

Winning Hearts and Minds? How the United States Reassured During the Russo-Ukrainian War

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Abstract

Decades of scholarship hold that great powers shore up global confidence during crises with strong demonstrations of resolve. A much smaller literature critiques these assumptions, suggesting that restraint may strengthen confidence. When and why do restraint or resolve reassure, and for whom? In light of Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine, we appraise early U.S. attempts to reassure allies and partners using public opinion surveys in 24 countries on six continents. Our novel data, which cover rarely surveyed publics, illuminates conditions under which restraint or resolve reassure. We introduce theoretical mechanisms that predict individuals' propensity to be reassured by resolve or restraint: prior beliefs about the use of force and geopolitical positioning. The results challenge dominant scholarly narratives. Respondents worldwide were reassured by restraint. Forgoing direct intervention in the Russo-Ukrainian War

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strengthened the U.S.-led order, successfully balancing NATO members' interests with those of U.S. Indo-Pacific and Global South partners.

Keywords

military alliances, Russo-Ukrainian War, reassurance, survey, public opinion, NATO, restraint, resolve

What sort of crisis behavior by a great power is most reassuring to allies and partners? A longstanding, dominant academic perspective is that strong resolve is essential for a great power like the United States to remain a global leader. According to this scholarship, quick and unequivocal reactions to international crises enable great powers to demonstrate their vast capabilities (Fearon 1997; Kydd 2000; Lupton 2018a). Such resolve deters future challengers and signals to partners that further cooperation enhances their security (Johnson 2017; Walt 1987; Weitsman 2003). By contrast, weak reactions jeopardize alliance cohesion. A reputation for staunchly defending one's allies and partners is, therefore, as Thomas Schelling writes, "one of the few things worth fighting over" (Schelling 1966, 124).

Yet an emerging strand of literature critiques strong demonstrations of resolve. Although this scholarship is less prominent, it challenges traditional thinking about resolve. This somewhat heterodox perspective suggests that when great powers pursue strategies of strong resolve to buttress relationships, these actions could backfire. Great powers can overstretch their resources when attempting to reassure geographically diverse allies with varied interests. Allies and partners may grow to doubt the credibility of great power protection, subsequently questioning the benefits of cooperation (Kim et al. 2024; Krebs and Spindel 2018). Still, some could fear that a great power's commitments could entrap them in foreign conflicts (Snyder 1997; Henry 2020). Even when partners have similar geopolitical priorities, they may have differing risk tolerances (Chernoff 1990). Strategies that lack restraint may not find universal approval.

To avoid overstretch, great powers make trade-offs between competing regional interests, as a crisis somewhere could drain resources from elsewhere. After all, an international crisis involves elevated military escalation risks, amplifying policy dilemmas over resolve and restraint. A crisis could force a great power to make hard choices that clarify which regions, interests, or countries it prioritizes. Allies, partners, and adversaries alike will thus scrutinize its actions, with some clamoring for greater resolve and others demanding restraint. For example, some criticized the 2021 U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan because allies and partners would fret that their own security commitments would not be upheld (Kim et al. 2024). Yet a popular argument for withdrawal was that the resources previously devoted to Afghanistan could be deployed to reassure other allies and partners. Scholars likewise debate whether Taiwan should be defended or whether U.S. allies and partners would prefer not to fight China (Glaser 2015; Green and Talmadge 2022). These debates illustrate that crises test reassurance.

Unfortunately, the dominant literature on great power resolve and those critiques advocating for restraint do not give clear policy guidance. This scholarship often points

unconditionally to one strategy, insufficiently articulating the conditions under which resolve or restraint should be more reassuring. Neither approach considers differences between great power treaty alliances versus partnerships. Moreover, little is known about the real-world conditions wherein citizens in U.S.-allied and partner countries will prefer policies of restraint or resolve, with few works examining how states assess these trade-offs in crises.¹ Additionally, scholarship often conceptualizes reassurance as an exclusively state-level phenomenon.² Yet reassurance is a perceptual phenomenon, requiring an assessment of both population- and individual-level dynamics.

In this article, we leverage a real-world security crisis to examine how great powers can most effectively engage in reassurance. We test a series of hypotheses with a cross-national survey conducted in June 2023. We evaluate perceptions of 27,250 survey respondents in 24 countries on six continents around the world regarding U.S. responses to the Russo-Ukrainian War.³ This rare, wide-aperture look provides measurable data on reassurance success and failure. It has several advantages over previous studies. First, our diverse sample allows us to assess heterogeneity in the conditions under which populations prefer great power resolve or restraint. Existing scholarship has often focused on single cases of reassurance; greater granularity permits a more comprehensive assessment. Second, because we fielded the survey during a high-salience crisis, we can grasp how key U.S. partners understood Washington's actual crisis management approach. The Russo-Ukrainian War and the growing great power competition between the United States and its adversaries represents a critical moment where U.S. allies and partners must make costly decisions about balancing their interests with one another. Third, the breadth of our study provides improved insights over past works on reassurance. By prioritizing a small subset of close U.S. allies, existing scholarship has inadvertently obfuscated variation across allies and regions, minimizing the impact that U.S. partners have on global order.

The United States had to strike a delicate balance amid Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Its actions would affect the war's course and perceptions of U.S. leadership. On the one hand, excessive restraint could diminish U.S. credibility among states that seek protection from Washington. A desire for reassurance may have been strongest among U.S. allies and partners operating in strategic uncertainty, such as East Asian states worried about stability in the Taiwan Straits (Lyon 2013). These countries might have feared inadequate U.S. resolve in Europe could encourage China to attack Taiwan. On the other hand, excessive resolve could isolate U.S. partners in the Global South with strong economic and political ties to Russia (Spektor 2023). It could also worry vulnerable U.S. allies if they perceive Washington as diverting resources to other theaters. We thus ask: Did Washington's approach build international support, or did it alienate allies and partners around the world (McMaster and Scheinmann, 2022; Simón 2022)?

Washington adopted a response that was far more restrained than what prevailing literature on reputation, credibility, and alliance cohesion might recommend. It imposed significant economic sanctions on Russia, enhanced military deployments to Europe,

and publicly re-affirmed its security commitments abroad. It forswore direct military intervention and rejected calls for a no-fly zone over Ukraine. Contrary to the dominant scholarly expectations, we find that allies and partners saw U.S. actions as embodying restraint, yet the use of such restraint was effective in reassuring diverse audiences. We uncover little evidence of a divide between European and non-European audiences, with U.S. efforts reassuring partners inside and outside of NATO. Our findings call for a reconsideration of scholarly ideas about the effectiveness of reassurance-by-resolve versus reassurance-by-restraint.

This article proceeds as follows. We first review literature on reassurance and international security crises to contextualize our analysis of the Russo-Ukrainian War. Several theory-driven hypotheses emerge regarding the purported benefits and drawbacks of resolve and restraint, alongside theoretical mechanisms predicting individuals' attitudes. Next, we describe our survey design, which leverages this unique crisis moment to gain insights into reassurance dynamics under high-pressure conditions. After elaborating on the survey results, we discuss relevant policy implications. We conclude that restraint was effective in strengthening U.S. relationships and achieving reassurance among many of Washington's allies and partners.

