

The Role of Alliance Politics in Determining US
Responses to International Annexations

by

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Introduction

Eight years ago global headlines were filled with news from Ukraine. Russia's annexation of the Crimean peninsula sparked discussion about violations of territorial integrity, the limits of self-determination, and the extent to which world powers would involve themselves in foreign conflicts. Today, global attention is once again on Ukraine, with Russia's now full invasion of the country necessitating further discussion on the acquisition of territory by force, and international responses to it. Countries and corporations from around the world have condemned the act and imposed sanctions. The NATO alliance has made it clear there will be a military reaction if violence extends to any of its members. At the front of this response has been the United States, with President Joe Biden making clear the American position that "Putin chose this war. And now he and his country will bear the consequences."¹

Although the 2022 conflict has not yet seen a 2014-style annexation, the presence of the separatist Donbass region in Eastern Ukraine certainly makes one possible in the near future. Were this to occur, how would the US respond? When it comes to annexations, it is not as easy to predict how the US will react as one might imagine. Encroachments into Ukrainian territory by Russia have seen a strong, negative response, but just over a year ago the outgoing Trump administration recognized long-disputed annexations by Morocco and Israel. However, the annexation of Kuwait by Iraq in 1990 was considered such an unconscionable act that the US went to war in order to reverse it. Statements on Ukraine have emphasized that the US considers territorial sovereignty sacred, and yet in the 21 cases of annexation since 1945, the US has only

¹ "Remarks by President Biden on Russia's Unprovoked and Unjustified Attack on Ukraine," *The White House Briefing Room*, February 24, 2022.

offered a strong condemnation in 5 of them. If US actions then, are not determined by this international principle, what is it that has influenced US responses to annexations? This thesis seeks to answer this very question.

I argue that alliance politics play a crucial role in determining when the US will recognize an annexation, and when it will condemn one. When looking at the cases of Morocco and Israel, and Russia and Iraq, one difference *is* apparent. The former two countries have long been major US allies, with support for them a prominent policy position of the US. The latter two hold no such status, instead their relationship with the US has been tense and unfriendly for the majority of the recent past. I hypothesize that this logic will hold true for all cases of annexation since 1945. The necessity of maintaining strong alliances will override the US' stated commitment to territorial integrity, and will result in support for annexations undertaken by its major allies. On the other hand, the fear of a non-ally gaining an advantage over the US through the incorporation of territory will necessitate a strong condemnation to hopefully prevent, or reverse, an annexation. The following research will therefore be centered around this simple argument: the US will recognize annexations by major allies, but condemn those by non-allies.

The first section of this thesis will be a Most Similar Systems Design case study analysis, in which I compare two cases of annexation since 1945 which are similar along several control variables, but differ in my independent variable. The 1963 annexation of West New Guinea by Indonesia and the 2014 annexation of Crimea by Russia will fill this role, with the level of American international and domestic interests, the party of the US president, and the presence of a fraudulent territorial status referendum making the two incredibly similar. The allied relationship between the US and Indonesia though, sharply contrasts the unfriendly nature of

the one between the US and Russia. By examining these two cases in great detail, the impact of alliance politics upon US responses to annexations will be further developed. The following section, a Large-N Qualitative Analysis (LNQA), will then apply this theory to the broader range of annexation cases since 1945. As the number of cases is small, and does not lend itself to quantitative analysis, the LNQA will be the best way to provide evidence for a causal relationship between the two variables.

I ultimately find that in the cases of Indonesia/West New Guinea, and Russia/Crimea, the US relationship with the annexing country was a compelling motivator when it came to the US responses. The importance of Indonesia as a non-communist ally during the height of the Cold War necessitated continued support of the country and its most prominent nationalist issue: control over the West New Guinea territory. The hostile relationship between the US and Russia however, influenced the US position that Crimea provided Russia with a strategic advantage and empowered its own nationalist agenda. In both of these cases however, it is difficult to fully separate the role of interstate relations from international interests. The US responses are correlated both to its relationship with the annexing country, as well as its international interests in the region of annexation. While this may suggest that it is actually the nature of US interests which determine its reactions to annexations, I believe there is more likely a deep connection between these two elements of foreign policy decision-making. US interests are sometimes the results of its interstate relations, and the nature of interstate relations are sometimes determined by the kind of US interests in a given region. Further study could help to clarify this connection in regards to annexations.

The LNQA shows that my theory holds true in 52.4% of cases since 1945 (11 out of 21 cases). Considering that this analysis contained no control variables, and allowed for other factors to influence the outcome, these results are in many ways compelling. However, a deeper examination of each case uncovers a significant flaw in my initial research design. While each variable was initially coded as a binary (the US could *either* recognize or condemn, and the annexing country was *either* a major ally or a non-ally), a more accurate analysis would include a third option for each. The US can offer no response to an annexation, and its relationship with the annexing country may not be extremely negative or positive, but simply neutral. A modification of the original LNQA to include these two new possibilities shows a strong correlation: the US recognizes acts of annexation by major allies, provides no response to ones by neutral states, and condemns ones by non-allies. This modified theory offers compelling evidence that the nature of interstate relations allows us to predict how the US will respond to annexations: it holds true in 18 out of 21 cases (85.7%).

Ultimately, the small number of cases and complexity of each individual annexation makes it difficult to say with certainty that any one element determines US responses. However, this research is a first step at developing an overarching method with which to predict US responses to annexations, something that is not currently present in the literature. Although a rare occurrence, the detailed case study analysis shows that annexations have a major impact on groups of people, the legitimacy of international law, and the dynamics of world peace and politics—with the US playing a particularly powerful role in all of these elements. This thesis thus presents a valuable topic of study—one which has only grown in importance following the events of 2022, the possibility of further Russian annexation of Ukrainian territory, and the questions

surrounding the exact ways in which the US will respond. Further study is of course needed, but this thesis shows that, in contrast to the entirely individual case study analyses currently available, annexation is a concept that can—and should—be examined in a broader sense.

Background

I. Defining Annexation

Annexation is the process by which a state asserts its control over a territory not originally within its borders. This will usually follow a military occupation, “when the occupying power decides to cement its physical control by asserting legal title.”² In many cases, the annexing country will seek to gain support for its actions by proving legitimate control over the annexed territory—including extending its governing institutions, fostering a domestic economy and involving the territory in international trade.³ Acts of annexation may be ‘recognized’ by other states, with this recognition settling the legal status of the annexed territory within the bilateral relationship of the two states. An act of recognition by one state does not, however, change the status of the annexed territory in the eyes of international law or international organizations. Additionally, states will occasionally employ a policy of ‘non-recognition’ in regards to an international annexation, a move meant to serve as a sanction for the annexing country’s violation of international law.⁴ This thesis will refer to the three elements of an annexation in the following way: the *annexing country* is the country which has laid claim to a piece of territory, the *annexed territory* is the land which has been laid claim to, and the *losing country* is the country to which the annexed territory belonged to prior to annexation. The losing

² Rothwell, Donald R., Stuart Kaye, Afshin Akhtarkhavari, Ruth Davis. *International Law: Cases and Materials with Australian Perspectives*. (Cambridge University Press, May 2014), p. 360.

³ Smith, Jeffrey J., “The Taking of the Sahara: The Role of Natural Resources in the Continuing Occupation of Western Sahara,” *Global Change, Peace & Security*, 27:3, 263-284, (September 14, 2015) DOI: 10.1080/14781158.2015.1080234

⁴ Green, N. A. Maryan, *International Law: Third Edition*. (Plymouth: Macdonald and Evans, 1982), pp. 34-40.

country is usually either an independent country or a colonial power, however in some cases the annexed territory is an independent entity, and thus there is no losing country.

II. The Non-Annexation Principle

Pre-20th century, territorial change was largely governed by a “right of conquest,” in which annexation following a military victory existed as a legitimate means of extending a country’s sovereignty.⁵ However, starting in 1917, the emergence of two principles began to change this international norm on annexations. The concept of self-determination—the “rights of nations to decide their own destiny”⁶—espoused both by US President Woodrow Wilson and the new Russian Provisional Government became a focal point of the post-World War I peace process, the implication being the emergence of a “non-annexation principle.” Summed up in Wilson’s 1918 Address to Congress, the new world order would be one in which there were “no annexations...peoples are not to be handed about from one sovereignty to another” and in which “territorial settlement...must be made in the interest and for the benefit of the populations concerned.”⁷ The first true codification of these new principles of self-determination and non-annexation would happen in 1919, within the Covenant of a new international organization, the League of Nations: “the Members of the League undertake to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all Members

⁵ Korman, Sharon, *The Right of Conquest: The Acquisition of Territory by Force in International Law and Practice*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Wilson, Woodrow, “Analyzing German and Austrian Peace Utterances,” February 11, 1918. <http://www.gwpda.org/1918/wilpeace.html>

of the League” (Article X).⁸ Although some debate existed as to the extent this Article prohibited the acquisition and annexation of territory through lawful acts of aggression (such as self-defense), authors such as Hersch Lauterpacht argued that the League was “essentially a prohibition of the acquisition of territory by force” and that with its creation “the title by conquest [had] been abolished.”⁹ Over the next decade the non-annexation principle would continue to gain prominence in international relations, being included in the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928 and the Stimson Doctrine of 1932, both of which recognized annexation as a potentially destabilizing act in an international system still recovering from the conflict of WWI.

III. Annexation in Modern International Law

The modern conception of annexations has been shaped primarily by the formation of the United Nations in 1945, and the codification of the non-annexation principle within its charter. Article 2(4) states that all members must “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 United Nations.” The application of this principle during the era of decolonization would be made clear in 1960, with the UN stating that all peoples of former colonies have an “inalienable right to complete freedom, the exercise of their sovereignty and the integrity of their national territory.”¹⁰ Furthermore the

⁸ “The Covenant of the League of Nations,” *The Avalon Project*, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leaguecov.asp

⁹ Lauterpacht, Hersch, *Private Law Sources and Analogies of International Law*. (Union, New Jersey: Lawbook Exchange, 2002).

¹⁰ “Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples,” UN General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV), (December 14, 1960).

“subjection of peoples to alien subjugation,” such as through military occupation and subsequent annexation, was said to constitute a violation of human rights.¹¹ The Friendly Relations Doctrine of 1970 would continue to enumerate the UN’s position on annexation. This statement reaffirmed the importance of self-determination, including in the “establishment of a sovereign and independent state, the free association or integration with an independent state or the emergence into any other political status.”¹² Included were additional references to colonial territories as being separate from their administering state, and the right of former colonies to determine their own territorial status.

Although the US was involved in codifying this international law,¹³ and has repeatedly stated its support for “sovereignty and territorial integrity,”¹⁴ this has not always been reflected in US policy towards annexation. In the 21 cases since 1945, the US has only offered a strong condemnation in 5 of them. In all other cases the US has either directly recognized the annexation, or tacitly recognized it by failing to offer any kind of negative reaction. This then presents an intriguing question—if US responses to annexations are not determined by its stated commitment to international law and the preservation of territorial integrity, what factor is more influential in its decision-making?

¹¹ “Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples...”

¹² “Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations,” UN Doc. A/RES/25/2625 (October 24, 1970).

¹³ Rosenstock, Robert. “The Declaration of Principles of International Law Concerning Friendly Relations: A Survey.” *The American Journal of International Law* 65, no. 5 (1971): 713–35. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2199354>.

¹⁴ See for example, “Secretary Blinken and Secretary Austin’s Meeting with Ukraine’s Foreign Minister Kuleba and Defense Minister Reznikov,” *U.S. Department of State*, March 26, 2022; “Territorial Integrity,” *The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe*; “The United States and Uzbekistan: Launching a New Era of Strategic Partnership,” *The Trump White House Archives*, May 16, 2018; “President Bush Discusses Situation in Georgia, Urges Russia to Cease Military Operations,” *The George W. Bush White House*, August 13, 2008.

Literature Review: Suggested Reasons for US Responses to Annexations

While the former section established the illegality of annexations within the current international community, it is still a fact that in several cases since 1945, the United States has chosen to recognize an annexation as legitimate. The goal of this thesis is to better understand this paradigm—what was it about these cases which prompted the US to deviate from its commitments to international law? While there is a lack of literature examining annexations in the broad sense, many authors have dived into individual annexation cases to examine the reasoning behind specific US responses. The most discussed cases since 1945 include Morocco and Western Sahara, Israel and the Golan Heights, Indonesia and East Timor, Indonesia and West New Guinea, Iraq and Kuwait, and Russia and Crimea. When examining the reasoning behind US responses to these cases, four important themes stand out. Some authors look to specific international interests, taking into account both time and region, while others emphasize the role of domestic US politics. On several occasions, the US President and other high-level officials are believed to have had an impact, while some cases seem to have been influenced by US positions towards certain political forces within the annexed territory—such as governing entities, and territorial status referendums.

I. International Interests

Many authors emphasize that certain international pressures are the greatest determinant in US responses to annexations. The outcome of an annexation attempt will have a major effect on the balance of power and regional stability. In its position as a major world power, the US looks to secure its influence throughout the world, spread its ideology, establish

economic connections, and prevent the rise of alternative powers. Many case studies show how these larger themes present themselves more specifically in certain regions and eras, as well as demonstrate how the choice to either recognize or condemn an annexation has often reflected these international considerations.

In the case of Morocco's annexation of Western Sahara, Brahim Saïdy¹⁵ first argues that the threat of Soviet influence in the North African region led to a prioritization of the US-Morocco relationship, and a tacit recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over the Western Saharan Territory. The Cold War environment in which the initial annexation took place created few incentives to comply with the concept of territorial sovereignty. Saïdy explains the continued US support for Moroccan control of the Western Sahara through a discussion of the special relationship between the two countries, and the role of Morocco as a key regional ally. Its willingness to compromise on issues related to Israel, and work with the US on counterterrorism have both impacted this relationship, while the US additionally sees Morocco as a vehicle for fostering pro-American sentiment in the region following the conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan. Yahia Zoubir and Karima Benabdallah-Gambier¹⁶ expand on this by introducing elements of greater North African geopolitics, including Morocco's support for the 1991 Gulf War, and the general instability in the neighboring country of Algeria throughout the 1990s. In each author's article though, the role of Morocco in the Israeli-Palestinian peace

¹⁵ Saïdy, Brahim, "American Interests in the Western Sahara Conflict, American Foreign Policy Interests," 33:2, 86-92, (April 19, 2011). DOI: 10.1080/10803920.2011.570735

¹⁶ Zoubir, Yahia H. & Karima Benabdallah-Gambier, "The United States and the North African Imbroglio: Balancing Interests in Algeria, Morocco, and the Western Sahara," *Mediterranean Politics*, 10:2, 181-202, (August 23, 2006). DOI: 10.1080/13629390500124333

process is described as a key motivating factor behind prioritizing the US-Moroccan relationship over the territorial integrity of the Western Sahara.

Victor Kattan¹⁷ also emphasizes international interests in the case of the recent recognition of the Israeli annexation of Syria's Golan Heights. With an overall lack of progress in the Middle East peace process, ensuring a strong ally in Israel is crucial to US interests in the region. Additionally, the instability in Syria following the outbreak of civil war in 2011, and the US' particular distrust of the Assad regime have both created an environment in which Syrian territorial concerns are of little interest to the US.

