BALTIC JOURNAL OF LAW & POLITICS
A Journal of Vytautas Magnus University
VOLUME 16, NUMBER 1 (2023)
ISSN 2029-0454

Cit.: *Baltic Journal of Law & Politics* 16:1 (2023): 122-147
https://content.sciendo.com/view/journals/bjlp/bjlp-overview.xml
DOI: 10.2478/bjlp-2023-0007

RUSSIA'S CONTAINMENT STRATEGY DURING BIDEN'S PRESIDENCY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE BALTIC STATES: OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLES?

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Received: August 28, 2023, reviews 2; accepted: October 2, 2023.

ABSTRACT

When Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, many experts claimed that in Europe there has not been such an assault on the principles of state sovereignty and territorial integrity since the end of Cold War." Moreover, politicians and researchers urged the U.S. to apply a containment strategy towards Russia once again. Meanwhile, the U.S. president Joe Biden made it clear that the U.S. was moving toward Russia's containment 2.0: he called Putin's actions "a naked aggression" and vowed to make Russia pay "economically and strategically." The article examines Russia's containment strategy in Biden's administration foreign policy and its implications to the Baltic states. What vision about Russia's containment strategy does the Biden administration have in terms of goals, instruments, and challenges? How does the administration implement its plans? Has the containment strategy been transformed and adapted to the new circumstances of the 21st century? What role does the Biden administration foresee for the Baltic States in Russia's containment strategy? What risks and opportunities does this idea present for the Baltic States? These are the questions that the article addresses.

KEYWORDS

United States; Containment; Russia; Foreign Policy; Joe Biden; George F. Kennan.

INTRODUCTION

Russia has occupied a prominent place in U.S. foreign policy since the end of the Cold War.[1] While U.S.-Russian relations have gone through many ups and downs[2], Russia's aggression against Ukraine in 2022 indicated that Russia's deterrence strategy applied by the Western countries has failed.[3] Jonathan Masters and other experts have pointed out that Russia's invasion of Ukraine "signified a historic turning point for European security."[4]

Even long before Russia invaded Ukraine, many researchers raised concerns about Russia's increased capacity to challenge American interests. Some were commenting on the rise of Russia's assertiveness and the use of military force "near abroad and beyond".[5] Others pointed out Russia's efforts to gain more influence by military and economic means.[6] Christopher Walker and others encouraged to pay attention to soft and sharp power's usage in Russia's foreign policy and the way Russia was challenging democratic norms.[7]

Despite Russia's increasing ambitions, various U.S. administrations have attempted to accommodate Russia and have framed the U.S. foreign policy towards the country accordingly. The retired U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel and former Director for European Affairs at the National Security Council Alexander Vindman mentions that, after

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1 David W. Rivera, "Engagement, Containment, and the International Politics of Eurasia," *Political Science Quarterly* Vol. 118, No. 1 (2003) // http://www.jstor.org/stable/30035823; Robert Legvold, "The Russia File: How to Move Toward a Strategic Partnership." *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 4 (2009): 78–93. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20699623; Angela E. Stent, *The Limits of Partnership: U.S.-Russian Relations in the Twenty-First Century*. Princeton University Press, 2014. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt4cgb8m; Michael McFaul, " How to Contain Putin's Russia," *Foreign Affairs* (2021) // https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2021-01-19/how-contain-putins-russia; M. E. Sarotte, "Containment Beyond the Cold War," *Foreign Affairs* (2021) // https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2021-10-19/containment-beyond-cold-war; Michael Hirsh, "Is Cold War Inevitable?" *Foreign Policy* (2023) // https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/01/23/cold-war-george-kennan-diplomacy-containment-united-states-china-soviet-union/; Jeffrey Mankoff, "Russia in the Era of Great Power Competition," *The Washington Quarterly*, 44:3 (2021), 107-125, DOI: 10.1080/0163660X.2021.1970905.

2 Michael McFaul, "How Biden Should Deal With Putin," Foreign Affairs (2021) // https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2021-06-14/how-biden-should-deal-putin; Andrei Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity*. Rowman & Littlefield Pub Inc, 2013.

3 Michael Beckley and Hal Brands, "The Return of Pax Americana?" *Foreign Affairs* (2022) // https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2022-03-14/return-pax-americana'; Ivo H. Daalder, "The Return of Containment," *Foreign Affairs* (2022) // https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2022-03-01/return-containment.

4 Jonathan Masters, "Ukraine: Conflict at the Crossroads of Europe and Russia," *Council on Foreign Relations* (2023) // https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/ukraine-conflict-crossroads-europe-and-russia.

5 Robert D. Blackwill and Philip H. Gordon, "Containing Russia, Again: An Adversary Attacked the United States—It's Time to Respond," *Foreign Affairs* January 19 (2018) // https://www.cfr.org/article/containing-russia-again-adversary-attacked-united-states-its-time-respond; Richard Sakwa, "External Actors in EU-Russia Relations: Between Norms and Space," In *Avoiding a New 'Cold War:* The Future of EU-Russia Relations in the Context of the Ukraine Crisis," edited by Cristian Nitoiu (*Dahrendorf Forum, 2016);* Angela Stent, *Putin's World: Russia Against the West and with the Rest* (Twelve: 2019); Dmitri Trenin, "Highs and Lows: Russia's Foreign Policy at the start of 2018," *Carnegie Moscow Center,* February 2 (2018) // https://carnegie.ru/commentary/75425.

6 Andrej Krickovic, "Imperial nostalgia or prudent geopolitics? Russia's efforts to reintegrate the post-Soviet space in geopolitical perspective," Post-Soviet Affairs, 30:6 (2014), 503-528 // DOI: 10.1080/1060586X.2014.900975; Viljar Veebel and Zdzisław Sliwa, "The Suwalki Gap, Kaliningrad and Russia's Baltic Ambitions," *Scandinavian Journal of Military Studies*, 2(1) (2019), p.111–121 // DOI: https://doi.org/10.31374/sjms.21; Konyshev, Valery, and Alexander Sergunin. "Russian Military Strategies in the High North," In: Heininen, L. eds. *Security and Sovereignty in the North Atlantic*. Palgrave Macmillan, London. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137470720_6; Dmitri Trenin, "The Revival of the Russian Military: How Moscow Reloaded," *Foreign Affairs* 95, no. 3 (2016): 23–29 // http://www.jstor.org/stable/43946854.

7 Christopher Walker, "What Is "Sharp Power"?", Journal of Democracy, Vol. 29 (2018) // https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/jnlodmcy29&div=47&id=&page=; Nikolas K. Gvosdev, "Is Russia Sabotaging Democracy in the West?," Orbis, Volume 63, Issue 3 (2019) // https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orbis.2019.05.010; Andis Kudors, "Russia and Latvia: A Case of Sharp Power," (2023). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003412335; Jeanne L. Wilson, "Soft Power: A Comparison of Discourse and Practice in Russia and China," Europe-Asia Studies, 67:8 (2015), 1171-1202, DOI: 10.1080/09668136.2015.1078108.

the Cold War, the majority of the U.S. administrations (Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama) constructed their policies in Eastern Europe around hopes for a cooperative relationship with Russia and fears of another Cold war.[8] Clinton's administration focused on Russia's engagement strategy. During the Bush presidency, the U.S. president famously looked into the eyes of Vladimir Putin and "saw his soul." The Obama administration introduced the Reset policy in U.S.-Russia relations. Moreover, during the 30 years of U.S.-Russia relations, the topic of containment seemed to be taboo in the U.S. political discourse about Russia. The U.S. foreign policy decision-makers criticised Russia but avoided the usage of the containment concept. Multiple experts call this type of foreign policy delusional.[9]

After Russia started the unprovoked and unjustified war in Ukraine in 2022, however, politicians and researchers urged the U.S. administration to give up the outdated perceptions of Russia and advocated the application of containment towards Russia once again. The former U.S. ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul emphasized that "summits are good, but containment is better."[10] Associate Professor of Political Science Michael Beckley and Kissinger Distinguished Professor of Global Affairs at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies Hal Brands pointed out that containment is considered one of the most successful strategies in U.S. diplomatic history.[11] Daalder called containment "the West's best option."[12] Moreover, the foreign policy experts not only encouraged to revive Kennan's, who is considered to be the father of Containment, ideas but also to adjust them to current international security realities.[13]

Meanwhile, the Biden administration identified the great-powers competition as the U.S. strategic priority. Furthermore, U.S. President Joe Biden made it clear that the U.S. was moving toward Russia's containment 2.0: he called Putin's actions "a naked aggression" and vowed to make Russia pay "economically and strategically."[14]

The article examines Russia's containment strategy in Biden's administration's foreign policy and its implications for the Baltic states. What vision of Russia's containment strategy does the Biden administration have in terms of goals, instruments, and challenges? How does the administration implement that strategy? What role for democracy is foreseen in Russia's containment strategy? Has the containment strategy

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8 Alexander Vindman, "Stop Tiptoeing Around Russia," *Foreign Affairs* (2022) // https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/stop-tiptoeing-around-russia.

