Ukraine Crisis and Iran's Balancing Regional Role in International Competitions

Abbas Mossalanejad[iD]

Professor of Political Science, Faculty of Law and Political Science, University of Tehran, Iran. Email: mossalanejad@ut.ac.ir

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	When Joe Biden took office, his goal was to establish stable and predictable relationships with Russia, while also focusing on addressing conflicts in Iran, as well as competition with China. Rather than seeking to reduce tensions with Putin's Russia to avoid confrontation that could disrupt the administration's agenda, Biden aimed for a more cautious approach. However, Washington's efforts to stabilize and predict its relations with Russia have faltered. On February 24, 2022, Vladimir Putin initiated a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, a move that significantly shifted international perceptions of his leadership. This act led to a series of responses, including imposing severe sanctions on Russia's financial sector and restrictions on business activities within and outside the country, fundamentally changing the dynamics of relations with Putin. The Islamic Republic of Iran pursues a strategic regional policy characterized by balance and cooperation. Iran's engagement in regional matters is guided by a cooperative approach that involves interacting with international actors during geopolitical crises. Iran's foreign policy is aligned with cooperative strategies in international relations. Iran's policy of international cooperation is influenced by various factors, such as geopolitical dynamics and regional crises, as well as attitudes and geopolitical considerations. Iran's regional cooperation is grounded in principles of collaboration, balance, and competition within the region. To effectively play its regional role, Iran must exhibit strength, flexibility, and be prepared for structural competition.

Introduction

The current landscape makes it nearly inconceivable for there to be any significant improvement in the US-Russia relationship under Putin's leadership. During this period, Washington and President Biden cannot rely on a confrontation between the United States and Russia to bring an end to the ongoing conflict. With Putin at the helm, the looming questions revolve around the duration of his leadership and the future prospects for US-Russia relations. Iran's regional resistance and balancing policy play a crucial role in influencing both regional and international crises. The strategic orientation of this balancing policy in crisis management is founded on a regional competitive approach. Various crisis management strategies are shaped by competitive environmental factors, regional structures, historical identities, cultural and ideological disparities, as well as international political dynamics. Iran's balancing policy responses serve as reflections on regional and international crises, such as the conflict in Ukraine, encompassing geopolitical competition, political structures, and regional balancing policies across Eurasia and Southwest Asia (Posen, 2021: 25). Iran's regional balancing policy stands out among its counterparts, emphasizing robust linkages for regional and international equilibrium. The process of crisis management is reliant on pivotal constraining factors that influence decision-making and provide a conceptual framework for analyzing Iran's policy-making concerning peace and regional crisis management (Larsen, 2022: 22).

The regional politics of both Biden and Putin have been molded to challenge the status quo. The regional policies of these leaders, marked by unpredictability and to some extent perplexity, position them as influential figures in navigating regional crises. Iran's strategic regional balancing policy is designed to effectively counter regional insurgencies, conflicts, and assertive actions. The policies adopted by Putin and other stakeholders in the Ukraine conflict represent significant challenges of the current decade (Biden, 2020: 9). Iran's regional peacekeeping and peacemaking strategy is predicated on achieving a state of equilibrium. The escalation of Iran's regional balancing efforts has underscored the importance of regional cooperative actions. Iran's regional policy objectives are focused on addressing regional crises and countering proxy actors who seek to destabilize regional security through confidence-building measures. Amid the Ukraine crisis, there have been indications of international radicalism. In the second decade of the 21st century, the United States and some European NATO member states have leveraged mechanisms to address Russian military and security threats (Weber, 2020: 14). These dynamics underscore the intricate interplay of regional and international actors in crisis management and the shaping of regional policies.

1. General concepts

The regional politics of the Islamic Republic of Iran represent a synthesis of various factors, drawing from systems akin to the Westphalian model and emphasizing the export of regional balancing. Through the application of resistance policies, Iran has engaged in the utilization of mechanisms such as cooperation and regional balancing to navigate complex regional dynamics. The Biden administration's approach to addressing urgent global issues, including subnational crises impacting regional security, has been characterized by an indirect role in the process of managing building processes (Abingdon, 2019: 35).

1-1.The main question

The primary question to consider is whether there would be a difference under future Russian leadership. Political leaders play a vital role in strategic policy-making, possessing the capacity and authority to manage crises and establish equilibrium. Various typologies of political leaders exist, with Henry Kissinger identifying six distinct types in the realm of crisis

management. Among those singled out by Kissinger as an exemplary leaders in fostering security and engaging in peace-making was Richard Nixon.

