

THE FAILURE OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY EUROPEAN PERPETUAL PEACE PROJECT: THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE WEST VIA OPPOSITION TO RUSSIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper critiques the de facto equation of Europeanization with submission to U.S. hegemony. It traces the choices that allowed the EU to be equated as one of side of the same coin with NATO. France's 2009 rejoining the NATO command structure encouraged this perception. It comports with the claim that US liberal hegemony made the European integration process feasible. It highlights the consequences for conflict resolution of the Europeanization process being equated with attitudinal orientation towards accepting U.S. hegemony. Ukraine is a case study of this process on the level of indirect conflict between Moscow and Washington each seeking to contain each other. European integration's focus on developing vested economic and bureaucratic interests has tied it to U.S. hegemony. It facilitated the institutionalization of anti-Moscow influence tendencies in European integration. The paper adopts a process tracing methodological approach with a focus on the Cold War and the prevailing views that have emerged around it. The institutionalization of Euro-Atlantic integration includes the internalization of the assumption that the USSR, and later Russia, were imperialist aggressors. The US-led Euro-Atlantic community successfully, and relatively peacefully, contained it. Moscow's prevailing view does not share this problematic analysis regarding post-1945 Soviet foreign policy motivation.

JEL: F51, F52, F54, F55

KEYWORDS: European Union, International Political Economy, International Relations, Nationalism, NATO, Russia, US Hegemony, Ukraine

“Ukraine also shows that Brussels and the [European Union] peace project have failed,” said Heather A. Conley, president of the German Marshall Fund. Brussels — and Washington — did not understand what their outreach to Ukraine for eventual membership in NATO and the European Union would spark in President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia” (Erlanger, 3/2023, paras. 17-18).

INTRODUCTION

On the eve of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, this writer expected that Russian forces would carry out regime change in Ukraine relatively quickly. This writer was apparently in reputable company. For various reasons, the prevailing view at least in the US intelligence community shared this assessment (Risen and Klippenstein, 2022). The faulty expectation was that Russian military forces would occupy the capital Kyiv in a matter of days. The US government offered to Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky to assist in his escape, which Zelensky famously rejected with the retort, “I need ammunition, not a ride.” “So-called ‘will to fight’ is among the most difficult intangibles for intelligence to predict, former officials say, and it has failed time and again: in Vietnam, in Iraq, and now, in Afghanistan and Ukraine” (Lillis and Bertrand, 2022, para. 12). Several

factors contributed to this writer's own misprediction. In terms of historical analogies, this writer looked to Hitlerian Germany's occupation of the Sudetenland and then occupation of Czechoslovakia. Germany faced little military resistance from Czechoslovak forces. The Biden administration reiterated that the US would not deploy forces to Ukraine to deter a Russian invasion, not to mention actively engage in deadly use of force against them (Gordon, 2021). The Biden administration repeated that it would not initiate violence against Russian forces that would lead to a de facto if not de jure war between them (Biden, 2022). This writer wrongly expected that with these blunt, clear statements from Washington, the Ukrainians would view violent resistance as ultimately futile. Prior to the invasion, evidence of Ukrainian government difficulty since independence in 1991 in combatting systemic corruption and implementing economic reforms was prominent (Savchenko, Subbot and Demianchuk, 2018, Greta and Pankosz, 2016). This writer erroneously inferred that it implied a relatively low collective national morale potential for warfighting for national self-determination (Morgenthau, 1993). Ukraine's response to the existential danger of the invasion included an intensive acceleration in the reform process along with Ukraine's acquisition of EU candidate member status (Baczynska, 2023).

Until this writing, the Putin government continues to deny that prevalent and intense Ukrainian national identity exists among self-identifying Ukrainians. This denial is further evidence indicating that for the Ukrainian nation, Russia's invasion was an existential threat. More than a year after the massive violence escalation that began in 2014, Russian state media continued to reiterate the claim that Ukraine is a superficial identity that modern history created. According to *BBC Monitoring* of Russian state television, "Putin receives the chairman of the Constitutional Court, Valery Zorkin, to discuss the activities of the court. The presenter says that Zorkin gave Putin a copy of a 17th-century French map which clearly shows that there was no state called Ukraine at the time. Video shows Putin and Zorkin discussing the map, Putin saying that it was the Soviet government that created Ukraine" ("Programme Summary," 5/2023, para. 3). Ukrainian spontaneous mass popular mobilization to resist Russia's February 24, 2022, invasion highlights the autonomous community agency of Ukrainian nationalism (Norris and Kizlova, 2022). The Ukrainian public's demonstrated will to fight would spur Ukraine's western supporters to expand exponentially their crisis emergency military and economic aid infusions to Kyiv (King, 2023). Ukraine's western allies remain committed to avoiding direct intervention and consequent fighting with Russian forces despite the demonstrated high level of Ukrainian national morale (Karalekas, 2022).

Media reports describe the fighting as the largest land war in Europe since the Second World War (Editorial Board, 6/2023). Indigenous Ukrainian military hardware capabilities are significantly less relative to Russia. Casualty rates of dead and wounded now stand at many tens of thousands, on each side. The so-called West has been willing to allocate several tens of billions of dollars of economic and military aid to support the clearly demonstrated Ukrainian willingness to fight (Reznik, 2023). More than a year later, clearly Ukrainian resistance remains intense, sustained and effective. Iran has emerged as major arms supplier to Russia's invading forces in Ukraine amidst the Moscow's lack of preparedness for apparently unexpected tenacious resistance (Eslami, 2022). Kuzio (2022, para. 1) notes that "Russian imperial nationalist stereotypes of Ukrainians made them miscalculate." Kuzio (2022) is particularly interested in highlighting the failed predictions by Western analysts regarding the relative power resistance capability of Ukraine. The initial US underestimation of the national morale of the Ukrainians may stem from various historical scenarios. The South Vietnamese military received relatively abundant supplies and direct support from the US, but South Vietnam collapsed in a matter of months after the American withdrawal. The US client regime in Afghanistan collapsed even before the Americans could withdraw, as the prevailing view emerged that the US would in fact leave.

Explanations for the differences with the Afghanistan, South Vietnamese and Ukrainian cases would include noting that the US and its allies did not militarily install the Ukrainian authorities. Ukrainian nationalism shared a perceived common foe with the US: perceived Russian imperial influence. Ukrainian and Russian nationalists have elements of zero-sum conflictual dynamics in their claims to certain territories

(Mick, 2023). The relative power disparity between Ukraine and Russia would be another incentive for an external great power potential ally of Ukrainian nationalism to be derivatively stereotyped positively by Kyiv (Cottam and Cottam, 2001). This psychological balancing dynamic is a focus in folk wisdom, i.e., the enemy of my enemy is my friend. Militant Ukrainian nationalism's tendency towards allying with Hitlerian Germany during the latter phase of the Second World War reflected this instrumentalization ("Documenting the Ukrainian Nationalist Movements," 1981). Concomitantly, Russian nationalism would utilize this mid-twentieth century experience to justify its own tendency to downplay and deny Ukrainian nationalism as a national liberation movement (Apt, 2023). Russian nationalism shares this parallel with Zionist advocates' reference to the Mufti of Jerusalem, al-Husayni's collaboration with Hitlerian Germany against British imperial control of Palestine (Mattar, 1988). Afghan territorial community nationalism had established itself firmly in the religious symbolic and ideological base of the Taliban, placing the US as an adversary of Afghan self-determination.

In early 2022, if the Ukrainians could demonstrate the sufficient degree of national morale necessary to persuade the US that this aid would be effective, then Ukrainian would receive much more. The events since February 2022 have demonstrated this assumption to be correct and US-led Western alliance aid has flowed (Vlahos, 2023). The Afghan and South Vietnamese cases imply that the willingness of the US to provide military aid to the Ukrainians would not itself imply the latter's willingness to resist. Evidence of nationalist resistance to Moscow's attacks against Ukrainian sovereignty clearly present. Ukrainian nationalist public opinion sentiment had long constrained the political decisional latitude of Kyiv senior foreign policy decision makers to compromise with Moscow. These issues included Ukraine's territorial sovereignty. Kyiv officials were politically unable to compromise on Ukraine's sovereignty via the 2015 Minsk I and II agreements that would have granted confederal status to the Donbas as per Moscow's demands (Sanders and Tuck, 2020).

Moscow's 2014 seizure of Crimea and its intervention in the Donbas "helped to consolidate the modern Ukrainian nation and its civic consciousness" (Potočňák and Mares, 2022, 5). Potočňák and Mares (2022, 5) highlight that this consolidation included a critical pro-Western orientation including an explicit anchoring of Ukraine in "a Western geopolitical orientation in its constitution." Ukraine "signed significant agreements with the EU, and cooperated with NATO in many practical ways" [*sic*]. Reactions to Russia's February 2022 invasion hardened Ukrainian nationalist public opinion against compromises over the Donbas and recognizing Moscow's sovereignty over Crimea. "As sociological polls demonstrate, the vast majority of Ukrainian society (82% of respondents) does not want peace at any cost, in particular, due to territorial concessions or loss of parts of the country as a condition of a so-called "peaceful compromise". Even in the country's east, which suffers most from Russian aggression, most citizens support this position. At the same time, people fully understand that the desired victorious peace as a common good will not be quick or easy" [*sic*] (Stepanenko, 2022, 17).

This study examines how did the EU become part of this perceived support system for European national social liberation movements resisting a perceived Russian imperial threat. A similar support system did not exist in 1938-39 for lesser powers under German threat. Czechoslovak capabilities versus Hitlerian Germany were significantly more diminutive in comparison to the Russia-Ukraine dyad. Ukraine's national morale had a greater boost despite explicit US statements of non-intervention on the eve of the Russian attempt to occupy Kyiv. By its existence, the so-called West intensified Ukrainian nationalism. Ukrainian nationalists could plausibly, and ultimately, correctly believe that if they had the will to resist Moscow with massive deadly force, they would gain Western economic and military supplies. They were correct. From an ontological, "constructivist" perspective, the West clearly exists as a community in the Ukrainian prevailing view into which Ukraine aims to enter (Specter, 2022, 252). On the basis of belief in the West, Ukrainian government policy is making existential decisions to determine the fate of the Ukrainian nation against a Russian irredentist threat. This threat denies Ukrainian national legitimacy (DeDominicis, 2022).

This paper begins by reviewing some of the foundational literature on geostrategy including status quo, imperial and prestige policies, with the emphasis on the last as applied to Russia. It contrasts prevailing assumptions regarding the nature of the development of the postwar international system that prevails in Washington and Moscow. It highlights the consequent divergences in political strategy prescriptions including appeasement versus containment and détente. The last applies to a conflict spiral, i.e., an international conflict with mutual misperception of belligerency as rooted in ultimate imperialist aggrandizement intent. It highlights Moscow's inferred prevailing view that the US utilizes the EU as a vehicle for European subregional US imperialism. Its policy recommendation focuses on developing autonomous EU diplomatic bargaining leverage capabilities by supporting Chinese mediation efforts in the Russo-Ukraine war. It requires overcoming the likely objections of US administrations and their supporters in the EU.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study suggests that the relative decline of Russia is not likely to be easily managed, not only by Russia and its allies, but also by the other major powers. Hans J. Morgenthau developed a foreign policy typology in his great power focused international relations theory of realism. Wadlow (2001, 82-83), summarizes Morgenthau's theory, i.e., "politics as a struggle for power; maintaining, increasing, demonstrating power; politics of status quo, imperialism and prestige. This triptych was at the base of all his analysis." Wadlow quotes from an unaccepted grant application that Morgenthau submitted to the Guggenheim Foundation in 1938: "This aspiration for power can assume three different guises: maintaining the power that has already been acquired, increasing it or demonstrating it.... Foreign policy is nothing but the will to maintain, to increase, or to demonstrate one's power, and these three manifestations... find their basic empirical expressions in a policy of the status quo, a policy of imperialism and a policy of prestige." The prestige type of foreign policy was comparatively less elaborated by Morgenthau.

