



RESEARCH PAPER

US Strategy over Russian Invasion of Ukraine: An Analysis

Maira Pervaiz

MS Scholar, Department of Strategic Studies, Air University, Islamabad, Pakistan

***Corresponding Author:** Jalilahmed@muetkhp.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

This paper is written to understand the historical aspect of ongoing conflict between Ukraine and Russia and how US used its grand strategic elements in the situation of war between both actors and focused on the US strategy over the Russian invasion of Ukraine listing the main driving forces of the US grand strategy and their role in the current humanitarian crisis and the role the US had been playing. Additionally, the causes that led to such involvement and massacre had also been discussed in this research with an analysis of the situation from both sides giving a little bit of history regarding the situation the world is witnessing now. The conflict between Russia and Ukraine has a historical background and had an episode of invasion by Russia in 2014 that was solved through diplomatic means. This was an explanatory study that used qualitative data analysis and was based on secondary data. The study analyzed two variables, the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the US strategy over the event. This research found that the US supported Ukraine and posed on Russia to undermine the Russian invasion or may had some other intentions of regime change in Russia and to plot a puppet government there to control the global power politics situation. This study recommends US to stick to humanitarian support to Ukraine as sanctions imposed on Russia had already made things worse for developing economies and global supply chain and energy market.

KEYWORDS Invasion, Russia, Strategy, Ukraine, USA

Introduction

Ukraine had been in a continuous riot, whether it is the overthrow of the Ukrainian government by Soviet forces in 1924 or a famine of 1932-33 due to Stalin's policies, or a takeover by Nazi Germans in June 1941. Ukraine is also known as a former Soviet state that got independence in post-World War-II era. However, the roots of current turmoil in Central Asian Nation Ukraine are based in 2014 to Russian annexation of Crimea and takeover of Donbas Region by Russia-backed separatist group.

In 2014, Ukrainian protesters put an end to President Viktor Yanukovich's government. That government was pro-Russian and the new interim government practiced pro-western governance. That new government signed trade agreement with European Union (EU), considered as the first step towards joining the bloc. (Matthew Mpoke Bigg) In reaction of this agreement, Russia invaded Crimea and Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic reaffirmed their independence and went to war with Ukraine. This war started in Donbas (Eastern region of Ukraine) and spread in western part sacrificing upon almost 13,000 Ukrainian soldiers and civilians. In 2014-15, Minsk Accords were signed by Ukraine, Russia, Germany and France to put a full stop to this hostility. (Matthew Mpoke Bigg)

In 2019, current president Mr. Zelensky was elected with majority and promise he made was to create friendly terms with Russia and seek control over Donbas Region again. (Matthew Mpoke Bigg)

On the other hand, increasing tilt of Ukrainian government towards west was worrisome for Russia as Putin demanded security guarantees for his country last year when Ukraine showed interest in joining Western military alliance, NATO. Russian President demanded Ukraine not to join NATO ever and group has to call back all of its troops in the Ukraine and Russia since 1997. (Matthew Mpoke Bigg)

Literature Review

The Russian incursion into Ukraine has had a significant influence on worldwide geopolitics and has revealed several fundamental aspects of the US grand plan. The United States has many alternatives for retaliating against the invasion, and each one entails its own set of hazards and advantages.

However, the United States' grand strategy may be broadly classified into four key areas: hegemony, selective involvement, offshore balance, and blending into shared efforts. Each of these categories has distinct ramifications for the nation as a whole, as well as its military and Navy. (Colby, 2011)

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine may be attributed to the collision of conservative objectives, whereby Ukraine prioritizes nation-building while Russia emphasizes state-building. This fundamental difference in approach has resulted in varying degrees of severity across many areas. (Kiryukhin, 2016)

The probability of Russia emerging victorious in the Ukraine-Russia conflict is low, mostly owing to adverse economic consequences, diminishing political backing, international isolation, and the possibility for further escalation of hostilities. (Johannesson, 2017)

