Relegitimization in Contemporary Russia: Putin’s PR Project

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The results of the December 2011 Russian parliamentary elections, which reinstated the incumbent United Russia Party, catalyzed the gathering of tens of thousands of Russians who denied the election results and accused the government of corrupt vote-rigging practices. These protests were further mobilized by the March 2012 election, which re-elected Vladimir Putin for his third presidential term. Individuals filled the streets in discontent as they accused the Russian government of corruption in addition to expressing many other grievances that they had. Numerous eyes were focused on Russia as many pondered what was to come as they watched these events unfold. Some questioned if these protests would incite a revolution and result in the complete overthrow of the semi-authoritarian Russian government. Until then, Putin had long been praised for bringing Russia out of economic hardship when he first attained the presidential seat in 2000 and this economic success helped him secure popular approval during his first two presidential terms. The 2008 Russian economic crisis had left many citizens dissatisfied and Putin could no longer rely upon economic performance to garner popular support going into his third presidential term. Amidst the “Stop Putinism” protest signs and the “Russia without Putin” chants denouncing his right to rule, Putin began his third presidential term with the immense task of resolving these challenges to his legitimacy. Fast-forward four years to today’s Russia and you will notice a completely different scene entirely. The tens of thousands of disgruntled Russian citizens that once clamored for a “Russia Without Putin” no longer fill the streets and the large protests have subsided as Vladimir Putin currently sits comfortably inside the Kremlin with increasingly high levels of popular support. Not only has Putin been able to successfully overcome the threat to his presidency, but he has somehow also managed to maintain this
support against the backdrop of a failing economy and continued authoritarian government practices. How exactly has Putin been able to restore and maintain his legitimacy in the eyes of the Russian people as many of the protester's original grievances continue to remain unresolved? This is the political phenomenon that motivates this thesis and the purpose of this study is to present a plausible theory that aims to explain Putin’s ability to recover and successfully secure his legitimacy.

My theoretical argument states that the 2011-2012 protests were the events that prompted Putin to change his legitimization strategy from that which could be described as performance-based legitimacy to what can now be described as value-based legitimacy. During Putin’s first two presidential terms, the Russian population may not have been entirely satisfied with the controls of the semi-authoritarian system, but seemed to at least be content with the improved quality of life that they had experienced as a result of economic progress. Putin’s third term is therefore distinct from his previous years of rule because in the absence of economic prosperity, he was forced to seek new methods that would convince the population of his right to rule. I argue that he was able to accomplish this task by appealing to common values such as Russian nationalism and elements of Russian traditionalism as a legitimacy enhancer that would compensate for the lack of government performance. Exploiting elements present within Russian political culture helps Putin and his political party portray their commitment to the Russian population’s interests. With actions rooted within these particular appeals, he is able to successfully deflect from his inability to produce an authentic liberal democratic system and his inability to improve economic performance. Therefore, I believe that through the promotion of these legitimizing cultural appeals and ideologies, Putin has been able to demonstrate that he is still interested in improving the quality of life of Russian citizens despite the failing economy.
and continuous authoritarian controls. The manipulation of nationalist identity politics and political culture work to his advantage to convince the public of why he is fit to lead Russia as a nation-state.

In this thesis, empirical methods will be employed and Russia will be used as a case study in order to understand the theoretical basis for how a semi-authoritarian government can restore and maintain legitimacy when its rule is under scrutiny. The research question that I just presented is important because the concept of legitimacy can be used as a socio-political contract that binds political and social systems. Understanding the case of Russia as a political phenomenon will provide insight on legitimization techniques that can be employed when positions of authority are under threat in order to restore the socio-political contract that grants the right to rule. This study is significant because it contributes to ongoing discourse regarding methods of legitimization and is relevant to current events occurring in Russia today. This study is likely to appeal to scholars interested in understanding the mystique regarding Putin’s consolidation of power. This study can also potentially interest those who participated in the 2011-2012 anti-Putin protest movement and increase their consciousness regarding the current source of Putin’s support base in order to form a stronger oppositional front in the future.

Drawing from previous research on legitimacy, nationalist ideology, and popular support for semi-authoritarian regimes, this thesis offers value-based legitimacy as an explanation for Putin’s ability to overcome threats to his rule. In the following sections, I will first provide a definition of terms that will be utilized throughout this study. Then, I will provide a brief historical background on Putin’s first two presidential terms in order to provide perspective on the unique nature of his third term. Next, an examination of previous literature that relate to this study will be presented to provide the framework in which this study will be conducted. Then, I
will present a theory that aims to explain how Putin has been able to restore and maintain his legitimacy in his third presidential term. Afterwards, strategies employed by Putin to enhance his legitimacy will undergo a brief analysis in order to examine how they are rooted in nationalist ideology and Russian traditionalism. Then, I will describe the methods employed in this study and then presents the results of my empirical analysis. Finally, I will conclude with statements on these results and comment on projections for future research in relation to this study.

**Definition of Terms:**

In order to understand the framework in which I will be conducting my research, I must explain certain key concepts. I shall begin by trying to define legitimacy as it pertains to this study. The concept of legitimacy crosses several disciplines such as psychology, sociology and political science.¹ Due to the numerous applications of this term, I will use a definition presented by Mark Suchman in his journal article, “Managing Legitimacy: Strategic and Institutional Approaches.” According to Suchman, “Legitimacy is a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions.”² In other words an entity is considered legitimate as long as his or her actions are in accord with the preferences of the subjects under his or her rule. Legitimacy is important because trying to govern a society based upon the possession of power alone requires enormous expenditures of resources to coerce individuals to producing desired behavior.³ Therefore, it works to the benefit of an authoritative

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² Wiechnik 574.
figure to cultivate a belief in his or her legitimacy in order to secure desired behavior through the willing consent of constituents.\(^4\)  Despite the fact that many scholars remain divided upon the sources of legitimacy, this study will focus on the following two sources exclusively: performance and value-based legitimacy.

Performance legitimacy is self-explanatory in the sense that this form of legitimacy is derived from the government’s performance and ability to improve the quality of life of its citizens. Subjects determine whether or not the government is credible based upon their assessment of the government’s actions in this regard. On the other hand, value-based legitimacy is a form of legitimacy that is not directly derived from government performance but is instead rooted in government appeals to certain internalized values. Value-based legitimacy therefore is derived from appealing to some commonly held value systems of the population concerning the normative appropriateness of government official behavior.\(^5\) These appeals foster the perception that government behavior is valid because its actions seem to be in accord with citizen preferences. Therefore, nationalism and other sources of Russian pride such as traditionalism, shall be examined as sources of value-based legitimacy within the context of this study.

\textit{Why Nationalism and Russian Traditionalism?}

Nationalism and Russian traditionalism have legitimating effects because they help create a consensus between rulers and members of the nation on mutual aspirations and obligations.\(^6\) These two concepts bind the state and society in a collective consciousness based on a sense of

\(^4\) Tyler 377.
political loyalty to the nation-state and cultural belonging to that community.\(^7\) Therefore, Putin can appeal to the population with actions that cultivate a sense of pride in being part of the Russian nation.

It is also important for me to state the degree of inclusion implied when I use the term “nationalism” because I am aware that it can take either a civic or ethnic form.\(^8\) Within the context of this study, the term “nationalism” implies the civic and more inclusive form due to the fact that Putin has acknowledged how an overtly exclusive form of nationalism could pose a danger to Russia’s fragile multiethnic social fabric.\(^9\)

Also, for the sake of simplicity in the remainder of this thesis, the term “nationalism” will also imply Russian traditionalism. This is because nationalism is a discourse of political culture that can also draw from elements of national history and tradition.\(^10\) National identity is embedded in the nation’s common historical past and the incumbent regime can appeal to a collective historical memory, which can then be exploited and manipulated to the government’s advantage.\(^11\) This allows political mobilization around the creation of a commemorative discourse of a national history mythologized by the incumbent regime to legitimize the nationalistic aspiration for a shared destiny on the basis of the common past.\(^12\) More specifically, exhibiting a commitment to restoring Russia as the powerful force that it once was, especially on the international stage is a nationalist aspiration that has much appeal to the

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\(^8\) Laruelle, Marlene. *Russian Nationalism and the National Reassertion of Russia.* [S.l.]: Routledge, 2009) 3.


\(^10\) Liao 357.

\(^11\) Liao 358.

\(^12\) Liao 358.
Russian population. The government’s ability to pursue society’s nationalist passions arouses an affectionate feeling within the populace toward the regime and this can help the government overcome challenges to its legitimacy. It is also important for me to note that this work acknowledges the fact that there isn’t always unity in the phenomenon of nationalism but recognizes its ability to establish unity in its constructed nature.

**Brief Historical Context:**

This brief historical examination of Vladimir Putin’s tenure as president will explain the circumstances behind his rise to power and also enables one to distinguish historical continuities and discontinuities in current Russian policy.

