



## Power in words: An Analysis of the Flaming Devices in President Vladimir Putin's Speech Before the February, 2022 Attack on Ukraine

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**Abstract.** The importance language plays in interpersonal and in intergroup relations can never be over-emphasised. Language can be used to make things happen, and also to prevent things from happening. The aim of this study is to demonstrate that how language is used determines the outcomes of its usage in intergroup and interpersonal relations. Hinging on the affordance language has, this study examines flaming devices in ten excerpts purposively chosen from the speech of President Vladimir Putin—the President of Russia in his bid to explain the reason for the decision to wage war in Ukraine. The study adopts the analytical tools of Critical Discourse Analysis espoused in van Dijk (1998). The objectives of the study are: to identify the flaming items in President Putin's speech; and to point out the potential danger President Putin advertently and inadvertently sends across through the identified flaming devices. The findings reveal that Putin's used derogatory words, phrases and clause when referring to Ukraine, US, and Nato in his speech; these have flaming tendencies; the reference to Ukraine, US, and Nato at some point in the speech are overt, and covert. The flaming devices have the tendency to infuriate the target(s) of the speech, and elicit negative reactions. The study recommends that since the world has become a global village, discourses of prominent persons should be devoid of devices that have the propensity to infuriate the hearers and stimulate negative feelings and reactions.

**Keywords:** Flaming words, Us and them, derogatory words, Russia/Ukraine war.

### 1. Introduction

Language is vital in maintaining cordial relationships between individuals, groups and countries. A tense situation can be doused with the effective and positive use of language. When language is used in a

negative way, the consequences can be dire. The study examines the flaming devices in President Vladimir Putin of Russia, shortly before he waged war on Ukraine in February, 2022. The rift between Russia and Ukraine dates back to 2020 when Ukraine elected Viktor Yakunovych as president. The United States of America and the European Union (EU hereafter) seem not to be comfortable with the election because they saw the new president as too aligned to Russia. Before the election, Ukraine had a free trade deal with the EU, but in 2013, Yakunovych refused to sign the deal, favouring closer ties with Russia. In November 2013, the United States fomented a Colour Revolution which led to a coup in Ukraine in which Yakunovych was overthrown. Leaders in eastern Ukraine declared allegiance to Yakunovych, this led to anti-government protests and a referendum in Crimea where about 97% of persons voted to Return Crimea to Russia. Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine in March 2014.

The new post-coup Ukrainian government proposed a Bill to remove Russian as an official language, this angered Russian speakers in East Ukraine arguing that ethnic Russians were in imminent danger. Russia in early 2014 started sending support to Russians in the eastern regions of Ukraine (Donetsk, Kharkiv, Zaporizhia, and Odessa) who now demanded independence from Ukraine. In April 2014, the mainly Russian-speaking regions of Donetsk and Luhansk broke away from Ukraine and proclaimed themselves as separate Republics.

Also in early 2014, Russia started performing military exercises on the eastern Ukrainian border just as North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) was doing the same in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, who share borders with Russia. In September 2014, Ukraine and Russia signed ceasefire agreements in Minsk, Belarus, to end hostilities in east Ukraine.

Despite the Minsk agreements, from 2014 to date, continuous battles have been waged between Ukrainian forces and Luhansk and Donetsk separatists over territory in the Donbas region in violation of the agreements. The United States and the EU imposed International sanctions against Russia, this led to the collapse of the Russian currency, and economic damage to EU countries. In 2017, the UN published a report stating that the EU countries were losing about “3.2 billion dollars a month” due to Russia’s sanctions. In March 2021, President Putin ordered the Russian military to mobilise troops near its border with Ukraine and in Crimea. In November, Russia deployed vessels to the Black Sea to “observe” US warships. Putin said the US warships were “a serious challenge”. In November 2021, the Russian Ministry of Defence said “The real goal behind the US activities in the Black Sea region is exploring the theater of operations in case Kyiv attempts to settle the conflict in the southeast by force”. From January, 2022, the US suspected and started announcing that Russia would invade Ukraine, stating that an attack could begin before the conclusion of the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing in February.

