When Diplomats Go MAD: How the Crisis Framing of Ministries of Foreign Affairs Results in Mutually Assured Delegitimization

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Abstract

This study argues that scholars lack an adequate conceptualization of the strategic use of social media framing by Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFAs) during crises. As a theoretical starting point, this article employs the concept of soft disempowerment to suggest that MFAs may use online framing to limit an adversary's range of possible actions during a crisis by depicting that adversary as violating norms and values deemed desirable by the international community. Next, the article introduces the concept of mutually assured delegitimization (MAD), which suggests that actors may call into question one another's adherence with certain norms and values during crises, which results in the mutual depletion of soft power resources. Importantly, this article proposes a novel, methodological approach for the analysis of individual tweets during crises. To illustrate its methodological and conceptual innovations, the study analyzes tweets published by the MFAs of the United States (US) and Russia during the Crimea crisis and demonstrates that both MFAs used Twitter to negatively frame each other by calling their morals into question, which resulted in MAD.

Key words: Crisis Management, Public Diplomacy, Crimea Crisis, Digital Diplomacy, Soft Power, Soft Disempowerment

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Introduction

For many decades, studies on diplomacy have focused on international crisis management. A review of the existing literature suggests that crises are contradictory by nature as they are unique and generic at the same time. Indeed, all crises share certain features, such as high levels of uncertainty, increased probabilities of military altercations, decision making under time constraints, and an escalatory momentum known as Crisis Slide (Bell, 1971; Boin et al., 2016; Cahill, 1996; Garrison, 2001; Richardson, 1988). Moreover, crises are characterized by intense competitions within governments as well as collective bargaining between decision makers (Allison & Zelikow, 1999). Finally, cognitive limitations impact all crises given the propensity of leaders to stereotype crises and treat novel situations as more familiar ones (Boin et al., 2016).

However, crises are also distinctive. The uniqueness of crises stems from a range of variables, such as the shared history of opposing countries; their relative balance of military power; ethnic ties that can bind countries; economic interdependence; and membership in military alliances. Each factor influences a crisis, as do the characters of national leaders (Acuto, 2011; Dafoe et al., 2021; Diehl et al., 1996; Freedman, 2014).

During crises, diplomats are tasked with three objectives, namely, justifying and legitimizing state action; rallying international support for state action; and, most importantly, limiting an adversary's range of possible actions and ensuring that one's country enjoys a diverse range of actions at the same time (Acuto, 2011; Ish-Shalom, 2015). For instance, the United States (US) could have responded to the 2014 annexation of Crimea by Russia through various actions, such as the expulsion of Russian diplomats from the US; recalling the US Ambassador to Moscow for *consultations*; imposing financial sanctions on Russia; or mobilizing the troops of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) along the Crimean border.

Advancements in information and communication technologies (ICTs) have created new means through which diplomats obtain the aforementioned goals. This article draws attention to the social media use of Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFAs) during international crises for two main reasons. First, individuals worldwide now turn to social media to learn about events shaping their world, including crises (Pew, 2018; 2020). Second, diplomats now also turn to social media to narrate crises in the hopes of rallying support from social media users for state policies (Bjola & Jiang, 2015; Seib 2012; 2016). In this sense, social media sites may be conceptualized as competitive arenas in which countries vie over the attention and support of online publics (Hayden, 2012).

This study examined the Twitter use of two MFAs during the Crimea crisis of 2014. It assumed that both the Russian and the US MFAs used Twitter to frame each other's country as violating accepted norms and values, possibly limiting each other's range of possible actions. Empirically, the study found that both MFAs negatively framed each other's country on Twitter by calling their morals into question. Theoretically, the study conceptualized such

Twitter activities through the concept of mutually assured delegitimization (MAD), by stating that if two states base their online framing on norms and values, then they may mutually deplete each other's soft power resources, which results in a lose–lose outcome. Methodologically, the study developed a unique model for analyzing individual tweets and demonstrated how these can include entire foreign policy frames. This aspect is important, because the majority of Twitter users will only encounter individual MFA tweets as they scroll through their social media feed. Notably, this is an exploratory study that aims to offer scholars a new methodology and a new theoretical model for analyzing MFAs' use of social media during crises. Toward this end, this study adapts offline framing methodologies to the online realm while using these methodologies to analyze all tweets published by the US State Department and the Russian MFA before and after the eruption of the 2014 Crimea crisis.

Literature Review and Theoretical Prism

Digitalization of Crisis Management

The past decade has witnessed the accelerated digitalization of diplomacy (Cull 2018; Hayden, 2012; Xiguang & Jing, 2010). Over the past 10 years, MFAs have launched virtual embassies, created digital outreach teams, designed smartphone applications, and established big data units tasked with obstructing disinformation campaigns (Khatib et al., 2012; Manor, 2019; Metzgar, 2012; The Economic Times, 2013). Diplomats have especially taken to social media (Collins et al., 2019), such that, currently, 90% of UN member states are estimated to have established some form of social media presence (Bjola, 2019).

The digital diplomacy corpus suggests that norms and values play a central role in the social media activities of MFAs. For instance, virtual embassies are frequently used to identify the values that shape the foreign policies of a state. The U.S. Virtual Embassy to Iran and Palestine's Facebook Embassy to Israel are both used to overcome lack of bilateral ties and the absence of brick and mortar embassies (Metzgar, 2012). Importantly, both embassies employ social media to identify the values to which their countries adhere and demonstrate how these values shape foreign policies. For instance, Manor and Holmes (2018) found that more than 25% of the Facebook posts of the Palestinian Embassy depicted the future Palestinian state as a liberal democracy that promotes the rights of minorities and women. This action may be construed as an attempt to align the future values of Palestine with those adhered to by Israel, which frequently brands itself as the only democracy in the Middle East (Avraham, 2009).

Moreover, MFAs rely on norms and values to manage the image of their nation (Bjola & Holmes, 2015). When evaluating the digital activities of the US State Department, Manor and Segev (2015) found that the Obama State Department used Facebook to portray America as an economically responsible superpower guided by democratic values and committed to building a meaningful relationship with the Muslim world. Similarly, Natarajan (2014) evaluated the social media use of Indian diplomats to depict India as a culturally diverse *soft*

power, whereas Manor investigated the Twitter use of Poland to distance itself from the atrocities of the Holocaust and associate itself with the value of tolerance (Manor, 2019; Natarajan, 2014). These findings suggest that MFAs currently use social media to demonstrate adherence to certain values and norms, such as diversity and multi-culturalism.

Lastly, diplomats invoke normative arguments when narrating events online. As Seib (2012) noted, the emergence of social media has led to a form of *real-time diplomacy*, in which diplomats narrate global events as they unfold on the ground (Zeitzoff, 2017). This practice has been forced on MFAs in the hopes of competing with the media's depiction of events (Causey & Howard, 2013). Thus, real-time diplomacy is a means through which diplomats hope to shape public perceptions of events and rally support for the policies and actions of their country. Here too norms play an important role. For instance, the Obama Administration used Twitter to depict the 2015 Iran nuclear negotiations as part of America's newfound commitment to engage with the Muslim world in dialogue instead of force (Duncombe, 2017; Wright, 2019). The United Kingdom's Foreign Office has depicted the Syrian Civil War as a humanitarian tragedy instead of a geo-political conflict, whereas the Russian MFA has depicted the present Ukrainian government as a neo-fascist administration that promotes Russia-phobic policies (Millet, 2013; NATO Strategic Communications [StratCom], 2014; Pruce, 2018).

Seib (2016) noted that countries might opt to offer contradictory depictions of the same event. For instance, while the Israeli MFA framed the 2015 Iran nuclear agreement as the equivalent of Hitler's appeasement in 1938, the State Department framed it as a triumph of dialogue. As Hayden (2012) concluded, social media are competitive framing environments, in which various actors vie for audience attention. This assertion echoes the conceptualization of Van Ham (2013) of framing as a competitive process in which countries endeavor to promote a specific, normative framework. However, Van Ham also asserts that social power denotes the use of frames to promote norms and values that facilitate or constrain state action. Thus, an imperative question emerges: "Do diplomats currently use social media to wield social power during crises?" This could be achieved by framing events and actors through normative frameworks and by emphasizing how an adversary's actions fail to adhere to the values embraced by the international community.

Framing as Power

Scholars of Diplomacy argued that power lies in the ability to change the behavior of other states (Khong, 2019). When examining the function of power in the 21st century, Nye (1990; 2004; 2021) famously distinguished between soft (co-optive power) and hard (coercive power). Although soft and hard power are used to alter the behavior of other states, hard power is reliant on the military strength and financial prowess of a country, whereas soft power rests on the ideology, culture, and institutions of a country.

Norms and values play a pivotal role in Nye's (1990; 2004) conceptualization of soft power. In 1990, Nye stated that, "When ideals are an important source of power, the classic

distinction between realpolitik and liberalism becomes blurred. The realist who focuses only on the balance of hard power will miss the power of transnational ideas." Furthermore, soft power is "the ability of a country to structure a situation so that other countries develop preferences or define their interests in ways consistent with its own" (Nye, 1990). Nye (2004) and Layne (2018) conclude that institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization, exemplify US soft power, because both promote free market capitalism, which forces other states to adopt American ideals (Layne, 2018).

Additionally, Nye (2021) asserts that power lies in the ability to set the political agenda and create a framework for international debate that promotes the preferences of a country. Thus, the normative dimension of power lies in determining the issues discussed by countries and the way in which issued are discussed. For instance, international issues may be discussed through a normative framework that supports one set of ideals (e.g., protection of journalists) but opposes another (e.g., nuclear proliferation). By shaping normative frameworks, countries can ultimately legitimize their use of force. Such legitimization is crucial during an international crisis, which sees a credible threat to the interests of a country (Allison & Zelikow, 1999; Bell, 1971). As scholars suggested, if a country can make its power seem legitimate in the eyes of others, then it will encounter less resistance to its foreign policies, including the use of hard power (Quelch & Jocz, 2009).

Building on the works of Nye (2004), Van Ham (2013) further explores the normative dimension of power by arguing that power is now wielded through the articulation of norms and values. Van Ham introduces the concept of social power and defines it as the ability to set standards and create norms and values deemed legitimate and desirable without resorting to measures such as coercion or payment (Van Ham, 2013). Values are central to the exercise of power, because countries cannot be viewed as contradicting accepted norms and values (Fedotov, 2015). As Natarajan (2014) proposed, India currently portrays itself as an ethnically diverse democracy given the need to adhere to the values of a Western liberal order. Moreover, acting on behalf of certain values or norms legitimizes the exercise of force. Quelch and Jocz (2009) asserted that countries viewed as promoting the values of human rights or peacekeeping may find it easier to implement their foreign policies, including military interventions.