Cross-Cutting Reassurance Pressures

Existing scholarly literature on great power reassurance has taken a myopic view of the concept of credibility. Yet the role of perception in allied and partner assessments of U.S. credibility suggests that a one-size-fits-all approach is inappropriate. This nuanced understanding of credibility enables us to isolate theory-driven hypotheses to test in the context of U.S. responses to the Russo-Ukrainian War. These hypotheses predict whether populations will be reassured and identify individual-level mechanisms to explain respondent attitudes.

Though we discuss allies and partners together, they are distinct. Written treaties between allies create expectations about future support and engage parties' reputations. Partnerships are far less formalized security relationships (Morrow 2000). The dynamics described in this article apply to both alliances and partnerships, but they might vary in intensity depending on treaty commitments. A treaty-bound state might worry that reckless allied behavior will trigger legal commitments; a partner can still worry that rashness could produce a wider war. At a minimum, a partner might fear even more than a treaty ally about being left alone in a crisis.

Current Understandings of Credibility

Because crises can implicate security commitments and carry increased risks of military escalation, a great power might sense that its credibility as a global leader is on the line. In security studies scholarship, credibility refers to the likelihood that a state will abide by its threats and promises. Threats pertain to imposing consequences on adversaries should they attack, while promises relate to supporting allies should they be attacked. Credibility thus simultaneously serves to deter adversaries and reassure allies and

partners. Adversaries that believe a great power will fulfill its threats and promises may refrain from challenging its leadership. Citizens in allied and partner countries may feel reassured that their patron will offer protection. This confidence can strengthen public support for cooperation and reduce pressures for destabilizing activities, including geopolitical realignment and dangerous rearmament programs (Bleek and Lorber 2014; Bollfrass and Herzog 2022; Lanoszka 2018; Sukin 2020).

This common understanding of credibility overlooks how threats to use force must be conditional, however. Adversaries cannot believe that fighting the great power is inevitable, regardless of their behavior. They must think that they will fight only if they attack its interests (Schelling 1966). Similarly, states must believe their patron will defend its partners, but not so readily that they will be dragged into unwanted conflicts (Kim 2011; Snyder 1984; Sukin 2020). Indeed, they may worry that the patron's other allies and partners could receive so much reassurance that they will act aggressively (Benson 2012).

We call this the “Goldilocks” level of credibility reassurance. In alliances, reassurance means promising not to make a decision that would harm the interests of one's partners. This definition provides a measure of the effectiveness of extended deterrence as “whether the ally feels protected,” both against adversary threats and undesired behavior by the patron itself (Knopf 2012). We address ally reassurance below, but we acknowledge that, in adversarial contexts, reassurance means conveying non-aggressive intentions that can improve mutual understanding.

Hypotheses on Reassurance, Resolve, and Restraint

Reassurance is a phenomenon experienced and assessed by individuals. Accordingly, our theory-driven hypotheses focus on how citizens interpret the credibility of their country's patron based on signals of resolve and restraint. Such signals are used in combination by great powers to reassure both allies and non-treaty security partners. States can raise the perceived likelihood that they follow through on threats by establishing a “reputation for resolve,” taking actions that demonstrate willingness to endure the costs of acting on security commitments, such as deploying forces (Lupton 2020).

Although the dominant literature analyzes how states communicate resolve, states can signal the conditionality of threats with acts of restraint. Strategies of restraint entail cautious maintenance of commitments through non-aggression. For example, states can show restraint by using economic tools of statecraft, like sanctions, to support partners' interests, rather than military tools. Allies might prefer their patrons using more cautious policies during potentially escalatory crises (Sukin and Lanoszka 2024).

Individuals may interpret their patron's behavior abroad as indicators of credibility relevant to their own country's alliance or partnerships. They might form views of their patron's credibility by evaluating its behavior in their immediate strategic environment (Henry 2020; Kim and Simón 2021; Press 2005). They might also learn from how the patron acts in other contexts (Crescenzi 2018; Lupton 2020; G. D. Miller 2003; Kim et al. 2024). Such signals are, therefore, the building blocks of states' reputations.

The prevailing scholarly view holds that demonstrations of resolve strengthen reassurance the most (Fearon 1997; Kydd 2000; Lupton 2018a). During crises, growing threats should increase demands for protection (Walt 1987). Under such circumstances, states are preoccupied with whether their patron will fulfill its commitments. The strongest state in the relationship bears the greatest responsibility to showcase its resolve and capacity to counteract the adversary (Morrow 1991). Powerful patrons like the United States should thus send forces to aid a partner or reinforce relevant military capabilities. After all, according to rationalists, states best communicate commitments using costly signals (Kydd 2000). Doing so requires demonstrating military capabilities in a way that weaker or irresolute states would not or could not do (Blankenship and Lin-Greenberg 2022). States show weakness if they inadequately respond to aggression, emboldening adversaries and making partners believe future commitments are unreliable (Mercer 1996).

The benefit of such forward-leaning strategies is to bolster one's reputation for resolve and, by extension, credibility. Those patrons standing firm against threats may well encourage cooperative partners to cohere around their interests. If a great power has a solid track-record standing up to enemy aggression, its allies and partners will trust its protection more and will be comfortable deepening their cooperation.⁴ Although scholars disagree about how long reputations for resolve last, they assume that states and their populations want their patrons to fulfill guarantees and to protect partners (Crescenzi 2018; Jackson 2016; Tingley and Walter 2011). This perspective suggests the following hypothesis:

H1: Citizens of allied and partner countries are more likely to feel reassured when their patron demonstrates resolve in the face of a major military crisis.

H1 represents the predominant view on credibility in the literature, but some scholars suggest that a strategy of resolve will not soothe all. Some might find this strategy dangerous, especially if it addresses security challenges they do not prioritize (Allison et al. 2022; Gates and Terasawa 1992). For example, if allies and partners view their patron's capabilities, attention, and interests in zero-sum terms, then they may disapprove of efforts to defend those other than themselves. A patron's actions on one issue, or in one location, may divert resources from another. Concern from NATO allies about growing U.S. focus on the Indo-Pacific region highlights this thinking. Conversely, allies in the Indo-Pacific region may be concerned about the trade-off risks of U.S. containment of Russia (Simón 2022). These issues are often salient in crises. Such concerns about a patron's resource allocation may be most intense among non-treaty partners, since their interests tend to be further afield from the patron than those of treaty allies. The danger of multiple great power conflicts happening simultaneously requires a grasp of both short- and long-term resource allocation trade-offs.

