POLITICAL DISCOURSE IN PUTIN'S RUSSIA: AN ANALYSIS OF NATIONALIST AND POPULIST RHETORIC IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESSES TO RUSSIAN PARLIAMENT (2000 – 2019)

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ABSTRACT

On March 18, 2018 Vladimir Putin received 76% of the popular vote in Russia's presidential election. This level of electoral unity had not been observed since the Soviet-era 'elections without selection' process. In the present study we seek to identify and analyze the discourse- forming strategies with the most impact used by Vladimir Putin (and to a lesser extent, Dmitry Medvedev) to foster political consensus among the diverse Russian populous and secure electoral support for their presidencies through the first quarter of the 21st century. By critically examining the 19 presidential addresses to the Russian Parliament from 2000 through 2019 and comparing the intent and tone of each individual sentence to the classic rhetorical triad of nationalism by Levinger and Lytle along with the distribution of five specific populous narratives, we attempt to describe and partially explain the continued popular support for Putin's regime. The analysis shows that the Russian Presidents use of nationalistic and populistic rhetoric intentionally fluctuates throughout the two decades of analysis and correlates with the occurrence of several historical events.

KEYWORDS: Presidential elections in Russia; Societal Consensus; Populist Rhetoric, Populist Discourse; Nationalist Rhetoric, Nationalist Discourse

INTRODUCTION

Vladimir Putin became acting president of Russia on December 31, 1999 when Boris Yeltsin resigned and then, the following May, assumed the formal duties of the office. Four years later in 2004 he was reelected to his second term and, at the end of which in 2008, his successor Dmitry Medvedev took the lead. It was early in his term (specifically on Tuesday December 23, 2008) that President Medvedev signed a law extending the presidential term from four years to six years effective with the next presidency. Three years later, in September of 2011, Putin announced he would seek a third term as president and won the March 2012 presidential election with 64% of the vote. Six years after that he earned 76% of the March 2018 presidential vote and was reelected for another six-year term that will expire in 2024. Vladimir Putin's electoral successes in 2012 and 2018 did not surprise western scholars, but the stamina of his regime and his continued popularity has been an object of analysis for some time (Sakwa 2015, Way 2015, Colton 2017).

This paper deals with some specifics of nationalism and populism but in a broad sense they can be generally defined as follows. Nationalism can be considered as an ideological movement for maintaining autonomy by a group of people who simply deem themselves to be a nation, whereas populism is more of a belief that instincts and wishes are legitimate guides to political action by a group of people who distrust politicians and political elites. (Smith 2000, Heywood 2003).

Building on the theory of collective action framework and applying the constructivist and instrumentalist approaches to solving the collective action problems, the present inquiry seeks to identify the rhetorical strategies that explain how Putin's regime maintains a monopoly that motivates the various political actors and benefits the established status quo while, at the same time, demobilizes any potential opposition. Specifically, in this study, we analyzed and coded the

4171 significant (non-neutral) sentences of the 19 presidential addresses to the Russian Parliament between 2000 and 2019 into one of three categories of the classic rhetorical triad of nationalism (Levinger and Lytle 2001) and one of five general tactic categories of populism with the intent of tracing the process of intentional discourse construction and delivery that has assured popular support for the leadership of Putin and his political regime.

A growing number of analytical studies have explored possible links between Vladimir Putin's popularity and Russian national discourse (Makarychev 2014, Koteyko & Ryazanova- Clarke 2009, Hale 2017, Marlangen, Tallapessy, & Diana, 2014, Remizov 2015) and these attempts have proven to be insightful, but most however, focused only on the descriptive qualitative analysis of a specific speech at a specific time. Only limited scholarly attention has attempted to capture the temporal dynamics of discursive narratives used by the Russian presidents, an item specific to the base of this study.

Research Question and General Design

According to Chapter 84 paragraph 'e' of the Russian Constitution, the president is to make an annual address to both chambers of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation (the Russian Parliament) and inform the parliament members about the current state of affairs in the country and establish the foreign and domestic policy agenda for the upcoming year. Form, style and content of the yearly addresses is not mandated by any legislative act and, for the most part, is within the purview of the president. A notable exception to this, however, is law number 5, dated July 20, 1995 titled 'On the State Forecasting and Programs of Socio-Economic Development of the Russian Federation'. This law requires that presidential addresses include a section containing analysis of completion of socio-economic development programs. Before 2014, the members of the Cabinet, along with associates of the president's administration, were involved with working on the presidential addresses, but beginning in 2015 the compiling, editing and fact-checking has been done exclusively by the administration.

The location of the presentation of presidential addresses is not legislatively mandated either and has changed. From 1994 through 2008 the reading of the presidential address took place in the Marble Hall of the Kremlin, but in 2009 president Dmitry Medvedev moved this annual event to the Georgievski Hall of the Great Kremlin Palace and then, at the end of his third presidential term, Vladimir Putin ordered the relocation of the reading of the 2018 presidential address (the one that was initially scheduled for December of 2017) back into the Exhibition Hall, the Manezh. This change was officially explained as an effort to increase the live audience and to accommodate usage of the visual demonstrations (infographics) during the presentation (Metzel', 2018). It did not go unnoticed that this particular presidential address had been delayed from December to March, just days before the next election.

At its core, the intent of this paper is to analyze Putin's rhetorical toolbox and explore the methods with which he and his regime combine nationalist and populist discourse strategies to mobilize the policy support of the Russian public while demobilizing the efforts of any opponents. In a general sense we asked how the official rhetoric of the Russian president (either Putin or to a lesser extent Medvedev) evolved throughout their (almost) two decades in office since the resignation of Boris Yeltsin. Did their usage of the Levinger/Lytle classic rhetorical triad of nationalism and comments regarding the populist narratives appear randomly throughout, or was their delivery and timing of these rhetorical practices concurrent with certain political and historical events?

