



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on February 22, 2022

Putin Sends “Peacekeeping” Troops to Breakaway Ukrainian Republics, the West Threatens Sanctions

“Joe Biden becoming president is the best thing that ever happened, tragically, for Vladimir Putin,” said Senator Ted Cruz (R-Texas), commenting on the news of the Russian military entering Ukrainian territory.

On Monday, the situation on Ukrainian-Russia border changed dramatically when Russia President Vladimir Putin announced his country now recognizes two breakaway Ukrainian regions — the so-called Donetsk People’s Republic (DPR) and Luhansk People’s Republic (LPR) located in Donbass region — as independent nations and ordered “peacekeeping” troops into the territory.



AP Images
Vladimir Putin

Both DPR and LPR, predominantly populated by Russians and Russian-speaking Ukrainians, were formed in 2014 after the so-called Revolution of Dignity in Ukraine that brought to power radical anti-Russian forces. Even though the regions formally remained administrative parts of Ukraine, they enjoyed military and financial support from Russia and were politically controlled by their “older brother.”

“I consider it necessary to take a long-overdue decision: To immediately recognize the independence and sovereignty of Donetsk People’s Republic and Luhansk People’s Republic,” Putin [announced](#) in a pre-recorded address to the nation Monday.

[Putin justified](#) his decision by an “existential threat” to Russia posed by NATO, which he also blamed for the current crisis.

Sweeping through more than a century of history, Putin painted Ukraine not as an independent country, but rather as a territory that is inextricably linked to Russia. Stating that “Ukraine never had a tradition of genuine statehood,” he added that it was “entirely created by [Soviet] Russia,” and had happened to inherit Russia’s historic lands. After the Soviet collapse, those territories were used by the West to contain Russia, he said.

“Ukraine will serve as a forward springboard for the [NATO] strike [against Russia],” Putin added, and concluded, “Russia has every right to take retaliatory measures to ensure its own security. That is exactly what we will do.”

“Treaties of friendship, cooperation, and mutual assistance have been signed between Russia and these new states, in which we promise to safeguard their security,” Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov said Tuesday. “I think everyone understands that,” he added, according to [RT](#).

The pictures and video clips of the Russian tanks, military vehicles, and troops making their way



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through the streets of Luhansk and Donetsk were posted, among other outlets, by [The Daily Mail](#) and local Ukrainian [media](#).

Donetsk residents [said](#) they haven't seen so many military vehicles since 2014. "I quit counting when I made it to one hundred," said one of the witnesses.

The decision to recognize the statehood and sovereignty of DPR and LPR and send troops to the newly recognized republics "to maintain peace" followed "formal" calls from the DPR and LPR leadership to do so in the face of what [they described](#) as an imminent Ukrainian invasion.

During the past week, the republics reported [heavy shelling](#) by the Ukrainian army. Ukraine, in turn, [denied the accusations](#) and put the blame on the separatists themselves. Further, Russia's FSB security service [even claimed](#) that a projectile apparently fired by the Kiev military flew over the border and destroyed a Russian security post. Ukraine, however, strongly denied that it ever ordered the bombardment. Overall, the sporadic bombing across the border between Ukrainian government troops and pro-Russian separatists has intensified since this past Thursday.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy practically begged the Biden administration to preemptively impose sanctions on Russia yet got a cold shoulder. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken [said](#) the United States would not punish Russia until "the tanks are actually moving, the planes are actually flying, the bombs are actually dropping." And people are actually dying, he could have added. The response was a bit unexpected, since the American establishment had been warning about the looming Russian aggression for months.

Following the decision of Russian President Vladimir Putin to recognize the two separatist regions as independent and sovereign states, President Joe Biden signed an [executive order](#) aimed at economically stifling the two puppet republics. The order bans any investment, trade, or other sort of business with the republics. From now on, any person involved with Putin's newest protectorates will be subject to personal sanctions from the United States. While the order notes that "swift and severe economic measures" against Russia are forthcoming, as of Tuesday morning, no sanctions have been announced against Putin's regime.

Blinken took to [Twitter](#) to condemn Russian actions: "Russia's move to recognize the 'independence' of so-called republics controlled by its own proxies is a predictable, shameful act. We condemn them in the strongest possible terms and #StandWithUkraine, as I told @DmytroKuleba Foreign Minister [of Ukraine] tonight."

So far, the most sensitive blow to Putin has been made by Germany, which [announced](#) Tuesday that it would suspend its certification of the newly built but never operated Nord Stream 2 pipeline. According to [Associated Press](#), the pipeline, a multibillion-dollar project of Russia's state-owned Gazprom energy company and European companies, would carry Russian natural gas to European market. Per the outlet, "It's been a top target of the Biden administration and Republican and Democratic lawmakers alike, who say the project was a strategic mistake from the start, increasing Putin's political power over Europe by prolonging Europe's dependence on Russia's natural gas."

After initially [quibbling](#) on whether or not the Russian "peacekeeping operation" in the Donbass qualifies as an "invasion," the White House said Tuesday that, actually, it is an invitation. "We think this is, yes, the beginning of an invasion, Russia's latest invasion into Ukraine," said Jon Finer, principal deputy national security adviser, per [Military Times](#). "An invasion is an invasion and that is what is underway."



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European Union officials sent mixed signals, too. On Tuesday, one of the EU's top diplomats, Josep Borrell, [said](#) that "Russian troops are on Ukrainian soil," yet that it was not a "a complete invasion."

U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson [said](#) it was definitely an invasion.

Ukraine's Western allies vowed to impose "swift and severe" sanctions against Russia later on Tuesday. Biden is set to update the nation on the situation in Ukraine on 1:00 p.m. EST.



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