



**THE REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE
SOCIAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY OF ANKARA
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**THE USA'S CONTAINMENT POLICY AGAINST RUSSIA: THE CASE OF
UKRAINE CONFLICT**

Master's Thesis

Gökberk BALABAN

International Relations MA Program

July 2024



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Thesis Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Murat YEŞİLTAS

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ABSTRACT

The containment policy is accepted as a key element of American foreign policy against the Soviet Union throughout the Cold War. This study argues that the containment policy continued after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and it is still maintained today against the Russian Federation by the USA. This research remarks that Ukraine has been the focal point of the containment policy since 2013. This study argues that the USA's containment policy entered a new phase in February, 2022 which it names this phase as "aggressive containment". This research examined the containment policy in the Cold War and its evolution in the post-Cold War period. In the main discussion part; this study analyzed the main motivations behind containing Russia through Ukraine, the instruments of containment and the consequences of this policy. This study unravels the core motivations behind the containment policy as weakening Russia, triggering a regime change in Russia and maintaining American global hegemony. This research classified the instruments of containing Russia through Ukraine as political, military, economic and non-conventional instruments. It found out that the USA's containment policy triggered a new cold war alongside causing serious implications for Russia, Ukraine, Europe and the USA itself. This research made contributions to the literature such as examining the Ukraine Conflict through the containment policy by making a difference from the other studies, approaching the containment policy in a holistic manner by analyzing the motivations, instruments and consequences of the policy alongside providing a fresh perspective to the Ukraine Conflict through examining recent sources.

Keywords: The USA, Containment Policy, Russia, Ukraine, the Ukraine Conflict

ÖZET

Çevreleme politikası, Soğuk Savaş boyunca Sovyetler Birliği'ne karşı Amerikan dış politikasının temel unsuru olarak kabul edilmektedir. Bu çalışma, çevreleme politikasının Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılmasından sonra da devam ettiğini ve bugün ABD tarafından Rusya Federasyonu'na karşı sürdürüldüğünü savunmaktadır. Bu araştırma, Ukrayna'nın 2013'ten bu yana çevreleme politikasının odak noktası olduğunu belirtmektedir. Bu çalışma, ABD'nin çevreleme politikasının Şubat, 2022'de yeni bir aşamaya girdiğini öne sürmektedir ve bu aşamayı "agresif çevreleme" olarak adlandırmaktadır. Bu araştırma, Soğuk Savaş'taki çevreleme politikasını ve politikanın Soğuk Savaş sonrası dönemdeki gelişimini incelemiştir. Ana tartışma bölümünde; çalışma, Rusya'yı Ukrayna aracılığıyla çevrelemenin arkasındaki temel motivasyonları, çevrelemenin araçlarını ve bu politikanın sonuçlarını analiz etmiştir. Çalışma, Ukrayna'yı çevreleme çabalarının altında yatan temel motivasyonları Rusya'yı zayıflatmak, rejim değişikliğini tetiklemek ve küresel Amerikan hegemonyasını sürdürmek olarak ortaya çıkarmaktadır. Bu araştırma, Rusya'yı Ukrayna üzerinden çevrelemenin araçlarını siyasi, askeri, ekonomik ve konvansiyonel olmayan araçlar olarak sınıflandırmıştır. Bu araştırma; ABD'nin çevreleme politikasının yeni bir soğuk savaşı tetiklemenin yanı sıra; Rusya, Ukrayna, Avrupa ve ABD'nin kendisi için ciddi sonuçlar doğurduğunu ortaya çıkarmıştır. Bu araştırma literatüre, diğer çalışmalardan farklılık yaratarak Ukrayna Çatışması'nı çevreleme politikası üzerinden incelemek; politikanın motivasyonlarını, araçlarını ve sonuçlarını analiz ederek çevreleme politikasına bütüncül bir şekilde yaklaşmak ve güncel kaynakları inceleyerek Ukrayna Çatışması'na yeni bir bakış açısı sunmak gibi katkılarda bulunmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: ABD, Çevreleme Politikası, Rusya, Ukrayna, Ukrayna Çatışması

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1. INTRODUCTION

This study aims to solve the puzzle of the Ukraine Conflict and the study puts forward the USA's containment policy against Russia to examine the conflict and its past to attain its objective. The Ukraine Crisis has been a significant matter since late 2013, characterized by a sequence of events commencing with protests in November 2013, intensifying with the coup in February 2014. Subsequently, a civil war broke out between the new Ukrainian government and the Donbass republics which continued for eight years. Throughout this protracted civil war, a considerable number of casualties, including civilians were recorded, alongside widespread displacement of population. By February 2022, the crisis took the form of a direct military conflict between Ukraine and the Russian Federation, marked by Moscow's incursion into its southwestern neighbor. Connected with the Ukraine Crisis, the USA's containment policy against Russia through Ukraine had serious implications. Most importantly, the containment of Russia eventually marked the end of the post-Cold War period and triggered a new cold war between the USA and Russia as Ukraine became a theatre of this new cold war. This study's significance lies not only in its comprehensive examination of the Ukraine Conflict but also in its unique perspective, which places the containment policy at the center of the analysis. While existing studies often focus on internal dynamics within Ukraine or Russia's foreign policy to explain the conflict, this paper asserts that American foreign policy played a crucial role in the development of the Ukraine Conflict. By highlighting the continued relevance of containment as a cornerstone of American foreign policy, the study challenges the prevalent notion that containment has faded into irrelevance since the termination of the Cold War. Instead, it underscores the enduring importance of containment as a guiding principle in shaping America's approach to global affairs, particularly regarding Russia. Moreover, by bringing attention to the underappreciated role of containment in contemporary scholarship, this research fills a critical gap in understanding of geopolitical dynamics. It prompts a reevaluation of the factors driving international conflicts and reaffirms the significance of historical frameworks in analyzing present-day challenges. In sum, this study not only offers fresh insights into the

Ukraine Conflict but also prompts a broader reassessment of the role of American foreign policy and containment in shaping the geopolitical landscape of the 21st century.

To clarify for the rest of the research, this study names the period between late 2013 until the early 2022 as the Ukraine Crisis. In this process, mass protests began in Ukraine in late 2013 and a coup was executed in early 2014 which was followed by a civil war that lasted for eight years. On February 24, 2022; Moscow decided to launch a military campaign into Ukraine. The Russian side named the following process as “special military operation” whereas the USA and its allies called it Russia’s “war” on Ukraine. It should be noted that this study opted to use the term “conflict” for the period which began on 24 February, 2022 and has continued until the publication date of this study.

1.1 Research Question

The main research question of this study is “Why and how did the USA contain Russia through Ukraine and what are the consequences of this containment policy?” This research question contains three different sub-questions. The first sub-question can be phrased as “What are the underlying motivations driving the USA's containment policy against Russia in the context of Ukraine?” The first part of the study intends to answer the “why” part of the question which examines the motivations behind Washington’s containment policy against Moscow. The motivations are concluded by the USA’s state documents such as the National Security Strategy documents, its foreign policy applications and the discourse of the American politicians. The second sub-question can be defined as “What specific instruments have the USA employed to implement its containment policy against Russia through Ukraine?” This sub-question of the main research question is a “how” question and it seeks to identify the instruments of the USA’s containment policy against Russia. The third and the last sub-question can be stated as “What are the consequences of the USA's containment policy?” This question aims to discover the outcomes of Russia’s containment through Ukraine.

1.2 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is the containment policy which is applied by the USA against the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation. The containment policy is accepted to be born after World War II by the American diplomat George Kennan's "long telegram". However, this study notes that signals of the beginning of the containment policy against the Soviet Union can be traced back to the foundation process of the Soviet Union. After WWII, the containment policy entered more apparently into American foreign policy framework as a key element. In spite of the fact that George Kennan did not entirely formulate the containment policy, he described and explained the containment policy throughout his term in Washington and the rest of his life. It can be stated that the containment policy was followed by the US administrations against the Soviet Union after WWII. This study argues that the USA's containment policy did not cease to exist with the end of the Cold War. Although there were some changes in the containment with different interpretations and practices, the containment policy remained the main concept in terms of the foreign policy regarding Russia.

1.3 Limitations

The main limitation of this study is that the Ukraine Conflict is a recent and still an ongoing conflict. Although the motivations and instruments behind the containment policy are more accessible to identify, the consequences of the USA's containment policy are deeply related to the progress of the Ukraine Conflict and this poses a challenge to analyze the consequences of the containment policy. This makes the consequences part of the study limited until the first half of 2024. On the other hand, some instruments of the containment policy are not readily available to examine such as information war and intelligence under the non-conventional instruments due to classified information.

1.4 Methodology

This research employs the case study method throughout the research to examine the USA's containment policy by the case of the Ukraine Conflict. The case study method is a qualitative method and it is extensively used in social sciences.

The most common utilization of the case study method refers to the use of a work examining a single example or phenomenon. Through the case study method, a single unit is studied intensively in order to comprehend the purpose of a larger unit. A unit means a phenomenon such as a state, political party or revolution. The case study method is particularly useful for defining different characteristics in political science and adjacent fields in social sciences (Gerring, 2004: 342).

In the international relations field; case studies facilitate the examination of a specific phenomenon like policies, crises or conflicts in detail. International relations involve complex interactions between different actors like states and international organizations. Case studies enable researchers to explore these interactions thoroughly. By focusing on individual cases, scholars can dissect the complexities of international relations; including the motivations of actors, the dynamics of interactions and the consequences of decisions.

The popularity of qualitative approaches in international relations reflects the benefits of these approaches in examining the intricate, somewhat unstructured and uncommon events that form the core of this field. In this context, the case study method among the qualitative approaches often proves itself quite successful (Bennett & Elman, 2007).

Case studies are valuable for analyzing the implementation of foreign policies. Researchers can investigate how policies are formulated and adapted in response to changing circumstances. Moreover, case studies offer an insight into the decision-making processes of leaders, policymakers, government officials and various actors in international relations. By analyzing the factors that inform decision-making, researchers can evaluate the rationale behind specific strategies, policies and actions.

This study adopts the case study methodology to analyze the USA's containment policy against Russia, focusing specifically on the case of the Ukraine Conflict. The case of the Ukraine Conflict was chosen due to its embodiment of the broader dynamics of the containment policy and its significance in contemporary USA-Russia relations. The Ukraine Conflict is a

highly valuable case to explicate the containment as it represents the core of the USA's containment policy for more than a decade. Therefore, this study also elaborates on the background of the case of the Ukraine Conflict to fully comprehend the case. In this research, the Ukraine Conflict is examined from different aspects by asking "why", "how" and "what" questions which constitutes an in-depth analysis of the case. The research approaches the Ukraine Conflict through different objectives as the second chapter describes the policy while the third chapter explains and explores the case.

Data for this research is collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources mainly include news, statistics and governmental documents such as the declarations of the White House and the National Security Strategy documents. On the other hand, secondary sources comprise books, articles, reports and expert views on the subjects of the containment policy and the Ukraine Conflict published by institutions such as the RAND Corporation and journals like *Russia in Global Affairs*. In this research, data is utilized to enrich the study, demonstrate examples and support the arguments.

1.5 Brief Summary of the Containment Policy and the Ukraine Conflict

In the Cold War, the USA's containment policy was a multifaceted strategy encompassing political, military and economic tactics aimed at curbing the expansion of the Soviet sphere of influence and the spread of communism. It is commonly acknowledged that the containment of the Soviet Union began with the American diplomat George Kennan's "long telegram" in February 1946. In the telegram, Kennan discussed the characteristics of the Soviet Union following WWII, as well as Soviet initiatives and implications for American foreign policy. According to Kennan, the Soviet Union was indicating its determination to expand and unleash a war on the capitalist system. Thus, in an effort to suppress the Soviet threat, Kennan proposed the containment policy (Gaddis, 2005). However, it should be noted that the USA's containment policy was driven by more factors than just Kennan's long telegram. The traces of the containment policy can be found during the Russian Civil War and WWII as this study demonstrates.

According to an assessment made in 1949 by the American embassy in Moscow, the Soviet Union was not only to be contained but its political sphere of influence was to be reduced

(Gaddis, 2005: 66). It was clear by this report and the subsequent actions of the USA that the containment policy was not completely a defensive policy but it had an offensive side as well. It is worth noting that, when the post-WWII era began, the Atlantic and Pacific oceans provided the USA with formidable boundaries; thus, Washington did not have a serious need to be concerned about the American mainland. Washington took a more assertive stance and looked to challenge Moscow in Europe through West European countries. In 1949, Washington made the decision to launch a military assistance program to Europe and founded the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

As the second half of the 20th century started, the containment policy became the backbone of American foreign policy against the Soviet Union and played an important role in the process of the beginning and escalation of the Cold War. The isolationist American foreign policy which had its roots in the Monroe Doctrine changed into a more interventionist strategy. In order to contain the Soviet Union, the USA employed a number of tactics including the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan and NATO among others. Throughout the Cold War, the containment policy was shaped by the US administrations and practiced by Washington with modifications over the years against the Soviet Union.

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Russia lost an extremely large amount of territory and human capital. It suffered a significant economic crisis for a decade alongside experiencing political and social turmoil. Taking advantage of Russia's situation, Washington seized it as an opportunity to further contain Moscow. Considering the rapid rise of the American sphere of influence in the post-Soviet geography and NATO expansions into the east, the containment policy did not vanish but rather developed more offensively in the post-Cold War period.

Over the years, the Atlantic Alliance expanded into numerous countries in Europe. As NATO had no other viable target to expand against, it became clearer via this expansion that Russia was being continued to contain. It was publicly stated during the Bucharest Summit in April 2008 that NATO would welcome Georgia and Ukraine as new members into the alliance (NATO, 2008). Although Moscow opposed NATO expansions before 2008, it refrained from taking a concrete action against the alliance for two main reasons. Firstly, Russia was not strong enough, particularly in the economic domain. Secondly, the majority of the expansions were mostly into the countries which did not share borders with Russia. However, when NATO welcomed the memberships of Georgia and Ukraine, Moscow started to oppose the containment

policy and further expansion of the Atlantic Alliance more strongly. This study argues that the 2008 Russian military campaign in Georgia was Moscow's first serious response against the containment policy.

Russia's second serious response against the containment came following the Ukraine Crisis. In late 2013, the president of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovich opted to collaborate with Russia economically over the European Union. After this decision, the USA and the EU backed the organized protests against the Ukrainian government which turned extremely violent. As the opposition forces seized the control, President Yanukovich was overthrown and fled to Russia. The far-right parties and individuals secured key positions in the new organizational structure of Ukraine. Following these events, the Russian population in Crimea and Donbass revolted and the new Ukrainian government initiated a military operation into the Donbass area. The Crimean Peninsula was secured by the Russian troops who had already been there due to the security agreements with Ukraine. The deployment of Russian soldiers into Ukraine was overwhelmingly approved by the Russian parliament at the beginning of March, 2014. In mid-March, Crime joined the Russian Federation through a referendum. Following the Crimean referendum, the USA and its allies implemented sanctions against Russia. In April 2014, the People's Republics of Lugansk and Donetsk were established. The Minsk Agreement allowed for the organization of peace negotiations between the People's Republics and the Ukrainian government in 2014 and 2015; however, the peace was not achieved. The civil war continued for eight years and claimed the lives of more than 14,000 people.

In late 2021, Moscow offered the USA and NATO explicit security accords to resolve the Ukraine Crisis. Washington was urged that there would be no short and intermediate-range missiles and nuclear weapons deployed abroad alongside an assurance that NATO would not incorporate Ukraine into the Alliance. However, the accords and discussion proposals were rejected by Washington (Reevell & Finnegan, 2022).

On February 24, 2022, the civil war turned into a military conflict between Russia and Ukraine with Moscow's decision to launch the "special military operation" into its neighbor. This study argues that this decision was the second serious response by the Kremlin against the USA's containment policy. Through its military attack, Russia sought to seize control of Kiev as well as Eastern Ukraine, primarily the Donbass region. Despite the fact that the Russian forces advanced quickly at the beginning, the Russian army had far fewer troops assigned to the operation than Ukrainian forces and they were unable to capture Kiev. Nevertheless, the

Russian troops relieved the Donbass forces and took control of a sizeable portion of Eastern and Southern Ukraine. Moscow and Kiev engaged in peace negotiations particularly in the first two months of the conflict. Nevertheless, no peace treaty was reached. Regarding the USA-Russia relations, the point of no return was passed with the beginning of the Ukraine Conflict and the following events.

As the conflict continued, the Russian army advanced and referendums were held in the regions of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia which resulted in the incorporation of these regions into the Russian Federation. Following these developments, Ukraine launched a counteroffensive in 2022 and regained a part of its previously lost territory. After the Ukrainian counteroffensive, Russian troops also made some advances and the balance between Russia and Ukraine remained mostly steady. The next year, in June 2023, Ukraine attempted another major counteroffensive, but despite suffering enormous losses, the Ukrainian forces were only able to seize a few strategically insignificant villages. By the end of 2023, the Russian forces took the initiative, advanced further and gained more ground in the first half of 2024.

1.6 Literature Review

This section provides a summary of the literature review regarding the USA's containment policy against Russia. The arguments are divided into three main groups. The first group of authors argues that the USA has been containing the Russian Federation although the Soviet Union collapsed following the Cold War's termination.

The first group can be categorized into three subgroups. The first subgroup argues that the USA has continued its containment policy against Russia through Ukraine. In this subgroup, Fix and Kimmage (2023) remark that the USA has been practicing the containment policy against Russia and argue that it already succeeded in Ukraine. The authors assert that containing Russia was a fundamental American and European interest. Noting that Ukraine's military efforts were not able to defeat Russia, Fix and Kimmage call attention to a long war and long-term containment. According to the authors, the failure or success of the containment against Russia would determine the future of the international order. On the other hand, Sushentsov (2023) asserts that Washington used Ukraine for the extreme containment of Russia. He notes that, through this containment, the USA's objectives are to harm Russia's reputation abroad,

disrupt relations with the EU and pressure European nations to support Washington's policies at the price of the continent's economy. Lieven (2022) argues that containing Russia is a good idea but he warns Washington to avoid making an unconditional commitment against the national interests of America. He notes that the containment in the Cold War was “absolutely necessary” despite it led to needless conflicts in the world too. According to Lieven, being the victorious side, the USA never recovered from the wounds of the Cold War. He remarks that George Kennan’s containment understanding was limited and defensive whereas Paul Nitze’s conception of containment was much more aggressive and had a global scope. As a result of Nitze’s containment being accepted by Washington, the USA escalated conflicts in Korea, Vietnam, Iran, Latin America and Africa. He points out that although the stage is smaller in Ukraine, compared with the global stage in the Cold War, the risk is higher as Russia considers Ukraine vital for its national interest.

The second subgroup of authors in the first group approach the containment policy as a strategy by the West, not solely the USA. Tsygankov (2017) argues that by relying on the containment of Russia, the West placed Moscow under pressure to follow a soft policy on Ukraine. According to Timofeev (2022), the best strategy for the West regarding Moscow is to contain Russia. Considering this, he underlines that Ukraine was doomed to be a part of the containment. Nuriyev (2018) writes that the West has been intending to contain Russia and this policy had consequences such as deepening the anti-Western sentiment among the Russian public and worsened the relations between Moscow and the European capitals.

The third subgroup of authors in the first group prefers to rename the containment policy as the USA and its allies adjusted its containment policy against Russia compared to the Cold War. Petro (1997) notes that although there is no more communism and the Soviet Union, the USA kept following the containment policy against Russia which he defines as “re-containment”. According to Petro, this re-containment policy is not an adequate policy and could not provide a powerful foundation for Washington’s foreign policy in the twenty-first century. Sakwa (2015) points out that the Atlantic community reformulated a new version of containment as the Cold War came to an end and they preserved the Cold War mindset by spearheading this “neo-containment” approach. Sakwa (2020) argues that in response to Russia's neo-revisionism, the West has employed counter-subversion and neo-containment strategies. In another article, Sakwa (2008) states that it is not surprising that the Kremlin is being contained after the Baltic countries joined the Atlantic Alliance and the Alliance engaged

more with the countries bordering Russia such as Georgia and Ukraine. He remarks that the West lacks a credible paradigm to comprehend the concerns of Russia. In addition to the third subgroup, Arbatov (2014) argues that the USA applies a new containment policy against Moscow but despite this containment, Russia does not face a threat of isolation from the world.

To summarize the first group, the authors principally argue that the USA has been continuing its containment policy against Russia although the Soviet Union was dissolved. However, in the literature, there is not a comprehensive study that examines the USA's containment policy against Russia through Ukraine. This research fills this gap by offering a holistic approach to the containment through Ukraine by investigating the motivations, instruments and consequences of the containment policy.

In the literature, there is a second group of arguments advocating that the USA has been practicing a dual containment policy against Russia and China. According to Müllerson (2022), in an effort to maintain the unilateral world order in the 1990s, the USA has been pursuing the containment policy against China and Russia directly, also through NATO and the EU. Yefremenko (2017) asserts that Washington brought Moscow and Beijing closer as they fostered increased political and military cooperation due to the USA's dual containment policy on an immense perimeter. Karaganov and Suslov (2018) argue that the USA intensified its practices of containment against Russia and China under the Trump administration. The authors note that this dual containment policy damaged each side, including the West. Huasheng (2022) advocates that Washington implements a systematic and comprehensive containment strategy against China and Russia; with a containment line encompassing the Baltic, Arctic, Black Seas, Indian Ocean, South and East China Seas meanwhile Moscow and Beijing developed closer military and security ties against the American pressure. Mahnken (2022) argues that the USA could sustain a struggle both against Russia and China even though the USA would primarily need to focus on Asia. Kramarenko (2022) advocates that the USA has been containing not only Russia, but China as well and he claims that a two-front war stands a possibility for the USA. Kramarenko notes that the West has been containing Russia in the last thirty years. The author points out that the Ukraine Crisis is more than a military threat to Russia, it threatens the Russian identity, history and culture.

This research also mentions the dual containment policy applied by the USA against Russia and China but principally focuses on the containment against Russia, particularly through Ukraine.

The third group of authors argues that the USA did not contain Russia but advised the USA to apply this policy against Russia. This group views the Ukraine Crisis primarily through Russian aggression and overlooks the assertive policies of the USA and prerequisites of Russian national security.

Blank (2020) asserts that the only means of guaranteeing peace in Europe would be to contain Russia's imperial objectives. Reznikov (2020) notes that the world was uncertain how to deal with the revisionist Moscow and he argues that Russia must be contained, particularly in Ukraine. Misik (2022) argues that a new policy of containment should be implemented against Russia to isolate and weaken it. Rumer and Weiss (2023) note that Russia was not defeated in the Ukraine Conflict although it took considerable damage. Putin and the Russian government endured the pressures and sanctions of the Western alliance. The authors advocate the USA to switch to a containment strategy against Russia in order to defeat Moscow. Goldgeier (2023) claims that the notion of imperialism is at the core of Moscow's foreign policies and therefore, the West needed to initiate a version of containment policy against Russia. Vershbow (2023) asserts that in order to deter Moscow, Washington and its allies would need to implement a containment policy that increases the cost to Russia for its disruptive actions as in Ukraine and gradually removes Russia's political and economic ties within the international community. In addition to this group, Tharoor (2022) argues that the USA had not practiced the containment policy since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, Washington started to put it into practice back again with the conflict in Ukraine. According to Tharoor, the Biden administration perceived Russia as a main adversary alongside China after its aggression in Ukraine and the USA revived a version of the containment approach against Moscow.

A subgroup in the third group who advises the containment policy to be applied against Russia also suggests new and different versions of containment while renaming the containment policy. Sherr (2015) notes that Russia demonstrated an aggression against the European security order by annexing Crimea and he argues that a "rigorous" containment must be applied against Russia. Franco (2021) argues that the Kremlin followed aggressive foreign policies to become a global actor once again. According to him, the USA and the EU should contain Russia and he puts forwards two different containment policies as "active" and "passive" types of containment policy to apply against Moscow. Ullman (2023) claims that Putin was not contained and not deterred in Georgia in 2008 and in Ukraine since 2014. Ullman advocates for a "muscular"

containment policy against Russia which signifies a more proactive and dynamic type of policy. Menkiszak (2016) claims that an accommodation policy had been applied to Russia before and he argues that a “smart” containment policy needed to be practiced against Russia instead of accommodation. According to Menkiszak, accommodation policy referred to the West’s engagement with Moscow and compromising on Ukraine. Menkiszak notes that the smart containment policy involved three key points which are strengthening Western resilience against detrimental Russian policies, pressuring Moscow and supporting Kiev. Considering the arguments in this group, especially the idea that Washington did not contain Russia and applied an accommodation policy is erroneous. It is not reasonable to assert that the USA applied an accommodation policy to Russia as Washington has kept NATO expanding and threatened Russia from military, political and economic spheres. It could be stated that some of the European countries applied accommodation policy to Russia, nevertheless, the West collectively did not accommodate Russia, especially considering that the USA is the main Western actor and policy-shaper in relations with Russia.

Apart from the three main groups, there are other arguments put forward in various articles and books about the USA’s policy on Russia regarding Ukraine. Cohen (2019) points out that Americans and Ukrainians do not share common points; conversely, the Russian and Ukrainian population share very similar ethnicity, culture and languages. They also possess a common history and had strong economic cooperation in the past. Cohen argues that the USA should not look into incorporating Ukraine into NATO. With this view, Cohen does not necessarily mean that a nation which does not share the same characteristics with the US should not join NATO. On the contrary, he calls attention to the high level of interconnectedness between Russians and Ukrainians and the irrationality to strive for bringing Ukraine into the Western military bloc. Cohen also asserts that Ukraine is not a vital national interest for the USA, on the contrary, it is for Russia. He questions how Washington would react if Russia placed military bases on the USA’s borders with Mexico and Canada. Menon and Rumer (2015: 162) point out that the Ukraine Crisis occurred due to the West establishing the post-Cold War security architecture on two institutions, NATO and the European Union which excluded Russia. According to Charap and Colton (2016), a negative-sum outcome emerged in the Ukraine Crisis because of the zero-sum policies followed by the USA, Russia and the EU.

