Legitimation Strategies in Territorial Disputes

The case of Russia and Ukraine’s dispute over Crimea

Kamila Kingstone (S1773933)
Master’s in International Studies (MAIS)
February 2016 – December 2016
Supervisor: Max Bader
Contents Table

Introduction 3

Section 1: Analytical Framework 6

Section 2: Methods 12

Section 3: Qualitative Data 14

Section 3.1: National-Historical Strategies 14

Section 3.2: Normative Strategies 17

Section 4: Quantitative Data 21

Section 5: Hybridised Strategies 23

Section 6: Broader Questions 26

Conclusion 29

Bibliography 31
Introduction

‘Territory itself is passive; it is human beliefs that give it meaning.’ (Knight, 1982, p. 517)

In the jigsaw puzzle of international borders that delineate the world’s states, the shape of many pieces is frequently under debate. The CIA Factbook (2016) identifies 188 states, out of a total of 193, engaged in some kind of territorial disagreement. Despite the prolific studies on the relationship between territorial disputes and war (Vasquez & Henehan, 2001), variations in territorial disputes (Wright & Diehl, 2014), and attempts at resolution (Shannon, 2009), there remains surprisingly little on the legitimation strategies political leaders use to justify their territorial claims. The study of legitimation strategies in territorial disputes is vitally important because, without analysing how each side publicly justifies itself, it can be difficult to understand who, or which international organisation, each actor is appealing to, how each side views the other, the chances of compromise, and even what norms are considered dominant in the international system. Understanding an actor’s legitimation strategies could even help in the prediction of their next move, as the actor tries to make their actions appear to conform to the motives they claim to have. In an attempt to shrink this gap in the literature, this thesis will focus on the case study of the Crimean conflict since 2014 to ask: how do Putin and Poroshenko justify their claims to Crimea?

The diversity of territorial disputes renders it necessary to narrow the scope of what is otherwise a very broad area of study. Territorial disputes can concern anything from natural resources, like the potential oil reserves in the South China Sea, to a divided population, like on the Korean peninsula, to control of a symbolic landmark like Jerusalem. A dispute can concern a small border ambiguity, like the exact location of the Faroe Islands’ continental shelf, or a vast territory like Western Sahara. It can concern a maritime region, like that between Turkey and Greece, or a piece of land like the Abyei area between Sudan and South Sudan. It can involve military action, like the Falklands War, or be resolved through negotiations, like the border inconsistencies between Bhutan and China. It can involve territory inhabited by millions of people, like the Gaza Strip, or land that is completely uninhabited, like Antarctica. It can be a dispute between states, like India and Pakistan’s
conflict over Kashmir, or a dispute between indigenous people and the state, like the Native American campaign for more land reserves. So as to look at the type of territorial dispute with the greatest potential for violence, and therefore the type most in need of international attention, this investigation will focus on a territorial dispute between states, involving military action, on a vast piece of land with a significant population. So as to focus on the actors with the greatest political influence over their state’s foreign policy, and who are presumed to speak on behalf of their population, the scope will be narrowed by its focus only on the Russian and Ukrainian heads of state, Putin and Poroshenko. Finally, the scope will be narrowed even further by the epistemological premise that the motivations behind an individual actor’s decision to claim a piece of land are impossible to know, since it would require knowledge of the thought processes within their mind. This study will therefore be limited to an investigation of the public justifications made by the heads of state in one type of territorial dispute.

The most illuminating example of an inter-state territorial dispute, involving military action, and a large population and territory, is the ongoing conflict between Ukraine and Russia over the Crimean peninsula. With two clear-cut sides and much rhetoric flying back and forth, the available data on Putin and Poroshenko’s legitimation strategies is of sufficient quantity and quality for in-depth analysis. A landmass protruding into the Black Sea, Crimea has been a point of contention for centuries. Annexed by the Russian empire in 1783, the site of the 1853–56 war between Russia, France, Britain, and the Ottomans, and the location of Russia’s Black Sea Fleet, it plays a key part in the narrative of Russian history. Despite being inhabited mainly by Russian-speakers, its administration was transferred to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic by Khrushchev in 1954 and this was cemented in Ukraine’s sovereign control of the peninsula after the collapse of the USSR. In a sudden move in March 2014, Putin took advantage of the Euromaidan protests in Kiev and announced the annexation of Crimea. To demonstrate Russia’s right to the peninsula, Putin called a referendum on Crimea’s status, claiming, amid accusations of electoral fraud, that 96% of voters had elected to join Russia. Ukrainian president since June 2014, Poroshenko lost no time in asserting Ukraine’s right to the peninsula and, coupled with the intense fighting in eastern Ukraine between separatist groups and the Ukrainian army, Ukrainian-
Russian relations have rapidly deteriorated. Although Poroshenko continues to assert that Crimea will one day be reunified with Ukraine, that prospect looks increasingly unlikely.

The range of legitimation strategies Putin and Poroshenko could employ is extensive. They might, for example, argue that controlling the peninsula is in their strategic interest, focusing on its location and the presence of the Black Sea Fleet. Alternatively, they could argue that the Crimean population’s linguistic, cultural, or ethnic similarities to their own nation make reunification imperative. Instead, they might focus on Crimea’s historical significance, and argue that they deserve Crimea to atone for historical injustices. They might use the same strategies as each other, different strategies to different audiences, combinations of strategies, or adapt their strategies to undermine each other. Through a content analysis of Putin and Poroshenko’s public statements on Crimea, the hypotheses will be tested that both presidents invoke normative legitimation strategies to an international audience, and that Putin, in particular, uses national-historical legitimation strategies to his domestic audience.

