

PUTIN AND BIDEN'S SPEECHES ON THE RUSSIAN INVOLVEMENT IN UKRAINE: DIALOGUE AND POLEMICS

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Abstract

Throughout the world's long tradition with war, it has often been raised as a question whether any war was worth waging, and if so, when and how? The reply to this philosophical maze of extreme convictions differs depending on whom you ask. In this present article, we tackled the ideological differences that lead to the discrepancies between answers given by Russia and the United States of America. For this, we took as primary sources the speeches of 24 February 2022 that Vladimir Putin and Joe Biden made on Russia's immediate involvement in Ukraine. We tried to look for dialogic clash over the choice of diction as a major ideological stance, relying on Michael Bakhtin's theory of dialogism and his notions of hidden polemics and parody to illustrate the condemnation of the war on one end and its justification on the other.

The aim was to extrapolate the themes tackled and their sequence by referring to the just war theory in its three divisions *jus ad bellum*, *jus in bello*, and *jus post bellum* which together structure the ancient practice of the art of war in its distinct phases. Biden and Putin heavily bid on these notions to give their viewpoints legal and ethical legitimacy and convince the international community of their just causes. Through this study, we found that the presidents stylized their speeches to follow each other's, giving responses in an implicit and tacit manner, which we uncovered as hidden polemics in their styles of diction. We have also discovered that both presidents evoked their nemesis' violation of the just war theory and defended their own just cause and respect for international regulation. This study falls within the field of discourse analysis that is a key element in understanding politics on the levels of presidential speeches.

Keywords: Biden, Dialogism, Jus ad bellum, Jus in bellum, Jus post bellum, polemics, Putin, Ukraine.

1. Introduction

The world as we know it is rapidly expanding, and with that come the inevitable currents of change to redraw once more, the poles of power for the new world order. As the United States of America has asserted itself at the top of the modern world, its "old adversaries" as described by former US president Barack Obama (2015), are taking strategic precautions against what the Russian president Vladimir Putin put as the United States' attempt to "squeeze, finish off and destroy [Russia] completely" (2022). The ongoing conflict between Ukraine and Russia has only exasperated the rate of accusations and speculations thrown in from both sides against each other.

<https://doi.org/10.62792/ut.filologjia.v12.i22-23.p2523>

This article then takes us into speeches given by the presidents of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin, and of the United States of America Joe Biden, on February 24, 2022 after Russia initiated a military operation in Ukraine. Many intellectuals have been on the fence about stating their clear stances on this Russian/Ukrainian conflict and the raging of western and Russian propagandas has propelled caution to either condemn or condone the warfare. The public faces of the two-sided conflict are the leaders of the concerned territorial bodies involved in it; albeit this includes the president of the USA Joe Biden at Ukraine's defense team alongside the Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy with whom he is fiercely against Russia's involvement.

Standing in two opposing camps, Biden and the president of Russia Vladimir Putin often exchange dialogue in their speeches that we find to be of the utmost significance in extrapolating both their motives and goals, not only for their respective countries, but also in what concerns the balance of powers in the modern world. Before starting our analysis, it is only appropriate to look back into such studies comparing Russian and American presidents' discourses. One, however, must read into the articles with discernment, in order to extract possible undercurrents of bias in aims for objective research. One instance of a comparative study between presidential speeches was done by the Russian Marina O. Chichina.

He conducted a linguistic comparative analysis of the speeches of president Putin and former US president Barak Obama. It is particularly relevant for taking the speeches delivered at the 70th United Nations General Assembly as its source material. Chichina uncovered the attitudes of the presidents when addressing the UN General Assembly in 2015, one year after the annexation of Crimea, with the help of Ukrainian separatists who voted in a referendum on joining Russia. Ukrainian and international communities both refuted the vote as undemocratic. Subsequently, both presidents of Russia and the USA gave allusions as to their stances on the political issues at hand.