Putin's response to the Ukraine policy has heightened the international challenges he confronts in regional politics. It remains to be seen whether he can effectively navigate the resulting backlash. Another important question pertains to Iran's regional policy during times of crisis, which is influenced by factors such as entrenched autocratic governance, regional economic hurdles, and significant competition.

Putin is characterized by his inclination towards restoring the empire and his propensity for high-risk behavior. In contrast, British and French leaders have adopted a policy of reciprocal actions and retaliatory measures in response to the Ukraine crisis. Iran's political leaders espouse the doctrine of balancing and mutual action within the multipolar structure. A considerable number of political leaders have embraced this balanced approach.

1-2. The hypothesis

The crisis in Eurasia and Southwest Asia necessitates a comprehensive management process in Russia's regional policy. The escalating levels of repression, strict control over the Russian media landscape, and the historically loyal stance of the security services position Putin to withstand growing dissent. Meanwhile, Biden faces the challenging task of governing the country, and as his administration evolves, new possibilities may arise for a less adversarial relationship that could potentially impact the democratic era in Russia. To navigate these complexities, Biden may need a strong intermediary akin to China. Iran's regional balancing policy in this crisis hinges on fostering international cooperation.

Leaders who prioritize maintaining balance can shape the framework for crisis management. Perceptual perspectives are integral components of leaders' political and security decision-making processes. Just as geopolitics significantly influences economic and security policy formulation, political leaders can draw upon their approaches and actions as guiding examples. These dynamics underscore the intricate interplay between leadership strategies and crisis management in shaping regional policies and responses in geopolitically sensitive regions.

1-3. Theory framework

The type and nature of Iran's regional foreign policy are intricately linked to power dynamics and regional competition. Following the aftermath of the imposed war, Iran's regional policy has embraced the principles of resistance and regional cooperation as a means of fostering peace. The approach taken by Iran towards regional and international crises is grounded in its overarching balancing policy.

At the core of Iran's regional policy lies power politics and collaborative regional efforts. In the context of the Ukraine crisis, Iran's role is underscored by the significance of power politics; without active engagement in such dynamics, meaningful outcomes would be elusive. Consequently, Iran's regional policy hinges on fostering cooperation with other regional actors. The foreign policy orientation of the Islamic Republic of Iran is centered on regional collaboration, underpinned by balancing mechanisms and peace-building initiatives within crisis-affected regions (Friedman, 2019: 28).

Iran's foreign policy imperative for managing regional and international dynamics, especially in the context of the Ukraine crisis, is predicated on mediation, cooperation, and de-escalation efforts to mitigate escalating tensions. Attaining these objectives necessitates agility, regional identity awareness, collaborative actions, and a focus on social legitimacy, all within the framework of international laws and institutions delineating geographical boundaries within the existing global political order. Successful regional balancing thrives when the mediating country possesses the requisite capabilities for effective persuasion and

multilateral cooperation. Power politics plays a pivotal role in fostering regional peace and cooperation. In navigating the complexities of the Ukraine crisis, Iran has exhibited dual and multilateral policies aimed at promoting peace and fostering equilibrium within the regional context.

Pragmatic leaders must adopt a forward-thinking approach when addressing crises. One critical factor contributing to the protracted nature of the Ukraine crisis is the failure of political leaders in European and American countries to embrace balancing strategies and pragmatism. Crisis management is most effective in environments where pragmatism and foresight guide decision-making processes. A balancing mindset becomes imperative during times of crisis. Despite assertions from Western countries suggesting Iran's support for Russia in the Ukraine conflict, such claims have yielded limited practical and tangible outcomes. Iran's regional policy is founded on principles of asymmetric security and multilateral collaboration with both regional and international stakeholders. Iran's approach to regional security enhancement relies on five fundamental indices, each influencing power, security, and the equilibrium of international relations. These indices encompass critical aspects such as regional cooperation, constructive partnerships, multilateral engagements at the regional level, and partnerships aligned with international imperatives. These factors collectively contribute to a framework of power politics, multilateralism, and collaboration with international institutions essential for fostering peace amidst crises and longstanding regional conflicts (Hetahet, 2019: 35; Mneimneh, 2020: 2).

