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Material bias in LTA:

**An analysis of variation in assessed personality trait scores between the
spontaneous and prepared material of political leaders**

Abstract: This thesis investigates how M.G. Hermann's Leadership Trait Analysis is affected by material bias between spontaneous and prepared settings. It emphasizes the methodological difficulties of content analysis for political leaders that underlie Hermann's prescription of spontaneous material. Using US president Trump, Russian president Putin and Japanese prime minister Abe as three cases, the variation in their trait scores between material type was assessed. It was found that each leader had similar variations in three traits, Conceptual Complexity, Self-Confidence and Task Focus. The significance of variations varied per leader, and the impact of these variations on LTA's leadership dimensions and style even more so. The results invite new research and discussion towards why these variations exist, and how we should consider them when selecting material for content analysis.

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Introduction

How should we study the phenomenon of political leadership? How do different leaders make different choices? How can we determine what makes them different? Despite all the public presence our politicians have, we generally know very little of how they make decisions or calculate risks. For scholars of International Relations (IR) who seek to investigate the agency of an individual leader in the formation of (foreign) policy outcomes this is a major challenge. To properly examine the role of agency, the decision-making process and outcome have to be tied to certain characteristics possessed by the agent. But how do we recognize these qualities in a leader?

One possible technique is content analysis, which can turn qualitative data in the form of text into replicable, systematically constructed quantitative data and make inferences from it (Winter & Stewart, 1977). As such, the public communication of political leaders is valid material, generally available in great volumes. The words leaders choose to say become a meaningful scientific measurement.

But can we trust a politician's word? Especially when we're using his words to define his qualities as an agent and decision-maker. A scholar inquiring to a random person on the street about the truthfulness of the average politician one is bound to meet an abundance of pessimism. As Paul Ekman put it: "[...] we expect our leaders to be truthful, even though we strongly suspect they are not" (Ekman, 1985, p. 323). Most will probably tell you – with good reason – that politicians would rather say things the electorate wants to hear instead of what they really mean or intend to do (or are capable of doing). How then can we make sure the data we use is as accurate and meaningful as possible? One way is to use data derived from verbal material that consists of situations in which a leader's words can be considered "spontaneous" instead of "prepared".

Hermann's Leadership Trait Analysis (LTA) is an agency-oriented approach within political psychology that utilizes content analysis in order to establish the degree in which a set of personality traits (henceforth referred to as "traits") are present in a political leader (Hermann, 2005). These traits form a basis with which one can determine how a leader will behave in the international environment. The analysis applies a coding scheme consisting of trigger words indicating presence or absence of those trait on the public communication of politicians. In this way, by collecting verbal material in the form of speeches or interviews, psychological characteristics can be inferred "at-a-distance". When collecting data, Hermann prescribes the use of spontaneous material like interviews over prepared material like speeches (Hermann, 2005, p. 193). She argues that data drawn from spontaneous settings will likely be more reflective of a political leader because it isn't as heavily managed as a speech and doesn't risk the words being written by a speechwriter or aide (Hermann, 2005, p. 192).

Yet, Operational Code (OC), another content-analytic approach to studying political leaders, does not have such a preference for spontaneous material. This raises the question of why these two methods are different in a crucial way, namely what data can be used? The argumentation offered by Hermann that deems a prescription of spontaneous material a "probabilistic solution" to the problem of a leader's material not always being reflective does not satisfy (Hermann, 1984, p. 78). She does not explain what potential differences could be found between type of material and why, and this leaves the question of how trait scores actually vary between types of material.

This thesis aims to investigate this question by comparing the trait scores of the spontaneous and prepared material of three political leaders: US president Trump, Russian president Putin and Japanese prime minister Abe. In the next section, literature on agency-oriented IR research, content analysis and the arguments for and against the use of prepared material are reviewed.

Literature review

The academic discipline of International Relations (IR) is often associated with rigid structural concepts that attempt to explain the actions of states such as (the pursuit of) hegemony, the security dilemma and international anarchy (Walt, 2000, pp. 29–32; Wendt, 1987, pp. 334–337). These concepts largely consider states to be rational, unitary actors pursuing self-interest in the international environment by all means necessary. This view is captured well in the realist notion of the Billiard Ball Model that supposes the examination of internal politics are unnecessary and IR should instead be understood by looking at the external factors and international interactions a state is faced with (Singer, 1961, pp. 81–82). All the balls weigh the same and are perfectly round so the way they each go during the game is determined purely by the external.

In this structural model there is no attention for the step that has to come between a state facing external pressure and its creation of corresponding foreign policy: the decision-making by those in power (Kaarbo, 2015, p. 197). The act of making decisions by a political leader, and thereby the performance of agency as an individual, is arguably the most substantive occurrence found in IR (Hudson, 2005, pp. 3–5). It would be dubious to assume that Roosevelt, Hitler, Montezuma and Alexander the Great should necessarily react in a similar manner when faced with similar constraints or structural factors. While the advantages of not considering the endlessly complex variable of decision-making in favor of considering states as homogeneous actors are obvious for comparative reasons, individual agency can't be dismissed as insignificant (Byman & Pollack, 2001, pp. 145–146).

Growing attention for IR in the field of political psychology and increasing concern for agency in IR seems to be answering the call for more agency-oriented research, but the introduction of psychological theory and methodology brings with it the epistemological mayhem they suffer from

(Hafner-Burton et al., 2013, pp. 368–369; Renshon & Kahneman, 2017, pp. 51–53). Can the influence of a single individual, even a head of state, in the forming of policy outcomes be properly determined? Can the presence of personality traits on that individual be accurately observed? Can these two things be brought together in a scientifically solid and meaningful way?

Ultimately, only the verbal or non-verbal actions of an individual can be observed as an indirect manifestation of their personality (Suedfeld et al., 2005, p. 246). Psychology has tended to rely on experimental research in a controlled setting using human participants and observing their decisions and (in)actions in this way. The use of this approach in examining the agency of political leaders in IR is made problematic for two reasons: political leaders are not readily available to participate and replacing them with university students risks the results not being able to be generalized to political leaders (Hafner-Burton et al., 2013, p. 368; McDermott, 2011, p. 504; Young & Schafer, 1998, pp. 21–22). Indeed, leaders lack the time and motivation to participate with experiments into the inner-workings of their minds, and (young) university students are arguably different decision-makers and psychological beings than (old) politicians (Hafner-Burton et al., 2013, p. 377). Additionally, the real life situations political leaders face in the international environment can't simply be reproduced in an experiment as they involve countless factors and parties (McDermott, 2011, pp. 504–505; Young & Schafer, 1998, pp. 26–28).

