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Justifying War in Ukraine: An Analysis of Speeches, Excerpts and Interviews by Vladimir Putin

Irene Goudimiak

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JUSTIFYING WAR IN UKRAINE: AN ANALYSIS OF SPEECHES, EXCERPTS
AND INTERVIEWS BY VLADIMIR PUTIN

A Thesis

Submitted to the McAnulty Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of the Arts

By

Irene Goudimiak

May 2016

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Irene Goudimiak

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JUSTIFYING WAR IN UKRAINE: AN ANALYSIS OF SPEECHES, EXCERPTS
AND INTERVIEWS BY VLADIMIR PUTIN

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ABSTRACT

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May 2016

Thesis supervised by Dr. Jennie Schulze and Dr. Mark Haas

For two years now the war in Southeast Ukraine has claimed approximately 10,000 lives and countless casualties. Pegged as a civil war, the conflict is waging on between pro-Western nationalists and pro-Russian separatists. The war ignited after the public ousting of President Yanukovch in Maidan Square in the midst of thousands of protesters, and the subsequent annexation of Crimea. Although the Russian Federation maintains it does not have a military presence in Ukraine, U.S. intelligence and Ukrainian military officials have evidence otherwise. As a result, the West has imposed significant sanctions on “Putin’s Russia”. This study explores how Putin justifies the Russian incursion into Ukraine through his own rhetoric, and further, whether this rhetoric changes when speaking to a domestic versus international audience. In the context of framing, this study analyzes 57 speeches, interviews, and excerpts of

Vladimir Putin focused on the Crisis in Ukraine, from the years of 2013 to 2016.

Throughout the literature, Kin-state rallying, Russian encirclement by enemies/isolation, Russian ethnocentrism, blurred legal rhetoric, and manipulation of historical myth, are the predominant frames that emerge. By way of propaganda, the findings indicate that Putin's most frequently used justifications frame the conflict through Russia's necessity to protect its brother nation from an unstable government, and the projection of blame onto the West. In effect, this study not only emphasizes the significance and implications of framing by elites in conflict, it also sheds light on the current debate over Putin's motivations in Ukraine.

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Introduction

A mere two decades have passed since Ukraine became an independent nation on August 24th, 1991. Yet once again, the young nation is forced to defend its language, livelihood and sovereignty from an all too familiar intruder. For centuries, Ukraine has been divided under the rule of several Empires (Molchanov, 2015, p. 3). The trends of masked aggression remain the same only this time it is Russian President Vladimir Putin leading the assault from the Kremlin. The rules of the game have changed, however, and in the current global climate a recognized bout of aggression is too costly for Putin to risk. Yet, in the midst of crisis in Ukraine and the backdrop of global turmoil, Putin has been able to pursue his imperialistic ambitions. The Kremlin officially denies any incursion into Ukraine, and Putin has presented himself as a concerned bystander: seeking a peaceful solution to the civil conflict raging on the territory of his brother country.

Ten thousand lives have been lost in the three years since war broke out on the Southeastern border of Ukraine and the death toll continues to rise (Bebler, 2015, p. 13). Dissatisfactions with the Ukrainian government first emerged among the Ukrainian people after President Yanukovich backed out of a deal with the European Union in order to foster warmer relations with Russia. To counter the EU financial package and keep Ukraine within the regional economic arena, Putin offered 15 billion dollars in aid to Ukraine, effectively breaking the EU-Ukraine deal (Tsygankov, 2015, p. 284). Inspired by their victory in the Orange Revolution of 2004, the enraged public decided to, once again, take the political fate of Ukraine into their own hands. The broken EU deal was the final straw in the cascade of Russian-leaning decisions made by the pro-Kremlin

Yanukovich, accused by many of being a puppet of Putin's ("60 Minutes," 2015, p. 13). And in a flash, thousands of peaceful protesters gathered in the capital's Maidan Square, teeming with passion and hope for a better future. The protests lasted from November 2013 to February 2014 when the corrupt President Yanykovich was finally ousted and forced to flee the country out of fear for his life. He fled to Russia (BBC News, 2016, p. 2).

The atmosphere of the protests changed from peace to violence. Enraged protesters battled the rigid and merciless Berkut police. Aided by only flimsy shields and tattered coats, the protesters fought with solidarity against the armed Berkut and trained hidden snipers. The capital was engulfed in violence and fire. The uprising eventually settled leaving behind the "heavenly hundred," the official reference to those that perished in Maidan for the sake of the nation (Yakimovich, 2015, P. 1). The scene was a mess of Molotov cocktails and shots fired. Kidnappings, tortures, and disappearances were reported throughout the uprising. It took months to rehabilitate the square to its former beauty and re-instill confidence into the souls of the embattled civilians (Gatehouse, 2015, p. 5). It was already in this stage of the crisis that the protesters noticed a slew of unfamiliar faces. Uniforms unmarked, yet recognizable, these anonymous soldiers aimed their military weapons at the unarmed people (Bebler, 2015, p. 7). These Russian "volunteers" were only the first glimpse of what was to come in eastern Ukraine (Lanoszka, 2016, p. 4), as tensions slowly began to mount.

The unlawful annexation of Crimea was Russia's next phase of involvement. It was the perfect scenario for Putin, who had the return of Crimea to Russia on his radar for years (Gvosdev, 2014, p. 5). A historically Russian territory, Crimea was given to the

Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic by Nikita Krushchev as a “symbolic gesture” to promote good relations with the Soviet Union. This bid also held an ulterior political motive, which was to garner support for Krushchev as General Secretary by the Ukrainian SSR. From then on it remained an autonomous Republic of Ukraine, populated by Russians, Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars (Gvosdev 2014, p. 3). While the large majority of the population was ethnically Russians, all groups lived together in harmony. The Maidan uprising, however, proved to have a greater impression on the nation than expected. It awakened a sense of Ukrainian nationalism and effectively hardened the previously muted ethnic boundaries.

In the wake of Maidan, ethnic Russians and Russian-leaning Ukrainians began to seek solace in Russia as Ukraine approached internal collapse (Motyl, 2015). It was the perfect pretext for Putin to step in. Amidst fear, chaos and separation, Putin came to the rescue of his ethnic kin. Solidified in 1999, and continually expanding, Russia’s Compatriot Act has been a staple in its foreign policy: vowing to protect Russian compatriots stranded outside of Russia’s borders following the breakup of the Soviet Union (Zekam, Saunders, Antoun, 2015, pp.16-18). Putin contends that with the fall of the USSR many ethnic Russians became foreigners. In the ousting of the pro-Russian Yanukovich and the formation of a Western-leaning interim government, Russian speakers in Crimea and the east began to fear for the viability of their future in the independent Ukraine (Motyl, 2015). In such a permissive environment, Crimea was swiftly and efficiently sliced from the map of Ukraine and returned to Russia “without a single shot fired” (Anonymous, 2014, p. 2). Putin organized a referendum, which resulted in the decision of the Crimean people to return to Russia. Involving armed guards and

bribes the referendum remains unrecognized and unlawful by the international community (Bebler, 2015, p. 8).

The main component of this Crisis is the ongoing war in the eastern ‘Donbas’ region of Ukraine that shares a border with Russia. Almost in tandem with the annexation of Crimea, various anti-government protests erupted in the industrial east of Ukraine (Tsygankov, 2015, p. 285). Pro-Russian and anti-government groups, angered by the overthrow of the Donbas-born president, began to assert their claim over the region and their staunch disapproval of the new Western-leaning interim government. Bolstered by Russia’s encouragement, the activists formed into the Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR) and the Luhansk People’s Republic (LNR)- representing the two major cities in the Donbas region. These pro-Russian rebels and separatists began to violently seize official buildings and territories, viciously asserting their malcontent with the new leadership. The primary grievance of the groups was a lack of adequate representation for the people in the east under Kiev’s new leadership.

As the Ukrainian government attempted to suppress these rebels the conflict escalated to a civil war between pro-Ukrainian nationalists in the west and pro-Russian rebels in the east. It also surfaced that Russian tanks and forces were doing a lot more than “purely humanitarian work” and were aiding the rebels (Luhn, 2015, p.1). Backed by U.S. intelligence, the Ukrainian government claims that Russia invaded sovereign Ukrainian territory in August 2014 marking an act of war and outright aggression. Although the Kremlin maintains its non-involvement by stating that Russian fighters in Ukraine are volunteers, physical evidence has mounted that there are indeed Russian

military personnel within the borders of Ukraine numbering in the thousands (Luhn, 2015, p 1).

In an attempt to quell the Crisis in Ukraine, there have been two Agreements formulated in Minsk, Belarus. The first round of agreements, entitled Minsk I, were finalized on September 5th, 2014. Ukraine, Russia, and the People's Republics of Donetsk and Luhansk were the signatories. Under observance of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the agreement was meant to stop the fighting in Donbas with an immediate ceasefire. Unfortunately, Minsk I failed soon after it's signing (Bern, 2014). The subsequent protocol, Minsk II, was signed on February 12th, 2015 and intended to reform and reinvigorate the previous agreement. Signed by Germany, France, Ukraine and Russia, Minsk II added a few key points to the table. The most prominent points included an immediate and full bilateral ceasefire, a withdrawal of heavy weapons from both sides, a dialogue on local elections in Donbas, constitutional reform in Ukraine, and a release of hostages on all sides (Motyl, 2015, p. 2). Minsk II has been extended into 2016, however, the fighting in the east continues.

According to the Kremlin's official rhetoric, the annexation of Crimea is legitimate and Russia's involvement in the east is purely humanitarian ("Former Kremlin internal policy chief," 2015, p. 5). Factual evidence, however, proves otherwise. Putin's actions have sparked both intrigue and retaliation from the international community. A debate has ensued over why he is involved in Ukraine. Response to NATO expansion, resurgence of imperialism, and unification of Ukrainian and Russian identity are just a few examples. However, this study focuses on *how* Putin is justifying his actions in Ukraine. To understand Russia's justifications through the lens of Putin himself, this

study analyzed 57 interviews, speeches, and excerpts from 2013-2016 that were relevant to the Crisis in Ukraine. Taking a glimpse through various frames, this study seeks to understand how Putin is justifying his actions in Ukraine to both a domestic and international audience.

History and Composition of Ukraine

To most effectively understand the significance of framing and justifications in the current conflict, it is imperative to present a brief history of relations between Russia and Ukraine, Ukraine's ethnic geography, and an outline of key players involved in the conflict. By and large, the relationship between Ukraine and Russia has been a complicated one. Historically Ukraine's borders have fluctuated under various conquests. In the 17th and 18th centuries, the competition over Ukrainian territories spread between the Polish Commonwealth, Muscovy, the Ottoman Empire, and the Crimean Khanate. Into the 20th century, Germany, Austria-Hungary, the USSR, Poland, Romania and Czechoslovakia all vied for a piece of the 'breadbasket of Europe' (Motyl, 2015, p. 2). Under Stalin, Ukrainians suffered through mass deportations, labor camps, and a fabricated famine that took close to ten million lives (Newnham, 2013, p. 117). Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia has continued to influence Ukraine both economically, as its primary trading partner, and culturally.

