

Should We Isolate Russia?



INTELLIGENCE SQUARED U.S. DEBATE BRIEFING BOOK

“Should We Isolate Russia?”

June 28, 2022

Should We Isolate Russia?



SHOULD WE ISOLATE RUSSIA?

MODERATOR
DAVID ARIOSTO

DEBATERS

YES TO THE QUESTION

MICHAEL MCFAUL, FORMER U.S. AMBASSADOR TO
RUSSIA

RADAN KANEV, BULGARIAN POLITICIAN & MEMBER
OF EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

NO TO THE QUESTION

EMMA ASHFORD, SENIOR FELLOW, ATLANTIC
COUNCIL

JONAS SHAENDE, INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIST

DESCRIPTION

At the time Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine, Russia supplied the European Union with some 40% of its natural gas, 25% of its oil, and nearly half of its coal. But as punishment for the war, most of Russia's energy imports to Europe will be banned by the end of the year, along with sweeping sanctions that target banks, businesses, and oligarchs. Is that smart policy? Those who argue "yes" say Russia must be punished for its actions, democratic governments should be protected, and that accommodations only embolden Moscow. Those who argue "no" say isolating the Kremlin to this extent is a dangerous gamble, which could undermine Europe's economies, push Russia further toward China, and lay the groundwork for an escalation. In this context, and in partnership with the German Marshall Fund, we debate this question, "Should we isolate Russia? "

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FROM THE DEBATERS



YES TO THE QUESTION: Michael McFaul

Michael McFaul is an American diplomat and scholar. In 2009, he joined the Obama administration in the National Security Council working on issues related to Russian and Eurasian affairs and later served as the U.S. Ambassador to Russia from 2012 to 2014. He is the author of several books, most recently the New York Times bestseller "Cold War to Hot Peace." McFaul is currently on faculty at Stanford University and is writing a new book on great power relations in the 21st century.

ARTICLE: [The West shouldn't back down in the face of Putin's threats](#)

By Michael McFaul | April 13, 2022 | The Washington Post

"But one inspiring victory does not win a war....They still need help from the West and the West must respond without caving to Russian threats."

ARTICLE: [Vladimir does not think like we do](#)

By Michael McFaul | January 26, 2022 | The Washington Post

"On this contentious issue, there is no deal to be had between the United States and Russia as long as Putin is in power."

ARTICLE: [The West needs to up its sanctions game against Russia](#)

By Michael McFaul | May 3, 2022 | The Washington Post

"For that reason, rather than targeting specific individuals, the world should shift some sanctions to target positions in the Russian government, state-owned enterprises, political parties and state-controlled media.... Sanctioning positions rather than individuals would also simplify targeting for governments. More systematic rules are easier to implement and defend. This principle also provides a way for individuals in Putin's government to get off the sanctions list, an option not available now. "



YES TO THE QUESTION: Radan Kanev

Radan Kanev is a Bulgarian politician, lawyer, and Member of European Parliament. He began his political career as one of the founders of Democrats for a Strong Bulgaria (DSB). Since then, he has had several political posts in the country and was elected to European Parliament as a representative of the recently founded "Democratic

Bulgaria" coalition in 2019. Kanev has also worked as an attorney, a partner and managing partner at several law firms, and a trademark representative for the Bulgarian patent office and the EUIPO.

ARTICLE: [The Russian war in Ukraine and the Green Deal](#)

By Radan Kanev | March 8, 2022 | Euractiv

"The EU's top priority should be energy independence and security of energy supply, on the lowest prices possible... All possible sources of energy shall be explored and developed..."

ARTICLE: [Will 'Postpolitik' replace 'Ostpolitik'?](#)

By Radan Kanev | April 5, 2022 | Euractiv

"A more robust standard defence policy is needed and is on its way already, and the increase in national defence budgets and capabilities is inevitable and already planned."

ARTICLE: [The European 'New Marshall Plan' – Challenges for Eastern Europe](#)

By Radan Kanev | May 1, 2020 | Euractiv

"And here is the big problem of the Bulgarian government and political elite: We all lived and were formed as politicians in the heyday of the Washington consensus. Never in our lifetimes was the Keynesian attempt even planned, let alone performed."