Even within a single region or security arrangement, cooperating states and their citizens may evaluate threats differently, resulting in disagreement about crisis responses (Béraud-Sudreau and Giegerich 2018; Herzog and Kunertova 2024; Yeo 2020). Risk-averse states may fear that adversaries could misconstrue a partner's

deterrence efforts as war-making (Snyder 1984). However, risk-tolerant partners could demand strong actions, seeing them as essential to mitigating threats. And some states could worry about being dragged into military conflicts they would prefer to avoid (Sukin 2020). These states might be most concerned about possible escalation risks, weighing them over the potential benefits of resolve. They do not want crises to become wars that undermine their national security.

Over-prioritizing resolve can be counterproductive (Herzog et al. 2025; Kertzer 2016). In some circumstances, restraint could better preserve capabilities and political will for other pressing challenges, while minimizing risks of inadvertent escalation (Steele 2019). Effective reassurance, from this perspective, involves threading the needle between providing security and minimizing the likelihood of provoking the very action that must be prevented. Put simply, partners want evidence that their received assurances are believable, but they prefer cautious policies reducing escalation potential. Great powers can show restraint by responding to crises with activities short of military means. For example, economic and diplomatic approaches to conflict resolution may not be interpreted as strong resolve (Sukin and Lanoszka 2024). States can refrain from providing military support or enhancing military capabilities to signal restraint. This approach suggests an alternative hypothesis:

H2: Citizens of allied and partner countries are more likely to feel reassured when their patron demonstrates restraint in the face of a major military crisis.

Both *H1* and *H2* leave unspecified the conditions under which states and their publics will desire patron signals of restraint or resolve. Instead, the main scholarly camp suggests that signals of resolve are near-universally desirable, while its critics contend that some degree of restraint is needed as a counterbalance. Neither viewpoint offers adequate nuance into the conditions under which states might prefer one strategy over the other.

The existing literature thus oversimplifies the dynamics of reassurance by focusing too heavily on states. Reassurance is a process of belief, formed by individuals and responsive to political developments. To understand the conditions under which strategies of reassurance succeed, we must understand the prior beliefs and geopolitical situations of individuals who seek reassurance. States are not monolithic.

For example, how one assesses a reassurance strategy could reflect prior beliefs about the efficacy of using force. Hawkish individuals may be more reassured by demonstrations of resolve, whereas dovish individuals will be more reassured by restraint. As Kertzer and colleagues note, hawks “believe that peace is best achieved through strength and the demonstration of resolve” (Kertzer et al. 2014). Hawks might find a strategy of restraint naively well-intentioned, inviting further aggression. In contrast, doves believe displays of force can be self-defeating because they trigger more hostility and create greater insecurity. They see the potential for security dilemmas to become aggravated and believe a strategy of restraint will contain conflict. Though these “types” are well-understood by scholars, most studies examine whether hawkish

or dovish individuals will support the use of force. However, we expect these beliefs will also meaningfully interact with reassurance.

H3: Individuals with more hawkish beliefs will feel more reassured by resolve, whereas individuals with more dovish beliefs will feel more reassured by restraint.

The perceived desirability of a particular strategy of reassurance could also be a function of one's vulnerability in a crisis. Respondents in countries most at risk of being ensnared in the crisis could believe that great power resolve will offer protection (Blankenship and Lin-Greenberg 2022). They may have greater familiarity with the potential adversary, enhancing their threat perceptions. Vulnerability leads to the belief that strength is best matched with strength. These individuals may not perceive a security dilemma, instead believing that standing firm will curb aggression. Conversely, those in less vulnerable situations may be more attuned to a possible security dilemma and may wish for restraint because they want to remain detached from the crisis. Lower vulnerability may also reduce the willingness to pay the costs of more resolved responses.

H4A: Citizens of countries more vulnerable to escalation are more likely to feel reassured by resolve, whereas citizens of less vulnerable countries are more likely to feel reassured by restraint.

In theory, vulnerability can cut both ways. Citizens of more vulnerable countries could instead fear getting pulled into the crisis and may be more averse to a resolve-centric strategy (Sukin and Lanoszka 2024). Because unintended escalation consequences are greater for these individuals, they may be more concerned about entrapment. They may desire greater restraint in order to reduce the chances of being exposed to a broader or more-intense conflict. Less vulnerable individuals may not feel the same pressures. They could be more open to reassurance-by-resolve because they are further removed from potential consequences if this strategy goes wrong.

H4B: Citizens of countries more vulnerable to escalation are more likely to feel reassured by restraint, whereas citizens of less vulnerable countries are more likely to feel reassured by resolve.

We study not only the dynamics of reassurance between formal treaty allies—the primary focus of much scholarship—but also how great powers credibly communicate reassurance across multiple alliances and to strategic partners. Washington has many treaty alliances across the globe as well as many non-ally security partnerships, ranging from security assurances to situations of limited cooperation. These partnerships have become more prominent in U.S. foreign policy (Rodriguez and Thornton 2022).

We argue that citizens' national relationship with the United States should influence perceptions of reassurance. For example, adversaries might prefer that great power rivals exhibit restraint since resolve directly challenges their interests. Both allies and

partners should prefer a mix of resolve and restraint in order to have evidence of a great power's credibility and reassurance that its threats are appropriate and conditional. Compared to allies, partners lacking formal security guarantees face different pressures on reassurance (Rosendorf 2024). Their looser relationships with the great power should mean the burden to make demonstrations of resolve convincing is much higher than for formal allies, as are the costs of insufficient restraint. Poorly-handled crises—whether through excessive resolve or restraint—could shape public views in emerging partner states, leading to skepticism about deepening cooperation. Treaty allies, however, should require less resolve and less restraint to have faith in the direction of their relationship. In the abstract, the opposite could be true, as states with looser relationships with a great power patron may expect less reassurance and could be more easily placated. But we find no evidence to this effect.

H5: The extent to which citizens feel reassured by resolve or restraint depends on the nature of their country's relationship with its patron.

Together, these hypotheses reflect debates between the dominant paradigm on reassurance—prioritizing resolve—and an emerging literature highlighting restraint. Unlike previous studies, we address not only whether resolve or restraint will be reassuring; we also investigate the conditions under which each strategy will be most likely to reassure. We identify and evaluate heterogeneity across individuals' and states' perceptions of U.S. foreign policy. Prior beliefs about the use of force and an individual's geopolitical positioning—vulnerability to adversary threats and the character of their relationship to the great power—should moderate reassurance perceptions.

Testing the Effectiveness of Resolve and Restraint

Because extant studies evaluate reassurance primarily at the state level and only among the closest U.S. allies, they miss considerable variation. In this section, we describe how public perceptions influence reassurance. Next, we explain why fielding a global observational survey during a high-salience crisis—the Russo-Ukrainian War—offers a valuable opportunity to examine reassurance at work. We then describe our survey design.

Role of Public Opinion

Our study evaluates public perceptions of Washington's credibility. Assessing public attitudes is theoretically and methodologically valuable. Public opinion can often indicate the health of a security partnership. Analysts worry that declining public confidence in U.S. security guarantees—in NATO, East Asia, and elsewhere—could harm alignment between the United States and its allies (Friedhoff 2020; Thomson et al. 2023). Public opinion can significantly strain alliances since anti-Americanism has ramifications for world order (Katzenstein and Keohane 2007; Markovits 2009).