"Less well developed was the type of policy likely to be pursued by a state which was declining in terms of relative capability base. Morgenthau advances a third type of policy, that of 'prestige', which could have been but inexplicably was not developed to accommodate this situation. Morgenthau turned naturally to psychological concepts to explain state behavior. He could, in the case of a declining power, easily have argued that a policy to maintain the image of the actor at its former capability level for as long as possible would be a natural policy for the declining actor to pursue. Since such policies would likely focus largely on maintaining a previous prestige level, they could well be described as policies of 'prestige'" (Cottam 1994, chapter 2, 81-82).

The policy of prestige reflects a great power exercising a level of international influence that surpasses its relative aggregate power capabilities. Morgenthau highlights that the relative power capability decline of a great power is not typically reflected immediately in a commensurate decline in relative international influence. Ross notes (2013, 283) "Morgenthau's 'policy of prestige' is subject to special volatility partly because it involved unpredictable emotions, such as trust, love, humiliation, and awe." Great powers typically do not decline gracefully. Nation states are particularly collectively prone to perceive more intense external challenges and stereotype their source, congruent with intense collective affect that associates with it (Cottam and Cottam, 2001).

"The threat perceived by the actor with a declining relative capability, however, is far less easily falsified, especially in the nationalist era. Examples of once great states that gracefully adjust to irreversible decline are difficult to come by. Still peaceful, if not graceful, acceptance of decline has occurred in this era, and in any case as we have argued, if the 'policy of prestige' were developed further, the patterns associating with capability decline would be reasonably well handled by political realism" (Cottam 1994, chapter 2, 91-92).

This paper proposes that the essence of a prestige policy by a declining great power manifests as the instrumental derivation of a perceived opportunity for influence expansion in a third, lesser state. Intervention in Ukraine is an example. This derivative intensity of this perceived opportunity correlates in response to a perceived threat from another great power (e.g., the US) by the declining great power (e.g., Russia). Former colonial and neo-colonial possessions may be more prone to stereotyping as more readily vulnerable to assertive intervention to reassert great power peer status by the declining state actor. By way of comparison, French President Charles de Gaulle emerged amidst postwar France's catastrophic efforts to re-assert its great power status in its former empire. He identified French military independence as necessary for French national greatness, i.e., "grandeur" which in turn required a French nuclear force amidst the Cold War (Davis, 2008, 663). De Gaulle supposedly personified the nationalist forces that threatened French sovereignty emanating from different sources including European integration (Moravcsik, 2000). The de Gaulle phenomenon apparently constituted a nationalist response to the downgraded influence of postwar France. France, like the other western European states, witnessed a dramatic downgrading in its level of international political influence. National defeats came to pass in Vietnam (1954), Suez (1956) and Algeria (1954-62). Subsequently, the leadership role of de Gaulle in sum allowed France to exploit the Cold War environment to raise France's prestige in international affairs. France's tactical formula included portrayal of itself as a balancer between Washington and Moscow through leading Europe, extending from "the Atlantic to the Urals" (Trachtenberg, 2012, 83). Its continued reliance upon the NATO political alliance and on the US-dominated capitalist global political economy allows the observer to characterize this balancing as soft. Bailey (2017, 255) includes de Gaulle's public distancing of Paris from Washington as contributing to an international political environment supportive for Cold War détente policies. De Gaulle's behavior made West German Chancellor Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik* more feasible as a strategic initiative. "Changes came from elsewhere too: by the end of the 1950s French leader Charles de Gaulle had taken steps to decouple European integration from the broader US-led Western alliance. He developed an independent French nuclear deterrent in 1960 and by March 1966 had taken France out of NATO's military structure."

De Gaulle's public differentiation of France from the US was more symbolic than substantive (Al-Kassimi, 2023). France did withdraw from NATO military command structures and ordered the closure of US military bases. De Gaulle sought to portray France under his leadership as a third, autonomous force in international relations, while remaining within the North Atlantic community. Raymond Aron thus critiqued de Gaulle for recklessly promoting an image of France in the world that was "contrary to reality" (Curtis, 2004, 17). Kenneth Waltz (1954) initially proposed the conceptualization of causation in international relations in terms of three levels of analysis: 1) the foreign policy decision maker level, 2) collective state level and 3) the international systemic level. This study proposes an analysis of relevant trends at the state level. It particularly focuses on Russian nationalism and its relevance for shaping Russian behavior towards its state targets and competitors. It proposes that Ukrainian resistance to Russian nationalist irredentist imperialism receives institutional support through the existence of so-called Euro-Atlantic structures. In sum, it constitutes the so-called West, of which the EU-NATO is the core. "The Western Group includes Europe, North America, Australia, New Zealand and the East Asian countries of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. Its members all have high technological, industrial and cultural capacities" (Fasslabend, 2023, 4).

The Cold War: Behavior Patterns and Contrasting Explanations

The US and the USSR engaged in a cold war, defined as intense competition short of direct military campaigns for influence over world affairs in the nuclear setting. At its most intense, they each saw this competition in zero-sum terms, i.e., the other side's gain is the counterpart's loss. They conducted this war in ways which resembled very little the wars of the past. The Cold War contest became a competitive struggle for influence preeminence within states which they regarded as having strategic significance. They were vital potential or real allies in containment of the Other (DeDominicis, 2021). The advent of nuclear

weaponry led to a fundamental change in international behavior due to unacceptability of direct use of force against the so-called superpowers. Clear patterns of behavior emerged in the course of this Cold War nuclear-era contest. Two features defined the Cold War's unique kind of competition for influence: 1) critically important engagements or battles occurred at the non-violent level, 2) the US and the USSR demonstrated a willingness to accept defeat in these engagements to a degree which would have been unthinkable in past wars. In the past, conflicts as intense as the Cold War led to general, full-scale war. While accentuated in the nuclear setting, hybrid warfare as the consequence is itself not new. Intense conflict between nuclear powers functionally consists of "competitive interference" in the internal politics of states (Cottam, 1967). Covert and informal interventions tactics provided at least a veneer of plausible deniability so as to lessen public opinion pressure for a belligerent response against the offender. It lessened the possibility of loss of political control over crisis dynamics (DeDominicis, 2019). The Cold War antagonists conducted their conflict within the domestic political processes of other states, at times lethally within the so-called Third World states. In sum, they, 1) they used the domestic politics of third states as the typical arena of engagement, and 2) they struggled for influence preeminence in states which they regarded as having strategic significance. They were vital potential or real allies in attempted containment of each other. External powers continue to ally with local minorities seeking patronage to achieve national political self-expression, e.g., Kosovar Albanians and Russophile Ukrainians. The intensity of great power conflict correlates with their interest in responding to these solicitations from prospective clients engaging in their own competitive interactions with their local adversaries.

Clear patterns of behavior emerged in the course of this Cold War nuclear-era contest and similar patterns in other intense Great Power conflicts persist today. First, each superpower's functional so-called sphere of influence included those countries in which the adversary would accept defeat in a battle for influence in its domestic political process. The adversary saw that counter actions might have a serious escalation potential for leading to a direct superpower nuclear military conflict. Second, the US and the USSR tolerated a surprising degree of diplomatic independence by small states in their respective spheres of influence. Third, an anomaly of the US-USSR Cold War was evident. The USSR tolerated American projections of influence deeply into what would appear—according to the geopolitical realist school—to be obviously within the Soviet sphere of influence. The US demonstrated far less tolerance for similar Soviet efforts in the Western Hemisphere (e.g.: Nicaragua, Grenada). Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov referenced the comparative belligerency of the US and Russia during and after the Cold War. He intended to justify Russian intervention in Ukraine purportedly to protect the Russophile population there.

"Hundreds of thousands of people were killed in Iraq and cities were razed to the ground. No weapons [of mass destruction] were found. Tony Blair in his memoirs said that they made a mistake, but it can happen to anyone. All of that was done to the countries located on the other side of the ocean. I'm not even talking about the reasons the Americans came up with for intervening the Dominican Republic or Grenada. President Reagan was talking about a threat to the lives of US citizens. Just a threat. There were thousands of Americans there. They invade countries, topple governments, etc." [sic] ("Russia's Lavrov Blames West," 2022, para. 98).

With the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact and the collapse of the USSR, Washington undertook a series of campaigns that eliminated Soviet Cold War-era allies, labelled as so-called rogue states (DeDominicis, 2018). They included the post-Tito pro-Moscow Milosevic-led regime in Serbia, the Baathist Saddam Hussein-led regime in Iraq and the Gaddafi-led regime in Libya. The Putin government intervened in Syria in 2015 to support the Assad-led regime that was under threat where Moscow still has a naval base. Today both Russian and US soldiers are present on its territory. A critical issue in this study is whether the prevailing worldview in Moscow in 2022 saw threat versus opportunity in the external international environment. Russia the nation state under the Putin regime appears notably more belligerent than the old Soviet regime. One necessary factor for explaining the comparative sluggishness of the USSR in responding to American influence expansion onto its border states lies in the USSR itself. The USSR was a

multinational state, with roughly half of population ethnically Russian. The 15 titular national Soviet republics contained a host of other primary intensity self-identification ethnic, sectarian and racial ingroups minorities. The Soviet governing apparatus relied primarily on coercion to maintain the integrity of the Soviet state. It did so but in combination with accommodation and reconciliation of national political self-expression demands among often conflicting groups, e.g., Russian and Ukrainian (Sasse, 2017). Spreading Soviet Communist ideology and influence was attractive to elements of the ruling elite, but it was a comparatively secondary issue for the mass public. With Gorbachev's downgrading of coercive control, the disintegration of the Soviet Union due to liberal nationalist social movements underscored the continuing attraction of ethnic nationalism. It contrasts with the US, which is a settler colonial immigration-founded, territorial community-based nation state (Cottam and Cottam, 2001). By 2022, appeal to Russian sovereignty nationalism against purported challengers, foreign and domestic, had become a primary component of the political control regime under Putin's leadership (Tepe and Chekirova, 2022). Coercion has become another primary mechanism in the control regime (Matveev and Zhuravlev, 2022).

The Soviet authorities ultimately failed in constructing a prevailing, primary intensity self-identification of the modal Soviet citizen with the Soviet territorial community. The significance of this distinction is evident in the more pronounced tendency of the US to project power globally during the Cold War. As a nation state, the US collectively was more prone 1) to perceive the external environment in terms of threats and opportunities for the American nation state; 2) to stereotype the sources of those perceived challenges, and 3) to overestimate its relative power capabilities (Cottam and Cottam, 2001). Unlike the multinational USSR, post-Soviet Russia more closely resembles the foreign policy behavior patterns of a nation state.

