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# Transitivity and lexical cohesion in Biden's and Putin's televised speeches on Russia's war against Ukraine

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**Abstract:** The present study explores the interplay of Transitivity and lexical cohesion in the President Biden's and President Putin's televised speeches on 24 February 2022 aiming at legitimizing their actions, following the announcement of the Russian politician's invasion of Ukraine and the American politician's condemnation of the attack. A further objective is to investigate whether the Transitivity and lexical cohesion analyses illustrate the politicians' ideological positions and how lexical cohesion contributes to the process of ideological construction in the speeches. Within the general framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), we first obtain the results for Transitivity following Halliday's Transitivity system and add a study of the interplay with lexical cohesion. The results reveal that both politicians used Transitivity differently: Biden effectively utilized Material clauses to portray Russia as the aggressor, while Putin employed Relational and Mental constructions to craft a narrative that justifies Russia's actions and present it as a victim. These linguistic choices contribute to their respective ideological representations of reality. The results also show that Transitivity and lexical cohesion were used as an ideological tool to persuade the audience of the legitimacy of war.

**Keywords:** *transitivity, lexical cohesion, persuasion, metaphorical themes, political language, political speech, ideology.*

## Transitividad y cohesión léxica en los discursos televisados de Biden y Putin sobre la guerra de Rusia contra Ucrania

**Resumen:** El presente estudio explora la interacción de la Transitividad y la cohesión léxica en los discursos televisados del presidente Biden y del presidente Putin el 24 de febrero de 2022, con el objetivo de legitimar sus acciones, tras el anuncio de la invasión de Ucrania por parte del político ruso y la condena del ataque por parte del político estadounidense. Otro objetivo es investigar si los análisis de Transitividad y cohesión léxica ilustran las posiciones ideológicas de los políticos y cómo la cohesión léxica contribuye al proceso de construcción ideológica en los discursos. Dentro del marco general de la Lingüística Funcional Sistémica (SFL), primero obtenemos los resultados de la Transitividad siguiendo el sistema de Transitividad de Halliday y añadimos un estudio de la interacción con la cohesión léxica. Los resultados revelan que ambos políticos utilizaron la Transitividad de manera diferente: Biden utilizó cláusulas Materiales para retratar a Rusia como el agresor, mientras que Putin empleó construcciones Relacionales y Mentales para crear una narrativa que justifica las acciones de Rusia y presentarla como víctima. Estas elecciones lingüísticas contribuyen a sus respectivas representaciones ideológicas de la realidad. Los resultados también muestran que la Transitividad y la cohesión léxica se utilizaron como una herramienta ideológica para persuadir a la audiencia de la legitimidad de la guerra.

**Palabras clave:** *transitividad, cohesión léxica, persuasión, temas metafóricos, lenguaje político, discurso político, ideología.*

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## 1. Introduction

A wealth of literature (Cabrejas-Peñuelas & Díez-Prados, 2014; Díez-Prados, 2016; Oddo, 2011; Scott, 2003) has uncovered various linguistic strategies used by politicians (e.g., political implicatures, evaluative language, lexical choice, metaphors, metonymies, among others) to systematically manipulate language with a view to legitimizing their actions. One of such devices is Transitivity, which reveals "how discourse is used by different social groups in order to communicate specific ideologies to ingroup and outgroup members" (Li, 2010, p. 3446). Unlike lexically-based strategies, Transitivity shows "consistent patterns of grammatical relations that reflect the world-view of the producer(s) of the discourse" (Scott, 2003, p. 13).

Lexical cohesion – defined as "the overt linguistically-signalled relationship between propositions" (Widdowson, 1978, p. 31) - is a phenomenon that may further contribute to the process of ideological construction within a text. Indeed, it is through lexical choice and cohesion that speakers/writers "construct meanings about discourse that transcend the referential meanings of each individual word through a deliberate interplay of lexical items that are semantically and pragmatically related" (Li, 2010, p. 3454). Through repetitions of lexical items that are collocationally related lexical cohesion is created. Lexical cohesion may be used to construct a particular version of reality that blames Their actions, which are eminently evil, and legitimizes Our decisions, even if that involves getting involved in a war (Kitis & Milapides, 1997; Li, 2010).

The language of politics is especially suited for the use of lexical choice hiding a specific ideology and Transitivity, since politicians need to offer a distinct picture that is unlike that of other politicians. Through lexical choice, politicians highlight their positive traits and the negative traits of their opponents (e.g., heroes vs. terrorists (van Dijk, 2011, p. 14-15)) and construct the Us vs. Them ideological polarization, while through different Transitivity patterns, politicians show the Us vs. Them division in an attempt to persuade the audience of the validity of their arguments and, thus, ensure support for their political actions (Cabrejas-Peñuelas, 2023; Li, 2010; Scott, 2003). Also, through lexical choice and specific lexicogrammatical choices politicians overtly set out to legitimize their actions, which, on occasions, involve defending a war that has dramatic human consequences.

War declaration speeches are a "genre in its own right" (Oddo, 2011, p. 289) aiming at legitimating violence. Indeed, "as a dangerous, deadly activity, war must be assigned *legitimacy* before it is undertaken" (2011, p. 289; italics in original). For that purpose, politicians "construe the war as a legally and morally acceptable project" (Chouliaraki, 2007, p. 3) before the audience by resorting to "highly moralized lexical resources" (Oddo, 2011, p. 294) and to various lexicogrammatical choices reflecting the politicians' ideological stance (Scott, 2003). Both seem to work together to "make the unpleasant realities of war seem necessary" (Oddo, 2011, p. 308) and, thus, politicians use them to garner support for military actions.

Transitivity has been a focus of attention in English and Spanish political speeches (Cabrejas-Peñuelas, 2023; Scott, 2003) and in different text types (e.g., newspaper articles, television interviews, courtroom talk, the language of scam, to name but a few), often combined with evaluation (Bartley, 2017; Oktar, 2001). However, to our knowledge, no study has attempted to analyze the role of lexical cohesion as a complementary analysis in English and Russian political speeches to check their role for positive self-presentation and negative other-deprecation (Oktar, 2001), for persuasion (Li, 2010; Scott, 2003) and for ideological positioning (Li, 2010). With the aim of providing a contrastive perspective, the present study examines President Putin's announcement of the invasion of Ukraine in a televised address and President Biden's speech condemning Russian military forces' attack. In his political speech, Putin attempted to convince the audience that his decision to invade Ukraine was not but an effort to stop the NATO's hostile expansion in the East, one that was getting close to Russia's borders. In contrast, Biden's speech served to denounce Putin's attempt to go back to the former Soviet Union, while he also announced a round of severe sanctions against Russia and President Putin. In a bid to uncover the politicians' lexicogrammatical and lexical choices aiming at legitimizing their actions, the present study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What type(s) of transitivity patterns as found in the Hallidayan Transitivity system (Halliday, 1994; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, 2014) are used in the American and Russian political speeches? Do they reflect the ideological stance of the speeches?
2. How does lexical cohesion contribute to the processes of ideological construction in the speeches aiming to legitimize politicians' actions?

To give an answer to the first research question, President Putin's address to Russia, announcing an attack over Ukraine, and President Biden's speech to the US condemning the attack, are analyzed, following the Hallidayan Transitivity system (Halliday, 1994; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, 2014). The analysis of transitivity patterns serves to "describe the lexicogrammatical choices that are made in strategic ways for the purposes of legitimizing [a] war" (Scott, 2003, p. 31) against Ukraine and of legitimizing the coordinated response to Russia over launching an invasion. It seems therefore that Transitivity contributes to an understanding of how ideologies are constructed in the speeches. In respect of the second research question, the repetitions of lexical items forming collocations are examined to check any metaphors that contribute to dominant themes in the speeches and that reveal the ideological construction of those in power (also, Li, 2010). Indeed, lexical choice depends not only on "setting, participants and goals", but also "on the knowledge and ideologies of the dominant authors and their groups" (van Dijk, 2011, p. 39). We believe that complementing an analysis of Transitivity with an analysis of lexical cohesion can help to uncover the ideologies underlying the Russian and American Presidents' speeches aiming to manipulate the audience's perception. We hypothesize that their interplay achieves semantic amplification and, thus, reinforces ideological perspectives that legitimize the narrative of war.