The resolution of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia might potentially be achieved via diplomatic negotiations, reciprocal actions, and the establishment of trust, facilitated by increased involvement of prominent international organizations in fostering communication and cooperation. (Fu, 2022)

The outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict may be attributed to a confluence of causes, including the strained ties between Russia and Western nations, the worsening conditions inside Ukraine, and the acts undertaken by the Russian Federation in Ukraine during the preceding three decades. (Cebotari, 2022)

The United States has adopted an excessively cautious and risk-averse approach in recent years, which has empowered Russia to act without fear of consequences. They advocate for a stronger and more proactive US foreign policy that is prepared to use military action to prevent aggression and protect its friends. (Dobbins, 2022)

The incursion into Ukraine has underscored the need for robust alliances in a global landscape characterized by escalating great power rivalry. The United States has collaborated closely with its NATO partners to provide strategic and economic aid to Ukraine, as well as to enforce sanctions on Russia. The collaboration has been crucial in mitigating Russian hostilities. (Mearsheimer, 2022)

The US has always been a staunch advocate for democracy and civil rights, but, these principles have faced mounting challenges in recent times. The incursion into Ukraine has demonstrated the perils of permitting uncontrolled authoritarian governments. It is imperative for the United States to persist in advocating for democratization and humanitarian rights in order to confront Russian aggression and create a fairer and more stable global environment. (Brands, 2023)

Material and Methods

This is an explanatory study that has used qualitative method for investigation in order to determine how the US used its grand strategic elements in Ukraine-Russia war. The reason why the qualitative approach is used is that this research is based on observation and analysis of various situations that happened after Russia invaded Ukraine. The research design for this research is a Case study. This research has explained the situation based on various data. This study used the secondary data that had been collected through various books, newspapers, research articles, and other electronic sources, in short, through literary means. The study had used qualitative data analysis, focusing on two variables: Invasion of Ukraine by Russia, an independent variable, and US strategy over the Russian invasion as a dependent variable.

Elements of the US Grand Strategy

Peter Dombrowski and Simon Reich in their book 'Comparative Grand Strategy' mentioned three elements of the U.S. grand strategy i.e. Messianism, Frontierism and Exceptionalism. Peter Dombrowski, Simon Reich. On analysis it could be concluded that the U.S is still following the combination of these three elements in its grand strategy over Ukraine crisis.

Exceptionalism

It is about a deep-rooted belief that America and Americans are superior. American presidents often found making statements about American uniqueness and accuracy in judging domestic affairs of other nations, disapprove power politics, make better decisions in foreign policy and reliance upon foreign affairs in liberal world order. Peter Dombrowski, Simon Reich.

Frontierism

Frontierism, in other words, territorial expansion is another pillar of US grand strategy. In American strategy, frontierism refers to the border advancement in the areas where Europeans were settled. Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopedia Frederick Jackson Turner explained that the westward expansion is a mean to dodge past for America. Peter Dombrowski, Simon Reich However, with changing time and political dynamics of the world the soul of frontierism has also been changed, its means have also been changed. Now to expand its influence, US has used many methods like institutional building (creation of UN, League of Nation, World Bank, IMF, etc.), creation of world largest military alliance (NATO), or through invasions in Middle East and South Asia (Iraq, Afghanistan, etc.).

Messianism

John Winthrop during his speech on Arabella in 1630 adopted a phrase from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount: "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden." He used the phrase '*the city on the hill*' to explain US position in the world. Many Americans believe that the US is epitome of guidance for others taking national self-confidence to higher levels. Various US presidents during their tenure proposed different methodologies to change international world order i.e. 14 points by Woodrow Wilson that led to creation of Leagues of Nation, Roosevelt proposals for creating new international world order and economic world order. Peter Dombrowski, Simon Reich These proposals are examples of American grand strategy based on assumption of US being shining city on a hill.

Russian Invasion of Ukraine

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine has long history but it escalated in 2014 when Ukraine's President Viktor Yanukovich rejected to sign economic integration with Europe. This debate started protests against president and he fled away in February,

2014. Conflict in Ukraine, the Center for Preventive Action Invasion of Crimea erupted fire to the situation and the conflict turns out to be violent in terms of activation of separatist groups in eastern region known as Donbas Region. Eventually, Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic declared their independence from Ukraine after fighting a war and losing several thousand soldiers and civilian entities.

