

FDD's Biden Administration Foreign Policy Tracker: The Year in Review

Edited by David Adesnik and John Hardie

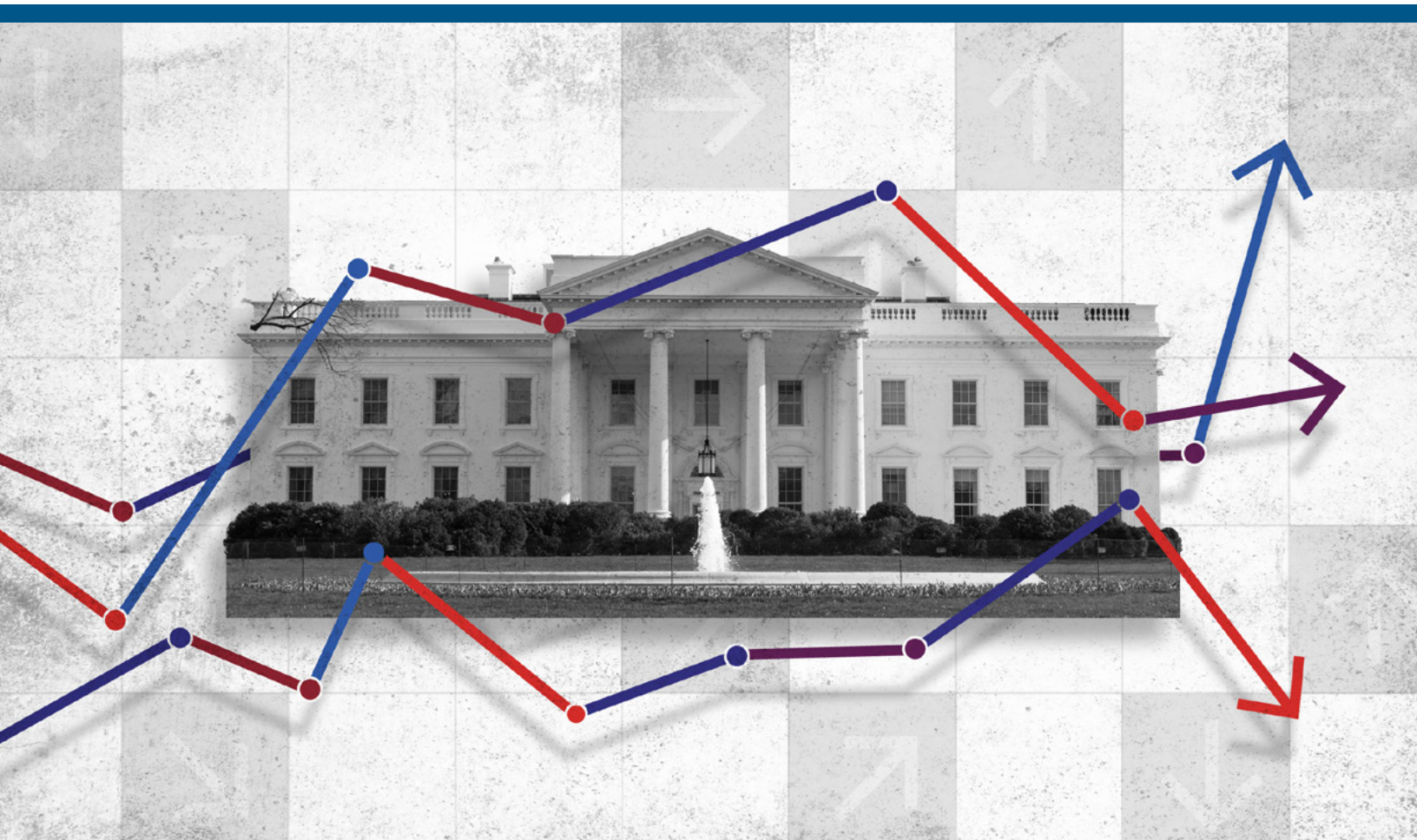
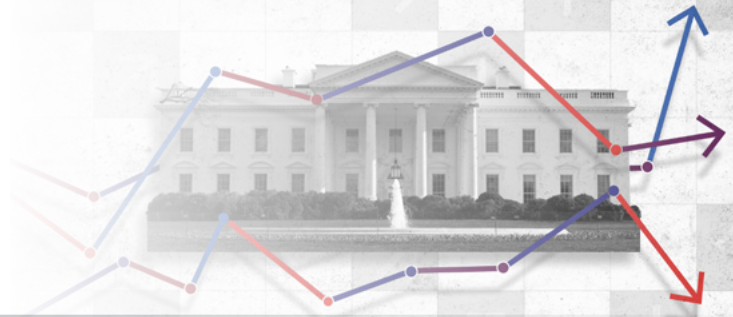




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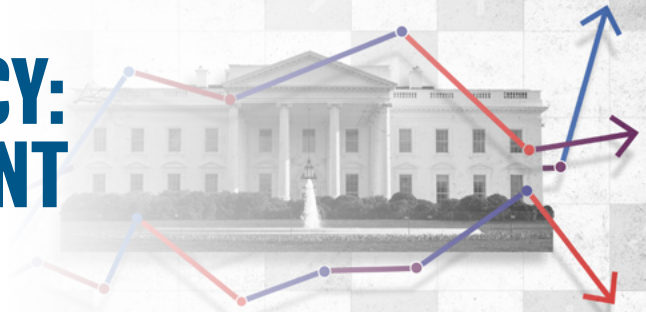


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BIDEN'S FOREIGN POLICY: A MIDTERM ASSESSMENT

By David Adesnik and John Hardie



Midterm grades are in for President Joe Biden's performance as commander-in-chief. The verdict from FDD experts is that Biden's foreign policy has often worked against both American values and American interests. On China, there is no clear policy. North Korea is firing off ballistic missiles at an unprecedented rate. The Iranian people are revolting against their oppressors, yet the administration is still offering sanctions relief in exchange for a fatally flawed nuclear deal. The Taliban have tightened their grip on Afghanistan, where al-Qaeda now finds sanctuary. Only when it comes to Russia and Ukraine has Biden stood firmly against aggression and for democracy and human rights — after spending his first six months in office attempting to build what he called a “stable and predictable relationship” with Russia under Vladimir Putin.

In FDD's monthly Biden Administration Foreign Policy Tracker, our contributors assess whether the trendline in their area of expertise is very positive, positive, neutral, negative, or very negative. In this end-of-year edition, we asked them to assess the trendline for the year as a whole. There are four areas, out of 17, where the administration earned positive marks: Defense, Europe, Russia, and Cyber. The first three all stem from the consistency Biden has shown in rallying international support for Ukraine while providing Kyiv with the weapons it needs to defeat Moscow's aggression. Progress on the cyber front has resulted from cooperation across partisan lines and between Congress and the executive branch. Funding has grown for cybersecurity initiatives, while the White House is working to secure government networks.

Regarding China, Biden seems incapable of driving his own administration toward a consensus on whether to engage in a full-throated competition with Beijing. The president has repeatedly pledged to defend Taiwan from invasion, contradicting his administration's official policy of strategic ambiguity. The administration says it is ready to engage with North Korea on nuclear issues, but the enforcement of sanctions has atrophied, reducing U.S. leverage in potential negotiations. Meanwhile, Kim Jong Un tested a record number of missiles in 2022.