To explore these issues, we downloaded the original Russian language parliamentary speeches from 2000 through 2019, organized them into individual sentences and then coded each sentence with regard to its intent, tone and demeanor as it might pertain to the rhetorical triad of nationalism and the basic signifiers of populism. Once coded, various statistical tests were performed to determine if significant differences were present in what occurred and what was expected. The observation of any outliers was attempted to be matched with the timing of historical events of a political nature.

Discussion and Coding of the Rhetorical Triad of Nationalism

The three elements of the rhetorical triad of nationalism identified in the classic study by Levinger and Lytle (2001) are defined and operationalized in the present work as follows:

The Glorious Past (Coded 1)
The glorious past is a mythical notion of the primordial golden age when the original nation existed as a homogeneous, prosperous, and harmonious community, unified by traditional universal values (Smith, 2000). As the story goes, the only conflicts were brought upon this pure original nation by the external enemies who rejected its traditional universal values. These acts of external aggression took away many lives and caused enormous suffering to everyone in the nation but were always overcome through national unification and heroic struggle for collective survival (Smith 2013). Any reference to these collective memories is designed to provoke strong emotional responses in the

audience such as collective pride, anger at the enemies, and determination to act upon the perceived creed that supposedly corresponds to the national identity (Sweet 2016). Examples of such rhetoric are particularly abundant in Putin's presidential address of 2015, which was the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II, culturally referred to as the 'Great Patriotic War'. For instance:

The strength of Russia is in a free development of all nations, in diversity and harmony of cultures, languages and our traditions; in mutual respect, in a dialogue among Orthodox [Christians], Muslims, Jewish, and Buddhists. It is our duty to ruthlessly stand up to any manifestation of extremism and xenophobia and preserve an inter-national and inter-religious consensus. This is the historical foundation of our society and the Russian statehood (Putin 2015, 75-78).

References to the Glorious Past are common throughout the speeches and are used to evoke a sense of inclusion and collective pride among the listeners.

The Degraded Present (Coded 2)
The degraded present is a negative representation of reality evoked by the speaker. It results with the majority of the message recipients relating to their memories about personal negative experiences or experiences shared with them by a third party. These negative portrayals of the present are inevitably attributed to a cataclysmic event or a series of traumatic experiences that, at some point in the past, ended the Golden Age, shattered national unity, and possibly even destroyed the existing collective identity (Stoegner & Wodak 2016). A key vector of this element of the rhetorical triad is to identify the responsible third party—neither the messenger nor the recipient—who either intentionally brought this malaise on the nation or simply allowed it to happen. The bleaker the presented picture of the degraded present, the greater the perceived differential with the glorious past, and the higher the emotional impact on the target audience when the speaker offers hope. The major intent behind using this rhetorical tool has to do with mobilizing emotions of the listeners to awaken and strengthen their fear, and then offering some hope to achieve security through trusting in the leadership of the speaker. In his 2003 speech Putin refers the Chechen terrorist attack at the Tushino airfield on July 5th and the suicide bombing in Red Square on December 9th and executes a dual threaded message admirably by saying

'Russia has happened to be one of the first countries that faced the large-scale threat of international terrorism. As we all know, not too long ago it threatened the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation' (Putin, 2003, 372-373) and then following with a second thread as 'After the well-known horrible tragedies that took place as a result of terrorist acts the anti-terrorist coalition was formed in the world' (Putin 2003, 374).

Putin's choice of words evokes the emotional effects of consolidation, unity and outrage just as intended. (See Table 1)

The Utopian Future (Coded 3)

The utopian future component of the nationalist triad regards the story of a nation's redemption through collective action, overcoming present degradation and restoration of the nation's identity. Though, (for the sake believability), the calls to 'bring back the Golden age' are not usually a part of the nationalists' agenda for the future, the promise of restoration of the nation's greatness (extremely vague description by intent) is a critical mobilizing component of the triadic rhetorical structure. The nation's greatness may not be defined at all or could be explained through deferral to other ambiguous terms, such as rebuilding status of a great power, reinstating of the traditional value system, or (on the contrary) purification of the national composition. Unlike the glorious past or degraded present, which are intended to build upon common grounds and raise emotional tension among the prospective followers, the promise of a utopian future is not something that audiences can identify with from their experiences. In fact, the possible futuristic scenario must be constructed through two types of discourse threads—the first being a thread connecting the message sender with his or her audience and the second being multiple interactions among the recipients of the message. This distinction is very important and designed to inspire and direct a specific collective action, which would make the utopian future possible. An example of a sentence coded as utopian future is the following from Putin's lengthy 2018 presentation:

> 'In the coming years, it is our goal to further strengthen this unity so that we are one team that understands that change is necessary and is ready to devote its energy, knowledge, experience and talents to achieving common goals.'
> (Putin 2018, 764)

This sentence exemplifies the three types of narratives used throughout the presidential addresses to create the perception of a utopian future in the mind of the listeners: laying out collective objectives, motivating collective action and expressing confidence in the nation's abilities to achieve the objectives through the collective action. The speaker obviously wants the audience to feel very positive about strengthening unity and devoting resources toward achievement of common goals. The specific emotions being called upon are optimism about the nation's future, confidence in the nation's abilities and excitement about being a part of the nation's destiny.

Table 1
Coding Criteria for the Rhetorical Triad of Nationalism

Rhetorical Triad Elements	Typical Narrative Content	Targeted Listener Emotional Response	Specific Emotions meant to be evoked in the listeners
Glorious Past [Coded 1]	References to well-known historical events or quotes from the works of respected famous individuals of the past	Primarily positive	Sense of inclusion, collective prided or resolve to be 'worthy' of the great national heritage.
Degraded Present [Coded 2]	Highlighting present (or relatively recent) injustices against the nation or references to selected historical instances of mass suffering or placing the blame for national degradation on some particular factor.	Primarily negative	Aggrieved entitlement to return to superpower status or outrage with those who are perceived to be responsible for the nation's decline or intense desire to punish the guilty.
Utopian Future [Coded 3]	Calls to collective action to bring about unity or laying out the plan for the national revival or implying that the audience understands what it takes to change the existing situation for the better. Promises of general changes or specific actions and relating them to desirable outcomes or expressing the speaker's confidence in the nation's capabilities.	Highly positive	Optimism toward the future and willingness to trust the speaker. Confidence in the speaker's ability to lead. Excitement in anticipation of reaping future benefits and willingness to act on the speaker's agenda

