

# 2

## **Conflict-Motivated Speech: An Appraisal Contrastive Analysis of Putin's and Zelensky's Speeches**

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### **Abstract**

*This study examines the use of affect and judgment in the speeches of Vladimir Putin and Volodymyr Zelensky during the Russia-Ukraine conflict, applying the attitude subsystem of Appraisal Theory. The research examines how both leaders construct their narratives through emotional appeals and evaluative language using qualitative discourse analysis of speeches delivered by Vladimir Putin and Volodymyr Zelenskyy in February 2022. The findings reveal that Putin's speeches are dominated by negative affect towards the West, particularly NATO, which he portrays as manipulative and dishonest. He uses emotionally charged terms such as "twisting" and "deceived" to emphasise a sense of betrayal, framing Russia as a victim of Western deceit. His language suggests a stance of distrust and resentment, as evidenced by terms like betrayal and war declaration; positioning Russia's military actions as a justified response. At the same time, he employs positive judgment when describing Russian soldiers and citizens, characterising them as "reliable," "courageous," and "patriotic;" reinforcing a sense of national unity. In contrast, Zelensky's rhetoric is built on empathetic appeals that highlight Ukraine's suffering and resilience. His choice of words, including "long-suffering" and "brutally attacked," underscores Ukraine's victimhood, aiming to elicit international sympathy. He negatively judges Russia's actions as "lawless" and "blackmailing" framing the invasion as ruthless and unjustified. His language calls for global intervention, reinforcing Ukraine's fight for sovereignty and survival. This study concludes that affect and judgment are strategically deployed in Putin's and Zelensky's speeches to frame conflict narratives and influence perceptions and recommends applying similar appraisal-based discourse analysis to other conflict contexts to understand further the role of evaluative language in shaping global political responses.*

**Keywords:** conflict, appraisal theory, judgement, attitude, Ukraine, Russia

### **1 Introduction**

The Russia-Ukraine conflict has significantly impacted global stability, with media discourse playing an important role in shaping public per-

ception. Conflict-related content, particularly during wartime, consistently receives priority in news coverage, influencing public discourse through the strategic use of evaluative language (Chouliarakis, 2006; Martin & White, 2005). This phenomenon is noticeable in the speeches of Vladimir Putin and Volodymyr Zelensky, which serve as compelling material for appraisal analysis due to their leaders' use of language to frame narratives, justify actions, and mobilise sentiment.

The twenty-first century is bedeviled with critical global challenges, including terrorism, ethnic conflicts, social inequality, and environmental destruction. Daily headlines report missile strikes, refugee crises, the weaponisation of media narratives, and the suppression of dissent through cyber and physical warfare. Recent studies confirm that war rhetoric and digital propaganda have become defining features of modern geopolitical crises (Chiluwa & Samoilenco, 2023; Wodak, 2023).

One of the most recent and consequential examples of political rhetoric in wartime is the Russia–Ukraine conflict, where speeches serve not only as military justification but also as tools of ideological persuasion and national identity construction. Russian President, Vladimir Putin, addressed his country in the early hours of Thursday, February 24, 2022, launching a “special military operation” against Ukraine. On February 21, he announced his recognition of the Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics and the signing of mutual agreements between Russia and the two separatist areas.

Political speeches, particularly those concerning state affairs and diplomatic relations such as election addresses, inaugural remarks, and international declarations, are central to the construction and communication of national and ideological identities. As Li (2003) explains, these speeches not only address domestic and foreign policy issues but also embody the official position of the state and the persona of the speaker. They serve as vital conduits for international communication and the dissemination of political intent. In such contexts, Yun (2008) emphasises that the identity of the speaker *who is speaking* can carry more rhetorical weight than the content itself, underscoring the performative and symbolic power of political discourse.

Humans use language as their primary means of communication. It not only reflects society’s reality but also helps to strengthen and sustain social cohesion. Language, culture, and society interact to provide recognition in society to people of various genders and degrees of authority. To a surprising extent, a man’s world is determined by the type of language he uses, hears, or reads. In every sphere of human society, whether in times of peace or conflict, educational advancement or decline, democratic governance or authoritarian

control, language lies at the centre of power dynamics and political discourse. It serves as both a mirror of ideological positions and a mechanism for shaping public consciousness (Ugoji, 2011, as cited in Ugoji, 2017, p. 19).

Numerous scholars have applied Appraisal Theory to the analysis of political discourse. For instance, Ding (2008) examines attitudinal resources in Obama's victory speech, while Urda and Loch explores the theory's relevance in understanding how social contexts of events evoke emotional responses. Yun (2018) analyses diplomatic speeches by Xi Jinping using the framework of Appraisal Theory. In the context of the Russia–Ukraine conflict, recent studies have applied Appraisal Theory to examine the rhetorical strategies of leaders involved. Hasanah, Gustary, and Prasaty (2024) analyse the use of deixis in the speeches of Zelensky and Putin, highlighting how linguistic choices reflect political positioning and audience engagement. Moreno Rubio (2022) utilises narrative theory to dissect President Zelensky's speeches, examining how storytelling elements are employed to construct national identity and resilience. Ksianzova (2023) provides a comprehensive linguistic analysis of Zelensky's wartime speeches, focusing on rhetorical strategies and their impact on international audiences. These studies underscore the growing scholarly interest in applying Appraisal Theory to the Russia–Ukraine conflict. However, there remains a need for further comparative analyses focusing specifically on the speeches of Vladimir Putin and Volodymyr Zelensky through the lens of Appraisal Theory. This study aims to contribute to this area by offering a contrastive analysis of their wartime rhetoric.

