



<p>Tuba TAŞLICALI KOÇ</p> <p>Dr, Independent Researcher, Bursa</p> <p> eposta: ttaslicali@yahoo.com</p> <p> https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6311-9960</p>	<p>Çağlar ÖZER</p> <p>Dr, Independent Researcher, Kocaeli</p> <p> eposta: caglarozzer_62@hotmail.com</p> <p> https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3090-4740</p>
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ANALYSIS OF PUTIN'S FOREIGN POLICY PRACTICES WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY

Abstract

The Russian Federation, which continued as its successor state after the collapse of the USSR and was one of the hegemonic powers during the Cold War period could not maintain this position both militarily and economically in the first years, but with the improvement of its economy in time, it regained its norm maker status. Russia, reborn from its ashes with this norm-making status, aims to be the dominant power in the new era, as seen in the revisionist foreign policy practices it displayed in the II. Chechen War, the Georgian War, the annexation of Crimea and the Donbass Events under the leadership of its new "charismatic leader" Putin. In addition, the Russian Federation has the motivation to establish a cultural hegemony through its efforts to construct a unique identity with the help of diaspora Russians and individuals belonging to the Russian world. Putin, who brought the Russian Federation back to the norm maker status in the new world order, carries out revisionist policies in the region, especially based on the near abroad doctrine and these policies significantly change the structure of international relations. In this study, it is aimed to evaluate these changes in the context of political psychology through important events in Putin's life. In the study, discourse analysis was used as a method, and thus the relationship between the social and psychological context produced by Putin and the conditions affecting the discourse was examined.

Key words: Putin, Russian Federation, Eurasianism, Political Psychology, Chosen Trauma, Chosen Glory.





ÖZ

Soğuk savaş döneminde hegemon güçlerden birisi olan SSCB yıkılınca ardıl devleti olarak devam eden Rusya Fedesyonu ilk yıllarında SSCB'nin gerek askeri gerekse de ekonomik düzlemde bu konumunu koruyamamış, ancak zamanla ekonomisinin de düzelmesiyle tekrar norm yapıcı statüsünü geri kazanmıştır. Bu norm yapıcı statü ile küllerinden adeta yeniden doğan Rusya yeni dönemde "karizmatik liderleri" Putin önderliğinde II. Çeçen Savaşı'nda, Gürcistan Savaşı'nda, Kırım'ın ilhakında, Donbass Olaylarında ve Ortadoğu'da sergilediği revizyonist dış politika pratiklerinde görüldüğü üzere başat güç olma statüsünü hedeflemektedir. Ayrıca Rusya Federasyonu diaspora Rusları ve Rus dünyasına ait bireyler yardımıyla da kimlik bağlamında inşa etmeye çalıştığı "biz" üzerinden kültürel bir hegemonya kurma saikindedir. Rusya Federasyonu'nu yeni dünya düzeninde tekrar norm yapıcı statüsüne kavuşturan Putin, bölgede özellikle de yakın çevre doktrininden hareketle revizyonist politikalar yürütmekte ve bu politikalar uluslar arası ilişkilerin yapısını önemli ölçüde değiştirmektedir. Bu çalışmada söz konusu tüm bu değişimlerin Putin'in hayatındaki önemli olaylar üzerinden politik psikoloji bağlamında değerlendirilmesi hedeflenmiştir. Ayrıca Rus toplumundaki seçilmiş travma ve seçilmiş zafer örneklerinden de hareketle, Rus dış politikasının Atlantikçi yapıdan Avrasyacı bir yapıya evrilmesindeki süreç analiz edilmiştir. Çalışmada özellikle yöntem olarak söylem analizi kullanılmış olup, Putin ile ilgili belgesellerden faydalanılmış ve böylelikle Putin'in ürettiği sosyal ve psikolojik bağlam ile söylemi etkileyen şartlar arasındaki ilinti irdelenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Putin, Rusya Federasyonu, Avrasyacılık, Politik Psikoloji, Seçilmiş Travma, Seçilmiş Zafer.

Introduction

Since the 1648 Westphalian order, the international relations discipline intended to comprehend the relations between nations and to create a systematic approach on this field (Özel Özcan, 2019: 54). While the 1648 Westphalian order was recognized as a milestone in the modern international relations paradigm, the principles of equality between states, non-interference in the internal affairs of one state and the sovereignty of the states in the system were introduced to the international order with the mentioned treaty (Özel Özcan, 2019: 59). However, it is observed that these three principles have changed in various perspectives, especially in the applications after the Cold War Era.

