

Military intervention is the best response to Russia's aggression

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Given the mounting military presence on the Eastern border of Ukraine, and the fact that Russia's military budget is expected to increase by more than 44 percent over the next three years, Vladimir Putin poses a threat not only to Ukraine but the security of Eastern European and international community as a whole, says Eglė Markevičiūtė in an opinion published on US news site *The Daily Caller*.

So, what should be the response of the so-called free world?

Open Borders

Opening international borders for oppressed immigrants and simplifying the visa regime would be the most humane way of dealing with war-mongering dictators all over the world, who rely heavily on the support of an isolated and therefore easily manageable citizenry. As Young Voices Advocate Maria Semykoz points out, it would help the Russian people to “embrace the views conducive to human rights, individual freedoms, limited government and non-aggression.”

Liberty-minded Europeans should definitely support this idea and work towards its implementation. Unfortunately, it is hard to believe that this type of initiative would receive political support fast enough to avoid further tension in Eastern Europe, particularly given the EU's stagnant political apparatus and the influence of nationalist interest groups. Alas, open borders will have to be a long-term solution to strive towards.

Economic Sanctions

Another means to deal with Putin's regime could be economic sanctions. Unfortunately, Russia is too big to fail. Its economy can be largely self-sustaining and is therefore difficult to apply pressure to. Moreover, as Young Voices Advocate Vera Kichanova noted, imposing economic sanctions on Russia would harm Russian citizens more than their tsar-like leaders who are not easily motivated by the suffering of others.

Furthermore, Europe has to become more economically independent from Russia for sanctions to not backfire, especially with energy sources like natural gas. As the Cato Institute's Richard W. Rahn comments, “Economic warfare is far preferable to military warfare, but economic warfare

requires that those who engage in it are not dependent on the enemy for needed raw materials, energy or markets.”

Four EU countries are 100 percent dependent on Russian gas — Finland, Sweden, Estonia, and Latvia. Slovakia, Hungary, and Bulgaria are more than 80 percent dependent, while Poland, Austria, Slovenia, and Greece are more than 50 percent dependent. Considering Europe’s economic interdependence with Russia, sanctions cannot be executed in full force without undermining Western markets.

The US and EU have also applied two rounds of sanctions on Russia, including visa bans and asset freezes for some people in Putin’s inner circle, to which Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov has responded, “We have lived through tougher times.” Indeed, sanctions on a heavily secured, rich and influential inner circle of Putin’s supporters is an unpleasant but rather manageable thing to deal with.

Military Intervention

Military intervention is a taboo topic, especially for war-weary Americans in the wake of Iraq and Afghanistan. However, as the free-market Russian economist Andrei Illarionov contends, “Putin must be confronted militarily. I do not mean acts of war. But the West should show a military presence in the Black Sea, for example. This is the only way to stop Putin.”

Limited military presence, such as an increased NATO presence in the Baltic States and Poland or troop deployment in Ukraine, is something that liberty-minded individuals should reconsider as a preventive measure to stop the spread of Putin’s conquests further into Eastern Europe.

While a soft power and diplomacy must remain the main instruments to peacefully resolve international conflicts, the Western world’s lack of military action only encourages Putin’s regime, which continues to test the limits of international community’s tolerance to their intrusive actions.

While the new Ukrainian government is struggling to carve its way out of Eastern Europe’s sphere of Russian influence, the new government’s territorial integrity and political sovereignty is being threatened by an increasing military and political presence from the Kremlin. While it’s true that an overly aggressive military response from the Western world may only provoke Russia further, a lack of military response could only be worse by encouraging further land grabs. NATO, the EU, and the US should find the right medium, using limited intervention to secure Ukraine’s Eastern borders and helping Ukrainians protect the democratic government they have been fighting for fearlessly this past winter.

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