

The Costs of the Russo-Ukrainian and Operation Iron Swords Wars on American Military Defense

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Abstract

The Russo-Ukrainian War, which began on February 24, 2022, has led to substantial U.S. involvement. Since May 2024, the U.S. government has granted over \$175 billion in aid to Ukraine, with approximately \$107 billion allocated for military assistance. Despite this support, the U.S. military-industrial complex is struggling to keep pace with demand, resulting in significant shortages of artillery ammunition and Lockheed Martin Javelin anti-armor missiles. In addition, on October 7, 2023, Hamas launched a coordinated terrorist attack on Israel, prompting Israel to respond with Operation Iron Swords. In support, the U.S. government has conducted over 100 military aid transfers to Israel, including two publicly disclosed transfers totaling \$250 million since May 2024. Over 80 percent of this aid is directed towards Israeli defense, comprising 15,000 bombs and 57,000 artillery shells, transported via C-17 military cargo planes. The exact figures are difficult to track as they continue to rise. This paper explores how military aid to Ukraine and Israel will affect six key factors of American military defense in the future.

Keywords: Defense Spending, Russo-Ukrainian War, Operation Iron Swords War, Hamas, Israel, Russia, Ukraine, Military Aid, Military Industrial Complex, Military, Lockheed Martin, Palestine

Introduction

The Russo-Ukrainian War began on February 24, 2022, and since May 2024, the United States Government has granted over 175 billion in aid to Ukraine, of which 107 billion to the Ukrainian government (Masters & Merrow, 2024). However, as we approach the third year of the Russo-Ukrainian War, it is evident that this is a war that Ukraine cannot win, even after the recent Kursk offensive and its successful invasion of Russia, (Walt, 2024) and NATO cannot orchestrate a Ukrainian victory, despite the coalition weaponry that is thrown at the situation. What is also called into question is the technological superiority of NATO, and particularly American weaponry given to Ukraine, as Russia continues to plow through and consistently defeat whatever is thrown at it. The media and foreign policy experts are finally starting to see the writing on the wall. It is time to negotiate terms of peace.

Concurrently, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict flared up again on October 7, 2023, as Hamas coordinated a massive brutal attack on Israel. In response, Israel launched Operation Iron Sword. Despite widespread criticism of Israeli human rights violations, the Biden/Harris administration continued to support its ally during an election year at the behest of the incredibly powerful Jewish lobby. For the 2023 fiscal year, Congress authorized \$520 million for joint U.S.-Israel defense programs (including \$500 million for missile defense) under the James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act. Congress appropriated \$3.8 billion for Israel (FMF and missile defense) in the 2023 Consolidated Appropriations Act and added \$98.58 million in funding for other cooperative defense and nondefense programs (Congressional Research Service, 2023, 2). It is likely that President Trump will continue to support Israel if he is reelected, although he will be more inclined to push for peace accords.

Problematically, little time has been spent analyzing how these massive defense expenditures and wars will affect the future of American defense. The media and scholars alike support these enormous expenses and war while critical thinking about the repercussions of these massive handouts is absent.

The United States military industrial complex cannot keep up with the demand as there are now tremendous shortages in weaponry and ammunitions. There are also unprecedented shortages in military personnel due to low recruitment in the last few years. American and NATO tactics have been deployed and the enemy is aware of how to defend and counterattack. These issues will be discussed below. The research questions this paper answers are “How will military aid given to Ukraine and Israel affect future American military defense?”

This paper looks at six components of American military defense: (a) The first component is the human component, concerning recruitment and training of the American military. Currently strategies to overcome the enormous decline in numbers in the American military include recruiting illegal immigrants into the military and instituting a draft; (b) The second component of military defense includes the lack of ammunitions and weaponry and the military industrial complex's struggle to keep up with the demand, which would leave the U.S. short of weaponry and ammunitions if it should fight a ground war instead of the current proxy wars; (c) The third component is the technological aspects of aspects of the military industrial complex: Does the U.S. still have the most technologically advanced military equipment in the world? Russia appears to have few problems defeating NATO technology, let alone American-made technology; (d) The fourth component is the economic repercussions concerning the creation of BRICS, the destruction of the petrodollar, and an increase in national debt and inflation; (e). Fifth, we look at the problems that these wars have exposed in America's logistics and supply chain concerning the shipping of weaponry and technology to fight wars across the globe; (f) Finally, we will look at the realignment of the world order, in which Russia, Iran and China form an alliance against the Western powers while the U.S. experiences an empire collapse. The concluding section of the paper examines the future of the military and the industrial complex, including policy prescriptions as to what can be done to secure a strong defense future for the U.S. The next section focuses on the methodology and theoretical frameworks used in this paper.

