

The Operational Code of Vladimir Putin in the Ukrainian Crisis in 2014

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| Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract | | | |
| <p>This thesis uses Operational Code analysis to study political beliefs and strategy of President of Russia Vladimir Putin during the Ukrainian Crisis between March 2014 and November 2014. As an at-a-distance method, quantitative Operational Code analysis uses subjects' speech acts to provide numerical values for their key foreign policy beliefs about themselves and others in international politics. This thesis uses the concept to study Vladimir Putin's belief changes about himself and Russia's adversaries during the Ukrainian crisis.</p> <p>First, key theories about foreign policy and international relations are reviewed and an argument is made for focusing on leaders and beliefs in the study of foreign policy. After this, the concept of Operational Code analysis is explained in detail, as are the additional methodological choices made by the author.</p> <p>The period is broken into three phases based on key events of 2014, and belief changes between them are studied using Verbs in Context System, a quantitative method for studying Operational Codes. Analysis is also extended to study the differences between the rhetoric of spontaneous comments and prepared statements. The numerical results are then interpreted and extended by analyzing the content of the speeches.</p> <p>Putin's beliefs are discovered to have changed in the phase that is located between the crash of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 and the signing of the First Minsk Accords, which ended the first period of hostilities. During this phase, strategic indicators generated from Putin's prepared statements reveal significant belief changes towards cooperative direction. The author suggests that this change represents a short-term tactical choice, designed to alleviate political pressure to Russia and present a cooperative image of Russia's involvement to the domestic audience. This view is supported by the facts that belief changes reverted after the First Minsk Accords, and that Putin's long-term outlook remained confrontational throughout the crisis.</p> <p>Finally, performance of the method is evaluated and suggestions for future research are made. Continuing analysis to include events up to and beyond the Second Minsk Accords remains an attractive option, as is analysis of Putin's beliefs on a long-term basis.</p> | | | |
| Avainsanat – Nyckelord – Keywords Operational Code; Vladimir Putin; Political Psychology; Political Strategy; Foreign Policy; Ukraine; Russia; Ukrainian crisis | | | |



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| Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract | | | |
| <p>Tutkielma analysoi Venäjän presidentti Vladimir Putinin poliittisia uskomuksia ja strategiaa Ukrainan kriisissä vuoden 2014 maaliskuun ja marraskuun välisenä aikana. Menetelmänä toimii operationaalinen koodi, joka analysoi kohteen puheita kvantitatiivisesti ja laskee numeeriset arvot keskeisimmille ulkopoliittikkaa koskeville uskomuksille. Tutkielma rajaa aineiston koskemaan Ukrainan kriisin osallisia: länsimaita, Ukrainaa ja Venäjää.</p> <p>Aluksi työ käsittelee kansainvälisen politiikan ja ulkopoliitiikan tutkimuksessa käytettäviä menetelmiä. Tutkielmassa painotetaan johtajien ja heidän uskomuksensa huomioon ottavien tutkimustraditioiden merkitystä. Tämän jälkeen käsitellään perusteellisesti operationaalisen koodin konseptia ja tutkimusotetta. Erityistä huomiota kohdistetaan tutkielmassa tehtyihin metodologisiin valintoihin aineiston valinnassa ja käsittelyssä.</p> <p>Tutkittava ajanjakso jaetaan kolmeen faasiin tärkeimpien tapahtumien perusteella, ja poliittisten uskomusten vaihtelua niiden välillä tutkitaan operationaalisen koodin kvantitatiivisesti laskevan Verbs in Context Systemin avulla. Lisäksi analysoidaan eroja valmisteltujen ja spontaanien puheiden tuottamien tulosten välillä. Tämän jälkeen numeeristen tulosten tuottamaa kuvaa uskomuksista ja strategiasta jatketaan puheiden sisältöön perehtymällä.</p> <p>Putinin uskomusten uskomusten todetaan muuttuneen Malaysia Airlinesin lento 17 onnettomuuden ja ensimmäisen Minskin sopimuksen välisen ajan käsittäneessä faasissa. Tänä aikana Putinin valmistelluista puheissa esiintynyt retoriikka johti useiden strategisten indikaattorien muuttumiseen yhteistyötä korostavammiksi. Tutkielmassa esitetään, että muutos kuvastaa Putinin lyhyen aikavälin taktista valintaa, jonka tarkoituksena oli vähentää poliittista painetta Venäjää kohtaan, ja edistää myönteistä kuvaa politiikan suunnasta Venäjällä. Väitteen tueksi esitetään strategisten indikaattorien palautuminen alkuperäisille tasoilleen Minskin sopimuksen jäkeen sekä kriisin aikana johdonmukaisesti jatkunut vastakkainasettelua korostava suhtautuminen länsimaihin.</p> <p>Lopuksi arvoidaan menetelmän suoritusta tutkimuksessa ja käsitellään mahdollisia jatkokysymyksiä. Tutkimuksen jatkamista Minskin sopimuksen jälkeiseen aikaan pidetään houkuttelevana mahdollisuutena. Myös Putinin uskomuksissa tapahtuneiden muutosten tarkastelua pitkällä aikajaksolla pidetään hyödyllisenä tutkimuskohteena.</p> | | | |
| Avainsanat – Nyckelord – Keywords Operationaalinen koodi; Vladimir Putin; Poliittinen psykologia; Poliittinen strategia; Ulkopoliittikka; Ukraina; Venäjä; Ukrainan kriisi | | | |

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1 Introduction

This thesis attempts to shed light on the developments and war in Ukraine in 2014 by calculating Vladimir Putin's Operational Code, a psychological profile on foreign policy beliefs, during the key moments of the crisis. It follows an assumption that the major decisions were ultimately made by Vladimir Putin, and that courses of action he chose to pursue were by some extent influenced by his beliefs. Additionally, an attempt is made to track any changes in Putin's beliefs during the crisis, which will help us understand of the effects of different events on Putin's psychological profile. The primary question is, did the Western sanctions have any effect on Putin's beliefs on international politics?

1.1 War in Ukraine

In May 2012 Vladimir Putin began his third term and second spell as the Russian head of state. For all intents and purposes, he became the final arbiter of Russian foreign policy. Scholars of International Relations (IR) and foreign policy have since mulled over the future of international security and pondering what role could Russia play in maintaining it, or disrupting it. His predecessor and the current Prime Minister, Dmitry Medvedev, presided over the Georgian war in 2008 to the dismay of many, who hoped that Russia might be fully integrated to the European security system, and that memories of cold war and Russian-Western antagonism might be buried for good. On the other hand, Russian accession to World Trade Organization in 2012 after long negotiations sparked hopes that the economic integration with the world might forge ties so strong between the community of states it entails, that further wars might be avoided. The notion that economic cooperation fosters peace is an old one, and can be traced back at least as far as to Immanuel Kant, whose dream of "perpetual peace" in Europe and the world beyond is now as elusive as it ever was. The irony of the situation is, that it may have been issues of economic cooperation that caused Russia to move against Ukraine in order to protect its own national interests.

The European Union had begun negotiations with Ukraine in 2007 for an agreement of closer economic cooperation, which resulted in a draft of Association

Agreement that would integrate Ukrainian economy more closely with the European Union. On a parallel path, Russia had been leading the development of the Eurasian economic integration under the umbrella of Customs Union, which in January 2015 was expanded and renamed into Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). Ukraine is Russia's most important trade partner in the post-Soviet space, but it was not a member. The issue was not about simple economic cooperation. Both Russia and EU had hopes for a closer political integration. Inclusion of Ukraine was an integral part of Russia's strategy to create an economic and political bloc that could compete with the EU. The stakes were high.¹

Ukraine was leaning towards Europe. While negotiations had stalled over the years, it was widely expected that in 2013 the Ukrainian Parliament could have passed the political motions required by the Association Agreement before it could take force. In the late Summer 2013 Russia started to adopt series of measures, which disrupted trade between Ukraine and Russia.² In November 2013, Russia issued a warning to Ukraine that it would respond if any further measures that would align Ukraine closer to Western Europe were implemented. It also offered a \$ 15 billion loan to save the Ukrainian economy from bankruptcy, a deal that the EU would not match. The Ukrainian government chose Russia, and the motions for Association Agreement were never passed. This sparked the Euromaidan protests that led to the overthrow of Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich and his government in late February 2014. Suddenly, the Association Agreement was back on table, and Russia had played its hand. The time for talk was over, and Putin chose stronger measures.³ Soon after, Russian military occupied the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, which then voted to secede from Ukraine and immediately applied to join Russian Federation. Their accession to Russian Federation was accepted by Russian State Duma in March 21th 2014.

In Ukraine the new post-revolution government under Prime Minister Arseniy Jatsenyuk signed the political provisions of the Association Agreement treaty in March 23th 2014. Around this time, Russian government-owned energy company Gazprom

¹ Pomeranz, William E. (2016): *Ground Zero. How a Trade Dispute Sparked the Russia-Ukraine Crisis*. In Wood, Elizabeth A. – Pomeranz William E. – Merry, Wayne E. – Trudolyubov, Maxim: *Roots of Russia's War in Ukraine*. Columbia University Press, New york, 57-58.

² Menon, Rajan – Rumer, Eugene (2015): *Conflict in Ukraine. The Unwinding of the Post-Cold War Order*. The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, 77.

³ Pomeranz, William E. 2016, 61-64.

cancelled two large discounts for the price of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) it sells to Ukraine, which in effect doubled the gas price overnight. The new price is among the highest in Europe and significantly higher compared to what many other former Eastern Bloc countries pay.

Donbass region in the Eastern Ukraine experienced civil unrest soon after. Russian-minded Separatists in the cities of Luhansk and Donetsk occupied government buildings and later declared these two areas independent republics. For all intents and purposes, the crisis escalated into an open war, with the military action confined in the eastern areas of the country. Initially, military forces of the Ukrainian government managed to gain early victories, reaching the outskirts of Luhansk and Donetsk. However, Russia remained committed to its goals and saved the Separatists by intervening in August 2014. It sent in troops, munitions and supplies, and led a counterattack that defeated the forces of the Ukrainian government. This led to a ceasefire of the First Minsk Accords in early September 2014.⁴

Russia has continued to provide material aid and troops to the Separatist side, while the United States and the EU have supported Ukraine, introducing sanctions against Russia after it annexed Crimea. Sanctions were initially largely symbolic, but they started to target the Russian economy and military technology directly, after a missile shot from Separatist territory destroyed a civilian aircraft in July 2014. Russia introduced counter-sanctions in response, and neither side has since backed. The full extent of Russia's involvement in military operations still uncertain, but it is thought to be considerable. It has been accused of being engaged in war against Ukraine, a claim that Russia continues to dispute. As of May 2016, war in Ukraine has shown no signs of final resolution.

1.2 Leaders and Leadership in World Politics

Research on international relations and foreign policy has long been fascinated by the mind of the leader. The founder of Classical Realism, Hans Morgenthau, famously suggested that Realist scholars could to understand decisions of leaders as if they were

⁴ Menon – Rumer, 85-86.

there to look over their shoulders and thinking their thoughts.⁵ Realism, however, attaches essential characteristics to human beings, such as self-interest, which are then used to analyze leaders' approach to politics. The primary subject ends up being the state, as these characteristics are easier to attach to it. This uniform approach was met with increasing dissatisfaction, and it led to the first systematic effort to understand how beliefs affect foreign policy decision-making by Snyder, Bruck and Sapin.⁶ They equated state action with action of its decision-makers, which allowed beliefs and perceptions to take precedence.⁷ Early foundations of Operational Code analysis were also set at this time, when Nathan Leites adopted psychoanalytical methods to study the political strategy of Soviet Politburo.

The notion that beliefs matter in international relations has been heavily contested by Structuralist scholars. Kenneth Waltz's Neorealist theory rejects the possibility that individuals are a reasonable unit of analysis in international relations. Neorealism holds that human nature drives the international society into a perpetual anarchy that operates according to predictable laws. According to this view, states have to act rationally, or they will simply not survive. The survival instinct is the prime mover of state action.⁸ On the other hand, a Constructivist theory by Alexander Wendt accepts that an anarchical international system guides international politics, but suggests that its nature is determined by its culture rather than by human nature.⁹ These theorists analyze states and the international system, rather than leaders.

In a similar manner, the Structuralist tradition by led Waltz has again been recently challenged by political scientists on the grounds that it treats human nature as a constant, when, in fact, it is not. Byman and Pollack argue that, instead of actors with uniform characteristics, a variety of different personalities occupy highest political offices and approach foreign policy in a number of different ways. Once we accept that human nature does not constrain action, and that variety of different personalities that may occupy highest positions in government hierarchy, the argument that individuals

⁵ Morgenthau, Hans (2005): *Politics Among Nations. The Struggle for Power and Peace*. 7th ed., revised by Thompson, Kenneth W. – Clinton, David W. McGraw Hill, Boston, 5.

⁶ Smith, Steve (1988): *Belief Systems and the Study International Relations*. In Little, Richard – Smith, Steve (eds): *Belief Systems and International Relations*. Basil Blackwell Ltd, Oxford, 14-15.

⁷ Snyder, Richard S – Bruck, H. W. – Sapin, Burton (1962): *Decision-Making as an Approach to the Study of International Politics*. In Snyder, Richard S – Bruck, H. W. – Sapin, Burton (eds): *Foreign Policy Decision-Making. An Approach to the Study of International Politics*. The Free Press of Glencoe, New York, 65.

⁸ Waltz, Kenneth N. (1979): *Theory of International Politics*. McGraw-Hill, Boston, 65-66, 89-91.

⁹ Wendt, Alexander (1999): *Social Theory of International Politics*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 247, 249-250, 257-258.

matter becomes more convincing.¹⁰

This view has been met with increasing support, despite systematic approaches dominating in the IR field. Research on foreign policy acknowledges that structure alone cannot account for decision-making. Hermann and Hermann posit that among government authorities, there is always the "ultimate decision unit", that is the final arbiter of foreign policy. Besides a predominant leader, it may be a single group of people, or an unit of multiple autonomous actors. This view has ultimately been accepted by Wendt as well.¹¹ Hermann and Hermann suggest that the nature of the decision unit will have important effects on the foreign policy. If the decision-making power is in the hands of a single leader, it important to learn about personal characteristics of the leader, because they will influence his or her foreign policy.¹²

A new study by Fredrik Dosser suggests that even cabinet members in democratic governments can initiate changes in long-term foreign policy orientation, provided that they are skilled politicians, have strong political convictions and a window of opportunity to realize them.¹³ For genuinely authoritarian rulers this checklist of demands should logically be shorter, as windows of opportunity are open much longer. Operational Code analysis in this sense, is especially well suited to analysing leaders like Putin, who has taken an active role in shaping Russia's foreign policy.

Operational Code analysis has also lent support to some of these claims. Malici and Malici compared belief changes of North Korean and Cuban leaders Kim Il Sung and Fidel Castro before and after the end of the Cold War. Their beliefs remained relatively stable, and the authors suggest that changes in their respective foreign policies were probably due to a behavioral adaption to the new structural environment of post-Cold War world. However, the fact that foreign policies of these countries remained erratic, and lasting changes were not achieved, is consistent with their stagnated beliefs.¹⁴ This leads Malici and Malici to state that structural changes do not provide a sufficient explanation, and conclude that "changes in foreign policy will be

¹⁰ Byman, Daniel L. – Pollack, Kenneth M (2001): *Let Us Now Praise Great Men: Bringing the Statesman Back In*. In International Security, Vol. 25, No 4 (Spring 2001), 112.

¹¹ Wendt 204-205.

¹² Hermann, Margaret G. – Hermann, Charles F. (1989): *Who Makes Foreign Policy Decisions and How: An Empirical Inquiry*. In International Studies Quarterly, Vol. 33, No. 4, 362-365.

¹³ Dosser, Fredrik (2013): *Leader-driven foreign-policy change: Denmark and the Persian Gulf War*. In International Political Science Review, 34(5), 585-586.

¹⁴ Malici, Akan – Malici, Johnna (2005): *The Operational Codes of Fidel Castro and Kim Il Sung: The Last Cold Warriors?* In Political Psychology, Vol. 26, No. 3, 2005, 404.

missing in absence of change at the individual level¹⁵.

The notion that leaders matter is not as contested as many suggest. Waltz explicitly denied the possibility that Neorealism could be used to study foreign policy effectively. He considers its aim functionally different: Neorealism explains why states behave similarly in the international system, and a theory of foreign policy would explain their differences.¹⁶ However, many Realists and other IR theorists do not agree with this view and continue to analyze foreign policy. Operational code analysts He and Feng point out the problems of most IR theories, when they attempt to predict the foreign policy orientations of different countries. Realism tends to regard states more or less alike. The primary variable that explains their foreign policy behavior is power and related material factors. While some Realisms do agree that there are different types of states, revisionist and status quo powers, the criteria to assess their nature is not clearly communicated. The underlying assumption that leaders are all alike still remains, limiting the possibility of conclusions. For theoretical purposes at least, their differences do not matter, and are routinely ignored. While Constructivists acknowledge the importance of ideas, they are treated more or less like cultural trends in the international system instead of beliefs held by individuals, leaving the latter unnoticed.¹⁷ While Wendt claims that "states are people too", it cannot be said that their depersonalized nature has no problems when analyzing foreign policy. This fact also acknowledged by Wendt, who uses this phrase to support a theory of state.¹⁸ When a state is under scrutiny instead of its leader, the level of analysis takes a step or two away from the particular towards the general. These problems are also acknowledged by Realists. As Mearsheimer freely admitted, a theory that simplifies reality sometimes has to leave out factors that may "dominate a state's decision-making process." In his example, it made a world of difference for world politics that it was Hitler who led Germany in the latter part of the interwar period.¹⁹

¹⁵ Malici – Malici, 407.

