

Communicating conflict:

Russian mediated public diplomacy in relation to the
annexation of Crimea

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Abstract

In this thesis I develop a theoretical argument suggesting that devoting attention to mediated public diplomacy and the strategic narratives they disseminate in studies of non-kinetic elements of contemporary armed conflict, will account for aspects of the working mechanisms of such conflict. Probing this argument in the case of the Russian 2014 annexation of Crimea, I find that this is the case. As this thesis is structured as a hypothesis generating case study, I formulate my findings in four hypotheses on the exact working mechanisms of mediated public diplomacy in the context of armed conflict. Empirically, I identify four narratives related to the annexation, as well as instances of enemy images and symbolic annihilation as part of the portrayal of the narratives actors. Having demonstrated that this approach has merit, I suggest that further research should take a communication model as its point of departure analysing not only the message, but also the reception and effects of various genres of dissemination.

Acknowledgments

If someone had told a much younger me that nineteen years of consecutive schooling would be crowned with a hundred page thesis on communication efforts related to a Russian military operation, I doubt I would have believed them. Life takes unexpected turns, and my decision on a whim to spend a semester of my Master's degree studying in St.Petersburg, Russia was definitely one of them. This was followed up with a year of studying Russian language in Norway as well as in Russia. I suspect I will devote a lifetime to improve it.

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Mistakes and shortcomings are most definitely my own.

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1 Introduction

In what has now become an infamous quote, Supreme Allied Commander Europe General Philip Breedlove stated that the Russian operations in Ukraine constitute 'the most amazing information warfare blitzkrieg we have ever seen in the history of information warfare' (Vandiver 2014). In the annexation of Crimea, Russia operated swiftly and decisively, and was able to seize the peninsula without firing a single shot—leaving the Ukrainian government as well as Western bystanders somewhat confused behind (The Economist 2014; Lavrov 2014). The annexation is an event of substantial political magnitude as it constitutes the first time since the end of the Second World War (WWII) that a European country's territory has been seized by another state. As such Lo (2015: xv) calls it 'both revolutionary and regressive'. Although we know that kinetic means were critical for the success of the annexation, the role of non-kinetic means were, as Breedlove forcefully underlines, crucial (Allison 2014).

Several scholars within literatures on war and armed conflict have identified the prominence of non-kinetics aspects as a new pattern in the conduct of warfare, and provided various conceptualizations of it. Of the most interesting contributions is Jonsson and Seely (2015) that launches the term *full-spectrum conflict* to designate conflicts where 'several military and non-military means are under one central command and directed to the same political goal' (Jonsson and Seely 2015: 2)¹. This is a very valuable contribution for our understanding of the *nature* of conflict, as is its intention, but it doesn't take us particularly far in specifying the exact working mechanisms of it. This is also Allison (2014)'s concern when in an article on the Russian annexation of Crimea, he calls upon scholars to employ an 'explanatory framework that includes, but goes beyond reliance on geopolitical categories and structural power' (Allison 2014: 1255).

As an answer to this call, in this thesis I put forward an alternative theoretical ap-

¹ It must be noted that Jonsson and Seely (2015) continuously stress that most aspects of this type of conflict have long traditions in Russian and Soviet military theory

proach to the study of contemporary armed conflict. In reviewing relevant literatures, I find that studies of contemporary warfare often mention the importance of non-kinetic aspects of armed conflict, but rarely scrutinize them at a low level of abstraction. Conversely, studies of armed conflict that don't relate their arguments to the warfare per se, provide detailed analyses at a low level of abstraction, but do not situate their findings within a strategic mode of interaction. In order to properly account for these aspects, I have therefore looked to other literatures. Specifically, I suggest that communication based theories will allow for an in-depth inquiry of the working mechanisms of non-kinetic aspects of armed conflict. I have constructed a theoretical argument that suggests that non-kinetic aspects of armed conflict will be located in a state's mediated public diplomacy and work through dissemination of the state's strategic narratives. I identify the television network and online news provider RT the main source of Russian mediated public diplomacy of this thesis. On the basis of the above assumptions, I have derived the following two research questions:

1. Which narratives can be identified in Russian mediated public diplomacy relating to the annexation of Crimea in February and March 2014?
2. What are the patterns of antagonism in actor portrayals of the narratives of Russian mediated public diplomacy relating to the annexation of Crimea in February and March 2014?

The thesis is structured as a hypothesis generating case study (Levy 2008: 5). This means that these research questions are means to probe the applicability of the theoretical account developed. Their answers will provide the empirical contribution of this study and the thesis' overarching objective is to, on the basis of this empirical contribution, determine whether the theoretical arguments developed in this chapter are a worthwhile approach to studying non-kinetic aspects of armed conflict more generally. The specific theoretical contribution will be hypotheses on the working mechanisms of mediated public diplomacy as part of armed conflict inferred from the empirical inquiry. As the potential for generalizing from a single case is limited, this should be seen as a

contribution to the process of theory building, rather than theory *per se* (Levy 2008: 5).

1.1 Outline of the thesis

Chapter two is the background chapter. This provides a comprehensive empirical context for the thesis' case. Specifically, I elaborate on the history of Ukrainian-Russian relations, Russian post-Soviet foreign policy, and the political turmoil in Ukraine in 2013-14 leading up to the 2014 annexation of Crimea. The background is this extensive in order for the political and historical references made in the data material of the analyses to be intelligible also for a reader that is not familiar with the history of this region.

Chapter three is a combined literature review and theoretical exposition. I start by reviewing the literature on armed conflict and warfare and identify a theoretical gap with regards to specifying the exact working mechanisms of their non-kinetic aspects. I then demonstrate how the literature on war and media for long have pointed to the salience of the relationship between these two actors and arenas. Based on this account I suggest an empirical refocusing from efforts of the armed forces themselves to that of their communication—specifically to mediated public diplomacy. In the case of Russia this primarily means *RT*. Drawing on Miskimmon, O'Loughlin and Roselle (2013), I suggest that mediated public diplomacy work through dissemination of Russian strategic narratives. As a final argument about the relevance of mediated public diplomacy and strategic narrative in international conflict, I draw on Nye (2004)'s concept of soft power and Castells (1997)'s notion of the information age to provide an account of how power is derived from communication efforts. I end the chapter with inferring the two research questions presented above and discussing how they relate to the overall theoretical objective of this thesis.

Chapter four is a brief account of the design of this thesis based on Levy (2008)'s typology of case studies based on their theoretical objectives. I conclude that this thesis most closely resemble the hypothesis generating case study whose objective is to contribute to the process of theory building.

Chapter five outlines the analytical framework of the thesis. I start by detailing the

perspective on the relationship between text, interpretation, and meaning adhered to for the purposes of this thesis, before I provide an account of the data material to be analysed. This primarily comes from the news coverage of RT, but also includes two key texts coming directly from the Russian government. I go on to explain that the RT material will also include representations of narratives that are not Russian. In order to be able to delineate Russian narratives from representation of other actors' narratives, I will perform a preliminary content analysis of the journalistic sources used in RT. The overview provided by the preliminary analysis will subsequently be used as an analytical tool for the identification of Russian narratives in the two main analyses. I then move on to detail the methodological approaches of the main analyses. The first is a narrative analysis. This will be done in two steps: first I will identify narratives of the Kremlin data material and second compare these narratives to the ones represented in the RT data material. This is another measure to make sure that the narratives I identify in RT are not representation of other actors' narratives. I present representations of causality as an operationalization of narrative. The second main analysis is of actor portrayal. As regards the latter I elaborate on the concepts of enemy images and symbolic annihilation which I will use for identifying antagonism. In addition I also present the more general categories of metaphors, similes, historical analogies, as well as the method of predicate analysis.

Chapter six is the actual analysis chapter. In the preliminary analysis of journalistic sources I find that these are biased towards Russia, but nonetheless that many nationalities are present. Most notably Ukrainian and American. I also find that the sources are very elite biased. In the narrative analysis I first and foremost map out the represented narratives related to the annexation of Crimea and the Ukrainian turmoil more generally. My main other findings relate to instances of non-narration and misrepresentation of events, as well as discrepancies between the Kremlin narratives and RT narratives. In the actor portrayal I find instances of both enemy images and symbolic annihilation, and that the severity of these types of portrayals vary. I also find that Crimea and Russia are portrayed in a similar manner and seemingly in positive opposition to the other actors. I

conclude by discussing all these findings more in-depth and deriving four hypotheses on the working mechanisms of mediate public diplomacy in the context of armed conflict.

Chapter seven is the conclusion which summarizes the thesis' findings.

2 Background

This thesis is on Russian mediated public diplomacy efforts in relation to their 2014 annexation of Crimea. In this background chapter I will in the first part provide an empirical context to the case at hand by placing it within the longer history of Russian-Ukrainian relations. In the second part I will account for trends and characteristics of Russian post-Soviet foreign policy towards the post-Soviet space. In the final part I will elaborate upon the political turmoil in Ukraine during winter/spring 2013/2014 leading up to the annexation of Crimea. The aim of this background is generally to accommodate for a richer understanding of the case at hand. As the later analyses will engage extensively with descriptions of Ukrainian history and politics and Russian-Ukrainian relations, a more specific aim is also to provide the reader with the necessary historical context for these analogies to be relevant and intelligible. This is also the reason why this background chapter is quite comprehensive.

2.1 Historical relationship between Russia and Ukraine

Any historical account on the relationship between Russia and Ukraine must necessarily start by asserting that questions of nationalities and statehood in the East Slavic part of Europe in general are complex. Moreover, as Tolz (2001: 209) states, the Russians' relationship with Ukraine 'was the most complex of all'. The question of where 'Russian history end and Ukrainian history begin' is correspondingly one that even current-day historians struggle with (Plokyh 2008: 3). The aim of the following account is to illustrate why this is in terms of historical political events that have taken place on what is present day Ukrainian territory.

On the territory of present day Ukraine, many state structures have existed. First,

the Kievan Rus' (882-1240) which was the largest polity of its kind in Europe at its time (Moss 1997: 13). For various reasons the Kievan Rus' state disintegrated in the 12th century and following the Mongol Yoke of 1240 it was completely devastated (Moss 1997: 56; 71). The question of the true inheritors of its legacy has since remained open and controversial. The bulk of present day Ukrainian lands were to become part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuanian Commonwealth and later (1569) the Polish side of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth² (Snyder 2003: 106). Following the Russo-Polish war (1654-1667) present day Ukraine became split along the Dniepr river: Its left bank (east of the river) became part of the Tsardom of Russia/Moscovy and its right bank (west of the river) remained Polish. Within Russian historiography, the above is seen as the moment 'when the stray Ukrainian stream found its way into the great Russian river' (Snyder 2003: 117), and these new lands became very important for Muscovy/Russian intellectual and educated life (Plokhy 2008: 34-35).

Following the three partitions of Poland in 1772, 1793, and 1795 the Russian empire³ acquired present day right bank Ukraine as well, except for the very westernmost regions around the city of Lviv which became part of the Austro-Hungarian empire⁴. The bulk of present day Ukrainian territory was now for the first time since Kiev Rus' gathered. This part of the empire, came to be known as Little Russia with the imperial center in Muscovy being Great Russia and present day Belarusian territory White Russia (Snyder 2003: 119).

In parallel with this, the Crimean peninsula had a completely different development. On the peninsula had been the Crimean Khanate inhabited by Crimean tartars. A Khanate is a political entity ruled by a khan. The Crimean Khanate was a vassal state

²Another entity, the Cossacks, were initially a group of people living in the southernmost parts of the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth bordering the Crimean Khanate. They were initially comprised of hunters and runaway peasants who began to settle this area, but over time 'grew into a military force to be reckoned with' (Snyder 2003: 113; Yekelchik 2007: 26-27. This was the group that triggered the Russo-Polish war.)

³ After 1721 the Tsardom of Muscovy/Russia was called the Russian Empire.

⁴ It could be noted however that these territories were not part of the Russian conception of Ukraine which was limited to present day left bank Ukraine (Snyder 2003: 120).

of the Ottoman empire tracing its ancestry to the Golden Horde. The Golden Horde was a khanate that originated from the northwestern sector of the Mongol empire established in around the mid of the 13th century (Halperin 1985: 27)

Crimea became part of the empire in 1783 when Russian annexed it following their victory in the Russo-Turkish war (1768-74) (Moss 1997: 283). Throughout the 19th century the borders of the Russian empire would remain more or less constant in these perimeters⁵.

The point of drawing historical lines as far back as I do here, is in part to illustrate just how intertwined Russian and Ukrainian history is. It's also to demonstrate the different historical and political experiences of different parts of Ukraine. By considering such a detailed history, we understand that the present day political conflict between western and eastern/southern Ukraine is not of convenience, but rather resulting from fundamentally divergent historical experiences shaping.

One of the results of the First World War and the revolution in Russia and the following disintegration of the Russian as well as the Austro-Hungarian empire, was that for the first time in history a Ukrainian state whose borders closely resembled the patterns of ethnic Ukrainian settlement came to be⁶: the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, a constituent republic of the Soviet Union (Yekelchuk 2007: 83; 85).

Because of the topic of this thesis it is worth mentioning that the Crimean peninsula was not part of the Ukrainian SSR at this point. It became so becoming so only by means of an administrative transfer in 1954 (Solchanyk 2001: 165). The exact reasons as to why are debated. It occurred some ten years after the major deportation of the Crimean tartars from the peninsula (Solchanyk 2001: 200). These were only allowed to return when the Soviet Union dissolved.

One of the reasons that Ukraine could become a sovereign state, was probably that a remarkable mobilization of Ukrainian nationalism had occurred during the first

⁵ Russia also had to give up a chunk of Bessarabia, located in present day Moldova and Ukraine, as part of the terms in the Treaty of Paris concluding the Crimean war (1853-56) (Moss 1997: 370)

⁶ Except for Galicia and its regional capital Lviv which became part of Poland after the war (Yekelchuk 2007: 65)

two decades of the 20th century (Plokhy 2008: 49; Yekelchuk 2007: 62). I use the term remarkable because Ukrainian nationalism had developed comparatively late and slowly until then. One of the main feats of the nationalist writings of the 19th century⁷ nonetheless, was the separation of Ukrainian history from Russian history, which had not been conceived of before then (Plokhy 2008: 81; Yilmaz 2015: 50). Even so, towards the end of the 19th century 'the idea that Russia was a single nation, and that all East Slavs were Russian had again become hegemonic' in Russian Ukraine (Snyder 2003: 122).

In parallel with this account, however, the development of a Ukrainian nationalism continued in the easternmost regions of the Austro-Hungarian empire centred on the now Ukrainian city of Lviv (Yekelchuk 2007: 62-63)⁸. It was this region that was the source of the national mobilization of the early 20th century. Their ideas spread to Eastern Ukraine part of the Russian empire as well and by 1917 Ukrainians in both empires possessed a clear notion of being Ukrainians (Yekelchuk 2007: 66). During the revolutionary period in Russia the Bolsheviks were only able to take control over Ukrainian lands once they offered them a formally independent Ukrainian state, and, including other things, recognition of Ukrainian language (Yekelchuk 2007: 82).

Following the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian empire after the First World War, the Ukrainian regions of Galicia and Volhynia eventually became part of Poland. Under forceful Polish rule the Ukrainian nationalism here radicalised, with repercussions still discussed in Ukraine, and, as appearing later, in the data material of this thesis. In 1929 the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) was formed in Polish Ukraine⁹. This was a Ukrainian nationalist organization in the tradition of what Rudling (2011: 3) describes as generic European fascism, sharing the fascist attributes of 'antiliberalism,

⁷ Led by the Ukrainian academic and politician Mykhailo Hrushevsky (1866-1934)

⁸ It was Ukrainian nationalists in Galicia that in the 1890s first began propagating the term Ukrainians for themselves (Yekelchuk 2007: 62)

⁹ In 1941 the OUN would split between a radical wing led by Stepan Bandera and consequently called OUN(b), and a more moderate wing led by Andrii Mel'nyk called OUN(m). The former gained predominance and is the one that's of relevance today (Rudling 2011: 3). When referring to OUN's actions after 1941 in the following, I am referring to the OUN(b).

anticonservatism, and anticommunism, an armed party, totalitarianism, anti-Semitism, Führerprinzip, and an adoption of fascist greetings' (Rudling 2011: 3; see also: Bruder 2006; Himka 2011; Weiner 2001). The OUN became widely popular and 'by the late 1930's, the underground nationalist movement, which embraced terrorist methods, captured the majority of politically active youth in Western Ukraine' (Yekelchuk 2007: 121).

The OUN had strong ties with Germany's military intelligence and welcomed Hitler's rise to power (Yekelchuk 2007: 128). As secretly agreed in the the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union (1939), the Soviet Union invaded Poland in September 1939 annexing Ukrainian regions (Galicia and Volhynia) and incorporated these into the Ukrainian SSR (Yekelchuk 2007: 132). Their brutal Sovietization radicalised the already extreme Ukrainian nationalists and when Nazi-Germany invaded the Soviet Union including Ukraine in 1941, the OUN cooperated with them and continued to do so under occupation. They were for instance highly complicit in massive and brutal pogroms and initiated a drive to cleanse Western Ukraine of Poles (Berkhoff 2004; Rudling 2011: 8-9). In 1941 OUN critically issued a declaration of Ukrainian statehood and partly in return for the above efforts the 'leadership hoped that [...] the Nazis would accept a fascist Ukraine as a vassal state' (Rudling 2011: 9). This, of course, did not happen, but the relationship between OUN and the Nazi German leadership continued, even after the war. Following the Nazi defeat in the battle of Stalingrad, which ended in February 1943, it increasingly became clear that the Axes would loose the war. In 1943 through 44 the Soviet Union gradually regained close to all Ukrainian territory, including the regions around Lviv that it had annexed from Poland in 1939. In parallel with the Nazi defeats, the OUN began to do away with its fascist and anti-semitic symbolism. Rudling (2011: 14-17) sees this as the origin of the 'manipulation of the OUN legacy' which 'forms an unbroken chain from 1943 until today'. This manipulation started with the deliberate intentions of the OUN from 1943 and onward (Rudling 2011: 13-15) and continued in the Ukrainian diaspora after the war (Himka 2005).

The OUN's efforts during the Second World War¹⁰ came to be subjects of national

¹⁰ In post-Soviet countries the term and periodization of the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945) is

myth making in the Ukrainian diaspora following the war. Anti-semitism and nazi-collaboration was left out of this story and their role as heroes fighting for national independence correspondingly bolstered¹¹. The declaration of the Ukrainian state is for instance seen as very crucial. In these national myths the OUN is presented 'as rescuers and benefactors who exercised an admirable restraint vis-a-vis the Jews, despite Ukrainian suffering at the hands of genocidal Jewish commissars' and seen as 'a democratic force leading an antitotalitarian struggle against Stalism and Nazism'¹² (Rudling 2011: 24).

When the Soviet Union collapsed, these myths were re-exported to Ukraine (Rudling 2011: 24). Several memorials, centres, museums, and similar were set up to commemorate the OUN (Liebich and Myshlovska 2014). The Yushchenko government (2005-10) formed following the Orange Revolution of 2004, in particular spent considerable resources attempting to consolidate a shared and anti-Soviet understanding of the Ukrainian history. The Ukrainian WWII experiences became a central tenet to this propagated understanding (Narvselius 2012: 469). Monuments commemorating Stepan Bandera proliferated in this period with seventeen being risen during this presidency (Liebich and Myshlovska 2014: 752). Furthermore Stepan Bandera was in 2010 named 'Hero of Ukraine' by president Yushchenko. Rudling (2013) has referred to these practices as a glorification of extreme right groups and sentiments, and naturally they also met resistance. Narvselius (2012: 489) concludes that although these efforts opened up for non-Soviet centred accounts of national memory, it has antagonized and radicalised national politics of memory. As will be apparent in the later analyses in this thesis, this means that these issues are natural points of departure for anyone trying to identify normally used as opposed to the Second World War (1939-1945). I will throughout the thesis use the term Second World War when referring to the wars of this time—also in the context of uniquely Soviet/Russian historical experiences.

