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**THE POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES TOWARDS
RUSSIA AFTER THE AGGRESSION IN UKRAINE
– STRIVING FOR PERMANENT WEAKENING
OR READINESS TO REBUILD COOPERATION?**

The article analyses and evaluates the United States' reaction to Russian aggression in Ukraine in the context of US strategic interests. The main research problem is contained in the questions: What are the main goals of the US response to Russian aggression in Ukraine? Is the United States striving to weaken Russia permanently? Is it possible to rebuild US cooperation with Putin's Russia? The main hypothesis is that the direct goal of the USA is to prevent Russia from winning the war in Ukraine and rebuilding its military potential, and its long-term goal is to maintain the dominant position of the USA and the West in the world. The US wants to convince both Russia and China that the undermining of the basic principles of the international community and the dominant American position in the world will meet with a strong response. If Moscow positions itself as the enemy of the West, it will be in the interest of the United States to weaken Russia permanently, ensuring that China does not take advantage of it. On the other hand, a positive change in Russia's foreign and domestic policy would favour the recovery of cooperation and a gradual withdrawal from sanctions.

Keywords: United States, Russia, China, war in Ukraine, foreign and security policy, hegemony.

INTRODUCTION

President Joe Biden's administration condemned the Russian aggression in Ukraine with one voice and announced its strong support for the defense of the country's sovereignty and territorial

integrity. According to the narrative of leading American politicians, the consequence of the reaction of the West, under the leadership of the United States, to the war in Ukraine is to weaken Russia and the regime of Vladimir Putin, especially in order to force them to abandon their aggressive policy. On the day of aggression in Ukraine, i.e. 24 February 2022, President Biden said: “Putin’s choice to make a totally unjustifiable war on Ukraine will have left Russia weaker and the rest of the world stronger”¹. On 25 April 2022 in Poland, on the way to Ukraine, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said: “We don’t know how the rest of this war will unfold, but we do know that a sovereign, independent Ukraine will be around a lot longer than Vladimir Putin is on the scene.”² Accompanying U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said in turn: “We want to see Russia weakened to the degree that it can’t do the kinds of things that it has done in invading Ukraine. So it has already lost a lot of military capability, and a lot of its troops, quite frankly. And we want to see them not have the capability to very quickly reproduce that capability.”³

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has brought relations with the United States to their lowest point since the end of the Cold War. The US has taken decisive action to prevent Russia from defeating Ukraine, including providing Ukraine with large quantities of increasingly advanced arms, intelligence, and training. In addition, it imposed severe economic sanctions on Russia and its regime, and strengthened NATO’s eastern flank militarily. As Russia and Ukraine have contradictory preconditions for entering into negotiations, the war can go on for years. This, in turn, will provide the background for relations between the US and Russia⁴.

The aim of the article is to analyze and evaluate the reaction of the United States to Russian aggression in Ukraine in the context of US strategic interests. The main research problem is contained in the

¹ The White House, *Remarks by President Biden on Russia’s Unprovoked and Unjustified Attack on Ukraine*, 24.02.2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/02/24/remarks-by-president-biden-on-russias-unprovoked-and-unjustified-attack-on-ukraine/> [accessed: 10.10.2022].

² R. Wright, *Ukraine Is Now Americas War Too*, „The New Yorker”, 1.05.2022, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/ukraine-is-now-americas-war-too> [accessed: 16.10.2022].

³ U.S. Department of State, *Secretary Antony J. Blinken and Secretary Lloyd Austin Remarks to Traveling Press*, 25.04.2022, <https://www.state.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-and-secretary-loyd-austin-remarks-to-traveling-press/> [accessed: 10.10.2022].

⁴ R. Haass, *Is Diplomacy Between Russia and the West Still Possible?*, Council on Foreign Relations, 10.05.2022, <https://www.cfr.org/article/diplomacy-between-russia-and-west-still-possible> [accessed: 12.10.2022].

questions: What are the main goals of the US response to Russian aggression in Ukraine? Is the United States striving to permanently weaken Russia? Is it possible to rebuild US cooperation with Putin's Russia? The direct goal of the USA is to prevent Russia from winning the war in Ukraine and rebuilding its military potential. The long-term goal is to maintain the dominant position of the USA and the West in the world as long as possible. The United States wants to dissuade revisionist powers such as Russia and China from breaking the rules of the international community and undermining the US dominant position in the world. If Moscow does not stop doing this, the United States will want to permanently weaken Russia. Since the main strategic rival of the US is China, Washington will try to ensure that Russia's weakening does not translate into a strengthening of China. The restoration of political and economic relations between the US and the West with Russia will depend on the directions of its foreign and security policy. The sanctions can also be gradually lifted if positive changes take place in the Kremlin's actions. The article was prepared from the perspective of offensive neorealism. The author interviewed scientists and experts from research centers in Washington and New York, including Columbia University and the George Washington University. The interviews were individual, non-standardized and in-depth. He also analyzed the expertise of leading US think-tanks for international politics.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Political realism is conceived in a predominantly materialistic way and is focused on selfinterest, which clearly distinguishes it from idealism⁵. Teresa Łoś-Nowak included the essence of the realistic current in international relations in four main theses⁶: (1) the state is the most important and fundamental participant in international relations; (2) the state in international relations acts rationally, ie it chooses the most favorable for itself from many alternative solutions, not being guided by the good of others, but with its own interests; (3) the key to all its activities is survival and independence; (4) anarchy and the distribution of power enforce the structural arrangement of the international system.