In the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia had defaulted on its debt, salaries for public sector workers and pensions were being paid months late, and basic infrastructure was collapsing. Russia’s economy had declined by 40 percent during the early part of the 1990’s and had suffered financial collapse by 1998. As a result, Putin’s main domestic policy initiative in his first presidential term was to restore economic stability in Russia by implementing economic reforms policies meant to reduce inflation and help the economy. Not too long after he began his presidency, there were unprecedented universal price hikes in oil and gas. Russia was a major exporter of these strategic commodities, and these price hikes greatly helped to sustain its economic recovery. At the beginning of 2007, Russia’s gross domestic

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13 Liao 361.
14 Laruelle 3.
17 Dresen
18 Dresen
19 Dresen
product (GDP) finally returned to the same level as in 1990, the penultimate year of communist power.\(^{20}\) The country had six straight years of growth, averaging 6 percent per year and in addition to the oil and gas influx, there was a strong increase in domestic household consumptions, complete repayment of public foreign debt, a doubling of spending on education, and a tripling of spending on health over the course of Putin’s first two terms in power.\(^{21}\) The rising oil and gas prices in addition to rising living standards had served as the buttress of Putin’s popularity during his first two terms from the years 2000 to 2008. Economic success seems to be one of the main contributors to his popularity because Russia under Putin existed as a restrictive and controlled democracy but he still managed to remain popular despite these controls. Putin was praised for bringing Russia out of stagnation and into a new era of progress and it was this incredible performance that was the source of his legitimacy during his first two terms. Putin had come to embody Russia’s “recovery” and although he is not solely responsible for the amelioration of the country’s economic situation, he has been able to turn this situation to his advantage in the political realm.\(^{22}\)

After his success, Putin was limited to two successive terms by the Russian constitution and his nominated successor, Medvedev, was elected while Putin took the position of Prime Minister in 2008.\(^{23}\) Putin and the United Russia Party had hand-picked and endorsed Dmitry Medvedev, who essentially represented the Putin system while modifying some of its features.\(^{24}\) Medvedev won the presidency with 70.3 percent of the vote, most likely because many saw him

\(^{20}\) Laruelle 7.
\(^{21}\) Laruelle 7.
\(^{22}\) Laruelle 7.
\(^{23}\) Sakwa 4.
\(^{24}\) Sakwa 4.
as a surrogate to Putin. The Russian economy took a blow after Medvedev was elected and the citizens of Russia suffered hardships that left the population increasingly dissatisfied. When Putin reassumed the presidential seat in 2012, he was met with disgruntled protesters and although initial reports of the immediate causes of the protests were credited to be cries of fraudulence and falsification of parliamentary elections, many believe that the roots of this protest movement go far deeper.

2011-2012 Protests:

On December 5, 2011, up to 10,000 protesters gathered on Chistoprudny Boulevard in Moscow to condemn fraud in the parliamentary ballot and then it gained pace when 100,000 participated in the December 24th protests also condemning the practices of a “managed democracy.” The main slogan was “Russia without Putin” while placards with the words “Putin is a thief” were also prevalent. According to Levada-Center surveys, the protest movement was overwhelmingly young and middle class. Although there was a middle class majority, there were also many students, pensioners, and poverty-stricken individuals that participated in the protests.

Issues of the socio-political nature were what prompted the fall in popularity of Russia’s leader and public outcry against his rule. Even though the immediate reasons for protest were fraudulent vote-counting that ultimately allowed the United Russia party to preserve its majority in the State Duma, the dissatisfaction with the regime was much deeper as protesters raised a

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26 Sakwa 120.

27 Sakwa 120.

28 Sakwa 122.

whole gamut of issues that reached far beyond that particular campaign, including demands for greater transparency, accountability, good governance, civil rights, etc. These protesters were frustrated with the regime’s structural ineffectiveness in delivering public goods and providing social justice and fair governing practices. A lack of trust developed between the ruling elite and the rest of Russian society as a result. Makarychev and Mommen also present another theory as to why the protests erupted. They claim that, “the roots of the widespread public discontent date back to September 2011, when at the United Russia party convention Medvedev not only refused to run for his second presidential tenure, but instead proposed this job to Putin in exchange for securing his own appointment as the next prime minister.” Makarychev and Mommen argue that despite Medvedev’s reputation as Putin’s marionette, a significant part of Russian society still perceived him as a moderate alternative to Putin’s hard-line policy of state centralization. Medvedev’s voluntary self-removal from the presidential race symbolized for many the end of their hopes for modernization and for a more liberal political regime in Russia. Also, the promises of liberalization of the political system and modernization of the Russian economy that were made during Dmitry Medvedev’s presidency were not fulfilled and many Russians felt deceived when they found out that Putin would be returning to his post as president. Russians were simply angered by the overt manipulation of electoral procedure, as

30 Makarychev and Mommen 1.
31 Makarychev and Mommen 3.
32 Makarychev and Mommen 3.
33 Makarychev and Mommen 2.
34 Makarychev and Mommen 2.
exemplified by the clandestine agreements between Putin and Medvedev, and by the large scale voter fraud that the government had been condemned for conducting.36

Unlike the Russian street protesters in the 1990’s who protested their inability to feed their families as a result of joblessness, the discontent of the 2011-2012 protests was mostly spread across Russia’s middle class who had a higher degree of education, expectations and demands as to the quality of governance that they sought after.37 Stability and order were the key signifiers in Putin’s lexicon at the beginning of his first presidential term, but now in the absence of economic prosperity, issues concerning the quality of government performance and corruption were finally being raised.38

Gel'man, Travin, and Marganiya argue that these protests also reveal that there was a change in the informal “social contract” between the authorities and society.39 According to these authors, “in previous years, Russian authorities provided Russian citizens with a rise of their well-being and material prosperity in exchange for passive loyalty and non-intervention in politics, in the wake of mass protests this contract was if not broken, then at least put into question.”40 The breakdown of this social contract was due to a shift in public opinion influenced by changing perceptions of socioeconomic problems, predominantly as a consequence of the 2008-2009 crisis and the absence of economic prosperity resulted in disillusionment with government corruption and other abuses of authority.41

This is why I argue that value-based legitimacy was what Putin resorted to in order to repair the damaged social contract and distract the population from persisting domestic issues.

36 Gel’man 2.
37 Makarychev and Mommen 4.
38 Makarychev and Mommen 17.
39 Makarychev and Mommen 127.
40 Makarychev and Mommen 127.
41 Makarychev and Mommen 127.
What follows is a review of existing literature on concepts that will provide the context in which my theoretical analysis will be built upon.

Chapter 2: Popular Mobilization under Authoritarianism

In this section I will analyze what we know about the nature of legitimacy, nationalist mobilization, and popular support for a semi-authoritarian regime. The purpose of this literature review is to present existing theories regarding these concepts from major scholarly works and then relate these theories to my examination of Russia as a case study. The works present within this literature review will provide insight on current on-going conversations concerning themes that are integral to this study. The key findings within the seven works that I will present will then be synthesized in order to draw connections between the various research studies and form the foundation upon which I will be conducting my own research.

Legitimacy

The process of legitimization is a well-studied topic in political science research. There are several varying theories concerning sources of legitimacy and many find their roots in the original work of Max Weber concerning issues of power and legitimacy. Wolfgang Mommsen’s book, *The Political and Social Theory of Max Weber: Collected Essays*, presents a well-known essay written by Weber entitled, “The Three Types of Legitimate Rule”, in which Weber reveals what he believes to be three ideal types of legitimate political authority. These three types of legitimacy vary in the manner that citizens are lead to believe in a leader’s right to rule. One type of legitimacy is described as legal authority, in which citizen obedience is demanded by virtue of a set of legal rules and laws. Citizens hold respect for the legal and administrative
institutions that are in place and therefore view the office holder as having legitimacy because they respect the position that the authority has, but not necessarily because they respect the officeholder himself. Legal authority is not rooted in the individual officeholder but is instead rooted in belief of the legitimacy of the rules and laws that have created the specific position of authority. The second source of legitimacy is traditional authority, which finds the roots of legitimacy in the citizen’s reverence for traditional practices. This type of legitimacy is not rooted in elections, but is often found in hereditary systems of rule that have long existed within a specific society. The officeholder within this system tends to retain legitimacy regardless of the individual’s ability to rule. The final categorization of authority is charismatic authority and is the only categorization that is actually rooted in the characteristics of the individual officeholder. Instead of a focus on legality or tradition, the ruler’s legitimacy is rooted in the individual’s charisma and appealing personality which is able to win over the citizen’s approval to attain legitimacy. These are the three categorizations that many scholars have used to form the basis of their studies regarding the nature of legitimacy, but David Beetham argues that this approach does not sufficiently portray the multi-faceted nature of legitimacy as a concept.

In his book, *The Legitimation of Power*, David Beetham responds to the Weberian concept of legitimacy and presents what he believes to be present conceptual fallacies within Weber’s categorical framework of legitimacy. In his book, Beetham acknowledges that although the Weberian conception is accurate to an extent, he argues that Weber fails to acknowledge the multi-dimensional nature of legitimacy. Beetham argues that Weber’s threefold typology of legitimate authority has caused social scientists since Weber to force every example of legitimacy into these 3 categories. He argues that this typology elevates each of the contributory

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elements of legitimacy (sanctity of tradition, rule-conformity, and the charismatic qualities of the individual leader) into a separate self-sufficient type of legitimacy and this fails to recognize that each is just one element of a totality. Beetham proposes an alternative approach to the subject by presenting three conditions that he believes need to be fulfilled in order for a power to be considered legitimate: 1) its conformity to established rules, 2) the justifiability of the rules by reference to shared beliefs, 3) the express consent, of the subordinate, or of the most significant among them, to the particular relations of power. David Beetham also believes that enhanced order, stability, and effectiveness are better ways to assess legitimacy in comparison to Weber’s reliance upon what the people believe or think about the leader.