Section 2 gives a short account of the political background of Putin's and Biden's speeches. As part of the literature review, section 3 deals with call-to-arms legitimation and the discursive strategies that politicians use to justify their actions in a war situation. It also describes lexical cohesion as a complementary analysis of Transitivity to reveal inherent ideologies in political texts. Section 4 deals with the methodology of the study. Section 5 attempts to shed some light into how President Putin and President Biden express their ideological orientation in their speeches and, finally, section 6 provides the conclusions to the study.

## 2. Socio-political background of the speeches

The origins of Russia's invasion of Ukraine lie on Russia's opposition to Ukraine's request to become a member of the Western defensive alliance (NATO) and on Russia's invasion of Crimea in 2014. For Russia, the acceptance of Ukraine in NATO as well as the acceptance of other Eastern European countries that were former Russian allies threatens its security (Mearsheimer, 2014, p.77). Another reason for the full-scale war lies on Russia's accusations of genocide in the eastern part of Ukraine, although such accusations have been claimed to be unfounded (see Kirby, 2022). Also, Russia's involvement in a war against Ukraine and his annexation of Crimea are legitimized on the grounds that Russia is within the bounds of international law, unlike the NATO countries and the US.

On 24 February 2022 President Vladimir Putin announced Russia's invasion in a televised address, which followed his address on 21 February 2022, in which he declared that the Russian government would give the Ukrainian separatist regions of Donetsk and Luhansk formal recognition. Putin's announcement of a "special military operation" (Putin, 2022) on 24 February continued with bombings of major Ukrainian cities, such as Kyiv, in an attempt to "demilitarize and denazify Ukraine" (Putin, 2022). Ukraine's President Zelensky responded to the invasion by declaring martial law and by offering weapons to Ukrainians wanting to defend their country. Also, European countries responded to the war by imposing sanctions on Russian individuals, businesses and financial institutions seeking to isolate Russia.

In the face of a full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, President Biden gave a speech at the White House on 24 February, in which he denounced Putin's attack and announced a round of financial sanctions that the US and the European allies hoped would cripple the Russian economy. Also, he announced a deployment of additional troops to Germany, but these would not be involved in the war. The sanctions on Russia were meant to punish rather than to prevent Putin's actions, although how much they could alter his decisions was still to be seen. Biden also expressed his concern that the Russian-Ukrainian conflict would mean rising gas prices for the US, although he intended to limit them (Biden, 2022).

The Russian troops obtained some big victories in the first months of the war, such as the city of Mariupol in Donetsk; however, the arrival of Western artillery soon took its toll, while the Ukrainian troops began a counter-attack and regained some territories. And yet, Russia was not the only one struggling: there was also a risk of a global food crisis looming

after a few months of the war had passed; also, in August 2022 Russia shut down the Nord Stream gas pipelines to increase pressure on Europe, which led to immediate price surges. One year and a half since the invasion, Ukraine was in control of cities of strategic value, although neither side was making significant progress. Despite Putin's nuclear threats and his efforts to gain military control of parts of Ukraine, he was failing to win the war. Also, Sweden and Finland applied to join NATO in May 2022, alarmed by Russia's attacks and, thus, his effort to push back NATO seemed to be failing as well (Askew, 2023). And yet, there is no end for the war in sight. The West has taken a cautious approach to supporting Ukraine for fear of provoking World War III. While the Biden Administration has had a major role in keeping Ukraine in the fight, the future is uncertain regarding how much support it will provide, with some believing that the most likely result is a frozen conflict with unforeseen consequences (Hooker, 2023).

## 3. Theoretical review

### 3.1.War legitimation

Legitimation refers to "discourse that explains and justifies social practices" (Simonsen, 2019, p. 505) and, thus, it involves providing "good reasons, grounds, or acceptable motivations for past or present action" (van Dijk, 1998, p. 255). It also provides an answer to the question "Why should we do this?" or "Why should we do this in this way?" (van Leeuwen, 2007, p. 93). Legitimation is frequent when political leaders make controversial decisions, such as wars, which need public support. For that purpose, they use soft power – an ability to persuade others to follow their own course of action (Chouliaraki, 2007, p. 1) -, which comes with their status or rank, but also with their privileged access to mass media, enabling them to reach large audiences (van Dijk, 1998).

War legitimization implies a conflict between good and evil. There is an in-group category that is identified with good, often "the free Western world" (Simonsen, 2019, p. 511), and an out-group that is identified with enemies, who are "the thoroughly evil aggressors" (Oddo, 2011, p. 289). They are described as "terrorists" and only verbs of mental processes (e.g., "**do not believe** women should be educated", "**want** to dictate how to think, "**celebrate** the murder of innocent people" (Reyes-Rodríguez, 2006, p. 373; bold in original) are used in their descriptions. This suggests "extreme subjectivism since [...] beliefs and ways of thinking are questions of perspective (i.e., western)" (2006, p. 373). At the same time, in wars involving Western countries the in-group "transcends geographical borders [...]; [that is], [it] establishes a symbolic in-group consisting of states and populations that identify with similar social categories typically associated with 'Western values', for example, modernity, liberalism and democracy" (Simonsen, 2019, p. 511). Such values contrast with those which the out-group identifies with; that is, anti-modernity, anti-democracy and, often, religious fundamentalism.

Political leaders waging war use various discursive strategies to convince the audience of the legitimacy of their purpose (see Oddo, 2011; van Leeuwen, 2007 for a review of some common strategies), the most important of which is the Us vs. Them ideological

polarization. This involves positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation (Oddo, 2011; van Dijk, 1998) to appeal the audience emotionally (Reyes-Rodríguez, 2006). For that purpose, Their criminal acts against innocent people are explained in great detail and are presented as intentional and perverse, while Our acts - even if violent - are shown to restore the moral balance (Lazar & Lazar, 2007, p. 49). Conceptual metaphors - defined as "understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain" (Kövecses, 2002/2010, p. 4) – are also used with a (de)legitimizing role of political actions (Arcimavičienė, 2019; Chilton, 2004) as part of their persuasive power. This is due to their ability to address complex or abstract issues (e.g. immigration, terrorism) in simple or concrete terms, to emphasize certain aspects while downplaying others and to evoke emotional responses (Charteris-Black, 2004; Flusberg et al. 2018; Kövecses, 2002/2010; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; to name just a few). For example, in 'we have *covered* a lot of ground', the journey metaphor serves to highlight the issue of progress (Kövecses, 2002/2010, p. 80; italics in original), while at the same time conjuring up feelings of completeness and achievement. Metaphors also fulfill an evaluative function (Ferrari, 2007; Neagu, 2013) and, thus, politicians use them to highlight Our actions (and, thus, legitimize them) and to deemphasize Their actions (and, thus, delegitimize them), since they "feel a strong pressure to justify [them] in terms of oppositions between right and wrong" (Chilton, 2004, p. 199). This happens by challenging the current status quo of "the amoral other" (Arcimavičienė, 2019, p. 109), who is the enemy and perpetrator of violent acts, and a victimized self, who is the victim and the defender of the oppressed (e.g. "*they use force* against foreign states (NATIONS ARE PERSONS); "If Russia *takes that path* [...] we will lift our sanctions" (POLITICS IS A MORAL JOURNEY) (2019, p. 112; italics in original). This way, by presenting Us positively and in danger of being attacked by the evil Them, be it through detailed descriptions of Their/Our actions and/or through metaphors, violent action against Them is considered necessary and inevitable.

