

**SECURITY ASPECTS
OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

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RUSSIAN STRATEGIC CULTURE: WHY THE PAST MATTERS

INTRODUCTION

In the process of transforming the global system of international relations and correspondingly changing the role of its key actors on the international arena, the majority of modern political theories try finding new variables that determine the influence of states in the world. The scientists shift away from purely realistic views on the system of international security and actualize the ideas proposed by social constructivism. In this regard, the perception and determination of the impact of culture on the world politics are extremely relevant, since it plays a strategic role in the contemporary international relations. Culture includes a set of knowledge and ideas of the world shared by members of a particular society: so, the differences in social perceptions affect the policies of individual states, the functioning of non-governmental and international organizations, the formation of public opinion, and the mass behaviour. Under these conditions, culture surely becomes one of the most important factors forming the strategy of a state on the international arena and, therefore, allows us to talk about the phenomenon of strategic culture as an important element of the international political analysis.

Modern states try to realize their national interests by involving the population and, accordingly, using its cultural achievements as a foundation for developing their own foreign policy courses. This trend is especially evident when a state strives to become a global leader or to return this status. Since the use of the imperial past and certain cultural trends of the population to restore the superpower status is typical for Russia, this article aims to identify key principles forming the RF strategic culture and to analyze the latter in its direct relationship with the imperial and Soviet past of the country.

The authors propose to interpret the strategic culture of the Russian Federation using its experiences in military international expansion, numerous interventions into the politics and governance of other countries and creation of a cohort of dependent actors, i.e. the actions being fully supported by the Russian population because they are symbolically inserted into its cultural history. Thus, the methodology of the article is based on the historical analysis of the Russian foreign policy and the inductive study of its social and cultural elements which form the strategic culture of this state nowadays.

Accordingly, this exploration allows us to study the systemic change in the RF strategic culture and to identify its tendentious effects on international relations in general.

DEFINING STRATEGIC CULTURE: MAIN SCIENTIFIC APPROACHES

The process of elaboration of the development strategy of a state in view of the necessity to ensure its security, to realize its foreign policy priorities and to implement its security tasks can often be characterized as a system of clear-cut calculation operations based on the use of political and military instruments that are available to this state. Traditional schools of international relations theory, such as realism and liberalism, tried to act this way proposing their explorations made for an almost exclusively state-centric international system. However, the international system being established nowadays is much more complex and diverse than it used to be in the 20th century. New actors of international relations are introducing the elements of religious ideologies, cultural symbolism, social assets of individual states and civilizations to the process of constructing political configurations on the global arena. They socialize international politics and, therefore, practically prove the truth of constructivist conclusions on the development of a state in direct relation to its society: *de facto*, to the latter's historical memory, symbols, traditions and culture. Although the officials drafting fundamental foreign policy documents often do not emphasize the importance of symbolism and specific patterns of social behaviour in the context of realization of the state interests, they are directly dependent on them and cannot completely forsake cultural values of the political organization of their country and traditions of its population to be rooted throughout the history (Rikveilis, 2007: 188).

In this context, we should consider the importance of the category 'culture' which is generally seen as a set of behavioural practices that can be acquired by members of a particular social group and change within this group but always provide the opportunity of communication for its participants and contrast them with the outside world. It consists of a unique set of behavioural patterns which emerge from beliefs, values, and normative attitudes of individuals and regulate behaviour of all members of the society. Culture is dynamic; it changes under the influence of society at different stages of its historical development (De Vreede, 2012: 17). Therefore, culture is very likely to have strong influence on the formation of the foreign policy strategy of a state, since it also develops the competencies of decision-makers or forms their perceptions of real events (Alekseeva, 2012: 146).

According to Colin Gray, the social science was not able to develop a specific methodology for identifying the cultures and styles of individual countries, although the study of cultural aspects of behaviour of different states is crucial for understanding the algorithm for constructing their foreign policy strategies and determining their role in the world politics (Gray, 1988: 42–43). In his turn, Oleg Ivanov believes that proper understanding of the significance of such an irrational factor as culture while using military force or elaborating a strategy for its use is quite important, since to neglect it or to focus solely on a rational model of foreign policy behaviour are two actions which can prevent determination of priorities by a certain actor of international rela-

tions (Ivanov, 2007: 88). Thus, “culture and nation-specific narratives deserve a thorough examination within the analysis of state security because they are engrained in the irrational mental strata, forming a code of conduct that is strong enough to resist international changes” (Al-Rodhan, 2015).

Studies of the links between national culture and security strategy of a state remain quite important due to the deterioration of relations between different cultures and civilizations and even the use of cultural factors to change the balance of power on the global political arena. So, we should note that the study of international security issues is inextricably linked to the concept of strategic culture which is “much more refined than the simplistic concept of a cultural ‘way of war’ ascribed to certain nation, ethnic group, or region, as it encompasses a combination of several mostly sociological factors that interact with each other in a complex and dynamic manner” (Howard, 2013: 8). Strategic culture comprises not only military issues but also financial, economic, administrative, political and cultural spheres of life of the society that determines the pivotal, decisive role of this phenomenon in the process of development of the national security strategy by a state actor. Moreover, “the study of strategic culture teaches us how to understand and interpret state and military actions, how to locate particular manoeuvres in a wider historical context, and, consequently, how to better predict state behaviour” (Al-Rodhan, 2015).