As a matter of fact, the principle of equality of states which is having a word/effect in international relations in proportion to their power; With the emergence of the "concept of diaspora", the possibility of a citizen of a country to have a say on domestic law under the name of identifying his rights by the power of the other country, the principle that another state cannot interfere in the internal affairs of a state; The principle of sovereignty of states





has evolved with the emergence of international organizations and the newly formed agendas of international law evolving into actors of foreign policy.

This change essentialized a re-examination of the international relations system in a newly emerging context; It has been evident that the system cannot be analyzed only through the states, that the actors differentiate in the decision-making processes and that these actors are affected by many overlapping factors. In this context, political psychology contributes to the international relations discipline in analyzing the current situation within the framework of a multidisciplinary approach.

In a general outlook and perspective, political psychology - generally accepted as the implementation of what is known about human psychology to political research (Huddy et al., 2013: 1) reveals that the interaction and reverberation of the past experiences and the norms and boundaries characterized by the society they live in affect the decisions taken by the leaders in analyzing any social event or phenomenon. The leader's behavior then turn into and projected to the group's behavior. This process connotes that, such a projection is shaped by "the awareness of belonging" and that decision-making processes should be analyzed both individually and on a collective level.

In this context, political psychology is a science that examines the interaction between political science and psychology (Çalışkan, 2021: 179). Çevik, on the other hand, defines political psychology as a discipline that evaluates the psychological factors that play a role in these relations by considering the relations of large groups, masses and nations with each other, as well as examining the psychological dimensions of the relations between large groups and their leaders (Çevik, 2007: 1).

While Arıboğan emphasizes that political psychology focuses on portraying the relations between the psychology of societies and individuals and political processes (2020: 42), she states that political psychology academics seek to explain the psychological basis of political behavior and argue that the political behavior of both individuals and societies is the product of a complex mental process (2020: 42-45). Kansu and Tarhan, on the other hand, define political psychology as individuals who have a direct or indirect relationship with politics; defines it as a discipline that deals with personal, social, emotional and mass behaviors on many developmental grounds, especially lifestyles (2018:3).

As it can be sensed from the definitions above, it is accorded that political psychology is used to make sense of the relations between nations. To sustain the analysis without adding the analysis of human and social psychology to the one of the political decision-making processes would create a decline in reaching scientifically sound and solid outputs. In this context, political psychology is a discipline that states the decision maker who was born, grew up in a group and is built within the social dynamics of that selected group cannot be expository by ignoring the dynamics of the group in context. Therefore, the psychology of the decision makers and the society of the country in which they make decisions should be included in the analysis and comprehension.





Basic Concepts in Political Psychology

Traumas and glories in the history of societies are among the inputs in the process of identity construction in individuals. These concepts, which are called chosen trauma and chosen glory in political psychology, provide an ideological perspective in societies that have the impact on evolving up to a citizen of a country. Volkan defines chosen trauma as "an event that evokes intense feelings in members of one group in the form of humiliation and victimization by members of another group" (1998: 20). According to Çevik, in order for an event to be defined as a chosen trauma, it is necessary not only to evoke the feeling of being victimized, but also to experience the feeling of mourning due to the loss (2007: 1).

This event creates a great trauma for the group in context and even the identity of the group is shaped within the framework and circle of this event. Thus, the group patterns the event, processes it and shapes its identity according to this pattern (Çevik, 2007: 1). Therefore, these feelings, which are transferred from generation to generation, form the identity, and then the decision makers who have a say in the country's administration use this identity for foreign policy outcomes without realizing it. As the identity is formed, these feelings are transferred from generation to generation and the decisions made are formed within the framework of this identity.

A chosen glory, on the other hand, is an event, development, achievement in which a group creates its own identity within the framework of this acquisition by it. Here, an intense mood-altering acquisition is obtained in the face of the group that it regards as the enemy and the identity of the group is interpreted around this acquisition. Chosen glories make one group feel superior to the other group (Taşlıcalı, 2008: 26).

When viewed in the context of chosen glories and chosen traumas, "past experiences" are important in the construction of the identity of groups. And individuals choose to follow leaders as the changemaker agents who act in line with the codes of this identity built in between the concepts of "us" and "other". Since these identities also create their perspectives, they lead to ideological polarization of decision makers. As a matter of fact, a leader focusing on the ideology of individualism/liberalism would advocate the privatization in the country's economy; an other leader coded with a collectivist/socialist mindset could ensure that the state monopoly is observed in production.

