

WIN WITHOUT WAR



Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

Intel for Advocacy

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SL: [The Global Impact of the War in Ukraine](#)

The Takeaway:

- As the war in Ukraine continues to devastate people there, its effects are also felt across the world.
- Even as we work to protect people from violence, we must be wary of dangerous policies like a “no-fly zone” that could escalate violence against people in Ukraine and put even more people at risk.
- From oil to wheat, many people rely on Russia and Ukraine’s exports. The U.S. and other wealthy countries must step in with food assistance to those most in need. They must also accelerate the transition to clean energy, which would both weaken the power of autocrats like Putin and confront the crisis of climate change for good.

The Global Impact of the War in Ukraine

The Danger of a “No-Fly Zone”

As Russia’s war in Ukraine rages on, some officials in both Ukraine and the United States have called for the establishment of a “no-fly zone” in the airspace over Ukraine. This is an understandable reaction to the horrific violence in Ukraine that we all want to see end immediately. Unfortunately, a no-fly zone may have just the opposite effect. It’s a dangerous escalation that would put even more people’s lives at risk.

A no-fly zone isn’t a mere declaration that planes won’t fly there — it means that NATO or U.S. forces would need to shoot down any Russian plane over Ukraine and destroy ground-to-air missile systems that target Ukrainian airspace. This would bring us into [direct military conflict](#) with Russia, and Putin has said he would [consider it as participation](#) in the war. Moreover, fully enforcing a no-fly zone would likely require destroying [air defenses](#) that are stationed inside Russia itself, which would be an extreme escalation. This could cause Russia to retaliate with more devastating military attacks, or, in the worst case, lead to the use of nuclear weapons.

What’s more, a no-fly zone is unlikely to significantly reduce the current violence in Ukraine, given that the war is not primarily being fought by air, but rather by Russia’s ground forces, including missile and artillery strikes. The horrible reality is that people in Ukraine continue to be

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terrorized by war. The United States must put its significant resources into robust humanitarian aid and refugee assistance, including raising the cap on the number of refugees who can enter the country.

Avoiding Doomsday

Putin's threat of nuclear weapons use should not cause panic, but it should remind us of the realities and costs of nuclear proliferation. So far, President Biden and the Pentagon have taken careful, laudable [steps](#) to try and avoid a nuclear conflict with Russia: canceling a planned missile test that could be misconstrued as an attack, creating a hotline with the Russian government to quickly communicate in the event of a crisis, and refusing to take direct military action against Russia by enforcing a no-fly zone. These steps are necessary, responsible acts to show the world the United States does not intend to start a nuclear war. But there are several more substantial actions President Biden could take to reduce the nuclear risks at play.

He should commit the United States to a "no first-use" policy, a commitment that the United States would never be the first country to use nuclear weapons in a conflict. This would help limit the possibility that a missile test or conventional attack could be misinterpreted as a nuclear attack, soliciting "retaliation." He also could slow the potential rush to launch a nuclear weapon during a conflict by ending "sole authority" — the policy that gives the president the sole decision-making power over the launch of a nuclear weapon — by increasing the number of people required to authorize such a momentous decision. Taking land-based missiles, which are 20x more powerful than the bomb dropped on Hiroshima, off of "high alert," a ready-to-launch status that allows nuclear warheads to be launched in minutes, could also prevent a mistaken launch. What's clear is that the administration must consider these and other long-lasting options to reduce the chances of nuclear warfare, not just in this moment of conflict in Ukraine, but also for the future.

A Breadbasket No More?

Another reverberation from this war is an [impending global food shortage](#) for everyday people around the world. Together, Russia and Ukraine provide up to 12% of the world's food supply, including about [30% of wheat](#), 30% of barley, and nearly 80% of sunflower oil globally. Although there are currently no sanctions on Russia's food exports, two major shipping companies have refused to do business with Russia. This week, Ukraine's government also [banned the export](#) of wheat, oats, and other staple goods. While this may help stem the worst of the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, it will likely have dire consequences for people's livelihoods in other places.