Methodology

This paper utilizes qualitative research methods to address the research question of how military aid granted to Ukraine and Israel influences future American military defense. Data were gathered from a variety of American and international sources, including government reports and documents, resources from intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), think tanks, newspaper articles, and the author's own expertise in American military affairs. The underlying aim of this research was to evaluate how excessive spending, overcommitment, and overextension may contribute to the potential decline of U.S. military strength. The conclusion section offers policy recommendations aimed at averting such a decline, safeguarding the integrity of the U.S. military-industrial complex, and protecting the principles of American democracy and liberalism for future generations.

The Theoretical Framework: Imperial Overstretch and the Security Dilemma

The U.S. currently faces a security dilemma with Russia. As Stephen W. Walt (2022) stated, a security dilemma “describes how the actions that one state takes to make itself more secure—building armaments, putting military forces on alert, forming new alliances—tend to make other states less secure and lead them to respond in kind. The result is a tightening spiral of hostility that leaves neither side better off than before.” An empire since its inception (van Alstyne, 1960), the United States is currently facing imperial decline. In his book, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, Paul Kennedy (1989) describes imperial overstretch as something that occurs when an empire overcommits to its global commitments and finds these commitments too expensive to maintain. While this rapid economic, military, and political decline is occurring, the

United States has been watching Russia experience massive economic growth, making it the fastest growing advanced economy in the world according to the IMF (Islam & Mullane, 2024). If the U.S. prevents Russia from becoming the world's empire, then it can reap the economic rewards of a broken war-ravaged Russia. The pillaging of Russian oil reserves, labor, land, and natural resources, among many other lucrative prospects would ensure the continuity of an American empire and help to restore a failing American economy with massive national debt problems. Russian land would also provide a fertile ground for foreign direct investment, allowing companies like Black Rock to overtake the Russian economy and instill Western values. America still seeks to create the world in its image, despite the obvious Russian rejection of Western values such as abortion, nihilism, LGBTQIA+ initiatives, critical race theory, feminism, etc. As Buzan (1991) would argue, U.S. security is affected by military, political, economic, societal, and environmental factors.

This is not the first time the United States has projected its power to maintain its superpower status. During the Cold War, the U.S. engaged in numerous proxy wars with the USSR to prevent the spread of communism. These conflicts included Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Cuba, Angola, Iran, the Dominican Republic, Lebanon, Grenada, and Panama, among others. The proxy wars spanned Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Europe throughout the Cold War.

Detailed accounts, such as Steve Coll's *Ghost Wars* (2004), highlight how the proxy war in Afghanistan contributed to the creation of al-Qaeda and the September 11, 2001 attacks. One could argue that the United States still operates with a Cold War mentality in its approach to Russia. Instead of seeking to cultivate a political and economic alliance with Russia, President Biden has chosen to use inflammatory rhetoric, treating Putin as though he were a Russian communist dictator. For example, in March 2021, President Biden referred to President Putin as a "killer" (Chernova et al., 2021). He has also labeled Putin as a "butcher" (Zurcher, 2022), "pure thug" (Nelson, 2022), and "murderous dictator" (Nelson, 2022). Biden even remarked, "For

God's sake, this man cannot remain in power" (Zurcher, 2022), suggesting a potential threat to remove Putin from power, which forced the White House to walk back the comments.

But what the West, and the U.S. in particular, does not understand is that Russia views the admission of Ukraine to NATO and the conflict that resulted from it as an existential threat. One only need to study the history of Russia and its response to World War II to understand that Russians will fight to the very last man, woman, and child to preserve their land and culture and protect their land from foreign invasion and their borders from NATO missiles. Death for Russians is an acceptable alternative while NATO and the United States do not have the stomach for an extensive total war.

The well-known political scientist John Mearsheimer has argued that the Russo-Ukrainian War is the fault of the West, particularly for promising Ukraine eventual entrance into NATO. The United States is pursuing a strategy of offensive realism, which posits that a state's need for security, and ultimately survival, drives it to be aggressive and seek more power. According to this theory, states cooperate only in temporary alliances, aiming to weaken their rivals and enhance their own power (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007). At present, the U.S. is threatening war with Iran, China, and Russia, and these threats are being voiced by both Republicans and Democrats. The United States is currently pursuing war with Russia through NATO and by providing troops to NATO to invade Russia in the Kursk offensive: In 2024 alone, the U.S. committed 1.33 million troops to NATO (Clark, 2024). How can Russia not view this invasion as an American attack on its soil? Standing strong with its longtime ally, Israel (U.S. Embassy in Israel, 2024), the United States is also possibly looking at war with Hezbollah in Lebanon and Iran by proxy (Lillis, 2024). Standing on the brink of World War III, the United States has placed itself in a dangerous security dilemma that is spiraling downward into violence and worldwide destruction, not to mention imperial overstretch.

