

## Recalibrating Canada's global focus must be a 2022 priority

*If we do not make changes, we will be left as a small cork bobbing precariously in stormy seas*

Derek H. Burney

National Post, January 01, 2022

Canada's crucial relationships with the United States and China are anything but promising. It is time to recalibrate our global focus.

Any hopes that Canada would be better off with the Biden administration than with the impulsive, erratic Donald Trump were dashed when, on his first day in office, U.S. President Joe Biden abruptly terminated the Keystone XL pipeline, a decision which, in hindsight and as gasoline prices skyrocket across America, he may well regret. Democratic senators such as Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Jon Tester of Montana have urged the president to reconsider his decision. Hopes for North American energy independence that would ensure market stability are among the casualties. Biden's "hands-off" waffling in the face of efforts by Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer to decommission Enbridge's Line 5 pipeline, which runs through Michigan and provides essential supplies to Ontario and Quebec, compounds energy uncertainty.

Trade relations have deteriorated in similar fashion: stronger Buy America measures, the doubling of tariffs on softwood lumber and, most egregiously, as part of the "Build Back Better" boondoggle, large subsidies for electric vehicles made exclusively in America which violate key elements of the USMCA. The auto sector was at the heart of the original free trade agreement, NAFTA, as well as the subsequent USMCA, and is critical to Canada's economic growth expectations. Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland and Trade Minister Mary Ng correctly signalled that these subsidies, if passed, would ignite retaliation with tariffs and possibly lead to suspension of the USMCA. Even if Biden fails to get congressional approval for his large spending package, elements like the EV subsidies could re-emerge as separate items.

*Trade relations have deteriorated in similar fashion*

As the recent "Three Amigos Summit" demonstrated, Canada clearly no longer has a "special" or "privileged" relationship with the United States. We have become a detached, if not disillusioned bystander on our own continent. Australia, our natural competitor, has pivoted above us in Washington in terms of foreign policy, trade and national security concerns.

Obviously, the U.S. will continue to be the key market for Canada but with less promise for growth and needing vigilant, defensive maintenance.

If anyone thought that the release of Meng Wanzhou and the Two Michaels would ease tensions between Ottawa and Beijing, they should think again. Instead, the thuggish, authoritarian Chinese regime has become more pugnacious vis-à-vis Canada. China's "wolf warrior" ambassador in Canada, Cong Peiwu, recently stepped up attacks on Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor, claiming that they had "confessed" and were simply "released on bail" — as if Chinese authorities have any regard for legal norms. They adamantly refuse to admit that their apprehension was raw hostage diplomacy with no foundation in fact or law. (For a detailed account, I recommend the book [The Two Michaels](#) by Mike Blanchfield and Fen Osler Hampson.)

When Canada joined the U.S., Australia and the U.K. in a nebulous "diplomatic boycott" of the Beijing Olympics, we were singled out for special scorn by the spokesman for China's foreign minister.

Nothing will be easy for Canada with China, but we cannot ignore what will soon be the world's largest economy, as well as the major threat to global stability. In finding a pragmatic level of engagement we have to combine realism judiciously with our principles and values. We do have some leverage, notably a large trade deficit that gives scope for tariff discipline on China. Canada has commodities, notably food and minerals, that China needs. Even when implementing boycotts of such products as Canadian canola, the Chinese found ways to acquire what they needed through third parties.

Polls in Canada reveal rising concerns about China's global actions and ambitions. The U.S. public is signalling similar anxieties, a mood broadly endorsed by both parties in Congress.

To avoid becoming simply "a beaver to kick," our government should be more assertive, e.g. countering Chinese cyber-attacks and directing the RCMP and CSIS to target rigorously the manner in which Chinese citizens, including government officials, use casinos in B.C. and Ontario to launder money derived from sales of fentanyl.

Technology expertise from our universities, which China has attempted to tap, should also be safeguarded more strictly. As well, the Canadian public deserves to know the full story about why two Chinese scientists were fired from the high-security National Microbiology Lab in Winnipeg a year ago.

The biggest threat to the Communist regime is internal stability and the power of real democratic values. For Canada, kowtowing to a regime bent on lawless global supremacy is not the answer. Asserting our rights systematically with China and diversifying our focus and our commitments to those who share our basic values and abhor violations of human rights would be the most prudent strategy.

*Kowtowing to China is not the answer*

Emerging markets, predominantly those in the Indo-Pacific region, are expected to account for 70 per cent of global wealth and 60 per cent of global trade by mid-century. Canada needs to recalibrate its global focus accordingly.