At the discourse level, politicians also employ two legitimation strategies: "legitimation by moral evaluation" and "legitimation by instrumental rationalization" (Simonsen, 2019; van Leeuwen, 2007). In legitimation by moral evaluation, "political leaders [...] replac[e] concepts with negative connotations, for example, 'war', 'attack' or 'violence'[1] with morally praiseworthy ones in order to shift the audience interpretation of an event from potentially illegitimate to legitimate" (Simonsen, 2019, p. 509). For example, after the September 11th terrorist attacks on American soil President Bush avoided the word "war" in his speech and used instead war metaphors (e.g. "our very freedom came under *attack* today" (AMERICA IS A VICTIM) (Bush, 2001). By describing the terrorists *attacking* Americans' freedom, President Bush stressed the legitimacy of Americans' self-defense. War metaphors are effective in communication for several reasons: (1) the schematic structure of a prototypical war is well known (i.e., there are two opposing sides involving good and evil engaged in a fight; they require strategic decisions; unfold over time; end in victory

[1] While 'war', 'attack' and 'violence' can be literal when they involve people fighting using military means and, thus, they are non-metaphorical, there can also be metaphorical uses of the words, as in 'freedom is at war'. These could be regarded as a metaphorical extension of a literal war.

or defeat; and evoke emotions, such as fear and threat); (2) there is widespread awareness of a prototypical war; and (3) many topics (e.g. sports, politics, illnesses) resemble wars (Flusberg et al., 2018, pp. 8-11). Legitimation by instrumental rationalization "legitimates war by reference to its goals, purposes and effects and, accordingly, is founded on the principle of utilitarianism" (Simonsen, 2019, p. 519). The objectives sought for call-on-arms legitimation are to "obtain calm, to improve the security situation" (2019, p. 510), to "protect civilian life", to "restore human rights" (Lazar & Lazar, 2007, p. 50) and "even [to achieve] peace" (Simonsen, 2019, p. 510). However, the self-defense argument is "the most prevalent legitimation in Western public discourse for the use of violence" (2019, p. 505).

### 3.2 Transitivity and lexical cohesion in political discourse

A body of literature (Bartley, 2017; Li, 2010; Scott, 2003) taking a Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) perspective have examined the Experiential and Textual metafunctions of language (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, 2014) in different text types (e.g., newspaper articles, political speeches) to uncover the ideologies and power relations underlying a text. Experiential meanings are realized through the grammatical system of Transitivity, which allows speakers to linguistically encode reality and represent human experiences through Processes, Participants, and Circumstances. Textual meanings are realized, among other aspects, through lexical cohesion, which helps to ensure that the text is coherent (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 30). By analyzing two aspects of clause grammar —Transitivity and lexical cohesion—, the speakers' ideological positions can be revealed in their lexicogrammatical choices: the former by overtly constructing a particular version of reality that justifies Our activities and blames Their activities, and the latter by subtly shaping the audience's perceptions (Li, 2010; Scott, 2003). When both are combined, semantic amplification is achieved and, thus, they play a significant role in legitimizing the political status quo (Li, 2010).

Through Transitivity, Their actions are restricted by using a choice of Processes and negative qualities are assigned to Them while positive qualities are ascribed to Us (Abrafi-Adjei & Ewusi-Mensah, 2016; Scott, 2003). Thus, Transitivity influences the audience's perception through the grammatical construction of sentences. Indeed, through negative Relational Attributive clauses (i.e., clauses in which one entity is assigned an attribute), Their enemies are characterized negatively (e.g., "Iraq *has been* an aggressor") (Scott, 2003, p. 126). Also, through Material clauses, the active role of a government toward the resolution of a conflict is emphasized (e.g., "General Powell *sent* a letter to the Chinese") (Li, 2011, p. 214), while through passive structures they are shown as victims of the actions of the opposing group (e.g., "All 24 diplomats *are being held* in China"), thus eliminating the government's responsibility in the events (2011, p. 214). Lexical cohesion is achieved through the constant repetition of certain word combinations, often metaphorical, that create a sense of unity and coherence and contribute to the themes of the text adding, thus, to the processes of ideological construction within a text (Li, 2010, p. 3545). This happens by using concepts in the source domain that are associated with a certain emotional state (e.g. danger, brutality, fear) in human experience which are then mapped to a target

domain. For example, juxtaposing terms such as "swarms", "hordes", "herds" and "hunt" (IMMIGRANTS ARE ANIMALS) and "flows", "waves", "tides" (IMMIGRANTS ARE FLOODS) when referring to immigration strengthens the text's overall cohesion (see more about ontological metaphors in Kövecses, 2002/2010; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Indeed, the repetitive use of such conceptual metaphors creates dominant themes in the text (e.g. violence) that bind the text together, as well as offering an implicit way of understanding reality that is ideological in nature: that immigrants are dehumanized beings and, due to their unpredictability, they are a threat to the host nation; it also suggests that immigration is dangerous and should be stopped. Therefore, it seems that "it is precisely these metaphors that underpin and sustain an implicit but consistent argument seeping through the configuration of [...] the text" (Kitis & Milapides, 1997, p. 567). When metaphorical lexical cohesion is combined with Transitivity (e.g. use of the verbs "flocked" or "flooded" to refer to immigrants; use of the active voice to highlight the actions of immigrants and, thus, their agency, among others) politicians can guide the audience's interpretation of the information provided, predisposing them to see certain aspects of reality in specific ways, even without their conscious awareness (also, in Li, 2010). This makes of the interaction of Transitivity and lexical cohesion a powerful tool of political persuasion.

## 4. Methodology

The speeches of Biden and Putin on 24 February 2022 were initially examined to determine whether Halliday's Transitivity system (Halliday, 1994; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, 2014) accurately reflects the producers' worldview and whether Transitivity and lexical cohesion combine to illustrate the politicians' ideological stance.

Putin's speech, consisting of 3,761 words (Putin, 2022), was sourced from The Kremlin's webpage, which publishes transcripts in English of the President's addresses. Similarly, Biden's statement in response to the Russian President's announcement of an attack on Ukraine, totaling 1,998 words, was obtained from The White House's webpage (Biden, 2022). To analyze Transitivity, we followed Scott's (2003, p. 36) approach and manually divided each text into ranked clauses and rank-shifted clauses, focusing solely on clause rank.[2] We used letters for the clause complex and numbers for the individual clauses in the texts. Once both texts had been divided into clauses, we uploaded them to the UAM corpus tool (O'Donnell, 2012) for analysis using a modified version of the built-in Transitivity network that excluded circumstance. We utilized Halliday's Transitivity network (Halliday, 1994; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, 2014), which differentiates between process, participant, and circumstance (see Figure (1) below with examples taken from Biden's and Putin's speeches):

[2] According to SFG, all languages have a rank scale in their grammar, which, in English, consists of clause, phrase/group, word, and morpheme. Each rank contains one or more units of the rank below it, and rank shifting is also possible. This means that a unit of one rank can be downranked or downgraded to function in the structure of a unit of its own rank or of a rank below it (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 9-10). In SFG, the term "clause complex" is used instead of "sentence," and it refers to "a number of clauses linked together grammatically" (2014, p. 8).