The above-mentioned things were taken into account by Jack Snyder as far back as 1977: comparing the Soviet and American nuclear doctrines, he described them as products of different organizational, historical, political and technical contexts and subsequently suggested the category ‘strategic culture’ which was “a set of semi-permanent elite beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour patterns socialized into a distinctive mode of thought” (Snyder, 1977: 8). However, the representatives of international political science continuing to study this concept strived to supplement different historical and sociological explorations with the anthropological and ethnographic studies proving that the processes of determination of the preferences, values and behaviour of states on the international arena should also be taken into account while considering the specific characteristics and context of formation of strategic cultures of different states.

Colin Gray, for instance, defined strategic culture as “modes of thought and action with respect to force, which derive from perceptions of the national historical experience, from aspirations for responsible behaviour in national terms ... the civic culture and way of life” (Gray, 1981: 22). By emphasizing the operational use of force, Yitzhak Klein considered strategic culture as “the set of attitudes and beliefs held within a military establishment concerning the political objective of war and the most effective strategy and operational method of achieving it” (Klein, 1991: 5). Alastair Johnston, in his turn, believed that strategic culture acted “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 strategic preferences seem uniquely realistic and efficacious,” since it was a true “integrated system of symbols (e.g., argumentation structures, languages, analogies, metaphors)” (Johnston, 1995: 46).

Active transformations of the modern international agenda made political scientists expand the notion of strategic culture and, therefore, derive it not only from the long lasting and pervasive strategic preferences about the role of military force in interna-

tional relations, but also from the norms, ideas and patterns of state behaviour helping an actor to achieve its security and defence goals (Greathouse, 2010: 63). From this perspective, Laura Chappell identifies strategic culture with historical experience of each particular state and outlines it as “a set of beliefs, attitudes and norms towards the use of military force” (Chappell, 2009: 419). Similarly, Kerry Longhurst determines that strategic culture is “a distinctive body of beliefs, attitudes and practices regarding the use of force, held by a collective and arising gradually over time through a unique protracted historical process” (Longhurst, 2004: 7). So, the formation of strategic culture of a state directly depends on the traditions of its population, as well as on the social values, beliefs, patterns of behaviour, habits, symbols, and specific ways of adapting to environmental conditions and solving problems related to the threat or use of force. Construction of strategic culture of a state is influenced by the peculiarities of history, geography and political culture of the latter, since it reflects the attitudes and patterns of behaviour in the international relations used by the most influential political and military elites of the country (Howard, 2013: 2).

As Mikhail Rykhtik rightly pointed out, the concept of strategic culture has two components. The first one brings together general views of society on the surrounding reality, i.e. worldviews, attitudes to the foreign policy, the army, the war, alliances, other countries, new and old threats, etc. The second component is more operational and identifies which tools can be considered acceptable for use while counteracting those threats and challenges that are vital or require mandatory intervention of the authorities (Rykhtik, 2003: 204). Thus, the strategic culture is an essential element of the national security policy.

This phenomenon has not yet been fully investigated but it is considered a vital variable in the process of formation of the foreign policy of any state and determination of its actions while realizing and protecting its national interests. Since “each and every state enters the international arena with its historical baggage of accumulated experiences, beliefs, cultural influences and geographic and material limitations,” all these factors do impact its conduct (Al-Rodhan, 2015). In this context, we can suppose that the strategic culture of any given state has numerous sources and varies over time, as it remains a ‘flexible’ phenomenon: there are different factors influencing the formation of national culture and “a subsequent rationality for security policy and strategic thinking” (Al-Rodhan, 2015).

Considering the steps taken by the leaders of the Russian Federation in the security sector in order to enhance the authority of this state and expand its power in recent years, we can state that the strategic culture of this actor of international relations should be one of the central elements of contemporary political studies because it directly influences the style of strategic behaviour of this country on the global stage.

GENERAL BACKGROUND TO FORM THE RF STRATEGIC CULTURE

The foreign policy of the Russian Federation was not always adapted to the fundamental changes that took place in international relations and was marked by the continuity of traditional forms of the great-power foreign policy activities of Russia

(Miklóssy, Smith, 2019: ix). In addition, the Russian leaders have historically used a quite selective approach to communication with different states, while attributing different importance and applying diverse means of pressure to those actors, even though they were located within the same region, – from fomenting separatism within the countries to sabotaging energy supplies or employing economic pressure. As the strategic culture is generally interpreted as a specific symbiosis of the collective memory and culture of a certain people, the foreign policy and strategic choices of modern Russia cannot sufficiently be studied without clear understanding of the wider historical, ideological and cultural heritage of this state. The events of the past can be considered as a legitimate and extremely important part of the strategic culture of any actor of international relations.

