CONTEMPORARY INTERVENTIONS AND REGIONALISM:
THE CASES OF UKRAINE AND VENEZUELA

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Master's Thesis

Ankara, 2024

To My Beloved Mother

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I am grateful for the guidance and encouragement my mother Meral DENİZ and my sister Melis DENİZ GÖÇER gave me throughout my undergraduate and graduate studies. Thanks to their support, I overcame many difficulties during this process. I dedicate this thesis and many other successes I will gain on this road to my beloved mother because she made me the woman I am today. Without her, there would be none.

Secondly, I would like to thank my respected teacher and supervisor, Prof. Dr. Mine Pınar GÖZEN ERCAN, for her worthy guidance and professional attitude in completing this master's thesis. Pınar Hoca was the only teacher I looked up to throughout my undergraduate and graduate studies, who made me love academia, she is the epitome of a strong woman. I would also like to thank all the professors I had the opportunity to work with during my master's degree. Also, I would like to thank to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ayşe Ömür ATMACA and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Gonca OĞUZ GÖK for their valuable insights and feedback, I am grateful and honoured to have presented my research to them, and I am also honoured to be in such a powerful group of women.

I am deeply grateful to my dearest friends that I gained during my undergraduate years at Hacettepe University and my partner for their support, guidance, and encouragement they provided me throughout my thesis process. If it weren't for them and their constant telling me that I could do it, I wouldn't have been able to complete this thesis.

Finally, I am grateful for my own commitment and resilience throughout this journey. I take pride in the dedication and hard work I have invested in this thesis, which has been an integral part of my growth and learning.

ABSTRACT

DENİZ, Özlem Bengisu. *Contemporary Interventions and Regionalism: The Cases of Ukraine and Venezuela,* Master's Thesis, Ankara, 2024

The international domain is characterized by diverse interventionist policies, wherein conflicts that escalate beyond the control of a nation often attract external intervention from neighbouring states, regional powers, or the broader international community. Such interventions, sanctioned under Chapter VII of the United Nations (UN) Charter by the Security Council, can range from military actions to non-forceful measures. However, interventions frequently occur both with and without formal authorization, driven by the foreign policy priorities of the intervening actors and the perceived urgency of the conflict.

In the contemporary global environment, major powers increasingly leverage their regional influence either to mediate regional disputes or justify intervention in the internal affairs and external engagements of specific states. The 21st century has witnessed a pronounced trend among great powers to shape their foreign policy strategies around their regionalist roles.

This thesis seeks to scrutinize the interventionist behaviours of regional great powers, focusing on the recent cases of Ukraine and Venezuela. It aims to dissect the dynamics of regionalism as it pertains to interventionism, providing a comparative analysis of US interventionism and regionalism in Venezuela, and Russian interventionism and regionalism in Ukraine. By examining these contemporary cases, it endeavours to elucidate the interplay between regionalism and interventionism, highlighting both similarities and differences in the approaches and impacts of these regional superpowers.

Keywords

Interventionism, Regionalism, Ukrainian Conflict, Venezuelan Crisis, US Foreign Policy, Russian Foreign Policy.

ÖZET

DENİZ, Özlem Bengisu. *Yakın Dönem Müdahaleleri ve Bölgeselcilik: Ukrayna ve Venezuela Örnekleri,* Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara, 2024

Uluslararası alan, bir ulusun kontrolü dışına çıkan çatışmaların sıklıkla komşu devletlerden, bölgesel güçlerden veya daha geniş uluslararası topluluktan dış müdahaleyi çektiği çeşitli müdahaleci politikalarla karakterize edilir. Birleşmiş Milletler (BM) Şartı'nın VII. Bölümü kapsamında Güvenlik Konseyi tarafından onaylanan bu tür müdahaleler, askeri eylemlerden zorlayıcı olmayan önlemlere kadar çeşitlilik gösterebilir. Ancak müdahaleler sıklıkla, müdahale eden aktörlerin dış politika öncelikleri ve çatışmanın algılanan aciliyeti nedeniyle hem resmi izinle hem de resmi izin olmadan gerçekleşir. Çağdaş küresel ortamda, büyük güçler ya bölgesel anlaşmazlıklara aracılık etmek ya da belirli devletlerin iç işlerine ve dış ilişkilerine müdahaleyi meşrulaştırmak için bölgesel nüfuzlarını giderek daha fazla kullanmaktadırlar. 21. yüzyılda, büyük güçlerin arasındaki dış politika stratejilerini bölgeselci rolleri etrafında şekillendirme eğilimlerine tanık olduk. Bu yüksek lisans tezi, son dönemdeki Ukrayna ve Venezuela örneklerine odaklanarak bölgesel süper güçlerin müdahaleci davranışlarını incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Müdahalecilikle ilgili bölgeselciliğin dinamiklerini incelemeyi, ABD'nin Venezuela'daki müdahaleciliği ve bölgeciliği ile Ukrayna'daki Rusya müdahaleciliği ve bölgeciliğinin karşılaştırmalı bir analizini sunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Tez, bu güncel vakaları inceleyerek bölgeselcilik ile müdahalecilik arasındaki etkileşimi aydınlatmaya çalışmakta ve bu bölgesel süper güçlerin yaklaşımları ve etkileri arasındaki benzerlik ve farklılıkları vurgulamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Müdahalecilik, Bölgeselcilik, Ukrayna Çatışması, Venezuela Krizi, ABD Dış Politikası, Rus Dış Politikası.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AU	African Union
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CNE	Supreme Court and National Electoral Council (of Venezuela)
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
CW	Cold War
EEU	Eurasian Economic Union
ELN	National Liberation Army of Colombia
EU	European Union
EUFOR	European Force
FARC-D	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
ICISS	International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty
IFOR	Implementation Force
IOs	International Organisations
IR	International Relations

MERCOSUR   The Southern Common Market

NAFTA   North American Free Trade Agreement

NATO   North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

NRA   New Regionalism Approach

OAS   Organization of American States

OECD   Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

OHCHR   Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

OSCE   Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

R2P   Responsibility to Protect

RTAs   Regional Trade Agreements

SFOR   Stabilization Force

SU   Soviet Union

US   United States

USMCA   US-Mexico-Canada Agreement

USSR   The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

UN   United Nations

UNGA   United Nations General Assembly

UNSC   United Nations Security Council

V4   Visegrad Group

WOA   World Order Approach

INTRODUCTION

The 1990s brought significant changes to the international system. It is typical for complex processes like dissolution to give rise to new states while paving the way for difficult circumstances and the possibility of widespread human rights violations. The increasing number and severity of problems lead to greater involvement of local, national and international organisations in internal disputes and crises. At the end of the Cold War (CW), new global trends resulted in new security understandings. A wide range of nations, including global powers like the United States (US) and the Soviet Union (SU), as well as states from the former SU, the Pacific region, Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and most of Latin America saw this shift in security perspective emerge as a critical agenda item. With an impact on nations at various stages of development and sovereignty, these adjustments represented a more extensive realignment in international relations.

In the 1990s, the transformations of the world order, structure, and agenda items were like domino pieces in the global system. The bipolar world system was the first piece in the set of transformations. During the CW era, there was not only bipolarity in politics but also dualism in economics, societies, understandings, and perspectives, that is, from the material to mental elements. The dissolution of the 68-year-old SU meant the end of bipolarity, and hence, a transition to a multipolar world order. From a liberal perspective, the new global shift shaped security thinking by policies such as preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping, and peace-making, as expressed in the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General's "Agenda for Peace". In this context, the emphasis was placed on strengthening regional mechanisms to handle potential security issues while simultaneously managing internal political crises from the perspective of intervention. It was seen that adopting policies such as preventive diplomacy and peacekeeping, and using methods like third-party mediation and good offices in conflicts were very effective and crucial (Fry, 2019, p. 253).

Placing at its core the notions of interventionism and regionalism, this thesis analyses regional great powers' regionalist policies and interventionist behaviours through the examples of the US and Russia. With a comparative analysis of the US intervention in Venezuela and Russia's intervention in Ukraine between 2018-2024 for Venezuela and

2014-2022 for Ukraine, this thesis aims to unveil the roots of interventionist behaviours and regionalist policies of these regional superpowers and highlights the intertwined nature and dynamics of the two notions.

As regionalism in the 20th and the early 21st centuries evolved in response to changing geopolitical dynamics and global challenges, the understanding of interventionism had its own transformations that are deeply rooted in historical contexts. In general terms, whether considered a "right", a "duty", a "responsibility", or a "humanitarian act", intervention has been a much-debated concept (Bellamy, 2015, p. 21; Greenwood, 1993, p. 34; Roberts, 2000, p. 3). In International Relations (IR) and international law literatures, many works debate the meaning and scope, the implementation and intentions, the timing, as well as the legality and legitimacy of interventions. Through various ethical and theoretical lenses and discussions on intervention, the emphasis on security issues has ceased to be a national problem, and humanitarian-societal values have become important.

Looking at the existing literature and discussions on intervention, there are various research questions and explanations. Intervention is a broad concept, and one should distinguish between political and legal justifications, non-military and military actions, individual and collective interferences, self-determination cases for intervention and the humanitarian aspects of interventions (Wright, 1957, p. 88). Therefore, for the purposes of this thesis, the humanitarian aspects of interventions (including the notion of the responsibility to protect) are excluded from the scope of the study. In the literature, the notion of intervention is defined by some scholars through the logic of anarchy (Goldman, 1994, p. 125; Kınacıoğlu, 2005, p. 15), whereas others focus on the capabilities and the material side of the concept (Kardas, 2003, p. 36; Sellers, 2014, p. 1). Regarding the legality and legitimacy of interventions, most studies are centred around questions like whether or not non-authorised interventions are illegal (Bellamy, 2015; Heraclides & Dialla, 2015b; Kioko, 2003; Kınacıoğlu, 2005; Wright, 1957). Intervention, by default, is considered to be an illegal action since it violates state sovereignty and is prone to threaten the independence of states. Furthermore, whether or not there should be external interventions has also been discussed widely. Some scholars argue that states should deal with their problems independently; by doing so, they also raise the question of what

happens when a state begins to violate the rights of its people and becomes a threat to them. Hence, it is asked in such cases if intervention becomes a "right" or a "duty"? (Bellamy, 2015, p. 21; Greenwood, 1993, p. 34; Roberts, 2000, p. 3).

In such scenarios, regionalism can play a pivotal role in understanding the very nature of interventions. While interventionism navigates the vast expanse of geopolitics, regionalism illuminates how regional alliances, with the combination of regional-, local- and self-interests, shape the dynamics of interventions. As Petersen and Schulz (2018, p. 105) observe, regionalism is an elusive concept. There are disparities and differences between countries not only globally but also within regions. These regional disparities are aimed to be reduced through organisations, agreements, regional development policies, and by supporting economic activities in regions (OECD, nd.). In this regard, regionalism is an essential notion in international politics, international law, and IR. In the literature, most works are centred around the themes of old regionalism–new regionalism, European dominance in regionalism, and globalism–regionalism discussions (Farrell et al., 2005; 2002; Hurrell, 2005; Lamy, 2002; Lombaerde et al., 2010; Söderbaum & Shaw, 2003). In old regionalism studies, the emphasis is on objectives and content. On the other hand, studies that emphasise new regionalism focus on diversity, changes in the system, and multilevel analysis of cases (Gamble & Payne, 1996; Hettne, 2002; Lombaerde et al., 2010). "The classical integration theories in the 1950s and 1960s dealt with European integration, and little else" (Hettne, 2002, p. 326) Beginning from the 1950s and through the 1980s, there was an "explosion of various forms of regionalisms and regional projects", one of the most debated examples was the "widening and deepening of the European Union (EU)" (Söderbaum, 2003, p. 1). Most contemporary studies of regionalism focus on the discussion of globalism and regionalism. There are various perceptions and identifications regarding the relations between these two concepts, but all agree on the point that regionalism and globalism are mutually constitutive processes (Hettne, 2002, p. 329; Hettne & Söderbaum, 1998; Hurrell, 2005; Lombaerde et al., 2010). Globalisation has significantly contributed to the rise of regionalism and regional arrangements since they mutually drive each other's development (Gamble & Payne, 1996; Hettne, 1999, p. 3, 2002, p. 329; Hurrell, 2005; Lombaerde et al., 2010).

Based on this overview of the literature on interventionism and regionalism and their interconnected complexities, this thesis asks how (and to what extent) regionalism impacts the interventionist policies of (more) powerful states, with reference to the specific examples of the US and Russia. In this regard, its main hypothesis is that regionalism significantly influences the interventionist policies of powerful states, and hence, shapes their foreign policy decisions and actions in specific geographic areas. Accordingly, the focus will be on US interventionism in Venezuela and Russian interventionism in Ukraine through the regionalism perspective.

Arguably, both states' intentions in their regionalist policies and intrusive actions display similarities. This thesis employs a descriptive methodological approach emphasising the systematic analysis of primary and secondary sources to deepen this understanding. By doing so, this study ensures a comprehensive and nuanced exploration of the cases. It comparatively studies the cases of interventions by the US in Venezuela and Russia in Ukraine to determine whether the proposed hypothesis is valid in the cases of Venezuela and Ukraine. As Blatter (2018, p. 68) describes, "a case study is a research approach in which one or a few instances of a phenomenon are studied in depth". In comparative case research, two or more cases are studied "independently of one another, with a conclusion which engages the two cases side by side" (Hancke, 2009, p. 72). For this reason, conducting a "descriptive case study" (Gerring & Cojocaru, 2016, p. 396) based on comparison will demonstrate how regionalism impacts the utilisation of interventionist policies of powerful states.

The cases of Ukraine and Venezuela are chosen for this thesis because they present significant and contemporary examples of how major powers employ regionalism and interventionism to influence geopolitical dynamics. It is essential to analyse these cases for several reasons. Both of the recent and ongoing instances are significant contemporary examples to examine current international relations dynamics. This helps us to understand how regionalism and interventionism function in today's geopolitical landscape. However, there is also a challenge that needs to be addressed, which is also a reason for the delimitation of the time period that is studied in this thesis. The Ukrainian case is a current one in which there is also an ongoing war, and this raises a problem in terms of accessing reliable data regarding the war itself. For this reason, the recent war period of

the Ukrainian crisis beginning in 2022 is excluded from the analysis. As for the Venezuelan case, the focus will be limited to the term of the Maduro regime. Moreover, Ukraine and Venezuela are in different geographic and cultural regions, offering a diverse perspective on how significant powers interpret and implement regionalism in other contexts. Ukraine lies in Eastern Europe, an area heavily influenced by historical ties to Russia and the recent EU and NATO interests, while Venezuela is in Latin America, a region where the US has had a long-standing influence. In addition, the nature of Russia's intervention in Ukraine and the US's intervention in Venezuela vary widely from military to economic measures. Russia's approach in Ukraine includes direct military intervention and annexation, whereas the US in Venezuela has mainly employed economic sanctions and diplomatic pressure. This variation allows for a broad analysis of how different types of interventions are justified and executed within the framework of regionalism. Both cases have significantly impacted the international order and raised important questions about the rules and norms governing state behaviour in the global system. The interventions have led to significant international debates about the principles of sovereignty, non-intervention, and the role of international institutions like the UN. Furthermore, Ukraine and Venezuela are strategically important for the respective intervening powers. Ukraine is crucial for Russia as being a security buffer against NATO along with the identity claims and Near Abroad policy adopted by the Russians. With its vast oil reserves, Venezuela has economic and energy-related importance to the US. Moreover, as the US positions itself as a beacon of democracy, Venezuela's democratisation is vital to the prosperity of the US and the rest of Latin America. Lastly, these cases illustrate the power dynamics between regional powers and their neighbours and how these powers use regionalism to influence and justify their policies and actions.

Looking at the policies of the US and the Russian Federation—two great powers also assuming significant influence in their respective regions—reveals how interventionist actions are motivated by their respective regional aspirations. Policies adopted and actions undertaken will be examined first, focusing on the US's presence in Latin America and Russia's presence in Eastern Europe. Then, the thesis will focus on the analysis of the contemporary cases of Ukraine and Venezuela. Over the last few years, we have seen that Russia's desires for Ukraine have become increasingly sharper. In the face of the risk of the gradually changing order in Europe spreading to Eastern Europe,

especially to Ukraine, Russia's leadership role and policies regarding post-Soviet countries turned into intrusive action first in 2014 and again in 2022 in Ukraine. On the other hand, in the case of Venezuela, with the outbreak of internal unrest in the country and the corrupt election processes, the US's presence in Latin America, especially in Venezuela, was reminded once again. Since American-Venezuelan relations are of great importance to the US, getting involved in the situation was crucial.

To this end, in Chapter 1, different approaches concerning the meanings and importance of intervention and interventionism, as well as regionalism, will be reviewed since understanding the policies and strategies of nations is vital for a discussion of their behaviour. In the first section of this chapter, the concepts of intervention and interventionism will be thoroughly examined. This will be followed by a descriptive analysis of regionalism. The last section will discuss the interrelation between these two concepts. This will allow us to question the role and impact of regionalism in interventionism, which, as a discussion, will also provide the basis for the analyses of the following chapter. Chapter 2 provides a historical background for the Venezuelan and Ukrainian cases examining how the US and the Russian Federation have affected Latin America and Eastern Europe respectively. In Chapter 3, the US's involvement strategies and regional presence over Venezuela, and the Russian Federation's interventionist and regionalist policies over Ukraine will be critically analysed. With this comparative analysis, Chapter 3 puts forth the main discussions of the thesis, and highlights the similarities and differences between the two cases in order to understand the interrelation between interventionism and regionalism.

Following from this, this thesis argues that regionalist motivations and regional policies significantly influence and affect the interventionist behaviours of regional great powers. In this vein, the cases of the US in Venezuela and Russia in Ukraine are potent illustrations of how geopolitical ambitions and regional interests increase the interventionist behaviours and actions of great powers. In conclusion, it is seen that the cases of intervention in Venezuela and Ukraine share similar patterns. The nature and consequences of interventionism and regionalism in global politics are understood more clearly by analysing the legal considerations, economic, political, and social impacts, and the role of regional and international responses.

CHAPTER 1:
UNDERSTANDING INTERVENTIONISM AND REGIONALISM

This Chapter lays the foundation for a comprehensive exploration of the concepts of interventionism and regionalism. It aims to clarify core definitions, provide an overview of scholarly dialogues, highlight critical historical instances, and discuss the complexities involved in these concepts. The first section of Chapter 1 delves into the various definitions of intervention, emphasizing the areas that spark scholarly debates the most and exploring the classifications and distinguishing features critical to understanding the concept. The second section focuses on the concept of regionalism. The final section then examines the interrelation between interventionism and regionalism, elucidating how these concepts interact and influence each other in the international arena.

1.1. CONCEPTUALIZING INTERVENTION AND INTERVENTIONISM

Intervention and interventionism are among the most controversial and problematic grounds in international politics and international law. The literature teems with debates concerning the precise definition, interpretation, and implications of interventionism. The concept's controversial nature leads to numerous discussion themes and varying definitions. To effectively engage in these debates, it is crucial first to understand the essence of the concept, beginning with a clear understanding of the term interventionism.