⁵ S. Guzzini, *Power, Realism and Constructivism*, Routledge, New York 2013, p. 113.

⁶ T. Łoś-Nowak, *Współczesne stosunki międzynarodowe*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław 2010, p. 32.

According to the representative of classical realism, Hans Morgenthau, power is the consequence of the drive for domination, which is the psychological motive of human activity. In human nature he perceived the origins of the essence of politics as power⁷. The theory of realism in international relations was modernized by Kenneth Waltz⁸, whose theoretical contribution was termed neorealism or structural realism. In explaining the actions of the state in international relations, he moved realism away from its unprovable assumptions about human nature, focusing on the notion of structure. States' decisions and actions are conditioned by two basic factors: (1) all states are constrained by existing structure of an international anarchic system; (2) any course of action states pursue is based on their relative power when measured against other states⁹.

The way in which the state ensures its own security determines the division into offensive and defensive realism. According to offensive realists, states strive to maximize the relative power that will give them an advantage over others. Defensive realists, on the other hand, believe that states in search of security do not pursue great power, because too much power, like the lack of power, is dangerous¹⁰. John J. Mearsheimer outlines five main assumptions on which is based the offensive realism: (1) the international system is anarchic; (2) great powers inherently possess some offensive military capability; (3) states can never be certain about the intentions of other states; (4) survival is the primary goal of great powers; (5) great powers are rational actors¹¹. From these core assumptions J. J. Mearsheimer argues three general patterns of behavior of states: (1) fear of others; (2) self-help (egoism); (3) power maximization (seeking for dominance)¹². According to him, states strive to gain and maintain a hegemonic position, because only this will ensure their security in an anarchic international system in which there is no certainty as to the behavior of other states¹³. It is worth noting that, according to offensive neorealists, the risk of war in

⁷ S. Guzzini, *Power, Realism...*, p. 47.

⁸ K.N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, Random House, New York 1979.

⁹ S. Antunes, I. Camisão, *Realism*, in: *International Relations Theory*, eds. S. McGlinchey, R. Walters, Ch. Scheinpflug, E-International Relations Publishing, Bristol 2017, pp. 16–17.

¹⁰ P. Kmiecik, *Realizm strukturalny ofensywny, defensywny i zależny*, 26.11.2013, Nowa Strategia, <http://www.nowastrategia.org.pl/realizm/> [accessed: 12.10.2022].

¹¹ J.J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York 2001, pp. 30–31.

¹² D.D.P. Johnson, B.A. Thayer, *The Evolution of Offensive Realism. Survival under Anarchy from the Pleistocene to the Present*, „Politics and the Life Sciences” 2016, vol. 35, no. 1, pp. 8–11.

¹³ J.J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy...*, pp. 1–6.

a multipolar system is greater than in a unipolar and bipolar systems. This is due to both the greater number of combinations of potential conflict pairs and the maintenance of the balance of power by external factors, including unstable alliances, rather than internal ones in the form of increasing military potential¹⁴.

Offensive neorealists believe that the possibility of cooperation between states is limited, as they fall into the trap of a security dilemma when seeking to increase their power. It consists in the fact that the increase in the strength of one country causes fears and thus the actions of other countries in the form of increasing their own power. Such a reaction results from a decline in the sense of security and preparation for the worst-case scenarios in an international environment dominated by competition¹⁵. By assuming the uncooperative and egoistic nature of humankind and the absence of hierarchy in the international system, realists encourage state authorities to act in ways based on suspicion, power and force. Offensive realism can thus be seen as a self-fulfilling prophecy, which may exacerbate the conflict. This is all the more so because realists believe that the possibility of peaceful change is limited¹⁶. On the other hand, J. J. Mearsheimer does not consider states to be mindless aggressors, blindly following power. They maximize their relative power by knowing when they can move forward and when they must move back, combining intelligence with energy in their actions. However, they must be prepared for the appearance of a revisionist power in order to be able to face it¹⁷. According to the offensive neorealists, states implement two types of strategies in the international environment: (1) aimed at preventing the violation of the balance of power (including, for example, by creating coalitions or shifting the main burden of opposing aggression to other states); (2) aimed at increasing one's own power (through war, blackmail, bait-and-bleed or bloodletting)¹⁸.

¹⁴ J. Czuputowicz, *Teorie stosunków międzynarodowych. Krytyka i systematyzacja*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2008, pp. 185–186.

¹⁵ P. Kmieciak, *Realizm strukturalny...*

¹⁶ S. Antunes, I. Camisão, *Realism*, p. 17.

¹⁷ A. Urbanek, *Realistyczna wizja bezpieczeństwa – próba systematyzacji koncepcji*, „Security, Economy & Law” 2017, no 4 (XVII), pp. 240–264.

¹⁸ P. Tof, *John J. Mearsheimer: An Offensive Realist between Geopolitics and Power*, „Journal of International Relations and Development” 2005, vol. 8, p. 385.

