



UKRAINE AFTER THE U.S ELECTION



COMMENTS
BY AMERICAN
EXPERTS





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How do you expect potential Trump's and Biden's administrations to develop US foreign policy with Ukraine after the 2020 presidential election? How do you expect a new US president to maintain relations with the EU, particularly on the Euro-Atlantic track? Can Kyiv count on a greater support by the USA for countering Russian aggression? The New Europe Center addressed these questions to leading American experts as part of the traditional «New Europe wanders...» rubric, which is this time devoted to the US presidential election. Leitmotif of expert recommendations is as follows: the Ukrainian state shall succeed in reforming, most notably in the anti-corruption activities. Such a Ukraine will become an equal ally for the United States, regardless of who heads the White House.

AMERICAN ELECTIONS. TOP-10 CONCLUSIONS FOR UKRAINE

- 1 Extraordinary elections. The current elections are historic in nature, in many ways they are unprecedented, so the attention to them is extremely high. U.S. analysts call the current campaign «the most significant vote in decades.» The uniqueness of the election lies in the style of the campaign set by Donald Trump's hooligan rhetoric; in the polarization of public sentiment; in technical difficulties of voting due to a pandemic; in the extremely high expectations of international partners, many of whom have failed to establish communication with the leader of the White House in the last four years. For Ukraine, the Trump presidency has also brought many stressful moments due to its involvement in the impeachment case.
- 2 Foreign policy is of little interest to voters. International relations in most countries of the world are not a priority for voters. In the United States, too, presidential candidates did not pay much attention to foreign policy issues during the campaign because of the low interest of citizens in the international agenda. Domestic policy (namely, the government's efforts to overcome the effects of the COVID pandemic; addressing economic issues) has been crucial in the discussions of the warring camps. Therefore, the Ukrainian issue (as well as any other international topic) was covered in the elections inconsiderably.
- 3 The United States will continue to support Ukraine. Since 1991, official Washington's policies have been aimed at supporting an independent, reformed, and prosperous Ukraine. Even under Trump, who judging by his public statements sympathized with the Russian leadership, US efforts were aimed at large-scale assistance to Ukrainians. It was during Trump's presidency that Ukraine received lethal weapons, and additional sanctions were imposed on Russia (including Nord Stream-2, which poses a serious security threat to Europe).
- 4 Less control vs more predictability. Re-election of Trump is a way to stronger control over the Republican Party and according to some analysts in the United States to more decisive action, even if it is not approved by his fellow party members (Trump will have nothing to lose as he will not have to worry about his rating anymore). Therefore, it could be more difficult for Republicans themselves to block possible «harmful actions» by the president – for example, certain agreements between Trump and Putin. Meanwhile, President Biden is considered by analysts to be more predictable: he better understands the threats posed by Russia; he is well acquainted with the Ukrainian situation.
- 5 European affairs. We can hardly count on any changes in the Trump administration's policy towards Europe. It will remain just as tough as previously demonstrated by protectionism in the economic sphere and blackmail of European partners in security issues. However, there is no reason to believe that Biden will return to the policy towards Europe pursued by Barack Obama (due to a change of context). Although he will be forced to try to «to repair diplomatic rifts» provoked by the actions and statements of Donald Trump.



6 Consensus on China. The Chinese question is one that divides Democrats and Republicans least. Therefore, we should not expect any changes in US policy towards China under any president. Ukraine must be ready to pursue an appropriate policy towards Beijing that takes into account Washington's strategic approaches.

7 Ukraine and the United States to stay at the correct distance. Whatever the desire of Ukrainian politicians to support one or another political camp in the United States, it is worth refraining from doing so. Any statement can be interpreted as an interference that could affect cooperation between Kyiv and Washington. Ukraine must emphasize the benefits of a long-term partnership with the United States, which remains steadfast despite changes in administrations.

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8 Ukraine as a contributor. It is important for the United States to see that their partners are not mere consumers of support, but also make appropriate contributions to international security. Accordingly, Ukraine could make more efforts to secure the Black Sea region through deeper cooperation with Georgia and relevant NATO member states.

