

# Review of: "The Russian Invasion of Ukraine in the United States National Security Strategy: A Geopolitical Approach From Neoclassical Realism"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Dr. Vidal Pérez, thank you for the opportunity to read and review your paper. I found it very interesting.

The author argues that the U.S. elite, through a geographical mental map, views China's rise as the primary challenge to the US. He evaluates the hypothesis that U.S. policy toward Ukraine contradicts the national security strategy, which prioritizes the Indo-Pacific region for countering China. The paper critiques the allocation of significant resources to Ukraine, a region deemed less geopolitically important. However, it overlooks the drain on U.S. resources from other ongoing conflicts, particularly in the Middle East. This inconsistency challenges the US's core strategy of preventing a dominant Eurasian bloc.

The paper suggests that the U.S.-Russia conflict arises from differing worldviews and interests. The U.S. refusal to acknowledge Russia as a peer and grant it a sphere of influence in Eastern Europe is seen as a key factor. This, combined with Russia's sense of exclusion and desire for influence, is argued to have led to the invasion of Ukraine. The US's significant support for Ukraine aims to weaken Russia strategically. However, this war risks becoming a resource drain, hindering competition with China, which could benefit from a weakened US and Russia.

The war's evolution limits US options. Continued US commitment to Europe could complicate its China rivalry. Domestic support for the war may also wane. A protracted war is undesirable. If Ukraine struggles, the US can push for a ceasefire; this will stop the violence and postpone political issues (like in Korea after WWII or a divided Germany). This frees up resources for the Indo-Pacific. Then, the US can encourage European allies to rebuild Ukraine and share security burdens in Eastern Europe. This allows the US and Europe to focus on containing Russia in the long term.

Overall, the war in Ukraine exposes a potential strategic incoherence in US foreign policy. Finding a way to contain Russia while prioritizing the rivalry with China will be a key challenge for US policymakers. A ceasefire could be a way out.

The arguments for a ceasefire are built on a scenario of a prolonged war in Ukraine, which is a drain on US resources. A long war weakens both the US and Russia, potentially benefiting China, which could exploit their vulnerabilities. The author's analysis includes that a frozen conflict could create internal instability in Russia due to economic hardship and a prolonged stalemate. This could limit Russia's ability to conduct further military campaigns.

However, one cannot exclude a scenario in which a frozen conflict might give Russia time to solidify its position in Ukraine

and potentially rebuild its military using its vast resources. It could also use the economic shift to become more self-sufficient, which has already happened. At the same time, internal US issues could weaken its economy while Russia strengthens, potentially shifting the global balance of power. A ceasefire would not resolve the underlying issues that led to the war, leaving tensions high and the potential for renewed conflict.

This highlights the difficult choice for the US. A ceasefire carries risks but allows for a strategic shift towards China. Continuing the war weakens both sides but might strengthen Russia eventually, especially if the US falters domestically.

The paper, well-written and presenting compelling arguments, advocates for a U.S. strategy that prioritizes competition with China while managing tensions with Russia. This could involve exploring a ceasefire in Ukraine as a first step towards a long-term shift in U.S.-Russia relations, aiming to prevent a China-Russia alliance. This contribution to the discussion on U.S. global strategy offers valuable insights.