THE AMERICAN STRATEGY OF WEAKENING RUSSIA AND THE NEED AND POSSIBILITY OF COOPERATION

The main strategic goal of the United States after the Cold War has been to maintain a primacy in the world¹⁹. According to the theory of offensive neorealism, the hegemonic position for the US is the surest guarantee of security. The American advantage over other participants in international relations has decreased, inter alia, as a result of mistakes made, including the poorly conducted global war on terror. The US entanglement in the Middle East was taken advantage of by China, which recorded an unprecedented increase in power, mainly economic, which led to the melting of American hegemony. Currently, we are probably dealing with the formation of a multipolar system of balance of power²⁰, which, according to offensive neorealists, increases the risk of armed conflicts. In this system, however, two centers have the greatest power, ie the USA and China. In the U.S. National Security Strategy of March 2021, both Russia and China are defined as revisionist powers, destabilizing international security, undermining the principles and values on which the international system is based, and trying to prevent the USA from defending its interests and allies around the world²¹. Due to its power, only China is able to challenge the US strategically and threaten its position in the world. However, the problem is the Russian-Chinese co-operation, which has been tightening for years, and is aimed against the hegemonic aspirations of the USA. For this reason, in response to the question of what the long-term goal of the sanctions against Russia should be, one of the most important questions is how this may affect China's power and international policy.

Steven Pifer points out that in the public debate in the United States, especially during the presidency of Donald Trump, many people argued that the US should not be overly tough on Russia. The crowning argument was that by rapprochement with Russia, Americans could pull the Russians away from the Chinese. According to him, however, it is a fool's task, because the United States does not have the ability

¹⁹ S.G. Brooks, W.C. Wohlforth, *World Out of Balance: International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2008, pp. 1–21.

²⁰ J.M. Fiszler, *Will China Take Over the World in the Middle of the 21st Century?*, „Studia Polityczne” 2022, vol. 50, no. 1, p. 12.

²¹ The White House, *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance*, Washington D.C., March 2021, pp. 8, 14, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NSC-1v2.pdf> [accessed: 10.10.2022].

to drive a wedge between those countries, although there are certain differences and disputes between them. Moreover, the US should not formulate its policy towards Russia based on such calculations²². Cynthia Roberts notes that Russia has for years pursued a two-vector policy, i.e. tightening cooperation with the West and the East. Due to the current aggressive policy, not only it is weakening strategically, economically and militarily, but only the eastern vector remains, which could make it a vassal of China that dominates Asia²³. The US policy towards Russia should not so much be formulated through the prism of the possibility of pulling it away from China, as preventing the strengthening of China and limiting its assertiveness in the international arena. Washington must be careful that a proxy war in Ukraine does not lead to bloodletting both Russia and the US and its allies. According to the theory of offensive neorealism, it would be conducive to increasing the relative power of China. In addition, the US must not allow China to use Western sanctions against Russia to do lucrative business and dominate its neighbor economically. Moreover, a firm response to Russia's aggressive behavior must be a warning to China that if it decides to attack Taiwan, it will have to reckon with at least an equally decisive response. This is in line with the necessity of the hegemon's readiness to repel an attack by a revisionist power, resulting from offensive neorealism.

Just before the war in Ukraine, Ben Hodges argued that the West should build an "offramp" for Putin without betraying Ukraine, NATO allies and shared values. Maintaining communication channels, increasing the transparency of military exercises and officially guaranteeing Russia that its borders would be inviolable were to give Moscow the opportunity to draw back forces²⁴. Russia has shown, however, that its policy is not defensive, but clearly offensive. Therefore, the West cannot return to the concept of "business as usual", but must respond firmly to stop Russia's aggressive policy that violates the basic principles of the international community. Russia's actions are a threat to the security of the entire West, so the answer must be common and the guilty must be held accountable. James Goldgeier

²² S. Pifer, *Interview Given to the Author*, Brookings Institution, Washington D.C., 29.04.2022.

²³ C. Roberts, *Interview Given to the Author*, Columbia University, New York, 13.05.2022.

²⁴ B. Hodges, *Defending US Allies and Interests Against Russian Aggression in Eastern Europe*, 17.02.2022, *Center for European Policy Analysis*, <https://cepa.org/defending-us-allies-and-interests-against-russian-aggression-in-eastern-europe/> [accessed: 12.10.2022].

believes that weakening Russia is the right strategy right now. As long as Putin is in power, it has to be done: “The message to Russia should be very clear, as long as Putin is in power and threatens us all the West has no choice, but to keep in place punishing economic sanctions and to try to help the Ukrainians defend themselves as much as possible... we really don’t have a choice because we can’t afford to have Putin threatening Europe, the way he has in the past”²⁵. In line with offensive neorealism, cooperation between the great powers has limitations, especially when they resort to aggressive solutions, as Russia has done. In such a situation, the US response must be firm to confirm its dominance in the system.