Public opinion can influence foreign policy. Hawkish interests pressure politicians to adopt aggressive stances and dovish sentiments constrain decision-makers via audience costs and rally effects (Chu and Recchia 2022; Lee 1977; Smetana et al. 2025; Tomz 2007; Weeks 2008). Public views shape media coverage; generate lobbying, protests, and activism; and affect party politics (Kertzer 2020; Lin-Greenberg 2021; Risse-Kappen 1991; Tomz et al. 2020). Public attitudes and activism on alliances and partnerships have long impacted the U.S. alliance network, from West German resistance to hosting intermediate-range missiles to anti-American protests in Okinawa over U.S. military bases. Critics contend that leaders can be immune from adverse public attitudes about their alliances if a counter-elite consensus exists, but such immunity may not persist in today's highly-polarized environment (Kreps 2010).

Even if public opinion does not directly change policy outcomes at home, it can offer important signals abroad. Because ascertaining a state's actual level of commitment is difficult, allies and partners regularly evaluate each other's public views. As Thompson and colleagues write: "*perceptions* of public resolve may be just as important as actual resolve" (Thomson et al. 2023).⁵

Scholars have used surveys to study alliance commitments.⁶ Because surveys can probe the psychological foundations of political behavior, they can provide more accurate measures of perceptual concepts like resolve, credibility, and reassurance. Traditional proxies—like defense agreements—cannot capture such nuance. By focusing on public attitudes, our study addresses scholarly and policymaker needs for deeper understanding of reassurance's microfoundations.

Studying the Russo-Ukrainian War

We conducted our study in June 2023. Its context has several advantages. First, the scale of Russian aggression should have sharpened abandonment fears both among those who counted Russia as an adversary and those who would lose from large-scale U.S. resource diversion to Europe. At the same time, U.S. partners across the globe were worried about the war becoming a broader conflict (DeYoung 2022). Both kinds of fears should have heightened sensitivity to U.S. commitments. Though many surveys use hypothetical experimental scenarios to test arguments, we capture attitudes during a major, ongoing event. Our study deals with a high-salience issue that has dominated headlines and provides real-world, real-time evaluations of U.S. policy. One benefit of our design is increased accuracy since "respondents seem to be willing to accept higher levels of burden if they are convinced that the data are important" (Bradburn 1978, 39). However, this may limit generalizability, as we might expect smaller effects during less salient crises.

Second, we study a wide array of security relationships. U.S. allies and partners across the globe have watched Washington's response to the war carefully. Of particular concern have been lessons that U.S. allies in East Asia might draw for potential conflict between China and Taiwan (Fravel 2023). If Washington showed insufficient resolve toward Ukraine, these allies might worry that Taiwan would be similarly abandoned. However, direct conflict with Russia would drain resources for deterring China. Great

powers face a delicate balance managing pressures from different regions. Moreover, the wide global reach of our survey allows us to depart from previous literature focused on so-called “WEIRD” (Western, Educated, Industrial, Rich, and Democratic) countries (Muthukrishna et al. 2020). We provide a broader lens that expands scholarship by evaluating how reassurance, restraint, and resolve operate among citizens in the Global South; so-called “swing states” such as India, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey considered crucial to advancing U.S. interests; and other under-studied countries (Omelicheva 2025). However, the sample is not globally representative, of course, with many important states missing.

Third, Washington has implemented measures in response to the war that encompass many major reassurance strategies in states’ toolkits. These included additional military deployments, significant economic sanctions, and reaffirmations of existing security guarantees. The scenario and timing of our survey are ideal for testing the efficacy of numerous policies and their theorized effects. We build upon previous scholarship, which has largely focused on military deployments as a signal of resolve—and therefore—reassurance.⁷ Below, we discuss our survey design and its ability to capture a range of reassurance mechanisms.

Survey Design

Our June 2023 observational survey of U.S. reassurance during the Russo-Ukrainian War involved 27,250 individuals across 24 countries on six continents.⁸ The study includes diverse U.S. alliances and partnerships. They include treaty allies like France, Germany, Japan, and South Korea; partners with defense commitments like Saudi Arabia and Taiwan; and emerging partners such as India and Indonesia. We also include an adversary—China—to demonstrate how attitudes about Washington among allies and partners might differ from rivals. In some analyses, we include U.S. respondents to evaluate perception differences between Americans and Washington’s allies and partners. Understanding U.S. public preferences towards restraint and resolve in this context matters because Washington is a key pillar of the Euro-Atlantic defense community. This mix of countries varies in regime type, security environment, military capability, economic capacity, and pre-war relations with Russia, among other factors. Such variation allows us to assess the effects of U.S. behavior on its wide global network.

We used online sampling with block quotas to ensure representation in each country based on respondents’ age and gender. We used the Lucid/Cint platform, leveraging convenience sampling across multiple pools of respondents. These samples match national benchmarks in the United States, a standard test of sampling strategy reliability. By aggregating respondents across different panels and platforms, Lucid accumulates a more varied respondent pool than many competitors. After all, many other survey firms lack older respondents (Munger et al. 2021). To cross-validate the firm’s own stratification, we ask respondents about their demographics, including age, gender, veteran status, education, and income. Our samples are diverse. The average age is 41, with a standard deviation of 15 years. The average education level is an associate’s

degree, with the first quartile value representing an upper secondary degree, and the third quartile value representing a bachelor's degree. All surveys were delivered in the national languages of the countries. Despite these precautions, the sample quality may vary since lower Internet penetration in some countries—such as Nigeria—may create selection effects.

To measure the effectiveness of U.S. reassurance policies, we ask: Does the U.S. response to the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine make you trust the United States more or less as [an ally / a partner] for your country?⁹ This wording allows us to evaluate trust in the United States—both in terms of the believability of commitments and in respondents' confidence that the United States will not make harmful decisions for their country. This accounts for the traditional understanding of credibility and also acknowledges that perceptions of U.S. viability as a partner depend on recognizing strategic alignment between U.S. goals and those of one's own government. By asking respondents to evaluate U.S. trustworthiness as a partner for their government, we isolate reassurance from whether Washington acted in good faith toward Ukraine.¹⁰ We ask respondents how U.S. actions in one setting bear on their assessment of Washington's reputation regarding their own interests.

This question asks respondents to self-evaluate how their opinions have changed amid the Russo-Ukrainian War. A preferable approach would, for example, compare individuals' evaluation of U.S. credibility before and after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Such data are unavailable. We thus ask respondents to report their own changing views, acknowledging the imperfection of self-reflection. Nonetheless, this measure provides a sense of how U.S. actions are perceived. That this measure prioritizes change—rather than simply reporting levels of trust in the United States across countries or regions—helps us assess the directional effectiveness of reassurance. It does more than just provide a snapshot of U.S. influence; our approach considers the varying reasons why different baselines for perceptions of Washington exist. We ask respondents to explain why they are (not) reassured by Washington, identifying preferences for resolve or restraint in these explanations.