When the lives of leaders, who are among the decision makers, are examined within the context of foreign policy analysis, the touchpoint in their earlier lives or traumas that have significant effects on their personalities are also surveyed. Trauma is defined as "any event that shakes, hurts and injures the mental and physical existence of the individual in many different ways". (Kokurcan and Özsan, 2012: 20). Various studies on trauma were conducted before the WWI, but specific studies on war-related trauma could be carried out





after the WWII. As a result of these post WWII studies, it was recognized that individuals who encountered difficult situations in the war for the first time could experience psychological shock and that they could develop psychiatric disorders due to the stress they were exposed to (O'Brien 1990: 80-95). In the studies conducted after the Vietnam War, it was observed that there was a significant correlation between exposure to combat and post-traumatic psychiatric disorders (Gerson 1992: 742-748).

These studies do not mean that every traumatized person will have a psychiatric disorder. As a matter of fact, many studies assume that when mentally healthy people experience a severely stressful event, they will fully recover, even if they have difficulties for a while (Özen, 2017: 106). However, traumatic events, that can be exemplified as threat to one's life or physical integrity, threat or harm to one's child, spouse, close relative or friends, damage to one's home or environment, or witnessing other people being injured or killed as a result of accidental or physical violence, leave an emotional mark on (Özen, 2017: 114).

Putin's Life and "Putin Interviews" Documentary in the Light of Basic Concepts in Political Psychology

When Putin's life is analyzed within the context of political psychology, it is seen that he has experienced many traumas in his past like other Soviet-era citizens. As a matter of fact, an article published in the Russian Pioneer magazine on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Great Patriotic War fought against Nazi Germany gives the opportunity to focus Putin's inner self and constructed reality. In the aforementioned article, in which highly subjective expressions can be found, Putin himself explained how his parents survived and illustrated what kind of sacrifices they made (Putin, 2015).

In Putin's narratives, it is stated that during the aforementioned war, Putin's father was badly injured as a result of a military attack, and pieces of shrapnel remained in his foot, he secretly took out the food given in the hospital and gave it to his wife so that he could feed his children at home. Putin added, "My brother was only three years old. They were living under siege, starving. Every time my father came to see him, he gave my mother the food that the hospital gave him, without showing it to the doctors and nurses. "When my mother hid the food and took it home, she was feeding her child. Then my father started to faint from hunger in the hospital. The doctors, who realized what was going on, did not let my mother into the hospital again." expressed in words (Gevorkyan et.al 2017: 18).

This story, which seems very simple at first, is actually an indicator of what kind of sacrifices the family can make in order to protect each other during a war. A seriously injured father is willing to starve so that his children can be fed, and this sacrifice can go as far as fainting (Truscott, 2004: 13). The first step in Maslow's hierarchy of needs is related to shelter and feeding, in other words, survival (Maslow, 1943: 370-396). Before this first step is completed - physiological needs defined by Maslow - a person cannot move to other higher





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levels and cannot improve himself (Kula and Çakar, 2015: 193). What is observable here is that Putin's father gave up his own physiological needs for the sake of someone else, even though he was seriously injured, and this devotion has a significant impact on Putin's life.

In one part of his article, Putin also tells about an incident related to his brother. He states that while taken to a kindergarten for evacuation during the war, he died of diphtheria in the nursery, his grave was not even known and the whereabouts of his grave was learned as a result of the personal efforts of some journalists at that time. "They didn't tell my parents where they buried my brother. They never found out where their son's grave was. Last year, some people I didn't know were working in the archives on their own and found some documents about my brother." were the statements that belonged to Putin (Gevorkyan et.al 2017: 19) and those statements contain an example of a trauma.

Separation of a mother from her child, breaking the bond between mother and him forcibly creates a tremendous stress among family members. Worse, the death of the child during this bond termination by force will cause a feeling of guilt in the mother due to her failure to fulfill her motherhood duties and protection while are not fully accomplished. In addition, the death of a loved one is a painful experience for everyone (Bildik, 2013: 223). In death, the person left behind tries to reduce the emotional state he/she experiences with connection objects. Connection objects are all kinds of objects that provide a connection between the deceased person and individuals until the end of the mourning process and enable people to go through and surpass the mourning process more easily (Volkan and Zintl, 2010: 101).

Grief is a natural reaction that develops after a person loses someone because of death (Weiss, 2001: 47-62). According to the model of grief tasks, a person must go through certain stages in order to adapt to the grieving process (Worden, 2001). These are; to accept the reality of the loss, to work on the pain caused by mourning and to express emotions, to adapt to an environment where the deceased is not present, to reorganize the relations with the deceased emotionally and to continue living (Bildik, 2013: 225).

