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*Identification of Security Issues and their  
Importance to Russia, Its Near-abroad and  
NATO Allies*

*A Thematic Analysis of Leadership Speeches*

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## Executive Summary

This study addresses key questions posed in the SMA EUCOM project by using thematic analysis of speeches from leaders of state and non-state polities in Eastern Europe, Russia, and the Caucasus. The importance of an issue is measured by the density (mentions/words in speech) with which it is mentioned and the use of associated emotive language. Table 1 summarizes the key findings in relation to the EUCOM questions.

Table 1: Key Findings by EUCOM Questions

<b>Regional Outlook</b>	
Q04. Who are Russia's allies and clients and where is it seeking to extend its influence within the EUCOM AOR?	Analysis of how strongly Russia's allies express their allegiance to Russia and Russian culture indicates that Crimea is Russia's staunchest ally. Transnistria also expresses a strong allegiance to Russia, followed by Donetsk. Luhansk and Armenia express pro-Russian sentiments, but only weakly.
Q10. How does Russia see its great power status in the 21st century?	Russian leaders do not mention aspirations for super-power status. Russia's desire for great power status should be treated as a hypothesis that requires testing – it should not be assumed.
Q20. How might Russia leverage its energy and other economic resources to influence the political environment in Europe and how will this leverage change over the next 15 years?	Economic issues rank high in Russia's security concerns. They express concern over the value of their energy resources, indicating that it is a key value. They often mention the reliance of European nations on Russian energy. To a lesser extent they mention expanding markets for their energy to Asia.
<b>Media and Public Opinion</b>	
Q07. Conduct analysis of open source Russian media to understand key frames and cultural scripts that are likely to frame potential geopolitical attitudes and narratives in the region.	Cultural Frame: A key cultural frame that Russia and its allies use is their history of overcoming odds against aggressive adversaries to uphold their Russian independence. References to the need to defend Russians from the Nazi threat (historically and today) are used.  Emotive Frame: Russia sees the US and NATO as a threat, and state that the US is conspiring against them.
Q08. How much does the U.S. image of Russia as the side that "lost" the Cold War create support for more aggressive foreign policy behavior among the Russian people?	Russia and its allies do not speak of losing to the West, but blame past leaders for giving away their power. Some leaders express nostalgia for Soviet power.
Q09. How might ultra-nationalism influence Russia's foreign policy rhetoric and behavior?	As expected, Russian Nationalists, express nationalist sentiments strongly. However, both Putin and Lavrov use Russian nationalist arguments to some degree.
<b>NATO</b>	
Q16. If conflict occurs, will NATO be willing and able to command and control a response?	NATO leaders use language in a manner (mention of security concerns, high emotive content) that indicates a relatively high commitment to addressing Russian threats.

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The larger EUCOM effort integrates different teams' findings in terms of how they relate to security issues, economic issues, domestic constraints, and prestige.

The security issues and themes identified through thematic analysis can be binned under these four interest areas and their densities analyzed. The Putin government exhibits the following patterns:

- **Security** – The Putin government mentions security concerns more than any other polity; this is related to their engagement in conflicts in the region and to the pervasive threat they perceive the US and NATO to be.
- **Economic Factors** – The Putin government has one of the highest densities for economic factors indicating that economic interests are a key factor in their decision calculus.
- **Domestic Constraints** – The Putin government seldom mentions domestic issues.
- **Prestige** – The Putin government ranks among the lowest of all the polities for the density of prestige-related themes. This is consistent with thematic analysis of the importance of emotive language. Compared to other polities, the Putin government exhibits a cool, measured rhetoric in discussing regional security concerns. This could be a form of deception or evidence of a patient approach to political developments in the region

Refer to Appendices A and B for a list of the top security concerns and emotive themes for key polities in the region.

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## **Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to apply thematic analysis methods for analyzing the speeches of regional leaders in Eastern Europe, Russia, and the Caucasus.

The key questions pertain to the regional outlook of polities in Eastern Europe, Russia, and the Caucasus, media and public opinion, and NATO.

## **Regional Outlook**

The following EUCOM questions can be addressed with the data and methods of this study:

- Q04. Who are Russia's allies and clients and where is it seeking to extend its influence within the EUCOM AOR?
- Q10. How does Russia see its great power status in the 21st century?
- Q20. How might Russia leverage its energy and other economic resources to influence the political environment in Europe and how will this leverage change over the next 15 years?

## **Media and Public Opinion**

Since the data used in this study were derived from leaders' speeches, they cannot directly address public opinion in the media. However, leaders did address specific issues of concern to their respective populations in EUCOM's questions. The questions that this study can partly address include:

- Q07. Conduct analysis of open source Russian media to understand key frames and cultural scripts that are likely to frame potential geopolitical attitudes and narratives in the region.
- Q08. How much does the U.S. image of Russia as the side that "lost" the Cold War create support for more aggressive foreign policy behavior among the Russian people?
- Q09. How might ultra-nationalism influence Russia's foreign policy rhetoric and behavior?

## **NATO**

Statements were analyzed from NATO leaders and leaders from NATO allies adjacent to Russia (Poland and the Baltic States). Therefore, the following question could be addressed:

- Q16. If conflict occurs, will NATO be willing and able to command and control a response?

## Corpus

In consultation with EUCOM, a list of polities most relevant to understanding regional dynamics in Eastern Europe was compiled. Some of these are nation states, like Russia, Ukraine, and Poland, others are rebel organizations/break away polities such as Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic, and others are multinational organizations such as NATO.

The polities were prioritized into two Tiers based on their perceived centrality to regional political dynamics. Tier A polities, would require a minimum of 10 documents, while the secondary group, Tier B, will require 3-5 documents. The tiers were decided with input from interested parties within EUCOM. Next, a list of leaders and decision-makers representative of each group was created. Individuals were chosen that held positions of authority or influence and were considered to be representative of that group. For instance, Dmitry Medvedev is one of the leaders collected to represent the Russian Government alongside Vladimir Putin, while Alexei Navalny was included in the Russian Opposition group.

An open source search of available English-language speeches, interviews, and news articles with quotes and extensive paraphrasing was conducted to populate the corpus. Preference was given to transcripts of speeches and interviews, but news articles with extensive quotes and paraphrasing were accepted when speeches and interviews were not readily available. Documents chosen for inclusion into the corpus were restricted to speeches during the past year and then scrutinized for references to Russia, the Ukraine, NATO or the United States. If there were numerous speeches and/or interviews to pick from, speeches or interviews that mentioned specific incidents or policies were chosen over speeches and/or interviews that were more generic in nature. The final corpus contained 169 speeches by 87 leaders from 22 polities (Table 2, Figure 1).



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Table 2: Final Corpus

Tier A	N	Individual
Donetsk People's Republic	10	Prime Minister Alexander Borodai (n=2) Prime Minister Alexander Zakharchenko (n=4) Deputy Commander of militia Eduard Basurin (n=2) Defense Minister Igor Girkin (aka Strelkov) Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Mikhail Mhukhin
Luhansk People's Republic	6	Prime Minister of the Republic Gennady Tsyppkalov Head of LPR Igor Plotnitsky (n=4) Prime Minister of the Republic Vasily Nikitin
Russian Oligarchs	6	Alexander Lebedev (n=2) Alisher Usmanov Oleg Deripaska Vladimir Potanin (n=2)
Transnistria	8	Minister of Foreign Affairs Nina Shtanski (n=3) Prime Minister Tatiana Turanskaya (n=2) President Yevgeny Shevchuk (n=3)
Crimea	7	Governor Alexi Chaly Prime Minister Sergey Aksyonov (n=3) Vladimir Konstantinov (n=3)
Russian Nationalist	7	Maria Katasonova Nikolai Starikov Vladimir Zhirinovskiy (n=4) Yevgeny Fyodorov
Putin Govt	29	Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev (n=5) Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin (n=3) Chief of Staff Sergei Ivanov (n=2) Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu (n=3) Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov (n=6) President Vladimir Putin (n=10)
Russian Opposition	7	Progress Party Politician Alexei Navalny (n=3) Communist Politician Gennady Zyuganov (n=2)

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Table 2: Final Corpus

Tier A	N	Individual
		A Just Russia Politician Sergey Mironov (n=2)
Ukrainian Govt	8	Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk President Oleksander Turchynov (n=2) President Petro Poroshenko (n=4) Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko
Latvian Govt	9	President Andris Bērziņš (n=5) Minister for Foreign Affairs Edgar Rinevics Prime Minister Laimdota Straujuma (n=2) Prime Minister Valdis Dombrovskis
Lithuanian Govt	8	Prime Minister Algirdas Butkevicius (n=4) President Dalia Grybauskaite (n=2) Foreign Minister Linus Linkevičius (n=2)
Estonian Govt	7	Prime Minister Andrus Ansip (n=2) Reform Party Politician Keit Pentus-Rosimannus (n=3) Prime Minister Taavi Roivas President Toomas Ilves
Polish Govt	8	President Bronislaw Komorowski (n=2) Prime Minister Donald Tusk (n=3) Prime Minister Ewa Kopacz (n=2) Minister of Foreign Affairs Radoslaw Sikorski
NATO	9	Deputy Secretary-General Alexander Vershbow (n=3) Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg (n=3) Spokesperson Oana Lungescu (n=3)
US Administration	12	Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter President Barack Obama (n=7) Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel Secretary of State Hilary Clinton Secretary of State John Kerry (n=2)