Internally, Ukraine is culturally heterogeneous. Groups within the country are distributed regionally. The five primary regions that comprise Ukraine are Western Ukraine (Galicia), Central Ukraine, South-Eastern Ukraine, Kyiv City and Crimea (Shulman, 2006, p. 253). These five main regions denote particular ethnic and cultural

affiliations. For example, the Western and Central Regions are comprised primarily of ethnic Ukrainians, while South-Eastern Ukraine is home to the largest concentration of ethnic Russians. Crimea is the only region of Ukraine in which the ethnic majority is Russian at 64% of the population. In a 2001 survey conducted by Stephen Shulman (2006), three categories of respondents (Ukrainians, Russians and ethnic Ukrainians who speak Russian) from each region were asked to determine the level of similarity between the five regions of Ukraine. Galicia and Donbas emerged as the least similar across the board, comprising the two poles of a seemingly bi-polar nation (p. 251). These regional differences, especially potent between the east and the west, provided a context of ethnic and cultural boundaries conducive to Putin's intervention in Ukraine.

Presently, the major players in this conflict can be divided into three distinct entities. The first is the Ukrainian government that is centralized in the capital of Kiev, which is strongly aligned with western Ukraine. Although Kiev is geographically located in central Ukraine it has become associated with the western cities of Lviv, Ternopil and Ivano-Frankivsk as a result of the conflict. The second key player is Putin and the Russian Federation. From the perspective of the Ukrainian government, Putin is the catalyst for much of the chaos occurring in eastern Ukraine. Finally, the very focal point of the conflict is located in the disputed region of eastern Ukraine known as the Donbas. Donbas is an encompassing term used to describe the oblasts of primarily Donetsk, Luhansk, and Mariupol. These regions have historically served as a buffer zone between Ukraine and Russia and are central to this conflict.

In the Donbas coal basin, inhabitants live in cities and towns that more closely resemble villages, with an altogether low standard of living (Osipian, L and Osipian, A

2006, p. 497). With a fluctuating history of multinational inhabitants, Donbas is overwhelmingly viewed in Ukraine as a unique entity that belongs to Ukraine, but is essentially a “no-man’s” land. Much of western Ukraine is ill informed about this region, while still viewing it as the industrial epicenter of the country. Most westerners have never traveled to the east (Osipian, L and Osipian, A, 2006, p. 496). Its position as a buffer zone between Russia and Ukraine, as well as its influx of various inhabitants such as Cossacks and Crimean Greeks, has given Donbas a unique identity and value system that differs from that of both western Ukraine and Russia. Throughout Ukraine, Donbas has the reputation of harboring pro-Russian and Soviet sentiments, possessing viewpoints that are the antithesis of Ukrainian independence (Shulman, 2006, p. 251). High levels of outside influence contribute to its status as a disputed territory.

One of the reasons that the Donbas is so highly disputed is that it is located in the eastern and southeastern arc that houses three fourths of Ukraine’s Russian population. The Donbas alone contains 3.6 million Russians (Wilson, 1995, p. 267). While the nearby regions of Zaporizhzhia and Kharkiv, have historical ties to Ukraine, and Crimea has historical ties to Russia, the origins of the Donbas region are uncertain. As a result, both Russia and Ukraine assert historical claims in the region (Wilson, 1995, p. 268). Regardless, the Donbas was included under sovereign Ukrainian territory when Ukraine achieved its independence on August 24th, 1991: although its roots continue to be the subject of debate.

Further, Ukraine and Russia both trace their roots back to Kievan Rus; a group of Eastern Slavic tribes that ruled from the 9th to 13th centuries (Gvodsev, 2014, p. 4). As historical myth is a necessary component of nation building (Smith, 1994, p. 11), this

claim is fundamental to the story of both nations. Russia contends that Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus can all date their roots to Kievan Rus, suggesting that Ukrainians, Russians and Belarusians are all one people. Ukraine contests this theory by stating that Kievan Rus predates the Muscovite state, denying Russia's statehood in Kievan Rus (Molchanov, 2015, p. 4). In modern times, this contradiction serves as a significant rift in Ukrainian and Russian relations. As Putin puts it, "... we are not simply close neighbors but, as I have said many times already, we are one people. Kiev is the mother of Russian cities. Ancient Rus is our common source and we cannot live without each other (Putin, March 18th 2014, p. 10)." This rift is key in Putin's ability to frame the current conflict.

How is Putin Framing His Actions? - A Review of the Literature

The Debate on Putin's Motivations

The ongoing and relevant nature of the Crisis corresponds to the many analyses targeted at understanding Putin's motivations for involvement in Ukraine. Mearsheimer, McFaul and Sestanovich (2014) present the most relevant debate on what prompted Putin's incursion into sovereign Ukraine. Mearsheimer, among other realists, suggests that Russia is acting aggressively to counter NATO expansion. Since Ukraine serves as a buffer state, a potential shift to the West would place NATO right on Russia's doorstep and would threaten its security (Mearsheimer, 2014, p. 4). McFaul and Sestanovich suggest that Putin's actions are borne out of consideration for regime consolidation and internal stability. The annexation of Crimea is, thus, a direct result of Russia's domestic hardships, particularly the dwindling economy (Mearsheimer, McFaul & Sestanovich, 2014, p. 1-3).

Further, Andrei Tsygankov (2015) views Putin's actions in Ukraine in the larger scope of continued hostilities between Russia and the West. It is Russia's ethnocentrism and U.S. ethno-phobia that contribute to this tension (p. 287). Masha Gessen (2015) suggests that war is an integral part of the Russian culture. Russia is only at peace in a time of war. These brief periods of peace are only anomalies: a time of preparation for the next aggressive act, incursion, or invasion (Pg. 3). The war in Ukraine is, thus, in perfect character for the nation that thrives off of unrest and conflict (Gessen, 2015, p. 2). Lilia Shevstova (2015) adds to this argument by suggesting that Russia's actions are borne out weakness rather than strength. She posits that Russia's domestic and internal grievances are effectively externalized as Russian economy and leadership are strained for survival.

Although these sources seek to explain what motivated Putin to act aggressively in Ukraine, this study focuses on *how* Putin is justifying his actions to both a domestic and international audience. The literature is, thus, based on the use of strategic framing in foreign policy and, more specifically, the significance and implications of framing in Putin's actions and policy toward Ukraine. Several key frames emerge in the literature including kin-state rallying, encirclement by enemies, Russian ethnocentrism, legal rhetoric and manipulation of historical myth and memory. In addition, Putin's use of propaganda in effectively framing the conflict is also analyzed.

Framing Issues in Foreign Policy

Erving Goffman (1974) was the first to describe framing as a way for us to organize the world. A pioneer in the field of sociology, Goffman wrote extensively on the

significance and rationale of framing in our everyday lives. Frame analysis, he describes, is a method of studying how a particular situation is defined and our rationale behind it (Goffman, 1974, p. 1). Following suit, James Druckman (2009) evaluated the significance of framing in communications and political science, studying the effect of strong frames versus weak frames in a series of experiments. He found that in political science, framing could be used strategically to influence public support and policy (p.19).

Framing is a powerful tool: In essence, it is an influence over perception. In the policy sphere, framing is often used by elites to indicate a problem and promote a solution (Druckman, 2009, p.18). Historically, leaders have used framing as a way to guide the outlook of and garner support for particular conflicts. In this way, they are able to justify the actions they make on the international sphere (Mintz & Redd, 2013, p.193). Putin's framing of the conflict in Ukraine has been a vital tool in directing public perception. With the use of mass propaganda, Putin has utilized various frames to present the war in Ukraine as a civil war and an effort by the Russian Federation to protect its ethnic kin from the fascist Ukrainian government and meddling West.

Propaganda Machine

Putin has been able to essentially control the mindset of the Russian public through his restrictions placed on all public media, news, and Internet sources (Kornblum, 2015, p. 2). The Russian public sees what Putin wants them to see. Practically all state-run channels are under the control of the Kremlin, with only a handful of (semi) independent stations remaining (The Public Diplomat, 2014, p. 1). Keeping a bird's eye view over daily Russian life, Putin is able to manipulate the public's

perspective to favor Putin, the Kremlin, and Russia's foreign policy (Heritage, 2013, p. 1-2). There are four distinct components to Putin's propaganda machine (Komarnyckyj, 2014, p. 4-5). The first component is an emphasis on Russian greatness. In contrast, the West is often demonized in Russian news for their false advertisement of democracy and excessive involvement in the affairs of other nations. Currently, there is a massive wave of propaganda bolstering the annexation of Crimea and involvement in eastern Ukraine. The fourth component is the manipulation of historical myth and memory as a propaganda tool to suit the rhetoric of the current administration.

The news that the general Russian public sees is often far from the truth and vastly different from what the Western community sees. Russian stations are famous for reporting on the superiority of the Russian people and the vast inferiority of the rest of the world (Komarnyckyj, 2014, p. 4). Most broadcasts slant in hard favor of Russian foreign policy decisions. As a result, Putin has no trouble garnering the support for his actions in Ukraine and abroad. On the contrary, Kremlin-run stations have a knack for reprimanding the foreign policy decisions of major players in the West. These channels often target the U.S. in a negative light, questioning the motives of American leadership domestically and abroad. The Kremlin maintains that the U.S. has a false sense of democracy that it imposes on the rest of the globe. According to Putin, the European Union is just a weak follower of the hegemonic U.S. He suggests it is the United States that the international community should fear instead of Russia.

In particular regard to the crisis in Ukraine, Putin has cleverly used the media to significantly divert the Russian audience from factual evidence of what is transpiring on the ground. The propaganda attack is two-fold. The first element is to boost the need and

valiance of Russian involvement in the region. This includes bolstering the actions of Russia in their humanitarian rescue of struggling ethnic kin (The Public Diplomat, 2014, p. 1). News stations show a constant stream of destroyed Ukrainian villages, frozen towns with no electricity, and passionate Ukrainians seeking solace in the aid of Russia (BBC Monitor, 2016). Putin is presented as a savior who provides the promise of a better life and future in the face of a weakened Ukrainian government. As an example, Russian media reported a story on Ukrainian nationals who crucified a young boy in front of his mother, who was also later killed. They also included a tearful witness. Both the killings and the witness story were proven false (Kavadze, 2015, p. 1).

The second component of this propaganda attack is portraying western-leaning Ukrainians as vicious, merciless fascists. The new President, Petro Poroshenko, has been labeled a Nazi on various occasions by Putin's leadership (Kanet & Sussex, 2015, p. 56). The rest of the Ukrainian public, those fighting for a Russia-free Ukraine, are pegged as "banderivtsi." Meant to be derogatory, this taunt is borne of a controversial historical figure in Ukraine named Stepan Bandera. As a member of UPA, the Ukrainian insurgent army, his role in Ukrainian national interest has been disputed. This term accuses Ukrainians west of Donbas of being fascist and ultranationalists (Riabchuk, 2015, p. 5). Fabricated news coverage of rallies being manipulated or taken out of context has severely escalated this stereotype. This tactic is meant to show the Russian people that his help is desperately needed in saving Russians in Ukraine from lawless fascists who destroy government buildings and precious monuments (Heritage, 2013, p. 2). The media, unsurprisingly, fails to recognize the Russian "volunteers" that are instrumental in

fabricating such images of Ukrainian delinquency. VICE news (2015) has documented several cases of fabricated uprisings, violence and diversion of attention from true events.

