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# Annotation Guidelines for the Analysis of Attitude and Argumentation in UNSC Speeches on the Ukrainian Conflict

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# 1 Introduction

This annotation guideline outlines the methodology for analyzing attitudinal evaluations and argumentation structures in United Nations Security Council (UNSC) speeches related with the Ukrainian conflict. The goal of the annotation task is to systematically identify and label evaluative language and argumentative patterns within diplomatic discourse. The framework integrates the Attitude domain of **Appraisal Theory** (Martin and White 2005) with the identification of **Argumentation Schemes** (Walton, Reed, and Macagno 2008), providing a foundation for the linguistic and rhetorical analysis of how parties associated with the conflict are discursively represented in the UNSC context.

## 2 Dataset Description

The dataset used for this study is derived from the *UNSCon* dataset (Zaczynska, Bourgonje, and Stede 2024), which builds upon the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) dataset developed by Schönfeld, Eckhard, Patz, and Meegdenburg (2019, 2025). It contains 87 English-language UNSC speeches, selected by Zaczynska, Bourgonje, and Stede (2024) based on the following criteria:

1. The debate led to an unanimously adopted resolution.
2. The average sentiment score of the debate was below 0.
3. Subtopic were selected in consultation with a political scientist.

From the UNSCon dataset, a subset of 45 speeches focusing on the Ukrainian conflict—particularly those addressing the annexation of Crimea and events leading up to the Minsk II agreement—was selected for the annotations and further analysis. Table 1 summarizes the included debates.

Debate Id	N. of Spch.	Year
SPV.7154	17	2014
SPV.7165	13	2014
SPV.7219	15	2014

Table 1: Dataset debates and number of speeches.

Each speech contains an average of 33 sentences and approximately 707 words, typically structured into an opening preamble and a main discussion body. All 45 speeches were previously annotated with premise-claim relations by Maria Poiaganova, which serve as the foundation for further annotation tasks.

### 3 Description of Appraisal Theory

*Appraisal Theory* offers a framework for analyzing how speakers and writers’ express evaluation, and how the textual voice positions itself in relation to other voices and viewpoints within the discourse (Martin and White 2005; Oteíza 2017). Situated within the broader framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday 1994), this theory emphasizes on the analysis of ”meanings in contexts towards rhetorical effects rather than towards grammatical forms” (Martin and White 2005, p. 94)—a particularly relevant focus when examining diplomatic discourse, such United Nations Security Council (UNSC) speeches.

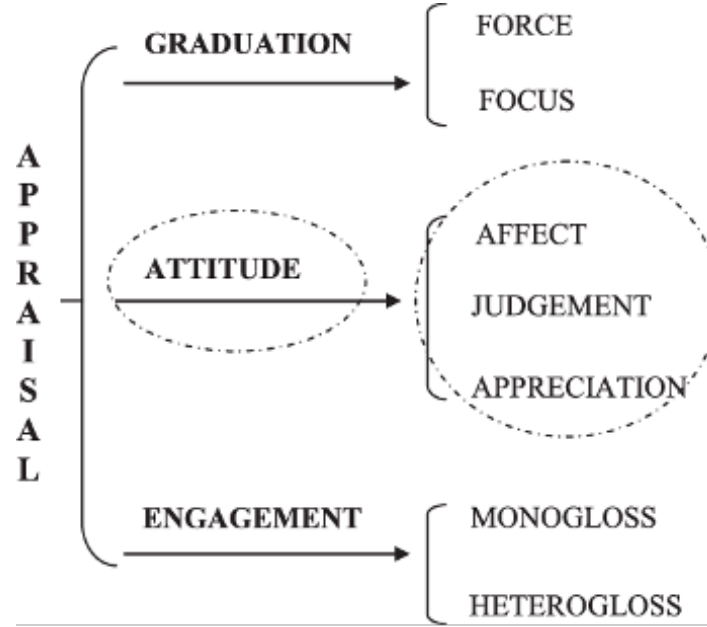


Figure 1: Domains and Subdomains of Appraisal Theory (based on Martin and White (2005)).