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Table 2: Final Corpus

Tier A	N	Individual
US Opposition	9	Senator John McCain (n=2) Senator Marco Rubio (n=3) Senator Rand Paul (n=2) Senator Ron Johnson (n=2)
Tier B	N	Individual
Russian Minority	1	Pro-Russian Activist Dimitri Linter
Armenian Govt	3	First Deputy Defense Minister David Tonoyan President Serzh Sargsyan Defense Minister Seyran Ohanyan
Azerbaijan Govt	3	Prime Minister Artur Rasizade President Ilham Aliyev (n=2)
Belarus Govt	3	President Alexander Lukashenko
Georgian Govt	4	Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili Minister of Foreign Affairs Maia Panjikidze Minister of Foreign Affairs Tamar Beruchashvili (n=2)
Moldovan Govt	5	Prime Minister Chiril Gaburici Deputy Prime Minister Eugen Carpov Prime Minister Iurie Leanca (n=2) President Nicolae Timofti
<b>Total =</b>		<b>169</b>

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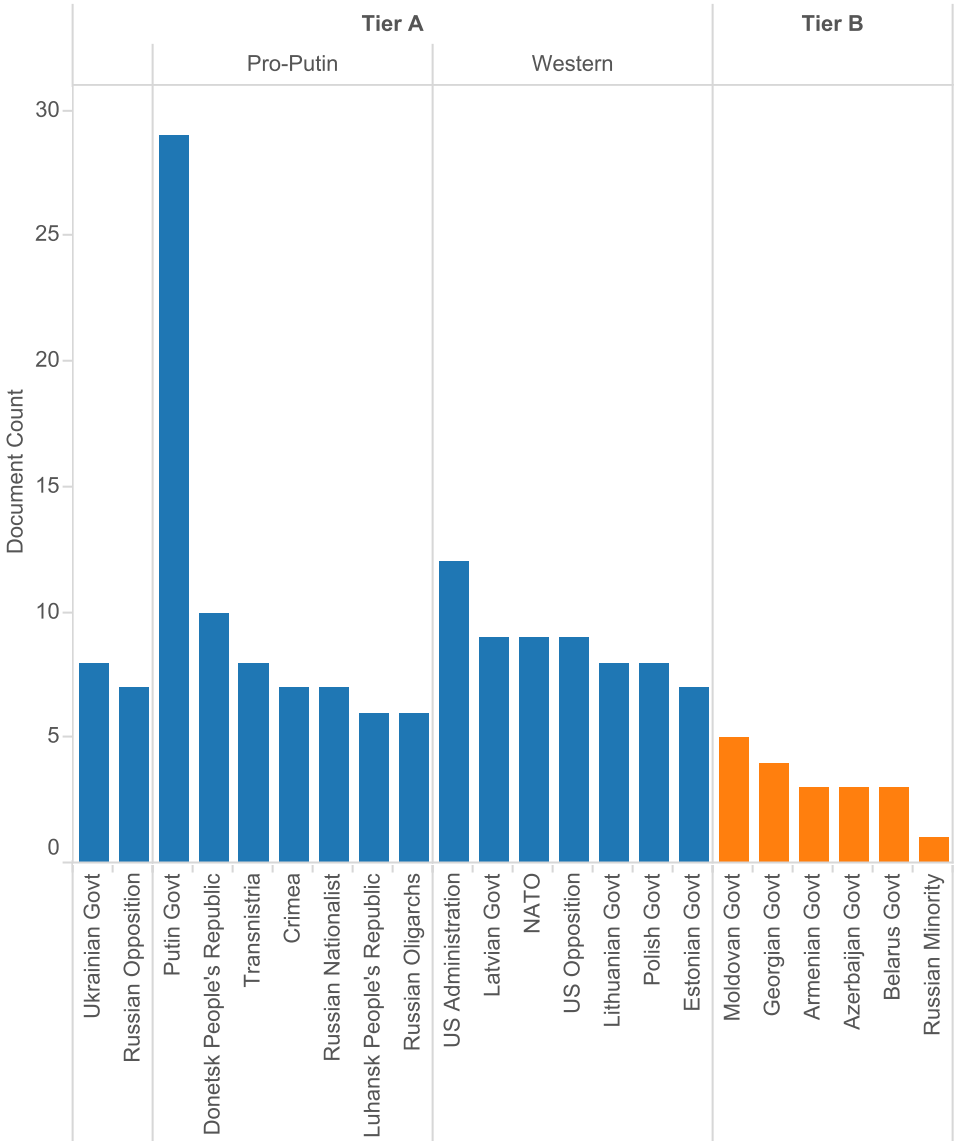


Figure 1 Document Count

## Methodology

The method used to assess how regional leaders view security concerns was thematic analysis, which involves coding relevant themes and ways of using language (rhetorical devices). Previous research conducted by NSI and the literature for thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), critical discourse theory (van Dijk, 2003; Fairclough, 2001), and grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) provided the basis for the coding methodology. These approaches stress the need for capturing the point of view expressed by the populations of interest and avoiding research biased by the investigator's agenda. NSI's thematic analysis approach provides an analysis sensitive to the concerns and cultures of the various polities in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus.

A theme refers to the connotative meaning of a concept as it is expressed in words, phrases, and in some cases paragraphs. Connotative implies that the meaning of the expression invokes more than a simple literal (or denotative) meaning. Connotative meaning often invokes emotional reaction, or refers to broader cultural and historical interpretations of meaning.

Rhetorical devices are ways of using language to amplify the connotative meaning of a theme. Examples of rhetorical devices include repetition, citation of numbers, intensifying or inflammatory language, metaphor, historical reference, sarcasm, etc. Rhetorical devices do not add meaning; they amplify the meaning of a theme.

The NSI team focused on the actual dialogue and language used by regional leaders to describe different aspects of security in the region as well as the cultural frames through which leaders perceive these security issues. The discourse analysis used in this study involves coding segments of political leaders' public security-related statements including the rhetorical devices (ways of using language to make a point); emotive themes (politically and culturally salient issues that amplify the importance of a point); and the valence (positive or negative) of a security concern.

Themes and rhetorical devices are counted per document and then the density with which they are mentioned is calculated by dividing these counts by the numbers of words in the document. This normalization permits comparison across documents, speakers, or any other analytical dimension relevant to answering the EUCOM questions.

By adding and/or multiplying combinations of themes and rhetorical devices, scales that measure the strength of sentiment with which leaders express their views on security concerns can be constructed, providing clear, visual, and quantitative measures of how different polities regard security issues. The specific scales used to answer EUCOM questions are described in the relevant sections where they are used.

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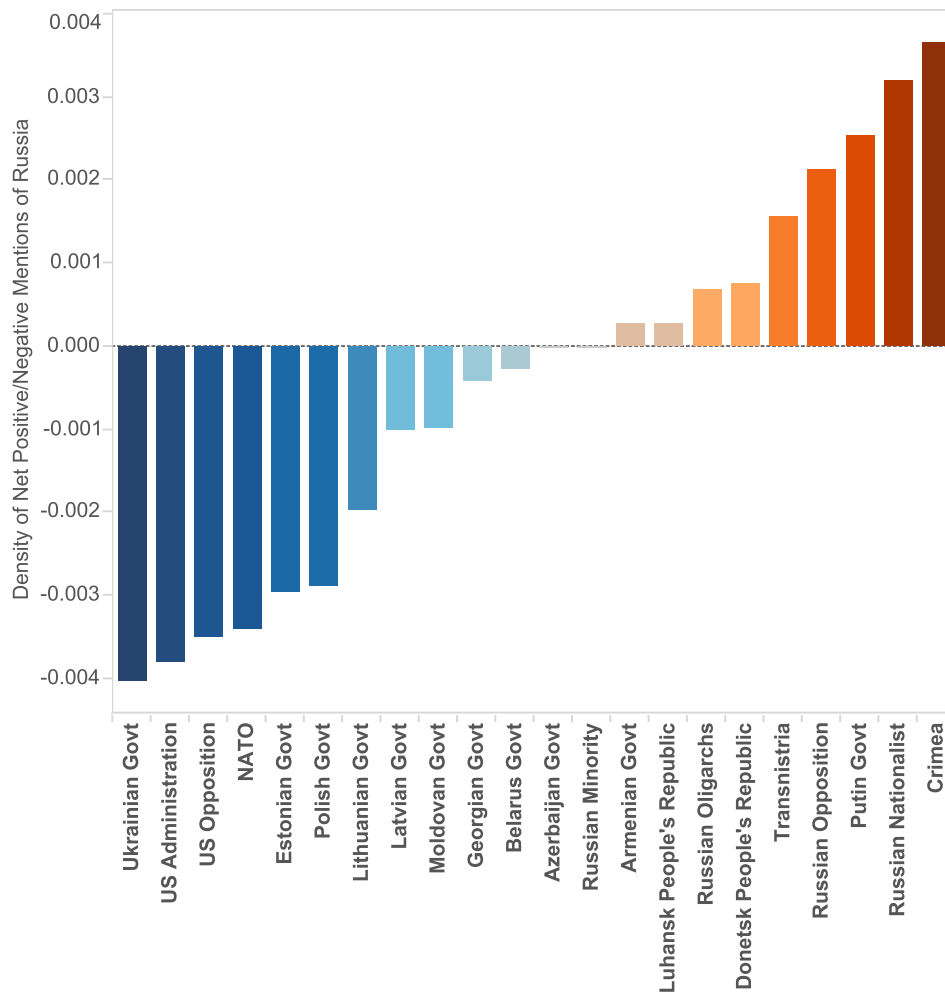


Figure 2 Density of Net Positive/Negative Mentions of Russia

## Findings: Regional Outlook

### Q04. Russia's allies and influence within EUCOM AOR

Who are Russia's allies and clients and where is it seeking to extend its influence within the EUCOM AOR?

