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DISTRACTED U.S. FOREIGN POLICY SECTOR:
THE EFFECTS OF STRATEGIC PRIORITIZATION TOWARDS
A RISING CHINESE STATE IN EAST ASIA

by

LILIANA RAMOS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Honors in Major Program in International and Global Studies
in the College of Sciences
and in the Burnett Honors College
at the University of Central Florida
Orlando, Florida.

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ABSTRACT

The question of the stability of American hegemony has consumed U.S. International Relations discourse since the Post-Cold War narrative. With the rapid changes in the international realm and the countless U.S. humanitarian and military operations around the globe, it is no surprise that many well-known researchers have taken the time to look at the impact of American hegemony under strict observation. However, more analysis must be made of these operations' strategic purpose and success. This thesis strives to fill this gap by conducting in-depth case studies on various U.S. military operations from the early 2000s to the present in the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and East Asia. These case studies were selected with the research tool "Comparative Case Study" method to limit any bias in which country or historical event to include in the case study chosen section. With the aid of Structured Analytical Techniques (SATs), an analysis is made using the historical information gathered by the case studies to determine whether the success and impact of U.S. presence in these regions are secure enough to go against a rising Chinese state. Contrary to the resources and attention given to these military operations, the lack of agreement among American presidential administrations on a strategy could have deteriorated American hegemonic presence abroad.

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Lastly, but surely not least, I want to thank my thesis chair, Dr. Larsen. It was because of your inspiring classes that I learned about SATs, which blossomed into the first idea for this thesis. Your insight and knowledge were the foundation for this entire writing process. I also want to share my gratitude to Dr. Reynolds for being an indispensable addition to the thesis committee.

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INTRODUCTION

Does multipolarity in the international system affect the United States' ability to prioritize strategic foreign policy approaches to counteract another rising hegemony? In this instance, China is the increasing hegemonic power challenging the United States' global status. For this thesis, distracted defines the behavior of U.S. foreign policy conducting various operations abroad in multiple critical areas instead of prioritizing current issues in East Asia. In US-Chinese relations, a distracted U.S. foreign policy sector could benefit China. A military or cultural presence in multiple global regions demands extensive military strength and economic funds; currently, the United States must hold a strong international presence in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and East Asia. Previous studies explained successful foreign policy strategies and hegemonic equilibrium; however, the impact of multipolarity on prioritization during policymaking has yet to be analyzed. In addition, external factors such as personal or domestic issues in a country can influence a political actor's foreign policy decision-making, describing how distractions could be a potential factor in bad policy decisions. However, this thesis will focus on the state's analysis level rather than the individual.

This thesis expands the existing literature on foreign policy analysis by looking at other case studies in American foreign policy as building blocks for understanding the impact of strategic prioritization in critical zones. The outcomes of the present military withdrawal out of Afghanistan and previous operations in Syria as American hegemonic expansion in the Middle East. The 2014 invasion of Crimea and the current invasion of Ukraine as examples of American re-entry into Eastern European foreign issues. And bilateral relations with the Korean peninsula. Within these regions of study, a discussion can develop on whether the United States was

actively strengthening its policy to counteract a rapidly developing Chinese state throughout those years. With this information, a correlation could be analyzed between moments when the United States was actively engaged in another critical zone and how it influenced its ability to enforce a foreign policy approach in East Asia.

The importance of this topic stems from its connection to a current issue brewing in international relations and its potential impact on the status quo of the United States in the future. By understanding the impact of foreign policy on hegemonies and the influence of a rising challenger, one can determine a clearer idea of the potential changes the international system might endure, impacting the stability of most countries abroad. According to Layne (2008), power transitions in the international realm are relative; the rise of one power is the decline of the other. It is the responsibility of the current hegemony, in this case, the United States, to mitigate this transitional period to gain the best and most stable outcome. With China rapidly growing as an economic power, the issue becomes more apparent to policymakers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Soul of a Hegemony

The structure of the international realm is composed of different factors contributing to hegemonic behavior. A hegemony's state power and influence allow it to shape the international realm to its will, including other member states in what is commonly called a sphere of influence. This behavior permits a hegemony to maintain its power status abroad by inflicting cultural and military impact in different regions. Historically, this is a normal behavior in the international realm. From Ancient China to England in the late 1880s to the United States presently, there has always been a transition of power between hegemonies. In each respective hegemony, foreign policy contributes heavily to the nation's construction of its sphere of influence. A key aspect of a hegemony is the ability to maintain a strong presence abroad and limit threats to its power status, which is the responsibility of the foreign policy sector. However, is it possible to correlate an oversaturated foreign policy sector to a hegemonic decline and policy approach? According to Gilpin (1981), the foundation of hegemonic decline depends on the state's ability to maintain the economic cost of its international status without it rising faster than the cost of maintaining its status quo; in other words, strategically resisting using a vast amount of resources during global changes or power transitions to maintain its status. If a state fails to accomplish this goal toward economic equilibrium, it enters the early stages of hegemonic decline.

Understanding Hegemonic Decline

Governing the international system demands a hegemonic state to situate money into alliances, a military workforce, foreign aid, technological advancements, and institution

maintenance, leading to a straining economic problem. Gilpin (1981) further elaborates on this topic by describing a historical example between the Chinese and Roman Empires. The survival of the ancient Chinese empire is all because of its ability to evolve its technology and production to maintain strong economic growth while balancing the number of military resources needed to fight back the Mongolian invaders. Economic equilibrium was not accomplished by the Roman Empire, one of the reasons for its decline in hegemonic influence.

The publication of Yom's (2020) *U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East: logic of hegemonic retreat* echoed Gilpin's (1981) idea of economic equilibrium and hegemonic powers needing to restrict the overuse of military resources. Yom (2020) perfectly illustrates how strategic prioritization works in U.S. foreign policy by discussing the reasoning behind the United States withdrawing from the Middle East. During the Bush administration, it was a top priority for the United States to be an overseer in the regional conflicts of Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Oil interest in the Middle East and terrorist attacks on U.S. land drove this motivation. However, throughout the years, staying as a MENA overseer has not outweighed the cost and resources needed in maintaining the American hegemonic presence in the region. Yom (2020) states that the United States' slow departure from MENA has been in the works since the Obama administration, with the Trump administration making a more drastic isolationist agenda with the “America First” slogan. In general, U.S. foreign policymakers understand how American presence in MENA is not as necessary as before; maintaining peaceful stability in MENA should be the responsibility of regional actors allied with American ideology. The resources used in MENA should be prioritized in another strategic approach to compete against modern economic policy choices conducted by China, such as their Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Viola (2020) carries a different approach to explaining the hegemonic decline. In their

publication of *U.S. strategies of institutional adaptation in the face of hegemonic decline*, there is a strong emphasis on multilateral relations. Establishing stronger relations with like-minded states and having common goals is a beneficial factor in maintaining hegemonic presence and influence. While Viola (2020) mentions China's rapid growth in military supplies and gross domestic product (GDP), it still struggles to maintain global hard power because of its lack of multilateral relations. The United States uses its military to maintain multilateral relations by being a security provider for many other nations abroad. Both U.S. interests in other nations' security and projection of military strength work to limit its hegemonic decline.

Prior U.S. Foreign Policy Approaches to China

An overall analysis of current policy approaches to a rising power in China and its effectiveness have been previously constructed. Understanding these findings and the current state of U.S. foreign policy in East Asia is necessary to measure the results of policy changes during engagement within other critical zones. According to Layne (2008), U.S. foreign policymakers had two current plans with China: liberalizing China to integrate itself into the U.S.-led ideological order and offshore balancing. Instead of containing or destroying Chinese influence in East Asia, the U.S. can mold China to become a functioning member of American hegemony; however, this is unlikely because of the characteristic of the Chinese government, as stated by Layne (2008). However, Mastanduno's (2019) *Liberal hegemony, international order, and U.S. foreign policy* arranges the argument toward the faults in the liberalization of China in a U.S.-led liberal hegemony. Mastanduno (2019) refers to Ikenberry's *After Victory* explaining U.S. hegemony post-cold war and point of view regarding the hit or misses in Ikenberry's explanation. China's path down authoritarianism has made this transition of power difficult for

the United States. A robust authoritarian Chinese regime will be less willing to cooperate with American ideals.