1-4. Literature

Defensive realism delves into the intricate dynamics between anarchy, the state, regional crises, and the overarching structure of the international system. President Biden is actively pursuing threat balancing mechanisms and offshore balancing strategies to bolster regional security. The concept of threat balancing is deeply rooted in the imperatives of necessity realism and defensive realism, shaping the behaviors of both regional and international actors (Carnelos, 2019: 25). Within the realm of defensive realism, scholars such as Walt, Giden Rose, and Taliaferro are pivotal in shaping strategic thought. Their theories, which have garnered attention from elites like Biden, emphasize the significance of defensive realism in addressing regional security crises in diverse regions such as the Middle East, East Asia, and Ukraine. Walt's advocacy for multilateral coalition-building aligns closely with Biden's strategic imperatives in foreign and regional policy formulation.

The pursuit of regional power expansion has introduced fresh security challenges for the United States, consequently impacting regional actors vis-à-vis NATO and the United States. The perspective espoused by Giden Rose, Stephen Walt, and Taliaferro within defensive realism posits that international anarchy fundamentally influences power dynamics and cooperative endeavors amidst regional crises. Collaboration among the U.S. and NATO member states is pivotal in fostering collective security and safeguarding mutual interests.

Approaches rooted in defensive realism, particularly those championed by Walt, underscore the necessity of forming coalitions to prevent aggressive actions and leveraging power to maintain balance, deterrence, and coercion against key international actors. The prevailing international anarchy accentuates the emergence of a security dilemma in global relations. The interplay between regional cooperation, geopolitical rivalries, and strategic capabilities significantly shapes regional crises and international relations (Mankoff, 2022: 135). Biden's foreign and security policy concerning regional crises like the conflict in Ukraine is heavily oriented towards the concept of regional power balancing. This strategic approach entails a nuanced understanding of power distributions between the U.S. and the European Union vis-à-vis the Ukraine crisis. It underscores the imperative for major powers

to navigate the delicate balance between competition and cooperation in the realm of regional and international crises. The Ukraine crisis has profound implications for Biden's regional policy, particularly in the context of U.S.-Russia competition. This geopolitical maneuvering has far-reaching implications on strategic policies in response to Russian aggression within Ukrainian territory. The competitive dynamics between the U.S. and Russia in regional geopolitics and ideological stances have precipitated a fresh crisis in Eurasia. Putin's assertive and pragmatic approach towards Ukraine underscores the complexity of real policies at play (Gvosdev, 2019: 4).

2. The role of Putin's Autocratic Leadership in Ukraine crisis

Traditional Russian leaders may craft policies in response to the Ukraine crisis and its associated challenges, drawing upon historical and cultural precedents. There have been efforts to recalibrate relations with the U.S. and European counterparts. However, there are concerns that a potential successor to Putin might maintain the status quo in international affairs. The emergence of a new generation of policymakers in Russia could face difficulties in navigating and reconciling competing factions to prevent destabilizing policies within the international and regional systems (Anderson, 2023: 155).

2-1. The Idiosyncratic and foreign policy Russian elites

Russian leaders, including Putin, argue that traditional policies toward neighbors will continue. This approach may serve as an incentive to exploit existing nationalist sentiments within Russia, aiming to boost public support and solidify power among political factions. Furthermore, questions arise regarding the timing and manner in which Putin's tenure will progress and what may follow the escalation of the crisis. It is widely believed among Russian elites that Putin's actions will perpetuate the conflict in Ukraine.

Putin has implemented unique and potentially hazardous policies towards Ukraine, distinct from those of past authoritarian leaders. As a prominent figure in both international and regional affairs, his domestic popularity and influence are intricately tied to economic growth and social welfare compared to other authoritarian regimes. Putin draws upon a longstanding tradition in comparative politics within regional, domestic, and international relations, exhibiting certain patterns in policy similar to that of other long-standing authoritarian leaders (Kavanagh and Frederick, 2023: 35). In the face of adversity, Putin's embattled persona provides valuable insights into the shifting landscape of regional policies. These changes could have significant implications on Russia's approach to the evolving regional and international order, reshaping policies towards regional and international security. While Putin's policies do not provide a clear prediction, particularly amid the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, they can serve as a foundational framework for understanding and addressing regional crises such as the war in Ukraine (Raine, 2021: 35).