9 Ukraine reformed. The United States has invested considerable resources and political efforts in Ukrainian reforms, and therefore expects to see appropriate progress, especially in the fight against corruption. Slowing down reforms and creating obstacles to the activities of anti-corruption bodies, whose establishment has been advocated by the United States could be a stumbling block for effective dialogue between the Ukrainian leadership and the White House (especially during Biden's presidency)..

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STEVEN PIFER,

a William Perry Research Fellow, Stanford University's Center for International Security and Cooperation, a former U.S. ambassador to Ukraine (1998-2000), USA

For Americans, the November 3 presidential election will be the most significant vote in many decades. The election also will have consequences for Ukraine: Whether Donald Trump or Joe Biden sits in the White House at the end of the day on January 20, 2021 will matter greatly for U.S. policy toward Ukraine and Europe.

Since Ukraine regained its independence in 1991, the United States has proven a strong and supportive partner. Presidents Clinton, Bush and Obama each saw a stable, independent, democratic Ukrainian state with a robust market economy as in the U.S. interest, including in contributing to a more stable and secure Europe. Washington thus has provided substantial political, economic and—particularly since 2014—military support to Kyiv. It has sanctioned Russia for its aggression in Crimea and Donbas and sought to bolster NATO in the face of a growing Kremlin challenge to Western security.

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The Trump administration has largely continued these policies. It has provided Kyiv reform and military aid, including lethal military assistance. It has applied additional sanctions on Russia, albeit

under pressure from Congress. And it has taken steps to strengthen the U.S. military presence in NATO, at least until recently.

However, it has never been clear that Mr. Trump himself supports these policies. His principal engagement on Ukraine was his attempted extortion of Kyiv to advance his personal political prospects, an effort that led to his impeachment. While his administration has taken a tough line on Russia, Mr. Trump seems incapable of criticizing Vladimir Putin or Russian misdeeds. He apparently thinks that Ukraine, not Russia, interfered in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, ignoring the conclusions of the U.S. intelligence community, the Mueller investigation and the Republican-led Senate Intelligence Committee.

Mr. Trump's disdain for NATO has long been clear, going back to the 1980s. In June, he decided to withdraw 10,000 U.S. troops from Germany, apparently out of pique at Chancellor Merkel's refusal to attend a G7 summit at Camp David. Senior Pentagon officials scrambled for weeks to offer military justifications for the drawdown, but those that they provided did not survive serious scrutiny.

If Mr. Trump is re-elected, he will not have to worry about facing the voters in another election campaign. He will cement his control of the Republican Party, leaving Republicans in the Senate and House of Representatives less able to block his bad instincts. What accommodations would he make with Mr. Putin? Would he be inclined, as he suggested in 2016, to recognize Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and lift economic sanctions? Would he withdraw the United



States from NATO, as many former U.S. officials fear? The Alliance's collapse would be a huge gift to Mr. Putin and leave Ukraine in a precarious geopolitical position.

It will be different if Mr. Biden is elected (full transparency: the author fervently hopes for this). The United States would have a president who understands the U.S. interest in a successful Ukraine and who knows the country well from his time as vice president. He would be the kind of friend that Ukraine needs, supportive but also ready to press the Ukrainian leadership to take necessary reform steps. He recognizes the security challenge that Russia presents to Ukraine and the West, and he realizes the importance of a strong trans-Atlantic relationship with a robust NATO at its core. And Mr. Biden might prove a president who could bind some of the differences that so badly divide Americans today. An America more unified at home would be a stronger international actor.

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Whether Mr. Trump or Mr. Biden wins the elections will mean very different things for U.S. policies affecting Ukraine. That said, the American electorate will decide the next president largely on domestic issues, such as the Trump administration's handling of COVID19 and the economy. Ukraine has no role to play in this, and Ukrainian officials should continue to do all that they can to avoid their country becoming a political football in the U.S. campaign.



