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RUSSIAN PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN'S SPEECH THAT TRIGGERED THE INVASION OF UKRAINE, FEBRUARY 24, 2022

Abstract:	<i>This research study aims to analyze the speech of the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, who launched the invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. One of the research objectives is to examine how he constructs his speech around the issue, the arguments he uses, and the position he adopts at the beginning of the conflict. The research question we are trying to answer is the following: "How does leader Vladimir Putin construct his speech that launched the invasion of Ukraine?".</i> <i>The purpose of the research is to observe how President Putin's speech influenced the launch of the invasion of Ukraine and the following events. The data collection method is the speech he gave on February 24, 2022, on the Russian television channeln Russia-2 (Россия-2), while the data analysis method is discourse analysis. At the end of the work, we are surprised by the fact that leader Vladimir Putin constructs and delivers his speech before the invasion of Ukraine using a series of elements of propaganda, disinformation, and strategic influence communication.</i>
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Introduction

Political science represents a collection of factors starting from the policies themselves, government, governance, leaders, the state-citizen relationship, and all these elements and processes are strongly influenced by political psychology. Knowing the environment, the people we meet over time, or even reflecting on our own person represent cognitive processes. Whether we are talking about studying behaviors, knowing the lower or higher processes of cognition, a person's attitudes, emotions or affectivity, all of these represent interpersonal and intrapersonal bridges¹. These can also be extrapolated to the level of governance, in addition to the social spectrum of citizenship, because they represent desiderata that capture the social contract between the citizen-state and the emotions/values that each of the parties promotes².

This research study aims to analyze the speech of Russian President Vladimir Putin, who launched the invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. His arguments regarding the launch of the "Russian military operation" highlight the protection of civilians in eastern Ukraine against whom, he claims, a genocide was committed³. In this

¹John Tooby, Leda Cosmides, Jerome Barkow, *The adapted mind, Evolutionary psychology and the generation of culture*, Oxford, 1992, pp. 40-45

²Bruce Bridgeman, *Psychology and evolution: The origins of mind*, Sage, 2003, pp. 90-100

³Vladimir Isachenkov, Dasha Litvinova, Yuras Karmanau, Jim Heintz, *Putin announces military operation in Ukraine; explosions heard in Kyiv*, PBS News, 20 January 2024, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/putin-announces-military-operation-in-ukraine>, (20.03.2025)

context, the main objectives of the research are to identify how he builds his speech around this issue, how he builds the rest of the arguments, what are the elements of propaganda and disinformation mechanisms. In addition to this general objective, we stipulate a specific objective, namely the analysis of non-verbal and paraverbal language, regarding gestures, mimicry, voice rhythm or body position. The research question that we try to answer during the analysis is the following: “How does leader Vladimir Putin build his speech that launched the invasion of Ukraine?”. First, the purpose of the research is to observe how discourse influenced the initiation of the invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent events. In addition, we aim to capture a series of traits of the leader, using the “Myers-Briggs Type Indicator” method, to highlight how certain character traits are reflected and influence a series of decisions and beliefs of a person, in this case the leader in the Kremlin.

The first part of the research paper is aimed at the “Theoretical Chapter” and highlights the theoretical framework, the theories that have been developed throughout the history of social and political sciences and the concepts used. The review of the specialized literature captures what other authors have written about the research topic, the dynamics surrounding the concepts, the processes they go through and the activation, in particular. The second chapter of the work is the “Methodological” one, surprising the selection of cases, why Vladimir Putin's speech was chosen as the case study. The data collection method is represented by the Russian leader's speech, from February 24, 2022, of the invasion of Ukraine while the data analysis method is discourse analysis. These contribute to a better understanding of the way in which the data collection process took place, of their analysis and how the connection between the theoretical and empirical parts of the study is created. “Analysis” represents the last chapter of the work, addressing the way of constructing the discourse, but also the formulation of some perceptions about the behavior/temperament of the leader in relation to those stated. This is done based on the presentation of the data, the results and their interpretation. In addition to these delimited sections, at the end of the work there are the emerging “Conclusions”, the limits of the research and future research directions, as well as the related “Bibliography” which represents the critical apparatus in conducting the research.