9 Ivo Daalder, "The best answer to Russian aggression is containment." *Financial Times,* October 16 (2016) // https://www.ft.com/content/258cffe0-9171-11e6-8df8-d3778b55a923; Brian Whitmore, "Can Containment Work Against Modern Russia?" *The Atlantic*, October 16 (2015) // https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/10/russia-containment-putin-soviet/410968/; Michael McFaul, "Russia as It is. A Grand Strategy for Confronting Putin." *Foreign Affairs* July/August Issue (2018) // https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2018-06-14/russia-it; Bobo Lo, "An Accident Waiting to Happen: Trump, Putin and the US–Russia Relationship," *Lowy Institute*, October 25 (2017) // https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/accident-waiting-happen-trump-putin-and-us-russia-relationship.

10 Michael McFaul, " How Biden Should Deal With Putin," *Foreign Affairs* (2021) // https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2021-06-14/how-biden-should-deal-putin.

11 Michael Beckley and Hal Brands, " The Return of Pax Americana?" *Foreign Affairs* (2022) // https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2022-03-14/return-pax-americana.

12 Ivo H. Daalder, "The Return of Containment," *Foreign Affairs* (2022) // https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2022-03-01/return-containment.

13 Carla Norrlof, " The New Economic Containment," *Foreign Affairs* (2022) // https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2022-03-18/new-economic-containment; Fredrik Logevall, "The Ghosts of Kennan," *Foreign Affairs* (2022) // https://www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/ghosts-george-kennan-lessons-cold-war; Michael Hirsh, "Is Cold War Inevitable," *Foreign Affairs* (2023) // https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/01/23/cold-war-george-kennan-diplomacy-containment-united-states-china-soviet-union/.

14 The White House, "Remarks by President Biden on Russia's Unprovoked and Unjustified Attack on Ukraine," (February 24, 2022) // https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/02/24/remarks-by-president-biden-on-russias-unprovoked-and-unjustified-attack-on-ukraine/

been transformed and adapted to the new circumstances of the 21st century? What role has been foreseen by the Biden administration for the Baltic States in Russia's containment strategy? What risks and opportunities does this idea present for the Baltic States? The article addresses these questions.

The article argues that Biden's administration reintroduced Kennan's ideas to U.S. foreign policy. First, I present the methodology of original research in which I use the research methods' triangulation. Then, I discuss the features of containment strategy: both, traditional containment, containment defined by Kennan, and contemporary containment. The third part of the article is devoted to the analysis of the Biden administration's political discourse regarding Russia. The fourth part of the article analyses the application of Russia's containment strategy during Biden's presidency focusing on domestic and international domains. In the final part of the article, I explore the implications that the Baltic states face as a result of the Biden administration's policy towards Russia.

1. Research Methodology

The analysis provided here of Russia's containment strategy in Biden's administration's foreign policy and its implications for the Baltic states derives from the Classical Realism theoretical approach that perceives states as the most important actors in international relations and claims that they are unitary and pursue power to ensure their security.[15] The research is based on the assumption that to identify a foreign policy approach towards a certain country one has to consider several research methods: foreign policy strategy announced by the leaders and to deduce foreign policy strategy that is "pursued as a function of the leaders' behaviour"[16]. Thus, the research that the article is based on has been divided into two segments: Biden's administration's public discourse analysis and Biden's administration's executed foreign policy analysis.

Public Discourse Analysis. According to Jean-Frederic Morin and Jonathan Paquin, foreign policy analysts can identify a country's foreign policy approach towards a certain country with the help of state officials' statements, official speeches and, in the case of the United States, National Security Strategies.[17] Snyder claims that a clearly stated foreign policy goal should indicate the target, the direction, the expected outcome, and a timescale.[18] For this reason, I have conducted a qualitative speech analysis and a qualitative document analysis. I have analysed official speeches, and remarks, and given interviews with the U.S. President who is a key figure in U.S. foreign policy decision-making. Official speeches, remarks, and interviews have been selected from the Whitehouse and The American Presidency Project websites which provide an extensive database of the U.S. presidents' records. Information source has been considered suitable for the analysis if it had contained the keyword "Russia" and if it fit into the research timeframe: namely, 20 January 2021-24 February 2023 (the beginning of Biden's presidency and the first anniversary of Russia's aggression in Ukraine). During the public discourse analysis, the following research criteria have been used: Russia's perception, the declared containment strategy instruments, the expected outcomes in

15 Hans Morgenthau. *Politics Among Nations* (McGraw-Hill Education, 2005).
16 Jean-Frederic Morin and Jonathan Paquin. F*oreign Policy Analysis: A Toolbox* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 19.
17 Ibid.
18 Richard Snyder, Derek Chollet and Valerie Hudson. *Foreign Policy Decision Makin*g (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

U.S.-Russia relations, and the foreseen role of the Baltic States in Russia's containment strategy. The Whitehouse and The American Presidency Project (APP) websites provided 1350 suitable records for the analysis.

Table 1. Analysis of Biden's Administrations' Political Discourse: Information Sources and Analysis Criteria

Information Sources Analysed	Criteria For Analysis	Additional Criterion
National Security Strategy (1) State Of The Union Addresses (2) Speeches and remarks of U.S. President (1350)	Russia's perception, Containment strategy instruments Expected outcome in the U.S.-Russian relations Role of the Baltic States in Russia's containment strategy.	How far has the administration gone from G. F. Kenan's ideas?

Source: composed by the author.

Biden's administration's executed foreign policy analysis. In addition to Biden's administration's public discourse analysis, another qualitative research method has been used to explore Russia's containment strategy applied by the Biden administration: the event data-set research method. The Event-based database is a valuable research tool that facilitates the analysis of applied foreign policy instruments in different domains: it lists all the events concerning certain topic during a specific time period.[19] Event-based databases are usually generated from events reported in newspaper articles.[20]

In this research, the event-data set of the U.S. foreign policy initiatives towards Russia has been constructed from events reported by the official website of the President of the United States (www.whitehouse.gov), the Washington Post, and the articles in Foreign Affairs. Biden administration's actions directed at Russia of any type (both in domestic and foreign domains) reported by the official website of the President of the United States (www.whitehouse.gov), the Washington Post, and the articles in Foreign Affairs that could have been attributed to Russia's containment strategy have been included in the event data set that had the following categories: date of the event (when), an event (what happened: who did what to whom and where?), the domain of the engagement (diplomatic, economic, military). The constructed event data-set consisted of 91 events in total. The constructed event data-set not only indicated specific Russia's containment instruments used by Biden administration but allowed to trace developments in the U.S. foreign policy towards Russia.

[19] James Rosenau and G. H. Ramsey. *External and Internal Types of Foreign Policy Behavior* (Sage International Yearbook of Foreign Policy Studies, 1975).

[20] Phil Schrodt, "Event Data in Foreign Policy Analysis," in Laura Neack, Jean Hey and Patrick Jude Haney, *Foreign Policy Analysis: Continuity and Change in its Second Generation* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1994), 826.

