‘Sovereignty’ and ‘Intervention’
Metaphors of Russia’s Loneliness in a Global World

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Introduction

This chapter engages in debates about mapping the global from the perspective of contemporary Russian politics. It particularly focuses on the question of how the nexus between ‘sovereignty’ and ‘intervention’ has been articulated by Russian state and bureaucratic elites in their discourse on contemporary domestic and foreign affairs. Its main research question is: What do political metaphors of Russia’s ‘sovereignty’ and ‘intervention’ tell us about the mechanisms of the ‘organized politics of loneliness’, as a specific way of relating to (and imagining) the world, in contemporary Russia?

In relation to the subject of this volume I would, firstly, like to contribute to research on how (as indicated in the introduction) transnational connectivity is limited and even actively resisted by actors that foster the isolation of nation-states by appealing to border protection, anti-globalization resentment, and concepts of global enemies. Today this often occurs as part of the general claim for national sovereignty or what Seyla Benhabib (2016: 109) has criticized as ‘the new sovereigntism’. I argue that the Russian case adds to this general debate.

Secondly, I would also like to open up a discussion with several other contributors to this volume. For example, in his chapter Aziz Elmuradov asserts that Moscow’s recent conception of the global has largely been defined by an idea that the Western-led liberal world order is in decline and that, instead, Russia should call for a multipolar, pluralistic world with a ‘multiplicity of politico-cultural forms and multiple centers of international influence’ (Chebamkova 2017: 1). In this chapter I explore what the price paid by Russia for advancing such an ethical and ideological position in the international arena might be. For example, does Moscow’s rejection of universalism in-

evitably push Russian elites to ontologize the global 'loneliness' of Russia and other 'great civilizations' in the world arena? Should Russia practise self-help in order to protect its 'lonely sovereignty' in a hostile world? In the latter case, can Russia's declared 'geopolitical loneliness' (Surkov 2018) serve as a justification for interventionism and revisionist world politics, while civilizational dialogue de facto turns into a 'dialogue on our terms'?

My argument will proceed as follows. In the next section, I will explain the theoretical framework of my research, which is based on the idea of sovereignty as a symbolic structure (Jens Bartelson), and the link between 'sovereignty' and 'intervention' (Cynthia Weber). I will then explain the methodology of discourse analysis of political metaphors and how it can illuminate the 'politics of loneliness'. In the empirical part I will proceed to investigate the principal 2014 'Crimean speech' that sheds light on the discursive articulation of 'sovereignty' and 'intervention' within Russian politics.

Of course, before the 2014 Ukrainian crisis there was the 1990s crisis in Yugoslavia, the 2008 war in Georgia, the 2008–2009 campaign for the independence of Kosovo, and so on. However, before 2014 Russia usually managed to find 'global alliances' with several Western states. This was most evidently the case in Russia's joint opposition with France and Germany to the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. It was only after the conflict over Crimea that the West was unified in its decision to impose sanctions on Russia, prompting Russia to reply with countersanctions. The case of Crimea opened the floodgates to mutual accusations of interventionism. The disputes over the suspension of several Russian athletes from the Winter Olympic Games in PyeongChang, Russia's alleged intervention in the US elections, and the 2018 chemical weapons scandal in Salisbury constitute just a small number of cases out of many in this respect. Those countries who either abstained or stayed neutral with regard to Russia soon became key partners of Russian foreign policy within the BRICS alliance between Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, as well as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the RIC Forum linking Russia, India and China. The empirical analysis in this chapter will take the 'Crimean speech' as its starting point.

'Sovereignty' and 'intervention' as performative and discursive practices of the local and the global

In the literature it is quite common to problematize 'Westphalian' accounts of the nature of sovereignty as a myth of International Relations (IR) (Albert 2016: 118) and sovereignty itself as an 'essentially contested and essentially uncontested' (see Bartelson 1995) concept. Jens Bartelson (2014: 39) sees sovereignty as a symbolic form by which Westerners have perceived and organized their political world during the modern period. According to him, this 'fetishism of sovereignty' implies that today everything that can be constructed as a threat to domestic political order 'can be twisted into an argument for further interference and intervention in the name of the overarching objectives of international peace and order' (ibid.: 99). Consequently, the governmentalization of sovereignty has amounted to 'a stealthy rewriting of the *nomos* of Earth that has turned the modern international system into an empire in its own right' (ibid.). In other words, sovereignty reveals itself 'through the effects that it generates' (Epstein et al. 2018: 804), for which reason we need to theorize further on the performative nature of sovereignty.

As noted by Tanja Aalberts (2016), like any other concept the concept of 'sovereignty' is meant to structure the reality around us. However, behind this lies the more complex question of how 'sovereignty' actually corresponds to that empirical reality. Referring to the analytical philosophy of Wittgenstein, Aalberts points towards a performative nature of sovereignty. In her view, 'sovereignty' not only describes, but also *constitutes* a certain reality (ibid.: 184). Moreover, although sovereignty tends to be seen as the founding principle of the modern state, there is no comprehensive account of sovereignty that is universally applicable to all cases of statehood. In this chapter, I agree that the use of the concept of 'sovereignty' can act as a powerful figurative expression (ibid.: 195), performed within a practice of exercising political power, and also that 'sovereignty' can be interpreted and studied as a discursive practice (ibid.: 192).