There is no consensus among American experts as to whether Ukraine will be able to defeat Russia, even with significant support from the US and the West. Many of them indicate the need to search for compromise solutions that will allow the end of the war. Richard K. Betts believes that Russia is unlikely to be completely defeated. Therefore, in order for the war in Ukraine not to continue indefinitely and to obtain a satisfactory peace agreement with the Putin government, it may be necessary to make some concessions, for example on the issue of Crimea and Donbas or the stationing of NATO troops in Central and Eastern Europe²⁶. Michael Doyle believes that a better solution than deepening antagonisms would be to cut deals with Russia, as with China, on many issues, including Ukraine, cyber security, arms control and others. However, this would require concessions also on the part of the West, including, for example, the withdrawal of NATO forces from the territories of the new member states of the Alliance. He believes that the deepening “new cold war” will lead to further tensions and conflicts. Efficient diplomacy could mitigate this and lead to the achievement of something like *détente*, which he calls “cold peace”. He realizes, however, that this approach is idealistic and will be difficult to implement²⁷. Concessions to Russia, and especially to President Putin, who is responsible for the war, may save thousands of lives and reduce property and financial losses, but will not lead to lasting peace. He has repeatedly shown that insincerity is part of his political strategy, and therefore will not respect international agreements. Moreover, the concessions on the

²⁵ J. Goldgeier, *Interview Given to the Author*, American University, Washington D.C., 16.05.2022.

²⁶ R.K. Betts, *Interview Given to the Author*, Columbia University, New York, 28.04.2022.

²⁷ M. Doyle, *Interview Given to the Author*, Columbia University, New York, 27.04.2022.

security of Ukraine and the countries of NATO's eastern flank would be a sign of the West's weakness, which would be exploited sooner or later by both Russia and China. These authoritarian powers seek to gain power, counting on the weakness and submission of the US and its allies. Only the argument of force can stop their aspirations, which is in line with offensive neorealism.

According to Julie George: "goals to weaken an adversary are short term goals and not long term goals. I think the goal should be to encourage Russia not to break international law, not to act imperially, but rather to engage in beneficial relationships of which there are many potential and ongoing. Although there's a certain less ongoing now, still there are many opportunities for us to work with Russia, to make the world a better and safer place". She believes that desire to weaken any adversary just for the sake of weakening them is an impulse, which must be better understood in order not to lose sight of the existing possibilities²⁸. This approach is justified because it is supposed to force Russia to give up its aggressive policy, and thus to demonstrate by the West its determination to defend the fundamental principles on which the international system is based. This is also to deter countries that are thinking of taking destabilizing actions in the future, including revisionist countries like China. At the same time, the policy of the US and the West is not to take long-term revenge on Russia. If Moscow understands that it can pursue development goals on the basis of peaceful cooperation, it will be possible to rebuild relations between the West and Russia. Therefore, as Frank G. Hoffman points out, after the aggression against Ukraine, the United States should focus on "a comprehensive compellence strategy toward Russia which would entail the focused integration of covert and overt military power, as well as a greater efforts to conduct information operations inside Russia to weaken Putin's fragile political control". The goal of this strategy would be to defeat Russia at the front, isolate it in the international arena, weaken Russia with sanctions, force Putin or his successor to stop hostilities and to sign an agreement favorable to Ukraine and the West²⁹.

An important question is whether, after the end of the war in Ukraine, it will be possible to at least partially rebuild relations between the West and Putin's Russia, or whether it will not be possible without a change

²⁸ J. George, *Interview Given to the Author*, Columbia University, New York, 23.05.2022.

²⁹ F.G. Hoffman, *America Needs a Comprehensive Compellence Strategy Against Russia*, 28.04.2022, Foreign Policy Research Institute, <https://www.fpri.org/article/2022/04/america-needs-a-comprehensive-compellence-strategy-against-russia/> [accessed: 12.10.2022].

in the Kremlin. It is clear that the United States has no immediate power to orchestrate a regime change in Russia, much less to ascertain that someone better replaces Putin³⁰. After the aggression against Ukraine and the crimes it committed, cooperative security between Putin's Russia and the West has become all but unthinkable, even on issues of mutual concern. On the other hand, it is imperative to maintain channels of communication and dialogue for the sake of strategic stability and risk reduction³¹. According to experts from the Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA), despite the need to contain and deter aggression, Russia is too big and too important to be completely ignored. Dialogue will be required on key issues such as nuclear stability or the Arctic³². The United States must bear in mind Russia's strategic nuclear potential. It is important to extend the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty limits beyond 2026. It is a particularly sensitive issue that Putin has repeatedly threatened the West with nuclear weapons in recent years. According to C. Roberts, Russia is naturally declining, and the West must be careful about this process so that it does not get out of hand. The USA cannot be provocative towards Russia, as Russia still has a nuclear arsenal, and must work with Russia to maintain strategic stability³³. According to Stephen Sestanovich: "Managing relations with Russia will be an immense policy challenge no matter how – or how soon – the war ends. There is no easy path back to a cooperative relationship, not even a narrow, transactional one." The United States cannot forcibly seek common cooperation goals, such as climate change, to mitigate the upcoming shocks in Russia, including the risk of regime change. Especially since Russia doesn't rank very high in the hierarchy of global players, with whom cooperation in solving these problems is crucial³⁴. At the same time, one can imagine the possibility of selective cooperation on some global issues, in which Russia is of key importance, such as the aforementioned strategic balance. This, however, will require sophisticated diplomacy³⁵.

³⁰ R. Haass, *Is Diplomacy...*

³¹ N. Masuhr, B. Zogg, *The War in Ukraine: First Lessons*, „CSS Analyses in Security Policy” 2022, no. 301, p. 3.

³² A. Polyakova et al., *What Does Europe Look Like 3–7 Years After Russia's War in Ukraine?*, May 24, 2022, Center for European Policy Analysis, <https://cepa.org/comprehensive-reports/what-does-europe-look-like-3-7-years-after-russias-war-in-ukraine/> [accessed: 12.10.2022].