Discussion

1. The Human Component

The U.S. military is currently facing an unprecedented recruiting crisis. The Department of Defense explains this decline as follows: "...the percentage of American youths who qualify for military service has dropped, the COVID-19 pandemic limited the ability of recruiters to interact with potential recruits, the U.S. economy is booming with low unemployment, and the number of adult 'influencers' with experience in the military continues to drop" (Garamone, 2023). However, there are many reasons that are overlooked in this analysis. American youth are disillusioned with the military and do not want to participate in wars that they believe the US should stay out of or situations that do not require American defense of the homeland. A July 2023 Gallup poll found that American confidence in the military has dropped to sixty percent, a rate that was last seen in 1997. Even Republicans express declining military support, from 91 percent to 68 percent over the last three years (Younis, 2023).

Prospective military recruits are disillusioned by the military's new "woke" policies. The White House has contaminated the military with Biden's political agenda, a move that is highly unpopular with veterans and the military. The military is, by necessity, apolitical and should not cater to any political agenda. To do so otherwise is to endanger an extension of the American people that are meant to protect the United States and destroy any entity that threatens it. Dale Papworth, retired Marine Corps lieutenant colonel summarized this sentiment when he stated,

With a woke military, whose most senior officer is concerned about 'white rage,' searching for a tattle tale process to discover and discharge white 'extremists,' blaming it on toxic masculinity, discharging real warriors for not getting vaccinated, having a two-day stand down to discuss white extremism, the promotion and expansion of women in

combat, lowering physical fitness standards to accommodate naturally weaker women, recruiting with social justice and diversity ads, stating we need more female and minority pilots, promotions based on the color of one's skin or genitalia, lowering recruiting standards, blaming the military for 247 years of institutional racism, is not the military I was in for 26 years (Myers, 2022).

Veterans who often recruit members of their family are also tremendously dissatisfied with recent military missions, such the shameful defeats in Iraq and Afghanistan. According to Selber (2004):

While the difficulties veterans encounter transitioning back into civilian life and the persistent problems with the Department of Veterans Affairs both contribute to veterans' disenchantment with the military, America's humiliating defeat in Afghanistan and the unsatisfying ending (if it can be called that) in Iraq are underappreciated issues.

From veterans to politically disinterested members of generation Z, the goals of the military or policy makers are not enough to establish a volunteer military. The effect of these low military numbers is simple: a lack of soldiers who are trained and ready for warfare when the time comes. If the United States must fight a war now, it is currently in grave danger.

One strategy that has been proposed is to grant giving automatic citizenship to undocumented immigrants who join the military. Illinois Democrat Senator Dick Durbin is quoted as saying:

The presiding officer, my colleague from the state of Illinois, has legislation which addresses one aspect of that. Her bill, and I hope I describe it accurately, says that if you are an undocumented person in this country and you can pass the physical and the required background test the like, you can serve in our military. And if you do it honorably, we

will make you citizens of the United States. Do we need that? You know what the recruiting numbers are. (Prairie State Wire Reports, 2023)

The problem with this idea is that these people arrived illegally in the United States, and their recruitment would place criminals in the military. Such criminality does not bode well in a military culture that is based on ethics. Second, these immigrants have no loyalty to the United States: They did not work to earn their citizenship like naturalized or natural born citizens who are raised in the culture. Third, since these people will not be viewed as American citizens who have been assimilated into the United States, the military may have a greater tendency to use these people as cannon fodder. Fourth, since these people cannot speak, read, or write in English, or even read or write in general, this will create a new host of problems for the military during training. Also, if the military needs to be used to quell uprisings on the homeland, these people are less likely to protect and respect American citizens. Although the military does have a citizenship process now for legal migrants, it is lengthy and restrictive (Moriarty, 2022).

Another solution to the military recruitment problem is to reinstitute the draft. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2023), 71 percent of military-aged youth are unable to serve because they are overweight or obese, have educational deficits, or have a criminal or drug abuse record. The remaining 29 percent may be unwilling or mentally unfit to hold a weapon. Four percent of military-aged prospects are ineligible due to mental health (Novelly, 2022). At some point, extraordinarily little is left of the population to draft (Younis, 2023).