**Table 1.** Transitivity network (Bartley, 2017; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Transitivity Types | **Material**<br>Clauses of "doing & happening" (H & M, 2014, p. 224). They express concrete actions. Ex: "*They sought* (Material process) *to destroy our traditional values* (Scope)" (Putin) | | Participant:<br>Actor<br>Other participants<br>Process | goal<br>scope<br>beneficiary |
| | **Mental**<br>Clauses of internal processes | *Mental cognition process*:<br>The clause brings ideas into existence, but the idea may or may not be true. The ideas (i.e. the content of one's thoughts or beliefs) are projected in clauses. Verbs: think, believe. Ex: "*We all kn*ow (Mental cognition process) *that [having justice and truth on our side] is [what makes us truly strong]* (Phenomenon)" (Putin) | | |
| | | *Mental desiderative process*:<br>The clause brings ideas into existence. The ideas denote action that is yet to be carried out (H & M, 2014, p. 140). Verbs: want, hope for. Ex: "*Putin chose this war*" (Biden) | | |
| | | *Mental emotive process*:<br>The clause can only project pre-existing facts. The clauses can be graded: "Do you love me?" Verbs: like, fear. Ex: "*However, Russia cannot feel safe*" (Putin) | | |
| | | *Mental perceptive process*:<br>The clause can only project pre-existing facts. The clauses cannot be graded: "Can you see me?" Verbs: see, hear. Ex: "*We saw a staged political theater in Moscow*" (Biden) | | |
| | | Participant: Senser Process<br>Participant: Phenomenon | | |
| | **Relational**<br>Clauses of being. They serve to "characterize and to identify" (H & M, 2014, p. 259). | *Relational attributive process*:<br>There is a relationship between two entities. One of them is assigned an attribute. Ex: "*This is a premediated attack*" (Biden) | Participants:<br>Carrier<br>Attribute<br>Process | Relational intensive<br>Relational possessive<br>Relational circumstantial |
| | | *Relational identifying process*:<br>One of the entities is given an identity. Unlike in relational attributive classes, a unique identity is inferred. Ex: "*Putin is the aggressor*" (Biden) | Participants:<br>Token<br>Value<br>Process | Relational intensive<br>Relational possessive<br>Relational circumstantial |
| | **Verbal**<br>Clauses of "saying" (H & M, 2014, p. 302). Ex: "*To reiterate* [Verbal process]: *they have deceived us* [Verbiage]" (Putin) | | Participant: Sayer<br>Participant: Target/recipient<br>Participant: Verbiage<br>Process | |
| | **Behavioral**<br>Clauses of "physiological and psychological behavior, like breathing, coughing, smiling and staring" (H & M, 2014, p. 301) | | Participant: Behaver<br>Process | |
| | **Existential**<br>Clauses of existence. They take the form "there is/was". Ex: "*There are many examples of this*" (Putin) | | Participant: Existent<br>Process | |

Due to space limitations, the system of circumstance was not included in this study. Therefore, we conducted a manual annotation (an excerpt of which is shown in (1)), as the process of verbs in ambiguous cases can be difficult to distinguish (see Bartley, 2017 for examples of such difficulties).

(1) M 18 In the late 1980s, the Soviet Union grew weaker [*Relational attributive clause*]

19 and subsequently broke apart. [*Material process*]

20 That experience should serve us as a good lesson for us, [*Mental cognitive clause*]

21 because it has shown us [*Mental perceptive clause*]

22 that the paralysis [of power and will] is the first step [towards a complete degradation and oblivion]. [*Phenomenon*]

Putin's 2022 speech

To ensure consistency in the analysis, one researcher analyzed the entire debate while another researcher analyzed 30 % of it to ensure inter-rater reliability. The two researchers agreed in 84.35 % of the cases in the Transitivity analysis. When discrepancies arose, they were discussed until a consensus was reached. However, dividing Biden's and Putin's speeches presented some difficulties, such as how to handle a succession of verbal clauses or cases that did not fit neatly into the Transitivity network. Therefore, some methodological decisions were made.

The first methodological decision concerned the analysis of phrasal verbs or set phrases and the selection of the most appropriate process type, based on their meaning (e.g., In "Our Allies have also been stepping up", "step up" is a Material process as it involves increasing the amount of something).

The second methodological decision concerned the division of verbal clauses. In (2), we decided to embed clauses of verbiage (see 59.1 and 59.2 below) "as [they] could all be interpreted as the 'something'" that the speaker says, and they "should remain attached at the same level as the Receiver" (Scott, 2003, p. 36), which is 'I':

(2) AQ 59 As I said on Tuesday, [$^{59.1}$ these are people [$^{59.1.1}$ who personally gain from the Kremlin's policies]] [$^{59.2}$ and they should share in the pain] (Biden).

The third methodological decision involved calculating the percentages of each clause type (i.e., Material, Mental, Verbal, Behavioral, Existential, and Relational) relative to the total number of words in the text. The purpose was to be able to make comparisons between participants, since the speeches have different lengths (see Table 2 below). The final methodological decision in the Transitivity analysis involved using the chi-square test to determine whether any differences between the political candidates were significant or due to chance.

To analyze lexical cohesion, we examined Biden's and Putin's speeches to identify any linguistic expressions that could not be taken literally and, hence, an abstract concept was understood by resorting to another "more concrete, physical, or tangible" (Kövecses, 2002/2010, p. 7); for example, LOVE IS A JOURNEY. Following Kövecses (2002/2010, p. 5), for the identification of metaphors the procedure used was that employed by the Pragglejaz Group (2007); that is, the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP), since there is a wealth of literature that has utilized or referred to it (e.g. Díez-Prados, 2016; Kövecses, 2002/2010) (for other analytical frameworks for the study of metaphor, see Charteris-Black's (2004) Critical Metaphor Analysis Approach and Steen et al. (2010) Metaphor Identification Procedure of VU University (MIPUV)):

1. Read the whole text to understand the overall meaning.
2. Determine the unit of analysis: a lexical unit.
3. Establish the contextual meaning of the lexical unit being examined.
4. Determine the basic meaning of the lexical unit (more concrete, human-related, and more precise).
5. Decide whether the basic meaning of the lexical unit differs from the contextual meaning, although both share similarities.
6. Mark the word as a metaphorical expression.

Once the words had been marked as metaphorical expressions, the source domain and the target domain were distinguished. Next, a set of correspondences were laid out between the constituent elements of the source and the target domains. Distinguishing between literal and metaphorical uses of lexical units involved a careful examination of content, their conceptual domains, and their basic and contextual meanings (e.g. "attack" has a literal meaning to refer to an act of aggression and a metaphorical meaning to describe being non-physically violent, but aggressive in nature). The analysis combined the source-based and target-based orientations, since the combined approach made it possible to appreciate the origins of metaphors and their impact on the target domain. One researcher manually analyzed both speeches for metaphors; however, to achieve interrater reliability, we had another researcher, who was also well acquainted with political discourse, manually analyze 30 % of the speeches. Both researchers reached 75.30 % agreement. Those cases for which there was no agreement were discussed until a consensus was reached. Next, we analyzed the ideological meanings of the conceptual metaphors found, following Lakoff & Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory. We also considered the pragmatic criteria of metaphor, especially its evaluative role. Finally, we focused on linguistic expressions that contained repetitions of collocationally related lexical items and analyzed them for dominant metaphors that permeated the speeches and created organizing themes (also, Li, 2010). The metaphors were thematically linked and served a common purpose (see for example Li's (2010, p. 3454) metaphors of flood, fire, and untamed animals, which


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contribute to the overarching theme of portraying protests as violent and uncontrollable). They functioned as a set of related metaphors, rather than as a single metaphor that was elaborated throughout a single text (see Kövecses, 2020).