Going to the cemeteries and talking to the deceased is also a part of the grieving process and cemeteries help us to live and accept the mourning as a connection object (Çevik and Öncü, 1995: 109-114). The fact that there is not even a grave that can be used to complete the mourning process for the death of Putin's brother appears as a cause of trauma. As a matter of fact, Putin mentioned in his article that noone told his parents where his brother was burried . Their son's grave was never to be found and that points out a traumatic case. In this context, it can be concluded that Putin has undertaken or shared the mourning of his family's loss of their son.





Another case that leads to a kind of trauma is a misinformation about Putin's mother's death. In his article, Putin mentions: "After my mother was alone, they let my father go home and he went home with crutches. When he got home, he saw that the paramedics were removing a funeral from the house. When he got a little further, he realized that it was my mother and said, 'He's still alive! Don't you see?' he said. The paramedics replied, 'she dies on the way.' Then my father threw himself on them with crutches and had my mother taken home. As a result, my mother survived and lived until 1999. My father died in 1998."

According to Putin, this event took place before he was born. The fact that his mother was thought to be dead and was taken away from home, of course, created a stress on his father. In summary, his brother's death from diphtheria by being separated from his mother, his grave not even known, his mother being taken to be buried while she was still alive, etc. are events that are experienced in the family and that can leave a heavy emotional impact. Being born into a family that has experienced these feelings means being born into a set of events that will be traumatically internalized for Putin. A family that has experienced so much trauma will certainly transfer feelings within itself and since the personalities of individuals are shaped in the environment they live in, it can be considered that Putin's personality is shaped in a family that has experienced severe traumas.

The documentary filmed between 2015 and 2017, directed by Oliver Stone, also provides a significant data in terms of examining both Putin's childhood and his leadership to the Russian Federation. The documentary, which was compiled from the interviews between the years 2015-2017 with Oliver Stone, in which Putin explained his system of values, is examined as a case in this part of the article. The documentary is important in that Putin's past experiences enlighten the processes in the construction of his identity. The documentary was compiled from interviews with Putin, which lasted more than 30 hours, between July 2015 and February 2017, as a 4-part mini-series for Showtime Networks by Oliver Stone and is composed of the entire conversations between him and Putin (Cnnturk, 2020).

Although the documentary was criticized for praising Putin who "followed anti-American policies" and for being too soft on him. Oliver Stone emphasized that Putin was misunderstood and deserved to be heard in his defense of the aforementioned criticisms (Simons, 2017: 5). Moreover, Snegovaya titled the documentary in question as "Putin Documentary and the Useful Idiot of the Kremlin" and stated that Oliver Stone made another documentary in praise of another dictator (2017: 1). The documentary examines a range of topics varying from sections of Putin's daily life to his views on foreign policy and provides an enlightenment for decision makers in order to make Putin's views more understandable. Oliver Stone also added that Putin had never given such a long interview to





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any Western country before and that he believed he could prevent a possible war with Russia thanks to this interview (CNN, 2017)

-First Episode: This episode reveals the traumas and glories in Putin's life, who answered questions about his childhood and the period until he became the President of the Russian Federation. As a matter of fact, two brothers, one of whom was lost in the Siege of Leningrad and the other in the Great Patriotic War, became the emotional burden on the family's shoulders before Putin was born. In addition to the aforementioned trauma, the father figure, who is unable to work for his wounds in battle is one of the emotional burdens that creates trauma for the whole family.

In this episode, one of the most significant turning point in Putin's life, his registration to the law school and thus gaining a place in the KGB, is examined. "After graduating from law school, you had to work where you were sent according to the Soviet system. They sent me to the KGB, as I always wanted to work. I went to law school from the very beginning just to work for the KGB." He states that he has succeeded in achieving what he has aimed since the beginning his education.

Regarding the Gorbachev era in the USSR, Putin stated that Gorbachev and his team knew that change was needed, but they did not know how to achieve it. He stated that Gorbachev's problem was that they did not know how to change both the system and the country without putting the citizens into trouble when the system was already problematic. And therefore they dragged the country into collapse. Adding that it is almost impossible to save the country with a collapsed system, a collapsed economy, a collapsed health system and therefore 25 million Russians were left as stateless overnight (Ülger, 2011: 1400). Putin defined this situation as one of the greatest disasters of the 20th century.