1.1.1. What are Intervention and Interventionism?

The concept of intervention and its broader application, interventionism, are critical elements in international relations discourse, encompassing a spectrum of actions undertaken by external actors to influence or address issues within sovereign states. A more or less standard definition of intervention is "the act of getting involved in a situation to improve it or stop it from getting worse" (Oxford English Dictionary, ed.). The scholarly landscape, however, provides a nuanced exploration of this term and refers to its different sorts.

One side of definitions of interventionism in international relations focuses on coercive actions taken by states or coalition of states across borders to prevent or end violations of fundamental rights of individuals in another state without the permission of the state in which the intervention occurs (Oliver, 2015, p. 111). This definition emphasizes the use of force or the threat of force as a means of intervention. Heraclides and Dialla (2015a, p. 1) take note of military intervention and define it as an act "aimed at saving innocent people in other countries from massive violations of human rights." For Kardas (2003, p. 29), intervention is a forcible action undertaken by different actors to prevent or end violations of human rights through the use or threat of force. A.Roberts (2000, p. 5) describes intervention as a military action undertaken by one or more states inside the borders of "another state without the consent of its authorities, and with the purpose of preventing widespread suffering or death among the inhabitants." According to another perspective, interventionism can be viewed as a practice involving transgressive actions constituting interventionism and their routinization over time (Olsson, 2015, p. 425). This definition suggests that interventionism is not solely about singular actions but also about normalizing and institutionalizing interventions as part of international relations practices. According to Sellers (2014, p. 1), intervention comprises "any activity by one state or its agents that influences the actions or attitudes of another state, but particularly the threat or use of force, because force is particularly intrusive, particularly persuasive, and often particularly resented by those subjected to its power." Goldman (1994, p. 125) defines the reasons for intervention as conditions of anarchy, massive starvation or famine, genocidal savagery, or prevention of misery and death of innocents. However, as Greenwood (1993, p. 34) expresses, no matter how varying the definitions are, intervention is confined to cases where a significant portion of a state population is greatly threatened with death or suffering. This can be because of the actions of the government of that state, as in the examples of Iraq and Kuwait, or where states slide into anarchy, like in the cases of Liberia and Somalia. Likewise, Reus-Smit (2013, p. 1065) looks into intervention from several angles:

> First, the idea of intervention assumes an initial realm of differentiation: it assumes the extraneous and the intrinsic, the exogenous and the endogenous […] Second, intervention is an act of transgression, a crossing or violation of lines of differentiation. To intervene is to enter from the outside as an outsider. Third, intervention is purposive, it is to transgress with intent […] Finally, intervention is a transformative act. Its purpose is 'to prevent or modify a result'.

Looking at the definitions and sorts of interventions, a pivotal inquiry emerges: What may we understand from interventionism? The definitions of interventionism reflect complex interplay of political, economic, and humanitarian considerations, often raising questions about sovereignty, legitimacy, and the balance between state autonomy and international responsibility. In international relations, interventionism refers to various forms of external involvement in the affairs of sovereign states to influence or interfere in their domestic or foreign policies (Macmillan, 2013, p. 1050; Olsson, 2015, p. 429). This involvement can include diplomatic or military-security interventions for peacekeeping, conflict resolution, or other purposes (Geis & Schröder, 2024, p. 1). Interventionism can be observed in regulating and mediating conflicts between political communities and transnational social forces, serving as a specific modality of coercion (Macmillan, 2013, p. 1039). This form of interventionism is well-suited for managing conflicts and mediating disputes between different entities.

To elucidate the multifaceted nature of interventionism, we need to further explore its diverse sorts and modalities. This inquiry into the origins of interventions is essential for a comprehensive understanding. Various diplomatic, military, economic, legal, political, environmental, technological, cultural, and social interventions represent a broad spectrum of strategies used in international relations to address complex global challenges. Diplomatic interventions typically involve negotiations, mediations, and dialogues to resolve disputes and promote peace through diplomatic channels. Military interventions may include peacekeeping operations and actions in conflict zones to enforce international security mandates, often under the authorization of international bodies or regional organizations. Economic interventions significantly influences international trade relations, encompass sanctions and financial aid programs, impacts the global financial order, and contributes to tensions between nations (Borlini, 2023, p. 1; Macmillan, 2013, p. 1045). Legal interventions leverage international legal frameworks, treaties, and agreements to address international law violations, uphold human rights, and ensure compliance with legal norms. Political interventions aim to influence political processes, governance structures, and decision-making mechanisms to foster democracy, good governance, and stability (Carlsnaes, 2002, pp. 207–235). Environmental interventions focus on mitigating climate change and promoting sustainability through international agreements and policies. Technological interventions utilize advanced

technologies and digital tools to address security threats and enhance communication. Cultural interventions promote cultural exchange and understanding, facilitating cultural diplomacy and cooperation. Social interventions target social issues, advocating for social justice and improving human rights through various programs and initiatives. Collectively, these interventions are pivotal in shaping international dynamics, fostering peace, and addressing intricate issues in international relations (Carlsnaes, 2002).

As seen, interventionism in international relations involves a complex interplay of diplomatic controversies, legal frameworks, peacekeeping missions, and peacebuilding efforts. These interventions are often guided by principles of sovereignty, human rights, and collective security, reflecting the evolving norms and practices in the international arena. Thus, interventionist practices are deeply embedded in global politics and governance dynamics. These interventions are not solely about the use of force or coercion but encompass a wide range of actions and strategies to influence state behaviour, resolve conflicts, and promote stability on the international stage.

Moreover, interventionism extends beyond traditional state-centric approaches, including interventions by international organizations, regional bodies, and non-state actors. These diverse structures underscore the multi-faceted nature of interventions in international relations and the need to consider a range of actors and mechanisms in addressing global challenges. Overall, interventionism reflects a dynamic and evolving landscape of external involvement in state affairs, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding efforts. Understanding interventionism requires an appreciation of the nuanced motivations, mechanisms, and implications of interventions in shaping the global order and addressing complex geopolitical issues.

Interventionism is frequently intertwined with discussions and debates surrounding sovereignty, human rights, and democracy, as interventions are commonly rationalized on humanitarian grounds to mitigate crises and conflicts. Many scholars outline interventionism in terms of humanitarianism. This view is founded on the belief that states will act on moral grounds to benefit the population in need in case of an intervention. However, this aligns differently with the purpose of the state itself, which acts to the benefit and interest of its population (Archibald et al., 2012, p. 98). This may be because of the changed perception of the concept itself and the undisclosed desires of the

interveners. Western states, and the "first/developed world" in general terms, have recognized the utility of human rights, thus promoting human rights as a justification for military intervention (Archibald et al., 2012, p. 95). In delineating the scope of interventionism, this thesis excludes considerations of interventions primarily driven by humanitarian concerns and protection of populations facing mass atrocity crimes, focusing instead on other facets.

Another related dilemma concerning intervention and interventionism is whether to intervene or not, which both have pros and cons (Archibald et al., 2012; Goldman, 1994, p. 128; Wheeler, 2000, p. 1,166). According to Archibald et al. (2012, p. 92), while some scholars believe that "the state has a moral obligation to represent its idealized values […] as a result, intervention is required […], [others] believe that the state has a moral obligation to respect the sovereignty of foreign nations." The decision to intervene or not is never easy because what is achievable in theory may not prove to be true in practice. On the one hand, there is the question of what ought to be done, and this corresponds to the moral imperative, which is the affirmation that everyone everywhere holds an equal right to life. On the other hand, there is the question of practical capabilities. This is outside the ethical frameworks and concerns military capabilities, funding, and strategies (Archibald et al., 2012, p. 95). From this point, the discussion about the necessity of an intervention comes to a deadlock. As Wheeler (2000, p. 1) suggests, "*'[d]oing something'* to rescue non-citizens facing the extreme is likely to provoke the charge of interference in the internal affairs of another state, while *'doing nothing'* can lead to accusations of moral indifference."

1.1.2. The Legal Basis for Interventions

The legal foundations of interventionism are complex, reflecting the nuanced interplay between legal norms, state obligations, and global governance structures. At the core of these legalities is the principle of collective security, as contained in the UN Charter. This principle authorises interventions by international bodies to address violations of or threats to international peace and security, as well as acts of aggression, thereby ensuring global stability and upholding the collective security of nations. Additionally, regional organizations are empowered to undertake enforcement actions within their respective

regions based on regional agreements and mandates that provide a legal framework for responding to conflicts and security threats.

Historical evidence shows that most interventions are initiated by neighbouring states or regional actors, driven by political and economic motives to restore order (Kardas, 2003, p. 40). Under Chapter VIII, the UN Charter explicitly underscores regional organisations' role in maintaining global peace and security. Accordingly, Article 52 states: "The Members of the UN entering into such arrangements or constituting such agencies shall make every effort to achieve pacific settlement of local disputes through such regional arrangements or by such regional agencies before referring them to the Security Council" (UN, 1945, p. 11). Moreover, Article 53 states "[t]he Security Council shall, where appropriate, utilize such regional arrangements or agencies for enforcement action under its authority. However, no enforcement action shall be taken under regional arrangements or by regional agencies without the authorization of the Security Council" (UN, 1945, p. 11). For example, As (Kınacıoğlu, 2005, p. 33) noted actual instances illustrate the active involvement of regional entities in peacekeeping efforts:

> [T]he 1961 Arab League Force deployed in Kuwait, the 1965 Inter-American Peace Force deployed in the Dominican Republic and established by the Organization of American States, the 1976 Inter-Arab Deterrence Force in Lebanon sponsored by the Arab League, the 1981-1982 Organization of African Union Force in Chad, and, the 1995 IFOR [Implementation Force] /SFOR [Stabilization Force] and 2004 EUFOR [European Force], in Bosnia Herzegovina established by NATO and the EU respectively.

International and regional organisations operate with a shared mandate to maintain global peace and security, yet their roles are nuanced to foster effective collaboration. The UN, vested with overarching authority, ensures the maintenance of international peace, as seen in its coordinated efforts with the African Union (AU) in Somalia through the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and its partnership with the League of Arab States during the Syrian crisis. Similarly, the diplomacy and mediation efforts in Kenya by a joint AU/UN envoy, Kofi Annan, exemplify the synergy between global and regional actors in conflict resolution (Bellamy, 2015, p. 36). Under the auspices of the UN, regional organizations like the AU engage directly with local disputes, often acting as first responders due to their proximity and regional understanding. These organizations operate within a legal framework established by the UN Charter, specifically under

Chapter VIII, which not only legitimizes but mandates their preliminary efforts in dispute resolution before escalating issues to the Security Council. This system underscores the pivotal role of regional entities in the initial handling of conflicts, ensuring a more immediate and culturally nuanced response. Further supported by the UN General Assembly (UNGA) Resolutions such as 2625 (XXV) of 1970 and A/RES/36/103 of 1981, which advocate peaceful dispute resolution and non-interference, these collaborative efforts highlight the importance of a cohesive and legally structured approach to international peacekeeping (Raynova, 2017, pp. 2–3).

Nonetheless, interventions often challenge state sovereignty, violating the principle of non-intervention. The use of force and intervention in internal affairs are prohibited under international law. Accordingly, Article 2(4) of the UN Charter establishes that "all Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the UN" (UN, 1945, p. 3). Moreover, Article 2(7) states that:

> Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the UN to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state or shall require the Members to submit such matters to settlement under the present Charter; but this principle shall not prejudice the application of enforcement measures under Chapter VII (UN, 1945, p. 3).

Likewise, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) (1975, p. 6) highlights the principle of non-intervention as follows:

> The participating States will refrain from any intervention, direct or indirect, individual or collective, in the internal or external affairs falling within the domestic jurisdiction of another participating State, regardless of their mutual relations.
>
> They will accordingly refrain from any form of armed intervention or threat of such intervention against another participating State.
>
> They will likewise, in all circumstances, refrain from any other act of military, political, economic, or coercion designed to subordinate to their interest the exercise by another participating State of the rights inherent in its sovereignty and thus to secure advantages of any kind.
>
> Accordingly, they will, inter alia, refrain from direct or indirect assistance to terrorist activities, or to subversive or other activities directed towards the violent overthrow of the regime of another participating State.

There are several pivotal questions in this regard:

> Is legality through UN Security Council authorization indispensable? Is a non-authorized intervention, by definition, illegal or legal given an alternative reading of the UN Charter? Can intervention be condoned if it appears legitimate even though it is technically illegal? […] where to place the threshold for intervening with or without UN Security Council authorization on systematic human rights violations? (such as systematic discrimination akin to apartheid or 'internal colonialism') […] which cases to intervene (with or without UN authorization), in a protracted internal war (Liberia, Syria), in a 'Hobbesian' war of all against all (Somalia), a separatist war (Kosovo), or only to put an end to one-sided onslaught (Rwanda), or in all four cases? […] problem of abuse (wrong intentions and ulterior motives), how can it be checked? UN authorization, collective intervention, and intergovernmental supervision may do the trick, but what if they are not forthcoming? […] Should intervention take place only after the exhaustion of all peaceful means? […] There is also the need for a reasonable estimate of a successful outcome, that is, of attaining the humanitarian goals, avoiding 'noble intentions and bloody results'? (Heraclides & Dialla, 2015a, pp. 4–5).

Legal and illegal interventions delineate actions based on their adherence to or violation of established international laws, treaties, and norms. Legal interventions are assumed to comply with international law and operate under the consent of involved parties or authorisation by international bodies. These include diplomatic negotiations, peacekeeping operations, and adherence to international legal frameworks, all aimed at fostering cooperation and resolving conflicts within the scope of legal statutes. Conversely, illegal interventions violate international law and state sovereignty or act without authorisation, often leading to disputes and broader challenges in the international arena. Such interventions typically involve unilateral military actions, breaches of state sovereignty, and non-compliance with international legal norms. These actions are against established international legal principles and lead to legal and diplomatic challenges. Therefore, while legal interventions aim to enhance international relations by fostering compliance and cooperation, illegal interventions disrupt these relations and undermine the rule of international law. Of course, while examining these circumstances, the type of justifications (political or legal), type of interventions (military or non-military), size of the intervention (individual or collective), status of authorisation, or the motives for the intervention (e.g. self-determination or international action) should be distinguished.

Using military force as a foreign policy tool is generally prohibited under international law (Kardas, 2003, p. 22). In such a situation, international law recognizes states'

competence to make treaties and mutual assistance agreements for collective self-defence and cooperation. Such legal frameworks allow states to legitimize interventions under specific conditions. However, exploitation of these treaties is cautioned against, as demonstrated by historical interpretations, such as Norway's stance on NATO's intervention rights without a formal request from the legitimate government (Wright, 1957, p. 83).

As another way of legitimate intervention, through the Security Council acting under Chapter VII of its Charter, the UN holds exclusive authority "to take enforcement action in cases of a threat to or breach of international peace and security" (Kioko, 2003, p. 820). However, the "Security Council is first required to determine whether a threat to peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression exists before it can take measures" (Kınacıoğlu, 2005, pp. 31–32). The Charter draws a sharp line between military and non-military and forceful and non-forceful measures since its first purpose is maintaining international peace and security. In a conflict, the UN permits states to protest such violations through their rights defined under international law by putting diplomatic and economic pressures through negotiation, conciliation, or arbitration, made available by customary international law, treaty, or the Charter. Hence, the UN Charter prioritizes non-military actions (Wright, 1957, p. 88). Non-forceful measures, peaceful and diplomatic means, or financial sanctions are encouraged.

This legal backdrop sets the stage for a more nuanced discussion of interventionism, analysed through various frameworks, including self-defence, maintenance of international order, and the principle of state sovereignty. Each perspective offers a unique insight into the complexities of international relations and the varying justifications for interventions on the global stage. The following sub-sections will further examine these frameworks, providing a deeper understanding of the principles and motivations underpinning interventionism.

1.1.2.1. Self-defence in Understanding Interventionism

The policies that shape the path to interventions vary by decades. The historical and philosophical underpinnings of interventionism have evolved significantly from the 16th

century to the present, reflecting shifts in legal, political, and ethical perspectives. Initially, looking into the 16th and 17th centuries, international lawyers like Hugo Grotius and Emmerich de Vattel, or the 18th and 19th centuries philosophers like Immanuel Kant, emphasize concepts like intervention, sovereignty, independence, self-defense, etc. In his "The Rights of War and Peace" (1625), Grotius was one of the first to make statements regarding interventions. While defining the form of intervention, he explicitly forbade any rebellion. However, he gave the foreign princes the right to intervene if the people were distressed (Hendrickson, 2014, p. 55). Like Grotius, Kant, in his "Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch" (1795), "opposed to revolution against oppression, despite his great enthusiasm for the French Revolution, the American Revolution, and the Irish struggle" (Heraclides & Dialla, 2015b, p. 82). According to his understanding, princes or states could intervene in others' internal affairs to end the anarchic situation, but this physical intervention should occur only in absolute necessity. Grotius opened the door for discussions about external intervention and the right of revolution, and philosophers like Rousseau and Hobbes followed. All of these were related to the understanding of external intervention for sovereignty, not the right of revolution. In the 18th century, with Locke, the emphasis on the right of revolution gained pace. However, it is worth noting here that scholars and thinkers only emphasized one side; they saw that the concepts of intervention and the right of rebellion were related, but nobody justified both. The reason might be that allowing external intervention and the right of rebellion would risk domestic and international order (Hendrickson, 2014, p. 55).

When examining interventions predating the 1990s, such as India's intervention in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), Tanzania's intervention in Uganda, and Vietnam's intervention in Cambodia, the rationale behind interventions was primarily rooted in traditional concepts of state sovereignty. At that time, interventions were justified by self-defence or maintaining regional stability rather than a claim of humanitarian motivations. India's intervention in Bangladesh (1971) was officially justified on the grounds of self-defence, as the refugee influx from East Pakistan due to the Pakistani military's actions posed a direct threat to India's internal stability. Tanzania's intervention in Uganda (1979) was partly justified by Uganda's aggressive policies towards Tanzania, including territorial claims and the support of armed rebels. Vietnam's intervention in Cambodia (1978-1979) was primarily framed around Vietnam's security concerns (Hendrickson,

2014, p. 54). As Archibald et al. (2012, p. 98) note, "[t]he idea that a state should intervene solely for humanitarian reasons is a noble dream". So, in the 1970s interventions, the inherent right of self-defence was invoked (Hendrickson, 2014, p. 54), which is an exception to this prohibition specified under Article 51 of Chapter VII, which reads as follows:

> Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the UN until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security. Measures taken by Members in the exercise of this right of self-defence shall be immediately reported to the Security Council. They shall not affect the authority and responsibility of the Security Council under the present Charter to take at any time such action as it deems necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security (UN, 1945, pp. 10–11).