³³ C. Roberts, *Interview...*

³⁴ S. Sestanovich, *Ukraine Should Wait on Cease-Fire Talks With Russia. Here's Why*, 24.05.2022, Council on Foreign Relations, <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/ukraine-should-wait-cease-fire-talks-russia-heres-why> [accessed: 12.10.2022].

³⁵ R. Haass, *Is Diplomacy...*

THE UNITED STATES ACTIONS TO WEAKEN RUSSIA

The United States is weakening Russia in two ways as part of its response to aggression in Ukraine, first by providing military support to the Ukrainian army and second by imposing financial and economic sanctions on Russia. The purpose of supporting the army of Ukraine is to prevent Russia from winning and thus permanently undermining Ukraine's independence and territorial integrity. Between 24 January 2022 and 24 February 2023 the United States provided \$ 76.8 billion in aid to Ukraine, of which \$ 3.9 billion (5%) for humanitarian aid and \$ 26.4 billion (34%) for financial assistance. The largest amount was spent on military assistance, i.e. \$ 46.6 billion (61%), including \$ 18.3 billion (24%) for security assistance, \$ 23.5 billion (31%) for weapons and equipment, and \$ 4.7 billion (6%) for grants and loans for weapons and equipment³⁶. The United States provides Ukraine with a variety of military equipment, including anti-aircraft systems, anti-armor systems, artillery systems, unmanned aerial systems, helicopters, vessels, vehicles, radars, small arms, individual equipment, ammunition, and explosives. Deliveries include increasingly advanced missile systems, including the M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) and the National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems (NASAMS), and from spring 2023 also Abrams tanks³⁷. In mid-2023, the US held intensive talks with NATO allies on the effective delivery of F-16 multi-role aircraft to Ukraine. The US Armed Forces has also provided support to the Ukrainian army in the field of training, reconnaissance and fire targeting. Military aid from the US and other Western countries allows the Ukrainian army not only to effectively defend itself, but also to conduct a counteroffensive. As a consequence, the Ukrainians recaptured a large amount of the occupied territory, eliminated tens of thousands of enemy soldiers from the fight, and destroyed huge amounts of Russian equipment of great value. They also prevented the permanent occupation of Donbas, which was an important center of the Soviet arms industry during the Soviet Union. The Ukrainian army turns out to be very effective in the fight against Russia, including the use of military equipment provided by the West,

³⁶ J. Masters, W. Mellow, *How Much Aid Has the U.S. Sent Ukraine?*, 19.05.2023, Council on Foreign Relations, <https://www.cfr.org/article/how-much-aid-has-us-sent-ukraine-here-are-six-charts> [accessed: 15.06.2022].

³⁷ U.S. Department of State, *U.S. Security Cooperation with Ukraine*, Washington D.C., 14.06.2023, <https://www.state.gov/u-s-security-cooperation-with-ukraine/> [accessed: 15.06.2023].

mainly the USA. The main burden of resistance against the revisionist state, including bleeding out on the battlefield, is borne by Ukraine. In the context of the theory of offensive neorealism, this is beneficial from the point of view of the United States, which does not need to send its own troops to the front. This is all the more important as the Americans had very bad experiences in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan, where they were unable to restore peace despite the involvement of large military contingents and the suffer of heavy personnel losses³⁸.

The USA also supports the security of NATO's eastern flank countries to prevent the conflict from escalating to allied states. During the first six months of the war in Ukraine, the US deployed or extended over 20,000 additional forces to Europe, increasing the number to more than 100,000 service members across Europe. These were both air, land, maritime, cyber, and space capabilities³⁹. At the NATO summit in Madrid on 29-30 June 2022, the US announced plans to send additional forces to the region⁴⁰. Washington primarily supported the decision to increase battalion battle groups stationed on the eastern flank to brigade-size units, including the American group stationed in Poland⁴¹. The US also decided to locate additional commands in Europe, including a permanent headquarters for V Corps in Poland. To maintain forces in Europe under the European Deterrence Initiative, the U.S. Department of Defense allocated \$ 3.8 billion in Fiscal Year (FY) 2022, and requested \$ 4.2 billion for FY 2023⁴². This goes hand in hand with the announcement of European countries to increase defense spending. Aggression against Ukraine has led to the revitalization of NATO, which in recent years seemed to be in disrepair. As Kimberly Morgan states: "Now there's a kind of renewed commitment to making NATO of a vibrant organization. So it really backfires on Vladimir Putin."⁴³ The military strengthening

³⁸ J.H. Lebovic, *Interview Given to the Author*, George Washington University, Washington D.C., 11.05.2022.

³⁹ U.S. Department of Defense, *FACT SHEET – U.S. Defense Contributions to Europe*, Washington D.C., 29.06.2022, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3078056/fact-sheet-us-defense-contributions-to-europe/> [accessed: 10.10.2022].

⁴⁰ T. Graham, *NATO Countries Signal Resolve at Summit: What Does It Mean for Russia?*, 30.06.2022, Council on Foreign Relations, <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/nato-countries-signal-resolve-summit-what-does-it-mean-russia> [accessed: 12.10.2022].