As illustrated in Figure 1<sup>1</sup>, Appraisal Theory comprises three main domains:

1. **Graduation:** Concerned with the grading or scaling of interpersonal meaning, this domain addresses how speaker and writers adjust the intensity or preciseness of their evaluations to increase or decrease their interpersonal impact (Martin and White 2005).
2. **Attitude:** Focuses on the types of evaluations directed toward entities (human or non-human), capturing how they are appraised in terms of emotion, ethics, or aesthetics (Martin and White 2005; Oteíza 2017; Oteíza and Pinuer 2019).
3. **Engagement:** Encompasses the linguistic resources speakers use to position themselves toward a proposition and to indicate degrees of alignment, certainty, or dialogic involvement (Martin and White 2005).

This annotation guidelines focuses specifically on the **Attitude** domain, as it is the only domain that

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<sup>1</sup>From Zhang (2013)

provides a detailed taxonomy for appraisals explicitly directed at humans or objects (Martin and White 2005; Oteíza and Pinuer 2019). This makes it particularly suited for analyzing how discursive actors are evaluated in UNSC speeches.

### 3.1 Attitude Domain

The Attitude domain captures emotional and ethical evaluations, as well as aesthetic and value-based judgments. This domain is divided in three subdomains:

1. **Affect:** Evaluation expressed as an emotional reaction (Martin and White 2005; Oteíza and Pinuer 2019).
2. **Judgement:** Evaluation of human behavior or character based on moral or ethical standards (e.g., honesty) (Martin and White 2005; Oteíza and Pinuer 2019).
3. **Appreciation:** Evaluation of objects, processes, or phenomena, often based on aesthetic or value-oriented criteria (e.g., complexity or clarity), contextualized within a specified field or discourse community (Martin and White 2005; Oteíza 2017).

Each of these subdomains carries a polarity—evaluations can be either positive or negative— and sub-categories<sup>2</sup>. Additionally, every appraisal has a **target**, referring to the entity (person, group, object, process, phenomena) being evaluated.

## 4 Description of Argumentation Schemes

In argumentative communication, **argumentation schemes** are understood as the abstract structures that underlie the inferential connection between premise(s) and conclusion (Visser et al. 2020). The annotation of argumentation schemes in this project builds upon prior claim-premise annotations conducted by Maria Poiaganova following the methodology of Haddadan, Cabrio, and Villata (2019), who define:

1. **Premises** as “assertions made by a debater for supporting their claims (i.e., reasons or justifications)” (p. 4686); and,
2. **Claims** as the “ultimate goal of an argument, in the context of political debates, claims can be policy advocated by a party or a candidate to be undertaken which needs to be justified in order to be accepted by the audience” (p. 4686).

Walton, Reed, and Macagno (2008) proposed 60 argumentation schemes organized into three main categories:

1. *Reasoning*: Includes inductive, practical, abductive and casual reasoning. It includes different types of sequences in which “there is a chaining of inferences, such that the conclusion of one local inference becomes a premise of the next one” (Walton, Reed, and Macagno 2008, p. 348).

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<sup>2</sup>The attitude subdomains (*affect*, *judgement*, and *appreciation*) already provide insights into the speakers’ evaluations of the conflict parties associated with the Ukrainian conflict; therefore, it was deemed unnecessary to delve further into the internal categories of each subdomain.

2. *Source-based arguments*: Comprises all cases where the “argument is dependent on a source, an agent that is in a position to know something” (Walton, Reed, and Macagno 2008, pp. 348–349).
3. *Arguments that apply rules to particular cases*: Pertains to arguments related to a “situation in which some sort of general rule is applied to the specifics of a given case, and the argument is decided on the basis of how well the rule fits the case” (Walton, Reed, and Macagno 2008, p. 349).

Following Swain (2017), a selection of 18 argumentation schemes from Walton, Reed, and Macagno (2008) typology is adopted for annotation purposes in this study (see Table 2).

