

Deciphering Russia's Strategic Intentions through the Lens of Strategic Culture: Exploring Offensive and Defensive Intentions in the Russian Invasion of Ukraine in 2022

Sigit Nugroho¹

¹International Relations, Universitas Padjadjaran, Indonesia

Email: sigit21002@mail.unpad.ac.id

Arfin Sudirman²

²International Relations, Universitas Padjadjaran, Indonesia

Email: arfin.sudirman@unpad.ac.id

Wawan Budi Darmawan³

³International Relations, Universitas Padjadjaran, Indonesia

Email: wawan.budi.darmawan@unpad.ac.id

Yusa Djuyandi⁴

⁴Political Science, Universitas Padjadjaran, Indonesia

Email: yusa.djuyandi@unpad.ac.id

Abstract

This study aims to elucidate how Russia's strategic intentions in national security relate to the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine. The researcher endeavors to comprehend the geographical circumstances, history, various defense documents, and significant speeches by security officials and the Russian president to depict a model of Russia's strategic intentions through the lens of Russian strategic culture. From the research findings, two contrasting models of Russia's intentions have been identified, which align with its strategic culture. The offensive intention model, dominated by the culture of being a great power, where Russia aims to

maximize its goal of restoring its imperial past and reaffirming its status as a global superpower. Conversely, Russia's defensive intentions, driven by a culture of perceived vulnerability, lead it to seek to defend its territorial sovereignty by maintaining its geopolitical position. Each model has its own set of parameters and yields conflicting estimates of what is needed to prevent Russia from further invading Ukraine. Inaccuracies in interpreting Russia's intentions can lead to misguided preventive measures, exacerbating the protracted conflict.

Keywords: *Ukraine, Strategic Culture, Strategic Intentions, Defensive, Offensive*

Introduction

In 2022, the world was startled by the policy of Russian President Vladimir Putin, who engaged in an anachronistic action by choosing a military invasion of Ukraine, which he claimed to be a special military operation. The decision was made in response to several diplomatic deadlocks between Russia and Western countries, mainly disagreements over proposals for security guarantees submitted to the US and NATO while sending many troops to the Ukrainian border in 2021. One of the security guarantee proposals, which requested the US to reject the accession of former Soviet Socialist Republics, including Ukraine, to NATO, was not approved on the grounds that Ukraine is a sovereign state with the right to join any security institution it desires.(Richter, 2022).

Several experts have highlighted multiple points about the background and motivations of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, beginning with President Putin's perspective of the world and his obsession (Liik, 2022; Torbakov, 2022), autocracy rising, and the fear of the Russian government (Daalder, 2022; Person & McFaul, 2022), up to NATO's expansion, which affects the distribution of power in the international system (Walt, 2022; Williams, 2022). To complement various arguments regarding the background and causes of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the author considers it crucial to examine Russia's strategic intentions as the foundation and a distinct mode of planned action. This is perceived as a rational response to various potential threats to Russia's defense and national security, influenced by its unique strategic culture shaped by geographical conditions, historical experiences, and politics.

This research qualitatively investigates Russia's goals using two opposing theories and the idea of Russia's strategic culture. It is envisaged that this research will provide insight into Russia's foreign and security policy decisions in invading Ukraine in 2022. Each model has its own set of parameters and generates conflicting estimates of what would be required to prevent Russia from further invading Ukraine. This two-model approach is expected to avoid a single estimate of an intention that could be wrong and incomplete and potentially result in a missed

policy recommendation. Understanding these two potential intentions is also used to reduce misperceptions and calculations that can trigger things that can provoke Russia to take more undesirable actions. Previous researchers have conducted extensive research on Russia's strategic culture, but researching the model of Russia's strategic intentions based on its strategic culture is innovative. It can also serve as a recommendation to contribute to realizing peace.