Table 1 illustrates the three major criteria used in this study for identifying each of the elements of the rhetorical triad. Three of these criteria were used to distinguish and code the sentences addressing either the Glorious Past (GP), the Degraded Present (DP), or the Utopian Future (UF). The first criterion deals with common patterns of narratives that are likely to be used by the speaker to make a reference to any one of the elements of the triadic structure. The second criterion deals with the speaker attempting to evoke a specific emotional response from the audience, which is usually negative toward the degraded present and, to varying degrees, positive toward glorious past and utopian future. The third criterion deals with identifying the speaker's intent to evoke specific emotions in the majority of the listeners, such as collective pride for the past victories, anger toward

the nation's enemies, or sources of national decay, or hopefulness and optimism for the nation's great future.

Discussion and Coding of the Populist Rhetoric

In 1999 Vladimir Putin came to power in a country with a devastated economy, demographic crisis, and social discord. In his article 'Russia at the Brink of a Millennia' Putin characterized Russia as a country that 'has used up its limit for political and socio-economic shocks, cataclysms, and radical transformations' (Putin 1999). He also characterized the gloomy condition of the Russian society as 'split and internally disintegrated', while calling for national reconciliation without official ideology. In retrospect some observers described the Kremlin's policy of that time as aimed toward overcoming and downplaying social divisions rather than building an ideational consensus. Major efforts had been invested in demobilizing and pacifying the Russian populous but not on building civil accord. The latter would require a thick and compelling ideological basis which was nearly impossible to sell to the Russian people, who were still recovering from the collapse of communism and disappointment with the premises of social democracy (Sakwa 2015). Also, a solid ideological foundation just happened to be the missing piece of most populist politics, which on its own displays some ambiguous ideation traits of ideological discourse (Stanley 2008).

As it was so eloquently argued by Robinson and Milne (2017), Vladimir Putin did not come to power as a populist, but in his effort to safeguard against potential electoral shocks he soon resorted to proto-populist rhetoric by the end of his first presidential term spearheading it against the powerful economic interests and influential regional elites (Robinson and Milne 2017). The populist frames and discursive practices, however, did not become the major instrument of Putin's regime until after the failure of Medvedev's modernization program and economic shocks of the Great Recession (Robinson, 2014) and Putin's triumphant return to presidency in 2012 was seriously jeopardized by the December 2011 mass protests and electoral fraud allegations.

After initially coding for the nationalist triad, we coded the same sentences again, but this time identified the use of five populist narratives pertaining to shared values, looming problems, the speaker's promises, the speaker taking credit for his accomplishments, and the speaker awarding credit to the benevolent actors, the members of the 'us' group.

Common Values (Coded 4)

References to Common Values such as those relating to tradition like family, loyalty, sacrifice, economic growth, research innovations and overcoming natural and/or manmade disasters is intended to evoke a sense of collective pride, belonging and inclusion. An example from Putin's 2000 speech is this:

> Increase of responsibilities among the leaders of the Federation subjects and
> legislative assemblies needs to be accompanied by the increase of

responsibilities among the municipal heads (2000, 382).

And from his 2005 speech he said:

> I am convinced that without following moral standards, broadly recognized in the civilized world, modern Russian businesses cannot be counted as being respectable (2005, 345)

Late in his most recent term as president Putin offers this:

> It is specifically the engagement of the people into affairs of the country and civil responsibility, as well as cultural, moral, and spiritual values that make us a unified people, who is capable of achieving great goals (2018, 324)

All in all the use of Common Values adds a positive and optimistic outlook on the matter and Putin incorporates this strategy quite effectively.

Looming Problems (Coded 5)

Several times throughout the 19 speeches, comments regarding impending economic crises, problematic environmental issues and continued terrorism enter into the rhetoric. The intent with the use of the Looming Problems strategy is to evoke a sense of fear, desperation, frustration, anger and a desire for retribution among the populous. As one might imagine the emotional response from the listeners is generally negative. Examples from three of Putin's speeches are these:

> It was very recently when it could be heard everywhere that the [Russian] army is in the state of decomposition and that in the military sphere we cannot count on any noticeable progress (2001, 68)

> I'd like to note that with such [negative] attitude to the work at hand, with such fear of making a responsible choice—here, of course, we do not mean the 'stagnation times' large-scale projects—we will be unable to move forward quickly and get into the next level (2003, 298)

> [My] Colleagues here understand well why this is happening, why the issue is still not resolved—it is due to a very corrupt environment. That is the problem. (2013, 171-172)

As can be seen Putin is direct with his message and incorporates skill with his delivery to evoke negative emotions.

Promises (Coded 6)

The discussion of Promises generally involves matters concerning statements of intended actions or explanation of alleged benefits or seeking approval and support from the audience or appearing to consult with the audience regarding intended actions—as if talking with them rather than talking to them. In sentence 422 of his 2003 speech he says

> Beginning in 2008 the duration of [mandatory] military service will be reduced to one year. (2003, 422).

Two other examples from two other speeches are these:

Overall this positive generating strategy regarding the intent of making promises encourages the listeners, raises their spirits and secures their trust in the speaker's ability to act. Many times a sentence containing this positive Promises strategy follows closely behind one discussing looming Problems.

Taking Credit (Coded 7)

When the speaker takes credit for some event or action a positive emotional response is the intent. Tactics might include reporting on difficulties that had to be overcome to provide the benefits or explaining the disastrous outcomes that were prevented as a result of the speaker's efforts or strategy. Examples of such sentences are these:

> Russia has already made headways in creating a business-friendly climate. (2014, 192)

> You know I have to say a few words about what is really happening, what we have here and what we have achieved. The natural growth of the population [in Russia] continues. (2016, 67-68)

> We now have a powerful buffer of financial security and I am pleased to inform you about this. For the first time in history our [foreign currency] reserves exceed not only our relatively small foreign debt, but also the debt of the commercial sector (2019, 364-366).