The performative nature of sovereignty resides in the fact that it does not so much describe a reality, but rather is itself (political) action towards the construction of a reality. Performativity can also be manifested in an attempt to represent something that is conditional and conventional (like, for instance, modern Russian collective identity) as unconditional, natural, universal, or even as the only 'normal' political order. Cynthia Weber described this as the phenomenon of 'simulating sovereignty' and of 'performative states', where

ideas of sovereignty and legitimized interventions are mutually constituent. As Weber emphasized in relation to US invasions in the Caribbean, 'in the sovereignty/intervention pairing, it is sovereignty which serves as the foundational concept and intervention which is meaningful only in relation to sovereignty. The construction of sovereignty as both a guarantee of the meaning of intervention and as a term that is meaningful in and of itself is done by theorists' (Weber 1992: 201f.).

Drawing on works by Jean Baudrillard, Weber points out that the latter's notion of 'simulation' can also be applied to discourses of sovereignty and intervention, because 'just as in simulation no ultimate foundation exists to ground indicators, so too with discourses of sovereignty, no "domestic community" can be distinguished and made to serve as the foundation of sovereign authority within a state' (ibid.: 215). According to Weber, the only way for sovereignty not to be seen as referring only to itself is the existence of another category – the category of 'intervention'. Weber calls intervention 'an alibi' of sovereignty, because intervention always implies a violation of some sovereignty (ibid.: 215). She outlines two alternatives for states to speak on behalf of the source of sovereign authority. Both of them reflect attempts by states to exert effective control over political representations. The first alternative is a 'political' representation that involves a presumed exchange between the state and its citizenry. In this case, a citizenry 'authorizes the state to serve as its agent so long as the state honours its obligation to stand for and further the interests of that citizenry both domestically and internationally' (ibid.: 216). However, according to Weber, what makes this relationship between the state and its citizenry possible is a second type of representation, 'symbolic representation' understood as 'the act of portraying officialized myth […]. In this case, what is portrayed is the mystical source of sovereign authority, "the people". Symbolic representation is a strategy whereby the sovereign authority of the state is "written" or invented in a specific form which serves as the grounding principle of the state' (ibid.).

At the time (the early 1990s), Weber's ideas on the *simulation of sovereignty* were new in IR, but not in the social sciences more generally. From Judith Butler had already come the ideas that the power of language can performatively constitute identities in fantasy, and that, for example, 'genders can be neither true nor false, but are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity' (Butler 1990: 136). When we look at sovereignty as a set of discursive practices and symbolic representations, I suggest that political metaphors can become useful tools to unveil particular frames that

a speaker is enacting in order to gain the support of the social groups that he or she is addressing.

Metaphors of security as tools for framing the 'politics of loneliness'

In political philosophy the concept of 'loneliness' is often defined through its juxtaposition with 'solitude'. The former is considered to be a negative state, because it has to do with painful rejection of the individual. By contrast, the latter – solitude – is not driven by estrangement, but rather a positive notion, as through solitude we can attain more self-awareness or greater creativity (see also Akopov 2020). Hannah Arendt has explicitly drawn attention to this difference: 'the lonely man finds himself surrounded by others with whom he cannot establish contact or to whose hostility he is exposed. The solitary man, on the contrary, is alone and therefore 'can be together with himself' (Arendt 1994: 476). Some scholars replace the dichotomy between solitude and loneliness with a similar opposition between 'loneliness' and 'aloneness', agreeing that a person who is alone does not feel abandoned but rather is full of enthusiasm (Singh 1991: 111). In psychology, similarly, Clark Moustakas distinguished between productive 'true loneliness' and 'negative loneliness'. While the former is equivalent to our earlier definition of solitude, the latter is characterized as 'loneliness anxiety' and is accompanied by a system of defence mechanisms that distract people from dealing with their crucial life questions. Instead, loneliness anxiety motivates people to constantly seek activity with others (Moustakas and Moustakas 2004). Counterintuitively, public gatherings in large crowds may not be the most effective ways of coping with loneliness. Crowds can become lonely as well, and 'lonely crowd' societies are usually characterized by a high level of conformity and 'other-directed people' (Riesman et al. 2001).

The ultimate idea of this theoretical endeavour is 'to insert [loneliness] into the reading of international relations, a conception which has so far remained outside the analytical focus of IR theorists' in a very similar way to the one in which Felix Berenskoetter (2007: 647) described his aim to insert the concept of 'friendship' into IR theory. That appears logical not only because 'loneliness' is an emotion that ontologically grounds the need for friendship (both individually and collectively), but also because loneliness satisfies both criteria offered by Berenskoetter for concepts of international political the-

ory: presence within academic circles and public discourse, on the one hand, and the ability to grasp key features of social relations tied to their 'experiential content', on the other (ibid.). An example of the latter is the article 'The loneliness of the half-breed' published in 2018 by Vladislav Surkov, a former First Deputy Chief of the Russian Presidential Administration, in which he affirms the slogan of Russian Tsar Alexander III: 'Russia has only two allies: its army and navy', something he considers 'the best-worded description of the geopolitical loneliness which should have long been accepted as our fate' (Surkov 2018).