## 2 Appraisal Theory

A framework of interpersonal meaning is called appraisal. According to Martin and Rose (2003), an appraisal is concerned with evaluation - the types of attitudes negotiated in a text, the strength of the feelings involved, and the methods by which values are supplied and readers linked. This type of Discourse System allows us to see the presentation of interpersonal meanings in greater detail. The ideological bases employed in a work are linked to the phrasing choices in this system. Readers can forecast the writer's sentiments toward the phenomenon being discussed by having the option of selecting an acceptable expression of lexis in addition to the other options (expression of words).

Appraisal is a subsystem of the interpersonal metafunction in Systemic Functional Linguistics that focuses on how speakers or writers express attitudes, engage with readers, and grade the intensity or value of their evaluations (Martin & White, 2005). Appraisal resources are used to negotiate social interactions by expressing one's feelings about objects and people to the

listeners or readers. The appraisal is separated into three subsystems by Martin and Rose (2003: 24): source (engagement), graduation, and attitude. Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation are the three subsystems of attitude, which will be the subject of this research. Furthermore, Martin and Rose observed that in addition to Attitude, Engagement and Amplification are essential factors in expressing an opinion. The Engagement System is a set of language options that allows a person to express how committed he or she is to the viewpoint being given. The Amplification System controls a speaker's power to enhance or lessen the strength of their opinions. A text could have all three categories of engagement (source), amplification, and attitude at any given time.

Appraisal Theory deals with interpersonal meaning and the ways speakers and writers use language to express attitudes, engage with readers or listeners, and evaluate people, things, and events within discourse. It is used to communicate, negotiate, and express ideological viewpoints. Within this broad scope, the theory is mainly concerned with evaluation, attitude, emotional language, and a set of resources that explicitly position a text's proposals and propositions interpersonally. The Appraisal System would assist us in categorising the opinions expressed in a text and determining whether they refer to things, emotions, or behaviours. People may be able to quantify the writer's dedication to the opinion and how focused that opinion is by employing Amplification and Engagement. Appraisal Theory divides its categories into three groups: Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation, among which attitude is subdivided into Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation, Engagement into Monogloss and Graduation into Force and Focus.

### 3 Attitude

Attitude is defined by Martin and Rose (2003: 22) as "anything to do with appraising objects, people's character, and their sentiments." The text is evaluated by how it is realised in the clauses. When assessing a text, the researcher must strive to find out what the speaker has said because he usually combines his own experience with his assessment of the object by expressing his feelings about it in a text. Attitudes can be more or less intense, that is, magnified. Aside from that, the attitude can be the speaker's own or attributed to another resource when conveying people's feelings, analysing people's character, or appreciating things. It means he may explain them himself or by referring to someone else's words. The source chosen has an impact on people who will bear the burden. There are various types of attitudes. According to Martin and Rose (2003: 22), there are three types of attitude: expressing people's feelings (affect), judging people's character (judgment), and appreciating things (Appreciation). They are related to one another in the

following ways:

## 4 Affect

Affect is concerned with emotional resources. It is about emotions, positive and negative emotional responses, and dispositions. Affect is defined by White (2001: 56) as an assessment of a person, object, incident, or condition of circumstances by the writer/speaker. 'I enjoy music,' for example, or 'This new government proposal scares me.' Furthermore, Martin and Rose (2003: 25) emphasise that people might have a positive or negative affect. Similarly, people can communicate their sentiments directly or deduce how others are feeling indirectly from their actions; so, affect can be expressed directly or indirectly. Positive or negative choices have an impact on the discourse of the text, whether the essence of a speech is happy or encouraging or it is about sadness.

## 5 Judgment

In discourse, judging people's character is referred to as judgement. According to Martin and Rose (2003: 62), "judgement" can be defined as "the institutionalisation of sentiment in the context of recommendations (norms about how individuals should or should not behave). They claim that judgement should be classified into two categories: Social Esteem (Personal) and Social Sanction (Moral), which can be expressed directly or implicitly. If people breach this region, they may simply need to try harder, practice more, or visit a therapist or self-help book; if they breach this area, they may just need to try harder, practice more, or contact a therapist or possibly a self-help book. This type of assessment includes Normality (how odd someone is), Capacity (how capable they are), and Tenacity (how persistent they are) (how resolute they are). Social Sanction, on the other hand, comprises Praise (Positive) and Condemnation (Negative), often with legal implications; if people have problems in this area, they should need a lawyer or a confessor. These Judgements have to do with Veracity, (and how truthful someone is) and Propriety (how ethical someone is).

## 6 Appreciations

Appraisal Theory, rooted in Systemic Functional Linguistics, provides a robust framework for analysing how speakers use language to construct interpersonal meaning, position themselves, and influence their audience (Martin & White, 2005). One key subsystem of this framework is Appreciation, which refers to the evaluative language used to assess the

value of things, processes, and states of affairs rather than people's behaviour (White, 2001). This makes it particularly relevant in political discourse, where leaders frequently evaluate situations, strategies, outcomes, and symbolic entities (e.g., nations, peace agreements, or resistance movements) to align their audiences emotionally and ideologically.

