

A Year In Progressive Foreign Policy: 2022

A look back at the "Debrief"

WIN WITHOUT WAR

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Dear Activists,

We at the Win Without War policy team spend a lot of time engaged with the day-to-day work of U.S. foreign policy. When a crisis is afoot, we connect activists from the communities most impacted with policymakers who might not otherwise seek out their voices. We find opportunities for the U.S. to turn away from violence and instead showcase the widespread benefits of a foreign policy rooted in diplomacy and solidarity with a focus on common threats. And we communicate these ideas to stakeholders on Capitol Hill and in the administration. We try our best to ensure that every decisionmaker in Washington reads policy recommendations aimed at promoting a more peaceful and just world.

Delivering progressive analysis to key players in the policy process is core to our work, but we know that none of our analysis would be heard without your dedicated support. Every phone call, petition signature, and donation from you reveals a groundswell of support for progressive foreign policy. Your activism gives our movement its power and ensures that none of us are ignored. That's why, twice a month throughout the year, the policy team turns our energy from producing analysis for Congress and the administration and instead produces it for you, in the form of the Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief.

The Debrief is a free-to-subscribe email newsletter that gives you the best of our policy work. When Russia launched its imperialist invasion of Ukraine, readers got our instant analysis on the true cost of Putin's devastating war and our proposals for preventing disastrous escalation. When the defense budget was being debated, readers got vital background on how the Pentagon is driving climate change. On the anniversary of the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, readers got personal reflections from a leading Afghan activist on the need for reparative policies to address the country's humanitarian disaster. These are the kinds of analyses we provide to progressive champions in Congress, delivered to your inbox, because you're an important stakeholder in our movement. If you are not already subscribed, you can do so [here](#).

Starting next year, you'll see a new and improved Debrief. In addition to timely analysis of foreign policy issues, you'll read interviews with the activists, organizers, and officials who shape our movement, and you will get links to events hosted by us and our partners. In the meantime, enjoy this collection of some of our favorite issues from 2022. We appreciate your support, and we look forward to working with you to build a more peaceful world in the year to come.

Sincerely,

Sam Ratner
Policy Director, Win Without War

Midterm Reflections

By Eric Eikenberry, *Win Without War*
November 17, 2022



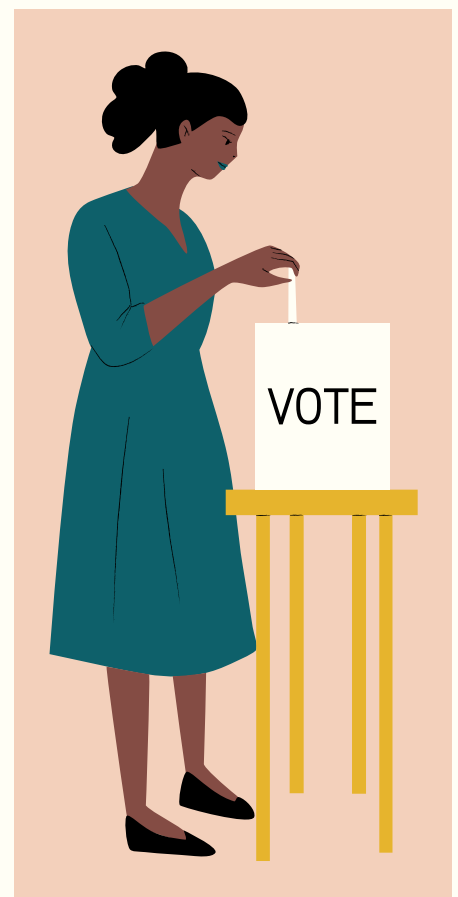
As of November 17, Democrats have retained their slim, 50-vote "majority" in the U.S. Senate, and they could pick up an outright majority in December's runoff elections in Georgia. Republicans are projected to control the House of Representatives with a majority they could count on one hand.

