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Othering in the Olympics

Russia's identity discourse during the Winter Olympics

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Abstract

Through the use of discourse analysis, this study examines how Russian identity claims have changed during increased tension with the West and to what extent it is noticed in the political arena of the Winter Olympics. The material consists of speeches and statements from leaders in the Russian government and the theoretical framework is based on Iver Neumann's and Tzvetan Todorov's theories on Othering. The purpose of the study is to further understand changes in Russia's identity rhetoric about the Self and the Other in the three latest Winter Olympics. The study determines that Russia's identity rhetoric has changed drastically during the three Games. Russia's value judgement of the Other seems to have gone from desirable to despicable, moreover, the Winter Olympics seem to reflect the increased tension and detachment from the West. The Winter Olympics appear to constitute a political tool to steer and strengthen constructions of identities and the study determines that Russia increasingly manifests the West and especially the US as enemies.

Key words: Othering, Winter Olympics, Russia, West, US, US-Russia relations, Self, discourse analysis, identity

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1 Introduction

It is war minus the shooting.

George Orwell, *The Sporting Spirit*, 1945

Referring to international sports in the quote above, George Orwell was the first to draw close connections between modern sports and warfare (Beck, 2013: 73). Orwell claimed that sports had developed an immense symbolic value and had become a vivid manifestation of a nation on the world stage (Beck, 2013: 86). Indeed, sporting mega events still pose a massive opportunity for countries to share viewpoints and narratives. Moreover, they play an important role in imagining communities and what constitutes one's country in relation to others (Persson, 2013: 15).

The Winter Olympics attracts mostly northern countries. Thus, it is an influential sports event that mainly appeals to Russia and the Western world. During the Cold War, the Winter Olympics served as an important ideological front. For Russia, sports have been an immense source of national pride (Dichter, 2018) as well as an influential piece of propaganda (Ioffe, 2017). Since the end of the Cold War, the Winter Olympics has maintained its strong position within the world of sporting mega-events. Meanwhile, Russia's relations with the West has gone from promising to beyond bad. By the time of the 2018 Olympics in Pyeongchang, US-Russia relations were perceived by some pundits as the worst since the end of the Cold War (DeYoung, 2018, Ayres 2017). In early 2018, Dmitry Trenin, head of the Moscow Carnegie Centre, said that the US and Russia were at war in all but the military aspect (Carroll, 2018). Moreover, the US Secretary of Defence, Jim Mattis, stated in January 2018 that China and Russia posed larger threats to the US than terrorism (Taylor, 2018). Relations have since escalated even further (Dangerfield, 2018). By analysing identity discourses during the three latest Winter Olympics this study aims to explicate changes in identity claims during a time of escalating conflict in an arena that is influential but traditionally not seen as political.

For Russia, the three latest Winter Olympics have varied immensely. The Olympic Games in Vancouver 2010 was a rather ordinary one for Russia as they did not have a central role in it. In 2014 Russia hosted the Sochi Olympics. This was the most expensive Olympics of all time and also one of the most controversial ones (Geere, 2014). Russia spared no expense in its quest to impress the world, however, in the final days of the Sochi Olympics Russia annexed Crimea which radically changed the country's relations with the West. A couple of years later Russia was not only the subject of substantial sanctions from the West, moreover, they were accused of interfering in several Western elections. A full-on information war had developed between Russia and the US. When South Korea hosted the 2018 Olympics in Pyeongchang, Russia was once again in the spotlight. This time in the role of an outcast as the state was accused of involvement in one of the largest doping scandals of all time. Russian athletes were banned from competing under the Russian flag. Russia on its part blamed the US for inventing the scandal and trying to alienate

Russia from the rest of the world. In summary, the role of Russia in the three latest Olympic Games has been highly diverse; in one they were merely another competing nation, in one they were the centre of attention and in another they were the outcast. The diversity of the cases can demonstrate different takes on the Winter Olympics as a political arena. Moreover, these three Games took place during a period of time when Russia's relations to the Western world were changing rapidly.

Considering the above, the exact research question is:

How has the Russian identity discourse changed during the increase of tension with the West in the past few years?

The purpose of the study is to further understand Russia's identity discourse during a time of increased tension in the context of the Winter Olympics as a political arena. Specifically, the study aims to analyse changes in the Russian identity discourse about the Self and the Other during three consecutive Olympic Games (2010, 2014, 2018) and how this can be connected to the increased tension with the West.

The politicization of sport is salient from a political science perspective, more so the study is relevant for peace and conflict studies in particular because of its aim to further comprehend how constructions of identity can aid in understanding the growing conflict between Russia and the West. This can help us prevent the situation from escalating and can explicitly be connected to the fundamental aspect within peace and conflict science to understand how latent and manifested, future and present, conflicts can be prevented and how the achievement of peace can be fostered. The study thereby aims to develop the understanding of Russia's complex current relationship with the Western world through analysing Russia's identity discourses in the undoubtedly influential forum of the Winter Olympics.

2 Theory

The following chapter consists of an introduction to the existing field of research on sports and politics. Moreover, it presents an overview of the theoretical framework that this study is based upon.

2.1 Previous research

Mike Dennis and Jonathan Grix claims that surprisingly little research on sports and politics has been conducted by political scientists (Dennis & Grix, 2012: 14). Further, the authors argue that sport has been used as a political tool for centuries and often to produce a sense of statehood among its citizens (ibid).

Mario Kessler states that there are several studies on how the 1936 Olympics in Berlin were used as a political arena by the Hitler regime (Kessler, 2011: 125). Kessler states that the Hitler regime used the Olympics to increase the civilian support for the government and to disguise the nature of the it to other countries (ibid). The Nazi regime perceived the Games as a success (Kessler, 2011: 126). Similarly, David Clay Large states that the Berlin Olympics was an attempt from the Nazi regime to win the hearts and minds of the German people and the Games became a “spiritual mobilization” (Large, 2007: 12). Furthermore, Patrick M. Cottrell and Travis Nelson posit that there has not been a single Summer Olympics since 1936 that has not been exploited for some sort of political motive (Cottrell & Nelson, 2010: 729-730). Sandra Wilson has published research on the implications of the 1964 Olympics in Tokyo for post-war Japanese nationalism (Wilson, 2011: 159). Suisheng Zhao claims that the rejection of China’s bid to host the 2000 Olympics led to popular resentment toward foreign countries and human rights groups as they were blamed for the failure (Zhao, 1998: 290). Moreover, Zhao claims the failed bid was interpreted as a Western anti-Chinese plot and doping allegations were seen as the result of a Western conspiracy to humiliate China (ibid).

In *Playing Politics: Soviet Sport Diplomacy to 1992* Victor Peppard and James Riordan analyse the history of sports in the Soviet Union and conclude that the struggle for world supremacy in sport has largely dissolved (1993). In contrast, Bo Petersson and Karina Vamling claim that the Sochi Olympics was an opportunity for Putin to display strength and to demonstrate that he is still a strong leader that is needed at the helm (2013: 4). Petersson and Vamling states that Putin has shown himself to be keenly interested in promoting mega events and that they have evolved into a tool for Putin to demonstrate that Russia is back with a vengeance (2013: 4-5). Emil Persson states that the Olympic Games are an opportunity for states to reinforce constructions of belonging (Persson, 2013: 221). Persson claims that the Russian regime used the Sochi Olympics to create national and global visibility of themselves as a great, yet tolerant, power (ibid).