However, the definition of *what* is desirable in the international community is in a constant flux (Clarke, 2003). Therefore, wielding social power is dependent on defining those values and norms to which countries should adhere. Thus, countries may be able to use social power to facilitate their actions or to constrain those of another. By portraying their policies as consistent with accepted values, countries may expand their range of possible actions during crises. Conversely, by portraying an actor's disregard for accepted values, countries may limit the range of possible actions of an adversary.

According to Van Ham (2013), countries can define norms and values through frames, or, mental structures that shape one's worldview. At any given moment, however, several states may endeavor to define that which is desirable. Thus, Van Ham (2013) conceptualizes

framing as a competition in which the wielders of social power intend to convince audiences that their interpretation of world events is correct. Currently, these competitions also take shape on social media.

In line with the conceptualization of power by Nye and Van Ham, Brannagan and Giulianotti (2015) introduce the concept of soft disempowerment, which refers to "actions, inactions and/or policies of a state that ultimately upset, offend or alienate others, leading to a loss of credibility and attractiveness" (pp. 1152-1153). Disempowerment may occur through two channels. First, states may be accused of contravening international laws and rules. According to Brannagan and Giulianotti, such accusations tend to be levied by the media. As an example, they illustrate how Qatar's soft power achievement of hosting a major sporting event was overshadowed by press coverage of possible bribes used by Qatar to host the World Cup. Second, soft disempowerment may also occur when countries are accused of failing to uphold international conventions or standards on global development in various areas, such as climate, humanitarianism, or promoting human rights. In this regard, non-government organizations (NGOs) may be the ones to discredit a country as was the case when NGOs highlighted the inhumane treatment of migrant workers in Qatar. Both routes to disempowerment pass through normative frameworks, such as laws, rules, and accepted conventions.

During a crisis, soft disempowerment may be strategically used by two actors involved in a crisis. Through social media, both actors may frame each other as violating laws and conventions as they compete for the support of digital publics. Digital diplomacy studies have begun to explore MFA framing during crises.

Crises, Values, and Digital Diplomacy

Previous studies in the field of digital diplomacy suggest that states use social media during crises to justify their actions and to call the morality of an adversary into question. For instance, Manor and Crilley (2018) analyzed the 2014 Gaza War and found that the Israeli MFA used Twitter to create moral dichotomies. While the Israeli MFA portrayed Hamas as an extension of Daesh and accused it of committing war crimes by firing at civilians, Israel was depicted as "taking the moral highroad" by agreeing to respect humanitarian windows; by abiding by temporary ceasefires; and treating wounded Palestinians in field hospitals, which were opened near the Gaza border. Moreover, Manor and Crilley found that while the Israeli MFA framed Hamas as firing at innocent children and celebrating the death of civilian *martyrs*, Israel was depicted as aborting military operations that may endanger Palestinian citizens. The disparity between these depictions created a moral contrast between Israel and the Western values of celebrating life with extremist values of celebrating death.

Manor and Crilley (2018) effectively demonstrated the manner in which norms and values facilitate or constrain state action through social power. For if Hamas is an extension of Daesh, then Israel surely holds a moral obligation to combat Hamas, similar to the moral obligation of the west to defeat Daesh. Moreover, if Hamas is akin to Daesh, then surely Hamas's rocket fire at Israel should be denounced internationally as an act of terror.

Furthermore, Manor and Crilley (2018) examined the use of Twitter by the Global Coalition Against Daesh. The authors found that digital diplomacy activities focused on creating normative dichotomies. While Daesh was depicted as a brutal entity that enacts oppressive regimes that undermine human rights across its territories, the Coalition was portrayed as enabling refugees to return home and rebuild their communities. Images shared on Twitter by the Coalition either alluded to the death and destruction caused by Daesh or captured children returning to schools in Coalition-held areas. Finally, studies on digital diplomacy have also examined how non-state actors frame crises on social media with Jones and Mattiacci (2019) highlighting the social media use of rebel groups to accuse governments of committing atrocities and disregarding international law.

The aforementioned studies demonstrate that during crises, states use social media to create normative frameworks and to demonstrate an adversary's lack of adherence to these frameworks. Thus, these studies resonate with Nye's (1990) assertion that norms and values are as indispensable to the application of power as military units. However, such studies fail to consider three important findings. First, social media are competitive framing environments in which diplomats vie for the support of online publics. Second, social power is also a competitive process in that several actors intend to define norms and values to which states should adhere. Third, diplomats now use social media for real-time diplomacy or for narrating crises as they unfold. The last aspect may explain why digital diplomacy studies have focused solely on the social media activities of one actor, rather than investigating how two states, embroiled in a crisis, use social media to depict each other's actions.

Importantly, during a crisis between two states, both states may turn to social media and use normative frameworks to justify their actions and delegitimize those of the other. In this case, both actors are pursuing a strategy of soft disempowerment. States may accuse one another of contravening international laws or failing to uphold international conventions. For instance, it is possible that while Israel accused Hamas of violating international law by firing at civilians, Hamas also used Twitter to accuse Israel of human rights violations, such as firing at schools in the Gaza Strip. Similarly, another possibility is that while the Global Coalition accused Daesh of brutality on social media, Daesh depicted the Coalition as a new form of Western imperialism.

Thus, another question emerges: "What is the result of mutual soft disempowerment?" Israel accusing Hamas of violating international law may deplete the soft power resource of Hamas, undermine its credibility, and reduce the attractiveness of Hamas. However, the same may be true if Hamas simultaneously depicts Israel as committing war crimes. If two actors in a crisis use normative frameworks and pursue soft disempowerment, then both may end up with depleted soft power resources and may experience delegitimization, because they are they are perceived as violating norms celebrated by the international community. This outcome may be conceptualized as a form of Mutually Assured De-legitimization or MAD. This study intends to examine whether the social media use of MFAs during crises indeed leads to MAD, which results in a lose–lose outcome because both actors suffer soft disempowerment. Toward this end, the study builds on the concept of framing.

Framing As Selection and Emphasis

Framing theory is rooted in the works of sociologist Erving Goffman (1974), who maintained that individuals constantly strive to make sense of the world around them. To this end, individuals apply cognitive schemata or primary frameworks that enable them to interpret social interactions. When defining frames, Pan and Kosicki (1993) stated that frames function as themes that connect the different elements of a story into a coherent whole.

Entman (1993) viewed framing as the result of salience. To frame, according to Entman, is "to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (p. 1). Increasing the salience of information may be achieved by repetition or association with culturally familiar symbols. Moreover, de Vreese (2005) and Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) proposed that the central dimensions of framing are selection, organization, emphasis, and exclusion.

Markedly, Entman (1993) and de Vreese (2005) illustrated the manner in which frames offer a carefully crafted prism through which an issue or event should be understood. Framing studies have traditionally focused on the news, given that journalists influence how people interpret events thereby shaping public debates. Studies have also investigated the process by which elites, such as journalists, craft and disseminate frames (Yang, 2003; Zhaou & Moy, 2007).

Additionally, studies on public diplomacy found that the media can influence foreign policy by drawing public attention to certain events and by arguing that these events influence national interests (Hartley & Russett, 1992; Gilboa, 2005; Jacobs & Page, 2005). However, journalists and news organizations are not the only ones to craft frames. Governments also use frames to ensure that their policies are positively presented to the public (Miskimmon, et al., 2014). Entman's (2004) Cascading Activation Model suggests that a foreign policy frame can originate from the White House and reach the public via political elites and the media. The same is true of frames constructed by MFAs, which are disseminated on social media to global publics. Markedly, few digital diplomacy studies have evaluated how a dyad of MFAs frame each other's state during a crisis. Moreover, no study to date has examined if such framing can lead to mutual soft disempowerment and MAD. Finally, studies have yet to employ framing methodologies to individual tweets. Such an investigation is crucial as most social media users are likely to encounter a small number of MFA tweets as they browse through their social media feeds several times a day. This study addressed the aforementioned gaps.

Notably, scholars and practitioners have questioned whether a single tweet can encompass an entire foreign policy frame. One telling example, shown below, was published by the German MFA at the height of the 2014 Crimea crisis.

Source: https://twitter.com/germanydiplo/status/443756062567829504?lang=en

Figure 1. The German MFA's tweet (example 1).

First, the tweet outlines Germany's prescribed resolution to the Russia-Crimea crisis- the de-escalation of tensions. Second, the tweet indicates that Russia is active in both Crimea and other parts of Ukraine, thus binding Crimea's fate with that of Ukraine while signaling that Germany refuses to distinguish between the two. This is made clear by the assertion that Germany will not accept the results of a Russian referendum on Crimean independence. However, most importantly, this was the first tweet ever to refer to the G7: Following this single tweet, journalists throughout the world reported that Russia had been expelled from the G8 due to its intervention in Crimea. This single tweet thus outlined Germany's entire foreign policy: Russian escalation, such as a proposed referendum, would be met with sanctions such as banishment from international and intergovernmental forums. Notably, the Crimea crisis is a worthy and representative case study because it was one of the earliest crises that diplomats responded to via social media; it threatened to engulf Europe in a war, and it has yet to be resolved (Kostyuk, & Zhukov, 2019).

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study sought to examine how a dyad of MFAs framed each other's states before and after the onset of a crisis. Building on previous digital diplomacy studies, it was assumed that MFAs would use social media to frame crisis-related events in near-real time while also framing each country's policies. Moreover, it was assumed that both MFAs' frames would rest on demonstrating an adversary's lack of adherence with accepted norms and values, resulting in mutual soft disempowerment and MAD. To examine the possibility of MAD, two research questions were formulated. While RQ1 investigated MFAs' use of social media for real-time framing purposes, RQ2 examines if such framing rested on norms and values.

RQ1: Did the US and Russian MFAs use Twitter to create and disseminate frames through which crisis events could be understood?