Type	Argumentation Scheme	Description
Reasoning	1. <i>Practical Reasoning</i>	If doing something helps you reach your goal, then you should do it.
	2. <i>Positive Consequence</i>	If an action happens then good consequences will occur.
	3. <i>Negative Consequence</i>	If an action happens then bad consequences will occur.
	4. <i>Positive Value</i>	If something is seen as a good value, it strengthens the agent's commitment to their goal.
	5. <i>Negative Value</i>	If something is seen as a bad value, it makes the agent less likely to stay committed to their goal.
	6. <i>Distress</i>	Someone is suffering, and another agent brings a positive change for them.
	7. <i>Cause to Effect</i>	If something usually causes something else and it's happening now, we expect the same result.
	8. <i>Evidence</i>	The argument is supported by the presence of facts.
	9. <i>Threat</i>	If agent X can produce harm if Y does A, then Y should not do A.
Source-Based	10. <i>Expert Opinion</i>	If an expert says something is true or false, it is accepted due to their expertise.
	11. <i>Position to Know</i>	A knowledgeable person's claim is trusted because they are in a position to know.
	12. <i>Popular Opinion</i>	If everyone believes something, that gives us a reason to believe it too.
	13. <i>Ad Hominem</i>	A person's argument is dismissed due to bad character, not the content.
	14. <i>Bias</i>	A biased person is less likely to have considered both sides.
Rules	15. <i>Example</i>	One example of property F coming with G implies this will generally happen.
	16. <i>Precedent</i>	Justifies an exception to a rule.
	17. <i>Rules</i>	Based on (non-)compliance with a rule.
	18. <i>Verbal Classification</i>	If someone has a property linked to a category, they are assumed to share its characteristics.

Table 2: Classification System for Argumentation Schemes (own creation based on Walton et al. 2008).

## 5 Annotating Attitude and Argumentation Schemes

### 5.1 Annotation Tool

The *INCePTION* tool (Klie et al. 2018) was selected for annotating the speeches. It is an open-source annotation platform for diverse tasks. The tool allows to create a project with specific features according to the annotation’s needs. Two projects were created:

1. **Project for Appraisal Theory:** with attitude subdomains (affect, judgement, appreciation), polarity (positive and negative) and the targets of the appraisals.
2. **Project for Argumentation Schemes:** relations between claims and premises (previously annotated by Maria Poiaganova) and argumentation schemes (Walton, Reed, and Macagno 2008).

### 5.2 Annotating Attitude

Annotations should be performed in a **chunk level**, depending on how the attitude is formulated—inscribed (explicit) or invoked (implicit)—following Anisimova (2023). The annotator’s task consists of:

1. **Reading each sentence** to identify tokens or chunks expressing an evaluation and annotating them with the appropriate **Appraisal Theory tag**.
  - If the annotator is confident in identifying the **attitude type and polarity**, these are assigned immediately.
  - If the category is uncertain, the fragment is temporarily labeled only with the **Appraisal Theory tag**.
2. Once the annotator completes the entire speech, all previously uncertain cases (marked only with the Appraisal Theory tag) are **revisited**:
  - If the category can now be identified with confidence, the annotation is updated accordingly.
  - If not, these fragments remain unresolved until the **final review phase** of the annotation process.

For each identified evaluative segment the annotator is expected to determine the **target**. Only **explicit** targets will be considered, this includes **only cases where the target is explicitly** stated—e.g., names of countries, pronouns, or political actors. The target may appear:

- In the same sentence as the appraisal, or
- In one or more preceding sentences, as long as the reference remains explicit.

#### 5.2.1 Affect

**Affect** refers to the speaker or writers’ emotional reaction (Martin and White 2005) towards an evaluated entity (i.e., a person, an object, a situation, an action). Common examples of affect include: “*I hate it*”, “*I like it*”, but as mentioned by Anisimova (2023) it can be found in more complex cases such as “*we welcome*” and “*we hope*”.



To annotate this subdomain the annotator is expected to:

1. Identify language (i.e., words or a group of words) expressing emotions or emotional reactions.
2. Determine whether the emotion is positive or negative.
3. If the target is explicit, it must be annotated.

Some examples of *affect* include:

**Example 1.**

Our deepest, most heartfelt condolences [affect-negative] go to the **families of the victims and to the people and Governments** [target] of those countries affected. (UNSC\_2014\_SPV.7219\_spch004, United Kingdom Of Great Britain And Northern Ireland)

**Example 2.**

I thank [affect-positive] **Under-Secretary-General Feltman** [target] for his briefing. (UNSC\_2014\_SPV.7165\_spch008, United States Of America)

### 5.2.2 Judgement

The **judgement** subdomains allow one to evaluate people (i.e., behavior and character) and entities presented with agency and the capacity to interact with individuals (e.g., a country as a political actor).