¹⁶ Waltz, Kenneth N. (1996): *International politics is not foreign policy*. In *Security Studies*, Vol. 6, no. 1, 1996, 54.

¹⁷ He Kai – Feng Huiyun (2013): *Xi Jinping's Operational Code Beliefs and China's Foreign Policy*. In *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 6, 2013, 211-217.

¹⁸ Wendt, 194-195.

¹⁹ Mearsheimer, John J. (2001): *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. W.W. Norton & Company, New York and London, 11.

1.3 Beliefs in Decision-Making Process

Besides structural IR theories, psychological approach to foreign policy has also been challenged by a variety of Rationalist approaches. Roots of these models spring from microeconomics. They assume that actors have a number of preferences that may be ranked according to the satisfaction they provide. Rational actor is often assumed to be able to recognize alternative options and their consequences prior to selecting the best possible option in any given situation. These models boast considerable explanatory power and while they probably are most often associated with economics, they have been used in the study of foreign policy decision-making as well. Scholars typically distinguish between thin and thick rationality, where thin rationality assumes a strategic pursuit of goals according to ordered preferences. Thick rationality assumes that all actors share preferences, which are mostly related to self-interest, survival and other base needs²⁰. Often it also assumes that actors have complete information of their environment and that they act accordingly.²¹

In the context of foreign policy decision-making, political psychology has challenged especially the thick variant of Rationalism. During the so called cognitive revolution in the 1960s and 1970s researchers discovered that motivated biases, or motivated reasoning, affect actor's capacity to weigh options objectively²². Decision-making does not happen in a vacuum, and it is connected to emotional needs of the decision-maker. In world politics, this leads leaders to rationalize and employ policies that enforce one's own interests and emotional needs. In short, it leads to "wishful thinking". Levy points out that the decisions most affected by this bias are ones that involve high stakes, which makes this concept especially useful for foreign policy analysis.²³ While this revelation points to the conclusion that beliefs primarily cloud judgment, recent advances in neuroscience have proven that emotions are critical in making sound and seemingly rational decisions as well. Jonathan Mercer reports that human beings, who somehow lack emotions, function differently even in everyday life

²⁰ Mintz, Alex – DeRouen, Karl (2010): *Understanding Foreign Policy Decision Making*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 57-59.

²¹ Wendt, 118.

²² For more information about biases in foreign policy, see Mintz, Alex – DeRouen Karl, 38-54.

²³ Levy, Jack S. (2013): *Psychology and Foreign Policy Decision Making*. In Huddy, Leonie – Sears, David O. – Levy Jack S. (eds): *The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*. 2nd ed., Oxford University Press, Oxford, 309.

situations.²⁴

The implementation of a foreign policy is very complex phenomenon with a number of different stages. Typically, a new policy is a response to a new threat, an opportunity or a problem. It is preceded by several stages of decision-making, during which a leader has to process information and make choices. Before choosing a corresponding policy, decision-makers have to have some initial expectations concerning the policy, that is, what they hope to achieve. Later on, a need to revise the policy may arise, due to new developments and initially unavailable information becoming available. New opportunities may arise, and alternative means to solve the problem may suddenly look more advantageous.²⁵ All of these stages require leaders to make judgments on the proper course of action, which they cannot do without their beliefs. From the point of view of psychology, pure rationality is an insufficient concept, as a completely objective image of reality is simply impossible to develop.²⁶

Challenging the thick Rationalist theory²⁷, Goldstein and Keohane have written about the effect of ideas specifically on foreign policy. Their central argument is that ideas influence foreign policy, because they help actors in control understand the world with more clarity, especially with regards to ends-means relationship. When leaders are trying to achieve something, they have to have an idea of how exactly they are going to do it. These beliefs on what accounts for proper and efficient conduct are not universally shared, which explains the variety methods employed to reach foreign policy goals.²⁸

The above assumptions are generally agreed by Operational Code analysts. Renshon points out that beliefs essentially act as a "filter", through which reality is experienced by leaders. It affects how they perceive the world around them.²⁹ There are, however, major differences in what an ideational approach to foreign policy and contemporary Operational Code analysis attempt to explain. While both approaches

²⁴ Mercer, Jonathan (2005): *Rationality and Psychology in International Politics*. In International Organization, Vol. 59, No. 1 (Winter, 2005), 92-94.

²⁵ Hermann, Charles F. (1990): *Changing Course: When Governments Choose to Redirect Foreign policy*. In International Studies Quarterly, Vol. 34, No 1, 14-19.

²⁶ Little, Richard – Smith, Steve (1988): *Introduction*. In Little, Richard – Smith Steve (eds): *Belief Systems and International Relations*. Basil Blackwell Ltd, Oxford, 5.

²⁷ Wendt, 118.

²⁸ Goldstein, Judith – Keohane, Robert O. (1993): *Ideas and Foreign Policy: An Analytical Framework*. In Goldstein, Judith – Keohane, Robert O. (eds): *Ideas and Foreign Policy. Beliefs, Institutions and Political Change*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 4.

²⁹ Renshon, Jonathan (2008): *Stability and Change in Belief Systems. The Operational Code of George W. Bush*. In Journal of Conflict Resolution, Vol. 52, No. 6, 2008, 822.

concern state level foreign policy, the Goldstein and Keohane focus on particular ideas and beliefs that are shared by great many people, such as general moral principles.³⁰ They can be very specific, such as a shared belief in the effectiveness of a certain economic policy, a normative support of anti-colonialism or a belief in human rights as a communal responsibility of all nations³¹. These beliefs, however, can concern outcomes of long-term foreign policy orientation. More or less, ideas are thought to work much like institutions that induce path-dependency.³² In the case of Ukrainian war, a scholar utilizing an ideational approach on foreign policy might be interested in the certain assumptions concerning Russia's responsibility to safeguard Russian speakers worldwide, Russia's relations with NATO and EU, and how Russia generally speaking sees its place in the world. However, for a short-term variation of beliefs within the time frame of the crisis, the above questions do not lead us closer to the answers that we are looking for. In the case of this thesis, it is hard to determine which collective beliefs are truly shared by Putin, and how they affect the ongoing Ukrainian crisis.

³⁰ Goldstein – Keohane, 6-7.

³¹ Goldstein – Keohane, 14-16.

³² Goldstein – Keohane, 12.

2 Operational Code Analysis

Rather than to analyze decision-making in itself, this thesis focuses on analyzing the world view and fundamental beliefs of Vladimir Putin. Operational code analysis was chosen as the method of the thesis due to its ability to provide specific research questions. While the entire world view of a person cannot be reduced into a few short questions, Operational Code analysis seeks answers to the ones that are most interesting and relevant to foreign policy decision-making. The goal of this thesis is not to reveal the inner workings and motivations of the Russian president but to provide clear and concise information on some key beliefs that influence his decision-making. I consider this method to be extremely well suited to analyzing an actor like Putin, since, even among his peers in world politics, he is relatively powerful in shaping the course of the foreign policy of his country. It should be fair to assume that Putin is less constrained than other presidents and premiers are, when decisions are being made.

Usage of Operational Code analysis also avoids the pitfall of focusing on specific subjects, which might not yield reliable information in other cases. Common sense would indicate that a few quotations taken out of context might not provide reliable information on fundamental beliefs of political actors. This is doubly true for figures like Putin, whose occasional use of aggressive rhetoric provides quotable material in great quantities and often draws the attention to themselves from other things. Conversely, this thesis attempts to put quotes into the context. In my opinion, research of this kind has to go beyond the surface level. Contemporary Operational Code analysis can process a large pool of source material effectively, which is something that many qualitative methods are not capable of. While the quantitative method might suffer from certain methodological weaknesses, highlighting qualitative key information from the data is not prohibited and will be done where applicable.

2.1.1 Qualitative Foundations

The Operational Code (Opcode) is best explained as a set of beliefs, or a belief system, which an individual forms to understand the political world. The term "Operational Code", is however, a misleading one in important ways, since it incorrectly suggests "a

set of recipes or repertoires for political action that an elite applies mechanically in its decision-making."³³ Alexander George notes that simply knowing that the subject has a belief system does not lead to predictive powers or simple explanations about his or her actions. It also does not take into account external forces such as institutional pressure that might affect political actors at the time of decision-making.³⁴ He even suggested changing the label into something that would have better described a belief system of a political actor such as, "approaches to political calculation", which indeed would have been a more accurate term for the method.³⁵ Students of operational code have since followed George's approach and line of reasoning in this case, although a new name for the method never materialized.

While the term Operational Code had existed before, it did not reach wide attention until Nathan Leites introduced the concept into political psychology in the early 1950s when his research on the political strategy of the ruling elite of Soviet Union was published in two parts³⁶. An abridged version of the results of Leites's research was published first in 1951 as *The Operational Code of the Politburo* and the complete work was unveiled in 1953 as *A Study of Bolshevism*. Leites found that members of the Soviet Politburo had shared beliefs about certain political axioms, which lead to a unified political strategy.³⁷ This was apparent, for example, in the Soviet communication strategy in 1948 between Moscow Politburo and Yugoslavian communists, which followed closely followed pre-1930s strategy.³⁸

Leites used the term "Operational Code" to refer to basic approach to politics. Beliefs were part of this greater whole, and he neither established a connection between different ones nor did he attempt to organize them hierarchically. As far as Soviet elite was concerned, these beliefs were also thought to be integrally linked to his concept of ideal type Bolshevik, which led him to the use of psychonalysis.³⁹ Already in the 1950s, there were some concerns that the conclusions of his research were entirely dependent on interpretation, especially with regards to psychonalysis. Furthermore, Leites never

³³ George, Alexander L. (1969): *The "Operational Code": A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making*. In *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 191.

³⁴ George, 200.

³⁵ George, 220.

³⁶ Walker, Stephen G. (1990): *The Evolution of Operational Code Analysis*. In *Political Psychology*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 403.

³⁷ Walker, Stephen G. 1990, 404.

³⁸ Leites, Nathan (1951): *The Operational Code of the Politburo*. McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, xiv.

³⁹ Smith, Steve, 21.

set down a criteria for picking his supporting evidence from Russian literature, which was met with criticism.⁴⁰ Issues of reliability that come with Leites's exclusively qualitative approach has also been also acknowledged by later research.⁴¹

While Leites's research attracted attention and even enthusiasm after its publication, his method did not attract a real following until Alexander George refined Leites's complex approach into a more lean and workable method in 1969. George isolated the concept of Operational Code from the greater whole of *A Study of Bolshevism*, focusing solely on beliefs of as a part of the political strategy. Psychoanalysis was abandoned in the process, as it was simply not a necessary tool to analyze beliefs.⁴²

2.1.2 Conceptualization and Research Questions

George conceptualized the Operational Code according to certain thin rationalist assumptions. He attested that leader's mentality, beliefs, world view and even the political culture view will influence his or her decision-making. Operational Code construct attempts to study these belief systematically. It cannot include all beliefs or factors that influence decision-making, but it is designed to capture a significant part of them. According to George, rational decision-making has inherent cognitive limits. He argued against extreme Rationalist theories by pointing out that political actors have usually incomplete information about situations they find themselves in, and that their ability predict the consequences of their actions is limited. Actors have often trouble assessing which course of action is objectively speaking the best one. Dealing with uncertainty requires political actors to work in environments, where they are not completely in control. Adaptation is necessary. George suggested that political actors, like other individuals, need to simplify and structure the world around them in order to comprehend it and to cope with it. Pure rationality is an insufficient concept for this, and leaders turn to their beliefs instead. However Operational Code does not detach itself completely from the concept of rationality. Instead, George proposed that different actors might have different beliefs and assumptions about best approaches to foreign

⁴⁰ Fischer George (1954): *A Book review*. In *The Western Political Quarterly* Vol. 07, No3, Sep 1954, 494-496.

⁴¹ Walker, Stephen G. 1990, 407.

⁴² George, 195.

policy.⁴³

George refined Operational Code into ten research questions about a subject's views about politics. When analyzed together, they provide a clear picture of the subject's political approach to solving the problems of uncertainty in decision-making. Contemporary Operational Code research, including this thesis, is based on the questions formulated by George, albeit with slight variations. Five of the questions deal with the philosophical nature of the political universe, that is, how the political actor perceives the world around him. The five following five deal with instrumental issues, that is, how to cope with the perceived nature of the political existence. This distinction helps to define how the subject sees Self and Other in the political world. The questions are outlined below:

The Philosophical Content of an Operational Code

1. *What is the "essential nature of political life? Is the political universe essentially one of harmony or conflict? What is the fundamental character of one's political opponents?*
2. *What are the prospects for the eventual realization of one's fundamental political values and aspirations? Can one be optimistic, or must one be pessimistic on this score; and in what respects the one and/or the other?*
3. *Is the political future predictable? In what sense and to what extent?*
4. *How much "control" or "mastery" can one have over historical development? What is one's role in "moving" and "shaping" history in the desired direction"*
5. *What is the role of "chance" in human affairs and in historical development?*

The Instrumental Beliefs in an Operational Code

1. *What is the best approach for selecting goals or objectives for political action?*
2. *How are the goals of action pursued more effectively?*
3. *How are the risks of political action calculated, controlled, and accepted?*
4. *What is the best "timing" of action to advance one's interest?*

⁴³ George, 197-200.

5. *What is the utility and role of different means for advancing one's interests?*⁴⁴

The specific research questions makes the Operational Code analysis relatively robust, but allows a number of ways to answer to research questions. George advocated pragmatism in methodological choices and data acquisition, pointing out that both qualitative or quantitative methods, may be useful when conducting this type of research.⁴⁵

George assumed that the first philosophical belief has subtle ripple effects on the rest. The perception of the nature of politics also influences beliefs on what is possible, what are the key threats and what should be done with them.⁴⁶ The point of view was taken further by Ole Holsti, who constructed a typology of six ideal type Operational Codes based on the ten questions formulated by Alexander George. Holsti concluded that the belief about the nature of political life (harmonious/conflictual) acts as a "master" belief that influences other beliefs as well. The belief on fundamental sources of conflict (human nature/attributes of nations/international system) acts as another anchor to form an ideal type Operational Code. These ideal types are essentially thought to be political belief systems.⁴⁷ Walker then suggested that it is possible condense Holsti's typology into four types, without a significant loss of reliability, as three types share the master belief of the conflictual nature of international politics. It leads them into agreement about a number of other beliefs as well.⁴⁸ This typology has recently found use in contemporary game theory analysis. In keeping with the methods thin rationalist tradition, Operational Code analysis suggests that the belief system of a leader influences his or her choice of moves.⁴⁹

However, Walker reports that further research conducted on Operational Codes of former American leaders found a series of hybrid types, which conformed neither to Holsti typology nor to its revised version. The tactics used by decision-makers tended to correlate with the discovered set of beliefs, even if the beliefs themselves did not form an unified belief system, as it is understood by cognitive psychology, or as George and

⁴⁴ George, 201-216.

⁴⁵ George, 221.

⁴⁶ George, 201-202.

⁴⁷ Walker, Stephen G. (1983): *The Motivational Foundations of Political Belief Systems: A Re-Analysis of the Operational Code Construct*. In *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No 2, 181-182.

⁴⁸ Walker, Stephen G. 1983, 185-186.

⁴⁹ Walker, Stephen G. – Schafer, Mark (2006) *Belief Systems as Causal Mechanism in World Politics: An Overview of Operational Code Analysis*. In Walker, Stephen G. – Schafer, Mark (eds): *Beliefs and Leadership in World Politics. Methods and Applications of Operational Code Analysis*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 13.

Holsti seemed to expect. This discovery constituted a problem for Operational Code research, as it had assumed a self-reinforcing and relatively robust belief system. Walker proposed to develop the method further by establishing a stronger connection to motivational and cognitive psychology, which led to the creation of a new quantitative method that does not expect an unified belief system.⁵⁰

2.2 The Quantitative Method

2.2.1 Verbs In Context System (VICS)

This thesis uses as its primary of method of analysis Verbs in Context System (VICS) which was developed by Walker, Schafer and Young. in 1998. They suggested that Operational Code should be understood more as alternative "states of mind" rather than as an unified and a relatively stable construct touching multitude of issues. This paradigm shift was supported by new discoveries made in the field of cognitive psychology and the mixed results that previous Operational Code analysis had provided.⁵¹ The new theoretical context allowed Walker, et al. to create this new quantitative method of analysis, which investigates a separate set of beliefs instead of an internally coherent Operational Code of proposed by Holsti and George. However, VICS still recognizes that some beliefs are more important than others. In addition to first philosophical belief, contemporary Operational Code analysis suggests that the first instrumental belief acts as another master belief to its corresponding set of beliefs, subtly influencing them.⁵²

VICS calculates indices based on Alexander George's ten questions. The leader's Operational Code is illustrated by the numerical values provided by indices. The justification for the existence of each index varies slightly, but there are few common denominators that provide evidence for the validity of the scoring system as a whole. The first one is the authors' concept of power, which in the case of VICS refers to the interplay of control relationships between Self and Other in the political universe.

⁵⁰ Walker, Stephen G. 1990, 411-412.