SCOTT CULLINANE,

Former Professional Staff Member for the House Foreign Affairs Committee Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia, and Emerging Threats, USA

While the COVID pandemic and domestic concerns have dominated the 2020 US presidential election, its outcome will have dramatic ramifications for US foreign policy. Over the past four years the US position in Europe has generally weakened with President Trump injecting uncertainty and controversy into a wide array of policy areas. Public polling of European populations has shown a marked decline in how the United States is viewed and low confidence in Donald Trump. Polling of US voters has found a growing split along partisan lines of how the European Union, NATO, and Russia are viewed, suggesting the possibility of greater volatility in US foreign policy – especially between changing administrations.

A second term for President Trump will see a continuation of an approach to Europe, which may at times be contradictory, but which emphasizes bilateral lines of communication and prioritizes economic issues. A Biden administration would not mean a simple reversion to Obama-era policies. While a Democratic administration would indeed emphasize alliances and the benefits of European integration, the broader context has evolved since 2016. A Biden administration would likely be much more pro-actively engaged in Europe to repair diplomatic rifts, but on issues such as those related to digital governance or China, their approach could resemble those of the Trump administrations to a surprising degree in substance – if certainly not in tone.

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For Ukraine, the outcome of the US election, while interesting, should not be of primary relevance. Ukraine must be prepared to fashion a relationship with either president and ideally continue to build an enduring partnership with the United States at all levels – from everyday Americans, to business and political elites, to elected officials. Given the uncertainty of the election outcome, the record of inconsistencies from the current administration, and the political dangers of being perceived to favor one outcome over another, Ukraine should anticipate building a long-term relationship regardless of short-term American political contests. In doing so Ukraine can make itself an enduring priority no matter which political party is victorious.

While the Euromaidan Revolution and the ongoing Russian aggression provide the primary focal points in the US-Ukrainian relationship, much can be done by the Ukrainian government to expand this already deep relationship following the US election.

First, for the past five years, Ukraine has been a security consumer, accepting assistance from the US. Ukraine is well positioned and has the potential to become a regional security provider as well. In a military sense, this means deepening



cooperation with nearby NATO partners and Georgia to increase Black Sea security.

Second, Ukraine must be relevant and helpful in the broader US confrontation and selective decoupling from China. Trump's China policy is likely to be his most enduring – and one that a President Biden would not seek to reverse entirely. The Ukrainian government must show itself to be a US partner in this effort and block attempts by China to use investment or other means to benefit from Ukraine's strategic industries, especially those with high tech, aerospace, or military implications.

Third, the Ukrainian government must be a transparent partner in anti-corruption and reform efforts. Earlier this year, candidate Biden wrote in Foreign Affairs, "To counter Russian aggression, we must keep the [NATO] alliance's military capabilities sharp while also expanding its capacity to take on nontraditional threats, such as weaponized corruption, disinformation, and cybertheft." Since 2014, the US has grown to understand Russia's use of disinformation and corruption as tools of statecraft. Fighting grand corruption and the related facilitation networks has become inextricably linked with countering Russian aggression. So long as anti-corruption reforms inside Ukraine remain stunted, relations with either a second Trump administration or a Biden administration will be restrained.

In closing, at a time when US foreign policy toward Europe and Ukraine has morphed into a partisan issue, the Ukrainian government must be exceedingly careful not to be perceived as anticipating or seeing more benefit in one election result over another. Ukraine must deepen

its relationship with the United States based on enduring values and long-term interests. A Trump or Biden presidency in 2021 will differ in tone, style, attitude, and emphasis. Yet, the government of Ukraine has an opportunity, regardless of the election's outcome to push forward a positive and mutually beneficial policy agenda.