The most immediate impact of this national vote will occur in the coming weeks, not months. Senate Democratic leadership will feel a little less pressed to rush through as many administration nominees as possible in the lame duck session, and may let the processes governing two "must-pass" bills, the National Defense Authorization Act and an annual appropriations package, unfold a little more smoothly, while pursuing other standalone legislation (as we're already seeing with the Respect for Marriage Act). And of course, leadership elections for both parties in both chambers will stir plenty of DC pots, with reporters likely to outline recriminations among Republicans and a possible generational shift in Democratic House leadership in their daily newsletters.

If Democrats get a 51st Senate seat, they'll have outright majorities across Senate committees, reducing the procedural hurdles to getting both the president's nominees and more partisan legislation to the floor. More procedural clarity in the Senate, however, won't change where Congress is likely heading overall: gridlock, with the Senate frustrating the aims of a Republican-controlled House and vice versa.

Following a rougher-than-expected election night, House Republicans have a choice in front of them. There is a world in which Republican leadership allows, for the sake of basic governance, certain key bills to advance with the support of a slice of party moderates that squeaked through in purple or "lean blue" districts. The contemporary Republican party, however, has tended not to inhabit that world. Unless their underwhelming election returns have truly shaken up their strategy, we should expect "oversight" in the form of investigation upon investigation. Particularly pernicious could be probes and public hearings into the U.S. withdrawal of Afghanistan and U.S.-Mexico border policy, which will be venues for the right to stir up Islamophobia and racism while advocating for a return to, or expansion of, the civil rights- and refugee-undermining policies of the post-9/11 era.

Even as these manufactured dramas play out, a bright, silver lining will be the work of an augmented and energized progressive caucus. New representatives, like Pennsylvania's Summer Lee and Florida's Maxwell Frost, will add to the growing chorus of congressional champions who center human rights, diplomacy, solidarity, and human dignity in the conduct of U.S. foreign policy.



Midterm Reflections, continued

Where we're going

Prospects for the continued push to shape U.S. foreign policy in a more progressive direction are, like the election results, uneven. Bold, transformative legislation will likely be treated as organizing tools – policy ideas around which you slowly build support, so that key offices can enact them when the congressional winds (and whip counts) are in their favor, months or years from now. There will be efforts to see what gems – whether in support of refugees, or to rein in Pentagon corruption – can be embedded as amendments in the slow-rolling boulders of massive “must-pass” appropriations and authorizations bills. Hearings will become even more vital, as venues both for congressional allies to outline their alternatives to gridlock and for emerging experts to lay out their views of the (policy) world as it should be.

That approach is not so different from the one that advocates, even in more favorable times, are used to adopting. What has shifted, however, is the amount of defense that will have to be played against opponents hoping to use the House as a springboard to enact their own unacceptable policies – vaulting the Pentagon budget well past \$1 trillion, funneling weapons to human rights abusing governments, and rolling back U.S. commitments to international agreements and agencies that undergird nuclear non-proliferation or deliver aid to the world's disaster-stricken. These policies, even defeated in the Senate or overruled by a presidential veto, have to be contested every step of the way. If they're not marginalized now, then today's inflammatory legislative stunt risks becoming tomorrow's bipartisan compromise.

"Voters demonstrated what others can be quick to forget: that progressive values are galvanizing."

Why we're here

Is it all grinding, gridlock-induced small ball from here on out? Not in the slightest. After all, in 2018 – when Trump was president and progressives were far from power – Win Without War helped coordinate with partners, key offices, and a nationwide coalition of activists to pass a war powers resolution through the Senate that both cooled U.S. support for the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen and forced Yemen's warring parties to the table for their first talks in over two years. If you're reading this, you're likely a person that, in their day to day, focuses on what's possible – and you wouldn't be reading Win Without War's debriefs if you didn't want to transform how the United States engages with the rest of the world.

