because the events have shown how risky and insecure investments in Western financial institutions can be.” [40]
Enemy Need	It implies that others require Russia as an enemy	“It is easier to say, “We are not to blame, the Russians are to blame, they interfered in our election, but we are good.” It reminds me of anti-Semitism...” [16]
Imposition	It characterizes the policies being influenced/imposed by the dominant power	“We also understand that identity and a national idea cannot be imposed from above, cannot be established on an ideological monopoly.” [41]
Irrational	It imposes irrational characterizations	“So, is there any logic here? No, there is none. This is just a pretext for taking additional action to contain Russia.” [26]; “This indicates the significant level of degradation among political elites in the West, including the United States. But I very much hope that common sense will prevail.” [42]
Morally weak	Rather a moral description of the behind-the-scenes decision-making of others; questioning of morality	“As far as democracy is concerned, the ruling classes usually talk about freedom to pull the wool over the eyes of those whom they govern.” [15];

Narrative	Description	Examples
Overestimated	It characterizes the U.S. and the West as overconfident	“That is his own opinion, as I also know his opinion that the American nation, the United States is unique. I cannot agree with either of those opinions.” [15]; “Respecting others’ interests means, as I said in my opening remarks, that you cannot just put the squeeze on others by using your exceptional economic or military clout.” [43]
Partners	It consists of a positive description of the West, appreciation of cooperation, and highlighting their achievements	“I think they were working away. Their intelligence is one of the best in the world. Let’s not start throwing criticism their way.” [44]; “I hope not, because American leaders, although we disagree on many positions, are nevertheless sensible people.” [45]
Pawns	It deprives other countries of the right to make independent decisions if they are consistent with US decisions	“How did the American NATO allies react? They all nodded away in docile agreement, without even bothering to analyse what was actually happening...” [46]; “Such a unipolar, standardised world does not require sovereign states; it requires vassals.” [41]
People	It describes Russia’s view on democracy in its traditional forms as a rule of a majority	“I should say that this is absolutely none of our business. This is the choice of the British people.” [22]; “It is important that the Cypriots themselves work out mutually acceptable solutions, without interference from outside.” [47]
Politically Weak	It describes others as politically weaker in comparison with Russia.	“The negotiators, our partners, are saying: well, we would be happy to do that, we did sign it, but the Congress does not let it through. So much for the decisions.” [48]
Politicians	It argues that it is not the people who want bad relations with Russia, but their governments	“America's creative approach to solving the problems the country is faced with, its openness and open-mindedness which make it possible to unleash the potential of the people” [13]; “in this case as an indication that a substantial part of the American people share similar views...It is good that there are people who sympathise with our views on traditional values.” [20]
Threat	It centered on the discussion of threats outside Russia.	“We are worried not about democracy on our borders, but about military infrastructure coming ever closer to our borders.” [45]
US Harsh Critics	It focuses on extensive criticism of the U.S.	“They just did not want to. They wanted to reign. So they sat on the throne. And then?.” [11]

Narrative	Description	Examples
US Mild Critics	It focuses on mild criticism of the U.S.	“Nobody listened to us! On the contrary, they thought we took an anti-Western position, a hostile stance towards the West. And now, when you have hundreds of thousands, already one million of refugees, do you think our position was anti-Western or pro-Western?” [11]; “Now, recently, the US also withdrew from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. It think it was a mistake, too, and that they could have gone a different path. I do understand the US concerns.” [49]

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