

**Title: Talking Heads:
Forecasting Russian
Aggression in 'Frozen'
Separatist Conflicts**

PRESENTER:

Michael Lenko

Faculty of Arts and Social Science

Political Science Department

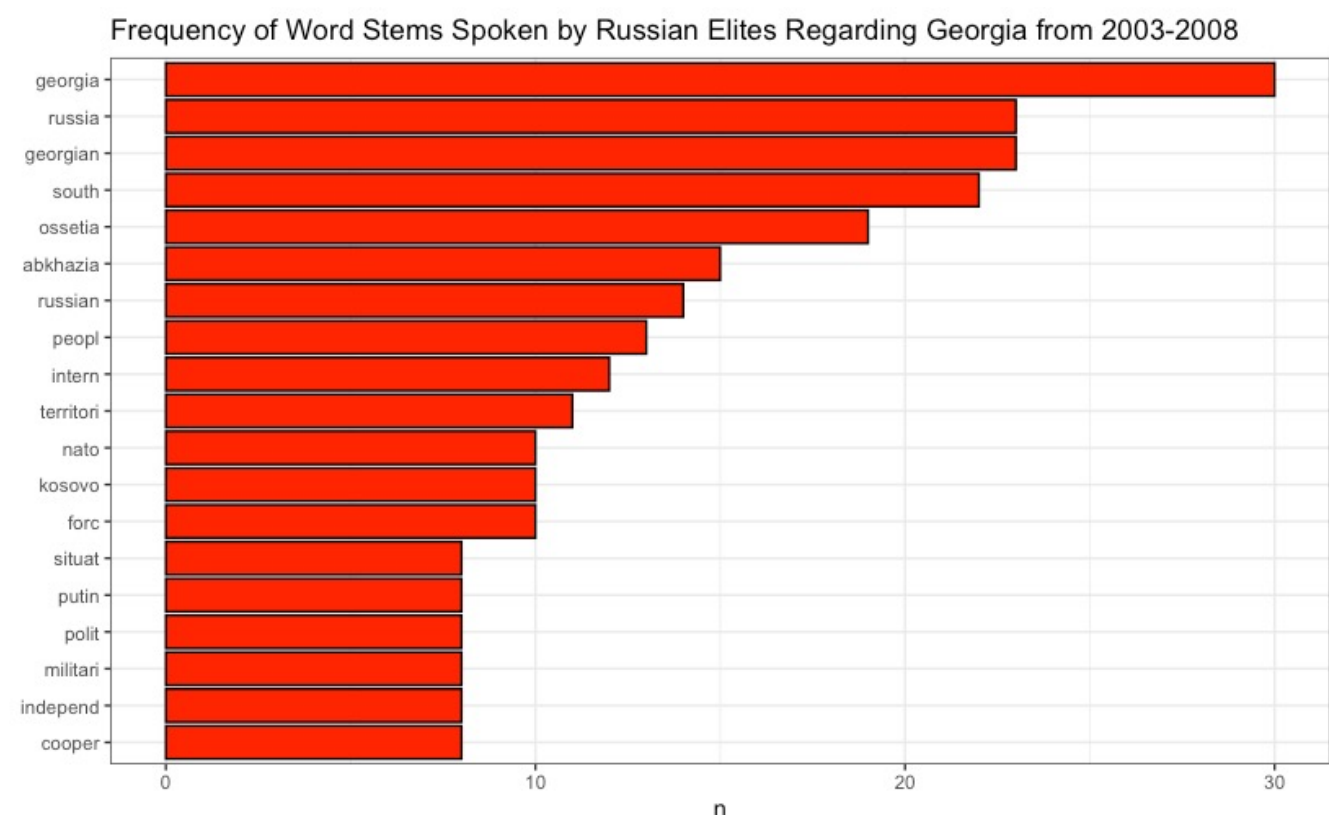


BACKGROUND: What if Russia's invasion of Eastern Ukraine could have been forecasted months to years before it happened? This project aims to examine whether Russian elite rhetoric can potentially be used to forecast Russian aggression in 'frozen' separatist conflicts.