Indeed, the strategic culture of modern Russia does have the imperial and Soviet roots, though they appear being modernized. The style of the foreign policy activities of the RF is based on the great-power revisionism which feeds upon the idea of injustice of the modern international relations received their configuration due to the use of ‘deception’ by Western nations and the realization of their desire ‘to destroy’ Russia as one of the poles of the contemporary system of global centres of power. Accordingly, Russia tends to tackle ‘geopolitical uncertainty’ (*de facto*, it is trying to actively influence the formation of the modern system of international relations) by increasing the number of so-called ‘client states’ and expanding its defence perimeter.

The use of manipulative political and diplomatic, information and financial and economic instruments allows the RF to retain its influence on individual client states which, often being the outcasts within the modern international relations, help the official Moscow to justify, at least nominally, its and their own undemocratic steps. The Russian support of authorities in Syria, Venezuela or North Korea makes these states dependent on the RF. However, such dependence is completely offset because they are obtaining some economic and military dividends from the Russian leadership. By the way, these dividends are often given at the expense of the RF economic development and the well-being of its population. However, the official Kremlin gives preference to the increase in support at the international level and, therefore, its geopolitical priorities come first: possible internal discontent is suppressed because of the authoritarian rule, the absence of strong opposition, and the permanent destruction of all civic initiatives.

Moreover, the Russian authorities are permanently mobilizing popular consciousness and concentrating it on the resolution of ‘historical’ tasks of the state. External expansion is an indicator of the sustainability of its imperial mechanism and, therefore, signals to citizens that the resources being necessary for the life of society could only be obtained by increasing the role of the Russian Federation abroad. As a result, the citizens are totally supporting all actions of the Russian politicians. The latter, in their turn, serve as a kind of ‘interface’ between the authorities and the population, while balancing the contradictions of domestic and foreign policy, identifying the ones who are ‘guilty’ about or ‘responsible’ for some events, and formally legitimizing the regime to prevent possible external and internal criticism. Success of the Russian leaders is based on the strict division between the authorities and the people. The state having returned to the archaic imperial model has no political (civic) nation as the subject of

power: instead, there is the military and administrative mechanism for coercion and external expansion that meets all the needs of the loyal masses. They are dependent on the authorities whose success directly determines the forms of redistribution of collective goods. Thus, public consciousness of most Russians and their sentiments are constructed by the attitude of unconditional loyalty to the RF leadership and the ideas of the special cultural and historical mission of Russia, as its full implementation will ensure both the greatness of the Russian people and its economic prosperity.

Everybody might agree that creation of the group of client states is not the invention of the 21st century. The Russian state ruled vassal state formations starting from the 15th – 16th centuries when it conquered individual khanates and kaganates established on the ruins of the Golden Horde. In the 18th century, Poland also played the role of a client state. The foreign policy actions of accumulating client states became especially widespread in the days of the Soviet Union. All the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, all the Member States of the Warsaw Pact were essentially client states. Thus, this tactics of implementing its foreign policy or rather positioning itself on the international arena has been used by Russia throughout almost the entire history of its development. The success of such actions was ensured by the creation of groups of influence within these states, the direct bribery of individual political forces or the simple annexation of their territories. However, all these instruments are also successfully used in the territories of the post-Soviet countries nowadays. In the other regions of the world, the RF often disperses its advisers on the ground. Definitely, advisers are not the main mechanism for ensuring control over the client states. However, the presence of the Russian advisers in the armed forces, political structures, special services or economic institutions of a particular state allows the official Kremlin receiving detailed information on any changes that are taking place in the domestic and foreign affairs of this country. As a result, vulnerable areas of their development may be influenced by the other means of the Russian pressure or ‘assistance’. By providing low-interest loans or supplying energy resources to selected countries, the RF authorities make the whole societies dependent on the Russian presence. These states, in their turn, unequivocally form ‘the group of friends’ of Russia in the world, even deteriorating relations with the Western powers and international organizations that are so necessary for their full-fledged development.

Constant increase in the number of client states has always been complemented by improvements in defence at the Russian borders, as the sense of security and stability has allowed Russia expanding its military capabilities and accumulating power resources for further territorial expansion. So, Russia always fought at its borders. The state has always been focused on maintaining its territory and protecting its borders, and these tasks justified any expansionist tendencies in a territorial protection context. When forming its territory, Russia began as a relatively small state surrounded by dangerous enemies and then expanded over time, eventually filling the whole continent. This expansion brought the Russians into contact and conflict with different nations (Metz, 2016). Russia gradually conquered them and then united within the Soviet Union after the October Revolution of 1917. Even despite the massive destruction and death the USSR suffered in World War II, the Kremlin leaders were ready to continue their expansionist policy in order to create ‘a belt’ of friendly states around

the Soviet Union and to intimidate and control weaker nations all over the world. The official Moscow used the USSR connections with communist or socialist organizations across the globe to exploit local grievances fueled by colonialism, inequity, corruption, repression and ethnic or racial tension in order to empower revolutionary movements or radical opposition and make them dependent on the Soviet assistance (Metz, 2016).

Nowadays, the RF foreign policy uses the same tools and reflects historical lessons learnt by the Russian Empire and the USSR. Russia tries influencing client states and prefers limited war to keep potential opponents located along the RF periphery weak: it uses not only classic warfare, but also economic and cyber weapons in order “to demonstrate that Russia remains a power to be reckoned with” (Metz, 2016).