The argument will start with an explanation in Section 1 of the analytical framework, defining a legitimation strategy, elaborating various typologies, and explaining why international norms should be taken into account, before Section 2 details the qualitative and quantitative methods used to analyse the presidents’ speeches. Section 3 contains the qualitative analysis of the data, followed by the quantitative analysis in Section 4. Section 5 contains the discussion of how the presidents hybridise their strategies, adapting their emphasis depending on the audience they are addressing. Section 6 looks at the broader questions raised by the analysis, asking why Putin and Poroshenko form their arguments as they do, and investigating whether the findings are corroborated by the key literature on the topic, before the final part concludes the argument.
Section 1: Analytical Framework

The first element to clarify when investigating the types of legitimation strategies Putin and Poroshenko use is the definition of a legitimation strategy. Stacie Goddard (2006, p. 40) defines a legitimation strategy as ‘the public and recognised reasons to justify a claim to an issue’, while Jennifer Gronau and Henning Schmidtke (2016, p. 540) give the more substantial definition of a ‘goal-oriented activity employed to establish and maintain a reliable basis of diffuse support for a political regime’. Synthesised, the two can be condensed down to a definition of a legitimation strategy as a concerted attempt to gain legitimacy, which in turn can be defined as conformity to social norms. Gronau and Schmidtke (2016, p. 541) also point out that a legitimation strategy can be either ‘substantive’, involving institutional change, or ‘communicative’, involving discursive acts such as speech-making, and it can be carried out by a plethora of actors, from the head of government to the media. For the purposes of this investigation, the focus will be on communicative legitimation strategies carried out by the heads of state of Russia and Ukraine.

There has been relatively little written about the types of legitimation strategies a political leader might use to justify their position in a territorial dispute. As Travis Nelson (2010) argues, the literature on legitimation strategies focuses either on how such strategies affect state behaviour, or on whether the change over time of the types of strategies used is evidence of a shift in international norms. The most recent typology of legitimation strategies was contributed by Andrew Burghardt (1973, p. 228-237), who argues that there are seven types of strategies. With the first strategy, the political leader argues that they already have ‘effective control’ over the given territory and so deserves the territory by default. With the second, the leader argues they have an historical right to the territory, either because their people were there first or have been there longest. With the third, a leader legitimises their claim on the basis that their people share a culture. With the fourth, a leader claims a piece of land because it is territorially connected to their current territory. Under the fifth strategy, a leader claims that their population requires the territory in order to economically develop. Under the sixth strategy, a minority claims a right to a certain territory, and under the seventh strategy, a leader claims a right to spread an ideology.
As well as Burghardt’s, there are other typologies that have been developed over the last decades. Norman Pounds (1972, p. 252), for example, somewhat overlaps with Burghardt, arguing that there are five types of legitimation strategy, based on the respective claims that: a piece of territory is strategically required, it is of economic necessity, the people living there are ethnically linked to the leader’s own population, it is of close proximity, within its sphere of influence, and it is geographically connected. Similarly, Norman Hill (1945, p. 120) articulates another five types of legitimation strategies: that a piece of land and people have historical importance, that it is geographically connected, necessary for economic reasons, strategically necessary, and that it would allow ethnic reunification. On top of this, Robert Strausz-Hupe and S T Possony (1954, p. 327) list a further twelve: that there is a common language, religion, culture, history, ethnicity, sociology, or psychology, that a border change makes military sense, that it would be economically beneficial, administratively beneficial, that the territory is of close proximity, and that it is ideologically necessary. Each of these four typologies shares some types in common, but, amalgamated, seventeen types of legitimation strategies have so far been theorised: administrative, cultural, economic, ethnic, geographic, historical, ideological, linguistic, military, psychological, religious, sociological, strategic, based on effective control, minority rights, proximity, or spheres of influence.

The fundamental problem with these typologies, however, is that their authors do not distinguish between the legitimation strategies directed towards a domestic audience and those directed at an international one. This is vitally important because, although the political leader needs both audiences to recognise the territorial claim, this recognition comes in different forms. From a domestic audience, recognition comes in the form of national identification with the claimed territory and population, while, from an international audience, recognition comes in the form of acceptance that the territorial claim conforms to international norms. This requires the leader to use what Rodger Payne (2001, p. 43) calls ‘issue framing’, whereby they discursively frame their actions in such a way as to gain legitimacy. While Payne claims that issue framing enables the actor to ‘provide a singular interpretation of a particular situation’ (Payne, 2001, p. 39), a political leader can in fact use issue framing to provide multiple interpretations. By emphasising
different arguments to different audiences, the leader can employ emotive reasons for their nation to identify with the claimed territory and population, while also demonstrating how their actions conform to international norms.

Of the numerous legitimation strategies put forward in the four typologies, many are insufficient to persuade the domestic population to identify with the claimed territory and population. It is unlikely, for example, that administrative, geographic, or strategic arguments, or arguments relating to spheres of influence or proximity, will be sufficient. Since the end of the Cold War, ideological arguments have lost credence, and religious arguments are unlikely in a region without notably strong religious fervour. It is likely instead that a political leader will use a legitimation strategy based on the premise that the domestic population has deep historical links to the claimed population and territory. This is because, in order for the political leader to persuade the domestic population that the claimed population and territory constitute a fundamental part of their national identity, they have to persuade them that they and the claimed population are part of the same ‘imagined community’ (Anderson, 1983, p. 6). In other words, the leader must persuade the domestic population that they have something fundamentally in common with the claimed population, and that something is a common historical experience. It is the idea that, despite differences of ethnicity, culture, religion, or even language, everyone in the imagined community is a cog in the wheel of the ever-turning tide of history. The elucidation of a shared historical experience is woven through the telling of historical myth. As Geoffrey Hosking and George Schöpflin (1997, p. 19) argue, the telling of historical myth ‘is one of the ways in which nations establish and determine the foundations of their own being’. Through myths, ‘boundaries are established with respect to other communities’ (Hosking & Schöpflin, 1997, p. 20) as the nation defines its group identity by who shares in the myth. By expounding national-historical myths, therefore, the political leader can expand the boundaries of the national identity to encourage national identification with the claimed territory and population, thereby legitimising their claim to their domestic population.

It is likely that Putin, more than Poroshenko, will make recourse to national-historical arguments in his domestic legitimation strategies. This is firstly because, after the collapse
of the USSR in 1991, Russia faced a fundamental crisis of national identity. Having historically been a multi-ethnic empire, Russia has experienced significant border changes and different imperial configurations that have, in the words of Geoffrey Hosking (1998, p. xix), ‘impeded the formation of a nation-state’. With non-ethnic Russians making up around 20% of the population and the constant threat of right-wing Russian nationalism, Putin faces the need to articulate an inclusive Russian national identity based not on ethnicity but shared historical experience. Secondly, since Crimea had belonged to Russia until 1956, Putin has significant grounds on which to weave myths of Russian-Crimean historical ties. Poroshenko, meanwhile, although presiding over a nation deeply divided between east and west, so with considerable need to develop a unified national identity, lacks the grounds on which to imagine Crimea as historically Ukrainian. As Hosking and Schöpflin point out, for a myth to be believable by the population, it must be grounded in some historical fact. Since Ukraine only gained Crimea 60 years ago, it is unlikely that national-historical arguments will be of considerable use to Poroshenko.