Donald E. Abelson claims that sports might be used in order to connect sports and politics by great powers but this is exaggerated and merely a part of a diplomatic game between states (Abelson, 2010: 89-90). Abelson maintains that sports should be viewed purely as sports (ibid). In contrast, John Hunter claims that sports have a large and increased impact on identities, culture and power (Hunter, 2003: 422-423). Similarly, Michael Billing states modern sports are important for manifestations of nationalism and has a large political significance (Billing, 1995: 120-122).

Studies on identity in relation to Olympic Games is an existing and developing field of research. Nevertheless, studies on Othering in the Olympics appear scarce. Moreover, there are no previous studies on identity constructions in the Olympics that focuses on the three cases that constitute this study. Thus, there is a gap in the previous research that can be filled.

2.2 Theoretical framework

Studies on Othering assume that the formation of collective identities is dependent on a dichotomy between 'the Self' and 'the Other' (Tekin, 2010: 11). The introduction of the Self/Other dichotomy into the field of international relations is rather recent (ibid). Most scholars agree that Others are required in the Self's identification process, notwithstanding, their explicit views differ (ibid). Sybille Renke De Buitrago states that one common definition of the Other is something different from the Self and further suggests that Othering can be observed in several dimensions in our everyday life and in international relations (De Buitrago, 2012, 13). Jonathan Mercer, argue that the universal desire for self-esteem results in large cognitive differences between the in-group and the out-group, consequently, negative qualities are attached to the out-group and positive to the in-group (Mercer, 1995: 242). This reasoning suggests that the perception of the Other can only be negative. Conversely, De Buitrago claims that Others can be described with positive connotations (De Buitrago, 2012, 15). According to Lene Hansen, the attributes of the Other are either desirable or despicable (Hansen, 2006:26). Diez points out that the Other must not be portrayed as inferior but simply as different (Diez, 2005: 628-629). These approaches are similar to Iver Neumann's. Neumann, along with Jennifer Welsh, states that Othering involves both negative and positive dimensions, moreover, there are positive Others which a group desires to identify with rather than differentiate from (Neumann & Welsh, 1991: 331). Consequently, the Self interacts with multiple Others and constructs various Self-identities and Self-Other relations. Which specific Self-identity and which Other should be prominent depends on the political context, moreover, a traditionally opposite Other can be turned into a positive Other (Neumann & Welsh, 1991: 331).

In *Uses of the other: 'the East' in European identity formation* Neumann highlights that the formation of the self is intertwined with its formation of its other (1999: 35). Neumann traces four paths consisting of ideas on identity formation as they have evolved around the conceptual pair of the Self and the Other (Neumann, 1999: 1). The ethnographic path has been trodden by scholars who have written on nationalism and focus has been on boundary markers of identity, where the cleave

is and how it is maintained (Neumann, 1999: 4-5). In the psychological path, Neumann discusses when collective identity formations of the Self and the Other overlap and draws references to how “Russianness” has been defined in Russia (Neumann, 1999: 7-9). In the continental philosophical path, Neumann outlines three dimensions of the Self (Neumann, 1999: 10). The first is the Self’s perception of its obligation to others, the second the Self’s idea of an ideal, goal and pre-given narrative (where the two major narratives are that of the hero script; where the Self should assert itself and rise above its fellows, and that of the affirmation of everyday life; where the Self should merely keep plodding) and thirdly, the Self’s presentation (ibid). Along the path of the Eastern excursion, Neumann highlights that the state defines itself by being the unit that distinguishes public enemies from friends (Neumann, 1999: 12). The Other does not need to be morally evil and can be seen as advantageous to trade with but is still an Other (ibid). Neumann suggests that it is the knowing that creates the Self and not the Self that creates the knowing, the Other is an epistemological and ontological necessity (Neumann, 1999: 12-13).

Neumann claims that Todorov was the first to conduct a full-length study on collective identity formation in international relations in his book *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other* (Neumann, 1999: 21). In this book, Todorov states that the relation to the Other is not constituted in just one dimension, but (in at least) three (Todorov, 1992: 185). Todorov’s three-level analysis of the Other consists of the following levels:

The axiological level: value judgement

A value judgement is made and the Other is located somewhere between good and bad. The Self assesses the Other’s nature compared to the Self and whether it is better or worse than the Self. Here, the Self may perceive the Other as inferior or equal, thus, the Other can be seen in a positive light as well as in a negative.

The other is good or bad, I love or do not love him /.../ He is my equal or my inferior (for there is usually no question that I am good and that I esteem myself

Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America*: 185

The praxeological level: rapprochement

Responses are made in accordance with the value judgements. The Self decides the what to do with and how to approach the Other. The praxeological response to the axiological image of the Other can involve neutrality or indifference, submission of the Self to the Other or the Other’s assimilation into the Self. The Self can therefore domesticate the Other, assimilate and perceive it as an extension of the Self. The Other’s values may appear remote, but not necessarily incompatible with those of the Self.

I embrace the Other’s values, I identify myself with him; or else I identify the Other with myself, I impose my image upon him; between submission to the Other and the Other’s submission, there is also a third term, which is neutrality, or indifference.

Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America*: 185

The epistemic level: knowledge

This level examines the degree to which the Self knows the Other. The Self can be knowing or ignorant of the Other's identity. It examines the conditions of knowledge and insight of the Other.

I know or am ignorant of the other's identity /../ of course, there is no absolute here, but an endless graduation between the lower and higher states of knowledge

Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America*: 185

This essay's theoretical framework is based on a combination of Iver Neumann's take on Othering as well as Tzvetan Todorov's axis.

3 Method

The following chapter presents an overview of the methodological choices that have been made in order to adequately answer the research question. First off, the case selection is explained. Following that, the choice of discourse analysis is clarified. Subsequently, the operationalisation is presented. Finally, choices in terms of material are described.

3.1 Case selection

Japan (1972), Russia (2014) and South Korea (2018) are the only host countries in the history of the Winter Olympics that are not European or North American. Thus, Europe and North America have together hosted 20 Winter Olympics which can illustrate the Western domination of the forum. This, along with the fact that the Olympics served as a political arena during the cold war, makes the Winter Olympics a strikingly appropriate sporting mega event to analyse Russia's relations with the West in.

The study focuses on three Winter Olympics; Vancouver 2010, Sochi 2014 and Pyeongchang 2018. Between 2010 and 2018, major political events such as the annexation of Crimea, the allegations of Russian interference in Western elections and Russia's support of the Assad regime in Syria led to increased tension between Russia and the West. The drastic changes in Russia's relations with the West between 2010 and 2018 make the three selected cases particularly interesting to analyse. Russia did not have any particular role in Vancouver, during the Sochi Olympics they were the protagonist and in Pyeongchang they were the outcast. The stark differences between the cases can provide insight in variations and changes in Russia's identity discourse in the political arena of the Olympics.