Deciphering Distractions in U.S. Foreign Policy

Understanding how "distractions" work within policymaking can be seen in the article, *Strategic distraction: America, China, and Japan in the 21st century competitive space*, its findings were that domestic issues lead to faulty foreign policy decision-making because internal conflicts undermine the political institutions constructing U.S. national strategy abroad. In *Strategic distraction*, the author of this article uses examples from the Trump presidency. During this administration, it is estimated, that the economy reached its lowest point, with income inequality being at an all-time highest, since before the collapse of the U.S. economy during the Great Depression. The lack of credible explanations for Trump's plan to increase tariffs created internal ambiguity about whether his plan could lead to long-term economic growth in the U.S. or a short-term cash plan ("Strategic Distraction," 2022). Social protest and political unrest between different political ideologies in the U.S. have caused issues in the mechanics of policymaking at both local and federal levels. Domestic distractions may seem unrelating to foreign policy, but it diminishes the U.S. federal government from applying necessary resources and economic allocations to credible enforcement of U.S. foreign policy. As this played out in the United States, China has actively evolved its economy with multiple projects abroad. The Belt and Road Initiative, established during President Xi Jinping's administration, is one of China's most elaborative plans to create an economic zone throughout the region, historically labeled the Silk Road ("Strategic Distraction," 2022). Building this initiative does put a political and financial strain on China since multiple resources will go into constructing this plan. Whether or not China collapses under its internal pressure is to be determined in the future. A

hypothetical internal collapse of China does not undermine the fact that they are rapidly increasing their economy under American supervision in East Asia, which leads back to the point of faulty U.S. foreign policymaking during moments of internal chaos. Regional actors can play a role in diminishing U.S. pressure in East Asia, with Japan being a vital participant in establishing security and stability in the region. Japan is a leading economic power in East Asia, one of the United Nations' top donors, meaning it has the means to aid the United States in its current goals in East Asia ("Strategic Distraction," 2022).

Characteristics of Successful and Unsuccessful Foreign Policy

To test if a lack of strategic prioritization or distracted foreign policy negatively influences these approaches made toward China, setting criteria as to what constitutes characteristics of a successful policy is necessary to the process. In *Success and failure in foreign policy*, Baldwin (2000) argues the effectiveness of policy instruments when making foreign policy and its relation to extraneous variables such as the anticipated goals, cost, and how it compares to alternatives. Baldwin (2000) used the power of economic sanctions and forceful military intervention as the tools in this comparative analysis. The variables in this study were the accuracy of policy evaluation dependent on the policy instruments in use. According to this study, a standard norm within the foreign policy sector is to view economic sanctions as failed operations because of their low success rate of 35%. However, Baldwin (2000) analyzes whether or not this percentage is low enough to be considered a failure and what percentage would be considered a success. The tendency to think that military interventions always works, as Baldwin (2000) further explains, is a lack of understanding of both subjects' statistical and empirical data. Finding information on the success of economic sanctions would be more effective without comparing it to military force. This gap prevents people from understanding what constitutes

successful under the expectations of these two policy instruments. Successful foreign policy is an iceberg, with the top being the main goal and what the world sees. The bottom is all the hard work such as smaller goals that eventually lead to ideal outcomes.

There seems to be a disruption in policymakers' ability to understand failure in foreign policy. Failure is an inevitable part of policymaking as any other subject (McConnell, 2016). Failure in this field causes negative consequences to nations, government agencies, and people; therefore, room for limited success is accepted but within a small range. There is an overall understanding that failure must happen to learn about preventative actions in future cases. According to McConnell (2016), finding the correct methodological approach when rating the success or failure of a policy is up to the researcher's discretion but makes an enormous difference in understanding policy making.

Heuristics and Biases in Policy Making

Cognitive biases play an additional role in analyzing success in foreign policymaking. The “American prism” is an example of mirror-imaging, a cognitive bias where American idealism and religious personality distorts the way it views the international community and application of policy. Ettinger (2021) claims this misperception when establishing American values in critical areas was a common occurrence during Trump's presidency. *Foreign policy analysis yesterday, today, and tomorrow* by Hudson et al. (1995) examines in depth the individual decision-maker and how they react in a group; the Cold War period was the historical background for this topic. The foreign policy decision-making process is not just the individual but groups at the micro and macro levels. The different organizations, such as the U.S. Department of State and political actors, make up the overall foreign policy approach that best fits the national interest. Irrational decisions against the national interest are a symptom of all

these different parts of a decision unit failing to work together. Ashford (2021) states in *Strategies of restraint: remaking America's broken foreign policy*, the original purpose of American foreign policy and what it has transformed into throughout the years. Essentially, Ashford (2021) argues that American policymakers miscalculated the strength of American global influence. As a result, policymakers cannot come to a common ground on remodeling U.S. foreign policy to calibrate it to modern times. The actions of Trump and Biden regarding the Middle East and U.S. allies have opened the opportunity for recent change.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Overall, the U.S. foreign policy sector has engaged in multiple policy approaches, from containment to liberalization of the Chinese regime, with little success. As discussed throughout this work, multiple factors can lead to these failed attempts. Multipolarity is an additional factor to strategic failures in U.S. foreign policy. The distribution of power within the international system is no longer associated with one region or state but with multiple areas with different focuses. Currently, the U.S. Department of State has operations in most regions of the world but specifically in the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and East Asia based on current and historical events. What accounts for the impact of multiple resources extracted from other critical regions, and to what extent is this limiting U.S. focus elsewhere. Under what conditions could it be measured that the United States is spreading itself too thin in its foreign policy and losing a strategic approach, increasing China's chances of becoming a hegemonic state.

Hypothesis

My theoretical hypothesis to this statement is to estimate that as polarity increases in the international realm, causing more critical zones for U.S. foreign policy, it decreases the success of policy prioritization toward a rising Chinese state. This prediction stems from the independent variable which is multipolarity in the international system and dependent variable of strategic policy application in China. This hypothesis will be tested using case analysis and process tracing within three critical regions in U.S. foreign policy: Eastern Europe, Middle East, and East Asia. Explaining Russian foreign policy regarding a sphere of security in Eastern Europe and disagreement towards NATO enlargement will assemble the background needed to understand U.S. foreign policy in an Eastern European case study. Additionally, an explanation of the

unpopular American intervention in Syria and military withdrawal of Afghanistan because of internal issues occurring between the Afghan nationals and terrorist groups, serve as the background for U.S. foreign policy analysis in a Middle Eastern case study. While simultaneously accumulating qualitative data on Chinese policy position and growth rate of hard and soft power development during this stated time frame, 2000 through the present time. The information collected from qualitative data will serve as the foundation for process tracing. According to Collier (2011), process tracing functions as an analytical tool for researchers to connect different pieces of evidence in the case studies as diagnostic pieces for what is trying to be measured. Conceptual frameworks are one aspect of process training. This qualitative approach links interrelated concepts into operationalized data that can be applied to explain a specific phenomenon. The gathered information can lead to multiple links to an expository explanation of whether the United States was actively strengthening its policy in East Asia during its engagement within these two critical zones.

Comparative Case Study Method

To calculate the connection between these case studies and the purpose of this research, a standard research tool used among political psychologists needs to be established, in this case the comparative case study method will be the main research tool used. However, because of the versatility and case-by-case nature of this case study method, prior political psychologists had to develop a more structured focus to increase the effectiveness and eliminate any researcher bias when deciding on an array of cases to use when testing casual inferences in the research topic (Kaarbo & Beasley, 1990, p. 370). The biggest challenge when focusing on different case studies to fulfill the purpose of the research question is to not fall victim to using interpretive and favorable conclusions to explain the phenomenon studied by the researcher. For the sake of the

reliability of this research, the definition of "case" by Kaarbo & Beasley (1990), as used in political psychology and international studies, will aid in eliminating the chances of interpretive explanations by specifying this foundation in the comparative case study method. As mentioned, Kaarbo & Beasley (1990) define a case as:

For example, a "case" may be a single instance or data point, such as in an experiment, a survey respondent, or the non-occurrence of war between belligerents. Alternatively, it may be a uniquely bounded phenomenon in a historical or geographical sense, such as the case. (pg. 372)

With that definition in place, another of Kaarbo & Beasley's (1990) statements is the basic understanding of the functions of the comparative case study method, which are:

We define a case study to be a method of obtaining a "case" or a number of "cases" through an empirical examination of a real-world phenomenon within its naturally occurring context, without directly manipulating either the phenomenon or the context. (pg. 372)

These two definitions set the foundation of this research design. With that established it is important to acknowledge that within this research design there are multiple types which different researchers have developed, and Kaarbo & Beasley (1990) compiled into their *Practical guide to the comparative case study* journal. The most compatible type of case study for this research is "Cases for Description" (Kaarbo & Beasley, 1990, pg. 373). This type of case study looks directly at the impact of the cases rather than a theory already established by political scientists. The main purpose of this type of case study is to get a wider point of view on how these different historical and political events influenced the international realm and to understand in detail the event or phenomenon (Kaarbo & Beasley, 1990, pg. 373). Ideas and theories already established will be used in this thesis through the Middle East, Eastern European, and East Asian cases. Once the different cases are fully developed and discussed through this

research method, it will give way to the final research tool used which is Structured Analytical Techniques (SATs). This will be the main research tool used for the analytical aspect of this thesis.