⁴¹ NATO, *Madrid Summit Declaration Issued by NATO Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Madrid 29 June 2022*, Madrid, 29.06.2022, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_196951.htm [accessed: 10.10.2022].

⁴² U.S. Department of Defense, *FACT SHEET – U.S. Defense...*

⁴³ K. Morgan, *Interview Given to the Author*, Washington D.C., George Washington University, 5.05.2022.

of NATO's eastern flank is a relative weakening of Russia's military position in the region.

The second area of activity, i.e. the financial and economic sanctions are intended to limit Russia's ability to finance the war and make it difficult to reconstruct its military potential, which is weakening as a result of serious losses on the front. In addition, they are to influence the elite and society of Russia to put pressure on the Kremlin to end military operations in Ukraine. U.S. Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Brian E. Nelson said: "The United States will work to ensure that the sanctions we have imposed, in close coordination with our international partners, degrade the Kremlin's ability to project power and fund its invasion."⁴⁴ Economic pressure is key to the longer-term goal of President Biden's administration of isolating the Russian economy internationally. The United States, the European Union and the United Kingdom imposed full blocking or other sanctions against Russian banks, companies, and oligarchs. They also imposed restrictions on Russian exports and imports⁴⁵. The USA, along with other Western countries, imposed sanctions on Russia of unprecedented breadth and severity for a major economy⁴⁶.

The financial sanctions of the US-led international community are damaging the Russian financial system. First of all, they consist in: the fall in the value of the ruble; the exclusion of Russian banks from inter-institutional transactions through the SWIFT system; a freeze of Russian Central Bank Russian financial institutions assets abroad and ban transactions with the bank; a freeze of the Russian banks by Western depositary countries; a significant increase in the central bank's monetary rate; capital restrictions; share market closures; removal of Russian markets from the international base; cutting off some of the Russian oligarchs from foreign assets; an increase in inflation; and an increase in debt servicing costs⁴⁷. Also purely economic sanctions are expected to lead to serious consequences for the

⁴⁴ U.S. Department of the Treasury, *U.S. Treasury Designates Facilitators of Russian Sanctions Evasion*, 20.04.2022, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy0731> [accessed: 10.10.2022].

⁴⁵ B. O'Toole, D. Fried, *Sanctioning Russia Is a Long Game. Here's How To Win*, 24.06.2022, Atlantic Council, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/sanctioning-russia-is-a-long-game-heres-how-to-win/> [accessed: 12.10.2022].

⁴⁶ A. Tank, *Economic Impact of Russia – Ukraine War*, „International Journal of Innovative Research in Science Engineering and Technology” 2022, vol. 11, iss. 4, p. 3346.

⁴⁷ M. Khudaykulova, He Yuanqiong, A. Khudaykulov, *Economic Consequences and Implications of the Ukraine-Russia War*, „International Journal of Management Science and Business Administration” 2022, vol. 8, iss. 4, p. 47.

Russian economy, mainly undermining Russian military capabilities by dismantling its supply chains⁴⁸. This is due to the ban on exporting semiconductors, telecommunication, encryption security, lasers, sensors, navigation, avionics and maritime technologies to Russia⁴⁹. This will affect Russia's production capacity of automobiles, fighter aircraft, tanks, missiles, unmanned aerial vehicles, electronic warfare systems, and other sophisticated manufactured products, mainly used by the army⁵⁰. More broadly, the sanctions are intended to affect the industrial, processing, and quarrying sectors due to the restriction of access to Western technologies, including electronic devices, computers, robots, etc. Limited access to advanced technology and parts will lead to the collapse of the labor market in Russia⁵¹.

The US, like other Western countries, realize that an embargo on gas and oil imports will be one of the most serious sanctions against the Russian economy. The revenues from the sale of these raw materials constitute around half of Russia's total revenue, and their export to the West constitutes the lion's share of these profits. It is worth recalling that the restoration of Russian power that has taken place since the beginning of the 21st century was caused partly and unintentionally by the USA, due to the significant increase in energy commodity prices caused by the war in Iraq⁵². If the West is determined to stop importing raw materials from Russia, the Russian budget should be seriously affected in the long run. This will be particularly acute for Russia if it does not find new trade partners, including in Asia. However, it should be borne in mind that Russia has a great ability to bypass some of the sanctions and look for new economic partners⁵³. Currently, the energy sanctions are having limited effects, as the West's abandonment of purchasing energy resources from Russia has led to an increase in their prices on world markets, which allows Russia to partially compensate for losses resulting from lower demand⁵⁴. At the same time, other producers of energy resources,

⁴⁸ I.E. Kotoulas, W. Pusztai, *Geopolitics of the War in Ukraine*, Foreign Affairs Institute, Athens 2022, p. 13.

⁴⁹ P.K. Ozili, *Global Economic Consequence of Russian Invasion of Ukraine*, „SSRN Electronic Journal” 2022, p. 7.

⁵⁰ B. O'Toole, D. Fried, *Sanctioning Russia...*

⁵¹ A. Tank, *Economic Impact...*, p. 3346.

⁵² J. Choonara, *The Devastation of Ukraine: NATO, Russia and Imperialism*, „International Socialism” 2022, vol. 2, iss. 174, p. 15.