#### Who are Russia's Allies?

Answering this question requires determining the positive or negative orientation toward Russia of the 22 polities examined in this study (Figure 2). A speaker's orientation toward the Putin government, the Russian people or Russian culture was coded as ambivalent, pro-Russia, or anti-Russia. The net orientation was calculated as the sum of the pro- and anti- statements, and the density of this net sentiment was calculated.

Those polities that expressed some degree of positive net sentiment toward Russia were considered Russian allies or client states. NATO allies of course are pre-defined.

As Figure 2 shows, Russia has a number of allies in the region, although not all express the same degree of alliance to Russia. For instance, Armenia does not mention Russia positively that often. Luhansk not only does not mention Russia positively often, but they actually make just as many ambivalent statements about Russia, primarily complaining that Russia has not supported them to the extent that they expected. On the other hand, Crimeans mention Russia and Russian culture positively even more often than Russians do.

As expected, NATO allies mention Russia negatively. It is notable that US politicians mention Russia negatively more often than NATO allies in the region.

Ukraine mentions Russia negatively more than any other polity examined.

Moldova has been in dispute with Russia over Transnistria since 1992 and of course, Georgia was invaded by Russia in 2008. Therefore, both of their net negative sentiment toward Russia is not surprising. However, they mention Russia negatively much less than NATO partners.

Belarus has historically had a friendly relationship with Russia, but recent tensions have surfaced over trade relations. This tension is expressed in a high degree of ambivalent mentions of Russia and an overall negative, but only slightly so, view of Russia. This could indicate that Belarus could play an intermediary role in regional politics between Russia and the West.

### **Where is it (Russia) seeking to extend?**

Clearly Donetsk and Luhansk are already leaning toward Russia, although Luhansk has complained that they expected more support from Russia and have not gotten it. They both are asserting that they want independent statehood and not to be part of Russia proper.

Relations with Belarus, a traditional ally, have become strained, and Belarus is currently mildly inclined away from Russia, although also guarded about the West. This represents a fissure in Russia's edifice of alliances that they may feel they need to address.

### **Security Concerns**

Another way of considering Russia's influence in the region is to examine the security concerns expressed by the region's different polities.

Forty-nine different security concerns were identified in the entire corpus, including sovereignty, borders, annexation, war, peace, cooperation, trade, investment to mention a few. Of course, no polity expressed all of the same concerns or density for individual concerns. Therefore, variation in what security concerns were mentioned and how often enables a differentiation of each polity's interests. Also, the extent to which security concerns are shared, exposes the extent to which certain issues bind allies. A comparative presentation of each polity's top security concerns is presented in Appendix B.

For the purposes of examining the different security perspectives of the region’s allied groups, a comparison was made between the US and its regional NATO allies (The West), Russia and its allies as defined above, and the Putin and Ukrainian governments individually.

We examined each polity’s top seven security concerns and grouped all of those concerns under each alliance group, and recorded among how many members of each alliance that concern was shared, along with the average density with which the concern was mentioned for each alliance group. The extent to which a particular concern is shared among members of an alliance is one measure of its importance, and the density with which it is mentioned is another. In order to get an overall sense of a security concern’s importance in an alliance, the number of times the concern was mentioned is multiplied by its average density. This scale provides a combined measure of how widespread and important an issue is to members of an alliance. This number is then used to rank order the security concerns.

Concerns represented a mixture of national security issues (e.g. borders, sovereignty, violent conflict related (war, troops, arms), and economic, and peace-oriented (negotiation, political processes, cooperation) issues. These issues are color-coded in the following graphs (Orange – national security; Red – violent conflict; Green – economic; Peace – Blue).

#### US & Regional NATO Allies Top 10 Security Concerns

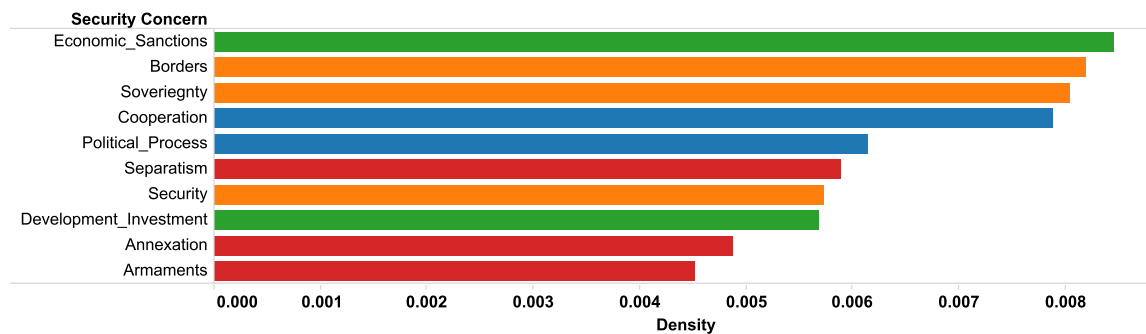


Figure 3 US & Regional NATO Allies Top 10 Security Concerns

#### The US and Regional Allies

The US and its regional allies’ top ten security concerns involve a mix of national security, war-related, peace oriented and economic concerns (Figure 3). Issues that threaten NATO states include concerns with borders, threats to sovereignty, the general security of the region, separatism, annexation and armaments introduced by Russia. The alliance shows a high level of concern with their responses to these threats, which include economic sanctions, the use of development and investment, and cooperation and the establishment of a political process to address the threats.



### Russia & Allies Top 10 Security Concerns

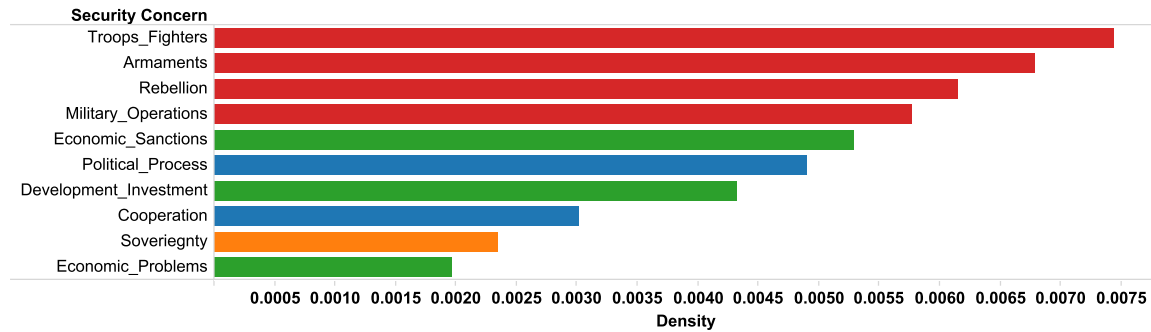


Figure 4 Russia & Allies Top 10 Security Concerns

### Russia and Its Allies

Russia and its allies are primarily concerned with issues related to violent conflict (Figure 4). They are also concerned with economic issues such as sanctions, the need for development and investment in their territories, and the economic problems they face. They also frequently mention peace-oriented issues such as political process and cooperation.

### Putin Government Top 7 Security Concerns

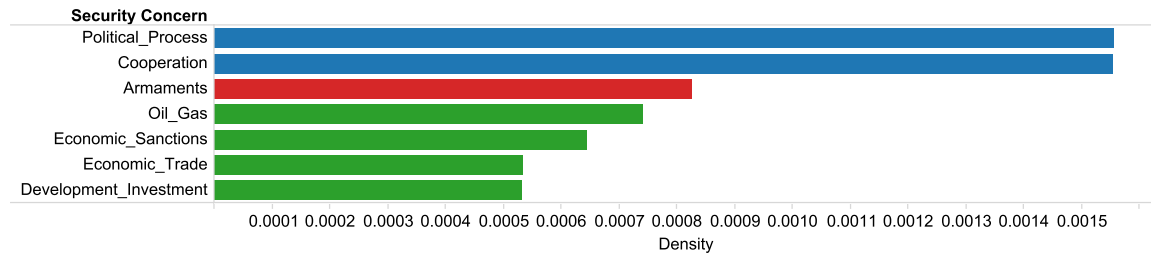


Figure 5 Putin Government Top 7 Security Concerns

### Putin Government

The Putin government alone has an interestingly contrasting set of top security concerns when compared to its allies (Figure 5). Its top concerns are establishing political processes and cooperation. Its only violent conflict concern is the flow of arms. While not mentioned as densely, the rest of the top ten concerns all concern economic issues: oil and gas revenues, economic sanctions, trade, and development and investment. The Putin government's top seven security concerns appear to betray an underlying concern with negotiating to maintain the Russian economy, and the mentions of the oil and gas industry is of special interest to Putin, who engineered the Russian government's acquisition of Gazprom.

From strictly the Putin government's perspective, rational actor theory might actually apply well. The government values its economy (especially in energy), and is willing to negotiate to protect that interest.

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The disjunction between the Putin government and Russia and its allies may indicate that the Putin government is using its client states in a gambit to put pressure on the West to negotiate more favorable terms to Russia, and Putin's particular concerns.

