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RUSSIAN INTERVENTIONISM: A CASE STUDY OF PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN'S
PERSONAL INFLUENCE IN THE SYRIAN CIVIL WAR

by
Lee Holmes

A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of the
requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

Oxford
May 2024

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ABSTRACT

The most influential factors in implementing interventionist policies into vulnerable countries are widely debated depending on political factors in the international relations sphere. Russia's decision to intervene in Syria's civil war in 2015 while Syria collapsed from civil unrest and authoritarian corruption is a prime example. Although most literature agrees that Russia's intervention stemmed from an attempt to solidify political influence and diplomatic relations in the Middle East, hardly any addresses President Vladimir Putin's individual influence as a determining factor. Since national power is consolidated to the individual leader in authoritarian regimes, it is crucial to understand President Putin's personal role in the Federal Assembly's decision to intervene in Syria's civil war. This study utilizes a psychobiographic leadership analysis sampled from the literature to answer its knowledge gap for Putin as an individual. Additionally, this study examines the role of Putin's personal relationships with key members of the State Duma within the Federal Assembly's hierarchy. This study finds that both Putin's history of revolutionary and military ideology exposure as well as political power advantages play significant factors into Russia's decision-making process for their intervention in Syria's civil war. This thesis determines how Putin's personal power influenced this decision from the beginning of Syria's civil war in 2011 to pre-intervention 2015.

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INTRODUCTION

“World Police” Struggle

The question of why countries act as national police for which countries they perceive as “developing” or “politically unstable” has been one of the most widely debated and researched topics in political science. The world’s “global superpowers,” especially the United States, China, and Russia, are usually included in most publicly available Western research. However, a significant portion of literature focuses on case studies surrounding both small and large scale U.S. interventions, especially those establishing a strong military presence throughout Latin America throughout the last century. Because of the predominant focus on Western interventionist decision-making processes, particularly within traditionally democratic governments, this thesis examines influences for interventionist policy decision-making in authoritarian non-democratic regimes.

Russia’s presence as an interventionist force is generally agreed among scholars to be rooted in anti-Western and pro-nationalist sentiments. Russia has used its governments and militaries to establish national power in the international political sphere, while Syria is Russia’s most prominent military and diplomatic presence in the Middle East today. To help understand presidential individual influence in authoritarian regimes’ decision-making process towards interventionism, this thesis utilizes a case study for Russia’s 2015 intervention in Syria’s civil war. President Vladimir Putin’s psychological background and power imbalance among his relationships with the State Duma and his military are two overlooked factors that play a major role in his decision-making process to intervene in Syria. Although the literature mostly

considers Russia's measurements of national power, Putin's individual influence strengthened this power to the point of enabling this intervention and should be carefully considered in further research on interventionist decision-making.

Justification for Syria Case Study

Putin's 2015 intervention in Syria's civil war earns its position as a unique case study. Various literature articles analyze the decision-making process of political interventions with case studies from the United States, but very few use Russia's intervention in Syria. The American nonprofit think tank RAND Corporation's use of this case study in 2021 argues that the presence of "external [terrorist] threat, regional power balance, national status concerns, [and] military capabilities" through Russian military reform, following the 2008 Russia-Georgia war, were the primary driving factors in Syria's intervention.¹ However, this thesis argues that a number of factors unaddressed in the literature help explain Russia's intervention in Syria on the basis of Putin's individual role in their decision-making process.

1. Transition of Power

Russia and Syria have maintained friendly bilateral relations, which can be traced all the way back to Imperial Russia's first consular post in Aleppo in the 1830s.² However, Russia's intervention in Syria was their most significant diplomatic policy in the Middle East since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in terms of troops and military units. Syria still remains one of Russia's only allies in the Middle East, so Russia's acceptance of President Bashar al-Assad's request for intervention appears as one of the most efficient ways to maintain their allyship.

¹Samuel Charap, Edward Geist, Byran Frederick, John J Drennan, Nathan Chandler, and Jennifer Kanavagh, "Case Study: Russia's Intervention in Syria," *Russia's Military Interventions: Patterns, Drivers, and Signposts*, 128, Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2021.

²Andrej Kreutz, "Russia and the Mediterranean Countries of the Arab East (Syria-Lebanon-Jordan)," *Russia in the Middle East: Friend or Foe?*, 12, Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2007.

2. Russian Population

Historically, Russia is more likely to intervene in countries or territories with a lack of Russian ethnic populations in order to establish Russian nationalism. For example, Russians were a small minority in Chechnya during the First and Second Chechen wars. However, Russia's recapturing of Chechen control in the 2000 Second Chechen war supports this example as Chechnya was originally part of both Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union. Additionally, Russians consisted of only a very small minority of Georgian citizens during the Russo-Georgian 2008 war, only around 0.7% in 2014.³ Because there is no evidence suggesting any reportable population percentage of ethnic Russians residing in Syria, Russia's intervention aligns with their historical pattern of intervening in countries with a relatively small ethnic Russian population.

However, Transnistria and Ukraine are exceptions to this point. Transnistria's Russian population was 30.3% in 2004,⁴ which is the closest census data available to the 1992 Transnistria war. Though Russians were a minority in Ukraine overall, they existed as a majority population in Crimea in 1989.⁵

3. Proximity to Russia and Economic Cost

Prior to Russia's intervention in Syria, all of Russia's interventions have occurred within or bordering on either former Soviet Socialist Republics (S.S.R.'s) or current Russian republics. Nations in which Russia previously intervened at least share borders with countries whose histories are heavily rooted in Russian nationalism as a result. For example, RAND

³National Statistics Office of Georgia (GEOSTAT), *2014 General Population Census*, April 28, 2016.

⁴"Preliminary Results of the Population Census in Transnistria Announced," Regnum News, September 8, 2005, <https://regnum.ru/news/509073>.

⁵"Russians and Russian-Speakers in Ukraine," Minority Rights Group, January 29, 2024, <https://minorityrights.org/communities/russians-and-russian-speakers-2/>.

Corporation's 2021 case study acknowledges how post-Soviet Russia had suffered from "drastically attenuated military capabilities,"⁶ as a result of Russia's military failures and withdrawal from the 2008 Russo-Georgian war. Russia lost an estimated six billion USD on the first day of their invasion of Georgia on August 8, 2008, followed by a severe stock exchange crash,⁷ only exacerbated by the 2008 Global Financial Crisis. One month after Russia's initial intervention in Syria, one Janes senior intelligence analyst estimated the intervention to cost Russia up to 4 million USD per day, or 1.46 billion USD per year.⁸ This is significantly cheaper than Russia's failed military operations in Georgia, even for an estimated budget at the time. Syria's case study could help weigh the economic cost between increased likelihood of retaliation despite easier access to location of bordering countries versus investing in fewer and more expensive military bases with complicated logistics.

To demonstrate Russia's expansion of nationalism, the Rondeli Foundation lists forty six locations throughout Georgia that Russia has used to contribute to their "borderization," mostly using inexpensive materials such as signs, barbed wire, and fences to enforce Russian-occupied territories.⁹

⁶RAND Corporation, *Russia's Military Interventions*, 99.

⁷Hans-Henning Schröder, "The Caucasus Crisis: International Perceptions and Policy Implications for Germany and Europe," *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik German Institute for International and Security Affairs*, November 2008, 9.

⁸Martin Matishak, "How Much Is Intervention in Syria Costing Russia?" *The Fiscal Times*, October 26, 2015, <https://www.thefiscaltimes.com/2015/10/26/How-Much-Intervention-Syria-Costing-Russia>.

⁹"Borderization - Creeping Occupation," Rondeli Foundation, October 6, 2022, <https://gfsis.org.ge/events/other/view/1387>.

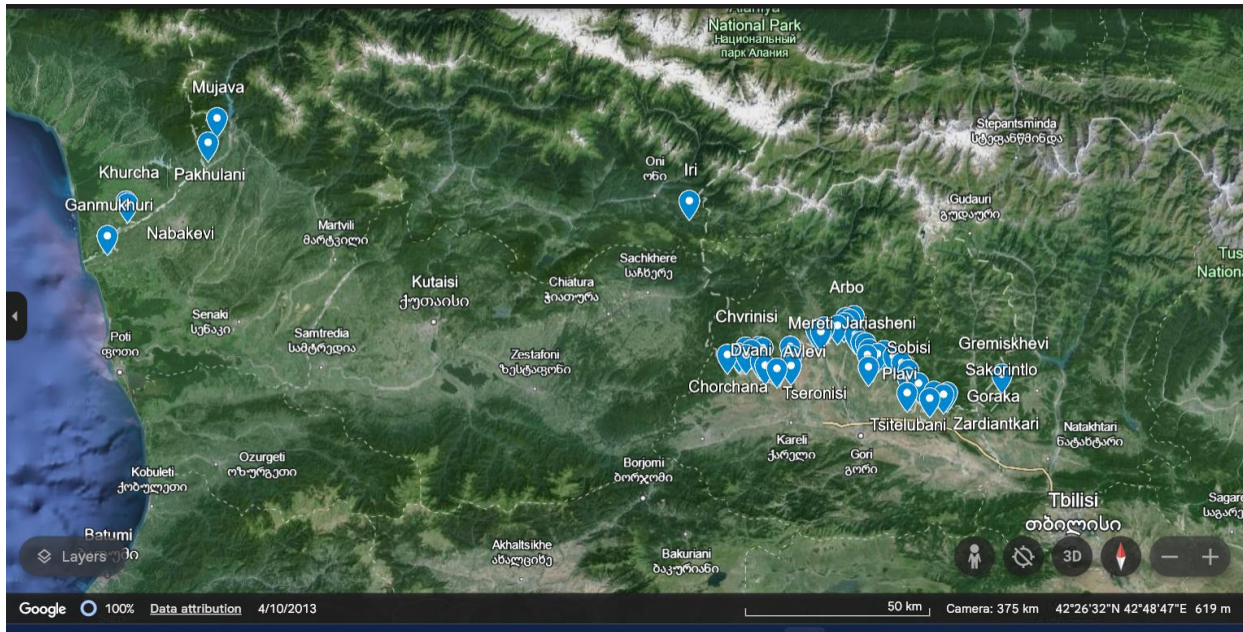


Figure 1. Screenshot of interactive map displaying various sites contributing to Russia’s “borderization” process in Georgia following the Russo-Georgian war. “Borderization - Creeping Occupation,” Rondeli Foundation, October 6, 2022, <https://gfsis.org.ge/events/other/view/1387>.¹⁰¹¹

The foundation also shows the majority of Russia’s military bases to be “land maneuver and artillery/missile forces” throughout Georgia, along the Ukrainian and Belarusian borders, and within Moscow, whereas only one missile base is stationed near Istamo, Syria. The majority of Russia’s bases within Syria are air defense systems or air bases, with Russia’s only naval base stationed at the Tartus port. Russia has a total of seven air defense or aerospace forces stationed throughout Syria as of 2018.¹²

¹⁰Data attribution to Google, Landsat/Copernicus, Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, and GEBCO. Imagery dates begin from April 4, 2023. Source: Google Earth.