Ukrainian Nationalism and the (so-called) West

This analysis continues into Ukrainian nationalism's effective large scale military resistance against its more powerful neighbor and why both Moscow and the West were generally surprised by it. This resistance appeared despite explicit US administration statements that it would not militarily intervene to aid the Ukrainians in self-defense. A comparative power analysis of the Ukrainian and Russian state power capabilities immediately pre-February 24, 2022, would have shown a significant disparity. It might have predicted that Ukraine would not be able to maintain its control over the territory it had controlled post 2014. Going further to retake territories lost in 2014-15 to reclaim sovereign control over its 1991 boundaries might seem hopeless. Such an analysis would have incorporated Morgenthau's concept of national morale. For example, Crimea is not only a historical romantic symbol of Russian national identity, but its Slavic population today is broadly sympathetic to Russian sovereignty (Tavberidze, 2023). Since annexing Crimea in 2014, Moscow has used its coercive authority to further cement local pro-Russian control over the province (Barros and Stepanenko, 2023).

Regarding Ukrainian national morale, Ukraine's population of 44 million made it the largest east European state (after Russia) in 1991 before the beginning of its partition in 2014. Russia's occupation of Crimea was bloodless, but the annexation of parts of Donetsk and Luhansk was not. It would precipitate a violent conflict that led to 14,000 deaths and up to 2 million displaced people and refugees before the full-scale Russian invasion on February 24, 2022 (Sakhanienko, Kolisnichenko and Rosenbaum, 2021). Intensifying hostility between Moscow and Kyiv was a concomitant with increasing cooperation between Kyiv and the Euro-Atlantic alliance. It, apparently, led to Moscow's decision to eliminate Ukraine as a sovereign state actor in international relations. The initial attempt failed. The multifactorial explanation for this failure would perhaps include implementing available scenario planning, even if unlikely to succeed. To quote the noted neo-conservative, US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, "You go to war with the army you have-not the army you want or might wish to have at a later time" (Rieff, 2012, 34). Others have noted American neo-conservative aims in early 2003 with self-justificatory claims of imminent critical threats from Baathist Iraq to justify militarily imposed regime change (Benhamou, 2015). Parallels are apparent in Moscow's

justificatory irredentist claim of threat to Russophiles due to alleged neo-Nazi domination of Ukraine to attempt its own militarily imposed regime change in Kyiv (Boucher et al., 2022).

The predominance of the self-serving stereotype of Ukraine as degenerate and ripe for rapid regime change to return it to the so-called Russian world fold is evident. Moscow's lack of preparation for an extended struggle is apparent. For example, Moscow did not withdraw its \$300 billion in foreign currency reserves deposited in Western banks before the invasion. It allowed them to become vulnerable to being frozen and inaccessible due to Western sanctions (Aris, 2023). Inferring that the prevailing view in Russia would be that this occupation would be relatively low cost seems difficult to accept given events since 2014. The belief in its efficacy may have derived from an ultimately self-serving and flawed delusionary assumption that the US-led Western alliance alone instigated and fueled Ukrainian resistance. In other words, Ukrainian resistance is tenacious because the West both inspires it and supplies it. De facto occupation of Ukraine through installation of a client regime that would permit Russian surveillance and border control would cut off this spiritual and material metaphorical oxygen.

Moscow's self-serving stereotype-shaped perception that Ukrainian national identity/national morale was superficial was evident in the stage of the invasion. "The Russians invaded Ukraine with 190,000 troops at the very most," according to Professor John Mearsheimer. "They made no effort to conquer all of Ukraine. They didn't even come close. There is no way they could have conquered Ukraine with 190,000 troops. And they didn't have the troops in reserve to do that. When the Germans invaded Poland, in 1939, they invaded with 1.5 million troops. That's the size army you need to conquer a country like Ukraine, occupy it and then incorporate it into a greater Russia. You need a massive army. This was a limited aim strategy" (quoted in Sayers, 2022, para. 5).

The genesis of the Ukrainian belief that the West has a de facto inherent tendency to oppose Russian state influence includes the foundation and development of European integration. The backbone of this integration is a vast network of governmental and non-governmental bureaucratic, civil society and economic vested interests founded during the Cold War. European integrationist authorities encouraged neo-functional spillover (Visoka and Doyle, 2016). These systemic reinforcement tendencies continue despite the emergence of various shades of significant Eurosceptic public opinion at least since fall of the Berlin Wall (Taggart, 2020). U.S. postwar hegemony is the international political environment within which postwar European integration has initiated, functioned and developed. This US hegemonic environment emerged from the prevailing view of relatively intense postwar threat from Moscow to manifest itself in the strategy of containment. Concurrently with the intent of west European leaders, this containment framework dynamically shaped the political opportunities and obstacles for European integration. On the level of political volition, postwar Germany relied upon the security hegemony of the US to ease the fears and insecurities among postwar Germany's neighbors (Collard-Wexler, 2006). Postwar Germany's reconstitution, reconstruction and reunification utilized U.S. hegemony as a critical enabling international systemic factor (Cho, 2003). U.S. hegemony was a critical factor in the Europeanization of postwar Germany (Beichelt and Bulmer, 2020).

Various political figures have expressed misgivings regarding the implications of U.S. hegemony, perhaps most notably French president Charles de Gaulle (Gfeller, 2010). French president Francois Mitterrand's European security policy proposals reflected also misgivings regarding post-Cold War ultimate US post-Cold War hegemonic intentions in Europe (Bozo, 2008). A Gaullist, Nicholas Sarkozy, in 2009 reintegrated France into the NATO command structure from which de Gaulle had withdrawn France in 1966 (Rieker, 2018). France's shift reflected the apparent self-image of relative inefficacy in opposing U.S. hegemony. This strategic shift emerged despite Paris' warnings and opposition to the G.W. Bush administration's decision to invade and occupy Iraq in 2003 ("Iraq: March 6-19," 2003). The opposition of Paris negatively affected foreign direct investment into France due to international investor unease in response to the public tensions between Paris and Washington (Arnold, 2005).

Twenty years later, French president Emmanuel Macron referenced the intra-EU schism over responding to Washington's appeal to its NATO allies to participate in the 2003 Iraqi invasion (Rose, 2023). He acknowledged Paris' controversial implicit claim to EU leadership in that crisis. Macron implied that east European rejection of Paris' 2003 appeal stemmed from the greater threat that eastern European states perceived from Moscow. This perceived threat necessitated close alliance with the US. Macron declared that Paris would not repeat the mistake of failing "to listen" to eastern Europe (Rose, 2023, para. 3). Macron again called again for the eastern European EU member states to support constructing "strategic autonomy," i.e., a European "pillar" within NATO (Abboud, 2023, paras. 6, 11). He mollified the east Europeans regarding their distrust over Paris' more conciliatory initial approach to Moscow in early 2022. Paris' initial response to the Russian invasion appeared to reflect an inference that Moscow's motivation included elements of complexity that could possibly allow for a negotiated settlement. While affirming in 2023 the hardline stance of some east European members, Macron noted that the EU could not continue to rely on an eternally firm US commitment to European security.

In sum, the EU has continued to utilize its close US alliance to reduce foreign policy as a major demand on national resources in the form of military budget allocations. "Before a European defence policy can be formulated, defence spending priorities have to be determined. Defence choices are the result of national preferences and views of the threat which will differ between European member states. Nations will also have incentives to free ride and shift costs to the larger nations" [*sic*] (Hartley, 2023, 5). It also reflects the decline of nationalistic collective attitudinal predispositions in continental Western Europe states to perceive significant threats from the external international environment. Capability generation of European military security autonomously from the US is generally not an effective public opinion electoral support appeal. For decades, French leaders periodically have called for what today Macron labels European "strategic autonomy" but persistently have lacked the political capacity to move towards it (Anderlini and Caulcutt, 2023). One obstacle has been persistent German skepticism towards French proposals that even risk suggesting a distancing of the EU from its foundational reliance on US-NATO security in Europe (Erlanger, 2/2023). It corresponds with a de facto default on the US alliance to ease any fears regarding European economic dependency on Germany. Controls that France and others place on Germany through the EU are important as well, but apparently are not perceived as sufficient, e.g., in Warsaw. Nationalism is significantly stronger among the east European EU members. Poland, for example, under the Law and Justice Party in power since 2015 relies on its US alliance to support its cooperation with its allies. French president Emmanuel Macron's conciliatory approaches to Beijing led Polish senior officials to reaffirm their US alliance as the foundation of their security (Cohen, 2023). This reliance facilitates the ruling rightwing Law and Justice Party to utilize appeals to latent, but salient Polish suspicion towards Germany to win votes ("Poland Formally Demands," 2022). It is secure in the notion that such appeals have U.S. hegemony as political guardrails with the raging war in neighboring Ukraine.

The integration of eastern Europe into the EU has intensified U.S. hegemony over EU policy. In this sense, EU enlargement has had a negative trend effect on the EU as a peace strategy for Europe. This eastern Europe focus on the US alliance reflects its orientation towards a reliable security coalition to compensate against the expansion of Russian influence in their region. The extent of lingering suspicions regarding Germany is a question that seems to be minor if at all in significance. Suspicions of German neo-colonialism through German foreign direct investment and exports seems to be politically relatively insignificant (Lankowski, 2015). The question remains as to whether these suspicions of Germany within the EU member states would remain latent if the US were to withdraw from NATO. The ability of the EU to develop an autonomous security policy for collective self-defense and military power projection remains daunting. Potential conflicts and fractures among the 27 EU member states remain a challenge. The counterfactual as to whether a re-elected Trump administration would have lessened or removed the prospect of the Russian invasion that occurred in February 2022 is an interesting thought experiment. Some who downplay the threat of Trump to the NATO alliance note that Trump's political weakening by so-called Russiagate and electoral defeat left Putin without an interlocutor. "Putin felt that he was without partners, in a sense like

Stalin had found himself ‘alone’ after Roosevelt and Churchill were gone” (Ellison et al., 2023, 204). Others note that during the latter term of the Trump administration, US commitments to support Ukraine including through lethal weapons sales became predominant in diplomatic messaging. This trend contradicted 2016 presidential candidate Trump’s public statements that Ukraine was more of a European problem than an American one (Sanders and Tuck, 2020).