### Ukrainian Govt Top 7 Security Concerns

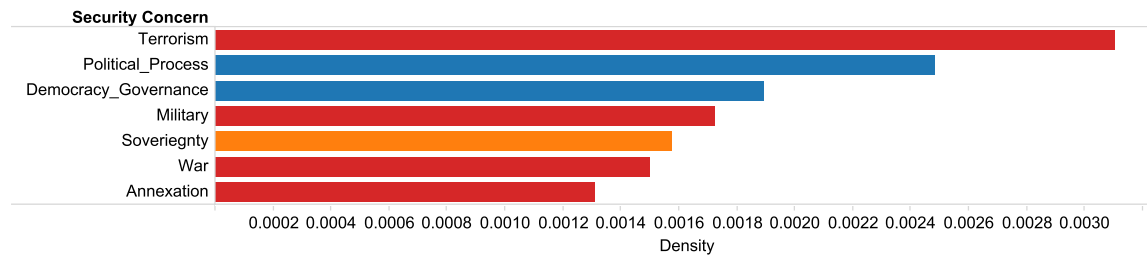


Figure 6 Ukrainian Government Top 7 Security Concerns

### Ukrainian Government

Ukraine's top concerns indicate a fear of violent conflict (terrorism, military, war, annexation, threats to sovereignty), and a desire for resolution (political process and the defense of democracy and encouragement of good governance) (Figure 6). Ukraine's security concerns imply a defensive posture and a perception that they are under siege.

## Valuation of Security

Mentioning a security concern often is one measure of its importance of that concern to the speaker. However, speakers provide additional clues regarding the importance of a security concern by conjoining it with themes that have an emotive appeal to the speaker or his or her audience. Additionally, rhetorical devices also increase the strength of sentiment regarding a security concern.

A security concern score was calculated for each group to provide a measure of the strength with which each polity expressed security concerns. Since the unit of analysis in this study was a single speech, the

### Security Concern Score

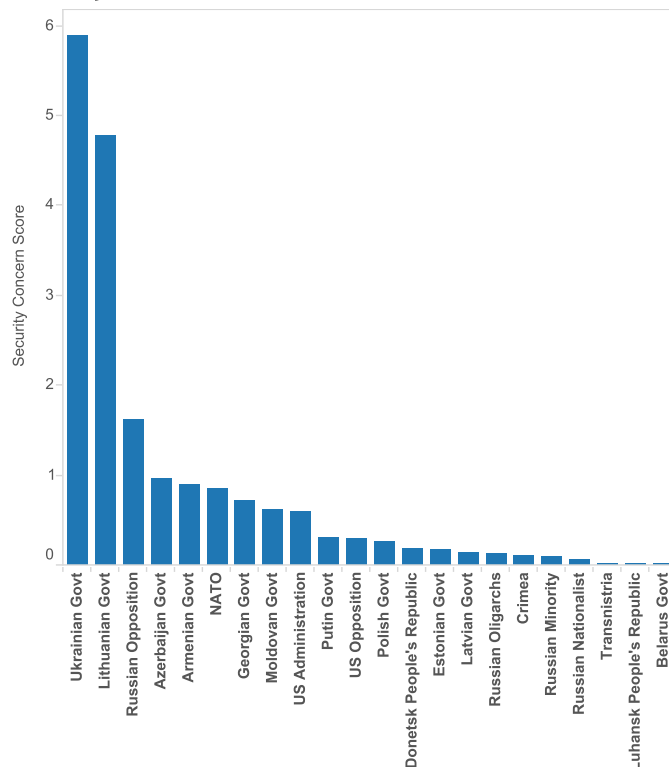


Figure 7 Security Concern Scores

overall densities of emotive themes and rhetorical devices is conjoined with all security concerns in a speech by multiplying the emotive themes X rhetorical devices X security concerns, divided by the number of words in the document. The average security sentiment score measures the strength with which each polity expressed security concerns.

When we add the effect of emotive language, some interesting shifts occur (Figure 7).

Ukraine is still the most concerned about security issues of all kinds. The sense of threat implied by their top listed security concerns is amplified tremendously by their use of emotive language.

Lithuania did not mention security issues much at all, but used a lot of emotive language. This could be due to the disproportionate influence of Dalia Grybauskaitė, who is known for her intensity.

We hypothesized that those Russian allies (including Russia) who are engaged in annexation (Crimea) and overt violence (Luhansk, Donetsk) would amplify their concerns with emotive themes and rhetorical devices to a high degree. In contrast, their discourse was among the most measured and toned down of any polity analyzed. Even though they mention security issues often (see Figure 4 above), they are typically subdued in their language, once it is normed by the numbers of words they use to express themselves. This may indicate that the political and conflict-related issues they mention are actually not the most important to them (and the underlying economic themes are the real issues), or that they are engaged in a patiently deceptive, long-term chess match with the West. Independent research is necessary to evaluate which strategic goals they may be pursuing.

### **Q10. Russia's great power status**

How does Russia see its great power status in the 21st century?

The notion of a greater Russia, or the extension of Russia into Eastern Ukraine (Novorossiya) is seldom mentioned by the Putin government. The mention of Novorossiya was ranked only 127<sup>th</sup> out of 219 themes (58<sup>th</sup> percentile). Combined with the lack of emotive speech used by the Putin government, this prima facie indicates that they are not seeking great power status, or that they are being deceptive.

The other polities that do mention Novorossiya (Russian nationalists and Donetsk), actually mention it 9 times more densely. This may represent their independent wishes, or possibly the Russian government's wishes by proxy.

A productive approach to evaluating Russian and allied intentions would be to entertain the different possible interpretations of Russian intent as competing hypotheses and explore what data would refute them, following Heuer's Alternative Competing Hypotheses, which was originally developed for testing hypotheses of Soviet intent (Heuer, 1999).

## **Q20. Russia's energy leverage and influence in Europe and in the future**

How might Russia leverage its energy and other economic resources to influence the political environment in Europe and how will this leverage change over the next 15 years?

Russia's energy issues are frequently mentioned, and its concerns can be grouped into four major areas: worries about fluctuating energy prices on their economy, leveraging their resources in negotiation with Ukraine, leveraging their resources in negotiation with Europe, and expansion of opportunities in Asia. Vladimir Putin most often invokes energy issues.

Putin and Rogozin specifically call out China as a potential expanding market. Medvedev calls out South East Asia repeatedly. Medvedev and Putin specifically mention negotiations with Ukraine. Most of Putin's mentions of Russia's energy sector refer to how essential Russian energy resources are to European nations such as Greece, Finland, Hungary, and EU nations in general. Near neighbors such as Kazakhstan and Belarus are mentioned as well.

...if we see that somebody is violating our contracts for gas supplies, we will reduce the volume, and the physical volume on the European market will simply be insufficient, there will simply not be enough. *President Vladimir Putin, June 2014, Document #02, Paragraph #49*

Russia is Finland's biggest trade and economic partner and in 2013 was firmly in first place in terms of trade volume. Russia is the reliable supplier for practically all of Finland's natural gas needs, and is a reliable supplier of other energy resources to the Finnish market too. *President Vladimir Putin, August 2014, Document #03, Paragraph #07*

As you know, a considerable part of Ukraine's energy sector has been originally built and relies on coal mined in eastern Ukraine. *President Vladimir Putin, December 2014, Document #10, Paragraph #17*

Russia supplies about 80% of oil and 75% of natural gas consumed in Hungary. We value our reputation as a reliable energy supplier to Europe and Hungary. *President Vladimir Putin, February 2015, Document #12, Paragraph #15*

There can be no return now to the South Stream project in its previous form. We have reached agreements with our Turkish partners. If I recall correctly, Turkey is Gazprom's second-biggest customer in Europe after Germany. *President Vladimir Putin, February 2015, Document #12, Paragraph #59*

Mr. Tsipras and I discussed our cooperation in the energy sector. Russia is the biggest exporter of energy resources to the Greek market and satisfies two thirds of Greece's natural gas demand. *President Vladimir Putin, April 2015, Document #14, Paragraph #08*

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Thematic Analysis of Leadership Speeches

Despite the bravado concerning Russia's primary export commodity and its power as a negotiating chip, both Medvedev and Putin equally mention concern with the fluctuations in energy prices and their implications for the Russian economy.

In classic deterrence theory, the key is identifying what the adversary values and holding it at risk. From the analysis of this corpus, the key resource Russian leaders value is their energy resources and the power it gives them. They simultaneously indicate the power it gives them over their European adversaries, their ability to exercise options in Asia, as well as their anxiety over how decreases in energy prices threaten this power. Their anxiety signals that this is a value they fear to lose; actually losing their energy power would predictably cause a shift toward risk taking behavior (Kuznar, 2007; Kuznar & Lutz, 2007; Levy, 2000; USSTRATCOM, 2006), in addition to eliminating a bargaining chip from the deterrence decision calculus.

## Findings: Media & Public Opinion

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### **Q07. Russia's key frames and cultural scripts**

Conduct analysis of open source Russian media to understand key frames and cultural scripts that are likely to frame potential geopolitical attitudes and narratives in the region.

#### **Cultural Frames**

The speeches analyzed in this corpus were intended to be consumed by both politicians and the general public through media, and so can partly address this question. Cultural frames refer to how an individual's (or a government's) perspective is influenced by historical and cultural factors. Cultural frames were assessed by examining cultural values and political issues expressed as themes that had to do more with the particular histories of the polities involved.

#### **The West**

The Western allies did not express much at all in terms of specific, cultural values that they are upholding or defending, reinforcing their internationalist perspective. The one value one would have expected them to emphasize as a common goal, democracy, did not even rate highly.

#### **Ukraine**

Ukraine did not express much in the way of specific Ukrainian history or cultural values, but they did express Ukrainian Independence often (Density = 0.002956 which was their 2<sup>nd</sup> most densely mentioned emotive theme).

