

# WIN WITHOUT WAR



## Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

*Intel for Advocacy*

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SL: What's war got to do with it?

### The Takeaway:

- The climate crisis is upon us — and we can't confront it without also confronting U.S. militarism. As we reach the end of COP26, we take a look at how climate and militarism intersect — and why a *sustainable* world and a *peaceful* world go hand-in-hand.
- Climate change, if left unchecked, will lead to a world of greater conflict and insecurity — exacerbating resource scarcity, enflaming authoritarianism, and displacing millions.
- U.S. militarism is a leading source of carbon emissions, siphons billions of dollars from climate action, undermines much-needed global cooperation, and upholds the extractivist, profit-before-people economic system that led us to this crisis to begin with.
- We must reject false solutions like “greening the military,” and instead fight to end the war-first approach to U.S. foreign policy. There is no climate justice without peace.

## Climate Action Means Dismantling the War Machine

In [last week's](#) Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief, we took a deep dive into all things [COP26](#): what it is, what's been accomplished, and where it's come up short. But this left many readers wondering: What does COP26 have to do with winning without war?

This week, as COP26 comes to a close, we set out to answer this question — and to pull down the artificial barriers that silo policy issues. Read on to understand why confronting the climate crisis and dismantling the U.S. war machine are two sides of the same struggle.

### Climate Change Fuels Conflict and Displacement

Rising sea levels. Hotter temperatures. The endangerment of all living species. These are just a few effects of climate change that we've witnessed over the past several decades. How do these changes impact foreign affairs though? Well, they spark greater conflict.

Climate change is igniting mass displacement and competition for resources to a degree we've never seen before. In 2019, the number of people displaced by extreme weather was [three times greater](#) than those displaced by all wars and conflicts. Just two months ago, Haitian refugees, abused by U.S. Customs and Border Patrol officers at the U.S.-Mexico border, were seeking refuge from [several disasters](#) — a presidential assassination, massive earthquake, and... a large tropical storm. The last of which is exactly the type of natural disaster that's

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become more frequent because of climate change. The Syrian civil war, meanwhile, is thought to have been [sparked](#), in some part, social unrest brought on by a lack of water during a climate change-induced drought. Without significant efforts to combat the climate-related hurricanes, droughts, crop failures, resource shortages, wildfires, and more, the violence and instability sparked by these disasters will only grow worse. The fight against climate change is fundamentally a fight to protect and build human security — in addition to saving a beautiful planet.

## **The Climate Costs of War**

Maintaining a global military apparatus is carbon intensive. One-third of all U.S. carbon emissions come from the Pentagon — if the Pentagon were a nation, researchers estimate that it would be between the 47th and [55th](#) highest emitter of greenhouse gases in the world. That's more emissions than Portugal, Sweden, or Denmark produce in a year. Many international agreements, though, don't include military emissions in their accounting of national emissions — [sign this petition](#) if you think that should change. Paying for this world-spanning, carbon-spewing empire also has tremendous opportunity costs: just one percent of this year's \$740 billion Pentagon budget [is enough](#) to fund 100,000 green energy jobs, or provide over one million houses with wind power for a full *decade*. In short: the war-first U.S. foreign policy is both causing climate change, and undermining our response to it.

## **Climate Cooperation, Not Competition**

U.S. warmongering, aggression, and trade wars are harmful in their own right — they're also deadly obstacles to [climate cooperation](#). The current domination-based, antagonistic approach to U.S. foreign policy only further undermines climate action. For example, while the U.S. is the top historical emitter of greenhouse gases, remains one of the top per capita, and therefore bears the [greatest obligation](#) to address the climate crisis, China today emits more total greenhouse gases than any other country. If these two countries cannot cooperate, there is little hope of rapidly reducing global emissions. As a letter from over 40 progressive organizations [announced](#) earlier this year: confronting the climate crisis demands that we [end the new cold war](#) with China and put good-faith multilateralism and diplomacy first. Luckily, this week, the two countries were able to put aside their differences and make a [good faith effort](#) toward a more cooperative future.