⁵³ C. Roberts, *Interview...*

⁵⁴ V. Shinde, *Russia – Ukraine war: economic impact assessment*, „International Journal of Advanced Research” 2022, vol. 10, iss. 5, p. 852.

including Saudi Arabia and Iran, have not condemned the Russian aggression and are taking steps to maintain high prices of energy resources on the global market⁵⁵. In addition, some countries like India are seizing the opportunity to buy cheap raw materials from Russia.

The American authorities are aware that the war in Ukraine and sanctions against Russia, especially in the energy sector, are causing the economic consequences also for Americans and people around the world. This is due to the interconnectedness of the global economy and the financial and economic dependence of the markets⁵⁶. Sanctions cause disruptions to trade, commodities supply and transportation network, and as a result increase in prices, including energy and food⁵⁷. As Cynthia Roberts states: "We want to weaken Russia and that involves some costs for us, but we don't want those costs to be worse on us than on Russia. So this whole energy picture, people are gotten very emotional about it. The pipeline, the supply of energy, it's there, it's a fact, and it will need to change, but it cannot change overnight because we can't completely weaken the countries that are dependent. They have to make those changes. They understand that."⁵⁸ Thus, much depends on the resistance of Western states and societies to the energy crisis and their ability to quickly find alternative trading partners to Russia. There is a fear that the governments of some Western countries will try to maintain, at least to some extent, energy relations with Russia in order to limit the negative consequences of the energy crisis⁵⁹. The United States is releasing some of its reserves of energy resources, including oil, to limit the destabilization of the global market⁶⁰.

There is already a difference of opinion as to whether the sanctions should be maintained only until the end of the war in Ukraine, or whether their goal should be regime change in Russia. There is also a whole spectrum of approaches, along with two opposite ones, ie

⁵⁵ J. Choonara, *The Devastation...*, p. 23.

⁵⁶ R.E. Mbah, D.F. Wasum, *Russian-Ukraine 2022 War: A Review of the Economic Impact of Russian-Ukraine Crisis on the USA, UK, Canada, and Europe*, „Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal” 2022, vol. 9, no. 3, p. 148.

⁵⁷ M. Nezhyva, V. Mysiuk, *War in Ukraine: Challenges for the Global Economy*, „Zovnishnja torgivlja: ekonomika, finansy, pravo” 2022, no. 2, p. 24.

⁵⁸ C. Roberts, *Interview...*

⁵⁹ T. Big-Alabo, E.C. MacAlex-Achinulo, *Russia-Ukraine Crisis and Regional Security*, „International Journal of Political Science” 2022, vol. 8, iss. 1–2, pp. 30–31.

⁶⁰ M. Tampubolon, *Russia's Invasion of Ukraine and its Impact on Global Geopolitics*, „European Scientific Journal” 2022, vol. 18, iss. 20, p. 58.

the pure logic of punishing Russia on the one hand and advocate for an easing of sanctions and rebuilding economic cooperation on the other, especially if the conflict in Ukraine were to freeze⁶¹. There is also the question of how to prevent Russia from being supported by other states, especially in the military area. President Biden's administration threatened with a number of consequences for other countries, including China, if they decided to supply weapons to Russia or provide economic support that would help it rebuild its military potential⁶². Under Secretary Nelson said: "Treasury can and will target those who evade, attempt to evade, or aid the evasion of U.S. sanctions against Russia, as they are helping support Putin's brutal war of choice"⁶³. The US response to Iran's military aid to Russia will show how real these threats are.

In the United States, some politicians, pundits, and commentators believe that the West ought to keep the sanctions on Russia for quite some time, including after the settlement of the war. The main argument for this is the need to make sure that Russia implements and complies with the provisions of such an agreement. This is supported by the political calculation that some of the sanctions once released would be hard to put back in place. The US, however, could waive some of the sanctions if it was required by the conclusion of a peace agreement between Russia and Ukraine⁶⁴. Any concessions would have to be made in agreement with Ukraine and NATO allies. Moreover, it should be done in such a way that they are not perceived as a manifestation of the weakness or submission of the West.

As Russia is putting itself in the position of a rival to the West, the United States should maintain in the long term those sanctions which give it a particularly important advantage over Russia. This applies in particular to the export of highly advanced technologies. It is necessary to maintain the ban on exports of semiconductors to Russia that are based on US parts, technology, or licensing. The US should not make it easier for Russia, China and other nations opposed to the West and its values to develop their own semiconductor industry. This is particularly important in the context of global economic competition and the production of sophisticated manufactured products including military equipment. In the perspective of offensive neorealism, it is

⁶¹ N. Masuhr, B. Zogg, *The War...*

⁶² J. Choonara, *The Devastation...*, p. 23.

⁶³ U.S. Department of the Treasury, *U.S. Treasury Designates...*

⁶⁴ S. Pifer, *Interview...*

a key factor in maintaining the technological and military domination of the USA and the West in the world against real and potential adversaries.

In the long run, the United States should also support the policy of European countries to limit or abandon purchases of energy resources from Russia. As the US becomes an increasing exporter of LNG, Europe could increase the consumption of American natural gas. This would require the construction of additional gas terminals, including in the most energy-consuming countries, such as Germany. In the long run, limiting or abandoning the purchase of energy resources in Russia would not be a matter of sanctions, but a rational choice of a trading partner⁶⁵. After the Kremlin once again resorted to energy blackmail and thus weaponized this sector of the economy, it would be difficult for the West to decide again to rely on energy resources from Russia in the future. On the other hand, both gradual access to technology and the restoration of trade cooperation could take place along with a clear evolution of Russia's foreign and domestic policy. If the country began to respect the basic principles of the international community, and the political system entered the path of democratization, the US and the West would show interest in rebuilding cooperation with Russia in all areas, including the economic one.