Table 2. Analysis of Actions Taken by the Biden Administration Related to Russia's Containment Strategy

Event Data-set based on:	Criteria for Analysis
Website of President of the U.S. The Washington Post Foreign Affairs	What instruments have been used to contain Russia (both in domestic and foreign policy domains)? How far has the administration gone from G.F.Kennan's ideas? What kind of containment strategy has the Biden administration applied: traditional, contemporary, or recommended by Kennan? What role was assigned to the Baltic States in Russia's containment strategy?

Source: composed by the author.

First, features of Kennan's suggested containment have been identified, as well as features of traditional and contemporary containment have been discussed. Second, the Biden administration's vision of Russia's containment has been explored with the help of the U.S. president's public discourse and strategic documents analysis. Third, Russia's containment strategy's instruments and implementation have been analysed based on the event-data sets research method with a special focus on the role of the Baltic States in it. Lastly, the comparison between Russia's containment strategy applied by the Biden administration and traditional, contemporary, and containment recommended by Kennan has been made to assess whether the Biden administration's policy towards Russia is indeed "old wine in new bottles".

2. A Tale Of Three Types Of Containment: Traditional, Contemporary, And The One Suggested By Kennan

Containment is a power-balancing strategy that attempts to prevent certain actors in international relations from using their power and position to reshape the international order.[21] Although the containment strategy defined the U.S. foreign policy for almost 50 years[22], the essence of this power-balancing strategy remains contradictory. The term Containment in the context of the U.S. foreign policy first appeared on 22 February 1946, when GF Kennan, a deputy head of the U.S. mission in Moscow, sent 'a Long Telegram' to the U.S. Secretary of State. However, later GF Kennan himself pointed out that his ideas about containment have been misunderstood.[23] This part of the article attempts to outline the features of containment strategy claiming that throughout the U.S. foreign policy history three types of containment have manifested: containment defined by its author GF Kennan; traditional containment (the strategy that dominated the U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War), and contemporary containment that is still evolving as a result of changing security environment.

The containment strategy suggested by GF Kennan was crafted as a response to challenges posed by the Soviet Union (USSR). The main ideas that defined containment were closely related to the foreseen measures towards the USSR. It seems that

[21] John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 4.

[22] Fareed Zakaria, "The Reagan Strategy of Containment," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 105, No. 3, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2150823; John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 4; William B. Pickett, "New Look or Containment? George F. Kennan and the Making of Republican National Security Strategy," *The Princeton University Library Chronicle*, Vol. 66, No. 2 (2005), https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.25290/prinunivlibrchro.66.2.0303; Richard Haass, *A World in Disarray* (Penguin Books, 2018), 43; Stephen Sestanovich, *Maximalist* (Vintage Books, 2014), 10.

[23] Michael Hirsh, "Is Cold War Inevitable?" *Foreign Affair*s (2023) // https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/01/23/cold-war-george-kennan-diplomacy-containment-united-states-china-soviet-union/.

the containment strategy's author perceived the USSR challenge as very serious: the "problem of how to cope with this force [is] undoubtedly [the] greatest task our diplomacy has ever faced and probably [the]greatest it will ever have to face".[24] GF Kennan portrayed the USSR as a powerful adversary of the U.S. that had big territory, was rich with natural resources, an effective apparatus capable of exerting the USSR's influence abroad, and, most importantly, an "instinctive Russian sense of insecurity." GF Kennan claimed that the USSR would attempt to exert its power in a variety of ways: participating in international organizations, building a powerful image for a domestic and external audience, using propaganda, hard and soft power measures, and any instruments available. He also highlighted the importance of military measures in the USSR's foreign policy: development of armed forces, military-industrialization, and display of its military might. Thus, according to GF Kennan, the USSR had various foreign policy measures at their disposal and intended to use them. GF Kennan's portrait of the USSR is surprisingly similar to the one of current Russia constructed by current foreign policy experts and think tanks: Michael McFaul claims that Russia has no restraint to use military power;[25] Robert D Blackwill and Philip H Gordon point out Russia's ideological campaign and sharp power;[26] Stephen Sestanovich suggests that Russia has various foreign policy tools at its disposal (from energy and money to disinformation).[27]

Even though GF Kennan described the USSR as a complex challenge to the U.S., in his suggested containment strategy he relied on soft power instruments and suggested paying substantial attention to the domestic dimension of containment strategy (claiming that propaganda and attempts to spread influence are the domains posing the biggest challenge for the U.S.). Kennan outlined the nonmilitary components of a policy of containment. Among these were (1) psychological weapons, (2) economic weapons, (3) political weapons, and (4) diplomatic weapons.[28] Kennan later asserted that the idea of his containment was "not the containment by military means of a military threat, but the political containment of a political threat".[29] Kennan suggested taking several steps to implement a containment strategy. To begin with, he claimed that American institutions, ideas and values have to be strengthened (solving society's problems, improving morale, and 'community spirit'). Second, the diplomat highlighted the need to educate American and foreign societies about the Russian situation using both: the press and the government. Third, in Kennan's opinion, a positive American example abroad should be demonstrated ("We must formulate and put forward for other nations a much more positive and constructive picture of sort of world we would like to see. <...>. We should be better able than Russians to give them this. And unless we do, Russians certainly will"). Finally, he suggested countering the Soviet Union in geographical and political points. Important regions, according to Kennan, were the United Kingdom, Japan, and the Ruhr valley in Europe. JL Gaddis claimed that GF Kennan advocated so called

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24 George Kennan, "The Long Telegram," February 22 (1946) // https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu//coldwar/documents/episode-1/kennan.htm

25 McFaul, Michael. "Russia as It is. A Grand Strategy for Confronting Putin," *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 2018) // https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2018-06-14/russia-it.

26 Blackwill, Robert D. and Gordon Philip H. "Containing Russia, Again: An Adversary Attacked the United States—It's Time to Respond," *Foreign Affairs* (January 19, 2018) // https://www.cfr.org/article/containing-russia-again-adversary-attacked-united-states-its-time-respond.

27 Sestanovich, Stephen. "What's Next for Russia's Relations with the West?" *Interview by Jonathan Masters. Council on Foreign Relations* (March 27, 2018) // https://www.cfr.org/interview/whats-next-russias-relations-west.

28 Kennan, George. Memoirs (Atlantic Little, Brown, Boston, 1972), 358.

29 Ibid.

asymmetrical containment.[30] However, the diplomat was vague regarding this suggestion. It was not clear what kind of deterrence he had in mind: based on hard power or relying on soft power measures. Some authors named GF Kennan's containment as "subtle, moderate, hopeful, and eschewing any excessive reliance upon military power for its implementation".[31]

It seems that GF Kennan did not believe in the possibility of bringing an unfriendly power (USSR) to a settlement. In Kennan's opinion, "in the long run, there can be no permanent peaceful coexistence."[32] He was criticized as a result. For instance, foreign affairs columnist in the New York Herald Tribune Walter Lippman claimed that "for a diplomat to think that rival and unfriendly powers cannot be brought to a settlement is to forget what diplomacy is all about".[33] Moreover, certain statements of GF Kennan lacked precision and, as a result, were not interpreted correctly throughout history (as GF Kennan later suggested himself).

During the Cold War, the U.S. tended to rely on hard power, not soft power instruments. The containment strategy was further developed by Freeman Matthews, Clark Clifford, and Dean Acheson who participated in the US foreign policy decision-making. All of the aforementioned US officials highlighted the importance of military component in containment strategy: F. Matthews suggested to use of all U.S. military types (but in the worst case only); C. Clifford did not reject the possibility of using a nuclear arsenal; D. Acheson proposed the creation of US military force "much superior to any other in the world".[34] In addition to GF Kennan's ideas, the containment strategy was supplemented with suggestions to apply economic instruments (investments in allies and partner countries; financial assistance to allies); and diplomatic support for allies. Misperception of original GF Kennan ideas was reflected in U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War as well. Until the collapse of the USSR, the U.S. containment strategy was dynamic but based on hard power measures: Truman's, Eisenhauer's, Kennedy's, Johnson's and other administrations relied on military and economic measures. The containment strategy was changing during the Cold War in terms of regions of priority only. Overall, GF Kennan's suggestion to focus on the soft power domain in containment strategy was not taken into consideration and the traditional containment strategy was mostly associated with hard power instruments.