¹¹This map was first published in 2018, but Russia’s “borderization” process began in 2009.

¹²“Russian Military Forces,” Rondeli Foundation, August 7, 2018, <https://gfsis.org.ge/maps/russian-military-forces>.



Legend

- Missile Unit
- Coastal Missile Unit
- Armored Train
- Naval Base
- Naval base without permanently stationed warships
- Fleet/Flotilla Headquarters
- Air Base
- Naval Air Base
- Long Range Aviation Air Base
- Military Transport Aviation Command Air

Legend

- Training Air Base
- Helicopter Base
- Training Helicopter Base
- Cosmodrome
- S-400, S-300 or S-350 Surface-to-Air Missile System Unit
- Air Defence Unit (without S-400, S-300 or S-350)
- Research Facility
- Communications Node
- Electro-Optical Node

Figure 2. Screenshots of interactive map with legend displaying a majority of Russia’s military presence in Syria to be air bases and defense systems. “Russian Military Forces,” Rondeli Foundation, August 7, 2018, <https://gfsis.org.ge/maps/russian-military-forces>.

Methodology

This thesis examines Russia’s decision-making process towards interventionism through two distinct forms of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors. The first chapter analyzes President Vladimir Putin’s intrinsic decision-making process through a psychobiographic profile

leadership analysis. The second chapter discusses Putin's leadership positions in relation to the State Duma and Russian military and how those relationships influence external factors in his decision-making process. The third chapter serves as a case study for Russia's decision to intervene in the Syrian civil war and applies this study's findings in Putin's intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors in this decision-making process.

This study predominantly relies on qualitative analysis of secondary data source research. For example, the psychobiographic outline for this study's leadership analysis was sampled from CIA analyst and intelligence psychiatrist Jerrold Post's political personality profile outline, and the majority of information surrounding the State Duma's leadership hierarchy was compiled from the Russian government's official website. Because of an undetermined amount of information decided to be omitted or censored within government sources, this leaves room for potential political bias. That being said, this study defines Putin's personal influence in Russia's decision-making process by only publicly available information and may not accurately assess his individual political profile in its entirety.

Theoretical Framework

This research utilizes the Principal-Agent Theory as the basis for answering President Putin's decision-making and extent of political influence. This theory answers how Putin's decisions are influenced by his relationships with the State Duma and military. The principal-agent problem describes the dilemma of an actor in power relying on the agent to carry out the desired task successfully, whereas the agent's interests conflict with the principal's power dynamics. Conflicting interests in civilian-military or president-military control are highly correlated with military conflict and policy disagreement.¹³ Under Putin's regime, he acts as a

¹³Randall Swain, "About Face: A Perspective on Civilian Military Relations through the Lens of the Principal-Agent Theory," *Ralph Bunche Journal of Public Affairs*, 5, 3, no. 1 (2014): 55.

principal relying on his regional governor agents for voting delivery power.¹⁴ In order to help determine the extent of Putin's national power in the international sphere, this thesis applies the principal-agent model to Putin's domestic power in his relationship with the State Duma and military.

¹⁴Gulnaz Sharafutdinova, "Subnational Governance in Russia: How Putin Changed the Contract with His Agents and the Problems It Created for Medvedev," *Publius* 40, no. 4 (2010): 675, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40865420>.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review evaluates concepts written about Russia's measures of national power, previous debates over primary driving forces in Russia's intervention in Syria's civil war in comparison to some of its previous interventions, and previous research on psychological profiles of authoritarian regime leaders. Although the second and third sections directly address aspects of this study's research question, the literature must include discussions of Russia's measurements of national power to assess its capabilities of enforcing hard national power to enable interventionist policy.

Russia's Measures of National Power

In order to determine Putin's rationalization for intervention in Syria, it is imperative to understand how Russia interprets power for its involvement in the international sphere. A strong presence of national power within a nation's government is critical for the ability to implement and conduct any interventionist policy. Although there are limited Russian sources defining Putin's understanding of soft versus hard power, several authors from various professional backgrounds outline different ways in which they measure Russia's international power and influence. This review will look at literature of four articles on Russia's national power and decision to intervene in Syria's civil war, two of which are debating articles answering the question "Is Russia in Decline?" from the same source. This debate centers on measuring Russia's instruments of national power from a non-Russian perspective. The other four articles address the gaps in this literature that fail to connect the role of personal diplomatic relationships between presidents Vladimir Putin and Bashar al-Assad in Russia's decision to intervene. This

review establishes a clear foundation of measuring Russia's understanding of national power in order to contextualize their capability and decision to intervene in Syria, focusing on the time period from the Arab Spring in 2011 to their first military intervention in 2015.

“Measuring National Power: Is Vladimir Putin’s Russia in Decline?” *Russia Matters* is an online research project launched in 2016 by the Harvard Kennedy School’s Belfer Center for Science in International Affairs, shortly after Russia’s intervention in Syria. Answering the online debate question, “Is Russia in Decline?” *Russia Matters* director Simon Saradzhyan and Moscow university lecturer Nabi Abdullaev open the argument concluding that Russia’s national power had risen in comparison to its leading Western competitors, including the United States, United Kingdom, France, and Germany, but fallen behind China and India. The only single-variable method included measuring Russia’s GDPI. The authors decided to use three multi-variable research methods, which included analyzing “economic output, energy consumption, population, life expectancy, military expenditures, government effectiveness, patents and even tourist visits” from 1999-2016.¹⁵ The following two methods are the only two of the multivariable methods that showed an increase in Russia’s national power: Chin-Lung Chang’s formula and the Experiment Index of National Power (EINP). Chin-Lung Chang’s formula equally weighs “critical mass, economic strength, and military strength,” and the EINP, taken from American intelligence analyst Ray S. Cline’s original formula,¹⁶¹⁷ calculates perceived power considering both the country’s capabilities and national strategic purpose. Only the

¹⁵Simon Saradzhyan and Nabi Abdullaev, “Measuring National Power: Is Vladimir Putin’s Russia in Decline?” *Russia Matters*, May 4, 2018. <https://www.russiamatters.org/analysis/measuring-national-power-vladimir-putins-russia-decline>.

¹⁶Ashley J. Tellis, Janice Bially, Christopher Lane, and Melissa McPherson, *Measuring National Power in the Postindustrial Age*, 2000, 30.

¹⁷ Original Cline formula: $P = (\text{Critical Mass} + \text{Economic Capability} + \text{Military Capability}) (S+W)$, where S = national strategy coefficient and W = several factors calculating national will, such as leadership strength and national interest of strategy.

Revised Geometric Index of Traditional National Capabilities (RGITNC)¹⁸ showed a .98 percent decline in Russia’s national power from 1999-2016, though its western competitors suffered much higher percentages of power decline. Key findings of the four models in this study are found below.

Method	Type Variable	Factors	Formula	Result (Russia, 1999-2016)	Incline/Decline
GDPI	Single	GDP, PPP	$GDP = C+I+G+NX^{19}$	3% increase	Incline
Chin-Lung	Multi	Critical mass, GDP, military strength	$P = (CM+ES +MS)/3^{20}$	21% increase	Incline
RGITNC	Multi	TPR, UPR, ECR, MER, VMR ²¹	Not provided in study	.98% decrease	Decline
EINP	Multi	Critical mass, GDP, military strength, technological prowess	$EINP = (CM*2^{22} +ES*2+MS^{23} +TP^{24}) * CER^{25}$	118% increase	Incline

Given this data, the RGITNC shows to be the least reliable way to measure Russia’s national power. Not only do the authors not provide their methodology for calculating the formula’s factors, but it was the only model out of the four that showed a decrease in Russia’s

¹⁸ Original GITNC used Steel Production Ratio as a measurement of economic capability but was replaced by Value-Added Manufacturing to accurately reflect post-industrialization measurements.

¹⁹ GDP = Consumption + Investment + Government Spending + Net Exports.

²⁰ Power = (Critical Mass + Economic Strength + Military Strength)/3, where critical mass = (Russia’s population/world total) x 100 + (Russia’s land mass by area/world total) x 100, economic strength = (Russia’s GDP/world GDP) * 200, and military strength = (Russia’s military expenditures/world military expenditures) * 200.

²¹ Total population ratio, urban population ratio, energy consumption ratio, military expenditures ratio, value-added manufacturing ratio. All ratios are measured in Russia’s total X/world total X.

²² Critical mass includes adjustment for national health = Russian population average life expectancy/world total.

²³ Military strength includes adjustment for nuclear weapons: 1.5 (>500 warheads), 1.3 (100-499 warheads) and 1.2 (<99 warheads).

²⁴ Russia’s triadic patents/world triadic patents.

²⁵ Capability to employ resources, percentile ranking.

total national power. It is also the only formula out of the other three models used to not include GDP in its calculation. For the rest of the models, Russia's percentage of national power increased for each variable included in each respective calculation. However, when the authors accounted for Russia's soft power, which includes its cultural and political powers, in the EINP (aptly named the EINPSP model), Russia's total power grew by 15% from 2007-2016 in comparison to the EINP model's 10% growth from those same years. Although EINPSP shows a higher total power percentage as it considers more measuring factors, the results were cut from the conclusions of the original study due to not having enough data to compare to other countries. Additionally, Russia's interventionist policies inherently exclude the use of soft power in their military campaigns, so this model would not accurately reflect the results of Russia's total national power in the years 2011-2015 leading up to their initial intervention.

