AN ANALYSIS OF RUSSIAN STRATEGIC CULTURE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS TO THE ANNEXATION OF CRIMEA

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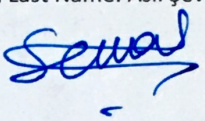
Signature 

ABSTRACT

AN ANALYSIS OF RUSSIAN STRATEGIC CULTURE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS TO THE ANNEXATION OF CRIMEA

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Crimea has been part of Russia from its annexation in 1783 by Catherine II until its transfer to Ukraine in 1954. When the transfer took place, both Ukraine and Russia were part of the Soviet Union. However, when the Union was dissolved in 1991, the disputes have risen about to whom Crimea should belong. Prior to Russian Federation's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014, it remained a part of Ukraine. Since 2014, regardless of international pressures, Crimean peninsula has been remained de facto under Russian Federation.

This study aims to analyze Russian decision to annex Crimea through the concept of strategic culture. Firstly, strategic culture is examined as the theoretical base for this study and then, Russian strategic culture, with three constitutive sources of it(history, elite perceptions and regime), is evaluated. Lastly, the annexation of Crimea in 2014 is analyzed from the perspective of Russian strategic culture. The methodology of the thesis is to apply a specific theory(strategic culture) to a specific case(Crimea's annexation). The main research question of this study is that: How did Russia's strategic culture effect Russian decision to annex Crimea? This study's strong argument lies in its ability to indicate a developing concept's utility in analyzing security decisions of the states. Therefore, the main argument of the study is that, Russian decision to annex Crimea was a reflection of its strategic culture.

Key words: Strategic Culture, Russian Foreign Policy, Annexation of Crimea, Vladimir Putin, Security Studies.

ÖZ

Rus Stratejik Kültürünün Analizi ve Kırım'ın İlhakına Etkileri

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Kırım, 1783'te II. Katerina tarafından ilhakından 1954'te Ukrayna'ya verilinceye kadar, Rusya'nın bir parçası olmuştur. Transfer gerçekleştiğinde, hem Ukrayna hem de Rusya Sovyetler Birliği'nin bir parçasıydılar. Ancak, Birlik 1991'de dağılınca, Kırım'ın kime ait olması gerektiği konusundaki tartışmalar arttı. Rusya Federasyonu'nun 2014 yılında Kırım'ı yasadışı ilhakına kadar, Kırım Ukrayna'nın bir parçası olarak kaldı. 2014'ten beri, uluslararası baskılara aldırmaksızın, Kırım yarımadası Rusya Federasyonuna fiilen ait oldu.

Bu çalışma Rusya'nın Kırım'ı ilhak etme kararını stratejik kültür kavramı ile analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. İlk olarak, stratejik kültür tezin teorik temeli olarak incelenmiştir ve daha sonra, Rusya'nın stratejik kültürü, onu oluşturan üç kurucu kaynağı(tarih, elitlerin algıları ve rejim) ile birlikte değerlendirilmiştir. Son olarak, Kırım'ın 2014'teki ilhakı, stratejik kültür perspektifinden analiz edilmiştir. Tezin metodolojisi, belirli bir teoriyi(stratejik kültür) belirli bir vakaya(Kırım'ın ilhakı) uygulamaktır. Rus stratejik kültürünün, Rusya'nın Kırım'ı ilhak etme kararını nasıl etkilediği, bu çalışmanın ana araştırma sorusudur. Çalışmanın önemi, gelişmekte olan bir kavramın devletlerin güvenlik kararlarını analiz etmede yararlı olduğunu gösterme yeteneğinde yatmaktadır. Buradan hareketle, bu çalışmanın ana argümanı, Rusya'nın Kırım'ı ilhak kararının, Rus stratejik kültürünün bir yansıması olduğudur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Stratejik Kültür, Rus Dış Politikası, Kırım'ın İlhakı, Vladimir Putin, Güvenlik Çalışmaları.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASSR: Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic

CIS: Commonwealth of Independent States

EEU: Eurasian Economic Union

EU: European Union

FSB: Federal Security Service

IR: International Relations

KGB: Committee for State Security

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization

ORT: Russian Public Television

RF: Russian Federation

RSDLP: Russian Social Democratic Labour Party

RSFSR: Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic

SALT: Strategic Arms Limitation Talks

SPS: Party of Right Forces

UN: United Nations

UNSC: United Nations Security Service

U.S.: United States

USSR: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

WWI: First World War

WWII: Second World War

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTON

There are many factors that have potential to affect foreign policy preferences of the states. Although one may argue that all of them matters, it is important to choose between them, especially depending on the case that a researcher selects. However, due to the dominance of realism and liberalism, which are among the cult theories of IR, the researches were carried out mostly through material factors of the states(size, capabilities, geography, economy etc.) and/or systemic explanations(anarchy, hierarchy, polarity etc.). Non-material factors, namely culture, ideas, norms, values, identity etc., were relatively neglected. Towards the end of the Cold War, IR literature gradually started to study non-material factors' affect on foreign policy preferences of the states. In this way, non-material factors also accepted as influential on decision-making process.

The studies of strategic culture also emerged almost in that period, that is, in 1970s. The main driving force behind strategic cultural research is to understand why some states, under the same conditions or under the same international system, act or decide differently. It is argued that, decision-makers in different states think and therefore, act differently at similar conditions, because of the difference of their strategic cultures. Which means that, leaders and other decision-makers have perceptions about their state's history, geography, political system, culture etc. And these perceptions influence the decisions and/or policies. The concept of strategic culture emerged with Political Scientist Jack L. Snyder's article named *"The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations"* in 1977.[1] He tried to explain why the United States(U.S.) and the Soviet Union(USSR) reacted differently under similar conditions, about their nuclear strategy. He argued that Soviet and

[1] Jack L. Snyder, "The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operation," *Rand Corporation* (Santa Monica, 1977).
https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/reports/2005/R2154.pdf

American decision makers perceived nuclear power differently because they are not culture-free systems.[2]

After Snyder, the concept has continued its development and simultaneously, discussions also continued. However, there is no consensus about the definition of strategic culture among scholars. Therefore, this thesis will start with explaining different definitions of the concept and then, an eclectic definition will be chosen to analyze Russian strategic culture. According to this definition, strategic culture is assessments and interpretations by the decision-makers of their state's main characteristics(history, geography, political system, etc.) to form security and foreign policies.

The utility of the "strategic culture" is that, strategic culture offers and provides causal explanations for regular patterns of state behaviors, policies, or decisions. In this way, it provides a more comprehensive explanation of the states' foreign policy preferences. Here, it is important to explain how the decision makers make foreign policy decisions, behaviors, or policies. To answer this, it is important to highlight the difference among these three words: foreign policy behavior, policy, and decision. First of all, there is a range of different options that any state's decision maker can choose. For example, for Russian decision makers, annexing Crimea was one of the options. And, annexing Crimea became the foreign policy decision for them, because it is the chosen option. Then, the foreign policy decision becomes foreign policy behaviour because, behaviour means the acting out of that selected decision.[3] Finally, the foreign policy outcome means the end result of the behaviour.

Ukraine and the European Union(EU) was to sign Association and Free Trade Agreement, however, in November 2013, former president of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovych postponed signing the agreements. To protest the decision to postpone, pro-EU Ukrainian citizens took the streets and the demonstrations started and

[2] Ibid., 9.
[3] Marijke Breuning, *Foreign Policy Analysis: A Comparative Introduction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 7.

spreaded across the country. As the protests continued and increased without slowing down, on February 22, 2014 Yanukovych fled Ukraine. Around the same time of his leave, Russia started to seize buildings in Crimea's capital, Simferopol and invaded the Peninsula. Eventually, on 16 March, 2014, an illegal referandum was held regarding the future status of Crimea and, majoirty of the Crimeans supported joining Russia. Subsequently, Russia officially declared its annexation of Crimea.

Because of the impact the event had on the IR literature, many studies have done about Crimea's annexation. But, although it has been six years since the annexation, the scholars do not agree on the motives behind the decision. To categorize, there are individual, state and system-level explanations. For example, Russia and Ukraine specialist Tor Bukkvoll argues that Putin's personality is an important reason.[4] His individual-level analysis argues that Putin's will to increase his approval ratings[5] and his imperialistic character play a role. Besides, Daniel Treisman, Professor in Political Science, points out the importance of the naval base and fleet on Crimea's annexation, he also explains another reason, "Crimea's annexation was as part of a Russian project to gradually recapture the former territories of the Soviet Union".[6] From that point of view, imperial and expansionist motives can take into account while analyzing the event. Along with all this, system-level analysis has also made. As a sample, Political Science Professor John Mearsheimer argues that the main reason why Russia annexed is, the West.[7] According to him, the West has moved into Russia's backyard and threatened Russia's core interests.[8] West's provocation, made Russia to annex.

[4] Tor Bukkvoll, "Why Putin Went to War: Ideology, Interests and Decision-Making in the Russian Use of Force in Crimea and Donbas," *Contemporary Politics* 22, no. 3 (2016): 267–82, https://doi.org/10.1080/13569775.2016.1201310.
[5] Ibid., 280.
[6] Daniel Treisman, "Why Putin Took Crimea," *Foreign Affairs*, 2016, 47, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2016-04-18/why-russian-president-putin-took-crimea-from-ukraine
[7] John J. Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault," *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 5 (2014): 1–12.
[8] Ibid., 1–2.

As seen above, there are many different answers about Russia's motives. The debate is still relevant. Here, strategic cultural analysis provides more comprehensive and culminative explanation to the issue. In this way, strategic culture allows more-than-one factors which influenced Russia's policies and provides an "inside-out" approach to the event. For example, rather than focusing more on systemic factors or the role of the individual, strategic culture provides a more merged perspective. This means, without neglecting the roles of other factors discussed above, strategic culture culminates those explanations and provides a broader look.

Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to contribute to the debate on the utility of the concept of strategic culture for understanding patterns in the security policies of the states. It aims to analyze Russian decision to annex Crimea from the perspective of strategic culture. The main research question of the thesis is that, how did Russia's strategic culture affect Russian decision to annex Crimea? Also, the thesis has sub-questions such as: What does strategic Culture mean? How does strategic cultural analysis affect security policies of the states? What are the sources and the main characteristics of Russian strategic culture? Which sources of Russian strategic culture affected its decision to annex Crimea? The main argument is Russia's decision to annex Crimea was a "reflection" of its strategic culture. Because, decision makers develop behavior patterns or perceptions that result from their state's strategic culture, and it shapes and effects security policies. In this way, developing strategic cultural profile of Russia and linking it to its security decision in Crimea, would help to further explain the decision.

The methodology of the thesis is to apply a specific theory to a specific case. The theoretical framework for the thesis is, strategic culture, while the case study is Crimea's annexation. The thesis is a qualitative analysis. The information gathered from primary and secondary sources. For primary sources, official documents, news, speeches have examined. For secondary sources, numerous academic journals, magazines and newspaper articles have been analyzed.

This study is important in three aspects. First and foremost, the thesis hopes to contribute to the IR literature as well as studies about Russian Foreign Policy, International Security, Foreign Policy Analysis and Strategic Culture literature. Second, it seeks to use a developing theory to analyze foreign/security policy of Russia. Strategic culture is still under development; but this thesis shows that the concept is useful in analyzing foreign/security decision of Russia. Third, because there is an ongoing debate about the reasons and motives of Putin for the annexation, this study provides a new, and relatively more comprehensive perspective to the event.

On the other hand, this thesis is not without its limitations. The findings are specific, because the scope is Crimea's annexatin in 2014. In other words, if one wants to make predictions, relying on one-case-study, won't be enough. Another limitation is the language barrier. Although I have intermediate Russian knowledge, I was not able to understand or read most of the official documents and other sources in Russians. Therefore, I have used the English version of the Kremlin's official cite.

The thesis consists of introduction, three main chapters and conclusion. First chapter is the introduction chapter, which will cover the background rationale, research question(s), argument, scope, methodology and thesis structure. Second chapter will analyze strategic culture as the theoretical framework of the study. Primarily, different definitions about the concept in the literature will be presented and then, three generations of the strategic cultural studies will be explained. Strategic culture's sources are also explained in this chapter. The sources summarized by Professor of Political Science Jeffrey Lantis is a good guide especially while analyzing a foreign policy decision through strategic culture. According to him, strategic culture has Physical(Geography, Climate, Natural Resources, Generation Change, Technology); Political(Historical Experience, Political System, Elite Beliefs, Military Organizations) and Social/Cultural(Myths and Symbols, Defining Texts) sources.[9] It can be said that, all sources are important as they comprise state's strategic culture, however, for case studies, it is important to chose the factors that contribute most

[9] Jeffrey S Lantis, "Strategic Culture: From Clausewitz to Constructivism" (Defense Threat Reduction Agency, 2006), 17.

to the decision. Besides, it is equally important to choose the sources that have high potential to effect strategic decisions of that particular state. Lastly, the concept's importance and its contributions to the security studies will also be explained in this chapter.

Third chapter of the thesis will evaluate Russian strategic culture and its sources. In the IR literature, scholars who analyze Russian strategic culture, more or less, agree on main points but they diverge on the sources. Some of the relevant works are, for example, while analyzing Russian strategic culture, Norbert Eitelhuber, who is a Lecturer for the Security Policies in Germany, states the importance of historical roots and external influences.[10] On historical roots, he explains Russian threat perceptions, autocratic legacy and its great power aspirations; while on external influences, he focuses on geography.[11] Accordingly, Marcos Degaut, who is a Deputy Special Secretary of Strategic Affairs in Brazil, also agrees that, authoritarian leadership and great power aspirations have influenced Russian strategic culture, but he also adds another dimension: Russia's wish to alter the international system to multipolar world order.[12] Unlike them, Danish Associate Professor at the Department of Political Science Mette Skak argues that Russian strategic culture's main source is the elites.[13] According to her, today's *chekisty*[14] perceived the Maidan Revolution in Ukraine as a threat, because they thought that just like the domino theory[15], color revolutions may spillover in Russia and eventually, change the regime. According to the Associate

[10] Norbert Eitelhuber, "The Russian Bear: Russian Strategic Culture and What It Implies for the West," *Connections: The Quarterly Journal* 09, no. 1 (2009): 1–28, https://doi.org/10.11610/connections.09.1.01.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Marcos Degaut, "The Russian Strategic Culture and the Annexation of Crimea: The Empire Strikes Back?," *Mundorama Journal of International Affairs*, no. May 2014 (2014), http://www.mundorama.net/2014/05/10/the-russian-strategic-culture-and-the-annexation-of-crimea-the-empire-strikes-back-by-marcos-degaut/.
[13] Mette Skak, "Russian Strategic Culture: The Role of Today's Chekisty," *Contemporary Politics* 22, no. 3 (2016): 324–41, https://doi.org/10.1080/13569775.2016.1201317.
[14] Cheka was the Soviet Security Organ from 1918 to 1922.
[15] Domino theory briefly means that an event in one country, will cause similar events in neighbouring countries. For example, if a country becomes communist, then, its neighbours will also become communist and gradually, the entire region can also become communist. The theory was inspired from a falling domino causes the other dominoes to fall. Ülke Arıboğan, Gülden Ayman and Beril Dedeoğlu, *Uluslararası İlişkiler Sözlüğü,* 4th ed., comp. Faruk Sönmezoğlu (İstanbul: Der Yayınları, 2010), 230.

Professor in the IR Department Polina Sinovets, Russian strategic culture is characterized by great power aspirations and Russia's need to surround itself with buffer states,[16] because of foreign invasions, indefensible borders, and distrust to Western powers. Lastly, Director of National Security Programs at the Nixon Center Fritz Ermath argues that, in the imperial times, Russian strategic culture was characterized by monarchy, nobility and military leadership; while Soviet strategic culture is characterized by military and party leadership.[17] To contribute to these studies about Russian strategic culture, this study also agrees on the main characteristics of Russian strategic culture and provides a merged perspective. For example, this study agrees on Mette on Russian elite's influence, but it does not limit constitutive elements of Russian strategic culture to elite beliefs only. Like most of the works in the literature, this study also agrees on the importance of historical experiences to shape Russian threat perceptions. Besides, rather than focusing only on autocratic tendencies on Russia, this study explains unique characteristics of the Russian regime and link it to its strategic culture.

Regarding on this, to analyze Russian decision to annex Crimea, mostly political sources of strategic culture have been chosen: Historical Experiences, Elite Beliefs and the Characteristics of the Regime. It is argued that those three sources are important drivers of Russian decision to annex and they are the constitutive elements of Russian strategic culture. History is an important factor to shape threat perceptions of the states, therefore, it is useful to know the past experiences to understand current security policies. In the Historical Experiences sub-chapter, Russian history from its origins to the contemporary Russia will be analyzed within the framework of strategic culture. Second source, the Russian elite and their beliefs will be analyzed in the second sub-chapter. For Lantis, three factors can cause change in strategic culture, and accordingly, security policies: 1) external shocks(war, revolution, economic crisis); 2) in the event that strategic thoughts contradict each

[16] Polina Sinovets, "From Stalin to Putin: Russian Strategic Culture in the XXI Century, Its Continuity, and Change," *Philosophy Study* 6, no. 7 (2016), https://doi.org/10.17265/2159-5313/2016.07.002.
[17] Fritz W. Ermath, "Russia's Strategic Culture: Past, Present, and… In Transition?," (USA: Defense Threat Reduction Agency, 2006), 18, https://fas.org/irp/agency/dod/dtra/russia.pdf

other; 3)the attitudes and beliefs of the political elites in that country.[18] Thus, in Russian case, the political elite have an important role in strategic cultural continuity and change. They are also influential in decision making. Last sub-chapter will shed light on Russian regime and its constitutive power on Russian strategic culture. Because, regime's characteristics, whether it is democratic or not, centralized or decentralized, should be taken into account when analyzing strategic culture.

Fourth chapter of this study will apply theory to practice. It will analyze Russian decision to annex Crimea through Russian strategic culture. The Crisis of Ukraine will be examined with pre-crisis conditions of Ukraine, its relations and problems with Russia, the escalation of the crisis and eventually, the annexation. Subsequently, the decision will be analyzed with the three constitutive sources of Russian strategic culture. First of all, Crimea will be located into Russian history as Russian and Crimean histories share a lot in common. Crimea was a part of Russian Empire from Catherine II's annexation of it in 1783 until its transition to Ukraine in 1954. After being under Ukrainian rule for 60-years, now, Crimea is a part of Russia. This long, intermingled history is important to analyze. Furthermore, Crimea is important to the contemporary Russia in many different aspects, material(strategic, military, politic) or not(religious, emotional). The Elite part will demonstrate the Russian political elite's beliefs and perceptions towards the annexation and also, their effect on Russian decision making. Here, survey results and elite's general attitudes towards Crimea will be presented and analyzed. Lastly, how the annexation effected regime consolidation, will be analyzed under the Regime Characteristics sub chapter.

The thesis will end with a conclusion chapter, in which the findings and the general results will be presented. The findings will demonstrate that, the sources of Russian strategic culture and its general features were useful and effective on its decision to annex Crimea.

[18] Lantis, "Strategic Culture: From Clausewitz to Constructivism," 26–28.

CHAPTER 2

STRATEGIC CULTURE AS THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Strategic cultural analysis' main focus is to understand the motives and reasons behind certain patterns of state decisions and policies. The main driving force behind strategic cultural research is to understand why some states, under the same conditions or under the same international system, act or decide differently? It is argued that, decision-makers in different states think and therefore, act differently at similar conditions, because of the difference of their strategic cultures. From this point of view, the first chapter of this thesis aims to analyze strategic culture as a thereoretical framework. The primary intention is to provide an in-depth analysis of the strategic cultural analysis. After providing definitions and survey the literature, then, the chapter continues with explaining the importance of it and contributions. Also, the chapter includes the gaps and problematic aspects of the approach.

2.1. The Concepts of "Strategy" and "Culture"

It is believed that the origin of the concept of strategy is derived from the Ancient Greeks, especially from the words *strategos*, which means "general" and *stratagems*, which means "tricks of war".[19] Strategy is generally perceived or used as a military concept, however the term has many different meanings and has used in many different disciplines.

In general, strategy means a plan, skill or method for achieving something. In IR literature, British soldier, military historian and theorist Liddel Hart defined it as "the art of distributing and applying military means to fulfill the ends of policy".[20] In other words, "Strategy is the bridge between military power and policy".[21] Additionally, Prussian General Carl von Clausewitz defined strategy as "the use of engagement for

[19] Rich Horwath, "The Origin of Strategy," *Strategic Thinking Institute*(2006): 1, accessed September 30, 2019, https://www.strategyskills.com/Articles_Samples/origin_strategy.pdf
[20] B.H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy* (London: Faber and Faber, 1967), 321.
[21] Colin S. Gray, *War, Peace and International Relations: An Introduction to Strategic History*, *International Politics* (London: Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2007), 40.

the purpose of war".[22] He also argued that, "…war should never be thought of as something autonomous but always as an instrument of policy".[23]

Strategy, war and policy are directly linked to each other. Here, strategy and war are tools for states[24] to achieve their policy(s). Then, what are the motivations for states to wage war on their components? Athenian historian and general, Thucydides, stated that the three strongest motives of combat are: fear, honor and interest.[25] Although there may be some other reasons along with these three primary ones, the motives for war has been, more or less, same throughout history, and even today. For example, when states fear that their security is dangered by other states, they declare war. Or, when there is a core interest of a state, and if diplomacy would not work or the only way to gain that interest is through combat, then, they can also wage war. As seen in the samples, one or more of these motives may be the reason of war.

Moving on with culture, the concept has many different definitions.[26] In general, "…culture is a product of man-made parts of the environment that subsumes an ensemble of knowledge systems, beliefs, traditions, language, arts, literatures coalescing into a collective".[27] Culture has many subunits; such as public culture, political culture, organizational culture, military culture, strategic culture etc. The question of where culture comes from should be answered. It comes primarily from history and geography. A state's geography and history cannot change, but culture can change over time, it is not static. Culture can evolve, adapt and "…it can even

[22] Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War,* trans. and ed. Michael Howards and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 177. PDF e-book.
[23] Ibid., 88.
[24] Although non-state actors also have impact on policies, key actors of the international politics are still the states. Therefore, states are accepted as key actors throughout this thesis.
[25] Robert B. Strassler, *Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War* (NewYork: Free Press, 1996), 43.
[26] For example, American anthropologists A. L. Kroeber and C. Kluckhohn, in their book called *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions,* had presented 164 different definitions of culture. A. L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhon, *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions,* (Cambridge Massachusetts: The Museum, 1952).
[27] Rajen Harshe, "Culture, Identity and International Relations," *Economic and Political Weekly* 41, no. 37 (2006): 3945. https://www.jstor.org/stable/4418700

change radically only if battered by traumatic schock".[28] Besides, culture is transferred through generations and, it dates back to human history.

On the other hand, culture entered IR literature, especially during the post-Cold War era, in early 1990s.[29] IR theorist and Professor Ken Booth, in his book called *Strategy and Ethnocentrism*, highlighted the importance of culture: "As long as the politico-cultural dimension is neglected, analysts will continue to develop theories which do not fit the facts, use words which do not fit the behaviour they are supposed to describe, and propose policies which will make more sense in a seminar room than in the world outside".[30] Accordingly Professor of Politics Jeffrey Legro stated culture's importance, "Culture's key contribution is to explain how differences in the collective beliefs and norms that characterize structures can lead to different understandings and behavior even while formal structure is similar".[31] Although culture is important, this does not mean to claim that culture is the one and only determinant of decision and action. Because, strategic decisions and behaviors is influenced by many other factors as well.

After explaning strategy and culture withing the framework of International Relations literature, next part will discuss the different definitions of strategic culture and provide a brief literature review.

2.2. Defining Strategic Culture

It can be said that strategic cultural studies had launched with Jack L. Snyder's report named *"The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations"* in 1977.[32] He was the first scholar to use the term. He defined strategic culture as, "…the sum total of ideas, conditioned emotional responses, and patterns of habitual

[28] Colin S Gray, "Out of the Wilderness: Prime Time for Strategic Culture," 2006, 10, https://fas.org/irp/agency/dod/dtra/stratcult-out.pdf.
[29] Jeffrey S Lantis, "Strategic Culture and National Security Policy," *International Studies Review* 4, no. 3 (2002): 87, accessed september 16, 2019, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3186465.
[30] Ken Booth, *Strategy and Ethnocentrism* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1979), 136.
[31] Jeffrey Legro, "Culture and Preferences in the International Cooperation Two-Step," *The American Political Science Review* 90, no. 1 (1996): 134–35, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2082802.
[32] Snyder, "The Soviet Strategic Culture,"

behavior that members of a national strategic community have acquired through instruction or imitation and share with each other with regard to nuclear strategy".[33]

In his report, Snyder studied the U.S.' and the USSR's strategic cultures through their different perceptions about nuclear strategy. And, he tried to answer why these two superpowers thought differently on nuclear strategy. He resulted his report stating that, Soviet perspective and U.S. perspective on nuclear options were not the same, because "Soviet decisionmakers (and American decisionmakers, for that matter) do not characteristically approach issues posed by technological change as though they were culture-free systems analysts and game theoreticians".[34]

After Snyder's definition, the literature has come up with many other definitions, some of them will be mentioned in here. For example, Professor of China in World Affairs at Harvard University Alastair Iain Johnston defined the concept,

> Strategic culture is an integrated 'system of symbols (e.g., argumentation structures, languages, analogies, metaphors) which acts to establish pervasive and long lasting strategic preferences by formulating concepts of the role and efficacy of military force in interstate political affairs, and by clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the strategic preferences seem uniquely realistic and efficacious'. [35]

Accordingly, Ken Booth in his article named *The Concept of Strategic Culture Affirmed,* provided another definition of strategic culture, "The concept of strategic culture refers to a nation's traditions, values, attitudes, patterns of behavior, habits, symbols, achievements and particular ways of adapting to the environment and solving problems with respect to the threat or use of force".[36]

Professor of IR and Strategic Studies Colin Gray also provided his own definition of the concept. According to him, "strategic culture can be conceived as a context out

[33] Snyder, "The Soviet Strategic Culture, " 8.
[34] Ibid., 9.
[35] Alastair Iain Johnston, "Thinking about Strategic Culture," *International Security* 19, no. 4 (1995): 46, https://doi.org/10.2307/2539119.
[36] Ken Booth, "The Concept of Strategic Culture Affirmed,"in *Strategic Power: USA/USSR*, ed. Carl G. Jacobsen (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990), 121.

there that surrounds, and gives meaning to, strategic behavior".[37] Whether including 'behavior' to the analysis of strategic culture or not, started the argument known as Gray-Johnston debate in the literature. More details about the debate will be mentioned in the upcoming parts of this chapter, after analyzing both Johnston's and Gray's approach to the strategic culture more comprehensively, especially when explaining generations of strategic cultural studies.

