

BIDEN’S SOFT POWER VS. COERCIVE DIPLOMACY AND RESPONDING TO RUSSIA’S INVASION OF UKRAINE

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Abstract: The article examines Russia’s military attack on Ukraine, and proposes actions to solve the crisis. It starts with an analysis of America’s relations with Ukraine prior to 2021–2022, and explains why we have to deal with Ukraine case to begin with. Next, it describes the primary drivers of Russia’s continued interest in invading Ukrainian territory. Finally, the author analyses Biden’s foreign policies and determines what type of strategy should be executed to bring peace and stability back to the region.

Keywords: Joe Biden, Ukraine, Russia, military buildup, the United States of America, hard power, soft power, coercive diplomacy

In 1994, the former National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzeziński justified American engagement with Ukraine: “It cannot be stressed strongly enough that without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be an empire, but with Ukraine suborned and then subordinated, Russia automatically becomes an empire” [Brzeziński 1994: 80]. Today, one must admit that what Brzeziński stated over twenty years ago has not lost its relevance, but it is even more significant today, because the whole world is watching whether Putin invades Ukraine or not. In the early 1990s, Brzeziński, strongly argued in favor of an increased U.S. involvement in Eastern Europe in order to avoid the rise of the Russian empire and to strengthen regional security. The main objective of this study is to demonstrate that there are premises which suggest that in order to prevent the war from escalating, the U.S. must put considerably more emphasis in its foreign affairs on offensive coercive diplomacy rather than on soft power.

U.S.-UKRAINE RELATIONS PRIOR TO 2021/2022

U.S. relations with Ukraine are profound and multidimensional. Studies indicate that the US is one of Ukraine's key foreign partners that provides considerable political, economic and military aid [Bureiko 2021: 104–106]. Steven Pifer, the third United States Ambassador to Ukraine from 1998 to 2000, points out in *The Eagle and The Trident: U.S.-Ukraine Relations in Turbulent Times*, that “For most of the twenty-five years since Ukraine regained its independence in 1991, the U.S.-Ukraine relationship has been strong and positive – as good as any that Washington has had with a post-Soviet state” [Pifer 2017]. From the start, the main goal for the US was to convince Ukrainians to remove their nuclear arsenal, and deliver vehicles from the country's territory. To that end, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and the United States signed the Budapest Memorandum on December 5, 1994 that included security assurances against threats or use of force against the territorial integrity of three countries: Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan. It is important to acknowledge, that at that time the newly independent Ukraine had one of the world's largest nuclear weapons stockpiles. Today, an argument can be made that from a realist perspective, Ukraine should not have signed the Budapest Memorandum and give its nuclear weapons to the Russians. After all, it would be irrational as it will substantially lower national security and Russia is a major potential threat for Ukraine. Two decades passed from signing the Memorandum when in 2014 Putin invaded and annexed the Crimean Peninsula. More importantly with regard to the agreement “The invasion of Ukraine by forces of the Russian Federation in February and March 2014 and the purported annexation of Ukrainian territory did not instigate a military response from the United Kingdom or the United States” [Grant 2014]. Even though, it is still unclear whether the document “constituted legal obligations among its Parties or, instead, is a political declaration having no legal effect” [*ibid.*], the U.S. response could have been greater. For example, “some U.S. officials and analysts suggest that the United States should respond to the annexation of Crimea and the attempt to destabilize eastern Ukraine by admitting Ukraine into NATO” [Stephen, Wilson, Gordon 2015]. In 2014, some American foreign policy advisers were saying that a move of actively pushing for Ukrainian membership in NATO “was unwise” [*ibid.*: 31], because “It would only inflame the political atmosphere and could give Putin an excuse for taking military action against Kiev” [*ibid.*]. Today, when Ukraine is fighting Russia's aggression, and the West cannot fully protect Ukrainians by sending their troops to the country's territory, it is clear those analysts were wrong because their assumptions did not come true – Putin's armed forces activities indicate that he was preparing to take a military action against Ukraine. Would American pushing for Ukrainian membership in NATO before 2014 prevent Ukraine from experiencing the war we have to deal with today? Taking a step back, to analyze the historical context can help in comprehending the problem.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Following the grim years Russian people had gone through, the USSR fell into pieces in 1991. This outcome had remained inevitable by dint of political and social crisis, caused by among other things, the Afghan conflict. Ultimately, shortly after signing the Belovezha Accords by Leonid Kravchuk, Stanislav Shushkevich and Boris Yeltsin and then the Alma-Ata Protocols in December 1991, the flags of the USSR vanished without trace from all of the communist buildings which had sprung up all over the Soviet Union. There is no doubt that it was a quantum leap for Ukraine, which had been a part of the Russian empire for many years before turning into a Soviet state. Since then, the country has been floating between the West and the East, though it finally set about establishing close relations with the European Union and the US following the Orange Revolution [NPR 2021]. Unfortunately, in November 2013, Putin-supporting Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich rejected an Association Agreement with the European Union to implement the accession process in favor of closer bonds with Russia. This triggered mass demonstrations and led to a serious crisis in Ukraine. The aftermath of Yanukovich's decision eventually forced the president to flee the country in the spring of 2014. Accordingly, in February and March 2014, what some scholars called a "skillfully executed operation" [Alim 2020], Russia responded by invading Ukraine and annexing the Crimean Peninsula. In the aftermath of the aggression, many civilians have died, and over 1.5 million people were internally displaced [CFR 2021]. "Ever since Russia's aggression in 2014, the US has been a staunch supporter, both in word and deed, of Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity and security, and the implementation of democratic reforms" [*ibid.*: 104].