In January 2022, NATO, and US began providing weapons including anti-armor missiles and other US-made weapons to Ukraine. The Netherlands and Spain also deployed forces to the region in support of NATO. The US in February sent soldiers to Germany and Poland to boost NATO's presence in Europe. Britain also deployed soldiers, warships and jets to eastern Europe. On 21 February, the leaders of the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics, requested Putin to officially recognize the republics' independence. Putin agreed and signed Russia's recognition of the republics and ordered troops to be sent there.

On 22 February, Boris Johnson, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom announced sanctions on Russian banks and individuals. Germany announced suspending the certification process of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline. EU foreign ministers blacklisted all Russians who voted in favour of the recognition of the breakaway regions. On 24 February 2022, President Putin in a televised speech—the speech analysed in this study announced the beginning of a “special military operation” in the Donbass region. The aim of the current study is to demonstrate that how language is used determines the outcome(s) of its usage in intergroup and interpersonal relations. The specific objectives of the study are: to identify the flaming items in President Putin’s speech; and to point out the potential danger President Putin

advertently and inadvertently sends across through the identified flaming devices. The central argument of this study is that most of human problems arise from the misuse of language and, if language is structured without flaming devices conflicts can be brought to the minimum.

Van Dijk (1997); Schäffner (1997 & 2010); Gee (2014); Ahmed (2017); affirm the importance of (critical) discourse analysis in dissecting language use in social relationships, social practices, power, equity, and abuses. It is in line with their thoughts that this study adopts the analytical procedure of Van Dijk (1998). This is presented in the section that follows.

## 2. Van Dijk and the “us” and “them” polarization

The analytical process of Critical Discourse Analysis as espoused by van Dijk (1998) is deployed in this study to show how President Putin polarized himself, his Russian people against the USA citizens clearly depicting the us and them polarization explained by (van Dijk, 1998: 267). van Dijk (1998) is suitable for the analysis carried out in this study, for the fact that he clearly captures in his propositions the two extremes of the human psyche (good versus bad). To van Dijk, humans always want to portray themselves in positive light, and portray others in negative light. Van Dijk (2000) in his ideological square formulates four principles to uncover the discursive reproduction of the ideology of “positive us” and “negative them”; explaining how people position themselves and other. The four ideological square which plays out especially in group conflict/competition are: Emphasize the positive things about Us; Emphasize the negative things about them; De-emphasize the negative things about Us; and De-emphasize the positive things about them. These four ideological square play important roles in the broader contextual strategy of positive self-presentation (us, we, our) and other negative presentations (them, they, their). In the positive self-presentation, positive things are said about “us”, no negative thing or attribute is ascribed to “us”; for the other negative presentations, negative things are said about the other, and no positive thing is said about the “other”. In other words, negativity, condemnation and other negative attitudes are used on the other.

Among a range of discursive strategies to fulfil the ideological square, van Dijk (1998: 276) mentioned ‘the distribution of agency, responsibility or blame,’. Discursive strategies are used by actors to pass negative or positive ideas depending on the one that suits them. Van Dijk (1998) method provides a

platform which uncovers the discursive reproduction of the ideology of positive “us” and negative “them”. The “us” mainly emanates from the source of a discourse, it could be from a group to another. The group represents its members as responsible actors, and the other group as irresponsible. Positive representing by “us” highlights “our good aspects” this is consistent with the first aspect of the ideological square, i.e. expressing/emphasizing information that is positive about us (van Dijk, 1998). Cognitive, social factors and consumption are involved with regards to ideological processing. Van Dijk (1995) explains that ideology controls the thinking of groups in the society which in turn show the main characteristics of groups based on their collective views, aims, standards, ideals, and available resources. As Seidel (1985, p. 45) notes, all kinds of discourse are political, because each discourse serves as a site of struggle, whereby there is a “semantic space in which meanings are produced and/or challenged”. In consonance with Seidel (1985), Weiss and Wodak (2003, p. 3) note that the way powerful people use language makes language to gain power. That is what happens in conflict and war situations, among others, as currently in Russia and Ukraine. All these fall within the realm of CDA, and are quite useful in the analysis carried out in this study.