The final aspect in the Putin propaganda machine is manipulating the historical memory of the nation. Whether it is the origins of Russia and Ukraine, the ownership of disputed regions, or the Russian historical myth of Kievan Rus and Crimea, he has been able to instill deep signifiers through each element of the Crisis. Even Russian history textbooks utilized in schools present a vastly different history than what is recognized in Ukraine and the West (Sherlock, 2016, p. 9). For example, the Holodomor, a man-made famine that killed millions of Ukrainians by the order of Stalin, is hardly recognized in historical literature (Khapaeva, 2016, p. 6-8). This, along with several other ‘outtakes’, is teaching children a constructed Russian history, essentially preparing them to seamlessly integrate into the propaganda driven society (Pg. 6). In sum, a look into Russia’s current propaganda machine highlights key frames that Putin has used to justify the current crisis in Ukraine.

Frames in the Literature

Kin-State Rallying

By definition, a kin-state is a state that claims to act on behalf of its co-ethnics abroad (Turner & Otsuki, 2010). Used by various leaders throughout history, it was the excuse made by Hitler to enter the Sudetenland and protect German ethnic kin. Putin utilized the same rationale in the Russo-Georgian war of 2008 and in the current Crisis in Ukraine. In Georgia, Putin stepped in on behalf of Russian separatists in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, vying to break away from the Georgian government. In this case, the

republics achieved autonomy with the help of Russian might (Tsygankov, 2015, p. 293). Essentially, this was a precursor for similar events in eastern Ukraine.

Thus, one of Putin's primary justifications for involvement in Ukraine has been the notion of kin-state rallying. Dating back to the Compatriot Policy, solidified in 1999, supporting ethnic compatriots outside of Russia has been integral component to Russian Foreign Policy (Zakem, et al., 2015, pp. 18-20). The policy has since evolved, blurring the term co-ethnic into the broader compatriot. Minister Sergei Lavrov stated last year: 'Rendering comprehensive support to the Russian World is an unconditional foreign policy priority for Russia ... we will keep enthusiastically defending the rights of compatriots, using for that the entire arsenal of available means envisioned by international law (Kuzio, 2015, p. 1).' The Putin administration has also noted that following the breakup of the Soviet Union, Russia has seen many of its people separated by newfound foreign borders (Bowen & Galeotti, 2014, p. 5). This dissolution of the Russian nation deems it necessary for the Kremlin to protect its ethnic kin who are no longer a part of Russia.

The concentrations of ethnic Russians in various post-Soviet states has given Putin an excuse to maintain influence in the region. As Blank (2015) writes, "...Moscow subsidizes and otherwise supports a large number of organizations and movements inside all of its neighbors, from Kazakhstan to the Baltic, to ensure that the pot is kept boiling over the issue of the purported discrimination against these minority Russian communities and the Russian diaspora (Blank, 2015)." This kin-state rallying allows Putin to continually justify his underhanded influence in the post-Soviet sphere. Ukraine is a particular case in that it houses a massive population of ethnic Russians, in addition

to sharing a border with Russia itself (Kuzio, 2015, p. 7). Putin states that there are approximately seventeen million Russians living in Ukraine, comprising about a third of the population. The largest Russian populations are on the southern and eastern borders of Ukraine. To this point, Putin asserts that with such a substantial population of Russians living in Ukraine, it is necessary to have interests there (Putin, 2008, p.1).

Moreover, kin-state nationalism holds a similar premise to the notion of Pan Slavism and *Ruskii Mir* (Russian World) (Kuzio, 2014, p. 4). In countless instances, Putin and his various staff members have asserted that Ukrainians, Russians and Belarusians are one people: borne of the same Slavic roots (Goble, 2015, p. 1). In particular, Putin claims that Ukrainians and Russians both emerge of the Kievan Rus. The two nations are bound together by religious, ethnic, historic and linguistic ties. Congruent to historical rhetoric, Putin has stated on more than one occasion that Ukraine is a territory. Borders cannot separate Russia and Ukraine because they comprise one people (Riabchuk, 2012, p. 284). Thus, Putin is able to rationalize his immense influence in Ukraine by inferring unity, oneness, a connection of the Slavic people that super-cedes borders.

Kin-state rallying and pan-Slavism are two concepts embedded in Russian history. As Blank points out, “Although these tactics emerged most violently in Ukraine, their origin goes back at least to Peter the Great, who legitimized his military campaigns against the Ottomans by claiming Russia was protecting the Orthodox subjects of the Ottoman Empire from discrimination. Such methods have continued to the present day (Blank, 2015).” The notion of *Ruskii Mir*, an organization launched in 2007 to promote Russian culture abroad is a modern continuation of this historic precedent. Large sums of

money have been allotted to the progress of Ruskii Mir, with factions operating in Ukraine (Kuzio, 2015, p.4). The notion that Russians abroad require Putin's protection has substantiated Putin's various incursions into Post-Soviet territories.

Encirclement by Enemies and Isolation

Another frame of justification derived from the literature is the notion that Russia has been a constant victim to isolation and encirclement by its enemies. Liah Greenfeld and Daniel Chirot's (1994) combined study on nationalism and aggression (also the title of the work, brings up two key findings that resonate with the current aggressive tactics of Russian foreign policy in Ukraine. First, is the notion that collectivist nationalism, as opposed to individualist nationalism, is more conducive to aggression and brutality—designating a clear distinction of “us” versus “them.” (p. 86) Second, the authors suggest that a Russian history of encirclement and isolation has instilled a sense of victimhood in the Russian people. They are the perpetual victims, never the aggressors (Leon, 2015, p. 2). This research frames Putin's current incursion into Ukraine as a product of collectivist nationalism and a result of the sentiment of victimhood and perpetual isolation.

The work of Greenfeld and Chirot (1994) seamlessly integrates into Putin's current framing of the conflict in Ukraine. Their research suggests that unlike individualistic nationalisms that are fueled by upwardly mobile groups, collectivist nationalisms are driven by small, “status-anxious” elites that either wish to protect their threatened status, or to improve it. These elites unite ethnically, religiously and linguistically diverse people under one “nation”, diverting their complaints to external factors and essentially “uniting in common hatred (pg. 87).” Uniting a diverse nation

against the threat of the “other” is a clear tactic in Putin’s rhetoric. Putin is engaged in defensive foreign policy, fending off constant enemies (Leon, 2015, p. 2).

To the same effect, Greenfeld and Chirot (1994) present a case study on the identification of Russian nationalism growth of anti-Westernism and isolation. In the cultural revelry and flourish of society marked by the reigns of both Peter the Great and Catherine emerged the sense of community and anti-western sentiment (p. 93). Dissatisfaction with the highly valueless and individualistic society of the West led to the Russian notion of community under one leader – essentially the birth of authoritarianism. Russian nationalism further developed in a sense of Russia’s unique mission and a hatred of the West (Pg. 94). A time of growth and advancement resulted in a threatening Russian power. When Russia won wars won it proved this power, when it lost it solidified the notion that enemies surrounded Russia. Russia’s aggressions within the realm of its empire solidified this sentiment (Pg. 96). Once it became clear that nations could plot against a threat such as Russia, its foreign policy went on the defensive, justifying mass deportations, famines and oppression as “noble duty” to protect their people (pg. 97).

The psychological approaches, stemmed from Tajfel and Turner’s Social Identity Theory, emphasize the relevance of categorization, social identification and social comparison as an explanation to conflict (Horowitz, 1984). The basis of the psychological approach is the need to belong and the establishment of an “us” versus “them” mentality. Once Putin accentuated the differences among the Ukrainian people, this very notion of “us” versus “them” became a very real phenomenon. Belonging to a particular group became relevant, and as the theory states, positive aspects of the in-

group and negative aspects of the out-group were vastly exaggerated (Korostelina, 2010, p. 130). Further, Ukrainians and Russians living in Ukraine, who once lived peacefully as neighbors, rapidly began to categorize one another. Language, regional affiliation and nationalistic associations that were once fluid throughout the nation turned into relevant labels and stereotypes. By illuminating these variances among the population, and providing an undercurrent of military pressure, Putin effectively fashioned a highly divided Ukrainian society, in a time of rebirth for the Ukrainian national identity.

Russian Greatness and Ethnocentrism

Similarly, Russian ethnocentrism, the unmasked superiority and greatness of the Russian people, is the backbone to the Russian military incursion in Ukraine. In 2014, Andrew Bowen and Mark Galeotti (2014) describe Putin as a self-titled ‘savior of Russian culture.’ The authors suggest that although Putin recognizes that the fall of the Soviet Union was the biggest disaster of the 20th century, he realizes that he cannot reconstruct it. They continue, “Perhaps the best metaphor is that while he brought back the Soviet national anthem, it had new words” (p. 1). Subsequently, Bowen and Galeotti claim that Putin’s ambitions lie in reviving Russian culture and civilization, restoring the patriotism and pride of the Russian people (p. 2). Putin’s actions are a result of his belief that Russians are an exceptional people, that there is something unique in the history and culture of the Russian people that needs to be protected (Lanoszka, 2016, p. 6).

Legal Rhetoric

A fascinating perspective on how Putin was able to justify his aggression in Ukraine is Roy Allison's (2014) look into Putin's legal rhetoric (p. 1). Allison suggests that to maintain his image of a "lawful actor," Putin masked his war-games in legal rhetoric. To support his annexation of Crimea, Putin toyed with the legal basis for military intervention and the concept of self-determination. International is often widely open to interpretation, and Putin utilized this to his benefit (Pg. 4). Allison claims that Putin's use of cloudy legal rhetoric and his disregard of international law have filled the global community with an air of uncertainty and hesitation. According to Allison, Putin engaged in 'deniable intervention,' essentially exploiting the pitfalls in the legal system and blending both legal and illegal actions. This makes it particularly difficult for the international community to gauge an appropriate response. Further, Allison states that Putin legitimized his actions by claiming "to be protecting Russian citizens from danger...to be intervening by invitation...and to reference western focus on human protection and Kosovo's secession from Serbia (Allison, 2014, p. 6)." In clouding the legal rhetoric, Putin was able to resist more significant repercussions.

Historical Memory and National Myth

Further, Putin has been able to play up the ethos of historical myth. The annexation of Crimea was a direct example of this. Rather than admitting that Crimea has been a part of Ukraine for the last several decades, Putin focused on the notion of the deep historical connection that Russia had to Crimea (Makarychev, 2014, p. 197). Upon annexation Putin remarked, "...after a long, difficult, exhausting voyage, Crimea and

Sevastopol are returning to their native harbor, to their native shores, to their point of permanent registration— to Russia (Bowen & Galeotti, 2014, p. 4).” This scenario is reminiscent of Kosovo and its bid to become an independent nation. While the Kosovars are an identifiably different people, Serbian leaders suggested that Kosovo had deep historical significance to Serbia and was the birthplace of Serbian martyrdom (Interfax, Russia, 2016, p.1). This same situation has played out in Crimea with Putin pulling at the heartstrings of the Russian people. In essence, he has created a sense of Russian attachment to Crimea in order to justify the illegitimate and expedient annexation (Bebler, 2015, p. 11).