⁵¹ Walker, Stephen G. – Schafer, Mark – Young, Michael D (1998): *Systematic Procedures for Operational Code Analysis: Measuring and Modeling Jimmy Carter's Operational Code*. In *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 32, 176.

⁵² Schafer, Mark – Walker Stephen G. (2006): *Operational Code Analysis at a Distance: The Verbs in Context System of Content Analysis*. In Walker, Stephen G. – Schafer, Mark (eds): *Beliefs and Leadership in World Politics. Methods and Applications of Operational Code Analysis*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 33, 50.

Walker et al. place a heavy emphasis on the action and information transfer, positive or negative, from Self towards Other and vice versa. Therefore, VICS system focuses on the way the leader sees Self and Other in the political universe. The second focus is on the usage of verbs in the rhetoric of the subject. Verbs in the leader's rhetoric indicate the perceived manifestations of different forms of power. VICS calculates its indices from transitive verbs in particular, as they represent the connection between Self and Other, and represents the leader's perception of the nature of the relationship between them. Additionally, Walker, et al. draw from cognitive psychology in asserting the importance of direction of actions that are associated with the concept of power. Direction of the transitive verb indicates how the leader perceives the question of control: does Self affect Other or vice versa?⁵³ Finally, Operational Code analysis attempts to provide explanation to the state's management of conflict with the approaches its leader takes to exercise of power.⁵⁴

2.2.2 VICS Indices

VICS indices have remained unchanged since they were first created by Schafer et al. They are based on utterances, spoken or written, by the subject, in this case Vladimir Putin. An utterance, as understood by VICS, consists of the subject and the verb.⁵⁵ Each sentence in the primary source material is coded to identify its subject (Self/Other) and the tense of the transitive verb (past/present/future). The category of the verb is then determined. It can either be cooperative (+) or conflictual (-). The intensity of the verb is further classified according to the the intensity and nature of the exercise of power: Punish (-3), Threaten (-2), Resist (-1), Support (+1), Promise (+2), Reward (+3).⁵⁶ The division is fairly straightforward. Verb of extreme intensity (+3/-3) signify deeds, as do all verbs in the past tense, since they indicate that something has already happened. Verb of moderate and low intensity (from -2 to +2) represent mere words. The intensity between them is based on whether they invoke further action (Threaten/Promise) or not (Resist/Support). Neutral verbs are given the value of zero and are not accounted for in

⁵³ This approach seems to draw inspiration from Leites's findings, in particular from "who affects whom" -question, which was a cornerstone of Soviet political strategy. See George, 202.

⁵⁴ Walker – Schafer – Young, 177.

⁵⁵ Schafer, Mark – Walker Stephen G, 32.

⁵⁶ Walker – Schafer – Young, 183.

the analysis, as they do not give any indication of direction and intensity.⁵⁷ A sentence "Russia has annexed Crimea" would then in this thesis be coded as Russia (Self) has annexed (-3) Crimea.

The aggregated results are the compiled into a collection indices. Mathematical equations that calculate each index is provided in Appendix 1. The description for each index is adapted from Schafer and Walker⁵⁸, and the criteria and reasoning behind each index is described below:

P-1. *The Nature of the Political Universe: Friendly, Mixed, Hostile.* This is the master belief of the philosophical part of Operational Code. Other beliefs in the philosophical realm are linked to it. Operational Code assumes that the leader's image of other actors, their policies and actions reflect his or her beliefs about political conflict and nature of politics itself. The index calculates the leader's perception about cooperative or conflictual nature of Other. A low score indicates a belief that other are hostile, and a positive one that they are friendly. The index varies between -1 and +1.

P-2. *Prospect of Realizing Fundamental Values: Optimism versus Pessimism.* This index is based on the leader's perception of the intensity of actions of others. High amount of hostile deeds induces pessimism, while a high number friendly deeds induces an optimistic view about realization of political values. Transitive verbs by Other are weighed according to intensity (from -3 to +3) and the index varies from -1 to +1.

P-3. *Predictability of Political Universe: Low to High.* This index tracks leader's perception about predictability and consistence of actions of others. High variance of actions causes a low score while consistency leads to a high score. This index varies between 0 and 1. High scores indicate a greater belief in predictability.

P-4. *Control over Historical Development: Low to High.* This index reveals who the leader believes to be in control of political universe. It is based on the number actions Self and Other take in the leader's rhetoric. If Self takes action most of the time, the leader believes himself or herself to be in control. High number of actions by others leads to an opposite conclusion. This index varies between 0 and 1.

P-5. *Role of Chance in Politics: Low to High.* This index is based on the two previous ones. If the leader believes himself or herself to be in control, and the political universe to be predictable, the role of chance is logically lower and vice versa. This index varies

⁵⁷ Schafer, Mark – Walker Stephen G, 31.

⁵⁸ For more extensive explanations, see Schafer, Mark – Walker, Stephen G, 32-38.

between 0 and 1. A high number indicates a belief in the high role of chance.

I-1. *Direction of Strategy (I-1): Cooperative, Mixed, Conflictual*. This is the master belief of the instrumental part of Operational Code. It illustrates the leader's beliefs about the best course of action in politics. It is based on the nature of Self's actions in the leader's rhetoric. If the leader talks about taking cooperative actions, then more value is based on cooperative actions and vice versa. This index varies from -1 to +1.

I-2. *Intensity of Tactics*. This index tracks the leader's belief about the intensity of tactics. Verbs referring to Self are weighed from -3 to +3. The index reveals the average level of intensity, with extreme verbs having more effect on it than mild ones. The index varies from -1 to +1, with negative scores indicating a belief in the utility of hostile tactics and positive scores indicating a belief in the opposite.

I-3. *Risk Orientation: Averse to Acceptant*. This index reveals the leader's belief about risk taking. High variety of different actions means that risks associated with any one type of action are smaller. Index varies between 0 and 1. Low scores indicate risk aversity and result from a diverse rhetoric. High score indicates that the leader employs smaller variety of tactics and is consequently more risk acceptant.

I-4. *Importance of Timing of Actions: Low to High Flexibility*. This index is split into two. The first one (I-4a) tracks the diversity of leader's tactics based on the distribution of cooperative and conflictual actions. The second one is based on the diversity of words and deeds in the leader's rhetoric. The indices vary from 0 to 1, with high scores indicating a more heterogeneous approach to tactics, and low scores indicating a low diversity of tactics. These indices also indicate risk management related to tactical choices. I-4a balances the risk of being dominated to the risk of deadlock, while I-4b illustrates the risk of doing too much versus not doing enough.

I-5. *Utility of Means. Low to High*. These indices calculate the relative amount of different actions of Self in leader's rhetoric. More instances indicate, that the leader believes the type of action to be useful. Each Verb is coded according to intensity and then divided by the sum of all verbs. Indices vary from 0 to 1, but as each index is weighed by the total of six tactics, average belief score is around 0,16. Scores noticeably higher than that indicate a belief in high utility of the tactic and lower scores vice versa.

2.2.3 Approaches to Coding

Coding was initially done by hand until a specific software for VICS was developed, which allowed the program to use dictionaries to code the text automatically. Both approaches have their own advantages and disadvantages. The greatest virtue of automated coding is the ability to process large quantities of data quickly and efficiently. However, as the software processes the data according to pronouns found in the data, Self-indicators in third person remain undetected, distorting results by ignoring Self's relevant in-groups. This can be dealt with by editing the text. Additionally, while the possibility of computer errors in coding cannot be ruled out, an automated software would make the same error every time. Therefore, the error would not affect the reliability of comparisons between different studies, which use the same automated coding scheme. Coding by hand, while potentially being the most accurate method, suffers from a greater possibility of errors. Each coding decision has to be made by the researcher, which means that political biases, fatigue, and other human errors can affect the result.⁵⁹ This question is especially relevant in this study, as I have no prior experience with VICS. Coding by hand might lead to a high number of mistakes.

For the above reasons, this thesis uses an automated coding software, Profiler Plus V. 5.8.4, with coding schemes for V. 5.3.4. These are provided by Social Sciences Automation. Inc. (www.socialsciencesautomation.com). The pool of primary sources is quite large, consisting of thousands of words. Choosing automated coding allows to shift the workload from mechanical labor to the analysis of the results, which is an integral goal of this study. Additionally, automated coding allows us to compare the results of this study to others that have used the same coding scheme. While hand coding is still in use, the majority of the VICS-using Operational Code analysis is currently conducted with automated coding. Comparing results to these other studies may be useful.

2.2.4 Primary Source Material

Primary sources for VICS are Vladimir Putin's public speeches from a roughly six

⁵⁹ Schafer, Mark – Walker, Stephen G., 39-42.

month period starting from Russian annexation of Crimea in March 2014 and ending with the aftermath of First Minsk Accords in October 2014. Only speeches containing foreign policy material related to Ukrainian crisis will be used by VICS. They will be retrieved from the web page of the presidential administration (kremlin.ru). The time frame was chosen, because it corresponds to the start of deep Russian involvement in the Ukrainian crisis and its first, albeit temporary conclusion. It is also large enough to provide substantial amount of source material, increasing the accuracy of VICS results. Additionally, it also allows us to start and end VICS analysis with two major speeches concerning Russian foreign policy: Putin's address to Duma, before the formal annexation of Crimea and Putin's closing speech in the Valdai Discussion Club in October 2014. Every speech between these two will also be included, no matter how small. More individual speeches and more coded lines will reduce the possibility of individual speeches having extreme effects on the results.

The pool of primary sources will be divided into three Phases, which will be analyzed separately and then compared with each other. In this way, we can discover if Putin's Operational Code changed throughout the crisis. Phases will be roughly of equal length, and the division line will be based on an event that might hypothetically induce changes in Russian tactics. Phase 1 begins with Putin's speech to Duma on March regarding Crimea. Phase 2 will start in July 2014 in the aftermath of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17, which led to a new package of Western Sanctions and increased political pressure on Russia. It will end with the signing of First Minsk Accords in Early September, which starts Phase 3. This division allows us to observe both the effects of increased pressure as well as the easing of tension after first ceasefire agreement.

Limiting the analysis to three Phases will also ensure that each Phase has enough source material for reliable VICS scores. A fourth Phase might have been reasonable to add, based on the start of the Donbass conflict in May 2014. However, this would have split Phase 1 into two, leading to scarcity issues with source material. The other option would be to calculate a single Operational Code for the whole crisis, but this would leave all belief changes unrevealed. On the other hand, focusing on individual speeches would leave out a large amount of data from smaller speeches, as separately many of them would not have enough coded verbs to provide complete and reliable VICS indices. Walker and Schafer have generally discarded speech acts with less than 15 coded verbs. However, they have combined smaller speech acts together, if their dates are close to each other. Walker and Schafer suggest that the time frames for

Phase length may vary. They conclude that it is more important to ensure that the aggregation of speeches serves the purpose of the research design and, most importantly, that individual phases are not too small.⁶⁰ This is a somewhat contested methodological choice. Renshon argues that single longer speech acts, with the minimum requirement of 1,500 words should be used for research on belief change, because it cannot be ruled out that changes happen between each aggregated speech act.⁶¹ This thesis attempts to resolve the issue by placing cutoff points for each Phase in places, where greatest belief changes hypothetically might happen. The choice of three Phases should provide an acceptable answer to these questions, as it allows VICS indices of Phase 2, where most of the small speeches are located, to be calculated in a satisfactory manner.

Division into Phases is a common, if not ever-present, characteristic of Operational Code analysis. Generally speaking, results have provided strong support for VICS as a tool to trace belief change. Renshon's research indicates that dramatic events can induce major changes in Operational Codes. He reports that the Operational Code of George W. Bush experienced statistically significant changes in one of the master beliefs after he had been elected as the president of the United States, and again after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.⁶² Similar results have been encountered in President Jimmy Carter's Operational Code after the Iranian hostage crisis of 1979 and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.⁶³ Changes can be minor or major, likely depending on the severity of the event and the strength of the belief in question.

Official English translations will be used for VICS, as Russian language is not supported by the available Profiler Plus version. As VICS analysis is based on pronouns and sentence structures, very little will be lost in translation. Additionally, as Russian sentences sometimes lack verbs or a clear subject, VICS approach might be inaccurate if it was done on Russian language source material. Because the thesis is written in English, translated speeches will also be used throughout the study. Russian originals in this case, will be cross-checked to ensure that the translations match. Official translations typically tamper only with idioms and anecdotes in order to make them understandable to English speaking audiences. Changes in these areas are less likely to distort results, because they do not contain foreign policy content. For all intents and

⁶⁰ Schafer, Mark – Walker, Stephen G, 44.

⁶¹ Renshon 2008, 845.

⁶² Renshon 2008, 834.

⁶³ Walker – Schafer – Young, 185-186.

purposes, the translations are of high quality and are extremely reliable. Any worries that English translations might feature softer, or otherwise inaccurate, versions targeted at non-Russians are groundless, as shown in Chapter 3.

2.2.5 Prepared Statements and Spontaneous Comments as Source Material

The validity of at-a-distance analysis using leaders' prepared speeches has been called to question. Schafer points out that public speeches might be carefully crafted to appeal to the sensibilities of their intended audiences. In this case, Operational Code might analyze the public image of the leader instead of his or her beliefs. Of course, outright lies in public material cannot be ruled out beforehand either. However, this is not the only problem. As leaders may not always write their own speeches, the authorship of source material cannot be ascertained with perfect accuracy. While speechwriters typically will not write anything that goes against speaker's policy goals, it cannot be ruled out that prepared speeches might portray leaders' set of beliefs incorrectly.⁶⁴ Some conflicting results have been found out in the last few decades. Generally speaking public speeches have been found useful in at-a-distance analysis. Renshon has discovered that Operational Code analysis on public speeches generally yields comparable results to analysis based on speeches held in private, indicating that they can deliver accurate depiction of the leader's beliefs. He also suggests that deception is a smaller problem than what was initially feared.⁶⁵

Analyzing Operational Codes from speeches and interviews of American presidents Ronald Reagan and G.W. Bush, Brian Dille discovered major differences between the two sources. Both philosophical and instrumental indices exhibited changes, though not all VICS indices were affected. Generally speaking, both leaders had more conflictual strategies in an interview setting. Bush also exhibited a more conflictual outlook on the political world, and showed more pessimism regarding realization of his political goals. Dille attributes these differences to the effect of speechwriters, who in Reagan's case were able to capture his philosophical outlook

⁶⁴ Schafer, Mark, (2000): *Issues in Assessing Psychological Characteristics at a Distance. An Introduction to the Symposium*. In *Political Psychology*, Vol. 21, No 3, 2000, 515.

⁶⁵ Renshon, Jonathan (2009): *When Public Statements Reveal Private Beliefs: Assessing Operational Codes at a Distance*. In *Political Psychology*, Vol. 30, No. 4, 2009, 656.

while failing at strategy. In Bush's case they failed at both. However, the context effects that are associated between prepared speeches and interviews may also be the source of some of the differences.⁶⁶ Dille does not elaborate on this, however, but the fact that an interviewer, generally speaking, sets the theme of discussion should have effects on the content as well. The effect is especially significant on short questions with short answers, although they obviously also weigh the VICS score less than the long ones.

Schafer and Crichlow did a similar test on Bill Clinton's Operational Code, analyzing differences over time as well as between spontaneous and prepared remarks. The evidence is more damning than Dille's, as Operational Code variables in key traits with regards to both philosophy and strategy exhibited major differences between prepared and spontaneous remarks. While Schafer and Crichlow cannot explain the differences, they hypothesize that speechwriting process itself may be the cause of some of the differences, much like Dille did. They note that there may be more political value in presenting the leader in cooperative terms.⁶⁷ Arguably, this explanation is not altogether satisfactory, as the leaders themselves should also understand the utility of being seen as the solution to conflicts instead of being their cause.

Dille suggests that the difference between prepared and spontaneous speeches may be large enough to cause validity concerns, although he ends up suggesting that prepared speeches may be useful indicators of leaders' psychological characteristics, if they are involved in their creation.⁶⁸ While we do not know the specifics of presidential speechwriting in Russia, an authoritarian ruler like Putin should be expected to have a high degree of control over the material. Schafer and Crichlow, on the other hand, suggest focusing on spontaneous remarks, as they seem to be more adept at capturing temporal changes that resulted in key events under analysis.⁶⁹ In the light of these developments, Walker and Schafer suggest case by case approach when deciding whether to use spontaneous remarks or prepared speeches. They end up suggesting that the decision should be based on each individual research design.⁷⁰

In my opinion, none of these positions are conclusive enough to warrant unequivocal support. Therefore, this thesis analyzes both prepared and spontaneous

⁶⁶ Dille, Brian (2000): *The Prepared and Spontaneous remarks of Presidents Reagan and Bush: A Validity Comparison for At-a-Distance Measurements*. In *Political Psychology*, Vol. 21, No. 3, 2000, 575-577.

⁶⁷ Schafer, Mark – Crichlow, Scott (2000): *Bill Clinton's Operational Code: Assessing Source Material Bias*. In *Political Psychology*, Vol. 21, No 3, 2000, 560-562.

⁶⁸ Dille, 582.

⁶⁹ Schafer; Mark – Crichlow, Scott, 569-570.