Tom Tyler’s article, “Psychological Perspectives On Legitimacy and Legitimation,” also discusses the social elements of legitimacy, but presents a more psychological perspective on the topic. He claims that an individual possesses legitimacy if he or she is capable of making others defer to decisions and rules out of obligation rather than out of fear of punishment or anticipation of reward. Although he acknowledges that excessive use of force or coercion can lead others to do what a leader wants, it is far easier to maintain social control if a figurehead actually holds legitimacy. He claims that legitimacy convinces individuals to acquiesce voluntarily due to their sense of obligation, which is most useful in periods of scarcity, crisis, and conflict. Tyler also mentions how social norms and values can become a part of people’s internal motivational systems and guide their behavior. As specific social norms and values are internalized, control by others become replaced with self-control as these norms become part of one’s own desires and guide how they behave. Tyler’s work reveals a sense of obligation and responsibility that

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43 Tyler 378.
44 Tyler 378.
45 Tyler 378.
arises out of the internalization of certain societal norms and values that can be used to the advantage of those in power. This sense of obligation is what he argues is a key element in the concept of legitimacy since it establishes voluntary submissiveness to the directives of authoritative figureheads.\footnote{Tyler 378.}

*Russian Nationalism*

Astrid Tuminez’s book, *Russian Nationalism Since 1856*, is an extensive historical analysis on Russian nationalism as a consolidating tool in Russian political history and how it was employed to mobilize people to action. The book defines nationalism as a political ideology that holds the following beliefs: (1) there exists a nation with identifiable members; (2) the nation, as a collective, has characteristics that make it distinct; (3) the individual and the state’s highest loyalty must be to the nation’s core interests or mission; and (4) the nation is the chief repository of legitimate political authority \footnote{Tuminez, Astrid S. *Russian Nationalism since 1856: Ideology and the Making of Foreign Policy*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000) 2.} According to Tuminez, the term “nation” is a concept or category that is used to connote a community of people who share kinship based on race, culture, language, ethnicity, religion, and/or citizenship.\footnote{Tuminez 3.} She argues that nationalism implies a consensus between rulers and members of a nation on mutual goals and also plays a key role in binding both the state and society effectively together with a common sense of identity and purpose. Due to the fact that the term “nation” holds a conceptual flexibility, it can be made into a force that allows leaders to use it as a way to evoke ideas that might best serve their aims in a particular political, economic, or cultural context.\footnote{Tuminez 3.} Nationalism’s flexibility also
allows its content and intensity to change over time and under different political and social circumstances. Tuminez notes that “historical experience, ethnic socialization, cultural traditions, and collective memory create a ‘structure of political discourse’ that renders public consciousness more susceptible to some nationalist ideas than others and increases the likelihood that these ideas will shape social attitudes and actions.” Nationalism has legitimating effects because it finds its political power within a defined “nation,” and those who claim to represent the nation and defend its alleged interests are likely to strengthen their political appeal, increase their societal support, and secure their power.

Tuminez also notes that her historical analysis of nationalism shows that it has been a weak and uneven mobilizing force in Russia. According to Tuminez, Russian rulers have never successfully used nationalism as an ideology to bind state and society in a lasting way. Nationalism’s temporal limits are due to the fact that it eventually becomes more difficult to harness nationalism for the purposes of the political elite because it loses its appeal to the population over time. Her analysis of tsarist and Soviet Russian history reveals that when the population was mobilized by nationalism to obey orders of the state, make sacrifices that preserved ruling regimes, and defend the state from external threat, they usually end up on the losing end of the aftermath of nationalist mobilization. Their concerns are ultimately left unaddressed and subordinated to the interests of the ruling elite.

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49 Tuminez 3.  
50 Tuminez 4.  
51 Tuminez 4.  
52 Tuminez 3.  
53 Tuminez 267.
Popular Support for Undemocratic Regimes

Richard Rose’s book, *Popular Support For An Undemocratic Regime*, uses Russia as a case study for understanding how undemocratic or semi-democratic regimes have been able to mobilize popular support. They seek to examine how Russians slowly develop support for a regime that they see as incongruent with their preference for a complete democracy. Subjects have various reasons as to why they support an undemocratic regime and these reasons include: they have an honest belief that the government is legitimate and/or they have a resigned acceptance of it as an alternative to chaos because it establishes some form of order. The authors also demonstrate that with the passage of time, performance makes evident how a new regime differs from its predecessor and the longer it remains in place, the greater the likelihood that its subjects will abandon any expectation that it could be replaced. The ability of the current Russian government to overcome the challenges that it encounters over time not only makes it durable but it also weakens the population’s hope for any viable alternatives. Developing viable alternatives to Putin in Russia remains an issue because no one alternative is endorsed by a majority and this prevents the opposition from forming a stable and viable coalition against the semi-democratic Russian government.

The Chinese Model of Value-based Legitimacy

Anne-Marie Brady’s article, “Mass Persuasion as a Means of Legitimation and China’s Popular Authoritarianism” examines the role of mass persuasion in reclaiming and maintaining political legitimacy using an authoritarian Chinese model. According to Brady, “states

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54 Rose 91.
55 Rose 93.
traditionally maintain power by means of either performance-based legitimacy or promulgating ideology. Mass persuasion can be used to both promote a regime’s ideology and persuade the public that it is performing the tasks of government effectively and equitably.”

She also notes that some governments even use a combination of these two to maintain legitimacy. Brady reveals that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has always used mass persuasion as a tool of government, but from 1978 to 1989, CCP rule faced a legitimacy crisis. She notes that many critics believed that this legitimacy crisis was the result of the Mao era reforms that were enforced and ultimately hindered economic growth. Brady believes that the CCP’s reliance upon economic legitimacy alone was too risky and identified this as the source of the political instability that had led up to the 1989 student protest movement. In response to the protests, the CCP chose to base its legitimacy on both economic growth and ideological goals that would then be incorporated and perpetuated by methods of mass persuasion. Starting from 1991, patriotism was a key political ideology that the Party included in its mass persuasion campaigns.

She also notes how the party also uses major events such as the Beijing Olympics as a method of “mass distraction” designed to mobilize the population and distract them from more troubling issues such as inflation, unemployment, political corruption, and environmental degradation. Due to the successful incorporation of ideology into methods of mass persuasion, China continues to be a Party-State rather than a multiparty democracy because the CCP government has succeeded in

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57 Brady 447.
its task of persuading the Chinese population that the current political system is the most appropriate one for China today.\textsuperscript{58}

Ning Liao’s paper, “Bringing Ideology Back In: Chinese Nationalism Contextualized in the Legitimacy Enhancement of an Authoritarian Regime,” also discusses how the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has resorted to using nationalism as an ideological tool for its legitimacy enhancement. Liao seems to agree with Brady and believes that regime legitimacy based solely on economic performance is imperfect and needs to be integrated with elements of ideology in order to restore order and achieve the population’s validation of authority. The CCP utilizes nationalist discourse to portray the party’s commitment to the Chinese population’s interests by exploiting elements present within Chinese culture. According to Liao, a conceptual fallacy exists in the common perception that illegitimacy exists in nations where authoritarian governments exist and their only source of survival is coercion and repression. Even authoritarian regimes and semi-democratic regimes need some degree of popular legitimacy to sustain their rule because control and coercion can only sustain leaders for a limited time, so they ultimately need to ground their claims in some kind of popular support\textsuperscript{59} Ning Liao argues that any regime that can sustain its rule for a long time has legitimacy as long as the population continues to accept the right of their leaders to rule. The author therefore believes that nationalism is an effective ideology that can cultivate a sense of political loyalty to the nation-state, cultural belonging to the community, and can be used as an instrument of regime legitimacy enhancement. Within this context Liao presents the concept of “value-based legitimacy” and how the CCP utilizes this in order to effectively evade the Party’s “performance dilemma.” According to Liao, “Nationalism-a distinctive discourse of political culture that

\textsuperscript{58} Brady 452.  
\textsuperscript{59} Liao 352.
draws deeply from the well of national history-is thus selected as a strategy alternative to economic performance to legitimize the rule of the authoritarian regime.”

Liao believes that the moderately high level of belief in the CCP’s regime legitimacy in the minds of Chinese citizens today is less a reflection of its policy performance in socioeconomic areas, but rather reflective of the regime’s success in framing the population’s perceptions within an ideological framework. He claims that, “even though the Chinese people remain discontented with policies implemented by the incumbent authority in certain issue areas, the overall subjective evaluation of the regime constitutes a reliable basis of popular support of the regime’s rule.” Liao argues that while performance-based legitimacy still serves as a rightful source of the regime’s authority, ideology cannot be treated as an insignificant factor in the enhancement of the CCP’s regime legitimacy. Ultimately, Liao believes that nationalism as an official ideology is arguably much more durable than performance-based legitimacy but also acknowledges the limits to its sustainability as regimes become dependent upon international conflicts and/or events to serve as distractions from the government’s performance-based failures (360).