A strategy often employed involves methods relying on content analysis. As mentioned in the introduction, the verbal material of a leader is assumed to contain information relating to the psychology of those leaders as it is an indirect manifestation of the mind (Renshon, 2009, pp. 649–650; Winter & Stewart, 1977, p. 28). This enables researchers to assess personality “at-a-distance” and makes the remarks of political leaders suitable data for analysis. Drawing on concepts of psychoanalytic theory and applying them to this data has created an instrument allowing us to look at

the influence on decision-making of the personality traits of political leaders systematically (Hart & Rhodes, 2014, p. 5).

Two of these “at-a-distance” content analytic approaches are Operational Code Analysis and Leadership Trait Analysis. OC assesses philosophical and instrumental beliefs that are thought to be vital in decision-making such as what is the essential nature of political life (harmonious or prone to conflict?) or what is the best timing of actions to advance one’s interest (Walker, 1990, p. 405). This method can utilize both spontaneous and prepared material as data for its content analysis. LTA, which is the approach that is considered in this thesis, assesses personality traits instead and creates a leadership profile based on seven personality traits and three resulting behavioral dimensions (will be expanded upon later). As mentioned in the introduction, LTA, unlike OC, is preferably performed using spontaneous material according to Hermann, the creator of the method (Hermann, 2005, p. 179). One assumption is that the unscripted nature of spontaneous responses are thought to be more reflective of a leader’s personality than prepared remarks due to the necessity to respond fast and more impulsively (Hermann, 2005, pp. 179–180; Schafer, 2000, pp. 515–516). A second assumption is that using prepared material risks assessing the personality traits of a speechwriter instead of the political leader in question (Benedict, Preston, & Dyson, 2006, p. 274; Hermann, 2005, p. 179).

However, the assumption that spontaneous settings increase the material’s accuracy in describing the traits and so leadership style of a leader has been attacked by Impression Management Theory that argues every verbal action is an attempt to create an impression for a certain audience to an equal degree (Dille, 2000, p. 574; Tetlock & Manstead, 1985, pp. 62–64). While the form and context of the action are important for the process, there is no reason to assume that a spontaneous answer has been managed to a lesser degree, or, in other words is closer to a “revealing” answer. Self-presentation in any public form can be an attempt to create a public “self” in line with an ideal “self” (Leary &

Kowalski, 1990, p. 37). Furthermore it could be argued that political leaders will be extra cautious of what they say in spontaneous settings like interviews because the conversation could take a turn for the worse if something controversial is said. While speeches similarly risk upsetting public opinion when controversial, leaders do not have to spend such caution when delivering them since their contents are prefixed and carefully considered. In interviews, responses have to be (to at least some degree) created in the moment which makes this caution much more urgent and vital.

Regarding the second assumption, research on this issue has shown that speechwriters *can* be very accurate in copying the verbal style of the political leaders they write for (Dille, 2000, p. 575; Winter, 2005, p. 174-175). Research on material bias in the operational code of US presidents Reagan and Bush by Dille indicates that if a leader is somewhat involved in the content of his speeches there is a stronger coherence between spontaneous and prepared material (Dille, 2000). Ultimately, for leaders not involved in the writing and editing process, the coherence between types of material would seem to depend to a large degree on the skill and intentions of the speechwriter. David Winter reasonably argues further that in any case the words will be considered to be the leader's and can be assumed to not be antithetical to a speech they would write themselves (Winter, 2005, p. 175).

Additionally, the necessity to use spontaneous material can lead to varying difficulties of obtaining legitimate data: political leaders in democracies have more material that might also be more spontaneous than do their authoritarian counterparts (Douglas, 2017, pp. 14–15). Furthermore, spontaneous material in general is much rarer than prepared material (Schafer, 2000, p. 516).

Finally, the technological development and decentralization of media through the Internet in the last decades must also be seen as an important factor of change regarding the public communications of political leaders, for populism in particular (Moffitt, 2017, pp. 74–75). New “media platforms” such as Facebook and Twitter have been threatening the traditional mass media who have increasingly been

pivoting in the direction of the Internet arena to compensate (Rasmussen, 2013, pp. 98–99). The capacity for near instant diffusion on a global scale of photos, videos, speeches, tweets or anything relating to a political leader to anyone with an interest and an internet connection has greatly increased the explosive potential of controversial comments. A great example of this potential is the way US president Donald Trump’s tweets become topics of debate mere minutes after they are placed online (perfectly embodied by his “covfefe” tweet and the heated debate around its meaning)¹. This development can probably work out positively for some political leaders able to harness the communicative powers of the internet and negatively for others who fail or refuse to see its importance in forming contemporary public opinion. The assumption is that this should make contemporary politicians on average more wary and conscious of what they say than were politicians in, for instance, the 1960s serving to decrease further the “psychologically reflective” nature of spontaneous (and prepared) material..

While these arguments do not serve to suggest the opposite of what is claimed by Hermann, (that prepared material is in fact more accurate than spontaneous material) they seek to review the unsuitability of prepared material for LTA by investigating variations in trait scores between types of material. The arguments are sufficient to question the absolute supremacy of spontaneous material in assessing political leaders and show flaws in the assumption that spontaneous settings are more reflective. Hermann does admit that Impression Management obfuscates the LTA approach, but argues that picking spontaneous material is a “probabilistic solution” since it is still more likely to be more reflective than prepared material (Hermann, 1984, p. 78). But without a sizable body of research investigating material bias in LTA, little can be said about the problem let alone Hermann’s solution. As such, this thesis attempts to contribute to the literature on material bias in LTA (and content-analytic

1 On 31-05-2017 Trump tweeted “Despite the constant negative press covfefe” leading to much criticism globally. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/may/31/what-is-covfefe-donald-trump-baffles-twitter-post>

approaches to political leaders more broadly) with the following research question: “How do personality trait scores vary between the spontaneous and prepared material of political leaders?”

