



Presidents Biden and Putin are set to meet in Geneva, Switzerland, on June 16. A successful summit with Vladimir Putin would require the administration to proceed from a position of strength. Yet, to date, the administration's strong rhetoric condemning Putin's aggression and malign activity has not been backed up by equally strong action. Here are just a few areas where the administration's Russia policy has missed the mark:

New START

One of the first foreign policy moves of the Biden Administration was to extend the New START nuclear arms reduction treaty with Russia, handing Putin a [major victory](#) right off the bat. Putin's No. 1 request of the United States was a full five-year extension with no strings attached. Agreeing to that surrendered U.S. leverage to fix structural flaws in the treaty.

Nord Stream 2 Natural Gas Pipeline

Last month, the Biden Administration [waived sanctions](#) on critical entities linked to this Russian malign influence project, citing "U.S. national interest." However, if gas is permitted to flow through the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, it will harm Ukraine, empower the Kremlin to spread its destabilizing behavior further into Europe, and fill Putin's coffers. This is clearly not in the U.S. national interest. The Biden Administration must revoke these waivers immediately and fully implement the bipartisan sanctions Congress mandated to stop Putin's pipeline project once and for all.

Support for Ukraine

Amidst the Russian military escalation in and around Ukraine this spring, the Biden Administration scrapped plans [to send](#) two Navy destroyers into the Black Sea to avoid "escalating tensions." Moreover, even though Russia [has since maintained](#) a sizable military presence on its border with Ukraine, the administration requested less military support for Ukraine than current spending. When taken together with the failure to stop the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, these actions send a troubling signal to Moscow that President Biden will not meaningfully follow through on his strong statements of unwavering support for Ukraine.



Biden-Putin Summit

Cyberattacks

In the weeks preceding the summit, there have been a [series of cyberattacks](#) on the United States emanating from Russia, including two which seriously disrupted critical supply chains. These attacks have made clear that the U.S. response to the SolarWinds hack has failed to deter the Putin regime from using cyber tools to advance its malign agenda. The administration must do more to make clear to the Putin regime that launching disruptive cyber operations and allowing cybercriminal groups to operate indiscriminately within its borders will not be tolerated.

The Poisoning & Imprisonment of Navalny

In March, the Biden Administration made [an official determination](#) that the Putin regime poisoned leading Russian opposition activist and anti-corruption crusader Alexey Navalny with an illegal Novichok nerve agent. Under the U.S. Chemical and Biological Weapons Control and Warfare Elimination Act, such a determination triggers two rounds of mandatory sanctions. The deadline for the second round of sanctions was earlier this month. Yet, the Biden Administration has failed to act. Forgoing these sanctions ahead of the Biden-Putin summit undermines U.S. values and sends an unfortunate message to Russian civil society that America is not willing to respond robustly to the Putin regime's crackdown and egregious human rights violations at home.

Belarus

This administration has yet to confront the Putin regime for its role in [enabling](#) the illegitimate Lukashenka regime in Belarus, including its decision to condone Belarus' [state-sponsored hijacking](#) of a commercial airliner to arrest a journalist onboard. Congress provided the Biden Administration authorities in the Belarus Democracy, Human Rights, and Sovereignty Act of 2020 to sanction the Putin regime for undermining Belarus' sovereignty and aiding in the repression of the democratic aspirations of the Belarusian people. It's far past time these authorities are used.