

The Effects of Putin's Family Background and Personal Experiences on Foreign Policy Decision-Making

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Abstract

This study investigates the extent to which Vladimir Putin's formative experiences in post-World War II Leningrad, particularly his family history and early psychological development, have influenced Russia's foreign policy under his leadership. By employing a qualitative and psychobiographical methodology, this research analyzes archival materials, political memoirs, interviews, and speeches to assess how elements such as survivalist attitudes, KGB and Totalitarian and communist systems influences, and socio-political conditioning shaped his worldview. to achieve this, the study applies a combination of psychobiography, decision-making theory, to connect personality-driven leadership with foreign policy choices, the main concern is that Russia obviously has a foreign policy ministry, but its main role has to do with Putin's personality. It concludes that Putin's personal history—especially childhood hardship and family trauma has significantly shaped his perceptions of threat, power, and Russia's geopolitical posture, by taking some cases, the reflections are visible. Thus, these findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how personal history informs authoritarian foreign policy leadership.

Keyword: Psychobiography, Putin Personality, Psychosocial Environment, Cold War Childhood, Influence on Foreign Decision, KGB, Totalitarian Influence.

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1. Introductory

1.1 Introduction to the Study

Understanding foreign policy under strong, centralized regimes such as Russia requires attention to the psychological and biographical makeup of key decision-makers. Vladimir Putin's political psychology is shaped not only by his institutional experience (e.g., as a KGB officer) but also by deeply personal influences: growing up in post-war Leningrad, a family history marked by loss and hardship, and early socialization in a Soviet security environment. These elements contributed to a mindset of resilience, suspicion, and nationalistic pride. Such traits are reflected in major foreign policy decisions, from the annexation of Crimea to Russia's intervention in Syria, and his enduring resistance to Western liberal democratic influence.

The historical context and personal identity of Vladimir Putin's foreign policy is deeply shaped by his personal background and upbringing in the Soviet Union. Born into a modest family in Leningrad after the second world war, he received stories of national suffering and resilience, particularly through his parents' experiences during the siege of Leningrad. Hence, this study explores the influence of Vladimir Putin's family history and WWII experiences on his foreign policy, highlighting his strong nationalist outlook, prioritizing sovereignty, historical grievances, and opposition to Western influence. Putin's focus is on strength, sovereignty, and protecting Russian identity. Understanding Putin's early life in Leningrad is crucial for assessing his influence on Russia's

foreign policy. Factors like family life, events, challenges, and living under totalitarian system, should be considered to understand his views and approach to international relations. In here must be present in a good academic way these influence (Hill, F., Gaddy, 2013; Gessen, 2012).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

There remains a significant gap in understanding the individual-level psychological and familial influences on his strategic decision-making. Prevailing analyses tend to prioritize institutional, structural, and systemic factors, often neglecting the personal dimensions that shape leadership behavior. It is also clear that Russia has a Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but Putin's personality, influenced by his background and experiences, plays a crucial role on decision-makings. This omission limits a holistic interpretation of Russia's increasingly centralized and personalized foreign policy approach. Understanding the psychology of leaders like Putin can be extremely problematic and challenging, so as a key component in foreign policy decisions by observing and interpreting his external behavior. An extensive body of literature on Russian foreign policy under Putin. Therefore, this study seeks to fill a critical gap in foreign policy analysis by integrating psychological profiling, biographical, upbringing and family experiences, inquiry into the comprehending of state behavior, this study addresses how his childhood environment, family suffering during WWII, and psychological development shaped his geopolitical thinking. By exploring the intersection of personal history and international strategy through a focused case study of Putin, and it presents a challenge in accessing sources such as interviews with Putin as a case study.

1.3 Aims of the Study

this study aims to achieve the following goals:

- 1.To explore how Putin's early experiences in post-war Leningrad influenced his leadership identity and contributed to a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of contemporary Russian foreign policy.
- 2.To assess the role of Childhood During the Cold War and family trauma in shaping foreign policy beliefs.
- 3.To apply psychobiographical tools and Snyder theory in explaining decision-making in an authoritarian context.
- 4.To analyze specific foreign policy events (e.g., Crimea, Syria, NATO confrontation) through a Childhood During the Cold War -based lens.
- 5.To contribute Childhood During the Cold War to leadership-focused foreign policy literature, especially within leadership-centric.
6. To examine the foreign policy decision-making process in general, with a focus on events involving energy, diplomacy, or security during Putin's presidency.
7. To examine the political implications of Putin's personal background on foreign policy decisions, i.e how personal experience translates into international decision-making.

4. Research Questions

Main Question: How has Vladimir Putin's childhood during the Cold War and family background influenced his foreign policy decision-making?

Sub-Questions (Supporting Study Questions):

- Can these biographical elements be traced in specific cases like Crimea's annexation, or intervention in Syria or responses to NATO?
- How are psychological traits acquired from childhood, such as a sense of threat, insecurity, mistrust, suspicion, and Communist regime's hegemony, expressed in major foreign policy moves?
- What role did post-war trauma in Leningrad play in shaping his political personality?
- How did family narratives of survival influence his worldview and strategic outlook?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study attempts to contribute to the field of political psychology and leadership-centered international relations by integrating psychobiographical methods with foreign policy analysis. It offers a deeper understanding of how personal history shapes state conduct, particularly in centralized systems where leader personality outweighs institutional checks. This approach enhances foreign policy prediction and evaluation by recognizing psychological continuity in strategic behavior. Thus, how these Putin's family background and personal experiences contribute to the development of the political personality. Biological beings who have experienced a protracted process of psychological and socialization influence are subsequently the ones who create and make foreign policy decisions. So as to establish a solid foundation for the political and academic realm, also psychopolitical techniques are employed to demonstrate all the factors that have influenced Putin's life and have a significant impact on his past, present, and future decisions.