Russia's Strategic Culture

Strategic culture is a set of shared beliefs, assumptions, and modes of behavior derived from shared experiences and approved oral and written narratives. Strategic culture forms a collective identity that defines the goals and the best means to achieve them (Kartchner, 2009). Strategic culture will also provide insight into intentions not simply defined by other frameworks and assist with comprehending variables that may be overlooked, perhaps resulting in misinterpretation (Fasola & Lucarelli, 2019). Strategic culture involves components of national culture that influence a country's specific security policies. The following provides several explanations for Russia's strategic culture, which has been fused into identity, values, norms, and a perceptive lens:

1. Preservation of traditional values

Russia holds conservative beliefs, cherishes its history, and considers traditional values an essential part of its identity. This belief originates from the perspective that Russia's identity is considered distinct, influenced by its historical significance, size, geographical location, and distinct centers of civilization (Prozorov, 2005). The Russian language and literature are viewed as instruments for sustaining national identity, historical continuity, and intergenerational relationships. The idea of historical continuity has allowed Russia to believe that its historical experiences and traditions are of global significance and that it possesses the mentality of a great nation that must be respected (Robson, 2021). The best approach to creating a Russian identity is to be a Russian who cherishes the nation's history and values. These foundations include attempts to defend and appreciate Russian history and achievements, as well as efforts to uphold Russian traditions and traditional beliefs. In terms of traditional beliefs, Russia is a diverse country with four legally recognized traditional religions.(Putin, 2013).

Supporting these traditional values does not mean that Russia is isolated and reluctant to move forward; rather, preserving these values is done appropriately by not excluding new ideas that will ensure the country's development. This suggests that traditional Russian values are being preserved to create a solid foundation and identity as a multi-ethnic nation, while

remaining open to all innovations that contribute to growth.

2. Pursuit of Great Power Status.

Russia has been involved on various occasions, bringing it to the status of great world power. Some of these events include, Peter the Great had established Russia's acknowledged military and economic strength by the early eighteenth century. Subsequently, Tsarina Catherine the Great expanded the Russian empire further into the Black Sea. Then, Russia participated in the Congress of Vienna in 1815 to establish Europe's political map and borders, giving Russia an active role in controlling Europe's security system. Lastly, the Soviet Union successfully fought against Nazi Germany's invasion and emerged as a superpower after World War II.

Russia's geopolitical location amidst Asia and Europe has given rise to the view that Russian civilization stands between two civilizations and that Russia is the custodian of civilization balance and a world power worthy of respect (Hedenskog et al., 2013). The narrative of great power status for Russia is also shaped by the belief that Russia is a country with vast geographical territory, high economic potential, abundant natural resources, a major energy supplier, and possesses nuclear weapons (Putin, 2012). Furthermore, as the original founding nation of the United Nations with its permanent seat on the Security Council, is interpreted as Russia bearing responsibility for the legacy of war, including the existing international system. Hence, the Russian elite believes that their country has a special role in upholding the international system post-World War II.

Even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian president has constantly articulated the grand power narrative (Tsygankov, 2019). During President Yeltsin's tenure, the belief in great power status was one of the most popular foreign policy ideologies, as articulated by Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov, who stated that despite Russia's difficulties, it remained a great power, and therefore its foreign policy should reference that great power status. The belief in great power status was enshrined in various strategic documents and Russia's first post-Soviet Foreign Policy Concept in 1993, which stated that one of the state's tasks was to ensure its active role on the world stage as a great power (Melville & Shackleina, 2005). At the beginning of his presidency in late 1999, President Putin declared that Russia has always been and will remain a great power. (Kotkin, 2015). Russia was depicted as a great power and one of the most significant centers in the modern world when the idea of Russian foreign policy was updated in 2000. Furthermore, each renewal of Russia's foreign policy concept in 2008, 2013, 2016, and 2021 will continue to describe Russia as a great power with

an active role internationally.

Russia's belief in itself as a great power has shaped its worldview through the prism of great power competition, wherein larger nations are perceived to be able to dictate the external and even internal relations of smaller countries (Walt, 2015). In Russia's view, international politics is a system dominated by a small number of great powers, each with its own sphere of influence. As a result, many Kremlin officials consider that geographic spheres of influence are necessary to re-establish and maintain great power status, such as President Yeltsin's September 1995 decree on Russia's strategic discourse on CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) member states, which stated that Moscow wished to establish a leading position in the post-Soviet region, allowing Russia to claim a deserving place in the world community.. President Putin is pushing for the development of the Eurasian Economic Union fifteen years later, intending to reintegrate the post-Soviet region under Russian authority and become one of the poles of a future multi-polar world (Krickovic & Pellicciari, 2021). The main idea that Russia, as a major power, should exert some form of control over its geopolitical environment has also been widely supported and a key focus in every strategic document, including Russia's military doctrines.

