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## Problems in Power: How the U.S. and Russia Have Battled Throughout the Decades

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**Problems in Power:**

**How the U.S. and Russia Have Battled Throughout the Decades**

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**Abstract**

The battle between the U.S and Russia has taken many forms throughout the years. When taking a sample of conflicts that involve the U.S. and Russia in various capacities and different points in time, certain similarities are observed. Within the individual level of conflict analysis, leaders in the U.S., Russia, and other states involved often sway between dovish and hawkish tendencies. On a domestic level, the U.S. and Russia have opposing ideologies. The U.S. values democracy and capitalism, and often supports states that lean democratically. In contrast, Russia views democracy as a threat and supports states that value protectionism and controlled economies and policies. The Cuban Missile Crisis, the Nicaraguan Revolution, and the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war demonstrate these similarities and differences to varying extents.

*Keywords:* U.S. and Russia relations, Cuban Missile Crisis, Nicaraguan Revolution, Russia-Ukraine War, individual level, doves versus hawks, domestic level, ideologies

**Problems in Power: How the U.S. and Russia Have Battled Throughout the Decades**

It goes without saying that conflict is a devastating occurrence that affects more than just the parties involved. This paper will explore the tendencies of leaders and the ideologies of their states in three conflicts that involve the U.S. and the Soviet Union/Russia in various capacities: the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Nicaraguan Revolution, and the ongoing Russia-Ukraine War. Conflicts manifest themselves in a variety of ways: currently, there are conflicts ranging from civil wars to territorial disputes and instability to criminal violence, just to name a few (“Global Conflict Tracker,” n.d.). The Geneva Academy monitors over 110 conflicts that are presently unfolding (“Today’s Armed Conflicts,” n.d.). Most of these conflicts are based in the Middle East and North Africa, but others are spread out among Asia, Europe, Latin America, and Africa.

Throughout the years since 1800, 37 million people have died fighting in wars (Herre et al., 2023). However, wars do not just affect those who are directly fighting. The “Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2022” report from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2023) reports that by the end of 2022, there were 108.4 million people “forcibly displaced” (p. 2). A report from the General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union (2009) explained that at the time, there had been 4 million deaths caused by war, and 90% of these were civilian casualties. Civilians also suffer indirect consequences during wartime as well: an article from the Council on Foreign Relations details that wars can cause poverty, hunger, a lack of access to healthcare and education, and increased sexual violence (“The Civilian Consequences,” 2023). These statistics, although broad, pinpoint the reason the present research is important: war is not a far-off concept that affects a limited number of people. Conflict can affect everyone from the general of the army to the family who chooses not to participate politically. Conflict causes

devastating consequences beyond just the regions involved. Studying past and ongoing conflicts is imperative to working at all costs to avoid conflicts in the future.

However, this is not as simple as it seems. Conflicts are rife with complex and nuanced circumstances that make it incredibly difficult to manage and resolve them. The most recent conflict that has garnered long-term global attention is that between Palestine and Israel. Conflict between Palestine and Israel has its roots in a book from 1896 by Theodor Herzl that proposed Jews should have a safe place to live in the land historically tied to their race (Robinson, 2023). Robinson (2023) also explains that in 1947, a UN General Assembly Resolution asked for Palestine to be split into two states: one for Jews and one for Arabs. Jerusalem was to be deemed separate from these two states (Robinson, 2023). Conflicts often come with deep-seated history like that between Israel and Palestine, which complicates the resolution of the dispute.

Similarly, Ukraine and Russia erupted in physical combat in 2022 after years of conflictual situations, and in under two years, this conflict caused thousands of deaths and injuries and millions of internal displacements and refugees (Center for Preventive Action, 2024). Even if these conflicts were to be resolved, the states would not go back to normal. The negative consequences of war do not end with the cessation of physical combat; conflicts leave devastating effects long after the war is declared over. People continue to suffer and die from injuries sustained during the conflict; psychological effects endure; refugees lack basic needs; and distrust grows (“Effects of War,” n.d.). Conflicts leave impacts that are sometimes irreversible.

With this information established, the present research will consider two elements that may influence the potential for and success of conflict resolution by examining three conflicts between the U.S. and Russia: namely, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Nicaraguan Revolution, and

the current war between Russia and Ukraine. The elements considered are the role of the leaders and the ideologies at play. The research questions are as follows:

RQ1: What are the roles of the leaders in these conflicts?

RQ2: How do the parties' ideological underpinnings affect their approaches to the conflict?

RQ3: Are there similarities amongst the three conflicts that imply something about conflict resolution?

### **Literature Review**

An important lens for examining conflicts is that of the three levels of analysis: individual, domestic, and systemic. These levels help explain conflict and conflict resolution. Within the individual level, cognitive consistency is a key trait. People are cognitively consistent when they stick to the beliefs and behaviors they uphold. In other words, they are not hypocritical; their actions reflect what they say they believe. For these individual leaders, it is important that they act in a way that is satisfactory to the group they have authority over. Additionally, these individuals likely face great stress during conflicts, which can alter their decision-making. The domestic level recognizes that groups have differences, but there is something that unites domestic groups that makes them somewhat homogenous. Another important factor of this level is the idea that when a group conflicts with another group, an in-group and an out-group form. The in-group members become more closely unified because they have a common ideology of disagreeing with the out-group. Lastly, the systemic level explains that conflicts are not just between the parties directly involved; the conflict is affected by other parties, who can strengthen an involved party by giving support or call for peace if that is deemed to be better for the world. Additionally, conflicts can affect other states as a result of sanctions and changes in trade.