The writer sought to conduct a semantic study based on the rhetorical techniques and vocabularies of the two leaders. He mainly focused on the dialectic of *we* versus *I*, and the manner in which the two presidents used them. It was shown throughout the analysis that the now-former American leader Obama utilized the personal pronouns *we* and *I*, 74 and 12 times respectively, in stark contrast with his Russian counterpart, who repeated the pronoun *we* a total of 12 times and omitted the pronoun *I* completely (Chichina, 2018). This, according to Chichina (2018), showed he USA's intentional self-presentation as a positive and humanitarian influence on the world by using verbs such as create, live, support, form, etc. whereas Putin's speech focused on being informative and argumentative as opposed to self-gratifying.

The war in Ukraine has engendered strong polarizing opinions from activists as well. Critics of the war include intellectuals from around the globe. In the West, we find Noam Chomsky, an American linguist and prominent political critic who is known for his anti-US positions. Chomsky is outspoken against the superpower's interference in many conflicts over the years, most infamously the Iraq War in 2003, observing that the world had turned "comical and grotesque" (2022). This was said in connection to his anti-interventionist affirmation that the US' foreign policy was "manufacturing future monsters" (2022).

Chomsky condemned the USA on issues related to the fates of many a nation through its provocation of Russia on multiple occasions, citing for example the Afghanistan war that was seminal in ending the Cold War. Russian intellectuals also participated in condemning the war on Ukraine. However, interestingly enough, Tatian Stanovaya comes from the opposing lane, condemning Russia for its geopolitical strategies that, in her opinion, are a distraction from the domestic issues of Russia. Upon her analysis of Putin's speech on February 21, 2022, she noted his total disregard for other politically relevant events in the favor of speaking about conducting Ukraine's "special military operation" (Putin, 2022).

In addition to this, she remarked the varied length of time he gave each of his segments, focusing mostly on assuaging Russians by promising social reforms and improvements, albeit limited. Her analysis further went on to mention Russia's focus on redirecting the general opinion towards outside geopolitical struggles that Putin was more and more reluctant to discuss in public, hence the shortness of his address about his strategic plans. This climate of ideological tension in the world has alerted us to the relevance of analyzing the Russian and American presidents' speeches side by side. Previous analyses of presidential speeches were often made with the aim of studying the rhetoric of their proclamations and the style each president uses to convey their ideas and persuade their people.

This article however, takes it one step further into a dialogic study of the presidents' hidden stances in order to gain a deeper understanding of the Ukrainian conflict as a porter of ideological beliefs each of these nations have on the war. The significance of this conflict then exceeds the mere geographical borders of the former Soviet Republic. Russia's quest for reclaiming its "historical territories," according to Putin (2022), mounts to the threat that NATO's expansion eastwards poses to the sovereignty of the very country.

Against this existential threat, Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24 of 2022, followed by the Russian president's address to the world in a speech in which he communicated many points and put the blame on the west's politicians. The US president Joe Biden (2022) soon replied in a speech of his own, one in which he singled out Putin and the military juntas of Russia as the main culprits of this "attack." This article will follow the sequence of the speeches, therefore starting with Putin's and following with Biden's responses to it to illustrate their intentional sequencing.

2. Methods

The aforementioned reviews highlight the growing interest in analyzing the speeches of state leaders. Our paper follows in the same tradition, employing for this purpose the idea of dialogism. As a concept, dialogism was developed by Russian philosopher and theorist Michael Bakhtin in his 1929's *Problems of Dostoevsky's art* in order to explain language and dialogue as a dynamic interaction that stretches beyond its mere grammatical construction of the word as a "dead, thing-like shell" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 355). For him, words and dialogues alike are multilayered given the inherent dialogical properties they possess.

This necessitates the presence of a multitude of voices "occupying *simultaneous but different space*" (Holquist, 2002, p. 21) from which emerges the relativity of meaning depending on perspective. *The Dialogic Imagination's* translator and author on Bakhtinian studies Michael Holquist further elaborates on this by affirming, "the meaning of whatever is observed is shaped by the place from which it is perceived" (2002, p. 21). Taking these notions into practice results in the explanation of language and dialogue (and monologue) as *events* built with a multitude of opinions, influences, on that is directed outwards, expressing various other standpoints through implementing various phenomena such as parody and stylization, and containing hidden polemics.

