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AP GOV

It has been almost three months since Russia invaded Ukraine and launched an unprovoked war. Billions of dollars have since been spent and thousands of lives lost, many of them innocent Ukrainian women and children. It has become a war that has touched almost every country around the world either politically or economically. This has already gone on for too long, though it is also a war that now gives the United States and NATO a chance to better contain dangerous and unpredictable moves by Russia without direct conflict, as long as the West goes about this the right way. In the case of Russia and Ukraine, the US should practice the strategy of containment, a product of a strong and unified NATO as well as levy economic and military sanctions. The western alliance should also continue to support and fund the Ukrainian military. This strategy will be particularly effective because it will prove the success of diplomacy, spares thousands of western lives, and will testify to a unified NATO front to other non-democratic countries that might attempt to further disrupt the peace.

Russia started its war of aggression against Ukraine on February 22nd. The war quickly threatened Western interests by testing NATO alliances. This war of aggression started when “President Vladimir Putin decided to recognize the non-government controlled areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts (administrative regions) in Ukraine as independent entities and to send Russian troops into those areas”(European Union Council). After this, a treaty of invasion was signed and Russian troops rolled into Ukraine. It has raised fear in the Baltic States that Russia wants to expand its territory through violence. It has had a global economic impact through the disruption of energy markets, and the crippling of food exports from Ukraine. It has recently increased tensions between Russia and its Northern European neighbors in Sweden and Finland, and most frighteningly, the Russian President has started to talk about the use of nuclear weapons, raising the threat of nuclear action to a level not seen since the Cold War. To quell these fears, the US needs to continue to support

Ukraine's military, induct Sweden and Finland into NATO, and strengthen the European Union's sanctions of Russia.

In order to understand why Russia invaded Ukraine, one has to understand the history of Ukraine and Russia. In part, the roots of the Ukrainian and Russian war stem from complicated relations that go back more than a thousand years. Russia argues that Ukraine was a historical part of Russia and should be reunited with the Rus people, when in fact Ukraine was far more advanced than Russia by centuries. Odessa was originally a prosperous city-state centuries before Russia was able to make a considerable contribution to the western world. The idea that Ukrainians don't have their own identity has been backed by the Kremlin for many years. As the Institute for National Strategic Studies states, "Moscow has pursued a policy toward Ukraine and Belarus predicated on the assumption that their respective national identities are artificial—and therefore fragile"(Mankoff). In the 1930's the Soviet Union claimed control over Ukraine and initiated their long oppressive rule over the country with a vicious genocide of the Ukrainian people. In the decades since that forced union, the majority of the Ukrainian people have developed a deep hatred for the Russians. The rest of the citizens¹, However, feel that Ukraine should belong to Russia (Wasielewski). This has created high tension within Ukraines civil society, where many want to be closer to the West, while loyalty to Russia is still strong in the eastern part of the country. Russia tried to take advantage of this when it argued that Ukraine trying to join NATO was the primary reason for its invasion. This argument was quickly rejected, however, by Eastern European and Russia experts. William Pomeranz, the acting director of the Kennan Institute, recently spoke to that point. "I think NATO, and the invitation for Ukraine to join NATO at some point in the future, is simply — a pretext to potentially invade Ukraine," he said, referring to Russia. "Ukraine is not a member of NATO, it doesn't have any of the NATO guarantees, and so there is no hint that Ukraine will become a member of NATO soon"(Snodgrass). Fundamentally, the Putin invasion was more a matter of Ukraine accepting western values, via the expansion of democratic expression and granting personal liberties to its populace. While there are

¹ Roughly 50% of all those residing in the Donetsk and Luhansk territories per a report from the Foreign Policy Research Institute.

many reasons that the Ukraine and Russia conflict reached a boiling point, solving this conflict and returning to a rules based order requires the adoption of a strategy of containment.

The first step in the containment process has been our solidarity with Ukraine and support for their military. A recent article in USA Today said the US has already committed almost “\$53 billion dollars” to support Ukraine with weapons and supplies(Davis). At first, America thought Russia would quickly defeat the Ukraine military, and would take the capitol of Kyiv in just two days. But as the war has gone on, the Pentagon has begun to say it might be much harder for Russia to win than anyone thought. That’s why the United States has been giving Ukraine more potent weaponry in recent weeks. Ukraine’s will to fight has been strong, and Russia has been unable to control any major cities. Fundamentally, Russia had a flawed invasion.

Prior to the war Russia's assumption was that a majority of Ukraine citizens were loyal to Moscow. Now, however, feelings have shifted. Jeffery Mankoff, a senior associate of European and Russian studies at the Center for Strategic and International Studies comments: “If anything, the current war has further united Ukrainian citizens from all regions and linguistic and religious backgrounds while reinforcing the split between Ukrainian and Russian identities” (Mankoff). The only way the Ukrainians will stay together is if they feel there is hope of winning. This means the US must continue to back the Ukrainians in their war efforts. The Ukrainians have proven time again that they are capable of winning. What’s more, if Russia's plan was to annex Ukraine, then they have already failed. An estimated 13 million Ukrainians have been displaced from their homes, 6.4 million have left the country, and those who have stayed are ready to fight to the death for their homeland (How many Ukrainians have fled their homes?). Collectively, the people of Ukraine have united and have found solidarity. It would not be possible for the Russians to cleanly assume power in any legitimate way, without having an insurgency on their hands. With the United States continued support, Ukraine has the strength, the will, and the drive to win this war.

