Generic Negative: Russia – no worries

By “Coach Vance” Trefethen

Some AFF plans will do something because they’re worried about Russia and its aggression, invasion of Ukraine, global hegemony, Putin, or other threats. This brief gives generic responses that can be used against any case that mentions threats or problems emanating from Russia, without knowing in advance what the specific AFF plan is.

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Generic Negative: Russia – no worries

FUNDING THE UKRAINE WAR

Russian exports are not paying for the war - not physically possible because of where the money goes

Prof. Mark Harrison 2022. (Emeritus Professor, Univ. of Warwick) 13 June 2022 " Western sanctions on Russia are working, an energy embargo now is a costly distraction" <https://voxeu.org/article/western-sanctions-russia-are-working-energy-embargo-now-costly-distraction> (accessed 30 June 2022)

Two things follow. One, the fact that Russia is exporting one seventh of its national income to the rest of the world is weakening, not strengthening, its war effort. Two, Russia’s exports are not ‘paying for Putin’s war’. They are certainly paying for something, but not that. What they are paying for is the accumulation of idle balances of foreign currency. This currency may be held by the state (within Russia) or by private citizens abroad (in the case of capital flight). But, if they cannot be used to import resources into Russia, they are not paying for Putin’s war.

No more steps remain for US policy that could effectively take any more money away from Russia

David Lawder 2022 (journalist) 6 Apr 2022 "Easy Russia sanctions exhausted, U.S. and allies face economic bite" <https://financialpost.com/pmn/business-pmn/easy-russia-sanctions-exhausted-u-s-and-allies-face-economic-bite> (accessed 28 July 2022)

As the world’s wealthy democratic powers prepare to roll out a new round of sanctions against Russia in response to horrifying images of executed Ukrainians in the city of Bucha, it has become clear that the easiest options are now exhausted and stark differences have emerged among allies over next steps. The European Union is set to take a first stab at Russia’s energy sector in response to its invasion of Ukraine launched in February, banning imports of Russian coal. But EU countries remain divided over whether and how to restrict Russia’s gas and oil sectors that are more critical to their economies. The United States and Group of Seven allies also are preparing new sanctions on Russian financial institutions, state-owned enterprises and more Russian government officials and their family members. In addition, they plan to ban new investment in Russia, and the United States has banned Moscow from paying sovereign debt holders with money in U.S. banks. The moves may increase economic hardship for Russians but may not put much of a dent in Russia’s energy revenues, the lifeblood of its economy, according to U.S. sanctions analysts.

RUSSIA HEGEMONY / GEOPOLITICAL COMPETITION

Neither China nor Russia is a threat to the US, just moving the world back into healthy balance of power

Vijay Prashad 2018 (Indian historian, editor and journalist. He is a writing fellow and chief correspondent at [Globetrotter](https://independentmediainstitute.org/globetrotter/), a project of the Independent Media Institute) A paranoid America is greatly exaggerating Russian power 22 Feb 2018 https://www.salon.com/2018/02/22/a-paranoid-america-is-greatly-exaggerating-russian-power\_partner/ (accessed 25 July 2022)

But it remains a defensive statement. Neither China nor Russia is making a push to become the global powerhouse. They are merely seeking to rebalance a world order that has — since the end of the Cold War — tilted unhealthily towards the United States. So is Russia a threat? Is China a threat? The question really is, to whom? They are threats to any assertion of US dominance over the planet. But they are no threat to the United States as such. They are committed to a multi-polar planet: a sensible solution in our very unstable and dangerous times.

US massively spends more on military than Russia, and Russia can’t establish much power abroad

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One of the central features of Putin’s reforms was to strengthen the military, whose capacity had declined in the post-Soviet era. This included Russia’s weapons production, which withered for lack of investment. Putin put in resources towards both the arms industry and the military — although the numbers here are minuscule compared to those in the United States. It is important to point out that the increase of the US military budget insisted upon by Donald Trump is greater than the total Russian military budget. The new US budget will spend $105 billion more on the military than it did last year, taking US military spending to $716 billion; Russia’s total military spending is $69 billion. **[END QUOTE**] Even Russia’s interventions — in Ukraine and in Syria — are less acts of belligerence than acts of defense. The two warm-water ports that Russia is able to access for its navy are in Sevastopol (Ukraine) and Tartus (Syria). If the West had been able to draw Ukraine and Syria away from mild Russian influence, Russia would have lost its navy. The United States, meanwhile, has 40 warm-water bases on its own territory and an additional 31 naval bases across the world (from Peru to Japan, from Spain to Diego Garcia). [**HE CONTINUES LATER IN THE CONTEXT QUOTE**:] Russia’s attempt to create the Collective Security Treaty Organization, a rival to NATO, has not gained traction. Eastern Ukraine remains in distress, while Syria is still in the midst of a terrible war. Russia has prevented American hegemony in these zones, but it has not been able to establish its own power here either.

