

Political culture and ideology

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**Moralizing the West: Multimodal Constructions of Civilizational Decline
in Pro-Russian Arabic-Language Discourse on X**

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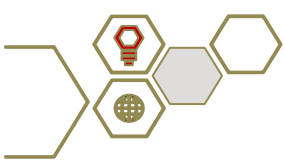
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Abstract. Purpose. The purpose of the article is to examine how the West is discursively and multimodally constructed in pro-Russian Arabic-language accounts on X. The article focuses on the ways in which anti-Western meanings are produced through the interaction of textual, visual, and symbolic resources. Special attention is paid to how individual episodes, images, videos, and evaluative captions are transformed into broader moral and civilizational generalizations about Western societies.

Methods. The study applies multimodal critical discourse analysis as the main methodological framework. This approach makes it possible to analyze the interaction between verbal messages, images, videos, symbolic markers, and platform-specific forms of communication. The empirical material consists of publications by selected Arabic-language accounts on X that systematically disseminate pro-Russian and anti-

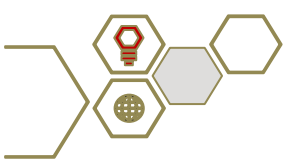


Western narratives. The analysis focuses on recurring evaluative patterns, visual framing, symbolic oppositions, discursive scaling, and the role of captions in assigning moral and political meaning to visual materials.

Results. The analysis shows that the West is systematically represented as a symbolic space of moral disorder, cultural decline, erosion of traditional norms, and destabilizing influence on other societies. This representation is produced through repeated references to gender, sexuality, family norms, public behavior, cultural practices, and cooperation with Western political institutions. Visual materials are used as seemingly direct evidence, while accompanying captions provide the preferred interpretive frame. Individual visual episodes are generalized and presented as signs of wider moral and civilizational processes. The study also finds that anti-Western representation performs a function of discursive self-positioning: by negatively evaluating the West, the analyzed accounts implicitly construct their own position as bearers of an alternative normative standpoint connected with their broader pro-Russian orientation.

Conclusions. The article concludes that anti-Western discourse in the analyzed publications operates through a stable multimodal mechanism: visual fragments provide apparent immediacy, captions assign evaluative meaning, and repeated interpretive patterns transform isolated episodes into broader claims about Western societies and Western influence. The West is represented not only through political criticism, but through a moral and civilizational register in which cultural practices, family norms, and public behavior become markers of decline. The findings deepen the understanding of digital political communication in the Arabic-language segment of X and of the mechanisms through which pro-Russian narratives adapt to non-Western information environments.

Keywords: Arabic-language information space; pro-Russian narratives; anti-Western narratives; political discourse; narrative construction; Russia–West opposition; social media discourse; information influence.



Моралізуючи Захід: мультимодальне конструювання цивілізаційного занепаду в проросійському арабськомовному дискурсі соціальної мережі X

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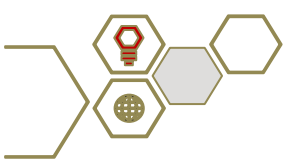
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Анотація. Мета. Метою статті є дослідження того, як Захід дискурсивно й мультимодально конструюється в комунікації проросійських арабськомовних акаунтів у соціальній мережі X. У статті розглянуто способи продукування антизахідних значень через взаємодію текстових, візуальних і символічних ресурсів. Особливу увагу приділено тому, як окремі епізоди, зображення, відеоматеріали та оцінні підписи трансформуються у ширші моральні й цивілізаційні узагальнення щодо західних суспільств.

Методи. У дослідженні застосовано мультимодальний критичний дискурс-аналіз як основну методологічну рамку. Цей підхід дає змогу аналізувати взаємодію вербальних повідомлень, зображень, відеоматеріалів, символічних маркерів і платформно-специфічних форм комунікації. Емпіричний матеріал становлять публікації відібраних арабськомовних акаунтів у соціальній мережі X, які системно поширюють проросійські та антизахідні наративи. Аналіз зосереджено на повторюваних оцінних моделях, візуальному фреймуванні, символічних опозиціях, дискурсивному масштабуванні та ролі текстових підписів у наданні візуальним матеріалам морального й політичного значення.

