

WIN WITHOUT WAR



Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

Intel for Advocacy

DATE: 8/9/19

SL: How U.S. foreign policy fuels violence here at home

[A CULTURE AWASH IN MILITARISM WILL PRODUCE VIOLENCE](#)

Over the weekend, the country was hammered with the devastating news of the mass shootings in Dayton and El Paso. Victims [included](#) families doing their back-to-school shopping and friends celebrating a birthday. Every time another tragedy like this happens, we must grapple with why the best reaction we could muster since the last shooting was merely thoughts and prayers and not real, constructive change. On top of that, many of the responses we heard to these latest tragedies were, generously put, unhelpful. See, for example:

- Right-wing media's [suggestion](#) that we can solve this shooting crisis by throwing more guns into the crisis.
- A ridiculous [claim](#) that the white supremacy that is helping to fuel this crisis is actually just a conspiracy theory.
- And [blame being thrown anywhere](#) except at the real underlying root causes. (This is a good place to mention that the [idea](#) of mental health being a root cause is really only promoting further stigmatization, criminalization, and scapegoating of individuals with mental health issues).

In contrast to the above, we wanted to illuminate some conversations that aren't happening (or are being buried under a mountain of shock value headlines):

Our foreign policy and our domestic policy are two sides of the same coin and intimately interlinked; they bolster and embolden each other's most dominant traits.

- In recent decades — or really just throughout our country's entire history, because we're long overdue in being truly honest with ourselves — those traits have prioritized mass violence and been rooted in white supremacy, human exploitation, toxic masculinity, ableism, and inequality.
- We can no longer ignore that the militarization of our foreign policy is intertwined with the militarization of our own society here at home, whether in policing, incarceration and deportation, mass surveillance, or the rise of hateful ideologies like anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and racism.

WIN WITHOUT WAR



- When we recognize these interconnections, it is not really that shocking how we have become so desensitized to the devastation and loss of lives at home and abroad.
- Nor is it that shocking that the Trump administration has deprioritized human rights so much that it has literally let a foreign government get away with killing a journalist living in the U.S. and writing for one of the most prestigious newspapers in our country.

The solutions we need are domestic and foreign policies that cherish all of humanity and champion everyone's right to an authentic and just sense of security.

- We won't obtain those policies by tossing more and more weapons into our current crises.
- Military-style semi-automatic [assault weapons have no place on our streets](#), in our communities, or in [any other place](#) for that matter — whether they're carried by civilians or law enforcement.
- We must reckon with the role of the United States as the largest purveyor of arms in the world and the fact that the United States' export of violence elsewhere is driven by corporate and special interests that profit off of human suffering.

The hard truth is that one reason that communities long fighting to resist the NRA and pro-gun lobbying groups have been struggling to make change is because decades of out-of-control military spending has created a powerful global lobby of arms manufacturers.

- As activists who work to reduce Pentagon spending and waste, this makes our efforts to reduce the size of the military industrial complex all the more urgent.
- We must dismantle the dubious claims of the NRA, arms manufacturers, and even our own government who claim their motivations are just: Pushing guns on us and the world does nothing to protect us or promote human security, it only serves to increase these institutions' power and profit.
- In addition to banning assault weapons here at home, we must also stop Team Trump and the NRA's push to increase exports of assault weapons abroad. Congress has an opportunity to do just that by blocking the administration's transfer of export approvals to the unaccountable Department of Commerce in House NDAA amendment #10.

Throwing more weapons into the chaos isn't the only wrong solution here. Sending more servicemembers with those weapons into wars to solve problems that have no military solution won't make anyone safer.

- In many cases, doing so further traumatizes the communities already being ripped apart by the conflicts.