A relevant example regarding the war in Israel and Palestine will help demonstrate these levels. Benjamin Netanyahu is the prime minister of Israel, and he represents the individual level. His rhetoric regarding the ongoing conflict is important to the conflict and because his role represents the state of Israel, his rhetoric speaks on behalf of the state. The domestic level is demonstrated in Israel's parliament. Parliament and the politics present there may be indicative of part of the reason why the conflict is ongoing. The ideologies that Israel holds, likely including desires for autonomy and security, also play a role in the domestic level. Lastly, on the systemic level, the United Nations (UN) has voted to call for a ceasefire. The UN has a global influence because its members are from different countries. The U.S. has sent aid to Israel, which also indicates the systemic level of the conflict.

In this paper, I focus most centrally on the individual level of analysis. Crawford (2000) expands on this idea of the individual level with an emphasis on the role of emotion. Much of the broader literature regarding conflict between states presents actors as "rational," motivated by self-preservation and state security (e.g. Keohane and Nye, Jr., 1987). However, in her article, Crawford (2000) moves away from a sole focus on rationality to instead looking at both reason and emotion. Within this movement, Crawford (2000) recognizes the difficulty of measuring emotion for research, but she emphasizes that this should not prevent researchers from studying emotions. She defines emotion as "the *inner states* that individuals *describe to others as feelings*, and those feelings may be *associated with biological, cognitive, and behavioral states and change*" (Crawford, 2000, p. 125). Crawford (2000) also touches on credible commitment, an important aspect of conflict resolution, when describing that emotions explain why people involved in a conflict do not trust the other party to do what they said they would do.

Crawford (2000) discusses “the incidence and variation of emotion,” detailing that emotions are ubiquitous, but the way emotions are displayed differs (p. 130). Crawford (2000) also breaks down the relationships of emotion within how people perceive emotions, emotion with cognition, and emotion with behavior. Under the proposition of emotion and the perceptions of emotion, Crawford (2000) discusses interpretation, emotional relationships, and threat perception. Here, Crawford (2000) argues “that the perception of others and the attribution of their motives” relies on the emotions the parties experience as well as the “emotional relationships” that exist between them (p. 119). Emotions are easily perceived in an unintended way, which can harm the process of conflict resolution.

When examining the roles of “emotion and cognition,” Crawford (2000) develops points about the collection and processing of information, the evaluation of the past and future, the evaluation of risk, and the effect of arguments (p. 137). Emotions can affect decision making and persuasion in ways that make it difficult to resolve the issue. In her last propositions regarding “emotion and process or behavior,” Crawford (2000) details the theory of deterrence, persuasion in political conflict, establishing peace after a conflict, and the influence of normative rules (p. 145). The connections emotions have with these factors can make resolution muddier than it already is. The findings from this article demonstrate that both reason and emotion play a role at the individual level of conflict resolution.

Recent events also emphasize the significance of this level. For example, Netanyahu’s influence as the leader of Israel has played an important role in the ongoing conflict in Israel and Palestine. The highly stressful situation of built-up tensions finally exploding into an armed conflict would surely cause Netanyahu distress in his decision-making. This explanation of the individual level taken from Crawford (2000) is important to the present study as it will shape the

analysis of the individuals involved with the three conflicts to be examined. Another article by Haas (2005) challenges the traditional perspectives of international relations regarding conflict, which helps outline the domestic level.

Haas (2005) argues that individuals' decisions can be linked to a broader ideology representing the domestic level that influences how they act. Much of the related scholarship has a realist perspective, arguing that power is more important than ideology. Haas (2005) explains that the scholarship that posits ideology's significance lacks necessary development. He proposes that people view others as more dangerously as their ideological differences increase. Additionally, states with similar ideologies are more likely to form alliances. This is human nature: it is natural for people to band together with others who are similar to themselves because they are familiar and therefore likely more secure. People who are different are unknown and therefore perceived as less safe.

Similar to Crawford (2000), Haas (2005) focuses on individuals, but he examines how ideologies impact a person's decision-making. He posits three ways ideologies can influence a person's actions in conflict and resolution: demonstration effects, conflict probability, and communications. Demonstration effects explain that the way events occur in a certain state can affect how the rest of the world perceives these events. Conflict probability is the idea that states desire to be more successful than other states. Lastly, differences in ideologies may make it difficult to successfully communicate (Haas, 2005). All three of these factors influence how a party approaches a conflict, and these parties will be affected by the factors in different ways. This contributes to the complexity of conflicts and their resolutions. In sum, the domestic level emphasizes that although there are differences within a state, there is also a level of homogeneity

that gives room for a group mentality to develop, particularly in situations in which the rally-round-the-flag effect occurs.