Accordingly, Norwegian political scientist Iver B. Neumann and political scientist from Finnish Institute of International Affairs Henrikki Heikka defined strategic culture with the emphasis on perceptions and interpretations of the decision makers or elites, according to them:

> The approach focuses on how elites and decision-makers assess and interpret the main characteristics of the international system in which they operate and how these assessments influence their views about security policy, and the use of military force in particular. The approach is therefore concerned with the perceptions, beliefs, ideas and norms that guide national security elites in their task of sorting out strategic priorities for the hard core of a state's foreign and security policy. [38]

Another definition of strategic culture came from Jeannie Johnson, who is a lecturer in the political science department at Utah State University. For Johnson, "Strategic culture is that set of shared beliefs, assumptions, and modes of behavior, derived from common experiences and accepted narratives (both oral and written), that shape collective identity and relationships to other groups, and which determine appropriate ends and means for achieving security objectives".[39]

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[37] Colin S. Gray, "Strategic Culture as Context: The First Generation of Theory Strikes Back," *Review of International Studies* 25, no. 1 (1999): 51, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210599000492.

[38] Iver B. Neumann and Henrikki Heikka, "Grand Strategy, Strategic Culture, Practice: The Social Roots of Nordic Defence," *Cooperation and Conflict* 40, no. 1 (2005): 6, accessed september 21, 2019, https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836705049731.

[39] Jeannie L Johnson, "Strategic Culture: Refining the Theoretical Construct," (USA: Defense Threat Reduction Agency, 2006), 5, accessed 20, 2019, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3186465.

Recently, Russian independent researcher Valeriy Solovey provided a very brief definition of the concept. According to him, "Strategic culture is the elite's set of views, beliefs, and approaches with respect to foreign policy and major strategy".[40]

In addition to all those definitions, strategic culture as a concept is sometimes misused. For example, strategic culture and grand strategy are sometimes used interchangeably. Grand strategy means the collection of plans and policies that include the state's effort to prioritize and mobilize its political, military, diplomatic, and economic tools to ensure that the state's core national interests.[41] In other words, "Grand strategy is the art of reconciling ends and means".[42] It can be said that, grand strategy is a set of preconditions for action and that action's actualization in practice, at a specific time and place.[43] However, strategic culture focuses more on perceptions of decision maker's about their state foreign or security policies. While grand strategy focuses more on material factors to analyze and reach an end, strategic culture enables non-material factors to include to the decision. As it is understood here, strategic culture and grand strategy are interrelated, they are not two opposing concepts, but still, it should not be used interchangeably because they have different definitions and they are two different concepts.

As seen above, strategic culture is a contested theory and the lack of a common definition of strategic culture, makes it hard to study. However, Johnston classified the literature and divided the work on strategic culture into three generations.[44] Each three generations' main assumptions, advocates, important studies, pros and cons will be discussed in the next part.

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[40] Valeriy Solovey, The True Story of How Russia's Foreign Policy Process Evolved," *The National Interest*, February 28, 2019. Accessed september 28, 2019, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/true-story-how-russias-foreign-policy-process-evolved-45812

[41] Peter Feaver, "What is grand strategy and why do we need it?," *Foreign Policy,* April 8, 2009, https://foreignpolicy.com/2009/04/08/what-is-grand-strategy-and-why-do-we-need-it/

[42] Ibid.

[43] Neumann and Heikka, "Grand Strategy, Strategic Culture, Practice,"14.

[44] Johnston, "Thinking about Strategic Culture," 36.

2.2.1. First generation in Strategic Cultural Studies

It is argued that the first generation came into the scene in the early 1980s and some of the first-generation scholars are: Jack Snyder, Colin Gray and David Jones. Their primary focus was on different approaches of the Soviets and the Americans about their nuclear strategy.[45] In his report mentioned in the previous part, Snyder stated "Soviet strategy has been influenced by a number of factors unique to the Soviet historical experience".[46] In Associate Professor of political science Jeffrey Lantis's words, Snyder claimed that, "…the Soviet military exhibited a preference for the preemptive, offensive use of force and the origins for this could be found in a Russian history of insecurity and authoritarian control. [47] Although he was the first to use the concept of "strategic culture", some scholars claimed that Snyder had distanced himself both from the concept and from the first generation of literature. [48] For example, he did not use the concept in his book called *The Ideology of the Offensive: Military Decision Making and the Disasters of 1914*.[49] And in *The Concept of Strategic Culture: Caveat Emptor*, Snyder stated that his explanation of culture has been misunderstood, as he had used the term culture in a different sense.[50] He added, "Distinctive Soviet strategic concepts come not from muzhik or Bolshevik culture, but from much more concrete aspects of the internal and external setting in which Soviet thinking about nuclear war developed".[51] Accordingly, he continued to explain his approach to strategic culture with the question: "…when differences in strategy do exist across countries, how helpful is the concept of strategic culture in explaining them".[52] He answered the question,

> Differences in Soviet and American strategy probably cannot be explained by broad differences between traditional Russian and Western cultures or between Leninist and liberal political cultures. Culture in this sense did not

[45] Johnston, "Thinking about Strategic Culture," 36.
[46] Snyder, "The Soviet Strategic Culture," 9.
[47] Lantis, "Strategic Culture: From Clausewitz to Constructivism," 6–7.
[48] Johnston, "Thinking about Strategic Culture," 36.
[49] Jack L. Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive: Military Decision Making and the Disasters of 1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984).
[50] Jack Snyder, "The Concept of Strategic Culture: Caveat Emptor," in *Strategic Power: USA/USSR,* ed. Carl G. Jacobsen (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990), 7. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-20574-5_1
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid., 4.

> figure in this author's original argument about Soviet strategic culture. Rather, he sought to explain differences of strategy in terms of specific differences in the domestic or international circumstances confronting the strategists of different states, not in terms of a generalized difference in their political cultures.[53]

On the other hand, Professor of Political Science David Jones focused on military strategic culture of the Soviets and had criticized Snyder for narrowly focusing on "nuclear strategic culture" only, and ignoring other issues.[54] Jones argued that Snyder recognized the USSR's historical experiences as an important cultural influence, however he reduced those experiences and legacy to the World War II(WWII) era only.[55] And, for Jones, it was not fair for Russians and/or Soviets whose historical legacy dates back beyond the Mongol invasion in mid-1200s.[56]

As a result; first generation of strategic culture, just like second and third, has its pros and cons. Previously culture had been viewed as a residual or secondary explanation for strategic behaviour, but especially with the first generation, culture's importance has been highlighted in many works. Following part will discuss second generation of strategic culture.

2.2.2. Second Generation in Strategic Cultural Studies

Second generation of strategic cultural studies emerged in mid-1980's and key scholar of this wave was Political Scientist Bradley S. Klein. Second generation's main argument was that there is a difference between what leaders say they are doing and what in fact they do.[57] In other words, second wave argued that the discourse and the action may not be the same. Why have second generation focused on discourse? Because, according to them, the strategic policies are carried out by individuals. That's why, discourse is important to analyze.

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[53] Snyder, "The concept of Strategic," 4.
[54] David R. Jones, "Soviet Strategic Culture," in *Strategic Power: USA/USSR,* ed. Carl G. Jacobsen (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990), 36.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Johnston, "Thinking about Strategic Culture," 39.

Second wave looked at the superpowers from a Gramscian perspective and for them, the discourse was used to consolidate the hegemony of the leader or the strategic elites. [58] According to the second generation scholar Bradley S. Klein, studying strategic culture meant studying the cultural hegemony of organized state violence.[59]. Also, he summed up Gramscian hegemony,

> For Gramsci, the location of the state over civil society is not some timeless universal given, but rather a particular historical achievement characteristic of modern class rule by which a culturally and intellectually sophisticated bourgeoisie has sought to integrate subordinate classes, and to do so along lines that are more nearly consensual than coercive. From this standpoint, hegemony concerns the production of legitimacy, the co-optation of radical challenges to bourgeois dominance and the construction of culturally integrative networks by which the working class and subaltern groups are absorbed within a political structure which bridges the historical antagonisms within civil society.[60]

A good example is U.S. nuclear deterrence policy during the Cold War. The nuclear deterrence policy fitted U.S. needs by merging two contradictory modes: one declaratory, and one operational.[61] At the level of 'declaratory policy', American nuclear strategy has been explained with defensiveness, retaliation and deterrence; but at operational level, it was active counterforce combat.[62] According to Professor of IR at University of Dhaka, Bangladesh, Uz Zaman, the declaratory strategy was used as a tool by American strategic elites to establish a cultural justification for their strategy, to mislead potential challengers and to gather support for aggressive foreign policies.[63]

In a nutshell, second generation's main argument is that there is a difference between what leaders say and in fact, what they do. Their approach of strategic culture, "…leads us to ask how strategic culture serves to constitute certain strategic

[58]Rashed Uz Zaman, "Strategic Culture: A 'Cultural' Understanding of War," *Comparative Strategy* 28, no. 1 (2009): 74, accessed September 23, 2019, https://doi.org/10.1080/01495930802679785.
[59] Bradley S Klein, "Hegemony and Strategic Culture: American Power Projection and Alliance Defence Politics," *Review of International Studies* 14, no. 2 (1988): 136, https://doi.org/10.1017/S026021050011335X.
[60] Klein, "Hegemony and Strategic Culture," 134.
[61] Uz Zaman, "Strategic Culture," 77.
[62] Klein, "Hegemony and Strategic Culture, " 138.
[63] Uz Zaman, "Strategic Culture," 77–78.

behaviour as meaningful but also how strategic behaviour serves to constitute the identity of those actors that engage in such behaviour".[64] With regard to these contributions, second generation also could not come up with a widely-accepted definition of the concept, and according to Johnston, in second generations aprroach it is not clear whether we should expect the strategic discourse to influence behavior.[65] Third and last generation, hoped to fill these gaps.

2.2.3. Third generation in Strategic Cultural Studies

The rise of constructivism led the way for the emergence of a new wave of strategic culture,[66] which is known as third generation of strategic culture. Important scholars of the third generation was, Alastair I. Johnston, Jeffrey Legro and Peter Katzenstein. The common feature of this new wave, that emerged in the 1990s, was that they excluded behavior as an independent variable in their analyses. Some used military culture, some political-military culture, and others organizational culture as an independent variable. [67] Although they did not neglect the importance of culture and identity, they selected their sources differently. For example, according to them, the sources of cultural values are less rooted in history, rather more of the product of recent practice and experience. [68]

Strategic culture's third generation scholars attempted to make the concept "testable" in the positivist way.[69] To do that, they treated "strategic culture" as an independent variable and "behavior" as a dependent variable.[70] Or, some of them excluded behaviour. However, dividing behaviour from culture is a shortcoming of the third generation and according to Bloomfield and Nossal, Johnston's positivist approach is inherently problematic.[71] For them, there are two reasons for that. First,

[64] Edward Lock, "Refining Strategic Culture: Return of the Second Generation," *Review of International Studies* 36, no. 3 (2010): 685, https://www.jstor.org/stable/40783291.
[65] Johnston, "Thinking about Strategic Culture," 40.
[66] Uz Zaman, "Strategic Culture, " 78.
[67] Johnston, "Thinking about Strategic Culture," 41.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Neumann and Heikka, "Grand Strategy," 8.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Alan Bloomfield and Kim Richard Nossal, "Towards an Explicative Understanding of Strategic Culture: The Cases of Australia and Canada," *Contemporary Security Policy* 28, no. 2 (2007): 287, accessed september 26, 2019, https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260701489859.

"…because culture straddles the divide between independent and dependent variables, it is an inherently difficult concept for positivists to use".[72] Second, "…the human world is so inherently complex that it is simply not realistic to separate ideational factors from behaviour".[73] In addition to this, importing positivism into the strategic cultural studies creates an analytical problem: "How can we interpret the meaning of (strategic) behavior if not within the context of (strategic) culture?".[74] The positivist approach assumes that 'behaviour' (as something 'out there') cannot in itself be a constitutive part of culture, therefore it can thus be studied separately from culture.[75]

Then, should strategic culture scholars include behavior as an independent variable or exclude it? And, whether behaviour is "out there" or is it in an unseperable relationship with culture? This dilemma, and the different opinions, led the way to the so-called Johnston-Gray debate in the strategic culture literature. Colin Gray opposed to the third generation scholars' idea to separate culture and behavior from each other. He expressed his critism with these words: "Anyone who seeks a falsifiable theory of strategic culture in the school of Johnston, commits the same error as a doctor who sees people as having entirely separable bodies and minds".[76] For Gray, "…culture is a significant and can even be a determining influence upon strategic decisions and behavior".[77] However, for Johnston, adding behavior is a tautological trap of the first generation and to avoid this, third generation scholars (Johnston included) explicitly exclude behavior as an element of their definition of culture.[78]

Gray answered to Johnston's criticism by claiming that Johnston's theorizing of the concept, misunderstood the nature, character and working of strategic culture.[79] He

[72] Bloomfield and Nossal, "Towards an Explicative, " 287.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Neumann and Heikka, "Grand Strategy," 8.
[75] Ibid., 8-9.
[76] Gray, "Strategic Culture as Context," 53.
[77] Gray, "Out of the Wilderness, " 7.
[78] Johnston, "Thinking about Strategic Culture," 41.
[79] Gray, "Strategic Culture as Context," 49.

argued that “Strategic culture should be approached both as a shaping context for behavior and itself as a constituent of that behavior”.[80] Lastly, he specified,

> Strategic culture and patterns of strategic behaviour, if one elects to separate them conceptually, are related integrally much as strategy, operations, and tactics are related. Just as all strategy has to be 'done' by operations which consist of tactical behaviour, so all strategic, operational, and tactical behaviour is 'done' by people and organisations that have been encultured supranationally, nationally, or sub-nationally.[81]

Johnston, wrote a response to Gray in 1999 and indicated few issues they agree: (1) Strategic culture explains the way different people think and act when it comes to the use of force; (2) “…strategic cultures are not epiphenomena of unitary states acting under anarchy and constrained by material power structures, but are independent of these structures, influenced perhaps by both domestic and international normative structures”.[82] Major differences between them were: (1) definition of strategic culture; (2) “whether behavior can stand alone as a dependent variable to be explained by ideational independent variable”;[83] (3) how to conceptualize strategic culture.

With regard of all differences and similarities, neither Johnston nor Gray, struck a happy medium. And, although the criticisms, third generation of strategic culture also has its shortcomings. First, leaving behavior out from the independent variable is problematic because culture and behavior is correlated to each other. Second shortcoming is valid for all three waves: Still no common definition. We can summarize three generations of strategic culture and indicate what has been identified so far with the table below.

[80] Ibid., 50.
[81] Ibid., 56.
[82] Alastair Iain Johnston, “Strategic Cultures Revisited: Reply to Colin Gray,” *Review of International Studies* 25, no. 3 (1999): 519.
[83] Johnston, *Strategic Cultures Revisited*, 521.

Table 2.1. Summarize of the generations of Strategic Culture

Generation	Main research fields	Important Scholars
First wave	Different approaches to the Nuclear Strategy by the U.S. and the USSR.	Jack L. Snyder Colin S. Gray David R. Jones
Second wave	The differences between discourse and action among actors.	Bradley S. Klein
Third wave	The role of organizational and institutional norms, cultures and identities in understanding strategic preferences.	Alastair I. Johnston Jeffrey Legro Peter Katzenstein

2.3. The Sources of Strategic Culture

Strategic Culture has many sources, but there is no consensus of its sources among scholars. The chart below prepared by Lantis shows highly cited sources of strategic culture.

Table 2.2. Potential Sources of Strategic Culture

Physical Sources	Political Sources	Social/Cultural Sources
Geography	Historical Experience	Myths and Symbols
Climate	Political System	Defining Texts
Natural Resources	Elite Beliefs	
Generational Change	Military Organization	
Technology		

(Source: Lantis, "Strategic Culture: From Clausewitz,"17).

Starting with the physical sources, geography always had a significant impact on policy makers. The geographical location of states, the characters of its neighbors, its size, and the political implications of the natural arrangement of land and sea, are crucial factors of the way its policymakers think about strategy.[84] An example about this is, Russian location. The lack of natural borders in Russia had always been a major factor for Russians to believe they have been constantly threatened.[85] On

[84] Williamson Murray and Mark Grimsley, "Introduction: On Strategy," in *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States, and War*, ed. Williamson Murray, MacGregor Knox, and Alvin Bernstein (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 7; Gray, *War, Peace and International Relations: An Introduction to Strategic History*, 12.

[85] Jones, "Soviet Strategic Culture," 38.

technology's and generational change's effect, another example from Russia can be given. Until Peter the Great, Russia was an isolated country and it could not catch up with the technological innovations from the West, this situation caused Russia to remain backward compared to the Western states.[86]

Natural resources' impact can be seen in interdependence. If a state is dependent on another state, then, the dependent state can tolerate the actions from other state. For example, Russia has punished states like Georgia with supply interruptions and higher prices because, their governments decided to turn their country's face to the West.[87] Because, both states are dependent on Russia, and Russia used its advantage to punish them. On contrary to Georgia and Ukraine, Russia had gifted the countries who remained friendly to the Kremlin, such as Armenia and Belarus.[88]

Continuing with political sources of strategic culture, firstly, historical experiences are crucial because a country's history helps to shape its behaviours and its perceptions. But here I must note that, this thesis will apply political sources of the strategic culture when analyzing Russia. Therefore, the upcoming examples will be given other than Russia. For example, in Israel's case, geography and history may be two explanatory sources of its foreign or security policies. Historically, the memories about the diaspora and the Holocaust, has an important place on the minds of Israeli policymakers. [89] Also, geographically, Israel feels unsecure as it is not only surrounded by 'enemy' Arab states, but also its relative small size makes an "offensively oriented preemptive strategy almost imperative".[90] Another example would be North Korea. When analysing North Korea's nuclear strategy through its strategic culture, Turkish scholar Emine Akçadağ Alagöz argued that North Korea's historical experiences, geography, ideology and its norms and values has shaped its policies.[91] In her article

[86] Ibid., 38.
[87] Randall Newnham, "Oil, Carrots, and Sticks: Russia's Energy Resources as a Foreign Policy Tool," *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 2, no. 2 (2011): 134, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.euras.2011.03.004.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Murray and Grimsley, "Introduction: On Strategy," 10.
[90] Ibid., 9.
[91] Emine Akçadağ Alagöz, "Stratejik Kültür Perspektifinden Kuzey Kore'nin Nükleer Programı," *Uluslararası İlişkiler Dergisi* 16, no. 61 (2019): 125, https://doi.org/10.33458/uidergisi.541541.

she stated that, rationally, it was expected from North Korea to give up from its nuclear programme and accept diplomatic and economic opportunuties, as because of the sanctions, its economy is sinking and public discontent is increasing.[92] However, North Korea did not give up on its nuclear strategy, because its strategic culture had effected its security policies.[93] North/South division, American threats, being attecked by different forces in different periods, all together, played a key role on its decision. She concluded her article with arguing that nuclear weapons would provide maximum deterrence of active defense, and in order to protect itself against interference and reduce the likelihood of being attacked, Korea continues its nuclear programme.[94]

Another fundamental factor is political system. Some countries can be democratic, others can be autoritarian, or some even can be hybrid. According to Lantis, in non-democratic countries, cultural variables such as tribal, ethnic, or religious allegiances may also be influential on decisions.[95] Elite Beliefs are important as the leader may be influenced directly or indirectly by elites. And lastly, military organizations effect can be found in the application of force during conflicts.

Myths and symbols, and defining texts are the social/cultural sources of strategic culture, however, compared to the political and physical sources, their effect is less significant. However, in Lantis' words "Both can act as a stabilizing or destabilizing factor in the evolution of strategic cultural identities".[96] Key/defining texts, for example Sun Tzu's *Arf of War*, Clausewitz's *On War*, Thucydides's *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, may be influential on society.[97]

Since the sources of strategic culture briefly explained, now, there are some questions that need to be answered. What are the most important factors to be

[92] Ibid., 112.
[93] Ibid., 123.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Lantis, "Strategic Culture: From Clausewitz," 17.
[96] Ibid., 18.
[97] Ibid.

studied and when and how do they influence strategic culture? Or, "…should these be ranked, or will it be variable across case studies, regions and the actors involved?"[98] According to Darryl Howlett, the effects of these resources should be ranked according to their importance.[99] However, according to Yitzhak Klein, trying to develop a general list that describes the sources of strategic culture is a futile exercise; because, for him, "Every strategic culture is unique, and has unique sources".[100]

As a result, the sources of strategic culture are shaped and changed depending on the definitions and cases selected by the scholars. A definition may include one or more sources while another definition may include others. Also, one factor may be important for one particular case while for another case, it may be less significant. The researchers generally use the ones they consider as important, or had the most explanatory power to his or her case, and the ones that fits their definition.

2.4. The Importance of Strategic Culture

As Gray stressed, "Strategic cultural understanding is difficult to achieve and even more difficult to operationalize".[101] The reason why is that it has many shortcomings, mentioned in the previous parts. However, the theory also fills a gap in IR theory and hopes to contribute to the literature in three ways . First, strategic culture accepts that most actors are likely rational, but it argues that rationality must be understood from a cultural perspective. [102] Second, strategic culture and its sources gathers and shapes data in a way specifically useful to foreign policy analysis.[103] Lastly, the theory helps to understand a state's "tendencies" with offering a stronger understand of decision parameters.[104]

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[98] Darryl Howlett, "Strategic Culture : Reviewing Recent Literature," *Policy* IV, no. 10 (2005).
[99] Ibid.
[100] Yitzhak Klein, "A Theory of Strategic Culture," *Comparative Strategy* 10, no. 1 (1991): 5, https://doi.org/10.1080/01495939108402827.
[101] Gray, "Out of the Wilderness," 6.
[102] Jeannie J. Johnson, "Conclusion: Toward a Standard Methodological Approach," in *Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction,* ed. Jeannie L. Johnson, Kerry M. Kartchner, and Jeffrey A. Larsen (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 244. Doi: 10.1057/9780230618305.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Jeannie J. Johnson, "Conclusion: Toward a Standard," 244.

Even in times B.C, Sun-Tzu stressed the importance of knowing yourself and knowing your enemy in his book called *The Art of War*. If you know yourself, then, your interests along with your culture, merges and creates a national strategy for a state. And if you know your enemy, then, you also know what kind of a state are you dealing with; its interests, security perceptions, capabilities etc. In Sun-Tzu's (6th century B.C.) words: "One who knows the enemy and knows himself will not be endangered in a hundred engagements. One who does not know the enemy but knows himself will sometimes be victorious, sometimes meet with defeat. One who knows neither the enemy nor himself will invariably be defeated in every engagement".[105]

Accordingly, Ken Booth also came up with several reasons why strategic cultural studies are important. On one of them, he agreed with Sun-Tzu and wrote: "…understanding a nation's strategic culture is a fundamental part of 'knowing thine enemy', one of the most basic principles of war. It contributes to an appreciation of another nation's behaviour in its own terms, and this is the starting point of understanding".[106] In addition to this, he provided some other reasons of the importance of strategic culture. Some of them are:

- It erodes the impact of ethnocentrism with all that implies for the theory and practice of strategy.[107]
- "…strategic culture sensitizes us to the importance of history if we want to ask the right questions about the motivations, self-image, and behavioural patterns of others".[108]
- "…it helps break down the artificial boundary between the domestic environment within which policies are made and the external security environment".[109]

[105] Sun Tzu, *The Complete Art of War*, trans. Ralph D. Sawyer (Colorado: Westview Press, 1996), https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004.
[106] Booth, "The Concept of Strategic Culture Affirmed," 125–26.
[107] Ibid., 125
[108] Ibid., 126.
[109] Booth, "The Concept of Strategic Culture Affirmed," 126.

As a result, in Uz Zaman's words; "…the need for understanding and making use of the concept is necessary to help us better understand ourselves, our competitors, and the outside world".[110] In addition to this, according to Bloomfield and Nossal, "…the real utility of the concept of strategic culture is its ability to deepen our 'explicative understanding' of the patterns of security behaviour of states". [111] That's why, despite the challenges, strategic culture has many important aspects worth analyzing.

2.5. Strategic Culture and Security Studies

Security Studies are a sub-discipline of International Relations. In this discipline, the continuation of the existence of the sovereign states was accepted as the main explanatory tool in understanding their behavior.[112] Although Security Studies primary concern has been state's internal and external security, however, the discipline is not limited only to the security of the regime, or borders. It also has many sub-units: Terrorism, Cyber Security, Human Security, Environmental Security, Energy Security and Economic Security are only a few of them. But for sovereign states, their primary concern has always been the security of their states. And, they adopt and develop strategies and policies to maintain their security, and along with it, their interests. For example; deterrence, limited or total war, non-combat action, disarmament, alliances and many other strategies can be adopted by states. However, the way states implement these policies, or gain their security, may vary from one state to another. Because of their different cultures, threat perceptions, thinkings and many other dimensions that affect their decision making process, they may come up with different policies. Here, according to Gray, "Since we are all encultured, whether we like it or not, we are obliged to pursue our interests with our values and preferences as a more or less powerful influence upon our decisions and behavior".[113]

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[110] Uz Zaman, "Strategic Culture," 83.
[111] Bloomfield and Nossal, "Towards an Explicative Understanding," 286.
[112] Alan Collins, "Giriş: Güvenlik Çalışmaları Nedir?",3rd ed., in *Çağdaş Güvenlik Çalışmaları*, ed. Alan Collins and trans. Nasuh Uslu (İstanbul: Röle Akademik Yayıncılık, 2017), 1.
[113] Gray, "Out of the Wilderness," 12.

Different International Relations theories have different points of views or arguments about security. For example, neorealist or structural realists do not agree with strategic culturalist, as they think that threat perceptions, cultures or other sources are not influential on foreign or security policies. Neorealism is a state-centric theory, it accepts states as the main actors in international politics. However, for it, states are black boxes or billiard balls. Their internal dynamics are relatively, less important. The theory tends to explain state behaviour through the structure of the international system. As the original founder of neorealism, Political Scientist Kenneth Waltz stated "In a systems theory, some part of the explanation of behaviours and outcomes is found in the system's structure".[114] Neorealists argue that the international system is anarchy and under that system, states must secure theirselves(self-help) and maximize their powers. As a result, in Waltz's words, "Neorealism contends that international politics can be understood only if the effects of structure are added to traditional realism's unit-level explanation".[115] Therefore, strategic culture scholars critize neorealism or structural realism for only focusing on system, and ignoring internal dynamics of the states. For instance, Colin Gray criticized neorealism by stating that neorealism is flawed, "… culture must always be a potential influence upon decision and action".[116] Additionally, Johnston also stated, "The neorealist framework discounts the accumulated weight of the past in favor of a forward-looking calculation of expected utility".[117] He also added that strategic cultural studies are challenging "the ahistorical, non-cultural neorealist framework for analyzing strategic choices".[118] However, this does not mean that structure of the system is not important. What matters is that the combination of structure and culture.[119]

[114] Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Boston:Addison-Wesley Publishing Company ,1979), 73.
[115] Kenneth Waltz, "Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory," *Journal of International Affairs* 44, no. 1 (1990): 34, https://www.jstor.org/stable/24357222.
[116] Gray, "Out of Wilderness," 10.
[117] Johnston, "Thinking about Strategic Culture," 35.
[118]Ibid.
[119] Legro, "Culture and Preferences," 134.