In rethinking our global economic priorities, we also need to examine our national security commitments. Mired in scandal, top heavy with brass hats (a ratio twice that of the U.S. Marine Corps!) and using dated, often unserviceable equipment, our military has become a national, if not global, embarrassment. Australia is lifting its defence expenditures to 3.0 per cent of GDP. Canada is stuck at 1.4 per cent, well below our NATO obligation. Australia is seen as a serious security partner in the Indo-Pacific. Canada is not, which is why Australia is in the AUKUS alliance and the Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue) and Canada is not.

Canada has become too complacent in the North America security cocoon. We are seen primarily as a tiny appendage to the U.S. It would take an enormous effort to up our military game and properly defend our interests in the Arctic and in the most dynamic region of the world, but neither the government nor the public seem to have the stomach for such a commitment. If we do not make changes and increase the resources required, we will be left as a small cork bobbing precariously in stormy seas.

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## Canada can do more to support the U.S. in their special relationship

Deanna Horton and Roy Norton

Globe and Mail, January 24, 2022

On the one-year anniversary of his 2021 inauguration, many Canadians – politicians, officials, and citizens alike – declared their disappointment with the Biden administration’s approach to U.S.-Canada relations. The U.S. and Canada generally share perspectives on issues such as climate change, defence, relations with China and Russia, and the rule of law, but from the cancellation of the Keystone XL pipeline, to tax credits only for U.S.-manufactured electric vehicles, and across a range of other bilateral issues, the President’s first year has prioritized domestic political constituents.

But in itself, this should be no surprise. And despite the disappointment, Canada needs to understand that the relationship is a two-way street, by doing more to support the U.S. in the name of these shared values.

U.S. behaviour during the Trump administration definitely planted doubts and uncertainty about the durability of America’s global reengagement. This causes real headaches for a country like Canada, which relies on institutions to curb the worst excesses of hyperpowers. But there’s no realistic alternative model in view.

On the big global issues where we share a common outlook, Canada could be stepping up more in support of liberal democracy and, in particular, of U.S. leadership. Canada

should be using its membership in the G7, G20, WTO, NATO, OECD and other organizations to advance open societies and markets. Domestic political constraints may circumscribe U.S. action, but it's clear that efforts from allies such as Canada would be welcomed in Washington.

With its withdrawal from Afghanistan, the U.S. ceased to be involved in any major military conflict. The Biden White House has renewed support for the "Quad" in Asia (U.S.A., Japan, Australia, India) and NATO (after a singular lack of interest from the Trump administration). This could signify that rather than reverting to isolationism, America will simply be highly selective in determining its national security interests.

Canada and other U.S. allies were caught off-guard when the AUKUS strategic partnership was announced, between Australia, the U.K. and the United States. The significance of this move as a counter to China is uncontestable. Was Canada left out because AUKUS is formally about nuclear-powered submarines, of which we have none? Or did the U.S. conclude, notwithstanding official Canadian rhetoric, that Canada is unequipped to make a significant geostrategic contribution in the broader Pacific region? If the latter, that's all the more reason for Canada to step up.

While Canada doesn't often invest resources and political capital in advancing ideas for transformative change in the bilateral relationship, when we've done so, we've achieved great success, on files including the St. Lawrence Seaway, the Canada-U.S. Auto Pact, bilateral free trade, acid rain abatement, participation in NAFTA, and post-9/11 border management. On the multilateral front, we've also demonstrated value by mobilizing like-minded countries to drive progress on issues such as Venezuela, WTO reform and land mines.

Canada's brand in the U.S. is strong; We are naturally suited to leading collaborative efforts on initiatives that could resonate with Americans. The question is whether we have what it takes to expend, on a priority (and continuing) basis, the efforts necessary to make a difference?

Maybe it's time for Canada, in a concerted fashion, to try to sell the U.S. Administration, Congress, state governments, business and labour leaders, think tanks and other influencers on big-picture solutions to both bilateral irritants and common challenges. Forging an understanding among Americans of the value of collaboration is both a worthwhile and viable goal.

Sure, policy capacity within our government has withered. And yes, political leaders in both countries increasingly focus on crisis- and image-management. But the status quo portends an ever-downward trajectory in the relationship – a spiral that didn't begin with Donald Trump and, absent comprehensive action, won't end with Mr. Biden.

Canada should invest in the leadership critical to finding comprehensive and durable solutions to the issues that undermine the bilateral relationship we manage with the U.S. and to address global challenges. We've done it before. We can do it again.

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## Joe Biden's perfect storm and the 'peril' of American democracy

*As problems spiral on many fronts, the president seems overwhelmed, if not befuddled. This is not what he promised for America in 2020*

Derek H. Burney

National Post, January 08, 2022

On the world stage, Biden faces ominous threats from Moscow and Beijing, while his botched withdrawal from Afghanistan continues to sap American credibility with friends and foes alike.