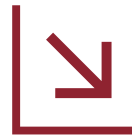
Biden's weakest performance was clearly in the Middle East, where he earned a very negative rating on Iran and Lebanon, along with negative ratings for policy toward Syria, Turkey, the Persian Gulf, and Sunni Jihadism. The White House made clear from day one that it wanted to reach a nuclear deal with Tehran, yet the clerical regime only accelerated its enrichment of uranium while obstructing the work of nuclear inspectors. Ironically, the people of Iran lost patience with their rulers long before Biden did. The administration proclaims its solidarity with Iranian protesters yet is still offering Tehran a deal that would entail \$275 billion of sanctions relief in the first year alone.

Each section of this tracker includes specific recommendations for how the administration can improve its performance in the third year of its term. Yet the broader lesson of the past two years is that America should finally put an end to wishful thinking about the readiness of our adversaries to moderate their behavior when the United States holds out an open hand.



CHINA

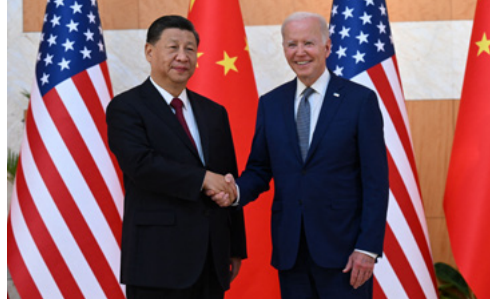
By Craig Singleton



2022 TREND
NEGATIVE

ASSESSMENT

President Joe Biden and his advisers insist there “need not be a new Cold War” between the United States and China yet warn that Washington faces a “decisive decade” in its strategic rivalry with Beijing.¹ Two years into its term, the administration appears conflicted about how best to manage its tense relationship with Beijing, often erring on the side of caution as opposed to embracing full-throated competition. Biden’s repeated contradiction of the White House’s official policy on Taiwan — the likeliest flashpoint between the superpowers — has added to the incoherence. Several times in 2022, Biden signaled a willingness to defend Taiwan from a potential attack by China, only for White House officials to walk back his remarks. Beijing, meanwhile, has escalated the number and intensity of its aerial and naval incursions around Taiwan. China has also increased its cyber, disinformation, and political interference operations aimed at convincing Taipei that reunification with the mainland is inevitable, one way or another.



To the Biden administration’s credit, it has prioritized efforts to sever China’s access to new and emerging technologies with both military and civilian applications. Relatedly, it has championed new investments in domestic semiconductor manufacturing and programs geared toward augmenting America’s STEM workforce. The White House has also sought to project U.S. soft power more effectively throughout the Indo-Pacific. However, it has matched those efforts neither with a serious commitment to bolster America’s military posture in the region nor with concrete, enforceable plans to leverage U.S. trade relationships with countries in the region to reduce their economic reliance on China. Also unclear is whether or how the Biden administration intends to hold Beijing accountable for its genocide of Uyghur Muslims and other ethnic minorities, most notably in China’s Xinjiang Province but increasingly in Tibet.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- » **Clarify America’s China policy.** To alleviate confusion, both inside and outside of government, regarding his personal views about America’s rivalry with China, Biden should deliver a speech — his first ever on China as president — that clearly articulates his administration’s policy.
- » **Replace the policy of “competing and coexisting” with China with a “compete to win” model.** The United States should exploit China’s systemic vulnerabilities, including its reliance on Western capital to drive its development.
- » **Re-organize the National Security Council** by establishing a first-of-its-kind, stand-alone China Directorate that reports directly to the national security advisor and treats China as a transnational, not regional or Asia-specific, threat.

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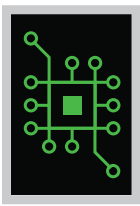
NOV



DEC



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CYBER

By RADM (Ret.) Mark Montgomery and
Jiwon Ma



2022 TREND
POSITIVE

ASSESSMENT

The Biden administration focused this year on improving the security of federal networks and enhancing government support for critical infrastructure. Federal, state, and local government agencies saw significant cyber budget increases through the Consolidated Appropriations Act, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, the CHIPS and Science Act, and other grant programs that invest in cybersecurity infrastructure and resources.¹ This funding accompanied numerous executive orders improving government network security² — for instance, the administration plan to revise parts of Presidential Policy Directive-21 (PPD-21) to set baseline cybersecurity standards for critical infrastructure.

The discovery in late 2021 of a critical vulnerability in widely used software, known as Log4j, tested the Biden administration’s ability to coordinate with private sector partners. Quick actions leveraging the Joint Cyber Defense Collaborative proved critical to staving off potentially catastrophic incidents. Meanwhile, the administration’s decision to rapidly share information about Russia’s malicious cyber activity and provide regular briefings to critical infrastructure owners and operators enhanced resilience against major cyberattacks.

The administration also made strides in its diplomatic efforts, nominating Nathaniel Fick as the first-ever cyber ambassador-at-large to lead the State Department’s Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy. Abroad, the administration achieved notable success in blocking Russia’s preferred candidate to lead the International Telecommunications Union and facilitating the election of the U.S. candidate. Meanwhile, the ability of Ukraine to withstand Russia’s cyber assaults has further demonstrated the value of U.S. cyber capacity building programs.

Finally, the Office of the National Cyber Director (ONCD) has grown and played a key role in assessing federal agencies’ requirements to improve government network security and in developing the National Cyber Workforce Strategy. ONCD will soon publish the long-awaited National Cyber Strategy as the Biden administration greets the new year.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- » **Identify systemically important critical infrastructure** to better prioritize entities and assets for participation in public-private partnerships to promote national security, economic productivity, and public health and safety.
- » **Ensure implementation of the National Cyber Strategy** through resourcing and accountability across the federal government.
- » **Revise Presidential Policy Directive-21** to better standardize U.S. government support for critical infrastructure through sector risk management agencies.
- » **Expand cyber capacity building programs** to strengthen the resilience of U.S. allies and partners.
- » **Work with allies and partners to rapidly attribute malicious cyber activity** as part of an enhanced effort to hold state-sponsors accountable.

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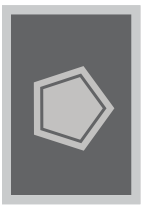


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2. The White House, “Memorandum on Improving the Cybersecurity of National Security, Department of Defense, and Intelligence Community Systems,” January 19, 2022. (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2022/01/19/memorandum-on-improving-the-cybersecurity-of-national-security-department-of-defense-and-intelligence-community-systems>)



DEFENSE

By Bradley Bowman



2022 TREND
POSITIVE

JAN



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ASSESSMENT

In response to Russia's February 24 invasion of Ukraine, the Biden administration led an extraordinary and agile campaign to rally diplomatic, economic, and security support for Kyiv, while isolating Moscow and reinforcing NATO's eastern flank. These efforts, combined with Ukrainian skill and determination, prevented Vladimir Putin from accomplishing many of his objectives, helped Ukraine preserve its independence, and bolstered deterrence of Russian aggression against NATO. Prior to the invasion, however, the administration dithered in supplying military aid to Ukraine, partly due to a misplaced fear of provoking Moscow. U.S. weapons shipments to Kyiv ramped up only after significant pressure from Congress.

The Biden administration unveiled its fiscal year 2023 defense budget request on March 28, asking for \$773 billion for the Department of Defense. That level of funding would have been insufficient to offset the effects of inflation, resulting in a reduction in real defense spending as threats grow.¹ Recognizing that fact, Congress is poised to authorize \$816.7 billion for the Pentagon for fiscal year 2023.