Putin’s primary tactic in effectively dividing the population along ethnic lines was the use of historical myths. By giving labels to the west and east that were remnant of prominent historical figures, he was able to mobilize emotions, sentiments, and stereotypes that were associated with these figures and their ancestry. A historical myth is a powerful tool (Sherlock, 2016, p. 3). Since the myth has little to do with true historical accuracy, its reiteration lies in the eye of the beholder. In this way, historical myths are easy manipulated to shift history in the way that they desire. By linking ethnic groups to the stories of their past, they tend to revive and bring purpose to their identities (Wilson, 1995). With this hidden weapon, Putin was able to make the greatest impact. With the preexistent belief that western Ukrainians were nationalistic, Putin pegged the westerners as *Banderivtsi*: a term reminiscent of prominent Ukrainian nationalist and independence movement leader, Stepan Bandera (Riabchuk, 2015, p. 5). As predicted, those in the east began to categorize based on this stereotype. Along with the geographically defined west, those who spoke Ukrainian even to the east of Kiev also became defined under that label.

The east was subsequently defined by their call back to a Soviet system and was perceived with animosity by the rest of Ukraine. At this point, Donbas and its unique way of life became more isolated than ever.

Lilia Shevtsova (2015) suggests that Putin is at a crossroads. He cannot liberalize his system as the risk of losing control, yet he cannot further militarize his country a-la Stalin as Russian elites will not allow it. Thus, Shevtsova warns that calm on the surface should not be misinterpreted. In the wake of sanctions and resources being directed to the Crisis, the economy and system of control in Russia are deteriorating (Luxmoore, 2014, p. 4). Additionally, people have no outlets to relieve their anger, signaling that domestic tension will only grow from here (Shevtsova, 2015). Shevtsova writes in regard to Russia, “It will go abroad not to learn the ways of modernization, but to challenge its external enemies. As it internationalizes its quest for survival, in other words, the Russian system will turn its own degradation into a global problem.” Shevtsova’s argument frames Putin’s incursion into Ukraine as a sign of internal decay and instability: weakness and sanctions fuel the fire for aggression (Tsygankov, 2015, p. 299).

The literature presented identifies several suggested frames that Putin utilizes to justify his involvement in Ukraine. The following research will explore the validity of these frames in Putin’s own rhetoric on the topic. Through this, the study will also examine the significance and implications of framing by elites in the political sphere.

Methodology

In order to identify frames within Putin’s rhetoric, I utilized qualitative content analysis. Krippendorff (2004), a primary expert on the topic, defines content analysis as

“a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use (Pg. 18)”. Krippendorff highlights the significance of replicable results and validity in content analysis. To achieve such results in the research requires a systematic and objective approach in which the content is handled without the bias of the reader (Pg. 19). Appendix I consists of the limitations and tactics I employed in order to achieve objectivity and replicability in the study.

This study explores the rhetoric of Vladimir Putin on the Crisis in Ukraine, through a content analysis of 57 speeches, excerpts, and interviews made by Putin to both a domestic and international audience. The purpose of the study is to identify key justifications, or frames, in Putin’s rhetoric and to compare these results with the key frames that are identified in the existing literature. In this way, the findings of this study can shed light on the ongoing debate over Putin’s motivations in Ukraine.

The 57 sources utilized in the study are a nearly exhaustive list of Putin’s rhetoric on the Crisis in Ukraine from 2013-2016. I used several criteria to determine which sources were relevant to the study.

1. The first criterion is subject matter. All of the speeches, interviews, and excerpts analyzed for this study focus on the Crisis in Ukraine. This includes Putin’s rhetoric on Euromaidan, the overthrow of Yanukovich, the annexation of Crimea, the Minsk Agreements, and the current scope of Russian foreign policy toward Ukraine.
2. The second criterion is the date of the source. The study focuses on the time period beginning with the Maidan uprising and extending into the current fighting in Donbas. The dates of the sources, thus, range from 2013 to 2016.

Two additional sources were included in the study from 2007 and 2012. Both sources are prominent addresses that Putin gave, and are directly related to Russian foreign policy toward Ukraine.

3. The third criterion is indeed Putin's rhetoric. All of the sources utilized contain Putin's own speech acts. The majority, 47 out of 57 sources, are direct transcripts of speeches and interviews given by Putin. The remaining 10 sources are remarks or excerpts from various news sources that contain Putin's rhetoric on the subject. The excerpts contain quotes given by Putin on the topic.
4. The fourth criterion is credible and varied sources. The sources are a combination of official Kremlin releases and prominent international news stations. The primary sources utilized were the Kremlin's official transcripts of interviews and press releases. Further, I utilized transcripts of prominent speeches that Putin gave to the UN, the Valdai Club, Russian Public, and Crimea, among others. Primary interviews included Putin's discussion with Charlie Rose, Bild Newspaper in Germany, and the Italian journal, "Corriere".

The focus of this study is to better understand the justifications of Russia's incursion into Ukraine through Putin's direct rhetoric. To do so, I first conducted several preliminary readings of the sources. The first read-through was meant to solidify that the source adhered to the aforementioned criteria. Once this was established, I read through the sources two more times to get a sense of emerging trends in the rhetoric. In the subsequent read through, I was able to identify 8 distinct trends, or justifications, by

denoting key phrases that were given in his rhetoric. I coded the sources manually by identifying key phrasing pertinent to each category, which will be defined in the findings in further detail. The 8 categories that emerged from the research are 1. Protecting Ukrainians and Russians/Illegitimate coup/Brother nation, 2. Projecting blame/Lack of dialogue, 3. Will of people/Kosovo precedent/Historical memory, 4. Protecting Russian interests, 5. Denial of intervention, 6. Minsk unfulfilled, 7. NATO Expansion.

Once distinct categories were clear, I organized them into a basic chart. Columns were distinguished by category, and rows were distinguished by source (sources were organized by date). Next, I went through each source and marked an “X” in the column that corresponded to the category utilized. Nearly all sources contained more than one “X” in the row, as most sources mentioned more than one justification. Table 1 and Chart 1 show the total frequency that each category (justification) was mentioned within the sources.

After compiling one comprehensive chart of all the sources, I engaged in a subsequent analysis. To identify changes in Putin’s rhetoric throughout the course of the Conflict, I created a chart that organized his justifications by year. Since the conflict was only beginning in 2013, I utilized 2014, 2015, and 2016 as the focal points. Appendix II contains a detailed chart of all 57 sources analyzed in the study. Each entry, organized by date, consists of a title, distinction of audience, the source it was taken from, and a small description.

Findings

Provided below is an outline of the eight most common trends (justifications) found in the rhetoric in order of frequency:

1. Protecting Ukrainians and Russians/Illegitimate coup/Brother nation

In Putin's rhetoric this justification was used most frequently: in 32 out of 57 sources. In the rhetoric, these three categories were integrated into one main justification, suggesting that Putin had to help the Ukrainian people, a brother nation, from the new illegitimate government. The key phrases used to identify this trend were "helping the Ukrainian people," "brother or sister nation," and "illegitimate overthrow." Any form of these key phrases provided a check mark in this column. The rhetoric, thus, suggests that Putin's main justification has been to help his brother nation through the chaos that has been created by the illegitimate overthrow of Yanukovich.

The following is an example excerpt taken from Putin's answers to journalist's questions in Novo-Ogaryovo on March 4, 2014. Following a comment on the overthrow in Kiev, Putin states, "When we see this we understand what worries the citizens of Ukraine, both Russian and Ukrainian, and the Russian-speaking population in the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine. It is the uncontrolled crime that worries them. Therefore, if we see such crime spreading to the eastern regions of the country, and if the people ask us for help while we already have the official request from the legitimate president, we retain the right to use all available means to protect those people" (Putin, March 4th 2014, p. 6). Later on he notes, "I want you to understand me clearly; if we make that decision, it will only be to protect Ukrainian citizens" (p. 12).

2. Projecting Blame/Lack of dialogue

The trend of projecting blame along with a lack of engagement in dialogue is a close second with a frequency of 31 out of 57 sources. In this trend, Putin often projects blame on the West, stating that they funded the Crisis in Ukraine, and continue in extensive involvement as a tactic to draw Russia into further isolation. Subcategories that are used in tandem with this trend are a lack of dialogue between the West, Ukraine, and Russia in the conflict, as well as, critique of American democracy promotion and its volume of troops stationed on foreign borders. The key phrases utilized were “U.S. supported the coup,” comparison of Russian to U.S. troops, “Russia is open for dialogue”, “Ukraine must lead negotiations,” and similar combinations.

An example of such rhetoric is presented in an excerpt from one of Putin’s answers in a Q&A session with journalists. Putin states, “And it is not the first time our Western partners are doing this in Ukraine. I sometimes get the feeling that somewhere across that huge puddle, in America, people sit in a lab and conduct experiments, as if with rats, without actually understanding the consequences of what they are doing (Putin, March 4th 2014, p. 15).” In addition, claims about Putin’s military involvement in Ukraine are often met with a retort on the quantity of troops that the U.S. has on foreign borders and the forced promotion of American values onto nations who are unready and unwilling. When directly questioned on his aggression in Ukraine, Putin projects the blame off of himself and onto other parties.

3. Will of the people/Kosovo precedent/Historical memory of Russia

This trend of three interwoven factors was utilized by Putin in 22 out of 57 sources. Often used in tandem, the gist of this combined justification is that Crimea is an integral part of Russian historical myth, the people of Crimea chose in the referendum to be a part of Russia, and the precedent of Kosovo gives this notion legitimacy. Putin essentially asserts that it is unjust to counter the overwhelming will of the people. Seeing as Crimea was historically and ethnically an integral part of Russia, it is only natural that it be returned to Russia unharmed. Putin mentions the Kosovo precedent as an example of the power in the will of the people. The coding for this category consisted of phrases such as “will of the people”, “Kosovo precedent”, “right to determine their future”, “historical memory”, and the like.

For example, Putin spoke on this topic in a speech to Federation council members, deputies of the Duma, Russian citizens, and representatives from Crimea and Sevastopol on March 18th, 2014. He stated, “...the residents of Crimea and Sevastopol turned to Russia for help in defending their rights and lives, in preventing the events that were unfolding and are still underway in Kiev, Donetsk, Kharkov, and other Ukrainian cities. Naturally, we could not leave the plea unheeded; we could not abandon Crimea and its residents in distress. This would have been betrayal on our part” (p. 5). In regard to historical memory, Putin writes, “Time and time again attempts were made to deprive Russians of their historical memory, even of their language and to subject them to forced assimilation” (p. 4).

4. Protection of Russians Abroad- Ethnic Kin

Putin notes the justification of protecting Russians abroad 21 times throughout the rhetoric. This trend highlights aspects of Russian pride, patriotism in the Russian nation, and the adamant protection of Russian co-ethnics abroad. To this effect, Putin often states these justifications in relation to the separation of Russian people by borders after the fall of the Soviet Union. He asserts that he must protect the rights of all Russians living abroad, rights that were being discriminated against in Ukraine. Putin states that the situation in Ukraine reached a point that his leadership could no longer tolerate. The coding for this justification included “Russian pride”, “protection of Russians abroad”, “Russian values”, “rights of Russian speakers”, and the like.

In December of 2013, Putin gave an address to the Russian people in which he stated, “We are aware of the all-encompassing, unifying role of the Russian culture, history and language for our multi-ethnic population and we must build our state policy with this in mind” (p. 4). In his remarks to the Duma in March 2014, Putin also states, “Millions of Russians and Russian speaking people live in Ukraine and will continue to do so. Russia will always defend their interests using political, diplomatic and legal means. But it should be above all in Ukraine’s own interests to ensure that these people’s rights and interests are fully protected. This is the guarantee of Ukraine’s state stability and territorial integrity” (p. 10).

