

# [***Opinion: If Marjorie Taylor Greene wins on Ukraine aid, we're headed for dangerous territory***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BPY-M8V1-JBSS-S00F-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; Republican Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia is the new boss in town. The representative, who is known for her reactionary rhetoric and references to conspiracy theories, is now strongly suggesting that she will force a vote to oust Republican Speaker Mike Johnson should he move forward with an aid package for Ukraine.

With a narrow Republican majority in the House and the ability of a single representative to call a vote to oust him, Johnson is stuck between a rock and a hard place. Greene is intent on blocking funding to Ukraine - a massive blow to both NATO and the US' own commitment to the post-World War II international order.

One option, aimed at placating the far right flank of the party, would involve structuring funds to Ukraine as a loan rather than outright assistance. But that did little to satisfy Greene, who shot back with a blistering response, calling it a "heaping, steaming pile of bullsh-t."

"This isn't a Republican speaker we have right now; this is a Democrat speaker," Greene [*said*](https://www.politico.com/newsletters/playbook/2024/04/04/how-mike-johnson-boxed-himself-in-00150544) - a highly misleading comment given that Johnson is arguably the most conservative speaker we've seen in modern times.

This standoff demonstrates just how far the Republican Party has moved from the era of Ronald Reagan. The party that once called on Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev to "tear down this wall" is now fast becoming an America First party that effectively tells Russia's Vladimir Putin, "Do whatever you want, just leave us alone."

How did we get to this point?

Long before Greene, a growing number of Republicans began expressing increased skepticism toward international institutions like the United Nations.

While the internationalist wing of the party had [*triumphed*](https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/cross-of-iron/BCA8E0308B48A49AC87A6E284ACDA434) over the neo-isolationists in the 1940s, by the mid-1960s, the Republican [*platform*](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/gop-platform-through-the-years-shows-partys-shift-from-moderate-to-conservative/2012/08/28/09094512-ed70-11e1-b09d-07d971dee30a_story.html) included a line that they would "never surrender to any international group the responsibility of the United States for its sovereignty."

By the time Ronald Reagan was in the White House, a new generation in the GOP that was committed to unilateral military action started to gain strength. These Republicans did not want the United States to withdraw from the world but they were increasingly critical of institutions such as the United Nations and alliances like NATO.

In 1994, neoconservative and Republican foreign policy expert John Bolton famously [*said*](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/23/opinion/john-bolton-un-united-nations.html) that if the UN building in New York "lost ten stories, it wouldn't make a bit of difference." Jesse Helms of North Carolina, the Republican chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee from 1995 to 2001, once characterized [*foreign aid as*](https://www.jstor.org/stable/41502509?seq=5) "throwing money down foreign rat holes."

This Republican skepticism became even more apparent when [*George W. Bush*](https://www.jstor.org/stable/41502509?seq=5) became president. He kicked off his term by withdrawing the US from the Kyoto Protocol, an international treaty aimed at curbing carbon emissions in 2001. Two years later, he launched a war against Iraq based on allegations of Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction program (which turned out to be wrong).Despite many key leaders, such as Frances's Jacques Chirac, warning this was a huge mistake and a distraction from the war against al-Qaeda, Bush moved forward with the support of a paper thin "coalition of the willing."

President Donald Trump picked up on this line of attack, using Bush's failed war in Iraq as evidence that the United States should abandon many of the international alliances that had defined our policies since World War II.

The war, he said, was proof that foreign entanglements did not serve the national interest and should be avoided. America First, he touted instead, picking up on a mantra that had long been associated with isolationism, xenophobia and reactionary domestic ***politics***. Not only did Trump elevate these arguments in the national conversation, but he pushed the entire party - particularly the House Caucus - toward new extremes. In doing so, he shattered his own party's [*commitment*](https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/closer-trumps-years-criticizing-nato-defense-spending/story?id=107201586) to standing up against autocratic adversaries such as Putin.

It's notable that in 2012, Republican nominee Mitt Romney blasted President Barack Obama for being weak on Russia. After Romney's election loss, Trump's 2016 campaign marked a major shift in the party's foreign policy stance.

As president, Trump stood next to Putin in 2018, defending him at [*the Helsinki summit*](https://www.cnn.com/2018/07/16/politics/donald-trump-putin-helsinki-summit/index.html) and questioning America's own intelligence agencies. Earlier this year, when Trump said he would [*encourage*](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2024/feb/11/donald-trump-says-he-would-encourage-russia-to-attack-nato-countries-who-dont-pay-bills) Russia to attack NATO allies that did not pay their share as part of the alliance, Republican lawmakers barely batted an eye.

With Greene keeping Johnson's feet to the fire when it comes to aid to Ukraine, the GOP's revolution is almost complete. It's clear that Trump has remade the party and the MAGA generation of Republicans is taking over.

Although Johnson might still pull out a narrow compromise that would allow a funding package to pass without losing his job, the GOP is moving in a clear direction on foreign policy. Unlike the Republican hawks of yore, the America First crowd is gaining traction and the implications are immense.

Far beyond the character of the Republican Party, this is a political battle that could result in the rapid erosion of international alliances we have depended on for decades to limit the odds of war and push back against despotic foreign leaders eager to expand their dangerous regimes.

If Greene and her colleagues win now, or even in the next faceoff over Ukraine, we will be entering a new, uncertain, and even more dangerous era.

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