2-2. Ukraine crisis and Russia identity

Putin is adept at circumventing the legitimacy of de facto leaders in positions of power, rather than adhering to due jure leadership structures. This is evident in the differences in methods employed by various authoritarian leaders, some of whom serve in Putin's government cabinet. For instance, Dmitry Medvedev technically held the presidency from 2008 to 2012 (Trenin, 2020: 16).

Putin consistently emerges as the most influential political figure within the cabinet and in managing regional crises. He has been identified as the de facto leader of Russia throughout the post-Soviet era over the past few decades, in line with the prevailing political landscape in Russia. A prospective qualitative examination of leadership transitions in Russia, akin to the Putin era, indicates that certain significant factors play a crucial role in determining these

transitions. Among these factors is the consensus among Russian elites on the use of repression and coercion, a common thread in cases where past leaders passed away in office. Additionally, instances where Russian leaders either voluntarily stepped down due to protests or were ousted from power, albeit infrequently through coups or other means, have historically been recurring themes in Russian political history.

2-3. The future of Russia foreign policy and Ukraine crisis

Several studies suggest that the manner in which Putin and other Russian leaders exit office could significantly influence the post-Putin transition in Russia. In cases where leaders pass away while in office, the most common form of transition among leaders comparable to Putin, it is likely that a successor from within the ruling power structure would ascend to leadership. The historical pattern in Russian politics indicates that the elite often rally behind a consensus candidate who ensures their continued access to privileges and positions of power. A similar scenario could unfold if Russia's elites were to take action against Putin and force him out of office. In such a situation, the existing regime would probably persist, albeit with a new leader assuming the top position. Should Putin depart under these circumstances, there would probably be a degree of continuity in Russian foreign policy. The core tenets of Russian foreign policy, such as the pursuit of great power status and the promotion of a more multipolar world order through power balance, enjoy broad support among transition elites and the Russian public (Sushentsov, 2018: 45).

This analysis posits that it provides insights into potential political changes in the post-Putin Russia era. A new leader with a different agenda might be inclined to shift policies and shape a new dynamic in Ukraine, potentially in exchange for sanctions relief. A change in leadership could alter the trajectory and tone of Russian foreign policy, particularly regarding Ukraine. This transition offers opportunities for new leaders to adjust policy approaches. Despite this, the overarching direction of Russian foreign policy could still maintain a confrontational stance against the coercive diplomacy of the United States (Kendall & Frantz, 2022: 84).

3. The role of NATO policy toward Iran and Russia in Ukraine

NATO's policy is centered around addressing the escalating threats posed by Russia, Iran's regional defiance, and the growing influence of China in global politics and economics. This strategic approach is a key initiative of NATO, with its success contingent upon the collective efforts of European countries and their allies. Presently, the defense and resilience of these nations are facing a period of crisis and strain.

A positive development for NATO's solidarity is that the invasion of Ukraine has served as a wake-up call, dispelling any illusions within the alliance about the feasibility of separating geopolitical considerations from commercial and political interests in their dealings with Russia. NATO's response to the Ukraine crisis has been a reflection of mounting concerns that have been brewing for years, particularly since the regional crisis in Ukraine that surfaced in 2015. This crisis has influenced the dynamics of trade relationships with Iran, Russia, and China within the global order. European nations are compelled to foster unity and demonstrate a higher degree of determination, especially in the context of the Ukraine crisis. It may prompt greater collaboration and a renewed stance of counterbalancing against Russia. Throughout the course of the Ukraine crisis, the security and values of liberal countries and powers have come under threat due to Russia's incursion into Ukraine (Hilterman, 2019: 13).

3-1. NATO reaction toward Ukraine crisis

The NATO response to the Ukraine crisis is embedded within a broader transatlantic endeavor aimed at addressing Russian policies. The role and operation of NATO have significantly contributed to the ongoing discourse on how Europe should adjust its strategies within the

Western bloc. NATO's reaction to the crisis has heightened perceptions regarding Iran, Russia, and China's policies, influencing geopolitical dynamics both regionally and globally. Historical territorial justifications have played a role in Russia's inclinations towards warfare and NATO's subsequent reactions. On February 21, 2022, NATO extended military support to the Donbas breakaway republics, shortly before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. President Vladimir Putin justified Russia's actions by citing the unjust borders established during and after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, particularly in relation to Ukraine (Azizi, 2019:19). Within NATO countries, concerns arise about President Putin's ambitions to reassert control over territories once part of the former Russian Empire. While Putin primarily focused on Ukraine in his speeches, there are suspicions that Russia's perceived rights over protecting Russian speakers abroad could extend to other regions, notably Poland and the Baltic States. Putin's ambitions regarding the Baltic region, especially concerning Estonia and Latvia, are fueled by the significant populations of native Russian speakers within these countries. Geopolitical considerations play a central role in regional developments, with countries like Lithuania and Poland vulnerable to Russian aspirations, such as consolidating control across the Suwalki corridor between Kaliningrad and Belarus (Sladden, et al, 2017: 8).