## **Enforcing the World Order for the Few**

But the link between U.S. militarism and climate change runs even deeper than the questions of budget priorities or cooperation with China — it's about the fundamental nature of the world order. One of, if not *the* primary, goal of U.S. militarism is to maintain a world order that benefits the few at the expense of the many — an extraction-based economy that runs on fossil fuels and the exploitation of people everywhere. Whether fighting [wars for oil](#), [selling weapons](#) to dictators that serve corporate and fossil fuel industry interests, or [backing coups](#) against countries that dare assert control over their own natural resources, U.S. militarism exists to

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protect the status quo. To solve the climate crisis, we must confront the entrenched interests that benefit from this order, and build a world that puts people and planet before profits. That, in turn, will require challenging the U.S. military power that underpins it.

## **Say No to Greenwashing**

Some have responded to the U.S. military's role in the climate crisis with the idea of "greening the military," or making the Pentagon's actions and policies more energy and environmentally-conscious. We're [talking](#) fuel-efficient Humvees, equipment-carrying blimps, solar powered lights at Guantanamo Bay. The works. None of this, however, changes the fact that the U.S. is operating 800 military installations abroad, which account for [about 40%](#) of the Pentagon's greenhouse gas emissions. It also doesn't impact the way that military operations like transferring troops or completing missions drive [70%](#) of the U.S. military's energy consumption.

The U.S. military empire is too large and central driver of an already-dire climate crisis for incremental changes to do the trick. We need cuts to weapons manufacturing, base closures, an end to endless wars, and more, so that we can invest further in things like climate-ready infrastructure, energy efficiency, and refugee assistance, to start. In sum, we can't cut corners here. In order to effectively mitigate future climate disasters, the U.S. must turn away from a posture of militarism and instead reposition itself towards peace.

## **Confront the Crisis. Dismantle the War Machine.**

The climate crisis is an existential threat. But this security threat can't be solved by traditional "security" solutions — just the opposite. Addressing the climate crisis will require us to end the war-first approach once and for all. From radical domestic action, to the transformation of the rules of the global economy, to a commitment to reparations and refuge for those most impacted by the crisis, there is much that must be done to take on climate change and build a new world rooted in justice. But chief among these is something that is too often ignored: ending U.S. militarism. To confront the climate crisis, to transform our broken system, and to build a world of peace: it's time to dismantle the U.S. war machine.

*For more on the intersection of militarism and climate change, read our policy brief [here](#), and check out the report "[No Warming. No War](#)" by our friends at the Institute for Policy Studies.*

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With two long weeks of government talks and peoples' [mobilizations](#), activists say **the COP26 draft agreement is wildly [insufficient](#) – and COP itself [little more than a “performance” and “illusion”](#)...**

... in response to failures of those in power, **activists have taken it upon themselves to announce their own [Peoples' COP26 Decision for Climate Justice](#)** – a reminder that the hope of our future lies in the hands of the people.

President Biden may *claim* to support a shift in U.S. foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia. **But from [failing to hold Jamal Khashoggi's murderers accountable](#), to a new [\\$650 million weapons sale to Saudi Arabia](#)... let's just say actions speak louder than words. ([See: Reps. Ilhan Omar and Ro Khanna](#)).**

**Rep. Sherman and 22 colleagues [wrote a letter](#) urging the Biden administration to (finally) declare peace between North Korea, South Korea, and the United States.** After SEVEN DECADES maybe it's time to stop the red scare and move towards diplomacy?

**Pegasus spyware developed by an Israeli hack-for-hire company, was [found on the phones of six Palestinian activists](#).** While Israeli defense officials have denied the use of NSO software, it's uh... not hard to put two and two together here.

The brutal suppression of information continues in Myanmar this week, **as U.S. journalist Danny Fenster is [sentenced to 11 years in jail](#).** Meanwhile, a UN investigator finds that the military junta's attacks on civilians may constitute [crimes against humanity](#).

Speaking of the suppression of information, **the U.S. government is [begging the British High Court to extradite Julian Assange to the United States](#).** Assange's prosecution could have disastrous implications for journalism and freedom of speech in the United States.

And finally, [congratulations to Malala Yousafzai!](#) We hope it was a beautiful wedding!