In the runup to last Tuesday, conventional wisdom was tending towards a massive defeat for progressives. Commentators accused progressive candidates and organizations of spending time and energy caring too much about protecting democracy at home and around the world, focusing too much on reproductive justice and righting the wrongs of the Supreme Court's Dobbs decision, throwing themselves too hard into opposing the deadly outcomes of racist law enforcement practices. Voters would punish progressives for pressing too hard for policies to address these wrongs, and would cut us down to size by sweeping opponents of these values into power.

Instead, voters demonstrated what others often forget: that progressive values are galvanizing; that democracy, reproductive justice, and anti-racism have broad constituencies in the United States; and that holding to a transformative political horizon, regardless of immediate obstacles, is always good policy and good politics. No matter the political terrain, Win Without War and our allies will always hold to that approach in our efforts to build a more peaceful, progressive U.S. foreign policy.

The Military-Industrial Carbon Footprint

By Yint Hmu, *Win Without War*
May 19, 2022



The Planet's Problem

Almost forty years after the world's governments and scientists came to a consensus that humans are causing climate change, we still have not taken the bold action needed to address it.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the United Nations are increasingly sounding the alarm that we are on a trajectory for the planet to warm between 2°C and 3°C, almost double the temperature limits of the Paris agreement. Without drastic action to shift course, we are poised to suffer through an environmental calamity of our own making very soon.

The Polluting War Machine

The U.S. military generates more greenhouse gasses than 140 whole countries. That makes the U.S. military one of the biggest polluters on the planet. Our efforts to make ourselves safer through military might are a huge contributor to the biggest threat to everyone's safety – climate change. Any conversation that involves cutting emissions must include reducing the size and scope of the U.S. military.



The U.S. military envelops the entire planet — our capability to wage war by land, air, sea, and increasingly space is made possible by the scattered military bases planted across the planet. Supported by a budget that could be as much as \$813 billion for FY2023, with wasteful spending on unnecessary weapons like the nuclear-armed sea-launched cruise missile (SLCM-N), the U.S. military is poised to grow even larger.

The Plan Misdirected

The U.S. national security community is acutely aware of the effects of climate change — they've been planning and gaming out scenarios since the late 2000s. For example, there's a National Intelligence Estimate and Global Trends 2030, both products of the National Intelligence Council; the Department of Defense's Risk Analysis and Adaptation Plan; and the Army even has its own climate plan.



The Military-Industrial Carbon Footprint, continued

But the U.S. national security community is primarily focused on adapting to fighting wars in a climate changed world. Efforts to reduce greenhouse emissions extend only towards electrifying non-tactical vehicles and transitioning to net zero carbon electricity generation for military bases. In other words, the SUVs and the sedans the military procure will be electric vehicles, but the F-35 will still burn 22 gallons of jet fuel per minute — a whopping 1,340 gallons of jet fuel per hour.

The Politics of Bread

We're already starting to live with the effects of climate change. Extreme weather patterns are now the norm and not the exception. Beginning in late March, a fifth of the total human population living in South Asia has been suffering through an extended drought that has sustained temperatures upwards of 120°F or 48.8°C. Birds have dropped dead from the sky.

The compromised environment that climate change creates exacerbates existing competition and conflict for resources. According to the World Food Programme, climate change is the second leading cause of hunger. Conflict is the first, which climate change also intensifies and inflames.

Food insecurity and the economic stress people feel, particularly in countries with poor governance structures, quickly snowball into political instability, violence, and increasingly forced migration leading to refugee crises.

"Any conversation that involves cutting emissions must include reducing the size and scope of the U.S. military."

The Progressive Climate Fight

In addition to emphasizing the urgency of the climate crisis and championing a Global Green New Deal, progressives' climate advocacy should include reducing the U.S. military footprint. It all comes down to fighting in the swamp on the federal government's resource allocations. Budget blueprints signal policy priorities. We must be fighting to shift our limited tax dollars away from the already bloated Pentagon and towards diplomacy and sustainable, equitable development.