The administration deserves credit, however, for prioritizing in its budget request the belated recapitalization of America's nuclear triad and supporting nuclear command, control, and communications systems. Most of the existing systems will reach the end of their service life between 2025 to 2035. Replacing them in a timely manner is essential as Moscow and Pyongyang rattle their nuclear sabers and Beijing conducts a dramatic and opaque expansion of its nuclear arsenal.²

The administration's National Defense Strategy (NDS), Nuclear Posture Review, and Missile Defense Review, published in October, generally set an appropriate strategic framework. The NDS identifies China as the "pacing challenge" and recognizes that this is a "decisive decade" in the U.S.-China competition. It remains to be seen, however, whether the administration will request sufficient Pentagon funding for fiscal year 2024 to accomplish the stated objectives. Washington must move with a greater sense of urgency to modernize U.S. forces, address the munitions production capacity crisis, and arm beleaguered democracies such as Taiwan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- » **Provide Kyiv with the robust security assistance necessary to defeat Russia's invasion** and preserve Ukrainian independence, while encouraging European allies to carry an increasing share of the burden.
- » **Request enough Pentagon funding for fiscal year 2024** to provide the department with at least a 3 to 5 percent increase above the rate of inflation.
- » **Take extraordinary measures to expedite arms deliveries to Taiwan** and strengthen U.S. military posture in the Indo-Pacific, while expanding production capacity for key munitions and procuring them for U.S. forces in the maximum quantities possible.³

1. Mackenzie Eaglen, "\$846 Billion: The Budget the U.S. Military Really Needs," *19FortyFive*, May 16, 2022. (<https://www.19fortyfive.com/2022/05/846-billion-the-budget-the-u-s-military-really-needs>)

2. Bradley Bowman, Ryan Brobst, and Mark Montgomery, "Losing an arms race with China is much worse than competing in one," *Washington Examiner*, December 8, 2022. (<https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2022/12/08/losing-an-arms-race-with-china-is-much-worse-than-competing-in-one>)

3. Rear Adm. Mark Montgomery (ret.), Bradley Bowman, and Ryan Brobst, "How 'MacGyver' magic can get Taiwan its Harpoon defenses faster," *Defense News*, December 7, 2022. (<https://www.defensenews.com/opinion/commentary/2022/12/07/how-macgyver-magic-can-get-taiwan-its-harpoon-defenses-faster>)



EUROPE

By John Hardie



2022 TREND
POSITIVE

JAN



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ASSESSMENT

Both before and particularly after Russia launched its full-scale invasion, the transatlantic alliance confronted the Kremlin with far greater unity and resolve than it had after Moscow invaded Ukraine in 2014. Although the White House has at times dragged its feet in supplying military aid to Kyiv, the administration deserves credit for leading strong transatlantic support for Ukraine.

As Russia prepared to invade, the Biden administration sought to deter Vladimir Putin and secure European buy-in for tough sanctions against Russia and for strengthening NATO's eastern flank. The administration released an unprecedented level of declassified intelligence to throw Moscow off guard and convince skeptical European allies. To help bring France and Germany on board, the administration made a last-ditch push for a diplomatic solution, even though Putin likely put little stock in the talks.¹ Importantly, Washington upheld its commitment to decide "nothing about Ukraine without Ukraine."²

Once Russia invaded, the administration bolstered U.S. force posture in Europe and worked with allies to establish an impressive pipeline of military aid to Ukraine. The U.S.-led Ukraine Defense Contact Group has brought together nearly 50 nations to meet Kyiv's evolving military needs and promote cooperation on defense industrial production.

The transatlantic appetite for sanctions surprised not only the Kremlin but even Western observers. The allies make good on their economic threats by sanctioning most major Russian banks and imposing far-reaching export controls designed to undermine Russia's defense industrial base. They also froze half of Russia's over \$600 billion stash of foreign reserves, undercutting Moscow's strategy for weathering sanctions. The allies subsequently banned most imports of Russian oil, although this inadvertently padded Moscow's coffers by increasing energy prices.³

Worried an impending EU ban on the provision of services facilitating Russian oil shipments would inflame oil prices, the administration persuaded America's G7 allies to adopt a "price cap" scheme aimed at slashing Russian export revenue while avoiding a price spike. However, whether the plan will substantially reduce the Kremlin's coffers remains unclear.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- » **Lower the price cap on Russian oil shipments** and revisit the need for a sanctions mechanism to force participation by Russia's top customers.
- » **Increase U.S. and allied capacity to enforce sanctions and export controls.** Russia is adept at circumventing Western restrictions, while many U.S. allies have little experience in enforcing them. The U.S. Commerce and Treasury departments also need more resources.
- » **Maintain transatlantic unity and resolve** — a job that begins here at home. Leaders from both parties must show the United States will continue to support Ukraine as long as Russian aggression continues.

1. Shane Harris, Karen DeYoung, Isabelle Khurshudyan, Ashley Parker, and Liz Sly, "Road to war: U.S. struggled to convince allies, and Zelensky, of risk of invasion," *The Washington Post*, August 16, 2022. (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/interactive/2022/ukraine-road-to-war/>)

2. The White House, "FACT SHEET: U.S. Diplomatic Engagement with European Allies and Partners Ahead of Talks with Russia," January 10, 2022. (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/01/10/fact-sheet-u-s-diplomatic-engagement-with-european-allies-and-partners-ahead-of-talks-with-russia/>)

3. Irina Ivanova, "For now, Russia oil ban may hurt consumers more than Putin," *CBS News*, June 1, 2022. (<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/russia-oil-european-union-ban-vladimir-putin/>)



GULF

By Hussain Abdul-Hussain



2022 TREND
NEGATIVE

ASSESSMENT

Inconsistency and confusion marred President Biden’s Gulf policy. While Biden designated Qatar, an autocracy close to Iran and various radical Islamist groups, as a Major Non-NATO Ally, he reprimanded fellow autocracy Saudi Arabia, which opposes Tehran and its sponsorship of terrorism. Biden alienated Riyadh by hammering the Saudis over the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi and by removing Yemen’s Iran-backed Houthis from the U.S. list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations without a clear plan for how to pressure them into a peace settlement.



In July, Biden visited Saudi Arabia for a meeting with regional leaders, reversing his earlier pledge to turn the kingdom into a “pariah.”¹ In the months beforehand, Riyadh increased its oil production as a token of goodwill. But Biden’s public chastising of Saudi Arabia over its human rights record,² aimed at pleasing domestic political audiences critical of the kingdom, rendered his visit counterproductive.

Biden’s Saudi policy left the administration with little political capital to persuade the kingdom to increase oil output after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine caused a surge in global energy prices. In October, the Saudi- and Russian-led OPEC+ oil cartel decided to cut daily production by 2 million barrels, buoying oil prices and undermining the G7’s plan to cap the price of Russian oil exports. The Biden administration responded by announcing a review of the U.S.-Saudi relationship, still ongoing as of November 22.³ To signal it had other options, Riyadh received Chinese leader Xi Jinping in December.

Still, there are no signs that Riyadh is planning to break its alliance with Washington. The kingdom has refused Beijing’s requests to conduct Chinese-Saudi trade, which amounted to \$87 billion in 2021, using the renminbi or a barter system rather than the U.S. dollar.⁴

RECOMMENDATIONS

- » **Demonstrate in both word and deed that Gulf allies can count on steady U.S. support** regardless of which party controls the White House.
- » **Coordinate Iran policy with Riyadh and other Middle Eastern allies.** This will reassure allies that America favors friends over foes.
- » **Continue working to integrate Gulf allies into America’s regional and global coalitions,** and redouble U.S. efforts to convince Gulf nations to normalize relations with Israel.
- » **Mend ties with Riyadh.** This will help Washington secure Saudi support in the oil market and encourage the kingdom to pursue normalization with Israel.