The current episode of the Ukrainian war started when Zelensky had given Ukraine's National Security Strategy in September 2020 that included partnership with NATO with further aim of membership. Relations with Ukraine In October 2020 President Zelensky signed a Political, Free Trade, and Strategic Partnership with the UK. Taras Kuzio This was the first pact signed by the UK after the creation of the commonwealth and development office, but its political importance is more significant as it was signed by both sides to ensure independent and sovereign status in trading. Szyszczak, Professor Erika On the other hand, with this pact, Ukraine took the first step towards getting into NATO and the EU which is considered to be an existential threat to Russia. By taking Ukraine into a military alliance, NATO could come to the doorstep of Russia which is actually a worrisome situation for Russian security. Meanwhile, Putin warned Ukrainian government again and again not to join NATO.

On 12th November 2021, the US reported unusual Russian military movement at the Ukrainian border which by 28th November turned out to be a military build-up by Russian troops of more than ninety-two thousand in number. US President Joe Biden warned Russia of dire consequences in case of such bold steps but all in vain and Putin announced to launch a military operation in the Donbas region of Ukraine early in the morning on 24th February 2022. During this tense situation in December 2021, Putin had given some recommendations including Ukraine not joining NATO ever and limiting US and NATO influence in former soviet states, that was rejected by Ukraine. Agence France-Presse

At last in January 2022, Russian troops started landing in Belarus along with border where Russia, Ukraine and Russian ally Belarus meet. US announced security aid to former Soviet state of \$200 million in the same month. Agence France-Presse On the same day of announcing security fund Biden during press conference made a statement,

"I think what you're going to see is that Russia will be held accountable if it invades."
(The White House , 2022)

Following this statement, NATO put its troops on standby and Russia initiated its military exercises near Ukraine and Crimea border. On 10th February 2022, Russia and Belarus started military drilling involving six thousand troops and 60 fighter jets. Agence France-Presse And after a week in eastern region of Ukraine situation got escalated. Some days earlier Russia claimed that it had withdrawn some of the troops from border but there were no signs of withdrawal. Few days later, Donetsk and Luhansk announced evacuation of civilians to Russia and soon after that shelling started. Agence France-Presse

US Over Russian Invasion

The US and Russia had agreed for Putin-Biden Summit but both the leaders seemed unwilling to pursue as Kremlin made a statement "it's too early" and the White House also seemed cautious. Agence France-Presse During press conference on 19th Feb 2022 Biden made a statement,

"And, you know, we're going to fortify our NATO Allies, I told him, on the eastern flank – if, in fact, he does invade. We're going to – I've already shipped over \$600 million worth of sophisticated equipment, defensive equipment to the Ukrainians." (The White House , 2022)

This statement shows US was helping Ukrainians from the very beginning to oppose Russia militarily but keeping its superpower status in mind it was cautious to directly get involved in a military conflict and to draw a negative image of Russia as Human Rights violator to the world and other institutions. The US and its allies planned for imposing hard sanctions for Russia to make it suffer in other ways and weaken the state. Nothing can legitimize Russian aggression, but according to Robert H. Wade the Kremlin has been tricked by the United States and NATO in order to bring down Putin's government. Wade, Robert H. Supporting his stance Wade referred to the statement Biden made during press conference on 24th Feb, the same day Russia invaded, stating "The goal of punitive measures is not to keep Russia out of the Ukraine, but to make the Russian people aware of the consequences of Putin's actions." ¹ Wade, Robert H. According to Robert these statements reflect the US intentions of regime change in Russia and all of this theater to be part of its plan. Nonetheless, on either side, provide Ukraine with enough weapons and other gear to entangle the Russians in a sand trap. Alternatively, apply harsh, crippling sanctions in order to severely disturb the Russian aristocracy and drastically reduce living circumstances for the middle class of Russia. For long enough, Russians will rise up and replace Putin with a pro-western president.