According to Martin and Rose (2003), Appreciation represents the institutionalisation of feeling in the domain of ideas, where norms guide how actions, performances, and material products are valued. While both Judgment and Appreciation focus on what is deemed valuable, the former targets human behaviour, whereas the latter evaluates entities and processes. For instance, in referring to "a heroic resistance," a political leader may be offering Appreciation of a struggle (a process or state) rather than Judging the morality of the people involved. In this way, political actors strategically use Appreciation to reframe actions as noble or deplorable, depending on their ideological stance.

White (2001) further clarifies that Appreciation may be positive or negative and can be used to subtly encode ideological evaluations, such as representing military action as "necessary" or "destructive" or portraying a ceasefire as "fragile" or "hopeful." It is important to note that within this theoretical frame, Appreciation does not denote gratitude or thankfulness; a common misunderstanding that must be avoided in scholarly analysis.

In the current study, the Appreciation system serves as a critical analytical lens for examining how Putin and Zelensky, in their respective wartime speeches, construct ideological positions through the evaluation of actions, outcomes, and national symbols. By analysing the contrastive use of evaluative resources, this study demonstrates how political leaders shape public perception during conflict, mobilise support, and legitimise their narratives. The systematic application of Appraisal Theory, thus, reveals the subtle, value-laden choices embedded in their discourse, offering insight into the discursive construction of conflict and resistance.

## 7. Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative discourse analysis approach, using Martin's (2005) appraisal framework to examine how emotional and evaluative language are deployed in Putin's and Zelensky's speeches. The appraisal theory is a linguistic tool for assessing evaluative language, with a particular focus on the attitude subsystem. This subsystem examines emotional responses, moral evaluations, and assessments of objects or events. Attitude is categorised into three distinct perspectives: affect, which explores the speaker's emotional expressions; judgment, which evaluates individuals' character and behavior;

including ethical considerations; and appreciation, which focuses on the assessment of entities, occurrences, or concepts, often emphasising aesthetic or functional attributes.

The study analyses two full public speeches; one by Vladimir Putin and the other by Volodymyr Zelensky delivered on February 24, 2022, during the onset of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. The speeches were purposively selected for their direct relevance to the research objective: to examine the use of emotional and evaluative language within conflict-driven political discourse. Putin's speech, announcing the commencement of the "special military operation" in Ukraine, was accessed in full English translation from The Spectator (<https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/full-text-putin-s-declaration-of-war-on-ukraine>). Similarly, Zelensky's address to the Russian people and the international community, delivered on the same day, was retrieved in full English translation from Al Jazeera (<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/24/ukraine-president-zelenskyy-addresses-russian-people-as-tensions-rise>). Both speeches were originally delivered in Russian and Ukrainian, respectively, and analysed in their English-translated forms. Only statements and segments within these speeches containing clear evaluative content were extracted and subjected to further analysis.

The analytical procedure adopted the Appraisal Theory model proposed by Martin and White (2005), with a focus on the Attitude subsystem, which includes Affect (emotional response), Judgment (moral evaluation of behaviour), and Appreciation (value-based evaluation of things, processes, or states). The speeches were closely read and manually coded through qualitative content analysis. Evaluative expressions were identified based on lexical choices, grammatical structures, and rhetorical function. Each expression was categorised under the relevant Attitude type and further classified according to polarity (positive or negative). Emphasis was placed on determining the target of evaluation, whether an individual, nation, institution, or action and the purpose of the evaluation within the broader context of the speech. Definitions and categorisation criteria were guided by Martin and White (2005) and White (2001) to ensure theoretical consistency. This approach enabled a systematic contrastive analysis of how each leader constructs interpersonal meaning and mobilises support through evaluative discourse in a time of international crisis.

## **Data Analysis Procedure**

The analysis follows a systematic process of identifying and categorising statements according to the three subcategories of attitude: affect, judgment, and appreciation. The researcher began by carefully reading the full English-

translated transcripts of both speeches, identifying and selecting sentences that contained clear expressions of **emotion (Affect)**, **evaluation of character (Judgment)**, or **assessment of events and objects (Appreciation)**. The analysis was conducted **manually**, using a **naturalistic reading approach** to trace how evaluative meanings were realised in context. This involved a close, line-by-line examination of the discourse to capture the nuances of interpersonal meaning without the use of software tools. Each identified evaluative instance was annotated and categorised according to the relevant **Appraisal category**, with particular attention to lexical choices, syntactic structures, polarity (positive or negative), and the rhetorical purpose of the utterance. This manual method allowed for interpretive depth and context-sensitive insight into how both leaders constructed ideological positioning and audience alignment through evaluative language

Each selected statement was then categorised based on the type of attitude it reflected.

- **Affect:** Statements were categorised as affect when they reflected emotional reactions, such as anger, frustration, or empathy.
- **Judgment:** Statements were classified under judgment if they involved moral evaluations of individuals' behaviour or character.
- **Appreciation:** Statements were grouped under appreciation when they involved assessments of the aesthetic, practical, or moral value of objects or events.

The purposive selection of statements is aimed to capture the leaders' key rhetorical strategies and ensure the data reflected the central themes of the speeches. Each statement was analysed in context to understand its function in shaping the overall narrative and emotional appeal.

## 8 Presentation of data

### Affect in Putin's speech

Negative affect is the expression of negative feelings: sadness, insecurity, dissatisfaction among others.