Theoretical chapter

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

The research focuses on concepts and fields related to the study, namely: analyzing the behaviors of the masses, politicians, and other mechanisms in the field of political psychosociology. At the same time, also through the study of psychology, propaganda is defined as “the deliberate and systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behaviors in order to obtain a response that corresponds to the interests of the propagandist”¹.

Behaviorist theory refers to the study of behaviors, “without analyzing the cerebral mechanisms of consciousness, internal mental processes” or higher or primary cognitive processes². The behaviorist model promoted a linear unidirectional stimulus-response connection between a communicator invested with an implicit, special power over a homogeneous, unstructured and totally under his control audience. In this type of communication, an exclusively persuasive action is carried out, the emphasis being placed on the way in which messages are transmitted, the accompanying text, the intonation used, the desire to manipulate and create a monologue, in most cases. “A central premise in the development of this perspective is represented by the promotion of the idea of mass society...”³. This mass society met certain conditions, as follows: the relationship between individuals was quite cold, being in a psychological isolation lacking empathy or emotional intelligence; impersonal dialogues, and the degree of freedom regarding social obligations was low⁴.

The interaction between a person and a situation is the most important context for understanding the personality and behavior of the former⁵. Personality presents a series of defining characteristics within the interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships of a person, these metamorphosing him into a unique entity. At the

¹G.S., Jowett, V. O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*. Newbury Park etc., Sage, 1992, pp. 100-103

²John, B. Watson, *Behaviorism*, Routledge, 2017, pp. 5-6

³S.J., Ball-Rokeach, DeFleur, M.L., *A Dependency Model of Mass-Media Effects*, “Sage Journals”, 1975, pp. 164, 20 January 2024, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/009365027600300101> (20.02.2025)

⁴*Ibidem*, pp. 164-165

⁵Kurt Lewin, *Psycho-sociological problems of a minority group*, *Character&Personality*, ”A Quarterly for Psychodiagnostic&Allied Studies”, 1935, pp. 34-35

same time, Temperament is the way people react in certain situations when they come into contact with new things in the environment¹. In order to create an easier understanding of the terminology mentioned above, we will propose the analysis of a case study that has Vladimir Putin as its main subject. The personality of leader Putin stands out as versatile, but predictable in most of his public appearances. In terms of cognitive and thinking process, it can be said that it is a pragmatic typology, with a well-developed strategic and logical sense of events.

The easiest example in this context would be the preparation of the plan for the invasion of Ukraine, the movement of troops, territorial representation, movement in the field and the well-prepared speech to impress citizens by fighting for the territories belonging to Russia and the reunification of Great Russia. At the same time, as stated earlier, it relies on the sentimental side, appeals to emotions in speeches addressed to the Russian people to awaken patriotism, nationalism and justify your actions. Last but not least, leader Putin presents a side that highlights judgment through chronology and the story of the historical past. His thinking is strongly rooted in the nationalist-populist culture, and Eurosceptic, anti-Western speeches, the promotion of Russian traditions and values to the detriment of others, with the help of ethnocentrism, represent the necessary levers in the complexity of defining the personality of leader Vladimir Putin. The gap identified in the specialized literature leads to the following research question: "How does leader Putin construct and deliver his speech before the invasion of Ukraine?"

Methodology

Case selection

Referring, from a methodological point of view, to Vladimir Putin's speech of February 24, 2022, it can be stated that it is a representative case for the leader's personality and historical past.

Data collection and analysis method

"Discourse analysis is often used when working with language and linguistics and is popular in many social sciences, including sociology and political science"². It examines how language works and how it creates meaning in various social contexts. It can be applied to both written and verbal documents (audio, video). It captures verbal and non-verbal aspects of communication: tone, inflections, gestures. It emphasizes contextual aspects of language. In particular, discourse analysis "emphasizes the importance of language and the perspective that highlights the importance of context and structure"³.

