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Why and How the U.S. Response to Russian Aggression Has Changed?

Master's Thesis

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Summary: This thesis explores the progression of the American response to Russian aggression from 2008 through today and analyzes how and why it has changed. In the context of the current war in Ukraine, this thesis analyzes what led to a shift in the U.S. approach and what conclusions can be learned from it.

Confirmation

I confirm that I am the author of submitted thesis: *Why and How the U.S. Response to Russian Aggression Has Changed?*, which has been prepared independently and has never been presented for any other course or used in another educational institution, neither in Lithuania, or abroad. I also provide a full bibliographical list which indicates all the sources that were used to prepare this assignment and contains no unused sources.

Kevin Kotsak

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Introduction

The United States was cautious when responding to Russian aggression as can be seen in the response to Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008. Despite pleas for help from Georgia, the US declined to send serious security assistance and to sanction Russia. This hesitancy, though to a lesser degree, can also be seen in the response to the Russian annexation of Crimea. The U.S. levied sanctions against Russia, but hesitated to severely damage the Russian economy and to hurt the Russian defense industry. The U.S. started to train Ukrainian troops to NATO standards, but hesitated to provide them with lethal advanced weaponry.

The hesitancy after Georgia and Crimea is in stark contrast to the current U.S. response to Russia's widescale invasion of Ukraine where it has played a decisive role. The U.S. has been the biggest supplier of security assistance to Ukraine since the war started on February 24, 2022 and has repeatedly expanded its' own "red lines" in terms of what it won't send to Ukraine. The U.S. has also sanctioned Russia and contributed to Russia now being the most sanctioned country on Earth.

This deep contrast raises important questions. How did the U.S. go from responding to Russia with such caution to now sending unprecedented aid to Ukraine like Patriot Missiles and Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicles? This thesis aims to identify why the United States was strategically cautious to respond to Russian aggression and what lead to the U.S. changing it's response. This chapter will provide an introduction to the research by first discussing the research object, research problem, the research goal, research objectives, the research gap and the significance of the research.

Research Object

The research object is U.S. foreign policy related to decision making in reaction to Russian aggression and the U.S. foreign policy relating to Ukraine.

Research Question

Why and how the US response to Russian aggression changed in the years from Russo-Georgian War of 2008 to the current war in Ukraine?

Research Problem

Despite a clear and consistent pattern of Russian aggression since the Russian invasion into Georgia in 2008, the United States struggled to articulate a coherent and long-term strategy that truly aimed to cause severe consequences to the Russian economy and limit their ability to wage aggression. These factors when considered holistically means that the U.S. has historically, cautiously responded to Russian aggression. When looking at the current approach to the war in Ukraine and rhetoric it is clear that there has been a shift in how the U.S. responds to Russian aggression.

The U.S. has spent more to support Ukraine militarily than any other country in terms of gross-dollar amount. The type of military aid the U.S. has given Ukraine has been decisive throughout the war. The U.S. has given Javelins, Stingers, HIMARS, and has made complex deals and trades with partners and allies to get Ukraine needed equipment. The current aid and sanctions have had tangible impacts that are seen on the battlefield. After the war in Georgia, the U.S. did not implement major sanctions against Russia, but after the current war in Ukraine, the U.S. was a key player in making Russia become the most sanctioned country on Earth. Sanctions levied against Russia after the launch of the current war have more wide-reaching and damaging to Russia than the sanctions it implemented a response to the annexation of Crimea. Just like the effects of military aid on the battlefield, sanctions have had real-world consequences and created complications for Russia when it comes to importing key technology, making advanced weaponry, and sustaining the Russian economy.

Goal of the Research

The main goal for this research is clearly show the evolution of how the U.S. handled Russian aggression. It also aims to show how the U.S. relationship with Ukraine has changed in this period and explore the relationship between the two countries and how it has changed.

Research Gap

There has been research done on specific key-events, such as the aforementioned war in Georgia and annexation in Crimea., but there is a gap in the research regarding a complete and holistic analysis of the U.S. reaction to Russia's aggression in light of the ongoing war in Ukraine. Due to the fact that the war in Ukraine is still occurring, there is a gap of research

regarding the shift in U.S. response towards Russian aggression. Some of the past research and conclusions regarding the U.S. reaction to Putin are now not fully complete now that we know Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The annexation of Crimea, the invasion of Georgia, the war in the Donbas in 2014, and more events have to be reexamined through the new lenses of the ongoing war.

Study Design

Case Selection: The period between the Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008 and the current Russo-Ukrainian war was chosen as a case study for multiple reasons. The war in Georgia and the current war in Ukraine are two examples of Russia invading a neighboring non-NATO former Soviet country. The response from the U.S. was noticeably different towards the two events. Given how effective U.S. security assistance to Ukraine has been in the current war, it is easy to compare what measures the U.S. did or not take in both situations. The time in between the two events helps to shed light on the conditions as to why the responses were so different.

Research Instruments. To fully understand why and how the U.S. response to Russian aggression has changed, this master's thesis utilizes different research instruments. The combination of analysis of scientific literature, official documents, press releases, and speeches from U.S. officials, secondary data analysis and foreign policy analysis help to answer the research question in the most concise way. Research instruments used in the conducting of this master's thesis include:

- Analysis of academic literature are used to define key concepts and theories
- Analysis of statistics related to U.S. security assistance
- Analysis of sanctions related literature, documents, and statistics
- Foreign Policy Analysis will be used to analyze key decisions made by the U.S. and the content of speeches from American officials, press releases, and related foreign policy documents regarding Russian aggression to show the shifts of America's approach to Russian aggression
- Secondary Alliance Dilemma is the main theoretical principal used to explain the U.S. caution towards Russia

Research Tasks

The tasks of this research are to show and explain the progression of the U.S. handling of Russian aggression, show the changes in the dynamic between Ukraine and the U.S., determine if the Secondary Security Dilemma can be adequately used to explain the behavior of countries that are closely aligned, but lack a formal alliance agreement.

Time Frame of the Study

The time frame of this master's thesis will focus on U.S. foreign policy, more specifically, the American response to Russian aggression, starting with the beginning of the Russo-Georgian War in 2008 to the current Russo-Ukrainian War. This thesis will also examine key events between the wars in Georgia and Ukraine, such as Russian interference in U.S. elections, areas of cooperation between Russia and the United States, and secondary areas of U.S.-Russian cooperation and tensions.

Literature Review

What is known about Alliances?

Since this thesis invokes a theory and concepts related how and why allies interact with each other, it is important to first define an alliance. Arnold Wolfers' definition is known for its simplicity. He defines an alliance as "a promise of mutual military assistance between two or more sovereign states."¹

Formal Agreement. Many in the field believe an alliance without an explicit agreement is rather an alignment. Although not the majority, some argue that alliances either do not need explicit mutual defense agreements or that countries can be in what constitutes an alliance, but unofficially. Some in the field highlight that sometimes countries who do not have formal agreements, act as allies, for all intents and purposes, without the formal agreement.

On alliances, Glenn Snyder suggests that without a mutual defense agreement, countries share alignment instead of an alliance. Snyder describes alliances as the formal subset of a

¹ Arnold Wolfers, "Alliances," in David L. Sills, ed., *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), p. 268

broader and more basic phenomenon, which he describes as alignment. He defines alignment as a set of mutual expectations between two or more states that they will have each other's support in disputes or wars with particular other states and that these expectations arise mainly from perceived common interests². These interests may be strong or weak, depending perhaps on the parties' degree of conflict with a common enemy. Formal alliances strengthen existing alignments, or perhaps create new ones, by their specificity, legal and normative obligations and for their public visibility. Under Snyder's definitions of alliances and alignments, it is clear that Ukraine is at the very least in close alignment with the United States over shared interests and a common adversary.

James Murrow echoes Snyder's take on the difference between alignment and alliances. Murrow distinguishes formal alliances from alignments by the greater length of commitment present in an alliance and adds that alignments reflect similarity in interest without the formal mutual commitment present in an alliance. He adds that alignments occur when nations concert their actions to pursue common interests at the present without the implication of coordination of their actions in the future. Murrow's definition of alliance and alignment both raises questions regarding Ukraine. Ukraine and the U.S. lack the formal agreement Murrow mentions, but the U.S.- Ukraine relationship goes beyond his definition of alignment. It is hard to imagine a future aggressor not assuming the U.S. would have some sort of military response in the event of a future conflict.

Murrow also explored the different power dynamic between stronger vs. weaker countries within an alliance, which is relevant to the relationship between the U.S. and Ukraine. "Nations, particularly great powers, can use alliances to further their pursuit of changes in the foreign policy status quo. Weaker parties can offer concessions, such as military bases or the coordination of foreign and domestic policies, that can increase a stronger ally's freedom of action while increasing their protection from external threats. Alliances can advance diverse, but compatible, interests.' In this view a nation will judge the attractiveness of an alliance by comparing the benefits of the ally's ability to advance its interests to the costs of advancing the ally's interests. When the former exceeds the latter for both nations, they will want to form an

² Snyder, G. H. (1984). The security dilemma in alliance politics. *World politics*, 36(4), 461-495.

alliance.³ He adds that prospective allies must share both harmonious and divergent interests. Without divergent interests, an alliance would be unnecessary because each country would simply come to the other's aid in order to pursue their own self-interest.

Some in the field of alliances point out some issues when analyzing the rigid definitions of what constitutes an alliance. Stewart Woodman points out that much of the thinking around alliances are possibly outdated because the formal military alliances of the early and mid-20th Century have ceased to represent the standard for allied security cooperation. Instead, Woodman argues that since the early 1990s there has been a shift away from formal alliance based on military force to more “marriages of convenience” based on more narrow, specific issues⁴. Walt mentions how during the Cold War, the clarity of the Soviet threat and the mostly static nature of the global balance of power kept the main coalitions more or less fixed for over four decades⁵. This is no longer the case, as Tertrais points out that 'there are also deeper historical forces at work that are forcing permanent alliances increasingly to give way to ad hoc coalitions⁶.

The Security Dilemma in Alliances

Glenn Snyder is one of the leading scholars in the field of alliances. Snyder came up with the concept of the Alliance Dilemma. The Alliance Dilemma is a form of the Security Dilemma. The term Security Dilemma is generally used to denote the self-defeating nature of the quest for greater security in an anarchic system. The theory states that even when no country has any desire to attack others, no one can be sure that others' intentions are peaceful, or will remain so indefinitely. Therefore, each country accumulate power for defense. Since it is impossible for a country to know that the power accumulation of others is purely defensive in nature, each must assume that others may have offensively-minded ambitions. Since the Alliance Dilemma stems from the Security Dilemma, it is important to see what the research says about the Security Dilemma.

³ Morrow, J. D. (1991). Alliances and Asymmetry: An Alternative to the Capability Aggregation Model of Alliances. *American Journal of Political Science*, 35(4), 904–933. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2111499>

⁴ Stewart Woodman, 'Beyond Armageddon? The Shape of Conflict in the Twenty-First Roy (ed.), *The New Security Agenda in the Asia- Pacific Region* (London, Macmillan, 1997). Pg. 81

⁵ Stephen Walt, 'Why Alliances Endure or Collapse', *Survival*, 39:1 (Spring 1997). d. 156.

⁶ 2 Bruno Tertrais, 'The Changing Nature of Military Alliances', *The Washington Quarter* p. 148

Herbert Butterfield argues that the security dilemma can lead states to war even though they may not want to inflict harm upon one another. He states, “The greatest war in history can be produced without the intervention of any great criminals who might be out to do deliberate harm in the world. It could be produced between two powers, both of which were desperately anxious to avoid a conflict of any sort.⁷” Butterfield’s writings emphasize that the dilemma stems from uncertainty over others’ intentions and that this dilemma is inherently not intentional. He also states that it can produce tragic results and it can be exacerbated by psychological factors of world leaders or populations.

Robert Jervis explored the different dynamics of the Security Dilemma, including the dynamics of offense vs. defense. He believed that defense/offense balances contribute to how influential the security dilemma is. Jervis shares many of Butterfield’s views regarding the Security Dilemma, such as the views that anarchy, mutual fear, and uncertainty regarding the intentions of other nations are all key causes of the dilemma. His interpretation differs from Butterfield because Jervis did not believe that the dilemma is the cause of all wars and that it is automatically a universal concept⁸.

John H. Herz was the one who first came up with the phrase Security Dilemma. Herz described the Security Dilemma as, “A structural notion in which the self-help attempts of states to look after their security needs tend, regardless of intention, to lead to rising insecurity for others as each interprets its own measures as defensive and measures of others as potentially threatening.⁹” Herz believed that when countries strive to attain greater security, they are driven to acquire more power in order to escape the consequences of others having power. This makes the others feel more insecure and forces them to prepare for the worst. Since no country can ever feel totally secure in such a world of competing interests, the power competition ensues and the vicious circle of security and power accumulation keeps going¹⁰.

⁷ Tang, S. (2010). The security dilemma: A conceptual analysis. In *A Theory of Security Strategy for Our Time* (pp. 33-71). Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

⁸ Jervis, Robert. “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma.” *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (1978): 167–214. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2009958>.

⁹ Kunz, B. (2022). Europe in the US-Russian Security Dilemma: Is There a Way Out? In *Polarity in International Relations* (pp. 333-349). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

¹⁰ Herz, J. H. (1950). Idealist internationalism and the security dilemma. *World politics*, 2(2), 157-180.

What is Known About Sanctions and Security Assistance?

This thesis explores how and with what tools the U.S. has responded to Russian aggression with. In terms of concrete responses to Russian aggression, the U.S. has responded to Russian aggression via two main routes: sanctions against Russia and security assistance to countries who are vulnerable to Russian aggression. It is important to understand these concepts and what literature has been written regarding these concepts.