Russian vs. Ukrainian Nationalism

The author has argued elsewhere that Moscow’s perceived opportunity in Ukraine was derivative of its perceived threat from the West. Moscow and Washington compete for influence in Ukraine (DeDominicis, 2022). Washington has a strong commitment to maintaining the support of eastern Europe to U.S. hegemony, which Germany accepts. It incentivizes Kyiv’s support for the European status quo under US hegemony, even if the likely outcome includes a scenario for the de facto partition of Ukraine. Kyiv and Ukrainian nationalism will integrate into the Euro-Atlantic community while the Western alliance will likely de facto acquiesce to Moscow’s annexation of the borderlands it has annexed. Russia and Russian nationalism will be thus contained along with China and Chinese nationalism, which will ally along with Iran and Iranian nationalism. A Korea-type scenario has emerged in commentary in reports on Russian mass media broadcasts. Russian media referenced a Swiss newspaper report that the US authorities have proposed to Moscow that Russia accept the annexation of 20% of Ukraine’s post-1991 territory in return for a ceasefire. Washington and Moscow denied the report (Reuters, 2023, Van Brugen, 2023). Moscow and Kyiv have both indicated that they refuse to negotiate. If Moscow is refusing to negotiate, then the US will likely continue to support Ukraine defensively but likely without providing sufficient resources to expel Russian forces from Ukraine’s 1991 borders. To reach a ceasefire, in the prevailing view of the fighters, a hurting stalemate has to be achieved that is ripe for resolution (Ifediora, n.d., 6). Achieving it is very difficult in the midst of battles in which regime survival depends on the outcome. The competition for global public opinion support includes media portrayals of the alleged crimes of the other side in the conflict. The politically attentive Russian public is apparently polarized, with many acquiescours and accommodators to Putin’s regime fleeing the country to avoid being mobilized for this war (Nechepurenko, MacFarquhar and Isai, 2023).

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

2023 Washington’s Prevailing View of Russian Intentions

Implicit differences in terms of appropriate political strategic response to Russia’s invasion have their foundations in differing inferences of the ultimate intentions behind Russian belligerency. The *New York Times* editorial board, for example, argues that Moscow’s escalation of belligerency in February 2022 was due to Moscow’s perception of political weakness in the West. According to this worldview, Moscow viewed the West as lacking the will and determination to oppose Moscow’s attempted assertion of control over Ukraine:

“Isolated from anyone who would dare to speak truth to his power, Mr. Putin ordered an invasion of Ukraine last year, convinced that the Ukrainians would promptly shed their ‘fascist’ government. The start of the war stunned Russians, but Mr. Putin seemed convinced that a West wasted by decadence and decline would squawk but take no action. He and his commanders were apparently unprepared for the extraordinary resistance they met in Ukraine, or for the speed with which the United States and its allies, horrified by the crude violation of the postwar order, came together in Ukraine’s defense” (Editorial Board, 1/2023, para. 13).

The prevailing view in Washington appears to be that Moscow and Kyiv will not seriously negotiate over a ceasefire at the time of writing. Negotiations are unlikely until such time as a prevailing view emerges

within each capital that ongoing fighting is more costly, at present and in the future, than a ceasefire. In sum, Moscow and Kyiv must view the fighting as in effect a hurting stalemate (Touval and Zartman, 2001). The US prevailing view is that attrition will eventually exhaust Kyiv and Moscow after months, perhaps years, of ongoing fighting, with casualties on each side consisting of hundreds per day. Kyiv and Moscow would have to conclude that maximal objectives that they are voicing are unachievable. In Moscow these demands are international recognition of the annexation of the four complete provinces of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson, along with Crimea to Russia. In addition, a “rump” Ukraine must demilitarize and accept international legal status as a neutral state, i.e., it may not join NATO (Hodge and John, 2022, para. 13). On the Ukrainian side, complete return to the 1991 borders of Ukraine and the removal of Putin from office, plus war reparations, appear to be its maximal demands, along with EU and NATO membership. The Putin regime has appeared implicitly to signal its willingness to negotiate the partition of Ukraine. The pro-Western territory focused around Lviv acquiescing to the loss of the territories east of the Dnipro to Moscow would be part of this formula. Moscow’s response to the integration of Kyiv into the Euro-Atlantic system would be the test of the accuracy of the inferences in this analysis that Moscow’s perceives threat to Russian national unity. Putin himself noted that the annexation of Galicia to Ukraine by Stalin is the ultimate source of Ukrainian nationalist hostility to Moscow.

“What did we believe at one time? We believed that OK, the USSR ceased to exist. But, as I said at yesterday’s Defence Ministry Board meeting, we thought our common historical roots, our cultural and spiritual background would be stronger than what pulls us apart, and such forces have always existed. We assumed that what unites us was stronger. But no, it was not so, due to the assistance of outside forces and the fact that people with extreme nationalist views came to power basically after the collapse of the Union.”

“And this division was growing worse all the time with the help of these forces and despite all our efforts. As I once said – at first we were pulled apart, separated and then set against each other. In this sense, they have achieved results, of course, and in this sense it has been something of a fiasco for us. We were left with nothing else. Maybe we were deliberately brought to this, to this brink. But we had nowhere to retreat, this is the problem.”

“They were always fully involved; they did their best. I do not remember now, but you can read up on it in history books. One of the deputies of the tsarist State Duma said, if you want to lose Ukraine, add Galicia to it. And this is what happened in the end; he turned out to be a visionary. Why? Because people from that part behave very aggressively and actually suppress the silent majority in the rest of that territory.”

“But again, we believed that the underlying foundations of our unity would be stronger than the trends that are tearing us apart. But it turned out this was not the case. They began to suppress Russian culture and the Russian language, tried to break our spiritual unity in totally barbaric ways. And they pretended that no one noticed. Why? Because, as I said, their strategy was to divide and rule” [sic] [emphasis BD] (“Russia’s President Putin Uses Term ‘War’ for First Time in Press,” 2022, paras. 42-45).

Former Russian president and prime minister Medvedev has also made statements regarding Moscow’s willingness to accept the partition of Ukraine.

“Dmitry Medvedev, the deputy head of Russia’s Security Council and a longstanding close ally of President Vladimir Putin, has said that new ‘special international norms’ are needed to hold talks on ending the war in Ukraine.”

“They are again recalling the principles of international law as the basis for negotiating. The universal principles of the public law of peoples are certainly important, but the problem has always been in their interpretation. For example, at least two of the seven principles contained in the UN Charter are obviously understood differently by us and by the countries hostile to us. This is the principle of self-determination of nations (when it comes to the former republics of Donbas and other former territories of Ukraine). And the principle of conscientious fulfilment of international obligations (when it comes to the Minsk agreements),’ Medvedev wrote on his Telegram channel on 18 January.”

“Therefore, what is necessary for new negotiations is not so much a unified understanding of the principles of international law but agreement on two legal aspects. First, recognition (or at least tacit acceptance) of the results of self-determination of the people of the former territories of Ukraine, which are embodied today in the internal law of Russia – in its Constitution. And second, the development of special international norms designed for the current situation and future international relations. As it was, say, during the preparation of the UN Charter in 1945. In fact, this is the creation of new international rules that complement the system of jus cogens [preceding two words in Latin] norms,’ he added.” [sic] (“Putin Ally Calls for New International Rules for Ukraine Peace,” 2023).

Medvedev has made intensely belligerent statements previously, apparently for domestic public opinion mobilizational aims. The above statement portrays Moscow as a great power supporter of the post-1945 status quo. The US-led hegemonic expansion into Ukraine is consequently an implication that the US is the revisionist power. It aims to subordinate indirectly Russian national significance to secondary status, despite Moscow being one of the founding UN Security Council permanent members. Again, a formula test for Moscow’s intentions appears to be acquiescence to partition with Moscow acquiescing to western Ukraine’s integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. The Putin government stereotyped Ukraine as a “degenerate” actor as apparently did most Western intelligence agencies (Cottam and Cottam, 2001, 117). The prevailing view that Russia would relatively quickly seize control of the capital and, perhaps, install a Russian client, proved to be a gross miscalculation (Euractiv, 2022). This analysis argues that a critical factor was nationalist stereotyping. The Putin government consequently has mired Russia in an attritional conflict with Ukraine receiving critical military and economic aid from Euro-Atlantic allies. Putin has to justify the invasion he launched in February 2022 or risk being toppled and potentially worse, both for him and his regime’s core supporters.

NATO Post-Cold War Containment of Moscow

The February 24, 2022, Russian invasion of Ukraine temporarily pushed the preoccupation with China down the agenda for EU-NATO cooperation. Recently (January 2023) the leaders of the member states of EU reaffirmed EU-NATO unity. They described the enhancement of the EU security capabilities as a strengthening of the North Atlantic alliance’s capabilities (European Council, 2023):

“Our mutually reinforcing strategic partnership contributes to strengthening security in Europe and beyond. NATO and the EU play complementary, coherent and mutually reinforcing roles in supporting international peace and security. We will further mobilize the combined set of instruments at our disposal, be they political, economic or military, to pursue our common objectives to the benefit of our one billion citizens” (para. 9).

As noted, the nuclear setting continues to reinforce patterns of influence competition that first became evident during the Cold War. Moscow and Washington compete indirectly for influence over the polity of a third actor (Cottam, 1967). In one pattern, a great power intervenes directly with military force while the other publicly provides only military aid to the third, arena target polity. These dynamics played out on a

comparable scale in in Korea, Vietnam and Afghanistan. The characterization of the US and Russia as great powers contrasts with predominant Cold War-era narratives that they were so-called superpowers. Post-Soviet Russia's GDP has been compared in size to that of Italy, due primarily to the size of its export commodities sector. Its deployed nuclear weapons capability gives it the capacity to participate as a primary protagonist in scenarios leading to the devastation of human civilization through threat of accidental escalation (Cottam and Gallucci, 1978). Avoiding uncontrolled military conflict escalation leading to utilization of nuclear destruction remains the primary, but not the only, foreign policy imperative, as it has been since 1945. The US response to Moscow's February 24, 2022, invasion of Ukraine functionally aims to contain Russian irredentism. It assumes that Russian belligerence is due to frustrated great power status recognition of Russia's hegemony at least over the territories of the former Soviet Union. It does not assume that the prevailing view in Moscow perceives an indirect, but intense threat to Russia through US-led globalization of Ukraine via its European integration variant (DeDominicis, 2022). This perceived "diabolical enemy" stereotype views the greater polity challenge being American-led globalization (Cottam and Cottam, 2001, 106). In this definition of the situation, the observer sees US foreign policy motivation as belligerently aggressive. It is a diabolically clever, cynically rational actor engaged in a long-term plan to dominate the international community (Cottam 1977). In this prevailing stereotype-driven worldview, the US succeeded in destroying the USSR. Moscow perceives the US today as aiming to subvert and disintegrate Russia through the attraction of so-called Europeanization of the former Soviet territories. Ukraine, according to the prevailing Russian narrative of its national history in 2022, is the most vulnerable and attractive target as the cradle of Russian civilization. It is also the most vulnerable target for Europeanization due its political geography, i.e., the NATO/EU would make Ukraine into an "anti-Russia."

In Putin's words, "For a long time, external forces have been implementing a project near our borders to create from our neighbour, Ukraine, a de facto hostile state, an 'anti-Russia.' They funnelled weapons into it for eight years, condoned aggression against the peaceful population of Donbass and indulged in every way in planting neo-Nazi ideology" [*sic*] ("Putin Addresses," 2023, para. 21). In August 2022, Russian Security Council secretary Nikolai Patrushev stated, "By organising a coup d'etat in Kyiv in 2014 and starting the accelerated transformation of Ukraine into the so-called anti-Russia, the Anglo-Saxons set out not only to create a springboard for pressure to be put on our country, but also to create a precedent for the further fragmentation of the Russian ethnic group in order to completely eradicate it" ("Russia Fighting Ukraine's Western-Installed Puppet Regime," 2022). Patrushev's primary intended target audience in this TASS Russian language report was domestic. Foreign audiences would inevitably respond that it is propaganda to control the Russian public because the European Union's primary aim is to promote peace in Europe. Moscow might respond that whatever rhetorical differences the EU leaders have with US policy, they never restrain the US, and end up eventually not only acquiescing, but supporting US policy. For example, in *Vedomosti* business daily:

"Vedomosti (business daily) — 'French President Emmanuel Macron, who has returned from a meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping, stressed that the Europeans are not interested 'in speeding up the solution of the Taiwan issue'... Macron noted the need for Europe to gain 'strategic autonomy'..."