No need to be worrying about Russia in distant corners of the world where US interests are not at stake

Eugene Rumer and Richard Sokolsky 2021. (Rumer, a former national intelligence officer for Russia and Eurasia at the U.S. National Intelligence Council, is a senior fellow and the director of Carnegie Endowment for International Peace’s Russia and Eurasia Program. Sokolsky is a nonresident senior fellow in Carnegie Endowment for International Peace’s Russia and Eurasia Program) 30 June 2021 “Grand Illusions: The Impact of Misperceptions About Russia on U.S. Policy“ <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/06/30/grand-illusions-impact-of-misperceptions-about-russia-on-u.s.-policy-pub-84845> (accessed 26 July 2022)

At the same time, the scope and scale of the threat that Russia’s global activism poses to U.S. interests will depend largely on how Washington defines those interests in regions where Russia has expanded its footprint over the past decade. Absent a sober assessment of Russia’s gains and tools for power projection, the United States will position itself to needlessly chase after the specter of Russian expansionism in distant corners of the world where major U.S. interests are not at stake.

Russia has no impact on Latin America

Eugene Rumer and Richard Sokolsky 2021. (Rumer, a former national intelligence officer for Russia and Eurasia at the U.S. National Intelligence Council, is a senior fellow and the director of Carnegie Endowment for International Peace’s Russia and Eurasia Program. Sokolsky is a nonresident senior fellow in Carnegie Endowment for International Peace’s Russia and Eurasia Program) 30 June 2021 “Grand Illusions: The Impact of Misperceptions About Russia on U.S. Policy“ <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/06/30/grand-illusions-impact-of-misperceptions-about-russia-on-u.s.-policy-pub-84845> (accessed 26 July 2022)

Russia’s imports from South America accounted for only about 2.5 percent of its total imports in 2018. Moscow is advancing its agenda of challenging U.S. influence in the latter’s backyard, but is not interested in helping countries there solve their problems. As a consequence, it brings little to the table that is of interest to the vast majority of countries in the region. In sum, Russia would have to make a substantially greater investment in the region, especially in its military footprint, to chip away at the U.S. military, political, economic, and cultural predominance in Latin America.

Russia has little influence: Even its friends and neighbors don’t respect it

Eugene Rumer and Richard Sokolsky 2021. (Rumer, a former national intelligence officer for Russia and Eurasia at the U.S. National Intelligence Council, is a senior fellow and the director of Carnegie Endowment for International Peace’s Russia and Eurasia Program. Sokolsky is a nonresident senior fellow in Carnegie Endowment for International Peace’s Russia and Eurasia Program) 30 June 2021 “Grand Illusions: The Impact of Misperceptions About Russia on U.S. Policy“ <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/06/30/grand-illusions-impact-of-misperceptions-about-russia-on-u.s.-policy-pub-84845> (accessed 26 July 2022)

The Lonely Ex-Superpower: Russia has no real allies, only weak client states that add little to its power and influence. It is surrounded by countries that are either hostile or wary toward it. Even within what Moscow regards as its “sphere of privileged interests,” other countries, notably China, have been able to achieve high levels of penetration. The former Soviet countries in Central Asia, in particular, are increasingly dependent on China for trade, investment, and infrastructure.

Russia can’t successfully expand its influence anywhere

Eugene Rumer and Richard Sokolsky 2021. (Rumer, a former national intelligence officer for Russia and Eurasia at the U.S. National Intelligence Council, is a senior fellow and the director of Carnegie Endowment for International Peace’s Russia and Eurasia Program. Sokolsky is a nonresident senior fellow in Carnegie Endowment for International Peace’s Russia and Eurasia Program) 30 June 2021 “Grand Illusions: The Impact of Misperceptions About Russia on U.S. Policy“ <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/06/30/grand-illusions-impact-of-misperceptions-about-russia-on-u.s.-policy-pub-84845> (accessed 26 July 2022)

Friends Without Great Benefits: Russia’s attempts to expand its influence and geopolitical sway are self-limiting. While much of the Kremlin’s activism in different regions has not been resource-intensive, it lacks many of the tools to win friends as it offers very little in the way of foreign investment, trade, or technology. There is little evidence to suggest that most countries in the developing world seek to emulate Russia’s economic model. Likewise, Moscow has not been able to leverage China’s growing presence and influence in these regions to its own advantage.

