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Discourse Indicators of Gray Zone Activity

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Executive Summary

The increasing use of emotive themes and rhetorical devices (that amplify a message's emotional effect) provide indicators of gray zone activities in speeches made by Eurasian regional leaders prior to and during the annexation of Crimea. Putin's leading indicators, those of Crimean leaders and the Russian-supported President of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovych, are presented separately.

Indicators & Warnings (I&W)

The primary findings regarding Russian government leading indicators are focused on Putin and include:

1. As a general pattern, Putin is more restrained in his language than most Western leaders, making indicators of his intent rare.
2. The rarity of these indicators increases the ability to detect them as statistical "blips" in his language use; a thing that rarely appears is noticeable when it occurs.
3. When Putin mentions key emotive issues, they occur suddenly as a "blip" in his general discourse in advance of operations. However, he is disciplined in subsequently silencing himself during apparent planning and execution phases.
4. However, once his goal is achieved, he relaxes his restraint and releases a rhetorical flourish of concerns and emotional language (a "brag").
5. After a rhetorical flourish, Putin again restrains his discourse when planning and executing operations to achieve his next strategic goal.
6. The blip patterns that may be detected are manifest in **emotional themes** such as *Pride, Protection, Unity, Strength,* and *Russian Superiority*, and **political themes** such as *Russian Security*, mentioning *Adversaries*, *Russian Energy,* and the *Ceasefire*.
7. Putin exhibits a sustained and increasing apparent concern with *Russian Energy Resources* and the *Threat of Nazism*, consistent with earlier studies.
8. Putin is demonstrating an increasing concern with *Turkey*, which may have direct implications for his intentions in Syria.

The primary findings regarding Crimean leaders and government include detectable blips approximately a month and a half before the annexation in emotive themes that include:

1. Fear of *Extremism*, *Failure* of the Ukrainian government (an enemy), desire for *Stability, Independence, Legitimacy* of Crimean cause, *Unity* of Crimeans, *Separatism, Sovereignty* for Crimea, a sarcastic claim to be open to *Cooperation*, and use of the rhetorical device of *Accusation.*
2. There is a curious "blip and brag" pattern in the mention of the ingroup (*Crimea*), their friend (*Russia*) and primary enemy (*Ukraine*).

Russian-supported President of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovych

1. There were no detectable leading indicators for the Russian-supported Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovch, but this may be due to the fact that his speeches ended four months before

the annexation of Crimea, and perhaps more relevantly, Yanukovych may have had more pressing concerns as his hold on power was failing at this time.

Predominant Concerns of Regional Actors

1. The pervasive concerns of the Putin government were *Economics and Trade*, not expansion, Russian imperialism, or national pride.
2. The pro-Russian President of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovych, expressed views identical to those of the Putin government, indicating his ideological alignment, if not direct control, by the Kremlin.

Introduction

People both knowingly and unknowingly signal their values and intentions in the way they use language (Beeman, 2001; El-Badawy, Comerford, & Welby, 2015; Fairclough, 2001; Rahimi & Sahragard, 2006; van Dijk, 2005). Thematic analysis focuses on themes people employ that reveal what matters to them (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012; Ryan & Bernard, 2003), while discourse analysis focuses on the linguistic tools people use to deploy and emphasize these themes (Farnell & Graham, 1998; Schiffrin, 2003; van Dijk, 2005). The approach used in this study combines both thematic analysis and discourse analysis to identify what issues matter most to a speaker and to what degree. Because people are often unaware of the extent to which they signal their values and intentions, identification of key themes can provide early indicators and warnings (I&W) in advance of political action. The authors have employed this approach in studies of both state (Fenstermacher, Kuznar, & Yager, 2012; Kuznar, 2013, 2014, 2016b; Kuznar, Popp, & Peterson, 2016; Kuznar, Suedfeld, Morrison, & Spitaletta, 2014; Kuznar & Yager, 2013, 2016; Kuznar, Yager, Clair, & Stephenson, 2012) and non-state (Kuznar, 2016a; Kuznar & Hunt, 2015; Kuznar & Moon, 2014; Kuznar & Yager, 2012) actors.

The findings of this report are based on an analysis of 73 speeches that preceded the annexation of Crimea by up to 8 months. It is useful to recognize that some specific themes (*Pride*, *Superiority, France*) may serve as early indicators and warnings of Putin's intent in taking gray zone (GZ) actions (Kapusta, Rouse, Astorino-Courtois, & Collison, 2016),[1] but an analyst should be aware that these specific themes

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[1] This paper employs the following working definition of the Gray Zone. "The Gray Zone is a conceptual space between peace and war, occurring when actors use instruments of power to achieve political-security objectives with activities that are ambiguous or cloud attribution and exceed the threshold of ordinary competition, yet fall below the level of large-scale direct military conflict. They threaten US, allied and partner interests by leveraging, challenging, undermining, or violating international customs, norms, or laws" (Kapusta, Rouse, Astorino-Courtois, and Collison, 2016).

could be generalized to similar themes (emotional, political, adversaries) that may serve as early indicators as well. Of the 73 speeches in this study, 10 represented the pro-Russian Crimean government. 25 speeches represented the Putin government, although only the 15 speeches delivered by Putin were analyzed since only those demonstrated statistically significant leading indicators. Finally, 33 speeches by the pro-Russian president of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovych, delivered before his ouster from government, were used. Each speech was coded (themes/rhetorical devices and their associated language identified) by at least two coders. The final database comprised a total of 2973 coded segments of text that represented codebook themes and rhetorical devices.

The primary results of this study are detailed after a brief description of some key methodological terms. Supporting information is found in the following appendices:

- Appendix: Key Dates and Events
- Appendix: Narrative of Historical Events
- Appendix: Source Data
- Appendix: Gray Zone Code System

Methodological Terms

Codebook Typology

The codebook is a taxonomy of themes and rhetorical devices that represent topics mentioned, persons, places, things, ideas, and ways of using language that amplify the sentiment associated with the themes. The following terms describe the higher-level categories of the codebook taxonomy.[2]

- **Theme** – something that can be nominalized (named); can be a person, place, thing, idea, or emotion

- **Emotive Theme** – themes that convey emotion (sentiment); their mere mention evokes an emotive response

- **Rhetorical Device –** a way of using language to amplify or dampen sentiment
    - Includes repetition, sarcasm, intensifiers (very, huge), lexicalization (special word choice), pejoratives (trash talk), use of kin terms, etc.

The Primary Categories of the taxonomy include:

- **Polities** – countries, formal organizations, regions, and sub-state groups
- **Cultural Emotive Values** – themes that evoke emotions in audiences
    - **Negative Extreme Emotive** – a cultural theme that tends to evoke an extremely negative response
    - **Negative Normal Emotive** - a cultural theme that tends to evoke a negative response that is not extremely negative
    - **Positive Extreme Emotive** - a cultural theme that tends to evoke an extremely positive response
    - **Positive Negative Emotive** - a cultural theme that tends to evoke a positive response that is not extremely positive
- **Political Factors**
    - **Positive Cohesive Concerns** – political concerns that tend to lead to notions of cooperation
    - **Disruptive Security Concerns** – political concerns that tend to lead to conflict
    - **Other Security Concerns**
- **Rhetorical Devices** – ways of using language that amplify or dampen the sentiment associated with a theme

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[2] As a convention, actual themes and rhetorical devices will be capitalized and italicized throughout the text, in order to differentiate them from more generic uses of the terms. When appropriate, footnotes defining themes will be given.

L e a d i n g   D i s c u r s i v e   I n d i c a t o r s   o f   G r a y   Z o n e   A c t i v i t y :
T h e   A n n e x a t i o n   o f   C r i m e a

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Who is Analyzed?

Speeches were analyzed from the four political actors, or groups, upon which this study is focused (Table 1).

Table 1. Speakers Analyzed in Crimean Annexation

Group	Speaker(s)	Position(s)
Pro-Russian Crimean Government	Sergey Aksyonov	Prime Minister
	Alexi Chaly	Mayor of Sevastopol
	Vladimir Konstantinov	Head of Crimean State Council
Putin Government	Dmitry Medvedev	President
	Sergey Lavrov	Foreign Minister
	Vladmir Putin	President
Pro-Russian Ukrainian Government	Viktor Yanukovych	President
Ukrainian Government post-Yanukovych	Petro Poroshenko	President
	Yulia Tymoshenko	Former Prime Minister
	Arseniy Yatsenyuk	Prime Minister
	Oleksandr Turchynov	Secretary of National Security and Defense Council

Key Metric: Density

The key metric for measuring themes is **Density**: the number of times a theme occurred in a document or speech, divided by the number of words in that document. This provides a normalized measure of how often a theme is used that can be compared across documents and between authors, groups, etc. Comparison of densities between themes also places a theme in a broader context, guarding against bias in judging the relative importance of themes. The underlying assumption is that the more densely a theme is used, the more important it is to the author, and potentially, to an audience.

Theme densities were calculated for each document, and the variations of these densities through time were used to identify trends and possible indicators and warnings (I&W). Only those trends that were statistically significant at the .05 level or less are reported.

Metrics for Sentiment and the Use of Emotional Language

The use of rhetorical devices and emotionally charged themes are ways to interject emotive appeal into an argument. When done unwittingly, this is an indicator that the speaker is in a more emotive state, as opposed to a more rational, deliberative state. Therefore, the ability to detect departures from a rational state of mind can provide clues that the speaker's decision calculus is departing from the deliberative, cost/benefit calculus which is at the heart of traditional deterrence theory (USSTRATCOM, 2006).

In order to measure the use of more emotive language, themes were classified as Extreme Negative Emotive, Negative Emotive, Extreme Positive Emotive, and Positive Emotive, and Rhetorical Devices were coded (Appendix: Gray Zone Code System). Each of these categories was tallied for each document and subsequently normalized as densities. In addition to these categories, the Extreme Negative and Negative Emotive themes were summed as were the Extreme Positive and Positive Emotive themes. This provides nine measures of the use of emotive language against which different actors or speakers can be compared.

The mean densities of these measures were compared between all actors in order to gauge whether or not differences in rhetorical style indicate differing levels of emotionality in their language.

Leading Indicators of Gray Zone Activity: Crimean Annexation Case

Statistically significant trends in the occurrence of themes and rhetorical devices identified leading discursive indicators of gray zone activity. Analysis was conducted for each actor (Putin government, Crimean government, and Ukrainian government). However, while speeches by Sergey Lavrov (Foreign Minister) and Dmitry Medvedev (Prime Minister) were analyzed along with those of President Vladimir Putin, only those speeches by Putin himself resulted in statistical indicators for the Putin Government, and so analysis will be restricted only to his speeches. The analysis of Putin's use of language was extended to include speeches involving the subsequent unrest and Russian intervention in eastern Ukraine, since this more fully captured the manner in which he reveals his intentions and interests (Kuznar et al., 2016).

Putin

In previous studies, Putin demonstrated less emotion and more restraint in his use of language than other Eurasian and Western leaders (Kuznar & Yager, 2016). This makes identification of leading indicators of his intent difficult on the one hand, since he gives up so little. However, the rarity with which he demonstrates his intentions through his use of language also makes the rare occasions in which he does so all the more noticeable, since there is a lack of "noise" surrounding these rare signals. Putin still reveals issues of importance and occasionally shows his hand. This occurs in two primary ways when analyzing the Crimean annexation alone: the "brag" and the "blip and brag."

The Brag

Putin is characteristically tight-lipped about his interests and intentions, but he tends to brag after he achieves a victory. This pattern offers nothing in terms of predictive analytics, but may reveal other aspects of his personality, such as a need for attention, power, and approval (See analyses in Hermann, 1999, 2011; Spitaletta, 2014; Suedfeld, Cross, & Logan, 2013 for examples in political leaders).

Bragging behavior was manifest with **political themes** such as *Borders,* Ukrainian politician *Petro Poroshenko, Irregular Troops*, and the *UK*. Interestingly, Putin used the rhetorical device of making a *Veiled Threat* after the annexation took place, but not before. Exactly what the brag represents is difficult to ascertain. On the one hand, it may simply be bragging on his achievement, or on the other hand, he may be issuing a deterrent threat in advance of his next strategic move.

The Blip and Brag

In a few cases, Putin showed his hand by mentioning interests and intentions slightly, but in a statistically discernable manner, in advance of GZ activity. However, as GZ activities were underway, he stopped mentioning these concerns in a disciplined manner, once again releasing a flourish of rhetoric about them once his end was achieved. Because Putin shows his hand in these cases, mentions of hot-button items show up as statistical blips but then go away. These blips and subsequent silences provide evidence that there is an increased probability that Putin is planning or undertaking GZ activity.