Putin is knowledgeable about the business sector and the demographics and understands how to use the tactics appropriately.

Giving Credit (Coded 8)

The complement of taking credit is giving it and Putin understands that this will generate highly positive emotional responses. Sentences that acknowledge members of some group for some appropriate achievement or accomplishment that benefited the entire group or awarding status to deserving members of a group are such examples. Three example sentence threads that were coded as Giving Credit are as follows:

> Today I am particularly thanking the Chechen people. For fearlessness. For not allowing yourselves to be deceived in the past or today. For wisdom, which is always present in simple but sensitive to the truth people (2003, 89-92).

> One more time I'd like to congratulate our Olympics champions with this success. And, of course, my best wishes extend to our Para-Olympics participants. Dear friends, you became the true heroes of Russia! (2014, 364-366)

> Thanks to the applied research of the Russian scientists we achieved self-sufficiency in wheat seed production (2019, 411).

Among the five populist strategies Putin's use of this one is not uncommon.

Drawing upon the rapidly growing research of populist discursive practices we identified five discursive narratives used in presidential addresses to evoke the audience identification or relatability through the feelings of fear, anxiety, desire and hope (Solomon 2013, Levinger 2017, Skonieczny 2018). The five identified populist narratives, their identification criteria, and anticipated emotional responses are shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Coding Criteria for the Populist Rhetoric Signifiers

Populist Signifiers	Typical Narrative Content	Targeted Listener Emotional Response	Specific Emotions meant to be evoked in the listeners

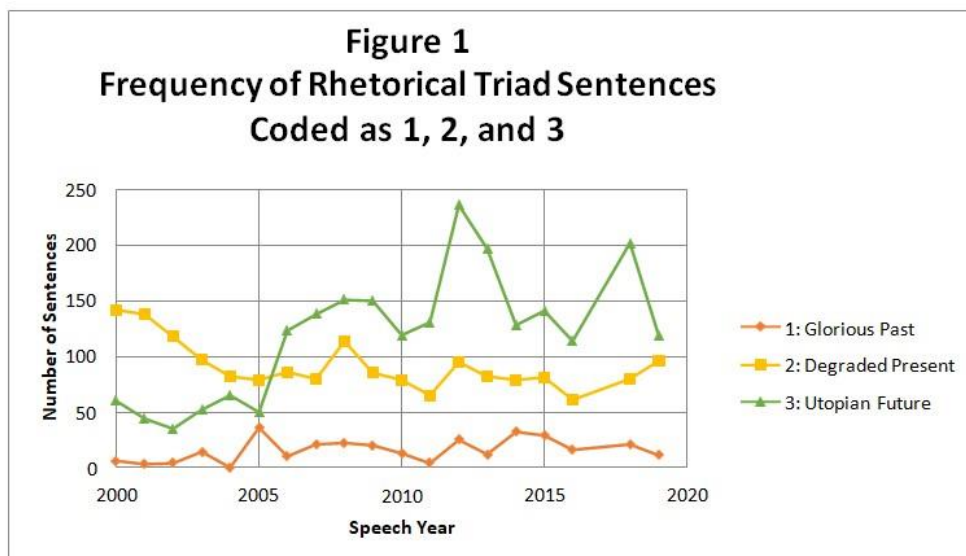|			
Common Values [Coded 4]	References to traditional values (family, loyalty, sacrifice) or modern values (economic growth, research, innovations, overcoming natural and man-made disasters) or post-industrial values (quality of life, human capital, future of the mankind);	Primarily positive	Collective pride and sense of belonging and inclusion. A feeling of deficiency and a longing for a stable sense of self
Speaker mentions Looming Problems/ Malicious Actors [Coded 5]	Scapegoating internal enemies (disloyal, entitled, illegitimate elites, oligarchs, corrupt bureaucrats) or transgressions (economic crisis, dangerous international environment, terrorism, hostile countries);	Primarily negative	Fear, despair, frustration, anger or desire for retribution;
Speaker Makes Promises [Coded 6]	Statements of intended actions or explanation of alleged benefits or seeking approval and support from the audience or appearing to consult with audience regarding intended actions;	Highly positive	Optimism toward future, trust in speaker's ability to achieve outcomes. Security about the future; willingness to aid in completing the speaker's agenda
Speaker Takes Credit [Coded 7]	Report of positive outcomes as the result of speaker's efforts; reporting on difficulties that were overcome to provide benefits; explaining disastrous outcomes prevented by the speaker's efforts or strategy.	Highly Positive	Gratitude for escaping worse outcomes and satisfaction from received benefits. Confidence in speaker's leadership and desire to secure received benefits and prevent transgressions in the future.
Speaker Awards Credit [Coded 8]	Acknowledging a member's group for achievements benefiting the entire group; awarding status to deserving members for accomplishments	Highly Positive	Group pride by association and sense of belonging to the group. Taking cues regarding the behavior that is acknowledged and rewarded by the group.

Methodology

There are many approaches to critical discourse analysis and one criticism is that many attempts have no analysis associated with them (Van Dijk 2015). With our approach we downloaded the 19

individual speeches (in their original Russian) from the official Kremlin.ru website, stripped them of excessive spaces and redundant headings, added a double line return code at the end of each sentence and otherwise prepared them for coding. The MSWord document was then copied and pasted into an Excel file where code counts, summations, and other basic statistics could be more easily performed. Once prepared, each sentence was coded twice—once for nationalism and once for popularism. An example of a portion of the 2005 speech is shown in Appendix A and a summary of all 10,128 coded sentence combinations is given in Appendix B.

The Nationalist Rhetoric in Presidential Addresses

The frequencies by speech year of the three elements of the rhetorical triad of nationalism are shown in Figure 1. The number of sentences evoking collective memories with mentioning the Glorious Past (GP) appeared to remain relatively infrequent, but consistently present throughout the nineteen-year regime's existence. References to the Glorious Past reached a high in 2005 which happened to be the 65th anniversary of the victory in WWII, the Great Patriotic War as it had been labeled by the Soviet propaganda. Generally speaking, World War II is the only event in Russian history that is not a subject of controversy, but a subject that remains at the forefront in contemporary public debate (Lipman 2019).