LTA and its components

As mentioned before, LTA is an “at-a-distance” content analytic theory that scans texts for trigger words indicating the presence or absence of seven personality traits. It is built on the assumption that the salience of certain words or constructions indicate the presence or absence of those personality traits (Hermann, 2005, pp. 197–200). Below are the seven traits with a short description of their meaning and how they are coded followed by how they correspond to the central three factors of leadership and eight different styles.

Distrust

This trait indicates how doubtful a leader is of others. A high distrust can lead to increased perception of the motives and actions of other people as a threat to oneself. Coding focuses on the nouns that refer to people or groups beside the leader’s own and whether they are a matter of concern to the leader (Hermann, 2005, pp. 215–216).

In-group Bias

Similarly to Distrust, the In-group Bias trait indicates the degree of importance a leader attaches to their own group. High In-group Bias means that for the leader, the root of all the group’s problems is external to the group itself and the cause is sought outside. The coding for this trait looks at self-referrals to the leader or his group and the combination with positive modifiers or the maintenance of group identity (Hermann, 2005, p. 214).

Task Focus

Task focus or “Motivation for Seeking Office” is a trait that indicates the nature of a leader’s motivation. It is treated as a dichotomy with “problem-solving” on one side of the scale and “group

maintenance” or building relationships on the other and a differing degree of emphasis in between. The coding focuses on specific words such as *accomplishment, plan, tactic* for a high problem-solving focus and *appreciation, collaboration and forgive(ness)* for group maintenance focus (Hermann, 2005, pp. 211–212).

Belief in Ability of Control over Events (also dubbed BACE)

The BACE trait indicates that a leader does or doesn’t believe they can form the outcomes of events. Leaders with a high score are thought to be proactive in the pursuit of solutions, while leaders with a low score tend to be more reactive to developments. The trait is coded through verbs and action words that indicate a leader is taking responsibility to initiate action or is overseeing the planning (Hermann, 2005, pp. 202–204).

Need for Power

As the name suggests, this trait indicates whether a leader is motivated by the attainment or use of power over others. A high Need for Power score indicates that leaders aim to control and influence the environment and end up having the most power or being the “strongest”. A low score means that a leader is okay with sharing his power and not having absolute control over decisions, they would rather reach them through group consensus instead of forcing their own interests. The trait is coded through verbs such as those that indicate the proposition of forceful actions, attempts to impress or increase fame or concern for reputation (Hermann, 2005, pp. 203–205).

Self-Confidence

This trait indicates a leader’s self-importance and the degree to which external factors will influence his self-image. Leaders with high Self-Confidence are less open to information and do not seek

information to refine their views and behavior. Low Self-Confidence leaders seek out new information and views which leads to what looks like inconsistent behavior because actions can differ greatly per context. The coding of this trait focuses on pronouns like “*my*” and “*I*” and how they are situated in sentences: if they are reflective of the instigation of an activity or the assumption of authority they indicate high Self Confidence (Hermann, 2005, pp. 207–208).

Conceptual Complexity

Conceptual complexity shows the capacity for differentiation that leaders show when discussing topics. In other words, a high Conceptual Complexity would indicate that a leader differentiates topics in many dimensions as compared to black-and-white or good-or-bad dichotomies. A high score would be more open to new information than a low score. Coding words for high complexity are things like “*approximate, possible*” while low complexity is “*absolute, certainly*” (Hermann, 2005, p. 209).

These traits can then be used to provide information on how leaders act regarding the following three leadership dimensions.

Constraints

Need for Power and BACE determine whether a leader will choose to respect or challenge international constraints (such as international agreements or behavioral norms) on their actions. If either or both traits are high, the leader is a challenger of constraints while a low score on both traits indicates the leader respects constraints. Depending on which of the traits are high, leaders will challenge constraints differently (Hermann, 2005, pp. 200–202).

Openness to information

Conceptual Complexity and Self-Confidence are the bases of the degree of openness a political leader has to new, contextual information. When they are open, they are more pragmatic and responsive to others. When they are closed, they strongly believe in the righteousness of their own views and are more unresponsive to the environment. When Conceptual Complexity is higher than Self-Confidence, leaders are open and visa-versa leaders are closed. When both traits are high, leaders are open and when both traits are low, leaders are closed to contextual information (Hermann, 2005, pp. 205–207).

Motivational nature (motivation for seeking office and towards world)

Motivation for seeking office corresponds with the Task Focus trait and motivation towards the world with Distrust and In-group Bias. Motivation for seeking office is defined as being either focused on problem-solving or on group maintenance, while motivation towards the world is similarly defined as being either focused on dealing with threats or on building relationships for opportunities. A high Task Focus means the motivation for seeking office is problem-solving. A high In-group Bias is a tendency to focus on dealing with threats to the group, while a high Distrust is a tendency to be vigilant towards others. A low In-group Bias means the focus will be on opportunities in relationships, while a low distrust means leaders are not constantly vigilant (Hermann, 2005, p. 210).

Leadership styles

Table 1 shows how the combination of leadership dimensions corresponds with a leadership style.

Table 1 Leadership styles (Hermann, 2005)		Motivation	
[...] Constraints	[...] Information	Problem Focus	Relationship focus
Challenges	Closed to	<i>Expansionistic</i>	<i>Evangelistic</i>
Challenges	Open to	<i>Actively Independent</i>	<i>Directive</i>
Respects	Closed to	<i>Incremental</i>	<i>Influential</i>
Respects	Open to	<i>Opportunistic</i>	<i>Collegial</i>

Conceptualization and previous research

The seven personality traits, three leadership factors and eight leadership styles serve to inform scholars on how leaders will likely act in the international environment (assuming their language to be meaningful in this regard). Whether the traits have high trait strength is determined by comparing the scores with the mean trait score and standard deviation found in the norming group² of political leaders.

The conceptualizations of the key concepts included in the research question – (variations in assessed personality traits, spontaneous material and prepared material – largely adhere to Hermann's. Personality traits are those mentioned above, included in LTA and seen as important for a leader's actions and attitudes in the international environment by Hermann. "Variations" are defined as both simple differences in trait score as well as variations in trait scores between material type large enough to put a leader into a different categorization for the corresponding leadership dimension. For instance, scoring high Self-Confidence in spontaneous material and low in prepared material resulting in a leader being closed or open to information respectively.