¹¹Later it was the famine of the 1930's, presented as an intended ethnic genocide of Ukrainians, that was to become the main focus of the national myth narrative.

¹²Comparing these views to the perceptions of Jewish collective memory is enlightening as such narratives would often name Ukrainians as the most brutal perpetrators of Holocaust (Weinfeld 2002: 213-214).

discord and divergence in contemporary Ukrainian politics and society.

2.2 Russian post-Soviet foreign policy

The following background on Russian foreign policy will be limited to the post-Soviet period¹³. I will devote particular attention to Russian policies toward the post-Soviet space generally, bilateral Russian-Ukrainian relations more specifically, and finally some trends regarding Russian perceptions of the West. All three of these aspects of Russian foreign policy are drawn upon in the texts to be studied below and thus provide very relevant context for the later analysis.

Russian foreign policy has gone through phases marked by both change and continuity, and it should be seen as shaped by both international influences and local conditions (Lo 2015: xviii). A prevalent theme and source of continuity dating back to Peter the Great's reign, is that of the West as Russia's significant and identity constituting Other. The country in which Russia mirrors itself and evaluates its own performance in relation to (Neumann 1996; Tsygankov 2013). Lo (2015: 98, my parentheses), referring to contemporary politics, describes this tendency as the '(decidedly old) Americacentric obsession'. Such 'obsession' has been formulated both in positive and negative terms: the West as the goal and what one aspires to become—as in the immediate period after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, or the West as rotten and decadent and what wishes to avoid becoming. In Putin's third presidential term (since 2012 up until today) the picture of the West has increasingly, at least in rhetoric, become that of the latter: A place of moral corruption. Although proclaiming the end of American hegemony and similar, Russia nevertheless continues to take the United States as its main point of reference when evaluating international affairs and regional and global governance (Lo 2015: 98-99). An important theme has been to stop western influence in Russia's neighbouring countries.

Another key element in Russian foreign policy is of course its relation to post-

¹³ This means that when I in the following use the term 'Russian foreign policy' and similar, I am referring to Russian *post-Soviet* foreign policy.

Soviet countries. This must be seen in the context of Russia's imperial past: up until the collapse of the Soviet Union Russia was an empire and transformation to a post-imperial state has been difficult (Remington 2012: 23-24). Particularly so with regards to the foreign policies towards the post-Soviet countries, of which Ukraine is a central one. In the early 1990's of 'post-Cold War euphoria', in its eagerness to integrate into the Western and liberal systems of economy, politics, and similar, Russia isolated itself from the former Soviet regions (Tsygankov 2013: 79). Mankoff (2009) goes as far as to say that

in the early 1990s, the non-Russian parts of the former Soviet Union [...] were perceived as little better than dead weight, to be left behind as rapidly as possible so that Russia could rush ahead to join the developed West (Mankoff 2009: 242)

As it turned out that aspirations of liberals and westernizers within Russian foreign policy establishment were not met, Russia quickly turned to a more realist foreign policy which would dominate from the latter half of the 1990's. Within this context, 'reintegration' of post-Soviet countries became a central tenet of attempts to balance Western power in a world considered multipolar (Tsygankov 2013: 115). Within this perspective, relations with the former Soviet states are seen as pursued for highly instrumental reasons. Tsygankov (2013: 118) stress that they were not pursued in an attempt at restoring empire, but by pragmatic policy and security concerns: it involved filling perceived security vacuums in the post-Soviet space, from terrorist threats in the Caucasus to NATO expansion in the west. The rather aggressive Russian strategy of economic domination over ex-republics' key economic property such as oil pipelines and electricity, illustrates that cooperation was nonetheless not perceived as happening between two equal partners (Tsygankov 2013: 154-155).

Another feature of Russian policies towards the post-Soviet region in this period, was its support of friendly, but undemocratic regimes, such as Belarus' Lukashenko regime and Ukraine's Kuchma regime (Mankoff 2009: 243). Kuchma had been president in Ukraine since 1994 and was a Russian favourite as he, among other things, had a pro-Russian stance in foreign policy (Kuzio 2005: 30). In the 2004 Ukrainian presidential

election Russia heavily supported Kuchma's chosen successor Viktor Yanukovich against the more Europe leaning opposition candidate Viktor Yushchenko. It's widely perceived that Russia aided Yanukovich and his campaign in rigging the elections and poisoning the opposition candidate (Karatnycky 2005; Kuzio 2005; Mankoff 2009: 249). Yanukovich initially won the second round of the elections, but to great protests as people claimed that the election was fraudulent. The main demand of the protesters was a third round, which they eventually were granted and which subsequently resulted in the opposition candidate Yushchenko's win. It's these events that came to be known as the Orange Revolution, named after the party colors of Yushchenko's party (Kuzio 2005). The revolution can be seen as somewhat of a turning point with regards to Russian-Ukrainian relations. Before it, Ukraine was more or less content with balancing between East and West (Mankoff 2009: 247). After it, more West friendly and liberal political forces became more prominent in the country and Russia's image became somewhat tarnished by its involvement in the staging of the 2004 election (Mankoff 2009: 250).

An even more radical Russian interference in a post-Soviet country occurred in the five day war with Georgia in 2008. Tensions between Russia and Georgia had been building for a long time, but it was a Georgian attack on the South Ossetian town Tshkinvali that triggered the war. South Ossetia is a self-proclaimed independent republic and Georgia wanted to regain control over it (Allison 2008). Russia responded by launching a large-scale operation with ground, air and sea troops (Tsygankov 2009). As Georgian forces withdrew after five days of fighting, a ceasefire was negotiated. Russia subsequently recognized the independence of the self-proclaimed republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Although immediate political concerns were cited as the reasons for Russia's intervention (for instance the protection of Russians living in South Ossetia), the grand strategic rationale is generally thought to be Russian blockade of any attempts at NATO expansion in the post-Soviet space (Lo 2015: 102-103).

The interventions in both Ukraine and Georgia may be seen in relation to a Russian tendency to view the post-Soviet regions as sites of geopolitical competition rather than independent countries in their own rights (Mankoff 2009: 242). Lo (2015: 102-103)

argues that although not seeing post-Soviet countries as some imperial realm to govern as they please, Russia does assign itself with a certain entitlement to these countries. They are seen as 'quasi-states—politically primitive, economically feeble, and vulnerable to foreign intrigues' (Lo 2015: 102). Russia, of course, as a great power, is seen as the opposite. In combination with its perceived privileges in the regions, this provides a powerful rationale for interference into these countries' domestic affairs—as witnessed in Ukraine in 2004, Georgia in 2008, and, perhaps, again in Ukraine in 2014.

2.3 Euromaidan and the 2014 annexation of Crimea

The unrest in Ukraine which came to be known as the Euromaidan started in late November 2013. Their president Viktor Yanukovich had refused to sign an association agreement with the EU, citing amongst other things their economic dependency upon Russia (BBC 2013). The refusal was however popularly perceived as a choice of geostrategic alignment towards Russia at the expense of the EU and caused uproar among EU leaning Ukrainians. In Kiev people took to the streets to protest. In contrast with the well organized Orange Revolution nine years before, these protests appeared more spontaneous and did not rally around a shared candidate or clearly defined political goal. Protesters now referred to rather vague geopolitical ideas of EU alignment as their motivation (Onuch 2014: 47).

After the immediate flare up, the protests initially died down. However, as government authorities decided to attempt to physically disperse the protesters on 30 November, they lit up again now gathering numbers of 800 000. When this happened the political sentiments of the protests were changed toward more general anti-government sentiments (Kudelia 2014: 28). The continuing heavy handedness and hard lined approach of Yanukovich would continue to radicalise the protests and spread them to other parts of the country as well. Onuch (2014: 46) has called the protesters a 'coalition of inconvenience' comprising liberals, social-democrats, and right-of-center political affiliations. Furthermore, she found that the median protester was man, aged 34-45 and with a full time job. He would cite domestic concerns—bettered socio-economic

prospects, resistance to government corruption and more—as the main motivation for participation, not opposition to the government seeking closer ties with Russia (Onuch 2014: 47).

Eventually radical right participation increased. The two most prominent groups were the Right Sector and the parliamentary party Svoboda. The former is amalgamation of several radical right-wing extra-parliamentary groups, formed in November 2013 for the purpose of fighting the Yanukovich regime by force. They formed the core of the violent resistance against Yanukovich, although as late as January 2014 it appears that it only had around 300 members (Shekhovtsov and Umland 2014: 59). Svoboda, on the other hand, is a typical European radical right party whose popularity had increased and at the time had 37 out of 450 seats in the Ukrainian Rada. They did not participate as an organization in the Euromaidan protests, but their members did (Shekhovtsov and Umland 2014: 58-59).

Eventually, towards the end of February 2014, Yanukovich realized that he was unable to end the protests by force. This is approximately when the time period of the data material of this thesis begins. Yanukovich agreed to an EU brokered agreement with the opposition on February 21. However, on the same day a number of his party's MPs crossed over to the opposition as they voted to reinstate the constitution of 2004 limiting presidential powers, and to dismiss the interior minister (Kudelia 2014: 30). These events made it clear that the regime was disintegrating. The same and following day the interior ministry troops which had been guarding governmental and presidential buildings in Kiev left their posts, Yanukovich left Kiev for Kharkiev in the east, and the Rada passed a vote to remove him from presidency citing his absence (Kudelia 2014: 31). 27 February a new interim government was announced headed by prime minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk.

Internationally, the Euromaidan protesters had generally been supported by the EU and American countries, although the radical right participation provided a certain headache in these relationships (Shekhovtsov and Umland 2014: 60). Russia, on the other hand, had supported president Yanukovich. Russian government officials were

outraged at developments in Ukraine. As a response the country supported an insurgency in Ukraine's eastern regions¹⁴ and annexed the Crimean peninsula in what Allison (2014) has termed a 'deniable intervention'. That is, it was done in such a manner that it was difficult to ascertain Russian involvement. It helped that the peninsula's inhabitants were largely sympathetic to the idea of becoming part of Russia and that Russia already had a legal military presence there which provided infrastructure and personnel. This allowed Russia to apply a low level of military pressure and aided in the:

remarkably effective [...] use of non-military instruments of influence and diplomacy, which emphasized in particular a more or less plausible deniability in an effort to disable international responses and bolster domestic Russian support (Allison 2014: 1258)

During the period of annexation, Russian government officials, including the president, consistently denied that Russian military personnel were involved in the annexation. Only in April 2014 did president Putin in a direct line interview admit that their servicemen, including special operation forces, were involved in amongst other things aiding Crimean self defence forces and 'creating conditions' for the expression of Crimeans' free will (Allison 2014: 1257). The latter is a reference to a referendum held among Crimeans on the issue of independence from Ukraine and incorporation into Russia 15 March 2014. The culmination of the annexation came two days after this when the Russian Duma voted to incorporate Crimea into Russia. Various approaches and attempts at theoretically accounting for this process of annexation will be elaborated upon in the below literature review and theory chapter.

3 Literature Review and theory

As would appear relevant to the above limited account of the Russian annexation of Crimea and the notion of plausible deniability, for some time scholars concerned with armed conflict coming from various traditions relating to strategic studies, war studies

¹⁴ I will not elaborate on the political events and insurgency that occurred and is still ongoing in Eastern Ukraine as I consider it outside the scope of this thesis.

and similar have pointed to a change in the nature of international conflict¹⁵. Explanations of such development range from Kaldor (2012)'s dichotomy of *new* and *old wars* to the IT driven Revolution in Military Affairs (IT-RMA) posited by Russian as well as American military theorists¹⁶ (Adamsky and Bjerga 2010). Most such theories share a sense that armed conflict and warfare are no longer confined to the battle ground¹⁷. Kaldor, for instance, points to *new wars* being fought in the name of identity rather than ideology and attempting to achieve political rather than physical control over territory (Kaldor 2012: 8-9), whereas military theorists for instance point to civil affairs as part of information operations in warfare (Armistead 2004: 62-63)¹⁸.

The classic works within strategic studies reveal that such non-kinetic factors have always been inherent to armed conflict. Clausewitz' famous insistence upon the intrinsically political nature of armed conflict is one such example. It is however within the traditions of Eastern military theory that such notions have been the most pronounced (Chong 2014; Lee 2014). This is exemplified by Sun Tzu's writings in *The Art of War*, dating as far back as to 500 BC and that produced well-known theorems such as 'if you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the results of a hundred battles' and 'the supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting'.

The Russian political and military effort to annex the Crimean peninsula from Ukraine in February and March 2014 was carried out without firing a single shot and with limited visible military force applied. I therefore consider it a very interesting empirical case for such type of warfare. Despite theoretical development such as the above, however, empirical studies of the Russian effort in annexing Crimea has struggled to grapple what actually took place (Jonsson and Seely 2015: 1). Almost all emphasize the importance of non-kinetic elements, and Jonsson and Seely (2015: 2) is a sophisticated

¹⁵I will in the following use armed conflict, warfare etc. interchangeably. Because this thesis doesn't concern the nature of war and/or armed conflict as such, but rather their working mechanisms, I consider this unproblematic

¹⁶ Although they do not necessarily use the same terminology, there are similar theoretical developments in other centres of military theory development such as China in particular, but also Israel.

¹⁷ They necessarily never was either, but this will be elaborated upon below

¹⁸ What civil affairs precisely entails, however, is not well elaborated upon

example when they claim that contemporary Russian approach to conflict can be termed *full-spectrum conflict*. This is characterized by 'several military and non-military means [being] under one central command and directed to the same political goal'. They exemplify this in the context of the Russian annexation of Crimea, but no proper analysis is undertaken. In general, few analyses integrate a thorough study of non-kinetic elements with the strategic nature of conflict. Most studies that have an explicitly strategic emphasis will detail the importance of non-kinetic elements, but their empirical inquiries will be limited to military efforts (Cimbala 2014; Kofman and Rojansky 2015). Conversely, studies of non-kinetic elements¹⁹, on the other hand, will often not include a strategic component (Szostek 2014; Laruelle 2016). This is mirrored in studies of similar phenomena that do not relate to the 2014 Russian-Ukrainian conflict specifically (see for instance: Betz 2006)

I suggest that one way of constructing a theoretical account and subsequent study that integrate the empirical domain of non-kinetic aspects of conflict with a strategic mode of interaction, is to broaden the theoretical perspective from that dealing explicitly with 'war' as such. A theoretically potent literature to look to would be that of the relations between media and warfare. This relationship has been studied from a variety of vantage points, but the most interesting in our case would be studies of how belligerent parties attempt to influence the portrayal of conflicts. Since the very first war correspondents appeared, incidentally reporting on the Crimean war of 1853-56 in the British press (Knightly 2000), this is known to be an important factor in the relationship between media and warfare. Influence over portrayal is wanted due to concerns both with maintaining information superiority regarding the military battle itself and with influencing the overall political portrayal of the conflict because it may affect soldiers' morale as well as publics and decision makers at home and abroad (Rid 2007).

This type of literature has found that historically belligerent parties have attempted to influence the media's portrayal of conflict through on the one hand restricting access to the battle field and on the other the dissemination of favourable spin (Taylor 1997:

¹⁹ Although none of these contributions would use such terminology

104). Such attempts have been undertaken since the very first war correspondents and as such represent a continuity in the relationship between the media and government in warfare. Nonetheless the relationship's dynamic has evolved with the emergence of new communication technologies. The Vietnam War (1955-75) and the Gulf War (August 1990 - February 1991) both represent watershed events²⁰ and have often been called *the first television war* and the *the first real television war*, respectively (Carruthers 2000: 108, 133). The Vietnam War was the first time images of war reached people's living room on a large scale. The American government placed relatively few restrictions on the media's reporting and military officials came to believe that this was one of the reasons for the American defeat (Taylor 1997: 108; Carruthers 2000: 108).

This lax approach to media management and its perceived consequences, served as lessons for the American government. Consequently, during the Gulf War government officials had a distinctively reflexive approach to media management. Several programs whereby journalists became embedded with military units were operated and the journalists and their copy even used for deception purposes. Deception is nothing new in war, but the '*active* incorporation of the media into [deception] exercises' (Taylor 1997: 127, italics in original) is a relatively new phenomenon. This provides for an illustrating example of the general tendency that Taylor (2003: 64) briefly pointed to: Over time an asymmetry between military or government officials and journalists develops because the military agencies learn from conflict to conflict and thus accumulate experience and knowledge, whereas the journalists on the other hand are often new. This points to an increasing professionalism of military media management (a claim supported by Maltby 2012), which would seem to echo the perceived increase in non-kinetic aspects of warfare as elaborated upon above.

As all the above goes to show, media and communication more broadly has always been an inherent aspect to warfare. However, even contemporary scholars of war and media claim that *something* is *new* (Hoskins and O'Loughlin 2015: 1321; Thussu and

²⁰ There are many studies of Soviet political propaganda, but very little relating to propaganda or media efforts directed for war purposes. The provided examples will therefore primarily be American.

Freedman 2003 (eds.)). I suggest that rather than interpreting this as a claim that certain aspects of international conflicts are entirely novel, it should be viewed as an argument that certain aspects of international conflict—that is the political and communicative one—are becoming increasingly important. At our specific point in time this emphasis is thought by amongst others Brown (2003) to be driven by late 20th century and 21st century mass media proliferation—or what he terms 'the mediatization of international politics' (Brown 2003: 87). Referring to the case of the American 'war on terror', he elaborates on this view:

In the twenty-first century politics is conducted via the mass media with the result that the 'war on terrorism' is a war that is also waged through the media. *The way in which the mass media represents the conflict is part of the conflict* (Brown 2003: 87, my italics)

This resonates well with the *revolutions in military affairs (RMA)*-postulation of military theory which holds that such developments are triggered by ICT developments that among various effects popularises information (Adamsky and Bjerga 2010).

On the basis of this theoretical recount I suggest that an empirical refocusing of studies of conflict and warfare from efforts of the armed forces to that of their communication—without losing theoretical sight of its strategic mode of interaction—will contribute to a more sophisticated understanding of international conflict. This goes for contemporary international conflict generally, but in this thesis I will naturally relate it to the 2014 annexation of Crimea specifically. Concretely, I will argue below that such strategic communication efforts can be expected to be located in Russian mediated public diplomacy.

3.1 Public diplomacy

Public diplomacy is an old concept with long traditions. Cull (2009: 19) demonstrates that the term first appeared in the mid 1800's, but in its modern format, it first emerged as a post-WWII and Cold War order phenomenon. Its slightly more derogatory partner being propaganda. Interest in public diplomacy by both practitioners and academics was revitalized in the mid 00's (Snow 2008). Public diplomacy is in this thesis defined

and understood as:

the process by which direct relations with people in a country are pursued to advance the interests and extend the values of those being represented (Sharp 2005: 106)

Entman (2008: 89) interestingly suggests a caveat to this understanding, maintaining that 'although the term implies a concern with mass publics, public diplomacy might better be conceived as designed ultimately to shape elite opinion and action'. This has to do with the instrumental and strategic nature of public diplomacy: as any policy it is a means to an end—in this case a means to shape the foreign policies of other countries. This is not to say that any such attempt will actually succeed in reaching these ends.