Brad Simpson¹⁸ analyzes the US' international interests in the initial recognition of Indonesia's annexation of East Timor in 1975. Recent instability and Soviet influence in the former Portuguese colonies of Mozambique and Angola raised the concern that similar events could occur in East Timor as it too began its independence from Portugal. Simpson continues to build his argument using a variety of recently declassified documents which outline the US belief that East Timor was "too small and too primitive" to successfully operate as an independent state. With the spread of communism throughout Southeast Asia, and the looming threat of Soviet influence, the possibility of East Timor becoming a failed state susceptible to outside influence motivated a support of Indonesia's expansionist goals. Simpson argues that although the US had the influence necessary to force a reversal of the annexation through the withdrawal of economic and military assistance, the international system at the time was one in

¹⁷ Kattan, Victor, "U.S. Recognition of Golan Heights Annexation: Testament to Our Times," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 48:3, 79-85, (December 21, 2020). DOI: 10.1525/jps.2019.48.3.79

¹⁸ Simpson, Brad, "Illegally and Beautifully': The United States, the Indonesian Invasion of East Timor and the International Community," 1974-76, *Cold War History*, 5:3, 281-315, (August 19, 2006). DOI: 10.1080/14682740500222028

which the US' interests were furthered by an alliance with Indonesia, rather than a press for East Timorese independence.

Thomas R. Duboi,¹⁹ in analyzing the justifications for US military action following Iraq's 1990 annexation of Kuwait, focuses heavily on US international interests. The speed at which the annexation was completed, combined with the heavy level of weaponry used, threatened "political instability and military asymmetry" in a region crucial to the global economy. The Bush administration was additionally concerned with a breakdown in the "new world order" recently established since the end of the Cold War. The close connection between the US and Israel further necessitated action, as Saddam Hussein had stated his commitment to destroying Israel. Further Iraqi expansion beyond Kuwait was also considered, with possible invasions of other Middle Eastern states a clear threat to the US' overall interest in a stable, friendly region.

In his 1996 dissertation, Terrence C. Markin²⁰ explores the circumstances which forced the US to take a position (ultimately pro-annexation) on Indonesia's takeover of West New Guinea. Although neutral on the issue for many years, the US during the Kennedy administration became increasingly worried it would need to divert resources away from curtailing Soviet advances in other regions should Indonesia precipitate a Southeast Asian war over its West New Guinea claim. The reemergence of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) during the Sukarno presidency and the support of Indonesian expansionism by the USSR was of major concern to

¹⁹ Dubois, Thomas R., "The Weinberger Doctrine and the Liberation of Kuwait." *The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters* 21, 1, (1991).

²⁰ Markin, Terrence C., "The West Irian Dispute: How the Kennedy Administration Resolved that "Other" Southeast Asian Issue," A dissertation submitted to The Johns Hopkins University. (UMI Dissertation Services: 1996).

the US. In an era of shifting Indonesian loyalties, the US wanted to incentivize its convergence with the non-Soviet bloc through support of the West New Guinea claim.

II. Domestic Interests

Other annexation case studies look to explain the differentiation in US responses through a domestic politics lens. Ahmet al-Burai²¹ argues that President Trump's 2019 recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights was driven by two major domestic issues connected to the 2020 presidential election. First, Trump had to ensure support from Evangelical Christian voters, who had already responded well to the 2018 decision to move the US Embassy to Jerusalem and recognize the city as Israel's official capital. Secondly, both Trump and his Republican allies sought to strengthen the relationship between the Republican Party and the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, "the most influential lobbying group in the United States." In this case, al-Burai argues that although the officially stated reasons behind recognizing the Golan Heights annexation were international and regional security concerns, the domestic pressures and upcoming elections facing Trump were ultimately the strongest motivating factors.

As discussed above, Brad Simpson has contributed to the idea that the US' recognition of Indonesia's 1975 annexation of East Timor was motivated by international interests. However, he has also offered an explanation for the US' shift in attitude towards East Timor in 1999—when it supported an independence referendum and the transition of the territory to the independent

²¹ Al-Burai, Ahmet A., "Trump and the Golan Heights: A Political 'Quickie' for a Turbulent Middle East!" *Al Jazeera Centre for Studies* (2019).

country of Timor-Leste.²² This change, he argues, was the result of intense lobbying efforts by activist groups, resulting in increased domestic support for East Timorese independence among US Congressmen. The US East Timor Action Network (ETAN) in particular, was responsible for increased visibility and public knowledge surrounding the issue of East Timor. ETAN's work helped to frame the annexation of East Timor as an issue of human rights and democracy, which resonated with large parts of the general US population, and in turn their Congressional representatives. Simpson thus argues that this shift in policy towards Indonesia and East Timor can mainly be explained through domestic US politics, where almost unanimous, bipartisan support forced the Clinton administration to rethink the decisions of its predecessors.

III. US President

Several authors have emphasized, at least in part, the specific role of the US President, and his ability to influence foreign policy through personal philosophies, the building of relations with other world leaders, and the appointment of top officials. Arthur Schlesinger²³ discusses how the arrival of President Kennedy to the White House in 1961 saw the emergence of a new kind of foreign policy based on his personal view that the emerging states of the decolonization era could be powerful partners and allies. William Henderson²⁴ applies this to the case of Indonesia and West New Guinea, explaining how Kennedy brought a warm, personal

²² Simpson, Brad, "Solidarity in an Age of Globalization: The Transnational Movement for East Timor and U.S. Foreign Policy," *Peace & Change*, 29:3-4, 453-482, (June 1, 2004). <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0149-0508.2004.00299.x>

²³ Schlesinger, Arthur M., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965).

²⁴ Henderson, William, *West New Guinea: The Dispute and Its Settlement*. (Seton Hall University Press, 1973).

touch to the Indonesia-US relationship which facilitated a stronger connection and greater conversation on the West New Guinea issue. Markin also points to Kennedy's newly appointed leadership of the National Security Council and Departments of State and Defense, who all took personal interest in the West New Guinea dispute and thus directed US attention towards the matter.²⁵

As discussed in the domestic interests section, President Trump has played a particularly important role in the recognition of Israeli annexations. Although the historically close connection between Israel and the US has had a large influence on many US administrations,²⁶ Trump's personal interest in winning the 2020 election and securing support from Evangelical Christian voters sets his actions apart.²⁷ Trump's role in the US recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara has also been discussed, with Yael Warshel²⁸ arguing it was a gesture to secure Moroccan cooperation on the 2020 Moroccan-Israel peace agreement brokered by Trump.

IV. Political Forces within the Annexed Territory

Finally, some authors emphasize the role that certain elements within the annexed territory have had on US decision making—mainly governing entities and territorial status

²⁵ Markin, "The West Irian Dispute..." pp. 64-70.

²⁶ Rynhold, Jonathan, "The Future of US-Israeli Relations," *Survival*, 63:5, 121-146, (2021) DOI: 10.1080/00396338.2021.1982202

²⁷ Al-Burai, "Trump and the Golan Heights..."

²⁸ Warshel, Yael, "Why "Peace" Between Morocco and Israel Matters for Western Sahara But Not for the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," *African Conflict & Peacebuilding Review*, Volume 11, Number 2. (Indiana University Press: Fall 2021).

referendums. Stephen Zunes²⁹ argues that a Western Sahara controlled by the “revolutionary and progressive” independence group, the Polisario Front, threatened US interests throughout Africa. As a movement with democratic institutions, openness to women and Black Africans, and a non-theocratic adherence to Islam, the Polisario Front posed a potential example for other liberation movements across Africa. If this were to happen, the ensuing instability would threaten US economic and security interests on the continent. Brahim Saïdy views the US position on the Polisario Front through a more global lens—the left-leaning group was a possible target of Soviet influence, something the US was particularly interested in preventing during the height of the Cold War.³⁰

In several annexation cases, the US seemed to react, in part, to the results of a referendum on the status of the annexed territory. Pieter Drooglever³¹ recounts in great detail the Act of Free Choice, which saw the former Dutch colony of West New Guinea fully absorbed by Indonesia. Although several irregularities were reported by both the UN observers and independent reporters, the US was clear in its support for the result of the vote—a near unanimous support for joining with Indonesia. In the case of Russia’s annexation of Crimea however, the US seemed less concerned with the results of the held referendum (also overwhelming support for annexation), but instead focused on the numerous ways in which it seemed to violate constitutional principles and international law.³² While the existence of a

²⁹ Zunes, Stephen, “Nationalism and Non-Alignment: The Non-Ideology of the Polisario.” *Africa Today*, Vol. 34, no. 3 (1987): 33–46. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4186427>.

³⁰ Saïdy “American Interests in the Western Sahara Conflict...”

³¹ Drooglever, Pieter, *An Act of Free Choice: Decolonisation and the Right to Self-Determination in West Papua*, translated by Teresa Stanton, Maria van Yperen, and Marjolijn de Jager. (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009).

³² Peters, Anne, The Crimean Vote of March 2014 as an Abuse of the Institution of the Territorial Referendum (July 8, 2014). Forthcoming: Christian Calliess (ed), *Liber amicorum Torsten Stein* (2015), 255–280. Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2463536>

referendum seems to be an important consideration for the US, it is simultaneously not a given that the US will recognize its results, or its controversies.

Although all of the discussed literature presents compelling explanations for US responses to individual cases of annexation, there is a considerable lack of literature examining annexation in a broader sense. Is there one factor that seems to be correlated with the outcomes of all cases? And is there a way to predict what the US response will be based on a single variable, instead of a detailed examination of every aspect of a certain case? Some authors described the impact of alliance politics on certain cases,³³ but can this be applied across all cases since 1945, including the ones which have received little attention or discussion? This thesis aims to test this theory, and contribute to the existing literature a first step at analyzing annexations in a broader sense.

³³ From the literature review, see particularly Brahim Saïdy, Brad Simpson, and Terrence C. Markin.

Theory and Hypotheses

Alliance politics have clearly played a role in several US responses to annexations, but can they allow us to predict the outcome of every instance of annexation? I believe that they can. The nature of the relationship between the US and the annexing country helps us understand the kind of American interests surrounding the annexation. This one variable should present then, compelling evidence as to what style of response the US will adopt.

With major allies, US interests will be focused on maintaining that alliance through strengthening, upholding, and protecting the other state. Keeping friendly states in line with US values through continued support is key to ensuring that the US is able to have a presence and some influence throughout the world, without expending or risking much American manpower. Therefore, when an annexation is undertaken by a state the US views as a current or potential ally, I believe that the most logical response will be to support the ally through support of the annexation. Although the US may have commitments to the principles of self-determination and non-annexation, the maintenance of strong alliances will override these in the hierarchy of US interests.

Alternatively, non-allies do not receive this kind of support from the US. There is a lack of shared interests and values, which weakens the connection between the two. The US will be less focused on supporting non-allies, and more on preventing any major changes to the current balance of power. Territorial expansion has the risk of doing just this. The US will not want to see states who deviate from its values given an advantage through the absorption of strategically important territory. In cases where the annexing country is a non-ally, US interests will thus

align with the international principles of self-determination and non-annexation, allowing for it to use these as a justification for a non-recognition policy.

To summarize my theory, this thesis will revolve around two simple hypotheses:

- A. Hypothesis 1: The US will **Recognize** an annexation undertaken by a **US Ally**.
- B. Hypothesis 2: The US will **Condemn** an annexation undertaken by a **US Non-Ally**.

Research Design

The literature review made clear a fascinating paradigm: despite the presence of the non-annexation principle in international law, the US has still recognized several high profile cases of annexation since 1945. While many authors have proposed case-specific reasoning for this, the lack of broader literature on annexations does not allow us to investigate whether or not there is a way to quickly predict when the US will recognize an annexation using only the most basic facts of the case. In my past study of several cases, I was particularly intrigued by the relationship between the US and the annexing country. It appeared that the annexations undertaken by major US allies were usually recognized by the US. This thesis will therefore seek to test this theory. Will the US recognize annexations by its major allies, but oppose ones done by states that are not major allies? A case study analysis will first provide evidence for the correlation between these two variables, and establish further the effect of alliance politics on US decision-making on annexations. I will then apply the general theory across all cases since 1945, hopefully showing that a broader pattern exists, and that there is a possible way of predicting what the US response to an annexation will be.

I. Dataset of Annexation Cases and a Note on the Time Frame

The first step was to compile a dataset of all cases of annexation since 1945. I began with The Correlates of War Project (COW) dataset Territorial Change (v6), which is a record of “all peaceful and violent changes of territory from 1816–2018.”³⁴ Using R Studio I isolated the cases

³⁴ Tir, Jaroslav, Philip Schafer, Paul Diehl, and Gary Goertz. 1998. "Territorial Changes, 1816–1996: Procedures and Data" *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 16:89–97.

that were both coded as an annexation, and which have occurred since 1945.³⁵ Strangely however, this only provided me with five cases, and was absent all of the cases I was aware of through prior research. I thus expanded the dataset to include all cases I had either previously read about, was able to learn about through searching political science databases for “annexation,” or became aware of through consultation with UC San Diego professors. The final dataset included 21 cases of annexation spanning from 1947 to 2015. For each case I included as much relevant information as possible, including the year, annexing country, annexed territory, losing country, US response, strength of US international and domestic interests, US president at the time of annexation, and political forces within the annexed territory—including governing parties, and elections. Information on each case was gathered from a combination of primary and secondary sources, including documents from the US State Department, Central Intelligence Agency, and National Security Council (all retrieved from *Foreign Relations of the United States*), archived articles from the New York Times, as well as case study analyses from various authors. The full dataset has been included in the appendix.

It is important to note why this thesis will only look at cases of annexation since 1945. Although the norm against violations of territorial integrity first emerged following the First World War and US President Woodrow Wilson’s emphasis on the right to self-determination, it was the codification of these principles first in the United Nations Charter and through subsequent UN Declarations that has firmly established the forceful acquisition of territory as a

³⁵ Two of these five cases will be excluded from my research. The annexation of Slovakia by Czechoslovakia occurred in 1945, but before the UN Charter went into effect. For the second case, described as a 1947 annexation by France of territory belonging to the German Federal Republic, I was unable to find any specific information that could tell me what this was referring to. As I am thus unable to ascertain the US response, and other relevant information, it will be excluded as well.

violation of international law.³⁶ One of the major questions I look to answer is why the US has either officially recognized or failed to respond to several high profile cases of international annexations, despite the presence of this codified international law. Additionally, by only looking at cases in which the UN and this international law exists, I am able to hold constant their existence across all my cases, and prevent the existence of a possible confounding variable.

II. Variables

Although all the scenarios examined in this thesis are both complex and unique, the dependent variable (US response) has been condensed into two possible values:

- A. **Recognition:** The US recognizes the annexation as legitimate.
- B. **Condemnation:** The US does not recognize the annexation as legitimate, and makes this position clear through either official statements, or actions such as sanctions or military action.

I look to explain these different outcomes through my independent variable, which will also take on two values. The annexing country is either a:

- A. **US Ally:** the US has signified the annexing country to be a major ally either through the formation of official treaties, or (when not available) through official government language.
- B. **US Non-Ally:** the US has signified that the annexing country is not a major ally. The relationship is either tense, or just neutral.

³⁶ Mellor, Roy E. H., *Nation, State and Territory* (1st edition). (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 55-56.

In cases where official treaties or statements are not available, the determination of the US-annexing country relationship will be made by an examination of US government language as well as secondary source analyses. Primary documents will come primarily from the *Foreign Relations of the United States* database.

III. Methodology

A. Most Similar Systems Design (MSSD)

The first section of this thesis will be a case study analysis between two instances of annexation, utilizing a Most Similar Systems Design (MSSD) in order to control for possible confounding variables as much as possible. My two cases will be similar along several control variables derived from the literature review. By holding constant the strength of US international and domestic interests, the party of the US president, and political forces within the annexed territory such as governing parties and territorial status referendums, but differing in the independent variable I am attempting to test—relationship between the US and the annexing country—I will be able to provide evidence for a causal relationship.³⁷ Because there are many elements that make up each case—foreign and domestic actors in the US, annexing country and annexed territory, as well as international and domestic interests of all three entities, economic considerations, historical influences, etc.—it is extremely difficult to draw causality from a simple comparison of two cases. While they may vary on the independent variable that is being studied, it is difficult to conclude that this variation is the genuine cause

³⁷ Anckar, Carsten, “On the Applicability of the Most Similar Systems Design and the Most Different Systems Design in Comparative Research,” *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 11:5, 389-401, DOI: 10.1080/13645570701401552

of the variation in the dependent variable, when there are so many other factors which could *actually* be causing it. It is thus important to control as best as possible for these confounders through careful case selection of two incredibly similar cases.