Structured Analytical Techniques (SATs) Method

The purpose of this analytical tool to this research is to limit any cognitive biases from forming when making an analysis on a case. Cognitive biases influence human rational and thought process for a multitude of reasons. When the human mind process data it at times creates shortcuts when gathering information to reach a solution or explanation quickly. Pherson and Heuer (2010) discusses this phenomenon when describing the effectiveness of SATs in analysis by dividing decision making analysis into two subsets called System 1 and System 2 (pg. 17). According to Pherson and Heuer (2010) System 1 is the quick unconscious decisions humans make when mitigating in the world, it severely depends on prior knowledge and requires little thinking effort. The quickness of intuitive thinking process makes it vulnerable to cognitive biases and heuristics. On the other hand, System 2 is the antonym of System 1, it uses slow analytical thinking to aid in the process of making critical thoughts which is beneficial for this research. With the aid of the comparative case study research tool as the basis for discussion of the different regional cases; the SATs will complement this tool by being the resource dedicated to being the core analytical tool with emphasis on System 2 analysis in qualitative data (pg. 17).

To narrow down which SATs to use for this research study as an appropriate analytical tool, Pherson and Heuer (2010) divides them into six families based on their function and specific analytical technique: Getting Organized, Exploration Techniques, Diagnostic Techniques, Reframing Techniques, Foresight Techniques, Decision Support Techniques (pg. 12). In this research a variety of these SATs will be used in the analysis section to see how each

of the cases mentioned in the research compare alongside each other. Since the cases will be analyzed as a cluster all together this analysis section will be completed after the discussion of each regional case. While each SAT is used, a brief description will be shown beforehand to give an overview on its function.

CASE STUDIES

Middle East

Syria, 2009-2017

Compared to the previous presidential administrations in the United States, President Barack Obama did not see the Middle East as an imminent priority to U.S foreign policy, as seen in the prior Bush administration's idealistic unilateral, hyper-militaristic 'war on terror' approach. President Obama's approach to the changing dynamics of the international realm was to pivot U.S foreign policy and construct a more assertive strategic approach in East Asia (Gerges, p. 300). However, as Gerges (2013) discussed, the stance and narrative of Washington and the State Department can negatively influence establishing a new foreign policy doctrine. This case applies to President Obama during his first presidential term, where there were bureaucratic limits to resources and a restricting political culture heavily centered on groupthink that diminished his ability to pursue a transformational foreign policy in the Middle Eastern region (Gerges, p. 300). The inconsistency in applying a realistic foreign policy in Syria is where Gerges (2013) argues that President Obama's vision for the future of U.S involvement in the Middle East falls short.

From the start of President Obama's presidency, it was stated that the only way the United States would directly get involved in Syria would be if the actions occurring in the country were a high risk to the national security of the United States (Gerges, p. 299). A drawn-down approach with an emphasis on de-escalation was the main policy point for Obama to implement if a situation were to arise; this was the mentality before being faced with the turbulent domestic affairs occurring in Syria under the presidency of Bashar al-Assad. A division

between the Obama administration Secretary of Defense's agenda towards arming Syrian rebels against the Assad regime created a rift between the White House and the Department of Defense (Gerges, p. 309). President Obama established a new foreign policy approach to Syria by supporting them politically and slowly removing military support. A growing fear that military intervention would escalate the situation with Assad and harm other member states in the international community was one of President Obama's concerns for maintaining the global reputation of the United States. Specifically, keeping one of the U.S critical allies in the Middle East, Israel, safe was another main contribution to President Obama's opposition to this militaristic approach (Gerges, p. 310). With the rise of the extremist jihadist group Al-Nusra Front, having American weapons fall into the wrong hands was a concern both the President and the Department of Defense focused on when discussing the future and stability of the Syrian state. It was clear through President Obama's decision in Syria that he had full expectations that Assad would step down naturally when given enough political pressure, prolonging an armed conflict in the region (Gerges, p. 310). Since Middle Eastern intervention was not one of President Obama's priorities, this foreign policy was viewed by both American and foreign spectators as an inconsistent and weak approach but only with the potential to become a transformational policy (Gerges, p. 311).

Aside from foreign policy inconsistency during the Obama administration in Syria, other vital global powers had strategic approaches to this state, in this case, speaking of Russia and China. While the United States struggles to grasp a clear objective on the Syrian crisis, a solid Sino-Russian strategic relationship has formed in support of the Assad regime. This could be a dangerous geopolitical obstacle for U.S. interest in the Middle East region.

With the annexation of Crimea by the Russian government in 2014, Moscow was isolated from the international community and sought out a familiar partner during this time. Combine this isolation period with the ongoing Syrian Civil War, and the Sino-Russian partnership was born. Russia and China hold similar values against regime changes within the Assad government and Western intervention in the Middle East. For this reason, China has taken the initiative to construct its foreign policy towards Syria with a strong emphasis on counterterrorism operations to decrease jihadist separatist movements within the Islamic State (IS), establishing the Belt and Road Initiative in the region, and strengthening China's economic position in reconstructing the Syrian state after the end of the civil war (Xu, 2017, p. 2). This, alongside Russia's position on prioritizing military intervention in Syria to stabilize the region by helping pro-government forces take back oil and gas facilities, this partnership has the capabilities to enact change in Syria based on their strategic objectives (Xu, 2017, p. 3). The Chinese-Tajik collaboration has been the main stray out of China's consistent anti-interventionist agenda. Chinese troops were deployed in Djibouti in October 2016 and Syria in 2017, showing China's willingness to establish a military and economic presence in Syria (Xu, 2017, p. 2).

Some differences may arise in this partnership, mainly in China's persistence in being a neutral player during UN meetings in regard to MENA. In the UN Security Council of 1973, China voted to abstain from the Libya resolution, which displeased the West and Libya National Transitional Council members—illustrating a pattern of China being a neutral player during MENA affairs. However, as mentioned by Xu (2017) this is a strategic play on China's part to prevent destroying its opportunity to rise as a future hegemonic power peacefully, therefore, preserving the current unilateral world order and maintaining decent economic ties with the United States is convenient to China but not to Russia (Xu, 2017, p. 3). Hence, Russia's more

aggressive militaristic stance toward Syria and alignment with Iran. By association, this drags China into the mix, creating tension between what China wants and preserving the Sino-Russian-Syrian partnership. Yet, this shows China's long-term plans in the Middle East to replace the U.S. foreign presence in the region and strategic plays in accomplishing this goal.

Afghanistan 2001-2021

When discussing U.S. interests in the Middle East, it is crucial to mention Afghanistan. From 2001 through 2021, this has been one of the longest foreign wars in U.S. history. It dramatically impacted the American reputation abroad and shaped U.S. foreign policy for future regional interactions. The approaches and objectives have changed throughout the years. After the 9/11 attacks in New York, the Bush administration prioritized intervening in Afghanistan to prevent another attack from al-Qaeda and Osama Bin Laden, the famous 'War on Terror' initiative (Tellis & Eggers, 2017, p. 7). Unprecedented events have altered the course of U.S. intervention in Afghanistan, leading to a longstanding military presence in the region. The original aim of U.S-Afghanistan relation, as told by Tellis and Eggers (2017), has long been accomplished, al-Qaeda was dismantled, and Osama Bin Laden was killed in 2011 (p. 7). Nevertheless, the remnants of this group echo in Afghanistan even after these accomplished goals. Taliban insurgency, successors to al-Qaeda, the self-proclaimed Islamic State, and terrorist group Lashkar e-Taiba are just a few variables that provoked continued U.S. military intervention alongside allies to stay in Afghanistan (Tellis & Eggers, 2017, p. 7).

