



To: Republican Study Committee Members

From: Chairman Jim Banks

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Subject: Biden and Putin: Return of the Reset?

Joe Biden's approach to Russia is consistent with his overall foreign policy. President Biden speaks loudly and carries a twig. President Biden called Russian President Vladimir Putin a "killer," then his team mostly returned to failed "reset" Obama policies. He couples tough talk with weak policies and inaction.

Yesterday, the Biden administration announced a sanctions package on Russia in response to the Solar Winds attack. It falls well short of imposing real costs on Russia. President Biden even invited Putin to a summit to "de-escalate" tensions while Putin conducted the largest military build-up on the border of Ukraine since 2014. Biden has exhibited clear weakness and Putin will seek to exploit them.

The RSC is making sure you are aware of Democrats' hypocrisy when dealing with Russia. That's why we've prepared the following fact sheet for you to browse.

1. Like Obama, the Biden administration has already exhibited a dangerous pattern of weakness towards Russia. It threatens to undermine U.S. leadership and credibility and alienate our allies and partners.

- President Biden began his administration by caving to Russian demands to renew the New START treaty for 5 years, giving up the leverage built by the Trump administration to limit Russia's entire nuclear force, and compel Russia to limit other weapons, including hypersonics.¹ As former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo stated, under New START "[o]nly 45 percent of Russia's nuclear arsenal is subject to numerical limits...[while] that agreement restricts 92 percent of America's arsenal."²
- President Biden has refused to impose any sanctions on any new entities over Nordstream 2, circumventing the intent of Congress in recent bipartisan mandatory sanctions legislation, the Protecting Europe's Energy Security Act, enacted as part of the NDAA. President Biden's refusal to impose such sanctions before the pipeline is set to be completed this summer will isolate Ukraine and give Putin a new economic lifeline in Europe, which Putin could use to fund even more destabilizing activities.³
- In February, the Biden administration rescinded the Trump administration's reimposition of the United Nations arms embargo on Iran, allowing Russia to sell arms to Iran, which risks escalating tensions in the Middle East.⁴

¹ [Biden wants to extend the US-Russia nuclear arms treaty for 5 years - Vox](#)

² [Disarming Amid an Arms Race | RealClearDefense](#)

³ [Nord Stream 2: Russia's enemies fear Biden won't fight to stop Putin's pivotal pipeline - Axios](#)

⁴ [U.S. rescinds Trump White House claim that all U.N. sanctions had been reimposed on Iran | Reuters](#)

- The Biden administration has sat idly by as Russia has mobilized thousands of troops on the border of Ukraine—more than there were ahead of Russia's invasion and eventual annexation of Crimea in 2014. Even worse, just yesterday the Biden administration canceled the deployment of two warships to the Black Sea with Turkey amid concerns over a Russian military build-up on Ukraine's borders.⁵ During the Trump administration, the U.S. provided anti-tank weapons to Ukraine and tripled the size of the European Deterrence Initiative to counter Russia, and Putin never attempted such a buildup.
- *Axios* has reported that President Biden is considering hiring Matthew Rojansky, an individual with a history of advocating appeasement towards Russia, as Director for Russia at the White House National Security Council. Rojansky has criticized "Cold War style paranoia" on Russia and criticized U.S. sanctions on Russia.⁶ Last October, Rojansky wrote, "At home, Biden has already called for dialogue instead of demonization, between opposing camps in US politics. He should adopt this approach in his foreign policy, especially toward Russia, which is an easy country for Americans to demonize."⁷
- Biden's State Department has also pushed for U.S. partnership with Russia in re-entering the failed Iran nuclear deal. State Department Spokesman Ned Price said on April 6th, "I think principally and strategically this is an area where we do have aligned interests with Moscow and aligned interests with Beijing. They were original members of the P5+1. They have sought to uphold the JCPOA, and we do see them as partners in this fairly narrow effort."⁸
- While Democrats wasted millions in taxpayer dollars promoting the false Russia collusion hoax, the Biden administration is actually returning to failed "reset" policies of giving concessions to Putin, which is causing him to be emboldened in real time.

2. Yesterday's sanctions announcement by President Biden falls very short of imposing real costs on Putin.

- The Republican Study Committee (RSC) has advocated for imposing sanctions on Russian sovereign debt since June 2020 when it released its [National Security Strategy: Strengthening America & Countering Global Threats](#). However, the sanctions imposed today by the Department of the Treasury on Russian sovereign debt include a number of exceptions that lack real teeth. OFAC has announced that such sanctions will continue to apply only to those "participating in the primary market" and will not restrict the buying of Russian Eurobonds on the secondary market.⁹
- Furthermore, President Biden's decision to again forego sanctions on new entities involved in the Nordstream 2 project, illustrates that while talking tough the Biden administration intends to return to the risk-averse approach that characterized President Obama's Russia reset policy., Biden claimed Nordstream 2 is "a complicated issue affecting our allies in Europe."¹⁰ It's not complicated, Biden simply does not want to stand up to Russia.

3. President Trump and conservatives in Congress have a solid track record of dealing with the threat of Russia.

- President Trump's National Security Strategy reoriented American foreign and defense policy toward great power competition and for the first time in decades described Russia and China as principal threats.
- President Trump, working with Congress, presided over the rebuilding of our military with robust defense resources and investment in nuclear modernization to deter Russian aggression. This included a historic boost to the European Deterrence Initiative, which assists European allies on the frontlines of Russian aggression, from \$800 million at the end of the Obama administration, to almost \$6 billion in the last year of the Trump administration.

⁵ [U.S. cancels warships deployment to Black Sea -Turkish diplomatic sources \(msn.com\)](#)

⁶ [Biden eyes Russia adviser criticized as soft on Kremlin - Axios](#)

⁷ [Joe Biden's oncoming headache over Vladimir Putin - CNN](#)

⁸ [Department Press Briefing - April 6, 2021 - United States Department of State](#)

⁹ [Battered rouble seeks to recover after U.S. sanctions Russia's new sovereign debt | Reuters](#)

¹⁰ [Will Biden's Russia sanctions stop Putin? - Vox](#)

- The Trump administration provided Ukraine with anti-tank weapons to defend themselves against Russian aggression, weapons the Obama administration refused to provide.
- In response to Putin's violation of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, something even the Obama administration admitted was happening, the Trump administration withdrew from the treaty.
- President Trump worked to strengthen NATO by pushing our allies to adhere to the terms of the alliance and increase their defense expenditures.
- President Trump imposed unprecedented sanctions on Russia including on hundreds of entities due to its destabilizing behavior in Ukraine, its chemical weapons attack in the United Kingdom, its human rights abuses, and its cyber-attacks and election interference.

4. If Democrats in Congress want to prove they are not soft on Russia, they should abandon "reset" thinking and adopt policies pushed by the Republican Study Committee.

- If the Biden administration and Democrats in Congress are sincere about countering the threat of Russia, both should be asked if they support the following conservative policies laid out by the RSC:
 - Ending the Nordstream 2 pipeline once and for all by implementing mandatory congressional sanctions.
 - Imposing biting sanctions on Russia's financial sector including sanctioning Russia's state-run bank Vnesheconombank.
 - Designating Russia as a State Sponsor of Terrorism and implementing the toughest Russia sanctions ever proposed by Congress laid out in the RSC National Security Strategy.
 - Supporting Trump-era defense budgets and nuclear modernization efforts to ensure our military has the tools it needs to counter Russia's aggression.