Regarding spontaneous and prepared material, a lot can be said for using a scale of spontaneity rather than a simple dichotomy. But since the dichotomy itself is being examined in this thesis it is essential to adhere to the standard approach. Material is considered to be spontaneous if it is not "scripted" in the sense that a political leader responds to a question posed by an interviewer (Hermann, 2005, pp. 192–193). The answer is created in that moment (or at least, that's what Hermann's assumption hangs on) and as such is not scripted. The most spontaneous answers can be found, according to Hermann, when a leader is caught in an "unprepared encounter" at the airport or leaving a meeting (Hermann, 2005, p. 194). In contrast, prepared material doesn't feature questions of any kind and is rather a prepared monologue of which the answer isn't created in that moment.

² In this research, the one used in Cuhadar et al. (2017), see Table 3 in the Results section on page 21.

Previous research on material bias in OC has shown that, for the leaders they included in their data, there are significant differences (Dille, 2000; M. Schafer & Crichlow, 2000). Schafer and Crichlow found that US president Clinton saw the political universe in more conflictual terms and was less favorable to cooperative behavior in his spontaneous material (2000, p. 570). Dille found that Reagan and Bush too were more conflictual in spontaneous material and Bush was also more pessimistic about reaching political goals (2000, pp. 577–579). While no research on material bias in LTA using all seven traits (and also examining variations in leadership style) could be found when reviewing the literature, Dille and Young did investigate the Conceptual Complexity trait (Dille & Young, 2000). They found that there was a significant and similar difference in the trait for US presidents Carter and Clinton: Conceptual Complexity was higher in spontaneous material for both presidents (Dille & Young, 2000, p. 594). Dille’s article on Reagan and Bush also included the Conceptual Complexity trait, but found no significant difference for either president between material (2000, pp. 582–583).

The capacity of this previous research to support expectations in this thesis is limited since it is either about OC, which measures different variables than LTA, or only about the Conceptual Complexity trait of which the results are mixed. The research in this thesis differs from those mentioned in the previous paragraph in two ways: it examines all LTA traits (and subsequent leadership dimensions and style) instead of just one (or OC), and it does not only use US presidents as cases. In this way, it hopes to provide the effect of material bias on “the whole picture” and not just a statistical variation in the observed differences of a single trait. Using only US presidents all the time for research into material bias could risk observed differences in material to be interpreted as universal while they might be specific to American politics. In the next section, case and data selection as well as the method of analysis are elaborated upon.

Methods

Case selection

To investigate whether there are variations in trait scores between the spontaneous and prepared material of political leaders, three cases were selected: US president Donald Trump, Russian president Vladimir Putin and Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe. The cases are all heads of state currently in power in their respective governments, but have also been picked for their diversity. While the material is all (translated to) English, it stems from vastly different sources in terms of language, culture and political environment. Russia as a semi-authoritarian state and the United States and Japan as two very different – albeit “Western”³ democracies can serve to lay bare similarities or differences in variation between spontaneous and prepared material not only across political leaders but arguably also across regime and culture. This is interesting because it enables similar variations between type of material found in multiple, diverse leaders to further reveal a structural difference in material potentially present in most if not all leaders. In this way, commonalities could indicate the effect “preparation” has on the public communication of political leaders (at least, in terms of LTA trait scores). The diversity of the cases means that the commonalities between them are probably not due to the specific political regime, culture or language and more likely due to material type. This serves to further answer the research question besides simply observing the variations in trait scores between types of material for some leaders.

Data selection

In order to properly analyze a leader, Hermann proposes that an adequate analysis contains at least 50 interview responses of at least 100 words resulting in at least 5000 words (Hermann, 2005, p. 193). She

3 Japan is often included in Western democracies due to its alignment with the US, and bears similarity in political institutions, but since its politics have a vastly different character and history I distinguish it as a different type of (democratic) regime from the US.

also states that in order to ensure that the leadership style is not context specific, used interviews (and in this case speeches) should cover a leader's entire tenure, concern multiple (foreign policy related) issues and be conducted in various settings.

In order to satisfy these demands, spontaneous and prepared material was selected from various years during the leader's *current* tenure⁴. Earlier tenures as head of state were not used because there is a focus on contemporary material. Both the interviews and speeches include a wide range of foreign policy related themes including economic, security and cultural issues. Finally, selected interview responses stem from a variety of national and international media agencies⁵ and speeches from different occasions and settings⁶.

For every leader, at least 20,000 words of both spontaneous and prepared material were collected. These words were used to create four spontaneous and four prepared datapoints per leader. In the material document, interview responses were one by one divided over the four datapoints. For every four responses, the first was put in datapoint one, the second in two et cetera. As such the 5th, 9th 13th response (counting from the top of the file) were also put in datapoint one, while datapoint four then consists of the 4th, 8th, 12th, 16th and so on- responses. The speeches, in which it was not really possible to make a distinction in "responses", were divided by four, assigning each datapoint roughly a quarter slice of the total words. Which parts were assigned to which datapoint was randomized. The appendix has been supplied with a replication file that shows the content of each datapoint for every leader as well as which parts of a speech or interview have been assigned to which datapoint.

In this way, each analysis contains different parts from the same interviews or speeches. This means that at least the contextual factors of time and interview/speech setting can be expected to be

4 Trump: 2017-2019, Putin: 2012-2019, Abe: 2012-2019. Both Putin and Abe have held the office of head of state before, with an interruption.

5 Abe is the exception, whose spontaneous material consists mostly of interviews with foreign media due to the lack of English translations of Japanese interviews, as well as the rarity of such interviews with the Japanese press.

6 For a full list of media agencies and speech settings per leader, check the appendix.

fairly coherent within the four spontaneous analyses and prepared analyses, respectively. The coherence between the two groups of analyses is another matter. While both groups were drawn from the same years and the issues at hand are very similar, there are inevitable differences in the setting. One part of this disconnect is the independent variable this thesis seeks to investigate: whether the setting is spontaneous or prepared. Others like specific audiences or occasions that could be structurally different along the same lines as interviews and speeches remain obfuscating factors.