Sanctions are defined in different ways in scholarly literature and different definitions of economic sanctions are used by scholars throughout the research field. Gary Hufbauer defines sanctions as “the deliberate, government-inspired withdrawal, or threat of withdrawal, of customary trade or financial relations¹¹.”

There is some disagreement by political scientists and economists regarding whether or not sanctions are effective in trying to fulfill geopolitical goals like regime change or causing a change-of-course regarding military action. The field of sanctions research has a wide-array of opinions, but the majority of the field tends to be skeptical of sanctions fulfilling lofty foreign policy goals. Instead, the more pro-sanctions side of the field believes they can be effective in limited circumstances.

Hufbauer, Jeffrey Schott, and Kimberly Ann Elliott (HSE) conducted one of the most comprehensive studies regarding sanctions and their effectiveness. The study has influenced policy makers and has led to a popularization of the idea that sanctions can be effective. One of the main conclusions from the study is the fact that sanctions are considered effective around one-third of the time. The study lays out general criteria that make sanctions generally more effective. These include:

- When the goal is relatively modest
- When the target is much smaller than the country imposing sanctions, economically weak and politically unstable
- When the sender and target are friendly toward one another and conduct substantial trade
- When the sanctions are imposed quickly and decisively to maximize impact.

¹¹ Hufbauer, G. C., Schott, J. J., & Elliott, K. A. (1990). *Economic sanctions reconsidered: History and current policy* (Vol. 1). Peterson Institute.

- When the sender avoids high costs to itself

Robert A. Pape is a well-known critic of the theory that economic sanctions can enact foreign policy or military changes. His study openly questions some of the findings in the HSE study on the effectiveness of international sanctions. Pape's study challenges the wide-spread optimism about the effectiveness of economic sanctions that came after the HSE study. Pape concludes that economic sanctions can have minor independent usefulness when it comes to the pursuit of noneconomic goals. Pape is also extremely critical of the HSE study saying that many of the cases considered as "successful" in the HSE study do not hold up strongly to examination. Pape states many of the cases were actually directly or indirectly settled by military means and there is no evidence that the countries targeted by sanctions made any concessions demanded by the targeting countries¹².

Security Assistance

Defining Security Assistance. For the purposes of this thesis that focuses on security assistance provided by the United States, security assistance is defined by Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Defense Exports and Cooperation, which describes security assistance as "group of programs, authorized under Title 22 of the U.S. Code, by which the U.S. government provides defense articles, military education and training, and other defense-related services to eligible foreign governments by grant, loan, credit, cash sales, or lease."¹³

There is vigorous debate about the effectiveness of U.S. security assistance amongst political scientists and military experts. Previous literature shows cases of U.S. security assistance that has made a difference including the arming of the Mujahedeen in Afghanistan when fighting the Soviet Army and the successful transition from Soviet tactics to NATO tactics of the Ukrainian Army starting in 2014. There is also literature in the field that is skeptical of U.S. security assistance and the sometimes-unintended consequences of it. A skeptic of the effectiveness of U.S. security assistance is Mara Karlin of the Brookings Institute. Karlin echoes some of the mainstream critiques of U.S. assistance, saying that U.S. assistance to foreign

¹² Pape, Robert A. "Why Economic Sanctions Do Not Work." *International Security* 22, no. 2 (1997): 90–136. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2539368>

¹³ *Security Assistance*. (n.d.). dasadec.army.mil. <https://www.dasadec.army.mil/Security-Assistance/>

militaries is a “halfway measure that neither solves the underlying problems of unstable states and often do not contribute to U.S. national security objectives¹⁴.” Karlin reiterates another critique, which is American reluctance to weigh in on higher-order questions of mission, organizational structure, and personnel. These types of issues profoundly affect a military’s effectiveness and capacity, but are often considered too sensitive to be publicly raised. This has led to the U.S. tendency to focus exclusively on training and equipment, which undercuts the overall effectiveness of U.S. assistance.

Another area of concern in the field regarding U.S. security assistance revolves around the concept of oversight and accountability. According to a report by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the U.S. government has key weaknesses when it comes to monitoring and oversight of security assistance. The study highlights that the U.S. does not have one central body that is responsible for oversight or monitoring of security assistance. With dozens of offices in different agencies responsible for developing and administering security assistance programs, it is difficult for key stakeholders to truly understand the full picture of assistance for a country or region. The U.S. government also has unclear metrics and goals regarding security assistance. Responsibility for oversight often has a confusing hierarchy. The U.S. often also lacks qualified staff to conduct monitoring of sites and military equipment, which leads to less qualified staff lacking key knowledge and terminology¹⁵.

Much of the recent research regarding U.S. security assistance to Ukraine has focused on the U.S. training of Ukrainian military personnel. Research has examined how U.S. training in Ukraine has helped their force fight with NATO tactics and strategy instead of Soviet-era doctrine. Currently, U.S. security assistance to Ukraine is constantly changing due to the ongoing nature of the war. The U.S. government publicly releases data regarding the cost, specific type, and purpose of assistance and gives more context in press releases. It is important to keep in mind that it is possible that the U.S. covertly gives certain types of security assistance to Ukraine.

¹⁴ Karlin, M. (2017). Why Military Assistance Programs Disappoint: Minor Tools Can't Solve Major Problems. *Foreign Affairs.*, 96, 111.

¹⁵ Dalton, M. G., Shah, H., Green, S. N., & Hughes, R. (2018). *Oversight and accountability in US security sector assistance: Seeking return on investment*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Methodology

Data Collection and Search Methods

Data was collected from a wide array of sources. Since there was a focus on military data, databases from JSTOR were utilized. JSTOR generally has a reputable quality and quantity regarding military literature. Data about military doctrine, strategy, and more were also found on official websites from NATO, the U.S. Army and the Ukrainian military. Much of the information and statistics regarding the war are from White House press releases and news articles. The U.S. Department of Defense keeps up-to-date records regarding security assistance. Quotes and explanations from Military sources helped to contextualize the military items and explain their use and significance. These quotes were found either in news articles or in press releases from different entities of the U.S. government. The U.S. Treasury Department has a comprehensive list of executive orders and other actions pertaining to sanctions on Russia. Other Sanctions literature, studies, and statistics were found on different databases, including Google Scholar and JSTOR.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods. Using Foreign Policy Analysis, the researcher analyzed speeches, press releases, fact-sheets, and other documents to better assess U.S. foreign policy in regards to their response to Russian aggression. The choices the U.S. made were compared to choices that were publicly considered or said to be considered by experts in the field. Seeing how the U.S. ultimately chose to respond vs. their proposed options gives insight into their thinking towards Russian aggression and the U.S. relationship with Ukraine. Analyzing quotes from U.S. officials and background information regarding the U.S. relationship with Ukraine and Russia, it is possible to hypothesize as to why the U.S. responded the way it did and compare those past responses to ones being currently made towards Russia and Ukraine.

Limitations

It is important to recognize that when analyzing data related to security assistance, the U.S. may have sent assistance to Ukraine covertly and did not publicize it. It is not possible to be

fully sure what was sent to Ukraine since this information would be highly classified and not available for the public.

The U.S. also conducts much of its' foreign policy behind the scenes or through back channels. This means that the U.S. may have said something publicly, but acted differently in reality. The research takes the U.S. at their word regarding their publicized intentions and thoughts regarding Russia and Ukraine, but with the knowledge that there may be important background context and information not publicly available. This may affect hypothesis regarding why the U.S. did or did not respond in certain ways.

1. Theoretical Framework

1.1 Theoretical Definition of Secondary Alliance Dilemma

The security dilemma in the alliance game has two phases: primary and secondary. The primary phase occurs during the process of alliance formation, the secondary phase occurs after alliances have formed. According to Glenn Snyder, "Once alliances have begun to form, the alliance security dilemma takes on a different character. That is, having already 'defected' in the primary dilemma by choosing to make alliances, states move into the second phase of the alliance dilemma, in which their choices are no longer whether to ally or not, but how firmly to commit themselves to the proto-partner and how much support to give that partner in specific conflict interactions with the adversary¹⁶."

Primary- The primary phase occurs during the process of alliance formation. This phase focuses on how countries consider the costs and benefits of forming alliances. Each country has two main aims in the bargaining process of alliance making: to be in the most feasibly possible powerful coalition and to maximize its own share of the alliance's net benefits.

Secondary- Once alliances have begun to form, the alliance security dilemma takes on a different character. The change occurs because a country has already chosen to be in an alliance. Having already left the decision-making process in the primary dilemma by choosing to make alliances,

¹⁶ Snyder, G. H. (1984). The security dilemma in alliance politics. *World politics*, 36(4), 461-495.

states move into the second phase of the alliance dilemma, in which their choices are no longer whether to be partners or not, but how firmly to commit themselves to the partner and how much support to give that partner in specific conflict interactions with an adversary.

In the Secondary Alliance Dilemma, alliances are never 100% firm. This means that the fear of being abandoned by one's ally is always a concern. Abandonment, in general, is some sort of defection from the alliance. It may take a variety of forms. The ally may realign with the opponent. The ally may de-align, breaking the alliance contract. The ally may fail to make good on commitment. The ally may fail to provide support in situations where strong support is expected. In both of the latter two options, the alliance may remain intact, but the expectations of support which underlie it are weakened.

Alignment. Regarding alignment, Snyder states that alignment “refers to the expectations held by policymakers concerning the question "Who will defend whom?" or, more broadly, "Who will support whom and who will resist whom to what extent and in what contingencies?”¹⁷ Alignment theorists like Walt and Stephen David define alignment as “a relationship between states that involves mutual expectations of some degree of policy c security issues under certain condition.”¹⁸

Abandonment. In general, abandonment can be described as some sort of defection, but it may take shape in a variety of forms. The ally can realign with the opponent, the ally may de-align, negating the alliance contract, or the ally may fail to make good on explicit commitments. The more common manifestation is when the ally fails to provide support in contingencies where support is expected. This can mean that the ally does give support, but not the expected degree or to a degree perceived as insufficient to the other ally.

Entrapment. Snyder describes entrapment as being dragged into a conflict over an ally's interests that one does not share, or shares only partially. The interests of allies are usually not identical regarding extent they are mutually shared as they may be valued to different degrees.

1.2 Allies: Determining Support

¹⁷ Snyder, G. H. (1991). Alliances, balance, and stability. *International Organization*, 45(1), 121-142.

¹⁸ Cited in Eric A. Miller and Arkady Toritsyn, 'Bringing the Leader Back In: Alignment Theory in the Commonwealth of Independent States', *Security Studies* 14:2 (2005) p. 333

The Secondary Alliance Dilemma emphasizes that each ally has a choice regarding to what extent, should they support the other ally. Choice involves estimates of and trade-offs among the various benefits, costs, and risks listed consists of:

- dependence of the partners on the alliance
- degree of strategic interest that the parties have in defending each other
- explicitness in the alliance agreement
- degree to which the allies' interests that are in conflict with the adversary are shared
- behavior of both allies in the recent past

This thesis explores the degree of support that U.S. has shown to Ukraine when faced with Ukraine aggression, therefore, it is important to examine Snyder's factors of choice more closely:

Recent Behavior of Allies. The recent behavior of both allies is a factor when a country decides how firmly to support an ally. The strategic choices by all actors' results with behavioral evidence which influences general situational factors when the parties assess the possible consequences of their strategy options regarding their ally.

Explicitness In the Alliance Agreement. A vague agreement tends to increase fears of abandonment. When an agreement is explicit there is less fear of abandonment, but it does not fully eliminate the fear. Entrapment may be a less worrisome possibility with a vague agreement since the partners can assert that they are not committed or can craft their own version of commitment.

Dependence on the Ally. How dependent an ally is or is not on the other ally can affect the choices regarding degree of support. Dependence can be measured by these factors:

- a state's need for assistance in war related to how much their capability falls short of its adversary's capability
- its partner's capacity to supply the assistance
- the state's degree of conflict and tension with the adversary

- the state's realignment alternatives (the more satisfactory alternatives there are, the less the dependence on the present partner.)

Allies 'Shared Interest. The shared interest of allies is a key factor in their relationship to each other. If these interests are similar and valued with about equal intensity, both risks will be minimized for both parties, since presumably they will be about equally ready to fight for these mutual interests. Conversely, if their interests are very different, each partner will worry about being trapped into conflicts but each will also fear that the other may stand aside if their own interests are threatened. Snyder also mentions strategic interests as the desire in keeping power resources out of the opponent's hands. Resources in this context do not just mean physical resources, but could be issues related to influence, economic clout, military prowess, etc. Snyder adds that some of most important causes of such imbalances of allies' strategic interests are caused by are geographical factors and disparity of power between allies.

1.3 U.S. Alliance with Ukraine?

The question of whether or not Ukraine and the U.S. are in an alliance has a lot of layers that need exploring. The U.S. and Ukraine do not have a formal mutual-defense agreement that many in the field of alliance theory think is required to use the term alliance or ally. This thesis will attempt to apply the Secondary Alliance Dilemma to the relationship between Ukraine and the United States. This is most relevant when analyzing what factors influenced the U.S. regarding their handling of Ukraine in the context of Russian aggression. As stated in the literature review, modern relationships between aligned countries have changed since many of the theories and research have been done on alliances. More complex alignments have formed, replacing the once more common strictly and formally defined alliance. The U.S. treatment of Ukraine has many of the aspects of an alliance and the relationship between the two is similar to how the U.S. relates countries it describes as allies. These similarities can be seen through multiple factors:

- Close alignment with Ukraine on strategic interests
- U.S. willingness to military respond to Russia in the case of a nuclear attack on Ukraine
- U.S. vagueness on alliances and allies

- Ukraine meets criteria of officially designated “Major Non-NATO allies”
- U.S. response in terms of Sanctions and Security Assistance to Ukraine in current Russo-Ukrainian War

U.S. Willingness to Respond to Russia. During a press conference in September 2022, President Biden’s national security adviser Jake Sullivan stated United States had warned Russia that there would be “catastrophic consequences” for Russia if Moscow used nuclear weapons in Ukraine and added that the United States has “spelled out” how the U.S. would react in private conversations with Russian officials¹⁹. Although the statement from the Biden Administration is not a formal and signed agreement, it has key elements of an agreement with explicit criteria for what would trigger the U.S. to militarily act on behalf of Ukraine. This public and explicit statement, can be viewed within the Secondary Alliance Dilemma under the criteria a country uses when assessing how and to what degree to support an ally.