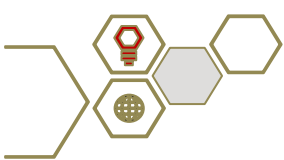
Результати. Аналіз показує, що Захід системно репрезентується як символічний простір морального безладу, культурного занепаду, ерозії



традиційних норм і дестабілізаційного впливу на інші суспільства. Така репрезентація продукується через повторювані звернення до тем гендеру, сексуальності, сімейних норм, публічної поведінки, культурних практик і співпраці із західними політичними інституціями. Візуальні матеріали використовуються як нібито безпосередні докази, тоді як супровідні підписи задають бажану інтерпретаційну рамку. Окремі візуальні епізоди узагальнюються й подаються як ознаки ширших моральних і цивілізаційних процесів. У дослідженні також встановлено, що антизахідна репрезентація виконує функцію дискурсивного самопозиціонування: негативно оцінюючи Захід, аналізовані акаунти імпліцитно конструюють власну позицію як носіїв альтернативної нормативної оптики, пов'язаної з їхньою ширшою проросійською орієнтацією.

Висновки. У статті зроблено висновок, що антизахідний дискурс у проаналізованих публікаціях діє через відносно сталий мультимодальний механізм: візуальні фрагменти створюють ефект безпосередності, підписи надають їм оцінного значення, а повторювані інтерпретаційні моделі трансформують ізольовані епізоди у ширші твердження про західні суспільства та західний вплив. Захід репрезентується не лише через політичну критику, а й через моральний і цивілізаційний регістр, у якому культурні практики, сімейні норми та публічна поведінка стають маркерами занепаду. Отримані результати поглиблюють розуміння цифрової політичної комунікації в арабськомовному сегменті соціальної мережі X та механізмів адаптації проросійських наративів до незахідних інформаційних середовищ.

Ключові слова: арабськомовний інформаційний простір; проросійські наративи; антизахідні наративи; політичний дискурс; наративне конструювання; опозиція Росія — Захід; дискурс соціальних мереж; інформаційний вплив.



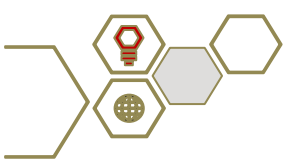
Problem statement. The relevance of this study is determined by the growing circulation of pro-Russian and anti-Western narratives in the Arabic-language information space after the beginning of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine. Within this environment, the Arabic-language sphere of X functions as an important site of political interpretation. A significant part of this communication relies on the construction of an oppositional model between Russia and the West.

Despite the growing scholarly attention to Russian information influence, propaganda, and disinformation, the discursive mechanisms through which the West is represented in pro-Russian Arabic-language communication remain insufficiently studied. In particular, there is a lack of research on how anti-Western meanings are produced through the interaction of textual, visual, and symbolic resources in social media discourse.

The problem addressed in this article therefore concerns the multimodal construction of the West in pro-Russian Arabic-language accounts on X. The study examines how individual episodes, images, videos, and evaluative textual comments are combined to produce broader civilizational generalizations about Western societies. Such analysis is necessary for understanding the conditions under which Russia can be represented as a morally ordered and culturally legitimate alternative.

The scientific significance of the article lies in its contribution to the study of digital political communication, multimodal discourse, and narrative construction in non-Western information environments. Its practical relevance is connected with the need to better understand how pro-Russian narratives are being shared among Arabic-speaking audiences and how anti-Western frames can shape the interpretation of international events. This is particularly important for Ukrainian strategic communication and public diplomacy, which require a deeper understanding of the interpretive frameworks through which Ukraine, Russia, and the West are positioned in the Arab information space.