3.2 Discourse analysis

The study has a descriptive foundation as it is aiming to find and analyse patterns of how something works or acts, (Halperin & Heath, 2017: 96) explicitly so through finding and analysing changes in Russia's identity discourse. As speech acts lay the foundation of this essay and the role of language is salient for a discourse analysis, the latter constitutes a strikingly appropriate method. Moreover, a discourse analysis is suitable for addressing questions on power and identity (Bergström & Boréus, 2012: 400). Neumann is an advocator for discourse analysis and Todorov is a literary scholar (Neumann, 1999: 10, 21). This makes the merging of method and theory seamless.

According to the concept of discourse analysis, identities and relations are formed through and by language. Our realities are created through language and there is no such thing as an objective reality (Bergström & Boréus 2012: 378). As it is not possible to ascertain reality itself this study does not claim to do so. Instead, the

discourses themselves are of relevance and aim to contribute to understandings of how the use of language is related to the formation of identities and relations.

There is no consensus on how to study discourse (Jørgensen and Philips, 2000), it is a disputed method consisting of many different approaches (Bergström & Boréus, 2012: 355). Thus, a discourse analysis can be executed in many different ways. Considering the general vagueness and broadness of discourse analysis, I have searched for a discourse analysis that is relatively straightforward. Therefore, this discourse analysis is based on Rosalind Gill who states that discourse analysis is an umbrella term to many approaches that are unified by the rejection of the realist notion that language is merely a neutral means of describing the world (Gill, 2000: 2). Despite this, Gill identifies four themes in discourse analysis:

The first theme is that discourse analysis focuses on texts in their own right, not some other reality causing the discourse (Gill, 2000: 5). The second theme is that language is constructive, thus, discourse is created by the speaker who in turn forms the way we view the world (ibid). Due to this, the setting in which something is said is also important in order to adequately interpret what is being said. Thirdly, discourse is a social practice and language is not an epiphenomenon but a practice in its own right (Gill, 2000: 5) Discourses are used by people in order to *do* things, such as blame, make excuses or present themselves positively (ibid). Lastly, discourse analysis sees social life as characterized by different kinds of conflict (Gill, 2000: 7). Thus, discourse establishes one version of the world among competing versions (ibid).

Intersubjectivity and reliability are rather problematic concepts for a discourse analysis due to their general lack (Bergström & Boréus 2012: 405). Considering this, the goal of the study is not to generalize extensively but to provide insight into patterns, changes and features of Russia's identity discourses in the Winter Olympics. In order to avoid the constraints of intersubjectivity, I try to clarify the methodological choices to establish transparency and facilitate possibilities to reproduce the study and reach similar results.

3.3 Operationalisation

According to Gill, the focus of discourse analysis can be on texts or transcripts of materials such as speeches, interviews or press conferences. In order to enable the analysis, a set of questions must be set up. Subsequently, a coding of the material is needed (Gill, 2000: 179-180). Next, the study will search for patterns in the discourse by focusing on consistency and variation. Following this, the study forms preliminary hypotheses on the functions of the discourse's features (Gill, 2000: 180). This discourse analysis is based on speeches, interviews and statements. The coding will be presented shortly, underneath each of the three main questions of the operationalisation.

Each statement is analysed through a series of questions based on Neumann's theory on Othering and Todorov's axis. Gill states that the coding begins with getting to know the material and after that, determine the questions of interest (Gill, 2000: 9). Thus, I have based the coding on aspects of Neumann's and Todorov's theories that I consider suitable for the material, topic and scope of the study. The coding and operationalisation aims to enable answering how Russia defines the Self as well as the Other and how they view the relations between the two.

What dimensions of the Russian Self can be detected?

In order to answer this, I have searched for the following:

- Is there a perceived obligation to others?
- Is there an ideal, goal or pre-given narrative which is either a hero script or an affirmation of everyday life?
- How is the Russian presentation of the Self?

What is the value judgement of the Other?

In order to answer this, I have searched for the following:

- Is the Other seen in a positive or in a negative way?
- Is the Other seen as desirable or despicable?
- Is the Other equal or inferior to the Self?

Does Russia approach or distance themselves from the Other?

In order to answer this, I have searched for the following:

- To what extent does Russia identify with the Other?
- To what extent are the Other's values compatible with those of the Self?
- Are any measures suggested and if so, what kind?
- Is the Other a friend or an enemy?

In this essay, the main Other is the US. The US is considered to be the most powerful nation on earth (Clark, 2017), thus, it can be presumed to be the leader of the Western world. As the US is intertwined with the West, the line between them can be difficult to detect in abstract content. Thus, when such division appears unclear, vague and arbitrary I have not attempted to separate the two. Thus, the

second Other of this essay is the vaguer one of the Western world. In this essay, the Western World is defined as the EU, the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

3.4 Material

To identify distinctive features in the Kremlin's identity discourse, a comprehensive analysis of the political statements is appropriate. To enable that and to augment transparency, this study is based on a narrow and defined selection of material. The material consists of speeches, interviews and statements that explicitly addresses the Olympics. Speech acts made by Russia's president, prime minister and foreign minister during the Olympic Games of 2010, 2014 and 2018 are analysed. During the 2010 Olympics, Dmitry Medvedev was president of Russia and Vladimir Putin was Prime Minister. During the 2014 and 2018 Olympics, Vladimir Putin was President of Russia and Dmitry Medvedev was prime minister. During all three Olympics, Sergei Lavrov served as Foreign Minister.

The material is derived from English web pages of Russian government institutions and from the English-speaking Russian news agency RT, which is state sponsored. RT has been accused of Russian propaganda, nonetheless, it is a suitable source of material for this study as it is clearly in line with the Russian government's rhetoric. The study focuses on what the Russian authorities' rhetoric and it is not within the scope of the study to measure the level of truth in the statements. As the translation is published by the Russian authorities or by a state-funded news agency, it can be presumed that it is congruent with their line of rhetoric. Nonetheless, to validate the translation of the statements I have asked a Russian speaker to compare and validate the translation of 6 randomly selected statements. It is not within the scope of the study to examine whether the attempts of identity constructions have become rooted in the Russian population's views.

Statements, formal speeches in the government or speeches to the Russian Olympic team from the first of December the year before until the last of March the year of the Olympics have been searched for. Speeches over 100 words published on Russian government institutions constitute the main material. In the case of Vancouver and Pyeongchang, the existing material is relatively small. Thus, I have used all of it. However, the amount of material linked to Sochi is far larger. In order to make the study viable and to achieve similarity regarding the material, I have in the Sochi case utilised material that is similar to the other cases when it comes to time, setting, individuals and manner.

Moreover, each case is supplemented with a complementing statement in order to obtain a matching selection of material. The aim was to add one statement from RT to each case. However, in the Vancouver case I wished to add one speech act from before the Olympics for the sake of similarity regarding the material. As there were no statements on RT published before the Games, an informal speech published on the Kremlin's web page was added (Speech S2). In the Sochi case, an interview published on RT was added. In the Pyeongchang case, the material was supplemented with a statement from Sergei Lavrov published on RT, as this was the only time in all three cases he was published commenting on the Olympics.