However, this is all from the perspective of the U.S. government. With the sensitivity of the events that have unfolded in Afghanistan, understanding the Afghan point of view is crucial to the larger picture of the essence of the U.S. foreign policy strategic approach in this region. Manfredi (Winter 2008/2009) traveled to southern Afghanistan to interview a provisional

governor and journalists living in the area. During the multiple interactions with these individuals, Manfredi (Winter 2008/2009) learned that as U.S. military intervention presence continues in the state, dissatisfaction with the United States and Western allies increases among the general public (p.23). Manfredi (Winter 2008/2009) interviewed Kandahar, a provisional governor of the area, and claimed that Kandahar was not only associated with family members that were Taliban but has witnessed everyday people join this organization because of strong resentment against foreign armies (p. 23). An interesting perspective on how U.S. goals, regardless of intention, clash with the overall narrative in Afghanistan.

Additionally, nation-building was not a simple solution to Afghanistan's much more complex situation. As of the mid-2010s, Kabul was fully democratized with an established constitution and elected legislature, yet this was not enough to increase quality of life and decrease U.S animosity (Manfredi, Winter 2008/2009, p. 24). Not considering the instability of this nation-building since a significant portion of its function depended on foreign aid (Manfredi, Winter 2008/2009, p. 25). The United States and western allies' search for oil and gas energy alternatives is a recurring subject mentioned by Afghan critics on what they view as the main reason for U.S. intervention and occupation of their country (Manfredi, Winter 2008/2009, p. 25). The difficulty of constructing a pipeline in the Hindu Kush Mountain region because of Afghanistan and Pakistan relations makes this U.S. goal, as mentioned by (Manfredi, Winter 2008/2009), a "pipedream" making it another failed objective (p. 25).

These variables, alongside the growing opium economy in Afghanistan, forced 21st-century U.S. presidents, such as President Trump, Obama, and Biden, to quickly decide on the best strategic approach to dealing with the Afghan dilemma. The looming interest of multiple other vital players in the international realm is waiting to see how the U.S. will handle this

longstanding crisis. China is one of those players that have created an alliance with Pakistan, fully supporting their interest in counterterrorist approaches in the area since 2011 (Tellis & Eggers, 2017, p. 9). China's strategy to protect its interest in creating stability in the regions surrounding its Belt and Road Initiative at times, as argued by Tellis & Eggers (2017), has flourished because of U.S efforts to maintain some level of order in Afghanistan, making it convenient for China to focus on economic opportunities in the region (p. 9). President Biden further reflected this point in his State Dining Room Speech on August 31, 2021, when he finally withdrew American troops from Afghanistan. Throughout the speech, President Biden summarizes the U.S. intervention's purpose, successes and failures in this state, and the personnel and economic toll it has taken on the American people and allies. But most importantly, why the withdrawal was necessary and a push forward to a better strategic approach to U.S. hegemonic presence abroad. As mentioned in President Biden's (2021) speech:

And here's a critical thing to understand: The world is changing. We're engaged in a serious competition with China. We're dealing with the challenges on multiple fronts with Russia. We're confronted with cyberattacks and nuclear proliferation. (para. 50).

This further illustrates the strategic appeal to the Afghanistan withdrawal, aside from past mistakes made in the region and its reaction from foreign competitors for hegemonic unilateral position in the international realm.

Eastern Europe

Ukraine

Ukrainian-NATO Relations, 2005-2019

During the Cold War, it was evident that the United States wanted to maintain a hegemonic military presence in Europe to counteract the Russian-Soviet influence. With this, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) came into existence as a physical military hand stretching over to all parts of Europe. NATO is composed of many leading member states participating together as a military alliance to unite their strengths and combat global security threats. However, with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the international realm drastically underwent shifts in power dynamics, specifically in Europe. As stated by Kozlovskaya (2006), from the many changes that Eastern Europe endured with the fall of the Soviet Union, Ukraine's 'civilized divorce' from Russia caused a significant rift in instability in the region (12). From then on, American influence in Eastern Europe became a conflicting political conversation. While Ukraine sought to become fully independent from Russian influence, it had to consider the negative political impact this decision would have on its internal security; this forced them to develop a "multi-vector" foreign policy approach in between developing cooperative relations with NATO and Russian friendly policy choices (Kozlovskaya, 2006, p. 9). However, this in-between was a paradox for one another. Ukraine depended on Russian natural gas and economic trade opportunities yet wanted membership to NATO as a fully participating member state and went as far as to be one of the first Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) to join the Partnership for Peace Program (PfP) (Kozlovskaya, 2006, p. 12). This program is significant to Ukraine's attempts to accept American security aid by slowly involving itself under the umbrella of NATO security protection. However, previous Ukrainian presidents have clearly explained their hesitancy in fully integrating into NATO because of the repercussions it might have held back in Moscow. In 1999, during the presidency of Kuchma, humanitarian issues and a rise in totalitarianism in the country dissuaded many European and American politicians from

supporting Ukraine in its security ambitions, forcing them back to Russian cooperation (Kozlovskaya, 2006, p. 14).

Nevertheless, the Ukrainian government was adamant about not losing American support. In 2004, Ukraine not only continued giving military support through troops in Iraq, and through the NATO-Ukraine Memorandum 2004, the United States had full access to its military aircraft (Kozlovskaya, 2006, p. 14). NATO's open-door policy, in which Article 10 argues that the door to NATO is open to any nation in Europe seeking to join, gives Ukraine the ambition to join in the future potentially (Kozlovskaya, 2006, p. 18). What seems like a success on the American side at successfully expanding its hegemonic influence into Eastern Europe, a region predominantly overseen by the Russian government. The current administration in Moscow viewed these decisions from Ukraine and the United States as a betrayal of promises kept after the end of the Cold War. As stated by President Putin at the 2007 Munich Security Conference in February 1990, former leader of the Soviet Union Gorbachev and former U.S. president Bush and secretary of state Baker signed a treaty stating to limit NATO expansion to the east if Gorbachev allowed NATO troops to be stationed in East Germany and formally accepted the unification of Germany, in which President Gorbachev complied and expected the Americans to keep their side of the promise, which President Putin claims to have not occurred (Guardian News, Russia's belief in NATO 'betrayal', 2022).

Annexation of Crimea, 2014

While it may be seen that the United States has successfully maintained its hegemonic presence in Europe, specifically in Eastern Europe, through the influence of its military organization NATO, political scientist argues its efficiency in maintaining stability in the region. This can be seen through President Putin, Russia's current president, reaction to continued

NATO expansion into the Russian sphere of influence, as mentioned previously. The annexation of Crimea in 2014 is a clear example of the extremities Moscow will undergo to prevent continued U.S. involvement in Eastern Europe. Daniel Treisman, a professor at the University of California, wrote in the *Foreign Affairs* magazine their analysis of the psychological and strategic reasoning for Putin to annex Crimea, contrary to negative global ramifications it might face. Treisman (2016) argues that President Putin's rationale for seizing Crimea can fit into three trains of thought. One of them was that President Putin viewed Crimea as a preventive attack to stop Ukraine from joining NATO. Imperial desires to bring together lost Soviet territories is a second opinion based on President Putin's perspective on the decreased geopolitical strength Russia endured after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. Or simply that there was no long-term planning on annexing Crimea, and it was, in sum, an impulsive decision on Putin's part (p. 47). However, while there is evidence backing up each of these trains of thought, a shared variable is the unforeseen removal of Viktor Yanukovych as president of Ukraine and the fear of the Russian Black Sea Fleet receiving an eviction from the naval base in Crimea, Sevastopol (Treisman, 2016, p. 47). Analyzing the actions of NATO and the U.S. leaders in Ukraine during the time leading up to this event is crucial to comprehend and validating the first train of thought as a reasonable explanation for Crimea. The evidence from European and American officials seems to contradict any confirmation of NATO's increased persuasion and including Ukraine as a member; on the contrary, it points to the opposite. Treisman (2016) illustrates that former Ukrainian President Yanukovych viewed Russian-friendly domestic policies as a priority and went as far as to implement these ideals by limiting Ukraine's ability to join military blocs from any nation in 2010 (p. 48). In 2008, at the NATO summit, Chancellor Merkel from Germany, alongside the support of British and French officials, agreed that the exclusion of Georgia and

Ukraine from the military bloc would be the best policy choice to maintain stable relations between the west and east in Europe (Treisman, 2016, p. 48). An insider from the White House, Micheal McFaul, U.S. ambassador to Russia during the period of 2009-2014, claimed that based on President Obama's speeches and policy approach, it was not his priority to push Kyiv into accepting membership to NATO (Treisman, 2016, p. 49). Additionally, he goes as far as to claim that calls between Putin and Obama, the President of Russia, never discussed his concerns against a possible attempt at the U.S. spreading its military hegemony into Eastern Europe through Ukraine and NATO expansion (Treisman, 2016, p. 49).