Although there is almost no literature on Poroshenko, much of the literature on Putin supports the argument that he has been using national-historical strategies throughout his time in office. Marvin Kalb (2015, p. 24), in particular, argues that Putin’s speech on 18 March 2014 announcing the annexation of Crimea, demonstrated Putin’s ability to ‘manipulate history’ to ignite Russian patriotism. Kalb (2015, p. 23) claims the speech was a ‘short course on Russian history, occasionally inaccurate, exaggerated, but always patriotic’. Richard Sakwa (2008, p. 219), in his broader study of Putin’s presidency, argues that this has been the purpose of much of Putin’s rhetoric: to ‘reconcile Russia’s various pasts’, with specific emphasis on the most controversial period of Russian history – the Stalin era. In making symbolic gestures such as reintroducing the Soviet national anthem, refusing to move Lenin from his mausoleum, and altering the plaque next to the eternal flame from Volgograd to Stalingrad, Sakwa argues that Putin has frequently tried to integrate Russia’s historical narratives. He has done so in particular, argues Ivo Mijnsen (2009, p. 284), by emphasising Russia’s valour in World War Two, so much so that Ivan Kurilla (2009, p. 270) goes as far as saying that ‘the Putin administration’s most impressive achievements lie in the sphere of symbolic politics’.
To an international audience, however, the political leader making a territorial claim
requires a different type of recognition. Rather than recognition that the claimed territory
and population are legitimately part of a national identity, the leader needs recognition
from the international system that their control of the territory and population is
legitimately in accordance with international norms. The leader is therefore likely to use
arguments that ‘reflect what states believe will be acceptable normative arguments to a
broader international community’ (Nelson, 2010, p. 129). What exactly counts as an
international norm has certainly changed over time, but it is clear that since 1945, and
particularly since the end of the Cold War, the liberal norms of democracy, human rights,
and individual freedom have been in the ascendency. Initially codified in the UN Charter and
Universal Declaration of Human Rights, they have been further entrenched in international
treaties on the rights of women, children, and minorities, and, in 2005, with the
Responsibility to Protect. While the claim made by Beth Simmons, Frank Dobbin, and
Geoffrey Garrett (2006, p. 787) that there has been a ‘global trend towards liberalism’ might
transpire to be premature, given the backlash to liberalism from European right-wing
nationalists, the dispersion of Islamist terrorism across the Middle East and North Africa,
and the increasing power wielded by China, liberal norms still dominate international
institutions such as the UN, EU, and OSCE, and still characterise international discourse. In
order to gain international support for their actions, or, in the case of Putin, mitigate the risk
of international reprisals, the Russian and Ukrainian presidents are likely to frame their
actions towards Crimea as the expression of international liberal norms. Since norms are
socially created, and exist to the extent that actors say they exist, Putin and Poroshenko will
likely act on the premise that the more acceptable they claim their actions to be, the more
acceptable the international community are likely to find them.

There is some evidence that political leaders use claims to international norms to their
advantage, particularly when they know their actions are unpopular. Jeremy Moses, Babak
Bahador, and Tessa Wright (2011, p. 355), for example, argue that Bush and Blair used two
key narratives to justify the invasion of Iraq: a security narrative and liberal humanitarian
narrative. They find that while 82.4% of arguments Bush and Blair used were related to
security, 12.6% of their arguments related to humanitarianism. The fact that Bush and Blair
emphasised their humanitarian desire to promote democracy and protect the rights of
Iraqis is taken by Moses, Bahador, and Wright (2011, p. 357) to argue that Bush and Blair were seeking international legitimacy. Roy Allison (2009, p. 175) makes a similar argument relating to Putin’s intervention in Georgia in 2008. He argues that although the invasion was motivated by strategic concerns, Russia’s desire to be seen as internationally legitimate meant that ‘the Georgia operation had to be cloaked in a legal and normative discourse’. Allison (2009, p. 177) argues that Putin manipulated international norms and law in his own interests, claiming the need to protect Russian ‘citizens’ abroad and preventing a ‘humanitarian catastrophe’, so as to frame his actions as congruent with international norms.

Given these arguments, two hypotheses will be tested. The first is that both presidents use international norms when addressing a primarily international audience, and the second is that Putin in particular uses national-historical arguments when addressing a primarily domestic audience. Exactly which norms they choose to employ, which aspects of history they choose to interpret, how they combine national-historical and normative strategies, and what emphasis they place on each remains to be investigated.
Section 2: Methods

To test this hypothesis, I examined all Putin and Poroshenko’s major public speeches, interviews, and statements relating to the annexation of Crimea until September 2016. I gathered Putin’s speeches from March 2014 onward, when he announced the annexation of Crimea, and Poroshenko’s speeches from June 2014 onward, when he became Ukrainian president. I gathered approximately 10,000 words each of Putin and Poroshenko’s discourse, comprised of 8 speeches respectively, from the Russian government and Ukrainian government websites, news and video-sharing sites. Although previous efforts have been made to analyse Putin’s rhetoric (see Kalb, 2015 and Slade, 2007), they are extremely descriptive and none uses an explicit methodology, providing plenty of ground on which to build. So as to capture both the nuances and overall emphasis of the texts, I conducted both qualitative and quantitative content analysis. Furthermore, so as to take in the micro and macro picture of each text, I decided to code on three levels of analysis – their use of language, the references or citations they made, and their overall arguments. The first step was to review the speeches to identify broadly what legitimation strategies the presidents use. Having discovered they used national-historical and normative arguments, I developed a system (see Table 1) to code the language, references, and arguments by whether they were part of a national-historical or normative legitimation strategy.

Table 1: Examples of data by category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of analysis</th>
<th>Type of legitimation strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National-historical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Mythical, ancient, homeland, sacred, soil, nation, native, brotherhood, blood, heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>The Second World War, the USSR, Khrushchev’s giving Crimea to Ukraine, ancient Rus’, Russia’s defeat of Napoleon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arguments</td>
<td>Crimea is the homeland of the Russian/Ukrainian people, Russia/Ukraine has been a victim of history,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There were inevitably occasions when it was difficult to categorise data into one set or another. When Putin argued, for example, that the international recognition of Kosovo was a precedent for the recognition of Crimea, I could have categorised this argument as part of a national-historical legitimation strategy or one based on international norms. In such instances, I decided on a case-by-case basis, looking at the premise behind each point. In the example of Kosovo, I categorised Putin’s reference as being part of a normative strategy because what underpinned Putin’s claim was not that Kosovo was historical but that the international community recognised the norm of self-determination.