"In terms of relations with Washington, one can really see 'Gaullist' notes in Macron's statements, in particular, the mention of 'strategic autonomy' and the refusal to get involved in new conflicts under the American leadership. Here one can recall both the Cold War and the issue of the invasion of Iraq in 2003, says Pavel Timofeev, the head of the Department of European Political Studies at IMEMO RAS. But in fact, we are not talking about any 'anti-Atlantic rebellion', the expert says."

"Yuri Rogulev, director of Franklin Roosevelt's Foundation for the Study of the United States, agrees. He stressed that France's de facto foreign policy is being built in line with Washington's course, which is evident from Paris' behaviour in the Ukrainian crisis and participation in the

supply of weapons to Kyiv. Macron only pretends to play 'the Frond', Rogulev believes.' [...] [sic] ("Russian Press Previews," 2023, para. 22-24).

Patrushev's characterization encapsulates the "social competition" strategic approach that prevails in Moscow regarding the conflict with the North Atlantic community over Ukraine (Cottam and Cottam, 2011, 92-93). In sum, a social competition strategy has a zero-sum conflictual interaction as its prevailing worldview. Ukraine has become this target of social competition due to Russian national irredentist claims to a region that had been part of the Russian empire. Ukraine became formally sovereign with the disintegration of the USSR into its fifteen constituent republics. Irredentist conflicts are particularly prone to social competition strategic approaches. The revisionist power characterized the allegedly occupied or colonized area as part of the nation that is unjustly separated from the patron-state and oppressed.

Moscow's Prevailing Worldview

The prevailing worldview in Moscow as of 2023 views the EU as essentially the institutional framework for US hegemonic coordination of the national power resources of its NATO allies. This Russian government prevailing view contrasts with some Western academic literature portraying the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) from a neo-realist perspective. The latter sees the CSDP as an EU attempt at "balancing" against the US in the post-Cold War unipolar environment. Other literature views the EU as lacking the power capability to act in the military arena independently of the US. The CSDP in fact enhances US-EU security cooperation to make a "more effective and enduring NATO" (Erciyas and Soydemir, 2022, 8). This latter perspective is closer to Moscow's worldview. Far from viewing the EU as balancer or hedger against the US, Moscow sees the Trump administration as illustrating the weakness of the EU. French president Emmanuel Macron highlighted this weakness by describing NATO during the Trump administration as experiencing "brain death" due to "a lack of strategic coordination and leadership from the United States" (Erlanger, 2019, para. 1). One 2021 observer infers that the start of trends leading to Macron's pronouncement emerged with the Obama administration's "transatlantic departure" with its heralded "pivot" to Asia (Da Cruz and Antonio, 2021, 15).

Macron more recently reiterated oft-repeated French calls for the development of EU strategic autonomy. Little evidence exists of its effectiveness in shaping the prevailing view in Moscow towards perceiving substantive differentiation of the EU from US-led NATO. One Belarusian observer associated with the opposition to Lukashenka critiques the prevailing view in Moscow and Minsk as viewing Warsaw and Kyiv as "mindless puppets of Washington" ("Highlights: Belarusian Media," 2022, para. 5). Despite Macron's condemnation of the absence of US leadership under the Trump administration, the EU appeared unable to organize a viable compensatory response. It did not effectively adopt a soft balancing, or hedging, strategy towards the US. "[H]edging strategies are adopted when states fear abandonment and seek to reduce their dependence on other states, either by cultivating alternative partners and projects, or self-insure against the possible betrayal of trust by other states" (Nielsen and Dimitrova, 2021, 703, referencing Ringsmose and Webber, 2020, 301). The EU remained collectively passive. Among the obstacles was the generally stronger commitment of the newer east European members of NATO/EU to orienting their military security policies towards Washington. "Because of this insurmountable structural cleavage, the EU will experience, for a long time from now on, a gap between the political will of unity, formally expressed by European leaders and the actual capacity to adhere to the idea of 'strategic European autonomy'" (Naumescu, 2020, 33-34). Macron's November 2019 corpse-like characterization of NATO generated rejections of varying intensity. They came, among others, from the Turkish president, the German Chancellor and the NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg. Among other rejoinders, Stoltenberg responded, "But the European Union cannot defend Europe. European unity cannot replace transatlantic unity."

A strong NATO and a strong European union are two sides of the same coin. Both are indispensable for the continued freedom and prosperity of Europe" (NATO, 2019, para. 27, referenced in Sarcinschi, 2019). The

EU functionally defaulted to placing its bets on Trump's removal from office. This bet paid off, but it can lead an observer to speculate as to whether Trump's re-election, if it had happened, would have lessened Moscow's perception of challenge from the US/NATO/EU. Nielsen and Dimitrova (2021) note the January 2019 *New York Times* (Barnes and Cooper) report that Trump raised privately the prospect of the US withdrawing from the NATO alliance. Although the justification was the drain on US resources, clearly Trump did not perceive Russia as a major threat to US interests, as Trump understood them. Moscow's conflict with Kyiv escalated publicly in spring 2021, a few months after Biden's inauguration (Kramer, 2021). The Trump US administration had distanced itself from active involvement in Moscow-Kyiv negotiations over the Donbas conflict (Kramer, 2019). Trump's interest in Ukraine declined following the revelations surrounding his July 25, 2019, call to newly elected Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky. Trump sought to use US aid to leverage Kyiv to announce an investigation into US businessman Hunter Biden, active in Ukrainian business circles. He thereby aimed to besmirch the reputation of his looming presidential election rival, former US vice-president Joe Biden, the father of Hunter. In the Obama administration, Biden had oversight responsibility for Ukraine and had been actively engaged in promoting particular reform policies there (Kramer, 2020).

According to this perspective, Joe Biden represents the reassertion of the primacy US foreign policy establishment, founded and cultivated during the Cold War. Notoriously referred to as "the Blob," it is "the bipartisan, Washington-based, foreign policy elite that believes maintaining the United States' global dominance is essential to ensuring American safety and international peace" (Beinart, 2022, para. 5, Lyall, 2021). Reynolds (2020, 44) notes that "the more influential critics of Washington's foreign policy consensus argue [...] that a broad bipartisan conglomeration of interlocking bureaucracies, think-tanks, and lobbies constitutes the Blob." The developing institutionalization of the functional assumption that post-Soviet Moscow remains a foreign policy challenge came to characterize the prevailing view in post-1991 Washington (Maitra, 2021).

Prevailing in this establishment worldview is the attitudinal assumption that Moscow would seek to re-establish the regional hegemony it lost following the 1989-91 Eurasian Communist collapse. A foundational component of this worldview is that post-Cold War Washington should respond to the appeals of the post-Communist European polities. The US should take the lead in containing Moscow's presumably revanchist influence by expanding NATO (Allin, 2022). Amidst the US nationalist response to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the US mainland, US defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld would highlight these east European allies (Sedivy and Zaborowski, 2004). Labelling them as "New Europe" for their support of the US in its impending 2003 Iraq invasion, he contrasted them with obstructionist, resistant "Old Europe," focused on Paris and Berlin ("Iraq: January 4-February 4," 2003, 30, 32). Beinart (2022) highlights the high marks the US foreign policy establishment has given to containing Russian expansion into Ukraine by providing military aid to Kyiv.

EU individual leaders and collective policy patterns provide evidence as to their respective functional self-understandings of the NATO/EU alliance regarding its ultimate foreign policy intentions. These self-understandings may differ from the prevailing view of NATO/EU ultimate intent as perceived by the targets of NATO and EU strategy, including Moscow. The Putin government apparently shares Stoltenberg's characterization of NATO and the EU being two sides of the same coin. This analysis infers that Moscow's prevailing view sees the functional intent of the Euro-Atlantic alliance is, at best, to subordinate Russia to a second-rate global power status. Russia is, at best, to submit to US hegemonic predominance as per postwar west European nation states, i.e., as per a European mid-range power. At worst, the aim is to dismember Russia, with the American-led Euro-Atlantic community acquisition of Ukraine the main wedge for accelerating this disintegration. The assumption is that permitting NATO's integration of Ukraine, even a partitioned Ukraine, would constitute appeasement of an aggressive, imperialist US. As with Munich in 1938, such appeasement will only make the appeased aggressor more aggressive.

The Russian authorities articulated this worldview through its control over Russian broadcast media, e.g., in response to Henry Kissinger's proposal to this effect, Kissinger's "trap." According to one Russian pro-regime pundit, "Without restoring some order in the [Russian] elite and in the authorities, the number of these manipulations will only grow, and the number of people who would be internally ready to go where Kissinger calls them [...] will grow" ("Russian State TV," 2022, para. 11). In this enemy image of the US in the nuclear setting, the immediate threat comes from internal actors within the Russian polity that would functionally serve as subversive American agents. As incentivized by the nuclear setting, this subordination occurs indirectly. A critical component is permanently dislodging Ukraine from Moscow's sphere of influence via the EU and its civilian power capabilities. In this worldview, the EU acts as the handservant of US hegemony in Europe.

The perception of threat as the prevailing view in Moscow is further evident in the domestic control formula that the regime authorities implement. Aside from coercion, the public opinion influence formula aims, functionally, to inoculate domestic public opinion from foreign news sources, i.e., maintain national morale. Western reports regarding a range of issues, e.g., Russian targeting of civilian infrastructure, are matched quickly by Russian state broadcast and social media claims. The latter circulate assertions of Ukrainian targeting of civilian infrastructure in Russian-held areas. Foreign news reports disseminating into Russia of Russian military targeting of Ukrainian infrastructure thereby can be more readily questioned as disinformation. The current common dismissal is that these reports are lies and fake news, thereby buttressing public opinion support for the authorities. They propagate Russian claims in multiple globally-employed foreign languages (Hanley, Kumar and Durumeric, 2023b). For example, the claim of secret US biological weapons laboratories in Ukraine remains a theme in Russian state propaganda (Hanley, Kumar and Durumeric, 2023a). It speculatively calls to mind the debunked claim of the G.W. Bush administration that Saddam Hussein's Iraq was developing such weapons in the lead-up to the 2003 US led invasion (Mills, 2011). This mirroring/mimicking of Western news reports occurs continuously as recounted in *BBC Monitoring Service* daily publications. On a tactical military level, Russian claims of destruction of the latest deliveries of Western weapons systems to Ukraine may also serve to buttress Russian military morale (Zabrodyski, et al., 2022).