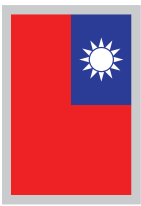
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2. U.S. Department of State, “2021 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Saudi Arabia,” April 12, 2022. (<https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/saudi-arabia>)

3. Sylvia Westall, “Blinken Says Review of Relations with Saudi Arabia Ongoing,” *Bloomberg*, November 22, 2022. (<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-11-22/blinken-says-review-of-relations-with-saudi-arabia-ongoing>)

4. “Factbox: Saudi-China energy, trade and investment ties,” *Reuters*, December 6, 2022. (<https://www.reuters.com/world/saudi-china-energy-trade-investment-ties-2022-12-06>)



INDO-PACIFIC

By Craig Singleton



2022 TREND
NEUTRAL

ASSESSMENT

The Biden administration sought to revitalize America’s credibility throughout the Indo-Pacific, an effort met, at least initially, with broad regional skepticism. For more than a decade, Washington has signaled plans to shift personnel and attention toward the Indo-Pacific. Yet the so-called Asia pivot largely failed to materialize, with America’s diplomatic and military footprint essentially unchanged since the Bush-Cheney era. Nevertheless, throughout 2022, senior administration officials, including President Biden and Vice President Harris, crisscrossed the region, meeting with friend and foe alike to discuss issues ranging from pandemic preparedness and climate change to defense cooperation and trade. Biden has rightly continued to nurture the Trump-era QUAD alliance, consisting of the United States, Japan, Australia, and India. Similarly, Biden hosted the first-ever White House summit for Pacific Island leaders, many of whom Beijing is courting as it seeks expanded military and trade access. At the same time, the Biden administration has deftly sought to elevate the U.S.-India relationship while accepting, however begrudgingly, that New Delhi remains committed to its non-alignment policy, including its robust defense cooperation with Moscow.



While the White House says the “U.S. isn’t going anywhere” in the Indo-Pacific, China retains its position atop the regional hierarchy.¹ Washington unveiled its Indo-Pacific Economic Framework — an informal discussion venue — while Beijing pursues enforceable trade deals and other policies geared toward deepening its supply chain centrality, in effect binding the region to China. Regrettably, the Biden administration has resisted calls to provide Indo-Pacific countries with enhanced U.S. market access, which would reduce their susceptibility to Chinese economic coercion. At the same time, Beijing has exploited differences between Washington and regional governments, most notably on Taiwan, to undermine U.S. initiatives and sow doubt about America’s security commitments. Left unchecked, this Chinese pushback threatens to undermine the administration’s broader progress.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- » **Pass a U.S.-Taiwan free-trade pact.** The White House, working with Congress, should prioritize passage of this agreement. It should also reconsider its refusal to provide Indo-Pacific nations with enhanced U.S. market access, starting with treaty allies Thailand and the Philippines.
- » **Consider stronger actions to undermine China’s military basing pursuits** in the Solomon Islands and Cambodia.
- » In addition to deterring China militarily, **identify new opportunities to neutralize China’s attempts** — whether through gray-zone tactics or political interference operations — **to undermine democratic resilience and the U.S. alliance system in Asia.** Such efforts should include clandestine operations and better leveraging public diplomacy to promote pro-U.S. narratives.

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AUG	↗
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NOV	→
DEC	→

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INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

By Richard Goldberg

2022 TREND
NEGATIVE

ASSESSMENT

The Biden administration engaged international organizations with mixed success in 2022, benefiting from global outrage over Russia’s invasion of Ukraine while failing to achieve systemic reforms in key agencies to counter China’s influence and strategic objectives.

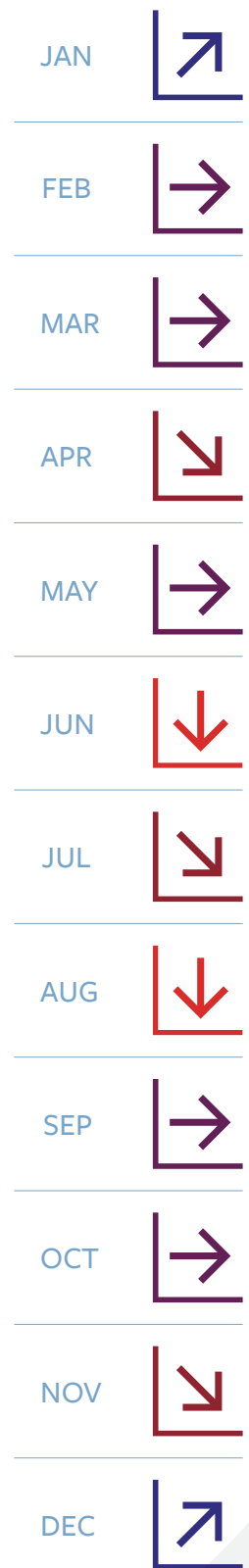
The administration returned to the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) this year, pledging to end the council’s systemic bias against Israel. Although it rounded up 22 countries willing to oppose the UNHRC’s antisemitic commission of inquiry into Israel, the Biden administration never offered a resolution to terminate the commission’s mandate. Nor did the White House move to eliminate the council’s standing agenda item castigating Israel. The UNHRC also defeated a U.S.-backed resolution that merely called for discussing human rights abuses in Xinjiang. Still, the U.S. took advantage of international backlash against American adversaries. It rallied the UN General Assembly to suspend Russia from the council after its invasion of Ukraine and won a UNHRC vote to establish a fact-finding mission on Iran’s crackdown on anti-regime protesters. Ultimately, though, the administration made no attempt to overhaul the council’s criteria for membership or elections process, which help stack the UNHRC with dictatorships.

The administration does deserve credit for its high-level interagency diplomatic campaign to elect an American to head the International Telecommunication Union, defeating a Russian candidate and boxing out Chinese influence atop the standards-making body.

The administration’s greatest failure may be inside the World Health Organization (WHO). The White House supported the re-election of Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus — whose pro-Beijing leanings helped China downplay the outbreak of COVID-19 — and then backed a Tedros budget initiative that diluted the influence of large voluntary contributors like the United States. For the second straight year, the administration failed to restore Taiwan’s observer status at the WHO’s annual meeting and never waged a campaign to suspend Russia or Syria from the WHO’s executive board. Meanwhile, after two years in office, the administration has yet to produce any meaningful independent investigation into the origins of COVID-19.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- » Demand an independent UN investigation into the WHO’s and China’s COVID-19 responses.
- » Lead an effort to remove Russia and Syria from the WHO’s executive board.
- » Wage a high-level interagency diplomatic campaign to restore Taiwan’s WHO observer status.
- » Vote on a resolution to terminate the UNHRC’s commission of inquiry into Israel.
- » Lead a UNHRC reform process with key allies to prohibit human rights abusers from holding seats on the council.
- » Prohibit funding for any UN agency that sponsors, supports, enables, or engages in acts of antisemitism pursuant to the authoritative working definition of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance.





IRAN

By Behnam Ben Taleblu and
Richard Goldberg



2022 TREND
VERY NEGATIVE

ASSESSMENT

The Biden administration’s Iran policy ends 2022 mired in contradiction. The administration claims to support the Iranian people but still seeks to revive a nuclear deal — the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) — that would enrich their oppressors. The White House continues to offer massive sanctions relief — \$275 billion in the first year, and \$1 trillion by 2030¹ — in exchange for fewer restrictions on Tehran’s nuclear program than the JCPOA required. Nor has it worked multilaterally to trigger a “snapback” of previous UN sanctions on Iran, which would not only terminate the JCPOA but restore a permanent arms embargo and ballistic missile testing injunction.