### 3. Literature Review

Journal articles on Russia/Ukraine war are scarce as at the time of writing this article. What formed the works reviewed in this section are sourced from online press release and digital publications on the war by the mass media. As noted in the methodology, almost all traditional media (the mass media) now have online news platforms and websites. Accordingly, Russia is reported to have launched a punitive attack on Ukraine on 24 February, 2022 (Grajewski, 2022, p.1). The attack is said to be “the biggest military offensive in Europe since World War II” (Grajewski, 2022, p.1).

Avetisova (2015) examined Russia’s and the US behaviours and actions in the Ukraine crisis in order to understand why the conflict resulted in a geopolitical power struggle. Avetisova notes that the debate on the crisis is characterised by bias, subjectivity and propaganda and so for a comprehensive understanding of the involvement of conflict actors in it, qualitative approach is imperative to critically analyse sourced from books and articles. Adopted the qualitative approach, the study identifies diplomacy, economy and military as

the three factors behind Russia’s and US’ behaviours and actions in the Ukraine crisis.

Bebler (2015) examined the roles of three main parties directly involved in the Crimean conflict, and explains historic, demographic, legal, political and military strategic background of the Russian-Ukrainian dispute over Crimea. Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko and Russian President Vladimir Putin, who both represent Slavic nations, were the two leaders involved in the newest conflict over Crimea. Bebler also explains the link the conflict has with the secessionist attempts in Eastern and Southern Ukraine. It highlights the ensuing deterioration of the West’s relations with the Russian Federation.

In what reflects the tenets of the offensive realism theory, Gromyko (2015, p. 49) noted that ‘in the past, the top of the pyramid of global influence was occupied by great powers. In their ranks, the most powerful were big empires.’ He goes on to inform that with time, they got ‘replaced by two superpowers, the United States (US) and the Soviet Union’ (Gromyko, 2015, p. 49). He explains that what majorly makes the difference between these two great powers and the previous heavyweights ‘consisted in the fact that they wielded unmatched capacity to project their influence almost in any corner of the world, and propensity for such a projection was limited mainly by mutual deterrence’ (Gromyko, 2015, p. 49). From the beginning of the 21st century, Russia has been evolving as an autonomous trans-regional centre of influence with elements of a global power (Gromyko, 2015, p. 49-50). This emergence is one of the root causes of the conflict and war Russia has got involved in. Although Russia is basically a European country, it has a transcontinental mentality and psychology.

Chivvis (2015, p. 36) pointed out that ‘Putin’s actions in Ukraine, especially against the backdrop of the 2008 Russia-Georgia War, have opened a Pandora’s box of problems across Central and Eastern Europe, where the political and economic accomplishments of the post-Cold War era are most endangered.’ Chivvis (2015, p. 39-41) regrets and explains danger that Russia’s attack on Ukraine poses to Baltic States and NATO. The danger is undoubtedly why NATO takes decisive actions and declares sanctions against Russia for its punitive actions against Ukraine, Crimea and other like nations.

Metre et al. (2015) analysed Russia’s war with Georgia, Crimea and Ukraine as well as its other forms of violence against its other neighbours. These

scholars insinuate that Russia is simply using its comparative advantages over its neighbours. New conflict dynamics continuously emerges between Russia and its neighbours. According to Metre et al. (2015), Russia's annexation of Crimea and the military operations in eastern Ukraine have brought to place post-Cold War norms that provided stability and development for the former Soviet that are now sovereign countries bordering Russia. Obviously, since no human activity can be carried out without the use of language, it is quite clear that language had been used in the annexation of Crimea and the military operations in eastern Ukraine by Putin and his allies.