The social learning theory helps connect Crawford's (2000) and Haas's (2005) ideas further. This theory posits "that emotions, and behaviors associated with emotions (e.g., aggression), are not "natural" but learned and reinforced through social interactions" (Bandura, 1973, as cited in Crawford, 2000, p. 128). Crawford's (2000) article explains that cognitive psychology looks at how emotions affect cognition. Haas's work (2005) points about the effect of ideologies on decision-making emphasizes the idea that a person's surroundings can affect how he or she acts in a given situation, and the emotions this individual feels also affect the decision-making process. A person is affected by his or her surroundings, which may teach him or her how to cognitively respond to certain emotions. Both Crawford's (2000) and Haas's (2005) works demonstrate the complexity of conflict; there are always multiple influential factors at play that shape the conflict and its resolution. In sum, domestic and individual levels are not separated by an impenetrable division; instead, these two levels are interconnected.

Another theory that helps conceptualize the complexity of conflict and its resolution is that of credible commitment (Walter, 2002). Walter (2002) explains that conflict resolution is often impeded by an inability to trust the other members in the conflict to carry out their sides of the deal. She argues that a credible commitment can be made if a third party ensures the actions that the members committed to are carried out, and if the parties involved in the conflict "extend power-sharing guarantees" (Walter, 2002, pp. 5-6). In this theory of credible commitments, the intersection of the individual level and the domestic level is evident. The individual actors are those who have the authority to represent their states by acting on behalf of them. Surely, in most cases, the individual actors will have advisors, political parties, and/or other influences on their

decision-making process. The differences of opinion among those with power over the individual level can also make credible commitments, and therefore conflict resolution, more complicated.

To summarize, the influence of the individual level on conflicts is undeniably important. Credible commitments are difficult to make in conflicts because they require a certain level of trust that the actors will do what they say they will do. The individual level is important to the first research question regarding the roles of the leaders who represent their states in the conflict. The domestic level is used as a framework to answer research questions two. As mentioned earlier, those who act on behalf of the state likely have domestic-level influences that impact how the actor makes decisions. For this reason, the individual level can be examined within the context of the domestic level. Ultimately, the decision rests in the hands of the individual, influenced by others with whom he or she is connected, who declares the state's actions. Because of the importance of the individuals' influence, the first part of this paper details the leaders' roles and how their individual factors affect conflict and its resolution before exploring the domestic level and concluding with similarities amongst the conflicts and what these similarities indicate in regards to conflict resolution. Before this individual-level analysis, though, it is important to overview the conflicts that will be discussed.

### **Case Selection and Justification**

Following the conclusion of World War II, the weakness of impacted states created a space for major powers to step into what realists call a "bipolar world." In this world, two perspectives dominated and competed with each other. First, capitalist democracy was represented by the U.S.; second, socialist autocracy was spearheaded by the USSR. The tensions that came with this bipolar world continued through the Cold War. Even when the USSR collapsed, Russia underwent democratic backsliding and still lives under an autocracy with President Vladimir

Putin. Today, the U.S. and Russia continue to be at odds with each other over these ideological differences that cause the individual actors within the states to advocate for different agendas.

### **Cuban Missile Crisis**

A 2002 article for *Prologue Magazine* saved in the National Archives details the Cuban Missile Crisis. This crisis was “the hottest moment in the Cold War” (“Forty Years Ago,” 2002, para. 4). This conflict is particularly important because the Soviet Union and the U.S. were major powers at the time, and the discovery of nuclear weapons in Cuba marked “the first direct nuclear confrontation in history” (“Forty Years Ago,” 2002, para. 6). In 1962, the Soviet Union transferred workers and supplies to Cuba, which sparked the interest of the U.S. U.S. intelligence started tracking ships going to Cuba from the Soviet Union and flying over Cuba to gather intelligence, and in August of 1962, the U.S. saw evidence of the Soviet Union’s work in Cuba. President John F. Kennedy subsequently sent two warnings to Premier Nikita Khrushchev about the situation; however, the warnings were unheeded (“Forty Years Ago,” 2002).

In October, U.S. intelligence captured photos that showed the Soviet Union had been placing offensive nuclear weapons in Cuba (“Forty Years Ago,” 2002). These weapons had the capabilities to attack the U.S., and Kennedy wanted to remove the missiles and appointed advisors to come up with solutions to this issue. The group of advisors brainstormed a few ideas, including appealing to the UN, attacking Cuba, and other possible solutions. Kennedy spent time with Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, who claimed that the weapons in Cuba were not offensive weapons. The group of advisors pushed for a naval blockade, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff wanted an air strike. Kennedy announced the blockade, presenting it as “‘limited action’” (“Forty Years Ago,” 2002, para. 14). Kennedy favored this because the U.S. could always increase its actions if the blockade was ineffective. U.S. forces were ready to conduct air strikes

on Cuba with aims on sites where the missiles were, ports, and other important spots. Troops were prepared in Florida for invasion, and navy ships were dispatched in the Caribbean. Aircrafts carried nuclear weapons as well (“Forty Years Ago,” 2002).