This question was answered by evaluating the way in which the dyad of Russian and US MFAs framed crisis-related events on Twitter during the Crimea crisis. The study's first research hypothesis was that during crises, MFAs would craft and disseminate frames given a desire to influence public perception of events and secure a desired resolution to the crisis. This would be crucial as crises threaten a country's national interests. Moreover, it was hypothesized that MFA frames would consist of the elements identified by Entman (1993): MFAs would seek to identify the root cause of a crisis, and in so doing, begin to rally support for a desired resolution. For instance, by framing the Crimea crisis as an illegal invasion of Ukraine, the US State Department could propose the solution of a complete Russian withdrawal from Crimea. Moreover, it was assumed that MFAs would highlight the moral dimensions of a crisis because values and norms can both facilitate and constrain state action during a crisis.

H1: MFA frames would include a problem definition, causal attribution, moral evaluation, and a suggested remedy.

The second research question aimed to explore the role of values and norms in MFA frames. It was assumed that during a crisis, diplomats would attempt to limit an adversary's range of possible actions while ensuring that their own state could choose from a diverse range of actions. To this end, an MFA would use norms and values to legitimize its own policies while delegitimizing those of an adversary. This would be achieved by wielding social power and portraying states as failing to adhere to norms and values celebrated by the international community.

RQ2: What role do norms and values play in framing foreign countries?

Analyzing the role that values and norms play in crisis framing was achieved by comparing how the US-Russia MFA dyad framed each other's states before and after the onset of the Crimea crisis. This study's second hypothesis postulated that once the crisis erupted, both MFAs would have emphasized normative frameworks in their framing.

H2: MFAs engrossed in a crisis will use social media to depict an adversary's lack of adherence with accepted norms and values.

Methodology

To answer RQ1 and RQ2, and validate the study's hypotheses, all tweets in which one MFA in the US-Russia dyad referred to the other country were analyzed. The data set consisted of all US and Russian tweets published during two periods: January 2 to 31, 2014, and February 11 to March 31, 2014. These two intervals were chosen because they include tweets published before and after a crucial event: the ousting of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych and the subsequent annexation of Crimea to the Russian Federation (Herszenhorn, 2014; Strange, 2014). In total, 147 tweets published by the US and Russian MFAs were analyzed using a codebook constructed for the purpose of this research.

Notably, the goal of this exploratory study was to illustrate how two MFAs might pursue soft disempowerment during crises. By analyzing the Crimea crisis, this study introduces a theoretical and methodological framework that could aid scholars in examining the role that norms and values play in crisis framing. Though the research corpus is somewhat modest, it should be noted that it included all tweets published by the US and Russian MFAs during the sampling period; in 2014, both MFAs were far less active than they are today. Moreover, each of the 147 tweets was evaluated using a codebook constructed specifically for this study. This approach demonstrates both the applicability of this study's methodology and the importance of analyzing individual tweets rather than settling for big data analysis as has become customary in recent digital diplomacy studies (Laeeq et al., 2019; Spry 2019; Ingenhoff et al., 2021). Finally, the Crimean case study was deemed important because it involved two MFAs who were avid users of social media (Manor, 2019), it was a complex crisis that threatened to engulf Europe and America in war, and it has yet to be resolved. Thus, it is an appropriate case study for developing new concepts and methodologies that could apply to crises that are more recent.

Codebook Construction

Framing studies have distinguished between generic and issue-specific news frames. Issue-specific frames deal with one topic or event, whereas generic news frames can be applied to a range of topics and cultures (de Vreese, 2015). Moreover, framing scholars have distinguished between two approaches to framing research. The deductive approach investigates frames based on a predefined criterion, while in the inductive approach, frames arise from the research corpus itself (Matthes & Kohring, 2008). Given this study's analysis of MFA frames following Entman's (1993) definition, it employed a deductive approach.

Characterizing the manner in which the US and Russia MFAs framed each other's countries on Twitter and assessing whether framing can be achieved at the individual tweet level were achieved using a codebook created for the purpose of this study (see Appendix 1). Notably, this codebook and its accompanying methodology were based on the work of Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), who examined the framing of European news in Holland (see Appendix 2).

The codebook focused on three elements in each tweet: 1) subject matter, 2) elements comprising Entman's (1993) definition of frames, and 3) the existence of generic frames. Following Entman's definition, each tweet was evaluated with four questions: is a problem defined; is there a causal interpretation; is there a moral judgment; and is a specific remedy recommended. Each of these questions was answered in a binary manner given the high inter-coder reliability it produces (Entman, 1993). For each tweet, the average of all four questions was calculated. For instance, a tweet that included two of Entman's four elements scored 0.5. Given the exploratory nature of this research, it was decided to consider tweets that scored 0.5 or higher on the Entman scale as meeting Entman's definition of framing.

In addition, each tweet was analyzed to identify the following generic frames: conflict, human interest, attribution of responsibility, morality, and economic consequences. Generic frames were used because these enable cross-cultural evaluations. Building on the work of Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), a list of 21 questions was prepared with five questions designed to identify the responsibility, human interest, and conflict frames and three designed to identify the moral and economic consequence frames.

Following Semetko and Vlakenburg (2000), each question in the coding book was answered in a binary manner. Owing to the exploratory nature of this research, only tweets that scored 0.5 or higher on any generic frame scale were considered to include the relevant frame. For instance, a score of 0.5 or higher on the attribution of responsibility scale meant that one MFA framed the other's state as responsible for a certain problem or situation. A high score on the economic consequence scale meant that one state might use financial leverage against the other. A high score on the human interest scale meant that a human face was put on a complex issue, while a high score on the morality scale indicated that one MFA called the morality of the other into question. Finally, a high score on the conflict scale meant that one MFA highlighted his disagreements with the other. Notably, this is the first digital diplomacy study to apply offline framing codebooks to the online realm.

It should be mentioned that individual tweets were not expected to include more than one generic frame given Twitter's 140-character limit in 2014. At times, several tweets were analyzed as a single unit. This occurred when several tweets were part of one statement (as can be seen in the example below) or in instances when several tweets dealing with the same topic were published at the same time. In 2014, diplomats would often tweet several messages at the same time, an early incarnation of today's threads.

Source: https://twitter.com/StateDeptLive/status/441645201522958336; https://twitter.com/StateDeptLive/status/441648704206819328

Figure 2. Two tweets analyzed as a single unit (example 2).

Four coders were employed in this study; all four were postgraduate students at Tel Aviv University's Department of Communication. Coders were trained in identifying generic frames in a two-staged process. First, all four coders read Entman's (1993) article defining the term framing as well as Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) study examining the presence of generic frames. Next, the coders reviewed a series of MFA tweets and jointly coded them based on the codebook. When disagreements arose, all four coders discussed them and reached a mutual decision (e.g., does a tweet include a moral evaluation?). Once coders had reviewed a series of 10 tweets without any disagreements, they were asked to begin individually coding MFA tweets. Inter-coder reliability of the Entman and generic frames scales was assessed by kappa (using a dichotomy of below or equal and above of 0.5). Based on 81 tweets and four coders, the kappa values and percent of agreement for the different scales were as follows: Entman scale: 0.60, agreement = 78%; attribution of responsibility: 0.56, agreement = 78%; human interest: 0.66, agreement = 99%; conflict: 0.55, agreement = 83%; morality: 0.42, agreement = 86%; and economic consequences: 0.66, agreement=90%.

Once all individual tweets had been coded and analyzed, the author sought to identify themes that demonstrate how one country in the dyad framed the other. This stage, employed the methodology of thematic analysis. Clarke and Braun (2014) define thematic analysis as a way of identifying, analyzing, and reporting on patterns, or themes, within a research corpus. This study followed the roadmap offered by Clarke and Braun for thematic analysis. Initially, the author categorized half of all the tweets published by each MFA based on the issues they

addressed. For instance, a large number of US tweets dealt with the Sochi Winter Olympics; therefore, a category called Olympics was created. Similarly, several US tweets dealt with the Geneva 2 Conference and were thus grouped under the Geneva category. Once half of all the tweets published by each MFA were categorized, these tweets were reviewed a second time to ensure the relevance of the thematic analysis. This led to the identification of additional categories such as US tweets dealing with human rights violations. Next, all remaining tweets were categorized into the issue-base categories. Finally, the most prevalent issue-based category, or theme, was identified and used to demonstrate how the Russian and US MFAs had framed each other's states.

For instance, if the largest percentage of State Department tweets dealt with Russia's violation of international law, and if such tweets were published throughout the research period, then they demonstrate that the State Department primarily framed Russia as a violator of international law. The search for themes was based on Pan and Kosicki's (1993) assertion that frames are themes that connect different elements of a story into a coherent whole. To assess whether the percentage of tweets scoring 0.5 or higher on the Entman scale (1993) increased following the eruption of the Crimea crisis, a one-sided Z-typed test for comparing proportions was employed. To assess whether the frequency of the generic frames varied over the various categories, a goodness-of-fit chi-squared test was used. Finally, the assessment of whether the frequencies of detected frames changed over time yielded only small number, and thus a formal test was not conducted.

Results

Throughout the research period, the US was mentioned in 96 tweets published by the Russian MFA; of these, 87 were analyzed and coded. Tweets that were omitted from the analysis were those that included links to images. Of the 87 tweets analyzed, 29 were published during the first time period (i.e., prior to the Crimea crisis), and 58 were published during the second period (i.e., February and March). The US State Department referred to Russia in 58 tweets published during the research period, of which 51 were analyzed and coded. Omitted tweets were those that included links to external sources or that consisted merely of images. Seven of the 51 analyzed tweets were published during the month of January, and 44 were published during the second time period. These findings demonstrate that both MFAs referred to each other's country more frequently following the onset of the Crimea crisis.

Topics Addressed in Tweets

During the first time period, the majority of Russian tweets mentioning the US (86%) dealt with the Syrian Civil War and the Geneva 2 Conference, which was cohosted by the US and Russia and aimed at resolving that conflict. Additionally, two Russian tweets dealt with the Sochi Winter Olympics, one dealt with a Russian pilot detained in Guantanamo Bay, and

another focused on a US global missile defense system (each accounting for 5% of Russian tweets mentioning the US). During the second period, 75% of all the Russian MFA's tweets mentioning the US dealt with the Crimea crisis, while 18% dealt with a jailed Russian pilot and only 7% dealt with the Syrian Civil War.

Source: https://twitter.com/mfa_russia/status/425743595371376641

Source: https://twitter.com/mfa_russia/status/425729893389705216

Figure 3. Close US-Russia collaborations during Geneva 2 (example 3).

