Vladimir Putin as a Political Leader: Challenges to an Adult Developmentally-Informed Analysis of Politics and Political Culture

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This article illustrates the extent to which adult development models can be useful tools for contributing to a more adequate, developmentally informed understanding of political leadership. In a case study of Russian president Vladimir Putin, we analyze evidence about important elements of the president's political identity and worldview, as well as his goals and behavioral strategies that result from them. We draw on extensive published materials, including biographies, interviews, speeches, and public discourse, which are analyzed through the lens of neo-Piagetian theories of adult development, in particular, ego development. On this basis, we identify a leadership profile revolving around a self-protective center of gravity and discuss this finding in methodological regard.

Keywords: Vladimir Putin, leadership, reasoning, action logics, self-protective

Vladimir Putin's coming into power as Russian president in 2000 marked an important break in Russia's recent history. It was the beginning of important changes in both institutional and symbolic dimensions of Russian political life, not all of which went in the direction expected and hoped for by many observers. While in the first period of his presidency, Putin's image of a strongman was hailed by many citizens, politicians, and academic analysts alike, due to his predecessor's failure to provide a workable order, evaluations have meanwhile become more differentiated. Putin's recent annexation of the peninsula of Crimea, his politics toward Ukraine, and his support for Syria's Baschar al-Assad have led to widespread criticisms in the West. At the same time, his repeated practice of electoral manipulation has caused a considerable protest movement among Russian citizens (Gabowitsch, 2013). Many now come to realize that Putin's version of law and order does not equal the rule of law, let alone a liberal democracy, and that the "strategic partnership," which has been put into place between western countries and Russia after the end of the Cold War lacks a consensus on fundamental political values. Recent negotiations on various occasions (Ukraine, Syria, Iran, etc.) have repeatedly revealed a missing common language with regard to fundamental dimensions and principles of politics, leading to mutual misunderstandings and miscommunications.

This article argues that these problems can to a considerable extent be explained by looking at structuralist aspects of the reasoning, meaning making and behavior of political actors through an adult development (AD) lens, drawing mainly on hierarchical complexity and ego development models (see below). At the same time, a research strategy exploring the larger impacts of political leadership on societies calls for an integrated approach, taking into account both personal (cognitive and behavioral), political-cultural and institutional factors, as well as their interrelations. Whereas based on a similar, comprehensive approach, the following article nevertheless puts a particular focus on the personal dimension of political leadership, trying to shed light on the characteristics and structural qualities of Vladimir Putin's performance as a political leader as they influence recent political

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developments and the workings of state and society in Russia today. In this context, political actions and decisions have to be given the same attention as their discursive justification and the leader's political reasoning around them.

An important challenge in this regard is therefore methodological in nature. How can political leadership as a complex phenomenon reaching out far beyond the person of the leader him/herself be looked at from an AD perspective? How can instruments of AD theory be used in view of studying the behavior of leaders who cannot be directly analyzed in person by the usual complexity measurement tools such as subject-object interviews, the sentence completion test, or other common testing strategies? To study Vladimir Putin as a political leader, this article will proceed in two major steps. First it presents and discusses a number of methodological considerations with regard to the above mentioned questions. Second, it proposes a developmentally informed analysis of empirical data related to Vladimir Putin's leadership behavior drawing on a variety of sources such as public policy materials, interviews, public discourse, as well as biographical accounts of observers who have studied the Russian president from various angles during his past 15 years in power. On this basis, we will describe the general "leadership profile" of the Russian president, covering a range of action logics, as well as a center of gravity that appears to be a key for understanding most of his leadership behavior.

Political Leadership, Adult Development, and Political Culture

Political science, cultural and leadership studies have differing approaches to the phenomenon of political leadership and competing hypotheses as to the degree to which the personalities of leading political actors determine political decisions making and the working of politics in general (Burns, 1978; Elcock, 2001; Helms, 2010; Masciulli, Molchanov, & Knight, 2009; Stogdill, 1974). Whereas there is wide agreement about the interaction of personal factors such as cognition and behavior with culture and institutional environments in principle, the degree to which these factors are conceptually taken into account, let alone convincingly integrated into an analytic framework, differs between leadership theories. While a more com-

prehensive account of theory development in this field is beyond the scope of this article, it shall limit itself to a general definition, as well as a brief sketch of important conceptual trends in the field. As Bass (1981) has stated, "there are almost as many different definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept" (p. 7). However, a core element of all academic leadership definitions is impact, that is, the capacity of the leader to influence the behavior (thinking and acting) of others, who may, but do not necessarily have to be his or her subordinates (Antonakis, Cianciolo, & Sternberg, 2004, p. 5; Cohen, 1990, p. 9; Kouzes & Posner, 1995, p. 30 Stogdill, 1950, p. 3, and others). So while the notion of leadership is thus closely connected with exercising influence, the latter can, in principle, come from anyone at any level and in any role. However, what is necessary for a leader to influence a given group of people can and does vary a lot in different contexts. Besides the person of the leader himself, it depends, for example, on situational factors (size of the group, character of the tasks etc.) and on structural factors such as organizational cultures and the systems of values shared or not shared between the leader and the respective group. This is where developmental complexity comes in. Structural complexity has been an issue in leadership theory in several regards (for more detail, see Reams, 2016). On the one hand, different leadership styles have been identified, which can be analyzed in view of the degree to which their perspective taking is able to include and deal with different stakeholder positions in an adequate way. An authoritarian ("heroic") leadership style, for example, requires less perspective taking than transactional leadership, and a lot less than transformative leadership (see Table 1). On the other hand, the development of leadership theory has itself progressed from less complex, one-factor approaches (e.g., trait theories, examining leaders' character traits, perceived as the decisive factors of success) to more and more complex ones, taking into account the embeddedness of leadership in multiple relations, structural and environmental settings, webs of meaning, and so forth (Deeg & Weibler, 2012).