However, a detailed introduction to the concept of loneliness and what it means for IR discourse is beyond the scope of this chapter. Here, I want to focus on a more recent case of the 'politics of loneliness', and specifically on how sovereignty and intervention have been vocalized by Russian state elites in their discourse on Russia's identity since the so-called 'Crimean spring' (2014). Put briefly, the 'politics of loneliness' can be linked to the idea, explained in the previous section, of the performative nature of sovereignty. In my understanding, the political discourse on sovereignty can play a performative function by absorbing the collective loneliness of the local community and redirecting it towards an 'external enemy' (or threat) in the global community. Most often it is done to strengthen vertical state control and to centralize power 'in the name of the nation' (Laruelle 2009) or 'state-civilization' (Tsygankov 2016). This securitization occurs through the means of language – specifically by means of metaphors that allow us to bridge claims for the defence of national sovereignty and justifications of interventionism in world politics.

These so-called 'metaphors of security' became an effective unit of analysis to study Russia's 'puzzling' collective political subconscious (see Chilton 1996: 47). Here I am interested not in random metaphors, but rather those that can be observed within well-established frames of political communication and channels of political mobilization. For example, those that unpack widespread anxieties, traumas or nostalgia for Russia's lost greatness (see Samokhvalov 2017). By exploring metaphors, we literally let the language of Russian official discourse speak for itself, allowing tropes to take us beneath the surface of rational ad hoc argumentation, towards the unknown mechanisms of the emotional construction of social solidarity (Bleiker and Hutchison 2014), the organization of hate (Ahmed 2004), or the hidden depths of affective political communities (Hutchison 2016), which help to reveal how the Russian political community envisages the link between national and global politics.

Certainly, the language of official discourse cannot speak on behalf of all Russians. It cannot reflect perspectives and positions regarding the 'world making' of the entire Russian community. However, it can at least mirror certain trends in public opinion and help to reproduce key frames and perspectives. This is not a new idea, particularly if we relate such an investigation of political metaphors to classical frame analysis, which explains conceptual frames as ways of organizing experience and structuring an individual's perception of society and identity. According to Erving Goffman, the manner in which the role is performed 'will allow for some "'expression" of personal identity' (Goffman 1986: 573). Therefore, for Goffman, there is a relation between persons and roles that 'answers to the interactive system – to the frame – in which the role is performed and the self of the performer is glimpsed' (ibid.).

Originally the idea of frames came to Gregory Bateson, who was observing fighting games between monkeys in the San Francisco Zoo. He believed that the monkeys exchanged metacommunicative signals, letting other members of the group know whether a particular fight was a 'fight for real' or rather a 'game-fight' for fun. We can, probably, find similarities between how monkeys exchange their metacommunicative signals and how politicians frame their rhetoric towards potential voters by using metaphors as signals to indicate how much their fight for national sovereignty is a 'fight for real'. In other words, a widely accepted political metaphor can become a 'metacommunicative frame' outside of which a speaker's messages may be simply ignored (Bateson 1987: 193).

Like Goffman and Bateson, George Lakoff (see Lakoff and Johnson 1980) also explored framing as a strategy in political communication promoting specific interpretations of political reality. According to Lakoff, frames determine our opinions and values as mental structures that influence our thinking, often unconsciously. That is because communication itself comes with a frame. There is an important connection between frames and metaphors. Authors suggest that metaphors are very important cognitively because they are widely used to convey personal meaning and worldmaking. For example, what Lakoff and Johnson described as a 'conduit metaphor': a speaker can put ideas or objects into words or containers and then send them along a channel, or 'conduit', to a listener who takes that idea or object out of the container and makes her own meaning of it (see ibid.).

Why do some 'conduit metaphors' connected with security generate real emotional resonance among their recipients while others entirely misfire? Based on Lakoff and Johnson, we could suggest that this happens when pow-

erful metaphors become assets that allow a variety of ways to make meaning for a significant portion of the politically mobilized population. The sense of loneliness, anxiety, trauma and nostalgia for the great past becomes a perfect reservoir that can be drawn on to construct metaphors of securitization, while the latter can cumulatively shore up new social alignments that create new political realities. In this chapter I suggest that political metaphors should be considered as metacommunicative signals targeted towards the (direct/indirect) reactivation of different frames of 'loneliness anxiety' in the social imaginary of Russian citizens. Or, as Russian scholar Olga Malinova (2012: 4) puts it, political leaders expect that their arguments will fit particular frames to provoke a desirable reaction from the audience, which is limited by the established semantic repertoires. For Lakoff (2006) the elements of the communication frame include the following: a message, an audience, a messenger, a medium, images and a context. In our case, such a 'message' will be a Russian official discourse of sovereignty; the audience – government servants and those members of the Russian population who consume this discourse; the medium – the Russian president, who articulates images and metaphors that will become the subject of our discourse analysis in the next section.