*(1) We have to be reminded of these facts, as some Western colleagues **do not like** to remember those events.*

The phrase "**do not like**" reflects an implicit emotional response of frustration. Putin implies that the West, particularly Western powers like the USA, deliberately forget or refuse to acknowledge certain historical events that justify Russia's current actions. This phrase suggests

an underlying grievance that Western countries are either ignorant of or intentionally disregard events that matter to Russia. The negative affect here is not overt but subtly conveys disapproval. Putin portrays Western powers as selectively moral, highlighting their tendency to manipulate historical memory for convenience. This is evident in the statement, **“We have to be reminded of these facts, as some Western colleagues do not like to remember those events.”** The phrase **“do not like to remember”** functions as a **linguistic marker of negative Affect**, reflecting Putin’s portrayal of the West as emotionally averse or resistant to historical accountability. The verb **“like”** used in the negative form (**“do not like”**) signals a **negative emotional reaction**, indicating displeasure or avoidance. His tone here demonstrates a sense of betrayal or disappointment that these nations are not holding themselves accountable, thereby undermining their legitimacy in criticising Russia’s actions. By framing the West’s disregard in this way, Putin is building an emotional case that Russia is unfairly targeted and that its perspective is willfully ignored, which fuels resentment on a global scale.

*(1) The twisting of all decisions taken by the UN Security Council on the ....* The word **“twisting”** carries a potent emotional charge, which suggests a deliberate and malicious manipulation of facts or decisions. Putin’s use of **“twisting”** paints the UN Security Council and, by extension, Western powers as intentionally distorting international agreements for their own benefit. The affect here is not just one of frustration, but of anger and deep distrust. Putin is invoking a sense of injustice by implying that these decisions were not merely misguided but were purposefully altered to cause harm; in this case, the destruction of Libya. His emotional investment in this statement is clear: the manipulation of international rules is perceived as a systemic practice by Western powers, something that Russia has also been a victim of. The term **“twisting”** positions Russia as righteous, standing against a hypocritical and morally corrupt system; thus, justifying its own defiance of international norms in the Ukraine crisis.

(1) *I repeat – they deceived us. In other words, they simply conned us.*

In the statement, “I repeat they deceived us. In other words, they simply conned us,” Putin employs a range of Appraisal Theory resources to intensify emotional meaning and position his audience. The terms “deceived” and “conned” are instances of inscribed negative Affect; that is, Affect that is explicitly realised in the lexis. Both words express a strong sense of betrayal, with “conned” introducing a colloquial and emotionally potent label for being tricked. This shift from the more formal “deceived” to the informal and forceful “conned” exemplifies graduation through force, as the emotional tone is amplified by using a term that connotes calculated manipulation and humiliation.

Furthermore, the phrase “I repeat” acts as a graduational intensifier, emphasising the speaker’s insistence and emotional investment. It also functions rhetorically to build alignment with the audience by invoking collective resentment and mistrust toward NATO. Here, invoked Affect emerges through the broader context: while betrayal is inscribed, the audience is also encouraged to feel anger, humiliation, and moral outrage not directly stated but invited by the framing and repetition. This combination of inscribed and invoked Affect, along with amplification, positions Russia as an emotionally injured party and legitimises Putin’s defensive posture. His evaluative stance is thereby framed not as aggression, but as a morally justified reaction to emotional and political harm.

(1) *After all, such cheating contradicts not only the principles of international relations.*

Putin’s use of the term “cheating” conveys an explicit inscribed Judgment, targeting the West’s behavior as not only dishonest but fundamentally unethical. Within the

Appraisal framework, this lexical choice operates within the domain of negative Judgment: propriety, casting NATO's actions as morally reprehensible and in violation of established international norms. The word "cheating" carries a potent moral charge, not simply suggesting a breach of agreement, but branding it as a deliberate and unjust betrayal.

This moral framing invites the audience to view Russia not as an aggressor but as a morally affronted actor responding to violations of fairness and justice. The affective stance, though not overtly emotional, reflects an invoked sense of righteous indignation strategically embedded in the discourse. The evaluative force is amplified through the simplicity and universality of the term "cheating," which resonates across cultural and political boundaries as a clear marker of wrongdoing.

By employing this language, Putin constructs a narrative in which Russia is portrayed as the defender of true international values, standing in contrast to the West's duplicitous conduct. The invocation of ethical imbalance positions Russia's actions as necessary and justified, framed as a correction to an unjust global order. Thus, "cheating" becomes a discursive tool through which Putin legitimises retaliatory measures, aligning national dignity with moral rectitude.

## 9. Affect in Zelensky's speech.

(5).....*in particular our long-suffering Mariupol, but also saving other states and regions from the further deployment of Russian aggression.*

The term "**long-suffering**" refers to the patience and endurance of the Ukrainian people, particularly those in Mariupol, who have been the primary targets of Russian aggression. This term evokes empathy and admiration for Ukraine's ability to withstand hardship. The positive affect here is resilience and fortitude in the face of adversity. By framing Mariupol as "long-suffering," Zelensky is appealing to the international community's sense of justice and urging them to see Ukraine as a victim of unjust aggression. The emotional

tone suggests both sorrow and pride, as Zelensky portrays Ukraine as a nation that, despite its suffering, remains strong and defiant. This framing is crucial in garnering international support, as it casts Ukraine as morally superior in its ability to endure and resist Russian attacks.