The point where leadership and followership are situated on similar scales of complexity, also determines what they regard as "good lead-

Table 1
Levels of Self Development and Leadership

Level of self-development	Subjective self-understanding	General leadership style	Leadership strengths	Leadership weaknesses
(1) Impulsive	"I" am my impulses (like a very young child) and unable to take the perspective of others	No leadership possible	None	Leaders not found at this level of development
(2) Egocentric	"I" am my needs and desires; able to manage my impulses and to take the perspective of others, but motivated solely by my own needs and desires	Strong, "great men," leader-centered. His/her wishes are orders; heroic leadership	Aggressive, "can do" personality	Destructive to teamwork and initiative ("my way or the highway")
(3) Interpersonal	"I" am defined by my relationships and social roles—what is "right" is defined by rules, regulations and proper authority (chain of command)	"Good boss" who cares and is in charge, paternalistic leadership, governed by relations of loyalty versus authority	Strong team player and supporter of organizational vision	Independent thinking, mediating competing relationship demands, e.g., boss, family, subordinates
(4) Autono-mous (in Kegan: institutional self; Loevinger: experts/ achievers	"I" create my own identity, inclusive of but not defined by my roles, relationships and the expectations of others	Transactional leadership, inviting followers to give their best, incentives versus good performance	Better able to take independent action and mediate competing relationship demands, e.g., boss, subordinates	Rigid self-identity that is associated with current success and threatened by fundamental change
(5) Integral (in Kegan: interindividual self, Loevinger: strategist)	"I" am a continually evolving person who is aware of development in myself and others; "I" have a flexible sense of identity that embraces complexity and paradox on a personal level (not just intellectually) but nevertheless has clear values and boundaries	Transformative leadership, shared/ distributed leadership, inviting followers (team members) to follow their purpose and make a meaningful contribution to the overall success of the whole	More adaptive to fundamental change without threat to personal identity; better able to support the self-development of others, and understand oneself in a multiparadigmatic way	Flexible self-identity may be confusing or threatening to subordinates; might push others to grow before they are ready

Note. Adapted from Putz and Raynor (2004), published first in Reams (2005, p. 129).

ership." It also helps to understand why notions of a "good leader" differ substantially between individuals and sociocultural contexts. While less developed forms of leadership are generally more ego or leader centered, revolving around putting the leader's ideas into practice, more complex forms start to care more about their followers' or subordinates' concerns both in terms of defining goals, and in view of implementing them (see Table 1). An example of a rather high stage view of leadership is the following quote: "At the core, good leaders make the people they are leading accomplish more than they otherwise would. The most effective leaders do this not through fear, intimidation or title, but rather by building consensus around a common goal" (Tom Madine, chief executive officer and president, Worldwide Express; http://www.businessnewsdaily.com/3647-leadership-definition.html). We suggest keeping this quote in mind when it comes to analyzing Vladimir Putin's leadership profile.

As the complexity of skills and competences rises among the followership or, in the case of political leadership, in society at large, higher stages of leadership practice are expected from leaders to be respected *as* leaders and thus followed at all. Moreover, sociologists of AD have often stressed that the broad public is generally attracted by leaders and leadership styles that are one level of complexity above their own, and which thus function as role models in view of more comprehensive, more efficient, more responsible or wiser answers to burning problems than the respective "audience" would have been able to come up with itself (Chilton, 1988, Rosenberg, 1988, 2002; Rosenberg, Ward, & Chilton, 1988; Ross & Commons, 2008).

Given that all leadership theories stress the importance of the leadership relation, we thus have to study the developmental complexity of both leaders *and* followers, as well as their interrelations. Yet, while leadership studies in the fields of business and economics tend to focus more on the leader as a person, social sciences such as sociology and political science are more interested in the collective contexts a leader is acting in, that is, the characteristics of the group or electorate supporting him—and thus making him possible as a leader in the first place. For example, an authoritarian leader will hardly be possible in a democratic society which is used to open public deliberation based on tolerance for diverging opinions, mutual respect and fact-based discussion. Inversely, a "servant leader" will probably be perceived as too soft and likely fail in a nondemocratic context. Studying political leadership is therefore always also about studying the sociocultural context in which it takes place. In what ways then can approaches informed by AD theory make meaningful contributions to the analysis of political leadership? At this point, some more specific theoretical, methodological and practical aspects have to be considered.

As to the methodological dimension, methods and approaches for studying individual leaders on the one hand, and followership, let alone whole political cultures or contexts on the other hand, necessarily differ. While classic AD-based leadership research has come up with a considerable number of tools and strategies for measuring individual leaders' performance, as well as for supporting their developmental growth (Reams, 2016), things are a lot less evident with regard to followers and society at large. Even though a number of pioneers have started to explore and use AD theories and knowledge for analyzing the complexity of cultures within cultures and societies (see the overview by Fein & Jordan, 2016 as well as Chilton, 1988; Fein, 2010a, 2010b, 2012; Fein & Weibler, 2014; Rosenberg, 2002; Rosenberg et al., 1988; Ross & Commons, 2008), there is as yet no widely accepted set of methods and approaches for this kind of research. Applying structural development models for analyzing the dynamics of specific sociopolitical, sociocultural and socioeconomic phenomena appears very plausible as such, given that all societies consist of individuals who are more or less developed, and the mutual interaction of whose different logics of meaning making is at the heart of many social science problems. However, similar studies have to carefully consider which developmental models, tools and approaches are most appropriate in each specific case (for examples, see this issue!). At the same time, there are widely accepted methods, particularly in the area of qualitative social science (see below), which appear well compatible with developmentally informed research agendas, even if more solid experience with similar boundary crossing approaches still needs to be gained, gathered and standardized. In particular, qualitative interviews with political actors can

well be conceived and analyzed according to developmental complexity criteria. Also, research strategies drawing on discourse analytical methodologies can be used to analyze the degree of complexity of public discourses around crucial political topics, events and policy decisions (Herschinger & Renner, 2015). The same can be done with sources and materials such as speeches and important utterances of a political leader. On this basis, the article explores possible avenues for analyzing political leadership behavior using AD tools and strategies at the example of the Russian president, Vladimir Putin.

Despite the need for a broader "whole system" view of leadership, understanding the sense-making logics of key formal leaders is still important and relevant, particularly in the political arena where individual leaders can become extremely powerful. Consequently, despite the importance of the social context of leadership outlined before, we will put a particular focus on the leader himself.

A pragmatic problem in this regard, however, is that the most obvious research strategy in classic AD approaches, that is, measuring the degree of complexity of the leader's personal development in different domains, is difficult to implement in the case of a head of state, unless the researcher has privileged access (which is not the case here). Accordingly, we cannot claim to be able to give a precise and methodologically sound evaluation of Putin's level of personality development in whatever domain. This, however, is not a serious limitation in view of our purpose, for several reasons. To begin with, there is no "automatic" one-to-one connection between a leader's personal development, his behavior, and certain political outcomes. This is due, among other contextual factors, to the fact that to establish a relation with his followership, a leader is likely to take into account the (assumed) mental habits of this followership. Hence, he might not always say (and do) exactly what he thinks but rather what he thinks his audience wants to hear or see. Moreover, instead of offering an individual "personality test," our goal here is to grasp the broader leadership "dispositive" (in a Foucauldian sense). In other words, we analyze the aggregate web of relations, patterns of communication, and meaning making, practices of decision-making and exercising influence on other political actors and on the respective society at large which is cocreated by the behavior of the given leader. Through studying daily practices of leadership and governance, we can thus trace how these *dispositives* are constantly built and reproduced and how they shape and change political culture.