Data was retrieved from the websites of media agencies and national governments. By using the method of selection as explained in this section, the author believes the data used in this thesis sufficiently adheres to Hermann's demands.

Analysis

The LTA coding scheme was applied to these datapoints (8 per leader, 24 in total) by submitting the material into ProfilerPlus⁷. The trait scores for each analysis or datapoint were then entered into SPSS. Because this thesis investigates the variation in trait scores between the spontaneous and prepared material of political leaders, and not the variation *between the scores* of these particular leaders, each leader was then analyzed further separately.

First, Welch's *t*-test (also known as the unequal variances *t*-test)⁸ was applied three times, once for every leader, to determine whether there is a significant variation between the mean trait scores of the spontaneous group and the mean trait scores of the prepared group. Additionally, Cohen's *d* (a measure for effect size noted in standard deviations) was calculated for each trait to determine how large the effect size of these variations are.

7 ProfilerPlus is a text-analysis service that applies coding schemes to text files automatically. Version 5.8.4 was used for this thesis. <https://profilerplus.org/aboutus.aspx>

8 The choice for Welch's *t*-test was made due to the lack of a high N requiring the more robust calculation that Welch's *t*-test provides compared to the standard student's *t*-test (Delacre et al., 2017).

Then, the trait scores were compared with the norming group⁹ used by Cuhadar et al. to calculate the trait strength in both groups (2017). Trait strength is high if trait scores are one standard deviation higher than the mean of the norming group for that trait, low if it's one lower and average if it is somewhere in between.

Finally, each of the three leadership dimensions, and so the leadership style, was determined by these trait strengths for both the spontaneous and prepared groups and then compared to see how the leadership profiles differed. It is important to note that these three steps of this analysis are not entirely interdependent¹⁰ and investigate the research question from three different angles: how do the actual trait scores vary, how do calculated trait strengths vary and how do leadership dimensions and style vary?

9 See Table 4 in “Results”, on page 21.

10 While the second step is necessary for the third, the second step is not meaningless without the third (at least, not when investigating variations between types of material).

Results

This section examines the results from spontaneous material compared with prepared material using LTA. Significant variations found in personality trait scores and leadership dimensions are highlighted and presented here. First, Table 2, 3 and 4, that contain the data for the three steps of analysis, are introduced. After the three tables, the results for each leader are summarized individually and then the results of all three leaders are considered together. Traits with significant variations are supplied with the unequal variance Welch's *t*, degrees of freedom, level of significance P and the effect size in standard deviations Cohen's *d*: ($t(df)=x, P, d$)

In Table 2, the mean for each material type, the difference between them and Welch's *t* of unequal variances is included. For the significance level of Welch's *t*, three alpha values, 0.1, 0.05 and 0.01 are used to denote different degrees of significance found in the unequal variances *t*-test. Table 3 displays the trait score average with standard deviation for the norming group consisting of the trait scores of 284 world leaders. The trait scores for both groups for every leader have been entered for comparison, and the strength of the traits calculated. Finally, table 4 shows how the calculated trait strengths translate to the three leadership dimensions and leadership style in both material types.

Table 2 Variations in trait scores per material type

		* = P < 0.1; ** = P < 0.05; *** = P < 0.01		
LEADER		Mean spontaneous	Mean prepared	Difference (<i>t</i>)
Trump	Distrust	.287	.257	-.030 (.917)
	In-group Bias	.140	.167	+.027 (-1.086)
	Task Focus	.437	.509	+.072 (-1.151)
	BACE	.425	.413	-.012 (1.151)
	Power	.247	.308	+.061 (-4.086)***
	Self Confidence	.452	.382	-.070 (1.397)
	Conceptual	.652	.539	-.113 (4.893)***
	Complexity			

		Mean spontaneous	Mean prepared	Difference (<i>t</i>)
Putin	Distrust	.111	.117	+0.006 (-.193)
	In-group Bias	.160	.198	+0.038 (-1.457)
	Task Focus	.609	.679	+0.070 (-3.984)***
	BACE	.347	.409	+0.062 (-2.877)**
	Power	.241	.309	+0.068 (-2.210)*
	Self Confidence	.448	.324	-.124 (2.372)*
	Conceptual Complexity	.586	.530	-.056 (3.948)***
		Mean spontaneous	Mean prepared	Difference (<i>t</i>)
Abe	Distrust	.053	.045	-.008 (.410)
	In-group Bias	.150	.125	-.025 (1.112)
	Task Focus	.595	.629	+0.034 (-1.243)
	BACE	.360	.384	+0.024 (-.713)
	Power	.299	.270	-.029 (.958)
	Self Confidence	.395	.260	-.135 (4.106)***
	Conceptual Complexity	.657	.571	-.086 (3.204)**

Table 3 Leader trait strength per material type

	World leaders average (SD)	Trump		Putin		Abe	
		Spontaneous	Trump Prepared	Spontaneous	Putin Prepared	Spontaneous	Abe Prepared
Distrust	.13 (.06)	.287 H	.257 H	.111 A	.117 A	.053 L	.045 L
In-group Bias	.15 (.05)	.140 A	.167 A	.160 A	.198 H ¹¹	.150 A	.125 A
Task Focus	.63 (.07)	.437 L	.509 L	.609 A	.679 A	.595 A	.629 A
BACE	.35 (.05)	.425 H	.413 H	.347 A	.407 H	.360 A	.384 A
Power	.26 (.05)	.247 A	.308 H	.241 A	.309 H	.299 A	.270 A
Self- Confidence	.36 (.10)	.452 A	.382 A	.448 A	.324 A	.395 A	.260 L
Conceptual Complexity	.59 (.06)	.652 H	.539 A*	.586 A	.530 L	.657 H	.571 A

N=248 (Cuhadar et al., 2017), **H** = High, **A** = Average, **L** = Low. Highlighted entries mark variations in mean trait scores large enough to move between Low, Average or High trait strength.

11 Because the norming group scores have two decimals instead of three, the scores consisting of three decimals were rounded up or down. Putin's In-group Bias becomes 0.20, which is High for that trait.