⁷⁰ Schafer, Mark – Walker, Stephen G, 47.

statements separately in order to provide more data. Furthermore, the possibility of differences between spontaneous and prepared material is an interesting question in itself and may provide important insights on how Putin's set of beliefs manifest in different situations. If Putin's prepared and spontaneous remarks exhibit significant differences, that fact alone is valuable information. Fortunately, these tests are fairly easily run, as the material is readily available and analysis is automated. Both spontaneous and prepared Opcodes will be analyzed in three Phases, with the same qualifiers applying.⁷¹

2.2.6 The Criteria of Foreign Policy Content

VICS requires all source material's content to be dealing with foreign policy. The question is more complicated than one might realize. Speeches may consist of multiple parts dealing with a variety of issues. Majority of primary sources in this thesis are speeches like that. Only few of them are solely about the Ukrainian crisis. Especially interviews and longer speeches diverge constantly to address a multitude of issues. Walker et al. provide a working definition of foreign policy material as understood by VICS:

The criteria for foreign policy content include theend following: (1) the subject and object are international in scope; (2) the focus of interaction is a political issue; (3) the words and deeds are cooperative or conflictual, The self- and other-attributions are identified and coded as either positive (+) or negative (-) and then into categories from Verbs in Context System (VICS)."⁷²

This definition is upheld in this thesis with a few adjustments. Because it attempts to analyze Putin's political strategy in the context of Ukrainian crisis, countries and actors

⁷¹ The division between prepared and spontanenous comments is fairly clear. However, during one spontanous speech act, Putin started to read previously written notes. This part of the speech act is analyzed with other prepared statements. See The Kremlin (12 Sep 2014): *Answers to journalists' questions*. In the official internet resources of the President of Russia. <<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/46555>>, retrieved 28 Apr 2016.

⁷² Walker – Schafer – Young, 182.

that are not participants are edited out of primary sources before running them through Profiler Plus. If there is interest in discovering how Putin's Operational Code changed in the key moments of the crisis, it does not make sense to include speeches related to BRICS countries into the pool of primary sources. A similar choice of excluding certain themes was also carried out by Dille, who calculated VICS scores based on US–Soviet relations only, although in this case it was done, because presidential influence was most likely to be shown in that area.⁷³ In any case, variations according to the demands of the research design are possible and commonly used.

Accordingly, when indices are calculated in this thesis, Self refers to Russia and Russia's in-groups. Other refers to Western countries, Ukraine and their in-groups, namely the actors that imposed or supported sanctions against Russia. Crimea and Separatists of the Donbass region are lumped with Other, as Putin clearly refers to them as such during the time of his speeches. The reasoning is that the philosophical Operational Code beliefs are conceptualized to be about the political universe that is not under subject's direct control. The uncertain status of the Separatists fits this criterion. The inclusion may affect the Opcode values slightly. However, I expect the effect to be fairly insignificant, as the vast majority of Other-references are about Western countries and Ukraine.

2.2.7 Editing Procedures of Primary Sources

No Operational code study that I have encountered has explicitly stated how its authors edited primary source material before running Profiler Plus. Editing is clearly necessary because only foreign policy content from speeches is intended to be analyzed. The program also provides a tool to ignore text. Because we are interested in Putin's Opcode as related to Ukrainian Crisis, some further measures needed to be taken. The downside is that the decision to remove content is up to the researcher, which may introduce some of the issues related to hand coding into automated analysis. The full list of actions that were done to primary sources is documented below:

⁷³ Dille, 575.

1. References to distant history are edited out. The reason is that past events are always coded by VICS as deeds, which would skew the analysis towards one extreme. Sometimes, this means cutting certain sentences out of paragraphs. The only exception to this rule is made when the actor from history, that Putin refers to, is meant to be acting at the time of the speech as well, or that historical action bears direct relevance to Ukrainian crisis. This features most prominently in speeches where forces behind the past color revolutions are stated by Putin to be acting in contemporary Ukraine.
2. Direct quotes of other people are edited out, as the statement is not Putin's own, and VICS cannot handle rhetorical nuances of that level.
3. Everything that does not directly concern foreign policy related to Ukrainian crisis, is edited out. The most significant of these issues are economic ones, even if they concern international trade. If economic cooperation has clear and direct connection to foreign policy in the Ukrainian crisis, the statement may have been left intact, but this was decided on case by case basis. The Association Agreement between Ukraine and EU and issues with gas trade are such examples.
4. Statements that are more related to protocol than politics, even if they satisfy other conditions, were altogether not analyzed. They distort results, because their actual content is virtually the same every time. Certain press statements with typical exchange of pleasantries are such examples. They were also edited out of more substantial documents, if they were present.
5. Foreign policy content pertaining other nations besides participants in Ukrainian crisis is edited out, as it does not belong to the framework of this thesis. Mostly, this relates to Russia's bilateral relations with China, India and South American countries.
6. Pronouns and other Self-indicators that the computer program would identify as Other were changed to appropriate Self-indicators when they refer to Russians. Two examples are provided here: "Russia's Armed Forces never entered Crimea; they were there already in line with an international agreement." Russia's Armed Forces was changed to "we". "They" was also changed to "we". In another example, proper verbs were also inserted in the text: "Russia is an independent,

active participant in international affairs; like other countries, it has its own national interests." In this case, "Russia is" was changed to "we are" and "it has" was changed to "we have". This is done purely to help the program to identify Self and Self's in-groups, when it should do so. If this had not been done, the Opcode indices would not give an accurate representation of Putin's Opcode, as those utterances would be interpreted by the program as Other. Coding process was unaffected, because transitive verbs were not tampered with.

7. Speeches were compiled into single files for each Phase, before they were analyzed by the program. For example, Prepared speeches in Phase 1 had their own file and spontaneous speeches in Phase 1 had their own file. Speeches in Phase 2 and 3 were compiled in the same manner.

2.3 Additional Qualitative Methods

Arrival of VICS and the automated coding software has transformed the field of Operational Code research. Problems of reliability, that were issues in Leites's research, have been eliminated by quantitative methods. However, the dominance of quantitative methods has introduced new problems. The Operational Code analysis typically does not explain or provide evidence of what the VICS indices really stand for. There is very little exposition on what a single numerical value tells us about leader's beliefs. Numerical value is can, of course, be put on a spectrum and the explained that it is extremely high, low or something in between, but the result is still fairly vague. A variant of this question was also noticed by B. Gregory Marfleet, who, when analyzing belief changes of John F. Kennedy during the Cuban Missile Crisis, noticed that public and private rhetoric may yield different VICS scores but might reveal similar trends. He ends up suggesting that individual VICS scores seem less important, and that changes in Opcode should be the focus of further analysis.⁷⁴

While Marfleet's approach has also been embraced here, relatively minor attention that VICS pays to the analysis source material is still a problem that has to be dealt with. How beliefs verbally manifest themselves in source material is almost never

⁷⁴ Marfleet, B. Gregory (2000): *The Operational Code of John F. Kennedy During the Cuban Missile Crisis: A Comparison of Public and Private Rhetoric*. In *Political Psychology*, Vol. 31, No. 3, 2000, 557.

explored. Instead of delving deeper, typical studies that employ automated Operational Code research stop short of conducting an in-depth analysis on the causes and effects of the newly discovered beliefs of world leaders. Considering the qualitative research tradition behind Operational code, this thesis suggests that more can and should be said of Putin's belief about the nature of the political universe (P-1) or the instrumental tactics he uses to deal with its consequences. To these questions VICS provides no answers.

Therefore, qualitative content analysis will be employed to dissect and digest the results provided by quantitative methods. While Operational Code tends not to use mixed methods, methodological flexibility is not uncommon on other fields. Social and behavioral sciences have made great use for them. Using mixed methods has been one conclusion to paradigm wars fought between Positivism and Constructivism. The third position of pragmatism favors using methods that work for each particular case instead of being bogged down debates about the philosophy of science. Some researchers have also pointed out that there is inherent value in combining qualitative and quantitative methods, as there are enough similarities in their fundamental values.⁷⁵ Social policy research has also accustomed into mixing both qualitative and quantitative methods. Quantitative methods may include analyzing governmental statistics such as census data, smaller databases gathered by surveys, while qualitative methods may employ interviews or fieldwork, directly observing subjects.⁷⁶ The concepts behind these methods translate well to Operational Code as well, even if the methods themselves are dissimilar. The greatest issue with mixing methods seems to be theoretical considerations, such as how data is treated, and some concerns resulting from multiple ontological positions.⁷⁷ On the whole, advantages seem to outweigh disadvantages.

David L. Morgan makes a compelling case for methodological pragmatism and a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. Philosophical issues aside, the choice of one tradition over the other can constrain research and limit the knowledge it can produce. Both quantitative and qualitative methodology have their own advantages and disadvantages in the research process. As Morgan points out, having absolute faith in one approach will only emphasize its problems, where it might otherwise be possible

⁷⁵ Tashakkori, Abbas – Teddlie, Charles (2008): *Introduction to Mixed Method and Mixed Model Studies in the Social and Behavioral Sciences*. In Plano Clark, Vicki L – Creswell, John W, (eds): *The Mixed Methods Reader*. Sage Publications, Inc, Los Angeles, 9-17.

⁷⁶ Brannen, Julia (1992): *Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches: an overview*. In Brannen, Julia (ed.): *Mixing Methods: qualitative and quantitative research*. Avebury, Aldershot, 10-17.

⁷⁷ Brannen, Julia, 4-10.

to work on its issues by combining methods.⁷⁸ In the context of Operational Code analysis, the sole focus on qualitative methods has had a distinct problem with generalizability and lack of focus. On the other hand, VICS scores can be severely under-analyzed. VICS is certainly a turning point in Operational Code analysis, but I will consider it necessary to supplement it by analyzing the primary sources more deeply.

The variety of options in combining the methods is substantial. One method can be emphasized over the other, or they can both be given equal weight.⁷⁹ This thesis will privilege VICS scores as the best representation of Putin's Operational Code. However, it will attempt to expand and explain the results, and shed light on Putin's political strategy in Ukraine by interpreting the content of his speeches. No commitments to any specific methods will be made, as the VICS results and the research tradition of Operational Code will provide sufficient guidance. While multiple methods have their uses, their contrived adoption would not bring intrinsic value to this study. It remains committed to pragmatism established by Alexander George and uses a mixed method in the benefit of the research design, not as an end in itself. It is my belief, that this kind of focus will only work in favor of the research design.

2.4 On Predictive Powers of Operational Code

Few scholars in the field of International Relations can resist the opportunity to make predictions on the future behavior of states. This seems to have been one of the goals of Realist school starting from Morgenthau. However, in effect, these goals have been tempered by reality. Mearsheimer suggests that prediction of future based on extrapolation of the contemporary will not provide sound results.⁸⁰ Many Realists however, at least claim to understand the nature of the system and detect patterns of behavior and general trends. If the theory is accepted as the best possible explanation for the nature of international system, their claim should be treated as plausible. The same train of thought seems to operate on many other IR theories as well. On the other hand, one of the goals of Operational Code analysis has been said to be to provide

⁷⁸ Morgan, David L (2008): *Paradigms Lost and Pragmatism Regained. Methodological Implications of Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Methods*. In Plano Clark, Vicki L – Creswell, John W (eds): *The Mixed Methods Reader*. Sage Publications, Inc, Los Angeles, 57-61.

⁷⁹ Tashakkori, Abbas – Teddlie, Charles, 17-23; Brannen, Julia 1992, 24-30

⁸⁰ Measheimer, Xii.

causal links between beliefs and political action.⁸¹ Therefore, the question of prediction and causality requires more careful consideration.

Most of the scholars who have utilized Operational Code lean towards Positivism when they interpret their results. The results are rarely subject to in-depth scrutiny, after they have arrived. This is mainly a feature of studies, which use VICS as the predominant method. The results are typically presented in the form of a chart, which is then described in writing.

Naturally, when a method such as this has a strong Positivistic air about it, predictions on future behavior often follow. He and Feng, in fact, spell out their goal of predicting future Chinese foreign policy based on the results of Operational Code analysis of Xi Jinping.⁸² However, in practice they end up treating their results as indicative instead of definitive, and vary in making strong predictions about the future behavior of China. Concerning research on ideas in general, Goldstein and Keohane have warned against supposing causality between beliefs and actions of research subjects. The burden of proof is simply too great. However, they do argue that knowledge of ideas can work as a road map, when scholars attempt to find causal links. In this sense, when combined with the understanding of material factors, policy outcomes can be more readily explained.⁸³ I believe that this is the most we can expect from any kind of micro-level foreign policy analysis, not to mention systemic approaches. It is entirely reasonable to expect that beliefs matter, and that they may even predispose a person to pursue a certain policies. However, it would be misguided to hope that research could provide a definite proof that a belief caused an action.

As far Operational Code analysis is concerned, the matter is further complicated by some studies that have discovered, that beliefs of their subjects have changed significantly over time. Sometimes the changes happened within months, as Schafer and Crichlow discovered with Bill Clinton during the Balkan crisis of 1993. These results suggest that long-term predictions have even less explanatory power than expected, although not all changes in Clinton's Operational Code seem to have been fundamental in nature.⁸⁴ Therefore, general trends in beliefs can probably still be observed fairly reliably. Some beliefs may be more resistant to change than others.

⁸¹ Mintz – DeRouen, 102.

⁸² He – Feng, 217.

⁸³ Goldstein – Keohane, 11-13.

⁸⁴ Schafer, Mark – Crichlow Scott, 566-570.

However, any one Operational Code can by no means be treated as stable without further considerations. Accordingly, this thesis is more interested in congruence, than attesting definite causal links between Putin's beliefs and Russian strategy.

3 The Operational Code of Vladimir Putin

Table I.
Vladimir Putin's Operational Code Based on Spontaneous Comments in the Ukrainian Crisis

| | | Phase 1 18.3 – 17.7.14 | Phase 2 17.7 – 5.9.14 | Phase 3 5.9 – 24.10.14 |
|------------------------------|---|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| <i>Philosophical Beliefs</i> | | | | |
| P-1. | Nature of Political Universe (Conflict/Cooperation) | 0,32 | 0,39 | 0,29 |
| P-2. | Realization of Political Values (Pessimism/Optimism) | 0,13 | 0,10 | 0,13 |
| P-3. | Predictability of Politics (Unpredictable/Predictable) | 0,11 | 0,17 | 0,10 |
| P-4. | Historical Development (Low Control/High Control) | 0,29 | 0,41 | 0,26 |
| P-5. | Role of Chance (Small Role/Large Role) | 0,97 | 0,93 | 0,97 |
| <i>Instrumental Beliefs</i> | | | | |
| I-1. | Strategic Approach to Politics (Conflict/Cooperation) | 0,60 | 0,50 | 0,49 |
| I-2. | Intensity of Tactics (Conflict/Cooperation) | 0,29 | 0,19 | 0,26 |
| I-3. | Risk Orientation (Averse/Acceptant) | 0,19 | 0,32 | 0,20 |
| I-4. | Timing of Action | | | |
| | a. Cooperation/Conflict | 0,40 | 0,50 | 0,51 |
| | b. Words/Deeds | 0,43 | 0,12 | 0,41 |
| I-5. | Utility of Means | | | |
| | Reward | 0,15 | 0,06 | 0,17 |
| | Promise | 0,13 | 0,06 | 0,06 |
| | Appeal | 0,52 | 0,62 | 0,52 |
| | Oppose | 0,09 | 0,12 | 0,16 |
| | Threaten | 0,05 | 0,12 | 0,06 |
| | Punish | 0,06 | 0,00 | 0,03 |

Table II.
Vladimir Putin's Operational Code Based on Prepared Statements in the Ukrainian Crisis

| | | Phase 1 18.3 – 17.7.14 | Phase 2 17.7 – 5.9.14 | Phase 3 5.9 – 24.10.14 |
|------------------------------|---|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| <i>Philosophical Beliefs</i> | | | | |
| P-1. | Nature of Political Universe (Conflict/Cooperation) | 0,21 | 0,09 | 0,31 |
| P-2. | Realization of Political Values (Pessimism/Optimism) | 0,03 | -0,02 | 0,13 |
| P-3. | Predictability of Politics (Unpredictable/Predictable) | 0,10 | 0,07 | 0,11 |
| P-4. | Historical Development (Low Control/High Control) | 0,29 | 0,24 | 0,25 |
| P-5. | Role of Chance (Small Role/Large Role) | 0,97 | 0,98 | 0,97 |
| <i>Instrumental Beliefs</i> | | | | |
| I-1. | Strategic Approach to Politics (Conflict/Cooperation) | 0,51 | 0,88 | 0,54 |
| I-2. | Intensity of Tactics (Conflict/Cooperation) | 0,11 | 0,57 | 0,21 |
| I-3. | Risk Orientation (Averse/Acceptant) | 0,36 | 0,24 | 0,25 |
| I-4. | Timing of Action | | | |
| | a. Cooperation/Conflict | 0,49 | 0,12 | 0,46 |
| | b. Words/Deeds | 0,43 | 0,71 | 0,56 |
| I-5. | Utility of Means | | | |
| | Reward | 0,07 | 0,35 | 0,15 |
| | Promise | 0,03 | 0,12 | 0,05 |
| | Appeal | 0,66 | 0,47 | 0,56 |
| | Oppose | 0,07 | 0,06 | 0,10 |
| | Threaten | 0,03 | 0,00 | 0,00 |
| | Punish | 0,15 | 0,00 | 0,13 |

3.1 Statistical Results

Test results indicate that Vladimir Putin's operational code against Western world experienced significant changes during the summer of 2014. Results are presented in two tables: Opcode changes in spontaneous comments are tracked by Table I, and changes in prepared statements are tracked by Table II. Prepared statements reveal a major reorientation of Putin's strategic beliefs during Phase 2, between plane crash of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 on 17.7.2014 and first Minsk Accords ceasefire agreement in 5.9.2014. Putin's strategic inclination is strongly cooperative in all indices (I-1), but in Phase 2 it became extremely more so, both in terms of general direction and intensity (I-2). It is noteworthy that Putin's choice of tactic was throughout the entire crisis Appeals (+1). However, Phase 2 shows a substantial increase in Reward (I-5), indicating that, during this time, more tangible contributions became a far more important component of strategy, even rivaling Appeals in importance. The adoption of this secondary tactic was the cause of more intense cooperative direction, as Promises (+2) of future rewards were never favored by Putin. It is noteworthy, that while Putin is generally prepared to mix his tactics, he became even more ready to act both in words and deeds (I-4b). Operational code construct allows us to look at this score from the point of view of risk management behavior, where the actor balances between not doing enough and doing too much. It seems that something during Phase 2 induced a need to take firm action even at the risk of causing potential costs. Risk seems to have been managed by reducing conflictual statements and actions (I-4a) to a bare minimum. The conscious risk management is also supported by changed I-3 value, which reveals generally a more risk averse strategy in this Phase (I-3), a condition which persisted even after the First Minsk accords. Most likely, deeds in Phase 3 were not deemed risky at all, especially considering that they were solely cooperative ones (Reward +3).