As problems spiral on many fronts, the president seems overwhelmed, if not befuddled. This is not what he promised for America in 2020. Biden is also beset by self-inflicted problems at the southern border, where illegal aliens continue to stream into the United States — more than 1.7 million in 2021, not including the thousands who eluded border patrols. In an unprecedented exercise of state sovereignty, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott is building a state wall to complete sections that lie stranded at the border.

Most alarmingly, America is also experiencing a startling epidemic of smash-and-grab looting and record levels of murder in major urban centres. At least 12 major U.S. cities broke annual homicide rates in 2021. Philadelphia, a city of 1.5 million people, had more homicides (559) than the nation's two largest cities — New York and Los Angeles. Chicago, the nation's third-largest city, led the pack with 797 murders, up three per cent over 2020, a year that also saw a 30 per cent increase in homicides nationwide.

Among the reasons explaining the crime wave are the impact of COVID-19 on communities and first responders, racial tensions triggered by the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis and a surge in gun sales since the beginning of the pandemic. Economic inequalities and lax enforcement of the law, notably in Democrat-run urban centres, are factors, as well.

COVID-induced disruptions of the criminal justice system carry a price. For months, grand juries as well as state and federal trials were largely halted due to the pandemic. A chronic lack of political will and radical new approaches to prosecutions are determining factors, too. Aided and abetted by billionaire George Soros, attorneys general in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Philadelphia and New York undermine law enforcement by relaxing prosecutions and sentencings on everything from armed robbery to grand theft.

Seemingly, they believe it is more just to refrain from arresting and jailing criminals than to protect citizens and businesses from being robbed. These are mindsets that diminish police morale and only make matters worse. The fact that thieves face little retribution in cities like San Francisco and Los Angeles explains why larceny and theft

incidents in the Central District of California are up 88 per cent from the previous year, while overall crime rose more than 50 per cent.

The attorney general of Illinois said that crime rings are costing retailers across the state an estimated \$45 billion in annual losses. Thieves can sell expensive items at slashed prices and there is no shortage of buyers. “It’s easy, it’s fast and the payback is good,” said Lynda Buel, president of an Ohio-based security consulting firm.

According to a Fox business poll, 57 per cent of those polled disapprove of Biden’s handling of crime; only 36 per cent approve. Eighty per cent of registered voters are “extremely” or “very” concerned about the surge in crime — 21 per cent blame a “breakdown of moral values” for the trend, 15 per cent see weakened criminal penalties as the cause, 13 per cent target the availability of guns and 12 per cent attribute decreased police funding as the reason.

These are dismal numbers for Biden and the Democrats heading into a mid-term election year, as Republicans are generally seen as being tougher on crime. When democratic governments fail to provide safety and security for citizens and businesses, they ignore the fundamental premise of government and yet, as mid-term elections soon assume centre stage, it will be all politics all the time, leaving little incentive or capacity for legislative achievement.

Biden won in 2020 because he was not Donald Trump and was perceived as better able to handle COVID, and Trump is now toying with the prospect of another run in 2024. More Americans have died from COVID under Biden in 2021 than under Trump in 2020.

Nearly two-thirds of independents disapprove of Biden’s performance. A majority of Hispanics, who normally support Democrats, also disapprove. Both groups were instrumental in Biden’s 2020 victory.

That is why Republicans sense that they have the wind at their backs. Battle lines are hardening between the two parties and the middle ground is shrinking. The lack of civility in America, epitomized by rises in crime and violence, is also seen in its political discourse.

There are days when it may seem like America’s democracy itself is in peril. But the damage from inflation, from blatant assaults on the rule of law at the southern border and the lawlessness pervading major U.S. cities pose more serious threats to American democracy than allegations about voter suppression, the prospect of a sequel to events of Jan. 6, 2021, or even the looming presence of Donald Trump.

Attempting to distract attention from their dismal track record, Democrats are using every pretext to stir concern about the “peril” of American democracy. Attorney General Merrick Garland has promised to investigate “anyone at any level,” including presumably Donald Trump, for their role on Jan. 6.

Democrats are determined to break the filibuster rule requiring 60 votes in order to pass voter rights legislation that would give the federal government more control over elections, but this is an issue that resonates more inside the Washington Beltway and with the progressive core of the Democratic party than in the country as a whole.

If ever there was a time for a resurgence of customary American resilience, that time is now.