### Russia & Allied Cultural Framing

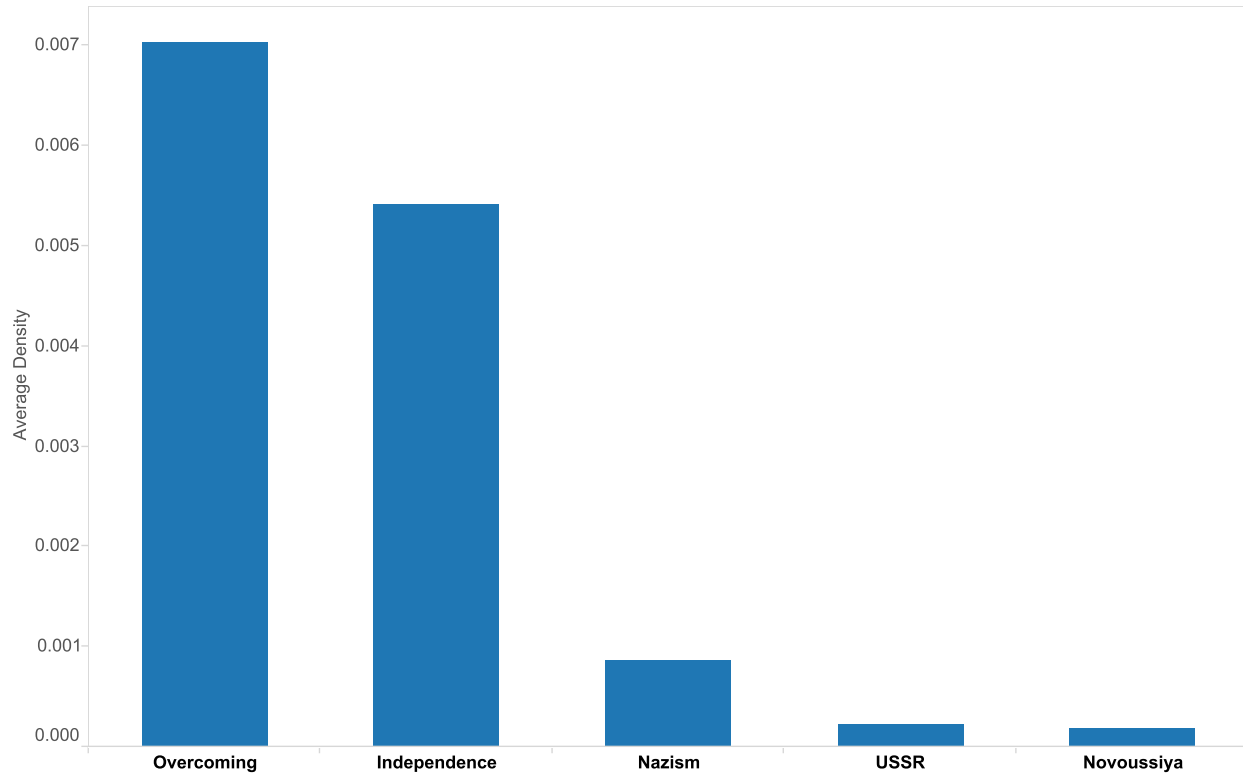


Figure 8 Russia & Allies Cultural Framing

### Russia and Its Allies

Russia and its allies (Putin government, Russian opposition, Russian nationalists, Russian Oligarchs, Crimea, Donetsk, Luhansk) often mentioned two emotive themes that have great cultural significance in the region (overcoming odds and defending independence), and often conjoined them with historically important themes such as: defeat of Nazis in WWII and the necessity to prevent the rise of Nazism today, a nostalgia for the power Russians had during the Soviet era, and surprisingly to a minor extent, the desire for the rise of a new Russian regional power in Ukraine (Novorussia) (Figure 8).

The overcoming and independence themes frame current struggles in terms of historically significant examples of defending Russian independence against odds, such as Alexander Nevsky's defeat of the Teutonic Knights in 1242, the repel of the Tartar invasions of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the Winter defeat of Napoleon (Russians call it the Patriotic War of 1812), and the Nazi defeat at Stalingrad. These historical touch points were immortalized in major cinematic productions during the Soviet era such as Alexander Nevsky (1938), Kutuzov aka 1812 (1944), and The Battle of Stalingrad (1949).



### Emotive Frames

Most of the other themes were really more emotive, and not necessarily specific to a polity and its people, and might speak more to the decision making capacity of polity leaders.

All groups express much fear. Peace is a minor theme and when it is mentioned it is a lower priority. Everyone has a basically dark view of things. And, as with nearly every other study NSI has done (Kuznar and Yager, 2012, in progress, Toman, Kuznar, Baker and Hartman, 2010) the speaker’s viewpoint is justified with victimization.

The main differentiator among the various polities is that Putin, Russia and its Allies express much more concern with lies and conspiracies. It is useful to classify lies and conspiracies differently than fear, since paranoia is fear of the unseen, and therefore unverifiable, and speaks to a different cognition.

### US & NATO Allies in Region Top 10 Emotive Themes

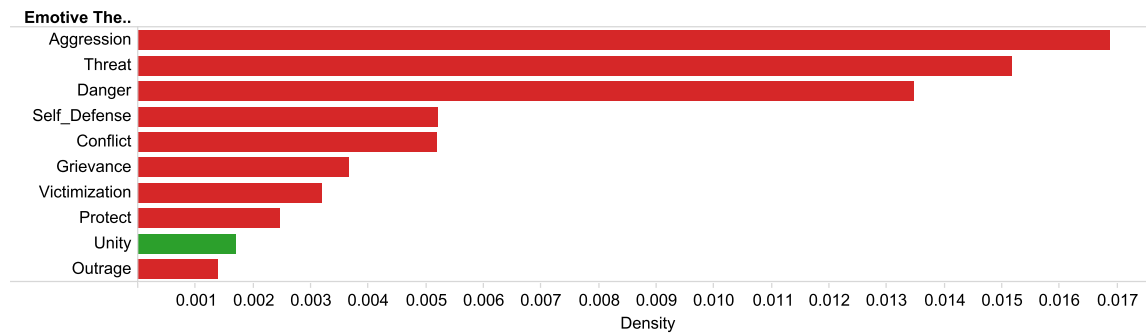


Figure 9 US & NATO Allies in Region Top 10 Emotive Themes

### US and NATO Allies

The emotive themes expressed by the US and its NATO allies overwhelmingly indicate fear and a feeling of victimization (aggression, threat, danger, self-defense, conflict, grievance, victimization, need to protect itself, and moral outrage) (Figure 9). This amplifies the importance of the security concerns to them.

### Russia & Allies Top 10 Emotive Themes

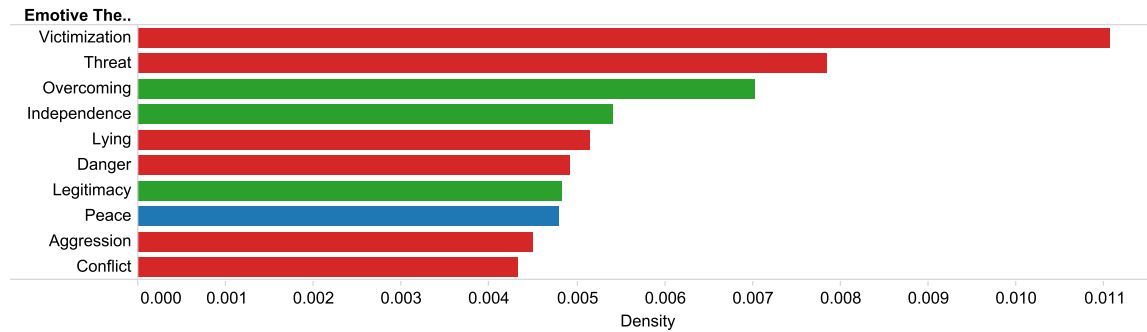


Figure 10 Russia & Allies Top 10 Emotive Themes

### Russia and Its Allies

The predominant emotive themes expressed by Russia and its allies (Putin government, Russian opposition, Russian nationalists, Russian Oligarchs, Crimea, Donetsk, Luhansk) include a sense of victimization, a concern with aggression, and a conspiratorial concern that the world is lying to and plotting against them (Figure 10). Themes of overcoming and independence are also frequently mentioned, corresponding with the cultural frame of heroic overcoming to preserve Russian independence. This is a potent cocktail that amplifies the security sentiments of Russia’s allies and client states especially. Peace makes the top ten, but is probably drowned out by the emotive/conflict-oriented themes.

### Putin Government Top 7 Emotive Themes

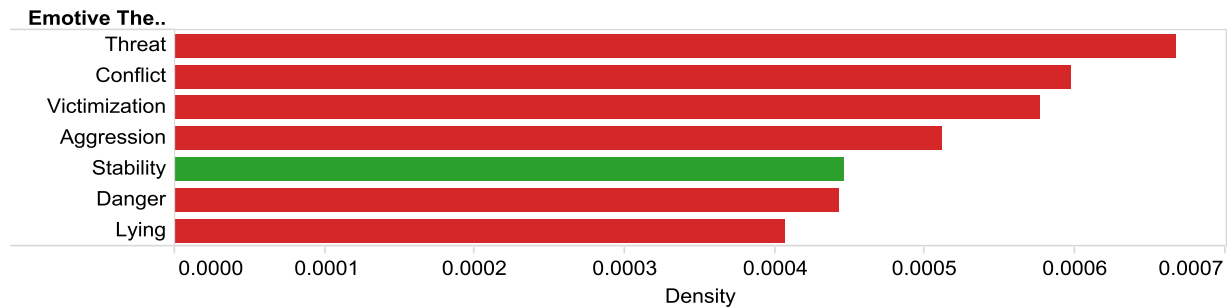


Figure 11 Putin Government Top 7 Emotive Themes

### Putin Government

In contrast to its emphasis on peaceful and economic security issues, the Putin government’s primary emotive themes concern violent confrontation (threats, conflict, victimization, aggression, danger) and conspiracy (Figure 11). They value stability highly. The composite picture of the Putin government is that it feels very much threatened by an international conspiracy to destabilize Russia.