To annotate this subdomain the annotator is expected to:

1. Identify evaluative language (i.e., words or a group of words) directed at people or entities (as defined above).
2. Determine whether the **judgement** is positive or negative.
3. If the target is explicit, it must be annotated.

Some examples of *judgement* include:

**Example 3.**

We have heard many unfair pronouncements about Russia today, but of course the most unfair of all came from our **Ukrainian colleague** [target], who accused Russia of terrorism. (UNSC\_2014\_SPV.7154\_spch021, Russian Federation)

**Example 4.**

We [target] will play a constructive [judgement-positive] role in that process. (UNSC\_2014\_SPV.7219\_spch008, China)

### 5.2.3 Appreciation

**Appreciation** refers to the evaluation of objects, situations and phenomena.

To annotate this subdomain the annotator is expected to:

1. Identify evaluative language (i.e., words or a group of words) directed at objects, situations, and phenomena.
2. Determine whether the **appreciation** is positive or negative.
3. If the target is explicit, it must be annotated.

Some examples of *appreciation* include:

#### Example 5.

The precise circumstances and causes of *this tragic event* [target] [appreciation-negative] must be established quickly and beyond any doubt. (UNSC\_2014\_SPV.7219\_spch004, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)

#### Example 6.

The **talks** [target] between Russia, Ukraine, the European Union and the United States planned for 17 April are an *essential step*[appreciation-positive] in that direction, but can take place successfully only on that basis. (UNSC\_2014.SP.V.7154\_spch011, Australia)

### 5.2.4 Special Cases

Although Anisimova (2023) guidelines are followed, some adaptations include the following particular cases:

1. The use of the term crisis (examples 7 and 8) in reference to the situation in Ukraine is interpreted as a **negative appreciation**, in line with Oteíza (2017).

#### Example 7.

The *crisis* [appreciation-negative] in Ukraine is rooted in a complex situation [...]  
(UNSC\_2014.SP.V.7219\_spch008, China)

#### Example 8.

With the shooting down of a civilian airplane carrying civilians, the Ukrainian *crisis* [appreciation-negative] is no longer a conflict between the Ukrainian military and armed separatists.  
(UNSC\_2014.SP.V.7219\_spch018, Rwanda).

2. The use of **modal verbs** such as *must* and *should* is not considered a **positive judgement**, as these refer to future, hypothetical actions (example 9).

#### Example 9.

Moscow *must* reject these latest unlawful actions, and do so publicly.(UNSC\_2014.SPV.7154.spch007, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)

3. The use of the terms such as *terrorist*, *armed* + noun (e.g., *group* or *forces*), and *separatists* is classified as **negative judgement**, despite their potential to appear neutral or common words. This classification is based on the negative evaluation these terms often convey about the individuals or groups in question.

**Example 10.**

Armed separatists, terrorists [judgement-negative] and foreign fighters and their supporters bear the responsibility for the deaths and injuries among the civilian population, including children, women and the elderly. (UNSC\_2014.SPV.7219.spch007, Lithuania)

**Example 11.**

We urge Russia to cease its policy of supporting armed separatist groups [judgement-negative] [...] (UNSC\_2014.SPV.7219.spch004, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland).

4. In cases where multiple appraisals co-occur in a fragment, **only the explicit appraisal** is annotated:

**Example 12.**

The Egyptian delegation chose not to vote against [affect-positive] today’s resolution 2272 [...] (UNSC\_2014.SPV.7643.spch005).

In this example, a **positive affect** is explicitly conveyed through support for the resolution. An implicit positive appreciation of the resolution also exists, but it is **not annotated**. Since one objective of this annotation process is to support computational modeling, only explicit appraisals are annotated in such cases. This decision increases the model’s ability to detect clear evaluative signals.

### 5.2.5 Attitude Targets

To further determine how the conflict parties of the Ukrainian conflict are constructed in the selected UNSC speeches extracted annotations from *INCEpTION* are further analyzed and categorized. In this step, the annotator is expected to further categorize the explicit targets into one of the four **general conflict party groups** following the descriptions and examples presented in Table 4).