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## I Remember Desmond Tutu

Ian Ferguson

Globe and Mail, January 13, 2022

In 1984, when the Nobel committee announced that Bishop Desmond Tutu would be the next recipient of the Peace Prize, I was assigned to the South Africa desk at Canada's old Department of External Affairs. Throughout the year, protests in South Africa had increased along with international criticism and Canadian engagement.

Sometime prior to the Nobel announcement, Tutu, then Auxiliary Bishop of Johannesburg and general secretary of the South African Council of Churches, had accepted an invitation to Ottawa by the Right Reverend Edwin Lackey, Anglican Bishop of Ottawa. The Peace Prize of course greatly increased political and media interest in the visit, which took place in December after the Nobel ceremony.

Although the visit was private in nature, official events were also planned and His Grace's dance card was full. His program included meeting political figures, media and NGOs as well as giving a major evening address to the public at Ottawa's Christ Church Cathedral. It was agreed that I would serve as his escort to ensure that he could keep to his heavy program.

Throughout the snowy day of the visit, we received messages from Canadian photographer Yousuf Karsh requesting that His Grace sit for his portrait. It didn't seem a priority for my employer, nor the bishop's host, or indeed for His Grace. We politely declined and then ignored the follow-up messages, which arrived throughout the day.

Finally, toward the end of the afternoon, we received a last note from Mr. Karsh recalling that he had also photographed Chief Albert Luthuli, president of the African National Congress (ANC) 1952-60, and himself a Nobel Peace Prize winner in 1960, the first African honoured in this manner.

That proved the key that turned the lock for His Grace and we trooped over to the Karsh Studio in the Château Laurier, where this portrait was taken.

Bishop Tutu's well-timed, high-profile visit and private meetings with Canadian politicians certainly had a catalytic effect on the evolution of Canadian policy.

Prime minister Brian Mulroney and secretary of state Joe Clark moved subsequently toward increasing pressure on the South African government to end apartheid. At that time, Canadian leaders did not meet with ANC representatives, so conversations with religious and non-governmental figures assumed an important dimension in helping politicians appreciate what was occurring in South Africa and how to react.

I remember that His Grace was unfailingly gracious to his interlocutors despite an exhausting schedule. On occasion he displayed his famous sense of humour. When he did, there was always a twinkle in his eye.

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## Russia and the threat of war

Gar Pardy

The Hill Times, January 10, 2022

In December, Canada, along with the other six G7 countries and the European Union's high representative condemned the Russian 'military buildup and aggressive rhetoric towards Ukraine.'

By putting troops along the Ukrainian border, Russian President Vladimir Putin has created conditions, in the minds of many, that, potentially, could lead to a larger conflict involving both European countries and the United States, writes Gar Pardy. *Photograph courtesy of the Kremlin*

There is Russian humour ending with the line the country has an “unpredictable history.” Given the ongoing historical myth making by successive Russian governments, as well as others, the joke has much to recommend it today. But today there is a new twist—Russia, has a large element of unpredictability as to its future.

In its future unpredictably, Russia has commonality with most of the world. There is, however, an extra dimension to Russia's future—its ongoing willingness to threaten or to use military force to deal with threats to its existing territorial integrity and even to see that territory enlarged.

Its action directed at Ukraine is the latest example of this. Earlier, in the '90s there were two prolonged and nasty civil wars in Chechnya and the use of force throughout Transcaucasia ensuring those earlier conquered lands remained part of today's Russia. Today, that region fully understands the size of Moscow's hammer and while there is resentment, there is no significant opposition.

A decade later, in 2008, neighbouring Georgia, following unsuccessful efforts to attract NATO membership, saw its two northern regions, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, invaded by Russian troops. It provided the template of what was undertaken against Ukraine in 2014—the total annexation of Crimea and the ongoing domination of the eastern regions

of Donetsk and Luhansk. An associated result saw Russia in complete control of the Sea of Azov.

Today, the massing of over a 100,000 Russian troops along its Ukrainian border provides the basis for a larger intervention and direct influence on Kiev's policy as to its independence and relations with other countries. As a result, Russia has created conditions, in the minds of many, that, potentially, could lead to a larger conflict involving both European countries and the United States.

In December, Canada, along with the other six G7 countries and the European Union's high representative condemned the Russian "military buildup and aggressive rhetoric towards Ukraine." The G7 meeting, in the United Kingdom, in early December, called on Russia to de-escalate and "pursue diplomatic channels and abide by its international commitments on transparency of military activities."

The Dec. 12 statement stressed the "use of force to change borders is strictly prohibited under international law." It went on to state "Russia should be in no doubt that further military aggression against Ukraine would have massive consequences and severe cost in response."