In 2021, Russia significantly increased its military presence at its western border with Ukraine. U.S. intelligence reports at the time indicated that more than 100,000 were being stationed there along with heavy military equipment such as "armored vehicles, tanks, self-propelled artillery and air defense systems" [Moore 2021]. In defense of its aggressive activities the Kremlin stated: "Russia is moving its own troops around on its own territory against the backdrop of highly unfriendly actions by our opponents in NATO, the United States and various European countries who are carrying out highly unambiguous maneuvers near our borders" [*ibid.*].

The European Union, the United States and the United Kingdom were deeply concerned about Russian movements at the Ukrainian border. Experts feared that at the worst case scenario Putin might invade Ukraine and occupy the country's territory as he did in Crimea. The Russian President has sought very precise and immediate Western security guarantees, declaring: "Speaking of security guarantees [...] our actions will not depend upon the negotiations, they will depend on the unconditional compliance with Russian security demands [...] We have made clear that any further NATO movement to the east is unacceptable" [Aarup 2021].

It is evident that Putin did not want Ukraine to become another NATO member and perceived a possible entry as a national security threat. The President in his style stated: “Now the ball is in their court. They have to give us some response” [Simmons 2021]. Putin sees his role as that of a “mediator” who speaks in the name of over a million residents of the republics of Donetsk and Luhansk who hold Russian passports, and proclaims that the people “who live there should determine their own future” [*ibid.*].

Having said that, it is interesting to point the results of surveys about Ukrainians wanting to join NATO. Studies indicate that support for NATO membership is constantly rising [Onuch, Sandoval 2022]. Right before Putin began massing troops on the border, surveys showed that 56% of respondents said that Ukraine should join NATO [*ibid.*]. That information is significant in terms of resolving the crisis at the Ukraine border. It is believed that “Russia’s increasingly aggressive policy toward Ukraine may have backfired, and that Moscow has failed to divide Ukrainians along regional or ethnic lines” [*ibid.*].

The question is what decision will the international community make regarding Ukraine? Will the European Union together with the United States accept Putin’s conditions or abandon them? Certainly, diplomacy exercised by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sergey Lavrov, and the American Secretary of State Anthony Blinken will play a crucial part in the decision-making process. The face-to-face talks of heads of state, namely President Joe Biden and President Vladimir Putin, will also play an important role.

There is an opinion among some scholars who specialize in Russian politics that the existing situation is reminiscent of the 1938 Munich Agreement between Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Italy when the four powers agreed to the annexation of the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia where over three million Germans lived. Signing the pact was to stop the outbreak of war, but it did not. Today, Putin and Lukashenko warn the West against escalation of the war if the West continues to help Ukraine. Who is to say that when the West fulfills Russian requests Putin will not start the war with, for example, Poland as Hitler did in 1939? After all, “Lies are hard to disentangle, that’s why Putin’s tactics have proved so successful in suppressing opposition at home and disrupting democracies abroad. The storm of lies [...] unleashed by Kremlin-controlled media and trolls during the Ukraine crisis in 2014 alerted the world’s attention to Russia’s new soft-power goals” [Skillen 2017]. In order to resolve the Ukrainian crisis, the international community led by the United States must come up with a solution that will prevent the possible Russian invasion of other countries such as Poland. If not, the possibility of Russian aggression is high. An argument can be made that one way to solve the crisis is by applying a combination of *soft/hard power* policies.