B. Selection of Cases

After compiling my dataset on annexation cases since 1945, the particular cases of Indonesia and West New Guinea, and Russia and Crimea, appeared to be similar along all my control variables. In both cases the US had strong international interests, weak domestic interests, the US President was a Democrat, and there existed a territorial status referendum considered to be fraudulent. These similarities are outlined below, and will be discussed in greater detail during the following case study analysis section.

	Indonesia/West New Guinea	Russia/Crimea
Year	1963	2014
Annexing Country	Indonesia	Russia
US Ally?	Yes	No
Territory Annexed	West New Guinea	Crimea
Losing Country	Netherlands (colony) (US ally)	Ukraine (US ally)
US Response	Support for annexation	Official condemnation and sanctions
US Int. Interests?	Strong	Strong
US Dom. Interests?	Weak	Weak
US President	John F. Kennedy (Democrat)	Barack Obama (Democrat)
Political Forces in Annexed	Act of Free Choice	Referendum voted to join

Territory	referendum unanimously voted to join Indonesia (fraudulent)	Russia (fraudulent)
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Although similar, there are some differences which will also need to be examined as possible confounding variables or alternative explanations. The two annexations took place in extremely different times—the era of decolonization versus the modern era. This difference in global circumstances may have had an effect on the mindset of US leaders and their foreign policy priorities. The status of the annexed territory pre-annexation also differs—West New Guinea was a Dutch colony while Crimea was a part of an independently recognized state. Was the US less concerned with the rights of a colony versus a full member of the international community? And finally, the involvement of the UN in the transfer of West New Guinea to Indonesia may have affected the way in which the US viewed the act’s legitimacy. All of these elements will be examined at the end of the MSSD section.

C. Large-N Qualitative Analysis (LNQA)

The second section will employ a large-N qualitative analysis (LNQA), in which my general theory concerning the relationship between the US and an annexing country and the US’ response to an international annexation will be applied across all the cases of annexations since 1945 that I have compiled. This methodology has recently become a common way for researchers to “strengthen causal inference and generalizability” concerning topics for which

there are relatively few cases available for study.³⁸ Considering the small number of cases of annexation since 1945 (21), the combination of the detailed MSSD, and broader LNQA will provide the greatest evidence for the applicability of my theory.

³⁸ Goertz, Gary and Stephen Haggard. "Generalization, case studies, and within-case causal inference: Large-N Qualitative Analysis (LNQA)," Version 15, prepared for the *The Oxford handbook on the philosophy of political science*.

Case I: Indonesia and West New Guinea

The first case will look at an instance of annexation in which the annexing country was deemed by the US to be a major ally: that of Indonesia, and its 1963 annexation of the territory of West New Guinea. Comprising the western half of the island of New Guinea, West New Guinea—also known in Indonesia as West Irian or Irian Barat—is home to the Papuans, an ethnic group distinct from those of the other Indonesian islands. Originally under Dutch rule as part of the Dutch Indies, West New Guinea’s post-colonial status was a topic of great debate in the 1950s and 1960s. This section will examine first the background of the case in greater detail, the relationship between Indonesia and the US, and the specifics surrounding the three control variables: US international and domestic interests, US president, and political forces within the annexed territory.

I. Background

By the 1660s, the Netherlands had established a presence in the Indonesian islands, with its power deriving from the transformation of several local sultanates into vassal states (including that of Tidore, under which the West New Guinea territory was said to officially fall following a Dutch decree in 1848).³⁹ The complexities of this early colonial relationship would serve as the basis for the 20th century dispute, as they both furthered the Dutch claims of sovereignty over West New Guinea, as well as Indonesia’s claim that the territory, as part of the greater Dutch Indies, was included in the 1945 proclamation of independence by the Indonesian

³⁹ Van Der Veur, Paul W. “New Guinea annexations and the origin of the Irian boundary,” *Australian Outlook*, 18:3, (1964), 313–339, DOI: 10.1080/10357716408444183

Republic.⁴⁰ This would prove important as discussions over self-determination arose, with Indonesia arguing that the Papuans, as part of the greater Indonesian Republic, had already exercised this right in 1945. When the Netherlands relinquished sovereignty over Indonesia in 1949, West New Guinea remained an important caveat, with its status set to be determined by future bilateral negotiations.⁴¹

With the two countries unable to come to a settlement, the issue of West New Guinea was brought before the 9th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 1954, and was discussed each year until 1957. Indonesia staked its claim to West New Guinea on the basis of anti-colonialism, while the Netherlands began emphasizing the Papuan's right to self-determination as described in Article II of the UN Charter, but the need to continue Dutch rule until Papua society was deemed advanced enough to properly exercise this right.⁴² These efforts saw little progress, with the UNGA only going so far as to call for "negotiations between the Governments of Indonesia and the Netherlands in order that a just and peaceful solution of the question may be achieved, in conformity with the principles and purposes of the Charter [of the United Nations]."⁴³ When the issue came up for debate again at the 16th session in 1961, thirteen former French African colonies sponsored a draft calling for further bilateral negotiations with the assistance of the UN Secretary General, an interim international administration and the eventual self-determination of the Papuans.⁴⁴ Although it would not

⁴⁰ Henderson, William, *West New Guinea: The Dispute and Its Settlement*. (Seton Hall University Press, 1973), p. 15.

⁴¹ Full agreement between Indonesia and the Netherlands codified in the 1949 Charter of Transfer of Sovereignty.

⁴² Henderson, *West New Guinea*, pp. 50-51.

⁴³ GAOR, Eleventh Session (1956-57), Annexes, A/C. 1/L. 173. (as quoted in Henderson, p. 52).

⁴⁴ Henderson, *West New Guinea*, pp. 106-107.

pass, the final vote being 53 states in favor and 41 against, this resolution signified some motion on the West New Guinea issue, especially with the first non-abstention from the United States, who voted in favor.⁴⁵

Starting in March 1962, Indonesia and the Netherlands began a series of negotiations in which the US, acting through the UN and with the assistance of UN Secretary General U Thant, served as a third-party mediator.⁴⁶ The Dutch continued to demand eventual self-determination for the Papuans of West New Guinea, while Indonesia stood firm in its position that any settlement had to see a full transfer of the territory to Indonesian control. After these initial negotiations fell apart, bringing the two sides together again proved difficult, as hostilities between the two had steadily been increasing in light of Indonesia's frustrations at having failed to obtain UN support.⁴⁷ Recognizing that it was in its best interest to secure a "peaceful settlement with as much face-saving for both sides as possible,"⁴⁸ the US next proposed the Bunker Plan, named after the US representative at the negotiations, retired diplomat Ellsworth Bunker. The Bunker Plan called for the transfer of West New Guinea to a temporary UN trusteeship for a maximum of two years, with the transition to full Indonesian control beginning shortly after. The plan also took into account the Dutch preconditions, and stipulated that the Papuans would have an "opportunity to express freedom of choice," although this was to take

⁴⁵ Henderson, *West New Guinea*, pp. 106-107..

⁴⁶ "U Thant Press Conference, March 27, 1962." *Public Papers of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations*, Volume VI, U Thant, 1961-1964, edited by Andrew W. Cordier and Max Harrelson. (Columbia University Press, 1976).

⁴⁷ Henderson, *West New Guinea*, Chapter 7.

⁴⁸ "Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy) to President Kennedy," Document 278. In *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, Volume XXIII: Southeast Asia. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1994).

place “only after Jakarta had exercised control for a number of years,” and was thus seen as a largely performative inclusion only meant to appease the Dutch.⁴⁹

Despite appealing mainly to the Indonesian position, negotiations continued to prove difficult as Indonesia sought additional concessions, including shortening the duration of the UN administration, and reducing the role of the UN in the self-determination process.⁵⁰ The Dutch, though facing significant losses, “sought to adhere strictly to the provisions of the Bunker formula,” their only concern being the presence of Indonesian paratroopers in West New Guinea, and the role these would serve during the interim UN administration.⁵¹ After intense diplomatic work from both the US and UN Secretary General,⁵² both sides agreed to approach a second round of negotiations with some flexibility. A final settlement between Indonesia and the Netherlands on the issue of West New Guinea was concluded on August 15, 1962.⁵³ The final results, as enumerated in the New York Agreement, closely followed the general outline of the Bunker Plan:⁵⁴

- Transfer of West New Guinea to a United Nations Temporary Executive Authority (UNTEA) would happen immediately.

⁴⁹ Henderson, pg. 185-187.

⁵⁰ “Memorandum from Secretary of State Rusk to President Kennedy,” Document 280. In *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, Volume XXIII: Southeast Asia. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1994).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² See pp. 126-131 of *Public Papers of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations*.

⁵³ U Thant, “Statement at ceremony for signing an agreement between Indonesia and the Netherlands,” pp. 195-196 in *Public Papers of the Secretaries-General...*

⁵⁴ Full text of the final agreement quoted in Henderson, as well as in *GAOR Seventeenth Session, Annexes, A/5170*.

- The UNTEA would end on May 1, 1963, after which the administration of West New Guinea would be transferred to Indonesia.
- All Indonesian troops currently in West New Guinea would be allowed to stay, and would be placed under the authority of the UNTEA.
- An act of self-determination for the Papuans was to happen before the end of 1969.

Language amongst US officials changed following the New York Agreement's ratification. Instead of West New Guinea, the territory was now referred to by the Indonesian term of West Irian, a move recognized and appreciated by the Indonesian leadership.⁵⁵ The act of self-determination was held in 1969, with the Act of Free Choice plebiscite ultimately resulting in an "unanimous decision to remain within the Republic of Indonesia."⁵⁶ The specifics surrounding the vote bring into question, however, the validity of this statement, and the overall fairness in the ways Indonesia conducted the Act of Free Choice. Despite this widespread doubt, international recognition—including from the US—would see the territory of West New Guinea officially annexed into the Republic of Indonesia. A detailed discussion of the Act of Free Choice, its controversies, and US support, can be found below.

⁵⁵ "Telegram From the Embassy in Indonesia to the Department of State," Document 285. In *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, Volume XXIII, Southeast Asia. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1994).

⁵⁶ Henderson, *West New Guinea*, p. 238.

II. The US-Indonesia Relationship

The inclusion of West New Guinea as a first case study is based upon the assumption that at the time of annexation, Indonesia was deemed by the US to be a major ally. As Indonesia would only gain full independence from the Netherlands in 1949, and the first US involvement in the West New Guinea issue occurred in 1961, there was little historical basis for the relationship. Instead, it evolved quickly, in an era of decolonization, shifting US administrations, and great-power Cold War. This section will establish the position of the US in regards to Indonesia, so that the effect of this relationship on US support for the West New Guinea annexation can be better understood.

The US played a crucial role in the movement towards Indonesian independence. As a member of the United Nations Commission for Indonesia, the US—in particular its representative H. Merle Cochran—was responsible for proposing many of the compromises that would be codified in the Round Table Conference, and eventually ensured the transfer of sovereignty from the Netherlands to the Republic of Indonesia.⁵⁷ The US saw the outcome of this conference as vitally important, mainly concerned with “the stability of Southeast Asia and the development of friendly, peace-loving and economically sound governments in that area.”⁵⁸ Even before Indonesia’s independence, the US was expressing an interest in the country’s future as a possible ally. Of particular importance to the US was the potential inclusion of Indonesia in

⁵⁷ Henderson, *West New Guinea*, pp. 114-115.

⁵⁸ “The Secretary of State to the Embassy in the Netherlands,” Document 333. In *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1949, The Far East and Australasia, Volume VII, Part I*. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1975).

the “non-Soviet world.”⁵⁹ At the end of 1949, memos between the US State Department and the UN Representative signaled a belief that US involvement in the Dutch-Indonesian settlement would provoke Soviet backlash, thus damaging the position of the Soviet Union and Communism amongst the Indonesian population.⁶⁰ By the time H. Merle Cochran presented President Sukarno of Indonesia with his credentials on December 28, 1949—signifying official US recognition of the independent Republic of Indonesia and Cochran’s appointment as the first US ambassador to the country—it was clear that the US already recognized the importance of this new relationship.⁶¹ Indonesia signified similar feelings about the new relationship, with a 1950 memo from Cochran to Washington proclaiming that Indonesian leadership was “looking to US more importantly than ever in present situation.”⁶²

A note should be made here of the simultaneous significance of the US-Dutch relationship. One of the US’ first allies during the American Revolution, official diplomatic relations between the two states were established in 1782.⁶³ These historical ties, combined with shared culture and “a common dedication to individual freedom and human rights”⁶⁴ had made the Netherlands a key US ally by the 20th century. Additionally, the membership of both the US

⁵⁹ “The Acting Secretary of State to the United States Representative at the United Nations (Austin),” Document 396. In *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1949, The Far East and Australasia, Volume VII, Part I*. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1975).

⁶⁰ “The Acting Secretary of State to the United States Representative at the United Nations (Austin),” Document 396.

⁶¹ “Memorandum of Conversation, by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Butterworth),” Document 409. In *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1949, The Far East and Australasia, Volume VII, Part I*. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1975).

⁶² “The Ambassador Delegate in Indonesia (Cochran) to the Secretary of State,” Document 611. In *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950, East Asia and the Pacific, Volume VI*. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1976).

⁶³ “US Relations With the Netherlands,” *US Department of State*, July 27, 2020.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

and the Netherlands in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) of April 1949 created new incentives for mutual cooperation and friendship between the two countries. The US' support of Indonesian independence, and its later proposal of a heavily pro-Indonesian settlement in the West New Guinea issue is therefore striking. To align itself with the emerging nation of Indonesia over its historical partner of the Netherlands signals a US belief in Indonesia as a potential major ally in Southeast Asia.

During the 1950s the US applied a policy of "studied neutrality"⁶⁵ when it came to Indonesia's appeals to the UNGA for assistance in settling the issue of West New Guinea. This can mainly be attributed to the US' concerns over maintaining its historical ties with the Netherlands, while also not wanting to damage the slowly developing US-Indonesian relationship.⁶⁶ However, by the early 1960s, this position was forced to change. President Suakrno had grown increasingly reliant on the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) to support him and his move towards the authoritarian "guided democracy" system, thus granting the party a position of relative power and influence within Indonesia.⁶⁷ Indonesia and the Communist world had demonstrated their strengthening ties in 1953, when Sukarno visited the Soviet Union and China.⁶⁸ The US had badly harmed its relationship with Indonesia by supporting rebel groups in 1958—a move aimed at stemming the influence of the PKI. In response to this, Sukarno only strengthened relations with the Soviet Union. In February of 1960

⁶⁵ Henderson, *West New Guinea*, p. 115.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 116-117.

⁶⁷ Vasil, Raj, *Governing Indonesia: The Development of Indonesian Democracy*. (Singapore: Reed Academic Publishing Asia, 1997), p. 44.

⁶⁸ Markin, Terrence C., "The West Irian Dispute: How the Kennedy Administration Resolved that "Other" Southeast Asian Issue," A dissertation submitted to The Johns Hopkins University. (UMI Dissertation Services: 1996), p. 49.