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NO TO THE QUESTION: Emma Ashford

Emma Ashford is a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council's New American Engagement Initiative, which focuses on challenging the prevailing assumptions governing U.S. foreign policy and seeks to develop effective solutions that preserve America's security and prosperity. Ashford's work focuses on questions of grand strategy, international security, and the future of U.S. foreign policy. She has expertise in the politics of Russia, Europe, and the Middle East. She is also a nonresident fellow at the Modern War Institute at West Point. Ashford writes the biweekly column, "It's Debatable," for Foreign Policy.

TRANSCRIPT: [Transcript: Ezra Klein Interviews Emma Ashford](#)

March 18, 2022 | The New York Times

"We've seen the Russians get increasingly unhappy about that. But equally, you know, that didn't force Russia to start a war in Ukraine. The Russians retained the culpability for that decision. The structural factors help us to understand how we got where we are today. I think where Mearsheimer goes too far is in basically assigning guilt to the West based on that history that he's telling."

ARTICLE: [What's the endgame in Ukraine?](#)

By Emma Ashford & Matthew Kroenig | May 13, 2022 | Foreign Policy

"...I find it baffling that the U.S. Congress is poised to pass a new \$40 billion authorization for new shipments of weapons and aid to Ukraine \$7 billion more than the White House even asked for! They're not even allotting time for a proper debate over this money, and yet it's around 5 percent of what the United States spends on defense in a given year."

ARTICLE: [Is weakening Russia a bad idea?](#)

By Emma Ashford & Matthew Kroenig | April 29, 2022 | Foreign Policy

"What does 'win' even mean in the context of this war? ...to permanently weaken Russia? That last one is especially problematic: It's not particularly sensible to talk about a nuclear power like that publicly, even if you do privately believe you should seek to weaken them."



NO TO THE QUESTION: Jonas Shaende

Jonas Shaende is an American economist who grew up in the Soviet Union. As an academic, his scholarship has focused on international economic relations and monetary systems. This includes teaching advanced economics, globalization, and international trade courses at the John Jay

College of Criminal Justice and CUNY and SUNY colleges in New York. Shaende is a frequent economics commentator, particularly on Russian-language media. He has held senior appointments in New York government and currently serves as chief economist of the Fiscal Policy Institute.

GENERAL RESEARCH

Background & History

ARTICLE: [How isolated is Russia, really?](#)

By Adam Taylor | April 8, 2022 | The Washington Post

“As a consequence of its invasion of Ukraine, Russia has become isolated.”

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ARTICLE: [U.S., allies plan for long-term isolation of Russia](#)

By Karen DeYoung & Michael Birnbaum | April 16, 2022 | The Washington Post

"At NATO and the European Union, and at the State Department, the Pentagon and allied ministries, blueprints are being drawn up to enshrine new policies across virtually every aspect of the West's posture toward Moscow, from defense and finance to trade and international diplomacy."

ARTICLE: [Is Russia as isolated as Ukraine's allies hope?](#)

April 24, 2022 | France 24

"Efforts to ostracize Moscow have faced resistance from a reluctant section of the international community."

REPORT: [Russia Futures: Three Trajectories](#)

By Andrew Lohsen & Cyrus Newlin | May 4, 2022 | Center for Strategic and International Studies

"That attitude of risk tolerance rests on a perception that Russia and the current regime do not face any imminent existential threats, despite fevered statements from top officials about the dangers posed by NATO enlargement and Ukraine's cooperation with Euro-Atlantic partners."

PAGE: [Kennan and Containment, 1947](#)

Office of the Historian

"Despite all the criticism and the various policy defeats that Kennan suffered in the early 1950s, containment in the more general sense of blocking the expansion of Soviet influence remained the basic strategy of the United States throughout the cold war."

PAGE: [A timeline of the tensions between Russia and Ukraine](#)

By Matthew Mpoke Bigg | April 13, 2022 | The New York Times

"Two founding members of the Soviet Union – Russia and Ukraine – are once again in conflict."

Yes

ARTICLE: [We must make sure Russia finishes this war in a worse position than before](#)

By Nigel Gould-Davies | May 12, 2022 | The New York Times

"At a minimum, Western policy should ensure that Russia gains no new Ukrainian territory and continues to face severe sanctions until it fundamentally changes its policy toward Ukraine."

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ARTICLE: [G-7 to continue economic pressure on Russia, tackle 'wheat-war'](#)

May 14, 2022 | CNBC

“The key to putting more pressure on Russia is to ban or phase out buying Russian oil with EU member states expected next week to reach an agreement on the issue even if it remains at this stage opposed by Hungary.”