METHODS

- 6 cases studies covering 3 time periods: 1992-2002, 2003-2008, 2009-2022, and two states: Moldova and Georgia
- Russia elite rhetoric taken from quotes, from news 180 articles.
- Run through various text analyses methods: Sentiment Analysis, Bigram Analysis and, Word Frequency,
- Test designed to indicate whether Russian elite rhetoric became more negative before Russia invaded Georgia in 2008, and whether certain words were used in greater prevalence and combination.

RESULTS



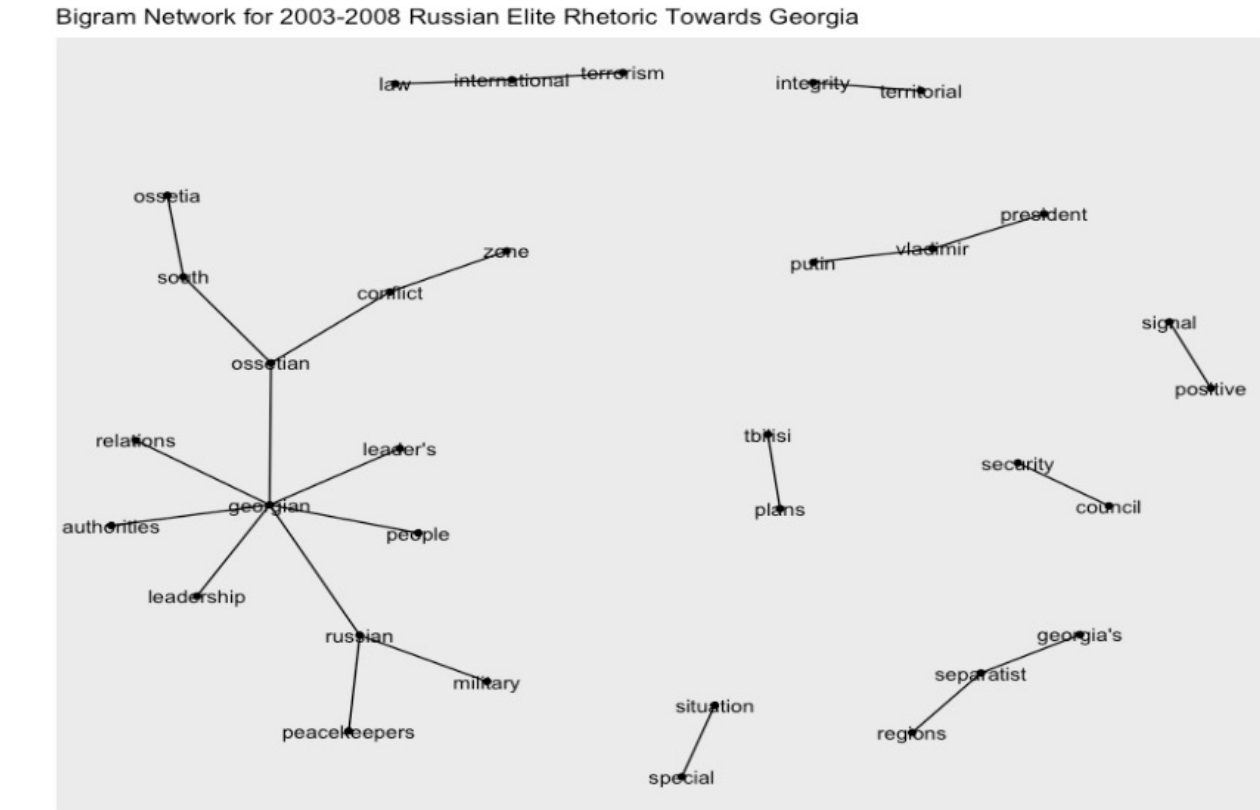
DISCUSSION

- Russian elite rhetoric needs to be centered on words related to power concerns.
- The lack of improvement in negative Russian elite rhetoric regarding Georgia and the improvement in Moldova between 2003-2008, is an interesting finding that potentially signals rhetoric's potential forecasting ability.