Non-NATO Allies. The U.S. has an official list of non-NATO allies and enumerates specific criteria regarding these alliances. The U.S. Government defines a Major Non-NATO Ally (MNNA) as any country not a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and designated as a major non-NATO ally under Section 2350a(f)(2) of Title 10, United States Code²⁰. The MNNA is a designation given by the U.S. government to close allies who have strong strategic working relationships with American forces, but are not members of NATO. The “Major Non-NATO Ally,” is a title that comes with certain uncertainties. Unlike NATO allies, a MNNA does not necessarily have a formal mutual defense agreement, but are eligible for certain kinds of military assistance and other types of benefits. Some of the most important benefits include:

- Makes the country eligible to have U.S.-owned War Reserve Stockpiles on its territory outside of U.S. military installations.
- Allows the country to use U.S. provided Foreign Military Financing for commercial leasing of certain defense articles.

¹⁹ Helmore, E. (2022, September 25). Jake Sullivan: US will act ‘decisively’ if Russia uses nuclear weapons in Ukraine. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/sep/25/us-russia-ukraine-war-nuclear-weapons-jake-sullivan>

²⁰ U.S. Department of State. (2021, January 20). *Major Non-NATO-Ally Status* [Press release]. <https://www.state.gov/major-non-nato-ally-status/>

- Makes a country eligible for loans of materials, supplies and equipment.
- Makes a country eligible for expedited processing of export licenses of commercial satellites, their technologies, components, and systems.

Ukraine has received all of these benefits from the U.S., despite not being an officially designated MNNA. The Ukraine Democracy Defense Lend-Lease Act of 2022 fits much of these criteria just by itself. The act passed by congress facilitates the supply of defense related items to the Ukrainian government in a similar way to the World War II Lend-Lease Act²¹.

Vagueness about Alliances. The U.S. has also been vague about the significance between who is an ally vs. who is just a strategic partner or closely aligned country. In 2012, President Barack Obama gave an interview to Telemundo about the relationship between the U.S. and Egypt. "I don't think that we would consider them an ally, but we don't consider them an enemy," said Obama. "They are a new government that's trying to find its way. They were democratically elected. I think we have to see how they respond to this incident."²² White House Press Secretary Jay Carney said later that day that "The President, in diplomatic and legal terms, was speaking correctly, that we do not have an alliance treaty with Egypt. "Ally" is a legal term of art." During his speech in front of the U.S. congress in Washington D.C., President Zelensky told his American audience "Our two nations are Allies in this battle."²³ This statement drew great applause from the crowd, the very people who have a large say in what security assistance Ukraine receives. The statement from Zelensky was not rebuked or clarified by any U.S. official.

The U.S. says of its' relationship with Taiwan, "As a leading democracy and a technological powerhouse, Taiwan is a key U.S. partner in the Indo-Pacific. Though the United States does not have diplomatic relations with Taiwan, we have a robust unofficial relationship."²⁴ The

²¹ Desiderio, A. (2022, April 6). In the fight against Putin, Senate unanimously approves measure that once helped beat Hitler. *POLITICO*. <https://www.politico.com/news/2022/04/06/senate-unanimously-approves-lend-lease-00023668>

²² Chadbourn, M. (2012, September 13). Obama: Egypt neither enemy nor ally. *U.S.* <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-obama-egypt-idUSBRE88C0S820120913>

²³ *We stand, we fight and we will win. Because we are united. Ukraine, America and the entire free world - address by Volodymyr Zelensky in a joint meeting of the US Congress* (By V. Zelensky). Address of President Zelensky to U.S. Congress, United States of America.

²⁴ *U.S. Relations with Taiwan*. (2022, May 28). [Press release]. <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-taiwan/>

relationship is somehow both unofficial yet robust. The U.S. also has sent significant security assistance to Taiwan. The U.S. also has openly said it will defend Taiwan in the case of an attack from China. In an interview with 60-Minutes Joe Biden said he does not look to promote and independent Taiwan, but when asked if the U.S. would defend the island he said, ““Yes, if in fact, there was an unprecedented attack.²⁵” The statement of support from Biden echoes similar statements of support regarding Ukraine.

The dynamic between the U.S. and Ukraine clearly is that of at least closely aligned partners. The dynamic can possibly be described as “quasi-allies” since much of their dynamic mirrors that of formal alliances. Using the criteria listed in the chapter, it is possible to see if the Security Alliance Dilemma can be applied to more broad categories of partnerships, including closely aligned countries like Ukraine and the U.S.

2. U.S. Response to Russo-Georgian War

Although this thesis focuses on the U.S. response to Russian aggression in relation to Ukraine, it is important to analyze how the U.S. responded to Russian aggression during and after the Russo-Georgian War in 2008. Before Ukraine, this was the last time Russia invaded a former Soviet country that was aligned with the U.S. The case of Georgia gives important context and background information regarding how the U.S. responded to military aggression. This chapter will explore the U.S. response to the war and some of the caution the U.S. exercised towards Russia.

Just a little more than three months after the NATO Bucharest Summit in 2008, during which the U.S. publicly opened the door for the possibility for Ukraine and Georgia to join NATO, Russian forces began the invasion of Georgia. The American and European reaction to Russia’s military campaign in Georgia was notably cautious, with Moscow suffering few negative consequences. This is due in part to a lack of agreement between Western allies

²⁵ Brunnstrom, D., & Hunnicutt, T. (2022, September 20). Biden says U.S. forces would defend Taiwan in the event of a Chinese invasion. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/world/biden-says-us-forces-would-defend-taiwan-event-chinese-invasion-2022-09-18/>

regarding the causes and details surrounding who was fully to blame for the war. Georgia requested a range of security assistance to the U.S., including lethal aid, such as stingers and javelins. The Bush Administration rejected these requests.

The U.S. was hesitant to give Georgia meaningful or lethal security assistance. Despite the lack of this security assistance, the U.S. publicly touted the official American response. Former senior White House adviser Karl Rove described the Bush Administration's response to the invasion of Georgia as tough, saying "What the United States did was it sent warships to the Black Sea, it took the combat troops that Georgia had in Afghanistan, and airlifted them back, sending a very strong message to Putin that 'you're going to be facing combat-trained, combat-experienced Georgian forces.' And not only that, but the United States government is willing to give logistical support to get them there, and this stopped them."²⁶ Rove is correct in saying that the U.S. did airlift Georgia forces that were in Afghanistan, back to Georgia. The United States also sent ships into the Black Sea and sent humanitarian aid. There were discussions within the Bush Administration regarding a more direct response. With the Georgian government requesting American help in closing down the key route through which Russian soldiers were entering into the country, Bush's national security aides outlined possible responses, including the bombardment and sealing of the Roki Tunnel and other precision strikes. Ultimately, the decision was not to engage, fearing a direct military conflict with Russia. The Bush administration rejected Tbilisi's request for anti-tank and air defense weapons, the same kind of weapons that the Ukrainians successfully used to repel Russia out of Kyiv during the current war in Ukraine. The Russians eventually halted their offensive short of Tbilisi, figuring that occupying the capital was not necessary.

Joe Wood, the deputy assistant for national security affairs to the more hawkish Vice President Cheney, was in Georgia shortly before the war broke out, but ultimately, he didn't advocate bombing the tunnel. He said he's still unsure "whether or not it should have been more seriously considered. "We will know the answer to that question in 10 to 20 years," he said. "If Russia continues to assert itself either militarily or through other coercive means to claim a sphere of influence, we will look back at this as a time that they were able to change boundaries

²⁶ Pifer, S. (2016, July 29). George W. Bush Was Tough on Russia? Give Me a Break. Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/george-w-bush-was-tough-on-russia-give-me-a-break/>

in Europe without much reaction,” he said. “And then we’ll say we should have considered harder options²⁷.”

2.1 Sanctions in Response to the Invasion of Georgia

When Irakli Kobakhidze, chairman of the Georgian Dream Party was asked whether or not his country was going to join in on the sanction’s regime against Russia for the current invasion of Ukraine, he responded by saying that after the Russia-Georgia war in 2008, no country in the world has imposed sanctions on Russia. “In this regard, we would like to remind you that after the Russia-Georgia war in 2008, no country in the world has imposed sanctions on Russia, despite the fact that Russia occupied 20 percent of Georgia, killed hundreds of military (soldiers) and civilians, and 30 thousand citizens became internally displaced persons in our country. Russia bombed Georgian cities, completely destroyed hundreds of Georgian villages, Georgian churches and other cultural heritage sites²⁸” Kobakhidze said.

In the context of Crimea and the current war, it is important to remember that the United States did enact any major economic sanctions on Russia for its’ involvement in Georgia. There was a clear progression in terms of U.S. sanctions response from Georgia to Crimea to the current war. Although there were criticisms about post-Crimea sanctions not being severe enough, they are a clear escalation when compared to a total lack of sanctions from the U.S. after the war in Georgia.

2.2 Competing Narratives About the War

Although the U.S. was publicly critical of Russia throughout the duration of the conflict, the language U.S. officials used still indirectly suggested that Georgia shared some of the responsibility. Condoleezza Rice, former Secretary of State said in her autobiography of then Georgian President Saakashvili, “He’s proud and can be impulsive, and we all worried that he

²⁷ Smith, B. (2010, February 3). U.S. pondered military use in Georgia. *POLITICO*. <https://www.politico.com/story/2010/02/us-pondered-military-use-in-georgia-032487>

²⁸ BM.GE. (2022, March 16). No country has imposed sanctions on Russia after the Russia-Georgia war in 2008 - Kobakhidze. Business Media Georgia. <https://bm.ge/en/article/no-country-has-imposed-sanctions-on-russia-after-the-russia-georgia-war-in-2008---kobakhidze/104578>

might allow Moscow to provoke him to use force.²⁹ Along with the U.S. language that would put most of the blame on Russia, while hinting that President Saakashvili let himself be provoked by Russia, there was not a consensus in the west regarding to what degree Georgia shared some responsibility in the conflict. Monitors with the OSCE blamed Georgia for firing the first shot. According to one of their monitors on the ground in Georgia, it was Georgia that launched the first military strikes against Tskhinvali. "It was clear to me that the [Georgian] attack was completely indiscriminate and disproportionate to any, if indeed there had been any, provocation," he said. "The attack was clearly, in my mind, an indiscriminate attack on the town, as a town."³⁰ A report released by the British House of Lords emphasized that the exact circumstances of the beginning of the conflict are not clear and that responsibly for the events were "in differing measures, by all the parties."³¹ The European Union funded an independent fact-finding mission headed by Swiss diplomat Heidi Tagliavini to investigate the causes of the war. The EU report blamed Georgia for starting the war, stating that open hostilities started "with a large-scale Georgian military operation against the town of Tskhinvali and the surrounding areas, launched in the night of 7 to 8 August 2008."

2.3 Alliance Dilemma Explaining U.S. Caution

Although this thesis does not focus on the U.S. relationship with Georgia, it does explore if some of the concepts of the Secondary Alliance Dilemma can apply to countries that are strongly aligned instead of in a formal agreement. The exercised caution when assessing how and if to assist Georgia can be viewed through Snyder's criteria regarding what influences the choice of an ally to assist another ally. The criteria the U.S. used to determine support can be viewed through the criteria Snyder lays out:

- Past behavior: U.S. and western allies had a sense Saakashvili may be easily provoked based on his previous statements.
- Different Interests: U.S. did not want possibility of direct confrontation with Russia.

²⁹ Rice, Condoleezza. *No higher honor: A memoir of my years in Washington*. Crown, 2011.

³⁰ Jon Swain (2008). "Georgia fired first shot, say UK monitors". *The Sunday Times*.

³¹ *After Georgia. The EU and Russia: Follow-Up Report*. (2009). House of Lords. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200809/ldselect/ldcom/26/2602.htm>

- Dependencies: U.S. did not rely on Georgia to any significant extent.
- Interests: U.S. allies, such as the E.U. were not as equivocal in blaming Russia for the war.

The case of how the U.S. responded to Russian aggression gives good background information regarding the U.S. and Russia. It is clear that the U.S. was cautious to provoke Russia. The U.S. chose against sending lethal aid and blocking off Russia's main path to Georgia. Seeing this response allows a narrative to form regarding the progression of U.S. policy towards Russia.

3. American Cooperation with Russia

Before analyzing the American response to Russian aggression towards Ukraine, it is important to look at background information related to the American-Russian dynamic. One of the reasons that the U.S. exercised caution towards Russia in the past is because the U.S. openly wanted to work with Russia in select areas that the United States publicly described as priorities or of high importance. These areas ranged from nuclear non-proliferation, Afghanistan, Syria, and more. To understand the context of U.S. caution towards Russia, it is important to understand these areas of interest that the U.S. prioritized. This chapter explores areas of cooperation between the U.S. and Russia.