One way to understand the relations between diplomacy and public diplomacy and developments of such relationship, is as a communication process with different types of participants: traditional diplomacy concern communication government-to-government and traditional public diplomacy includes the public into this relation so that it becomes government-to-public. In what is sometimes termed the new public diplomacy, governments are attempting to accommodate for public-to-public diplomacy. This is seen as the most modern type facilitated by a new media and technological environment of the 21st century (Snow 2008: 6).

Public diplomacy, either new or traditional, can and does include a wide array of activities. In the contemporary Russian context these range from the government agency Rossotrudnichestvo's federal funding of education in Russia for foreigners²¹ to the multimedia service Sputnik launched in November 2014 available in 38 languages online²². In more general terms²³ there have, according to Cull (2009), been five pillars of traditional public diplomacy: listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange diplomacy, and international broadcasting. As I am interested in public diplomacy relating to a specific event, the annexation of Crimea, in real time, long-term measures such as the four former would not seem suitable empirical domains. Since the Russian government

²¹ <http://russia.study/en>

²² www.sputniknews.com

²³ Although it must be noted that research on public diplomacy is very biased toward American experiences

funds international broadcasters (*Sputnik* and since 2006: *RT*), the latter pillar is the best candidate. This type of public diplomacy is commonly referred to as mediated public diplomacy. It denotes public diplomacy efforts pursued through the media, defined by Entman (2008) as:

shorter term and more targeted efforts using *mass communication (including the internet)* to increase support of a country's specific foreign policies among audiences beyond that country's border. (Entman 2008: 88, italics in original)

Such efforts will principally be done either by working within the existing global media environment (including social media and internet) or by altering the media environment by establishing a government owned broadcaster. Examples of activities of the former type are provided by Gilboa (2002: 741) when he discusses how various governments pursue both 'routine and special media activities' ranging from press conferences to 'spectacular media events organized to usher in a new era'. In the same vein, the practice of naming military operations is discussed by Sheaffer and Shenhav (2009). As examples of the latter, we find RT and Sputnik of course, but previous research has also focused upon the general advent of broadcasting networks such as BBC World, Al Jazeera, France 24 (Figenschou 2014).

3.2 Strategic narratives

What is the mechanism through which efforts of mediated public diplomacy could be expected to work? There is a plethora of communication based theories that could be expected to answer various aspects of that question. I will in the following focus on Miskimmon et al. (2013)'s theory of *strategic narratives* which holds that strategic narratives are means to power in international politics—the implication being that mediated public diplomacy work through being a channel for presenting and spreading strategic narratives. This theory sets out with an explicitly multidisciplinary approach combining insights from communication theory with, interestingly, an argument about power in international relations. Their general premise is that communication is always central to any actors' understanding of their social and material surroundings. In the context

of international relations this resembles a social constructivist position that argues that ideas and norms matter (see for instance: Wendt 1992; Risse, Ropp and Sikink 1999). The subtle difference of anchoring this type of perspective in communication theory instead of mainstream social constructivism, I would argue, is that ideas become inherently associated with the actors holding and communicating them. Basing the analytical framework on communication based theory is thus a way to retain more of the strategic mode of interaction. The theory of strategic narratives holds that communication efforts can be instrumentalized in an *attempt* to construct an understanding of international order and issues as well as actors' identities that benefit the actors themselves (Miskimmon et al. 2013: 101-145). If we relate this argument to the broader meta debate on structure versus agency as determinative of social action, it represents a way of working with ideas, or specifically narratives, without the analysis having to do away with agency.

A narrative is a particular structure of communication whose core characteristic is that of temporality: in its most simplistic formulation a narrative consists of a beginning, a midsection, and an end. More specifically, however, it will often concern an initial order, an incident disrupting the order, and a resolution which reestablishes (an altered) order (Miskimmon et al. 2013: 5). At a more conceptual level, narratives are seen as 'frameworks that allow humans to connect apparently unconnected phenomena around some causal information' (Todorov 1977: 45). In this sense narratives function as devices of language through which sense and meaning is achieved (Miskimmon et al. 2013). I will elaborate more on how concretely to work with strategic narratives as an analytical tool in chapter five - analytical framework.

It makes sense to talk of narratives as strategic if actors instrumentalize them—that is reflexively craft a narrative which they perceive to benefit their goals and aspirations in international affairs and subsequently disseminate it. Empirical studies of communication practices within various government agencies goes to show that this actually is an occurring practice (see for instance: Maltby 2012; Thune 2009). Including this notion of strategy assumes, as noted, a great deal of agency on behalf of actors, which

is not uncontroversial, particularly not when working with various types of text—as is common when exploring narratives and as will be done in this thesis. The most pressing matter is to delineate the relation between narrative and discourse²⁴.

For the purposes of this thesis I adhere to a Foucauldian understanding of discourse whereby it is defined as 'a system for the generation of certain statements and practices'²⁵ (Neumann 2001: 18). In this way discourse defines what is sayable or even intelligible within a certain context—it is a 'structure that endows meaning to text'²⁶ (Bratberg 2014: 30). This is a very thick understanding of discourse which places a very strong emphasis on their structuring effect (Bratberg 2014: 30). The benefit, however, of adopting such a thick conception of discourse, is that it arguably allows for *sub-discursive* agency. This would appear to also be Miskimmon et al. (2013: 7)'s understanding when they say that 'discourses are the raw material of communication [...] that actors plot into narratives'. Discourses are what make a narrative intelligible, or, more specifically perhaps, what makes it intelligible and reasonable in a certain cultural context, but not in another. Discourses have a structuring effect upon narratives, but I will in the following assume that in most instances a certain discursive context will have enough leeway to allow for strategic narrative formation.

3.2.1 Power: how does a strategic narrative work?

Narratives are considered important in international affairs because the 'shared meaning of the past, present, and future of international politics' that they seek to construct, may affect actors' behaviors by 'extend[ing] [...] influence, manage expectations, and change the discursive environment in which they operate' (Miskimmon et al. 2013: 2). This does not in any way presuppose that any narrative may necessarily have the intended

²⁴ As this thesis uses media theory perspectives, it would also appear relevant to argue why I choose narrative theory as opposed to framing theory. In order to delimit the scope of the thesis I have excluded this discussion, but I will simply state that an added value of strategic narrative theory is that it combines prescription of how to study communication with an argument about power in international affairs.

²⁵ My translation. Original: 'Et system for frembringelse av et sett utsagn og praktiser'

²⁶ My translation. Original: 'struktur som gir teksten mening'

or any effect, but rather that any narrative will have the potential to. Underlying this conception of the power of narratives is an understanding of power that is more comprehensive than military and economic might and coercion and inducement.

Strategic narratives are meaningfully viewed within the framework of the concept of soft power. Soft power was coined by Nye (1990) and quickly entered into intellectual and public discourse. The notion of soft power rests upon a recognition that 'the ability to shape the preferences of others' (Nye 2004: 5) is also a form of power. It is defined as 'the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments' (Nye 2004: x).

This definition has two parts. First is specifies what power intrinsically *is*—namely the ability to get what you want. This echoes the behavioural understanding of power whereby 'A has power over B to the extent that he has the ability to get B to do something he otherwise would not have done' (Dahl 1957: 202-203; Nye 2004: 2). This understanding also resonates well with an everyday perception of what constitutes power. Another merit of defining power in such terms is that it locates power in the social and thus inhibits the intellectual short cut of treating resources as proxy for power. The novelty of soft power, however, lies in the second part of the definition—the sources of power. In addition to coercion, deterrence, protection, and inducement, the soft power postulation holds that B's change in behaviour may also result from attraction or agenda setting.

Why is attraction a form of power? In Nye (2004: 2)'s rather intuitive explanation, it is because attraction is one way to 'influence the behavior of others to get the outcomes one wants' by 'shaping [their] preferences' (Nye 2004: 5). An example of soft power can be found in the Soviet Union's attractiveness in Europe before their invasions of Hungary and Czechoslovakia. This explanation does however not take us particularly far in specifying exactly *where* and *through which mechanisms* such attraction occurs. Castells (1997) and his theory of the information age and the network society²⁷ may help

²⁷ Although these two concepts underpin Castells' theory and are very important for his arguments, I will not discuss them here as I consider that outside of the scope of this thesis.

us dig deeper into both these questions. Regarding the latter question his works suggest that power relationships work through communication because socialized communication provides 'support for the social production of meaning' (Castells 2007: 239). That is, when actors communicate with each other they share and produce an understanding of their social and material surroundings (i.e. meaning). Relating this to Nye's terms we could say that influence occurs through the communication of attractive ideas.

Before elaborating further on this notion, let's first assert that in practice communication, for the most part, is mediated. This is relevant to the question of *where* attraction occurs. In our case of politics, the news media is a central medium, as well as social and other new media as of late. This is because in the information age the media becomes the predominant place for communication and thus the space in which politics unfold (Castells 2007: 315-316). In a theoretical exposition on the relationship between the media and international politics specifically, Thune (2009) advances a similar argument: his claim is that when assessing such a relationship, we should conceptualize the media not as an actor influencing policy (as with the 'CNN effect' research agenda), but as a platform upon which international politics take place. Castells (1997) elaborates on practical consequences for politics:

Yet, the critical matter is that, without an active presence in the media, political proposals or candidates do not stand a chance of gathering broad support. Media politics is not all politics, but all politics must go through the media to affect decision-making. So doing, politics is fundamentally framed, in its substance, organization, process, and leadership, by the inherent logic of the media system, particularly the new electronic media (Castells 1997: 137)

Thus to act on peoples minds, and wills, conflicting political options, embodied in parties and candidates, use the media as their fundamental vehicle of communication, influence, and persuasion (Castells 1997: 313)

Although formulated in terms of domestic politics, I also consider this relevant for the international kind. A caveat must nonetheless be made: I take Castells' assertions to point to salient mechanisms in the conduct of politics, but I do not adhere to his essentialist formulations that *all* politics must go through the media. I consider it likely

that certain political decisions can still be made among political leaders in the back room or between diplomats behind closed doors. I also consider it likely that the degree to which politics must go through the media will vary with for instance political system and media system in a given country or region. Even so, Castells' notions allow us to theoretically account for the parts of politics which do follow his prescribed pattern and there is great merit in that. A consequence of the intimate relations between politics and media is its self-reinforcing effect described as follows:

Once politics is captured in the space of the media, political actors themselves close the field of media politics by organizing political action primarily around the media: for instance, by leaking information to advance a given personal or political agenda. This lead, inevitably, the counter-leaks, so making the media the battleground in which political forces and personalities, as well as pressure groups, try to undermine each other (Castells 1997: 316)

The arguments of Castells resonate well with the proliferating theoretical literature on *mediatization* which investigates how the institutional logics of various organizations in society to a greater or lesser degree conform to a media logic in their everyday workings (see for instance: Hjarvard 2013; Maltby 2012; Strømback and Esser 2014). As such it also dovetails well with the theoretical literature on media and warfare discussed in the first part of this chapter and provides another theoretical perspective and argument for the proliferation of media policies of military agencies.

3.3 Research questions

It follows from this literature review and resulting theoretical exposition that one way to explore the dynamics of the Russian side of the 2014 conflict with Ukraine over the Crimean peninsula, is by identifying its related mediated public diplomacy efforts and mapping the narratives they projected. As we are dealing with a conflict, I have emphasized the importance of theoretically retaining a strategic mode of interaction. Without knowing the intentions of actors—getting inside the infamous black box—this is a very difficult task. To a great degree studies of strategic narrative and (mediated) public diplomacy will have to presuppose strategic capacity of actors. Inherently this

goes for this thesis as well. However, I will in part be helped by comparing statements of my data material with statements made at different points in time. For instance, in the data material it is consistently denied that Russian military servicemen are involved in the Crimean secession from Ukraine, yet as presented in the background chapter, the president later admitted that they were. Moreover, in an effort to more explicitly design the inquiry to identify strategic approaches to narratives, I will also explore antagonistic actor portrayals within them. The assumption then being that in a strategic mode of interaction opponents would be portrayed more antagonistically than other actors.

On the basis on the above discussion I derive two research questions for this thesis:

1. Which narratives can be identified in Russian mediated public diplomacy relating to the annexation of Crimea in February and March 2014?
2. What are the patterns of antagonism in actor portrayals of the narratives of Russian mediated public diplomacy relating to the annexation of Crimea in February and March 2014?

By answering these two very concrete research question I will gain insight into new aspects of non-kinetic efforts of the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea. The overarching object of this thesis is to, on the basis of these insights, determine whether the theoretical arguments developed in this chapter are a worthwhile approach to studying non-kinetic aspects of war and armed conflict more generally. This will be elaborated more upon in the below chapter.

4 Design

As the overall objective of this thesis is theoretical as opposed to empirical, I consider it valuable to devote some attention to the relation between design and inferential logic. Having constructed the above alternative approach to studying warfare and armed conflict, I will, as follows from the research questions, apply this perspective in a single-case study of Russian mediated public diplomacy efforts in relation to their 2014 operation

to annex the Crimean peninsula. The research strategy of this effort, is to probe the theoretical perspective in a relevant empirical case to see if this will provide new insights into non-kinetic aspects of warfare and armed conflict—consequently providing an indication whether this is a worthwhile approach to studying these phenomena or not. As this hints at, I see this thesis as one part of a broader research effort to increase the sophistication of our understand of these complex social phenomena.

I aim to make inferences from this study to theory, but critically to 'the *process* of theory construction rather than to theory itself' (Levy 2008: 5, italics in original). Levy (2008) goes on to explain the rationale behind this way of using a single-case study:

case studies can help refine and sharpen existing hypotheses in any research strategy involving an ongoing dialogue between theory and evidence. A theory guides an empirical analysis of a case, which is then used to suggest refinements in the theory, which can then be tested on other cases (Levy 2008: 5)

Referring again to Levy (2008)'s and his typology of case studies, a type very proximate to the case of this thesis is the hypothesis generating case study²⁸. This type is described in the following manner:

Unlike idiographic case studies, which aim to describe, interpret, or explain an individual historical episode, hypothesis-generating case studies aim to generalize beyond the data. They examine one or more cases for the purpose of developing more general theoretical propositions, which can then be tested through other methods, including large-N methods (Levy 2008: 5)

Since generalize beyond the data from a single case study is fraught with problems, I will be careful to formulate the hypotheses inferred in a manner that will make it easy to attempt to falsify them.

²⁸ Within his typology I might as well have called it a plausibility probe, but as this category says nothing of the inferential logic of the case study, I consider this more obfuscating and will not refer to it.

5 Analytical framework

In order to answer the two research questions of this thesis I will apply various techniques of textual analysis—both quantitative and qualitative. Specifically I will start with a preliminary quantitative content analysis of the journalistic sources used in data material coming from the news organization *RT*. After this I will go on to the two main analyses: first a qualitative narrative analysis in order to answer research question 1 and, second, a qualitative analysis of the portrayals of the actors in the narratives in order to answer research question 2. Since the analytical tools used are quite diverse, I will start the chapter by discussing the perspective on the relationship between text, interpretation, and meaning held for the purposes of this thesis. The methodological and design related choices I have made are partially a consequence of the data material at hand and I will therefore first continue with presenting the data material before I finally present the analytical techniques to be applied in the analysis in more detail.

5.1 Text, interpretation, and meaning

Since I operate with predefined categories such as narratives and various forms of actor portrayals in the main part of the analysis, one might imagine my perspective to be that there is specific meaning inherent in text—attributable to the intentions of its source—to be unveiled by the researcher in the same manner as geological formations on the earth are material facts to be identified and represented by the mapping authorities. Krippendorff refers to this perspective as 'definitions that take content to be *contained* in a text' and 'definitions that take content to be *a property of the source* of a text (Krippendorff 2013: 25, italics in original). I do not adhere to such a view. Rather my perspective is that content or meaning '*emerge in the process of a researcher analysing a text* relative to its context' (Krippendorff 2013: 25, italics in original) and that meaning thus is socially, historically and culturally constituted and a significant degree of interpretation on the part of the researcher is required in order to make sense of texts (Jørgensen and Phillips 1999: 14). This implies that any reading and subsequent coding and/or interpretation

of text is highly dependent upon the social context of the researcher.

The reason for nonetheless using such predefined categories as mentioned above, relates to the above elaborations and concerns the role of theory vis-a-vis empirics; because I set out with a predefined structure, that is said categories, I will get results that are given by this very structure. Although I base parts of the research questions on the notion of narratives and various actor portrayals, this does not imply that I necessarily believe there to be such predefined structures inherent in the texts. On the contrary I argue that such categories should first and foremost be seen as an analytical construct disciplining the inquiry, rather than an empirical claim.

The above acknowledgements create somewhat of a dissonance if juxtaposed with the criteria of replicability, objectivity etc. of scientific research ideals (King, Keohane and Verba 1994). Indeed we often find that textual analyses within political science have to balance in a split between two opposing views on the identity of social sciences; that is, between the criteria of natural sciences and humanities (Bratberg 2014: 12-13). In an effort to relieve some of this tension, I will attempt to be particularly careful and clear about how I interpret text material in keeping with the operationalized structures. This is not in an attempt to make the inquiry less about interpretation and more about measurement, but rather to make assumptions underpinning the interpretations clear so that any reader will be in a better position to judge the validity of inferences herself.

The preliminary part of the analysis will nonetheless be a content analysis of the journalistic sources in news texts coming from *RT*. This tradition may generally be thought of as running quite contrary to my above assertions on the necessity of interpretation. For the purposes of this thesis and its research questions, I do not consider such rigidity merited. I include the content analysis so as to get an overview of the sources present in the text in order to lay the ground for the analyses of narratives and actor portrayals to follow. I will not infer any particular meaning or ideology constructs from the counts provided by the analysis—as otherwise would be common for this type of method. For such a limited research objective I consider content analysis a convenient tool and I do not see any major epistemological challenges to combining qualitative and

quantitative approaches of textual analysis.

5.2 Data

My data are primarily media texts coming from the Russian television network and internet based news outlet RT—understood as a tool of Russian mediated public diplomacy. I have also included two texts coming from the Russian government’s English language web archive at en.kremlin.ru which I have identified as central. These texts are also considered part of mediated public diplomacy. I elaborate on both these sources of data in separate sections below.

It would possibly seem natural to also include more Russian context data explicitly into the analysis to account for intertextual references and the cultural context of statements. This is partly not done in order to limit the scope of the thesis. Even more so, however, this choice relates to the peculiarity of mediated public diplomacy; these are texts that are meant for an international and English-speaking target audience. The Russia specific intertextual references are arguably thus not available to the intended readers. To evaluate the texts on the basis of such cultural context would therefore miss the mark. This being said, it is naturally not possible to predetermine the cultural competencies of the target audiences of Russian mediated public diplomacy and I do not purport to do so either.

5.2.1 RT - Russia Today

This subsection on the RT data material I will, as is customary in studies of news organizations, start by elaborating on what we know of the organizational, financial, and editorial policies of RT. RT is a television network launched in 2005 as part of a larger campaign by the Russian government to improve its image abroad. It has three news channels broadcasting through cable and satellite globally. In addition to this, RT produces internet based news content in five languages. Its main office is in Moscow. According to their own account, they have 22 bureaus in 19 countries and ‘more than 1000 employees’ (<https://www.linkedin.com/company/rt>).