### **Q08. Russia's Cold War image and relation to foreign policy**

How much does the U.S. image of Russia as the side that "lost" the Cold War create support for more aggressive foreign policy behavior among the Russian people?

Russia (Putin government, Russian opposition, Russian nationalists, Russian Oligarchs) and its allies (Crimea, Donetsk) mention the Soviet era, although it is not framed in terms of their loss to the US and Western powers.

In terms of the Cold War, Russian speakers typically blame themselves for giving away their power, as opposed to the West having defeated them.

For instance, Deputy Prime Minister Dmitri Rogozin states, "Russia giving up its colonial possessions makes it necessary to look in a different way at our diplomacy in the era of Gorbachev and Yeltsin, trading away pieces of the Soviet Empire."

Otherwise, the issue some Russian leaders express is nostalgia for how the Soviet Union confronted challenges through development, although this nostalgia was seldom mentioned.

Finally, Russian leaders acknowledged the Soviet Union's role in defeating the Nazis.

This particular study focused on leaders, and so cannot address how these sentiments regarding Russia's past resonate with the general populace.

### **Q09. Ultra-nationalism and Russia's foreign policy**

How might ultra-nationalism influence Russia's foreign policy rhetoric and behavior?

Russian leaders certainly employ nationalistic arguments in their justifications of policy as the following extended quote from Sergei Lavrov demonstrates.

As for the Russian world, it's another matter altogether. The Russian world implies a common culture, language, values and religious guidelines. You can compare it, although it won't be a perfect match, to Francophonie or Ibero-America, a collection of countries united by the Spanish language and culture, or the Confucius, Goethe and Cervantes institutes. The Russian world unites not only and not so much ethnic Russians as people who have been brought up on Russian culture or respect for Russian culture, love for and interest in the Russian language, literature and arts. Like any other country that wants to preserve its cultural heritage, we maintain and will work to expand our ties with all these people through available legitimate methods, including the creation of scientific and cultural centres and various organisations of the Russky Mir Foundation, and we will support our compatriots when they need legal assistance to protect their rights in the countries of their residence.

While this argument is deployed, these arguments do not occur very often in the corpus, and so other issues (economic, violent conflict-related, peace-related) appear to be more salient for the leadership. Also, the type of nationalism expressed would not qualify as ultra-nationalism; Lavrov is careful to draw an analogy with the notion of Francophone or Ibero-America as examples of similar levels of ingrouping and ethnic pride that are general acceptable.

## Findings: NATO

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### **Q16. Conflict and NATO's response**

Q16. If conflict occurs, will NATO be willing and able to command and control a response?

In previous work, NSI found that the density of emotive rhetoric corresponded to willingness to fight, although the correspondence was closer for non-state vs. state-level groups (REFERENCE).

The Security Concern Score provides a measure of the importance of security concerns to each polity (see Figure 7). Ignoring Ukraine and Lithuania as outliers, NATO actually scores high among the polities, similar to Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia, and higher than the US. This may indicate a commitment to responding to Russian threats to regional stability, although their primary responsibility is political and therefore could amplify the Security Concern Score since they do not talk about other types of issues. However, their high score is also a function of the emotive language they use; NATO does express language consistent with commitment.

## Findings: Drill Down Into Particular Themes

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Some themes occurred often and appeared to be particularly important to the polities analyzed in this study.

### **Overcoming**

The theme of overcoming adversity was widespread, and always associated with a military or economic struggle that one's people needed to defeat. This theme was almost entirely expressed by Russia and its allies (Armenia, Transnistria, Putin Government, Russian Nationalists, Crimea, Donetsk, and Luhansk. Ukraine also used this theme often (especially Poroshenko). The Obama administration also used this theme in terms of its regional allies overcoming adversaries. Polities used the theme for both historic (especially Nazis) and contemporary overcoming of adversaries.

Overcoming is related to the concept of victimization in that it invokes a notion that the one who overcomes is an underdog who has to overcome unfair or overwhelming odds. Occasionally, the two themes co-occur explicitly as in this quote from Russian Nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky.

“The current pressure put on us will make us pay attention to industry, agriculture, science, construction, and roads. We will build a great number of roads. Sapsans [Russian high speed electric trains] will run everywhere; their speed will be 200-400 km per hour. We will produce all goods by ourselves. Probably not all of them will be of high quality, but we will have our own medicines, food products,” *Vladimir Zhirinovsky, December 2014, Document #02, Paragraph #02*

### **Nazis**

Russia and its allies frequently invoked the threat of Nazism; both historic Nazis and contemporary neo-Nazis were often simultaneously invoked. US Allies Estonia and Latvia invoked overcoming historic Nazis.

### **USSR**

One of the more surprising findings was the frequency with which the Soviet Union was invoked by numerous polities. For Russia and its allies (Putin Government, Russian Nationalists, Russian Opposition, and Donetsk), the Soviet Union was either used to lament the loss of former power, or a better, an heroic past. The loss, however, is seen not as a loss to a superior West, but as an internal failure to be great.

Georgia, Ukraine, and Poland each mention the Soviet era in a negative light and refer to difficulty or oppression.

The specters of the Soviet Union, as with Nazism, are still on the minds of leaders in the region and form part of the cultural/historic lens through which people see current events and express their feelings about issues.

### **Russian View of US**

What Russian leaders say about the US addresses the general question about how the US is regarded, and also addresses a more specific question regarding whether or not the Russians think they are at war with us.

Russian leaders neither talk about being on a war footing with the US, nor do they talk about being on the offensive with the US in any way. However, the US and NATO are seen as threats and ill intentions are attributed to the US.

Putin hardly mentions the US at all, aside from one mention of NATO being used as an instrument of US policy. Leaders like Medvedev, and Ivanov mention having good relations with the US President and wanting to work with the US to solve regional problems, but they lament that the US does not seem to be willing to work with them and see the US and NATO as a threat. Medvedev recognizes that a healthy US economy is necessary for Russia's economic health. Shoigu and Lavrov focus on the US as a threat to Russia and as being an aggressor toward Russian interests.

## Findings: Discourse Analysis of Integration Interests & Security Sentiment

The larger SMA EUCOM effort has focused on four areas of interests, Security, Economic, Domestic and Prestige, that regional polities have in order to integrate the various findings of the teams. It was easy to take the themes and security interests coded in this research and regroup them to represent each of the four integration interests. The densities of each of these interests were calculated by summing all of the instances of each type of interest, and dividing by the number of words in each document, and then averaging these densities for each polity (Figure 12).

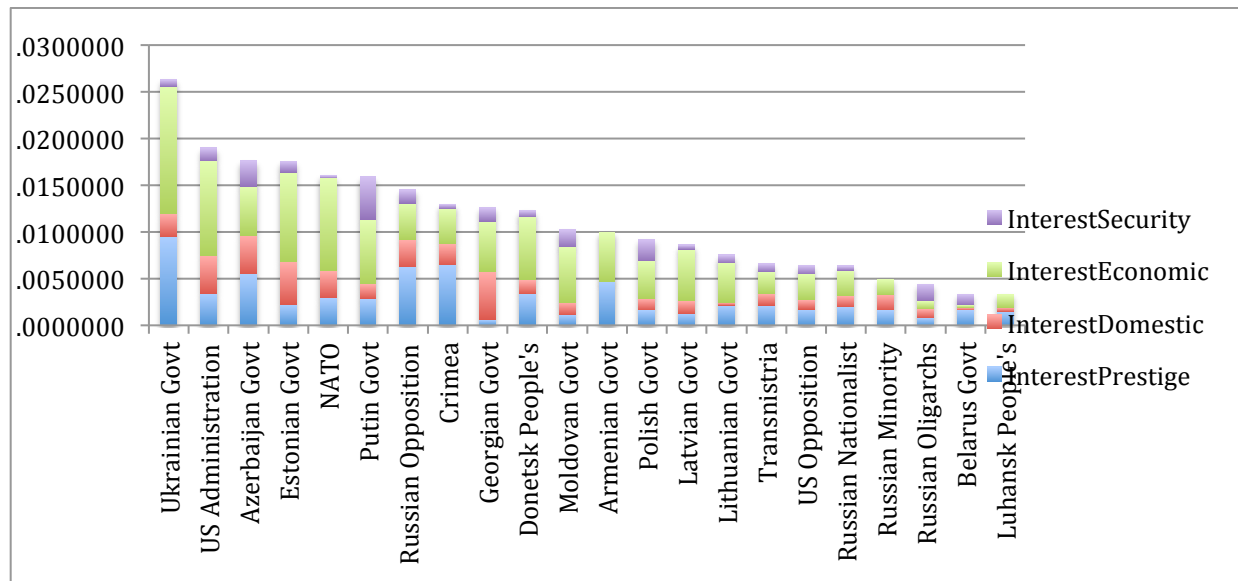


Figure 12 Average Densities by Interest

Ukraine exhibits the highest density of mentions of all Interests, and is also the most concerned with security and prestige issues. This mirrors the findings concerning Ukraine’s highest level of concern with security interests, and the specific security interests that are most important to them (violent conflict related themes such as terrorism, war, military and annexation).

The US mentions a lot of interests as well, as does Estonia, NATO, the Putin government and Donetsk.

Economic Issues are actually most densely mentioned for most all polities; there seems to be an important economic subtext to the whole security situation in Eastern Europe for all polities.