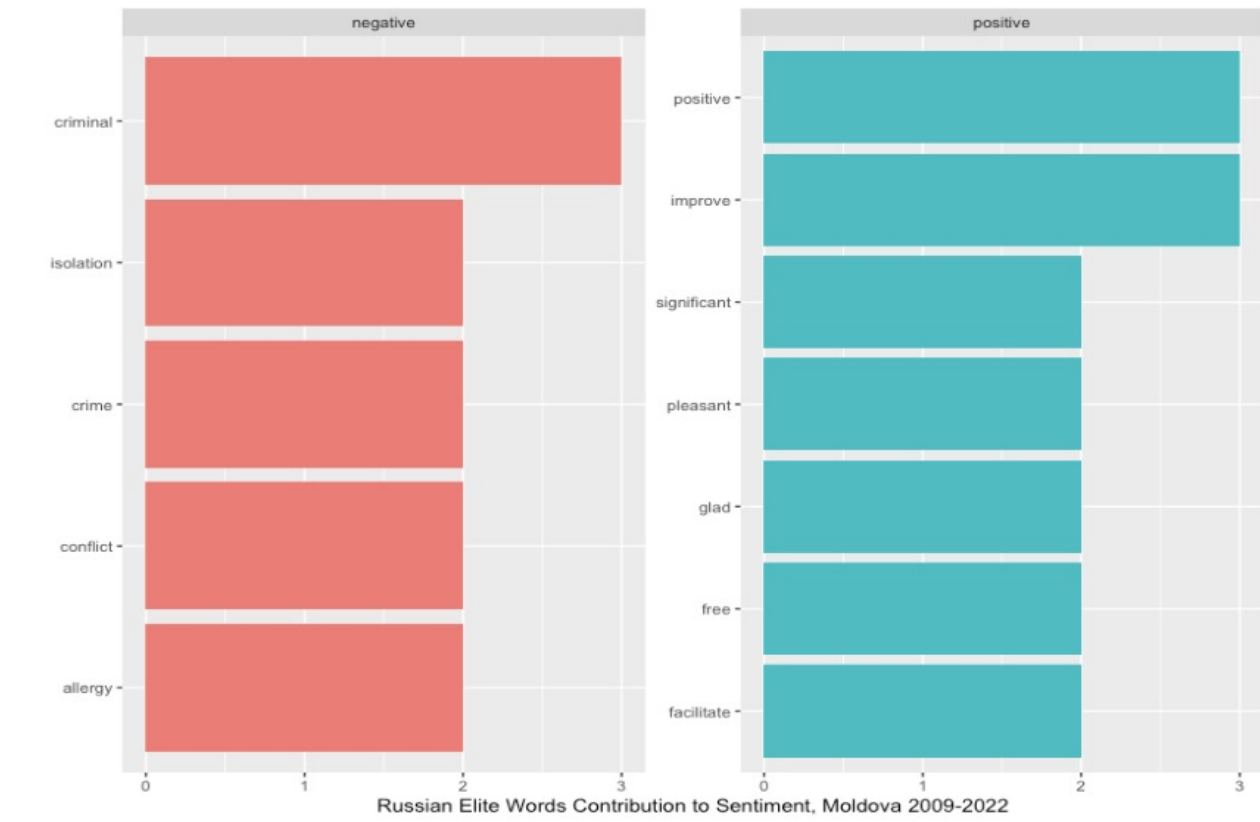
Sentiment scores from Russian elites' rhetoric can potentially forecast future Russian aggression in frozen separatist conflicts, but more cases need to be studied before these results can be generalized.