RT was established by the Russian news agency RIA Novosti, but it is consistently asserted that RT is fully independent from the agency²⁹. The network is owned by the the Russian government and financed over the federal budget. Different sources list different budget sizes, ranging from 310 to 445 million dollars for 2014³⁰ (Dziadul 2015; Tetrault-Farber 2014). In any case RT's funding increased significantly for 2015 in the government's overall effort to strengthen its information agencies (Ennis 2015).

Originally named Russia Today the network's mission was to inform a foreign audience of news in Russia. Realizing that there were very limited audiences to such news, Russia Today was re-branded in 2009 which also involved changing its name to RT (Von Twickel 2010). Today RT's official mission is to:

[provide] an alternative perspective on major global events, and acquaints an international audience with the Russian viewpoint (RT n.d.)

In other words, RT's new goal is to present a different view of world affairs, not a different view of domestic Russian politics. This contrasts with for instance the approach of China's CCTV which tries to achieve the goals of its public diplomacy by creating a more favourable view of China itself (Rawnsley 2015).

The journalist Margarita Simonyan became editor-in-chief of RT in 2005 and still manages both the network and the news agency Rossiya Segodnya established in 2013. She maintains that the editorial policy is decided by the network itself and not the government (Dougherty 2013: 54). She compares RT to European state funded international broadcasters such as BBC, France 24, and Deutsche Welle, yet maintains that the critical difference is that

'[...] I would say our mission is to think of the alternative picture. More than the mainstream media are showing. We deliberately choose to show something different to our viewers.' (Simonyan as quoted in: Dougherty 2013: 54)

When asked whether she considered RT an aspect of Russian soft power, Simonyan

²⁹ In 2013 RIA Novosti was subsumed into the news agency Rossiya Segodnya

³⁰ In comparison BBC World Service Group's budget for the financial year 2014/2015 was approx. 365 million dollars (*Annual Review 2013/2014* BBC World Service)

denied this (Dougherty 2013: 54). Scholarly research on RT is very limited, but among the contributions that exist, there is a consensus that—contrary to Simonyan’s denial, but as expected from the theoretical account of mediated public diplomacy presented in the previous chapter—RT is part of Russian public diplomacy and thus soft power arsenal (see for instance: Rawnsley 2015; Seib 2010: 738).

I will in the following treat RT as a mediated public diplomacy tool. This is however not a unproblematic approach and I do not purport to claim that RT acts as a direct extension of the Russian government’s policies. This is because although RT is considered part of the Russian government’s soft power arsenal, it needs to adhere to certain genre criteria if wanting to retain its credibility as a news provider. Among such ideal type criteria of news, we find their ‘unsystematic’ character where news are seen as dealing ‘with discrete events and happenings, and the world seen through news alone consists of unrelated happenings’ (McQuail 2010: 369). Such genre criteria mean that assuming a direct and unproblematic relationship between state interest and news production in RT would most likely be a simplification. Indeed, what is interesting about news organizations that are part of a state’s mediated public diplomacy is precisely the tension between the freedom they necessarily must be granted and the politically motivated purposes for their establishment. Many of the design and data related choices I have made reflects this complicated relationship. Specifically, two design and data related measures will be undertaken in order to more validly be able to discern between Russian narratives and representations of other actors’ narratives in RT texts: First, I will as mentioned include data material coming directly from the Russian government and compare their narratives to the narratives of RT. Second, I will do a preliminary content analysis of the journalistic sources used in the RT texts. Both of these measures will be elaborated more upon in designated sections below.

Procedure for retrieving RT data

I wanted all English language news articles related to the political situation in Ukraine under the period of the annexation of Crimea. By annexation of Crimea I refer to the

military efforts undertaken to support this operation and according to Lavrov (2014: 164) this started 27 February. Because we know that non-kinetic aspects of military operations often precede the kinetic ones, I wanted data from some days before this (Armistead 2004). I therefore chose the period 20 February - 31 March 2014.

The webpage www.rt.com retains documents from that far back, but they do not have a open or public archive. It is therefore only possible to access the articles by scrolling in their feed. This is a very unstable method and thus not a realistic option. I therefore used Google Search to retrieve the documents with the following search specifications³¹

1. *Search string:* site:rt.com/news -arabic
2. *Specified time period:* 20 February 2014 - 31 March 2014

I got 500 results from this search. I only saved articles which had the following words in their title and/or lead paragraph³²:

1. Ukrain*
2. Crimea*
3. Kiev*
4. Sanction*
5. Yanukovich*
6. Maidan*
7. Black Sea*

This resulted in 221 results and articles. In addition I identified 12 results that did not fit my criteria but that nonetheless seemed like it could be related to the political

³¹ The data were collected on Thursday 8 October 2015.

³² The star is an indication that any ending of the word is included

situation on interest in this thesis. I read all these articles and decided to include all of them in my data material resulting in 233 RT documents in my material in total.

I can not be certain that this retrieval procedure has left me with the universe of RT articles of that time span as I do not know neither the specificities of Google's indexing procedures nor the universe of articles of the period. Since *rt.com* does not have an archive I considered and tested several different approaches to retrieving the data. The reason why I chose the one described above is because it is the one which left me with the most articles and thus necessarily the best approximation to the universe of articles. As the above discussion nonetheless goes to show, because I do not know the universe of articles I cannot be certain of degree of the reliability of this procedure.

Drawing a sample of the RT data

The preliminary content analysis of sources is done on the entire data material. The two subsequent qualitative analyses are done on a sample of it. I used the following sampling procedure: I grouped all texts according to their date published—a strata. I then named each text according to its date and numbered the texts within each date strata. I then drew four random numbers within each strata³³. This left me with 153 articles for the qualitative narrative and actor portrayal analyses as not all dates had four or more relevant texts.

The reason why I stratified the sample had to do with the research question; since I am looking at narratives, that is representation of sequences of events, I considered it important to have data from every single day in order to maximize the chances of every important event being present in the data material.

³³ I drew the numbers in the computer programme RStudio using the function *sample*. If a given date had seven articles, the code would be the following: `sample(1:7, 4)` which would leave me with four random digits between 1 and 7.

5.2.2 en.kremlin.ru

In addition to media content from RT, I wanted to include statements coming directly from the Russian government. This has to do with issues of data triangulation: drawing data from different sources increases the validity of the findings. This point is mirrored in a concern I also had with design issues relating to working with the genre of mediated public diplomacy: as previously mentioned, although I consider RT a tool of mediated public diplomacy, this does not mean that it acts as a direct extension of the Kremlin narratives. In order to be considered a relevant media outlet it needs to also represent narratives competing with the Russian government's. Moreover, individual journalists may make individual choices that to a greater or lesser degree contradict the strategic communication plans of the government. By including texts coming directly from the Kremlin, I am able to compare the narratives from RT and the Kremlin and thus better discern what are representations of other actors' narratives and what corresponds to the Kremlin's.

The documents from en.kremlin.ru comprise full transcripts of interviews and speeches held by the president, write ups of meetings of varying detail, statements concerning issued presidential decrees and more. As I initially surveyed the material, it appeared, however, that most of these were very brief and not very informative. Two of them did nonetheless stand out in terms of both length and political saliency. I have therefore included these two in the data material. The first is a 9014 word transcript of a press conference held by Vladimir Putin 4 March 2014 and the second is an 5286 word long address held by Putin 18 March known as 'the Crimean speech'.

The initial retrieval and subsequent surveying of these texts was done by using the web page en.kremlin.ru's own archive³⁴. This is the official website of the Russian presidency. In the archive function I was presented with two options: news or events. Choosing events gave me three further options: news, events, and trips. The news under the 'Events' headline correspond fully to the initial news option. I chose both News and Events and then went on to define 20 February 2014 as the begin date of my query. I

³⁴ On Friday 9 October 2015

copied every single article in individual word documents saved locally to my computer and subsequently singled out the two of interest.

5.3 Content analysis of RT sources - the preliminary analysis

Analysis of the journalistic sources in news has long traditions. The news media can be seen as a critical component of an ideal type Habermasian public sphere (Habermas 1989) and this is why uncovering patterns of inclusion and exclusion has been considered an important task. As this hints at, an important and ever present question within such analyses is that of access. Both *who* has access and *who* has the power to determine who this is (Franklin and Carlson 2011: 4-5). The former is the most relevant for the purposes of answering this thesis' research question.

Manning (2001: 19-22) conceives of the organization of news production (and by implication the use of sources) in the American and/or Western-European context as a power relationship between journalists, news proprietors, and political elites each bringing with it its own constraint and imperatives. Such power may work both structurally and instrumentally (Murdoch 1982: 124). If applying this model on publicly owned media outlets such as RT, we would need to collapse political elites and proprietors as actors in this relationship. Expectedly, then, news production would be left a struggle between the constraints and imperatives of journalistic professionalism on the one hand and political owners on the other. Research on the Russian media system goes to show, however, that the degree of professionalism in the post-Soviet generation of journalists is low³⁵ (Pasti 2005: 103), and expectedly it is even more so in a media organization such as *RT* that is so explicit in its affiliation with mainstream politics. All in all, this leads me to expect that the use of sources is highly aligned with the interest of the state owners. Nonetheless, as discussed above, despite the strong government control, RT

³⁵ There are, however, good reasons to question the neutrality or universality of the term *professionalism*. Pasti (2005: 103) finds that in Russia journalism is understood as inherently derivative of power and its degree of professionalism is not evaluated along the dimensions of autonomy and independence. The ideal journalism is 'creative, politically mature [and] non-standardized', not detached, disinterested or neutral as within a Western understanding

must be expected to have a certain room of manoeuvre. I therefore consider it likely that there will be many sources in RT whose message is not aligned with the Russian government's. This is what motivates the source analysis.

The source analysis will be done in order to get an overview of which actors' perspectives and narratives expectedly are represented in the texts coming from RT. The main purpose of this preliminary effort is thus to equip myself with an analytical tool that can guide the later analyses with regards to delineating Russian narratives from representations of other actors' narratives. I will however still present the findings of this source analysis in a quantified form so as to illustrate the extent to which non-Russian narratives are present in the RT data.

Of course features other than frequencies contribute to explaining the presence of meaning inherent in texts, and any such quantitative measure can of course not give the full picture. For instance Eide (2002: 90) emphasizes that it is also important '[who the reader is] invited to identify with'. In this case, for instance, a more thorough reading of the material would have revealed that some of the American sources support the Russian narratives and opposes those of the American government. Since the main concerns of this thesis and its research questions are not with RT as a journalistic product in and of itself, such detailed study fall outside of the scope of this inquiry.

5.3.1 Content analysis and procedures

The most appropriate method for mapping sources present in RT is a simple content analysis, described by Bratberg (2014) as:

techniques for summarizing and describing content in text by means of quantitative measures³⁶ (Bratberg 2014: 84)

As stated many times already, the objective of the preliminary analysis is to be able to discern Russian narratives from the representation of competing narratives in the subsequent qualitative analyses. The content analysis will thus only be used for

³⁶ My translation. Original: teknikker for sammenfatting og beskrivelse av innhold i tekst ved hjelp av kvantitative mål

descriptive purposes. The unit of analysis is the explicit presence of a particular source in a discrete text. I have operationalized this as one of the following types of phrases:

- (a) the reference to a person, institution, document, or news agency followed by a verb indicating an utterance. This includes, but is not limited to, the following statements: ... reports ..., ... says ..., ... claims ... ³⁷
- (b) the reference to a person, institution, document, or news agency after the phrase 'according to'
- (c) the use of quotation marks and/or dash indication quotation

I have furthermore coded each unit according to reported information related to the variables in the table below. The 'institution category' variable is based upon my own interpretation of what type of institution they are from. The 'via news org(anization)?' variable was included after I piloted an initial coding scheme without this variable on 20 texts. I then found it difficult to decide how to code instances such as: '[...], said Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov, as reported by ITAR-TASS'. The following table is an illustration of how this example would have been coded in the final version of the coding scheme.

ID	Name	Nationality	Title	Institution
1	S. Lavrov	Russia	Foreign minister	MFA

Institution category	Via news org?	If so, which?
Government	Yes	ITAR-TASS

Table 1: Coding example

³⁷ Any tense of the verb may have been used. That means that 'reports' also refers to reported and reporting. The three dots refers to placement of actor name.

When doing a content analysis one must also address issues relating to the reliability of the coding process. Reliability refers to 'the consistency of measures' (Bryman 2008: 149). With regards to content analysis the critical questions are that of *inter coder reliability* and *intra coder reliability*. The former concerns the degree to which two or more coders code the same empirical observations in the same manner and is thus irrelevant for this thesis as there has only been one coder (the author). Intra coder reliability on the other hand concern the individual coders consistency over time (Bryman 2008: 288). I have taken two main measures to increase the intra coder reliability: As mentioned, I first performed a pilot where I found it necessary to include the via news outlet-factor. Because I did not perform a intra-coder reliability test, I wanted to to minimize the potential sources of error and thus performed the coding over only two days so as to minimize the time span of the process.

5.4 Narrative analysis - the first qualitative part

I now move on to detailing the narrative structure that will serve as my research tool of the first part of the qualitative analysis. In summarizing various scholars' definitions of narrative, Rudrum (2005: 196) finds that that they share an understanding of narrative as a 'representation of a series or sequence of events'. Miskimmon et al. (2013: 5) explain narrative in two different ways and the first echoes Rudrums findings because it it also emphasizes temporality by explaining that a narrative 'entails an initial situation or order, a problem that disrupts that order, and a resolution that re-establishes order'. I suggest that this approach can be seen as defining the structure of a narrative. To be used as a tool in the analysis, it will be operationalized as linguistic representations of causality. In the most concrete terms possible this means, for instance, two pieces of information linked by words such as *because*, *due to*, *since*, *as a result of*, *thanks to*, *owing to*, *on the grounds that* and more. This is naturally non-exhaustive as language is flexible, and provides for a myriad of ways of expressing the same idea. It is for instance easily conceivable that a causal representation can be expressed at a linguistic level above individual words. In order to be able to analytically identify also such types of

representations of causality, I have intentionally decided to have an operationalization of narrative that is somewhat open. The definition and its operationalization is summarized in the below table:

NARRATIVE as an analytical tool	
Definition	Beginning, midsection, suggested end
Operationalization	Causal representations
Examples (non-exhaustive)	Because, due to, since, as a result of, thanks to, owing to, on the grounds that, and more.

Table 2: Narrative as an analytical tool

Miskimmon et al. (2013)'s second explanation of narrative, on the other hand, can be seen as a content approach: Rather than focusing on a narrative's structure, it lists its component parts. My final argument in this regard is that the structure approach and content approach must be seen as complimentary rather than competing. Burke (1969), for instance, takes on a content approach by claiming that a narrative consists of actors, action, goal or intent, a scene and an instrument. Miskimmon et al. (2013: 5) more or less paraphrase Burke by claiming that a narrative is 'compromised of actors; events, plot, and time; and setting and space'. In an attempt to synthesize these two claims, I suggest that we can understand the content of a narrative as consisting of actors, events, settings, and (suggested) resolution. The inclusion of resolution is it self a synthesis between Burke's goal and instrument. The element of time as listed by Miskimmon et al. I suggest designated to the structure rather than content.

Investigating the representations of all content categories of the narratives would be too large a task for the scope of this thesis. I will therefore limit the inquiry to actor portrayals. The choice of actor portrayal is naturally related to the research question and

the presumption that this a content type in which antagonism can be identified. In order to explore these actor portrayals and gain purchase on the significance of their meaning, I need more sophisticated analytical tools. These will be detailed in the following.

5.5 Actor portrayals - the second qualitative part

The analysis of actor portrayals in media texts has a long, but somewhat fragmented tradition rich with analytical tools. Because of this the analytical tools included here are diverse and at different analytical levels vis-a-vis the actual texts. All of these tools will nonetheless be used to identify patterns of antagonism in actor portrayals.

At the most aggregate level I will look for *enemy images*, *symbolic annihilation* and the simultaneous portrayal of *the self* as an actor. The two former serve as ideal types of antagonism, whereas the latter's relation to antagonism is more indirect. This will be discussed below.

An *enemy image* is defined as:

A negative stereotypical description of a nation/state/religion/ideology or regime/state leader. The enemy image is expressed through metaphors, imagery or other literary, visual or graphic effects that create expectations of inhumane, aggressive or hostile actions³⁸ (Ottosen 1993: 31)

The various literary terms and word classes that create the enemy image according to this definition will be elaborated upon in the below section on predicate analysis.

Numerous studies have found enemy images to be prevalent in both news media and propaganda (Keen 1991; Luostarinen 1989; Ottosen 1995; Torsti 2007). This would make enemy images a suitable candidate in the analysis of mediated public diplomacy. I have however not been able to identify such studies on Russian material. This has implication for the interpretation of the definitional criterion of stereotypes: these are highly culturally specific phenomena and with little previous research it's difficult to

³⁸ My translation. Original: (Et fiendebilde er) en negativ stereotyp beskrivelse av en nasjon/stat/religion/ideologi eller regime/statsleder. Fiendebildet kommer til uttrykk gjennom metaforer, billedbruk eller andre sprklike, visuelle eller grafiske effekter som skaper forventninger om umenneskelige, aggressive eller fiendtlige handlinger

determine *a priori* what counts as a stereotype and not. I will therefore be somewhat lax with regards to this criterion.

Two final clarifications on my interpretation of this definition is needed. First, the inquiry of this study will be limited to literary enemy images as opposed to visual or graphic ones. Second, I see enemy images as a portrayal that may be created at various levels of text. That is, an enemy image may be identified both as well as on the level of the individual sentence (as in Steuter and Wills (2010)'s example 'Islam is a virus') and through the tendentious portrayal of a certain actor or group over time, which at the individual sentence level may not come across as particularly radical.

Symbolic annihilation is a form of non-portrayal of actors (Tuchman, Daniels and Benet 1978). It 'is a way of representation which renders the Other invisible, insignificant, and/or incomprehensible to the public' (Eide 2002: 46). Eide (2002: 45) furthermore illustrates this phenomenon by detailing how in 1998 a tidal wave killed 10 000 people in north-western India without it hardly being mentioned in Norwegian newspapers. Symbolic annihilation is a somewhat complicated analytical tool to work with because the number of actors that in principle *could* be included into any narrative is for practical purposes indefinite. What I will do is to include a list of actors relevant to the political events at hand based upon the background chapter and subsequently compare it to the list of actors represented in the data material to assess if there are actors that are continuously face non-representation.

Regarding the final analytical tool, that is the simultaneous representation of other actors and *the self*, a short elaboration upon structural linguistic theory is needed in order to provide the rationale for this tool's inclusion in a study whose research question concerns antagonism. Classical works within this tradition hold that at the most basic level, meaning is created through relationships of differentiation³⁹ (Saussure 1966: 121). That is, an object only comes to be as *something* by being distinct from *something else*. After something comes to exist, it may also be ascribed with identity or characteristics—which conversely implies equating the object with something. Ascribing an actor

³⁹ Analogous to binary code which is used in almost all computer systems

with an identity, then, is a simultaneous process of linking and differentiation. This means that all things exist only in relation to other thing—in their relative positioning within a sign system (Milliken 1999: 229). Furthermore, identity ascriptions are thought to be constructed in terms of binary, hierarchical oppositions (Derrida 1981: 41). This can be exemplified by for instance our tendency to define states as either 'developed' or 'under-developed', 'civilized' or 'uncivilized' whereby the one is not intelligible without the other. Studies of foreign policy have shown how the identity of states or regions historically have been constructed in opposition to a constitutive Other such as for instance Europe being the constitutive Other of Russia's identity (Neumann 1996). For our purpose this means that the way in which other actors are portrayed (through amongst other things enemy images and symbolic annihilation) simultaneously reveal something about the portrayal of the self—that is Russia. In the same vein portrayal of the self will contribute to the other groups' portrayal. As we will see, the Ukrainian government is for instance portrayed as incapable and passive and the Russian government is simultaneously portrayed as capable and active. It should be noted that studies of international affairs that incorporate this perspective will often concern *identity* as a more fundamental concept than the *portrayal of actors* that I am interested in for the purposes of this thesis. Although the perspective of this thesis is somewhat different, the above theoretical elaboration are still relevant.