From the early years of the containment until today, the great majority of realists opposed the containment policy claiming that the USA was committing itself for the defense of

countries that were not crucial for American national security. At the beginning phase of the Cold War, former US vice-president Henry Wallace criticized the rough stance towards the Soviet Union and urged for ending the Cold War. He remarked that the Soviet sphere of influence in Central Europe was legitimate and Washington's opposition only exacerbated the tension. Wallace rejected the strategy of the containment primarily from a moral dimension (Kissinger, 1994). Lippman (1947) argues that through containment, the USA would spend its energy and resources unnecessarily for the states that were on the perimeter of the Soviet Union. Moreover, Lippman criticizes Kennan's containment for failing to distinguish the vital and peripheral interests (U.S. Department of State, 1947). In the modern days of the US foreign policy on Russia, the containment policy through Ukraine were mostly supported by liberals. On the other hand, most realists opposed the assertive policies against Russia and argued that it did not benefit the USA. Among It can be stated that John Mearsheimer is the most prominent one among this group. According to Mearsheimer (2014), Russia did not need to be contained because it was a declining power and had an aging population. He emphasizes that the USA and the EU shared most of the responsibility for the Ukraine Crisis as the main cause for the crisis was the planned NATO enlargement. Mearsheimer asserts that the US government underestimated realism in the 21st century and warns Washington to put an end to NATO expansion. Walt (2015) emphasizes that the Ukraine Crisis began when the USA and the EU intended to take Ukraine from Moscow's orbit into Western sphere of influence. Walt objects to the "deterrence model" which was put forward by the ones who favored further NATO enlargement. He opposes arming Ukraine as it would cause a longer and more destructive conflict. Walt puts forward that the solution to the crisis of Ukraine for the West is to abandon the hazardous and unnecessary target of endless NATO expansion. Both authors warn Washington that it pushed Russia closer to China through their offensive Ukraine policy. Furthermore, both authors argue that the real threat against the USA was China and Washington needed to ally with Moscow against Beijing in long-term.

1.7 Contribution of the Study to the Literature

This study makes various contributions to the existing literature mainly in three key areas. Firstly, it addresses a notable gap by analyzing the Ukraine Conflict through the conceptual framework of containment policy. Despite the extensive study concerning the

Ukraine Conflict from various perspectives, this research offers a comprehensive examination that underscores the pivotal role of containment policy in understanding the conflict's origins and dynamics alongside examining Russia's peculiar security requirements. By tracing the roots of the Ukraine Conflict back to the USA's longstanding containment policy against the Soviet Union and Russia, this study sheds light on the underlying factors driving the conflict.

Secondly, this research adopts a holistic approach by investigating containment's motivations, instruments and consequences within a single study. By posing "why," "how," and "what" questions; the study enriches scholarly discourse by offering a nuanced understanding of the containment policy and its implications for the Ukraine Conflict.

Thirdly, the study stands out for its extensive use of the latest primary resources, including news sources, statistics and governmental documents. By drawing upon a wide range of contemporary literature, the research provides a current and comprehensive overview of containment policy. By synthesizing recent sources and bringing diverse perspectives together, the study offers valuable insights into the ongoing relevance and evolution of containment policy in the contemporary geopolitical landscape.

1.8 Structure of the Study

This study consists of three chapters. The first chapter is comprised of the introduction part of the research. The second chapter looks into the containment policy in the Cold War and the post-Cold War periods which is divided into two sections. In the first section, the containment in the Cold War era is examined. In its first subsection, the containment policy is defined and its process of birth is explained. In the second subsection, the history of the containment against the Soviet Union is summarized by demonstrating the roles of different American administrations through the decades. In the third subsection, the USA's motivations to contain the Soviet Union are analyzed. Following the motivations, the instruments which were utilized to contain the Soviet Union are listed and explained to some extent in the fourth subsection. As some instruments remained the same against the Russian Federation, they are explicated in the third chapter. In the last subsection, the achievements and failures of the containment in the Cold War period are examined. The second section of the second chapter is denominated as the containment in the post-Cold War period. The first subsection explains the

evolution of containment policy alongside the developments that took place in the post-Cold War period. The second subsection summarizes the Ukraine Crisis and demonstrates the role of American foreign policy in the crisis and the conflict. The third and last subsection is concluded with analyzing the differences between the containment policy in the Cold War and post-Cold War periods.

The third chapter of the study is divided into three sections. The motivations behind the containment policy through Ukraine are investigated in the first section. The USA's motivations are listed and analyzed in the subsections as weakening Russia, changing the regime in Moscow and maintaining global hegemony. The tools of the containment policy through Ukraine are examined in the second section. The main instruments of containment are categorized as political, military, economic and non-conventional instruments. The consequences of the containment policy through Ukraine comprise the third section of the third chapter. The first subsection includes various responses from Russia against the containment policy. The second subsection puts forward that the world has embarked on a new era which this study denominates as the new cold war. The following subsections list the consequences according to different actors in the world affected by the containment policy which are the USA, Russia, Europe and Ukraine. The research is finalized with the conclusion part at the end.

2. THE CONTAINMENT POLICY IN THE COLD WAR AND THE POST-COLD WAR PERIODS

This chapter is divided into two sections, focusing on different periods of the containment policy. The first section delves into the historical context of containment throughout the Cold War era, primarily drawing on secondary resources. It begins by providing an overview of containment and its emergence as a principal American foreign policy. Subsequently, the second subsection narrates the history of containment together with the US administrations and key events of the Cold War. The third subsection provides an overview of the USA's motivations concerning its containment policy on the Soviet Union. Instruments of the containment policy in the Cold War are elucidated in the following subsection. Lastly, the last subsection of the first section evaluates the achievements and failures of the containment policy against the Soviet Union.

The second section shifts the focus to the post-Cold War period, examining the continuation of the USA's containment policy against the Russian Federation. This section begins by asserting the persistence of the containment policy beyond the Cold War era. The following subsection delves into the analysis of the Ukraine Crisis and Washington's involvement in the crisis through its containment policy. Finally, the third subsection evaluates the distinctions between containment policy in the Cold War and the post-Cold War eras. This structured approach allows for a comprehensive exploration of the containment policy; spanning its historical evolution, contemporary relevance and geopolitical implications.

2.1 Containment Policy in the Cold War Period

This section begins by defining the containment and explains the birth of the containment policy. George Kennan's thoughts on the Soviet Union, the issue of how to approach the Soviet Union and the formalization of the containment policy are explained in the first subsection. In addition to Kennan's containment concept, differing from other studies on this topic, this research questions the background of the containment policy and whether the roots of this policy can be found before the "long telegram". The second subsection tackles the history of the containment policy, from the post-war until the end of the Cold War by segmenting the periods according to the US presidents' terms in each paragraph. Following this; the motivations, instrument and consequences of the containment policy on the Soviet Union are investigated. The consequences of the containment policy are analyzed by classifying them into achievements and failures. These subsections are important as they constitute a base for the motivations, instruments and consequences of today's containment policy.

2.1.1 The Definition and Birth of the Containment Policy

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the primary meaning of containment is "the act, process, or means of keeping something within limits" while the secondary and political meaning of containment is described as "the policy, process or result of preventing the expansion of a hostile power or ideology" ("Definition of Containment," 2023). Another dictionary source, the Cambridge Dictionary, defines the political meaning of containment as "an attempt to keep another country's political power within its limits without having a war with them" ("Containment," 2023). The USA's containment policy against the Soviet Union in particular can be defined as political, military and economic strategies to prevent the spread of communism and Soviet sphere of influence. Although the concept was initially promoted as a relatively defensive approach, it gradually became a relatively offensive policy.

It is widely accepted that George Kennan's "long telegram" in February 1946 was the origin of the containment policy against the Soviet Union. The telegram was named so because it was the longest telegram delivered in the history of the State Department at the time. George Kennan was a diplomat in Moscow when he wrote this piece. He wrote this telegram

confidentially but then it was published as an article called “The Sources of Soviet Conduct” under the name “X” in the Foreign Affairs magazine’s July 1947 issue. In the telegram, Kennan wrote about the features of the Soviet outlook after WWII, the Soviet policies and deductions for American foreign policy. He depicted a picture of the Soviet administration’s view of communism and capitalism as he noted that a longstanding and innate sense of insecurity among Russians lies at the core of Moscow’s perspective on international affairs. Kennan claimed that the Soviet Union would erode the major Western countries’ overall strategic capacity, reduce the influence of Western powers that arose in colonial areas, pressure and remove the anti-communist governments, destroy personal independence and antagonize major Western powers against each other. In order to attain these objectives, Kennan noted that the Soviet Union would use tools such as other communist parties and governments in the world, international organizations, the Russian Orthodox Church and Pan-Slav movement. He compared the Soviet Union with Nazi Germany and concluded that it did not resemble to Nazi Germany as the Soviet Union did not have fixed plans and did not take unnecessary risks. Compared to the Western world, Kennan pointed out that the Soviet Union was much weaker although it had assertive objectives. For the implications in American foreign policy, Kennan recommended studying the features of the Soviet Union and comprehending it fully, informing the American public of the “Russian situation”, enhancing the vigor of the society, taking the initiative to guide the other countries and not yielding the initiative to the Soviet Union. Consequently, Kennan put forward the containment policy to suppress the “Soviet threat” as he claimed that the Soviet Union was declaring war against the capitalist system and showing expansionist intentions (Kennan, 1946).

John Lewis Gaddis' book "Strategies of Containment" is the most comprehensive analysis of the USA's containment policy which this study benefits widely, particularly in this section. As stated in this book, George Kennan never wrote the concept of containment in a complete and detailed form but many of his thoughts were included in policy papers and his thoughts were implemented by the Truman administration (Gaddis, 2005: 87). Gaddis remarked that the issues on international relations included many nuances and it was hard to put them on the paper and even harder to make sure that the bureaucrats practice them despite continuously changing conditions in international politics. He remarked that all post-war US administrations applied the containment policy although there were notable differences between them on what needed to be contained and the tools at their disposal (Gaddis, 2005: 259).

The containment of the Soviet Union is mostly acknowledged to have commenced after WWII with Kennan's long telegram. However, Kennan's long telegram was not the only motive behind the USA's containment policy. The traces of the containment policy can be found back in the October Revolution. The USA took assertive actions against the Soviets which dated back to the Russian Civil War. As the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia; the USA, along with several other countries such as the United Kingdom, France and Japan provided formidable support to the White Army against the Red Army throughout the Russian Civil War which took place from 1917 to 1923. The primary motivation for this support was to prevent the Red Army from winning the Civil War and the spread of communism. The USA not only provided supplies and financial assistance to the White Army but also sent two military missions into the Russian land which were named as the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) and the American North Russia Expeditionary Force. 7,950 American troops were enlisted in the AEF in Siberia. The AEF in North Russia, also known as the Polar Bear Expedition, landed in Arkhangelsk with 5,000 American troops (Willett, 2003: 66-170; Willett, 2003: 267). Eventually, the Red Army emerged victorious from the Civil War despite the USA and other countries' assistance to the White Army. In the 1930s, revanchist Germany's resurgence caused the West to rethink its containment policy against the Soviet Union and realize that it required support from the Soviet Union (Istomin, 2019: 17).

It is considered that the USA and the Soviet Union were allies in WWII as both countries were enemies of the Axis alliance which was led by Nazi Germany. However, it was apparent that the USA and the Soviet Union represented contradicting set of values and carried a strong potential to be adversary to each other. When Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, the Soviet Union lost a colossal territory in the first few months of the war. Nonetheless, the Red Army stopped the Germans near Moscow at the end of 1941. The first two years of the war were quite troublesome for the Soviet Union but the Battle of Stalingrad became a turning point in the war and the Soviets gained the full initiative with their victory in the Battle of Kursk in the summer of 1943. After the Kursk victory, the Soviets recaptured a great amount of land and it became apparent that the Soviet Union would defeat Nazi Germany. Despite the fact that the USA launched an aid of lend-lease program to the Soviet Union at the beginning of the war, it refrained from initiating a major operation into Europe until the Sicilian campaign in 1943. Thereafter, Washington took the decision to launch a major operation into Western Europe by initiating with the Normandy landings on June 6, 1944. As the Red Army was moving towards the West, the USA and its allies secured Western Europe and moved towards the East.

Considering it was evident that the Soviet Union would be victorious against the Germans in 1943 and particularly in 1944, Washington still decided to conduct a major operation into Europe. This study argues that this was mainly to prevent the Soviet Union from capturing larger lands in Europe and cutting its expansion towards the West and also containing the spread of communism. It can be inferred from the actions of Washington against the Soviets from the Russian Civil War and WWII that the USA would aim to prevent the resurgence of the Soviet Union and the spread of communism regardless of Kennan's long telegram.

It is worth noting that the impact of George Kennan on the official American foreign policy is disputed. According to Gaddis, some overestimate and some others underestimate his influence on the US government (Gaddis, 2005). In May 1947, Kennan was appointed as the first Director of Policy Planning and he had a valuable opportunity to practice and shape the containment policy. His role can be considered as the head of the US Department of State's internal think tank in which he remained for two years. Kennan acknowledged that he had an important role in areas such as the emphasis on European initiative and the Marshall Plan.

2.1.2 History of the Containment against the Soviet Union

The most elaborate work on the USA's containment policy was written by John Lewis Gaddis in his book "Strategies of Containment". Gaddis issued this book in 1982 and later published a revised and expanded edition in 2005. His study provided a detailed picture of containment by bringing together Kennan's books, articles and lectures alongside the events throughout the Cold War. In his book, Gaddis remarked that the term of containment was generally used as a concept to stop the Soviets from reshaping the post-war world order with its position and strength it gained in WWII". (Gaddis, 2005: 4) Defeating Nazi Germany in WWII, the Soviet Union emerged victorious. However, the Soviets lost an incredible amount of 27 million people and their industry had to be rebuilt after the war. On the other hand, the USA was also a winner of the war by losing only around 1.5% of the people that the Soviet Union lost. Moreover, the American mainland was not invaded either. Therefore, especially in the first decade after WWII, it is reasonable to note that the USA had more power and compatibility to shape the post-war international order in comparison to the Soviet Union.

The USA and the Soviet Union did not have equal conditions when the post-war period started. The USA was surrounded by the Atlantic and Pacific oceans which provided strong barriers and Washington was not concerned about its mainland. In a possible conflict with the Soviet Union, the American mainland would not be seriously threatened and a conflict would predominantly threaten Western Europe. On the other hand, the Soviet Union was compelled to protect the borders of the Warsaw Pact. For this reason, the Kremlin developed plans for the "Finlandization of Europe" in the early 1950s, which called for the formation of a group of countries in Central and Eastern Europe that would be impartial toward the Soviet Union and the USA (Dugin, 2015: 31).

In 1949, the American embassy in Moscow reported that the Soviet Union should not only be contained, but the sphere of the Soviets should be decreased as well (Gaddis, 2005: 66). This report was one of the primary signs that the containment policy would be not only defensive but also an offensive policy. According to Kennan, the Soviet Union did not plan to go to war against the USA or the West collectively (Gaddis, 2005). It was a reasonable argument as the Americans had the atomic bomb before the Soviets and the Soviet Union lost an extreme manpower in WWII. Hence, the Soviets were not willing to get involved in another major war.

Despite the relieved and relatively peaceful environment in Europe after WWII, Washington decided to launch a military assistance program to Europe and establish the North Atlantic Treaty. This brought about unnecessary concern in the West of a Soviet invasion which "no one in Moscow had any serious intention of launching" (Gaddis, 2005: 71, 72).

Harry Truman was the first president of the post-WWII era and he remained at the post for eight years, from 1945 until 1953. George Kennan's initial concept of containment underwent changes through time and was not applied in an exact way that Kennan planned, particularly in Truman's second term. Gaddis called attention to the fact that the process of containment grew more essential than the goal that the process was meant to achieve. It was evident that Kennan's proposals had lost their significance by the time he departed the Policy Planning Staff at the end of 1949 (Gaddis, 2005: 81). After his departure, Paul H. Nitze took his office. A document called NSC-68 was drafted under Nitze with the goal of systematizing containment and searching for ways to practice it (Gaddis, 2005: 88). The NSC-68 described containment as an attempt to obstruct future development of Soviet strength, uncover the falseness of Soviet assertions, force a retreat of Moscow's influence and cause a destruction

within the system of the Soviets (Gaddis, 2005: 96-97). According to Gaddis, both Kennan and the writers of the NSC-68 preferred the use of a “flexible response” by using economic, diplomatic and psychological instruments of containment (Gaddis, 2005: 99). A difference between Kennan’s concept and the NSC-68 was that while Kennan advocated fragmenting the international communist movement and taking advantages from this potential disunity, NSC-68 did not convey this objective. Moreover, the Truman administration did not make a distinction among socialist states and considered them equally hazardous (Gaddis, 2005: 100). George Kennan viewed diplomacy as a way of changing Soviet attitudes. Conversely, the NSC-68 rejected diplomacy and claimed that a settlement with the Soviet Union could not occur unless the Soviet system transformed (Gaddis, 2005: 88-102). During Truman’s administration, the USA’s relations with the Soviet Union worsened considerably. In 1949, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was established with the initiative of the USA as a collective defense alliance against the perceived threat of Soviet aggression which marked a critical step in the militarization of the Cold War. Harry Truman signed the National Security Act in 1947 which reorganized the American intelligence. With this Act, military services such as the CIA, the NSC and the Department of Defense were established (“National Security Act”, n. d.). These organizations became essential in developing and carrying out the containment policy against the Soviet Union. Moreover, Truman supported military assistance programs to aid various countries in holding down the communist sphere of influence. For instance, the White House provided military aid to France throughout the First Indochina War and later to South Vietnam during the Vietnam War. On the other hand, the American authorities, especially military commanders, exaggerated the Soviet danger in order to convince the Congress to increase the defense spending which resulted in an overreach of American military strength. Therefore, the Soviet Union expanded the size of their own military and this escalation sparked a greater armament race due to fear of encirclement. Moreover, the exaggeration of the Soviet threat hampered diplomacy and it caused Americans to interpret the events incorrectly (Paterson, 1986).

Replacing Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower maintained the containment policy throughout his two terms as the US president and he formed a newer version of containment which was called the “New Look”. The New Look emphasized the use of nuclear weapons as a deterrent to the Soviet Union and a way to maintain military strength alongside reducing conventional forces and overall defense spending. According to Eisenhower, the USA’s ability to deter Soviet aggression with a credible nuclear deterrent was essential to the massive

retaliation doctrine. Apart from nuclear deterrence, the New Look strategy included elements of alliances, negotiations, psychological warfare and covert actions. According to Gaddis, these elements were more advantageous than the NSC-68's symmetrical response as they were cheaper to apply (Gaddis, 2005: 159). Gaddis noted that the main objective behind Eisenhower's New Look strategy was to prevent the communists to the greatest extent possible at the lowest feasible cost. He argued that this strategy was mostly cost-effective by emphasizing the decrease of the defense spending percentage in the gross domestic product (Gaddis, 2005: 162) Eisenhower supported the creation of regional alliances as part of a strategy to contain the spread of communism. With this mindset, the organizations of SEATO and CENTO were established to serve as the instruments of containment against the Soviet Union.

Elected as the president in 1961, John F. Kennedy continued to hold the view that communism posed a threat to the USA and carried on the containment policy. Nevertheless, the Kennedy idealists found the brinksmanship of the Eisenhower era antiquated. Kennedy put the "flexible response" defense policy into effect, which refrained from major reprisal and advocated mutual deterrence ("Milestones: 1961–1968", n. d.). During John F. Kennedy's presidency, which lasted only two years, important events took place such as the Bay of Pigs invasion and the Cuban Missile Crisis. In April 1961, a group of Cuban exiles attempted to invade Cuba at the Bay of Pigs with the assistance of the CIA in an attempt to topple the Cuban government. The assault failed and it caused the tension between the USA and the Soviet Union to escalate. The Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962 was another important milestone in Washington-Moscow relations. After protracted negotiations between Nikita Khrushchev and John Kennedy, the Soviets accepted to remove the missiles in exchange for the USA removing its missiles in Türkiye and vowing not to invade Cuba which helped to defuse the crisis ("The Cuban Missile", n. d.). As another development in Kennedy's term, the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty which prohibited testing nuclear weapons in the domains of atmosphere, space and undersea was signed in 1963 by the Soviet Union, the USA and the UK.

After the assassination of Kennedy in 1963, Lyndon Johnson became the new US president and remained at this post until 1969. The most noteworthy and controversial aspect of Johnson's foreign policy was expanding Washington's inclusion in the Vietnam War. The policy of containment played a major role in the decision to commit the American soldiers to support the South Vietnam against the North Vietnam. Johnson believed in the "domino theory" which signified that the fall of a Southeast Asian nation to communism could lead to the fall of

other neighboring countries. With this mindset, the USA got deeply involved in the Vietnam War. However, the war became a divisive and costly conflict that drew significant criticism both domestically and internationally. The defense spending was increased from \$49.6 billion in 1961 to \$54.8 billion in 1964 during the presidency of Kennedy and Johnson (Gaddis, 2005: 225). The Vietnam War was the main reason behind this increase, particularly under the Johnson administration. Although Kennedy supported the South Vietnam, he opposed sending American troops to Vietnam. On the contrary, Johnson approved sending the USA's soldiers to Vietnam in April 1965. Initially, 3,500 Marines were sent and the numbers soared in the next two years. Eventually, the total number of American troops in Vietnam reached 486,000 at the end of 1967 (Schandler, 1977, 352). Washington made considerable commitments to contain communism throughout the Vietnam War, not only in manpower but in military equipment and expenditure as well. To exemplify, the USA dropped more bomb tonnage to Vietnam than it did in WWII. Despite the colossal costs, the USA failed to make any notable achievements in the Vietnam War and it was eventually defeated.

Replacing Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon applied the containment policy in a way that was more consistent with the primary containment which was developed by George Kennan. After taking over the office in 1969, Nixon appointed Henry Kissinger as his national security adviser. Kennan told Gaddis that Henry Kissinger comprehended his views better than anyone in the State (Gaddis, 2005: 281). Gaddis noted that there were strong resemblances between the containment policies promoted by Kennan in the late 1940s and Kissinger in the early 1970s. Both emphasized that it was necessary to draw boundaries between the core and peripheral interests because resources were scarce. They both thought that the main threat to these interests was the Soviet Union, not global communism. Both used asymmetrical responses in an attempt to contain the threats and they took advantage of fractures in the international communist movement (Gaddis, 2005: 306). Dickson (1978: 155-157) remarked that the similar views of Kennan and Kissinger stemmed from their mutual commitment to the realist tradition of American foreign policy. Kissinger placed an emphasis on the triangular relationship between the USA, the Soviet Union and China which was later called the triangular diplomacy. According to Kissinger and in line with the containment policy against the Soviet Union, Washington chose to side with the weaker antagonist which was China against the stronger antagonist, the Soviet Union. Therefore, the Nixon administration did not emphasize the ideology aspect in its containment policy due to the Sino-Soviet split. Washington desired to draw Beijing towards itself and intended to escalate the antagonism against Moscow. At the

same time, the USA improved its ties with Tito's Yugoslavia as well. On the other hand, as the USA incurred terrific losses in Vietnam and lost prestige, the Nixon administration decided to decrease Washington's commitments in the world which later became known as the Nixon Doctrine ("Report by President Nixon", n. d.). This doctrine was aimed at reducing the USA's direct military commitment in certain regions and fostering regional self-reliance. Furthermore, Nixon used a "détente" strategy with the Soviet Union in an effort to reduce Cold War hostilities although he did not abandon the containment as the main foreign policy. Despite the broader policy of détente, Nixon continued containment efforts in Southeast Asia, such as in Vietnam. The Nixon administration pursued a policy known as "Vietnamization," involving the gradual withdrawal of US troops meanwhile building up the South Vietnamese military's capabilities to resist communist forces ("Vietnamization," 2019). During Nixon's administration, Moscow and Washington initiated the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks. The first phase, SALT I, resulted in the signing of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty in 1972. This treaty attempted to lower the risk of a nuclear war by restricting the use of anti-ballistic missile systems. While the negotiations for SALT II began under Nixon, it was his successor, Gerald Ford, who signed the SALT II treaty with the Soviet Union in 1979. This treaty aimed to further decrease strategic arms although eventually it was not ratified by the US Senate.

The next US president Gerald Ford chose to keep Kissinger in his team and the Ford administration mostly maintained Nixon's foreign policy agenda. During Ford's presidency, the Helsinki Accords were signed in 1975. The accords were the consequence of a conference held in Finland and involved the United States and the Soviet Union alongside other European countries. The accords recognized the post-WWII borders in Europe and included commitments to human rights and economic cooperation although there were no specific binding provisions. The Helsinki Accords were seen as a step toward improving relations between the Eastern and Western blocs ("Helsinki Final Act", 1975). On the other hand, containment of the Soviet Union from the periphery continued. In this period, particularly in Africa, the two superpowers competed to expand their sphere of influence. For instance, in Angola, the USA provided support to anti-communist factions and the CIA became deeply involved in the country's civil war to defeat the communist factions supported by the Soviet Union (Greene, 2016).

Succeeding Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter appointed Zbigniew Brzezinski as his national security advisor and followed a more strict containment policy against the Soviet Union. Brzezinski was a key actor in leaving the détente period that the White House had followed

earlier. During the presidency of Jimmy Carter, the USA intensified its support for anti-Russian organizations in different regions, particularly in Afghanistan. The Soviet Union faced challenges in the Afghanistan War as a result of the USA's and other countries' military support to the armed Afghan groups. Carter established a doctrine in his name and this doctrine incorporated the notion that the USA would use force if required to defend the American interests in the Persian Gulf. The goal of this concept was to inhibit the Soviet Union from enhancing its sphere of influence against the USA, particularly in the Gulf region. On the other hand, the rivalry between the USA and the Soviet Union in the "third world" escalated further as both countries aimed to expand their influence. Conflicts in the Middle East, Africa and Central America became platforms for ideological rivalry and proxy wars.