So the question of how a developmentally informed social science can analyze political leadership without focusing exclusively on the leader can, in some sense, be answered pragmatically. At the same time, the answer is grounded in the specific features and demands of social analysis. The lack of first hand developmental data about the leader can be compensated by a number of alternative, complementary strategies. While focusing on the *public* person of the leader, based on secondary sources (such as interviews, public statements, biographical accounts etc.), the main research interest is to provide a reasonable basis for evaluating the center of gravity of the leader's *public* behavior and his overall objective influence on his constituency and the outside world. Similar to discourse theoretical approaches, our analysis thus remains at the level of public discourse. Rather than claiming that Putin actually operates at a certain developmental level (which may or may not be the case), we analyze the structural complexity of the empirically observable outcomes he objectively produces through his verbal and physical behavior. Like discourse analysis, developmentally informed social science ultimately does not care whether a social actor really thinks or means what he says, or in this case: if he really operates at the level generally displayed in his discursive behavior (this is a clear difference to psychological analysis). Its claims are situated exclusively on the level of the social impacts or implications of what the leader is saying and doing. In other words, we treat the empirical (verbal and physical) behavior the leader displays as a social fact, independent of its psychological motivation, value or qualities. Even though it can be argued that behavior is likely to express inner, psychological dispositions, and that it is difficult to "fake" one's complexity of sense-making to produce a "public personality" different from one's actual complexity of sense-making, we concede that we ultimately do not have direct access to sense-making. At the same time, even those models that work with first-hand material

such as the subject-object interview or sentence completion tests are still based on verbal behavior. So while we are only interested in the "public personality" of the leader here, his private, personal qualities, as well as possible differences between the two, are if not irrelevant, but at least left out of our research agenda and explanatory claims. (For further discussion of the methodological challenges connected to similar research endeavors see Fein, 2007, 2010a and Fein & Jordan, 2016.).

As to the theoretical dimension of this project, we propose a framework of reference, which draws on a combination of several models taken from the AD research corpus, which, put together, cover a number of important aspects in view of explaining meaning making in typical areas of political leadership. Among the classic tasks of a leader mentioned in the literature are "to interpret problems, prescribe ends and means to solve them, propagate personal visions as solutions or, at least, responses to problems, [and to] mobilize followers to implement those solutions or responses" (Heifetz, 1994; Tucker, 1995, quoted after Masciulli et al., 2009, p. 7).

Regarding political leadership, and more precisely, leadership in a society in transition such as the Russian one, the "problems" leadership has to interpret, often revolve around rather fundamental questions such as redefining the nation/state and its political identity, how to interpret the country's history and make sense of past experiences. In particular, leadership has to draw conclusions about what follows from this for the perception of politics and the world in general. Put more precisely, a Russian leader will have to answer questions like, (a) "Who are we ('Russians') as a country/nation/society?" (b) "Who are we different from and how?" (c) "How should we relate to which neighboring countries and why so?" (d) "What is/was the meaning of the historical experience Russia went through in the 20th century?" (e) "What are the lessons to be learned from those experiences for the future?" (f) "What is good governance? What is a good leader? What kind of politics/leadership does Russia need?" and so forth.

Political actors' answers to those questions provide excellent opportunities for studying the discursive strategies they use to make claims, articulate positions and try to create impact in their respective sociopolitical context. Viewed from an AD perspective, discourse is a window showing the degree of complexity political leaders apply in several dimensions of meaning making to succeed, namely in social perspective taking, perspective seeking, perspective coordination, as well as moral reasoning and self-development (which takes an additional focus on the collective self and identity here). Again, as explained earlier, our analysis is not referring to the respective actors' individual cognition as a psychological entity or fact, but only to what is publicly displayed. For it is argued that the structural qualities of public discourse, that is, the discursive complexity displayed in the leader's way of publicly addressing his audience, can be indicators of the level of complexity of meaning making which is generally used and thus functions as the dominant reference point in a given sociocultural context.

Our framework of reference therefore draws on several developmental models such as the models of ego development by Kegan (1982), Loevinger (1970), and Cook-Greuter (2013), on Kohlberg's (1969, 1981a, 1981b) model of moral development, as well as on the model of hierarchical complexity (MHC; Commons, 2008). Further inspiration comes from on models of complexity development in organizations (Laloux, 2014; Torbert & Associates, 2004; Torbert, 1987). However, given that questions of identity and personal maturity are paramount in the field of leadership, our main reference is Cook-Greuter's (2015) leadership maturity framework (LMF). Whereas the interrelations between general hierarchical complexity and ego development, or between logical reasoning and meaning making would certainly be a worthwhile topic for immersion, they cannot be analyzed in a systematic way here (for a recent, extensive discussion of these interrelations, see Hagström & Stålne, 2015). Also, for reasons of space, and based on the expectation that most *Behavioral Development Bulletin* readers are familiar with these models, they will not be described in detail here. Rather, the necessary developmental concepts, structures and types we refer to, will be explained in the following empirical section while taking a closer look at how concrete empirical leadership behaviors can be evaluated in terms of the complexity of their underlying reasoning and action logics.

Vladimir Putin as a Political Leader: Developmental Complexity in Discourse and Behavior

General Remarks

This article cannot give an exhaustive picture of Putin's political record as Russian president and prime minister (for more detailed accounts, see Casula, 2012; Casula & Perovic, 2009; Gorbunova & Baranov, 2013; Harding, 2011; Hill, 2010; Putin, Gevorkyan, Timakova, & Kolesnikov, 2000; Reitschuster, 2004; Roxburgh, 2012; Sakwa, 2008; Shevtsova, 2003, and others). Neither can it provide a systematic analysis of all existing relevant materials on over 15 years of political activity of one of the world's most important and most powerful political figures. Rather, we wish to suggest possible avenues that developmentally informed social science can follow to analyze political leadership, while a more thorough (and less selective) study of Putin as a political leader is beyond the scope of this article.

In view of analyzing the structural characteristics of Vladimir Putin's leadership behavior we propose to take into account several dimensions which can be grasped by specific types of data, in particular, (a) political action and decisions taken during the last 15 years in office (either as president or prime minister)—these are well documented in the literature and general media; (b) public statements in speeches, interviews and other published ego documents, mostly available online and sometimes also in edited data collections; and (c) biographical accounts and comments by close observers of Putin's leadership (collaborators, journalists or consultants, etc.). In each of these dimensions, typical structural patterns can be identified in the available data which can be interpreted based on AD knowledge and criteria.

The database we have used for this article was an easily accessible one and included scholarly accounts of Russian politics and recent history, mostly from western (American and European) authors, a systematic sample of newspaper articles from German daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, covering Putin's terms as president and prime minister, nine biographies by Russian and western authors (see references), inasmuch as they touch the question of personality and go beyond simple narratives of decisions and events (which, surprisingly, not all biographies do), and a random choice of Russian, English, and German language speeches and interviews given by Vladimir Putin over the past 15 years. So the database is not a comprehensive, all-embracing documentation of Putin's verbal and physical behavior as Russian president, but rather a collection of relevant accounts that enjoy a certain prominence in the discussion within Russian studies.