3.1 START Treaty

On April 08, 2010, President Obama and President Medvedev met in Prague to sign the START Treaty. In Prague president Obama said "I want to thank my friend and partner, Dmitry Medvedev. Without his personal efforts and strong leadership, we would not be here today. We've met and spoken by phone many times throughout the negotiations of this treaty, and as a consequence we've developed a very effective working relationship built on candor, cooperation, and mutual respect."³² President Obama then went on to add, "While these issues are a top priority, they are only one part of the U.S.-Russia relationship... We also discussed the potential

³² Obama, B. (2008). *Remarks by President Obama and President Medvedev of Russia at New START Treaty Signing Ceremony and Press Conference 2010* [Transcript]. Retrieved from <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-obama-and-president-medvedev-russia-new-start-treaty-signing-cere>

to expand our cooperation on behalf of economic growth, trade and investment, as well as technological innovation, and I look forward to discussing these issues further when President Medvedev visits the United States later this year, because there is much we can do on behalf of our security and prosperity if we continue to work together.³³”

3.2 U.S. Base in Kyrgyzstan

. The Manas Air Base in Kyrgyzstan was opened in December 2001 to support U.S. military operations in in Afghanistan. The base was a transit point for U.S. military personnel in and out of Afghanistan. President Putin was instrumental in convincing Kyrgyzstan to allow the U.S. to operate the base. Some of Putin’s closest advisors allegedly were very against the plan. The base, at the main civilian airport in the former Soviet republic, moved more than 5.3 million servicemen in and out of Afghanistan and handled tens of thousands of cargo shipments and refueling missions. According to Colonel John Milard, Commander of the 376th Air Expeditionary Wing and head of the Manas base, “We were known as the gateway to Afghanistan on freedom’s frontier. We offloaded more than 1 billion liters of fuel to 136,000 coalition aircraft ... We like to say we fueled the fight.³⁴”

3.3 North Korea

The United States convinced Russia to sign on to the UN Security Council resolution 1874 in response to North Korea’s nuclear test. The resolution condemned in the May 25, 2009, nuclear test by North Korea and tightened sanctions against it by blocking funding for nuclear, missile and proliferation activities through targeted sanctions on additional goods, persons and entities and widened the ban on arms imports-exports.

North Korea was also an area of potential cooperation during the Trump Administration. Talking about a potential negotiation between the U.S. and North Korea, Trump said “I think we’re doing very well with North Korea. A lot of progress is being made,” Trump told reporters

³³ Obama. (2008)

³⁴ Dzyubenko, O. (2014, June 3). U.S. vacates base in Central Asia as Russia’s clout rises. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-kyrgyzstan-usa-manas-idUSKBN0EE1LH20140603>

at the White House. “I appreciated President Putin’s statement yesterday. He wants to see it done also. I think there’s a lot of excitement for getting a deal done with North Korea.³⁵”

3.4 Syria

Throughout the war in Syria, President Obama often tried to work with Russian Vladimir Putin to try to reduce civilian casualties, broker ceasefires, and help get humanitarian aid into the country. Barack Obama’s administration tried for months to broker a durable cease-fire in Syria, desperately trying to get Russia to come to terms but ruling out the possibility of using U.S. military force against the Assad regime.

In June of 2016, the Obama administration proposed an agreement on Syria to the Russian government that was meant to deepen military cooperation between the U.S. and Russia with the aim of Russia persuading Syrian President Assad to stop bombing American-backed rebels. The main point of the deal was a U.S. promise to join forces with the Russian air force to share targeting and coordinate a bombing campaign against al-Qaeda’s branch in Syria, which was primarily fighting the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. In exchange, the Russians would have agreed to pressure the Assad regime to stop bombing certain Syrian rebel groups the United States did not consider terrorists³⁶. CIA Director John Brennan said at the time in remarks to the Council on Foreign Relations that Russia was “trying to crush” anti-Assad forces and that Moscow has not lived up to its commitments regarding the cease-fire or the political process in Syria. Nevertheless, Brennan said, the United States needed to work with Russia. “There’s going to be no way forward on the political front without active Russian cooperation and genuine Russian interest in moving forward,³⁷” he said.

A few months later, Russia and the U.S. struck a deal. The proposal, announced by Secretary of State John Kerry and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov was ambitious. The idea was for the U.S. and Russia to get the Syrian rebels and Assad government to stop fighting each other

³⁵ Lee, J. J. M. (2019, April 26). North Korean leader warns of return to tension; Trump thanks Putin. U.S. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-russia-kcna/north-korean-leader-warns-of-return-to-tension-trump-thanks-putin-idUSKCN1S12QH>

³⁶ Dekel, Udi, and Orit Perlov. “Syria: No ‘Situation Freeze.’” Institute for National Security Studies, 2016. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep08745>.

³⁷ Rogin, J. (2016, June 30). Obama proposes new military partnership with Russia in Syria. *Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/obama-proposes-new-military-partnership-with-russia-in-syria/2016/06/29/8e8b2e2a-3e3f-11e6-80bc-d06711fd2125_story.html

temporarily so that the U.S. and Russia could jointly attack both ISIS and al-Qaeda-linked groups in Syria more effectively. The agreement was theoretically a ceasefire although Secretary Kerry gave conflicting descriptions calling for the agreement to end to “all” attacks and attempts to seize territory, while also he referring to it as a “sustained reduction in violence,” which suggests it was something less than a complete ceasefire.

The Obama administration so urgently wanted to work with Russia on the issue of Syria that the administration hesitated when members of the U.S. mission to the United Nations drafted a plan in the fall of 2014 to blame Assad for a series of chlorine attacks in Syria, fearing it might hurt efforts to secure Russia’s support for peace in Syria and jeopardize the Iran nuclear deal. The State Department ignored repeated appeals from Wa’el Alzayat, a senior policy advisor to U.S. Ambassador to the UN Samantha Power, to endorse the proposal laying different options for holding the Assad regime responsible for its use of chemical weapons. “My sense is we were being slow-rolled,” Alzayat told *Foreign Policy* at the time³⁸. Ultimately, Alzayat and a group of like-minded colleagues got their way in what turned out to be long and contentious internal State Department conflict, but only after several months had passed. It would be nearly a year after Syrians first dropped a chlorine bomb before the Obama administration agreed to press for a U.N. resolution aimed at holding the Syrian regime accountable and then another four more months before it would be adopted by the U.N. Security Council. The Obama administration’s reluctance reflected concern that the initiative would anger Russian President Vladimir Putin, an ally of Assad, when U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry was hoping to restart stalled peace talks in Syria and pursuing separate negotiations on a nuclear deal with Iran. “The questions that kept coming back to me and others was: Why are you pushing this? Russia will veto,” said a former State Department official in Washington, who recalled pressing senior officials to confront the Russians at the United Nations on Syria’s ongoing use of chemical weapons with the Russians³⁹. “They would say, ‘What would happen if we did something and it imploded the relationship we have right now with Russia — tank something else we have going on and to what end?’”

³⁸ Lynch, C. (2017, May 19). To Assuage Russia, Obama Administration Backed Off Syria Chemical Weapons Plan. *Foreign Policy*. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/05/19/to-assuage-russia-obama-administration-backed-off-syria-chemical-weapons-plan/>

³⁹ Lynch, C (2017)

3.5 Iran Relations

United States gained the support of Russia to help pass United Nations Security Council Resolution 1929 in June 2010, which created the most comprehensive and severe international sanctions against Iran. UN resolution 1929 says Iran should not acquire an interest in any commercial activity in another country involving uranium mining, production or use of nuclear materials and technology, in particular uranium enrichment and reprocessing activities, all activities and bans the export of technology related to ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons. The resolution also decides that countries are prohibited from direct or indirect supply, sale or transfer to Iran of heavy conventional weapons such as battle tanks and aircraft.

In 2015, Iran agreed a long-term deal on its nuclear program with a group of world powers including the U.S., U.K., France, China, Russia and Germany. The deal came after years of tension over alleged Iranian efforts to develop a nuclear weapon. Iran insisted that its nuclear program was peaceful, but the international community led by the U.S. was very skeptical. Under the deal, Iran agreed to limit its sensitive nuclear activities and allow in international inspectors in return for the lifting of economic sanctions that severely hurt Iran's economy⁴⁰.

The Obama administration treated the Iran deal as a major priority. At a speech at the White House after the signing of the deal, President Obama said of the deal, "The agreement now reached between the international community and the Islamic Republic of Iran builds on this tradition of strong, principled diplomacy. After two years of negotiations, we have achieved a detailed arrangement that permanently prohibits Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. It cuts off all of Iran's pathways to a bomb. It contains the most comprehensive inspection and verification regime ever negotiated to monitor a nuclear program. As was true in previous treaties, it does not resolve all problems; it certainly doesn't resolve all our problems with Iran. It does not ensure a warming between our two countries. But it achieves one of our most critical security objectives. As such, it is a very good deal."⁴¹

⁴⁰ *Remarks by the President on the Iran Nuclear Deal*. (2015, August 5). [Press release]. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/issues/foreign-policy/iran-deal>

⁴¹ *Remarks by the President on the Iran Nuclear Deal*. (2015, August 5). [Press release]. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/issues/foreign-policy/iran-deal>

Russia was publicly pleased with the deal. After its' signing of the deal, the Kremlin issued a statement that read, "Both sides stressed that the comprehensive agreement on the Iranian nuclear program meets the interests of the entire international community, helping strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime and decreasing tensions in the Middle East. In this respect, the presidents emphasized the role of Russian-U.S. dialogue in ensuring security and stability in the world."⁴²

3.6 Cooperation with Russia and Alliance Dilemma

The U.S. clearly had many areas of mutual interest with Russia. Based on quotes from many U.S. officials previously mentioned in the chapter, it is clear these were not only areas of mutual interests, but key priorities from the U.S. perspective. Snyder talks about the fear of an ally realigning of "de-aligning." The U.S. interest in cooperating with Russia can be seen as a strategy of balancing their strategic and geopolitical interests. Ukraine shared and shares alignment with the U.S., but some of the areas of cooperation with Russia were considered major priorities. These are the types of dynamics that influence to what degree to respond to Russian aggression.

4. US Response to Crimea

The United States responded to the Russian annexation of Crimea mainly through sanctions against Russia. The U.S. also responded with security assistance to Ukraine, but not the lethal assistance that they requested. The U.S. also started to implement the beginning of a complex training mission of Ukrainian troops. This chapter will analyze the U.S. response to the annexation of Crimea.

When first implementing sanctions, the U.S. focused mainly on travel bans and asset freezes of Russian officials and oligarchs within President Putin's inner circle. The U.S. also sanctioned a number of Russian companies within the defense sector. Eventually, but in a narrow

⁴² Eshchenko, A. (2015, July 16). Obama, Putin congratulate each other for Iran deal. *CNN*. <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/07/16/politics/obama-putin-iran-nuclear-deal/index.html>

capacity, the U.S. also limited certain types of exports to Russia in spheres of technology and oil production. According to official White House archives, President Barack Obama signed his first executive order allowing for sanctions on Russia in response to the annexation of Crimea on March 06, 2014. The EO allowed for the US government to block any property owned by an individual found to be responsible for or complicit in, or to have engaged in, directly or indirectly, any of the following:

- actions or policies that undermine democratic processes or institutions in Ukraine
- actions or policies that threaten the peace, security, stability, sovereignty, or territorial integrity of Ukraine or misappropriation of state assets of Ukraine or of an economically significant entity in Ukraine⁴³.

More sweeping sanctions related to export bans were not broadly applied to all of Russia, but rather specifically to Crimea. President Obama signed an executive order barring new investment and trade with Crimea⁴⁴. The executive order “is intended to provide clarity to United States corporations doing business in the region and reaffirm that the United States will not accept Russia’s occupation and attempted annexation of Crimea,” President Obama said in the EO. This forced companies like Apple and Valve to blacklist Crimea, in addition to payment operators Visa and MasterCard. U.S. Obama also issued an executive order banning U.S. exports of goods, technology or services to Ukraine's Crimea region. Under the implemented actions, U.S. persons are also prohibited from financing, facilitating or guaranteeing any transaction by a foreign person that could not be undertaken directly by a U.S. person, making it harder for a U.S. citizen with Russian connections to circumvent sanctions⁴⁵.

4.1 Impact of Sanctions

⁴³ The White House: Office of the Press Secretary. (2014, March 6). *Executive Order -- Blocking Property of Certain Persons Contributing to the Situation in Ukraine* [Press release]. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/03/06/executive-order-blocking-property-certain-persons-contributing-situation>

⁴⁴ *Statement by the President on Executive Order “Blocking Property of Certain Persons and Prohibiting Certain Transactions with Respect to the Crimea Region of Ukraine*. (2014, December 19). [Press release]. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/12/19/statement-president-executive-order-blocking-property-certain-persons-an>

⁴⁵ Ukraine crisis: Obama orders ban on Crimea trade. (2014, December 20). *BBC News*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30558502>

The U.S. and allied sanctions implemented against Russia did not force Russia to concede Crimea back to Ukraine or stop their arming of rebels in Eastern Ukraine. Instead of trying to answer whether or not these sanctions “worked”, it is more useful to examine what impact they may have had on Russia. Russian GDP overall contracted approximately 3 % between 2014 and 2016 with growth resuming in 2017, but only reaching 1.5 %. In 2015 The International Monetary Fund reported that Western Sanctions helped to reduce Russian real GDP initially by 1–1.5 %. Citibank conducted an analysis to estimate the effects of sanctions on Russia’s economic performance. Their analysts found that about 90 % of the observed decline in GDP could be explained by falling oil prices. Meaning that only 10 % of the output decline in 2014–2015 was explained by sanctions⁴⁶.

4.2 Harsher Options Considered

One of the responses considered by the Obama administration was sending security assistance to Ukraine, including lethal aid. The Obama administration would ultimately send hundreds of millions of dollars’ worth of security assistance, including drones, armored Humvees, night-vision goggles, food, and medicinal supplies, but not lethal military assistance.

The criticism of a cautious U.S. response also came from within the Obama administration. In 2014, Chris Wallander was a senior advisor on Russian affairs to President Obama. During a senate-confirmation hearing for his confirmation in January of 2022, to the post of assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs, he was asked tough questions related to the U.S. response to Crimea. “I believe that our response in 2014 was too slow and too incremental. And it’s confirmed by the lessons that I learned, and that I believe others in the national security community learned, to better address Russia’s ongoing aggression,” said Wallander, who would oversee U.S. military security cooperation and foreign military sales⁴⁷. Later, Sen. Tom Cotton, R-Ark., asked whether the Obama administration had miscalculated by not sending Ukraine lethal weapons for fear of provoking a war with Russia. Wallander agreed. Cotton noted the last administration sent such aid, “and we haven’t had World

⁴⁶ Girardone, C. (2022). Russian sanctions and the banking sector. *British Journal of Management*, 33(4), 1683-1688.