The EU's rhetorical emphasis on its identity as a "civilian superpower" includes human rights promotion as a predominant theme (Moravcsik, 2003, para. 41). Romanova (2016) highlights the analytical importance of focusing on the subjective perception of "normative power Europe" by a particular target state, whether Russia or otherwise (2016, 1). Romanova (2016) affirms that the Russian state's ultimate collective foreign policy motivation is to gain status equality with the EU and the US in international relations. Romanova (2016) notes that Putin's rejoinders to EU critiques of Russia's human rights record have highlighted EU complicity with the US in establishing "secret prisons and torture in Europe" (2016, 308).

The Putin regime authorities had long been skeptical of EU expansion of its influence into the former Soviet states before the beginning of the Russo-Ukraine war in 2014 (Ferguson 2018). One observer noted that the increasing trans-Atlanticism of EU policy under US "leadership" [*sic*] has spelled "the death of Europe as the subject of its fate" (Sakwa, 2019, 564, 569). Another observer noted the strongly supportive response of "the West" to the 2014 liberal democratic revolution in Ukraine, in contrast to an Armenian mass movement 5 years earlier (Grigoryan, 2020, 1). Grigoryan argues that differentiating factor was that the former was intensely hostile to Moscow's influence, whereas the latter was not.

Maass (2020) illustrates that Moscow was skeptical of the EU's ability to act as a coherent, effective actor in implementing its "state-building" project in Ukraine. Moscow's effectiveness in overriding EU policy aims by partitioning parts of eastern Ukraine in 2014 was a primary cause for the EU's inability to achieve its stated goals. Maass notes that in 2013 in the leadup to the EU's Eastern Partnership summit with Ukrainian President Victor Yanukovich in Vilnius, Moscow pressured Kyiv and Brussels for a trilateral trade agreement to include Russia. Thereby, Moscow would maintain its economic vested interests in

Ukraine while Ukraine would gain the economic benefits of integration into the EU single market. When the EU demurred, then Yanukovich announced that he would not sign the economic association agreement with the EU in November. Moscow had ratcheted up economic sanctions on Ukraine threatening Yanukovich's political support base in the industrialized Donbas region (Herszenhorn, 2013, Smale, 2013, Roth, 2013). His decision triggered protests that escalated to scores of deaths and his flight from Ukraine to Russia.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Russia's traditional conservative values affirmation response is part of the emerging authoritarian populist political regime that perceived opportunity and now threat emanating from Ukraine. The perceived threat from the US was the context that created the derivative perceived opportunity in February 2022 emanating from Ukraine. The conflict spiral crisis that has emerged has its foundations in these Soviet-era bureaucratic security apparatus vested interests, which now associate with post-Soviet Russian nationalism. Their US counterparts' association with American nationalism remains, with the elimination of Trump's challenge to them. European integration's foundations include these Western-counterpart bureaucratic security apparatus vested interests. Nationalist Euroscepticism can challenge this so-called establishment, as the Brexit phenomenon demonstrated. For those EU member state actors in which nationalism is not as salient, then they will tend to support EU integration. Current debates regarding how to respond to Moscow's dramatic escalation of its violent conflict with Ukraine include differences in the perception of ultimate Russian motivations. These 2022 differences focused, for example, on whether or not the US should take the lead in providing heavy tanks to Ukraine. Germany's commitment to US hegemony also reflects its prospective acquiescence to its allies providing heavy tanks. Germany's prevailing assessment of its own foreign policy tactical aims include a commitment to maintenance of US hegemony. US hegemony necessitates acquiescing to a US commitment to increasing NATO military supplies to Ukraine, to which Germany would agree. Germany balks at appearing to take the lead in organizing the Western response to Moscow's invasion. Notable has been the US response to the invasion at its one-year point. The US at first refused to provide Abrams tanks to Ukraine, after Berlin repeated its insistence to not being the first Western state to provide this type of military aid (Schmidt, Tanno and Otto, 2023).

The EU's close association with the US among the respective prevailing views in target states such as Russia, China and Iran make Euro-Atlantic based activists vulnerable to stereotyping. In this enemy stereotype of the Euro-Atlantic community ultimately under Washington's direction, public reports of disagreement or tensions between NATO member-state leaders emerge. They are ultimately insignificant. In this enemy stereotype of US hegemony, individual leader idiosyncratic dissent that reaches media reports is epiphenomenal and ultimately inconsequential. This predispositional characterization applies to the US as well as to its alleged client/allies such as France. Trump's occupation of the White House did not alter the thrust of US foreign policy towards containment of Russia. A leader such as Trump that might have threatened this thrust would generate an American polity response that would remove him from power, i.e., Trump's electoral defeat in 2020.

In this enemy stereotype prevailing worldview, a similar dismissal of individual leader dissent within all-encompassing US hegemony applies to France as well. Russian state-controlled broadcast media reminded domestic viewers that French president Emmanuel Macron repeatedly communicated personally via telephone with Russian president Vladimir Putin. Macron sought to dissuade Moscow from its full-scale 2022 invasion and then continued in attempting to persuade Putin to order a stop. "Macron himself with his endless phone calls to the Kremlin got nowhere" ("Russian TV News," 2023, para. 16). This same state-controlled news broadcast on April 7 characterized France as a "vassal" of the of the US: "this is what happens when a vassal tries its hardest to formulate an independent policy, it doesn't really work out" ("Russian TV News," 2023, para. 19). France's supposed demonstrated genetic incapacity for agency explains Macron's alleged failure to persuade Chinese president Xi Jinping to pressure Moscow during

Macron's state visit to Beijing. Notably, commenting on his just-completed state visit in Beijing, Macron declared on April 13 that being a US ally did not require being a "vassal" to the US (BBC, 2023, para. 3).

"Yet Mr. Macron was widely criticized for his comments after visiting China's president Xi Jinping in April, when he said that Europe should not be 'followers' on Taiwan or 'adapt ourselves to an American rhythm and a Chinese overreaction.'"

He said that it would be 'a trap for Europe' to get caught up in crises 'that are not ours.' Europeans should continue to develop their own strategic autonomy and become a 'third pole' in the world order, and not risk becoming 'vassals' in a U.S.-China confrontation. Like Mr. Scholz, Mr. Macron downplayed any rivalry and said that China was 'a strategic and global partner'" (Erlanger, 6/2023, paras. 13-14).

A few weeks later, Macron would warn Russia that it was becoming a "vassal state" of China (Nakazawa, 2023). According to the theoretical framework of this analysis, Macron's statements imply that Macron views a conflict spiral as the foundation of the escalating conflict between Moscow and Washington. In sum, Moscow as well as Washington are responding belligerently to a perceived threat from the Other, i.e., the Other's belligerency is due to perceived degenerate weakness in Self. Self must therefore respond with the requisite resolute will and determination to disabuse Other of this perceived degenerate weakness. This framework implies that Macron's statements were possibly signals to Moscow that France does have a capacity for autonomous agency. This capacity is only feasible if Moscow politically reinforces Paris' diplomatic leverage within NATO by responding positively to mediation efforts through compromise towards a ceasefire. According to Moscow's prevailing worldview, this absence of agency capacity derives from the stereotyped nature of European Union politics. These forces that now threaten to subjugate Moscow have their foundation not in the individual foreign policy decision makers themselves. Liberal capitalist politics utilize non-state actors. They include multinational corporations and human rights NGOs, to become the Western polity agents for undermining Russian national morale via so-called color revolutions. National morale is one of the core components in Morgenthau's conceptualization of power (Morgenthau, 1993). Notably in relation to the title of this study, Emmanuel Macron in October 2022 presented an original print copy of Immanuel Kant's *Perpetual Peace* strategic plan for Europe to Pope Francis ("Rare Book," 2022). This Russian state media report mocked Macron's gift, claiming, incorrectly, that it was apparently looted by Second World War combatants from a library in Lviv.

Characterization of the post-Cold War international relations system as unipolar is a Weberian ideal-typical characterization. This perspective allows for elucidation of behavior patterns to observe and analyze. Drezner (2019) highlights the characterization of Schweller and Pu (2011) of the international system in which a rising power challenges the hegemonic leader of the status quo. Balancing by the challenger will appear to be a revisionist strategy according to the hegemonic discourse of the status quo leader. This insight stands in contrast to the characterization of balancing a status quo defense strategy, which in fact only applies within a multipolar international system. In 2022, the rise of China and its affirmation of its alliance with Russia appeared to conform with a balancing strategy against the US and its European allies. The expansion of Euro-Atlantic institutional structures provoked a violent response by Moscow, with the escalating conflict intensifying Russia's collaboration with China. One noteworthy inference from the application of this model is that it also confirms that the prevailing worldview in Moscow does not see the EU as another pole in a multipolar world. The intense if not always salient nationalist predispositions among various EU member states that has become manifest particularly since Brexit implies that the EU never had this capacity. For example, U.S. hegemony is the framework which permits extended, institutionalized collaboration between Warsaw and Berlin (Zerofsky, 2023). The reassertion of conflict with Moscow indicates that Moscow's prevailing view infers a similar conclusion. In Moscow's view, European integration is significantly a project of U.S. hegemony. It as an elaborate system of institutions ultimately supporting U.S. hegemony in the form of American-led globalization in the European region.

A hedging strategy has been defined as a state's reaction to changing power distributions in international relations, located on a continuum between balancing and bandwagoning. It is a response to strategic ambiguity due to uncertainty regarding the foreign policy behavior implications of a shifting comparative power capabilities among states (Koga, 2018). The cognitive revolution in international relations theory emphasizes the recognition of bounded rationality in international relations theory (Herrmann 1988, Hafner-Burton, Hughes and Victor, 2013). Its relevance is evident in the impact of uncertainty regarding the further elaboration of this concept of hedging. Koga (2019) elaborates on sub-variations of hedging patterns of foreign policy behavior again reflecting the impact of uncertainty regarding various trends on current and future power balances. During the Trump administration, the willingness, ability or both of the EU to engage in hedging was not evident. Had Trump been re-elected in 2020, perhaps the ensuing crisis may have pushed the EU to develop a greater autonomous power capability. Such an outcome is a hypothetical scenario that is difficult to prove. The conclusions of this study include that as of 2023, the EU has not demonstrated the capacity to act as great power. To rephrase, it has not convincingly demonstrated the power capability, including the internal public opinion influence capacity, to establish its own foreign policy aims autonomously. Its high-level foreign policy aims remain constrained within parameters established by of the US, and the US interaction with other great powers, e.g., China and Russia. One high-profile attempt that the EU leadership made to oppose the US was in the lead up to the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, an attempt that abjectly failed.

A Path Forward

A détente strategy may manifest itself in a pattern of the EU balancing against the US and Russia by participating in China's Belt and Road Initiative. Concurrently, the EU can also demur from following the US lead should Washington favor Ukraine joining NATO. The EU can prepare for the need to promote a détente between the US, Russia and China. It needs to adopt a more autonomous role in relation to the US in order to shape US, Russian and Chinese political perceptual and attitudinal trends within these polities. China can potentially play a role in utilizing its diplomatic bargaining leverage to persuade Moscow to view the war in Ukraine as a hurting stalemate. The US and its allies would have to utilize their diplomatic bargaining leverage to bring around Kyiv to this point of view. In this scenario, the US and its allies will continue to pledge military support to Ukraine. Kyiv would perceive that the West providing sufficient resources for Kyiv to achieve its maximum objectives is not politically feasible as Russia mobilizes. Kyiv's prevailing view that Russia is politically vulnerable to state collapse would fade while Kyiv's expenditures in costs seem not to be providing more than a military stalemate.

