

Background to coverage of Russia aggression against Ukraine

**Sloan: 2005 (*NATO, the European Union and the Atlantic Community*)**

Illustrating Poland's concern about Ukraine's future, Janusz Onyszkiewicz, a Polish member of the European Parliament and former Polish defense minister, noted that "Poland is extremely worried about the future of Ukraine and Russia's policies in that country. If Russia establishes a dominance over Ukraine, it could give rise to new imperialistic tendencies. If Russia can manage to do that with Ukraine, why not Belarus, Moldova, and other countries in the Caucasus?"

Whether or not Ukraine will choose to continue its political reform process and alignment with the NATO and EU countries remains to be seen. It is one of the most important wild cards on the European table, right alongside the question of whether or not Russia will continue reform and democratization or will slide back toward some form of quasi-authoritarian government.

**Sloan: 2010 (*Permanent Alliance*)**

As noted in Chapter 7, when Russia invaded Georgia in August 2008, NATO states clearly did not want the affair to destroy the potential for a cooperative relationship with Russia over the long run. However, the short-term effect was to provide more evidence for the arguments being made in the states that had only recently escaped from Russian domination that they still needed protection against that threat. NATO, and the vital link it provided to American power, remained the most reliable guarantee of their security that they could imagine.

**Sloan: 2016 (*Defense of the West – 1<sup>st</sup> Ed.*)**

By 2014, Russia had clearly become a revisionist power, seeking to change the Euro-Atlantic security system as it evolved after the end of the Cold War. This confronted NATO and the EU with the requirement to decide what parts of that system they were willing to defend and what they were willing to pay or risk for that defense. Whether the NATO allies and their enlargement decisions were partially to blame for Russia's revisionist behavior, or if the "humiliation" claimed by Russia was simply a cover for maintaining President Putin's domestic control and his expansionist desires, a clear Russian threat had emerged to the West's view of the Euro-Atlantic security system. As long as this threat remained unaltered by future Russian actions, it would likely be the primary driver for NATO and Western policies for many years to come.

**Sloan: 2018 (*Transatlantic Traumas*)**

As tensions with the West deepened over Russia's seizure of the Crimea and military intervention in Ukraine, it became clear that President Putin was contesting the entire Western-oriented system of security in Europe and globally that, from his point of view, gave Russia's interests short shrift. Putin knew that NATO, given its reliance on consensus decision-making, was not an offensive threat against Russia and likely would never be one. But Putin did see a threat: the danger that Western political and economic systems, becoming more and more popular around Russia's borders, would ultimately infect Russia itself, bringing Putin's form of autocratic rule into question. Putin argues that he is simply reacting to encirclement by the West, and he undoubtedly sees Western-style democracy as a threat, while using the image of a NATO military threat as a rationale for internal domestic control and external intervention.

**Sloan: 2020 (*Defense of the West – 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.*)**

NATO's support for Ukraine combined with Putin's goal of, one way or the other, bringing Ukraine back into the Russian orbit could lead to a widened conflict in Central Europe....

President Putin made it very clear: he does not accept the Western model that he says the United States, NATO, and the European Union tried to impose on Europe at a time of Russian weakness. He first made Georgia a battleground for this confrontation. He won. He then made the Crimea a battleground. He won there too. Some have said he has been winning in his war against a free and sovereign Ukraine. Will Belarus be his next target? Does the West care? If it does not, it raises the question of what the West stands for or believes in. It would seem that the transatlantic allies and their leading institutions—NATO and the EU—now must successfully defend the values and interests they claim to hold dear while not increasing the chances of a new and prolonged Cold War, or even a hot one.