Now we have established the dialogical process of dictating the connectedness of words and speech to former or simultaneous speech forming a dialogue. However, this complex linguistic operation, in which everyone engages consciously or otherwise, contains hidden criticism or critiques of its adjacent. This is what Bakhtin called hidden polemics, and as such, "within the arena of almost every utterance an intense interaction and struggle between one's own and another's word is being waged, a process in which they oppose or dialogically interanimate each other" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 354).

The double-voicedness of speech allows this friction to happen, and similarly, an interlocutor may employ a *stylized* form to address his subject, although in this case "the author's attitude does not penetrate inside his speech -the author observes it from without"

(Bakhtin, 1984, p. 190), meaning that all the references one makes towards the other are implicit. Stylization is often mentioned with parody as these two techniques are employed together. Parody, unlike stylization that keeps out of the work it refers to, aims to “turn inside out” another’s speech (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 127), and “introduces into that discourse a semantic intention that is directly opposed to the original one” (1984, p. 193).

3. Results

Our source materials for this article, the speeches of Russian president Vladimir Putin and US president Joe Biden are examples of two political discourses loaded with dialogical interactions, going as far as sharing the same structure of their texts, in an aim to answer each other’s propositions, sanctions, and threats without directly addressing the other. Of course, as the speeches are presidential, one anticipates this kind of interaction, especially between the Russian Federation and the United States of America, who are historical opponents still engaged in modern-day geopolitical conflicts. The presidents Putin and Biden gave their speeches on the same issues, employing figures of speech and sequence of ideas that best express their stances.

The speeches given on 24 February 2022 uncovered Bakhtinian dialogism when we compared the heads of states’ descriptions of the same conflict. Standing on opposing lanes, the speeches opened with Putin calling the intervention in Ukraine a “special military operation” (Putin, 2022) whereas Biden considered it “a premeditated attack, a brutal assault” (Biden, 2022). Their rhetorical choices are at odds, and so are their ideological stances, and their target audiences. In light of their careful consideration of their word choices, the presidents make the most of the meanings that words hold to communicate with different types of audience in a single speech. Doing so requires the implementation of the aforementioned dialogic discourse and thus, Putin and Biden use the double-voicedness of utterance to convey their messages.

In this manner, our study has uncovered a tapestry of techniques the presidents employed to legitimize their attitudes towards the Russian involvement in Ukraine, in ways that do not directly position the country as a playground for power bargains between the eastern and western poles, especially given America’s sponsoring of NATO and Russia’s annexation of Ukrainian territories. Their speeches followed mostly the sequence of the just war doctrine in its three parts.

We have followed traditional and modern theories of the war to illustrate the presidents’ bids for ethical high ground, and argue for their moral justifications by resorting to mentions of negotiation attempts and just cause proclamations that together with other criteria satisfy *jus ad bellum* or the right to wage war. As their speeches went on, accusations flared from both sides attacking each other’s good faiths, their motives, and eventual goals in this on-going war, that encompassed *jus in bello* and *jus post bellum*.

4. Discussion and conclusion

In this part, we are going to discuss the minutiae of the expressions of our primary sources, relying both on Bakhtinian dialogism as well as a mention of the just war doctrine to make sense of the succession of the presidents’ ideas. The Russian leader (2022) addressed his televised speech to “dear citizens of Russia and friends,” and conducted his 28-minute speech in segments each tackling a specific point, additionally calling out the “irresponsible politicians of the West.” Biden (2022) on the other hand, gave a response speech at a media conference that spanned 14 minutes, exactly half the duration of Putin’s. Biden’s speech specifically targeted “the military junta” of Russia and Putin himself, calling him “an aggressor.” In *Dialogism: Bakhtin and his world*, Michael Holquist talked about perspective in Bakhtin’s dialogism, making an analogy to Albert Einstein’s theory of relativity, considering that an object only exists in relation to another, hence the inherent dialogism of all things.

