

IT IS TIME TO QUIT LEADING
FROM BEHIND

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address the crisis in Ukraine, Putin's rising aggression and intransigence in the face of increased international opprobrium, and the failure of American leadership that has allowed these recent events to transpire.

This is yet another example of Vladimir Putin looking at President Obama's foreign policy and making the calculation that he can do whatever he wants without fear that the White House will react with anything other than empty threats.

We have seen this time and time again, so much so that the President's lead from behind policy has not only eroded our influence and credibility around the world, it has hurt our relations with other countries, and it has shown tyrants like Putin, Assad, Maduro, Kim Jung Un, Khamenei, and the Castros that the U.S. lacks the courage of its convictions.

Putin has annexed Crimea, and we would be foolish to think that he will stop there as he seeks to reestablish Russia as more than just a regional power, and the Obama administration has misguidedly dismissed Putin and his provocations as those of a weakened Russia acting out.

This is an astonishing view to take and one that could seriously harm our U.S. national security interests if we continue to downplay these threats.

In 1994, the United States, along with Ukraine and Russia, signed the Budapest memorandum. In that agreement, all sides agreed to respect Ukraine's territorial sovereignty if Ukraine returned the nuclear weapons it inherited after the fall of the Soviet empire. We gave our guarantee to protect Ukraine's borders, a guarantee that we clearly did not keep.

What kind of message is the United States sending to the world again?

You can bet that Rouhani and Khamenei are sitting in Iran, and they are paying very close attention, Mr. Speaker. They are making the calculations right now, and they are betting that perhaps they will face no repercussions if they abandoned the negotiations and actively and openly pursue nuclear weapons.

President Obama's lack of leadership and strength has shown that the umbrella of U.S. security that so many have relied upon is not as wide nor as durable as they once thought.

The House and the Senate have acted to pass sanctions legislation against Putin over his actions in Crimea, but it is clear that Putin is not going to be deterred by this.

It may be a case of too little, too late because the administration failed to take decisive action from the get-go, just like it had in Iran and Syria before this and just like it is now failing to do in Venezuela.

While Obama threatens consequences for Putin over his Crimea provocations—and fails to act on these words—he hasn't even mustered up the fortitude to even feign strong condemnations for Maduro and his thugs in Venezuela, as they continue to brutally oppress the opposition in Venezuela, the opposition that is calling for reforms and democracy.

Mr. Speaker, I have here a poster of Maria Corina Machado, a valiant human rights leader in Venezuela, and she is just one of the many victims of Maduro's thuggery.

There have been 30 people killed as a result of Maduro's violent attempts to oppress dissent, while opposition leaders like Leopoldo Lopez have been unjustly detained over a month now in military prison, and Maria Corina Machado has been stripped of her seat in the national assembly, thus revoking her immunity, her protection, suggesting that Maduro and his goons will soon be coming to take her away to a military prison.

Yet again, President Obama chooses to lead from behind. The administration has repeatedly said that we need to work with the Organization of American States to hold Maduro accountable, but that body is even more afraid to call out Maduro than this administration.

Mr. Speaker, 5 years of failed foreign policy from this administration is really coming home to roost, and that means dire consequences for the American people, for the people of Venezuela, for the people of Ukraine, and for freedom-seeking people throughout the world.

It is time for the administration to take an active role in foreign policy for the sake of American national security and for the sake of the future of democracy. It is time to quit this leading from behind. It is time to restore American leadership, and that is the only way to make the world a safer place.

REPUBLICAN BUDGET MORE OF
THE SAME

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, the baseball season begins this week, so I will quote the great Yogi Berra. "It's déjà vu all over again."

This year's Republican budget, which Chairman RYAN unveiled yesterday, is more of the same we have, unfortunately, come to expect. It is an exercise in partisan messaging, not a serious and honest attempt to invest in our priorities and pursue compromise toward a sustainable fiscal outlook.

Their budget rejects the balanced approach of spending reforms, new revenue, and investments in our economy called for by both the Bowles-Simpson and the Rivlin-Domenici Commissions, as well as by the Gang of Six in the United States Senate and by virtually

every economist. The Ryan budget cuts \$5 trillion without a single penny of new revenue, not even a hint of balance.

Moreover, Chairman RYAN's budget once again relies on the magic asterisk of hundreds of billions of dollars in spending cuts to important domestic programs. He doesn't say what programs we are going to cut; he simply says we are going to get the money.

He said that last year, of course, and it didn't happen. He gives virtually no details about the policies through which he expects to achieve these savings. To that extent, it is radically different from the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee's tax reform plan, which made real choices, showed real courage, and was a real document.

The Republican budget continues their obsession with repealing or undermining the Affordable Care Act, their 53rd attempt to do so. However, of course, they keep all the savings and revenues that the Affordable Care Act is scored as giving.

It would furthermore kick millions off their health insurance and turn Medicaid into a capped block grant, decimating the program and making life more difficult for all those millions who rely on it.

Once more, they are seeking to end the Medicare guarantee as we know it. They will say it is a choice, that at 55 you can make a choice whether you want to have private insurance with a voucher that you get from the Federal Government or go into Medicare. That's what they say.

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The reality is, however, they would make traditional Medicare far, far, far more expensive, driving people out of that program and eliminating it over time.

Their budget, in addition, would make it very difficult, if not impossible, for Congress to invest in our economy and our people by driving domestic discretionary spending well below the sequester's harmful level.

The American people ought to be outraged but not surprised. We have seen this movie before, and it never ends well for Republicans or, tragically, does it end happily for the American people. The new plot twist in this year's budget is that Chairman RYAN is going where no budget chairman has gone before, relying on the spurious gimmickry of so-called "dynamic scoring" to pad his numbers with budget savings that simply do not exist.

We have talked about this a lot. The 1981 tax cuts were supposed to boom the economy. In fact, we increased the national debt by 187 percent. In 2001 and 2003, we were promised that the tax cuts would grow the economy. In fact, during those 8 years of the Bush administration, we had the worst economy that anybody in this Chamber has experienced and, indeed, I would presume, in the gallery as well.