The spike of Utopian Future references in 2012 coincided with Vladimir Putin's return to power after the Medvedev's presidential term. The next spike is observed in 2018 which took place just two weeks prior to Putin being reelected for his fourth presidential term. This speech was unusually lengthy with 839 individual sentences (the maximum of any speech analyzed), was visually aided and made media headlines throughout the world as the accompanied videos depicted new military weaponry allegedly either being developed or already in possession of Russia's armed forces.

Figure 1
Frequency of Rhetorical Triad Sentences
Coded as 1, 2, and 3

1: Glorious Past
2: Degraded Present
3: Utopian Future

Note: No speech was given in 2017

Finally, another observation that can be drawn from Figure 1 is that mentioning of the Degraded Present (DP) was at its peak level in 2000 and 2001 when Putin just assumed presidency for the first time. Since that peak the DP comment frequencies have decreased to a low in 2016 with a small spike in 2008 when Medvedev made a speech regarding the global recession impacting the Russian economy.

The Populist Rhetoric in Presidential Addresses

The number of references to common shared values (see Figure 2) peaked to an all-time high of 222 sentences (32.7% of that speech) in December of 2008 when Dmitry Medvedev made his first presidential address. Much of that unifying and pride-inspiring rhetoric was related to justification of military involvement in South Ossetia and 'the responsibility to protect our brothers and sisters in the near abroad' with attempts to gauge support for his modernization reform and come out even stronger from the international economic crisis. It is interesting to note that another spike in use of common value narratives, though not so dramatic with only 146 sentences (24.6% of that speech), was emulated by Vladimir Putin in 2012 as he returned for his third presidential term.
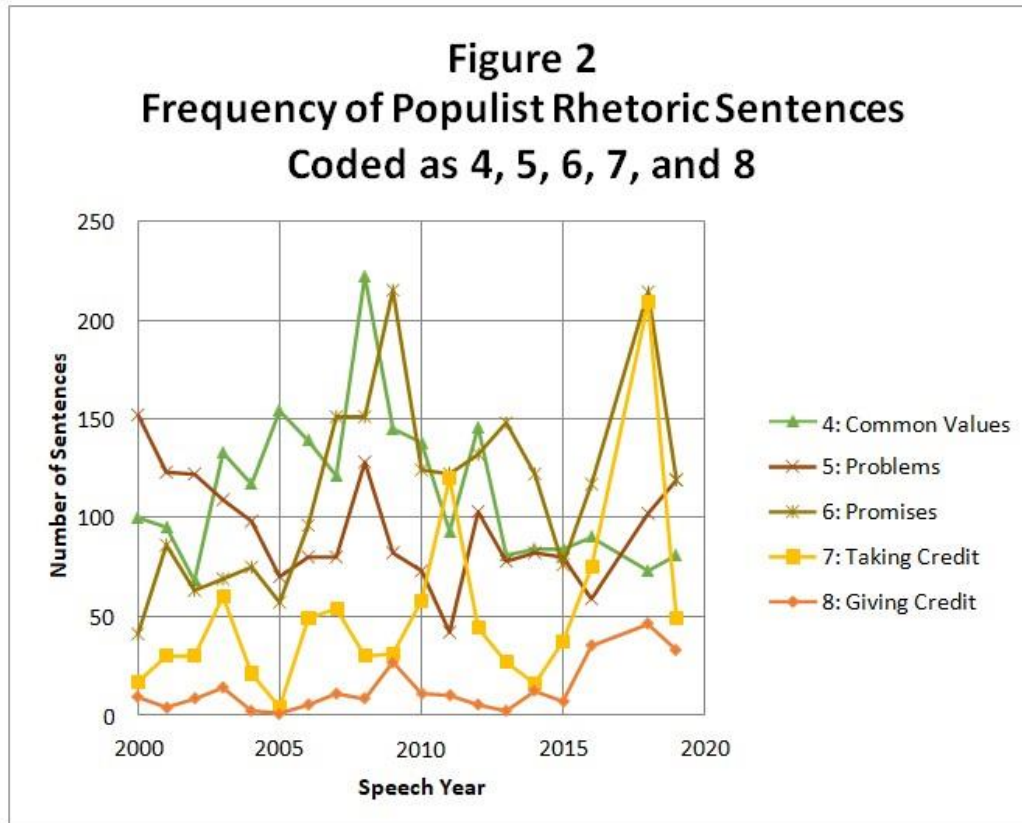
Unlike the Common Values populist narrative, the usage frequency of Looming Problems began with all-time high (at 152 in 2000), decreased steadily through Putin's first two terms and went on an up-and-down rollercoaster as the Putin's regime's support needed periodic boost from the scare tactics. Specifically, in the 2008 Medvedev address, 128 sentences were focused on alleged international hostility toward Georgian breakaway region of Abkhazia with the UN backing a Georgian claim that Russia shot down one of its unmanned drones over Abkhazia. The next peak of fear-mongering is associated with the 2012 Putin's address where he reflects on the aftermath of the global economic recession as well as insinuates the U.S. interference during Russia's parliamentary election in December 2011, which was followed by mass protests in Moscow and St. Petersburg.

The speaker's promises narrative peaked twice during the observed period: in 2009 with Medvedev making 215 statements (27.8% of the speech) and in 2018 with Putin making 214 comments (27.8%) many of which (142) were matched with a utopian future message. The first spike has to do with Dmitry Medvedev's futile attempt to reinvigorate his failing modernization program, while the second one is related to 2018 Putin's preelectoral speech.

The Taking Credit populist narrative seems to perfectly mirror the presidential electoral cycle with two relatively modest increases in 2003 with a count of 60, and in 2007 with a count of 53. These are followed by a doubling in 2011 with a count of 120, and then a maximum spike in 2018 with 209 sentences noted as taking credit.