Tehran has used the cover of negotiations to vastly expand its enrichment activities, stockpiling enough high-enriched uranium to potentially make four nuclear weapons.² Biden’s decision to keep the door open to a deal in 2023 now holds him back from confronting Iran’s violent suppression of domestic protests as well as active threats against Americans and drone proliferation to Russia.

With anti-regime protests continuing for almost three full months, the Biden administration has used human rights sanctions to name and shame key officials while pressuring the regime within certain UN bodies. But Biden has yet to deliver a live address to the Iranian people pledging his support, and no administration official has signaled support for the protesters’ desire to topple the Islamic Republic. Nor has Washington imposed human rights sanctions on either Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the supreme leader, or Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi. Neither maximum support for the Iranian people nor maximum pressure on the regime has materialized.

Finally, Biden’s tepid response to Tehran’s regional aggression has apparently emboldened the regime to take direct military action in Iraq and sponsor more attacks against Americans. Active plots to assassinate former American officials continue.³ And in September, during one of Iran’s multiple attacks against Iraqi Kurdistan this year, an Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps ballistic missile strike killed an American.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- » **Vigorously enforce economic sanctions on Iran.** Target Chinese banks and state-owned enterprises connected to Tehran’s oil and petrochemical sales.
- » **Deliver a presidential address to the Iranian people,** voicing support for their goal of bringing down their oppressive regime.
- » **Create a strike fund to** support Iranian protesters.
- » Work with the United Kingdom to “**snap back**” **UN sanctions on Iran,** restoring the UN arms embargo and building multilateral pressure against drone transfers to Russia.
- » **Impose human rights sanctions on Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Ebrahim Raisi.**
- » **Issue visa bans against regime elites for engaging in human rights abuses.** The bans should include family members.

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2. David Albright, “Iran Building Nuclear Weapons,” *Institute for Science and International Security*, December 5, 2022. (https://isis-online.org/uploads/isis-reports/documents/Iran_Building_Nuclear_Weapons_December_2022.pdf)

3. For example: Jana Winter, “Exclusive: U.S. government warns that Iran may try to kill American officials as revenge for killing top general,” *Yahoo News*, July 13, 2022. (<https://news.yahoo.com/exclusive-us-government-warns-iran-may-try-to-kill-american-officials-in-revenge-for-killing-top-general-162641423.html>)



ISRAEL

By David May



2022 TREND
NEUTRAL

JAN



FEB



MAR



APR



MAY



JUN



JUL



AUG



SEP



OCT



NOV



DEC



ASSESSMENT

U.S. negotiations with Iran aimed at reviving the 2015 nuclear deal, opposed by Israel, caused tension between Washington and Jerusalem. In early 2022, Israeli leaders publicly denounced the expected nuclear agreement.¹ Israeli concerns abated after August, as the talks stalled.

Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Biden administration publicly criticized Israel for not offering stronger support for Kyiv. Jerusalem has been wary of jeopardizing its operations in Syria, where Russia has deployed powerful air defense systems.

Meanwhile, administration officials strongly condemned the ongoing wave of Palestinian terrorism, which began in March.² But as Palestinian violence intensified, Secretary of State Antony Blinken issued a "call on all sides to exercise restraint." In May, Palestinian American *Al Jazeera* journalist Shireen Abu Akleh was killed during an Israeli counterterrorism operation in the West Bank. The Biden administration initially expressed confidence in Israel's ability to investigate the incident and refused to "prejudge an investigation."³ However, in November, after Israel released its final report on the matter, the Justice Department opened its own investigation.

During a three-day round of fighting in August in which the terror group Palestinian Islamic Jihad launched over 1,000 rockets at Israeli population centers, President Biden reiterated his support for Israel's security.

During a visit to Israel in July, Biden promised over \$300 million in aid, mostly to UNRWA, the Palestinian-specific UN refugee agency, which has encouraged maximalist Palestinian demands.⁴ Also during Biden's visit, Egypt and Saudi Arabia concluded a deal that will guarantee Israel flyover rights above Saudi Arabia, a possible precursor to full normalization. In March, top diplomats from Israel, the United States, and Arab countries convened a summit to advance the Abraham Accords.

Finally, the United States failed to prevent the release of multiple biased reports by the UN Human Rights Council's commission of inquiry targeting Israel. However, the White House is reportedly pressing the United Nations not to update a previously published blacklist of companies operating in the West Bank.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- » **Close the Justice Department's investigation into Shireen Abu Akleh's death.** The investigation discredits Israel's ability to carry out its own investigations and could make Israeli and U.S. troops more susceptible to biased investigations by the International Criminal Court.
- » **Continue to promote normalization under the Abraham Accords framework,** strengthening existing agreements and creating new ones.
- » **Dismantle UN bodies biased against Israel,** particularly the UN Human Rights Council's commission of inquiry.
- » **Demand reform as a precondition for funding UNRWA.**

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4. The White House, "FACT SHEET: The United States-Palestinian Relationship," July 14, 2022. (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/07/14/fact-sheet-the-united-states-palestinian-relationship>)



KOREA

By Anthony Ruggiero



2022 TREND
NEGATIVE

JAN



FEB



MAR



APR



MAY



JUN



JUL



AUG



SEP



OCT



NOV



DEC



ASSESSMENT

The Biden administration in April 2021 declared it would pursue a “calibrated practical approach that is open to and will explore diplomacy with” Pyongyang.¹ North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has rebuffed the administration’s public and private requests for negotiations. Meanwhile, Kim has expanded his nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs while the Biden administration was distracted by competing priorities. North Korea conducted over 60 missile tests in 2022, more than in any prior calendar year, including eight intercontinental ballistic missile tests. Pyongyang could conduct a seventh nuclear test, the first in five years, at any time. The once-robust U.S. sanctions regime against North Korea has atrophied since 2018. Pyongyang earns millions of dollars annually from the exportation of coal and overseas laborers, prohibited by UN sanctions. Diplomatic pressure on Pyongyang is also waning, as Washington has been unable to build a solid coalition to condemn Kim’s actions.²



On the positive side of the ledger, the administration has focused on strengthening the ROK-U.S. alliance and deterring North Korean threats. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin hosted his South Korean counterpart in early November and noted that a North Korean nuclear attack, “including the use of non-strategic nuclear weapons, is unacceptable and will result in the end of the Kim regime.”³ The administration resumed large-scale ROK-U.S. exercises, reversing former President Donald Trump’s decision to scale them back, which undermined alliance readiness. In September, the allies conducted a combined exercise involving a U.S. aircraft carrier for the first time in five years.⁴

RECOMMENDATIONS

- » **Reinvest in enforcement of sanctions against North Korea**, targeting the Kim regime’s revenue to force Kim to decide among his top strategic priorities.
- » **Build a strong diplomatic coalition that condemns Pyongyang’s actions.**
- » **Increase efforts to strengthen the ROK-U.S. alliance** as a deterrent to Pyongyang’s provocations.