MICHAEL KIMMAGE,

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The 2020 presidential election in the United States could have dramatic consequences for Ukraine. Rarely have two candidates differed so profoundly on foreign affairs as do Donald Trump and Joe Biden. Because one is an incumbent President and other a former Vice President, their outlooks and record can be stated with clarity. President Trump has not prioritized Ukraine in his first term, although he chose to send lethal weapons to Ukraine. The Trump administration has also made a nominal commitment to great-power competition with Russia, rendering Ukraine an American partner by default. Yet Trump has simultaneously pushed Ukraine into domestic American politics. He has encouraged members of his diplomatic staff and his personal lawyer, not to mention Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky, to fabricate information on the Biden family's business activities in Ukraine. In addition, Trump has presided over a serious degradation of the transatlantic relationship and refused to criticize Russia's President Vladimir Putin publicly. He has speculated openly about NATO as obsolete and about Crimea as deservedly a part of Russia. Trump could well act on these "pro-Russian" instincts in a second term, in which case Ukraine would be isolated between a disempowered Europe and an emboldened Russia.

Were he to get elected, Biden would project none of Trump's radicalism and unpredictability. Biden would likely pursue three goals vis a vis Ukraine: a return to the reform agenda that

the Obama administration had promoted after the Maidan revolution of 2013-2014, directed then by Vice President Biden; a revival of the transatlantic relationship and the NATO alliance, lending it his personal enthusiasm and the budgetary largess of the United States; and a confrontational posture toward Russia composed of rhetorical condemnation on the one hand and economic sanctions on the other. In a President Biden, Ukraine would have a friend and an advocate.

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First, partisan zeal has overtaken politics in the United States since 2016, weakening the effectiveness of its foreign policy. In his own administration, Trump is surrounded by people who seem not to agree with him on international affairs. Most Republican elites still prefer the democratic internationalism of a Ronald Reagan to the nationalist isolationism of a Donald Trump. As a result, Trump's foreign policy very often goes in circles. Biden, should he win, would face fierce opposition from Republicans in Congress and from the conservative media. In the zero-sum logic of contemporary American politics, Biden's



failure will equal conservative success, and vice versa. Through no fault of its own, Ukraine will continue to fall victim to this political tug-of-war – either through direct accusations and misinformation or through Washington’s diminished effectiveness on the international stage.

Secondly, the American economy has been devastated by the COVID virus. It had many problems pre-COVID, notably gaping inequalities of income and opportunity. Americans on the Left and the Right wish to see government spending directed toward internal needs. This makes the shadow of two ruinously expensive wars, in Afghanistan and Iraq, all the more dark. Whether in Ukraine or in Belarus, there will be no American appetite for military conflict in the future. Trump has made this case repeatedly, and it is popular. Biden would ignore this dynamic at his peril.

Finally, the primary challenge in American foreign policy is not Russia but China. China’s military aspirations and globally scaled economic statecraft will be marching forward, creating realities to which the United States and Europe will be busy responding. This would not lead, in a Biden administration, to a relaxation of tensions between the United States and Russia, but it will be decisive in the determination of American strategic priorities. In sum, by strengthening the transatlantic relationship and by promoting reform in Ukraine Biden would provide a firm foundation for U.S.-Ukrainian relations. Where conflict between Ukraine and Russia is concerned, however, the status quo of 2020 – a low-grade, long-lasting military confrontation – will quite possibly be the status quo of 2024.



PAUL D'ANIERI,

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The foreign policies of Donald Trump and Joe Biden would be different in philosophy, in style, and in substance. Trump is an isolationist, he loves grand gestures, and his foreign policy has been highly transactional, looking to make concrete deals that benefit the US (or his own) interest. Biden is an internationalist, he believes in gradual progress on difficult issues, and he sees cooperating with like-minded liberal democracies as essential. Biden is a man of the foreign policy establishment, while Trump loathes that establishment.

Trump has not challenged the consensus that the US should support Ukraine in its war with Russia. Therefore, if Biden were to win and pursue a supportive policy, it would be a change in degree, not a change of direction.

Despite the vast differences between the two candidates, however, policy on Ukraine will not change dramatically depending on who wins the election. While Trump famously sought to use his relationship with Volodymyr Zelensky to his own political advantage, that was much more about US domestic politics than about US-Ukraine relations. Trump has not challenged the consensus that the US should support Ukraine in its war with Russia. Therefore, if Biden were to win and pursue a supportive policy, it would be a change in degree, not a change of direction. Policy toward Russia remains the one issue on which Republicans and Democrats in the US

Congress agree. There is bipartisan support for maintaining or even strengthening sanctions against Russia and for supporting Ukraine in its efforts to resist Russian aggression. The one actor who does not share this consensus is President Donald Trump. Trump still admires Vladimir Putin and does not place a high priority on Ukraine. Based on these conditions, one might believe that the election of Joseph Biden would lead to a much more favorable policy toward Ukraine, but change will probably be more modest.