The existence of different perceptions of a single event occurs when one simply changes their position; therefore, moving from the Western pole to the Russian significantly alters the direction of blame that each president cast on the other. It is inevitable that such contradictions would arise from the two points of view. Biden followed a similar structure to Putin's speech, and throughout the addresses, both presidents condemned each other's stances. Putin vehemently attacked the hegemony that the west was trying to impose on the traditions of Russia as well as on its allies, expressing worry that the balance of power in post-WWII world is compromised.

Hegemonic currents and brute force alike sprouting from powerful countries or empires have always been perpetuated throughout modern history, with Putin citing for instance Belgrade, Libya, Syria, and Iraq. Kazakhstan was another territory the US tried to use to get to Russia, according to Russian president, consolidating his argument of the historical precedents of the effects of US' foreign policies. The Russian leader extensively went over the involvement of the USA in the world, and mentioned its "perversion of all UN Security Council's decisions," with such interferences led to "international terrorism and extremism" (Putin, 2022). Biden on his part referred to Russia's attempt to establish two republics on Ukrainian soil in 2014 as "a flagrant violation of international law" (Biden, 2022).

Just war theory

The Ukraine situation is sensitive for many reasons; its history with the USSR, its geopolitical position, the eagerness of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) for Ukraine to join the alliance, and America's interests in the region going as far back as the Cold War. All of these parameters have made Ukraine a figurative and literal battleground for power and control. In them, we see the difficulty of attributing moral high grounds to any of the parties involved, which made us reach for established ethical laws of war, mainly the theories that constitute a just war in its three divisions: *jus ad bellum*, *jus in bello* and *jus post bellum*.

These expressions refer to just war regulations before, during, and after the military engagement respectively. These laws encompass authorities' right to conduct as well as soldiers' moral responsibility in war. Accounts on the righteousness of war in any situation however, is contested by pacifists who believe that there are always non-violent ways of settling conflict, thus condemning the war in Ukraine by principle. However, if one were to tackle traditional and modern theories of just war, they would find this discussion to be more nuanced because of the body of ethics that governs this practice even before it begins.

Presidents Putin and Biden are well aware of these rules, which is why they bid heavily on them in their speeches. *Jus ad bellum*, or the right to wage war, gives specific conditions of morally required conduct that a state or a competent body of authority must exhaust before declaring military action. Let us take Saint Augustine's views on this matter, as he is a classical philosopher who wrote about the justifications of war, based them on religious views, and often cited stories from the Bible as illustrations. He gave reasons as to why a war may be morally admissible –or even necessary– such as divine will and command, and punishment of evil, based whether on human or divine authorization.

The concept of punishing evil is somewhat ambiguous, however, which led American moral philosopher Jeff McMahan to cite Hugo Grotius' explanation in his article "*Just cause for war*" that "[St. Augustine] has taken the word avenge in a general sense of removing and preventing, as well as punishing aggressions" (Grotius as cited in McMahan, p. 8, 2005). McMahan, as a modern just war theorist, expanded on what constitutes one, giving six conditions that must be met before a competent authority may resort to violence. These conditions are "just cause, competent authority, right intention, reasonable hope of success, necessity, and proportionality," (McMahan, 2005, p. 4) of whom he said were invalid if the just cause was not present.

In today's international law, very few reasons constitute enough cause to wage a war, and those still permissible are self-defense, prevention of genocide, or unavoidable threat. Putin started his speech with a justification for his frustration with the West: NATO's expansion eastward left him no choice, and despite his attempts to negotiate, he was met with "cynical deception and lies" (Putin, 2022). He assured his listeners that he had been reaching out to the West for thirty years, most recently in December 2021 on the importance of ensuring security by limiting NATO's expansion.

Biden on the other hand expressed his willingness to reach peaceful understanding with Russia, but its president "rejected every good faith effort... through dialogue" to avoid armed conflict that causes human suffering (Biden, 2022). These declarations of possessing a rationale that prioritizes pacifist means were made in accordance with the requirement of *jus ad bellum*, for it is required, by the just war tradition that war be the last resort after the exhaustion of other means such as negotiation. This, then, in addition to Putin's justifications (or motives, according to Biden) are what incited the war.