3. Orthodoxy

Russia has adhered to Orthodox Christianity since 988. Then, when Constantinople fell to the Turks in 1453, Russia declared itself as the bastion of Orthodoxy. (Drost & De Graaf, 2022). Subsequently, Ivan III, as the tsar who unified much of the Slavic territories in 1462 and married the niece of the last Emperor of Byzantium, proclaimed that Russia was The Third Rome and a rightful successor to the Roman Empire and Byzantium (Eitelhuber, 2009). Continuously, Orthodox Christianity in Russia serves as a national anchor, experiencing a revival in the present era. Orthodox teachings such as saving the world from evil and reinforcing Christian values have significantly impacted Russian values.

Since his inauguration as president in 2000, President Putin has consistently reiterated the importance of Christianity. According to Putin, Christianity is a unifying force in Russian society's history and serves as a source of values and moral education. Orthodoxy is one of the political and moral foundations of the Russian Empire, where the church has always played a significant role in Russia. (Putin, 2006). Putin has also stated that Russian Orthodox Christianity in this era serves as a replacement for the bankrupt ideology of the communist state. Previously, after the October Revolution, the Soviet state attempted to destroy the spiritual roots of Orthodoxy by demolishing churches and replacing the Bible with the Moral Code of the

Builder of Communism (Putin, 2017).

Orthodoxy in Russia has become a notion of patronage accompanied by claims of Russia's irrevocable rights over the territories it has defended. Russia also perceives that the international status and modern prestige of Russia can be achieved not only through military power, political influence, and traditional balance-of-power strategies, but also through Russia's global role in the 21st century seen as a rightful entitlement stemming from its spiritual and cultural Orthodox status. The Russian Orthodox Church also serves as the right hand of Russia's political dictatorship, which was established on an ideology of consolidation and confrontation involving Russia and the West, with the aim of creating Russia a strong country so that no system or weapon can silence Christ's testimony (Engström, 2014). In the end, it is important to pointed out that the value of Orthodoxy in Russia does not imply that the Russian people have become overly religious and have overflowed the churches, but rather that orthodoxy has been resurrected to support the regime and increase general support for its policies.

4. Autocracy

Based on the vulnerability of Russia's vast territory and its multi-ethnic population, most Russians desire strong and centralized leadership (autocracy) so that Russia can play a leading role on the international stage. Throughout Russian history, the autocratic tradition has successfully preserved the nation's unity, and autocratic leadership is the best option for addressing internal and external security threats (McFaul 2021). The Soviet Union's ability to repel Nazi Germany's invasion and turn Russia into a superpower following World War II was the most effective manifestation of autocratic leadership in Russian history.

The autocracy is seen in the Russian Strategic Security Paper 2015, in which the President plays a central role in implementing the national security policy by ensuring the coordination of all system elements under the President's supervision (Russian, 2015). The national security policy of the Russian Government is implemented through the joint efforts of all elements of the system under the authority of the President of the Russian Federation and in coordination with the Security Council of the Russian Federation. It shows that the President bears personal responsibility for ensuring the implementation of the priority directions of state policy in the field of national security. Russia's centralized executive power has shaped an autocratic strategic culture emphasizing national stability and unity. The President's foreign and defense policy authority has strengthened the military's role in Russian strategic decision-making.

Furthermore, the President can appoint and dismiss the defense minister, contributing to a political climate where the military holds significant influence. Russia's ruling central political

elite still maintains control over domestic politics, similar to the Soviet Union era. However, a democratic system has somewhat mitigated this control (Gorenburg et al., 2017). In the Russian political system, the President has more power than the prime minister, as opposed to a parliamentary system where the prime minister is the head of Government and has absolute control over both domestic and foreign policy, while the President is only the head of state and serves as a symbol of state sovereignty. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, the President of the Russian Federation is responsible for determining the main lines of foreign policy, directing foreign policy, and representing the Russian Federation in international relations as head of state, by the Constitution of the Russian Federation and federal laws.

5. Compatriotism

Russia's relations with post-Soviet countries are affected by how the perception of Russian history is shaped by Soviet thinking of togetherness (Nalbandov, 2016). President Boris Yeltsin and Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrei Kozyrev introduced the phrase *compatriot* or *compatriot abroad* in 1992 (Zevelev, 2016). People who reside outside Russia's borders and seek to maintain similar historical, cultural, and linguistic ties to Russia, regardless of nationality status, are referred to by this phrase. Since 1994, the phrase *compatriot abroad* has been included in state and Russian foreign policies. Another term for this compatriot is the Russian World (Russkiy mir), which President Putin used and entered the Russian political treasury in 2007. Compared to compatriots, Russkiy mir is considered to have a more significant connotation, whereas Russkiy mir is an idea established based on self-identification or internal perception of Russia. Russkiy Mir shares the same political centre in Moscow, the same spiritual centre in Kyiv, the mother of all Rus, and the same language, Russian (A Declaration on the “Russian World” Teaching 2022).

