



FACT SHEET: Sanction Russia To End Biden's Folly

If Russia continues to stall peace talks, how can President Trump force Moscow to the table and end the war? By convincing Putin the alternative to peace is economic hell to pay. Biden promised to shrink Russia's economy in half. Instead, his administration's weak-kneed sanctions allowed strong Russian growth that prolonged the war.

To end the war, the Trump Administration will need to up the ante on Russia. That will require a tactical adjustment and avoiding Biden's sanctions paralysis. Real, biting sanctions are the best way to force Putin to make a choice: stop the killing or face economic destruction.

How Biden's Weak Sanctions Failed:

Soon after Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, Biden [declared](#) his sanctions would turn the ruble "into rubble" and shrink Russia's GDP "by double-digits this year alone." Neither happened. But that didn't stop Blinken and Sullivan from echoing that message and [insisting](#) Biden's sanctions were triggering "a dramatic decline" in Russia's oil sales. That tough talk rings even more hollow today. Biden refused to impose real pressure, letting Moscow adopt new trade tactics, reroute exports, and bankroll its war machine with little disruption. Here's how:

- **He imposed sanctions with massive loopholes.** Despite liberal fanfare, Biden's sanctions were so weakly enforced that [nearly a quarter](#) of their oil tankers remain unsanctioned. Russia found workarounds in global markets, shifted exports to Asia, and built up a war economy that defied U.S. pressure. Now, Russia's energy export revenues are creeping back up to their pre-war level. Biden's sanctions were leaky, late, and lacked bite.
- **He outsourced our sanctions policy to European bureaucrats.** Biden handed over critical calls to Brussels, where European leaders prioritized protecting their industries over defeating Putin. For instance, sanctions were watered down when Airbus and other aerospace firms [pushed](#) to keep importing Russian titanium. The White House folded, choosing to appease EU corporate interests rather than pressure Moscow.
- **He prioritized optics over outcomes.** Biden's team obsessed over statements, hashtags, and summits while ignoring Russia circumventing sanctions in real time. His strategy was foreign policy by press release: performative, symbolic sanctions that didn't apply real pressure. The result? Russia's economy grew by 2.6% last year, it has recovered nearly all post-invasion losses, and its energy exports have [provided](#) over 30% of Russia's federal budget revenues for three years straight.
- **He waited over two years to go after Russia's shadow fleet.** This covert network of tankers let Moscow reroute oil and avoid price caps with ease. Biden's delay gave it time to establish alternative supply chains and lock in energy deals across Asia and the Middle East. When the administration finally acted 10 days before leaving office in

January 2025, the damage was already done. That's not a sanctions strategy—it's cleanup after being derelict for years.

- **He refused to enforce and tighten the G7 oil price [cap](#) or interdict shipments at sea.** Without enforcement, the price cap became a meaningless talking point. The administration never committed to inspecting ships or blocking Russian oil flows. It was a sanctions policy designed to look tough but do nothing.
- **He turned a blind eye to China and others buying Russian oil.** While preaching solidarity with Ukraine, the White House allowed Beijing and others to bankroll the Kremlin with massive [energy purchases](#). Chinese imports of Russian crude surged, offsetting Western pressure, and India and Turkey kept buying tens of billions of Russia's crude oil and refined petroleum. By refusing to penalize these buyers, Biden undermined his own sanctions and strengthened the China-Russia axis.
- **He protected Russian debt markets and kept their banks on SWIFT.** Instead of sanctioning secondary trading of Russian sovereign debt, Biden allowed investors to keep backing Putin's war machine. He also left approximately 200 Russian banks in the SWIFT system, throwing Moscow a financial lifeline that could have been severed on day one of the invasion.

What Real Sanctions Would Do to Russia

- **They would deprive Moscow of energy revenues.** Senator Lindsey Graham's sanctions [bill](#) would impose a 500 percent tariff on imports from countries buying Russian oil, gas, uranium and other products. That would all but force Russia's customers to abandon Russia as a supplier, devastating its economy, reducing its annual export revenues by tens of billions, and limiting Putin's ability to fund his war machine.
- **They would drive down the ruble's value and force capital flight.** Energy exports are Russia's primary source of dollars, euros, and yuan. Cut those off and Russia will struggle to buy foreign goods, tech, and parts—particularly for weapons production and high-tech systems. Couple that with expanded SWIFT cutoffs, freezing central bank assets, and targeting ALL Russian banks, and the ruble will crater.
- **They would fuel internal dysfunction.** In 2024, Russia's oil and gas sector contributed approximately 30% of the federal budget revenues. Diminishing this inflow would cripple the government's ability to function, fueling inflation, wage and pension cuts, and the collapse of public services. This would increase pressure on the Kremlin from ordinary Russians, whose tolerance for financial hardship has limits.
- **They would stop Europe from bankrolling Russia.** While Europeans lecture America on Ukraine, they remain the largest buyer of Russia's [pipeline gas](#) and [LNG](#)—accounting for [40% and almost half of those exports](#), respectively. Including laundered gas imports from Azerbaijan and Central Asia, the percentages are even higher. Real sanctions would force Europe to stop moralizing and reduce its energy dependence on Russia, as President Trump [called](#) for in 2018.
- **They would impose costs on the CCP.** Sanctions would also bear consequences for China, which continues to buy cheap Russian oil from its shadow fleet. China is Russia's top importer of crude oil—buying about half of Russia's top energy export at around [\\$61 billion](#) in 2023 and 2024—and generates [tens of billions more](#) in revenue for Russia

through natural gas, petroleum, and uranium imports. Real sanctions would penalize China for Russia refusing to negotiate in good faith and prod the CCP to play a more constructive role.

- **They would give President Trump massive leverage to coerce Russia.** If Congress passes Sen. Lindsey Graham's sanctions bill to take these steps, President Trump would have the unilateral power to inflict devastating sanctions on Russia with the stroke of a pen. That would put him in the strongest negotiating position possible with Putin to end the war, up the ante on Russia, and ensure he retains flexibility.

Bottom Line: For years, Biden issued lofty rhetoric about imposing costs on Putin - while blocking the actions that would have actually done so. His administration watered down sanctions so much that Moscow had no incentive to seek peace. **Only President Trump can end this war by forcing Russia to the table. That means convincing Putin the alternative to peace is Russian bankruptcy.**