5.5.1 Qualitative reading of identity as predicate analysis

The concepts elaborated upon above are analytical constructs, but they must nonetheless necessarily be identified through the actual reading of actual texts. In order to do so I will perform a qualitative analysis based on my own interpretations of the text in relation to said categories. Within this type of analyses, intimate reading of texts has become customary (Bratberg 2014: 49). 'Qualitative' and 'interpretation', however, need not mean that it is not possible to explain the procedures I will follow. Milliken (1999) suggests that textually intimate analyses most often implicitly or explicitly use *predicate analysis* as their method. Predicate analysis 'focuses on the language practices

of predication—the verbs, adverbs and adjectives that attach to nouns’ (Milliken 1999: 232). I will add to this that all word classes may of course be part of a predicate, not only the three she lists⁴⁰. These predications endow the subject with specific meanings, characteristics, and so on⁴¹.

I am the most interested in the following types of predicates:

WORD CLASSES (non-exhaustive)	
Adjective	A word class that describes a pronoun or noun
Adverb	A word class that describes a verb, adjective, another adverb, a clause, or a whole sentence
Verb	A word class that describes an action, condition, or experience’
Noun	A word class that function as the name of a concrete or abstract thing or set of things

Table 3: Word classes

As indicated by the definition of enemy images, I will also identify the literary devices presented together with their definition in table 4 immediately below. These literary devices refer to particular constellations of the more general predicates listed in table 3.

⁴⁰ Within studies of grammar there are two competing notions of predicate. In this thesis I am referring to the understanding of *traditional* grammar whereby a predicate is ‘everything in a clause that’s not part of the subject’ (Kroeger 2005: 63).

⁴¹ Milliken (1999: 231) go on to suggest that ‘predicate analysis is suitable for the study of language practices in texts (e.g. diplomatic documents, theory articles, transcripts of interviews), the main research material for International Relations’.

LITERARY DEVICES	
Metaphor	'A word or expression that in literal usage denotes one kind of thing, without asserting a comparison' (Abrams and Harpham 2012: 130)
Simile	'A comparison between two distinctly different things is explicitly indicated by the word 'like' or 'as"' (Abrams and Harpham 2012: 130)
(Historical) analogy	'The illustration of an idea by means of comparison to a recognizable parallel' (Cuddon 2013). In the case of historical analogies this refers to recognizable historical parallels

Table 4: Literary devices

Within literatures dealing with media portrayal of international conflict generally as well as enemy images specifically, attention has been devoted to the use of metaphors⁴² (see for instance: Lakoff 1991; Lule 2004; Steuter and Wills 2008). Steuter and Wills (2010), for instance, find that in American post-9/11 media portrayals of Islam and religious Muslim actors, the religion and the actors are often dehumanized by using animal metaphors such as that of the vermin. For the purposes of this thesis I see similes as extensions of metaphors without problematising this relationship further. All else being equal a metaphor would nonetheless of course make for a more assertive association than a simile.

As the definition presented in table 4 says, an analogy is also a form of comparison and will thus often take the shape of a metaphor or simile. As elaborated upon in Baldick (2008), however, an analogy will often be an *extended* simile which means that

⁴² In order to limit the scope of this thesis, I will not account for the theoretical literature on the role of metaphors in language, human cognition and social relations. For a seminal work on this see Lakoff and Johnson (1980).

it will often have a more complex structure than a simple simile or metaphor. In the context of domestic political rhetoric, Noon (2004: 341) suggest that historical analogies serve to 'trigger emotional, even subconscious associations that are equally capable of inspiring, attracting, and recruiting support for a particular political decision'. Rather poetically he continues to detail how collective historical memory serves as a 'reservoir of social memory into which current events, detached from the routine flow of history, may be siphoned off and blessed with gravity and epic meaning'. As I have depicted in the background chapter Ukraine and Russia have a rich and shared, yet contested history, and I anticipate that this will make historical analogies a very relevant category in the study of the Russian texts.

As long as one is not following a very strict, schematic coding of predicates and nouns one could argue that predicate analysis is simply a fancy rephrasing of reading. I would argue however that referring to such a method will structure the reading so as to make it more analytical. After all, for a researcher to read the newspaper in the morning and read her data material for an analysis are two similar, but distinct processes. Talking of the method as predicate analysis is a way of indicating this.

6 Analysis

In this part of the analysis I will first look at the sources used in order to determine which voices are being represented in RT's coverage of the annexation. In order to answer research question 1, I will go on to map the narratives of the conflict. I have done this in a two-step process capitalizing on the different genre of material in my data. I will first map narratives of the Kremlin material and subsequently use these narratives as analytical tools when analysing the RT material. This is done in order to more validly determine which representations in the RT material can be considered part of Russian narratives as well as to be able to identify potential discrepancies between the two genres and material. Finally, in order to answer research question 3, I will look at for patterns of antagonism in the actor portrayals of the narratives.

6.1 Sources

As a preliminary part of the analysis I will look at the sources present in the RT material. Because of my research topic and questions, I am particularly interested in the nationalities of the sources and whether they are elite sources or not. Nationality is a variable that each unit of analysis has been coded on. The elite/non-elite dichotomy on the other hand was not⁴³. Rather it is a composite category I have created based upon the variable *institution category*. I have operationalized this dichotomy so that the institutional categories *government, local government, ex-government, judiciary, local judiciary, parliament, local parliament, opposition, local opposition, security services, local security services, ex security services, armed forces, international organization, regional organization, civil society, local civil society, religion, and professionals* have been included into the elite group. *Professionals* include individuals that have been used as a source on the basis of her profession. Most of these units are either election observers or political analysts used as experts. The reason for including civil society as an elite, is that all sources coded as civil society are within the leadership of civil society organizations. *Protesters, Maidan protesters, and individuals* have been included into the non-elite group. *Individuals* refer to sources referred to by virtue of being a 'citizen' or 'eye-witness'.

There are also a considerable count of sources that could not meaningfully be placed within this dichotomy. The bulk of units within the category *unidentifiable* refers to social media users where the information provided cannot be used to determine their social status⁴⁴. It also includes references to inanimate objects such as videos or polls with unspecified origins as well as unspecified references such as 'reports have it that' and similar. I have furthermore excluded traditional media sources from the elite/non-elite dichotomy as I do not consider this a relevant dichotomy for describing the status

⁴³ This was an intentional choice made in order to limit sources that could disrupt reliability of the coding

⁴⁴ Conversely when for instance a tweet from the NATO secretary general appeared, this has been coded as *regional organization* on the *institution category* variable and been included in the elite category.

of traditional media sources.

ELITE AND NON-ELITE SOURCES IN <i>RT</i>		
Elite	685	75 %
Non-elites	39	4 %
Traditional media	112	12 %
Unidentifiable	81	9 %
<i>Total</i>	<i>917</i>	<i>100 %</i>

Table 5: Elite and non-elite sources in RT

As we see from this table, 75 % of sources used by RT are elite sources. Elites are an inherent part of the production of news and as such their dominance is to be expected (Schudson 2003: 150). 75 % does nonetheless represent a very large number. Expectedly, many of the media sources have they themselves relied on elites for their coverage, if so suggesting that the elite influence on portrayal in RT is even higher. A preliminary conclusion is that RT is very elite dependent in its source usage. The elite category used in the above table is however quite wide in that it includes both government and non-government sources as elites. It would therefore be a worthwhile endeavour to attempt to get a more refined understanding of the elites sources by decomposing these numbers by elite type.

ELITE SOURCES IN <i>RT</i>		
Elite type	Count	Percentage
National government	392	56 %
Local government	54	7 %
Ex-government	11	2 %
Parliament and opposition	77	11 %
Local parliament and opposition	19	3 %
Judiciary	12	2 %
Professionals	50	7 %
Civil society	20	3 %
Business	8	1 %
International and regional organizations	46	7 %
Religion	7	1 %
<i>Total</i>	<i>685</i>	<i>100 %</i>

Table 6: Elite sources in RT

In this table the 685 sources in the elite category have been decomposed on the basis of the variable *institution category*. It is however not fully disaggregated as the category national government in the table for instance includes the values *government*, *armed forces*, and *security services*.

From the numbers in this table we see a more diverse picture where different elite groups are used as sources. However, if combining the counts and percentages for the elites belonging to the state apparatus, that is all but professionals, civil society, business, international and regional organizations and religion, we get a count of 565 and percentage of 82. That is, 82 % of the elite sources are from state structures. For our purposes the most interesting conclusion to draw next, is that elite and government sources are very present in the material, also comparatively (see for instance: Strømback and Nord

2006). This could lend a certain credence to an argument that the government side of the power relationship between government and journalistic professionalism is dominant in the case of RT—or, at the very least, that journalistic professionalism is low—but this would need to be investigated further to be determined. I will now turn to nationalities of RT sources.

NATIONALITIES OF RT SOURCES					
Country	Count	Percentage	Country	Count	Percentage
Ukraine	305	33 %	Turkey	3	0,3 %
Russia	274	30 %	Belarus	2	0,2 %
USA	83	9 %	Canada	2	0,2 %
Crimea	26	3 %	Estonia	2	0,2 %
Germany	20	2 %	Latvia	2	0,2 %
Poland	14	1,5 %	Afghanistan	1	0,1 %
UK	14	1,5 %	Armenia	1	0,1 %
France	8	0,9 %	Belgium	1	0,1%
Austria	4	0,4 %	Ecuador	1	0,1 %
China	4	0,4 %	Finland	1	0,1 %
Serbia	4	0,4 %	Israel	1	0,1 %
Bulgaria	3	0,3 %	Lithuania	1	0,1 %
Czech Republic	3	0,3 %	International	48	5 %
Ireland	3	0,3 %	Unknown	83	9 %
Italy	3	0,3 %			
<i>Total:</i>				<i>917</i>	<i>100 %</i>

Table 7: Nationalities of RT sources

As seen in the table above, Ukrainian and Russian sources are the very most prevalent. That Ukrainian sources are prevailing is to be expected as Ukraine is the territory

upon which the conflict of the empirical case plays it self out. In order to be able to recount these events and affairs, one would necessarily have to use many Ukrainian sources. Nonetheless, I still consider it somewhat surprising to see that not only are the majority of sources are Ukrainian, but 70 % are non-Russian. This pattern warrants the inquiry and attention devoted to sources. Besides Ukraine and Russia, the main bulk are from the U.S and EU totalling 83 each. As will be seen in the later analysis, this mirrors the actors assigned with a role in the Russian narratives.

Cross-tabulating nationality with elite-status might shed some final light upon the sources of the RT data. In the below table I have only included the eight most prevalent nationalities. Since the counts of the rest of the nationalities are so low, I see little benefit in disintegrating the numbers further.

NATIONALITY AND ELITE/NON-ELITE IN RT SOURCES

	<i>Elite</i>		<i>Non-elite</i>		<i>Media</i>		<i>Unidentified</i>		Total	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Ukraine	251	82 %	27	9 %	20	7 %	7	2 %	305	100 %
Russia	200	73 %	5	1,8 %	68	24,8 %	1	0,4 %	83	100 %
USA	79	95 %	-	-	3	4 %	1	1 %	83	100 %
International	47	98 %	-	-	1	2 %	-	-	48	100 %
Crimea	18	70 %	4	15 %	4	15 %	-	-	26	100 %
Germany	17	85 %	1	5 %	2	10 %	-	-	20	100 %
Poland	14	100 %	-	-	-	-	-	-	14	100 %
UK	14	100 %	-	-	-	-	-	-	14	100 %
France	6	75 %	-	-	2	25 %	-	-	8	100 %

Table 8: Nationalities and elite status of RT sources

This cross-tabulation reveals an interesting final pattern. It appears that foreign countries have the highest percentages of elite sources. As previously mentioned, nationality does naturally not determine political affiliation and a French source may very well express sentiments closer to Russian than French government narratives. Nonetheless, I consider it more likely for elites than non-elites to be part of their domestic political establishment and adhere to its mainstream narratives on world affairs and similar. This would indicate that representation of other main actors' narratives are likely very prevalent in the RT material.

Besides this, these numbers also demonstrate the limited use of other international media as sources, that Ukrainian and Russian sources are the most spread out in terms of social categories, and that only Ukrainian, Russian, Crimean, and German nationalities are present among non-elite sources.

6.1.1 Conclusion of preliminary analysis

I summarize this preliminary analysis by concluding that the sources of the RT data material are biased towards elites, but quite balanced in terms of nationality. In combination I take these two factors to indicate that many mainstream government narratives of other countries on the political situation in Ukraine will be represented in the RT

material as well. On the basis of the counts I expect Ukrainian, American and EU narratives in particular to be present. In the subsequent analyses I will therefore pay particular attention to the ascribed origination of statements in order to discern Russian narratives from representation of primarily Ukrainian, American and EU narratives.

6.2 Narratives

In order to uncover the Russian narratives relating to the 2014 annexation of Crimea, I have done two separate, but related analyses. First I read the data material coming from en.kremlin.ru. This part of the analysis concludes with models illustrating narrative(s) on the annexation of Crimea. I then use these models as analytical tools in the following analysis of the RT material. The main reasons for doing so both relate to the difference in genre as elaborated upon above. In both data materials much attention is devoted to the political events in Ukraine at the time more generally, specifically 'the coup'⁴⁵ in Kiev. Since, as will be shown, these two events in varying degree are represented as related to each other, I find it necessary to account for the narration of both in order to answer the research question properly.

6.2.1 From Kremlin texts

Narratives on the political situation in Crimea

In the Kremlin presentation of the political situation and turbulence in Ukraine in February and March 2014 as per 4 March, 'there can only be one assessment': the main cause of concern and thus problem is 'an anti-constitutional takeover, an armed seizure of power' in Kiev (Putin 2014a). Despite this essentialist formulation, an ensuing chaos throughout the Western part of the country is portrayed as equally problematic: 'What is our biggest concern? We see the rampage of reactionary forces, nationalist and anti-Semitic forces going on in certain parts of Ukraine, including Kiev' (Putin 2014a).

At this point in time, 4 March, however, Russia had already launched a military

⁴⁵ I am aware that this is a contested term, but I will nonetheless from now on refer to this event as 'the coup' since this is the term that is used in the data material.

operation to take control over the 27 000 m² of Ukrainian territory that is Crimea and thus enabled regional politicians to depose of its governor and vote to hold a referendum on the peninsula's autonomy (Lavrov 2014: 163-165). In contrast with the portrayal of political events in Kiev and disproportionate to the political magnitude of these actions, what is at all mentioned of their unfolding in Crimea is very vague. The below excerpt provides an illustrating example:

What was going on [in Crimea]? People came, surrounded units of the armed forces and talked to them, convincing them to follow the demands and the will of the people living in that area. There was not a single armed conflict, not a single gunshot (Putin 2014a)

What additionally is said of Crimea in the 4 March text, is that it is receiving humanitarian support from Russia, that Russia increased security around its military facilities located there, that there has been no violence, and finally that what is happening on the peninsula (whatever that may be) is an example of Russian-Crimean unity (Putin 2014a). Although the latter-most notion foreshadows the very grandiose narration of the political conflict over Crimea from the other text in the material, this exhaustive list of vague descriptions show that as per 4 March there simply is no proper narration of the political events taking place in Crimea. The temporal narrative structure of an order, a disruption and (suggested) resolution is not present. Because we now know that a Russian military operation at the time had been going on for at least six days, this lack of representation of the events is remarkable (Lavrov 2014: 164). With the benefit of retrospect, it's clear that this represents an overt attempt at agenda setting because by not representing the Russian military operation in Crimea, only the political events in Kiev are left to be defined as a problem calling for policy response.

In relation to this lack of narration, there is also a somewhat confusing representation as the president talks about

when a few days ago a group of armed men tried to occupy the building of the Crimean [parliament], this caused the concern of the local residents. It seemed as though someone wanted to apply the Kiev scenario in Crimea and to launch a series of terrorist attacks and cause chaos (Putin 2014a)

It was critically because of this, Putin continues, that Crimeans 'set up self-defence committees and took control over all the armed forces' (Putin 2014a). This event is thus portrayed as the reason why Crimeans broke the central governments monopoly of violence on the peninsula. This is profound both in terms of the symbolic value and the loss of physical enforcement competency of the central government. The confusing aspect is that the only armed forces that had occupied the Crimean parliament at this point were in fact Russian task forces ⁴⁶ that hoisted a Russian flag above the building early morning 27 February and subsequently let MPs in to hold an emergency session to depose of their prime minister and vote to hold the referendum on autonomy (Lavrov 2014: 163). Within the framework of this thesis there is not room for any in depth inquiry as to the intentions behind this inconsistency. It could however possibly be seen as a variant of the lack of narration; instead of simply not at all representing and narrating, there is a certain narration, but this does not correspond to observed practice or observed practice reported by other sources.

As already alluded to, in the case in Putin's Crimean speech of 18 March, the political events of Crimea are in stark contrast subject to a sweeping narration. The Russian military involvement is nonetheless still left out of this. On 18 March Russian and Crimean authorities sign the final document of accession of Crimea to the Russian Federation. Speaking before both chambers of Russia's Federal Assembly, president Putin declares that the accession has 'vital, historic significance to all of us' and draws historical parallels going 2500 years back (Putin 2014b). The main argument goes that Crimea is central to Russian sense of historical, cultural and civilizational self. As such this argument elaborates upon the 'unity' mentioned in the 4 March text as referred to above. In discerning the concrete narrative structure, it becomes clear that the initial situation of the narrative is for Crimea and Russia to be one and the same—to be united.

The combined effects of two occurrences serve as the disruptive events of this narrative: the first concerns 'the personal initiative of the Communist Party head Nikita Khrushchev' in 1954 to 'transfer [the] Crimean Region [including Sevastopol] to Ukraine'

⁴⁶Albeit they were not positively confirmed as Russian at that time

(Putin 2014b). At this time Ukraine was of course still a republic of the USSR and although the 'decision was made in clear violation of the constitutional norms', the transfer 'was treated as a formality of sorts because the territory was transferred within the boundaries of a single state' (Putin 2014b). Second, making the disruption complete, as the 1990's began and the Soviet Union dissolved, Ukraine became an independent state. This was on the whole a very chaotic process, and 'it was only when Crimea ended up as part of a different country that Russia realised that it was not simply robbed, it was plundered' (Putin 2014b). Both of these two events are seen as illegitimate because

the people could not reconcile themselves to this outrageous historical injustice. All these years, citizens and many public figures came back to this issue, saying that Crimea is historically Russian land and Sevastopol is a Russian city (Putin 2014a)

In combination the 1954 transfer Crimea to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and the dissolution of the Soviet Union serve to disrupt the historical unity of Crimea and Russia.