Nitoiu (2016) examined the Ukraine crisis in relation to the co-operation dichotomy in EU-Russia relations over conflict. Nitoiu (2016, p. 1) affirms that Russia is a major contributor to the Ukraine crisis, noting that Ukraine's popular choice and enthusiasm for European integration, expressed clearly on the streets of Kyiv, appears to be what has made Russia to resort to taking up a (neo)revisionist attitude against Ukraine. Like Averre (2009), Nitoiu (2016) believes that relations between Russia and the EU as well as the West as a whole have been frozen and been directed on path towards conflict. Nitoiu's (2016, p. 1) work 'analyses how the traditional dichotomy between conflict and cooperation in EU-Russia relations was replaced by conflict in the context of the Ukraine crisis.' The central argument of the work is that 'the breakdown of the symbolic and peaceful cohabitation between the EU and Russia has been influenced by the fact that both actors have chosen to ignore key tensions that characterised their post-Cold War interactions' (Nitoiu, 2016, p. 1). The work identified three sets of tensions associated with the Ukraine crisis and Russia's invading actions against Ukraine, but fails to look at the role positive use of language can play in dousing tension.

There is mutual suspicion between Russia and Ukraine on one hand and between Russia and the EU on the other (Gromyko, 2015; Haukkala, 2010). The suspicion would have remained ever unknown and unfelt if language has not been used continuously to express fear of domination, marginalisation, distrust, superiority tendencies, cultural and ideological clashes.

On their part, Pikulicka-Wilczewska & Sakwa (2016 p. iv) observe that 'the intense and dangerous turmoil, provoked by the breakdown in Russo-Ukrainian relations, has escalated into a crisis that now afflicts both European and global affairs. Pikulicka-Wilczewska and Sakwa (2016) point out

that their work, investigates and reveals factors behind what has come to be known as 'Ukraine crisis'. Their work does so from the point of view of Russo-Ukrainian relations, upon which the perspectives of the various groups involved, are grasped. They also look at the discursive processes that have contributed to the developments in and interpretations of the conflict.

Grajewski (2022) pointed out that the attack in Ukraine by Russia on 24 February, 2022 is said to be "the biggest military offensive in Europe since World War II" (Grajewski, 2022, p.1). According to Grajewski (2022), the resistance to Moscow's incursion into the territory of its south-western neighbour and attempts to capture Kyiv and major cities thwarted President Putin's reported plans for a quick conquest and installation of a subservient government. Grajewski (2022, p.1) concludes that "Putin has moved Russia's nuclear force on to 'special alert'", sparking fear and renewed condemnation across the world.

Astrov et al. (2022) express uncertainty about Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the kind of sanctions (partial or full) to be imposed on Russia by the EU. Applying a stylised VARX model on Russian quarterly time series, Astrov et al. (2022) found that Russia is extremely vulnerable to a reduction in the price or volume of its energy exports. This option of truly nuclear sanctions likely has negative impact on both Russia and EU. Russia's economy will be greatly affected by the 'cutting Russian banks off from the SWIFT system and dollar markets, and bans on exports of high-tech goods to Russia' (Astrov et al., 2022, p. 1). The current war Russia has engaged Ukraine in will isolate its economy and mar its diplomatic and economic fortunes. According to Astrov et al. (2022, p. 1), Russia's current invasion of Ukraine 'will also likely accelerate EU moves towards energy diversification away from Russia.

The studies above have looked at the Russia/Ukraine hostilities from interesting angles; majorly the power tussle between Russia and Ukraine, the reason behind the hostilities, the danger of the continued hostilities, and the likely consequence of the war. Quite interesting as the studies are, they have left out important variable in their researches—how flaming devices in utterances of prominent personalities can stimulate hostilities.