On October 26, Kennedy got a letter from Khrushchev that explained that if the U.S. promised not to attack Cuba and stop the blockade, the Soviet Union would reevaluate its work on the missiles in Cuba. In another letter, Khrushchev suggested a quid-pro-quo deal with Kennedy: if the U.S. removed its missiles in Turkey, the Soviet Union would remove missiles in Cuba. Finally, on October 28, the Soviet Union committed to taking the missiles out of Cuba, and on November 20, Kennedy made an announcement about the U.S. ending the blockade (“Forty Years Ago,” 2002). This action was publicly known, but privately, the U.S. removed its missiles in Turkey (History.com Editors, 2023). Soon after, the two leaders agreed to the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and established a direct line of contact between Washington D.C. and Moscow (“Forty Years Ago,” 2002). This conflict is important to examine because of its global influence, particularly because of the threat of nuclear warfare. The leaders involved in this conflict were aware of the intense implications of the options available to them, and this conflict and its resolution had to be approached very carefully for this reason.

### **The Nicaraguan Revolution**

The Nicaraguan Revolution would be best classified as a proxy war in relation to battles between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. An article by Knapp (n.d.) details the events of this conflict. While the revolution itself took place in the 1970s, the U.S. and Nicaragua had relational history starting in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when the U.S. started its “Dollar Diplomacy” program (Knapp, n.d., para. 1). Through this program in Nicaragua, the U.S. was able to choose the state’s president, and in 1912, the U.S. sent troops into Nicaragua and occupied the state until

1933 when the two states struck an agreement. The man the U.S. set in charge of the National Guard in Nicaragua, Anastasio Somoza, fraudulently won the Nicaraguan presidency a few years later. His family remained in power for decades while the U.S. maintained its support of this regime (Knapp, n.d.).

The success of the Cuban Revolution in the 1950s inspired people from the middle class in Nicaragua as well as farmers and students to rebel in a group called the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) (Knapp, n.d.). Although dissidents continued to be repressed by the Somoza government, the FSLN was gaining too much traction to be completely stopped. President Jimmy Carter initially supported Somoza, but as the conflict continued and human rights were called into question, the U.S. pulled its support from Somoza. The U.S. did not think that FSLN would win, but with help from Cuba and the Soviet Union, the Sandinistas took over Nicaragua in 1979, and Somoza left both his office and Nicaragua. The Sandinista government's new policies for land distribution did not fare well with everyone, and another dissent group, the Contras, was formed to fight against FSLN. President Ronald Reagan wanted to send support to the Contras, but Congress passed a law forbidding giving aid to the group, and this led into the Iran-Contra Affair. The Sandinista party stayed in power because the Contras were not able to make as much headway as the Sandinistas had (Knapp, n.d.). Although this conflict did not see the fullest extent of involvement from the U.S. and the Soviet Union as others, it does demonstrate the importance of ideologies and how these ideologies influence how individuals act in conflicts. For these reasons, this conflict contributes to the understanding of the importance of the influence of the individual and domestic levels of conflict.

### **Russia-Ukraine War**

The history of the relationship between Russia and Ukraine is complicated and deeply rooted in history. Masters (2023) explains that Ukraine was a powerful member of the Soviet Union, second to Russia. Ukraine declared independence in 1991 and since then has tried to associate more with the West. However, eastern Ukrainians tend to be more supportive of a relationship with Russia, while western Ukrainians favor being closer to western Europe. In 2014, because Ukraine was connecting more with the European Union, Russia annexed Crimea and began to support separatists in the southeastern region of Ukraine called the Donbas. The resulting fighting represented the rise of Russia as a challenger to the U.S.'s hold on being a unipolar power. In 2022, Putin invaded Ukraine, whose president is Volodymyr Zelenskyy (Masters, 2023).

Russia has multiple interests in its war with Ukraine, including millions of Russians who live in Ukraine, resisting the West, trade, and energy sources (Masters, 2023). Some believe the recent invasion indicates Russia's dissatisfaction with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) influence on the states that used to be part of the Soviet Union. Putin and other leaders claim that both the U.S. and NATO are breaking commitments they established not to infringe on the former Soviet Union member-states. As Ukraine grew closer to gaining NATO membership status, Russia insisted that NATO refuse the alliance and asked the U.S. to take its nuclear weapons out of Europe. Ukraine's adoption of Western ideologies poses a threat to Putin's desire to become a greater influence in Eastern Europe. Putin also argues that Ukrainians and Russians are "one people" (Masters, 2023, para. 27).

Russia's initial invasion in 2022 aimed to capture major cities after a buildup of troops along the border, but Ukraine fought back in a way Russia was not anticipating (Masters, 2023). However, Russia has illegally obtained some areas of Ukraine. Former U.S. National Security

Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski knew the importance of Ukraine to Russia's power, and the U.S., the U.K., and Russia acknowledged that Ukraine was sovereign in the 1990s, so long as it removed its nuclear weapons. The U.S., among other states, has supplied Ukraine during this war and has placed sanctions on Russia (Masters, 2023). This war is still unfolding, but already the influence of the individual and domestic levels is evident.