Indonesia welcomed Nikita Krushchev for a highly publicized diplomatic visit,⁶⁹ and the following year Indonesian General Nasution would complete a \$400 million arms deal with the Soviet Union.⁷⁰ Soviet support for Indonesia's claim to West New Guinea—a sharp contrast with the American silence on the issue during the UNGA sessions of the 1950s—further pushed Indonesia away from the US. The image of Indonesia as a major US ally against Communism in Southeast Asia was becoming less and less of a reality.

The arrival of President John F. Kennedy in the White House in 1961 would provide an important impetus towards greater US-Indonesian relations. Kennedy separated himself from other prominent figures at the time, including his own Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, on the appropriate US position regarding the newly emerging countries of the decolonization period. Instead of classifying them as either “with” the US or “against” it, Kennedy sympathized with the idea that “the desire to be independent and free carries with it the desire not to become engaged as a satellite of the Soviet Union or too closely allied with the United States.”⁷¹ He believed that attempts to force emerging countries away from a neutral position could damage their image of the US, possibly driving them towards tighter alliances with the Soviet Union and Communist China. Instead, Kennedy emphasized independence, and with it the “secure achievement of national identity”⁷² as a means of bringing new nations to the American side, and “[inviting them] to find a common interest...in resisting communist expansion.”⁷³ Although

⁶⁹ Henderson, *West New Guinea*, p. 62.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

⁷¹ Schlesinger, Arthur M., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), p. 507, quoting a comment made by Kennedy for *Harper's* in 1959.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 508.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

early efforts to do this were mainly symbolic—inviting Sukarno to Washington for example—the Kennedy administration quickly realized that the threat of further Communist presence in Indonesia, and possible Southeast Asian war over the West New Guinea issue required a stronger response.⁷⁴

As discussed, these shifting interests saw the US become involved in negotiations and the eventual adoption of the New York Agreement. But a final point in US-Indonesian relations should be mentioned. In 1965 Sukarno was deposed in a military coup that saw the rise of President Suharto, and with him a drastic change in Indonesian politics. The PKI was removed from a position of power, its organizations shut down, and thousands of its members executed (later acknowledged by the CIA as “one of the worst mass killings of the 20th century”).⁷⁵ Despite the mass violence, the US was glad to finally see Indonesia become the anti-communist ally it had desired for so long. By the time of the 1969 Act of Free Choice, Suharto had firmly established Indonesia’s status as a major American ally.

III. Discussion of Control Variables

As discussed in the literature review above, existing theories regarding US responses to international annexations look at international and domestic US interests, the role of the US president, and political forces within the annexed territory. In order to examine a new method for predicting US responses—that is, the role of the relationship between the US and the annexing country—this analysis will hold constant these four variables as much as possible, in

⁷⁴ Markin, “The West Irian Dispute...” p. 65.

⁷⁵ Elson, R. E., *Suharto: A Political Biography*. (Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 125.

order to isolate the independent variable and its possible effects. This section will summarize the specifics of these four variables as they relate to the case of Indonesia and West New Guinea. A comparison and analysis section will come in the following section, after an introduction to the second case study.

A. US International and Domestic Interests in West New Guinea

As discussed above, the US had strong international interests when it came to West New Guinea, Indonesia, and Southeast Asia as a whole. As Indonesia's emergence as an independent nation would coincide with rising tensions between the US and Soviet Union, establishing its role as a non-Communist, non-Soviet aligned state was of key interest to the US.⁷⁶ As the 1950s progressed however, the US would see this interest challenged, as Indonesia developed relations with the Soviet Union and Communist China through arms deals and other trade.⁷⁷ Although the US was originally hesitant to take a side on the West New Guinea issue, a result of its simultaneous historical connections to the Netherlands and its new ones with Indonesia, the early 1960s saw a shift in US policy. The acknowledgement of a growing Communist presence in Southeast Asia saw the US begin to prioritize its Indonesia relationship and actively seek a settlement to the West New Guinea conflict. A new emphasis on respecting the nationalist ideologies of emerging nations moved the US to recognize the most important issue amongst Indonesian nationalists—West New Guinea—and support a settlement that was essentially pro-

⁷⁶ “The Acting Secretary of State to the United States Representative at the United Nations (Austin),” Document 396.

⁷⁷ “Memorandum of a Conversation, Department of State, Washington, January 31, 1956, 10:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.” Document 93. In *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955–1957*, Foreign Aid and Economic Defense Policy, Volume X. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1989).

Indonesian. In its larger goals of mitigating Soviet influence and establishing a non-Communist ally in Southeast Asia, the US saw West New Guinea as the key to pushing Indonesia towards its side.

Support for the classification of West New Guinea as a strong international interest came mainly from primary documents in the *Foreign Relations of the United States* database from the years 1949-1969 (from the independence of Indonesia to the completion of the Act of Free Choice). Throughout this time period, documents show discussion of Indonesia, West New Guinea, and US interests by the Secretary of State,⁷⁸ Secretary of Defense,⁷⁹ Joint Chiefs of Staff,⁸⁰ and the President⁸¹ (to just give a few examples). The frequency of these topics amongst foreign policy correspondence, along with the urgency with which they are discussed, show that the US had strong international interests in the issue of West New Guinea.

Additionally, the US had weak domestic interests in Indonesia and West New Guinea. In no primary or secondary sources studied for this thesis was there a mention of a domestic element to US decision making. This is in sharp contrast to the annexation cases where strong domestic interests are frequently discussed—those involving Israel. The elements which create strong US domestic interests in Israeli annexations—the large population of Jewish and Evangelical Christian voters, as well as powerful pro-Israel lobbying groups—are not seen in the

⁷⁸ “Memorandum by the Secretary of State to President Truman,” Document 608.

⁷⁹ “The Secretary of Defense (Marshall) to the Secretary of State,” Document 678. In *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, East Asia and the Pacific, Volume VI. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1976).

⁸⁰ “Memorandum From the Joint Chiefs of Staff to Secretary of Defense McElroy,” Document 53. In *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1958-1960, Indonesia, Volume XVII. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1994).

⁸¹ “Memorandum of Conversation (Subject: West New Guinea Issue),” Document 244. In *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1961-1963, Southeast Asia, Volume XXIII. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1994).

case of West New Guinea. It will therefore be assumed that domestic interests played little to no role in the US' recognition of the West New Guinea annexation.

B. US President

Although the settlement process and transition from Dutch to Indonesian control over West New Guinea occurred over many years and several US administrations, the final negotiations, the UN trusteeship, and the Indonesian takeover in 1963 fell under the presidency of Democrat John F. Kennedy. Much of Kennedy's personal role in transforming the US position towards emerging nations has already been discussed, however it is important to note here not only his political party, but his stance toward the UN (as it is within the UN Charter that the principles of self-determination and non-annexation lie). In a speech in 1961, Kennedy made clear his support for a strong UN, and his belief that as the "only true alternative to war," the UN must be given "new strength and new rules."⁸² Amidst an era of conventional conflict and a new nuclear threat, Kennedy asserted that "dedication to the Charter must be maintained...for we far prefer world law, in the age of self-determination, than world war."⁸³ On the issue of self-determination, Kennedy would be very clear: the "continuing tide of self-determination, which runs so strong, has our sympathy and our support...[let us] apply the principle of free choice and the practice of free plebiscites in every corner of the globe."⁸⁴ Kennedy's clear support of

⁸² "JFK Address at U.N. General Assembly, 25 September 1961," *John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum*. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/historic-speeches/address-to-the-united-nations-general-assembly>

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

the UN and its principles thus contrasted the US position on West New Guinea. The question remains then, what motivated this decision-making?

Of course Kennedy would only be President during a brief period of the West New Guinea conflict. In the years between his assassination in November 1963, and the Act of Free Choice in August 1969, the US would see an additional Democratic administration (Johnson) and a Republican one (Nixon). An important point then, is that across these administrations, the US position remained unchanged.

C. Political Forces in West New Guinea: the Act of Free Choice

The third control variable will look at political forces within the annexed territory of West New Guinea, in particular the Act of Free Choice referendum of 1969. To repeat an earlier point, “political forces” in the context of this thesis is a summary term that refers to political parties, governing entities, and territory-wide elections. The existence, in the cases of West New Guinea and (as will be discussed in the following section) Crimea, of a territory-wide referendum resulting in overwhelming support for annexation is an important similarity. In both cases the legitimacy of the referendum was challenged, and yet in one case the US supported annexation and in the other it opposed annexation. Following will be a brief discussion of West New Guinea’s Act of Free Choice.

It is important to first note the level of political development of the West New Guinea Papuans at the time of the referendum. Early calls for self-determination were always countered with the claim that the Papuans were not yet ready to make a decision on this scale

due to their “backwardness,” and lack of political understanding.⁸⁵ However, as Dutch colonial programs and missionary groups increased access to education, healthcare, and social welfare services, West New Guinea saw the growth of a “modern-educated, Papuan lower middle class”⁸⁶ who were increasingly active in local political structures. Most important during this time was the development of a Papuan political identity. As summarized by Henderson:⁸⁷

...the real significance of the 1950s was that the overall process of modernization laid the basis for the emergence of a distinct sense of Papuan self-consciousness among the slowly increasing although still relatively miniscule indigenous elite. This became apparent after the Dutch initiated in early 1960 a new plan for hastening the development of the territory, a step which was soon followed by the flowering of a kind of Papuan nationalism whose main emphasis was on the separate identity of the autochthonous population and its right to determine its own political future.

The main result of the 1960 policy was the establishment of the New Guinea Council, an elected legislative body that would be jointly responsible (along with an executive) for passing legislation and a budget, and would have “rights of petition, interpellation, initiative and amendment.”⁸⁸ The Council’s first elections in 1961 would see majority Papuan representation, with some of its first measures establishing a national flag, an anthem, and a new name for the territory: Papua Barat.⁸⁹ Although early Council sessions showed that the Papuans still had a lot to learn, the speed at which the population had become politically integrated proved that the Papuans were now far from “backwards,” and that an act of self-determination would be possible in the near future.

⁸⁵ Henderson, *West New Guinea*, p. 45.

⁸⁶ Van der Kroef, Justus M., “West New Guinea: The Uncertain Future.” *Asian Survey* 8, no. 8 (1968): 691–707. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2642586>.

⁸⁷ Henderson, *West New Guinea*, pp. 93–94.

⁸⁸ Van der Veur, Paul W., “Political Awakening in West New Guinea.” *Pacific Affairs* 36, no. 1 (1963): 54–73. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2754774>.

⁸⁹ Henderson, *West New Guinea*, p. 98.

Six years would pass between the transfer of West New Guinea to Indonesian control on May 1, 1963, and the Act of Free Choice in August of 1969. During this time Indonesia, recognizing the slight chance that a referendum would result in an independent Papua Barat, began to take measures to ensure this would not happen. Immediately Indonesia outlawed the political parties and labor unions that had formed under the Dutch rule, and prohibited visitations from almost all foreigners (in an attempt to remove foreign influences on education and political ideology).⁹⁰ The New Guinea Council was ended, and replaced by a series of territory-wide and regional councils with Indonesian appointed members in which “only a limited number of Papuans continued serving.”⁹¹ Under this new Indonesian rule, “partisan political activity was banned unless officially approved” and “controls over the press and all public gatherings generally equalled...those under the authoritarian system...in the rest of Indonesia.”⁹² Despite these obvious attempts to silence Papuan nationalism and prevent a successful independence referendum, the US was distinctly quiet. A 1965 meeting between President Johnson and Congressional leadership in which various situations in South Asia were discussed emphasizes this, with Secretary of State Dean Rusk remarking that “the situation in West New Guinea is quiet,”⁹³ the only reference to West New Guinea within the meeting.

Article XVII of the 1962 New York Agreement between Indonesia and the Netherlands stated that the UN Secretary-General would “appoint a Representative who...will carry out the

⁹⁰ Drooglever, Pieter, *An Act of Free Choice: Decolonisation and the Right to Self-Determination in West Papua*, translated by Teresa Stanton, Maria van Yperen, and Marjolijn de Jager. (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009), p. 624

⁹¹ *Ibid*, p. 627.

⁹² Van der Kroef, “West New Guinea: The Uncertain Future.”

⁹³ “Memorandum of Conversation: President’s Meeting With Congressional Leaders,” Document 101. In *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968*, Volume XXVI, Indonesia; Malaysia-Singapore; Philippines. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2000).

Secretary-General's responsibilities to advise, assist, and participate in arrangements which are the responsibility of Indonesia for the act of free choice."⁹⁴ On April 1, 1968, U Thant would appoint Bolivian diplomat Fernando Ortiz Sanz to this role. Despite having limited authority to intervene in the administration of the Act of Free Choice, Ortiz Sanz's role as an observer, and the contents of his official reports, present the strongest evidence of the illegitimate nature of the referendum. As the New York Agreement did not stipulate specifics for how the Act of Free Choice was to be carried out, Indonesia had the authority to choose the method of voting. Instead of following the recommendations of Ortiz Sanz to adhere to the "democratic, orthodox, and universally accepted method of 'one man, one vote',"⁹⁵ Indonesia would establish a series of "consultative assemblies" who would come to a decision through *musyawarah*, the "Indonesian method of reaching a decision through discussion, understanding, and consensus."⁹⁶ As preparations for the Act of Free Choice began, it was clear that Indonesia had no intention of allowing Ortiz Sanz any sort of oversight as to the appointment and elections of the members of these councils (something that had been a key condition for the UN Representative), with some accounts claiming that the Indonesian police and army had a strong influence on the procedures and outcomes of the various appointments and elections.⁹⁷ During the process of the referendum (July 14-August 2 of 1969), several journalists would report on the levels of unrest within West New Guinea, and the pressures facing the chosen representatives. Australian

⁹⁴ See p. 257 in Henderson, *West New Guinea*.

⁹⁵ GAOR 24th Session (1969), Annexes, A/7723, *Report of the Secretary-General regarding the act of self-determination in West Irian*, Annex I, "Report by the Representative of the Secretary-General in West Irian, submitted under Article XXI, paragraph 1, of the Agreement between the Republic of Indonesia and the Kingdom of the Netherlands concerning West New Guinea (West Irian)" (as cited in Henderson, p. 264)

⁹⁶ Henderson, *West New Guinea*, p. 234.

⁹⁷ Drooglever, *An Act of Free Choice*, p. 713.

journalists Joseph Halloway and Hugh Lunn would both describe encounters with Papuans who seemingly risked violent retribution should they vote for independence from Indonesia.⁹⁸ Under these conditions, the outcome of the Act of Free Choice was of no surprise: the consultative assemblies unanimously ruled in favor of remaining a part of Indonesia.⁹⁹ In his final report, Ortiz Sanz would question the validity of this, having received a large number of petitions which:¹⁰⁰

...often expressed criticism of the Indonesian administration; complained against acts of repression by the Indonesian armed forces; denounced the lack of guarantees for basic rights and freedoms, including the freedom to organize opposition political parties; [and] requested the release of political prisoners.

The final conclusion made by Ortiz Sanz was that “an act of free choice [had] taken place in West Irian [West New Guinea] in accordance with Indonesian practice, in which the representatives of the population have expressed their wish to remain with Indonesia.”¹⁰¹ This statement has prompted much discussion, with analysts such as Henderson and Drooglever commenting on the use of the word “an” to signify that “the Act of Free Choice as implemented was not in accord with the international practice of which the New York Agreement had spoken.”¹⁰²

Official US documents show little consideration for the controversies surrounding the Act of Free Choice. On July 29, fifteen days after the consultative assemblies had begun their discussion, Secretary of State William Rogers met with Indonesian Foreign Affairs Minister Adam Malik, expressing his pleasure at there being “no bilateral problems between US and

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 723.

⁹⁹ Henderson, *West New Guinea*, p. 238.

¹⁰⁰ GAOR 24th Session (1969), Annexes, A/7723. (as quoted in Henderson, pp. 236-237)

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, (as quoted in Henderson p. 239).