Discourse analysis of metaphors of 'sovereignty' and 'intervention' in the 'Crimean speech'

As discussed in the section above, we are looking at political metaphors of security that frame sovereignty in a way that helps to absorb, deploy and redirect the collective emotion of 'loneliness anxiety', which can also be used for the justification of interventionism. If, following Weber, we consider justified intervention as 'an alibi' of sovereignty, then, in the case of modern Russia, it is logical to pick as a starting point for discourse analysis the 2014 'Crimean speech'. The first step is to look at the speech and distinguish metaphors of sovereignty and intervention that reveal how Russian elites envisaged both *the global* and *the national* (local). To synthesize these metaphors, I will use a technique of initial active coding derived from the methods of grounded theory. In grounded theory it is recommended to test whether the developed codes are representative. Thus, in a second step (next section) I test this speech against other speeches, undertaking a systematic analysis among the pool of all the Official Addresses of the Russian president to the Federal Assembly (1994–2020).[1] I will suggest that the identified metaphors offer an indication

of the particular ways in which Russian elites construct 'symbolic representations' of sovereignty in order to make an authoritative claim to represent the Russian people in local and global affairs. A final graph will help to discuss the results in a comparative perspective in the conclusion.

The 'Crimean speech' was made on March 18, 2014 in the Kremlin, where the Russian President addressed the Russian parliament. I have used that speech to create twenty 'open' codes of 'sovereignty':

a) Integration, gathering together (*sobiranie*); Reunification of Russia regardless of the opposition of the West; Primordial unity of Slavic countries (panslavism); Ancient Rus as a common heritage; Inseparability of Crimea from Russia.
b) Glorification of Russian military (for example, historical victories in Crimea).
c) Soviet 'sovereignty parade' as a negative phenomenon.
d) Victimization of Russian nation as being forcefully divided and historically split apart. Metaphor of '*the sack of potatoes*' as symbol of lack of recognition of Russian-speaking diaspora.
e) Speculating on Russia's trauma of the 1990s.
f) (Relative) deprivation of Russia's population.
g) Opposition between the suffering ordinary people and irresponsible elites and highly paid 'global nomads'.
h) Unmasking and unveiling of nationalism (case of conflict in Ukraine); References to fascism and WWII.
i) President as a protector of ordinary people, who 'does not abandon his men' (paternalism).
j) '*The elastic spring*' metaphor – Russian resilience and need to be assertive; Sovereignty and self-determination; Sovereignty as immunity from the West.
k) Importance of maintaining political stability and seeking world order within the system of the UN.
l) Soft power and foreign intervention via 'colour revolutions'.
m) Sarcasm and hypocrisy of the West; Condemning exceptionalism of the USA.
n) Gratefulness to the countries of the East / BRICS for support for Crimea becoming Russian.
o) '*Keeping our house in order*' metaphor (political and legal order in Russia).

p) Collectivism and collective will; Solidarity and 'spiritual bracing' (*'duhovnie skrepi'*).
q) Russia facing a threat from the 'fifth column' *('this disparate bunch of "national traitors"'*).
r) Legal aspects of sovereignty (Case of Kosovo, Ukraine's illegal revolt, Crimean Referendum etc.).
s) Ungratefulness of the West.
t) People as the ultimate source of every authority and sovereignty.

Following the logic of building grounded theory I synthesized and reorganized these twenty initial codes into six groups (constellations): the three first groups (1–3) represent metaphors of 'sovereignty', while the second three (4–6) represent 'justified interventions'. I illustrate them below:

The first group I brought together under the metaphor *the defender of ordinary people*. This trope accentuates the 'loneliness anxiety' of citizens seeking the paternalistic protection of a strong leader: 'We *could not abandon* Crimea and its residents in distress. This would have been a *betrayal* on our part' (Putin 2014). After that accumulated collective emotion can be redirected to construct perceptions about the outside world: 'However, what do we hear from our colleagues in Western Europe and North America? They say we are violating norms of international law. Firstly, it's a good thing that they at least remember that there exists such a thing as international law – better late than never' (ibid.). Defending the common people and, in their name, defending political stability against the hypocrisy of political elites (i) can be expressed in the Russian catch phrase 'we do not abandon our men' (*'mi svoih ne brosaem'*).

The second group of symbolic representations falls under the metaphor of *spiritual ties* for national unification (p). Here the primordial unity of Slavic countries and panslavism (a) in general play a key role in promoting the historical civilizational unity of three Slavic countries 'where Prince Vladimir was baptized. His spiritual feat of adopting Orthodoxy predetermined the overall basis of the culture, civilization and human values that unite the peoples of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus' (ibid.). Russia is being threatened by a 'fifth column' (q) that may put its *unity under threat* – a valuable language tool to justify the need for sacral sacrifice in the best traditions of the scapegoating mechanism when violence can be diverted onto another (external) object, 'something it can sink its teeth into' (Girard 1979: 4). The (re)unification of Russia, along with the recovery of its national sovereignty (a) (regardless of how this might complicate its international relations) and the glorification of

its military, plays a key role here (b). It appropriates nostalgia for lost self-esteem and national pride: 'This is also Sevastopol – a legendary city with an outstanding history […] Crimea is Balaklava and Kerch, Malakhov Kurgan and Sapun Ridge. Each one of these places is dear to our hearts, symbolizing Russian *military glory* and outstanding valor' (Putin 2014).

Thirdly, the *house in order* metaphor unites under a single frame codes like the importance of domestic *stability* (o) and how the world's stability is being challenged by the decline of the UN (k). Stability should be achieved, according to Putin, via the collective will of the people as the ultimate source of legitimacy (s): '*We see* that the overwhelming majority of people in Crimea and the absolute majority of the Russian Federation's people support the *reunification* of the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol with Russia … because the people are the ultimate source of all authority (ibid.). The expression 'we see' plays a performative role here, symbolically uniting into a single political body the president and 'his men', so that neither of them feel themselves to be 'lonely' anymore.