WHAT IS SOFT POWER AND HOW IT RELATES TO HARD POWER?

The term “soft power” is mostly credited to one scholar – Joseph Nye [2008: 1352–1356], who first identified the concepts: “soft power” and “hard power” [Nye 2010]. Nye sees soft power as “the ability to obtain preferred outcomes by attraction and persuasion rather than coercion and payment” [Nye 2014: 19–22]. As the scholar explains, in foreign affairs “the soft power of a country rests primarily on three resources: its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority)” [*ibid.*]. In order for a country’s soft power to be successful, it must include all those elements. Recent efforts by Russia to increase its soft power illustrate that if a country’s strategy is not comprised of its culture, its political values as well as its foreign policies, it is ineffective. Studies point out: “In almost twenty years of its existence, Russia’s soft power strategy has gone a long way from its rise to tightening. Today, it remains in Russia’s foreign policy arsenal, but it evokes a controversial reaction from the Russian leadership and is referred to abroad solely in the context of information and hybrid wars” [Ageeva 2021]. Recent Putin’s actions, e.g. the Ukraine invasion, locking up a well-known political activist, Aleksey Navalny, are not going to improve Russia’s soft power. Additionally, it can be stated that “For President Putin soft power is regarded in a similar light as coercion, and military force”. [Trunkos 2021]. Scholars indicate that “Russia learned to use its soft power to prepare the ground for soft revolutions [...] the Russian use of soft power for military purposes seems to be strategic connecting with the targeted region’s population via Russian TV and other cultural and communication methods to make the population more open to a possible Russian invasion” [*ibid.*].

Similarly, researchers suggest that American soft power is not doing much better and has declined significantly since the end of the Cold War [*ibid.*]. The War on Terror, CIA’s enhanced interrogation program, and abuses of detainees in Guantanamo Bay during the presidency of George W. Bush have spoiled America’s image and negatively impacted its soft power strategy. During the presidency of Donald Trump, the decision to unilaterally pull out of the Paris Agreement on climate change and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on weapons, as well as the president’s actions that led to an attack on the U.S. Capitol have also negatively impacted its soft power.

President Joe Biden is an experienced politician who served as the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and understands the role of soft power in building U.S. strength overseas. At the Virtual 2021 Munich Security Conference President Biden clearly indicated:

The United States must renew its enduring advantages so that we can meet today’s challenges from a position of strength. We will build back better our economic foundations; reclaim our place in international institutions; lift up our values at home and

Speak out to defend them around the world; modernize our military capabilities, while leading first with diplomacy; and revitalize America's unmatched network of alliances and partnerships. [Seymour 2021]

At the beginning of his presidency Biden declared "America is back". Among other things, the president promised that he would get the U.S. military out of forever wars, rebuild close relations with the most important American partners, and restore American leadership abroad. One can admit that in some respects it is a soft power vision of foreign policy. Biden followed through and in his first hours as President, the U.S. rejoined the World Health Organization and the Paris climate accord. The U.S. has actively teamed up with the international community to fight COVID-19, and similarly, collaborated with the European Union and the United Kingdom on climate change. However, at the end of the President's first year, China and more recently Russia have been putting a lot of political, economic military pressure on the U.S., reminding Biden about their superpower aspirations. Both, Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin have forced Biden to adapt his foreign policy, from *soft power* towards Nye's concept of *hard power*. What exactly is hard power?

In Nye's opinion, hard power "is based on coercion and payment" [2009: 160–163]. While soft-power is pull, hard power is push "or to extend a common metaphor, hard power is like brandishing carrots or sticks; soft power is more like a magnet" [*ibid.*]. When a country wants to use its hard power in order to force another country to do something that is contrary to its will, it makes use of its military or economic tools [Simons 2001]. An example of a contemporary American hard power use is US's "power of persuasion" in the Arab Middle East. President Barack Obama "used remote warfare by technology, surrogate or proxy" [Krieg 2017]. His Secretary of State – Hillary Clinton – publicly declared: "America cannot solve the most pressing problems on our own, and the world cannot solve them without America [...] We must use what has been called 'smart power,' the full range of tools at our disposal" [Nye 2009: 7–9]. One of the clear examples of Obama's implication of soft power strategy were the president's orders at the beginning of his term to close the Guantanamo prison within a year and to stop the CIA's use of "enhanced interrogation" techniques. Another example of Obama's use of soft power that directly relates to foreign policy was his strategy towards Afghanistan in which the president emphasized not only sending more troops to Afghanistan, but also the need to expand the number of professional civilians such as agricultural specialists, lawyers and engineers.