American political scientist Andrew Kuchins critiques Saradzhyan et al.'s argument in "Russian Power Under Putin: Up and Down and Flatline" in the "Is Russia In Decline?" *Russia Matters* debate. Although Kuchins acknowledges Saradzhyan et al.'s conclusions to be relatively consistent throughout their four models, Kuchins critiques factors used to measure economic growth, military capabilities, and technological development. Russia's economy grew much more rapidly from 1998-2007 than it did in 2008-2016,²⁶ which points out a stagnation in Russia's economy during the time period in which Russia decided to invade Syria. He also highlights the fact that Russia's military spending grew quicker after Russia's economic growth started to slow down. Finally, Kuchins argues that triadic patents are not the most efficient way to measure technological progress as the sheer quantity of patents does not consider compounding growth of developing innovation that could strengthen Russia's capabilities, nor

²⁶Andrew Kuchins, "Russian Power Under Putin: Up and Down and Flatline," *Russia Matters*, August 22, 2018, <https://www.russiamatters.org/analysis/russian-power-under-putin-and-down-and-flatline>.

the lack of patents to maintain privacy of Russian “government-sponsored research.”²⁷ Although Kuchins presents minor critiques in Saradzhyan et al.’s methodology, the main consensus from both arguments state that Russia’s military capabilities strengthened during the time period in which Russia decided to intervene in Syria, regardless of economic growth or stagnation in Russia.

Literature on Russia’s Interventionist Decision-Making

Postdoctoral research fellow Spyridon Plakoudas especially considers the potential for geopolitical influence in “Putin, Assad, and Geopolitics.” Both Charap et al. and Plakoudas share the opinion of Russia’s regional interest in solidifying a diplomatic ally in the Middle East, as well as Russia’s intrinsic conflict of establishing “international legitimacy,” especially through portraying the intervention as efforts against terrorism. However, Plakoudas prioritizes President Putin’s desire to restore Russia’s global image as a “world power.”²⁸ Charap et al. takes Assad’s risk of collapse, geopolitical interests, and key military factors: air, naval, and ground access in Syria.²⁹

The New Yorker contributing writer Anand Gopal comments on Russia’s intervention breaking the “stalemate” between democratic oppositional forces and the Syrian regime in 2015.³⁰ Gopal states that Russia first agreed to intervene under the notion that they would only target jihadi forces entering Syria, but quickly fought against all democratic forces enabled by the intervention’s large scale. In fact, he points out Russia’s initial hope for reconstruction

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Spyridon Plakoudas, “Putin, Assad, and Geopolitics,” *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 19, no. 3, 2015, 37.

²⁹Charap et al., “Understanding,” 9.

³⁰Isaac Chotiner, “Reexamining Putin’s Military Interventions in the Middle East,” *The New Yorker*, March 9, 2022, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/q-and-a/reexamining-putins-military-interventions-in-the-middle-east>.

contracts. This opinion is supported by Russia's economic benefit of increasing arms sales and military training opportunities.³¹

Charap et al. and Plakoudas' pieces heavily consider national interests for Russia's decision. However, in nondemocratic regimes such as Putin's, almost every decision for national security must be cleared by him before any action can be carried out. Because Russia's foreign policy decisions are highly individualized in Putin's personal influence, it is crucial to understand the psychological factors that determine his acceptance of interventionist policies. In "Explaining Foreign Policy Behavior Using the Personal Characteristics of Political Leaders," Margaret Hermann evaluates "nationalism, belief in one's own ability to control events, need for power, need for affiliation, conceptual complexity, [and] distrust of others" as core personal characteristics of political leaders.³² Of the personality characteristics evaluated, nationalism and need for power consisted of 40% of $p < .10$ correlations between personality traits and foreign policy variables.

Literature on Authoritarian Leadership Psychological Profiles

In addition to determining leadership characteristics for political leaders in general, Stanley Renshon uses President Bill Clinton's profile to demonstrate sources constructing psychological profiles, such as anecdotal evidence and "behind the scenes" accounts.³³ Renshon's chapter in *The Psychological Assessment of Political Leaders* serves primarily as guiding assessments of building personality profiles of political leaders, whereas Hermann

³¹Anna Borshchevskaya, "Russia's Strategic Success in Syria and the Future of Moscow's Middle East Policy," The Washington Institute, January 23, 2022, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/russias-strategic-success-syria-and-future-moscows-middle-east-policy>.

³²Margaret G. Hermann, "Explaining Foreign Policy Behavior Using the Personal Characteristics of Political Leaders," *International Studies Quarterly* 24, no. 1, March 1980, 41.

³³Stanley A. Renshon, "Psychoanalytic Assessments of Character and Performance in Presidents and Candidates: Some Observations on Theory and Method," *The Psychological Assessment of Political Leaders*, edited by Jerrold M Post, 120-122, University of Michigan Press, 2003.

suggests characteristics heavily prominent in political leaders, especially paranoia and abnormally manipulative behaviors.³⁴ Because neither article evaluates profiles of nondemocratic regime leaders, few behaviors outlined in the literature can be associated with Putin's decision-making favoring interventionism without considering past behaviors of dictators or authoritarian regime leaders similar in leadership style.

Full accuracy of psychological profiles of living dictators or authoritarian leaders proves to be nearly impossible due to constantly shifting dynamics in personality and leadership traits. However, several studies evaluate profiles of deceased nondemocratic regime leaders to find similarities in personalities and psychologies. Mohammed Senoussi analyzes traits of personality disorders for Yasmina Khadra's depiction of Muammar Gaddafi in *The Dictator's Last Night*. Although the novel is historical fiction, Senoussi draws his evidence from historical and psychological fact. He describes Gaddafi as a megalomaniac and a paranoid narcissist because of his role as a dictator, as well as comparing his "radical methods of control" to those of Adolf Hitler, Mao Zedong, Joseph Stalin and Pol Pot.³⁵ This is not to conflate narcissistic or megalomaniac personality traits with personality disorder diagnoses; not all dictators have the commonality of suffering a mental illness that leads to their radical leadership methods.

Frederick Coolidge and Daniel Segal compare expert personality evaluations of Kim Jong-il, Saddam Hussein and Adolf Hitler under the similarity of their dictatorial leadership styles utilizing the Coolidge Axis II Inventory (CATI) examination. Out of 14 personality disorders measured according to the third and fourth editions of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, "sadistic, paranoid, antisocial, narcissistic, schizoid and

³⁴Hermann, "Explaining," 10.

³⁵Mohammed Senoussi, "The Psychology of Dictatorship: A Journey into Muammar Gaddafi's Mind in Yasmina Khadra's: *The Dictator's Last Night*," *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* 64, 2021, 248.

schizotypal” were the most common among all three dictators.³⁶ The cross-examination between psychological evaluations and public perception through fictional literature reinforces the association between dictators’ radical leadership methods and highly narcissistic and controlling personality traits. However, almost no literature exists correlating these personalities with enforcing interventionist policies. Therefore, this thesis evaluates Putin’s association with psychological leadership styles commonly found in dictators to answer to which extent this factor influences his step forward in intervening in Syria’s civil war.

Assessment

Most literature written on Russia’s decision to intervene in the Syrian civil war agrees on the notion that Russia strengthening their military capabilities was a key factor in enabling their intervention. Aside from agreeing on Russia’s geopolitical interests in establishing diplomatic influence in the Middle East and certain economic benefits for Russia’s arms control, most of the literature fails to address the role of the personality of either President Putin or President Assad, who both rule authoritarian, non-democratic regimes. However, because Russia’s intervention in Syria was one of the few and most significant diplomatic moves in Syria since the Soviet Union, it is imperative to understand Russia’s unique position for this decision. Therefore, understanding President Putin’s personal influence is vital to contextualizing Russia’s perceptions of its national power capabilities and ability to successfully intervene in Syria to Russia’s benefit.

While perceptions of measurements of national power and regional interests in saving a collapsing society in exchange for diplomatic influence serve as the main driving factors for Russia’s decision to intervene, it is imperative that researchers influencing policymakers

³⁶Frederick L. Coolidge and Daniel L. Segal, “Is Kim Jong-il Like Saddam Hussein and Adolf Hitler? A Personality Disorder Evaluation,” *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression* 1, no. 3, September 2009, 199.

acknowledge the way the President's personality profile and governmental relationships impact diplomatic decisions for interventionism.

CHAPTER 1: PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN LEADERSHIP ANALYSIS

Introduction

Several pieces of the literature reviewed psychological behavioral patterns that are commonly found among authoritarian leaders. However, very few are actually written on President Vladimir Putin himself, and none are written on the impact of Putin's personality on Russia's decision to intervene in the Syrian civil war. President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin originally rose to power in 1999 while serving as prime minister, was elected president in 2000, returned to his prime minister position in 2008, and was eventually elected as president again in 2012. Although Russia has progressed since the dictatorship under USSR Communist Party leader Joseph Stalin, Putin's leadership still meets the definition of a nondemocratic regime according to Politics and Government Professor Patrick O'Neil, which is controlled by a "small group of individuals" who control the state without constitutional accountability.³⁷ Considering most decisions under nondemocratic regimes are ultimately made in the leader's primary interest, especially those of dictators in authoritarian regimes, it is crucial to understand them on a personal level.

Leadership analyses are one of the most effective ways to depict correlations between personal development and political outcomes in nondemocratic regime leaders. Therefore, this leadership analysis takes into consideration certain aspects of President Putin's personal life and political career that potentially his decision of Russia's intervention in Syria. This chapter uses

³⁷Patrick H. O'Neil, "Nondemocratic Regimes," *Essentials of Comparative Politics*, 5th edition, 178, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2015.

sections of Jerrold Post's "conceptual framework and organization design for an integrated political personality profile"³⁸ to answer the gap in the literature. Post's personality profile is organized into four parts: a psychobiographic discussion, a personality review, a discussion on perceptions of worldview, and a review on leadership style. Not all subcategories of Post's personality profile outline will be used in this chapter. For the sake of conciseness, this analysis focuses on personality profile aspects only related to Putin's interest in interventionist policy.