The Putin government mentions security issues more than any other polity. They see the West as a major aggressive threat, determined to finish the work of the Cold War on Russia.

Focusing on the Putin Government, The majority of concerns expressed are economic, closely followed by security concerns. Security concerns often focus on the threat of the US and NATO, and secondarily on the Ukraine crisis. Domestic concerns are not much expressed by the Putin government, and the Putin government is in the middle of the range of other polities regarding the importance of prestige.



As for where the Putin government ranks in relation to other polities on interest issues, the Putin government expresses Security issues much more often than anyone else. They are fairly high on Economic issues. They are in the middle on Prestige, and low on Domestic issues.

When the effect of emotive language is added, some interesting shifts occur.

Lithuania did not mention security issues much at all, but made very frequent use of emotive language, indicating that the security issues mentioned by Lithuanians matter a lot to them. However, as mentioned above, this could be the disproportionate influence of Dalia Grybauskaitė's heated rhetoric.

The starkest contrast is between the high density of interests mentioned by Russia, and the low density of emotive language. Even though they mention security issues often (see Figure 12 above), they are typically subdued in their language. Since other Russian constituents and fellow Russian-speakers do not exhibit this pattern, it indicates that either the issues are not as highly valued by Russian leaders or they are purposefully subdued in an act of quasi-deception, or they may be exhibiting more patience with the development of regional events. The latter might be compared to the deliberative and patient process of playing chess.

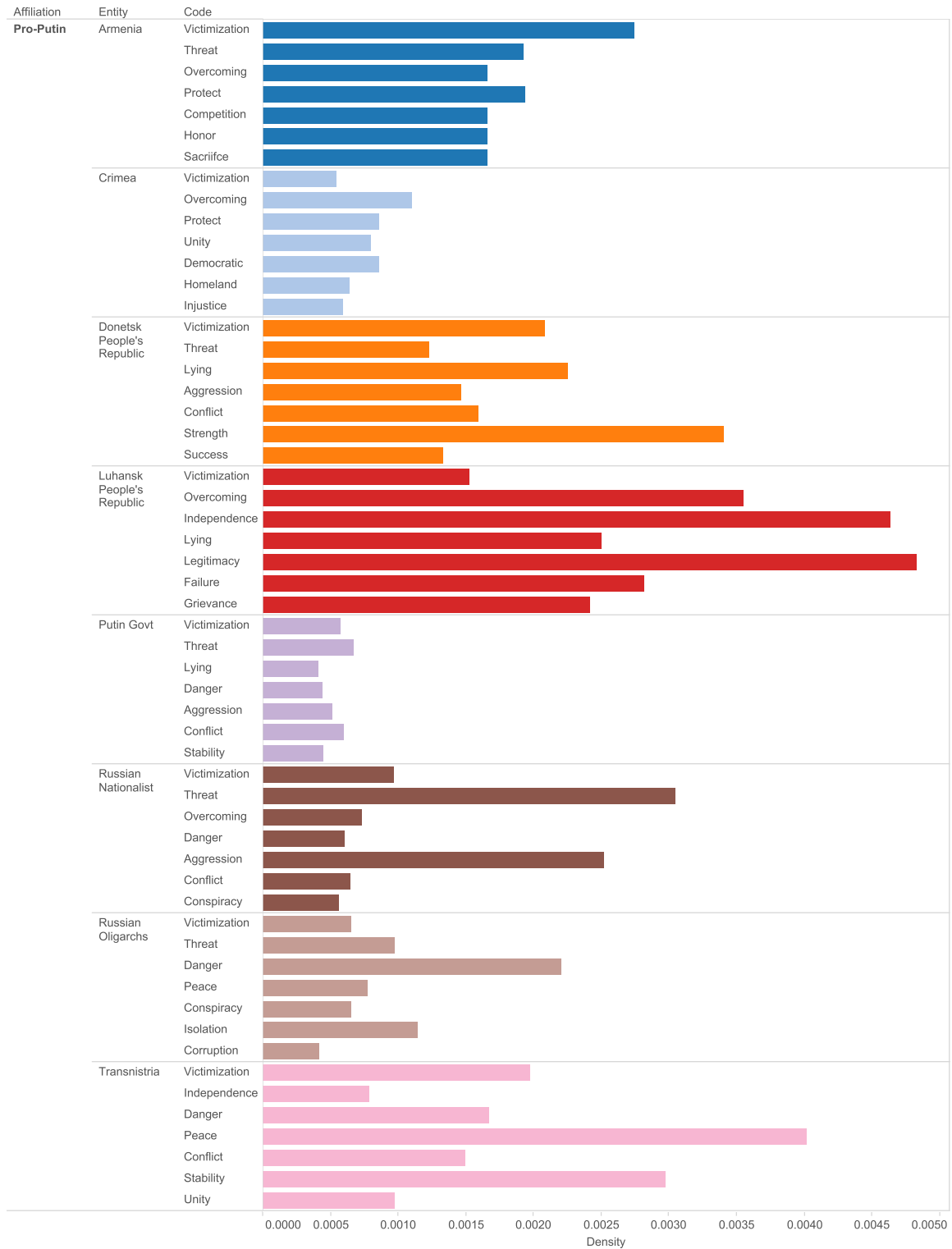
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Identification of Security Issues and their  
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Thematic Analysis of Leadership Speeches

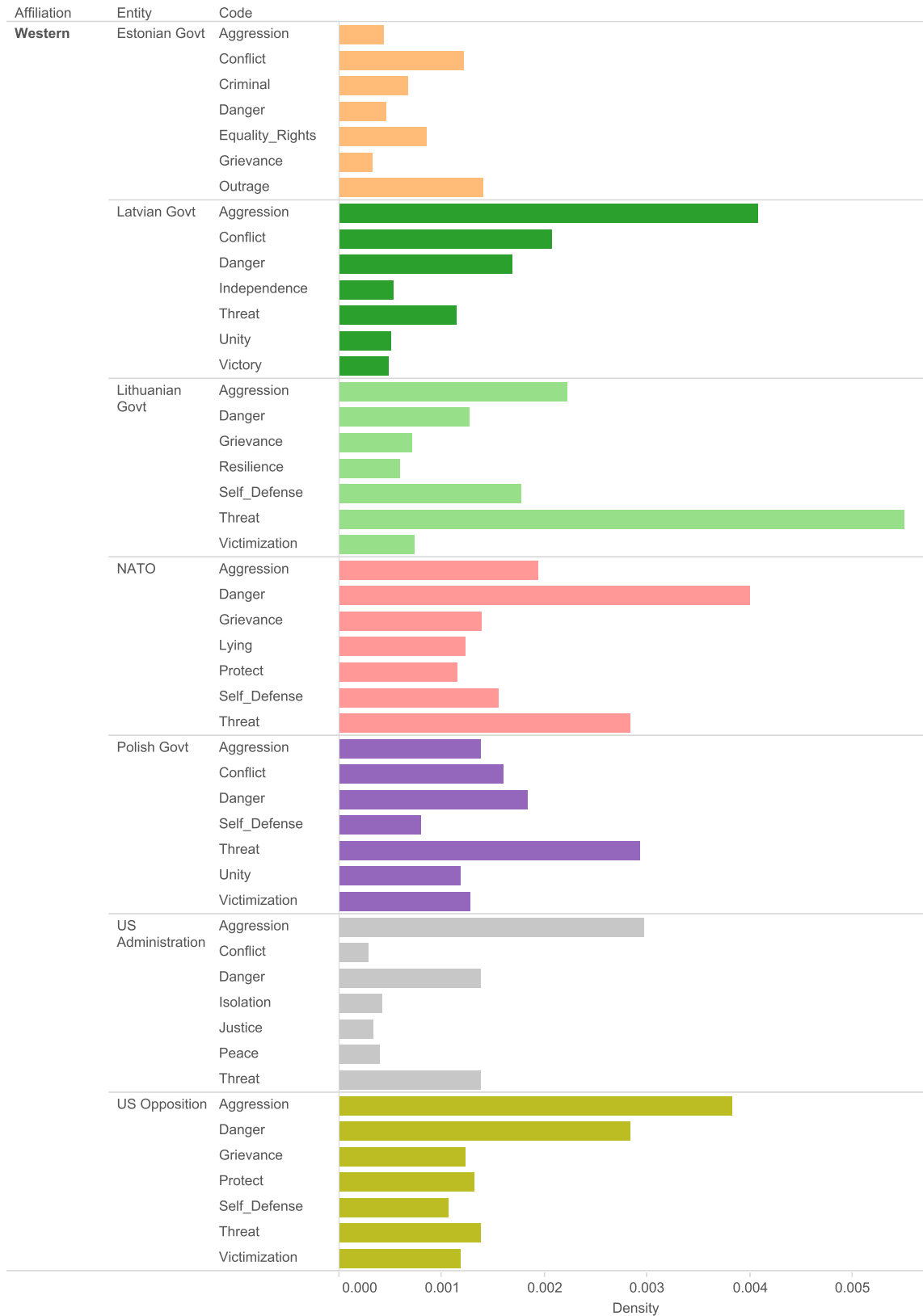
## Appendix A: Top Emotive Themes by Polity