Having conducted the qualitative analysis, I moved on to the quantitative stage. For each speech, I used the above coding system to calculate the percentage of sentences that were normative, national-historical, or neutral, counting as ‘neutral’ any statement that pertained to the Crimea conflict but did not relate to any particular legitimation strategy. Using the online tool, wordcounttool.com, I identified Putin and Poroshenko’s 30 most frequently used words. Finally, although I looked for quantitative and qualitative change over time, I did not find any discernible trend, and so have not included any discussion of such findings here.

A key constraint was that all the analysis was conducted in English, meaning that the connotations of some Russian and Ukrainian words were lost. Given that there is no direct translation for these connotations in English, both the Russian words народ and люди, for example, had to be translated as meaning ‘people’, even though the former implies a national group while the latter implies a group of individuals. This was not too significant a problem, however. If this study were focused on the type of nationalism Putin advocates then it would be useful to explore the different words for ‘people’, but in the present framework the obscuring of connotations did not interfere with the categorisation of sentences into national-historical or normative strategies.
Section 3: Qualitative Data

This section will detail the qualitative data, looking first at Putin and Poroshenko’s national-historical legitimation strategies and then their normative strategies, analysing each at the level of their language, references and citations, and overall argumentation.

3.1: National-historical strategies

Linguistic analysis

Throughout his speeches, Putin consistently uses language to emphasise the national-historical bond between Russia and Ukraine. Referring to Russia as the ‘Fatherland’ (2014d), ‘Motherland’ (2014e), ‘Homeland’ (2014e), ‘common home’ (2014e), or ‘native shores’ (2015) of all Russian speakers, he implicitly denies the Ukrainian claim that Ukrainians and Russians are separate nations, arguing that the two share a ‘civilisation’ (2014a, 2014b, 2014e). In using the word ‘reunification’, rather than merely ‘unification’, when referring to the annexation of Crimea (2016, 2015a, 2014b, 2014d, 2014e), he emphasises Russia’s ‘historical’ bond (2014b, 2014d) specifically with the peninsula. Emphasising Russia’s military strength, he refers to World War 2 as the ‘Great Patriotic War’ (2014b, 2014c), and repeats that the Soviet army ‘liberated’ Europe from the Nazis (2014b, 2014d), portraying Russia as the historic saviour. Declaring in his 2014 Federal Assembly address that Russia has historically proved itself to be ‘mature’, ‘united’, ‘truly sovereign’ and a ‘strong state’ (2014b), he further portrays Russia as superpower with the strength to challenge the West.

Poroshenko’s national-historical language is, inevitably, almost the mirror image of Putin’s. He refers to Ukraine (as opposed to Russia) as Crimeans’ ‘Homeland’ (2016b, 2014f), describing Crimea’s connection to Ukraine as ‘spiritual’, ‘civil’, ‘sacred’, and ‘historically determined’ (2016b). Unlike Putin, however, who explicitly denies that he annexed Crimea to gain territory, Poroshenko emphasises the importance of the land itself, less able than Putin to claim national-historical links with the mainly Russian-speaking Crimean population. Referring to Crimea as ‘Ukrainian land’ (2016b) or ‘Ukrainian soil’ (2015b, 2014f), Poroshenko repeats four times at the 2015 Munich Security Conference the need for Ukrainians to ‘defend’ their ‘land’ (2015c).
**Analysis of references/citations**

Putin’s national-historical references are most often associated with Russia’s historic strength, demonstrated by repeated references to Russia’s defeat of Hitler (2014b, 2014e), Bandera (2014e), and the Nazis (2014d). Implying the need for a strong military, he makes an extended allusion to the symbol of the Russian bear, arguing that if the bear were to let down its guard, the ‘land will be taken over’ (2014a). Putin also makes a number of references to Ukraine and Russia’s national unity, repeatedly referring to ancient Rus, historically considered the source of both Ukraine and Russia, (2014e), and comparing the annexation of Crimea and Russia to the reunification of East and West Germany (2014e). Putin further reinforces this message with several religious references, citing the baptism of Grand Prince Vladimir in the ancient Crimean city of Korsun, which formally introduced Christianity to Rus, as evidence of Russia’s bond with Crimea (2014b, 2014e). Arguing that Christianity has been a ‘powerful, spiritual, unifying force’ (2014b) in uniting Ukrainians and Russians, he claims that Korsun to Russia is like Jerusalem to Islam and Judaism (2014b).

Poroshenko’s national-historical references share with Putin’s an emphasis on Christianity. Poroshenko quotes twice from the Bible, as if competing with Putin for the religious high ground (2015b, 2014f). On the first occasion, he quotes the Gospel of Mark – ‘those who take the sword shall perish by the sword’ – advocating peace on the Ukrainian-Russian border (2014c). On the second occasion, he quotes from the Gospel of John – ‘in the beginning was the word’ – accusing Putin of hypocrisy and asking rhetorically ‘what kind of a gospel do you bring to the world if all your words are double-tongued?’ (2015b). While Putin’s historical references are designed to emphasise Russian strength, however, Poroshenko’s focus on Ukrainian victimisation. Thrice comparing Russia’s annexation of Crimea to the German-Austrian Anschluss (2016b, 2015a), Poroshenko likens the Russian army to the Nazis. He also implicitly compares Putin’s actions to those of the Soviet Union, citing historical ‘Russian aggression’ towards Finland, Lithuania, and Bulgaria, arguing that no such country would want to return to ‘Moscow’s orbit’ (2015c). Perhaps surprisingly, Poroshenko also makes references to Ukraine’s internal weakness, citing the disagreements between Volodymyr Vynnychenko and Mykhailo Hrushevsky as being to blame for the collapse of the Ukrainian People’s Republic in 1921 (2014c).
Analysis of argumentation