Since 2014, concepts such as compatriot, Russkiy mir, or patriotism of fellow Russians have been a growing concern of the Kremlin's policies toward former Soviet Union countries. Since that year, defending and maintaining a sense of solidarity among Russians has become an official phrase in Russia's national politics, forming a national narrative about Russia's resurgence after failing during the post-Soviet Union collapse. Currently, compatriotism pervades Russia's relations and policies toward other post-Soviet countries, for which Russia is responsible and guarantees security for the Russian World. Russia considers itself to possess a role on the territory of the former Soviet Union to integrate this region based on Pan-Slavism and to preserve Russian rights in the new post-Soviet republics (Portas, 2020). This compatriot

value is further identified in the text of Russia's 2021 National Security Strategy, which states that Russia will strengthen the bonds of brotherhood among the peoples of Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine, as well as fight attempts to falsify history, protect historical truth, and preserve and store Russian history.

6. Messianism

The messianic elements have become an integral part of Russian culture. Russia sees itself as entrusted with a unique mission in the world, reflecting the divine will and embodying the highest ideals of truth and justice. This self-perception has cultural roots based on historical, religious, and ideological arguments. The continuous mythological narrative in Russia has depicted the country as a liberating hero, from the Mongol invasion, Napoleon Bonaparte's invasion in the 19th century, to the liberation of Europe from Hitler during World War II. The firm conviction in this messianic role is further epitomized by the belief that Moscow embodies the Third Rome, bearing the sacred duty of illuminating the world from darkness, while Russia stands as the guardian and champion of Slavic nations. Moreover, the Soviet Union is perceived as both the fountainhead and the instrument of global socialist revolution. Although spirituality was suppressed during the Soviet era, the messianic concept continued to evolve, particularly through Marxist ideology, which shares the same essence in disseminating the socialist mission widely and universally.

In the annals of Russian history and culture, messianism manifests in multifaceted ways. Politically, there is a belief that Russia has a responsibility to spread certain ideologies or political systems for the greater good of humanity. From a religious standpoint, messianism refers to the belief that Russia has a crucial role in disseminating Orthodox Christianity or even in combating evil and darkness in the world. Recently, the narrative of Russian messianism has been used as a tool to preserve Russian civilization and oppose the hegemony of Western countries dominating the global normative order (Curanović, 2022). However, messianism has also sparked conflict and controversy throughout Russian history. Movements or individuals asserting a messianic role frequently incite internal discord or confrontations with neighboring nations. Furthermore, diverse interpretations of the genuine essence of messianism have engendered disputes within Russian society itself.

7. The Vulnerability of Russian Defense to External Threats

Russia's history and geography consistently lead its leaders to perceive that their country is vulnerable in terms of its defensive position against external threats (Carleton, 2017). The

bulk of Russia's population resides west of the Ural Mountains, comprising the heartland of the nation. These territories are defined by expansive flatlands devoid of natural obstacles and directly abutting Europe making it vulnerable from all directions and easily accessible to European military forces (Kolosov et al., 2022). On the other hand, Russia also lacks access to warm waters, thus lacking a maritime trade route, which greatly burdens Russia's defense issues (Jones, 2018). Over the past 500 years, Russian history documents multiple invasions from the west, such as the Polish forces in 1605, the Swedish forces under Charles XII in 1707, the French forces led by Napoleon in 1812, the German forces in 1914 during World War I, and in 1941 during World War II).

The geographical landscape of Russia, coupled with its history of Western invasions, has instilled a deep-seated and neurotic fear within the nation, perpetually rendering it insecure. Consequently, Russia places paramount importance on maintaining strategic depth and establishing buffer zones to safeguard its heartland and deter encroachments on its territorial sovereignty.