In the 20th century, specific conditions and factors characterising the area where the intervention occurred shifted dramatically with decolonisation, which decreased the frequency of interventions justified by self-defence claims. The newly independent states were no longer of strategic interest to colonial powers. Thus, these imperial states had no incentive to invest in "rescue operations" (Falk, 1999, p. 370). This occurred for many reasons: geopolitical structure has changed, the support for human rights has increased, and human security understanding has come to the forefront; with the effect of globalisation, many micro-nationalisms and ethnic causes have emerged (Falk, 1999, p. 374). So, in the 1990s, not only did a new international order emerge, but also, as Falk (1999, p. 370) and Hendrickson (2014, p. 53) suggest, a new type of interventionism was introduced.

> The most vexing problems in the 1990s have arisen from human catastrophes in economically and politically disadvantaged countries. Somalia, Bosnia, Rwanda, Chechnya, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Sudan are the most prominent instances. These countries are either in the geographical South or in two dismantled states: the SU and Yugoslavia. Their plight is linked to the circumstances of the 'new world disorder' that emerged after the end of the Cold War and continued through the 1990s (Falk, 1999, p. 370).

With the new order, wars, and policies adopted, old interventionist methods became inadequate for the new order. As a result, the change in world politics changed how interventionist thinking was viewed. It is seen that "the traditional prohibition against intervention", initialised in 1919 and reassured in 1945, was beginning to lose

significance (Hendrickson, 2014, p. 54). This new era of interventionism changed even further in the 2000s because of terrorist activities and changes in security policies. This also created a domino effect within the system. Changes in the international order, state relations, foreign policies, and security definitions created different approaches for understanding and implementing intervention. In this regard, actions and policy implementations are realigned according to the international legal and political order (Kardas, 2003, p. 22). The primary distinction between the interventionist methods lies in their evolution from state-centric, economically focused actions in traditional interventionism to more diverse and complex approaches in modern interventionism. While older methods emphasised state control and economic measures, contemporary strategies involve a broader range of actors and tactics. These new approaches include the influence of international alliances on conflict emergence, the implementation of multilateral economic sanctions, and the use of reciprocity in superpower conflicts.

1.1.2.2. International Order and Sovereignty Discussions in Relation to Interventionism

Following the end of the CW, the global geopolitical landscape transitioned from a bipolar structure dominated by the US and the SU to a unipolar system where the US emerged as the predominant power. However, this unipolar moment was relatively short-lived as it soon began to evolve into a multipolar world order characterized by the rise of multiple power centres.

> As power continues to diffuse from the unipolar US, we can expect a multipolar world to be more complex and multi-layered. We can expect geopolitical self-assertion in a multipolar system to mean that interventions will continue if not indeed grow in importance, but that they will not be defined by a single regime type and its associated set of ideas (Cunliffe, 2019, p. 8).

Interventions within these international orders are shaped by diverse forces extending beyond the traditional state-centric model. These influences include varying identities, interests, and behaviours, implicating multiple actors. Therefore, it is crucial to recognize the broader spectrum of influences that define and direct the nature of interventions in the international arena. For instance, in some orders, the political authority is distributed based on sovereignty, and in others based on empire or heteronomy. However, in these

orders, units vary with the systemic configuration of authority, units being the sovereign states in the example of sovereign orders. In this regard, the nature of the intervention and the forms of reasoning vary from one kind of order to another (Goldman, 1994, p. 127; Reus-Smit, 2013, p. 1058).

The principle of sovereignty, traditionally understood as the right of states to govern themselves without external interference, has been a cornerstone of international relations since the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. According to Grotius and de Vattel, every human should be free, equal, and independent in the individualistic sense in the same manner as states should be free, equal, and independent in the domestic sense (Sellers, 2014, pp. 1–2).

> Scholars frequently preface their analyses with definitional discussions about what intervention is. However, these definitions usually take a common form, with intervention conceived within a 'sovereignty frame.' It is assumed that it occurs within a system or society of sovereign states, that the intervening actors are sovereign states, and that the intervention targets are sovereign states. Furthermore, intervention practices are understood to violate sovereignty (Reus-Smit, 2013, p. 1058).

The principle of sovereignty has been increasingly challenged, particularly in instances involving human rights violations or threats to international peace and security. In many works, understanding the principle of sovereignty became the basis for a legal right of intervention since the right of a state to be free of interference is as old as the state system itself (Goldman, 1994, p. 125). In the intervention-sovereignty studies, "it is commonly assumed that intervention takes place within an international order where political authority is distributed according to the principle of sovereignty–where the state enjoys supreme authority within its territorial borders and recognizes no higher authority beyond those borders" (Reus-Smit, 2013, p. 1060). It is worth highlighting here regarding the meaning of sovereignty:

> sovereignty is not a quality of which some abstract political entity becomes possessed by mere virtue of the fact that some geographers or cartographers have drawn lines around it. Rather, sovereignty is the possession of the identifiable group of people who happen to be living within those confines, and who are entitled by international law to exercise their right of self-determination in creating a state (Goldman, 1994, p. 128).

In such a world where authority is defined in terms of sovereignty, "the cardinal norm sustaining the systemic configuration of political authority is non-intervention […] Intervention, conversely, is conceived as the violation of this principle, as the

transgression of a sovereign state's exclusive, territorially defined domain of political authority" (Reus-Smit, 2013, p. 1060). This sovereignty frame may be a reasonable example in today's international order "in which the principle of sovereignty informs the basic distribution of political authority, and intervention is practiced and experienced by sovereign states or their agents" (Reus-Smit, 2013, p. 1062).

In light of the above analysis, a common and basic description of the intervention can be drawn for this thesis. Intervention is about interference and to intervene. It can take form in non-intrusive means like mediation or arbitration; it may be in the form of sanctions to persuade, or it may be of a more coercive sort and involve the use of force. The type of intervention changes according to the severity of the situation. If there is a severe dispute/situation in a country that affects a substantial part of the population, if there is a natural disaster, famine, or drought, if there are severe abuses of human rights, and if the government of that country is unwilling or unable to prevent and intervene in the situation, or protect the population; with or without the consent of the incumbent government, the international community, international organizations, a state or a coalition of states, or regional powers or organizations may intervene. This intervention might occur to help the population, solve the problem, and ease the tension, or it can be used to implement intervening powers' interests. Because of the intervening powers' uncertain intentions and many different aspects, intervention and its outcomes are highly disputed in IR and international law. Thus, interventionism is a policy or practice in which a country involves itself in the affairs of another sovereign nation. This involvement can take various forms, including political, military, economic, or humanitarian actions. The intervening state often justifies its interventionism on national interest, security, humanitarian concerns, or promoting specific values and norms. However, it is also a contentious practice as it most often violates the sovereignty of the targeted state and may lead to unintended consequences and/or prolonged conflicts.

1.2. CONCEPTUALIZING REGIONALISM

Regionalism impacts the dynamics of interventionism within specific geographic regions in various ways. For example, it encourages cooperation among states, fostering collective responses to regional challenges and opportunities. This cooperation is crucial

in shaping decision-making processes concerning interventions and security measures. Regionalism is critical for understanding how geographical and cultural proximities can lead to unique collaborations and/or conflicts. As for this thesis, studying regionalism through the lens of Ukrainian and Venezuelan experiences allows for a deeper understanding of how regional affiliations and conflicts influence global politics and offers lessons on the power dynamics and strategic decisions within different regional settings. Defining the concepts of region and regionalism requires starting with the foundational question of "what, exactly, is regional and what is not" (Lombaerde et al., 2010, p. 739).

1.2.1. What Are Region and Regionalism?

Regionalism is a multifaceted concept that has evolved significantly, encompassing various dimensions such as economic integration, political cooperation, and cultural identity. At its core, regionalism refers to the process through which states within a specific geographic area develop shared norms, institutions, and policies to address common challenges and promote collective interests (Barbieri, 2019, p. 431). This process is not solely about geographic proximity but also involves the creation of a cohesive identity and a sense of community among the states and societies within the region. The concept of a region is "fluid", shaped by dynamic interactions between political, economic, and social forces rather than being fixed by geography alone (Söderbaum, 2015, p. 5). Regionalism has evolved to represent a significant mechanism of governance where regions take on "quasi-autonomous roles in shaping global policies" and address issues previously handled by global multilateral institutions (Barbieri, 2019, p. 424). This fluidity and evolution are central to understanding how regions act as both a response to and a driver of globalisation. Unlike static geographic entities, regions evolve as states and non-state actors continuously redefine their boundaries and roles— from a mainly state-centric perspective to one that recognises the significance of regional networks and the interdependence of regional entities—leading to a more complex and interdependent global order. Regionalism underscores the complexity and diversity of regional interactions in contemporary global politics by blurring the lines between domestic and international and between micro- and macro-regions (Lombaerde et al.,

2010, p. 739; Söderbaum, 2009, p. 478). This conceptual understanding of regionalism highlights its role as a critical mechanism for managing regional affairs, fostering stability, and influencing global governance through various forms and facets, ranging from economic cooperation to security alliances (Barbieri, 2019, pp. 425–426, 431; Söderbaum, 2009, pp. 478–479). After this brief introduction, the information provided will be detailed below sections.

The term region encompasses a variety of interpretations and conceptualisations across different disciplines. That is why just like Keating (2011, p. 4) has put it, "[i]t is notoriously difficult to define a region. It is a territorial space, certainly, so we can exclude virtual spaces from our consideration, but it can take a number of territorial configurations." In its generic meaning, a region is a defined area characterised by shared features, such as geographical, cultural, economic, or political similarities, that distinguish it from surrounding areas. Regions encompass relational networks and territorial entities which are crucial in shaping policies and addressing global issues. In a broad sense, a region can be described as a collection of places where two places within the a region share some similarities (Geerdink, 2010, p. 4). Generally, regionalism can be defined as the process of regional integration and cooperation among states within a specific geographic area. It involves the development of shared norms, institutions, and policies to address common challenges and promote collective interests within a regional context. Regionalism can also be defined as multilateralism that focuses on enhancing cooperation, fostering stability, and deepening integration among neighbouring states. Regionalism may also influence global politics by serving as a platform for regional powers to assert influence, negotiate with external actors, and address transnational issues that impact the region (Kavalski, 2009, p. 6). In this regard, it can be said that a region is an area with shared characteristics. At the same time, regionalism represents a mechanism of governance where regions play an increasingly autonomous role in shaping policies and addressing issues. That is why regionalism plays a significant role in shaping global governance, as regional organisations and arrangements contribute to managing regional affairs, conflict resolution, and promoting regional stability.

Another way of defining regions is by referring to the term as a "geographical area" instead of "state communities". As Lombaerde et al. (2010, p. 736) have defined, "calling

something a region is done because it emphasises that geographical area with its attached social community and the system is not a state while at the same time, it may have some statehood properties". Here, we can see that some scholars define *regions* as not sovereign states but may possess some state-like features (Lombaerde et al., 2010, p. 736). In the mainstream IR literature, the general view places states at the centre of discussions. This state-centric view is being challenged by the differentiation of regions and states and by referring to "regionhood (statehood properties without sovereignty), identity, institutionalisation, […] the capacity to interact with other regions, […] or the capacity to (economically or politically) influence other regions" (Lombaerde et al., 2010, p. 740). This means that while these regions may exhibit characteristics such as governance structures, economic systems, and even cultural identities similar to those of sovereign states, they do not possess full sovereignty. They may lack complete autonomy in their political decision-making and are often subject to the authority of the sovereign states in which they are located. As Hettne (2002, p. 327) describes, "[r]egion is a process. Regions are always evolving and changing. Like a nation, a region is an 'imagined community,' and like a nation, it has a territorial base". This evolving nature of regions is further evidenced by the expanding role of regionalism in international relations, which now encompasses a wide array of government and non-state actors. With the effect of globalisation along with other factors, states are no longer the sole actors. This expansion reflects "the shifting nature of global politics and the intensification of globalisation" (Lombaerde et al., 2010, p. 732). The institutionalisation of regionalism, hence, has been a strategic concept for many years. From the Second World War years to the CW years, institutions acted as a political space in building new and robust coalitions to counterbalance other actors, strengthen one's ideals and interests, legitimate one's power, and deflect the policies of the most powerful (Hurrell, 2005, p. 50). Also, institutions, both formal and informal, play a crucial role in the development of regions and regional identities. These institutions provide the framework for regional cooperation, governance, and economic activities. Throughout the 1980s, the landscape of regionalism witnessed a significant diversification with the proliferation of various regional projects. The EU, in particular, underwent substantial expansion and deepening, becoming a focal point of regional integration (Söderbaum, 2003, p. 1).

As seen so far, the literature defines regions and regional integrations from economic, political, historical, and cultural perspectives. According to some scholars, this construction and reconstruction through social practices and discourse have led to increasing pluralism of regional definitions, such as "mega-, macro-, meso-, sub-, and micro-regions" (Lombaerde et al., 2010, p. 739; Söderbaum, 2009, p. 478). In time, regionalism has evolved as a space between the national and the local. These types of regions were later called micro-regions. Likewise, later, macro-regions emerged to refer to larger territorial units. These regions were located somewhere between the state and global system levels. As described by Nye in *International Regionalism: Readings* (1968), macro-regions consist of a few states connected by their geographical proximity and mutual interdependence. With the boost of globalisation, the macro-regions became the most common object in world politics; conversely, micro-regions were used to define regional concepts at the domestic level. Especially in comparative regionalism, macro-regions were at the centre. However, in contemporary studies, where the sharp distinction between domestic and international is lost, micro-regions have become more cross-border concepts. This can be more clearly understood from the constructivist perspective. According to constructivism, regions and boundaries are concepts constructed by states and non-state actors, making both increasingly fluid. This perspective suggests that boundaries and regions are no longer fixed by geography alone but are shaped by dynamic political, economic, and social interactions. As a result, the traditional distinction between these two classifications has become increasingly indistinct, reflecting their shared fluidity and constructed nature. For example, the most common differentiation point for macro-regions and micro-regions was their level and size. However, both micro and macro-regions can come in different sizes. "A macro-region (for example, Benelux) can be smaller than a micro-region (for instance, a Chinese province), in terms of population, economic weight or some other measure" (Lombaerde et al., 2010, p. 738).

The wide range of definitions for region, regionalism, and regionalisation reflects diverse perspectives and analytical frameworks (Lombaerde et al., 2010, p. 735). Different disciplines interpret and define regions differently. Thus, just like Hurrell (2005, p. 46) puts it, this diversity has created extensive debates and divisions within the field, notably between those who view regionalism primarily through the lens of state interests and

interstate arrangements and those who conceptualise regionalism as a process leading to more complex regional polities. As Acharya (2011, p. 632) emphasises, while geography studies define a region as a particular area characterised by shared features, such as geographical, cultural, economic, or political similarities, that distinguish it from the surrounding area, in political science, the concept of region is often associated with regionalism, where regions are socially constructed entities that play a significant role in shaping global policies and addressing various issues. In economics, regions are typically defined through economic indicators such as GDP, employment rates, industry specialisation and trade patterns. These are crucial for analysing economic development and disparities and formulating policies that promote regional growth and integration.

To briefly explain the different perspectives, from a geographical perspective, regionalism is conceptualised as a framework of relational networks and territorial entities, explicitly focusing on infrastructure and viewing regions as socially constructed entities that significantly influence global policies and developments. From a political science perspective, regionalism is a governance mechanism (Barbieri, 2019, p. 424). Within the field of IR, regionalism is both a sub-discipline that highlights global trends and perspectives and a framework for understanding how regions interact, cooperate, and compete on the international stage. As seen, the generic definitions and the criteria used to define a region can differ significantly; while geography and environmental sciences typically focus on physical characteristics, environmental factors and spatial relationships to delineate regions, economics focuses on financial and technical indicators. In addition, the scales of analysis—whether local, national, or global—significantly influence the definition and delineation of a region. At the local scale, the definition of a region may focus on specific geographic boundaries, cultural identities, or economic activities within a confined area. Criteria for defining regions at the national scale may involve factors such as economic development, political boundaries, and shared historical legacies. At the global scale, regions are often conceptualised as interconnected entities that transcend national borders and encompass diverse countries or continents. Global regions may be defined based on geopolitical considerations, economic integration, or shared environmental challenges.

Moreover, how a researcher defines a region can vary significantly based on their perspective. The definition of region changes according to the nationality, theoretical viewpoint of a researcher, and especially according to the research question, showing that regionalism is a multifaceted concept influenced by various academic and practical considerations (Barbieri, 2019, p. 430; Geerdink, 2010, p. 4). For example, a Third World scholar defines regions differently than a European or North American scholar. From a materialistic point of view, regions may be described in terms of their economic capabilities. In contrast, from a liberal point of view, regions may be defined from their human rights standpoints. In this regard, regionalism is not just about one type of regionalism; it has various forms and dimensions.

Building on these varying conceptual frameworks, recent regionalization processes further reveal how political, economic, and cultural similarities, though political, financial, and security aspects often dominate the debates (Hettne, 2002, p. 333). The main focus is on the economic side of regions, such as economic policies or agreements. However, since regionalism is a dynamic process, regions come together through various factors. This process involves a series of logics like "[l]ogics of economic and technological transformation and societal integration, logics of power-political competition, logics of security and logic of identity and community" (Hurrell, 2005, p. 40). As (Hurrell, 2005, p. 45) notes, "[t]he character of regionalist projects and the nature of the challenges facing them have been decisively influenced by security and geopolitical imperatives". Especially with the 1990s, the era of global change, new realities combined with globalisation brought new security challenges. The way of thinking, perceptions, foreign policies of states, international policies of the international community, and the security priorities changed with the new order. Security studies, neighbourhood policies, and regionalist policies climaxed with the 9/11 attacks. The idea of "either you are with us, or you are an enemy" created another viewpoint within the security discourse of regionalism. Before this period, security and regionalism were studied regarding how regions depend on each other and how this system creates insecurities between regions. With 9/11, the security discourse changed to a more complex one. As Hurrell (2005, p. 45) said in this specific matter, "the links between increasing patterns of interdependence and different forms of insecurity were already a significant feature of regionalism well before 11 September 2001. But the post-11 September security climate has made this

aspect of regionalism ever more salient". This shift indicates a movement from focusing on nation-states and inter-state relations to a broader consideration of systemic changes, evolving security paradigms, and redefining what is essential in international relations. As Hurrell (2005, p. 39) said, "changes in the salience of intra-regional relations, the density and scope of regional interactions" affected central states' foreign politics, especially those interested in a particular region.

1.2.2. A New Era in Regionalism

Regionalism plays a vital role in the international order, and it "is far from being a linear or uniform process; rather it has emerged in stages, shaped by a variety of external and internal factors alike" (Fawcett, 2012, p. 8); it can be described in waves. If we look at this chronologically, the first wave of regionalism started in the 1950s and 1960s through Regional Trade Agreements (RTAs). The enactment of RTAs marked a significant trend towards regional integration, which has since expanded considerably. However, with the new regionalism policies (among other things in the international arena), RTAs' growth has, in a way, exploded (Burfisher et al., 2004, p. 1). "The process of integration that started in the 1950s had the purpose of transcending the historical war system" (Hettne, 2002, p. 325). This regional integration project was initiated economically because, in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, many nations, scholars, and politicians focused on defining regions scientifically.