In the 1990-ies, the Russian authorities were mainly concerned with the suppression of manifestations of separatism, stabilization of the RF economy and political development, while trying to gain control over the situation in the country. Therefore, the National Security Concept of the Russian Federation, adopted in 1997, focused on the domestic political issues of this state emphasizing that “the RF national interests in the international sphere lay in ensuring sovereignty and strengthening great-power position of this state as one of the influential centres of the multipolar world; in developing equal and mutually beneficial relations with all countries and integration associations (primarily with the CIS Member States)” on the basis of the widespread observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms and the inadmissibility of double standards (*Ob utverzhdenii Kontseptsii...*, 1997).

However, having invaded Georgia and having actually remained unpunished by the international community, the Russian leaders developed the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation until 2020 where declared the extension of capabilities of the RF to strengthen its influence on the world stage through the use of its resource potential and pragmatic policy. Accordingly, not only the development of bilateral and multilateral cooperation with the CIS Member States, but also the advancement to regional and sub-regional integration and coordination between participants of the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Eurasian Economic Community, providing stabilizing influence “on the general situation” in the post-Soviet area, were proclaimed as the priority of the Russian foreign policy (*O Strategii natsionalnoi bezopasnosti...*, 2009).

Believing that the 2014 shift of power in Ukraine had changed the status quo in the post-Soviet area, Russia declared its leading role ‘to stabilize the situation’ and openly stated the need for protecting its compatriots abroad. So, the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation of 2015 not only accuses the United States and the EU of opposing integration processes and creating hotbeds of tension in the Eurasian region, but also states that the situation in Ukraine has a negative impact on the implementation of Russian national interests. As a result, the Russian Federation has undertaken a variety of measures to maintain ties with the CIS Member States and to support the Russian language, history and culture in their territories in every possible way (*O Strategii natsionalnoi bezopasnosti...*, 2015).

This evolution of the Kremlin political concepts is based on powerful theoretical explorations of the Russian scientists aimed at explaining the essence and consistent patterns of formation of the RF strategic culture. Today, the Russian political studies on the formation of the RF strategic culture can generally be divided into three main

approaches which differently interpret the importance of the categories of identity and cultural development for the implementation of the foreign policy of this actor of international relations.

Representatives of political liberalism (the so-called ‘Westernizers’) emphasize that the Russian state should develop in accordance with the scenario worked out by the leading European democracies. In their opinion, Russia is a part of Europe because its population is committed to European values and its leaders are striving for multilateral collaboration and cooperation within various international institutions. However, the actual failure of such a scenario of the Russian development in the 1990-ies steers the official Kremlin to cast these scientific ideas aside, while urging the necessity to restore the greatness of Russia that was almost lost after the collapse of the USSR.

As a result, the works of political realists represented by the Russian statisticians are much more popular among the RF leaders. These scientists believe that the implementation of the foreign policy of the Russian state should be based on the need to realize its national interests which, in their turn, are determined after a thorough comprehensive analysis of the geopolitical situation, economic development and available resources of the country (Miklóssy, Smith, 2019: xii). In fact, statisticians are currently targeting the leaders of the Russian Federation to restore its superpower status, as it can still act similarly to such influential actors as the United States or China by using the elements of both hard and soft power. These ideas are even more radically embodied in the explorations of the civilizationists who consider the international environment hostile to Russia, as the Western states directly threaten the Russian values and the concept of Pan-Slavism. Under such circumstances, the RF should continue building a separate civilization unified by the ideals of Orthodoxy and the idea of the all-unity of Slavs.

After the so-called ‘Munich speech’ given by the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin at the 43rd Munich Security Conference on 10 February 2007, the world leaders perfectly realized that the official Kremlin not only chose a separate civilization path for Russia, but also aimed at restoring its superpower status because “Russia was a nation with more than a thousand-year history, and it had almost always enjoyed the privilege of implementing the independent foreign policy” (Putin, 2007). Residents of those states which had previously formed the territories of the huge Russian Empire and the Soviet Union were to become the foremost instrument of the implementation of the RF foreign policy: while preserving the memory of the recent common past, they still supported the idea of the Pan-Slavic unity of peoples and the solid commitment to ideals promoted by the Russian Orthodox Church. Therefore, the strategic culture of the Russian Federation acquiring a new historical quality was characterized by its eternal parameters. All of them cumulatively had to ensure the successful implementation of the great-power course of Russia in the 21st century.

RUSSIAN STRATEGIC CULTURE IN THE LIGHT OF ITS VARIABLES

Being a complex political and social phenomenon, strategic culture of any state cannot be unitary (Howard, 2013: 9). Thus, there are several key aspects that define the Russian strategic culture and simultaneously paint it with the specific undertones

of the struggle of the actor of international relations for restoring its superpower status amid the social, political and economic stagnation.