In some cases, the "blip and brag" was manifest in **emotional themes**, such as claims of *Superiority* and the issue of *Separatism* (Figure 1). For instance, in a speech delivered on 28 January 2014, Putin asserted Russian energy superiority in relation to its adversaries.

> "We know what we are doing and how. We have enormous resources. We are prepared to work constructively. Indeed, people have been discussing this throughout all previous months" (28 January 2014).
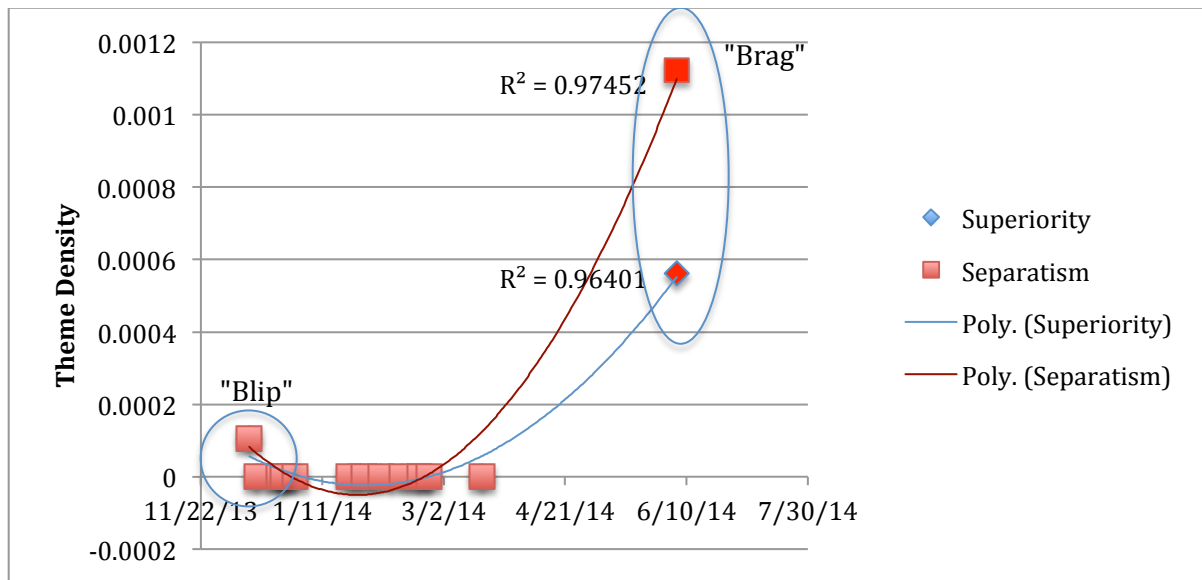
Figure 1. Crimea Case: Blip and Brag of Emotional Themes. Bright red data points mark the event. Poly. = second degree polynomial curve fit. R^2 is goodness of fit.

L e a d i n g   D i s c u r s i v e   I n d i c a t o r s   o f   G r a y   Z o n e   A c t i v i t y :
T h e   A n n e x a t i o n   o f   C r i m e a

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In other cases, Putin mentions polities, in particular, European adversaries such *France* and *Germany* (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Crimea Case: Putin's Blip and Brag of Adversaries. Bright red data points mark the event. Poly. = second degree polynomial curve fit. R^2 is goodness of fit.

L e a d i n g   D i s c u r s i v e   I n d i c a t o r s   o f   G r a y   Z o n e   A c t i v i t y :
T h e   A n n e x a t i o n   o f   C r i m e a

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Statistical blips are also manifest with pragmatic concerns such as *Energy* and *Ceasefire* (Figure 3).

> "I think the Ukrainian leadership must show goodwill – or, if you will, demonstrate government wisdom. This [counter-terrorism] operation must be stopped immediately, a ceasefire must be declared immediately. This is the only way to create the conditions for negotiations. There is no other way!" (Putin, 6 June 2014)
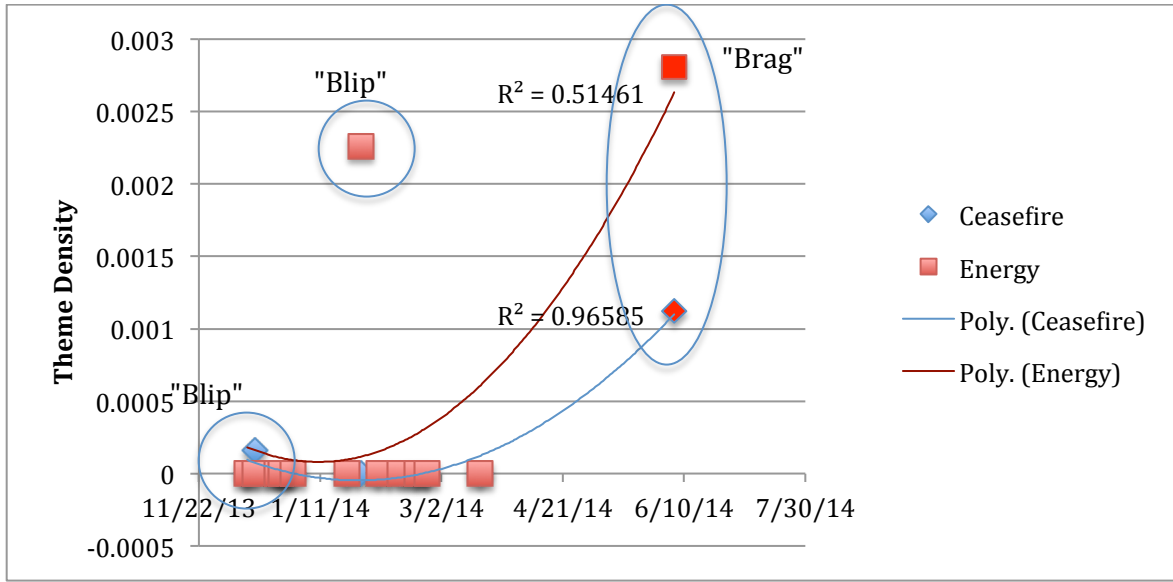
Figure 3. Crimea Case: Putin's Blip and Brag of Pragmatic Concerns. Bright red data points mark the event. Poly. = second degree polynomial curve fit. R² is goodness of fit.

Rhetorical Devices and Emotionality

Putin demonstrated an initial absence of emotional language followed by a subsequent peak in emotional language as he approached victory and either increased or leveled off afterward. The increasing use of rhetorical devices to amplify his message may provide an indicator that Putin thinks that he is nearing his strategic goal. This pattern was observed in the case of *Counterarguments* (Figure 4), use of *Examples* (Figure 5), and use of *Intensifiers* (Figure 6).[3]

Counterargument

$R^2 = 0.41809$

Figure 4. Crimea Case: Putin's Increasing Use of Counterargument. Bright red data points mark the event. Poly = second degree polynomial curve fit. R^2 is goodness of fit.

Use of *Counter-example*:

> "Moreover, the Crimean authorities referred to the well-known Kosovo precedent – a precedent our western colleagues created with their own hands in a very similar situation, when they agreed that the unilateral separation of Kosovo from Serbia, exactly what Crimea is doing now, was legitimate and did not require any permission from the country's central authorities." (Putin, 18 March, 2014)

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[3] Counterargument is the presentation of one's argument and contrasting it point for point with an opposing view; Example is the use of specific current or historical examples to make one's point; Intensifiers involve the use of adjectives such as "very," "great," and "often" to emphasize a point.
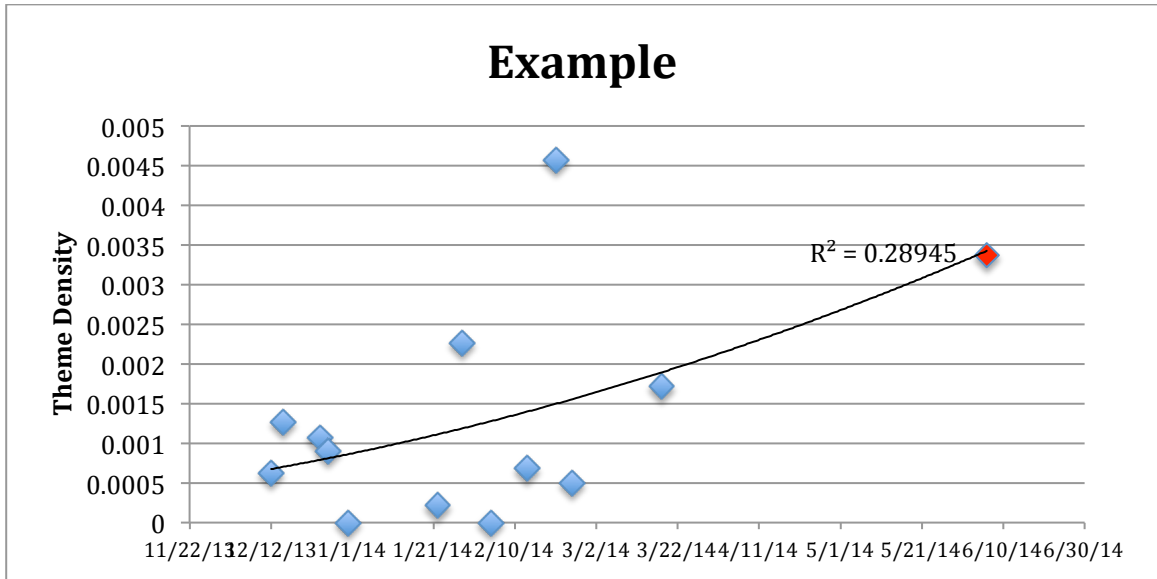
Example

Figure 5. Crimea Case: Putin's Increasing Use of Examples. Bright red data points mark the event. Poly. = second degree polynomial curve fit. R^2 is goodness of fit.

Use of *Example* to make his point:

> "We have seen in recent years how attempts to impose a presumably more progressive model of development on other countries in reality led to regress, barbarity and massive bloodshed. This happened in a number of countries in the Middle East and North Africa. These dramatic events took place in Syria." (Putin, 12 December 2013 on the futility of Western attempts to impose democracy)
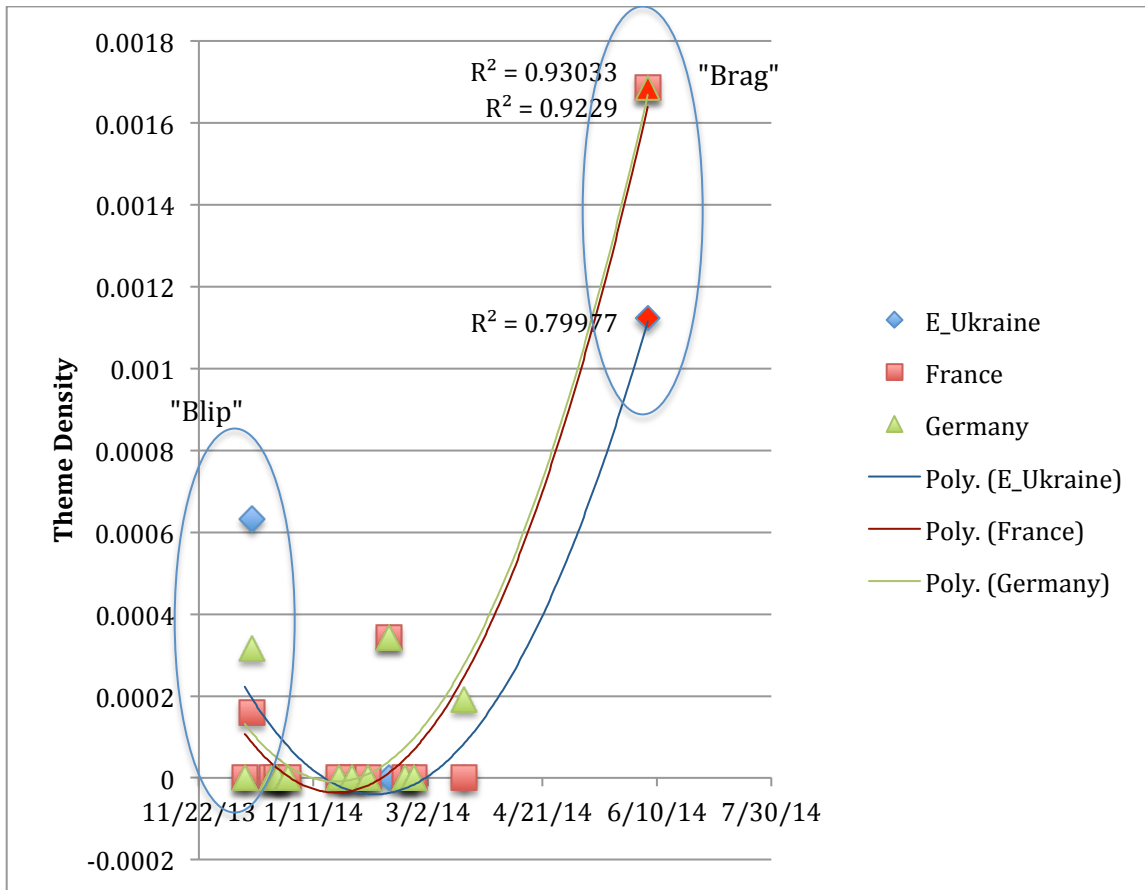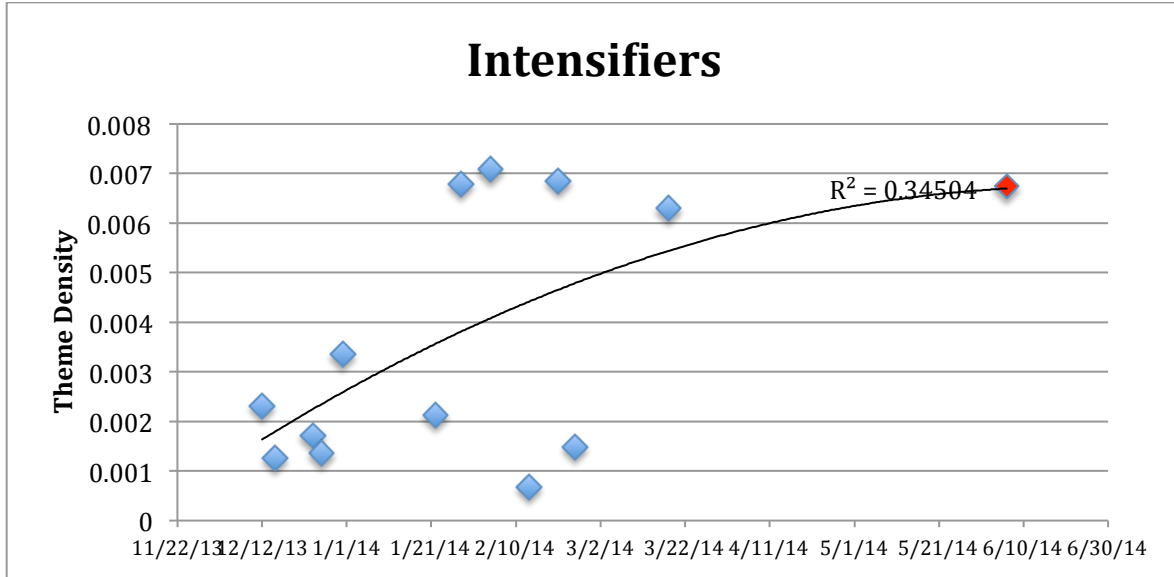
Intensifiers