2. Ammunition and Weaponry Scarcity

One thing that the wars in Ukraine and Israel have highlighted is that Western countries cannot supply weaponry for war unlimitedly. Since this paper is geared towards the United States, we will only focus on the US. In an article published by *Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)*, Mark Cancian and his

colleagues (2021) researched the shortage of weaponry manufacturing. In this article, the authors state that the United States cannot maintain its stockpiles to support war plans. The Department of Defense requested that Congress approve funding for increased production of High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS) or Guided Multiple Launch Rocket Systems (GMLRS) and 155-millimeter (mm) ammunition, but it would take several years to manufacture these munitions. In addition, HIMARS launchers, Javelin missiles, other anti-tank missiles, stinger missiles, M-77 howitzer, and 155 mm ammunition, in addition to many more are in limited supply (Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Office of Congressional and Public Affairs, 2024; Cancian, 2022; see Appendix 1 for a list of weaponry the United States provided to Ukraine).

In reference to Israel, the United States is the country's largest supplier of weaponry, providing an estimated 68% of Israel's foreign-sourced weapons. The United States also gives Israel 3.8 billion in military aid annually. After the Hamas attack in October 2023, the US Senate passed a bill that would provide "\$14.1 billion in Israel-related supplemental spending. The package included 4 billion in funding for the Iron Dome and David's Sling missile defense systems, 1.2 billion of Pentagon funding for the Iron Beam laser-based defense system, 3.5 billion in foreign military financing, and 801.4 million for ammunition procurement (Reed, 2024)." In a 95-million-dollar aid bill on funding for Israel and Ukraine, Israel receives 26 billion in the package (Kapur et al., 2024).

The United States is short on high-end and artillery ammunitions and the wars in Ukraine and Israel have exacerbated these problems. "The Center for Strategic and International Studies warns of potentially critical shortages in Stinger and Javelin missiles and in 155-millimeter shells that could, in extreme cases, take years to replace" (Cancian, 2023). Other experts point to shortages of submarines and Howitzer shells (Temin, 2023). Besides manufacturers' limited capacity to produce munitions on a large scale, companies are unable to refine rare earth minerals needed to create these weapons at sufficient pace (Buccino, 2024).

Meanwhile Russia's production of weaponry has increased tremendously. According to the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI):

Russia has significantly mobilized its defence industry, increasing shifts and expanding production lines at existing facilities as well as bringing previously mothballed plants back online. This has led to significant increases in production output. For example, Russia is delivering approximately 1,500 tanks to its forces per year along with approximately 3,000 armoured fighting vehicles of various types. Russian missile production has similarly increased. At the beginning of 2023, for instance, Russian production of Iskandr 9M723 ballistic missiles was six per month, with available missile stocks of 50 munitions. By the beginning of 2024, not only had Russia used a significant number of these missiles each month since the summer of 2023, but it had increased its stockpile to nearly 200 Iskandr 9M723 ballistic and 9M727 cruise missiles. A similar picture can be observed across other core missile types like the Kh-101 (Watling and Reynolds, 2024).

American munition and weaponry shortages leave the United States in a vulnerable position if they needed to fight a real war. From a lack of weaponry to a lack of prepared and volunteer troops, the ability of the United States to win a war looks dire. The wars in Ukraine and Israel continue with no end in sight now. Although allies can manufacture these munitions or more factories can be created, all solutions require several years to become reality. From a defense perspective, the United States needs to be ever ready to fight a war: Anything else is devastating.

3. Declining Technological Innovation

The war in Ukraine has exposed the Achilles' heel of America weaponry. American weaponry is no longer the most technologically advanced and it cannot defeat the Russian military as expected. After more than 2 years of

fighting with Russia, 175 billion in military aid and highly advanced American weaponry, Ukraine cannot win. In March 2022, the Kremlin developed a peace plan that was ignored by the Biden Administration and the Boris Johnson Administration. In April 2024, the draft document became the first plan for peace talks, with Russia retaining the Russian parts of Ukraine including Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson (Associated Press, 2024). It is only a matter of time before Ukraine is forced to make peace to salvage what little remains of the country.

The message here is clear, American weaponry cannot defeat Russian weaponry. For example, American remotely piloted aircraft (RPA) such as the Reaper cannot defeat the Shaheed (kamikaze) drones, which are cheap and manufactured in great numbers. These are throw-away drones costing 20,000 to 50,000 Euros per drone (Reed, 2022) whereas the Reaper costs around 32 million Euros per drone (The Feed, 2023). Although Russia is using them as kamikaze drones, it is futile to put a Reaper out there to stop a Shaheed drone. The Reaper is too expensive to risk as the arsenal is small in comparison and the Shaheeds are greater in number and cheaper. As a result, it is economically unfeasible to use Reapers against the Shaheeds, which Russia uses as throw-away drones.