That also means negotiating arms control treaties to limit the spread of carbon-intensive arms races, strengthening international institutions to manage resource competitions and resolve conflicts, and supporting change-makers in the Global South to build stronger governance structures and creating resiliency against the effects of climate change. This 21st century fight the progressive movement must undertake won't be easy, but it will be worth it.

Holding the Line on Nukes

By Faith Gay, Win Without War
June 17, 2022



Earlier this week, Congress kicked off its annual markups of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), this time for the 2023 fiscal year. With the bill seeking to authorize an astounding \$813 billion (\$847 billion, if the Senate gets its way) for Pentagon spending, it is full of numerous opportunities for waste, approving initiatives that the Pentagon doesn't need to pursue.

This year, Win Without War is advocating against funding two weapons in particular: a nuclear sea-launched cruise missile and the B83 megaton bomb. At a time when many people in the United States are feeling the costs of war from the gas pump to the grocery store, and watching the U.S. government clash with other nuclear powers like Russia and China, expanding the nuclear arsenal is the last thing people need. Making sure SLCM-N remains undeveloped and fully retiring the B83 bomb are some of just a few ways we can challenge Congress to address real security threats and limit potential provocations for future nuclear war.

Just What Are These Weapons?

SLCM-N is a Trump-era initiative to arm Navy submarines and possibly surface ships with "low-yield" nuclear missiles. Prior to the Trump administration's decision to fund research and development of the weapon, the Obama administration retired it, and George H.W. Bush removed its predecessor from Navy ships as part of a nuclear de-escalation effort at the end of the Cold War. Considered unnecessary by both Republican and Democratic administrations, and with an estimated price tag of \$10 billion, the weapon serves as yet another example of Trump's reckless defense policy and commitment to enriching weapons contractors.

With 80 times more power than the bomb dropped in Hiroshima, the B83 is a different type of reckless, but lethal and devastating all the same. Praised for its ability to destroy underground bunkers — meaning, that should the U.S. seek to carry out a nuclear strike, the Pentagon can proudly claim there's nowhere to hide — this weapon has been kept around by the Pentagon for 40 years. This old, Cold War-era nuke's life extension would cost \$100 million just to start, and would eventually be as expensive to finish as building a completely new nuclear weapon.



Holding the Line on Nukes, continued

So who's interested in developing these weapons systems? President Biden doesn't want them. Several congressional Democratic leaders, like Chairman Adam Smith of the House Armed Services Committee, don't want them. The Navy has said it doesn't need or want SLCM. But Republicans and certain members of the military brass have spent the past several months campaigning for these weapons to be authorized in FY2023 defense and appropriations bills, already succeeding in getting the Senate Armed Services committee to authorize \$25 million for SLCM-N research and delaying B83 retirement to until the government can produce yet another study on its effectiveness as a bunker buster. The House Armed Services committee, however, still has the chance to totally take these weapons off the books, and committee members are hearing from Win Without War and leading nuclear non-proliferation groups regularly.

These weapons champions aren't the only ones who have been campaigning. We've spent the last few months meeting with elected officials, working with partners, and educating our base on the need to end these weapons, gearing up for the legislative fights that are picking up steam right about now. So let's dive into just how costly and dangerous these nukes are.

**"For all the money we throw
at nukes, there's a host of critical
needs that go unmet."**

Nightmare on Doomsday Street

To put it bluntly — operationalizing SLCM-N is a tactical nightmare. On a radar screen, nuclear and conventional missiles launched from the same platforms (in this case, submarines and ships) are indistinguishable from one another. With plenty of U.S. submarines already purposed for other conventional missions, these ambiguities will make it difficult for other countries to tell if a cruise missile launched by the United States is conventional or nuclear, forcing them into high pressure decisions about carrying out a nuclear response.

Aside from its potential to confuse threat levels on the nuclear landscape (small detail, we know), the logistics of getting its production and use up and running also raise a host of other issues. The missiles themselves are not necessarily housed in the same states as the submarines, which prompts questions about how they'll be moved and which U.S. states will be responsible for now storing these nuclear weapons. Servicemembers currently don't have the training needed to operate these weapons and would need to receive some. These are just a few of the issues that will arise should the U.S. pursue this form of nuclear proliferation.