The works that I have presented within this literature review provided the present ongoing conversations concerning the nature of legitimacy, nationalist mobilization, and popular support for undemocratic regimes. The first five works examined one of these three topics extensively and the final two works analyzed how these three elements interact with one another within the Chinese model. The theories and claims that these works present matter because they form the framework upon which my study will be conducted and help shape my argument.

Although I agree with David Beetham’s criticism of Weber’s three-fold categorization of legitimacy and also agree with the conditions that Beetham presents as an alternative to Weber’s
theory, I do believe that Russia is an exception to one condition that Beetham presents. The case of Russia is unique as it relates to the first condition, which states that an authority needs to conform to established rules in order to be considered legitimate. Although the legitimacy of the ruling elite in Russia is often questioned when incidents of government corruption come to light, the ruling elite somehow still manages to win the expressed consent of constituents after the legitimacy crisis. Beetham’s conditions are correct when these rules are applied to a fully democratic state, but in the case of Russia any many other undemocratic regimes like it, not all of the conditions that he presents apply because many regimes still find ways to garner popular support despite their fallacies. My study is therefore focused on understanding the strategies employed by undemocratic regimes or more specifically Russia in order to retain legitimacy when citizens bring its right to rule into question.

There also seems to be some discord between these authors regarding whether government performance or the population’s constructed beliefs about the government are better sources of legitimacy. Although many of these authors seem to acknowledge the importance of shared beliefs, social norms, and values in terms of their ability to internally mobilize individuals into acquiescing voluntarily to a leader’s rule, opinions differ on if this is a more important and/or sustainable source of legitimacy than government performance. David Beetham seems to be in favor of the performance argument because he believes that enhanced order, stability, and effectiveness are a better way to assess legitimacy while some of the other authors acknowledge the effectiveness of ideology as a substitute for a government’s performance deficit. Michael Hechter does an excellent job of explaining the dynamic between these two sources of legitimacy in his journal article, “Legitimacy in the Modern World.” He claims that although the principal determinant of a government’s ruling effectiveness is based upon its ability to provide public
goods that will improve the constituent's quality of life, in the absence of state performance and fair government procedures, rulers can gain legitimacy by employing ideologies, symbolic scripts, and techniques of mass persuasion that can be utilized to “hoodwink” state subjects into attaining a “false consciousness.” Therefore, value-based legitimacy can lead constituents to believe that the government has the right to rule even despite its deficiencies.

My project fits within the context of the works presented here because I am interested in understanding how concepts such as legitimacy, nationalism, and the maintenance of popular support interact through the use of value-based legitimacy within today’s Russia. Many works seem to focus on political and economic performance as the basis of legitimacy, but far fewer works examine how value-based legitimacy is utilized when a leader can no longer rely upon performance legitimacy alone. The Chinese example has demonstrated how value–based legitimacy is a valid and functional source of legitimacy and the works that I have presented have proven its usefulness to be true. Although Tuminez’s work already provides perspective on how nationalist ideology was used in tsarist and Soviet Russian history, my study is unique because it will analyze nationalism as a legitimacy enhancer in today’s Russia. My research is intended to fill the gap that currently exists concerning the significance of value-based legitimacy and its usefulness in securing popular support in times of poor economic and/or political performance under the rule of a semi-authoritarian regime. My study is therefore meant to bridge the gap in our understanding of the utilization of value-based legitimacy in the absence of government performance through the examination of contemporary Russia as a case study.

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Chapter 3: Theory

Drawing from the behavior predicted by the previous works of literature that I just presented, this study aims to examine relative events that have occurred in contemporary Russia. More specifically, the main question motivating this study is how exactly has Putin been able to restore and maintain his legitimacy in his third term following the 2011-2012 protests that erupted? My theoretical argument claims that Putin responded to these protests by changing his legitimization strategy from performance to value-based legitimacy and this is what has helped him secure his right to rule. Although there are numerous values that can be associated with value-based legitimacy, for the sake of limiting the scope of this thesis, I will be focusing on nationalist ideology and other extensions of Russian pride such as traditionalism.

I acknowledge that nationalism is not a completely foreign concept, but is actually an essential element when ruling a nation-state. The significance of nationalism in this case is rooted in the fact that Putin seemed to be utilizing a more benign form of nationalism in his previous terms but his actions and rhetoric seem to have taken a more aggressive direction lately. When Putin first came into power, he had the benefit of economic stability and had no need to seek other modes of generating popular support. But now, due to changes in the current economic state of Russia, I argue that Putin has become more dependent upon appealing to the population’s nationalist sentiments in order to maintain his right to rule. By appealing to nationalist sentiment, the population sees Putin’s promotion of national interests as an effective mode of conduct and his engagements on the international stage also properly distract the population from persisting domestic issues that remain unaddressed and unresolved. I will not necessarily be able to prove that a causational relationship exists between Putin’s actions and his ability to re-establish a strong support base, but instead I make an argument for a correlational
relationship that exists between how Putin has been able to re-legitimize himself after accusations of dissatisfactory performance.

In order to test my theory and examine whether or not Putin actually has placed a greater focus on nationalism in his third term compared to his previous two terms, I decided to analyze his State of the Union Addresses to the Federal Assembly. I chose to examine Putin’s speeches because public rhetoric is an excellent method of exerting political influence and these speeches will also allow me to examine if and how Putin’s political discourse has changed since his comeback. Leaders use rhetoric in their speeches in order to convey certain ideas and form some sort of bond with the population that they are speaking to and these speeches represent just one of many methods that Putin’s utilizes to disseminate certain ideas when considering the magnitude of his control over mass media. In order to analyze his speeches, a coding scheme of topics of utterance and the word frequency of terms related to these topics were created for analysis. Initially, I only coded for nationalist rhetoric in order to assess word frequencies over time, but then I decided to expand my coding to also include other topics related to domestic policy such as the economy, environment, social welfare, etc. By expanding the topics that I include in my coding process, I should be able to attain a more comprehensive analysis of Putin’s policy agenda and how it has changed over time. The domestic issues that I have included were then categorized as either value-based or performance-based issues. The logic of my assessment of Putin’s speeches is as follows: an increase in word frequency of value-based topics would lead me to infer that this is a priority in Putin’s policy agenda while an increase in performance-based topics would lead me to conclude that addressing those domestic issues is at the top of his agenda. Through the use of a computerized qualitative analysis program useful for analyzing textual and multimedia data, I analyzed all of the State of the Union addresses that
Putin has given in his first term, second term, and thus far in his third term. In order to determine whether Putin has indeed chosen to use nationalism as part of his new legitimization strategy, I will test the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 1: Putin’s use of nationalist rhetoric will increase in his third term in comparison to his previous two terms**

Also, in order to have a more comprehensive examination of Putin’s policy agenda and to assess whether or not there has been a shift from performance-based legitimacy to value-based legitimacy, I shall also test the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 2: In order to shift the population’s focus and compensate for his performance deficit, Putin’s references to government economic and liberal democratic performance would also decrease in his third term.**

If an increase in the use of nationalist rhetoric in Putin’s third term were found to be true, then this would serve to support the argument that he has placed a greater emphasis on appealing to the nationalist sentiments of the Russian population in order to restore his legitimacy in his third term after the protests. An increase in the promotion of nationalist ideology will serve to demonstrate how he is using nationalism to distract citizens from the government’s performance deficit and secure his legitimacy.

It is also important for me to note that I am not claiming that a government must always choose between performance and value-based legitimacy. In fact, it would be most beneficial to achieve support based upon both values and performance. I do expect this study to reveal
whether or not Putin has chosen one source of legitimacy over the other as I have hypothesized and also reveal which particular values and areas of performance have mattered the most to him since he has taken office. Before we test the two hypotheses that I have proposed, I will first present a few instances that serve to demonstrate why I have been led to believe that Putin has pursued more aggressive nationalist promotion strategies in his third presidential term.

**Legitimacy Enhancement Strategies in Putin’s Russia**

What follows is a brief analysis of legitimacy enhancement strategies employed by Putin that seem to be rooted in nationalist ideology and Russian traditionalism. For the purposes of my research, I will demonstrate how appealing to these values serve to exhibit Putin’s intent on promoting citizen interests so that they will support the current political system. I will briefly discuss how Putin controls narratives through state control of the media, how he has developed a strong relationship with the Church (a strong symbol of Russian historical tradition), and I will also discuss his recent initiatives on the international stage that are utilized to mobilize nationalism and avert attention from current domestic issues.