President Putin is also aware that the discrepancy between weapons technology is not significant. According to TASS, Russia's state media, in February 2024, President Vladimir Putin stated, "If we compare modern NATO armaments, the armaments of the last period of the Soviet era, in some respects are inferior, but not always... and if you take our newest armaments, they are clearly superior to everything. This is an obvious fact" (Jackson, 2024)."

Another example of declining U.S. technology innovation is the inferiority of the American Abrams tank. According to former Colonel Douglas Macgregor, the Abrams tank is an outdated fuel-guzzling tank and America is still using tanks that have been rebuilt from the 1990's. Macgregor states that these tanks burn so hot that they can be tracked easily by the enemy from space (Carlson, 2023). Russia states that it has destroyed over 15,300 Ukrainian tanks since the

beginning of the war (Lewis, 2024). In addition, Russia's response to Western tanks is the Kornet missile, a man-portable anti-tank guided missile (ATGM) intended for use against main battle tanks. Unfortunately, as the war drags on, all the military aid that the United States has given to Ukraine has simply prolonged the conflict, destroying Ukraine, and killing future generations of Ukrainian men.

In addition to the degradation of American technology, the Russo-Ukrainian War has exposed American battle tactics since the US is training and equipping Ukrainian military forces through NATO and outside of it. General James Hecker, Commander of the US Air Forces in Europe has stated that he is now "figuring out how to counter air and missile defenses, electronic jamming and other anti-access, area-denial (A2/AD) capabilities, as they are known in military parlance, that would keep the U.S. out of Russian territory" (Cohen, 2023, p. XX). Taking this a step further, one Ukrainian soldier argued that the NATO tactics he was trained on were useless on the Ukrainian battlefield. While NATO placed emphasis on movement, the Ukrainian battlefield is composed of trenches and stagnant battle lines. "NATO small-unit tactics like patrolling, infiltration, ambushes, and raids are hardly used in Ukraine" (Jajcay, 2024, p. XX). Jajcay added that although NATO taught him that drones were technologically advanced assets that only professionals with advanced training could operate, drones are treated as disposable assets in Ukraine and will continue to be on future battlefields. Finally, Jajcay argued that "TLPs, MDMP, CONOPS, Load plans, CASEVAC plans, PowerPoint, whiteboards, briefings...it's all necessary" (Jajcay, 2024, p. XX). The battlefield in Ukraine is incredibly disorganized to the point where there are no organized evaluation units to transport wounded soldiers for medical treatment. Flexible battle plans that are communicated regularly on the battlefield and battle plans that include all force's actions coordinated in sequence are necessary for future conflicts. What America has anticipated in its preparation for future warfare is not entirely correct. Several prognostications need to be corrected. If enemies know American battle tactics, they can much more easily defeat the

United States in a real war. What is key is whether the American military and industrial complex can pivot quickly enough to apply the lessons learned in Ukraine to future battlefields.

4. The Economic Repercussions of Controversial Wars

The ongoing Russo-Ukrainian and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts have significant economic repercussions that negatively impact American defense. Four primary concerns illustrate this effect:

1. **The rise of BRICS and its challenge to the U.S. dollar:** One of the most damaging outcomes has been the establishment and reinvigoration of BRICS, an informal group of countries including Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. BRICS, which focuses on financial issues, is now exploring the development of a new currency to rival the U.S. dollar as the global reserve currency (BRICS, 2023). These countries, weary of U.S. sanctions, trade wars, and perceived bullying tactics, collectively represent 40% of the world's population and 31.5% of the global GDP. With seven of the thirteen OPEC countries applying to join BRICS, the U.S. risks losing its status as the holder of the world's reserve currency. If this happens, it could trigger hyperinflation, increased interest rates, and declining asset prices (Roach, 2023).
2. **The decline of the petrodollar:** Another critical factor is the diminishing role of the petrodollar—U.S. dollars exchanged for crude oil exports. The petrodollar has traditionally ensured the U.S.'s position as an economic world leader in foreign trade and investment, while also securing cheap and reliable access to oil. As reliance on the petrodollar decreases, the supremacy of U.S. economic interests and the dominance of the dollar are jeopardized (Tun, 2022).
3. **The growing U.S. national debt:** The third economic issue is the ballooning U.S. national debt, which now exceeds 34 trillion dollars and has surged dramatically under the Biden administration (Fiscal Data, 2024). The Federal Reserve's practice of printing money without backing it with assets