Philosophical beliefs remained more stable, although it is noteworthy that Phase 2 saw Putin's belief about the nature of political universe moving towards a more conflictual direction (P-1), to the point of feeling that it is certainly ambivalent instead of harmonious. Other values also became more negative, although not extremely so. The changes are not significant enough to conclude that Putin's beliefs in these areas changed much, if at all. However, as an indicator of a master belief, the fact that P-1 value carries great importance in the Philosophical part of the Opcode should be

remembered and appreciated. Therefore, it cannot be said that prepared statements revealed a world view that was relatively unaffected by the crisis. Especially noteworthy is that the decrease of P-1 value in Phase 2 proved out to be a short slump, and Putin's belief recovered after First Minsk Accords ceasefire agreement. This was also accompanied by slightly strengthened belief in the realization of Russian goals (P-2), a reasonable change, considering the continued existence of Separatist areas after the fact.

Putin's spontaneous statements did not experience drastic changes in Phase 2. On the whole his philosophical outlook became more positive. Especially noteworthy are the increased belief in the cooperative nature of politics (P-1) and the two scores that indicate a heightened belief in the predictability of the crisis (P-3) and the control of its development (P-4). These values speak of a man, who wants at least to give out an appearance of being in control. This notion is supported by certain instrumental values. As far as interviews are concerned, Putin was all talk and little action (I-4b). In a complete reversal of his prepared statements, he was also ready to employ both cooperative and conflictual rhetoric (I-4a) in equal measure. This may be seen as risky, but it was a risk he was increasingly willing to take (I-3). Punish (-3) was not part of his repertoire of tactics, so the risk may not have been as great as some might imagine.

While Putin's generally cooperative stance towards foreign policy may come as a surprise to many, in the context of Operational Code analysis it is not unusual. In fact, results from Putin's Opcode bear great resemblance to George W. Bush's Operational Codes throughout his presidency, which also had a cooperative streak despite the fact that United States was at war during most of his two terms. In fact, most of their values match closely, including the belief in the high role of chance (P-5), which is perhaps not as unusual, as it might seem at first glance.⁸⁵

3.2 Cognitive Consistency and Putin's Operational Code

The fact that it were Putin's instrumental beliefs that experienced greatest changes is extremely interesting. Renshon reports that many social psychological studies on belief

⁸⁵ Renshon 2008, 829-834.

change posit that beliefs are hierarchically organized. According to cognitive consistency theory, currently prevalent in political psychology, beliefs are relatively stable and mutually reinforcing. According to this view, new events are typically filtered and interpreted by people in a way that is consistent with their previously adopted world views. For this reason, beliefs most resistant to change lie on top of the hierarchy of beliefs and deal with the most fundamental assumptions about the world we live in. As far as leaders and Operational Code are concerned, these beliefs concern the nature of political reality and similar issues. Below them in the hierarchy are strategic policy beliefs and at the bottom are beliefs related to tactics, which are the most malleable ones. According to cognitive consistency theory, changes in beliefs happen from bottom up, so that fundamental assumptions rarely change without minor ones doing so as well.⁸⁶ Furthermore, basic goals or objectives are so resistant to change that will only be changed after "repeated strategic failures".⁸⁷ This assumption should be kept in mind, as it corresponds to shifts in Vladimir Putin's operational code during the Ukrainian Crisis. Beliefs referring to tactics, such as the greatly increased value for Reward (I-5a) during Phase 2, experienced largest changes in indices generated from prepared statements, while most of the fundamental assumptions about political world experienced fairly minor ones. The one exception is the master belief on the nature political reality (P-1), that had the corresponding score lowered. It seems reasonable to expect that new tactics would reflect this change. However, the matter is not as simple as it seems.

Renshon explains that the opposite is true for majority of Opcode studies. They indicate that philosophical beliefs change far more easily and in greater magnitudes than instrumental ones. When instrumental beliefs change with them, they usually do so in a more limited manner. According to Renshon, this behavior appears to directly contradict predictions of cognitive consistency theory. Putin's Opcodes throughout the period of analysis, on the other hand, developed markedly differently from the majority of other studies that Renshon refers to. Renshon, however, points out, that only a small number of Opcode studies have been designed to detect alternative causes for belief changes. He concedes that while we know that Operational Codes change, it is still very unclear how they do so.⁸⁸

Renshon manages to reconcile some of his findings with the cognitive consistency theory with the fact that the distinction between philosophical and

⁸⁶ Renshon 2008, 823-828.

⁸⁷ Levy, 311.

⁸⁸ Renshon 2008, 823-828.

instrumental beliefs in the Operational Code construct is not meant to represent a hierarchy. While certain beliefs such as favorable disposition towards a certain tactical choice rank hierarchically below the master belief, instrumental values on the whole are not less important than the philosophical ones. Operational Code construct is designed to divide an individual's beliefs about Other into philosophical realm and beliefs of the proper course of action for Self into instrumental realm. Renshon concludes that instrumental beliefs can be seen to compromise a part of individual's personal identity, while the philosophical ones represent an interpretation of the political universe.⁸⁹

3.3 Prepared Statements Revealing Tactical Choices

In this sense, minor changes in instrumental realm do not represent serious problem to Operational Code analysis. However, the rather unique pattern of instrumental scores in Putin's Opcode still has to be accounted for, as the findings run contrary to many other studies, including Renshon's, which discovered that 9/11 terrorist attacks in the USA resulted in significant changes in George W. Bush's philosophical Opcode scores but had much less effect on his instrumental VICS scores⁹⁰. Furthermore, it seems reasonable to contest Renshon's conclusion that instrumental beliefs truly go as deep as to represent parts of identity, at least as far as Putin is concerned, especially since the difference between his prepared statements and press interviews is massive during Phase 2. While the question of authorship of prepared statements is not completely resolved, it seems clear that Putin would stand behind them fully in critical moments such as the summer of 2014.

3.4 Tactical Functions of Prepared Statements and Interviews

I argue that major shift in all of Putin's instrumental scores in prepared statements may reflect a certain kind of tactical thinking with regards to short-term foreign policy goals. Many Operational Code studies have analyzed differences between prepared statements and spontaneous remarks. However, often the goal has been to find out that which kind

⁸⁹ Renshon 2008, 840-841.

⁹⁰ Renshon 2008, 834.

of source material is more reliable indicator of leader's psychology.⁹¹ The approach is slightly different here. In fact, based on Putin's scores, I argue that both can be reliable measures of his political strategy, but they may illustrate different aspects of it. It seems reasonable to believe that foreign policy can be approached from different angles in different mediums. Prepared statements are typically meant to reflect the official foreign policy stance of a country. They may be short or long but they are planned beforehand to disseminate information about the country's plans for the future. In this way, they are extremely serious documents and require very careful preparation. In the case of this study, prepared speeches were usually held in an event that received major international coverage and reactions from all over the world, one such example being the speech held before the State Duma before it formally annexed Crimea.

Phase 2, where major changes in Putin's Opcode happened, did not include prepared statements of this caliber. However, it did include a speech to the Security Council, a one that was clearly intended for a larger audience⁹², as well an address to separatists in Eastern Ukraine, where they were urged to open up a humanitarian corridor for entrapped Ukrainian soldiers. Putin also took this opportunity to address Ukrainian authorities and call for a ceasefire and further negotiations.⁹³ While not as long in content as other material, especially the latter statement must have been extremely carefully composed in order to communicate the Russian message as clearly as possible.

Interviews, on the other hand, fulfill arguably a different function, a one that has fewer immediate foreign policy consequences. They are discussions on the previously announced foreign policy stances and elaborate on them. This pattern exhibits itself very well on the primary sources of this thesis. All spontaneous remarks in this paper were gathered either from one-on-one in depth interviews or from Putin's answers to questions during press meetings. While Ukrainian crisis was constantly under discussion, Putin did not introduce new policies in any of the interviews or made concise new openings. Instead, he emphasized his viewpoints, drew attention to facts that he thought were important and, generally speaking, defended his policy choices. In this sense, Putin's spontaneous Operational Code in Phase 2 may have been the result of

⁹¹ See, for example, Schafer, Mark – Crichlow Scott; Dille.

⁹² The Kremlin (22 Jul 2014): *Security Council meeting*. In the official internet resources of the President of Russia. <<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/46305>>, retrieved 28 Apr 2016.

⁹³ The Kremlin (29 Aug 2014): *President of Russia Vladimir Putin addressed Novorossiia militia*. In the official internet resources of the President of Russia. <<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/46506>>, retrieved 28 Apr 2016.

a conscious tactical choice. Being seen as tough, confident and in control may have been useful at this point of the crisis. Acting such way is also less risky, if we consider that prepared statements were the real crux of this Phase, as far as political decisions were considered. Putin clearly relishes interview situations and has an uncanny ability to control their flow and the nature of discussion. His conduct in Phase 1 is an excellent indicator of this proactive approach to press meetings. At times he ignored the question almost entirely and gave a lengthy speech to get across a point that he thought was important.

In one prominent case during St. Petersburg International Economic Forum Putin was asked a three-part question by an Indian journalist, the first part concerning Putin's reaction to the fact the Indian Prime Minister did not support Western sanction policy against Russia. The other two parts dealt with bilateral relations and a nuclear power plant project with India. Putin's answer was a lengthy monologue on the background of Russian involvement in Ukrainian crisis, and how Russia was justified to act how it did. Putin pointed out that, with new authorities in place, Ukraine might join NATO, which might lead to a serious geopolitical threat to Russia and would force Russia out of Black Sea territory. He also stressed that new authorities were placed in power by an unconstitutional coup, while hinting that the coup was started by people who wanted to see Ukrainian NATO accession to happen. Finally, he expressed dissatisfaction that EU had refused to hear Russian concerns about negative economic impacts that the Ukrainian Association Agreement would have for them. It was a fine answer to a question that was not asked. The original question was only acknowledged at the end with few grateful words for the fact that India had stayed out of the crisis and had not introduced any sanctions. Regarding the nuclear power project, he simply gave a vague reply that Russia will uphold all agreements with India and hopes to increase cooperation in the future.⁹⁴

In the same press meeting, a German journalist also asked whether Russia can be a reliable gas provider to Europe in the future due to its large new contract with China, while coyly mentioning its recent political course as another concern to Europe. Putin's reply was sufficiently detailed, but it also led him to an even more thorough examination on the history of Russian-Ukrainian gas trade, where, according to Putin, Russia had been accommodating Ukraine with various measures and discounts for

⁹⁴ The Kremlin (24 May 2014): *Meeting with heads of leading international news agencies*. In the official internet resources of the President of Russia. <<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/21090>>, retrieved 28 Apr 2016.

years, until it simply could not continue to do so. Most of the answer was again unrelated to the question. While Ukraine's position as a transit country for Russian gas sold to Western Europe may warrant its mention in the answer, the amount of attention devoted to Ukraine here is in some ways almost excessive. The original question was not about the background of price hike for gas that Ukraine buys, but the answer was.⁹⁵

The focus on Ukraine, even when the situation did not specifically call for it, indicates that Putin approached at least this interview with certain objects in mind. Before the Indian journalist had the chance to ask his question some of his colleagues had already broached the subject of the Ukrainian Crisis by asking, whether Putin recognizes Petro Poroshenko as the legitimate president of Ukraine or not.⁹⁶ Of course, Putin himself had also brought up the disputes in Russian-Ukrainian gas trade. However, these two cases only concerned certain aspects of the crisis and not really the crisis itself. It seems that Putin was expecting a question that would allow him to explain his point of view and justify for the acquisition of Crimea in the process. When a question that could naturally lead to an answer like that was never asked, he may have simply decided to take the chance as it came. In this case, the press meeting was used to restate and emphasize earlier points that were already present in the speech that Putin held before Russian parliament at the beginning of Phase 1. Therefore, it should not come as surprise that Opcode values between the prepared statements and the spontaneous ones did not diverge greatly in Phase 1.

3.5 New Tactics in Phase 2 – The Statistical Basis

The situation is markedly different in Phase 2, when Russian position with regards to Ukrainian crisis had become more perilous and uncertain. The plane crash of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 had led Western countries to introduce a serious packet of sanctions against Russia for the first time, while the military forces of Ukrainian central government were advancing in areas previously held by the separatists. Before First Minsk Accords led to a ceasefire, the Ukrainian army had reached the outskirts of Luhansk and Donetsk.

Correspondingly, the tone of Putin's statements became less hostile in Phase 2. However, this manifested differently in Opcode values derived from prepared

⁹⁵ The Kremlin 24 May 2014.

⁹⁶ He did recognize Poroshenko.

statements and interviews. The interviews in Phase 2 did not reveal as drastic changes in the instrumental realm as the prepared statements did. In fact, his direction of strategy actually became slightly less cooperative (I-1) and the intensity of tactics also lessened (I-2). Analysis based on his spontaneous remarks indicates, that he actually became less inclined to use Reward (I-5a), or Promise (I-5b), the two most cooperative tactics in the spectrum. He still favored a mix of cooperative and conflictual actions (I-4a) but his propensity for action (I-4b) lessened significantly. He did become more risk oriented (I-3) though, but still remained somewhat risk averse on the whole. Putin's philosophical score on nature of political universe (P-1) actually became slightly higher, indicating a belief a significantly more harmonious world than the score derived from interviews did. His belief in the prospect of realizing values (P-2) decreased slightly more based on prepared statements than it did based on interviews, though. It should be added, that the sample size for spontaneous comments in Phase 2 is very small, with only 1,188 words out typical standard of 1,500 words. This may have had a slight impact on the results. While not an ideal situation, it simply has to be accepted in this case. In any case, the most significant results are related to Putin's prepared statements, and the data in every Phase of that category exceeded the threshold of the recommended word count.

Opcode scores in this area experienced a major upheaval in Phase 2, especially in the instrumental realm. The direction of Putin's strategy became extremely cooperative (I-1) to the point that only one negative Self-indicator was registered by the program in this Phase 2. This cooperative tactical streak also intensified greatly (I-2), which was caused by his greater readiness for cooperative deeds (Reward +3). This was the only high Reward value in all three Phases both in prepared and spontaneous statements, as the other ones were dominated by Putin's favorite tactic, Appeal (+1), which remained a favorite of Putin in this phase as well. Especially noteworthy is that the intensification of Putin's cooperative strategy was not caused by Promise (+2), another verbal tactic, but actual deeds, signified by Reward (+3). While it may be contested that Russia truly worked to solve the crisis with cooperative actions at this point, Putin certainly tried to demonstrate Russia's stance that it was not a hostile player in the crisis. This tactic and the changes presented above can also be seen in two Opcode scores that track certain kinds of risk management. Generally speaking, he became more risk averse (I-3) in a stark contrast to his persona in Phase 2 interviews. However, the two tactics signifying the timing of cooperative and conflictual actions (I-4a) and words and deeds (I-4b) show that Putin had minimized conflictual actions in his

repertoire and that he was prepared to employ heterogeneous tactics to drive forward his cooperative strategy. In terms of risk management, Putin had begun to see the mixing of cooperative and conflictual messages too risky for the situation, but on the other hand was prepared to risk doing too much instead of doing too little. This was a time of action, not of mere talk.

Putin's philosophical Opcode scores can give us some insight on why these changes had come to pass. His P-1 score, while not negative, decreased during Phase 2 and registered the lowest value out all three phases. Additionally, his belief in the prospect of realizing values (P-2) also decreased as well as his belief that he could control the situation (P-4), or predict what is to come (P-3). However, the new values, other than P-1 were not far removed from Phase 1 ones, so it may be best not to draw too many conclusions about them. Altogether, however, it seems that Putin saw the position of Russia and the separatists as more precarious during Phase 2, a belief that would be congruent with the developments of the crisis at that time. The conflict in Ukraine had intensified into an open war and new Western sanctions posed a serious risk to Russian economy. It should be noted, that while Phase 1 interviews indicate that Putin's P-1 value rose to a friendly view, it may have been just an indicator of wishful thinking. Table III, where both prepared and spontaneous statements are combined into a general Opcode, shows that his general P-1 value, in fact, decreased between Phase 1 and 2.