Russia's policies towards its neighbors before 2022 were characterized as cooperative and constructive. However, the military invasion of Ukraine marked a stark departure from this approach. President Putin's stance on Ukraine differed significantly from that of NATO countries, as they demanded the withdrawal of Russian forces from Eastern Europe and Ukraine. Suspicions linger that Russian leaders, post-1997, harbor ambitions to assert control over the Baltic region, which they see as lost territory following the accession of Poland to NATO in 1999 and the Baltic States in 2004 (Kortunov, 2020: 7). During the Madrid Summit of NATO in June 2022, allies adopted a new Force Model aimed at bolstering their military readiness and capabilities. This new model involves the coordination of a high-readiness force comprising over 300,000 troops, with 100,000 troops ready for deployment within two weeks, and an additional 200,000 troops prepared within one month. Moreover, the new NATO model includes an additional 500,000 troops deployable in crisis situations between 30 and 180 days, thereby totaling one million troops committed to European security. Allies have expressed their commitment to augment existing troop numbers from battalion-size support units of 1,000 to 1,500 troops to brigade-size units of around 4,000 forces as needed.

The NATO alliance does not appear to adhere to the traditional ratio of 1/3 between NATO forces and Russian forces typically stationed near Eastern borders. Russian troops, numbering around 90,000 with advanced tanks and artillery, are concentrated in areas like Kaliningrad Oblast and the Western Military District. Military analysts advocating for a successful defense strategy emphasize the importance of accounting for potential Belarusian support on Russia's side during conflicts, as well as the anticipated backing from Sweden and Finland in support of the alliance. This necessitates additional responsibilities for NATO in defending Eastern borders. The collective European investments in joint military capabilities within NATO have been on the rise, necessitating a review of strategic and operational options. The ongoing debates surrounding European strategic autonomy post-Ukraine crisis underscore the continued reliance on NATO's integrated command structure and the importance of leveraging US capabilities to enhance European security missions. European NATO members are encouraged to cultivate new comparative advantages to ensure the direct defense of European territories and security.

3-2. The evolution of NATO's Comparative mission

The ascendance of global players like China and Russia has emboldened proponents advocating for NATO to assume the role of a "liberal bulwark" against illiberal adversaries.

Prior to his election as president, Biden underscored this notion, emphasizing that the United States should take the lead alongside its democratic allies and partners in enhancing their institutional resilience. Biden recommended that NATO allies expand their collaboration in military and defense capabilities.

In 2020, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg proposed the establishment of a Center of Excellence for Democratic Resilience aimed at reinforcing allies' societal resilience against hostile interference in democratic processes and institutions. In alignment with the US president's initiatives, European defense ministries are urged to combat weaponized corruption, illicit financing in politics for security purposes, and the outsourcing of influence campaigns including cyber theft (Radin and Reach, 2017: 64).

A "NATO 2030" expert report commission stressed the importance of upholding the democratic way of life and promoting rules-based cooperation and order. The new NATO Secretary General places a heightened focus on enhancing the alliance's defense capabilities particularly in crisis zones. It is recommended that alliance countries develop a resilience concept that integrates closely with military and defense infrastructure as they shift their focus towards collective defense against Russia and other emerging crises that seek to exploit divisions within the alliance through coercion, disruption, and influence campaigns. The NATO Secretary General has underscored the need for the alliance to promote training, structure, and task future troop deployments in Poland and the Baltic states to address gray-zone threats. The envisioned mission of NATO should be proactive in addressing potential destabilization activities preceding kinetic force, such as cyber-attacks on critical infrastructure or disinformation campaigns (Sakwa, 2017: 35).