¹⁰² Drooglever, *An Act of Free Choice*, p. 740.

Indonesia.”¹⁰³ Following their meeting, the US Embassy in Indonesia would come to the following conclusion about the Act of Free Choice: “there is no doubt about the result; the West Irian people will of course register their desire to remain in Indonesia.”¹⁰⁴ This meeting coincided with a visit by President Nixon to Indonesia, where he met with the new Indonesian President Suharto on July 27 and 28. The two would discuss military assistance, aid for Indonesian development, Communism in Southeast Asia and the situation in Vietnam, but little about the ongoing Act of Free Choice. In fact, in his summary of the meeting, Secretary Rogers would say that “President Nixon...had not studied the background of the West Irian problem” and that “he would do so when he returned to Washington.”¹⁰⁵

At the 24th session of the UNGA in 1969, a resolution acknowledging the Act of Free Choice and its completion under the guidelines of the 1962 New York Agreement was adopted (84 in favor—including the US, 0 opposed, 30 abstentions).¹⁰⁶ This vote followed the defeat of a Ghanaian effort to recognize the discrepancies in the conduct of the Act of Free Choice, by calling for a new act of self-determination to take place before the end of 1975. This amendment was rejected (15 in favor, 60 opposed—including the US, 39 abstentions).¹⁰⁷ As these discussions

¹⁰³ “Telegram From the Embassy in Indonesia to the Department of State,” Document 271. In *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume XX, Southeast Asia*. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2006).

¹⁰⁴ “Telegram From the Embassy in Indonesia to the Department of State,” Document 272. In *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume XX, Southeast Asia*. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2006).

¹⁰⁵ “Telegram From Secretary of State Rogers to the Department of State,” Document 273. In *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume XX, Southeast Asia*. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2006).

¹⁰⁶ “US Participation in the UN: Report by the President to the Congress for the Year 1969,” p. 46, Department of State Publication 8540, International Organization and Conference Series 92. (Washington: Government Printing Office, October 1970).

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

were taking place, President Nixon continued to show his support for Indonesia, noting in a conversation with Foreign Minister Malik on November 17 his pleasure at “Mr. Malik and his colleagues [avoiding] a Communist takeover in Indonesia.”¹⁰⁸ Despite the sometimes tumultuous nature of the US-Indonesia relationship, by 1969 and the completion of the Act of Free Choice, it was clear that the US had gotten exactly what it wanted: a strong, non-Communist ally in Southeast Asia. The only question was at what cost to the right to self-determination for the Papuans, and the status of the non-annexation principle in international practice?

¹⁰⁸ “Memorandum of Conversation,” Document 276. In *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976*, Volume XX, Southeast Asia. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2006).

Case II: Russia and Crimea

The second case will look at an instance of international annexation where the annexing country was not deemed by the US to be a major ally: that of Russia, and its 2014 annexation of the Crimean Peninsula of Ukraine. Situated in the south of Ukraine, at the northeastern coast of the Black Sea, Crimea's unique location at the intersection of Europe and Asia has made it an area of great territorial dispute since the Middle Ages. From the Ottoman Empire, to the Russian Empire, to Ukraine, and back to Russia, sovereignty over Crimea has a complex history—its current status made more complicated by the presence of a multitude of ethnic and religious groups. This section will examine Crimea's history, the relationship between Russia and the United States, followed once again by a discussion of the four control variables as they relate to this case.

I. Background

Crimea first came under Russian control in 1783, when Catherine the Great secured its annexation into the Russian Empire following several centuries of Ottoman dominance on the peninsula.¹⁰⁹ Up until the outbreak of the First World War, there would be a constant push by Russia to settle more Orthodox Christians of various ethnicities (Armenian, Bulgarian, Greek, etc.) in Crimea, actions which pushed much of the native Muslim Crimean Tatar population to emigrate to friendlier neighbors, mainly the Ottoman Empire.¹¹⁰ By 1856 and the conclusion of

¹⁰⁹ Kent, Neil, *Crimea: A History*. (London: Hurst & Company, 2016), pp. 52-54.

¹¹⁰ Glyn Williams, Brian, *The Crimean Tatars: From Soviet Genocide to Putin's Conquest*. (London: Hurst & Company, 2015), p. 7.

the Crimean War,¹¹¹ Russians and other Christian groups would make up the majority of the Crimean population, with the dwindling Tatar community becoming increasingly nationalistic.¹¹²

Following the events of World War I and the 1917 Russian Revolution, Crimea would be briefly controlled by the Bolshevik Crimean Revolutionary Committee, until October 1921 when the Crimean Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic would be founded (establishing Crimea as a republic separate from Russia).¹¹³ Viewing the peninsula as strategically important, Germany would seize Crimea in 1941 and annex it into a puppet Ukrainian state. Over the next three years, Crimea's Jewish population would be subject to the same slaughter seen across the continent, while the Tatars were offered some level of protection so as to not damage German relations with Turkey.¹¹⁴ Crimea would return to Soviet control in 1944, with the Tatar population facing retribution for supposed collaboration with Nazi Germany. May 18, 1944 would come to be known as "The Black Day": 180,000 Crimean Tatars were deported by the Soviet Union, forced to march and resettle in the Central Asian states.¹¹⁵ It was not until 1967 that the Crimean Tatars as a whole were absolved of the collaboration charges, and it would take until 1989 for them to be allowed to return home to Crimea.¹¹⁶

The year 1954 is one of great importance in Crimea's history, as it serves as the precursor for the 2014 territorial dispute. By the order of Nikita Khrushchev, Crimea was transferred to

¹¹¹ The Crimean War (1853–1856) was a conflict between Russia, and a victorious alliance of France, the Ottoman Empire, the United Kingdom, and Sardinia.

¹¹² Kent, *Crimea: A History*, p. 99.

¹¹³ Wilson, Andrew, *Ukraine Crisis: What It Means for the West*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), p. 103 <https://doi.org/10.12987/9780300212921-007>

¹¹⁴ Kent, *Crimea: A History*, p. 134.

¹¹⁵ Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis*, pp. 103–104.

¹¹⁶ Kent, *Crimea: A History*, p.183.

Ukraine, a move seen as part of a new strategy toward strengthening Russian-Ukrainian ties following the death of Stalin.¹¹⁷ Although widely accepted as legitimate at the time, recent Russian narratives have instead framed this transfer of Crimea as simply a “royal gift” – an illegal action undertaken by an individual, and motivated by Khrushchev’s Ukrainian roots.¹¹⁸ Russian President Vladimir Putin would make this an official Russian position in 2014, when, following the annexation of Crimea, he would state that:¹¹⁹

In 1954, a decision was made to transfer the Crimean Region to Ukraine...this was the personal initiative of the Communist Party head Nikita Khrushchev. What stood behind this decision of his – a desire to win the support of the Ukrainian political establishment or to atone for the mass repressions of the 1930s in Ukraine – is for historians to figure out. What matters now is that this decision was made in clear violation of the constitutional norms that were in place even then. The decision was made behind the scenes...

Despite these assertions, there is no doubt that for sixty years, from 1954 to 2014, Crimea was fully a part of Ukraine.¹²⁰

A referendum in January 1991 would see the return of an autonomous Crimean republic, this time within the Ukrainian Soviet State. When Ukraine declared its independence from the Soviet Union in August 1991, Crimea would be included.¹²¹ Although in some ways, Crimea would continue to demonstrate its Ukrainian connection (Ukrainian was declared the official language for example), the post-Soviet period would also see the rise again of Crimean nationalism

¹¹⁷ Cherviatsova, Alina, “The 1954 Transfer of Crimea.” *Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society*, edited by Julie Makarychev, Andrey Umland, Andreas Fedor. (Stuttgart, Germany: Ibidem-Verlag, 2020), p. 190.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 185.

¹¹⁹ “Address to the Parliament, heads of Russian regions and civil society representatives in the Kremlin,” *President of Russian Federation* official website, March 18, 2014.

¹²⁰ Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis*, p. 100.

¹²¹ *Ibid*, p. 105.

amongst the ethnic groups who deemed themselves “indigenous” (although this movement would struggle to gain internal or international recognition due to the large number of peoples tracing their roots to ancient Crimea).¹²² Throughout this period, the Tatars, still recovering from the events of 1944, would be the largest proponents of a pro-Ukrainian policy within Crimea. In 1995 Crimea’s position within Ukraine would be further strengthened, when the abolishment of the Crimean presidency and an end to recognition of Crimean constitutions positioned Kyiv as the sole political authority within Crimea.¹²³ In 1998 a new Crimean constitution would be ratified, changing the territory’s name to the Autonomous Republic of Crimea.

In 1997, Ukraine and Russia would sign two important treaties relating to Crimea. The Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation, and Partnership between Ukraine and the Russian Federation made it clear that going forward, Russia would respect the “territorial integrity, inviolability of borders” of Ukraine. With its signing, Russia was also committed to the “non-use of force or threat of force [and]...the right of peoples to freely determine their fate.”¹²⁴ The two countries would also come to an agreement on the status of the navy docked at the Crimean port city of Sevastopol. The Partition Treaty on the Status and Conditions of the Black Sea Fleet established a clear division between the Ukrainian and Russian navies, and made it clear that Russia could keep its Black Sea Fleet in Crimea until 2017. In 2010 this arrangement was renewed to last until 2043.

¹²² Kent, *Crimea: A History*, p. 145.

¹²³ *Ibid*, p. 146.

¹²⁴ Sorokowski, Andrew D., “Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation, and Partnership between Ukraine and the Russian Federation.” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 20 (1996): 319–29.

The years between Ukrainian independence and the annexation of Crimea would be wrought with tensions between pro-Western and pro-Russian forces. Control over the presidency would move back and forth between them, with the election of a pro-Russian president in 1994 (Leonid Kuchma), a pro-Westerner in 2004 (Viktor Yushchenko), and a pro-Russian again in 2010 (Viktor Yanukovich). The divide would be exacerbated by the 2008 financial crisis, during which Ukraine struggled with both economic weakness and high levels of corruption, pushing many to look towards Russia as a source of support.¹²⁵

In 2013, Ukrainian President Yanukovich would end negotiations over an Association Agreement with the European Union aimed at increasing trade between Ukraine and the EU. This move sparked massive protests, particularly at Kyiv's Maidan Square (the event would come to be known as Euromaidan). As a result, Yanukovich would be removed by Parliament in February of 2014. In Crimea, the people were once again divided, with some supporting the Euromaidan protesters, and others viewing the protests as a coup overthrowing Yanukovich.¹²⁶ Taking advantage of this unrest, pro-Russian forces staged a coup within Crimea, with Sergey Aksenov assuming power following rigged elections in the Crimean Parliament.¹²⁷ Almost immediately, Russian troops aided by defected members of the Ukrainian Berkut (police force) seized strategic points, including the airport at Simferopol and the port city of Sevastopol (the city where Russia's Black Sea Fleet has been stationed since 1997).¹²⁸ By March 11, approximately

¹²⁵ Kent, *Crimea: A History*, pp. 150-151.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 155.

¹²⁷ Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis*, p. 110.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 111.

30,000 to 35,000 Russian troops were stationed throughout Crimea, with the smaller Ukrainian military lacking the training and orders to properly retaliate.¹²⁹

A referendum would be held on March 16, with Russia claiming that the results showed 96.7% support for union with Russia, a number not even remotely plausible considering that 24% of Crimea's population was Ukrainian and 12% Crimean Tatar.¹³⁰ A treaty signifying the official annexation of Crimea would be signed on March 18, and ratified on March 21.

The international response was swift. On February 28, US President Barack Obama was already expressing that Russia's movements violated its commitment to "respect the independence and sovereignty and borders of Ukraine, and...international laws."¹³¹ At this point he made it clear that "the United States [would] stand with the international community in affirming that there [would] be costs for any military intervention in Ukraine."¹³² A series of executive orders signed by Obama (13660 on March 6, 2014, and 13661 on March 16, 2014) placed sanctions on those whose "actions or policies...undermine democratic processes or institutions in Ukraine,"¹³³ or those who had "asserted governmental authority over any part or region of Ukraine without the authorization of the Government of Ukraine."¹³⁴ On March 20, Obama would note the recent occurrence of "an illegal referendum in Crimea; an illegitimate move by

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 111-112.

¹³⁰ Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis*, p. 113.

¹³¹ "Statement by the President on Ukraine," *The Obama White House: Office of the Press Secretary*, February 28, 2014.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ "Blocking Property of Certain Persons Contributing to the Situation in Ukraine," Executive Order 13660, March 6, 2014.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

the Russians to annex Crimea...”¹³⁵ and would announce an additional executive order to expand upon the earlier sanctions.

The UNGA adopted Resolution 68/262, “Territorial Integrity of Ukraine” on March 27, which committed the General Assembly to respect “the sovereignty, political independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.”¹³⁶ During debate, the US representative Samantha Power would argue that “coercion cannot be the means to self-determination,” and the representative for Costa Rica would make the well-received argument that for small states, sovereignty can only be protected by international law—something Resolution 68/262 would help affirm.¹³⁷

NATO would also condemn Russia’s actions, with the NATO-Ukraine Commission¹³⁸ releasing a statement on September 4:¹³⁹

We strongly condemn Russia’s illegal and illegitimate self-declared ‘annexation’ of Crimea and its continued and deliberate destabilization of eastern Ukraine in violation of international law. We call on Russia to reverse its self-declared ‘annexation’ of Crimea, which we do not and will not recognise...Allies consider any unilateral Russian military or subversive action inside Ukraine, under any pretext, including humanitarian, as a blatant violation of international law.

The US would continue to express its condemnation of Russia’s actions in Crimea throughout the Obama Administration. In his final days in the White House, he would declare a continuation

¹³⁵ “President Obama Speaks on Ukraine,” *The Obama White House: Office of the Press Secretary*, March 20, 2014.

¹³⁶ “Territorial Integrity of Ukraine”, UN Doc. A/68/L.39 (March 24, 2014).

¹³⁷ Sengupta, Somini, “Vote by U.N. General Assembly Isolates Russia,” *The New York Times*, March 27, 2014.

¹³⁸ Although Ukraine is not a member of NATO, the NATO-Ukraine 1997 Charter on a Distinctive Partnership established NATO’s support for Ukraine and the NATO-Ukraine Commission.

¹³⁹ “Joint statement of the NATO-Ukraine Commission,” *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, September 4, 2014.

of one year of the “national emergency” first declared in Executive Order 13660. On February 25, 2020 President Donald Trump would extend the national emergency for a period of one year.¹⁴⁰ On September 1, 2021 the administration of President Joe Biden would make clear the continued position of the US on Russia’s annexation of Crimea:¹⁴¹

“The United States does not and will never recognize Russia’s purported annexation of Crimea...The United States supports Ukraine’s efforts to...focus international attention and action on the humanitarian and security costs of Russia’s occupation of Crimea with the aim of peacefully restoring Ukraine’s control over this territory in accordance with international law.

II. The US-Russia Relationship

By 2014 and the annexation of Crimea, the US and Russia had experienced a long and tumultuous relationship. Beginning in 1809 with the establishment of diplomatic relations, the two have had periods of alliance during the two World Wars, but also ones of great tension—mainly of course, the 45 year Cold War. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, relations between the US and Russia would continue to fluctuate with changes in leadership on both sides. Although President Obama was able to cooperate in some areas with Russian President Dmitri Medvedev (in power from 2008–2012), the return of Vladimir Putin in 2012 would also see a return in tensions. By 2014, it was clear that the US and Russia were far from allies, with actions in Crimea simply confirming this. Following will be a brief expansion on the US-Russia relationship during the Obama administration leading up to the Crimean annexation.