In the questions about privatization regarding the new era, his answer was that he had not finished the privatization yet, only that he had prevented the sale of state properties at no cost. Adding that his aim was not to end the privatization, but to prevent a wealthy group from being created overnight and to ensure that privatization was carried out under equal conditions. Putin also stated that even though the previous laws were not legal, the state promised to protect their properties, but he had to introduce new regulations for privatization. He added that with this initiative people with no economic success who earned their millions and billions overnight just because they had good relations with the government were not satisfied and that they agreed with the ideas of other businessmen and the public on privatization (Örmeci, 2017).

In a part of the interview, Putin stated that not only Russia paid its debt to the IMF, but also the USSR's countries and cited Ukraine's \$16 billion debt as an example. The point he wanted to emphasize here was that Russia had an honorable state tradition. It is seen that





he made very important comments regarding the post-Cold War period. As a matter of fact, he shared his disappointment towards the West by expressing that they thought that the Russian people would continue as equal partners and friends with the USA and the EU when the Cold War was over. They trusted that they would support them, but instead they saw that the American intelligence service supported terrorists instead.

Stating that he thought they would be supported by his American partners at that time, Putin mentioned that they later learned that USA officials were helping terrorists to interfere with Russia's internal affairs. In particular, in his comments on Al-Qaeda, he stated that Al-Qaeda was the work of American "friends", not the Russians. In the Soviet-Afghan war, the Americans provided both information and weapons to Fundamentalist Islam against the Soviets, and thus Al-Qaeda was born. Putin stated that the situation later got out of control, as always, and that the people who should be blamed were his American partners. In his comments on NATO, Putin did not hide his resentment against Gorbachev. Relying on the promise given to him, having a verbal agreement that NATO would not expand against Russia was to be a non-acceptable in terms and he added that the promise was not kept by the West indeed.

Emphasizing the necessity of written agreements in international relations, Putin once again exemplifies that the West does not fulfill its obligations while highlighting the Warsaw Pact and NATO were established due to the polarization between the East and the West, but there would be no need for NATO since there was no SSCR remaining. Putin stated that the West was trying to find or create an enemy against NATO, but the method and tools used to execute was erroneously managed. However, despite all this perception, NATO continued to expand in the region defined by the Russian Federation as the near abroad (Oğuzlu, 2019).

In this episode of the documentary, Putin's speech at the UN Security Conference on February 10, 2007 is also included. In his speech, Putin declared that a unipolar world order was proposed as the new one after the Cold War, but that there is only one hegemon in the unipolar world, this hegemon is America. He added that this system harms not only itself but also people while expressing that America is trying to diffuse its own economic, political, educational and cultural policies and values/definitions to other countries by over-crossing its national borders. It can be observed in the video that some American listeners nod their heads and show cynical/negative gestures on this issue. Senator McCain, as one of the two senators representing the state of Arizona who always criticizes Trump's statements about improving relations with Russia was also negatory regarding to Putin's speech.

Moreover, regarding to NATO topic, Putin stated that by being a member to it, the newly assigned member would had to do whatever the United States dictated. For this reason, Russia executed countermeasures and they had to direct their own defense system to





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systems that threatened them. He also clearly emphasized that when they told the then-president Bill Clinton about their proposal to join NATO, the delegates were very uncomfortable because if they were accepted into NATO, they would have a say too, and thus they would not allow manipulation. These discourses are an indication that Russia will not accept a unipolar world and a hegemonic power in foreign policy.

Another reason Putin is against the phenomenon of unipolar world order is that the hegemonic power not only influence countries to sustain domination, but also creates imperial feelings on the citizens of the country. With the following statement, "If you say that you are the hegemonic power in the international system and that the citizens of the country are unique, you cannot prevent imperial feelings in your people and imperialist expectations in foreign policy. But this negatively effects the Americans. Because in the end these imperialist ideas will cause problems." Putin's thoughts about the hegemonic power in this context can highly be observed.

In his criticism of international relations, Putin examines not only the West but also his own nation. The main reason for the establishment of NATO was the USSR that acted primitively after the WWarII and thus gave the USA a reason and motivation to establish such means. He openly stated that, the USA got into the "psychology of invincibility" when the Cold War era ended. Emphasizing that the USA has the illusion that it can do as it pleases. In addition, Putin stated that the Americans provided operational and financial support to the Chechens in the Chechen War and that they shared this information with some of their American colleagues (Utkina, 2019: 71).

