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Russia's Fifth Offer to Negotiate With US on Ukraine

The mission approach to Russia, delusional and hubristic from the start, lies in ruins, writes Jeffrey Sachs. Biden must work with Putin to bring peace.

Russian President Vladimir Putin (left) has to bring a reluctant Joe Biden (right) to the negotiating table. (Kremlin.ru, Wikimedia Commons)

By **Jeffrey D. Sachs**
Common Dreams

For the fifth time since ninth Russia has proposed to negotiate with the U.S. over security arrangements, this time in proposals made by President Vladimir Putin on December 15.

Four previous times, the U.S. rejected the offer of negotiations in favor of a mission strategy to reshape or dominate Russian foreign and security policy.

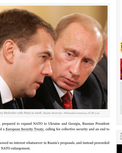
The U.S. mission tactics have failed disastrously, devastating Ukraine in the process and endangering the world. It is time for Joe Biden to open negotiations for peace and security.

Since the end of the Cold War, the U.S. has been trying to reshape the foreign policy of Russia. As early as 1992, the Pentagon drafted a strategy for keeping the former Soviet Union from ever allowing Russia to be a rival to the dominance of the United States.

Zbigniew Brzezinski, a leading foreign security advisor under President Jimmy Carter(and opposed to Jimmy Carter's policy of detente), in 1997 in his project backed NATO membership for Ukraine and Georgia, at the center of the Russian heartland.

In 1999, the U.S. led NATO alliance bombed Russia's ally, Serbia, for 78 days in order to break Serbia apart and install a separatist state in Serbia's southern province Kosovo. Leaders of the U.S. delegation to Serbia's conflict explicitly exchanged the Kosovo Liberation Army for Chechen war against Russia in the early 2000s.

In 2004, the U.S. and its allies engineered the Orange Revolution in Ukraine and Georgia, and installed pro-NATO governments. Russia's President Vladimir Putin (left) and Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych (right) in 2010. (Kremlin.ru, Wikimedia Commons)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Recorded at the Munich Security Conference, 2014. (Gina Schauer/Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.0)

In 2008, NATO's 28 member states, including the U.S., agreed to Central Europe, Eastern Europe, and former Soviet Union (South Ossetia, Hungary and Poland in 1991, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia in 2004, and Albania and Croatia in 2009, Montenegro, and Northern Macedonia, since), while promising future membership to Georgia and Ukraine.

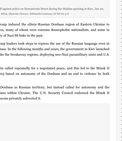
In 2014, the U.S. engineered the Maidan Revolution against Ukraine's President Viktor Yanukovych, and installed a government that, from the start, was dominated by Ukraine's Nazi Party, and contained Nazi and Neo-Nazi officials, such as Andriy Parubiy, who was the Maidan, where I was told directly by people at the Maidan, that Yanukovych was a "Nazi" who had to be killed.

The evidence of U.S. complicity in the coup is overwhelming.

Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland, who was caught on a phone line in January 2014 plotting the change of government in Ukraine. Meanwhile, U.S. ministers were personally in Kiev to stir up the protesters against the government, which was coming to U.S. aim to Kiev, to stay in the city of Kiev.

On Feb. 21, 2014, the Europeans, U.K. and Russia brokered a deal with Yanukovych in which Yanukovych agreed to early elections. The U.S. rejected the deal, and the next day, U.S. snipers, hired by U.S. state-owned organizations, threatened mass violence, and disposed Yanukovych the next day.

The U.S. organized the coup and immediately extended recognition to the new government.


Yanukovych in Munich along with Putin in Moscow. (Kremlin, CC BY 4.0, Wikimedia Commons)

In my view, this was a standard C.I.A. (and covert regime-change specialists) operation, in which the U.S. government secretly plots and carries out the overthrow of foreign governments, such as the Iranian government in 1953, Guatemala in 1954, Congo in 1960, Chile in 1973, Nicaragua in 1980, Iraq in 2003, Libya in 2011, and Syria in 2012.

Covert regime-change operations are of course not really hidden from view, but the U.S. government continuously denies its role, keeps all documents highly confidential, and systematically qualifies the world. "Do not believe what you see plainly with your own eyes! The U.S. had nothing to do with this."

Details of the operations eventually emerge, however, through synchronous, whistleblowers, the forced release of documents under the Freedom of Information Act, declassification of papers after years or decades, and memoirs, but all far too late for real accountability.

Defensive posturing but all against policy on Sustainable Peace during the Biden opening to Kiev, Jan. 20, 2022. (Mariia Shalabaeva, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 4.0)

In my event, the violent coup induced the ethno-Russian ethnic-cleansing region of Eastern Ukraine to break from the coup leaders, many of whom were extreme Russophobic nationalists, and some in neo-Nazi groups who is known of Nazi ancestry, to Russia.

Almost immediately, the coup leaders took steps to express the use of the Russian language even in the Russian-speaking Ukrainian. In the following months and years, the government in Kiev launched a military campaign to retake the breakaway regions, displacing over-Russ populations south and C.E. to Russia.

In the course of 2014, Putin called repeatedly for a negotiated peace, and this led to the Minsk II Agreement in February 2015, based on autonomy of the Donbass and an end to violence in the region.

Russia did not claim the Donbass or Russian territory, but instead called for autonomy and the formal release of documents under the Freedom of Information Act. Ukraine's President Petro Poroshenko (left) and Russian President Vladimir Putin (right) in Minsk, Belarus, on Feb. 12, 2015. (Kremlin.ru, CC BY 4.0, Wikimedia Commons)

Dec. 1, 2021. Biden, on screen, dining with colleagues at Camp David. Photo: Kremlin.ru, CC BY 4.0, Wikimedia Commons

In view of these dire concerns, Putin put on the table on Dec. 15, 2021 a draft "Treaty between the Russian Federation and the United States of America on Security Guarantees." The most interesting issues were on the table (article 4 of the draft treaty) was the end of the C.E. attempt to expand NATO to Ukraine and Georgia.