¹⁴⁰ “Text of a Notice on the Continuation of the National Emergency with Respect to Ukraine,” *Trump White House*, February 25, 2020.

¹⁴¹ “Joint Statement on the U.S.-Ukraine Strategic Partnership,” *The Biden White House*, September 1, 2021.

Vice President Joe Biden would announce the new administration's policy towards Russia at the 2009 Munich Security Conference, emphasizing the many areas in which there was potential for cooperation. The more personal connection between Obama and Medvedev allowed for some progress, with a June 2010 memo highlighting the signing of the New Start Treaty, sanctions against Iran, and the development of a program using Russian territory to supply US troops in Afghanistan.¹⁴² This new era of US-Russian relations would be short-lived however, with the 2011 Arab uprisings leading to tensions over UN intervention in Libya, and division over the preferred method of dealing with the crisis in Syria.¹⁴³ As he faced a surprisingly large opposition movement in the 2012 presidential elections, Putin quickly placed the blame on the US, accusing it of financing the protests (with a particular emphasis on Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and the US State Department).¹⁴⁴ After his election, US-Russian relations continued to sour, as it was announced that the USAID programs in Russia were to be shut down by October 1, 2012. Missile defense quickly became a heated issue, with Russian officials ignoring the American position (that such a system is necessary for defense against hostile states such as Iran), instead asserting that "they know the real target of missile defense is Russia."¹⁴⁵ A 2012 conference in Moscow simply ended in a stalemate, with Putin expressing his belief that the issue would never be resolved, regardless of who the US President was.

¹⁴² "US-Russian Relations: 'Reset' Fact Sheet," *The Obama White House: Office of the Press Secretary*, June 24, 2010.

¹⁴³ Stent, Angela, "US-Russian Relations in the Second Obama Administration," *Survival* (December 2012).

¹⁴⁴ Elder, Miriam, "Vladimir Putin Accuses Hillary Clinton of Encouraging Russian Protests," *Guardian*, December 8, 2011.

¹⁴⁵ Stent, "US-Russian Relations..." p. 131.

Combined, all these issues created a US–Russia dynamic that had moved away from the “reset” period and into a new, more hostile one. By the time Russia annexed Crimea, almost every policy area had seen a turnaround from cooperation to confrontation. It was certainly clear that in its response to the events of 2014, the US was not dealing with a close ally.

III. Discussion of Control Variables

As in the Indonesia and West New Guinea case, this section will offer a brief description of the four control variables as they relate to the case of Russia and Crimea. A comparison between the variables in each case will follow in the analysis section.

A. US International and Domestic Interests in Crimea

As expressed by both the Obama administration itself and numerous authors, the US has strong international interests when it comes to Russia’s incursion into Ukraine and its annexation of Crimea. Central to US objectives in Europe is the maintenance of a strong and unified NATO free from Russian security threats.¹⁴⁶ In his visits to Poland and the Baltic States in the days following the Crimean Referendum, Vice President Biden made it clear that his administration viewed Russia’s latest moves as a direct threat to this interest, and recommitted the US to the defense of its threatened NATO allies.¹⁴⁷ In light of the Obama administration’s shift towards developing stronger relations with the Asian states, and growing worries amongst

¹⁴⁶ “Remarks to the Press by Vice President Joe Biden with Prime Minister Donald Tusk of Poland,” *The Obama White House: Office of the Press Secretary*, March 18, 2014.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

Eastern European states that the US was no longer a reliable ally, these assurances were especially important.¹⁴⁸

Although not a member of NATO, strong relations with the country of Ukraine are particularly important to the US, as its position at the border between Europe and Russia makes it a key barrier to Russian influence throughout Eastern Europe. As exemplified by the 2008 US-Ukraine Charter on Strategic Partnership, “a strong, independent and democratic Ukraine, capable of responsible self-defense, contributes to the security and prosperity not only of all the people of Ukraine, but of a Europe whole, free and at peace.”¹⁴⁹ Ukraine’s potential as a future NATO and EU member further emphasizes this US interest in supporting a fully independent Ukraine free from Russian interference. In February of 2014, the US would take additional steps to ensure this, with approximately \$1.3 billion committed to Ukraine to “strengthen democratic institutions and civil society, stimulate economic growth, strengthen its defenses, and help Ukraine more safely monitor and secure its borders and defend its territorial integrity.”¹⁵⁰ With some arguing that “before democracy can spread further, it must take deeper root where it has already sprouted,”¹⁵¹ the strength of Ukraine’s democratic institutions and of Eastern Europe’s regional stability was increasingly important considering the concurrent US interest of seeing democratic governments take root in the nearby Middle East.

In light of the breakdown in US-Russia relations following Putin’s return to the Russian presidency, the US was additionally interested in curbing a Russia “undergoing a major change

¹⁴⁸ Landler, Mark, “In Poland, Biden Promises Allies Protection,” *The New York Times*, March 18, 2014.

¹⁴⁹ “U.S. Ukraine Charter on Strategic Partnership,” *U.S. Embassy in Ukraine*, December 19, 2008.

¹⁵⁰ “FACT SHEET: U.S. Assistance to Ukraine since February 2014,” *The Obama White House: Office of the Press Secretary*, June 15, 2016.

¹⁵¹ Diamond, Larry, “The Democratic Rollback,” *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2008.

in its attitudes, its worldview and its level of assertiveness.”¹⁵² Putin’s undermining of the post-Cold War order through his actions in Crimea not only posed a direct risk to US interests in Eastern Europe, but also distracted the US from focusing on building relations with other developing world regions and ending extreme crises in places such as Iraq and Afghanistan.¹⁵³ In its response to the annexation of Crimea, the US was thus taking into account its international interests not only in Europe, but the rest of the world.

Like the previous case, study of both secondary and primary sources signal that in the case of Crimea, US domestic interests were weak. Although a small domestic element may have existed (the massive response amongst the US population to Russia’s 2022 invasion of Ukraine suggests that President Obama may have faced backlash had a strong response not been given in 2014), the official dialogue by US leadership and the numerous analyses by various authors all emphasize the international and strategic interests of the US as the leading motivations for decision makers. It will therefore be assumed that domestic interests played an insignificant role in influencing the US response to the Crimean annexation.

B. US President

As discussed above, the worsening of US-Russia relations and the annexation of Crimea occurred during the administration of Democratic President Barack Obama. As with President Kennedy and the West New Guinea case, it is important to analyze Obama’s position towards the UN and its values. In his first speech at the UN in September 2009, Obama would outline his

¹⁵² Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis*, p. vii.

¹⁵³ *Ibid*, p. viii.

ambitious goals for a new world order focused on nonproliferation, peace and security, environmental protections, and economic globalization—all of which, he made clear, would be impossible without a strong global commitment to the UN.¹⁵⁴ A believer in leading by example, Obama described his administration’s “re-engagement” with the UN: “We have paid our bills. We have joined the Human Rights Council. We have signed the convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. We have fully embraced the millennium development goals. And we address our priorities here, in this institution.”¹⁵⁵ In addition to his support of the UN as an institution, Obama would make clear his support for “the right of people everywhere to determine their own destiny.”¹⁵⁶ A strong supporter of both the UN and its values, Obama’s position towards Russia’s annexation of Crimea is thus better understood.

As with the US in the case of West New Guinea, an important note is that the position towards the annexation of Crimea would remain unchanged in the following administrations, including both a Republican (Trump), and a Democrat (Biden).

C. Political Forces in Crimea: the March 16 Crimean Referendum

The Crimean Referendum of March 16, 2014 presented the people of Crimea with two options: “1) Do you support the reunification of Crimea with Russia as a subject of the Russian Federation? 2) Do you support the restoration of the Constitution of the Republic of Crimea as of 1992 and the status of Crimea as a part of Ukraine?” The circumstances surrounding it, which saw “overwhelming support” for Crimean secession from Ukraine and annexation by Russia,

¹⁵⁴ “Barack Obama’s UN General Assembly Speech in Full,” *The Guardian*, September 23, 2009.

¹⁵⁵ “Barack Obama’s UN General Assembly Speech in Full...”

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

have been mired in much controversy. International leaders were quick to label the vote as illegal, with subsequent studies by independent research groups confirming that Russia's description of the final vote was far from true. This section will provide the evidence which has widely shown that, like Indonesia's Act of Free Choice, the Crimean Referendum was carried out in an illegitimate fashion, and did not accurately represent the wishes of the Crimean people.

An important first aspect is the question of legality—was the Crimean Referendum legal under the constitutions of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Ukraine? An opinion by the European Commission for Democracy through Law (also known as the Venice Commission, henceforth referred to as VC) sought to answer this question on behalf of the Council of Europe.¹⁵⁷ After examining the language of both constitutions, the VC ultimately came to the decision that neither allowed the holding of an independence referendum along the lines of the one in Crimea, something that the US echoed through its description of the vote as “illegal.”¹⁵⁸

Although holding some autonomy since the adoption of the 1998 constitution, Crimea is still required to act within the constraints of the Ukrainian Constitution (UC), as indicated by Article 134: “the Autonomous Republic of Crimea is an inseparable constituent part of Ukraine and decides on the issues ascribed to its competence within the limits of authority determined by the Constitution of Ukraine.” Articles 18.1.7 and 26.2.3 of the Crimean Constitution (CC) do authorize local referendums, as does Article 138.2 of the UC, which states that “organizing and

¹⁵⁷ Venice Commission, Opinion no. 762/2014 of 21 March 2014 (Doc. CDL- AD(2014)002), “Whether the decision taken by the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea in Ukraine to organize a referendum on becoming a constituent territory of the Russian Federation or restoring Crimea's 1992 constitution is compatible with constitutional principles.”

¹⁵⁸ “President Obama Speaks on Ukraine...”

conducting local referendums is within the competence of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea.” However, additional language throughout each document indicates that the issue of secession is not included. Article 2 of the UC states that “the sovereignty of Ukraine extends throughout its entire territory...the territory of Ukraine within its present border is indivisible and inviolable.” According to the UC, the only way to alter the territory of Ukraine is through an “all-Ukrainian referendum”—a quality certainly not present on March 16. Other methods of altering the status of territory within Ukraine are prohibited by the UC, with Article 157.1 stating that it “...shall not be amended, if the amendments...are oriented toward the liquidation of the independence or violation of the territorial indivisibility of Ukraine.”

As Article 134 of the UC makes clear its supremacy over the CC, the prohibition of secessionist referendums under the UC thus overrides Crimea’s ability to hold “local referendums,” and makes clear that the vote held on March 16 was in violation of constitutional principles.

A second important element is whether or not the Crimean Referendum was held in a way that complied with internationally recognized standards for referendums. During the era of decolonization, the UN established its rules for the “free association” or “integration” of a territory with an independent state.¹⁵⁹ This process must “be the result of a free and voluntary choice by the peoples of the territory concerned expressed through informed and democratic processes.” Furthermore, “It should be one which respects the individuality and the cultural characteristics of the territory and its peoples, and retains...the freedom to modify the status of

¹⁵⁹ UN GA Res. 1541 of 15 December 1960: “Principles which should guide Member States in determining whether or not an obligation exists to transmit the information called for under Article 73e of the Charter,” Principle VII.

that territory through the expression of their will by democratic means and through constitutional processes.”¹⁶⁰ More recent standards, especially in Europe, expand on this, emphasizing that the keys to a “democratic process” include free, universal suffrage, equal voting rights, secret ballots, free media, international observation, and overall peacefulness.¹⁶¹

Actions in Crimea on and around March 16 make it clear that these international standards were far from met. The presence of Russian troops and reports of violence by soldiers against Crimean residents¹⁶² violated the condition that referendums be held under peaceful and neutral authorities. The question of universal suffrage is difficult to ascertain in Crimea, considering the history of displacement of native Crimeans and the forced settlement of ethnic Russians. Despite these complexities, many accounts made it clear that people were allowed to vote who had Russian passports and were not permanent Crimean residents.¹⁶³ Additional concerns expressed by the previously mentioned VC opinion included the short length of time between the calling of the referendum and its implementation, the lack of negotiations amongst all related parties (Ukrainians, Russians, Tatars, etc.), the lack of a simple “no” option allowing for the status of Crimea to remain unchanged, and the ambiguity as to whether the “1992 constitution” referred to the May 1992 version or the amended September 1992 version (the amended version made it even clearer that Crimea was a part of Ukraine).¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ UN GA Res. 1541 of 15 December 1960.

¹⁶¹ See Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1704 (2005), “Referendums: towards good practices in Europe,” April 29, 2005; Venice Commission, Code of Good Practice on Referendums (CDL-AD(2007)008rev), January 20, 2009. (both cited in Peters, “The Crimean Vote of March 2014...”).

¹⁶² Lee Anderson, Jon, “Thugs on the Street for Crimea’s Referendum,” *The New Yorker*, March 16, 2014.

¹⁶³ Adesnik, David, “How Russia Rigged Crimean Referendum,” *Forbes*, March 18, 2014.

¹⁶⁴ Venice Commission, “Whether the decision taken...”

A final point is the seeming inaccuracy of the “official” numbers following the completion of the referendum. Russia announced that 83.1% of eligible voters had participated, with 96.77% of them choosing option 1, opting for the peninsula to join the Russian Federation.¹⁶⁵ However, this number does not seem plausible for several reasons. First, a survey of Crimean citizens in 2013 by the International Republican Institute, which asked the question: “In your opinion, what should the status of Crimea be?” saw 53% support for remaining a part of Ukraine, and 23% support for union with Russia (with three other options).¹⁶⁶ Secondly, according to the 2001 Ukrainian census (the most recent as of the referendum), Ukrainians accounted for 24% of Crimea’s population, and Crimean Tatars for 12%—two groups which have historically been pro-Ukrainian.¹⁶⁷ The younger generation of Crimeans, born after Ukrainian independence, had also been vocal in opposing the referendum.¹⁶⁸ In addition, many Tatar leaders called for a boycott of the vote, viewing it as an “illusion,” a “cheat,” and a “humiliation.”¹⁶⁹ Although more specific metrics concerning turnout rates among ethnic groups are unavailable, it is unlikely that, with a boycott by the Tatars and a lack of support from Ukrainians and the younger generation, the actual turnout rate equaled the 83.1% stated by Russia, and the level of support the stated 96.77%.

Estimates of the actual referendum results have varied across sources. The Russian Federation Presidential Council for Civil Society and Human Rights briefly posted to its website

¹⁶⁵ Grant, Thomas D., “Annexation of Crimea.” *The American Journal of International Law* 109, no. 1 (2015): 68–95. <https://doi.org/10.5305/amerjintelaw.109.1.0068>.

¹⁶⁶ “Public Opinion Survey Residents of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea May 16 – 30, 2013,” *International Republican Institute*, 2013.

¹⁶⁷ Sneider, Noah, “Mindful of Past, Many Tatars Fear a Russian Future,” *The New York Times*, March 12, 2014.

¹⁶⁸ Herszenhorn, David M., “Crimea Votes to Secede from Ukraine as Russian Troops Keep Watch,” *The New York Times*, March 16, 2014.

¹⁶⁹ Salem, Harriet, “Crimea’s Tatars fear the worst as it prepares for referendum,” *The Guardian*, March 13, 2014.

that support for annexation was around 60%, with voter turnout being between 30% and 50%.¹⁷⁰ A survey by the Pew Research Center, published on May 8, 2014, indicated that amongst Crimeans, 12% wanted Ukraine to remain united, 54% were in favor of secession, and 34% were unsure.¹⁷¹ The same report indicated however, that 88% of Crimeans believed Kyiv should recognize the results of the referendum while 4% said it should not and 7% were unsure.¹⁷² Although these numbers do show that the ultimate result of the referendum did seem to reflect the views of a majority of Crimeans, the discrepancy between Russia's conclusions and those of other sources also indicates that in its carrying out of the referendum, Russia did not allow for every Crimean to freely and democratically express their opinion. The perhaps accurate results do not mitigate the fact that the vote was held in violation of both constitutional and international principles, and thus its label as an "illegal referendum" is justified. This also highlights however, that the US continued to object to the annexation despite being aware of the more accurate numbers. The ultimate results seemed, in the case of Crimea, to matter less to the US than the country responsible for administering the referendum in the first place.