Russian and American leaders employed in their speeches justifications for their ideological stances, and in them, not only was there just war-inspired rhetoric, but also parodic undertones, given that each was trying to bring out the true meaning in their opponents' untrue statements that the parodies tried to expose. The motives that Russian president Putin gave were not laid flat before the world, instead, he used historical instances to showcase that the country hailed as a superpower was in fact "an empire of lies" (Putin, 2022). He also criticized the media as a propaganda machine that the USA used to present a sham to the world about the presence of chemical weapons in Iraq.

Biden on his part brought up the recent history of Russia, and made comments about Ukrainian people's determination to be free, while also calling into attention "baseless and outlandish" claims against Ukraine without evidence (Biden, 2022). He also warned about Russian media outlets being used to "claim success for its military operation against a made-up threat" (Biden, 2022). Before the fall of the USSR in 1991, Ukraine was part of the Soviet Union. In fact, its history with Russia goes even further into the Russian Empire that was overtaken by the Bolsheviks in 1922.

However, because of the communist reign in the USSR, Ukraine suffered from a famine (1932-1933) that some historians claimed to have been a deliberate move on the part of Joseph Stalin to eradicate the Ukrainian counter-revolution and suppress any ideas of an independent Ukraine. According to Historian Anne Applebaum, "the idea of an independent Ukraine was a challenge to central Soviet power that could potentially undermine the Soviet state" (2017). This proved true, as it has been the case after the independence of Ukraine in 1991, which propelled the eventual dissolution of the USSR.

Taking this snapshot of history into the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, one can draw a link tracing this hostility back to the reign of Stalin. In other words, the possibility of Ukraine allying with anti-Russian countries instantly makes it a threat. When Putin addressed his people on February 24, 2022, therefore, he made an appeal to the Ukrainians to understand that they were a "single whole." He also justified his endorsement of the creation of the Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic, and said it was a matter of support for them who had nowhere else to turn but their "homeland" (Putin, 2022).

Another reason why Putin engaged in war with Ukraine is to "protect" the people of the Donbas region from Ukrainian violence. The Ukrainian government would not have forgiven these regions for their decision, said Putin, hence he felt a duty towards them to ensure their protection as they rejoined their historical "motherland" (Putin, 2022). As the Russian president embedded his speech with historical events, he also reminded the people of the dangers of delaying war on Ukraine as Russia did in 1941. In that time, Nazi Germany, which was stopped by a counterattack "at a colossal cost," attacked Russia (Putin, 2022).

Reminding the Russian people of the tragedies of the past invokes a sense of warning against repeating the same mistakes, filling his speech with cautionary tales and a didactic undertone. These last paragraphs' snippets on the United States, Ukraine, and Russia contain all the motivations that Putin employed in his speech, justifying the war. In the just war tradition, self-defense is admissible to wage a war, so is defense against genocide in other countries, as well as protection against potential threats to the sovereignty of a state. In his construction of events, we find that the Russian president emphasized the three causes to strengthen his argument the necessity of involvement in Ukraine.

The first one is geopolitical, having to do with the consequences that NATO's approaching Russian borders could entail. Ukraine being positioned strategically in Europe makes the possibility of stationing NATO infrastructures in Ukraine, after those of Warsaw, a direct threat. The second reason deals with post-WWII power equilibrium. The events of the 1990s redivided the world, thereupon allowing the United States to extend its influence as a "kind of modern form of absolutism" whose decisions are detrimental even to its allies (Putin, 2022). Putin, despite his admission of its strength, however, still believes in the balance of power in the world.

He seeks therefore to stop the unilateral influence of America in multiple domains, such as its spread of "pseudo-values" (2022), as well as its constant blackmail of Russia. The third reason has to do with the protection of the Republics of Donetsk and Luhansk from potential attacks by Ukraine. These causes are Putin's justifications for war. He made sure to include all three categories of the just war causes to persuade the international community of its legitimacy. On the other spectrum of the conflict, however, Joe Biden organized his conference and speech specifically to debunk the former's arguments. Spanning half the time of Putin's speech, Biden went through why he condemned the war on Ukraine, starting his speech by a proclamation that the Russian attack was "without provocation, without justification, without necessity" (Biden, 2022) therein refuting all of Putin's rationalizations for the war.