1.6 Literature Review

The study examines the effects of Putin's family background and personal experiences on foreign policy decisions, highlighting the lack of specialized

research on this topic, despite numerous studies addressing it partially, and underscores the need for further research, such as:

Tuomas Forsberg, et al. (2017) carried out a study entitled “The Psychological Dimension of Russian Foreign Policy: Putin and the Annexation of Crimea” focusing on the role of personality traits, cognitive and psychological dimensions, assessing expectations, belief systems, and emotions on decision-making. The study used analytical and descriptive methods to analyze Putin's decisions in the Ukrainian crisis, integrating the more comprehensive psychological understanding of his actions. As a result, it emphasized the specific role and personality of the main decision-maker in this issue, who is President Putin.

Furthermore, Acikalin and Suay Nilhan (2022) carried out a study entitled “A New and Alternative Leadership Model to Analyze the Role of Leaders in Foreign Policy”. This article introduced the "SNA leadership model," a new approach to understand the role of leaders in foreign policy formulation, focusing on national background, personal history, patterns, behaviors, and background reflections. The purpose was to determine the background of the leadership of the foreign policy through the application of a historical and descriptive approach. The study explored the impact of leaders' backgrounds on foreign policy development by examining their personal histories, patterns, actions, and past views.

In the same line, Hamidani, Salim (2013) conducted a study entitled "The Political Decision from the Perspective of the Decision-Makers Personality". This study aimed to understand the impact and employment of the personality element and its impact on the political decision-making process. By using the descriptive approach, the study concluded that understanding situations and their causes and

effects is crucial, with decision-makers' personalities and interactions with crises playing a significant role.

Moreover, Al-Bayati, Aref (2023) conducted a study entitled "The Impact of the Psychological Environment on the Foreign Political Decision-Making Process: A Theoretical Study" in order to better understand the aspects of the psychological environment in terms of individual perceptions, values, and beliefs and how they impact the decision-maker, using a descriptive and analytical approach to discuss how the psychological environment affects the process of making foreign policy decisions. The study suggests that understanding foreign policy trends and individual attitudes requires a focus on psychological environment traits.

The last but not least, Koc, Tuba (2023) carried out a study entitled "ANALYSIS OF PUTIN'S FOREIGN POLICY PRACTICES WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY" with the purpose of analyzing the key events in Putin's life and relating his foreign interactions to aspects of his personality and upbringing. The aim of the study was to evaluate these changes within the context of political psychology. By using the descriptive and analytical method, the study found out that these events have a negative psychological impact on Putin and influenced his foreign policy decisions.

However, although these studies have generally discussed the effects of family background personality on external decisions, but they have not focused broadly on family backgrounds and personal environments, such as Putin's family background, which have seen gaps and shortcomings. This study attempts to examine the impact of Putin's background on his personal decisions by understanding Putin's personal history, such as his childhood during cold war and family background, career, and personal experiences.

By focusing exclusively on Putin's childhood during cold war and family history, upbringing, early experiences, and how these factors have shaped his foreign policy outlook, our study makes a distinctive contribution to the subject relating political decision-making to biographical study and providing a more comprehensive and well-founded understanding of Putin's foreign policy motivations that go beyond individual traits or life circumstances. It provides knowledge of foreign policy choices to a more profound sociocultural and micropsychological level. Although previous research has examined Putin's personality, leadership style, and psychology, the current study fills a major vacuum by examining the direct influence of his personal history, family history, and childhood on his foreign policy as it builds on existing literature by combining biographical specificity including Putin's childhood during cold war and family, early social environment, and psychological trauma with leadership-focused theoretical models, offering an innovative perspective.

1.7 Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative, case study approach. It utilizes:

- Document analysis: Speeches, political memoirs, media transcripts.
- Primary sources: Russian-language biographies, interviews, and archives (where accessible).
- Contextual analysis: childhood during cold war, Leningrad post-WWII environment, KGB indoctrination, Soviet family values.
- Leadership analysis models: Leadership Trait Analysis (LTA), Big Five Personality Traits, and Dark Triad models.
- Putin is treated as the central case, and key foreign policy events are examined through a psychobiographical and decision-making lens.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

Among the prominent approaches is Snyder's Decision-Making Theory, which provides a micro-level analysis of how individual leaders and small groups influence foreign policy outcomes. This theory places the individual decision-maker at the center of foreign policy analysis, emphasizing how personal beliefs, background, and environment shape national choices (Snyder, 2002). It justifies the focus on Putin rather than institutional actors like the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Snyder's (1962) framework for foreign policy decision-making emphasizes the role of psychological, cognitive, perception, and organizational variables, consisting of past events. It suggests that leaders' decisions are influenced by their understanding, personal goals, values, and group dynamics. The approach highlights the importance of individual-level analysis in explaining foreign policy and critiques systemic theories like realism and constructivism (Snyder, 1962; Snyder, 2002).

2. Vladimir Putin's Personality Structure and His Personality Traits

The following section is devoted to focus on his family background, his educational and psychological environment, his **intelligent** career, and other activities that helped to build Putin's traits:

2.1. Background of the Putin Family and its Early Life Influences

Understanding Russian history, culture, family dynamics, and influences is key to grasping Putin's leadership style, marked by strength, determination, efficiency, and loyalty (Novruzov, 2024, p. 219). Putin's foreign policy choices are heavily shaped by his upbringing, personality, family background, psychological composition, education, experiences, beliefs, and the impact of post-WWII hardships, as we'll explore further (Arab Post, 2022). Putin himself refers to the difficult situation of his family, stating, "My father was born in 1911

in St. Petersburg when WWII started, life in St. Petersburg was hard, and people were hungry, so the whole family went to Pominovo, a village in the Tver region where my grand mother came from. They married, and both moved to a nearby town where her husband worked as a Navy mechanic” (Presidential Executive Office of Russia, 2000). He published his autobiography in early 2000 under the title "The First Person: A Candid Portrait of the Russian President." The book is the result of a lengthy interview with Putin.

