

WIN WITHOUT WAR



Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

Intel for Advocacy

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SL: [The Russian Invasion of Ukraine](#)

The Takeaway:

- Russia's invasion of Ukraine is an unjustifiable, premeditated war. Diplomacy aimed at de-escalation is the only hope to avoid greater conflict.
- This war will likely create many new refugees, and we must prepare immediately to aid and welcome with dignity any Ukrainian seeking safety.
- Being anti-war during war means showing solidarity, centering the people who will be harmed the most, and returning to our values-driven, progressive solutions to build security and prevent future conflict.

The Latest on Russia's War in Ukraine

Russia's War of Choice

Like many of you, we have been watching the recent [Russian invasion of Ukraine](#) with horror. We are in solidarity with the people of Ukraine, who will bear the brunt of this war. Make no mistake: this was a premeditated war of choice, and Russian Federation President Vladimir Putin should be strongly condemned for this unprovoked act of aggression. While people living in Ukraine have diverse and complex relationships with the former Soviet Union, and there are historical origins to tensions in and around Ukraine — these in no way justify Russia's flagrant violations of international law, violent aggression, and intent to [topple Ukraine's democratically-elected government](#). Putin's [nostalgia](#) for the former Soviet empire, and willingness to use military means to revive it, is putting millions of Ukrainian lives unnecessarily at risk.

Early Thursday morning Moscow time, Putin [announced on Russian state TV](#) that Russia was launching a "[special military operation](#)" in Ukraine out of "self-defense" — which, to the rest of the world, meant an unprovoked invasion of a sovereign, democratic country. Shortly after, Russian military forces [attacked multiple cities](#) in Ukraine, including [key infrastructure](#). A [cyberattack](#) also hit some Ukrainian government websites and banks, following a [similar cyberattack](#) last week which debilitated four government sites. In a case of cruel irony, Russia also chaired an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council, which had been called to

WIN WITHOUT WAR



address the potential Russian invasion. But while representatives from across the world pleaded Russia not to invade, Putin declared war shortly after the meeting commenced. As the first attacks on Ukrainian cities began, the Ukrainian representative on the Council offered a [powerful statement](#) to the Russian chair: “There is no purgatory for war criminals.”

While diplomacy has failed to prevent this invasion, diplomacy remains the only hope to avoid further catastrophic conflict. In his speech on Thursday, Putin threatened any actors who intervene with “[consequences that you have never experienced in your history](#).” There is a very real and terrifying possibility that this could include the use of nuclear weapons. The [greatest risk](#) of this occurring is unexpected escalation due to misstep, miscalculation, or misinterpretation. Given the unthinkable possibility of direct conflict between the world’s two largest nuclear powers, U.S. efforts should be driven by our diplomats with an aim towards de-escalation. The United States must continue to use every diplomatic tool possible to encourage all parties to immediately cease hostilities, and avoid any further escalation that could lead to greater conflict.

War Means Real, Human Suffering

War is inherently violent, deadly, and destructive. We fear for the enormous loss of human life that could [potentially result](#) from a full-scale war. Already, there are reports of over [100 Ukrainian casualties](#) — likely to grow in the coming days, especially as Ukrainians across the country [take up arms](#) and others are [conscripted into the army](#). This is not to mention the massive disruption to Ukrainians’ daily lives as they forgo work and school, some fleeing their homes. We can only imagine the inescapable fear that many people are feeling, hunkering down in [basements and subways](#) as air raid sirens go off overhead.

This fear may be especially existential for [LGBTQ+ people](#), religious and ethnic minorities, dissidents, anti-corruption advocates, and journalists — who will likely be at [greatest risk of persecution](#) if there is a Russian occupation of Ukraine. For many LGBTQ+ Ukrainians, leaving for neighboring countries with harsh anti-LGBTQ+ policies presents an equally dire option. There are also bound to be severe consequences for dissidents inside Russia and everyday citizens who dare to speak out against the Russian government, which has already [arrested hundreds of anti-war protestors](#) in cities across the country.

We must not lose sight that real human lives are being harmed, whether as a result of fighting, displacement, government persecution, or the impact of sanctions on Russia and their likely economic retaliation. While military movements and fighting dominate the news, many people are suffering and their stories should not be erased by a singular focus on the violence causing that suffering and the political leaders directing it.

New Refugees From Ukraine

Another grave, likely outcome of this war will be the refugees it creates, as Ukrainians escape their country, seeking safety and security beyond its borders. Already, there are reports of

WIN WITHOUT WAR



Ukrainians fleeing and arriving [at the Polish border](#). But geographic proximity alone should not determine where Ukrainians can seek refuge, and neighboring European countries should not have the sole responsibility of accepting refugees. The United States, along with the international community, must immediately prepare to support people leaving Ukraine.

The United States should do everything possible to welcome any Ukrainian seeking refuge. It should begin by designating Temporary Protected Status (TPS) or Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) for Ukrainians, which would allow those already in the United States to remain here while conditions in Ukraine are unsafe. It should also send resources to prepare shelters and help process Ukrainians crossing borders, as [U.S. personnel are already doing](#) at the border with Poland. Further, the United States and its international partners should respond with robust humanitarian aid and peacebuilding resources, with special attention to the unique risks that minority and LGBTQ+ refugees may face outside Ukraine.

The Need for Accountability

An international act of aggression like this demands accountability, and we join the chorus calling for holding President Putin and his oligarch enablers responsible. We strongly welcome President Biden's efforts to lead a broad, multilateral response that unites the world in accountability. Yet, there is room for much more to be done.