1. Nandita Bose, “Biden administration sets new North Korea policy of ‘practical’ diplomacy,” *Reuters*, April 30, 2021. (<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/biden-administration-has-completed-north-korea-policy-review-white-house-2021-04-30>)

2. Anthony Ruggiero, “How to Really Turn the Screws on North Korea,” *The Dispatch*, November 22, 2022. (<https://thedispatch.com/article/how-to-really-turn-the-screws-on-north-korea>)

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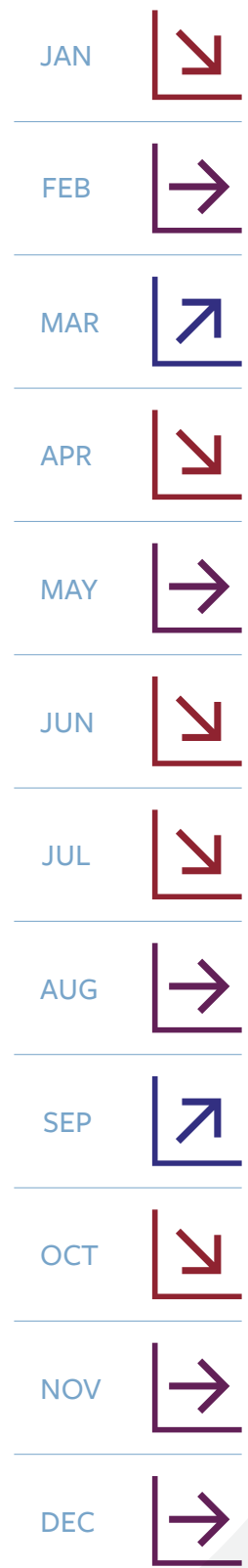
4. U.S. Department of Defense, “Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III and South Korean Minister of National Defense Lee Jong-sup Hold a News Conference,” November 3, 2022. (<https://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/3209711/secretary-of-defense-lloyd-j-austin-iii-and-south-korean-minister-of-national-d>)



LATIN AMERICA

By Carrie Filipetti and Emanuele Ottolenghi

2022 TREND
NEGATIVE



ASSESSMENT

When it comes to the Western Hemisphere, the Biden administration’s early promises that “America is back” have turned into “America is in the background.” Beijing has exploited this trend, as China has become the top trading partner for most countries south of Costa Rica and has built 60 percent of the region’s telecommunications infrastructure. Following recent elections in Chile, Honduras, Colombia, Brazil, and Peru won by anti-American populists, there are now 11 Latin American nations embracing greater economic and political ties with China.¹ Yet while China has increased its focus on the region, America seems to be distracted.

Even though 106,000 Americans die every year from fentanyl, which enters the country mainly across the unsecured southern border, Washington has yet to impose Kingpin Act sanctions against local Mexican officials who cooperate with cartels. Illegal immigration continues at historic levels,² with nearly 7,500 new illegal immigrants entering the United States every day. U.S.-Mexico security cooperation, vital to stem trafficking across the southern border, has declined over the last year thanks to a 2020 Mexican law that imposed extensive reporting requirements on U.S. and other “foreign agents.”³

In Venezuela, President Biden has maintained his predecessor’s commitment to a political settlement, but has provided the Maduro regime with partial sanctions relief despite its continued crimes against humanity. American sanctions constitute one of the democratic opposition’s few remaining sources of leverage in negotiations with the regime. Rather than demanding that Maduro make tangible concessions to secure sanctions relief, Washington merely required the regime to promise to negotiate. The talks will therefore likely remain deadlocked.

In some cases, the administration has asserted U.S. leadership. For example, Washington imposed sanctions on Nicaragua’s Ortega-Murillo regime for its assault on democracy.⁴ The administration has also prioritized combating corruption in the region, including by designating corrupt Paraguayan officials.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- » **Secure the border.** The administration must resource the U.S. border patrol and re-implement policies, including the Trump administration’s “Remain in Mexico” program, to limit illegal immigration.
- » **Deploy Kingpin sanctions.** A recent hack into Mexican military computer systems revealed disturbing ties between cartels and local mayors in Mexico. Washington should consider deploying Kingpin designations and revoking non-immigrant visas based on this information.
- » **Focus on electoral reform in Venezuela.** The United States should insist that Maduro implement the EU observation mission’s 23 recommendations to ensure Venezuela’s 2024 elections are as free and fair as possible.

1. “Engaging Chinese Engagement in Latin America: Recommendations for U.S. Policy,” *Forum for American Leadership*, September 22, 2022. (<https://forumforamericanleadership.org/latam-chinese-engagement>)

2. U.S. Customs and Border Protection, “CBP Enforcement Statistics Fiscal Year 2023,” November 14, 2022. (<https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/cbp-enforcement-statistics>)

3. David Agren, “Mexico: new security law strips diplomatic immunity from DEA agents,” *The Guardian* (UK), (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/15/mexico-security-law-dea-agents-us>)

4. U.S. Department of State, “Nicaragua Sanctions,” accessed December 13, 2022. (<https://www.state.gov/nicaragua-sanctions>)



LEBANON

By Tony Badran



2022 TREND
VERY NEGATIVE

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ASSESSMENT

One of the Biden administration’s top priorities in Lebanon was to conclude an agreement demarcating the Israel-Lebanon maritime border, signed in November. To clinch the deal, the administration leveraged a Hezbollah drone attack against Israel’s Karish gas rig to press for Israeli concessions. The deal effectively positions Washington as a guarantor between Israel and Hezbollah, Iran’s regional arm.



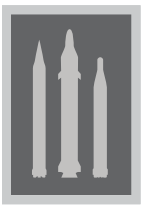
The Biden team is also pursuing a plan to pay the salaries of 100,000 unvettable personnel from the Lebanese Armed Forces and Internal Security Forces, which cooperate with Hezbollah. Washington has “never” previously made direct salary payments to a foreign military, as a senior State Department official admitted in November.¹ The administration initially intended to disburse the funds through Foreign Military Financing but lacked legal grounds to do so.² Instead, the State Department will draw the money from the Peacekeeping Operations account and disburse it through a UN-managed fund.³ In addition to the plan’s questionable legality, pumping cash into a market thoroughly penetrated by Hezbollah risks financing terrorism.

Finally, the administration continues to promote regional energy deals that would send Egyptian gas and excess Jordanian electricity to Lebanon through Syria, enriching Damascus in the process. The deals suffered delays because the World Bank refused to finance the projects before Lebanon enacts reforms, which Beirut now claims to have completed. The deals would violate U.S. sanctions mandated by the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2019, but the administration insists otherwise.⁴

RECOMMENDATIONS

- » **Drop the plan to pay LAF and ISF salaries.** Congress should probe the initiative’s legality, especially given the high terrorism finance risk that Lebanon poses.
- » **Abandon the gas and electricity deals,** which violate the letter and spirit of the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act. Congress should assert its authority and uphold U.S. sanctions law against the Assad regime.
- » **Rethink Lebanon policy.** In fiscal year 2021 alone, Washington spent nearly \$800 million in taxpayer money on Lebanon. America’s Lebanon policy needs a complete rethink, as it amounts to little more than underwriting and micromanaging an Iranian terror base.