Further, It is run by three Russian journalists, in which Putin says, "I come from a normal family; my parents don't tell me anything about them in depth." In particular, his father, who describes him as a "quiet man" reflected in Putin's personality, especially when he became an intelligence officer, saying, "Compared to my mother's family, I know my father's family better." Putin spoke of his father's heroic service in World War II and his grandfather's role as a cook for Lenin and Stalin and predicted a prosperous future and extraordinary birth in the Soviet Union at the age of 41. Putin described his family's situation as following ".....I've lived like this for a long time, almost all my life. I've lived like a normal person and always maintained that connection". His father served in World War II. He was employed at the carriage works in the 1950s as a security guard and foreman (Presidential Executive Office of Russia, 2000; Arab Post, March 1, 2022).

Vladimir Putin grew up in a post-WWII Soviet working-class household. His mother, Maria Ivanovna Shilomova, who was born in 1912, was a factory worker, while his father, a WWII veteran, suffered injuries during the war and later joined the Soviet Navy. The family endured significant hardship due to the lingering effects of World War I on their children (Gessen, 2012, p. 18, Sims, 2018, p. 21). Putin's personality traits and leadership style have been significantly shaped by his family background; his father's bravery and devotion, along with

his mother's moral character, contributed to his development of confidence, caution, patriotism, and initiative—traits that influence both his domestic governance and foreign policy decisions (Hamadni, 2024; Belton, 2020). Putin's assertiveness, independence, and resistance to submission—evident in his conduct during the **Georgia**- Chechen War—were partly shaped by his mother's wartime resilience and self-sacrificial behavior, such as secretly providing food to her children while her husband was hospitalized (Mohasin, 2015, pp. 83–85; Natalia et al., 2022, pp. 19–28). Putin's perspective on Russian dominance and national unity was shaped by his father's deep adherence to Soviet ideology and Russian nationalism, which strongly influenced his early worldview (Schunn, 2007, p. 410; Rashid, 2022, pp. 142–145).

Growing up in 1950s–1960s Leningrad, Putin's values of loyalty, endurance, discipline, and respect for authority were shaped by his mother's sacrifices and his father's military service, while his working-class upbringing within the Soviet system influenced his approach to managing Russia's domestic and international challenges (Sims, 2018, 22; Arab post, 2022; Glebov, 2019, 47). This means Putin's political development and leadership style were shaped by his parents' discipline, patriotism, and sacrifice—particularly his father's near-death wartime experience and his mother's resilience—alongside early foreign policy exposure and a strong foundation in Russian nationalism (Belton, 2020, Sims, 2018: 22, Hamdani, 2024, Kolesnikov, 2019, p. 50). Although Putin's behavior and personality were influenced by his family's difficult circumstances, his post-inauguration attitude was greatly impacted by his father and grandfather's enthusiasm for the Soviet Union.

Putin's family background, trauma, courage, loyalty, and career significantly influenced his personality development, leadership, and political behavior, with the greatest event being that which influenced him.

2.2 The Leningrad-Petersburg Siege - Impact on Putin's Life and Foreign Behavior

One significant influence on Putin's life was the Leningrad-Petersburg Blockade (1941–1944), a catastrophic World War II event marked by mass starvation and loss of life, including members of his own family. Despite the hardships, Family of Putin survived and often reflects on this period as shaping his sense of resilience and strength (Galeotti, 2019, p. 47).

Putin recalled how his father recognized his wife by her shoes among the dead and begged the medics to save her even though they thought she wouldn't make it through the war, calling his mother's rescue a horrific and painful experience. This narrative is similar to one mentioned in Hillary Clinton's book "Hard Choices" (Clinton, 2014, p. 906). After the war, Putin's parents chose to have another child at the age of 40 to cope with the loss of their third, symbolically bringing him back to life through the birth of Vladimir Putin (Yusuf, 28/2/2022). "My father told me that he forced her to take him to the apartment with his crutches," Putin said.

Further, Putin, the incoming president of Russia, came from a family that had endured hardship during the siege of Leningrad. Their maternal grandmother was killed by German occupiers, while their uncle and five of his stepbrothers disappeared from the Eastern Front. Putin's character was impacted by these experiences (Hamdani, 2024; Belton, 2020; Arab Post, March 1, 2022), and later actions were shaped by the hardships his parents endured, contributing to a leadership style marked by resilience and a renewed emphasis on nuclear power (Yousef, 28/2/2022).

Putin's views on leadership, sacrifice, power, and national pride were deeply influenced by his family's suffering during the Leningrad siege, reinforcing his belief in a strong, resilient state overcoming adversity (Pomerantsev, 2014, p. 31). Although he was neither born nor present during the siege, however, his upbringing and viewpoint were greatly influenced by his family's experiences, which included:

1. Psychological Aspect: Analysts suggest that the legacy of the Leningrad siege fostered Putin's deep mistrust of external threats, leading him to prioritize military strength and territorial security in his strategic policies (Belton, 2020:25–30; Hill & Gaddy, 2015, pp. 45-50). 2. Nationalistic Rhetoric and Politics: Putin often references the Leningrad siege as a symbol of Russian resilience to promote patriotism and legitimize assertive actions, such as the 2014 annexation of Crimea, framing Russia as a fortress defending against Western aggression (Reid, 2011, pp. 320–325).

Putin was not born during the Nazi occupation and attack on Leningrad, but his suffering has made him resilient, devoted, and determined. He is ready for global threats since he is focused on national security and suspicious of outside threats. However, given how catastrophic the siege was for the city, he might be able to avoid vulnerability by utilizing military power, an assertive foreign policy, and the acquisition of Crimea.

2.3 Putin's Birth, Psychosocial Environment, and Childhood Development Vladimir Putin's early life and psychological development were shaped by various factors, including the post-World War II environment, the decline of the Stalinist era, and widespread economic, social, and political instability. Born in Leningrad on October 7, 1952, he has described his

upbringing as psychologically challenging, influenced by the broader context of communist rule and its aftermath (Hamdani, 2024; Belton, 2020). Putin was raised in a psychologically strained environment marked by uncertainty, fear, and instability, both within his household and the broader context of post-war Leningrad. Growing up in a low-income, working-class family living in a modest, poorly equipped apartment, he experienced material deprivation and limited access to personal comforts or possessions, including toys. (Mankoff, 1999; Gessen, 2012, 18; Alhurra Channel, 12/5/2022; Hill, F., Gaddy, 2013, Dawisha, 2014).