In contrast to Obama, Donald Trump refrained from using the diplomatic lever of power in exchange for the real "airpower diplomacy". For the ex-president "it was all about hard power, never about soft power". Trump concentrated on punishments and threats, more than on diplomatic solutions. For example, the president has ordered air strikes as retaliation for the chemical attack on the Syrian town of Douma. Evidence of Trump's hard power policies took place in

September 2018 when the president signed an order to extend sanctions with Cuba. As a result, it is believed that “with the transition from Obama to Trump, the U.S. has completely abandoned smart power as a strategic element of American foreign policy” [Havertz 2019].

While President Trump has limited American power to economic and military pressure, “Joe Biden will have to deploy the total range of American power capacities. The administration cannot hesitate to use military force if necessary, nor hesitate to resort to economic sanctions, but the incoming president will also need to make use of soft power” [Struye de Swielande 2021: 141]. It is believed that “the Biden administration has to restore the image of the United States, using public diplomacy, nation branding, and investing in international organizations, agencies, and treaties” [*ibid.*: 142]. At the same time, it is significant to point out that the Russian military buildup near Ukraine’s border does not directly threaten U.S. interests. However, in order to maintain a certain impact within international community, as well as to preserve the U.S. status as a superpower, Biden must support Ukraine in helping to avoid additional Russian military actions [*ibid.*]. To be effective, the president ought to exercise American soft power in unity with the rest of the EU. The unity is an essential ingredient in the fight against the Russian aggression. Putin knows that the U.S.’s soft and hard power substantially increases when applied collectively, while one of his reasons to start the current crisis was to undermine European unity. The Russian leader is aware that not all European nations will care the same way for the security situation in eastern Europe as much as Ukraine, Poland or Latvia. After all, from the geopolitical perspective, countries such as Italy, Spain or Portugal have fewer interests and accordingly one might expect less involvement in the resolution of the conflict. As a result, Biden should not count on Europe to act as one with the U.S., but rather change his policy strategy, and instead of relying on soft power as well as hard power, use coercive diplomacy which might have more potential to be a successful method in bringing back stability to the region.

BIDEN’S DOCTRINE OF COERCIVE DIPLOMACY

Coercive diplomacy seeks to stop or change an actor’s course of action without resorting to all-out use of power [Bowen 2019]. Used as strategy, it sends a message to the opponent that “the proposed benefits of an action, or continuing action, are outweighed by the costs” [*ibid.*: 315]. The tools of coercive diplomacy consist of economic sanctions, and other “non-military” instruments. Yet, the use of limited force is not clear. The question is: how far is enough? The main point is to use the type of force which will not lead to an escalation of a conflict but rather to its reduction. Accordingly, there are two forms of coercive diplomacy: defensive coercive diplomacy and offensive coercive diplomacy. In order to illustrate how coercive diplomacy looks like in “real life” scenario, one can use the

recent example of Russian military mobilizations and exercises on the Ukrainian border. Having said that, it is important to acknowledge that Putin used the same method of coercive diplomacy – large-scale military exercises, days after the Maidan protests. “They involved some 150,000 troops [...] and served as a credible signal to Kiev that any forceful response to the Crimean operation could lead to further escalation and outright invasion in the East” [*ibid.*: 321]. An argument can be made, that as of today, the US should use a similar method of coercive diplomacy, and significantly increase its military presence in NATO former Eastern Bloc countries. Offensive diplomacy is more relevant in Ukraine case, because it is the form of coercive strategy that Putin has used so far. In order to effectively “balance back” Russia’s power, the U.S. cannot apply defensive tools but rather use aggressive tactics that could bring the two main players – Biden and Putin to the negotiating table.

