

The Headline

Today marks the one year anniversary of Vladimir Putin's brutal, imperialist invasion of Ukraine. What many (Putin included) believed would be a short war capped by a Russian victory has become anything but, with Ukrainians making a courageous and effective stand for their independence. Today, the chances of Russian victory seem distant, but the war's horrors drag on. As we enter the second year of this awful war, the U.S. must continue the hard diplomatic work of supporting Ukrainian sovereignty, backing Ukraine's attempts to seek peace at the negotiating table, and reducing the risk of catastrophic escalation between Russia and NATO. To that already challenging portfolio, a new, more hopeful, but no less difficult task has been added: managing international support for reconstructing Ukraine.

President Biden's record in handling the U.S. role in the conflict thus far has been mostly laudable. U.S. support for Ukrainian independence has been steadfast, a commitment the president [renewed](#) in his visit to Kyiv this week. In the face of Putin's nuclear saber rattling, Biden has been measured and mature, making clear that the U.S. has no interest in nuclear confrontation and ensuring that lines of communication between Washington and Moscow stay open, preventing potentially disastrous miscommunication. Even with Putin's announcement this week that Russia is taking the reckless step of suspending cooperation with the U.S. on the New START nuclear arms control treaty, the administration has refused to be drawn into a pointless tit-for-tat, instead correctly emphasizing the need for nuclear arms control and [repeating](#) that it remains ready to engage on strategic arms limitation.

On reconstruction, planning is afoot. Late last month, the U.S., Ukraine, and the EU [co-chaired](#) their first meeting as leaders of a reconstruction planning committee that also includes other G7 countries, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. The committee will play a leading role in determining what shape the Ukrainian economy will take as the country rebuilds the infrastructure and systems that have been destroyed by Russian bombardment. The prospect of a resurgent Ukraine is a hopeful one, but the process of getting there contains many pitfalls. For one, Ukrainian labor unions and civil society organizations – so crucial to Ukrainian life and the country's resilience over the past year – have largely been frozen out of the reconstruction planning process thus far. With concerns growing that [erosion](#) of workers' rights, [corruption](#), and externally-enforced [austerity measures](#) could marr a new Ukrainian dispensation, it is crucial that organizations representing the people who have done so much to underwrite Ukraine's wartime success have a seat at the table in determining its economic future. The U.S. can and should ensure that leaders from labor unions and civil society organizations have powerful voices on the reconstruction committee it is co-chairing.

What's next: House Republicans are already using Putin's New START suspension as an excuse to spend even more on nuclear weapons – a move that would only pointlessly escalate tensions. On reconstruction, the international reconstruction committee will meet for the second time next month – we'll keep you updated about whether labor and civil society leaders are invited. Most importantly, though, what's next is that people in Ukraine will continue to find ways

to live their lives and preserve their independence, despite suffering from a war they did not seek.

The Happenings

February 28th, 1:00 PM ET: The Global Ripple Effect of U.S. Sanctions. [Carnegie Endowment](#)

March 1st, 8:30 AM ET: Rethinking Accountability in the US Security Sector (ft. Rep. Jason Crow), [CIVIC and Stimson Center](#)

March 6th, 11:00 AM ET: The economic case for tackling the climate crisis now. [Brookings Institute](#)

March 9th, 9:30 AM ET: "If We Don't Sell:" What Happens When States Are Cut Off From Arms, [CIVIC and Stimson Center](#)

The Spotlight

In today's spotlight, we interview Colleen Moore, [Advocacy Director](#) at Women Cross DMZ. You can follow her on Twitter [here](#).

1): What was the first moment you realized you were interested in U.S. foreign policy? Do you have any lessons learned for students or those just starting in a similar career path?

I have always been interested in learning more about the world around me, but I wasn't always sure how to translate that interest and passion into a career, outside of the typical federal government or think tank path. I ended up interning at CODEPINK: Women For Peace the summer of 2014, which completely changed my perspective on social change and activism. That summer we protested Israel's war on Gaza as well as police brutality after the murder of Michael Brown in Ferguson, and those two moments made me question a lot of what I had learned in my standard American education. I was resolved from that moment on to be an activist for social change, specifically for resisting U.S. militarism within and outside our borders.

For those interested in a career in foreign policy, I would encourage them to think outside of the box. There are so many skills applicable in this field that we need to strengthen our movement for peace; we need graphic designers, writers, legal experts, artists, engineers, and so many others to build a movement against U.S. militarism.