He then elaborated on each idea. We will go into his arguments following the sequence of his initial statement, starting with an explanation of what he meant by provocation. The word refers to any action or word used to incite a reaction. Biden denied any action of such nature, specifically in what relates to Russia's claim that "Ukraine committed genocide –without any evidence," insisting that "Putin chose this war" (Biden, 2022). Biden's second accusation of the Russian attack on Ukraine was on basis that it had no justification, nor any viable reason that makes it permissible to start a war. Biden questioned Putin by reframing the latter's bid for security by affirming that what Putin really wanted was empire.

The word empire figured in the speeches of both presidents, with Russia calling America "the empire of lies" (Putin, 2022) and America calling out Russian president for plans of building an empire again. This intersects a stylized technique in their utterances by following each other's patterns of presenting their ideas. But it went as far as parody by highlighting aspects in each other that they mutually deemed laughable, or at least very wrong. Biden also called the war on Ukraine a "threat to world peace" (Biden, 2022) thus, giving a dark reading for Putin's version of the future. The last expression the US president employed to discredit Putin's justification for war was "without necessity" (Biden, 2022).

Necessity here means last resort, once all good faith efforts fail, which he insisted was not the case. In addition to that, according to McMahan, "the requirement [of necessity] demands that war be a necessary means of achieving the just cause" (McMahan, 2005, p. 5), therefore, when Biden called the Ukraine war "a war without a cause" (Biden, 2022), it immediately qualified the war as unnecessary for there can't be a necessary war without a just cause. According to Biden, Putin seeks more power by "bullying Russia's neighbors," whereas "America stands up to bullies" (Biden, 2022), hence his announcement of troop deployment to NATO's eastern Allies to protect their borders and strengthen the Alliance.

Here, in his expression, we see a use of the word *bully* twice to describe the United States' enemies, in order to give the country a look of moral high ground in the face of threats or counter-hegemonic currents. The internal dialogism of this word encapsulates Bakhtin's view of dialogue as receptive and anticipative of a response, rendering this expression of *bully* a tool used to evoke positive reactions from the world about America's willingness to protect from bullies. Biden also referred to the UN charter to validate his cause. He called out the "flagrant violation of international law" (Biden, 2022) that Putin engaged in by creating Luhansk and Donetsk republics, even after Putin framed this process within Article 1 of the UN charter of the right to self-determination.

Biden evoked regulation once more to maintain the NATO's right to defend itself and its allies based on Article 5 of NATO that states an attack on one is an attack on all, raising the tone about any further ambition of territory. This was in response to Putin conjuring up international laws to declare that his decision to conduct "a special military operation" (Putin, 2022) in Ukraine was in accordance with UN Charter's Article 51 of Part 7. Once the war began, *jus ad bellum* expired in favor of *jus in bellu*, and although combatants are conferred to follow their authorities' commands to fight and kill, there are those by whose side stands the just cause, and those who are fighting on the side of the country that may not possess a moral justification for the war.

In modern theories of just war, as for instance in the writings of Michael Walzer, special emphasis is given to the personal aspect of war, and argues against realism in it, as it involves real people and not just abstract notions. Thus, soldiers who participate in an unjust war might be exempt from moral retribution but that does not remove their responsibility for their actions. This is because soldiers in any war are responsible for adhering to *jus in bellu* conduct, which is a body of laws restricting the limits of power usage in the war. Walzer sums this up by saying "when soldiers fight freely, choosing one another as enemies and designing their own battles, their war is not a crime; when they fight without freedom, their war is not their crime" (Walzer, p. 37, 1977).