In the episode, Putin was to asked comment on whether the USA was having backthoughts to collapse Russia's economy and his response was that the people could not see the future and added that the Russians didn't give up. He mentioned about their attitude towards the Nazis with not till their last ruble was spent, nor the lifes were lost. With his response, Putin aimed to clarify the future of the Russian Federation by giving examples from its past. Moreover, Putin indicated that in 2015, while Russia spent 40 billion dollars, the USA spent 46 billion dollars on defence. According to Putin, people who understand the Russians, do not consider vassalizing but befriending because in his opinion Russians cannot live outside their own country and they wouldn't have had to spend that much on defense if the USA had not done so.

-Second Episode: In this episode, Putin emphasizes on the US withdrawal from the 30-year anti-ballistic missile agreement despite the end of the Cold War. Putin added that anti-ballistic missiles were immediately placed on the Russian border despite the rhetoric of the USA saying that Russia is no longer our enemy, and that although these systems were arranged as a defense system, the missile beds could be replaced with ones for attack missiles immediately. Adding to that; Russia would respond in respective kind, but that this





answer would be a new arms race. The point that Putin emphasizes regarding this arms race is that Russia's response would not be more complicated, hence cheaper and more effective. As a matter of fact, Russia reduced its defense expenditure from 90.7 billion dollars in 2012 to 66.4 billion dollars in 2015 (Gürson and Göker, 2017: 93).

In this context, the issue immediately suggested is the new weapon technologies developed by the Russian Federation. With the implicit language that they are developing new weapons, Putin aims to establish a language of deterrence and create an element of pressure on the USA. As a matter of fact, only 7 months after the second episode was published in May 2018, in December 2018 Russia announced that it had successfully tested its new hypersonic missile called Avangard. Launched from the Yasni region in the south of Russia and successfully hitting the target in the Kamchatka region 6500 kilometers far ahead, the missile has reached the mass production stage and entered the inventory of the Russian Army in 2019 and can carry both conventional and nuclear warheads (BBC, 2018a).

Putin's statements on the Avangard missiles in his annual speech to the parliament on March 02, 2018 are strategically well-marked (BBC, 2018b). Emphasizing that unlike the existing weapon systems, the system can fly at hypersonic speeds above Mach 20 in the atmosphere, in the intercontinental range and can perform side and vertical maneuvers of thousands of kilometers therefore of which invincible against all air and missile defense systems. Owing to this performance, Putin has proven the accuracy of his claim of simplicity, cheapness and effectiveness in the arms race.

In the same statement, 5 other weapons developed by the Russian Federation were introduced and these new technologies were defined as invincible weapons that could pass any defense system. These five weapons were a missile system with a new heavy intercontinental missile-codenamed Sarmat; an unlimited-ranged nuclear energy guided missile; an unmanned, nuclear-powered underwater vehicle, an air-launched hypersonic missile system called Kinzhal ("Dagger") and lastly a laser weapon system (BBC, 2018b).

These weapons enabled Putin express himself confidently in the second episode of the documentary. As a matter of fact, US Chief of Staff, General Joseph Dunford Russia claimed as a competitor owing to these weapon systems considering that the Congress signed a law in 2018 to ensure the American hypersonic missiles be operational by October 2022 and he noted, that NATO's superiority has eroded against Russia which is getting stronger again at the NATO Military Committee meeting held in Slovenia on September 17 2019 (Gürdeniz, 2019; Smith 2019).

Another significant topic mentioned in this episode was "spy wars". After the incident, also known as the Rosenberg case, which resulted in the execution of the defendants in 1953 after the allegations that the USA's nuclear secrets were sold to the Soviet Union (Hurriyet, 2001), Putin surprisingly introduced the issue within a normative





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Putin replied in a way that might attract the attention of normative theorists to another question directed to him about "spy wars" and "intelligence wars". He stated that his country is not in a position to listen to everyone collectively for domestic intelligence purposes like PRISM (Bolgegundem, 2019), which was revealed in 2013 by Edward Snowden. He also added that no matter how much they tried to portray Russia as the evil, Russia was a democratic and independent country. However, Valenta opposes to this claim (2017:2) and emphasizes that Trump should not trust Putin to skillfully present Russia as a democratic country.

-Third Episode: In this episode, Crimean issue and the Ukraine Crisis are mainly focused on. Putin stated that there was an economic collapse in Ukraine due to the illegal privatization of state properties and their sale at almost no price and this situation created a perception among people that the economy would improve if they entered the European Union. The point that Putin puts emphasis on regarding the admission of Ukraine to the European Union is the existence of a customs union agreement between Ukraine and the Russian Federation. Adding that they still do not collect customs duty with Ukraine, Putin mentioned that if Ukraine became a member of the European Union, EU goods would enter the territory of Russia duty-free and therefore Russia would experience economic loss.