As seen in here, unlike what appears, strategic culture and neorealism, or other International Relations theories, are not opponents. Rather, they can build on each other. It can be said that, strategic culture is a supplement to the classical realism, neo-realism, constructivism or other theories.[120] For example, neoclassical realism acknowledges strategic culture as a domestic-level intervening variable, along with leader image, state-society relations and domestic institutions.[121] According to the neoclassical realists, strategic culture helps to shape the strategic understanding of political leaders and societal elites.[122] With regard to these examples, we can argue that scholars of strategic culture do not see it as a competing theory to other International Relations theories. Because, in Gray's words, "…it is literally impossible for there to be behavior of a realist character that is utterly bereft of cultural influence".[123] Scholars of strategic culture also accepts that culture by its own self, or other sources of strategic culture, cannot have a full explanatory power. Some other variables may also be needed. Structure of the system, other internal dynamics, the leaders' personality, and many other features may also be as important as the sources of strategic culture, while analyzing state's behaviour. Here, strategic culture's importance lies in its ability to boost understandings.

As a result, it can be said that strategic culture is a supplement or a helping hand to states when they form their security policies. Because they must consider their sources of strategic culture when forming their security policies. Strategic culture is mostly unique to a state. But some sources may overlap with other state(s).

2.6. Conclusion

Conceptually, the scholars are not able to place strategic culture to a common ground, because it does not have a common definition. Since it does not have a common defintion, methodologically, it is also hard to operationalize. Therefore, for this thesis, an eclectic definition of strategic culture is selected. According to this

[120] Johnson, "Strategic Culture: Refining," 3.
[121] Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, and Steven E. Lobell, *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 8–9.
[122] Ibid., 67.
[123] Gray, "Out of Wilderness," 13.

definition, strategic culture is assessments and interpretations by the decision-makers of their state's main characteristics (history, geography, political system, etc.) to form security and foreign policies.

As mentioned earlier, strategic culture is an important analyze tool especially in foreign and security decisions when other explanations are not adequate. In the Turkish IR literature, Associate Professor of IR Ramazan Erdağ specified the importance of strategic culture when he analyzed Turkish strategic culture. He argued that, the actors determine orientations in their preferences for the solution of national and international problems with the effect of cultural depths in their mental backgrounds, and thus form their strategic cultures.[124] What is significant here is that, these emerging strategic cultures are important to the extent that they can affect the attitudes and behaviors of states.[125] Therefore, while determining the sources of the Russian strategic culture, the scope of the sources should be narrowed according to the factors that affect the strategic preferences. Because of the limitation, using every source would be out of the scope of this thesis. That's why, for this research, the main criteria when selecting the sources was, to find the ones that are directly related to the annexation of Crimea. From the Lantis's "Sources of Strategic Culture" table, this thesis will focus on political sources.

The number of researches about Russian Strategic culture is limited and those works have been explained in the Introduction part of this study. With acknowledging past works that had done before about Russian strategic culture, this thesis will also start with Russia's historical experiences, especially with the emphasis on its threat perceptions. Because, primarily, strategic culture is a product of a state's historical experiences.[126] In addition to that, like Mette, this thesis also agrees on the importance of the elite's beliefs and perceptions on strategic culture, especially in the Crimean case. That's why, after historical legacy, elite beliefs subchapter will examine Russian elites. Lastly, the characteristics of the regime will be analyzed.

[124] Ramazan Erdağ, "Türkiye'nin Stratejik Kültürü ve Dış Politikada Yansıması 1," *Akademik İncelemeler Dergisi*, no. 1 (2013): 57.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Degaut, "The Russian Strategic Culture," 3.

CHAPTER 3

RUSSIAN STRATEGIC CULTURE

Strategic culture, or "the security policy habits of mind"[127], has been an important source to analyze security policies of the states. Especially, in Russia's case, it is believed that there is a strong link between Russia's strategic culture and its security policies and motives.

The literature review presented in the beginning of this study shows that, while analyzing Russian strategic culture, scholars', more or less, agree on main points. For example, they agree on the fact that Russia has an autocratic legacy which affects its policies. Also, especially after the dissolution of the USSR, Russia lost its title of being super power, and ever since Putin came to power in 2000, Russia has been pursuing to regain that status. However, scholars diverge in the sources to analyze Russian strategic culture. In the framework of this thesis, three sources have been chosen when analyzing Russian strategic culture, namely historical experiences, elite beliefs and the characteristics of the regime. These sources are interpreted for guidance when forming foreign or securty policy by Russian decisionmakers.

3.1. Russia's Historical Experience

It can be argued from what discussed above that states' historical backgrounds affect their decisions directly or indirectly. Experiences from the past, guide states to behave in a certain way and they help to avoid old mistakes. From the perspective of strategic culture, state's historical experiences are one of the sources of strategic culture and it is worth analyzing as it helps to understand policies. Although history alone, does not have enough power to influence the foreign policy outputs, it is still useful to have a historical look at the formation of Russia to better understand its current perceptions, decisions, and behaviors.

[127] Skak, "Russian Strategic Culture," 324.

Explaining Russia's centuries-long history in details is out of the scope of this thesis. Therefore, only the important aspects will be mentioned in this part of the thesis. In this context, the main goals of this part are to highlight important characteristics of Russian history along with its threat perceptions, to discuss continuity and change of Russia's strategic culture, and finally, to demonstrate its long history's affects to its foreign policies. While analyzing long periods in history, periodization is difficult. For this thesis, Russian history has been divided into three periods. The pre-Soviet times, the Soviet era and the post-Soviet era. The reasons why it has divided to three is that, while explaining from strategic cultural perspective, it is important to highlight the transition periods. The first period will cover Russia from the first Slavic state(Kievan Rus) to the establishment of the USSR. Second Part will start with explaining the reasons why USSR established and end with the dissolution of it. The last part will cover the RF under Yeltsin and Putin, and showed the change and continuity of Russian strategic culture from Soviet strategic culture.

3.1.1. Pre-Soviet Times

This sub-part will shed light on Russian historical experiences before the establishment of the USSR. The origin of the Russian history starts from approximately at the end of 800s and the USSR had established in 1922; so, this sub-chapter of the thesis will cover more than a century. To make it easier to analyze, this period is divided to two: from the Kievan Rus to the Imperial Russia will be covered in the first part while from Imperial Russia to its end will be covered in the second part.

3.1.1.1. From Kievan Rus to the Imperial Russia

Scandinavians or Vikings, renowned as sailors, pirates, traders and explorers, spent most of their lives in the sea, and they conquered many places in the northwestern parts of Europe. A Viking called Rurik, came to Novgorod and dominated there in 862. Therefore, 862 is considered to be the year in which the political history of Russia started.[128] Since Rurik is the ancestor of the family, the name of the dynasty is also

[128] Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Rusya Tarihi: Başlangıçtan 1917'ye Kadar,* 6th ed. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2014), 23.

known as the Rurik dynasty. Although the exact year of Rurik's birth is unknown, he died in 879.[129] Following him, due to Rurik's son Igor was too young to ascend to the throne, Oleg became the new Knyaz[130]. Approximately around 880, he established the origins of the first Russian state, known as the Kievan Rus.[131] Oleg, Rurik's son Igor, Igor's wife Olga and then Olga's son Sviatoslav subdued East Slavic tribes and greatly expanded Kievan territory. After Sviatoslav's death, disagreements broke out between his sons, but Vladimir gained victory from this turmoil in 978 and became the new Knyaz. During his reign, an important event took place: Knyaz Vladimir I, or Vladimir the Great, accepted Orthodox Christianity as the official state religion in 988 and baptized.

Russian Kievan state continued to expand its territories, by the 11th century, they existed in a huge territory stretching from the Gulf of the Fin in the north; the Sea of Azov, the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea in the south; and from the east to west, from the Don river to the borders of today's Hungary. However, by the middle of the 12th century, Kiev's gradual decline had started. The decline process started with the death of Yaroslav in 1054. This period had witnessed constant civil wars among Yaroslav's sons, Iziaslav, Sviatoslav, and Vsevolod; and also, social political and economic problems. According to Ziegler, the reasons of Kiev's decline are:

> Factors often cited as contributing to this decline include the weak and decentralized nature of the Kievan political system, debilitating political and social conflicts, external aggression, the decline of trade, and, perhaps most importantly, the uncertainties of princely succession…the various Kievan states were unable to present a unified defense against outside forces.[132]

Approximately in 1237, Mongols invasion to Russia had begun. "Mongol rule lasted for about one century in the western part of Russia, and for nearly two centuries in the eastern region".[133] With no doubt, such a long period of rule had several impacts

[129] Kurat, *Rusya Tarihi*, 22-23.
[130] In those times, Russian rulers were called *Knyaze,* which can be translated as princes, dukes or rulers.
[131] Edward Acton, *Russia: The Tsarist and Soviet Legacy,* 2nd ed. (London: Longman, 1995), 14.
[132] Charles E. Ziegler, *The History of Russia* (California: Greenwood Press, 2009), 15.
[133] Ziegler, *The History of Russia,* 18.

on Russia, both negative and positive. On negative impacts, Mongols slaughtered Russians and caused serious destruction on cities, except for Novgorod, Tver, Yaroslav and Rostov.[134] Accordingly, Professor of History at the University of California, Berkeley Riasanovsky argued that Mongols had cut Russia off from Byzantium and in part from the West, and this led Russia to become an isolated country.[135]

Regardless of these negative evaluations, the Mongol domination of Russia had another significant influence. Mongols never destroyed Russian principalities, in this way they preserved at least unity of state structures. And gradually, the political center moved from Kiev to north, to Moscow principality. Thus, centralist and powerful state concentrated around in Moscow, whose name had mentioned for the first time in the Russian chronicles in 1147. Mongol invasion had left important marks on Russian strategic culture as, it showed that its borders were not defensible and was open to attack any time. Therefore, Russia aimed to militarize its army, build defensible borders, create a belt of buffer states from its neighbors to avoid future invasions and consolidate power at home. Most of these elements are showing continuity in today's Russia and its strategic culture.

Apart from the political initiatives, important changes took place in Russian Orthodox Church. Before the Mongol-Tatar rule, the Russian Orthodox Church was based in Kiev and it was headed by the metropolitans of Kiev. However, because of the Mongol's destruction, Moscow became the new seat of power of the Church. What's more, when the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II, or Mehmet the Conqueror, conquered Constantinople and end the Byzantine Empire in 1453, the Greek Orthodox Church recognized the supremacy of the Roman Pope.[136] This event made Russian Orthodox Church's seperation from the Greeks, thus Russian church became autonomous and chose its own metropolitans.[137]

[134] Ibid., 18–19.
[135] Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia,* 6th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 66.
[136] Ziegler, *The History of Russia*, 24.
[137] Paul Bushkovitch, *Rusya'nın Kısa Tarihi*, 3rd ed. (İstanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınevi, 2020),55.

In 1480, Moscow principality led by Ivan III (The Great, 1462–1505) won the battle against Golden Horde, and this marked the end of the Mongol-Tatar domination of Russia. An event of equal significance for Moscow state under Ivan III was the annexation of Novgorod. According to Professor of History at Yale University, Paul Bushkovitch, the date of the birth of Russia from the Moscow principality is 1478, when Ivan III annexed Novgorod.[138] Because in this way, Ivan united two political and religious principal centers of Russia in medieval times under the administration of a single ruler.[139]

After centralizing the authority, another turning point for Russia's history is the start of the Tsarist era. In 1547, Ivan IV had ascended the throne as Tsar. On behalf of the state authority, his 20-years—long bloody rule, had witnessed destruction. Due to Ivan's bloody rule and destruction, he was called Grozniy (Гро́зный) Ivan in Russian and Ivan the Terrible in English. He established *Oprichnina*, which aimed to eliminate the traitors to the Czar.[140] The traitors according to Ivan was the Russian aristocrats, boyar families. The Czar wanted to consolidate and strengthen his rule, and that meant weakening the impact of the top boyar families.[141] The destruction caused by the *oprichnina* was so enormous that there were almost no people left to sow the soil or to do the military service.[142] By establishing *oprichnina*, Ivan IV created a new state within a state. Because, the Czar did not wanted to stay in Kremlin and he built a new palace for himself and his family. And, he seperated Russia to two parts, one part was the north and central Russia and Novgorod, which left to his rule and oprichnina's rule, and the remaining part was left to the Moscow administration, to the boyars.[143]

Although his brutality, Ivan had conquested the Khanates of Kazan (1552), Astrakhan (1556), and Siberia (1582). Also, he removed *oprichnina* in 1572. But, the Moscow

[138] Ibid., 57.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Kurat, *Rusya Tarihi*, 165.
[141] Ziegler, *The History of Russia*, 25.zi
[142] Ibid., 167.
[143] Bushkovitch, *Rusya'nın Kısa Tarihi,* 70.

state was affected militarily, economically, politically and socially in negative way and struggled to get rid of this situation after the death of Ivan IV in 1584. In the aftermath, Russia entered a difficult period known as "Time of Troubles" (1598-1613). During this period, Russia had witnessed economic problems, as well as political and social instability. Gradually, Russia had managed to recover from the difficulties it had faced and overcame the "Time of Troubles". During this era, the boyars, oppressed by the *oprichnina*, managed to regain their old privileges. Also, the state centralized its authority. And a new period started: Russian Empire.

3.1.1.2. The Rise and Fall of the Russian Empire

Russia managed to recover from the difficulties it had faced, and overcame the "Time of Troubles" with the accession of Michael Romanov. Also, when Michael Fyodorovich Romanov became the Tsar of the Tsardom of Russia on 2nd of May, 1613, Romanov dynasty started. Romanov rule in Russia continued untill 1917.

In the 18th century, a new period in Russian history started. When Peter I or Peter the Great took the title "Emperor" in 1721. During his rule, Peter the Great transformed relatively weak and isolated Russia into a major European power,[144] as he started the Europeanization process of Russia in the fields of culture, statehood and government, army, etc. Also, he made St. Petersburg the new capital of imperial Russia. It can be said that, untill 1917, the biggest transition in Russia took place under Peter's rule.

18th century for Russia had marked with the Empress Catherine II's victory over the Ottoman Empire. Russian-Turkish War of 1768-1774 resulted with the signing of the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca. As a result of the treaty, Crimea and other northern coasts of the Black Sea gained their independence from Ottoman Empire and this caused Black Sea to lost its title of being "Turkish Lake". This paved the way for Russian dominance of Black Sea. During the 19th century, another important event took place, in 1812 Napoleon Bonaparte invaded Russia. In the early stages of Napoleon's expedition to Russia, he managed move into Russia and conquered Moscow.

[144] Ziegler, *The History of Russia*, 33.

However later he lost his advantage and forced to retreat. The war rised the patriotism among Russians and victory over Napoleon had boost Russians honor and Russia's image. Because, after the victory, Alexander I entered Paris on 31st of March, 1814, and became the savior of Europe.[145]

In the 18th and 19th centuries, Russia had conquered the territories of today's Caucasus states (Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan), Central Asian states (Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgızistan), Baltic states (Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia), Poland and Western parts of Ukraine, the Crimean peninsula included. These expansions and Russia's victory over Napoleon were important events to boost Russians condifence and honor, however, Russia got defeated in the Crimea War of 1853-1856 to Ottoman Empire, as a result of the war, the Treaty of Paris had signed. The treaty has important implications to Russia and its strategic culture, because the Crimean War had destroyed Russian Empire's(and Emperor Nicholas I's)prestige and honor. It also ended Russia's influence on the European politics, it was no longer the savior of Europe. Furthermore, the war showed that, Russia is politically isolated, militarily defeated and the regime is completely crashed.[146] The issue of regime's crash is important, because Russian regime's characteristic is a formative tool of its strategic culture. But the war indicated that, it was the autocracy that defeated. Because during the war, Sevastopol was under siege for a long time but it resisted well, this showed that Russians and the army still had split of war but that split was frazzled by the backwardness of the Nicholas I and his regime.[147]

Alexander II succeeded the throne after Nicholas I's death in 1855. He was known as Alexander the Liberator, because he emancipated the Russian serfs in 1861. He was assassinated in 1881 and his son Alexander III ascended the throne. His father's assassination affected him deeply, and in 1887, some people were caught and executed on the grounds of the assassination.[148] Among those executed was Alexandr Ulyanov. He was the eldest brother of Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov(1870-1924),

[145] Ziegler, *The History of Russia,* 328.
[146] Kurat, *Rusya Tarihi,* 348.
[147] Bushkovitch, *Rusya'nın Kısa Tarihi*, 192.
[148] Bushkovitch, *Rusya'nın Kısa Tarihi*, 289.

who is better known as Lenin. Later he became a very important person in Russian politics, served head of the Soviet Russia USSR between 1922-1924.

Alexander III had an important political goal: opposing all liberal and revolutionary movements in Russia.[149] He died in 1894 and his son Nicholas II ascended the throne as the last Emperor of Russia. The same policy goals were also valid for Nicholas II as well, because the opposition was increasing. Small communities were formed in various cities of the Empire, and they started spreading new ideas. Eventually, in 1898, the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) was established by Marxist young people like Vladimir Lenin and Julius Martov[150]. The party's programme was based on main principles derived from German philosophers Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Marxism argues that the mode of production affects any other social phenomena and, under capitalist mode of production, the working class or the proletariet is exploited and oppressed. As a result of this, capitalism will lead to a proletarian revolution. Therefore, in socialist systems, instead of private property, there is cooperative property. Although the Party members agreed on general principles, there were some issues they could not agree on. Due to the differences of opinion within the party, RSDLP divided into two groups in 1903: Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. Lenin and his supporters were the majority, therefore they were called Bolsheviks, beause the word *bolshinstvo*(большинство) means majority in Russian language. His opponents were in minority, and they called Mensheviks as *menshinstvo*(меньшинство) means minority in Russian. Despite this seperation, both sides agreed on the importance of the working class or the proleteriat. Because Marxism argues that working classes will play an important role. In those times, Russia was mostly an agrarian empire, but industrialization has also begun and gradually developed. As mentioned earlier, emancipation of Russian serfs took place in 1861, after that, due to industrialization in Russia, a new class emerged: the working class. At the end of the 19th century, their number were less than a million,

[149] Ibid., 287.

[150] Martov was born to a Jewish middle-class family in 1873 in Constantinople and died in 1923. He was a politician and revolutionary who become the leader of the Mensheviks in the early 20th century.

however, in the early 20th century, their number reached almost 4 million. This new class played a crucial role in the formation of the USSR.

But prior to formation of the USSR, Russia experienced another defeat during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905. The war had important results for Russia. Russia suffered a heavy defeat and lost most of its navy. The war also had important elements for its strategic culture. First and foremost, it showed the weakness of the Empire. A number of failures of the Empire, from the Crimean War to Russo-Japanese war, decreased its prestige in the eyes of Russians. It revealed that it is not possible to preserve the current regime, as the war brought the monarchy to the brink of extinction. In addition to the decreased trust to the regime, the Russo-Japanese war led the Empire to the 1905 Revolution. However, the war was not the only reason. Mass discontent, bad economic conditions, opposition and the humiliation from the war combined and led the way to the 1905 Revolution.

On 22nd of January, 1905 a crowded community of workers gathered and walked to the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg, to present petition and grievances to the Nicholas II.[151] Demonstrators were unarmed, but the soldiers fired upon them. Hundreds of people killed and injured, and because of that, that day was called Bloody or Red Sunday. The event had important consequences for the rulers of the Imperial Russia, because it provoked public outrage and massive strikes throughout the Empire. To end the opposition, Nicholas II declared the October Manifesto on 17th of October, established the Duma, created the 1906 Constituton and even held multi-party elections, also he reluctantly accepted to guatantee full civil liberty.[152] But none of these developments helped suppress the opposition and they did not bring stability to the Russian Empire. Moreover, the war that broke out in 1914, fueled the already-bad situation.

[151] Vernadsky, *Rusya Tarihi,* 328.
[152] Acton, *Russia: The Tsarist*, 117.

In short, it can be said Russian principalities had no defensible borders, and this created vulnerability and a condition to invite foreign invasions and attacks.[153] Thus, its history shows that Russia had been invaded by many different powers and those invasions had left significant marks on it. To defend itself against the invasions, Russia had chosen imperial expansion. As seen above, Russia's expansion was through its neighbors, this indicated that even back in those times, today's "near-abroad" were significant for Russia. And, Moscow state had significant place to understand today's Russia. When other Russian states recognized the dominance of the Moscow state and gradually united into a single state, the basis of today's Russia was established.[154] Russia's centralist character, or prevailing authoritarian character was relevant even then. Except for a few defeats, during the long Imperial times, Russia has had always been a great power and, this tradition continued during the USSR times.

1905 Revolution gave Russians relative freedom, but not what they really want. Although the opposition and strikes, Nicholas II and his regime had no intention to leave the country or fulfill the public's requests. The October manifesto could not suppress the anger of the people, because it was aimed to stop the revolutionary movement. In this context, the Manifesto was an attempt to win over the liberal opposition, because the regime was fearful of a social revolution to happen soon.[155] Therefore, the socialist movement's leaders were against the Manifesto. Lenin was among those who opposed to the government's politics, he returned from exile and continued to guide the revolutionary movement.

While Russia was dealing with public outrage and opposition, the international relations were also tense. Russia's defeat in Russo-Japanese War, caused it to bring its attention to the West. Tensions in Europe were rising day by day, especially in the Balkans. Bosnia and Herzegovina was under the patronage of Austo-Hungarian Empire, but in 1908, the Empire annexed Bosnia. Serbia strongly opposed to the annexation, because it did not want the Serbs living in Bosnia to live under the rule

[153] Ermath, "Russia's Strategic Culture: Past," 4.
[154] Kurat, *Rusya Tarihi,* 105.
[155] Vernadsky, *Rusya Tarihi,* 330.

of Austria. Therefore, it provoked Bosnian Serbs to riot. Tension reached its peak in 1914, when a Serbian patriot killed Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in the city of Sarajevo, Bosnia. This event started the World War I(WWI) officially. The 1917 Russian revolution was one of the many consequences of the WWI. Because, the war had put too much burden to bear for Russians and the Csarist regime. It led the Empire to war and turmoil which continued for six years, which ended with the revolutions, civil war and eventually, the establishment of the Soviet rule.

Russian Empire entered the war when Germany declared war to it in 1914. There was a patriotic environment within the Empire, the strikes replaced by patriotic demonstrations in the cities. With the entrance to the war, already bad economic conditions of the Russians, especially peasants, even worsened. Starvation, poverty, and famine was too often. Thus, the patriotic environment did not last long and there were riots all the time. In February, these usual riots led the way to the so-called February Revolution. During the February Revolution, the riot became too large to suppress and the Tsar had gave the order to shoot to kill.[156] However, the soldiers refused to obey and according to Kenez, this refusal was an important milestone in the revolution.[157] After these events, the Tsarist government had ended in Russia, the Czar Nicholas II and his family were exiled to Siberia. This marked the end of 303-year-old Romanov rule. Instead, there were two governments in Petrograd: provisional government and Soviet of workers and soldiers' representatives. The Revolution ended the Romanov rule and the Czarist Russia but did not solve the problems of Russians. Therefore, just a few months later, Russia found itself in another revolution, called October or Bolshevik Revolution.

[156] Peter Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to the End*, *Cambridge University Press* (New York, 2006), 15.
[157] Ibid., 17.

3.1.2. The Soviet Times

The establishment of the USSR has brought important implications to understand contemporary Russian strategic culture. For example, in the pre-Soviet times, it can be said that, military leadership and constant invasions constituted Russian strategic culture. Next part will indicate that, in Soviet strategic culture, some elements have remained the same, while others have changed. To this aim, the next part is divided to two. First, it will analyze the formation of the USSR until the Cold War. It will start from the October or Bolshevik Revolution. Second part will explain the developments in the USSR during the Cold War.

3.1.2.1. Soviet Rule till the Cold War

Returning from exile, Lenin and the Bolsheviks attacked and captured the Winter Palace and took over the government. This coup d'état was called October or Bolshevik Revolution and from now on, the Bolsheviks began to rule the largest country in the world. First and foremost, they had to put the political ideas they declared into practice.[158] The Bolsheviks first goal was to take Russia out of the war. They signed the Brest-Litovsk treaty, and as a result of it, Russia surrendered Ukraine, Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia to Germany and returned Kars, Ardahan and Batumi to the Ottoman Empire. This showed that the Bolsheviks preferred land loss to war.

While the Bolsheviks tried to heal the wounds of Russia from the WWI, the civil war between the Bolsheviks (or Reds) and anti-Bolsheviks (or Whites) took place simultaneously. To suppress the opposition, Bolsheviks established Soviet security organ, called Cheka. It started to target all anti-government opponents of the new government; this political repression period is also known as the Red Terror. Apart from that, Bolsheviks had brought some changes. For example, RSDLP's name changed to All-Russian Communist Party. And they moved the capital from Petrograd to Moscow.

[158] Vernadsky, *Rusya Tarihi,* 361.

On 30 December 1922, Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and the Trans-Caucasus Federation[159] signed a treaty and legally formed the USSR, and the 1924 constitution declared the USSR as a federation of states. Soviet administration system was based on the Party. Communist Party was above any other political unit and its head was the Soviet leader. Also, the *nomenklatura system* helped the Party to choose the right candidate to the right position. The *Nomenklatura*, which was a list of names, made sure that the possible candidates for a position were politically reliable.[160] The purpose of this system was the attempt to manage every activity in the USSR,[161] and to make the Party to preserve its political hegemony.[162]

Lenin died in 1924 and Joseph Stalin, who was born in Georgia in 1879 and died in 1953, succeeded him. Stalin's time can be characterized as a dictatorship. He suppressed not only the opposition against Bolsheviks but also opposition against himself within the Communist Party. In this way, he became an absolute dictator of the USSR, until his death in 1953. Communist Party's politics were already characterized by the Party hierarchy and the power was concentrated in the Political Bureau (Politburo). But Stalin centralized the power mostly around him. He aimed rapid industrialization, privatization and collectivization. In the entire country, the peasants were forced to join collectives, for those who did not join, were forced to go to camps or killed.