Russo-Ukrainian War 2022-Present

It did not take long for another Russo-Ukrainian crisis to burst in Europe. It was evident during the annexation of Crimea that Russian influence in Ukraine would continue to grow and fear of NATO expansion was a priority for Russian foreign and security affairs in Eastern Europe. During 2021, officials in D.C. claimed that Moscow had presented a list of demands, which, if met, would prevent an ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine from escalating. Examples of these demands were a limit to American military assistance to Ukraine and a permanent ban on NATO to stop expanding its military infrastructure with other allied states. However, in hindsight, it is challenging to see if the Russo-Ukrainian War could have been prevented with diplomacy alone and if Europe and NATO could have met Moscow's demands before the war's escalation in 2022 (Trenin, 2021). U.S. Intelligence had calculated that Russia had placed over 100,000 troops near the Ukrainian border. With the aid of its military machinery, it was no surprise that in February 2022, with failed attempts at meeting eye-to-eye with European, NATO, and Russian demands, a war broke out through a special military operation under Putin's administration. During the start of the war, there was an overbearing amount of

discourse around who was at fault for this crisis in Europe. Some pointed to Ukrainian President Zelensky for the apparent use of drones in the Donbas region, a highly sensitive issue for Moscow. European leaders in France and Germany also seemed to blame for failing to uphold the purpose of the Minsk Agreement, which sought to end the crisis in the Donbas peacefully in 2015. NATO for its apparent continued military support in Ukraine even after the annexation of Crimea. And lastly, President Putin's paranoia about the internal security of Russia because of the current international order in Europe. Back in Moscow, President Putin has admittedly spoken about his perspective on a necessary repair of the security dilemma happening in Eastern Europe, which erupted after the fall of the Soviet Union (Trenin, 2021).

The United States has maintained strong support for the Ukrainians during these difficult times during the Russo-Ukrainian war through sanctions against Russia and military and financial aid. An energy crisis might deter the impact of U.S. aid and presence in Europe. Russia's main export to Eastern and Western European countries is petroleum and natural gas, crucial resources to the well-being of the people of these countries in terms of energy consumption. This dependency started as early as during the Cold War with the Moscow Treaty of 1970. This set the foundation for how the Soviet Union, Russia now, would cooperate with Europe in financing its natural resources. At the time, the Federal Republic of Germany provided the pipelines and materials for the USSR to supply the natural gas that generated heat and heating in the country (Ozawa, 2022, p. 43). Throughout the years, it developed all over Europe, with different countries depending on Russian energy at different levels of dependency, with Eastern Europe having the highest levels. An example stated by the Eurostat for 2020 claimed that Finland and Poland imported more than 75% in 2020 alone (Ozawa, 2022, p. 44). With this

energy cooperation, Europe has received natural gas and petroleum resources cost-effectively and with stability.

Furthermore, Russia has maintained a stable economy with the exports of its natural resources. At times, Ozawa (2022) argued that it did seem like an ulterior method was used with this dependency, such as being a negotiation tool to intimidate other countries to establish Russian-friendly policy instead of following other advised policy choices, specifically in Eastern Europe (p. 45). This ulterior motive appeared before and during the Russo-Ukrainian War when Putin continued to pressure Ukraine to limit its support of military assistance through NATO. President Putin weaponized the effectiveness of the Nord Stream oil pipelines by threatening to cut off the oil and natural gas supply to Ukraine and every European country that depended on this pipeline if they did not comply (Ozawa, 2022, p. 42). With the start of the war, it was clear to the European Union (E.U.) that a decrease in Russian natural gas dependency needed to happen, with plans to make this happen by 2027 (Ozawa, 2022, p. 41). However, Ozawa (2022) brings up a crucial point: the cost of transitioning out of Russian gas into liquified natural gas (LNG) from other parts of the world or green energy. If and when the war in Ukraine ends, many countries might feel economically pressured to return to Russian gas (p. 47). This will lessen the impact of the U.S.-enforced economic sanctions in Russia and limit U.S. foreign policy strategic influence in Eastern Europe since Russia will have the final punch card with its natural resource market. The United States is one of Ukraine's strongest allies in this war. However, beyond helping with military and humanitarian issues in Ukraine, the U.S. foreign sector is responsible for maintaining its sphere of influence in Eastern Europe through the impact of NATO. If the economic sanctions fail to implement changes in state behavior, in this case, having President Putin withdraw troops from Ukraine, ending the war, and not cutting the energy sector in Europe,

then it would seem to be a failed foreign policy approach from Western European leaders, but most importantly for the sake of this thesis, from the U.S. Ozawa (2022) illustrates how already President Putin is looking to expand its natural gas market to China through the Power of Siberia pipeline as of February of 2022. India and parts of the developing world are also being looked at as potential new customers for the Russian gas market. President Putin's administration is trying to recover from any potential economic damages it might face if the E.U. persist with its plan to limit its dependence on Russia (p. 51). Making any sort of restrictive policy towards Russia harder to enforce by Western powers.

East Asia

South and North Korea, 1986-Present

With the events unraveling in East Asia between China, Japan, the United States, and South and North Korea, it is no surprise that President Obama coined the term "pivot to Asia" during his speech to the Australian parliament in November 2011. In this speech, President Obama spoke on the importance of shifting priorities in U.S. foreign policy to accommodate the changes in power dynamics within the international realm in the 21st century (Myre, 2021). Specifically, the issues regarding the future of the Korean peninsula have put both global powers, China and the United States, on tense terms. During the Korean War, China sided with the communist Kim Il Sung regime and established solid bilateral relations with the Treaty of Friendship. The United States took on the responsibility of aiding the Republic of Korea (Lee, 2020, p. 3). From then on until the armistice, both powers have had balance managing their soft and hard power presence in either North or South Korea and preventing one power from gaining too much of a hegemonic presence in the East Asian region. Lee (2020) perfectly describes the

importance of the U.S. strengthening a tripartite alliance between itself, South Korea, and Japan in missile defense and intelligence-sharing initiatives to maintain its hegemonic power against a competitor, China (p. 11). However, the South Korean-Chinese relations of recently the past ten years have indicated a slight deterioration of South Korean-U.S. relations and, instead, a growing appeal to China as a strategic alternative to the U.S., especially in an economic sense. While this diplomatic relationship is young, started only in 1992, it has severely impacted U.S. foreign and military policy in the region (Lee, 2020, p. 1-2).