The end of the 1980s marked a new regionalism, which is "characterized by its multidimensionality, complexity, fluidity" and a departure from traditional conformity due to the diversity of regional actors; this new period prompted a discussion of "regionalisms in the plural", recognising the varied forms and expressions of regionalism across different contexts (Söderbaum & Shaw, 2003, pp. 1–2). The new understanding of regionalism was born to differentiate the two eras after World War II. It differed from the old regionalism because the system was changing, and regionalism discussions were no longer limited to the economic discourse. In the last two decades of accumulated knowledge, we have witnessed various milestones, from "the institutional design of numerous regional organisations" to the complex "relationship between globalisation and regionalism" (Lombaerde et al., 2010, p. 732).

Regionalism has evolved into a dynamic process, as illustrated by the New Regionalism Approach (NRA), which emphasises interconnectedness, cohesive identities, and the concept of "regionness" (Deciancio, 2016, p. 108; Hettne, 2002, p. 327). Hettne (2002, p. 327) described "regionness" as a spectrum ranging from simple geographical spaces to complex, institutionalized polities and defined five levels of regionness. According to the first, he defines "*regional space"* as a geographic area that exists as the natural physical barrier, like Europe as the territory that expands from the Atlantic to the Ural. In the second definition, he emphasizes the regional complexities. This complex form is an outcome of the intense trans-local relations of human groups. The interconnection of these local/regional groups through some common factors creates a security complex. One example that could be a good match for this definition is the realist definition of the regional system. According to this definition, since the system is anarchic and the state system is organised through the concept of balance of power, the relations among these states through regional formations create a security question (Hettne, 2002, p. 327). On the third form of explanation, Hettne (2002, p. 327) argued that "a regional society can be either organised or more spontaneous". This can be in economic, political, cultural, and military fields. As the fourth level of regionness, we can discuss a regional community created through an organizational framework. With the forms mentioned above, these transnational civil societies are created with social interactions and shared values. In the final form of regionness, Hettne (2002, p. 328) talks about a regional institutionalised polity. At this level, regions became more fixed structures, more politicised, and more *sui generis* formations. State formation and nation-building processes can be excellent examples of this level, similar but not the same.

Since the 1980s, the multidimensional nature of regionalism has not only advanced studies and theories but also introduced new challenges to the field, necessitating a diverse array of theoretical approaches—from institutionalism and security complex theory to constructivist and critical perspectives and 'new regionalism' approaches, such as the world order approach (WOA), new regionalism approach (NRA) and region-building approach to neorealist and neo-liberal institutional theories, new trade theories and new institutionalism and even mentalist, power, constructivist, neo-functionalist and historical institutionalist perspectives; a new wave of regional integration (Hettne, 2002, p. 328; Lombaerde et al., 2010, p. 734; Söderbaum & Shaw, 2003, p. 202). However, this

does not mean the multidimensional side of regionalism is always good; this plural and multidimensional character of regionalism also led to the proliferation of new challenges and puzzles for comparative politics (Lombaerde et al., 2010, p. 732; Söderbaum, 2009, p. 477). First discussions occurred about the formation of regions. Although the geopolitical character of regionalism is always emphasized, with new nation-states, changes, and global effects in the system, regions are argued to be not a natural formation. Lombaerde et al. (2010, p. 736) have described that "regions are not a natural kind: the concept is used when referring to different phenomena such as the EU, North- Rhine-Westphalia or the Euregio." Secondly, and probably most discussed criticism of regions and regionalism was related to the fragmented nature of the research field. Despite the growing emphasis on 'comparative regionalism', debates on comparison fundamentals were either lacking or there were none (Lombaerde et al., 2010, pp. 732–733). Moving from the weak side or criticisms of regions and regionalism to understanding the concept in more detail, we first need to understand its change.

The new regionalism and wave of regionalism were very different from their old form in several ways. Firstly, it was formed in the bipolar CW environment but took shape in the multipolar world order. This multipolar system is affected by globalisation. Secondly, the old was created through "superpower engagements", while the new one was formed with more voluntary actions (Hettne, 2002, p. 326). As the third point, the economic structure in the old one was inward-oriented and more protectionist, but in the new one, a more open system was a must through globalisation. The fourth one is the motivations and orientations of these levels. In the old perspective, realist views were more dominant, so the objectives of regionalism were more security-motivated and economic-oriented. In the new wave, the multidimensional parts were becoming more dominant through global effects, changes in the international system, and emerging new states and theories. Lastly, "the old was concerned with relations between nation states", while the new one was concerned with various non-state actors because of the above-mentioned new realities (Hettne, 2002, p. 326).

With the discussions about new regionalisms in the 1990s, globalisation studies within the regionalism discussions increased. "In the field of international relations, the studies of this so-called 'new regionalism' considered new aspects, particularly those focused on

conditions related to what increasingly came to be labelled globalisation" (Lombaerde et al., 2010, p. 734). However, regionalism is now understood not merely as a response to globalization but as an integral part of it, shaping and being shaped by global dynamics (Hettne, 2002, p. 329; Lombaerde et al., 2010, p. 734). Linking concepts together was very popular, apart from defining them separately (Gamble & Payne, 1996; Hettne, 1999, p. 3, 2002, p. 329; Hurrell, 2005).

Many definitions of regionalism were made in the process that came with the new order. According to these definitions, while some scholars see regionalism and regionalism policies as a project brought about by the new order and globalization, other scholars began to define regionalism within the political-economic order. According to one side of the view, regionalist policies try to restore the political order by using liberal economic policies and the new order. On the other hand, there is the view that regionalism cannot be the dominant organizing principle of the new order but can only play an auxiliary role, especially with common regional interests (Hurrell, 2005, p. 53). According to this understanding, regionalism must be studied and understood from exogenous (global) and endogenous (historical) perspectives (Hettne, 2002, pp. 325–326). "[F]rom the exogenous perspective (according to which regionalisation and globalisation are intertwined articulations of global transformation) and from an endogenous perspective (according to which regionalisation is shaped from within the region by a large number of different actors)" (Lombaerde et al., 2010, p. 734).

It is evident that regionalism is a complex concept, much like interventionism, and encompasses a wide array of definitions and debates, which results in more intricate perspectives. As all the definitions suggest, regions are traditionally understood as geographic areas, but it can be argued that they should also be conceptualized as geopolitical structures. In this context, regionalism refers to unifying of these geopolitical entities under shared norms, common identities, enemies, or other unifying features. Contemporary regionalist structures illustrate that regions are not solely composed of geographic entities (such as Latin American states) but also entities formed around common interests (such as Third World countries or specific regional organizations like the African Union or ASEAN) (Söderbaum, 2009). Moreover, it can be argued that the state-centric approach to regionalism is increasingly seen as inadequate. Given

regionalism's "fluid" nature, different realities, strategies, and perspectives naturally give rise to diverse forms of regionalism (Söderbaum, 2015, p. 5). This fluidity reflects the evolving nature of global dynamics, with regionalist structures varying according to the subject of study or the researcher's perspective. Therefore, it can be argued that there is no singular or fixed definition of regionalism; no one definition can comprehensively explain all instances of regional cooperation. Fixed territorial borders do not bind regional actors, as the concept of regionalism is inherently fluid, mirroring the ongoing changes in the global order. As study subjects evolve rapidly, the concepts and frameworks used to analyse them, such as regionalism, must also adapt to maintain relevance.

In light of the discussions mentioned above, it can be argued that, in the cases of Ukraine and Venezuela, regionalism manifests through their distinct geopolitical alignments and regional influences that shape their foreign policies and international interactions. Ukraine's regionalism may be characterized by its relations with the EU and its Eastern European neighbours, focusing on security and economic integration. In contrast, Venezuela's regionalism is deeply intertwined with American regionalism and Latin American regional politics. Venezuela's complex relationship with the US significantly affects its regional strategies, including diplomatic and economic policies. In this regard, it can be argued that regionalism has been both shaped by and shaped Ukraine and Venezuela's international engagements. In Ukraine, regional dynamics have significantly influenced its conflict with Russia and its aspirations towards European integration. In the other case, regionalism has impacted Venezuela's diplomatic relations and economic policies with the US. These initial observations will be explored in the following chapters in more detail.

1.3. THE INTERRELATION BETWEEN INTERVENTIONISM AND REGIONALISM

The intricate relationship between regionalism and interventionism is pivotal in understanding the dynamics of international relations and geopolitical strategies. As global politics evolves, the interplay between these two concepts becomes increasingly relevant, influencing how states interact within their regions and on the global stage. This section explores the connection between regionalism and interventionism, defining their

relationship, examining their interrelation, and assessing the significance of these interactions in contemporary international affairs. By dissecting how regional affiliations and alliances can influence interventionist policies and vice versa, we can better understand the mechanisms that drive regional stability, cooperation, and conflict.

Interventionism and regionalism are interconnected concepts in the field of IR, with regionalism often influencing the nature and scope of interventions within specific geographic areas. The relationship between interventionism and regionalism can be understood through various perspectives, such as regional security cooperation, regional organisations, stability, integration, power dynamics, and norms and values. Regionalism fosters security cooperation among neighbouring states, leading to collective responses to security challenges within a specific region. This cooperation can influence the decision-making process regarding interventions to address regional security threats and conflicts (Lucatello & Gómez, 2022, p. 6). Furthermore, regional organisations facilitate interventions and conflict resolution within their respective regions. These regional organisations provide a platform for dialogue, coordination, and cooperation among their members in addressing regional challenges and conducting operations (Hoffmann, 2019, p. 2). Regionalism contributes to stability within a geographic area, which can impact the types of interventions conducted and the level of cooperation among regional actors in addressing security threats and conflicts. Stable regional environments may require different intervention strategies compared to regions facing instability (Lucatello & Gómez, 2022, p. 1). Moreover, regional integration through economic agreements and political cooperation significantly affects the nature of interventions. If these nations are highly integrated, they are more likely to solve a crisis through peaceful mechanisms, which reduces the necessity for external interventions. Thus, in a regional space, power dynamics play a critical role in determining the outcomes and motivations of interventions. Regional powers can significantly influence the direction and effectiveness of interventions. Additionally, through the shared norms, values, and interests among states, regional organisations influence the justification and legitimacy of interventions.

Exploring the interrelation between regionalism and interventionism forms a critical foundation for this thesis, providing key insights into the underlying dynamics that will inform the comparative case studies of Russia's policies over Ukraine and the US's

policies over Venezuela. This analysis is crucial not only for understanding the geopolitical strategies and international relations within these specific regions but also vital for substantiating the hypothesis of the thesis that regionalism significantly influences the nature and scope of interventionism. Dissecting how regional affiliations and alliances impact interventionist policies and vice versa allows for a comparative analysis of interventions' motivations, strategies, and outcomes in these two distinct geopolitical contexts. The framework established in this section allows for a deeper understanding of how regional powers leverage regionalism to pursue their geopolitical agendas and how these actions affect regional stability and international relations.

Following the conceptual basis established in this chapter, the regionalist and interventionist states' policies, namely the US and Russia, will be examined in the subsequent chapter. In order to provide a basis for the comparative case analysis, Chapter 2 studies Eastern European and Latin American policies and strategies of the US and Russia, respectively. Then, the US-Venezuelan and Russian-Ukrainian relations will be examined. This analysis will involve a detailed exploration of the geopolitical strategies, economic interests, and security concerns that underpin the US and Russia's actions in these regions.

CHAPTER 2:
THE US RELATIONS WITH LATIN AMERICA AND RUSSIAN TIES TO EASTERN EUROPE

This Chapter focuses on the historical and current interactions of the US and Russia in the specific geopolitical areas of Latin America and Eastern Europe. By examining the US's actions in Latin America and Russia's involvement in Eastern Europe, this Chapter sheds light on the effects of regionalism and interventionism and how these policies (or strategies) affect their international relations and policymaking. In Section 2.1. of the Chapter, US regionalism in Latin America and the region's relations with the US are studied. Section 2.2. provides an overview of Eastern Europe and the region's ties with Russia. This comprehensive examination will provide insights into the broader implications of regionalist and interventionist policies on international relations, emphasizing geopolitics, the intricate interdependencies and strategic calculations involved.

Geopolitics is crucial in shaping the dynamics and interactions within the Latin American and Eastern European regions. In Latin America, geopolitics influences power struggles, economic interests, and security considerations among countries in the region and with external actors like the US. The Monroe Doctrine, as a geopolitical strategy, has historically guided US foreign policy towards Latin America, emphasizing the region as a sphere of influence, shaping regional power dynamics, and creating "a kind of hegemonic order" (Liu & Wang, 2024, p. 73). Geopolitical factors in Latin America have also influenced regional cooperation efforts, trade relations, and responses to external interventions, impacting the region's stability and development (Agulló, 2024). In the case of Eastern Europe, geopolitics has been central to understanding the region's power dynamics, security challenges, regional identities, and historical legacies. The geopolitical significance of Eastern Europe has been underscored by factors such as historical alliances, conflicts, and power struggles between significant actors such as Russia and the EU. The region's strategic location and historical context have made it a focal point for geopolitical competition and influence, shaping security arrangements, economic partnerships, and political alignments. Geopolitical transformations in Eastern

Europe, such as the SU's dissolution and the EU's enlargement, have had far-reaching implications for regional stability and cooperation. Thus, geopolitics in both Latin America and Eastern Europe influences regional identities, power structures, and responses to external pressures. The strategic importance of these regions, driven by historical, economic, and security considerations, underscores the complex interplay of geopolitical factors that shape regional dynamics and interactions, specifically US regionalism and Russian regionalism. Understanding these geopolitical dimensions is essential for comprehending the global challenges, opportunities, and complexities that define these regions and their relations with the respective countries.

The deep-seated relations between the US and the Latin American region, as well as the intricate connections between Russia and the Eastern European region, directly inform and complicate the dynamics of US and Russian interventionism in Venezuela and Ukraine, respectively. The US interventionism in Venezuela has been shaped by its historical involvement and stakes in Latin America, characterized by interventions and policies aimed at promoting democracy and countering perceived threats to US interests. This historical context has led the US to take a proactive stance in Venezuela, supporting opposition leaders and imposing sanctions on the Venezuelan government in response to perceived authoritarian actions (Bull & Rosales, 2020, p. 2). On the other hand, Russia's interventionism in Ukraine has been influenced by identity discussions and complex historical relationship between the two countries. "[T]he evolution of the formation of the political and security doctrines of the ruling regime of Russia from quasi-liberal views to an expansionist policy of restoration of historical Russia" has played a crucial role in shaping Russia's interventionist policies in Ukraine (Lossovskyi & Prykhodko, 2022, p. 25). The narrative crafted by Russia, particularly in reaction to events like the annexation of Crimea, has been antagonistic and aimed at justifying its military actions in Ukraine (Chaban et al., 2023, p. 420). Moreover, the historical framing of the Ukraine crisis, mainly through the lens of the "Great Patriotic War", has been instrumental in guiding "domestic political perceptions" in Russia and shaping Russian national identity and historical claims (McGlynn, 2018, p. 1). The manipulation of historical events, such as the use of the concept of the "ambivalence of the sacred" by the Russian Federation in justifying its aggressive policies in Ukraine, highlights the strategic use of historical narratives for foreign interference and achieving strategic objectives (Kulahina-

Stadnichenko, 2023, p. 509). After this initial introduction, the following sub-sections will detail historical and current information regarding the regions (Latin America and Eastern Europe), the countries in question (the US and Russia), and the cases of Ukraine and Venezuela.

2.1. THE US REGIONALISM AND INTERVENTIONISM IN LATIN AMERICA

The The US has long had a significant and wide-ranging impact on Latin America. US regional policies have played an essential role in shaping the region's economic, political and security issues, mainly through geopolitical objectives, economic integration, and democracy promotion. Historically, the US has viewed Latin America as its sphere of influence; this perspective is rooted in the Monroe Doctrine, which posited the US opposition to European intervention in the Americas and has, therefore, intervened in the region to promote democracy and protect its interests (Görgen, 2023; Grugel, 2004; Youngs, 2002). This policy has formed the basis of US regionalism, in which the US has sought to exert influence over Latin American countries through diplomatic, economic, and sometimes military means (Görgen, 2023, p. 584). These strategies have impacted the political landscape but also the socio-economic fabric of the region, often leading to significant internal conflicts and social upheaval. In order to provide context for understanding the interplay between US interests and Latin American regional dynamics, this chapter looks at the historical foundations, development, and current status of US regional policies and interventions in Latin America, providing a context for understanding the interaction between US interests and Latin American regional dynamics.

The US has historically considered Latin America strategically crucial due to its proximity and economic significance. Historically, governance structures and political alliances have shaped US interventionism in Latin America. The US's involvement in Latin America, guided by doctrines like the Monroe Doctrine, has often led to the imposition of policies that align with US interests, impacting regional cooperation and sovereignty as stated in the doctrine which US President James Monroe proclaimed,

> […] as a principle in which the rights and interests of the United States are involved, that the American continents, by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers" (Monroe, 1823, para. 1).

Within the doctrine, three key propositions were articulated: "no future colonial claims by European powers in the Americas; American non-entanglement in European affairs; and the declaration of any European intervention in the Americas as a threat to national security" (Muno & Brand, 2014, p. 380). Therefore, the Monroe Doctrine has been significant in shaping the US foreign policy towards Latin America, establishing the region as a sphere of influence for the US and emphasizing resistance to external interference. By declaring the "Western Hemisphere off-limits to European colonization and political intervention", the doctrine established the US as a dominant power in the region (Sexton, 2023, p. 845). This interventionist approach has sometimes created tensions within Latin American countries and fostered a sense of solidarity among Latin American countries and Latin Americans (Friedman et al., 2022, p. 22; Muno & Brand, 2014, p. 382). The repercussions of the Monroe Doctrine are evident in the region's frequent political and economic crises, often exacerbated by external pressures and internal divisions. This is because the doctrine has been used to secure "hegemony through interventions and exerting control" by the US in Latin America and to promote stability and counter perceived threats to US interests (Muno & Brand, 2014, p. 382).

Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, particularly during the CW, the US regionalism over Latin America evolved into more direct interventions, including military invasions and support for regimes that align with the US strategic interests. The US viewed Latin America as a critical frontier in its efforts to contain communism, leading to a series of interventions aimed at installing or supporting anti-communist regimes. As Muno and Brand (2014, p. 381) had expressed,

> [t]he Cold War ended this gentle US approach towards Latin America, reviving the thinking of the Monroe Doctrine and the Roosevelt Corollary. In the following decades, Latin America was seen as a Cold War arena with the USA trying to prevent any communist takeover in the region, especially after the Cuban revolution.