The study of lexical cohesion in the American and Russian speeches also entailed making some methodological decisions. The first methodological decision involved determining the unit of analysis, which was the lexical unit. Following the Pragglejaz Group (2007), to determine whether a lexical unit coincided with a word or phrase, dictionary entries were used. Single headwords were regarded lexical units (2007, p. 15); however, words that could not be "analyzed through the meaning of its constituent parts" (2007, p. 5) were also regarded as a single lexical unit; e.g., *cut off*. The second methodological decision referred to classifying the conceptual metaphors found into themes that helped to comprehend Biden's and Putin's understanding of the events reported. This entailed extracting all metaphors in the speeches and categorizing them based on their source domains. Once we extracted the themes, these helped us to compare and contrast between speakers.

## 5. Results and discussion of findings

This section has been divided into two parts: we first present the quantitative results for the study of Transitivity in Biden's and Putin's speeches; then, we analyze lexical cohesion.

### 5.1 Results from the study of Transitivity

In this subsection, we present and discuss the main findings regarding Biden's and Putin's frequency of Transitivity processes so as to answer our first research question. The results are those obtained after analyzing the politicians' speeches, following Halliday & Matthiessen's (2014) framework. We only mention the results that proved statistically significant (see Table 2).[3]

When contrasting the six Transitivity types, Biden uses Material clauses most frequently, which accounts for almost 50 % of all clauses, followed by similar rates of Mental, Relational, and Verbal clauses. The rate of Existential clauses is very low and Behavioral clauses are non-existent. In contrast, Putin uses similar rates of Material and Relational clauses, followed in order of occurrence by Mental, Verbal, Existential, and Behavioral clauses. The results obtained reveal significant differences between the politicians in Material and Relational clauses, but not in Mental, Verbal, Behavioral, and Existential clauses and, thus, they may have used such Transitivity types in a similar manner (see Table 2). As in previous research (Bartley, 2017; Scott 2003), Material clauses prevail over the rest or are one of the most common Transitivity types used, as they are concerned with actions and events undertaken by politicians and citizens (e.g., protect, work, write).

[3] In this study, we take $p<0.05$; that is, a significance level of 95 %, which is considered significant in social sciences (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 210). This suggests that there is a 95 % level of confidence that the results are not due to random chance and, thus, they are statistically significant.

Closer examination of the results reveals that the American and Russian politicians rely on different uses of Transitivity to legitimate their actions in times of war by making particular choices in the language they use. Biden uses more Material clauses (9.02 % for Biden *versus* 4.85 % for Putin) ($\chi^2$ = 35.757, p<.00) and, thus, more Material processes (3.51 % for Biden *versus* 2.18 % for Putin) ($\chi^2$ = 5.547, p<.00), to denounce Putin's invasion of Ukraine and to announce a round of sanctions (see (3) and (4) and Table 2 below):

(3) The Russian military has begun [*Material process*] a brutal assault on the people of Ukraine without provocation, without justification, without necessity [*Material clause*] (Biden).

(4) It was [*Relational identifying intensive clause*] always about [...] Putin's desire for empire [by any means necessary] by bullying [*Material process*] Russia's neighbors [through coercion and corruption] [*Material clause*], by changing [*Material process*] borders [by force] [*Material clause*] [...] (Biden).

In (3) and (4), Biden uses Material clauses to explain that the Ukraine war is the result of Putin and his government's actions. Their actions are described negatively and, thus, they shed a negative light upon *Them*. The invasion leads to "the rescue scenario" (Lakoff, 2013, p. 8) on the part of the US, its Allies, and partners; that is, imposing a wage of measures targeting Russian financial institutions and elite families. The Transitivity results suggest that, in his attempts at "justify[ing] a war on moral grounds" (2013, p. 8), Biden makes systemic choices in his language to construct a particular version of reality in which the US, its Allies and partners' involvement in the conflict over Ukraine is justified through Russia committing an offence against an innocent victim and the demonization of the enemy.

The Transitivity results further reveal that Biden emphasizes the active role of *Us* (i.e., the President, the Democratic party and, on occasions, the NATO countries), who bring about changes in Material clauses (3.01 % for Biden *versus* 1.41 % for Putin) ($\chi^2$ = 13.133, p<.00). Indeed, "we/I /my administration" were labelled as actor in 41.67 % of the cases, while 45.45 % of the elements in Material clauses had other participant roles (2.51 %, $\chi^2$ = 8.998, p<.00), especially scope (1.95 %, $\chi^2$ = 6.679, p<.00) (see (5)):

(5) We [*Material: Actor*] will limit [*Material: Process*] Russia's ability [*Material: Scope*] [to do business in Dollars, Euros, Pounds, and Yen] [to be part of the global economy]. We [*Material: Actor*] will limit [*Material: Process*] their ability [*Material: Scope*] [to do that] (Biden).

In (5), Biden announces strict sanctions on the part of the NATO allies against Russia in an effort to isolate Moscow from the global economy. To do that, he uses Material clauses, which have *Us* as the subject. Also, *Our* actions are for the benefit of others, rather than ourselves, all of which adds to Our positive self-presentation. Indeed, *Our* actions contribute to forcing the Kremlin to pull back its troops and, thus, restoring the moral imbalance that Putin and his government had created (Lakoff, 2013).

**Table 2.** Transitivity network (Bartley, 2017; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

| | Biden | | Putin | | Statistics | | % per 100 words of text | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Feature** | N | % | N | % | Chi square | Sig | [Transitivity processes / total number of words] x 100 | |
| **TRANSITIVITY - TYPE** | N=407 | | N=679 | | | | **B %** | **P %** |
| Material | 180 | 44.23% | 182 | 26.80% | 34.757 | +++ | **9.02** | 4.85 |
| Mental | 81 | 19.90% | 166 | 24.45% | 2.993 | + | 6.78 | 4.42 |
| Relational | 72 | 17.69% | 211 | 31.08% | 23.660 | +++ | 3.61 | **5.62** |
| Verbal | 68 | 16.71% | 111 | 16.35% | 0.024 | Not sign | 3.41 | 2.96 |
| Behavioral | 0 | 0.00% | 0 | 0.00% | 0.000 | Not sign | 0 | 0 |
| Existential | 6 | 1.47% | 12 | 1.77% | 0.134 | Not sign | 0.3 | 0.32 |
| MATERIAL - TYPE | N=407 | | N=679 | | | | | |
| Actor | 60 | 14.74% | 53 | 7.81% | 13.133 | +++ | **3.01** | 1.41 |
| Other participants | 50 | 12.29% | 47 | 6.92% | 8.998 | +++ | **2.51** | 1.25 |
| Process | 70 | 17.20% | 82 | 12.08% | 5.547 | +++ | **3.51** | 2.18 |
| OTHER PARTICIP. | N=407 | | N=679 | | | | | |
| Scope | 39 | 9.58% | 37 | 5.45% | 6.679 | +++ | **1.95** | 0.99 |
| MENTAL - TYPE | N=407 | | N=679 | | | | | |
| Mental cognition process | 29 | 7.13% | 91 | 13.40% | 10.200 | +++ | 1.45 | **2.42** |
| MENTAL COGNITION PROCESS | N=407 | | N=679 | | | | | |
| Cognition participant phenomenon | 10 | 2.46% | 35 | 5.01% | 4.662 | ++ | 0.5 | **0.93** |
| RELATION - TYPE | N=407 | | N=679 | | | | | |
| Relational attributive | 45 | 11.06% | 167 | 24.59% | 29.688 | +++ | 2.26 | **4.45** |
| RELATION. ATTRIBUT. | N=407 | | N=679 | | | | | |
| Relational intensive process | 33 | 8.11% | 106 | 15.61% | 12.835 | +++ | 1.65 | **2.82** |
| Relational possessive process | 5 | 1.23% | 43 | 6.33% | 15.694 | +++ | 0.25 | **1.14** |
| RELATION. INTENSIVE | N=407 | | N=679 | | | | | |
| Intensive participant carrier | 10 | 2.46% | 38 | 5.60% | 5.937 | +++ | 0.5 | **1.01** |
| RELATION. POSESSIVE | N=407 | | N=679 | | | | | |
| Possessive participant carrier | 1 | 0.25% | 12 | 1.77% | 4.981 | ++ | 0.05 | **0.32** |
| Possessive participant attribute | 2 | 0.49% | 15 | 2.21% | 4.873 | ++ | 0.10 | **0.40** |
| Attribute possessive process | 2 | 0.49% | 15 | 2.21% | 4.873 | ++ | 0 | **0.40** |