The written materials were carefully excerpted with a particular focus on the relation between the president's verbal and physical actions and the underlying patterns of reasoning, meaning-making and motivation with regard to Russian politics, to make visible the driving forces and the logics behind them, insofar as they are made explicit. To structure these, we used a qualitative coding process to identify typical, recurrent patterns and sequences of leadership thinking and behavior as reported in the data.

The data were coded by the two authors independently and later exchanged between them to discuss similarities and deviations as compared to the general leadership style characteristics of various levels of self-development as described in Table 2 by Cook-Greuter herself. Note that neither of the authors is a certified scorer in the model by Cook-Greuter, which has been used as the main analytical tool and reference point here. Therefore, a certified scorer has been asked to comment on the coding results. While he agreed with most of the coding, he suggested a different (higher) score for one particular sequence used in this article, however conceding that the quote in question might not have been authored by Putin himself but by a ghost writer.

In result of the process of coding individual sequences of leadership behavior in the data, we find, on the one hand, a structural "center of gravity" informing most of Putin's leadership behavior (46% of the sequences). This term is understood here not as a general structure of mind, but only with regard to the performance and skills that are predominantly displayed. On the other hand, we also find a broader range of other action logics, which occasionally come into play in specific domains or situations. To make sense of Putin's leadership behavior as a whole, we have to understand the dynamics and

Table 2
Complexity Levels of Self-Development and Their Relative Strength in Putin's Leadership Profile

Level of self-development	Subjective self-understanding, key motivations	General leadership style[a]
Stage 2, impulsive, egocentric, 24%	"I" am my needs and desires, able to manage my impulses, motivated solely by my own needs and desires	Strong, "great men" (in a simplistic, macho kind of sense), leader centered His wishes are orders ("I am the boss"); heroic leadership Aggressive, "can do" personality and behavior ("my way or the highway") Destructive to teamwork and initiative *Examples*: dictators in totalitarian systems, warlords, mafia bosses
Stage 2/3, self-protective, opportunistic, 46%	Essentially fragile, insecure self, thus constantly testing limits; no insight into themselves or others, but sense of who they can/cannot manipulate; life is a war of wills, aggression hides own vulnerability	Are distrustful of others and assume that others do not trust them Believe that success depends on cleverness and good or bad luck Regard whatever they can get away with as "legal" and permissible Manipulate and deceive others to achieve their ends Always find blame outside of themselves and negatively stereotype others Experience feedback as an attack and go on the offensive Punish others according to "an eye for an eye." Experience rules as a loss of freedom Act quickly and without deliberation Have short time horizons and are not guided by precedent Focus on concrete tasks, rather than ideas, plans or principles
Stage 3, interpersonal, 25%	"I" am defined by my relationships and social roles—what is "right" is defined by rules, regulations and proper authority (chain of command)	Conform to protocol and rules, and try to do what is expected of them Do not voice disagreement to those more senior to them Relations of loyalty versus authority Are loyal to their immediate group(s), rather than the more distant organization or principles Work well to group standards and norms and hope to be noticed for being good "guys" or "girls" Are usually nice and polite, often create a pleasant, "homey" work environment Avoid taking actions, which may cause discontent or ruffle feathers Prefer to speak in clichés, absorb group jargon to demonstrate membership Are not aware of inner conflict, avoid situations calling for independent action Are uncomfortable about feedback that is even slightly critical of them and may feel uneasy evaluating others, especially peers or superiors
Stage 3/4, expert, conscientious, 5%	Separate self differentiated from others; sense of own specialness; reflect upon own and others' behavior, try to distinguish themselves by individual performance, often perfectionist; sensitive to critique, but establish own sense of superiority and power by criticizing others	Give personal attention to details and seek perfection in their work Find it difficult to delegate to or trust others to do the job well, because only they can do it right Value correctness based on authority (technical knowledge, a famous professor etc.) Dismiss feedback from those who are not their accepted craft masters or take it personally, not just as a criticism of a narrowly defined aspect of themselves Oppose the group norm when it doesn't fit their own preference or knowledge Give feedback in terms of telling others what they should or must do to improve or be respected

(*table continues*)

Table 2 (*continued*)

Level of self-development	Subjective self-understanding, key motivations	General leadership style[a]
		Value decisions made on technical merit alone disregarding context and other contingencies
		Aim at efficiency not effectiveness, unaware of the wider implications of their actions within the whole system
		Can be dogmatic, particularly in response to ideas outside their own mental framework
		May enjoy doing a job as well as they can within established norms or may experiment with different ways of doing the job in order to do it better
		Work closely but somewhat impersonally or competitively with others
		Take back delegated work as soon as it seems to be going badly

[a] Stage descriptions 2/3, 3, and 3/4 are taken from Cook-Greuter's (2015) leadership maturity framework.

interrelations between all of them. This article argues that the center of gravity of Putin's leadership behavior is a self-protective identity or, as Cook-Greuter (2013) and Torbert et al. (2004) also called it, an opportunistic ego structure and action logic (Stages 2/3 in their LMF). Beyond this, we observe both lower and higher complexity action logics, reaching from Stage 2 (impulsive/egocentric, 24% of the sequences) in Cook-Greuter's developmental model to Stages 3/4 (expert, 5% of the sequences) while conventional Stage 3 (25% of the sequences) clearly seems to be the target level in need of further development and consolidation.

Table 2 provides an overview of the general descriptions of these stages. In view of interrelations and tentative correspondences with the MHC see the discussion section and Hagström and Stålne (2015).[1]

To back up our claims on Putin's leadership profile as it becomes visible in the published sources selected for this study, we have organized our analysis around three key domains of leadership. This article looks at Putin's general leadership profile and his personal and professional background. From there, it reconstructs a number of root drivers of his (publicly displayed) thinking and action. In a second article (Wagner & Fein, 2016), we complement our analysis with two case studies: (a) Case Study 1—Putin's most important domestic policy practices and decisions (the "vertical of power," media politics, and the "war on terror"), and (b) Case Study 2—Putin's foreign policy.

For analyzing important structural features of the logics of reasoning, meaning-making and action, as they are publicly displayed by the Russian president, we have looked for explicit or implicit answers to several of the crucial leadership questions mentioned above, which can serve as prisms in all of these domains. In combination, these domains provide a sufficiently solid basis for evaluating the complexity of his (verbal and physical) patterns of leadership.