Figure 6. Crimea Case: Putin's Increasing Use of Intensifiers. Bright red data points mark the event. Poly. = second degree polynomial curve fit. R[2] is goodness of fit.

Typical use of *Intensifier:*

> "Colleagues, let me turn to a *very* important subject with *profound* implications." (Putin, 12 December 2013) [emphasis added]

Crimean Government

Representatives of the Crimean independence movement and subsequent government exhibited a number of early "blip" indicators and a few "blip and brag" indicators.

Blips

Several **emotive themes**, including the fear of *Extremism*, the *Failure* of the Ukrainian government, the desire for *Stability*, criticism of the *U.S.*, *Independence*, *Legitimacy*, *Unity*, *Separatism*, and *Sovereignty*, emerged about a month and a half before the annexation of Crimea (Figure 7, Figure 8, Figure 9, Figure 10, Figure 11). Likewise, somewhat sarcastic remarks regarding Crimean willingness to *Cooperate* also emerged at that time (Figure 12) as did the **rhetorical device** of leveling *Accusation* (Figure 13). Then, notably, these themes and rhetorical devices went largely, if not totally, silent throughout the instigation and consolidation of Crimea's annexation.
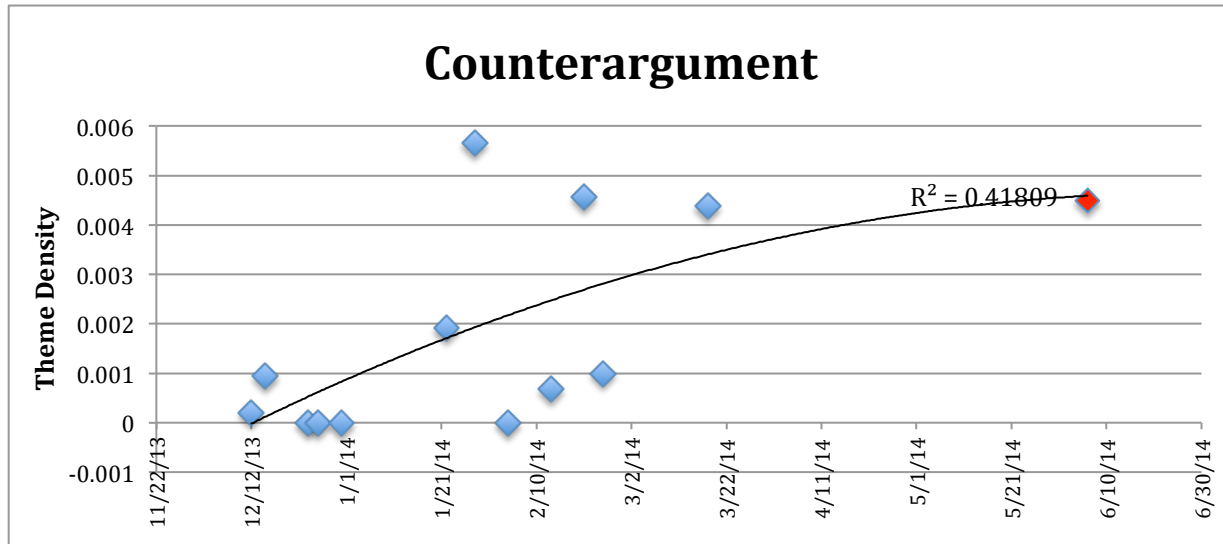

Figure 7. Crimea Case: Crimean Government Emotive Themes. Bright red data points mark the event. Poly. = second degree polynomial curve fit. R^2 is goodness of fit.

Extremism example:

> "The central government is run by radicals that the opposition actually fears. The so-called Maidan rapidly degenerated from an initially peaceful protest movement in early December into a radical structure involving militants from Western Ukraine who preach a clearly Nazi ideology." (Sergey Aksyonov, 7 March 2014)

Failure of one's adversary:

> "The opposition fails to control the Maidan because there is no one to do that: all the policemen took off when they saw they're being used to stand against the people." (Sergey Aksyonov, 7 March 2014)

Stability example:

> "So to ensure security, stability and public order, we set up self-defense units in Crimea."
> (Sergey Aksyonov, 7 March 2014)

Example of invoking *US* as an adversary:

> "We do not comment on petitions being signed in favor of some states seceding from the US,
> for instance." (Sergey Aksyonov, 7 March 2014)

**Figure 8. Crimea Case: Crimean Government Independence Theme. Bright red data points mark the event. Poly.
= second degree polynomial curve fit. R^2 is goodness of fit.**

Independence example:

> "As the Crimeans provide their answers, they will be able to say if they would like to be a
> standalone autonomous entity or join Russia." (Sergey Aksyonov, 7 March 2014)

Legitimacy

Figure 9. Crimea Case: Crimean Government Legitimacy Theme. Bright red data points mark the event. Poly. = second degree polynomial curve fit. R^2 is goodness of fit.

Legitimacy example:

> "What's more, there are attempts to bring criminal charges against the police for fulfilling the orders of the then-legitimate government." (Sergey Aksyonov, 7 March 2014)

Unity

Figure 10. Crimea Case: Crimean Government Unity Theme. Bright red data points mark the event. Poly. = second degree polynomial curve fit. R^2 is goodness of fit.

Invocation of *Unity* of in-group members:

> "Fellow Crimeans." (Vladimir Konstantinov, 26 February 2014)

Figure 11. Crimea Case: Crimean Government Separatism and Sovereignty Themes. Bright red data points mark the event. Poly. = second degree polynomial curve fit. R^2 is goodness of fit.

Separatism example:

> "In various regions of the Crimea, the members of our parliament hold regular meetings with the voters, who have frequently asked to make the ultimate decision given the current situation in Ukraine: either to seek full autonomy, meaning an ability to adopt our own state laws; or to opt for secession, since the situation in Kiev has been spinning out of control." (Sergey Aksyonov, 7 March 2014)

Invocation of *Sovereignty*:

> "Crimeans have repeatedly told us to hold a referendum on joining Russia and on the status of Crimea's autonomy." (Sergey Aksyonov, 7 March 2014)
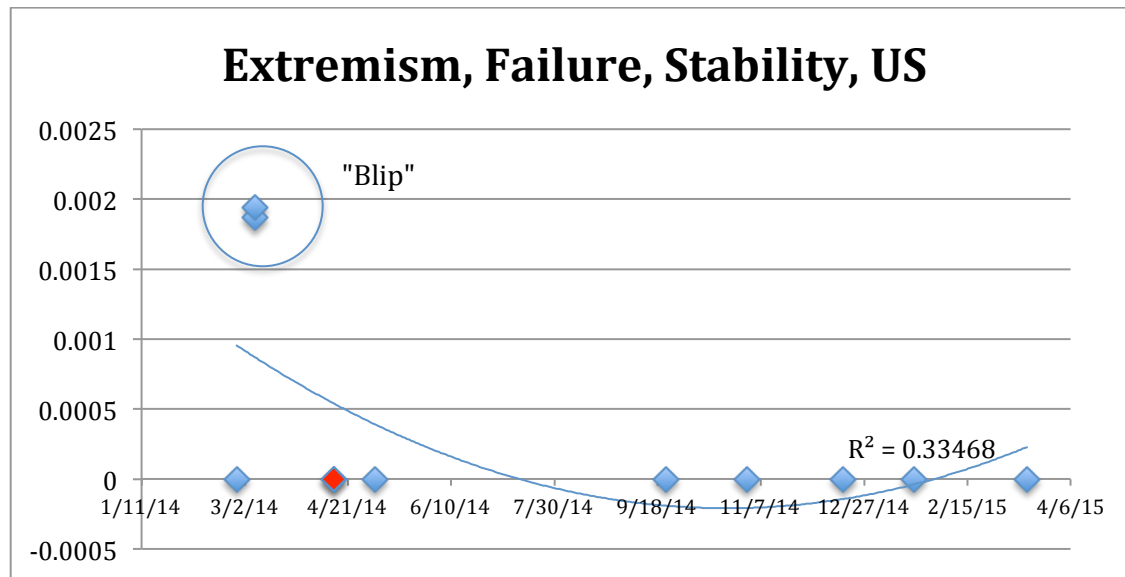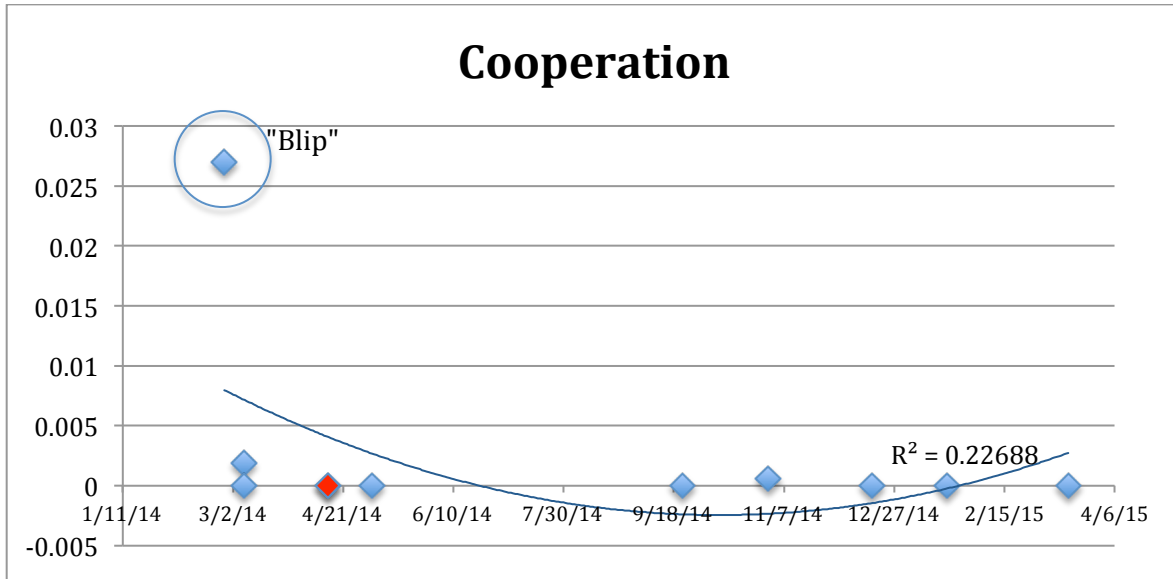
Figure 12. Crimea Case: Crimean Government Cooperation Theme. Bright red data points mark the event. Poly. = second degree polynomial curve fit. R^2 is goodness of fit.

