Position: Economic sanctions should be imposed on Russia

This position addresses the topic 2014 Russian military intervention in Ukraine.

For this position

"The immediate concern must be to show Russia that further moves will not be tolerated and that Ukraine’s territorial integrity is sacrosanct. Diplomatic isolation, asset freezes and travel bans against oligarchs are appropriate. The announcement of air defense exercises with the Baltic states and the movement of a U.S. destroyer to the Black Sea bolster our allies, as does economic help for Ukraine’s embattled leaders, who must put aside their internal divisions and govern their country."

From Will America heed the wake-up call of Ukraine?, by Condoleezza Rice (The Washington Post, March 7, 2014) (view)

"Why did we deny Ukraine weapons? Because in the Barack Obama-John Kerry worldview, arming the victim might be taken as a provocation. This kind of mind-bending illogic has marked the administration’s response to the whole Crimea affair."

From Obama’s pathetic response to Putin’s invasion of Crimea, by Charles Krauthammer (The Washington Post, March 20, 2014) (view)

"Western strategy must also fulfill the warning issued by German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who said the invasion would “cause massive damage to Russia, economically and politically.” That means, at a minimum, excluding Moscow from the Group of Eight and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, which it is seeking to join. It also requires expanding sanctions from individuals to sectors — starting with the Russian banking system, which should be cut off from U.S. and European markets."


"What is truly alarming in Mr. Putin’s rash behavior is that he is motivated by the desire for revenge against the Ukrainian people for revolting against a Kremlin-friendly government. A rational actor would know that the precedent of holding a local referendum to determine sovereignty is risky for Russia — a federation of more than 80 disparate regions, including more than 160 ethnic groups and at least 100 languages."

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Putin showed little heed to Obama’s raised hand, with brazen confidence that his U.S.
counterpart would never dare swing. So far, Putin’s leverage has fed his appetite for
conquest. Crimea is his, and already he has cast a wandering eye toward Russian-
speaking areas of eastern Ukraine. Ukraine, meanwhile, waves a 1994 treaty in which
the U.S., United Kingdom and Russia pledged to respect its territorial boundaries and
wonders if anyone remembers signing anything.

Mr. Obama said Monday he will “calibrate our response based on whether Russia
chooses to escalate or de-escalate.” Since a de-escalation looks at this point like
wishful thinking, we’ll know that the president’s calibrations are adequate when they
cause Russia’s markets to plunge rather than rally.

The immediate step, freezing assets of a few officials close to Putin, is a minor warning
shot. The firepower can by multiplied many times by imposing embargoes, cutting
Russia off from the international banking system or other measures — if Europe is
willing to bear the cost. An even more potent step would be aggressive energy
development in Europe, which over time would deprive Russia of revenue from its
primary export and reduce its leverage.

We do not need to close the pipelines tomorrow, nor could we. But most energy
experts believe Europe is already paying over the odds for Russian gas. By
restructuring the energy network to take in other producers, such as Qatar and Algeria,
we could, within the space of just a few years, cut our dependence on Russia, with the
disastrous implications that would have for Moscow’s balance sheet.

When the Russian-backed operatives first began taking over buildings in Donetsk and
other cities two weeks ago, Mr. Kerry told a congressional hearing that broad sanctions
against the Russian banking, energy and mining sectors were “on the table.” Those
steps would give pause to the Russian elite, if not Mr. Putin.
Critics point to the Russian "occupation" of Crimea as evidence that no fair vote could have taken place. Where were these people when an election held in an Iraq occupied by U.S. troops was called a "triumph of democracy"? Perhaps the U.S. officials who supported the unconstitutional overthrow of Ukraine's government should refocus their energies on learning our own Constitution, which does not allow the U.S. government to overthrow governments overseas or send a billion dollars to bail out Ukraine and its international creditors.

From Crimea secedes. So what?, by Ron Paul (USA Today, March 17, 2014) (view)

Mixed on this position

No results

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This page was last edited on March 18, 2014, at 17:13.

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