#### 4. Methodology

The study is descriptive and qualitative in nature. The data analysed were extracts of the speech of Presidents Putin from footage made available on

February 24, 2022 on the official website of the Russian president (kremlin.ru), as he addressed the nation at the Kremlin in Moscow. The speech came on the heels of his decision to recognise the Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic on February 21 and the signing of mutual cooperation agreements between Russia and the two breakaway regions. It was reported that in the early hours of Thursday, February 24, 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin addressed his nation, announcing a "special military operation" against Ukraine. The data are as translated by Al Jazeera staff, released by the Russian presidency. The analytical tools of Critical Discourse Analysis by van Dijk were deployed to the excerpts, to tease out the overt flaming potentials of words, phrases, and clauses in the speech. In all ten excerpts were purposively extracted from the speech; at the analysis section, the extracts are put in bold fonts to distinguish them from the rest of the paper.

## 5. Data Presentation and Analysis

**Excerpt 1: "I am referring to what causes us particular concern and anxiety – those fundamental threats against our country that year after year, step by step, are offensively and unceremoniously created by irresponsible politicians in the West."**

In the last line of this excerpt, the derogatory phrase "... irresponsible politicians..." as used by President Putin is a flaming device and has the tendency to send negative signals to the addressees, and rouse negative reactions. He pitches himself together with his Russians against the West, as he uses the pronoun "I" to refer to himself, "our", to refer to his fellow Russians, then "irresponsible politicians" which is derogatory to refer to the West. He portrays himself and his fellow Russians as good people, who are being caused anxiety by the actions of the West who he portrays as "irresponsible politicians".

**Excerpt 2: "By the way, American politicians, political scientists and journalists themselves write and say that in recent years, an actual 'empire of lies' has been created inside the United States. It's hard to disagree with that, as it's true."**

Here, the phrase 'empire of lies' contains words with flaming tendencies. Questions arise as to who created the 'empire of lies', how, when and who are those that rule the abstract empire. Describing the abstract or purported empire as an actual empire is also questionable. These words accuse various categories

of personalities in the United States of being liars. Meanwhile, Putin makes no real reference to specific American politicians, political scientists and journalists who write and say so in recent years. Putin fails to give reason(s) to support his claim that "American politicians, political scientists and journalists themselves write and say that in recent years, an actual 'empire of lies' has been created inside the United States...". Through his assertion, he, portrays US as bad through the flaming device "empire of lies". These are flaming words which and can quite infuriate the addressee.

**Excerpts 3: "...Therefore, with good reason, we can confidently say that the entire so-called Western bloc, formed by the United States in its own image and likeness, all of it is an 'empire of lies.'"**

In this excerpt, Putin further affirms his belief that the "so called Western bloc, formed by the United States in its own image and likeness, all of it is an 'empire of lies.'" Here again, he used the pronoun "we" to refer to himself and his fellow Russians as "truthful people", while "them" (Western bloc, formed by the United States) are "an empire of lies". Even though Putin claims to have based his drawn conclusion on reason– logic (...Therefore, with good reason ...), he made hasty generalisation and thus commits fallacy of hasty generalisation. Also, the flaming words (empire of lies) condemn America's hard-earned image, reputation and power. This total condemnation of a country's collective image is capable of rousing the reactions of the Americans. Putin says good things about Russia, and bad things about USA.

**Excerpt 4: ...In this regard, no one should have any doubts that a direct attack on our country will lead to defeat and horrible consequences for any potential aggressor."**

Putin in this excerpt, expressed confidence in Russia's comparative advantage over many other nations in terms of military might and possession of weaponry. He chooses words from war lexicon which are flaming words: "attack", "defeat" and "horrible consequences". These words can arouse sentiments from the target to want to take measure that will disprove Putin of his claims. His words express his optimism that "horrible consequences" are bound to befall any "potential aggressor" of Russia. His use of "our country" foregrounds his positive position about Russia, while the West especially US is seen as a "potential aggressor", who will face "horrible consequences".