5. Russian denial of involvement

The denial of Russian military involvement in Ukraine is a trend that surfaces in 18 sources throughout the rhetoric. Coding for this trend included “no intention of

involvement”, “no armed forces”, “peace for Ukraine” and similar phrases. This justification is particularly fascinating as there is palatable evidence of Russian intervention into Ukraine. Nonetheless, Putin attests that he is hoping for a peaceful resolution and that the Russian Federation has no intention of intervening in the neighboring country. To this effect, Putin adds Ukraine is more than capable of settling this Crisis on its own and does not require Russia to step in.

In a Russia-EU Summit held in Brussels on January 28th, 2014 Putin states, “as for advice for Ukraine on what to do and how to do it, I think the Ukrainian people are quite capable of deciding this for themselves. In any case, Russia has no intention of ever intervening” (p. 7). In response to a question on the possibility of war breaking out in Ukraine Putin states, “I am not concerned, because we do not plan and we will not fight with the Ukrainian people” (p. 12). This is one of several almost identical remarks in which Putin denies any interest or plans to engage in a war with Ukraine.

6. Legal Rhetoric

The sixth most prominent justification that Putin utilizes in his rhetoric is that his foreign policy is always conducted within the bounds of international law. Thus, his involvement in Ukraine and his annexation of Crimea were both legal and justified. The use of legal rhetoric appears 16 times within the sources. In a majority of the examples, Putin states that Russia strives to consistently comply with international law. At points, this claim is substantiated by a comparison of Russian versus U.S. accordance to international laws and norms.

In an interview with Hubert Seipel on November 27th, 2014, Putin states, “We believe that this sort of reaction was totally disproportionate to what had happened. Whenever I hear complaints about Russia violating international law I am simply amazed. What is international law? It is first of all the United Nations Charter, international practice and its interpretation by relevant international institutions” (Global Research, 2014, p. 3). In regard to the comparison of abiding to international norms with the West Putin states, “...what do we hear from our colleagues in Western Europe and North America? They say we are violating norms of international law. Firstly, it’s a good thing that they at least remember there exists such a thing as international law—better late than never” (Putin, 2014, p. 5).

7. Minsk Agreements Unfulfilled

Also used 16 times is the justification that Putin’s involvement is required in order to fulfill the Minsk agreements. Putin claims that it is only through his involvement that there was any headway made in the attempted ceasefire. Putin claims that he is waiting on the cooperation of Ukraine to fulfill the agreement. On the other hand, Poroshenko maintains that it is unsafe to lay down arms at this time as there is heavy artillery consistently coming from the separatists. The coding for this justification included “Minsk agreement”, “Russian cooperation on ceasefire”, “lack of Ukrainian response”, and so on.

In an interview with Hubert Seipel, Putin states, “the Minsk agreements arose only because Russia became actively involved in the effort; we worked with the Donbas militias, that is the fighters from southeast Ukraine, and we convinced them that they

should settle for certain agreements. If we had not done that, it would simply not have happened. There are some problems with the implementation of these agreements, it is true” (Global Research, 2014, p. 4). This claim exemplifies Putin’s perceived role in the Agreements.

8. NATO Expansion

The final category, mentioned 10 times in the rhetoric, is the justification of countering the threat to NATO expansion. Putin talks of the threat that NATO presents if it continues an eastward expansion right on to Russia’s borders. This would not only threaten the security of Russia, but it would directly contradict the warnings given to NATO to stay out of Georgia and Ukraine. Talks of Kiev joining NATO are also cause for concern to the relationship between Ukraine and Russia (Putin, 2014, p. 10).

In February 2007, Putin spoke at the 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy. In regard to NATO he stated, “I think it is obvious that NATO expansion does not have any relation with the modernization of the Alliance itself or with ensuring security in Europe. On the contrary it represents a serious provocation that reduces the level of mutual trust. And we have the right to ask: Against whom is this expansion intended (p. 5).” This speech given in 2007 is an example of the continued stance that Russia has on the threat of NATO expansion. Coding for this included “NATO expansion”, “eastward encroachment”, and “frontline on Russian borders.”

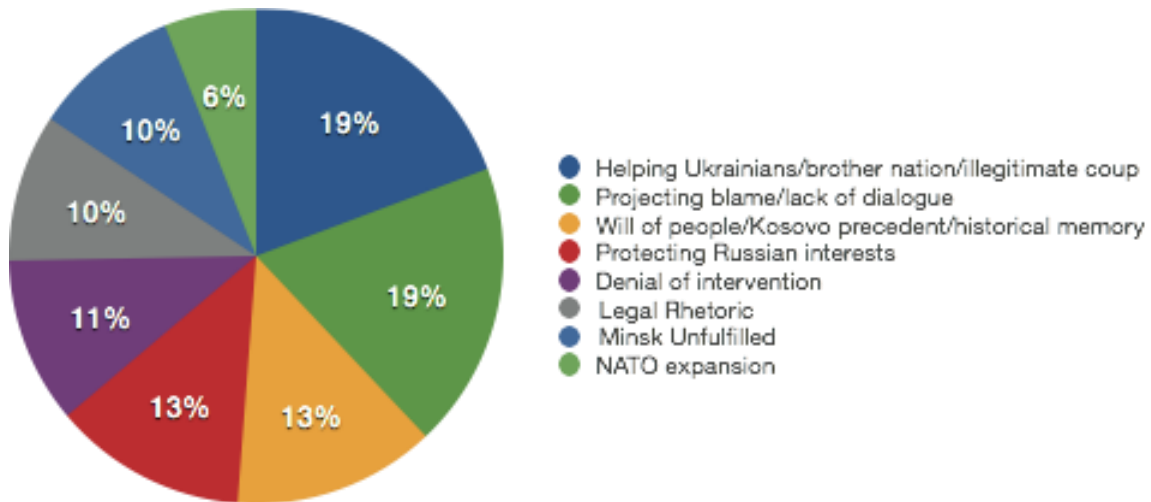
Trends by Year

In order to gauge whether Putin's rhetoric changed throughout the progression of the conflict, essentially from Maidan to Crimea to Donbas, the sources were grouped by year. Only the most relevant years of 2014, 2015 and 2016 were chosen as they pertain to the events of interest. Since there was an unequal distribution of sources among these years, it was difficult to assess any major shifts in rhetoric throughout the conflict. However, what this analysis did show is that 2015 was a major turning block in the conflict, and it was a year that fostered increased media attention and debate. It is also evident that in 2015, Putin gave significant attention to the Crisis in Ukraine, along with other world leaders. In the start of 2016, attention has dwindled from Ukraine and progressed to other issues such as the civil war in Syria and the rise of ISIS (Stent, 2016 Pg. 6). Whether it was a strategic move by Putin, or simply the nature of media coverage, attention on the Crisis in Ukraine began to fade in 2016.

Table 1- Putin’s Frames and Frequencies in the Ukraine Crisis

Putin’s Frames	Frequency
Helping Ukrainians/brother nation/illegitimate coup	32/57
Projecting blame/lack of dialogue	31/57
Will of people/Kosovo precedent/historical memory	22/57
Protecting Russian interests	21/57
Denial of intervention	18/57
Legal Rhetoric	16/57
Minsk Unfulfilled	16/57
NATO expansion	10/57

Chart 1- Comparison of Total Frequencies



A Comparison of the Findings to Existing Studies

As Druckman notes, “Indeed frame strength goes a long way in determining who wins or loses in politics” (2009, p. 29). This conclusion, derived from James Druckman’s research on the influence of framing in politics, gives particular salience to Putin’s intense use of propaganda and manipulation to present the conflict in Ukraine through specific frames. With a monopoly on media (Lynch, 2015, p. 7) and celebrity status among the people (Sperling, 2015, p. 2), Putin’s rhetoric, and *only* his rhetoric, is heard. In this, Putin has the ability to guide public opinion on the conflict in Ukraine and his involvement there. So, how is he justifying his actions? The answer is simple. Putin is justifying Russia’s actions in Ukraine by framing his involvement there as legitimate, benevolent and necessary.

The strategic use of framing is an influential tool in politics. It gives elites the unique opportunity to steer the masses toward a desired outcome. By presenting information through a particular lens, elites can virtually construct a problem and provide a solution for it (Druckman, 2009, p. 18). In the Russian nation for example, such a problem is often externalized, meant to rile up domestic support and demonize the proposed enemy (Shevtsova, 2015). Returning to Druckman (2009), there is a fascinating interaction among political elites vying for ample airtime. They are aware that the more coverage they receive, the easier it will be to promulgate their ideas to the public (p. 23). This competition for media attention solidifies the utility and strength that framing possesses in international politics.

This particular case strongly exemplifies the significance of framing in achieving desired outcomes as it demonstrates how an act of aggression can be manipulated in the

international and domestic sphere to resemble something different. Putin's use of propaganda is a key tactic in influencing particularly domestic public opinion on the conflict. The framing of his rhetoric resonates with the masses, providing even greater approval for the already celebrated leader (Levada Center Poll, 2016). As Putin holds a monopoly over practically all Russian media sources, we can infer that the propaganda that is circulated is in direct order from the Kremlin.

Looking back to the findings, Putin's justifications point to the use of several relevant frames in his rhetoric. Most prominent is Putin's ability to frame his actions in Ukraine as necessary and benevolent. As the rhetoric suggests, Putin's main justification for involvement in Ukraine is the obligation to act on behalf of the embattled Ukrainians who are toiling under the strain of the new, illegitimate government. Putin labels not only his ethnic kin, but also all Ukrainians, as one people with Russia. Time and again he laments the struggle of Ukrainians living under constant corruption and governmental instability (Putin, March 18th 2014). Accordingly, Putin's rhetoric presents a clear sense of disapproval for and lack of legitimacy in the new leadership. Consistent rhetoric of this kind emboldens the point that Russia's closest relatives are in need of help. Framing the situation in this way presents Putin's involvement in Ukraine as a necessary measure.

In direct relation to necessity is the notion of Putin acting out of benevolence to his brother nation. Putin often sympathizes with the Ukrainians, expressing that it pains him to see such civil unrest and devastation so close to home (Putin interview, Mar. 18 2014, p.10). Hence, he often places himself in the position of a concerned observer. More often than not, Putin speaks of his desire for peaceful resolution in Ukraine and insists on his willingness to engage in open dialogue with all parties involved. Supported by his

denial of troops on the ground, Putin is able to sell his involvement in Ukraine as purely diplomatic: seeking a peaceful resolution for his Slavic brothers.

Upon taking a closer look, however, there is a commonality of contradictions that emerges throughout his rhetoric. While much of Putin's rhetoric focuses on helping the Ukrainian people, his characterization of them fluctuates from brothers to enemies and fascists. This discrepancy is evident throughout the conflict and creates confusion on Putin's true perceptions: Perhaps that is the point. While Putin speaks ardently on lending a hand to Ukrainians, his propaganda machine circulates images of violent ultranationalists staging rallies and destroying cities (Shynkarenko, 2014, p. 2). Incidentally, VICE News has reported numerous cases of these seemingly nationalistic rallies that turn out to be staged by Russian fighters (Luhn, 2015, p.1).

