

# BIDEN WAS RIGHT – PUTIN MUST BE DEFEATED

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Regime Change in Moscow: 70% Agree Putin Must Go

President Biden closed his speech in Warsaw March 26 with a ringing denunciation of Russian dictator Vladimir Putin. “For God’s sake, this man cannot remain in power,” he said, setting off a firestorm of criticism from around the world.

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5cu2-rZbHhQ>

Attempting to ameliorate the impact of the president’s words, the White House staff immediately tried to walk them back, saying that Biden didn’t really mean that he wanted Putin removed from power, but only that Russia should not be allowed to exert power over its neighbors.

This didn’t wash. The tyrant’s spokesman, Dmitri Peskov, rejected Biden’s remark, saying, “It is up to the Russian people to choose their president.”

French president Emmanuel Macron was also upset with Biden’s use of the word “butcher” to describe Putin. “I wouldn’t use this type of wording because I continue to hold discussions with President Putin,” Macron said. “We want to stop the war that Russia has launched in Ukraine without escalation — that’s the objective.”

Council on Foreign Relations president Richard Haass seconded this view, tweeting, “Ending the war in Ukraine and avoiding escalation must be our priorities.”

Senator Jim Risch (R., Idaho), the minority leader of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, also chimed in,

terming Biden's closing sentence a "horrendous gaffe," adding: "This administration has done everything they can to stop escalating — there's not a whole lot more you can do to escalate than to call for regime change."

While I think Biden could have done a vastly better job supporting Ukraine, both in the lead-up to and since the invasion, I must in this case take the president's side. Biden spoke the truth. It needed to be heard.

We can readily dismiss the complaint offered by Putin's mouthpiece that the Russian people should be allowed to choose their president, because the primary purpose of the Putin regime is to prevent such an event.

Since his seizure of power in 1999, Putin has systematically silenced any free press in Russia, suppressed opposition political parties, and jailed or assassinated a great many critics. The removal of Vladimir Putin is a necessary *precondition* for the right of Russians to choose their own government.

*It's simply off the wall to say that calling for regime change in Russia is inappropriate. Putin has not merely called for regime change in Ukraine, he has launched a full-scale invasion and repeatedly sent squads of assassins to murder Ukraine's elected president, Volodymyr Zelensky.*

Putin's latest team of assassins was apprehended on the same day that Biden made his speech in Poland.

Furthermore, *the idea that applying harsh words to Putin is bad because they may disrupt negotiations is absurd — negotiations with Putin are nonsensical, since he can't be trusted to keep any agreements.*

In 1994, Ukraine gave up its nuclear arsenal in exchange for guarantees from the United States, the U.K., and Russia to respect and defend Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. While there are questions as to whether the U.S. and Britain are fully living up to their side of that bargain, Putin has plainly defied it.

In 2014, as his forces invaded Crimea, he denied any Russian involvement. Virtually right up to the day of the latest invasion, Putin's spokesmen were assuring the world that Russia would not invade Ukraine. Then it did.

Macron's criticism of Biden is misguided. While Biden has provided inadequate arms to Ukraine, France has disgraced itself since the invasion began by providing no weapons at all, and major French companies continue to do business in Russia.

Moreover, Macron has been conducting negotiations with Russia while excluding Ukraine from the discussions. In these talks, Putin has offered various formulas that all involve Ukraine's disarming and making territorial concessions. This would, of course, leave Ukraine helpless to resist further demands.

If Ukraine wants to surrender, it can do so without Macron's help. But Ukraine clearly does not want to surrender. It has experienced Russian rule before, which included not only mass murder of intellectuals and other potential opponents but also, in the 1930s Holodomor, the systematic starvation of millions of Ukrainians as Kremlin agents confiscated all of Ukraine's food.

Do you doubt that Putin is able and willing to repeat such crimes? Go look at his current massacre of Mariupol to settle the question.

For Ukraine, there can be no substitute for victory. But for the rest of us, "containing" the war, rather than winning it, must be the priority: So say Macron, Haass, and many defeatists within or near the Biden camp.

But one has only to look at Putin's track record to see that containment won't work. Since 1999, he has been testing the West's resolve by indulging in one aggression after another.

First, he devastated Chechnya. Then, in 2008, he invaded Georgia. This was followed by the massacre of over

500,000 people in Syria in 2012, and the intentional stampeding of millions of refugees into Europe to increase the fortunes of Putin-allied nativist parties.

Then, in 2014, he invaded Ukraine, a European country that was seeking EU membership. Since his gains from that attack were accepted by the West, he is now aiming for a territorial conquest that would provide him with a broad front for potentially attacking NATO members Poland, Slovakia, and Romania.

Putin has stated that he wants to restore the Russian and Soviet empires; and if he thinks he can get away with it, he'll likely continue in that project. He therefore *cannot be appeased. Each successful aggression leads to yet a more offensive one.*

If he succeeds in conquering Ukraine, he will go for more, because his position will be stronger and the West — with Ukraine's forces neutralized — will be weaker, and because he will have seen, once again, that the West is unwilling to fight.

If we wish to prevent escalation, the only way is to draw the line. The idea that we can protect ourselves by “containing” the war through appeasement is fallacious. It is Putin who needs to be contained. That requires defeating him. Furthermore, the defeat needs to be permanent, or he will simply try again.

*So Biden spoke the truth: For the sake of world peace, Putin cannot be allowed to remain in power.* Biden's statement may have been, as Senator Risch said, a gaffe. But gaffes are what happens when politicians inadvertently speak the truth.

The West could readily empower Ukraine with the means to repel Putin's invasion. But we are not doing so because our purposes are confused. Some within administration circles want Ukraine to win and are calling for sending Ukraine all the weapons it wants. Others just want Ukraine to go away, and they wager that the fastest way to achieve that is to let Putin win.

So, torn between these two outlooks, the administration sends drones, but only 100 of the small short-range kind suitable to taking out trucks, not the larger, heavier versions capable of destroying tanks.

We are fine with Ukrainians destroying Russian tanks, to be sure, but only if they do it with infantry willing to risk coming close enough to use handheld anti-tank rockets. We are willing to provide Ukraine with short-range anti-aircraft missiles capable of shooting down low-altitude Russian aircraft, but not missile systems for shooting down high-altitude bombers.

Certainly, we must not send fighter aircraft, which could knock down bombers and subsonic cruise missiles and also do a job on Russia's stalled convoys, its tanks that are roaming open country in the south, its artillery bombarding Mariupol, and its ships waiting offshore to strike Odessa.

No, providing Ukraine with airpower would make Putin very unhappy, so we supposedly must not do it. Yet we cannot win, or even draw, without making Putin very unhappy.

Clausewitz said that the key quality a military leader needs is *resolution*. Winston Churchill, at the beginning of his *Second World War*, sets forth the “moral of the work,” the first line of which is “In War: Resolution.” Resolution requires moral clarity. For a brief shining moment on Saturday, Biden offered just that.

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