*Control of Media and the Restoration of Putin’s Image:*

It would be remiss of me to discuss Putin’s public oratory without discussing his consolidation of the Russian media and its implications on his ability to rule. Mass media plays a very important role in every political system because it has the power to influence popular opinion concerning political and societal issues.\(^1\) The media serves as a political resource that is vital to successfully perpetuating the ideological values that Putin is trying to appeal to. Ever since Putin first became president, according to Markus Soldner, “there [were] no electronic

\(^1\) White 157
media outlets with nationwide significance and politically relevant content that [were] not influenced—either directly or indirectly—by state agents."62 For example, *Pervyi Kanal* and *Rossiiia*, which are the two TV channels with the largest audience share, happen to be under firm state control.63 Other channels with relevant political content are also controlled by people and companies loyal to and dependent upon the government.64 Just as the previously mentioned by Anne Brady, “mass persuasion can be used to both promote a regime’s ideology and persuade the public that it is performing the tasks of government effectively and equitably.” State-controlled news narratives not only provides a platform for Putin to disseminate a particular narrative to the Russian public but it also allows a certain level of censorship over issues that the public is aware of. Therefore, the media outlet allows Putin to control the presence of certain “legitimizing” public narratives. Putin holds a monopoly over information in Russia and this can ultimately influence the population’s perceptions about him and his ability to rule. In order for value-based legitimacy to be completely successful, Putin relies upon controlling and limiting free press to advance his arguments for why he is the rightful leader of Russia. Suppressing counterarguments is the only way to ensure that Putin’s appeals to Russian values are not exposed as manipulations of Russian public opinion. Muzzling anti-Putin voices immensely enhances his ability to portray both himself and his actions in a more positive light without the interference of dissenting voices.

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63 White 168.

64 White 168.
Consolidation of the Russian Orthodox Church:

Religious values are an important aspect of Russian historical tradition and it is important for me to describe the role that religion plays in contemporary Russian politics. The Russian Orthodox Church holds a rich place in Russian history and since the beginning of Putin’s presidency in Russia, the lines segregating church and state have become almost indistinguishable. The church finally made a resurgence with the fall of the Soviet Union following years of repression that began after the Bolshevik Revolution. After the socioeconomic insecurity of the 1990s drew crowds of Russians back toward the dwindling institution, the Russian Orthodox Church was finally able to reestablish its central role in Russian society and politics. Ever since, the Church has enjoyed a growing influence and relevance in Russian culture that hark back to the Russian imperial era. Recent polls show that 74% of Russians consider themselves part of the Russian Orthodox Church, so it therefore becomes easy to understand why Putin would want to develop close ties with the church while ruling over an increasingly pious Russian society. Recently, Putin seems to be establishing a close relationship between himself and leader of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Kirill, who in 2012 once called Putin a “miracle from God,” who rectified the “crooked path of history.” Patriarch Kirill’s public glorification of Putin is a symbolic reflection upon imperial Russian tradition in which the state had close ties to the church and power was bestowed by God himself with the support of the church. Not only is Putin’s role as the head of the Russian government thus validated by his close relationship to the patriarch but the patriarch also serves

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66 Tschudi
67 Tschudi
68 Tschudi
69 Tschudi
to gain from this relationship because he needs Putin’s support in order to continue exercising his power.\textsuperscript{70} This collaboration works because both sides have something to gain from this partnership – legitimacy and political clout.\textsuperscript{71} In fact, Patriarch Kirill was granted residence in the Kremlin back in 2011, after he supported Vladimir Putin’s bid for a third term in office. This move restores the church to the offices it once occupied before the 1917 revolution.\textsuperscript{72} These events serve to illustrate the historical ties that the Orthodox Church has to Russian tradition and demonstrate how appeals to popular religious values serve to benefit Putin and secure his support base.

**Strategies on the International Stage:**

Internationally, Putin has sought to reestablish Russia as a major player in foreign affairs and what follows is a brief description of key events that I believe have boosted nationalist morale and have helped shape the population’s perceptions about Putin’s ability to effectively promote national interests in the international arena.

**Russia’s Annexation of Crimea and Ukrainian Destabilization:**

Putin’s actions regarding the Ukrainian crisis and the Crimean annexation can be seen as attempts to exhibit his dedication to the promotion and protection of Russian interests abroad because Crimea is a region with an ethnic Russian majority, it contains Russia’s Black Sea Fleet military unit, and demonstrates Putin’s recovery of historic Russian territory. The Kremlin’s involvement in the annexation of Crimea ultimately served to create a “rally around the flag”

\textsuperscript{70} Tschudi  
\textsuperscript{71} Tschudi  
\textsuperscript{72} Tschudi
effect and boost national solidarity. The current destabilization of Ukraine also benefits Putin because, according to Henry Hale, “[it] nicely fit a narrative Putin has long been weaving that revolutions — and protests that might develop into them — are fraught with the danger of state failure and territorial dismemberment. These are messages that serve him well at home, at least, for now.” The current situation in Ukraine serves as a warning against any future uprisings that might occur against his rule at home in Russia.

The current economic situation in Russia as a result of its involvement in Crimea and the Ukraine is dismal at best as Russia deals with fleeing investors, plummeting oil prices, and Western-imposed economic sanctions. High levels of inflation in food prices also resulted after Russia banned certain foods from Europe and the U.S. in response to the Western sanctions. Even though Putin’s actions in Crimea and the Ukraine have accelerated Russia’s economic depression and undermines national interests instead of promoting them, Putin’s control of mass media allows him to reconcile this contradiction by placing the blame for their misfortune on the West. Instead of taking the blame for the role he has played in the further deterioration of the Russian economy, he has managed to shift the blame onto the West by characterizing their economic sanctions as acts of Western aggression against Russia. Public Western condemnation of Russia’s involvement in Crimea and the Ukraine also serve to support Putin’s argument concerning Western aggression and deflects blame away from Putin.

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73 Hale, Henry. “Russian Nationalism and the Logic of the Kremlin’s Actions on Ukraine.” The Guardian.
74 Radia, Kirit. “Russia’s Currency Tumbles as Investors Panic.”
75 Radia
Sochi Olympics:

The 2014 Winter Sochi Olympics were a convenient international sports event that also boosted nationalist sentiment and portrayed Russia as a great power on the international stage.\footnote{Brady 448.} Hosting the Olympics provided an excellent platform to put Russian greatness on display and generate strong national pride. According to Emil \& Bo Petersson, “the Sochi Olympics [meant] a renewed chance of displaying vigor and strength, and to project this image internally as well as externally.”\footnote{Petersson 195.} This sporting event helped revive national pride and stimulated nostalgic memories of the 1980 Summer Olympics which were held in Moscow at a time when the Soviet Union was at the pinnacle of its power.\footnote{Petersson 23.} According to Makarychev and Mommen, “The authorities are trying to compensate for the absence of visible social and economic development with spectacular achievements such as the organization of world summits such as sports events like the Sochi Winter Olympics in 2014.”\footnote{Makarychev and Mommen 23.}

Syria:

Putin’s capacity to present Russia as a leader in the international arena was also demonstrated by his actions during the Syrian crisis.\footnote{Sakwa 202.} In response to the Syrian government’s use of chemical weapons against civilians back in 2013, Putin pushed for a diplomatic approach to resolving this issue in order to protect his Syrian ally President Bashar Assad and also thwart
U.S. efforts to intervene militarily.\textsuperscript{81} Ultimately, the parties involved agreed to work towards a diplomatic solution as Putin had originally proposed. This was a massive diplomatic triumph because Putin was able to effectively aid the peaceful dismantling of Syrian chemical weapons while averting Western military assault on the country.\textsuperscript{82} This international success helped Russia protect its interests in Syria and also assume the role of a global peacemaker by preventing the further bloodshed in Syria that could have resulted from military intervention.\textsuperscript{83} According to Richard Sakwa, “His triumph in Syria provided confidence in Putin’s ability to bring Russia as a powerful and influential contender on the international stage and proved his ability to make decisions independent of the U.S. and be successful in pursuing Russian interests without following the lead of the U.S. or being a Western puppet.”\textsuperscript{84} Putin’s ability to outsmart the West in terms of finding a solution to the Syrian chemical weapons crisis was a monumental feat especially since the U.S. usually assumes the role as international peacemaker. Russia’s ability to act independently of the U.S.’s influence also caters to the notion of Russian exceptionalism and the traditional pursuit of a unique Russian path. According to Putin, intervention in Ukraine was necessary and legitimate while military intervention in Syria was out of the question.\textsuperscript{85} These are not issues of principle but rather strategic moves to mobilize the population through the advancement of Russian interests.\textsuperscript{86} In addition, Russia also thwarted the West by granting asylum to Edward Snowden in the same year as the Syrian crisis. Regardless of whether or not Russia actually extracted information from Snowden, their possession of him


\textsuperscript{82} Sakwa 202.
\textsuperscript{83} Shuster
\textsuperscript{84} Sakwa 202.
\textsuperscript{85} Bullough
\textsuperscript{86} Bullough
symbolizes the acquisition of a resource that could work to the advantage of Russia. Not only did he pull these strategic moves off swiftly but also with a certain finesse that was sure to win over the respect of the Russian population.

In September 2013, after Putin’s triumphs with Syria and Snowden, Putin delivered a speech at the Valdai International Discussion Club, which is an international discussion forum in which leading foreign experts gather to engage in dialogue with Russia’s leaders. The speech that he delivered that year exhibited a reinvigoration of national pride after these international successes.  

