

Putin's Crimea Speech, 18 March 2014: Russia's Changing Public Political Narrative

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Abstract: President Putin's Crimea Speech of 18 March 2014 represents a pivotal moment in the development of the post-Soviet world. Marking the annexation of Crimea by Russia, the speech, whilst containing elements familiar from Putin's discourse in recent years, simultaneously changed fundamental assumptions about Russia's place in the world order. Analyzed from the perspective of political narrative, Putin's speech shows marked differences from the standard narrative employed since he came to power in 2000. Aside from the momentous international impact that they represent, these differences have opened up a new complexity and uncertainty in Russia's domestic politics.

Foreign Minister Lavrov and I talked for a good six hours. And the conversation was very direct, very candid, frank, and I say constructive because we really dug into all of Russia's perceptions, their narrative, our narrative.

—John Kerry, US Secretary of State, March 2014

On 18 March 2014 Russia's president, Vladimir Putin, gave a speech in the Kremlin's grand St George's Hall to an invited audience of State Duma deputies, Federation Council members, heads of Russia's regions, and civil society representatives. The speech, which culminated in the signing of a treaty making Crimea and the city of Sevastopol subjects of the Russian Federation, represents a landmark statement of Putin's—and Russia's—worldview. Russia's annexation of Crimea constitutes a pivotal juncture in the post-