*(10). And the world of people who have been **specially humiliated** by their state for decades, **specially driven into poverty** and lawlessness.*

The phrase “**specially humiliated**” carries a strong emotional charge, as Zelensky accuses Russia of deliberately subjecting its people to poverty and lawlessness. This term suggests that Russia’s leadership has intentionally degraded its citizens, creating a deeply negative affect of disgust and moral outrage. By emphasising that this humiliation is “special,” Zelensky suggests that it is not incidental but a key aspect of Russia’s governance, aimed at keeping its people oppressed. This framing of deliberate humiliation evokes sympathy for the Russian people while simultaneously condemning the Russian government. The negative affect here is both directed at the leadership of Russia and at the suffering inflicted on ordinary citizens, painting the Russian government as a morally bankrupt regime that thrives on the degradation of its own people.

*(6)Russia **wants** to destroy our independence.*

The verb “**wants**” in this context signifies an intentional desire on Russia’s part to destroy Ukraine’s sovereignty. This is a highly emotional statement, reflecting Zelensky’s sense of vulnerability and fear for Ukraine’s future. The affect here is one of helplessness, as Zelensky portrays Ukraine as being at the mercy of Russia’s aggressive ambitions. The emotional weight of this phrase lies in its simplicity and directness: Russia’s aim is not merely to challenge or oppose Ukraine but to erase its independence entirely. By framing the conflict in these stark terms, Zelensky appeals to the international community’s moral responsibility to defend Ukraine’s right to self-determination. The negative affect here is meant to generate both empathy for Ukraine and outrage at Russia’s brazen attempts to destroy a sovereign nation.

(7) *There is no hope that Russia will stop on its own.*

The assertion that there is “no hope” for Russia to stop on its own carries an inscribed affect of despair and conveys a heightened sense of inevitability and urgency. This emotionally charged expression functions as a forceful act of amplification within the Appraisal framework, intensifying the perceived severity of the conflict. It invokes a judgment of Russia as a relentless aggressor and evokes pity for Ukraine’s vulnerability, reinforcing a clear moral binary between oppressor and victim.

Framed within a strategic plea to the Korean House of Assembly, this utterance is more than a report of the situation; it is a call to action. The absence of “hope” without external intervention indirectly challenges the audience’s ethical stance, positioning neutrality or inaction as tacit support for continued violence. Through this rhetorical structure, the affect of desperation is not merely expressed but escalated, urging the international community to shift from observer to participant. By invoking shared values of justice and responsibility, the statement constructs Ukraine’s struggle as a global moral imperative requiring an urgent response.

## 10 Judgment

### Judgment in Putin’s speech

Judgment is evaluating people’s character, which consists of positive and negative. It can be realised through adverbial, Adjective, noun, and verb forms.

(8) *I am confident that the soldiers and officers of the Russian Armed Forces devoted to their country will professionally and courageously fulfil their duty.*

The word “confident” reflects Putin’s positive judgment of the Russian soldiers’ abilities and character. By stating that he is “confident,” Putin is expressing a high level of trust and certainty in the soldiers’ competence and dedication. This confidence signifies his evaluation of the military as reliable and capable of carrying out their responsibilities effectively. The affect tied to “confident” suggests not only trust in their performance but also pride in their

loyalty to the nation.

The choice of “confident” frames the soldiers as worthy of admiration and respect, aligning their actions with professionalism and patriotism. It signals that Putin views their commitment to duty as unshakable, reinforcing a narrative of steadfastness and strength within the Russian Armed Forces. By asserting this confidence, Putin is also projecting an image of stability and control to his audience, both domestically and internationally, suggesting that the military’s actions are not just driven by orders but by a shared nationalistic spirit. The term functions as a rhetorical resource to project Putin’s **inscribed Affect of confidence**, which simultaneously invokes a **Judgment of capacity and tenacity** in the Russian military. This layering not only affirms the moral legitimacy of their mission but also constructs an image of assured success in the conflict.

*(1) As has always been the case in our history, the fate of Russia is in the **reliable** hands of our multinational people.*

The term “reliable” here carries a strong positive judgment, reflecting Putin’s deep trust in the character of the Russian people. By stating that the “fate of Russia” is in their “reliable hands,” Putin is evaluating the people as dependable and steadfast, historically proven to be capable of safeguarding the nation’s future. The affect tied to “reliable” evokes a sense of assurance and confidence, suggesting that Russia’s strength and continuity are secure because of the people’s inherent loyalty and capability. The phrase “as has always been the case” further emphasises a sense of tradition and historical continuity, reinforcing that this reliability is not a recent phenomenon but a deeply ingrained national characteristic.

The judgment here goes beyond a mere compliment; it ties the people’s reliability to the very survival and prosperity of the nation. The use of “reliable” serves to elevate the Russian populace to a central role in the nation’s fate, portraying them as the backbone of Russia’s endurance and success. This positive evaluation fosters a collective national identity, where the people are seen as both historically and currently responsible for Russia’s resilience. Putin’s invocation broadens the scope of this judgment, implicitly including all ethnic

and cultural groups within Russia, which strengthens the idea of unity and collective responsibility across the diverse population.

This judgment also functions rhetorically to build trust and solidarity among the populace, encouraging them to embrace their role in Russia's destiny. By casting the people as "reliable," Putin is not only praising them but also subtly placing a burden of responsibility on them to live up to this judgment. The affective power of "reliable" here is designed to inspire confidence within the nation and to bolster morale, particularly in times of conflict or external pressure. It signals that Russia's fate is not merely in the hands of its leaders or military but fundamentally depends on the collective strength and reliability of its people. This invocation of "reliablehands" also works to unify the population under a shared purpose, reinforcing that their actions and solidarity are crucial to Russia's continued strength and survival.