Even before official bilateral cooperation between the state of China and South Korea, indirect trade between these states overseeded the trade relations between China-North Korea and the United States-South Korea, reaching 1.7 billion in revenue in 1986 (Lee, 2020, p. 4). However, as with any other bilateral relationship with a country, its stability depends on many extraneous variables. One of them is the internal affairs of each country participating in the bilateral discourse, including the current administration and their respective ideologies. A historical analysis of South Korean-Chinese relations shows a peak in economic ties in the 90s to early 2000s. During this period, the administrations of Chinese President Jian Zemin and South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung established the "Cooperative Partnership Toward the 21st Century," which expanded cultural and economic ties. It was upgraded in 2003 under President Hu Jianto in China and President Roh Moo-hyun in South Korea, showing a consistent flow of attempts to increase the efficiency of this bilateral relationship (Lee, 2020, pp. 5-6). This stability, however, has been tested with the question of what to do concerning North Korean nuclear proliferation. It is no surprise that a large portion of South Korea's internal security concerns is tied to the nuclear developments occurring in Pyongyang. For the United States, the question is easy to answer, a firmly held agenda towards a complete denuclearization of the

North Korean state. It reinforces their relationship with South Korea since it shows support for an issue they are deeply concerned about. It also expands U.S. military presence in the region through the theatre missiles defense (TMD) program. Yet, this is a complicated issue for the Chinese government because of its political connection with North Korea. Its strategy is maintaining a stance on recognizing the importance of maintaining a North Korean government to limit the expansion of U.S. hegemonic presence in the entire Korean peninsula while maintaining a safe distance on not being entangled in a nuclear or military conflict (Lee, 2020, p. 3). This is where South Korea and China come to a resolution on the importance of preventing North Korea from becoming a dangerous nuclear rogue state—illustrated through China's leadership during the Six-Party Talks to re-establish its image as a cooperative nation navigating its role as a balancing power in the East Asian region (Lee, 2020, pp. 6-7). However, pushing away North Korea as a trustworthy ally is also not a part of China's strategic plan, creating an internal struggle within their security and foreign policy objectives.

Similarly, South Korea has a related internal struggle with the United States. Prior South Korean administrations have approved of the usefulness of U.S. missile defense system deployment in the country, Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD), in this case, and intelligence security cooperation with Japan and the United States to counteract North Korean provocations. But on the same note, positive cultural and economic relations with China are equally important (Lee, 2020, p. 11). The Chinese government is well aware of the implication THAAD and other security agreements between South Korea and the United States demonstrate to the international realm a reduction of its hegemonic position within the domestic affairs of South Korea, leading to a national security risk (Lee, 2020, p. 10). In addition, limits on South Korea and the United States' relations stem from outside concerns between China and North

Korea; cultural clashes between the Japanese and Koreans have put the United States in an uncomfortable mediator position. The 2018 Supreme Court decision in South Korea to give reparations to individuals that underwent forced labor under Japanese occupation brought up severe controversies when the Japanese government failed to acknowledge the issue of "comfort women" during its colonial rule of the peninsula (Noland, 2019, p. 1).

In contrast, South Korean and Japanese bilateral security relations have improved in recent years, with South Korea re-entering the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA), their crucial intelligence-sharing partnership (Lee & Takenaka, 2019). However, little can be said about whether the United States had any influence in this decision since, during this conflict, U.S. President Trump was undergoing his impeachment process with little room to be concerned about foreign affairs issues at the time (Noland, 2019, p. 2). It seemed to have been a fortunate turn of events rather than an arrangement of strategic decisions on the side of U.S. foreign administrations.

Under the Biden administration, some improvements and changes have been made to the Indo-Pacific strategy regarding alliance stability between South Korea and Japan and the future of North Korean denuclearization. Biden's 2017 National Security Strategy (NSS) states a shift towards combining hard counterterrorism military power and soft diplomatic power. A strong emphasis on a stable trilateral alliance between U.S., Japan, and South Korea is the key to solving the North Korean dispute while still establishing a strategic policy to preserve its strength in the region to counteract China's rising influence (Myong-hyun, 2021, p. 5). This new policy has increased Intelligence Surveillance Reconnaissance between Japan and South Korea in association with the U.S. (Myong-hyun, 2021, p.5) and changes within South Korean President Moon's objectives with the United States and China. In 2017, President Moon and President Xi

Jinping came to an agreement called the "three no's," where a multitude of matters was discussed, one being a firm objection against any U.S-South Korean military alliances. Current events have diminished this condition since military cooperation among Japan, the U.S., and South Korea has been developing during and before Biden's administration with Trump's North Korea talks (Myong-hyun, 2021, p.4)

FINDINGS

Figure 1.1

Paired Comparison

Analyzing Hegemonic Presence: Positive Reception of Foreign Policy by Syria during 2009-2017

Positive Reception		War on Terror Approach (Bush Administration) A	Draw-down Approach (Obama Administration) B	Sino-Russian Partnership Support of Assad Regime Approach (Xi Jinping Administration) C	Anti-Intervention/Pro-Economic Reconstruction Approach (Xi Jinping Administration) D
'War on Terror' Approach (Bush Administration) A			B 1	C 3	D 3
Draw-down Approach (Obama Administration) B				C 2	D 2
Sino-Russian Partnership Support of Assad Regime Approach (Xi Jinping Administration) C					D 1
Anti-Intervention/Pro-Economic Reconstruction Approach (Xi Jinping Administration) D					
Option	Score	Weight			
A	0	0%			
B	1	8.3%			
C	5	41.6%			
D	6	50%			

In Figure 1.1, using the SAT Paired Comparison and information from the thesis, I analyzed hegemonic presence by looking at how the heads of state in Syria perceive the foreign policy approaches of China and the United States. What is illustrated in the Paired Comparison is

that the most positively received foreign policy approach was the " Anti-Intervention/Pro-Economic Reconstruction Approach " by the Chinese government, with a 50% rating compared to the lowest score, which came from the "War on Terror" approach with a 0% rating when compared to the others. The consistent dislike of the "War on Terror" approach stems from its failures to protect American interests post 9/11 in the region and stabilize Syria or, more generally, the Middle East from radical Islamic attacks and growth. An estimated 5 trillion dollars was used throughout establishing the "War on Terror" approach. Yet, American intervention has made minimal changes within the Middle East (Goepner & Thrall, 2017). Even the evolved policy choices made during the Obama administration to engage Syria rather than ostracize them have had limited results in being accepted by the Syrian government and people. However, when looking at the acceptance of Chinese economic aid and reconstruction of the region by the Assad administration is drastically different from that of American attempts. China's non-intervention stance in the United Nations and other international committees has a solid appeal to the current Syrian regime.

Figure 1.2

Paired Comparison

Analyzing Hegemonic Presence: Positive Reception of Foreign Policy by Afghanistan during 2001-2021

Positive Reception	War on Terror Approach (Bush Administration) A	Nation Building Approach (Obama-Trump Administration) B	Sino-Pakistan Counterterrorism Partnership (Xi Jinping Administration) C	Belt and Road Initiative Approach (Xi Jinping Administration) D
'War on Terror' Approach (Bush Administration) A		B 2	C 3	D 3
Nation Building Approach (Obama-Trump Administration) B			C 1	D 2

Sino-Pakistan Counterterrorism Partnership (Xi Jinping Administration) C					D 1
'Belt and Road Initiative' Approach (Xi Jinping Administration) D					
Option	Score	Weight			
A	0	0%			
B	2	16.7%			
C	4	33.3%			
D	6	50%			

In Figure 1.2 it illustrates the "Belt and Road Initiative Approach" as the most highly perceived foreign policy approach in Afghanistan with a rating of 50%, compared to the lowest rated "War on Terror" approach with 0%, again re-enforcing the dislike of Bush's aggressive anti-terrorism approach in the Middle East post-9/11. Nation building, by extension, was a soft approach to the "War on Terror." Attempts to reconstruct Middle Eastern countries with American values was an issue of mirror imaging, a cognitive bias where U.S. intelligence assumed Middle Eastern countries would adopt American-enforced democratic values without much hesitation or friction. Additionally, the data gathered from Kayani's (2021) article on the progress of the Belt and Road Initiative indicates why this project has taken such a positive appeal to current Middle Eastern governments. Countries such as Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Egypt are discussing an alternative to adopting the BRI as a part of their economic plan and lessening their dependence on prior U.S. military and financial resources (Kayani, 2021). Lastly, the second most acceptable policy choice from the perspective of Afghanistan is the "Sino-Pakistan Counterterrorism Partnership" by the Xi Jinping administration. Not only

have 16 billion dollars been invested in the Sino-Pakistan Counterterrorism project by neighboring countries such as Saudi Arabia. China has successfully used regional powers and resources to combat issues of terrorism in the Middle East rather than being a spearheader like the United States (Lons, C., Fulton, J., Al-Tamimi, N., & Sun, D, 2019). Regional control has been granted to the region by the current Chinese administration and with its economic aid it has proven to have higher approval ratings by Middle Eastern heads of state.