Thus, during the CW, regionalism in Latin America was significantly shaped by US policies, which were often justified under the guise of security and economic stability but frequently resulted in political upheaval and social unrest. Notable interventions include

the US involvement in the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Chilean coup d'état, and support for Contra rebels in Nicaragua. For the Chilean coup d'état, it can be seen in the official Pinochet files that "[…] the USSR [Union of Soviet Socialist Republics] considers the Chilean revolution a failure and destined to be terminated by military action [… and] that one could not expect socialism to grow out of the present chaos in the country" (*Views of the Chilean Army Commander in Chief on Possible Military Intervention in His Country*, 1973, pp. 4–5). For the Nicaraguan case, "[…] the United States set out to forge a cluster of guerrilla bands, known as contras, into a weapon capable of coercing the Sandinistas into changing their leftward course, or even forcing the regime from power entirely" (*The Contras: How U.S. Got Entangled*, 1985, p. 1). These actions were part of a broader strategy to prevent leftist movements from gaining momentum and potentially aligning with the SU (Vélez-Vélez, 2011). The CW era exemplifies how geopolitical rivalry and ideological battles significantly impacted Latin America's regional politics and societal structures.

As said, the origins of the US involvement in Latin America are multifaceted, reflecting a blend of economic, political, and security dimensions. Notably, the Washington Consensus policies of the 1990s, driven by ideologies and economic principles of the US, critically shaped the economic structures and growth trajectories of Latin American countries, emphasizing market liberalization, privatization, and deregulation (Paula et al., 2013, p. 218). While intended to foster development and integration into the global economy, these economic policies often led to increased inequality and social discontent. In the post-CW era, the US's regionalist policies have shifted towards promoting economic liberalization through mechanisms like the "US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), which substituted the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)" (*United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement*, n.d.). These trade agreements reflected a broader economic integration strategy, which the US viewed as essential for fostering stable and cooperative regional relationships (Garcia, 2008, p. 36). However, as said, the legacy of past interventions has left a residue of mistrust and skepticism toward US motives. Despite efforts to promote partnership and development, US policies are often viewed through the lens of historical interventions, which have contributed to anti-American sentiments in parts of Latin America (Friedman et al., 2022, p. 22). This sentiment has been exacerbated by ongoing issues such as immigration policies, drug-

trafficking issues, trade relations, the militarization of the US, which continue to strain diplomatic relations (Garcia, 2008, p. 39), and mistreatment faced by refugees in the US (Ortega Ramírez, 2021, pp. 604–605). Addressing these historical grievances and building genuine partnerships based on mutual respect and cooperation remain significant challenges for the US in the region.

Apart from the trade agreements, regional organizations, such as the Organization of American States (OAS) and MERCOSUR, have been critical platforms for the regionalist policies of the US in Latin America. The US has utilized these organizations to promote its agenda on democracy, human rights and free trade. For instance, the OAS has been a forum through which the US has pushed for resolutions and policies that reflect its interests, including the promotion of democratic norms and responses to crises in the Latin American region (Lerner-Kinglake, 2008, p. 579; Youngs, 2002, p. 125). For instance, for the Nicaraguan case, OAS declared:

> [C]ondemnation of, and call for immediate cessation of acts of violence, intimidation, and threats directed against the general public; and its condolences to the victims of recent violence and their families, as well as its solidarity and support for the people of Nicaragua (Declarations and Resolutions Adopted by the General Assembly, 2018, p. 3).

For the Venezuelan case, OAS resolved:

> [t]o declare that the electoral process as implemented in Venezuela, which concluded on May 20, 2018, lacks legitimacy, for not complying with international standards, for not having met the participation of all Venezuelan political actors, and for being carried out without the necessary guarantees for a free, fair, transparent and democratic process (Declarations and Resolutions Adopted by the General Assembly, 2018, pp. 207–208).

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these organizations in advancing US interests has been mixed. While they have facilitated some level of regional cooperation and integration, they have also been criticized for their inability to effectively resolve conflicts or prevent democratic backsliding (Weiffen, 2020, p. 14), as seen in the "OAS's uneven performance" in upholding its democratic charter (Lerner-Kinglake, 2008, p. 579).

US regionalism policies in Latin America will likely continue evolving in response to global shifts and regional developments. Challenges such as China's growing influence in the region, issues of migration, and human security will require the US to reassess its

strategies and perhaps forge more collaborative and less coercive forms of engagement. Strategic adjustments will be necessary to address these emerging challenges and to foster a more balanced and sustainable relationship with Latin American countries. How the US navigates these issues will be crucial for shaping its future relations with Latin America and determining regionalism's role in promoting or hindering collective action and cooperation (Bull & Rosales, 2020).

2.2. RUSSIAN REGIONALISM AND INTERVENTIONISM IN EASTERN EUROPE

Russia's stance towards Eastern Europe, particularly Ukraine, has been influenced by its historical ties and narratives like the Great Patriotic War (which greatly impacted its perception of security and national identity) and its geopolitical aims (Arribas et al., 2023, p. 3,9; McGlynn, 2018, p. 4). Due to its historical connections, Russia views the region as a part of its sphere of influence (Arribas et al., 2023, p. 14; Chaban et al., 2023, p. 420). For this reason, Russia shaped its role in Eastern Europe through information campaigns and hybrid warfare strategies aimed to promote "hard balancing" and reduce NATO's influence in the region (Lima, 2019, p. 109). As a result, these intentions affect Russian policies over the region, even as a form of forceful action, like in the case of the annexation of Crimea, as part of its efforts to assert control and counter perceived threats (Chaban et al., 2023, p. 420,427; Lossovskyi & Prykhodko, 2022, p. 27).

Russian regionalism in Eastern Europe is rooted in the region's complex historical, cultural, and political structure, shaped significantly by the empires, the World Wars, and the CW. Two significant cases that resulted in the emergence of new states and reconfiguration of regional dynamics were the dissolution of the USSR and the fall of the Iron Curtain. The transition that the dissolution brought has been a central theme in the regionalism of Eastern Europe, which directly affected regional dynamics and Eastern European cooperation (Blokker, 2005, p. 504; Napang et al., 2020, pp. 5–6). This process precipitated intense political, economic, and institutional change and created new regional cooperation and integration opportunities. With the end of the CW, power dynamics in Eastern Europe were reconfigured, while new initiatives and alliances were built to promote economic development, security, and stability in the region (Hitt et al.,

2004, p. 174). The establishment of democratic institutions and market economies in many Eastern European countries was a direct response to these historical shifts, facilitating their integration into the European and global systems.

One of the most critical policies crucial to understanding Russian relations with Eastern European countries is the concept of "near abroad". The term "near abroad" refers to the former Soviet republics that are now independent states and are geographically close to Russia. This is also reflected in the near abroad policy section of the "Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation":

> The most important for the security, stability, territorial integrity and social and economic development of Russia, strengthening its position as one of the influential sovereign centres of world development and civilization is to ensure sustainable long-term good-neighbourly relations and to combine the strengths in various fields with the CIS member states, which are connected with Russia by centuries-old traditions of joint statehood, deep interdependence in various fields, a common language and close cultures (*The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation*, 2023, Section V).

This policy reflects Russia's strategic interest in maintaining influence and control in its immediate neighborhood. Russia's engagement with the near abroad is a strategic effort to safeguard its interests, enhance security, and project power in Eastern Europe while impacting regional stability, shaping alliances, and influencing responses to external pressures. The near abroad policy also shapes the geopolitical landscape of Eastern Europe, influencing regional power structures and security arrangements (Ademmer et al., 2016, p. 2; Gentile, 2015, pp. 3–7). That is why understanding the near abroad policy is essential for comprehending the complexities of Russian relations with Eastern European countries and the broader geopolitical dynamics in the region. This policy has been a cornerstone of Russia's strategy to maintain its geopolitical influence and prevent the encroachment of Western powers into its perceived sphere of influence. That is why "the loss of its external sphere of influence in Eastern Europe, the creation of newly independent post-Soviet republics, as well as their relations with external actors (including the European Union and countries such as the United States and Turkey, among others)" has irritated Russia (Harzl, 2012, pp. 147–148). Since this region is essential for Russia's security and geopolitical objectives, Russia considers the area a "buffer zone" (Cadier, 2014, p. 79; Ginano & Riyanto, 2022, p. 202). Through regional organizations like the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), the Collective Security Treaty

Organization (CSTO), and many others, Russia seeks to institutionalize its influence and provide a platform to extend its economic and security influence, as well as offer alternatives to Western integration (Ademmer et al., 2016, p. 2; Cadier, 2014, p. 80; Napang et al., 2020, pp. 2–3).

Since Eastern European states seek closer integration with Western institutions like the EU and NATO, the complex relationship between Russia and Eastern European countries is also shaped by conflicting ambitions. These regional organizations provide a framework for cooperation and integration among Eastern European countries, shaping their political, economic, and social interactions (Padgett, 2012, p. 262). For instance, the EU significantly influences Eastern European regionalism. Accession to the EU has been a significant drive for political and economic reforms in Eastern European countries, aligning them with the EU standards and regulations (Padgett, 2012, p. 261,271). Many Eastern European countries are joining the EU or aspiring to do so, seeking economic development and political stability, which makes the union a significant political and economic force. Thus, the EU's enlargement policy has shaped the political landscape of Eastern Europe, promoting democratization, market-oriented reforms, and regional cooperation (Blokker, 2005, p. 504). The process of EU accession has not only transformed domestic policies but also enhanced the geopolitical alignment of Eastern European countries towards the West. As for the discussions about NATO enlargement and the Ukrainian crisis, the security dynamics in Eastern Europe are influenced by Russia. NATO leaders argue that the enlargement of NATO does not threaten Russia but rather provides stability in Europe and "brings many advantages to the alliance itself" (Wolff, 2015, p. 1108). However, the presence and expansion of NATO has raised concerns for Russia, thus leading to a security dilemma since each new member has been perceived by Russia as a threat to its security, prompting it to enhance its security measures (Wolff, 2015, p. 1111). This unease is particularly notable in the Baltic states, where Russia's neo-imperialist actions challenge NATO's credibility, offering only partial reassurance to eastern NATO members (Fryc, 2016, p. 53). Despite the dissolution of the SU, NATO persists, and Russia perceives this as marginalizing its role in European affairs (Wallander, 2003, p. 705). Thus, Russia has consistently opposed NATO's enlargement in its vicinity and still opposes any potential eastward expansion of the alliance (Gautam, 2022, p. 12). Russia considers NATO's accession policy as a risk that

could isolate Russia from the European political and security sphere (Ginano & Riyanto, 2022, p. 201).

Russia's concerns are heightened by the alliance's defense stance on its Eastern flank, sparking discussions on NATO's effectiveness in deterring Russia both operationally and politically (Tardy, 2020, p. 29). The continued expansion of NATO has thus become a flashpoint in Russia's relations with the West, contributing to ongoing geopolitical tensions. It created debates about the effectiveness of permanently deploying combat forces in Eastern Europe to counter security challenges, including Russia's involvement in the Middle East peace process (Kiesewetter & Zielke, 2016, pp. 38–39). Apart from the EU and NATO, one of the best examples of an Eastern European sub-regional alliance is the Visegrad Group (V4), which consists of Czechia, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, the former socialist nations undergoing economic transformation. The V4 is a regional alliance that promotes cooperation in various fields, including politics, economy and culture. It is a platform for joint initiatives and collaboration among its member states, contributing to regional stability and integration (Bąk-Pitucha, 2023, pp. 195–196; Kurečić, 2017, p. 69; Walsch, 2018). The V4's efforts highlight the importance of sub-regional cooperation in addressing common challenges and promoting collective interests in the broader European context. While Eastern European nations benefit from these organizations' support and integration routes, Russia's reaction to this alignment is crucial in determining regional dynamics. "[S]ince the post-communist states of Central and Eastern Europe […] joined NATO and then the EU, Russia has been searching ways to re-establish its regional influence" (Kurečić, 2017, p. 71). This was evident in Russia's actions "during the Ukraine Crisis of 2014", where "NATO's expansion policy in eastern Europe" was seen as the cause of Russia's involvement in Crimea (Nankobe, 2021, p. 1). "Russia, by far the largest and most important republic, inherited a variety of difficult Soviet legacies, and since then has found it very hard to uphold its claim to regional leadership in its immediate periphery" (Harzl, 2012, p. 147). This resistance to NATO and EU expansion reflects Russia's broader strategy to prevent Western influence from encroaching on its traditional sphere of influence.

Russia's interventions, which use a variety of strategies, are intended to protect Russian geopolitical objectives. Russian interventions in Eastern Europe have employed a mix of

tactics, including military force, cyber operations, propaganda, political interference, and economic leverage (Helmus et al., 2018, p. 1). These tactics have several reasons. After the dissolution, Russia had structural weaknesses that affected its military power, economy, and population. These shortcomings prevented Russia from taking any long-term strategies and aligning its foreign policy actions, pushing Russia to act aggressively and hurriedly (Harzl, 2012, p. 148). Russia's attempts to use direct intervention in neighbouring states' affairs to resist the movements of Western integration from time to time turn into open conflict. The most significant example is Russia's actions in Ukraine, particularly the annexation of Crimea in 2014, support for movements in Eastern Ukraine, and its involvement in the Georgian conflict in 2008. These interventions highlight Russia's readiness to use military and political means (Matsaberidze, 2015, p. 78; Napang et al., 2020, pp. 12–13). These actions have not only destabilized the affected regions but have also strained Russia's relations with the international community, leading to economic sanctions and political isolation towards Russia.

Moreover, these interventions of Russia, especially those imposed by the Putin Regime, cite the principles of humanitarian intervention and human rights standards to justify the invasions, involvements, and interferences in the internal affairs of Eastern European nations and other nations of the world. For instance, in the case of "Russian interventions in and occupations of the internal territories of Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, all purport to respect the requirements and humanitarian principles of international law while violating them in practice" (Sellers, 2014, p. 8). These actions reflect a broader strategy of asserting Russia's great power status, significantly impacting post-Soviet Eastern European governments' political choices, economic orientations, and security strategies. This strategic narrative is often used to mask aggressive actions and garner domestic support, framing interventions as necessary for protecting ethnic Russians and Russian speakers abroad. One of the problems with the continuation of Russia's actions or ongoing intervention in the world is the absence of robust enforcement mechanisms. Without such a mechanism, "the interpretation and application of international law" are open to abuse, as seen from the Russian claims in Ukraine (Sellers, 2014, p. 8). Aggressors and interveners, including Russia, use humanitarian purposes or sovereignty claims to legitimize their interventions or unwarranted interferences, which the Putin regime has done both (Sellers, 2014, p. 8). However, "what really lies at the heart of

Russian foreign-policy thinking today—independent of obscuration and well-cultivated myths—remains unclear" (Harzl, 2012, p. 148). This ambiguity in Russia's strategic intentions creates uncertainty and complicates international diplomatic efforts to address its interventions.

Russian interventionism has had profound effects on regionalism by altering power dynamics and fostering divisions within the region. Russia's interventions have challenged regional stability and unity, leading to shifts in alliances and security perceptions among Eastern European countries. Russian interventionism has influenced regional outlooks and responses to external threats, shaping the dynamics of regional cooperation and security arrangements (Kazharski, 2023, p. 102). These interventions have often resulted in heightened tensions and an arms race as neighboring countries seek to bolster their defenses against the perceived Russian aggression. On the regionalist front, Russia has aimed to strengthen ties with Eastern European countries through regional initiatives to promote economic cooperation and security partnerships (Napang et al., 2020, pp. 8–9). In addition, Russia's energy policies, especially in the natural gas sector, have influenced its relations with Eastern European countries. Projects like the Nord Stream pipeline have raised concerns about energy security and Russia's regional influence (Borówka, 2020). These initiatives are seen as tools to exert political leverage and maintain control over energy supplies to Eastern Europe (Voytyuk, 2022, p. 93). Thus, energy dependency remains critical to Russia's strategy to wield influence over its neighbors, ensuring that economic ties bind these countries closer to Moscow.

In conclusion, Russia's regionalist and interventionist policies in Eastern Europe are shaped by historical legacies, security concerns, and geopolitical ambitions. The region's competing interests and power struggles underscore Eastern European geopolitics' complex and often contentious nature. A mixture of historical grievances, strategic calculations, and contemporary geopolitical challenges influences the interactions between Russia and Eastern European countries. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for comprehending the broader geopolitical landscape of Eastern Europe and the ongoing tensions that characterize the region.

So far in the thesis, the history, meaning, intentions, and reasons behind the interventions and regionalist policies have been described, emphasizing the discussions within the

literature and how two opposite states could have some common ground in terms of the two concepts discussed: interventionism and regionalism. Although these two states, the US and the Russian Federation, have a long history of dispute and different theories in their domestic and international policies, they have the same agenda or approach to particular issues. There is a need to discuss and compare the specific cases of Ukraine and Venezuela to get the primary intent around the interventionist and regionalist policies of the US and Russia. It becomes evident that the US and Russia have engaged in significant interventions in Venezuela and Ukraine, respectively, with profound implications for these nations' political and economic landscapes and the broader regional stability and international relations. The base of the Ukrainian and Venezuelan cases and the structure for comparing these two cases will be discussed in the following chapter. Through these detailed examinations, the contrasting yet similarly impactful approaches of the US in Venezuela and Russia in Ukraine will provide a nuanced understanding of global interventionism, setting a comprehensive stage for a deeper comparative analysis.

CHAPTER 3:
DIFFERENT CASES, THE SAME OUTCOME?

The intricate relationships and interventionist policies of the US towards Venezuela and Russia towards Ukraine provide distinctive examples of international influence and interference, highlighting the complexity of contemporary geopolitical dynamics. The historical context of these relationships, their development over time, and the subsequent domestic and international responses provide a vivid illustration of contemporary geopolitical dynamics.

To compare the interventionist strategies of the US and Russia, it is essential to consider the historical context, diplomatic relations, and the impact of the CW. The CW era notably influenced the dynamics between the US and Russia, affecting their global strategies and interactions. The US-Russian rivalry has been present for a long time. From the communism-liberalism discussions, power race, and the CW to involvement in regionalist policies of one another; there has always been a rivalry, a competition between those nations, almost in every branch of policy. In the study of regionalism and interventions, many different approaches were used for cases between the US and formerly the SU, the current Russian Federation. The peak for this separation was the CW times. In the literature, there are various studies on how the US and Russia are different from one another, but they also have some similarities in case of their interventionism and regionalism policies. This situation can be likened to two ends of a stick. Although both ends are entirely different, they share characteristics as they are part of the same stick. For example, "[i]nterventions, such as the Soviet action in Czechoslovakia in 1968 or the American action in the Dominican Republic in 1965, were universally excoriated as exercises of great power privilege" (Goldman, 1994, p. 126). Despite their differences, both nations' approaches to interventionism illustrate a shared tension between their ideological commitments and their practical strategies for exerting influence.

The principle of non-intervention conflicted with the beliefs of both the SU and the US concerning their capacity to exert influence over other states within their respective spheres of interest. This was one of the reasons both camps agreed to sign the 1975 Helsinki Final Act. By doing so, each side endorsed the principle of non-intervention, as

this commitment required them to moderate their own behavior as well as that of other powers. "Although the non-intervention principle was already part of international law and practice in Europe, it has since become a key element of customary international law" (Raynova, 2017, pp. 1–2). The Final Act was a positive step in terms of diplomatic relations and the international community; however, it did not end the cold environment or the threat of intervention and use of force.