Regarding the level of vocabulary communication that captures the degree of formality, values, metaphors from the perspective of what is being analyzed. Another index is the use of grammar that conveys information about active/passive diathesis, the use of imperatives, verbal tense⁴. The structure of a discourse highlights the systematization of information, what is emphasized, verbs used, mood, time and dynamics. At the same time, non-verbal communication analyzes the tone of voice, pauses, gestures, sounds, while conversational codes capture the interaction, whether they give priority, interruptions or the way the parties involved listen⁵. "The package contains, firstly, philosophical premises (ontological and epistemological) regarding the role of language in the social construction of the world, secondly, theoretical models, thirdly, methodological guides for approaching a field of research and fourthly, specific techniques for analysis"⁶. Within this framework, three different approaches to social constructionist discourse analysis can be identified – the discourse theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, critical discourse analysis, and discursive psychology⁷.

"Discourse analysis is only one of several social constructionist approaches, but it is one of the most widely used approaches within social constructionism"⁸. Discourse psychology is an approach to social psychology that has developed a type of discourse analysis to explore the ways in which people's selves, thoughts, and emotions are

¹C. Robert, Cloninger, *Temperament and Personality*, "Current Opinion in Neurobiology", Vol 4, No. 2, 1004, pp. 266–73

²James Paul, Gee, *An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and method*, Routledge, 2014, pp. 100-101

³S. Gherghina, *Data Availability in Political Science Journals*, "European Political Science", Vol. 12, 2013, pp. 333-349

⁴*Ibidem*, pp. 333-349

⁵*Idem*

⁶V. Burr, *An introduction to social construction*, Routledge, London, 1995, pp. 10-15

⁷*Idem*

⁸Kenneth J., Gergen, *Social constructionist inquiry: Context and implications, The social construction of the person*, Springer, New York, 1985, pp. 3-18

formed and transformed through social interaction and to shed light on the role of these processes in the social domain¹. Transposing ideas beyond what we want to convey will be felt through gestures, mimicry, gesticulation, and will create modalities through which others can characterize us².

Analysis

“Special Military Operation”

In his speech on February 24, 2022, at 05:30 in the morning, Russian time, he conveyed that the Dombas People's Republic appealed to Russia for help regarding the situation of ethnic Russians in that area. In this regard, “in accordance with Art. 51 Part 7 of the Sanctions Charter of the Council of the Russian Federation, ratified by the Federal Assembly on February 21, in honor of the treaties of friendship and mutual assistance with the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic”³, leader Putin launches a special military operation. “Our plans do not include the occupation of Ukrainian territories. We will not impose anything on anyone by force”⁴. He states that the purpose of the operation is to protect people who have been subjected to harassment and genocide by the Kiev regime for eight years and in no case to occupy territories, so “The circumstances require us to take decisive and immediate action”⁵.

In the following, we will use the “Myers-Briggs Type Indicator” method, which is an introspective self-report questionnaire that reveals how people position themselves at certain times, what their values are, and what factors guide their decisions⁶. In order to visualize how Vladimir Putin perceives the world and what are the reasons behind his actions, an analysis of strategic influence communication carried out with accuracy is needed. First of all, identifying an extroverted side is obvious, and the most appropriate example in this context is the public speech he makes through television. The totality of the statements made is exacerbated by the gestures of superiority they present, corroborated with elements of threat and intimidation: “Anyone who tries to stop us, especially to create threats against our country or our people, should know that Russia's response will be immediate and will lead you to consequences that you have never had before in your history”⁷.

On the other hand, it cannot be said that he is an extrovert par excellence, because the introvert side cannot be neglected. He presents some difficulties in managing emotions, one of the most visible moments being the pauses in speech, but also the fact that he chose to give the speech from the office, in a sitting position, with his legs not visible. It is known that there is a problem in controlling them in the case of other speeches or meetings. The meeting with Donald Trump in Helsinki, at their first bilateral summit, organized with the aim of improving relations between Moscow and the USA, where the body position conveyed a lack of trust, the excessive movement/tremor of the leg emanated agitation, perhaps even a slight state of anxiety, and the communication was quite simplistic and superficial, being one of the examples.