Category	Description	Example
<b>Other</b>	The target is an external actor (e.g., another country or a member of the council), the situation in Ukraine, or references to terrorists, illegal armed groups, separatist groups, agreements, meetings, and the Malaysia Airlines Flight MH-17 plane accident.	<b>The United Kingdom</b> [target] will provide whatever assistance is necessary to support that investigation. (UNSC_2014_SPV.7219_spch004, United Kindgom)
<b>Ukraine</b>	Mentions of Ukraine, the Ukrainian government, Ukrainian citizens, and political figures from the country (e.g., Yatsenyuk and Turchynov).	<b>Prime Minister Yatsenyuk</b> [target] went to Donetsk; although he did not meet with the protesters, he did say the right things about dialogue, decentralization and his desire to find a way out of the problem. (UNSC_2014_SPV.7154_spch004, Russian Federation)
<b>Russia</b>	Mentions of Russia, the Russian government, and political figures from the country (e.g., Putin and Churkin).	During the entire course of the crisis in Ukraine, <b>Russia</b> [target] has never advocated aggravating it or destabilizing the country. (UNSC_2014_SPV.7154_spch021, Russian Federation)
<b>Russia-Ukraine</b>	The target explicitly refers to both countries (e.g., "Ukraine and Russia").	We hope that those <b>main actors</b> [target] will be able to achieve the agreement necessary. (UNSC_2014_SPV.7154_spch013, Argentina)

Table 4: Conflict Party Appraisal Target Categories and Descriptions.

Once assigned to a conflict party group, the targets are to be further classified into **specific appraisal target types**. The annotator is expected to follow the descriptions presented in Table 5.

Category	Description
Russian/Ukrainian political actors	Political figure from either Russia or Ukraine.
The country as a political actor	Name of the country (Russia or Ukraine) or the government, considered in its role as a political actor rather than merely as a geographical entity.
Russian/Ukrainian authorities	Authority or institution from one of the conflict parties (e.g., Ukrainian security forces, Kyiv authorities, Russian officials).
Russian/Ukrainian citizens	Civilians or general populations of the respective countries (e.g., “Ukrainian citizens,” “Ukrainians,” “Russians”).
Individuals or groups	Specific individual or group of people (e.g., “Russian mercenaries,” “armed forces,” “terrorists,” “pro-Russian separatists”).
Agreements and solutions	Agreements, solutions, efforts, dialogue, proposals.
Other political actors	Political figure which is not from Russia or Ukraine.
Airplane accident	Situation, the victims, families and countries related with the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH-17.
Human rights, laws, freedom of expression and disinformation	Human rights, human lives, laws, principles, and freedom of expression (i.e., in media).
Meetings, reports, debates	Meetings, messages, reports, warnings, decisions, discussions and debates.
Situation in Ukraine	Event, act, situation related to the current situation in Ukraine.
Ukrainian rights	Ukrainian rights, sovereignty and independence.
Social movements and elections	Social or political movements, protests, demonstrations, campaign, and political elections.
Violence	Acts of violence, attacks, tensions, and sanctions.
Something said in the debate	Something said during the debate by a representative.
Diplomatic courtesy	Welcoming and thanking for a briefing, meeting or member.

Table 5: Conflict Party Specific Appraisal Target Categories and Descriptions

Every **explicit target** must be annotated with one of the categories listed above.

### 5.3 Annotating Argumentation Schemes

These annotations build upon previously annotated claim-premise pairs by Maria Poiaganova, following the methodology of Haddadan, Cabrio, and Villata (2019). Only support relations between premises and claims are considered, as counterarguments are not the focus of this study.

The *INCEpTION Project for Argumentation Schemes* includes the support relations already annotated by Maria Poiaganova. The annotator is expected to carefully read each premise-claim pair

and assign one of the argumentation schemes listed in Table 2.