Ronald Reagan became the 40th president of the USA after Jimmy Carter and he emphasized the containment of the communist ideology and referred to the Soviet Union as an "evil empire." The Reagan administration implemented further economic measures to put more pressure on the Soviet Union. Reagan advocated for a significant military build-up as part of his "Peace Through Strength" strategy ("Peace Through", n. d.). This involved expanding defense spending, modernizing the nuclear arsenal and deploying intermediate-range nuclear missiles in Europe. The objective was to enhance American military capabilities to counter perceived Soviet threats and further contain the Soviet Union. Reagan launched a massive military build-up that included the projected Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) which sought to create nuclear-resistant missile systems. Although the SDI was never completely implemented due to technological difficulties, it increased pressure on the Soviet Union to match the American military capabilities.

Elected in 1989, George H.W. Bush was the last American president who led the containment policy against the Soviet Union in the Cold War. Throughout his term, the ideological and geopolitical landscape radically changed with the ideological paradigm shift in Eastern Europe, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact. Bush initiated negotiations for a new arms control treaty known as START (Strategic Arms Reduction Talks) with the Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev. The START treaty was signed in July 1991 with the goal of reducing the number of strategic nuclear weapons. The West and East Germany's unification occurred in 1990 during the presidency of Bush as well. The reunification process proceeded with Washington's assurances that NATO would not expand into the former lands of East Germany. NATO General Secretary Wörner (1990) emphasized

that NATO was not ready to deploy troops beyond German borders and this gave the Soviet Union a security guarantee. However, in 1990, Pentagon and the US Department of State officials already started reporting that the doors of NATO should be opened for the Eastern European countries (Shiffrinson, 2016).

To briefly summarize the Soviet side of history during the Cold War, geopolitical self-awareness among the Soviet leadership rapidly decreased after Joseph Stalin's death. The foreign policy of Moscow turned more reactive and mostly defensive (Dugin, 2015: 33) Under Nikita Khrushchev's administration, the Soviet Union lost China as a crucial partner. Replacing Khrushchev, Leonid Brezhnev became the General Secretary of the Soviet Union. His main foreign policy doctrine, the Brezhnev Doctrine, required using all measures possible, including armed intervention to inhibit defection from the Pact. This doctrine was canceled by his successor, Mikhail Gorbachev, in 1988 as he advocated the idea that all the Soviet republics had a right to independently choose their path. Throughout the disintegration process of the Soviet Union, Gorbachev made numerous concessions to the USA meanwhile Washington did not respond in the same way and it became a process of unilateral concessions.

Table 1: The US Administrations' Strategic Orientations and Policy Implications throughout the Cold War

President (period)	Strategic Orientation	Policy Implications
Harry S. Truman (1945-1953)	Systemization of containment Mobilizing Europe Containment through institutions	Truman Doctrine NATO Marshall Plan NSC-68 National Security Act
Dwight D. Eisenhower (1953-1961)	Massive retaliation Containment through international organizations	"New Look" Policy SEATO CENTO
John F. Kennedy (1961-1963)	Flexible Response	Bay of Pigs invasion
Lyndon B. Johnson (1963-1969)	Domino Theory	Vietnam War

Richard Nixon (1969-1974)	Détente Containing the enemy, not the ideology	Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty Fracturing the international communist movement Vietnamization
Gerald Ford (1974-1977)	Détente	Helsinki Accords
Jimmy Carter (1977-1981)	Gulf primacy	Carter Doctrine
Ronald Reagan (1981-1989)	Peace Through Strength Emphasis on communist ideology	Strategic Defense Initiative
George H.W. Bush (1989-1993)	Transition of the containment policy into post-Cold War period	Maintaining NATO

2.1.3 Motivations of Containing the Soviet Union

The USA's motivations to contain the Soviet Union can be summarized as preventing the Soviet Union from expanding, weakening the Soviet Union, preventing communism from spreading and strengthening American hegemony over the world.

According to Gaddis, containment's motivation was to prevent the Soviet Union from utilizing the power it gained as a consequence of WWII to shape the world order (Gaddis, 2005: 4). The White House feared that the Soviets would expand towards other regions of the world, mainly Europe and Asia; therefore, Washington intended to prevent this potential Soviet expansion. After WWII, the Soviet Union expanded its influence, especially in Eastern Europe. Moscow cooperated with the region's countries in establishing socialist governments and created alliances with them in political, military, economic and ideological domains. The Soviet Union supported communist movements in Asia, Africa and Latin America through financial aid and military training. Furthermore, cultural diplomacy and educational exchanges were utilized to promote Soviet values on a global scale. The USA intended to restrict this expansion through the containment policy.

The USA viewed the Soviet Union as considerably more dangerous than communist China and focused on containing the Soviet Union. George Kennan argued that China was not an essential power source and that the Soviet influence over China would not constitute a

serious threat to the USA. According to Kennan, Europe carried the utmost importance and it was vital to keep Europe away from being communist (Gaddis, 2005: 83). It can be remarked that Kennan's emphasis on Europe and considering China of less importance also carried a trace from Halford Mackinder's "Heartland" theory. Mackinder put forward his theory in 1904 by articulating that the control of Eastern Europe would mean the control of the "Heartland" and consequently the control of the world (Mackinder, 1904).

Gaddis argued that the main threat of the Soviet Union was its political power, not its military power (Gaddis, 2005: 39). In terms of military power, the Soviet Union had both superiorities and weaknesses at the end of WWII. The Soviet Union was equipped with cutting-edge military technology and the Soviet soldiers were highly experienced as they were actively engaged in the war for years. Nonetheless, the Soviets lost a great number of troops and civilians that significantly declined their manpower. Overall, it can be stated that the Soviet Union did not carry a significant strength to expand its physical borders by invading other countries on a large scale. On the other hand, the Kremlin strived to expand its sphere of influence through political, economic and socio-cultural means on a global scale.

According to a report by the USA's Moscow embassy in 1949, the Soviet Union was not only to be contained but also the Soviet sphere was to be decreased (Gaddis, 2005: 66). This report indicated that the USA's containment policy against the Soviet Union would not be completely defensive, but offensive as well. The USA did not only aim to prevent the expansion of the Soviet Union but also strived to weaken its adversary.

The USA aimed to weaken the Soviet Union as these two major powers were in a serious geopolitical competition at the beginning of the post-war period. The existence of a superpower in Eurasia posed a major challenge to the USA's geopolitical targets. To seize the initiative in Eurasia, it was a precondition for the USA to reduce the geopolitical power of the Soviet Union. Therefore, the USA aimed at not only preventing the Soviet expansion but also weakening the Soviet Union to gain superiority in this geopolitical competition.

Weakening the Soviet Union was also viewed as a way to diminish the effects of communism and damaging the international image of the Soviet Union. As the Soviet Union represented the opposite system and values of the USA, the presence of the Soviet Union in international politics posed an existential threat to Washington. The Soviet Union was in a position as the vanguard of international communism. By seeking to weaken the Soviet Union,

the USA aimed to damage the ideological credibility and appeal of communism as a viable alternative to capitalism. Weakening the Soviet Union was intended to disrupt its capacity to support international communist movements and insurgencies. By reducing Soviet influence and assistance, the USA sought to undermine the effectiveness and resilience of communist organizations and networks on a global scale.

Apart from the geopolitical and ideological reasons, there was also a significant economic rivalry between the two superpowers. Washington aimed to maintain its economic superiority and technological edge by weakening Moscow. The US administrations believed that weakening the Soviets economically would undermine its ability to sustain military and geopolitical activities. Economic pressure through arms was a key strategy that the USA practiced against the Soviet Union. The arms race, characterized by extensive investments in military technology and defense expenditures, strained the Soviet economy and diverted resources from civilian sectors. Additionally, the USA utilized its economic power to impose economic sanctions and trade restrictions on the Soviet Union and its allies, exacerbating economic pressure and reducing their ability to compete globally.

One of the main motivations of the USA's containment policy was containing the communist ideology. As the Soviet Union was identified with communism, containing the Soviet Union was inseparable from containing communism. Communism spread around the globe in the 20th century and its popularity grew stronger with the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany in WWII. The communist Soviet Union and the capitalist USA were engaged in a fierce ideological struggle that gave rise to the Cold War. Each party in this global contest aimed to advance its political and economic systems and increase its power worldwide (Gaddis, 2006). According to Kennan, Russia's antipathy against the West stemmed from ideological and historical circumstances (Gaddis, 2005: 32). The Soviet Union was the pioneer of socialism and innately carried its ideology into the liberated countries of Europe. The popularity of socialism was not bound to Europe as it continued gaining popularity in other parts of the world. Kennan was fearful of the Soviet Union enhancing its influence and communism becoming widespread. The communist ideology, an inherent enemy of capitalism, threatened the USA and its ideal capitalist international system. Communism appealed to those seeking alternatives to colonialism and economic exploitation particularly in the developing and underdeveloped countries. The promise of social equality attracted millions of people in Africa, Asia and Latin

America. The communist ideas appeared in harmony with social movements seeking to solve inequality and challenge authoritarian regimes supported by the USA.

The success of socialist revolutions in countries such as China and subsequently in Vietnam demonstrated the appeal and potency of communist ideology in achieving political change. These revolutions put the USA's interests at risk and contributed to the wider global spread of communism (Meisner, 1977).

Domestically, the perceived threat of communism led to heightened political tensions, the McCarthyism, "Red Scare" and efforts to exterminate communist sympathizers within American society and institutions. This paranoid era had a long-lasting effect on American politics (Schrecker, 2002).

Lastly, another main motivation for containing the Soviet Union was the USA's objective to strengthen its hegemony around the globe. At the end of WWII, there was a fierce geopolitical competition between the USA and the Soviet Union. Europe was mostly divided between the socialist and capitalist blocs. However, disagreements took place regarding territories and spheres of influence. For instance, serious controversies took place on the control of Berlin, especially in the first years of the post-war period. In Asia, particularly in China and Korea, the USA supported anti-communist forces against the communist groups which were assisted by the Soviet Union. In the Middle East and Africa, the USA had rooted dominance together with other major Western powers compared to the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, the Soviet revolution found support in these regions as well which challenged the American sphere of influence. In Latin America, Washington viewed the region inherently under its dominance, a perception dating back to the Monroe Doctrine. After the end of WWII, the White House feared that the USA's dominance in Latin America could be endangered by the Soviet sphere of influence. Due to these fears, the USA aimed to contain the Soviet Union right from the beginning of the post-war era to reinforce its hegemony against the Soviets. Furthermore, the spheres of influence of the United Kingdom and France decreased around the world as these major European powers suffered from WWII more than the USA. The USA aimed to fill this space on behalf of the West and strengthen the American hegemony in the world.

2.1.4 Instruments of Containing the Soviet Union

The USA used several instruments to contain the Soviet Union throughout the Cold War such as the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, NATO, psychological warfare and covert actions. It can be stated that the Truman Doctrine was more of a holistic framework designed to contain the Soviet Union after WWII. During the Greek Civil War which erupted in 1946, the Greek anti-communists were politically supported by the British government. Nonetheless, as the economy of Britain was in a difficult situation after WWII, it could not sustain regular military and financial support to anti-communist armed groups. At the same time, the American and Soviet spheres of influence contested in Türkiye. In this context, the President Harry Truman asked the Congress for financial and military aid to Greece and Türkiye to assist the Greek anti-communists to be victorious in the civil war and further draw Türkiye on its side. Truman's declaration that Washington ought to back free peoples who withstand outside pressures in March 1947, indicated that American foreign policy was transforming into a more interventionist mentality. Even though Truman did not clearly identify the "outside pressures", it was evident that he implied the Soviet Union. Through the Truman Doctrine, 400 million dollars were delivered to Greece and Türkiye in order to draw them to Washington's orbit more and inhibit the Soviet sphere of influence. George Kennan was a firm advocate of Truman's request for assistance to Türkiye and Greece (Gaddis, 2005: 40).

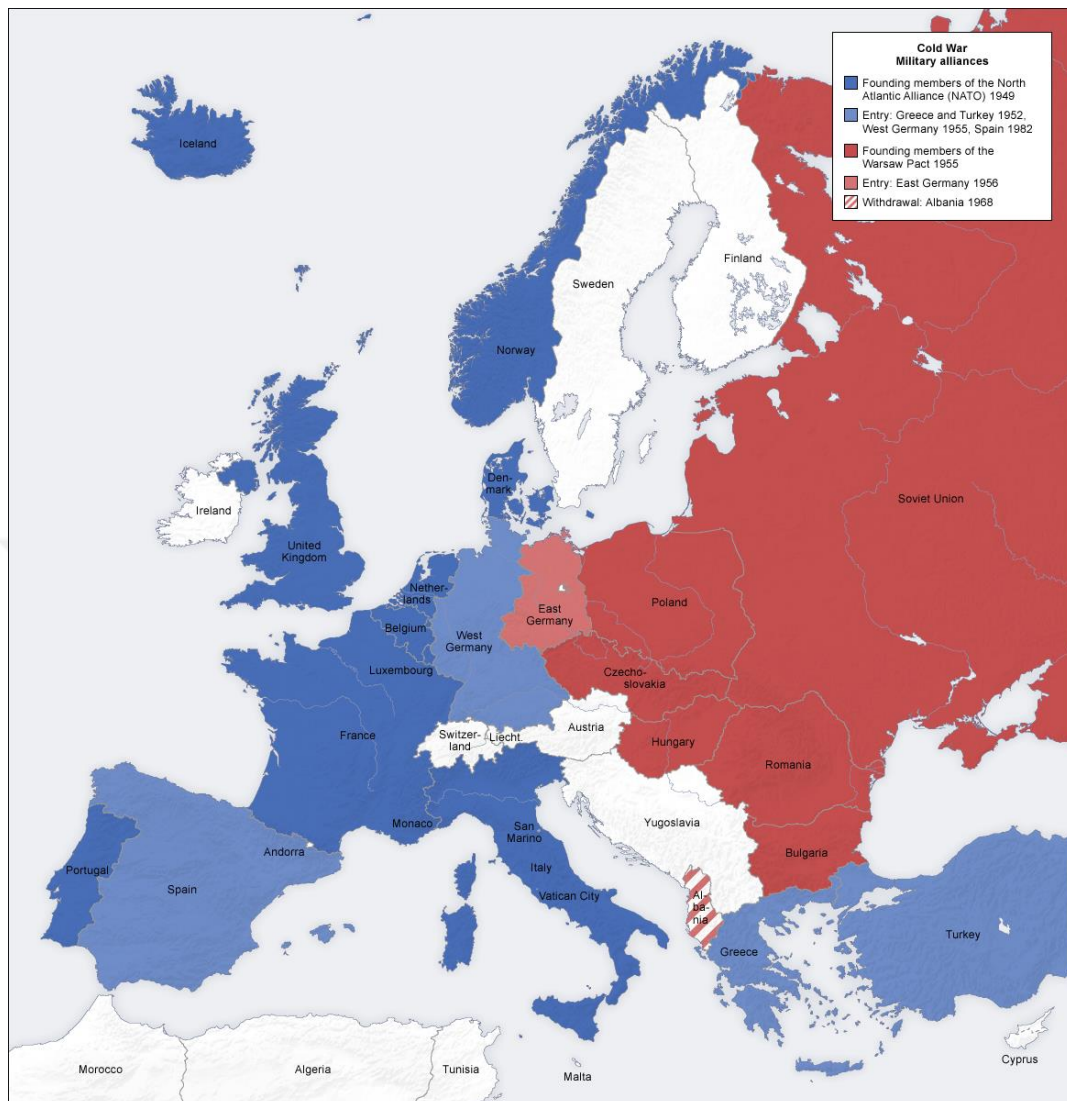
The Truman administration's major instrument of containment policy was economy. According to Gaddis, economy was the least expensive and the most effective instrument to achieve containment. Covert action, psychological warfare and propaganda were also among the instruments of the containment policy (Gaddis, 2005: 62).

Following the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan was introduced by the USA as a new instrument to contain the Soviet Union which had a greater extent, comprising the majority of Europe. At the end of WWII, Europe was in a dire economic condition and the communist parties became more popular and powerful due to the increasing Soviet political power after the victory against Nazi Germany. Therefore, Washington decided to provide a grand assistance for the European countries to improve their economies and strengthen the anti-communist governments. In June 1947, the Secretary of State George Marshall suggested offering financial support to European countries for economic recovery and the President Harry Truman issued a statement to the Congress in December 1947, adopting Marshall's recommendations for

providing economic support to Europe. Congress passed the Economic Cooperation Act of 1948, which became known as the Marshall Plan after the president signed it into law in April 1948. The Congress authorized \$13.3 billion for the recovery of the European countries until 1952 (Marshall Plan, 2022). The adoption of the Marshall Plan by the Congress indicated that the post-war bipartisanship of WWII would continue. In addition to containing the Soviet Union, the Marshall Plan made Europe become a major market for American goods.

The USA utilized international organizations to contain the Soviet Union and established a number of military alliances including NATO, CENTO, SEATO, ANZUS in addition to informal agreements (Istomin, 2019: 18). North Atlantic Treaty Organization was established in 1949 in Washington under the leadership of the USA. The other founding members included Canada, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Portugal, France, Denmark, Belgium, Italy, Iceland, Luxembourg and Norway. Throughout the Cold War, NATO served as the main military instrument of containing the Soviet Union. NATO provided a collective defense mechanism against the Soviet Union by maintaining a strong military presence in Europe. This presence included the deployment of troops, equipment and strategic assets to prevent any potential Soviet expansion into Western Europe. Through strategic planning, joint military exercises and intelligence sharing; NATO bolstered its members' military strength against the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. NATO's expansion into the countries on the periphery of the Soviet Union, such as Türkiye and Greece contributed to the encirclement of the Soviet Union.

Map 1: Map of Europe in the Cold War Era (“Cold War Europe”, n. d.)



Covert operations were employed as an instrument of the containment as well. Specifically, the “New Look” strategy which was employed by the Eisenhower administration emphasized covert operations. The budget of the CIA’s covert operations was increased from 4.7 million dollars in 1949 to 82 million dollars in 1952 and the working staff in these operations were enlarged from 302 to 2,812 with an additional 3,142 overseas contract personnel. The scope of covert operations was listed in a National Security Council directive in 1954. Some of the covert operations were named as political action, economic warfare, subversion against hostile states and assistance to anti-communist elements. Additionally, the CIA launched guerrilla and paramilitary operations against China and North Vietnam, coordinated

reconnaissance flights over the Soviet Union and at least contemplated, if not actively participated in murder plans against many foreign leaders such as Fidel Castro, Rafael Trujillo and Patrice Lumumba. The CIA also infiltrated academic, journalistic, cultural groups and provided financial support to establishments and publishers alongside other covert actions such as surveillance over mail and telecommunications. (Gaddis, 2005: 154-156). In the Cold War, the USA toppled democratically elected governments such as in Chile, Guatemala and Iran while it collaborated with autocratic governments like Greece and South Vietnam (Shiffrinson, 2022: 9). The USA intended to change other countries' governments seventy-two times throughout the Cold War period and sixty-six of these efforts were covertly operated. Twenty-six of these covert operations succeeded while the rest of the regime change operations failed. The USA intended to influence national elections in other countries sixteen times through propaganda and funding. Among these sixteen cases, the US-backed sides won in twelve of these elections (O'Rourke, 2016).

Other instruments of containment such as psychological warfare encompassed many dimensions such as the use of propaganda, print and broadcast media. Through these dimensions, the USA used tactics to humiliate and degrade the Soviet Union while enhancing its own image.

Causing fragmentation inside the international communist movement was another way of containing the Soviet Union (Gaddis, 2005: 64). The USA aimed to improve its ties particularly with Yugoslavia and China. It can be stated that Washington reached success in fragmenting the socialist states although the American intervention was not the only reason behind the deterioration of the partnership between the Soviet Union and other socialist states.

2.1.5 Achievements and Failures of the Containment in the Cold War

The extent and intensity of the containment fluctuated throughout the Cold War but the policy never ceased to exist. The USA's containment policy until the end of the Cold War had several consequences which can be divided under two categories as achievements and failures.

During the Cold War, the USA was able to prevent the spread of communism to some extent. Logevall (2004) argued that the containment was successful as it prevented the

expansion of communism without “exploding the world”. The Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan provided massive economic aid for rebuilding the war-torn Europe and boosted the European economy. Through this grand assistance, the USA strengthened the anti-communist governments in the continent and inhibited communist movements from gaining more power. Furthermore, through the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan, Washington gradually made Europe dependent on itself. As one of the main methods of the containment policy suggested by Kennan, Washington impaired the collaboration between the Soviet Union and other socialist states, mainly Yugoslavia and China. Thereby, the USA was able to reduce the Soviet sphere of influence and ideological solidarity. Moreover, Washington maintained a colossal military presence in Europe by establishing numerous military bases and massing hundreds of thousands of NATO troops near the Soviet borders. This forced the Soviet Union to allocate high amounts of resources into its armed forces which consumed a considerable part of its GDP and created significant problems in the Soviet economy. The containment policy was one of the reasons behind the dissolution of the Soviet Union; nevertheless, it was not the only cause. Rather, it can be stated that the individual decisions of the bureaucrats in Moscow paved the way for the collapse of the Soviet Union. The disintegration of the Soviet Union was determined despite 77% of the Soviet citizens voted for the preservation of the Soviet Union in the 1991 March referendum.

The containment policy was not a completely successful policy, it had several failures. The USA’s containment practices against the Soviets started with the Bolshevik revolution, as the American leadership feared that the revolution could spread to other parts of the world, especially Europe. Therefore, the USA challenged the revolution and supported the White Army against the Bolsheviks in the Russian Civil War. Nevertheless, the USA could not prevent the emergence of the Soviet Union. Washington could not hinder the establishment of communist governments in countries such as China and Korea either. The Chinese Communist Party led by Mao Zedong won the Chinese Civil War, which resulted in the creation of the People's Republic of China in 1949. The Korean War was another setback of the containment policy. The USA prevented South Korea from becoming socialist; however, it could not inhibit North Korea from becoming a sovereign socialist state. Another failure of the containment was the Vietnam War which was a protracted and costly conflict for the USA. Despite massive military and financial support, Washington was unable to prevent the reunification of North and South Vietnam into a united socialist republic. Furthermore, the international image of the USA was seriously damaged due to inhumane practices in the Vietnam War and other conflicts. Apart

from Asia, socialist revolutions took place in the American continent such as Cuba and Nicaragua. In addition, the USA spent a substantial amount of its resources on the military, nuclear arsenal and intelligence for containing the Soviet Union which led to economic strain to some extent and decrease on the welfare of the American people.

Overall, it can be concluded that the containment in the Cold War was generally a successful policy although it had several failures. Gaddis (2005: 381) also argued that the achievements of the containment outweighed its setbacks.

Table 2: The USA's Motivations, Instrument and Consequences of Containing the Soviet Union

Motivations	Instruments	Consequences
Preventing the Soviet Union from expanding	Truman Doctrine	Prevention of communism from spreading to some extent
Weakening the Soviet Union	Marshall Plan	Making Europe depend on the USA
Preventing communism from spreading	NATO	Impairing the Soviet Union's relations with other socialist states
Strengthening American hegemony over the world	Other international organizations	Forcing the Soviet Union to spend high amounts of resources for armament
	Covert operations and psychological warfare	Failing to prevent the foundation and resurgence of the Soviet Union
	Fragmenting the international communist movement	Failing to inhibit the birth of socialist states
		Spending high amount of resources in containing the Soviet Union

2.2 Containment in the Post-Cold War Period

Following the first section which tackled the containment policy in the Cold War era, this section explores the containment policy in the post-Cold War period. In the first subsection,

the evolution of containment policy is explained alongside the developments in international politics and the USA-Russia bilateral relations. Later, the second subsection provides a background to the context of this study which is the Ukraine Crisis and Conflict. In this part, the study investigates and focuses on the USA's role in the crisis. In the last subsection, the differences between the containment in the Cold War and the post-Cold War periods are analyzed by noting that the containment policy is a general and flexible concept that can be applied under different conditions with modifications.

2.2.1 Evolution of the Containment Policy and the Developments in the Post-Cold War Period

After the Cold War came to an end, the USA remained the sole superpower in a unipolar world. This new period of unchallenged American hegemony allowed Washington to impose considerable influence over international relations, reshaping global dynamics through a range of actions. Benefitting from its global hegemony in a unipolar world order, the USA frequently pursued policies and engaged in actions that sparked controversy and drew criticism from other states, challenging the ideals of multilateralism and global consensus.

In the post-Cold War period, the USA intended to prevent Russia from reemerging as a powerful geopolitical adversary that could challenge the USA's interests on a regional and global basis. Therefore, Washington maintained its containment policy against the Russian Federation following the Soviet Union's collapse. The USA's motivation for preventing the Soviet expansion changed towards expanding the USA's own sphere of influence, particularly in the post-Soviet geography. The motivation of weakening the Soviet Union continued in a more offensive approach to weaken Russia. On the other hand, it can be stated that the USA's aim to prevent communism from spreading became redundant although the new Russian state carried the Soviet Union's ideological aspect to some extent. Benefitting from the stroke that socialism undertook, the USA intended to universalize its economic and social principles based on capitalism.

Under the George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton administrations, the USA continued to employ its containment instruments against the Russian Federation as it applied against the Soviet Union. NATO was maintained as the main military instrument in containing Russia in

the post-Cold War period. In the Cold War, NATO was mostly limited to Western Europe and the motivation behind NATO was containing communism and the Soviet Union with a relatively defensive mindset. In the post-Cold War period, NATO was utilized by the USA with a more offensive mindset, to contain Russia closer towards its mainland.

Following the termination of the Cold War, the Kremlin sought to integrate with Western institutions, even with NATO. Russia joined NATO's Partnership for Peace program in 1994 and the NATO-Russia Founding Act was signed in 1997. However, Washington did not seek to include Russia in the Western institutions. On the contrary, it continued containing Russia by expanding NATO eastwards. Although Russian officials warned the Clinton administration not to expand NATO into former Warsaw Pact countries, Washington took the formal decision to expand NATO into the East (Erlanger, 1993). The first NATO expansion after the Cold War took place in 1999 which incorporated the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland into the Atlantic Alliance. The expansion of NATO into Eastern Europe took place despite the assurances given to Russia. Therefore, NATO's expansion was perceived by Russia as encroaching on its sphere of influence and security interests, leading to a sense of betrayal in Moscow. In addition, NATO's airstrikes on the former Yugoslavian state in 1999 escalated the tension between Russia and the USA further.