⁴⁷ Gould, J. (2022, February 17). Senate confirms Wallander to Pentagon international affairs role. *Defense News*. <https://www.defensenews.com/pentagon/2022/02/16/senate-confirms-wallander-to-pentagon-international-affairs-role/>

War III yet.” Wallander responded by saying, ““I believe one of the lessons I learned is that it would have been appropriate and necessary to provide Ukraine with what it needed to defend its territory, including the weapons you suggest.⁴⁸”

John Brennan was the CIA Director at the time during Crimea. He said that the administration was afraid that advanced U.S. technology like that of the Stinger or Javelin could end up in Russian hands. "The Russians had deep penetrations of Ukrainian intelligence, security, and military forces in the aftermath" of Ukraine’s 2014 revolution that overthrew the pro-Russian government he said, "and it took time to rid those forces of Russian moles, agents, and spies. That was the purpose of my visit to Kyiv less than eight weeks after the Revolution of Dignity.⁴⁹" Brennan added, ““Some [officials] argued strenuously to provide lethal assistance, but the ultimate decision made by [Obama] was to provide only non-lethal military and economic assistance.⁵⁰”

4.3 U.S. Training Mission

The U.S. wanted to be able to respond to Russia improve without provoking it. One of the balanced approaches it found was the extensive training of Ukrainian troops by U.S. military personnel and advisors. One of the main contributions that the U.S. made to Ukraine after Crimea was an increased focus on training Ukrainian forces to integrate NATO standards and tactics. 2014 is when Ukraine slowly started to make this shift, which is currently helping Ukraine fend off Russia who is predominantly still using Soviet war-tactics. Western observers and the Ukrainians themselves have noticed how this has had practical effects on the battle field. Oleksiy Danilov, secretary of Ukraine’s National Security and Defense Council, said Ukraine’s implementation of a command-and-control model based on the NATO doctrine has provided a competitive advantage. “A junior commanding officer has the ability to make decisions

⁴⁸ Gould, J. (2022)

⁴⁹ Dilanian, K. (2019, November 22). Former CIA Director: We worried arming Ukraine would hand technology to Russian spies. *NBC News*. <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/national-security/former-cia-director-we-worried-arming-ukraine-would-hand-technology-n1089926>

⁵⁰ Dilanian (2019)

depending on the situation and takes responsibility for himself, for his soldiers and for the territory,⁵¹” Danilov said.

The Soviet style of warfare is still the current mode of warfare that the Russian Army uses. One of the key drawbacks of the Soviet fighting philosophy is that it is extremely centralized. This means that many decisions on the battlefield must be approved by a high-ranking officer or a whole chain of officers before any action can be taken⁵². In a combat environment, key opportunities to inflict damage on the enemy are not static. Enemy troops can quickly move, a position once safe can be compromised, or equipment can suddenly break.

Unlike the Soviet system war-fighting, the NATO system was heavily influenced by the United States and does not rely on a highly-centralized model. The NATO system relies on a strong Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) corp. NCOs are of the rank lower than officers, but higher than that of newer and inexperienced soldiers. They serve as the connecting tissue between officers and lower ranked soldiers. NCOs are encouraged to make vital, real-time decisions on the battlefield⁵³. This allows for experienced soldiers who are not commissioned officers to make quick decisions right on the spot instead of waiting hours or even sometimes days for permission from a superior.

4.4 Big Strides for Ukrainian Army

It is important to see how the Ukrainian Army was able to transform, due in large part to U.S. training and funding. In 2014, Ukraine’s military was called “decrepit” by one national security analyst, and its navy was in “a sorry state.”⁵⁴ Ukrainian General Victor Muzhenko, a former top commander of Ukraine’s armed forces, bluntly said that the Ukrainian military was

⁵¹ Shuster, S., & Bergengruen, V. (2022, September 26). Inside the Ukrainian Counterstrike That Turned the Tide of the War. *Time*. <https://time.com/6216213/ukraine-military-valeriy-zaluzhny/>

⁵² Odom, William E. “Soviet Military Doctrine.” *Foreign Affairs* 67, no. 2 (1988): 114–34. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20043776>

⁵³ Arms, L. R. (2002). The U.S. Army Museum of the Noncommissioned Officer. *On Point*, 8(2), 16–16. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44611176>

⁵⁴ Episkopos, M. (2019, July 21). Be Afraid, Russia: Ukraine’s Military Is Becoming a Force to Reckoned With. *The National Interest*. <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/be-afraid-russia-ukraines-military-becoming-force-reckoned-68022>

“an army literally in ruins.”⁵⁵ In 2014, the Ukrainian government launched a comprehensive review of its national security and military defense infrastructures. The review identified a number of issues that directly resulted in poor combat performance. The weaknesses were wide-ranging, from an inability to fight cyberattacks to poor medical care for soldiers fighting in the East. Corruption was normalized, troops were not getting paid and basic supplies always were always low. Overall, Ukrainian logistics and command were poor inefficient, and can be compared to the current issues the Russian military faces. To fix some of these issues, President Petro Poroshenko in 2016 ordered wide-spread reforms in five categories: command and control, planning, operations, medical and logistics, and professional development of the force. The timeline of implementations were four-years, a short period of time considering much of Ukraine’s military were already fighting in the Donbas region. A persistent fear that Russia may launch a more wide-scale invasion motivated Ukraine to implement these reforms as quickly as possible. Ukraine has made significant improvements in the period between the current war and Crimea.

As part of this assistance, the United States helped train Ukrainian soldiers at the Yavoriv military base. The base quickly became an effective and respected training center, where an estimated five battalions (one battalion has approximately 1,000 soldiers) have trained annually since 2015. In 2016, although the process had already started unofficially, Poroshenko formally asked for senior defense advisers from the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Lithuania and Germany to advise Ukraine on modernizing its armed forces with the goal of eventually reaching NATO standards. One such NATO rule was a requirement for civilian control of the military. At the time, Ukraine’s Minister of Defense was also an active duty general. Another NATO requirement was ensuring that Ukraine was able to integrate its logistical support with other NATO units if and when deployed.

In 2014, Ukraine’s military culture did not encourage risk-taking by junior leaders, including NCOs, lieutenants and captains who were conducting the on the ground fighting in the East. Unable to make decisions, junior leaders had to seek permission before they could make a key decision on the battlefield. These decisions occur when initial battlefield orders are

⁵⁵ Akimenko, V. (2018, February 22). Ukraine’s Toughest Fight: The Challenge of Military Reform. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/02/22/ukraine-s-toughest-fight-challenge-of-military-reform-pub-75609>

no longer relevant or fit the ever-changing situation on the ground. Given the fast-paced, and lethal nature of modern warfare, disciplined decision making can be the difference between life and death. While fighting Russian-backed separatists and Russian forces in the Donbas back in 2014, the Ukrainians quickly figured out that lower-level leaders could not wait for approval from a higher-up every time they wanted to make a decision. The speed of battle was simply too quick. With the help of the U.S. and western training and advising, a new culture has appeared. This cultural shift, joined with eight years of fighting in the Donbas, has created a generation of combat-ready officers and NCOs. Many of these leaders are now fighting against Russia today.

4.5 U.S. Response and Secondary Alliance Dilemma

U.S. caution when responding to Crimea makes sense when considering the criteria that the countries use when determining to what degree will an ally help another ally when they are under attack. Based on comments from U.S. officials, the U.S. was clearly afraid that Russia would get their hands on sensitive U.S. technology. Snyder mentions strategic interests as being one of the key factors when a country decides whether or not to help an ally. He defines strategic interests as “an interest in keeping the ally's power resources out of the opponent's hands.”⁵⁶ Since advanced U.S. military technology is a key component of American power, this example of caution from the U.S. makes sense using the Secondary Alliance Dilemma.

The U.S. was also cautious when sanctioning Russia for Crimea. Despite the sanctions having some noticeable affects, like a decline in purchasing power for Russian consumers, the U.S. administration was afraid to harm its’ other, more prioritized allies, such as Germany and France. After President Obama signed new legislation that would have given him the authority to impose greater penalties on Russia, he admitted that he was not planning on using the new law to damage Russia because he was reluctant to move more aggressively than European allies were willing to citing concerns about European partners. Europe does far more business with Russia than the United States does and faces more economic consequences from sanctions. This relates to a divergence of interests between Ukraine and the U.S. under the Secondary Alliance

⁵⁶ Snyder. (1984) Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics

Dilemma. The U.S. prioritized its' relationship with stronger economic partners like those in Western Europe over the concerns of Ukraine.

5. US Pre-War Policy 2021-2022

The U.S. openly warned the international community that Russia was going to launch an invasion into Ukraine. This chapter analyzes the different types of aid the U.S. gave to Ukraine in anticipation of the war and what it says about how the U.S. views Ukraine and Russia.

The United States drastically enhanced its shipments of lethal military aid and protective equipment to Ukraine as the prospect of a Russian invasion became more apparent and then a reality, according to a declassified accounting of transfers. The list indicates that as early as December, the Pentagon was equipping Ukrainian fighters with arms and equipment useful for fighting in urban areas, including shotguns and specialized suits to safeguard soldiers handling unexploded ordnance. The focus on urban weapons likely indicates that the U.S. anticipated that Russia would advance towards major Ukrainian cities. One of the last publicized aid packages to Ukraine before the invasion shipments included M141 single-shot shoulder-launched rocket launchers, M500 shotguns, Mk 19 grenade launchers, M134 mini guns typically used for firing from helicopters, and protective suits for explosive ordnance disposal. All of these weapons are useful for defensive purposes and potential urban combat.

One of the notable developments of the months before the war was how vocal and confident the US intelligence apparatus was in predicting a full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. A Wall-Street Journal article from February 18, 2022 titled "U.S. Warns of Imminent Russian Invasion of Ukraine with Tanks, Jet Fighters, Cyberattacks" outlined the Biden Administration's high-degree of confidence of an imminent invasion. According to the article, U.S. officials said a Russian attack could involve a broad combination of jet fighters, tanks, ballistic missiles and cyberattacks, with the ultimate intention of rendering Ukraine's leadership powerless. The official's said Mr. Putin has laid the groundwork via a series of destabilizing activities and false-flag operations, which were long predicted by U.S. and allied officials and intended to make it look as if Ukraine has provoked Russia into a conflict, therefore justifying the Russian invasion. Speaking at the White House, President Biden referred to the Kremlin's

efforts to fabricate a pretext for Russian forces to attack. “We believe that they will target Ukraine’s capital, Kyiv, a city of 2.8 million innocent people,” Mr. Biden said. He said he was providing the information because “we’re doing everything in our power to remove any reason that Russia may give to justify invading Ukraine and prevent them from moving.” Asked about whether Mr. Putin has given the go-ahead, Mr. Biden said: “I’m convinced he’s made the decision. We have reason to believe that.” An administration official said later the president’s statement reflected the intelligence community’s assessment of the situation.

5.1 Alliance Dilemma: Before the War

The fact that the U.S. armed Ukraine with lethal security assistance shows the progression of their response towards Russian aggression. The U.S. was quickly arming Ukraine before the invasion began. When compared to the denial of lethal aid after Russia had already invaded Georgia, the trend is clear. The constant warnings from the U.S. also indicate a change in approach. By this point, the U.S. was much more familiar with Russia’s disinformation campaigns and cyber capabilities. As President Biden said, the U.S. wanted to proactively discredit any claims of self-defense on Russia’s part. This proactiveness can be seen as a sign of the U.S. being more assertive towards Russia and playing a more active role in trying to help Ukraine.

6. U.S. Response to Current Russo-Ukrainian War

The U.S. response in support of Ukraine has been a fundamentally different from past responses to Russian aggression. The quantity and scope of security assistance has been greatly exceeded what was given to Ukraine from 2014-2021 combined. As with other examples of Russian aggression, the U.S.’s main response was to sanction Russia and to give security assistance to Ukraine. This chapter analyzes the U.S. response to Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

6.1 Sanctions Response

The implementation of harsh and broad sanction aimed at key sectors of Russia’s economy, Putin’s inner circle, the Russian defense industry, and Russia’s foreign reserves has been one of the most devastating responses to the Russian invasion of Ukraine by the United

States. Compared to sanctions implemented after Crimea, US sanctions have had material impacts Russia's economy and defense sector.