30 Gaddis, John Lewis. *Strategies of Containment*. (Oxford University Press, 2005).
31 Powers, Richard. 1971. "Who fathered containment? " *International Studies Quarterly,* Vol. 15, No. 4. (1971) // DOI: 10.2307/3013581.
32 Kennan, George. "The Long Telegram," (February 22, 1946) // https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu//coldwar/documents/episode-1/kennan.htm
33 Iatrides, John O. "George F. Kennan and the Birth of Containment: The Greek Test Case," *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (2005) // https://www.jstor.org/stable/40209983.
34 Jakstaite, Gerda. "Containment and Engagement as Middle-Range Theories," *Baltic Journal of Law and Politics*, Vol. 3, n. 2. (2010) // DOI: https://doi.org/10.2478/v10076-010-0015-7

Table 3. Containment in Kennan's Ideas

	Kennan's Ideas
Perception of USSR/Russia	• Adversary • Powerful (but less than the US) • Good at using soft power measures and propaganda • Having various foreign policy measures. Willing to use both: hard and soft power • FP is driven by insecurity and domestic reasons
Containment's instruments	Reliance on **soft power** and deterrence: • To strengthen American institutions, ideals, and values; • To educate American and foreign societies about the Russian situation; • To demonstrate positive American example abroad; • To counter the USSR in geographical and political points.
Is a settlement possible?	No

Source: composed by the author.

Although containment strategy dominated the U.S. foreign policy for at least half a century, after the Cold War 'Containment' concept has become similar to a taboo in the U.S. public discourse with regards to Russia. However, it appears that since the beginning of the Ukraine conflict in 2014, this perception of 'taboos' in the U.S. foreign policy rhetoric has shifted. Many foreign policy experts have named the U.S.-Russian relations as Cold War 2.0.[35] Obama's administration has not avoided applying the term either. After Russia's unprovoked and unjustified aggression against Ukraine in 2022, some foreign policy experts pointed out that Kennan's recommendations made 75 years ago are very relevant today.[36] Nevertheless, academic discussions about contemporary containment, especially as a foreign policy instrument to counter Russia's ambitions, are rather scarce. Containment research tends to cluster around topics related to China,[37] Iran, and Israel;[38] meanwhile, the factor of Russia is not discussed that often in the context of containment: the authors examine historical lessons of containment,[39] economic sanctions as part of containment; discuss important anniversaries related

[35] Trenin, Dmitri."Avoiding U.S.-Russia Military Escalation During the Hybrid War," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (*January 2018) // https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Trenin_Hybrid_War_web.pdf; Legvold, Robert. *Return to Cold War* (Polity, 2016); Stent, Angela. *Putin's World: Russia Against the West and with the Rest (*Twelve, 2019); Hove, Mediel. "The Emergence of the New Cold War: The Syrian and Ukraine Conflicts," *Jadavpur Journal of International Relations,* Volume: 20, Issue: 2 (2017) // https://doi.org/10.1177/0973598416680432.

[36] Daalder, Ivo H. "The Return of Containment." *Foreign Affairs* (2022) // https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2022-03-01/return-containment.

[37] Iskander Rehman, "Keeping the Dragon at Bay: India's Counter-Containment of China in Asia," Asian Security, 5:2, 114-143 // DOI: 10.1080/14799850902885114; Michael Mandelbaum, "The New Containment," Foreign Affairs (2019) // https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/fora98&div=40&id=&page=; Ashley J. Tellis, "Balancing without Containment: A U.S. Strategy for Confronting China's Rise," The Washington Quarterly, 36:4, 109-124 // DOI: 10.1080/0163660X.2013.861717.

[38] Amnon Aran, "Containment and territorial transnational actors: Israel, Hezbollah and Hamas," *International Affairs*, 88: 4 (2012), 835–855.

[39] McFaul, Michael. "How Biden Should Deal With Putin." Foreign Affairs (2021) // https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2021-06-14/how-biden-should-deal-putin; McFaul, Michael. "How to Contain Putin's Russia." *Foreign Affairs* (2021) // https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2021-01-19/how-contain-putins-russia; McFaul, Michael**.** "Russia as It is. A Grand Strategy for Confronting Putin." *Foreign Affairs* July/August Issue (2018) // https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2018-06-14/russia-it.

to Kennan's ideas;[40] provide suggestions for contemporary containment.[41] In general, contemporary containment is mostly discussed in Foreign Affairs journal and various think tanks.

Table4. Three Types of Containment

	Kennan's Containment	Traditional Containment	Contemporary Containment
Instruments	Reliance on **soft power** and deterrence: *To strengthen American institutions, ideals, and values; *To educate American and foreign societies about the Russian situation; *To demonstrate positive American example abroad; *To counter the USSR in geographical and political points.	Reliance on **hard power** and military instruments: *Military instruments (nuclear arsenal included); * Economic instruments (investments in allies and partner countries; financial assistance to allies); *Diplomatic support for allies.	Various instruments: *Economic instruments (sanctions, new legislation that regulates Russian investments); *Military instruments, *Instruments related to democracy (abroad and within the U.S.), *Instruments on the level of ideas (requiring Russia to be more transparent about its efforts to influence the Western countries).

Source: composed by the author.

Foreign policy experts emphasize the importance of various instruments for contemporary containment that can be divided into several groups: economic instruments, military instruments, instruments related to democracy, and instruments on the level of ideas. In terms of economic measures to contain Russia, sanctions in economic and energy sectors are suggested as well as greater demand for greater transparency around Russian financial activities, and new legislation that regulates Russian investments.[42] In contemporary containment, substantial attention is devoted to the cultivation of democracy abroad and within the U.S.[43] Moreover, in discussions about contemporary containment a great emphasis is placed on the element of ideology: requiring

[40] Adam C. Starr, "The United States' (Mis)interpretation of Containment Theory," *Foreign Policy Journal* (March 16, 2013) // https://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2013/03/16/the-united-states-misinterpretation-of-containment-theory/; Norrlof, Carla. "The New Economic Containment." *Foreign Affairs* (2022) // https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2022-03-18/new-economic-containment.

[41] Christopher Walker, "The New Containment: Undermining Democracy," World Affairs (June 2015) // https://www.jstor.org/stable/43555281; Andreas Herberg-Rothe, "New Containment Policy A Grand Strategy for the Twenty-first Century?" The RUSI Journal, 153:2, 50-54 // DOI: 10.1080/03071840802103272; Deborah Welch Larson, "The Return of Containment," Foreign Policy (January 2021) // https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/01/15/containment-russia-china-kennan-today/; Corneliu Bjola and James Pamment, "Digital containment: Revisiting containment strategy in the digital age," *Global Affairs* (2016) // DOI: 10.1080/23340460.2016.1182244.

[42] Michael McFaul, "How Biden Should Deal With Putin," *Foreign Affairs* (2021) // https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2021-06-14/how-biden-should-deal-putin; Michael McFaul, "How to Contain Putin's Russia," *Foreign Affairs* (2021) // https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2021-01-19/how-contain-putins-russia; Michael McFaul, "Russia as It is. A Grand Strategy for Confronting Putin," *Foreign Affairs* July/August Issue (2018) // https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2018-06-14/russia-it.

[43] Walker, Christopher. "The New Containment: Undermining Democracy." *World Affairs* (June 2015) // https://www.jstor.org/stable/43555281.

Russia to be more transparent about its efforts to influence Western countries.[44] The logic of contemporary containment is: to increase costs for Russia and, in such a way, to bring internal changes (to end the political regime).[45] Overall, contrary to traditional containment advocates, current foreign policy experts distinguish two crucial containment dimensions: domestic (changes in the U.S.) and international (changes directed at Russia).