4. The Self and the Other in the Olympics

This chapter begins with a short introduction to Russia's Olympic history. Subsequently, the analysed statements and speeches are presented. This is followed by the analysis of all interpreted materials, presented per case. To contextualise the setting during which the analysed statements and speeches were told, there is a short background on each case before the analysis. To summarise and clarify, this chapter ends with a table that compares the Russian presentation of the Self and the Other in the three cases.

Historically, the Olympic Games have been as a propaganda tool by Russia to portray it as a superpower with 'superpeople' (Ioffe, 2017). During the Cold War, sports became an important arena as the USSR's victories over bourgeois states demonstrated the greatness of the Soviet system (Riordan, 1993: 26). During the Soviet-era the funding of sports was generous and the sports infrastructure nurtured athletes whose triumphs were used to emphasise the superiority of the communist system (TIME, 2010). Between 1956 and 1992, the USSR won 8 out of 10 Olympic titles in ice hockey (Clarey, 1994) and the Soviet Union never finished lower than second in the medal table of a Winter Olympics (Belam & Levett, 2018). An iconic event in the history of the Winter Olympics as well as of the Cold War was the so-called 'miracle on ice' in 1980. The American hockey team defeated the Soviet hockey team, who were four-time defending gold medallists, during the height of the Cold War and mere months after Russia had invaded Afghanistan (Anderson, 2005). Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, funding reduced and many elite athletes, coaches, sports medics and scientists moved overseas (Riordan, 1993: 41). Nonetheless, sports were still seen as a tool to project the state's power and the later successes were proclaimed as a sign of the country's resurrection as a global force (TIME, 2010).

4.1 Presentation of material

The statements and speeches that are analysed will further be referred to according to the abbreviation below which is based on case and chronological order.

<i>Vancouver 2010</i>	<i>Sochi 2014</i>	<i>Pyeongchang 2018</i>
V1: 28/1 2010. Dmitry Medvedev, greetings to Russia's Olympic team set to leave for Vancouver	S1: 6/12 2013. Dmitry Medvedev, annual TV-interview	P1: 30/11 2017, Dmitry Medvedev, annual TV-interview with five Russian TV-channels
V2: 11/2 2010, Dmitry Medvedev, meeting with Students of Tomsk Universities	S2: 19/12 2013, Vladimir Putin, news conference covered by over 1,300 Russian and foreign journalists	P2: 7/12 2017, Dmitry Medvedev, speech at a Government meeting.
V3: 11/2 2010, Vladimir Putin, video conference with the Russian Olympic team	S3: 19/1 2014, Vladimir Putin, interview to Russian and foreign media	P3: 14/12 2017, Vladimir Putin, annual news conference
V4: 5/3 2010, Vladimir Putin, speech at a government meeting to discuss the performance of the Russian team at the Winter Olympic Games	S4: 25/2 2014, Vladimir Putin, interview with Russian journalists	P4: 31/1 2018, Vladimir Putin, speech at a meeting with the Russian Olympic team
V5: 15/3 2010, Dmitry Medvedev, speech at a ceremony for medallists	S5: 27/2 2014, Dmitry Medvedev, speech at a ceremony for medallists	P5: 11/2 2018, Sergei Lavrov. Interview with Rossia-1 News Channel
V6: 26/3, 2010, Dmitry Medvedev, speech at a government meeting	S6: 27/2 2014, Dmitry Medvedev, speech at a government meeting	P6: 28/2 2018, Vladimir Putin, speech at a ceremony for medallists

4.2 Vancouver

The 2010 Olympics took place in Vancouver, Canada between the 12th and 28th of February. In this Olympic Game, Russia was merely one among many participating nations. For Russia, however, the games ended up a full-blown disaster as it was their worst Olympic performance ever. The team struggled to live up to expectations and finished in eleventh place on the medals table which can be put in relation to that from 1956 to 1991, Soviet topped the medals table at all but two Winter Olympics (TIME, 2010).

In Vancouver, the Russian national anthem was not heard on the figure skating rink which was seen as a travesty for the nation's glorious figure skating history (TIME, 2010). Moreover, for the first time since 1964 the Russian hockey team did not medal which was widely seen as the final humiliation for the Russian Olympic team (Ioffe, 2017). As a reaction to the defeat, then-president Dmitry Medvedev cancelled his ticket to the closing ceremony and the Siberian city Tomsk held a moment of silence (ibid). The team's head coach, Vyacheslav Bykov, said "Let's put guillotines and scaffolds up on Red Square. We have 35 people in the squad — let's finish them all off" while the headline of Sport Express declared "If you were asleep, you were lucky" and RIA Novosti dubbed it the "Nightmare in Vancouver" (TIME, 2010).

What dimensions of the Self can be detected?

In V1, Medvedev wishes the Olympic team success and emphasises that previous achievements have demonstrated their high level of skill (S1). He further highlights that Russia is "particularly interested in supporting sport at this high level" (V1). In V2, Medvedev states that Russia has certain problems in modern sports but defends it by stating that sports during the Soviet era is sometimes idealised. Medvedev elucidates that Russia has invested a lot in sports in recent years and are building sports facilities the country has never had before, not even in the Soviet era (V2). Medvedev also states:

I would really like to see no bias towards our athletes, but sometimes it happens. Sport is not just sport, it is politics too, and sometimes manipulation of certain interests. On the other hand, I hope that our athletes will be impeccable in their behaviour.

Dmitry Medvedev, V2

In this quote, Medvedev suggests that Russian athletes are sometimes the victims of political manipulation. Nonetheless, Medvedev appears to have confidence in the Russian athletes' abilities to handle this impeccably well. Medvedev also maintains that he has "tremendous hopes" for Russian sports in the future (V2). Considering both speeches, Medvedev expresses pride over the Russian team's greatness but alludes to further glory in the future.

In V3, Putin expresses confidence in the Olympic team's capacity to triumph. Putin states the athletes have been under a lot of pressure but that he is confident they will "surmount all obstacles to achieve great results" (V3). This implies that Russians

might be placed under significant pressure but ultimately they conquer. Thus, the hero script is present. Putin also seizes the opportunity to speak about the upcoming Sochi Olympics and emphasises the IOC inspectors' favourable reviews (V3). Putin claims they stated "now we see the might of the Russian state". Quoting this, Putin highlights the Russian might and appears pleased that other countries notice it too. Moreover, Putin recognises "the large scale and ambitious nature of the challenges we face and address" (V3), implying an aspiring nation with a prosperous future.

After the poor results in the Olympics, Putin states people "could hardly believe" the results (V4). Putin states that no one asks him about the recession or the economy anymore as everybody wants to know what went wrong in the Olympics (V4). Thus, the poor results appear unexpected and uncharacteristic for Russia and seem to clash with their self-image and perceived hero script. Putin states:

Bad luck cannot explain everything. Sports are sports, of course, and luck certainly plays a role. But we must determine the actual causes of our failures, make our conclusions, and fix the problems. Attempts to explain away our defeats as a result of biased judging, capricious weather and scheming against our team are irrelevant. This is what losers do.