Within the speech, Putin emphasized the need of new strategies ‘to preserve our identity in a rapidly changing world and stressed that “the question of finding and strengthening national identity really is fundamental for Russia.”’ Putin argued against copying other country’s experiences and rejected attempts to “civilize Russia from abroad” and instead stressed that “the desire for independence and sovereignty in spiritual, ideological, and foreign policy spheres is an integral part of our national character.” He ended his speech with the argument that after the many tribulations of the post-communist era since 1991, Russia was finally “returning to itself, to its own history.” Richard Sakwa characterized this speech as having a traditionalist message while containing a level of conservatism and a developmental strategy that stressed its autonomous values and direction. According to Sakwa, “in detail it was convincing, but when placed in the overall context of the economic and political challenges facing the country, it represented a partial and ineffective model for the future.” One important aspect of the speech to note is the fact that it also exhibited the type of nationalism that Putin is

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87 Sakwa 202.
88 Sakwa 203.
89 Sakwa 203.
90 Sakwa 204.
91 Sakwa 204.
92 Sakwa 204.
promoting. Putin explains, “Russia was formed specifically as a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional country from its very inception. Nationalists must remember that by calling into question our multi-ethnic character, and exploiting the issue of Russian, Tatar, Caucasian, Siberian, or any other nationalism or separatism, means that we are starting to destroy our genetic code. In effect, we will begin to destroy ourselves. Russia’s sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity are unconditional.”

This was an attempt to prevent a divisive ethnic form of nationalism from taking hold of the country and disrupting the country’s united front.

Chapter 4: Testing the Theory

Up until this point, I have presented events that have alluded to a more aggressive form of nationalist mobilization in Putin’s third term as a way to re-establish and maintain his legitimacy. This section will now serve the purpose of putting these assumptions to the test. Therefore, I shall be examining Putin’s State of the Union addresses in order to analyze how Putin’s political language has changed over time. Analyzing the content of these speeches will provide insight on what issues and topics are at the top of Putin’s policy agenda and should reveal how the dynamic between value-based appeals and domestic economic and political issues change over the course of his three presidential terms. The content of these speeches will also reveal the topics that Putin aims to focus the public’s attention upon. More importantly, it will allow me to test my theory and determine two things: (1) if nationalist rhetoric has increased in his third term relative to his previous terms and 2) if Putin’s references to government economic and liberal democratic performance truly have decreased in his third term, in order to shift the

93 Sakwa 203.
population’s focus and compensate for his performance deficit. What follows is a brief description of the methodology utilized to conduct this study and a presentation of the data that I collected.

**Methodology**

*Content Analysis*

Content analysis was the primary method of data collection utilized in this study. My content analysis was directed at eleven of the State of the Union addresses that Putin has delivered between 2000 and 2014 with individual key terms as the unit of analysis. The speeches were coded into a software program called ATLAS.ti 7, which is commonly used for coding and interpreting textual and multimedia data. This software was utilized in order to identify the existence of certain key terms. Computer-assisted content analysis is preferred over manual analysis because computerized programs ensure reliability and replicability. This method also provides a more accurate and unbiased platform in which one can conduct both quantitative and qualitative operations.

I opted to study Putin’s State of the Union addresses primarily because these speeches are directed to a Russian audience. These speeches will provide insight on the appeals that he makes and serve to reveal how Putin’s policy agenda changes over time. Content analysis will allow me to quantify and analyze the presence of certain words and/or concepts in order to make inferences about patterns regarding Putin’s political priorities. In order to conduct this content analysis, the speeches were coded into 2 main conceptual categories: 1) Performance and 2)

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94 “Content Analysis.” *Colorado State University*. 10 Feb. 2015. 1
Values. The key methodological question of this study was determining what terms would be associated with “performance” and what terms would be associated with “values.” I decided to categorize terms that were meant to appeal to Russian tradition and/or boost nationalism as “values”, while terms associated with domestic political and economic performance were categorized under “performance.” The “performance” category had thirteen subcategories such as macroeconomic issues, civil rights, social welfare, law and crime, energy, etc. These subcategories are meant to reflect typical domestic issues and topics that Putin may address. The “values” subcategories include nationalism and other subcategories that could boost nationalism and traditionalist sentiment such as national security, references to past Russian history, and references to Russian Orthodoxy/spirituality, etc. Although I acknowledge that issues of national security can equally be considered as a performance-related topic, I opted to associate it with nationalist values because issues of national security tend to boost nationalist morale. A codebook with a full list of terms that projected each of these subcategories was then generated. (The full codebook can be found in the appendix section).

Content analysis can be broken down into two categories: conceptual analysis and relational analysis.95 Content analysis simply establishes the existence and frequency of concepts most represented by words or phrases in a text, while relational analysis identifies what other words the key terms that I have identified appear next to, in order to determine the different meanings that emerge as a result of these groupings.96 Conceptual analysis simply involves choosing certain concepts for examination by quantifying and tallying its presence, while relational analysis is a more in-depth analysis of the derived meanings of word or phrase

95 “Content Analysis” 3.
96 “Content Analysis” 3.
Therefore, it is important for me to note that relational analysis was not utilized in this study for the sake of conducting a more objective and replicable method of analysis.

**Coding Procedures: How to determine words to include in codebook**

Due to the fact that no relevant dataset had existed prior to this study, I must thoroughly explain all of the coding procedures employed in order to ensure transparency and replicability of this study’s findings. The codebook that can be found in the Appendix was generated using terms extracted from a publicly available dataset, which was derived from the word frequency analysis of U.S. State of the Union addresses dating back to George Washington. This dataset aided in the generation of my codebook because it allowed me to determine topics that are commonly discussed in State of the Union addresses. In addition to this, I also included some terms from The University of Texas at Austin’s Policy Agenda Project codebook (see Appendix) because it also included numerous topics commonly discussed in political speeches. Each of the terms derived from these two sources were then associated with one of the specific subcategories that I previously mentioned.

**Coding Procedures: How to code in Atlas.ti 7**

The English translations of Putin’s State of the Union addresses were extracted from Putin’s presidential website and were uploaded into Atlas.ti 7. Codes for each category and subcategory were then generated. Afterwards, I randomly selected 3 speeches to read in order to account for certain discrepancies in the way that Putin spells certain terms and the manner that I have spelled them as an American. I noticed that Putin would spell certain words differently

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97 “Content Analysis” 3.
from traditional American spellings, for instance, he used terms such as “labour” instead of “labor”, “rouble” instead of “ruble”, and “defence” instead of “defense” along with a few other noted differences. Therefore, I decided to include both spellings of these words for a more comprehensive study. Then, I input a list of terms to be associated with each subcategory and coded them into the program. For thoroughness, I had the program search for the root words of some terms in order to include all variations of particular words that might have multiple endings. So for example I would input “econom-” as a root word in the program and it would search for words with similar roots such as economy, economic, economies, etc. This makes for a more inclusive analysis of the text. After all speeches had been coded, the accumulated data was then extrapolated onto an Excel spreadsheet in order to analyze the word frequencies related to each category over time. What follows is a presentation of the data that was accumulated.

Data

*Figure 1: Word frequency of performance and value terms within 2000-2014 speeches*
Figure 2: Economic Word Frequency Over Time

Figure 3: Liberal Democracy Word Frequency Over Time
Figure 4: Nationalism Word Frequency Over Time

Figure 5: Putin's Top Three Policy Agendas Over Time
Data Analysis and Discussion

Before data accumulation began, I presented the following two hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 1:** Putin’s use of nationalist rhetoric will increase in his third term in comparison to his previous two terms

and

**Hypothesis 2:** In order to shift the population’s focus and compensate for his performance deficit, Putin’s references to government economic and liberal democratic performance would also decrease in his third term.

My findings as demonstrated by figure 4, seem to support hypothesis 1 because they reveal that Putin’s use of nationalist rhetoric actually peaked at the beginning of Putin’s third term in 2012. In addition, Putin’s references to the past and his references to religion also peaked in 2012 as seen in figure 1. Although nationalism and the other values did increase at the beginning of Putin’s third term as I had predicted, I was surprised to see that they did not remain consistently high in the years that followed. This slight decline may be due to the fact that his dependence upon value-based appeals were no longer as vital to his regime’s survival as they once were back in 2012 when the protests still posed a threat to his rule.

Not all of my findings seemed to support my hypotheses however as demonstrated by figure 2 which shows that Putin’s references to economic performance did not decline in his third term. I expected that he would decrease his references to government economic performance in addition to increasing value-based rhetoric as a way to deflect from his government’s performance deficit, but this was proven to be incorrect. In fact, data from figure
5 shows how the economy consistently remained a top priority on Putin’s agenda. This serves to indicate that although Putin may have increased his use of value-based rhetoric to help bolster popular support, he also held a consistent interest in discussing the economy. In fact, according to figure 2, the year 2012 was actually an instance in which he had the second highest number of references to economic performance. These findings suggest that although Putin may have tried to compensate for the lack of economic performance with a greater emphasis on nationalist rhetoric, he did not completely deflect from discussing economic issues as I had previously suggested. Although I did not believe that Putin would completely ignore pressing issues such as the dwindling economy, I did expect economic and value-based rhetoric to have a more inversely proportional relationship that would demonstrate his efforts to shift the focus from issues that he has yet to alleviate, to issues in which he seems to be making progress. It is possible that in the absence of a strong economy, Putin resorted to making economic promises and presenting economic initiatives in his speeches as a way to show that he has plans to improve the economic situation in Russia. This reveals that a leader cannot completely deflect from persisting domestic issues but instead has to convince their constituents that they have a plan for change in the future in the absence of good performance in the present. Therefore, Putin’s new legitimization strategy does not involve using values to completely mask the current lack of economic performance as I had suggested. These findings suggest that Putin did not transform from one source of legitimacy to another, but instead has altered the degree in which he has relied upon these sources. Putin’s third term is distinct because he could no longer rely upon economic performance to secure popular support but instead relied upon promises of economic prosperity in addition to an increased use of nationalist rhetoric. So I was correct in claiming that there was
a change in his legitimization strategy, but was incorrect in determining what exactly this change was.