[1] The editor-in-chief strongly suggested that the authors include a correspondence table comparing the LMF to MHC stages at this point, because there is great controversy over whether or not the Loevinger/Cook-Greuter scheme is, in fact, a stage measure (Kitchener & King, 1990). He argued that "it surely became much more stage like up to the metasystematic stage because of Cook-Greuter's application of an earlier version of MHC to the theory. At the moment, there are two standard general stage theories: Fischer skill theory and MHC." After a considerable discussion process, the authors decided to leave out a similar correspondence table, to avoid potentially misleading interpretations. While it might be of interest to *Behavioral Development Bulletin* readers to inquire into the relations between those models, the authors wish to stress that they cannot and do not want to make any claims whatsoever about potential levels of Vladimir Putin's performance in any other domain beyond the publicly displayed leadership behavior they have analyzed, based on the materials used for this article. Readers who are interested in a general discussion of the relation between meaning-making and logical reasoning are referred to Hagström and Stålne (2015). However, to put the stages originally defined by Loevinger in context, the editors have included a comparison table of stages (see Appendix) that has been reviewed by a number of people who know both theories as an attachment to this article. This is to make relations between the LMF and the MHC clearer to people of a behavior developmental persuasion who are the primary readers of the *Behavioral Development Bulletin*.

Complexity Levels of Self-Development and Their Relative Strength in Putin's Leadership Profile

> Judo teaches self-control, the ability to feel the moment, to see the opponent's strengths and weaknesses, to strive for the best results. I am sure you will agree that these are essential abilities and skills for any politician.
>
> —Vladimir Putin
> (http://eng.putin.kremlin.ru/interests)

This quote from the official presidential website, we argue, summarizes important elements of the substantive outlook on leadership Vladimir Putin is generally displaying (a) a competitive win–lose logic, as it is used in sports, for describing the political process; (b) the perception of other political players as opponents; (c) the active use of opponents' strengths and weaknesses for attaining own goals; (d) the idea that one has to control oneself and to mask one's goals to achieve them while expecting the opponent to do the same, that is; (e) the idea that there is always a hidden agenda and that therefore, other players generally cannot be trusted.

While this may or may not be an accurate account or interpretation of the philosophy of judo, we argue that these elements (some of which are only partly explicit in the above quote) do characterize Putin's actual leadership style. Note that we do not know if Putin himself is the author of the quote. Moreover, in itself, the quote would likely be scored at the achiever (Stage 4) level due to the number of abstract concepts it contains and to the transfer of these concepts from the realm of sports to that of politics and leadership.[2] However, in substantive regard, the logic of reasoning revealed in the quote in many regards corresponds to what we would expect from Cook-Greuter's self-protective/opportunistic identity as sketched in Table 2. This logic of leadership behavior is also described in a very ostensive way in Eigel and Kuhnert (2016), pp. 67–88). Our claim with regard to Putin can be illustrated by evidence from all three domains of our analysis. We will begin with Putin's personal and professional background as a KGB officer.

Because all leadership scholars agree that the personality—and personal development—of the leader is paramount, inquiring into a number of Putin's personal qualities as reported by our data is a good starting point. While his private biography is quite difficult to reconstruct due to considerable efforts to officially control his image in public, Putin's professional background and 16-year career as a KGB officer between 1975 and 1991 appear to be a more stable point of reference. Moreover, both aspects seem to merge into one quite easily. All biographic accounts stress that Vladimir Putin absolutely wanted to be a KGB man since he was a child, probably influenced by contemporary patriotic movies presenting a heroic image of the "secret elite" of the Soviet state (Gessen, 2012, p. 69). His official website quotes him saying, "My perception of the KGB was based on the idealistic stories I heard about intelligence." What is known about his youth is that he grew up in a comparatively well situated family in Leningrad (present day Saint Petersburg, Russia), spent much of his free time with other boys in the streets and took on judo fighting at age 11. While on his official website, Putin stresses that "I come from an ordinary family, and this is how I lived for a long time, nearly my whole life. I lived as an average, normal person," biographers explain the relative wealth of the family by their close connections to state, party, and KGB structures (Dobbert, 2015; Gessen, 2012, p. 63). Given that his alleged father and grandfather apparently worked for the services, the latter as Stalin's cook, it is understandable that the young boy did not develop a critical attitude toward the KGB. Note that despite a huge official industry of image making around Putin's biography, rumors persist that Putin grew up in a foster family in Leningrad (officially presented as his biological family) while in fact, he had been born in Georgia two years earlier than officially stated, where his biological mother, Vera Putina, and siblings still lived. According to media reports, 88-year-old Mrs. Putina has been forbidden to talk to journalists about her family. The results of a blood test are being kept secret, and at least three journalists who have tried to investigate the issue, have been killed (Dobbert, 2015).

Other personal stories align well with this. For example, Putin publicly admits that he "was a troublemaker, not a Pioneer" (the latter being a synonym for a rule-obedient, conformist So-

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[2] We thank Alexander Leuthold, a certified scorer in Cook-Greuter's model, for this analysis.

viet youth). His former teacher, Vera Gurevich, recalls that as an unwanted child of an illiterate mother, he easily started fights (Gessen, 2012, pp. 64, 68), that "he didn't care" and that "no one ever beat him" (Judah, 2013, p. 10). While this could pass as a typical boy's childhood career, the remarkable thing is that this attitude did not seem to have changed much as Putin matured. And even today, as Russian president, he stresses his self-image of an irritable, tough and violent man at multiple occasions, thereby addressing the widespread discontent with his predecessor Yeltsin's weak and "liberal" leadership style. Even though we do not subscribe to Putin's dictum that "there are no ex-checkists" (Roxburgh, 2012, p. 84), we argue that the attitude which, for convenience, we call "judo worldview" here (and which has certainly been amplified by years of socialization inside Soviet KGB schools) is an important key to understanding Putin's leadership behavior in every domain of his political activity. In a nutshell, it perceives political life as an existential competition between "us" and "them" (political or ideological opponents), where the latter have to be beaten with all available means and techniques (including illegal ones), quite similar to what was taught by the Soviet political rationale.

The following cues illustrate Putin's consistently uncritical attitude toward the Soviet Union, the KGB and the communist party. Not only does he interpret the collapse of the Soviet Union as "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century" (cited in Plokhy, 2014), repeatedly stressing to what extent Russia had made a "sacrifice" by giving up its empire (Fleischmann, 2010, p. 105), without any mention of the downsides of Soviet rule. He also displays a striking lack of comprehension and perspective taking with regard to other East Europeans' views about their experience of four decades of neighborhood with the Soviet Union. This includes his relativizing Stalinist crimes (Neier, 2015), his taking on "Soviet" methods in dealing with political critics (see section below), his leaving a European Union event in 1994 with ostentation while Estonian Prime Minister Meri talked about Soviet "occupation" (Gessen, 2012, p. 170), or his statements that the Ukraine was "not a real state" and that Russia had a "vital interest" to protect all Russian speaking populations on former Soviet ter-

ritories, justifying the annexation of the Crimea and semihidden military action in southeastern Ukraine.