+ Weak significance (90%) ++ Medium significance (95%) +++ High significance (100%)

Analysis of Putin's transitivity patterns in his speech reveals that he uses more Relational clauses than Biden (5.62 % for Putin *versus* 3.61 % for Biden) ($\chi^2$ = 23.660, p<.00); that is, clauses that construe the experience of being and becoming (Halliday, 1994, p. 212), especially to describe the attributes of particular entities (4.45 % for the former *versus* 2.26 % for the latter) ($\chi^2$ = 29.688, p<.00). The carrier (i.e., the entity that is characterized) rather than the attribute or the process in Relational attributive intensive clauses proves statistically significant for Putin (1.01 %) ($\chi^2$ = 5.937, p<.00). Indeed, "the speech [is] carefully crafted to place the blame on Ukraine, the United States, and NATO, while framing Russia as desiring peace but now taking military action as a moral responsibility" (Atlantic Council, 2023, n.p.). When doing so, Putin uses Relational attributive intensive clauses, which have processes such as *is*, *were*, *seem*, *would have been* (see (6)):

(6) Even now, [with NATO's eastward expansion] the situation for Russia [*Relational attributive clause: Carrier*] has been becoming worse and more dangerous [by the year]. Moreover, these past days NATO leadership [*Relational attributive clause: Carrier*] has been blunt in its statements [that they need to accelerate] and step up efforts [to bring the alliance's infrastructure closer to Russia's borders] (Putin).

In (6), Putin stresses the fact that the aggression of the enemy (i.e., NATO) is imminent. He does so through Relational attributive clauses, which ascribe negative qualities to the current situation for Russia due to NATO's actions. Thus, he presents Russia as a victim, which casts a negative image upon *Them*. This serves him to act in a way that is contrary to his own nature.

The Russian politician also relies on Relational attributive possessive clauses, which describe a relationship of possession with processes, such as *have*, *provide*, or *face* (1.14 % for Putin *versus* 0.25 % for Biden, $\chi^2$ = 15.694, p<.00). The carrier (0.32 %, $\chi^2$ = 4.981, p<.05), attribute (0.40 %, $\chi^2$ = 4.873, p<.05), and process (0.40 %, $\chi^2$ = 4.873, p<.05) are statistically significant (see (7)):

(7) It is a fact [*Relational attributive intensive clause*] that over the past 30 years we have been patiently trying [to come to an equal and indivisible security in Europe] [*Mental cognitive clause*]. In response to our proposals, we [*Relational attributive possessive: Carrier*] have invariably faced [*Relational attributive possessive: Process*] either cynical deception and lies or attempts [at pressure and blackmail] [*Relational attributive possessive: Attribute*] (Putin).

In (7), by using Relational attributive possessive clauses, Putin portrays *Us* (i.e., the Russian government) in a positive light for making efforts towards peace, despite their perceived futility, while also condemning *Them* (i.e., NATO and Western democracies) for their malevolent actions. These jeopardize the international order.

The Russian President further prefers Mental cognitive processes (2.42 %) ($\chi^2$ = 10.200, p<.00) to represent his and his government's inner thoughts and beliefs (i.e., the phenomenon (0.93 %) ($\chi^2$ = 4.662, p<.05)). See (8), in which he expresses his main motivation for "liberating" some parts of eastern Ukraine: to defend the people in the

controlled parts of Crimea and Sevastopol from the Kyiv's government. This way, he shows altruism to be his driving motive (Thom, 2022, n.p.). At the same time, *Them* are associated with negative sentiments:

(8) They [*Mental cognitive: Senser*] did not leave [*Mental cognitive: Process*] us any other option [*Mental cognitive: Phenomenon*] [for defending Russia and our people], [other than the one we are forced] [to use today] (Putin).

However, there is no evidence suggesting that Ukraine attacked Russia and, thus, it needs to defend itself. Rather, it seems that "this is part of Putin's narrative accusing Ukraine of conducting military operations and even preparing for war against Russia" (Weber et al., 2022, n.p.). This suggests that Putin's speech is ideological in purpose. Putin also uses Mental cognitive processes to showcase "a characteristic of ideological dictatorships, the enormous lie" (2022, n.p.) (see (10)):

(10) We [*Mental cognitive: Senser*] do not intend [*Mental cognitive: Process*] [to impose anything by force] [*Mental cognitive: Phenomenon*]. [...] Freedom guides [*Mental cognitive: Process*] our policy [*Mental cognitive: Phenomenon*], ([which is) the freedom to choose independently our future and the future of our children]. We [*Mental cognitive: Senser*] believe [*Mental cognitive: Process*] [that all the peoples living in today's Ukraine, anyone who wants to do this, must be able to enjoy this right to make a free choice] [*Mental cognitive: Phenomenon*] (Putin).

In (10), through Mental cognitive clauses that have *Us* as senser and positive phenomena, the Russian president assures he and his government did not intend to occupy the Ukrainian territory by force. And yet, there is a full-scale war in which they annexed some Ukraine provinces, while Putin claimed he aimed at the "liberation of Donbas" (Kirby, 2022, n.p.). This again shows Putin's ideological purposes in the war against Ukraine.

## 5.2 Results from the analysis of lexical cohesion

To address our second research question, we present some repetitions of collocationally related lexical items in Biden's and Putin's speeches and examine how these repetitions create dominant metaphors that establish organizing themes.

### *5.2.1 Lexical cohesion in Biden's 2022 speech*

Analysis of the lexical items that are collocationally related in Biden's speech reveals that the motifs of war, sanctions, community, and journey in Biden's portrayal of the events are strengthened by his lexical choices. These contribute to some dominant metaphors in the speech that construct and sustain ideologies conceptualizing Russia as a military assaulter of Ukraine and the US, its Allies, and partners as defenders of Ukrainian people (see Table 3 below for Biden's lexical choices building up metaphorical themes in the speech). Indeed, in his 2022 speech Biden constructs the POLITICS IS WAR metaphor through metaphorical lexical items such as "*violation*", "*assault*", and "*war*" and uses them in a context of moral argument (MORAL ARGUMENT IS WAR) through the words "*international*

*law*", "*the very principles*", "*without a cause*" (see (1) to (3) in Table 3). In such excerpts, Biden's lexical choices stress Russia's amoral position, since it poses a risk to the world's peace (also, in Obama's speeches concerning the Ukraine crisis and the annexation of Crimea, see Arcimavičienė, 2019). The War metaphor is intertwined with THE COUNTRY IS A VILLAIN and THE COUNTRY IS A HERO metaphors, in which Russia is described as a criminal and the US is ascribed the role of hero. Russia is an "*aggressor*", "inherently evil, perhaps even a monster" (Lakoff, 2013, p. 8), because it ordered "an *assault* on the very principles that uphold global peace". The US is a hero who "is left with no choice but to engage the villain in battle" (2013, p. 8). It provides "*relief*" to the victims and "*stands up*" for freedom. At the same time, the Democrat depicts Russia as a nation-child (THE COUNTRY IS A CHILD), "who need[s] to be taught how to develop properly and must be disciplined [...]" by the nation-adult (i.e., the US and the NATO countries) (THE COUNTRY IS AN ADULT) "when [it] fail[s] to follow instructions" (Lakoff, 2004, p. 119) (both metaphors are part of the STRICT FATHER metaphor (2004, p. 9)). The US and the NATO countries discipline the nation-child with sanctions, which are a form of punishment (SANCTIONS IS PUNISHMENT). The punishment inflicts metaphorical physical pain: it "*hurst*[*s*]" when the nation-adults "*strike a blow*" and "*hit*". However, it also inflicts economic distress, because it has a "long-term *impact* on Russia", "*degrade[s]* their aerospace industry" and "*limit[s]* their ability to do business". By constructing Russia's attack as a full-scale invasion of Ukraine and by taking up the position of moral integrity, Biden conceptualizes a reality of an unfair war, which calls for immediate action, this being stinging sanctions targeting Russia's financial, energy and transport sectors.