In 2004, the second NATO expansion took place as Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Slovenia and Romania joined the Atlantic Alliance. With the second expansion, NATO continued to incorporate several countries which were formal members of the Warsaw Pact. More importantly, Estonia and Latvia which share borders with Russia joined the organization. At the same time, two countries in the Black Sea region, Bulgaria and Romania became members of the Alliance as well. With the 2004 expansion, it became clearer that Russia was being contained as NATO had no other reasonable target to expand against. When the USA and NATO aimed at incorporating Georgia and Ukraine into NATO, Moscow finally concluded that the West led by the USA was not willing to treat Russia as an equal partner and changed its foreign policy from seeking partnership in the West to a more assertive policy in near abroad to respond the USA.

In order to understand the evolution of the containment policy in the post-Cold War period, the post-Cold War developments regarding Russia should be comprehended. The Russian Federation in the 1990s differed from the Soviet Union remarkably. During the Soviet Union period, Russia used to have robust economic structures. After the fall of the Soviet

Union, the Russian Federation experienced a serious economic crisis. Russia experienced hyperinflation and deindustrialization, mainly due to the shock therapy led by Yegor Gaidar in 1992. British economist Guy Standing (2022) wrote that the shock therapy plan proved to be fatal. Apart from the economy, the collapse of the Soviet Union involved substantial negative implications in the social sphere as well. As the new states were born out of the Soviet Union, millions of Russians were left outside their homeland and had to continue their lives in different countries. Particularly, in terms of Ukraine, millions of Russians remained within the borders of the newly-born Ukrainian state.

In the post-Cold War period, Moscow intended to maintain its sphere of influence in the post-Soviet countries to some extent and initiated a new organizational structure. Six members of the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States); Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan signed the Collective Security Treaty in May 1992 while Belarus, Azerbaijan and Georgia joined the Treaty in 1993. The Collective Security Treaty came into force in April 1994 after the completion of national ratification procedures. On the other hand, the USA intended to enhance its sphere of influence through organizational structures such as GUAM. GUAM Advisory Forum was founded in October 1997 with participating countries Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova (About GUAM, n. d.).

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation faced threats of losing more territories. Disintegration became a real risk for Russia as conflicts emerged such as in Chechnya. These separatist movements posed a serious threat to the security and unity of the newly founded Russian Federation.

At the beginning of 2000, Vladimir Putin became the president of the Russian Federation and the country started to recover from the disastrous 1990s. After Putin took over the office, he immediately focused on the Second Chechen Conflict and ensured the unity of the Russian Federation. Putin provided the missing order and improved the country's economy. Under the Putin administration, Moscow nationalized several crucial monopolies and forced the oligarchs to abide by the laws of the Russian Federation. After the gradual recovery of its economy, Russia started to become an important actor again in international politics towards the 2010.

Although Putin is mostly viewed as an intrinsically anti-Western leader, it can be stated that he was rather pro-European and friendly to the USA in his first term. In 2000, Putin

remarked that Russia was a part of the European culture and he could not imagine his country isolated from Europe. Furthermore, he mentioned that it was hard for him to visualize NATO as an enemy and when asked if it is possible that the Kremlin could decide to enter into NATO, he answered that if Moscow's views are taken into consideration as an equal partner, he didn't see why not ("BBC Breakfast", 2000). In Afghanistan, Putin made the decision to assist the USA and provided support for the succeeding American invasion and occupation of the country. Russia served as a liaison for the occupying forces which helped the quick overthrow of the Taliban. Nevertheless, the Bush administration maintained the policy of containment against Russia despite Moscow's intention to form constructive relations. The USA withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2002 and began placing missile systems in Eastern Europe. Washington launched the Iraq invasion in 2003 and this caused Russia alongside other countries to protest the USA.

In addition to the increasing tension in American-Russian bilateral relations, "color revolutions" took place in the former Soviet region. The "Rose Revolution" was executed in Georgia in 2003 and the pro-American Mikhail Saakashvili was granted the leadership of the country. On the other hand, instability escalated in Ukraine in 2004 and the "Orange Revolution" took place as the pro-American Viktor Yushenko came to power instead of Viktor Yanukovich who was the winner of the elections that the USA declared rigged. Nonetheless, the Kremlin did not show an adversary reaction to the "Orange Revolution" and did not intend to isolate the new government (Charap & Colton, 2016: 78). Lastly, the "Tulip Revolution" occurred in Kyrgyzstan in 2005. The USA showed support to these color revolutions which can be interpreted in the context of containing Russia. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, numerous American-backed non-governmental organizations were established throughout Russia in the 1990s and these organizations played a role in destabilizing and undermining the country. Furthermore, these organizations were also established in the other post-Soviet states and they were utilized to enhance the Western sphere of influence. As a consequence, American and European-funded NGOs played a major role in Yushenko and Saakashvili attaining power (Charap & Colton, 2016: 71).

In 2007, Vladimir Putin delivered a speech at the Munich Security Conference that can be considered as a revolt against the unipolar world order and the containment of Russia. In his speech, Putin stated that the unipolar world order was both unacceptable and impossible to exist in the future. Putin reminded the promises that NATO would not expand further and questioned

the target of NATO expansion. He asserted that European organizations such as the OSCE were being turned into an instrument of the USA for American interests (Putin, 2007).

In the Bucharest Summit of April 2008, NATO (2008) openly declared that it would welcome the memberships of Ukraine and Georgia into the Alliance. The Kremlin was evidently against NATO's declaration and its further enlargement into Eastern Europe ("Russia Criticizes," 2008). For a state to become a NATO member, it must not have unresolved territorial disputes (NATO, 2008). For this reason, the Saakashvili government intended to capture Abkhazia and South Ossetia to solve this issue. The Georgian armed forces launched an offensive operation into these regions in August 2008. Russia intervened and gained a swift victory by securing the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. It resulted in Washington's defeat against Moscow in the Near East (Reynolds, 2018). Trenin (2011) noted that for Russia, the conflict in Georgia was actually against the USA as Georgia was only a proxy state.

Although Moscow objected to NATO expansions before 2008, it did not take a strictly active stance against the Atlantic Alliance mainly due to two reasons, it was not powerful enough and the expansions mostly took place in countries that did not have common borders and histories with Russia. Nevertheless, the situation changed with NATO's declaration to welcome Georgia and Ukraine into the organization. At that point, the Kremlin began to oppose further NATO enlargement and containment policy more strictly. The military intervention in Georgia in 2008 can be defined as the first serious response from Moscow against the containment policy.

In 2008, Dmitry Medvedev became the president, replacing Vladimir Putin while Putin took the prime minister role. Although Medvedev was known as a more pro-Western personality compared to Putin, he did not seek a compromise with Washington which did not take Russian national interests into account. In the USA, Barack Obama became the president in 2009 and remained at this post until 2017. During Obama's presidency, some positive outcomes occurred between Moscow and Washington such as the New START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty). In addition, the two countries cooperated on relations with Iran which helped the signing of a nuclear agreement. Nevertheless, the containment policy continued to be applied against Russia which intensified in Ukraine in late 2013. Furthermore, the USA waged wars against Libya and Syria which Russia had close partnerships with. Although Russia did not voice much opposition to the Western intervention in Libya, Moscow showed solid

backing to the Syrian government. The two major powers were extensively involved in the Syrian conflict and came to direct confrontation with each other. Moreover, Edward Snowden, a former intelligence contractor who leaked the global mass surveillance of the US intelligence was sheltered by Russia in 2013 which fueled the tension between the two countries further.

Succeeding Barack Obama, Donald Trump served for one term, from 2017 until 2021. During his administration, Trump deviated from conventional foreign policy strategies to some extent by championing the notion of “America First” to prioritize American national interests above multilateral commitments. Trump criticized European partners for not making enough financial contributions to NATO and questioned the alliance's worth.

In terms of containing Russia, the containment policy continued under the Trump administration. Although there were allegations that Russia intervened into the US presidential elections in 2016 to assist in Trump’s victory, Trump applied the most sanctions against Russia until Joe Biden. In 2017, the Congress approved the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) which placed severe sanctions on Russia for its actions in Ukraine and alleged meddling in the US presidential elections. CAATSA targeted key domains of the Russian economy such as defense, energy and banking which contributed to the containment of Russia. Moreover, the Trump administration continued to provide financial support to the Ukrainian government. Compared to the Obama administration, Trump increased military assistance to Ukraine which fought a civil war against the Donbass forces.

Under the Trump administration, the USA’s official National Security Strategy in 2017 identified Russia and China as the USA’s adversaries (“National Security Strategy”, 2017). In addition to the containment of Russia, the USA also initiated containing China under the Trump administration. The Trump administration considered China as the main challenger of American hegemony and technological leadership. The realization that China was a strategic rival to the USA in the military, technology and economic areas was a major driving force for the Trump administration to contain China.

Joe Biden took over the office in 2021 and followed a different foreign policy mentality compared with Trump, both in general foreign policy and the foreign policy regarding Russia. Unlike Trump, Biden sought to reengage with international organizations and alliances, particularly NATO and the United Nations which was strained by Trump’s “America First”

foreign policy. Biden reaffirmed the USA's significance on NATO for enhancing solidarity with the European members to contain Russia.

The Biden administration took a tougher stance on Russia compared with the Trump administration and applied an aggressive containment policy against Moscow, particularly following Russia's attack in Ukraine. Joe Biden advocated for increased NATO presence near Russia's borders and further expansion of the alliance. Under the Biden administration, the USA provided immense military and financial support to Ukraine. Although the Trump administration aimed to weaken Russia, Trump did not call for a regime change in Russia. On the other hand, Joe Biden opted for an aggressive discourse and called for a regime change.

Contrary to Trump's containment against China, especially in the economic domain, the Biden administration did not persist sanctions against China as much and followed a more positive policy on trade. However, the USA challenged China's sphere of influence and security in the Far East, particularly by providing support to Taiwan. Although the Biden administration continued to contain China to some extent, it focused on containing Russia rather than China.

2.2.2 The Ukraine Crisis

In the post-Cold War Ukraine, Leonid Kuchma, who was the president between 1994 and 2004, mostly took a neutral stance between Russia and the USA. At the beginning of the 21st century, the Ukrainian public had a positive attitude towards Russia. A survey conducted in 2000 revealed that Ukrainians significantly favored closer ties with Russia and the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) compared to the USA and NATO. 75% of the respondents described their view of Russia as favorable and 61% of them stated that they desired Ukraine to join a union with Belarus and Russia. 40% of the Ukrainians supported the reunification of Ukraine and Russia. In terms of seeking closer security relations, 52% of the respondents opted for the CIS and Russia whereas only 14% chose NATO and the USA (Kramer, 2001).

In 2010, Viktor Yanukovich was elected president and shortly after he took over the office, Yanukovich agreed with Moscow for the Russian Black Sea Fleet to remain in Sevastopol for 25 years in exchange for cheaper gas prices. Moreover, the parliament of

Ukraine voted to abandon pursuing NATO membership in June 2010 and Yanukovich signed a new foreign policy doctrine which remarked Ukraine's return to neutrality following the Viktor Yushenko administration.

In late 2013, President Yanukovich who maintained friendly ties with Moscow, refused the EU's economic package deal and opted for further economic cooperation with Russia. Protests were organized against this decision in the capital Kiev and other cities. After the Ukraine's interior minister's decision to disperse the protesters by force, thousands of people joined the protests in the following days. As the tension heightened, the Yanukovich administration entered a series of meetings with the opposition leaders Vitali Klitschko, Arseniy Yatsenyuk and Oleh Tiahnybok. The government and the opposition reached an agreement on 21 February 2014 which was signed by the Russian, German, French and Polish representatives. The agreed pact stipulated that the 2004 constitutional changes which limited the president's authority and were repealed in 2010, would be reinstated within 48 hours, a national unity administration would be established in ten days, all illegal weapons would be surrendered, presidential elections would be conducted in latest December 2014 under new electoral rules and the occupation of public spaces would be terminated (Charap & Colton, 2016: 124). However, despite agreement, the protests did not cease to exist and took a more violent form.

It can be remarked that the USA played a key role in the beginning of the crisis in Ukraine. The protests were openly supported by Washington. American senators such as John McCain addressed the public in the protests ("John McCain," 2013). Non-governmental organizations that played a part in the protests were funded by the Western states, mainly the USA. The founder of the Renaissance Foundation, George Soros, explicitly declared that his foundation played a role in the "independence" process of Ukraine (Stone, 2016). Moreover, a leaked phone call between the US ambassador to Ukraine and Assistant Secretary of the State revealed the role of the USA in the coup ("Transcript of Leaked," 2014). Apparently, Ambassador Geoffrey Pyatt and Assistant Secretary Victoria Nuland were discussing the uprising in Ukraine and who should form the new government. In the phone conversation, Nuland stated that Arseniy Yatsenyuk should be the president and consequently, Yatsenyuk actually became the president after the coup.

Throughout the protests in Maidan, the far-right groups were the most active elements, more than any other groups and political parties (Ishchenko, 2016: 468). Meetings were held between the far-right Svoboda party and American authorities such as Victoria Nuland and John

Mccain (Blumenthal, 2014). During the violent protests which led to the coup, five Georgian ex-soldiers admitted that they received orders from an ex-American army sniper who was linked to the Ukrainian neo-Nazi organization Right Sector. After the coup, Svoboda acquired four ministries alongside the neo-Nazi Azov leader Andriy Biletsky and the Right Sector leader Andriy Parubiy obtaining key positions. This was another hint of the neo-Nazi involvement in the coup (Katchanovski, 2019b).

President Yanukovich was ousted and he flew to Russia meanwhile the opposition forces captured the government buildings and seized power. Anti-Russian speeches of the new Ukrainian officials and far-right parties locating themselves into the coalition concerned the Russian population in Ukraine (Charap & Colton, 2016: 126). The Russian population revolted in Donbass and Crimea. On the other hand, the new Ukrainian government launched an “Anti-terrorist Operation” into the Donbass region which was later renamed as the “Joint Forces Operation”. The Russian armed forces who were already in Crimea due to security agreements with Kiev secured the peninsula. On 1 March 2014, the Russian parliament unanimously approved the deployment of Russian troops into Ukraine. Furthermore, Crimea was incorporated into the Russian Federation with the referendum on 16 March. Following the Crimean referendum, the USA and its allies imposed sanctions on the Russian entities and individuals which included freeze of assets, travel bans and prohibition of business activities in the Western countries that applied the sanctions. The individuals which were subjected to the sanctions were mostly Russian officials, businessmen and former Ukrainian government officials. The number of sanctioned entities and people rose in the coming years.

Donetsk People’s Republic and Lugansk People’s Republic were founded in April, 2014. The peace talks between the republics and Kiev were organized through Minsk Agreement in 2014 and 2015. Nevertheless, the peace process was not actually realized. Some delegates in the parliament of Ukraine advocated using the agreement to buy time until they could use force to retake Donbass (Charap & Colton, 2016: 142). In addition, according to the leaders of the signing parties, the Minsk Protocols were signed by Western officials for gaining Ukraine time to prepare its armed forces against the Donbass Republics. Ukrainian president of the term, Petro Poroshenko, said that the Minsk deal was used to gain time to militarize and the Agreements “meant nothing”. He stated that the NATO instructors were invited to Ukraine and the Ukrainian army was built during the Minsk process. (“Minsk Deal,” 2022; “Minsk Agreements Allowed,” 2023). German president of the term, Angela Merkel, admitted that the

Minsk Agreements were signed to give Ukraine time to gather strength (“Attempt to Give,” 2022). Moreover; French president of the term, François Hollande, remarked that the Ukrainian army was better trained and equipped thanks to the Minsk Agreements (“Hollande Confirms,” 2022). Thus, the Minsk Agreements did not bring a peaceful resolution to the crisis. The civil war between the Ukrainian government and the Donbass republics lasted for eight years. While the civil war in Ukraine continued, the USA made significant financial commitments to the Ukrainian government. For instance, Washington set aside 789 million dollars in 2016 and 3.4 billion dollars in the 2017 fiscal year in order to increase its military presence in East Central Europe (Charap & Colton, 2016: 162). As another development, the USA withdrew from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty in 2019.

In late 2021, Moscow proposed explicit security agreements both to the USA and to NATO to resolve the Ukraine Crisis (“Russia Reveals,” 2021). The Kremlin asked for guarantees from the White House to cease NATO expansion including Ukraine, non-existence of short and intermediate-range missiles and mutual non-deployment of nuclear weapons abroad. The US and NATO officials declared that they would not consider ceasing further NATO enlargement (“Washington Says,” 2022). The USA insisted on NATO expansion into Ukraine although the Kremlin consistently declared that Ukraine is a red line for Moscow. On the other hand, the President Biden stated that he did not accept anyone’s red lines while China backed the demands of Russia (“Biden Says,” 2021; “China Fully Supports,” 2021).

Prior to the beginning of Russia’s military campaign in Ukraine, the USA decided to withdraw its warship from the Black Sea and ordered the departure of its soldiers from Ukraine to other European countries (“U.S Opted,” 2022; Macias, 2022). Furthermore, the USA initially refused to provide Ukraine certain types of weapons that could hit targets inside Russia (Lubold & Youssef, 2022; Holland, 2022). From these actions, it can be interpreted that Washington did not aim to confront Moscow directly but weaken Russia through a proxy war in Ukraine. After the intervention in Georgia in 2008, the second and the biggest response of Moscow against the containment came with the decision to launch a military campaign into Ukraine on February 24, 2022, after Moscow declared that the Donbass and Lugansk Republics were unified into the Russian Federation on February 21, 2022. This changed the course of the Ukraine Crisis, turning the crisis into the biggest military conflict in Europe after WWII. The Ukraine Conflict became the central focus of international politics and security. The USA’s containment policy evolved and became more aggressive after the initiation of the Russian attack on Ukraine. This

study denominates the new phase of the containment policy since 2022 as “aggressive containment”.

When the Ukraine Conflict began, Russia intended to swiftly capture the eastern part of Ukraine, mainly the Donbass region and also take control of Kiev. Although the Russian forces made quick and effective advances at first, the number of Russian troops allocated to the operation was quite low compared with the Ukrainian forces and Russian forces were not able to capture Kiev. The Russian army still captured an important part of the East and South of Ukraine, relieving the Donbass forces. Negotiations for peace were held between the two sides particularly in the first couple of months with the mediation of Türkiye. However, a peace agreement was not signed. Gerhard Schröder, former Chancellor of Germany, who took part as a mediator in the Ukraine Conflict remarked that the Ukrainian leadership was ready to make concessions to Russia but the US administration did not allow them to make peace with Moscow (“Gerhard Schröder”, 2023). After the Russian advances, referendums were organized in Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions and they were integrated into the Russian Federation. Following this development, Ukraine conducted a counter-offensive and it was able to capture back some of its lost territories. After the Ukrainian counter-offensive in 2022, the situation was mostly stable between Ukraine and Russia while the Russian forces recaptured some territory which it lost during Kiev’s offensive. The Ukrainian government launched a new counter-offensive in June 2023 but despite colossal losses, the Ukrainian forces did not make any noteworthy gains and were only able to capture some villages. In 2024, the Russian forces took the initiative and made some territorial gains.

2.2.3 Differences between the Containment in the Cold War and Post-Cold War Periods

The USA’s containment policy against the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation carry different features although the containment concept is mainly the same. Some of the differences are analyzed below.

Ideology was a key component of the containment policy in the Cold War. The USA and the Soviet Union represented two strictly opposite ideologies which were inherently adversary to each other. The USA possessed a market-oriented capitalist economy with a strong emphasis on private enterprise and containing the Soviet Union also meant that containing the

communist ideology. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation was swiftly thrown into a capitalist system through the shock therapy. Nevertheless, Russia still preserved socialist values to some extent. Moreover, after Putin became the president, the position of the state in the national economy was cemented again. Apart from the economy, there is still a feeling among the Russian public that they belong to the Soviet world, most of the Russian population highly respect the Soviet socialist era and long for the Soviet times which is an indicator of the socialist ideology's existence. A study in 2018 found that 66% of Russians regret the collapse of the Soviet Union and another study found that 75% of the Russian population believed that the Soviet era was the best time in the history of Russia ("Back to USSR," 2018; Deriglazova, 2021). It must be noted that the ideological views of the USA and Russia continue to contradict today. The USA is a strong advocate of globalism, Atlanticism and "liberal" values such as LGBT rights. On the other hand, Russia stands up for nationalism, Eurasianism and the preservation of traditional values. Consequently, although the role of ideology is not as major as in the Cold War, it is still important in the containment of Russia in the post-Cold War era.

Comparing the containment in the Cold War era to the containment in the post-Cold War period, the latter is more offensive. The containment policy in the Cold War was mainly defensive although it carried offensive features as well. In the bipolar world of the Cold War, it was understandable to some extent that the USA contained the Soviet Union for defensive purposes. On the other hand, the USA kept containing the Russian Federation after the end of the Cold War in a more offensive way. While NATO was limited mostly to America and Western Europe throughout the Cold War, Washington later expanded the organization into Central Europe and Eastern Europe. Throughout the Cold War, the Russian mainland was mostly contained from the outskirts of the republics of the Soviet Union. In the post-Cold War period, the containment policy directly threatened the borders of the Russian Federation such as Baltic countries, Georgia and Ukraine. In particular, since 2022, Washington's policy against Russia through Ukraine reached a more offensive phase as this study names this phase of the policy as "aggressive containment". The shift into the aggressive phase also stemmed from the fact that Russia launched a military campaign into Ukraine.

The power distribution of the international system in the Cold War and post-Cold War eras is different. In the Cold War era, the power distribution was bipolar with the USA and Soviet Union being the two superpowers of the world. The post-Cold War began with a unipolar

world order with the global hegemony of the USA as the White House shaped international politics and the world economy. Nonetheless, the world gradually approached towards a multipolar power distribution, especially since 2010. The Chinese economy achieved record growth rates in consecutive years which eventually made China a superpower. Russia recovered from its difficult days in the 1990s and gathered its strength back. Other BRICS countries; India, South Africa and Brazil managed to become regional powers and further diversified the power distribution of the world. On the other hand, Europe made considerable progress with Germany leading the economy of continental Europe. Washington had difficulty in maintaining its global hegemony.

Compared with the Cold War era, the USA has less support worldwide in the containment of Russia today. During the Cold War, Washington had better control of its allies. Today, the American influence in the international arena is not as strong and there is international support for Russia, especially from Asian and African countries.

This research emphasizes that containment is not a rigid concept but a general concept that can be applied with different instruments and intensity levels. In this context, this study argues that the USA applied the containment policy against the Soviet Union and then against the Russian Federation with various modifications.

3. THE CONTAINMENT POLICY THROUGH UKRAINE

This chapter serves as the centerpiece of this study, encompassing the main discussion and findings that address the research question and its sub-questions. Comprising three sections, this chapter explores the motivations, instruments and consequences of the containment policy through Ukraine. The first section addresses the “why” part of the research question, investigating the primary motivations behind the containment policy. These motivations are explained in three subsections; in the order of weakening Russia, regime change and maintaining American global hegemony. In the second section, attention shifts to the “how” component of the research question, aiming to identify the instruments employed in the containment policy through Ukraine. This section categorizes the instruments into four groups as political, military, economic and non-conventional and expresses each category in separate subsections. The third and final section focuses on addressing the “what” part of the research question by investigating the consequences of the USA’s containment policy through Ukraine and the Ukraine Conflict. This section comprises six subsections, each dedicated to analyzing the implications for various actors involved. The first subsection examines Russia’s responses to the USA’s containment policy and the second subsection elaborates on the study’s argument that the containment policy triggered a new cold war. The rest of the four subsections categorize the consequences according to the different actors which are respectively the USA, Russia, Europe and Ukraine.

3.1 The Motivations behind the Containment Policy through Ukraine

This section investigates the motivations behind Washington’s containment policy against Russia. This study argues that the main motivation behind the containment is to weaken Russia. The indicators of this objective are found in the USA’s National Security Strategy documents, the US officials’ discourse and think tank organizations’ reports among others which this study brings together. Furthermore, this section investigates whether Russia is still

worth of weakening by the USA and it calls attention to the rising power of Russia in the new millennium. This study argues that a more assertive objective behind the containment was to trigger a regime change in Russia which was voiced by the top official of the USA, President Joe Biden. The last subsection points out the shifting global dynamics of the world and remarks that the power of the USA has been waning. By analyzing the declining power of the USA and the enhancing power of Russia in contrast, this study claims that through the containment policy, Washington aims to prevent Moscow from being a major power that could threaten its global hegemony.

3.1.1 Weakening Russia

The USA's 2021 Interim National Security Strategy emphasized that Russia was committed to expanding its influence worldwide and the 2022 National Security Strategy remarked "constraining Russia" as a global priority by stating that Russia followed an imperialist foreign policy and undertook attempts to damage sovereign nations and multilateral institutions ("Interim National", 2021; "National Security Strategy", 2022). These points in the strategy documents indicated that the USA perceived Russia as a rising major adversary and it aimed to weaken Russia. In addition to the National Security Strategy documents, The US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin clearly stated that they wanted "to see Russia weakened" as a goal of the USA (Borger, 2022).