ARTICLE: [Russia should be embargoed and kicked out of everything](#)

By Sten Hankewitz | February 25, 2022 | Estonian World

“This unprovoked military incursion against Ukraine, unprecedented in Europe since the Second World War, needs a strong, coordinated response from the free world. And just sanctions, unfortunately, aren’t going to work.”

No

ARTICLE: [I grew up in a paranoid dictatorship. Isolating Russia won't bring Europe peace.](#)

By Lea Ypi | March 21, 2022 | The Guardian

“In short, the development of a digital currency could present the most dramatic expansion of federal power in history, depending on its design.”

ARTICLE: [To isolate Russia is not in the west's power or interest](#)

By Ivan Krastev | April 22, 2022 | Financial Times

“There are a myriad of moral reasons why Russia should be ghettoized as a geopolitical Chernobyl. But treating Russia as a collective Putin will be a strategic blunder.”

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ARTICLE: [Countries attempting to isolate Russia only hurting themselves: Putin](#)

May 27, 2022 | Business Standard

“Those advanced economies are experiencing their worst inflation in 40 years as well as growing unemployment, he said, adding that logistics chains were breaking, and global crises were intensifying in such areas as food.”

Russia in Ukraine

PAGE: [Russia-Ukraine War: Live Updates](#)

ARTICLE: [100 days of war in Ukraine: A timeline](#)

By Eleanor Watson | June 3, 2022 | CBS

“Friday marks the 100th day since Russia launched the invasion of Ukraine intent on taking over the country quickly and overthrowing democratically elected President Volodymyr Zelenskyy for a puppet government loyal to Russian President Vladimir Putin.”

ARTICLE: [Preventing a wider European conflict](#)

By Thomas Graham | May 9, 2022 | Council on Foreign Relations

“The United States is focused primarily on raising the costs to Russia with punishing sanctions and reassuring North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies neighboring Russia of its commitment to collective defense. Less attention has been given to containing the war to Ukraine and preventing its escalation into a broader European conflict.”

ARTICLE: [Why has Russia invaded Ukraine and what does Putin want?](#)

By Paul Kirby | May 9, 2022 | BBC

“Vladimir Putin unleashed the biggest war in Europe since World War Two with the justification that modern, Western-leaning Ukraine was a constant threat and Russia could not feel ‘safe, develop and exist.’”

Military & Security Concerns

ARTICLE: [In clash with Russia, U.S. and Europe revive Cold War 'containment'](#)

By Ishaan Tharoor | April 18, 2022 | The Washington Post

“Putin’s decision to invade Ukraine – and the West’s collective and sweeping response to the invasion – has brought us to an existential moment.”

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ARTICLE: [The Ukraine war still holds surprises. The biggest may be for Putin.](#)

By Thomas L. Friedman | June 7, 2022 | The New York Times

“While I expect some erosion as people grasp how much this war is driving up global energy and food prices, I’m still hopeful that a majority of Americans will hang in there until Ukraine can recover its sovereignty militarily or strike a decent peace deal with Putin.”

ARTICLE: [Interim security insights and implications from the first two months of the Russia-Ukraine war](#)

By John B. Gilliam & Ryan C. Van Wie | May 2022 | Brookings

“While Russia’s significant losses in this war will clearly degrade its ability to conduct large scale offensive operations against NATO in the short term, it is too soon to write off the medium to long-term threat posed by Russia.”

ARTICLE: [What's Ukraine's "strongest position" 100 days into the war?](#)

By Alex Kliment | June 1, 2022 | GZero

“After an initial two months in which Ukraine heroically beat back a much larger Russian army, defending the capital Kyiv and the second city Kharkiv from Putin’s assault, things have moved into a new, more inconclusive period of fighting.”

Sanctions

PAGE: [EU response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine](#)

European Council

ARTICLE: [Can sanctions really stop Putin?](#)

By The Editorial Board | April 22, 2022 | The New York Times

“Will the sanctions imposed by the Group of 7 nations truly isolate Russia? No.”

ARTICLE: [Finding tougher Russia sanctions requires some creativity](#)

By The Editorial Board | April 22, 2022 | The Washington Post

“Western allies must be creative – and aggressive – about curing their addiction to Russian fossil fuels, which developed over decades and looms in hindsight as one of history’s great geopolitical miscalculations.”