Despite Trump's views, the US government has maintained sanctions on Russia, support for Ukraine, and pressure on Germany to stop the Nordstream 2 pipeline. The election of Biden would lead to less confusion about US relations with Putin, and would likely lead to a more determined effort to combat Russian interference in US politics. More important for Ukraine, it would likely lead to much more effort to cooperate with NATO allies, reversing Trump's policy of undermining NATO. But constraints would remain on the US dramatically increasing its military support for Ukraine, as would the deep concerns the US has about rule of law in Ukraine. So change will be limited.

When one looks at the foreign policy advisors in the Biden team, they are mostly veterans of previous democratic administrations. As in other areas, the left wing of the Democratic Party is not well-represented. So, for example, those in the left who sympathize with Trump's isolationism or with the view that Russia has been misunderstood are not going to be represented in a Biden administration.

However, if Biden wins, Republicans will attack him using allegations about Hunter Biden's



dealings with Burisma. There will undoubtedly be people in Ukraine willing to help them. Therefore, Biden himself will be constrained from taking too much direct interest in Ukraine.

I do not see much reason to expect an immediate change in US policy toward Ukraine if Trump wins. The Congress will almost certainly remain firmly committed to a strong stance against Russia, and while a Trump reelection would tighten his grip on Republican legislators, it seems unlikely that changing policy on Ukraine would be a high priority for him. A Trump reelection will lead to longer-term changes that are detrimental for Ukraine (and for Europe in general): US influence will continue to fade, the White House will continue to encourage populist autocrats in Europe, and the US government will continue to deny the extent of Russian influence in American public life. None of that would be good for Ukraine.

Overall, while Ukraine's worst fears from a Trump reelection are unlikely to materialize, nor does it make sense to believe that a Biden victory will somehow transform US policy. Like it or not, Ukraine is going to continue to have to play the same difficult hand it is currently playing.



DAVID SATTER,
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Despite his rhetoric, President Trump has been prudent in his dealings with Russia, reinforcing NATO's Eastern flank, providing defensive arms to Ukraine and, in general, insisting on increased NATO spending. If he is re-elected, this practice is likely to continue. At the same time, Trump's effusive rhetoric toward Russia and Putin is likely to decrease.

The reason for the likely cooling of rhetoric favorable to Russia is the insolence of Russia's crimes. The poisoning of Alexei Navalny demonstrates that Putin has not been deterred by the sanctions imposed after the attempted murder of Sergei Skripal in the United Kingdom. Trump has enough experience from his business career to know when he is being defied.

There is also generally a learning curve for an American president in relation to Russia. It begins with the desire to establish a personal relationship and leads eventually to a realization that the interests of Russia's rulers are opposed to those of the West and a more realistic approach.

There is also generally a learning curve for an American president in relation to Russia. It begins with the desire to establish a personal relationship and leads eventually to a realization that the interests of Russia's rulers are opposed to those of the West and a more realistic approach. The evolution of Trump's rhetoric is likely to follow the traditional U.S. presidential course.

The actions of a President Biden are less predictable. He is likely to be less friendly rhetorically but it would be a mistake to assume that he will act decisively in standing up to acts of aggression. The Democrats are committed to anti-Russian rhetoric

because they attribute Trump's election victory to Russian interference. The thrust of their opposition to Russia is likely to be demands that Russia not interfere (as they assume) on the side of the Republicans. When it comes to matters of defense, Biden is unlikely to move far from the policies of the Obama administration in which there was a desire not to offend Russia at any cost.