Both throughout the entire history of the Russian state and nowadays, the population of this country have tended to permanently legitimize the decisions of the ruling elite and the activities of the political leaders. In fact, the Russian people have always needed the sole ruler whose 'hard hands' could govern a huge state and hold conquered or annexed territories. But no matter when the authoritarian power was formed historically: the sole ruler was always looked upon by the common people as the bravest warrior and the wisest strategist taking care of their people. Thus, the Russian state was gradually destroying the germs of democracy that could emerge in its territory under the reign of Catherine the Great during the existence of the Russian Empire, in the days of Joseph Stalin during the Soviet era or under the rule of Vladimir Putin in the 21st century. Currently, the influence and authority of the latter among both ordinary Russians and political elites are not simply based on the high rankings: they are supported by total usurpation of power and suppression of dissent. The open opposition to and even the tough confrontation with the West help to idealize the image of Vladimir Putin in the public eye, since ordinary Russians still want to restore the superpower status of the Russian Federation. Considerable economic growth, enhancement of living standards and improvement of the overall well-being of the population after the tumultuous 1990-ies allowed Vladimir Putin to be seen as the leader who stabilized the situation in the country. Thus, the sentiments of the general public have not changed since the Russian military invasion of Georgia in 2008 and the beginning of the RF armed aggression against Ukraine in 2014. Moreover, the 2014 annexation of the Crimean Peninsula is now considered by the Russians as an act of the restoration of historical justice and the reunion of all Russian territories. Of course, nobody mentions that this 'Russian territory' was initially withdrawn from the protectorate of the Ottoman Empire and eventually annexed by the Russian Empire in 1783.

By the way, the annexation of the neighbouring areas once determined the specific characteristics of Russia as a continental empire: the colonies were not geographically distant from their colonial power and, therefore, were included into its territory forming one country with it. This situation generated the eternal need for strong authoritarian rule in the colonies which, therefore, slowed down democratic processes in the colonial power itself. The centre of the continental empire having unclear boundaries between the imperial core and the periphery cannot be democratized without fomenting separatism on its outskirts. Thus, the imperial orientation of Russia was inextricably linked to the authoritarian system of government which later existed in the USSR and is clearly traced in the activities of the RF authorities nowadays. Moreover, the regime of Vladimir Putin is now transforming into the dictatorial rule: declaring the need to amend the Constitution of the state in the Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly on 15 January 2020 (Gosudarstvennaia Duma Federalnogo Sobraniia RF, 2020), the Russian leader then did not reject 'resetting to zero' the number of his presidential terms and, thus, *de facto* reaffirmed his desire to rule forever.

This idea is strongly supported by the society which believes in the importance of maintaining and enhancing patriotic feelings to be cultivated by Vladimir Putin. These actions are also considered by ordinary Russians as one of his greatest merits.

Indeed, the Russian leadership has long built up a network of powerful and clear associations which had to take root in the minds of people while remembering patriotism and love for their Motherland. The constant emphasis on the fact that World War II military casualties of the Soviet Union exceeded those of any country across the globe allows the RF leadership underlining the leading role of the USSR (in fact, Russia) in the victory of the Allied forces over Nazi Germany. Glorification of the Russians who fought against German aggression is extremely important for maintaining rigid rhetoric to support the RF foreign policy because it allows preserving a strong sense of 'Us' elaborated in the Soviet period among the people and comparing this 'Us' with the external 'Others' (Al-Rodhan, 2018). Consideration of World War II and the role of the Russian people therein is a striking example of the unification of the RF authorities and society while determining the foreign policy future of the state and its strategic culture as well (Rikveilis, 2007: 196).

Victory in World War II, appropriate symbols and ceremonies selected by the leadership of the state are vitally important for establishing the Russian strategic culture. Unconditional support of patriotic slogans propagated by the authorities is mainly ensured by the 'selective historical memory' of the society that was formed in the Soviet era. The mechanism of formation of such memory was triggered by the preferential determination of facts that should have been conceived as historical truths. Thus, certain historical myths and symbols quickly turned into the ideological foundation of the existence of a consolidated 'Soviet people'. The course for the construction of the unified 'Soviet history' notably 'expanded' the Russian historical and cultural heritage as the actual basis for the 'common history' of peoples of the USSR through the involvement of creative forces belonging to different nations and asymmetrical cultural exchange. In addition, the authorities 'ensured' impoverished, filtered representation of histories and cultures of different peoples within the framework of the unified 'Soviet history' and considerable changes in the spiritual palettes of nations being parts of the Soviet Union.

Thus, this idealized version of history is now freely used by the RF leadership as a tool for self-identification of the Russian people and manipulations on the basis of the uniqueness and unity of the latter. By appealing to the need for protecting their compatriots abroad, the Russian leaders not only attacked Georgia in 2008, but also annexed the Ukrainian Crimea and occupied parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine in 2014. However, the concept of 'compatriots' seems to have quite blurred essence nowadays. Any person who speaks Russian, has the Russian surname or considers themselves to be Russian is covered by this concept from the point of view of the RF authorities. The official Kremlin has sought to get this effect for centuries: it is especially important when the internal political situation in a particular country is unstable and some political forces in this country would like to cooperate with the Russian Federation in order to receive proper dividends. Understanding this fact, Russia can easily camouflage offense as defence.