From the beginning of the conflict at the Ukraine’s border, Putin has been avoiding the limelight. However, that fact does not mean that he has not been busy, but rather suggests that the Russian head of state wants to directly negotiate with President Biden, “over the heads of many European countries” [McFaul 2021], which Putin, one might think, does not see as a legitimate partner for him to sit with at the table. There is a reason for his action: Putin, a former well-trained KGB officer, perceives Biden “as a man who may be willing to make a deal – and that Mr. Biden, as a veteran of the Cold War, may possess a respect for power diplomacy with Moscow that younger American politicians do not” [Troianovski 2022]. Moreover, the facts speak for themselves. Current high security negotiations over possible NATO’s “contraction” and not expansion between Washington and Moscow indicate that what was impossible for many years now is conceivable. As a result, two observations can be made about the situation. First, it sends the signal that the threat of Russian invasion of another European country is real and that the U.S. takes it very seriously. The second reflection is more significant, because as some indicate, direct talks between the two superpowers without the representatives of other European countries signify what Michael McFaul called “Yalta 2.0” [McFaul 2021] agreement. The former US Ambassador to Russia clearly stated that “in this new version, the United States and Russia (this time excluding Britain) would carve out spheres of influence in Europe” [*ibid.*]. And that as Ambassador McFaul firmly states “is unacceptable” [*ibid.*]. Yet, what Mr. McFaul calls unacceptable, might be the only way to stop the war from escalating. Since Putin wants to make a deal with Biden, the U.S. President should stand up to the challenge together with the President of Ukraine. Future developments will indicate if the declaration stated by one of the U.S. top diplomats, Deputy Secretary of State Wendy R. Sherman that “we will not make decisions about Ukraine without Ukraine” [U.S. Mission Brazil 2022] turns out to be true. After all, so far most important diplomatic meetings regarding de-escalation tensions at Ukraine’s border consisted of just Americans and Russians, without the most interested side – Ukrainians. Consequently, as some reports indicate, President

Volodymyr Zelensky has decided to begin separate talks with President Putin [Cooper 2022]. Zelensky's move should be for the Americans to speak directly with him, because as some believe, if diplomatic efforts fail and the war spreads on other countries such as Poland, the U.S. plans to support an insurgency [*ibid.*].

One-on-one meetings between the heads of the nations or through their representatives should rather quickly change from strictly diplomatic to more personal because President Biden knows Ukraine exceptionally well. While acting as vice president to President Barack Obama, he visited the country six times. Biden knows many Ukraine's political leaders. An additional advantage for Biden, which should help him during talks with the Ukrainians is the fact that his presidential victory was received very well. During a process of building a relationship at the time of crisis, when decisions are made quickly and require confidentiality, it becomes a clear advantage.

If the reports are accurate and indeed Biden considers providing help to a possible uprising, then it would seem highly advisable not to wait for the war to begin, but already start preparing training centers in NATO's eastern flank countries, such as Poland, Slovakia and Romania, "which could enable insurgents to slip in and out of Ukraine" [*ibid.*]. One can argue that closer "partnership" between Biden and Zelensky might result in plans for considerable American military assistance to the "frightened" nation that goes beyond logistical support and weapons, but includes also other elements, such as army training and medical as well as shelter assistance for Ukrainians during Russian attacks. This could be more effective and preventive in the face of the potential war between Russia and other European countries than massive sanctions.

It needs to be recognized that so far "most policies introduced by the West were not intended to impose serious economic hardship on Putin's regime but were designed to put long-term pressure on the Russian economy" [Snegovaya 2021]. Therefore, only a harsher and more wide-ranging sanctions regime like the ones imposed against Iran could work against Putin. Excluding Russia from Swift – the global electronic payment system – would do some damage to the country's economy, but will it stop an already started invasion if Putin fires first? Moreover, as scholars indicate, "the West's threat of economic sanctions can work only if the proposed measures would make Russian military action against Ukraine expensive enough to alter the Kremlin's cost-benefit calculus [...] for sanctions to work, they have to be costlier than the vast benefit Putin perceives in controlling Ukraine" [Miller 2022]. Therefore, in order to discourage Putin from attacking, President Biden must be much tougher and persuade the Russian leader that "his provocations will also be met with a military response that will weaken the impact of his favorite coercive tactics and dramatically undermine Russia's ability to strong-arm concessions from its neighbors" [Townsend 2022]. There are reasons to believe that Biden's course of action towards Russia should consist of a combination of coercive diplomacy, and hard power – a military component.