One of the early and most unprecedented steps taken was the freezing of Russia's foreign reserves. This was something totally unprecedented and something that experts believe Putin and his economic team did not expect. Specifically, sanctions implemented by the United States along with allies have frozen an estimated \$300 billion worth of Russian Central Bank assets, limiting the central bank's ability to aid the war effort and mitigate the impacts from sanctions⁵⁷. The freezes mean that any Russian central bank assets that are held in U.S. financial institutions are now stuck and financial institutions outside the United States that hold dollars for the bank are banned from transferring them. According to John E. Smith, the former director of the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control, "Sanctions against the Central Bank of Russia and the central bank's assets held worldwide are simply beyond comparison to previous sanctions regimes, particularly involving a major power like Russia."⁵⁸ Even the usually stoic Russian Central Bank Governor Elvira Nabiullina admitted, "We need to look toward the future, but at the moment I am struggling to give specific suggestions. The list of the countries issuing liquid reserve currencies is limited and they are the ones that have taken hostile measures and limited our access."⁵⁹ She added, "The period when the economy can live on reserves is finite. And already in the second and third quarter we will enter a period of structural transformation and the search for new business models."⁶⁰

Another unprecedented step the U.S. decided to take against Russia was to stop the purchase of Russian fossil fuels. On March 08, 2022, President Biden announced an EO that banned the importation into the United States of Russian crude oil, petroleum products, liquefied natural gas, and coal. In 2021, the U.S. imported nearly 700,000 barrels per day of crude oil and refined petroleum products from Russia⁶¹. The same EO also bans new U.S. investment in

⁵⁷ Rappeport, A. (2022, March 1). US Escalates Sanctions With a Freeze on Russian Central Bank Assets. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/28/us/politics/us-sanctions-russia-central-bank.html>

⁵⁸ Rappeport. (2022)

⁵⁹ Rosen, P. (2022, April 18). Russia central bank admits it's struggling to find foreign-currency options as sanctions spur "structural transformation." *Yahoo*. <https://sports.yahoo.com/russia-central-bank-admits-struggling-132113545.html?guccounter=1>

⁶⁰ Rosen. (2022)

⁶¹ The White House. (2022, March 8). *FACT SHEET: United States Bans Imports of Russian Oil, Liquefied Natural Gas, and Coal* [Press release]. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/03/08/fact->

Russia's energy sector, and prohibits American from financing or enabling foreign companies that are making investment to produce energy in Russia.

The US also implemented a wide range of targeted export bans meant to deprive Russia of sensitive technology that can aid their war effort. The US utilized new foreign direct product rules targeted at Russia to prevent exports of foreign-origin items produced with U.S. advanced technologies, tools, and software. This prevents Russia from accessing key technology, such as advanced super-computers, wiring, and electronics from outside the US if the products use American-made components or intellectual properties. The US targeted items essential to Russia's chemical and biological weapons production capabilities and by imposing export controls on certain chemicals and equipment used to make such weapons. There have been Russian media reports that production of its next-generation airborne early warning and control military aircraft has been postponed due to lack of key western components, including semiconductors.

6.2 Impact of Current Sanctions

One of the most comprehensive studies about the ongoing impact of American sanctions on Russia for their invasion of Ukraine comes from Yale University, led by Jeffrey A. Sonnenfeld from the Yale School of Management. Their study is unique in that it continually is updated and reassessed to account for new sanctions imposed by the U.S. The study utilizes a wide variety of metrics to show how current U.S. sanctions are damaging the Russian economy. Some of these sources include, "high frequency consumer data, cross-channel checks, releases from Russia's international trade partners, and data mining of complex shipping data⁶²." The detailed study leads to key conclusions regarding the impact of current sanctions against Russia:

[sheet-united-states-bans-imports-of-russian-oil-liquefied-natural-gas-and-coal/#:~:text=Today's%20Executive%20Order%20bans%3A&text=Last%20year%2C%20the%20U.S.%20imported,U.S.%20drivers%20and%20consumers%20annually.](#)

⁶² Sonnenfeld, Jeffrey and Tian, Steven and Sokolowski, Franek and Wyrebkowski, Michal and Kasprowicz, Mateusz, Business Retreats and Sanctions Are Crippling the Russian Economy (July 19, 2022). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4167193> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4167193>

- Russia’s position as a commodities exporter has eroded and faces complex challenges executing a “pivot to Asia”
- Russian imports sharply decreased and Russia faces challenges securing crucial parts and technology from growingly hesitant trade partners, which is leading to widespread supply shortages within its domestic economy.
- As a result of foreign business exiting Russia, it has lost companies, which represent approximately 40% of its GDP
- Russia being substantively cut off from international financial markets, limiting its ability to tap into pools of capital needed for the revitalization of its crippled economy.
- Russia is resorting to unsustainable and dramatic fiscal and monetary intervention to blunt against worsening structural economic weaknesses
- Hundreds of factories have suspended production because they cannot access foreign-made parts
- Many affected companies are placing employees on part-time schedules or furlough
- Hundreds of U.S. and international companies have exited the Russian market
- Russian oil is selling below market prices

There are still some economists who believe the Russian economy has weathered the sanctions better than many expected. In October 2022, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimated that in 2022, the Russian economy would contract by a about 3%, less than half of its economic disruption during the global financial crisis of 2008-2010. Despite an initial sharp decline, the Russian Ruble has been steady, due to strict measures implemented by the Russian Central Bank. Despite Russia’s issues with importing key materials related to military use, Russia has been able to create at least some new cruise missiles since the beginning of the war⁶³.

The recent expansion of oil-sector sanctions is expected to increase pressure on Russia. In December 2022, the EU banned imports of most Russian crude oil and the G7 implemented a

⁶³ Ismay, J. (2022, December 5). Despite Sanctions, Russian Cruise Missiles Were Made Recently. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/05/us/politics/cruise-missiles-russia-ukraine-sanctions.html>

global price cap on Russian oil purchases. The U.S. closely helped craft the price cap, which includes a mechanism that bars participating countries to use their shipping vessels or insurance services to help transport Russian oil⁶⁴. These new oil sanctions are already showing signs of effectiveness against the Russian economy.

6.3 Security Assistance

When U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin publicly said that “we want to see Russia weakened to the degree that it can’t do the kinds of things that it has done in invading Ukraine” it was obvious there was something different and less cautious about the U.S. approach to Russia⁶⁵. A National Security Council spokesperson reiterated that Sec. Austin’s comments were consistent with what the US’ goals have been for months adding that the U.S. wants “to make this invasion a strategic failure for Russia.” “We want Ukraine to win,” the spokesperson added. “One of our goals has been to limit Russia’s ability to do something like this again, as Secretary Austin said. That’s why we are arming the Ukrainians with weapons and equipment to defend themselves from Russian attacks, and it’s why we are using sanctions and export controls that are directly targeted at Russia’s defense industry to undercut Russia’s economic and military power to threaten and attack its neighbors.”⁶⁶

The U.S. approach to security assistance when the war already started was to focus on how to help Ukraine repel a wide-spread Russian invasion. As it became clear that Ukraine was exceeding expectations, the U.S. shifted to aid that suggested that the U.S. was expecting a longer conflict. This included artillery and attack drones, the type of weaponry that is not considered “game-changing”, but known to make incremental gains over a longer-period of time. More types of security assistance to Ukraine will be explored in later chapters.

⁶⁴ Questions and Answers: G7 agrees oil price cap to reduce Russia’s revenues, while keeping global energy markets stable. (2022, December 3). [Press release].

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/QANDA_22_7469

⁶⁵ Bertrand, N. (2022, April 26). Austin’s assertion that US wants to ‘weaken’ Russia underlines Biden strategy shift. *CNN*. <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/04/25/politics/biden-administration-russia-strategy/index.html>

⁶⁶ Bertrand. (2022)

7. Tensions Between U.S. and Russia

Tensions between the U.S. and Russia increased from 2008 through today. From the U.S. perspective, these areas of tension were often due to Russia taking antagonizing actions against the U.S. This Chapter explores how these events may have indirectly affected the dynamic between the U.S. and Ukraine.

7.1 2016 U.S. Presidential Election

According to a report released by United States Department of Justice Special Counsel Robert Mueller, Russia interfered in the 2016 presidential election in sweeping and systematic fashion. Evidence of Russian government operations began to appear in mid-2016. In June of that year, the Democratic National Committee and its cyber response team publicly announced that Russian hackers had compromised their computer networks. Hackers then leaked emails and other sensitive materials that same month. Additional releases followed in July through WikiLeaks, with further releases in October and November. The report goes on to state “That fall, two federal agencies jointly announced that the Russian government “directed recent compromises of e-mails from US persons and institutions, including US political organizations,” and, “these thefts and disclosures are intended to interfere with the US election process.”⁶⁷”

After the election, in late December 2016, the United States imposed sanctions on Russia for having interfered in the election. By early 2017, several congressional committees were examining Russia’s interference in the election.⁶⁸ Russian interference went beyond hacks into the Democrat Party and releasing embarrassing emails of DNC members and staffers. A bipartisan report from the U.S. Senate Intelligence Committee came to many of the same conclusions that Special Counsel Robert Mueller did, but focused on Russian efforts to sway public opinion. The senate report confirms that The Internet Research Agency, a Kremlin-backed troll farm, was believed to have engaged in operations to interfere with the U.S. political and electoral processes by creating fake American personas on social media and spreading false

⁶⁷ Mueller III, S. C. R. S. (2019). Report On the Investigation into Russian Interference In The 2016 Presidential Election.

⁶⁸ Mueller. (2019)

information about the 2016 election⁶⁹. The report also found that the Internet Research Agency sought to support candidate Donald Trump by hurting candidate Hillary Clinton's chances of winning.

On February 16, 2018 Special Counsel Robert Mueller indicted 13 Russian individuals and three Russian organizations for engaging in operations to interfere with U.S. political and electoral processes, including the 2016 presidential election. Throughout the indictment, Mueller lays out important facts about the activities of the IRA and its operatives: "Defendants, posing as U.S. persons and creating false U.S. personas, operated social media pages and groups designed to attract U.S. audiences. These groups and pages, which addressed divisive U.S. political and social issues, falsely claimed to be controlled by U.S. activists when, in fact, they were controlled by Defendants...Over time, these social media accounts became Defendants' means to reach significant numbers of Americans for purposes of interfering with the U.S. political system, including the presidential election of 2016."⁷⁰ The U.S. intelligence community confirmed many of Mueller's findings. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence laid out the Intelligence Community's assessment that senior Russian government officials had directed a hacking-and-dumping campaign to interfere in the November 2016 U.S. election. In a follow-up report, the Intelligence Community Assessment (ICA) in January 2017, the Intelligence Community further documented Moscow's interference in our election and its efforts to assist Donald Trump's campaign and harm Hillary Clinton's.

The U.S. took the interference seriously even before it became public. When CIA Director first saw reports of the interference, he considered it so sensitive that he kept it out of the President's Daily Brief, concerned that even that highly-restricted report's distribution was still too wide. The CIA package came with instructions that it be returned immediately after it was read. To prevent against against leaks, subsequent meetings in the Situation Room followed

⁶⁹ *RUSSIAN ACTIVE MEASURES CAMPAIGNS AND INTERFERENCE IN THE 2016 U.S. ELECTION* (Senate Report 116-290). (2020). United States Senate Intelligence Committee. <https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/publications/report-select-committee-intelligence-united-states-senate-russian-active-measures>

⁷⁰ Mueller, R. S. (2019)

the same protocols as planning sessions for the Osama bin Laden raid⁷¹. Throughout his final weeks in the White House, the president and team struggled to find an appropriate response to a serious threat to U.S. elections. Obama approved additional narrow sanctions against Russian targets, expelled 35 Russian diplomats, and shut down two compounds in the U.S. controlled by the Russian government⁷². Obama also approved a previously undisclosed secret measure that authorized planting cyberweapons in Russia's cyber-infrastructure, the digital equivalent of a bomb that could be triggered if the U.S. found itself in an escalating conflict with Russia. The plan was still not finalized by the time he left office, so the capability was left to President Trump⁷³.

7.2 2020 U.S. Presidential Election

As with the 2016 president election, the U.S. intelligence community concluded that Russia tried to interfere in order to help President Trump win his reelection bid. This would be the second consecutive presidential election that Russia has been known to interfere in. A declassified report by the NIC stated, "We assess that Russian President Putin authorized, and a range of Russian government organizations conducted, influence operations aimed at denigrating President Biden's candidacy and the Democratic Party, supporting former President Trump, undermining public confidence in the electoral process, and exacerbating sociopolitical divisions in the US. Unlike in 2016, we did not see persistent Russian cyber efforts to gain access to election infrastructure."⁷⁴ The report goes on to mention that "A key element of Moscow's strategy this election cycle was its use of proxies linked to Russian intelligence to push influence narratives—including misleading or unsubstantiated allegations against President Biden—to US media organizations, US officials, and prominent US individuals, including some close to former President Trump and his administration."⁷⁵

⁷¹ Miller, G. (2017, June 23). Obama's secret struggle to punish Russia for Putin's election assault. *Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2017/world/national-security/obama-putin-election-hacking/>

⁷² Polyakova, A. (2022, March 9). *Don't rehabilitate Obama on Russia*. Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/03/05/dont-rehabilitate-obama-on-russia/>

⁷³ Miller. (2017)

⁷⁴ *Foreign Threats to the 2020 US Federal Elections* (ICA 2020-00078D). (2021). National Intelligence Council. <https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/ICA-declass-16MAR21.pdf>

⁷⁵ *Foreign Threats to the 2020 US Federal Elections* (ICA 2020-00078D). (2021)

In response to the conclusions found in the NIC report, President Biden enacted multiple measures to punish Russia. The U.S. announced sanctions on 32 individuals and entities accused of attempting to influence last year's presidential election. Biden said that when he advised Putin days prior that he would implement these measures, which also included expulsion of the 10 diplomats and representatives of Russian intelligence services, he told Putin "That we could have gone further but I chose not to do so. I chose to be proportionate."⁷⁶

7.3 Solar Winds Hack

The SolarWinds hack is the commonly used term to refer to the supply chain breach that involved the SolarWinds Orion system. In this hack, nation-state hackers gained access to the networks, systems and data of thousands of SolarWinds customers. The wide-spread nature of the hack is unprecedented and one of the largest of its kind ever recorded. More than 30,000 private and public entities, including local, state and federal agencies use the Orion network management system to manage their IT needs. As a result, the hack compromised the data, systems and networks of thousands when SolarWinds inadvertently delivered the malware as an update to the Orion software.

Many entities, such as government departments like the Department of Homeland Security, State, Commerce and Treasury were affected. Private companies such as FireEye, Microsoft, Intel, Cisco and Deloitte also suffered from this attack. With hackers having first gained access to the SolarWinds systems in September 2019 and the attack not being publicly discovered or reported until December 2020, the hackers may well have had 14 or more months of complete and total access to sensitive governments systems⁷⁷.