Following the Cold War and due to the transformations in the bipolar system, a significant question arose regarding the continued relevance of interventionist policies on the political agenda (Falk, 1992, p. 129). This question has been answered with the changes in the foreign policy approach of the US, as the return of the interventionist strategies (Dobson, 2002, p. 578). However, it created another abstention in the international system. The shift in the intervention patterns combined with the absence of a Soviet counter-threat meant a possible increase of the US interventionist actions through the US's "arrogance of power" (Dobson, 2002, p. 577). Also, the shift from more military and regional security-based interventions to more humanitarian and human rights-based interventions created more doubt about the intervention concept (Fry, 2019, p. 264). In addition, there was the question of what is out there apart from the West? Changes in the international order influenced by "global economic growth and technological change has led to the resurgence of powers such as China, India, and Russia", challenging Western leadership (Cunliffe, 2019, p. 2). These states have "responded by constructing their own collective international institutions to pursue their political and economic goals", becoming more "politically assertive, willing to exercise imperial influence abroad such as Russia's interventions in Syria and Ukraine" (Cunliffe, 2019, pp. 2–3). The shift from a US-dominated unipolar world to a more multipolar world where developing economies like BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) play a prominent role is characterized by dynamic shifts in global governance (Rached, 2019).

Suppose the multipolar order is the case to achieve goals like peace, justice, and human rights. In that case, the emergence of entities, especially regional ones, is essential since regionalism can strengthen world order by managing globalization's adverse impacts and improving governance at the regional level (Falk, 1997, p. 2). However, these did not

change the complex relationship between the US and Russia, as we witnessed from the post-CW interventions till today.

3.1. CASE STUDY: US POLICY OF VENEZUELA AND RUSSIA'S ACTION IN UKRAINE

Citing the destabilizing effects of state disintegration seen in the Middle East and currently in Ukraine, many Western authors, intellectuals, and politicians (especially from the US side) support policies that would provide Western powers an extensive authority to intervene in civil conflicts worldwide (Hendrickson, 2014, p. 53). Like the Western states' presence and views on Ukraine, Eastern states like Russia and China gained significant roles in South American conflicts since internal political crises and economic downturns created a regional power vacuum in the Latin American region (Stuenkel, 2017, p. 59). Also, the military and technological connections between Venezuela and Russia have been essential for the Venezuelan government under both Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro. When viewed through the lens of corruption, this alliance served both nations' geopolitical objectives in opposition to the US (Cardozo Uzcátegui & Mijares, 2020, pp. 182–183). In order to better understand the complicated and frequently contentious nature of international interventionism by major powers, this discourse lays the groundwork for a closer exploration of the specific dynamics of US-Venezuelan and Russian-Ukrainian ties.

This section examines the cases of Ukraine and Venezuela, which is a basis for the comparative analysis that is expanded upon the following sections. The subsequent sub-sections will critically assess Russia's policies in Ukraine from historical and contemporary perspectives and the US's strategic involvement and viewpoints regarding Venezuela. Using these two current instances of interventionism, the approach of Russia towards Ukraine and the stance of the US in Venezuela, are illustrated. These instances clearly show the distinct foreign policy and intervention tactics adopted by each nation across other regions.

3.1.1. US-Venezuelan Relations

A complex interplay of economic, political, and strategic interests has influenced the regionalist and interventionist policies of the US towards Venezuela. The US has intervened in Venezuela to safeguard its interests, particularly in the realm of oil resources and political stability and used the crisis to promote its vision of democracy, and counter what it sees as a destabilizing force in the region. The US has implemented various strategies in Venezuela, including economic aid, military support, and political alliances, to advance its regional interests. These actions have sometimes been perceived as interventionist, often faced resistance from Venezuelan authorities which have impacted diplomatic relations between the two countries and raised concerns about sovereignty and self-determination in Venezuela (Demirel, 2020, p. 38). In this regard, Venezuela has pursued a foreign policy that involves engaging with multiple global powers, such as China and Russia. This approach reflects a strategy of power balancing and economic diversification, with Venezuela positioning itself as a gateway to Latin America for emerging powers like China and Russia (Mijares, 2017, p. 223; Thoene et al., 2023, p. 629). Also, Venezuela's historical interactions with international organizations and regional cooperatives have influenced its foreign policy strategies and diplomatic engagements (Mijares, 2017, p. 221).

The relationship between the US and Venezuela has fluctuated significantly, influenced by colonial legacies, oil diplomacy, and ideological conflicts as well as tensions and complexities (Demirel, 2020, p. 38). This fluctuation is quite visible in then-president Donald Trump's words, who remarked: "That was the wealthiest country of all in that part of the world which is a very important part of the world […] And now you look at the poverty and you look at the anguish and you look at the crime and you look at all of the things happening" (Westwood & Cole, 2019). For much of the 20th century, relations were largely cooperative, driven by Venezuela's status as a major oil exporter. As Cardozo and Mijares (2020, p. 188) have defined, the oil industry and military arms were key sectors where corrupt practices underpin the bilateral relationship between the US and Venezuela, which affects the international sanctions and geopolitical dynamics. Venezuela's nationalization policies, especially in the oil sector, have further influenced US-Venezuela relations and have been a point of contention between the two countries

(Miavania & Arie, 2022, p. 531). Following the election of Hugo Chávez in 1999 — whose Bolivarian Revolution aimed to diminish American influence and advance a socialist agenda— the tensions between the US and Venezuela escalated, resulting in strained relations that have continued throughout Nicolás Maduro's presidency. The crisis and strained relations became more visible after the death of Hugo Chávez in 2013 and with Nicolás Maduro coming to power. During the Maduro government, economic mismanagement, especially reliance on oil revenues, led to severe economic and political instability within the country (Arslan, 2022, p. 273). The decline in the humanitarian conditions in the country, coupled with the continuing economic downturn, the crisis in the governmental structure, tainted elections, and increasing poverty gave birth to the Venezuelan crisis. According to some viewers, the crisis in Venezuela could not be sustained. However, it was predictable and potentially preventable through a more assertive regional diplomatic strategy. The decline was exacerbated by falling oil prices, leading to severe economic and humanitarian consequences for Venezuela (Stuenkel, 2017, p. 56). These mismanagements and crises in almost every branch within the country increased the severity of the crises. As a response to these tensions, the US has implemented various policies to promote political change. Because Maduro being in power was not beneficial for the US, it also domestically worsened the situation in the country since the regime increased the authoritarianism of the government (Stuenkel, 2017).

The economic and energy-related crisis has led to widespread human rights violations, including food and medicine shortages, political repression, and a deteriorating healthcare system (Arslan, 2022; Doocy et al., 2019, p. 80; Pietrosemoli & Rodríguez-Monroy, 2019, pp. 419–420; Rose, 2008). These conditions raised concerns about the potential for mass atrocities and the need for international intervention to protect vulnerable populations since crisis involved severe human rights crises and threats to the safety and well-being of the population (Omar & Zulkifli, 2021). In such an environment, the Venezuelan government failed to protect its population (Arslan, 2022). Given the scale of the crisis and its impact on neighboring countries, the situation in Venezuela is considered a legitimate concern for the international community. However, the response was fragmented and insufficient, characterized by a mix of diplomatic efforts and sanctions. While there were attempts at peaceful resolution through talks and

negotiations, the efforts were often undermined by unilateral actions, particularly by the US, which focused on regime change rather than addressing the humanitarian crisis. The US and the EU, imposed sanctions on Venezuela, aiming to pressure the Maduro regime. However, these sanctions worsened the economic situation, increased the political instabilities in the country and indirectly affected the Venezuelan population and complicating humanitarian aid efforts (Arslan, 2022, pp. 281–282). Politically, these actions have intensified the polarization between the government and the opposition, complicating efforts for a peaceful and democratic resolution to the country's political turmoil. The sanctions, while aiming to pressure the Venezuelan government, also adversely affected the population and potentially strengthened the government's narrative (Stuenkel, 2017, p. 61).

There have been mixed approaches in the regional reactions to US policies in Venezuela. Some Latin American countries, particularly those governed by right-leaning administrations, have supported US actions. Since the US sees itself as a beacon of democracy within the region, these administrations viewed the actions and sanctions as necessary to restore democracy in Venezuela. Others, especially those with leftist governments, have criticized the interventions as imperialistic and harmful to Venezuelan sovereignty. In a sense, the Venezuelan crisis ceased to be a humanitarian crisis and turned into a political race. This internal race grew larger as other states chose sides in the Venezuelan crisis, and when it turned into an international conflict, its humanitarian side was forgotten.

In terms of the means of intervention, the US generally imposed political and economic sanctions on the Maduro regime, however, on some occasions the US have reminded that the use of US military force is still "an option" (Westwood & Cole, 2019). The US has not yet conducted a military intervention in Venezuela, but this does not mean they will not, considering that they supported the coup attempt. In this sense, it can be argued that the US will intervene militarily in Venezuela when suitable conditions are achieved and if this intervention is in its interests (Demirel, 2020, p. 67).

In the case of regionalism, the crisis in Venezuela has had significant effects both within the country and in the Latin American region. Among the Latin American nations, the regional dynamics were impacted through the influence of cooperation and tensions.

While the crisis has tested regional cooperation and regional integration, as well as the resilience and adaptability of regional governance structures in the face of such challenges (Nolte, 2014, p. 17). Within the country, the crisis has significantly impacted the quality of life of the population, including the workforce (Berríos-Riquelme, 2021; Caraballo-Arias et al., 2018, p. 512). The crisis has been exacerbated by the country's economic struggles, with Venezuela facing the worst economic, social, and political crisis in its history. This crisis has led to hyperinflation, making the Venezuelan currency virtually worthless and resulting in a significant decline in living standards for the population (Acosta-Reyes et al., 2023, p. 2; Summers et al., 2022, p. 97). Also, the crisis had far-reaching implications beyond the country's borders. The crisis has led to a substantial influx of Venezuelan migrants into neighboring countries, such as Colombia, Peru and Chile, creating challenges related to integration, labor market insertion, and access to services along with the problems of hunger, poverty and violence (Acosta-Reyes et al., 2023; Berríos-Riquelme, 2021; Cintra, 2023; Doocy et al., 2019; Gonzalez Balyk, 2022; Gunawan et al., 2023; Jeronimo Kersh, 2020). This migration problem has also become a concern of international organizations and governments as a means to address the needs of Venezuelan migrants and refugees (Gunawan et al., 2023; Perera et al., 2022, p. 8; Summers et al., 2022, p. 98). The migration wave resulting from the crisis was one of the significant among other global crisis such as the Russia-Ukraine war and Syrian civil war (Ertanir et al., 2023, p. 1873). In summary, the crisis has highlighted the need for a coordinated regional response to address the challenges including the humanitarian needs of Venezuelan migrants and refugees (Summers et al., 2022, p. 98,107).

3.1.2. Russian-Ukrainian Relations

Strategic interests, historical claims, identity discussions, and geopolitical ambitions have influenced Russia's regionalist and interventionist policies towards Ukraine. Russia's actions and policies in Ukraine, particularly in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, have been characterized by interventionist policies aimed at maintaining influence in the region and preventing EU and NATO expansion towards its borders. The annexation of Crimea and support for separatist movements in eastern Ukraine have resulted in heightened tensions between the Western powers and Russia (Smith, 2015, p. 6). On the regionalist front,

Russia has aimed to strengthen ties with Ukraine through regional initiatives (Napang et al., 2020, pp. 8–9). These efforts demonstrate Russia's goal of maintaining long-term influence over Ukraine's domestic and foreign policies, especially in energy sector (Ruszel, 2019, p. 40). Russia's energy policies, particularly in the natural gas sector, have significantly impacted its relations with Ukraine. Ukraine was a transit country for Russian gas exports to Europe, and disputes over gas prices and supplies often strained their ties (Ruszel, 2019, p. 41; Wolczuk, 2016, p. 117). Using natural gas supplies as a geopolitical tool has influenced the relationship between the two countries and raised concerns about energy security in Ukraine (Keypour & Hendla, 2019, p. 148).

The relationship between Russia and Ukraine dates back to the era of the SU and even earlier to the Empire times. However, the turning point for relations was the dissolution of the USSR. One significant aspect of this relationship was economic interdependence, particularly in the energy sector. Additionally, Ukraine's nuclear disarmament in the early 1990s in exchange for security assurances from nuclear weapons states, including Russia, highlighted the complexities of their security dynamics (Budjeryn, 2016, p. 9). Tensions with the Russian government began when Ukraine gradually started to orient towards the West and other Eastern European countries.

Russian intentions and policies in Ukraine have focused on preventing Ukraine's integration with the West, particularly with NATO and the EU. As Putin (2014) himself has said, Ukraine being a member of NATO meant "NATO's navy would be right there in this city of Russia's military glory, and this would create not an illusory but a perfectly real threat to the whole of southern Russia." He further emphasised this on the recent crisis in Ukraine by stating that "[…] with NATO's eastward expansion the situation for Russia has been becoming worse and more dangerous by the year" (Putin, 2022b). As seen, both for the 2014 Crimean Crisis and 2022 invasion, even the possibility of Ukraine being a member of NATO meant a great deal for Russia. Putin has expressed this and explained the reason for intervention as:

> For the United States and its allies, it is a policy of containing Russia, with obvious geopolitical dividends. For our country, it is a matter of life and death, a matter of our historical future as a nation. This is not an exaggeration; this is a fact. It is not only a very real threat to our interests but to the very existence of our state and to its sovereignty. It is the red line which we have spoken about on numerous occasions. They have crossed it (Putin, 2022b).

The crisis in Ukraine is marked by its complexity, involving a long history and numerous actors, each with its agenda. "[A]t the heart of the conflict lie 'Ukrainian-Russian identity relations and Russian chauvinism towards Ukrainians' […] the cause of the conflict is resurgent Russian nationalism and Russia's refusal to accept Ukraine as a sovereign country" (Platonova, 2018, p. 488). To begin with the statehood discussions,

> When Vladimir Putin denies the reality of the Ukrainian state, he is speaking the familiar language of empire. [...] In 2012, he described Russia as a 'state-civilization', which by its nature absorbed smaller cultures such as Ukraine's. The next year, he claimed that Russians and Ukrainians were joined in 'spiritual unity'. In a long essay on 'historical unity', [...] he argued that Ukraine and Russia were a single country, bound by a shared origin (Snyder, 2022).

Similarly, as (Düben, 2020) has expressed,

> Already long before the Ukraine crisis, at an April 2008 NATO summit in Bucharest, Vladimir Putin reportedly claimed that 'Ukraine is not even a state! What is Ukraine? A part of its territory is [in] Eastern Europe, but a[nother] part, a considerable one, was a gift from us!' In his March 18, 2014 speech marking the annexation of Crimea, Putin declared that Russians and Ukrainians 'are one people. Kiev is the mother of Russian cities. Ancient Rus is our common source and we cannot live without each other.' Since then, Putin has repeated similar claims on many occasions. As recently as February 2020, he once again stated in an interview that Ukrainians and Russians 'are one and the same people', and he insinuated that Ukrainian national identity had emerged as a product of foreign interference. Similarly, Russia's then-Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev told […] that there has been 'no state' in Ukraine, neither before nor after the 2014 crisis.

The rhetoric that 'Ukraine is not a state' has been at the core of Russian claims over Ukraine to weaken the state's structure and to ill represent Ukraine's relations with the Western institutions and countries (Arribas et al., 2023, p. 15). "[T]he perception towards Ukrainians as a Little Brother within Greater Russia, and the importance of Kievan Rus, have been emphasized by Russian leaders many times and this kind of understanding has an impact on Russian foreign policy" (Aridici, 2019, p. 18). That is why, Ukraine presented as not a state, but as a historical part of Russia, and even presented as a creation of Bolsheviks (Arribas et al., 2023, p. 15). Ukraine is created by Bolshevik argument born during the Russian civil war. "[A]ll Russian political forces—monarchists, liberals, and Bolsheviks—sought to either maintain or re-fashion the Tsarist Empire. The first two rejected any prospect of Ukraine receiving autonomy (let alone independence) while the latter agreed to the creation of a Soviet Ukrainian republic within the USSR" (Kuzio, 2019, p. 4).

Apart from the statehood discussions, there was the identity crisis. "Various formulations of Russian identity have played a prominent role in Moscow's approach to the Ukraine crisis" (Allison, 2014, p. 1282). Tolz, in her book *Russia: Inventing the Nation,* discussed five variations of Russian identity.

> The first is where "*the Russians are defined as an imperial people or through their mission to create a supranational state,*" whether the Tsarist Empire, the USSR or EEU. […] A second identity that Russians discussed in the 1990s is where "*The Russians as a nation of all eastern Slavs, united by common origin and culture.*" [...] This identity has become central in Russian leaders' attitudes towards Ukrainians who are viewed as a branch of the "*Russian*" people. […] A third is where "*The Russians as a community of Russian speakers, regardless of their ethnic origin. Language is the main marker of national identity."* […] A fourth is "*The Russians defined racially, that is, blood ties constitute the basis of common identity*". A racially defined "*Russian*" identity would include Ukrainians. […] The fifth identity, "*A civic Russian nation, whose members are all citizens of the Russian Federation*" continues to exist but is less important than the first three identities which dominate Putin's Russia (Tolz, 1998, as cited in Kuzio, 2019, pp. 4–5).

While the first four defined identities deny a separate Ukrainian identity, the latter one does not seek to "absorb Ukraine" while defining a Russian identity (Kuzio, 2019, p. 5). In a similar manner, there are some portrayals for Ukrainian identities. The first identity revolves around the use of language, between "Ukrainophones and Russophones". Second one portrayed around the "self-declared nationality" such as Ukrainian, Russian, or Crimean Tatar. Third one can be given as a "language identity" where one might not be a "Ukrainian by nationality" but identifies with the Ukrainian language (Onuch & Hale, 2018, p. 86).

As Lossovskyi and Prykhodko (2022, p. 30) described, "[t]he Russian-Ukrainian war is fundamentally a postcolonial war over Ukrainian identity." To justify and describe their actions and policies, Russia used historical narratives while Ukraine used self-determination and self-defence: "Russia fights for the past" while "Ukraine fights for the future" (Lossovskyi & Prykhodko, 2022, p. 30). The first apparent result of Russia's policies on Ukraine was the 2014 Crimean crisis. To describe the 2014 events, while according to some views Russia's actions in Ukraine defined as "reunification" (Harzl, 2015, p. 221; Putin, 2014), others defined it as "annexation" (Allison, 2014; Biersack & O'Lear, 2014; Fryc, 2016, p. 47; Keypour & Hendla, 2019; Nankobe, 2021, p. 1; Tardy, 2020; Wolff, 2015; Zhang & Zhou, 2023). According to President Putin (2014), "[i]n people's hearts and minds, Crimea has always been an inseparable part of Russia. […]

Crimea is historically Russian land […]". However, despite Putin's descriptions and some scholars' definition of the case as "reunification", in the case of the Crimean Referendum, the common interpretation of violation of the prohibition of force prevails (Harzl, 2015, p. 221). Although Putin (2014) described the Crimean Referendum as fully compliant with "democratic procedures and international norms", a referendum being carried out under the presence of Russian soldiers proves Russia's indifference to outside responses (Harzl, 2015, p. 221). These actions reflected Russia's goal of maintaining a sphere of influence in the post-Soviet space and countering NATO expansion. Russia annexed Crimea in 2014 and continues to intervene in the Ukraine. However, "both Russia's overall international posture and interventions remain strategically reactive", sending Russia's interests in eastern Ukraine from the perceived threat of NATO and EU expansionism to its borders (Cunliffe, 2019, p. 5). "Russia can reap strategic benefits from establishing a 'frozen conflict' in Ukraine, as it manages to preserve its affair of influence in that country in this way" (Cunliffe, 2019, p. 5).