Some examples of the most common argumentation schemes are:

**Example 13.**

**Argumentation Scheme:** *Evidence*

**Premise:** The anti-terrorist forces in Ukraine have been repeatedly shelled from the territory of Russia.

**Claim:** Such attempts are actively facilitated by Russian border protection units.  
(UNSC\_2014\_SPV.7219\_spch019, Ukraine)

**Example 14.**

**Argumentation Scheme:** *Negative Consequence*

**Premise:** Seven observers of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) were taken hostage on 25 April.

**Claim:** The violence continues.  
(UNSC\_2014\_SPV.7165\_spch005, France)

**Example 15.**

**Argumentation Scheme:** *Positive Consequence*

**Premise:** The four-party talks in Berlin in the past two weeks showed some promise.

**Claim:** Further political efforts are essential.  
(UNSC\_2014\_SPV.7219\_spch009, Australia)

**Example 16.**

**Argumentation Scheme:** *Negative Value*

**Premise:** We have witnessed the deplorable shooting on 28 April of the Mayor of Kharkiv and the abduction and killing of a Horlivka City Council representative.

**Claim:** Russia's claims that it has no agency in or influence over the actions of armed militia groups operating in eastern Ukraine are not credible.  
(UNSC\_2014\_SPV.7165\_spch014, Australia)

**Example 17.**

**Argumentation Scheme:** *Positive Value*

**Premise:** The talks between Russia, Ukraine, the European Union and the United States planned for 17 April are an essential step in that direction

**Claim:** But talks can take place only with genuine commitment and good faith on all sides  
(UNSC\_2014\_SPV.7154\_spch011, Australia)

**Example 18.**

**Argumentation Scheme:** *Rules*

**Premise:** As of 14 July, the total number of groups of Russian armed forces in the areas bordering

Ukraine has significantly increased.

**Claim:** Those actions are incompatible with the obligations of the Russian Federation under the Geneva agreement of 17 April and the Berlin declaration of 2 June.  
(UNSC\_2014\_SPV.7219\_spch019, Ukraine)

### 5.3.1 Annotating Argument Targets

After assigning the argumentation scheme, the annotator is expected to identify the argument target. Argument targets are defined as the entity or entities central to the argumentation. To further explore how conflict parties in the Ukrainian conflict are constructed, the annotator is expected to annotate the argument target into one of the categories presented in Table ??.

Argument Target	Description
<b>Other</b>	The argument is based on statements or actions of representatives or members (e.g., presidents, ministers) who do not belong to either the Russian Federation or Ukraine. This includes members of the UN Security Council or representatives of other countries.
<b>Ukraine</b>	The argument is based on statements or actions of a representative or member (e.g., president, minister) of Ukraine. This includes explicit mentions of Ukraine, the Ukrainian Government, Ukrainians, and political figures from this country (e.g., Yatsenyuk and Turchynov).
<b>Russian Federation</b>	The argument is based on statements or actions of a representative or member (e.g., president, minister) of the Russian Federation. This includes explicit mentions of Russia, the Russian Government, and political figures from this country (e.g., Putin and Churkin).
<b>Russia-Ukraine</b>	The argument is based on statements or actions of representatives or members (e.g., presidents, ministers) of both Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

Table 7: Argument Targets and their Description

Some examples of argument targets are:

#### Example 19.

**Argument Target:** Other

**Premise:** The independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine are being threatened, and that threat is a threat to the security and stability of the whole region and Europe, with serious international repercussions

**Claim:** The international community and members of the Council should not be fooled by the pronouncements of the likes of Yanukovich and his corrupt cronies (UNSC\_2014\_SPV.7154\_spch005, Lithuania)

### Example 20.

**Argument Target:** Ukraine

**Premise:** Perhaps they are satisfactory to some one, but the responsibility for the future of Ukraine, Europe and the world is not being considered - at least not by these people.

**Claim:** The result is that the Government in Kyiv has done nothing to implement the Geneva document. (UNSC\_2014\_SPV.7165\_spch015, Russian Federation)

### Example 21.

**Argument Target:** Russian Federation

**Premise:** Some colleagues have today given some information about the Luhansk and Donetsk leaders proclaiming republics.

**Claim:** Russian nationals are directly participating in destabilizing the situation in eastern Ukraine. (UNSC\_2014\_SPV.7219\_spch019, Ukraine)

### Example 22.

**Argument Target:** Russia-Ukraine

**Premise:** The use of armed force that we are now witnessing in eastern Ukraine to impose one set of views on the peaceful majority is therefore entirely without justification.

**Claim:** That is a clear pathway to resolve differences through peaceful, constitutional means. (UNSC\_2014\_SPV.7154\_spch007, United Kingdom)

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