Vladimir Putin, V4

Putin suggests that despite Russia's poor performance they are not 'losers'. Putin also infers that "true winners always learn something from their defeats" (V4). Thus, even after the poor results the hero script is present and Russia appears to have a pre-given narrative of a winner in the long run. The disappointing results are portrayed as a temporary setback that will be resolved. Moreover, Putin states that Russia "must be among the leaders" in the upcoming Sochi Olympics and explicitly says that merely a "good" showing is not enough (V4). Putin states that the Games are a national project that will be given undivided attention (V4). Considering this, Putin suggests that there is a strong obligation to win. Putin's overall rhetoric implies that despite this particular obstacle Russia has a pre-given narrative as that of a true winner and hero, which is its 'true' Self.

In V6, Medvedev states that "over these last years we have been steadily lagging behind our main competitors" and discusses measures that will be made in order to resolve the situation (V6). In V5, Medvedev also addresses necessary measures and states that there is a lot of work ahead (V5). Medvedev states that Russian sports are going through a change of generations and that many young athletes have displayed talent (V5). He also states that Russia's array of strong sports is widening which appears promising for the future (V5). Medvedev also expresses frustration over Yevgeny Plushchenko's silver-medal as he deserved gold (V5).

What is the value judgement of the Other?

There is little value judgement of the Other. However, Putin states that following the collapse of the Soviet Union many talented people moved abroad in order to find a better outlet for their abilities (V4). It can be presumed that many moved to the West. Moreover, Putin states:

We need to take all the best ideas from the Soviet training system and combine them with modern international methods. As you know, our foreign partners have learned a lot from Russia. The time may have come to take a page from their playbook

Vladimir Putin, V4

It is quite clear that Putin refers to the West due to their frequent successes in the Winter Olympics. Thus, Putin opens up to a Westernization of Russia and the Other appear to possess positive traits that the Self desire as well. Considering this, the Western world is portrayed positively. As previously mentioned, Medvedev stated that Russia has been lagging behind their main competitors (V6). Thus, the Other even appears to be (temporarily) superior to Russia in certain aspects. Nevertheless, a closer relationship between the Self and the Other is portrayed as beneficial for both.

Does Russia approach or distance themselves from the Other?

As previously mentioned, Putin highlighted the need to learn from the Western world (V4). This indicates that the Self is compatible with the Other, moreover, that Russia wishes to attach certain Western traits, values and characteristics onto the Self. Moreover, Russia appear to be distancing themselves from the Soviet era and instead approach a new, modern, Russia (V2). The new Russia appears to increasingly identify with the Other and there seems to be flourishing prospects of friendship between the Self and the Other that is mutually beneficial. Moreover, several speeches refer to the future Sochi Olympics. Putin states that the Games provides Russia with an opportunity to use cutting-edge international technology and how that is something they will continue with (V3). On this note, Medvedev states:

At the 2014 Winter Olympics Russia must show the world that it can host a competition of the highest standard. I said this earlier at the ceremony raising the Olympic and Paralympic flags here in Sochi. This is our chance to show the world that we are a capable, hospitable and technologically advanced country. It is also our chance to show the world that we can stand tall and that we know how to win.

Dmitry Medvedev, V6

It appears vital for Russia to 'show the world' that they can host an impressive Olympics. Considering the context of the Winter Olympics, it can be assumed Russia especially want to show the Western world the Russian capacity. This, along with the drastic measures suggested in V4, V5 and V6 implies that it is very important to reach new heights and the same or higher level as The Other who is (temporarily) superior in certain aspects.

4.3 Sochi

The 2014 Olympics took place in Sochi, Russia between the 7th and the 23rd of February. The Sochi Olympics were widely seen to be the most unlikely venue ever designated to host a major winter sporting event (Weir, 2010). Sochi is a subtropical seaside resort town and the warmest place in Russia, moreover, it lacked infrastructure and had no experience of winter sports (Geere, 2014).

Philipp Casula states that the Putin regime's attempts to enforce their idea of a Russian national identity was visible in the bid book of the 2014 Sochi Olympics (Casula, 2016). In this bid book, Russian officials argue that Russia is a modern democracy that easily fulfils the IOC's political criteria which Casula claims put Russia in a position to use the successful bid for the Olympics as a means to legitimize its institutions and regime (Casula, 2016).

Following the Sochi Olympics, Putin's approval ratings soared. According to two different surveys released in March 2014 the approval rating of the Russian President was 72 percent, the highest number since 2008 (Jivanda, 2014). Another survey, released in July 2014, stated that 83 percent of the Russian population approved of Putin's leadership. The survey, released by Gallup, linked the high ratings to national pride caused by the Sochi Olympics and the annexation of Crimea (Ray & Esipova: 2014)

What dimensions of the Self can be detected?

Before the Olympics, Putin emphasised that what matters most is not winning, but being a good host and that the athletes demonstrate skill and character (S2, S3). Moreover, Putin states that Russians are forgiving of failures and that "of course the best will win, and we will be happy for them" (S2). The Sochi Olympics' importance for Russian infrastructure is highlighted by both Putin (S2, S3, S4) and Medvedev (S1, S6). Medvedev implies that Russia was too grand for the former state of Sochi and that such underdevelopment was embarrassing (S1). Putin states that Russia is creating the best possible conditions for top class specialists (S4). With this rhetoric Medvedev and Putin imply that times are changing in Russia's favour. The presentation of the Russian Self is that the country is heading towards a new, glorious and world-leading future.

Following the Olympics, Medvedev states that the athletes are the "main heroes" (S6) which implies that the state is a hero too, albeit a humbler one. In S4, S5, S6, the results of the Russian Olympic team are praised. Medvedev highlights that Sochi is the fourth case in the history of the Winter Olympics that the host country topped the medal ranking and states:

Frankly, there has simply never been an event like this in the modern history of our country that has consolidated our nation and united our people so much

Dmitry Medvedev, S5

Thus, according to Medvedev, modern Russia is consolidated and united in its supreme victories and its recent portrayal of greatness. Russia is claiming their pre-given narrative and hero script. The greatness of the nation is illustrated by the Olympic team's victories. Russia is exhibited as heroic, united and stronger than ever.

What is the value judgement of the Other?

Practically all American presidents /.../ pay great attention and act effectively, that is why the team of the United States traditionally achieves very good and impressive results. We wish success to our American friends, the American athletes. I know that a lot of people in our country, millions of people admire American athletes and truly sincerely love them. As I have already said I would like very much the sports not to be soiled by the politics. And I think that we all will benefit from this.

Vladimir Putin, S3

In the quote above, Putin praises America and appears impressed by them. He states that millions of Russians love American athletes and compliments American presidents for their investments in sports. Considering this, the Other is portrayed in a positive light as well an equal who possesses several desirable traits.

In S6, Medvedev states "to quote international analysts, [the Sochi Olympics] were one of the best in the history of the Winter Games". Thus, it is implied that the West is impressed by Russia which appears favourable. Moreover, it is portrayed as a great achievement one of the best hosting states and the company at the top is likely Western states due to their domination in hosting of the event. On another note, Putin states:

However, there was, and I am sure there still is another group of critics who have little to do with sports. Their main concern is competition in international politics. Their job is different, and they used the Olympic project to achieve their own goals in their anti-Russia propaganda efforts.

Vladimir Putin, S4

It can be presumed that the anti-Russian propaganda efforts are predominantly Western. This adds a negative aspect to the otherwise positive perception of the Other.