By the mid-1930s, Stalin had reached most of his goals; he managed to defeat his rivals by violence, the USSR was mostly industrialized, the peasants were forced to give up on their land, Soviet collective farm was established and terror was a part of Soviet life.[163] In the foreign affairs, from 1924 to the pre-WWII times, the USSR's foreign policy preferences were relatively defensive, not imperialist or expansionist, because it had tried to strengthen its central authority within the country. Until it

[159] In 1936, Trans-Caucasus Federation dissolved and on behalf of it, three South Caucasus socialist states re-emerged: Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan.
[160] Ziegler, *The History of Russia*, 83.
[161] Ibid.
[162] David Lane, "Transition under Eltsin: The Nomenklatura and Political Elite Circulation," *Political Studies*, no. 5 (1997): 857, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.00116.
[163] Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union*, 105.

regained its power, the Soviet government adopted neutrality and non-aggression policy,[164] because the best way to pursue the interests of the USSR was to stay neutral.

In 1930s, the international relations were tense again. With Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1932 and Adolf Hitler's rapid rise in Germany in 1933, tensions increased. Only two decades after the WWI ended, the states found themselves in another world war. WWII caused the world to witness genocides, massacres, starvation, diseases, use of nuclear weapons and it blurred the distinction between civilians and soldiers. It is often referred as the deadliest war in human history, with 70 to 80 million fatalities.

In the first year of the WWII, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union had signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact on 23 August 1939, it was a non-aggressin treaty which guaranteed that neither side would attack each other. The pact also incuded a secret protocol, which accepted Belarus, Western Ukraine, Letonia, Finnland, Lithuania and Estonia as Soviet's domain. Nazi Germany had captured most parts of Europe in a very short time, which scared the Soviet rulers. They aimed to complete the strategic occupation of the Baltic region as soon as possible. Therefore, the USSR occupied the Baltic states and annexed them as constituent republics in 1940. In this way, before 1940 the Union had 11 republics (Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan), after the occupation of the Baltic republics in 1940, 3 more republics incorporated into the Union: Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia. 15th and the last republic that joined the Union was the Moldova Soviet Socialist Republic.

Although the non-aggression pact was signed with the Nazi Germany, the Soviet rulers thought that the country would face an invasion sooner or later. This opinion had two bases. One is based on the Soviet strategic culture because the USSR perceived that they were subjected to the interference and hostility of almost all

[164] Oral Sander, *Siyasi Tarih 1918-1994,* 22nd ed. (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi Yayınları, 2013), 39-40.

states. Also, the opinion was stemmed from the Soviet leadership's analysis of the world. As strategic culture is a total of assessments and interpretations by the decision-makers, Soviet leadership and Stalin in particular, thought that they are open to invasion, due to Russia's threat perceptions throughout its history, it was invaded by many different powers. This perception caused Stalin to make Soviet army one of most advanced armies in the world by 1935.

Stalin and other Soviet decision-makers suspicions were corrected on 22 June 1941, when Germany launched Operation Barbarossa and started the invasion of the Soviet Union. The invasion also caused the non-agression pact's termination. Hitler's Germany trampled the Soviet lines within weeks and reached Kiev and Leningrad[165] at the end of the summer.[166] When the Germans thought that they were so close to victory, the things have changed. The Soviet army counter attacked to the Germans successfully and forced the German army to retreat before the 1942 summer. And in 1943, The Soviets succeeded to proceed to Ukraine, and allied countries(France, Britain…) began to achieve success in different parts of Europe. In this way, the WWII had ended in 1945. The USSR won the war, but the price of victory was heavy. It lost approximately more than 20 million of its population. Also the economy was weakened because of the war. But still, the USSR became a superpower along with the U.S. during the post-WWII era. Also, its victory over Hitler had helped the Soviet regime to boost their prestige in the world.

3.1.2.2. Soviet Union during the Cold War

The Soviet leadership's aim was to expand ideologically and geopolitically. But their imperial interests were against the U.S. interests, that's why, it created a confrontation with the U.S., which led to a period from the end of the war to the late 1980s, called the Cold War. When the USSR had established communist regimes, for example in Eastern Europe, Western countries scared that this communist-led governments would spread through the world. With this fear, containment policy

[165] St. Petersburg's name was changed to Petrograd during the WWI. After the establishment of the USSR, the city's name changed again, to Leningrad.
[166] Bushkovitch, *Rusya'nın Kısa Tarihi,* 364.

pursued by the U.S. to block Soviet expansionism with creating some sort of a chain between states who did not belong to the Soviet camp.

Due to the Russian strategic culture, the relations between Western powers and the USSR was based on mutual distrust and doubt. Stalin never believed a cooperation between communist USSR and the other capitalist powers. When Stalin died in 1953, the mutual distrust have not ended but rather heritated by his successor, Nikita Khrushchev. He was born in 1894 in Ukraine and died in 1971 in Moscow. He became a member of the Bolshevik Part in 1918 and joined the Red Army in 1919. Khrushchev become the leader of the Communist Party and the USSR in 1953, and first and foremost, tried to get rid of the cult legacy of Stalin. For example, to distance themselves from Stalin, the new leaders of the USSR adopted the principle of collective leadership. Besides the internal evaluations, in the international arena, the two superpowers came on the brink of war (for example, during the Korean War, Vietnam War, Cuban Missile Crisis…). However, they did not declared war on each other, and nuclear deterrence played a significant role for this situation. Because along with the nuclear deterrence, it also created a well-known "security dilemma" case between these two superpowers. Briefly saying, if a state increases its power to prevent another state from threatening itself, the other state can also increase its power to be protected from that state,[167] and this case means security dilemma. In a bipolar world it was very difficult to distinguish defense from attack.[168] Because if the U.S. had increased its power, no one could know whether its intentions were offensive or defensive, the USSR would think that the U.S. was getting ready to attack it.

When Leonid Brezhnev became the head of the Party in 1964, he inherited weak economic conditions and increasing international tensions. Brezhnev was born in 1894 in Ukraine and died in 1982. During his term, relatively life for the average Soviet citizens improved. Both Khrushchev and Brezhnev maintained that the ethnic nationality within the Union was constantly improving, that's why, they tried to

[167] Joseph S. Nye, Jr and David A. Welch, *Küresel Çatışmayı ve İşbirliğini Anlamak,* 2nd ed., trans. Renan Akman (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2011), 24.
[168] Ibid., 212.

submerge the national or ethnic identities into a general Soviet consciousness.[169] In the international relations, Brezhnev was characterized by gradual relaxation of tensions, this policy is known as détente. In this context, several agreements signed between the USSR and the U.S. to reduce Cold War tensions and the threat of nuclear war. For instance, Strategic Arms Limitation Talks(SALT) was held between the two superpowers. SALT-I was signed with the President of U.S. Richard Nixon in 1972 and SALT-II was signed with another U.S. President, Jimmy Carter in 1979. The agreements were important for the disarmament between two powers.

Although the détente, the Cold War continued and in 1982, Brezhnev died and left a legacy of economic stagnation. Following his death, early 1980s of the Soviet Union was characterized by aging Soviet leadership, who faced tough domestic problems and a challenging international environment. Yuri Andropov(1914-1984) was head of the Committee for State Security(KGB) between 1967-1982. He served as the head of the Party for one and half years, and following his death in 1984, his successor was 73-year-old Konstantin Chernenko (1911-1985). However, his rule lasted even shorter than Andropov's because he died within a year. During his time, Gorbachev was second in command and due to Chernenko's illness and old age, he was not in charge most of the time. In his absence, Mikhail Gorbachev often chaired Politburo meetings and gradually, he became an important figure in Russian politics.

Gorbachev was born in Stavropol kray in 1931 and he joined the Communist Part in 1952. In 1955, he got law degree from Moscow State University. Following the two short lived regimes of Andropov and Chernenko, on March 11, 1985 Politburo members appointed Mikhail Gorbachev to the General Secretary of the Communist Party. He was relatively younger than his previous', age 54. He was the last leader of the USSR, and his leadership can be characterized by many reforms, which eventually led to the dissolution of the Union. Glasnost(openness) and perestroika(restructuring) were some of the reforms Gorbachev hoped that would

[169] Ziegler, *The History of Russia*, 118.

avoid the Union to dissolve. In addition to these reforms, he wanted to boost détente and arms control with the U.S., and he began to reduce Soviet forces in Eastern Europe.[170] However, his initiatives in domestic and foreign policy, accelerated both the current Soviet decline and the end of the Cold War. There were many social, political, economic reasons why the Union dissolved. Public dissatisfaction with the regime, troubled economy and nationalism were the most important reasons. Gorbachev and the Soviet leadership could not overcome the decline in the Soviet economy. Besides, Soviet goods and services could not meet world standards.[171] In addition to the economic difficulties, Gorbachev underestimated the power of nationalism.[172] Especially, the Baltic republics no longer wanted to be a part of the USSR. In the rest of the Union, the situation was same. For example, Ziegler argued that the nuclear explosion at Chernobyl in 1986, stimulated the already existing Ukrainian nationalism.[173]

To avoid the Union's dissolution, Gorbachev called for a plebiscite for national unity. The voters were asked "Do you consider it necessary to preserve the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as a renewed federation of equal sovereign republics in which the human rights and freedoms of every nationality will be fully guaranteed?"[174] The results were in favor of Gorbachev as expected, because the referendum was not held under free and fair conditions. However, the plebiscite could not keep the Union together because, the already-bad economic conditions were getting worse and nationalism were increasing gradually. Therefore, Gorbachev wanted to make a renewed treaty for the USSR. Since six republics (Moldova, Estonia, Letonia, Lithuania, Armenia and Georgia) had not participated to the prebiscite, the renewed treaty was planned to sign with the remaining nine republics, on August 20, 1991. However, a day before, the opponents of the renewed treaty attempted coup d'etat.

[170] Ermarth, "Russia's Strategic Culture: Past,"
[171] Nye and Welch, *Küresel Çatışmayı ve İşbirliğini Anlamak,* 229.
[172] Riasanovksy, *A History of Russia,* 592.
[173] Ziegler, *The History of Russia*, 144.
[174] Ibid., 274.

They, known as the State Committee[175], feared that the renewed treaty would lead the Union to destruction, so they declared the State of Emergency and sent tanks to the streets to preserve order and security.[176] The coup failed, Gorbachev returned to his power but he could not stay long, on 25 August, 1991 he resigned. One of the coup resisters was Boris Yeltsin, and the failed coup helped him to boost his popularity. Although he was leading the opposition within the Union, he stood on the tank in front of the Russian White House and opposed to the coup. Yeltsin(1931-2007) grew up in Kazan, Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic(ASSR) and studied civil engineering at the Ural State Technical University, and worked in construction for many years. In 1961, he became a member of the Communist Party of the USSR. He was elected chair of the Russian Supreme Soviet in 1990, and in 1991 was elected president of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic(RSFSR). His political program was clear-cut: he was ready to get rid of the Union, change the old political system, and make further economic reforms.[177]

On December 8, the presidents of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus met and dissolved the Union formally. On behalf of it, they established a regional intergovernmental organization called Commonwealth of Independent States(CIS). The aim of the organization was to continue the cooperation between the former Soviet states in the fields of politics, economics, environment, culture and other issues.

As a result, with these evaluations, Yeltsin became the first President of Russia in 1991 but, the dissolution of the USSR had left an important mark on today's Russia and its strategic culture. Also, it marked the end of the Cold War and the bipolar system. Like Tsarism, the communist regime had not brough down by the enemies of the system, but rather they both collapsed on their own because, the principles on which they had been based became old-fashioned.[178] Russia has had a tendency

[175] The leaders of the coup were: Vladimir Kryuchkov, head of the KGB, Defense Minister Dmitrii Yazov, Interior Minister Boris Pugo, Prime Minister Valentin Pavlov, and Chairman of the Supreme Soviet Antoly Lukyanov.
[176] Ziegler, *The History of Russia*, 145.
[177] Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union*, 271.
[178] Ibid.*,* 278.

towards strong leaders and autonomy, this tendency continued and exacerbated during the one-party rule of the USSR. Although after the death of Stalin, his dictatorship softened, but the authoritarian one-party rule continued. Khrushchev and Brezhnev adopted de-Stalinization period, and tried to bring collectivity to the ruling, however, the problems were inherent in the system itself. RF and other successor states also witnessed the same problems.

3.1.3. Post-Soviet Times: Yeltsin Period in Russia(1991-2000)

Following the resignation of Gorbachev, the RSFSR was renamed as the Russian Federation. Yeltsin, who was already chosen as the president of Russia in June, continued his dominance in the Russian politics and following the resignation, he officially became the first president of the RF. The expectations from him was high, because of his democratization and market economy promises. However, it was not easy for him to fulfill his promises because, the dissolution of the Union had brought many internal and external problems to Russia. Internally, bad economic conditions, political problems, Chechen terrorism were a few of the top challenges for the new government. Besides, its population has been declining since the dissolution of the USSR.[179]

Externally, after the dissolution, RF was no longer the second super power. Russia was accepted as the "legal successor state" of the USSR and thanks to that it inherited the Union's permanent seat on the UNSC,[180] and it has veto power. But its loss of the superpower title, caused humiliation and, to overcome it, Russia tried to form a strong state.

Yeltsin and his government focused on internal problems more than external ones because Russia in 1990s witnessed a number of economic and political crisis at home. For Yeltsin and his advisers, Soviet Union's dissolution's reason was its lack of ability

[179] Emel Parlar Dal and Emre erşen, "Russia and the Changing International System: An Introduction," in *Russia in the Changing International System*, ed. Emel Parlar Dal and Emre Erşen (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 4.
[180] Mark Kramer, "The Soviet Legacy in Russian security policy," in *Routledge Handbook of Russian Security,* ed. Roger E. Kanet (New York: Routledge, 2019), 37.

to create and manage a modern economy.[181] Therefore, President Yeltsin and his acting prime minister, Yegor Gaidar, adopted a program called 'shock therapy', which aimed to introduce capitalism to Russia. Shock therapy involved the abrupt deregulation of prices, the privatization of state-owned enterprises, and the shift to a market economy.[182] Although Russian economy's infrastructure was not ready for such a rapid change, the government still materialized it.

Another challenge was the constitution. Russia was still using the RSFSR's Constitution from 1978 and the question of a new constitution had been on agenda since the collapse of the USSR.[183] Ultimately, a new constitution was adopted in 1993, and with it, the already strengthened Presidency got even more stronger as it increased the president's power significantly.

Despite these reform efforts, Yeltsin's almost a-decade-long rule, was full of crisis for Russia. Economy was primary one, its struggle to articulate into the capitalist system was weakening it even more. According to Bushkovitch, Yeltsin's biggest political problem was that he could not create a political party that would serve his own purposes.[184] This caused an increase in opposition to Yeltsin.

Another crisis was the Chechen problem. Their desire for independence had been a problematic and unresolved issue throughout 1990s. Chechnya was an important place in oil producing and on October 1994, Yeltsin sent Russian military forces to seize control in the capital of Chechnya, Grozny. Despite of the Russian army's advantage in manpower, weapon and other combat vehicles, Chechen guerrillas set back Russian soldiers. Thousands of people, mostly civilians, died. The result of the Battle of Grozny was a humiliation, demoralization, and opposition to Yeltsin. In this way, First Chechen War ended when Yeltsin declared a ceasefire with the Chechens in 1996 and they signed a peace treaty.

[181] Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union*, 279.
[182] Ziegler, *The History of Russia*, 151.
[183] Ibid., 162.
[184] Bushkovitch, *Rusya'nın Kısa Tarihi,* 433.

Although the loss of his prestige, Yeltsin won the 1996 presidential elections in Russia and started his second term in Kremlin. However, the bad economic conditions continued during his second term as well. The war brought a heavy burden of the Russian economy, and it cumulated with the 1998 economic crisis. High fixed exchange rate, large budget deficit, falling production and oil prices were a few of the reasons why Russia entered the economic crisis. As a result of the crisis, the ruble lost much of its value and prices for many items skyrocketed.[185] Simultaneously with Russia's economy's collapse, Yeltsin and the Parliament had dispute over Prime Ministers. Viktor Chernomyrdin(1938-2010) had served as the Prime Minister from 1992 to 1998 and after him, Sergei Kiriyenko(1962) became the new Prime Minister and served from 23 March to 23 August in 1998. Yeltsin tried to reappoint Viktor Chernomyrdin, but the Duma did not approve it. Eventually, Yeltsin appointed Yevgeny Primakov(1929-2015) who served as Prime Minister between September 1998 to May 1999. The Prime Minister problem continued when Primakov was replaced with Minister of Interior, Sergei Stepashin(1952-…), who served only three months. On 9th of August 1999, Yeltsin replaced Stepashin with Vladimir Putin. Putin was born in 1952, in today's St. Petersburg, Leningrad. In 1975, he graduated from the Leningrad University and got law degree. He started working in KGB(1975-1990), during these years, he served in the German Democratic Republic, which was the communist Germany until the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989. In 1990s, he served as advisor to the major of St. Petersburg, Anatoly Sobchak[186]. Prior to his appointment as Prime Minister of Russia, he worked as the director for the Federal Security Service(FSB) from 1998 to 1999. After that, he became the Prime Minister of Russia. When Yeltsin resigned on 31 December 1991, Putin became the acting president.

[185] Ziegler, *The History of Russia*, 155.

[186] Anatoli Sobchak(1937-2000) was the first democratically elected major of St. Petersburg and he was a teacher and mentor of Vladimir Putin, Dmitri Medvedev, Igor Sechin and so on. They also had worked with Sobchak, when he was working as the mayor. Salih Yılmaz, *Putin Dönemi Rusya Dış Politikası ve Güvenlik Doktrinleri* (Ankara: Nobel, 2019), 30.

3.1.3.1. Putin's First Term as the President of Russian Federation

Vladimir Putin's coming to power at the beginning of the new millennium signaled another period of change in Russia. He inherited broad presidential powers, falling living standars, political mismanagement, corruption, public outrage, weakened economy and terrorism. The Chechens' actions of assault and terrorist attacks against Russian citizens caused great concern in Russian society. And in 1999,Chechen rebels invaded Dagestan. Putin as the Prime Minister suppressed the Chechen unrest. Unlike the First Chechen War, the Second Chechen War restored Russian control over the territory. Therefore, it can be said that the Second Chechen War brought advantages to Putin as he boosted his popularity and prestige. But still, he became the President automatically with Yeltsin's resignation. He did not follow democratic procedures like elections. However, in March 2000, he participated to the presidential elections of Russia. He did not face an effective opposition, his only opponent was Gennady Zyuganov, the leader of the Communist Party. Zyuganov received %29.4 of the votes, while Putin received %53.4 of the votes. Putin won the presidential elections and consolidated his authority.

In Putin's first term(2000-2004), his primary goal was to bring political and economic stability to Russia. In terms of economy, thanks to the rise in oil prices in 2000s, Putin managed to increase the living conditions and Russia got rid of its external financial dependence.[187] In terms of politics, he wanted to strengthen his power, therefore, he aimed to eliminate actors that limited the powers of the president during the Yeltsin era, and those actors were the oligarks. His first term was marked with the war on oligarks. He did not fight with all oligarks, but only the ones who intervene politics. He won the power-struggle against them and this move helped him to strengthen his power.

Gradually, Putin managed to bring political and economic stability to the country, and by doing that, he boost his popularity among the Russians. In this way, Putin won the

[187] Dmitry Trenin, "20 Years of Vladimir Putin: How Russian Foreign Policy Has Changed," *The Moscow Times,* August 27, 2019, accessed December 3, 2020, https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/08/27/20-years-of-vladimir-putin-how-russian-foreign-policy-has-changed-a67043

2004 presidential election with receiving more than 70 percent of the vote. Despite the victory, the beginning of his second term(2004-2008) was marked with Beslan school hostage crisis. Chechen rebels took more than 1,000 hostages, most of them were children, and at least 334 people died. Massacre caused serious political reactions and oppositions to the Russian government. As a result of it, Kremlin officials took measures to strengthen their powers.

Despite of the Beslan crisis, in foreign affairs, Putin wanted to get rid of the "weak Russia". Putin and his administration's key goal was to make the restoration of Russia's status as a great power.[188] The Russian leadership believed that Russia cannot be a great power in the region if it cannot keep its central position and control in the former Soviet countries.[189] However, the so-called color revolutions affected the security thinking of Putin and his team. 2003 Rose Revolution in Georgia, 2004 Orange Revolution in Ukraine and 2005 Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan caused concern in Kremlin. They feared that pro-Western governments would decrease its ties with Russia, and also they wanted to prevent a revolution like colored ones. To form strong ties with the former Soviet countries, Russia used different platforms. CIS was a tool to help Russia increase its influence and relations in the region. However, not all former Soviet countries are members[190] of it, and the organization's influence is limited. Therefore, Kremlin seeked to built bilateral relations. However, some of the former states wanted to increase its relations with the Western countries and organizations as well. Georgia was one of them. For Russia, their cooperation with the Western countries meant decreasing Russia's influence. Here, the Kremlin's perception on the 'near abroad' is important to analyze future moves of Russia towards this region, especially Russo-Georgia War in 2008 and Crimea's annexation in 2014 are examples for that. Putin made it clear that those countries were in Moscow's legitimate sphere of influence.[191]

[188] Ziegler, *The History of Russia,* 201.
[189]Alexander Sergunin, *Explaining Russian Foreign Policy Behavior. Theory and Practice*, ed. Andreas Umland, *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 69 (Stuttgart: ibidem Press, 2016), 157.
[190] Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are the remaining 9 members of the CIS.
[191] Ziegler, *The History of Russia,* 203.

3.1.3.2. The *Tandemocracy* in Russia

Putin was not legally able to hold a third term and that's why, he signaled that he might become Prime Minister in the next term before the Duma elections. And he supported Dimitri Medvedev as President during the elections. Medvedev was born in 1965 in Leningrad. In 1987, he graduated from the Law Department of Leningrad State University. He became an academic untill 1999. After his work experience at university, he started working with Sobchak and Putin in the Leningrad municipality. Once Putin became the President of Russia, he was appointed important positions by Putin. First, he was deputy head of the presidential stuff, then he became the presidential chief of staff and he served as first deputy prime minister. Eventually, in the presidential elections held on March 2, 2008, Medvedev was elected as president. He served one term, his presidency ended in 2012. Under Medvedev's presidency, Russia for the first time in post-Soviet era went to war with one ex-Soviet country, Georgia.

In that period, Putin served as Prime Minister, and this marked the so-called tandem period or *tandemocracy* in Russia. The tandem period between Putin and Medvedev means the joint leadership of Russia. The Tandem continued until 2012, in which Putin and Medvedev trade positions. Putin became the President while Medvedev became the Prime Minister.

Albeit Prime Minister, Putin maintained his political dominance. Medvedev stated that his foreign and security policy course will continue the strategy of his predecessor, Putin.[192] He also said there would be no major changes in Russia's threat perceptions and security policies.[193] This meant that Russia's sensitivity over Near Abroad was valid under Medvedev as well. Medvedev and other Russian elite continued Putin's belief that former Soviet countries were a region where Moscow has special interests and responsibility.[194]

[192] Sergunin, *Explaining Russian Foreign Policy,* 157.
[193] Ibid.
[194] Jeffrey Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy: The Return of Great Power Politics* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 294.

Russo-Georgian War on August, 2008, had been a significant event in Medvedev's era. As mentioned earlier, after the Rose Revolution in Georgia, a pro-Western president, Mikheil Saakashvili came to power in 2004. Gradually, Tbilisi begun to increase its ties with the Western countries and organizations, and this caused Moscow-Tbilisi relations deterioration. Eventually, it turned out to be a full-scale crisis between both sides. The historic roots of the conflict, which centered on two breakaway provinces in Georgia, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, dates back to many years ago. Within Georgian SSR, The South Ossetia was an Autonomous Oblast(1922) and Abkhazia was an Autonomous Republic(1931). However, South Ossetia in 1990 and Abkhazia in 1992 declared their independence from Georgia, and a civil war broke out in Georgia in those years. The tensions continued and Russia included to the conflict with deploying Russian peacekeeping forces to the area in 1994. However, the conflict continued in the early 2000s and reached its zenith in 2008. After months of back-and-forth accusations and provocations, on August 8, Georgian President Sakaashvili ordered Georgian military troops to capture South Ossetia. With this order, Russia also responded with its troops and took control. Russia's justification was human rights concern, especially over ethnic Russians in the region. Kremlin accused Georgia of committing ethnic genocide in South Ossetia. However, the real driving factor was The Georgian endeavour to join Western structures.[195] NATO enlargement has been perceived as a threat by Kremlin and, Russia did not want its neighbours to become a member of any Western organization. According to Emmanuel Karagiannis, Russia's response to Georgia was predictable and it was a reaction to NATO expansion.[196] The war lasted five days and as a result of it, President Medvedev signed the de jure recognition of the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The 5-day war with Georgia helped Medvedev to strenghten authority and popularity, both among Russians and the elite. Western states like U.S. and Britain, and Western organizations like NATO called for ceasefire but, they could

[195] Marcel De Haas, *Russia's Foreign Security Policy in the 21st Century: Putin, Medvedev and Beyond*, *Russia's Foreign Security Policy in the 21st Century: Putin, Medvedev and Beyond*, 2010, 139, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203854402.

[196] Emmanuel Karagiannis, "The 2008 Russian–Georgian War via the Lens of Offensive Realism," *European Security* 22, no. 1 (2013): 10, https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2012.698265.

not present an effective respond to Russian aggression and they were accused of not preventing Russia. Their efforts were only diplomatic, and inadequate.

Russo-Georgian War in 2008 indicated that, Russia made sure that it will not welcome other states in its "near abroad". This policy has its roots in Russian history. Russia has been invaded many times since the 13th century, its leaders sought to establish buffer zones aroung the Russian heartland.[197] From this point of view, Russia views former Soviet states as its sphere of influence, and it can be said that these states are natural buffer zones for Russia. In this way, the Kremlin is sensitive over these region and wants to maintain its influence and interests. This perception also constitutes Russian strategic culture, because it merges Russian threat perceptions. Western powers has been viewed as hostile to Russia and therefore, Russia needs the former Soviet states to be by its side to maintain its security.

3.1.3.3. Putin's Return to the Presidency: His Third and Fourth Terms

Kremlin's efforts to boost its ties with the former Soviet region continued in Putin's 3rd term. He became the president of Russia for the 3rd time with the presidential election on March 4, 2012. He received 63.6 percent of the vote. This time, rather than 4 years, he was elected for 6 years. Because, the presidential term increased from 4 years to 6 years in Russia as a result of the recent constitutional amendment.[198] That's why, Putin's presidency lasted until 2018.