Given this perspective, it's unsurprising that decision-makers in Russia firmly portray NATO expansion as a substantial threat. Indeed, during the initial years of President Yeltsin's leadership in the 1990s, the majority of Russia's security institutions harbored deep suspicions toward NATO (Black, 2000). Since 1993, Russia's Military Doctrine and National Security Strategy have consistently identified NATO expansion as a tangible risk and threat (Dannreuther, 2000) The Russian Military Doctrine of 2014 and 2021 reiterates this assertion, explicitly stating that NATO expansion and the Alliance's military infrastructure near Russia's borders are deemed among the most perilous threats.

Russia perceives itself as susceptible to a range of threats emanating from the West, extending beyond mere physical or kinetic attacks to include endeavors toward democratization and liberalization affecting both Russian domestic politics and former Soviet Union states (Poulsen & Staun, 2018). Russian policymakers hold the belief that their nation is encircled by a tide of Western liberalism sweeping into Eastern Europe post-Cold War, seen as an existential threat to Russia. This apprehension has deepened following the color revolutions in Georgia in 2003, Ukraine in 2004, and Kyrgyzstan in 2005 (German, 2020). The color revolutions are perceived as orchestrated Western maneuvers, taking the shape of organized coups under external control. Russian leaders believe that NATO expansion not only threatens the security of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) but also has the potential to impede the political, military, and economic integration of these countries with Russia. Russia also holds the belief that Western nations intentionally and consistently strive to undermine Russia's

influence in the CIS region (Patrushev, 2005).

8. Dominance over post-Soviet states

Throughout its history, Russia has demonstrated a sustained effort to secure its territory by expanding its influence into surrounding regions. From the mid-sixteenth century to the late seventeenth century, Russia expanded its territory at an average rate of 35,000 square kilometers per year for 150 consecutive years (Rumer & Sokolsky, 2020).

Russia is convinced that the loss of its surrounding territories would lead to a substantial reduction in strategic depth, posing a profound threat to its overall security (Gurganus & Rumer, 2019). Historically, Russia has endured two significant phases of territorial loss. First, with the implementation of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in 1918, which required Russia to relinquish its territorial claims to Finland, the three Baltic states, parts of Poland, most of Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine. Second, the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 into fifteen independent states. During the first dislocation, Russia managed to regain its strength in the mid-1920s and expanded it again in 1945, when it successfully occupied territories previously held by Nazi Germany in Central and Eastern Europe.

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, efforts to regain strategic depth in the form of influence dominance became the primary focus of Russian foreign policy, particularly towards post-Soviet states (Trenin, 2009). Russia sought to shape the post-Soviet space by establishing new regional structures centered in Moscow, including the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Russia also continued to bolster its special role and interests in the post-Soviet space, asserting its position as "primus inter pares" among the countries in the region.

The core objective of Russia's foreign policy toward dominating post-Soviet states is to prevent the emergence of unfriendly regimes, establish stable relations with neighbors to protect the human rights of Russian citizens, and resolve territorial disputes with CIS countries. The notion that Russia should have control over its geopolitical surroundings enjoys widespread support and is reflected in various strategic documents, including Russia's Military Doctrine (1993, 2000, 2010, 2014) and Foreign Policy Concept (1993, 2000, 2008, 2013, 2016)."

The Russian Strategic Intentions Model

Strategic intentions are acts that a country plans to take under particular circumstances. The intention is also a critical foundation or basis behind all behaviors and actions, and it can even be utilized as a barometer for all behaviors and actions. Strategic political intention refers

to thoughts about foreign policy strategies to deal with adversaries under current circumstances (Yarhi-Milo, 2013).

Russia's strategic intentions is heavily influenced by its strategic culture. As a major power, Russia believes that it is a global force worthy of sitting alongside other major powers to discuss and decide on important world issues. However, the post-Cold War European order led by the US contradicts Russia's values and perspectives, where Russia believes that its efforts to regain its position as a major power in Europe are hindered by the US and NATO, which continuously constrain and undermine them. Russia necessitates dominance and extensive influence within the former Soviet Union states to serve as a buffer zone against potential foreign invasions and to assert its status as a major power capable of safeguarding Slavic and Orthodox populations, integral to Russia's cultural heritage.

The strategic culture of Russia substantially influences its strategic intentions. As a great power, Russia believes that its country is a global power, so it deserves to meet with other major power countries to discuss and decide critical global issues. The post-Cold War European system led by the United States is regrettably at odds with the value norms and perceptive lens inherent in Russian culture and interests. Russia also believes that the United States and NATO are impeding its efforts to reclaim its status as a great power on the European continent by continuing to constrain and weaken it. With its principles of patriotism, messianism, and orthodoxy, Russia was much agitated when there was a dispute between the Russian people and the local state authority, which Russia blamed on foreign intervention. Russia also requires dominance and a sphere of influence in the former Soviet Union as a buffer zone against various potential foreign invasions, both military and non-military, and as an indicator of a great power status capable of protecting fellow Slavs and orthodoxy, which is at the root of Russian culture.