The answer is making as strong a message as possible, given the circumstances, without suggesting war. Will it have any effect on Russian policy? Not likely. Russia, since it officially replaced the Soviet Union, has followed a hard policy on internal stability issues and in relations with neighbouring countries, not significantly different than was the case in the pre-1991 period.

The presence of increasing Western troops, including those from Canada, in neighbouring countries has not and will not lessen Russian efforts to create influence in Western Europe, especially using its abundant supply of gas. The Nord Stream II pipeline, at this time, is more important to Germany than it is to Russia. Russia is now a comfortable member of OPEC. Plus, there, its influence is readily seen in the organization's collective decision-making.

In some ways, Russia's use of force in Georgia and Ukraine may be at the extreme ends of its policy. Its role in the Azerbaijan and Armenian conflicts, internationally and domestically, has been measured and constructive and was possible due to the lack of interest by Western countries to be involved. Equally, its role in the domestic unrest in Kazakhstan and other "stan" countries, including Afghanistan, provides greater stability for that region than is available from other countries. Belarus, however, is an entirely different problem. Its existing leadership is old and erratic and there will not be much to enjoy in Moscow in the coming years for the increasing Russian suzerainty.

The current stalemate on Ukraine, however, serves the interests of both sides. For Russia it is a reflection of its strength and willingness to dictate developments along its borders. It also influences the policies of Western countries in respect of Russian red lines which essentially is to lessen the scope of NATO on its borders and ensuring that there is little to no possibility of enlargement in the foreseeable future.

For Ukrainian nationalists it eliminates millions of people, many with stronger ties to Moscow than with Kiev, from its national equation. At the same time, it most likely weakens Moscow's ongoing efforts to keep the Ukraine outside of European influences including that of NATO.

In the coming days there will be a series of meetings involving Russia, the United States, NATO, and other Western countries. These meetings will not be conclusive but rather will be conditional in the management of the immediate problems associated with Russia's efforts to engage the world on its own terms.

However, in these meetings, the reliability of the United States rather than Russian intentions will be the most important conditioning factor. At this time, there is little to no confidence the United States will be able to generate a strong common policy involving its numerous allies around the world.

Much will be said but little will be achieved until there is an answer to the fundamental American questions relating to the continuing influence of former U.S. president Donald Trump. There is no certainty the question will be answered with the November Congressional elections, and then the real test starts with the associated maneuvering for the 2024 presidential campaign. As such, it will be the passage of time that will sort out Russian intentions rather than concerned countering action by Western countries.

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## American Democracy is Stronger Than its Enemies

Colin Robertson

Policy Magazine, January 4, 2022

So, is democracy in America done? About to be served out like Thanksgiving turkey?

Much of the slew of commentary around the anniversary of the January 6th storming of the US Capitol takes as its theme, not without elements of smugness and schadenfreude, that the United States is spiraling downwards. But to paraphrase Mark Twain, reports of democracy's demise in our next door neighbour have been greatly exaggerated.

The declinist case boils down to a lament over America's political polarization (rancour and division in American politics is as old as the Republic), its dysfunctional government (by design, the founding fathers set up a system of checks and balances to prevent radical change, as well as a federal system that, like Canada's, relies on a separation of powers), its gun culture (rooted in its revolutionary origins and enshrined in the Second Amendment to the US

Constitution) and the nationwide Republican attacks on voting rights (a serious threat that is being contested in the courts by civic groups and the federal Justice Department).

Then there is Trumpism. As historian Jon Meacham argues in his splendid *Soul of America: The Battle for Our Better Angels* Donald Trump fits into the type of American “loud mouth” that in the last century included Huey Long, Father Coughlin and Joseph McCarthy.

Meacham points out that American history is littered with moments of democratic crisis. This is what comes of trying to create a pluralistic, multi-ethnic democratic republic across a vast expanse of land with an 18<sup>th</sup> century constitution. The goal is not perfection but a more perfect union, something with which Canadians should identify.

For Meacham, five elements – the presidency, Congress, the courts, a free press, and a civic-minded people – really matter. As long as two or three row in the right direction, the American experiment will continue.

As for American decline, consider the following: its military remains the most powerful in the world. The US Navy secures the sealanes that have made possible the globalization that lifted billions, most of them in China and the developed world, out of poverty. When there is an earthquake or tsunami or famine or Ebola outbreak the first and best responders are the men and women of the US Armed Forces.

Its deterrent power, the backbone of collective security alliances like NATO and NORAD, has also preserved the general peace for over 75 years.

Americans are tired of playing sheriff but when they retire, as we saw in Afghanistan, we don't like the result. Think of Gary Cooper in High Noon for a sense of the lonely life of the sheriff.