Figure 1.3

Paired Comparison

Analyzing Hegemonic Presence: Positive Reception of Foreign Policy by Ukraine during 2005-Present

Positive Reception	NATO Military Aid Approach (Without Membership) (Bush/Obama/Trump/Biden Administration) A	Economic Sanctions Against Russia (Biden Administration) B	Sino-Russia 'Power of Siberia' Approach (Xi Jinping Administration) C	Sino-Russian Security Cooperation Approach (Xi Jinping Administration) D
NATO Military Aid Approach (Without Membership) (Bush/Obama/Trump/Biden Administration) A		A 3	A 3	A 3
Economic Sanctions Against Russia (Biden Administration) B			B 3	B 3
Sino-Russia 'Power of Siberia' Approach (Xi Jinping Administration) C				D 1
Sino-Russian Security Cooperation Approach (Xi Jinping Administration) D				
Option	Score	Weight		
A	9	56.3%		
B	6	50%		

C	0	0%
D	1	6.3%

In Figure 1.3, the positive reception of foreign policy was shifted to the Eastern European region, specifically with a focus on Ukraine. The highest-rated policy approach in this paired comparison was the "NATO Military Aid Approach," with 56.3% compared to the lowest ranking being the Sino-Russia "Power of Siberia" Approach. Looking at the events unfolding in the Russo-Ukrainian War, there is a connection on why Eastern European countries would prefer to have a U.S. military backing strategy in the region to go directly against Russian expansionist aggression than a friendly approach to Russia through economic cooperation as viewed in the "Power of Siberia" approach by the Chinese government. During the 1993 administration in Ukraine, before the invasion of the country, the idea of entering NATO for military protection was seen as the highest form of protection for national security in the country, indicating a long-term interest in the council. However, geopolitical changes within the international realm after the collapse of the Soviet Union changed the dynamic between Ukrainian-Russian relations, less as an alliance and neighbor and leading more as an extension of Russian security concerns (Kozlovska, 2006, p. 12). Around 80 billion dollars has been accumulated to aid Ukraine in collaboration with all 30 NATO members. This ranges from military equipment, financial aid, and humanitarian aid (Duggal, 2023). Unsurprisingly, "NATO military aid" successfully was a more effective policy choice from the perspective of the Ukrainians. American and NATO efforts have allowed Ukraine to fight back against Russian aggression. Specifically, direct

financial and military aid has been much more effective than Biden's preliminary plan on enforcing stricter economic sanctions against Russia. The reasoning stems from the fact that European Russian natural gas dependency is undeniable. Crude oil production has slightly decreased from the invasion; 10 million barrels are still in production today (Constable, 2023). However, as argued by Constable (2023), the effectiveness of economic sanctions in changing state behavior is debatable. We can use Iran and Cuba as examples. Additionally, while the "Power of Siberia" and "Sino-Russian Security Cooperation" work to maintain a strong alliance between both countries based on similar objectives against American foreign policy in Eastern Europe, it puts China in a problematic predicament since it limits its engagement with Ukraine. In contrast, maintaining positive relations with Russia are still maintained because of the current Russo-Ukrainian War, making Chinese strategic policy choices in Ukraine futile.

Figure 1.4

Paired Comparison

Analyzing Hegemonic Presence: Positive Reception of Foreign Policy by South Korea during 1986-Present

Positive Reception	Denuclearization of North Korea Approach (Trump-Biden Administration) A	‘Asian Pivot’ (Obama Administration) B	‘Cooperative Partnership Toward the 21st Century’ Approach (Zemin Administration) C	Balancing Force in East Asia Approach (Xi Jinping Administration) D
Denuclearization of North Korea Approach (Trump-Biden Administration) A		A 3	A 1	A 1
THAAD Approach (Bush-Obama Administration) B			C 1	B 1
‘Cooperative Partnership Toward the 21st Century’ Approach (Zemin Administration) C				D 2
Balancing Force in East Asia Approach (Xi Jinping Administration) D				

Option	Score	Weight
A	5	55.5%
B	1	11.1%
C	1	11.1%
D	2	22.2%

Lastly, Figure 1.4 illustrates the positive reception of foreign policy approaches by heads of government in South Korea. The highest-rated foreign policy approach was the "Denuclearization of North Korea" pushed during the Trump and Biden Administrations, with a 55.5% rating, compared to the lowest score being a tie between the "THAAD Approach" by the U.S. administration and "Cooperative Partnership Toward the 21st Century Approach" by the Chinese Administration. The nuclear aggression evoked by the North Korean government and consistent missile threats against South Korea and Japan in the 21st century clearly reinforces why the denuclearization approach received a higher rating than a regional balancing power actor objective enforced by the Chinese government. However, cultural and economic bilateral relations between the South Korean and Chinese governments make the complete acceptance of U.S. defense missiles in East Asia a complicated and controversial decision for the South Korean government without completely offending the strategic plans of China.

Figure 2.1Key Assumptions Check

Assumption	Evidence	Rating
The 'Belt and Road Initiative' (BRI) by the Xi Jinping Administration is a successful policy choice in the Middle East	Like the Silk Road, China has been able to successfully establish the BRI project in the Middle East. Connecting Europe, Asia, and Africa through Chinese economic development, cultural exchanges, and security protocol between member states. Syria, Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Iran, and Saudi Arabia are a few of the Middle Eastern countries interested in expanding the BRI within their country or have future plans to do so (Kayani, 2021). Two of the major players in the flourishing of the BRI in the Middle East is the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. In general, China receives 40% of its oil imports from the trading routes in this region and Saudi Arabia is one of their main suppliers for this resource (Kayani, 2021). The UAE has the Strait of Hormuz which is another of China's major oil import transportation route (Kayani, 2021). Through diplomatic tool "fence sitting" China has been able to create cooperative partnerships with these countries with an emphasis in economic strengthening (Kayani, 2021).	S
The 'War on Terror' by the Bush Administration was a failed policy choice in the Middle East	Goepner (2016) illustrated a data analysis of the 'War on Terror' effectiveness to achieve its objectives during its 15 year long period. For counter-terrorism efforts it rates it a failure by its overall negative impact on terrorism globally (p.110). Per every 1000 American troops and billion U.S. dollar spent on the 'War on Terror' policy, global terror attacks increased by 19 post-9/11 (Goepner, 2016, p. 110). In terms of protecting American and the U.S. from terrorist attacks, Islamist inspired attacks have increased to 7 compared to the pre-2001 quantitative observation of only 5 Islamist inspired attacks (Goepner, 2016, p. 113). Similarly, by 2013 the number of members in Islamist terrorist organizations have increased to an average of 110,000 worldwide compared to the 32,200 in 2000 (Goepner, 2016, p. 113). Extremist Islamist terror groups have also increased globally, with the application of the 'War on Terror' policy, by 13 in just 2001 to 37 in 2013 (Goepner, 2016, p. 113). In terms of U.S. intervention and its success in stabilizing the Middle East, countries invaded by the U.S. had 143 more	S

	terrorist attacks per year than a country not invaded by the U.S. during this time (Goepner, 2016, p. 111).	
The Biden's Administration decision to withdraw from Afghanistan in 2022 was strategically correct	Ordoñez (2022) illustrates the consequence of President Biden's plan to withdraw out of Afghanistan on September 11, 2021. The reasoning for this was to end the 13-year war between both countries and focus military and intelligence service on other more pressing issues within the international realm such as Russia and China, as stated by John Kirby the National Security Council Spokesman to the Biden Administration. Additionally, allowing Biden to delegate more resources to dealing with current economic and social issues within the U.S. (Ordoñez, 2022). While this might seem advantageous to the U.S. and calculative move, the consequence of this action back in Afghanistan have been detrimental. Not only have the Taliban taken control of the state in just a year but humanitarian crises and political oppression by the Taliban to women and minority rights have increased drastically after the U.S. withdrew from Afghanistan (Watkins, 2022). Leaving a permanent mark on U.S. failures to stabilize the region.	C
Through NATO the United States has been able to maintain stability in Eastern Europe	NATO is a by-product of the Cold War, made as a response to the Warsaw Pact. However, with the Soviet Union gone, ending the Cold War many scholars argue the continued existence of NATO in the 21 st century. Dowd (2022) strengthens the argument that not only has NATO evolved to fulfill a new purpose in Europe but its continued functioning is supported by a multitude of Western and Eastern European countries. Evidence of this lies in the fact that prior Soviet bloc countries, Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia and prior members of the Warsaw Pact, Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovakia have all willingly joined NATO for military protection against Russian aggression in Eastern Europe (Ricks, 2004). Making NATO the most effective deterrence tool against President Putin's foreign policy agenda to undermine the sovereignty and autonomy of Baltic and Slavic states in Eastern Europe (Dowd, 2022). With NATO alone the United States has been able to increase European defense budget by \$1 trillion dollars and establish over 3 million troops in the region, giving NATO members the security that if any aggression were to be directed towards them they would have the support of the U.S. (Stavridis, 2019). However, this is a classic example of the security dilemma, the more NATO re-enforces its military support for NATO members the	C