In an EO released by President Biden, the United States formally named Russian FIS as the perpetrator of the broad-scope cyber espionage attack that took advantage of the SolarWinds Orion platform and other information technology infrastructures. According to the EO, "The

⁷⁶ The White House. (2021, April 15). *Remarks By President Biden on Russia* [Press release]. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/04/15/remarks-by-president-biden-on-russia/>

⁷⁷ Peisert, S., Schneier, B., Okhravi, H., Massacci, F., Benzel, T., Landwehr, C., & Michael, J. B. (2021). Perspectives on the SolarWinds incident. *IEEE Security & Privacy*, 19(2), 7-13.

U.S. Intelligence Community has high confidence in its assessment of attribution to the SVR. The SVR's compromise of the SolarWinds software supply chain gave it the ability to spy on or potentially disrupt more than 16,000 computer systems worldwide. The scope of this compromise is a national security and public safety concern. Moreover, it places an undue burden on the mostly private sector victims who must bear the unusually high cost of mitigating this incident.⁷⁸

7.4 Influence on Ukrainian-American Relationship

Although these acts towards the U.S. did not directly contribute to better relations between Ukraine and the U.S., they indirectly more closely aligned the interests of the U.S. and Ukraine. The U.S. has had consistently unfriendly or cold relations with Russia, but did not find themselves as the victims of Russian aggression. Based on comments from U.S. politicians and officials, the U.S. took Russian election interference and cyber-attacks very seriously and, in some cases, attacks on American sovereignty. Both Ukraine and the U.S. felt Russia had committed violations of their sovereignty. Under the Secondary Alliance Dilemma, when countries become more aligned, the more likely they will increase support to the other.

8. Reduction of Areas of Cooperation

It is important to note that, while Russia was stepping up its cyber-attacks and election interference against the United States, there was a decrease in areas where the U.S. and Russia shared mutual interest and/or cooperated together. These coinciding shifts helped shape the landscape of the dynamic between the U.S. and Ukraine. Two important developments and trends were happening simultaneously: while Russia was more directly confronting the U.S., areas of cooperation between the two countries started to shrink.

8.1 Open Skies Treaty

⁷⁸ The White House. (2021, April 15). *FACT SHEET: Imposing Costs for Harmful Foreign Activities by the Russian Government* [Press release]. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/04/15/fact-sheet-imposing-costs-for-harmful-foreign-activities-by-the-russian-government/>

Signed in 1992, The Open Skies Treaty allows each country to conduct short-notice reconnaissance flights over the others' entire territories to collect data on military forces and activities. Unarmed observation aircraft are used to observe and identify significant military equipment, such as fighter aircraft, and combat vehicles. The treaty is aimed at building confidence and familiarity among countries through their participation. The U.S. withdrew from the treaty in November 2020, and Russia withdrew in December 2021, which left 32 state-parties remaining in the accord⁷⁹.

The U.S. took advantage of this treaty, often flying over Russia three-times as often as Russia would fly over the U.S. The flights provided key intelligence for the U.S. Many critics of the treaty state that satellite imagery can surpass the limited resolution of cameras aboard Open Skies flights, but it is important to note that planes have much more flexibility in choosing flight paths. Countries that are getting observed also get more of a warning before a satellite overpass, which gives them more time to move military assets. The Treaty flights provided only 24 hours' notice, which increases the odds that overflights capture an accurate assessment. The Open Skies flights have been used by the U.S. when dealing with Russia as was the case after Russia instigated the conflict in Donbas in 2014. The United States targeted flights at eastern Ukraine and the bordering Russian territory in order to send a message of U.S. support for Kyiv.

8.2 American Withdrawal from Iran Deal

On May 08, 2018, President Trump announced that the U.S. will be withdrawing from the Iran Nuclear Deal, also known as the JCPOA. In the statement, President Trump said "The Iran Deal was one of the worst and most one-sided transactions the United States has ever entered into⁸⁰." As previously mentioned, the Iran deal was a major diplomatic feat for the United States and represented a key area of cooperation between the U.S. and Russia.

Russia reacted negatively to the U.S. pulling out of the Iran deal. 'We are extremely concerned that the United States is once again acting contrary to the opinion of the majority of

⁷⁹ The Open Skies Treaty at a Glance. (2021, December). *Arms Control Association*. <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/openskies>

⁸⁰ Trump, D. (2018, May 8). *President Donald J. Trump is Ending United States Participation in an Unacceptable Iran Deal* [Press release].

states and exclusively in its own narrow-minded and opportunistic interests, in flagrant violation of international law,' said the Foreign Ministry statement. 'Washington's actions are a serious violation of the JCPOA [Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action], they bring international discredit to the IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency], which was proving its high professionalism throughout the realization of the JCPOA,' the statement said.

8.3 Manas Air Base Closure

In July of 2014, the U.S. handed back control of the Manas Air Base in Kyrgyzstan back to the Kyrgyz government. As previously stated, the base was crucial to American military operations in Afghanistan.

The details of the base closure add to the general picture of relations between the U.S. and Russia. In February of 2009, Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev announced that Manas Air Base would eventually close. A bill calling for the closure of the base and the eviction of U.S. forces was passed by the Kyrgyz parliament almost unanimously. Just one day after the vote in parliament, an official eviction notice was delivered to the U.S. Embassy in Bishkek. The news of the closure was followed shortly by the announcement of a new agreement between Russia and Kyrgyzstan in which Kyrgyzstan would receive \$2 billion in loans and \$150 million in financial aid from Russia. Many U.S. officials saw a clear link between the financial assistance from Russia and the base closure, prompting frustration from the U.S. U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates also said that, "The Russians are trying to have it both ways with respect to Afghanistan in terms of Manas. On one hand you're making positive noises about working with us in Afghanistan, and on the other hand you're working against us in terms of that airfield which is clearly important to us."⁸¹ The U.S. would eventually strike a deal to pay more money to rent the base, which pushed the closure to 2014, which was when the lease was ready to expire.

8.4 Withdrawal from Syria

⁸¹ Obama Loses a Key Base for Afghanistan - TIME. (2009, February 19). *Time World*. <https://web.archive.org/web/20090222064338/http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1880686,00.html>

In October of, 2019, President Trump ordered a withdrawal of American military forces from northern Syria, a decision that effectively ceded control of the area to the Assad regime and to Russia. The withdrawal took away the American presence from the northeastern part of the country in the face of Turkey's incursion into the section of Syria controlled by Kurdish forces. Then Secretary of the Army Mark Esper described the planned withdrawal of what he said was "less than 1,000 troops" as a prioritization of the safety of American soldiers in the crisis, and he said the United States would ultimately have been unable to deter Turkey from invading Syria⁸².

8.5 Reduction of Cooperation and the Alliance Dilemma

Less cooperation between the U.S. and Russia had consequences for the U.S.-Ukrainian partnership. The U.S. had fewer competing interests to work with Russia, allowing for closer alignment between Ukraine and the U.S. This helped lead to conditions in which there are fewer concrete consequences for the U.S. if they provoke Russia. These previous areas of cooperation also had the practical effect of forcing Russia and the U.S. to regularly engage, positively affecting their diplomatic relationship.

9. The Current War and Emerging Dynamics

The war in Ukraine has been waged for almost one-year now. There has been enough time that has passed to see certain patterns emerging regarding U.S. support to Ukraine and the U.S. response to Russia. This chapter will explore some of these dynamics that have appeared during the war and those that are still ongoing.

9.1 Escalating Security Assistance

One of the key shifts of the U.S. approach towards Russia during the war has been the escalating nature of security assistance to Ukraine. As already mentioned, the U.S. has been the biggest provider of security assistance since the start of the war to Ukraine (in terms of dollar-amount.) One of the consistent themes of American aid to Ukraine has been initial hesitation and

⁸² Barnes, J. E., & Schmitt, E. (2019, October 16). Trump Orders Withdrawal of U.S. Troops From Northern Syria. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/13/us/politics/mark-esper-syria-kurds-turkey.html>

denials of requests made by the Ukrainian government for advanced western weapons systems. These denials of requests for certain weapons go back all the way to after Crimea. Ukraine has long asked for advanced systems like HIMARS and Patriot missile systems and have been denied for years. Almost all of the advanced western-made weapon systems that the U.S. has publicly donated to Ukraine were initially requested well before they ever made it to Ukraine. This is because the U.S. initially denied the requests to transfer these systems.

Throughout the war, there have consistently been reports of possible weapon transfers to Ukraine that at the time would have been unprecedented. In many cases, the aid that was reportedly being considered by the Biden administration has ended up being ultimately transferred to Ukraine. Due to this information, it is important to consider what security assistance the U.S. is reportedly considering sending to Ukraine. The precedent shows that when certain types of systems are being discussed and not outright refused, they have a good chance of ending up in Ukraine. According to media reports, the Biden administration is weighing an offer from Boeing to send Ground-Launched Small Diameter Bombs, which would significantly extend Ukraine's strike range. The Boeing-produced Ground-Launched Small Diameter Bombs have a range of roughly 100 miles. This would allow Ukraine to strike a vast-majority of their territory that is currently occupied by Russia⁸³. Russian officials have described long-range weapons as a "red line." These types of bombs would be a grey area since they have a longer range than that of a system like HIMARS, but are less powerful. The fact that the U.S. has not definitively ruled out a weapon with this range is telling.

The U.S. recently decided to send Patriot Missiles to Ukraine. Patriot Missiles represent one of the most advanced systems given to Ukraine by any country. On December 1, 2022, the White House announced a security assistance package worth \$1.85 billion dollars. In this round of assistance are a battery of Patriot Missiles. According to a senior defense official at the briefing, "As you know, Patriot is one of the world's most advanced air defense systems, and it will give Ukraine a critical long-range capability to defend its airspace. It is capable of

⁸³ Stone, M. (2022, November 28). Exclusive: U.S. weighs sending 100-mile strike weapon to Ukraine. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/100-mile-strike-weapon-weighed-ukraine-arms-makers-wrestle-with-demand-sources-2022-11-28/>

intercepting cruise missiles, ballistic missiles and aircraft.⁸⁴” The U.S. has been hesitant when dealing donating the Patriot system. For months, U.S. officials cited many concerns regarding giving the system to Ukraine. It takes approximately 90 soldiers to operate one system, the missiles are very expensive, the system is big and hard to transport, and like with Javelins, the U.S. did not want Russia getting their hands on the technology. The fact that the U.S. is sending this system to Ukraine means they have considered all of those risks and decided it was still worth it for Ukraine to have.

9.2 Iran as a Factor in Russo-Ukrainian War

One of the ongoing developments of the current Russo-Ukrainian War is the emergence of Iran as a material supporter of Russia. According to U.S. intelligence reports, Iran has sent hundreds of suicide-type drones to Russia and has sent instructors to Crimea to teach Russian military personnel how to properly operate the drones. John Kirby, the communications coordinator at the National Security Council, said the presence of Iranian personnel was evidence of Tehran’s direct engagement in the conflict. “We can confirm that Russian military personnel that are based in Crimea have been piloting Iranian UAVs, using them to conduct strikes across Ukraine, including strikes against Kyiv,” Kirby said, referring to unmanned aerial vehicles⁸⁵.

Iranian-made drones first began being noticed by the Ukrainian military in Ukraine in mid-August 2022. As of writing, the exact date of when Iranian made drones first were used in Ukraine remains unclear. In November, the news site The Guardian sent a team of military experts to Kyiv to exam drones used by Russian against Ukraine. Ukrainian military intelligence showed the team dismantled captured Iranian drones. On one of the drones shows the manufacturing date on the propeller of a Mohajer-6, an Iranian spy drone, which reads “February, 2022”. Since the propeller is just one of many components needed to make the drone, the February date indicates that the drone would have been supplied, if not made, after the start of the invasion, according to a representative of Ukraine’s military intelligence. This may

⁸⁴ Sullivan, B., & Bowman, T. (2022, December 21). The U.S. will send a Patriot air defense system to Ukraine. How will it help? *NPR.Org*. <https://www.npr.org/2022/12/21/1144662505/us-ukraine-patriot-missile-system>

⁸⁵ Liptak, K. (2022, October 21). White House says Iran sent personnel to Crimea to train Russians to use drones. *CNN*. <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/10/20/politics/white-house-iran-drones-crimea/index.html>

suggest that Iran has been giving aid to Russia towards the beginning of the war⁸⁶. At first, the Russian military appears to have used the Iranian drones mainly as battlefield loitering munitions (sometimes referred to as suicide drones), using them to strike at Ukrainian artillery and other military targets. Then in October of 2022 came a shift in strategy. Since mid-October, the drones have formed one of the key components of a coordinated campaign of strikes against key pieces civilian infrastructure, such as Ukraine's electricity distribution grid and power-generation capacity. Russia needed them to replace its fast-depleting stocks of cruise missiles, which rely on a decreasing amount of imported electronic components. With an effective range of approximately several hundred miles, the Iranian drones have enabled the Russian military to strike at targets deep inside western and central Ukraine from launch points in Crimea and southern Belarus.

In addition to more drones, western officials believe that Russia is planning to buy Iranian ballistic missiles. The same officials said that Iran had sent 450 drones to Russia and would send another 1,000 units of weaponry, including the expected missile⁸⁷. The shipment is being closely monitored by U.S. intelligence because it would be the first instance of Iran sending advanced precision guided missiles to Russia, which could give the Kremlin a substantial boost on the battlefield. According to Ukrainian government estimates, Russia has ordered between 2,000 and 2,400 drones from Iran. As of writing, current Iranian production figures for the drones are unknown, but there are reports that the Russian defense industry is already moving to establish its own domestic production lines for the drones.