Finally, Giving Credit narratives reflects the intensity with which Putin's regime seeks to attract and keep the loyalties of its supporters, which is an indirect indicator of the regime's internal cohesion. Putin's electoral strategy of being the 'only game in town' met serious opposition in 2011 for the

first time, the year in which we see the number of Giving Credit references being at a relatively low value of 10. This tactic continued to decline through to 2013 when it bottomed out with only two sentences (out of 472) devoted to Giving Credit. Then, as the next election cycle approached, the comments increased to a high of 46 in 2018 (6.0%). The next year it backed off to 33.

Figure 2
Frequency of Populist Rhetoric Sentences
Coded as 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8

Note: No speech was given in 2017

The overall usage of the five populist narratives suggests that Putin's regime is increasingly uncomfortable with electoral uncertainy. It also appears that presidential addresses are written and delivered strategically with an intention to construct, deconstruct, or redirect official political debate in Russia through targeting specific emotional responses from their audience. The regime has been attempting to rally and mobilize its grateful supporters prior to the presidential elections (through 'taking credit' and 'giving credit'), while putting effort into discrediting and demobilizing any potential opposition through the use of 'common values', 'looming problems', and 'making promises'.

It is appropriate to reiterate that the Russian president's official rhetoric seems to embrace different populist narratives as a reaction to domestic and international political environments to strategically mobilize its supporters and demobilize its critics. For example, the Common Values narrative is
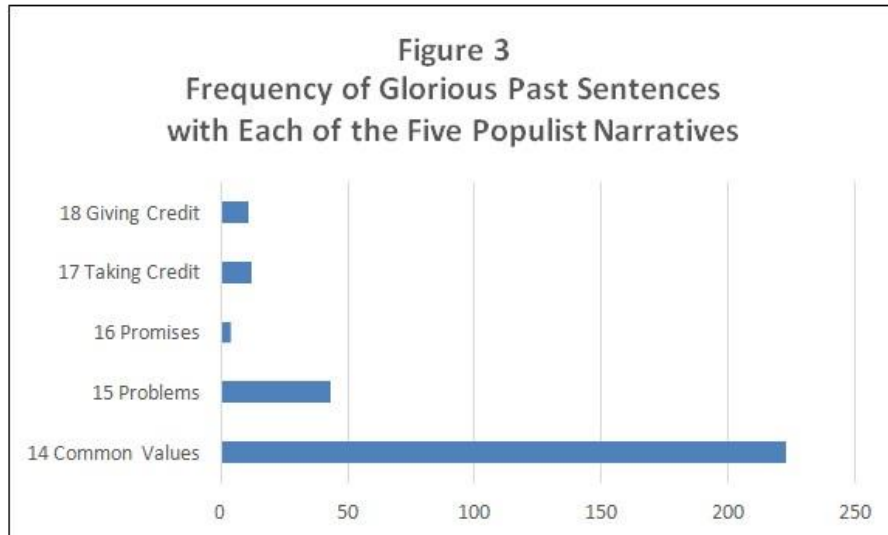
designed to increase the sense of societal cohesion through a broad use of glittering signifiers. The Looming Problems narratives were initially used by president

Putin to consolidate power domestically confronting any uncooperative economic and political elites of the regions, but beginning with the speeches in 2008, the conflict in South Ossetia caused the use of this narrative to increase as the Kremlin faced pressure from the international community about its foreign policy. The narratives of the speaker's Taking Credit for achievements appears to have intentionally peaked in the presidential addresses preceding the presidential elections.
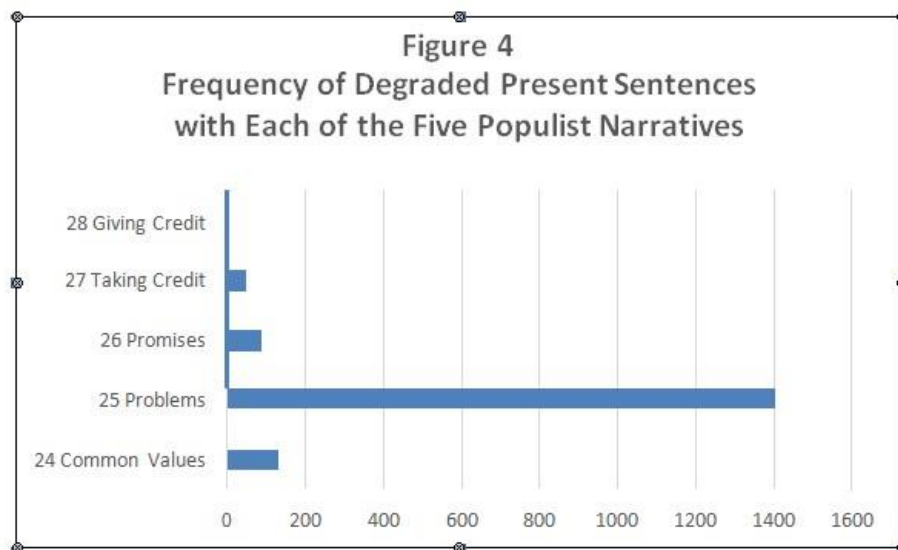
The Combined Use of the Nationalist Triad and Populist Narratives

Finally, we set out to explore how the use of triadic structure of nationalist rhetoric in the official discursive practices might correspond with populist narratives. It seems to be appropriate to briefly reiterate that the nationalist rhetoric uses horizontal frame of us (the sovereign nation) vs. them (the foreign enemies of the nation), while populist discourse places emphasis on the vertical distinction between us (the people) and them (the illegitimately powerful elite) (De Cleen 2017, Pyykko 2002). Since both nationalism and populism use the contrasting representations of the environment and time/hypothetical there is no surprise that segments of political speeches with particular emotional appeal might simultaneously employ nationalist and populist frames. These discursive portrayals of reality make those segments especially emotionally appealing as it adds another dimension to the flat oversimplified image summoned by the speaker's narrative from the audience's conscious or even subconscious mind. The following three bar charts (Figures 3-5) illustrate the number of sentences from all 19 presidential addresses to Russian parliament that had been coded as both nationalist and populist codes.