Table 4 Leadership dimensions and styles per material type

	Trump Spontaneous	Trump Prepared	Putin Spontaneous	Putin Prepared	Abe Spontaneous	Abe Prepared
Constraints	<i>Challenge indirectly</i>	<i>Challenge directly</i>	<i>Respect</i>	<i>Challenge</i>	<i>Respect</i>	<i>Respect</i>
Information	<i>Open</i>	<i>Open</i>	<i>Open</i>	<i>Open</i>	<i>Open</i>	<i>Open</i>
Motivation 1. for seeking office (problems or relationships) 2. towards world	<i>1. Relationship 2. Opportunities while remaining vigilant</i>	<i>1. Relationship 2. Opportunities while remaining vigilant</i>	<i>1. Both depending on context 2. Opportunities</i>	<i>1. Both depending on context 2. Threats, though some things are opportunities</i>	<i>1. Both 2. Opportunities</i>	<i>1. Both 2. Opportunities</i>
Style	<i>Directive</i>	<i>Directive</i>	<i>Collegial</i>	<i>Actively Independent</i>	<i>Collegial</i>	<i>Collegial</i>

Trump

For US President Trump, two personality trait scores, Need for Power ($t(df = 5.304) = -4.01, P < 0.01, d = -3.34$) and Conceptual Complexity ($t(5.188) = 4.90, P < 0.01, d = 1.76$) were found to vary between spontaneous and prepared material to a significant degree. His Need for Power is higher, while Conceptual Complexity is lower in prepared material. This also translates to a change in strength for both traits. As can be read in table 4, the Need for Power trait shifts from average to high, while Conceptual Complexity shifts from high to average.

The consequences of the variations in Trump’s trait scores on his leadership style are minor, as only the way in which constraints are challenged is different between spontaneous and prepared material. As a result, Trump’s leadership style is the same in both groups: *Directive*. It is noteworthy to mention that Trump’s Conceptual Complexity varies most distinctively of all data, the trait was found to have nearly five times as much variation between the spontaneous and prepared groups as within them.

Putin

Russian president Putin was found to have the most significant variations in trait scores. Five traits have a significant variation: Need for Power ($t(5.816)=-2.21, P<0.10, d=-1.98$), Self-Confidence ($t(5.826)=2.38, P<0.10, d=3.27$), BACE ($t(6.000)=-2.88, P<0.05, d=-2.35$), Conceptual Complexity ($t(5.545)=3.948, P<0.01, d=3.22$) and Task Focus ($t(5.626)=-3.984, P<0.01, d=-3.25$). Putin also has the most shifts in trait strength, although it does not entirely correspond with the statistically significant variations mentioned above. While In-group Bias does not have a statistically significant variation between groups, the difference in trait scores leads to a shift from average to high when compared to the norming group. Furthermore, the Task Focus trait that was found to have the strongest variation between groups for Putin but did not shift and is average in both the spontaneous and prepared group. This is the same for the Self-Confidence trait which can be seen as counter-intuitive since the effect size of the variation for these two traits is the largest among all of Putin's trait scores (Task Focus has a d -value of 3.25, and Self-Confidence of 3.27). BACE and Need for Power shift from average to high, and Conceptual Complexity from average to low.

The consequences for Putin's leadership dimensions and style of these shifts in trait scores are large. Being a constraint respecter in his spontaneous material, he is a constraint challenger in prepared material. Additionally, in the prepared material, his motivation towards the world is focused on threats instead of opportunities. These changes result in Putin having a different leadership style between groups: *collegial* in his spontaneous material and *actively independent* in his prepared material.

Abe

Japanese prime minister Abe has two traits that have a significant variation between groups: Conceptual Complexity ($t(5.159)=3.204, P<0.05, d=2.62$) and Self-Confidence ($t(5.918)=4.106, P<0.01, d=3.35$), which are both lower in prepared material. This corresponds with a shift in trait

strength as can be observed in Table 3: Self-Confidence shifts from average to low, and Conceptual Complexity from high to average.

Abe is the only leader included in this research whose variation in trait scores does not lead to any different observations in terms of leadership dimensions and style. In either material, he is a constraint respecter, open to information, has a mixed motivation for seeking office and focus on opportunities in his motivation towards the world. Both spontaneous and prepared material have resulted in the *collegial* leadership style. The effect size of the variation found in Abe's Self-Confidence is the largest difference in means for all data with with more than three standard deviations.

Group

While the degree and the way in which leadership dimensions and style vary between spontaneous and prepared material is somewhat different for each leader, certain variations are present in all three cases. Conceptual Complexity and Self-Confidence are all lower in prepared material, while Task Focus is higher for all leaders. The variation in Conceptual Complexity is significant for all leaders, while the variation in Self-Confidence is only significant for Putin and Abe. Furthermore, the leadership dimension associated with these two traits, openness to information, does not change between material for any of the leaders. This, too, is somewhat counter-intuitive as one would expect traits with major variations between material to cause a change in leadership dimensions and style. It can be partially explained by the way in which openness to information is calculated: the relative strength of conceptual complexity and self-confidence is its determinant. As such, when both trait scores are lower the relation between them remains the same (e.g. conceptual complexity > self-confidence = open to information)¹².

An important particularity that calls into question the meaning and value of these observations (and the way LTA is interpreted in a broader sense) in trait score variations can be observed when looking at

¹² It is possible that one trait has a much larger variation in score between material than the other, resulting in the leadership dimension potentially becoming different. However, this has not been the case for the three leaders used in this research.

Table 3. How come that a significant variation in Putin's Task Focus trait of .070 is without consequence for determining his leadership dimensions and style while an insignificant variation in In-group Bias of .038 results in a different motivation towards the world? The question being rhetorical, the answer is obvious: it is due to the position of a leader's trait scores relative to the norming group's average in that trait. Perhaps readers are quick to argue that this is a moot point since LTA is essentially based on comparing trait scores with a norming group. However, this argumentation ignores the goal of this research: investigating the variation in trait scores between spontaneous and prepared material. On one hand, these results show statistically significant variations that have led to different leadership dimensions but also significantly varying traits whose variations can be deemed to be irrelevant due to the way LTA is calculated. On the other hand, this research has also found a change in leadership dimensions to sometimes be caused by variations in trait scores that are not statistically significant.