In conclusion, containment strategy has undergone various changes during its development: from emphasis on military instruments to economic measures and focus on strengthening democracy and the domestic domain. This foreign policy strategy is dynamic and is being constantly adjusted to international security realities.

3. The Biden Administration's Vision About Russia's Containment Strategy

To uncover whether the Biden administration transformed the containment strategy and adapted it to the new circumstances during Biden's presidency, the following analysis has been divided into two segments: before Russia invaded Ukraine on 24 February 2022 and after. Further in the text, the analysis results, structured according to the analysis criteria outlined in the previous part, are presented.

The research suggests that the Biden administration altered the U.S. foreign policy towards Russia according to the administration's broader foreign policy framework stressing the importance of democracy in the international arena and values that are important to the U.S. and its allies. Moreover, the analysis of the Biden administration's political discourse reveals the administration's attempts to expand Russia's containment strategy's toolbox in comparison to traditional containment.

Russia's perception and portrayal. In the Biden administration's political discourse, Russia is characterized as an aggressive, reckless and brutal international relations actor ("there is no question that Russia is the aggressor"[46]) that seeks to destabilize the international order and weaken the transatlantic alliance ("because it's so much easier for the Kremlin to bully and threaten individual states than it is to negotiate with a strong and closely united transatlantic community"[47]) and poses a threat to the U.S. In 2021–2023, in the U.S. political discourse, Russia has also been portrayed as an ambitious country that seeks to reestablish the former Soviet Union, is not trustworthy ("Russia has aggressively promoted disinformation at home and abroad"[48]) and uses a wide arsenal of instruments to achieve its foreign policy goals (Biden's administration refers to that as Russia's 'playbook'). The Biden administration referred to Russia as a country that does not admit its wrongdoings ("Russia will plead ignorance and innocence, it will create a false pretext for invasion, and it will amass troops and firepower

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44 McFaul, Michael. "How Biden Should Deal With Putin." *Foreign Affairs* (2021) // https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2021-06-14/how-biden-should-deal-putin; McFaul, Michael. "How to Contain Putin's Russia." *Foreign Affairs* (2021) // https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2021-01-19/how-contain-putins-russia; McFaul, Michael. "Russia as It is. A Grand Strategy for Confronting Putin." *Foreign Affairs* July/August Issue (2018) // https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2018-06-14/russia-it.

45 Daalder, Ivo H. "The Return of Containment." *Foreign Affairs* (2022) // https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2022-03-01/return-containment.

46 Joseph R. Biden, "Remarks on Russia's Actions in Ukraine Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley," *The American Presidency Project* (February 22, 2022) // https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/354581.

47 Joseph R. Biden, "Remarks at the Munich Security Conference "Special Edition 2021" and an Exchange With Reporters Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley," *The American Presidency Project* (February 19, 2021) // https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/348090.

48 Joseph R. Biden, " Remarks on Russia's Actions in Ukraine," *The White House* (February 22, 2022) // https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/02/22/remarks-by-president-biden-announcing-response-to-russian-actions-in-ukraine/#:~:text=We%20still%20believe%20that%20Russia,the%20capital%20city%20of%20Kyiv.

in plain sight"[49]). Moreover, the administration multiple times pointed out the fact that Russia uses various measures to interfere with U.S. domestic affairs: interferes with the U.S. elections, utilizes propaganda, digital authoritarianism and others.

The research of the Biden administration's strategic documents and political discourse suggests several trends in Russia's perception of the administration. During Biden's presidency, Russia has been portrayed as a threat (a "profoundly dangerous" country) whose power is diminishing. The latter notion in the administration's strategic documents and political discourse appeared after Russia invaded Ukraine and resembles the one used by Obama's administration after the annexation of Crimea in 2014. It seems that Biden's administration took a similar stance towards Russia as Obama's administration did: public intimidation of Russia and downplay of its status to demonstrate the upper status of the U.S. and the determination to defend its foreign policy interests. On the one hand, Biden's administration highlighted that it took Russia seriously due to its power capabilities, WMD arsenal, malicious foreign policy and other factors. On the other hand, it has been emphasized that, from the Biden administration's point of view, for the U.S. strategic interests Russia poses a different challenge than China does. The U.S. NSS, released in October 2022, states that Russia is an immediate persistent threat to the U.S. (contrary to China which is "the only competitor with both the intent to reshape the international order and <…> power to advance that objective").[50] Thus, for the Biden administration, Russia is not a top-tier threat: it is a threat significant in the transatlantic region that requires attention in the short term.

Although Russia was perceived as a less powerful actor than China by the Biden administration, the administration emphasized that Russia posed a multifaceted threat to the U.S. due to its versatile foreign policy 'playbook'. On the one hand, the research revealed the administration's references to diverse foreign policy instruments used by Russia: Russia interferes with elections, poisons its citizens, attacks democracies and "weaponizes corruption to try to undermine our system of governance,"[51] uses propaganda, information warfare, "provocative military exercises", sabotage, and cyber-attacks, and directs such efforts at both, international and domestic domains. On the other hand, the U.S. officials seek to undermine Russia's power and to reassure its allies and partners claiming that this wide arsenal of policy measures ('a playbook' in the Biden administration's words) is well known for the U.S.: "We saw this playbook in 2014. They are preparing this playbook again."[52] Noteworthy is the fact that even after Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022 (and the attention of everyone was on military instruments), the administration nevertheless maintained focus on the diversity of the threat posed by Russia. This suggests that the Biden administration possibly learned from the past U.S. administrations' mistakes.

At the same time, however, the research shows no significant transformations in Russia's perception of Biden's administration's political discourse as a result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine: the same as before the invasion, after Russia's aggression against

[49] Kamala Harris, "Remarks by the Vice President at the Munich Security Conference in Munich, Germany Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley," The American Presidency Project (February 19, 2022) // https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/354517.

[50] The White House, "National Security Strategy," (October 2022) // https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf.

[51] Joseph R. Biden, "Remarks at the Munich Security Conference "Special Edition 2021" and an Exchange With Reporters Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley," The American Presidency Project (February 19, 2021) // https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/348090.

[52] Jen Psaki, "Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley," The American Presidency Project (January 13, 2022) // https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/354104.

Ukraine in 2022, Russia was portrayed as an authoritarian country with a revisionist/imperialist foreign policy that poses an immediate persistent threat, seeks to remake the international order and has a certain playbook but is not able to challenge the U.S. interests due to its multiple limitations that were exposed as a result of the war that Russia itself started. On the one hand, this indicates that the Biden administration did not need Russia's aggression against Ukraine to understand Russia's real ambitions and that the U.S. foreign policy instruments were already in place at the beginning of Biden's presidency. On the other hand, after Russia invaded Ukraine, the Biden administration's political discourse revealed a new approach to the actor's portrayal that started a war against Ukraine: if before Ukraine's invasion Biden administration usually referred to Russia as the actor responsible for the war, after 24 February 2022, the administration partly redirected its attention from Russia to Putin pointing out that this actor is to blame for the military invasion: "Putin is the aggressor. Putin chose this war"; "Putin has committed an assault on the very principles that uphold global peace"; "Putin has failed to achieve his grand ambitions on the battlefield".[53] Such choice signals administration attempts to differentiate between Russia and its leader (this has been done in the U.S. NSS as well) leaving a possibility to negotiate or to seek beneficial outcome for the U.S. in the future. In other words, the analysis revealed changes only in the administration's chosen way to frame Russia's image (focus on Putin) but not in the image itself.