The traditional notion of the mandatory victorious end of war formed in the popular genotype for centuries has always demanded moral and physical readiness for the victims in the name of victory from the Russian people and has not allowed it to be doubted. The national belief in the need for non-alternative victory has ensured pub-

lic support for all the armed conflicts and wars fought by Russia since the collapse of the USSR, as they were regarded by the Russians as wars for national independence and national survival. The Russian authorities convinced citizens that every new war would ultimately strengthen international and geostrategic positions of the RF, as well as would promote its authority and increase its influence in the world. Therefore, the Russian people have traditionally provided high-end combat capabilities of the Russian army, while striving to protect their Motherland at any cost. This approach was shaped historically, since, according to Vladimir Putin, “the will of the Russian people was confirmed not by referenda and votes but by blood.” That is why the official Kremlin reiterates the importance of the contribution of ordinary Russians to the victories of their state on the international arena, while once again appealing to their patriotism and sacrifice and maintaining the discourse concerning the great contribution of the Soviet people to the victory over Nazism in World War II: “All the multinational people fought for the freedom of their native land. They all carried the heavy burden of war. And all of them together accomplished the immortal feat of saving their Motherland. They determined the outcome of World War II. They released the peoples of Europe from the Nazis” (Putin, 2015).

In fact, proper perception of the RF external military actions by its population envisages that all the existing public demands should be adapted to certain state needs and interests. Accordingly, the social component of the modern Russian Federation can be considered in terms of a proper ‘popular contribution’ made to maintain the power of the state mechanism. Within the framework of this concept of ‘bio-power’ of a state actor, the importance of individuals or certain social groups is decreased, since they are considered as a ‘leverage’ to support the process of state development (Foucault, 1984: 265).

Rationalists believe that the state control over the public resources which are capable of contributing to the process of realization of the national interests of an actor provides the state with a separate source of its ‘bio-power’ to be necessary for improving its military strength when developing global political relations. However, we can assume that the determination of national interests through the use of military means is an internal process in relation to the construction of the foreign policy identity of the state. While forming a separate ‘security society’ where the practical construction of structures guaranteeing national or social security increases the importance of power relations; constitutes external or internal, natural or ‘pathological’, civilized or barbaric ethnic and territorial boundaries, the state integrates the masses into its functioning system because it relies on their fear of being exterminated or absorbed after the interference of another actor of the international scene (Campbell, 1998: 202).

As a result, we can presume that the ‘ideology of fear’ maintained by the Russian authorities acts as a sufficiently powerful manipulator of social consciousness to be used in the process of realization of the RF national interests (Campbell, 1998: 49). In addition, public fear is directly used as a means of deriving a proper assessment of the importance of certain interests of the state. By making the ‘death threat’, the official Kremlin *de facto* legitimizes its hostilities. So, the Russian authorities have a kind of monopoly on the management of all aspects of life of the society. In response, individuals receive exceptional guarantees for the protection of their lives and the security

of society as a whole. Moreover, Vladimir Putin uses interventions to score political points back home, portraying them as great victories that accomplished what he had intended, while protecting the Russians (Metz, 2016).

In this context, the activities of the Russian Orthodox Church form a solid foundation for the beliefs in the uniqueness of the Russian people and the needs to protect Russians in other states. To gain public support for certain foreign policy actions, the Russian authorities need not only military force, but also a modernized ideology. In the South West and the South, Russia wanted to become the historical carrier of Orthodoxy presented in a form being more or less acceptable to the peoples who had previously spread Orthodoxy (and Christianity in general) throughout the Russian territories. So, it required partial assimilation of the Kyivan spirituality, mass involvement of the Ukrainian scholars in the church reforms, the ‘correction of books’, the spiritual education, etc. Russia was preparing for a ‘spiritual reunion’ with the Orthodox brothers from the West and the South (Dziuba, 2001: 269). In this regard, the Russian religious ideology has shown remarkable historical plasticity.

Having been fundamentally enshrined in the notorious apocalyptic concept of Moscow as the Third Rome exposed by the monk Philotheus of Pskov in the 16th century, it was moved by the Slavophiles, considering it as a spiritual salvation of the European peoples, from the state and imperial to the religious and imperial plane in the middle of the 19th century. Later, due to the unexpected configuration of historical processes, this ideology was paradoxically overlapped with the idea of the world proletarian revolution and Moscow as its energy source and the capital of the Third International. In the end of the 20th century, this religious ideology finally incorporated a new Russian messianic idea which, influenced by the traumas of the great-power pride, began revealing xenophobia and extreme national intolerance that had previously been hidden or displaced to the unconscious. To some extent, this idea can also be seen as a reaction to the ‘erosion’ of Russianness which, in its turn, is the reverse side of the Russian expansion and Russification of other peoples, i.e. the inevitable payment for the empire. Xenophobia and missionaryism seem to be mutually exclusive phenomena. However, the messianic state of consciousness turns out to cover so wide range and to have so plastic forms that it can use xenophobia as its ‘striking force’. Today, new Russian missionaryism becomes “a very characteristic policy of the Putin administration” (Rikveilis, 2007: 196) which emphasizes the historical continuity of the Russian Federation based on “the memory of the ancestors who passed their ideals and faith in God on the Russians” (Gosudarstvennaia Duma Federalnogo Sobraniia RF, 2020).