The fourth group redirects claims to sovereignty towards justified interventionism, employing an allegory of *the elastic spring*. That includes codes for Russian resilience, the need to be assertive against the West/NATO, or immunity from the West (j) coupled with sarcasm over Western exceptionalism (m). An image that threatens Western partners with a Russian 'spring' that will strike back at them is emblematic in that sense: 'They are constantly trying *to sweep us into a corner* because we have an independent position […]. But there is a limit to everything. And with Ukraine, our western partners have crossed the line, *playing the bear* and acting irresponsibly and unprofessionally' (ibid.). The metaphor of 'playing the bear' gives away another psychological mechanism – comparative victimization: 'After all, they were fully aware that there are millions of Russians living in Ukraine and in Crimea […] Russia found itself in a *position it could not retreat from*. If you compress *the spring* all the way to its limit, it will *snap back hard*' (ibid.).

The fifth group I marked under Putin's metaphor of *the sack of potatoes* (d), which speaks directly to Russia's 'geopolitical loneliness' described earlier. Regretting the marginalization and division of the Russian nation, the president noted: 'Millions of people went to bed in one country and awoke in different ones, becoming ethnic minorities overnight […] while the Russian nation became one of the biggest, if not the biggest, ethnic group in the world to be *divided* by borders' (ibid.). Criticizing Russia for its lack of assertiveness in world politics, he added: 'I heard residents of Crimea say that back in 1991

they were handed over *like a sack of potatoes*. This is hard to disagree with. And what about the Russian state? […] It humbly accepted the situation' (ibid.). In this group I also placed codes like speculating on Russia's trauma of the 1990s (e) and the further victimization of the Russian nation as being forcefully split apart (d). They seem to be based on an idea of Russia's relative deprivation (f).

Finally, the sixth group – the idea of '*moral debt (duty)*' – is based on the ungratefulness of the West to Russia (t). It addresses Russia's sense of alienation and isolationism from the negative 'Other', but perhaps also what Aziz Elmuradov in his chapter to this book describes as a deep, historically rooted sense of insecurity, which results in Moscow's permanent demand for a great leader ('*vozhd*') and 'great power politics'. According to Putin, the actions of the West were aimed against Ukrainian, Russian and Eurasian integration, despite Russia's attempts to engage in dialogue with the West. Instead of reciprocal steps 'they have lied to us many times, made decisions behind our backs […]. This happened with NATO's expansion to the East, as well as the deployment of military infrastructure at our borders. They kept telling us the same thing: "Well, this does not concern you". That's easy to say …' (ibid.). Below we can compare how the 'ungratefulness of the West to Russia' contrasts with Russia's 'gratefulness to the East' (n): 'We are grateful to the people of China, whose leaders have always considered the situation in Ukraine and Crimea by taking into account the full historical and political context, and greatly appreciate India's reserve and objectivity' (ibid.).

The six key metaphors of Russian sovereignty and justified intervention identified above remain instrumental for our further investigation. As we can see, the first three groups are meant to accumulate and absorb domestic 'loneliness anxiety', and the last three aim to redirect it towards envisioning *the global* (West and East). A further round of saturations is needed to see whether the initial coding of these six metaphors and, most importantly, the mechanisms of the 'politics of loneliness' that they contain, has any relevance to a wider cache of speeches to the parliament.

Metaphors of 'sovereignty' and 'justified intervention' in the annual addresses of Russian presidents (1994–2020)

Since 1994 the Russian president has delivered an address to the Russian parliament almost every year, outlining major plans for the county's development in the upcoming year. His listeners usually number around 1300 people:

members of the Federation Council and Russian government, deputies of the State Duma, heads of the constitutional and supreme courts, the governors of Russian regions, heads of the Russian Orthodox Church and major media outlets, and so on. The 1994–2020 collection of speeches to the Russian parliament looks like a valid pool against which we can test the symbolic representations of Russian sovereignty that we identified earlier in order to build more grounded conclusions about the 'politics of loneliness'.

In Table 8.1 I have systemized every mention of 'sovereignty' or 'sovereign' in the annual addresses of three Russian presidents. After each year I have provided in brackets abbreviations of the names of the Russian presidents; for example, '1994 (BY)' for speeches of Boris Yeltsin, '2000 (VP)' for Vladimir Putin and '2008 (DM)' for Dmitry Medvedev.