Table III.
Vladimir Putin's Combined Operational Code in the Ukrainian Crisis

| | | Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 |
|------------------------------|---|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| | | 18.3 – 17.7.14 | 17.7 – 5.9.14 | 5.9 – 24.10.14 |
| <i>Philosophical Beliefs</i> | | | | |
| P-1. | Nature of Political Universe (Conflict/Cooperation) | 0,28 | 0,18 | 0,26 |
| P-2. | Realization of Political Values (Pessimism/Optimism) | 0,09 | 0,03 | 0,09 |
| P-3. | Predictability of Politics (Unpredictable/Predictable) | 0,10 | 0,07 | 0,10 |
| P-4. | Historical Development (Low Control/High Control) | 0,29 | 0,30 | 0,25 |
| P-5. | Role of Chance (Small Role/Large Role) | 0,97 | 0,98 | 0,98 |
| <i>Instrumental Beliefs</i> | | | | |
| I-1. | Strategic Approach to Politics (Conflict/Cooperation) | 0,57 | 0,70 | 0,51 |
| I-2. | Intensity of Tactics (Conflict/Cooperation) | 0,23 | 0,38 | 0,24 |
| I-3. | Risk Orientation (Averse/Acceptant) | 0,24 | 0,24 | 0,21 |
| I-4. | Timing of Action | | | |
| | a. Cooperation/Conflict | 0,43 | 0,30 | 0,49 |
| | b. Words/Deeds | 0,42 | 0,42 | 0,46 |
| I-5. | Utility of Means | | | |
| | Reward | 0,12 | 0,21 | 0,17 |
| | Promise | 0,10 | 0,09 | 0,06 |
| | Appeal | 0,57 | 0,55 | 0,53 |
| | Oppose | 0,08 | 0,09 | 0,14 |
| | Threaten | 0,04 | 0,06 | 0,04 |
| | Punish | 0,09 | 0,00 | 0,06 |

4 Qualitative Analysis

4.1 Phase 1 Content Analysis – Dominance of Grand Strategy

The new strategy of Phase 2 can also be seen in the actual content of Phase 2 source material. While many of his Phase 1 statements can be readily interpreted as conflictual, Putin toned this side down and presented himself as far more cooperative in Phase 2. Variance is greater in Phase 1 statements, however, as the period is longer and contains more speech acts. Between the beginning and the end of it, the situation in Ukraine had also become very different.

Russia had already involved itself in the crisis in the beginning of Phase 1. Crimea had been occupied for weeks, and the parliament had approved the use of military force to safeguard Russian population in Ukraine. The EU and the United States had introduced their first, albeit minor, package of sanctions against Russia. Initially Russian involvement was limited to Crimea. First disturbances in the Donbass happened in the middle of April, after which Russian-backed Separatists took control of the region. Ukraine responded by launching a military operation against the Separatists, which led to an open war in the area. The operation was somewhat successful during Phase 1, in the sense that the Ukrainian government managed to gain victories against the Separatist forces, capturing the city of Sloviansk in early July. Phase 1 ends in uncertainty, as Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 crashes into the Separatist territory.

Putin's views in Phase 1 are best presented in Putin's address to State Duma Deputies, after which Russia formally voted in favor of annexing Crimea. This speech reveals deep dissatisfaction with the way international system has developed after the end of the Cold War. According to Putin, the collapse of bipolar system under the United States and Soviet Union has resulted in American domination of the world, which in turn has led to instability and the unilateral use of force in political disputes:

"Like a mirror, the situation in Ukraine reflects what is going on and what has been happening in the world over the past several decades. After the dissolution of bipolarity on the planet, we no longer have stability. Key international institutions are not getting any stronger; on the contrary, in many cases, they are sadly degrading. Our western partners, led by the United States of America, prefer not to be guided by international law in their

practical policies, but by the rule of the gun."⁹⁷

Putin explains that the United States and the West use international law only when it suits their purposes, such as in Kosovan independence, while they routinely ignore it when it is convenient to their interests, as happened in Serbia, Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya. According to Putin, Russia was next under attack, as color revolutions in Ukraine and other countries were "controlled" by outside forces, while Russia had only wanted its interests to be taken seriously:

"We understand what is happening; we understand that these actions were aimed against Ukraine and Russia and against Eurasian integration. And all this while Russia strived to engage in dialogue with our colleagues in the West. We are constantly proposing cooperation on all key issues; we want to strengthen our level of trust and for our relations to be equal, open and fair. But we saw no reciprocal steps.

On the contrary, they have lied to us many times, made decisions behind our backs, placed us before an accomplished fact. This happened with NATO's expansion to the East, as well as the deployment of military infrastructure at our borders."⁹⁸

This view makes it easier to understand why Putin consistently denied throughout the crisis that Russia is one party of the conflict in the Donbass region⁹⁹ and why Russia does not, publicly at least, consider Ukraine to be its enemy. Putin is pushing a narrative of Western aggression against Russia, and Russian military operation in Ukraine would fit into it poorly. Putin also seems to consider Ukraine's new government an American proxy, and, as such, it does not represent the people of Ukraine to him¹⁰⁰. This position becomes apparent in the context of other color revolutions as well, as he

⁹⁷ The Kremlin (18 Mar 2014): *Address by President of the Russian Federation*. In the official internet resources of the President of Russia. <<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/20603>>, retrieved 28 Apr 2016.

⁹⁸ The Kremlin 18 Mar 2014.

⁹⁹ The Kremlin (7 May 2014): *Press statements and replies to journalists' questions*. In the official internet resources of the President of Russia. <<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/20973>>; The Kremlin (27 Aug 2014): *Answers to journalist' questions following working visit to Belarus*. In the official internet resources of the President of Russia. <<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/46495>>, retrieved 28 Apr 2016.

¹⁰⁰ The Kremlin 24 May 2014.

insists that the peoples' feelings of discontent were "cynically" taken advantage of: Their misfortune may have been real, but it was only used to install new government that only worsened their situation and took the power off their hands.¹⁰¹ To Putin, the true battle extends far beyond Ukraine's borders. Nowhere does this stance become clearer than at the end of the address:

"Some Western politicians are already threatening us with not just sanctions but also the prospect of increasingly serious problems on the domestic front. I would like to know what it is they have in mind exactly: action by a fifth column, this disparate bunch of 'national traitors', or are they hoping to put us in a worsening social and economic situation so as to provoke public discontent? We consider such statements irresponsible and clearly aggressive in tone, and we will respond to them accordingly. At the same time, we will never seek confrontation with our partners, whether in the East or the West, but on the contrary, will do everything we can to build civilised and good-neighbourly relations as one is supposed to in the modern world."¹⁰²

According to Putin, Russia may be under attack too. It is important to note, that it is not Russia's territorial integrity that is in danger, but its domestic stability. Indeed, no country could probably seriously threaten a country with Russia's military capabilities. He states as much himself in a meeting with Security Council during Phase 2, owing Russia's safety primarily to the balance of military forces in the world.¹⁰³ However, the office of president is not as invulnerable as the nation is, as has been shown in color revolutions and in the Arab Spring. Putin seems to feel that his position may be under a similar threat. It would provide some explanation to the strong response Putin showed in the wake of the 2014 revolution in Ukraine. With slightly adapted outlook based on political realism, we can observe that while Russia's survival as a state is not threatened, the survival of Putin's presidency may be. The aggressive response should not come as a surprise.

Putin's character has been previously been studied and some congruence between certain traits or "roles" and political action has been

¹⁰¹ The Kremlin 18 Mar 2014.

¹⁰² The Kremlin 18 Mar 2014.

¹⁰³ The Kremlin 22 Jul 2014

found. Putin has been described as survivalist, always preparing for the worst.¹⁰⁴ He has also emphasized the need for strength both in personal life and politics.¹⁰⁵ Some parallels may be drawn between the Second Chechen War and the conflict in Ukraine. Putin's response was to stop the former decisively, swiftly and with overwhelming use of force, because he saw it as an existential threat to Russia.¹⁰⁶ While Ukraine's position as an independent country makes it different from Chechnya, Putin clearly treats it separately from many of its other neighbors. Not only has he said that Russia will protect ethnic Russians in Ukraine, along with those Ukrainians who identify with Russia,¹⁰⁷ Putin has gone on record saying that he considers Ukrainians and Russians one people.¹⁰⁸ Many Ukrainians might disagree this view, but Putin may have had a good reason to adopt it. Cultural, linguistic and familial connections between the two countries are indeed strong. If Ukraine continues to follow the course towards closer economic and political integration with the European Union and gains the perks that come along with it, word of it will find a way to Russia, unfiltered by Russian state controlled media and news channels. It might have unforeseen effects on Russia's domestic politics, including Putin's own future.

4.2 Russia's Foreign Policy Orientation

Above statements in themselves present a deeply conflictual view of the world, a one that is dominated by Western aggression and dominance. It should be stressed that Putin's conflictual view of world politics was not borne out of Ukrainian revolution alone. The roots of it go at least as far back as to 2007, when he held a widely known speech in Munich, where he discussed world politics on similar terms. He voiced his opposition for

¹⁰⁴ Hill, Fiona – Gaddy, Clifford G. (2013): *Mr. Putin. Operative in the Kremlin*. Brookings Institution Press, Washington D.C, 84.

¹⁰⁵ Hill – Gaddy, 93-95.

¹⁰⁶ Hill – Gaddy, 98.

¹⁰⁷ The Kremlin (24 Jun 2014): *Press statements and answers to journalists' questions following Russian-Austrian talks*. In the official internet resources of the President of Russia. <<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/46060>>, retrieved 28 Apr 2016.

¹⁰⁸ The Kremlin (16 Apr 2015): *Direct Line with Vladimir Putin*. In the official internet resources of the President of Russia. <<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/49261>>, retrieved 28 Apr 2016.

unipolar world, his concerns for eroding respect for international law and disruption of balance of power by new military infrastructure on Russia's borders. Putin was especially critical of NATO expansion in Eastern Europe, calling it a provocation. Putin also resisted the idea that Western organizations such as NATO and EU could unilaterally legitimize use of force, reserving the role for the United Nations only. Interestingly, the idea that the West is interfering with Russia's domestic affairs was already present here, in the form of NGOs that receive foreign funding. Taken together, all the building blocks of Putin's grievances with regards to Ukrainian Crisis were already present in 2007.¹⁰⁹

However, the confrontational approach has far deeper roots in Russian politics. The attitude that the West is constantly and covertly undermining Russia's international position and opposing its legitimate interests dates back to the late 1990s. During this time Russia suffered a loss of status and a number of humiliating defeats in the international arena. It was unable to reach many of its goals with regards to NATO expansion, arms treaties and in the Yugoslavian breakup. After the appointment of Yevgeniy Primakov as Russia's foreign minister, and with support of many Russian bureaucratic elites, Russia edged closer towards a new confrontation with the West. At this point Russia adopted a new strategy, dubbed Primakov School by scholars, as the solution to Russia's lack of say in international affairs. It emphasized the concept of a multipolar world as opposed to a unipolar one led by the United States, and sought the status of one of the leading power centers for Russia. As an independent power center, it was thought that Russia could face American ambitions by forging strategic partnerships in Asia and Europe, while anticipating that the end of the Cold War would lead United States to lose its influence over many of its allies.¹¹⁰

In the early part of his presidency Putin had reversed this goal and had adopted a strategy based on cooperation on key issues, such as trade.

¹⁰⁹ The Kremlin (10 Feb 2007): *Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy*. In the official internet resources of the President of Russia. <<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034>>, retrieved 28.3.2016.

¹¹⁰ Fedorov, Yury, E. (2005): *Russia's Foreign Policy: Basic Trends under President Putin*. In Hanna Smith (ed.): *Russia and Its Foreign Policy. Influences, Interests and Issues*. Gummerus Printing, Saarijärvi, 10-14.

Global terrorism was also a threat facing both the West and Russia. These common issues fostered a more cooperative vision of international politics. However, in the context of Ukrainian Crisis, these concerns and goals seem to be of little importance. Table IV by Yury Fedorov compares Primakov School with Putin's initial foreign policy orientation. As we can see, Putin's original vision is all but disappeared and his current foreign policy orientation seems to harken back to the principles of Primakov School.¹¹¹ The major exception seems to be the anticipation of NATO's disintegration and partnerships in Europe, which probably are not realistic goals today, although close relations with certain European Populist parties may be an adaptation of the old view. Eurasian integration may be used to provide a replacement.

| | The "Primakov School" | Vladimir Putin |
|--|---|--|
| Conceptualization of Russia | A great power, one of the centers of the multipolar world. | A European Country and equal member of the Western community of nations. |
| Basic world trend | Two antagonistic trends: the formation of a "multipolar world" and the U.S. attempt to dominate global politics. | Internationalism and globalisation. Competition for markets and investment. A rise in extremism and terrorism. |
| Key threats to Russia | The formation of a "unipolar world". The American policy of global domination. | Terrorism, extremism, WMD proliferation. Transnational organized crime. |
| Russia's key strategic policies | A "Strategic Partnership" with China, India and the "quickly integrating" Europe on an anti-American basis. Anticipation of the Disintegration of NATO. | A Strategic Partnership with the United States, NATO and European Union; normal relations with China. |

Source: Fedorov, 17.

¹¹¹ Fedorov 14-17.

4.3 Phase 2 Content Analysis – New Tactics but Old Strategy

Because of the longevity of this idea of conflict between Russia and the West, it should probably be thought as Putin's long-term outlook on the nature of contemporary international system. This long-term view was present in some of speeches in Phase 2 as well, but on the whole it took a backseat to more pressing issues. Phase 2 saw Ukrainian government continue its military operation in the Donbass region. The EU and the United States also became more involved, responding to the plane crash of Flight 17 by introducing package of sanctions, which targeted Russian economy. However, Phase 2 ended in a decisive victory for the Separatists, as a successful counterattack led by Russia forced Ukrainian military forces into a ceasefire.

Primary source material for was scarce in this period, and in fact only one speech, the one held to Security Council in 22.7.2014 was primarily about long-term strategy. While it is shorter, its approach is somewhat comparable to speech held to State Duma Deputies as it included remarks dealing with both international and domestic politics, as well as the economy and pressing matters of Ukrainian crisis. Here the message when it comes to world politics remains as it was in Phase 1:

"However, ever more frequently today we hear of ultimatums and sanctions. The very notion of state sovereignty is being washed out. Undesirable regimes, countries that conduct an independent policy or that simply stand in the way of somebody's interests get destabilised. Tools used for this purpose are the so-called colour revolutions, or, in simple terms – takeovers instigated and financed from the outside."¹¹²

"At the same time, they present Russia with an ultimatum: either you let us destroy the part of the population that is ethnically, culturally and historically close to Russia, or we introduce sanctions against you. This is a strange logic, and absolutely unacceptable, of course."¹¹³

¹¹² The Kremlin 22 Jul 2014.

¹¹³ The Kremlin 22 Jul 2014.

"However, attempts are clearly being made to destabilize the social and economic situation, to weaken Russia in one way or another or to strike at our weaker spots, and they will continue primarily to make us more agreeable in resolving international issues."¹¹⁴

This view of Russia being under attack by Western countries is exactly the same as the one presented several months ago before the State Duma. The same themes of unnamed outside forces toppling governments and even another reference to color revolutions point out that this is Putin's long-term view, a one that he wants repeatedly to communicate both in Russia and abroad. It deserves to be pointed out though that other Phase 2 speeches, which espoused a noticeably more cooperative view on the crisis, were probably not dishonest in nature, in the sense that they were targeted at outside audiences with certain objectives in mind. The speech for the Security Council was held for international audiences as well, as Putin used this chance to express his condolences to the victims of Flight 17, as well as reached out to Kiev and asked them to introduce a ceasefire in order to investigate the plane crash.¹¹⁵

However, the Opcode scores for instrumental values in prepared statements indicate that something had changed in Russian approach. It should be stressed that Opcode values cannot really be explained by content, as they depend only on transitive verbs in the text. However, there was clearly another thread emerging from Putin's speeches, one that was topical instead of general, and usually abstained from commenting the state of world affairs. The two threads are different both in content and context. Putin's cooperative side is, practically speaking, only visible in the context of certain events of the Ukrainian Crisis, while his most conflictual statements are usually about world politics. The context of Ukrainian crisis gained prominence in Phase 2, and along with it came a more cooperative tone. In fact, practically all the other prepared speeches have Putin calling for the peaceful resolution of the crisis and the use of diplomatic means to move forward. This probably had greatest effect on results in Phase 2. Other

¹¹⁴ The Kremlin 22 Jul 2014.

¹¹⁵ The Kremlin 22 Jul 2014.

prepared statements in this period were a statement with regards to Flight 17, a public statement after meeting with Finnish President Niinistö, as well as an address to Separatists after their successful counterattack in the end of August. The final one of them is perhaps the most illustrative of Phase 2 Opcode values, as it solely promotes peace in Russian good will and is even gracious to Ukrainian soldiers:

"I call on the militia groups to open a humanitarian corridor for Ukrainian service members who have been surrounded, so as to avoid any needless loss of life, giving them the opportunity to leave the combat area unimpeded and reunite with their families, to return them to their mothers, wives and children, and to quickly provide medical assistance to those who were injured in the course of the military operation.

For its part, the Russian side is ready and willing to provide humanitarian aid to the people of Donbass, who have been affected by this humanitarian catastrophe.