The U.S. has taken the issue of Iran-Russia cooperation in Ukraine very seriously. The US has launched a major effort to stifle Iran's ability to manufacture and deliver drones for Russia to use in the war in Ukraine, which is similar to its years-long push to complicated Tehran's drive toward producing nuclear weapons, The New York Times reported. Citing multiple security officials in the US, Europe and the Middle East, the paper said the program also

⁸⁶ Koshiw, I. (2022, November 11). Drone analysis in Ukraine suggests Iran has supplied Russia since war began. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/nov/10/iranian-made-drones-supplied-to-russia-after-february-invasion-says-ukraine>

⁸⁷ Atwood, K. (2022, November 1). Iran is preparing to send additional weapons including ballistic missiles to Russia to use in Ukraine, western officials say. *CNN*. <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/11/01/politics/iran-missiles-russia/index.html>

aims to give Ukraine the ability to shoot down any of the Iranian drones that Russia manages to acquire, as well as to target their launch sites⁸⁸. The Times also reported that President Joe Biden's administration is cooperating closely with Israel on the issue and is building on Jerusalem's experience thwarting Iranian drone attacks. Washington has described an extensive relationship between Iran and Russia involving military equipment, especially since Russian troops invaded Ukraine in February⁸⁹.

The case of the Iranian drones is where the mutual interests of the U.S. and Ukraine converge. According to a detailed report by SKY News, Russia allegedly flew \$169,000,000 in cash and a selection of captured UK and US weapons to Iran in return for dozens of deadly drones for its war in Ukraine, according to a security source. According to an anonymous UK defense official, a "Russian military aircraft secretly transported the cash and three models of munition - a British NLAW anti-tank missile, a US Javelin anti-tank missile and a Stinger anti-aircraft missile - to an airport in Tehran in the early hours of 20 August."⁹⁰ The source said they could give the Iranian government the ability to study Western technology and potentially copy it, allowing them to potentially reverse engineer the technology to use in future conflicts. As previously discussed, this is a huge concern for the U.S. regarding their strategic military interests.

Iran's increased participation with Russia directly relates to the strategic aspect of the Secondary Alliance Dilemma. The U.S. has been sanctioning Iran extensively for their uranium enrichment program and support for organizations the U.S. government describes as terrorist organizations like Hezbollah. A strengthening of ties between Russia and Iran has serious implication for U.S. interests. As mentioned, Iran studying western weapons technology may increase their own military capabilities. This poses a direct threat to U.S. allies, such as Israel.

⁸⁸ US in major effort to choke Iran's drone program, end supply to Russia — NY Times. (2022, December 28). Times of Israel. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/us-in-major-effort-to-choke-irans-drone-program-end-supply-to-russia-ny-times/>

⁸⁹ Times of Israel. (2022)

⁹⁰ Haynes, D. (2022, November 9). Russia flew €140m in cash and captured Western weapons to Iran in return for deadly drones, source claims. *Sky News*. <https://news.sky.com/story/russia-gave-eur140m-and-captured-western-weapons-to-iran-in-return-for-deadly-drones-source-claims-12741742>

10. U.S. Still Exercising Caution

This thesis has analyzed U.S. caution towards Russia and how it has evolved. It is evident that despite the U.S. becoming less cautious, it still exhibits caution in regards to Russia. This chapter delves into why the U.S. still practices caution when confronting Russia.

10.1 What the U.S. Won't Give

For as much as the U.S. has told Ukraine, “Yes” during the war, it is important to understand that the U.S. has also very often said “No.” One of the first things the Ukrainian government asked for from NATO was to establish a no-fly zone over Ukraine. Slogans like “protect the sky” were shared by Ukrainian officials on social media, trying to gain international support for the idea. The argument was that NATO backed countries would hypothetically block Russian aircraft from accessing Ukrainian airspace. This idea was very quickly swatted down by the U.S. and there is no evidence this was seriously considered by the Biden administration. When President Biden’s Press Secretary Jen Psaki was asked about the possibility for a no-fly zone in March of 2022 she responded, ““A no-fly zone, which people often shorthand, essentially means us shooting down Russian planes and them potentially shooting us,” Psaki added that the president “continues to believe that a no-fly zone would be escalatory.”⁹¹”

As of writing, the U.S. has also resisted sending modern western tanks to Ukraine, despite almost a year of requests from Ukraine. German Chancellor Olaf Scholtz has also resisted sending western tanks to Ukraine. Part of his logic, is that Germany won’t send Ukraine modern tanks unilaterally, but would consider it if there was a coalition. The Prime Minister of Finland and Poland have used similar logic for not yet sending western tanks. As of writing, no western country has sent western made tanks to Ukraine. Poland has sent over 200 Soviet era T-72s and France announced they would send AMX-10 RC fighting vehicles, which many in the media describe as “light tanks”, but is not a tank by military standards. Its armor is much lighter

⁹¹ Milligan, S. (2022, March 15). Biden Stands Firm Against No-Fly Zone as Zelenskyy Prepares to Address Congress. *U.S. News*. <https://www.usnews.com/news/politics/articles/2022-03-15/biden-stands-firm-against-no-fly-zone-as-zelenskyy-prepares-to-address-congress>

than proper tanks and can be penetrated with light autocannons using armor-piercing ammunition. France's own Ministry of Defense classifies it as a "Tracked Armoured Vehicle."⁹²

10.2 Hesitation to Take Credit

On May 04, 2022, a high-profile New York Times article titled "U.S. Intelligence Is Helping Ukraine Kill Russian Generals, Officials Say" was published. It quoted anonymous sources in the U.S. government outlining how intelligence given to Ukraine by the U.S. has helped target Russian generals. The sources also mentioned how "The administration has sought to keep much of the battlefield intelligence secret, out of fear it will be seen as an escalation and provoke President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia into a wider war."⁹³ After the publishing of this article, a national security official wanted to make clear that the U.S. is not directly aiding Ukraine in killing Russian generals. Adrienne Watson, a National Security Council spokeswoman, said in a statement that the battlefield intelligence was not provided to the Ukrainians "with the intent to kill Russian generals." The article also quotes the anonymous officials who say that the U.S. prohibits itself from providing intelligence about the most senior Russian leaders.

Conclusions

How the U.S. Response Changed: Evidence of a shift in how the U.S. responds to Russian aggression appears in several ways. The response has become noticeably less cautious from 2008 through today. Despite areas of interest between Russia and the U.S. fluctuating and changes in U.S. administrations, the general trend has gotten less cautious when dealing with Russia.

⁹² French Ministry of Defence. (2021). Defence Key Figures- 2021 Edition. <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/ministere-armees/Chiffres%20cl%C3%A9s%20de%20la%20D%C3%A9fense%202021%20UK%20%28pdf%20version%20anglaise%29.pdf>

⁹³ Barnes, J. E., Cooper, H., & Schmitt, E. (2022, May 5). *U.S. Intelligence Is Helping Ukraine Kill Russian Generals, Officials Say*. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/04/us/politics/russia-generals-killed-ukraine.html>

It is not conclusive whether or not the current U.S. approach towards Russia can be classified as “cautious.” The U.S. still shows caution when dealing with Russia. Not sending boots on the ground, denying a no-fly zone, not sending long-range missiles, and having a progression regarding their limits on security assistance are examples of this caution. On the other hand, sending unprecedented amount of lethal military aid, openly talking about wanting to damage Russia, and escalating the types of offensive weapons the U.S. is sending are examples of not exercising great caution all while ignoring explicit threats and condemnations from Moscow.

The overall shift continued and has accelerated during the war. The U.S. was once openly hesitant to send defensive weapons meant to hold off a Russian offensive, but now sends Ukraine weapons designed for offensive actions, such as taking back occupied territory. The “limit” of what the U.S. is willing to send Ukraine has shifted dramatically in less than one-year

Why the U.S. Response Changed: There is no single one event that caused a direct cause and effect response regarding what made the U.S. overall less cautious. Instead, there are general factors that helped shape the overall trend. One general factor was an escalation in aggression from Russia in terms of how often Russia was willing to display aggression and the severity of the aggression. This aggression was increasingly and more directly being aimed at the U.S. as well. The conflicts in Georgia and Crimea, while frowned upon by the U.S., were seen as more limited campaigns with specific goals. The current war with the goal of regime change and widespread destruction to civilians has forced the U.S. to reassess their approach to Russia.

The change of response after the current war already started is partly due to Ukrainian success of the battlefield and Russian incompetence. From 2008 through the beginning of the current war, a vague and sometimes abstract fear of “provoking Russia” has dominated U.S. policy towards Russia. The U.S. was surprised by the depth of Russian military incompetence and surprised by how Ukraine is wildly exceeding pre-war expectations.

The Secondary Alliance Dilemma. The Secondary Alliance Dilemma can explain U.S. caution towards Russia throughout the period from 2008-current day, even though Ukraine is not formally defined as an ally. The U.S. never seriously showed signs of fully abandoning Ukraine, but always struggled to figure out to what degree to support them. The shift toward being less cautious is a result of a constant changing of the factors that influence the choices the U.S. has in terms of how and when to support Ukraine.

A key weakness in using the Secondary Alliance Dilemma to answer the research question was the issue of the “explicitness of the agreement” between allies. Since Ukraine and the U.S. do not fall under a formal alliance, it was difficult to avoid these criteria or to formulate an alternative hypothesis.

Future Research. This topic will require more research in the future. The situation on the ground in Ukraine is constantly changing as are sanctions against Russia, U.S. and security assistance to Ukraine. There will be new developments in the war. Once the war is over, a more thorough assessment can be made of just how far the U.S. pivot towards being less cautious towards Russian aggression has gone.

There will be big questions for this research post-war regarding to what extent will the U.S. support Ukraine once the war is over. If Ukraine wins, will the U.S. push more hesitant allies to accept Ukraine into NATO? Will the U.S. have no limits regarding security assistance to Ukraine? If Ukraine loses, how far will the U.S. go in supporting a Ukrainian resistance?

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We stand, we fight and we will win. Because we are united. Ukraine, America and the entire free world - address by Volodymyr Zelensky in a joint meeting of the US Congress (By V. Zelensky). Address of President Zelensky to U.S. Congress, United States of America.

Summary

Title of the Thesis: Why and How the U.S. Response to Russian Aggression Has Changed?

Research Problem: Despite Russian aggression since the Russian invasion into Georgia in 2008, the United States struggled to articulate a coherent strategy that truly aimed to cause severe consequences to the Russian economy and limit their ability to wage aggression.

The current aid and sanctions have had tangible impacts that are seen on the battlefield. Sanctions levied against Russia after the launch of the current war have more wide-reaching and damaging to Russia than the sanctions it implemented a response to the annexation of Crimea. Just like the effects of military aid on the battlefield, sanctions have had real-world consequences and created complications for Russia when it comes to importing key technology, making advanced weaponry, and sustaining the Russian economy.

Research Question: Why and how the US response to Russian aggression changed in the years from 2008 to the current war in Ukraine?

Research Object: U.S. foreign policy related to decision making in reaction to Russian aggression and towards the U.S. relationship with Ukraine from the beginning of the Russian invasion into Georgia through the current Russo-Ukrainian war.

The Goal of the Thesis: Clearly show the evolution of how the U.S. handled Russian aggression and what the approach looks like today.

Thesis Tasks: The tasks of the thesis are to see if the U.S.-Ukrainian dynamic can be explained using the Secondary Alliance Dilemma, to show a progression of U.S. handling of Russia, and to explain the progression.

Main Conclusions of the Thesis: How the U.S. Response Changed: Evidence of a shift in how the U.S. responds to Russian aggression appears in several ways. The response has become noticeably less cautious from 2008 through today. Despite areas of interest between Russia and the U.S. fluctuating and changes in U.S. administrations, the general trend has gotten less cautious when dealing with Russia.

It is not conclusive whether or not the current U.S. approach towards Russia can be classified as “cautious.” The U.S. still shows caution when dealing with Russia. Not sending boots on the ground, denying a no-fly zone, not sending long-range missiles, and having a progression regarding their limits on security assistance are examples of this caution. On the other hand, sending unprecedented amount of lethal military aid, openly talking about wanting to damage Russia, and escalating the types of offensive weapons the U.S. is sending are examples of not exercising great caution all while ignoring explicit threats and condemnations from Moscow.

The U.S. was once openly hesitant to send defensive weapons meant to hold off a Russian offensive, but now sends Ukraine weapons designed for offensive actions, such as taking back occupied territory. The “limit” of what the U.S. is willing to send Ukraine has shifted dramatically in less than one-year

Why the U.S. Response Changed: There is no single one event that caused a direct cause and effect response regarding what made the U.S. overall less cautious. Instead, there are general factors that helped shape the overall trend. One general factor was an escalation in aggression from Russia in terms of how often Russia was willing to display aggression and the severity of the aggression. This aggression was increasingly and more directly being aimed at the U, S. as well. Georgia and Crimea, while frowned upon by the U.S., were seen as more limited campaigns with specific goals. The current war with the goal of regime change and widespread destruction to civilians has forced the U.S. to reassess their approach to Russia.

The change of response after the current war already started is partly due to Ukrainian success of the battlefield and Russian incompetence. From 2008 through the beginning of the current war, a vague and abstract fear of “provoking Russia” has dominated U.S. policy towards Russia.

The Secondary Alliance Dilemma. The Secondary Alliance Dilemma can explain U.S. caution towards Russia throughout the period from 2008-current day, even though Ukraine is not formally defined as an ally. The U.S. never seriously showed signs of fully abandoning Ukraine, but always struggled to figure out to what degree to support them.

A weakness in using the Secondary Alliance Dilemma to answer the research question was the issue of the “explicitness of the agreement” between allies. Since Ukraine and the U.S. do not

fall under a formal alliance, it is difficult to avoid these criteria or to formulate an alternative hypothesis.

There will be questions for this research post-war regarding to what extent will the U.S. support Ukraine once the war is over. If Ukraine wins, will the U.S. push more hesitant allies to accept Ukraine into NATO? Will the U.S. have no limits regarding security assistance to Ukraine? If Ukraine loses, how far will the U.S. go in supporting a Ukrainian resistance?