In this sweeping narrative, the role of more recent political developments in Ukraine is related to *two* resolutions aimed at re-establishing equilibrium. The latest of them the 2014 accession of Crimea into Russia. The first attempt at resolution was a border demarcation treaty between Russia and Ukraine of 2010. The Russian rationale in signing this treaty was precisely to make sure 'that everyone had a clear understanding that by agreeing to delimit the border we admitted de facto and de jure that Crimea was Ukrainian territory, thereby closing the issue' (Putin 2014b). It is as such clearly presented as an attempt at reaching a resolution by Russia acquiescing in the Crimean peninsula being Ukrainian land. However, statements that follow indicate that it is best viewed as a *qualified* resolution; the Russians signed this treaty because they 'hoped that Russian citizens and Russian speakers in Ukraine, especially its southeast and Crimea, would live in a friendly, democratic and civilised state that would protect their rights in line with the norms of international law'. However, 'this is not how the situation developed' (Putin 2014b). As is resonant with the portrayal of the chaos following the ousting of president Yanukovich, Putin says that in today's political context the rights

of Russians living in Ukraine are threatened, not protected:

Those who opposed the coup were immediately threatened with repression. Naturally, the first in line here was Crimea, the Russian-speaking Crimea. In view of this, the residents of Crimea and Sevastopol turned to Russia for help in defending their rights and lives, in preventing the events that were unfolding and are still underway in Kiev, Donetsk, Kharkov and other Ukrainian cities. Naturally, we could not leave this plea unheeded; we could not abandon Crimea and its residents in distress. This would have been betrayal on our part (Putin 2014a)

As such the coup in Kiev and its aftermath function as a demonstration that a resolution had not been found after all because the expectations of the 2010 demarcation treaty had not been met. That Russians are under threat thus provides a rationale for a new attempt at resolving the historical disruption. The very long historical lines being drawn, however, arguably positions the Ukrainian unrest as a provoking event, rather than an underlying cause.

Even seen in isolation from the first resolution attempt, within a Russian context the notion of Russians living abroad being *threatened* is a powerful call for action and claim to legitimacy for Russian interventions. Since the breakup of the Soviet Union protecting Russians living abroad has been a recurring topic within Russian foreign policy (Sakwa 2002: 391-94). This relates to the peculiar experience of Soviet disintegration whereby millions of Russians ended up as minorities of other countries. The suppression of the rights and interests of Russian citizens in foreign states has even been mentioned in Russian military doctrines as respectively an external military danger (*The Basic Provisions of the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation* 1993) and as legitimate reason to use its employ its armed forces beyond own borders (*The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation* 2010). Protecting the Russians living in South-Ossetia and Abkhazia was also one of the main rationales provided for Russia's intervention into Georgia in 2008 (de Haas 2010: 83-86; Kremlin 2008)⁴⁷. As this indicates, for Russia such protection is framed in terms of a state interest and, as Putin rhetorically asks in

⁴⁷ It should be noted that Laruelle (2015: 96) finds that this appears more as a *post hoc* explanation for policies, not a promoted agenda

the Crimean speech, 'are we ready to consistently defend our national interests, or will we forever give in, retreat to who knows where?' (Putin 2014b). On top of this it is emphasized that both Yanukovich—seen as the only legitimate president—and Russian citizens in Ukraine and Crimea, have openly called upon Russia to help them. Help with exactly what and in exactly which way is not specified. Nonetheless, all of this seen together is an argument for the necessity of a new, final resolution: the accession of Crimea into Russia—finally restoring their spiritual unity.

The full narrative of the Crimean incorporation into Russia found in the 18 March Kremlin text can be illustrated as follows:

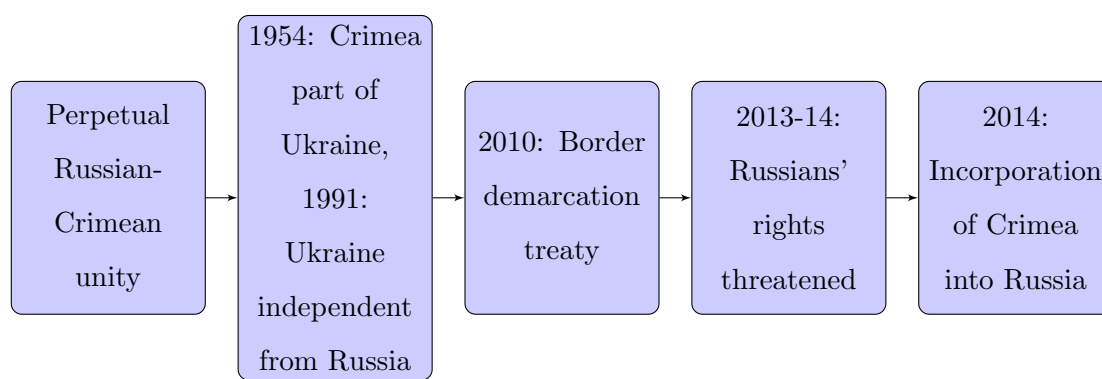


Figure 1: First narrative

Narratives on the political situation in mainland Ukraine

Despite of the slight role the political turbulence in Ukraine is assigned with in the narrative on Crimea in both key texts these events are, however, devoted a great deal of attention to and are clearly objects of narration on their own terms. There seems to be two parallel and distinct, yet compatible narratives of contemporary Ukrainian domestic political life in the two texts: one which locate a disruption within an immediate armed coup in Kiev and one which locate a disruption in the continuous incapacity of Ukrainian governments since the breakup of the Soviet Union. Government incapacity in any case plays a role in both of the narratives. It is described as a 'constant political and state crisis that has been rocking the country for over 20 years' (Putin 2014b) because of

a 'lack of strong, confident and stable system and government' that supposedly has characterized several generations of Ukrainian politicians (Putin 2014a). This led to the 'revolutionary situation' that has 'been brewing for a long time, since the first days of Ukraine's independence' (Putin 2014a). The situation is furthermore characterized by a long running lack of social progress allowing, for instance, for a concentration of wealth that is 'beyond anything we can imagine' (Putin 2014a). Instead of paying attention to the people's demands, the governments have 'milked the country, fought among themselves for power, assets and cash flows and did not care much about the ordinary people' (Putin 2014b).

In such a depiction of the Ukrainian political system as inherently problematic, it is difficult to locate a preceding order that the coup disrupted. One obvious place to look would thus be outside of the Ukrainian political system. More specifically to the one preceding it, the Soviet Union. I am not referring to the ideological aspects of this system, but rather the order and stability it is perceived as entailing. It should be noted that there is no explicit reference to the USSR as a previous order. The positive mentions of the historical experience in the texts makes me confident that this is a relevant inference to make. If this procedure of inference is accepted in this case, the below initial situation and disruptive event of a narrative can be discerned. I will come back to its resolution toward the end of the section.

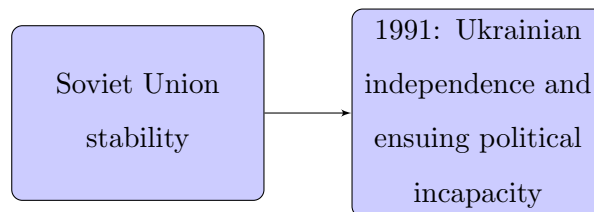


Figure 2: First part of second narrative

However, although the period preceding the coup is described as a problem in need of resolution, another possible way to interpret it is for the period to be an equilibrium or order simply by virtue of being constant. This would position the coup as a disruption in the sense of being a culmination and could explain the particularly critical descriptions

of this event. The inclusion of radical political forces that the coup entailed may be the key to understanding this narrative. Ukrainian political life has always been chaotic and corrupt, but before the 2013/14 unrest and subsequent coup, at least it remained within a certain mainstream spectrum of political life⁴⁸. Following the protests and coup, extremist groups came to the political fore, resulting in unprecedented radicalization:

However, those who stood behind the latest events in Ukraine had a different agenda: they were preparing yet another government takeover; they wanted to seize power and would stop short of nothing. They resorted to terror, murder and riots. Nationalists, neo-Nazis, Russophobes and anti-Semites executed this coup. They continue to set the tone in Ukraine to this day (Putin 2014b)

'Rampage of reactionary forces, nationalist and anti-Semitic forces going on in certain parts of Ukraine' is furthermore named the Russian government's 'biggest concern' (Putin 2014a). This very condemning portrayal of the coup and the groups that are seen as instigating it, suggest that with these groups' entry to prominent political stages in Ukraine, something qualitatively new seem to have happened. Since this is seen as a negative event, it makes sense to discern the coup as a discrete disruptive event.

In sum the above account leaves us with the following beginning and midsection of the second narrative on contemporary Ukrainian political events:

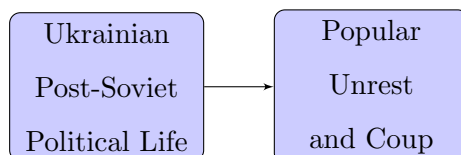


Figure 3: First part of third narrative

It is within this context that 'the West' is assigned with a role in the narratives. By lending their moral and practical and/or material support to the opposition and protesting forces in Kiev they presented as enabling them to come to the political fore. This is seen as instrumental foreign policy whereby the West has chosen to involve

⁴⁸ Radical elements were of course also present before the unrest. Svoboda for instance, as mentioned in the background, had 47 seats in parliament (Shekhovtsov and Umland 2014: 58-59)

themselves in order to advance an agenda that is 'aimed against Ukraine and Russia and against Eurasian integrations' (Putin 2014b). Moreover this involvement is presented the continuation of '*controlled* "colour" revolutions' (Putin 2014b, my italics) that occurred in post-Soviet countries during the 00's⁴⁹.

It must be qualified that this blame put on Western countries is not explicit. Statements such as 'we understand that these actions were aimed against Ukraine and Russia and against Eurasian integration' (Putin 2014b) and '[it's] not the first time our Western partners are doing this in Ukraine' (Putin 2014a) in their proper context, however, leave little room for other interpretations. Yablokov (2015) sees such types of representations within a Russian contemporary tendency to uphold conspiracy theories as tools of foreign policy attempting to undermine 'the positions of the American government' (Yablokov 2015: 311). As will be detailed in the actor portrayal part of the analysis, a dominant theme within the portrayal of the West is also that of double morals and hypocrisy. This could indicate that Yablokov's assertion might hold water in this case as well. What nonetheless is interesting regardless of the degree to which this is a conspiracy or not, is that with the West's inclusion into the narrative on the political situation in Ukraine, the situation is no longer exclusively a domestic Ukrainian affair. Rather, it simultaneously is an international conflict playing itself out in Ukraine. Although an interesting finding in itself, this type of portrayal is however not so prevalent that I consider it justified to discern it as a discrete narrative in its own right. The reader is referred to the actor portrayal analysis for elaborations on the West's role in the Russian narratives.

As regards resolutions to the two incomplete narratives presented above, when explicit references to these are made⁵⁰, they are always found within domestic Ukrainian politics—not international politics. The two narratives share suggested resolution. There are many such suggestions mentioned at the abstract level, including the restoration of

⁴⁹ *Colored revolutions* is a collective term usually thought to include the mass protests against the regimes in Yugoslavia in 2000, Georgia in 2003, Ukraine in 2004, and Kyrgyzstan 2005

⁵⁰ What I mean by 'explicit references to resolutions' is not necessarily that the word 'resolution' has been used. The cases mentioned also refer to mentions such as 'what is needed now is that...' and similar.

order and 'peace and harmony' in Ukraine and the inclusion of 'the whole country' (Putin 2014b) in decision-making processes. It's also said that protection of Russians' rights in Ukraine is what will guarantee the country's territorial integrity (Putin 2014b). With regards to concrete policy suggestions for Ukraine, this translates to a call for a constitutional referendum, as seen in this example:

Essentially, what is now needed is to adopt a new constitution and put it to a referendum so that all of Ukraine's citizens can take part in the process and influence the choice of basic principles that will form the foundations of their country's government (Putin 2014a)

The content of such a constitutional referendum is not specified. It is however often mentioned in the context of an agreement signed between president Yanukovich and the opposition 21 February, which says that the constitution should be changed so as to 'balance' the powers between the legislature, parliament and president. Regardless of what the specific content of the constitutional reform, it's important to understand its aims: in the texts the suggested reform is portrayed as a means to the ultimate goal of order and stability in Ukraine: 'if people feel they are left out of this process [of reforming the constitution], they will never agree with it and will keep on fighting it' (Putin 2014a). Russia doesn't want fighting in Ukraine, but for 'Ukraine to be a strong, sovereign and self-sufficient country' (Putin 2014b).

The two full narratives can be illustrated in the following manner:

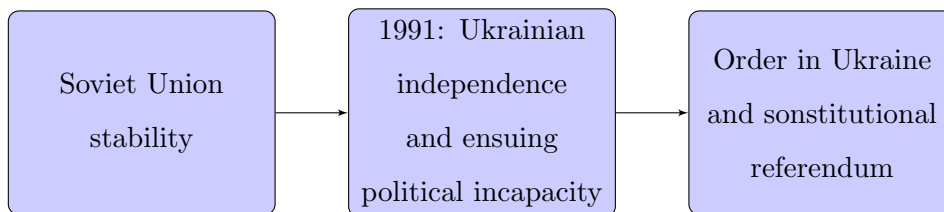


Figure 4: Second narrative

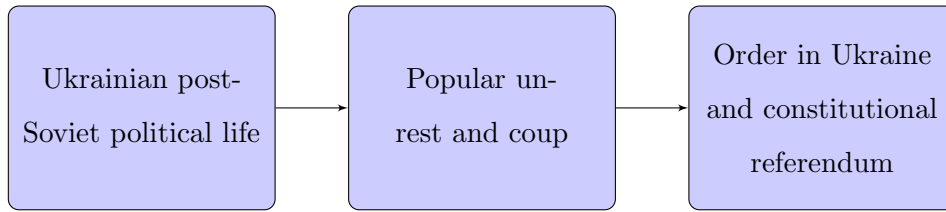


Figure 5: Third narrative

A final notion on the narratives of the coup and political turmoil in Ukraine generally, is that the coup is problematized just as much in the text before the incorporation of Crimea as in the one after. This is another indication that the incorporation is not portrayed as a resolution to the coup—which further strengthens the impression that these two events are being narrated as discrete incidents. However, they are not represented as unrelated since Putin for instance remarks that the Kiev opposition bears the full burden of the partition of Ukraine on their own shoulders and that the future guarantee for Ukraine’s sovereignty is that it is able to secure the rights of its citizens (Putin 2014b).

6.2.2 From RT

The main point of doing this two-step analysis is to use the Kremlin narratives as analytical tools to discern Russian narratives from representation of other actors’ narratives. In this manner the Kremlin narratives have disciplined this second part of the narrative analysis. I have found representations of many other actors’ narratives in the RT texts, most prominently in the radical Ukrainians’, Americans’, and the EU’s statements. Another reason is to do the two-step analysis, is however to assess the degree of congruence within narratives that can be identified as Russian. I have found that with regards to uncovering such differences, a reservation must be made. The most prevalent difference between the materials is the level of detail in RT’s day-to-day accounts as opposed to the more broad and summarizing type of portrayals in the Kremlin texts. In the below discussion I will only bring up such type of discrepancy in instances where it represents a

corrective to or a wholly different causal relationship than that of the Kremlin narratives.

There are some instances when the details of RT's accounts leave us with a notably different picture. This is primarily the case in the portrayals of the relation between events in Kiev and the ones unfolding in Crimea. In the Kremlin texts these were narrated as two related, but distinct historical processes with their linkage being of a provoking as opposed to causal nature. The coup is devoted correspondingly little attention to in the narration of events in Crimea. In contrast, the link between Kiev and Crimea is thoroughly expanded upon in the RT material. The two developments that specifically form the linkage are first the Ukrainian parliament's 23 February vote to repeal the law *On the principles of state language policy* and second the threat of violence coming from radicals in mainland Ukraine.

On the principles of state language policy is a bill which was first passed in the Ukrainian parliament in 2011 and made it possible to use Russian language in official circumstances in Ukraine. 23 February 2014 the parliament voted to repeal it and this is represented as causing great controversies in Crimea. It is even put up as *the reason why* Crimeans began objecting to the Kiev authorities: 'Crimeans began protesting after the new self-proclaimed government in Kiev introduced a law abolishing the use of other languages in official circumstances in Ukraine' (1.3 VII, 2.3 III, 2.3 V, 2.3 VI). Using almost the exact same formulations it's also said that this was the reason why 'the authorities in Crimea requested Moscow's assistance' (2.3 IV). Considering the importance assigned to this repeal, it is puzzling that it is not reported on at all that the repeal was reversed 3 March. Furthermore, that the repeal is evoked as an argument even after its reversal (9.3 II). As with Putin's reference to an event that is not thought to actually have happened discussed above, this is remarkable.

The second development, which comes to matter a great deal, concerns the notion of Crimeans being afraid of right wing extremism. This is partly seen in relation to the overall chaos and lawlessness portrayed in mainland Ukraine whereby Crimean leaders state that they are afraid of this spreading. Partly, however, there are also representations of concrete instances when such extremists are reported to explicitly have

threatened Crimea. For instance, a Right Sector persona threatened to send a 'train of friendship' to Crimea (4.3 IIX). One incident is particularly noteworthy here and relates to the non-reporting of the Russian military operation on the peninsula in the Kremlin material. It is reported by RT that on 27 February 'Kiev gunmen' attempted to seize the Interior Ministry building, but that the attempt was derailed (28.2, 1.3). This prompted the occupation of the Crimean parliament building overnight 27 February by 'Crimean self defence forces' and the parliament's subsequent vote to depose of their governor. The attempted Interior Ministry occupation is represented as a key event in the political takeover of Crimea and as the reason, both normative and descriptive, why the other events unfolded. This event could be what president Putin actually meant to refer to in his derogatory notion of the Crimean parliament having been occupied (Putin 2014a). However, as with Putin's claim about the parliament, according to many accounts the represented occupation of the Interior Ministry never occurred (Hille 2014).

Whether this just adds detail to the provoking event of the Kremlin narrative or if it represents a more significant incongruence can be discussed. I consider the latter the most suitable interpretation. This is partly because of concrete casual representations in the formulations themselves such as 'Crimeans began protesting *because..*', and partly because of the prevalence of such statements in terms of number of occurrences and the space devoted to it in each instance. It is however not so that this narrative is fully incompatible with the Kremlin narratives. Maybe a better way to put it is that they share perception of reality, but emphasize different aspects of it. Both the language law and threats of extremists are mentioned in the Kremlin material as well, but is much more prominent in the RT portrayals. The implication of such an interpretation is that RT is narrating the events unfolding in Crimea differently from the Kremlin. Their narrative focuses more on the immediate events unfolding in real time, as could also be expected of a journalistic enterprise. Their narrative can be illustrated in the following way:

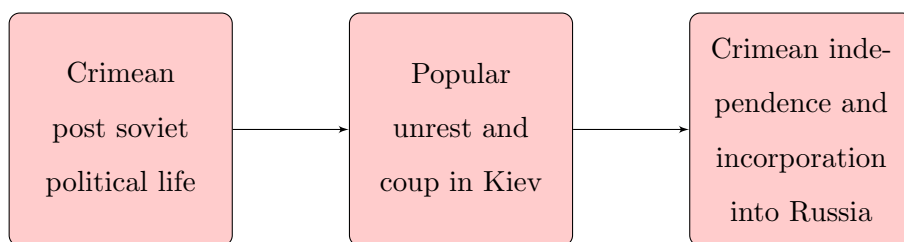


Figure 6: Fourth narrative

Related to the above assertion of the coup in Kiev and the accession of Crimea being narrated as in a causal relationship, it is also remarkable that events in Crimea are narrated at a much earlier stage than in the Kremlin material. The first mentions of activities occur 27.2 (27.2 I) with the first reference to the political significance of it on the same day (27.2 II). Although this finding doesn't constitute a separate and discrete narrative, it is nonetheless remarkable and represents another incongruity in the representations of the two materials.