Putin repeatedly pushed the rats to the corner of the room and fought them, compelling them to either give up or start a fight because their apartment was just full of rats and mice. Putin compares the situation in Ukraine with NATO to a rat having to decide whether to resist and fight or give up and die. As Putin stated in a speech on May 24, 2022, this also holds for Russia, and it is clear that many of his characteristics and beliefs are influenced by the circumstances of other parties. Also, Putin's early years were impacted by several factors, including a filthy apartment, battlefield injuries, financial difficulties, the absence of his mother, and his father's military career. Despite serving in the military, his father's absence from home influenced his views on loyalty and authority (Mankoff, 1999, Gessen, 2012: 18; Alhurra Channel, 12/5/2022).

Here, Putin emphasized the nature of their home as a psychological environment. "It was a building that looked like a circle-shaped courtyard, like a well, a fifth floor without an elevator before World War II. My parents lived in a half-house in Peterhof and were proud of the standard of living they had achieved at the time, although it wasn't much, but it seemed like an ultimate dream to them," as an indication of traits like constancy, fortitude, resolve, and non-surrender (Presidential Executive Office of Russia, 2000).

In a BBC interview with the Russian psychologist Maria Osorina, who describes Putin's living environment as a psychological environment, which she believes is "very porous and very close to the way we lived in the 1950s," she points out, "It was very frightening and had its own set of rules, didn't it? He was small, difficult, and unhappy, but Putin was born to heroic, determined, agile, and courageous parents, so it was very important for him to be strong, resilient, and brave as a personal character and not to be beaten by other children, and the family was distinguished by his honesty; his grandfather and father and mother possessed many moral qualities such as honesty, commitment, and loyalty. Putin's parents prioritized norms and moral principles over Western values, but they didn't express their love for him. Their cold exteriors, especially their father's, exacerbated their lack of caring. "Political leaders like Putin employ military power to elicit symbols, garner support, and address concerns of self-esteem when they see dangers and uncertainty in international relations (BBC Global, 2025, Levy, 2013, p. 310).

We referenced earlier. Putin's authoritarian mindset stems from feelings of insecurity, mistrust, and a need for more control. These factors are influenced by poverty, ideological repression, and childhood trauma (Gessen, 2012, pp. 25-30). Some thinkers and diplomats emphasize the influence of Putin's mental environment on his external behavior, including Fedorsky, a former diplomat, states, "Putins decision-making style is due to personality traits influenced by the psychological environment in which he lived, such as, his parents upbringing, school environment, sports, social and economic life, intelligence and patriotism, the communist system, and early life experience,.He is strong leader, adaptable, culturally havey and valued by Russians" (Fedorovski, 2022, Nasrit, 2019, pp. 44-60).

The Russian thinker **Yurimukhin** says, "Putin's personality is characterized by a negotiated and conflict resolution approach, but he is strong in times of crisis and is willing to take tough measures." Putin has gained the respect of American scholars due to his careful and restrained approach. His calm demeanor and versatility make him popular (Nasrit, 2019, pp. 44-60). Individuals who endure difficult living conditions and constant anxiety often experience diminished trustworthiness as a result of these challenges (Choi & Horner, 2021). American intellectuals admire Putin for his psychological traits, particularly his cautious and restrained nature. His recognized status is further attributed to his personable demeanor and adaptability (Tripathi, 2017, pp. 52-53).

Putin's upbringing in post-World War II Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), where he honed his leadership skills and navigated the city's harsh environments, played a significant role in his rise to power (Sakwa, 2007, p. 36).

Hence, Putin's character and leadership skills were significantly impacted by his unique upbringing, which encompassed poverty and adversity. It is important to comprehend his personality composition because his independence, aggression, and values have influenced his current foreign policy behavior. His educational background in Leningrad must also be taken into consideration, Putin's foreign policy is influenced by his upbringing in a Soviet police-intelligence state, emphasizing controlled force. He favors psychological operations and media manipulation over direct conflict, focusing on cyberwarfare and misinformation campaigns. His mistakes have shaped his foreign policy choices.

2.4 Early Soviet Education and Ideology's Influence on Putin Foreign Policy

The Soviet education system, which prioritized discipline and respect for authority, profoundly shaped Putin's development during his youth. Attending school in Leningrad in the 1950s, he was exposed to an educational framework aimed at cultivating collective identity, promoting Soviet ideology, and fostering loyalty to the state (Wilson, 2014, P. 40).

Putin's perspective was shaped by Soviet ideals and ideological frameworks, which emphasized the greatness of the Soviet Union, socialism, and loyalty to the state. Although the Soviet Union dissolved, its legacy as a champion of social justice and progress remained influential. Soviet ideology prioritized national unity over individual freedoms and communal interests over personal rights. Putin's policies, which focus on socioeconomic stability, state protection, control, and national unity, reinforce the Soviet Union's totalitarian legacy and its emphasis on state legitimacy (Kolesnikov et al. 2019, pp. 93-96).