WIN WITHOUT WAR



- Likewise, responding to our nation's shooting crisis by filling our streets, malls, religious centers, and schools with more police forces and armed security will not make our communities more secure, it will just further militarize policing.
- These forces have been devastating [communities of color](#), degrading [women](#) and [people with disabilities](#), and attacking [LGBTQ+ people](#) for decades. They have continually abandoned [U.S. indigenous communities](#). They are [trained](#) to use the very same weapons, vehicles, crowd control methods, and interrogation/humiliation tactics our [military uses in war](#).
- Within school settings, there's [little evidence](#) that an increased police presence actually make schools safer overall. On the other hand, there is absolutely [evidence](#) that a larger presence of police has led students, particularly students of color, to [feel more frightened](#), experience racial profiling, face harsher punishments and more criminal arrests, and [perform poorly in](#) their studies.
- There's no hope of achieving an increased sense of security in our communities —and particularly the most vulnerable ones — if it's coming from groups and individuals who have a long history of ushering in the very same insecurity we're working to combat.

Is it really that surprising, then, that we have a rampant culture of hateful violence in the U.S., when that is the kind of culture we have been continuously exporting abroad through arms sales, our endless wars, and our incendiary approach to diplomacy? Is it really just a coincidence that there's no end in sight to the constant stream of wars, political and economic instability, and bloodshed that we have either directly caused, instigated, or escalated, when we continue to drag our feet at home on recognizing our own bloody, unjust history and creating sustainable domestic policies that actually promote justice, peace, and security?

While the status quo is indeed grim, there is a path forward to sustainable and just security. These are the solutions we actually need:

- A foreign policy that rejects all legacies of colonialism, white supremacy, economic exploitation, patriarchy, and xenophobia, and instead demands democratized diplomatic solutions that center the voices and needs of the populations our policies disproportionately affect – women, LGBTQ+ people, Black people and people of color, people in the Global South, Indigenous people, people with disabilities, climate-impacted populations, and low-income communities around the world.
- A domestic policy that rejects all legacies of colonialism, white supremacy, economic exploitation, patriarchy, and xenophobia, and instead uplifts the communities that have been most harmed by our history, gives them the power and pathways to redefine justice and security in ways that will eradicate our culture of violence, and dismantle the infrastructure and industries that regenerate inequity.

WIN WITHOUT WAR



A progressive foreign policy and a progressive domestic policy go hand in hand. They will empower and preserve each other — and in doing so, they will together empower and preserve the basic rights of people here and abroad to live in dignity, justice, security, and peace.

TAKE ACTION: You can [tell Congress](#) to act on banning military-style semi-automatic assault weapons.

BURIED LEDES

The White House has continuously declined the Department of Homeland Security's request to make combatting domestic terrorism [a higher priority](#).

And yes we [do need to figure out](#) how to confront white nationalist domestic terrorism but **the post-9/11 security state model isn't the way to go**.

Trump and defense industry CEOs [tout job creation](#) to justify throwing more and more taxpayer money at the Pentagon. **But that argument is completely false**.

Amnesty International [declared this week](#) that “continued investment in coal, oil & natural gas companies is at odds with human rights, **because of the direct link between their activities & climate disaster**.”

Meanwhile, a United Nations [report](#) released this week warned that **the world's food supply is at great risk due to climate change**.

USA Today's editorial board eviscerated Trump's Iran policy this week, [saying](#) “we're growing tired of waiting to win.”

The opportunity is there to pick apart Trump's North Korea policy but it [doesn't seem like](#) most of his challengers are up to the task.

Win Without War Policy Director Kate Kizer [told the Globe Post this week](#) that Trump's new economic embargo of Venezuela “**only further exacerbates the suffering of the Venezuelan people** and does nothing to secure a peaceful democratic transition that gives all Venezuelans a voice in the future of their country.”

“**Sometimes you lose the war but win the peace**,” a [lesson](#) for the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan.

WIN WITHOUT WAR



And finally, THE BEST PEOPLE: Our activists [wrote to their local newspapers](#) to take CNN's Jake Tapper to task for his presidential debate question on nuclear weapons **that was soaked in pro-war talking points.**