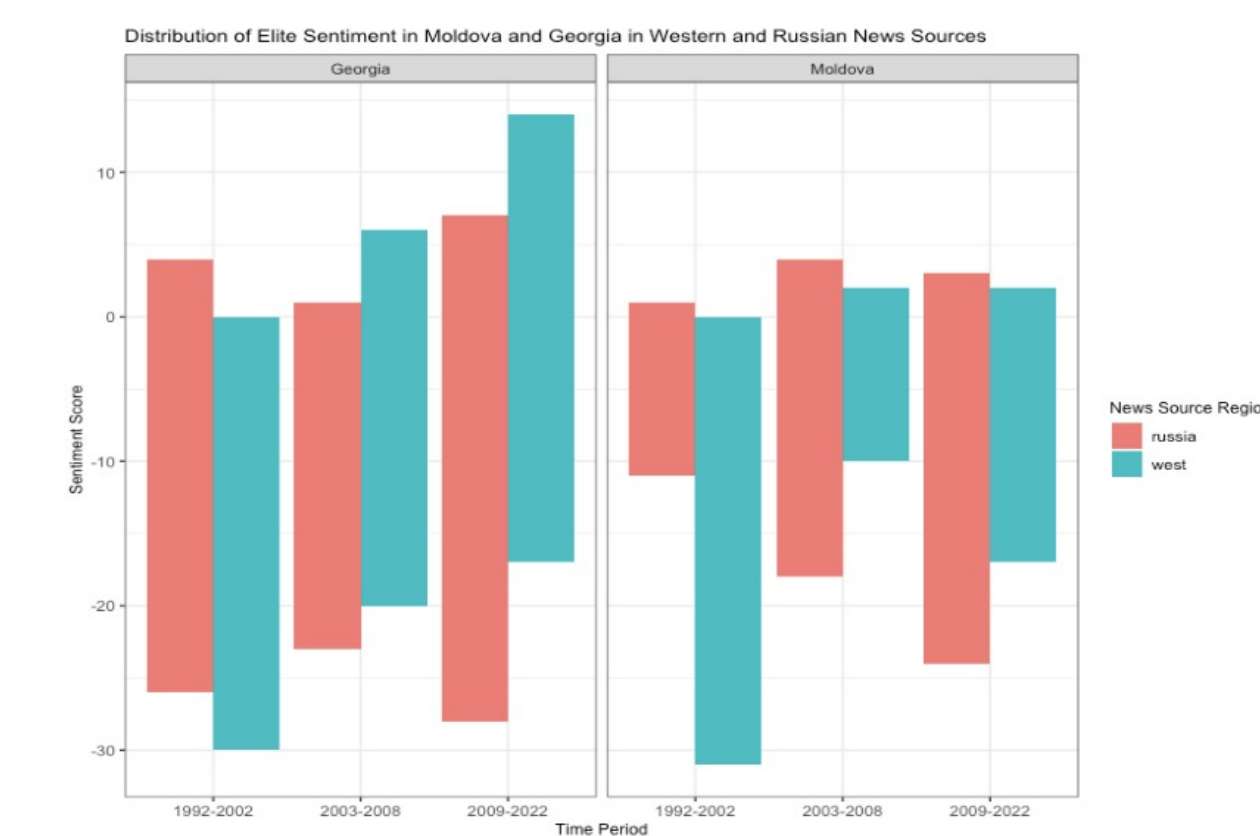
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- Bigram chart highlights Russian elite's rhetoric from 2003-2008 focuses on Georgian leadership, the international community, and the conflict with Georgia.



- The words which contribute the greatest to the sentiment of Russian elite rhetoric regarding Georgia between 2003-2008, are related to power concerns by Russian elites.



- While not generalizable, the minor variation between the sentiment in the regional coverage of Russian involvement in the 'frozen' separatist conflicts is an interested trend.

Michael Lenko,
michael_lenko@sfu.ca