Progressives have often opposed broad based sanctions, which in this case would likely harm people in Russia already forced to live under authoritarian rule in one of the world's most unequal economies. To truly hold those responsible for this war accountable, policymakers should use this moment to explore new, innovative accountability mechanisms that target Putin and key decision makers directly. Doing so will require recognizing that Russia's oligarchs don't just have their money in Russian banks, but also, in South Dakota's secret trusts and [luxury real estate](#) in New York City, London, and beyond. If we want to get real about accountability, we need to get serious about tackling corruption.

Beyond corruption, one of the key challenges to accountability currently is European dependence on Russian oil and gas supplies. Here too, bold solutions are needed, including a far more rapid decarbonization of our economy that would have the dual benefit of shrinking Putin's purse while also helping save the planet from the climate crisis.

Finally, the United States for decades has failed to support – and too often actively undermined – efforts to create robust, meaningful mechanisms for international accountability such as the International Criminal Court and the UN's Human Rights Commission. This crisis should be a moment to reverse that trend with a renewed commitment to building multilateral institutions capable of delivering genuine accountability and justice for war crimes and international aggression.

WIN WITHOUT WAR



Ultimately, none of these steps will stop the horror we're seeing right now in Ukraine, but it will help target our response where it might actually bring some accountability for this act of aggression.

Being Anti-War During War

At this initiation of yet another needless war, it may feel disheartening to be in the anti-war movement. We couldn't prevent the war, but at a moment like this, what we *can* do is focus on people — particularly the people who will be harmed the most. We should uplift their stories, center their needs, and refuse to allow media or government narratives to obscure their humanity and agency. We must show solidarity with people who bear the costs of war, no matter who the aggressor. As progressives, we should return to our core values: that all people deserve human rights, safety, security, dignity, and justice. People from [diasporic communities](#) of color that have experienced the brutality of U.S. intervention and militarism, in particular, have underscored the importance of this. We must call out all forms of violence that threaten these values, whether perpetrated by our own government, Russia's, or others.

More broadly, we can point to larger progressive solutions to build human security, and make the case for why they are now more relevant and urgent than ever. Putin's allusions to nuclear war underscore the need to reject nuclear proliferation and advocate for disarmament, including No-First-Use policies. Rising oil prices and the ongoing energy crisis exacerbated by this war show just how much we need a Green New Deal and just energy transition. We should also make clear that the endless war profiteering and weapons sales driving much of U.S. foreign policy have shallowed out our diplomatic relationships and encouraged worldwide militarism. Now is the time to cut the Pentagon budget and redirect resources into non-military tools, not the contrary.

Finally, the UN Security Council's futile attempts to counter Russia's invasion demonstrate why we must strengthen international institutions with real power to help avoid war — and to begin, the United States must stop undermining these institutions through its own military interventionism and contravening of international law and norms. While these policy shifts do not offer much solace to the people currently suffering, they are the solutions we will need to build an anti-war future.

(CALL OUT BOX:) DISINFORMATION ABOUNDS

An unfolding crisis with rapid developments, the widespread urge to share click-bait content, Russia's [ability to troll online](#), and the lack of moderation from social media platforms = the perfect recipe for [misinformation and disinformation](#). Please remember to cross-reference information before amplifying and only share reputable sources. Be especially careful not to amplify content showing protestors' faces or people who may later be identified and targeted. Here are [some resources](#) to spot disinformation and combat it, and [protect your accounts](#).

WIN WITHOUT WAR



BURIED LEDES

Last weekend marked the 80th anniversary of Executive Order 9066, which authorized the incarceration of 100,000+ people of Japanese descent during World War II. **The [legacy](#) of this order, the trauma it caused, and the xenophobia it was born from, are still relevant today.**

In a huge win for Asian American activists, **the DOJ ended the China Initiative, an “anti-economic espionage program” that racially profiled academics of Chinese descent and contributed to Trump’s agenda of fostering anti-Chinese sentiment.** Next order of business: [assessing the damage](#).

Win Without War [joined](#) more than 80 organizations in urging President Biden to **advocate for the urgent suspension of covid vaccine patents preventing global vaccine equity.** It’s high past time for us to end vaccine apartheid, and Biden has the power to help.

In a move that can only be described as vile and inconsistent, **the Biden administration outlined a plan to take billions of dollars from Afghanistan’s foreign currency reserves, Afghan people’s money that could provide desperately-needed relief, and give it to ... 9/11 victims’ families?** There’s a word for this: [theft](#).

The Pentagon resumed [drone strikes](#) in Somalia for the first time since August 2021, and **the Biden administration is considering placing U.S. troops there again.** We’ve said it before, and we’ll say it again: the U.S. needs a [better counterterrorism strategy](#).

Ahmaud Arbery’s killers, and three of the cops complicit in George Floyd’s murder, were all [convicted](#) for civil rights violations against these two Black men this week. There is no amount of sentencing that could achieve justice for Ahmaud, George, or their loved ones. But may we all still work to end state-sponsored violence against Black people, and seek justice for Black lives.

On Monday, Colombia became the third Latin American country in about a year to decriminalize abortion! It didn’t happen in a vacuum though. **Abortion rights activists [spoke](#) about the power of learning from one another, across generations and borders.**

The fight for bodily autonomy goes beyond Colombia — this week, Texas Governor Greg Abbott launched a cruel attack against transgender children and their families by criminalizing gender-affirming care. **Trans rights lawyer Chase Strangio [explains](#) why we should all be invested in protecting trans lives, and anyone whose physical and emotional security is targeted by the state.**

WIN WITHOUT WAR



Biden [will nominate](#) Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson to the Supreme Court, where she would be the first Black woman to serve. We celebrate this momentous occasion, and look forward to learning about her views more!

And finally, as we do our best to keep up with news, and process some of the harm we see done unto others, **please don't forget to [take good care](#) of yourselves too.**