Based on various perspectives of Russia's strategic culture, two contrasting intentions models can be identified: offensive intentions and defensive intentions. Offensive intentions is evident when Russia seeks to reclaim its imperial territories and strengthen its status as a global superpower. Meanwhile, defensive intent arises when Russia endeavors to protect its territorial sovereignty and maintain its geopolitical position against the West. The differing intentions of Russia result in contrasting assessments regarding the measures needed to prevent undesirable actions from Russia. In both perspectives of Russia's strategic intentions, there is a commonality: Russia rejects the post-Cold War international order because it tends to favor Western policies and is perceived as an obstacle to Moscow's global recognition. Both perspectives also believe that the US seeks to weaken Russia to bolster its position as the sole remaining superpower, leading Russia to adopt a revisionist approach to the US-led unipolar

order. The dual model approach to intentions is employed to avoid a single perspective that may be incomplete, given Russia's strategic culture yielding nuanced understandings. Each of these Russian intention perspectives will yield a unique set of indicators, as demonstrated in the following Table-1.

Table 1: Matrix of Russia’s Offensive and Defensive Intentions

	Offensive Intentions	Defensive Intentions
Perspective on the international system's polarities	Revisionists against the US unipolar	Revisionists against the US unipolar
Perceptive Lens	Imperial Returning to the geographical area (irredentism)	Fear Maintaining status quo
Identity	Reactionary Dreaming of past glories	Conservative Maintaining culture and traditions
Strategic Patience	High	Low
The possibility of an unexpected attack	High	Low, unless it is gravely threatened and decides that offence is the best form of defense
Regional approach to near abroad countries	For area expansion	For influence dominance
Motives to behave aggressively	To prepare for further expansion	To deter NATO with a pre-emptive strike
Motives to modernize the military	To prepare for further expansion	To strengthen defenses and prepare for pre-

		emptive strikes when necessary
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Source: Prepared by the author (2024)

Table 1 above illustrates a comparison between Russia's offensive and defensive strategic intentions across various aspects, including perspectives on the international system, identity, strategic risks, and reasons behind aggressive actions or military modernization. This provides a clear overview of the differences in approaches and objectives between the two intention models.

Offensive Intentions

According to the offensive intentions model, Russia is influenced by the belief in its status as a great power and a desire to restore its past glory. They believe that achieving their security objectives requires disrupting or revising the status quo and sovereignty in the "near abroad" countries. Russia perceives that peaceful compromises will not achieve their imperial ambitions and past glory. They seek to rectify the dislocation after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 by expanding their influence through territorial expansion. Russia also tends to be a reactionary state, aspiring not only to preserve its culture and history but also to return to its role and glory of the past by exerting control over territories that are currently beyond its sovereignty.(Shinar, 2017). Russia will engage in irredentist actions to claim or recapture territories from neighboring countries with the aim of reuniting populations sharing the same ethnic and historical ties (Miholjic, 2019). They aim to restore the glory of the empire and its sphere of influence, as well as regain control over former Soviet states to create a physical buffer against potential enemies and strengthen national defense (Mohler, 2022).

Russia perceives the European Union and NATO as existential threats to its geopolitical agend. They believe that achieving the ambition of past glory requires actions that disrupt the existing security architecture of Europe, fracture NATO, and undermine the norms and institutions of regional Europe. Russia continues to work on weakening NATO and the European Union while strengthening their military capacity to achieve their political objectives (Borrell, 2022). Russia exhibits a high level of strategic patience and will only attack countries within its sphere of influence, including Ukraine, if they believe they can win the war. The invasion of Georgia in 2008, the annexation of Crimea in 2014, and its invasion of Ukraine in 2022 are early stages in a long-term strategy to rebuild control and dominate all other countries

on Russia's periphery, reminiscent of its historical precedents.