I once again call on the Ukrainian authorities to immediately stop military actions, cease fire, sit down at the negotiating table with Donbass representatives and resolve all the accumulated problems exclusively via peaceful means."¹¹⁶

It should be added, that in the same speech Putin claims that Ukrainian soldiers were not volunteering for the operation but were simply following orders.¹¹⁷ This is a clever way to draw the line between Ukrainian people and the contemporary Ukrainian government, which has consistently been Putin's goal since the annexation of Crimea. It shows that even smaller speeches concerning short-term objectives may have this long-term strategic component in them.

Even though Putin's long-term views on world politics remained unchanged, as it can be seen with regards to speech for the Security Council, the fact they took backseat to addresses to militia or calls for a ceasefire reveals a certain tactical choice: the focus had to be on Eastern Ukraine. A quick ceasefire to calm down the situation in the Donbass region was probably in Russia's interests. Most of the speeches in Phase 2 were

¹¹⁶ The Kremlin (29 Aug 2014): *President of Russia Vladimir Putin addressed Novorossiia militia*. In the official internet resources of the President of Russia.

<<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/46506>>, retrieved 28 Apr 2016.

¹¹⁷ The Kremlin 29 Aug 2014.

held as the Separatist counter attack was already in progress. At this point, short-term objectives were most likely already decided, and cooperative rhetoric was employed to support them. Considering the backdrop of Flight 17 and the increased Western pressure, these short-term goals were probably limited to ensuring the continued existence of Separatist Donbass¹¹⁸. While Putin acted defiantly in his opening remarks to Security Council, new Western sanctions posed a serious threat to Russian economy for the first time in the crisis.¹¹⁹

Sanctions most likely did not have a great effect on Russia's short-term goals, as the counterattack started after they were implemented, but they did represent uncertainty and heightened risks involved with overt aggression. Consequently, a cooperative tone may have been a tactical choice to reduce risks involved in provoking the West in further action during the military operation. Russia never acted openly in Ukraine, and this was probably one of the reasons. Accordingly, cooperative words had most use during the height of the operation. The successful counterattack, which lasted only weeks, allowed Putin to stabilize the situation with a ceasefire, which removed an immediate threat of further political action against Russia. After that, there was no sense for the West to upgrade sanctions to a new level, while the short-term goal had been achieved.

Interestingly enough, during this time Putin also expressed satisfaction in a press meeting that Russia's concerns for the economic effects of Ukrainian Association agreement were for the first time taken seriously, in a stark contrast to Phase 1 views detailed above.¹²⁰ The fact that this conciliatory tone had crept into interviews as well, points out to subtle shift in Russia short-term plans, even if instrumental Opcode values remained relatively stable. It is, however, somewhat reflective of Putin's heightened P-1 value.

4.4 Events Guiding the Themes of Public Speeches

¹¹⁸ The fact that the military operation resumed shortly after the ceasefire also supports this conclusion.

¹¹⁹ Sanctions in Phase 1 were mostly targeted at certain Russian and Crimean officials and individuals close to Putin.

¹²⁰ The Kremlin 27 Aug 2014.

There is another major explanation to differences in Opcode scores between first two Phases. Statements or interviews are not given in void, but are dependent on the international developments that transpired during Phase 2. Marfleet noticed something similar in Kennedy's VICS scores during Cuban Missiler Crisis, where I-1 and I-2 indices were noticeably more conflictual in private discussions than in public speeches throughout the crisis. He suggested that one reason for this disparity was the nature of discussions. In private, Kennedy had to prepare for the worst, and the discussions with his closest advisers were about contingency plans in the case that a peaceful solution could not be reached.¹²¹ In a similar manner, the nature of discussions changed in Phase 2, which was dominated by three factors. The first one was the plane crash of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17. The second one was the continuing Ukrainian military operation in the Donbass Region and the counterattack that repelled it. The final thread running through this phase was the political process towards ceasefire. Almost every speech in this phase dealt with these issues, which were either non-existent or of minor importance in Phase 1. Extremely conflictual statements in some of these cases would simply have been utterly counterproductive to Russian goals. Ceasefire negotiations are hard to start with an aggressive tone, and any constructive discussion on a military attack against civilians requires certain prudence.

This most likely had an important effect on Phase 2 Opcode values. It can already be seen in Putin's first official word regarding the plane crash of Flight 17, where he carefully attempts to deflect any accusations that Russia might share a responsibility for the strike: "At the same time, no one should and no one has the right to use this tragedy to pursue their own political goals." On the other hand, he hints that Ukrainian government might be partly responsible without actually blaming them: "I believe that if military operations had not resumed in eastern Ukraine on June 28, this tragedy probably could have been avoided."¹²² The actual meaning behind these two statements resembles Putin's Phase 1 views, as he expects the

¹²¹ Marfleet, 551.

¹²² The Kremlin (21 Jul 2014): *Statement by President of Russia Vladimir Putin*. In the official internet resources of the President of Russia. <<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/46262>>, retrieved 28 Apr 2016.

crash to have utility value for Russia's unnamed adversaries in the conflict. However, he expressed these views differently this time, perhaps for the reasons outlined above. Phase 1 speeches, on the other hand, concerned a number of different issues, the most important of them being Russia's place in the international system. This question is a long-term issue, and could be and was discussed with a more conflictual tone.

In this way, events and agency are interconnected, and short-term tactical choices became more important to Putin than long-term strategy. They were simply more relevant at the time, and speeches too revolved around them accordingly. This also has an effect on Opcode scores, since there are only so many ways one can offer their condolences or call for a ceasefire. It should be noted, that a typical Operational Code analysis does not have to deal with this question. Many studies sample their source material from a large pool speeches over period of years, minimizing the effects from single important events.¹²³ However, it should still be stressed that this turn of events did not disturb the statistical analysis in this thesis. In fact, one of the goals was to bring out the effects these events had for Putin's Operational Code. In these isolated cases as well, Opcode values deal with beliefs of proper course of action. It seems clear, that in terms of the tragedy of Flight 17, Putin believed that a very careful approach was needed, when it came to his own statements. Other avenues for Russian viewpoints, the media for example, approached the tragedy differently. The reasons vary, but they are probably related to Russian strategy as well. This issue, however, requires a study of a greater scope than what is attempted here.

4.5 Phase 3 – Return to Stability

Phase 3 begins with the signing of First Minsk Accords, which formally ended the hostilities in the Donbass region. It was a period of brief respite from the crisis, and ends a few weeks later in late October. During this time Putin's speeches reverted back to concerning international relations, which allowed a more conflictual tone again. This change can most readily be seen

¹²³ See, for example, He – Feng; Malici – Malici.

in Putin's Opcode scores based on prepared statements, which swung back towards Phase 1 values in multiple indices. The instrumental values experienced greatest changes, with the I-1 value reverting to 0,54, which is almost the same as 0,51 in Phase 1. Notably, this change was accompanied by shrinking of cooperative intensity (I-2), powered by lesser amount Promises (+2) and Rewards (+3) and propensity to usage of hostile tactics, especially Punish (-3). Putin's dominant tactic in Phase 3 was Appeal (+1) again, which indicates a certain lack of need to engage in serious compromises. Indeed, after a lull in Phase 2, Putin was ready to use both cooperative and conflictual tactics again (I-4a) in almost exactly the same propensity as in Phase 1. While Putin's risk orientation (I-3) remained in Phase 2 numbers, it should be noted that he reverted to Phase 1 numbers in his mix verbal tactics and deeds (I-4b), effectively meaning that he saw less use for deeds in Phase 3 than in Phase 2. Remarkably, after some changes in Phase 2, Putin's entire Philosophical Opcode has changed back almost exactly to Phase 1 numbers, with only minor differences across the board. Most notably, his P-1 value increased moderately when compared to Phase 2, while still indicating mixed feelings about the nature of political universe.

The fact that Opcode values of Phases 1 and 3 are so similar points out to the conclusion that they represent a certain base line Operational Code for Vladimir Putin, when handling the Ukrainian Crisis and perhaps other situations in world politics as well. We should also recall, that Opcodes calculated from spontaneous remarks are very close to these values in multiple indices. For instance, both master beliefs I-1 and P-1 stay within a moderately small range that indicates that Putin's belief about world politics is slightly tinted towards a harmonious stance, and that his direction of strategy is definitely cooperative. His favored tactic in every index in all Phases is Appeal, so it is fairly safe to say, that it is a more or less permanent part of his tactical palette when Russia is challenged in the international arena. It is hard to say, whether or not his Operational Codes would also remain as they are here in a non-crisis environment. None of the speeches analyzed within these pages took place in the context of standard policy formation. The thesis also does not extend to events leading up to Second Minsk Accords, so it is hard to determine whether extremely

cooperative tactics in Phase 2 were a onetime application to a specific situation or a standard approach to support a diplomatic solution whenever the need arises. In these cases, further research is needed. However, new Opcode values in Phase 3 are a very strong indicator that Phase 2 values arose from a temporary of need rather than from a new alignment in foreign policy. If Western sanctions had any effect on Russian foreign policy, it was most likely a short-lived. I suspect that military operations in Eastern Ukraine had more effect on Putin's, at the time, more cooperative tactics.

In any case, short-term cooperative tactics of any kind gave a way to long-term strategy in Phase 3, analysis of which is mostly based on Putin's speech in the final plenary meeting of Valdai International Discussion Club released in 24.10.2014. This speech is mostly about the big picture of high politics in the contemporary international system. Putin connects the ongoing Ukrainian crisis to a wider process of deteriorating rule of law and mutual agreements in international relations. Besides increased rearmament, he sees the escalation of ethnic, social and religious conflicts as a threat to world peace. Here color revolutions are lumped together with other revolutions and military conflicts in other parts of the world, the prime cause of all being Western meddling:

"Incidentally, at the time, our colleagues tried to somehow manage these processes, use regional conflicts and design 'colour revolutions' to suit their interests, but the genie escaped the bottle. It looks like the controlled chaos theory fathers themselves do not know what to do with it; there is disarray in their ranks."¹²⁴

The latter part of the quote does not seem to refer to Ukraine. Putin's message here is that Western elites are leading the world into chaos by supporting groups, of which they know nothing about. Without getting into specifics of each crisis Putin mentions the changing attitudes that Western media has for activists in the Middle East: first they are called freedom fighters, then Islamists. In this case Putin most likely refers to Egypt in the aftermath of Arab Spring or the situation in Syria, which were already

¹²⁴ The Kremlin (24 Oct 2014): *Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club*. In the official internet resources of the President of Russia.
<<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/46860>>, retrieved 28 Apr 2016.

discussed in an earlier part of the speech. The important part, however, is that Putin seems to consider the latest revolution in Ukraine a part of the Western grand strategy of toppling disliked regimes or administrations all over the world. Unsurprisingly, First Minsk Accords did not seem to alter this view at all. With regards to cognitive consistency theory, this is probably to be expected. Putin's own strategy seems to be opposing this process, and one ceasefire agreement should not change it. In this sense, it is also no wonder that Putin's Opcode values reverted back to normal after immediate risks to Russia were settled. Cooperative tactics had outlived their usefulness.¹²⁵

An argument could, of course, be made for the interpretation that Putin had reversed the cooperative stance of Phase 2, because it was starting to become clear that First Minsk Accords were not being implemented in a satisfactory manner. Putin, actually refers to these troubles in the press Q&A session after the speech. However, he did not adopt these views late in Phase 3. In fact, Putin had voiced his opinion that Ukraine was an American puppet only a week after the agreement:

"I can't help but think the seditious thought that no one actually cares about Ukraine itself. They are just using Ukraine as an instrument to shake up international relations. Ukraine is being used as an instrument and has been made hostage to the desire of some players on the international stage to revive NATO say, not so much even as a military organisation, but as a key instrument in US foreign policy, in order for the US to consolidate its satellites and scare them with a threat from abroad. But if this is the case, this is a real shame because it means that Ukraine has essentially become hostage to another's interests. I do not see anything good in this practice."¹²⁶

In his defense it has to be said that this answer was a reaction to a question regarding new EU sanctions, which were announced before the press meeting. However, Putin brought up the United States himself, without any journalist specifically asking about the country. This speaks volumes of his

¹²⁵ The Kremlin 24 Oct 2014.

¹²⁶ The Kremlin (12 Sep 2014): *Answers to journalists' questions*. In the official internet resources of the President of Russia. <<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/46612>>, retrieved 28 Apr 2016.

views on the nature of the crisis and the part that the EU has to play in it. It's not a particularly flattering assessment, and suggests that Putin considers the United States as Russia's primary Western counterpart, with European countries playing a lesser part. The role that he sees NATO playing out only reinforces this position.

It is also worth pointing out that in Phase 3 Putin no longer mentions the improved talks he had a month earlier with his Western colleagues regarding Russian economic concerns with the Ukraine's EU Association Agreement. In fact, he has completely reverted to these Phase 1 views that were expressed in May 2014:

"We had documented evidence to argue that they were wrong and that Ukraine was part of a free trade area as a CIS country, something that would directly concern our interests. We were told that no, you are not a party in this process, we are not going to discuss it with you."

Eventually, when we managed – I will stress it, by absolutely diplomatic and civilised means – to talk the Ukrainian officials into holding further talks with Brussels, our Western partners encouraged an unconstitutional regime change."¹²⁷

In his speech in Valdai five months later he repeated almost in verbatim the point that the Western countries instigated a coup in Ukraine, after the Association Agreement was put on hold:

"We had discussions on all topics related to Ukraine's association with the EU, persistent discussions, but I want to stress that this was done in an entirely civilised manner, indicating possible problems, showing the obvious reasoning and arguments. Nobody wanted to listen to us and nobody wanted to talk. They simply told us: this is none of your business, point, end of discussion. Instead of a comprehensive but – I stress – civilised dialogue, it all came down to a government overthrow; they plunged the country into chaos, into economic and social collapse, into a civil war with enormous

¹²⁷ The Kremlin 24 May 2014.

casualties"¹²⁸

Détente of Phase 2 in this case was so short-lived and the wording so similar to Phase 1, that it may be questioned whether it meant anything at all to Putin in the first place. The interesting part of this exchange, however, is the fact that the Association Agreement was business between EU and Ukraine. United States had very little to do with it, if anything. However, in a contrast with an earlier view, it is now EU, and not the US, that incited the revolution in Ukraine. At times, it has been both them together.¹²⁹ The mismatch is not surprising. Putin typically avoided naming the supposed background instigators of Ukrainian revolution, or of other color revolutions for that matter. As we have seen, usually they are called "colleagues", "partners" or simply "they". I believe that the vague wording is intended primarily for the home audiences, to create flexible image of Russia's opponents in the international system. "They" can play multiple parts, after all. If no one nation or an administration is identified as the prime cause of the conflict, the idea of aggressive outsiders can be used indefinitely and in a wide variety of situations. It allows Putin to constitute and enhance a polarized view of world politics where Russia occupies one side and Western countries the other one. This tactic was already in use in 2007, when Putin preferred not to name those, who in his opinion, were turning Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) into an apparatus of foreign policy goals of certain, also unnamed, countries.¹³⁰

Of course, it is hard to ascertain whether conflictual dialogue was consciously invoked in order to polarize international relations, and rally the populace behind current Russian administration. However, the effects that the Ukrainian crisis has had on political views Russian citizens can be determined. Levada-Center, an independent Russian research organization, found in May 2014 that 71% Russians thought relations with US were bad, a stark turn from 44% in January. The low point was reached in January 2015, when 81% thought the relationship between the two countries to be

¹²⁸ The Kremlin 24 Oct 2014.

¹²⁹ See, for, example, The Kremlin 24 May 2014.

¹³⁰ The Kremlin 10 Feb 2007.

bad. These were the worst numbers recorded since the year 1990. Similar declining curve was also observed in perceptions of Russia's relations with EU and Ukraine, although these ratings did not reach numbers as low as with United States.¹³¹ At the same time Putin's personal approval rating surged higher. It rose 11% in just one month between February and March 2014 to 80%, and kept improving throughout the summer of 2014. Incidentally, Putin's approval rating reached an all-time¹³² high in October 2014, Phase 3, with 88% of Russians approving his actions.¹³³

Approval ratings that high should be treated with a healthy dose of suspicion, even if Levada has a reputation of independence and accuracy. When asked directly, many Russians might try to avoid giving a negative opinion. However, another ongoing survey by Levada-center asks Russians to independently name 5 or 6 politicians or public figures they trust, and the results followed a similar pattern there. In February 2014, 36% of respondents named Putin as a trusted figure, and just one month later the number had soared to 51%. The yearly high of 60% was reached in October 2014, having developed in line with the approval rating. Public trust for Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov also improved in the same manner, pointing to an increased satisfaction for Russian foreign policy as the crisis evolved.¹³⁴ Putin's speeches that emphasized the polarized view of Russia versus the West were surely not the only cause, perhaps not even a major cause, of the perception of declining international relations. The surveys, however, indicate that they resonated well with the Russian public.

The role of shaping public opinion in support of political strategy should not be underestimated, especially in questions of war and peace.

¹³¹ Levada-Center: *Отношение к странам. Отношение к США; Отношение к ЕС; Отношение к Украине* (Eng. *Relations with countries. Relations with USA; Relations with EU; Relations with Ukraine*). In the web page of Levada-Center. <<http://www.levada.ru/indikatory/otnoshenie-k-stranam/>>, retrieved 28 Apr 2016.

¹³² Shared with September 2008, when Russia fought a brief war with Georgia.