During his third term in the Kremlin, Putin and his government adopted three primary methods on its neighbors: 1) it tried to promote a positive image of Russia by adopting "soft power" policies to the region; 2) it provided economic incentives as a motivation to join the Eurasian Economic Union(EEU); 3) it started to offer security guarantees to these states.[199] EEU is used to economically integrate the post-Soviet states to Russia. It came into force on 1 January 2015, by the leaders of Belarus,

[197] Karagiannis, "The 2008 Russian–Georgian War," 10.
[198] Luke Harding, "Russian vote paves way for early Putin comeback," *The Guardian,* November 14, 2008, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/nov/14/russia-putin
[199] Jeanne L Wilson, "The Russian Pursuit of Regional Hegemony," *Rising Powers Quarterly* 2, no. 1 (2017): 16.

Kazakhstan and Russia. It is a supranational and intergovernmental organization and has Custom's Union among its members. It encourages the free movement of goods, services, capital and labor. In addition to the Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus, EEU also has two more members: Armenia and Kyrgyzstan. In addition to the economic integration, soft power had been a tool to boost Russian influence in those states but mostly, it was ineffective. Also, Russian image was shattered by its aggression in Georgia. And it reached its zenith in 2014, with the Crimea's annexation. The annexation also marked Russia's return to hard power politics. Ukraine Crisis, its escalation and how it resulted with the Crimea's annexation, will be explained in the next chapter of this thesis in details.

Putin's fourth term as the President of Russia began in 2018. He will remain in Kremlin until 2024. Since his coming to power, he had two main goals: preserving Russia's unity and restoring its status as a great power.[200] Under Putin, Russia became an extremely centralized state, and he managed to,relatively, heal Russian economy. He also consolidated his power with eliminating his opponents and boosting his prestige and popularity among Russian citizens and Russian elite. In foreign affairs, Putin and his team was againts the U.S.-led hegemonic international order and preferred multipolarity. Because, they were worring about U.S.'s overarching role in the international relations and argued that multipolarity was the key to international stability.[201] Therefore, they attempted to develop multipolar world order, and tried to made Russia one of the poles. And it is widely accepted that he is the one who made Russia return to the international system as an effective actor. [202]

In the pre-Soviet times, Russia's strategic culture was charactarized by strong leaders or monarchy and high-militarization, due to the foreign invasions and distrust to its allies. During the Soviet times, the bearers of Soviet strategic culture were the party leadership and the military leadership.[203] In the post-Soviet era, RF's strategic culture showed continuities and changes of its former strategic culture. For continuities,

[200] Trenin, "20 Years of Vladimir Putin,"
[201] Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy: The Return of Great Power Politics*, 15.
[202] Merve İrem Yapıcı, *Rus Dış Politikasını Oluşturan İç Etkenler* (Ankara: USAK, 2010), 7.
[203] Ermarth, "Russia's Strategic Culture: Past, Present," 18.

Russia's threat perceptions are still relevant. For example, as mentioned above, throughout its history, Russia had been invaded many times by many states, that's why, it still feels vulnerable and insecure. Therefore, Russians feel compelled to surround its borders with buffer states.[204] Another continuity would be, during the Cold War, Russia was a super power and Putin wanted to make Russia as powerful as the USSR, in the terms of being a superpower. In his annual address to the Federal Assembly(April, 2005) he said "The collapse of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century".[205] He perceieved the dissolution of the USSR as a negative impact to his country and wanted to return to the days when it was big and powerful. On change, another example would be ideology. On contrary to the USSR, Russia no longer seeks to impose its ideology, neither communism nor any other one. As seen in this sub-chapter, especially in the Russian case, the power of history is undeniable but Russia's strategic culture is not consisted of historical component only. Second sub-chapter will cover Russian political elite and their perceptions.

3.2. Russian Elite and Their Beliefs

Russian politics has become extremely centralized ever since Putin entered the Russian political scene in 2000. As the President of Russia, Putin has broad powers, given him by the Constitution, and he is the ultimate decision-maker. Therefore, when analyzing Russian foreign policy, especially the decision-making process, the researchers tend to focus only on Putin and neglect other influential factors. However, despite the centralization, Russian elite also have significant influence in decision-making. During the Soviet-era, with the *nomenklatura*, it was easy to identify Soviet elite layer. After the dissolution of the USSR, identifying elite became more problematic. Yeltsin era elite were fewer in number, however, the number of elite increased during the Putin-era Russia. Therefore, the primary goals of this part of the thesis is first, to introduce the elite that are influential on Russian politics. Who are they? What are their perceptions? Second, to identify the general camps of the elite.

[204] Sinovets, "From Stalin to Putin," 422.
[205] Vladimir Putin, "Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation," April 25, 2005, accessed November 13, 2019, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/22931

How many camps that the Russian elite have divided after the dissolution of the USSR? What are the main beliefs of these camps? In the third chapter of the thesis, when analyzing Crimea's annexation through Russian strategic culture, elite's beliefs and their perceptions, especially about the annexation, will be explained more detailly. But still, prior to explaining what these elite thought about Crimea's annexation and/or how they affected the decision, it is useful to provide a brief overview of who they are and what are their beliefs, in order to understand their role in constituting Russian strategic culture. Because, elite have an important role when explaining change and continutiy in strategic culture.[206] For example, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Skak argues that Russian chekist are the reason why Russia annexed Crimea, because Russian elite were the decisive factor behind Russian strategic culture.[207] Although agreeing on her point, this thesis is not limiting Russian strategic culture to elite beliefs only, and adding other explanatory elements, such as history and regime.

3.2.1. From Soviet Political Elite to Yeltsin-era Elite

In order to understand Russian elite structure, or "the power vertical" in Russian political jargon, and their influence, it is important to start from the *nomenklatura* tradition. Elite can be considered either as a modifier or a continuity provider in the strategic cultural analysis, therefore, the transition from Soviet elite to the Yeltsin elite are important to explain.

The origins of the Soviet-era elite can be found in the *nomenklatura* system. After the October Revolution, the Bolsheviks faced many problems of governing the country because of its vast size and the ongoing political, economic and social problems. When the establishment of the USSR could not solve the problems, the Bolsheviks began to form an elite layer known as *nomenklatura.*[208] With the *nomenklatura* system, the Communist Party apparatus controlled the choice of personnel in every

[206] Lantis, "Strategic Culture: From Clausewitz to Constructivism," 28.
[207] Skak, "Russian Strategic Culture," 336.
[208] Mesut Hakkı Caşın and Giray Saynur Derman, *Rus Dış Politikasındaki Değişim ve Kremlin Penceresinden Yeni Ufuklar* (Ankara: SRT Yayınları, 2016), 89.

area of national life such as industry, education, agriculture, etc.[209] The Communist Party, also established Communist Youth League *(Komsomol),* which in 1927 had over 1 million young members.[210] The members of the *Komsomol*, *nomenklatura* personnel and the members of the Communist Party all together, created the elite layer of the USSR.[211]

One of the well-known researchers of Russian elite, Olga Kryshtanovskaia had provided some common characteristics of the Soviet elite under the *nomenklatura* system. According to her, the *nomenklatura* system was a monolithic quality, because, for example, the elite were Communists and the top-levels of the Party were approved them.[212] There were hierarchy,[213] and privileges given to the elites.[214] On the other hand, the *nomenklatura* had some differences among its elite especially with the influence of the Soviet leaders. For example, it is argued that Lenin era elite can be refferred as revolutionary elite, because they made the October Revolution.[215] However, after Stalin became the new Soviet leader, he appointed most of the elite and they were different from the Lenin era elite in the aspects of education levels and ethnicity.[216] Khrushchev and Brezhnev also tried to reshuffle cadres in order to surround themselves with loyal people, however their elite circulation was not very successful.[217] When Gorbachev came to power, he tried to break the rules previously adopted by the former Soviet leaders about the *nomenklatura* system. Gorbachev's cadre maneuverings weakened the positions of the most once-powerful personnel of the *nomenklatura*.[218]

[209] Thomas Henry Rigby, "Staffing USSR Incorporated: The Origins of the Nomenklatura System," *Soviet Studies* 40, no. 4 (1988): 523, https://www.jstor.org/stable/151806.
[210] Vernadsky, *Rusya Tarihi*, 410-411.
[211] Ibid., 411.
[212] Ol'ga V. Kryshtanovskaia, "Transformation of the Old Nomenklatura into a New Russian Elite," *Sociological Research* 34, no. 6 (1995): 19, https://doi.org/10.2753/sor1061-015434066.
[213] Ibid., 20.
[214] Ibid., 22.
[215] Caşın and Derman, *Rus Dış Politikasındaki Değişim ve Kremlin Penceresinden Yeni Ufuklar,* 101-107.
[216] Ibid., 106-107.
[217] Kryshtanovskaia, "Transformation of the Old Nomenklatura," 22.
[218] Kryshtanovskaia, "Transformation of the Old Nomenklatura," 22.

With the dissolution of the USSR, the new government of the RF changed many things and elite were also a part of that change. However, it can be said that there were more continuity than change, in the elite system. Because, Yeltsin era elite were more or less, share the similar characteristics with the Soviet elite. Most important reason for that was that Yeltsin's elite were the same cadres promoted by Gorbachev.[219] Soviet Union had dissolved, but its elite have not. In Kryshtanovskaia's words, "A new pyramid of power grew up over the old one." [220]

When Yeltsin became the first president of the Russian federation in 1991, the bad economic conditions were a top concern for the new government. Therefore, "…Yeltsin had surrounded himself with a group of young radical reformers who were determined to bring capitalism to Russia as quickly as possible—Yegor Gaidar, Anatoly Chubais, and Aleksandr Shokhin".[221] The *nomenklatura* had benefited the most from the economic reforms, known as shock therapy, and the privatization. In Sakwa's words, "Privatisation allowed an already privileged class to consolidate its position by the transformation of public goods into private wealth, and allowed a small group of oligarchs to plunder the national economy".[222] After the privatization, these oligarks[223] took control of the Russian economy and boosted their wealth. Approximately, there were fifteen of these wealthy oligarks, to name a few: Rem Vyakhirev, Boris Berezovsky, Vladimir Gusinsky, Vagit Alekperov, Vladimir Potanin, Mikhail Fridman, Mikhail Khodorkovsky etc.[224] The oligarks had significant influence on politics, and this influence showed itself during the presidency elections in Russia. They supported Yeltsin and financed Yeltsin's campaign in 1991 presidential elections. They also helped Yeltsin through media, as majority of the media were under control of them. With that, they managed to influence public opinion.[225]

[219] Ibid., 31.
[220] Ibid.
[221] Ziegler, *The History of Russia*, 151.
[222] Richard Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, 4th ed. (London and New York: Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2008), 285, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203931257.
[223] They were also known as *semya* (семья), which means "family" in Russian.
[224] Olga Kryshtanovskaya and Stephen White, "The Rise of the Russian Business Elite," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 38, no. 3 (2005): 294, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.postcomstud.2005.06.002.
[225] Yapıcı, *Rus Dış Politikasını Oluşturan İç Etkenler*, 58.

Accordingly, their support on Yeltsin continued in the 1996 presidential elections, too. Because during the 1996 elections, Yeltsin's approval votes were really low because of two reasons: the failure of his economic reforms and the Chechen War. The regime failed to improve the already bad economic conditions and the Russian army failed to achieve the expected success against the Chechens. Thus, Yeltsin needed his oligarks support and fund to win the 1996 presidential elections. Support and funding requested by Yeltsin came from oligarks and with their help, Yeltsin won the elections.

When Yeltsin became the President of the Russian Federation for the second time, he awarded the oligarks for their support. For example, Berezovsky was one of the oligarks who helped bankroll Yeltsin's re-election in the 1996 presidential election. Yeltsin awarded him with political appointments, first he became deputy secretary of the Security Council in 1996 and then, he became executive secretary of the CIS in 1998.[226] However, in August 1998, Russia had faced a financial crisis. During the crisis, Russia defaulted on its international debts and the rouble was in effect devalued. This crisis had profound effects on Russia; especially it caused changes in the relationship between government and the business elite.[227] In short, the August crisis accelerated the collapse of Yeltsin's oligarchy.[228]

As a result, the main characteristics of the *nomenklatura* continued under Yeltsin's presidency but, there were also changes. Primary change was, Yeltsin's elite lacked a common ideology,[229] which was communism among the Soviet elite. Privatization policies favoured oligarks or family of Yeltsin. After Yeltsin, Primakov government fought against oligarks, especially to Berezovski. However, the main changes in the relationship between government and the oligarks took place particularly after the election of Vladimir Putin as president in March 2000.[230]

[226] Chaim Shinar, "The Russian Oligarchs, from Yeltsin to Putin," *European Review* 23, no. 4 (2015): 587, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1062798715000319.
[227] Kryshtanovskaya and White, "The Rise of the Russian Business Elite," 294–95.
[228] Ibid., 303.
[229] Lane, "Transition under Eltsin: The Nomenklatura," 874.
[230] Lane, "Transition under Eltsin: The Nomenklatura," 295.

3.2.2. Putin-era Elite: Subordinating Oligarks to the State

When Yeltsin resigned, majority of the oligarks, along with Yeltsin himself, supported Putin on the presidential elections.[231] "Putin was chosen by Yeltsin and his band of oligarchs as a loyal successor who would keep them out of jail and preserve the existing system of oligarchic capitalism, in which oligarchs make money not by producing or selling goods and services but by stealing from the state".[232] This support paid off, and Putin became the new President of the Russian Federation. Putin's primary effort was to strenthen cenral authority. Accordingly, he began to pursue a policy of 'equal distancing' towards oligarchs. [233] Putin, instead of opposing all oligarchs, has tried to eliminate those who engage in actions that will undermine his power by interfering politics.[234] He came up with a number of rules for the oligarks, and the number one rule was: Do not meddle in politics.[235] In his fight with the oligarks, Putin first targeted two important Yeltsin-era oligarks, Gusinsky and Berezovsky. Gusinsky built a media empire in Russia, which included NTV, newspaper *Sevodnya*, radio station Echo of Moscow.

On the other hand, Berezovsky controlled former Soviet state airline Aeroflot, Russian petroleum campany Sibneft, Russian automobile manufacturer Avtovaz, and Russia's main television channel Russian Public Television(ORT). Once Putin became the new President in 2000, the oligarks fell out with Putin and they became an open critic of the Putin regime, but this prepared their end. Within weeks of Putin's inauguration, both were forced to leave Russia for exile, Gusinsky went to Spain and Berezovsky went to Britain. Russian government alleged numerous charges against them, such as money laundering and financial fraud, and the Kremlin demanded their extradition. Although the demand had rejected by the Spanish and British authorities, Berezovsky and Gusinsky could not return to their country and their assets were seized by the Russian state. Putin's fight with the oligarks continued and

[231] Yapıcı, *Rus Dış Politikasını Oluşturan İç Etkenler,* 85.
[232] Michael McFaul, "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back," *Journal of Democracy* 11, no. 3 (2000): 20, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2000.0062.
[233] Kryshtanovskaya and White, "The Rise of the Russian Business Elite," 295.
[234] Yapıcı, *Rus Dış Politikasını Oluşturan İç Etkenler,* 86.
[235] Zygar, *All the Kremlin's Men,* 48.

reached its zenith with the so-called Yukos affair. The owner of Yukos, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, became "the unofficial leader of the entire Russian oil industry".[236] He was an important figure in Yeltsin's Russia, and he wanted to secure his position during the Putin-era.

There are numerous claims about why the Yukos affair took place. For example, burden of tax was one of the reasons. In 2002, Russian government wanted to increase the tax burden on oil companies with a tax on mineral extraction, Yukos led the fight against the tax because it was contrary to the interests of the company.[237] Another claim or reasons was that, Khodorkovsky's attempt to sell the majority shares in the company to the U.S. petroleum company Exxon-Mobil. The Kremlin was afraid that Khodorkovsky would make Western corporations to take over Russia's most strategic and valuable energy company.[238] In addition to all this, what upset Putin the most was his interference in politics.[239] Khodorkovsky was a critic of the Putin regime and he funded opposition parties. For example, "Khodorkovsky was reported to have offered Russia's two liberal parties, Yabloko and SPS (the Party of Right Forces), $100 million to unite and campaign together in opposition to Putin and his United Russia Party".[240] What's more, he hinted that he would become a candidate for president in 2008, as Putin's two-terms in the office would be finished.[241] After all these events, Khodorkovsky was charged with tax evasion, embezzlement, money laundering and fraud, and spent a decade in prison.[242] He was released in 2013, with a sudden pardon by Putin, and he flew out of the country.[243] In short, Yukos affair had significant implications for Russia. First implication was the increased state intervention in the economy. Transforming into a market economy

[236] Zygar, *All the Kremlin's Men*, 50.
[237] Ibid.
[238] Goldman, Marshall I. "Putin and the Oligarchs." *Foreign Affairs* 83, no. 6 (2004): 33-44. Accessed April 23, 2020. doi:10.2307/20034135., 40.
[239] Ibid., 37.
[240] Ibid.
[241] Ibid.
[242] "Russia issues international arrest warrant for Putin critic Khodorkovsky," *The Guardian,* December 25, 2015, accessed May 1, 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/23/russia-issues-international-arrest-warrant-for-putin-critic-khodorkovsky
[243] Ibid.

and articulating to the capitalist system was undermined. Another implication was, in Shinar's words, "The attack on Yukos marked the beginning of a system whereby a cabal of bureaucrats and businessmen friendly to the Kremlin manage important assets for their own benefit and what they deem to be the benefit of the state".[244] Last implication was the replacement from the oligarchy to the *silovarchy*[245].

3.2.3. The Rise of Putin's New Elite: The *Siloviki*

Russian elite in the beginning of 2000s were divided to many camps. On one side there were the declining Yeltsin-era oligarks, which Putin managed to eliminate. On the other side there were a new rising circle close to Putin, known as the *siloviki,*[246] and also there were other camps of Russian elite, like business elite etc, and they were not members of the *siloviki.* With Yeltsin-era oligark's elimination, it can be said that a new group, the *siloviki* rose over the old declined oligarks. The word *siloviki*[247] is derived from "силовые структуры" (silovye struktury),which means power or force structures in Russian language. It is "a reference to the armed services, law enforcement bodies, and intelligence agencies that wield the coercive power of the state".[248] *Siloviki* consists of people who are working for or coming from security structures, and who is mostly from St. Petersburg. The importance of them is that, they are a strong and influential group compared to other groups of Russian elite. Commenting on the issue, Bremmer and Charap stated that, "The siloviki's shared beliefs and policy preferences are a major source of the group's cohesiveness. In those spheres of governance in which the siloviki have established a high degree of control, their ideas could prove decisive in determining policy outcomes".[249] Although there are others, several leading representatives of the *siloviki* are: Igor Sechin, Viktor Ivanov and Nikolay Patrushev. Sechin is a longtime aide of Putin and he is the current CEO of Rosneft, the biggest state petroleum company. Mikhail Zygar

[244] Shinar, "The Russian Oligarchs," 591.
[245] Silovarchy refers to merging the words "silovik" and "oligarchy". Daniel Treisman, "Putin's Silovarchs," *Orbis* 51, no. 1 (2007): 142, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orbis.2006.10.013.
[246] Shinar, "The Russian Oligarchs," 590.
[247] Siloviki (Силовики) is the plural form of silovik (Силовик).
[248] Ian Bremmer and Samuel Charap, "The Siloviki in Putin's Russia: Who They Are and What They Want," *Washington Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (2007): 86, https://doi.org/10.1162/wash.2006-07.30.1.83.
[249] Bremmer and Charap, "The Siloviki in Putin's Russia," 88.

considers him as the second most powerful person in Russia.[250] He was born in St. Petersburg and graduated from Leningrad State University (like Putin and many other Kremlin insiders).[251] In mid-1980s he worked as a military interpreter in Mozambique and Angola, and in the early 1990s, he worked for Anatoli Sobchak, St. Petersburg major, with Putin.[252] Additionally, Viktor Ivanov is also a long-time friend of Putin and a former KGB agent. Also, he has been the chairman of the board of directors of the aviation and defense company, Almaz-Ante since 2002 and also Aeroflot airline since 2004. Nikolay Patrushev was the former director of the Russian Security Service (FSB), currently he is secretary of the Security Council of Russia and according to Zygar, he is "…one of the key masterminds of Russian foreign policy".[253] In addition to them, Sergey Ivanov was a former KGB agent and he is a longtime friend of Putin. He has been part of Putin's trusted inner circle for years and he was Kremlin chief of staff however, in 2016 he had dismissed.[254] Sergei Shoigu is the Minister of Defense and again, an important person in Putin's inner circle; Alexander Bortnikov is the Director of the FSB of the RF since 2008 and Alexei Miller is the CEO of Gazprom, which is the most important company of Russia and extracts, produces, transports and sales natural gas. Here, Gazprom is important as Putin takes a personal interest in it and he wants to maintain its belonging to the silovarch empire.[255] It is important to identify these names as they are some of the elite who influences Russian foreign policy. Also, some of them presented above, were influential on Crimea's annexation and will also be mentioned in that part of the thesis. The transition from Yeltsin-era elite to Putin-era elite can be understood with the chart below because it demonstrates which oligarch lost what and which *silovik* gained what. As seen below, main oligarchs lost their companies.

[250] Mikhail Zygar, *All The Kremlin's Men: Inside the Court of Vladimir Putin* (New York: Public Affairs, 2016), xvii.
[251] Treisman, "Putin's Silovarchs," 143.
[252] Ibid.
[253] Zygar, *All the Kremlin's Men,* xiv.
[254] "Russia's Putin sacks chief of staff Sergei Ivanov," *BBC,* August 12, 2016. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-37058751
[255] Treisman, "Putin's Silovarchs," 144.

Table 3.1. From Oligarchs to Silovarchs [256]

Oligarchs	**Key oligarch-controlled Companies (1996)**	**Key oligarch-controlled companies (2006)**	**Key silovarch-controlled Companies(2006)**	**Silovarchs**
Boris Berezovsky, Roman Abramovich	Avtovaz, Aeroflot, ORT, Sibneft		Aeroflot, Almaz-Antei	**Viktor Ivanov**
Vladimir Gusinsky	NTV		Rosoboronexport, Avtovaz	**Sergei Chemezov**
Rem Vyakhirev	Gazprom		Gazprom, Sibneft, NTV, OMZ	**Alexei Miller**
Mikhail Khodorkovsky	Yukos (including Yuganskeftegaz)		Rosneft, Yuganskeftegaz	**Igor Sechin**
Vladimir Potanin	Norilsk Nickel	Norilsk Nickel	Russian Railroads	**Vladimir Yakunin**
Mikhail Fridman	Alfabank, TNK	Alfabank,TNK-BP		

After explaining the transition of oligarks to silovarchs, now it is important to highlight the values, beliefs and perceptions of the *siloviki*. According to Ian Bremmer and Samuel Charap, the first value of the *siloviki* is that they put a lot of emphasis on a highly centralized state with advanced security and defense structures. According to them, "Law and order and stability are much higher priorities than democratic process or an active civil society".[257] Second, they believe that a strong state should play a decisive and an active role in the country's economic life.[258] Important sectors

[256] Ibid.,146.
[257] Bremmer and Charap, "The Siloviki in Putin's Russia," 89.
[258] Ibid.

(for example: energy), should not be in private hands. Third, "the siloviki promote the restoration of Russia's greatness on the international stage".[259]

Related to these beliefs, an example about their belief and how that belief affect foreign policy outcomes, would be the elite perception of the U.S. For example, they see the United States and NATO as external threats to Russia which tries to undermine Russia's sovereignty, to avoid that they believe that Russia must regain the respect that the Soviet Union once commanded in international affairs.[260] The hostile perception of the U.S. is a good example of elite beliefs(*silovik* or not) and how they shape and affect Russian policies.

One of the few surveys of Russian elites conducted by the 2016 Hamilton College Levitt Pol, entitled "The Russian Elite 2016" demonstrates Russian elite perceptions about several topics. One of the survey questions was: "Do you think that the USA represents a threat to Russia's national security?"[261] The lowest rate was in 1993 with %73,1 of the elite, answered "no" and said that the U.S. is not a threat to Russian security. However, after that in the years 1995, 1999, 2004 and 2008, the number of "yes" was more than "no", which means that the elite thought that U.S. is a threat to Russia. An exception to this was in the year 2012, %48.1 said yes. In 2016, the rate reached its peak, %80.1 said that U.S. is a threat. In another question, the elite were asked how friendly or hostile the U.S. towards Russia today.[262] In the 1993 data, the majority said that U.S. is fairly friendly towards Russia. While in 1995 and 2004 the majority said "neutral", however, after that, in 2008, 2012 and 2016 the majority said that U.S. is fairly hostile. Again, in 2016, the rate reached its peak with %62.1. As these survey results show, the threat perceptions of the elite towards U.S. gradually increased and this showed itself in the foreign policy agenda. According to Sherlock, "The Kremlin, the siloviki, and other like-minded elites construct and disseminate

[259] Ibid.
[260] Ibid.
[261] Sharon Werning Rivera, William Zimmerman and Eduard Ponarin, *The Russian Elite 2016,* (May 11, 2016), conducted by Hamilton College, 7
https://www.hamilton.edu/documents/russianelite2016final.pdf
[262] Ibid., 12.

narratives of American hostility that authorize their political power and justify responses in kind".[263] Perception of the U.S. as a threat, gives justification for the security policies of Russia. In this regard, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has accused the U.S. of destabilizing the world.[264] Commenting on the issue, Thomas Sherlock, who is a Professor of Political Science at the United States Military Academy in New York, also agrees that Russian elites prefer more assertive foreign policy, compared to the Russian public.[265]

As a result, it can be said that Russian elite have been affecting Russian foreign or security policy preferences. Especially, the *siloviki,* have been more effective than the other groups of Russian political elite. Next part of the study will demonstrate other camps of the elite.