In the offensive intention model, Russia can only be deterred through extreme measures by its adversary states, such as deploying combat forces to the region to convince Russia that any invasion it undertakes will fail. This step must be undertaken in the long term over several decades because Russia will also adopt a long-term approach to achieve its goals (Shlapak & Johnson, 2016). To halt Russia's invasion of Ukraine, NATO countries must maintain solidarity in providing military support to Ukraine and bolster military presence in Eastern European regions until Russia is convinced that its invasion efforts will be thwarted.

Defensive Intentions

According to the defensive intentions model, Russia is dominated by a strategic culture of fear and vulnerability due to its geographical conditions and historical experiences of various attacks and invasions from external forces, as well as domestic unrest resulting from foreign intervention. The defensive intent assumes that Russia has a painful legacy of repeated invasions by Western countries. Major Western European powers have invaded Russian territory several times in the past two centuries, namely in 1812, 1854, 1914, and 1941. Furthermore, there are domestic conflicts and subversive operations that mobilize civilian populations in Russia and neighboring countries, such as the color revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan. Successively from 2003, 2004, and 2005.

Russia does not intend to restore past glory or engage in irredentist actions to seize territory from neighbors. Instead, Russia seeks to maintain economic and political dominance in the post-Soviet region while nurturing the cultural and historical values that have made it a great power in the past. Russia also harbors suspicions about the United States' intentions to maintain global supremacy through methods deemed detrimental to Russia's interests. Russia views that the United States seeks to maintain its status as the sole superpower in the world by utilizing a combination of political, economic, informational, and other non-military instruments to overthrow regimes that oppose it, including those in Russia and former Soviet Union countries, including Ukraine (Lavrov, 2016; Putin, 2021a). The invasion of Iraq, NATO expansion into Eastern Europe, the Arab Spring events, Color Revolutions, and the intervention in Libya are all part and evidence of these efforts (Putin, 2014).

Russia seeks to prevent NATO from expanding further along its borders and to halt Western dominance over post-Soviet states. They aim to establish a sphere of influence in the former Soviet territory without reconstructing the Soviet Union or annexing these countries. Russia only desires dominance and benefits from its influence to gain privileges in politics,

economics, and military control (Hill & Gaddy, 2015). Russia employs the strategy of "asymmetric balancing" to counter Western influence in the region. However, if this strategy proves ineffective and a red line is crossed, posing an existential threat, Russia will resort to military measures, starting with the clandestine infiltration of special forces and escalating to the use of military force (Gerasimov, 2016). Russia also continues to conduct various military exercises and modernization efforts to enhance its ability to defend itself and prepare for potential pre-emptive strikes in response to what it perceives as rational reactions to threats that violate its red lines and jeopardize its security. Balancing power and troop deployments to Eastern Europe, which are increasingly encroaching on Russia, could potentially lead to unintended provocations, thereby triggering aggressive actions from Russia.

Russia takes a firm stance in maintaining the status quo in its region, including Ukraine, to prevent them from turning to Western alliances. The country views military, political, and economic interventions by Western nations in Ukraine as clear red lines that require anticipation and response. In this context, Russia exhibits limited strategic patience and is prepared to launch preemptive strikes if its red lines are crossed. Although preemptive attacks on NATO-backed nations, such as Ukraine, carry substantial risks outweighing potential benefits, Russia believes that preemptive action in response to threats to its security represents the optimal defensive strategy (Kofman et al., 2021). In this defensive intent model, Russia perceives its invasion of Ukraine in 2022 as a preemptive strike to reinforce that Russia's red lines must not be crossed. This action was taken after various diplomatic stalemates between Russia and Western countries, particularly when the security assurance proposals submitted to the US and NATO were rejected. The proposal reflects Russia's vulnerability to threats and contains three premises, including a request for NATO not to expand further eastward, including not accepting Ukraine as a Member State; a request for the US/NATO to cease bilateral military cooperation, including the construction of military infrastructure bases in former Soviet Union countries that are not NATO members, including Ukraine; and a request for all parties not to deploy military forces or conduct exercises in areas where such deployments could be construed as a threat to the national security of other parties.

To deter Russia with defensive intentions, it's essential to diminish apprehension and acknowledge Russia's status as a major power. An approach of equality in relations with NATO is also vital to bolster Euro-Atlantic security. Measures like balancing forces in Eastern Europe must be executed cautiously to avoid provocations that could instigate aggressive responses from Russia. Persuading Russia to halt its invasion of Ukraine demands adept negotiation and compromise from NATO and Ukraine. However, this endeavor poses challenges for NATO

nations, led by the US, as they must be prepared to set aside their egos to find common ground with Russia and reconsider the security assurances previously proposed by Russia. Striving to comprehend Russia's stance is anticipated as the optimal course to pave the way for negotiations aimed at de-escalation.