Russian propaganda and disinformation, notorious elements in the discourse

In his speech, one can identify Russian propaganda that manifests itself through pro-Kremlin narratives, misleading statements, disinformation and emotional themes aimed at sensitizing the audience. He argues that with

¹Idem

² Kenneth J., Gergen, *Social constructionist inquiry: Context and implications, The social construction of the person*, Springer, New York, 1985, pp. 20-23

³International Court of Justice, *Preliminary objections of the Russian Federation*, 2022, <https://www.icj-cij.org/node/202996> (20.02.2025)

⁴ Vladimir Isachenkov, Dasha Litvinova, Yuras Karmanau, Jim Heintz, *Putin announces military operation in Ukraine; explosions heard in Kyiv*, PBS News, 20 January 2024, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/putin-announces-military-operation-in-ukraine>, (20.03.2025)

⁵Idem

⁶M.L., Goetz, A. Jones-Bitton, J. Hewson, J., Khosa, D., Pearl, D., Bakker, et.al., *An examination of Myers-Briggs type indicator personality, gender, and career interests of Ontario veterinary college students*,”*Journal of Veterinary Medical Education*”, Vol. 47, No. 4, 2020, pp. 430-444

⁷Vladimir Isachenkov, Dasha Litvinova, Yuras Karmanau, Jim Heintz, *Putin announces military operation in Ukraine; explosions heard in Kyiv*, PBS News, 20 January 2024, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/putin-announces-military-operation-in-ukraine>, (20.03.2025)

NATO's expansion to the east, the situation for Russia has become worse and more dangerous year by year¹. Moreover, NATO leadership has always specified in its statements that it must accelerate and intensify its efforts to bring the alliance's infrastructure closer to Russia's borders. "It is a reality that over the past 30 years we have patiently tried to reach an agreement with the main NATO countries on the principles of equal and indivisible security in Europe"². He emphasizes that a policy of isolation is being exercised against Russia that represents a real threat not only to the interests of the state, but to its very existence and sovereignty. The ideology he uses highlights currents such as Populism, Nationalism, Euroscepticism, and Conservatism, while also taking advantage of the unfavorable context in which the citizens of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions found themselves.

Another important phrase that stands out in the Kremlin leader's speech is the following: "Tectonic change of the world order, he who sows the wind, reaps the storm, Western states will finally be forced to discuss "on equal terms" with Russia and the rest of the world about "a common future"³. In this context, we are surprised that he maintains his position, induces a sense of security in future actions, shows his conviction that he will not give in, but Western states will be forced to make compromises and accept the "negotiations" stipulated by him. Using the tactic of manipulation, Vladimir Putin states the following: "The West is not able to rule the world, but it tries desperately, and the majority of the peoples of the world will not accept it"⁴. In this sense, he joins some states that he does not mention, uses the term "majority" to induce a large number of actors and create disillusionment in the audience. Another statement from the speech surprises the audience: "Both in nature and in society there is a development, a peak, a disappearance. Russia has not reached its peak. We are on the march, on the march of development. The country went through the most difficult trials in its history in the 1990s and early 2000s, but it is on the march of development. There are a lot of problems, but, unlike other old or rapidly aging nations, we are still on the rise"⁵. He wants to highlight Russia's capabilities, its supremacy, the way in which it can reach the heights thanks to endurance and supreme will, a positive thing for the nation, but negative because of the unreality it achieves by lying by omission about economic declines, political collapses or social division regarding the political system.