These conflicts are pertinent to the present research because they represent different periods of time in which the U.S. and Russia were in conflict. Each conflict involves various actors and decision-making processes and occurs in different contexts. The Cuban Missile Crisis took place during the Cold War, in which proxy wars were common. This crisis represents a moment in the Cold War when the conflict was near a boots-on-the-ground war that could have turned nuclear. The Nicaraguan Revolution is another example of a proxy war, at least at the beginning of the conflict. It demonstrates a different level of involvement from the U.S. and the Soviet Union in comparison to the other two selected conflicts. Lastly, the war between Russia and Ukraine has seen the U.S.'s support of Ukraine with the intent to resist Russia. These three battles cover a spread of what different conflicts can look like, which helps make the present analysis more reliable and valid.

### **Individual Level Analysis**

As established previously, the individual level plays an important role in the way conflicts play out. A way to examine the role of leaders is with the terminology "doves" and "hawks." Doves are political leaders who advocate more for peace, while hawks are leaders who tend to support military action (Porter, 2022). The way a leader approaches a conflict as either a dove or a hawk influences what that conflict looks like. This analysis section will answer the first research question:

RQ1: What are the roles of the leaders in these conflicts?

### **Cuban Missile Crisis**

The most central leaders in the Cuban Missile Crisis are Kennedy and Khrushchev, but Cuban Prime Minister Fidel Castro was also heavily involved in this conflict. Initially, upon the discovery of the missiles in Cuba, Kennedy was leaning toward hawkish action. Kennedy and his advisors focused on military action as their response, but as they explored the consequences of military action, Kennedy began to prefer a nonmilitary response. As mentioned earlier, what he decided on was a blockade. This certainly escalated the conflict, but not to the point of a full-blown war, which painted him as a dove during this conflict (Porter, 2022). The quiet deal with Khrushchev for the U.S. to remove missiles from Turkey also demonstrates Kennedy's dovish tendencies in this crisis. In a letter from Kennedy's Secretary of State Dean Rusk, it was revealed that the president would have publicly agreed to remove the missiles if that was necessary (Harwood, 1987). Thus, the individual level of the U.S. is rightfully considered a dove overall, though initially Kennedy's stance was more hawkish.

Khrushchev, like Kennedy, seemed to have fluctuations in his stance as a dove or a hawk. Initially, Khrushchev appeared to want "to introduce a thaw in the Cold War" ("Nikita Khrushchev," 2015, para. 6). However, Khrushchev acted in certain ways that made it difficult for his behavior to be anticipated. For example, he left a meeting in Geneva, which was a significant move, especially because the Soviet Union was the second largest power there; on the other hand, Khrushchev also went around the state to meet citizens ("Nikita Khrushchev," 2015). These contradicting actions make it difficult to classify him as an absolute dove or hawk. Many people declared him to be a hawk for choosing to build up weaponry in Cuba, while others see this action as a response to the U.S. placing missiles in Turkey, which the West thought was

acceptable since Turkey is a member of NATO. However, Khrushchev perceived this action as threatening because the Soviet Union bordered Turkey (“Nikita Khrushchev,” 2015). It is important to recall that Khrushchev sent a letter to Kennedy outlining conditions he would be willing to adhere to if Kennedy agreed with his requests. When Kennedy responded quietly to the separate request for removal of the missiles in Turkey, Khrushchev accepted these terms. Khrushchev’s acceptance of this resolution again paints him in a dovish lens, especially when one considers that he might have lost some face when he allowed Kennedy to save face by quietly removing the missiles from Turkey.

Castro’s role in the conflict was not as high-level as Kennedy’s and Khrushchev’s. Castro told Khrushchev to launch the missiles, even if it led to Cuba’s destruction, but by then, Khrushchev had already negotiated with Kennedy (“Castro,” n.d.). In later years, Castro fluctuated between dovish and hawkish behavior (“Castro,” n.d.), but his willingness to put Cuba on the line demonstrates hawkish behavior, at least in this situation.

These three leaders are unexpectedly similar: they all have experiences with being both doves and hawks. However, in this conflict, Castro remained hawkish. Khrushchev and Kennedy, though, swung between the two styles, particularly when it came to negotiation. Both sides were willing to concede and therefore avoided escalation. Khrushchev approached Kennedy quietly through mail, and Kennedy chose to make certain actions public while quietly conceding on the matter of missiles in Turkey. It appears as though each party- Kennedy in particular- wanted to maintain a sense of power throughout the negotiation process by protecting himself from seeming weak and giving in to the other side. At least at the start of the conflict, Khrushchev said he would not give in to Kennedy’s requests; however, when he agreed to remove missiles in Cuba, he weakened his political stature, even though he was able to get the U.S. to agree not to

attack Cuba (“Nikita Khrushchev,” 2015). It would be fair to suggest that each party recognized the gravity of the situation and approached negotiation carefully.