Russian president appealed personally to the military personnel of the armed forces of Ukraine, urging them not to fight a war sponsored by "neo-Nazis" reminding them that their oath of allegiance is for the Ukrainian people and "not to the anti-people junta that ... mocks these same people" (Putin, 2022). He also urged all servicemen to surrender, promising them a safe return to their homes. This is in accord with a *jus in bellu* rule that Putin recognized in the fight. Biden on the other hand, said that his troops would not be directly engaging in the war although intervention is not forbidden by *jus in bellu* convention, except when it would lead to an unnecessary escalation in the seriousness of the conflict, in this case, since the Russian president warned against any meddling.

Putin addressed his people to remind them of unity and flexibility to change as factors for moving forward. His American counterpart responded by imposing sanctions "designed ... to maximize the long-term impact on Russia," bringing up "Russian elites and their families" whom he was sanctioning as a consequence of the war, affirming that "people who personally gain from the Kremlin's policies should share in the pain" (Biden, 2022). Biden had in mind imposing economic sanctions and restrictions by joining hands with the European Union and the members of the G7 to impair Russia's imports and its ability to trade in Dollars.

The goal was to block major Russian banks and to freeze billions of their assets in order to strike blows to Russia's ability to compete internationally in high-tech economy. Russia had declared it was already assessing these threats "extremely realistically" and that it considered them as "blackmail" (Putin, 2022). Despite these identified threats, Putin's speech excluded talk about his strategic plans to push back. It focused mostly on historical precedents of US hostility, and made allusions to the harm that Russia was capable of inflicting on the West, saying that the state was "one of the most powerful nuclear powers in the world" (Putin, 2022).

Biden on the other hand, dedicated the longest portion in his speech to elaborate on the economic sanctions and their foreseeable affects on the Russian economy, thereby tacitly attempting to intimidate Russia, in addition to his response to Putin's nuclear threats by a readiness of America and its allies to "oppose with every tool of [their] considerable power" (Biden, 2022). Such utterances are filled with hidden polemics intended to target their respective opponents without jeopardizing the overall direction of their speeches or derail them from their main points. The state of the war declared is the reason why the states exchange threats and accusations. However, as *jus in bellu* requires, its conduct must respect the lawful rules laid out by just war theorists such as Saint Augustine and Michael Walzer.

The former stated that war's purpose is not fighting for its own sake, but the achievement of peace (Augustine, 426 AD), and Walzer advocated for a "human rights doctrine" (Walzer, 1977, p. xxiv) in determining the limits of military activity and regulating the extents to which it can be taken. This concerns the moral rules of fighting until the just cause is achieved by which time the war should end. *Jus post bellum* practices complete the *jus in bellu* conduct in this regard, as it is the point at which the initial goals of the military intervention are realized. In the case of Ukraine and Russia, objectives have been set for each party's post-war agenda. Putin thus clarified his: first for the protection of the Donbas region and its people from genocide, then to bring to justice the criminals who have perpetuated crimes against civilians, through means of "demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine" (Putin, 2022).

These aims fall within the post-war theory's accepted practices, particularly with the expression of the Russian president of no intention to occupy Ukrainian territories after achieving his goals. On another note, he attacked the USA's foreign policy, insisting that its *post-bellum* effects show records of terrorism, illustrating it with the exodus of North-African migration to Europe caused with the intervention in Libya. Biden, in his response to these claims, stated his support for democracy, advocating for a transparent world where others' transgressions are declassified and debunked as "false pretexts" and cover-ups (Biden, 2022). In addition to this, he described Putin's vision for the future as sinister and autocratic.

His economic sanctions had for a shared goal, with his allied countries, the long-term damaging of Russian economy and its isolation from international markets, in order to cripple Russia and avoid future threats. These clashing discourses are often made in a double-voiced manner, meaning, "the individual manner in which a person structures his own speech is determined to a significant degree by his peculiar awareness of another's words, and by his means for reacting to them" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 196). This unspoken construction of one's words to object the other is the Bakhtinian dialogism, with many of its other interactive techniques, such as stylization and parody.

Biden's speech for example was written to follow the same sequence of ideas as Putin's, meanwhile, they both evoke each other's failures as parody. What is most interesting are the opposing conclusions both presidents reached, starting from the same outwardly expressed intention of desiring peace. Their conclusions are opposites however, because of the history of aggression in which both countries participated. Additionally, we see that the just war theory with its modern components was appropriated by the two presidents in completely different ways. Whilst Putin finds the intervention a necessary means to protect Russia's sovereignty, Biden sees in it a flagrant violation and unprovoked attack.