RAND Corporation, a key think tank organization which has considerable effect in shaping American foreign policy, published a report titled "Overextending and Unbalancing Russia" in 2019 (Dobbins et al., 2019). The report underlined that Russia is still a strong state and a peer competitor to the USA in some key areas. Regarding the competition with Russia, RAND offered "cost-imposing options" to unbalance and extend Russia. One of the measures offered by the organization was to apply deeper trade and financial sanctions against Moscow, particularly comprehensive and multi-lateral sanctions, noting that the success of the sanctions would depend on the other countries to join them. This report also recommended encouraging the emigration of Russian skillful workforce and well-educated young generations to damage Russia in the long term. In terms of geopolitics, RAND's report emphasized providing lethal aid to Ukraine to exploit Russia's biggest external vulnerability. More importantly, the report

allocated ample space to the military domain by noting that increasing American troops in Europe and deploying a greater number of NATO forces on Russia's border would overextend and unbalance Russia. On the maritime domain, RAND remarked that enhancing the American and NATO naval force presence near Russia and strengthening its Black Sea buildup would discomfort Russia. Regarding the air and space, the report noted that deploying more tactical nuclear weapons near Russia alongside relocating bombers and fighters closer to the Russian land could be utilized in overextending and unbalancing Russia.

The goal of weakening Russia was also supported by some former American diplomats. For instance, William Courtney (2023), a former US ambassador who works for the RAND Corporation, argues that Russia had never been more isolated and the West should take advantage of the hardships that Russia had. Furthermore, he advocated the idea that rebellions in Russia could be encouraged by the West. The former President of Ukraine before the 2014 coup, Viktor Yanukovich, stated that Ukraine was designated by the West as the territory which "a total weakening of Russia" should begin ("Ukraine Risks," 2022). O'Hanlon and Sisson (2022) argue that weakening Russia was legitimate, however, it should not be exaggerated and the goal should not be the destruction of Russia. The writers asserted that pursuing the destruction of Russia was a dangerous policy by exemplifying cornered Germany after the end of World War I.

The USA contained the Soviet Union throughout the post-WWII era and it has been containing Russia for three decades. The main motivation behind the USA's containment policy in the Cold War was weakening the Soviet Union and the main objective after the Cold War remained as weakening the Russian Federation. Thus, it can be remarked that the containment's primary purpose remained the same.

The question that whether Russia is still a major power needed to be weakened by the USA may appear as a puzzle. To be able to answer this question, Russia's sources of power and its development shall be comprehended. The Russian Empire had been a great power from the 18th century until World War I. Before the termination of the World War I, Russians destroyed the Tsarist monarchy and became the founding element of the Soviet Union which maintained a strong existence until its dissolution. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Russia lost significant land and population while its economy and military were seriously damaged. The Russian Federation was in a dire situation for a decade. However, ruling a gigantic territory with rich resources, possessing a considerable population and traditionally being a major state;

Russia was still a considerable regional player and carried the potential to be a great power again which posed a risk for the USA.

Taking advantage of Russia's weak situation in the post-Cold War period, the USA grew its sphere of influence in Eurasia. These regions can be specified as Eastern Europe, the Baltic, Caucasus and Central Asia regions. Russians had a strong influence in these areas beginning with the Czarist period and enhancing in the Soviet era. The Soviet Union created strong bonds in these regions not only politically and economically but culturally and socially as well. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the USA found a unique chance to exploit these regions. By expanding NATO into Central Europe and Eastern Europe, Washington enhanced its political influence in the post-Soviet regions.

It should be pointed out that Ukraine is not just any neighboring state to Russia. Ukraine is a crucial country to weaken Russia because it can be described as the soft underbelly of Russia. Ukraine shares a massive border with Russia which was longer than two thousand kilometers and it had a significant control range over the Black Sea. Furthermore, considering the proximity of Ukraine to the Russian mainland, the USA found an opportunity to threaten Moscow with missiles from a closer range. Apart from its geographical importance, Ukraine is also crucial for Russia as the two countries have deep historical, cultural and ethnic bonds. Therefore, Ukraine is a country that Moscow could not tolerate losing its sphere of influence to Washington. On the other hand, it can be stated that containing Russia through Ukraine is important to weaken Russia.

In the framework of the containment policy, weakening Russia entailed mainly political and economic aspects.

In the Cold War period, the Soviet Union possessed a remarkably high political power. Overthrowing the Czarist regime, the Soviets became a flag-bearer of socialist revolution in the world. In 1919, Moscow spearheaded the foundation of the Comintern (Communist International) in which the Soviet Union gathered many of the world's revolutionary organizations and enhanced its political power. As the Soviet Union won defeated the Axis forces in WWII, this victory helped the prestige of the Soviet Union to peak. Although the Comintern was dissolved during WWII, another international organization, the Cominform (Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers' Parties) was founded in 1947. As a response to the establishment of NATO in 1949, the Warsaw Pact was founded in 1955. Poland,

Hungary, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Bulgaria, Romania and Albania became members of the Pact alongside the Soviet Union. With the foundation of the Warsaw Pact, the Soviet Union further strengthened its political power.

Russia incurred a loss in political power with the Soviet Union's dissolution and it was unable to restore its power for at least a decade after the foundation of the Russian Federation. However, Moscow improved its political power considerably in the 2000s. Moscow constructed stronger relations with its neighboring countries, began to take the initiative in Eurasia and then made its presence felt in the other parts of the world. One of the main reasons behind Russia's growing political power was its advocacy for a multipolar world order. A multipolar world was desired by not only Russia but many countries. Regional powers and developing countries were not content with American political hegemony and they supported a more diverse and fair distribution of power in the world. As the political power of Russia grew, the USA's political power declined in the last two decades. As Washington viewed Russia's enhanced political power as a threat to itself, it aimed to diminish Moscow's power by isolating Russia and urging other countries to limit cooperation with Moscow, particularly following the beginning of the Ukraine Conflict.

In terms of the economy sphere, although the Russian economy was in a difficult shape in the 1990s, it started to recover after Putin took over the office in 2000. Towards the end of his presidential term in 2008, it can be stated that the Russian government achieved control over the oligarchs by making them to make business in a way that would benefit the Russian state. Several critical monopolies were secured under the body of the state which furthered facilitated the regulations and control over the national economy. Except for the internal recovery of the economy, the Russian Federation strengthened economic relations with the neighboring regions. In particular, Moscow established strong ties with the EU and China. The economic ties between the European countries and Russia were established on the foundation of the energy ties. The creation of the energy relations dates back to the 1960s with the building of the first natural gas pipelines. After the Cold War came to an end, the energy ties continued and an interdependence emerged between the Russian Federation and the EU due to advanced mutual benefits. Russia received a considerable amount of hard currency for its economy and Europe was able to develop its industries thanks to Russian gas. With beginning of the third millennium, the economic collaboration further diversified through new pipelines.

Washington was concerned about the strong economic collaboration between Russia and Europe. Furthermore, the booming trade and growing economic partnership between Moscow and Beijing alarmed Washington as the USA perceived the two countries as the most serious threats to itself. To constrain the Russian economy from further development, Washington targeted weakening the Russian economy by imposing sanctions. By aggressively containing Russia through Ukraine, the USA aimed at draining Russian resources and inhibiting it from conducting an effective trade with other countries.

3.1.2 Regime change

Weakening Russia is an apparent motivation behind Washington's containment policy against Moscow. A more assertive goal of the containment policy is regime change. The discourse of the US administration regarding regime change in Russia emerged strongly after the Ukraine Conflict erupted in 2022. President Joe Biden expressed a desire for regime change by articulating that "Putin can not remain in power" and later described the Russian president as a "war criminal" (Breuninger, 2022; O'Connor, 2022). Moreover, Biden expressed that sanctions against Russia were not prevent anything from happening but rather they were imposed to demonstrate to the Russian public what Putin caused for them ("Remarks by President Biden", 2022). This statement alongside others reflected Washington's rooted regime change strategy on Russia as the sanctions were not to prevent Russia from invading Ukraine but punishing Russians and inflicting a regime change (Wade, 2022). Another top official, former US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland, clearly stated that current Russia was not the Russia that "they wanted". Nuland affirmed that they wanted to see a Western-oriented Russia unlike what the course of the Russian leadership chose ("Victoria Nuland, 2024"). Apart from the government; a Republican US senator, Lindsey Graham, called for the assassination against Putin saying that someone should "take out" the Russian president (Chappell, 2022). In addition, a close ally of the USA, Canada's foreign minister stated that their goal was not only to isolate and weaken Russia but also to change the regime in Moscow ("Regime Change", 2023).

In the RAND Corporation's report which was mentioned in the previous subsection, brought forward activities that could inflict a regime change for overextending and unbalancing

Russia (Dobbins et al., 2019). The report remarked that diminishing faith in the electoral system of Russia could be intended but this would be challenging due to the state's control over media sources. On the other hand, RAND noted that creating a perception that the Russian regime is not following the public interest could extend Russia although it would be a risky method. Furthermore, the report identified encouraging domestic protests as another method to distract and destabilize the regime.

The idea of regime change in Russia found some support in the West. For instance, Courtney (2022) argues that the West's long-term peace with Moscow could be achieved only through a regime change and the possibility of a regime change in Russia seemed more feasible compared to the past. Fücks and Sannikova-Franck (2023) put forward that the Wagner rebellion on June 23, 2023 demonstrated the fragility of the Russian government and pointed out that the West should look for potential regime change scenarios in Russia. Machnikowski (2017) notes that Moscow's aggressive actions in Ukraine and deteriorating relations with the West made the Russian Federation come closer to a regime change.

On the other hand, some considered regime change in Russia unlikely, unworthy or dangerous. Smith-Boyle (2022) points out that a considerable amount of people supported the Russian government despite the Western view which assumed Russia as an autocracy. Menon and DePetrìs (2022) remark that the desire in the West for regime change in Russia could result negatively as the country would not move towards "pro-Western democracy" and someone even more "ruthless" than Putin could become the new leader of Russia. Alkhouli (2023) writes that the notion of Putin's ouster would put an end to the war in Ukraine is erroneous because a change in Russian leadership would not result in a fundamental shift in Moscow's Ukraine strategy. In addition, French President Macron stated that all the other alternatives to Putin were worse in his opinion ("Russia Tells Macron", 2023).

In the subject of the USA's regime change goal in Russia, it should be noted that Russia possesses a strong internal state layout which Putin himself has been designing for the last two decades. The only incident which seemed to threaten the stability of the Russian government came in June 2023. Wagner armed forces' leader Yevgeny Prigozhin's actions against the government, which could be described as a coup attempt, did not draw support from the public and failed to inflict serious damage to the Russian government and the president.

President Putin and the ruling party United Russia are both quite popular in the country. Putin secured 56% of the votes in the 2018 presidential election and the United Russia party received 50% of the votes in the 2021 legislative election. The second most popular party in the 2021 election was the Communist Party which secured 19% of the votes. In the 2018 presidential election, the nominee of the Communist Party Pavel Grudinin received the second highest vote with nearly 12%. The Communist Party is at least as firm as the United Russia Party in the USA and Ukraine issues.

It was promoted that Putin would be under serious pressure and could lose his popularity following the Ukraine Conflict. However, one month after the Russian troops entered Ukraine, Putin's popularity among Russian citizens rose from 71% to 83%. (Odobreniye Institutov, Reytingi Partiy I Politikov, 2022). The popularity ratings reflected the 2024 presidential elections as well. Vladimir Putin was reelected by collecting a record rate of votes with 87.2% in the presidential election which the citizens made high participation with 77.5%.

3.1.3 Maintaining Global Hegemony

The third motivation behind the USA's containment policy toward Russia is to maintain its global hegemony in international politics. The Cold War era ended with the Soviet Union's disintegration in 1991 and the collapse of the bipolar power structure that characterized the geopolitical landscape for decades. The USA began to enjoy global hegemony in the post-Cold War era as the neo-conservatives preferred to call themselves "benevolent hegemon" (Dorrien, 2004). During the unipolar world order, the White House was able to shape the world as it desired without serious opposition from other international actors. Counting on the "American primacy", the USA took decisions and actions without the consent of other global and regional actors. In particular, the Bush administration initiated a "global war" after 9/11, claiming that "Islamic terror" constituted a major threat to the USA and the world. Washington intended to justify its actions such as invading Iraq and Afghanistan with this pretext and false allegations such as the adversary countries possessing weapons of mass destruction. Benefitting from this perspective, Washington established numerous military bases around the world, especially in the Middle East and Eastern Europe. Throughout the post-Cold War period, the USA managed to destabilize and destroy anti-American governments. Furthermore, by spreading its sphere of

influence, Washington took a more assertive stance in Eastern Europe against the Russian Federation by incorporating ex-Soviet countries into the Atlantic Alliance.

The unipolar world order started to fade as the USA lost power towards the end of the first decade of the new millennium (Layne, 2006; Layne, 2009; MacDonald & Parent, 2011). The United States' power and influence have declined due to factors such as the rise of other major powers, shifting geopolitical dynamics and economic changes. The American primacy underwent a regression as other countries such as Russia and China became major powers while the middle powers of the world such as India, Brazil and South Africa grew stronger. In addition, the European countries further enhanced their economic capabilities compared to the 1990s. On the other hand, concerns regarding the strength and durability of the American economy intensified following the financial crisis in 2008. Moreover, the USA encountered difficulties in global governance frameworks and multilateral institutions. In the early 21st century, the USA's military engagements in the Middle East and Afghanistan caused overextension and resource depletion while internal elements such as political polarization contributed to an internally divided USA. With the new millennium, the power distribution of the world gradually moved away from the unipolar order. Particularly in the beginning of the 2010s, it was more evident that the power distribution of the world was gradually becoming multipolar.

Even though experiencing a disastrous decade, Russia managed to recover at the beginning of the 21st century and became a challenger to the USA's global hegemony. Russia is not only a major power itself, but it also causes a multiplier effect by leading the creation of the multipolar world with its international activities such as in BRICS and Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Washington had to compete with Russia in different regions such as Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East. On the other hand, China is a stronger power than Russia and the USA has increased tension with Beijing as well, especially under the Trump administration. Although China is a stronger power than Russia, Washington opted to contain Russia more assertively. Trenin (2018) argued that the USA focused on the containment of Russia rather than China as it viewed Moscow as weaker and more provocative.

The USA's 2017 National Security Strategy document described Russia and China as revisionist powers and remarked that Russia desired a power status again ("National Security Strategy", 2017). Furthermore, the 2021 Interim National Security Strategic Guidance referred to the USA's growing rivalry with Russia alongside China and asserted that Russia was

committed to taking a disruptive stance on international affairs (“Interim National”, 2021). In light of these strategy documents, Washington perceived Russia as a serious threat to its global hegemony. To be able to prevent Russia from reaching a hegemon status and strengthen its own global hegemony, the USA had to consolidate NATO and unite the European countries under its leadership. NATO had an existential crisis which emerged with the termination of the Cold War. In terms of the organizational security structure of Europe, there were initiatives of the European countries to create an independent body and framework from NATO such as the “Common European Security and Defense Policy” and there were talks of European countries establishing their own military organization. For this reason, Washington had a fear of Europe becoming more independent from the USA and it consistently looked for ways to justify NATO’s existence. Due to these reasons, this study argues that the USA aimed to consolidate its global hegemony by mobilizing NATO and other regional and global actors in its containment efforts against Russia.

3.2 The Instruments of Containing Russia through Ukraine

The USA employed numerous tools to contain Russia which this research categorized under the groups of political, economic, military and non-conventional instruments. In terms of political tools, the USA utilized diplomacy in order to mobilize other countries’ governments to take part in the containment efforts against Russia. This research questions whether the other countries consented to get involved in these efforts and elaborates on a few countries to ascertain if the rest of the world agreed to join the USA’s containment efforts against Russia. Later, the European Union and its transformation over the years is examined in the context of the containment policy. Furthermore, the Ukrainian government is evidently considered as another main political tool of the containment policy by this study. In the second subsection, the study tackles the military instruments and lists them as NATO, the Ukrainian army and non-state armed actors. This study questions the objective of NATO expansions and its role in the containment of Russia. Later, the USA’s military aid into the Ukrainian armed forces is examined. Lastly, the study focuses on the controversial Ukrainian non-state armed actors and their usage by the USA. In the third subsection, this research provides a detailed examination of the economic tools that were employed by the USA to constrain the Russian economy.

Lastly, the fourth subsection deals with the non-conventional tools employed by Washington which this study lists as information warfare, intelligence and covert operations.

3.2.1 Political Instruments

The USA intended to contain Russia employing its political instruments. Specifically, the Biden administration intended to mobilize the countries against Russia through diplomacy. Washington encouraged other countries to abide by the sanctions applied against Moscow. However, the USA could not fully convince other countries to assist itself in the containment of Russia.

Certain NATO members such as Türkiye, Hungary and Croatia did not fully abide by the sanctions imposed by the USA to contain Russia. Among them, Türkiye has been a long-standing partner of Russia, especially in the economic sphere. Even though Türkiye condemned Russia's incorporation of Crimea in 2014 and the incursion in 2022, Türkiye did not join the sanctions applied against Russia. In particular, Ankara remained neutral throughout the conflict and took the role of a mediator between Kiev and Moscow. In addition, some Russian businesses which quit the Western markets relocated to Türkiye and Russian capital was let into the country.

A NATO and an EU member, Hungary, opposed the sanctions against Russia several times (Gotev, 2022; Ozturk, 2023; Jack 2023). Furthermore, Budapest signed a new gas deal with Moscow in 2022, extending the amount of imported Russian gas ("Hungary to Buy," 2022). In the military domain, Budapest refused to send weapons to Ukraine and decided not to allow weapons to be sent to Ukraine through Hungary (Swaton, 2023; "Hungary Will Not," 2022). Moreover, Budapest did not support training Ukrainian soldiers in a training mission organized by the EU either (Ory, 2022).

Another NATO and EU member, Croatia did not quite abide by the USA's containment policy against Russia. The Croatian president Milanovic displayed his stance on the conflict and remarked that he was not pro-Ukrainian. He stated that he did not consider Ukraine an ally and accused Kiev of glorifying war criminals who were mass executors of Jewish and Polish people ("The Croatian President," 2022; "President: I Am", 2022). In the subject of military

support to Ukraine, the Croatian parliament rejected to provide training to Ukrainian soldiers as part of an EU mission (Milenkovic, 2023). The president Milanovic stated that Croatia would not send any troops to fight against Russia. On the contrary, Zagreb would recall its troops in the case of an escalation (“Croatia to Recall,” 2022). Furthermore, he called attention to reaching a deal in Ukraine which would take Russian national security interests (Trkanjec, 2022).

In the 2023 Slovakian parliamentary election, Robert Fico and his SMER party which opposed the aid to Ukraine won the most votes and halted sending further military aid shortly after the elections. The Slovakian President Fico also stated that he would not support the sanctions against Russia if the sanctions had a negative impact on Slovakia (“Slovakia’s Fico,” 2023).

Europe was not the only continent where Washington aimed to mobilize other countries diplomatically regarding sanctions on Moscow. The US Senate introduced a bill named “Countering Malign Russian Activities in Africa” in 2022 in order to prevent the Russian sphere of influence in the continent. However, this bill was not welcomed by African countries such as South Africa (“Countering Malign,” 2022; “US Anti-Russia,” 2023). The South African Defense Minister Thandi Modise stated that the USA threatened the African countries over any kind of links with Russia (Steinhauser & Faucon, 2023).

Through diplomacy, containment against Russia was applied from the socio-cultural dimension as well. The sanctions and exclusion were not only against the Russian Federation but also its citizens, society and culture. Russian citizens were denied by the Western countries in terms of visas and residence permits while Russian athletes and sports clubs were banned from international competitions and even the Russian literature faced bans in the West. Hence, it can be noted that containment took the shape of a civilizational policy to some extent.

The USA utilized the European Union widely as a political instrument in containing Russia. Washington dictated its anti-Russian discourse and its containment policy to the European Union throughout the years (Kazarinova & Taisheva, 2019: 22).

In the first years of the 2000s, the relations between the European countries and Russia were positive. The EU and Russia signed the Strategic Partnership Declaration in 2003, with the goal of deepening collaboration in areas such as economic integration, justice affairs, education and research. The EU countries had established strong economic partnership with the

Russian Federation and enjoyed inexpensive Russian energy which greatly contributed to their industries and economies.

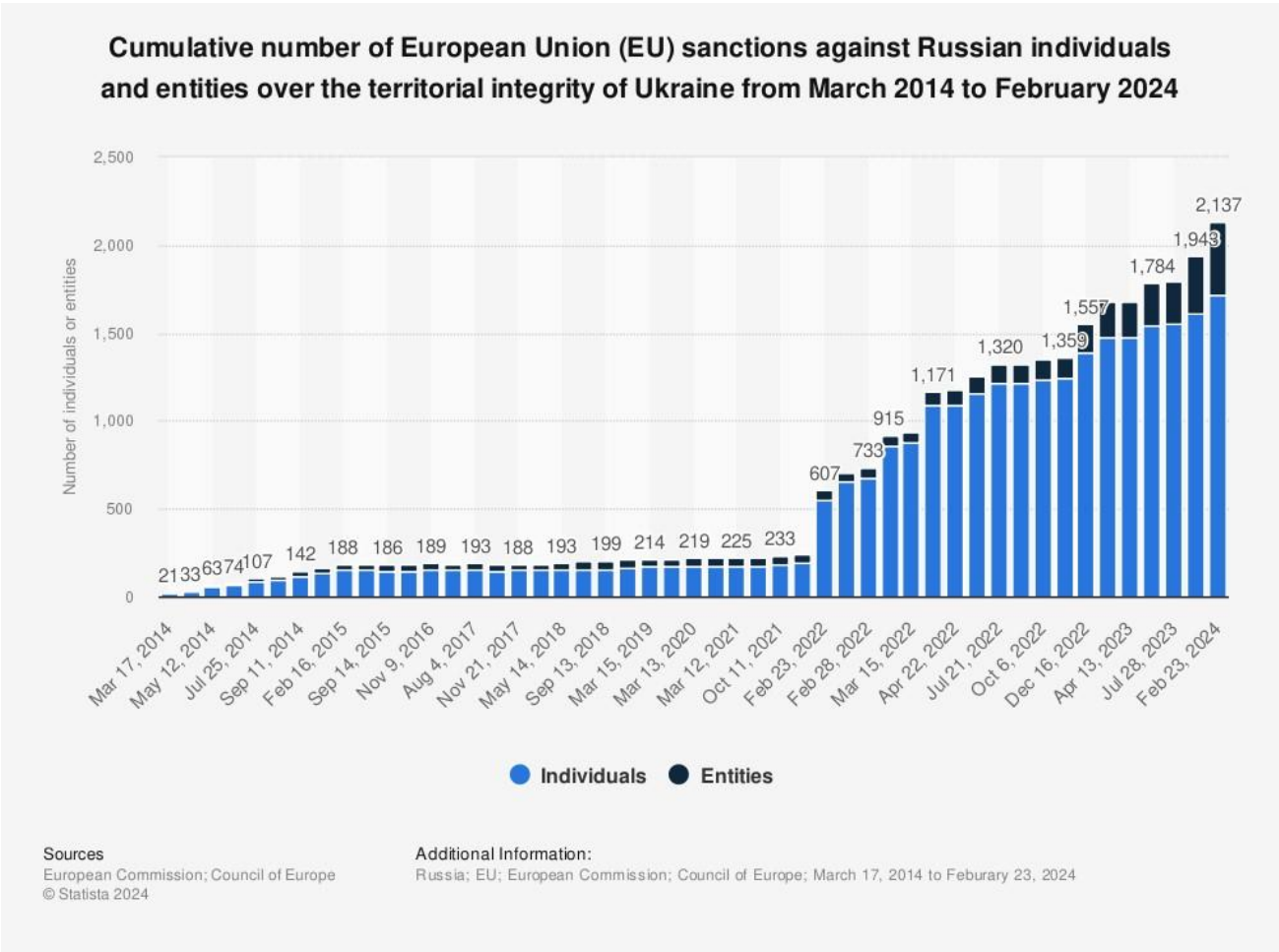
The EU launched its Eastern Partnership policy framework in 2009 to strengthen connections with six Eastern European countries that are Azerbaijan, Belarus, Moldova, Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine. However, expanding towards the East by adding new members to the organization, the EU did not seriously consider the membership of Russia into the organization. On the contrary, the EU gradually became an instrument of containing Russia which amplified the American sphere of influence towards Eastern Europe.

NATO and the EU have been collaborating since the early years of the EU's foundation. Joint projects and initiatives were pursued in security and defense areas between the two organizations. The EU and NATO established cooperation mechanisms such as the "Berlin Plus" agreements which gave the EU access to NATO's military assets and capabilities.

In the last decade, it can be stated that the USA's level of influence on the EU increased. Particularly, in the last few years and starting in 2022, the EU acted more in harmony with the USA's containment policy on Russia. The EU began to play a military role for containing Russia through the conflict in Ukraine. For instance, the EU initiated a military mission to train 15,000 Ukrainian soldiers (Council of the EU, 2022). The German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock admitted that as the European Union, they were fighting a war against Russia (Norton, 2023). In January 2023, the EU and NATO signed a joint declaration on consolidating their cooperation to confront security threats and challenges posed by Russia and China. The two organizations stated that they would use military, political and economic tools to pursue their shared objectives. This document was important as it displayed Russia as a direct adversary of the European Union ("Joint Declaration on," 2023).

Throughout the Ukraine Crisis, the EU froze Russian assets which totaled almost 200 billion Euros. Furthermore, the EU applied numerous sanctions against the Russian Federation which targeted Russian entities and individuals. Thus, it can be stated that the EU played an important role in the containment of Russia, particularly in the economic sphere.

Graph 1: The European Union’s Sanctions against Russian Individuals and Entities between 2014-2024 (“Russian Individuals and Entities,” 2024)



Besides NATO and the EU, the USA intended to make use of other international organizations and bodies for containing Russia. Washington introduced resolutions to the United Nations and some of them were adapted such as reparation payments from Russia to Ukraine (“General Assembly adopts resolution,” 2022). However, in the United Nations, many countries opposed and abstained in anti-Russian resolutions. In another organization, G-8, Russia was evicted with Washington’s initiative following the annexation of Crimea.

After the coup in 2014, the government of Ukraine was shaped by Washington and it became a crucial political instrument for containing Russia since then. With Russia’s initiation of the military campaign into Ukraine, the USA moved on to a new phase in its containment policy which can be described as “aggressive containment”. The containment policy’s

aggressive phase came with unprecedented military and financial support to the Ukrainian government. Besides military and financial aid, the USA supported the Ukrainian government from an ideological aspect as well. Kiev and Washington have voted against the United Nations resolution which condemned the glorification of Nazism since 2014. In 2021, they were the only states to vote against this resolution (“General Assembly Adopts 59”, 2021).