Does Russia approach or distance themselves from the Other?

Before the games, Putin highlighted the importance of Russia showing good manners, skill and character (S1, S3). Thus, to behave well in front of the international community. As previously mentioned as well as quoted, in S3 Putin spoke highly of American presidents, praised the American sports system and even claimed that millions of Russians love American athletes. Moreover, Putin spoke in favour of good relations between the US and Russia and encouraged them to unite through sports (S3). Considering this, it can be presumed that Russia identifies with the Other. The Other's values seem to be similar enough to the Self's for them to possess an amicable friendship. Similarly, Putin states that Sochi provides an

opportunity for others to see that “there is nothing to fear, that we are open for cooperation” (S4). A close relationship between the two is portrayed to be possible and beneficial for both. While speaking of terrorist threats to the Olympics, Putin states:

I remember the painful reaction of the then British Prime Minister Tony Blair to the attacks, and I remember how we all provided him moral and, if necessary, special support. As an aside, now I also want to thank all our partners from North America, the United States, Europe, and Asia which engage in very active cooperation with their Russian counterparts in the law enforcement bodies and special services. Such joint work is ongoing.

Vladimir Putin, S3

This further suggests that Russia and the West stand united against a common enemy; terrorists. Putin even claims to have offered Tony Blair moral support.

4.4 Pyeongchang

The 2018 Olympics took place in Pyeongchang, South Korea between the 8th and the 25th of February. Russia's flag, anthem and tricolour were absent during the Games due to a ban from the IOC (The International Olympic Committee) which was based on doping allegations that had followed Russia's Olympic team since the Sochi Olympics. The whistleblower was Grigory Rodchenkov, former head of a Moscow based anti-doping lab now based in the US, who claimed there was a large-scale state-sponsored doping scheme involving the sports minister of the time, Vitaly Mutko (Ustyugov, 2018). Richard McLaren, a Canadian attorney, was retained by WADA (World Anti-Doping Agency) to investigate Rodchenkov's claims (Sterling, 2018). McLaren stated that over 1000 Russian athletes benefitted from doping (ibid).

After some individuals, among them Mutko, were handed lifetime bans the IOC allowed athletes to participate under a neutral flag in the Olympics if they could show they were clean (Ustyugov, 2018). 169 Russian athletes were approved to compete in the Games while 220 athletes were denied (Ingle, 2018). Team "OAR" (Olympic Athletes from Russia) was the third largest team participating in the Pyeongchang Olympics (Jennings, 2018). However, the team finished 13th in the medal table (Belam & Levett, 2018). This is a lower placement than the Vancouver Olympics, thus, Russia's poorest Olympic achievement since the end of the Soviet Union. On the last day of the Games the ban was lifted (Ahmed & Seddon, 2018).

Controversy ensued when the OAR team won men's ice hockey gold and sang the Russian national anthem (Belam & Levett, 2018). There was one more gold medallist from Russia in the Pyeongchang Olympics; the figure skater Alina Zagitova (Ahmed & Seddon, 2018). When she was congratulated by Putin she exclaimed "He [Vladimir Putin] has done so much for our country" (Ahmed & Seddon, 2018).

According to an opinion poll by the Russian Public Opinion Research Center, almost two-thirds of the Russian population (63 percent) regard the accusations toward Russia as politically motivated (TASS, 2016). In March 2018, Putin won his fourth presidential election with more than 75 percent of the votes with a voter turnout of almost 70 percent (MacFarquhar, 2018). In the beginning of May 2018, RT reported that Richard McLaren had changed his claim against Russian athletes and that he meant to say that over 1000 Russian athletes *may have* benefitted from doping (Sterling, 2018). The RT article states that the Western media reported frantically earlier made but remains silent as Russian athletes are being acquitted of doping violations (Sterling, 2018).

What dimensions of the Self can be detected?

Medvedev claims that the Russian victories in Sochi were “supreme”, “brilliant” and that the doping investigation cannot undermine that (P1). Putin expresses contentment over the athletes’ performance and states that the athletes deserve praise for their contributions to their country (P6). Putin portrays Russia as a winner who handles hardships superbly (P6).

Putin admits that there are cases of doping, yet maintains that Russia is not worse than any other country (P3). Putin claims that the doping allegations are based on a “political frenzy” (P3). Moreover, it is claimed that there are unfair conditions in world sport as athletes from other countries have been permitted to use drugs due to various excuses (P2, P3). Putin states “this is very odd, because this gives some athletes a competitive edge over others” (P3). Medvedev states “it’s a real shame that clean athletes face unfair treatment of this kind. These athletes and our country in general faced these unprecedented and groundless accusations levied against an entire state” (P2). Russia is portrayed as wrongfully accused. As the athletes’ performances were later praised, it is suggested that despite unfair preconditions Russians will prevail in the end. Thus, the hero-script is present.

The overall presentation of the Russian Self is marked by goodness and innocence, moreover, they are portrayed as an outsider in the international community due to jealousy and fear. Nevertheless, Russia acts nobly. It is suggested that Russia is repeatedly being mistreated, ostracised and baselessly accused by the West as well as put under heavy scrutiny (P4). However, it is implied that Russia’s fair and honest methods makes them morally superior over the West and a true winner (P4). The Russian obligation to others is to, unlike the West, act with magnanimity.

What is the value judgement of the Other?

Medvedev states that the doping scandal is “another Anti-Russia campaign”, “no doubt about it” (P1). Medvedev states that doping is 30 percent of the scandal and that the rest is political manipulation (P1). By stating “we can see that this campaign will peak during a certain political cycle in order to show how we are doing a bad job of it. This is their definite and quite clear plan” Medvedev clearly implies that “they” are trying to undermine the Putin administration (P1). Medvedev’s rhetoric is similar in another speech:

First of all, the decision clearly has a fact-based and a political side /.../ This decision was taken in the run-up to the presidential election in Russia with a view to affecting the general mood in the country.

Dmitry Medvedev, P2

Similarly, Putin states:

this whole scandal was whipped up in the run-up to Russian domestic political events. No matter what anybody says – I am sure that is the way it is. No matter what they say, I know that this is so

Vladimir Putin, P3

It is heavily implied that the West, especially the US, are liable for the anti-Russia campaign. For an example:

Regarding him [Rodchenkov] being protected by the FBI, this is not an advantage but rather a disadvantage for us, since this means that his actions are controlled by the US intelligence services. What are they doing with him? What are they giving him to make him say what they want him to say? This is just ridiculous.