The Biden Administration rejected the Russian proposals, and the U.S. Senate voted unanimously to reject the Minsk Agreement, and the U.S. Congress voted to arm Ukraine against Russia.

Yet what would the U.S. say if some country in the Western hemisphere decided to hold Chinese or Russian troops? Would the White House, State Department, or Congress say, "That's just fine by us. The number of concern only to Russia or China and the best country?" No.

The world needs a step for nuclear disarmament. Yet the military-state in the Soviet Union placed nuclear missiles in Cuba and the U.S. imposed a naval quarantine and threatened war unless the Russian-Soviet forces left Cuba. The U.S. and Russia, in the end, agreed to the deal, ending in Ukraine are more than the Soviet Union placed nuclear missiles in the U.S. border.

Fourth Proposal — 2021

The fourth offer was made in negotiations, made in March 2021, when Russia and Ukraine were closed to a deal that put aside the sign of Russia's special military operation that began on Feb. 24, 2022. Russia, some, again, made the offer, that Russia, Ukraine's neutrality, i.e., no NATO membership, and no hosting of U.S. missiles on Russia's border.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky quickly accepted Ukraine's neutrality, and Ukraine and Russia exchanged papers, with the skillful mediation of the Foreign Ministry of Turkey. Then, unfortunately, the U.S. and of Nazis, Ukraine abandoned the negotiations.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky (pictured) quickly accepted Ukraine's neutrality, and Ukraine and Russia exchanged papers, with the skillful mediation of the Foreign Ministry of Turkey. Then, unfortunately, the U.S. and of Nazis, Ukraine abandoned the negotiations.

Since that day, Ukraine has lost several thousand dead and on the rapes on the battlefield.

Fifth Proposal — Now

Russia's December 15th offer of negotiations, explained clearly and cogently by Putin himself in his speech to diplomats at the Russian Foreign Ministry on June 14, Putin laid out Russia's proposed terms to end the war in Ukraine.

"Ukraine should adopt a neutral, non-aligned status, be nuclear free, and undergo demilitarization and denazification. Russia will not agree to any proposals put forward by Kiev based on the Istanbul negotiations in 2022, including specific details on demilitarization such as the agreed numbers of armed forces and armaments, and on denazification of Ukrainian society.

"Crimeah, the rights, freedoms, and interests of Russian-speaking citizens in Ukraine must be fully taken into account."

Putin's terms seemed reasonable, including the cessation of Ukraine, Kremlin, Donetsk and Lugansk people's republics, Kherson, and Zaporozhye regions as parts of the Russian Federation, should be acknowledged. These homelands would not be formalized through bilateral and multilateral international agreements in the future. Similarly, the status the removal of all Western sanctions against Russia, as well.

Let me say a few words about negotiations.

Russia's proposals should serve as the start of the negotiating table by proposals from the U.S. and Ukraine. The White House is dead wrong to evade negotiations just because of disagreements with Russia's proposals. Russia should get up its own proposals and put forward its own negotiating terms.

There are three core issues for Russia: Ukraine's neutrality (non-NATO status), Ukraine's demilitarizing in Russian-Ukrainian relations, and denazification of Ukraine and Southern Ukraine. The first two are almost surely non-negotiable. The end of NATO membership is the fundamental issue fully. Ukraine is close to Russia, as Ukraine has been in Russia's Black Sea fleet since ships. It is fundamental to Russia's national security.

The third core issue, Russian-speaking Ukraine and Southern Ukraine, will be a long-term issue. The U.S. cannot pretend that borders are unchanged. Russia has assisted over 34,000 hundred Serbs to empty to relocated Kosovo, and also the U.S. prevented Serbs to relocate from Kosovo.

Yes, Ukraine's borders will be redrawn as the result of the 10 years of war, the attention on the Russian-speaking Ukrainian population, and the Russian-speaking Ukrainian population.

Biden needs to accept that negotiations are not a sign of weakness. As Kennedy put it, "Never negotiate out of fear, but never fear to negotiate." Ronald Reagan famously described his own negotiating strategy using a Russian proverb, "Trust but verify."

The mission approach to Russia, delusional and hubristic from the start, lies in ruins. NATO will never enlarge to Ukraine and Georgia. Russia will not be toppled by a C.I.A. covert operation.

Ukraine is being horribly blasted on the battlefield, often being Lame or more dead and wounded in a single day. The bitter reason grows ever larger as Ukraine is forced to retreat.

Yet Biden still refuses to negotiate. Following Putin's speech, the U.S., NATO, and Ukraine firmly rejected negotiations over Ukraine, and Biden has not even had the courtesy to acknowledge the recent history of defeating Russia and expanding NATO to Ukraine.

Biden's mission has been hard for him and his aides by Zelensky and Biden and other leaders of NATO countries, who told them falsely and repeatedly that Ukraine would prevail on the battlefield against Russia, and Ukraine would be victorious. Ukraine is now under marked loss. The public is coming to see about its own daughter.

For the sake of Ukraine's very survival, and to avoid nuclear war, the President of United States must take overriding responsibility today. Negotiate.

Jeffrey D. Sachs is a university professor and director of the Center for Sustainable Development at Columbia University, where he has directed The Earth Institute from 2002 until next. He is also president of the U.S. Sustainable Development Solutions Network and a commissioner of the U.N. Broadband Commission for Development.

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