Russia's Strategic Intention in the Invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

In the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, arguments exist that support both defensive and offensive models of Russia's strategic intentions based on its strategic culture, considering historical context, sphere of influence, and responses to external threats.

In the historical context, Russia's offensive intention views the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine as an aspiration to restore past glory, aiming to expand its influence into Ukraine as part of its imperial ambitions. Russia's strategic culture, encompassing the preservation of traditional values and compatriotism, asserts the belief that Russia is a great power entitled to control more territories as part of its national identity. Conversely, the defensive intention portrays the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine as a result of Russia's fear and vulnerability to foreign intervention in Ukraine, driven by painful historical experiences, including invasions and foreign interference perceived as undermining Russia's sovereignty and the surrounding region. The strategic culture emphasizing awareness of vulnerability to threats reinforces the view that the 2022 invasion of Ukraine is a preventive step to protect national security.

In the context of sphere of influence, Russia's offensive intention views Russian invasion of Ukraine 2022 as part of its ambition to disrupt the status quo and expand its sphere of influence in neighboring countries, including Ukraine. The strategic culture, pursuing great power status and dominance in the post-Soviet region, supports this perspective. In this regard, Russia believes that peaceful compromises will not achieve their imperial ambitions to control Ukraine, leading Russia to resort to military force as a tool to achieve their political goals. On the other hand, the defensive intention sees the need for Russia to continue maintaining political and economic dominance in the post-Soviet region, including Ukraine. Russia's compatriotism sentiments perceive Western intervention in Ukraine as a threat to regional security and stability, thus requiring efforts to provide protection as part of Russia's messianic views. Russian invasion of Ukraine 2002 is deemed a necessary military step as a rescue measure when political and economic dominance in Ukraine fails to yield results and is threatened by Western intervention.

In the context of responding to external threats, Russia's offensive intention perceives Russian invasion of Ukraine 2022 as an effort to neutralize existential threats by disrupting the

existing European security architecture, fragmenting NATO, and undermining regional European norms and institutions to advance its geopolitical ambitions. Russia believes that the presence of these alliances impedes its imperial aspirations and poses a threat to its national security. On the other hand, the defensive intention views Russian invasion of Ukraine 2022 as a preemptive measure in response to Russia's concerns about NATO expansion into Eastern Europe and Western interference in Ukraine. Russia considers these actions as crossing red lines that endanger its security, thus requiring a stronger response to safeguard its national security.

Conclusions

Russia's strategic culture, shaped by its history, geographic position, and political discourse, embodies a range of values and perspectives. These include the preservation of traditions, the pursuit of great power status, the promotion of Orthodox religious influence, adherence to autocratic traditions, cultivation of compatriotism sentiments, espousal of messianic visions, acknowledgment of vulnerability to threats, and the aspiration for post-Soviet dominance. These facets underpin both offensive and defensive models of Russia's Strategic Intention in the Invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

The offensive intention model reflects Russia's aspiration to restore past glory and expand its influence as part of its national identity, supported by traditional values and compatriotism sentiments. On the other hand, the defensive intention model emphasizes compatriotism sentiments and the need for a messianic role triggered by Russia's fear and vulnerability to foreign interference, in line with painful historical experiences and awareness of high vulnerability to threats.

In the context of the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, both models of Russia's strategic intentions can be applied. The offensive intention model can be seen as Russia's effort to realize its expansionist ambitions and strengthen its dominance in the 'near abroad' region, including Ukraine. Meanwhile, the defensive intention model depicts Russia's preemptive steps in safeguarding its national security from NATO expansion and Western influence in Eastern Europe, including Ukraine.

Understanding whether Russia's strategic intention in the invasion of Ukraine is offensive with expansionist ambitions or defensive as a response to perceived red-line violations threatening Russian security is crucial. Misinterpretations can have fatal consequences, exacerbating the conflict and triggering increased Russian aggression. To ensure that preventive measures taken are appropriate and do not result in harsher Russian responses, it is advisable

to conduct accurate further assessments of various factors influencing the decisions of Russian leaders in undertaking the invasion of Ukraine, thus determining Russia's Strategic Intention in the Invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Conflict Of Interest

The Author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

Fundings

None.

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