In this way, Putin's use of "reliable" transcends individual praise and instead constructs a narrative where the people are guardians of the nation's legacy, carrying with them the weight of historical responsibility. The positive judgment of the Russian people's reliability, thus, becomes a cornerstone of Putin's broader message of national resilience and unity in the face of external challenges, particularly from Western powers.

*(1) The goals will be achieved, and the security of our Motherland will be **reliablyguaranteed**.*

The phrase "the security of our Motherland will be reliably guaranteed" blends affective and evaluative meanings to construct a powerful rhetorical stance. The term "reliably" inscribes a positive Judgment of capacity and tenacity, which affirms the competence, determination, and resilience of those charged with safeguarding Russia. It reflects Putin's Affect of confidence, indicating emotional assurance in the nation's strength and future outcomes. This affect is not merely personal but projected as a collective sentiment that should be shared by the audience to foster national trust in state institutions and military capabilities.

In addition, "guaranteed" operates as a verbal metaphor of certainty and control that projects the security outcome as not only likely but inevitable. This metaphor shifts security from a contingent goal to a predetermined result,

thereby minimising uncertainty and reinforcing the legitimacy of ongoing efforts. The discourse exhibits characteristics consistent with **Appreciation**, specifically, the valuation of systems, by implicitly praising Russia's military, political, and strategic frameworks as dependable and effective. The evaluative force here is further graduated through the use of "reliably," which amplifies the strength and predictability of the guarantee, leaving little room for doubt.

Together, these linguistic choices construct a layered evaluative framework: an Affect of confidence, a Judgement of institutional capacity, and an Appreciation of the systems in place. The result is a message that affirms the legitimacy of Russia's actions, assures the public of success, and repositions the nation's defensive posture as both morally justified and structurally sound.

## 11 Judgment in Zelensky's speech

### *(11) For the people of Russia, such conditions are **deliberately created***

The phrase "deliberately created" carries a strong negative judgment, indicating that the conditions affecting the people of Russia are not accidental but rather the result of intentional actions. The use of "deliberately" implies a calculated and purposeful approach, suggesting that someone, presumably external actors or Western powers, is actively crafting unfavourable circumstances for the Russian populace. This characterisation frames the situation as not only harmful but also as a product of malice or ill intent, which evokes feelings of anger and betrayal among the audience.

By employing the term "deliberately," Putin suggests that these adverse conditions are the outcome of a systematic effort to undermine Russia and its people. This judgment conveys a sense of urgency and seriousness, portraying the circumstances facing the Russian people as the result of conspiratorial actions rather than natural or coincidental occurrences. The emotional weight of this phrase is significant, as it implies that the hardships endured by the Russian populace are part of a larger, orchestrated plan by foreign adversaries to destabilise the country.

The term "created" reinforces this judgment by suggesting that these conditions are not inherent to Russia or the Russian people but are imposed from outside. This language serves to externalise blame and positions the Russian leadership as defenders against an orchestrated attack on their society. Thus, Putin seeks to evoke a sense of solidarity among the Russian people, rallying them around a shared understanding of victimisation and encouraging them to unite against perceived external threats.

This negative judgment is also a strategic move to justify the actions and policies of the Russian government. By portraying the current circumstances as the result of deliberate actions by others, Putin can present his leadership

as a necessary and protective response to these challenges. This rhetorical framing aims to legitimise government actions as defensive measures aimed at safeguarding the Russian people from external manipulation and exploitation.

*(12) Russia attacked us. Attacked, taking advantage of its military force*

The term “attacked” is a direct and unambiguous declaration that positions Russia as the aggressor in the ongoing conflict. This negative judgment is stark and confrontational, clearly framing Russia’s actions in a hostile light. By using the word “attacked,” Zelensky seeks to invoke a sense of urgency and alarm, emphasising the aggressive nature of Russia’s actions. This word not only conveys the physical act of aggression but also carries emotional weight, as it reflects the fear, pain, and trauma experienced by the Ukrainian people in the face of military hostility.

The repetition of the word “attacked” further amplifies the emotional impact that reinforces the notion that aggression is not a singular event but a continuous and deliberate series of assaults. This repetition signals the seriousness of the situation and the threat that Russia poses, evoking feelings of vulnerability and helplessness among the audience. It compels listeners to recognise the severity of the threat and the necessity of action to defend against it.

The phrase “taking advantage of its military force” adds another layer to the judgment; that Russia’s actions are not only aggressive but also opportunistic. The term “taking advantage” implies predatory behavior. That is, Russia is exploiting its superior military capabilities to exert power over Ukraine. This characterisation frames the conflict as one not just of military might but of moral failure on the part of Russia. By presenting the attack as an opportunistic move, Zelensky casts Russia in a negative light, portraying it as a bully that leverages its strength against a vulnerable neighbour.

*(13) That Russia is openly blackmailing the world with nuclear and chemical weapons!*

The term “blackmailing” serves as a powerful negative judgment that conveys a strong moral condemnation of Russia’s actions. Zelensky’s use of this word frames Russia as engaging in extortionate behavior and leveraging its military capabilities—specifically its nuclear and chemical arsenals to intimidate and coerce the international community. This

characterisation implies that Russia is not merely acting in self-defence or pursuing its national interests but is instead resorting to threats that jeopardise global security and stability.