Personality qualities, work ethic, seriousness, balance, adaptability, and resilience are all significantly influenced by childhood events. These morally reversible experiences influenced the person's beliefs, personality, and admirable actions (Qarachatani, 2015, pp. 294-302). It's crucial to note that Putin's instructor explains his character at school. He recalls that his teacher, who taught him from the first to the eighth grades, was a troublemaker rather than a leader, Vera Gurevich: "In the fifth grade, he hadn't found himself yet, but I could feel his energy, his energy, his personality, and I saw that he was very interested in language; he took it easy, he had a great memory, and he had an active mind." "I thought, 'Something good is going to come out of this guy in the future, so I decided to pay more attention to him to divert his attention away from the boys

on the streets, his teacher, his ability to get better results, and the influence he had on his father to influence his son, which led to a significant change in his attitude towards Vladimir Putin”. (Presidential Executive Office of Russia, 2000) Putin has openly described himself as a "naughty student." shaped by the post-war environment, and exhibiting violent tendencies and emotional instability. Moreover, his teacher from grades four to eight, Vera Gurevich, considered his living conditions to be deplorable (Mohssan, 2015, p. 84). Svobodnaya Press magazine called Putin a "bully rather than a pioneer" since he was a poor student, but his love of German history and language helped him cope (Novruzov, 2024: 218). Putin became a member of the Youth Communist Pioneers Organization and rapidly advanced to the position of platoon commander. This role, which served as an entry point for leadership and social engagement, followed his display of personality, strength, and self-defence skills in the sixth grade, where he also introduced the concept of self-taught defense techniques (Presidential Executive Office of Russia, 2000).

We argue that one of the key factors in managing international assignments, such as Putin's transfer to Dardsen, Germany, by the KGB, was his motivation to learn German. Leningrad was a state-run city in the 1950s and 1960s that encouraged cultural tolerance while repressing dissent. One aspect of the city's effect was its ability to teach its citizens about Stalinism and the authoritarian governments of Khrushchev and Brezhnev. Putin's leadership style reflects the authoritarian, centralized power structure of the Soviet regime and is influenced by Soviet values such as discipline, loyalty, nationalism, suspicion of outsiders, and state control. As we mentioned earlier, his foreign policy places a high priority on defending Russian sovereignty and thwarting Western aggression (Galeotti, 2019, p. 58; Pomerantsev, 2014, p. 85).

The way Putin behaves and acts is influenced by his political and social views. He targets and assaults students, demonstrating quick thinking, cooperation in foreign policy, and coalition building. These traits, which influence his beliefs, actions, and leadership style, are mostly influenced by his upbringing, education, and social contacts. Because Judo's youth programs are influential, they have had a significant influence on Russian decision-makers. Positive traits from birth influence his behavior and choices in the future, particularly in social situations.

2.5 The Influence of the Soviet Inclusive Police State on Putin's Foreign ecisions

Putin was raised in an environment deeply shaped by policing, intelligence, and authoritarian governance in Leningrad. His entry into the Soviet foreign policy security services fostered a strong appreciation for state loyalty and centralized authority. During the 1950s and 1960s, Leningrad played a key role in Soviet defense and intelligence operations, largely supported by the KGB, which significantly influenced Putin's formative years and ideological development (Pomerantsev, 2014, p. 32). During the Soviet period, Putin was influenced by the atmosphere of political surveillance and repression in Leningrad. Although the city served as a center of intellectual and political activity, the pervasive presence of the KGB fostered a climate of caution, where conformity and loyalty to the state were essential (Pomerantsev, 2014, p. 35). Putin's early years were defined by a keen interest in understanding power structures and strategically navigating his environment. After graduating from Leningrad University in 1975, he pursued a career with the KGB, the Soviet Union's security agency known for its emphasis on order, allegiance, and safeguarding national interests. Drawing on his experience in East Germany

during the Cold War, Putin highlighted the critical role of authority and secrecy in state security, reflecting the foundational principles of his work within the intelligence apparatus, as Putin points out: "My view of the KGB was based on the typical stories I had heard about intelligence." (Presidential Executive Office of Russia, 2000; Pomerantsev, 2014, p. 33)

Putin's leadership style was shaped by Soviet ideological principles, military discipline, and a deep-rooted loyalty to the KGB. His formative years in Leningrad were marked by the harsh realities of the postwar Soviet environment and the pervasive influence of the KGB, which instilled values of control, hierarchical order, and strict discipline (Wilson, 2014, p.: 42) As a typical KGB officer, Putin was raised in a political and professional climate that valued strategic ambiguity, disinformation, and anticipating opposition. These traits, which include a propensity for informal and ambiguous political procedures, democratic government, and the adoption of hybrid warfare tactics, continue to have an impact on him today (Gessen, 2012; Soldatov, 2010).

Putin's early career in Soviet intelligence widely regarded as a foundational influence on his worldview—has significantly shaped his approach to both domestic and foreign policy. His current leadership style, marked by patriarchal tendencies, mistrust, unpredictability, suspicion, caution, and the use of disinformation, reflects the psychological impact of his KGB experience and his enduring cultural ties to the Soviet era (Stevens, 2022). Exposure to Cold War-era espionage and political repression during his time as a KGB officer informed his assertive foreign policy and strategic decision-making (Myers, 2015, pp. 45-60) Putin's tenure in the KGB highlights how his formative experiences within the organization influenced his leadership style, instilled deep-rooted trust issues, and produced lasting psychological effects from his training and service, all of

which continue to shape his external conduct and decision-making (Dawisha, 2014, pp. 20-35).

Despite facing numerous challenges, Putin consistently sought to uphold the authority and legacy of the Soviet Union. His efforts included joining the KGB and acquiring the credentials necessary for recognition within the intelligence community, as well as pursuing his early aspiration of becoming a member of the Young Pioneers (Greenwood, 2022; Schoen, 2007, p. 410).

Putin, who grew up in Leningrad under the watchful eye of a police and intelligence state and subsequently became a prominent figure in the KGB, places great importance on nationalism, loyalty, control, sincerity, and seriousness in his leadership style. Putin's KGB activity has influenced both domestic and international politics and has been successful in settling NATO and foreign conflicts. Putin's familial background and life experiences have mostly influenced his foreign policy choices in these ways.