Table 8.1 Employment of 'sovereignty' in 1994–2018 addresses of Russian presidents

Year	№	Representation of sovereignty inside and outside Russia
1994 (BY)	6	*Inside:* Sovereignty of the multinational people of Russia granted by its constitution that should protect their equality (1) and guaranteed by Russian armed forces that protect territorial integrity (2) *Outside:* Problem of building united monetary system with Belarus (3); if necessary defending Russia's legitimate interests 'firmly and harshly' (4); Russia is not required to request permission from the world community for its UN peacekeeping operations within the CIS (5); in relation to European security – against the expansion of NATO without Russia (6)
1995 (BY)	15	*Inside:* Ensure sovereignty, independence and unity of Russia (1); sovereignty and need to overcome crisis improving the quality of life (2); sovereignty and building proper federalism and municipal management (3–4), sovereignty against separatism (5); sovereignty vs. 'banditism' in Chechnya as loss of territorial integrity and power fragmentation (6–13); defending sovereignty (14) and the stability of state borders (15)
1996 (BY)	6	*Inside:* Sovereignty of nationalist movements led to the fall of the USSR (1) while 'paralysed' Russia could not become a 'foothold' against nationalism of former USSR republics (2); President Boris Yeltsin protects Russian people as source of real sovereignty in 1993 conflict with the Supreme Council (3); satisfaction that finally in 1991–1993 the Soviet 'parade of sovereignties' was channelled into the Federal Treaty of Russia (4) *Outside:* Alma-Ata agreements on the creation of CIS from sovereign states (5); tendency for integration prevails now over the former 'run-away' of some CIS S. states (6)

1997 – 1998 (BY)	0	
1999 (BY)	2	*Inside:* Russian sovereignty declaration underpins new Russian parliamentary tradition (1) *Outside:* Protecting sovereignty vs solving problems by force, with methods 'from the Stone Age' (2)
2000 (VP)	2	*Inside:* 'Challenge for Russian state sovereignty' vs global terrorism getting inside the country, but also aspiring geopolitical recomposition of the world (in case of Chechnya) (1) *Outside:* Attempts to infringe upon the sovereign rights of post-Soviet states under the guise of 'humanitarian interventions' (2)
2001 - 2005 (VP)	0	
2005 (VP)	4	*Inside:* Our values determine our sovereignty and we will stay strong (1); Russia chose democracy itself and decides how/when to build it itself (2); gratitude to soldiers defending sovereignty during WWII (3) *Outside:* those who 'buried' sovereignty of Russia ahead of time made a mistake (4)
2006 (VP)	0	
2007 (VP)	3	*Inside:* National spiritual unity as grounds for sovereignty (1); 'State sovereignty is also determined by cultural criteria', wrote D. Likhachev (2) *Outside:* We will only be able to preserve our statehood and sovereignty if our citizens see, feel, and are confident that all the state's efforts of are aimed at protecting their vital interests – improving their lives, improving their welfare and safety (3)
2008 (DM)	1	*Inside:* Any 'reformatory itching' is inappropriate, Sovereignty of people and constitution should remain intact for a long time
2009 (DM)	0	
2010 (DM)	1	*Outside:* the size of sovereign debt is minimal. The level of Russia's international reserves today is significantly higher than it was at the end of 2008
2011 (DM)	0	

2012 (VP)	5	*Inside:* Not disruption of sovereignty but continuity in Russia's political development, promotion of direct democracy, including people's initiatives via the Internet online (1) *Outside:* Russia should remain sovereign and influential in C21st world, keeping its national and spiritual identity (2); Sovereignty as strong diplomacy and military might (3); To be sovereign we should multiply and be younger, more creative and morally better (4); Unity, integrity and S. of Russia vs separatism, nationalism, Russian sovereignty vs outside intervention including through foreign agents (5)
2013 (VP)	1	*Outside:* Russia will aim for leadership in defending international law, seeking respect for national sovereignty, independence and the unique identity *(samobitnost')* of its peoples
2014 (VP)	7	*Inside:* This year we overcame hardships together proving that we are a mature nation, a really sovereign and strong state, that can defend its compatriots (1) and respect the sovereignty of Ukraine (2-3) *Outside:* Russian sovereignty vs. sovereignty loss by states in Europe (4–5); Sovereignty vs dissolving, getting lost in the world (6) *Outside:* Eurasian Union as integration, based on keeping national identity of its states (7)
2015 (VP)	0	
2016 (VP)	1	*Outside:* Sovereignty as unity based on patriotic values vs. sanctions against Russia
2018 (VP)	1	*Outside:* Technological delay as loss of sovereignty that is equivalent to the loss of economic energy
2019 (VP)	3	*Outside:* Russia has been and always will be a sovereign and independent state (1). It will either be that, or will simply cease to exist. Unlike some countries, without sovereignty Russia cannot be a state (2). For the first time our reserves fully cover not only the sovereign debt (3), but also private borrowings.
2020 (VP)	5	*Inside:* The opinion of our citizens, as the main source and bearers of sovereignty (5) must be decisive. *Outside:* Russia can be and can remain Russia only as a sovereign state (1). Our nation's sovereignty must be unconditional (2); National citizenship to be an obligatory requirement for those who hold positions of critical significance for national security and sovereignty (3); The 2020 amendments to the Russian constitution will help to create a solid system that will be absolutely stable in terms of its external contours and will securely guarantee Russia's independence and sovereignty (4).

I then attributed each mention of sovereignty to one of six above-mentioned metaphors and calculated their total number. Cases that I could not ascribe to any of these groups I assigned the label '*other frames*'. Following the logic of R.B.J. Walker, I have split these metaphors into '*internal*' and '*external*' ones, applying Walker's (1993: 159) famous 'inside/outside' dualism of 'order' vs 'anarchy'. As we remember from Weber (1992: 201), discourses of sovereignty imply discourses of (legitimate/justified) interventions. Looking at the three 'internal' metaphors in the left column, we can see that they can be coupled with justifications of 'external' interventions in the right column (Table 8.2).