The US has lots of flaws: excessive individualism, self-indulgence, racism and inequality. Its primary and secondary schools are under-nourished. But it continues to educate the world's best. In the latest global rankings seven of the top 10 universities are American. Xi Jinping sent his daughter to Harvard. The list of Canadian leaders who have studied and worked in the US or for US companies is long and distinguished.

*When it comes to democracy, the commentariat focuses on politics and its reflection in social media. But for most Americans, the ins and outs of politics are not central to their daily lives.*

No other nation comes close in Nobel laureates, especially in the sciences. California alone is home to 10 percent of laureates, part of the reason that the future begins in California, from music and cinema in Hollywood, to the tech and digital world of Silicon Valley.

Then there is American soft power. Its popular culture — in film, music, sports and fashion — has global appeal. To truly appreciate America, you need to immerse yourself in its social history, brilliantly captured, warts and all, in the filmography of Ken Burns.

The classic account of the spirit of America is Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. Written after a tour in the 1830s of the still immature Republic, de Tocqueville described a people who were boisterous, bumptious, and disrespectful know-it-alls. They "seldom take the opinion of their equal, a man like themselves, upon trust" and they doubted "the general notion of...intellectual superiority." At its worst this trait produced the nativist and racist "Know Nothings", the Ku Klux Klan, and Donald Trump.

Americans' saving grace, observed de Tocqueville, in contrast to their European counterparts, is that they are ambitious, creative and forward-thinking. Most of all, they were enthused with democracy and the belief that with hard work and luck anyone could succeed. That hasn't changed. Americans are still the best at taking an idea, then making it, growing it and marketing it to the world.

This confidence of forward motion has taken a beating in recent years. How to deal with racial and economic inequality is debated daily. When civil protest takes to the streets or Capitol Hill, it is not pretty. To paraphrase Mark Twain once again, citizenship is what makes a democracy; autocracies can get along without it. What keeps a democracy on its legs is good citizenship.

When it comes to democracy, the commentariat focuses on politics and its reflection in social media. But for most Americans, the ins and outs of politics are not central to their daily lives. Neither is Twitter, As Pew surveys reveal only about one in five Americans uses Twitter. It's a useful tool for we in the chattering class, but never forget that most tweets come from a small minority of users playing to an echo chamber.

The best definition of American democracy is still the 1943 letter from E. B. White (remembered today as the author of *Charlotte's Web* and *Stuart Little*) responding to the Writer's War Board.

*Surely the Board knows what democracy is. It is the line that forms on the right. It is the don't in don't shove. It is the hole in the stuffed shirt through which the sawdust slowly trickles; it is the dent in the high hat. Democracy is the recurrent suspicion that more than half of the people are right more than half of the time. It is the feeling of privacy in the voting booths, the feeling of communion in the libraries, the feeling of vitality everywhere. Democracy is a letter to the editor. Democracy is the score at the beginning of the ninth. It is an idea which hasn't been disproved yet, a song the words of which have not gone bad. It's the mustard on the hot dog and the cream in the rationed coffee.*

Over 40 years ago, as a young diplomat in New York, I got to know Alastair Cooke, the legendary BBC correspondent who for over half a century would deliver a weekly letter from America that I first listened to on my father's shortwave. Cooke had recently hosted a personal history of the United States for PBS.

New York had almost gone broke. Times Square was dirty and dissolute. There were gas lines. Jimmy Carter told us to turn down the heat. I thought then, as others do today, that the US really was falling off the cliff. But Cooke cautioned me with the words that concluded his series: "America is a country in which I see the most persistent idealism and the blandest of cynicism and the race is on between its vitality and its decadence."

The symptoms of democratic decline in America are readily apparent. But like Cooke, my bet is still on the energy and vitality of the American people and their institutions.

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Russia, China testing American commitments to the independence of Ukraine and Taiwan

Gar Parady

Hill Times, January 26, 2022

The value of American commitments and those of its allies, including Canada, to the independence of Ukraine and Taiwan is what is being tested by Russia and China.

The United States is intimately involved in the ongoing foreplay of war in the Ukraine and Taiwan. In both situations the Americans have historic political and legal obligations to provide assistance should Russia or China decide on an actual military invasion. Canada, along with other allies, have similar political obligations. In the meantime, the United States, along with several allies, has countered the threats with words and actions illustrating the consequences of invasions.

In the seventy-five years since the Second World War, the United States has dominated geopolitical developments throughout the world. It provided coherence of policy and resources in creating the promises of a liberal international order as outlined in the 1941 Atlantic Charter. These principles – self-determination for all people, no territorial change by force, self-government - became the bedrock on which the independence of the nation state and the freedom and security of all peoples flourished.