Putin’s argumentation is rooted in his claim that, in annexing Crimea, Russia made a brave historical sacrifice to protect the ‘millions of Russian people’ on the peninsula (2015), with whom Russians share a similar ethnicity, language, culture, territory, economy, government, and religion (2014b). Putin reduces Khrushchev’s 1954 decision to transfer Crimea to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic to a ‘personal initiative’ on Khrushchev’s part (2014e), thereby stripping it of any legitimacy, national or international. Arguing that it left Russia ‘plundered’ (2014e), he claims that Russia was forced to accept this ‘outrageous historical injustice’ only because it was incapable of taking action at the time (2014e). Casting Russia as the martyred hero, Putin argues that the economic sanctions on Russia since 2014 ‘is the price we have to pay to preserve ourselves as a nation’ (2014a). Presenting the sanctions as part of a broader ‘policy of containment,’ he argues that the West has ‘for decades, if not centuries’ directed its wrath at Russia (2014b). Putin reinforces his depiction of a heroic Russia by reminding the West of the debt it owes to the Russian nation. Comparing the West’s treatment of Russia to Hitler’s invasion, he notes that ‘everyone should remember how it ended’: with Russia ‘liberating’ Europe (20014b). Refusing to be cowed by the West’s aggression, Putin therefore claims that the annexation of Crimea, as an act of justice, was ‘the embodiment of God on earth’ (2016).

In contrast to Putin’s narrative of Russia as risen hero, Poroshenko’s national-historical arguments focus on Ukraine as the historical victim, casting Russia as the aggressor. Accusing Russia of stabbing Ukraine in the back, Poroshenko argues that ‘Russia has been preparing for the seizure of Crimea since 1991’ (2016b). He attacks Putin’s ‘rhetoric about brotherly peoples’, and accuses him of being motivated by a desire to return to ‘imperial times’ (2015b). Recognising Putin’s desire to ignite patriotism through the annexation, Poroshenko claims it was an act of Russian ‘self-affirmation’ (2014b). The most significant part of Poroshenko’s national-historical arguments, however, is his claim that Ukrainians have historically been part of Europe. Declaring in his inauguration speech his desire to return Ukraine to its ‘natural European state’, he claims that Ukraine has always been part of the ‘family of European nations’ (2014c). Being part of Europe, he says, is ‘at the heart of our national ideal’ and was ‘a choice made by our ancestors and prophets’ (2014c). He uses
such emotionally loaded phases as ‘European homeland’, and describes the Ukrainian people as ‘coming home’ (2014c).

3.2: Normative Strategies

Analysis of language
Throughout Putin’s public statements, he uses normative language to delegitimise the claims made by Poroshenko. In employing the word ‘reunification’ to describe the annexation, Putin reminds his audience that Crimea used to be Russian (2016, 2015b, 2014b, 2014d, 2014e), implicitly placing the burden of proof on Poroshenko to prove that Ukraine deserves Crimea more than Russia. He also repeatedly uses the word ‘legitimate’ to both undermine the Ukrainian government and justify Russian policy. He notes that the Crimean parliament was ‘a legitimate Parliament’ (2014b), that Yanukovych was ‘absolutely legitimate’ (2014b), that Russia had to protect its ‘legitimate interests’ (2014b), and that Crimea’s decision to join Russia ‘was legitimate’ (2014e), while there is ‘no legitimate authority in Ukraine’, and that some Ukrainian agencies are run by ‘imposters’ (2014e). He repeatedly calls the 2014 Ukrainian revolution a ‘coup’ (2016, 2014a, 2014b, 2014e), an ‘armed coup’ (2014b) or a ‘coup by military means’ (2014a). He dismisses the Ukrainian protesters as an ‘army of militants’, ‘radicals’, ‘nationalists’, ‘neo-Nazis’, ‘Russophobes’, ‘and anti-Semites’ (2014e). Refusing to recognise their protests as calls for democracy, he condemns their actions as ‘terror, murder, and riots’ (2014e).

Poroshenko uses similar linguistic tactics to those of Putin, condemning Russia for abandoning international norms and couching his condemnation in terms that de-legitimize Russia’s actions. He describes Russia’s ‘invasion’ (2015b) and ‘occupation’ of Crimea (2016b, 2015a, 2015b, 2014a, 2014f) as ‘criminal’ (2014b, 2014f), implying that it is illegal under international law. He reinforces this message by accusing Russia of ‘terrorism’ (2015b) and of ‘flooding’ eastern Ukraine with ‘terrorists’ (2014a). He condemns Russia’s actions as ‘unprovoked’, ‘blunt’, ‘brutal’, ‘shocking’, and as being a ‘violation’ of international law (2015b). Unequivocally placing the blame on Russia, he argues that the ‘aggressor should be punished’ (2015a), the ‘aggressor is Russia’ (2015b), and condemns ‘blatant Russian aggression’ (2014a). In contrast, he uses language to illustrate Ukraine’s adherence to
international norms. Claiming that ‘Ukraine is Europe’ (2016b), that it has made a ‘European choice’, and has a ‘European future’ (2014c), he aligns the country with the continent that dominates many of the world’s international institutions. He claims that Ukraine and the West ‘seek harmony’, ‘dream of a harmonious world’, and must choose between ‘harmony and zones of influence’ (2016a). Declaring ‘the world is with us’ (2015a) he portrays Ukraine as working alongside the international system.

**Analysis of references/citations**

Putin makes two key references to international norms and law. He refers in particular to the West’s hypocrisy towards the UN Charter, arguing that, under the Charter, ‘every nation has the right to self-determination’ (2016a). He points out that although Western states objected to the Crimean Parliament invoking the Charter when declaring allegiance to Russia, they made no objection when Ukraine referred to the Charter when declaring independence from the USSR (2014e). He also attacks the West’s claim that the Ukrainian authorities have to give permission for Crimea to join Russia, arguing that the West ‘agreed that the unilateral separation of Kosovo from Serbia was legitimate and did not require any permission from the country’s central authorities’ (2014e). He argues that Crimea’s declaration of independence was even more legitimate than Kosovo’s because it was based not merely on an act of Parliament but a referendum. Accusing the West of hypocrisy, he asks ‘if Kosovo has the right to self-determination, why don’t the Crimeans have the same right?’ (2016).