UKRAINE WAR PROVES RUSSIA WEAKNESS, REDUCED THREAT

Ukraine war proves how weak Russia is. We shouldn’t be wasting resources on such a weak “threat”

Prof. Anatol Lieven 2022 (Professor at Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, Qatar, visiting professor in the War Studies Dept of King’s College London, senior fellow of the New America Foundation ) 14 July 2022 “Just How Much Bigger Is the US-NATO Military Force Than Russia's?” <https://www.commondreams.org/views/2022/07/14/just-how-much-bigger-us-nato-military-force-russias> (accessed 26 July 2022)

The Russian invasion of Ukraine, and the atrocities that have accompanied it, have naturally caused deep anxiety throughout Europe. NATO's new Strategic Concept for the next decade calls Russia "the most significant and direct threat to Allies' security and to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area." But before devoting huge additional resources to confront Russia, it would be a good idea to take a level-headed look at Russian military resources and the nature and extent of the Russian military threat to NATO. We should not forget how, after the USSR's collapse, Western intelligence agencies concluded that their Cold War estimates of Soviet military power were greatly[exaggerated](https://www.csmonitor.com/1995/1024/24191.html) (just as, it's worth noting, were Western[predictions](https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-ukraine-invasion-scenarios/31614428.html) of an easy Russian[victory](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR2500/RR2563/RAND_RR2563.pdf) over Ukraine this year). After all, U.S. and Western resources are not unlimited, and devoting them to defend against Russia means limiting them elsewhere.

Ukraine proves weakness of Russian military. No way they can threaten the rest of Europe

Doug Bandow 2022 (JD; senior fellow at the Cato Institute; former special assistant to Pres. Reagan) 28 Mar 2022 “With Russia’s Weakness on Full Display: Hawks Now Want America to Fight Russia and China” <https://www.cato.org/commentary/russias-weakness-full-display-hawks-now-want-america-fight-russia-china> (accessed 29 July 2022)

Putin also inadvertently showcased the limits of the Russian armed services. They have significant firepower but suffer from important weaknesses. While raw numbers of troops and tanks would suggest that Moscow could defeat any European nation, poor logistics, maintenance, morale, and training make Russia look substantially less threatening. No doubt, Moscow will learn from its mistakes and address its military’s shortcomings, though it might be short of money to refurbish its force. Nor should Russians be underestimated if defending their country from attack. However, looking ever less plausible are scare stories of a revived Red Army driving across Europe to the Atlantic.

Ukraine war is a humanitarian crisis, not a military threat: Don’t over-react

Doug Bandow 2022 (JD; senior fellow at the Cato Institute; former special assistant to Pres. Reagan) What Now for Russia? 3 March 2022 <https://www.cato.org/commentary/what-now-russia> (accessed 29 July 2022)

Third, Washington should treat Russia’s invasion primarily as a humanitarian crisis, not a military threat. Russian President Vladimir Putin is a bad guy, but he has never demonstrated the slightest interest in war against America, which would be beyond foolish. Thus, the Biden administration should not overreact. Its principal obligation is to ensure that the Russian invasion does not turn into a security crisis for the U.S.

NO THREAT TO THE BALTICS

There’s only 1 reason Russia would use to justify invading Baltics: Blockade of Kaliningrad

Prof. Anatol Lieven 2022 (Professor at Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, Qatar, visiting professor in the War Studies Dept of King’s College London, senior fellow of the New America Foundation ) 14 July 2022 “Just How Much Bigger Is the US-NATO Military Force Than Russia's?” <https://www.commondreams.org/views/2022/07/14/just-how-much-bigger-us-nato-military-force-russias> (accessed 26 July 2022)

A Russian invasion of the Baltic would, in any event, be a deeply irrational act in purely military terms; and while Putin's invasion of Ukraine was utterly criminal, it was not insane—after all, as noted, Moscow's assumptions of an easy short-term victory were shared by Western intelligence. The one circumstance in which Russia might feel compelled to invade Lithuania would be if Lithuania were to[blockade](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/6/18/lithuania-enforces-eu-sanctions-on-goods-to-russias-kaliningrad) access to the Russian exclave of[Kaliningrad](https://www.brookings.edu/podcast-episode/why-is-kaliningrad-at-the-center-of-a-new-russia-nato-faceoff/?mc_cid=8269c793b6&mc_eid=a854a7e91d); which is why the EU would be wise to follow Germany's[lead](https://www.thefirstnews.com/article/germany-tries-to-exempt-kaliningrad-from-eu-sanctions---polish-dep-fm-31599) exempting Kaliningrad from EU sanctions.