The universe at the time consisted of fifty-two countries, battered by a world-wide war and first use of nuclear weapons, met in London in 1945 and agreed to those Charter principles. Today, that universe is nearing two hundred countries and more will come. Every member of the United Nations commits to these principles and, not to do so, undermines and erodes the very essence of today's international order.

The Atlantic Charter and membership in the United Nations are useful memes around which to give coherence to the threats of war in Ukraine and Taiwan. Ukraine was an original member of the United Nations in 1945 along with Belarus, demanded by the Soviet Union to bulk up support in the new organization. Today, Russia argues Ukraine does not have the attributes of UN membership but is inherently part of its national territory. Most of the world disagrees.

On the other side of the world, China insists Taiwan is inherently and politically a part of its historic national territory and does not have the attributes for UN membership. In the world since 1945, most countries have legally agreed with Beijing but politically have acted otherwise.

For several decades, Taiwan, ironically, argued it was the government for all of China and only recently that piece of fiction has disappeared. Now, the issue is whether or not China's assertions, ignoring a decision by the people of Taiwan, is valid or politically acceptable.

The value of American commitments and those of its allies, including Canada, to the independence of Ukraine and Taiwan is what is being tested by Russia and China.

The United States political system has been battered by a series of lost and inconclusive wars. Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, Syria, Libya, and today Afghanistan have imposed the heaviest of demands on the country and its people, so much so, it has energized discussion of the collapse of its political system.

In spite of these military "losses", the commitment of the United States to the principles of the Atlantic Charter and the United Nations has been fundamental to the success of

the global order from the ashes of the Second World War. Ironically, it is that success that created the Russia and China of today and their ability to challenge the United States.

It is no accident the two countries, dominating Europe and Asia, with their continental unity and successful prolonged leadership have come together to create a common threat to the American global hegemon. The question of coordination between Russia and China is still adrift but it is of little consequence as the effect of their threats of war in the Ukraine and Taiwan creates the largest threat to the United States and its allies since 1945.

The success of the global order is a counterpoint to the disarray of the American domestic order. The Trumpian years, when the fundamentals of American hegemony were attacked and undermined, created today's crises. Sadly, the four years of disorder by the former president has not ended.

The continuation of Putin and Xi leaderships into an unknown future are elements in their creation of the present crises. They both see a value in the crises to their continuing success. But that value could be undermined should the crisis go beyond the iteration of demands and require the actual use of their militaries. The success of both leaders would be eroded as the fullness of the borsh and rice bowls of their people lessened.

The Americans have frequently used war as a rallying cry out of domestic political difficulties. Their political system that provides its military with 40% (2020) of the world's military expenditures, suggests the temptation to do so is always there.

It is in these hesitations by the leaders of the three countries that characterize the present crises and leads to the conclusion there is a considerable amount of bluffing. Hopefully, the reliable standby of negotiations and diplomacy will succeed and come spring the threat of war will have receded. Then, the world can return to the serious problems of a raging virus and climate change.

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## America must act now on the Ukraine crisis

*Stern rhetoric is no longer sufficient. Biden must counter Putin's aggression with concrete measures*

Derek H. Burney

National Post, January 18, 2022

Vladimir Putin's cat-and-mouse tactics against Ukraine pose serious challenges for the Biden administration and the NATO alliance. Because there were no negative consequences for Putin when Russia seized Crimea and parts of eastern Ukraine in

2014, there is growing concern that he sees little risk in doing more of the same again. Especially given the significant number of Canadians with Ukrainian ancestry, this is not a dispute on which Canada can be AWOL.

Tensions increased markedly last Friday after diplomatic talks reached a stalemate. At the same time, Ukraine was hit by [massive cyber attacks](#) that knocked out several government departments. The attacks were accompanied by a menacing warning to all Ukrainians: “All information about you has been made public. Be afraid and expect the worst. This for your past, present and future.”

White House press secretary Jen Psaki warned on Friday that Russia has already pre-positioned a group of operatives to conduct a “false flag” operation in Eastern Ukraine, designed to look like an attack on Russian-speaking people in that region and to provide a pretext for military invasion.

*This is not a dispute on which Canada can be AWOL*

Invoking memories of Munich in 1938, historian Niall Ferguson has dismissed the diplomatic talks over Ukraine as “phoney diplomacy that aggressors engage in before they attack.” False flag actions also draw ominously from a Hitlerian playbook.