	more threatened the Russian government is, increasing their aggression, as seen through the actions against Ukraine. Therefore, whether or not NATO is effective in stabilizing the region, it exists within its own paradox, the more successful it is at this task the more it increases the chance of Russia starting a war in Europe with the U.S. which would be detrimental to the region.	
Through a Sino-Russian bilateral relation China has been able to maintain stability in Eastern Europe	The Russo-Ukrainian War has proven how durable the Sino-Russian relation has become in the recent years. Not only has President Xi Jinping continued its support of the Russian government during this war but has openly shown its disapproval of the economic sanction against Russia (Jones et al, 2022). While China continues strengthening its bilateral relation with Russia to establish its own economic presence in Eastern Europe, its approval of the Russian invasion of Ukraine has created tension between China and other Eastern European countries. Jones et al (2022) illustrates this dilemma by discussing Merezko, Chairman of Foreign Affairs Committee in Ukraine, position on viewing China as a potential threat because of its lack of neutrality during the Russo-Ukrainian War. Yet, breaking economic relations with China, one of Ukraine's biggest trading partners, would increase the troubling economic situation the country is facing in military expenditures during the war. The potential for China to become a mediator during the war is still open, leaving room for the Chinese government to improve its image in the eyes of Eastern European countries (Jones et al, 2022).	C
China has better bilateral relations with South Korea than the United States in 2020-Present	South Korean-Chinese relations are predominately composed of economic and cultural ties. Since 2019, South Korea biggest exports have come from China, amounting to \$136 billion worth of products (Yuan, 2022). Additionally, because of China's relation with North Korea as a balancing power between North-South Korean tension, South Korea has had to mitigate its relationship with China to prevent any sort of shortcomings hurting the stability China brings to Seoul-Pyongyang relations (Yuan, 2022). However, in a Carnegie poll it indicated a disagreement from the South Korean public in viewing China as a trustworthy partner with the agenda to unify Korea. Additionally, more than 50% of the South Korean public voted China as the biggest threat to a unified Korea in this 2019 poll (Yuan, 2022). Compared to the 8.3% that voted the U.S. as the	U

	biggest threat to a unified Korea, it is clear who the South Korean public views as a stronger ally in the stabilizing of their country (Yuan, 2022). Additionally, in the 2020 Pew global poll 83% of the South Korean public voted a sign of no confidence in President Xi Jinping ability to do good in global affairs (Yuan, 2022). Economic ties are still crucial within South Korean-Chinese relations but whether that is strong enough to prevent that South Korean government and public from preferring China over the U.S. is unlikely.	
The U.S. THAAD project is a stronger priority to South Korea than economic relations with China	China's stance on U.S missile deployment in South Korea has been transparent on how damaging it views it to its strategic interest in East Asia. Between the Xi Jinping and Moon government they constructed the "Three Nos" which included the assurance that South Korea would not agree to deploy THAAD system in their country (Tong-Hyung, 2022). However, with the change of government, new South Korean conservative administration, Yoon Suk Yeol, have disregarded this rule in the "Three Nos" policy; going against the Chinese government's disapproval with this decision. The South Korean government successfully implemented THAAD in 2017 (Tong-Hyung, 2022). While this decision injured South-Korean-Chinese relations it illustrated their current shift on prioritizing missile defense system against North Korean threats than strong bilateral relations with the Chinese and North Korean government.	S

As stated in the Key Assumption Check (KAC), the most supported assumptions were surrounding the effectiveness of the "Belt and Road Initiative" in the Middle East and the failure of the "War on Terror." Aside from the stated information in support in the chart, these assumptions have been previously proven in the Paired Comparison SAT. The THAAD's program appeal to the new administration in South Korea is reinforced by being one of the other supported assumptions in the KAC. Overall, the different assumptions earned an unsupported or caveated response in the KAC test because of the multitude of variables that can either make or break the validity of the assumption.

Figure 3.1Cross Impact Matrix

China's Economic Influence as a Threat to the United States Hegemonic Presence in the Middle East

	Technological Progress	Exports per Capita in the Region	Foreign Trade Partnerships	Strategic Hedging	Economic Assistance
Technological Progress		-	+	Neutral	Neutral
Exports per Capita in the Region	Neutral		+	+	Neutral
Foreign Trade Partnerships	+	+		+	+
Strategic Hedging	Neutral	+	+		+
Economic Assistance	Neutral	Neutral	+	+	

Figure 3.2Cross Impact Matrix

China's Economic Influence as a Threat to the United States Hegemonic Presence in the Eastern Europe

	Technological Progress	Exports per Capita in the Region	Foreign Trade Partnerships	Strategic Hedging	Economic Assistance
Technological Progress		+	+	Neutral	Neutral
Exports per Capita in the Region	Neutral		+	Neutral	+
Foreign Trade Partnerships	+	+		+	+
Strategic Hedging	+	Neutral	+		+
Economic Assistance	Neutral	Neutral	+	Neutral	

Figure 3.3Cross Impact Matrix

China's Economic Influence as a Threat to the United States Hegemonic Presence in the East Asia, Southeast Asia, and Central Asia

	Technological Progress	Exports per Capita in the Region	Foreign Trade Partnerships	Strategic Hedging	Economic Assistance
Technological Progress		+	+	Neutral	Neutral
Exports per Capita in the Region	Neutral		+	Neutral	+
Foreign Trade Partnerships	+	+		+	+
Strategic Hedging	Neutral	+	-		+
Economic Assistance	+	Neutral	+	Neutral	

In Figure 3.3, the chart illustrates the potential of Chinese soft and economic power in East Asia. The values are signed using positive or negative signs. Depending on the strength of the vertical variable's impact on the horizontal variable is what determines its value. These values can range from neutral, bolded positive, or bolded negative. If negative, it indicates little to no impact. If positive, it indicates a more substantial impact. In this case, the variable with the most substantial impact was foreign trade relations with regional powers. In addition, it analyzes not only the Chinese economy's economic strength abroad but also how it threatens U.S. hegemonic presence in three critical areas. What was determined was that the factor of "Foreign Trade Partnerships" has the most decisive positive influence on all other variables, making it the most influential economic tool the Chinese government repeatedly uses to form bilateral relations with countries worldwide. In addition, its rapid productivity and economic growth have made its Chinese-promoted trade relations globally accepted and sought out by many member states worldwide. Its ability to construct change within its countries without the Chinese

government entangled in its domestic affairs is the biggest concern when seeking a bilateral relationship with the U.S.

CONCLUSION

With an array of military and foreign operations abroad, analyzing a few U.S. foreign operations in the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and East Asia gives insight into the many variables that make a successful policy. With the aid of the SATs, it was possible to visualize the impact of the prior U.S. administration's approach to hot-topic historical events, from conflicting systems between the U.S. president and the Department of Defense or drastic changes in policy choices such as between Bush's "War of Terror" approach and Obama's more diplomatic approach to Syria. The United States government has had to overcome many internal obstacles that have prevented a straightforward approach to any global crisis. Failures to maintain a hegemonic presence in certain regions, such as the Middle East, have allowed room for the Chinese government to implement their economic approaches, such as the Belt and Road Initiative, successfully with the approval of the heads of government in the Middle Eastern region. However, not all is lost, for the current U.S. administrative approaches starting from Obama, Trump, and Biden, have generated positive reactions in Eastern Europe, with the foreign aid and economic sanctions against Russia promoted by the U.S. and establishment of strong U.S. military presence against Russian aggression towards Eastern European through NATO. In addition, with the new South Korean administration, Suk Yeol, a new perspective on U.S. military defense in East Asia has flourished against the Chinese government's request. The competition for uni-polar hegemonic strength in the international realm is still at the hands of the U.S. government to maintain if administrative decisions continue on a similar path with an acknowledgment of the failures in the Middle East and redirection to fix these past mistakes.

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