### **The Nicaraguan Revolution**

Somoza, the Nicaraguan president, is considered a hawk for “his strong-arm tactics” and the martial law he imposed (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2023a, para. 3). Under his rule, the National Guard committed human rights violations against the people (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2023a). The leaders of the FSLN may also be considered hawkish by virtue of the fact that they were leading a revolution in an attempt to oust the Somoza regime. Carlos Fonseca Amador, Silvio Mayorga, and Tomás Borge Martínez founded the FSLN, which led attacks in the 1970s on Nicaragua’s National Guard that evoked a response from Somoza (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2023b). When the Nicaragua Revolution began, Daniel and Humberto Ortega Saavedra were controlling the FSLN, and after they defeated Somoza with the help of Cuba and Leonid Brezhnev of the Soviet Union, they crafted an army to counter opposition (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2023b). However, because of the group’s commitment to pluralism and pressure from citizens, they had to allow forms of opposition and freedom in elections (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2023b). While many of the FSLN’s actions would be deemed hawkish, there is still a fluctuation in how the group chose to lead after their hawkish ways of winning the revolution. Because they yielded to the influence of their citizens, the FSLN was dovish to a certain extent.

In this conflict, the U.S.’s role was less involved than in others. Initially, the U.S. supported the Somozas, but when Carter pulled his support from the Somoza regime, the U.S. chose not to be involved. Later on in the conflict, as the Contras resisted the FSLN, the Iran-

Contra affair occurred. During this event, the U.S. would be considered a hawk for secretly providing aid to the Contras.

### **Russia-Ukraine War**

While this conflict is ongoing, there has been enough evidence to argue for the leaders' classifications as hawks or doves. For his continued war against Ukraine, Putin may be classified as a hawk. He is turning "Russia into an increasingly militaristic society" (Rosenberg, 2024, para. 7). Putin has great influence over Russia's actions. He "sits at the center of a vast web of patronage links that define the ruling elite" (Graham, 2023, para. 3). This is part of what grants him the authority to wield power over the state: if he is taken out of power, the lives of other authority figures set up by Putin will be at stake (Graham, 2023). Because of this reliance his appointees have on Putin's authority, Putin does not have to answer to anyone; he has the power he needs in order to do what he wants without major pushback.

Putin has multiple interests in invading Ukraine, including his belief that Ukraine is part of Russia (Baker, 2024). Additionally, Putin may have his mind on the way history will remember him: Thomas Graham, Stephen Hall, and Professor Brian Taylor, who all have depths of knowledge of Russia, agree that "Putin's desire to be revered in history books likely motivated him to attack" (as cited in Baker, 2024, para. 46). Graham also argues that Putin did not face pressure from others to attack Ukraine, "which suggests at least some of his reasoning was personal" (as cited in Baker, 2024, para. 45).

However, Faulconbridge and Korsunskaya (2024) explain that Putin has also stated that he is ready to work toward a ceasefire, but the U.S. is not interested unless Ukraine is involved in the conversation. Putin would not be willing to give back the territory Russia has already taken, but he would agree to stop the war where the lines are at (Faulconbridge and Korsunskaya,

2024). Although Putin is ready to negotiate a ceasefire, he is poised to continue fighting until others are willing to negotiate (Faulconbridge and Korsunskaya, 2024).

Zelenskyy can also be seen as a hawk, but because he had to respond to the attack, it is hard to classify him as a hawk overall. Perhaps he would have opted for a peaceful negotiation to prevent the war if that had been presented to him first. In 2022, Zelenskyy said that “he would only negotiate with Russia’s ‘new president’” (Sussex, M., 2022, para. 18). He also explained that his goal is to push Russia out of Ukraine completely (Olander, 2022). Russia and Ukraine have stated they want the war to end, but they are unwilling to let the war end on the other state’s conditions (Ellyatt, 2024). Ukraine has a peace plan prepared, but it does not involve giving any territory to Putin; if Zelenskyy were willing to appease Putin by giving Russia territory, he would risk losing reelection (Ellyatt, 2024).

The West has thought of both dovish and hawkish actions in considering their response to this attack. As hawks, the West has aided Ukraine with weaponry and other assistance; as doves, the West has hesitated to increase their involvement in the conflict (Neuenkirch et al., 2023). Patman (2023) outlines different dovish and hawkish approaches to this conflict: doves would encourage a ceasefire in which Ukraine cedes some territory to Russia, and hawks may believe that Russia does not deserve negotiation for its violation of the UN Charter. Some see that a way for this conflict to end is for Russia to admit this violation and remove its troops, while others think that Ukraine should be given enough ammunition to force Russia to negotiate (Patman, 2023). The U.S. has supported Ukraine in various ways, but as the conflict has continued, some Americans are pressuring government leaders not to send any more aid.