Special attention should be directed towards countries like Estonia and Latvia, given the potential for ethnic-political tensions involving significant Russian-speaking communities and their shared border with Russia. There is a need for vigilance within NATO, recognizing that China could exploit its control over ports and rail systems to delay responses to Russian aggression. Recent incidents, such as the Nord Stream pipeline explosions in November 2022, highlight vulnerabilities in Europe's undersea telecommunications infrastructure. Enhancing Europe's capacity for independent decision-making apart from the US is crucial to reduce harmful dependencies during times of crisis. Efforts to bolster NATO's role in technological and economic competition with China, including dialogues on export controls and increased consultations to align threat perceptions, are being actively pursued.

4. Global Role of Russia, US, EU and Iran after Ukraine War

The aftermath of the Ukraine crisis has positioned global actors and major powers at the forefront of international politics. Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which has been characterized by territorial seizures, mass expulsions, and full-scale assaults on Ukrainian sovereignty and culture, some scholars argue that it has rattled Western elites, reminiscent of a turbulent period in European history (Mosalanejhad, 2018: 46). This conflict is viewed as the first imperial war of the 21st century, heralding a new era of heightened geopolitical tensions akin to a modern cold war. While some suggest that Ukraine's desire to align with NATO or the European Union was not the root cause of the crisis, international relations theorists note that each crisis and conflict often leads to the emergence of a new structural competition. The outcome of the Ukraine crisis is deemed crucial for shaping future global politics, with major powers like China emerging as key mediators in negotiations between the European Union, the United States, and Russia. The resolution of the Ukraine crisis holds significant implications for the broader world system, with each global actor striving to capitalize on the situation to secure strategic advantages. Notably, Iran has managed to bolster its position during the crisis, marking a shift where a regional player has influenced

international affairs. Iran is anticipated to strengthen its regional standing in the 21st century's third decade, shaping its cooperation with European powers in alignment with the evolving global and regional order.

Echoing sentiments prevalent among Russian intellectuals and politicians, Putin has contended that Ukrainians and Russians are essentially one people, advocating for unity between the two nations based on a shared historical heritage. This perspective views Ukraine as an integral part of Russia's historical legacy, justifying Moscow's ambitions to assert control and influence over the region. Unlike some other countries such as Iran, Turkey, and China, which do not espouse explicit territorial expansion or cultural assimilation agendas like Putin, they seek regional dominance without overt imperialistic ambitions. Certain nations, however, have leaders who position their states as pivotal entities within distinct regional realms, aiming to exert influence beyond their formal borders by drawing upon imperial legacies to legitimize their aspirations for greater status. These actions underscore varying interpretations of international order, emphasizing the importance of sovereign equality and territorial integrity for states in global politics (Marten, 2015: 198).

4-1.The role of European Union toward Ukraine crisis

The imposition of energy and financial sanctions, which are also adversely affecting Western economies, raises doubts about the sustainability of the unity that has characterized the EU and the response of Trans-Atlantic counties to the attack, war, and invasion of Ukraine. Furthermore, the Western response has not garnered substantial backing in many Southern regions, where the looming food shortages stemming from the disruption of grain and agricultural exports from Russia and Ukraine are a pressing concern.

The EU and the West's provision of military support to Ukraine and their efforts to rally global solidarity against Russia's actions in Ukraine do not appear to have significantly altered the standoff between Russia and Washington. This underscores the challenge that the U.S. and EU allies in Europe face in deterring similar crises and threats. The EU has adopted an oppositional stance toward Russia's regional policies, with organizations like NATO and the European Common Market maintaining a status quo approach post Ukraine crisis.

4-2.The role of Russia toward Ukraine crisis

Russian President Putin's evolving policies towards Ukraine have consistently surprised the political world. Since the outset, Putin has vehemently opposed the ouster of the Ukrainian President in February and March 2014, viewing it as illegitimate and part of a Western orchestrated strategy that he perceives as a threat to Russia's regional power and influence. This perspective has resulted in negative reactions from Putin towards Ukraine, confounding even seasoned analysts.

One of the initial shocks was Moscow's swift control of Crimea through a covert military operation known as "little green men" by Ukraine and "polite people" by Russia. Putin's stance towards the potential expansion of NATO to include Ukraine is rooted in his concerns over the loss of Russia's strategic naval base in the Crimean port of Sevastopol, as highlighted by Mearsheimer (Churchill, 2021: 61). Some argue that Putin's unpredictable regional policy choices have been driven by a desire to secure Russia's interests amid perceived threats. The opacity of the Russian system was demonstrated in the Wagner chaos of June 2023, hinting at potential internal power struggles and covert plans within the regime. The outlook for Ukraine remains grim, with the most plausible peaceful resolution entailing an ethically challenging acceptance of Russian and pro-Russian territorial gains as a permanent policy shift. This would necessitate international acknowledgment of Putin's actions in Crimea and Donbas, potentially stabilizing the region at the cost of legitimizing aggressive behavior.