Similarly, during the first time period, the State Department published seven tweets referencing Russia, three focused on the Sochi Winter Olympics (43%) and four on Geneva 2 Conference (57%). During the second period, 90% of State Department tweets mentioning Russia dealt with the Crimea crisis, 7% dealt with the Sochi Winter Olympics, and 2% dealt with the issue of human rights. These results demonstrate that during the first time period, both MFAs highlighted their cooperation in convening the Geneva 2 Conference, but the second time interval was dominated by the Crimea crisis, illustrating that once international crises burst onto the scene, they come to dominate MFA digital communications.
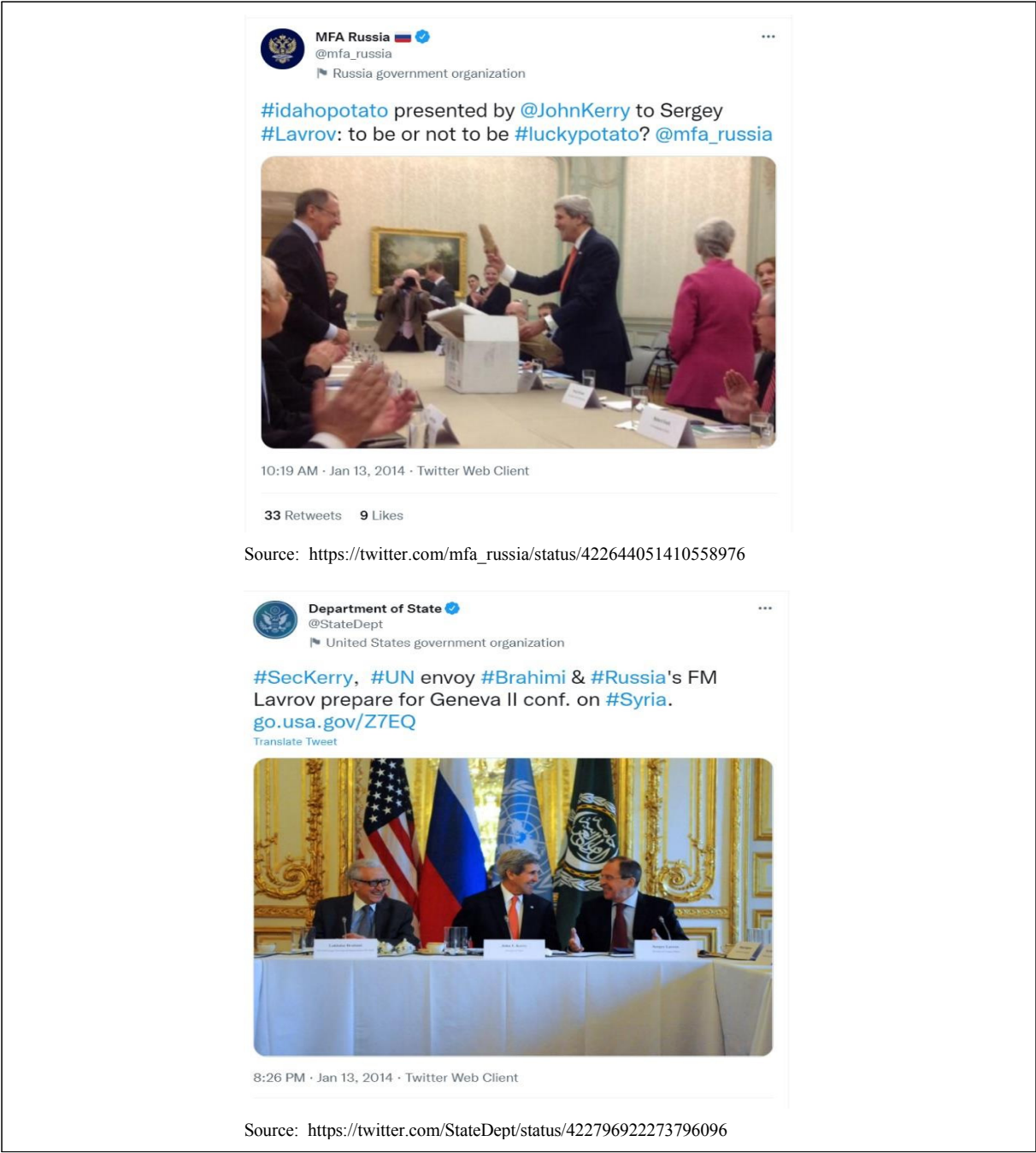

Source: https://twitter.com/mfa_russia/status/422644051410558976

Source: https://twitter.com/StateDept/status/422796922273796096

Figure 4. Highlighting close relations prior to the Crimea crisis (example 4).

Frame Analysis

During both time periods, the research corpus included tweets that scored 0 on the Entman and the generic frame scales alongside tweets that scored 1. The two tweets shown below, which were analyzed as one unit, met all four elements of Entman's (1993) definition of frames and therefore scored 1 on the Entman scale (See Appendix 3 for elaboration).

Figure 5. Tweets with a score of 1 on Entman's scale (example 5).

The problem presented in these tweets is that the US plans to create a global ballistic missile defense system and to include NATO in this system. There is a moral evaluation given that the second tweet includes the terms peace, security, and stability to suggest that the US is undermining global peace. There is also a recommended course of action: establishing a Euro-Atlantic area of peace. These tweets demonstrate how social power can be wielded on social media. By portraying the US as failing to adhere to the values of peace and stability, the Russian MFA could have sought to prevent the US from implementing its security policy. Similarly, by portraying itself as committed to the values of peace and security, the Russian MFA could have sought to positively frame its own policies that supposedly rest on collaboration and mutual prosperity.

Entman Scale

As Figure 6 shows, during the first time period, only 11 Russian MFA tweets mentioning the US scored 0.5 or higher on the Entman scale (38%) as opposed to 32 tweets during the second period (56%). Likewise, no State Department tweets mentioning Russia scored 0.5 or higher during the first time period as opposed to 33 during the second (76%). These results show a statistically significant increase in the proportion of tweets scoring 0.5 or higher on the Entman scale. For the US State Department, z was 3.86 ($p < 0.01$); for Russia, z was 1.59 ($p = 0.055$); and with the two combined, z was 3.44 ($p < 0.01$).
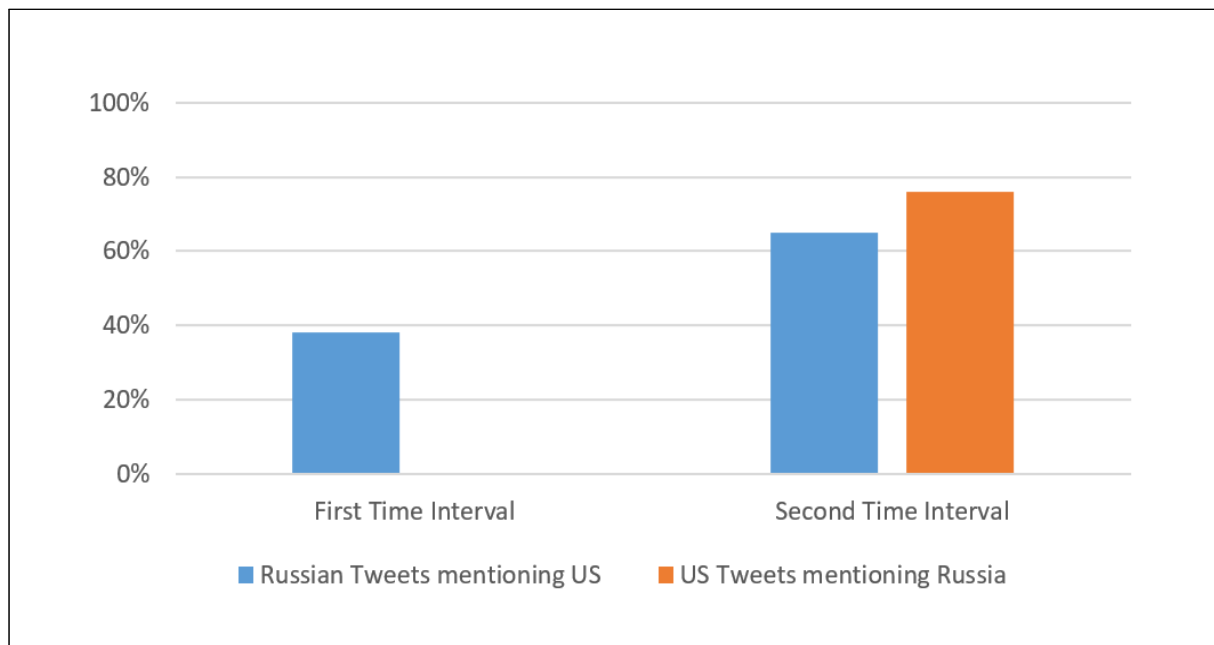

Figure 6. Percentage of tweets that scored 0.5 or higher on the Entman scale.

The reason for this substantial gap could be that during the first time period, the US and Russia both went to great lengths to portray themselves as allies working together to tackle global issues. During the second period and the onset of the Crimea crisis, the two states found themselves engulfed in a rapidly escalating crisis, with each MFA offering his own interpretation of events by defining the cause of the crisis, passing moral judgments, and offering possible solutions. These results validated H1 (MFA frames would include a problem definition, causal attribution, moral evaluation, and suggested remedy).

Prevalence of Generic Frames

Figure 7 depicts the frequencies of the generic frames in the Russian MFA's tweets mentioning the US throughout the entire sampling period.
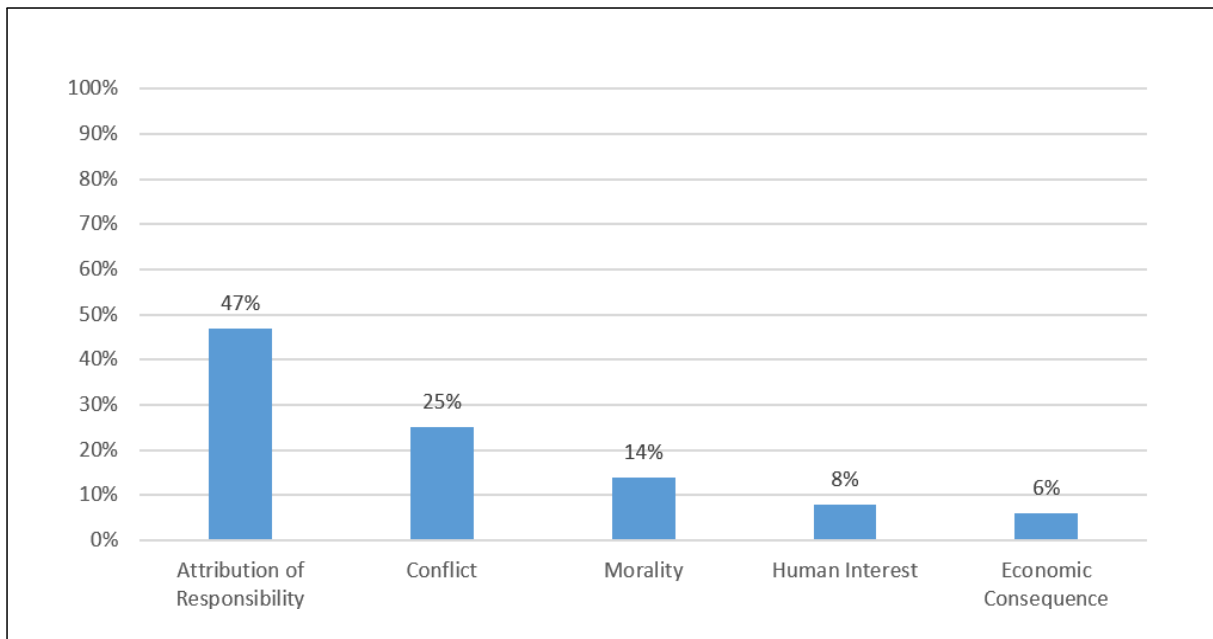
Figure 7. Frequency of generic frames in Russian tweets throughout the sampling period.