ARTICLE: [Finding tougher Russia sanctions requires some creativity](#)

By The Editorial Board | April 22, 2022 | The Washington Post

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“Russia’s economy is already being crippled. Yet as his country’s economy collapses behind army lines, Putin pushes on. Despite all this, many in the West still continue to see sanctions as a deterrent.”

Economies

ARTICLE: [The decoupling of Russia: European vulnerabilities in the high-tech sector](#)

By Monika Grzegorczyk, J. Scott Marcus, Niclas Poitiers & Pauline Weil | April 12, 2022 | Bruegel

“Although Russia bears the brunt of Western high-tech sanctions, the European Union will face challenges in sectors where it relies on Russian and Ukrainian commodities and technologies.”

ARTICLE: [Russia's war in Ukraine means there'll be no return to normality for Europe's economy](#)

By Elliot Smith | April 12, 2022 | CNBC

“However, this aggressive decoupling comes at a price for the European economy, driving up already high inflation to record levels and threatening to undermine the manufacturing recovery that began last year as economies attempted to re-emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic.”

ARTICLE: [Russia's war in Ukraine means there'll be no return to normality for Europe's economy](#)

By Elliot Smith | April 12, 2022 | CNBC

“The question of who breaks first may shape Ukraine’s fate as much as any weapons transfer or tank assault.”

Energy Decoupling

ARTICLE: [Russia to permanently 'decouple' with west on energy, gas producers say](#)

By James Fernyhough | May 17, 2022 | Financial Times

“The EU has promised to cut Russian gas imports by two-thirds by the end of the year and has also proposed banning all oil imports from Russia.”

ARTICLE: [The EU without Russian oil and gas](#)

By Guntram B. Wolff | April 5, 2022 | Bruegel

“However, such a partial and gradual wind-down of volumes from Russia is ineffective. There is a risk that this strategy will drive up prices even further, over-compensating Russia for the loss of

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volume. The current sanction strategy is therefore not effective enough to meaningfully change the calculations of Russian leadership.”

ARTICLE: [Three reasons the EU's shift away from Russian gas could be catalytic](#)

By Noah Gordon | March 10, 2022 | Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

“European governments are preparing to quickly stop burning large quantities of a particular fossil fuel for reasons of national interest and indeed national security—a large-scale, state-driven fossil fuel phase-down. And that’s an exceedingly rare thing.”

Putin

ARTICLE: [War of obsession: Why Putin is risking Russia's future](#)

By Kadri Liik | February 25, 2022 | European Council on Foreign Relations

“...we also do not know what made Putin eventually decide against the diplomatic path. For now, only one thing is clear: Putin prioritized his personal obsession above Russia’s interests. And he likely did so almost singlehandedly...”

ARTICLE: [Putin shrugs off sanctions, says Russia isolation 'impossible'](#)

By Emily Crane | April 12, 2022 | New York Post

“Russian President Vladimir Putin warned the West on Tuesday that his country cannot be isolated or held back – no matter what punishment it receives – as he doubled down on his decision to invade Ukraine.”

ARTICLE: [Putin's Ukraine war draws on his vision of nationalism, exceptionalism](#)

By David Ignatius | June 9, 2022 | The Washington Post

“Russian nationalism has always been a double-edged sword for Putin: He likes the raw passion of its patriotism, but he appears wary of its sometimes uncontrollable ethnic extremism, which might threaten his authoritarian rule over a disparate nation.”

ARTICLE: [Article by Vladimir Putin "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians"](#)

July 12, 2021 | President of Russia

“First of all, I would like to emphasize that the wall that has emerged in recent years between Russia and Ukraine, between the parts of what is essentially the same historical and spiritual space, to my mind is our great common misfortune and tragedy.”

Russia at Home

ARTICLE: [Retired colonel speaks out on Russian TV](#)

By Steve Rosenberg | May 17, 2022 | BBC

“The Kremlin still maintains that the Russian offensive is going according to plan. But on Monday night, studio guest Mikhail Khodarenok, a military analyst and retired colonel, painted a very different picture.”

ARTICLE: [Russia's isolation from the west will outlast the war](#)

By Maria Repnikova | April 20, 2022 | The Atlantic

“Following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the space for investigative and critical journalism in traditional media has largely vanished. The regime has either banned or driven out all major critical outlets.”