1. “US Policy on Lebanon: A Conversation with Assistant Secretary of State for NEA Ambassador Barbara Leaf,” *Wilson Center*, November 4, 2022. (<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/us-policy-lebanon-conversation-assistant-secretary-state-nea-ambassador-barbara-leaf>)
 2. Tony Badran, “Biden Pays Army Salaries to Iranian Ally,” *Tablet Magazine*, February 9, 2022. (<https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/israel-middle-east/articles/biden-pays-army-salaries-to-iranian-ally>)
 3. Tony Badran, “America’s Regional Integration Scheme Benefits Iran,” *Tablet Magazine*, September 7, 2022. (<https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/israel-middle-east/articles/america-regional-integration-scheme-benefits-iran-deal-obama-biden>)
 4. David Adesnik, “The White House Is Bending the Law on Syria Sanctions,” *Foundation for Defense of Democracies*, May 12, 2022. (<https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2022/05/12/the-white-house-is-bending-the-law-on-syria-sanctions>)



NONPROLIFERATION AND BIODEFENSE

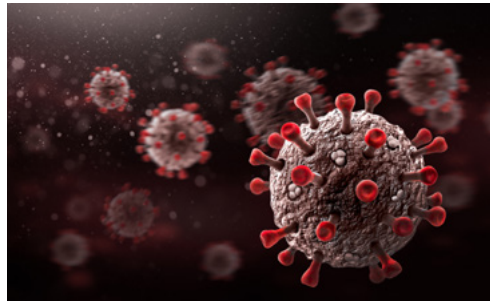
By Anthony Ruggiero and Andrea Stricker

2022 TREND
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ASSESSMENT

In early 2021, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the Biden administration would seek to negotiate a nuclear arms reduction treaty with Russia, reduce the dangers posed by China’s growing atomic arsenal, and ensure Iran never acquires a nuclear weapon. He also said the Biden team would strive to denuclearize North Korea and limit its ballistic missile program, buttress the Chemical Weapons Convention, and defend against future pandemics and bioweapons.¹ Ultimately, the administration has fallen short in each area.



The administration extended New START with Russia for five years, but Moscow’s non-strategic nuclear weapons remain outside the treaty’s purview. The administration has unsuccessfully tried to convince Russia to resume mutual inspections under the treaty. Washington has done little, if anything, to address China’s rapid nuclear buildup. Biden’s team pursued 18 months of negotiations with Iran to revive the 2015 nuclear accord, but Tehran vastly expanded its nuclear enrichment capabilities, shortening the time it needs to produce an atomic bomb. The regime also stonewalled an International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) investigation into undeclared Iranian nuclear material and activities. North Korea has conducted an unprecedented number of missile launches this year and is likely preparing a nuclear test. Yet Washington has not sufficiently used its sanctions authorities to target Pyongyang’s finances.²

Biden delivered on his predecessor’s goal of suspending Syria’s voting rights and privileges at the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). However, the administration has not sought Russia’s suspension, despite Moscow’s two proven chemical weapons attacks against regime enemies. Nor has Biden’s team penalized Moscow’s nuclear conglomerate, Rosatom, for its role in Russia’s takeover of Ukraine’s Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant. China continues to obstruct an impartial investigation into COVID-19’s origins nearly three years after the pandemic began.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- » **Work with European allies to reconstitute a pressure campaign against Iran.** This should include referring Tehran’s non-cooperation with the IAEA to the UN Security Council, reinstating UN sanctions on Iran, and deterring and rolling back its nuclear advances.
- » **Pursue the suspension of Russia’s voting rights and privileges at the OPCW.**
- » **Impose phase-in penalties against Rosatom** and other actors responsible for Russia’s seizure and occupation of Ukraine’s Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant.

1. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken, “Remarks at the High-Level Segment of the Conference on Disarmament,” February 22, 2021. (<https://geneva.usmission.gov/2021/02/22/secretary-blinken-cd>)

2. “North Korean Missile Launches and Nuclear Tests: 1984-Present,” *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, November 22, 2022. (<https://missilethreat.csis.org/north-korea-missile-launches-1984-present>)



RUSSIA

By John Hardie



2022 TREND
POSITIVE

JAN



FEB



MAR



APR



MAY



JUN



JUL



AUG



SEP



OCT



NOV



DEC



ASSESSMENT

President Biden’s initial Russia policy aimed to achieve a “stable and predictable” U.S.-Russia relationship. Vladimir Putin had other ideas. Likely believing he had a closing window of opportunity to reassert Russia’s dominance over Ukraine, Putin ordered his military to prepare for a full-scale invasion.

The Biden administration, in coordination with NATO allies and Kyiv, sought to deter Putin by threatening to impose crippling sanctions, bolster NATO’s eastern flank, and dramatically ramp up military support for Ukraine while attempting to find a diplomatic solution. Meanwhile, the administration sent Ukraine some additional military aid but dragged its feet in doing so.¹ While perhaps stemming partly from intelligence assessments that Kyiv would fall quickly, this reluctance also reflected a misplaced White House aversion to provoking Putin — even as U.S. intelligence warned an invasion was virtually inevitable.²

On February 24, Russia invaded, initially aiming to take Kyiv and install a puppet regime. But Putin underestimated Ukraine’s determination and ability to fight. Moscow’s invasion plan, predicated on meeting little Ukrainian resistance, instead resulted in disaster for Russia’s military.

To their credit, the transatlantic allies followed through on their threats. Then they went further, including by freezing half of Russia’s over \$600 billion war chest, kneecapping the Kremlin’s strategy to sanctions-proof Russia’s economy. Particularly since the spring, Western military aid, including over \$19 billion delivered or committed by Washington alone,³ has been critical in enabling Ukraine to stay in the fight and eventually retake large swathes of territory.

Apart from setting the broad goal of ensuring Ukraine remains sovereign and independent, Biden has studiously deferred to Kyiv on how to define victory on the battlefield.⁴ The administration likely continues to envision the war ending through a negotiated settlement, but Biden has rightly refrained from attempting to push Kyiv into territorial concessions or premature peace talks. At the same time, White House concerns about potential Russian escalation led Washington to delay delivery of HIMARS rocket artillery and to deny Kyiv ATACMS missiles for those systems.

RECOMMENDATIONS

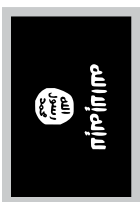
- » **Sustain military and economic support for Ukraine.** U.S. aid for Ukraine is not charity. Defeating Putin’s aggression serves core U.S. interests.
- » **Continue to refrain from pressuring Kyiv into premature peace negotiations.** Putin has given no indication he is ready for genuine peace. So long as this remains the case, peace talks will only embolden Putin, play to Russia’s advantage, and prolong the war.
- » **Provide Ukraine with ATACMS.** The risk of escalation is overstated; Putin appears to want no part of a direct conflict with the United States. As an added precaution, Washington could limit Ukraine to targets in the occupied territories, including Crimea.

1. Jack Detsch and Robbie Gramer, “White House Delays Moving Military Assistance to Ukraine,” *Foreign Policy*, December 16, 2021. (<https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/12/16/us-ukraine-russia-military-support-congress-biden-delay-aid>)

2. Shane Harris, Karen DeYoung, Isabelle Khurshudyan, Ashley Parker and Liz Sly, “Road to war: U.S. struggled to convince allies, and Zelensky, of risk of invasion,” *The Washington Post*, August 16, 2022. (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/interactive/2022/ukraine-road-to-war/>)

3. U.S. Department of Defense, “Fact Sheet on U.S. Security Assistance to Ukraine,” December 9, 2022. (<https://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/Ukraine-Fact-Sheet-Final-12092022.pdf>)

4. President Joseph R. Biden Jr., “President Biden: What America Will and Will Not Do in Ukraine,” *The New York Times*, May 31, 2022. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/31/opinion/biden-ukraine-strategy.html>)



SUNNI JIHADISM

By Bill Roggio



2022 TREND
NEGATIVE

ASSESSMENT

The United States and its allies scored tactical successes against jihadist groups world-wide, but the overall strategic picture continued to deteriorate. The Taliban has consolidated its control of Afghanistan, and foreign terror groups continue to shelter there. Eager to establish its own Islamic emirate, the emboldened Movement of the Taliban in Pakistan — distinct from the Afghan Taliban — has ended its ceasefire with the Pakistani government. The Islamic State is regenerating its strength in Iraq and may get new life in Syria if Turkey pursues military operations that disrupt U.S.-led counterterrorist operations. In Africa, both Al Qaeda and the Islamic State are advancing steadily.