Figure 7 shows that the frequencies of the generic frames in the Russian MFA's tweets varied considerably (χ^2 44.9, $df = 4$, $p < 0.01$), with the most prevalent frame being the attribution of responsibility (47%). However, during the month of January, tweets that scored 0.5 or higher on the attribution scale often dealt with the joint responsibility of the US and Russia to resolve global conflicts. Such is the case with the tweet in Figure 8, which deals with the problem of offering humanitarian aid to the Syrian population because it required coordination with the Syrian rebels. This problem may be resolved through the cooperation of the US which is in contact with these rebels. Conversely, during the second time interval tweets scoring 0.5 or higher on the attribution scale all framed the US as responsible for mounting tensions and the crisis in Ukraine.

Figure 8. Joint US-Russian efforts to offer humanitarian aid in Syria (example 6).

The second most prevalent generic frame was conflict (25%). Notably, this frame was not evident in any Russian tweets during the first time period, which suggests that as tensions in Kiev mounted, the Russian MFA's portrayal of the US altered dramatically as it emphasized the growing conflict between both states. The morality frame was the third most prevalent in the Russian MFA's tweets (14%). Yet unlike the attribution of responsibility frame, Russia's MFA employed this frame during both time periods with the same goal, calling US morality into question. Such is the case with the tweet below depicting the ill treatment of a Russian pilot jailed in Guantanamo Bay.

Source: https://twitter.com/mfa_russia/status/424626577905704960

Figure 9. US immorality and ill treatment of jailed Russian pilot (example 7).

Tweets dealing with the ill treatment of the Russian pilot also scored 0.5 or higher on the human interest frame; thus, this frame could be linked to the morality frame. This may explain why the human interest frame was the fourth most prevalent (8%). By humanizing an issue, one state can highlight how another state disregards norms and values that have been deemed legitimate. Finally, the least prevalent generic frame used by the Russian MFA was the economic consequences frame (6%), which was employed only when commenting on US sanctions imposed on Russia (Figure 10).
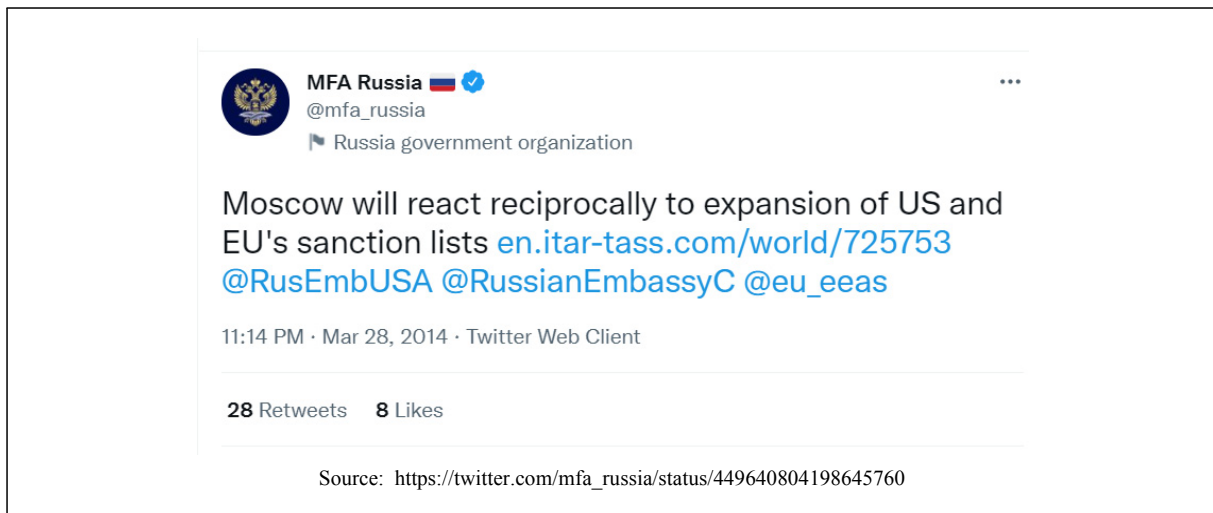
Figure 10. Russia commenting on US financial sanctions (example 8).

Interestingly, during the first time period, no State Department tweets mentioning Russia scored 0.5 or higher on any of the generic frame scales, although this changed significantly during the second period (Figure 11).
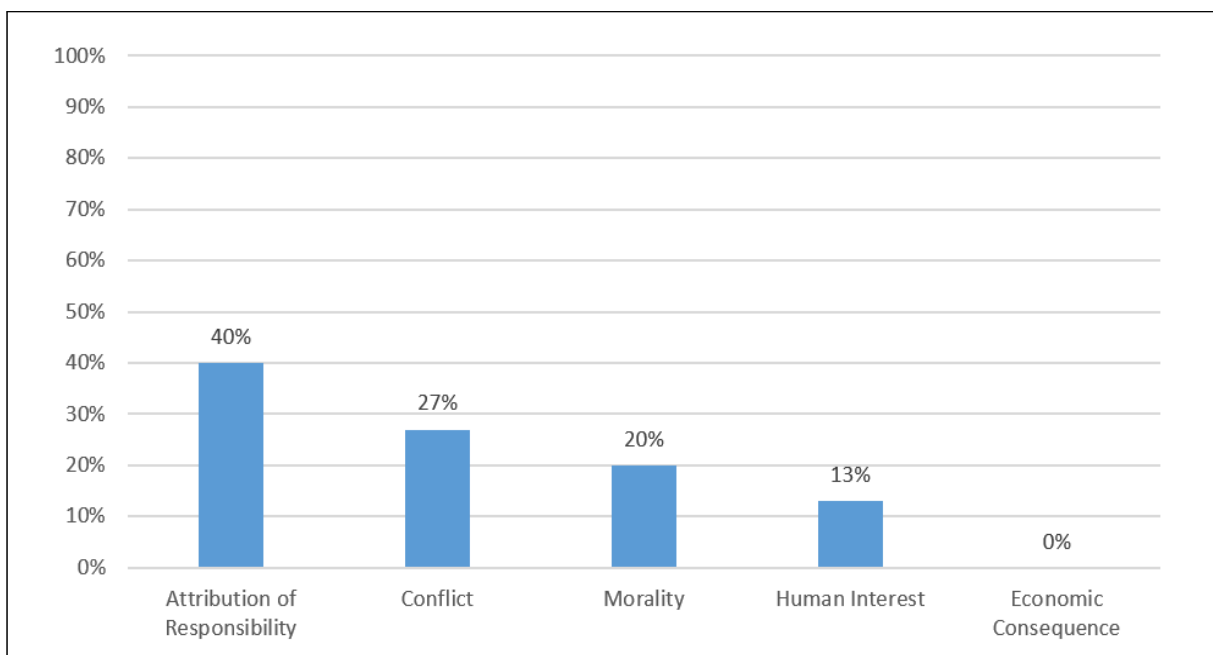

Figure 11. Frequencies of generic frames in US tweets following the eruption of the Crimea crisis.

Notably, the frequency of the various generic frames evaluated varied considerably (χ^2 22.02, df = 4, p < 0.01), and as was the case with the Russian MFA, the most prevalent generic frame was attribution of responsibility (40%). This indicated that the State Department framed Russia as responsible for the Crimea crisis.
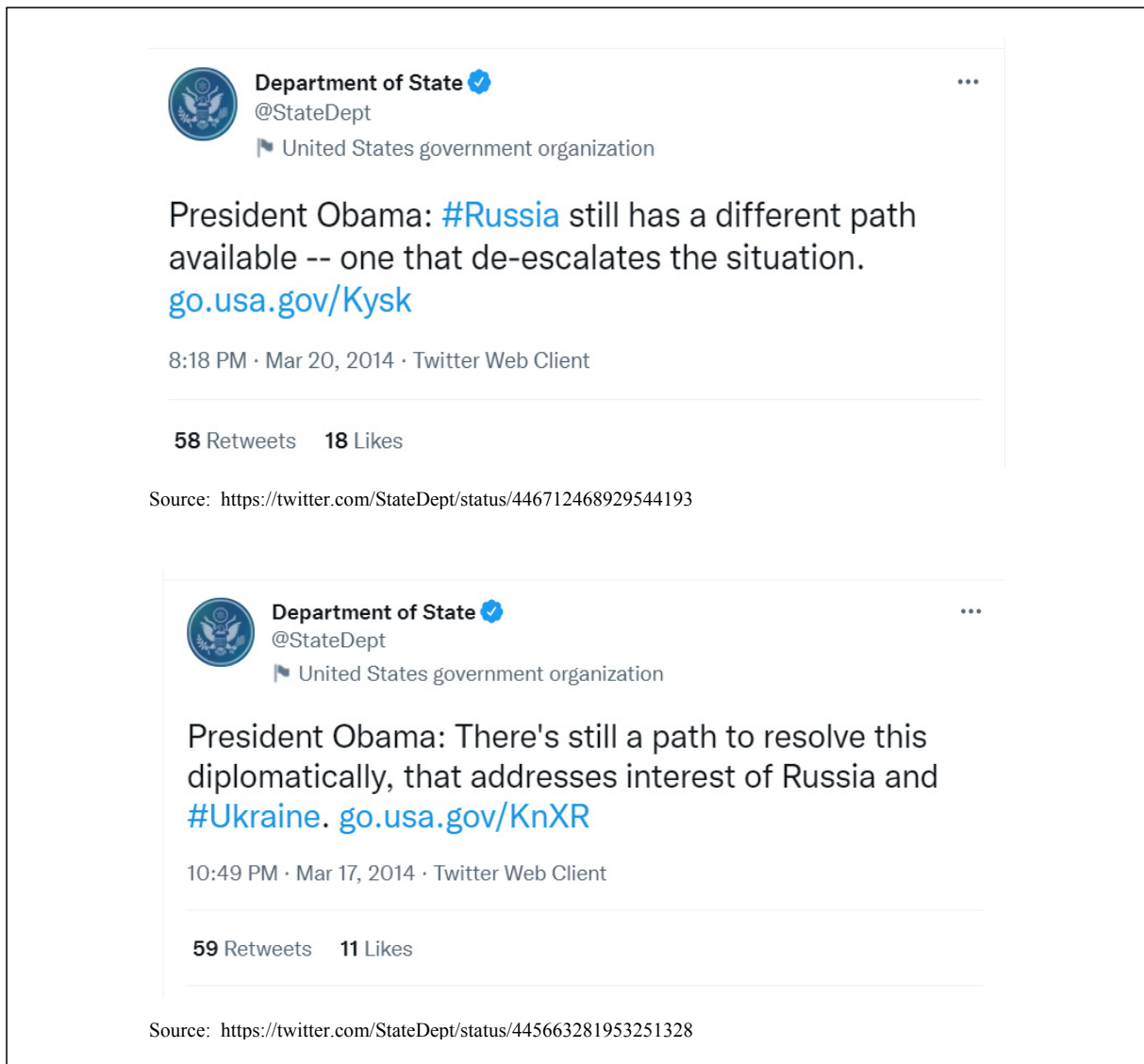
Source: https://twitter.com/StateDept/status/446712468929544193

