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The Coverage and Reception of
the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict

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WHAT ABOUT UKRAINE?

The Russian-Ukrainian Conflict as Seen in the Discourse of the Romanian Presidential Candidates

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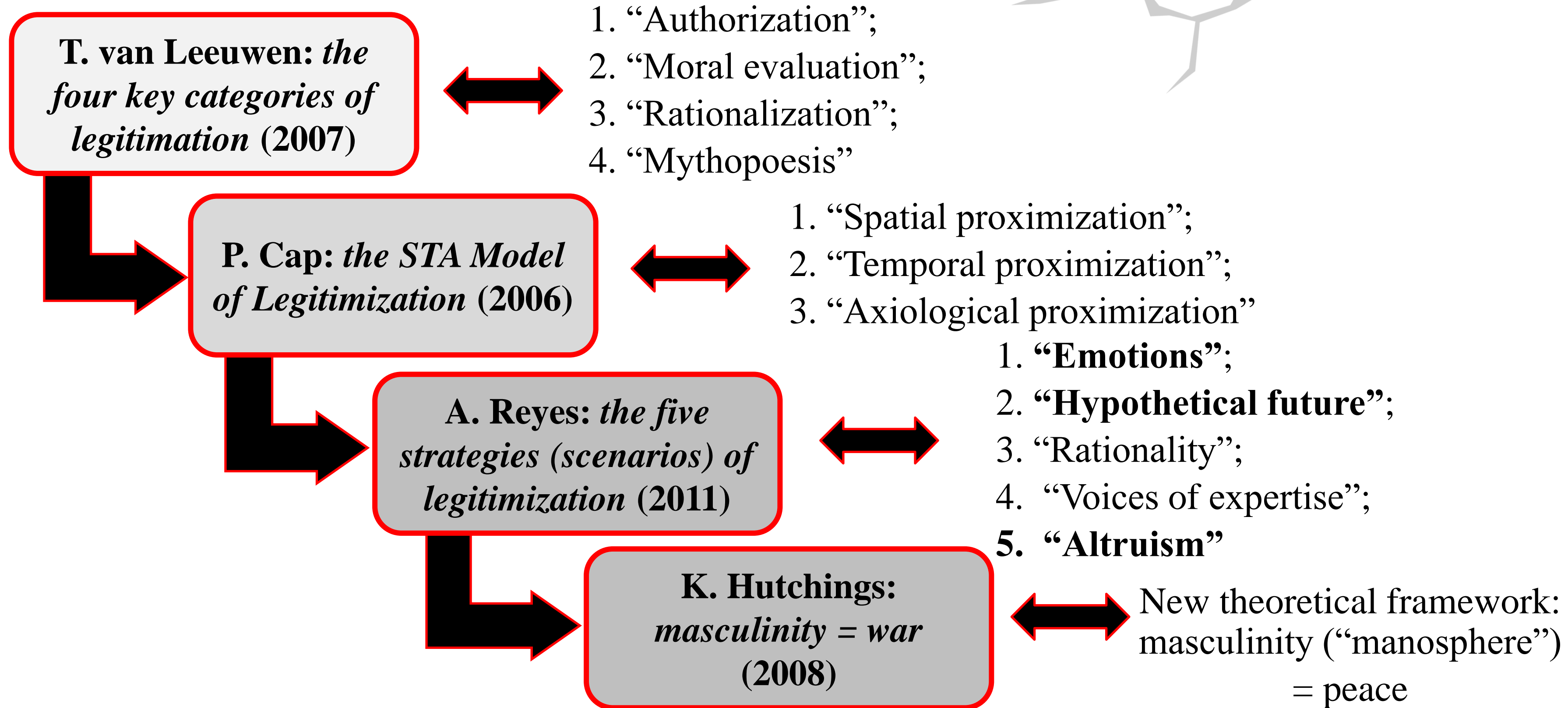
Outline

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Theoretical Framework

T. van Leeuwen: *the four key categories of legitimation* (**2007**) ⟷

1. "Authorization";
2. "Moral evaluation";
3. "Rationalization";
4. "Mythopoesis"

P. Cap: *the STA Model of Legitimization* (**2006**) ⟷

1. "Spatial proximization";
2. "Temporal proximization";
3. "Axiological proximization"

