Europe Strong and Safe

Європа сильна та безпечна

Справжня мета В. Путіна, вважають автори статті американського журналу, – обмежити здатність України керувати своєю долею. В. Путін хоче відмовити Україні в її незалежності та її здатності приєднатися до НАТО та Європейського Союзу та загалом приєднатися до Заходу. Він також хоче завадити Україні стати успішною демократією, бо це може створити політичну модель по сусідству з Росією, яка, як він боїться, може надихнути його власних громадян. Ось чому В. Путін вторгся в Україну та анексував Крим у 2014 р., і чому він спонсорував та підтримував бойовиків на Донбасі протягом останніх восьми років.

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To Deter Russia, America Must Help Revive the Region's Security Architecture
Ukrainian service members near the border with Russia, January 2022
Russian President Vladimir Putin wants the world to believe that the seeds of today's conflict in eastern Ukraine were planted in 2008. At a summit in Bucharest that year, NATO leaders considered requests by Georgia and Ukraine to join the alliance. Although the United States and many of NATO's newest members strongly supported moving forward with preparing Georgia and Ukraine for possible future membership, other members—led by Germany and France—opposed the idea. A divided alliance brokered a compromise that promised both countries that they would one day join NATO but refused to endorse a plan to prepare them to do so. The Bucharest summit declaration proved to be profoundly damaging to NATO, to the two applicants, and to NATO's relations with Russia.

But neither the outcome of the Bucharest summit nor the alliance's geographic reach is the real reason that Russia amassed more than 100,000 troops on the Ukrainian border. Putin's true aim is to curb the ability of Ukraine and other countries in eastern Europe to control their own fate. He wants to deny Ukraine its independence and its ability to join NATO and the European Union and align itself more generally with the West. He also wants to keep Ukraine from becoming a successful democracy, because that could create a political model next door to Russia that he fears could inspire his own citizens. That is why Putin invaded Ukraine and annexed Crimea in 2014 and why he has sponsored and supported rebel fighters in the Donbas region for the past eight years. He wants to turn the clock back to the late 1990s, before NATO added any new members from central and eastern Europe—if not to the late 1980s, before the Soviet Union disintegrated and Moscow reigned supreme over that part of Europe.

The United States and its allies cannot let this happen. Confronted by Russian aggression, they must stand up and stand together. But they also must do everything possible to avoid a war. That will require creative multilateral diplomacy—despite Moscow's desire to deal directly with Washington. Talks should focus on rebuilding the European security structure that emerged from the first Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, held in Helsinki in 1975. There, NATO, the Warsaw Pact, and other European countries concluded the Helsinki Final Act, which enshrined the principles that borders must not be changed by force and that countries are free to choose their own alliances. The Final Act led to decades of diplomacy that produced agreements on arms control and other security issues, all of which contributed to the reduction of tensions in eastern Europe. But these agreements have almost all fallen by the wayside in recent years. The time has come to restore and reform them for the present era and to revive the approach to diplomacy that helped prevent the Cold War from turning hot.

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HALF A LOAF FOR ALL

The idea of NATO enlargement was written into the treaty that created the alliance in 1949. Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty states that other European countries can be invited to join the alliance if they can "contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area." Well before the end of the Cold War, NATO extended membership to Greece and Turkey in 1952 to strengthen NATO's southern flank, brought in West Germany in 1955 to ensure that the country's rearmament would take place under tight supervision and control, and added Spain in 1982 to help consolidate its democracy after the fall of its dictator, General Francisco Franco. And in 1990, Washington secured Moscow's consent to keep Germany firmly in NATO following its unification, with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev acknowledging that the Final Act gave countries the freedom to choose their own alliances. With the end of the Cold War and the subsequent dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union, the newly liberated and independent states of central and eastern Europe sought the security and prosperity their Western neighbors enjoyed and petitioned to join NATO and the European Union. NATO and the EU conditioned membership on the applicants making far-reaching political and economic changes, thus providing them with a powerful incentive to transform into market-based democracies. The Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland were first to meet the test and joined NATO in 1999. They were followed by seven more countries in 2004, including the three Baltic states that had been forcibly incorporated into the Soviet Union at the onset of World War II.

Putin wants to turn back to the clock to the 1980s, when Moscow reigned supreme in Central and Eastern Europe.

Although Russia acquiesced, albeit grudgingly, in NATO's early enlargement, that attitude changed when Georgia and Ukraine applied to join in 2007 in the wake of their democratic revolutions. At the summit in Bucharest the following year, NATO members made the muddled decision to promise that both countries would join the alliance but declined to approve their membership action plan (MAP) applications, even though the process would have taken many years to complete and left open the eventual decision of membership. Far from resolving anything, the compromise left everyone dissatisfied. The United States failed to secure MAPs for Georgia and Ukraine. Germany committed to membership for countries it believed might never meet the standard. Georgia and Ukraine were left with a promise of membership but without any concrete steps to get there, let alone the security commitment that membership entailed. And Russia was confronted with a NATO declaration that promised future NATO membership for Ukraine and Georgia but until then excluded them both from the alliance's collective security commitment.