¹³³ Levada-Center: *Одобрение органов власти: Одобрение деятельности Владимира Путина* (Eng: *Approval of Government Authorities. Approval of the activities of Vladimir Putin*). In the web page of Levada-Center. <<http://www.levada.ru/indikatory/odobrenie-organov-vlasti/>>, retrieved 28 Apr 2016.

¹³⁴ Levada-Center (2015): *Январские рейтинги одобрения и доверия. Назовите, пожалуйста, 5-6 политиков, общественных деятелей, которым вы более всего доверяете* (Eng. *The January approval and trust ratings. Please name 5-6 politicians, public figures, whom do you trust the most?*) In the web page of Levada-Center. <<http://www.levada.ru/2015/01/28/yanvarskie-rejtingi-odobreniya-i-doveriya-3/>>, retrieved 28 Apr 2016.

Domestic pressure for peace or a moral condemnation of war may end up compelling leaders.¹³⁵ This notion is especially important in the context of Ukraine, with its numerous ties to Russia. Aggression against a fraternal people, as Putin called Ukrainians¹³⁶, would be poorly tolerated. For this reason alone, it seems imperative for Putin to constitute enemy images of Ukrainian government and the West, and, on the other hand, keep the public uninformed about the true extent of Russian military involvement in the Donbass region. A cooperative communication strategy of Phase 2 was tremendously important in this sense. It is possible and even likely that it was primarily targeted at domestic audience rather than at the international one. It allowed Putin to present a cooperative side of himself, while preserving the conflictual image of the West. This strategy has been present throughout the crisis in the framing of dissidents as stooges of the West and, consequently, color revolutions as anti-Russian. So far this strategy of conflictual rhetoric seems to have worked. At least in the light of approval ratings, Putin's position has become significantly stronger, reducing the likelihood of a color revolution in Russia.

4.6 Proactivity and Soviet Instrumental Tactics

Drawing lines between Putin's Operational Code and that of the classical Bolsheviks may be tempting because of Putin's KGB background and the roots of Operational Code analysis itself. In depth analysis would probably have little practical use, however. An integral part of Leites's approach to Operational Code was the ideal type of a Good Bolshevik that would persistently adhere to ideology as defined by Lenin and Stalin. Putin is certainly not a Communist, so at best we might be able point out that he agrees here and there with the old Bolshevik strategy.

There is, however, an interesting connection between Alexander George's analysis of Soviet instrumental tactics and Putin's Opcode changes

¹³⁵ Mintz – DeRouen, 131.

¹³⁶ The Kremlin 18 Mar 2014.

between the three Phases. While George used Leites as a basis of his analysis, this part does not depend on ideology, but rather on how one takes action in international politics. George pointed out that despite believing in the inevitable victory of Communism, Bolsheviks thought it would not happen without effort, and consequently had to be consistently pushing the history to the right direction. Foreign policy was a part of this push and was accordingly seen as a game of opposing sides with clear winners and losers. A failure to take advantage of a situation was thought to effectively be a net loss for the Bolshevik side. This view in turn resulted in a need to assess and choose proper tactics advance ones position.¹³⁷ We can ignore the ideological background here and just focus on the fact, that this approach to international relations resulted in a very proactive way to conduct foreign policy. This proactivity, rather than ideology, seems to be the greatest connection between Putin and his predecessors in Soviet Union, and also helps to explain his flexible instrumental tactics in Phase 2.

George explained that Bolsheviks avoided setting single goals in a conflict situation, but rather tried to extract the greatest gains possible, while at the same time avoiding recklessness that might jeopardize the whole cause. In order to choose the proper course of action, there was a great need to assess what was "objectively possible" in any given political situation. George used the phrase "optimizing strategy" to describe the resulting way to approach foreign policy, invoking an image of tweaking with tactics as necessary. The need to maximize gains resulted in a gradual pursuit of multiple objectives and stopping when nothing more could be achieved. This pursuit was to be done carefully, minding the power balance between all actors, and calculating and managing risks of long-term costs against short-term gains. Soviet leaders avoided adventurism. On the other hand, George pointed out that they did "push to the limit" when they saw a possibility of further gains. Concessions from enemies were seen as a sign of weakness, which only invited further action. On the other hand, an equally important counterpoint to these aggressive instrumental tactics was level-headedness. Bolsheviks were not to be carried away by the early victories and had to "know when to stop". Gains could then be solidified at

¹³⁷ George, 205-206.

the negotiation table for the time being, and the conflict be settled, until new opportunities to advance would arise.¹³⁸ In short, Bolshevik strategy was *realpolitik* in its rawest form. Mearsheimer considers this behavior to be an inherent part of Great Power politics.¹³⁹

Putin's shifting Operational Codes and the developments in the crisis are congruent with this strategy. Of course, it is difficult to prove that this part of Bolshevik strategy has survived the ideology that created it. Furthermore, changing Opcode itself is not an indicator of this strategy. As studies concerning US presidents Kennedy and Clinton have demonstrated, significant short-term belief changes in crisis environment are nothing unusual.¹⁴⁰ However, there is evidence that Putin subscribes to some form of Political Realism. His concern of strategic balance as a way to peace and want for an even standing with United States is a textbook example Waltz's defensive Neorealism.¹⁴¹ Putin's idea that Western countries are cynical power players is a case in point. Subscribing to defensive Neorealism indicates that Putin's goals are limited, although this might be cold comfort for Russia's neighbors, who in a bipolar world would fall into its sphere of influence like they did during the Cold War.

On the other hand, in the context of single events, belief into any kind of Realism might translate to ruthless action. There are few indicators that Russia has been extracting gains in a gradual manner similar to "Push to the limit" strategy. First we should observe the gradual development of the conflict. Russia's opening move in the crisis was a quick annexation of Crimea in March 2014. Judging from Putin's speeches, it has been the baseline bare minimum goal that Russia had hoped to achieve. Having quickly been incorporated in the federation according to Russian laws, its importance to Russia should be thought greater than that of other regions in Ukraine. The civil disorder in Eastern Ukraine intensified in the following May, and Ukraine then attempted to crush it with a military operation during summer. Putin's rhetoric became a lot more peace-oriented during this period as the Opcode of Phase 2 has shown. The immediate goal seems to

¹³⁸ George, 206-211.

¹³⁹ Mearsheimer, 34.

¹⁴⁰ See, for example, Marfleet; Schafer, Mark – Crichlow, Scott.

¹⁴¹ See, for example, Waltz, 174-175.

have been freezing the conflict, before Ukraine might retake the areas it had lost. Ukraine came close to crushing the Separatists late in this period, but their successful counterattack ended this possibility. Ceasefire of First Minsk Accords, established that Ukraine could not retake Donbass region with military force. It had to negotiate with the Separatists. It should be noted that the status of Crimea was not part of this agreement, and has not been on the negotiation table since. The first gradual step has more or less been achieved, and the focus of the international community has been transferred elsewhere. This might not have been the case, if the conflict in Eastern Ukraine had not been the focal point of the crisis ever since April 2014.

Russia has had to manage its involvement, namely the use of its Armed Forces, carefully in various points of the crisis. Nothing definite can be said about the amount of Russian support, munitions and troops given to the Separatist side. However, it can be said that too much Russian aid might provoke the West into a serious confrontation with Russia and too little might lead to the annihilation of Separatist forces and removal of the Donbass region from Russia's sphere of influence, bringing the focus back to Crimea. This strategy worked fairly well until the plane crash of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17, as before it the Western sanctions did not target Russia's economy and posed no serious threat to Russia as a country. The sanctions themselves may not have constrained Russian action as much as Western politicians might hope, as the counterattack in late Phase 2 points out that Russia remained committed to its objectives. However, a further advance into Western Ukraine might have been too much at this point and could have resulted in a serious backlash. If Putin made the decision to negotiate, at this point he knew, "when to stop".

However, while the period from late November 2014 onwards is not covered by this thesis, we can see that the result of First Minsk Accords was not enough neither for Separatists nor, presumably, for Russia. Military operations resumed after brief pause, and the result was another gradual victory in the form of Second Minsk Accords, where the Separatist side controlled a larger land area than after the first ceasefire. This result seems to be more acceptable and the ceasefire has since held. The experience is

not unfamiliar to Russia, and the War in Donbass seems to be shaping into a mold of a frozen conflict in the vein of South-Ossetia and Abkhazia in Georgia. The international focus moved since towards Syria, where Russia initiated a major military operation, this time supporting the Syrian government. However, as far as the Ukrainian crisis is concerned, more possible gradual achievements remain. Crimea is still separated from Russian mainland by a small strip of land under Ukrainian control, but whether this short land area is past the limit is another question. As of May 2016, it has been.

4.7 Weaknesses in VICS Analysis

Many of Putin's speeches reveal an inherent weakness of statistical Opcode analysis and quantitative methods in general. One extremely conflictual utterance can be overshadowed by many cooperative ones, as seems to be the case with Putin's Opcodes. VICS analysis is designed to mitigate this problem by weighing scores in accordance with the intensity of the utterance. The results for this can be found in Phase 2 prepared statements, where several index values rushed towards the cooperative extreme due to weighing of Reward. Even then, however, there remains the question of what is truly important in any statement or a speech. Putin's instrumental tactics are dominated by Appeals in all phases in both Tables. Appeal is a very low cost -tactic. No promises are given and nothing tangible to support good intentions is not shown. It does not tie ones hands and, because it is not linked to any future action, it is hard to be caught with a lie. Altogether, there is very little risk in simply appealing to ones good senses. Very few politicians try to appear warlike and aggressive, quite the contrary. This can be seen in Putin's speech to State Duma as well. It should be noted that right after promising to "respond" to Western aggression, Putin was quick to remind everyone that Russia will be a force of good in the world. The wording is vague enough that the promise amounts to nothing. It seems clear, that the most noteworthy content here is the accusation that certain

elements in the West might resort to subversion and even giving support to treasonous acts in Russian domestic sphere, and that Russia is prepared to act accordingly.¹⁴²

After reviewing results of VICS analysis for Putin's Opcode, I am not sure that Operational Code analysis takes into account the severity of these claims enough. Perhaps extremely cooperative and conflictual utterances should be weighed more heavily. However, in Putin's case the effect on Opcode scores would probably not be great, as the number of positive deeds for Other is close to the amount of negative ones in all Phases. In practice, Putin's mixed or slightly friendly P-1 value is the product of many contrasting deeds and some Appeals by the Other. The program cannot, of course, differentiate between important deeds and minor ones. It treats them all equally. For now, it seems that the easiest way to make the distinction between the two is to analyze the content more thoroughly after VICS indices are calculated. In Putin's case, he probably believes the world of international politics to be far more conflictual and dangerous than what the numbers (P-1) indicate. The qualitative evidence pointing to this direction is simply overwhelming, especially considering that the favorable values were calculated from speeches held in a midst of an international crisis. The stability and harmony in Putin's mind are not caused by good will between people, but by international agreements, which guarantee that national interests of all major players are taken in account. He is also adamant in saying that this is simply not the case in today's international politics, resulting in a world steeped in conflict.¹⁴³

¹⁴² The Kremlin 18 Mar 2014.

¹⁴³ The Kremlin 24 Oct 2014.

Conclusion

I have tried to demonstrate the utility of analyzing short-term belief changes by using the full palette of options provided by the Operational Code construct. The choice of committing neither to prepared nor to spontaneous speeches and employing a three-phase division has provided results, which otherwise would have been left unnoticed. Analyzing sources with more in-depth methods also provided encouraging results, which helped to put the VICS values into context. Phase 2 shows significant changes in Putin's beliefs, but only in material generated from prepared statements. Changes may have resulted from several factors, including a threat of increased Western involvement, as well as from the need to freeze the conflict at an advantageous situation. However, it seems clear that the changes represent a tactical readjustment rather than a genuine switch to a more cooperative foreign policy orientation. Putin seems to believe that a cooperative rhetoric is useful in conflict situations, although it is unclear whether it is used to appeal to domestic or international audiences. I suggest that the more important target was the domestic audience, as a way draw attention away from Russia's military operation.

The results seem to indicate that Putin has a particular baseline Operational Code, which seems to be relatively durable, particularly with regards to master beliefs. There is also an indication that, besides shocking effects, context effects can lead to great short-term variations in Operational Codes. This was most apparent in Phase 2 prepared statements, which stood out from the rest of the indices. This points to the obvious conclusion that extreme care should be taken with regards to choosing primary sources. This thesis had to use what was available on the website of the presidential administration, and, consequently used as much of it as possible. The achieved result was intended, and worked for the favor of research design, but other studies may need to take a different approach. When calculating long-term Operational Codes, it seems that sampling is especially important in minimizing the effect of short-term variations. On the other hand, the fact that Operational Codes calculated from spontaneous comments and prepared statements resembled each other closely, with the exception of Phase 2, indicates that both of these sources are reliable indicators of Putin's beliefs. Furthermore, it shows that either Putin does not depend on speechwriters to convey his ideas or that the speechwriters are very competent in capturing them.

Regarding Putin's political strategy, VICS did not perform as well as it could have. VICS scores indicated that Putin had a slightly friendly view of Other, despite the fact that the content of his speeches indicates the opposite. Solely qualitative analysis would have certainly come to the conclusion that Putin believes the West to be very hostile. This indicates that qualitative methods continue to have use in Operational Code analysis. Regarding Russia's own strategy, however, VICS performed admirably. It captured Putin's belief in the utility of cooperative communication strategy, as well as the belief that Russia stands for cooperation in world politics. It should be stressed that this belief does not necessarily translate to cooperative action, as we have seen during the Ukrainian crisis. However, combined with the hostile view of the West, it does indicate that Putin believes that his vision about international politics is not met, and the West continues to foil Russia's plans to have an international standing equal to that of the United States.

The results suggest that Operational Code construct can be used in a number of new ways for future research. Putin's speech in Munich in the year 2007 seems to have been the watershed between the old cooperative foreign policy orientation and the new confrontational approach. For long-term Operational Code analysis, this may be the best place to put the Phase division line in order to see if Putin's beliefs about politics changed along with the strategy. It would also confirm the baseline Operational Code, which only seems to be apparent here. As for short-term studies on belief change, the time period could be extended to include events up to and after the Second Minsk Accords. It might be interesting to see, if Putin's Operational Codes changed during this period in a similar manner. Depending on source material, this might reveal more about Putin's approach to solidifying gains or about the context effects that affect Operational Codes.

Appendix 1: VICS Equations

Equations behind each VICS index: adapted from Walker, Schafer and Young.¹⁴⁴

P-1. Nature of the Political Universe. Index: % Positive Other Attributions minus % Negative Other Attributions. Range: -1,0 = Conflictual...+1.0 Cooperative

P-2. Realization of Political Values. Index: Mean Intensity of Other Conflict/Cooperation Transitive Verb Attributions for Scale with Values -3, -2, -1, +1, +2, +3. To make the scale more comparable the mean is divided by 3. Range: -1.0 pessimistic...+1.0 optimistic. Cases of zero are omitted from the index.

P-3. Political Future. Index [1 minus IQV], where IQV equals the Index of Qualitative Variation: the ratio of the number of different pairs of observations in a distribution to the maximum possible number of different pairs for a distribution with the same number of variable classifications Range: 0.00 Lowest...1.0 Highest predictability

P-4. Control over Historical Development. Index Self Attributions divided by [Self Attributions plus Other Attributions]. Range: 0.00 Other Locus of Control...+1.0 Self Locus of Control.

P-5. Role of Chance. Index: 1 minus [Predictability Index multiplied by the Control Over Historical Development index]. Range: 0.00 Lowest...1.0 Highest Role of Chance

I-1. Strategy. Index equals % of Positive Self Attributions minus % Negative Self Attributions. Range: -1.0 Conflictual Strategy... +1.0 Cooperative Strategy.

I-2. Tactics. Index: Mean Intensity of Self Conflict/Copperation Attributions for Scale with Values of -3, -2, -1, +1, +2, +3. To make the scale more comparable to others, the mean is divided by 3. Range: -1.0 Very Conflictual Tactics...+1.0 Very Cooperative Tactics. Cases of zero are omitted from the index.

I-3. Risk Orientation. Index: [1-IQV] for self attributions. Range: 0.00 Risk Averse (Low Predicatability)...1.0 Risk Acceptant (High Predictability).

I-4a. Timing of Cooperation vs. Conflict. Index: Shift Propensity is 1 minus Absolute Value of [% Positive Self-Attributions minus % Negative Self-Attributions]. Range:

¹⁴⁴ Walker – Schafer – Young, 178-181.

0.00 Low Shift Propensity...1.0 High Shift Propensity.

I-4b. Timing of Words vs. Deeds. Index: Shift Propensity is 1 minus Absolute Value of [% Words minus % Deeds]. Range: Low Shift Propensity...1.0 High Shift Propensity.

After 1998 and set of indices measuring the Utility of different means has been added to the method, while a summary index of self versus other attributions devised by Schafer et al. in 1998 is no longer in common use: Utility indexes are sourced from Schafer and Walker.¹⁴⁵

I-5. Utility of Punish: The sum of all self utterances Punish divided by sum of all utterances.

I-5. Utility of Threaten: The sum of all self utterances Threaten divided by sum of all utterances.

I-5. Utility of Oppose: The sum of all self utterances Oppose divided by sum of all utterances.

I-5. Utility of Support: The sum of all self utterances Support divided by sum of all utterances.

I-5. Utility of Promise: The sum of all self utterances Promise divided by sum of all utterances.

I-5. Utility of Reward: The sum of all self utterances Reward divided by sum of all utterances.

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