3.2.4. Different Camps within the Russian Elite

Although the *siloviki* is an important group, non all Russian elite is a member of that group, there are other camps as well. Putin managed to balance those camps with "…giving each camp some, but not all, of what it wished".[266] Those other camps demonstrates the division on the opinions on matters of foreign policy among Russian elites. Although the strenght of the *siloviki* is their shared beliefs, still, they also may have different opinions on certain cases. Professor of International Politics Stephen White, divides and classifes Russian elites by their opinions about foreign policy as: Liberal Westerniser, Pragmatic Nationalist, Fundamentalist Nationalist. According to White, fundamental nationalists wish to re-establish Russian hegemony in the former Soviet countries, they have an antipathy towards the market economy and they are hostile to both NATO and the European Union(EU), because they believe

[263] Thomas Sherlock, "Russian Society and Foreign Policy: Mass and Elite Orientations After Crimea," *Problems of Post-Communism* 67, no. 1 (2020): 4, https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2018.1561190.
[264] Emma Burrows, Angela Dewan and Lindsay Isaac, "Russian Foreign Minister berates US for 'destabilizing' world," *CNN,* January 15, 2018, https://edition.cnn.com/2018/01/15/world/russia-us-lavrov-trump-foreign-policy-intl/index.html
[265] Sherlock, "Russian Society and Foreign Policy," 3.
[266] Jeffrey Mankoff, "Russian Foreign Policy and the United States after Putin," *Problems of Post-Communism* 55, no. 4 (2008): 45, https://doi.org/10.2753/PPC1075-8216550404.

that these organizations are a threat to Russian integrity.[267] In addition to this, pragmatic nationalist favor democracy but not necessarily in the form which it is understood in the West.[268] They also argue that reconstructing USSR is not realistic, however, Russia must fully integrate with the former Soviet members.[269]

Last camp, Westernizers, are the least influential among the Russian elites and according to them, Moscow should focus on integrating with the Western states.[270] Therefore, they favour a pro-Western foreign policy, a market economy and a democratic system. Jeffrey Mankoff adds two more camps: neo-imperialist(or Eurasianists) and centrists.[271] Neo-imperialists or Eurasianists believe that Russia must construct a bloc of states to challenge the West, as they see the West as a direct threat to Russia.[272] For them, Eurasia is the sphere of influence of Russia, and Russia's core interests are in there, not in West. Another camp is the Centrists, they believe that Russia's history, culture, geography and many other elements, are not only based on Eurasia, but rather, they are in-between Europe and Eurasia.

> This outlook remained important under Putin, who believed that Russia's proper sphere of influence was the entire world, but who shared the centrists' understanding of good relations with the former Soviet republics as well as Russia's other close neighbors (China, India, Iran, as well as the European Union) as a necessary component of a truly global foreign policy. [273]

As a result, when Putin became the president of Russia, he adopted a different strategy towards Russian elite than Yeltsin. Putin dismissed the majority of the elite from Yeltsin's era, and, he paved the way for the rise of a new group of elite, also known as the *siloviki.* They gained power and influence during Putin's era and they played a crucial role on Crimea's annexation. That's why, knowing them, knowing their beliefs and perceptions, understanding the transition of them, and discussing

[267] Stephen White, "Elite Opinion and Foreign Policy in Post-Communist Russia," *Perspectives on European Politics and Society* 8, no. 2 (2007): 150, https://doi.org/10.1080/15705850701322418.
[268] Ibid., 151.
[269] Ibid.
[270] Mankoff, "Russian Foreign Policy," 47.
[271] Ibid., 45
[272] Ibid.
[273] Mankoff, "Russian Foreign Policy," 46.

their differences is significant to analyze. Before applying Russian strategic culture to the practice with the annexation of Crimea, the following chapter will discuss another important source of Russian strategic culture, which is the characteristics of the regime in Russia.

3.3. The Characteristics of Russia's Political Regime

Political regime broadly refers to the form of government in a country. A state can be either democratic or nondemocratic. Nondemocratic states can be classified as totalitarian and authoritarian. Totalitarian regimes are characterized by a strong ruler who attempts to control every aspect of individual life with coercion and repression and also who follows and dictates an ideology. Franco's Spain, Hitler's Nazi Germany, Mussolini's Fascist Italy and Stalin's Soviet Union are some examples of totalitarian regimes. Authoritarian or nondemocratic states[274] are also characterized by a strong leader, however with a limited control. Lastly, democracy is another form of government in which laws, policies and other initiatives of a state are directly or indirectly decided by its people. [275] Although these definitions, there are some states whose political regimes don't simply fit into democracy or autocracy. For those regime types, political science has developed an important concept called "hybrid regimes". According to Henry E. Hale, who is a Professor of Political Science and International Affairs at George Washington University, hybrid regimes can be defined as a political system which merges democratic and autocratic elements.[276] And, he argues that the concept of hybrid regime is useful to understand political systems of Eurasian countries, including Russia.[277] Therefore, it can be said that Russia's political regime is an example of hybrid regime as it has both democratic (elections, parliament etc.) and authoritarian elements (control over parties and media).

[274] Throughout the thesis, I have used these two terms interchangeably.
[275] Robert A. Dahl, "Democracy," Encylopædia Britannica, February 19, 2020, https://www.britannica.com/topic/democracy
[276] Henry E. Hale, "Eurasian Polities as Hybrid Regimes: The Case of Putin's Russia," *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 1, no. 1 (2010): 34, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.euras.2009.11.001.
[277] Hale, "Eurasian Polities as Hybrid Regimes," 40.

3.3.1. Yeltsin's Democratization Attempts

Most of Russia's history, Russians have experienced authoritarian regimes and ruled by authoritarian leaders, namely tsar or tsarina, emperor or empress, Soviet leaders and so on. Eitelhuber noted, "Given the state's vast size and multi-ethnic nature, autocratic leadership seemed to be the type of governance that was best suited to cope with the wide range of external and internal threats that cropped up throughout Russian history".[278] Although this tradition continues even today, however, it is not that easy to simply classify Russia as autocratic state, or democratic. Democratic institutions were introduced after 1905 to Russia, but they remained powerless and dependent on the Tsar.[279] Subsequently, 1917 revolutions faded away the democracy attempts and more than 70-years-old totalitarian, communist Soviet rule consolidated the already-authoritarian system.[280] With Gorbachev and his reforms like *perestroika* and *glasnost*, Russia attempted democratization. *Perestroika* reforms caused economic decentralization of the Union and with the *glasnost* and *demokratizatsiya* process, political decentralization also started.[281] Because along with the reforms, there were initiatives among the Union's members for independence. The desire for independency varied from state to state but, according to Kenez, Baltic republics(Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia) had the strongest desire for it.[282] Hence, Lithuania became the first republic which declared its sovereignty on 11th of March, 1990 from the Soviet dominance. As mentioned earlier, Gorbachev wanted to sign a renewed treaty on August 20, 1991, to avoid the Union's dissolution. But on 19 August 1991, there were a coup attempt by the State Committee. Although the coup failed, it helped Yeltsin to boost his popularity.

Under these circumstances, Yeltsin brough up to the Russian politics with the hope and attempt to bring democracy to Russia. "…in May 1990, he was elected Chairman of the Russian Paliament. Under his leadership, the Russian Federation declared sovereignty, began to conduct foreign policy, and, in general, acted as a state within

[278] Eitelhuber, "The Russian Bear," 6.
[279] Ibid.
[280] Ibid.
[281] Yapıcı, Rus Dış Politikasını Oluşturan İç Etkenler,135.
[282] Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union*, 272.

a state".[283] Following these events, the independence declarations among the Union had increased. And, eventually, the USSR officially dissolved on 25th of December, 1991, the same day Gorbachev resigned. The Communist Party had been banned by Yeltsin. However, once RSFSR renamed as the RF, Yeltsin's attempts to bring democracy to Russia had not lasted long, because he transformed Russia to a strong presidential regime, which was widely known as "super presidentialism".[284] Due to the broad powers given to the President, Yeltsin era Russia witnessed a competition between executive and legislature branches of government, which resulted with Yeltsin's firing on the Parliament at the end in 1993.

As mentioned in the "Historical Experiences" chapter of this study, a new constitution to the RF was on the agenda ever since the dissolution of the USSR. However, there was no consensus among the President and Parliament about it. Prior to the constitutional referendum, Yeltsin called for an early referendum, in which the citizens were asked four yes/no questions: 1)Did they have confidence in Yeltsin as president? 2)Did they support his economic and social policies? 3)Should early elections be called for the presidency? 4)Should early elections be called for the legislature? The results were in favor of Yeltsin. Majority said yes to the first and second questions and specified that they support Yeltsin. The majority of the voters said no to the third question and they said yes to the fourth question. In fact, with this referendum, the citizens were forced to choose between the two institutions of Russia: The President and the Parliament.[285] The results encouraged Yeltsin to call for a new referendum on a new constitution to the RF. The new constitution has accepted by the voters with %58,43 "yes" on the referendum. The new constitution which favored strong presidential powers and minimal parliamentary powers, is the constitution Russia still uses today, however, changes have been made on it.

[283] Ziegler, *The History of Russia*, 145.
[284] Hale, "Eurasian Polities as Hybrid Regimes," 36.
[285] Ziegler, *The History of Russia*, 162.

3.3.2. Russia's Current Political System and its Government

Additionally, debates about Russia's political system, whether it is presidentialism, semi-presidentialism or a combination of these two systems, are going hand-in-hand with debates about its political regime. Its political system has elements of semi-presidential model, but at the same time, in terms of the duties and powers of the president, it also evokes presidentialism. France is an example of semi-presidentialism, and the U.S. is an example of presidential systems. In semi-presidential systems, the executive power is shared by the President, who is directly elected by the voters, and the Cabinet, whose head is the Prime Minister, appointed by the President. On contrary, in presidential systems the execute power is not dual, the president has executive power. Another difference is, in semi-presidentialism, the President and/or the Prime Minister have a right to dissolve parliament under some certain conditions, while in presidentialism, the President cannot dissolve Congress. Just like in semi-presidentialism, the Presidential system also allows the voters to elect their President directly.

With respect to all this data, Russian government is divided into three branches: legislative, executive and juridical. The executive power is in the Kremlin, the government. And, the head of the state is the President, who is directly elected by the Russians. And, the President of RF has the right to appoint the Prime Minister, who is the head of the Government.[286] The President has broad powers and, the foreign intelligence service, the federal security service, military intelligence, the interior ministry, the foreign ministry, the defense ministry, and the ministry of justice are few of the institutions that linked to the President. About foreign policy, the President is the key figure in decision-making. According to the Constitution of the RF, the President shall conduct foreign policy of the RF and sign international treaties and agreements.[287]

[286] RF Const. art. L X X X III, https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICkB6BZ29/content/id/571508
[287] RF Const. art. L X X X VI.

In terms of legislative power, Russia's parliament, Federal Assembly consists of two houses, an upper house named the Federation Council and a lower house named the Duma. The State Duma consists of 450 deputies while to the Federation Council, Russia's federal subjects send two representatives. In total, the Council of the Federation has 170 members, because there are 85 federal subjects. Lastly, Russia's highest judicial body is the Supreme Court. Following it, there is the Constitutional Court and the other regional courts.

Based on what has been explained so far, it can be said that Russia has elements both in semi-presidentialism and presidentialism however, with Putin's rise to power, the Russian system has been continuing to evolve towards a purely presidential system,[288] and its regime is evolving more autocracy than democracy. In Lynch's words, "The development of an authoritarian regime based on presidential prerogative was well under way by the time Putin came to power as a Prime Minister in August 1999".[289] According to the constitution of the Russian Federation, "…Russia is a democratic federative law-governed state with a republican form of government".[290] But again, it is not very easy to call Russia a full democracy. Although it is arguable whether they are free and fair, Russia has elections. Formally, voters in Russia have different options of party and candidate to vote. However, on practice, the elections are not free and fair. Because, the winners of an election were decided and appointed before the voting taken place. For example, in 2008 elections Putin's successor Medvedev faced no resistance from other candidates and the voters. Because, apart from United Russia, other political parties[291] are relatively weak.

[288] Ibid.
[289] Allen C. Lynch, "The Influence of Regime Type on Russian Foreign Policy toward 'the West,' 1992-2015," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 49, no. 1 (2016): 110, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.postcomstud.2015.12.004.
[290] RF Const. art. I.
[291] The main opposition party is the Communist Party, led by Gennady Zyuganov. Apart from that, some other political parties in Russia are A Just Russia, Rodina, Liberal Democratic Party of Russia etc.

3.3.3. Regime Type and Strategic Culture

This study is analyzing a security decision by Russian leadership, therefore, to link regime type to Russian strategic culture also means linking regime type to security policies of it. To this aim, first, it is important to know the perceptions of the Russian leadership towards the different regime types. For instance, Putin and his supporters argue that stability and security is prior than democracy. Besides, democracy is often perceived as a Western origin concept used by imperialist powers to stir Russia up. This is illustrated by the survey conducted by Levada Center In 2014.[292] From 1996 to 2014, they asked the participants which political system they think is the best: The Soviet system, the current system, Western-style democracy or other? The results of the poll demonstrated that, majority of the Russians preferred the Soviet system, except for 2008. In 2008, %36 of the participants voted for the current system. This result brings us to an important outcome, unlike other authoritarian regimes, Russian decision makers care about public opinion. For them, to consolidate power at home, the public support is utmost important, as well as Putin's popularity. Therefore, the Kremlin is trying to boost popularity and approval rates. This situation is important to analyze and understand Russian strategic culture, because, since the Kremlin cares about approval rates, they are not making decisions without considering public. This is important to understand that the characteristics of Russian regime has a distinct role while constructing Russian strategic culture.

About Russia's current political regime, it can be said that there is hybridity. It has elements unique to Russia, they are sui generis. They have elements both from democratic regimes and autocratic ones, and at the same time from semi-presidentialism and presidentialism. However, after examining the RF Constitution, especially its fourth chapter (art.80-93), it is clearly seen that Russia has an empowered presidential system. So, in practice, the President controls and dominates every branch of Russian politics. Other institutions, namely the parliament, political parties and regional governments, remained powerless or ineffective towards the president. Besides, the new proposed changes to the

[292] The poll results: https://www.levada.ru/2014/02/24/luchshaya-politicheskaya-i-ekonomicheskaya-sistema/

Constitution proves that Russia has a strong presidential regime. On 15th of January 2020 President Putin delivered the Address to the Federal Assembly and proposed several constitutional amendments. If accepted, the proposed amendments will allow Putin to stay in power until 2036. Another important change is about state structure. Putin stated that, it is hard for Russia to exist as a parliamentary republic, therefore it must remain a strong presidential republic.[293] The amendments are already approved by the Federal Assembly's both chambers, the State Duma and the Federal Council, and by the Constitutional Court. Now, two-thirds of Russian regional parliaments must approve the amendments, then, the public must approve the amendments on referendum.[294] These proposed changes show that, Putin will continue to be the key decision-maker in Russian politics even after 2024.

As a result, what is clear is that, Russian politics have a tendency towards strong leaders and autocracy. And, the authoritarian legacy is important to constitute Russia's strategic culture. Because, Russia is not a democratic state like Western states, so it does not have democratic norms and values. As Snyder predicted, Soviet military would prefer offensive use of force because of its authoritarian being. And when Putin's rule started in 2000, Russia's tendency towards the authoritarian, centralized, strong leaders have increased. However, this does not mean to return to the Soviet-times totalitarian, single-party system. In terms of strategic culture and state structure, there is more change than continuity in the Russian strategic culture. For example, during the USSR times, there were party-state identification. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union was the dominant figure in every aspect within the Union, controlled all branches of power and was the only decision-maker. Currently, although has majority in all parliaments, United Russia is a formel party structure and there is no political party dominance in the contemporary Russia. The Kremlin itself is the main and ultimate decision-maker. To sum up, the characteristics of Russian political regime is a constitutive element of Russian strategic culture and, although authoritarian being is still relevant, it is different than the Soviet times.

[293] Vladimir Putin, "Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly," January 15, 2020, accessed April 14, 2020, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/62582

[294] The referandum was scheduled for April 22, however, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it is postponed.

3.4. Conclusion

Russian strategic culture consists of several elements' stems from its history, regime type and elite beliefs. As a state's past experiences guides its future behaviors, history is an important constitutive element of a state's strategic culture. Even Putin himself, esteems the importance and power of history, especially "the application of history as a policy tool".[295] Also for Putin, one very important lesson from Russian history is, "the danger of repeated 'times of troubles' that have risked the collapse or disintegration of the Russian state".[296] That's why he attaches importance to centralized authority, and he uses several factors to help him achieve this goal. More than seventy years long one-party authoritarian regime, and under Stalin totalitarian, solidified the authoritarian legacy. Although Yeltsin attempted for democratization, RF inherited authoritarian legacy and this legacy consolidated since Putin became the President.

Foreign invasions, indefensible borders, loss of its superpower status, external influences, lack of trust to the Western powers, are all threat perceptions for Russia. They helped to shape Russian strategic culture, and this paves the way for Russia to behave in a certain way. For example, strenghtening power at home and expansion abroad were always the key policies of Russia for security.[297] Although Putin's terms in the Kremlin is characterized by assertive, confrontional policies in the international relations, it is not a direct result of Putin himself, elite opinion is also playing an important role for foreign policy decisions.[298] The dissolution of the USSR and decline of Russia's role as a great power caused Russian elite to adopt and approve more assertive policies. Because, Russia's advocacy to "multipolar world order" also has to with Russian leadership's, and Russian political elite's, perception of their country as a great power. It can be said that, this perception has been inherited from the Cold War period,[299] it is a Soviet legacy to the contemporary Russian strategic culture.

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[295] Fiona Hill and Clifford Gaddy, "Putin and the Uses of History," *National Interest*, no. 117 (2012): 22. https://www.jstor.org/stable/42896424?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents
[296] Ibid., 26.
[297] Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy: The Return of Great Power Politics*, 2.
[298] Ibid., 4–5.
[299] Dal and Erşen, "Russia and the Changing International System," 7.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYZING CRIMEA'S ANNEXATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF RUSSIAN STRATEGIC CULTURE

Crimea is a peninsula geographically located in Eastern Europe, on the northern coast of the Black Sea. It is between the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. Its population consists of mostly Russians, Ukrainians, and Crimean Tatars. Its capital is Simferopol. It has been invaded many times in its history, by Cimmerians, Scythians, Huns, Mongols etc. In 1441, it consolidated its power with the establishment of the Crimean Khanate. In 1475, it was under Ottoman Empire's domination, however, during the 1768-1775 Ottoman Empire's war with the Russian Empire, Russia invaded Crimea in 1771 and in 1783, they annexed Crimean Khanate. Until 1954, Crimea remained a part of Russia. From 1954 to 2014, Crimea was a part of Ukraine, however with the annexation; it became a federal subject of Russia. Today, Ukraine and many other Western states and international organization do not recognize Crimea as an integral part of Russia, but since March 2014 it is de facto part of Russian Federation.

Crimea's annexation in 2014 by Russia took the world by surprise because, since the end of the WWII, no territory had been annexed in Europe before. The scholars have been trying to find out the motives behind Russian leadership for annexation. Despite the amount of research, in the IR literature, there is no consensus among scholars why Russia annexed Crimea. Regarding on this, strategic culture provides more comprehensive explanation of the issue. Without neglecting the roles of other factors explained by the scholars, strategic culture culminates those explanations and provides a broader look with including more-than-one sources. Next part of this study will examine the crisis in Ukraine and analyze Crimea's Annexation.

4.1. The Crisis in Ukraine and Crimea's Annexation

Crimean Peninsula is very important to Russia as it endured high costs for it. Crimea has material and non material importance to Russia. It was the place where thousands of Russians died during the 19th and 20th centuries while defending the

homeland against the Turks and Germans, where Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill negotiated to shape the world after the WWII during the Yalta Conference in 1945.[300] Additionally, the naval base at Sevastopol has strategic and military importance to Russia because the naval base is home to Russia's Black Sea Fleet. The naval base's importance had showed itself, for example, during the Russo-Georgia War. Because, Russia used the Black Sea Fleet to blockade against Georgia.[301]

On the other hand, Crimea has many non-material importance to Russia. For example, according to expert of post-Soviet affairs Anatol Lieven, Russians always have national feelings over Crimea, and this must not be ignored.[302] Because, Crimean Peninsula is the only region of Ukraine that ethnic Russians are majority.[303] Also, the City of Sevastopol's emotional significance comes from its history and perceptions of the Russians, "The city is partly seen as a symbol of the Russian Empire and the Russian navy at the height of their achievement and glory,…".[304] Besides, for religious importance, it was the place where Vladimir I baptized and converted to the Orthodox Christianity.

This sub-chapter is dedicated to explaining what led to the conflict in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea. It can be said that, because Russia-Ukraine history is intermingled, both sides are having disputes over many issues and Crimea's status was one of them. The next part will explain pre-crisis conditions in Ukraine and its escalation.

[300] Marvin Kalb, *Imperial Gamble: Putin, Ukraine, and the New Cold War*, *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 69 (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), 148, https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2016.1265816.
[301] Paul N. Schwartz, "Crimea's Strategic Value To Russia," *Center For Strategic & International Studies,* March 18, 2014, https://www.csis.org/blogs/post-soviet-post/crimeas-strategic-value-russia
[302] Anatol Lieven, *Ukraine&Russia: A Fraternal Rivalry* (Washington, DC: The United State Institute of Peace, 1999), 105.
[303] Gerard Toal, *Near Abdroad: Putin, The West and The Contests Over Ukraine and the Caucasus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 202.
[304] Lieven,*Ukraine&Russia,* 127.

4.1.1. Russia-Ukraine Relations After the Dissolution of the USSR

Since its independency, Ukraine's policies stuck between Western countries and Russia. On one side, it tried to have closer integration with the West and on the other side, it tried to balance Russia. The first president of Ukraine was Leonid Kravchuk(1934), who served from 1991 to 1994. Although he ran for presidency for the second term in 1994, he was defeated by Leonid Kuchma(1938). Kuchma was Kravchuk's former Prime Minister. He ruled the country for two terms from 1994 to 2004. In the foreign affairs, he tried to balance Russian and EU, too.

In 2004, presidential elections were arranged. There were two candidates who was left to the last round in presidential elections: Viktor Yanukovych and Viktor Yushchenko. Yushchenko was born in 1954 and he was Kuchma's former Prime Minister from 1999 to 2001. Yanukovych was born in 1950, he also was Kuchma's former Prime Minister from 2002 to 2004. As a result of the elections, Yanukovych was alleged to won the elections, however the elections were claimed to have massive corruption. Because of this claim, thousands of Ukrainians gathered in the Ukrainian capital, Kiev and protested the results of the election, which led the country to the so-called Orange Revolution. Pro-Western opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko launched mass protest campaign over rigged elections and finally, Supreme Court cancelled election result. In the second round of the elections, Yushchenko won it and became the third president of Ukraine. So, Orange Revolution led the way for a Western-oriented president to be elected in Ukraine.

Energy has always been a top problem for Russian and Ukraine. This continued during the Yuschenko's presidency, as well. In 2006 and 2008, Russia cut supplies to Ukraine. Because of Ukraine's position as a transit country, gas-cuts affected most Western states, too. In 2009, Ukrainian Prime Minister Tymoshenko reached a deal with her former counterpart, Russian Prime Minister Putin, to avoid gas shortages. Tymoshenko was a prominent actor in the 'Orange Revolution' and, she was also known as the "gas princess" because of the wealth she gained in the energy sector.[305]

[305] "Profile: Yulia Tymoshenko," *BBC,* May 23, 2014. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-15249184

Yuschenko's administration caused disappointment among the Ukrainians. The ongoing economic crisis and corruption, political instability, failure to fulfill the pre-election promises were the reasons for the disappointment. In international arena, his term was marked with political tensions and gas crisis in the bilateral relations between Russia and Ukraine. Following these events, Viktor Yanukovych won the 2010 presidential elections. Kremlin desired to improve Russo-Ukrainian relations as an anti-Russian president was replaced with one that was, relatively pro-Russian.[306] As soon as he was elected, the Kharkiv Pact was signed between Ukraine and Russia in 2010. The agreement extended the duration of the Russian base in Sevastopol, Crimea until 2042.

While trying to improve its relations with Russia, Ukraine still wanted to have closer ties with the EU. Although its balancing policy towards EU and Russia continued, associate research fellow at the Swedish Institute of International Affairs, Karina Shyrokykh argues that to understand Ukraine's foreign policy, external factors like Russia and EU must be analyzed with its internal factors.[307] For example, Kremlin used Ukraine's economic dependency to pressure Ukraine for a foreign policy that would please Russia's interests.[308] On the other hand, for EU, its neighbors are utmost important for its own security and stability. Therefore, for its border security, energy transit and environmental issues, Ukraine is important for EU as well. But, according to Shyrokykh, the West had promoted itself by normative factors and attracted itself with European identity, human rights and values.[309]

Additionally, in 2013, Free Trade and Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union was planned to sign. Prior to that, EU and Ukraine were already partners with EU's Eastern Partnership and with European Neighborhood Policy. But both sides were seeking to have closer relations, not only politically but also

[306] Andrei Tsygankov, "Vladimir Putin's Last Stand: The Sources of Russia's Ukraine Policy," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 31, no. 4 (2015): 284, https://doi.org/10.1080/1060586X.2015.1005903.
[307] Karina Shyrokykh, "The Evolution of the Foreign Policy of Ukraine: External Actors and Domestic Factors," *Europe - Asia Studies* 70, no. 5 (2018): 832–50, https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2018.1479734.
[308] Ibid., 844
[309] Ibid., 845.

economically. However, EU's demands to have closer relations with Ukraine, were causing anxiety on Russia as it did not want Ukraine to integrate with any Western organization. That's why, it can be said that Ukraine was causing some sort of a "security dilemma" between Russia and EU. Because of the bearers of Russian strategic culture, non-defensible borders, being open to attack, needing to surround itself with buffer states, Russia did not want to lose the countries it sees as its "backyard". In addition to that, Russia did not want another containment policy from the West and it opposed Ukraine's will to join EU and/or NATO. Therefore, since Ukraine's independency, Russia tried to limit its connection to West. And in 2013, Russia's attempts paid off when Ukrainian president Yanukovych gave up the Association Agreement with the EU. Russian Federation's President Vladimir Putin rewarded Yanukovych for his decision to abandon EU Agreement, Putin provided significant discount on natural gas to Ukraine.[310] In sum, Russia's approach to these incidents in Ukraine showed that no matter what happens, Russia would not let Ukraine to become a NATO or EU member or even integrate with them; it also made it clear that it will not let the U.S. to spread to the Black Sea.

On the other hand, Ukrainian citizens took the streets to protest their government's sudden decision to withdraw from the agreement. Dozens died during the protests; which led country to another revolution named "Maidan Revolution". When the government could not suppress the protests, president Yanukovych had to escape from the country. After Yanukovych's run away, Ukrainian politician and economist Oleksandr Turchynow(1964) was the acting Presidenf of Ukraine until 25 May 2014 presidential elections. During the 2014 elections, Ukrainian's voted for Ukrainian businessman and politician Petro Poroshenko(1965) as the new President of Ukraine. During the Euromaidan Revolution, Kremlin was suspicious that Kiev would break its historical ties to Russia.[311] What triggered this suspicions was the fact that an European identity was very popular among Ukrainians, and Kiev's cancellation Russian as a regional language in Ukraine.[312]

[310] Ozan Örmeci, "Ukrayna Krizi ve Rusya'nın Batı ile Satrancı," in *Rusya Siyaseti ve Rus Dış Politikası,* ed. Ozan Örmeci and Sina Kısacık (Ankara: Seçkin Yayıncılık, 2018), 217.
[311] Tsygankov, "Vladimir Putin's Last Stand," 293.
[312] Ibid.