Putin stated that they did not interfere with Ukraine's preferences, but his rejection was about Russian people suffering because of them and he also expressed his sincere thoughts by defending himself that they did not interfere in Ukraine's internal affairs in this respect. However, he added that the first agenda that the newly appointed government in Ukraine was about to pass a law banning the Russian language. The EU prevented Ukraine from doing so, but as to Putin the public saw the move towards it. Putin mentioned about attempts to imprison ethnic Russians by police force in the Donbass region which clearly indicates that Putin is closely concentrated on the internal affairs of Ukraine.

With regard to Crimea, Putin stated that they did not annex the region but the people of Crimea chose to unite with them. According to Putin they ensured the security of the elections through 20,000 personnel in the Crimean base who were rightfully there as per the 1997 Friendship Agreement. Throughout the documentary Putin presents his arguments with reference to international law and normative approach in the context of the international relations discipline. As a matter of fact, it can be evaluated that Putin exhibits a





normative approach, since he argues that a new paradigm, a new philosophy is needed to be built between states and that this paradigm should be established with respect for the interests of other societies. But Valenta insists that Trump should lift western sanctions only if Putin voluntarily withdraws his forces from Ukraine, recognizing his territorial integrity and neutrality (2017: 4).

The main reason for Putin's attitude towards NATO and the USA is the belief that once it enrolls a state, neither the leader of that state nor the community can affect the decisions made and the USA's commitment to NATO is the point of view of being a fundamental force manipulated by it. Putin declared that the USA needed an enemy to ensure its unity and to build a common "us" and for this, whereas Russia was trying to erase the old influences of the USSR especially in Eastern European countries. Putin thinks that this would end one way or another and that Russia would soon be seen that it was not a threat. However, considering the Ukraine-Russia conflict beginning from February 24, 2022 to this day, it is seen that the declared non-enemizing language and manufactured discourse by Putin is not valid and that the developments envisaged by Valenta are openly observed and painfully experienced by Ukraine and the International Community at scale.

-Fourth Episode: In this episode, Putin argues that the leaders do not have much of a say in the administration of the country - in a veiled way of shadowing his character - as one of the important actors in international relations. As a matter of fact, based on Trump's example, Putin argues that the administration is in the bureaucracy, both in the USA and in the world and that Trump will understand this in time.

When asked about his point of view on Senator McCain in the first part of the documentary, Putin replied that he admires him for his patriotism and that he can understand that he is fighting for the sake of his own country. In this context, patriotism and fighting for your own country are among the personality traits to be respected for Putin, even if he is the "other" as taught by his mother while he was a child. Her words about German troops in the WWII were as follows "Well, what kind of hatred can there be for these soldiers? They are ordinary people and also died in the war....What can we take from them? They are hard workers just like us. They were just driven to the front." (Putin, 2015) and by these words she taught Putin to respect every human being fighting for their own country despite their origin.

In a part of the documentary, images of him carrying his father's portrait in the Immortal Regiment March in Moscow to commemorate those who fought or died in the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union against Nazi Germany in 1941-1945 were published. And Putin specifically mentioned his father's photo in his statements to underline this commemoration. He stated that he chose it because his father was also in that war and, like many Russian citizens, he dedicatively and patriotically chose to be there (Bobylev, 2019).





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Putin, who underlines and prioritizes to make sacrifices for his country, also respects Senator McCain for him doing so.

But in the documentary Putin also declares McCain as outdated and in Putin's point of view a leader should beware of the importance of self-development and having a vision by stating that problems such as international terrorism, poverty and environmental pollution are the problems of all of us in the present and future ages will encounter. In this respect, Putin states that taxes should be spent on health, education and pension systems rather than defense expenses. As a matter of fact - Russia's motto - , which can be defined by "affordability, simplicity and effectiveness in military strategy and defense systems" derives from this.

Putin stated that they did not feel the need to take any precautions after the end of the Cold War Era, because they thought they were part of the system. They had obtained and bought everything from both the USA and Europe in terms of software and hardware at that time. However, he stated that as the phenomenon of cyber warfare develops, the Russian Federation should also take measures in this regard and various studies have been carried out in the last years in the context of ensuring their technological independence and security.

Finally, Putin makes comments about the oligarchs in this episode of the documentary. Asking himself the definition of oligarchy and giving his own answer, Putin defines oligarchy as the combination of money and power to influence the decisions taken and ultimately the accumulation of wealth. Emphasizing that his duty is to separate money and power, Putin answers the rumors that he has replaced the old oligarks with new ones by this approach.

