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4 NOVEMBER 2022

MEMORANDUM FOR SCUSA 73

SUBJECT: Russian Aggression Against Ukraine and the Threat to World Order:
Evaluating America's Response

1. **Issue:** The purpose of this memorandum is to propose policy options for the U.S. in countering the Russian war in Ukraine, as well as Russian coercive actions and aggression elsewhere, including within the U.S.

2. **Strategic Analysis:**

a. Territorial Integrity

Russia seeks complete control of Ukraine, which strengthens its buffer zone against perceived threats. U.S. and NATO military support is critical to the Ukrainian war effort, but direct intervention is not preferable. Russia's invasion of Ukraine threatens the proliferation of interstate conflicts globally. Increased militarization in neighboring NATO countries creates significant risk to U.S. troops and confrontation between NATO and Russia. The U.S.'s adversaries will act based on the efficacy and resolve of our response; similarly, our allies are watching that we make credible commitments.

b. Nuclear Deterrence

Russian doctrine explicitly states that it will use its nuclear arsenal to repel perceived existential threats. Russia has threatened the use of nuclear weapons over Western military support to Ukraine, signaling that they view their war in Ukraine as an existential issue. There are multiple dimensions to 'the nuclear question.' NATO and the United States' response to a potential Russian nuclear strike will set the precedent and expectations for future nuclear politics.

c. Economics in the European Energy Security

Russia has manufactured an energy shortage in Europe and exacerbated a global food crisis in attempt to overturn sanctions and fund its war in Ukraine. This winter will prove critical for European energy security and resolve to continue upholding sanctions. As energy demands peak, the shortfall of fuel will place increased stress on European nations to acquiesce to Russian demands for sanction relief but if this can be avoided then lowered demand and increased capabilities for alternative sources will greatly reduce Russia's future energy leverage. If Europe gives in, then sanctions will be undermined, and Russia will be able to fund offensives in the spring more easily. The PRC is increasing its purchase of Russian oil and gas and Russia will continue to rely on Chinese business to partially fund the war effort in Ukraine.

d. Humanitarian Concerns

Economic sanctions against Russia and the Russian blockade of Ukraine's Black Sea ports risks starvation for up to 47 million people. Russia re-joined the Ukrainian grain export deal, created in July 2022, but may pull out of the deal if Ukrainian successes continue, placing further stress

MADN-SOC

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on food and fertilizer shipments. Across the conflict zone, the Russian Federation has committed human rights abuses, culminating in the displacement of 12 million Ukrainians and 14,000 reported civilian deaths.

3. Relevant National Interests:

- a. Bolstering regional security in Europe
- b. Protecting the normative post-WWII international order
- c. Maintaining nuclear deterrence
- d. Mitigating economic harm (coercion and latent effects)

4. Strategic Options:

a. Maintaining European Security by Increasing Costs to Russia Short of Direct Intervention

The U.S. should forego any direct intervention and should continue to utilize the Ukraine Democracy Defense Lend-Lease Act of 2022 to provide weapons and support to the Ukrainian military. Accelerating the delivery of surface-to-air defense systems would most substantially improve Ukrainian capabilities. In addition, the U.S. should work through NATO to project impenetrability in the members contiguous to Ukraine through increased troop and armament presence or military exercises to the greatest extent feasible within the constraints of resource funding and maintaining our own readiness threshold domestically. The U.S. should encourage Turkey to assent to Finland and Sweden's admission to NATO and the immediate armament of those states upon ascension. The U.S. should pursue a legally viable and defensible way to seize frozen Russian assets and direct them to Ukraine or Europe for military funding. Increasing military production is paramount to these strategies, and the U.S. should work through the Ukraine Contact Group to coordinate expanded production efforts in other countries and if necessary, look to utilization of the Defense Production Act to increase domestic production.

b. Addressing the Nuclear Question

The United States must examine potential Russian courses of action involving nuclear use and identify key Russian interests that indicate their thresholds in order to shape deterrent actions.

- i. Maintain firm strategic ambiguity in nuclear dialogue.
- ii. Maintain backdoor channels of diplomacy with Russian nuclear decision-makers to effectively communicate coercive signals.
- iii. Continue coalition building and strengthening against Russia with other nuclear powers.

Contingency if Russia strikes:

- i. Respond with a conventional strike on Russian forces in Ukraine.
- ii. Non-kinetic options: Use of cyber warfare, and other escalatory options.

c. European Energy Security and Solidarity

Increased international cooperation to rapidly reduce energy costs, and encourage production of critical energy sources in Europe, especially in the short term.

- i. Federal subsidy of the sale and shipment of liquefied natural gas to Europe.
- ii. Targeted bilateral agreements with European states most at risk of extreme shortages and subsequent domestic disruptions to subsidize the supply of American natural gas at low prices to ensure continued commitments to sanctions.
- iii. Apply diplomatic pressure on Norway and other allied producers of critical fuel supplies to sell below regular market levels for strategic gain. No financial cost to the US but may result in friction with Norway.

MADN-SOC

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d. Humanitarian Concerns

Encouraging cooperation with regional stakeholders in host efforts, reinforcing policies of non-refoulement, and reinvigorating the production and distribution of essential grains and fertilizers must be international priorities. The U.S. must increase food and humanitarian aid to nations in the Global South. It must build on existing channels of cooperation such as the Black Sea Grain Initiative and the UN-supervised agreement between Russia and Ukraine to reopen and reinvigorate agricultural exports from Ukrainian ports. Given the capacity for agricultural production in the U.S. and Canada, increasing seasonal grain production may compensate for short term food shortages. The US can also increase humanitarian and social assistance to international aid institutions. Emergency food relief, cash transfers, subsidies, and tax measures may provide temporary solutions to food shortages, and financial assistance in rebuilding Ukrainian agricultural infrastructure destroyed in the war can assist in the long run. The U.S. should build a robust international consensus condemning Russian human rights abuses in Ukraine and demanding accountability under the International Criminal Court. Further, the U.S. must support the EU in meeting the needs of Ukrainian refugees and host states.

5. Recommendations:

- a. The US should not pursue direct intervention and continue aiding Ukraine.
 - b. The US should also exert pressure on Turkey to accelerate Sweden and Finland's entrance into NATO
 - c. Targeted bilateral subsidies with at-risk states such as Czechia, Slovakia, etc. through the winter are likely to be the best combination with respect to speed, price, and effect. Ensuring European solidarity with respect to upholding sanctions through the winter until leverage based on fuel shortage becomes less potent.
 - d. Reestablish nuclear deterrence through maintaining strategic ambiguity, utilizing Track 2 channels, and strengthening coalitions against Russia.
 - e. Increase financial and humanitarian aid to nations and international humanitarian institutions in the Global South and Eastern Europe and build on existing channels of cooperation with Russia to mitigate humanitarian crises.
6. The point of contact for this memorandum is CDT Madeleine Biscaichipy at madeleine.biscaichipy@westpoint.edu or 626-484-5024.

Russian Aggression Against Ukraine
SCUSA 73
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MADN-SOC

SUBJECT: Russian Aggression Against Ukraine and the Threat to World Order: Evaluating America's Response

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