A. Reyes: *the five strategies (scenarios) of legitimization* (**2011**) ⟷

1. **"Emotions"**;
2. **"Hypothetical future"**;
3. "Rationality";
4. "Voices of expertise";
5. **"Altruism"**

K. Hutchings: *masculinity = war* (**2008**) ⟷ New theoretical framework: masculinity ("manosphere") = peace

Data & Methodology

Corpus: the discourse of the
Romanian presidential candidates
(October 2024 – present)

Quantitative analysis: manual collection (Romanian-language media; social media)

Qualitative analysis (1): "implicit" vs "explicit" legitimization (Van Leeuwen 2007)

Qualitative analysis (2): discursive **strategies** and linguistic patterns of legitimization

Selected Results and Taxonomy (1)

Explicit legitimization (pro-European stance)

- Direct statements of antipathy and sympathy towards the actors of the conflict;
- The delegitimization of Russia's aggression and the encouragement of support for Ukraine (the *STA model of legitimization*).

Implicit legitimization (anti-European stance)

- Indirect legitimization of Putin's invasion in Ukraine (**lexical clusters**: "peace" and "the Romanian people").

Selected Results and Taxonomy (2)

Explicit legitimization & solidarity (pro-European stance)

- **STA model of legitimization** (spatial proximization) **& rationalization & emotions** (fear): "(…) It is very important for Ukraine to win the war because Russia will not stop; it has an imperialistic behavior." (E. Lasconi, 4 Dec. 2024); **effect orientation rationalization & hypothetical future**: "We must help Ukraine win this war. (…) We are here, with Putin right on our doorstep (18 November 2024)"; "(…) Our goal is for Russia to stay within its borders, not to get closer to Romania (C. Terheș, 14 Nov. 2024)."

- **STA model of legitimization** (axiological proximization): ("us" + Ukraine vs Putin): "(…) This fight is not just Ukraine's fight, but a fight for the stability of the entire region, a fight for democracy, for the freedom to think with our own minds." (E. Lasconi, 19 Nov. 2024).

Implicit legitimization (anti-European stance)

- **Authorization** ("role model authority") + **Moral evaluation** + **Altruism**: "Putin is a leader who loves his country, a patriot." (C. Georgescu, 30 Nov. 2024)."

- **Authorization** ("the authority of tradition"): "The fact that Ukraine is a state established at the request of the great powers is a historical fact. It should not be considered a biased or defamatory statement" (C. Georgescu, 31 Jan. 2025).

- **Mythopoesis** (constructing the myth of the family): "I will not support Ukraine because I will first take care of my family, of Romania." (C. Georgescu, 23 Feb 2025); "Romania and the Romanian people come first." (C. Georgescu, 4 Dec. 2024); "It is time for peace, Romanians want peace. I will be a president who will not involve Romania in any war." (G. Simion, November 18, 2024).

Selected Results and Taxonomy (2)

Implicit legitimization, masculinity & peace (anti-European stance)

- **Mythopoesis** (masculinity and peace): "It is unthinkable to have a war next to us in the middle of Europe, so a priority will certainly be to immediately stop this war in Ukraine" (C. Georgescu, 4 Dec. 2024)

- **Anti-feminist and pro-misogynistic rhetoric**: "There is a huge, gigantic difference between femininity, which is a woman's ultimate power, and feminism, imposed by a degenerate West, which has done nothing but destroy the greatest power in the world (…)." (C. Georgescu 11 Nov. 2024) & **"Male entitlement" & "traditional gender roles"** (Nicholas et al. 2024): "(…) A woman has a different role in society. Not that of president (C. Georgescu, 11 Nov. 2024)

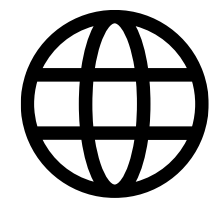# Conclusion & New Avenues for Research

Comparative analysis (2024-2025)

Linguistic patterns: lexical, semantic, morphological and syntactic

Selective bibliography

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• Nicholas, L., Clark, S., Agius, C., & Cook, K. (2024). Antifeminist, manosphere and right-wing extremist sentiment among men who use domestic and family violence: masculinism, misinformation, and the justificatory logics of violence. *NORMA*, 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/18902138.2024.2430513.

• Reyes, A. (2011). Strategies of legitimization in political discourse: From words to actions. *Discourse & Society*, 22(6), 781–807. 10.1177/0957926511419927.

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