Nevertheless, the use of weapons and penalties required a justification for their implementation. Putin's invasion provided the necessary justification for that. Wade, Robert H.

Figure 1 Assessed territory in Ukraine controlled by Russian military



Source: <https://www.vox.com/22989379/russia-ukraine-war-putin-zelenskyy-us-nato-explainer-questions>

On the other hand, John Mearsheimer has maintained for years that the United States has raised the probability of nuclear conflict between nuclear countries by moving NATO eastward and creating diplomatic ties with Ukraine. NATO's Bucharest summit

in April 2008 was the catalyst for the current crisis when NATO announced that Ukraine and Georgia will join the alliance. In addition to NATO expansion, this involves a wide range of other issues. The strategy's centerpiece is NATO expansion, but it also involves EU membership and the transformation of Ukraine into a pro-American liberal democracy, all of which pose an existential danger to Russia. As part of the EU enlargement, NATO expansion, and the transformation of Ukraine into a pro-American liberal democracy, there is an overall plan. (Chotiner, 2022)

With historical analysis, the stance made by Robert H. Wade in his essay seems more applicable as a similar trap was laid for Saddam Hussein in 1990 when the United States promised not to meddle in the disagreement between his government and Kuwait. As a result of Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, the United States had justification to devastate Iraq's military. This time it seems like the tools will not be the same but Ukraine is playing the role of Kuwait in the past.

Similarly, the orange revolution in Ukraine is also another example of west-sponsored regime change during the period 2006-2007. During the elections of 2007, then president Yushchenko lagged behind in gaining votes from his strong ally during the orange revolution and the previously, prime minister of his government Tymoshenko and an opponent Yunokovych. After these results, a coalition government of pro-western political parties was made under Tymoshenko as prime minister. (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2022) So, this regime change strategies by west especially by the United States of America is not new. Similar is the case for Ukraine, the only difference is that this time Russia wants this change in Ukrainian politics to gain some fruits but if theory of western intention of regime change in Russia is true, it has already fallen into western trap.

US Role after Invasion

Recently, US has approved \$40 billion for Kyiv as more aid to retaliate Russian aggression. (Al-Jazeera, 2022) This is not new as from the beginning US is helping Ukraine through military supplies and billions of dollars as aid. This time these 40 billion dollars will help war torn country militarily and economically and will also help to ease disruption in global food supply chain caused by 3 months long war in Ukraine. Additionally, Republican Representative Kay Granger has made a statement that highlighted US intentions,

“As China, Iran, and North Korea watch our response, we must show the world that America stands firm with its allies and will do what is necessary to protect our interests abroad.” (Al-Jazeera, 2022)

This statement shows that the US is not only intended to help Ukraine but has to give a message to its opponents ‘I am still the superpower’. Furthermore, it is depicting that America always stands with its allies and supports them to every extent in order to keep their promise of protection.

On 26 March, President Biden, speaking in Warsaw, said, unscripted: *“For God’s sake, this man [Putin] cannot remain in power.”* (Wade, 2022) It is such an overt statement by US president that had exposed the true intention and trap theory proved right in case of Ukraine invasion.

Not only military aid but sanctions imposed by the US on Russia amid Ukrainian crisis are also notable. U.S. officials have imposed further sanctions against President Putin's 2 older daughters, after the horrific finding of civilians hit by a bullet in Bucha after it’s reconquered from Russian troops. (Zinets & Humphries, 2022) Further, President Biden made a statement regarding sanctions on the same day,

"We're going to keep raising the economic costs and ratchet up the pain for Putin, and further increase Russia's economic isolation," (Zinets & Humphries, 2022)

The US also wants Russia to be kicked out of G20 and declared that if Russian representatives will attend group meeting in Indonesia they will not show up. (Zinets & Humphries, 2022) They also insist killings in Bucha and other places by Russian forces a war crime but seems to forget what they did in Afghanistan, Vietnam, and Iraq etc.