Cooperation example:

> "We do not say we won't cooperate with Kiev: I've got a lot of friends there, who tell me the situation in Kiev is out of control… if tomorrow a new legitimate government is elected in Ukraine, we will gladly cooperate." (Sergey Aksyonov, 7 March 2014)
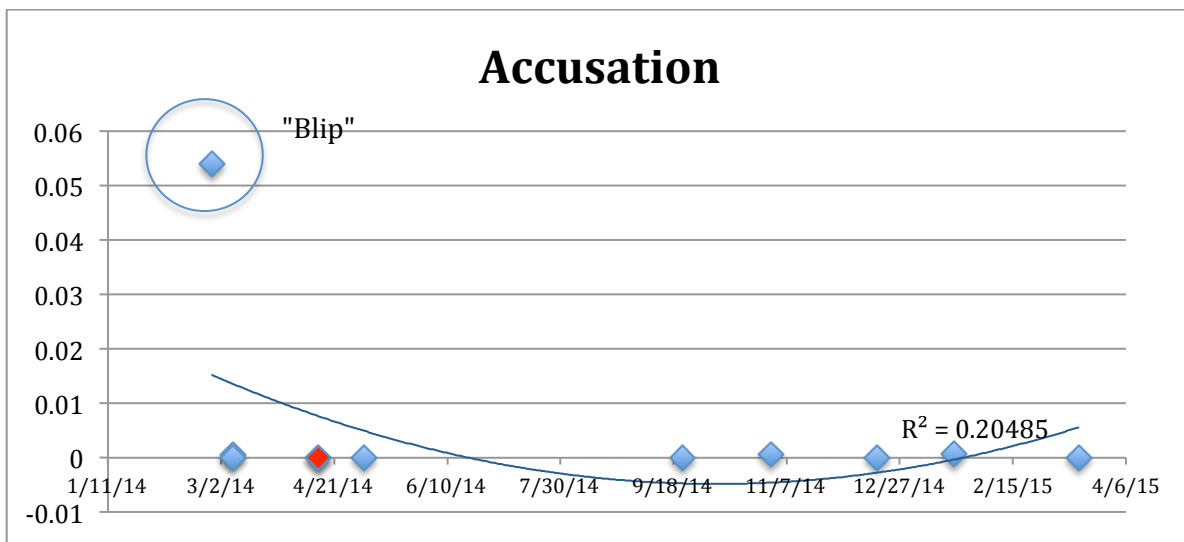
Figure 13. Crimea Case: Crimean Government Accusation Rhetorical Device. Bright red data points mark the event. Poly. = second degree polynomial curve fit. R^2 is goodness of fit.

Example use of *Accusation* as a rhetorical device:

"It is a provocation[4] aimed to discredit the autonomy's parliament and deprive it of its
legitimacy." (Vladimir Konstantinov, 26 February 2014)

Blip and Brag

The "blip and brag" pattern, in which a small but statistically detectable increase is followed by silence,
and then a rhetorical flourish once the objective is achieved, was observed in the naming of the *Ingroup*
(Crimea, Figure 14), *Friends* (Russia, Figure 15), and *Enemies* (Ukraine, Figure 16).
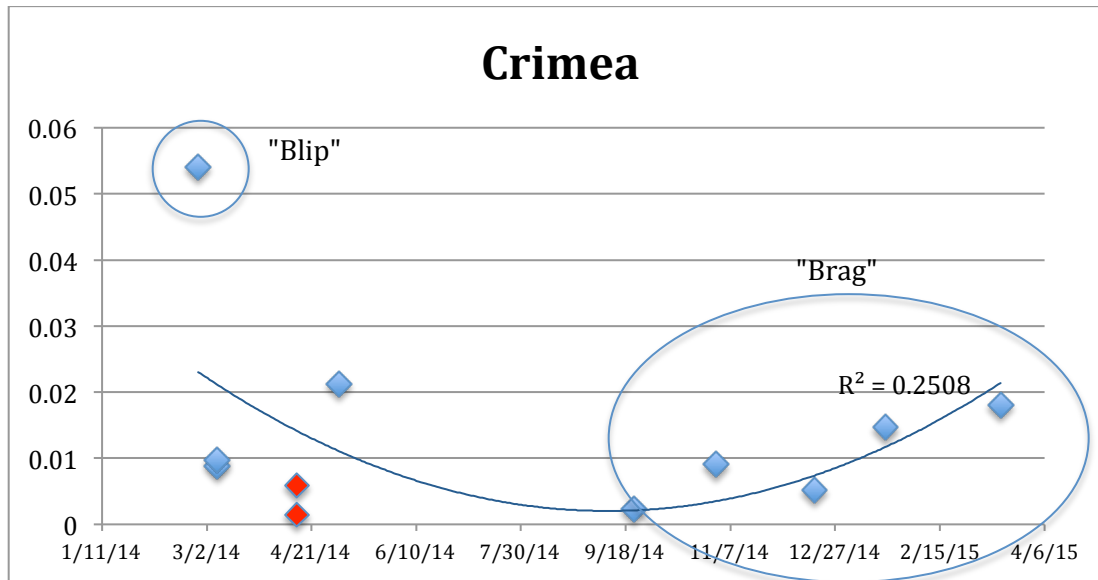
**Figure 14. Crimea Case: Crimean Government Crimea Theme. Bright red data points mark the event. Poly. =
second degree polynomial curve fit. R^2 is goodness of fit.**

Mention of *Crimea*:

> "So to ensure security, stability and public order, we set up self-defense units in Crimea. The
> well-being of the Crimeans is our top priority." (Sergey Aksyonov, 7 March 2014)

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[4] The provocation refers to a parliamentary procedure that prevented discussion of Crimean secession.
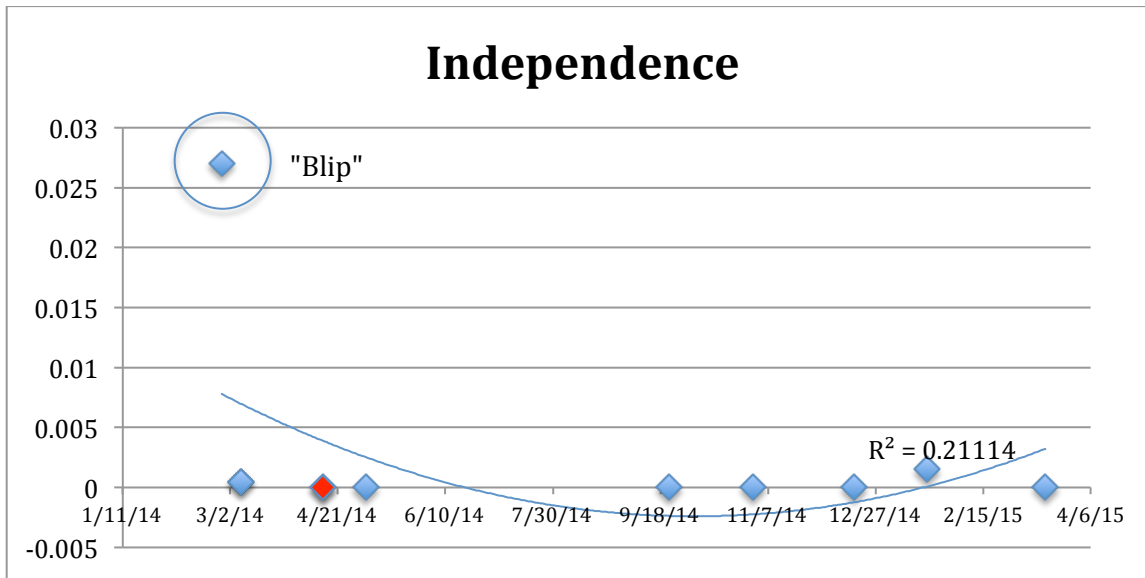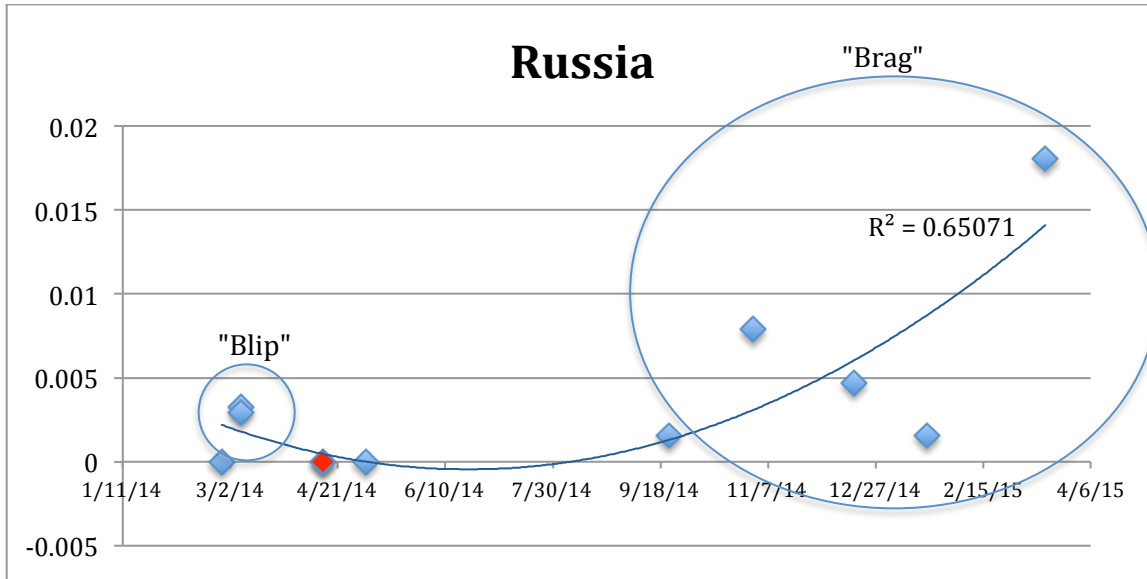
Figure 15. Crimea Case: Crimean Government Russia Theme. Bright red data points mark the event. Poly. = second degree polynomial curve fit. R² is goodness of fit.

Mention of *Russia*:

> "The people are so filled with gratitude and patriotic emotions that they want to have very close relations with Russia. Many of them would like to be part of Russia." (Sergey Aksyonov, 7 March 2014)
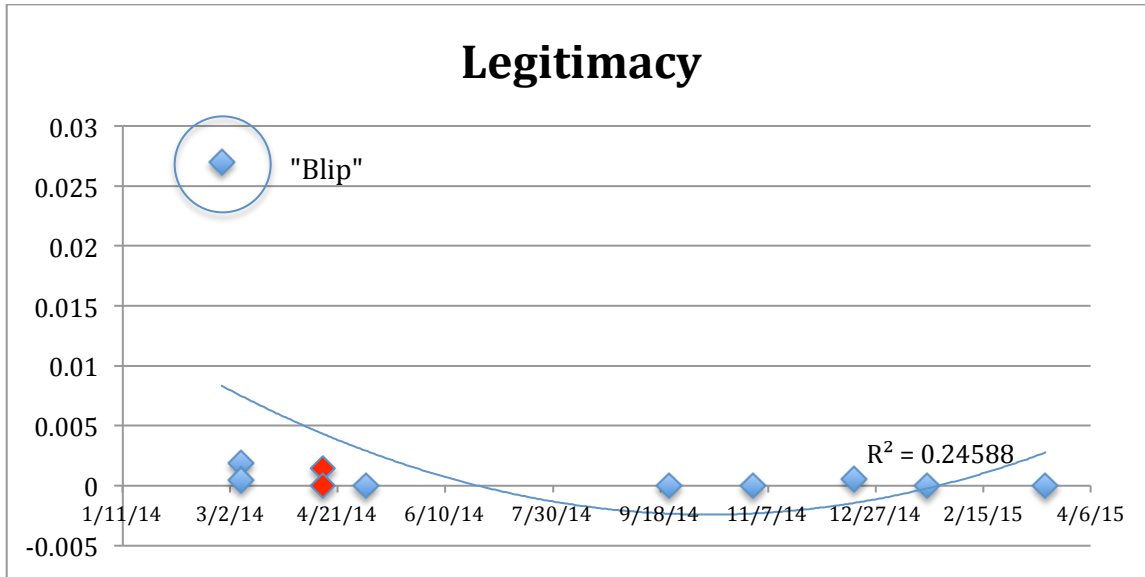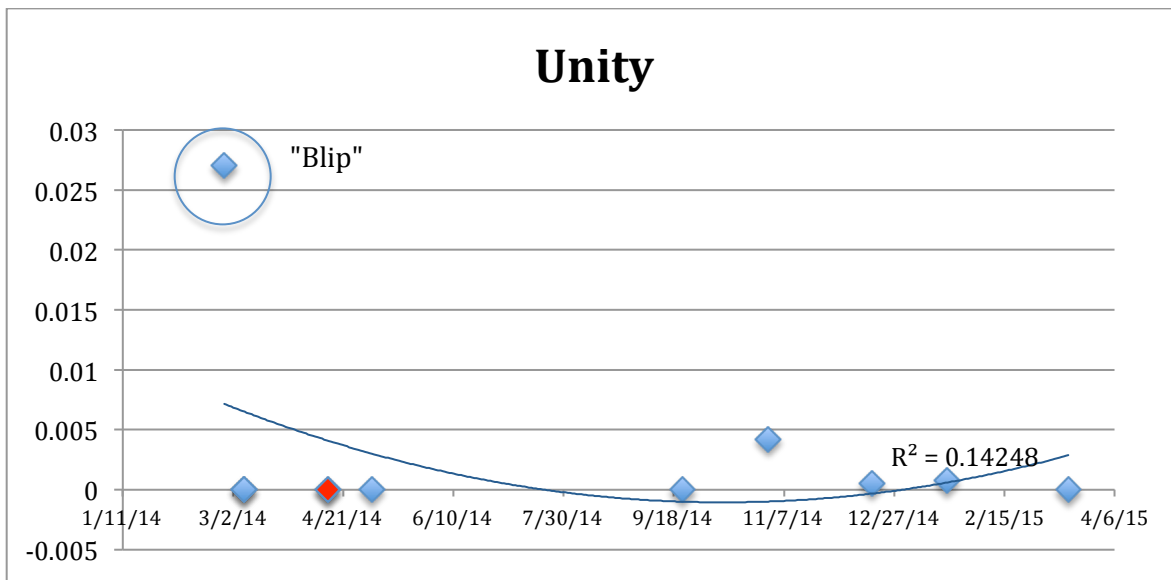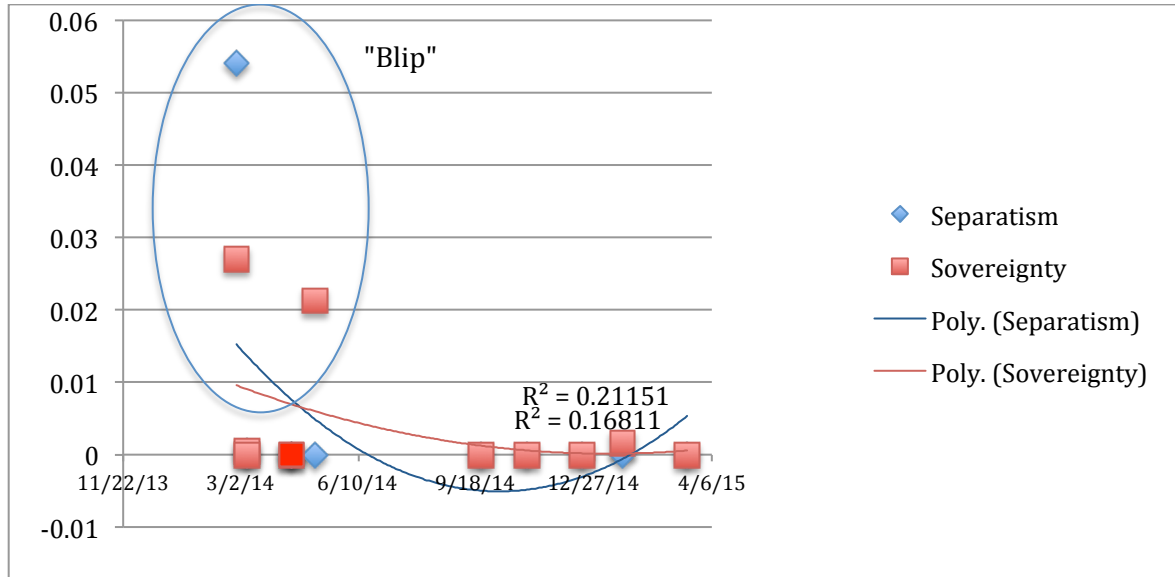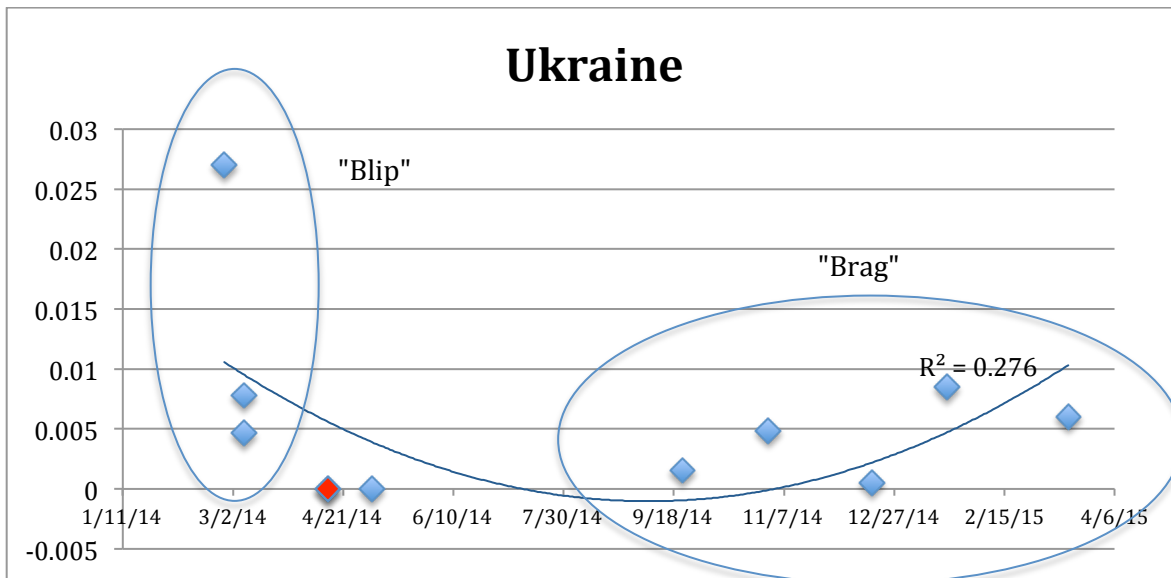

Figure 16. Crimea Case: Crimean Government Ukraine Theme. Bright red data points mark the event. Poly. = second degree polynomial curve fit. R² is goodness of fit.

Mention of *Ukraine*:

"Ukraine's security services and Interior Ministry are actually defunct." (Sergey Aksyonov, 7 March 2014)

Ukrainian Government of Viktor Yanukovych

Viktor Yanukovych was the Russian-favored president of Ukraine from 2010 until his removal from power and escape to Russia in February of 2014, just before the annexation of Crimea. Yanukovych rejected a popular association with the EU in favor of closer ties to Russia, which led to protests in Kiev's Maidan Square. After the protests turned deadly in January of 2014, Yanukovych was driven from power and fled to Russia. Given his close ties to Russia, we expected that his use of language may yield indicators of Russian intentions in Crimea.

However, although the themes of *Putin* and *Borders* steadily decrease, they are not obviously related to Crimea, and no other themes or rhetorical devices demonstrate any pattern. He appeared to have his own separate concerns, and our hypothesis that he could yield indicators is refuted.

Predominant Concerns of Regional Actors

The primary goal of this research is to identify leading indicators of adversarial intent with respect to gray zone activity, and therefore, the diachronic analyses presented in the previous sections are the primary focus of this report. However, it is also useful to understand what issues a particular actor prioritizes and which uses of language that actor relies on the most in order to persuade an audience.

In this section, those themes and rhetorical devices that were used more often *for that particular actor* statistically significantly at a ≤ 0.10 level are compared.

Predominant Concerns: Putin Government

Putin government officials (Putin, Medvedev, Lavrov) statistically emphasized only one security theme, *Economics and Trade* (Table 2), reproducing one of the primary security concerns in an earlier analysis of the Putin government's priorities (Bragg, 2016; Kuznar & Yager, 2016). The primary polities that seem to concern the Russian government are the EU and Ukraine in this corpus. Finally, the Putin government made statistically frequent use of *Counter-arguments*, *Intensifiers,* and *In-grouping* language.

Table 2. Predominant Concerns of Putin Government and Pro-Russian Ukrainian President Yanukovych. 1 = theme statistically more often used at a less than or equal to 0.10 level.

		Group			
Code Type	Code	Crimea_Govt	Putin_Govt	Ukrainian_Govt	Yanukovych
Negative Emotive Theme	Failure	0	0	1	0
Disruptive Security Concern	Borders	0	0	1	0
	Materiel	0	0	1	0
	Occupation_Invasion	0	0	1	0
	Separatism	1	0	0	0
Cooperative Security Concern	Sovereignty	1	0	0	0
	Cooperation	0	0	1	1
	Econ_Trade	0	1	0	1
Polity	Crimea	1	0	1	0
	EU	0	1	0	1
	Russia	1	1	1	1
	Ukraine	1	1	1	1
Rhetorical Device	Accusation	1	0	0	0
	Counterargument	0	1	0	1
	Intensifiers	1	1	1	1
	Lexicalization	0	0	0	1
	Magnitude	0	0	1	1
	Ingrouping	1	1	0	1

There were no indicators that uniquely identified the Putin government. However, there is an almost total overlap between those themes and rhetorical devices used by the Putin government and those by the pro-Russian Ukrainian government of Viktor Yanukovych (see below).

Predominant Concerns: Pro-Russian Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych

In all but one case, the most prominent themes emphasized by Yanukovych were identical to those expressed by the Putin government (Table 2). The only exception is that Yanukovych emphasized the security theme of *Cooperation*. The correspondence of Yanukovych's rhetoric to the Kremlin's is striking and at the very least indicates that he was completely ideologically in synch with the Putin government, if not directed by it.

Predominant Concerns: Pro-Russian Crimean Officials

Pro-Russian Crimean officials prominently expressed seven themes and used four rhetorical devices more than others (Table 3). They expressed their desire for *Separatism* (a Disruptive Security Concern), asserted their *Sovereignty* (a Positive Security Concern from their perspective), and named their ally, *Russia*, and primary adversary, *Ukraine*. Crimean officials emphasized the use of rhetorical devices such as *Accusation*, *Intensifiers*, and *In-grouping* language.

The issues emphasized by Crimean officials make sense considering their assertion of the legitimacy of their cause, the need for unity against the Ukrainian government, and their desire to separate from Ukraine.

Table 3. Predominant Concerns of pro-Russian Crimean Officials. 1 = theme statistically more often used at a less than or equal to 0.10 level.

		Group			
Code Type	Code	Crimea_Govt	Putin_Govt	Ukrainian_Govt	Yanukovych
Negative Emotive Theme	Failure	0	0	1	0
Disruptive Security Concern	Borders	0	0	1	0
	Materiel	0	0	1	0
	Occupation_Invasion	0	0	1	0
	Separatism	1	0	0	0
Cooperative Security Concern	Sovereignty	1	0	0	0
	Cooperation	0	0	1	1
	Econ_Trade	0	1	0	1
Polity	Crimea	1	0	1	0
	EU	0	1	0	1
	Russia	1	1	1	1
	Ukraine	1	1	1	1
Rhetorical Device	Accusation	1	0	0	0
	Counterargument	0	1	0	1
	Intensifiers	1	1	1	1
	Lexicalization	0	0	0	1
	Magnitude	0	0	1	1
	Ingrouping	1	1	0	1

Predominant Concerns: Ukrainian Government Officials Opposed to Yanukovych

Officials in the Ukrainian government officials opposed to Yanukovych prominently expressed eight themes and used two rhetorical devices more than others (Table 4). They employed the Negative Emotive theme of *Failure*, and emphasized Disruptive Security Concerns, including *Borders*, Military *Materiel*, and the specter of *Occupation and Invasion*. They emphasized the Cooperative Security Concern of *Cooperation*. They mentioned *Crimea*, mostly as an example of what they feared, and their adversary, *Russia*. Finally, they employed the rhetorical device of *Intensifiers* often (as did all other actors), and *Magnitude* (use of number and sense of greatness) in order to emphasize their concerns.

The security concerns the Ukrainians cited are in line with what were clearly their primary concerns – being invaded and having their territory annexed as had happened in Crimea.

Table 4. Predominant Concerns of Ukrainian Officials Unaffiliated with Yanukovych. 1 = theme statistically more often used at a less than or equal to 0.10 level.

