

Question for written answer E-003245/2021

to the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

Rule 138

Filip De Man (ID)

Subject: Deterioration in EU-Russia relations

On 16 June 2021, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy announced that EU strategy with regard to Russia would be based on three main pillars: 'push back, constrain and engage'. Significantly, this statement has been timed to coincide with the visit of US President Joe Biden, whose administration is pushing for a new 'cold war' with Russia. Furthermore, the language used by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy closely echoes that used by the US in previous decades in its dealings with Russia, that is to say: 'contain' and 'rollback'. He criticises Russia for what he refers to as its aggressiveness and insufficient progress towards democratisation.

1. How can he account for the double standards being applied in seeking to combat Russia's alleged interference in the EU on the one hand, while at the same time giving direct support to Russian civil society and extraparliamentary opposition (human rights defenders) on the other?
2. The EU energy transition will take several decades and, in the meantime, the closure of nuclear plants will make Member States more dependent on Russian gas. What will be the likely impact on the energy security of the Member States of the 'push back, constrain and engage' strategy being advocated by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy?
3. Is he in favour of further expansion by NATO into Eastern Europe?