While cultivating its civilizational and cultural detachment, Russia continues developing its own messianic idea which is primarily seen as a traditional set of views of the special historical kismet of Russia, its unique historical path and a new dawn it must show the humanity. Accumulation of the Pan-Russian, Pan-Slavic and great-power traits within the Russian national project (taking into account aspirations of the RF to restore its superpower status) instilled the Russian missionaryism with the eschatological aspects. Perceptions of Russians as the chosen people to achieve a great world purpose gain ‘material’ support and a chance for realization based on the state power, as well as the military, political and diplomatic successes of the country. At the same time, geopolitical and military confrontation with Europe corresponds with spir-

itual and religious opposition: in line with the core idea, Russia should be considered as a stronghold of Orthodoxy confronting the odious Catholic West, and Orthodoxy being the only true faith should unite peoples, even the Slavic ones, into a brotherly Christian family under the auspices of a strong Russian leader.

In order to achieve this goal, the Russian elite has involved two other important components of foreign policy actions into the RF strategic culture, i.e. the reliance on indirect rule in other states and the policy of Russification of their peoples. In principle, these instruments have always been present in the diplomatic arsenal of the Russian Empire and the USSR. However, media capabilities of the official Kremlin allow them taking on new dimensions nowadays. Activities of the Russian media do help the new 'messianic ideas' of the RF to take root in the territory of other states. Moreover, their propaganda often justifies the further Russian military actions and provides support for the latter in the minds of the local populations.

Today, the Russian Federation does not abandon the policy of military interventions and violations of state sovereignty of other states: the 'militant' political culture of the Russian leadership has always contributed to the militarization of the strategic culture of this country.

Nowadays, the Russian military officers believe that war is not only a competition between capabilities and weapons, but also a clash between military systems. Therefore, the so-called 'strategic military elites' play a significant role in the formation of the Russian strategic culture (Rikveilis, 2007: 197). Their actions, organizing the nation before the war, constitute the consolidated system which competes with the system of an opponent; therefore, only the military system that is more powerful and capable could win in the end. The Russian military system complies with the considerations of war, in particular, with the considerations of the political and military goals, strategy, and operational art used during the war, as well as with the way employed by the public officials to introduce the experience of the pre-war crises (Covington, 2019).

Coming to power in 1999, the President of the RF Vladimir Putin has steadily used the revenues from exports of oil and natural gas to restore the Russian military system after the collapse of the USSR, as well as has permanently stimulated the evolution of new military tactics that eventually turned into a symbiosis of cyber warfare, support of the marionette military units, special operations and typical military interventions. The RF military interventions in Georgia, Ukraine, Syria and elsewhere demonstrate that Vladimir Putin has honed Russia's arsenal of weapons and is willing to use them (Metz, 2016). The Russian military system is constantly evolving to emphasize the strengths of the RF and, at the same time, to minimize its military, economic and political disadvantages. The current authorities of the Russian Federation are ready to enrich its military sector with every element that is the key to creating fighting force being capable of realizing national interests of the state on a global scale.

In fact, we can argue that the strategic culture of Russia emanates from the strategic uniqueness, since it requires unique military approaches to maximize and exploit capabilities during the warfare. The RF leadership uses aggressive measures against the Russian opponents, as they are perceived as potentially 'indisputable'. The Russian population considers the entry into the war with Russia by any country as a potential war not only against the leadership of the state, but also against all Russian people

(Covington, 2019). However, Russia prefers to be involved into indirect, small-footprint and standoff actions by entering limited wars. These wars are considered as a way to influence events in the other countries at an acceptable cost when important but not vital national interests are threatened. The RF can conduct limited wars indirectly, if possible, by finding and empowering partners or proxies at the local levels (Metz, 2016). The Russian leadership rarely acknowledges its military presence in the territory of other countries but maintains favourable sequence of events and ‘anonymously’ provides direct economic, advisory and military support. Under such circumstances, the official Kremlin not only escapes legal responsibility envisaged by the provisions of the international law in case of violation of the state sovereignty of another actor of international relations, but also has the opportunity to manoeuvre while developing an appropriate attitude of the Russian population toward its policy. Its military is optimized for conventional war but Russia has extensive limited war capabilities, including special operations forces and “organizations that combine traditional intelligence functions – the gathering and analysis of information to support national decision-makers – with specialized operational capabilities” (Metz, 2016). The Russian prolonged incognito presence allows the official Moscow deploying its political and military lobbies within other states, as they further contribute to the process of legitimization of its foreign policy actions, even though these actions are aggressive (we observed such situations both in Georgia and Ukraine).

The ideological basis of these military approaches clearly resonates with the ‘militant’ political culture of the Russian Federation. Today, their essence is precisely reflected in military explorations of scientists and documents that are replicated by the RF leadership to determine the specific characteristics of the foreign policy and military actions of the state. In the periods of hostilities, the Russian strategic culture is focused on the implementation of military tactics which should reflect the ‘historical role’ of the Russian Federation in the process of worldbuilding. Even in peacetime, the Russian military behaviour complies with the contemporary Russian military assessments of the post-Soviet strategic environment, the priorities and the goals of the Russian Federation, that are to restore the superpower status and to reestablish its former borders at any cost.