Moscow perceived all these events as a threat to its national interests and its security, because they feared that these protests might spill over to Russia.[313] This process actually started with the Rose Revolution in Georgia in 2003, then in 2004 Ukraine's Orange Revolution, and Kyrgyzstan's Tulip Revolution in 2004, finally the Maidan Revolution was the last standing point. Due to the importance of Ukraine, Russia showed that it will not allow it to become a part of any Western organization. While Kiev tries to liberate itself from the Moscow's domination, Moscow tries to keep Kiev in its own sphere of influence and under its hegemony.[314] Russia uses a wide spectrum of tools while forming its security policies and tries to pressure other states' with those tools. And due to diplomatic, economic and military superiority of Russia over Ukraine, it keeps Kiev under its sphere of influence.

4.1.2. Crimea's Annexation

On Febrauary 21, 2014, President of Ukraine Yanukovych was dissmissed by the Ukrainian parliament Rada. Following this event, seperatist movements rise again in Crimea. From the beginning of the February, Russia landed its special forces on the Crimean peninsula and took control of it, this transformed the situation from a domestic crisis into a regional and international problem.[315] The special forces were called by the Russian media as "little green men" or "polite people" who were armed and in military uniform, but did not have any clue to identify them. Apart from these proxies, Russia used some other tools in Crimea, which had started another debate among scholars and politicians about hybrid warfare. The term hybrid warfare means incorporating a range of different modes of warfare, conventional or not. [316] For example, Russia used several different tools in Crimea to succeed its annexation: Proxies "little green men", fake news, propaganda, cyber threats, economic pressure, handing out passports etc. Although this does not mean that Russia have not used

[313] Skak, "Russian Strategic Culture," 325.
[314] Andreas Kappeler, "Ukraine and Russia: Legacies of the Imperial Past and Competing Memories," *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 5, no. 2 (2014): 115, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.euras.2014.05.005.
[315] Vügar İmanbeyli, "Ülke-İçi Krizden Uluslararası Soruna Ukrayna-Kırım Meselesi," *SETA,* no.36 (2014): 1, http://file.setav.org/Files/Pdf/20140320184806_ulke-ici-krizden-uluslararasi-soruna-ukrayna-kirim-meselesi-pdf.pdf
[316] Frank G. Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century:The Rise of Hybrid Wars* (Virginia: Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, 2007), 8.

conventional modes, it also used some non-conventional tools to increase its likelihood to achieve the desired policy. According to Renz, who is an Associate Professor at the School of Politics and IR, there were favourable conditions in Crimea for Russia such as weakened political and military leadership of Ukraine, their unwillingness or unableness to resist and the large pro-Russians that welcomed Russian actions rather than resisting.[317] This conditions and using the right tactic/tool at the right time, made Russian hybrid warfare in Crimea successful.

On 16th of March 2014 a referendum was held in Crimea, and more than %95 of the Crimeans voted in favor to joining Russia.[318] However, this referendum is not recognized by majority of the international community. Western states and the U.S. have imposed sanctions on Russia, which includes visa bans to Russia's key officials and as a result, Russia also imposed countersanctions. However, according to the President Poroshenko; they are not enough. In his article to *New York Times*, he implied that more needs to be done to raise the cost to Russia for threatening Ukraine's security and sovereignty.[319] Although the condemnations and sanctions, Putin signed the Treaty to include the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol into Russian Federation,[320] and Russian parliament ratified it. Thus, Crimea and Sevastopol became the 84th and 85th regions of RF.[321] About annexation, Putin said that,

> …a referandum was held in Crimea in March, at which its residents clearly expressed their desire to join Russia. After that, the Crimean parliament - it should be stressed that it was a legitimate parliament that was elected back

[317] Bettina Renz, "Russia and 'Hybrid Warfare,'" *Contemporary Politics* 22, no. 3 (2016): 288, https://doi.org/10.1080/13569775.2016.1201316.
[318]According to official Russian news,"95.7% of Crimeans in referendum voted to join Russia - preliminary results,"*Russia Today*, March 16, 2014, https://www.rt.com/news/crimea-vote-join-russia-210/
[319] Petro Poroshenko, "Putin Must Be Punished," *New York Times,* December 5, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/05/opinion/petro-poroshenko-putin-ukraine.html
[320] "Ukraine crisis: Putin signs Russia-Crimea treaty," *BBC, March 18, 2014,* https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26630062
[321] "One history, one faith, one country: five years ago, the Crimea returned to Russia," March 18, 2019, http://duma.gov.ru/en/news/30069/

> in 2010 – adopted a resolution on sovereignty. And then we saw the historical reunification of Crimea and Sevastopol with Russia.[322]

President Putin used histocial elements in his speech and justified the annexation with the concept of *Russkiy Mir*, translated as Russian World. The concept does not necessarily refer to ethnic Russians only, but also consists of Russian speakers or the ones who share Russian culture. Therefore, by doing that, Putin securitizied Russian speakers in Crimea. According to the Copenhagen School in IR, a multi-category security approach is essential to the IR literature, to departure from traditional security approach which focuses on military security only.[323] Related to the second generation in strategic culture, Copenhagen School also argues that the discourse of the decision makers is essential for securitization or desuritization any matter.[324] However, speech only is not enough, in Assist. Prof. in Political Science Şirin Duygulu Elcim's words, "…in order for an issue to be categorized as a security threat the audience needs to accept the legitimacy of such a claim and consent to the use of non-political measures in addressing it".[325] In sum, the Russian leadership attempted to frame Russian speakers as a security issue with their discourse, because Putin argued that the annexation took place to protect ethnic Russians and Russian speakers in Ukraine.[326] Besides, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the RF Sergey Lavrov also argued in one of his interviews that, the annexation was the will of the Crimeans.[327] However, the Kremlin also must convince its audince, which is the Russian citizens.

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[322] Putin, "Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly," December 4, 2014. http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47173

[323] Ralf Emmers, "Güvenlikleştirme," 3rd ed., in *Çağdaş Güvenlik Çalışmaları*, ed. Alan Collins and trans. Nasuh Uslu (İstanbul: Röle Akademik Yayıncılık, 2017), 132.

[324] Ibid., 132-133.

[325] Şirin Duygulu Elcim, "The Effects of Using Security Frames on Global Agenda Setting and Policy Making," (PhD diss., University of Massachusetts, 2015), 35. https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations_2/438/?utm_source=scholarworks.umass.edu%2Fdissertations_2%2F438&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages

[326] Putin, "Address by President of the Russian Federation," March 18, 2014, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603

[327] Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation Sergey Lavrov's interview with TV Channel France 24, December 16, 2014, https://www.mid.ru/en/press_service/minister_speeches/-/asset_publisher/7OvQR5KJWVmR/content/id/848819

In February 2015, Russian President Putin met with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Francois Hollande and Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko to negotiate cease-fire in eastern Ukraine. Because they met in the capital of Belarus, Minsk, the protocol became known as Minsk Protocol. Some of the important points from the Protocol are; an immediate and full bilateral ceasefire, withdrawall of all heavy weapons, foreign illegal armed groups, military equipment, and mercenaries from the territory of Ukraine, release of all hostages.[328] However, the Minsk Protocol could not change the fact that Crimea is still a part of RF right now. Because, it was more about the problems in Lugansk and Donetsk regions of Ukraine.

Crimea's annexation has many challenges not only to Ukraine and Russia, but also to the other states and international order. With the annexation, Russia had neglected and abused international law and order. Ukraine had to deal with instability which continues even today. "…inspired by Russia's annexation of Crimea, separatists in the east and south of Ukraine took control of government buildings and refused to cooperate with the government in Kiev by appointing 'popular' governors in several regions (Donestsk, Lugansk, Nikolayev, Khar'kiv, Odessa, and others)".[329]

On the other hand, annexing Crimea had serious costs to Russia, especially economic and political. Politically, Russia's relations with many Western states have dropped to an unprecedentedly low level.[330] Also, the Crisis in Ukraine challenged Russia's position and its relations with the former Soviet states. Because with the annexation, Russia demonstrated to them that it will not allow any of them to have closer ties with the West. In this regard, Putin said "There are certain red lines that we can't allow to be crossed. Ukraine ad Crimea are such a red line".[331] What's more, Russia also had additional payments due to the annexation. Because, those sanctions

[328] "Ukraine ceasefire: New Minsk agreement key points," *BBC,* February 12, 2015, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31436513
[329] Tsygankov, "Vladimir Putin's Last Stand," 285.
[330] Tsygankov, 285.
[331] Vladimir Putin, "Meeting with heads of leading international news agencies," May 24, 2014, accessed March 19, 2020, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/21090#sel=84:30:Wjl,84:49:u1j

effected Crimea as well. To remedy Crimea's economic difficulties, Russia offered about $12,000,000 for regional development.[332] Although economic and political difficulties, Russia still did not give up on Crimea. In Mearsheimer's words, "History shows that countries will absorb enormous amounts of punishment in order to protect their core strategic interests".[333] Next part of this study will analyze Russian strategic culture and its sources on its decition to annex Crimea.

4.2. Analysis of Components of Russian Strategic Culture Influencing the Crimean Annexation

This part of the thesis is devoted to analyze Crimea's annexation from the three constitutive elements of Russian strategic culture, which are history, regime and elites. Starting with historical experiences, along with other elements, in this work it is argued that history is an important source to analyze especially in the Crimea's annexation, because history was a legitimizing tool for Putin. However, while analyzing history-politics relationship, it is important to understand its limits. "Consciously or unconsciously, government officials rely on their understanding of the past in seeking to address what is happening today…".[334] But, as mentioned earlier, history by its own self does not have enough explanatatory power on foreign or security policies. But still, without historical explanations, it is difficult, if not impossible, to understand foreign policies, especially when analyzing cases through strategic culture. The rest of this part will locate Crimea into Russian history, in this way Russian historical justification and historical sensitivity towards the Peninsula will be understood better.

4.2.1. Russia and Crimea in the Historical Context

Prior to the establishment of the Khanate of Crimea in 1441, Crimea had been invaded by many different powers and nomadic people like Cimmerians, Scythians, Huns and Mongols, until the establishment of the Khanate of Crimea in 1441. The

[332] Neil Kent, *Crimea: A History* (London: Hurst & Company, 2016), 160.
[333] Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis," 10.
[334] Hal Brands and Jeremi Suri, "History and Foreign Policy: Making the Relationship Work," *Foreign Policy Research Institute,* April 1, 2016, accessed March 28, 2020, https://www.fpri.org/article/2016/04/history-foreign-policy-making-relationship-work/

Khanate became under the Ottoman Empire's rule in 1475 and remained a part of the Empire until its annexation by Russian Empire In 1783. After that year, Crimea became a part of Russian Empire and remained under the Russian rule ever since the collapse of the Russian Empire and the Romanov dynasty. It spent the first half of the 20th century under the RSFSR's rule, then, it was transferred to Ukraine in 1954, and it continued to remain a part of Ukraine after the dissolution of the USSR. This shows that, Crimea was under Ukrainian rule for 60 years, since RF's annexation in 2014, but prior to that, Crimea was under Russian rule for one and half centuries and this has implications to the contemporary Russia's sensitivity towards the peninsula. With this brief summary, this part of the study is divided to two. In the first part, Crimea's first settlers will be explained and the establishment and the collapse of the Khanate of Crimea will be analyzed. Second part will analyze Crimea under Soviet rule to today.

4.2.1.1. The Establishment of the Khanate of Crimea

Prior to Kievan Rus domination, the first settlers of Crimea were the Cimmerians and after them, during the 8th and 7th centuries B.C. the Scythians had arrived.[335] Although the Scythian domination in Crimea existed till the end of the third century A.D., first Goths and then Huns captured Crimea. Meanwhile, Kievan Rus' power increased and Crimea became an important political and religious place because, in 988, the Grand Prince Vladimir was baptised near Sevastopol and he accepted Christianity from Byzantine Orthodoxy.

Because of its strategic location, Crimea increased its economic ties with Anatolia and gradually, especially the southern parts of it developed in the 12th and 13th centuries. Afterwards, Mongol domination begun and Crimea was subdued in 1339, by Genghis Khan's grandson and Golden Horde's founder, Batu Khan.[336] In the early 1440s, the Golden Horde entered a period of fragmentation and the Mongol-Tatar authority over the region started to decline. Tatar communities divided and as a result, Khanate of Kazan(1438), Crimean Khanate(1441) and Kasimov Khanate(1452) established.

[335] Kent, *Crimea: A History,* 9-10.
[336] Ibid., 22.

Crimean Khanate was established by Hacı I Giray(?-1466) in 1441 and existed from 1441 to 1783. In the 15th century, Crimea's political context radically changed. In 1475, the Ottoman Empire conquested Crimea and it became a 'vassal state' of the Empire.[337] With the domination of Crimea, the Ottoman Empire firmly established its dominance in the Black Sea. It can be said that, after 1475, bilateral relations between Ottoman Empire and Grand Principality of Moscow led the history of Crimea. After the Ottoman domination, Ivan III of Russia made a deal with the Crimea Khan and gained economic and politic advantages. A lively trading network was developed between the Muscovy and Crimean ports.[338]

Towards the middle of the 16th century, it became a great political aim to connect Kazan and Astrahan to the Crimean Khanate, under the Ottoman rule.[339] The Khan, Sahib Giray(1532-1551) stated that the Moscow Knez was trying to capture Muslim countries such as Kazan and Astrahan and turned the Ottoman sultan against Moscow.[340] From this date on, Russian expansion efforts perceived as a threat by the Ottoman sultans to their Empire's security.[341] Competition on Kazan and Astrahan between Crimean Khanate and Csarist Russia, ended with Russia's capture of Kazan(1552) and Astrahan(1554).

During the 18th century, because of the weakening of the Ottoman Empire, Russia invaded Crimea three times and most of the peninsula destructed by the Russian armies.[342] Eventually, Ottoman Empire waged war to the Russian Empire, the war is also known as Russian-Turkish War of 1768-1774. In 1771 Russia invaded Crimea and, in 1774, treaty of Küçük Kaynarca signed between both sides. This treaty marked the end of the Ottoman rule over Crimea. Because, as a result of the treaty, Crimea and other northern coasts of the Black Sea gained their independence from Ottoman

[337] Kent, *Crimea: A History*, 26.
[338] Vernadsky, *Rusya Tarihi,* 123.
[339] Halil İnalcık, *Kırım Hanlığı Tarihi Üzerine Araştırmalar: 1441-1700* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2017), 112.
[340] Ibid.
[341] Ibid.
[342] Halil İnalcık, "Struggle for East-European Empire: 1400-1700: The Crimean Khanate, Ottomans and the Rise of the Russian Empire," in *Kırım Hanlığı Tarihi Üzerine Araştırmalar: 1441- 1700,* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2017), 436.

Empire. This caused Black Sea to lost its title of being "Turkish Lake". The Empress Catherine II's main goal was to expand Russia's domination to the Black Sea. Because she believed that, without dominating the Black Sea and destroying the Crimean Khanate, Russia could not fulfill its economic and political interests.[343]

Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca caused 299 years long Ottoman rule to end in Crimea however, Crimea's independent status did not last long. Czarina Catherine II violated the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca and annexed the khanate in 1783, with the threat of opening a new war against the Ottoman Empire.[344] With the annexation, Russia dominated all of the Black sea as the territory of the khanate covered all Black Sea coasts.

Less than a century later, Crimean Peninsula witnessed another war. Huge but backward Russia fought against an alliance made up of France, Britain, Piedmont-Sardinia and Ottoman Empire. One of the reasons of the war war, France and Britain's decision to capture Sevastopol, so that they could both control Black Sea and prevent Russian Empire's expansion.[345] The war lasted for three years and it ended with the Treaty of Paris in 1856. Russia defeated, however, the allied powers did not gain much, either. The Sultan, Abdulmecid, had hoped that Crimea would be ceded to the Ottoman Empire by Russia but, Crimea continued to be a part of Russian Empire.[346]

As a result, Crimea is located in a strategic place and it is key for the security of Black Sea, Ottoman Empire, Russian Empire and other powers in the eastern Europe. Russian attacks and invasions to the Crimea in the 18th century indicated that, Ottoman Empire was not capable of defending the khanate. The Czarina benefitted from Ottoman's isolation and weakness, and annexed the territory. Russia faced with a challenge of losing Crimea in the Crimean War but as a result, Crimea continued to be a part of the Empire even though Russia was defeated in the war.

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[343] Vernadsky, *Rusya Tarihi,* 211.
[344] İnalcık, *Kırım Hanlığı Tarihi,* 205.
[345] Hall Gardner, *Crimea, Global Rivalry, and the Vengeance of History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 32.
[346] Kent, *Crimea: A History,*101.

4.2.1.2. Crimea Under Soviet Rule

Crimea was called Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic under the USSR. Its status within the Union was special because it was not attached to Soviet Ukraine but rather, it was directly attached to Soviet Russia.[347] However, in 1945, Crimea's status changed, rather than being an autonomous republic, it became an autonomous region, in other words, an oblast.[348] And less than a decade later, in 1954, Soviet leadership decided to give Crimea to Ukraine, in order to highlight the 300th anniversary of the Treaty of Pereislav.[349] The treaty was signed in 1654 and as a result of it, Ukraine reunified with Russia and accepted the rule of Russian Tsar.

USSR leadership's decision is still discussed even today. It is often said that Crimea was gifted, but there are some scholars who disagree with this view. For example, according to Wilson, "…the transfer of Crimea was designed to make Ukraine less Ukrainian by adding so many Russians".[350] In addition to that, with transferring Crimea to Ukraine, the USSR leadership might have wanted to comfort Ukraine, whose territory was destroyed due to civil war, Nazi occupation, famine and which lost significant part of its population. Crimea is often referred as a "gift" by Khruschev to Ukraine, however, this discourse must also be discussed because it is not fully accurate. After Stalin's death on March 5, 1953, the USSR leadership faced a problem of finding a successor and witnessed power struggle. Because of Stalin's cult figure and dictatorship, it was hard to replace him. The solution was collective leadership. Georgii Malenkov(1902-1988) became Prime Minister, Khrushchev became General Secretary(renamed as First Secretary) of the Communist Party Central Committee and Viacheslav Molotov(1890-1986) became the Minister of Foreign Affairs. By the end of the 1954, Khrushchev maneuvered Malenkov out of the premiership and by the end of the 1950s, he increased his power and won the power struggle.[351] From

[347] Kent, *Crimea: A History,* 122.
[348] RF constists of 85 federal subjects; 22 republics, 9 krais, 46 oblasts(provinces), 1 autonomous oblast(Jewish Autonomous Oblast), 4 autonomous okrugs, 3 cities of federal importance(Moscow, St. Petersburg, Sevastopol).
[349] Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union*, 229–30.
[350] Andrew Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis: What It Means For the West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 99.
[351] Ziegler, *The History of Russia*, 96.

here, it can be said that, the decision's were taken collectively in Politburo and Khrushchev was not in a powerful position to decide alone. Especially, by 1954, he had just begun to eliminate his opponents in the power struggle. According to Mark Kramer, who is a Director of the Cold War Studies at Harvard University, to won the power struggle, Khruschev wanted to gain Ukrainian elite's support and to do that, he most likely, wanted to expand Ukraine's territory.[352] Therefore, it can be discussed that, Khruschev might wanted to transfer Crimea to Soviet Ukraine's rule, but, the decision was not only up to him. Rather than refering Crimea as a "gift" by Khruschev, it can be said that, it was decided to transfer to the Soviet Ukraine by the Soviet leadership.

Opinions vary about the Soviet leadership's motives, but from 1953 to the 2014's annexation, Crimea continued to become a part of Ukraine. In 1991, when Ukraine declared its state independency, it also declared Crimea as an autonomous republic within Ukraine.[353] The 1990s saw "…repeated friction between the Crimean parliament(The Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea)and Kiev over the extent of Crimean autonomy and the appointment of Crimean prime ministers".[354] Meanwhile, in Russia, the Duma declared that USSR leadership's decision to gift Crimea in 1954 was illegal and affirmed that Sevastopol is a Russian city, however, Yeltsin administration rejected it.[355] Because, as Kent stated, "At the time, President Yeltsin, preoccupied with so many other issues, had no greater desire to re-annex Crimea".[356]

4.2.1.3. Justification of the Annexation and the Ongoing Debates

It is natural for any state to seek good relations with its neighbors, but for Russia, former Soviet states are more than 'just neighbors' as it has many interests and motivations towards these states. Apart from political, economic and security

[352] Mark Kramer, "Why Did Russia Give Away Crimea Sixty Years Ago?," *Wilson Center,* accessed on 15 June, 2020, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/why-did-russia-give-away-crimea-sixty-years-ago
[353] Kent, *Crimea: A History,* 145.
[354] Lieven, *Ukraine&Russia,* 119.
[355] Ibid., 124.
[356] Kent, *Crimea: A History,* 145.

motivations, Russia also has historical and cultural ties with those states. Russian military intervention to Georgia in 2008 was a message to the Western states, the U.S. and also to the other former Soviet states. Before the 2008 intervention, Russia was verbally opposing to NATO's eastward expansion, but the 5-day-war showed that Russia is willing to use military tools to avoid any Western organization's expansion to its sphere of influence, even at the expense of worsening relations with the U.S. and Western Europe.[357] In which, Crimea deteriorated Russia's relations with the Western states and the sanctions imposed by them have deteriorated its economy.

Russian speaking residents in Crimea was Putin's and his colleagues' driving force or motive for annexation. Because, he said that Russian speaking population was under threat and they asked Russia for help.[358] So, it can be said that Russia used history and Russian speakers as a legitimizing tool for the annexation. Commenting on the issue, Professor of Government and International Affairs Gerard Toal wrote "When Putin decided to annex Crimea, the move was intuitively presented as a historic Russian terriroty rejoining the motherland and, further, as the correction of an arbitrary and capricious historical wrong".[359] That historical mistake was USSR leadership's 'gave away' Crimea to Ukraine in 1954. In Putin's words,

> It was an event of special significance for the country and the people, because Crimea is where our people live, and the peninsula is of strategic importance for Russia as the spiritual source of the development of a multifaceted but solid Russian nation and a centralised Russian state. It was in Crimea, …, that Grand Prince Vladimir was baptised before bringing Christianity to Rus.[360]

Despite the Kremlin's efforts to justify its actions by historical and cultural elements, Charter of the United Nations(UN) prohibits states from using or threatening to use force against the territorial integrity or independence of any state in Article 2(4).[361]

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[357] Roger E. Kanet, "Russian Strategic Culture, Domestic Politics and Cold War 2.0," *European Politics and Society* 20, no. 2 (2019): 195, https://doi.org/10.1080/23745118.2018.1545184.
[358] Vladimir Putin, "Direct Line with Vladimir Putin," April 17, 2014. http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20796
[359] Toal, *Near Abroad: Putin,* 237.
[360] Putin, "Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly," December 4, 2014. http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47173
[361] United Nations, *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, 1 UNTS XVI, art. II, § 4, https://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/chapter-i/index.html

The only exception of this rule is the right to self-defense in Article 51.[362] Self-defense requires an ongoing armed attack and there had to exist no other choice. Furthermore, in terms of international law, protecting any state's citizens that are in danger on the territory of other state can also be regarded as self-defense, or, for International Law Expert Christian Marxsen, it can be regarded as an "…unwritten customary exemption of the prohibition of the use of force".[363]

However, Russian leadership's argument of protecting the ethnic Russians or Russian-speakings living in Ukrainian territory to justify its seizure has no legal basis in international law. Because, there were no proven armed attack or threat to attack, discrimination, ethnic cleansing or genocide, severe human rights violations against the Russian speaking minority in Ukraine. In short, Russia's justifications to militarily intervene to a sovereign and independent state's territory has no legal basis in internaional law. Because, minorities living abroad cannot be evaluated as a legal tool to strip sovereign states.[364]

Besides, another debate about Russian seizure and annexation of Crimea, was the Budapest Memorandum signed in 1994 by the president of Russia, the U.S., Ukraine and prime minister of the United Kingdom. The reason for the signing of the Budapest Memorandum was to ensure that the nuclear weapons in Ukraine were transferred to Russia, dismantled and neutralized there. In return, the U.S. paid 500 million dollars to Ukraine and not the use nuclear weapons against any non-nuclear-weapon-state was decided. In addition to this, the Memorandum had other commitments such as, to respect Ukraine's territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty and to provide security assistance to Ukraine.[365] Although the legal binding of the treaty

[362]United Nations, *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, 1 UNTS XVI, art. LI, https://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/chapter-i/index.html
[363] Christian Marxsen, "The Crimea Crisis from an International Law Perspective," *Kyiv-Mohyla Law and Politics Journal* 0, no. 2 (2016): 372, https://doi.org/10.18523/kmlpj88177.2016-2.13-36.
[364] Malcolm N. Shaw, *International Law,* 5th ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 271.
[365] Steven Pifer, "Mr. Lavrov, Russia, and the Budapest Memorandum," *Brookings,* January 28, 2016, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2016/01/28/mr-lavrov-russia-and-the-budapest-memorandum/

is open to debate, Russia violated the Budapest Memorandum and its commitments with the annexation.

To better understand Russian strategic culture's implications on Crimea, it was utmost important to know what Crimea meant for Russia. One of the most important milestones in Crimean history was its annexation by Russian Empire in 1783. Because, if we neglect Ukrainian Soviet rule from 1954-1991 and Ukrainian rule from 1991 to 2014, since 1783 Crimea has been under Russian rule. This long period of Russian rule has left important marks on Crimea. For example, Crimean War in 1854 is important to analyze Kremlin's decision to seize and annex Crimea in February-March 2014 through strategic culture. Russia feared that with the Euromaidan protests, the new NATO and EU-backed Ukrainian government would demand the eviction of the Russian Black Sea Fleet at Sevastopol.[366] Because, Russians' memories of Ottoman, British and French siege of Sevastopol in 1854-55 is still alive.[367] What is also alive in Russian mind-set is, Nazi German's invasion to Crimea in late October 1941, during the WWII. The Soviet forces, especially in Sevastopol, showed significant resistance and succeeded in repelling the Germans in April 1944. Although it was taken back, the Nazi occupation had an important implication to Crimea. Crimean Tatars were accused of helping Germans, in consequence, Stalin deported[368] the entire Crimean Tatar population from Crimea to Central Asia in 1944.[369] This situation caused Crimea to mostly have Russian population, Russian culture and identity, which maintains today.[370] The ethnic Russians' majority was used to legitimate annexation in 2014, however, this justification has no legal basis in terms of international law. After the historical explanations and debates, the next part of the thesis concentrates on the Russian elite and their beliefs about Crimea.