WHAT BIDEN SHOULD DO

It must be underlined that so far the U.S. has been dedicated to peace and diplomatic solutions during the time of crisis, but in focusing on mediation without an adequate accent on hard-power instruments, Biden missed a chance to head off a crisis on the Ukraine/Russia border. Some scholars indicate that “a more forceful response to the military buildup that Russia carried out on its border with Ukraine last April could have led to preemptive force-posture changes and the introduction of lethal aid to Ukraine, which might have had a greater impact on altering the Kremlin’s calculus for a military-technical solution” [Vindman, Bustillos 2022]. The Biden administration waited far too long to put in place comprehensive hard power responses, and today even confronting Putin with powerful American full scale military policies to deter Russia might not be as effective as it would have been then. However, today Biden has no choice and if he wants to stop Putin from escalating the war, the President must do what he should have done in April 2021 – frighten Russia with American military power. It is believed, that “by strengthening their military capabilities in Europe and increasing their presence along Russia’s periphery, the United States and its allies can both shore up neighboring governments’ confidence in their ability to withstand Russian bullying and shake Putin’s confidence that his Western adversaries lack the means and the will to resist his aggression” [*ibid.*]. To be precise, today President Biden should think not only about Ukraine but more importantly about all the other former Eastern Bloc countries such as Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Poland, and Romania, and install extra forces and aid its European partners. “The United States must reassure them that it has their backs, as guaranteed by Article 5 of the NATO Charter. Otherwise, in response to a perceived existential threat, they might rush military and humanitarian aid to their borders over the objections of Washington and western European governments” [*ibid.*]. After all, one cannot rule out the possibility that once Putin decided to attack Ukraine, he will not use the same military tactics against other adjacent countries as he did against Ukraine.

On the other hand, one might argue that by increasing Western military presence in Poland, Romania, and other countries, it might serve to convince Putin that he must attack other countries such as Poland as well. Foreign policy specialists do not believe in that scenario. For example, Jim Townsend, who was the Pentagon’s NATO policy official for President Barack Obama, said that “he sees little chance that Putin would deliberately extend an offensive beyond Ukraine unless he believed Biden would be unwilling to go to war to defend NATO allies” [Burns 2022]. Based on what Townsend indicates, one can assume that he is for an increase of American and NATO military presence on the eastern flank of NATO which is the first line of the Alliance. Accordingly, Biden continues to increase the number of American troops in the former Eastern Bloc countries. For example, in February 2022, he has send additional 3,000 soldiers to Poland

as well as to Romania, and more importantly the US President declared that he will deploy more if necessary.

Having said that, it is important to remember that as some scholars point out, “the effectiveness of coercive diplomacy depends on the balance of interests, not the balance of power” [Mastro 2011]. Moreover, “successful coercive diplomacy requires clear and credible signaling because the punishment has to appear contingent on the target state’s behavior” [*ibid.*: 226]. Looking back in history, one can admit that the U.S. has effectively used coercive diplomacy in the past. For example, President John F. Kennedy’s policies against the Soviet Union and Cuba during the Cuban missile crisis, or George H.W. Bush’s actions against Iraq during the Gulf War were examples of coercive diplomacy. In the case of Iraq, one component of economic sanctions was the freezing of Iraq’s assets. As some scholars indicate “Indeed, the blocking of Iraq’s assets was effective primarily because of the international application of the freeze” [Sheen 2022]. An argument can be made that if the sanctions against Russia are to be effective, they must include the freezing of Russia’s financial assets. Moreover, as an element of coercive diplomacy, the economic sanctions aimed at Russian elites who sympathize with the Kremlin must be implemented *now*, not when the war escalates. The execution of sanctions will significantly change the position of the West ahead with the U.S. at the diplomatic table, where so far the initiative lays on Russian side. Acknowledging that problem, former Polish Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz noted “since Vladimir Putin’s speech in Munich in 2007, the initiative or new ventures all come from Putin” [TVN24 2022]. Cimoszewicz explained: “The West’s mistake is not being able to reverse this situation. It is the West that constantly wonders what Putin will do and tries to imagine it, not Putin wonders what the West will do. This is quite an elementary mistake when it comes to international relations, especially those related to tension and conflicts” [*ibid.*].