¹⁷⁰ Grant, "Annexation of Crimea," p. 69.

¹⁷¹ "Despite Concerns about Governance, Ukrainians Want to Remain One Country," A report by the Pew Research Center, May 8, 2014.

¹⁷² "Despite Concerns about Governance, Ukrainians Want to Remain One Country..."

Analysis: The Role of Alliances in US Decision Making on Annexations

Now that the specifics of the two case studies have been presented in great detail, the role of the independent variable—the relationship between the US and the annexing country—can be analyzed. As the circumstances of Indonesia’s annexation of West New Guinea and Russia’s annexation of Crimea are similar along several control variables, the likelihood of these being responsible for the differing US responses is low. In both cases, the losing country was a major US ally (the Netherlands and Ukraine). While one may attribute the condemnation of the Crimean annexation to the US’ friendly relations with Ukraine, this thinking does not hold true in the case of West New Guinea, where the US supported its annexation despite having similarly strong relations with the Netherlands. The relationship between the US and the losing country then, does not appear to determine the US response to an annexation.

As the domestic interests in each case were weak, one cannot say that the US was motivated to either support or condemn either annexation based on any kind of domestic pressure. In both cases the annexation occurred during the administration of a Democratic president who was a vocal supporter of the UN and its values. After the initial responses under Presidents Kennedy and Obama, the US position remained unchanged through subsequent administrations—both Democratic and Republican. One can therefore not attribute the difference in US responses to differing foreign policy values amongst the major US political parties. Additionally, the position of the US president towards the UN (under which the principles of self-determination and non-annexation are codified) does not seem to automatically suggest what the US response to an annexation will be. Although a US president

may be a stated proponent of the UN and its values, that has not meant an automatic condemnation of international annexations.

Lastly, in both cases the US was presented with the results of a referendum on the territorial status of the annexed territory. While each referendum had the same result (“overwhelming” support for annexation), and similar issues (influence by the annexing country, questionable universal suffrage, threats of violence), the ultimate US responses differed from one another. It cannot be assumed then, that the US will recognize the results of a referendum on annexation, nor will it automatically reject any referendum seen as illegitimate. As discussed in the literature review, all of these control variables have had an impact on US responses in certain cases. However, as made clear by the above analysis, none of these seem to explain the variation in US responses across all cases.

The role of the final control variable—international interests—deserves a more in depth analysis. In both cases the US had strong international interests in the circumstances surrounding the annexation. Whether this be mitigating Communism’s spread in Southeast Asia, or curbing the influence of Russia in Eastern Europe and the Black Sea region, it is clear that the outcome of the annexation would have a major effect on US regional interests. Therefore, in each case, it seems the US was strongly incentivized to be involved in the annexation in some way. In the case of Indonesia, the response that best served US interests in Southeast Asia was recognition of the West New Guinea annexation, while in the case of Crimea, US interests were best served by a strong condemnation of Russia and retaliation through sanctions. As the US responses were therefore correlated with its interests, it is certainly a

possibility that the strongest motivating factor was not the nature of the US-annexing country relationship, but rather that of its international interests.

Of course, these two elements are difficult to separate from one another. In many instances, the formation of strong alliances seems to be based on the assumption that such relationships would help the US fulfill its greater interests. However, interests can also emerge as a result of interstate relations. A tense relationship between the US and another state can necessitate a shift in US interests towards deterring acts of aggression and expansion. While many authors have presented greater theories for when and why states form alliances, the specific interaction between alliance politics and international annexations is certainly an area where greater study could emerge. As shown in this thesis, the US-annexing country relationship plays a role in influencing how the US will respond to an annexation, but the intertwined nature of alliances and interests may also make looking solely at alliances an improper way of determining US responses.

However, I believe a quick look at the cases involving Israel provide compelling evidence for the alliance politics theory. Recognizing the Israeli annexations of the Golan Heights and East Jerusalem has certainly served some of the US' interests in the Middle East, but it has also created further tensions with much of the Arab and Muslim world. When it comes to the greater US interest of establishing peace within the region, recognizing the Israeli annexations may actually have worked against it. Considering this, the special relationship between the US and Israel seems in these cases to be the greatest influence on the US responses. Of course, situations involving Israel are always of utmost importance to the US, and thus are difficult to directly compare to other cases. However, this does provide further evidence that, in

responding to annexations, the US has at times gone against some of its own international interests.

The following sections will examine in greater detail the alliance politics theory in relation to the cases of Indonesia/West New Guinea, and Russia/Crimea. While international interests have emerged as a potential confounder, I maintain my argument that the nature of the US-annexing country relationship is a powerful influence on US responses to annexations. It may not be the only motivator, but it is certainly an important factor to examine and discuss.

Indonesia and West New Guinea

Since Indonesia's independence in 1949, the US made clear that a major objective was to establish it as a strong, anti-communist ally. A memo sent from US Secretary of State Dean Acheson to President Harry Truman on January 9, 1950 explained this:¹⁷³

Present Indonesian Nationalist leadership, having taken a strong anti-Communist line, is regarded as a dangerous enemy by world Communism which will spare no effort to destroy this leadership and to replace it by leadership which will respond to Communist direction...As the Communist gains on the Asiatic mainland increase, the importance of keeping Indonesia in the anti-Communist camp is of greater and greater importance. A continuation in power of the present anti-Communist leadership in Indonesia will have a most profound effect upon leadership elsewhere in Asia. The loss of Indonesia to the Communists would deprive the United States of an area of the highest political, economic and strategic importance...

In the serving of the US' interests in Southeast Asia, a strong relationship with Indonesia was clearly seen as a necessary fact. However, this did not immediately happen, and US responses to the West New Guinea issue reflected this. During the presidency of Sukarno, when the

¹⁷³ "Memorandum by the Secretary of State to President Truman," Document 608. In *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, East Asia and the Pacific, Volume VI. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1976).

Communist presence within Indonesia was prominent and relations with the Soviet Union and China were strengthening, the US did not support the West New Guinea annexation. Throughout the 1950s the US was silent on the issue, in particular abstaining from every vote brought before the UN. During almost the entirety of Sukarno's rule, Indonesia could not be classified as a major US ally, and US actions on West New Guinea seemed to reflect this. It was not until the very end of the Sukarno presidency that efforts were made to change the nature of the US-Indonesia relationship. As it slowly became more friendly, the US position on West New Guinea began to change. The involvement of the US in the UN-run peace talks exemplified this shift in policy, with the ultimate support for a relatively pro-Indonesian New York Agreement a reflection of the now stronger US-Indonesian relationship.

When one looks at the timeline of US actions on West New Guinea in comparison with its relationship with Indonesia, it appears that the more positive the relationship, the more support the US gave for annexation. The ultimate act would come in 1969, when the US ignored any evidence of the illegitimacy of the Act of Free Choice and gave its full support for the full absorption of West New Guinea into Indonesia. At this point, under the Suharto presidency, Indonesia was a major US ally. Suharto's strong anti-communist stance finally fulfilled the objectives described by Acheson nearly twenty years earlier. Now a major US ally in the height of the Cold War, Indonesia had no problem gaining complete support from the US on its annexation of West New Guinea. In analyzing the causal factor behind the US' recognition then, the nature of its relationship with Indonesia seemed to be of utmost importance.

Russia and Crimea

Unlike with Indonesia and West New Guinea, there is no lengthy timeline for the Crimean annexation—in 2014 the US did not consider Russia to be a major ally, and thus immediately condemned its actions in Crimea. While in some instances, the focus of US worry seemed to be with Ukraine (possibly signaling that it was actually the strength of the US-Ukraine relationship that caused US condemnation), it is important to recognize the underlying reasoning for this relationship in the first place. A buffer between Russia and the NATO allies of Europe, Ukraine's importance stems from its ability to block Russia from having a center of power directly next to Europe and the Middle East. Thus, although a clear sympathy lay with the Ukrainian people themselves, the concern for Ukraine can be interpreted as a concern about Russia. The strategic position of the Crimean peninsula, however, allowed for Russia to make these inroads into the European and Middle Eastern regions without a full takeover of Ukraine. With the nature of the US-Russia relationship now tense and unfriendly, this presented the US with a scenario in which it had to strongly condemn Russia's actions.

The tense history between the US and Russia also offers some evidence for this. In many instances the US has used its animosity with Russia as a justification for becoming involved, or responding to certain international situations. Throughout the Cold War, the US became engaged with Russia in proxy conflicts, supporting one faction within a foreign country with the real motive of preventing the presence of Soviet influence and values.¹⁷⁴ Though seemingly

¹⁷⁴ See for example, the independence of the Congo, and US support for the removal from power of democratically elected Patrice Lumumba, simply because he was believed to have ties to the USSR. US involvement in the Korean War, the support for the South African invasion of Angola and involvement in the Angolan Civil War, the US role in the Cambodian Civil War, the multiple conflicts in Vietnam, and many others.

concerned with an issue specific to that country, the impact of the relationship with Russia can often be found in the background as a causal mechanism. Although the threat of Communism was not a major concern at the time of the annexation of Crimea, this pattern of behavior had been deeply ingrained within the political ideology of the US. The incursion into Ukrainian territory not only threatened immediate international interests, but also sparked a regression to the era of great power rivalry between the US and Russia.

As with any historical study, the lack of a counterfactual of course poses a complication in the determination of cause and effect. Would the US have still supported the annexation of West New Guinea had the annexing country been one other than Indonesia? Would the US have condemned a country besides Russia annexing Crimea? While impossible to ever know for sure, the detailed description and analysis of the two case studies has offered much evidence that the kind of US response was adopted because of its specific relationships with Indonesia and Russia.

The two cases also highlight, however, the intertwined nature of alliances and international interests. Indonesia's importance as a US ally was a result of the regional circumstances, and the American interest in having a non-Communist partner in Southeast Asia. The increased animosity between the US and Russia following Putin's return to power forced a shift in US interests towards stemming Russian aggression and expansion. In each case the US-annexing country relationship was clearly a strong motivator, but it may not be possible to solely look at this variable. As discussed above, this connection between US international interests, its relationships with annexing countries, and its responses to annexations could certainly provide the framework for further study on annexations.

Alternative Explanations? Examination of Confounding Variables

The most pressing confounder—US international interests—has already been discussed, but as with any complex situation, several other factors stand out as potential alternative explanations. In the cases of West New Guinea and Crimea, these are: the different eras in which they took place, the status of the annexed territory pre-annexation, and the involvement of the UN in the West New Guinea case.

Differing Eras

The two annexations took place in extremely different world eras. West New Guinea was a major issue during the era of decolonization, in which much emphasis was put on transitioning colonies either to independent rule or integration with existing states. Crimea on the other hand, took place during the modern era, in which almost all world territory is classified as belonging to independent states. Could the support for Indonesia have been a result of American anti-colonialism, and its wish to see the end of colonial empires? Perhaps, although the support for the fraudulent Act of Free Choice calls into question the validity of this as a causal mechanism. If the US had actually been motivated by anti-colonialism (of which proper self-determination was an important factor), then it would have stopped supporting annexation after the referendum's controversies came to light. At the very least, it would have called for a second vote with greater international oversight. The US did neither of these things however, and thus the influence of the decolonization era seems to be weak.

Additionally, there were instances of independent states annexing colonial territory that were opposed by the US. Most prominently the Indian annexation of Goa (a former Portuguese colony) in 1961 was condemned by the US as part of a UN Security Council measure (ultimately blocked by the Soviet Union, yet still reflective of the American view).¹⁷⁵

Status of the Annexed Territory

Prior to annexation, West New Guinea was a Dutch colony, while Crimea was internationally recognized as being a part of the independent state of Ukraine. Was the US thus motivated by the fact that the Crimean annexation could be considered an invasion of a state, while West New Guinea's annexation was simply part of the natural transition away from colonialism? Possibly. This offers the strongest confounding variable, as other cases of annexation have often followed a similar pattern. The US also supported the annexation of East Timor by Indonesia, a former Portuguese colony (although as just discussed it condemned the annexation of Goa). The strongest instance of US condemnation besides Crimea was the 1991 Gulf War in response to Iraq's annexation of the country of Kuwait. What makes this variable difficult to examine however, is that in many cases of annexation since 1945, the previous status of the annexed territory is difficult to determine. The princely states of Junagadh and Hyderabad (annexed by India in 1947 and 1948, respectively) do not quite fall under either category, and some cases (Britain and Rockall in 1955, South Africa and Marion/Prince Edward Islands in 1948) involve the annexation of islands not previously belonging to any state or recognized as colonial entities. The pre-annexation status of the annexed territory then, may play a role in some of the

¹⁷⁵ Korman, Sharon, "India's Annexation of Goa, 1961," *The Right of Conquest...* pp. 267-275.

more major cases (including West New Guinea and Crimea), but cannot be used to determine causation across all cases.

UN Involvement in West New Guinea

A final potential confounder is the role of the UN in the West New Guinea annexation—both in the negotiation process, and the one year UN trusteeship that occurred before the territory was transferred to Indonesian control. Was the US simply responding to decisions made by the international organization? Most likely not. The UN has been involved in several cases of annexation, often condemning them. In some of these cases the US has agreed with the UN position and in others it has disagreed. For example, the UN called for a referendum in the Western Sahara territory in 1991, something that the US did not enforce up until its recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over the territory in 2020.¹⁷⁶ While the involvement of the UN may have provided some legitimacy to the transfer of West New Guinea, it has not been a determining factor in US responses across all cases of annexation.

While on the surface all three possible confounders offer compelling reasoning for US responses to the annexations of West New Guinea and Crimea, none of them seem to hold up when examined in closer detail, and in comparison to alternative cases. The relationship between the US and annexing country still seems to be a stronger influence on US responses to

¹⁷⁶ Zunes, Stephen, “The East Timor Model Offers a Way Out for Western Sahara and Morocco,” *Foreign Policy*, December 9, 2020.

the two annexations. Will this theory hold true however, when applied across all cases since 1945? The next section will answer this question.

LNQA: Application of Theory Across all Annexation Cases

The following section seeks to establish a broader pattern, by applying my theory to all cases of annexation since 1945. Each case shows the relationship between the US and annexing country, the US response, and whether or not it reflects support for my theory. US allies should see US recognition, while US non-allies should see condemnation.