Containment strategy in Biden's rhetoric. The U.S. strategic documents and the political discourse of the Biden administration refer to various foreign policy strategies that the administration intends to use against Russia containment strategy being one of them. Even though the Biden administration constantly highlighted the necessity and determination to hold back Russia's imperialistic ambitions and restrain this actor, the term containment has not been used. Moreover, the U.S. political discourse before 2022 indicates that the U.S. hesitated to apply a containment strategy against Russia. Several factors contributed to such a foreign policy stance. To begin with, the U.S. foreign policy decision-makers have always been relatively sensitive about the foreign policy lexicon and, in the contemporary foreign policy of the U.S., trying to avoid terms reminiscent of the Cold War. Moreover, even after Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the U.S. decision-makers conviction that it is better not to provoke Russia and not to escalate the situation has remained rather common among foreign policy decision-makers. Overall, this suggests that the U.S. stance towards Russia often seems to be driven by wishful thinking (thinking of Russia as how it should rather than does behave) making the U.S. foreign policy towards Russia reactive, not proactive. However, the administration's decision to avoid the term of containment in the U.S. strategic documents and political discourse does not imply that containment strategy was absent from Biden administration's foreign policy towards Russia altogether. On the contrary, as discussed later in the article, not only have there been many elements of containment in Biden's foreign policy towards Russia, after February 2022 the administration made containment strategy a centre-piece of its foreign policy agenda in relations with Russia. This tendency (no references to Russia's containment strategy in administration's political discourse but reliance on it in the U.S. foreign policy) has been in the

[53] Joseph R. Biden, "Remarks on Russia's Attack on Ukraine and an Exchange With Reporters Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley," *The American Presidency Projec*t (February 24, 2022) // https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/354595.

U.S. foreign policy since the end of the Cold War.[54] Hence, Biden's administration has not been an exception.

The analysis of the Biden administration's political discourse revealed several traditional trends in Russia's containment strategy during the Biden presidency. Both before Russia's invasion of Ukraine and after, the administration emphasized NATO in Russia's containment strategy. Biden administration stressed that "the United States will defend every inch of NATO territory with the full force of American power"[55] and that "the United States' commitment to Article 5 is sacrosanct."[56] Moreover, the administration accentuated the importance of defending NATO's Eastern Flank in particular. Another instrument of Russia's containment that was declared in the administration's political discourse was various sanctions (from political to economic ones: the adminstration was "prepared to impose severe costs that would damage Russia's economy"[57]). The research suggests that the Biden administration has chosen the tactics to gradually increase the punitive measures. Various military instruments of Russia's containment strategy have become part of the U.S. rhetoric after 24 February 2022. Hence, on the one hand, the Biden administration signalled the intention to apply various measures of traditional containment and contemporary containment (as demonstrated in the notions about the need to weaken Russia's economy) to hold back Russia's aggression and to limit its power.

Table 5. Russia's Containment Instruments Declared by the Biden Administration.

Potential instruments of containment that the administration referred to Before 24/02/2022	Potential instruments of containment that the administration referred to After 24/02/2022
Sanctions	Sanctions
In coalition of allies and partners->multilateralism	In coalition of allies and partners->multilateralism
	Military component: assistance with weapons to Ukraine. But: „Our Forces are not engaged and will not engage in the conflict with Russian forces in Ukraine."
Measures in the cyber domain and promotion of cyber resilience	Measures in the cyber domain and promotion of cyber resilience
NATO	NATO

Source: composed by the author.

On the other hand, the research has shown more features of contemporary containment that manifested in references to strengthen the U.S. cyber resilience, application to various domestic measures (for instance, tackling Russia's interference in the U.S. elections) and emphasis on multilateralism in the application of Russia's

[54] Gerda Jakstaite, " Russia's containment and engagement strategies in the U.S. foreign policy during the presidency of G. W. Bush," *Polish Political Science Review=Polski Przegląd Politologiczny*. Wrocław : Instytut Politologii Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego. ISSN 2353-3773. 2014, Vol. 2, iss. 1, p. 62-80.

[55] Biden, Joseph R. "Remarks on Russia and Ukraine Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley," *The American Presidency Project* (February 15, 2022) // https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/354488.

[56] Joseph R. Biden, "Remarks on Russia and Ukraine Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley," *The American Presidency Project* (February 15, 2022) // https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/354488.

[57] Joseph R. Biden, "Background Press Call by Senior Administration Officials on Russia Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley," *The American Presidency Project* (December 23, 2022) // https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/353953.

containment strategy. This shows that during the Biden presidency, new features of Russia's containment emerged that on the one hand could be traced back to Kennan's ideas (like domestic measures) or could be associated with contemporary containment that emphasizes the importance of economic measures.

Expected outcome in U.S.-Russian relations. The Biden administration portrays the conflict with Russia not merely as a conflict of diverse interests but a conflict of values (claiming that the U.S. and its allies are defending universal values that Russia is against). Moreover, the administration places the rivalry between the U.S. and Russia in a bigger picture and frames it not as a rivalry between the West and Russia but as Russia's actions against some universal principles (established in the UN Charter).

However, contrary to Kennan, who did not believe in the possibility of a settlement between the USSR and the U.S., the Biden administration is interested in leaving the window of opportunity to improve U.S.-Russian relations open. Biden and his administration's officials highlighted multiple times that they are interested in de-escalation and (reciprocal) dialogue.

In sum, the Biden administration's vision of Russia's containment strategy mirrors both Kennan's ideas about containment strategy and manifests the features of contemporary containment. Surprisingly, however, this vision has not been affected by Russia's aggression to Ukraine as much as one could expect. This signals that the Biden administration knows Russia as an international relations actor rather well or is not willing to make radical changes in its foreign policy strategy towards Russia despite its aggression.

4. Implementation Of Russia's Containment Strategy During Biden Presidency

The research has revealed that the Biden administration is the first U.S. administration that highlight the importance of domestic measures in Russia's containment strategy and directly related them to Russia's containment strategy since the end of the Cold War. Therefore, this part of the article has been divided into two segments: external and domestic measures taken by the administration.

Russia's containment strategy: external measures. Although the Biden administration has not used the term 'containment' in its political discourse, they have been rather consistent in implementing an officially declared approach towards Russia. Moreover, the administration was very open about its intentions: Biden administration has chosen a different communication approach to dealing with Russia (as demonstrated in Biden's rhetorics before Russia invaded Ukraine: the U.S. president warned that Russia would attack Ukraine) using it as a tool for public pressure as well. The research demonstrated that the main elements of Russia's containment strategy in the international arena were various sanctions, extensive communication with the U.S. allies and partners in Europe, assistance to Ukraine, measures related to NATO, administration's initiatives for democracy renewal abroad, and support for the USAID.

Some of the Biden administration's applied Russia's containment measures reflect features of the traditional containment. Biden administration, like many other U.S. administrations, highlighted the importance of NATO in U.S. foreign policy. During the Biden presidency, the U.S. Senate approved NATO membership for Sweden and Finland: Sweden's and Finland's membership in NATO would change the geopolitical situation in the Baltic Sea region and strengthen the security of the Baltic States that Russia aims

to maintain in its sphere of influence. Moreover, the administration increased the U.S. military presence in Europe and, as they claim, "led a broader NATO effort to deter further Russian aggression and to defend NATO allies, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe." After Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, the U.S. deployed an additional 20000 American troops to Europe (including 10000 troops to Poland and a U.S.-led NATO battle group to Romania.[58] During the Biden presidency, NATO reoriented its collective defence posture to respond to the Russian threat. In general, the military component was an important part of Russia's containment strategy during the presidency of Joe Biden. After Russia's aggression against Ukraine in 2022, the administration provided various types of aid to Ukraine, military aid included (for instance, they sent sophisticated artillery systems and ammunition).

Another traditional measure of Russia's containment strategy that the Biden administration used was patterns of communication: while with Russian officials the U.S. administration's officials followed the principle "do not engage", they maintained extensive communication with its European allies (especially with NATO's Eastern flank countries) and Ukraine. For instance, a week before Russia invaded Ukraine, various U.S. officials spoke with their European counterparts multiple times: the U.S. president Biden spoke with 16 European leaders, Secretary Blinken had more than two dozen calls, and Secretary Austin spoke with eight of his European counterparts. Moreover, the Biden Administration is in constant contact with Ukrainian officials and has been stressing that "the United States will be operating on the principle of 'nothing about you without you'".[59]

Furthermore, the Biden administration responded to Russia's aggression against Ukraine with large-scale sanctions against Russia's government, entities and individuals. Biden administration placed restrictions on Russia's central bank, imports of Russian oil and other energy products, and targeted Russia's defence, aerospace, and maritime sectors; prohibited the U.S. investments in Russia and entrance into and use of U.S. airspace and ports.[60] In addition, the Biden administration applied political sanctions against specific Russian individuals (for instance, Russian President Vladimir Putin, Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin, members of Russia's Security Council and administration) and entities (for instance, certain banks, Rostec, entities of Russia's military-industrial complex, propaganda institutions and others) as well.

