Negative Brief: Georgia Free Trade Agreement

By “Coach Vance” Trefethen

***Resolved: The United States Federal Government should significantly reform its import and/or export policy within the bounds of international trade***

The AFF plan offers a Free Trade Agreement with the east European country of Georgia.

Negative: Georgia FTA 3

INHERENCY 3

1. Status Quo trade promotion policies 3

US and Georgia already have a lot of duty-free trade under GSP and most-favored-nation trade in WTO 3

Multiple programs/policies in place promoting US/Georgia trade 3

2. Alternative balancing 3

Russia's neighbors are able to use various alternatives to balance themselves against Russia 3

3. Existing US political commitment 4

US already has a strong political relationship with Georgia 4

HARMS / SIGNIFICANCE 4

1. Over-hyping Russia 4

We shouldn't worry about trying to counter Russia everywhere, when our interests are not at stake 4

No global geo-political threat from Russia 4

2. Little or no geo-political impact 5

Former Soviet states [like Georgia] are of little concern to the U.S. because they don't impact US security 5

SOLVENCY 5

1. Zero economic benefit 5

FTA’s don’t provide any economic benefit because they don’t deal with the real drivers of economic growth 5

2. More study needed 6

Before starting an FTA, policy makers must study the impact and evaluate costs and benefits 6

3. No Georgia democracy 6

Multiple defects in Georgia's government show serious problems with efforts to achieve "democracy" 6

Can't uphold democracy in Georgia because they don't have it yet 6

Democracy being eroded in Georgia 7

Turn: Offer of outside benefits should be used as leverage to first motivate democratic reform inside Georgia before we agree to anything 7

DISADVANTAGES 7

1. Economic reversal 7

Single-country “Free Trade” agreements distract from global trade efforts and move us back to the Depression 7

Trade agreements reduce US workers' wages and transfer wealth from the poor to the rich 8

2. Free trade backfire 8

Turn: Free trade agreements undermine support for the goals it’s supposed to achieve 8

3. Politicizing trade & Provoking Russia 8

Link: FTA as a diplomatic tool to leverage power for political purposes is a misuse 8

Link: AFF explicitly tells you their plan to build up Georgia is designed to oppose Russia 9

Link: We made that mistake before - in Ukraine 9

Historical example: European Union free trade negotiations with eastern Europe antagonized Russia 9

Link: Over-committing to Georgia would be a serious mistake 9

Impact: Miscalculation with Russia can lead to World War 3 10

Impact: Provoking Russia means more people die. That's what's happening in Ukraine now 10

Backup link: Russia is willing to use force in Georgia. They already have (2008) because they consider it a key national interest 10

Negative: Georgia FTA

INHERENCY

1. Status Quo trade promotion policies

US and Georgia already have a lot of duty-free trade under GSP and most-favored-nation trade in WTO

US Dept of Commerce, International Trade Administration 2021. “Georgia - Country Commercial Guide” 3 Oct 2021 <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/georgia-trade-agreements> (accessed 2 June 2022)

As a member of the WTO, Georgia has Most Favored Nation trading relationships with all WTO member countries.  Georgia benefits from Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) reductions in tariffs on a wide range of products with Switzerland, Norway, Canada, and Japan.  The United States and Georgia work to increase bilateral trade and investment through a High-Level Dialogue on Trade and Investment and through the U.S.-Georgia Strategic Partnership Commission’s Economic, Energy, and Trade Working Group.  Both countries signed a Bilateral Investment Treaty in 1994, which stipulates Georgia is eligible to export many products duty-free to the United States under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) program.