Another difference between the two materials can be located in suggestions for resolution of the coup and its subsequent distress. In the RT material it is earlier and more clearly emphasized that the political wishes of south-eastern Ukraine has not been met in Kiev, neither with regards to the coup itself nor with the policies carried out by the new coup-imposed government. In the earlier material it is said that these groups' political demands must be met, as is resonant with Kremlin's narratives' resolution suggestions (1.3 V, 3.3 VI). Later, however, the cultural divide between East and West is described as so great that federalization specifically is the only option. This is depicted as a call coming from the people of Eastern and Southern Ukraine themselves (3.3 X or VI). Although this is important, I do not consider it a break with the Kremlin narratives, but rather a continuation of them. The call for federalization simply emphasizes even more clearly that the resolution of the distress caused by the coup is located within Ukrainian domestic politics as opposed to in international politics or the bilateral relationship between Ukraine and Russia.

6.2.3 Conclusion narrative analysis

In this analysis I have discerned four narratives relating to the annexation of Crimea in February and March 2014. It's these four that constitute the answer to the first research question of this thesis. One narrative relates to the annexation of Crimea (see figure 1), two relate to the coup in Kiev (see figures 4 and 5), and one that sets up a link between the two events (see figure 6). I have found clear, but not radical differences in the narration of the Kremlin government and of RT. In narratives of both the Kremlin and RT, however, I have found that importance is assigned to events (the attempted occupation of the Crimean parliament and Interior Ministry, respectively) that most likely have not occurred. Another important finding is the difference in narration in the Kremlin material at different points in time: when the Russian military operation to annex Crimea was ongoing, it was not represented and thus narrated at all (Putin 2014a). Later the incorporation was narrated, but Russia's role was not accounted for (Putin 2014b). Although the RT material did establish a link between the event in Kiev and the annexation of Crimea, it did not challenge the non-representation of Russian involvement. Finally, I have found that all narratives locate the sources of the coup in Kiev and the accession of Crimea in either domestic Ukrainian politics or Russian-Ukrainian relations, as opposed to international affairs more generally.

Having read through all texts intensively to identify these narratives, I know that there is relevant meaning not accounted for by simply identifying their structures. The following analysis of actor portrayals will account for most of this. For this part I summarize the following groups as assigned with roles in the narratives:

- Russia
- New Ukrainian government
- Radical Ukrainians
- Crimeans
- The West

6.3 Actor portrayals

In this subsection I will look at how the narratives' actors are portrayed. The actors that have been discerned through the narrative reading are presented above. In addition, based on the background chapter, I will include liberal protesters into this list. Moreover, as a variant of Crimeans I will also include its Tartar minority.

6.3.1 Radical Ukrainians

I begin this inquiry by looking into the actors represented as the origins of the events unfolding in the Russian narrative: the radical Ukrainians. These are referred to by many names and descriptions, but I will in the following consistently refer to them as *the radical Ukrainians* or simply *the radicals*. Radicalism is a generic term, but in this case it refers specifically to right wing and nationalist extremism. Although often referred to and treated as a more or less coherent social movement, it's clear that it consists of several subgroups and movements. The organization Right Sector and the political party Svoboda are the ones most frequently mentioned.

The radical Ukrainians' entry point with regards to the political turmoil of Ukraine is through their subversion of the initially legitimate popular protests against the corrupt Kiev regime (21.2 II). After having taken over the protest movement, the radicals are portrayed as moving on to violently overthrow the Ukrainian president. They are not represented as achieving this solely by themselves, but rather descriptions such as 'members of the radical movement were *very active in* the violence which triggered the ouster of President Yanukovich' (16.3 I, my italics) are used. When describing such activities of the radicals, very active verbs denoting a great deal of agency are used. The radicals are terrorizing (26.2 I), sabotaging (15.3 IIX), planning and preparing provocations (10.3 I), controlling (18.3 VI), bullying and forcing (20.3 III), and more. These kinds of constructions endow the radical forces with considerable agency and capacity in terms of both physical force and strategic aptitude.

Also other types of words and phrases used to describe the radicals indicate excessive

violence and force, often in combination with a sense of immorality in the shape of ruthlessness and extremism. I suggest that an instructive way to understand the majority of those notions would be as centring on an assumption of uncivilizedness. This is explicitly apparent in predicates such as 'barbaric' (25.2 I) and going 'on a rampage against the authorities' (12.3 III), as well as the presence of metaphors related to hunting such as for instance: '*the dominance of the ultra-nationalist forces in Kiev, which have launched a hunt for dissidents across the country*' (11.3 II, italics in original), 'with the latest *manhunt* dozens of pro-governmental delegates withdrew from the Ruling party, fearing reprisals as the arrests of the ministers were not over' (24.2 III, my italics), and referring to the radicals as 'lynch mobs' (1.3 IX). The treatment of the Yanukovich government's special police force *Berkut* is used to demonstrate the mercilessness and thus immorality of these groups: when a Berkut officer's eye had been 'poked out' and supposedly his hand cut off, 'an individual purported to be a local medic says that the officer doesn't deserve an ambulance' (20.2 II).

The above is rich with imagery and clearly represents an enemy image. This conclusion is based upon the quite uncontroversial assumption that uncivilized, anti-intellectual and violent males roaming the streets is a stereotype within a Russian context.

If the above is considered a portrayal of the average radical Ukrainian, then the portrayal of the radical Ukrainian *par excellence* happens through the enemy image painted of one of Right Sector's most prominent figures: O. Muzychko. He stands out through his brute ways and obscene and blunt language (22.2 II, 26.3 III, 4.3 III, 10.3 II). For instance, he shows up at local city council meetings flashing a rifle ('a Kalashnikov appears to be the best argument in a debate for Mizychko' (26.3 III)), threaten to kill politicians and civil servants in brutal ways (22.2 II, 4.3 III, 10.3 II), and in general being verbally abusive. The enemy image of Muzychko is seemingly the same as for the radicals generally, only in a more extreme variant. This goes especially for the part of the definitional criteria that reads 'create expectations of inhumane, aggressive or hostile actions' since Muzychko is never actually depicted as engaging with anyone in a calm, 'civilized' manner. As he is consistently referred to as a representative of the

whole organization of the Right Sector, the enemy image created of him personally is also transferred to the whole movement and thus tainting it further.

In parallel with constructions elaborated upon above, one of the most prevalent features of the portrayal of the radical Ukrainians is the extensive use of historical analogies. Specifically they are called Nazis, neo-Nazis, fascists, anti-Semitic, and similar (22.2 I, 24.2 III, 25.2 II, 26.2 III). As these are categories of ideological orientation as well as references to specific historical experiences and actors, it is somewhat complicated to determine their type of usage in each case. If an organization is called anti-Semitic because it actually advocates an anti-Semitic ideology, then this is not necessarily a metaphor or analogy to previous anti-Semitic manifestations. There are, however, clear indications that in our case such mentions can be seen as both ascription of ideological affinities *and* historical analogies. The former because it's widely accepted in the academic literature that groups such as Right Sector and Svoboda have an extreme right-wing ideological positioning⁵¹ (Shekhovtsov and Umland 2014). The latter because of similes describing today's situation *like* that around the time of the Second World War. Similes are more explicit analogous references than metaphors which helps determine the analogy in this case, as in the following example:

He compared the situation in turbulent Ukraine — which is facing its worst political crisis in modern history — to the rise of the Nazis in the 1930s (22.2 III)

In order to get at the full resonance of such analogies and metaphors in a Russian context, we must consider the mainstream Russian perception of Soviet experiences in WWII generally and with Nazism specifically. The Soviet Union was invaded by nazi-Germany in 1941. They were eventually able to stop and repulse the invasion, but when Allied victory was secured in 1945 it had come at enormous Soviet losses: The generally accepted number of casualties is 26-27 million⁵² (Ellman and Maksudov 1994; Haynes 2003). Weiner (1996: 638) explains the social and cultural significance of this period in

⁵¹ It should be mentioned that Right Sector has not been the subject of much in-depth research. That their members actually have extreme right affinities is nonetheless beyond doubt.

⁵² Haynes (2003) claims that the total number of war-related deaths could be as high as 42.7 million.

terms of national myth-making by detailing how 'the experience of the war became a yardstick by which identity, meritocracy and status were measured throughout the Soviet polity'. Nazi-Germany came to be represented as the arch-enemy of the Soviet Union who would target Soviet citizens specifically with their atrocities (Berkhoff 2012: 119). Seen in this context it is illustrating that in our data material, the radicals are also called Russophobes⁵³. Symbolically, the portrayal of the radicals' toppling of statues of Soviet soldiers and historical heroes is accompanied with information about the simultaneous erecting of new monuments celebrating Ukrainian national heroes (OUN/Bandera):

Symbols of victories over Hitler and Napoleon are being torn down, while those glorifying
Nazi rule are multiplying (25.2 II)

Based on the above discussion it's clear that Nazism/neo-Nazism/fascism also can be seen as a stereotype within this discursive context. When the radicals even refers to themselves as enemies of Russia (16.3 I), it is clear that these historical analogies represent a second manifestation of an enemy image of the radical Ukrainians. This time as russophobic Nazis with the potential to commit similar atrocities against (post-)Soviet citizens as the actual Nazis during WWII.

It should be mentioned that compared to other common ways of portraying the enemy found in other studies, this is not particularly radical. Steuter and Wills (2010) in her study of enemy constructions related to the 'war on terror' refers in particular to the practice of *dehumanising* the enemy. This is done through metaphors retrograding the enemy in terms of biological hierarchy and evolutionary development to for instance a vermin or—even moving outside of the realm of animals—a virus. The images at hand of an uncivilized radical and a Nazi, are clearly that of *enemies*, but enemies well within the human realm.

That these groups are described with enemy images is not necessarily very surprising; holders of such ideology and purporters of such actions (for instance the extrajudicial

⁵³ Again, this is not to ignore the fact that the groups' ideologies are actually also to a large extent anti-Russian in terms of preferred political and cultural orientation of Ukraine (Shekhovtsov and Umland 2014).

prosecution of civil servants (4.3 III)) would expectedly be demonized in similar manners in most discursive contexts. In terms of strategic antagonistic portrayals, the most striking is the great presence they occupy in the narratives on the conflict and coup. This is best understood not by examining the portrayal of radical Ukrainians themselves, but the correspondingly anonymising portrayal of the other segment of protesters—the liberal protesters. This will be explained under the following heading.

6.3.2 Liberal protesters

In the following I use 'liberal protesters' to refer to mentions of non-elite protesters that are *not* radicals. Elite based liberal protesters that are part of the organized political opposition will be analysed under the separate heading 'new government'.

In RT's coverage, the Maidan and demonstrations against president Yanukovich are often referred to. Nonetheless liberal protesters are not at all assigned with a role in the narratives. To the limited degree that they are mentioned it is as an historical artefact—something that used to exist, but is no longer. The below, which is a response by foreign minister Sergey Lavrov, is one of the few examples of such mention:

the protests started on Independence Square, with protesters putting up tents, setting up mobile kitchens, portable toilets, etc., and very soon militants from the Right Sector and other radical groups appeared on Maidan [...] even at that point it was clear that those protests were turning unconstitutional and anti-governmental (30.3 VI)

From existing literature we know, however, that liberal protesters were a big part of the demonstrations which ousted president Yanukovich (see for instance: Onuch 2014; Popova 2014). Furthermore they were also highly featured in Western European and American media coverage (see for instance: BBC 2013; Herszenhorn 2013). Onuch (2014) performed a survey of protesters between 26 November 2013 and 10 January 2014 reporting the following findings:

Our survey data show that the median protester was a male between 34 and 45 with a full-time job (56 percent were thus employed). He was well-educated, voted regularly, had experienced very little contact with civic or social-movement groups, wanted a better

political future for Ukraine, and was more worried about violent state repression (and infringements on basic rights) than about forming closer EU ties (Onuch 2014: 47)

Popova (2014) reserves that by the end of February 2014 radical forces had become a lot more prominent than they were at the outset. The almost complete lack of representation of liberal protesters in the RT material is nonetheless remarkable. It is therefore clear that this is an instance of *symbolic annihilation* rendering the liberal protesters *invisible* to its readers. By implication this invisibility also renders the initial political rationales of the Euromaidan protest movement *incomprehensible* to the readers—as illustrated by the following portrayal of the Maidan: 'It's just a disgrace for a European country and one of the most beautiful cities in Europe to have this kind of thing for half a year' (29.3 I).

A caveat to my conclusion of symbolic annihilation must be made: The new Ukrainian government formed in the aftermath of the 22 February vote to remove Yanukovich from the presidency was in part composed of the liberal protesters. As will be demonstrated below, the new government is assigned with a role in the narrative and thus by implication some of the liberal protesters' sentiments are as well. If I had data going further back in time I could have seen whether the liberal protesters were portrayed more comprehensively before the new government was formed. As I do not have this I am left to work within the limits of my data material. Based on this I still conclude that liberal protesters are subject to symbolic annihilation.

6.3.3 New Ukrainian government

When referring to the 'new Ukrainian government' in the following, I am referring to the government formed after the vote to remove Yanukovich from the presidency on 22 February. It was formally formed 27 February comprising ministers from the mainstream political parties including the radical right party Svoboda as well as certain activists without a background in party politics. Oleksandr Turchynov became the government's president and head of state whereas Arseniy Yatsenyuk became head of

government and prime minister⁵⁴ (Herszenhorn 2014).

The very most prominent features of the portrayal of the new Ukrainian government, is the little to non-existent agency and governing capacity they are ascribed with. As the functional *raison d'être* of government is to govern, this is clearly a delegitimizing feature. Foreign minister S. Lavrov terms it a 'severe crisis of statehood' (30.3 VI). The lack of legitimacy is sometimes described through the new government's actions, but more often they are depicted by means of the chaos rendered from their lack of any initiative.

A suitable analytical lens to get at this chaos would be to temporarily look at the narrative component 'setting'⁵⁵. A government's legitimacy is commonly thought of as derived from its ability to secure the life of the citizens on its territory. This means to maintain order, a certain quality of life, and more. The Ukrainian country, however, is consistently portrayed as a geographical area in chaos and anarchy. This is illustrated by the actions of Muzychko and right wing radicals more generally in the above section, but also through the harassment of journalists (29.3 III), hammer wielding radicals storming town council meetings (4.3 IIX), the theft of heavy artillery from weapon depots (8.3 II, 15.3 IIX) and 1 million dollars worth of paintings and icons (30.3 III). All these examples are seen as 'manifestation[s] of anarchy' (24.3 II).

Another example of the new government's lack of control or influence over its territory, comes from the resistance of Eastern Ukraine and Crimea to Kiev rule (26.2 I, 5.3 V, 9.3 I). As regards Crimea specifically, the very fact that it was able to break away from Ukraine is a case in point for the legitimacy of said accession. Conversely, a case in point for the lack of legitimacy of the new Ukrainian government as claimants to governance over Crimea.

It is very clear that the responsibility for this chaotic situation is placed with the new

⁵⁴ Following a parliamentary vote of 21 February powers were transferred from the head of state to the head of government, making the prime minister more powerful as compared to under Yanukovich.

⁵⁵ I have previously defined setting as beyond the scope of this thesis. Since it is done in order to account for actor portrayal, not as an analysis of the narratives' settings in and of themselves, however, I consider it justified

government. There are for instance calls for the Kiev authorities to '*show responsibility, and to prevent further deterioration of the situation*' (24.2 I, italics in original). The three following examples illustrates the same:

The '*lack of any action*' on part of the current Kiev authorities with regard to ultra-nationalists and radical forces acting in Ukraine has particularly been noted by Putin (9.3 I, italics in original).

Moscow would like to see somebody in Kiev who would have the authority and power to implement whatever agreements the country may negotiate (24.2 I)

Actually there's no state control over public order and the so-called Right Sector calls the tune (8.3 III, italics in original)

Despite the above assertions, however, there are certain instances where the new government is portrayed as initiating policies. The following is an example of this ambivalence:

Meanwhile, the coup-imposed Kiev government has stepped up pressure on Crimea, blocking the electronic system of the region's treasury, freezing the autonomy's accounts, and ramping up the presence of border police on the autonomy's borders (9.3 I)

Yet, despite the above measures, the Crimean authorities confirm that it will not affect their day to day workings and as such it wasn't very effective (9.3 I). In general, when policies are initiated, the decisions' democratic basis as well as the governments ability to implement are questioned. The new government's suggestion to ban dual citizenships is for instance ridiculed for not benefiting Ukrainian citizens and being undemocratic (3.3 IV). Policy initiatives are portrayed as honourable, yet always fail in execution. For instance when the prime minister Yatsenyuk attempts to attract military personnel by offering them a bonus this is derailed by the finance ministry because of the severe lack of funds (10.3 III).

What the above accounts leaves us with is a group in Kiev posing as government, whereas in practice there is a governance void. This would imply that there is room for other actors to either take the new government's role or sway it towards a preferred

direction. The void is described as exploited in differing manners by American/Western involvement and the radical Ukrainians.

The most prominent of such relations is that between the government and the radicals. A description of the radicals' general role in Ukrainian politics is already provided. This account will therefore only concern the relations with the new government. The new government and the radicals are interchangeably described as simply collapsed, or as the latter controlling the former to a greater or lesser degree.

In a representation such as the below, the new government is simply treated as collapsed with the radicals:

Treating masked men armed with Kalashnikov rifles, who are now circling Kiev, as a government — we would find it difficult working with such a government (24.2 I)

What happens when they are seen as one and the same actor, is that the portrayal of the radicals to a certain degree is transferred upon the new government. As such, the new government also becomes represented by the radicals' enemy image whereby they are seen as russophobe, radical, and uncivilized. The anti-Kiev chants from Eastern Ukrainian are illustrating: 'We wont live under Bandera!' (23.3 III). The government's policy to remove limitations on 'neo-Nazi propaganda' and their wish to forbid Russian language 'entirely' (24.2 I) are also examples. Because the new government in the examples provided in an above paragraph is seen as at least attempting to initiate policy that is not necessarily particularly radical, I would reserve that this case of enemy image is less clear-cut than with the radical Ukrainians.

In the following examples the radicals and the new government are represented as two distinct actors, but clearly that the former is controlling the latter: 'Ukraine's new government is under the influence of the radical nationalists, according to Russia's Foreign Minister' (8.3 III) and 'the *'lack of any action'* on part of the current Kiev authorities with regard to ultra-nationalists and radical forces acting in Ukraine has particularly been noted by Putin' (9.3 I, italics in original). Another incident indicating the same, is when the opposition has to present their suggestions for ministerial posts to the Maidan with 20 000 participants and the people will only leave once all their wishes

are followed (26.2 I).

This portrayal of the radicals as controlling the government must be seen in relation to the West doing the same. With reference to Western countries, Sergey Lavrov is for instance quoted as saying 'the current Ukrainian government can hardly be suspected of being independent' (29.3 I). The ironizing statement 'Ukraine will play host, but the US will call the shots' (20.3 V) over a military exercise to be held in Ukraine is illustrating of the power Western countries are represented as having over the new government. The influence over policies that these two groups are seen to have over the new government implies that it is subject to a certain degree of symbolic annihilation as a *political* group—that is as a group with a political project. This renders their political project invisible and thus their role as a political group insignificant.