As far as Ukraine itself is concerned, the focus for the U.S. in the next four years is likely to be Ukraine's progress in building a society that is free of corruption. The anti-tank weapons have been delivered and the situation along the point of contact is not dramatic enough to attract the attention of an American public that is fixated on America's internal affairs. Even a critical issue

that affects Americans directly such as the shooting down of the Malaysian airliner MH17 is not discussed in the U.S. All this could change if there is large scale Russian aggression but in that case, the person most likely to respond forcefully is Trump.

For different reasons, both Trump and Biden are likely to distance themselves from the issue of Ukraine's internal evolution.



For different reasons, both Trump and Biden are likely to distance themselves from the issue of Ukraine's internal evolution. Trump is concerned with restoring the economy of the U.S. and Biden will find it difficult to be taken seriously on the corruption issue in light of the business dealings of his son, Hunter. Ukrainians, however, will face pressure from the American government bureaucracy to fight corruption and respect the rule of law. Because the Democrats are globally minded, this pressure is likely to be greater if Biden is elected instead of Trump.

In sum, Ukraine should look to its own interests and its own defense, mindful of the good will of the U.S. but not dependent on it. As always, the best assurance of Western support is the positive evolution of Ukrainian society, especially eradication of corruption and the strengthening of the rule of law.



DR. BENJAMIN L. SCHMITT,

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Since the emergence of an independent Ukraine in 1991, the United States and Ukraine have developed a strategic partnership that has been vital to the national security of both nations. The events of the past decade have especially underscored the importance of the Washington-Kyiv relationship as a bulwark against Russian aggression along NATO's Eastern Flank. This strategic reality will hold regardless of whether Joe Biden or Donald Trump assumes the U.S. Presidency on January 20, 2021.

Ukraine's security cooperation with the United States and Europe's liberal democratic states has enabled it to retain its sovereign status (however precariously) in the face of Russia's long-term campaign to undermine Ukraine's stability – a campaign marked by the illegal annexation of Crimea, aggression in the Donbas region of Eastern Ukraine, and persistent military, economic, and geopolitical pressure. For Washington, support of Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic aspirations remains paramount to Transatlantic national security interests, rooted in a Europe that is whole, free, and at peace.

Ukrainian national security leaders have proven themselves as invaluable partners to the United States and other European countries in coping with Russia's hybrid malign activities: cyber, information, and energy warfare tactics; as well as election interference. The Ukrainians have longstanding, real-world experience of responding to these Russian actions. The lessons learned and shared across the West by Ukrainian leaders and experts have been central to the

development of comprehensive Transatlantic strategies for advancing democratic resilience. The Kremlin's recent reckless actions against both domestic political opposition leaders and Western democratic norms suggest that the partnership between the United States and Ukraine will only grow in importance over the next four years.

In this context, can we expect that the foreign policy and national security posture of the United States toward Ukraine will change dramatically depending on the outcome of the 2020 U.S. Presidential election? If recent history is any guide, the likeliest answer is "no." Ukraine has received a high-level of bipartisan support from both chambers of Congress over the past decade, and this backing across a variety of policy areas has been reflected in the largely continuous policy actions taken by both the Obama and Trump administrations. For example, under the Obama administration, the U.S. Government quickly ramped-up its support of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity in the face of Russian aggression. The Trump administration continued to support Ukraine, even giving its approval of lethal defensive arms sales to Ukraine in late-2017. In response to Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and aggression in the Donbas region of Eastern Ukraine, the Obama administration led the coordination of Transatlantic sanctions designations against the Russian Federation, which have also been continued by officials leading the U.S. Departments of the Treasury and State under the Trump administration. We can expect both a future Biden administration and a continued Trump administration to maintain diplomatic engagement aimed at pressing for increasing sanctions actions to deter further Russian



aggressive behavior in Ukraine and beyond.