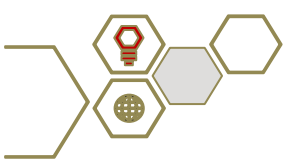
Recent research and publications. The issue lies at the intersection of research on Arab media systems, Russian information influence, digital political



communication, and multimodal discourse analysis. Richter and Kozman (2021) show that Arab media systems are heterogeneous but connected by shared Arabic-language and transnational media flows [1]. Radcliffe, Abuhmaid, and Mahliaire (2023) emphasize the role of social media in news consumption and political discussion in the Middle East and North Africa [2], while Mostafa and Almogren (2024) introduce a large-scale Arabic tweet dataset designed for fake news detection and veracity analysis [3]. These works contextualize the platform environment, but do not examine how pro-Russian accounts produce anti-Western meanings through discourse and visual representation.

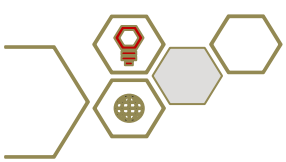
Russian information activity in the Arabic-language space has received growing attention after the beginning of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine. Elene Janadze (2022) shows that RT Arabic and Sputnik Arabic intensified their online activity after February 2022 and promoted interpretations that shifted responsibility for the war toward NATO and the West [4]. Marcin Styszynski (2023) examines how these outlets adapted the war to Arab audiences by connecting it with regional sensitivities and pre-existing interpretive frames [5]. Vassilena Dotkova (2023) highlights the role of Russian embassies as channels of narrative dissemination [6]. Jonathan Morley-Davies, Jem Thomas, and Graham Baines (2024) identify the Middle East as a region where Russian narratives can benefit from pre-existing skepticism toward Western policies [7]. Arik Segal (2024) also points to the visibility of RT Arabic in several Arab countries and the role of Russian international media in regional information flows [8]. These studies show the scale of Russian Arabic-language communication, but they focus mainly on state media, diplomatic channels, and broad information operations rather than the detailed discursive and visual construction of the West in pro-Russian Arabic-language accounts on X.

Recent studies also examine Arab reactions to the Russo-Ukrainian war and the relationship between anti-Western sentiment and attitudes toward Russia. Tamer et al. (2023) collected approximately 3.1 million Arabic-language tweets and analyzed them through sentiment, emotion, and partiality classification [9]. Their



partiality analysis classified tweets as pro-Russian, pro-Ukrainian, or neutral/neither, with the majority of classified tweets not expressing clear support for either side. Soran Tarkhani (2024), based on more than 15,000 comments on Arabic-language news videos, identifies a statistically significant relationship between anti-Western sentiment and expressions of support for Russia in the context of the war in Ukraine [10]. Ragnar Weilandt (2025) argues that perceptions of Russia and Ukraine in the Middle East and North Africa are shaped by broader attitudes toward Western policy, double standards, and regional grievances [11]. These studies demonstrate that support for Russia in Arab digital environments is often connected to wider interpretive structures in which the West is already problematized. However, they mostly address attitudes, comments, sentiments, or aggregate patterns of opinion, while paying less attention to how anti-Western meanings are produced through the interaction of verbal messages, images, videos, symbols, and platform-specific communicative forms.

The methodological foundation of the article is shaped by critical discourse studies and multimodal approaches to meaning-making. Fairclough's understanding of discourse as a form of social practice is relevant because it allows political communication to be examined as a process through which power relations, ideological positions, and social evaluations are produced and normalized [12]. Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach is important for explaining how discourse is connected with shared representations, mental models, and ideological schemas through which audiences interpret political events [13]. The analysis of visual and symbolic components relies on social semiotics and multimodal critical discourse analysis. Kress and van Leeuwen's work on visual grammar shows that images should be understood as structured semiotic resources rather than neutral illustrations [14]. Machin and Mayr's approach is useful for examining how verbal and visual elements jointly construct social actors, actions, evaluations, and ideological meanings [15]. This methodological perspective is necessary for the present article because the analyzed posts on X combine videos, images, captions, symbolic markers, and evaluative comments into a single interpretive structure.

