

## Why Are We Evacuating Diplomats from Ukraine?

For all the talk our commitment to Ukraine, hitting the panic button and needlessly pulling officials out doesn't inspire confidence.

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*How they must be laughing in the Kremlin. Western policy towards Ukraine is evolving from the ridiculous to the positively surreal. Thus the latest demonstration of the West's unbreakable commitment to Ukraine and to future Ukrainian NATO membership is — to [evacuate Western diplomats](#) from Kiev, before a single shot has been fired, and while Russia continues to deny that it has any intention of invading. At this rate, Russia will have no need whatsoever to do so. President Putin can enjoy a quiet cup of coffee while Western governments run around squawking hysterically, and NATO's credibility collapses along with the Ukrainian economy.*

The United States, Canada, and Britain — the countries that have been among the loudest in their calls for a strong line against Russia — have withdrawn their military and civilian officials from the OSCE mission monitoring the ceasefire line between Ukrainian and pro-Russian separatist forces in the Donbas. Military trainers from these countries have also been withdrawn, and airlines are cancelling services.

What sort of signal of Western resolve does this decision send? And much more importantly, what does it say about the present character of Western civilization? NATO is beginning to resemble a confederation of capons — emasculated roosters who in this case have unfortunately retained the ability to strut and crow.

Nobody is suggesting that Western diplomats should fight, let alone give up their lives in some desperate last stand against Russian tanks. What we can ask is that they stay in their embassies and continue to do their duty, in the face of some small amount of risk. Individual diplomats are not to blame for this shameful flight — but the governments and official cultures of their countries most certainly are, especially after the way in which Western embassies fled from Kabul.

Apart from the effect on what is left of the West's reputation for courage and discipline, the

consequences of this route for Ukraine and supposed Western interests there will be severe; for the effect is to undermine still further the already faltering Ukrainian economy and currency. Hence the tragicomic sight of the Ukrainian government, which has spent years talking up the Russian military threat to Ukraine, now desperately trying to [talk it down](#) again. On the other hand, this attempt by Kiev to reduce tension does reflect the feelings of the Ukrainian population, most of which seems vastly calmer than Western capitals.

However humiliating and contemptible, the evacuation of the diplomats (and the advice to all other Western citizens to leave Ukraine) could have one good result, assuming that Western political elites, media, and citizens are still capable of occasionally looking at themselves honestly in the mirror. For what it demonstrates beyond all possible remaining doubt is that the Western offer one day to admit Ukraine to NATO is totally empty.

From its very beginning, the expansion of NATO was predicated on the conviction that NATO would never have to fight to defend its new members. To take Ukraine into NATO however means being prepared to fight hard to defend it against Russia — and that is something that NATO is completely, innately incapable of doing.

The Ukrainian government, and Ukrainian citizens should also pay attention. For all that Ukraine's search for NATO membership is doing, has done, and will continue to do is to create a terribly damaging and dangerous crisis with Russia without strengthening Ukrainian security or real Western commitment to Ukraine in the slightest. To drop this manifestly pointless pursuit would be good for Europe, the world, and above all Ukraine itself.

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*Featured image: Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken meets with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, in Kyiv, Ukraine, on May 6, 2021. [State Department photo by Ron Przysucha]*

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