In addition, the Biden administration pledged to support Ukraine "as long as it takes."[61] The administration provided various kinds of support (security, humanitarian, democracy, human rights, and anti-corruption Assistance) for the invaded country and worked in close coordination with the government of Ukraine. To bolster Ukraine's ability to defend its territory Biden administration provided the anti-armor and anti-air systems (for instance, the 8,000 Javelin and 1,600 Stingers), sent the artillery and ammunition (more than 100,000 rounds of 125mm tank ammunition; and 100,000 rounds

58 CRS, "NATO's 2023 Vilnius Summit Report," (July 20, 2023) // https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IN/IN12192.

59 The White House, "Fact Sheet: U.S. Diplomatic Engagement with European Allies and Partners Ahead of Talks with Russia," (January 10, 2022) // https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/01/10/fact-sheet-u-s-diplomatic-engagement-with-european-allies-and-partners-ahead-of-talks-with-russia/.

60 CRS, " Russia's War Against Ukraine: Overview of U.S. Sanctions and Other Responses," (December 20, 2022) // https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IN/IN11869.

61 John Hudson and Missy Ryan, "Blinken, in Kyiv, pledges to support Ukraine 'for as long as it takes," *Washington Post* (September 8, 2022) // https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/09/08/blinken-visit-kyiv-security-aid/.

of small arms ammunition).[62] In 2022-2023, the U.S. provided more than $1.9 billion of humanitarian aid. To add to that, the administration provided nearly $220 million for Ukraine to enable Ukrainian media outlets to continue operating during the war and to counter disinformation.[63] Overall, after Russia invaded Ukraine, the most visible instruments of the U.S. foreign policy towards Russia were economic sanctions, and then NATO. However, the research results give the impression that the Biden administration, while claiming that it is important to respond strongly to Russia's aggression, does not want to escalate the situation. Avoidance of escalation is not the antipode of containment: on the contrary, one can claim that it is part of containment since one of the goals that containment strategy aims to achieve is to balance power of an adversary in such a way that the whole situation does not extends into war.

The Biden administration's Russia containment strategy reflected some new (not used by previous U.S. administrations) measures directed to the international arena. This administration has placed a strong emphasis on support for democracy which was part of the broader administration's agenda in their efforts to contain autocracies. The Biden administration started the Presidential Initiative for Democratic Renewal that aimed to invest approximately $9.5 billion (2021-2024) to support democracy, human rights, and good governance globally. Moreover, the administration devoted finances to fighting disinformation on a global scale as well: Biden administration has created a first-ever Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance within the USAID that is instrumental in fighting disinformation.

Russia's containment strategy: domestic measures. For the Biden administration, domestic measures directed at dealing with Russia's influence were an important part of Russia's containment strategy and made the Biden administration's policy towards Russia rather innovative. The administration took several containment measures in the domestic domain: initiatives to bolster cyber resilience in the U.S., to strengthen democracy and election systems, fighting corruption and propaganda. These measures were part of the administration's broader agenda to deal with autocratic countries (China and Russia being the frontrunners in this category). Moreover, Russia's containment measures in the domestic domain were drafted before Russia invaded Ukraine (at the beginning of Biden's presidency) and, contrary to the international domain, made the U.S. position in this sphere proactive and innovative. However, the preconditions for previously mentioned measures were created before 2022 as a result of deepening polarization within American society and the usage of Russia's sharp power.

From the beginning of Biden's presidency, the Biden administration has elevated the status of cyber issues. According to the administration, it was very important "to lock our digital doors".[64] During Biden's presidency, an executive Order was issued modernizing the Federal Government's defences and improving the security of widely-used technology. Moreover, the U.S. president launched public-private action plans to strengthen the cybersecurity of the electricity, pipeline, and water sectors. Furthermore, the first Deputy National Security Adviser for Cyber and Emerging Technology was appointed. Many steps were directed not specifically against Russia but were a reaction to changes in a security context. However, they become part of the containment

62 The White House, "FACT SHEET: One Year of Supporting Ukraine," (February 21, 2023) // https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/359782.
63 Ibid.
64 Joseph R. Biden, "Statement by President Biden on our Nation's Cybersecurity," The White House (March 21, 2022) // https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/03/21/statement-by-president-biden-on-our-nations-cybersecurity/

strategy of both Russia's and China's. In addition, on multiple occasions Biden administration publicly shamed Russia for its hacking efforts or called it out for malicious cyber activities: the U.S. president denounced Russian hackers in a call with Putin in January 2021; in April 2021 the administration announced it was expelling from the United States 10 Russian diplomatic personnel, including representatives of Russian intelligence services, as part of its response to Russia's harmful foreign activities. Already at the beginning of his presidency, Biden ordered a full assessment of Russian interference in the 2020 U.S. presidential election.

The Biden administration took a similar (rather unique) approach in fighting disinformation and propaganda spread by Russia: instead of targeting American social media companies for the content they publish, the administration was rapidly sharing intelligence about Russia's propaganda and promoted pro-Russian narratives and publicly identified the outlets that published pro-Russian content (like conservative financial news website ZeroHedge, for instance).[65] Biden administration took similar steps right before Russia invaded Ukraine as well. In February 2022, the administration released information about a Russian scheme to film a fake attack on Russian territory or Russian speakers in eastern Ukraine to manufacture a justification for an invasion.[66]

Having made the defence of democracy a centre-piece of the political agenda (the administration stressed that it was essential to "restore and strengthen the United States democratic institutions, including by protecting the right to vote and the civil rights of all Americans")[67], the Biden administration has introduced various initiatives in this field. In the Department of Justice, the number of staff dedicated to enforcing voting rights laws has doubled. The President's FY 2024 Budget provided an increase of $62 million to further strengthen the Department's Civil Rights Division. Moreover, $5 billion was devoted to help state and local jurisdictions strengthen our election infrastructure.[68] In January 2023, President Biden signed into law the Electoral Count Reform Act aiming to prevent events similar to the U.S. Capitol attack of January 6 clarified that the vice president's role in the elections' votes counting proceedings is purely ceremonial and raised the bar for objecting to a state's slate of electors. Making the fight against corruption a core U.S. security interest, the Biden administration also launched the first U.S. Strategy on Countering Corruption (December 2021) that introduced an unprecedented government-wide approach to fighting corruption in the U.S. and abroad.

The focus on strengthening democracy as one of the containment strategy's pillars stems from several circumstances. First, the promotion of democracy is one of the traditions of progressive foreign policy. Second, questioning the value of democracy has become one of the narratives promoted by authoritarian regimes. Consequently, the administration created the Disinformation-fighting Advisory Group within the

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65 Nandita Bose, "Analysis: How the Biden White House is fighting Russian disinformation," Reuters (March 4, 2022) // https://www.reuters.com/world/how-biden-white-house-is-fighting-russian-disinformation-2022-03-04/.

66 Max Boot, "Why the U.S. Ramped Up Its Information War With Russia," Council on Foreign Relations (February 10, 2022) // https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/why-us-ramped-its-information-war-russia.

67 The White House, "Fact Sheet: The Biden-Harris Administration's Abiding Commitment to Democratic Renewal at Home and Abroad," (March 29, 2023) // https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/03/29/fact-sheet-the-biden-harris-administrations-abiding-commitment-to-democratic-renewal-at-home-and-abroad/.