Multiple programs/policies in place promoting US/Georgia trade

US State Dept., Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs 2021. "U.S. Relations With Georgia" 27 Aug 2021 <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-georgia/> (accessed 2 June 2022)

The United States and Georgia seek to identify opportunities for U.S. businesses to invest in Georgia, and for both countries to sell goods and services to each other. They have signed a bilateral investment treaty and a bilateral trade and investment framework agreement. Georgia can export many products duty-free to the United States under the Generalized System of Preferences program. Through a high-level trade and investment dialogue, the two countries have discussed a range of options to improve economic cooperation and bilateral trade. They have also discussed ways to improve Georgia’s business climate to attract more investment, underscoring the importance of continued improvements in rule of law, respect for labor rights and effective implementation of newly passed labor reforms, protecting intellectual property rights, and resolving business disputes in a transparent and timely manner. From 2006 to 2011, a Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact helped promote Georgian enterprise and economic growth through investments in physical infrastructure. From 2013 to 2019, the MCC helped support Georgia’s education reform through a second compact.

2. Alternative balancing

Russia's neighbors are able to use various alternatives to balance themselves against Russia

Eugene Rumer & Richard Sokolsky 2021 (Rumer - former national intelligence officer for Russia and Eurasia at the U.S. National Intelligence Council, is a senior fellow and the director of Carnegie Endowment for Peace Russia and Eurasia Program. Sokolsky - nonresident senior fellow in Carnegie Institute for Peace's Russia and Eurasia Program) Grand Illusions: The Impact of Misperceptions About Russia on U.S. Policy 30 June 2021 <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/06/30/grand-illusions-impact-of-misperceptions-about-russia-on-u.s.-policy-pub-84845> (accessed 2 June 2022) (the "Two regions" referenced in the first sentence are "Central Asia" and the "South Caucasus").

Finally, Russia’s neighbors in these two regions have become more effective in resisting its pressure by playing it off against China and by engaging in various forms of hedging, balancing, and forming coalitions. More broadly, the development of relations with other outside actors whose presence in Eurasia has grown in importance, has been a particularly effective form of counterpunching against Russia’s neo-imperialist designs in the region.

3. Existing US political commitment

US already has a strong political relationship with Georgia

US State Dept., Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs 2021. "U.S. Relations With Georgia" 27 Aug 2021 <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-georgia/> (accessed 2 June 2022)

The strength of U.S.-Georgia relations is codified in the 2009 U.S.-Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership. The U.S.-Georgia Strategic Partnership Commission is comprised of four bilateral working groups on priority areas identified in the Charter: democracy; defense and security; economic, trade, and energy issues; and people-to-people and cultural exchanges. In addition to holding a high-level plenary session of the Commission each year, senior-level U.S. and Georgian policymakers lead regular meetings of each working group to review commitments, update activities, and establish future objectives. Since the signing of the Charter, the United States and Georgia have strengthened their mutual cooperation based on U.S. support for Georgia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, and its commitment to further democratic and economic reforms.

HARMS / SIGNIFICANCE

1. Over-hyping Russia

We shouldn't worry about trying to counter Russia everywhere, when our interests are not at stake

Eugene Rumer & Richard Sokolsky 2021 (Rumer - former national intelligence officer for Russia and Eurasia at the U.S. National Intelligence Council, is a senior fellow and the director of Carnegie Endowment for Peace Russia and Eurasia Program. Sokolsky - nonresident senior fellow in Carnegie Institute for Peace's Russia and Eurasia Program) Grand Illusions: The Impact of Misperceptions About Russia on U.S. Policy 30 June 2021 <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/06/30/grand-illusions-impact-of-misperceptions-about-russia-on-u.s.-policy-pub-84845> (accessed 2 June 2022)

At the same time, the scope and scale of the threat that Russia’s global activism poses to U.S. interests will depend largely on how Washington defines those interests in regions where Russia has expanded its footprint over the past decade. Absent a sober assessment of Russia’s gains and tools for power projection, the United States will position itself to needlessly chase after the specter of Russian expansionism in distant corners of the world where major U.S. interests are not at stake.