Biden's metaphorical portrayal of Russia is completed with the POLITICS IS COMMUNITY, NATION IS PERSON, and POLITICS IS A JOURNEY metaphors. He uses the POLITICS IS COMMUNITY metaphor, in which "nations are conceptualized as individual people living in a world community" (Lakoff, 1999, p. 11) and its related NATION IS PERSON metaphor. The POLITICS IS COMMUNITY metaphor implies the existence of friend, enemy, and rogue countries. Such metaphor "has the effect of isolating Russia from a unity with other nations" (e.g., "30 *Allied* nations and close *partners*"). It is therefore "part of a process of ideological polarization: family/friends/partners vs. strangers/opponents/enemies [in which] nations are divided into good and bad, right and wrong" (Arcimavičienė, 2019, p. 104) (see (10) above, in which Biden sets up a division between *Us* and *Them*, since the US and our Allies and partners stand as a unit before Russia). Also, one's own country is home and "regional military forces (e.g., NATO) are seen as forces that 'police' the neighborhood" (Lakoff, 1999, p. 11). Indeed, after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, some moral friendly *partners* of the world community - the US and the NATO countries - *allied* to introduce a wave of sanctions against Russia for not abiding by community norms (POLITICS IS COMMUNITY), with President Biden speaking on behalf of the moral countries before the amoral Them (i.e., Russia). In this way, Biden uses "a strategy of legitimization, where the US is viewed as a moral agent that knows right from wrong by representing universal moral values and thus can make judgements about others" (Arcimavičienė, 2019, p. 107).

**Table 3.** Metaphors in Biden's 2022 speech.

| **MORAL ARGUMENT IS WAR / MORALITY IS UP<br>THE COUNTRY IS A VILLAIN / THE COUNTRY IS A HERO** |
|---|
| *Them* |
| (1) We saw **a flagrant violation of international law.**<br>(2) Putin has committed an **assault on the very principles** that uphold global peace.<br>(3) It was about […] Putin's desire for empire by any means necessary – […] by **choosing a war without a cause**. |
| *Us* |
| (4) America **stands up** to bullies. We **stand up** for freedom.<br>(5) We'll provide humanitarian **relief** to ease their suffering. |
| **SANCTIONS IS PUNISHMENT** |
| *Us* |
| (6) We've already seen the **impact** of our actions on Russia's currency, the Ruble, which early today **hit** its weakest level ever — ever in history.<br>(7) It will **strike a blow** to their ability to continue to modernize their military. It'll **degrade** their aerospace industry […]. It will **hurt** their ability to build ships […].<br>(8) This is going to **impose severe costs** on the Russian economy. |
| **POLITICS IS COMMUNITY / NATION IS A PERSON** |
| *Us* |
| (9) Tomorrow, NATO will convene a summit — we'll be there — to bring together the leaders of 30 **Allied** nations and close **partners**.<br>(10) He [Putin] rejected every good-faith effort the United States and our **Allies** and **partners** made to address our **mutual** security concerns. |
| **POLITICS IS A JOURNEY** |
| *Us* |
| (11) We're also **taking steps** to defend our NATO Allies, particularly in the east.<br>(12) They [the Ukrainian people] will not tolerate anyone who tries to **take their country backwards**.<br>(13) I'm also authorizing additional US forces and capabilities to **deploy** in Germany as part of NATO's response. |

In Biden's speech, the POLITICS IS COMMUNITY metaphor is further interrelated with the POLITICS IS A JOURNEY metaphor as part of the journey taken to legitimize the US and NATO's intervention in Ukraine (see (13) above, in which Biden explains that NATO and the US forces were used as a response to Russia's invasion and, thus, the intervention in Ukraine is justified). Table 3 shows that lexical choices related to the journey motif appear in Biden's speech. He uses metaphors of walking (e.g., "*take steps*"), but also of general movement (e.g., "*give way*", "*unleash* its assault", "additional *moves*"). At the same time, Biden associates Putin with "*tak[ing] their* [the Ukrainians'] *country backwards*" and, thus, he sheds a negative light on Them. It seems, therefore, that the ideologically motivated

constructed metaphors in Biden's speech not only contribute to "creat[ing] a version of 'reality' that blames the activities of *them*, but also appeal to the readers' emotions, shaping their understanding and interpretation of the event" (Li, 2010, p. 3455, italics in original).

### *5.2.2 Lexical cohesion in Putin's 2022 speech*

The previous Transitivity analysis of Putin's 2022 speech constructs the conflict between Russia and Ukraine as being caused by Ukraine, the United States and NATO, while Russia was obliged to act. The motifs of community, war, journey, and space are supported by Putin's lexical choices, which contribute to some metaphorical themes in the text (see Table 4 for some dominant metaphors). As in Biden's speech, the Russian politician's lexical choices conceptualize and sustain ideologies that attempt to justify the war as necessary. For that purpose, politicians "use the NATION AS PERSON metaphor plus two narratives that have the structure of classical fairy tales: The Self Defense Story and The Rescue Story" (Lakoff, 2004, p. 120). Putin uses the Self Defense Story, which is based on the populist strategy of (de)legitimation (Arcimavičienė, 2019, p. 111-112), to foreground his legitimacy and morality in the Ukrainian events. In order to illustrate this idea, the Russian politician employs the POLITICS IS COMMUNITY metaphor, depicting Russia and Ukraine as two interconnected nations (e.g., "the people of Crimea and Sevastopol made their choice in favour of being with *their historical homeland*, Russia", "*our historical land*"). Such close ties help Putin to legitimize waging a war, whose aim is to protect Ukrainians from the Kiev regime, the US, and the NATO countries (WAR IS A RESCUER). The POLITICS IS WAR metaphor complements the POLITICS IS COMMUNITY metaphor in Putin's legitimization strategy (e.g., They did not leave us any other option for *defending* Russia and *our people*) (also, in Putin's Crimea address in 2014, see Arcimavičienė, 2019 for further details). Indeed, the POLITICS IS COMMUNITY metaphor serves the function of "appeal[ing] to the emotions of the intended audience and its sentiments by highlighting a common ancestry", while the POLITICS IS WAR metaphor is used to "legitimi[ze] and construct a moral ground upon which to defend this long lasting bond" (2019, p. 111).