Some of the sanctions included are exemption of dollar-denominated foreign deposits from either the Russian central bank or interactions with the Ministry of Finance and the National Wealth Fund. Restriction on "critical US technologies" created outside of the United States utilizing "US-origin computer, technology or equipment" for export to Russia or Belarus. (Congressional Research Service, 2022)

US Current Strategy for the Ukraine Crisis

There is a three-prong strategy at play here: E.U. expansion, NATO expansion, and turning Ukraine into a pro-American liberal democracy. Additionally, US is practicing all three elements of its grand strategy over Ukraine. Exceptionalism in terms of strategy for overthrowing Putin regime in Russia (meddling in internal affairs of other countries) and helping Ukraine through military and economic means as well as putting sanctions on Russia to cripple down its economy.

Frontierism in terms of NATO expansion with the aim of expanding NATO and EU to Central Asian or previously Soviet states. Messianism in terms of assuming its right to make decisions for others and run the world as per its own will or being superior. The imposition of sanctions on Russia is a means to fulfill this pillar of the strategy. In addition to this US is also playing great power politics over this competition with Russia and China at the same time.

Results

This study shows that the role that US has played during the current episode of Russian invasion of Ukraine is supporting evidence of Mearsheimer's theory. The US has weakened Russian economy that had changed the public opinion about current regime. However, the exact impact on internal politics of Russia are not clear at this stage. But no doubt Russia has faced a great hitch in its economy and now it is trying to get back to normal by giving another head in the great power politics. That new lead is towards depreciation of dollar and dealing in rubles. These things shows that US and Russia are opposing each other once again and Russia is clearly trying to challenge the US hegemony as a global great power. Nonetheless, US has multiple challenges at the moment to deal with in terms of great power politics whether it is from Russia or China.

Conclusion

"Great-power politics," not "imperialism," is the correct term. You have to give heed to how the Russians believe when you live next to a major power like Russia because if you keep poking them in the eye with a stick, they will react. State governments in the Western World are fully aware of this. The goal of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, according to Mearsheimer's theory, is to impose a pro-Russian administration or regime change. The world will have to wait and watch whether the United States' goal of political transition in Russia also includes regime change in the United States. However, a strong message to China given by US-led Western efforts to ruin Russia's infrastructure or possibly bring about a regime change would do so in case of the continuous rise of China. This is not only a threat to rising economic power or the South Asian region but to the whole world as the obsession of the US for unipolar world order brings the whole world under a ticking bomb that can be exploded anytime and anywhere. This time it's Ukraine next time God knows. However, there is no doubt that

Ukraine will suffer much and face the repercussions for a long period, regardless of the motives of large nations.

Recommendations

Some of the recommendations for US strategy over Ukraine war are:

It is not advisable for the United States to persist in offering robust military and humanitarian aid to Ukraine.

The US should cease collaborating with its partners in the implementation of stringent sanctions on Russia. These sanctions not only focused on Russia's economy but also caused disruptions in the global economic system, particularly in supply chains and energy imports. As a consequence, energy prices have risen and inflation has increased.

The United States should provide assistance to civil society groups in Ukraine that are actively addressing the humanitarian issue. This assistance might include fulfilling the basic necessities of a region devastated by conflict.

The Russian incursion into Ukraine is an intricate and demanding occurrence that necessitates a continuous and diverse reaction by the US. The aforementioned suggestions serve as a preliminary framework, and the US should be ready to modify its policy as the circumstances progress. Nevertheless, the United States should assume its position as a worldwide superpower and endeavor to uphold global peace rather than exacerbating the problem further.