Poroshenko’s normative references are more extensive than Putin’s. Noting that Ukraine was one of the founders of the UN Charter (2015b), he implicitly reminds his audience that Ukraine was abiding by international norms before they had even become norms. Contrasting this with Russia’s veto of the UNSC resolutions condemning the Crimean referendum and establishing an international tribunal to investigate the MH17 crash, he declares ominously that ‘everyone in this hall clearly understands the real motives of Russia’s veto’ (2015b). By reaffirming Ukraine’s commitment to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and criticising Russia’s treatment of Crimean Tatars (2015b), Poroshenko contrasts Ukraine’s and Russia’s attitude towards minority rights. He invokes Ukraine’s National Human Rights Strategy, portraying Ukraine as the very model of a norm-
abiding state, arguing that Ukraine drew inspiration from the EU Strategic Framework for Human Rights and Democracy (2015b). Finally, Poroshenko makes reference three times to the Budapest Memorandum, whereby Russia agreed to security assurances for Ukraine. Condemning Russia’s actions as ‘a clear violation of the Memorandum’, Poroshenko claims that Putin’s actions have ‘undermined the value and credibility’ of such agreements (2015c).

**Analysis of argumentation**

Putin’s normative argumentation can be condensed down to the premise that Russia follows international norms, while Ukraine and the West do not. He denies allegations of invasion, declaring ‘we did not make war, nor did we occupy anyone’ (2016) and arguing that all he wants is ‘peace and harmony’ (2014e). Throughout his speeches, he repeatedly portrays Russia as being firmly on the side of international human rights and territorial norms. Pledging to ‘rehabilitate the Crimean Tatars and restore them in their rights’ (2014e), claiming to respect the ‘territorial integrity of the Ukrainian state’ (2014e), and arguing that Russia has supported Ukraine financially since its independence from the USSR (2014b), he argues that Russia acts fully in line with ‘the norms of international law’ (2014e). In contrast, he portrays the Ukrainian government and the West of abandoning such norms. Accusing the Ukrainian government of ‘subjecting Russian speakers in Ukraine to forced assimilation’ (2014e), and the West of using sanctions and the expansion of NATO to ‘suppress the growth of Russia’s capabilities’ (2016), he portrays Ukraine and the West’s actions as a deliberate plot to sideline Russia. He further accuses the West of purposefully excluding Russia from the negotiations on the Ukrainian Association Agreement, illustrating the West’s reluctance to engage in cooperation (2014b).

Poroshenko uses similar tactics to Putin, arguing that Ukraine, unlike Russia, has followed international norms. He calls for ‘freedom, democracy, free speech, basic human rights’ for Ukraine (2016a), which it can only achieve through a ‘European choice’ (2016f). Its fight for Crimea, he argues, places it ‘at the forefront of the global fight for democracy’ (2014b). He argues that Ukraine wants to hold new elections in the Donbas under the observation of the OSCE and ODIHR (2015c), demonstrating his willingness to conform to international standards. He declares his preparedness to stand by the Minsk deal (2015b), and pushes for a new European Responsibility Charter (2015c). Arguing that Ukraine ‘plays by the rules’
(2016a), he implies that Ukraine’s actions are firmly embedded in international norms. In contrast, Poroshenko accuses Russia of abandoning the norms of war, arguing that Putin is funding ‘terrorists’ in eastern Ukraine (2014c) and ordering its fighters to remove their insignias when fighting so they cannot be identified (2015b). He condemns Putin’s ‘imperialist mindset’ (2015b), arguing that the ‘the world has been thrown back in time to the reality of zones of influence’ (2014b).
Section 4: Quantitative Data

From the qualitative data, it might appear that Putin and Poroshenko spend equal amounts of time on national-historical as normative legitimation strategies, but this is not the case. Although qualitatively they use the same tactics, quantitatively it becomes clear that they use different emphasis.

Table 2: Percentage of sentences each president uses that are part of each legitimacy strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>National-historical</th>
<th>Normative</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Putin</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poroshenko</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 2 demonstrates, while both presidents use normative arguments more than national-historical arguments, Putin puts the most emphasis on national-historical arguments while Poroshenko puts the most emphasis on normative arguments. In fact, Putin spends over double the time on national-historical arguments than Poroshenko, while the latter spends the vast majority of his efforts on a normative framing. The different emphasis the two presidents use also becomes clear when their most commonly used words are compared; Tables 3 and 4 illustrate each president’s 30 most commonly used words (excluding grammar words) compared to the other president’s, with their top 10 words highlighted.

Table 3: Putin’s 30 most commonly used words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Putin</th>
<th>Poroshenko</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sevastopol</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nation</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coup</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fact</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Poroshenko’s 30 most commonly used words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Poroshenko</th>
<th>Putin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peace</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rights</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggression</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donbas</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As Tables 3 and 4 demonstrate, Putin uses national-historical language more often than Poroshenko. He uses the word ‘nation’ 17 times to Poroshenko’s 4, ‘common’ (in the context of ‘common language’ or ‘common history’) 14 times to Poroshenko’s 2, ‘historical’ 10 times to Poroshenko’s 2, and ‘people’ (in the context of ‘the Russian people’) 84 times to Poroshenko’s 45. Nevertheless, Poroshenko does frequently employ national-historical language, using the word ‘history’ 9 times to Putin’s 8, the word ‘national’ 12 times to Putin’s 8, and although he uses the word ‘people’ less frequently than Putin, it is still his second most commonly used word.

The different emphasis on normative arguments is also laid bare by Tables 3 and 4, as Poroshenko uses the word ‘world’ 30 times to Putin’s 12, ‘peace’ 47 times to Putin’s 5, ‘European’ 33 times to Putin’s 6, ‘freedom’ 24 times to Putin’s 3, ‘democracy’ 11 times to Putin’s 3, and ‘global’ 9 times to Putin’s 1. He also uses the word ‘Charter’ (in terms of the UN Charter) 11 times to Putin’s 3, and ‘organisation’ 10 times to Putin’s 1. This is not to say that Putin is entirely outdone, as ‘international’ remains his second most commonly used word, and he uses the word ‘law’ (as in ‘international law’) 20 times to Poroshenko’s 14, and ‘dialogue’ 11 times to Poroshenko’s 6. Nevertheless, it is clear that Poroshenko’s argument rests to a much greater degree than Putin’s on a normative framing.
Section 5: Hybridised Strategies

The two presidents do not, however, merely employ national-historical and normative strategies as disparate strands, but weave them into hybridised narratives of valour and victimhood, each arguing the inversion of the other. Throughout his statements, Putin constructs the narrative that Russia has been historically victorious against forces intent on its destruction, first defeating the Nazis and now defending itself against the West. He claims that Russia is conducting this fight by valiantly and legitimately, in line with international norms, saving Crimean Russians from a Ukrainian coup, but that it is being victimised by a West that refuses to follow the norms that Russia adheres to. In his speech celebrating the first anniversary of the annexation (2015c), for example, he praises Russia’s ‘heroic forebears’ for defending the nation, reassures his audience that Russia will do everything to ‘help Ukraine get through this difficult period in its development’, but that Russia is beset with ‘obstacles that others try to create for us from outside’. Similarly, in his address on the day of the Crimean annexation (2014e), he claims that Crimea symbolises ‘Russian historic military glory and outstanding valour’, and that Russia respects the international norm of the ‘territorial integrity of Ukraine’, but that the West ‘prefers not to be guided by international law’.