- of inherent value, such as gold or silver, contributes to rising inflation. This debt-driven inflation further undermines the strength of the U.S. economy.
4. **Rising inflation rates:** The fourth economic concern is the current inflation rate in the U.S. economy. As of April 2024, the inflation rate is at 3.5%, excluding food and energy costs—the primary expenses for the average American. Food prices alone have surged by 11.4%, the highest rate since May 1979 (US Inflation Calculator, 2024). These figures reflect only the increases in the past year and do not account for the full impact of inflation since the Biden administration took office. Since Biden took office, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) has risen by over 25% (Martin, 2024).

In conclusion, these economic challenges, exacerbated by the ongoing wars, are eroding the U.S.'s economic primacy. The resulting national debt, inflation, and diminishing political support for the U.S. as a superpower could lead to decreased production of weapons, reduced technological innovation, and loss of global respect. Consequently, these factors contribute to the degradation of American defense capabilities.

5. Logistics and Supply Chain Issues

The distinction between victory and defeat often hinges on the effective management of resources, efficient transportation of supplies and troops, and adaptability to evolving circumstances. The conflict in Ukraine has underscored significant challenges in American logistics and supply chains. According to a study conducted by the Government Accountability Office (GAO), the Department of Defense has identified numerous supply chain issues affecting weapon programs. These challenges, exacerbated by events such as the COVID-19 pandemic and heightened demands from Ukraine, include prolonged lead times for supplier parts and raw materials, impacting the timely delivery of crucial components. For example, one missile program reviewed by the GAO reported a lead-time increase from 19 to 34 months for electronic parts within the past two years (Russell, 2024).

Furthermore, equipment suppliers in the war zones often lacked direct access to the battlefield for training military personnel, storing weapons and ammunition, and conducting maintenance and repairs. On the contrary, the U.S. faced its own setbacks, as evidenced by the loss of track of \$1.7 billion worth of equipment in Ukraine. Inspector General Robert Storch revealed that despite some improvements in accounting practices since Russia's invasion began, as of last June, tracking of over half of the U.S.-supplied defense articles, including Javelins, Stinger missiles, and night-vision devices, remained deficient (Crawford, 2024).

The whereabouts of this ammunition and weaponry raise concerns, suggesting potential diversion to the underground economy or unauthorized entities, neither of which bodes well. If the United States fails to create, assemble, and transport weaponry in a timely and organized manner, its effectiveness is compromised. Similarly, if the Ukrainian and Israeli military personnel lack adequate training and support for weapon usage and maintenance, the supplied weapons become ineffective and represent a waste of taxpayer resources.

The Empire Collapses

The United States is encountering significant challenges on both global and domestic fronts, which some scholars argue reflect the characteristics of a declining empire (Ferguson, 2024). The financial strain from prolonged military engagements, including the Russo-Ukrainian War, has contributed to increased national debt and fiscal challenges. The war has also prompted shifts in the global order, with the United States perceived as adhering to a Cold War mindset by engaging in proxy conflicts aimed at countering Russia, an increasingly independent and economically influential power.

Alongside Iran and China, Russia has strengthened its position within the BRICS alliance, presenting a unified front that resists the adoption of Western

cultural norms. Additionally, many nations in the Global South have begun to coalesce in opposition to what they perceive as Western dominance, favoring closer ties with Russia, Iran, and China.

Domestically, several large American cities, including New York City, face economic and social challenges. These cities, once symbols of opportunity and the American Dream, are grappling with issues such as unemployment, rising poverty, and public safety concerns. Progressive political policies and significant immigration inflows have contributed to these dynamics, leading to an exodus of businesses, and heightened socioeconomic disparities (Bickerton, 2023).

Political polarization is intensifying, with divergent ideologies often clashing, leading to a contentious environment where critical thinking and dissenting viewpoints may be marginalized. Infrastructure across the nation shows signs of aging and inadequacy, with inflation further exacerbating the struggles of many Americans. Economic inequality is becoming more pronounced, with wealthier individuals increasingly retreating to insulated communities.

The political landscape is also marked by contentious legal and electoral developments. There are concerns about the use of legal authority in ways that could set precedents for future administrations to suppress political opposition. These issues raise questions about the integrity of democratic processes and the state of fundamental freedoms, such as those enshrined in the First Amendment.