The Glorious Past sentences presented in Figure 3 tend to coincide with references to the Common Values narrative which is not surprising due to the well-documented tendency among nationalist to idealize the past and try to relate legitimacy of their leadership to eternal (or at least long-standing) noncontroversial ambiguous values that comprised a foundation of the traditional pure and virtuous society (Anderson 2006, Brubaker 1996, Krylova 2017, Makarychev 2014).

Figure 3
Frequency of Glorious Past Sentences
with Each of the Five Populist Narratives

The total number of sentences coded as Degraded Present is divided into five categories corresponding with populist narratives and presented in Figure 4. The largest number of sentences unsurprisingly fell into Looming Problems narrative category. This demonstrates that the nationalist frame of Degraded Present is mainly used by the president to place blame for Russia's less than perfect presence either on the internal enemies (establishment, corruption, narrow-minded regional elites, or oligarchs) or the external foes (international terrorists, western powers, NATO, or the U.S. aggressive foreign policy).

Figure 4
Frequency of Degraded Present Sentences
with Each of the Five Populist Narratives

The last bar chart (Figure 5) captures the total number of sentences coded as the Utopian Future and how they fall into the five populist narrative categories. This element of the rhetorical triad emphasizing the narrative categories of Speaker's Promises and Common Values. The former category is much more populated than the latter (1274 and 766 respectively). However, the category of the Common Values should not be understated because the populist narrative of shared values is what connects in the minds of the audience with the Glorious Past in that they are proud of, and hold as the Golden Age with the Utopian Future that is being promised to them by the speaker. As it was previously mentioned, the populist narrative of the speaker's promises becomes the central theme in the presidential addresses to the Russian parliament particularly in the pre-electoral years. It is the imagined blissful reality that the speaker offers to the listeners in exchange for their support, loyalty and votes.

Figure 5
Frequency of Utopian Future Sentences
with Each of the Five Populist Narratives

As a part of the analysis of the combined use of the nationalistic triad and populist parameters a Chi-Square test for independence was performed. Table 3 summarizes the observed and expected values for each of the 4171 sentences that had no zero associated with their coding. As can be seen the discrepancy between what was observed and what was expected (shown in parentheses) ranged from almost zero at the intersection of Utopian Future with Taking Credit, to a maximum of 791 (rounded) at the intersection of Dismal Present and Looming Problems, the latter of which was the largest contributor to rejecting the null hypothesis of independence at any level of significance (χ^2calc = 3,195, df=8, p-value = 0.0000+). This implies that there was a high level of dependency upon the combination being used or, said differently, the speaker intentionally presented his message by using specific combinations intended to sway the listener's opinion.

Table 3

Observed and Expected Values for Each Combination of Nationalism and Popularism in a Chi-Square Test for Independence

Nationalist Coded Value	Populist Coded Value					Total
	4 Common Values	5 Looming Problems	6 Promises Made	7 Taking Credit	8 Giving Credit	
1 Glorious Past	223 (78.7468)	43 (106.9861)	4 (95.8871)	12 (8.9916)	11 (2.3884)	293
2 Dismal Present	132 (450.7114)	1403 (612.3402)	87 (548.8144)	48 (51.4639)	7 (13.6701)	1677
3 Utopian Future	766 (591.5418)	77 (803.6737)	1274 (720.2985)	68 (67.5445)	16 (17.9415)	2201
Total	1121	1523	1365	128	34	4171

NOTE: The expected values shown in parentheses are rounded to four-decimal place accuracy.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE STUDY

This work applied qualitative discourse analysis and some quantitative methods to evaluate and trace the use of rhetoric associated with nationalism and populism that was used by Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev in their annual presidential addresses to the Russian parliament from 2000 to 2019. Among these tools of discourse creation of popular consensus, we focused on the rhetorical triad of nationalism pioneered by Levinger and Lytle (2001) and five populist narratives empirically identified from the presidential addresses to the Russian parliament.

Our study showed that the nationalist triad of Levinger and Lytle is still relevant in explaining listeners' positive emotional responses to messages presented in presidential addresses. We found no statistically significant difference between the use of the triad across the speeches of Putin and Medvedev which might be explained by their promises of stability and continuity of a political leadership as well as low turnover among the staff of presidential speechwriters (Metzel' 2019, Uchirov 2016).

The study of discursive construction of policy consensus performed here allowed us to trace evolutionary changes in Russian presidents' rhetorical strategies, a topic commonly studied (Reyes

2011). During Vladimir Putin's first and second presidential terms (2000-2007) his addresses to parliament emphasized the degraded present and placed major responsibility on

domestic scapegoats such as irresponsible businesses, entitled oligarchs, corrupt bureaucrats and international terrorists. Putin's discursive practices during this time can be described as leaning toward official populism with the cautious inclusion of some nationalistic rhetorical tools.

Beginning with Dmitry Medvedev's presidency (2008-2012) Russia assumed a more aggressive posture on the international stage. This change is reflected in presidential addresses to the Russian parliament as the usage of populist narratives and nationalist rhetoric became more prominent, emotionally charged and anti-Western in character. When Vladimir Putin returned to the presidency in 2012, feeling threatened by the mass protests of December 2011, his discourse became even more anti-Western and anti-American. Putin openly accused the United States of attempts to highjack parliamentary elections and infringe upon the sovereignty of the Russian people. After the Crimean annexation in 2014 he placed the blame for transgression of the Russian economy on the western economic sanctions. The seventeenth presidential address was rescheduled from the usual time in early December of 2017 to March 1st of 2018, which happened to coincide nicely with what resulted in Putin's reelection to a fourth presidential term. The use of nationalist and populist rhetoric in that specific address surpassed those of all preceding addresses in nearly every category.