While he has called his resignation from the KGB (signed on August 20, 1991, when the defeat of the August coup was foreseeable), the "most difficult decision in my life" (Gessen, 2012, p. 129), Putin never voiced a critical tone about his former employer (Fleischmann, 2010, p. 226), even during his first presidential campaign in early 2000. Rather, he proudly presents his experiences gained in the secret service as proof of important qualities of a political leader such as "professionalism" (Fleischmann, 2010, p. 225), being able to provide law, order, and discipline.

He did not leave the Communist Party of the Soviet Union until it was banned in 1991, either. Observers therefore hold that Putin was probably on the opposite side of the barricades than Yeltsin in August 1991 (Gessen, 2012, p. 151).

After taking office as president, Putin steadily increased the number of old colleagues from St. Petersburg, the former KGB, and the current Russian FSB in the so-called power ministries, as well as in the higher state administration (by 2006, 78% of the Russian state elite had a background with the "services," Kryshtanovskaya, 2006) while critics were successively eliminated (Fleischmann, 2010, p. 218). He thereby also reinforced the importance of loyalty over performance in the state administration (Reitschuster, 2004, p. 290).

Note that in all other postcommunist countries, members of the former secret services have been banned from public office and/or subjected to certain "lustration" processes, which these countries imposed as part of their deliberate break with the previous regime (Fein, 2005). Also, all East European societies, as well as certain urban segments of Russian society itself, always perceived the end of communist rule as a liberation and historic chance for sociopolitical transformation and development. Not only does Putin promote an opposite reading here; he somehow reactivates Soviet political logics toward internal critics and neighboring states. Notwithstanding the fact that Putin's leadership is popular among certain other segments of Russian society (his popularity actually saw steep rises both in relation with the Chechen war and in the course of the Crimea crisis; Triebe, 2015), we hold that they are in-

dicators of a rather limited perspective taking, perspective seeing, and perspective coordination practice as it is typical of self-protective identities. This structure does not show empathy with others, and often does not respect their rights, because it does not view them as equal others with legitimate, potentially differing perspectives on things. Instead, it perceives all outside actors and events through an egocentric, somewhat narcissist lens, primarily asking: "how does it affect me?" and "what's in it for me?" In this context, "me" mainly equals the actual power holder and does not necessarily include the collective interest of a broader group (such as "the Russian people," for example) which is not clearly distinguished from the former.

This self-centered lens can be identified in multiple examples of Putin's publicly demonstrated worldview as present in our data. Given his experience as a KGB officer in East Germany, where he was unable to defend his system of convictions against the peaceful revolution in 1989 (Gessen, 2012, p. 87), biographers record that Putin perceived the whole process of perestroika, liberalization, and democratization, combined with the Soviet Union's loss of her status as a great power, as a personal defeat. To him, this was an insult and betrayal of his commitment as a loyal serviceman by the Soviet leadership itself and thus, a threat to his identity. (This reaction is structurally similar to the one reported from provincial clerks in Tsarist Russia after the introduction of a modern legal system, see Fein, 2016) Gessen (2012, pp. 87, 170) argues that this experience of feeling weak and exposed to change beyond his control caused Putin to "hate democracy" and to want to build a system which was "better" than the former KGB and the USSR, meaning that it should not let him down again. So at the center of his political reasoning as described in the data we find a rather weak, insecure self, lacking confidence (Tregubova, 2006, p. 213), which is driven by "panic fear" of losing ground in a potentially hostile environment. Possibly, we are also dealing with an early (not yet stable) conformist action logic (see below) regressing to self-protection in the face of overwhelming experiences or even trauma. Understandably, this has wide-ranging implications in all dimensions of political leadership.

The deep distrust of self-protective leaders in others (maybe with the exception of close personal acquaintances who are constantly under their own "supervision") usually leads to a strong, though not necessarily very clear image of the enemy. They see enemies and spies everywhere (see Stalin's notion of being "surrounded" by enemies; Gessen, 2012, p. 79). And due to a lack of more differentiated coping strategies, they consequently try to control, hunt or eliminate them by all means (Fleischmann, 2010, pp. 7, 12). If there are no enemies, they invent or create them (p. 224; Roxburgh, 2012, p. 127). On the level of discourse, Putin's (perceived) enemies tend to be equated with "Russia's enemies," who are often presented as "foreign agents" or as psychologically ill (Fleischmann, 2010, p. 34).

Moreover, any social action beyond the self-protective leader's control, such as citizens making use of their freedom of speech, or independent journalists' voices, are perceived a (more or less existential) threats to the leader's power (Tregubova, 2006, p. 202). In fact, they are, because the self-protective identity is unable to deal with critique in a rational, matter-of-fact way, but rather feels personally offended and attacked, at least existentially questioned deep inside. This explains the rigor and cruelty it tends to use to defend itself (Putin: "We showed ourselves to be weak. And the weak get beaten"; Roxburgh, 2012, p. 124).

Therefore, this action logic develops considerable (even though not always very effective) capacities of control which can be exercised in rather harsh ways. They reach from direct forms of "pragmatic brutality" (as in the case of Juscenko and Litvinenko, who have been poisoned, apparently with official support; Roxburgh, 2012, pp. 134, 172), the use of "kompromat" for blackmailing (Reitschuster, 2004, p. 50), or more subtle strategies known from the Soviet KGB (Gessen, 2012, pp. 206, 232), such as the creation of "false" democratic parties or even civil rights groups, thereby delegitimizing the real ones ("Potemkin democracy," p. 172). Inversely, self-protective power does not like to be controlled itself, which is why it tends to keep sensible information secret (Reitschuster, 2004, p. 82), to regard any information related to its own power and legitimacy as sensible, to work on the basis of unpredictability (Fleischmann, 2010, p. 226), and to make use of

resources which are largely beyond democratic political control—and sometimes, as in the case of the KGB's successor FSB, even without a legal basis (p. 222).

Consequently, this also affects how concepts like "democracy," "justice," and "the rule of law" are perceived and function. As to the latter, Putin himself often mentions the "dictatorship of law," probably meaning that the law should be strictly observed while in fact, it increasingly tends to be used as a means of presidential dictates. Putin's legal assistant Shuvalov, for example, has openly declared that the judiciary is expected to execute the will of the head of state (Gessen, 2012, p. 313f). Other observers report cases of "selective justice" (Fleischmann, 2010, p. 19), "telephone justice" (Reitschuster, 2004, p. 162), or justice used as a means for taking personal revenge (Gessen, 2012, p. 202). Similarly, democracy takes the form of a personal dictatorship where "the head of the electoral commission says his guiding principle is that whatever Putin says must be correct" (Roxburgh, 2012, p. viii). Given that the self-protective leader distrusts all democratic institutions which, by definition, he does not control himself (Reitschuster, 2004, p. 257, Roxburgh, 2012, p. 208), and even more so the electorate, he consequently sees himself as the only "real democrat" (Fleischmann, 2010, p. 41).