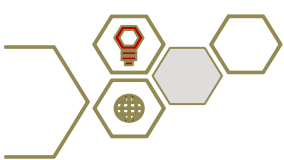


At the same time, the existing literature leaves several issues insufficiently addressed. Studies of Russian information influence in the Arab world have clarified the role of RT Arabic, Sputnik Arabic, Russian diplomatic communication, and broader narrative strategies, but less attention has been paid to Arabic-language accounts on X that present themselves as Russian, Russia-oriented, or Russia-affiliated sources outside the format of official state media. Research on Arab reactions to the Russo-Ukrainian war provides valuable evidence about sentiments, attitudes, and patterns of alignment, yet it does not fully explain how specific meanings are produced at the level of discourse, particularly how the West becomes a morally problematized symbolic object.

A further limitation concerns the moral and cultural dimensions of anti-Western discourse. Existing studies often identify themes such as NATO expansion, Western hypocrisy, double standards, neocolonialism, or criticism of Western interventions, but pay less attention to representations of gender, sexuality, family norms, public behavior, cultural practices, and traditional values. Moreover, computational studies of social media narratives tend to prioritize scale, sentiment, topics, or coordination, leaving the interaction between textual interpretation and visual evidence-making underanalyzed. The present article addresses this gap by examining how verbal, visual, and symbolic resources jointly construct the West as a space of moral decline, cultural degradation, and civilizational crisis in pro-Russian Arabic-language discourse on X.

The objective of the article is to examine how the West is discursively and multimodally constructed in pro-Russian Arabic-language accounts on X. The article aims to identify the textual, visual, and symbolic mechanisms through which anti-Western meanings are produced, stabilized, and connected to broader moral and civilizational interpretations.

To achieve this objective, the article pursues several interrelated tasks. First, it examines how selected Arabic-language accounts on X represent the West through recurring evaluative patterns, visual materials, and symbolic oppositions. Second, it analyzes how individual episodes are transformed into broader generalizations about

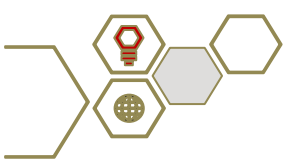


Western societies. Third, it explains how the negative construction of the West creates discursive conditions under which Russia may be represented as a morally ordered and culturally legitimate alternative. The article therefore contributes to the study of pro-Russian narratives, Arabic-language political discourse, and multimodal meaning-making on social media.

Findings and Discussion. The empirical part of the article is based on a multimodal critical discourse analysis of selected Arabic-language accounts on X that systematically disseminate pro-Russian and anti-Western narratives: Rusia News (@RussiaArabic0), Alsaḥafia Alrusia (@Russian__press), Aliaelamia Alrusia (@Russian__media), Rusia News (@mog_Russ), Rusia Alaan (@Russianowarabic), Moscow News (@M0SC0W0), Shuuwn Rusia (@id7p_), and Akhbar Rusia Alaitihadia (@Su_35m). The study does not aim to map all Arabic-language pro-Russian communication on the platform, but focuses on a theoretically relevant corpus in which recurring discursive patterns are especially visible. This corresponds to the logic of qualitative discourse analysis, where the objective is the interpretation of repeated mechanisms of meaning-making.

The analyzed accounts present themselves as Russia-oriented, Russia-affiliated, or Russian information sources and often circulate content consonant with Russian political communication. Their publications combine news-like formats, evaluative commentary, videos, images, symbolic markers. This makes the corpus suitable for multimodal critical discourse analysis, since the relevant meanings are rarely produced by text alone. In most cases, the political message emerges from the interaction between a visual fragment and an interpretive caption that directs the audience toward a specific moral or political reading.

The analysis proceeds from the assumption that anti-Western discourse is not a secondary element of pro-Russian communication, but one of its structural components. In the examined publications, the positive image of Russia is usually formed relationally, through opposition to a negatively marked image of the West. For this reason, the article focuses on how selected Arabic-language accounts on X



transform individual visual episodes, social practices, and cultural references into broader generalizations about Western societies. The main finding is that the West is systematically represented as a space of moral decline, cultural degradation, and erosion of traditional values. This representation is constructed through repeated references to gender, sexuality, family norms, public behavior, and cultural practices. These themes allow the accounts to present the West not only as a geopolitical rival of Russia, but also as a moral and civilizational problem.