3. The Effect of Putin's Early Life and Family Background on Foreign Policy Decision-Making

Putin's formative years, including his family background, personal history, early education, ideological development, childhood experiences during cold war, and the encompassing influence of the Soviet system, have all significantly shaped his perspectives on contemporary Russian foreign policy and decision-making, as demonstrated below:

1. Putin's foreign policy has been profoundly shaped by his family background, early life experiences, including poverty and hardship, as well as the ideals and low self-esteem of his parents. These factors have influenced not only his

leadership style and international relations, particularly with countries like China, India, and others, but also his approach to conservative regimes such as Iran, Syria, and North Korea. Additionally, these influences are reflected in key decisions, such as the annexation of Crimea and military interventions in Syria and other former Soviet states (Engelmann et al. 2019, pp. 12781-12786).

In his speech on May 24, 2022, Putin compared Russia's current attitude toward NATO to the negative psychological climate and the large number of rats in their home: "The West and NATO have besieged us; there is no other way to defend ourselves like a mouse..." "... Their house is full of rats, and many times we besiege them; they are afraid to attack; they are waiting for death. This applies to our war with Ukraine because NATO has besieged Russia" (Putin's speech, 24/2/2022), and apply the same style and behavior of childhood towards the outside world. As Putin asserted in one of his interviews, the effects of bullying on him by other children are dealt with once by intimidation, and this time by leniency for expansion in the war with Ukraine (Presidential Executive Office. (n.d.). 2000; Mohssan, 2015, p. 84)

Following World War II, children endured bullying, intimidation, and the expansion of war. Putin, similarly, experienced discomfort due to the challenging environment shaped by Western involvement in regions such as Central Asia, Georgia, Ukraine, and NATO. This unsettling atmosphere contributed to his ongoing focus on security in his decisions and public statements. He conveyed this sense of uncertainty in his speech at the Munich Security Conference on February 10, 2007: "U.S. policy does not leave anyone feeling safe" (Putin, 2007).

The profound and enduring psychological sequelae of World War II, the protracted Siege of Leningrad, and the imposition of totalitarian governance included widespread trauma, a pervasive sense of despair, the manifestation of

antisocial behaviors, a heightened perception of unpredictability, and persistent states of fear among affected populations, as emphasized in his speeches on Al-Hurr TV on May 24, 2022, with President Putin: "All that happened is emergency measures; we have no other option. They have created security risks that have not enabled us to act differently". This is a trait of mistrust and neuroticism that drives Putin to take action before deciding to go to war with Ukraine (Alhurra Channel, 2022).

2- Putin's foreign policy and power paradigms, emerging in the 1950s-1960s, were shaped by Soviet nationalist ideology, characterized by the prioritization of Soviet power, Russian ethnic centrality, and a doctrine of supremacy (Wilson, 2014, p. 85). The 2014 annexation of Crimea serves as a key case study of Putin's foreign policy, reflecting both his Soviet educational background and his strategic objective of expanding Russia's global influence (Pomerantsev, 2014, p. 60). Putin's ideological framework was significantly shaped by Soviet-era principles of youth indoctrination, which emphasized the protection of Russian national interests and the restoration of patriotic sentiment, which is "big-power politics" (Wilson, 2014, p. 92).

Putin's leadership fostered a post-Soviet resurgence of national identity, bolstered collective self-assurance, and cultivated a sense of optimism, demonstrating the potential for harmonious alignment between elite-driven initiatives and public support in the realm of foreign policy (Loftus, Suzanne, 2022). Putin's resilience and pragmatic approach to foreign policy may stem from his family's experiences during the Siege of Leningrad, alongside their strong ties to Russian history, national identity, and patriotism. His ability to navigate crises, adapt to external pressures, and protect Russian and Slavic interests in post-Soviet

states reflects his strategic flexibility, pragmatism, and steadfastness in international affairs (Hill, F., and Gaddy, 2015, pp. 100-115).

3. Putin's authoritarian approach to diplomacy, shaped by his upbringing in a society that valued loyalty and submission to centralized authority, is reflected in his unilateral decision-making in both diplomatic and military contexts (Pomerantsev, 2014, p. 65). Putin's foreign policy decisions have been significantly shaped by his early life and family background in Leningrad, influenced by the broader political, social, and psychological context of the Soviet Union.

4. Putin's emphasis on projecting a strong state in international affairs is rooted in his upbringing and family life in Leningrad, which profoundly influenced his worldview and foreign policy decision-making. He has explicitly connected his personal family experiences and the political, social, and psychological environment of the Soviet Union to key foreign policy choices during his presidency (HistoryKnowledge (n.d) 2025; Sims, 2018, p. 62).

5. The Survival Mentality: Shaped by his upbringing in the harsh post-World War II environment and the siege of Leningrad, Putin developed a survival-oriented mindset that informs his foreign policy. This approach is characterized by caution and pragmatism, with a strong emphasis on safeguarding Russia's sovereignty and enduring perceived external threats, including those posed by NATO (Sims, 2018, p. 62).

6. Putin's foreign policy outlook, particularly regarding security and surveillance, was significantly shaped by his KGB background, Soviet-era security training, and upbringing in Leningrad. Exposure to state security doctrines, police-state structures, and intelligence operations instilled in him a deep-seated distrust of

the West, reinforcing an emphasis on state control, secrecy, and vigilance in international relations (Sims, 2018, p. 62). The KGB played a critical role in intelligence collection and suppressing dissent as part of the Soviet Union's geopolitical strategy—a framework that later influenced Putin's foreign policy approach (Pomerantsev, 2014, p. 45). His tenure within an intelligence agency fostered a persistent distrust of Western nations, which subsequently influenced his geopolitical outlook (Engelmann et al. 2019, pp. 12781-12786). Available intelligence suggests his operational history under KGB mentorship may have informed subsequent geopolitical strategies, including alleged cyber interference in the 2016 U.S. electoral process, persistent resistance to NATO enlargement, and a strategic distrust of Western geopolitical objectives.