Source: https://twitter.com/StateDept/status/445663281953251328

Figure 12. Russian Responsibility for Crimea Crisis (example 9).

The second most prevalent frame employed by the US State Department was the morality frame (27%). While Russia used the morality frame to portray the US as violating human rights or sabotaging global peace, the US used the morality frame to depict Russia's incursion into Crimea as a violation of international law

The third most prevalent frame employed by the State Department was conflict (20%), indicating that like the Russian MFA, the State Department framed Russia as its adversary while emphasizing differences between the two. The fourth most prevalent frame was economic consequences (13%), which is not surprising given that the US saw economic sanctions as the proposed remedy for the Crimea crisis; see Figure 13 (Freedman, 2014). Finally, as opposed to the Russian MFA, the State Department refrained from employing the human interest frame.

Figure 13. US Imposing Financial Sanctions on Russia (example 10).

The results presented thus far offer three important insights. First, following the onset of the Crimea crisis, both the US and Russian MFAs increasingly used Twitter for framing purposes as indicated in numbers of tweets that scored 0.5 or higher on the Entman scale. Second, both the US and Russian MFAs employed the morality frame to portray each other's failure to adhere to normative frameworks adopted by the international community. Third, each MFA attempted to portray the other's state as responsible for the Crimea crisis. These results partially validated H2 (MFAs engrossed in a crisis will use social media to depict an adversary's lack of adherence to accepted norms and values).

Thematic Analysis

The results discussed thus far derived from individual tweets, but it is also possible to cluster several tweets together to find an overall theme that demonstrates how one MFA framed an adversary. In the case of the Russian MFA, one such theme framed the US as morally bankrupt by addressing a range of issues including US refusal to allow medical treatment of a jailed Russian pilot, US responsibility for the high death toll in the Syrian Civil War, US discrimination against persons with disabilities, and America's decision to come to the aid of neo-fascists who, according to Russia, staged a coup d'état in Kiev. Tweets comprising this theme accounted for 26% of all Russian tweets mentioning the US. Examples of these tweets can be seen in Figures 14 and 15 and in Appendix 4.
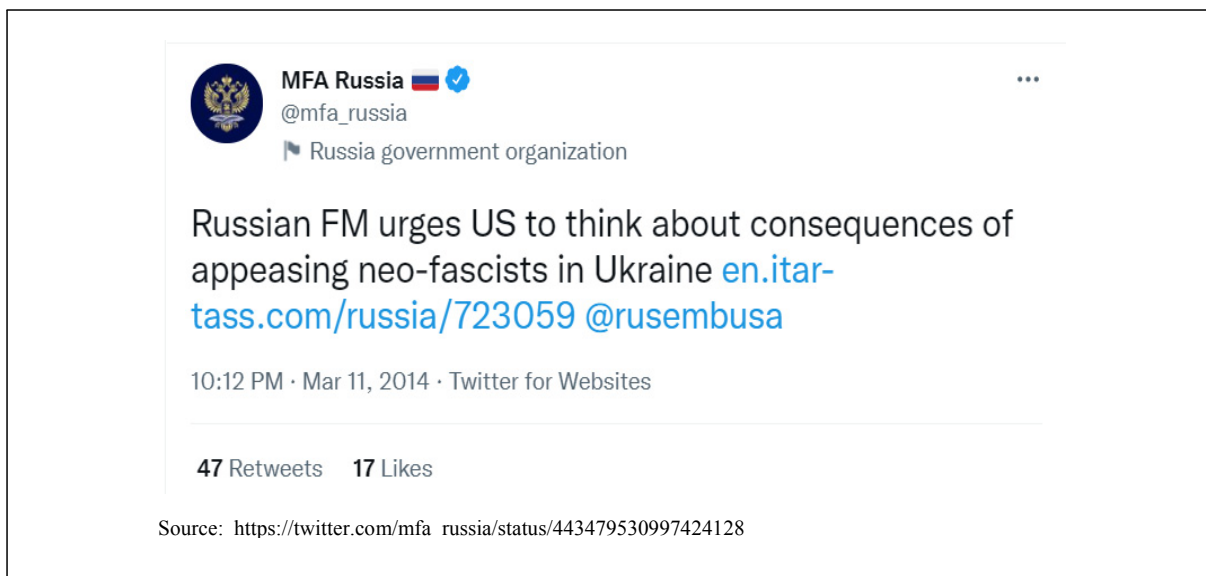
Figure 14. US Appeases neo-fascists in Ukraine (example 11).

Figure 15. US discrimination against People with disabilities (example 12).

Analyzing the State Department's framing of Russia revealed a legal theme: Throughout the Crimea crisis, the State Department emphasized the fact that Russia's incursion and annexation of Crimea was illegal and that Russia had violated the territorial integrity of Ukraine. Moreover, the US asserted that the Crimean referendum, held under gunpoint, had no legal standing (Figure 16) and that no country could violate international law without being held accountable (Figure 17). Tweets comprising this theme accounted for 33% of all State Department tweets mentioning Russia. Appendix 5 also contains examples of these tweets.

Figure 16. US rejects referendum held under gunpoint (example 13).

Figure 17. Russia Violates International Law (example 14).

These results further validated H2 (MFAs engrossed in a crisis will use social media to depict an adversary lack of adherence with accepted norms and values).

Discussion

This study analyzed the manner in which a dyad of MFAs framed each other's states before and during a major crisis and in so doing identified and addressed a lacuna in digital diplomacy research. Previous researchers have found that MFAs often use social media to articulate the norms and values their country adheres to and that norms and values play a central role in MFAs' social media activities during crises as diplomats delegitimize adversaries

by portraying them as having violated accepted norms. However, digital diplomacy studies have focused solely on the activities of one actor involved in a crisis. Yet given that social media are competitive framing arenas, it is necessary to evaluate how two actors embroiled in a crisis frame each other and how such framing impacts the soft power resources of each actor. This study addressed this lacuna.

When comparing the first and second time periods, there was a sharp increase in the number of tweets published by both MFAs that reached the 0.5 threshold on the Entman scale. This suggests that as events unfolded in Crimea, and both states found themselves engulfed in a crisis, their MFAs attempted to use Twitter to offer interpretations of events by identifying the cause of the crisis, passing moral judgments, and offering possible solutions; notably, qualitative analysis revealed that each MFA also framed the other as responsible for escalating tensions. These results are in line with previous digital diplomacy studies which assert that digitalization leads to a form of "real-time" diplomacy as MFAs comment on crises as they unfold (Seib 2012; 2016). This study also found that both MFAs frequently used the morality generic frame following the onset of the Crimea crisis and that it was primarily used to call one another's morality into question. These findings indicate that through framing on Twitter, MFAs can call into question an actor's morality and political ideals thereby possibly de-legitimizing that actor's policies.

To summarize, the results presented thus far suggest that MFAs do in fact use Twitter to disseminate frames and that such frames can be analyzed at the individual tweet level. Moreover, generic frame analysis can be used to analyze how different actors frame each other's actions and policies. Lastly, findings also demonstrate that the frames disseminated by both MFAs constituted carefully crafted prisms through which digital publics could make sense of unfolding events.

Crucially, in their framing of one another's state, both the US and Russian MFAs seem to have attempted to wield social power as each depicted the other's country as operating outside the bounds of that which is accepted and desirable by the international community. The US's legal framing of Russia rested on the notion that Russia's incursion into Crimea violated the norms that govern state action in the 21st century. According to the State Department's framing, international conflicts are resolved in this century through dialogue and diplomacy, not military incursions.

Similarly, in its framing of the US, the Russian MFA depicted the US as a country that had abandoned the value system deemed legitimate in a Western-influenced world order. The online attempts of both Russia and the US to portray the other as failing to adhere to values and norms demonstrate Van Ham's (2013) conceptualization of social power as a competition over public support. Thus, social media framing emerges as a strategic crisis management tool for potentially limiting another state's range of possible actions (Van Ham, 2013). For example, by calling into question Russia's adherence to international law, the State Department might have been attempting to limit Russia's use of hard power in Crimea.

Notably, one must also consider the broader ramifications of MFAs' wielding of social power on social media. By depicting each other as violating internationally recognized norms and values, both Russia and the US called into question the other's character, thereby possibly depleting each other's soft power resources. Indeed, it is hard to imagine that the US could attract and entice other countries if it came to be regarded as a menace to global peace or a supporter of neo-fascist regimes. Similarly, it is hard to imagine that Russia could avoid international isolation if its annexation of Crimea came to be regarded as a violation of international law at best and an act of war at worst.