Based on this panorama of reasoning and action, combined with the available information on Putin's personality and first career, we claim that explaining most of the Russian president's leadership behavior as the result of a self-protective identity structure makes a lot of sense. However, as indicated above, besides this center of gravity, we also observe evidence of other complexity levels of self and identity development in his behavior, namely egocentric/impulsive (Stage 2), conformist (Stage 3), and self-conscious/expert (Stages 3/4) logics. As to the less developed egocentric-impulsive (in Cook-Greuter, 2013) structure, we can only hypothetically draw on models like the LMF, because leaders at this developmental level are rather rare and seldom described in much detail. (Cook-Greuter, 2013, labels both her Stages 2 *impulsive* and 2/3 *self-protective* as "egocentric.")

The above Putz and Raynor model (see Table 1) does not even observe any kind of leadership at the impulsive stage at all. However, we think it is possible and meaningful to distinguish between egocentric identities which are "able to manage [their] impulses and to take the perspective of others" (Putz & Raynor, 2004, quoted after Reams, 2005, p. 129) and ones which do not take the perspective of others into account at all, but simply follow their own impulses. Examples of those can be found in situations of exceptional violence and brutality, as well as of individuals acting out their will regardless of any social convention. While the self-protective identity does have a (rudimentary) sense of rules, even if it violates them (and sometimes finds intelligent excuses for doing so), the egocentric-impulsive identity completely ignores its social context (or at least significant parts of it). It is only motivated by its own needs and desires, and thereby blurring the boundaries between legal and extralegal spaces altogether. This can, in some sense, be referred to as the difference between concrete and abstract stages in the MHC. While concrete Stage 9 politics merely consist of making deals without any moral considerations (similar to Kohlberg's preconventional morality), Stage 10 starts to develop abstract concepts such as morality and law, even if it does not yet systematically coordinate them with its behavior (see Fein & Weibler, 2014).

Whereas some empirical cases are difficult to evaluate without first hand sources in this respect, the following incidents do suggest an egocentric-impulsive action logic. Fleischmann (2010, p. 343) reported how Putin publicly applauded the then Israelian President Katsav for having raped 10 women in 2006 ("What a strong guy. We all envy him!"). Gessen (2012, p. 85f) reported incidents where Putin just takes away objects from an exhibition that have been presented to him, or naturally expects Red Army Fraction terrorists working for the KGB to bring him high tech or luxury goods from the west without even asking about compensation. Roxburgh (2012, p. 294) quoted a Spanish prosecutor who investigated into Russian organized crime in Spain in 2010 and "came to the conclusion that it was impossible to differentiate between the activities of the government and organized crime groups." Several observers equally describe the importance of under the table deals between high ranking political actors and economic structures, as well as of the "law of force" clearly outweighing formal legality

(Reitschuster, 2004; p. 265, Tregubova, 2006, pp. 81, 85; Varese, 2005). In this context, Reitschuster (2004, pp. 223, 286) also mentions a considerable number of criminals working in the state apparatus and therefore speaks of a "dictatorship of ruthlessness" (p. 273). All observers stress Putin's publicly displayed self-image of a tough, energetic, and ruthless hero, driven by "checkist honor," as the "new face of Russia" (Roxburgh, 2012, p. 21; Tregubova, 2006, p. 220). In fact, ex-checkist Alexander Litvinenko used his last words before dying of Polonium for calling Putin a "reckless brute, unworthy of your position" (Gessen, 2012, p. 278). Finally, a central part of this self-image is Putin's often extremely vulgar, and sometimes sexualized language, some of which will be quoted in the next section (Case Study 1).

Besides this strong proportion of egocentric reasoning (70% of the items coded in our data), we also observe elements of later stage logics, namely conformist (Stage 3) and, to a lesser extent, self-conscious (expert, Stages 3/4) reasoning. While these are also reoccurring elements in Putin's leadership profile, they appear to be less stable or at least less important for how his leadership comes across in public. In many cases, conformist traits are described as part of earlier periods of Putin's life and career (namely his work as a KGB officer in the 1970s and 1980s), rather than as present time behavior. In other cases, they do not seem to function as overall drivers of behavior, even though they help to explain it (see below).

The following characterizations suggest a conformist, interpersonal action logic. Almost all biographers stress Putin's unconditional loyalty toward his superiors (i.e., the respective KGB structures, his boss Anatoly Sobchak, the Yeltsin family, etc.), which made him their "favorite" (Fleischmann, 2010, p. 8). They also mention his absolute reliability, obedience, and trustworthiness in the eyes of superiors or negotiation partners, sometimes described as "inability to betray" (Fleischmann, 2010, p. 350; Gessen, 2012, p. 119). In some accounts, this is also connected with the claim that Putin was ready to "arrange himself with any system" (Fleischmann, 2010, p. 8) and "to serve any master, or best, to serve all of them simultaneously" (Gessen, 2012, pp. 75, 129). Not only does this highlight the importance of personal loyalty over performance in Putin's own leadership style (Gessen, 2012, p. 129; Reitschuster, 2004, pp. 55, 290; Roxburgh, 2012, p. 19). His "inability to betray" also has to be interpreted on—and limited to an interpersonal level of meaning-making. For loyalty toward concrete persons might well result in violations of the law, and thus, in betraying the larger society, if more abstract moral or ethical principles do not play a significant role.

A similar structure is visible in Putin's striving to protect fellow-Russians wherever they are (Roxburgh, 2012, p. 254). As an expression of a political identity that is defined by the interpersonal ties of common nationality, this type of conformism has been showing its downsides, that is, limitations in a number of conflicts with neighboring states, where Putin seems to put the value of protecting fellow Russians above that of respecting (i.e., conforming to) existing international law. It is not paradoxical that observers also stress Putin's reluctance to enter into conflicts, in order not to make himself (more) enemies (Reitschuster, 2004, p. 286). This feature goes along with his striking ability to adapt to others' expectations and communication styles as reported by Tregubova (2006) and Gessen (2012, p. 75), and "to mimic his interlocutor and win their confidence" (Roxburgh, 2012, p. 34), thus making them feel at ease in his presence. Elena Tregubova describes this ability as that to "reflect like a mirror the person he is with, to make them believe he is just like them. He does this so cleverly that his counterpart apparently doesn't notice it but just feels great" (quoted by Roxburgh, 2012, p. 34). In fact, several western visitors have mentioned their surprise when they met Putin and found him to be a nice, friendly person (Reitschuster, 2004, p. 158).

Regarding Putin's activity as Russian president, not surprisingly, our sources report his high valuation of good, often friendly personal relations with other heads of state such as Gerhard Schröder, George Bush, Silvio Berlusconi, and so forth (Roxburgh, 2012, p. 93), as a basis for doing politics. At the same time, it is well known that these man-to-man friendships have been the cause of criticism or even mockeries in the west, because citizens feared a buy out of their democratic interests in service of these "friendships."