Putin’s strategic objective is to reinstate a sphere of influence in Eastern Europe similar to that of the former Soviet Union. He has consistently portrayed NATO’s eastern expansion as an “existential threat” to Russia. In a lengthy essay last summer, the Russian president contended that “Ukrainian independence was an unsustainable historical anomaly.” No subtlety there. During a marathon December press conference he contended that for the US to have offensive weapons at Russia’s doorstep was “like Russia having such weapons in Canada or Mexico.”

Putin has persistently stated that he will not accept Ukraine membership in NATO, which is why, despite public assurances that sovereign countries like Ukraine and Georgia have every right to make their own decisions on such matters, the alliance has been slow to accept repeated requests from Kyiv. Germany and France have dragged their feet on any formal invitation to Ukraine, which is why U.S. President Joe Biden has been assiduously courting key European leaders in order to muster a more united front.

Biden has warned of “serious consequences” and has threatened “unprecedented economic sanctions” if Russia were to invade Ukraine again but has carefully excluded mention of any military engagement by the U.S. and has been cautious about further military assistance to Ukraine lest he trip over a “red line” enumerated by Putin. Some ambiguity about the likelihood of U.S. action might have been a better deterrent to Russian escalation. Putin has long held the view that the collapse of the Soviet Union was “the greatest catastrophe of the 20th century.” He also knows that the U.S. and the West are more concerned about the economic and military threats from China than those from Russia, whose economy is smaller than Canada’s. But his nuclear arsenal is potent and growing, which is why the risk of matters getting out of hand in Ukraine are considerable.

Stern rhetoric is no longer sufficient. The lessons of history on appeasement to aggression are crystal clear. The U.S. must react now to the latest provocations with concrete measures:

- A selective cyber attack on portions of Russian infrastructure near Ukraine would be a good start.
- Ukraine should be promptly equipped to resist an invasion.
- The White House should lift constraints placed on Democratic Senators who, along with many Republicans, want to impose sanctions on Russia's Nord Stream 2 pipeline to Germany.
- Biden should encourage NATO allies to expedite NATO membership for Ukraine, and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau should vigorously support such action.

Ian Bremmer, president of the Eurasia Group, contends that Putin will not launch a full invasion of Ukraine because his objective is to divide the Europeans from the Americans. An invasion would have the opposite effect. He sees the piecemeal escalation we are now witnessing as more likely. Putin currently has some leverage to disrupt the unity of the Western alliance given Europe's increasing dependence on Russia for almost 50 per cent of its gas and one quarter of its oil. But the new German Chancellor, Olaf Scholz, has stated publicly that an invasion of Ukraine would lead to the cancellation of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, intended to bring Russian gas to Germany while bypassing Ukraine and Poland.

In an opinion piece for [Bloomberg](#), Niall Ferguson has argued that Putin's objective is not to divide NATO but rather to undermine Ukraine as a sovereign, democratic state.

Putin may feel the need to burnish his nationalist credentials at Ukraine's expense. He would obviously prefer that Ukraine be more like Belarus and Kazakhstan — authoritarian and obedient to Moscow.

*The lessons on appeasement to aggression are crystal clear*

Though badly outnumbered on troops and military equipment for a full-scale war, the Ukrainians will fight back fiercely in what could become a bloodbath that would compel the U.S. and the West to respond with more than a new round of sanctions. (The Ukrainians must wish they had never given up their nuclear arsenal in 1994 to achieve a settlement that Russia continues to violate.)

Putin undoubtedly sees Biden as an extension of former U.S. president Barack Obama, who did little in response to Russia's occupation of Crimea and eastern Ukraine in 2014. Perceptions of weakness, reinforced by America's embarrassing "cut and run" from Afghanistan, will hamper U.S. credibility in any showdown with Russia.

If Putin escalates attacks on Ukraine and Biden reacts in the same flaccid style as Obama, America's global leadership aspirations and Ukraine's democracy will falter. If

Biden counters Putin's aggression with concrete actions, his presidential prospects and the fate of Ukraine should benefit. A great deal hangs in the balance.

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## **Links**

Jeremy Kinsman

CTV News, January 28: Will Russia Invade?

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=2371487>

CTV News Diplomatic Community, January 25: Again, Galloping Tension Over Russia and Ukraine; What's New?

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=2369891>

CTV News Diplomatic Community, January 18, Tension rising over Russia and Ukraine? And how the US looks after 1 year of Biden

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=2364955>

CTV News, January 11, Diplomatic Community: the Russia/USA talks on security - and how to get Iran to face up to its responsibilities for killing 167 civilians on flight PS752 two years ago?

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=2359048>

CBC The Current, January 10, Kazakhstan

<https://www.cbc.ca/listen/live-radio/1-63-the-current/clip/15888133-whats-driving-recent-violent-protests-kazakhstan>