Vladimir Putin, P3

Putin accuses the US for drugging Rodchenkov to undermine Russia. Moreover, both Medvedev and Putin accuses Rodchenkov of having severe mental problems (P1, P2, P3). Putin states that “we realise that it is not easy for them [the IOC]. They are under pressure all the time and are even intimidated” (P3). Thus, Putin implies that the West are threatening the IOC. Putin does not seem to blame the IOC for the ban, but the West and especially the US. Putin disparages that Rodchenkov “brought all this bad stuff from North America, from the US and Canada”, pointing out that the origin of the illegal substances was from the West (P3). Lavrov blames the US for using “unilateral, coercive, illegitimate, unlawful actions to obtain the advantage” (P5). Lavrov further states that according to the US, “all rivals must be pushed to one side” (P5). Moreover, Lavrov claims that “the Americans apparently can no longer beat us in a fair fight”. Lavrov implies that the US is using foul methods in order to battle the Russian resurgence and to conceal the American downfall. US is thus portrayed as inferior to Russia. Lavrov states:

they believe that taking back and preserving uncontested leadership in global sports requires sidelining the competition

Sergei Lavrov, P5

Lavrov presents the US as desperate to maintain their position and to do so they use despicable methods. Russia undoubtedly portrays the Other negatively and seems to view them as reprehensible, despicable and inferior to the Self. It is stressed that the US is using deceitful and unlawful methods to undermine Russia and Putin’s regime and seem to be prepared to go to great lengths to do so. Thus, the Other is perceived as an enemy and inferior when it comes to both strength and morality.

Does Russia approach or distance themselves from the Other?

Russia is distancing themselves from the Other. The Western world is portrayed as an enemy who attempts to undermine Russia with unjust methods. There are many claims that the doping scandal is a political campaign against Russia. Medvedev states that “this is a political campaign – not a sports related anti-doping campaign, but a political campaign against our country. And this is the only way to look at it” (P1). He also states that “we will keep countering this at all levels of communications, and at all organisations” (P1). Further, Putin states:

In other countries, however, there have been similar cases, except there was no such political frenzy. There is no doubt that this whole situation is politically motivated

Vladimir Putin, P3

That the political campaign is claimed to be staged by the West is evident in other statements. Lavrov states that Russian athletes were banned “because the

Americans apparently can no longer beat us in a fair fight” and that the US use “unilateral, coercive, illegitimate, unlawful actions to obtain the advantage” (P4). In P4, the campaign against Russia appears to be revenge for Russia’s alleged interference in the American election (P4). Lavrov slams the accusations of Russian interference in the US election and states:

They have been investigating this for a year and not a single fact has surfaced to corroborate these speculations /.../ If there were any facts, they would have been leaked by now. I know this is how the US system works. Everything gets leaked with so many people involved in all those hearings and investigations.

Sergei Lavrov, P4

However, Lavrov states that he expects the Russian relations with the US to be fixed and that Russia will not retaliate or take hasty action (P4). Nevertheless, as the US and the West is accused of ‘anti-Russian’ actions, they are suggested to be unreliable, evil and treacherous. In conclusion, the Other is portrayed as an enemy. Russia does not identify with the Other and the Other’s values are portrayed as despicable, and ultimately incompatible.

4.5 Comparison

	<i>Vancouver</i>	<i>Sochi</i>	<i>Pyeongchang</i>
<i>What dimensions of the Russian Self can be detected?</i>	There is an obligation to improve. Russia is undergoing large changes and its future looks bright. Russia has a pre-given narrative of a hero script. The Self is portrayed as a “true winner” and the unfortunate situation is a temporary glitch that will be resolved.	There is an obligation to be a good host. Before the Games it is stressed that skill and character is more important than to win. After the Olympics modern Russia appears to be consolidated and united in its supreme victories. Russia has a pre-given narrative of a hero script that they are aligning with.	The Russian obligation to others is to, unlike the West, act with magnanimity The Self is innocent, just and moral. Russia has a pre-given narrative of a hero script that they are aligning with and this scares other countries. Thus, other nations are against Russia.
<i>What is the value judgement of the Other?</i>	The Other is equal, even (temporarily) superior in certain aspects and possesses desirable traits Russia wants to apply onto the Self. The Other is mainly described positively.	The Other appear to be equal to the Self. The Other is mainly described positively. The Other appear to possess desirable traits. Russia wants the Other to be impressed by the Self.	Russia is superior to the Other. The Other is portrayed in an extremely negative light. The Other is seen as evil, despicable and desperate to fight the Russian resurgence and to conceal their own downfall.
<i>Does Russia approach or distance themselves from the Other?</i>	Russia approaches the Other and wants to learn from them. Russia is changing and want to identify further with the Other. There are flourishing prospects of friendship between the two. Russia and the Other are seen as compatible.	Russia approaches the Other. Russia identifies with the Other and is open for cooperation. The Self and the Other appear compatible enough to be friends and beneficial business partners. Russia and the Other are uniting against a common enemy: terrorists.	Russia is clearly distancing themselves from the Other. Russia does not identify with the Other and their values are not compatible. The Other is portrayed as an enemy that is actively trying to undermine Russia.

5. Discussion

The previous chapter shows that Russian identity discourse in the Winter Olympics has changed drastically as the relations with the West intensified. The clear barrier between the Self and the Other during the Pyeongchang Olympics becomes even more evident while comparing it to Russia's West-friendly rhetoric during the Winter Olympics in Vancouver and Sochi. Russia's rhetoric during the past three Winter Olympics appears to reflect Russia's changing relations with the West and the increased Russian detachment from the Western world.

Russia's rhetoric during the Vancouver Games is similar to Neumann's claim that the Other does not need to be evil but can be seen as an advantageous trade partner. Negative aspects in the Other are detectable in both Sochi and Vancouver, nevertheless, the Other is generally seen as a potential friend and a beneficial business partner. After the poor results in Vancouver, Russia distanced themselves from the Soviet era and spoke of the necessity to learn from the West and become increasingly similar. Thus, Russia opened up for a Westernization of the Self. Thus, the Other was considered desirable. Neumann's claim can also be related to Russia's Sochi rhetoric where Russia portrayed close relations with the Other as beneficial. The Self and the Other appeared to be both friends and business partners. Both Vancouver and Sochi implied that Russia wished to be viewed as well as treated as a developed, powerful and world-leading state by the West. It was heavily implied that Russia was in a process of resurgence and wished for this to be noticed by other influential and powerful states.

After the Vancouver Games, there were no significant attempts to justify the poor results. Instead, the rhetoric was marked by promises and plans. The results from the Sochi Olympics fulfilled the promises but also exceeded expectations. Thus, Sochi can be interpreted as a symbol of the legitimacy, greatness and efficiency in the Putin regime. Through Sochi, the country was presented as stronger and greater than ever. Russia appeared to alight with their hero script and pre-given narrative.

The situation in Pyeongchang was problematic and undesirable. Moreover, the Olympic performance was even worse than in Vancouver, yet there was not the slightest sign of disappointment from the government. Instead, Kremlin based the doping allegations on jealousy and fear of the Russian might and the athletic performance was praised. As two thirds of all Russians considered the doping allegations to be politically motivated, it seems that the Kremlin's rhetoric was successful. The efficiency of the Pyeongchang rhetoric might have depended on that Sochi had already consolidated the regime's efficiency and greatness. Thus, the allegations could be used to further strengthen the Self as well as to diminish the Other. Russia's Sochi rhetoric shows how athletic achievements can be used by politicians to symbolize and manifest a nation's prosperity. A strengthened perception of the Self's greatness and pre-given narrative of a hero script allows

for accusations from the Other to be brushed off as based on jealousy and fear. This might have a unifying effect on the Self and strengthen it further.