The just cause is therefore disputed amongst the two, although they both claim to abide by this theory. The actions of NATO expanding eastwards as a just or unjust cause is also disputed by the presidents. Where one believes it protects their allies, the other finds it to be an existential threat. This underscores the vantage points from where they tackle their narratives. This Rashomon effect stems from Swanson's et al. remark that "narratives are often crafted with the explicit goal to have an emotional impact on the reader, sometimes more so than they are to convey a specific sequence of events" (Swanson et al., 2017, p. 108).

Hence, Putin and Biden's statements are self-preserving, without observing objective storytelling in their speeches. Vladimir Putin is known to shorten his speeches on strategic plans he sets and the Kremlin's agendas, especially when it comes to the involvement in Ukraine. The latter being backed by the USA turned the conflict into the iteration of previous Russian prime minister Dmitry Medvedev, calling this era's conflicts between the former poles of powers "a new cold war" (Medvedev, as cited by Marcus, 2016). It is therefore understandable that Biden and the white house are involved first hand in the Ukraine-Russia conflict by backing Zelensky with military technology and support.

In fact, according to the American think tank Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), the United States has devoted more than \$175 billion since 2022 to fund Ukraine and its troops. It is notable however, that the United States has not extended its aid into sending soldiers to fight in-situ. President Biden in his address on February 24th, 2022 extensively elaborated on the effects that US aids will have on tilting the balance of power in the west's favor, and in addition to the military support. The president also spoke of sanctions he set against "Putin and his country" and the purported damage it will cause Russian economy.

On the other end of the conflict, and as we have already established that it exceeds Ukraine and Russia into a renewed polarity struggle, it is pertinent to recapitulate Putin's address to his people, and his main points of focus; his speech incorporates historical rhetoric, whereby he returned to American foreign policy and its effects on the world in the places in which it intervened. The Russian president was against the United States' policies and its manner of resulting in "bloody, unhealed wounds." This strong language was justified both by the USA's immediate actions and the long-term consequences of such interventions.

Historically, Putin referred to many countries, inter alia, Syria and Iraq, accusing the United States of being responsible for the creation of "ulcers of international terrorism and extremism." His outlook on the state of world post-American meddling allowed him to qualify the United States as an "empire of lies," bringing about many examples where wars were justified by press conferences announcing publicly whatever "hoax" suited their agenda. The Ukraine-Russia conflict as is recognized by now, exceeds the borders of the two nations, going as far as upsetting international relations at large, especially between Russia and the United States of America who have not yet overcome the ideological differences of the Cold War.

The two poles maintain their bids for justice and truth, democracy and human rights, and put them in the closing statements of their speeches on the day of February 24, 2022 as a summary for their main points, to remind the world once more of their priorities in this struggle. What remains to be said about the speeches of presidents Putin and Biden is their willingness to oppose the other's perceived menaces with all their might. This article has attempted to extract the interrelated rhetoric of Russian president Vladimir Putin and US president Joe Biden, relying on Bakhtin's dialogism, in order to extract both the nuanced and overt points of clash in their speeches. We have referred to the just war tradition in its three parts, *jus ad bellum*, *jus in bello*, and *just post bellum* to frame the structure of the discourses of Putin and Biden within this tradition the Bakhtinian analysis allowed us to show that the word choice and its variation depends primarily on the ideological stance.

As the conflict is still ongoing in Ukraine, analyzing presidential speeches is essential to understanding the currents of thought that drive governments' policies. Therefore, the analytical discourse we have discussed in this present article ascertains a method that is pertinent to understanding the dialogic points of connectedness to multiple implicit references, as we have come to find out. The result that imposed itself was that loud echo often comes from subtleties in the choice of diction. This goes to show the importance of standing at a distance from any political speech, and thus, the Bakhtinian dialogism gets to be used to have a well-rounded discourse analysis.

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