Consequently, similar to the Iraq case, the freeze cannot be applied solely by the United States, but by the international community as well. Only then is there a good chance that economic sanctions will be effective quickly. A classic example of successful coercive diplomacy illustrates a confrontation between the U.S. and China in the South China Sea, when on 8 March 2009, five Chinese vessels in a hostile way maneuvered near the U.S. Naval Ship “Impeccable”. Following the accident, Chinese applied a strategy which included not one, but three elements of coercive diplomacy: military provocation, media campaign, and finally contested U.S. explanations of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas.

Similarly, with regards to solving the Russian war with Ukraine, the US together with its European allies should act as Chinese did in 2009. Moreover, current war indicates that Biden’s strategy should include what a distinguished scholar Jack S. Levy calls “the full-fledged ultimatum” [Levy 2008]. First, the West must substantially increase its military presence on the Eastern Flank. This action will secure NATO countries and send a message to Putin that the West

will support its partners in case of military aggression from Russia. Biden ought to consequently put more and more pressure on his rival and increase American military presence in Europe by sending additional troops as well as the army equipment and providing training to Ukrainian army.

Second, Biden administration should clearly state “a demand, a time limit for compliance, and potent and credible threat of punishment for noncompliance” [*ibid.*: 540] to Putin using the media. The full-fledged ultimatum’s goal is to put more significant pressure on Putin and take the initiative instead of just reacting to his aggressive moves. There is no time for a “try-and-see approach as one in which a demand is made without an explicit threat or time limit, and a gradual turning of the screw” [*ibid.*]. Putin must realize that starting a war with other European countries would also mean starting a war with the U.S.

Finally, Biden with the West should provide substantial financial help to Ukraine. The continuous media stream of scary warnings about a possible full scale war in Ukraine has a very negative impact on the country’s economy. “A series of cyberattacks knocked the websites of major banks, the defense ministry and Ukrainian army offline for several hours [...] the Kremlin’s saber-rattling has caused the national currency, the hryvnia, to plunge to a four-year low against the dollar. Dutch airline KLM halted flying to and over Ukraine, while Germany’s Lufthansa said it is considering a suspension” [Kyporenko, Ferris, Rotman 2022]. It needs to be emphasized that Putin’s main objective is to successively weaken Ukraine’s economy and destabilize the country’s governmental system. It is not in Putin’s interest to get himself involved in a long military conflict, because it is simply too expensive and too risky. Instead, the Russian leader wants to break Ukraine using other methods, such as cyberattacks. Therefore, if the West led by the U.S. wants to win this fight with Putin it cannot only help Ukraine militarily, and by sanctioning Russia, but in addition by providing financial assistance. For example, the Biden administration could help already financially broken Ukraine “by scrapping hidden surcharges on its IMF loan” [Romashko 2022], and, as suggested Ukrainian Finance Minister Serhiy Marchenko, by underwriting bonds “issued by the government in Kyiv because of the prohibitive cost of borrowing in international markets” [De Luce, Parafeniuk, Melkozerova 2022].

To recapitulate, solving Russian war with Ukraine cannot be achieved through Biden’s soft power policies, but through coercive diplomacy. Moreover, in this case applying an offensive coercive diplomacy must be “multidimensional” and include both military and economic instruments, in order to, on the one hand, deter Russia, and on the other, to provide Ukraine the much needed assistance. As indicated, the analysis showed that it is Putin who initiates moves, not Biden, therefore, reliance on soft power policies will not reverse the situation, but can only worsen it. Neither of those two factors can be accomplished by the Biden administration alone but only in unity and cooperation with the European community.

Tytuł: Polityka „miękkiej siły” Bidena a dyplomacja przymusu i odpowiedź na inwazję Rosji na Ukrainę

Streszczenie: Autor w niniejszym artykule analizuje militarny atak Rosji na Ukrainę i proponuje działania zmierzające do zakończenia wojny. Rozpoczyna od analizy stosunków Ameryki z Ukrainą przed rokiem 2021–2022 i wyjaśnia główne przyczyny ciągłego zainteresowania Rosji inwazją Ukrainy. Na koniec autor analizuje politykę zagraniczną Bidena i określa, jakiego rodzaju strategię należy zastosować, aby przywrócić pokój i stabilność w regionie.

Słowa kluczowe: Joe Biden, Ukraina, Rosja, koncentracja wojsk, USA, „twarda siła”, „miękką siła”, dyplomacja przymusu

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