Psychology of Interventionism

The very core of politicians' decision-making processes comes from their set of personal beliefs. American philosopher Alexander George refers to sociologist Nathan Leites' concept of the political actor's "operational code" when discussing this theory, in which their beliefs "provide norms, standards, and guidelines that influence the actor's choice of strategy and tactics."³⁹ There are several reasons for interventionist policies aligned with both aspects of Putin's personality profile discussed below and the principal-agent theory. These include "epistemological reasons" such as the government assuming it has more reliable knowledge on this policy than their agents, which is associated with Narcissistic Personality Disorder's (NPD) sense of entitlement and interpersonal exploitation. Additionally, interventionist activities including threats of violence and coercion fall in line with narcissism's disregard for others' feelings and inability to empathize.⁴⁰⁴¹ Interventionist policies with the intention of progressing individual rights can come from moral obligation. However, this theory of individual rights

³⁸Jerrold M. Post, "Assessing Leaders at a Distance: The Political Personality Profile," *The Psychological Assessment of Political Leaders*, edited by Jerrold M Post, 102, University of Michigan Press, 2003.

³⁹Alexander L George, "The 'Operational Code': A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making," *International Studies Quarterly* 13, no. 2, June 1969, 191.

⁴⁰Lindsay Curtis, "What Is Narcissistic Personality Disorder?" *Health*, April 19, 2023, <https://www.health.com/narcissistic-personality-disorder-overview-7371087#:~:text=High%2Dfunctioning%20narcissists%20are%20often,gain%20the%20admiration%20of%20other> S.

⁴¹"Interventionism," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2023, <https://iep.utm.edu/interven/#H3>.

states that governments can only attain rights from civilian-enabled power.⁴² Under the principal-agent theory, this supports the argument that Putin is only able to obtain certain rights in foreign policy through agent-led actions, such as voting delivery power.⁴³

Three interrelated theories to help understand interventionism in social sciences are the theory of the problem, theory of desired outcome, and theory of intervention.⁴⁴ Along with the theory of the problem “often [inviting] political struggle,” the theory of desired outcome attempts to identify actors that have control over the problem and to make the ideal social outcome most likely to occur.⁴⁵ This results in the plan for exercising influence, which is the theory of intervention. Governmental authority, policy incentives such as sanctions, and persuasion of ideas such as “public information campaigns” are crucial mechanisms of interventionism in foreign policy. Leaders of intervention must identify their problem and desired outcome before administering interventionist policies, as the literature has identified Russia’s desired outcome of solidifying diplomatic influence in the Middle East and benefiting economically from reconstruction agreements.

Interventionism requires full power of governmental leaders to influence their agents of intervention, as mentioned in the principal-agent problem. Additionally, Encyclopedia Britannica states that aggressiveness and a threat of force are required for the agents to be considered interventionists.⁴⁶ Therefore, this analysis will consider aspects of Putin’s psychological development, personality profile, and public statements on Syria’s intervention related to

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Sharafutdinova, “Subnational,” 675.

⁴⁴Janet A. Weiss, “Theoretical Foundations of Policy Intervention,” *Public Management Innovation and Reform*, 1999, 37–69.

⁴⁵Janet A. Weiss, “From Research to Social Improvement: Understanding Theories of Intervention,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 29, no. 1, March, 2000: 81–110, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764000291006>.

⁴⁶Razvan Sibii, “Interventionism,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, June 15, 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/interventionism>.

personality and leadership traits enabling full control of hard national power, especially those associated with narcissistic tendencies and violence.

Cultural Background

Vladimir Putin was alive for thirty nine years until the Soviet Union fell at the end of the Cold War. Being the world's first nation whose government structure followed communist practices established in 1917,⁴⁷ the former Russian Empire had to undertake many radical reforms to establish the socialist state of the Soviet Union. After the Russian Revolution of 1917 and 1920 and murder of Russian Empire leader Tsar Nicholas II in 1918, the Bolshevik party was able to overthrow Tsarist Russia and establish the Communist government in the Soviet Union, later renaming themselves the Russian Communist Party.⁴⁸ The secret police organization Cheka, eventually becoming the modern day KGB, carried out this revolution through almost exclusively violent means, with mass killings and several assassination attempts and victories of key Tsarist leaders throughout the union and its occupied territories. Estimated deaths from 1917 to 1922 vary widely among historians, an upwards of up to 200,000, becoming what is now known as the Red Terror.⁴⁹

Joseph Stalin came to power as a result of this revolution as the Communist Party General Secretary in 1922 and was allowed more control over the Soviet government following Communist Party's founder Vladimir Lenin's death in 1924. Within the next ten years, Stalin implemented a myriad of economic and law enforcement policies causing widespread agony across the Soviet Union, leading to millions of deaths in the 1930 Soviet Famine and hundreds of

⁴⁷John Breuilly and John Schwarzmantle, *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism*, Oxford University Press, 2017.

⁴⁸"Lenin and the Bolsheviks," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., www.britannica.com/place/Soviet-Union/Lenin-and-the-Bolsheviks.

⁴⁹Norman Lowe, *Mastering Twentieth Century Russian History*, Palgrave, New York, 2002, 151.

thousands of former Communist Party opponents in the Great Terror of 1934 to 1940. Famine even ravaged the Soviet Union a second time following their post-World War II victory. Stalin's 1950-1953 Cold War policy predominantly focused on maintaining power throughout the Eastern Bloc. Vladimir Putin was born just one year before Stalin's death, with Communist revolutionary cultural factors shaping the country's political landscape since its formation.

Part 1: Psychobiographic Discussion

Putin was born on October 7th, 1952 in Leningrad, Soviet Union to a factory worker mother and Navy conscript father.⁵⁰ Putin's early years were greatly tied to both tragedy and Soviet identity. Putin's grandfather had direct professional ties with both Vladimir Lenin and Joseph Stalin, and both of his parents served in Soviet forces. Along with his strong familial ties to military service, Putin also experienced high exposure to death throughout his life. He suffered the tragedy of his grandmother being killed by German soldiers and his uncles disappearing on the Eastern Front.⁵¹ In fact, both of his preceding brothers passed away at no older than one year old during World War II. This is incredibly significant as the conditions during the Siege of Leningrad were very similar to the Siege of Aleppo beginning in 2012.⁵²⁵³ Being raised an only child and losing several immediate family members to war, with the surviving members dedicating themselves to national service, Putin could be more desensitized to the concept of death and is less likely to consider emotional trauma inflicted onto others when implementing interventionist policy. One could also argue that Putin could be more sensitive to death from war.

⁵⁰Tomila Lankina, "Who Supports the War? And Who Protests? The Legacies of Tzarist Social Divide in Russia," *LSE Public Policy Review*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.31389/lseppr.76>.

⁵¹Richard Sakwa., *Putin Redux: Power and Contradiction in Contemporary Russia*, Routledge & Taylor Francis Group, London, 2014, 2.

⁵²Lucy Pasha-Robinson, "Putin's Brother Died in Siege of Leningrad, Which Bears Striking Resemblance to Syrian Crisis," *International Business Times UK*, International Business Times UK, 9 Oct. 2016, www.ibtimes.co.uk/putins-brother-died-siege-leningrad-which-bears-striking-resemblance-syrian-crisis-1585531.

⁵³Luke Harding and Martin Chulov, "Syrian Rebels Fight Assad Troops in Aleppo," *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 22 July 2012, www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jul/22/syrian-rebels-fight-aleppo.

However, this also suggests that Putin could have obtained power to have control over who is allowed to die under his watch, unlike his lack of power as a child. Either way, Putin's high exposure to death could suggest his willingness for interventionist policy.

Putin studied much Communist theory by "Marx, Engels and Lenin" during his early educational years.⁵⁴ Putin also spent his entire educational career during a time when Soviet children were required to enroll in the Young Pioneers youth program, which lasted all the way from 1922 to the Soviet Union's dissolution in 1991. Young Pioneers originated from Scoutmasters from the October Revolution of 1917 using military interventionist policies against the Red Army to 1921. While the Young Pioneers was assigned for children ages 10 to 14,⁵⁵ youth ages 14 to 28 were required to enroll in the Komsomol, a political organization primarily focused on spreading Communist teachings and preparing members to join the Communist Party upon departure.⁵⁶ Putin served his mandatory membership in this organization during his law studies at Leningrad State University from 1970 to 1975.

While studying law at Leningrad State University, Putin met an assistant professor of business law, Anatoly Sobchak, who later became a co-author of the Russian constitution of 1993. Befriending Sobchak was one of the earliest examples of Putin's growth of political influence. Putin joined the KGB in 1975 and trained in Leningrad in the counterintelligence division. Following his assignment in Dresden, East Germany in 1985 and earning a bronze medal for exemplary service to the National People's Army in 1989, Putin was promoted to lieutenant colonel by 1990. His service included acting as liaison between the KGB and the

⁵⁴Peter Truscott, *Putin's Progress: A Biography of Russia's Enigmatic President, Vladimir Putin*, Pocket Books, London, 2005, 40.

⁵⁵"Young Pioneers." *The Museum of Russian Art*, 11 Nov. 2015, tmora.org/online-exhibitions/postage-stamps-messengers-of-the-soviet-future/the-human-project/young-pioneers/.

⁵⁶"Komsomol," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Komsomol>.

Ministry of State Security (*Stasi*) of East Germany.⁵⁷ Both military organizations held a distinct reputation for strict, violent control over each citizen's profile throughout the Communist nation.