Accordingly, another prominent justification that Putin utilizes is protecting his ethnic kin from the subjugation and lack of representation they face in Ukraine, coupled with the threat of violent fascists (Bebler, 2015, p.8). Putin consistently defends the language, culture, and rights of his co-ethnics living outside of Russia's borders. In Ukraine, there were several key moments that Putin highlighted in an effort to necessitate his involvement on behalf of these co-ethnics. Through the use of propaganda, Putin framed the conflict to appear as if his ethnic kin required immediate protection, and it was his duty to provide it for them. To this effect, Putin emphasized the suggestion given in Ukrainian government to remove Russian as an official language in Ukraine as a clear attack on Russians' rights (Bebler, 2015, p. 8). Further, the media ran several stories of villagers crying out for Putin's help in both Crimea and the east.

In order to provide further legitimacy to his actions, Putin often manipulates the notion of national myth and historical memory to provide a story that his audience can relate to. It is clear in the rhetoric that Putin often uses this frame in regard to Crimea. Reminiscent of the claim on the birth of Serbian martyrdom in Kosovo, Putin often stresses the historical Russianness of Crimea and its deep bond with Russian society (Bebler, 2015, p. 10). Centering on ethos, Putin emphasizes the illegitimacy with which Crimea was initially given to Ukraine, and the desperate will of the people living there to return to Russia (Putin, March 18th, 2014, p. 6, 9). Putin has been able to influence the social memory of the Russian people and bring a consensus and bastion of support for his actions in Ukraine. As Miguel Linan (2010), of the University of Seville puts it, "...this period is on the defensive. It is propaganda discourse that rather than shedding light on the past, accuses those who question Russia's greatness of lying" (p. 177).

In the justification of projecting blame resonates the framing of Russia as a constant victim and bound in isolation. In Putin's rhetoric, the West is the spark that started the Maidan uprising, providing billions of dollars and personnel in order to establish a Western leaning government and to further isolate Russia. Putin condemns the West for meddling in Ukraine and implies that this is not the first time that the U.S. has intervened in Russia's sphere of influence, and Ukraine is a step too far (Putin, March 4th 2014, p.15). Further, much of Putin's propaganda focuses on anti-Western sentiment, accusing the U.S. in particular of hating Russia and disrespecting its traditional values (Lynch, 2015, p. 1). While this is hardly a reason for invading in a sovereign country, Putin maintains that while the U.S. meddles, his assistance is welcomed and necessary.

To the international community, Putin's aggression in Ukraine is in clear violation of several international treaties, laws, and norms (Motyl, 2014, p. 2). Looking at the findings, however, suggests a different story. Putin consistently presents himself as someone who vehemently abides by the law and encourages others to do the same. Further, he often condemns the West for their actions abroad, citing them as illegitimate and unbound to international law. His stark defense of the annexation of Crimea as a fully justified move and the diplomacy with which he engages in the east, frame his actions in the conflict as legally sound and legitimate. While it is evident that Putin's aggression is a violation of international law, exploring his rhetoric makes this a difficult point to argue.

The findings suggest that several of the analysts presented earlier are correct in identifying the key frames that Putin is using to justify his actions in Ukraine. The first are Kuzio and Blank (2015), who suggested that Putin was framing the conflict in the context of kin-state rallying; presenting his actions as a measure to save and protect his ethnic kin. The findings support this argument, as it turns out to be one of Putin's main justifications. Further, Allison's take on Putin's use of blurred legal rhetoric also directly coincides with the findings. Allison argues that Putin has framed his actions as a legitimate measure, an appropriate and justified response in light of the circumstances. To this effect, Allison claims that Putin took advantage of the interpretive and often ambiguous nature of international law and molded it to fit his agenda.

Also spot on is the work of Greenfeld and Chirot that labels Russia a collectivistic society, externalizing their problems and uniting as a nation through common hatred. A distinct notion of "us" versus "them" is a common theme in Putin's rhetoric (Greenfeld and Chirot, 1994, p. 86). This also progresses to Russia's feeling of constant encirclement

by enemies and isolation. By projecting blame onto the West in a slew of anti-Western propaganda and accusing the United States of hating Russia, Putin solidifies Greenfeld and Chirot's claims. Also, Putin's use of historical memory to foster a deep connection with Crimea and Donbas is reminiscent of the frame suggested by Sherlock. Bebler also notes the use of ethos to assert the overwhelming feeling of Russianness present in both Crimea and Donbas (2015, p. 10).

The literature presented is highly conducive to the findings of this study. A look into Putin's rhetoric has solidified the claims of analysts who suggest that he was framing his actions through protection of his ethnic kin, anti-western projection of blame, blurred legal rhetoric and manipulation of historical myth and memory. Beyond his use of framing, however, it is important to explore the method with which he is able to so effectively project these frames onto the general public. Exploring the utility of Putin's propaganda machine in his ability to frame the conflict is paramount in this study.

The use of propaganda and disinformation has been an enduring strategy of the Kremlin. The highly regulated flow of news and media stories consistently bolster the Putin Regime, condemn the West, and more recently display a negative image of the Ukrainian people. The question remains, however, as to how Putin is able to so effectively sway the public mindset. There are a few potential answers to this. The first is the Kremlin's violent efforts to silence the opposition in Russia. With no one to speak out against the regime, Putin can ensure that only his rhetoric is circulated. Further, his tendency to externalize Russian problems works to unify the people in support of policies that seem to promote the Russian nation. In regard to the situation in Ukraine, Putin was able to easily project anti-Ukrainian sentiment on the people of Donbas and provide them

with the idea of a better future in Russia. With this he reinvigorated divides among the Ukrainian people and necessitated them to choose sides.

Prominent opposition against the Russian regime is minimal at best. This is a result of several mysterious poisonings and murders of outspoken opposition leaders to the Putin Regime. Most notable were the cases of Alexander Litvienko who was poisoned in London, and the public murder of Boris Nemtsov on the streets of Moscow (Rainsford, 2015, p. 8). Nemtsov, an open critic of the Putin Regime, was in the process of publishing a book on his perspective of the war in Ukraine before he was killed (Rainsford, 2015, p. 6). These mysterious acts, among several other cases, are a massive deterrent to others who wish to speak out against the Kremlin. And as Shevtsova writes, Russians do not have a place to relieve their anger or malcontent, building tension in the domestic sphere (Shevtsova, 2015). Still, Putin receives consistent support by effectively externalizing Russia's domestic problems.

The theory of social construction consists of elites or ethnic entrepreneurs interested in their own material or political gains, who effectively rile up the masses by mobilizing identities that deeply resonate with the people and culture. Thus, although social constructivists argue that ethnic identities are not biologically given, they assert that these elite constructed identities are not based off of nothing. The main undercurrent of this theory is that ethnic identities are the products of human actions and choices (Horowitz, 1984). This is congruent with Putin's strategy in Ukraine where he was able to bring to the forefront identities that have been present, yet stagnant, for decades.

In Ukraine, the manipulation of the separatists was quite simple. As a majority of Donbas inhabitants have never left the region, their access to information is narrow and

one sided. Consequently, Putin was able to instill the people with various notions about Kiev and western Ukraine, all the while projecting the promise of adequate representation and improved quality of life that they could have as a part of Russia. To rile up resentment against western Ukraine, propaganda filled Donbas with stories of Ukrainian fascists who hate the Russian language and the people in the east (Gvosdev, 2015, p. 4). On the opposite side, westerners viewed Donbas a broken territory of criminals and enemies of Ukraine. Putin was able to capitalize on these pre-existent sentiments and frame the conflict around them.

The contradiction between Putin's framing of the conflict and his evident aggression in Ukraine has resulted in a series of unprecedented implications. In his effort to foster warmer relations and maintain Ukraine's presence in Russia's economic arena, Putin has essentially lost Ukraine. In addition, he has only strengthened the desire of the Ukrainian people to progress in a Western-leaning society (Von Eggert, 2014, p. 3). His actions have also led to a weakened domestic economy and society, something that his involvement in Ukraine was meant to bolster. Another major implication has been a reversion to Cold-War era-like tensions between Russia and the West. These examples detail the implications that arose as a result of Putin's strategic framing of the conflict.

As western Ukraine toils in fear that it's neighbor will expand further into their territory, anti-Russian sentiments are growing ever stronger both at home, and throughout diaspora communities abroad. The identities and divides that Putin reinvigorated were, in fact, already underpinned in all three players involved, and their salience only grows with each progression of this unprecedented war. The overarching sentiment of the masses, thus, continues to be an immediate conclusion to the war and a dis-attachment of further

Russian influence. Not only has Putin established resentment toward himself, he has also fostered a newfound resentment in Ukrainians for the Russian people: something that previously had not existed in significant stature. By fueling this Crisis, Putin has effectively promoted a new sense of Ukrainian nationalism and pride in purely Ukrainian traditions, language and culture (Goble, 2015, p. 1). Contrary to historical trends, Ukrainian is now seen as the preferred language. Thus, although Putin constructed an environment for conflict, he gave Ukrainians a purpose and a nation to fight for.

As Shevtsova writes, the unnecessary war in Ukraine has left Russia economically destabilized and socially divided. Frames such as projection of blame and kin-state rallying were meant to unify the Russian nation against a common enemy however; constant sanctions and subsequent economic downturn have had a destabilizing effect on the unity of the Russian people (Shevtsova, 2015). The costly agenda, the murders of popular opposition leaders, and disapproval for the war have resulted in several massive protests in the major cities of Russia. Unbiased polls also show a drop in approval ratings for the direction that the country is headed in. Ironically, Putin consistently maintains approval ratings in the range of 70-80% (Levada Center Poll, 2016).

In his aggressive bout to keep Ukraine in the regional economic and security arena, Putin has not only lost the cooperation of Ukraine, but also that of the West. A little over two decades have passed since the end of the Cold War, yet tensions have again resurfaced in the midst of this Crisis. Perhaps this tension stems from Tsygankov's (2015) argument of consistent misunderstanding between the two countries. As mentioned earlier, Tsygankov suggests that hostilities remain largely due to the contradiction between Russian ethnocentrism and the U.S.'s ethno-phobia (p. 287). This

is a notion that fosters misunderstanding between the two nations, leaving Russia in a constant feeling of isolation from Western affairs and the U.S. apprehensive of a potentially imperialistic Russia. In regard to Ukraine, Putin's framing of the war has reasserted this pre-existent mistrust between the two regional hegemons.

Aside from exemplifying the significance and implications of framing, this study also sheds a fascinating light on the debate over Putin's motivations in Ukraine. If we take Putin at face value, and understand his rhetoric as veritable, then we can see from the findings that there are clear holes in the well-known debate of Mearsheimer, McFaul and Sestanovich (2014). While Putin does speak on the threat of NATO expansion, it is last on the list of his justifications. The findings in this study do not support either Mearsheimer's assertion of Russia acting to balance NATO expansion, nor McFaul and Sestanovich's claim that Russia's aggression is a result of domestic instability (McFaul, Mearsheimer, Sestanovich, 2014, p. 1). Moreover, the realist approach, arguing that states act to balance security and acquire power (Makarychev, 2014, p. 183), is simply not present in the findings. The rhetoric indicates a far more complex story, combining power grabbing with deep historical and societal connections.