Poroshenko, meanwhile, argues the inversion of this, creating the narrative that, throughout history, Ukraine has been a victim of the Polish, Russian, and Soviet empires. He argues that, after centuries of weakness, Ukraine is finally demonstrating its valour by fighting for the international norms of democracy and freedom in the face of the ever-predatory Russia. In a speech celebrating the second anniversary of the ‘anti-Russian resistance in Crimea’, for example, Poroshenko (2016b) makes an historical parallel between the annexation of Crimea and the Anschluss, arguing that ‘Russia has been preparing for the seizure of Crimea since 1991’, but that Ukraine, as a ‘European country’, will do everything it can to ‘defend the collective rights of communities’ in Crimea. Similarly, in his inauguration speech, Poroshenko (2014c) argues that Ukraine must learn the ‘harsh lessons’ that ‘resulted in the loss of our independence’ throughout history, that Russia is nothing but a collection of ‘bandits’, and that Ukraine shall commit itself to ‘European democracy’.
Moreover, as well as weaving their strategies together, both presidents appear to have adapted their strategies depending on the audience they are addressing.

Table 5: Percentage of sentences in each of Putin’s speeches that are part of each legitimation strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>National-historical</th>
<th>Normative</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview to <em>Bild</em> newspaper (2016)</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Assembly Address (2015a)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNGA speech (2015b)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anniversary concert (2015c)</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News conference (2014a)</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Assembly address (2014b)</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer to a journalist’s question 2014 (2014c)</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gala concert (2014d)</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crimea address (2014e)</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 suggests that Putin emphasises normative arguments when addressing an international audience, and national-historical arguments when addressing a domestic audience. When speaking to the German tabloid *Bild*, when addressing the UNGA, and when answering a question from an international journalist, Putin laid great emphasis on the international normative aspects of his argument, at 74%, 100%, and 73% respectively. In contrast, when addressing a Russian gala concert, when speaking at an anniversary celebration of Crimea’s annexation, and in his 2015 Federal Assembly address, he emphasised national-historical arguments, with normative arguments making up just 10%, 18% and 0% respectively. There are nevertheless exceptions, as Putin emphasised normative arguments in a number of speeches ostensibly designed for a domestic audience: his annual news conference to the Russian nation in 2014 (with normative sentences making up 67% of the total), in his 2014 Federal Assembly address (63%), and in his landmark speech at the annexation of Crimea (70%). This could be explained, however, by the
likelihood that Putin anticipated that an international audience of journalists and political leaders would pay close attention to his statements, given that his Crimea address would set out his foreign policy towards the peninsula, that the 2014 Federal Assembly address would be his first since the annexation, and since his news conference was attended by 1259 Russian and foreign journalists (Putin, 2014a).

Table 6: Percentage of sentences in each of Poroshenko’s speeches that are part of each legitimation strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement at roundtable (2016a)</th>
<th>National-historical</th>
<th>Normative</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2nd Anniversary of the ‘anti-Russian resistance’ (2016b)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with DW (2015a)</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech at the UNGA (2015b)</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech at the Munich Security Conference (2015c)</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech at the Atlantic Council (2014a)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech at US Congress (2014b)</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inauguration speech (2014c)</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Poroshenko has also to some extent adapted his emphasis in the same way as Putin. To decidedly international audiences – a roundtable in Istanbul on ending conflicts, a speech at the UN General Assembly, and a speech at the 2015 Munich Security Conference – he focused almost entirely on normative arguments, at a rate of 88%, 94%, and 95% respectively. Conversely, although he puts less emphasis overall on national-historical arguments than Putin, he nonetheless enhances his emphasis when addressing a domestic audience in his inauguration speech and on the second anniversary of protests in Crimea to the Russian occupation, his emphasis on normative arguments being only 71% and 42% respectively.
Section 6: Broader Questions

A key question to ask is why Putin uses the most national-historical arguments and why Poroshenko uses the most normative arguments. On the one hand, it might seem obvious that Putin would use more history than Poroshenko, given that Russia’s history has been characterised by more military victories and superpower status than Ukraine’s. Moreover, given that Russia has to find a way to accept its status as a ‘diminished Russia’ (Sakwa, 2008, p. 214), there is the need for Putin to reconcile the modern state with the Russian and Soviet empires. Nevertheless, it is not inevitable that Poroshenko should place little focus on national-historical arguments. Given that Ukraine’s population is so divided, he might have used his speeches as an opportunity to encourage national unity by more extensively linking Ukraine to its past. As Gwendolyn Sasse (2007, p. 66) argues, ‘discontinuity and a circuitous path to nation and statehood are the key themes in contemporary Ukrainian historiography’. With such a disjointed history, Poroshenko could portray Ukraine’s independence in 1991 as an historic struggle, and could, as Putin did with Russian history, invoke Ukraine’s struggle in World War Two, or resistance fighters against the Soviet Union to create an historical myth of Ukrainian strength. Poroshenko’s emphasis on normative arguments, however, can be credited to two elements. Firstly, as Sasse (2007, p. 80) points out, ‘the argument that Crimea was primordially Ukrainian requires implausible historical revisionism’. Since Ukraine only gained Crimea in 1954, it would be a stretch for Poroshenko to claim, even though he intermittently tries, that Crimea is historically Ukrainian. Secondly, Poroshenko’s need for international support likely trumps the need to rouse greater domestic unity. Putin, meanwhile, keen to dislodge the sanctions but aware of the impossibility of allying with the EU, UN, or NATO, and keen to portray Russia as an independent power, has less need than Poroshenko of invoking international norms.