3.2.2 Military Instruments

North Atlantic Treaty Organization, a crucial military instrument in the Cold War to contain the Soviet Union, was founded on April 4 1949 in Washington. NATO was established on the premise of collective defense as stated in Article 5 of the Treaty. This article stipulates that an armed attack against one or more NATO members is considered an assault against all members and each member would take the necessary measures to restore and defend the security of the Atlantic Alliance (Collective Defence and Article 5, 2023). Beyond its military function, NATO acted as a political alliance that bolstered the political and ideological unity of its member nations in the face of the Soviet threat. The USA continued to lead NATO in the post-Cold War period as Washington’s decisions gave shape to the organization’s plans, actions and expansions. The USA established a framework for the alliance members' collaboration on strategic, diplomatic and economic issues. Although NATO's initial concentration was on Western European security and the containment of Russia from Europe, the operations and connections of the alliance spread beyond the continent over time.

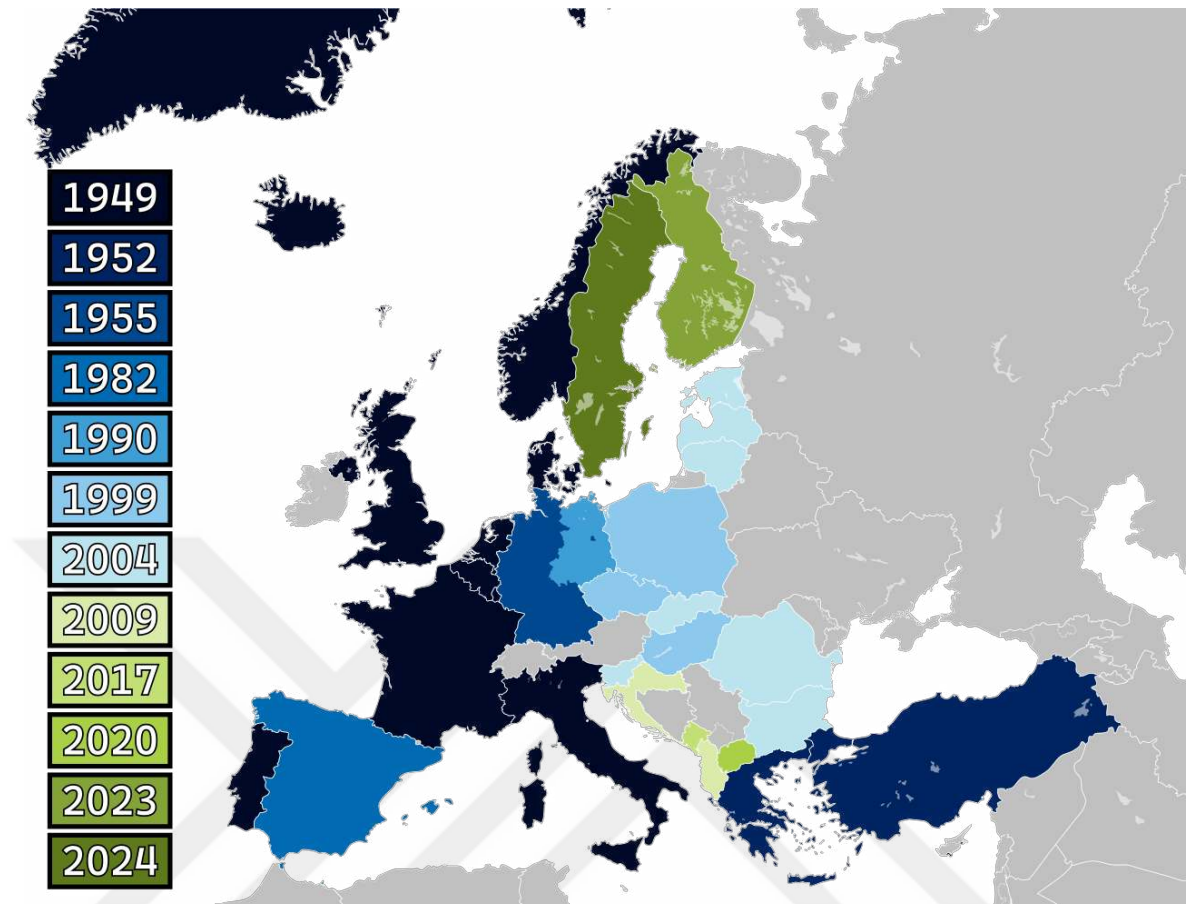
As the Cold War came to an end, the Warsaw Pact was dismantled and the Soviet Union was dissolved. Russia was born as a troubled state which lost a great amount of land and population. In a logical sense, the USA could have abandoned its containment policy and NATO could have been dismantled. However, Washington did not cease the existence of NATO and maintained the Cold War mindset. Washington took this context as an opportunity to further contain Moscow and enlarge the Atlantic Alliance. The US officials promised the former Russian President Boris Yeltsin not to expand NATO one more inch into the East but this promise was not put on paper (Goldgeier, 2019). Eventually, Washington did not comply with this verbal agreement. Russia was not strong enough to oppose the USA and NATO at the time as it was a torn country under the Yeltsin administration. After 9/11, the USA displayed

the new security concern for NATO as terror and the new objective of the Atlantic Alliance was demonstrated as “global war on terror”. Nonetheless, NATO’s expansion into Central and Eastern Europe indicated that NATO’s main task was still containing Russia as there was no other credible target than Russia that NATO was expanding against. All claims that the West no longer perceived Russia as a competitor and was only worried about the rise of the “Islamic danger” or China's potential were nothing more than tactics and weapons of information war (Dugin, 2015).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, NATO expanded into 16 countries in total. NATO's first post-Cold War expansion took place in 1999 when the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland were integrated into the Atlantic Alliance. This was a pivotal event in NATO history, as it extended NATO's reach into Central and Eastern Europe, incorporating nations which had previously belonged to the Warsaw Pact. The Baltic States; Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania joined NATO's second expansion in 2004; together with Slovenia, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania. This expansion strengthened NATO's influence in Southeastern Europe by progressively integrating former Eastern Bloc countries. In 2009, Albania and Croatia joined NATO, further expanding the alliance's reach in the Balkans. In addition, Montenegro joined the alliance in 2017. During the Ukraine Conflict, the USA took steps for the integration of Finland and Sweden into NATO. Finland officially became a NATO member in April 2023. With the accession of Finland into NATO, the Atlantic bloc extended its border with the Russian Federation by almost 1300 km. Lastly, Sweden joined the Atlantic Alliance in March 2024.

At this point, it should be noted that George Kennan, who formally promoted the containment policy first in the USA, asserted that expanding NATO would be “the most fateful error” of American foreign policy in the post-Cold War period. Kennan noted that NATO’s expansion could aggravate the anti-Western and nationalist tendencies in Russia. Furthermore, it could revive the Cold War environment and compel Russia to follow a foreign policy that the USA doesn’t desire as Russians would view their prestige and security interests be endangered (Kennan, 1997).

Map 2: Expansion of NATO throughout the Years (“Enlargement of NATO”, 2024)



Regarding NATO expansions, Lukyanov (2021) notes that the USA overstretched NATO through expansions and the Atlantic Alliance dragged itself into a trap by having to defend weak and irrelevant countries in Eastern Europe. On the other hand, Carpenter (2022) remarks that it was completely foreseeable that NATO expansion would ultimately cause a disastrous breach in relations with the Kremlin. He argues that the Ukraine Crisis was a product of shortsighted and arrogant US foreign policy.

As the USA's containment policy became more offensive compared to the Cold War era, NATO also became a more assertive organization which was proved by the persistent expansions. In NATO's 2022 Madrid Summit declaration, Russia was identified as "the most significant and direct threat" to the Atlantic Alliance (NATO, 2022). Furthermore, NATO increased its number of troops near the Russian border drastically from 40,000 to 300,000 in 2022 (Siebold, 2022). With its aggressive containment against Russia, Washington mobilized NATO in order to participate in its proxy war in Ukraine against Russia. This was also

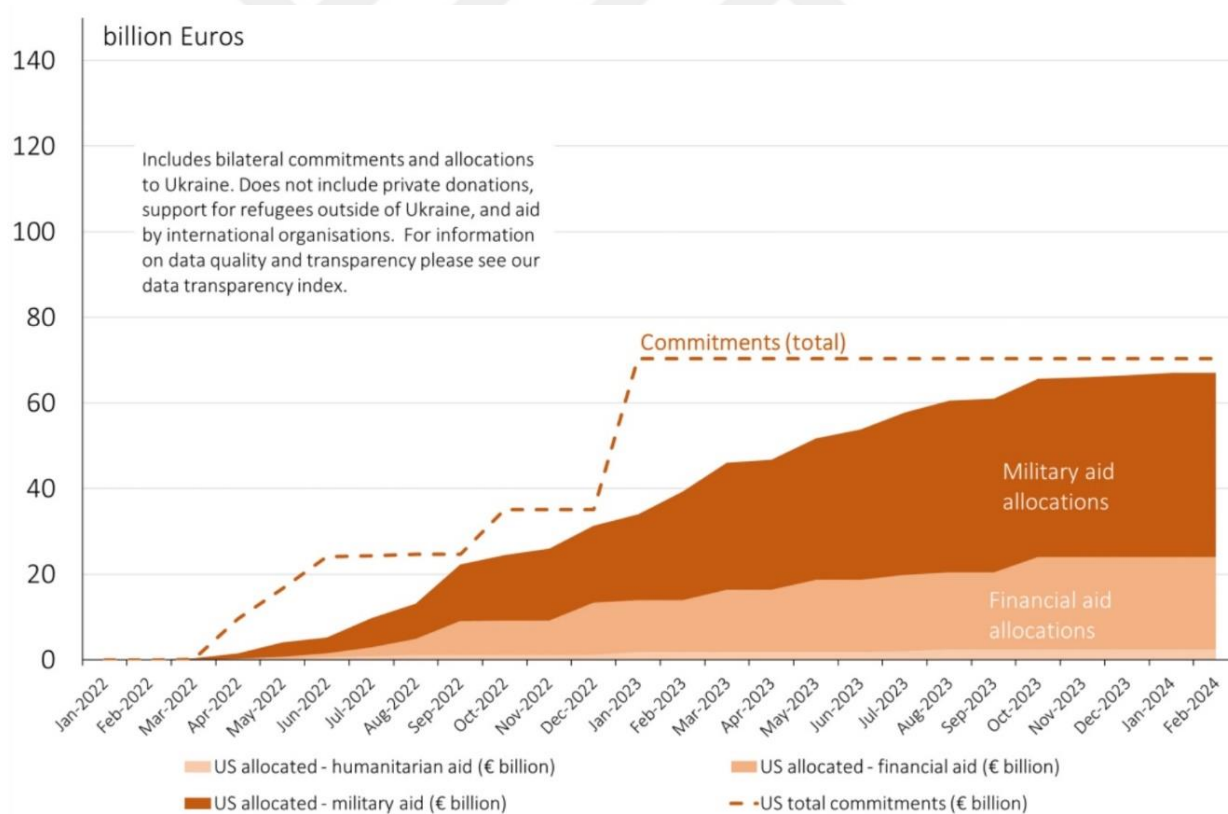
expressed by the Ukrainian defense minister Aleksey Reznikov as he stated that Ukraine carried out a NATO mission by fighting against Russia which is the biggest threat to the Western military organization (“Ukraine on ‘NATO Mission’,” 2023).

The USA utilized NATO to construct closer relations with Ukraine since the early years of the post-Cold War period. The USA initiated programs through NATO to assist Ukraine such as the “Military Committee with Ukraine Work Plan” and “NATO Defense Education Enhancement Program”. The NATO-Ukraine Commission which was established in 1998 operated as a consultation and cooperation platform. This commission included sub-groups such as “NATO-Ukraine Joint Working Group on Defense Reform” and “Joint Working Group on Defense Technical Cooperation”. On NATO’s website, it is emphasized that the cooperation between Ukraine and NATO is the most extensive partnership compared with other countries (“Relations With Ukraine”, 2023). In 2015, NATO representation was established in Ukraine which included the NATO Liaison Office and NATO Information and Documentation Center. The following year, NATO members agreed on the “Comprehensive Assistance Package for Ukraine” in Warsaw. In June 2017, the Ukrainian government passed legislation to establish membership for NATO. However, Ukraine’s potential membership in the organization did not have solid backing from several member countries.

Apart from NATO, the Ukrainian armed forces were utilized as a major military instrument to contain Russia. According to the official data of the USA, as of June 7, 2024; the USA’s total military assistance to the Ukrainian government reached 51.2 billion dollars since the beginning of the conflict. Considering the assistance since 2014, the military assistance exceeded 54 billion dollars. Washington equipped the Ukrainian forces with numerous weapons. The air defense equipment included Patriot, Avenger and Hawk defense systems. A vast amount of artillery rounds contained more than 800,000 105mm artillery rounds and 3 million 155mm artillery rounds among other types of mortars and rockets were provided to Kiev. Furthermore, more than 10,000 Javelin anti-armor systems, 2,000 Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, 400 million rounds of small arms ammunition and grenades were sent to Ukraine. Land systems included 31 Abrams tanks and more than 300 Bradley Infantry Fighting vehicles. 20 Mi-17 helicopters and more than 26,000 aircraft rockets were among the delivered aircraft and unmanned aerial systems. In terms of the naval warfare aid; 80 patrol boats, unmanned coastal defense vessels, two Harpoon coastal defense systems and anti-ship missiles were sent to the Ukrainian army (“U.S. Security Cooperation”, 2024).

The USA utilized different methods to finance and arm Ukraine. 23.8 billion dollar aid was provided to Ukraine through Presidential Drawdown Authority. Department of Defense secured 12.1 billion dollars through the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative. 4.6 billion dollars were ratified by the Congress as a means of Foreign Military Financing alongside 4 billion dollars loan on Foreign Military Financing and 4 billion dollars loan through the NATO allies. With Third Party Transfers, around 12,000 anti-armor systems and 1,550 anti-air missiles among various equipment were provided to Ukraine through the allies of the USA. Moreover, the USA completed foreign military sales which valued approximately 600 million dollars. Washington also used its Export Control and Border Security Program to finance Kiev (“U.S. Security Cooperation”, 2023). Furthermore, the USA launched the European Defense Initiative in June 2014 under the name of the European Reassurance Initiative following the growing tension of the Ukraine Crisis in which the USA has spent over 30 billion dollars for the program (Congressional Research Service, 2021).

Graph 2: The USA’s Aid to Ukraine between 2022-2024 (Bomprezzi et al., 2024)



In addition to military equipment assistance, the USA has also trained thousands of Ukrainian soldiers since 2014. It was also noted that the NATO forces did not only train Ukrainian soldiers but they directly got involved in the conflict against Russia (Ganguly &

Davies, 2023). Apart from training the soldiers, Washington shaped the military strategy of the Ukrainian government. Former US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland stated that the USA worked with the Ukrainian government on the counteroffensive against Russia for months (“US Has Been,” 2023).

Except for NATO and the Ukrainian army, the USA utilized Ukrainian non-state armed actors as a military instrument for containing Russia. Many of these armed actors are far-right groups and they have deep anti-Russian roots that date back to WWII. With the Bolshevik revolution, Ukraine joined the Soviet Union as the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. In WWII, Nazi Germany captured Ukraine in its war against the Soviet Union. In spite of the fact that most of the Ukrainians fought for the Soviet Union, some far-right groups such as the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists collaborated with the Germans and participated in the mass murders of the Russian population (Katchanovski, 2019). Eventually, the Red Army emerged victorious although the racist Ukrainian organizations were not completely terminated. At this point, the first American intervention in Ukraine took place against the Soviet Union. The USA helped the Ukrainian far-right groups to undermine the Soviet internal security in the late 1940s and the 1950s. Declassified CIA documents demonstrated strong ties between the US Intelligence and Ukrainian far-right groups since 1946 (Kreft & Weiss, 2014). These groups’ subversive activities against the Soviets continued until the mid-1950s even though they could not inflict significant damage on the Soviet Union. After WWII, the leader of the Ukrainian Nazi OUN-B organization, Stepan Bandera fled to Europe with the CIA’s help and the illegal activities of this organization were excused by the Agency. The second leader of the OUN-B, Mikola Lebed, was moved by the CIA to America for protection (Stone, 2016). Regarding this issue, Kaspar de Ploeg (2017: 60) notes that Ukrainian fascists were smuggled into the USA to be trained to fight a guerrilla war against the Soviet Union. In addition, Per Anders Rudling remarks that OUN was supported by Western intelligence agencies during and after the Cold War (Rudling, 2013).

Today, there are numerous non-state armed actors in Ukraine which most of them are connected with the neo-Nazi ideology such as the Right Sector, Donbass Battalion, Aidar Battalion, C14 and the Azov Battalion. The Azov Battalion, the strongest far-right armed group in Ukraine, was officially integrated into the National Guard of Ukraine in November 2014 and was named the Azov Regiment. The Ukrainian government worked together with the Nazi groups since 2014 and assisted them in their recruitment (Krishnaswamy, 2022). The Ukrainian

neo-Nazis are different from most of the neo-Nazi organizations in Europe as they are more friendly to the USA and the EU.

As the issue of the assistance to the Ukrainian far-right groups, particularly the Azov Battalion/Regiment became controversial in the USA, the US Congress blocked military funding for training and weapons to the Azov Battalion in June 2015. However, in December 2015, the ban was lifted (“Congress Has Removed,” 2016). Later, it was revealed that American army officers came together with Azov leaders in a multinational training session in 2017 (“Do Polku Azov,” 2017). The Azov leader Andriy Biletsky stated that the Battalion was being trained according to NATO standards (Saessalo & Huhtinen, 2018). In 2018, the US Congress again stipulated that American aid for Ukraine could not be used “to provide arms, training or other assistance to the Azov Battalion” (Kheel, 2018). Despite this decision, it is highly questionable that the USA’s military and financial aid to Ukraine does not reach the neo-Nazi groups due to the intertwined structure of the Ukrainian armed forces and these armed groups.

3.2.3. Economic Instruments

Washington utilized sanctions, import and export restrictions against Russia as economic instruments in order to contain Russia, particularly throughout the Ukraine Crisis and Conflict. The USA, alongside its Western allies, placed a number of sanctions on Russia in the wake of Crimea’s accession to Russia in 2014. President Barack Obama signed four Executive orders in 2014 to sanction Russia. The first one, Executive Order No. 13660 was issued on March 6, 2014. This Executive Order authorized sanctions on Russian individuals and entities that the USA deemed responsible for breaching Ukraine’s territorial integrity and sovereignty. Executive Order No. 13661 was signed on March 17 primarily to respond to Russia’s military intervention in Crimea and it continued with the issue of the new Executive Order “Blocking Property of Additional Persons Contributing to the Situation in Ukraine” on March 20. This order broadened the range of sanctions which were imposed by previous Executive Orders. The last Executive Order in 2014 was signed on December 19 which intensified the financial and diplomatic sanctions. It included sanctions against Russian defense companies, banks and energy companies. After 2014, Executive Order No. 13694 was signed in April 2015 and the Executive Order No. 13757 was issued on the last day of 2016. These two Executive Orders

gave room the cyber activities among other domains (Ukraine and Russia Sanctions, n. d.). Through the last Executive Order, the USA expelled thirty five diplomats from Russia and widened the sanctions on Moscow due to its alleged interference in the 2016 presidential elections of the USA (“Actions in Response”, 2016).

Under the Obama administration, specifically in Obama’s second term, the USA sanctioned individuals and entities which it deemed accountable for or complicit in Russia's actions in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine. Asset freezes and travel bans were among the measures imposed. To prevent the transfer of certain technologies and items to the Russian Federation, the USA applied export controls as well. Washington imposed restrictions on specific sectors of the Russian economy including finance, energy and defense. The USA coordinated its sanctions with NATO and European Union members.

The goal of the USA’s sanctions against Russia was to replace the regime in Moscow as part of a larger strategy to contain and isolate the country, with a questionable hope that a future government in Russia would be more compliant with the US interests. Therefore, when assessing the effectiveness of the sanctions, Washington considered more than how sanctions affected Russia's behavior toward Ukraine (Merry, 2015: 4).

After the Obama administration, Donald Trump imposed more sanctions on Russia and became the president who applied the most sanctions on Moscow until the Joe Biden administration. In the first year of the Trump administration, legislation to formalize and amplify sanctions against Russia was enacted by the US Congress with the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) in 2017. While the focus was mostly on Russia, the CAATSA also targeted North Korea and Iran. After the CAATSA was issued, the Trump administration continued to impose a wide range of sanctions on the Russian Federation, Russian entities and individuals. The USA’s Department of Treasury was extensively utilized in imposing the sanctions against Russia (“Treasury Information”, 2018; “Treasury Sanctions”, 2019; “Treasury Targets”, 2019).

The Biden administration followed a more aggressive containment policy against Russia compared with the Trump administration, particularly following the launch of Russia’s military into Ukraine in 2022. The Biden administration imposed unprecedented sanctions on the Russian Federation which made Russia the most sanctioned country in the world. The 2022

National Security Strategy document noted that the USA constrained Russia's economy, particularly its strategic sectors ("National Security Strategy", 2022).

As Moscow decided to launch a military campaign into Ukraine in February 2022, Washington immediately imposed more substantial sanctions against Russia. On February 24, the same day that Russia's attack on Ukraine began, the USA's Department of Treasury launched immense economic sanctions ("U.S. Treasury Announces", 2022). The scope and severity of the sanctions which were launched in 2022 intensified greatly compared to the sanctions in 2014. According to the USA's Department of State, Washington held Russia accountable for invading Ukraine and aimed to complicate finding funds for Moscow and severely damaged Russia's prospects to import key technologies. Apart from the sanctions, import and export restrictions; the USA also imposed visa restrictions against Russia. ("Holding Russia", 2024).

In the following process, the USA applied more sanctions on Russian banks and their subsidiaries, imposed sanctions on top Russian diplomats and government representatives, blocked financial transactions of the Russian Central Bank, excluded Russia from the SWIFT system, banned imports of gas, oil and other energy sources from Russia, imposed heavier sanctions on the defense industry, energy, metals and mining sectors. ("Sanctions Against Russia", 2024). As the Obama administration, the Biden administration utilized the Executive Orders as a key method for imposing sanctions against Russia. The Biden administration applied to the Executive Order multiple times in order to sanction the Russian Federation, Russian entities and individuals. To exemplify some Executive Orders; Executive Order No. 14024 on April 15, 2021 focused on blocking Russian properties ("Blocking Property", 2021). As another example, Joe Biden signed The Executive Order No. 14066 on March 8, 2022 which banned new Russian investments and certain imports ("Executive Order on Prohibiting", 2022).

Pierre de Gaulle argued that the number and the scale of sanctions which the USA applied against Russia since 2022 demonstrated that they were organized in advance ("US Making Europeans," 2023). The sanctions applied against Russia did not carry a significant threat to the American economy whereas they posed vital problems for the European economy. In particular, the energy ties between the EU members and Russia were damaged among other sectors. Furthermore, the USA and the EU seized colossal Russian assets. The US Senate approved a bill called the "Ukraine Reconstruction Act" for confiscating Russian assets and proposed a similar bill under the name of "Rebuilding Economic Prosperity and Opportunity

for Ukrainians Act” (Library of Congress, 2022; Rebuilding Economic Prosperity, 2023). According to the US official statistics, it was stated that 300 billion dollar Russian assets were frozen globally (United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 2023). In addition, Washington aimed crippling the Russian financial system by making Visa and Mastercard to cease international transactions of the Russian Federation.

In spite of the fact that the USA applied unprecedented sanctions against the Russian Federation and inflicted some damage, it was not able to destroy the Russian economy as the sanctions were not all successful. The USA itself could not forego importing certain goods. For instance, the USA imported fertilizers from Russia for a record amount in the first half of 2023 (“US Buying,” 2023). Although Washington imposed sanctions against Russia and tried to encourage other countries to do the same, Washington itself was not able to implement its policy completely due to the importance of Russia’s critical commodities. In addition, European countries did not completely halt their energy ties with Russia. For instance, Russia remained Germany’s biggest coal supplier in 2022 (“Energiekrise-Deutschland Importierte,” 2023). Furthermore, European countries continued to import Russian oil indirectly from countries like India (Sharma, 2024).

3.2.4. Non-conventional Instruments

Apart from the political, military and economic instruments which can be considered as conventional instruments; non-conventional instruments were employed by the USA as well to contain Russia through Ukraine. These instruments were mainly information warfare, intelligence and covert actions.

The USA utilized the information sphere widely in containing Russia, specifically during Joe Biden’s presidential term. Washington generated a narrative regarding Ukraine to justify the containment policy. According to this narrative; Russia declared a completely unprovoked and unjustified war against Ukraine in February 2022 and Moscow was aiming to revive the Russian Empire under the leadership of Vladimir Putin

Washington did not desire the American and international public to receive news and insights that did not fit into this narrative. Therefore, the USA resorted to banning oppositional

networks and platforms which provided different views on Ukraine. This was not a method that the US administrations applied for the first time. For instance, in 2007, it was revealed that the CIA and FBI had edited Wikipedia numerous times on various subjects according to Washington's narratives (Mikkelsen, 2007). Throughout the Ukraine Conflict, the USA and the EU, with the American and European platforms, banned the Russian broadcasting channel Russia Today and Russian news network Sputnik (Roettgers, 2022; Deutsch, 2022). This can be interpreted as an effort to contain Russia in the information sphere. Despite the restrictions, Russia Today and Sputnik were reached by more American viewers than before the beginning of the conflict according to a research conducted by Microsoft. This research emphasized that the Russian media outlets received 60 million to 80 million page views monthly which is at the same level as famous the Wall Street Journal in the USA ("Defending Ukraine," 2022). This demonstrated that despite the containment efforts of the Biden administration in the information domain, the public still reached news and sights which contradicted Washington's narrative.