We argue that Putin's reluctance to "touch the constitution" (in view of running for a third term; Roxburgh, 2012, p. 207), and his insistence that Russia would absolutely observe existing treaties ("If we sign a treaty, we fulfil it!"

Roxburgh, 2012, p. 267) must also be interpreted on this background. Besides, they are rather commented as connected with his being "terrified of anarchy" (Judah, 2013, p. 328) than with a clear commitment to the rule of law as an abstract value of in itself.

Finally, one of the most crucial and often reoccurring motives referring to conformist-interpersonal reasoning is Putin's strong urge to be respected as a partner in both face-to-face political relationships and as a member of the "family of nations" (Fleischmann, 2010, p. 252). It will therefore be discussed in more detail in Case Study 2 (Wagner & Fein, 2016).

As to the evidence we found of self-conscious (Stages 3/4 expert) action logics, several observers note Putin's intelligence, diligence, and competence, based on a considerable professional ambition, as well as the fact that he is generally "well informed" and working efficiently in his fields of expertise (Reitschuster, 2004, p. 46). His official website quotes, "If I do something, I try to see it through to its completion, or at least try to ensure that it brings the maximum result." Roxburgh (2012, p. 46) also reports that Putin was very eager to learn from his economists' expertise and regularly discussed burning topics with them, thus taking a "crash course" in market economy during his first years in office. Another typical "expert" feature is the "unsupportable pedantism" recalled by an old acquaintance of his from Dresden (who also speaks about his otherwise unimpressive and "faceless" appearance; Beyer, 2012, p. 11). Finally, Putin himself repeatedly called himself an "expert of human relations" and a good mingler when describing his work at the KGB (Gessen, 2012, p. 76). However, this self-assessment is questioned by third party accounts saying—and sometimes also making jokes about their impression that Putin had (or has) a severe "communication deficit" (Gessen, 2012, p. 78) in both professional and private respects (Reitschuster, 2004, p. 243).

We therefore argue that despite these indicators of conformist and self-conscious reasoning, these do not determine Putin's actual leadership behavior in its entirety so far, in contrast to the self-protective/self-defensive action logic. How the above outlined combination of action logics in Putin's (assumed) leadership profile works in practice and which dynamics it creates will be discussed in more detail in two case studies on domestic and foreign politics (Wagner & Fein, 2016).

Discussion and Concluding Remarks

This article has proposed a reading of Vladimir Putin's leadership behavior viewed through the lens of adult developmental models, mapping the complexity of typical examples of reasoning, meaning-making and action. We have drawn on general models of complexity development of cognition and moral reasoning (MHC and Kohlberg), in particular on the LMF by Cook-Greuter (2000, 2013, 2015) and Bill Torbert et al. (2004; McCauley, Drath, Palus, O'Connor, & Baker, 2006). This choice is based on the claim that typical questions of ego/identity development are also crucial questions political leadership has to answer with regard to collectivities.

The analysis has been based exclusively on a selection of published, easily accessible materials. A number of limitations and methodological challenges are therefore inherent in our approach. First, it does not include first hand personal (oral or written) communications like extensive interviews given by the leader in different contexts or letters to varying receivers. Neither does it use the classic instruments such as SCTi Map (Cook-Greuter's, Wayland, MA) or others, by lack of direct access to the leader. Therefore, it does not allow inferences on the leader's personal identity development. Inversely, public statements such as speeches or "populist" statements, which we have used, may not correspond to the leader's actual level of meaning making. However, they do mirror how he wants to come across, and thus, the general "tone" he sets for public and political discourse in general. Moreover, given that leadership is defined as an influence (either on other people's thinking and behavior, by achieving certain goals or by shaping the working of a larger organization), that is, by its observable social *impacts*, we hold these limitations to be tolerable. For ultimately, our interest is not to deliver a personality test of the political leader, but an analysis of his publicly displayed *leadership,* that is, the "dispositive" constructed by his behavior and the impact he objectively produces in and on larger social and political contexts.

At the same time, self-protective behavior does not necessarily imply that the person who demonstrates it generally operates from that level. Nor does it imply a particular, "corresponding" level of general complexity of their logical reasoning abilities. Moreover, while their general logical reasoning skills might be more developed, indi-

viduals tend to "regress" to earlier levels of conceiving self and identity either in situations of stress or in result of traumatic experiences, which they have no other ways to deal with. As mentioned earlier, Putin might have experienced the collapse of the Soviet power, which he had been strongly identified with, as a personal trauma. This hypothesis is in line with some of our evidence suggesting a conformist action logic with regard to a number of incidents and characteristics reported about Putin's earlier career. Another possible experience of trauma might have occurred in Putin's childhood. If Vera Putina's story is true there might have been a traumatic impact on Putin's personality, which could at least in part explain his behavior.

While more substantial claims with regard to the trauma hypothesis would require a more thorough psychological investigation, we have limited our analysis of Vladimir Putin's political leadership on what is publicly displayed in his behaviors, holding that this does support the claim that its center of gravity is primarily self-protective. To get a more comprehensive picture of Putin's leadership in action, more evidence is needed. We will therefore provide a tentative, developmentally informed account of the Russian president's domestic and foreign politics in two case studies presented in Wagner and Fein (2016).

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Appendix

Concordance Table

	Order 7: preoperational	Order 8: primary	Order 9: concrete	Order10: abstract	Order 11: formal	Order 12: systematic	Order 13: metasystematic	Order 14: paradigmatic	Order 15: cross-paradigmatic	Order 16: metacrossparadigmatic
Commons & Richards (1984)										
Fischer, Hand, & Russell (1984) Kohlberg (1981b); Selman (1971)	Representational mapping 1/2	2	6 Representational systems 2/3	7 Single abstractions 3 Mutuality	8 Abstract mappings 3/4	9 Abstract systems 4 Social system	10 Single principles 5 Prior rights/ social contract 6 Universal ethical principals			
Gilligan (1982)	1.0 Survival	1.5 Transition from self-care to responsibility	2.0 Self-sacrifice (caring for others)	2.5 Transition to reflective care	3.0 Balanced care for self and others	3.5 Integrated care for self and others				
Loevinger, 1976 (Cook-Greuter, 1985, revised 2013)	Stage 2/3: Self-protective or opportunistic stage	Delta/3: The rule-oriented stage	Stage 3: The conformist stage	Stage 3/4: The self-conscious or expert stage	Stage 4: The conscientious or achiever stage	Stage 4/5: The individualist–pluralist stage	Stage 5: The autonomous stage (strategist)	Stage 5/6: The construct-aware and ego-aware stage (magician, alchemist)		Stage 6: The unitive stage