Conclusion

The question now arises: Can America recover and, more importantly, continue to defend itself amidst significant adversity? The answer is affirmative—America can endure and potentially return to its former prominence, but this necessitates immediate and strategic changes. A new national security framework towards the Middle East and Ukraine needs to be implemented.

This national security framework needs to include Buzan's (1991) five security factors: military, political, economic, societal, and environmental. From a military perspective, foremost among these changes is a reconsideration of American foreign policy, particularly a return to a form of isolationism where the United States refrains from engaging in conflicts that do not directly threaten its security or the well-being of its citizens. Political compromise and diplomacy should take precedence. For example, rather than providing humanitarian aid to Palestinians while simultaneously supplying Israel with weapons, the United States might instead prioritize diplomatic efforts to foster peace between Israel and Palestine.

Historical analysis suggests that Russia's invasion of Ukraine might have been averted had NATO, with American backing, not seriously considered Ukraine's admission into the alliance. Adhering to prior assurances given to Russia regarding NATO's expansion—such as those made by previous U.S. administrations—could have mitigated the conflict. The notion of incorporating Ukraine, a small and geopolitically vulnerable state, into NATO seems driven more by a desire to challenge Russia than by strategic necessity. Given NATO's origins as a counterbalance to the USSR, it is crucial to recognize that President Putin has consistently articulated that Ukrainian membership in NATO, along with the stationing of NATO missiles near Russia's borders, constitutes an existential threat from the Russian perspective. This perspective driven by diplomacy and cooperation rather than war and aggression will allow the American military to rebuild its numbers, armaments, weaponry, and technological innovation (learned from both the Russo-Ukrainian and Israeli-Palestinian wars).

It might also be advantageous for the United States to reconsider its leadership role within NATO, potentially allowing the organization to wane naturally. NATO's struggles in the ongoing conflict with Russia underscore its current limitations, suggesting that the U.S. could benefit from re-evaluating its commitments. In addition, NATO has failed to stop the Russo-Ukrainian War and instead has prolonged the conflict, destroyed Ukraine, and killed

the future generations of Ukrainian men. Since NATO was created to curtail the power of the USSR, perhaps it is time to curtail the power of NATO to create peace.

From a political economic perspective, fostering an alliance with Russia could be a strategic move for the United States. Russia shares several cultural and historical similarities with the United States, including elements of Judeo-Christian heritage. Rather than engaging in actions that undermine Russia, the U.S. could focus on developing trade and political alliances, thereby weakening potential Russian ties with Iran and China. Strengthening relations with Russia might also enhance America's influence in Eastern Europe, contributing to broader geopolitical stability.

Economically speaking, a return to a gold, silver, or other precious metal standard could be considered to curb inflation and restore economic stability. Controlling inflation would reinvigorate the American economy and stabilize the U.S. currency, potentially reasserting the dollar's dominance as the global reserve currency and addressing several related economic challenges.

The next U.S. president holds significant potential to restore the nation's military, political, economic, societal, and environmental vitality. By emphasizing isolationism, diplomacy, and economic growth, the U.S. could rebuild its military capabilities and defense industries. This includes replenishing weapon stockpiles and advancing technological innovation, particularly drawing lessons from military engagements in Ukraine. Furthermore, successful negotiation of peace between Israel and Palestine could contribute to lower global oil prices, thereby reducing gas prices domestically and internationally.

The adage that "domestic politics explain a state's foreign policies" is both relevant and instructive for the United States. If domestic political stability is achieved, it could pave the way for more constructive and effective foreign policies.

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Appendix 1: List of United States' Weaponry Provided to Ukraine

Air Defense

- One Patriot air defense battery and munitions;
- 12 National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems (NASAMS) and munitions;
- HAWK air defense systems and munitions;
- AIM-7, RIM-7, and AIM-9M missiles for air defense;
- More than 2,000 Stinger anti-aircraft missiles;
- Avenger air defense systems;
- VAMPIRE counter-Unmanned Aerial Systems (c-UAS) and munitions;
- c-UAS gun trucks and ammunition;
- mobile c-UAS laser-guided rocket systems;
- Other c-UAS equipment;
- Anti-aircraft guns and ammunition;
- Air defense systems components;
- Equipment to integrate Western launchers, missiles, and radars with Ukraine's systems;
- Equipment to support and sustain Ukraine's existing air defense capabilities;
- Equipment to protect critical national infrastructure; and
- 21 air surveillance radars.