Because of his significance in reinforcing the Iron Curtain uniting the Soviet Union and occupied East Germany, Putin's military role was crucial in upholding nationalist power within occupied territories until his resignation forced by the collapse of the Berlin Wall, and therefore, the East German government in 1989.⁵⁸ Additionally, it is imperative to understand that Putin stayed in Dresden while crowds demanded accountability from the Stasi and KGB in admitting Soviet control over the citizens of the occupied territories. After Moscow refused to aid Putin, he ordered his KGB members to burn as much evidence for their espionage as possible.⁵⁹ This shows a complete disregard for accountability and transparency for the occupied people. One of the very few times Putin felt apparent fear for his political demise was during the Union's collapse, to which he used unethical means to avoid Stasi and KGB accountability. Nonetheless, he was still able to reconsolidate his power quickly enough to become either Russia's prime minister or president since 1999. This suggests that Putin is more likely to take advantage of any opportunity to assert political dominance in a vulnerable nation, including Syria, without regard for moral practices. This is especially when the aid is encouraged by the country's government, which was not the case for Moscow in 1989.

Part 2: Personality

Most sources written on Putin's personality focus on only specific aspects of his political career surrounding a few international relations events at a time. The most open-sourced

⁵⁷Moscow Times, "'Prompt, Disciplined, Meticulous': Putin's KGB Profile Declassified," The Moscow Times, October 31, 2019, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/10/31/putins-kgb-profile-declassified-a67983>.

⁵⁸"What Was the Berlin Wall and How Did It Fall?" *Imperial War Museums*, www.iwm.org.uk/history/what-was-the-berlin-wall-and-how-did-it-fall.

⁵⁹Eileen AJ Connelly, "To Understand Putin, Look to the Fall of East Germany and the USSR," New York Post, New York Post, 26 Feb. 2022, nypost.com/2022/02/26/to-understand-putin-look-to-the-fall-of-east-germany-and-the-ussr/.

personality assessments from 2011 to 2015 were written in response to Putin’s annexation of Crimea. Writers for the *Journal of Democracy* argue that Putin “fears democracy” as a threat to his regime and attempts to blame NATO for Crimea’s annexation,⁶⁰ and one *International Journal* essay describes the “Crimea crisis” as a way to unite Russians in their identity and prevent Western power from taking over former Soviet space through NATO.⁶¹ These opinions suggest that Putin is protective of the Russian people’s identity and culture, but this assumption of associating enforcing hard national power with nationalism can apply to any world leader that does the same. The annexation can be argued to be a precursor to Syria’s intervention. However, even though there are only a few publicly available sources analyzing Putin’s personality profile on specific levels, it is crucial to apply these personality traits to Syria’s intervention, not just Crimea’s annexation.

A 2017 research report published in the Saint John’s University Department of Psychology’s Unit for the Study of Personality in Politics labels Putin as an *expansionist hostile enforcer with deliberative high-dominance introversion*.⁶² Because Margaret Hermann’s Foreign Policy Role Orientation Model associates “expansionist” leaders with an “us versus them” mentality and a political motivation to gain more control over “territory, resources, or people,”⁶³ this suits Putin’s personality most appropriately as his interventionist policies in Syria served as a way to solidify political influence in the Middle East since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Additionally, according to Aubrey Immelman and Joseph Trenzeluk’s assessment of the Millon

⁶⁰Robert Person and Michael McFaul, “What Putin Fears Most,” *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 33, no. 2, 2022, 18–27, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2022.0015>.

⁶¹Kari Roberts, “Understanding Putin: The Politics of Identity and Geopolitics in Russian Foreign Policy Discourse,” *International Journal: Canada’s Journal of Global Policy Analysis*, vol. 72, no. 1, 2017, 28–55, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020702017692609>.

⁶²Joe Trenzeluk and Aubrey Immelman, “The Political Personality of Russian Federation President Vladimir Putin,” *Department of Psychology - Saint John’s University*, January 2017, 8.

⁶³*Ibid*, 31.

Inventory of Diagnostic Criteria (MIDC), Putin’s personality profile was most associated with aggressive, narcissistic, obsessive-compulsive, introverted, and risk-taking tendencies.⁶⁴

The research outlined in this personality assessment is not to diagnose President Putin with any mental health or personality disorder. However, it should be noted that personalities in individuals suffering from narcissistic tendencies or an NPD diagnosis are highly correlated with a need for “constant attention and approval” and “feeling superior, unique, and special.”⁶⁵ This study argues that President Putin best fits the categories of high-functioning or exhibitionistic narcissism as several of his behaviors relate to “articulate, socially engaging, and highly successful” personality traits,⁶⁶ which are most present in his personal life. For example, Putin has maintained a reputation for presenting himself as highly skilled in athleticism, including judo, hockey, fishing, scuba diving, and soccer by 2018.⁶⁷ Although these hobbies would otherwise be present as means for maintaining physical health, high exposure to and recognition from media agents, evidenced by several news articles written about these commendable aspects, show that these behaviors could be intended more for displaying a grandiose sense of self, associated with high self-esteem and overconfidence.

Additionally, one 2022 study found most dimensions of grandiose narcissism to be positively related to most emotional adaptive outcomes as well as post-traumatic symptoms (Montoro et al., 2022). Evidenced by his high exposure to trauma surrounding death in his developmental stages and political career, a significant portion of Putin’s personal interest in interventionist policy stems from his grandiose narcissistic personality in his constant need for

⁶⁴Ibid, 6.

⁶⁵Curtis, “What Is.”

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Deutsche Presse-Agentur, “Judo, Hockey, Football: Putin and His Relationship with Sport,” China Daily, June 23, 2018, <https://www.chinadailyhk.com/articles/184/33/121/1529741678599.html>.

enforcing national power and public admiration. Since interventionism requires a threat of violence with the intent to manipulate foreign countries' policies, Putin's narcissistic personality tendencies fall in line with his acceptance of interventionist policy.

Part 3: Worldview

Since taking office as prime minister, much of Putin's political philosophy has surrounded interventionist policies. In 1999, Putin assisted in sending around 200 Russian soldiers to Kosovo in response to NATO forces threatening to overcome Serbian forces in the region. NATO had justified bombing Serbia and Kosovo shortly beforehand, claiming it assisted in combating ethnic cleansing of Kosovars.⁶⁸ This event served as a precursor for Putin becoming more confident in intervening in future events for Russian national security, such as the 2008 invasion of Georgia.⁶⁹ Putin's preoccupation with national power is supported by rejecting intervention from international forces.

For example, Russia abstained from vetoing against the NATO coalition with UNSCR 1973 in response to the Libyan civil war in 2011, describing the resolution as resembling "medieval calls for crusades."⁷⁰ Putin additionally criticized Libya for threatening civilian lives through its bomb strikes and that no one should "interfere in internal political conflicts."⁷² This could be a sincere statement at the time as all of Russia's interventions at this point were within or bordering on current or former S.S.R.'s, technically referring to "internal" conflicts as part of Putin's rigid nationalist outlook. However, Russia's intervention four years later in Syria killed

⁶⁸Tim Marshall, "What Putin Learnt from NATO's 1999 Intervention in Kosovo," Engelsberg Ideas, April 8, 2022, <https://engelsbergideas.com/notebook/what-putin-learnt-from-natos-1999-intervention-in-kosovo/>.

⁶⁹John Norris, "The First Time Putin Tried to Invade a Foreign Country," Center for American Progress, March 13, 2014, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-first-time-putin-tried-to-invade-a-foreign-country/>.

⁷⁰Michael Georgy, "West in 'Medieval Crusade' on Gaddafi, Putin Says," Reuters, March 21, 2011, <https://www.reuters.com/article/ozatp-libya-201103217-idAFJOE72K0DF20110321>.

⁷¹Charap et al., "Understanding," 6.

⁷²Gleb Bryanski, "Putin Likens U.N. Libya Resolution to Crusades," Reuters, March 21, 2011, <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE72K3JR>.

2,000 civilians through airstrikes in just six months.⁷³ This serves as a direct contradiction to Putin's statement and demonstrates both Syria's significance as a unique case study, as well as Putin's narcissistic tendencies through a hypocritical sense of entitlement to interventionist policy.

Following the 2014 invasion of Crimea, only several months before the intervention in Syria, Putin published aspects of his political philosophy for interventionism on his official presidential website. In his essay "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians" published on February 17, 2015, Putin elaborates on Russian-Ukrainian historical and current events issues to seemingly justify their invasion. Putin uses language criticizing "'Maidan' authorities" disrupting Russian language education and "secular authorities" intervening in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church's "symbol of kinship" while attributing himself and his cabinet for "preserving and maintaining" economic relations with Ukraine.⁷⁴ This form of self-praise and condemnation of opposing forces also falls in line with the narcissistic characteristics of a grandiose sense of self and hypersensitivity to outside criticism.

Part 4: Leadership Style

Putin is known for viewing Russia through a Russian nationalist and anti-Western ideological perception of politics. Key aspects of "Putinism," or characteristics of Russia's social, political, and economic systems under Putin, include authoritarianism, his personality cult, and aggressive foreign policy. One of the most explicit examples of Putin's nationalism is from his 2005 address to Russia speech, where he claimed that the Soviet Union's collapse was a

⁷³Emma Graham-Harrison, "Russian Airstrikes in Syria Killed 2,000 Civilians in Six Months," The Guardian, March 15, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/15/russian-airstrikes-in-syria-killed-2000-civilians-in-six-months>.

⁷⁴Vladimir V Putin, "Article by Vladimir Putin 'On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians,'" President of Russia, February 17, 2015, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181>.

“major geopolitical disaster of the century,” saying that “old ideals were destroyed” and “terrorist intervention...damaged the country’s integrity,” referring to Islamic terrorists invading Dagestan and starting the Second Chechen War.⁷⁵ Under Putin’s leadership by 2008, he increased the budget for national security surveillance systems by \$35 billion, tolerated increased legislation in mandatory Orthodox Christian education around the country, and censored any use of “Russian nationalist” in official government sources by changing the phrasing to “patriot.”⁷⁶

These factors are not an exhaustive list of Putinist characteristics; rather, aspects that demonstrate Putin’s insatiable desire for national power and manipulation of government operations that are consistent with his narcissistic personality tendencies. This supports previous arguments outlined in the literature review of Russia’s need to assert hard national power over countries struggling with political instability. However, it is worth noting that narcissistic tendencies within Putin’s psychological profile and history of power imbalances within both domestic and foreign policies play a much larger role in Russia’s interventionist decision-making process than previously discussed in the literature.