For example, [Egypt imports about 80% of its wheat](#) from Russia and Ukraine; other heavily reliant countries include Yemen, Libya, Nigeria, South Sudan, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Cameroon. Even beyond these countries, shortages will impact global markets, likely driving up the price of some foods for people everywhere. This could also have the devastating effect of increasing famine in [Yemen](#), South Sudan, and Afghanistan. The good news is that there should continue to be enough food produced across the world to keep people

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from going hungry, if it's distributed effectively. However, [people will starve](#) if governments don't step in. The European Union, United States, and other wealthy countries must commit to fully funding the UN World Food Programme, currently at a funding shortfall, and other food assistance efforts globally.

Dirty, Destructive Oil

Earlier this week, the Biden administration announced a [ban](#) on imports of Russian oil, natural gas, and coal. This decision was motivated by the reality that Putin's attack is in large part [funded](#) by revenues from selling oil and gas. In more cases than one, authoritarian leaders have propped up their governments by exporting fossil fuels. Unfortunately, we've been a willing partner to many of them, and the United States itself has fought wars in which oil and the politics around it were a key motivator. And, we continue to be the [major](#) producer and consumer of oil globally.

Both the reliance on so-called "foreign oil" *and* the reliance on fossil fuels in general are security issues. We should not strengthen ties with other dictators in the vain hope that they will drive down fossil fuel prices, especially not the Saudi and Emirati governments, which continue to drive one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world in Yemen and serve as a safe haven for [Russian oligarchs](#). We must also realize that fossil fuel production and reliance, at home or abroad, can accelerate war and impede the capacity to resolve conflict diplomatically. Doubling down on fossil fuels is short-sighted.

Instead, this crisis moment can be [the push](#) for a mass transition to clean energy, *today*. We have the technology to usher in an era of clean energy... *All we need now is the political will*. Biden should immediately invoke [the Defense Production Act](#) to speed up renewable energy production and the deployment of renewable energy technologies, domestically and globally. Kicking our dependence on fossil fuels will take a key source of power out of the hands of Putin and similar authoritarians, as well as Big Oil companies that put profits over people and the planet. It is necessary to help prevent future conflict, displacement, and ultimately the greatest existential threat to our world: climate change.

BURIED LEDES

For International Women's Day this week, we're honoring women's movements around the world — from [marches in Mexico](#) to end gender-based killing, to the [dual struggles of Zapatista and Kurdish women](#) for both human rights and the self-determination of their peoples.

If the United States truly wants other governments to uphold human rights, it must start by holding itself accountable. **This week, UN war crimes investigators urged the United States to [investigate U.S. air raids in Syria](#)**, which killed many civilians — a likely war crime.

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Let's also not forget the atrocities wrought by U.S. drones and airstrikes in Yemen. **Sens. Murphy and Warren are [requesting an investigation](#) into this harm**, and we join them in demanding accountability for the civilians killed.

Yoon Suk Yeol, of the conservative People Power Party, was [elected president](#) of South Korea in the closest presidential race in the country's history. We'll be [watching how this affects](#) efforts to improve dialogue and diplomacy with North Korea.

Before he was a bad president, Donald Trump was bad at business. **Oh wait...he's still [bad at business](#). And the failure of his policies [continues to be exposed](#).**

What if we told you...the NYPD has a bigger budget than the entire Ukrainian military?

They also have so much extra gear that they're [sending some to Ukraine](#). But somehow we still need to pour more money into the police and Pentagon here at home....make it make sense!

Biden has rightly called for an end to Texas' disgusting "investigations" into gender-affirming procedures for transgender children, which can be life saving. **"These actions are terrifying many families in Texas and beyond," the [president said](#).**

It's no coincidence that [ISAP](#), a program that surveils people awaiting hearings in U.S. immigration court, is run by a company owned by a giant private prison corporation. The invasive, dangerous program is billed as a "humane" alternative to detention, but it is an infringement on immigrants' right to life. **Endless surveillance is not, in any way, humane.**

The surveillance doesn't stop at the prison's edge. **Police in Minnesota have been [secretly targeting and surveilling](#) journalists, protestors, and civil rights advocates following George Floyd's murder.** We don't need to tell you that this is concerning, for so many reasons.

And finally, **if you've ever thought you could be the human version of Shazam, [today's your day](#) to shine!**