These two ideas, (statistically) significant variations in certain traits being irrelevant and insignificant variations in certain traits being relevant in determining leadership dimensions, call for, at the very least, careful consideration of each of the three steps (embodied by the three tables above¹³) when comparing a leader's spontaneous and prepared material. It is not enough to simply calculate trait scores and compare the resulting leadership dimensions because potentially significant variations in raw trait scores will not be observed this way. Of course, it could be argued that these variations in trait scores might be "meaningless" and should be ignored if they don't affect the leadership dimensions anyway. However, by doing so one would ignore the central assumption of LTA: the salience of certain words having meaning in relation to how a leader makes decisions (this process consisting of the three leadership dimensions in this case). This should not only apply when a leader's trait score passes some

13 The first being a statistical analysis of trait score variations, the second being the translation of these variations of scores into variations in trait strength (when compared to the norming group) and the third being the comparison of leadership dimensions and style of both types of material.

artificial, statistical barrier determined by the norming group but should apply to any observed variation in trait scores both between leaders as well as within one leader's material.

Discussion

Results

This thesis found that variation in trait scores differs by trait and by leader. For example, for all leaders, Conceptual Complexity is a trait that varies strongly between material, while the In-group Bias and Distrust trait have much smaller variations that were deemed (statistically) insignificant for all leaders. Additionally, Russian president Putin has five significantly varying traits and a different leadership style between material, while Abe has only two and the same leadership style.

Similar variations in all three leaders, which can help explain the effect of material bias, were found in the three traits of Task Focus, Conceptual Complexity and Self-Confidence. Task Focus was higher in prepared material, while Conceptual Complexity and Self-Confidence were lower. The other four traits do not have a uniform movement (there is always one leader whose variation for that trait is in the opposite direction of the others). This begs the question whether this holds true if more material and more leaders are used and if it does: why? Why these three traits and not others. It is possible that strong variations in these traits are caused by the format of prepared material or the way the traits are coded rather than an attempt, conscious or unconscious, by a leader or his speechwriter to create a public image that is different from their spontaneous ones.

Then there is the observation that Putin has that much more variation than do Trump and Abe. It opens the door to further analyze variables like political regime that can predict strong variations in political leaders. However, it's entirely possible that Putin's result is idiosyncratic (e.g. the pattern of variation is unique to him) and pointing a finger at regime type is not yet warranted based on these results.

Previous research

Comparing these results to previous research on material bias finds coherence with the findings on Conceptual Complexity by Dille and Young in which the trait was also significantly lower in prepared material (Dille & Young, 2000). It can also be said to be somewhat in agreement with the conclusions of the OC research that suggests that leaders have significant differences in the psychological variables deduced using content analysis. It must be said that in this thesis, however, the size of the difference is very dependent on which leader is examined. In two out of the three cases, the leadership style resulting from either type of material is the same, while they did have traits that varied significantly. The relationship between varying trait scores and varying leadership profiles drawn from different types of material can be said to be a difficult one.

How can these results be related to Hermann's principal arguments for prescribing spontaneous material: speechwriters and reflectiveness? They are in a sense the same argument: a spontaneous response is closer to the leader. It is nigh impossible to connect certain variations of traits to exact causes. The similar variations found in Task Focus, Self-Confidence and Conceptual Complexity might very well be a result from the generally different structure of prepared texts instead of an obfuscation caused by the speechwriter's different use of words and language. The fact that the Distrust and In-group Bias traits are not statistically different for any leaders also suggests that authorship effects do not effect those traits and by extension the specific language for that trait. Even harder than connecting variations to causes is commenting on the reflectiveness of these results. Since two leaders got the same leadership style between material, reflectiveness can be said to be the same for them. On the other hand, there *are* variations in traits. The question becomes whether we choose to give meaning to these variations if they do not have an impact on leadership style.

Future research

The research in this thesis could be improved by including many more leaders and much more of their data (even if that means using more prepared material than spontaneous material). The lack of a large quantity of material makes the statistical analysis weak, and the less reliable than they could be.

Potentially fruitful directions for future research are more comparative research on variations between types of material and a close methodological and linguistic study of LTA, its coding scheme and differences between material. Including more leaders and using more of their material can lead to further discovery of patterns in variations between material and the effect of regime type or language on the degree and form of material bias. This would not only shed light on why different leaders have different variations between their material but could also ultimately serve as a predictor for coherence between spontaneous and prepared material. For future scholars of political leadership this would be a valuable tool since it could inform them on the suitability of the prepared material available for their respective leader.

Inspection of the coding scheme is also necessary, since the discovery of material bias in certain traits being caused by the structurally different format of speeches would pose a new problem. For example, if Conceptual Complexity is lower because Hermann coded it by only using spontaneous language (and choosing some trigger words for the trait that are more frequent in spontaneous material), a difference in that trait between material is useless. A difference between these trait scores could have no psychological meaning since it would be due to form and not content. The prepared trait score could only gain meaning by being compared with the trait score of the prepared material of other leaders.

Conclusion

This thesis attempted to find out more about the variation in trait scores between the spontaneous and prepared material of political leaders. The aim was to provide new information on Hermann's prescription of spontaneous material and positively review the suitability of prepared material. When using LTA, variations and consequences of these variations between types of material differ per leader. This means that, with some care, scholars can and should use both types of material granted that the differences are not huge for that leader. Similar patterns that were found in variation between material indicate that there is a structural difference between material for all leaders. These patterns help shed light on the effect of material bias when performing content analysis on political leaders.

Enabling scholars to use speeches and other prepared material expands potential material for analysis significantly, and will give a picture more representative of the entire public communication of a leader, instead of just responses to interview questions. We have observed differences, but which set of traits are more accurate? This remains a problem that cannot ever be solved without looking into the mind of a politician and should *definitely* not be downplayed and solved with a simple "probabilistic solution" based on the assumption that leaders don't know what they're going to say in an interview. This might be the case if you catch a leader by total surprise, but all these occasions together won't provide you with even 5000 words.

Instead of arguing that the variations found in this research are proof that exclusively spontaneous material should be used, it is an argument for further investigation on *why* these variations exist. The situation regarding spontaneity and content analysis remains complex. Indeed, we, as IR scholars, expect political leaders to say things that are meaningful, even though we strongly suspect that what they say has been doctored with by aides or idealism. If these two attitudes can find a way to live in

harmony, content analysis is all the better for it, and prepared material can get its rightful place in the analysis of political leaders.