⁷⁵Vladimir V Putin, “Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation,” President of Russia, April 25, 2005, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/22931>.

⁷⁶Leon Aron, “Putinism,” American Enterprise Institute, 2008, 5-6, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep03039>.

CHAPTER 2: INDIVIDUAL VERSUS STATE DUMA DECISION MAKING

This study evaluates President Putin's relationship with the State Duma. The Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation consists of the Federation Council as its upper house and the State Duma as its lower house in its bicameral legislature. With the State Duma's 450 deputies in comparison to the Federal Council's 168 senators, Putin's relationship with the State Duma is significantly more influential in Russia's political decision-making process than the Federal Assembly.

Outline of State Duma Government Structure

The voting system for all 450 deputies of the State Duma has been through proportional representation since 2007, who each serve in a five year term as of 2008. The Chairman of the State Duma oversees two First Deputy Chairmen of the State Duma, each representing only United Russia and the Communist Party of the Russian Federation. However, each major political party is still represented by deputy chairmen. The State Duma holds its elections in its convocations on average every four years.⁷⁷ This is primarily to determine legal priorities during its term depending on its political representation results.

⁷⁷"History of the State Duma," The State Duma: The Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, 2024, <http://duma.gov.ru/en/duma/about/history/information/>.

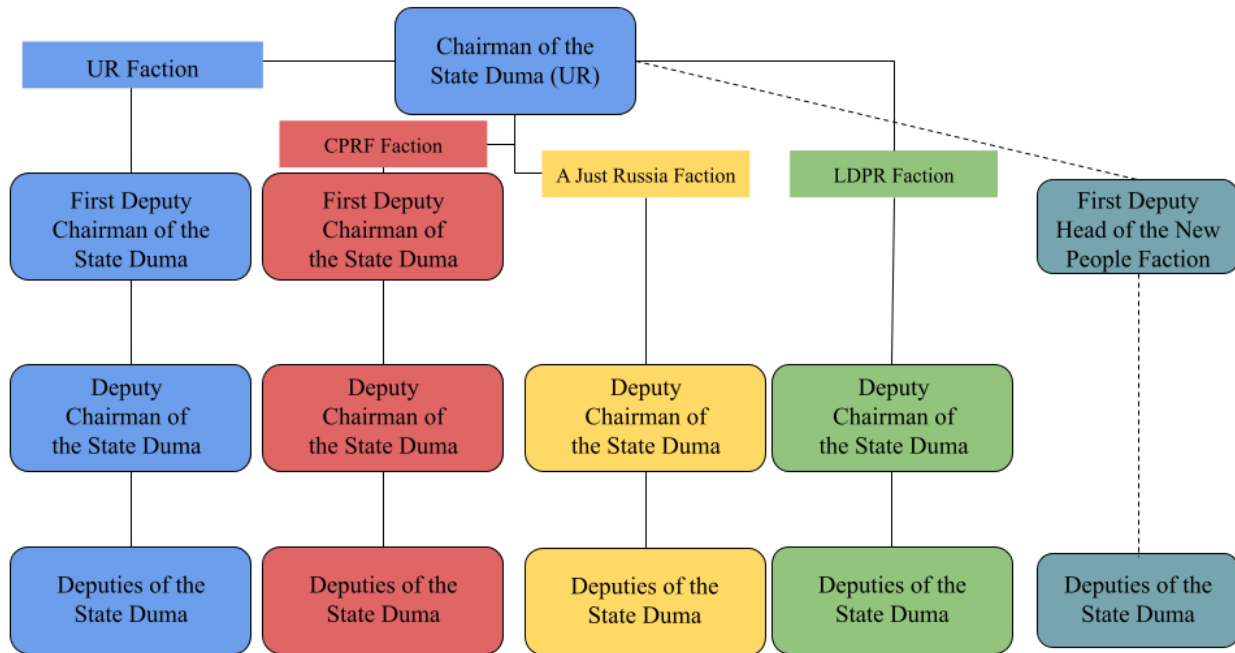


Figure 3. Original hierarchy chart outlining organizational chain of command for the State Duma of 2024. “Status and Powers, Composition and Regulations of the State Duma,” The State Duma: The Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, 2024, <http://duma.gov.ru/en/duma/about/>.

Relationship Between Putin and State Duma

The Speaker of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly is fourth in command to President Putin in his head position as State Council Chairman, behind the Prime Minister and Federal Assembly Speaker.⁷⁸ The State Duma was in its sixth convocation for the majority of the Arab Spring and beginning of Syria’s civil war with its elections taking place on December 4th, 2011. Although these elections took place shortly before Putin’s presidential inauguration on May 7, 2012, his representative party, United Russia, has held the majority vote representation in the State Duma since 2003.⁷⁹ In fact, the State Duma’s Chairman, Sergey Naryshkin, and four Deputy Chairmen were members of United Russia at the time of Russia’s intervention in Syria, as it was the first convocation that lasted five years instead of four. This is also the first

⁷⁸“Members · State Council · Structure · President of Russia,” President of Russia, 2024, <http://www.en.kremlin.ru/structure/state-council/members>.

⁷⁹Ibid.

convocation that changed their election dates from December to October of 2016, and their elections likely would have nearly coincided with Syria's intervention on September 30 had they taken place the year before. Chairman Naryshkin had established "close ties" with Putin during their time working for the Saint Petersburg Mayor's Office from 1992 to 1995. Naryshkin served as "head of the foreign economic relations sub-department of the economics and finance committee" and Putin as head of the Committee for External Relations.⁸⁰

Around 1992, legislature food committee member Marina Salye suspected Putin to be "manipulating contracts" selling St. Petersburg ship-building metals in exchange for humanitarian aid food that never arrived in the city.⁸¹ Putin was never put under investigation and advanced his career by leaving this position in 1996. This suggests that Putin favors appointing long-term colleagues who were not involved in even his most trivial scandals for his presidential leadership, thus serving as one of his earliest examples of exploiting political groupthink in favor of his grandiose sense of self.

Relationship Between Putin and Military

Regardless of his position responsibilities as Russia's commander-in-chief, Putin has routinely relied on his military as one of his primary resources for enforcing hard national power, especially regarding his history as a former KGB officer. More importantly, there is little evidence to suggest that there has been enough of Putin's military members refusing or protesting service to have any significant impact in his political decisions leading to interventionism in Syria. In regards to the Principal-Agent theory, Putin's military acts as an

⁸⁰"Sergei Naryshkin," The Moscow Times, October 28, 2011, https://web.archive.org/web/20111029162554/http://www.themoscowtimes.com/mt_profile/sergei_naryshkin/434258.html.

⁸¹Hoffman, David, "Putin's Career Rooted in Russia's KGB," Washington Post, January 30, 2000, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/longterm/russiagov/putin.htm>.

agent in relation to Putin’s position as a principal decision-making force. This is unlike the State Duma for two reasons. Its deputies have their distinct constitutional legislative rights independent of Putin’s influence, and State Duma deputies play a significant role in Russia’s decision-making processes, unlike its military.

Interpersonal Bias in Power Structure

Russia’s constitution adopted in 1993 allows an indefinite amount of interpersonal bias among unbalanced power structures. Article 90 states that “the President of the Russian Federation shall issue edicts and regulations,”⁸² as well as article 91 declaring that “the President of the Russian Federation shall have immunity.”⁸³ Since the President’s position in Russia’s executive branch is distinct from the Federal Assembly’s legislative powers, the President’s extent of control over regulations within the legislative branch defined by the constitution is unclear for two reasons. First, the State Duma’s Committee on Control and Regulations does not define its leadership, members, or positions within its structural organization for public access, despite a separate list of official committees and commissions available on the State Duma website.⁸⁴ Second, Article 93 of the Constitution states that the Council of Federation holds authority to impeach the President for only “high treason or...another grave crime,”⁸⁶ despite the President supposedly being granted legal immunity and concerning the fact that the upper house Federation Council holds significantly less political power than the State Duma.

⁸²Constitution of the Russian Federation, art. 90, sec. 1.

⁸³Ibid, art. 91.

⁸⁴“Regulations,” The State Duma: The Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, 2024, <http://duma.gov.ru/en/duma/about/regulations/>.

⁸⁵“Committees and Commissions,” The State Duma: The Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, 2024, <http://duma.gov.ru/en/duma/commissions/>.

⁸⁶Constitution of the Russian Federation, art. 93, sec. 1.

Application of Principal-Agent Theory

Power imbalances between Putin and both the State Duma and the military can be best explained by the Principal-Agent Theory. Essentially, Putin relies on both parties to properly carry out his self-interests, which applies well due to the government being an authoritarian non-democratic regime, yet these parties also rely on Putin to fulfill his promises once those actions are completed. Although this theory is normally applied to economic concepts, American economist Robert Higgs summarizes how this it helps explain government representation in his *Independent Review* journal article:

Small groups of people make decisions to suit themselves and a few cronies and key supporters, and they paint their actions with ideological colors to persuade the great mass of people that they are doing something desirable. The problem is not simply that the so-called representatives are bad or corrupt, though they may be. It's that the job they purport to do cannot be done even by the finest, most uncorrupted representatives imaginable. No agent can truly represent a variegated group of principals, especially a really large group whose members disagree along many dimensions.⁸⁷

If Putin's military agents failed or refused to conduct his desired actions meant to enforce hard national power over foreign governments, this would also lead to Putin almost certainly retrieving his military support and turning to other government agencies to maintain political dominance instead. It should be noted that an agent's understanding of their "moral hazard" can change depending on their definitions of "intervention" versus "invasion," as "invasions" more accurately refer to these "interventions" leaving the country in worse conditions than originally proposed with the intervening country's presence. Putin's agents of military power could consider the moral dilemma of Syria's intervention. Questioning its justification due to upholding the Assad regime and the Syrian people's general approval, despite the thousands of

⁸⁷Robert Higgs, "Principal—Agent Theory and Representative Government," *The Independent Review* 22, no. 3, 2018: 479–80, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26314785>.