A second key issue is the question of why Putin emphasises Russia’s valour while Poroshenko emphasises Ukraine’s victimhood. The answer is not as simple as declaring that Russia has historically had military glory, while Ukraine has historically been a victim, because this is not necessarily the case. It is true that Russia played a significant part in the defeat of Napoleon and the Nazis, while Ukraine did not even exist until 1991, but both presidents could have manipulated history for their purposes. Putin could have emphasised
the historical suffering Napoleon, the Nazis, and Stalin inflicted on Russia, as well as the economic woes of the 1990s, arguing that Russia has always been the victim of history. Correspondingly, Poroshenko could have portrayed Ukrainian history as a teleological struggle for independence, which it valiantly won in 1991. Their decisions not to do this are, again, most likely due to what they want to gain from the international system. Poroshenko, as leader of a small state caught in the power games between Russia and NATO, most likely thinks he will gain more international support if he portrays Ukraine as vulnerable and in need of protection, while Putin, wanting to dissuade NATO expansion into its traditional sphere of influence, is naturally likely to portray Russia as an equal, or even greater, power than that of the West.

The analysis of Putin’s rhetoric corroborates much of the existing literature. The findings revealed by the qualitative analysis in particular support Kalb’s (2015, p. 21) claim that Putin ‘manipulated history’ and ‘set a nationalist tone’ in his March 2014 Crimea address. What is surprising, however, is that Kalb (2015, p. 24) mentions only in passing Putin’s use of normative language, claiming Putin ‘used the language of democracy to describe his brand of autocracy’, but not elaborating further. Given that Putin’s espousal of international norms comprised 70% of his speech (see Table 5), this is a significant omission. Putin’s normative rhetoric is discussed in more detail in Roy Allison’s (2009) analysis of Putin’s invasion of South Ossetia. Allison (2009, p. 175) argues that Putin ‘cloaked [the invasion] in a legal and normative discourse’, in the same way that Putin did with his invasion of Crimea. Just as Allison argues that Putin justified the 2008 invasion on the grounds that a Georgian attack on South Ossetia was an attack on Russia, Putin (2014b) argues that ‘Crimea is where our people live’ and that an attack on Russians in Crimea is an attack on the mainland.

On the other hand, the findings illuminate the serious shortcomings of the typologies of legitimation strategies developed by Burghardt (1973), Pounds (1972), Hill (1945), and Strausz-Hupe and Possony (1954). Firstly, none of the typologies discusses how legitimation strategies might differ across different types of territorial dispute. None deals with the possibility that leaders might use different strategies to different audiences, nor the question of whether a leader might adapt their strategy over time. Neither do the authors discuss whether competing sides might use the same or different types of legitimation
strategies as each other, or why this might be so, and none discusses how a leader might hybridise their strategies, or which combinations might work in which context. Most fundamentally, none take into account the possibility that a leader might invoke international norms as a legitimation strategy. This is most likely due to the typologies being out of date, having been developed before the post-Cold-War ascendancy of liberal norms such as the promotion of democracy and human rights. This suggests that there would be room for the development of new typologies and discussion of legitimation strategies in the literature on territorial conflict.
Conclusion

Through qualitative and quantitative content analysis of Putin and Poroshenko’s public statements on Crimea, the two hypotheses are confirmed. First, both presidents employ normative arguments when addressing an international audience, both claiming to be promoting peace, democracy, and human rights as a means to legitimise their territorial claims. Second, Putin, more than Poroshenko, employs national-historical strategies to a domestic audience, emphasising the historical links between Russia and Crimea, so as to reap domestic legitimacy for his claim. In addition to the hypotheses, however, a third key finding emerges. Although Poroshenko places significantly less emphasis on national-historical arguments than Putin, he still employs national-historical arguments when addressing a domestic audience, but, unlike Putin, he lays emphasis on Ukraine’s weakness. This means that, when compared together, the two presidents use the same, but inverted, legitimisation strategies as each other. Hybridising national-historical and normative legitimisation strategies, Putin portrays Russia as an historically heroic nation fighting for international norms against a hypocritical West, while Poroshenko portrays Ukraine as an historically victimised nation, now at the forefront of the fight for international norms against a dangerous and imperialist Russia.

A number of implications can be drawn from these findings. Firstly, that both sides use the same normative tools suggests that the international norms of democracy, human rights, peace, and freedom dominate the international system sufficiently for both sides to make recourse to such arguments in order to gain international acceptance. Secondly, the fact that both Putin and Poroshenko can interpret history to support their diametrically opposed claims to Crimea, and that Putin in particular can interpret his widely condemned actions as promoting international norms, demonstrates how easy it can be to justify a position in a conflict. Thirdly, the finding that the two presidents use the same types of strategies adds weight to the argument that the Crimea conflict is intractable. If one president were arguing they deserve Crimea to allow their economy to develop, and the other were arguing they deserve Crimea so their nation has access to historically significant landmarks, a compromise could be envisaged. The fact that they use inverted versions of the same hybridised strategies, however, both claiming they are achieving their historical entitlement
to Crimea by defending international norms, leaves little room for trade-off or compromise and suggests that reconciliation will be extremely difficult.

As one case study in the wider phenomenon of territorial disputes, these findings on Crimea open two key avenues for further investigation. Within the case study, a logical extension of the above research would be to investigate, particularly through interviews or surveys, the extent to which the narratives expounded by Putin and Poroshenko are internalised by their respective populations. If Russians and Ukrainians do support their leader’s narratives, it would strengthen the leader’s position and, at the same time, make it more difficult for them to back down. If, on the other hand, there was a diverse range of narratives within the same population, it could be easier for the leader to compromise, but at the same time, could cause domestic discord. Down the second avenue, research could look at the extent to which national-historical and normative legitimation strategies are used in other territorial disputes, particularly where they might be least expected. The hypothesis could be developed, for example, that national-historical and normative arguments are less likely in territorial disputes over natural resources or maritime borders, where actors are not attempting to atone for historical suffering or gain a target population, but attain resources for future development. If, even in this situation, leaders use national-historical and normative legitimation strategies, it would suggest the two sets of arguments are the most pervasive justifications in territorial disputes. With this kind of further research, more knowledge can be gained on the subject of how political leaders justify their claims, and small steps can be made towards solving the jigsaw puzzle of the world’s states.
Bibliography


Poroshenko, Petro. 2015a. Interview with DW: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LFU-Qr1hIhw