In Afghanistan, Al Qaeda’s inseparability from the Taliban was on full display when the United States killed Ayman al Zawahiri, the terror group’s emir, in a Taliban-run safe house in the capital of Kabul. Nevertheless, the Biden administration continues to seek ways to fund Afghanistan’s central bank. The U.S. government has provided more than \$1 billion in aid to the country since America’s 2021 withdrawal, but refuses to disclose how the money is spent.¹

In Pakistan, the deputy emir of the Movement of the Taliban ordered the group’s commanders to resume attacks across the country after negotiations with the government broke down. Despite this, the Pakistani state continues to support the Afghan Taliban, which in turn supports the Movement of the Taliban in Pakistan. A host of other terror groups continue to operate within Pakistan, many with support from the Pakistani state.

The Islamic State is regenerating its insurgency in Iraq and continues to maintain a significant presence in Syria, even though it lost two emirs and several senior commanders this past year. Al Qaeda and the Islamic State also continue to wage brutal insurgencies throughout Africa, from the Sahel to the Democratic Republic of Congo and East Africa. In Somalia, the U.S. military and African troops supported a government counteroffensive against Shabaab, Al Qaeda’s branch in East Africa. Results have been mixed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- » **Designate the Taliban as a Foreign Terrorist Organization**, and all of its leaders as Specially Designated Global Terrorists. Channel no aid to the Afghan people through the Taliban.
- » **Support the Afghan resistance**, which can serve as a conduit for aid and provide intelligence on the Taliban and foreign terror groups operating in the country.
- » **Designate Pakistan as a State Sponsor of Terrorism**. Cut off all military and economic aid and closely ally with India to contain the threat of Pakistani-sponsored terrorism.
- » **Continue supporting the Somali government** and consider increasing the number of U.S. troops engaged there. Assist African nations in organizing their militaries and governments to combat the spread of jihadism.

JAN



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1. U.S. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, “Why the Afghan Government Collapsed,” November 2022. (<https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/evaluations/SIGAR-23-05-IP.pdf>)



SYRIA

By David Adesnik



2022 TREND
NEGATIVE

ASSESSMENT

Secretary of State Antony Blinken pledged to “put human rights at the center of U.S. foreign policy,” yet the Biden administration has done the opposite in Syria.¹ Nor has the administration worked to hold the Bashar al-Assad regime accountable for facilitating the transfer of Iranian funding and weapons to Hamas and Hezbollah. The administration has barely made use of the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2019, which mandated tough sanctions on the regime’s backers. Over the past two years, the administration has designated only 19 targets, none of them economically significant.² Biden’s team has also tacitly encouraged Arab governments to re-engage with Damascus,³ including via promotion of regional energy deals that could generate \$50 million of income for Assad, a direct violation of the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act. Implausibly, the administration claims the deals would involve no transactions with Assad, leaving nothing to sanction.⁴



To its credit, the Biden administration has kept a small contingent of U.S. troops in northeast Syria to support local forces battling the remnants of the Islamic State. At the UN, the administration has pushed back — with limited effectiveness — against Russian efforts to block humanitarian aid for parts of Syria outside the Assad regime’s control. The administration has been silent, however, about the UN’s ongoing failure to prevent the regime from diverting vast amounts of aid, as well as the outright corruption of UN officials in Damascus. Finally, the White House resisted congressional pressure to confront the rapid growth of narco-trafficking by the Assad regime, which may now be its most important source of revenue.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- » **Revert to a policy of maximum pressure on Assad**, including full enforcement of Caesar sanctions. The administration should withdraw its support for regional energy deals that benefit the Assad regime.
- » **Employ U.S. leverage as the top donor of UN Syria aid** to push the organization to prevent Assad’s diversion of aid and root out corruption in the UN’s own ranks.
- » **Build a parallel channel for humanitarian aid to northwest Syria** to protect against a Russian veto of UN aid to the region.
- » **Formulate an interagency strategy for countering Assad’s narco-trafficking**, building on the guidelines laid down in the bipartisan CAPTAGON Act.

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1. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Press Statement, “Putting Human Rights at the Center of U.S. Foreign Policy,” February 24, 2021. (<https://www.state.gov/putting-human-rights-at-the-center-of-u-s-foreign-policy>)

2. David Adesnik, “Biden Administration Limits Itself to Symbolic Sanctions on Syria,” *Foundation for Defense of Democracies*, December 13, 2021. (<https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2021/12/13/biden-limits-symbolic-sanctions-syria>)

3. Josh Rogin, “Biden is Tacitly Endorsing Assad’s Normalization,” *The Washington Post*, October 7, 2021. (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/10/07/biden-is-tacitly-endorsing-assads-normalization>)

4. David Adesnik, “The White House is Bending the Law on Syria Sanctions,” *Foundation for Defense of Democracies*, May 12, 2022. (<https://www.state.gov/putting-human-rights-at-the-center-of-u-s-foreign-policy>)



TURKEY

By Sinan Ciddi



2022 TREND
NEGATIVE

ASSESSMENT

The Biden administration is reluctant to hold Turkey accountable for its refusal to implement sanctions on Russia and threats to use force against neighbors, lest Ankara block NATO expansion or food supplies for Ukraine. The government of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has stalled the accession of Finland and Sweden to NATO, citing the Scandinavian countries' alleged lack of sensitivity to Turkey's security concerns. Specifically, Sweden has granted safe haven to numerous Kurds affiliated with the PKK, which both Ankara and Washington have designated as a terrorist organization.¹ To placate Turkey, Sweden has extradited several individuals whom Ankara believes have ties to terrorism. While hesitant to offend Russia, Erdogan has equipped Ukraine with TB2 combat drones and facilitated grain shipments through the Black Sea.



Meanwhile, throughout the year, Ankara disputed Greek sovereignty over several islands in the Aegean Sea, even threatening to invade Greece, a fellow member of NATO. Ankara also helped Russian oligarchs evade Western sanctions and initially allowed Turkish banks to continue using Russia's MIR payment system, Moscow's alternative to Visa and Mastercard.² Ankara also says it will soon send troops into northern Syria to attack the YPG, a U.S.-aligned Syrian Kurdish force, in retaliation for a November bombing in Istanbul. The YPG does have ties to the PKK, yet both deny any role in the bombing, and Turkish intervention would likely divert the YPG from cooperating with the United States to suppress the Islamic State in Syria.³

To its credit, the Biden administration successfully pressured Ankara to stop accepting payments via MIR by threatening to impose sanctions on Turkish banks that accepted the payments. Nor will the administration sell F-16 fighter jets to Ankara while it threatens its neighbors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- » **Work with NATO allies to pressure Erdogan to allow free and fair elections** and honor the results. Turkish law requires the government to hold presidential elections no later than June 2023.
- » **Sanction any Turkish officials found to be complicit in illicit finance.** Despite blocking MIR, Turkey remains a haven for illicit finance involving Hamas, the Islamic State, and other terrorist groups.
- » **Do not allow the F-16 sale to proceed until Erdogan stops threatening Greece and approves Finland's and Sweden's accession to NATO.**
- » **Continue U.S. military patrols with Syrian Kurdish partners,** and inform Ankara that the United States will employ sanctions if Turkish ground operations proceed.

JAN



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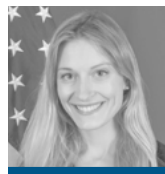
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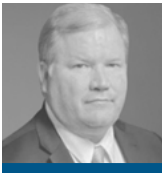
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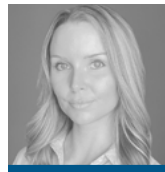
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