This last point provided Moscow with a useful opening, which Putin readily seized. Preventing Georgia and Ukraine from joining NATO would become a driving force of Russia's policy toward both countries and create a ready-made excuse whenever Putin wanted to increase the pressure on them.

A CONVENIENT EXCUSE

NATO's 2008 declaration has provided Putin with a convenient excuse, but he was already seeking to undermine and intimidate Ukraine and Georgia after their democratic revolutions in the early years of the twenty-first century led him to fear the impact of those "Color Revolutions" on his hold on power. Like all autocrats, Putin fears the ability of people to freely choose their own leaders. That much is clear from his actions at home. He's engineered a change in the Russian constitution so that he can remain president until 2036. And he has cut off any possible path for another leader to come to power, as evidenced by his subversion of elections and the poisoning and then jailing of his main opposition leader, Alexei Navalny.

Beyond Russia's borders, he wants Moscow, rather than Kyiv, to determine the destiny of Ukraine, the most strategically significant former Soviet republic aside from Russia itself. Putin's efforts to intimidate and undermine Ukraine started long before the Bucharest declaration. When the Orange

Revolution stopped Russian-backed Viktor Yanukovych from stealing an election in 2004, Putin <u>was outraged</u> that he did not get his preferred outcome and blamed the West for fostering Ukrainian attitudes in favor of democracy. His issue, then, lay with the Ukrainian people and their government's ability to decide their own course at home and abroad.

NATO's 2008 promise that Ukraine will become a member of the alliance provides a useful excuse for Putin to do what he would have tried to do regardless of the declaration. But it is a gift that NATO keeps on giving: time and again the promise is repeated in NATO documents, NATO speeches, and NATO meetings with Ukrainian leaders. As an organization that operates on consensus, changing tack is hard, especially when the underlying disagreement among allies remains deep. But although NATO's disagreement means that the prospect for Ukrainian (and Georgian) NATO membership remains distant at best, Putin can point to the repeated promise as the reason for his continued threats against Ukraine as well as his complaints about the West. Even without it, however, he would still feel the need to deny Kyiv its independence and destroy its efforts to build a successful democracy given the threat that example could mount to his rule.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Next week, U.S. and Russian officials will meet in Geneva to discuss European security issues. A meeting of the NATO-Russia Council will convene in Brussels two days later, followed by a meeting of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe on January 13. These diplomatic engagements, first put on the table by U.S. President Joe Biden during a videoconference with Putin in early December, aim to develop an alternative path to military confrontation. There is room to negotiate: even though denying Ukraine its sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity is clearly unacceptable, Russia, like any other country, has legitimate security concerns.

Although Moscow would love nothing more than for the discussions to be conducted between the United States and <u>Russia alone</u>, the negotiations must be done in a multilateral fashion. To its credit, the Biden administration has insisted on this, recognizing the United States cannot address European security without its allies, nor can it decide Ukrainian security without Ukraine. Russia will have a seat at the table—but so should every other country with a stake in the outcome.

Russia has made its demands plain through the publication of proposed treaties with the United States and NATO. Much of the content of those drafts is unacceptable to the United States, NATO allies, and Ukraine—including a NATO guarantee not to invite any new members to join and the removal of all military NATO deployments and infrastructure on the territory of the 14 countries that have joined the alliance since 1997. Other ideas, such as a hotline between NATO headquarters and Moscow and a prohibition on military exercises in border areas, are worth discussing.

In recent years, the security architecture in Europe has essentially collapsed.

The core of any discussions between NATO, Russia, and other European countries, however, should focus on rebuilding the European security structure that emerged from the Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. In the subsequent two decades, as political relations improved and the Cold War gave way to continent-wide security cooperation, the parties agreed to a series of treaties and agreements that transformed European security, including the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, which eliminated ground-based nuclear missiles; the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty, which limited conventional force deployments in Europe; the Treaty on Open Skies, which provided for increased transparency on unarmed reconnaissance flights; and the so-called Vienna Documents, which limited military activities, mandated the exchange of information on military holdings, and required prior notification of significant troop movements. These agreements' verification and inspection provisions all but eliminated the possibility that any country could engage in the large-scale use of military force without prior notice.

Unfortunately, in recent years this security architecture has essentially collapsed. The United States has contributed to its deterioration by withdrawing from some treaties to advance its own perceived interests and from others because Moscow failed to address Washington's concerns about Russian

compliance. The bulk of the blame, however, rests with Moscow, which for more than two decades has failed to live up to many of its obligations under these agreements. It built and deployed a ground-launched nuclear missile in violation of the INF Treaty, suspended its participation in the CFE Treaty, circumvented the Treaty on Open Skies, and has all but ceased to abide by the provisions of the Vienna Documents.

As a result, security in Europe today is more precarious than at any time since the end of the Cold War. Russia, the United States, NATO, and other states in Europe must rebuild the foundations of European security around the core principles established back then. Russia has the right not to fear invasion by the West. NATO members have the right not to fear invasion by Russia. And Ukraine has the right to pursue a democratic future free from Russian interference and intimidation. These fundamental rights would be easier to preserve if the Helsinki architecture were restored. Doing so will be difficult. But as the Cold War demonstrated, even the fiercest adversaries can find ways to prevent the nightmare scenario of great-power war returning to Europe.