Syrian civilian deaths caused by Russia’s military operations, leaves Putin unstable in his principal position.

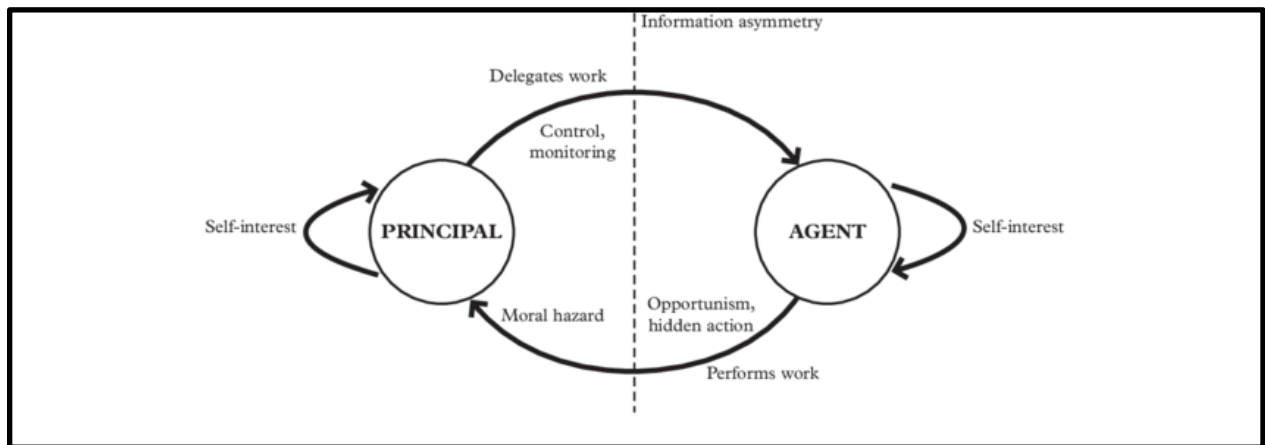


Figure 4. Chart outlining basic functions of the Principal-Agent Theory. Tim Snippert, Wiebe Witteveen, Hans Boes, and Hans Voordijk, “Barriers to Realizing a Stewardship Relation Between Client and Vendor: The Best Value Approach,” *Construction Management and Economics* 33, no. 7, July 3, 2015, 569–86, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01446193.2015.1078902>.⁸⁸

Assessment

Putin’s extrinsic motivation for Russia’s political decision-making process relies heavily on his trust in his agents’ ability and willingness to conduct its results efficiently and faithfully. This is due to both his government’s authoritarian structure and his deep interpersonal connection within the house of the Federal Assembly with the most voting power.

⁸⁸Original citation for diagram: David M Van Slyke, “Agents or Stewards: Using Theory to Understand the Government-Nonprofit Social Service Contracting Relationship,” *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 17, no. 2, June 7, 2006: 157–87, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/mul012>.

CHAPTER 3: CASE STUDY – INTERVENTION IN THE SYRIAN CIVIL WAR

This case study applies Putin’s personal influence and his relationships with the State Duma and his military to Russia’s decision-making process to intervene in Syria’s civil war. This study defends that Putin held almost the entirety of Russia’s decision-making process that allowed it to establish national power and military presence while reinforcing its diplomatic allyship to Syria since the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Discussion on Literature

RAND Corporation’s article “Understanding Russia’s Intervention in Syria” analyzes Russia’s political and military driving factors that led to Russia’s decision to intervene in Syria. It uses several cases of Russia intervening in other countries to demonstrate that Russia’s intervention stemmed from both a high level of threat to international security and would present geopolitical benefits to Russia’s diplomatic sphere. Charap et al. defines Russia’s intervention in Syria post-2015 as “large-scale intervention,” where Russia’s military is directly involved in the conflict, whereas “small-scale,” such as Yemen’s intervention in 2015, refers to “non-coercive” and “nonbinding.”⁸⁹ The research claims that “imminent adverse military outcome, grave security implications, [and] exhaustion of other means” were driving factors in the large-scale intervention in post-2015 Syria in comparison to the “lesser scale” (medium and small-scale) interventions of Syria pre-2015, Libya, Afghanistan, and Yemen.

⁸⁹Samuel Charap, Elina Treyger, and Edward Geist, “Understanding Russia’s Intervention in Syria,” RAND Corporation, 2019, 2-13.

Roy Allison agrees in “Russia and Syria: Explaining Alignment with a Regime in Crisis” that one of Russia’s primary drivers in remaining involved in Syria’s crisis are geopolitical interest in regional power and appearing to combat terrorism spillover from Syria. However, Allison takes a unique perspective of discussing Russia and Syria’s similarities in political and military ties. The Ba’ath regime served as one of the USSR’s only Middle Eastern allies from the 1970s until the end of the regime. Although most post-Soviet pro-Arab stances were diminished after the Arab spring, showing no explicit evidence from Putin himself,⁹⁰ Allison argues that Russia and Syria are united under mutual support for certain Russian foreign policies, even before the Arab Spring.⁹¹ Allison shares similar economic development and geopolitical sentiments as Charap et al.’s and Plakoudas’ arguments from the literature review, but focuses on Russian-Syrian diplomatic unification for future policy implication rather than measuring Russia’s national power or interest in Syria.

In general, the consensus of previous discussions regarding Russia’s decision to intervene in Syria’s civil war agrees on Russia’s need to establish national power due to nationalist motivations, geographic regional policies, with only some differences in Russia’s use of soft national power through “arms deals, trade, diplomacy and provisions of nuclear reactors,”⁹² or predominantly hard national power. However, the gap of Putin’s individual influence still remains, so the following study relays aspects of Putin’s personal authority in Russia’s decision enforcing interventionist policy in Syria.

⁹⁰Kreutz, “Russia,” 25.

⁹¹Roy Allison, “Russia and Syria: Explaining Alignment with a Regime in Crisis,” *International Affairs* 89, no. 4, 2013, 803.

⁹²Borshchevskaya, “Russia’s,” 2022.

Outline of the Syrian Civil War

Syria's civil war began with their country's participation in the Arab Spring beginning in February 2011. This was heavily influenced by Tunisia and Egypt successfully overthrowing their dictatorial regimes through their protests earlier that year. In fact, an estimated 25 thousand individuals were called to protest against the Assad regime on a Facebook page named “الثورة”⁹³ in early 2011, confirming that the protests began with anti-regime graffiti art in a quote from the page's unidentified founder:

وردنا خبر مؤكد مئة بالمئة أن الأخوة في درعا قامو بتعبئة جدران عامة بكتابات مناوئة للنظام والدولة لم تقم بمسح الكتابات بل قامت بهد الجدران بالجرافات!!!! وقام الأخوة هناك بحرق كشك للشرطة واعتقال العديد من الشبان.⁹⁴

We received one hundred percent certain news that the brothers in Daraa filled public walls with writings opposing the regime, and that the state did not erase the writings but rather demolished the walls with bulldozers!!!! The brothers there burned a police booth and arrested a number of young men.

The Free Syria army, the Assad regime's primary opposition group, then formed in July 2011, leading to an armed insurgency in Syria that lasted an average of nine months.

⁹³“ألف مشارك بدعوة على فيسبوك لثورة ضد الأسد” يوم 15 مارس 2011, May 11, 2020. <https://nashwanews.com/newsold/135275/25-%d8%a3%d9%84%d9%81-%d9%85%d8%b4%d8%a7%d8%b1%d9%83-%d8%a8%d8%af%d8%b9%d9%88%d8%a9-%d8%b9%d9%84%d9%89-%d9%81%d9%8a%d8%b3%d8%a8%d9%88%d9%83-%d9%84%d8%ab%d9%88%d8%b1%d8%a9-%d8%b6%d8%af-%d8%a7%d9%84>.

⁹⁴Ibid.



Figure 5. Free Syrian Army soldier pointing at government soldiers from a makeshift shelter from sandbags in 2013.⁹⁵

With rapid deaths of thousands of Syrian civilians killed by Assad’s military and law enforcement, the protests quickly erupted into a full blown civil war and massive refugee crisis, eventually including a myriad of additional opposing armies throughout Syria represented by the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces. The war’s international actors involved in fighting for or against the Assad regime have since included the United States, Iran, Turkey, and Russia. Tensions between Turkey and Russia are also exacerbated by the high Kurdish population in Syria and Russia’s open support and established bilateral relations with the Kurdistan region. With Syria’s conflict still active with opposition forces occupying various

⁹⁵Teun Voeten. *A Free Syrian Army (FSA) Looks out of an Improvised Shelter Secured with Sandbags, Holding His Gun and Pointing at Government Soldiers on the Frontline in the City of Aleppo*, April 20, 2013, <https://jstor.org/stable/community.12153837>.

territories in 2024, Syria's civil war has proven to be one of the most ravaging and complex crises since the beginning of the Assad regime with no clear end in sight.

Russian-Syrian Relations

Russia and Syria have maintained bilateral diplomatic relations since 1944, being the Soviet Union at the time. The two countries signed a nonaggression pact in 1950 following the 1948 Arab-Israeli war and the rise of the Ba'ath movement in Syria. Thousands of Soviet military servicemen were also present within Syria throughout the majority of the 1980's leading up to the Cold War's conclusion and Soviet Union dissolution. Assad's father, Hafez al-Assad, routinely met with Soviet government officials in order to build diplomatic relations and even established a friendship treaty in 1980, which Assad revived with Russia in September 2015 very shortly before Russia's intervention began.⁹⁶ Russia, along with China, vetoed four United Nations Security Council resolutions on Syria from 2011-2014, attempting to prevent Western powers, particularly the United States, from establishing diplomatic presence in Syria.