No global geo-political threat from Russia

Eugene Rumer & Richard Sokolsky 2021 (Rumer - former national intelligence officer for Russia and Eurasia at the U.S. National Intelligence Council, is a senior fellow and the director of Carnegie Endowment for Peace Russia and Eurasia Program. Sokolsky - nonresident senior fellow in Carnegie Institute for Peace's Russia and Eurasia Program) Grand Illusions: The Impact of Misperceptions About Russia on U.S. Policy 30 June 2021 <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/06/30/grand-illusions-impact-of-misperceptions-about-russia-on-u.s.-policy-pub-84845> (accessed 2 June 2022)

Some experts perceive Russia’s assertiveness as part of a broader pattern of expansionism as opposed to discrete actions aimed at promoting specific objectives. This does not appear to be the case. For example, Putin’s decision to intervene in Syria to prevent the collapse of Bashar al-Assad’s regime reflected several considerations, including support for a traditional ally, maintaining the Russian military’s access to critical installations in the Mediterranean, defeating what he perceived as another U.S.-led effort at regime change, thwarting the ambitions of the Syrian opposition perceived by the Kremlin to be jihadist extremists, and demonstrating Russia’s capacity for force projection as a symbol of its great power status. It is a big leap to extrapolate from these objectives, as some analysts have done, a Russian campaign to replace the United States as the dominant power in the Middle East.

2. Little or no geo-political impact

Former Soviet states [like Georgia] are of little concern to the U.S. because they don't impact US security

Eugene Rumer & Richard Sokolsky 2021 (Rumer - former national intelligence officer for Russia and Eurasia at the U.S. National Intelligence Council, is a senior fellow and the director of Carnegie Endowment for Peace Russia and Eurasia Program. Sokolsky - nonresident senior fellow in Carnegie Institute for Peace's Russia and Eurasia Program) Grand Illusions: The Impact of Misperceptions About Russia on U.S. Policy 30 June 2021 <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/06/30/grand-illusions-impact-of-misperceptions-about-russia-on-u.s.-policy-pub-84845> (accessed 2 June 2022)

Europe is the most important theater where Russia’s actions pose the most significant threats to the United States and its allies. Its ambitions in many other parts of the world—the Asia-Pacific, Africa, the Western Hemisphere, the Arctic, and even the states of the former Soviet Union—pose less serious concerns because they have little impact on core U.S. interests of security or economic prosperity, and in many cases could lead to Russia’s overextension.

SOLVENCY

1. Zero economic benefit

FTA’s don’t provide any economic benefit because they don’t deal with the real drivers of economic growth

Clyde Prestowitz 2012 (founder and president of the Economic Strategy Institute, a former counselor to the secretary of commerce in the Reagan administration ) 30 July 2012 “The free trade agreement fraud” <https://foreignpolicy.com/2012/07/30/the-free-trade-agreement-fraud/?gclid=Cj0KCQjw-daUBhCIARIsALbkjSaheghGO67NMDzOEWBlI00k2VpIF_fF0gGCK2pshDOvZhVRD44h1igaApTrEALw_wcB> (accessed 2 June 2022)

In any case, the fundamental dishonesty arises not so much from the use of FTAs to demonstrate solidarity with allies, but from the fact that they will be sold to the Congress and the public as agreements that will increase U.S. economic growth and create jobs. Actually, they could only do this by accident. None of the deals cover the main determinants of trade, economic growth, and job creation. For example, they don’t deal with currency exchange rates, investment and tax incentives, value added taxes, international cartels, or "administrative guidance" (a euphemism for bureaucratic pressure and threats) from governments to companies. To be sure, analyses of what any proposed deal might do in terms of job creation and growth will be bandied about in support of the deal. But in view of the fact that the analyses include nothing they deals with the above factors, they can be nothing other than fiction.