As said, Russian intervention has significantly undermined Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, leading to ongoing conflict, especially in the Donbas region. The Crimea Crisis not only destabilized Ukraine but also contributed to broader regional insecurity, challenging the post-CW European security order and raising concerns about further Russian aggression in Eastern Europe (Malyarenko & Wolff, 2018). The crisis has escalated into the bloodiest conflict in Europe since the Yugoslav wars, driven by ideological clashes and a fundamental disagreement over the nature of Ukrainian statehood and sovereignty (Harzl, 2015, p. 219). The situation has been further aggravated by the West's lack of a coherent policy towards Russia, often simplifying the complex dynamics at play, which includes the demonization of Vladimir Putin rather than addressing the underlying geopolitical tensions (Harzl, 2015, p. 220). Just like Henry Kissinger (2014) once said: "The demonization of Vladimir Putin is not a policy; it is an alibi for the absence of one".

This crisis, especially the Crimea case, has shattered relations between the West and Russia, rekindling historical modes of territorial conflicts reminiscent of the 19th century (Harzl, 2015, p. 219; Marsh, 2015; Platonova, 2018). The international and regional responses to Russian actions in Ukraine have been varied, with Western countries,

particularly the US and the EU, imposing sanctions on Russia and providing support to Ukraine. These measures aimed to deter Russian aggression and support Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. However, Russia did not accept the actions taken by the Putin administration as violations. Putin has responded to the accusations of the Western Europe and North America in case of the Crimean Crisis as:

> [W]hat exactly are we violating? True, the President of the Russian Federation received permission from the Upper House of Parliament to use the Armed Forces in Ukraine. However, strictly speaking, nobody has acted on this permission yet. Russia's Armed Forces never entered Crimea; they were there already in line with an international agreement. True, we did enhance our forces there; however – this is something I would like everyone to hear and know – we did not exceed the personnel limit of our Armed Forces in Crimea, which is set at 25,000, because there was no need to do so (Putin, 2014).

At the regional level, while some Eastern European countries have strongly condemned Russia's actions, others have adopted more cautious stances, reflecting the complex geopolitical dynamics in the region and varying degrees of dependence on Russia.

> Citizens of Scandinavian and the Benelux countries and Germany had the most negative views about Russia, while the population of many eastern European countries, such as Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia, as well as Cyprus considered Russia in a more positive view (Makkonen & Mitze, 2023, p. 2930).

At the local level, some politicians, intellectuals, and authors argued that one of the reasons for the 2014 Ukrainian crisis to occur was the internal weaknesses of Donbas society. The propensity for "lawlessness and the pro-Russian leanings […] further helped push the unrest in Donbas" (Platonova, 2018, p. 488). Putting aside how and why this crisis started, if the Ukrainian crisis wants to be solved anytime soon, "an enormous amount of energy and innovative approaches" will be needed to solve these conflicts (Harzl, 2015, p. 221). This will be particularly difficult since "the core conflict between the West and Russia is not so much about international principles and their contents, but rather, about the question of who has the right to set them and make exceptions" (Harzl, 2015, p. 221).

3.2.   ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

To begin with the Ukrainian Case, Russia's intervention, particularly in the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and ongoing support for separatist movements in Eastern Ukraine, is

driven by a mix of strategic, historical, and geopolitical motivations. Ukraine's geopolitical location is crucial as it is considered as a buffer state between Russia and Western Europe, helping Russia maintain strategic depth, which is significant for its military and security doctrines. Additionally, Ukraine has deep cultural, historical, and political ties with Russia, dating back to the Russian Empire and the SU, and Russia often views Ukraine as part of its near abroad – areas where it seeks to maintain influence. According to the Russian Government, the actions taken in Ukraine were part of a broader effort, to resist the foreign pressure and to protect the people in the region (particularly the Donbas region), especially the well-being of the people of Donetsk and Lugansk. This was a project to protect the ethnic Russians and Russian-speaking populations within the region (*Government Meeting*, 2022). Russian government believed that the people of these regions were subject to persecution, openly attacked by the Ukrainian government, and often labelled as "separatists" or "terrorists" (Dmitry Polyanskiy, 2024). On these grounds Russia built its interventions in Ukraine, as a response to the humanitarian crisis which were taken place in the Donbass region (Putin, 2022a). Apart from the motivation of "protecting ethnic Russians", Russia framed its actions as a response to the instability created by Ukraine's lack of "true" sovereignty and portrayed Ukraine as a tool of the West (Bordachev, 2024). So, a key motivation for Russia has been to prevent Ukraine from joining Western military alliances like NATO, which is seen as a direct threat to Russian security.

The methods employed by Russia in Ukraine include military actions such as the direct annexation of Crimea and military support to the separatists in Eastern Ukraine, including arms, training, and personnel. Russia has also exerted political influence through propaganda and information warfare aimed at destabilizing Ukraine and influencing its political choices. Russian political leaders along with the Russian controlled media have portrayed the situation in Ukraine as a direct threat for Russia's security and region's stability, and also portrayed Ukraine's acts as actions that are driven by the Western countries. Russian political leaders, such as Mikhail Mishustin (2022) has depicted Russia and other post-SU countries (like Belarus) being under "unprecedented sanctions pressure" that amounts to "all-out economic war." Also, within several media channels, the situation is depicted as a conflict between Russia and an illegitimate, extremist government in Kiev (Dmitry Polyanskiy, 2024; Vassily Nebenzia, 2024). These

narratives depicted that the Ukrainian government was a part of a coalition of "unfriendly" states, was controlled by the Western powers, and incapable or unwilling to protect the population, thus Russian involvement was a necessity (*Government Meeting*, 2022; *The Government Approves the List of Unfriendly Countries and Territories*, 2022). The demonization of Ukraine is intensified with the speech of Putin (2022a) when he called Ukrainian regime a "neo-Nazi" regime. According to Putin, the government was taken hostage by this neo-Nazi regime and was committing atrocities against the ethnic Russians and Russian-speaking populations, thus, it was a great threat to the well-being of the whole of Russia. According to Russia, Ukraine (if it is a state) is "incapable of governing itself, interpreting its own history, forming its own foreign policy, deciding if it is over-run by 'Nazis' or determining who 'Nazis' are in the first place" (Knott, 2022, p. 2). In the media and through the words of Putin it was depicted that, this 'illegitimate' regime was controlled and supported, like in the forms of military means, by the Western powers. Putin himself was framing this military support as not a cooperation but as a direct involvement of the outside powers to the Ukrainian-Russian conflict (Sputnik, 2023). In the media, it is also portrayed that, since Ukrainian government is being used by external powers (specifically the US), Ukraine cannot be a rational actor and cannot protect its own population in this conflict, thus is a "rogue state" (Bordachev, 2024).

Through all of these statements, Russian government tried to justify its intervention in Ukraine by framing it as a response to "unfriendly activities" of Ukraine and other coalition of states. As Russia claims that, like it can be seen in the Government directive No.430-r, Ukraine and these coalitions of states engage in hostile actions against Russia as a whole, not only towards the Russian Federation, but the hostility was also towards the Russian-speaking population, Russian companies and the citizens (*The Government Approves the List of Unfriendly Countries and Territories*, 2022). For Russia, this was the case during the 2014 Crisis and this was repeated once again in the recent crisis of 2022 (Dmitry Polyanskiy, 2024). All of these were depicted as reasons for Russia to intervene in Ukraine.

In the Venezuelan Case, the US and Venezuela had peaceful, strong and respectful relations from the beginning of diplomatic relations in 1835 till the climax of the crisis. With the economic downturn in the country, increased authoritarianism in the regime,

downturn of humanitarian conditions, increase in poverty, alongside the conflictual election processes, Venezuelan conflict became a crisis and attracted international and regional involvement. Thus, the US intervened in Venezuela and laid the ground for its reasons to intervene in the promotion of democracy and concerns over significant human rights abuses under Maduro's government (US Department of State, 2023). Because as officially declared by the US government "the circumstances, as described in Executive Order 13692 and subsequent Executive Orders issued with respect to Venezuela, continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States" (The White House, 2024). With Executive Order 13692 in 2015, the US declared a "national emergency" citing national and international concerns for the Venezuelan case and argued that the crisis poses an "unusual and extraordinary threat" to US's national security and foreign policy (The White House, 2024).

The US depicted the Maduro regime as corrupt, repressive and responsible for severe human rights violations and economic mismanagement (Seelke, 2024). Thus, the US has employed economic sanctions and diplomatic pressures as principal strategies in response to the political and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela. These sanctions are imposed through several Executive Orders with an aim to restrict Maduro regime's access to resources and to pressure the regime for a political change in the country. These orders included blocking the property of the Government of Venezuela, giving specific licenses to allow specific transactions to the Guaido regime; sanctions resulting from human rights abuses, political repression, and corruption; sanctions in forms of financial restrictions; sanctions on certain assets like oil to isolate the Maduro regime's main source of revenue (Venezuela-Related Sanctions: Executive Orders, n.d.). The political and diplomatic measures are primarily aimed at promoting democratic change by supporting opposition groups and penalizing the Maduro regime. Apart from those, the US framed its actions and sanctions imposed as necessary steps to combat corruption, protect the population, cope with the security threats, and fight against illegal activities such as terrorism and drug trafficking (Seelke, 2024).

For over 15 years, the US has imposed sanctions in response to activities of the Venezuelan government such as Venezuela's lack of cooperation on antidrug and counterterrorism efforts (US Department of State, 2023). Starting from the Obama

Administration, sanctions have been imposed against individuals for human rights abuses, corruption, and antidemocratic actions. Following this, the Trump Administration expanded economic sanctions in response to the increasing authoritarianism of President Maduro. In January 2019, the US government ceased recognizing Maduro as Venezuela's legitimate president, and the Trump Administration sought to compel him to leave office through diplomatic, economic, and legal pressure (United States Congress, 2022). Additionally, the US has worked to isolate the Maduro regime diplomatically by recognizing opposition leader Juan Guaido as the legitimate president of Venezuela and encouraging other nations to do the same.

The US political leaders and the media have portrayed the situation in Venezuela and their involvement by highlighting the human rights abuses within the country such as the killings, tortures, harsh prison conditions, and suppression of freedom of speech which were taking place because of the authoritarian nature of the Maduro regime and especially because of the "deeply flawed political re-election process" (US Department of State, 2018). A resolution was adopted by the US officials concerning this illegitimate election process:

> The resolution S.Res.44 denounces the Nicolás Maduro regime's most recent legislative elections as fraudulent and illegitimate, does not recognize the legitimacy of the new Venezuelan National Assembly, and joins members of the international community in rejecting the elections. Further, it urges that elections in Venezuela be conducted as soon as possible according to international standards for free, fair, and transparent electoral processes (S.Res.44 - 117th Congress (2021-2022), 2021).

According to the US controlled media and statements of the US official channels this illegitimate hold on power of Maduro was possible because of his alleged ties to terrorist groups like FARC-D (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), ELN (National Liberation Army of Colombia), and Hizballah. US officials emphasized that if these actions of Maduro continues, the risk of Venezuela being a "failed state" gradually increases (US Department of State, 2019). Through this comment along with the depiction of Venezuela as a "threat to US national security" and being negative example to other countries in the region, the US tried to justify its actions within the country and also justified that they will continue to impose sanctions to Maduro regime (Harris, 2024).

The effects of the crisis on Venezuela have been significant, sanctions and international pressure intensified the political deadlock in the country, which contributed to ongoing unrest and weakening Maduro's international legitimacy. Although "[i]t is difficult to attribute precisely the extent of Venezuela's economic collapse that is due to US sanctions versus broad economic mismanagement" (United States Congress, 2022), it would not be wrong to say that the economic sanctions have exacerbated Venezuela's economic collapse. As it is mentioned in the UN Annual Report:

> While the roots of the economic crisis in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela predate the imposition of economic sanctions, they are one of the factors that continue to impede the country's economic recovery and adversely affect the enjoyment of economic and social rights[…] (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2023).

In addition, as a recent US Congressional Research Service report admitted, the sanctions imposed by the US "failed" in their implicit goal of regime change but have exacerbated an economic crisis that "has prompted 7.7 million Venezuelans to flee." *The Hill* ran an opinion piece stating that "sanctions are still hurting everyday Venezuelans – and fuelling migration" (Harris, 2024).

The comparison of the US intervention in Venezuela and the Russian intervention in Ukraine reveals several critical outcomes. Both interventions illustrate how major powers use a combination of political, economic, and military strategies to influence regional geopolitics and achieve their strategic objectives. In Ukraine, Russia's direct military actions and political influence have led to significant human rights violations and regional destabilization, emphasizing the severe impact of military interventions on sovereignty and regional stability. Conversely, the US's reliance on economic sanctions and diplomatic efforts in Venezuela highlights the substantial humanitarian and economic consequences of non-military interventions, contributing to political instability and a deepening humanitarian crisis.

Furthermore, the international community's responses to these interventions underscore the importance of multilateral engagement and the enforcement of international norms. In the Venezuelan case, beginning with Maduro's fraudulent re-election in 2018, numerous international actors have been involved in the crisis—with the US and many other countries initially focused on isolating Maduro and supporting Guaidó (United

States Congress, 2022). As a result of these, the US introduced a draft resolution in the UNSC that called for free, fair, and credible presidential elections in Venezuela. This draft resolution S/2019/186 proposed by the US on 28 February 2019, right after the first conflictual election process. However, there were the supporters of the Maduro regime. China and Russia, which are permanent members of the UN, were among these countries, and when they vetoed the draft resolution, the resolution prepared for the Venezuelan crisis could not be adopted (United Nations Security Council, 2019). On the other side, regional organizations like the OAS supported the claims of the US and the OAS General Secretariat stated that the Venezuelan government is corrupt, undemocratic, and manipulative, particularly regarding the electoral process (OAS, 2024). Through this statement, the OAS condemned the actions of Venezuela's Supreme Court and National Electoral Council (CNE) and accused the Venezuelan officials and CNE as non-transparent, biased, fraudulent and repressive (OAS, 2024). So, once more the elections were condemned by several international and regional actors, US officials and media. "Actions by Nicolás Maduro and his representatives in Venezuela, including the arrest of members of the democratic opposition and the barring of candidates from competing in this year's presidential election, are inconsistent with the agreements signed […]" (Miller, 2024). The UN Human Rights Office focused on "the human rights violations, need for a stronger rule of law and promoting and protecting democratic space and populations" side of the crisis in Venezuela. For this reason, the UN emphasized its actions on providing technical assistance, monitoring and reporting on human rights cases and to prevent and end violations, while doing that they also wanted to ensure accountability and support for the civilians (*OHCHR in Venezuela*, n.d.). The US responded to these international involvements positively, interpreting them as a positive step for a fair election process in Venezuela, which meant ultimately achieving what they have been asking for. The involvement of regional organizations like the OAS, regional actors like Colombia, or international organizations like the UN meant a coordinated approach towards Venezuela (The White House, 2024). Moreover, the US has expressed gratitude for the support that they have been getting by international partners such as the EU, Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, and Peru in the Venezuelan crisis (United States Mission to the United Nations, 2019), because these

actors were both the supporters of the US actions in the country and the opposers of the Maduro's actions.

For the Ukrainian case, the effects of the 2014 and 2022 Crises in Ukraine have been profound, including significant human rights violations, destabilization of the region, and displacement, loss of life, and social disruption. So, the international response to the crisis was twofold: those who supported Russian actions in Ukraine as the first side and those who supported Ukraine and argued that the intervention was illegitimate as the second side. As can be seen from Mikhail Mishustin's (2022) statements, cooperation between nations like Belarus and other regional allies (which can be given examples for the former side of the international response) is crucial to stand against the economic pressures of the Western powers (which are the examples of the latter side). As a response to these international responses, Russia first accused Ukraine of "violating the international humanitarian law" (Vassily Nebenzia, 2024). Then, it referred to Article 51 of the UN Charter, which allows for self-defense, and cited the treaties between Donetsk, Lugansk and Russia. Despite the latter's disagreement, Russia framed its actions as legitimate, necessary and the within the context of the international law (Putin, 2022b). The second side, which is the side that against the intervention, argues that Russia's actions are violations of international law and the UN Charter. In this context, several resolutions were adopted during UNSC Meetings (see, UNSC, 2022a, 2022b) along with several UNGA resolutions. For instance, Resolution A/RES/68/262 reaffirmed the territorial integrity of Ukraine and condemned Russia's annexation of Crimea (UNGA, 2014). Resolutions A/RES/73/194 and A/RES/74/17 reaffirmed Ukraine's sovereignty over Crimea and emphasized the importance of respecting territorial integrity (UNGA, 2018, 2019). Resolution A/RES/ES-11/1 condemned Russia's military aggression and called for immediate withdrawal of Russian forces (UNGA, 2022). Resolutions A/RES/71/205 and A/RES/75/29 addressed human rights violations in Crimea under Russian occupation (UNGA, 2016, 2020). However, Russia generally disregarded these resolutions and often cited principles of self-determination presenting the Crimean referendum as the ultimate justification (UNSC, 2014). And also, due to the use of vetoes in the UNSC, international responses specifically those of UN remained limited.

The widespread condemnation of Russia's actions in Ukraine and the mixed reactions to the US's actions in Venezuela demonstrate the varying degrees of international tolerance for interventionist policies, shaped by geopolitical interests and the perceived legitimacy of the intervening state's actions. Ultimately, these cases illustrate the complex interplay between regionalism, interventionism, and international law, offering valuable insights into the dynamics of global power and the challenges of maintaining international peace and security.

3.4.   COMPARATIVE CASE EXAMINATION

Focusing on two major powers —the US and Russia—shows how interventionism and regionalism are significant in shaping the different foreign policies. This thesis highlights the well-documented cases of Ukraine and Venezuela, illustrating how these concepts influence the actions of the US and Russia, respectively. Despite the differing circumstances in each case, the findings reveal that powerful nations consistently use interventions to advance their interests.

The interventions of the US and Russia differ in form, scale and approach. This is also an outcome of the different historical contexts that are shaped by complex relationships and events that have influenced current actions of the two states. In the case of Russian interventions in Ukraine, historical narratives and memories through identity discussions play a significant role. As mentioned in the previous section, the historical ties between Russia and Ukraine have been marked by periods of conflict and cooperation including the legacy of the SU and the annexation of Crimea. These historical events have contributed to forming national identities and perceptions of sovereignty, influencing Russia's strategic narratives and justifications for its actions in Ukraine (Allison, 2014; Chaban et al., 2023, p. 420; Pupcenoks & Seltzer, 2020).