7-Historical narrative: Putin systematically employs Soviet-era historical narratives, ideological frameworks, and cultural traditions— internalized since childhood— to legitimize contemporary Russian foreign policy as a defensive measure against perceived Western encroachment. This rhetorical strategy has been notably utilized to rationalize military interventions, including the ongoing conflict in Ukraine as a "holy war." (Gessen, 2012, p. 314)

8-Putin's foreign policy has been heavily influenced by his ideological rejection of the Soviet Union's collapse and the resulting decline in Russia's global influence. His firm belief in restoring Russia's status as a major world power has shaped key interventions, such as those in Syria and Ukraine, which aim to reassert Russian hegemony and counter the geopolitical setbacks following the Soviet Union's dissolution. Putin's foreign policy was shaped by what he referred to as "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century," highlighting the profound sense of loss and contempt that characterized his worldview and showed Russia's hostility to Western attempts (Sims, 2018, p. 76; Galeotti, 2019, p. 71-

74; Pomerantsev, 2014, p. 45). Many Europeans perceive Putin as an aggressive and authoritarian leader with ambitions to reconstitute the former Soviet Union, a view shaped by his actions—such as his response to the 2008 Russian invasion of Georgia. This perception is reinforced by the belief that Putin's foreign policy decisions are strongly influenced by his self-image and personal convictions (Ismail, 2008). Putin's confrontational and strategic stance toward the West is shaped by his difficulty in accepting Russia's diminished status and lingering suspicions about Western intentions, which continue to influence his foreign policy approach (Sims, 2018, p. 78).

The qualities Putin was taught during his early years in Leningrad—discipline, seriousness, self-confidence, loyalty, belonging to the state, and national pride—were shaped by the political and social environment of Soviet Russia. These elements have a direct impact on Putin's foreign policy, international relations, and governance, showing how his early life experiences, events, traumas, and family background all shape his foreign policy choices, especially when it comes to Russia's place in the world. The following table describes the impacts and connections between youth, childhood, family history, and outside choices: **Table (1): Effects of Early Life and Family Background on Putin's Foreign Policy Decisions:**

Early Life/Family Background	Impact on leadership style and personality	Case Study	Foreign Policy Decisions
Working-class families in Leningrad lead a simple lifestyle.	He underlined the value of independence, tenacity, pragmatism, and a strong work ethic.	Partnership with China, Georgian conflict, Chechnya (1999–2009), Ukraine,	Russia's military defends its interests, fights separatism, strengthens its global standing, and counters Western influence, despite bad consequences for low-income families.
Childhood in Leningrad, Street Fighting	The belief that survival requires strength and control, with the use of force to assert authority over one's own decisions.	Chechnya, Gorgia, War Ukrania,	Putin's viewpoint was influenced by a focus on defense and power.
Father's WWII Veteran Background	Their sense of nationalism, patriotism, and duty has significantly intensified.	Annexation of Crimea (2014), Gorgia	Through the annexation of Crimea, he restored Russian influence driven by nationalist sentiment.
Religious women and their mothers' escape from the Siege of Leningrad	A survival attitude, emotional stability, and resilience were created.	To preserve "Holy Rus'" ties to existing regimes (such as Syria and Iran) in the 2022 war in Ukraine.	Despite global reactions, he has exhibited determination and steadfastness.

Patriotism, Nationalism	It is deeply rooted in both global and Russian history.	Intervention in Syria (2015)	By aiming to project power and safeguard its interests, it underscores Russia's significance on the global stage.
KGB training, Soviet ideology, and a mistrust of the West.	Uncertainty regarding the future of the West and a mentality characterized by secrecy.	U.S. Election Interference in (2016), War Ukraine	He interfered with the U.S. elections in an attempt to weaken Western democratic institutions.
Authoritarian Education	Faithfulness to the state, affiliation with communist parties, and acceptance of centralized authority.	Rational justifications for foreign policy decisions, such as Georgia's 2008 annexation of Crimea.	He struggled to assert control and resist Western influence in South Ossetia.
Martial Arts Training	Self-control and strategic thinking	Georgia, Ukraine.	Putin's training instilled patience, discipline, and strategic thinking, qualities that facilitated his ability to make informed foreign policy decisions and execute swift, unanticipated actions.

Sources: (Dawisha, K. (2014); Galeotti, M. (2019); Putin, V. et al. (2000); Sakwa, R. (2008); Stent, A. (2014); Trenin, D. (2011).

The table above depicts how Putin's early life experiences, including bloodshed and family stories, his upbringing in post-war Leningrad, and hearing family stories of wartime sacrifice all instilled resilience, nationalism, and a penchant for strong statecraft responsibility. His leadership style and foreign policy decisions are shaped by familial patriotism, Soviet-era KGB influences, and martial arts. His distinct leadership style, influenced by psychological and

cultural variables, mixes strategic patience and military action in foreign policy issues including NATO, Georgia, Syria, Ukraine, and so on.

4. Conclusions

Based on the findings, the study comes to the following conclusions about Vladimir Putin's personality, leadership style, and foreign policy decision-making orientation:

1. This study re-examined the relationship between foreign policy, psychology, and leadership, demonstrating how Putin's upbringing and familial experiences have shaped a psychological framework that significantly shapes Russia's foreign policy. It offers fresh perspectives on the function of psychological continuity in political leadership and the personalization of Russian foreign policy through a psychobiographical and decision-theoretic approach.

1. Parental and Familial Influence: Putin's personal and political manner was heavily influenced by his parents, (father) and (mother), as well as his extended family background. Their ideals, hardships, and ideological beliefs influenced his perspective.

2-Psychological Resilience and Aggressive Outlook: Putin's portrayal of his childhood struggles—a rat attitude, either surrender and die or resist, as framed—reflects Russia's aggressive approach to NATO, particularly in the Ukraine crisis. His early experiences, including battles with rodents in a harsh living environment, instilled a feeling of defiance and survival.

3- Father's Absence and Its Long-Term Impact: Putin's father's protracted departure for military service during his early years shaped his views on power, homeland defense, and loyalty. This absence may have influenced his reliance on strong, centralized authority and national security.

4-Patriotism and State Centralism: Exposure to his father's patriotic values and the Soviet state's centralized power structure had a significant impact on Putin's

political behavior. These events confirmed his belief in a strong, sovereign state immune to external intervention.