<b>Case</b>	<b>Main individuals involved</b>	<b>Hawkish/dovish?</b>	<b>Evidence</b>
<b>Cuban Missile Crisis</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Kennedy</li> <li>2. Khrushchev</li> <li>3. Castro</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fluctuation but tending to dovish</li> <li>2. Fluctuation; good mix of both, but ends dovish</li> <li>3. Hawkish</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Preferences for blockades/non-military steps</li> <li>2. Built up weapons in Cuba but agreed to resolve the conflict peacefully</li> <li>3. Encouraged Khrushchev to build up weapons in Cuba</li> </ol>
<b>Nicaragua Revolution</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Somoza</li> <li>2. FSLN leaders</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Hawkish</li> <li>2. Fluctuation; mainly hawkish but some dovish tendencies</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Oppressive tactics</li> <li>2. Led a revolution and created an army to counter opposition once in power, but allowed certain freedoms in elections</li> </ol>
<b>Russia-Ukraine</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Putin</li> <li>2. Zelenskyy</li> <li>3. West/US</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Hawkish</li> <li>2. Hawkish</li> <li>3. Hawkish</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Autocratic control over Russia and war</li> <li>2. Had to respond to Russia's military attacks</li> <li>3. Provided aid to Ukraine</li> </ol>

Table 1. Summary of individual level factors across three case studies

### **Domestic Level**

Each leader is influenced at the domestic level by ideologies, political parties, and other factors that play a role in how the leaders approach conflict. This section will outline the domestic level of each conflict and answer the second research question:

RQ2: How do the parties' ideological underpinnings affect their approaches to the conflict?

#### **Cuban Missile Crisis**

The domestic level of this crisis is rooted both in ideological differences between the U.S. and the Soviet Union as well as a desire to demonstrate power. During World War II, the U.S. and the Soviet Union were allies and won against the Axis Powers, even though they differed ideologically. The U.S. upholds values of democracy and capitalism, while the Soviet Union demonstrated communistic ideals. The U.S. and the Soviet Union created a bipolar world, and each wanted to flex its military muscles to take the upper hand. The Cuban Missile Crisis, with its threat of nuclear warfare, instilled fear in many people that the world may end. The clear division between the U.S.'s and the Soviet Union's ideologies with the real potential of nuclear warfare caused a deep, globally experienced tension. This threatening situation demonstrates the importance of the ideological level of conflicts. The U.S.'s missile buildup in Turkey posed a threat to the Soviet Union. In a spirit of retaliation, Khrushchev began creating a weaponry base in Cuba. The ideologies that each state wanted to uphold as well as the gravity of the situation because of nuclear weapons likely influenced the way Kennedy and Khrushchev approached the conflict and its resolution. Both Kennedy and Khrushchev wanted to be seen as powerful, capable, and in control. They both wanted their ideologies to be upheld globally and seen as more valuable, especially in the midst of the Cold War. The policy that outlined the silent

removal of missiles allowed Kennedy to save face and Khrushchev to garner a win for his state with the removal of missiles in Cuba and Turkey.

### **The Nicaraguan Revolution**

This conflict is a proxy war with little direct involvement from the U.S. However, this conflict again indicates ideological differences between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. The U.S. originally supported the Somoza regime, which it helped to establish earlier in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, Carter decided to pull his support from the Somozas because of questionable human rights practices. The Soviet Union had various leaders throughout this revolution, but during the overthrowing of the Somozas when Brezhnev was in charge, Nicaragua's ideological switch to be more socialistic drew the Soviet Union's support. The FSLN valued Marxist-Leninist ideas and opposed the capitalist economy established by the Somozas; this opposition to capitalism and draw toward socialism influenced the nationalization of parts of Nicaragua's economy ("The Sandinistas," n.d.). Additionally, the FSLN tended to use more extreme tactics when crises occurred, such as revoking businesses the government perceived to be a threat ("The Sandinistas," n.d.). The Soviet Union, as it held similar ideologies, supplied the FSLN militarily and financially ("The Sandinistas," n.d.). Reagan wanted to support the Contras, which aligned more closely to the U.S.'s values of capitalism, but Congress outlawed sending them aid.

The way this conflict played out did not lend itself toward a readily accessible resolution, particularly because the FSLN was trying to completely overthrow the Somoza regime. The ideologies were very much at play, especially when examining that the Soviet Union sided with the socialist FSLN and the U.S. temporarily backed the capitalist Somoza regime. The involvement of the U.S. and the Soviet Union in this war is demonstrative of the extent to which

these states wanted to uphold their ideologies: they would go so far as to involve themselves in a war that did not directly affect them in order to fight for the influence of their beliefs.

### **Russia-Ukraine War**

Similarly to the Nicaraguan Revolution, the Russia-Ukraine War also involves a heavy influence of ideological differences. Putin is interested in expanding his territory, which violates Ukraine's sovereignty. Russia is upset with Ukraine because Ukraine is moving toward democracy. Ukraine wants to uphold its democratic values, but Russia has forced Ukraine to fight for the security and preservation of its sovereignty. Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Celeste Wallander states that Ukraine has been trying to adapt to "the European life they have chosen," and the U.S. wants Ukraine to be "sovereign, independent, and secure" (as cited in Garamone, 2024, para. 6). The U.S., via its aid, supports Ukraine's pursuit of its own goals to be independent; however, liberalism explains that President Joe Biden and Congress must obey the citizens' desires to maintain their position. So, as Republicans become more opposed to than supportive of aid for the war and Democrats continue to support aid (Kafura and Smeltz, 2024), U.S. leaders need to respond to their constituents' desires in the policies they pass, or they risk losing their office. This contrasts with Putin's regime; because of his authority, he can establish policy with greater freedom, even if his citizens are not pleased with it. In sum, in this conflict, a battle is stemming from a state moving toward democratic values and a state that resists these values.