Code Type	Code	Group			
		Crimea_Govt	Putin_Govt	Ukrainian_Govt	Yanukovych
Negative Emotive Theme	Failure	0	0	1	0
Disruptive Security Concern	Borders	0	0	1	0
	Materiel	0	0	1	0
	Occupation_Invasion	0	0	1	0
	Separatism	1	0	0	0
Cooperative Security Concern	Sovereignty	1	0	0	0
	Cooperation	0	0	1	1
	Econ_Trade	0	1	0	1
Polity	Crimea	1	0	1	0
	EU	0	1	0	1
	Russia	1	1	1	1
	Ukraine	1	1	1	1
Rhetorical Device	Accusation	1	0	0	0
	Counterargument	0	1	0	1
	Intensifiers	1	1	1	1
	Lexicalization	0	0	0	1
	Magnitude	0	0	1	1
	Ingrouping	1	1	0	1

Use of Emotional Language

While officials in the Putin government, and to some degree the Crimean government, exhibited discipline in controlling their language compared to Ukrainian officials in the diachronic analysis of I&W, there were no statistically significant differences in the use of emotive language between any of the actors (pro-Russian Crimean government, Putin government, Ukrainian government, pro-Russian Ukrainian government of Viktor Yanukovych) for the time period as a whole.

Conclusions

Analysis of key themes and uses of language (rhetorical devices) can provide indicators and warnings (I&W) of gray zone activity, reveal the predominant concerns of actors, as well as provide insights into emotional factors that can influence their decision calculus. In the case of Russia's annexation of Crimea, linguistic indicators would have tipped analysts to impending operations and a rational calculation of the costs and benefits of Russian brinksmanship months in advance of Russia's move on Crimea. Such insight would have tipped analysts off that operations were about to begin and would have enabled the sort of cost/benefit and risk analysis (USSTRATCOM, 2006) necessary for evaluating deterrence options.

Thematic analysis, in which the density of themes and rhetorical devices are normed against measures of speech length, provide objective metrics that track the potential importance of issues to speakers (and potentially their audiences) and their actual level of emotionality, which impacts decision making. These measures discipline our own subjective readings of other's discourse in which we are likely to over- or under-estimate the importance of what people express.

Indicators & Warnings (I&W)

Indicators and warnings (I&W) were present for Vladimir Putin and Russian-oriented Crimean leaders. When examining the density of themes and rhetorical devices, Vladimir Putin exhibits a uniquely disciplined restraint in his use of language; he is decidedly un-emotional when compared to other world leaders. The implication of his actual restraint (compared to what we perceive) is that he rarely forecasts his interests or the state of his decision calculus. This obviously presents a challenge to analysts. However, it also provides an opportunity. When Putin does foreshadow his intent, it is demonstrated by a small statistical signal among the many issues he will address; these signals, or "blips," are detectable. After-the-fact confirmation is easily achieved, since Putin exhibits a comparative rhetorical flourish, in which he will more openly state his intentions to the world after his objectives are achieved, a "brag." The statistical signature of these "blip and brag" patterns is extremely detectable. Putin's "blip and brag" pattern was detected with emotional themes such as *Russian Superiority* and *Separatism*, the mention of foes such as *France* and *Germany*, and in more pragmatic political interests such as, *Russian Energy* and the *Ceasefire*.

Putin exhibits a sustained concern over *Russian Energy Resources* and the *Threat of Nazism*, consistent with earlier studies (Kuznar, 2016b).

Pro-Russian Crimean Leaders

The primary findings regarding Crimean leaders and government include detectable "blips" approximately a month and a half before the annexation in emotive themes that include: *Fear of Extremism*, *Failure* of the Ukrainian government (an enemy), desire for *Stability*, desire for *Independence*, *Legitimacy* of the Crimean cause, the *Unity* of Crimeans, *Separatism*, *Sovereignty* for Crimea, a sarcastic claim to be open to *Cooperation*, and use of the rhetorical device of *Accusation* against their adversary, Ukraine.

L e a d i n g   D i s c u r s i v e   I n d i c a t o r s   o f   G r a y   Z o n e   A c t i v i t y :
T h e   A n n e x a t i o n   o f   C r i m e a

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There is a curious "blip and brag" pattern in the mention of the In-group (*Crimea*), their ally (*Russia*), and primary enemy (*Ukraine*).

The Russian-supported President of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukyovich, exhibited no detectable leading indicators, but this may be due to the fact that his speeches ended four months before the annexation of Crimea, and perhaps more relevantly, Yanukovych may have had more pressing concerns as his hold on power was failing at this time.

Predominant Concerns of Regional Actors

Economic concerns appear to dominate the concerns of the Putin government, despite the fact that this corpus was focused on issues relating to the annexation of Crimea. This finding reproduces earlier research by this team and others (Bragg, 2016). This indicates that, while Putin may desire a rejuvenated Russian empire and the restoration of national significance, his underlying motive is the economic development of Russia and aggrandizement of resources in which he has a personal interest (energy).

Another interesting finding is that pro-Russian Ukrainian President Yanukovych parroted nearly the exact same themes and rhetoric as did the Putin government, indicating that Yanukovych was extremely close to the Kremlin ideologically if not under its direction.

Predictably, pro-Russian Crimean officials emphasized their desire for separatism and their sovereignty to do so. Ukrainian officials opposed to Yanukovych emphasized their concerns over their borders and the threat of annexation as had happened in Crimea.

Emotional Language and Decision Calculus of Regional Actors

There were no statistically detectable differences between any of the actors' use of emotional language and therefore no indicators of any departure from or adherence to a rational actor model of decision making.

Appendix: Key Dates and Events

The following table (Table 5) lists key dates and events that led up to the annexation of Crimea by Russia. A full narrative of events is found in Appendix: Narrative of Historical Events.

Table 5. Key Dates and Events in Annexation of Crimea

Event	Date	Aggressor
Pro-Russian businessman appointed mayor of Sevastopol, Crimea	25-Feb-14	
Serious tensions in Crimea arise between pro-Russian and pro-Ukrainian protesters	25-Feb-14	pro-Russian & pro-Ukrainian protesters
Crimean Parliament sets referendum	27-Feb-14	Crimea
Unidentified (Russian) gunmen in combat uniforms appear outside Crimea's main airports	27-Feb-14	Russia
Armed men in trucks and armored vehicles surround a Ukrainian military base in Crimea	2-Mar-14	Russia
78 of 81 deputies in Crimean Parliament vote to join Russian Federation. Ukraine PM denounces the illegality of such a move. Russia supportive of decision	6-Mar-14	Crimean Parliament
US denounces proposed referendum in Crimea. US and EU prepare sanctions against Russia	6-Mar-14	US
Military hospital and base in Crimea seized by Russian troops and pro-Russian militias	10-Mar-14	Russia
Crimea's de facto PM outlines steps for joining Russia	10-Mar-14	Crimean Parliament
Crimean parliament declares Crimea independent from Ukraine	11-Mar-14	Crimea
G7 threatens Russia with further sanctions	12-Mar-14	G7
Russia sends more troops and military hardware to Crimea in preparation of referendum	14-Mar-14	Russia
US drafts UN resolution declaring the upcoming referendum invalid	14-Mar-14	US
EU prepares sanctions on Russia ahead of referendum vote	14-Mar-14	EU
Russia vetoes UN resolution on Ukraine	15-Mar-14	Russia
Crimea's secession referendum on joining Russia is backed by 97% of voters. Vote condemned by West as a sham	16-Mar-14	Crimea
Crimea's new pro-Russian government hails the result of the referendum vote	16-Mar-14	Crimean Parliament

Ukrainian PM threatens consequences and prosecution for those that facilitated the vote in Crimea	16-Mar-14	Ukraine
Acting Ukrainian President demands that Russia withdraw its troops from Crimea and states that the headquarters of the Ukrainian navy would remain in Sevastopol	16-Mar-14	Ukraine
US President states the referendum in Crimea would never be recognized by the US and the international community	16-Mar-14	US
Russian President states that the referendum vote was fully consistent with international law	16-Mar-14	Russia
Presidents of European Council and Commission state that the referendum is illegal and illegitimate and its outcome will not be recognized	16-Mar-14	EU
Ukrainian government announces that it will not recognize the result of the vote, and PM Yatsenyuk refers to it as a circus supported by Russian troops	17-Mar-14	Ukraine
EU Foreign Affairs Council condemns the referendum	17-Mar-14	EU
EU officials indicate that Ukraine and EU would sign agreement on closer political cooperation	17-Mar-14	EU
The EU and US impose travel bans and asset freezes on several officials from Russia and Ukraine over the Crimea referendum	17-Mar-14	EU & US
Putin recognizes Crimea as a sovereign state	17-Mar-14	Russia
Putin signs a bill to incorporate Crimea into the Russian Federation	18-Mar-14	Russia
Foreign Ministry of Ukraine launches formal protest against Russian occupation of Crimea	18-Mar-14	Ukraine
Russian military forces and pro-Russian militia storm military base in Simferopol, Crimea	18-Mar-14	Russia
Ukrainian Navy headquarters in Crimea overtaken	19-Mar-14	Crimean "self-defense" forces & Russia
Ukraine announces troop withdrawal from Crimea	19-Mar-14	
US VP threatens Russia with increased political and economic isolation	19-Mar-14	US
Russian Duma approves treaty legalizing annexation of Crimea	20-Mar-14	Russia
Western sanctions expanded on Russian and Ukrainian officials	20-Mar-14	EU/US
Russian Parliament ratifies treaty to create two new regions of Russia:	21-Mar-14	Russia

Crimea and Sevastopol		
UN invalidates Crimean referendum and Russian annexation	27-Mar-14	UN
De facto Crimean Parliament adopts new Constitution making Crimea a democratic state within the Russian Federation	11-Apr-14	Crimea
Russian ID papers issued to residents of Crimea	18-Apr-14	Russia

Appendix: Narrative of Historical Events

Ukrainian Protests Spread to Crimea

The 21 November 2013 decision by Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych to abandon Ukraine's preparations for a planned Association Agreement (AA) and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) with the European Union and instead revive economic relations with Russia sparks protests in Kyiv. These protests, between Ukrainians in support of closer ties with Russia and Ukrainians in support of closer ties with the EU, continue through 2013 and into 2014.

By February 2014, protests have spread into the largely pro-Russia Crimea region. The announcement of the removal of pro-Russian leader Viktor Yanukovych as the president of Ukraine on 22 February 2014 further sparks tensions and unrest on the Crimean Peninsula. Crimea's largely pro-Russian population displays clear dissatisfaction with, in particular, the Ukrainian Parliament's decisions to impeach the pro-Russian Yanukovych and implement a new language law making Ukrainian the country's only official language, removing Russian.

Pro-Russian Businessman Alexei Chaly Appointed Mayor of Sevastopol, Crimea

On 25 February 2014, just days after the Ukrainian Parliament's decision to remove Yanukovych as president, the city council of Sevastopol, Crimea appoints Alexei Chaly, a Russian citizen and businessman, as mayor.[5] Chaly is appointed mayor as more than a thousand pro-Russian protestors assemble outside of the Sevastopol city hall to demonstrate support for Crimea having greater autonomy from Ukraine and closer ties to Russia[6] – the protestors in Sevastopol reportedly chant "Russia" repeatedly and "a Russian mayor for a Russian city."[7]

The move comes amidst rising fears of Crimean separatism from Ukraine and clearly illustrates Russia's influence on the Crimean city of Sevastopol,[8] only further increasing those fears of separatism.

Crimean Parliament Sets Referendum

With pro-Russian protests increasing throughout Crimea and subsequently increasing tensions in the region,[9] on 27 February 2014, the Crimean Parliament publicly announces that it is preparing a referendum to widen the authority of the autonomous republic of Crimea.[10] As part of the announcement, the Crimean Parliament emphasizes that it is the only remaining legitimate authority in

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[5] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm; https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/25/ukraine-sevastopol-installs-pro-russian-mayor

[6] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm

[7] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/25/ukraine-sevastopol-installs-pro-russian-mayor

[8] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/25/ukraine-sevastopol-installs-pro-russian-mayor

[9] http://unpo.org/article/17122; http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2014/03/06/ukraine-russia-timeline-obama/6127545/; http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm

[10] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm

Crimea and questions the newly established Ukrainian government's commitment to the Crimea region.[11]

The Crimean Parliament's announcement of referendum preparations indicates a clear signal of looming Crimean separatism efforts to move the region away from Ukraine to instead align Crimea closer to Russia, justifying the growing concerns of the Ukrainian government.

Unidentified Forces Move in on Strategic Facilities in Crimea

On 28 February 2014, the day after the Crimean Parliament announces its referendum preparations, several hundred armed military forces wearing unidentified uniforms move in on and take control of strategic facilities in Crimea.[12] The forces reportedly take control of government buildings and the airport in the Crimean capital of Simferopol. They also take control of a military airport and surround a coast guard base in Sevastopol as well as seize control of key television, telephone, and Internet communication facilities.[13] The moves indicate a tactical plan of aggression on behalf of the armed forces.