2. More study needed

Before starting an FTA, policy makers must study the impact and evaluate costs and benefits

Dr. Michael G. Plummer, Dr. David Cheong and Dr. Shintaro Hamanaka 2010. (Plummer - PhD economics; is currently head of the Development Division of the Trade and Agriculture Directorate of the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development. Cheong - PhD international economics; chief technical advisor in the Trade & Employment Program at the International Labour Organization. Hamanaka - PhD; economist at Office of Regional Economic Integration of the Asian Development Bank) Methodology for Impact Assessment of Free Trade Agreements <https://aric.adb.org/pdf/FTA_Impact_Assessment.pdf> (accessed 2 June 2022)

It is not an exaggeration to say that policy making in connection with free trade agreements (FTAs) should start and end with impact assessment (see ADB 2008, 109–134). At the initial stages of creating an FTA, an assessment of the potential costs and benefits of the prospective FTA is a prerequisite for shaping the FTA’s objectives, informing consultations with public and private stakeholders, and formulating effective negotiating strategies. After the FTA is implemented, an assessment of the FTA’s actual versus projected impact is necessary for determining whether the FTA’s objectives have been met and what adjustments are needed. Not all countries possess the know-how and wherewithal for conducting proper assessments of FTAs. Because of a lack of resources, developing countries may either forgo these evaluations or rely on anecdotal observations and, thus, fail to fully benefit from FTAs.

3. No Georgia democracy

Multiple defects in Georgia's government show serious problems with efforts to achieve "democracy"

Prof. Ghia Nodia 2021. (Professor of Politics at Ilia State Univ., Tbilisi, Georgia)" THE UNCERTAIN STATE OF GEORGIA’S DEMOCRACY" - part of The Struggle for Good Governance in Eastern Europe Second Edition, published by Centre for European Policy Studies <https://www.ceps.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/The-Struggle-for-Good-Governance-in-Eastern-Europe-2nd-edition_.pdf> (accessed 2 June 2022)

 Since its independence, Georgia has never been considered a full democracy but its political system does have genuine democratic features. It has a competitive political environment, vibrant civil society, and a diverse and critical independent media. It has gone through several changes of power from government to opposition, although it was only in 2012 that this happened according to existing constitutional rules. It has been widely recognised as the most democratic nation in its immediate neighbourhood. Despite this, Georgia continues to fail to meet minimal standards of electoral democracy. The most conspicuous defect in its political system is a propensity to concentrate all levers of power within a ruling group dominated by a single powerful leader. Typically, the ruling party controls a constitutional majority in parliament, takes advantage of so-called administrative resources to gain an unfair advantage during elections, exercises effective influence over the court system, fully dominates local government bodies and exerts pressure on business and independent media. The playing field between the government and the opposition is extremely uneven.

Can't uphold democracy in Georgia because they don't have it yet

Centre for European Policy Studies 2021. The Struggle for Good Governance in Eastern Europe Second Edition <https://www.ceps.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/The-Struggle-for-Good-Governance-in-Eastern-Europe-2nd-edition_.pdf> (accessed 2 June 2022)

For Ghia Nodia, Georgia has seen several democratic breakthroughs, but failed so far to consolidate these into a mature democratic system. Since the Rose Revolution of 2003 Georgia has become a rather well-governed country according to several international sources and objective measures, including the serious reduction in corruption in public administration. However, since 2012 the political system has been dominated by one oligarchal personality, Bidzina Ivanishvili, who controls the ruling party Georgian Dream. In recent years even the basics of electoral democracy have been abused, with large-scale vote buying in the presidential election of 2018, and serious irregularities in the parliamentary elections of 2020.

Democracy being eroded in Georgia

Centre for European Policy Studies 2021. The Struggle for Good Governance in Eastern Europe Second Edition <https://www.ceps.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/The-Struggle-for-Good-Governance-in-Eastern-Europe-2nd-edition_.pdf> (accessed 2 June 2022)

Armenia experienced a stirring democratic breakthrough in 2018 against a soft-authoritarian regime, while the momentum of democratic reform may now be flagging. Georgia made a much earlier democratic breakthrough; a recent electoral reform moves in a positive direction, but other trends point to democratic erosion, as most recently in the parliamentary elections of autumn 2020 with electoral irregularities engineered by and favouring the ruling (oligarch-supported) party.