To prevent further escalation, it is suggested that Europe, the U.S., and NATO may need to implicitly guarantee Ukraine's security to dissuade Putin from further territorial expansion. However, this cautionary approach risks provoking a proxy war in Ukraine, straining global alliances and risking nuclear escalation – echoing past historical crises such as the Berlin and Cuban Missile Crises (Abingdon, 2021: 71). The Ukraine crisis serves as a lens into the future of global order and Putin's Eurasian policies, with powerful countries like the U.S. demonstrating strong support for NATO's mutual defense pact. This commitment underscores the potential for a heightened security dilemma reminiscent of a new Cold War era, albeit devoid of ideological divides. The fate of Ukraine as a sovereign nation appears precarious, suggesting challenging times ahead for peripheral countries involved (Sushentsov, 2018: 16).

4-3. The role of U.S toward Ukraine crisis
American politicians have been actively engaged in foreign interventions since the end of World War II and the Cold War era. While the US has conducted large-scale and costly interventions in countries such as Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Iran, there have also been numerous smaller and shorter deployments for various purposes, with many proving successful. Despite this, the bias in U.S. decision-making continues to lean towards military and proxy war interventions in crises like the one in Ukraine. US military interventions, like "Operation Desert Storm" in 1991 and the "Shock and Awe" operation in 2003 against Saddam Hussein's Iraq, have yielded varying levels of success. Some interventions, such as those in Somalia, Haiti, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya, have been met with mixed outcomes, highlighting the complexity of foreign interventions in the post-Cold War era (Wezeman et al., 2023: 61).

During military crises, the pressure for a US military response often arises swiftly, driven more by immediate circumstances than a strategic choice of inaction. However, in some instances, the US could have achieved its objectives without resorting to military intervention. Assessing the effectiveness of U.S. military interventions between 1992 and 2023 reveals how they have influenced regional conflicts, security objectives, and U.S. interests. The Ukraine crisis has led to the deployment of U.S. military forces to address security concerns vis-a-vis Russian forces in the region. Analysis of past interventions suggests that the US has engaged in over 200 conflicts and regional crises, with the success of each intervention heavily influenced by accurate assessments of local conditions (Anton, 2020: 8). While some US military interventions have successfully advanced U.S. interests by achieving defined objectives within short timeframes, others with broader political goals have faced challenges. There is a recognition that military force alone may not guarantee effective regime changes or democratic transitions, highlighting the limitations of extensive military interventions in resolving complex regional crises (Mosalanejhad, 2019: 18).

The recent examples of military interventions, such as in Ukraine and Afghanistan, demonstrate that the success of such endeavors may be hindered by the scale, complexity, and local support for the mission. The abrupt withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan in 2021 underscores the risks of expansive goals in managing regional crises. Moving forward, US policymakers need to carefully consider the effectiveness of military interventions and prioritize non-military alternatives where possible. In the context of the Ukraine crisis, policymakers should exercise caution in endorsing proxy methods of intervention and remain vigilant against setting unrealistic objectives. The war in Ukraine has also sparked shifts in arms transfers, with European and US support increasing as they bolster Ukraine's defense capabilities against Russian intervention. This surge in arms support underlines the evolving dynamics of conflict and the strategic responses of major players in the region.