While the forces wear unidentified military uniforms, there is almost universal speculation that the pro-Russian forces belong to Russia. The pro-Russian forces reportedly even go so far as to raise the Russian flag over the Crimean Parliament after taking over its control.[14] Russia initially denies any involvement of Russian troops from its base in Sevastopol; however, Russia later indicates that it has in fact moved Russian units from its Sevastopol base into Crimea to "protect fleet positions" but emphasizes that all movements are within already agreed upon terms between Russia and Ukraine.[15]

The move demonstrates a clear, provocative act of aggression on behalf of the pro-Russian forces and ostensibly Russia itself, seemingly representing a tactical maneuver that likely only helps to solidify, strengthen, and progress the looming Crimean separatism efforts put in place by the referendum announcement.

Crimean Parliament Votes to Secede from Ukraine

On 6 March 2014, the Crimean Parliament votes to secede from Ukraine and join Russia. The Crimean Parliament also elects to formally hold the local referendum on Crimea's status on 16 March 2014. Reports indicated that some members of Parliament were not allowed to participate in the vote;[16]

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[11] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm
[12] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm; http://www.euronews.com/2015/02/10/ukraine-conflict-timeline/; http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/ukraine-crisis-timeline-highs-independence-full-blown-war-1497629; http://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-events-timeline-idUSBREA3Q0CC20140427; http://unpo.org/article/17122; http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2014/03/06/ukraine-russia-timeline-obama/6127545/; http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26248275
[13] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm; http://unpo.org/article/17122; http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26248275; http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/ukraine/11449122/Ukraine-crisis-timeline-of-major-events.html; http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2014/03/06/ukraine-russia-timeline-obama/6127545/
[14] http://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-events-timeline-idUSBREA3Q0CC20140427
[15] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm
[16] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm

however, regardless, 78 of the 81 present members vote to join Russia and sanction the local referendum for 16 March 2014.[17] The vote represents a significant move of progress for Crimean separatism efforts away from Ukraine and toward closer ties with Russia.

In a further sign of aggression from the Crimean Parliament, Crimea's de-facto Prime Minster, Sergey Aksyonov, announces that Crimea is unwilling to negotiate with Ukraine's interim government, which the Crimean Parliament deems to be illegitimate.[18] Furthermore, Askyonov's deputy, Rustam Temugaliyev, announces that Ukrainian military members in Crimea will be forced to either surrender, accept Russian military postings and Russian citizenship, or leave Crimea.[19] These statements highlight clear aggression from the pro-Russian leadership in Crimea toward the Ukrainian leadership in Kyiv.

The Ukrainian government and the US are quick to dismiss the Crimean Parliament's move. The Ukrainian government declares the planned Crimean referendum to be illegitimate, calling it a "farce" and a "crime against the state […] organized by the military of the Russian Federation" and urges the Russian government to refrain from supporting the separatist movement in Ukraine.[20] US President Barack Obama denounces the Crimean Parliament's referendum proposal as unconstitutional and as a violation of international law. Furthermore, in a step of US aggression and in response, the US President authorizes sanctions against individuals and entities responsible for violating the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, which could include sanctions against both Russian and Ukrainian officials.[21]

On the other hand, Russian leaders express support for the Crimean Parliament's decision, and indications appear that Russia may be starting preparations for incorporating Crimea into Russia.[22] Russian President Vladimir Putin, in a 9 March 2014 meeting with leaders from Germany and Britain, underscores that the moves made by the legitimate leadership of Crimea are within the norms of international law and aim to ensure the legal interests of the Crimean population. The Russian president also defends the presence of Russian forces in Crimea as a measure of support to Russians in the region whom fear for their safety.[23]

The variances in response to the Crimean Parliament's announcement highlights a clear divide between Russia and the international community regarding their envisioned trajectory for Crimea.

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[17] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm; http://unpo.org/article/17122
[18] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm; http://unpo.org/article/17122
[19] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm
[20] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm; http://www.kyivpost.com/article/content/ukraine/turchynov-stops-referendum-in-crimea-338646.html
[21] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm; http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2014/03/06/ukraine-russia-timeline-obama/6127545/; http://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-events-timeline-idUSBREA3Q0CC20140427
[22] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm
[23] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm

Despite the international community's negative response to the Crimean Parliament's secession vote, on 10 March 2014, de-facto Crimean Prime Minister Aksyonov outlines steps that Crimea is taking in preparation for a union with Russia, which include implementing Russian laws and currency.[24]

Crimean Parliament Declares Independence

On 11 March 2014, the Crimean Parliament declares Crimea as independent from Ukraine and confirms that it will ask to join Russia if Crimeans vote to do so in the upcoming referendum.[25]

In response to the announcement, Russia claims the Crimean vote is legitimate and announces that it would consider the issue of Crimea joining Russia.[26] On the other hand, on 12 March 2014, both the G7 and European Parliament announce strong opposition to the upcoming referendum in Crimea and to Russia's position on Ukraine.[27] Once again, the notable variances in response highlight a clear divide between Russia and the international community regarding their envisioned trajectory for Crimea.

On 13 March 2014, in an address to the UN Security Council, interim Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk states that there is still a chance to peacefully resolve the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, and he urges Russia to pull back its military forces in Crimea and instead initiate peaceful talks and negotiations.[28]

Russia Vetoes UN Resolution on Ukraine

On 15 March 2014, Russia vetoes a UN Security Council Resolution that would declare the scheduled referendum in Crimea invalid. Despite vetoing the resolution, Russia also reaffirms the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. Russia is the only member of the UN Security Council to veto the vote.[29]

In response to the Russian veto, the US Ambassador to the UN, Samantha Power, claims that Russia is using its veto as "an accomplice to unlawful military incursion."[30] Furthermore, the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs claims that the Russian veto is an illustration of how "the Russian Federation has isolated itself not only in the Security Council but in the whole world."[31]

Crimea Votes to Join Russia

On 16 March 2014, Crimea holds its scheduled referendum. The referendum ballot reads: "*Do you support reunifying Crimea with Russia as a subject of the Russian Federation? Do you support the*

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[24] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm
[25] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm; http://www.cnn.com/2014/03/11/world/europe/ukraine-crisis/
[26] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm
[27] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm; http://unpo.org/article/17122
[28] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm
[29] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm; http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2014/03/15/290404691/russia-vetoes-u-n-security-council-resolution-on-crimea
[30] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm; http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/16/world/europe/russia-vetoes-un-resolution-on-crimea.html
[31] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm

restoration of the 1992 Crimean constitution and the status of Crimea as a part of Ukraine?"[32] While outside observers are quick to note that voters were not given the option of maintaining the status quo, the referendum results in nearly 97% of the voters in Crimea supporting reunification of Russia.[33]

The Crimean government hails the referendum results as successful and legitimate. Following the vote, it declares Crimean independence from Ukraine, calls on the international community to recognize Crimea as an independent state, and formally petitions to join Russia. The pro-Russian Crimean government's satisfaction is evident as Prime Minister Sergey Aksyonov publicly announces that Crimea is going home to Russia.[34] Russia is also quick to highlight the legitimacy of the vote as the head of Russia's observer mission in Crimea announces that there is absolutely no reason to consider the results of the vote to be illegitimate.[35]

However, the Ukrainian government, the US, and the EU disagree. The Ukrainian government publicly announces that it will not recognize the referendum results, and Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk even calls the vote a "circus" supported by Russian troops.[36] US President Obama emphasizes that Crimea's referendum results would never be recognized by the US and international community, and the US begins preparing sanctions against Russia for its role in the events.[37] The EU Foreign Affairs Council condemns the referendum results, calling the vote illegal and a clear breach of the Ukrainian constitution and begins outlining sanctions against Russian officials involved in the Crimean secession efforts.[38]

Once again, clear and significant differences between Russia and the international community are on public display regarding the future of Crimea.

Putin Recognizes Crimea as a Sovereign State

On 17 March 2014, just one day after the Crimean referendum, Russian President Vladimir Putin issues a decree on the recognition of the Republic of Crimea and recognizes Crimea as a sovereign and independent state.[39] Despite the Ukrainian government, the US, and the EU repeatedly refusing to

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[32] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm

[33] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm; http://unpo.org/article/17122; http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2014/03/06/ukraine-russia-timeline-obama/6127545/; http://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-events-timeline-idUSBREA3Q0CC20140427; http://www.euronews.com/2015/02/10/ukraine-conflict-timeline/; http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26248275; http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/ukraine/11449122/Ukraine-crisis-timeline-of-major-events.html

[34] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm

[35] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm

[36] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm

[37] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm

[38] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm

[39] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm; http://unpo.org/article/17122; http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2014/03/06/ukraine-russia-timeline-obama/6127545/

recognize the referendum results as legitimate, Russia issues the decree, which is likely the first step towards formal unification of Russia and Crimea.[40]

In what would be an even further act of Russian provocation and disregard for the interests of the Ukrainian government and international community, it is reported that Russia may be putting together plans to provide Crimea with $410 million worth of financial assistance, which is an amount that would double the region's budget.[41]

The US and EU Impose Sanctions on Russian Officials

In an aggressive response to Russian involvement in the Crimean independence efforts, on 17 March 2014, the US and EU impose sanctions on Russian and Ukrainian officials responsible for the situation in Ukraine.[42] The US emphasizes that it will further adjust the sanctions in response to whether or not Russia chooses to escalate or de-escalate the situation in Crimea and throughout Ukraine. The US also highlights that further Russian provocation will only further isolate Russia.[43] The EU emphasizes that these sanctions are only a first step, and more sanctions are likely to be expected.[44] The sanctions illustrate clear dissatisfaction and frustration with Russia from the US and EU for its involvement in escalating the situation in Crimea.

Russian and Crimean Leaders Sign Reunification Treaty

Undeterred by the announcement of US and EU sanctions, on 18 March 2014, Russian President Vladimir Putin, Crimean Prime Minister Sergey Aksyonov, the Head of the Crimean State Council Vladimir Konstantinov, and the Mayor of Sevastopol Alexey Chaly sign a treaty to reunify Crimea with Russia.[45] With the treaty in place, Russia now considers Crimea and Sevastopol to be Russian territory, with the full reunification of Crimea with Russia coming after a transition period set to last through 2015.[46]

As expected, the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry formally protests Russia's occupation of Crimea. US President Barack Obama and German Chancellor Angela Merkel also condemn the Russian annexation of Crimea, pushing instead for a diplomatic solution but doing so while also threating more Russian sanctions.[47]

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[40] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm
[41] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm
[42] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm; http://unpo.org/article/17122; http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2014/03/06/ukraine-russia-timeline-obama/6127545/; http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26248275; http://www.euronews.com/2015/02/10/ukraine-conflict-timeline/
[43] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm
[44] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm
[45] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm; http://www.euronews.com/2015/02/10/ukraine-conflict-timeline/; http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26248275
[46] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm
[47] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm

Russia emphasizes that the US and EU sanctions are "absolutely unacceptable" and, in an aggressive response of its own, threatens to impose its own similar sanctions against the US and EU.[48]

Russian Aggression Increases in Crimea

Following the Crimean referendum and the Crimean unification efforts with Russia that resulted, tensions and aggressions increase between Ukrainian military forces and Russian military and pro-Russian militia forces in Crimea.

In an act of tactical aggression from the Russian side, on 18 March 2014, Russian and pro-Russian forces storm a military base in Simferopol, reportedly resulting in at the least the death of one Ukrainian soldier and wounding of another.[49] As part of the attack, the Russian and pro-Russian forces allegedly seized the documents of the Ukrainian soldiers and then placed them under arrest.[50]

Outraged by the events, the Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk calls the killing of the Ukrainian soldier a war crime and announces that the deaths indicate that "the conflict is shifting from a political to a military stage."[51] Furthermore, in a significantly aggressive and provocative response to the Russian aggression at the Simferopol military base, the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense in turn responds by issuing an order authorizing the use of deadly force by the Ukrainian military in cases of self-defense.[52]

The events of 18 March 2014 seemingly indicate an evolution in the trajectory of the situation in Crimea. Pro-Russian separatists and Russia itself move from a more peaceful, political approach for initiating change to a more aggressive and violent military approach to ensure that the longevity and foundation of the political changes they desire have been made.

Continuing with aggressive tactics toward military bases in Crimea, on the next day, 19 March 2014, pro-Russian Crimean "self-defense" forces, presumably being aided by Russian military forces, take control of and raise the Russian flag over the Ukrainian navy headquarters in Sevastopol. As part of the takeover, the insurgents also detain Ukrainian Rear Admiral Sergey Gaiduk.[53] While the takeover did not include any violence, it clearly represents another act of aggression on behalf of the pro-Russian separatist and Russian forces in Crimea.