Turn: Offer of outside benefits should be used as leverage to first motivate democratic reform inside Georgia before we agree to anything

Prof. Ghia Nodia 2021. (Professor of Politics at Ilia State Univ., Tbilisi, Georgia)" THE UNCERTAIN STATE OF GEORGIA’S DEMOCRACY" - part of The Struggle for Good Governance in Eastern Europe Second Edition, published by Centre for European Policy Studies <https://www.ceps.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/The-Struggle-for-Good-Governance-in-Eastern-Europe-2nd-edition_.pdf> (accessed 2 June 2022)

It is well understood by political elites and the general public that Georgia’s recognition as a European nation largely (though not exclusively) depends on (the) progress in building democratic institutions. This gives the EU and other Western powers fairly strong leverage with regards to any Georgian government when it comes to pushing for democratic reforms.

DISADVANTAGES

1. Economic reversal

Single-country “Free Trade” agreements distract from global trade efforts and move us back to the Depression

Clyde Prestowitz 2012 (founder and president of the Economic Strategy Institute, a former counselor to the secretary of commerce in the Reagan administration ) 30 July 2012 “The free trade agreement fraud” <https://foreignpolicy.com/2012/07/30/the-free-trade-agreement-fraud/?gclid=Cj0KCQjw-daUBhCIARIsALbkjSaheghGO67NMDzOEWBlI00k2VpIF_fF0gGCK2pshDOvZhVRD44h1igaApTrEALw_wcB> (accessed 2 June 2022)

For one thing, the words "free trade" in these proposals are euphemisms. They are not about free trade. Rather the term is used to mask the fact that what is being proposed is a series of preferential trade agreements. It is this kind of fractured set of special deals that governed global trade before the Great Depression and that greatly contributed to its prolongation if not its outbreak. It was precisely to avoid a repletion of that experience that the Post World War II leaders negotiated the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and eventually the World Trade Organization (WTO) to govern trade globally on the non-preferential bases of National Treatment (a country treats foreign participants in its economy just as it treats its own indigenous participants) and Most Favored Nation (a country extends to all its trading partners the same benefits and concessions that it extends to its previously most favored trading partner). The new deals and those being proposed are, in fact, a repetition of the pre-war, pre Great Depression regime. As such they are undermining global free trade and the WTO rather than enhancing it.

Trade agreements reduce US workers' wages and transfer wealth from the poor to the rich

Robert E. Scott 2016 (Senior international economist for the Economic Policy Institute) 17 Mar 2016 NEW YORK TIMES " Are Trade Agreements Good for Americans?" (accessed 3 June 2022) https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2016/03/17/are-trade-agreements-good-for-americans

Recently, [Bivens estimated](https://www.epi.org/publication/standard-models-benchmark-costs-globalization/) that the growth of trade with low-wage countries reduced the median wage for full-time workers without a college degree by about $1,800 per year in 2011. Workers without a college degree make up more than two-thirds of the U.S. labor force, roughly 100 million people. Thus, the growth of globalization, as encouraged by more than 20 U.S. trade and investment deals, plus the proposed T.P.P., is responsible for transferring approximately $180 billion per year from low- and middle-income workers to those in the top third, and especially to those in the top 10, 1 and 0.1 percent of the population.

2. Free trade backfire

Turn: Free trade agreements undermine support for the goals it’s supposed to achieve

Clyde Prestowitz 2012 (founder and president of the Economic Strategy Institute, a former counselor to the secretary of commerce in the Reagan administration ) 30 July 2012 “The free trade agreement fraud” <https://foreignpolicy.com/2012/07/30/the-free-trade-agreement-fraud/?gclid=Cj0KCQjw-daUBhCIARIsALbkjSaheghGO67NMDzOEWBlI00k2VpIF_fF0gGCK2pshDOvZhVRD44h1igaApTrEALw_wcB> (accessed 2 June 2022)

To be sure, analyses of what any proposed deal might do in terms of job creation and growth will be bandied about in support of the deal. But in view of the fact that the analyses include nothing they deals with the above factors, they can be nothing other than fiction. Finally, when the deals don’t deliver as forecast, they actually undermine support both for free trade and for allies. Thus does fraud beget the very trouble it purports to be attempting to avoid.