The case against the B83 is all the simpler. Using a 1+ megaton bomb as a "bunker buster" could kill up to 3 million people, per one simulation. It's not tactical. It's intolerable and unacceptable.

Trying to Avoid Global Nuclear War

Another unavoidable consequence of increased nuclear weapons production is that it's not done in a vacuum. The Biden administration has attempted to avoid direct military conflict with Russia during its invasion of Ukraine in an effort to avoid an escalation to nuclear warfare, even in the face of Putin making vague but concerning threats of unforeseen violence to come should other countries interrupt his colonial conquest. Additionally, in the last several years, U.S. military officials and policymakers have justified demands for increased weapons production and Pentagon spending in response to China's expansion of its weapons stockpile, and concerns about whether the Chinese government intends to forcefully infringe on Taiwanese sovereignty in the near future.

Holding the Line on Nukes, continued

As tensions increase on multiple sides, what sort of message does it send to these countries if the United States increases its stockpile with weapons like SLCM-N and the B83?

Building out the U.S. nuclear arsenal can spur other countries to expand theirs as well. In other words, new weapons production can inspire greater threats to people's security rather than deter those threats.

Weapons like these, and perhaps all nuclear weapons, threaten each and every person on Earth by raising the threshold for what's considered collateral damage in pursuit of military domination. Bombs like B83 are treated as reasonable and successful tools for their ability to obliterate human life miles beneath the ground, on our very much shared, and already dying, planet. SLCM-N muddies people's ability to perceive what is a threat or not, putting service members who don't even operate these weapons at increased risk of conflict, and the rest of us as well. Any cost is considered worth it to prove that the U.S. government has no limits in its capacity to cause irreparable and widespread harm to others, in a way that will also undeniably harm the people in its own country at the same time.

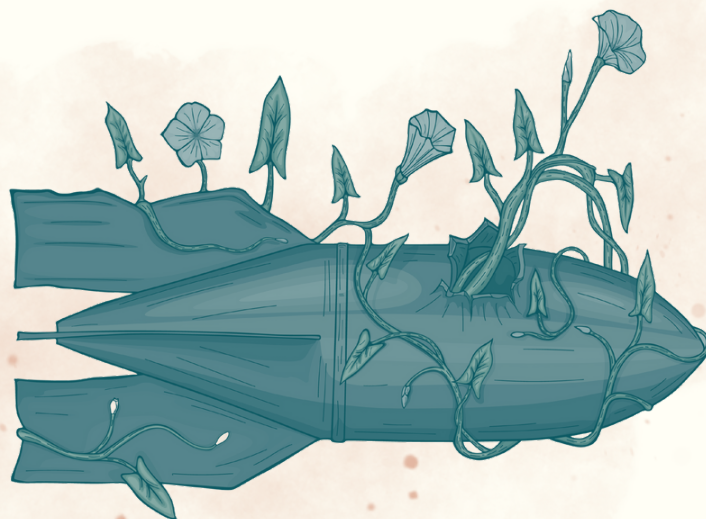
Each of these weapons' capacities to cause mass human and environmental destruction renders them impermissible. It falls on policymakers to scrutinize demands to fund these weapons of mass destruction and the great costs they come with.

Opportunity Costs

For all the money we throw at nukes, there's a host of critical needs that go unmet — greater pandemic response, affordable healthcare, climate action, housing assistance in response to rent increases, adequate public transportation in the face of rising gas prices, and the list goes on.

In a country where we're currently reliving the time when white supremacists tried to overthrow a presidential election and fighting back against ongoing attempts to erase queer rights and kill black people, all against a backdrop of daily gun violence, it's crystal clear that nuclear weapons, of all things, are not what will keep us safe.