The affective weight of “blackmailing” evokes feelings of fear and urgency. It suggests a scenario where countries are forced to comply with Russia’s demands out of fear for their safety or that of their citizens. This framing amplifies the perception of danger posed by Russia, making it clear that its actions are not only aggressive but also fundamentally coercive. The use of this term positions Russia as a rogue state, willing to use its destructive capabilities to impose its will on others, thus violating international norms and standards of conduct.

The phrase “openly blackmailing” adds another dimension to this judgment. “Openly” suggests that Russia is brazenly and unapologetically engaging in this behaviour, which further diminishes any moral justification for its actions. This transparency in blackmail connotes a lack of accountability and an arrogant disregard for the potential consequences of its threats. Zelensky’s emphasis on the term “openly” suggests that Russia is not trying to conceal its coercive tactics, which amplifies the sense of menace surrounding its actions.

*(14) Sending its army brought up in **total lawlessness** to destroy everything that allows other nations to live.*

The term “total lawlessness” is a profound negative judgment that characterises the Russian military and its operations as fundamentally chaotic, reckless, and devoid of any moral or legal constraints. Zelensky’s use of “total lawlessness,” portrays the Russian army operations without regard for established norms, rules, or ethics that govern military conduct. This judgment evokes a sense of disorder and anarchy, painting a grim picture of Russian forces as not just aggressive but fundamentally uncivilised and dangerous.

The affective weight of “total lawlessness” heightens the emotional response of fear and outrage among the audience. This phrase suggests that Russian forces are not merely engaged in conventional warfare but are instead acting with a complete disregard for human life and international law. By framing the actions of the Russian army in this way, Zelensky seeks to portray them as barbaric and inhumane, thereby garnering sympathy for Ukraine and condemnation for Russia’s military tactics.

The phrase “to destroy everything that allows other nations to live”

further amplifies the negative judgment associated with “total lawlessness.” Here, Zelensky connects the actions of the Russian army to a broader existential threat not just to Ukraine but to global peace and stability. By stating that the Russian military aims to “destroy everything” essential for life, he emphasises the devastating consequences of Russia’s aggression. This judgment serves to invoke a moral imperative in the international community to take action against such a destructive force.

## 12 Appreciations

### Appreciation in Putin’s speech

Appreciation can be realised as Adjectives, Nouns, and Verbs.

(15) “It’s **hard** to disagree with that, as it’s true.”

The word “**hard**” functions primarily as an **Appreciation: A reaction** expressing the emotional and intellectual difficulty involved in challenging a controversial claim, in this case, that America is a nation founded on lies. According to Martin and White (2005), **Reaction** refers to how something affects the observer emotionally or sensorially. Here, “hard” conveys a sense of resistance or discomfort that discourages opposing the statement, implying that the assertion is deeply unsettling or troubling to consider.

The phrase “**as it’s true**” is a clear example of **Appreciation: Valuation**, where Putin assigns significant worth to the claim by presenting it as an undeniable fact. Valuation in Appreciation evaluates the importance or significance of something. This intensifies the rhetorical force of the statement, transforming it from a subjective opinion into a factual truth that demands acceptance.

Together, these two parts work in tandem: the “**hard**” signals the challenge of confronting this truth emotionally and cognitively, while “**as it’s true**” establishes the claim’s objective legitimacy. This combination also functions rhetorically to position Putin as a voice of reason who acknowledges uncomfortable realities, contrasting with those who might hold naive or misguided views about America. The underlying affect includes a tone of frustration and resignation toward the accepted narratives, reinforcing Putin’s delegitimising stance against the West.

(16) “The outcome of World War II, as well as the sacrifices made by our

people on the altar of victory over Nazism, are **sacred**.”

The adjective “**sacred**” is a profound instance of **Appreciation: Valuation**, expressing the deep worth and elevated status attributed to Russia’s historical victory and sacrifices during World War II. Valuation assesses the significance or esteem given to an entity or event (Martin & White, 2005). By describing these sacrifices as “sacred,” Putin imbues them with near-religious reverence, suggesting they transcend mere historical fact and occupy a morally inviolable space within Russian national identity.

This elevated valuation serves multiple purposes. It solidifies the historical memory as a foundational and unassailable moral authority, thus legitimising Russia’s current political and military positions by linking them to this sanctified legacy. It also appeals to collective pride and unity, fostering a shared sense of belonging and resilience among Russians. The use of “sacred” carries strong emotional connotations, evoking respect, honor, and even awe while simultaneously warning against any criticism that might be perceived as disrespectful or sacrilegious.

In this way, the term reinforces the notion that questioning Russia’s contemporary policies is tantamount to dishonouring the sacrifices made in the past, thereby strengthening internal cohesion and justifying external actions.

(17) “And you have something that can be **indispensable** for us.”

The adjective “**indispensable**” is an example of **Appreciation: Valuation**, which highlights the critical importance and necessity of the support Zelensky is requesting from the Korean House of Assembly. By labeling the support as “indispensable,” Zelensky communicates that it is not merely helpful but absolutely essential to Ukraine’s survival and success against Russian aggression; thereby, affirming Martin and White (2005) notion of Valuation as a perceived value/significance for something.