In support of Ukraine's energy sovereignty, the Obama administration coordinated the vital reverse flows of natural gas volumes to supply Ukraine from the EU in the face of cutoffs by Gazprom. At the same time the Obama administration was heavily involved in working with European Union counterparts in support of broader energy infrastructure diversification development across Eastern Europe. The Trump administration has continued with this policy. Furthermore, both the Obama and Trump administrations have been vocal opponents of the Kremlin-backed Nord Stream 2 pipeline aimed at ending Russian gas transit to Europe via Ukraine, which would undermine Kyiv's economic and strategic security interests. Nord Stream 2 supporters have attempted to paint this opposition and the 2020 U.S. National Defense Authorization Act sanctions that thus far have been successful at stopping the Kremlin pipeline from completion as a policy stemming from President Trump himself. By attempting to paint U.S. opposition to Nord Stream 2 as a polarizing 'Trump-led' issue, they may hope to erode support for the policy among Congressional Democrats, as well as among project opponents across Europe that have concerns with Mr. Trump. It's a "guilt-by-association" tactic, as President Trump is deeply unpopular in many European countries. In fact, however, opposition to Nord Stream 2 and support for broad, technology-calibrated sanctions to stop the project enjoys bipartisan support on Capitol Hill. There is no reason to doubt that this support will remain regardless of the outcome of the U.S. elections. Notably, Vice President Biden himself, in an August 2016 speech in Stockholm, called Nord Stream 2 a "bad deal for Europe."

The greatest disparity that we can expect from the two leaders is really in their personal commitment and rhetorical support for Ukrainian political stability and sovereignty.

The greatest disparity that we can expect from the two leaders is really in their personal commitment and rhetorical support for Ukrainian political stability and sovereignty. On this score, President Trump has demonstrated an abysmal record. Mr. Trump has displayed little interest in standing up to Putin by condemning his misdeeds in Ukraine and across the West more broadly. Instead, Mr. Trump actively solicited support from Ukrainian President Zelensky to open a politically-motivated investigation aimed at harming Mr. Biden – which led to Trump's impeachment in late 2019. More recently, Trump and close personal associates, including former New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, have actively spread disinformation narratives advanced by pro-Russian Member of the Ukrainian Rada Andrii Derkach, on whom Trump's own Treasury Department imposed sanctions for Russia-linked election interference. In terms of personal support for Ukrainian national security, President Trump himself has modeled behavior that has been destabilizing for Ukraine, and repeatedly threatened to erode essential bipartisan support for it.

By great contrast, Vice President Biden himself has been a staunch supporter of Ukrainian sovereignty, in both word and deed. As Vice President, Mr. Biden was placed in charge of Ukraine policy, and was viewed across the international community as a champion

of supporting Ukrainian territorial integrity against Russian aggression, while working with leaders across the European Union and multiple international financial institutions to fight corruption in Ukraine and thus support its own domestic democratic resilience. Mr. Biden's personal empathy and support for Ukraine's young, pro-reform leaders following the 2014 Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity was perhaps no better captured than in his historic December 2015 address to the Rada in which he hailed the present as "Ukraine's moment," calling on Ukrainian leaders to "seize the opportunity [and] build a better future for the people of Ukraine." More broadly, since leaving government in 2016, Vice President Biden has repeatedly spoken out in support of Ukraine's national security interests and against Vladimir Putin's hybrid aggression against the Transatlantic community.

So while we can be assured that official U.S. political support for a strong and free Ukraine will continue under either a Biden or Trump Administration post 2020, the support and attention Ukraine receives from the President himself is likely to be the biggest difference that Ukrainian leadership can expect to encounter over the next four years. In either case, it will remain paramount that U.S. and Ukrainian diplomats and national security officials at all levels continue their work toward positive strategic cooperation as we proceed into the new decade. Our mutual success and security depends on it.



ABOUT NEW EUROPE CENTER

*The **New Europe Center** was founded in 2017 as an independent think-tank. Despite its new brand, it is based on a research team that has been working together since 2009, at the Institute for World Policy. The New Europe Center became recognized by offering high-quality analysis on foreign policy issues in Ukraine and regional security by combining active, effective work with advocacy.*

The New Europe Center's vision is very much in line with the views of the majority of Ukrainians about the future of their country: Ukraine should be integrated into the European Union and NATO. By integration, we understand not so much formal membership as the adoption of the best standards and practices for Ukraine to properly belong to the Euroatlantic value system.

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