Closer examination reveals that the POLITICS IS WAR metaphor and its related THE COUNTRY IS A VICTIM, THE COUNTRY IS A HERO and THE COUNTRY IS A VILLAIN metaphors set a clear division between *Us* and *Them*. In such metaphors, Russia is portrayed as a victim and as a hero; the Western countries, as a villain; and Ukraine, as a puppet of the West. Indeed, after the dissolution of URSS the US and its Allies tried to "put the final *squeeze* on us, *finish us off*, and utterly *destroy* us" (WAR IS AGGRESSION). Also, they are the "very same '*empire of lies*'" (THE WESTERN BLOC ARE LIARS), have a "feeling of absolute *superiority*" (MORALITY IS UP) and "sought to *destroy* our traditional values and *force* on us their *false values* that would *erode* us, our people from within" (THE COUNTRY IS A VILLAIN). In addition, the policies followed by the US and NATO Allies are characterized as "modern *absolutism*", which reinforces the theme of aggressive villain countries. This contrasts with Putin's strict compliance with international law when he annexed Crimea and Sevastopol (PUTIN IS A LAWFUL ACTOR) and Russia's portrayal as a victim. Putin and his government further attempt to "demilitarize and *denazify*" Ukraine (WAR IS A RESCUER) and do away with

"today's *neo-Nazis*" (THE COUNTRY IS A VILLAIN). Also, they intend to "*stop that atrocity, that genocide* of the millions of people who live [in Donbas]" (THE COUNTRY IS A HERO / WAR IS A RESCUER). This implies providing military support to ethnic Russians in Ukraine,[4] which is justified under Article 51 of the UN Charter. This allows for self-defense in the face of an armed attack on a UN member state. Despite the claims that Putin's accusations are baseless (Fisher, 2022, n.p.) and, therefore, they are ideological in nature, they are one of the main justifications for Putin's military involvement in Ukraine. At the same time, "an act of political violence [is] projected as a heroic stance in the name of the oppressed" (Arcimavičienė, 2020, p. 100).

**Table 4.** Metaphors in Putin's 2022 speech.

| **POLITICS IS COMMUNITY / NATION IS A PERSON** |
|---|
| *Us* |
| (1) [...] in territories adjacent to Russia, which I have to note is our historical land, a hostile "anti-Russia" is taking shape.<br>(2) The people of Crimea and Sevastopol made their choice in favour of being with their historical homeland, Russia.<br>(3) The combat operations conducted by the Western coalition [...] |
| **WAR IS A RESCUER / WAR IS AGGRESSION**<br>**THE COUNTRY IS A HERO/ THE COUNTRY IS A VILLAIN** |
| *Us* |
| (4) We had to **stop that atrocity, that genocide** of the millions of people who live there.<br>(5) The purpose of this operation is to protect people [...]. We will seek to demilitarize and **denazify** Ukraine [...]. |
| *Them* |
| (6) [...] they immediately tried to put the final squeeze on us, finish us off, and utterly destroy us.<br>(7) [...] they sought to **destroy** our traditional values and **force** on us their false values that would **erode** us, our people from within, the attitudes they have been aggressively **imposing** on their countries [...] |
| **THE COUNTRY IS A VICTIM / ELECTIONS IS APPEARANCE** |
| *Them* |
| (8) We can see that the forces that staged the coup in Ukraine in 2014 have **seized power**, are keeping it with the help of **ornamental election procedures** [...] |
| **POLITICS IS A JOURNEY / MORALITY IS UP** |
| *Them* |
| (9) [...] Where did this insolent manner of **talking down** from the **height** of their exceptionalism, infallibility and all-permissiveness come from?<br>(10) [...] they need to **accelerate** and **step up** efforts to **bring** the alliance's infrastructure **closer** to Russia's borders.<br>(11) **the first step** towards complete degradation and oblivion. |

[4] The so-called 'kin-state rallying' refers to acting on behalf of compatriots (Goudimiak, 2016, p. 15).

Putin's lexical choices provide further justification for his war against Ukraine, since they picture the North Atlantic Alliance to have "*accelerate*[d] and *step*[*ped*] *up* efforts to *bring* the alliance's infrastructure *closer* to Russia's borders" (POLITICS IS A JOURNEY) (NATION IS PERSON). Similarly, through the use of other Journey metaphorical verbs and noun phrases (e.g., "*came in the way*", "*took a different turn*", "*pushed the country* towards a humanitarian catastrophe", "*exodus*") (POLITICS IS A JOURNEY), Putin refers to NATO's wrong political decision-making involving expansionism, whose final destination is to threaten Russia's interests, since "Ukraine serves as a buffer state of enormous strategic importance to Russia" (Mearsheimer, 2014, p. 82). At the same time, he taints the US's and its Allies' image as corrupt and aggressive. The spatial metaphorical verbs and noun phrases (e.g., "*talk down*", "*at the highest state level*", "*height*", "*superiority*") (MORALITY IS UP) serves Putin to demonize NATO for their false sense of democracy and their arrogance, although it is precisely "the unmasked superiority and greatness of the Russian people [...] the backbone to the Russian military incursion in Ukraine" (Goudimiak, 2016, p. 19). All in all, Putin creates a narrative in which Russia is a victim of NATO and its Allies, which he and his government need to fight against as an act of self-defense. At the same time, all metaphors are ideologically constructed to "directly express [a negative] moral evaluation of the out-group" (Arcimavičienė, 2020, p. 97), which justifies Putin's decisions.

## 6. Conclusion

The present study has examined President Biden's and President Putin's lexicogrammatical choices and lexical cohesion in their speeches on February 24th, 2022 to find out to what extent these serve to legitimize war. The results from the study of Transitivity show that the American and Russian politicians rely on different rates of Transitivity to construct their own version of reality that reflects their ideological stance. Biden uses higher rates of Material clauses than Putin to condemn Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and to announce a round of sanctions, vowing to impose a severe cost on Russia. In contrast, Putin uses higher rates of Relational and Mental clauses. The Relational clauses cast a negative light on NATO for their perceived hostile eastward expansion, while presenting Russia as a victim. The Mental clauses, on the other hand, allow Putin to express his inner positive motivations. These contrasting patterns in Transitivity highlight the differing rhetorical strategies employed by Biden and Putin. Indeed, Biden's Material clauses help him to position Russia as the aggressor, whereas Putin's Relational and Mental constructions serve him to shape a narrative where Russia is justified in its actions and to portray itself as a victim. These linguistic choices contribute to the respective leaders' efforts to legitimize their stance on the war.

An analysis of the metaphorical lexical cohesion employed by President Biden and President Putin reveals that both leaders utilize similar metaphorical themes to shape their own narratives regarding the Russian invasion of Ukraine, but use them differently. Through a deliberate use of collocationally related lexis contributing to some dominant metaphors, both politicians construct their own version of the events in Ukraine. They do so by subtly influencing how the audience perceives events (i.e., war as a full-scale invasion

of Ukraine or as an act of self-defense) and individuals (i.e., Putin as an aggressor or as a victim) by framing them in a particular light. The aim is to legitimate a war of unforeseen consequences. Concurrently, the American and Russian Presidents appeal to the emotions of their respective audiences in an attempt to persuade them of the veracity of their assertions.

When both Transitivity and lexical cohesion are combined, semantic amplification is achieved. Indeed, the interplay works overtly through lexicogrammatical choices and implicitly by shaping the audience's emotional response through metaphors that recast military actions in terms of defense and justice. This way, their interaction leads the audience to interpret war as, not only morally justified, but also as necessary. It seems, therefore, that Transitivity and lexical cohesion are deeply interrelated in legitimacy narratives. They contribute to the construction of legitimacy by shaping how Putin's and Biden's warfare actions and decisions are perceived by the audience and, thus, influencing their acceptance as legitimate.

The present study presents some limitations. One such limitation is that the speech by President Putin that was analyzed was a translation into English, rather than the original Russian. This may have influenced the results concerning Transitivity and metaphors. Ideally, analyses could be conducted on the original text. Additionally, the Pragglejaz Group's MIP was utilized for identifying metaphors. Future research could benefit from analyzing political speeches using the MIPUV (Steen et al., 2010). The MIPUV refines and expands on the original MIP, which could provide a basis for comparing the results obtained. Additionally, MIPUV includes specific criteria for identifying implicit metaphors (2010, p. 122), which politicians may use, as they are subtle and, thus, not directly apparent upon first hearing or reading them. This suggests that MIPUV could a suitable tool for analyzing political discourse.

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