The second step of containment efforts include the extension of NATO membership to selected countries bordering Russia. Finland and Sweden have recently applied for membership and Moldova

is well on its way to applying to join the alliance as well. Welcoming Finland and Sweden would prove that, in the face of adversity, NATO is able to expand and negate future threats. These countries have been warned by Russia multiple times that if they do join NATO - there would be consequences. Bringing these specific countries into the group is crucial to the containment plan because it would call Putin's bluff. This is also important because many of its neighbors think Russia again wants to divide and conquer all of the rest of the former eastern bloc countries, similar to Soviet strategy, taking control again of the Baltic Sea. A bigger NATO could send a strong message that the tactics used by the Soviets to divide and conquer will not work in this modern age. The message is modern Europe will not be bullied into submissiveness. Many analysts say Putin has already been surprised by how cohesive NATO has remained as the alliance has become a unified front against Russia. Even more effective than just a diplomatic deterrent, by accepting Sweden and Finland into NATO we "...change the security environment for the entire Baltic Sea and for the Arctic," says retired Lt. Gen. Ben Hodges (Lucas). Russia, which recently lost the flagship of its naval fleet, needs naval control of this region to project a strong military presence. By stripping Russia of one of its essential military goals, the United States and the NATO alliance have effectively warned Russia that there are greater implications for acts of aggression.

The next step of the containment strategy with Russia is to continue to work with our partners in the EU to strengthen the legitimacy of our sanctions. One country calling for a sanction is not enough. A strategy of sanctions must have total compliance from all EU members for it to be effective. Europe is taking a big risk by advocating for sanctions since an EIA report has recently said that Europe receives almost "39% of its fuel from Russia", especially Germany, which receives around "46% of its primary energy source from Russia"(U.S. Energy Information Administration). But so far, the EU is staying strong, saying "The use of force and coercion to change borders has no place in the 21st century. Tensions and conflict should be resolved exclusively through dialogue and diplomacy" (European Union Council). The EU has already enacted sanctions in conjunction with the United States, including sanctions on major Russian banks, the blocking of sales of Russian energy within the

EU, and limitations on travel and trade for Russian people and goods. This makes this conflict a war of mass economic attrition. The West can only win a war of attrition if the United States, the EU, and partner countries continue to suffocate Russia financially, including cutting off their sales of military equipment to the world. For example, a White House publication produced on 24 Mar. 2022 points to sanctions that specifically focus on:

48 Large Russian defense state-owned enterprises that are part of Russia's defense-industrial base and produce weapons that have been used in Russia's assault against Ukraine's people, infrastructure, and territory, including Russian Helicopters, Tactical Missiles Corporation, High Precision Systems, NPK Tekhmash OAO, Kronshtadt. We are targeting, and will continue to target, the suppliers of Russia's war effort and, in turn, their supply chain.(White House)

Russia's firearms industry is incredibly profitable for their country. They contract both with independent countries as well as with the Russian government. To cut these companies off from primary sources of funding, effectively limits their ability to provide weapons to the Russian government and will stop an important source of foreign investment into Russia's economy. Once the military and energy industries are subject to severe sanctions, the rest of the Russian economy will feel adverse side effects.

Russian civil society is losing faith in their government. Vladimir Putin's polling numbers are showing a steep decline in popularity, with one Russian publication recently writing "..... that some 80% of respondents do support the military, but that group is by no means a monolith... about 50% have "definite support" without any qualms, but the other 30% have support with reservations...[and there is] shock and anxiety across the entire group"(Treisman). An additional drop in support for Putin may also come as the Oligarchs are pressured. Those citizens who are losing the most money tend to lose the most trust in their government. By adding pressure through tariffs and sanctions via a strategy of containment, support for the Kremlin decreases. An additional drop in support for Putin may also come as the Oligarchs are pressured. Steven L. Hall retired from the CIA in 2015 after 30 years of

running and managing Russian operations. He states that the relationship is "...something of a power-sharing agreement between Putin and his oligarchical team, but it is one-sided and mostly economic: Putin allows them to run large money making entities in Russia and abroad, and in return, they help him launder his own funds or assist him for whatever else he deems them useful"(Hall). The Oligarchs help run the country, and they support Putin for economic reasons. Once the economy is in shambles and the Oligarchs are being personally punished, it will lead to a further lack of support or perhaps even an internal overthrow of Putin.

In the case of Russia and Ukraine, the US should practice the containment strategies born from a strong NATO unification, economic sanctions on Russia's military, and the continued support and funding of the Ukrainian military. This strategy will be particularly effective because it proves the success of diplomacy, spares thousands of western lives, and will prove a unified NATO front to other non-democratic countries that might attempt to further disrupt the peace. There are some in the west who argue for more direct intervention, or giving even more powerful weapons to Ukraine, though the Pentagon and the White House have said they are worried about that looking escalatory. The current method of containment has worked very effectively thus far, slowly pushing Russia towards spending more money per day on the war than what they are taking in, reducing their treasury/resources to conduct the war. The consultancy Civitta places Russia's losses roughly around "900 million dollars a day" on their Ukraine efforts and once Russia starts to lose more money on the war than they make off of their energy and military exports, it will come down to a battle of economic attrition between Ukraine and Russia (Staten). With the backing of the EU and the US, Russia won't be able to keep up.

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