The Biden administration blocked opposite narratives which contradicted its own Ukraine narrative from social media as well. It was revealed that the US government worked with the Big Tech companies including Facebook, Twitter and Microsoft on its information warfare against Russia (Klippenstein & Fang, 2022; Maté, 2023). The influence of Washington on Twitter came into view, particularly following the purchase of Twitter by Elon Musk. It was brought to light that the Pentagon, CIA and other US intelligence organizations made the platform to censor information that contradicted Washington's narrative ("US Spies," 2022). In addition, Washington established the Foreign Malign Influence Center to counter disinformation coming from hostile foreign actors, mainly Russia. In the information war against Russia, Washington collaborated with foreign organizations to undermine the Russian state and individuals. Myrotvorets, a Ukrainian organization which exposes personal information of the so-called enemies of Ukraine and includes them in a kill list played an important role in the information warfare against Russia. According to an investigation made by the Foundation of Battle Injustice, Myrotvorets was supported by the US government and American individuals (Foundation to Battle Injustice, 2022).

In addition to the information sphere, the USA utilized intelligence and covert actions to contain Russia. Washington did not hide its intelligence ambitions against Russia. The CIA director William Burns openly stated that wartime Russia was a unique chance to recruit more spies and they were taking advantage of this ("CIA Says," 2023). In terms of battle intelligence,

the USA was extensively involved in the Ukraine Conflict. The USA provided intelligence to the Ukrainian armed forces on Russia's troop and equipment movement (Barnes et al., 2022). The US military personnel provided detailed coordinates to the Ukrainian troops to launch American missiles from the multiple rocket launcher systems such as HIMARS (Khurshudyan et al., 2023). Consequently, the USA had a direct role in killing the Russian soldiers and destroying the Russian targets. Miller and Khurshudyan (2023) reported that the CIA constructed new headquarters for sections within Ukraine's military intelligence agency, trained recruits in both the USA and Ukraine, it gave Ukraine cutting-edge surveillance technologies and shared intelligence on a wide scale. Ukrainian President Zelensky confirmed this with his statement that the Ukrainian government did not have any secrets from the CIA ("Exclusive: Zelensky," 2023). Arkin (2023) noted that the CIA was central to the conflict in Ukraine even before it started.

Regarding covert actions, one of the most striking examples was the sabotage allegation on the Nord Stream gas pipelines. It was asserted that the US government planned and executed the detonation of the Nord Stream gas pipelines with the collaboration of Norwegian officials (Hersh, 2023). Before the Russian military campaign in Ukraine, American President Joe Biden implied that they would terminate the Nord Stream 2 if Russia attacked Ukraine (C-SPAN, 2022). In addition, former US State Department spokesperson Ned Price and Under Secretary Victoria Nuland clearly stated that Nord Stream 2 project would not advance if Moscow decided to attack Ukraine ("Nord Stream 2 Will Not," 2022; In Context, 2022). These statements of the American top diplomats strengthened the authenticity of Washington's sabotage on the Nord Stream. Although Washington accused Moscow of taking out the pipelines, the EU officials did not find any evidence of the Kremlin's inclusion in the Nord Stream sabotage (Harris et al., 2022). Furthermore, cyber warfare was another domain that the USA aimed to contain Russia. It was exposed that NATO officers played the main part in the cyberattacks against Russia alongside Ukrainian hacker groups ("Rahdit Hackers", 2022).

Table 3: Instruments of Containing Russia through Ukraine

Political	Military	Economic	Non-conventional
Diplomacy	NATO	Sanctions	Information warfare
The European Union	The Ukrainian army	Export restrictions	Intelligence
The Ukrainian government	Non-state armed actors	Import restrictions	Covert actions

3.3 The Consequences of the Containment Policy through Ukraine and the Ukraine Conflict

In this section, the research examines the consequences of the USA's containment policy alongside the Ukraine Conflict as the containment through Ukraine is deeply interconnected with the Conflict. In the first subsection, the study analyzes Russia's responses to the USA's containment policy by taking Russia's geopolitical and historical features into consideration. This study argues that the USA's containment policy played an important factor behind Russia's attack on Ukraine in 2022. The second subsection puts forward the argument that the USA's containment policy through Ukraine sparked a new cold war with Russia. The study remarks that this new cold war is more complex and extensive compared with the previous Cold War among other differences. In the later subsections, the consequences of this policy on the USA, Russia, Europe and Ukraine are examined respectively. This study argues that the containment policy was useful to the USA to some extent as Washington weakened Moscow and enhanced the unity of NATO. Although the containment caused considerable negative consequences for Russia, the USA was not able to isolate Russia as most of the countries in the world did not join Washington's containment efforts against Moscow. On the other hand, the containment policy generated negative consequences for Europe and particularly for Ukraine.

3.3.1 Russia's Responses to the Containment

In this subsection, the study delves into the responses of the Russian Federation to the containment policy. Understanding these responses necessitates an examination of the historical

context of Russia's mindset on national security. A rational analysis is crucial for comprehending the Russian perspective in the Ukraine case. By exploring the underlying factors shaping Russian behavior and decision-making, including historical grievances, strategic imperatives and perceptions of threats to national security, this subsection aims to shed light on Russia's security requirements and its responses to USA's containment efforts.

A strong security need shaped the Russian history since the Imperial Russian times. Due to the East European Plain, Russia has been highly vulnerable to invasions from its Western borders. For this reason, indefensibility has been one of the main characteristics of Russia throughout its history. Russia does not possess oceans, mountains, swamps or rivers marking its borders on a large scale and it has no other means of natural defense outside the hostile climate and forest. The essential strategic problem of Russia is that it is geopolitically unstable as the pain of enduring invasion after invasion is documented throughout Russia's history. Neither the Russian Empire nor the Soviet Union were genuinely secure. Russia faced three invasions led by Napoleon, German Wilhelm the Second and Adolf Hitler. In particular, Napoleon and Hitler entered the heart of Russia and came close to capturing Moscow. In the post-Cold War, Russia has failed to carry out its strategic geopolitical obligations, in contrast to major powers such as China and the USA. The Russian Federation still controls the North Caucasus but is no longer able to advance far into the mountains, including Georgia and Armenia, therefore Russia can not consider its flank secure without these regions. Russia is unable to prevent or disrupt any developments in its south that would pose a danger to its security since it has lost its anchor in the mountains and deserts of Central Asia. Furthermore, Russia lost control over Moldova and especially Ukraine in Southeast Europe which posed a threat to the Russian mainland. The incorporation of the Baltic countries into NATO further disrupted Russia's final defensive line on the North European Plain (Friedman, 2012). Russian security policy has historically been based on defense, enlarging the area around the core to prevent being caught off guard. Russia has repeatedly been the victim of disastrous invasions, the Kremlin has always believed that the only way to ensure security is to strengthen "strategic depth" (Lukyanov, 2016). Russia did not participate in the split-up of Africa and other regions like Western imperial powers but expanded by incorporating near territories. In an article issued by RAND Corporation, it is stated that the imperial Russia's expansion was a way of defending itself against invasion (Oliker et al., 2015).

As can be seen in the below physical map, Western Russia is at the heart of the Great European Plain and its only natural defense line, the Ural Mountains and the Caucasus Mountains are quite far away from its European borders which makes it extremely vulnerable.

Map 3: Physical Map of Western Russia (Map of European Russia, n. d.)



Kiev and Ukraine carry special importance for the Russian state and nation. It is considered that the Kievan Rus, a loose alliance of Slavic tribes, was the historical origin of the Russian civilization. A considerable Russian population resides in Ukraine and Ukrainians are almost identical with Russians in terms of ethnicity and culture. Throughout history, Ukrainians and Russians mostly lived under the same rule for centuries. For this reason, being contained through Ukraine is threatening not only Russia's geopolitics but its identity as well.

Washington has been applying the containment policy against Russia for decades and this caused Moscow to respond against this policy over the years. Although Moscow reacted to the containment and previous NATO expansions in ways which were mostly verbal, the USA's

objective to expand NATO into Georgia and Ukraine caused Russia to take more concrete steps. Due to the strategic value of these countries for Russia, Moscow could not tolerate these countries joining NATO, particularly Ukraine. On the issue of NATO expansion; Charles Kupchan, who was a former national security expert in the Obama and Clinton administrations, remarks that if Russia allied with Mexico and Canada and began erecting military outposts along the American border, the USA would hardly stand by silently (Kupchan, 2007). It can be stated that Moscow did not stand passively either. This study asserts that Russia's first serious response to containment was its military intervention in Georgia and its second serious response came with its military campaign in Ukraine. This study argues that an important motivation behind Russia's military campaign in Ukraine was the USA's containment policy. Therefore, the study considers the consequences of the Ukraine Conflict together with the results of the USA's containment policy through Ukraine.

Responding to the USA's containment policy, Russia amplified its military capabilities in Europe. Besides, its mainland and Kaliningrad, Moscow significantly increased its military presence through Belarus. Belarus links the Russian mainland with Kaliningrad which is a vital region for Russia near the Baltic Sea. After the beginning of the Ukraine Conflict, Moscow attached higher importance to securing Belarus as a stronghold on its Western flank as it is the only friendly state on its Western border. In the first month of the Ukraine Conflict between Russia and Ukraine, Belarus allowed Russian soldiers to march towards Kiev from its soil even though the Belarusian army did not actively engage in the conflict. Furthermore, the two countries agreed on a common military doctrine under their new Union State programs and Russian nuclear weapons were decided to be stationed in Belarus. Following its intervention in Ukraine, Moscow also used nuclear deterrence in its discourse and suspended the START nuclear treaty with NATO in February 2023.

As the USA contained the Russian Federation, Moscow worked on ways to break the intended isolation circle by strengthening ties with different parts of the world, mainly the Global South which includes Asia, Latin America and Africa.

Moscow has constructed fruitful partnerships in the continent of Asia in the last two decades and China has been the main partner of Russia in this continent. During the Ukraine Crisis, the two countries maintained and further enhanced their collaboration. Before the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine, Moscow and Beijing signed a joint declaration on 4 February 2022 which reaffirmed their partnership and demonstrated their will to strengthen

collaboration in several areas including regional and international security (“Joint Statement”, 2022). Washington applied the containment policy more aggressively against Russia after the conflict began and on the other hand, NATO highlighted China as a threat officially for the first time (Madrid Summit Declaration, 2022). It can be stated that by containing Russia aggressively and also manifesting China as a target, the USA prompted Russia and China to cultivate their alliance to a higher level. In February 2023, the Chinese Foreign Ministry published an announcement declaring its position regarding the Ukraine Crisis. In this document, Beijing called for leaving the Cold War mentality of the West and ending the unilateral sanctions against Russia (“China’s Position”, 2023). It is important to emphasize that the alliance of Russia and China signifies an aggregate military power that outweighs the USA and the total Atlantic Alliance. In addition to China, Russia improved ties with India as the two countries reached record trade levels and the Indian government refused to abide by the USA’s sanctions. In addition to the Asian countries, Russia continued to enhance its ties with Türkiye and Hungary in Europe throughout the Ukraine Crisis.

Moscow also strived to heighten its influence in the Western Hemisphere through connecting with Latin American countries. During the Soviet era, the Kremlin made an effort to form strong ties with the Latin American countries. The cooperation was mostly in the economic sphere although the Soviet Union formed political alliances with countries such as Cuba and Nicaragua, thanks to the socialist revolutions in those countries. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation had to focus on surviving the economic and social crisis in the 1990s. For this reason, Russia could not maintain its sphere of influence in Latin America. However, in the first decade of 2000, Russia returned to improving its ties with the Latin American countries. With the Bolivarian Revolution starting in 1999, Venezuela formed a strong partnership with Moscow in its quest to keep the revolution alive. As the BRICS organization emerged, Brazil and Russia had substantially closer ties. Russia’s endeavors to have closer ties with South and Central American countries can be viewed as a balancing strategy to the USA’s containment against Russia. After the breakout of the conflict in Ukraine, the USA could not attract much support from the Latin American countries in the containment of Russia, such as in complying with the sanctions. Despite the fact that the USA was successful in drawing large parts of Europe to itself against Russia, it is important to note that Washington could not manage to side the countries of the Western Hemisphere with itself. For instance, one of the biggest economies in the world, Brazil took a neutral stance on the Ukraine Conflict.

Africa was another continent that Russia substantially enhanced its ties with. Moscow

has taken initiatives to be more active in the continent, particularly in the 2010s. These initiatives brought out the emergence of the Russia-Africa summit in 2019. Throughout the conflict in Ukraine, Moscow kept improving its cooperation with the African capitals. On the other hand; the Western powers, primarily France, lost their power and spheres of influence in the continent. As a result, Russia gradually became a major actor in Africa alongside China. During the Ukraine Conflict, there were numerous visits between Moscow and the African capitals and the Russia-Africa summit was held in 2023 for the second time.

3.3.2 A New Cold War

Following the termination of the Cold War, the USA was the hegemon of the world in a unipolar order. In today's world, many argue that this post-Cold War era is over. Fomenko (2022) argues that the post-Cold War order ceased to exist in 2022 due to Washington's ignition of the Ukraine Conflict among other factors. Timofeev (2023) remarks that the order which was established after the end of the Cold War was over and the world is once again experiencing a usual level of turmoil, rivalry and fight for survival. On the other hand, Trenin (2018) argues that there has been a hybrid war between the USA and Russia which is fought in multiple domains such as military, economic and informational. This new conflict is quite dynamic and it is mostly fought globally unlike the barriers of the Iron Curtain during the Cold War. Trenin remarks that the USA is superior to Russia in almost all important aspects except nuclear weapons. This power difference makes the current hybrid war different than the Cold War in which the two countries had more equal powers. Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair acknowledges that the Western dominance was ending and the world would be at least bipolar and possibly multipolar (Faulconbridge, 2022). In addition, Rabil (2022) notes that the Ukraine Crisis strengthened the worldwide belief that multilateralism and multipolarity benefits the world more.

This study also argues that the post-Cold War period which was constructed mainly by the USA ceased to exist. Furthermore, the USA's containment policy against Russia, specifically through Ukraine, triggered a new cold war between the two powers. It can be stated that Washington's support to the coup in Ukraine alongside massive military and financial support to the Ukrainian government played a significant role ignite this new cold war. There

are several evidences indicating that the world is experiencing a cold war once again. The Ukraine Conflict became a large-scale proxy war and it gave way to a vast arms race between Russia and the USA. The size and scale of the USA's sanctions against Russia are unprecedented. The discourse of the American and Russian politicians is also quite aggressive. Due to the presence of the US and NATO forces in Ukraine, a risk of direct military conflict between the sides increased. As another indicator of this new cold war, NATO identified Russia as "the most significant and direct threat" to the alliance in 2022 (NATO, 2022). Moreover, it should be underlined that the risk of nuclear war reached the highest level since the Cuban missile crisis.

Legvold (2014) remarks that a new cold war started between the USA and Russia with the emergence of the Ukraine Crisis. He notes that Ukraine constitutes the center of this new cold war. Karaganov (2021) argues that the West is fighting a third cold war against Russia. He argues that the first cold war began with the October Revolution in 1917 as the West intended to destroy the Soviet Union during the civil war and continued undermining activities afterwards. The first cold war came to an end with the breakout of WWII. The second cold war, which is the universally accepted one, commenced after WWII and ended with the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. Later, Russia and China enhanced their powers remarkably in the mid-2000s and the West launched the third cold war against these two powers which consequently brought Moscow and Beijing closer to each other. In addition, Karaganov warns that the risk of a new world war is extremely high and an active peace policy is urgently needed.

Due to the USA's dual containment policy against Russia and China, it can be stated that Washington's new cold war against the two major powers carries the risk of leading to a third world war. In spite of the fact that the USA is the militarily strongest country in the world, the total military power of its adversaries surpasses the USA's power. According to a military strength ranking by the Global Fire Power in 2023; the USA possesses the greatest military strength as Russia follows the USA closely at the second spot. China is the third biggest military power and India is the fourth ("2023 Military Strength", 2023). Even though the USA has numerous allies in NATO, it is important to recognize that the USA has increased tension with the militarily strongest two countries behind itself. Besides, India as the fourth strongest state, has substantially improved its cooperation with Russia and China in recent years. In terms of specific military strengths, Russia is ahead of the USA in several areas such as the number of

tanks, self-propelled artillery, rocket artillery, frigates and corvettes. On the other hand, the USA outstands Russia in other areas, especially including aerial and naval power.

The new cold war differs from the previous one in some ways. During the Cold War after WWII, the alliances were clearer and more static. Conversely, in the new cold war, there are many non-aligned countries and their behaviors are complicated to predict. Even in the alliances of NATO, the member countries such as Türkiye and Hungary do not comply with the organization's general stance on certain issues and they tend to follow their own foreign policies. The new cold war is more extensive and complex. There is no set iron curtain as in the previous cold war and each continent and country could be perceived as a domain of the new cold war. On the other hand, the re-emergence of proxy conflicts between the West and Russia is one of the resemblances between the Cold War period and the current West-East conflict. (Rojansky, 2016). In this new cold war, Ukraine is a crucial theater between Washington and Moscow.

It should be noted that the USA's containment policy through Ukraine indirectly raised the risk of a potential nuclear war as well. The use of nuclear weapons has been frequently discussed throughout the Ukraine Conflict. Except the intentional use of nuclear weapons, there is a danger of an accidental nuclear war between Russia and the USA. The authorities warn that this risk is even higher than the Cold War era (Mendonca, 2021). The Russian Federation possesses 5,977 nuclear weapons while the USA possesses 5,428 nuclear weapons (SIPRI, 2022). The total nuclear power of these countries guarantees mutual assured destruction. It is worth noting that the world came close to a potential nuclear war when two Polish citizens died because of the missiles fired by Ukraine in November 2022. The Ukrainian government claimed that this was an attack by Russia and called NATO to war against Russia although eventually, Polish authorities confirmed that the missiles were Ukrainian ("Polish Experts," 2023).

Apart from the risk of a nuclear war, a considerable part of the arms that were dispatched for Ukraine by the USA were not securely delivered and this created a worldwide security problem as a substantial amount of weapons went into the black market. Jonas Ohman, founder of an NGO, estimated in 2023 that only 30-40% of the Western supplies reached their final destinations (Yamaguchi & Pena, 2022). It was revealed that the US State Department was concerned that the USA could not track the weapon aid to Ukraine efficiently ("U.S. Cable," 2022). Investigative journalist Seymour Hersh pointed out that Ukrainian officers sold Western

weapons in the black market and dispersed into different countries without control (Awasthi, 2023).

3.3.3 Consequences for the USA

By containing Russia through Ukraine, the USA attained mainly three positive outcomes. Firstly, the USA was able to weaken Russia to some extent which was the main objective of the containment policy. As Moscow felt threatened by being contained through its southwestern neighbor, it launched a military incursion against Ukraine in 2022. Russia had to place more emphasis on the military sphere and allocate substantial financial resources to its armed forces. Russia experienced several other negative consequences such as impaired relations with Europe. Most importantly, the USA was able to weaken Russia without directly confronting it but by using Ukraine as a proxy.

Secondly, Washington increased the commitment of Europe to itself and to NATO with the containment policy through Ukraine by intensifying the sense of a Russian threat in Europe. Washington was able to make Europe depend on the USA once again by pushing Moscow to intervene in Ukraine and heightening the insecurity in Europe. As Joe Biden stated in the NATO Madrid Summit in 2022 that they proved that NATO was needed more than ever (The White House, 2022). Through the same perception, Washington was able to further enlarge the Atlantic Alliance by incorporating Finland and Sweden.

Thirdly, the USA was able to boost its certain economic sectors by exporting arms and energy, mainly to Europe. The share of the USA in the global arms trade rose as the Ukraine Crisis deteriorated. The USA increased its share in global arms trade from 34% in the 2014-2018 period to 42% in the 2019-2023 period. In Europe, while the USA had a 35% share in European arms imports between 2014 and 2018, this share rose to 55% between 2019 and 2023. The perceived Russian threat was the main reason behind this increase in Europe. Regarding Ukraine, the American share of Ukraine's arms imports constituted 39% of Kiev's total arms purchases ("Trends in International", 2023). In addition, Washington paved the way for American arms companies to make unprecedented gains in arms sales and consequently, they enjoyed high profits and soaring stock prices since 2022 ("As The War", 2023; Lanlan, 2023). Following the increased tension in Ukraine, several European countries decided to boost their

financial allocations to their armed forces. The most benefiting part from this development were American arms companies. For instance, an important share of Germany's immense military fund of 100 billion Euros was to be allocated to American defense companies (Hübner, 2023).

Before the conflict broke out in Ukraine, Europe used to import Russian natural gas extensively which was not in accordance with American strategic interests. After the Nord Stream sabotage and the sanctions against Russia, European countries steered for different energy sources and the USA began to increase its LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas) exports to Europe substantially. Thus, it can be stated that the USA not only managed to increase the military and political dependence of Europe to itself, it sowed the seeds of an energy dependence as well.

In its containment policy through Ukraine, the USA was not completely successful and faced negative consequences as well. In spite of the fact that the USA was able to weaken Russia to some extent, Washington did not achieve its goal of isolating Russia. Most of the countries in the world maintained their partnerships with Russia despite Washington's diplomatic efforts to downgrade their relations with Moscow. Washington was not able to trigger a regime change in Russia either. On the contrary, the popularity ratings of Putin and the ruling party of Russia peaked with Crimea joining the Russian Federation in 2014 and the decision of the military campaign into Ukraine in 2022.

As a consequence of the containment policy against Russia, it became apparent that the majority of the world did not support the USA in containing Russia. Particularly, most of the countries in the Global South were indifferent to the calls of Washington to join the sanctions against Russia. The organization BRICS, which comprises around 40% of the world's population and a quarter of the world's GDP, stood against containing Russia and they did not support the sanctions applied on Russia. Conversely, the trade volumes of BRICS countries with Russia soared. On the other hand, following Russia's attack in Ukraine, a vast amount of Russian assets and forex reserves abroad was frozen ("Russia: About," 2022). The Russian Central Bank shifted towards the Chinese yuan in international transactions ("Russian Central Bank Reveals," 2022) which was a gain for Beijing, the USA's most powerful financial competitor. Washington's decision to freeze Russian assets created a sense of insecurity for other countries and their financial assets. Suspecting that the same could happen to themselves, other countries applied ways to reduce their dependence on dollar. This being an important

factor, the share of dollar in global reserves dropped to the lowest point in three decades, especially in the Global South. (“China Thought,” 2022; “Share of Dollar,” 2023).

Even in NATO, disagreements took place and complete unity could not be formed against Russia. Apart from the administrations of the countries, there was serious opposition to the US policies on Ukraine among the European public. Many citizens found the USA responsible for what happened in Ukraine. In Türkiye, which is a longtime NATO member, 48% of the public blamed the USA and NATO for the conflict in Ukraine whereas 33% of the people held Russia accountable (“MetroPoll’den Ukrayna-Rusya,” 2022). Even though most of the European governments sanctioned Russia and supported Ukraine militarily, their citizens did not fully favor this view. Italians held demonstrations for the end of the war and called on their government to stop sending weapons to Kiev (“Italian Rally,” 2022; Thousands Rally,” 2022). Similar demonstrations for ceasing the arms support to Ukraine and halting the sanctions against Russia took place in other Western countries such as Germany, Austria and Czech Republic (“Thousands March,” 2022; “Protesters Gather,” 2023; Connolly, 2023; Austria: Protest in Vienna, 2022; “Austria: It’s a Shot”, 2022; Tait 2022). According to a poll in Germany in October 2022; only a fifth of Germans considered Russia as a major threat to their country. Sonke Neitzel, a military historian, remarked that a significant number of German citizens still considered the USA as the real enemy (Wünschel, 2022). In addition, the majority of Germans opposed the possible accession of Ukraine into NATO and the military support to Ukraine (“Umfrage: Mehrheit Für, 2023; Majority of Germans,” 2023). These examples demonstrated that Washington was not very successful at convincing the European citizens that Russia is an evil power that needed to be contained. Despite the fact that the USA was able to mobilize most of the NATO countries’ governments in the containment of Russia, the public dissidence to the USA among NATO nations questioned the future of the Atlantic Alliance. Lawrence Wilkerson, a retired US colonel and former US Secretary of State Colin Powell’s chief of staff, argues that NATO is likely to disintegrate if the proxy war between NATO and Russia prolongs. (“Col. Lawrence Wilkerson: NATO,” 2023).

While containing Russia through Ukraine, the USA underwent immense military expenses for Kiev. Some of these expenses were in debt and some of it was in the form of grants. Either way, the USA sustained a serious financial bearing since the Ukraine Conflict started. The USA even reached a point where a serious risk of default emerged in mid-2023 (Hussein, 2023).

As another negative consequence of the containment, the USA urged Russia to a stronger alliance with China. Furthermore, under the Biden administration, Washington used most of its capacity in containing Russia whereas China kept growing more and more powerful.

3.3.4 Consequences for Russia

The USA's containment policy had serious negative consequences on the Russian Federation. The most damage to Russia was made in the economic sphere as the containment policy forced Russia to boost its military spending significantly. The USA started to implement its sanctions against Russia with the beginning of the Ukraine Crisis. The sanctions undermined the Russian economy as Russia's GDP contracted in 2015 and the Russian ruble lost considerable value. Being contained by the USA through Ukraine, the Kremlin decided to launch a military campaign and it allocated high level of resources to its armed forces. Furthermore, the magnitude of sanctions reached unprecedented levels following Russia's incursion into Ukraine. The USA's sanctions on Russia caused the value of the Russian ruble to plummet to a historic low level by losing around 40% value in the first month of the Conflict meanwhile the Russian stock market was very negatively affected as well. Therefore, the Central Bank of Russia raised the interest rate from 9.5% to 20% at the end of February 2022 which helped the ruble to approach its level before the launch of sanctions. The containment policy had negative results on Russia's human capital as well. Some citizens opted to leave Russia after it came under immense sanctions in 2022.