3. Politicizing trade & Provoking Russia

Link: FTA as a diplomatic tool to leverage power for political purposes is a misuse

Dr. Michael G. Plummer, Dr. David Cheong and Dr. Shintaro Hamanaka 2010. (Plummer - PhD economics; is currently head of the Development Division of the Trade and Agriculture Directorate of the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development. Cheong - PhD international economics; chief technical advisor in the Trade & Employment Program at the International Labour Organization. Hamanaka - PhD; economist at Office of Regional Economic Integration of the Asian Development Bank) Methodology for Impact Assessment of Free Trade Agreements <https://aric.adb.org/pdf/FTA_Impact_Assessment.pdf> (accessed 2 June 2022)

Note, however, that there exists the possibility that an FTA may be used as a diplomatic tool to pursue one country’s strategic goals which are not necessarily shared by other FTA members. An often-cited traditional case of misuse of FTA is the Zollverein in the pre-war period when Prussia established an FTA with weaker German states (Viner 1950). By excluding Austria from the FTA, Prussia attempted to increase its influence in the region and minimize that of Austria. It should be noted that asymmetric economic and trade interdependence is always a source of influence and power because smaller states are usually more vulnerable than larger ones. Thus, making an FTA as inclusive as possible in terms of membership tends to be advisable.

Link: AFF explicitly tells you their plan to build up Georgia is designed to oppose Russia

Link: We made that mistake before - in Ukraine

Doug Bandow 2022 (JD from Stanford; senior fellow at the Cato Institute, specializing in foreign policy and civil liberties; former special assistant to Pres. Reagan) " The Washington Blob: Its Blind Arrogance May Lead to War with Russia" 23 May 2022 <https://www.cato.org/commentary/washington-blob-its-blind-arrogance-may-lead-war-russia> (accessed 2 June 2022)

Second, members of several administrations callously and recklessly set up Ukraine. Since 2008 Washington, NATO, and European governments assured Kyiv that they looked forward to its eventual membership in the transatlantic alliance. Yet no one in Europe, and few in Washington after the disastrous Bush administration mercifully passed into history, were prepared to go to war over Ukraine. By repeating this faux promise, they simultaneously fueled Russian anger – oft articulated by Putin and a gaggle of Russian officials – and Ukrainian overconfidence.

Historical example: European Union free trade negotiations with eastern Europe antagonized Russia

Kim B. Olsen 2018 (advisor to the Danish Foreign Ministry and a PhD Fellow at the University of Antwerp) "The Domestic Challenges of European Geoeconomic Diplomacy" - New Realities in Foreign Affairs: Diplomacy in the 21st Century, Nov 2018 <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/new-realities-in-foreign-affairs-diplomacy-in-the-21st-century> (accessed 3 June 2022)

A similar link between trade and geopolitical an­tagonisms was pivotal in the EU’s negotiations about Association Agreements and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (AA/DCFTA) with the Eastern Partnership (EP) countries. Even as EU officials per­sistently downplayed geopolitical objectives as a driver for bringing EP countries closer to the EU’s internal market, the Russian government’s overtly sceptical and aggressive reactions to the final nego­tiation stages between the EU and, particularly, Ukraine in late 2013 – and the events that led to the ‘Ukrainian crisis’ – suggest that this benign view of Brussels was not shared in Moscow.