To quote Brannagan and Giulianotti (2015), both the State Department and the Russian MFA pursued a strategy of "soft disempowerment." Russia's attacks on the US's moral character followed the path usually taken by NGOs in accusing the US of failing to uphold international conventions and standards such as ensuring minority rights or promoting human rights. The State Department chose the path traditionally taken by the media by alleging that Russia was a consistent violator of international law. Subsequently, the two countries depleted each other's soft power resources while also possibly limiting each other's ranges of actions to similar degrees. Thus, while the Cold War was characterized by the acronym MAD for mutually assured destruction, wielding social power on social media could lead to another MAD: mutually assured delegitimization (Kassab, 2014). As both MFAs employed the strategy of soft disempowerment, they each besmirched the other's national reputation and undermined each other's international credibility and attractiveness. In other words, both countries and their MFAs might have gained as much as they lost by basing their framing of the Crimea crisis on adherence with accepted norms and values.

The concept of MAD offers three important contributions to the digital diplomacy research corpus. First, it suggests that wielding social power online during crises might only be effective if employed by one actor. By arguing that an adversary has transgressed on international norms and values, an MFA can obtain the three goals identified in this study's introduction: justifying and legitimizing state action, rallying international support for state action, and limiting an adversary's range of possible actions. Such digital activities result in win-lose situations.

However, if both actors wield social power online, the result is mutual soft disempowerment, resulting in MAD and a lose–lose situation. Previous digital diplomacy studies have alluded to such occurrences. Manor and Crilley (2018), in their analysis of the 2014 Gaza War, found that while the Israeli MFA called Hamas's morality into question, Hamas media narratives accused Israel of committing war crimes. Similarly, Seib (2016) found that Israel, Iran, and the US all used normative frameworks to frame the 2015 Iran nuclear deal on Twitter and that these frameworks negated one another. This study offers a theoretical prism through which such activities can be understood and further researched, that of MAD.

Second, MAD suggests that digital diplomacy studies must examine how all actors embroiled in a crisis frame one another. Studies exploring how one actor (e.g., Israel) frames another (e.g., Hamas) fail to recognize that social media constitute competitive framing arenas

and that social power is a competitive process. Notably, MAD is not limited to crises between two states: Twenty-first century crises have grown in complexity as they impact the interests of many states. The Syrian Civil War, for instance, impacts the interests of Egypt, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Russia, Syria, and the US, while the Crimea crisis impacted the interests of Russia, the US, Ukraine, and EU and NATO member states. Crises can thus now be framed by multiple actors with each actor relying on norms and values for its framing purposes.

Finally, the risk of MAD indicates that the use of social media during crises must include a digital strategy that combines proactive and reactive digital measures. MFAs must identify the frames and narratives an adversary is disseminating on social media and respond to these frames in a way that avoids mutual soft disempowerment. This can be achieved by emphasizing how a state's policies during a crisis adhere to accepted normative frameworks and rebuking allegations adversaries make online. For instance, Israel's framing during the 2014 Gaza War sought to associate Israel's assault on Hamas with the world's war on extremism (Manor & Crilley, 2018). Similarly, the Global Coalition Against Daesh highlighted its commitment to human rights and rebuilding war-torn states in the Middle East (Manor & Crilley,2018) . In both cases, actors highlighted their adherence with accepted normative frameworks.

Conclusion

This study had three goals, first, to draw scholars' attention to the need to assess how all actors involved in a crisis frame crisis-related events on social media; second, to offer a methodological approach that will allow scholars to analyze frames at the level of individual tweet; and third, to conceptualize how states wield social power in their online framing of a crisis.

The analysis presented in this study raises another question: Did MFAs simply refer to existing normative frameworks or did they constitute normative frameworks? As previous digital diplomacy studies suggest, during crises, MFAs identify the norms and values that should govern state action and in so doing, they also constitute normative frameworks that should govern state action. This is achieved by creating moral dichotomies that contrast state policies. According to Israel's framing of the 2014 Gaza War, states should abide by agreed-upon conventions of war such as preventing harm to civilian populations and celebrating life rather than death. According to the Global Coalition Against Daesh, oppressive regimes that deny refugees the ability to rebuild their homes and communities have no right to exist. Similarly, according to the State Department, quarrels between states are now resolved through diplomacy and negotiations rather than military force and intimidation, whereas Russia's MFA argues that nations must abide by the post-Cold War international order and resist the temptations of neo-fascism. In this way, diplomats simultaneously reassert and constitute the normative frameworks to which states must adhere. Future researchers could examine whether crisis framing leads to changes in the norms and values that the international community deems legitimate.

Notably, invoking norms and values during crises and wielding social power are not unique to the digital age. The USSR often used discrimination against African Americans to lambast the US (Ritter, 2019), while Arab States criticized Israel's treatment of the Palestinians long before the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority. What is perhaps unique to the digital age is that the wielding of social power takes place in real-time as MFAs comment on crises events as they unfold (Seib, 2012). Moreover, social media has enhanced the competition between MFAs looking to shape public perception because social media users learn about crises from peers, influencers, opinion makers, media outlets, and diplomats (Hayden, 2012). During crises, these competitions become central to MFAs' online activities as diplomats seek to gather support for their states' policies while diminishing support for those of adversaries.

It is important to identify this study's limitations. First, this article evaluated frames at the level of the 140-characher individual tweet. However, given the harsh character limit on Twitter, it is possible that many individual tweets failed to include all four elements identified by Entman. Thus, future researchers might choose to focus on threads of tweets that relate to a specific issue, and future scholars could also explore if the new 280-character limit enables diplomats to disseminate complete foreign policy frames in a single tweet.

Second, the number of tweets analyzed in this study was modest. Yet it is important to keep in mind that each tweet served as a case study for validating this study's methodology and for conceptualizing crisis framing on social media. Scholars can now use these to examine the use of Twitter in present-day crises. Third, this study did not evaluate whether social power did in fact change or limit the behavior of the actors involved in the Crimea crisis. Such an evaluation is warranted given the proliferation of crises in the world and the ever-growing reliance on social media in diplomacy. Finally, this study did not evaluate whether both the US and Russia suffered soft disempowerment as an outcome of MAD. Future researchers could use reputational indices (e.g., Soft Por 30, Good Country Index) as well as opinion polls to examine if MAD does indeed harm both actors' reputations and attractiveness.

Acknowledgments

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Appendix 1

Codebook for Framing Analysis of Individual Tweets

- Country who published Tweet:
- Country mentioned in the Tweet:
- Tweet number:
- Date of publication:
- Who is the Author of the Tweet? (Entman, 1993)

_____

_____

Components of frames (Entman, 1993)		
Is there a problem definition?	**Yes (1)**	**No (0)**
Is there a causal interpretation?	**Yes (1)**	**No (0)**
Is there a moral evaluation?	**Yes (1)**	**No (0)**
Is there a treatment recommendation?	**Yes (1)**	**No (0)**
Generic frames (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000)		
Attribution of responsibility Frame:	**Yes (1)**	**No (0)**
Does the Tweet suggest that someone has the ability to alleviate the problem?		
Does the Tweet suggest that someone is responsible for the problem?		
Does the Tweet suggest solutions to the problem?		
Does the Tweet suggest that an individual/country is responsible for the problem?		
Does the Tweet suggest that the problem requires urgent action?		

Human interest frame:	Yes (1)	No (0)
Does the Tweet provide a human example or human face on the issue?		
Does the Tweet employ adjectives of personal vignettes that generate feeling of outrage, empathy-caring, sympathy or compassion?		
Does the Tweet emphasize how individuals and groups are affected by the issue/problem?		
Does the Tweet go into the personal or private lives of the actors?		
Does the Tweet contain visual information that might generate feelings of outrage, empathy-caring, sympathy or compassion?		
Conflict frame:	**Yes (1)**	**No (0)**
Does the Tweet reflect disagreement between parties-individuals-groups or countries?		
Does one party-individuals-groups or country blame another?		
Does the Tweet refer to two sides or to more than two sides of the problem or issue?		
Does the Tweet refer to winners and losers?		
Does the Tweet emphasize the achievement and/or actions of an individual/party/country versus the achievement and/or actions of another individual/party/country? (Added by Vreese, Peter and Semetko, 2001)		
Morality frame:	**Yes (1)**	**No (0)**
Does the Tweet contain any moral message?		
Does the Tweet make reference to morality, God and other religious tenets?		
Does the Tweet offer specific social prescriptions about how to behave?		
Economic consequence frame:	**Yes (1)**	**No (0)**
Is there a mention of financial loses or gains now or in the future?		
Is there a mention of the costs/degree of expense involved?		
Is there a reference to economic consequences or pursuing or not perusing a course of action?		

Appendix 2

Original Questionnaire, Semetko and Valkenburg 2000

	Factors				
	1	2	3	4	5
Framing items	Attr. of resp.	Human interest	Conflict	Morality	Econ. cons.
Attribution of responsibility					
Does the story suggest that some level of gov't has the ability to alleviate the problem?	.80	-.11	.10	-.04	.10
Does the story suggest that some level of the government is responsible for the issue/problem?	.74	-.22	.12	.01	.10
Does the story suggest solution(s) to the problem/issue?	.69	.04	-.02	.00	.09
Does the story suggest that an ind. (or group of people in society) is resp. for the issue-problem?[1]	.67	-.22	-.07	.04	.04
Does the story suggest the problem requires urgent action?	.43	.14	.26	.01	.02
Human interest frame					
Does the story provide a human example or "human face" on the issue?	-.01	.76	.06	.04	-.04
Does the story employ adjectives or personal vignettes that generate feelings of outrage, empathy-caring, sympathy, or compassion?	-.08	.69	.04	.11	-.03
Does the story emphasize how individuals and groups are affected by the issue/problem?	-.08	.64	.06	-.02	-.00
Does the story go into the private or personal lives of the actors?	-.17	.61	-.02	-.00	-.00
Does the story contain visual information that might generate feelings of outrage, empathy-caring, sympathy, or compassion?	.04	.60	-.06	.07	-.11
Conflict frame					
Does the story reflect disagreement between parties-individuals-groups-countries?	.10	.02	.88	-.02	.01
Does one party-individual-group-country reproach another?	.01	.10	.81	.03	.02
Does the story refer to two sides or to more than two sides of the problem or issue?	.19	-.04	.77	-.04	.06
Does the story refer to winners and losers?	-.02	.01	.29	.06	-.02
Morality frame					
Does the story contain any moral message?	-.01	-.02	.02	.91	-.01
Does the story make reference to morality, God, and other religious tenets?	-.02	.09	.05	.86	-.03
Does the story offer specific social prescriptions about how to behave?	.01	.07	.04	.68	-.03
Economic frame					
Is there a mention of financial losses or gains now or in the future?	-.01	-.01	.03	-.02	.81
Is there a mention of the costs/degree of expense involved?	-.11	-.03	-.03	-.01	.73
Is there a reference to economic consequences of pursuing or not pursuing a course of action?	.23	-.11	.03	-.03	.74