**Excerpt 5: “They, of course, will crawl into the Crimea, just like in the Donbas, in order to kill, just as the gangs of Ukrainian nationalists, Hitler’s accomplices, killed defenceless people during the Great Patriotic War.”**

Putin used the pronoun “they” to implicitly refer to USA, casting the USA in a negative light as the outgroup. The phrases “in order to kill”, points to a siege mission, USA aim of crawling into Crimea and in Donbas is “to kill defenceless people”. By implication, reflecting on this particular phrase beyond its semantic meaning, one realises and can rightly assert that Putin does to not only imply the killing by the leading NATO countries and extreme nationalists and Neo-Nazis in Ukraine, but also that which he and his military forces were to embark on in retaliation for the past killing by “gangs of Ukrainian nationalists”, who Putin considers to be “Hitler’s accomplices”.

The reflection on “the Great Patriotic War” in the last line of the excerpt presupposes the new war that will be like that past war, in which “the gangs of Ukrainian nationalists, Hitler’s accomplices, killed defenceless people.” In contrast, Putin insinuates that this time, the people will be defended. Referring to Ukraine as “Hitler’s accomplices” casts Ukraine in a negative light, as it calls to mind the massacre that took place under Hitler and his accomplices.

**Excerpt 6: “The course of events and the incoming information show that Russia’s clash with these forces is inevitable. It is only a matter of time: they are getting ready; they are waiting for the right time. Now they also claim to acquire nuclear weapons. We will not allow this to happen.”**

Putin continues his depicting and casting of USA in a negative light as he used and reiterates with the plural pronoun “they” to refer to USA, that they are getting ready ostensibly to attack Russia, he sets up the USA, as the bad by mentioning them first through saying “they are getting ready; they are waiting for the right time”. And in response “We will not allow this to happen”; shows Putin and Russian’s readiness to do all they can to resist the perceived enemy and others; and also sends a message to Ukraine and other targets to get ready for counter attack from Russia. The use of the pronoun “We” includes him and his fellow Russians, as he justifies while they are ready to respond to USA’s attack. The independent clause “Russia’s clash with these forces is inevitable” sends out the message that Russia was certain about clashing with the said forces. As such, Russia is fully ready to clash (war) with the forces (USA). Ukraine unfortunately, is the target for the planned clash.

Putin declares that even though Ukraine’s claim of the possession of nuclear weapon will not deter him. Putin’s flaming words are capable of triggering responses from Zelensky and Biden who are the main target of his speech.

**Excerpt 7: We have been left no other option to protect Russia and our people, but for the one that we will be forced to use today. The situation requires us to take decisive and immediate action. The people’s republics of Donbas turned to Russia with a request for help.**

Putin in this excerpt sort of seals and justifies the choice of words he had used in previous excerpts to defend himself and Russians, and castigate “the others” the USA, Ukraine and NATO. He justifies that the others have “... left him no other option to protect Russia and our people “but for the one that we will be forced to use today” to send a signal to them (USA, Ukraine and NATO) that he and Russians are ready to stand up to face the enemies. By saying that the situation required them to take decisive and immediate action, Putin rouses the consciousness of his people to be ready for war. He further justifies his pull to go to war because “The people’s republics of Donbas turned to Russia with a request for help”. Putin foregrounds that the empathy for “the people’s republics of Donbas who turned to Russia for help” is part of the reason why they are going for war, partly to defend Donbas who are “helpless”. This statement is capable of making Ukrainians hate Donbas that they remotely ignited Russia’s attack on them. Putin used the pronouns “we” and “us” to show collectiveness of the Russians to take the decision to wage war on Ukraine, indirectly setting up Ukraine as the “them” who need to be dealt with.