We also measure respondents' views on the use of force, identifying hawks and doves depending on their beliefs about whether “the use of military force only makes problems worse.” We classify respondents in terms of their relationship with the United States, whether as allies, partners, or adversaries. Respondents are also distinguished by their vulnerability to Russian aggression, taking into account their country's geographical location, historical relationship with Russia, and NATO membership. We use these variables to assess how individual-level beliefs and geopolitical positioning moderate views on reassurance.

Further, we include several controls, such as how favorable respondents feel towards the United States and Russia.¹¹ These should correlate with general willingness to trust Washington and allow more precise identification of the effect of the U.S. response to the war. We use Polity scores to measure regime type, accounting for the common framing of the Russo-Ukrainian War as a fight between autocracy and democracy (Center for Systemic Peace 2018). We also collect demographic information that could correlate with general foreign policy beliefs and affect interpretations of U.S. behavior.

Benefits of Restraint

Below we explore the survey results. First, we evaluate respondents’ attitudes about the United States given its responses to the Russo-Ukrainian War. This headline finding allows us to assess the extent to which Washington reassured globally. Second, we explore why reassurance succeeded and how restraint contributed to improved confidence in U.S. foreign policy, thus challenging existing literature that emphasizes resolve as the main tool for reassurance. Third, we assess individual-level preferences to show how diverse views and geopolitical alignments affect interpretations of attempts at reassurance. Our results highlight the success of the largely restrained U.S. response to the war at that point and show that individual beliefs and geopolitical positioning are critical to understanding the conditions under which restraint or resolve will successfully reassure.

Successful Reassurance

Were allies and partners reassured by Washington? Figure 1 displays the distribution of global attitudes. A plurality in most countries indicated their views of the United States had not substantially changed. This finding alone is substantial, given the significant concerns voiced about the consequences of the U.S. response to the war for international politics. That many respondents’ views of Washington are entrenched and not responsive to even a major suite of U.S. policies suggests limitations to the role of reputation in shaping ally and partner relationships.

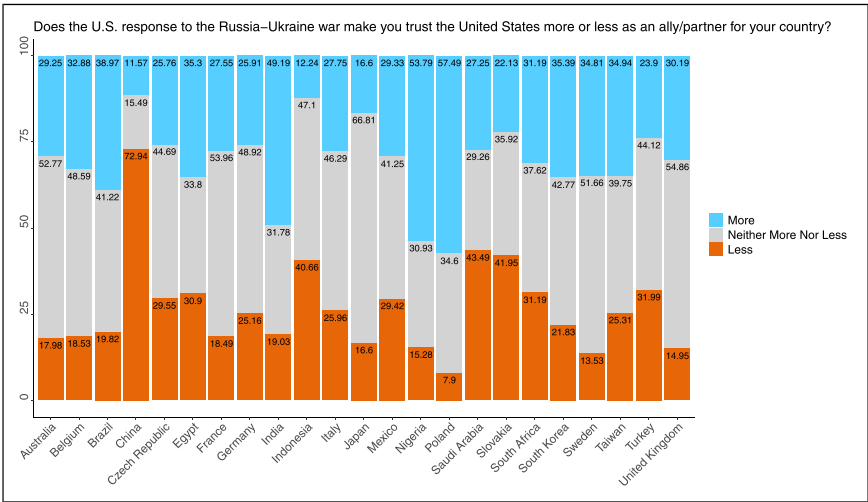


Figure 1. Does the U.S. response to the Russia–Ukraine war make you trust the United States more or less as an ally/partner for your country?

Although many respondents' views towards the United States are fixed, a significant favorable shift is evident. This shift is pronounced among NATO allies. The findings suggest that most U.S. allies and partners have, overall, viewed Washington's handling of the war positively.

In Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, trust in the United States increased among 26–57 percent of the public. In each case, a greater percentage of respondents reported more, rather than less, trust. Reassurance was particularly marked in Poland, where a majority of respondents indicated greater trust. Only 8 percent of Polish respondents selected the opposite sentiment. Sweden also displayed a significant increase in reassurance, with 35 percent perceiving the Russo-Ukrainian War as tightening ties. This compares to just 14 percent whose skepticism of Washington grew. The close proximity of Poland and Sweden to Russia creates heightened threat perceptions, yet each public appears placated by U.S. actions. These results comport with Finland's and Sweden's NATO accession and greater NATO alignment under Russian threat.

There are some exceptions. In three studied NATO countries, the United States appears to have lost some face: the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Turkey. Here, distrust was more likely to be heightened than trust. Just under one-quarter of Slovak and Turkish respondents reported increased trust in the United States, and 26 percent of Czechs said the same. By comparison, 30 percent of Czech respondents reported higher levels of distrust, compared to 42 percent in Slovakia and 32 percent in Turkey. Slovakia and Turkey have closer relationships with Russia than many other NATO allies and exhibit comparatively more anti-Americanism in foreign policy than other members of the Atlantic Alliance. This could explain why a significant portion (29 percent in Turkey and 30 percent in Slovakia) believe Washington, and not Moscow, was responsible for the war. Decreased trust in these countries is attributed strongly to a perception that Washington should have relied more on economic and diplomatic responses than military ones. A total of 30 percent of respondents express this view in Turkey, 43 percent in Slovakia, and 34 percent in the Czech Republic. For respondents in these states, the United States may have prioritized resolve too heavily. The results in these three countries likely do not comport with *H1* and the expectation that strong showings of resolve will translate into greater allied reassurance.

We find that partners in the Indo-Pacific were receptive to how Washington managed the Russian threat. This evidence contradicts worries that states in this region view U.S. restraint as either eroding American credibility or diverting resources from Asia. There was no net change in the perception of U.S. credibility among Japanese respondents, arguably because of the steadiness of local foreign policy attitudes, but those in Australia, India, South Korea, and Taiwan expressed greater confidence.¹² Indonesia, which has only a limited partnership with the United States, saw a net decline in public confidence in Washington as a trustworthy partner. Almost three-quarters of respondents in China, the only U.S. adversary in the sample, unsurprisingly reported perceiving the United States as less trustworthy.

These findings speak directly to concerns that the lack of U.S. intervention on Ukraine's behalf could diminish U.S. credibility worldwide, especially in East Asia. In

this region, one of the primary security concerns relates to threats from another large, nuclear-armed power—China—against another U.S. partner country with security assurances rather than a formal guarantee—Taiwan. The parallels between Ukraine and Taiwan are imperfect, but much has been written about the lessons that may be drawn from the current conflict.¹³ Our results indicate that the aforementioned worry has not materialized.

In Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East, perspectives on how the United States handled the crisis were generally positive. We observe neutral or positive effects on perceptions of U.S. credibility among respondents from Brazil, Egypt, Mexico, Nigeria, and South Africa. However, Saudi Arabians were more skeptical of U.S. credibility in the wake of the war. Overall, the results suggest that the United States has been hampered in neither the Global South nor the Indo-Pacific. Instead, the U.S. approach to the Russo-Ukrainian War seems to have garnered public support both within NATO and among diverse U.S. partners worldwide. If the U.S. response were indeed seen as restrained by publics in these countries, as we show in the following section, then this finding aligns with *H2*.

The timing of the survey may have aided our finding that the United States succeeded in reassuring allies and partners. Surveys are, after all, indications of attitudes at a particular point in time. Confidence in the Ukrainian counteroffensive may have led respondents to have greater faith in the Western response to the war. As we do not ask questions about the counteroffensive, we are unable to assess if this shaped public views. However, our pre-tests from East-Central Europe in 2022 find similar results before the counteroffensive took place.¹⁴

Why Reassurance Worked

How did Washington successfully reassure diverse allies and partners during the Russo-Ukrainian War? [Figure 2](#) reports respondents' selections of various reasons why they might (dis)trust the United States as a partner, aggregated across the full sample (except U.S. respondents). This is complemented by [Figure 3](#), found in Online Supplement 5.2, showing how views vary for each studied country. These figures highlight whether restraint or resolve is doing more work driving the success of U.S. reassurance.

Contrary to dominant scholarly explanations, we uncover a preference for restraint, per *H2*. Still, attitudes vary. Among respondents who report greater trust, the largest group—33 percent—at least partially attribute this shift to the view that the United States was “sufficiently cautious” toward Russia. Past scholarship argues that credibility and reassurance require very strong and often visible signals of resolve (*H1*); our results indicate otherwise. U.S. partners were often concerned about the costs of escalation and approved of responses avoiding escalatory measures. Similarly, 31 percent of respondents explained their increased trust in terms of approval of U.S. economic and diplomatic—rather than military—measures. These more cautious policies exemplify restrained methods of solidifying commitments and communicate non-aggressive intentions. Nonetheless, some respondents may instead have seen stringent sanctions as signals of U.S. commitment to Kyiv. Furthermore, 21 percent of

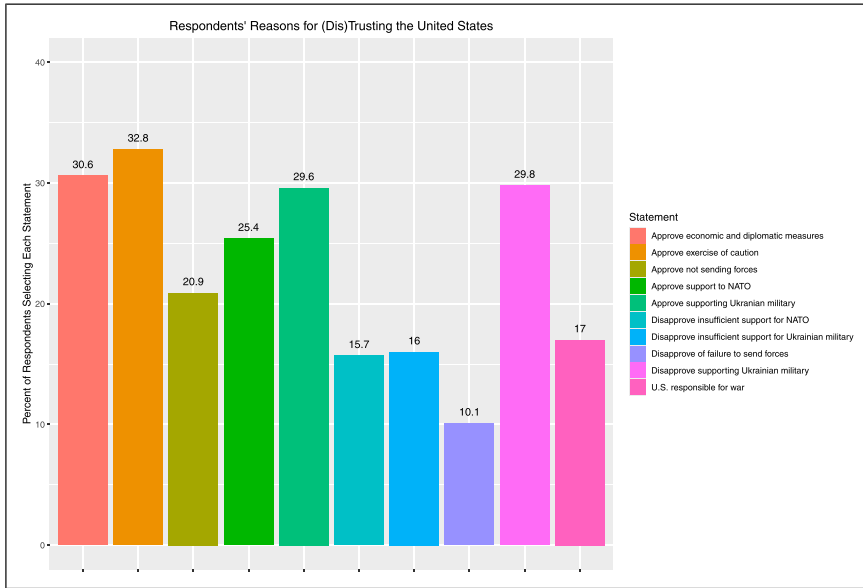


Figure 2. Respondents' Reasons for (Dis)Trusting the United States.

respondents specifically attributed reassurance to non-aggression, saying they trusted Washington more because of its decision not to send forces to Ukraine. Together, these findings support *H2*.

Our results among non-European U.S. partners highlight the centrality of restraint. In Australia, Brazil, Japan, and Mexico, the most commonly cited reason for increased trust in the United States was its exercise of caution. Between 34 percent and 41 percent respondents chose this option. In South Korea and Taiwan, 33 percent of subjects indicated that caution increased their confidence, although other rationales slightly prevailed. In South Korea, 34 percent noted approval of U.S. economic and diplomatic responses as a rationale for greater trust in the alliance. In Taiwan, this was also most prominent (38 percent), followed by approval of U.S. support for the Ukrainian military (35 percent). The latter result may be the product of Taiwanese thinking about a possible confrontation with China.

Importantly, these findings do not illuminate what preferences would be like if U.S. restraint slipped into abandonment by forgoing any support to Ukraine. Respondents value caution, but that does not necessarily indicate fully dovish preferences. We expect that failing to offer any support to Ukraine would meet resistance.

Put differently, approval of U.S. restraint may be conditional on the concurrence of signals of restraint and resolve. While the United States did not intervene directly in Ukraine, it solidified commitments to Europe and contributed significant aid to Ukraine. A total of 30 percent of respondents said a major reason for increased trust in the United States was support to Ukraine's military forces, and 26 percent indicated that U.S.

support to NATO allies earned their trust.¹⁵ Effective restraint does not imply complete inaction, but rather, calculated caution short of direct military action.

Indeed, respondents could select multiple reasons why they were (not) reassured by Washington; many respondents expressed preferences for both restraint and resolve.¹⁶ For example, 43 percent of respondents chose both restraint- and resolve-focused reasons for why they were reassured, while 33 percent chose both types of reasons for why they were not reassured.¹⁷

Among respondents whose distrust in Washington grew, the most prominent reasons relate to desires for caution and restraint. We find that 29 percent argued that the United States “should have primarily used economic and diplomatic approaches, rather than providing military support to Ukraine.” While some subjects expressed concerns that the U.S. response to Russia was inadequate, this view is rare. Just 10 percent believed the United States should have sent its armed forces, although slightly more (16 percent) suggest Washington should have provided greater support to Ukraine’s military. The same percentage (16 percent) called for further support to NATO members in addition to backing Ukraine. These findings reiterate support for the restraint hypothesis (*H2*) and raise questions about the literature’s general consensus on the strict relationship between resolve and reassurance (*H1*).

The second most common reason why distrust in the United States grew might be susceptibility to disinformation about the causes of the conflict. A total of 17 percent of respondents said their decreased confidence in Washington was because of its responsibility for the war.¹⁸ This rationale was particularly prominent among states with closer pre-war ties with Russia. These states include Egypt, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. In Saudi Arabia, 29 percent of respondents saw the war as the fault of the United States, compared to 24 percent in Egypt, 18 percent in India, 14 percent in South Africa, and 10 percent in Nigeria. Still, Washington faced only limited resistance from strategic partners with amicable pre-war relationships with Russia.