The leader's thinking, according to the theory invoked, is pragmatic, strategic and logical. The striking example that supports this is the plan for the invasion of Ukraine, the movement of troops, territorial representation, movement in the field, the speech, a positive thing considering the anticipation of events, the preparation of the plan, but negative from an ethical and moral point of view. "I urge you to immediately lay down your weapons and go home. I will explain to all personnel of the Ukrainian army that those who will fulfill this requirement will be able to freely leave the combat zone and return to their families"⁶. Leader Putin claims that he is ready for any outcome, being sure that the soldiers and officers of the Russian army are loyal to their country and will fulfill their duty with professionalism and courage"⁷. "Dear comrades! Your parents, grandparents, great-grandparents did not fight with the Nazis and defended our homeland, so that today's neo-Nazis could take power in Ukraine"⁸. In this context, he appeals to emotions in his speeches addressed to the Russian people in order to awaken patriotism, nationalism and justify his actions. Vladimir Putin states that the "special military operation" does not stem from the desire to violate the interests of Ukraine and the Ukrainian people, but is related to the protection of Russia against those who have taken Ukraine hostage and are trying to use it against the country and the Russian people. Its target group is represented by Russian citizens, but also the rest of the Russophile citizens, uninformed and vulnerable

¹Andrew, Osborn, Nikolskaya, Polina, *Russia's Putin Authorises "special Military Operation against Ukraine*, Reuters, section Europe, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russias-putin-authorises-military-operations-donbass-domestic-media-2022-02-24/> (20.02.2025)

² *Idem*

³ *Idem*

⁴ *Idem*

⁵ *Idem*

⁶ Vladimir Isachenkov, Dasha Litvinova, Yuras Karmanau, Jim Heintz, *Putin announces military operation in Ukraine; explosions heard in Kyiv*, PBS News, 20 January 2024, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/putin-announces-military-operation-in-ukraine>, (20.03.2025)

⁷ *Idem*

⁸ Vladimir Isachenkov, Dasha Litvinova, Yuras Karmanau, Jim Heintz, *Putin announces military operation in Ukraine; explosions heard in Kyiv*, PBS News, 20 January 2024, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/putin-announces-military-operation-in-ukraine>, (20.03.2025)

people, who do not have a culture of security, civic education, history. At the same time, the dissemination of conspiracy theories to people strongly rooted in their own vision/beliefs, especially those raised and educated in authoritarian regimes, with a nationalist, Euro-spectric, anti-Western spirit, represent elements that can affect the emotional security of citizens¹.

Conclusions

If we were to summarize the research thread, one of the preliminary conclusions we reached concerns the fact that Vladimir Putin constructs and delivers his speech before the invasion of Ukraine using a series of elements of propaganda, disinformation, and strategic influence communication, achieving a corroboration between the means and the goals that he had set even then. Following his decision to recognize the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic on February 21, 2022, and the signing of mutual cooperation agreements between Russia and the two separatist regions, his declaration on the morning of February 24, 2022 is the one that triggers the invasion of Ukraine. Most of the time, the person of leader Vladimir Putin is an extremely controversial one in the public space, in terms of attitude, temperament and the impact that his decisions have had on citizens, relations with other actors and the international agenda. Leader Putin's temperament is not very difficult to define, being a direct person, who does not shy away from saying what he thinks and what bothers him.

He focuses on the task at hand, he does not deviate from the initial plan and the rules he has drawn. The analytical sense is strongly rooted, the details are never overlooked, and the logic and chronology behind the events are not lacking, precisely for this reason he has a great ability to develop strategies. Following this brief description, it can be clearly seen that the temperament of leader Putin is choleric, the preparation of the plan for the invasion of Ukraine, the movement of troops, the territorial representation, the movement in the field and the well-prepared speech to impress citizens by fighting for the territories he belongs to supporting all of this.

Research limitations

Following the conclusions stated above, I identify a series of limitations of the work that I noticed during the research and that refer to the elements that I was unable to analyze extensively. These occurred perhaps due to the subjectivism identified in the writings of some authors, the level of knowledge that I assimilated regarding this subject, the significant volume of information, but also the dynamics of the events that occurred in a short period of time.

Future research directions

All the gaps identified above determine the resumption of the data collection and analysis processes on a larger scale, on niche case studies through which the analysis of several discussions that leader Putin authored during the invasion of Ukraine can be highlighted as future research directions. The ultimate goal is to empirically observe the way in which the process of metamorphoses took place and the actors involved, in terms of states, international organizations or individual actors.

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