ARTICLE: [Can't stop, won't stop: Why the Russian public is tired of the war in Ukraine](#)

By Andrei Kolesnikov | June 7, 2022 | Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

“However, some difficult internal moral work is under way in society: despite the increasing routineness of the conflict and the resulting decline in attention to it, Russians are beginning to think about their own responsibility for what is happening.”

ARTICLE: [Mysterious Zamestim artwork in St. Petersburg signals Russia's anti-West defiance](#)

By Steve Rosenberg | April 28, 2022 | BBC

“Those in power in Russia are demanding unflinching support from the Russian people: for the direction in which the Kremlin is taking Russia, away from Europe; for the anti-Western rhetoric emanating from Moscow; and for Russia’s military offensive in Ukraine – no matter what the consequences here at home.”

European Political Landscape

ARTICLE: [Russia's war has created a power vacuum in Europe](#)

By Steve Rosenberg | May 5, 2022 | Foreign Policy

“The two aspirants to be the arbiters of Europe’s fate in the 21st century, Russia and Germany, are on the wane—the former repelled by the Ukrainians and the latter opposed and shamed by most other Europeans.”

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ARTICLE & AUDIO: [Inside the European Union's response to the Russia-Ukraine war](#)

By Dorey Scheimer & Meghna Chakbarti | February 28, 2022 | WBUR

"That attitude of risk tolerance rests on a perception that Russia and the current regime do not face any imminent existential threats, despite fevered statements from top officials about the dangers posed by NATO enlargement and Ukraine's cooperation with Euro-Atlantic partners."

ARTICLE: [Economic ties among nations spur peace. Or do they?](#)

By Patricia Cohen | March 4, 2022 | New York Times

"If Russia's financial system was more integrated with those of the allies, they might have been more hesitant to take measures that could provoke a financial crisis."

China

ARTICLE: [Russia prioritizes China relationship as West continues to punish Putin](#)

By John Feng | June 1, 2022 | Newsweek

"With Putin's military offensive now into its 14th week, officials in Beijing have successfully resisted calls to openly condemn Russia and distance themselves from Moscow's actions against its neighbor."

ARTICLE: [Europe strives to end dependency on Russian gas](#)

By Damon Evans | April 22, 2022 | China Dialogue

"On the other side of the equation, Russia is also trying to reduce its dependence on its traditional European energy customers. And the natural alternative is China, the world's biggest energy consumer."

ARTICLE: [As Russia's isolation grows, China hints at limits of friendship](#)

By John Power | February 28, 2022 | Al Jazeera

"But amid Moscow's deepening international isolation, there are growing signs that Beijing's willingness to throw its strategic partner an economic lifeline may only go so far."

ARTICLE: [Russia is turning to China to survive sanctions, but it won't be easy](#)

By Christian Shepherd & Lily Kuo | March 11, 2022 | Washington Post

"This shared mistrust of the United States and its allies has deepened economic links, making China by far Russia's largest single trading partner."

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ARTICLE: [Russia's isolation spurs rethink in China](#)

By James Palmer | March 9, 2022 | Foreign Policy

"As Russia has dramatically shown in the last two weeks, supposedly unthinkable breaks with the rest of the world can happen very fast when geopolitics comes into play. And it becomes even more likely when domestic politics reward fervent nationalism instead of long-term thinking."

Global Response

ARTICLE: [The U.S. can't force the rest of the world to support Ukraine. Here's why.](#)

By Daniel R. Depetris & Rajan Menon | May 25, 2022 | Politico

"The question of who breaks first may shape Ukraine's fate as much as any weapons transfer or tank assault."

ARTICLE: [The West v. Russia: Why the global South isn't taking sides](#)

By David Adler | March 28, 2022 | The Guardian

"But the map of sanctions suggests that the true rift is not between left and right, nor even between east and west. On the contrary, the map reveals a rift between north and south, between nations that we call developed and those we call developing."

ARTICLE: [Why non-Western countries tend to see Russia's war very, very differently](#)

By Trita Parsi | April 11, 2022 | MSNBC

"The West's messaging on Ukraine has taken its tone-deafness to a whole new level, and it is unlikely to win over the support of countries that have often experienced the worse sides of the international order."

ARTICLE: [To further isolate Moscow, the West must support Russia's neighbors](#)

By Wesley Culp | March 16, 2022 | The Hill

"If the United States supports these countries in weathering the economic shocks emanating from Russia, efforts to politically isolate Moscow from the rest of the world could take on a new significance."