Evaluating Reassurance-By-Restraint or -Resolve

Because reassurance is perceptual, we explore the data further to identify which individuals were reassured by signals of restraint and resolve. This enables us to uncover the conditions wherein these two contrasting strategies will reassure. Table 1 reports linear regression models assessing which individuals are reassured by actions of restraint (Models 1 and 2) or actions of resolve (Models 3 and 4). We now include U.S. respondents to evaluate if their views about restraint and resolve differ because of Washington’s great power status.

A great power can reassure individuals in multiple ways. We code respondents as reassured by restraint in two cases. We do so if their explanations for why the United States’ (for U.S. respondents, NATO’s) actions assured them were because troops were not sent to Ukraine and/or because of a sufficiently cautious response to the war.¹⁹ We code respondents as reassured by resolve if their explanations for reassurance center on direct support to the Ukrainian Armed Forces or increased NATO military

Table 1. Explaining Respondent Justifications for Reassurance

	Dependent variable			
	Reassured by restraint		Reassured by resolve	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Dove	0.060*** (0.007)	0.017 (0.019)	−0.045*** (0.008)	−0.027 (0.023)
Vulnerability–High	0.164*** (0.021)	0.239*** (0.074)	−0.128*** (0.025)	−0.093 (0.092)
Vulnerability–Low	0.207*** (0.027)	0.293*** (0.087)	−0.253*** (0.032)	−0.229** (0.108)
Vulnerability–Moderate	0.093*** (0.023)	0.248*** (0.087)	−0.202*** (0.028)	−0.237** (0.109)
USA	−0.019 (0.023)	0.048 (0.098)	−0.106*** (0.028)	−0.139 (0.122)
Security Cooperation	0.071*** (0.025)	0.029 (0.071)	0.002 (0.029)	0.115 (0.089)
Partner	0.245*** (0.023)	0.206*** (0.065)	0.132*** (0.028)	0.182** (0.081)
Adversary	0.160*** (0.057)	0.231 (0.148)	0.031 (0.068)	0.280 (0.184)
Favorability–Russia	−0.006 (0.007)	−0.017 (0.019)	−0.140*** (0.009)	−0.122*** (0.023)
Favorability–Ukraine	−0.046*** (0.008)	−0.038* (0.023)	0.148*** (0.010)	0.066** (0.028)
Favorability–USA	0.023*** (0.008)	−0.029 (0.024)	0.026*** (0.010)	0.022 (0.030)
Democracy	0.002 (0.001)	−0.004 (0.004)	0.001 (0.002)	0.0002 (0.005)
Age	0.006*** (0.0004)	0.004*** (0.001)	0.002*** (0.0005)	0.001 (0.002)
Female	−0.038*** (0.012)	−0.034 (0.035)	−0.111*** (0.014)	−0.109** (0.043)
Veteran	−0.0003 (0.001)	−0.001 (0.001)	−0.002* (0.001)	0.00004 (0.002)
Education	−0.010*** (0.005)	0.010 (0.015)	0.018*** (0.006)	0.033* (0.019)
Income	0.005 (0.003)	−0.001 (0.008)	0.012*** (0.004)	0.015 (0.010)
Constant	0.403*** (0.051)	0.685*** (0.149)	1.021*** (0.062)	1.053*** (0.185)
Observations	19,179	2,081	19,179	2,081
R ²	0.038	0.037	0.050	0.028
Adjusted R ²	0.037	0.029	0.050	0.020
Residual Std. Error	0.799 (df = 19,161)	0.776 (df = 2063)	0.955 (df = 19,161)	0.964 (df = 2063)

Note: * $p < .1$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$.

capabilities.²⁰ Respondents can select multiple reasons for reassurance. Indeed, the median reassured subject selected one “restraint” rationale and one “resolve” rationale.

For each dependent variable (reassurance-by-restraint or reassurance-by-resolve), we show two models. The first (Models 1 and 3) include all respondents in the sample except those whose reassurance declined. The second specifications (Models 2 and 4) include only a subset of “semi-elite” respondents, who report working in law, national security, government, or international organizations.²¹ We expect these respondents to be more knowledgeable about geopolitics than others. Coalescence between the larger public opinion sample and this smaller, specialized sample shows how public opinion might mirror or even shape and constrain

higher-level political discussions. This semi-elite sample represents those with a larger stake in, and knowledge of, the international system. They may have more similar information and backgrounds to powerful political decision-makers than the general public. They may also have greater opportunities to influence the behavior of political actors. However, significant differences remain between this “semi-elite” sample and a true policymaker sample. Nevertheless, this subset may shed more insight into elite thinking than the broader sample.

We now consider *H3*, predicting hawkish individuals will be more reassured by demonstrations of resolve and doves by restraint. We use a standard measure of hawkishness/dovishness by asking respondents how much they agree or disagree with “The use of military force only makes problems worse.” Supporting *H3*, we find that dovish respondents are more reassured by restraint and less reassured by resolve than hawks. However, this result does not hold for the semi-elite sample, who may rely less on heuristics and more on contingent assessments.²²

To test *H4A* and *H4B*, we assess how respondents’ vulnerability to escalation affects views on reassurance. We code vulnerability by considering each country’s geographical location and geopolitical alignments. NATO states that are geographically close to or share borders with Russia—Poland, Slovakia, and Sweden—are “frontline” states. This is the base category in Table 1. Other NATO states are coded as “high” vulnerability to escalation. U.S. allies and partners that are likely to either contribute directly to an expanded conflict or have relevant U.S. resources re-allocated to the European theater in the event of expanded conflict are coded as “moderate” vulnerability. These are Australia, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. We also code China as moderately vulnerable given its partnership with Russia. States with “low” vulnerability are extra-regional, unlikely to become directly involved in an expanded Russo-Ukrainian War, and unlikely to see significant deterioration of any U.S. security assurances in the event of expanded war. Brazil, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, and South Africa comprise this category.

Compared to frontline respondents, high-, moderate-, and low-vulnerability individuals show greater support for restraint and less for resolve. Those most vulnerable to Russian aggression prefer signals of resolve that could bear on defeating or deterring Russia. In contrast, populations in states facing fewer immediate risks prefer caution in responding to Russia’s actions, which would reduce their chances of entanglement. This supports *H4A* and contradicts *H4B*. Respondents in frontline states prioritize deterrence through strength, while those elsewhere may wish to reduce inadvertent escalation through restraint.

H5 suggests respondents’ national relationship with the United States will affect how they perceive reassurance signaling. To test this hypothesis, we classify the type of relationship each state has with Washington. We code five categories: treaty allies (Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Poland, Slovakia, South Korea, Sweden, Turkey, and the United Kingdom); states with significant security cooperation but no formal security guarantee (Mexico, Saudi Arabia, and Taiwan); non-allied cooperative partners (Egypt, India, Indonesia, Nigeria, and South Africa); and competitors (China). We also include a dummy variable separating

Americans. The inclusion of U.S. respondents improves the external validity of our analysis because *H5* relates to individual-level beliefs about reassurance.