Ultimately, the documentary provides a voice in Putin's interpretation of events from his own perspective, and in this context, it provides an opportunity to announce the arguments of the Russian side to the "other". The analysis of the documentary in terms of identity, ideology and discourse during Putin's decision-making process in the country's administrative stratas and styles reveal the tendency of the Russian Federation in the decision-making processes in foreign policy. The points that Putin emphasizes throughout the documentary are that the Russian Federation is a unique country, that acting in line with the interests of NATO and the United States in the immediate environment will not bring any gain in terms of world peace – moves of which will lead to a new arms race.

What can be observed, when these series of documentaries are analyzed is that; the USA and the Western Block Countries - repeatedly evaluated as "the other" by Putin - did not fulfill their promises, and match the effort to comply with counter-measures taken by the Russian Federation due to evilizing foreign policy practices. In his documentary series, Putin generally thinks that the USA and the Western Block act in line with their own agendas and





do not leave a choice to the citizens of other countries and emphasizes that this state of affairs will create more conflict areas in the near future.

Conclusion

Due to the complexity and multifacetedness of the problem areas faced by the academic community in today's world, the importance given to multidisciplinary approaches to the solution of problems is promisingly increasing. For this reason, anthropologists, political scientists, philosophers, historians, sociologists, economists, psychiatrists and similar professions contribute to the political psychology literature and try to find solutions to the problems of today's world. Political psychology, which tries to provide a projection for the future periods through both surveys for analyzing voter behaviors and leader analyzes etc. is in an effort to prevent possible dispute subjects transforming into a conflict by preemptive determining. In this context, political psychology can highly contribute to the academic community as it is an emerging discipline.

Discourse analysis method is used very effectively in political psychology, which examines the effects of chosen trauma and chosen glory analyses and the individual and society's separate experiences on decision-making processes in the following years, and as a matter of fact, the method was used while examining Putin's life in the study. In addition, according to political psychology, the outputs in the decision-making processes are taken under the influence of the leader's past experiences and the chosen trauma and chosen glories throughout the country. In this context, the decisions taken by Putin in the foreign policy of the Russian Federation are affected by his experiences and social psychology.

Regarding to this, shock therapies performed in the Russian Federation to improve the economy after the collapse of USSR in which basic needs were distributed by the state caused a longing for the existence of the Union because the old/traditional values became more prioritized in the society due to the lack of timely or no economic aid planned by the Western block has shaken the trust in the West in the Russian Society. Putin, who was born in a society with an imperial past and grew up in the Soviet system, was constructively elected as the leader as a result of the society's proudly ambition to last longer .

If the collapse of the USSR is analyzed in terms of political psychology, one of the most important issues that emerge is the "selected traumas created by the destruction" in the eyes of society that exigently got stateless overnight, and being forced to abandon the old Soviet economic and cultural values and found itself in a set of values in which the Western economic and cultural structure was prioritized. When this sudden change coincided and overlapped with the economic crises in that time, a feeling of longing for the past glory arose in the society and this structure further complicated the perception of "us" and "the other" in the context of identity.





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In addition, the attitude of the Western society seemingly aimed to support the economy whilst committing crimes like human trafficking under the excuse of tourism in order to benefit from the current economic situation - have caused irreparable wounds in the society and the numbers for suicides have increased respectively. In this context, the chosen traumas embedded in the identity of the society led to the expansion of the two poles of "us" and "the other" during the USSR period and to the formation of the new "other" over time.

The chosen traumas and the expansion of "the other" leads to the need for chosen glories in the people over time. And for the self-realization of these glories, the need to remove the pro-Western power that caused the traumas escalated. On this basis, the "Eurasianist Putin" came to power instead of the "Atlanticist/Westernist Yeltsin" administration in which the main objective is aiming to regain the status of former the USSR against the West (Yıldırım, 2020: 436) and Putin responded to the need for chosen glory in the society after World War II and Cold War Era with Chechen War field practice, where especially the younger generation is manipulated and used while all negative perceptions and failures towards "us" were tried to be erased in the statements given by Putin.

In this context, Putin – growing within a community and family witnessing the collapse of the USSR in earlier life - experienced economic crises and could not prevent the plunder of the country's values by oligarchs, then tried to offer new glories to Russian society in the new world order. However, since the traumas in this context have spread to various fields both in the geographical, economical, psychological contexts, meeting the need for chosen glory in the society and to ensure those chosen traumas to be forgotten will lead the Russian Federation to exhibit new revisionist policies in the upcoming years in order to create more chosen glories.

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