

War in Ukraine

Joe Biden says he is prepared to speak to Putin about ending Ukraine war

Comments mark furthest US president has gone in expressing openness to talks with Russia's leader



French president Emmanuel Macron, left, and his US counterpart Joe Biden hold a press conference at the White House during their first bilateral summit on Thursday © Ludovic Marin/AFP/Getty Images

Felicia Schwartz and **Leila Abboud** in Washington YESTERDAY

Stay across the latest Ukraine coverage. [Join the FT's Telegram channel](#)

×

US president Joe Biden has said he is “prepared to speak with” Vladimir Putin about the war in Ukraine if Russia’s leader shows an interest in bringing the nine-month conflict to an end.

“I am prepared to speak with Mr Putin if in fact there is an interest in him deciding he is looking for a way to end the war,” Biden said, adding that he would only do so after consulting [Nato](#) allies.

The remarks, made at a press conference in Washington, DC, during a bilateral summit with French president Emmanuel Macron, mark the furthest Biden has gone in expressing openness to discuss the war with Putin.

The US president said he had “no immediate plans” to contact Russia’s leader, adding that he had not seen any indications from Putin that he was willing to bring the war to an end.

“He hasn’t done that yet. If that’s the case, in consultation with my French and Nato friends, I’ll be happy to sit down with Putin to see what he has in mind,” Biden said.

The comments came as the US hosted Macron on a three-day state visit, the first of the Biden administration and the second for France's president. Although the two leaders were at pains to cast their countries as staunch and historical allies, tensions between the US and Europe have grown in recent weeks as the [war in Ukraine](#) rages on.

The conflict has taken a deeper economic toll on Europe than the US by steeply driving up energy prices after Russia severely curtailed natural gas exports needed by households and companies across the EU.

Meanwhile, European countries have been stung by Biden's flagship climate legislation, known as the Inflation Reduction Act, and its \$400bn of incentives to fund the transition to green energy. France has been among its loudest critics, arguing that it unfairly skews competition by reserving tax credits and subsidies for US companies, which risks leading to job losses in the EU.

Macron on Wednesday [called the legislation "super aggressive"](#) against European companies and warned it risked "fragmenting the west" when unity was needed to navigate the fallout from the war.

At the press conference, Biden said he "makes no apology" for the sweeping IRA, which includes subsidies for electric cars manufactured in the US and tax credits to promote industries such as renewable energy and batteries.

However, he signalled his willingness to make concessions over the law to appease EU concerns.

"There are tweaks that we can make that can fundamentally make it easier for European countries to participate or be on their own, but that still needs to be worked out," Biden said. "We never intended to exclude folks who were willing to co-operate with us."

Calling the discussions with Biden "frank and sincere", Macron said he was "confident" that progress could be made on the IRA but declined to give details.

The two leaders said they had mandated a joint task force between the US and European Union to work on "technical discussions" about what remedies would be possible.

"In the coming weeks and months we will clarify all this, but progress should be possible," Macron said. "We want to succeed together, not against each other."

Macron and other European leaders have floated the idea of the US granting exceptions to European companies, similar to those granted to countries with trade deals with the US such as Canada and Mexico. But so far it has been difficult to get the US to change its approach because Congress has already passed the law.

“There is a lot we can do,” Biden said.

[Copyright](#) The Financial Times Limited 2022. All rights reserved.