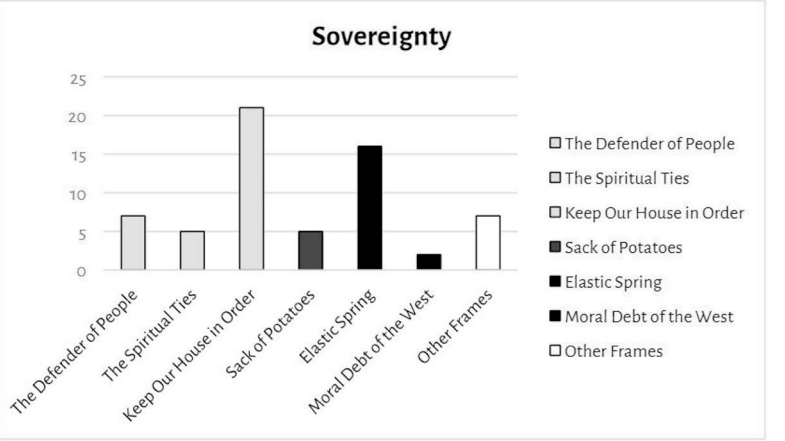
Table 8.2 Numbers of symbolic representations of Russian sovereignty 1994–2020 projected onto 'internal' and 'external' political communities

Sovereignty projected onto the national sphere (Inside)	**Sovereignty projected onto the global (Outside)**
'The defender of (the will and voices of) the common people' being victimized – 7	Russian diaspora treated as a 'sack of potatoes' – 5
'The spiritual ties' of Russia – 5	'The elastic spring' of Russian resistance – 16
The need to 'keep our house in order' – 21	'Moral debt' of the 'ungrateful West' – 2
Other – 3	Other – 4

This coupling seems logical: the metaphor of *the defender of common people* can be redirected towards the need to protect the mistreated *Russian diaspora abroad*. Once unified by its *spiritual ties*, Russia can be mobilized (like an *elastic spring*) into resistance to the Western liberal world order. Finally, the commitment to *keep our own house in order* is mutually supportive of the obligation not to trust the hypocrisy of the *ungrateful West*. The results of Table 8.2 are again graphically displayed in Figure 8.1.

Generally, the six metaphors mentioned above relate to the utilization of sovereignty in the texts of the 1994–2020 addresses of Russian presidents, though to different degrees. Figure 8.1 shows that 21 mentions of the term 'sovereignty' fall within the symbolic frame '*keep our house in order*'. This is a rather wide symbolic pool in which we can emphasize the representation of sovereignty as building strong centralized federalism and opposition to separatism, 'banditism' and the loss of territorial integrity (alluding to the two Russian wars in Chechnya). Another noteworthy aspect is the close link between claims for sovereignty and the idea of a strong Russian state (*derzhava*),

Figure 8.1 Metaphors of 'sovereignty' in addresses of Russian presidents 1994–2020



as well as its financial independence from foreign creditors (see, for instance, Medvedev's declaration in 2010 that Russia's 'sovereign debt is minimal').

The second most numerous group is *the elastic spring* of Russian resistance, with 16 examples. While the previous group largely related to justifications of 'internal' interventions (like wars in Chechnya), *the elastic spring* expresses how Russia envisages 'justified interventions' in its 'external' relations, in particular, concerns about 'humanitarian interventions' and accusations that NATO controls European countries for whom 'possessing sovereignty is too much of a luxury' (see Table 8.2).

According to Figure 8.1, the metaphors '*defender of common people*' (seven mentions) and '*spiritual ties*' (five mentions) were almost equally influential**.** The latter relates to the sovereignty of the Russian state and its leadership of the spiritual unity of the Russian nation, based on the preservation of its unique civilizational identity. The former is more concerned with the representation of the president as a main defender of the interests of 'common folk'. For example, in 1993 Boris Yeltsin (1993) 'protected the interests of the Russian people' in his conflict with The Supreme Council, which 'acted against the will of the people'. In a comparable way, in 2014 Vladimir Putin (also in patriotic unity with the people) defended Russian interests in conflict with NATO and against the sanctions imposed by the West.

Metaphors representing the Russian diaspora abroad, treated as a '*sack of potatoes*' (five examples), usually refer to them as compatriots (*sootechestvenniki*), whether they live in Latvia, Estonia or Ukraine. References to the '*moral debt of the ungrateful West*' (two mentions) emphasize the notion of the West's long-expected attempt to break down Russian statehood and sovereignty. Both narratives started to evolve in Russian discourse during the first term of Putin's presidency. For instance, back in 2005 he said, in relation to the task of 'keeping state sovereignty': 'It seemed to many that our young democracy was not a continuation of Russian statehood, but its final collapse. That it was just a prolonged agony of the Soviet system. Those who thought this way made a mistake' (Poslanie Prezidenta 2005).