6.3.4 Western countries

I use the term 'the West' and similar in the following and throughout the thesis because this is the term used in the data material. I take the West to mean North-American and Western European countries. The entrance of the West into the narratives is through their support of the protesters and opposition in Kiev.

The running theme throughout the portrayal of the Western countries, is a notion of hypocrisy. This refers specifically to claims of double communication through a Western tendency to refer to certain norm, but in reality acting out of self interest. It is for instance said that the U.S doesn't have genuine concerns, only geopolitical interests (24.2 II) and that they use international law like 'political football' (11.3 II).

In the present case of Ukraine, the West was, according to foreign minister Lavrov, well aware of the radical nature of the new government, but choose to conceal these facts to the public (8.3 III, 10.3 IV). Instead they encouraged the Euromaidan by sending 'troves of officials to Kiev to cheer up anti-government protesters' (27.3 I). They also denounce the referendum in Crimea and similar, yet when brutal crimes occur in for instance Lviv, there's no reaction from the West (6.3 I).

The notion of hypocrisy is a claim about current affairs, but simultaneously also

an historical analogy. In the Russian perspective, Western countries and the U.S in particular, has since the end of the Cold War pursued what they term a 'regime change policy' advancing the overthrow of undemocratic regimes. In the very first mention of hypocrisy in the data material, it's therefore suggested that in stead of warning Russia against using force in Ukraine, the West should direct this caution at themselves (24.2 II). The statement that the West uses 'human rights as a pretext for pursuing geopolitical goals' (3.3 VI) is an illustration of the double morals that is assigned to this policy.

I interpret this portrayal of the West as an enemy image because it portrays the West as an unreliable partner that is not to be trusted because it may say one thing, but actually have ulterior motives. As such it 'creates expectations of [...] hostile actions' (Ottosen 1993: 31). As opposed to the enemy image of the radicals, however, the West is not demonized, but ridiculed:

World's biggest bully preaching peace and love. And its flying killing robots are the messengers. And guards in secret CIA prisons are the keepers. And the NSA keeps an eye on those who won't listen (27.3 I)

The inference that the West is portrayed through an enemy image is also supported by the notions of them being russophobes—their media even engaging in 'russophobic hysteria' (15.3 V).

The slamming for hypocrisy is not only done in relation to Ukraine, but also with regards to Saudi-Arabia, Kosovo, Libya and more (24.2 II, 15.3 V). Correspondingly, taken together the notion of the West's hypocrisy resembles an argument about the West's detrimental role in world order just as much as about the political situation in Ukraine. This actor portrayal thus somewhat contradict the narration discerned and presented in the narrative analyses which narrates the conflicts as the result of domestic Ukrainian pressures or aspects to Russian-Ukrainian relations. This could thus be interpreted as an early indication that Russia's intervention in Ukraine is indeed also a policy directed towards the Western world order, not only relating to the bilateral Russian-Ukrainian relationship—as many analysts have suggested already (see for instance: Allison 2014: 1268).

6.3.5 The Self: Russia

What immediately is most apparent in the RT descriptions of Russia and its role in relation to the political situation in Kiev, is that they are portrayed as cautious, responsible and reactive, almost passive. The cautiousness is represented through Russian continuous calls for ceasefires and dialogue in Kiev (20.2 VI, 19.3 VII). Their passivity through the initial lack reference to any Russian actions, but also explicit statements, such as:

Following the ouster of President Yanukovich, Moscow has not changed its stance nor voiced any support for him. It only criticized the opposition for not keeping its word and breaking a West-sponsored reconciliation agreement, which it signed with Yanukovich (24.2 I)

When Russia eventually does consider the possibility of becoming militarily involved, Putin asks for and is granted the Duma's permission to use military force in Ukraine. This process is thus portrayed as happening fully in accordance with legal procedures. And, critically, solely upon the call for help from the people and authorities of Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, as well as ex-president Yanukovich (1.3 I, 5.3 V, 3.3 XI). It's continued that Russia can't 'ignore that address' (1.3 VII), must answer the 'SOS signals' (1.3 IX), and 'doesn't ditch its people' (15.3 VII). As such their potential involvement is not only represented as legal, but legitimate as well.

A source of the portrayal of Russia as responsible and cautious can be found in the verbs used for its predication. When the question of using military first arises, it is to '*deter radicals*', '*ensure safety*', and '*prevent bloodshed*' (3.3 VI, 3.3 XI, 5.3 II, my italics). This positions Russia's role in the narrative not as the aggressor, but on the contrary as a defender.

Despite all of these portrayals, Russia is not *actually* ascribed a military role in either mainland Ukraine or Crimea, nor in organizing the referendum in Crimea. Before the referendum is held, Russian officials for instance refuse to comment on implications of its results: 'the State Duma—Russia's parliament—said it would debate the issue of Crimea joining Russian only after the referendum takes place' (8.3 I). This contributes to their depiction as reactive or passive vis-a-vis the political development in Ukraine.

However, once the referendum is held and its results state that Crimeans themselves wish for accession, Russia takes quick and decisive action. They for instance start giving out passports 19 March one day after signing a treaty of accession (19.3 II). Again the verb usage is telling: Russia will '*guarantee*' rights of citizens (18.3 VI, my italics), '*stabilize*' the situation (19.3 VII, my italics), and the president '*orders*' the immediate provision of social benefits to all Crimeans (19.3 II, my italics).

Finally, Russia is positioned all-knowing and an authority. This is most evident in their many policy suggestions for other countries:

We have repeatedly stated that those who came to power in Kiev must disarm the militants, provide security to the population and ensure people's legitimate right to rally. 'Unfortunately, as shown by the events in Ukraine, this is not happening, the Kiev authorities do not control the situation in the country,' Russia's Foreign Ministry declared [sic] (14.3 III, italics in original)

The reason for including a section on self-depiction in a thesis whose research question concerns antagonism, is because through the portrayal of Russia as the Self, the shortcomings of all the other actors are underlined and become more prominent to the reader:

- The West is portrayed as self-interested and reckless, whereas Russia only involves itself upon calls for it
- The new Ukrainian government is bashed for lacking governing capacity, whereas Russia, after it has gotten political legitimacy through the Crimean referendum, resolutely carries out policies
- Neither the new Ukrainian government, the West, nor the radicals are lawful, whereas all Russian policies are portrayed as following rightful legislative procedures

There is in particular one interesting finding of this analysis of self-depiction that would not have appeared if only looking at the portrayal of other actors. That is that

there are instances where other actors are evaluated according to standards set by Russian behaviour: whereas Russia maintains that it's open to dialogue, the U.S is warned not to ruin the relations between the two sides over many years (23.3 I). When the Ukrainian government wants to set up a visa regime with Russia, Russia refuses to reciprocate because 'millions of innocent Ukrainians would suffer' (21.3 IV). This type of juxtaposing with Russia, however, only happens with the new government and with the West, not the radical Ukrainians. This portrays the radicals more as a nuisance, than a major political actor on the level of state structures. This again indicates that the fundamental problem of Ukraine is not the radicals in and of themselves, but the authorities' lack of control over them and the political and social landscape more generally.

6.3.6 The Crimeans

This section on Crimea will be brief because most of the representations of the political life on the peninsula simply mirrors the self-portrayal of Russia. This can be explained by the statements of the inherently Russian nature of Crimeans: 'we are talking about real men and women who are Russian in their heart' (17.3 I) and '*long term history. We are talking about the Russian people, about the territories of the former USSR with artificial borders*' (16.3 V, italics in original). This also contributes to a sense of the referendum and its results being a *fait accompli* even before they are held.

Treating Crimea as one actor is nonetheless a simplification. Rather the peninsula is seen as inhabited by several politically relevant groups: it's population, the regional government, and its self-defence forces being the three main ones. These are however all seen as rallying around the common cause of accession from Kiev, where each group plays a designated role in achieving the objective. The Crimean people, 'who are Russian in their heart' (17.3 I) have 'repeatedly asked lawmakers to hold a referendum on the status of the republic's autonomy' (7.3 IIX). The authorities are, exactly as the Russian, calm, in control, and taking decisive action. After the Crimean PM announces that he'll temporarily manage all security forces stationed on the peninsula, this is simply treated—again—as a *fait accompli* (1.3 VII). The referendum moreover is treated in

the same vein: it's announced and subsequently treated as a fact (8.3 I, 10.3 I). The self-defence forces established are seen as the tool allowing for this control. They are for instance cited as 'helping' the regional government (28.2).

There is however an exception to these corporative relations between the various groups. The Crimean Tartars are mentioned in the narratives as a politically disadvantaged group. It is acknowledged that they were treated badly under the Soviet Union, and Crimean authorities vow that once they become independent from Kiev, they will be given the apologies they deserve (11.3 V). However, their protests against the referendum are not represented whatsoever and they are not assigned with significance for the narratives. On the contrary, the referendum is praised for its high attendance. This could possibly be seen as a symbolic annihilation, if not of the actors as such then of them as *political actors*. This is important for if representing their dissent with the political development of Crimea, the overall portrayal of the peninsula as a place of order where the people's will is peacefully, but decisively carried through, would not be coherent.

6.3.7 Conclusion actor portrayals

In this analysis I have found that three groups of actors are portrayed through enemy images of varying degree of antagonism: the radical Ukrainians, the new Ukrainian government, and the West. These groups are also depicted through other statements that are negative and antagonistic, but that doesn't necessarily amount to enemy images. Of these groups the radical Ukrainians are definitely the group that is most antagonistically portrayed. This is illustrated by the fact that part of the negative portrayal of the new government is derived from the very fact that they allow the radical Ukrainians to come to the fore. However, a very interesting empirical finding is that compared to metaphors and enemy construction identified in previous research on other cases, the enemy images of this thesis are not very radical in that they are not dehumanizing (Lule 2004; Santa Ana 1999; Steuter and Wills 2010; Steuter and Wills 2008).

I have moreover found two actors who are subject to varying degree of symbolic annihilation—the liberal opposition and the Crimean Tartars. If we understand antag-

onism negatively as the absence of sympathetic portrayal, then we can argue that this also is a form of antagonistic portrayal.

I have also identified two groups that are very sympathetically portrayed: Russians and Crimeans. I have not operated with a specific analytical construct to identify this type of portrayal. Rather they have been identified through 'ordinary' textual analysis or predicate analysis. Interestingly⁵⁶, the very same qualities that the negatively described actors are slammed for not having, are the ones that Russia and Crimea are ascribed with. This underlines that said qualities are not represented as some utopian ideal, but a realistic prospect for state policy. In this manner, the representation of the Russian positively portrayed self (including Crimea) simultaneously enhance the antagonism in the portrayal of the others.

6.4 Discussion of theoretical implications of findings

For summaries and discussion of the empirical findings the reader is referred to the respective concluding sections. I will therefore in this section focus on what I have declared to be the overall purpose of this thesis: assessing whether the theoretical approach developed and subsequently applied in this thesis is a worthwhile approach to studying non-kinetic aspects of armed conflict more generally? In order to do so I will discuss and synthesize the above empirical findings. This effort will conclude with, respectively, three theoretical hypotheses on the workings of mediated public diplomacy as part of non-kinetic aspect of armed conflict. Finally, I will reflect on the relevance of this thesis and suggestions for further research.

The first interesting pattern is that through the narratives and actor portrayals, the reader's attention is arguably directed away from Crimea—that is, away from where the military operation takes place. This happens because the events unfolding in Crimea are very vaguely narrated and the military operation completely circumvented. Moreover, the Ukrainian actors are represented as radical, sensationalist and allowing for chaos,

⁵⁶ Although strictly speaking not very surprising, considering the account presented towards the end under heading 5.5.

whereas the Crimean actors are represented as calm and in control. The implication of this is a portrayal of Crimea as a place of peace and order where the people's will is heard—consequently not news or attention worthy. Conversely, Kiev and mainland Ukraine are constructed as anarchic and out of control in a highly attention grabbing manner. Finally, attention is directed away from the area of military operations by misrepresenting events. In other words, through deception at the political-strategical level.

- Hypothesis 1: Through mediated public diplomacy, attention will be directed away from where the military operation occurs
- Hypothesis 1.1: This will be done through a) misrepresentation of the situation where the operation occur (deception), b) representing a sensational situation elsewhere, c) representing the area of operation in a non-news worthy manner, d) non-representation of the operation

The second pattern is that due to the manner of actor portrayals, the events unfolding in Crimea are consequently presented as *fait accomplis*. They are not questioned, but treated as normal and given. As such the language and formulations used do not open for discussions.

- Hypothesis 2: In mediated public diplomacy, events relating to the military operation will be represented in a manner which does not easily open up for questions

The third and final pattern of interest, is the difference in narration in the two different formats—Kremling and RT. It is well known that format influences content. The mere fact that the events are presented differently can thus initially be considered a superfluous finding. Though not surprising, there is nonetheless a certain novelty and merit in establishing this relationship also in the context the use of mediated public diplomacy in an armed conflict. This goes especially since this is an understudied field.

- Hypothesis 3: Narratives of different genre of mediated public diplomacy will not be exact renditions of each other

I argue that had I not adopted a communication based approach to studying the non-kinetic aspects of the Russian 2014 annexation of Crimea, I would not have identified the mechanisms presented above. When referring to such large categories as 'warfare' and 'armed conflict', these findings may seem very modest and one might argue that they do not warrant scholarly attention. However, I argue that their limited nature is precisely what makes them relevant and valuable. The study of war and armed conflict are full of broad and abstracted theories on these phenomena's nature. If we are to reach a more sophisticated understanding of the actual working mechanisms of contemporary armed conflict, such theories must be supplemented with studies of actual practices and, in this case, utterances at a low level of abstraction. The *combination* of these types of approaches will then in concert provide a much fuller picture of developments within contemporary armed conflict.

Nonetheless, despite the assertion that these findings are valuable, there is no denying that they are limited. Further research must thus be undertaken for the full potential of communication-based theories in studying contemporary armed conflict and warfare to be unlocked. A first step would naturally be to attempt to falsify the hypotheses this inquiry has resulted in. Since I have argued for the added value of communication based theories for studying warfare and armed conflict, I will also locate suggestions for further research in the communication process⁵⁷ itself: I have now analysed the messages that have been communicated, and further research should critically therefore also look at its *reception* among sampled target audiences. Only then can the effectiveness (in relation to a given predetermined criteria) of various types of messages be assessed. Moreover, by including communication coming from the same actor, but in different formats (e.g. social media versus traditional media), the effect of the dissemination process itself could also be accounted for.

⁵⁷ In its most simplistic formulation, communication consists of a sender, a message, a receiver, and a feedback loop (see for instance: Schramm 1955)

7 Conclusion

I will begin this conclusion with a summary of the main theoretical, empirical, and methodological contributions of the thesis. Conclusions relating to the main objective of the thesis will be presented first and the answers to the two research questions afterwards. I will end with a summary of the main weaknesses pointed to at various points that the reader should be aware of.

The main *theoretical contribution* of this thesis is the theoretical argument developed in the theory chapter which combines communication based theories with the study of non-kinetic aspect of contemporary armed conflict. Specifically, the argument calls for including studies of mediated public diplomacy efforts and the strategic narratives they disseminate in accounts of non-kinetic aspects of armed conflict. This argument is substantiated by Nye (2004)'s and Castells (1997)'s respective theories of soft power and power in the information age. The whole study is structured as a probe of the above argument, and when applying it to the case of the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea, I am able to analytically identify limited, but salient working mechanisms of the 2014 annexation. I have formulated these mechanisms as four hypotheses so as the better facilitate a possible future research effort into the same questions. These hypotheses, which answer to the main overarching objective of the thesis, are:

- 1: Through mediated public diplomacy, attention will be directed away from where the military operation occurs
- 1.1: This will be done through a) misrepresentation of the situation where the operation occur (deception), b) representing a sensational situation elsewhere, c) representing the area of operation in a non-news worthy manner, d) non-representation of the operation
- 2: In mediated public diplomacy, events relating to the military operation will be represented in a manner which does not easily open up for questions
- 3: Narratives of different genre of mediated public diplomacy will not be exact

renditions of each other

The empirical contributions of this thesis is located in the answers to the two research questions that it has posed. The first is a descriptive question calling for the identification of strategic narratives relating to the 2014 annexation of Crimea and the political turmoil in Ukraine at the time more broadly. I here discerned four narratives (illustrated in figures 1, 4, 5, and 6). In the process of doing so I have made several interesting observations. I identify at least one instance of lack of narration or non-representation. Since I have not been presented with this finding in previous research on strategic narratives, this is an interesting result (De Graaf, Dimitriu and Ringsmose 2015; Miskimmon et al. 2013; Roselle, Miskimmon and O'Loughlin 2014). In relation to this I have identified clear, but not profound differences in representations of narratives in the Kremlin texts and RT material. These mostly occur in instances where an event is not narrated in the Kremlin text, but at the same point in time subject to narration in the RT texts. I also find representations of events that most likely have not occurred.

The second research question concerns patterns of antagonism in actor portrayal. I have found that negative depictions amounting to enemy images are prevalent, specifically of radical Ukrainians, the new Kiev government, and the West. Compared to previous research that have identified a tendency for dehumanization, these are not very extreme (Lule 2004; Santa Ana 1999; Steuter and Wills 2010; Steuter and Wills 2008). For the radicals they center on a portrayal of them as brutal, uncivilized, and neo-Nazi. For the new Ukrainian government these enemy images of the radicals are partially conferred upon them due to their represented lack of governing capacity. For the West the enemy images center around notions of untrustworthiness and hypocrisy. I have also identified symbolic annihilation of the liberal opposition and the Crimean Tartars, and to a certain extent the new Ukrainian government. Russia and Crimea are portrayed in seemingly positive opposition to the other actors and thereby reinforcing their negative depiction. That is, whereas the other actors are portrayed as reckless and without governing capacity, Russia and Crimea are portrayed as calm, decisive, and in control.

From the preliminary analysis of journalistic sources in RT's news, I have found that

these are overwhelmingly elite-based, but only 30 % are reported as Russian nationals or from Russian organizations.

An important *methodological contribution* of this thesis relates to narrative analysis. I have found that in order to uncover more of the meaning inherent in the narratives, one should combine a structure approach with a content approach. That is, one should seek to investigate one or more of either actors, settings, events, or suggested resolutions in addition to the narrative structure of an initial order, a disruption, and a suggested resolution.

The main source of threat for the validity of the conclusions made relates to two aspects of the retrieval of data material. First, due to the lack of a public archive on RT's websites, I do not know if I have retrieved the universe of articles from the designated period. After having tried several different approaches to gathering the data, I chose the one that left me with the most texts since this necessarily will be the closest proximate to the universe. This left me with 233 texts. This is quite a large number, but nonetheless the uncertainty remains.

All these 233 were however only used for the preliminary content analysis of journalistic sources. For the subsequent qualitative analyses I drew a stratified sample of four texts per strata, resulting in a sample of 153 texts. All strata did not have four texts and in these cases all texts have been included in the sample. This sampling procedure clearly aggravates the uncertainty already inherent to the data as there are now greater chances of key events or actor portrayals not being accounted for. As 233 articles in any case would have been too much material for the textually intimate analysis I wanted, I took two measures to minimize the aggravation: Because the data material would be used for identifying narratives, I stratified the sample according to day so that every day would be represented. Moreover I wanted to have as many texts as possible represented per day, and therefore sampled as many as four texts per day. Nonetheless, despite these measures I must again conclude as in the above paragraph that a certain uncertainty still remains.

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