Although a positive trend in the usage of the rhetorical triad of nationalism categories and the use of policy specific statements was observed, neither was statistically significant. However, the distribution dependence of the comments within the separate categories of the rhetorical triad of nationalism and policy specific statements was observed as being highly significant (p-value = 0.0000+). This may be explained by the occurrence of global events such as 9/11, the school shooting in Beslan in 2004, the brief Russian-Georgian war in South Ossetia in 2008, the end of the second Chechen war in the south of Russia in 2009, and the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014. It appears as though the consistent popularity of Putin's leadership in Russia can be at least partially attributed to his charismatic (yet down-to-earth) presentations and the skillful use of his rhetorical toolbox, masterfully designed to secure endorsement of his policies through cognitive and emotional cohesion among his listening audience. Vladimir Putin's recent reelection for a fourth presidential term (along with the use of other political tactics) can be interpreted as a decided success of his legitimizing discourse strategies. When the data for the usage of the Glorious Past references was tested for significance through the years it was determined that the p-value was 0.09029 and therefore, the null hypothesis of no slope can be rejected at the 10% level of significance but not at the 5% level. Essentially this means that the use of Glorious Past comments remained relatively consistent throughout the years.

As a side note Putin's recent Victory Day speech given on May 8, 2019 was also analyzed. Containing only 58 sentences it was much shorter than were the 19 presidential addresses which

averaged 533 sentences in length, but emphasized the glorious past (coded 1) and the Russian tradition (coded 4) disproportionately more than any other combination—a combination that is certainly appropriate for this Victory Day speech.

Neither Putin nor Medvedev have memorable statements such as the Iron Curtain rhetoric of Churchill, the Day of Infamy notation of Roosevelt or the Ask not what your country can do for you question of Kennedy (which on a grand scale is encouraging), but the sentence structure in their speeches reflected coherence, persuasion and unity. And, perhaps the most telling of the populous unity and support was observed in the recent Victory Day march in which President Putin was shown walking down among the masses carrying his own poster with no indication of secret service around. He is not only trusted, charismatic and confident, but having risen through the ranks, still remains one of the 'us' people.

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Appendix A
Sample Listing of the Original Russian Sentences in a Coded Speech

323	*В то же время надо отдавать себе отчет, что простого повышения зарплаты для решения проблем бюджетного сектора экономики недостаточно.*	0	5
324	*Давно назрела необходимость в таких финансовых решениях и механизмах, которые способны мотивировать к достижению эффективных результатов и сами организации социальной сферы.*	2	4
325	*Таким образом, финансовая политика должна стать одним из стимулов к повышению доступности и качества социальных услуг.*	3	4
326	*И наконец, следует создать условия для активного привлечения инвестиций из других, помимо государственных, источников в здравоохранение, образование, науку и культуру.*	3	6

327	*Подчеркну также, что определенные в предыдущем Послании задачи по модернизации образования, здравоохранения должны решаться, но должны решаться предельно аккуратно.*	0	6

Source: Sentences 323 through 327 in President Putin's speech of 2005

Appendix B

Coded Results of the 10,128 Sentences within the Nineteen Russian Presidential Parliamentary Speeches from 2000 through 2019

	Speech Years																			
CD	'00	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14	'15	'16	'18	'19	TOT
00	95	96	145	104	92	72	87	138	134	249	179	123	153	133	129	104	93	122	423	2671
04	61	65	55	77	80	84	56	48	117	77	61	38	39	16	38	22	48	12	49	1043
05	17	16	9	22	21	8	13	7	23	10	6	5	5	6	7	6	8	34	36	259
06	14	46	36	52	44	32	41	66	80	112	65	34	13	9	14	9	28	68	50	813
07	16	30	29	60	20	2	45	51	30	23	55	104	24	15	11	27	70	190	31	833
08	5	4	7	14	1	1	4	11	7	27	11	9	3	2	7	6	33	40	24	216
ST	208	257	281	329	258	199	246	321	391	498	377	313	237	181	206	174	280	466	613	5835
10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	6
14	3	3	1	12	0	34	9	15	17	17	13	4	15	9	18	22	11	15	5	223
15	0	0	2	2	0	2	1	4	4	3	0	0	4	0	9	5	5	1	1	43
16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	4
17	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	1	2	0	2	3	12
18	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	0	0	1	2	11
ST	6	3	4	14	0	36	10	21	22	20	13	4	25	12	32	29	16	21	11	299
20	0	7	1	2	0	5	5	2	3	4	4	2	2	0	0	16	2	1	6	62
24	8	11	2	11	3	12	15	5	6	5	7	9	5	9	7	7	3	4	3	132
25	132	107	108	84	75	59	63	67	93	66	61	35	80	62	62	57	46	66	80	1403
26	2	13	6	0	4	1	0	5	11	5	5	8	4	5	6	1	6	3	2	87
27	0	0	1	0	0	2	2	1	0	5	2	11	4	6	2	0	3	6	3	48
28	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	2	7
ST	142	138	118	97	82	79	86	80	114	85	79	65	95	82	79	81	61	80	96	1739
30	2	1	1	1	0	1	4	1	2	0	1	1	7	1	0	21	0	1	9	54
34	28	16	10	33	34	24	59	53	82	46	57	42	87	47	21	33	28	42	24	766
35	3	0	3	1	2	1	3	2	8	3	6	2	14	10	4	12	0	1	2	77
36	25	27	21	17	27	24	55	80	59	98	54	80	114	134	101	66	83	142	67	1274
37	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	2	0	3	1	5	13	5	2	8	2	11	12	68
38	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	5	5	16
ST	60	44	35	52	65	50	123	138	151	150	119	131	236	197	128	141	114	202	119	2255
TOT	416	442	438	492	405	364	465	560	678	753	588	513	593	472	445	425	471	769	839	10128

Note 1: The speech scheduled for December of 2017 was delayed until March of 2018, two weeks before the presidential election

Note 2: The four columns in gray represent the speeches delivered by Medvedev. All others were delivered by Putin.

Note 3: The double-digit code in the leftmost column represents the combination of the rhetorical triad (on the left as 1, 2, or 3) and the populist signifiers (on the right as 4, 5, 6, 7, or 8). Any zero code represents a sentence that is neutral to the issue.