Another argument on Putin's motivations in Ukraine is his desire to restore the glory of the Soviet empire. This claim suggests that Russia's aggression in Ukraine is an imperialistic pull to reestablish Russian influence in the region and keep the post-Soviet states under the hand of Russian rule (Tsygankov, 2015, p. 294). This is a common Western perspective on the topic; however, the findings again do not support this claim. While Putin recognizes that the dissolution of the Soviet Union was the biggest tragedy of the 20th century, his rhetoric does not suggest a desire to rebuild it. Moreover, while

the findings imply that Russia sustains its influence in the region by maintaining Russian minority enclaves in almost all post-Soviet states, they do not suggest a desire for a resurgence of imperialism within the region.

One of the key fundamentals of content analysis is that the results of the research are replicable and applicable to other cases (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 19). The study is applicable to the general public in that it details a case study based around the significance and implications of framing used by elites in the political arena. This research can relate to a number of similar cases in the region abroad in which elites frame conflicts to attain a preferred outcome. Studying the direct rhetoric of leaders can be truly telling. We can either take leaders at face value, or recognize the contradictions in their rhetoric that point to holes in their strategy. Either way, the use and significance of framing in guiding public perception of conflicts is manifested in the rhetoric of political elites.

Conclusion

A costly and damaging war is waging on in the southeastern borders of Ukraine and the prospects of a peaceful resolution appear grim. Even if the Ukrainian government succeeds in regaining control of the separatist republics, the political climate will remain wary leaving no room for missteps and high risk of reversion (Molchanov, 2015, p. 8). And although the physical wounds will heal once the weapons are laid down on both sides, the emotional scars will leave a lasting impression on all parties involved in the crisis. This war happened in a time of rebirth for the Ukrainian nation, and perhaps once the tensions ease, Ukraine will finally get a chance to build sustainable nationhood.

A look into the justifications of Putin through his own rhetoric, in light of the Crisis in Ukraine, has given particular salience to the significance and implications of framing by elites on the international stage. Further, the findings of this study speak to the current debate on Putin's motivations in Ukraine. While the prominent approaches currently attest Putin's actions in Ukraine to a balance to NATO expansion and the result of domestic instability, the findings of this study demonstrate minimal support for this claim. While Putin does mention NATO expansion as a potential threat, his rhetoric is primarily focused on aspects of kin-state protection and the projection of blame onto the West as instigators of the conflict.

The distinction of various claims and justifications through which Putin framed the conflict, not only identified the utility and success of framing, but also pointed out its consequences and implications to Putin's agenda. While Putin was able to effectively frame the conflict in Ukraine to appear as a Western promulgated civil war, his tactics also manifested several significant consequences. For instance, the solidification of identities through mass propaganda initially divided Ukraine into a seemingly bipolar arena of nationalists in the west and pro-Russians in the east. However, the Kremlin's inability to legitimize these divisive accusations led to an unprecedented unification of the Ukrainian nation and further isolation of Russia from the West.

Putin's initial agenda to divide the nation of Ukraine into two opposing poles has actually had quite the opposite effect. It is suggested in the rhetoric that Putin predicted a highly split Ukrainian nation, and a strengthened Russian nation. In reality, Ukrainians have never felt such a strong sense of nationhood. The war, in effect, has fostered a newfound desire for a vast majority of Ukrainians to vie for the unity and success of the

Ukrainian people (Goble, 2015, p. 1). For instance, Ukrainians who were insulted by the derogatory term of ‘banderivtsi’ have now embraced the insult. Rather than symbolizing fascism, the term now stands for patriotic Ukrainians who are proud of their nation and want to see it independent and flourishing (p. 1-2). This was an unexpected turn of events for Putin whose strategy depends heavily on intense propaganda. In return, Russians are beginning to retaliate against Putin’s incursion into Ukraine. It turns out that Russia is the one fractionalizing under the pressure of foreign advances.

While this study applies particularly to the conflict in Ukraine, its basis provides salience to a number of other conflicts in the region and abroad. The findings pose a necessary look into the significance of framing, suggesting that the rhetoric of elites can be very telling in cases of crisis. In this case, an analysis of Putin’s rhetoric pointed out key contradictions between his words and his practice. These contradictions point to specific holes of Putin’s strategy in Ukraine that can guide future policy toward a resolution.

In light of the findings in this study, my opinion is that the threat of Putin’s regime extends far wider than Donbas and Ukraine. Following suit to similar separatist movements in the region, it is evident that the acquisition of Donbas and Crimea is only a stepping-stone to subsequent conflicts. Putin’s strategies have been consistent throughout the region. The tactic has been to militarily engage in separatist movements on behalf of Russian compatriots, and remove them from the control of the presiding government. This is evidenced in the cases of Georgia, Moldova and Chechnya, among others. In 2008, Russian military might successfully backed the Republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in their efforts to separate from the Georgian government. Moldova experienced

a similar situation with its eastern border region of Transnistria, where Russian troops are stationed to this day. Also, Putin transformed the Republic of Chechnya into a military state with utmost loyalty to the Kremlin: the result of two brutal wars that left Chechnya in shambles and a puppet government in its place (Shuster, 2015, p. 5).

Such events are ominous precursors of what is to come in Ukraine should Russia gain full control over the Donbas region. The case of Ukraine is unique, however. Russia's insistence that Ukrainians are just an extension of the Russian people adds a level of complexity to the already heavily intermingled societies (Molchanov, 2015, p. 3). The deep history of Ukrainian subjugation by Russia raises the stakes for Putin's involvement in his neighbor state. At this point, Putin's economic and social ties to the region far outweigh the interest of the West to get involved militarily on Ukraine's behalf (Warner, 2015, p. 4).

Further, Ukraine's fate hinges on its own internal instability. The biggest issue that Ukraine currently faces is corruption within its own government. An impending fallback into the oligarchical ways of the old regime is sending the public into further unrest and confusion. As the web of corruption is gradually exposed, there is grave potential for a massive resurgence of protests akin to Euromaidan. This would only reawaken frustration among the people and pull the country further into economic destabilization. This would have several detrimental repercussions. First, it would only enhance the already permissive environment for harboring radical and separatist sentiment. Second, it would reinvigorate Putin's justifications of coming to save the people from the incompetent and illegitimate Ukrainian government. And finally, it

would deter the flow of Western aid and assistance to the conflict. Thus, the main Crisis in Ukraine lies within its own government.

It is becoming all the more evident that Putin is on the losing end of the battle in Ukraine. The support of his nation is dwindling, and the Ukrainian people have unified rather than crumbled in the midst of his invasion (Boyes, 2016, p. 2). As a result, Putin is now vying for a frozen conflict, and further, a federalized Ukraine or even a failed state. A unified Ukraine under one distinct leadership would be fatal to Putin's agenda. Federalization on the other hand, in which the country would essentially separate and divide leadership amongst the regions, would give Putin the upper hand that he desires (Eyal, 2015, p. 2). In the case of federalization, Putin would be able to remain an integral part of Ukrainians affairs, particularly in the Donbas (Anonymous, 2014, p. 4).

In regard to the frozen conflict, many analysts suggest that Putin has been strategically diverting attention from the Crisis in Ukraine to the civil war in Syria with his airstrike campaign. This theory suggests that Putin is attempting to direct the attention of the global community to the conflict in Syria in order to further carry out his agenda in Ukraine (Stent, 2016, p. 2). With the attention off of Ukraine, he would be able to fulfill his efforts of federalizing the nation and effectively freezing the conflict to a standstill. In the event of a frozen conflict, Ukraine would slowly begin to wane and cripple economically and politically from the continuing costs of the war (Eyal, 2015, p. 2). This would be an ideal situation for Putin, as Ukraine would no longer have the strength or resources to fight off his incursion. The international community is, thus, attempting to diminish the possibility of an effective standstill in Ukraine (Boyes, 2016, p. 3).

As a result of his foreign philandering, Putin has received a plethora of economic sanctions from the international community; although many analysts believe that this is not enough to quell his actions. The sanctions have served as a temporary deterrent (Ashford, 2016, p. 2). They are slowly wearing away at the economic stability of the Russian powerhouse, causing increasing civil unrest. Putin contends that the sanctions are effectively hurting the global market, in particular that of the West, rather than proving to be detrimental to Russia (“Former Kremlin internal policy chief,” 2015, p. 50). His continued denial of invasion, however, is only serving to sustain sanctions against Russia and perhaps see increased measures of punishment.

The findings of this study pose a unique perspective on Putin’s involvement in Ukraine. The most telling justification is Putin’s vehement protection of his ethnic kin abroad. This justification is the common link that unifies all of the Kremlin’s previous incursions in the region. Blank is correct in stating that with the Kremlin’s stark protection of ethnic Russian minorities in the Post-Soviet sphere, Putin is able to keep the pot boiling on the basis of Russian minority discrimination in nearly every state in the region. Following suit to the cases of Georgia, Moldova, and Chechnya, the case in Ukraine is a harbinger for further incursions of this kind (Bebler, 2015, p. 6). In sum, this study has presented the implications and significance of Putin’s framing of the conflict in Ukraine through mass propaganda and provided the framework for future studies.

“Putin has declared a war of brother against brother in the Ukraine. This bloody folly by a crazed KGB man will cost Russia and Ukraine dearly: once again the deaths of young boys on both sides, bereft mothers and wives, children turned into orphans. An empty

Crimea, which tourists will never visit. Billions, tens of billions of rubles taken from old people and children and thrown into the furnace of the war, and then after that even more money to prop up the thieving regime in Crimea...the ghoul needs a war. He needs the blood of the people.”

-Boris Nemtsov (Batou, 2015, p. 5)

Appendix I

In conducting this study I faced several limitations. The first, and most prevalent, was eliminating pre-existent bias. As a native of Ukraine, I have an established view on the topic; regardless of whether it is positive or negative. This immediately signals to subjectivity in the research. However, to maintain objectivity in such a sensitive case, I employed a systematic approach in my content analysis to ensure that an unbiased party would reach the same results that I did.

To accomplish this, I read through the 57 sources several times and identified specific phrases that were consistently repeated throughout the rhetoric. These codes then served to identify key trends/justifications, which were subsequently compiled in a chart. After each justification (8 in total) was totaled, I was able to view the frequency with which Putin mentioned each individual justification throughout the rhetoric. At this point, I was able to make comparisons amongst the categories, presenting them in the order of most frequently mentioned to least frequently mentioned. From this, I took a qualitative approach in detailing the context that surrounded each individual justification.

Objectivity in this study was paramount in order to produce valid results and present a method of research that was replicable to similar cases. I consider this study to be replicable and applicable. The rhetoric of elites can be very telling. This study provides a glimpse into the use of framing by elites and the significance and implications of such a strategy.