5-Education and the Characteristics of the Soviet Leadership: The Soviet era instilled in Putin the values of endurance, discipline and loyalty to the state. These beliefs influenced foreign policy decisions, which consisted of leadership styles, characterized by initiative, confidence, and loyalty to Russia's sovereignty.

6-The Influence of Motherhood on Foreign Policy: His foreign policy reflects his mother's influence, particularly his efforts to develop partnerships with conservative and anti-Western countries such as Iran, Syria and North Korea. This means that the alliance is opposed to Western hegemony.

7-His KGB Background and Authoritarian Tendencies– Putin's upbringing in the Soviet Union, where he witnessed the KGB's control and state police procedures, strengthened his authoritarian impulses. His foreign policy shows strong patriotism ‘a vision of Russian glory and a willingness to confront Western encroachment.

8- The Restoration of Russian Hegemony: Because of his early experience with power and security, Putin prioritizes reestablishing Russia's global hegemony. His military activities in Georgia (2008), Ukraine (2014-2022), and Syria (2015) demonstrate a persistent effort to oppose NATO expansion and Western hegemony.

9-Collective Security and Childhood Lessons: His support for the Collective Security Alliance originates from his boyhood, when social resilience and communal loyalty were essential for survival.

10. Training Principles in Geopolitical Strategy: Activities taught Putin valuable skills such as strategic calm, controlled aggression, and adaptability. These abilities are visible in foreign policy operations, particularly rapid military

moves like the 2008 Georgian war, which emphasises the surprise and precision of techniques.

Finally, these findings highlight how Putin's early life, family background, and ideological training have all influenced his leadership style, sustaining an assertive, sovereignty-driven foreign policy in an increasingly unfriendly global environment.

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پوخته

ئەم توێژینەمۆیه لێکۆڵینەمۆه دەکات لە کاریگەری مندالی و گەنجی خیزانی فلادیمیر پوتین لە کاتی شەری سارددا لەسەر بریاردانی سیاسەتی دەرەمۆی ڕووسیا، وکارلێکی ئالۆزی نیوان میژووی کەسی و سیاسەتی دەوڵەت، بە بەکارهێنانی میتۆدی چۆنایەتی و شیکاری لەوانە شیکردنەمۆی بەلگەنامەکان، چاپێکەوتنەکان، سەرچاوە سەرەتاییەکانی ئەرشیفی ڕووسیا و یاداشتنامەکان، هەروەها لێکۆڵینەمۆه دەکات لەمۆی ئایا و چۆن مندالی پوتین، ژینگەی خیزانی و گەشەیی کەسایەتی بۆچوونی ئەو بۆ پەيوەندیبە نێودەوڵەتییەکان و دینامیکی دەسەلاتی دارشتوو، وکێشەیی سەرەکی ئەمۆیه کە ڕوسیا بە ئاشکرا و مزارەتی سیاسەتی دەرەمۆی هەیه، بەلام ڕۆلی سەرەکی پەيوەندی بە کەسایەتی پوتینەمۆه هەیه لە بریاری دەرەمۆی. توێژینەمۆکە هەروەها لە چوارچێوەی تیۆری پەيوەندیبە نێودەوڵەتییەکانە، بەتایبەتی تیۆری بریاردانی (سنایدر) بە شیکردنەمۆی هەلسۆکەوتی پوتین لە ژێر ڕۆشنایی ئەم تیۆرەنە وجێبەجێکردنیان، توێژینەمۆکە هەول دەدات ئەو بۆشاییە پر بکاتەمۆه لە تیگەیشتن لە ڕەهەندە دەرەمۆییەکانی سەرکردایەتی و کاریگەرییان لەسەر سیاسەتی دەرەمۆ. لە دەرەمۆی ئەمۆه دەرەمۆخات کە تیگەیشتنی پوتین بۆ هەرەشە دەرەمۆییەکان و ترسی لە دەستدریژی بە شیوەیهکی بەرچاو لە ئەزموونی دروستکەریدا سەرچاوەی گرتوو، لەدەرەمۆی گەنجی و کاریگەری کەسایەتی پوتین و باکگراوندی خیزانی لە دارشتنی سیاسەتی دەرەمۆی ڕوسیا بە دیاردەکەوت.

المخلص

تبحث هذه الدراسة تأثير طفولة وشبابية فلاديمير بوتين وعائلته خلال الحرب الباردة على قرارات السياسة الخارجية الروسية وتستكشف هذه الدراسة التفاعل المعقد بين التاريخ الشخصي وسياسة الدولة من خلال دراسة تأثير خلفية عائلة فلاديمير بوتين وتجاربه المبكرة في لينينغراد على قرارات السياسة الخارجية. باستخدام المنهجيات النوعية الوصفية والتحليلية - بما في ذلك تحليل الوثائق والمقابلات والمصادر الأولية من الأرشيفات الروسية والمذكرات - يبحث هذا البحث فيما إذا كانت طفولة بوتين وبيئته الأسرية وتطوره الشخصي قد شكلت نهجه في العلاقات الدولية وديناميكيات القوة و شكلت المشكلة الرئيسية هي أن روسيا لديها وزارة سياسة خارجية بوضوح، لكن دورها الرئيسي مرتبط بشخصية بوتين في قرارات الخارجية.

كما تتناول الدراسة الأطر النظرية في العلاقات الدولية، وخاصة نظرية سنايدر لصنع القرار، وتحليل سلوك بوتين من خلال العدسات هذه النظريات وتطبيقهم، يسعى البحث إلى سد الفجوة في فهم الأبعاد النفسية للقيادة وتأثيرها على السياسة الخارجية. ويفترض أن تصورات بوتين للتهديدات الخارجية وخوفه من العدوان مستنية بشكل كبير من تجاربه التكوينية، مما يصل إلى نتيجة بأهمية وتأثير الشخصية بوتين وخلفيته العائلية في صياغة السياسة الخارجية الروسية.