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[366] Gardner, *Crimea, Global Rivalry,* p.29.
[367] Ibid., 30.
[368] On 18th of May, 1944 Stalin ordered the deportation of the entire Crimean Tatar population. They could only come back to Crimea after the collapse of the USSR. But, prior to that, Russians has always tried to decrease the number of Tatars by pressure, immigration or russification them. Especially after the 1783 annexation, Russia gradually applied policies to increase the number of ethnic Russians in the peninsula. This situation reached its top especially in 1936, when Soviet Russia directed campaigns to crush Tatar identity and rather than that, to impose Russian identity, culture and language.
[369] Lieven, *Ukraine&Russia,* 107.
[370] Kent, *Crimea: A History,* 140.

4.2.2. Elite Beliefs on the Crimea's Annexation

It can be argued that Russian decision-making is highly centralized, especially around the President, however some key groups of the Russian elite exerted significant influence on decision-making. Especially, military/security officers, or the *siloviki,* occupy a special place in Russian politics. In Volkov's words, "No Russian elite group appears to be as organized and influential as the siloviki".[371] Although their importance is undeniable, the amount of data available on Russian elite, *siloviki* and other groups, are less and hard to come by. But still, due to their importance on decision-making and Russian strategic culture, it is important to analyze their beliefs.

Russian elite have witnessed the traumatic collapse of the USSR. Moscow's loss of great power status, the humiliation of the Soviet collapse, the loss of influence in the former Soviet region all together affected their beliefs. As mentioned before, in order to regain that status, they prefer more assertive foreign policy. This can be seen in an elite survey conducted by Hamilton College Levitt Poll under the supervision of Associate Professor of Government Sharon Werning Rivera, in 2016. The survey was made by face-to-face interviews with 243 Russian elite who works in Russia's federal bureaucracy, parliament, military-security agencies, businessman, state-owned enterprises, media outlets and academic research institutes. In that Elite Survey, for example, the elite were asked whether Russia's national interests are limited to its current territory or extend beyond its territory. In 2008, which is the year of Russian-Georgian War, the majority of the elite(%64) answered in favor of Russia's national interests extend beyond its borders.[372] In 2012, the number decreased, %43,4 answered to the extend beyond its borders while the majority(%56,6) answered in favor of current existing borders.[373] However in 2016, the answers have changed radically. %82,3 of them answered that Russia's national interests extend beyond its existing territory and only %17,7 answered to the current borders.[374] This

[371] Denis Volkov, "Russian Elite Opinion After Crimea," *Carnegie Moscow Center*, March 23, 2016, https://carnegie.ru/2016/03/23/russian-elite-opinion-after-crimea-pub-63094
[372] Hamilton College Levitt Poll, *The Russian Elite 2016* (May 11, 2016), 15, https://www.hamilton.edu/documents/russianelite2016final.pdf
[373]Ibid.
[374] Ibid.

demonstrates that, Russian elite argued that Russia's national interests are not limited with country's borders only, but extend beyond its territory. In this way, it can be said that elite approve Russian actions abroad if it is for the sake of Russia and its interests. Russia's military operation in Syria in 2015 or Crimea's annexation in 2014 were done to achieve Russia's interests and security, therefore they stand by their government. On Syria, they were asked why the Kremlin has participated to the conflict and %76 of them chosed the answer: "Attempting to neutralize and eliminate the spread of military activities by Islamic radicals and terrorists to Russia".[375] This shows that, it is done for the security of Russia.

On Crimea, the Russian elite supported Putin, his regime and his foreign policy.[376] According to Zygar, when the Maidan protests started in Ukraine, the *siloviki*, patriotic businessmen and the Kremlin insiders were talking about Crimea and *Krım nash* "Крым наш"(Crimea is ours) became a mantra among most of them.[377] Especially, the head of Rosneft Igor Sechin and the head of Russian Railways Vladimir Yakunin were fans of the slogan.[378]According to the propaganda film made by the Russian state television, *Crimea: The Way Home,* when the decision to annex Crimea was made, Putin was with four members of the Russian elite, Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu, Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev, the head of FSB Alexander Bortnikov and chief of staff Sergey Ivanov.[379] Shoigu was the first senior official to visit Crimean Peninsula after the annexation. Despite not all elite consists of these four members, majority of the Russian elite supported the annexation, as indicated from the tables below. The reason why most of the Russian elites supported Russia's decision to annex is, the annexation was perceived by majority of the elite as a signal that Russia's great power status was restored.[380]

[375] Ibid., 22.
[376] Volkov, "Russian Elite Opinion After Crimea," 1.
[377] Zygar, *All the Kremlin's Men,* 85.
[378] Ibid.
[379] Sergey Kraus, dir., *Crimea: The Way Home* (2015; Russia: All-Russia State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company), DVD.
[380] Volkov, "Russian Elite Opinion After Crimea," 8.

Pursuit of great power status is a key element in Russian strategic culture. Another key elements are, its tendency to distrust Western actors and its sensitivity to its sphere of influence. Because of that, Russian actions abroad, Russian-Georgian War in 2008, Crimea's annexation in 2014, military operation in Syria in 2015, all presented as the West did not respect the traditional spheres of influence, therefore Russia needed to act. Two survey results presented below justifies what has been explained so far.

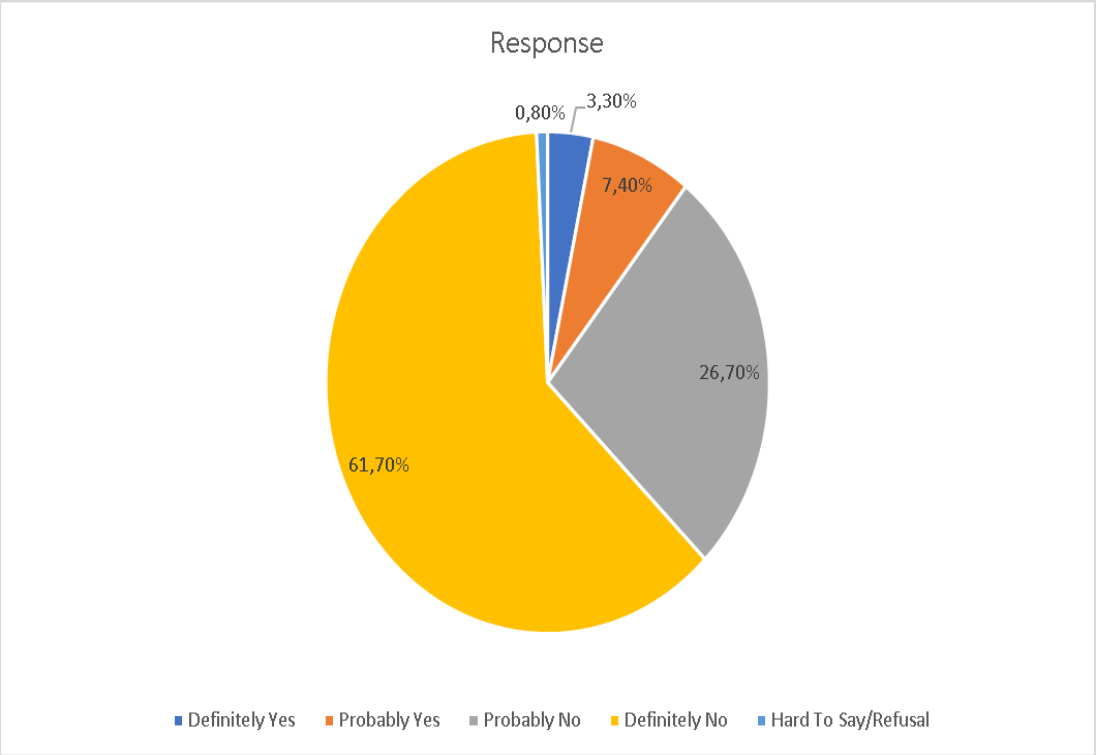

Figure 4.1. Russian Elite Survey, Question: "Do you agree that in annexing Crimea, Russia violated post-war and post-Soviet international agreements and international law?" (Source: Hamilton College Levitt Poll, *The Russian Elite 2016* (May 11, 2016), 19, https://www.hamilton.edu/documents/russianelite2016final.pdf)

As the survey results demonstrate, overwhelming majority of the Russian elite argued that Russia did not violate international law when annexing Crimea. Almost 90 percent of them answered "no" (definitely and probably). Because, according to their perception, annexation was a necessary decision made by the Kremlin. To understand this perception, it is important to look at elite answers on reasons of the crisis in Ukraine. The elite were asked what led to the conflict in Ukraine, and the top three answers are showed in the table below. As seen there, %75,7 of the elite

answered that it was U.S. and its provocations to Ukraine for another color revolution. This answer justifies the threat perceptions of Russian strategic culture. Because, Russian strategic culture consist of elements to hostility to the Western actors, and especially among the elite, the U.S. is perceieved as a major threat. Due to their perception of the U.S. as a major threat for Russia's interests and security, they are playing an important role on constructing Russian strategic culture towards more hostility to the U.S. In sum, the West, more precisely the U.S., is perceived as a main rival of Russia and presented as an evil who tries to undermine Moscow's security and interests.[381]

Table 4.1. Russian Elite Survey about the Crisis in Ukraine
Question: What led to the conflict in Ukraine?

Attempts by the USA to foment another color revolution in Ukraine	%75.7
The Ukrainian opposition, having resorted to armed methods of protests on the streets	%35.4
The hopes of regular Ukrainians that association with the European Union would solve fundamental problems in the country	%28.0

Source: Hamilton College Levitt Poll, *The Russian Elite 2016* (May 11, 2016), 20, https://www.hamilton.edu/documents/russianelite2016final.pdf

Russian elite's constitutive power in Russian strategic culture and in its foreign policy preferences, is related to Russian regime. Because, according to the Professor of Russian and Eurasian Studies Vladimir Gel'man, in nondemocratic states like Russia, the distinction between 'regime' and 'ruling group' is unclear.[382] They are mostly intermingled to each other. For Putin, the support of the elite and mass public is important and the annexation restored and streghtened the elite's loyalty to the regime.[383] The data from the same survey also demonstrates that they prefer current regime. They were asked which political system fits RF best and in 2012 and 2016, the majority of them choosed the current political system.[384] The reason why they

[381] Sinovets, "From Stalin to Putin," 419.
[382] Vladimir Gel'man, *Authoritarian Russia: Analyzing Post-Soviet Regime Changes* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015), 6.
[383] Volkov, "Russian Elite Opinion After Crimea," 8.
[384] Hamilton College Levitt Poll, *The Russian Elite 2016* (May 11, 2016), 6, https://www.hamilton.edu/documents/russianelite2016final.pdf

prefer current system over the Soviet one is that, Gel'man and Kirill Petrov(MGIMO University) "…today's Russian elites ascended to the top of the "power pyramid" and have maintained their status under the current political system; any changes to the status quo may be perceived as very risky and undesirable".[385] This indicates that, contemporary Russia and its decision makers, with no doubt, got affected by their state's Soviet legacy. They yearned the great power status of the USSR, because pursuit of great power status is an important feature of Russian strategic culture. Russian elite had witnessed the dissolution of the USSR and lost great power status. Therefore, to regain that status, they supported Russian leadership's decision to annex Crimea because, the annexation gave them what they wanted.

4.2.3. Russian Regime's Characteristics and the Annexation

During the Soviet era, single-party system and unity of powers tradition caused party-state identification. Transforming from the Soviet regime to today's Russia was a hard and complex process. Especially after the failure of Yeltsin's democratization process, with Putin's rose to power, there were interpretations that authoritarian, yet totalitarian tendencies would rise. However, according to Hale, the current Russian regime and the Soviet-time one-party totalitarian system has little direct continuity.[386] What's more, it can be argued that contemporary Russia is not a fully authoritarian or totalitarian or dictatorship state, for example unlike China and Saudi Arabia. And, Russia is not a democracy, either, like most Western states. Despite this, Russian regime shares an important feature with the Western democracies, public opinion. In systems like Russia, public opinion plays an important yet distinct role.[387] Putin and his government are very sensitive to the public opinion and the approval ratings, especially after the 2011-2012 protests in Russia. Although Putin won the 2012 presidential elections and took the Presidency seat back from Medvedev, his third term started with mass demonstrations in the big cities of Russia. The demonstrations were triggered by the rigged parliamentary elections in December

[385] Kirill Petrov and Vladimir Gel'man, "Do Elites Matter in Russian Foreign Policy? The Gap between Self-Perception and Influence," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 35, no. 5–6 (2019): 456, https://doi.org/10.1080/1060586X.2019.1662185.
[386] Hale, "Eurasian Polities as Hybrid Regimes," 36.
[387] Hale, 35.

2011 and continued during and after the presidential elections. The Russian leadership feared that the demonstrations would turn into color revolutions.[388] Because, Putin believed that the opposition's reason was the outside influence.[389] Although the protests suppressed, it indicated that Russian regime is actually fragile, therefore Putin relies on public support. To ensure that, he needs active political work by the administration and ruling elite, by television, by schools and churches, to increase and maintain his popularity.[390] Putin needed to regain his legitimacy and boost his approval ratings. Crimea's annexation was the opportunity Putin was waiting for.

To measure whether the characteristics of a country's regime is effective in making decisions based on that country's strategic culture, several questions should be asked. According to Howlett, those questions are,

> What traditionally have been the most important features of the country's political system? Has it been liberal-democratic or communist, centralized or decentralized, open or closed, pluralist or dominated by narrow elites? Is there a tradition of stability or instability? Has the system undergone any radical change? Has public opinion had much of a role to play in policy-making? Have the armed forces involved themselves in politics? Can any generalizations be made about the type of polity and its military behavior?[391]

Based on those questions, Russian regime's one of the most important features is strong presidentialism. Democratic and non-democratic elements are hand-in-hand but on a scale, it can be said that it is closer to the non-democratic part. Another important characteristic of the Russian regime, especially under Putin is, centralization. Putin established a hierarchical chain of authority, known as vertical of power. Putin is on top of the vertical and his personal authority is utmost important for regime's legitimacy and policy-making process. However, strong personalized

[388] Stefan Meister, "The domestic and foreign policy nexus: politics, threat perception and Russian security strategy," in *Routledge Handbook of Russian Security,* ed. Roger E. Kanet (New York: Routledge, 2019), 77.
[389] Fiona Hill, "Putin: The One-Man Show the West Doesn't Understand," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 72, no. 3 (2016): 5, https://doi.org/10.1080/00963402.2016.1170361.
[390] Ibid., 232.
[391] Howlett, "Strategic Culture : Reviewing Recent Literature."

leader decreases the authority of the state and its institutions.[392] The lack of trust to the institutions is a common characteristic of Russian regime, since "…strong personal authority allows its bearers to change the rules of the game and violate laws and traditions without substantial loss in political image and reputation".[393]

Crimea's annexation was a violation of international law, however, as the survey results indicated, it did not decrease Putin's or his regime's prestige. On contrary, it helped to increase its support. Therefore, to answer the question whether public opinion had much of a role to play in policy making, it can be said that, for Putin administration, public opinion is important. For example, according to Emil Abramovich Pain, who is a Professor of Political Science at the National Research University Higher School of Economics in Moscow, unlike Putin, Yeltsin was not trying to increase his approval ratings, too.[394] That is why, especially for Crimea's case, it can be argued that, public opinion was important and effective, therefore the government used several methods like fake news, propaganda etc, to manipulate public. The table below, retrieved from Russia's relatively independent polling agency Levada Center, demonstrates the increase on Putin's and the government's approval ratings.

Table 4.2. Putin's Approval Ratings

	2003	2007	2011	2013	2014	2015	2016
Approve	81	84	67	61	85	85	86
Disapprove	18	15	32	37	14	14	14
No Answer	2	1	1	2	2	1	1

(Source: Levada Center, "Putin's Approval Rating," accessed May 10, 2020, https://www.levada.ru/en/ratings/)

[392] Valeri Ledyaev, "Domination, Power and Authority in Russia: Basic Characteristics and Forms," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 24, no. 1 (2008): 24, https://doi.org/10.1080/13523270701840423.
[393] Ledyaev, "Domination, Power and Authority," 24.
[394] Emil Pain, "Special Characteristics of the Post-Soviet Political Regime," *Russian Politics and Law* 50, no. 6 (2012): 51, https://doi.org/10.2753/RUP1061-1940500603.

Table 4.3. Approval of the Russian Government by the Citizens

	2003	2007	2011	2013	2014	2015	2016
Approve	36	48	46	39	59	54	50
Disapprove	58	48	53	59	40	45	49
No Answer	7	4	1	2	2	2	1

(Source: Levada Center, "Approval of the Govenrment," accessed May 10, 2020, https://www.levada.ru/en/ratings/)

All data in the table belongs to November and all the years seen in the table were selected in an order. Putin's ratings in his first term was almost as in 2003 therefore, 2003 represents his approval ratings in his first term. The same rule also applies to 2007, which represents his second term. The tandem period, when Medvedev became the president and Putin became the Prime Minister, is represented in 2011. 2013 is chosen to demonstrate that before the annexation, his approval ratings were really low, 61 percent in 2013. Same goes to the government, too. Kremlin was disapproved by the Russians most of the time before the annexation. On contrary, after the annexation, both Putin and the government increased their approval. Putin's approval reached more than 85 percent and he managed to preserve it in 2015 and 2016 as well. This made Putin to regain his legitimacy and his regime to get back its power in the eyes of the Russian people.

For nondemocratic states like Russia, to consolidate its regime and to maintenance of equilibrium, the leader must avoid the disobedience by the citizens and by the elite.[395] Kremlin managed to gain support from both sides, the Russian elite supported their government during the annexation. And, the rise in Putin's approval ratings shows that the public supported the annexation. Besides, despite the sanctions, "Krım Nash" (Crimea is Ours) became a mantra among Russian citizens as well,[396] like the Russian political elite. The government also managed to reverse the declining support from the citizens.

[395] Gel'man, *Authoritarian Russia: Analyzing Post-Soviet,* 6.
[396] Gel'man, *Authoritarian Russia: Analyzing Post-Soviet*, 88.

It can be argued that, with the annexation of Crimea, the political regime's legitimacy crisis from the mass protests were resolved.[397] However, the "opportunity" was at the same time, risky. Because, at home, poverty and low incomes were causing dissatisfaction among Russian citizens towards their government. As a result of the annexation, sanctions imposed by the Western states, made the already bad economic condition worse. Russian leadership took the risk and the annexation helped Putin and his government to increase popular support for the regime. Also, the annexation helped Russia to restore its identity as a great power, and it worked to promote national self-esteem among Russians.[398] According to Andrei Kolesnikov, who is a senior fellow and the chair of the Russian Domestic and Political Institutions Program at the Carnegie Moscow Center, "It appears that in order to get off its knees, Russia felt it had to reclaim a key imperial territory that is rich in symbolism and full of nostalgic, historical, and nationalist significance".[399]

In short, it can be said that, to consolidate power at home, the Russian leadership used foreign invasion. Because, the Russian regime, characteristically, wanted to create conditions that favored itself. As indicated before, elite perceptions and the characteristic of the Russian regime are related to each other. In Valeri Ledyaev's(Professor of Politics at the Higher School of Economics University) words, "…, the ruling class cultivates values that reproduce and maintain the conditions of its domination".[400] Because, the bad economic conditions were challenging Putin and his administration. Therefore, they wanted to boost their support by Crimea. With the annexation, they reached their goal.

4.3. Conclusion

This chapter indicated the utility of strategic culture in explaining security patterns of states. Because, Russia's vast size, indefensible borders, constant invasions, lack of trust to the other states triggers its insecurity and vulnerability. There threat

[397] Volkov, "Russian Elite Opinion After Crimea," 1.
[398] Sherlock, "Russian Society and Foreign Policy," 3.
[399] Andrei Kolesnikov, "Two Years After Crimea: The Evolution of a Political Regime," *Carnegie Moscow Center* (March, 2016), accessed May 10, 2020, https://carnegie.ru/commentary/63082
[400] Ledyaev, "Domination, Power and Authority in Russia," 20.

perceptions stem from Russian history and constitutes its strategic culture. Related to this, to maintain its security, former Soviet states are utmost important. Russia knows that as soon as it gets weaker, it might be invaded by the Western states or organizations.[401] According Sinovets, Russia has a tendency to dominate its sphere of influences thanks to its strategic culture, but the West did not follow this rule and interfered Russia's tradition domain, that's why the annexation took place.[402] These perceptions are also shaped by Russian regime and Russian political elite. For political elite, it can be seen from the tables presented earlier that, most of them supported the decision to annex Crimea because, they perceive their state as a strong and great power. Lastly, to avoid insecurity and vulnerability, Russia depends on consolidated, centralized authority. In this context, Crimea was a risky yet advantageous opportunity for the regime to strengthen its legitimacy.

[401] Sinovets, "From Stalin to Putin," 420.
[402] Sinovets, "From Stalin to Putin," 419.

CONCLUSION

In this study, Crimea's annexation by Russia in 2014 is analyzed from the perspective of Russian strategic culture. Crimea is located in a critical area for the security of the riparian states to Black Sea, namely Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, Georgia and Russia. Thus, controlling Crimea provides an important strategic advantage in the region. Before the Imperial Russia, Black Sea region witnessed power struggle between Ottoman Empire and Tsarist Russia. With the foundation of the Russian Empire in 1721, Russia's efforts to dominate the region have increased and eventually, Russia won the power struggle against Ottoman Empire, when it annexed the Crimean Khanate in 1783. This date is important for the history of Crimea because from 1783 to 1954, it remained under Russian rule. With the decision of the Soviet leadership in 1954, Crimea spent the second half of the 20th century under the rule of the Soviet Ukraine. After the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, Crimea continued to be a part of Ukraine however, this has illegally changed in 2014.

Ukrainian President Victor Yanukovych's decision to postpone the treaty planned to be signed with the EU on November 2013, open the way to the violent crisis in Ukraine and Crimea annexation. The crisis escalated irreversibly since January 2014. On 22 February 2014, Yanukovych fled the country and Russian armed forces seized Crimea. With the disputed referendum held on March 16, 2014, Russian officials claimed that majority of the Crimeans supported joining Russia. Therefore, at the request of the Crimeans', Russia officially annexed Crimea.

Without neglecting other explanations in the IR literature about the annexation, this thesis has argued that Russian strategic culture played a decisive role in the annexation. Strategic culture is defined as the assessments and interpretations by the decision-makers of their state's main characteristics(history, geography, political system, etc.) to form security and foreign policies. While analyzing from the perspective of strategic culture, it includes more than one source to the analysis and in this way, it allows multidirectional and more comprehensive findings. This was

important particularly for Crimea's annexation because the decision required a versatile analysis.

In line with other studies about Russian strategic culture, this thesis also agrees on main points of Russia's strategic cultural profile. In this context, Russian strategic culture is characterized by pursuit of great power status; perception of high vulnerability and insecurity; tendency to distrust to allies, especially Western ones; tendency to have strong yet centralized leadership. For Crimea's case, historical experiences, elite beliefs and the characteristics of the regime are selected as constitutive sources of Russian strategic culture.

Keeping the definition of strategic culture in mind, historical experiences shed light on the interpretations of decision makers of their state's history. This helps to deepen our understanding on their decisions. For example, Kievan Rus' domination covered more or less, today's Ukraine, Belarus and European parts of Russia. This means that, the place where the Russian history starts is Kiev and its surroundings. Therefore, it can be said that Russia's and Ukraine's histories are intertwined and it is hard to explain them without reference to one another. In this long yet intertwined history, the question of Crimea has been a problem, because both sides claim domination over the peninsula. As mentioned before, Crimea has been under Russian rule for more than one and half century and was under Ukrainian rule (Soviet Ukraine and contemporary Ukraine) only for 60 years. Therefore, the long historical ties enabled Russia to use historical elements to justify its seizure and annexation. Besides, Russia's fear of containment, distrust to Western allies, its devastating experiences during the World Wars, all together, constitutes today's Russia's threat perceptions. Russia's unique strategic culture evolved from these experiences and as this study indicated that, it still effects Russia's foreign and security policies.

In line with its strategic culture, Russia's long and rich history demonstrates that Russia has always been pivotal player in the world politics. After the dissolution of the USSR, Russia lost its title of being a superpower and had a painful transition process to the market economy. When Putin rose to power in 2000, Russia overcame

most of its difficulties from the transition period and gradually became a strong and centralized state. Russian political elite also transitioned, and a new group called *siloviki* raised with Putin. Because they witnessed the dissolution and loss of the superpower title, they wanted to regain that status and perceived their states as strong. Therefore, they supported the Kremlin's decision to annex Crimea. This study also agrees that Russian political elite are important and influential on Russian strategic culture and this influence was particularly relevant on the Crimea's annexation.

In Kremlin's view, strong and centralized state is key to maintain security. According to characteristics of its regime, whenever Russia was weak in history, it was invaded by many different powers. To avoid this, it needed to form strong centralized state. After the *tandemocracy* period, Russian leadership faced protests. The protests and the bad economic conditions in the country caused Russian government's and Putin's approval ratings to decrease significantly. Keeping the Kremlin's sensitivity to approval and public opinion in mind, after the annexation, they managed to increase their approval radically. In this way, annexation served as a key source for regime legitimacy.

Based on this study, it can be concluded that, strategic culture has utility to explain security decision of Russia. Even though Russia's sense of security is attached to strict realist approach, strategic culture was useful to explain why Russia militarily intervened Ukraine and annexed Crimea. The results indicate that, Russian decision to annex Crimea was a reflection of Russian strategic culture.

As clearly illustrated in this study, strategic culture helps to strengthen the explanatory power of Russian security decision. However, while this study provides new insight to Russian decision to annex Crimea, the concept lacks predictivity and this limits the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, for this study, the findings are specific because, although the concept is useful in explaining Russian decision to annex Crimea, it does not allow the researcher to generalize the findings.

Although strategic culture as a concept suffers from lack of common definition, generalization, and codified methodology, nevertheless, the concept is useful in two aspects. First, as this study's results indicate that, the concept is useful for understanding the underlying causes or motives of a state's security decision. Second, it has utility to boost a researcher's insights about a country and its foreign policy preferences. Due to the scarcity of studies on strategic culture, more studies, empirical and theoretical, are needed. Therefore, further research is needed to determine whether strategic culture also has predictive power and whether it is generalizable or not.

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