Appendix 3

Example of Coding of Individual Tweets

MFA Russia @mfa_russia · Feb 18
#Lavrov: We have outlined our stance on #US plans of using @NATO to create a global BMD system
↩   ⟲ 12   ★ 5

MFA Russia @mfa_russia · Feb 18
#Lavrov: We must ensure the implementation of @UN,@OSCE & @NATORussia decisions on creating a Euro-Atlantic area of peace,security&stability
↩   ⟲ 8   ★ 4

Entman Scale	Is there a problem definition	1
	Is there a causal interpretation	1
	Is there a moral evaluation	1
	Is there a treatment recommendation	1
	Entman score	(1+1+1+1)/4=1
Attribution of responsibility frame	Does the Tweet suggest that someone has the ability to alleviate the problem?	1
	Does the Tweet suggest that someone is responsible for the problem?	1
	Does the Tweet suggest solutions to the problem?	1
	Does the Tweet suggest that an individual/country is responsible for the problem?	1
	Does the Tweet suggest that the problem requires urgent action?	0
	Attribution of responsibility score	(1+1+1+1)/5= 0.8
Human interest frame	Does the Tweet provide a human example or human face on the issue?	0
	Does the Tweet employ adjectives of personal vignettes that generate feeling of outrage, empathy-caring, sympathy or compassion?	0
	Does the Tweet emphasize how individuals and groups are affected by the issue/problem?	0
	Does the Tweet go into the personal or private lives of the actors?	0
	Does the Tweet contain visual information that might generate feelings of outrage, empathy-caring, sympathy or compassion?	0
	Human interest score	0

Conflict frame	Does the Tweet reflect disagreement between parties-individuals-groups or countries?	1
	Does one party-individuals-groups or country blame another?	1
	Does the Tweet refer to two sides or to more than two sides of the problem or issue?	1
	Does the Tweet refer to winners and losers?	0
	Does the Tweet emphasize the achievement and/or actions of an individual/party/country versus the achievement and/or actions of another individual/party/country?	0
	Conflict score	(1+1+1)/5=0.6
Morality frame	Does the Tweet contain any moral message?	1
	Does the Tweet make reference to morality, God and other religious tenets?	0
	Does the Tweet offer specific social prescriptions about how to behave?	1
	Morality score	(1+1)/3=0.66
Economic consequence frame	Is there a mention of financial loses or gains now or in the future?	0
	Is there a mention of the costs/degree of expense involved?	0
	Is there a reference to economic consequences or pursuing or not perusing a course of action?	0
	Economic consequence score	0

Appendix 4

Russia Frames the US as Morally Bankrupt

Tweet	Topic
MFA Russia ✔ @mfa_russia · 17 Feb 2014 #Lavrov: We insist that not only the prison doctor but also #Russian doctors be allowed to visit and examine #Yaroshenko ↩ ♻ 4 ♥ ••• **MFA Russia** ✔ @mfa_russia · 17 Feb 2014 #Lavrov: #Yaroshenko was not convicted for what he did but for what he said, which even a #US court qualified as intent. ↩ ♻ 1 ♥ ••• **MFA Russia** ✔ @mfa_russia · 17 Feb 2014 #Lavrov: Konstantin #Yaroshenko was actually abducted in #Liberia after being lured into a conversation that was later used against him ↩ ♻ 1 ♥ ••• **MFA Russia** ✔ @mfa_russia · 14 Feb 2014 Russia's Foreign Ministry presents demarche over #Yaroshenko's health deterioration en.itar-tass.com/russia/719255 @rusembusa @USEmbRu @statedept ↩ ♻ 6 ♥ 1 •••	Jailed Russian pilot held by US authorities
MFA Russia ✔ @mfa_russia · 13 Feb 2014 #Lavrov: Surprisingly, the #EU and the #US assume that the 'free' choice has already been made for #Ukraine, which is a 'European future' ↩ ♻ 18 ♥ 5 ••• **MFA Russia** ✔ @mfa_russia · 13 Feb 2014 #Lavrov: **We have always assumed** that it is a sovereign right of each state to choose its course of development ↩ ♻ 14 ♥ 7 •••	Ukraine
Retweeted by MFA Russia **Russian Mission UN** @PressRUSUN · 23h Churkin: One of the reasns it has turned into such a gory, bloody conflct is that US made a wrng assessment about the staying power of Assad Expand ↩ Reply ♻ Retweet ★ Favorite ••• More	Syrian Civil War (re-Tweeted)

Tweet	Topic
MFA Russia @mfa_russia · 17h Vladimir Putin drew attention of Barack Obama to criminal actions of ultranationalists supported by Kiev authorities eng.kremlin.ru/news/6752 Expand — Reply · Retweet · Favorite · More MFA Russia @mfa_russia · 15h Russian FM urges US to think about consequences of appeasing neo-fascists in Ukraine en.itar-tass.com/russia/723059 @rusembusa Expand — Reply · Retweet · Favorite · More	Ukraine
MFA Russia @mfa_russia · 27 Mar 2014 #Russia FM indignant at discrimination against singer with eye impairments getting US visa en.itar-tass.com/russia/ @RusEmbUSA ← ⟲ 9 ♥ 6 •••	US discrimination against handicapped people
MFA Russia Retweeted RussianMissionGeneva @mission_russian · 27 Mar 2014 #USA voted against the resolution due to practice of illegal detention at #Guantanamo ← ⟲ 14 ♥ 5 •••	UN Human Rights Resolution proposed by Russia which the US voted against (re-Tweeted)
Retweeted by MFA Russia RussianMissionGeneva @mission_russian · Mar 26 #Russia calls US and EU short-sighted for their approach to ultra-nationalists in #Ukraine en.itar-tass.com/russias-foreig... Expand — Reply · Retweet · Favorite · More Retweeted by MFA Russia RussianMissionGeneva @mission_russian · Mar 26 European parliamentarians express alarm over anti-Semitism, xenophobia and Nazi symbols in "new" #Ukraine #humanrights efdgroup.eu/newsroom/item/... Expand — Reply · Retweet · Favorite · More	Ukraine (re-Tweeted)

Appendix 5

US frames Russia Using the Legal Frame

Tweet	Legal Argument
Retweeted by Department of State **@NSCPress** @NSCPress · 16h Russia's continued violation of Ukraine's sovereignty & territorial integrity would negatively impact Russia's standing in intl community. Expand Reply Retweet Favorite More **Retweeted by Department of State** **@NSCPress** @NSCPress · 16h US calls on Russia to de-escalate tensions by withdrawing forces back to bases in Crimea & refrain from interference elsewhere in Ukraine. Expand Reply Retweet Favorite More **Retweeted by Department of State** **@NSCPress** @NSCPress · 16h President Obama expressed his deep concern over Russia's clear violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity. Expand Reply Retweet Favorite More	Russia has violated international law by violating the territorial integrity of Ukraine (re-Tweeted)
Retweeted by Department of State **StateDept Live** @StateDeptLive · Mar 6 .@JohnKerry: The people of #Ukraine want nothing more than the right to determine their own future and live in their own country freely. Expand Reply Retweet Favorite More **Retweeted by Department of State** **StateDept Live** @StateDeptLive · Mar 6 .@JohnKerry: President Obama has been clear we cannot allow #Russia or any country to defy international law with impunity. Expand Reply Retweet Favorite More	Russia has defied international law (re-Tweeted)
Retweeted by Department of State **US Mission to the UN** @USUN · Mar 15 .@AmbassadorPower: US will stand with the Ukrainian people...and as we saw in the Council today, we are not alone in that regard. Russia is. Expand Reply Retweet Favorite More **Retweeted by Department of State** **US Mission to the UN** @USUN · Mar 15 .@AmbassadorPower: World knows that referendum scheduled for tomorrow in #Crimea was hatched in Kremlin and midwifed by Russian military. Expand Reply Retweet Favorite More **Retweeted by Department of State** **US Mission to the UN** @USUN · Mar 15 .@AmbassadorPower after Security Council vote: "Today's vote is a reflection of what #Russia denies but the whole world knows." Expand Reply Retweet Favorite More	The Crimea referendum is not legal, it is a charade perpetrated by Russia and thus will have no legal standing (re-Tweeted)

Tweet	Legal Argument
Department of State @StateDept · Mar 16 .@JohnKerry urged Russia to support efforts by Ukrainians to address power sharing, decentralization through constitutional reform process. Expand ↰ Reply ⇄ Retweet ★ Favorite ··· More **Department of State** @StateDept · Mar 16 During his call with Foreign Minister Lavrov, @JohnKerry restated the US will not recognize the outcome of the ongoing referendum. #Ukraine Expand ↰ Reply ⇄ Retweet ★ Favorite ··· More **Department of State** @StateDept · Mar 16 During a call with Foreign Minister Lavrov today, @JohnKerry reaffirmed the US considers the ongoing referendum illegal under Ukrainian law. Expand ↰ Reply ⇄ Retweet ★ Favorite ··· More	As the Crimean referendum, is illegal, the US will not recognize its outcomes
Department of State @StateDept · Mar 26 President Obama: We have isolated #Russia politically, suspending it from the G8 nations, down-grading our bilateral ties. #UnitedForUkraine Expand ↰ Reply ⇄ Retweet ★ Favorite ··· More **Department of State** @StateDept · Mar 26 President Obama: Together, we have condemned #Russia's invasion of #Ukraine, rejected legitimacy of Crimean referendum. #UnitedForUkraine Expand ↰ Reply ⇄ Retweet ★ Favorite ··· More **Department of State** @StateDept · Mar 26 Pres. Obama: #Russia's violation of international law - assault on #Ukraine's sovereignty - must be met with condemnation. #UnitedForUkraine Expand ↰ Reply ⇄ Retweet ★ Favorite ··· More	Both the Russian incursion into Crimea and the Crimea referendum are illegal will therefore be met with condemnation