Link: Over-committing to Georgia would be a serious mistake

Eugene Rumer & Richard Sokolsky 2021 (Rumer - former national intelligence officer for Russia and Eurasia at the U.S. National Intelligence Council, is a senior fellow and the director of Carnegie Endowment for Peace Russia and Eurasia Program. Sokolsky - nonresident senior fellow in Carnegie Institute for Peace's Russia and Eurasia Program) Grand Illusions: The Impact of Misperceptions About Russia on U.S. Policy 30 June 2021 <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/06/30/grand-illusions-impact-of-misperceptions-about-russia-on-u.s.-policy-pub-84845> (accessed 2 June 2022)

Misconstruing Russian motivations and capabilities is especially dangerous when the “correlation of forces” on the ground favors Russia rather than the United States. The U.S.-led effort to extend NATO membership invitations to Georgia and Ukraine in 2008 did not take into account either the strength of Russia’s opposition to this or its capabilities for preventing the two countries from joining the alliance. The result has been a situation in which the United States has overpromised and demonstrated its inability to deliver on the pledge for well over a decade.

Impact: Miscalculation with Russia can lead to World War 3

Doug Bandow 2022 (JD from Stanford; senior fellow at the Cato Institute, specializing in foreign policy and civil liberties; former special assistant to Pres. Reagan) " The Washington Blob: Its Blind Arrogance May Lead to War with Russia" 23 May 2022 <https://www.cato.org/commentary/washington-blob-its-blind-arrogance-may-lead-war-russia> (accessed 2 June 2022)

This is how World War III could start. Washington treating Russia like Serbia, Afghanistan, Libya, or Iraq, as Rogin and many others advocate. In those wars even stupid, disastrous policies had limited impact on America despite wrecking other nations, killing hundreds of thousands of foreigners, and displacing millions of people. Being a superpower often means you can destroy and kill with little consequence at home. Get Russia wrong, however, and Americans, too, could pay a very high price.

Impact: Provoking Russia means more people die. That's what's happening in Ukraine now

Doug Bandow 2022 (JD from Stanford; senior fellow at the Cato Institute, specializing in foreign policy and civil liberties; former special assistant to Pres. Reagan) " Russia’s Aggressive War Illustrates Importance of US Foreign Policy: Ukrainians Are Latest Victims" 4 Apr 2022 <https://www.cato.org/commentary/washington-blob-its-blind-arrogance-may-lead-war-russia> (accessed 2 June 2022) (accessed 2 June 2022)

However, the U.S. and its European allies set the stage for the war, engaging in behavior that clearly yet needlessly antagonized Russia. For contributing to the horror now engulfing Ukraine, Washington should be held responsible and its officials held accountable. Otherwise more people will keep dying because of Uncle Sam’s foolish hubris.

Backup link: Russia is willing to use force in Georgia. They already have (2008) because they consider it a key national interest

Eugene Rumer & Richard Sokolsky 2021 (Rumer - former national intelligence officer for Russia and Eurasia at the U.S. National Intelligence Council, is a senior fellow and the director of Carnegie Endowment for Peace Russia and Eurasia Program. Sokolsky - nonresident senior fellow in Carnegie Institute for Peace's Russia and Eurasia Program) Grand Illusions: The Impact of Misperceptions About Russia on U.S. Policy 30 June 2021 <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/06/30/grand-illusions-impact-of-misperceptions-about-russia-on-u.s.-policy-pub-84845> (accessed 2 June 2022)

An equally important factor was Russia’s willingness to use force to advance or protect its core interests—and to pay a higher price in resources and lives to achieve its goals than NATO was willing to sacrifice to halt Russian aggression. As seen by its security establishment, the 2008 war with Georgia was one of necessity, signaling to the West that Russia was committed to protecting its exclusive sphere of influence. It was a move against a much weaker adversary with little or no risk of U.S. or NATO intervention to protect a nontreaty ally. The payoff was disproportionate—NATO’s eastward expansion was effectively stopped and the Russian core interest of securing a buffer zone along its periphery was protected.