**Excerpt 8: Its goal is to protect people who have been subjected to abuse and genocide by the regime in Kyiv for eight years. And for this we will pursue the demilitarisation and denazification of Ukraine, as well as bringing to justice those who committed numerous bloody crimes against civilians, including citizens of the Russian Federation.**

Putin claimed that the goal of his war against Ukraine was “to protect people who have been subjected to abuse and genocide by the regime in Kyiv for eight years.” From the foregoing speech, it can be inferred that the people is referring to in this excerpt are the people of Donbas. In his effort to convince his military, other allies and Russians in general to see the need for his declared punitive war against

Ukraine. The utterance is flaming, and can incite the Ukrainians to want to stand up to Putin. President Putin justifies his reason and wants everyone concerned to see reason with him for waging war in Ukraine that he wants “to protect people who have been subjected to abuse and genocide by the regime in Kyiv for eight years”.

The independent clause “...we will pursue the demilitarisation and denazification of Ukraine” is flaming and capable of infuriating Ukrainians. By talking about demilitarisation, his Russian military automatically became charged in readiness for the task of demilitarisation of Ukraine, an avenue that would show its strength, gallantry, combat-readiness, capacity, expertise and the extent to which he shows his protection of Russia’s national interests and consolidate his stand as the President of Russia. Through his speech, he roused Ukraine to be ready for war. Putin’s statement of pursuing “the demilitarisation of Ukraine and denazification of Ukraine”. By implication, Putin labels Ukraine a Nazi country that has to be “denazified”, seemingly meaning that Putin and his forces were ready to treat Ukrainians as Nazis. The use of the phrase “denazification of Ukraine” is derogatory.

**Excerpt 9: ‘Once again, I emphasise, all responsibility for possible bloodshed will lay on the conscience of the ruling regime in Ukraine.’**

The polarisation of “us” and “them” is implicitly stated here by Putin. The implied “them” will be responsible for all possible bloodshed. Putin shifted the responsibility for the bloodshed he and/or his forces will cause in Ukraine to the Ukrainian ruling class.

**Excerpt 10: Whoever tries to hinder us, or threaten our country or our people, should know that Russia’s response will be immediate and will lead you to consequences that you have never faced in your history. We are ready for any turn of events. All necessary decisions in this regard have been made. I hope that I will be heard.**

Putin used threatening words to warn other nations from intervening or interfering in his punitive war against Ukraine. He boldly cautions “Whoever tries to hinder us, or threaten our country or our people, should know that Russia’s response will be immediate and will lead you to consequences that you have never faced in your history...” . This bold declaration of Russia’s might and power to face any nation by Putin portrays him as arrogant and proud. The declaration has the tendency to provoke other

nations who are overtly or covertly interested in impasse between Russia and Ukraine. Putin further warns that “We are ready for any turn of events”, that is, him and his fellow Russians are up to the task of quelling attacks that may arise from any quarters. He adds that “All necessary decisions in this regard have been made”, meaning that he had conclude arrangements to launch attack on any nation of the world that attempts to help Ukraine.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

A positive use of language is very crucial in interpersonal relationships, otherwise of it leads to conflict. President Putin’s speech delivered on February 24, 2022, announcing a “special military operation” against Ukraine is full of flaming devices. Through the analysis made, it is clear that Putin’s has used derogatory words, phrases and clause in referring to Ukraine, US, and Nato in his speech. As revealed through the analytical procedures of CDA deployed in this study, Putin used negative and derogatory adjectives to refer to the “them” (Ukraine, US, and NATO). In some points in the speech, the mention of the “them” is obvious, and in some cases, it is implied. The “them” as revealed in the speech is full of evil and negativity.

The world is now a global village where people can be heard immediately when they speak from any part of the world, with this in mind, the study recommends that discourses of prominent persons should be devoid of devices that have the propensity to infuriate the hearers and stimulate negative feelings, and reactions. Views, feelings and thoughts pertaining a situation can be subtly passed across to the target of a speech. Further studies can be carried out on the speech and response of President Zelensky of Ukraine to Putin’s speech.

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