Year	Annexing Country	US Relationship	Annexed Territory	US Response	Support for Theory?
1947	India	Non-Ally	Junagadh	Recognition	No
1948	South Africa	Non-Ally	Marion Island, Prince Edward Island	Recognition	No
1948	India	Non-Ally	Hyderabad	Recognition	No
1950	Jordan	Non-Ally	West Bank	Recognition	No
1951	China	Non-Ally	Tibet	Recognition	No
1954	India	Non-Ally	Dadra, Nagar Haveli	Recognition	No
1955	United Kingdom	Ally	Rockall	Recognition	Yes
1961	India	Non-Ally	Goa, Daman, Diu	Condemnation	Yes
1962	Ethiopia	Non-Ally	Eritrea	Recognition	No
1967	Israel	Ally	Golan Heights	Recognition	Yes
1967	Israel	Ally	East Jerusalem	Recognition	Yes
1963	Indonesia	Ally	West New Guinea	Recognition	Yes
1971	Iran	Ally	Continental Shelf	Recognition	Yes
1972	Yemen Arab Republic	Non-Ally	Perim Island, Kamaran Island	Recognition	No

1975	India	Non-Ally	Sikkim	Recognition	No
1975	Indonesia	Ally	East Timor	Recognition	Yes
1975	North Vietnam	Non-Ally	South Vietnam	Condemnation	Yes
1976	Morocco	Ally	Western Sahara	Recognition	Yes
1990	Iraq	Non-Ally	Kuwait	Condemnation	Yes
2014	Russia	Non-Ally	Crimea	Condemnation	Yes
2015	Norway	Ally	Queen Maud Land	Condemnation	No

In an initial look, my theory is supported in 52.4% of cases (11 out of 21). Of course, unlike the MSSD, the LNQA does allow for other factors to influence the results (there are no control variables being held constant across all cases). Considering this, the 52.4% support is surprisingly high, with an examination of the specifics surrounding some of the “no” cases offering possible explanation for their deviation:

- In the case of Junagadh (1947), the US was not willing to divert its time and resources away from the simultaneous debate over Kashmir, and thus a specific response was never provided.¹⁷⁷
- In the case of Marion Island and Prince Edward Island (1947), the annexed territory consisted of two small, uninhabited islands in the Antarctic region, and thus a specific US response was not warranted.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁷ “The Chargé in Pakistan (Lewis) to the Secretary of State,” Document 205. In *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1948, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa, Volume V, Part I*. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1975).

¹⁷⁸ “This day in history: Prince Edward Island Annexation,” January 4, 2016, and “This day in history: Marion Island Annexation,” December 29, 2016, *The Antarctic Legacy of South Africa*.

- In the case of Tibet (1951), the US has maintained the position that it is a part of China, but has also supported its autonomy, as well as provided military aid to Tibetan resistance groups in the 1950s and 60s.¹⁷⁹
- In the case of Eritrea (1962), the US stated its lack of support for the annexation, but also its desire to maintain friendly relations with Ethiopia.¹⁸⁰
- In the case of Perim Island and Kamaran Island (1972), the annexed territory consisted of two small islands off the coast of Yemen, to which the US had little incentive to respond. Additionally, the presence of diplomatic relations between the US and Yemen Arab Republic had only just resumed earlier in 1972.¹⁸¹ The relationship was thus friendly, yet hesitant.
- In the case of Sikkim (1975), the US chose specifically not to publicly condemn the annexation in order to keep the US-India relationship friendly.¹⁸²
- In the case of Queen Maud Land (2015), the US does not recognize Norway's official claim in line with the Antarctic Treaty of 1959, but it still supports Norway's presence and even maintains one of its own.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ Goldstein, Melvyn C., "The United States, Tibet, and the Cold War," *Journal of Cold War Studies* (2006) 8 (3): 145–164. <https://doi.org/10.1162/jcws.2006.8.3.145>

¹⁸⁰ "Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Ethiopia," Document 282. In *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963*, Volume XXI, Africa. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1995).

¹⁸¹ "Telegram From Secretary of State Rogers to the Department of State," Document 193. In *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976*, Volume XXIV, Middle East Region and Arabian Peninsula, 1969–1972; Jordan, September 1970. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2008).

¹⁸² "Telegram 101888 From the Department of State to the Embassy in India," Document 199. In *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976*, Volume E-8, Documents on South Asia, 1973–1976. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2007).

¹⁸³ "Antarctic Region," *Office of Ocean and Polar Affairs, US Department of State*.

It seems then, that some factors are clearly important to the US that were not previously considered. Annexations of small pieces of territory seem to go ignored by the US, especially when uninhabited. The presence of a large population within the annexed territory may play a role then, in US decision making. In some cases, the annexation was pushed to the side in favor of US interests deemed more pressing. What is it that makes an annexation important to the US? The relationship between the US and annexing country may not be enough to determine if the annexation is going to be viewed as important to US interests.

In the formation of the dataset and LNQA table, a broader pattern seemed to emerge, one that was not previously considered in the creation of the research design. In devising my question, I had divided both my independent and dependent variables into two options: the annexing country was either a major US ally or it wasn't; the US response was either a recognition or a condemnation. However, a third possibility has become clear for each variable. In many cases where the US-annexing country relationship was not determinable with treaties or direct statements, it seemed to be less of an extreme in either direction, but more neutral. The annexing country appeared to simply be a friendly state, rather than a major ally or an adversary. Thus this research design could have been strengthened by including a third option: the US-annexing country relationship is either allied, neutral, or adversarial.

Similarly, the responses by the US did not fall into a strict binary as I had originally laid out. In some cases the US offered a direct recognition or condemnation, but in others it simply ignored the annexation—sometimes a conscious choice, and other times a result of the annexation being small and seemingly insignificant. The dependent variable should thus have

included a third option as well: the US either recognizes, condemns, or tacitly recognizes (as a lack of vocal opposition signifies a silent support) an annexation.

As I have studied each case individually, these new independent and dependent variables seem in many instances to be connected. When the annexing country is a neutral state, the US often tacitly recognizes the annexation. While this does not completely explain every case in which my original theory was not supported, it does help to explain many of them. Many of the non-allies which received recognition for their annexations would more accurately be described as neutral states receiving tacit recognition. While my original theory thus has several flaws, it appears that with some modification, the concept of the US-annexing country relationship guiding the US response to an annexation could prove quite powerful. Of course, it would be easier to make this claim if there were more cases to investigate. The problem of only having 21 cases makes it difficult to claim a causal effect, either with the original theory or the modified one. The lack of literature studying annexations in a broad manner thus makes sense. However, this thesis aimed to be a first step at possibly identifying larger trends in cases of annexation. Below is a second LNQA table showing what the alteration to my independent and dependent variables would most likely look like. The relatively strong support for my theory with modification (18 out of 21 cases, 85.7%) shows that although more study should be done on this topic, there just might be ways at predicting US responses to annexations.

Year	Annexing Country	US Relation-ship	Annexed Territory	US Response	Support for Theory?
1947	India	Neutral	Junagadh	Tacit	Yes

				Recognition	
1948	South Africa	Neutral	Marion Island, Prince Edward Island	Tacit Recognition	Yes
1948	India	Neutral	Hyderabad	Tacit Recognition	Yes
1950	Jordan	Neutral	West Bank	Tacit Recognition	Yes
1951	China	Non-Ally	Tibet	Recognition	No
1954	India	Neutral	Dadra, Nagar Haveli	Tacit Recognition	Yes
1955	United Kingdom	Ally	Rockall	Recognition	Yes
1961	India	Neutral	Goa, Daman, Diu	Condemnation	No
1962	Ethiopia	Neutral	Eritrea	Tacit Recognition	Yes
1967	Israel	Ally	Golan Heights	Recognition	Yes
1967	Israel	Ally	East Jerusalem	Recognition	Yes
1963	Indonesia	Ally	West New Guinea	Recognition	Yes
1971	Iran	Ally	Continental Shelf	Recognition	Yes
1972	Yemen Arab Republic	Neutral	Perim Island, Kamaran Island	Tacit Recognition	Yes
1975	India	Neutral	Sikkim	Tacit Recognition	Yes
1975	Indonesia	Ally	East Timor	Recognition	Yes
1975	North Vietnam	Non-Ally	South Vietnam	Condemnation	Yes
1976	Morocco	Ally	Western Sahara	Recognition	Yes

1990	Iraq	Non-Ally	Kuwait	Condemnation	Yes
2014	Russia	Non-Ally	Crimea	Condemnation	Yes
2015	Norway	Ally	Queen Maud Land	Condemnation	No

Conclusions and Future Implications

The purpose of this thesis was to create a predictive model in which the relationship between the US and an annexing country suggests whether the US will recognize or condemn an act of annexation. After the comparison between Indonesia's annexation of West New Guinea, and Russia's annexation of Crimea, the relationship between these two variables seemed to emerge. Indonesia's position as a strong anti-communist ally in Southeast Asia necessitated a US response which would maintain this relationship—recognition of Indonesia's claim over the refuted territory of West New Guinea. In Crimea, the tense relations between the US and Russia, as well as the threat of Russian expansionism, motivated a strong condemnation of the annexation. The similarity between the two cases along several control variables strengthens this effect, and a close examination of several confounding variables weakens the possibility of their influence.

A variable however, that is not able to be ruled out is US international interests. The two case studies show that the concepts of alliances and interests are closely intertwined, and thus the conclusion that US decisions are solely motivated by its interstate relations cannot be made. What is clear however, is that alliances matter. Interests may sometimes be driven by alliances, while in other cases the status of 'US ally' is conditional upon it supporting US interests, but in either case US decision-making on annexations is greatly influenced by the way it views and interacts with other states. Future research could certainly look to further separate alliances and interests in regards to annexations, but could also look at the ways in which these two elements are *together* responsible for driving the style of US responses to them. Ultimately, an important takeaway from this thesis is that these concepts of annexation and US responses to it

have not been studied before in a broad sense—something which should certainly be the topic of future research.

When applied to all cases of annexation since 1945, the original theory holds true in 52.4% of them. While each case is unique, and thus alternative reasons exist in each one, the LNQA section revealed a major flaw in the research design and theory. A third possibility exists, and seems to be prevalent—in many cases the relationship between the US and annexing country was neutral, leading to a lack of response (or tacit recognition) of the annexation. In some cases there simply was not a strong enough incentive to take a definitive stance in either direction. Most likely wanting to avoid setting precedent, or upsetting friendly states with no real benefit, the US often simply ignored the annexation. When this third option is added to the original theory, there is a strong correlation between the independent and dependent variables (the modified theory holds true in 85.7% of cases). Although in the case studies, international interests appeared as a potential confounder, the LNQA shows that the nature of US relationships may actually be a way to predict how it will respond to annexations. More research is needed to fully understand the relationship between US interests, its bilateral relations with other states, and its responses to annexations, however, there does appear to be a pattern to US behavior in the past.

Which brings us to the question of the future. Annexation is a relatively under-discussed topic, and yet several cases are ongoing—with major impacts to groups of people, regional stability, and global peace. How will the US respond to these? And what will be the effects? The final weeks of the Trump administration gave some sense as to the implications of recognizing acts of annexation. The acknowledgement of Morocco's claim to Western Sahara, Israel's to the

Golan Heights, and the merging of the US embassy in Jerusalem with the consulate in East Jerusalem were all strong positions taken on issues that have had major effects on the stability and peace processes within North Africa and the Middle East. Not only that, but in each case the annexed territory is inhabited by large populations of people. The current US support for military occupation and annexation exacerbates refugee crises, and in many cases prevents ethnic groups from living autonomously on the land they call home. Recognizing that taking a pro-annexation stand matters not just for geopolitics, but also for the lives of ordinary people is an important element that often remains in the background. Annexation may be a rare occurrence, but it has major implications.

2022 has made this extremely clear. Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 was a violation of territorial integrity that received a strong, yet passive response from the US and international community. Sanctions were applied, heads of state condemned Putin in their own countries and at the UN. And yet the annexation was allowed to take place. It gave Russia a strategic advantage in Eastern Europe and the Middle East. It gave hope to the Eastern separatist regions of Donetsk and Luhansk. It ultimately led to the extreme—a complete invasion of Ukraine initiated on February 24, 2022. The international community has been swift to respond, with Russia now the most sanctioned country in the world, military and financial aid flowing into Ukraine everyday, and NATO troops stationed in its member states along the Ukrainian border. Will this be enough to force Russia back onto its own territory? Only time will tell.

The question of NATO remains important. In cases of annexation since 1945 the US has only been drawn into military action once—the 1991 Gulf War in response to Iraq's takeover of Kuwait. What would it take for the US to respond in a similar way to current events? President

Biden has made it clear that an international military response will only occur if NATO members are directly attacked, something that seems increasingly likely as Russian bombing gets closer and closer to the Polish border. US alliances are clearly of utmost importance to US decision making. Whether or not they are the key determinant for responses to annexations is still difficult to know for sure. What is clear however, is that despite the current shift towards greater internationalization, bilateral relationships still reign supreme.

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Year	Annexing Country	Relationship with US	Territory Annexed	Losing Country	US Response	Strength of US Response	US Int. Interests?	US Dom. Interests?	US President	Political Forces in Annexed Territory
1947	India	Non-Ally (neutral)	Junagadh	N/A	Recognition (tacit)	Weak	Weak	Weak	Truman	Muhammad Mahabat Khanji III (Muslim ruler)
1948	South Africa	Non-Ally (neutral)	Marion/Prince Edward Islands	N/A	Recognition (tacit)	Weak	Weak	Weak	Truman	N/A (unoccupied islands in Antarctic)
1947	France	Ally	?	German Federal Republic	?	?	?	?	Truman	?
1948	India	Non-Ally (neutral)	Hyderabad	N/A	Recognition	Medium	Medium	Weak	Truman	Nizam family (Monarchy)
1950	Jordan	Non-Ally (neutral)	West Bank	Mandatory Palestine	Recognition	Weak	Medium	Weak	Truman	support for annexation from Arab Palestinians
1951	China	Non-Ally	Tibet	Tibet	Recognition	Strong	Strong	Weak	Truman	Dalai Lama
1954	India	Non-Ally (neutral)	Dadra and Nagar Haveli	Portugal (colony)	Recognition (tacit)	Weak	Weak	Weak	Kennedy	NLMO, AGD and RSS orgs opposing Portuguese rule
1955	United Kingdom	Ally	Rockall	N/A	Recognition (tacit)	Weak	Weak	Weak	Eisenhower	N/A
1961	India	Non-Ally (neutral)	Goa, Daman, Diu	Portugal (colony)	Condemnation	Medium	Weak	Weak	Kennedy	Goa Liberation Movement
1962	Ethiopia	Non-Ally (neutral)	Eritrea	Eritrea	Recognition (tacit)	Weak	Medium	Weak	Kennedy	Eritrean Liberation Front
1967	Israel	Ally	Golan Heights	Syria	Recognition	Strong	Strong	Strong	Johnson	Palestinian National Liberation Movement
1967	Israel	Ally	East Jerusalem	Jordan	Recognition	Strong	Strong	Strong	Johnson	US Embassy merged with East Jerusalem consulate in 10/18
1963	Indonesia	Ally	West New Guinea	Netherlands (colony)	Recognition	Strong	Strong	Weak	Nixon	Act of Free Choice referendum (controversial)
1971	Iran	Ally	Continental Shelf	UAE	Recognition (tacit)	Weak	Weak	Weak	Nixon	N/A
1972	Yemen Arab Republic	Non-Ally	Perim and Kamaran Island	Yemen People's Republic	Recognition (tacit)	Weak	Weak	Weak	Nixon	N/A (Kamaran used as postal station)
1975	India	Non-Ally	Sikkim	N/A	Recognition (tacit)	Weak	Medium	Weak	Ford	Chogyal (Monarchy)
1975	Indonesia	Ally	East Timor	Portuguese Timor	Recognition	Strong	Strong	Medium	Ford	Fretilin
1975	North Vietnam	Non-Ally	South Vietnam	South Vietnam	Condemnation	Strong	Strong	Weak	Ford	Vietnam War
1976	Morocco	Ally	Western Sahara	Spain (colony)	Recognition	Strong	Strong	Weak	Ford	Polisario Front
1990	Iraq	Non-Ally	Kuwait	Kuwait	Condemnation	Strong	Strong	Weak	H.W. Bush	Emir Jaber al-Ahmed. Small Kuwaiti resistance groups
2014	Russia	Non-Ally	Crimea	Ukraine	Condemnation	Strong	Strong	Weak	Obama	Referendum voted to join Russia (controversial)
2015	Norway	Ally	Queen Maud Land	Antarctica	Condemnation	Medium	Weak	Weak	Obama	N/A (for reasearch purposes)