Another negative consequence of the containment for Russia was the deteriorating relations with the European countries. Russia and Europe had been in close economic partnership, specifically since the beginning of the 21st century. Europe thrived thanks to the low-cost energy coming from Russia and Russia benefited from the hard currencies it received from the EU countries. However, the containment policy and the USA's sphere of influence on Europe urged the EU members to take a hostile stance against Moscow and the ties between the two sides were impaired. The EU countries imposed restrictions and sanctions against Russia since 2014 and they soared in 2022.

The most negatively affected bilateral ties due to containment were the Russia-Ukraine relations. By containing Russia through Ukraine, Washington sparked an enmity between two

brother nations. From the economic point of view, Ukraine had been Russia's one of the most important trade partners until 2014. The volume of trade between the two states plummeted after the coup and vanished with the outbreak of the conflict in 2022. Furthermore, the loss of Ukraine to the USA also meant losing a buffer state against NATO and a loss of strategic depth for Russia.

In spite of the fact that Moscow underwent difficulties and negative consequences due to the containment, it was not affected as heavily as Washington intended. Despite containing Moscow aggressively with various instruments, the USA was not able to isolate Russia and cause a regime change.

To contain the Russian economy, Washington especially intended to substantially cut Russia's energy exports through sanctions. Nonetheless, the Biden administration's plan did not turn out to be fully successful. An oil industry expert, Paul Sankey, remarks that the sanctions on Russia's crude oil "failed completely" (Bala, 2023). After the sanctions led by the USA, Russia proved to be quite flexible in its energy exports and redirected its exports to different parts of the world, mainly to Asia. Russia exported record volumes of energy to China and India following the extensive sanctions launched by the USA and its allies in 2022. In addition, Russia increased its diesel exports to other regions of the world such as Latin America and Africa ("Russia Boosts Diesel," 2023; "Russia Ramps up," 2023). Consequently, as regional powers like China, India and Brazil boosted their trade with Russia; Russia's economic dependence on Europe decreased. On the other hand, Russian LNG was not sanctioned by the EU and surprisingly Russian LNG exports to Europe reached to record high in 2022 and 2023. (Tani, 2022; Humpert, 2022; "EU Imports of Russian LNG", 2023). Moscow did not only have a growth in its energy exports, Russian agriculture exports increased in 2022 and 2023 as well ("Russia Grain," 2023; Nandy et al., 2023). Overall, Russia's account surplus reached the highest in history in 2022 with 227.4 billion dollars which was 86% larger compared with 2021 ("Russia Posts Record," 2023). The Russian economy contracted only by 2.1% in 2022 despite higher contraction expectations by the USA ("Russian Economy Shrank," 2023). In 2022, the external debt of Russia dropped to its lowest level in 15 years which stabilized the economy further. According to the Russian Central Bank, external debt of Russia fell by 17.7% further in 2023 ("Balance of", 2024). The same year, the Russian economy grew by 3.6% which was higher than the USA and the EU (Garver, 2024).

By applying numerous sanctions against Moscow and encouraging international businesses to stop their activities in Russia, the Biden administration expected an exodus of international firms from Russia. Nevertheless, the USA did not quite receive the desired result. According to a research executed by the University of St. Gallen in 2022, only 8.5% of the G7 and the EU firms halted their operations in Russia. Besides, some of these firms included “buy-back” clauses in agreements with purchasers of their Russian subsidiary companies (Evenett & Pisani, 2022). It can be concluded that not only countries, but also companies did not completely abide by the containment against Russia either and the majority of firms remained willing to continue their businesses in Russia.

Being contained by the USA, Moscow came up with economic solutions against the sanctions. One of them was the establishment of the Mir payment system in 2015. Although the sanctions against Russia were not extremely severe at that time, the independent payment system was particularly useful following the SWIFT sanction in 2022. In addition to finding measures to alleviate the impact of the sanctions, Moscow has discovered ways to leverage them to boost and revitalize Russian industry (Trenin, 2023). According to Emmanuel Todd, the resistance of the Russian economy to sanctions pushed the American imperial system to abyss (Lownie, 2023). In addition, Russia has gained significant military experience through the Ukraine Conflict in terms of mobilization and real warfare experience.

To conclude this part, Russia incurred considerable negative impacts due to the containment policy. Nevertheless, Russia could not be isolated by the USA as it is a country of grand magnitude and its international partnerships are quite diversified.

3.3.5 Consequences for Europe

Through Washington’s endeavors in the containment of Russia, the USA greatly increased its military presence in Europe. The number of American troops stationed in Europe exceeded 100,000 in 2022 (U.S. Department of Defense, 2022). The European countries became more dependent once again on the USA and NATO. The USA’s shift in its containment policy towards a more offensive mentality beginning in 2022 triggered the tension to increase between Russia and European NATO members which came at risk of direct confrontation with Russia that they were not prepared for. To exemplify, a former British top commander, Richard

Barrons, warned that Britain could only last an afternoon against Russia as they seriously lacked ammunition and were not equipped for a major conflict (Barrons, 2023). Furthermore, Europe faced nuclear danger risk throughout the Ukraine Conflict. Ukraine possessed the biggest nuclear power plant of Europe in the Zaporizhzhia region. During the clashes, the power plant faced dangers of being damaged and spreading radiation to the neighboring countries.

The EU countries had enhanced their economies significantly in the last couple of decades and their trade with Russia and China was an important factor in this economic progress. Josep Borrell, High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs, acknowledges that the basis of prosperity of the EU was provided by Russia and China (Bove, 2022). The USA's containment policy by the use of sanctions alongside trade restrictions against Russia caused serious negative economic consequences on Europe as it impaired bilateral relations with Moscow. In the period from December 2013 until June 2015, the countries which sanctioned Russia lost 60.2 billion dollars and the EU countries incurred the biggest trade loss with 76.7%. (Crozet & Hinz, 2016). Europe's economic losses peaked after the Ukraine Crisis turned into a direct military conflict between Kiev and Moscow in 2022. President of the German Institute for Economic Research, Marcel Fratzscher, estimated that Germany lost approximately 100 billion euros in 2022 due to the conflict in Ukraine as Germany had a high dependence on energy and exports ("Ukraine: Kriegsfolgen Kosteten," 2023). Apart from the economy, the social structure of Europe was spoiled due to the rapid change in demography as millions of Ukrainians had to migrate to the European countries following the Conflict.

3.3.6 Consequences for Ukraine

Affected by the USA's containment policy against Russia, Ukrainian foreign policy changed from being neutral to more Atlanticist. As a consequence, Ukraine renounced its buffer state characteristic and became a loyal ally of the USA. It can be stated that Ukraine assumed the primary role in the containment of Russia since the change in the Ukrainian government in 2014. As Ukraine was on the front line to contain Russia, it incurred serious negative consequences which can not be separately evaluated from the civil war and conflict in Ukraine.

The most negatively affected party by Washington's containment policy became Ukraine. Once viewed as a country carrying a strong potential with high industrial prospects,

Ukraine faced dire consequences due to placing itself at the center of Washington's containment efforts against Russia. Losing an important amount of territory in the civil war and then in the conflict against Russia, Ukraine turned into a failed state. The country lost its industrial heartland, the Donbass region and a highly valuable Crimea which is vital for the control of the Black Sea.

Ukraine has suffered severe casualties since 2014, firstly in the civil war against the Donbass republics and especially since 2022 against the Russian Federation. The Ukrainian government did not provide a precise number of their total casualties in the conflict against Russia although a former Ukrainian general estimated the losses in 2022 at hundreds of thousands. ("Ukrainian General," 2022). Another source estimated that there were more than 100,000 Ukrainian soldiers killed or wounded at the end of the first year of the conflict ("Ukraine Doesn't Have," 2023). Ukraine's ambassador to the UK, Vadim Pristaiko stated that the Ukrainian government would reveal their losses of men after the end of the war and it would be a "horrible number" ("Ukraine Will," 2023).

Ukraine also incurred a serious loss of qualified human resources and civil population because of the migration to Europe. Since 2014, Ukraine had negative net migration almost every year and this peaked in 2022 with around 6.6 million people leaving the country (World Bank Open Data, 2023).

Apart from the military casualties and high levels of migration abroad, Ukraine's economy has been devastated since 2014 as the industries and the infrastructure of Ukraine were seriously affected. The Ukrainian economy considerably shrank after the coup and the beginning of the civil war in early 2014. The GDP of Ukraine decreased by 10% in 2014 and 2015 (World Bank Open Data, 2021). While the inflation in 2013 was nearly 0%, it skyrocketed in 2014 and 2015 alongside the devaluation of the Ukrainian grivnia (O'Brien, 2015). Ukraine approximately incurred a loss of 98 billion dollar in trade due to the sanctions of Russia which was Ukraine's greatest trade partner before the crisis (WTO, 2016). The GDP began to recover in the next years but did not have sufficient growth. In 2022, Ukraine's GDP slumped by 29% according to Ukraine's official statistics (Preussen, 2023; Novyny, n. d.).

Table 4: The Main Consequences of the Containment Policy on Affected Parties

	The USA	Russia	Europe	Ukraine
Political Consequences	Managed to weaken Russia but failed to isolate it	Its relations with Ukraine perished and relations with Europe impaired	Became more committed to the USA	Quit its neutral status between Russia and the West
	Consolidated Europe's commitment to itself	Enhanced ties with China and Global South	Impaired relations with Russia	Assumed the primary role in the containment of Russia
	Failed to mobilize the Global South in containing Russia			
Economic Consequences	Increased arms and energy exports to Europe	Incurred considerable economic pressure due to sanctions	Sustained economic damage and instability	Sustained serious economic damage
	Underwent economic expenses in containment efforts	Redirected its exports from Europe to Global South		
Military Consequences	Strengthened the unity of NATO	Launched a military campaign into Ukraine	Became more committed to NATO	Engaged in internal and external conflict
	Increased military presence in Europe		Increased risk of direct military confrontation with Russia	

CONCLUSION

This research examined the USA's containment policy on Russia through the case of the Ukraine Conflict. The study identified the containment policy's motivations, instruments and consequences in the third chapter and made related arguments. Besides these arguments, this study attained five conclusions. These conclusions are summarized shortly below.

Firstly, although the containment policy was shaped and conceptualized after WWII, this study demonstrated that the USA undertook actions pressuring the Soviet Union and limiting its sphere of influence right from the beginning of the Soviet Revolution. Therefore, this study argued that, even though the American diplomat George Kennan elaborated on the containment policy, the traces of the containment policy date back to the Russian Civil War.

Secondly, this study argued that the containment policy was not abandoned by Washington with the termination of the Cold War, but rather intensified as the policy was sustained through incessant NATO expansions. As can be understood from the USA's actions and the discourse of the US politicians, the containment remained the primary American foreign policy regarding Russia.

Thirdly, this study asserted that the USA shifted its containment policy into a more aggressive form following Russia's military campaign into Ukraine and named this new phase of the policy as "aggressive containment". There are various indicators that the containment became aggressive. For instance, the USA raised the number and intensity of the sanctions to unprecedented levels, provided Ukraine immense military and financial support, risked a direct military confrontation against Russia and expanded NATO into traditionally neutral countries such as Finland.

Fourthly, this study analyzed the background of the events in Ukraine and demonstrated the USA's role in the crisis. Consequently, this study argued that the USA's containment policy was an important factor behind the Ukraine Crisis and the Conflict.

Fifthly, this study argued that the USA's containment policy fueled the tension against Russia and eventually triggered the birth of a new cold war between Washington and Moscow which carried substantial implications for international politics.

This study provided three main contributions to the existing literature. Firstly, despite being a widely researched subject, no thorough analysis of the Ukraine Conflict had been done from the perspective of the USA's containment policy against Russia. This study filled this gap by putting forward the containment policy to investigate the Ukraine Conflict. Secondly, no research had looked at the purposes, tools and outcomes of the USA's containment policy in a single publication. The research filled this gap as well and offered a new perspective on the Ukraine Crisis by thoroughly analyzing the policy of containment. Thirdly, this research provided a fresh overview of the containment policy by examining a wide range of recent primary resources and the recent literature on the subject of the containment policy and the Ukraine Conflict.

At this point, it should be noted that the White House did not name the official American foreign policy that it follows regarding the Russian Federation. This study reached the conclusion that the USA contains Russia by examining the USA's actions, its politicians' discourse and extensive primary and secondary sources.

This study argued that the main motivations behind the containment policy were weakening Russia, causing a regime change and maintaining American global hegemony.

This study remarked that weakening the Soviet Union was the primary motive of Washington's containment policy throughout the Cold War and weakening remained the main goal of the containment policy against Russia. In addition to the official state documents such as the National Security Strategy document, the American officials such as Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin clearly stated that they aimed to weaken Russia. In addition to the documents and discourse of Washington, the USA's actions for decades demonstrate that it had a consistent agenda for diminishing the strength of Russia and undermining Moscow. This study remarked that weakening Russia mainly comprised two domains, political and economic. By containing Russia, the USA sought to weaken Moscow's political influence and isolate it by mobilizing other nations to curtail their ties with Russia. In terms of the economy, Russia began to recover and became a powerful economy once again in the new millennium. The USA aimed to undermine the Russian economy in order to prevent it from growing further. To achieve this, the USA employed economic instruments since 2014 and significantly intensified the use of these tools in 2022.

Russia's weakening is the clear driving force behind the USA's policy of containing Russia. This study asserted that a more ambitious objective of the containment is regime change. As Washington shifted into an aggressive containment policy against Washington with the beginning of the Ukraine Conflict, the US administration's rhetoric regarding a regime change in Russia became more apparent. However, this study demonstrated that, given the popularity of both President Vladimir Putin and the ruling Russian party, a regime change in Russia is highly unlikely.

One of the major motivations behind the containment policy was the goal of the USA to maintain its global hegemony. After the Cold War came to an end, the USA benefited from the unipolar world order as the sole great power. However, the USA started to lose its strength towards the end of the first decade of the 2000s and the unipolar nature of the global order began to wane. Despite going through a terrible decade in the 1990s, Russia was able to recover in the 2000s and started to pose a threat to the USA's unipolar dominance alongside the rise of China. This study argued that Washington contained Moscow as it aimed to prevent Russia from becoming a further detrimental power to its global hegemony.

The USA have employed various instruments to contain Russia which this study categorized as political, economic, military and non-conventional.

The USA, especially the Biden administration, employed diplomacy as a political tool to deter other nations from engaging in relations with Russia. Washington demanded that other countries adhere to the sanctions imposed on Russia. Nevertheless, the USA was unable to persuade most of the countries to support its efforts to contain Russia.

In its diplomatic efforts to contain Russia, the USA also aimed to mobilize the European Union to constrain Russia. With the initiation of Washington, the EU applied numerous sanctions against the Russian Federation, Russian entities and individuals. In addition, colossal amounts of Russian assets were frozen by the European Union. Furthermore, in the Ukraine Conflict, the EU assumed a military function in the containment of Russia as well by providing training to Ukrainian soldiers.

The Ukrainian government has been extensively used in the containment of Russia by the USA. Washington was quite effective in the establishment process of the new Ukrainian government in 2014. Since then, Kiev served as an essential tool for containing Russia. Therefore, the USA has provided significant political, financial and military assistance.

In terms of the military instruments of containment, NATO was a vital tool for containing the Soviet Union throughout the Cold War. Following the end of the Cold War, the Warsaw Pact was broken and the Soviet Union was dissolved. Nonetheless, the USA did not dissolve NATO; rather, Washington took it as a chance to expand the alliance further and contain the Russian Federation in a more assertive way. In 2022, Washington placed the Russian danger at the top of the agenda and Russia was identified as “the most significant and direct threat” to the alliance at the Madrid Summit. With the leadership of the USA, NATO dramatically increased its number of troops on the Russian border.

In addition to its political role, Ukraine has served as a military instrument in the containment of Russia with its army. In order to empower Ukraine, the USA has delivered colossal military aid to the Ukrainian government. As of June 2024, the total US military assistance to Ukraine exceeded 54 billion dollars. Besides, the USA has trained thousands of troops Ukrainian troops since 2014. Furthermore, this research remarked that Washington also influenced and took an active part in the military doctrine of the Ukrainian government.

Another military instrument used by the USA to contain Russia was the non-state armed actors. The history of these armed actors goes back to the Ukrainian Nazi groups which collaborated with Germans in WWII. This study demonstrated that Washington provided support to these armed far-right organizations following WWII. Currently, there are dozens of non-state armed actors in Ukraine and many of these armed actors are far-right groups. This study noted that the reach of Washington’s assistance to these groups such as the Azov Battalion besides the regular Ukrainian armed forces became a controversy in the USA.

The USA prioritized economic instruments in containing Russia. Washington made excessive use of sanctions alongside import and export restrictions to constrain the Russian economy beginning in 2014. Following Crimea's accession to Russia in 2014, the USA and its Western allies applied various sanctions on the Russian Federation and the US Congress further intensified the sanctions with CAATSA in 2017. With the start of Russia's incursion into Ukraine, Washington imposed unprecedented sanctions on Russia. The USA aimed to disintegrate Russia from the international financial system by initiating to exclude Russia from the SWIFT system. Furthermore, the US Senate froze immense levels of Russian assets.

Another instrument which was employed by the USA to contain Russia through Ukraine were the non-conventional instruments which comprised of information warfare, intelligence

and covert actions. In order to contain Russia, the USA made extensive use of the information domain, especially under the Biden administration. Washington undertook a course of action to spread its own narrative on the Ukraine Crisis and inhibit the opposing views. The USA collaborated with major tech firms including Microsoft, Twitter and Facebook to transmit its narrative and it banned the Russian networks. Washington also utilized intelligence and covert operations as containment tools against Russia. The USA delivered the Ukrainian armed forces intelligence on Russian troop and equipment movement. Furthermore, American officers took active roles in cyberwarfare against the Russian Federation.

The study concluded the consequences of the containment policy in the last section of the third chapter and categorized them under different parts as Russia's responses to the containment policy, a new cold war and consequences according to actors which are respectively the USA, Russia, Europe and Ukraine.

Moscow has reacted against Washington's containment policy over the years. Although earlier Russia responded to the containment and NATO expansions verbally, Washington's ambition to expand NATO into Georgia and Ukraine prompted Russia to take more decisive actions as these countries have the utmost importance for Russia's national security. This study argues that Russia's military intervention in Georgia was its first concrete reaction to the containment and the second concrete reaction was Russia's incursion into Ukraine in 2022. This study asserts that the USA's containment policy played an important role in the progress of Russia's decision to launch an incursion into its southwestern neighbor. Among other reactions of Russia were its leaders' nuclear deterrence rhetoric and canceling the START nuclear deal in the process following the conflict with Ukraine. As a concrete response against being contained, Russia also strengthened its military existence in Europe. Except the Russian mainland and Kaliningrad, the Kremlin took the initiative to intensify its military build-up in Belarus and eventually Russian nuclear weapons were installed in Belarus.

From the diplomatic perspective, this study remarks that Russia broke the targeted isolation circle on itself by fortifying its ties with other regions of the world, primarily the Global South which comprises Asia, Latin America and Africa. Over the past couple of decades, Moscow has established productive ties with the Asian continent, particularly with China. It can be stated that Washington forced Moscow and Beijing to develop their alliance to a greater degree by containing Russia and making China a target. On the other hand, Moscow aimed to strengthen connections with Latin American states in order to expand its influence in

the Western Hemisphere which can be seen as a counterbalance to Washington's containment of Moscow. Another continent that Moscow strengthened its ties with was Africa. Russia gradually became a major actor in Africa despite the USA's efforts to draw the African countries to its containment efforts against Moscow.

This study notes that the post-Cold War era which began with the dissolution of the Soviet Union and maintained by the USA as the global hegemon came to an end. Furthermore, this study argues that a new cold war between the two major powers was triggered due to the containment of Moscow by Washington. To compare the two cold wars, the Cold War era that succeeded WWII included more definite and stable alliances. On the contrary, this study remarks that the modern cold war is more complex and flexible. On the other hand, one of the similarities between the previous Cold War era and the contemporary Cold War is the reappearance of proxy wars between the USA and Russia. Particularly, Ukraine is a key theater in the new cold war between the Kremlin and the White House. One difference is that Ukraine is not a usual proxy war between the USA and Russia. Although the USA utilizes Ukraine as a proxy, Russia is directly fighting without the use of a proxy which makes the confrontation between the USA and Russia more direct.

In terms of the consequences of the USA's containment policy, Washington achieved considerable gains by containing Russia through Ukraine. In the first place, the containment policy's primary goal of weakening Russia was achieved by the USA. The sanctions and frozen assets left significant damage to the Russian economy. Moreover, being contained through Ukraine, the Kremlin felt obliged to provide more funding to its armed forces which posed a further setback to the Russian economy. From a security standpoint, this study argues that Washington reinforced the perception that Russia posed a threat to the European security architecture which directed Europe to rely more on the USA. Following the sanctions and trade restrictions on Russia, the European governments started looking for alternative energy sources and eventually, the USA considerably boosted its LNG exports to Europe. Furthermore, this research emphasized that Washington was able to skyrocket American arms exports to Ukraine and Europe.

Nevertheless, this study argued that the USA was not entirely successful in its policy against Russia and incurred negative consequences as well. The USA succeeded in weakening Russia to a certain degree, but it was unable to isolate Russia. Moreover, Washington spent colossal resources for Ukraine in its containment efforts against Moscow. On the other hand,

as a result of the USA's efforts to mobilize other countries to join the containment efforts; it became evident that the majority of the world did not agree with this policy. Washington's efforts to draw countries into joining the sanctions against Russia were mostly met with indifference, especially by the Global South. Disagreements also existed inside NATO and total unity was unattainable. This study remarked that another unfavorable outcome of the containment was that the USA directed Russia to form a closer partnership with China. Furthermore, as Washington exerted immense efforts to contain Russia, China continued to gain strength without facing a great challenge. The USA did not intend to improve relations with China to draw Beijing to its side against Russia as Washington took steps which aggravated the relations, starting particularly with the Trump administration and continuing with the Biden administration through Taiwan.

The Russian Federation suffered grave consequences as a result of the containment policy through Ukraine. Russia perceived the USA's increasing sphere of influence in Ukraine, NATO's consistent expansions into the East and Ukraine's potential entrance into the Atlantic Alliance as vital threats to its national security and felt compelled to intervene in Ukraine. As a result, Moscow allocated a significant amount of resources to its military expenditures. Furthermore, the sanctions seriously constrained Russia due to their magnitude and intensity. On the other hand, this research demonstrated that as a result of Washington's mobilization efforts on European countries to join the sanctions, Moscow's ties with the majority of the EU members worsened. Moreover, due to the containment policy, the bilateral relations between Moscow and Kiev were severely impaired.

Although the containment caused significant challenges and adverse effects for Russia, these effects were not as great as Washington had contemplated. Even though the Russian economy took serious damage, this research concluded that the Russian economy did not completely fail and displayed a resilient stance. Washington specifically intended to utilize the sanctions to plummet Russia's revenue from energy exports in order to weaken the Russian economy. However, the Biden administration's strategy did not quite turn out as planned. Following the sanctions, Russia demonstrated considerable flexibility in its energy exports, redirecting its exports to different regions, primarily Asia. In 2022, the Russian economy shrank by just 2.1% although the American and European economists expected a considerably worse contraction. In addition, Russian GDP grew by 3.6% in 2023 which outperformed the USA and the EU overall. Another indicator of the Russian economy's resilience despite the Ukraine Conflict was that Russia's foreign debt reached its lowest point in fifteen years in the year the

conflict began. The Biden administration anticipated an outflow of foreign companies from Russia by imposing economic restrictions on Moscow and encouraging the firms to cease operations in Russia. Nevertheless, Washington was able to achieve this only to some extent as many firms refused to withdraw their business from Russia. Although containment had significant negative effects on itself, Russia could not be isolated due to its size alongside the diversity and strength of its international connections.

As an outcome of the USA's containment efforts on Russia, the USA considerably boosted its military presence in Europe and oriented NATO to identify Russia as a direct threat. Therefore, this study argued that the reliance of the European countries on the USA grew in the military sphere. The European countries also had to deal with great security concerns due to the containment and the transformation of the Ukraine Crisis into a fierce conflict. Apart from the security aspect, this study demonstrated that the containment through Ukraine indirectly inflicted grave detrimental economic effects on Europe. The most important cause behind this drawback was the fact that Europe impaired its relations with Russia due to American incentives and pressures to disconnect ties with Moscow and engage in extensive sanctioning efforts. In addition to the economic effects, the social structure of Europe was severely damaged as millions of Ukrainian citizens moved to European countries.

As affected by the USA's containment policy, the Ukrainian government quit its neutral status which functioned as a buffer between Russia and the West and undertook the principal role in containing Russia by serving on the front. Ukraine suffered grave negative effects from its front-line position to contain Russia which are inextricably linked to the civil war and the conflict. This study asserted that Ukraine became the most negatively affected party in Russia's containment. Ukraine turned into a failed state after losing a significant portion of its land in both the civil war and the subsequent conflict with Russia. Ukraine lost Crimea which is essential for controlling the Black Sea, as well as its industrial core, the Donbass region. Ukraine sustained serious casualties in the civil war against the Donbass republics and especially in the conflict against Russia. On the other hand, Ukraine has suffered a great loss of civil population and qualified workforce due to migration to Europe.

To conclude, the future of the USA's containment policy through Ukraine stands unknown. Despite the fact that the Biden administration has been very determined to contain Russia aggressively through Ukraine, the 2024 presidential elections in the USA carry a potential shift in the containment policy. In the case that a Democrat Party candidate is elected

as the president, it can be stated that the containment is probable to continue in an aggressive form concluding from the Biden administration's actions and discourse. On the other hand, in the case that Donald Trump is elected the president, it is possible that the containment policy against Russia will be altered considerably. In spite of the fact that Trump applied several sanctions against Russia, initiated CAATSA and provided support to Ukraine; the containment policy in his term was quite moderate compared with the Biden administration. In addition, Trump criticized the extreme amount of support delivered to Ukraine and he claimed that he would put an end to the conflict in a day after being elected president again. This carries a significant potential for change in American foreign policy, particularly the containment policy on Russia. Therefore, it should be noted that the containment policy needs to be restudied following a potential change in the US government and new developments in the Ukraine Conflict.

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