Treaty allies compose the base category in [Table 1](#). Compared to allies, respondents from states with significant security cooperation mildly prefer restraint, although this finding does not hold in the semi-elite sample. Respondents from states with limited U.S. partnerships show greater reassurance from both restraint and resolve. After all, those with stronger connections with the United States have less demanding reassurance needs, while those with weaker connections face higher costs from both insufficient resolve and insufficient restraint. Unsurprisingly, Chinese respondents prefer U.S. demonstrations of restraint more than allied respondents.

We also evaluate control variables that could correlate with views on reassurance. For example, we assess views towards Russia and Ukraine by asking about favorability. Though we expect favorability ratings will correlate with vulnerability to Russian aggression and relationship with Washington, these subjective views could still indicate individual receptivity to messages of reassurance. As expected, respondents with more favorable views toward Russia are less reassured by resolve. Respondents with more favorable views toward Ukraine are more reassured by resolve.

Because the Russo-Ukrainian War has been framed as a contest between autocracy and democracy, we control for regime type. Respondents from more democratic countries are slightly more likely to prefer reassurance-by-restraint, though this finding does not hold for semi-elites. Regime type does not bear on reassurance-by-resolve. These findings suggest the democracy-versus-autocracy framing has had little impact on reassurance. Otherwise, we would find citizens of democracies preferring stronger responses to Russian aggression. This evidence indicates that Washington can reassure democracies and non-democracies alike, mitigating concerns that democratic backsliding in some countries will mean reduced international cooperation.

We likewise include measurements of age, gender, veteran status, education level, and income. Older respondents are slightly more reassured by restraint. Females generally show lower levels of reassurance from restraint and resolve alike. More educated respondents are less reassured by restraint (full sample) and more reassured by resolve (both samples). Veteran status and income level inconsistently correlate with dependent variables and may not substantively shape reassurance.

In [Table 1](#), we focus on the reasons why respondents are reassured, showing that individual-level traits lend valuable insight into the conditions under which restraint or resolve reassure. Additionally, in [Online Supplement 5.3](#), we provide a robustness test evaluating the inverse, when respondents fail to be reassured by U.S. actions. We find similar results highlighting the importance of geopolitical positioning, vulnerability, and hawkish or dovish attitudes.

Conclusion

Decades of scholarship presume strong, direct demonstrations of military capability provide reassurance during crises. Our study of global public opinion towards the Russo-Ukrainian War suggests the restraint Washington has shown may have been

instrumental in shaping global views in its favor. Even without military intervention—or perhaps because of a lack of it—the U.S. response to the war has been met with widespread approval.

Respondents' reactions to U.S. behavior following Russia's February 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine offer evidence of the effectiveness of reassurance-by-restraint. Although Washington did not militarily intervene on behalf of Kyiv, the general consensus has been that its more restrained engagement—including the sanctions imposition and willingness to upgrade force posture in East-Central Europe—reaffirms regional security commitments. Likewise, it also demonstrates thoughtful and cautious decision-making that prioritizes the well-being of NATO states—perhaps at the cost of intervention in Ukraine. Whether these perceptions of U.S. reassurance will generalize to other crises requires further investigation. Nevertheless, our study demonstrates that prior views on the use of force, geopolitical positioning, and conflict vulnerability predict whether individuals will be more reassured by resolve or restraint.

Of course, fissures exist within NATO and among U.S. partners regarding their pre-war approaches to Russia. However, our data show that even the most vulnerable front-line states in NATO expressed a consensus view on the importance of NATO and the trustworthiness of the United States. Across the globe, U.S. partners increased their faith in Washington. Rather than believing that non-intervention in Ukraine was a bad omen for Taiwan, U.S. partners and allies in East Asia saw the cautious U.S. response as evidence of credibility. This strategy enhanced the U.S. reputation as a reliable partner. Little in our data indicates that Washington failed to generate a cohesive response to Russian aggression among both the Global North and Global South. Our findings instead suggest that the United States—by and large with few exceptions—succeeded in maintaining or improving its reputation among its myriad strategic partners and their publics, including those in the Global South. We thus find that the U.S. reputation was strengthened in the face of Europe's greatest crisis in decades.

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Data Availability Statement

Replication data for this article may be obtained from (Sukin et al. 2025).

Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

Notes

1. Henry (2020) evaluates reassurance of allies primarily during peacetime, but evidence about crisis reassurance is rarer.
2. For an exception, see Kertzer (2016).
3. For locations, see Online Supplement 5.1.
4. See, for example, Huth (1988), Mattes (2012), Weisiger and Yarhi-Milo (2015), Harvey and Mitton (2016), and LeVeck and Narang (2017).
5. Emphasis original.
6. On reassurance between adversaries, see Cebul et al. (2021), Lupton (2018), and Yarhi-Milo et al. (2018). On reassurance between allies, see Ko (2019), Allison et al. (2022), and Sukin and Lanoszka (2024).
7. A notable exception is Sukin and Lanoszka (2024), who examine the reassurance potential of sanctions, political statements, and diplomatic engagement.
8. All respondents consented and are anonymous. The survey obtained ethics approval from the London School of Economics. Replication data is available at <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/O9XGTX> (Sukin et al. 2025).
9. The language in brackets depended on respondents' country's arrangement with Washington. U.S. respondents were instead asked: "Does NATO's response to the Russia–Ukraine war make you trust NATO countries more or less as allies for the United States?"
10. For example, one might believe Washington is credible to NATO but not toward their own government.
11. See Online Supplement 5.5.
12. For a detailed look at many of these regional dynamics, see Sukin and Seo (2024).

13. For a strong example, see [Fravel \(2023\)](#).
14. See [Online Supplement 5.6](#).
15. Just 4 percent chose other reasons.
16. Correlations between explanations are shown in [Online Supplement 5.7](#).
17. See the section on “Evaluating Reassurance-by-Restraint or -Resolve.”
18. Approximately 6 percent of respondents attributed their decreased faith to other reasons.
19. This variable is coded 0 if respondents selected neither statement, 1 if they selected one statement, and 2 if they selected both.
20. U.S. respondents could select “NATO members have increased their defense capabilities.” A 0–2 score indicates the number of statements selected. If respondents attribute reassurance to U.S. economic and diplomatic policies, this is counted as neither reassurance by resolve nor restraint. Though this likely indicates a preference for restrained policy, some individuals could view stringent sanctions as demonstrating resolve. Thus, we present a harder test of our arguments about restraint by omitting this rationale.
21. Lawyers may be the least likely of these groups to be involved directly with policy, but the strong pipeline between law and government—and the typically higher education levels and incomes of lawyers—means lawyers may be roughly representative of the broader pool of policy elites. For example, U.S. policymakers are often lawyers. See M. C. [Miller \(2002\)](#).
22. [Online Supplement 5.4](#) shows little evidence that hawkishness interacts with the relationship to the United States.

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