Syrian civilians mostly reacted positively to Russia's intervention in its immediate aftermath. Syrian News Channel, one of the largest state-run news agencies in Syria,⁹⁷ reported Syrian students gathering in front of Russian embassies around the world in October 2015. This included a vigil from the National Union of Syrian Students who organized in Moscow holding signs reading "Together to Combat Terrorism" and "Thank you, Putin" ("معاً لمكافحة الإرهاب" و "شكراً يا بوتين"). The organization also rallied in front of the Iranian embassy, where they also expressed their disappointment that "America and its allies tried to combat [terrorism] and

⁹⁶Edward Yeranian, "Report: Syria, Russia Revive 'Friendship' Treaty," Voice of America, September 8, 2015, <https://www.voanews.com/a/arab-media-report-says-syria-russia-reviving-1980-friendship-treaty/2951168.html>.

⁹⁷"الهيئة العامة للإذاعة والتلفزيون - سورية" ("General Authority for Radio and Television - Syria"), ORTAS. April 8, 2024, <http://www.ortas.online/>.

proved unable to do so” (“أمريكا وحلفائها بمكافحته وأثبتت عدم قدرتها على القيام”).⁹⁸ Other articles from SNC, or Al-Ikhbariyah Syria (الإخبارية السورية), reported in November 2017 both anti-Western and pro-Russian rhetoric while the station published almost no reports originating from Western sources. Former Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir claimed that President al-Assad’s presence in Syria was crucial to resolving Syria’s crisis after openly supporting the Russian Air Force’s timing in beginning the intervention.⁹⁹ Additionally, the station reported Russians expressing joy and gratitude for President al-Assad’s visit to Russia, shortly after Putin and al-Assad “conducted an inventory of military cooperation between Russia and Syria” (“أجرى جرداً للتعاون العسكري بين “ (”نصر على الإرهاب“).¹⁰⁰ (“روسيا وسورية

Putin’s Personality in Syria

Both President Vladimir Putin and President Bashar al-Assad share common ground in their authoritarian non-democratic regime government structures. However, Assad’s psychobiographic outline or personality profile are not entirely relevant to Putin’s interest as Assad is simply the actor who was suffering from pure desperation to save his country from opposition forces. Assad most likely requested intervention from Russia as it has one of the largest and most powerful militaries of all of Syria’s allies. However, this still might include the possibility of considering diplomatic benefits of sharing common regime structures and prioritization of hard national power representing their countries.

98 “وقفه وفاء لطلبتنا أمام سفارة روسيا بطهران ومذكرة تقدير لقتلها في العاصمة الأسترالية” (“A Gesture of Loyalty to Our Students in Front of the Russian Embassy in Tehran and a Note of Appreciation to Its Consul in the Australian Capital”), الإخبارية السورية, October 18, 2015, <http://alikhbaria.net/>.

99 “الرئيس البشير: الولايات المتحدة لعبت دوراً تخريبياً في سورية” (“President Al-Bashir: The United States Played a Sabotage Role in Syria”), الإخبارية السورية, November 23, 2011, <http://alikhbaria.net/>.

100 “برلمانيون وخبراء روس: زيارة الرئيس الأسد إلى روسيا تاريخية ومؤشر للنصر على الإرهاب” (“Russian Parliamentarians and Experts: President al-Assad’s Visit to Russia is Historic and an Indicator of Victory Over Terrorism”), الإخبارية السورية, November 21, 2011, <http://alikhbaria.net/>.

In an interview with BBC less than one month following Russia's intervention, Putin stated explicitly that Russia had "no intention of creating an empire or reconstructing the Soviet Union," yet justified their airstrikes claiming that "danger in Syria will exist anyway" because of anti-Assad "terrorist" forces.¹⁰¹ However, less than a month earlier, Putin stated in a CBS interview that "only the Syrian people...decide who should govern their country and how."¹⁰² As Russia had actively been protecting the Assad regime from collapsing since the Arab Spring,¹⁰³ this statement is virtually meaningless considering thousands of Syrian protesters had been killed at that point in time trying to pull Assad from power.

Putin's narcissistic tendencies both stand on their own and are also related to certain interventionist principles within authoritarian regimes. Therefore, not only does his personality profile serve as a major factor in his individual decision-making process towards Syria, but he is also likely to have favored assisting Assad. This is partly because Syria's regime ruthlessly torturing and neglecting its citizens during the war was not a deal-breaker for Putin supporting the regime. Since narcissistic tendencies are highly correlated with aggression and violence, this supports Putin's personality profile being a significant factor leading to Russia's intervention.

State Duma and Military Influence in Syria

The only and most recent statement available from specifically the State Duma regarding the Syrian civil war was in 2018. Viacheslav Nikonov, Chairman of the Committee on Education and Science, was deeply concerned about U.S. military presence within Syria and claimed that it

¹⁰¹BBC News, "Syria conflict: Putin defends Russia's air strikes - BBC News," October 12, 2015, Video, 2:32, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RIQ2SbHcsEE>.

¹⁰²CBS Evening News, "Putin on future of Syria," September 24, 2015, Video, 2:08, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NbVV4s5T6aY>.

¹⁰³Mansur, Chris, "Syria: Not Another Libya," Geopolitical Monitor, July 2, 2012, <https://www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/syria-not-another-libya-4695/>.

was protecting anti-regime terrorist organizations “as if they were relatives.”¹⁰⁴ However, not only did his statement not seem to have much impact on Putin’s re-evaluation of their decision to continue Russia’s intervention, but nearly no publicly available open-sourced data or evidence exists suggesting the State Duma’s opposition to Putin’s decision approving the intervention during or after its process. However, it is important to note that it was the upper house Federal Council that unanimously voted to carry out Russian air force bombing raids throughout Syria on September 30, 2015, to which Putin carried out within the same day.¹⁰⁵ Other than the parliament extending Russia’s Tartus naval base lease for the next 49 years only two years later,¹⁰⁶ publicly accessible information regarding the parliament’s influence in Russia’s decision-making process in Syria’s intervention remains incredibly limited.

Therefore, it is highly probable that Putin’s parliament, especially the State Duma, is either under the same influence that lead to similar decision-making processes as Putin, or they are so tightly controlled under Putin that their expression of challenging policies is restricted from public view. A similar condition exists for the military; there is almost no publicly available discerning evidence suggesting that Putin’s military opposed his orders towards Syria to suggest that Putin reconsidered Russia’s policies approving and enforcing interventionism. Because of Putin’s tight control over his military’s actions, especially considering they are enforced by prison sentences, it is highly unlikely that his military will have any greater say in Russia’s decision-making process than that of the parliament to influence Putin in any way.

¹⁰⁴“The State Duma Expressed Serious Concern Over the Escalation of the Situation in Syria,” The State Duma: The Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, September 18, 2018, <http://duma.gov.ru/en/news/28149/>.

¹⁰⁵“Russian Parliament Grants Vladimir Putin Right to Deploy Military in Syria,” The Guardian, September 30, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/30/russian-parliament-grants-vladimir-putin-right-to-deploy-military-in-syria>.

¹⁰⁶“Russian Parliament Ratifies Naval Base Agreement with Syria.” The Times of Israel, December 21, 2017. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/russian-parliament-ratifies-naval-base-agreement-with-syria/>.

Application of Principal-Agent Theory

Putin serves as the principal to the State Duma and military's agent position in the principal-agent theory for Syria's case study. Putin's self interests rely predominantly on his narcissistic tendencies allowing the consequences of his decisions to take on violent means within Syria. Whereas, his military's self-interests are unclearly defined, but since Putin's political control over his servicemen is so strong, this study concludes that the military's self-interests are likely that of avoiding consequences of resistance. The information asymmetry exists where the military may not accurately report its successes and failures within Syria in accordance with Putin's commands. A certain degree of moral hazard among service members may exist with the extent of moral justification, especially regarding specific commands potentially more reminiscent of an invasion rather than an intervention. Regardless, the military is in the least likely position to express any moral hazard because of Putin's overwhelming individual dominance in both Russia's domestic and international political spheres.

CONCLUSION

President Vladimir Putin's personal influence is the overwhelmingly predominant factor in Russia's political decision-making processes. Through careful examination of Putin's history with prior interventions, his psychological leadership personality profile, and interpersonal relationships with the State Duma and the military, this study suggests for researchers to thoroughly consider Putin's individual intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for future Russian policies that especially relate to developing aspects of national power. This is particularly important for decision-making processes of authoritarian non-democratic regimes, but researchers should also consider how their government's hierarchical chain of command and assignment of professional responsibilities affect the regime leader's individual's influence. Regardless of whatever seemingly "democratic" systems exist in place to uphold a public image of political fairness, especially if it lacks the transparency that of his State Duma and military, Putin's case for answering the question why authoritarian regime countries act as "world police" is quite simple yet far from unique to him: the final decision is ultimately in the hands of the regime's supreme leader.

Russia's involvement in Syria's civil war could have contributed to the 2017 Saint Petersburg and 2018 Chechnya terrorist attacks due to making themselves a target for domestic security issues. Although ISIS terrorist attacks had been consistent in Russia throughout the 21st century, Russia's intervention heightens military tensions between them and anti-Assad forces. Policymakers would be able to use individual influence as a determining factor in interventionist policy much more efficiently if non-democratic regimes would publish their governments'

diplomatic relations more transparently, and if intelligence community psychologists would carefully study personalities of non-democratic regime leaders. Putin's tendencies towards narcissistic and self-idealizing beliefs, patterns of speech, and relationships with non-confrontational political partners have lasted his entire political career. Policymakers have more than just a non-democratic regime's geopolitical regional interests to predict approval of potential interventions. In order to determine whether this intervention benefits the decision-maker's interests, they should take their leader's long-term psychological and interpersonal political profiles into much greater consideration than previously researched in the international political sphere.

Finally, this theory of emphasizing individual influence from psychological background and professional relationships among authority figures is not exclusive to the field of political science, but remains underrepresented in its research. The relationship between sociology and politics does not exist in a vacuum; diplomatic government processes that determine a country's way life is inherently social. Psychological leadership profiles and the principal-agent theory can be applied to authority figures, subordinates, and anyone affected by their careers in any professional field to help determine the principal's decision-making process. However, researchers and policymakers prioritizing individual profiles of any government leader, especially those of non-democratic regimes, could fill gaps that would lead to a newfound understanding of leadership within international relations.

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