References

- AKTAŞ, I. (2022, Jan 29). America's failed grand strategy. *Daily Sabah*.
- Al-Jazeera. (2022, Apr 24). Russia Ukraine War. *Al-Jazeera*.
- Anne-Marie Slaughter, K. M. (2022, Mar 21). U.S. Grand Strategy After Ukraine. *Foreign Policy*.
- Beauchamp, Z. (2022, Mar 30). 9 big questions about Russia's war in Ukraine, answered. *Vox*.
- Beauchamp, Z. (2022, Mar 3). How the US and its allies can help Ukraine without starting World War III. *Vox*.
- Bigg, M. M. (2022, March 26). A history of the tensions between Ukraine and Russia. *The New York Times*.
- Brands, H. (2023). *The future of grand strategy: America and the world*. Brookings Institution Press.
- Carnegie Europe. (2022, Feb 25). Russia's Invasion of Ukraine Changes Everything. *Strategic Europe*.
- Cebotari, S. (2022). *The Russia-Ukraine war. Causes of emergence*. International Relations Plus.
- Chotiner, I. (2022, March 1). Why John Mearsheimer Blames the U.S. for the Crisis in Ukraine. *The New Yorker*.
- Colibasanu, A. (2022, April 23). Putin has launched the first economic world war, and the EU and the West are his targets. *MarketWatch*.
- Congressional Research Service. (2022, March 24). Russia's War Against Ukraine: Overview of U.S. Sanctions and Other Responses. *Insight*.
- Cordesman, A. H. (2022, Mar 14). *U.S. Strategy and the Real Lessons of the War in Ukraine: From Cooperation with Russia and China to Lasting Confrontation*. Centre for Strategic and International Studies.
- Council on Foreign Relations. (2022, April 22). *Conflict in Ukraine*. Global Conflict Tracker.
- Daily Dawn. (2022, Apr 17). 'Inhuman' situation in Ukraine's Mariupol as Russia claims almost full control. *Dawn*.
- Dobbins, J. (2022). *Restoring order: America's grand strategy after the Cold War*. Brookings Institution Press.
- Eugene Rumer, R. S. (2020, Sept 23). Russia in the Asia-Pacific: Less Than Meets the Eye. Eugene Rumer, R. S
- Fact Sheet on U.S. Security Assistance for Ukraine*. (2022, Mar 16). *Briefing Room*.
- Fu, H. (2022). The History and Impact of the Conflict between Russia and Ukraine. *Journal of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 6, 94-98
- Halper, S. (2022). *The return of history: America and the future of the global order*. Random House.
- Johannesson, J. (2017). Russia-Ukraine War Is Not a Simple Riddle. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 05, 139-147.
- Mearsheimer, J. (2022, Mar 19). John Mearsheimer on why the West is principally responsible for the Ukrainian crisis. *The Economist*.

- Mearsheimer, J. J. (2022). *The great power politics primer*. Oxford University Press.
- Peter Dombrowski, S. R. (2019). The United States of America. In P. D. Thierry Balzacq, *Comparative Grand Strategy: A Framework And Cases* (pp. 25-40). Oxford University Press.
- Shapiro, J. (2022, Jan 27). Why Europe has no say in the Russia-Ukraine crisis. *European Council on Foreign Relations*.
- Shea, J. (2022, Mar 04). Russia's invasion of Ukraine: getting the right Western strategy in place. *Friends of Europe*.
- Szyszcak, P. E. (2020, Nov 20). *The UK-Ukraine Political, Free Trade and Strategic Partnership Agreement*. University of Sussex
- Telhami, S. (2022, Mar 31). *What do Americans think of the Russia-Ukraine war and of the US response?* Brookings.
- The Audiopedia. (2017, Jan 28). What is AMERICAN FRONTIER? What does AMERICAN FRONTIER mean? AMERICAN FRONTIER meaning. *The Audiopedia*
- The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. (2022, March 02). *The Orange Revolution and the Yushchenko presidency*.
- The Guardian. (2022, Apr 23). Russia-Ukraine war: what we know on day 59 of the invasion. *The Guardian*.
- The White House . (2022, January 19). Remarks by President Biden in Press Conference. Washington D.C.
- Wade, R. H. (2022, March 30). Why the US and Nato have long wanted Russia to attack Ukraine. London School of Economics. Zinets, N., & Humphries, C. (2022, April 07). Russia bombards and U.S. imposes sanctions as Ukraine urges decisive help. *The Reuters*.
- Walt, S. M. (2022). *The origins of alliances*. Cornell University Press.