



The Republican Party Has Two Daddies

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I have held my tongue on many matters political while I waited for the Ukraine-Israel-Taiwan-border deal. Now that the Senate Republican caucus has voted to block the bill, I can make my views plain.

Republican elected officials, some of whom flip-flopped within 48 hours on this matter, have made it clear they will listen to two men – and no one else. One of those men is Donald Trump. The other is Vladimir Putin. Both are hoping to destroy Ukraine and shatter the democratic world; the GOP is now their vehicle. The rest of us must act accordingly – and play some serious hardball along the way.

The GOP Surrender to Trump

How dominant is the former president? Mitch McConnell, supposedly the Republican Senate leader, the man who pledged his full support not two days ago and “whose staff helped negotiate the bill” (*WaPo*), voted against it. Forty-four of his fellow Republicans followed suit, blocking the bill.

The uninitiated may wonder why the Republican Party is turning against a bill that would tighten immigration policy so much that the Border Patrol union openly endorsed it for measures that would “codify into law authorities that U.S. Border Patrol agents never had in the past.” No matter, Donald Trump said he didn’t want it passed because he’d rather run on the issue. His supporters all fell in line for darker reasons, as David Frum notes in *The Atlantic*.

Donald Trump has sold his supporters the dangerous fantasy that democratic politics can be replaced by one man’s will. No need for distasteful compromises. No need to reckon with the concerns and interests of people who disagree with House Republicans. Just somehow return Trump to the presidency: he’ll bark; the system will obey.

Of course, such fantasies have no basis in reality. As the Cato Institute reported last November:

The Biden Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has removed a higher percentage of arrested border crossers in its first two years than the Trump DHS did over its last two years. Moreover, migrants were more likely to be released after a border arrest under President Trump than under President Biden. In absolute terms, the Biden DHS is removing 3.5 times as many people per month as the Trump DHS did.

Altogether, about 1.1 million unauthorized border-crossers were released into the United States during the Trump presidency and not removed by the end of his term. Glowering and yelling do not in fact accomplish much. But to many Trump supporters, glowering and yelling are the whole of it. They don't care how little gets accomplished, so long as that little is done in the most offensive manner possible.

If this were just about border politics, it would be bad enough.

The GOP Surrender to Putin

However, as Frum further notes, this is about something deeper – a virulent anti-Americanism that has turned the GOP into the instrument of a foreign power – namely, the Kremlin.

When Mike Johnson was elevated to the House speakership, he claimed that he genuinely wanted to help Ukraine but that aid had to wait until Congress passed new laws to harden the U.S. southern border. He wrote to President Joe Biden as recently as December 5 that further aid to Ukraine was “dependent upon enactment of transformative change to our nation’s border security laws.” When Senate negotiators produced exactly what Johnson said he wanted—a transformative bill that Congress could enact—he responded by reversing his demands. Johnson no longer wants any law at all. But one thing is constant: no aid to Ukraine—which suggests that “no aid to Ukraine,” not “defend the border,” is the true priority here.

Indeed, Speaker Johnson is responding with a bill that would drop everything but aid to Israel. Not even Taiwan is important enough to survive the GOP sellout to foreign tyrants.

Frum’s analysis got an unexpected confirmation from none other than Matt Gaetz (R-FL), in response to Thomas Massie (R-KY) raging at recent Republican incompetence (The Hill, emphasis added):

“McCarthy lied to us, made secret side deals, increased spending, got rolled by Biden and shrunk our majority by quitting when he couldn’t run the place,” the Florida Republican replied. “His removal was warranted.”

In response to a separate reply, Massie asked a commenter to “name one thing that’s improved under the new Speaker.”

Gaetz himself shot back, “*Here’s one: we haven’t sent any money to Ukraine (yet).*”

There you have it.

The consequences are already being felt.

What Next for Supporters of Democracy

Congressional majorities exist in both houses to aid Ukraine’s fight for survival against Russian conquest. There is a shrinking number of Republicans willing to do the right thing, but it’s still means there are more votes in the House for Ukraine than against it. None of that matters to Republican leadership. They are a pro-Putin party now, and the pro-Ukraine minority within has

been effectively silenced. As Frum put it, “They’re going to arrive only at no—no for America, and no for Ukraine. But no is what they want.”

The Senate is moving on with a bill that includes the aid to Ukraine, Taiwan, etc. without the border provisions. I fear that won’t be enough to pry the House loose. Democrats, independents, and pro-democracy Republicans need to react and to adapt to this.

We need to play hardball. I’d recommend the following:

- Make it clear Israel doesn’t get a dime unless Ukraine does too. They’re fighting the same war on different fronts, the GOP refusal to see that notwithstanding. President Biden is already doing this ([CNN](#)), the rest of the coalition should follow suit.
- Attach Ukraine funding to every continuing resolution and State/Defense appropriations bills from here on out. Tell Speaker Johnson in no uncertain terms that his obstinance to his members and obsequiousness to Putin means a government shutdown.
- Repeatedly remind every single American voter what is at stake this November. It’s more than American democracy. It’s also American independence. A Republican victory will mean the de facto Russian colonization of America. Voters need to be aware of that – over and over and over again.

Democrats gave Republicans the benefit of the doubt with the border negotiations. That has to stop. We need to treat the Republican leadership as the obstacle it is and work around it. We also need to recognize the Republican Party is, in and of itself, a threat to American interests, and keep it out of power everywhere.