Another issue is the post-war reconstruction of Ukraine. According to a report of 9 September 2022 jointly compiled by the World Bank, the European Commission and the Ukrainian government, reconstruction in Ukraine may cost \$ 349 billion⁶⁶. A significant part of these funds should come from Russia, which is the aggressor. The possibility of creating international legal mechanisms that Ukraine could use some of the Russian central bank assets that are now frozen in the West and seize them for purposes of a reconstruction is currently under consideration⁶⁷. Moreover, possible future purchases of energy resources from Russia could be subject to co-financing of the reconstruction of Ukraine. Such actions would not be revenge, but a form of war reparations due to Ukraine. They would also act as a deterrent to aggression in the future, both by Russia and other countries.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁶ The World Bank, *Ukraine Recovery and Reconstruction Needs Estimated \$349 Billion*, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/09/09/ukraine-recovery-and-reconstruction-needs-estimated-349-billion> [accessed: 12.10.2022].

⁶⁷ S. Pifer, *Interview...*

It should be borne in mind that the approach to sanctions by the US authorities may change significantly depending on who will be in power. For example, Stephen Biddle believes that if Donald Trump returns to office there will be a radically less forceful US response to Russia⁶⁸. Moreover, the USA must bear in mind the position of its allies and partners, including European ones. For example, in Germany and France, which are dominant in the EU, there is no need to permanently weaken Russia. The French government is in favor of maintaining sanctions against Russia and supporting Ukraine as long as necessary, as Russia cannot win the war. At the same time, however, it does not believe that the overall goal should be to permanently weaken Russia. Nevertheless, there are some reevaluations in France, including President Emmanuel Macron's departure from the condition of "not humiliating" Russia. A similar ambiguity is also evident in Germany and several other Western European countries. Pierre Morcos thinks that "the rationale behind that is that maybe a weekend Russia might be more dangerous than we could say, because if Russia is cornered it might try the desperate actions and take aggressive decisions against NATO."⁶⁹ In the United States, there is a discussion not only about the possibility of the collapse of Putin's regime, but also about the possibility of the disintegration of Russia⁷⁰. A breakup of Russia is unlikely, but if it happens, it would be very dangerous for the USA, as it could lead to increased instability and violence, and to strengthening China in Asia at the expense of Russia.

CONCLUSION

Russian aggression in Ukraine in February 2022 revealed the offensive and criminal nature of President Putin's regime, including its contempt for the fundamental principles of the international community. At the same time, Russia placed itself in the position of a revisionist power and an enemy of the West. The United States, as the leader of the West, has to defend the international system in order

⁶⁸ S. Biddle, *Interview Given to the Author*, Columbia University, New York, 5.05.2022.

⁶⁹ P. Morcos, *Interview Given to the Author*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington D.C., 11.05.2022.

⁷⁰ M. Laruelle, *Putin's War and the Dangers of Russian Disintegration*, Foreign Affairs, 9.12.2022, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/russian-federation/putins-war-and-dangers-russian-disintegration> [accessed: 15.06.2023].

to confirm its dominant position in the world, which is consistent with offensive neorealism. Therefore, it undertook two-track actions, consisting in supporting the Ukrainian army and imposing financial and economic sanctions on Russia. The direct goal of these actions is to prevent Russia from winning the war and from rebuilding its military potential. Kremlin threats and blackmail against the NATO mean that the US-led West must respond firmly to prevent Russia from pursuing its revisionist goals. Showing the strength and determination of the West is also crucial in the context of relations with China, which is a revisionist state rapidly growing in power. The long-term goal of the United States is to maintain its dominant position in the world. In the future, China may be strong enough to challenge the US and try to become a regional and then a world hegemon. In line with offensive neorealism, the US must not only limit the growth of China's power, but also be ready to repel its possible aggression. The attitude towards Russia in the context of the war in Ukraine must be organized in such a way as to prevent the growth of China's power and make it clear to them that if they decide to challenge the world order, they will have to reckon with a decisive US response.

The crimes committed in Ukraine, including against the civilians, make it very difficult to cooperate with Putin's Russia. On the other hand, global issues such as strategic stability require this cooperation. Regardless of the situation on the Ukrainian front, the West cannot return to relations with Russia on a „business as usual” basis, especially when those responsible for the war remain in power. However, it is possible to waive some sanctions, if this would be required by the conclusion of a peace agreement. The possible concessions of the West cannot be a signal of its weakness, as this would be used by the revisionist powers. In the long term, the goal of the US-led sanctions should not be to take revenge on Russia, but to follow strategic calculations. If Russia continues to position itself in opposition to the West, sanctions, especially in the area of modern technologies, must be maintained. The technological advantage of the US and the West is the most important factor in ensuring their domination in the world. On the other hand, a permanent limitation in the purchase of energy resources from Russia should be the result of a rational choice of a trading partner. Possible political and economic cooperation between the West and Russia should primarily depend on the directions of its foreign and domestic policy.

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