On the other hand, the US interventions in Venezuela are influenced by historical dynamics related to governance issues and human rights violations in the region. The US has a history of involvement in Latin America, including interventions in countries like Nicaragua and Cuba, which have shaped its approach to Venezuela. These interventions were a result of the historical and cultural ties, economic interests, and geopolitical profits

(Bull & Rosales, 2020; Muno & Brand, 2014). The Monroe Doctrine, for instance, exemplifies the historical and ideological underpinnings of US interventions in Latin America, reflecting its pursuit of geopolitical influence, its desire to advance and secure its economic benefits, strategic advantages, and geopolitical interests through trade agreements, investments, resource exploitation, economic development, investment opportunities, and access to natural resources (Bull & Rosales, 2020, p. 10; Long, 2020, p. 9; Muno & Brand, 2014, p. 380).

Furthermore, the US and Russia have employed various methods in their interventions in Venezuela and Ukraine, including economic sanctions, military presence, diplomatic efforts, and information campaigns. The US has adopted a different interventionist approach toward Venezuela compared to Russia's approach towards Ukraine, generally in forms of sanctions, emphasizing diplomatic, political, and economic pressure, including sanctions and support for opposition leader Juan Guaidó (Demirel, 2020, pp. 56–57; Thoene et al., 2023, pp. 632–633). In the case of the US intervention in Venezuela, economic sanctions have been a critical tool aimed at pressuring the Venezuelan government and supporting opposition movements (Demirel, 2020, p. 64). These sanctions have targeted individuals, entities, and sectors of the Venezuelan economy, impacting the country's financial stability and international trade relationships. Additionally, the US has utilized diplomatic efforts to build international support for its stance on Venezuela, engaging in multilateral forums and alliances to address the crisis in the country (Demirel, 2020, p. 53). Conversely, Russia's tactics in Ukraine not only involved diplomatic, legal and media campaigns through propagandas, but also involved direct military actions (Allison, 2014, p. 1258; Biersack & O'Lear, 2014, p. 253; Maksymenko & Brusylovska, 2022, p. 227). Actions include the annexation of Crimea; economic support including loans and energy deals to bolster pro-Russian factions in Ukraine; and information campaigns to shape narratives and influence public opinion in Ukraine through employing media manipulation and disinformation tactics to advance its interests (Hanley et al., 2023; Helmus et al., 2018, 2021; Kornieiev et al., 2022; Kuzio, 2019; Makhortykh et al., 2020; Maksymenko & Brusylovska, 2022; Sazhniev & Sułkowska, 2020; Zhang & Zhou, 2023). As Helmus et al. (2018, 2021) highlight, using social media as a tool for Russian propaganda in Eastern Europe indicates a deliberate effort to shape narratives and influence public opinion. Social media as a tool for

influence was also evident in the context of US interventions and interferences in the Latin American region.

Moreover, the motivations behind the interventions differ. The motivations behind the US and Russian interventions in Venezuela and Ukraine are multifaceted and align with each country's foreign policy objectives. Regarding Russian interventions in Ukraine, apart from the identity crisis and historical motivations, energy security has been a significant factor (Biersack & O'Lear, 2014; Graaf & Colgan, 2017; San-Akca et al., 2020). These actions align with Russia's foreign policy objectives of maintaining influence in its neighboring regions and safeguarding its strategic interests. Russia's intervention in Ukraine has been framed as a response to perceived threats to its national security and as a means to redefining what it sees as the European order (Allison, 2014; Papadakis & Spyrakou, 2022). These notions have influenced the actions and interventions of Russia over Eastern Europe, as is evident by the historical shifts in labor movements, the ideological clashes in the region, shared traditions, energy policies, and regional alliances, Russia's intention to maintain influence in its historical sphere of control, rise of populist radical right parties in Central and Eastern Europe, and counter the perceived encroachments by Western powers (Pirro, 2013; Rieker & Gjerde, 2016; Virag, 2018). On the other hand, the US intervention in Venezuela has been driven by concerns over governance issues, human rights violations, and the desire to support democratic processes (Demirel, 2020, p. 65). The US aims to promote stability and democracy in Venezuela, aligning with its broader foreign policy objectives of supporting democratic governance and human rights globally (Mijares, 2017, p. 208). Additionally, the US intervention in Venezuela can be considered part of a broader strategy to maintain influence in Latin America and counter the influence of countries like Russia and China (Bull & Rosales, 2020; Mijares, 2017; Thoene et al., 2023).

Russia's strategic interventions in Eastern Europe have primarily targeted enhancing its economic and geopolitical influence, particularly through energy policies, strategic alliances, and relationships with multinational corporations and foreign direct investment. These interventions reflect the complex nature of Russia's engagements aimed at bolstering its geopolitical standing and securing economic benefits. Such actions are analyzed in the context of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, where power dynamics and energy

strategies play significant roles (Rieker & Gjerde, 2016; Virag, 2018). All of these reflect the multifaceted nature of their engagement and Russia's strategic interests in leveraging economic ties and investments to exert influence, strengthen, and secure its geopolitical position and economic advantages in Eastern Europe (Ahmed et al., 2022, pp. 1079–1080; Makkonen & Mitze, 2023; Petrova, 2015; Rieker & Gjerde, 2016; Virag, 2018). Moreover, the ideological and political tensions in the region underscore the geopolitical contests, particularly concerning issues of sovereignty and European integration. This ideological divergence also manifests in varied relationships between the EU and its eastern neighbors, which are shaped by differing supranational identities and religious traditions ((Akaliyski, 2017, p. 40; Akaliyski & Welzel, 2020, pp. 13–14).

Similarly, the US interventions in Latin America often reflect ideological confrontations, aiming to support democratic principles, secure economic interests, and counter ideological threats. These interventions are influenced by historical ties, cultural factors, and the strategic use of multilateral security measures (Long, 2020, p. 2).

Although the international community has responded differently to the US actions in Venezuela and Russian actions in Ukraine, both interventions have faced international scrutiny and criticism. In the case of US interventions in Venezuela, the international community has expressed mixed reactions. While some countries have supported US efforts to address governance issues and human rights violations in Venezuela (United States Mission to the United Nations, 2019, para. 8), others have criticized US intervention as interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign state (Demirel, 2020, p. 65). The UN has played a role in facilitating dialogue and humanitarian assistance in response to the crisis in Venezuela, with various agencies providing aid and support to address the humanitarian needs of the Venezuelan population (see OAS, 2024; United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2023; United States Mission to the United Nations, 2019). Regarding Russian interventions in Ukraine, the international community has strongly condemned Russia's actions, including the annexation of Crimea for violating international norms and challenging the post-CW European state system (Allison, 2014; Makkonen & Mitze, 2023, p. 2927). The UN, Western countries and international organizations have denounced Russia's violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty, calling for restoring peace and stability in the region (Allison,

2014, p. 1268; Averre, 2016, p. 700). The UN Security Council has held meetings and the UNGA adopted resolutions condemning Russia's actions in Ukraine, emphasizing the importance of upholding international law and respecting the sovereignty of states. Specifically resolutions such as A/RES/ES-11/1, A/RES/68/262, A/RES/71/205, A/RES/73/194, A/RES/74/17, and A/RES/75/29 placed emphasis on matters such as "Territorial Integrity of Ukraine", "Aggression against Ukraine", "Human Rights in Crimea", "Militarization of Crimea" and "Militarization of Sevastopol" (UNGA, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2022). Neighboring countries and regional organizations have also responded to this intervention. In Latin America, neighboring countries have expressed concerns about the impact of US actions in Venezuela on regional stability and economic conditions (Arslan, 2022; Stuenkel, 2017). In Eastern Europe, countries mainly from the Western hemisphere have supported Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty while also seeking to address the humanitarian consequences of the conflict (Allison, 2014; Averre, 2016). Certain countries in the Eastern Hemisphere have supported Russia's claims regarding the prevention of the spread of Western institutions. The UN and regional organizations like the OAS have been involved in diplomatic efforts to address the crises in Venezuela and Ukraine, advocating for peaceful resolutions and respect for international norms (see OAS, 2024; UNGA, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2022; United Nations Security Council, 2019).

A comparison of the regionalist and interventionist practices of the US towards Venezuela and Russia towards Ukraine reveals a multifaceted interplay of geopolitical interests and strategic maneuvering. The persistence of state power and the evolving nature of sovereignty are critical in shaping international spatial boundaries. This complexity underscores the geopolitical maneuvers characterizing the interventions of both Russia and the US in their respective regions. The deployment of geostrategic arguments by various actors intricately intertwines intentions, influencing interventions in Eastern Europe and Latin America. This analysis highlights the dynamics in these regions, reflecting both strategic aims and broader geopolitical calculations.

In the context of the US interventions towards Venezuela, geostrategic argumentation and the strategic maneuvering of state power are evident. The US has historically pursued interventions in Latin America to advance its economic and geopolitical interests, often

leading to ideological clashes and historical legacies of interventionism. In the same manner, interventions in Venezuela have been influenced by the geopolitical interests of the US, reflecting a desire to exert influence and secure economic benefits in the country. Similarly, interventions in Ukraine have been influenced by historical and cultural ties and geopolitical and strategic considerations, reflecting a desire to assert influence and power in the region. Russia's use of geostrategic argumentation underscores the complex interplay of intentions and geopolitical interests in shaping Eastern European interventions.

Comparing the US intervention in Venezuela with the Russian intervention in Ukraine provides valuable insights into the dynamics of interventionism and regionalism. One generalizable lesson is the importance of considering the legal and political justifications used by intervening states in an attempt to legitimize their actions. In the case of Russia's intervention in Ukraine, unfounded legal and political claims were used to justify the annexation of Crimea and support separatist movements (Allison, 2014, p. 1267). This highlights the need to critically examine and contest such claims to uphold international norms and principles of sovereignty.

Another lesson is interventions' significant economic, political, and social impacts on target countries. In Venezuela, US interventions have contributed to economic instability, social unrest, and a humanitarian crisis. The imposition of economic sanctions and support for opposition movements have exacerbated the country's economic challenges, leading to hyperinflation, shortages of essential goods, and a collapse of the healthcare system. The political turmoil and economic downturn have resulted in mass emigration, increased poverty levels, and a deterioration of living conditions for many Venezuelans. The long-term consequences of US interventions in Venezuela included ongoing economic challenges, social polarization, and a protracted humanitarian crisis that continues to impact the country's stability and well-being (Demirel, 2020). In Ukraine, Russian interventions have led to political instability, economic risks, and a humanitarian crisis. The seizure of Crimea and movements in eastern Ukraine and later the war have further fueled conflict and violence, resulting in displacement, loss of life, and social disruption, as well as economic challenges and social divisions hampering the country's stability and development. The relations between Russia and

Western nations are strained due to the ongoing conflict, leading to geopolitical tensions and challenges to regional security. Overall, the interventions by the US in Venezuela and Russia in Ukraine have had far-reaching and enduring impact on the geopolitical landscape, economic stability, and social fabric of both regions.

In conclusion, comparing the US intervention in Venezuela with the Russian intervention in Ukraine reveals generalizable lessons about the legal justifications, economic, political, and social impacts, and the importance of regional and international responses to interventions. These insights can inform future discussions on interventionism, regionalism, and maintaining international peace and security.

CONCLUSION

This studied the cases of Venezuela and Ukraine through the perspectives of interventionism—a complex and often problematic feature in international relations—and another complex concept, regionalism. The intervention strategies of the US in Venezuela and Russia in Ukraine have been subject to various factors influencing their effectiveness such as economic, security and ideological motivations.

The US intervention in Venezuela aimed to address governance issues and human rights violations and support democratic processes, while geopolitical interests, security concerns, and influence in the region drove Russia's intervention in Ukraine. To begin with the Russian case, because of Russia's ambitions and fears of the EU and NATO expansions to it sphere of influence and its near abroad, Russia's regionalist policies over the Eastern European region turned into forceful interventions. In the Ukrainian crisis this fear was not the only reason for intervention, there was also the identity crisis between Russia and Ukraine, as Putin openly stated Ukraine was not considered as a country, but it was actually a Russian territory (Aridici, 2019; Arribas et al., 2023). For the Crimean case, Russia tried to justify the annexation through the claim of self-determination (Pupcenoks & Seltzer, 2020, p. 768). This is a known fact for the Russian interventions. Because of the claims of Russia, and its desire to maintain influence within Eastern Europe, to counter the perceived NATO and EU expansion near its borders and to fully isolate Western regimes from its sphere of influence, Russia used military means and political influence. Interventions in Ukraine have led to economic risks and disruptions which impacted the economies of both countries. In addition, the intervention has led to ongoing conflict and a protracted humanitarian crisis characterized by displacement and intense civilian suffering.

In the case of the US intervention, geopolitical and strategic interests along with economic expectations and ideological conflicts have driven a history of interventionism in Venezuela. This was a result of or a continuation of the US's longstanding approach in Latin America (like in the case of Monroe Doctrine), where its foreign policy seeks to advance democratic governance and economic interests. Additionally, Venezuela's substantial oil reserves and strategic position in the Latin American region, the presence

both in the region and within the country was essential for the US as a way to counter external influence, especially from countries like Russia and China which support the Maduro regime (Bull & Rosales, 2020; Mijares, 2017). In the Venezuelan crisis, the US justified it actions and involvement in the country through its concerns over the authoritarian Maduro regime, this regime's governing issues, human rights violations that are happening because of this flawed management, and the need to support democratic processes since, in a way, the US considers itself a beacon of democracy (Demirel, 2020, p. 65; Mijares, 2017, p. 208). Based on these reasons, the US adopted a strategy that emphasized economic and diplomatic pressure through sanctions and maneuvers such as the support for the opposition leader Juan Guaidó, blocking the revenue of the Maduro regime through economic sanctions and embargos, and using international platforms to attract external support (Demirel, 2020; Mijares, 2017; Thoene et al., 2023). The intervention in Venezuela, especially the economic sanctions-imposed has exacerbated Venezuela's economic challenges, deepening inflation, resource shortages, and widespread social unrest while adding strain to the already weakened state infrastructure.

In both cases, interventions have had varying impacts on political stability, with Venezuela experiencing political turmoil and Ukraine facing ongoing conflict and political instability. Both interventions have had significant social consequences, with Venezuela experiencing social unrest, migration crisis and a humanitarian crisis, while Ukraine has faced displacement, loss of life and loss of national territory, and social disruption. The interventions have had long-term geopolitical implications, with the US and Russia facing international condemnation and challenges to their regional influence and relationships. While the intervention strategies differ in these two cases, both interventions underscore a geopolitical struggle for influence which reveals the extent to which significant powers employ varied interventionist methods to maintain regional dominance.

Both interventions have drawn international attention and stirred ethical discussion regarding the limits of external intervention. The responses from the international community and neighboring countries to these interventions highlight the importance of regional cooperation and diplomatic efforts in addressing crises resulting from external interventions. The condemnation of Russia's actions in Ukraine by the international

community (see UNGA, 2014) and the support for Venezuela's stability by neighboring countries in Latin America demonstrates the significance of multilateral engagement and solidarity in responding to interventionist actions, and emphasizes a commitment to uphold principles of territorial integrity and non-interference (see United States Mission to the United Nations, 2019). Ethically, these interventions pose important questions about the respect for sovereignty of states and the right of nations to self-determination without external interference; concerns about human rights violations, humanitarian crises, and the protection of civilian populations in conflict zones; adherence to international law, including the principles of non-intervention and the prohibition of the use of force in international relations. The international community's role was vital in mitigating and exacerbating the situations in Venezuela and Ukraine.

In the case of Venezuela, international organizations, neighboring countries, and humanitarian agencies have provided aid and support to address the country's humanitarian crisis and economic challenges. The international community has called for peaceful solutions to the political turmoil in Venezuela, emphasizing the importance of upholding democratic principles and human rights. Conversely, Latin American countries have demonstrated a nuanced approach, with some positioning themselves with the Venezuelan regime and arguing that US sanctions have made economic difficulties worse, some others have sided with the US and argued that the Maduro regime is responsible for the country's problems and that intervention is necessary. In the Russian case, the members of the international community that are close to the Western side accused Russia of violating international norms and provided support to the Ukrainian government in its efforts to address the conflict in the eastern regions. International organizations, such as the UN and the EU, along with some regional powers have been involved in diplomatic initiatives and peace negotiations to promote stability and security in Ukraine. On the other side, some regional powers, such as Belarus, have sided with Russia regarding the arguments on the expansionist and influential policies of Western powers in Eastern European countries.

All in all, the international community's role has proven both pivotal and limited in addressing these crises. While the international community has taken steps to address the crises in Venezuela and Ukraine, because of the presence of other countries in these

nations, no definitive result was obtained in resolving the crises. In the case of Russia, the presence of the EU and Western institutions and their opposition to Russia's policies on Ukraine, and in the case of Venezuela, the veto power of Russia and China in the UN can be shown as the fundamental reasons for this situation.

In sum, the cases of Ukraine and Venezuela reflect how great powers leverage intervention for their strategic gains, often disguised as and justified under human rights, self-determination, promotion of democracy, or regional stability. This thesis reveals that certain powers' regional ambitions, policies and actions significantly shape their interventionist behaviors and influence their foreign policies, international relations, global standing and state identity. It can be concluded that regionalism serves as a framework to justify or base powerful states' efforts on maintaining stability or nurturing ideals within a specific region. For the US case, this might be restoring the stability of the Latin American region, whereas, for the Russian case, this might be protecting the sphere of influence in Eastern Europe. This shows that regionalism can be used as a tool to legitimize a mission. Ukrainian and Venezuelan cases demonstrate that despite Russia and the US being two ideologically opposing regimes and despite the rhetoric against interventionism in other global contexts, both Russia and the US align with their interests when intervention becomes essential to their objectives. Regardless of their positions within the international system, these states justify their actions by invoking humanitarian reasons or aligning them with international norms and principles.

In addition, as seen in the thesis, regionalism affects, and in a way compels, the interventionist policies of states on specific regions in line with their national security and economic interests. In the Venezuelan case, its proximity to the US and its economic relations increased Venezuela's importance and made it a focus for intervention. As for the Ukrainian case, discussions of geography, cultural ties, and identity were the essential factors for the Russian intervention. Moreover, not only the decision to intervene but also the perceived regional importance of each region shapes the means of intervention. In this case, while economic and diplomatic means were used for the US-Venezuela side, military intervention was referred to for the Russian-Ukrainian case. Also, regionalism through regional policies and norms might push powerful states to act in specific ways. For both of these case studies, such a scenario was evident. The Monroe Doctrine was the

driver of US policies in Latin America, while near-abroad and creating a sphere of influence in the post-Soviet countries were the reasons for Russian activism. All in all, it can be concluded that regionalism significantly impacts the interventionist policies of powerful states in specific regions, especially regarding the extent, rationale, and form of interventions.

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