4-4. The future of Iran's regional role after Ukraine crisis

As regional and international crises come to a close, a new order emerges in the regional landscape, and the repercussions of the Ukraine crisis will unfold post-ceasefire. Throughout the Ukraine crisis, Iran and Turkey took strategic actions aligned with regional balancing processes and peace-building efforts. Turkey, in particular, played a pivotal role in enhancing regional security mechanisms during this period (Sushentsov and Margoev, 2018: 14). Iran, Turkey, and China have each faced challenges in upholding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of neighboring states, parallel to the dynamics witnessed in the Ukraine crisis that reflect Russia's assertive policies. These countries have grappled with incomplete transitions from imperial histories to nation-states, with Russia's actions towards Ukraine portraying a more overtly imperialistic stance. The offensive actions by Russia aimed at Ukraine stem from a desire within the Russian elite to reclaim and expand imperial aspirations, overlooking the legitimacy and permanence of post-Soviet transformations. The repercussions of power policies in the regional sphere have elicited responses from the European Union and the United States. China's concept of a Community of Common Destiny informs its endeavors to foster hierarchical and multilateral relationships with regional nations, leveraging initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to advance political and security objectives (Brose, 2019: 38). Iran, Turkey, and China's mediating roles in the Ukraine crisis are contingent upon temporary partnerships with Russia, making their positions transient and unstable. China's policy towards the crisis emphasizes cooperative dialogue, non-confrontation, and a stance against forming alliances.

Multilateral policies have fostered cooperation between China, Iran, and Russia in the international arena, with formal commitments and partnerships boosting economic ties, especially under China's BRI framework. China also utilizes its economic influence to rally support in combating separatism, terrorism, and extremism, albeit with scrutiny from human rights advocates and international bodies regarding its treatment of Uyghurs. The cautious approach to regional cooperation by Ankara, Tehran, and Beijing is partly influenced by the dominant Western liberal order, where the looming threat of sanctions restrains even powerful states like China from taking actions that could trigger devastating retaliatory measures impacting their economies and the global order (Radin and Reach, 2017: 6). The conflict in Ukraine represents a larger battle over the universality of the liberal world and regional order, with profound implications for the future foreign policies of Turkey, Iran, and China. Russia's strategies could lead to further territorial divisions in Ukraine through confrontation and sanctions. Regional actors in the Ukraine crisis have vital roles in managing the ongoing crisis.

Conclusion

The Ukraine crisis exemplifies numerous complex scenarios in which the United States has intervened against Russian national and regional interests. Under Biden's leadership, the US has asserted its power to counter Russia's aggression in Ukraine, adopting a stance characterized by firmness, rigidity, and hostility towards Russia's regional policies in the area. This approach marks a departure from previous US reactions towards Russia, which have fluctuated in intensity since the Cold War. The evolving US policy towards Ukraine has gradually embraced more expansive goals amidst Russia's military interventions, ultimately revealing the limitations of military intervention in achieving objectives within an evolving international landscape. Scholars like Robert Kagan highlight that international politics are inherently defined by competition, conflict, and cooperation, with relationships governed by the balance of power and threats. The concept of the "balance of power" is frequently evoked in regional crises to underscore the risks posed to the global order and US national security interests. Scholars like Walt aim to illuminate the dynamics of power equations and security

policies among emerging global actors in the world system (Kagan, 2018: 65). Biden's policy response to the Ukraine crisis reflects a new approach characterized by defensive realism and interactive power strategies. The National Security paper outlines annual threats to US national security, responding assertively to Section 617 of the Authorization Act by adopting a confrontational stance towards Russia in the Ukraine crisis.

Biden's strategic policy towards Ukraine prioritizes multilateral mechanisms to safeguard the international order, particularly in response to Russia's actions in the region, balancing cooperation and competition dynamics based on regional power structures and threat levels. Central to Biden's strategy is the utilization of environmentalism, multilateralism, regional alliances, and threat balancing to reduce direct US and European Union military involvement in regional crises. Biden aims to forge coalitions against Russian aggression in Ukraine, securing economic, military, intelligence, and diplomatic cooperation from European Union countries in countering Russia's influence in international and regional politics. Amidst this complex geopolitical environment, Iran has maintained a neutral stance in response to the crisis in Ukraine, taking a critical view towards the expansion of NATO's influence. This nuanced approach enhances US capabilities in managing the powers of China and Russia, addressing challenges such as countering drug cartels, organized crime, terrorism, and the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as optimizing cyber capabilities, all of which constitute key strategic imperatives for the US in the 21st century. As the US and NATO navigate their relations with Russia, potential dangers loom for regional countries, with the Ukraine crisis posing new threats, including those affecting Iran. Biden's strategic policy towards Ukraine underscores the necessity for adapting US strategic frameworks and coalition-building efforts to effectively manage crises in the region. Signs of shifts in US and European Union security policies during the Biden administration suggest evolving approaches towards the Ukraine crisis, prompting gradual adjustments in Iran's strategic and regional policies in response to the changing dynamics of the conflict.

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