In 2007, in Munich, Putin developed this idea, claiming that the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) had degenerated into 'a vulgar instrument designed to promote the foreign policy interests' of Western states alone (Putin 2007). According to the Russian president, 'it is obvious that such interference does not promote the development of democratic states at all […]. We expect that the OSCE be guided by its primary tasks and build relations with sovereign states based on respect, trust and transparency' (ibid.). In 2014 Putin was already pursuing a similar line of argumentation by condemning the 2008–2009 interventions in Kosovo and US exceptionalism, which 'prefers not to be guided by international law' but rather 'by the rule of the gun' (Putin 2014). 'Here and there, they use force against sovereign states […]. To make this aggression look legitimate, they force the necessary resolutions from international organizations, and if for some reason this does not work, they simply ignore the UN Security Council and the UN overall' – a narrative later used by Putin to deflect US criticism of Russia's intervention in Crimea.

Eventually this logic grew into the full-scale opposition of Russia to the 'global West': despite many efforts of 'those who in the past 15 years have tried to accelerate an arms race and seek unilateral advantage against Russia' they still have not 'managed to restrain Russia' (Poslanie Prezidenta 2018). The passage above demonstrates that symbolic representations of the *moral debt of the ungrateful West* and *the elastic spring* are interconnected. Pointing to this interconnectedness is valuable for explaining the 'politics of loneliness'.

Russia's 'lonely' sovereignty: conclusion and discussion

The word 'sovereignty' or 'sovereign' was used 63 times in the addresses of Russian presidents to the Russian parliament between 1994 and 2020. In his Official Address to the Federal Assembly on 15 January 2020, the Russian president used the word sovereignty six times (more than in any of the speeches in the previous years). 'Sovereignty' in that speech was related to different subjects: the sovereignty of the 'Russian state', the 'unconditional' sovereignty of the Russian nation, sovereignty as a 'guarantee of national security and independence', sovereignty and social opinion as a 'source of power' (Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly 2020). Given the manifold ways in which sovereignty has established itself in the world of Russian political discourse we can pose the question: What is the reason for the constant return to sovereignty by different Russian presidents?

One of the approaches to answer this question is to treat 'sovereignty' as a 'floating signifier', 'an object presupposed by hegemonic articulatory logics' (Laclau 2000: 75); but what makes one 'floating signifier' more powerful than another? A second approach looks at 'sovereignty' as a symbolic form (Bartelson 2014), but a symbolic form of what? Or, perhaps, sovereignty can be approached as a tool for mediation between an authoritarian political regime and the perceptions of a given populace, where 'going outside the regime is not an option' (Gill 2015: 28, 50). But what makes the populace trust the narrative of the regime? Without disregarding the three approaches mentioned above, in this research I was testing Weber's (1998: 92) idea that political speeches 'may be analysed as performative enactments of a state's sovereignty'. My discourse analysis aimed not just to show how metaphors of security become political representations of Russia's sovereignty, but also how they reflect the perceptions of Russian elites on the nexus between *the national (local)* and *the global* – the subject of investigation in this volume.

The findings of this research seem to indicate multiple interconnections between a group of metaphors that play the role of containers for the accumulation of political support inside the local community and a (second) group that redirects and diverts the 'fear and anxieties' of the national populace towards construction of the image of a hostile global environment (in particular, towards the anti-Russian conspiracy of the hostile West). There is something very existential that plays the role of a 'floating signifier' of Russian sovereignty and stands behind its symbolic form, functioning as a mediation tool between Russia's authoritarian politics and its populace. It is hard to say

for sure what that is, but, as I have tried to explore in the discussion above, it seems credible to suppose that Surkov's narrative of 'Russia's geopolitical loneliness' is not as innocent and accidental as it may sound.

Once we insert loneliness into Russia's puzzling equation between claims for its national sovereignty and justification of its outside interventionism, it looks as if our circle can be squared. Surkov compares Russia's cultural and geopolitical identity with that of someone born into a mixed-race family: 'Russia is a Western–Eastern half-breed nation. With its double-headed statehood, hybrid mentality, intercontinental territory and bipolar history, it is charismatic, talented, beautiful and lonely. Just as a half-breed should be' (Surkov 2018). The image of 'lonely Russia' created by Surkov mirrors all six metaphors of Russian sovereignty identified in this research. Russia is independent and assertive (*the elastic spring* metaphor), Russian-speaking people are divided and victimized (*the sack of potatoes*). That explains the demand for Russia's unity through shared *spiritual ties* as well as the idea of stability and *order in our house*. Last but not least is the symbolic representation of the Russian president who *defends and does not abandon his men* against the hypocrisy of the *ungrateful West*. The latter perfectly fits into the conclusion reached by the former main ideologist of the Kremlin: 'What will the forthcoming loneliness look like? Will it be the loneliness of a middle-aged bachelor at the edge of the dance floor? Or the happy loneliness of the front-runner, an alpha nation that has made rapid headway to leave all other peoples and states far behind?' (Surkov 2018).

How can 'lonely sovereignty' justify intervention? In my view, it makes sense even on the level of our daily life. When we feel anxiety about being lonely, we can justify to ourselves things that others would find hard to accept. Notably, the same can happen with collective 'loneliness anxiety': loneliness can be fantasized as a sacral sacrifice for staying true to our home community and national identity, even if it is the price to be paid for alienation from the global world.

Notes

1 All the texts of the Official Addresses of the Russian president to the Federal Assembly (1994–2020) were retrieved from the Russian Legal database 'Consultant Plus' (http://www.consultant.ru).