Russia's political propaganda against the US during the Pyeongchang Olympics is evident. Lavrov highlights that the US can no longer beat Russia in a fair fight. This indicates that Russia is stronger than ever and is actualising its pre-given narrative while the US is in a downfall. Moreover, the US appear desperate to maintain their position and ruthless in its pursuit to undermine Russia. It is suggested that the West has threatened the IOC, drugged Rodchenkov and based a whole investigation on someone who has mental issues. The most severe accusation is perhaps that Russia repeatedly claimed that the US attempted to influence the Russian election and undermine the Putin regime. This is comparable with the accusations of Russian interference in various Western elections. To accuse the US for the same thing during a very influential forum might have been an attempt to show that even if Russia did interfere in any elections, Western countries are not as guiltless as they portray themselves to be. Portraying the West as hypocrites might be an attempt to nullify the legitimacy of the accusations towards Russia. Nevertheless, if the Russian population increasingly perceives the West as hypocrites it potentially results in Western accusations against Russia becoming less effective. Especially as the Russian rhetoric suggests that the West manages to avoid scrutiny for their methods while continuously and groundlessly portraying Russia as the world's villain. This type of perception of the West is further evident in Russia's claim that the West has staged the doping scandal whilst the doping situation in Russia was not worse than elsewhere. Another parallel is how Putin criticised that athletes from other nations were permitted to use drugs due to various excuses and how that was not questioned.

The rhetoric during the Pyeongchang Olympics suggested that Russia had abandoned their aspirations to approach and befriend the Other. This might have been due to a perceived lack of respect but especially due to Western anti-Russia-campaigns. Russia suggests that the tense relations are a result of the West's unjust behaviour. In Pyeongchang, Russia did not advocate for adapting Western traits any longer, instead, the Self appeared to be defined by its differences from the Other. Russia no longer seemed to view the West as desirable but as an immoral, disgraceful and unjust enemy that constantly and groundlessly works against Russia. The frequent mentioning of anti-Russia campaigns implies an attempt to unite and strengthen the Russian Self by making the Western Other into an enemy and a threat. Here, a parallel can be drawn to when Putin during the Sochi Olympics appeared to view the terrorist threat as a way for Russia and the West to unite against a common enemy. Thus, manifesting enemies appears to be central for both the construction of the Self as well as the Self's relations with its Others.

The presentation of the Self and what constitutes 'Russianness' appears to be relatively similar in all three cases. The hero script was present in many speeches. The Other was present in all cases; however, it was not until the Pyeongchang Olympics that the Other is described solely negatively. The Russian rhetoric during Pyeongchang is never directly threatening or belligerent. Instead, the presentation of the Self is marked by being grand but

sensible while the Other is seen as irregular and ruthless. The empirics suggest that the out-group can be applied both positive and negative content. This is in concordance with Todorov's and Neumann's claims. The perception of the Other's nature appears to have changed as Russia's value judgement of the Other seems to have gone from desirable to despicable. Nevertheless, the possibility of describing an Other with positive content ultimately means that there is a possibility of turning a negative Other into a positive one. The study shows that mega events such as the Olympics can pose an arena for manifesting the approach to the Other, whatever it may be.

Russia's complaints over the US politicization of sports can be related to their own decision to hold a government meeting on the poor performance in the Vancouver Olympics. Further, athletes may have a political impact themselves. Through praising Putin, Zagitova's great Olympic performance is linked to the greatness of the government. Lavrov was publicized on RT speaking about the Pyeongchang Olympics, thus, the increased tension between US and Russia has led to that sport suddenly is relevant for the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Russia blames the US for politicizing sports, nevertheless, it is evidently becoming politicized in Russia too. The greatest political power of sports may be that it is often seen as regular and peripheral. By stating sport is 'just sport' we might increase its political power. Sporting mega events constitute a rare opportunity to affect how people, maybe especially those who are interested in sports but not in politics, perceive their nation and its Others. Due to technological advances and an increasingly globalized world, mega events such as the Olympics might serve as an even more powerful political arena in the future. Advancing technology enables more people to watch the Olympics and fall under the propaganda sphere of sports.

Russia appears ambivalent in its view on whether sport is 'just' about sport or actually about politics as well. Nevertheless, connections between sports and politics in the Winter Olympics are tangible. The Olympic Games are one of the reasons behind Putin's immense approval ratings and two thirds of all Russians considered the doping scandal to be politically motivated. Consequently, the Olympics have entailed possibilities to cement political paths and perceptions of enemies. Through the Winter Olympics, Russia has expressed rapprochement to the West and later retracted it. Thus, the Winter Olympics appears to have been a political arena for the Russian government to manifest their relationship with the West. The Winter Olympics show that Russia increasingly views the West but especially the US as an enemy. This is likely to have repercussions as the relationship between them is of importance for the entire world. Moreover, tension appears able to be reproduced or subdued in the political arena of the Winter Olympics. In order to further understand the complexity of Self-Other relations between Russia and the West, future studies on the Western portrayal of Russia in mega events such as the Olympics would be of particular interest.

6. Conclusion

Russia's identity rhetoric during the last three Winter Olympics reflects an increased detachment from the West. The Winter Olympics appear to have constituted a tool to navigate perceptions of the Self, the Other and the relations between the two. During the Vancouver and Sochi Olympics, the Other is described mostly with positive content while the description and approach towards the Other is substantially different during the Pyeongchang Olympics. The Russian Self appears to have gone from approaching the West and desiring to become increasingly similar, to defining the Russian Self by its distance to and its differences from the West.

The Winter Olympics seem to have constituted a method for Russia to approach the West and later on, to retract the rapprochement. Thus, the Winter Olympics seem to be able to manifest what constitutes one's country in relations to others and this appears to be dynamic as the Other has been described with both positive and negative content. Due to the large amount of people who follow the Winter Olympics, the greatest political power of it might be that people who are interested in sports fall under the political propaganda without even noticing as it is often seen as 'just sports'. While categorizing sporting mega events as regular and peripheral, we allow sports to have an invisible political power which what is established to be political lacks. The Olympics appear to be used by the Russian government to legitimize their political path and as a way to affect peoples' view of themselves and the West. Moreover, the Olympics appear to be used by Russia to enhance the enemy picture of the US.

Russia's rhetoric during Pyeongchang can be seen as an attempt to manifest the tension and barrier between the Self and the Other. Russia's retraction of the previous Western rapprochement and the manifestation of the US as enemies could be a part of an attempt to legitimize the Putin regime after allegations of doping and interference in elections. Russia seems to try to save the strong perception of the Self by turning the Other into an enemy. Nevertheless, the previously positive portrayal of the West strengthens the assumption that the Other can be described with both positive and negative content. Moreover, the study shows that sporting mega events such as the Winter Olympics can be used by nations to manifest both rapprochement and detachment. Thus, this study demonstrates that the Winter Olympics is a salient political arena in terms of collective identity constructions.

Hence, the answer to the research question is that through analysing Russia's rhetoric during the Winter Olympics it is evident that Russian identity claims have changed significantly. Russia appears to increasingly perceive themselves as aligning with their hero script and becoming a great power. In the first two cases, the Other was associated with a certain admiration that has ceased. Instead, the last Winter Olympics appeared to have been a political arena by the Russian government to manifest the West but especially the US as a despicable and jealous enemy that is considerably different from the Self.

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