There was a time when people assumed that nuclear war was inevitable. They prepared their bunkers and ran school evacuation drills and held their breath to see if the handful of world leaders who held the power to commit mass murder would jump over that cliff.



Holding the Line on Nukes, continued

That's not security. And living with that level of fear isn't sustainable. That's why a countless number of people have organized and participated in civil disobedience to push their leaders to engage in diplomacy, decrease nuclear stockpiles, make public promises against weapons use, and whatever else it takes to avoid such a final outcome. People have proven that nuclear war is not a given, and we need policymakers to continue to ensure that stays the case.

"New weapons production can inspire greater threats to people's security rather than deter those threats."

What We Need Instead

If we're to really build the security of people in the United States and abroad, rather than simply give some Pentagon officials whatever they want, we need members of Congress to encourage nuclear nonproliferation and diplomacy whenever they get the chance. They should support bills calling for a no first-use policy, declaring that the United States will never be the first party to use nuclear weapons, and other legislation that ends the president's sole authority to launch those types of weapons. Additionally, while the United States remains in tense conflict with Russia at the moment, pursuing nuclear nonproliferation treaties with other nuclear powers, like the United States' and Russia's New START treaty, are proven ways to help de-escalate tensions and avoid going down the path of no return. And given how much these weapons come with unacceptable costs, policymakers should also push for the U.S. to decrease and abolish its nuclear weapons stockpile overall.

"It's crystal clear that nuclear weapons, of all things, are not what will keep us safe."

It's crucial that any and all efforts to further endanger the world with nuclear weapons — from SLCM-N and B83 to the vast array of other weapons the U.S. holds — are met with fierce pushback. We call on congressional members who have these upcoming opportunities to defeat nuclear proliferation efforts with NDAA and Appropriations legislation to do so.

Consequences of the War in Afghanistan

By Arash Azizzada, *Afghans For A Better Tomorrow*
August 26, 2022



When the United States first invaded Afghanistan in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, endless promises were made. Of course, the United States promised to permanently rid Afghanistan of al-Qaeda and to eliminate the Taliban as punishment for hosting Osama bin Laden. Then, there were more extravagant promises: the U.S. would make Afghanistan a peaceful beacon of hope as well, where women would thrive again and a western-style democracy could flourish.

Twenty years later, these promises have come to nothing. The war that followed the 2001 invasion dragged on for over 20 years, and after its long-overdue end, people in Afghanistan are left to contend with the consequences of a devastating conflict. The Western-backed government fell quickly last August after it spent its latter years awash with political infighting and corruption. While certainly political gains were made during the 20-year occupation, none of them were sustainable.

The entirety of Afghanistan is now controlled by the Taliban, a group laser-focused on repressing its population and maintaining internal cohesion among their tens of thousands of fighters. They have ethnically cleansed various minorities throughout the country while closing girls' schools past the 6th grade. Today in Afghanistan, dissidents are arrested arbitrarily while Afghan women activists chanting for "freedom, jobs, and food" are met with violence in the streets. The U.S. withdrawal has accomplished one important goal: the armed conflict in Afghanistan has largely dissipated. But Afghans know that the way the Taliban are ruling — with exclusion, control, fear — ensures that violence remains part of daily life. Elements of ISIS are already thriving in this environment, continuing their brutal attacks on mosques and civilians in the capital city of Kabul and elsewhere. This generation of the Taliban is good at fomenting war and brutalizing civilians; keeping the peace and governing is a whole new ball game for them.

A version of peace is here now, but this is a negative peace that has rendered women second-class citizens and deprived people of food and jobs. The economy is in total freefall, fueled in part by the Taliban's incompetence at economic governance. Much of the misery here, though, is driven by the actions of the United States and the West. Western powers have ended development aid to the country, after helping construct an economy heavily dependent on foreign aid. Afghanistan is sanctioned now due to de-facto Taliban rule, while almost \$9 billion in Afghan foreign reserves remains frozen, allowing hyperinflation to spiral out of control. The administration faced deep criticism for putting aside \$3.5 billion of those assets, pending litigation by the families of the victims of the September 11th attacks. The Biden administration is currently in talks with the Taliban to ensure a "third-party" mechanism that would allow some of the reserves to be used to stabilize the economy, allowing for some minor relief for the country's 38 million people.