This word choice also carries an affective dimension, implicitly appealing to the audience’s sense of responsibility and moral duty. It evokes feelings of urgency and importance, stressing that the international community’s intervention is crucial and time-sensitive. Furthermore, “indispensable” elevates the relationship from one of simple assistance to a strategic partnership in a broader struggle for freedom and justice.

By framing his appeal in these terms, Zelensky strengthens the rhetorical impact of his request, positioning Ukraine as an active agent in a global conflict, while emphasising the unique and necessary role the Korean government can play. This shifts the dynamic from passive reception of aid to mutual cooperation grounded in shared democratic values and ethical

commitment.

## 13. Discussion

This study investigates the affective and evaluative dimensions in the speeches of Vladimir Putin and Volodymyr Zelensky, focusing on how both leaders use language to frame their positions in the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict. Through a careful analysis of their speeches, it is evident that both figures employ a range of affective strategies to elicit emotional responses from their audiences and shape perceptions of the conflict.

Putin's rhetoric is characterised by a deeply negative affect toward the West, which he frames as deceitful and manipulative. Terms such as "empire of lies" and "twisting decisions" illustrate his portrayal of the West, particularly NATO and the United States, as morally corrupt entities that intentionally distort international agreements. This negative characterisation is aimed at justifying Russia's actions, positioning them as a necessary defence against Western aggression. This aligns with findings by Chilton and Schäffner (2014), who observe that political leaders commonly use moral delegitimisation of opposing actors to legitimise domestic policy agendas, especially in conflict situations. Similarly, Mayer (2015) argues that portraying external adversaries as deceitful serves to unify domestic audiences around a perceived common threat.

Additionally, Putin's speech frequently utilises positive evaluations of Russia's military and people, describing them as "reliable," "courageous," and "steadfast." These positive judgments serve to cultivate a sense of national pride and unity, reinforcing Russia's image as a strong and morally righteous nation defending its sovereignty. This is consistent with Wodak's (2015) analysis of victimhood and resilience discourse in political communication, where positive self-representation is key to building national solidarity during times of crisis. More recent work by Hager and Versteeg (2020) also highlights how positive appraisal of a nation's capacity and tenacity functions as a strategic resource in geopolitical rhetoric.

In contrast, Zelensky's speech employs a more empathetic tone, particularly towards the Ukrainian people, whom he portrays as victims of unprovoked Russian aggression. Words such as "long-suffering" and "brutally attacked" evoke strong emotional reactions, framing Ukraine as a nation enduring hardship with resilience and moral integrity. Zelensky's rhetoric is directed at garnering international sympathy and support, with repeated calls for external assistance framed as essential for Ukraine's survival. This use of empathetic appeals to mobilise international audiences corresponds with Hart and Daughton's (2015) findings on emotional engagement in political

crisis communication. Furthermore, recent studies by Jørgensen and Phillips (2023) emphasise how victimisation narratives in conflict speeches help construct moral legitimacy and foster international solidarity.

His speech is also replete with negative judgments of Russia, accusing it of engaging in lawless and ruthless actions. Zelensky's portrayal of the conflict emphasises the moral high ground of Ukraine, contrasting his nation's defensive posture with Russia's aggressive and exploitative tactics. This contrast aligns with insights from Fairclough (2013), who demonstrates that moral dichotomies in political discourse serve to polarise audiences and justify one's own political position.

Both leaders demonstrate sophisticated use of affect and judgment to serve their political objectives. Putin's language constructs a narrative where Russia is positioned as a victim of Western deceit, using emotionally charged language to galvanise domestic support. Zelensky, on the other hand, uses emotional appeals to draw international attention to the plight of Ukraine, highlighting the suffering caused by Russian aggression and the need for global solidarity. These strategies reflect patterns identified in recent conflict discourse studies by Richardson and Helms (2022), who argue that emotional and moral framing is central to contemporary geopolitical speech acts.

By applying Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005) to contemporary conflict discourse, this study contributes to the understanding of how affective and evaluative language functions strategically in geopolitical contexts. It extends existing scholarship by offering a comparative analysis of two opposing leaders' rhetoric, illuminating how affect and judgment operate differently depending on political positioning and intended audience. This enriches the broader literature on political communication, conflict framing, and international persuasion, underscoring the importance of linguistic analysis in decoding the emotional and moral dimensions of modern conflicts.

## 14. Conclusion

The analysis of affect and judgment in the speeches of Putin and Zelensky underscores the critical role that language plays in shaping public perceptions during conflict. Both leaders strategically use affective and evaluative language to construct narratives that serve their respective political agendas. Putin's speech seeks to legitimise Russia's military actions by framing the West as deceitful and hostile, while Zelensky appeals to international audiences by emphasising Ukraine's resilience and the moral imperative of resisting Russian aggression. This study illustrates how the manipulation of affect and judgment in political discourse can influence both national unity and international responses during crisis. Language, in this context, becomes

a powerful tool for legitimising actions, rallying support, and constructing moral narratives in international relations.

These findings offer valuable insight for discourse analysts examining how leaders in conflict settings use appraisal resources to position themselves and their adversaries. By highlighting the role of affect and judgment in shaping moral narratives, this study contributes to a growing body of research on language and ideology in crisis communication. Similar analytical frameworks could be applied to other geopolitical conflicts, such as in the Middle East, Africa, or East Asia, to understand how political actors mobilise support, frame legitimacy, and negotiate international alliances through discourse. This expands the scope of appraisal theory beyond descriptive accounts to a critical analysis of political strategy and identity construction during warfare.

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