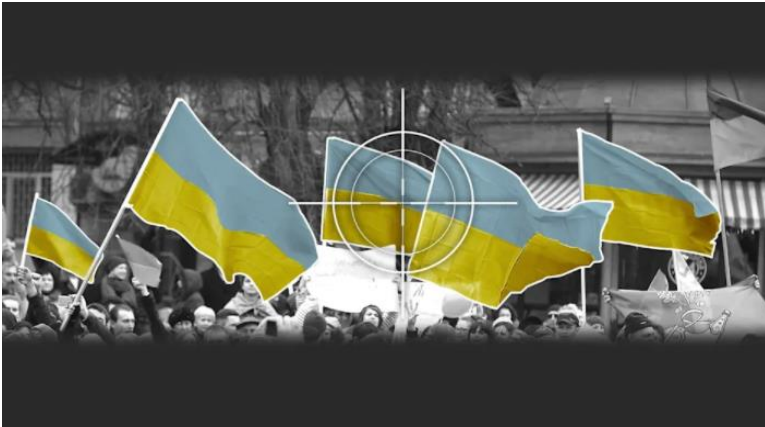


Allies are needed to support Ukrainian independence

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Why is Ukraine's democracy in the crosshairs?

The Ukrainian crisis tests President Biden's foreign policy leadership. Biden was elected because he is not his predecessor. Unlike his predecessor, Biden is rebuilding relationships established during the Cold War, especially NATO, a bulwark against despotism in Europe since 1949. Biden's predecessor denigrated such relationships, thus enabling Russia's hegemonic pretenses

Since becoming Russia's current autocrat, Vladimir Putin's foreign policy has mimicked his predecessors. Making no secret of his ambition to reestablish Soviet domination, Putin's regime calls the independent republics of former USSR the "near abroad." His moves in Chechnya, Georgia, Crimea, the Donbas region of Ukraine, and his preparations to invade Ukraine clearly manifest this ambition. Ukraine has a long, tortured history as a vassal of its Russian overlords.

Except for Biden's predecessor, US foreign policy has followed Woodrow Wilson's example from January 1918 when he announced his "14 Points" as the only possible basis for an enduring peace following World War I. Point 5 is critical to this policy, in which sovereignty is determined by the affected population of a particular area. Wilson also favored the idea of collective security to prevent war, first with the failed League of Nations, but more successfully with the United Nations, whose charter abolished territorial expansion via conquest. NATO is a critical addition to the UN in following the Wilsonian tradition.

NATO was not formed primarily as a defensive alliance — it is a collective security organization, with objectives subordinate to the UN Charter. The first four articles of the North Atlantic Treaty define its role in peacefully settling international disputes, including among NATO members. Defense is not mentioned until Article 5, which famously declares an attack on any NATO member as "an attack on all." This has been invoked only once — following the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States in 2001.

In the current crisis, Russia demanded that Ukraine be excluded from ever joining NATO, and that the alliance not deploy military forces in countries bordering Russia. Supported within NATO, Biden's administration rejected Putin's demands. NATO's expansion to the borders of Russia and Ukraine has been in response to Russian aggression.

Founded in 1949 with 12 members, NATO added Greece and Turkey in 1952, West Germany in 1955, then Spain in 1982. Following the Cold War, and after much internal debate and despite Russian opposition, NATO added Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic in 1999. In 2004, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia were added. Albania and Croatia joined in 2009. Montenegro joined in 2017 and North Macedonia in 2020. NATO, now with 30 members, recognizes Bosnia-Herzegovina, Georgia, and Ukraine as aspiring members. Notably, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are the only former Soviet republics currently in NATO. Previously independent, the USSR annexed them in 1940, but the US never recognized this. Also, in 1945 the USSR demanded two seats in the UN; the second seat was Ukraine's.

Putin threatens Ukraine likely because he believes the US is too weak and divided to effectively respond. By contrast to Wilson's concept, Russian foreign policy — tsarist, communist, or putinesque — has created a sphere of influence dominated by Russia. During the Cold War, this centered on the Warsaw Pact — countries

the Red Army occupied at the end of WW II. By contrast to NATO, Pact membership was not voluntary; it collapsed shortly before the USSR did.

The best counter is to stop Russian aggression in its tracks. During the Berlin Airlift of 1948-1949, Western allies stopped the USSR from dominating Berlin through a combination of adroit military action and diplomacy. Not seeking a shooting war, the Soviets backed down. The current situation calls for similar action, to include out-of-the-box diplomacy and military deterrence reminiscent of those early days of the Cold War, to include enhancing the Ukrainian Army's ability to maximize enemy casualties should Russia invade. The previous administration's bankrupt "America First" policy would surrender Ukraine to Russian expansion. President Biden's policy of enhancing NATO to stop aggression at Putin's borders gives Ukraine and its neighbors their best chance to retain their sovereignty.

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