Interestingly, the results regarding liberal democratic performance were somewhat inconclusive as displayed by figure 3. Similar to my predictions for economic performance, I expected to find a more distinguished decrease in references to establishing a liberal democracy in Putin’s third term as another way to deflect from the issues and refocus the population’s attention on other topics. I cannot draw any clear conclusions regarding whether his references in his third term have increased or decreased relative to his first two terms because the changes are not as drastic as I would have expected, but I will say that relative to the last two speeches that he delivered in his second term, his references to liberal democracy in 2012 seem to have slightly increased. This may be due to the fact that he wants to seem as if he is addressing the grievances of protesters concerning government corruption, administering free and fair elections, and the protection of certain freedoms. This assumption also seems to be supported by the spike in liberal democratic rhetoric evident in the speech that he delivered in 2005 (see figure 3). The fact that this speech was delivered not too long after the beginning of the color revolutions and directly after the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan, leads me to believe that he sought to address the issue of his government’s democratic deficit in order to prevent a revolution from taking place within Russia. So it is very possible that under the threat of revolution and protests, Putin attempts to portray his government as being more responsive to citizen grievances, even though in reality he has no incentive to make any real changes because the implementation of a true liberal democracy would ultimately only serve to limit his power.

My findings seem to suggest that the most common priorities on Putin’s agenda seem to be the economy, national security, and nationalism as exemplified by figure 5. This is the
predominant trend over the course of Putin’s three terms, but there are some instances in which other topics make it to the top of Putin’s policy agenda. For example, in the years 2001, 2002, and 2005, law and order seem to have become an issue that Putin deemed a priority to address. Another interesting trend to note is the fact that education and banking have also managed to make it into the top of Putin’s policy agenda during his third term.

Despite the observations that content analysis of Putin’s speeches present regarding changes in Putin’s policy agenda over time, this method does not fully explain why the population chooses to support a semi-authoritarian leader amidst a failing economy and other lingering domestic issues. In order to provide perspective on the Russian population’s opinions regarding Putin’s performance as a leader and his right to rule, I will now present some relevant survey data.

**Understanding the Basis of Putin’s Support**

Analysis of survey data was also utilized within this study in order to understand the reasoning behind the Russian population’s support for Putin and how they evaluate his leadership performance thus far. The survey data that I will present was collected by the Levada-Center which is an independent Russian non-governmental research organization. It was important for me to gather survey data from an independent research group because it provides authentic citizen responses that have not been directly manipulated or influenced by the government. The following survey data was collected by the Levada-Center in the fall months of 2014 and they shall reveal how constituents evaluate Putin’s rule as president of Russia.

When prompted with the following question, “With which of the evaluations of Putin as President of Russia would you be inclined to agree?” the most popular response was “I fully
share Putin's views and positions,” while 23% replied “I am ready to support Putin, as long as he carries out democratic and market reforms in Russia.” Only 17% responded “I support Putin due to the absence of other worthy politicians” (see table 1). According to a another nationwide survey conducted by the Levada-Center (see table 2), when asked “In which of the following actions was Putin least successful?,” a majority of claimed that he was least successful in fighting corruption while other responses reveal how some believe that Putin was also unsuccessful in increasing the standard of living (15%), limiting the influence of oligarchs (15%), strengthening of morals (13%), and economic development (11%). This survey reveals the main issues that the citizens of Russia still want Putin to address and it also reveals how aware constituents are of specific policy issues that Putin has failed to resolve. These findings also suggest that the Russian population is not completely oblivious to the issues that remain and their recognition of Putin’s failures dismisses speculation of a possible cult of personality as justification for his high levels of popular support. In fact, when asked if there was a cult of personality surrounding Vladimir Putin in Russia (see table 3), a majority of respondents answered “no, there are no signs of such a cult” while 31% of respondents claimed “not yet, but the preconditions for a cult of personality are growing.” If a cult of personality does not presently exist within Putin’s Russia, then why exactly does he have such a strong support base right now? The majority of responses to the question “Why do you think so many people trust Vladimir Putin” reveal that many people are convinced that Putin resolves problems successfully and with dignity and they hope that, in the future, Putin will be able to resolve the country's current problems (see table 4). The population seems to place a lot of trust in Putin and they believe that despite the current dismal situation in Russia, Putin is a leader that is capable of leading them towards a brighter and more prosperous future.
Even more revealing are responses to the prompt: “Do you really believe that Putin is concerned about seriously improving people’s lives, or do his words represent the typical empty promises that all politicians make?” A surprising majority responded that, “Putin sincerely wants to improve the well-being of the population, but he cannot do this because of bureaucratic pushback and the absence of a good team” while the second highest response was that “Putin sincerely wants to improve the well-being of the population, and he will be able to succeed in the next 6 years.” Surprisingly, only 15% responded, “Putin often says the right things, but he does not follow through on what he promises” (see table 5).

The final survey that I will present demonstrates how popular opinion regarding Putin’s accomplishments have changed over time. This survey contains a series of responses to questions concerning “Putin’s accomplishments during his years in power” and responses in March 2004 after Putin’s first presidential term showed that respondents believed that his greatest accomplishments were, “improving the quality of life of citizens, salary and pension growth,” and “increasing optimism and hope for a quick improvement of the way things stand in the country” (see table 6). When the same question was asked in March 2014, during his third term, the most popular responses were “strengthening Russia’s position in the international arena,” “establishing order in the country, ensuring a calm political environment”, and “strengthening Russia’s military capability, reforming the armed forces.” The transition from the 2004 responses regarding improving the quality of life to the 2014 responses regarding Russia’s position in the international arena, established order, and strengthening military capability also lead me to infer that his use of nationalist rhetoric has had some level of influence in terms of finding other sources of legitimacy. The strategies that Putin has employed thus far to repair his image have proven to be somewhat effective as revealed by the survey data. There seems to be a
correlation between the ideas that Putin has been trying to disseminate and the responses that I have presented in this section.

Sources of Error in Methodology:

There are a few benefits and drawbacks to the coding procedures that I employed in order to conduct this study. In order to maintain objectivity, I chose to not hand code the speeches when accumulating data on word frequency, but there are some limits to using computer-assisted content analysis instead. The program that I used only coded for the presence of certain words but did not attribute any meaning to them therefore relational analysis was not conducted in this study. This is a possible source of error because computerized analysis takes away the ability to contextualize each word in relation to other words. Therefore, there are some words that may have been coded under a specific subcategory but may have meant an entirely different thing if analyzed within the context of the sentence that it was in. So for example, the term “customs” was coded to mean “commercial trade” but this same term within the right context could also imply “customary traditions” instead. Therefore the context can always change the meaning of specific terms. Although using a computer program allowed me to maintain objectivity and prevented the projection of my own biases when collecting and interpreting data, this method contains a certain level of inflexibility because I was limited to only coding for words and was unable to code for certain phrases that could have also represented a specific theme or topic. Common phrases such as references to a “Greater Russia” which is a common political aspiration for Russian nationalists, was left uncoded because the program I used was limited to words and excluded phrases. Therefore there may have been plenty of other phrases that were left unrecognized by the program and this may have influenced the data results.
As previously mentioned, I had the program detect terms on the basis of root words in order to have a more comprehensive data accumulation. But in an attempt to have a more thorough analysis, this method may have also lead to the inclusion of certain terms that may have shared the same root but should not have been incorporated into the data.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In summation, this thesis was inspired by the events that have taken place in contemporary Russia in response to the 2011-2012 protests and legitimacy crisis. The political question and phenomenon motivating this project thus became: How exactly has Putin been able to restore and maintain his legitimacy in the eyes of the Russian people in the midst of a failing economy and as many of the protestor's original grievances continue to go unaddressed?

Building upon previous scholarly works, I argued that Putin’s shift from performance-based to value-based legitimacy has aided him in retaining his right to rule over Russia. More specifically, I argued that in order to mediate the absence of economic prosperity and fair government practices, Putin resorted to using value-based discourse to portray his commitment to the Russian population’s interests and exploited elements of Russian political culture to his advantage. This was a tactic that helped him pivot the Russian population’s attention from his economic and democratic deficiencies to other areas of appeal such as those on the international stage.