Appendix II

The following is the collection of 57 speeches, interviews, addresses and excerpts that were chosen for this study. The chart includes the date, audience, title, small description and source of each case. The cases are organized by date:

Spch/Int/Add	Date	Audience	Title	What for	Source
Speech	Feb. 7th 2007	Munich, Germany	"Peace Through Dialogue"	43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy	BBC News
Article by Putin	Feb. 7th 2012	Kommersant (Russian Paper)	"Russia Must Reject Corruption and Build a Modern Democracy"	Piece from "Kommersant"	The Gaurdian
Article by Putin	Sep. 12 2013	American audience	"A Plea for Caution from Russia"	What Putin has to say to Americans on Syria	The Gaurdian
Speech	Dec. 12 2013	Both houses of parliament, State Duma, Federal Council	"State of the Nation Speech"	Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly	Russian Federation
Press Statement/Answer to journalists' questions	Jan. 28 2014	Brussels, international	"Vladimir Putin took part in the Russia-EU summit meeting"	News Conference following the Russia-EU summit	Official Kremlin website
Answer journalists' questions	Mar. 4 2014	Novo-Ogoryovo, Moscow Region	"Vladimir Putin answered journalists' questions on the situation in Ukraine"	Answer to questions on Ukraine	Official Kremlin website
Excerpts	Mar. 5 2014	Europe	"Ukraine Crisis: What are Putin's Calculations?"	Excerpts on situation in Ukraine	BBC News
Speech	Mar. 18 2014	Federation council, state Duma, Reps of Crimea and Sevastopol/public	"Transcript: Putin says Russia will Protect the Rights of Russians Abroad"	Remarks after the "reunification of Crimea with Russia"	The Washington Post
Excerpts	Mar. 29 2014	Europe	"Ukraine Crisis: Russia vows no invasion"	Remarks on further advancement into Ukraine	BBC News

Interview	May 23 2014	International	"Putin to Ukraine: We Will Accept the Legitimacy of your Illegitimate Election"	CNBC Interview	Novosti Kremlin
Interview	Jun. 4 2014	International	"Putin speaks out on Ukraine, Crimea and US relations with French Media"	Interview in Sochi to French Media with Gilles Bouleau and Jean-Pierre Elkabbach Media TF1 and Europe 1	RT Official
Excerpts/Remarks	Jun. 27 2014	Europe	"Ukraine: Putin aide brands Poroshenko 'Nazi' ahead of EU deal"	Remarks of Senior Advisor to Russian President Sergei Glazyev	BBC News
Excerpts/Remarks	Aug. 31 2014	Europe	"Putin 'urges talks on statehood for east Ukraine'"	Putin called for talks to discuss statehood of east Ukraine	BBC News
Speech	Oct. 25 2014	Valdai International Discussion Club	"Putin's speech at the Valdai Club- Full Transcript"	Speech to the XI meeting of the Valdai Club	The Vineyard of the Saker
Interview	Nov. 7 2014	Russian Television	"Vladimir Putin announces itself in the Ukraine Crisis to speak: The Kremlin Leader Alleged that the Russian Army had the right to military intervention in a neighboring country."	TV Question time with "Direct Line" Putin raises serious allegations against the government in Kiev	National Turkish
Excerpts from Interview	Nov. 24 2014	TASS- International	"Excerpts From Vladimir Putin's Latest Interview"	Interview with Andrei Bandenko of TASS	Forbes
Interview	Nov. 27 2014	International/Europe	"Interview with President Vladimir Putin: The Crisis in East Ukraine, The Sanctions Regime, Russian-German Relations"	Interview with Hubert Seipel for the German TV Channel ARD. Took place in Vladivostok on Nov. 13	Global Research
Speech/Address	Dec. 5 2014	Domestic/Russia	"Putin Defends Foreign Policy in State Address"	Putin defending the Kremlin's foreign policy in the State Address	Aljazeera

Meeting/Answers to Questions	Dec. 5 2014	Kremlin, Moscow	"Meeting with the members of the Council for Civil Society and Human Rights and federal and regional human rights commissioners"	Meeting examined current issues regarding respect for human rights and development of civil society institutions in all the regions	Official Kremlin Website
Excerpts	Dec. 5 2014	World, Russia	"Putin Cut Ukraine Criticism from Speech Ahead of Peace Talks"	Denotes points on Ukraine said by Putin that were dropped from the previous meeting	TIME
Speech Excerpt	Dec. 18 2014	Russian State Media	"Russian state media promo for Putin speech: 'the Bear Never Asks Permission'"	Odd state media promo ahead of the President's annual news conference	CNN
Speech Excerpt	Dec. 18 2014	Domestic/Russia	"Putin speech sparks more ruble volatility"	Putin blames external factors for Russia's ongoing economic problems	NBC
News Conference	Dec. 18 2014	Moscow/Russia	"News Conference of Vladimir Putin"	President's News conference broadcast by: Channel 1, Rossiya-1, Rossiya-2, Rossiya-24, Radio Rossii, Mayak and Vesti FM + Russian and Foreign Journalists	Official Kremlin Website
Speech	Jan. 01 2015	Domestic/Russia	"Putin: Crimea annexation important milestone"	New Year's Speech to the Nation this time on Crimea	Aljazeera
Interview	Feb. 02 2015	Domestic/Russia	"President Vladimir Putin's Interview with VGTRK"	Putin answered questions from the National State Television and Radio Company (VGTRK) journalist Vladimir Solovyov	Russian Mission
Interview Excerpts	Feb. 24 2015	Russia	"Ukraine conflict: Russia's Vladimir Putin says war 'unlikely'"	Excerpts from an interview with Russian Television on situation in Ukraine	BBC News
Excerpts	Feb. 28 2015	Europe	"Boris Nemtsov murder prompts Putin 'justice' pledge"	Remarks made by Putin and mourners following Nemtsov's murder	BBC News

Meeting/Press Statement	Mar. 20 2015	Domestic/Russia	"Press Statement following a meeting between the presidents of Russia, Belarus and Kazhakstan"	Statement after meeting with Belarus and Kazhakstan regarding relations and Ukraine"	Kremlin Official Website
Answer to journalists' questions	Apr. 16 2015	Moscow/Russia	"Answers to journalists' questions after Direct Line"	Putin met with media representatives to answer questions after interview on Russian Television	Kremlin Official Website
Excerpts from Interview	Apr. 18 2015	Moscow/Russia	"Putin extends unexpected peace offering to U.S. in media interview"	Excerpts from interview with Russia's state-backed television station	Washington Examiner
Speech	May 9 2015	Moscow/Russia	"Victory Day Speech"	Speech in the Red Square on Victory Day commending Russians on the defeat of Nazis	World Future Fund
Press Statement/ Answer to journalists' questions	May 10 2015	Moscow/Russia	"Press statement and replies to journalists' questions following talks with Federal Chancellor of Germany Angela Merkel	Press statements and answers to questions on Russian-German Relations	Official Kremlin Website
Excerpts from news conference	May 10 2015	Moscow/Russia	"Putin: Russia can influence E. Ukraine but its up to Kiev to solve crisis"	Important excerpts from news conference with Angela Merkel	Russia Today
Interview	Jun 7 2015	International	"Vladimir Putin, interview for the Italian Newspaper "Il corriere della Sera"	Russian Italian-Relations and situation in Ukraine	Corriere
Panel Discussion	Jun 19 2015	Russia	"Putin: Russia is not aspiring to superpower status, just wants to be respected"	Discussion during the plenary meeting of the 19th St. Petersburg International Economic forum 2015	Russia Today
Yanukovich interview	Jun 22 2015	Europe	"Ukraine Crisis: Yanukovich Regrets Bloodshed in Kiev"	Interview with Yanukovich which contains remarks about Putin when Yan. was ousted	BBC News
Excerpt from meeting	Jul 3 2015	Russia	"Putin: We don't expect any change in hostile policies toward Russia"	Meeting of the country's security council	Russia Today

Excerpt from interview	Jul. 20 2015	International	"Ukraine Crisis: 'Putin is obsessed with the idea of testing Nato' - and the Baltics will be next, says Odessa governor Mikheil Sakhshvili	interview with Sakhshvili with regard to Putin, some mention of remarks made by Putin	Independent
Answer journalists' questions	Aug. 18 2015	Russia/Sevastopol	"Answer to Journalists' Questions"	Answers journalists' questions after examining the ancient shipwreck near the entrance to Balaklava Bay in Sevastopol	Official Kremlin Website
Answer to journalists' questions	Sep. 4 2015	Russia/Vladivostok	"Vladimir Putin answered Russian journalists' questions"	Answered questions on current issues such as: Russian economy's development outlook, oil prices, russia's social policy, the situation in Ukraine, refugees, terrorism	Official Kremlin Website
Answer journalists' questions	Sep. 12 2015	Russia/Sevastopol	"Answer to Journalists' Questions"	Vladimir Putin and former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi answered to journalists' questions	Official Kremlin website
Speech	Sep. 28 2015	International/Europe	"transcript: Putin's Speech Before UN General Assembly"	Putin addressed the UN General Assembly	Washington Post
Interview	Sep. 29 2015	American Audience	"President Putin Interview with Charlie Rose"	Interview with Charlie Rose to American TV Stations CBS and PBS on Ukraine	Official Kremlin website
Interview	Oct. 12 2015	Russia/ Int'l	"Vladimir Putin rules out ground operations in Syria: Russian President's Rossiya TV interview in full"	Interview on Syria and fight against terrorism, Putin accuses US and Europe of not offering results in the fight against terrorism	Independent
Excerpt	Oct. 14 2015	International	"Trudeau faces the 'Putin Test'"	Trudeau and Putin exchange on situation in Ukraine	The Leader Post
Answers to journalists' questions	Nov. 16 2015	Russia/ Antalya	"Responses to journalists' questions following the G20 Summit"	Answers to questions on Turkey and Ukraine following the G-20 summit	Official Kremlin website

Meeting	Dec. 10 2015	Moscow/Russia	"Meeting with Head of Chechnya Ramzan Kadyrov"	Briefing by Kadyrov on the socioeconomic situation in the region. interchange between Putin and Kadyrov	Official Kremlin website
Press Conference	Dec. 17 2015	Moscow/International	"Vladimir Putin press conference: 'Russian Military personnel were in Ukraine' - as it happened	Russian President holds annual press conference with Russian and International journalists in Moscow— Military presence in Ukraine	The Gaurdian
Press Conference	Dec. 17 2015	Russia	"Vladimir Putin's Annual News Conference"	Annual Press Conference, discussion on Ukraine Rossiya-1, Rossiya-24, Channel One	Official Kremlin website
Law in Writing	Dec. 30 2015	Russia	"Law on suspending free trade agreement with Ukraine"	The President signed Federal Law On Suspension by the Russian Federation of the Agreement on the Free Trade Zone with regard to Ukraine	Official Kremlin website
Interview	Jan 5 2016	International/Europe	"Part one of January 5, 2016 interview with Russian President Vladimir Putin by Germany's Bild Newspaper"	Interview with German Bild Newspaper held in Sochi, Russia. Part one of interview	New Cold War
Excerpt from interview	Jan 11 2016	International/Europe	"Russian President views relations with West, NATO Expansion, Ukraine Conflict"	"For me, it is not borders that matter"	BBC Monitoring Europe
Speech Excerpt	Jan 25 2016	International	"Vladimir Putin Accuses Lenin of placing a 'time bomb' under Russia"	Putin denounced Lenin and the Bolshevik government	The Guardian
Conference	Feb. 18 2016	International/Europe	"Munich Security Conference: Talking Peace, Russian Style"	Russian Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev was send to 2016 Munich Security Council to speak on Russia's behalf	The Moscow Times
Speech Excerpt	Feb. 18 2016	International/Europe	"Putin Blasts EU Statements on Sanctions Relief"	Minsk Deal and lifting the sanctions against Moscow	The Moscow Times
Excerpt	Feb. 21 2016	International/Russia	"Putin: US and NATO want to sit on the throne in	Sanctions are a geopolitical strategy, defending his	DW

			Europe alone”	policies in Ukraine and Crimea	
Press Conference	Feb. 22 2016	International	“G-20: Putin’s Speech significantly different than official transcript?”	Press conference following the G-20 summit	TND

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