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Appendix

Below is the list of speeches and interviews used in this research as well as a replication file. The replication file contains all material used, twice: once in the form of speeches and interviews with a color coding to indicate which part went into which datapoint and once in the form of datapoints consisting of material used in that datapoint. The latter has been done to ease the process of replication by supplying the reader with the raw texts that can be entered into ProfilerPlus to retrieve identical results. Navigate to interviews using control F and to datapoints using the table of contents below.

Leader	Material type	Name	Link
Shinzo Abe	Spontaneous	1. 27/05/2014 <i>WSJ interview</i>	https://blogs.wsj.com/japanrealtime/2014/05/27/excerpts-from-wsj-interview-with-prime-minister-shinzo-abe/
		2. 26/03/2015 <i>Washingtonpost interview</i>	https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-partisan/wp/2015/03/26/david-ignatiuss-full-interview-with-japanese-prime-minister-shinzo-abe
		3. 16/05/2017 <i>CNBC interview</i>	https://www.cnbc.com/2017/05/16/cnbc-transcript-japanese-prime-minister-shinzo-abe
		4. 07/10/2013 <i>Financial Times interview</i>	https://www.ft.com/content/ba65e892-68f6-11db-b4c2-0000779e2340
		5. 19/01/2018 <i>Australian Financial Times interview</i>	https://www.afr.com/news/world/asia/shinzo-abe-interview-with-the-australian-financial-review-20180119-h0kjp5
		6. 05/12/2014 <i>Economist interview</i>	https://www.economist.com/asia/2014/12/05/shinzo-abe-talks-to-the-economist
		7. 22/04/2015 <i>Jakarta Post interview</i>	https://www.mofa.go.jp/p_pd/ip/page4e_000242.html
		8. 28/07/2014 <i>Express interview</i>	https://www.mofa.go.jp/p_pd/ip/page4e_000125.html
		9. 08/06/2014 <i>The Australian interview</i>	https://www.mofa.go.jp/p_pd/ip/page4e_000114.html
		10. 25/01/2014 <i>Times of India interview</i>	https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/culture/page4e_000060.html
		11. 12/01/2014 <i>Ethiopian Herald interview</i>	https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/culture/page4e_000059.html
		12. 09/01/2014 <i>Oman Daily Observer interview</i>	https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/culture/page4e_000058.html
		13. 16/11/2013 <i>Vientiane Times interview</i>	https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000020346.pdf
		14. 08/10/2013 <i>Borneo Bulletin & Brunei Times interview</i>	https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000020341.pdf

15. 06/09/2013 *Buenos Aires Herald interview* <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000020338.pdf>
16. 19/06/2013 *The Irish Times interview* https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/press/iken/pdfs/ireland_130619_en.pdf
17. 15/05/2014 *Various Japanese media agencies Q&A press conference* https://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/statement/201405/0515kaiken.html
18. 16/01/2017 *Various Japanese and Vietnamese agencies Q&A press conference* https://japan.kantei.go.jp/97_abe/statement/201701/1221207_11567.html

Prepared

1. 25/09/2018 *73rd Session United Nations address* https://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/unp_a/page3e_000926.html
2. 20/09/2017 *72nd Session United Nations address* https://japan.kantei.go.jp/97_abe/statement/201709/_00010.html
3. 21/09/2016 *71st Session United Nations address* https://japan.kantei.go.jp/97_abe/statement/201609/71unga.html
4. 07/09/2017 *3rd Eastern Economic Forum address* https://japan.kantei.go.jp/97_abe/statement/201709/1224376_11585.html
5. 23/01/2019 *World Economic Forum speech* https://www.mofa.go.jp/ecm/ec/page4e_000973.html
6. 17/04/2014 *The Economist Japan Summit keynote address* https://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/statement/201404/1204650_9498.html
7. 25/09/2014 *69th Session United Nations address* https://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/statement/201409/unga2014.html
8. 23/09/2014 *UN Climate Summit statement* https://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/statement/201409/unclimatesummit.html
9. 22/02/2013 *Center for Strategic and International Studies speech* https://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/statement/201302/22speech_e.html
10. 31/05/2013 *Alliance Forum Foundation Development Programme Conference remarks* https://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/statement/201305/31speech_e.html
11. 14/12/2013 *ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit press conference* https://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/statement/201312/14kaiken_e.html

statement

12. 11/11/2014 APEC Summit Meetings press conference statement https://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/statement/201411/1111naigai.html

13. 22/01/2018 196th Session of the Diet policy speech https://japan.kantei.go.jp/98_abe/statement/201801/_00002.html

Vladimir Putin Spontaneous

1. 11/11/2018 Russia Today interview <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/interviews/59091>

2. 17/07/2018 Fox News Channel interview <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/interviews/58019>

3. 05/06/2017 NBC interview <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/interviews/54688>

4. 23/12/2016 Nippon TV and Yomiuri Shinbun interview <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/interviews/53455>

5. 25/04/2019 People's Daily China interview <http://en.special.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/60344>

6. 06/06/2018 China Media group interview <http://en.special.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/57684>

7. 15/10/2014 Politika interview <http://en.special.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/46806>

8. 15/07/2014 ITAR-TASS interview <http://en.special.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/46218>

9. 11/07/2014 Prensa Latina and ITAR-TASS interview <http://en.special.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/46190>

10. 11/01/2016 Bild interview part 1 <http://en.special.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/51154>

11. 12/01/2016 Bild interview part 2 <http://en.special.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/51155>

Prepared

1. 27/04/2019 Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation round-table discussion speech <http://en.special.kremlin.ru/catalog/keywords/82/events/60393>

2. 01/09/2018 Russia- <http://en.special.kremlin.ru/catalog/keywords/82/events/58436>

*Azerbaijan press
statement*

3. 26/05/2018 *Russia-
Japan press statement* <http://en.special.kremlin.ru/catalog/keywords/82/events/57566>
4. 07/09/2017 *Visit by PM
Abe remarks* <http://en.special.kremlin.ru/catalog/keywords/82/events/55555>
5. 28/09/2015 *70th Session
United Nations address* <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50385>
6. 26/04/2019 *Belt and
Road Forum for
International Cooperation
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