In this scenario, the European Union will acquiesce to the US-led strategy. They will rationalize it by maintaining the alliance. Russia will more likely arrive at the hurting stalemate position as Russia integrates with Asia. The battle front becomes a ceasefire line and a de facto border to which China contributes peacekeeping monitoring forces through a UN Security Council authorization. Russia keeps the territory it occupies. Ukraine accedes to the EU and NATO, much like Cyprus did and Moldova will do with a so-called frozen conflict on its territory. Moscow has to come to conclude that gaining Odessa and linking with Transdnistria to a landlocked Ukraine is not achievable. Russia is also isolated from the West and throws in its globalization focus on Asia amidst the emerging Soviet 2.0 worldview of a conspiratorial Anglo-Saxon global system. In this stereotype, the latter currently utilizes economics and soft power to assimilate and subordinate Russia.

The UN Security Council is a twentieth century framework for the immediate postwar status quo institutionalization of a multipolar international system. Multipolar systems are more amenable than unipolar and bipolar systems for the adaptation by defensive national great powers to pursue "social creativity" strategies (Cottam and Cottam, 2001, 92-93; Evans, 2015, 404; Mazloomi et al., 2018). Social creativity involves reaffirmation of Self's status equality by pursuing alternative, substantive strategic

means of international status acquisition and recognition. Moscow has repeatedly reasserted its aim to establish a multipolar world system. It aims through cooperation with China functionally to bandwagon against the West until the purportedly expansionist United States is contained. Moscow articulated this approach in its most recent foreign policy strategy, portraying itself as a “self-reliant civilization state” (“Summary of Russian Press,” 2023, para. 46). “In the 2023 concept, Russia, China, India and the United States are named ‘sovereign centres of world development (read— the poles of that same multipolarity)’” (“Russian Press Ponders,” 2023, para. 19).

The EU should strive for international social creativity opportunities through promoting multipolarity. It will require elements of containment of the US. At least one EU member state major power leader is again calling for ending unanimity in favor qualified majority voting in the Council of the European Union for determining EU foreign policy positions (Kauffmann, 2023). This decision rule change would apply in deciding the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy and on taxation policy. It would conceivably contribute to a positive trend in global perception of the increasing autonomous agency of the EU as an international actor. Greater taxation authority would presumably be useful for raising revenue to build more effective diplomatic bargaining leverage instruments, e.g., a European military arm. This same report highlights the skepticism of other EU member state leaders to the likelihood of such a consensus to change the rule ever emerging. Analogously, to increase the possibility of distancing the EU more effectively from the US in the view of Moscow and Beijing, the European Parliament should have the right to initiate legislation. At a minimum, these evolutionary policy developments would be incremental progress in the right direction of increasing global perception of EU autonomy vis-à-vis NATO.

The Russian conception of the world order that they advocate to the international community is, according to Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, “a more just, polycentric world order based on international law and UN centrality” (“Foreign Minister Lavrov,” 2023, para. 12). Other comments by Lavrov and other leaders, such as Dmitri Medvedev, together indicate a world order which the UN Charter articulated at the end of the Second World War. The UN Security Council would constitute a framework for institutionalizing the wartime alliance into a postwar institutional framework for a global concert of great powers. The permanent five members were formally equal in legal status with their respective veto power. Resuscitation of this framework would necessitate the rebuilding of Russian relative power capabilities through collaboration with China. The high-level tactical aim would be to redress the global diplomatic bargaining leverage which the US currently enjoys. In sum, Russia seeks to reestablish a comparative diplomatic bargaining leverage relative capacity comparable to that which the old Soviet Union enjoyed. The Soviet claim to global leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle again is a theme of Putin’s leadership. Moscow seeks collaboration with China and India, as well as Iran and other states resistant to US efforts to contain Russian influence expansion. The US and its developed country allies/clients, i.e., the West, together constitute the “golden billion” that claims global hegemony (“Putin Outlines,” 2022, paras. 10-11).

The desired future configured in Moscow’s so-called sovereign centers strategy appears to be a recreation of the multipolar world order. In sum, it is an imitation of the so-called concert of Europe to a global stage. An enforcement of Chapter VII of the UN Charter with a focus on the UN Security Council system would be the institutional framework. This Russian, so-called sovereign centers strategy is apparently a containment-type strategy oriented towards the US as a perceived threat. The prevailing view in Moscow is that the EU is not an alternate pole in this system. In this worldview, the EU has evolved into an institutional framework for coordinating European resources in support of US centered aspirations towards global unipolarity (Meijer and Brooks, 2021). The EU is one part of one of the sovereign center/poles under the US hegemonic domination. Russia’s hegemonic dominance would lie over the Orthodox Slavic world. Predispositions towards perceived threats from China over Russian influence in Central Asia have mitigation predispositions from the shared perceived threat from Washington in Beijing and Moscow.

Prescriptively, the EU would return to behavior today that parallels with that prevailing during the latter stages of the US-EU Cold War. The intensity of threat that the EU perceived from Moscow was significantly lower than the US prevailing view in the first term of the Reagan administration. The EU sought economic benefits from increasing trade with the Soviet Union. It led to the construction of the oil and gas pipelines from the USSR to Western Europe beginning in the 1960s that are particularly problematic since February 2022 (Shagina, 2021). The functional assumption was that Europe's expanding trade ties with the USSR would counteract tendencies towards a conflict spiral between the European Community and Moscow. This assumption appears to have been valid during the Soviet era.

Despite the reinvigoration of conflict between Moscow and Washington at the end of the 1970s, Moscow did not perceive a significant threat from Europe per se. On the one hand, in the early 1980s, the European Community did not oppose the US deployment of the Pershing II intermediate range ballistic missiles in Europe despite popular opposition (Panova, 2006). The west Europeans evaluated their US alliance as critically important for supporting intra-European cooperation. On the other hand, the integration of postwar West Germany into the European Community alleviated perception of threat despite modern German history (Pfennig, 2001). It was evidence supporting the functional prevailing view in Gorbachev's Moscow that the Cold War was a conflict spiral. In other words, it was based upon mutual misperception of threat, leading to Gorbachev's détente strategy towards the West. While visiting Moscow, US president Ronald Reagan in 1988 acknowledged that his 1983 depiction of the Soviet Union as an evil empire was no longer valid (Meisler, 1988, Balzacq and Jervis, 2004).

The prevailing view in Moscow of Ukraine as the scene of the source of derivative opportunity to counteract the overarching threat from Washington derives from the enemy image that prevails today. This threat is all-encompassing, and the nuclear setting incentivizes perceiving the threat indirect and informal as well as covert to some degree, involving a critical role for non-state actors, e.g., international NGOs. The Putin regime's prevailing view today as evolved to display a neo-Stalinist worldview of perceived threat from "the Anglo-Saxons" heretofore dominating the global political economy ("Lavrov," 2023, para. 3). It justifies the authoritarian control of the Russian polity in combination with appeals to authoritarian nationalism. These economic and cultural/civilizational ties and dependencies of Russia with the West have become part of the political threat from Washington. They supposedly help set the groundwork for so-called color revolutions. In this enemy stereotype-informed worldview, these color revolutions are the vehicle for neo-colonial subversion and subjugation. Ohanyan and Kopalyan (2022, 29) differentiate the popular instigation of the 2018 Armenian so-called "Velvet Revolution." They contrast it with research that highlights the leadership of "top-down by the political elites, or the externally funded NGO sector, as has been the case in post-Soviet color revolutions" (Ibid.). The Putin regime's politically prevailing view is that vulnerable domestic actors for collaboration with the external threat include the Westernized Russian bourgeoisie. Describing Western actors purportedly threatening Russia through Ukraine and elsewhere, Putin claimed that "[t]hey will try to bet on the so-called fifth column, on national traitors, on those who earn money here, with us, but live there" [...] "And 'live' not even in the geographical sense of the word, but in their thoughts, in their slave-like consciousness" (Troianovski, 2022, para. 20). So-called oligarchs whose wealth and influence derives from direct participation and exploitation of international commercial and financial flows are particularly suspect.

Moscow made non-governmental organizations a legal target in 2006 following the Orange Revolution in Ukraine. Repression against them intensified concomitantly with the subsequent deterioration in US-Russia relations (Gilbert, 2020). Within Moscow's prevailing view, liberal political and economic constituencies have vested their interests in Western economic, political and cultural power centers. According to this enemy stereotype, they have become fifth column conduits for neo-colonial subversion and subordination of Russia. According to President Putin, a month after the start of the full-scale invasion:

“But any nation, and even more so the Russian people, will always be able to distinguish true patriots from scum and traitors and will simply spit them out like an insect in their mouth, spit them onto the pavement. I am convinced that a natural and necessary self-detoxification of society like this would strengthen our country, our solidarity and cohesion and our readiness to respond to any challenge.”

“The so-called collective West and its fifth column are accustomed to measuring everything and everyone by their own standards. They believe that everything is for sale and everything can be bought, and therefore they think we will break down and back off. But they do not know our history and our people well enough” [sic] [emphasis BD] (“Putin Gives Speech on Ukraine, 2022, para. 53-54).

The more internationalist bourgeois constituencies within the Russian polity are, in this worldview, vulnerable to serving as de facto agents of informal, covert subversion serving Western power centers. Figure 1 below highlights that a nationalist is by definition relatively more prone to perceive foreign influence within his or her national polity as excessive, even intolerably so. The definition of the international environment will shape the consequent perception of allies and adversaries. For example, a postwar German nationalist in Bonn would likely view US influence favorably against threatening Soviet control, i.e., the enemy of one’s enemy is one’s friend. The current Russian nationalist prevailing view portrays the regional European international political economy as under US orchestration. Russian pro-Western bourgeoisie business orientation functionally serves as a vehicle for cooptation of the Russian polity into greater sensitivity and vulnerability to US diplomatic bargaining leverage. It serves functionally to incentivize the steady assimilational subjugation of the Russian polity to subservience to Washington. In this prevailing view in Moscow of the enemy stereotypical threat, this covert, informal form of US-led polity colonial targeting of Russia is the form of imperialism in the postwar nuclear setting. The imperial subjugation of Russia cannot occur through direct military conquest, but rather through targeting the broader Russian polity via Euro-Atlantic political economic assimilation. It reflects a reformatting and updating of the prevailing view within Stalinist Moscow. Putin has replaced it with a state-led corporatist pragmatic approach more similar in nature to the Chinese corporatist system that has emerged since the late 1970s.

“Figure 1 is an inclusive typology of the forms of imperial control that reflects the rise mass popular political awareness in the modern era incentivizing occupying powers to engage in what today is called neo-colonialism. It consists of informal, indirect control to obscure the foreign ultimate authority over local government policy as so perceived by local nationalists. Other constituencies, e.g., business classes, may not resist this foreign domination if they perceive the latter as protecting and promoting their economic interests. The traditional elite threatened by the radical pro-change nationalistic forces may also collaborate with the foreign imperial power. The latter is a colonizing power if the local nationalist citizenry views it as aiming to assimilate and erase the nationalist’s primary, terminal self-identity community.” (DeDominicis, 2023).