Fires

- 39 High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems and ammunition;
- Ground-Launched Small Diameter Bomb launchers and guided rockets;
- 198 155mm Howitzers and more than 2,000,000 155mm artillery rounds;
- More than 7,000 precision-guided 155mm artillery rounds;
- More than 40,000 155mm rounds of Remote Anti-Armor Mine (RAAM) Systems;
- 72 105mm Howitzers and more than 800,000 105mm artillery rounds;
- 10,000 203mm artillery rounds;

- More than 200,000 152mm artillery rounds;
- Approximately 40,000 130mm artillery rounds;
- 40,000 122mm artillery rounds;
- 60,000 122mm GRAD rockets;
- 47 120mm mortar systems;
- 10 82mm mortar systems;
- 112 81mm mortar systems;
- 58 60mm mortar systems;
- More than 400,000 mortar rounds;
- More than 70 counter-artillery and counter-mortar radars; and
- 20 multi-mission radars;

Ground Maneuver

- 31 Abrams tanks;
- 45 T-72B tanks;
- 186 Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicles;
- Four Bradley Fire Support Team vehicles;
- 189 Stryker Armored Personnel Carriers;
- 300 M113 Armored Personnel Carriers;
- 250 M117 Armored Security Vehicles;
- More than 500 Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicles (MRAPs);
- More than 2,000 High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles (HMMWVs);
- More than 200 light tactical vehicles;
- 300 armored medical treatment vehicles;
- 80 trucks and 124 trailers to transport heavy equipment;
- More than 800 tactical vehicles to tow and haul equipment;
- 131 tactical vehicles to recover equipment;
- 10 command post vehicles;
- 30 ammunition support vehicles;
- 18 armored bridging systems;
- Eight logistics support vehicles and equipment;

- 239 fuel tankers and 105 fuel trailers;
- 58 water trailers;
- Six armored utility trucks;
- 125mm, 120mm, and 105mm tank ammunition;
- More than 1,800,000 rounds of 25mm ammunition; and
- Mine clearing equipment.

Aircraft and Unmanned Aerial Systems

- 20 Mi-17 helicopters;
- Switchblade Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS);
- Phoenix Ghost UAS;
- CyberLux K8 UAS;
- Altius-600 UAS;
- Jump-20 UAS;
- Hornet UAS
- Puma UAS;
- Scan Eagle UAS;
- Penguin UAS;
- Two radars for UAS;
- High-speed Anti-radiation missiles (HARMs);
- Precision aerial munitions;
- More than 6,000 Zuni aircraft rockets;
- More than 20,000 Hydra-70 aircraft rockets; and
- Munitions for UAS.

Anti-armor and Small Arms

- More than 10,000 Javelin anti-armor systems;
- More than 90,000 other anti-armor systems and munitions;
- More than 9,000 Tube-Launched, Optically-Tracked, Wire-Guided (TOW) missiles;
- More than 35,000 grenade launchers and small arms;

- More than 400,000,000 rounds of small arms ammunition and grenades;
- Laser-guided rocket systems and munitions;
- Rocket launchers and ammunition; and
- Anti-tank mines.

Maritime

- Two Harpoon coastal defense systems and anti-ship missiles;
- 62 coastal and riverine patrol boats;
- Unmanned Coastal Defense Vessels; and
- Port and harbor security equipment.

Other capabilities

- M18A1 Claymore anti-personnel munitions;
- C-4 explosives, demolition munitions, and demolition equipment for obstacle clearing;
- Obstacle emplacement equipment;
- Counter air defense capability;
- More than 100,000 sets of body armor and helmets;
- Tactical secure communications systems and support equipment;
- Four satellite communications (SATCOM) antennas;
- SATCOM terminals and services;
- Electronic warfare (EW) and counter-EW equipment;
- Commercial satellite imagery services;
- Night vision devices, surveillance and thermal imagery systems, optics, and rangefinders;
- Explosive ordnance disposal equipment and protective gear;
- Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear protective equipment;
- Medical supplies, including first aid kits, bandages, monitors, and other equipment;
- Field equipment, cold weather gear, generators, and spare parts; and
Support for training, maintenance, and sustainment activities.

About the author

Dr. Christine Sixta Rinehart is a Professor of Political Science in Palmetto College. Her areas of expertise are international relations and comparative politics. Her research focuses on Latin American Politics, Middle Eastern Politics, US foreign policy, international terrorism, counterterrorism (UAV, RPA), and female terrorism. She is the author of three books published by Lexington Books: *Sexual Jihad: The Role of Islam in Female Terrorism*, *Drones and Targeted Killing in the Middle East and Africa*, *An Appraisal of American Counterterrorism Policies*, and *Volatile Social Movements and the Origins of Terrorism - The Radicalization of Change*. More information about her publications can be found on her website www.sixtarinehart.com.