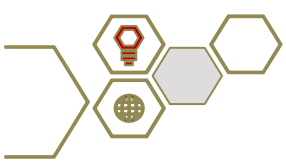
A characteristic example appears in a publication by Rusia News (@RussiaArabic0) from 2 January 2025. The post contains a short video that allegedly shows a public performance under LGBT-related symbolism (Fig. 1). The accompanying text provides a strongly evaluative interpretation, referring to “pornographic scenes,” “sexual connotations,” “rainbow science,” “decadence,” and “nudity.” The caption transforms a single visual episode into a general statement about Western society as a whole.



Fig. 1. Screenshot of a post by Rusia News (@RussiaArabic0), January 2, 2025.

Source: Rusia News (@RussiaArabic0), X, January 2, 2025,

<https://x.com/RussiaArabic0/status/1874867145538162868?s=20>

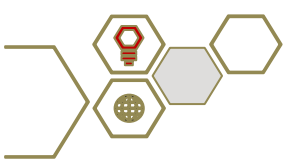


From the perspective of multimodal critical discourse analysis, this example demonstrates a typical division of semiotic labor between image and text. The video appears to provide empirical immediacy, while the caption determines how the visual material should be interpreted. It assigns moral meaning to the scene and links it to a wider narrative of civilizational decline. The visual element therefore does not speak for itself; its meaning is stabilized by textual commentary that frames it as evidence of a broader Western condition.

A similar mechanism is visible in posts where family or intimate life is used as a sign of broader civilizational degradation. For example, a publication by Alsaḥafia Alrusia (@Russian__press) from 3 January 2025 contains a video in which an American woman allegedly discusses open relationships with her husband [16]. The accompanying text presents the case as evidence that “everything is permitted” in the West and asks whether there is any deeper level of decline that the West could reach. The private story is therefore not treated as an individual case or a social practice requiring contextualization, but as a symptom of the moral condition of Western society in general. In this way, family and intimate life become sites through which the analyzed discourse evaluates the condition of a civilization.

A second important pattern is that anti-Western discourse is not limited to Europe or the United States. It also extends to countries cooperating with Western institutions, or entering Western political structures. In such cases, the West is constructed not only as a space of moral decline, but also as a source of transnational cultural degradation. This logic is visible in a publication by Rusia News (@RussiaArabic0) from 8 January 2025, which states: “Peoples that sell themselves to the West and imitate its culture are finished. This is not Europe or the United States. This is Japan” [17]. The post expands the category of the West into a cultural force whose influence is portrayed as destructive wherever it appears.

The same expansion appears in posts that associate Western influence with NATO. In one publication by Alsaḥafia Alrusia (@Russian__press) from 28 December 2024, a video allegedly showing a wedding scene in Turkey is accompanied by a



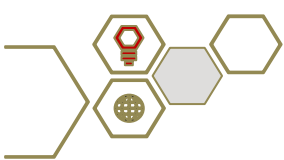
caption claiming that every country where NATO policy and culture are introduced moves toward decline and exposure (Fig. 2). NATO, usually discussed as a military and political institution, is connected here to intimate behavior, bodily exposure, and public morality.



Fig. 2. Screenshot of a post by Alsahafia Alrusia (@Russian_press), December 28, 2024.

Source: Alsahafia Alrusia (@Russian_press), X, December 28, 2024, https://x.com/Russian_press/status/1872769767918191046

Across numerous examples, several recurring mechanisms can be identified. First, individual visual episodes are generalized into claims about “Western people,” “Western societies,” “the West,” “NATO culture,” or countries that allegedly imitate the West. This process may be described as discursive scaling: a single event is elevated to the level of a large-scale civilizational diagnosis. Second, evaluative vocabulary stabilizes the preferred interpretation. The analyzed posts repeatedly mark the West and Western-associated practices through categories of decline, degradation, abnormality, permissiveness, or collapse. Third, anti-Western representation performs a function of self-positioning. By negatively evaluating the West, the analyzed