As mentioned earlier, both Russia and Ukraine are willing to work toward resolution, but only on their own terms. This is not conducive toward negotiation and likely fuels the animosity between the states. Zelenskyy, as described earlier, stated that he will only negotiate with the new

president of Russia, which indicates that he is not ready or willing to approach Putin for resolution.

These three conflicts are vastly different, but there are important similarities to be explored. These similarities come from both the individual level with the leaders' decisions and influence, as well as the domestic level and the ideologies at play during these conflicts.

### **Similarities**

This section seeks to outline similarities amongst the individual levels and domestic levels of the three case studies and what these similarities imply, answering the final research question:

RQ3: Are there similarities amongst the three conflicts that imply something about conflict resolution?

Though each conflict brings its own nuance and complexities, there can be similarities drawn from them. In these three cases, individual leaders in times of conflict often demonstrated both hawkish and dovish tendencies, though the ways they approached both of these tendencies varied. Kennedy and Khrushchev both fluctuated between dovish and hawkish behaviors: Kennedy started hawkish and ended up being more of a dove, while Khrushchev seemed to be a dove at first, but acted in ways that made it hard to classify him as a dove or hawk. His willingness to negotiate with Kennedy displayed dovish behavior. Similarly, the FSLN leaders were hawks for starting a revolution, but once they took power, they had to uphold certain dovish tendencies, like free elections. In the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Putin, Zelenskyy, and Biden have tended toward hawkish actions, but both Putin and Zelenskyy have expressed an openness to peace (albeit on their own terms), and there is pushback about the U.S. sending more aid to

Ukraine. Other leaders, like Castro in the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Somozas in the Nicaraguan Revolution, display only hawkish tendencies.

This pattern of fluctuation between dovish and hawkish actions demonstrates the nuanced and complicated nature of conflict. There is no individual actor who acts the same as another in a given situation. This explains that conflict resolution is rarely, if ever, straightforward, and it will never look the same from conflict to conflict. Fluctuations in behavioral tendencies also indicate that leaders' actions are not always predictable. Thorough analyses can propose accurate predictions of behaviors in a conflict, but these predictions cannot be guaranteed to hold true. As Crawford (2000) explains, emotions influence how a person behaves. Because emotions can be fickle and unpredictable, an individual's decisions can change on a whim, even when the person has been advised toward a certain direction. What may seem like an obvious decision becomes complicated for the individual with the influences of emotions, ideologies, advisors' recommendations, and the need for job security. Clearly, many factors are at play and these factors vary from conflict to conflict and impact individual leaders differently. While certain similarities can be drawn from the three conflicts analyzed in this research, even these similarities were generalized and manifested in different ways in the leaders' behaviors as hawks or doves.

Additionally, ideologies played a vital role in these conflicts. This may be because of the great divide between the U.S.'s values and those of Russia. Throughout the conflicts, regardless of whether it directly or indirectly involved the U.S. and the Soviet Union or Russia, an ideological clash between democratic/capitalistic and socialistic/autocratic values is evident. Even in the Cuban Missile Crisis, when the conflict appeared to be centered around the buildup of weapons, the ideologies and motivations underlying the parties' actions were likely motivated

by the disdain the parties had for one another's stances. In the Nicaraguan Revolution and the Russia-Ukraine War, the ideological motivations are more obviously present, as the beginnings of these conflicts were rooted in a clash of ideologies. It is natural for people to want to stand up for what they believe in, and even more basically, to be motivated by what they stand for. This is a similarity amongst the three conflicts included in this research, but it goes without saying that this similarity is manifested very differently in each conflict. This again demonstrates that while similarities can be found across conflicts, these commonalities remain general and leave a great amount of space for variations that require each conflict to be approached differently.

Although some similarities are observed in these conflicts, each one calls for a different approach to resolution by the nature of circumstances that are constantly changing and influenced by emotions, ideologies, and other factors. No two conflicts can be resolved in the same way, so it takes a depth of knowledge about the conflict and well-developed negotiation skills to navigate the complexities of conflict resolution.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the great divide between the U.S.'s and Russia's ideologies has become entrenched in multiple conflicts throughout history. The Cold War further pitted the U.S. and Russia against each other, and both states have produced powerful leaders who continue to make decisions that are affected by the state's ideology. The Cuban Missile Crisis, the Nicaraguan Revolution, and the Russia-Ukraine War bear witness to this ideological split that has motivated the states' actions in these conflicts. Additionally, the leaders in these conflicts either strive for peace as doves or demonstrate belligerence as hawks, and most leaders have their moments as both doves and hawks. While these similarities can be drawn from patterns in these three conflicts, all of them are so different that no clear path to resolution can be drawn as a one-size-

fits-all. Each conflict has to be negotiated in novel ways, but the evaluation of past conflicts can help point resolution in the right direction.

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