EUROPE’S PROBLEM, NOT OURS

If Russia really is a big threat to Europe, then it’s Europe’s problem, not ours

Doug Bandow 2022 (JD; senior fellow at the Cato Institute; former special assistant to Pres. Reagan) 13 July 2022 “Europe Is Rich. So Why Does It Need America’s Help against Russia?” <https://www.cato.org/commentary/europe-rich-so-why-does-it-need-americas-help-against-russia> (accessed 29 July 2022)

Instead of adding forces to Europe, Washington should be bringing American personnel home. Europe needs to decide if it believes Russia poses an existential threat and if so, take effective action accordingly. The only way that will happen is if Uncle Sam does less. Starting now.

Russia isn’t much of a threat. Whatever problem it may be, it should be managed by Europe, not us

Doug Bandow 2022 (JD; senior fellow at the Cato Institute; former special assistant to Pres. Reagan) 28 Mar 2022 “With Russia’s Weakness on Full Display: Hawks Now Want America to Fight Russia and China” <https://www.cato.org/commentary/russias-weakness-full-display-hawks-now-want-america-fight-russia-china> (accessed 29 July 2022)

After World War II, many democratic and friendly states were vulnerable to Soviet subversion and assault. Hence Washington’s policy of containment. Thankfully, the justification for this policy disappeared: the USSR collapsed, the Warsaw Pact dissolved, Eastern European nations raced westward. Had Washington and its allies behaved differently, not treating Moscow as a defeated nation through NATO expansion and more, Russia likely would not have reemerged as a threat. But Putin has helpfully demonstrated that Moscow, though certainly not a paper tiger, nevertheless is not equipped for continent‐​wide aggression. Russia remains a problem, but one that could and should be managed by Europeans, not Americans.

US national security is best served by NOT confronting Russia and letting Europe deal with it

Doug Bandow 2022 (JD; senior fellow at the Cato Institute; former special assistant to Pres. Reagan) 28 Mar 2022 “With Russia’s Weakness on Full Display: Hawks Now Want America to Fight Russia and China” <https://www.cato.org/commentary/russias-weakness-full-display-hawks-now-want-america-fight-russia-china> (accessed 29 July 2022)

Ultimately, Russia’s criminal aggression against Ukraine offers a reminder why US security is best served by remaining outside of unnecessary conflicts, not making other nations’ wars America’s own. It is well past time for Washington’s allies and friends to take over their own security and confront whatever threats exist. The American people defended much of the world over the last eight decades. Now it is time for them to retire.

DISADVANTAGE: HYPING THE THREAT

Link: Inflating the evil Russian threat makes things worse: Hardens Putin, increases risk of retaliation

Doug Bandow 2022 (JD; senior fellow at the Cato Institute; former special assistant to Pres. Reagan) 23 May 2022 “The Washington Blob: Its Blind Arrogance May Lead to War with Russia” <https://www.cato.org/commentary/washington-blob-its-blind-arrogance-may-lead-war-russia> (accessed 29 July 2022)

Worse, administration officials are not just pursuing inflated war aims, but promoting them publicly, expressing desire for regime change, war crimes trials, and a weakened Russia. This ostentatious challenge raises the stakes for the Putin government, increasing pressure on it to respond. Public discussions of America’s role in combat operations, including targeting Russian generals and ships, also highlights Washington’s status as a cobelligerent and tempts Moscow to retaliate.

Impact: World War 3

Doug Bandow 2022 (JD; senior fellow at the Cato Institute; former special assistant to Pres. Reagan) 23 May 2022 “The Washington Blob: Its Blind Arrogance May Lead to War with Russia” <https://www.cato.org/commentary/washington-blob-its-blind-arrogance-may-lead-war-russia> (accessed 29 July 2022)

Escalation could be [striking Western aid shipments](https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/europe/2022/04/11/poland-risks-russian-agression-as-it-becomes-key-weapons-route-for-ukraine/) before they reach Ukraine, perhaps in Poland; encouraging attacks by Russian or proxy forces on US garrisons elsewhere, such as in Syria or Iraq; augmenting the military capabilities of American adversaries, most dangerously Iran or North Korea; employing more [destructive weapons and firepower](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-60664169), including nuclear weapons; and [declaring full mobilization](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/05/19/russians-criticize-military-war-ukraine/), thereby committing the Russian people to a modified version of total war. All of these would set up a potentially dangerous confrontation with Washington. It would be madness for the US to match or trump Moscow, given the stakes. However, backing down, seemingly abandoning Ukraine, would sacrifice US credibility. This is how World War III could start.