Empirical methods were then employed in order to assess whether or not Putin has indeed focused on utilizing value-based legitimacy as a substitute and distraction for his performance deficit. The results of content analysis of his State of the Union addresses revealed that Putin’s use of nationalist rhetoric did in fact increase at the beginning of his third term in addition to
other traditionalist appeals such as his references to the past and religion. These findings supported my first hypothesis and demonstrated that Putin did in fact alter his policy agenda to some degree at the beginning of his third term. Unfortunately, not all of my findings supported my theory because my second hypothesis was proven to be incorrect by the fact that economic performance was consistently at the top of Putin’s policy agenda in every speech that he delivered. His economic references did not decrease in his third term as I had expected which reveals that although Putin did increase his value-based rhetoric to compensate for his performance deficit, he did not completely divert attention away from present issues. These findings suggest that Putin did not solely rely upon value-based legitimacy to solve his legitimacy crisis, but his new strategy was instead a hybrid of increased value-based appeals in addition to a rather consistent focus on improving economic performance. This reveals that a leader cannot completely refrain from addressing persistent domestic issues but instead has to convince their constituents that they have a plan for change in the future in the absence of good performance in the present. Therefore, Putin’s legitimacy strategy seems to depend upon both domestic performance in political and economic areas in addition to framing the population’s perceptions within an ideological framework. This legitimization strategy is quite similar to those employed by the Chinese Communist Party back when it also faced a legitimacy crisis.

Despite the observations that this data presents regarding changes and shifts in Putin’s policy agenda over time, I decided to incorporate survey data in order to understand the rationale of individuals who continue to support a semi-authoritarian leader amidst a failing economy and other domestic issues. Analysis of survey data revealed that the population is not completely oblivious to the persistent problems in Russia because they claim that Putin is least successful in fighting corruption, increasing the standard of living, among many other issues. Therefore, in
the case of Russia, citizens have not necessarily been “hoodwinked” into a “false consciousness” as Michael Hechter and I had proposed. Respondents to the surveys seem to place a lot of trust in Vladimir Putin because they are convinced that Putin is capable of resolving the country’s problems successfully and they believe that he will be able to resolve the country's issues in the near future. A comparison of 2004 and 2014 responses to questions regarding Putin’s accomplishments seemed to suggest a correlation between Putin’s increased utilization of value-based rhetoric and the basis of his popular support. The transition from the 2004 responses regarding his ability to improve citizen quality of life to the nationalist-tinged 2014 responses lead me to infer that his use of nationalist rhetoric seems to have had a positive effect in shaping popular opinion and may have aided his reconsolidation of legitimacy following the 2011-2012 protests.

Some of the works that I had previously presented within my literature review proposed theories concerning how authoritarian governments restore and maintain legitimacy after periods of crisis. Some authors believe that performance-based legitimacy is the proper source of legitimacy and Putin’s consistent use of economic performance references proves this to be true. Regardless of this outcome, one cannot deny how value-based legitimacy can serve as a useful legitimacy enhancer in periods of uncertainty. Despite the current success that Putin seems to be having through this method, past tsarist and Soviet Russian history reveal the inevitable temporal limits of nationalist mobilization. Russian history has demonstrated how it tends to weaken over time because the population usually ends up on the losing end of the aftermath and their concerns are ultimately left unaddressed and subordinated to the interests of the ruling elite. Only time will tell how long Putin will be able to maintain the nationalist campaign that he is on before it loses its effectiveness.
Limits of Study and Future Research:

This study was limited by temporal constraints in the sense that the political phenomenon under examination is still pretty recent and many surveys that serve to assess levels of nationalism and other values within the Russian population are still being conducted. In addition, the number of published resources that relate to the phenomenon under examination are also pretty limited. Therefore, this study was unable to prove that a causational relationship exists and only implies a correlational relationship between Putin’s use of rhetoric and the population’s internalization of his ideas, as revealed by the survey data that I presented. This study was conducted and bound within the Russian context but it is also possible that the methods utilized within this study can also be applied other case studies. The limitations that I have presented reveal the boundaries of my study but can also serve as jump off points to inspire future research.

“The core, the binding fabric of this unique civilization – is the Russian people, Russian culture.” –Vladimir Putin (2012)

“This civilizational identity is based on preservation of Russian cultural dominance, which is not only carried by ethnic Russians, but all carriers of this identity regardless of nationality,” –Vladimir Putin (2012)
Appendix

Levada-Center Data Tables:

*Table 1:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WITH WHICH OF THE EVALUATIONS OF PUTIN AS PRESIDENT OF RUSSIA WOULD YOU BE INCLINED TO AGREE?</th>
<th>May 01</th>
<th>May 02</th>
<th>Aug. 04</th>
<th>Jun. 05</th>
<th>May 06</th>
<th>May 07</th>
<th>Aug. 10*</th>
<th>Sep. 14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I fully share Putin's views and positions</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am ready to support Putin, as long as he carries out democratic and market reforms in Russia</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I support Putin due to the absence of other worthy politicians</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am not a supporter of Putin</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I liked Putin before, but recently, I have become disappointed in him</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So far, I have not really liked Putin, but I hope that he will be useful for Russia in the future</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think it is necessary to support anyone but Putin</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is difficult to say</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>All replies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fighting corruption</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rising standard of living</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limiting the influence of oligarchs</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthening of morals</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic development</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighting crime</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving relations with the West</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating favorable economic and political atmosphere for small businesses</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solving the Chechen problem</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating order in the country</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthening of international position of Russia</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving relations between people of different nationalities in Russia</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raising hopes and optimism</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting rid of terroristic threats</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation with other members if CIS</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving of fighting efficiency and reforming the army</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection of democracy and political liberties</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t see any successes</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Levada center, nationwide survey, 22-25 August 2014, N=1600
**Table 3:** DO YOU THINK THERE IS A CULT OF PERSONALITY SURROUNDING VLADIMIR PUTIN IN RUSSIA?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yes, all the signs are already evident</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not yet, but the preconditions for a cult of personality are growing</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no, there are no signs of such a cult</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is difficult to say</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4:** WHY DO YOU THINK SO MANY PEOPLE TRUST VLADIMIR PUTIN?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Jul. 01</th>
<th>Aug. 03</th>
<th>Jul. 05</th>
<th>Jul. 09</th>
<th>May. 11</th>
<th>Aug. 13</th>
<th>Sep. 14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>people are convinced that Putin resolves the country’s problems successfully and with dignity</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>people hope that, in the future, Putin will be able to resolve the country’s problems</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>people do not see anyone else upon whom they could rely</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is difficult to say</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5:

**DO YOU REALLY BELIEVE THAT PUTIN IS CONCERNED ABOUT SERIOUSLY IMPROVING PEOPLE’S LIVES, OR DO HIS WORDS REPRESENT THE TYPICAL EMPTY PROMISES THAT ALL POLITICIANS MAKE?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>May 12</th>
<th>Sep 14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Putin sincerely wants to improve the well-being of the population, but he cannot do this because of bureaucratic pushback and the absence of a good team</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Putin sincerely wants to improve the well-being of the population, and he will be able to succeed in the next 6 years</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Putin often says the right things, but he does not follow through on what he promises</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Putin does not want to do anything, insofar as he is only interested in controlling power and in his own enrichment; he needs the support of those on whom he relies, and he couldn’t care less about the population</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is difficult to say</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6:

Vladimir Putin’s accomplishments during his years in power:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mar. 04</th>
<th>Mar. 06</th>
<th>Mar. 08</th>
<th>Jul. 10</th>
<th>Feb. 12</th>
<th>Aug 14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>strengthening Russia’s position in the international arena</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>establishing order in the country, ensuring a calm political environment</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strengthening Russia’s military capability, reforming the armed forces</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>increasing optimism and hope for a quick improvement of the way things stand in the country</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>improving the quality of life of citizens, salary and pension growth</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>resolving the Chechen problem</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>economic development of the country</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cooperation with other CIS countries</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fight against corruption and bribery</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>curbing “oligarchs” and limiting their influence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>creating an economic and political environment conducive to the development of private business</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eliminating the danger of terrorism in the country</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fighting crime</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>improving Russia’s relations with the West</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving relations between people of different ethnicities in Russia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>defending democracy and citizens’ political freedoms</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strengthening morality and ethics in the country</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t see any accomplishments</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it is difficult to say</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Coding Scheme for Content Analysis of Putin’s State of the Union Addresses:**

*Not all associated terms in codebook required the use of root words
* Many terms were derived from: 1) Dataset extracted from the University of California’s American Presidency Project and 2) The University of Texas at Austin’s Policy Agenda Project topic codebook

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category:</th>
<th>Subcategory:</th>
<th>Associated Terms:</th>
<th>Root Words:</th>
<th>Code:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>economy, recession, development, inflation, budget, taxes, deficit, exports, imports, industry, revenue, manufacturing, fiscal, austerity, privatisation, productivity, income, prices, costs, monetary, savings, treasury, debt, commodity, consumption, ruble, real-estate</td>
<td>econom-, recession-, development-, inflation-, budget-, tax-, deficit-, export-, import-, industr-, revenue-, manufactur-, privat-, produc-, income-, price-, cost-, mone-, saving-, debt-, commodit-, consum-</td>
<td>Perf_economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>National security</td>
<td>security, military, defence, defense, war, enemy, power, strength, territory, threat, external, aggression, attack, borders, terrorists, missile</td>
<td>secur-, militar-, defen-, war-, enem-, territor-, threat-, attack-, terrorist-, missi-</td>
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