Figure 1: “Variance in Perceptions of Foreign Policy” From *Foreign Policy Motivation: A General Theory and a Case Study*, By Richard W. Cottam, © 1977. Reprinted By Permission of the University of Pittsburgh Press.

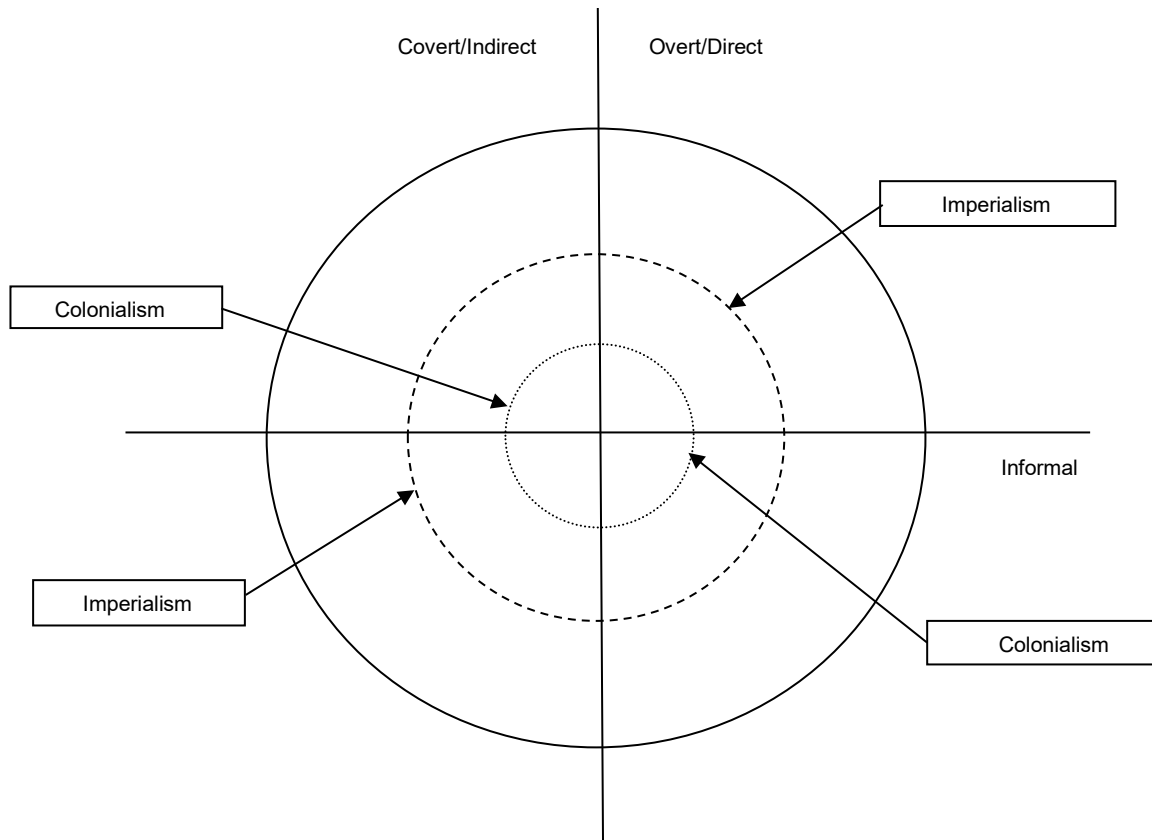


Figure 1 above is copied from the author’s application of the theoretical framework of Cottam (1977) to the analysis of the impact of Soviet neo-colonial control of Bulgaria on the Bulgarian state evolution. It highlights that in the postwar era, imperial intervention is typically cloaked under a formal legal or informal covert format to lessen the public profile of the foreign locus of control over local policy, thereby reducing costly indigenous resistance to the imperial power. Eastern European autarkic economic policy orientations reached their peak in the Stalinist period, as Moscow’s rejection of Marshall Plan aid highlighted (Lazor and Morawski, 2014). Putin’s regime espoused a parallel view of the roots of European integration serving a US hegemonic framework through the Marshall Plan (“Programme Summary,” 6/2023, paras. 21-25).

Youth groups whom the Moscow authorities stereotypically perceive as vulnerable to Western consumerist offerings and lifestyle trends are also suspect as channels for subversion of the polity. The Russian Education and Science Ministry directed that “Soviet-style compulsory military training courses and patriotic education were to be reintroduced to Russian universities” in 2023 (“Russian Universities,” 2023). Universities are to generate curricula that will achieve “universal competence in countering extremism, terrorism and corrupt behaviour” [sic] (Ibid.). The Ukraine conflict became the crisis inflection point for the Kremlin to break off the Russian polity from these alleged subversion channels and threats.

The self-servingly perceived alliance with the Chinese authorities stems partly from the inference that a similar worldview prevails in Beijing. The latter heretofore had effectively exploited the national economic development opportunities that globalization provided to China. Beijing had perceived a derivative opportunity to exploit the latter stage of the US-Soviet Cold War which re-intensified in the latter half of the Carter administration. Bureaucratic inertia continued to allow Beijing to partner with the so-called developed countries in regulating globalization. The September 11, 2001, attacks led to US Middle East interventions in response to them. These military occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan continued into the so-called Arab Spring regime challenges. They continued to distract Washington from intensifying its international influence competition with China even as rhetoric in the Obama administration included the

so-called pivot to Asia. The disruption of Donald J. Trump's election and interference in alliances continued to divert US attention from Beijing. The focus continued towards Russia as the Mueller investigation into allegations of collusion between the Trump campaign in the lead-up to the 2016 US presidential election epitomized. Partly for domestic political electoral considerations, the Trump administration placed high-profile trade sanctions on China in January 2018 which the Biden administration has not reversed.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This paper has attempted to outline the prevailing views in Moscow, Brussels and Washington regarding so-called globalization's role in the Russo-Ukraine War. It highlighted the indirect nature of political competition and competitive political interference in third actors due to the imperatives of the nuclear setting. It illustrates that the European Union has not persuasively demonstrated its capacity to occupy a convincing balancer role in a multipolar international political system. Moscow's prevailing view is that it rather appears to function as a coordination mechanism supporting US global hegemony. Putin's Russia has consequently allied the Beijing to counter the diplomatic bargaining advantage of the so-called West. The latter seeks functionally to ally with Ukrainian nationalism against Russian irredentism.

The EU ideally should overcome US resistance and agree to the deployment of peacekeeping forces including Chinese forces along with ceasefire line in Ukraine. The remaining part of sovereign Ukraine should gain entry into NATO and the EU. Ukraine and Russia should integrate into the Chinese Belt and Road initiative. The main obstacle to this strategy for a durable ceasefire would likely be the US. This formula for a test would be part of a larger ceasefire strategy that included utilization of the UN Security Council institutional setting to include China in its implementation. Again, the main challenge here is the US; Washington appears resistant to accept China's role as a formal party in European security arrangements. Kyiv's de facto acceptance of the partition of the 1991 territorial borders of Ukraine would be politically very difficult to make de jure. It would mean that Crimea as well as currently Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine remain on the Moscow-controlled side of the demilitarized zone (DMZ). Chinese use of its economic and military diplomatic bargaining leverage to maintain the ceasefire would require cooperation by Brussels and Washington.

In return for this acquiescence, social creativity side payments to Ukraine would include accession to NATO and the EU. The accession of Cyprus to the EU with one-third of its territory under Turkish occupation since 1974 established a legal precedent. China would also employ its formidable economic resources to leverage Moscow to accept the status quo. Moscow is likely to remain frozen out of Euro-Atlantic trade and financial flows for the foreseeable future; China would be Moscow's lifeline for international trade and development. Integration of Ukraine as well into Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative would also be a source of leverage over Kyiv as it rebuilds from war devastation. Brussels and Washington's perception that China maintains its commitment to support the existing international institutional political economic order is necessary for this formula to be politically plausible. Formal recognition Moscow's annexation of the territory it currently controls in Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, Kherson and Crimea is implausible, as is Ukraine having officially neutral status. This analysis implies that a durable ceasefire requires concrete security guarantees that an international peacekeeping force including Chinese components would be a condition. Western support for NATO-EU Ukrainian accession would require that Ukraine accept the ceasefire line as a de facto international border, analogous to the demilitarized zone in Korea. The institutionalization of Moscow's de facto recognition of the demilitarized zone would rely upon Chinese diplomatic bargaining leverage. China remains a necessary economic and security ally for Moscow. For Washington to accept China's role in this regard, Washington's prevailing view would necessarily be that China is a status quo power, i.e., that China does not intend to supplant US hegemony.

The EU could play an active role in shaping critical US constituency views regarding Chinese ultimate foreign policy intentions. As indicated above, at least the prevailing 2022 view in Paris appears to reflect

this estimation of Chinese foreign policy motivation being ultimately defensive. This view is apparently not shared in other EU capitals, e.g., in Vilnius. The theoretical framework of this analysis points towards Vilnius' perception of threat from China inferentially stemming from Lithuania's perception of threat from Moscow. In Vilnius' prevailing world view, Beijing presumably enables a threatening Russia through its ongoing economic trade with Russia.

Should Trump win re-election in 2024, a test of the capability of the EU to develop so-called strategic autonomy will present itself. This framework implies that the EU's eastern European states will not permit the development of an EU strategic autonomy that is vulnerable to potential suspicions that may emerge in Washington. Specifically, they would oppose Chinese influence if the US views it as a zero-sum competitive challenge to US influence. NATO represents the institutionalization of US primacy, so the development of the EU's capacity will risk provoking in Washington that EU strategic autonomy threatens to undermine NATO.

Rather than permit distancing their own distancing from Washington's security guarantees, the EU's Eastern European states would likely respond. Should NATO disintegrate under a new Trump or neo-Trump US administration, they would counter by seeking bilateral security agreements with Washington. This security architecture would resemble the so-called hub-and-spokes framework of bilateral security alliances between Washington and its East Asian allies. This projection assumes that the East European EU member state capitals would not place their primary security arrangements in security guarantees that Paris and Berlin would provide. Escalating conflicts between Brussels on the one hand, and Warsaw and Budapest on the other hand, appear to confirm this inference.

The EU is unlikely to move to qualified majority voting to decide the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy. Paris' rhetorical quest for EU strategic autonomy is likely to remain a chimera unless the US withdraws from Europe. Should Trump win re-election in 2024, Warsaw's renewed appeals to American nationalism would include strengthening Poland's function as a base for US unilateral action in the region. In sum, a Trump administration would more likely adopt a US foreign basing strategy more like the format it has established in the Middle East as well as East Asia. Bilateralism, i.e., the hub-and-spoke arrangement between the US and its East Asian allies, would prevail, with multilateralism, of either a NATO or EU variant, undergoing marginalization. The other scenario route of institutionalizing and expanding Euro-Atlantic hegemony to all the Council of Europe area minus Moscow and Minsk is the likely fallback. It is France's advocacy of the so-called European Political Community. To rephrase, it appears to default to institutionalize the pursuit of what Moscow suspects has long been the functional strategic aim of Euro-Atlantic integration. In sum, it involves incentivizing long term self-activated regime change in Moscow without direct military intervention.

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