Ukraine Announces Troop Withdrawal from Crimea

With visibly increasing tensions and violence between the Ukrainian military, pro-Russian separatists, and Russian forces in Crimea, on 19 March 2014, Ukraine announces plans to evacuate all Ukrainian

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[48] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm
[49] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm; http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2014/03/06/ukraine-russia-timeline-obama/6127545/
[50] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm
[51] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm
[52] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm; http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2014/03/06/ukraine-russia-timeline-obama/6127545/
[53] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm

military personnel from Crimea.[54] The move highlights the success that the aggressive tactics undertaken by the pro-Russian separatist and Russian forces have had against the Ukrainian military in Crimea.

International Community Continues with Threats Against a Seemingly Undeterred Russia

On 19 March 2014, US Vice President Joe Biden announces that "as long as Russia continues on this dark path, they will face increasing political and economic isolation."[55] German Chancellor Angela Merkel also threatens increasing political and economic consequences for Russia, which are likely to include increased sanctions and diminishing EU-Russia and G7-Russia relations.[56] NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen stresses that Russia's invasion of Crimea is a "wake-up" call for the international community and highlights that NATO will consider increasing its assistance to Ukraine.[57]

However, while the statements from the international community are provocative, they are certainly not the first statements of dissatisfaction and frustration from the international community in regards to the role Russia has played in the Crimea situation; furthermore, to this point, the comments and actions of the international community have had little success in deterring Russia from intervening and getting involved first-hand in Crimea.

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[54] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm
[55] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm
[56] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm
[57] http://ukraine.csis.org/crimea.htm

Appendix: Source Data

A total of 73 speeches represented the three actor groups analyzed in this study. Ten speeches represented the pro-Russian Crimean government (Table 6). 25 speeches represented the Putin government (Table 7), although only 15 speeches delivered by Putin (Table 8) were used since only those demonstrated statistical patterns in leading indicators. Finally, 33 speeches by the pro-Russian president of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovych, were used before his ouster from government (Table 9). Each speech was coded (themes/rhetorical devices and their associated language identified) by at least two coders.

Table 6. Pro-Russian Crimean Government Speeches

Document	Date	Word_Count
2014.02.26_Crimea_Vladimir Konstantinov_02	2/26/14	37
2014.03.07_Crimea_Sergey Aksyonov_01	3/7/14	2139
2014.04.14_Crimea_Alexi Chaly_02	4/14/14	679
2014.05.04_Crimea_Vladimir Konstantinov_01	5/4/14	47
Sergey Aksyonov_01	3/7/14	2058
Sergey Aksyonov_02	9/22/14	1284
Sergey Aksyonov_03	3/16/15	166
Vladimir Konstantinov_01	10/31/14	1648
Vladimir Konstantinov_02	12/17/14	1917
Vladimir Konstantinov_03	1/20/15	1292

Table 7. Putin Government Speeches Analyzed in Crimean Annexation

Document	Date	Word_Count
2013.12.12_Putin Govt_Vladimir Putin_03	12/12/13	9358
2013.12.15_Putin Govt_Dmitry Medvedev_02	12/15/13	6332
2013.12.24_Putin Govt_Sergey Lavrov_03	12/24/13	4661
2013.12.26_Putin Govt_Sergey Lavrov_02	12/26/13	2210
2013.12.31_Putin Govt_Vladimir Putin_05	12/31/13	596
2014.01.22_Putin Govt_Dmitry Medvedev_01	1/22/14	4715
2014.01.28_Putin Govt_Vladimir Putin_07	1/28/14	1767
2014.02.04_Putin Govt_Vladimir Putin_06	2/4/14	847
2014.02.13_Putin Govt_Sergey Lavrov_04	2/13/14	2911
2014.02.20_Putin Govt_Sergey Lavrov_05	2/20/14	875
2014.02.24_Putin Govt_Dmitry Medvedev_03	2/24/14	2023
2014.03.18_Putin Govt_Vladimir Putin_01	3/18/14	5246
2014.06.06_Putin Govt_Vladimir Putin_02	6/6/14	1780

Table 8. Vladimir Putin Speeches

Case_Study	Document_Name	Date	Word_Count
Crimea	2013.12.12_Putin Govt_Vladimir Putin_03	12/12/13	9358
Crimea	2013.12.31_Putin Govt_Vladimir Putin_05	12/31/13	596
Crimea	2014.01.28_Putin Govt_Vladimir Putin_07	1/28/14	1767
Crimea	2014.02.04_Putin Govt_Vladimir Putin_06	2/4/14	847
Crimea	2014.03.18_Putin Govt_Vladimir Putin_01	3/18/14	5246
Ukraine	Vladmir Putin_02	6/6/14	1780
Ukraine	Vladmir Putin_03	8/15/14	794
Ukraine	Vladmir Putin_04	8/27/14	1135
Ukraine	Vladmir Putin_05	9/3/14	757
Ukraine	Vladmir Putin_06	9/12/14	1992
Ukraine	Vladmir Putin_08	11/16/14	3227
Ukraine	Vladmir Putin_10	12/6/14	655
Ukraine	Vladmir Putin_12	2/17/15	3165
Ukraine	Vladmir Putin_13	3/20/15	936
Ukraine	Vladmir Putin_14	4/8/15	2088

Table 9. Pro-Russian Ukrainian President Yanukovych Speeches

Document	Date	Word_Count
2013.08.24_Ukraine_Viktor Yanukovych 33	8/24/13	1136
2013.08.29_Ukraine_Viktor Yanukovych 01	8/29/13	105
2013.08.29_Ukraine_Viktor Yanukovych 02	8/29/13	138
2013.08.30_Ukraine_Viktor Yanukovych 03	8/30/13	73
2013.08.30_Ukraine_Viktor Yanukovych 04	8/30/13	86
2013.08.30_Ukraine_Viktor Yanukovych 05	8/30/13	63
2013.09.02_Ukraine_Viktor Yanukovych 06	9/2/13	101
2013.09.08_Ukraine_Viktor Yanukovych 07	9/8/13	275
2013.09.12_Ukraine_Viktor Yanukovych 08	9/12/13	271
2013.09.25_Ukraine_Viktor Yanukovych 09	9/25/13	55
2013.10.15_Ukraine_Viktor Yanukovych 34	10/15/13	110
2013.10.17_Ukraine_Viktor Yanukovych 10	10/17/13	126
2013.10.17_Ukraine_Viktor Yanukovych 11	10/17/13	60
2013.10.18_Ukraine_Viktor Yanukovych 12	10/18/13	126
2013.10.25_Ukraine_Viktor Yanukovych 13	10/25/13	102
2013.11.06_Ukraine_Viktor Yanukovych 14	11/6/13	140
2013.11.14_Ukraine_Viktor Yanukovych 15	11/14/13	110
2013.11.15_Ukraine_Viktor Yanukovych 16	11/15/13	98
2013.11.25_Ukraine_Viktor Yanukovych 17	11/25/13	124
2013.11.25_Ukraine_Viktor Yanukovych 18	11/25/13	119
2013.11.26_Ukraine_Viktor Yanukovych 19	11/26/13	78
2013.11.26_Ukraine_Viktor Yanukovych 20	11/26/13	152
2013.11.27_Ukraine_Viktor Yanukovych 21	11/27/13	66
2013.11.27_Ukraine_Viktor Yanukovych 22	11/27/13	1082

2013.11.27_Ukraine_Viktor Yanukovych 23	11/27/13	105
2013.11.27_Ukraine_Viktor Yanukovych 24	11/27/13	99
2013.11.28_Ukraine_Viktor Yanukovych 25	11/28/13	89
2013.11.29_Ukraine_Viktor Yanukovych 26	11/29/13	110
2013.12.02_Ukraine_Viktor Yanukovych 27	12/2/13	135
2013.12.02_Ukraine_Viktor Yanukovych 28	12/2/13	55
2013.12.02_Ukraine_Viktor Yanukovych 29	12/2/13	130
2013.12.02_Ukraine_Viktor Yanukovych 30	12/2/13	92
2013.12.05_Ukraine_Viktor Yanukovych 31	12/5/13	90
2013.12.10_Ukraine_Viktor Yanukovych 32	12/10/13	664

Appendix: Gray Zone Code System

Code System
Agreements
G20
Minsk_Agreements
Polities_Regions_Organizations
Abkhazia
Afghanistan
Arctic_Far_North
Armenia
ASEAN
Asia
Austria
Azerbaijan
Balkans
Baltics
Belarus
Brazil
BRICS
Britain_UK
Bulgaria
Caucasus
Central Asia
Chechnya
China
Crimea
Cyprus
Czechoslovakia
Czech_Republic
Donbass
Donetsk
E_Ukraine
Estonia
EU
Europe
Finland
France
Georgia
Germany
Greece
Hong Kong
Hungary
India
Iran
Iraq

ISAF
Italy
Japan
Jordan
Kalingrad
Kazakhstan
Kyrgyzstan
Latin_America
Latvia
Lebanon
Libya
Lithuania
Luhansk
Malaysia
MENA
Moldova
Mongolia
Nagorno_Karabakh
NATO
North Korea
OSCE
Philippines
Poland
Romania
Russia
Russian_America_[Alaska]
Siberia_Far_East
Slovakia
South China Sea
South Korea
South_Ossetia
Soviet_Union
Spain
Sweden
Syria
Tajikistan
Taiwan
Thailand
Transnistria
Turkey
Ukraine
UN
US
Vietnam
Western_World
Yugoslavia
Denmark
Guam
Norway
Portugal

		Switzerland
	Cultural_Emotive_Values	
		Negative_Extreme_Emotive
		Aggressor_Aggression
		Conspiracy
		Danger
		Enemy
		Humiliation
		Injustice
		Manichean_Evil
		Shame
		Threaten
		Threatened
		Victimization
		Xenophobia
		Negative_Normal_Emotive
		Anti-Western
		Competition
		Conflict
		Corruption
		Criminal_Illegal
		Denial
		Extreme_Radical
		Failure
		Grievance
		Imperialism
		Isolation
		Lying
		Outrage
		Weakness
		Women_Innocents
		Positive_Extreme_Emotive
		Dignity
		Duty_Obligation
		Heroism
		Homeland
		Honor
		Independence
		Justice
		National_Identity
		Overcoming
		Preparedness
		Pride
		Protect
		Religion
		Resilience
		Sacrifice
		Self-defense
		Strength
		Superiority

		Victory	
	Positive_Normal_Emotive		
		Confidence	
		Courage	
		Democratic	
		Equality_Rights	
		Hope	
		Legitimacy	
		Peace	
		Progress	
		Respect	
		Stability	
		Success	
		Tolerance	
		Trust	
		Unity	
Events			
	CharlieHebdo		
	Cold War		
	Color_Revolutions		
	G20		
	Maidan_Square		
	MH17		
	WWII		
Individuals			
	Obama		
	Poroshenko		
	Putin		
	Stalin		
Political_Factors			
	Positive_Cohesive_Concerns		
		Allies	
		Cooperation	
		Domestic Development	
		Economy_and_Trade	
		Foregin Aid_Investment	
		Foreign Aid	
		Formal Agreement	
		Friendship	
		Governance	
		Humanitarian_Aid	
		Political_Process	
		Political_Reform	
		Support	
		Domestic_Development	
		Foreign_Aid_Investment	
	Disruptive Security Concerns		
		Annexation	
		Atrocity	

		Borders_Territory	
		Conflict	
			Gray_Zone_Activities
			Rebellion_Resistence
			Terrorism
			War
		Coup	
		Crime	
		Cyber_Attacks	
		Economic_Problems	
		Economic_Sanctions	
		Energy	
			Nuclear_Energy
			Oil_Gas_Other
		Extremism	
		Violation_International	
		Island Building	
		Media_Propaganda	
		Military	
			Materiel
			Miilitary_Operations
			Occupation_Invasion
			Troops_Fighters
			Regular_Troops
			Irregular_Fighters
			Weapons_Nuclear
		Nationalism	
		NATO_Expansion	
		Nazism	
		Prisoners	
		Protests	
		Refugees	
		Separatism	
		Sovereignty	
	Other_Security_Concerns		
		Article5	
		Ceasefire	
		Civilians	
		Infrastructure	
		Novorossiya	
		Oligarchs_Elites	
		Reunification	
		Russian_Minorities	
		Security	
Rhetorical_Devices			
	Accusation		
	Counterargument_Comparison		
	Dehumanization		

Ethos_Credibility
Example
Figurative_Language
Graphic_Violence
Grouping
History
Hyperbole
If_Statements
Intensifiers
Intimacy
Kinship
Lexicalization
List
Logos
Magnitude
Misinformation
Other_Outgroup
Pathos
Pejorative
Poetry
Quote
Repetition
Rhetorical_Question
Sarcasm_Irony
Title
Us_Ingroup
Veiled_Threat

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