Nowadays, Russia generally manages to preserve its strategic culture to be developed historically, as it continues adapting it to the new realities. Thus, its foreign policy absorbs the modern tactics which is necessary to ensure the realization of national interests of the state but relies on the strategic foundation to have been formed for centuries. However, the power of the modern state is first and foremost the combination of competence and flexibility. The competitive state mechanism is bound to be a moderator (a leader and a mediator) of the key processes of the life of society. Moreover, it should manage not only the primary social processes, but also the derivatives of them. Therefore, by clinging to the old stereotypes of traditional ‘statehood’, the Russian ruling circles run the risk of squandering the vestiges of national resources to protect the phantoms of their historical memory. The ‘mobilization of society’ by

means of traditional Soviet methods would ultimately lead to the stickiness of the state structure, would cause the stupor of political and economic development and, as a result, would culminate in the complete digression of the population from dialogue with the authorities.

If Russia wants to preserve and, furthermore, to expand the area of its influence, it has the only way to do so: to accelerate the development of its economy, investment and scientific potential. Moreover, this model should be diversified and aimed at stimulating structural reforms, shifting away from the 'raw material orientation' and the efforts to exert energy pressure on other countries in order to transform them into client states in the future. Russia needs to move away from the ephemeral efforts to conquer all the peoples which have previously formed the Russian Empire or the USSR. This position does not create competitive advantages of the country on the world political arena: it completely deprives it of them instead. However, Russia's long history, ir-resolute society, and incontestable dominance in the neighbourhood reinforce its aspirations to reclaim its status as a global superpower and its desire to become one of the nations constructing modern system of international relations.

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ABSTRACT

Today, strategic culture becomes an essential element of the national security policy of the Russian Federation. While absorbing some modern aspects, its strategic culture reflects historical lessons learnt by the Russian Empire and the USSR. Russia still cannot refuse from the idea to restore its superpower status and to fight for new territories. Thus, we can define a number of essential elements of the Russian strategic culture formed in relation to the historical and contemporary development of this state.

Throughout the history, the Russians have legitimized the decisions and activities of the ruling elites. As the Russian leadership has long built up powerful associations which had taken root in the minds of people while remembering patriotism and love for their Motherland, the Russians believe in the importance of maintaining and enhancing patriotic feelings. While cultivating its civilizational and cultural detachment, Russia continues developing its own messianic idea which envisages the views of the special historical kismet of Russia. In order to fulfill its global tasks, Russia uses the policy of military interventions and violates state sovereignty of other countries, since the 'militant' political culture of its leaders has always militarized the strategic culture of the RF.

So, the strategic culture of Russia emanates from the unique position and history of this state which manages to adapt it to the new realities. However, Russia's aspirations to reclaim its status as a global superpower at any cost do not allow its strategic culture to be changed or even to be altered.

Keywords: strategic culture, Russia, strategy, foreign policy, national security, history

ROSYJSKA KULTURA STRATEGICZNA: DLACZEGO PRZESZŁOŚĆ MA ZNACZENIE

STRESZCZENIE

Kultura strategiczna staje się obecnie istotnym elementem narodowej polityki bezpieczeństwa Federacji Rosyjskiej. Przystawiając pewne współczesne wzorce, jej kultura strategiczna odzwierciedla doświadczenia historyczne zdobyte przez Imperium Rosyjskie i ZSRR. Rosja wciąż nie może odrzucić idei odzyskania statusu supermocarstwa i walki o nowe terytoria. W ten sposób można określić szereg kluczowych elementów rosyjskiej kultury strategicznej ukształtowanej w oparciu o historyczne oraz współczesne wzorce rozwojowe. Na przestrzeni dziejów Rosjanie legitymizowali decyzje i działania własnych elit rządzących. Te ostatnie z kolei, od dawna budowały i starały się zakorzenić w społeczeństwie rosyjskim patriotyzm i przywiązanie do państwa. Rosja, pielęgnując obraz swej cywilizacyjnej oraz kulturowej odrębności, rozwija własną ideę mesjanizmu, opartą na wizji realizacji wyjątkowej rosyjskiej historycznej misji dziejowej. Co więcej, do realizacji swoich globalnych zadań Rosja wykorzystuje politykę interwencji militarnych oraz naruszania suwerenności innych państw. Proces ten tłumaczony jest przez autora „wojowniczą” kulturą polityczną rosyjskich elit, która zawsze militaryzowała kulturę strategiczną Federacji Rosyjskiej. Reasumując, kultura strategiczna współczesnej Rosji jest efektem mariażu wyobrażenia rosyjskich elit o wyjątkowej pozycji Rosji oraz jej historycznego dziedzictwa ze współczesnymi uwarunkowaniami geopolitycznymi. Tymczasem zdaniem autora, aspiracje Rosji do odzyskania statusu globalnego supermocarstwa za wszelką cenę nie pozwalają na zmianę jej kultury strategicznej, utrudniając tym samym jej adaptację do zasad rządzących współczesną architekturą bezpieczeństwa w systemie międzynarodowym.

Słowa kluczowe: kultura strategiczna, Rosja, strategia, polityka zagraniczna, bezpieczeństwo narodowe, historia