68 The White House, "Fact Sheet: The Biden-Harris Administration's Abiding Commitment to Democratic Renewal at Home and Abroad," (March 29, 2023) // https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/03/29/fact-sheet-the-biden-harris-administrations-abiding-commitment-to-democratic-renewal-at-home-and-abroad/.

Department of Homeland Security (in 2022) that had to monitor disinformation activities of foreign countries (such as Russia, China, and Iran). Hence, on the one hand, Biden administration's attempts to strengthen democracy at home are linked to such variables as domestic concerns about polarization of American society. On the other hand, as demonstrated in U.S. president's political discourse, efforts to address democracy related challenges have also been directly linked to the U.S. foreign policy towards autocracies (mostly, Russia) and have been of containment strategy. As stressed by Kennan, domestic and international domains should be interrelated in successful strategy of containment since autocratic countries attempt targeting the domestic domain as well to increase their power and weaken the opponent.

5. Russia's Containment Strategy: Implications for the Baltic States

U.S.-Baltic States relations have always been cordial and stable – the U.S. being the main security guarantor, in the Baltic States' perception. The Baltic States also have always been very vocal about threats posed by Russia. Having borders with Russia (for instance, Lithuania borders Kaliningrad which used to be the most militarized zone in Europe), having been constant targets of Russian officials' political discourse, having faced hybrid warfare measures by Russia, and some of them also having a significant Russian minorities (in Latvia, there are 24.5% Russians, while in Estonia they constitute 24.8%)[69], the Baltic States end up with a containment strategy against Russia in one way or another.

The Biden administration referred to the Baltic States as strong, effective, and reliable allies that have helped to promote security, democracy, and prosperity in Europe and beyond.[70] The administration also stressed that the U.S. will defend every inch of NATO's territory[71] and highlighted the fact that both the U.S. and the Baltic States share concerns about Russia. Moreover, the Biden administration emphasized that the question was not if the U.S. would defend the Baltic States but „what additional capabilities can we provide to ensure that they feel strong and confident in their own sovereignty and territorial integrity?". In short, the Biden administration's political discourse reflected what the Baltic States wanted to hear.

Biden administration maintained close communication with the Baltic States before and after Russia's attack against Ukraine: for instance, Biden met with officials of the Baltic States on the margins of the NATO Summit in Brussels in 2021; National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke by phone with counterparts from our Baltics to discuss European security in light of Russia's war in Ukraine in June of 2022. The Biden administration coordinated its policy towards Russia with the Baltic States as well: for instance, before Biden met with Putin in June 2021. In 2021-2023, the U.S. provided significant security assistance to the Baltic States: through the Baltic Security Initiative the U.S. appropriated nearly $169 million in FY2021 and $180 million in FY2022 for the Baltic States focusing on the development of the Baltic States' air defence systems.[72] It has been decided to authorize $250 million annually for 2023-2027 for the Baltics'

[69] Derek E. Mix, " Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania: Background and U.S.-Baltic Relations," CRS (September 29, 2022) // https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46139.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Joseph R. Biden, "Remarks on Russia's Actions in Ukraine," American Presidency Project (February 22, 2022) // https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-russias-actions-ukraine.
[72] Derek E. Mix, " Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania: Background and U.S.-Baltic Relations," CRS (September 29, 2022) // https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46139.

defence. In other words, during Biden's presidency, the Baltic States played a direct role in Russia's containment strategy by their defence capabilities being strengthened both via bilateral channels and via NATO (as NATO's Eastern Flank).

In addition, in the Biden administration's Russia containment policy, several notions are significant for the Baltic States:

- Biden administration's focus on authoritarian regimes and authoritarianism-democracy nexus in containment strategy.
- Naming China and Russia as the most important threats to the U.S. national security.
- Framing the threat posed by Russia as broader than only the hard security domain.
- The aforementioned Biden administration's position presents several opportunities for the Baltic States.

With the Biden administration's focus on the authoritarian countries (China is an existential, while Russia is an immediate threat) the Baltic States could use this opportunity to advocate for the notion that the best way to deter China is to defeat Russia. China and Russian issues are very interrelated; thus, the Baltic States should use every opportunity to stress that. In such a way, the Baltic States would discuss security issues important to the U.S. Moreover, it could be the opportunity for the Baltic States to demonstrate that these countries do understand tensions within the U.S. due to engagement in Europe vs. Indo-Pacific.

Furthermore, even in the current situation, the Biden administration leaves an open window for cooperation with Russia on mutually important issues and stresses that the U.S. does not want to escalate the situation nor fight another Cold War. Thus, for the Baltic States, it is difficult to change a country's (i.e. the U.S.) mindset held many years. Therefore, the Baltic States need to adapt and use the U.S. interest in the Indo-Pacific and its stance towards China for their benefit.

As the Biden administration places high importance on NATO in Russia's containment strategy, the Baltic States must continue to spend 2% of their GDP on defence; this presents the opportunity to prove that they are serious about their commitment to NATO and prefer the principle "work with you" than "work for you" from the part of the U.S. (emphasized by Trump and Obama administrations).

The fact that the Biden administration frames the threat posed by Russia as broader than only a hard security domain and admits Russia's capability to use propaganda for its benefit (and admits that Russia is successful at doing that) presents another opportunity for the Baltic States. Knowing Russia's foreign policy instruments (the usage of sharp power included) very well, the Baltic States could share their experiences on how to counter disinformation promoted by Russia.

To conclude, Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 created more security challenges for the Baltic States. However, as the Baltic States have always been part of Russia's containment strategy applied by the U.S., insecurity on NATO's Eastern flank meant more security initiatives from the Biden administration in the region. Moreover, the Biden administration's focus on containing authoritarian regimes for the Baltic States provided multiple opportunities to advance their foreign and security policy agenda within this framework and to prove their value as U.S. allies.

CONCLUSIONS

During the Biden presidency, their containment strategy has changed. On the one hand, the Biden administration brought back Russia's containment strategy to Kennan's original ideas: the importance of various domestic measures of the strategy has been emphasized; and the factor of democracy has been made a centre-piece of the administration's foreign policy agenda. At the same time, the Biden administration has made the containment strategy more contemporary, so that it now reflects current international security realities. For instance, cyber security measures have become an important part of the containment strategy. Thus, the Biden administration has transformed the containment strategy and adapted it to the new circumstances of the 21st century.

The research conducted for this article reveals that during the Biden presidency, containment strategy still is the hostage of certain Cold War traumas in the U.S. In the face of Russian aggression, U.S. officials still are hesitant to mention the term containment or to declare certain foreign policy tools that might attributed to the Cold war. Therefore, the Biden administration might consider going further and creating new terminology that reflects new trends in international security.

Surprisingly, however, Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has not made a significant impact on the administration's foreign policy towards Russia and Russia's containment strategy as could have been expected. The research conducted shows that the Biden administration knew about the seriousness of the Russian threat long before Russia's aggression against Ukraine; therefore, the increased attention to military measures of containment and harsh references to Russia as an actor in international relations was not a new trend in the U.S. foreign policy caused by the war started by Russia. Moreover, the research indicates that after 2022 Biden administration still did not want to escalate the situation and was ready to leave the window of opportunity for cooperation with Russia on certain strategic matters (like nuclear non-proliferation, for instance). In addition, after 2022 the Biden administration modified its official political discourse and instead of referring to certain actions of Russia that violated international law attributed such actions to Vladimir Putin placing the blame on a single person rather than on a certain country. In the long run, the Biden administration's hesitance to escalate the situation and its signals about windows of opportunity for potential cooperation in the future might create problems for the U.S.; after all, the challenges created by Russia and China are very intertwined. As a result, failure to send a strong message to Russia and execute it might backfire in the U.S. foreign policy towards China.

As for the Baltic States, the Biden administration has foreseen a traditional role for the Baltic States in Russia's containment strategy: in the U.S. foreign policy, assuring the security of the Baltic States is containing Russia at the same time. The Biden administration's Russia containment strategy provides more opportunities for the Baltic States to advance their foreign policy and security interests since Biden administration broadened its containment toolbox.

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