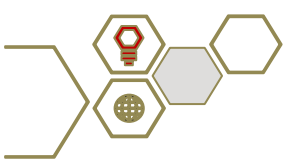


accounts implicitly position themselves within an alternative normative order. Since these accounts present themselves as Russian, Russia-oriented, or linked to Russian informational space, this self-positioning indirectly contributes to the construction of Russia as the opposite pole. Russia does not always need to be praised explicitly; it can be positively implied through the repeated negative construction of the West. Fourth, the analyzed Arabic-language posts often frame the West through themes that may be culturally salient for conservative or religiously oriented segments of Arab-speaking audiences: family, gender norms, sexual morality, public modesty, and respect for tradition. The accounts selectively mobilize themes that can resonate with specific cultural and moral repertoires already present in parts of the Arabic-language information space. In doing so, they make anti-Western discourse culturally legible and potentially emotionally persuasive.

The obtained results present that in pro-Russian Arabic-language communication, the West is repeatedly associated with moral decline, cultural degradation, loss of traditional norms, and destructive influence on other societies. At the same time, the analysis requires several qualifications. First, the findings are limited to the selected corpus and should not be generalized to all pro-Russian Arabic-language communication on X. Second, the article examines discourse and representation; it does not measure audience reception or the persuasive effects of the analyzed posts.

The empirical material demonstrates that anti-Western discourse in the analyzed corpus operates through a stable multimodal mechanism: visual fragments provide apparent immediacy, captions assign moral interpretation, and repeated evaluative patterns transform isolated episodes into broader claims about Western societies. The West is therefore represented as a symbolic space of moral disorder and cultural decline. This negative construction is central to the broader pro-Russian narrative structure of the analyzed accounts, because it creates the discursive background against which Russia may be positioned, implicitly or explicitly, as a value-based alternative.

Conclusions. The article examines how the West is discursively and multimodally constructed in pro-Russian Arabic-language accounts on X. The analysis

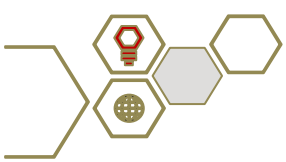


shows that the selected accounts represent the West as a symbolic space associated with moral disorder, cultural decline, the erosion of traditional norms, and the destabilizing influence of Western political and cultural models. The study demonstrates that this representation is produced through the interaction of textual, visual, and symbolic resources. Images and videos function as seemingly direct evidence, while accompanying captions assign them specific evaluative meanings. As a result, individual visual episodes are transformed into broader claims about Western societies, Western influence, or countries portrayed as imitating the West. This mechanism enables anti-Western discourse to move from isolated examples to wider moral and civilizational generalizations.

The article also shows that anti-Western representation performs a function of discursive self-positioning. By negatively evaluating the West, the analyzed accounts do more than describe an external political or cultural object; they implicitly construct their own position as a bearer of an alternative normative standpoint. Since these accounts present themselves as Russian, Russia-oriented, or linked to the Russian information space, this self-positioning is closely connected with their broader pro-Russian orientation. In this sense, the moral problematization of the West helps authorize the speaker's perspective: the accounts present themselves as observers capable of identifying decline, defending normative boundaries, and interpreting global events through a value-based lens.

The research objective has been achieved: the article identified the main textual, visual, and symbolic mechanisms through which anti-Western meanings are produced in the selected Arabic-language accounts on X, explained how specific episodes are generalized into wider civilizational interpretations, and showed how negative representations of the West contribute to the self-positioning of pro-Russian accounts within an alternative normative order. The findings remain limited to the analyzed corpus and should be interpreted as an analysis of discourse and representation.

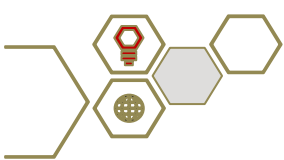
Further research could expand the corpus across other platforms, including Telegram, Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok, and compare whether similar moral and



civilizational frames appear in different digital environments. It would also be useful to combine multimodal critical discourse analysis with computational methods in order to trace the scale and circulation of such narratives. Such approaches would deepen understanding of how pro-Russian narratives adapt to non-Western information environments and how anti-Western discourse functions as a culturally resonant form of political meaning-making.

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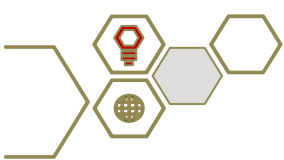
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