Consequences of the War in Afghanistan, continued

The Afghan middle class has evaporated overnight. When the U.S. withdrew, it took all the jobs with it, leaving a liquidity crisis in its wake. Afghans have money saved in banks and food in the markets to sell, but the sanctions, asset freeze, and widespread unemployment are ensuring nobody can access money to buy the food in the markets. That is the story of the Afghan people today - punished for a government they do not even want.

These U.S. policies are battering the Afghan economy. Poverty has gripped every pocket and corner of the country, forcing over 50% of a country of 38 million to be reliant on imported food. An extreme drought and the invasion of Ukraine are making the situation worse, and Afghans, like all of us, are still living through the COVID-19 pandemic. Afghanistan, since last fall, has been a step away from famine. Thousands of babies have been born malnourished or died from deprivation.

Much of the misery here, though, is driven by the actions of the United States and the West.

Often, we get messages from desperate Afghans inside the country. They fear the Taliban and suffer from unemployment and hunger driven by U.S. policy. Some have sold their kidneys or their children. Others have committed or considered suicide, unable to find a way out, as the U.S. and others have closed most immigration pathways to allow Afghans to seek safety or refuge.

The U.S. has now mostly ended its military involvement in Afghanistan, but that alone does not mean its obligations to Afghans end. A reparative policy to address the harms done by the war begins by giving newly arrived Afghan refugees a pathway to legal status and continuing evacuations of at-risk Afghans who seek safety through the Afghan Adjustment Act, which is before Congress now. Additionally, a reparative approach must involve returning seized Afghan assets to their rightful owners, the Afghan people, to allow the Afghan economy to stabilize, giving millions a chance to survive. Much pain and suffering have been inflicted on Afghans by the United States and it will take quite some time to repair that harm. Passing the Afghan Adjustment Act and unfreezing Afghan assets will be a good first step.

The Latest on Russia's War in Ukraine

By Amisha Parikh-Friese, Win Without War
February 25, 2022

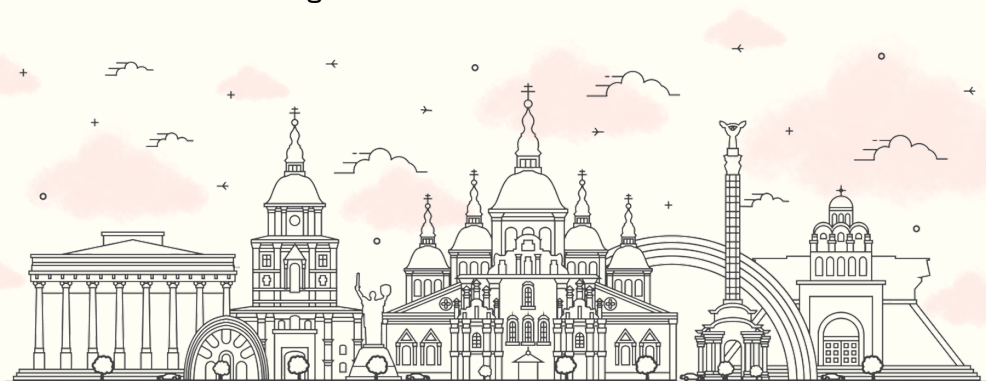


Russia's War of Choice

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 are 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 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.



The Latest on Russia's War in Ukraine, continued

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 consequences. 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.

"Putin's nostalgia for the former Soviet empire and willingness to use military means to revive it are putting millions of Ukrainian lives unnecessarily at risk."

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 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 Latest on Russia's War in Ukraine, continued



**PEACE
FOR
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. 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.



The Latest on Russia's War in Ukraine, continued

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.

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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.