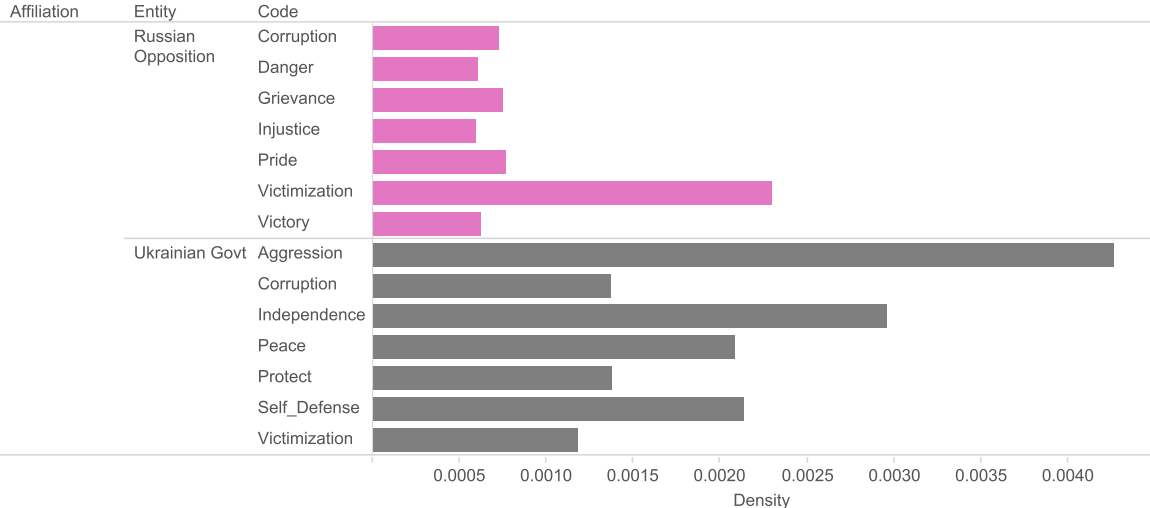
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# Identification of Security Issues and their Importance to Russia, their Near-abroad and NATO Allies

## Thematic Analysis of Leadership Speeches

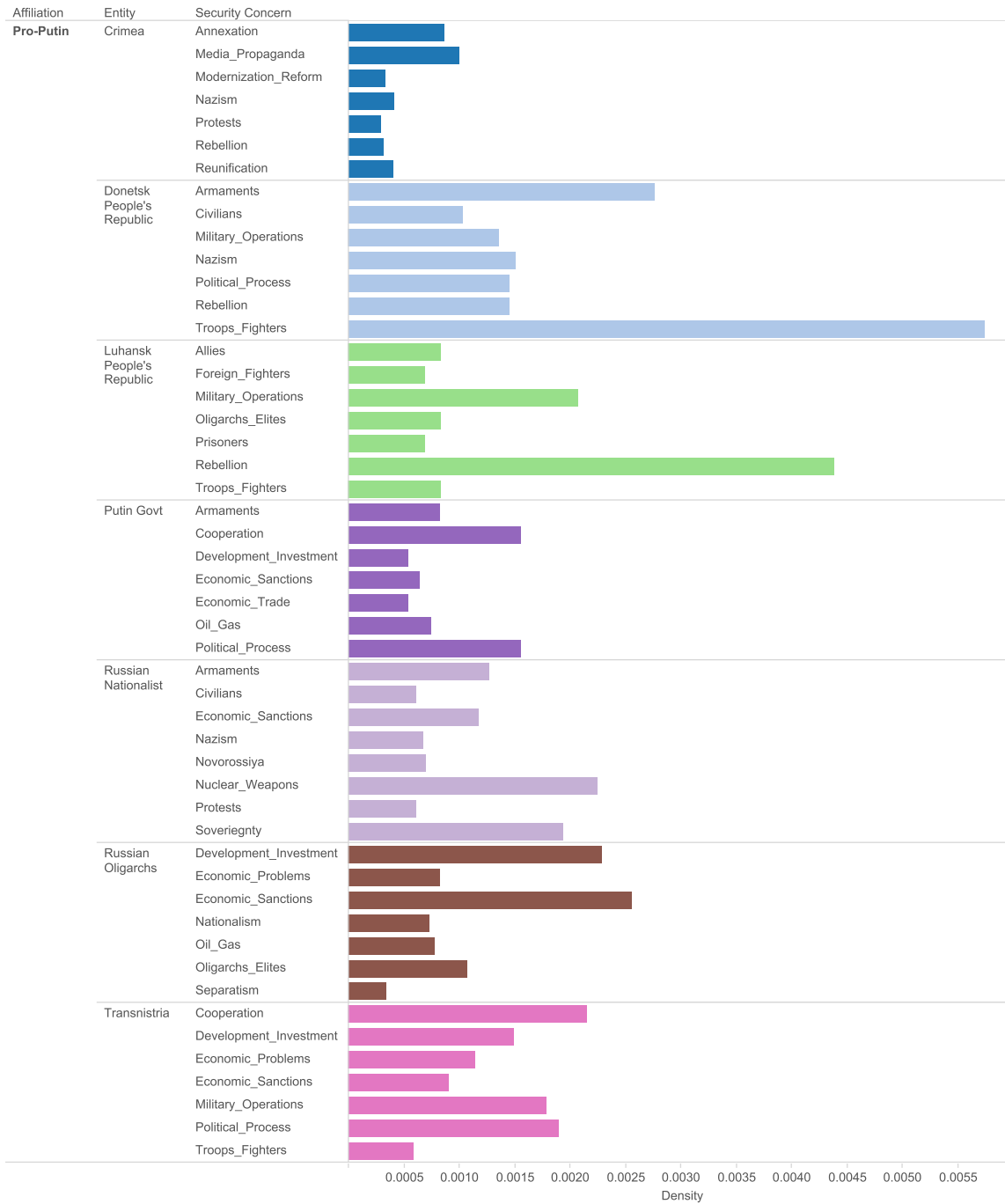


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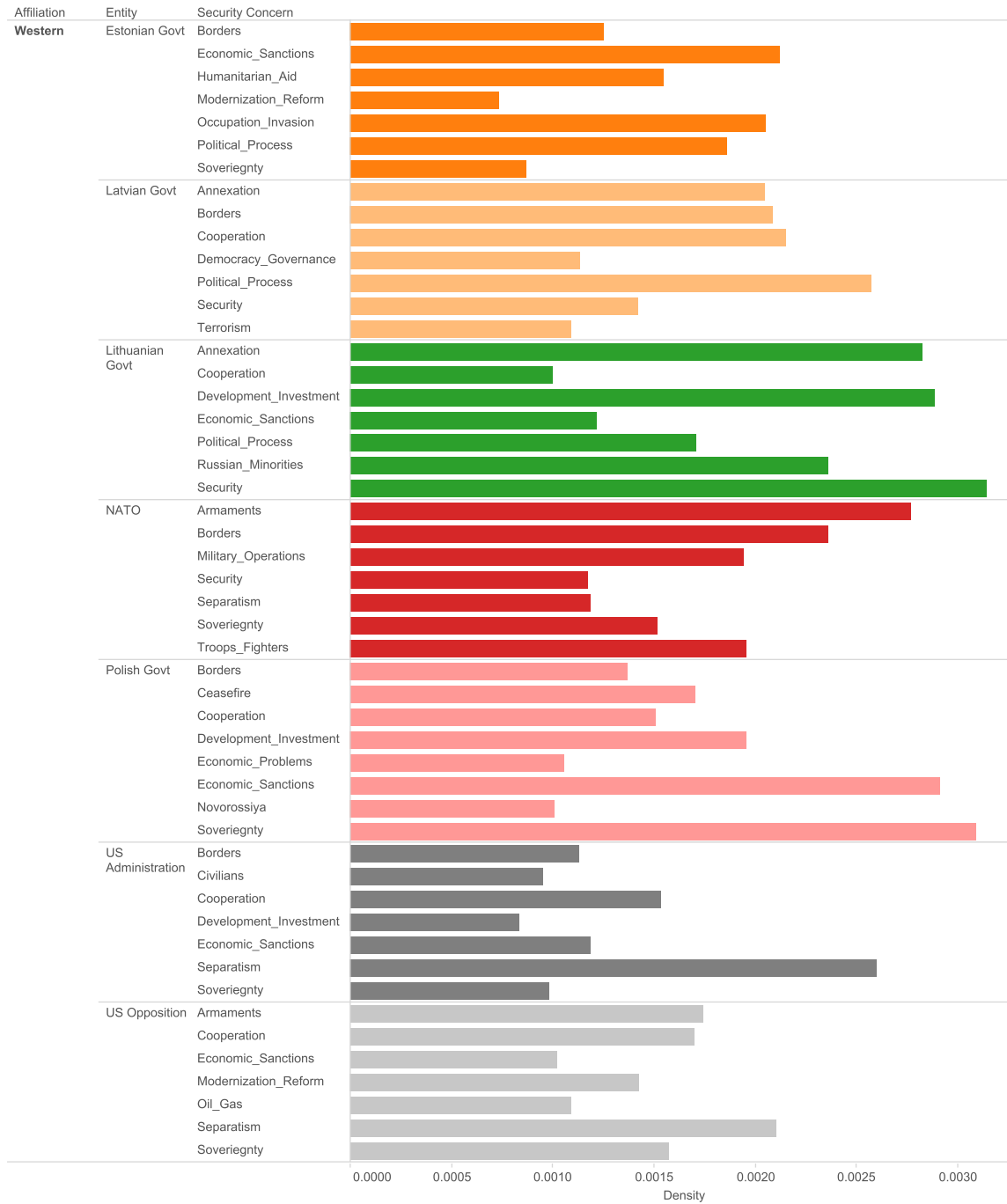
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## Appendix B: Top Security Concerns per Polity



# Identification of Security Issues and their Importance to Russia, their Near-abroad and NATO Allies

## Thematic Analysis of Leadership Speeches





# Identification of Security Issues and their Importance to Russia, their Near-abroad and NATO Allies

## Thematic Analysis of Leadership Speeches