2): What about U.S. foreign policy towards the Korean Peninsula do you wish was better understood?

Many who disagree with our call for the U.S. to negotiate a peace agreement with North Korea fail to provide other alternatives. The reality is that the status quo of sanctions, isolation, and military threats has failed to make progress on rolling back North Korea's nuclear weapons development or to create peace and stability. Our peace-first approach is about trying something new: a feminist policy that centers the people of Korea, both North and South.

Furthermore, a peace-first approach is not an idea on the fringe of politics, but is backed by many in the mainstream. This includes former President [Jimmy Carter](#), who told Women Cross DMZ Executive Director Christine Ahn in 2018, "All that the North Koreans have wanted is a peace agreement instead of a ceasefire and that we should help North Koreans access the outside world by ending our embargo." It also includes more than 50 members of Congress who cosponsored both [H.Res.152](#) in the 116th Congress, the first House Resolution calling for a formal end to the Korean War, as well as the [Peace on the Korean Peninsula Act](#) in the 117th Congress. We've created this massive paradigm shift: 10 years ago, there were only 2 members of Congress who would speak on this issue, and we continue to build the political will for a different approach. John Carl Baker of the Ploughshares Fund says, "Five years ago, congressional advocacy on Korea peace issues simply did not exist. Now, there is a thriving coalition of groups who legislatively promote ending the war, reuniting families, and using diplomacy to roll back the nuclear weapons program. Women Cross DMZ helped build this robust activist infrastructure, which is now in place to address future moments of crisis and possibility."

3): In a [recent piece](#) in NK News, you argued "the U.S. must be willing to take the first step [toward peace on the Korean peninsula], by scaling back joint drills, endorsing a peace agreement and other de-escalatory measures, to realize a cooperative approach." What role can grassroots organizing, including from organizations like yours, play in making this cooperative approach happen?

People power has been — and will continue to be — the keystone to building the political will for a new U.S. approach toward North Korea rooted in demilitarization and peace. The movement has prioritized an inside-outside advocacy strategy, with DC beltway organizations advocating for a peace-first approach working in tandem with grassroots constituents across the country in key districts. Korea Peace Now! Grassroots Network is the grassroots contingent of the international Korea Peace Now! Campaign with Women Cross DMZ's partners in South Korea, with more than 12 chapters nationwide.

Grassroots mobilization was critical to achieving almost 50 cosponsors on the Peace on the Korean Peninsula Act in the last Congress. People power is also paramount to calling attention

to the significance of this July 27, 2023, which will mark the 70th anniversary of the signing of the armistice agreement that ended the active hostilities of the Korean War. Join us to call on the US government to negotiate a peace agreement to end the Korean War!

Buried Ledes

1. **Biden [nominated](#) former Mastercard CEO Ajay Banga to lead the World Bank** after the current head, David Malpass, announced his resignation. Climate activists want to use this opportunity to overhaul the institution into a major international vehicle for green energy transition, but there are few indications Banga shares that vision. His nomination highlights once again the absurdity – long criticized – of a system in which the U.S. and Europe hold a monopoly on selecting the heads of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, two institutions with huge power in the Global South.
2. **U.S. Judge George B. Daniels [rejected](#) a bid by September 11 attack victim families to seize \$3.5 billion in frozen Afghan central bank funds** to pay off a civil judgment against the Taliban. The judge ruled that awarding the funds to the families would be unconstitutional because it would be tantamount to recognizing the Taliban as Afghanistan's legitimate government. President Biden's decision to allocate half of the frozen reserves to the families has worsened the humanitarian catastrophe in Afghanistan.
3. **Palestinian political prisoners incarcerated in Israel have [launched](#) a mass civil disobedience campaign to protest worsening conditions** and punitive measures imposed by the country's new far-right government. The campaign began at Nafha prison on Tuesday and has since spread to jails across Israel, with hunger strikes planned at the start of Ramadan in late March. Israeli Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir has imposed new restrictions, including the closure of Palestinian prisoner-run bakeries and limiting family visits. About 4,780 Palestinian political prisoners are currently held in Israeli jails.
4. **Astronomers [found](#) six massive galaxies dating back to within 600 million years of the Big Bang.** These compact galaxies could contain as many stars as our Milky Way and weigh billions of times more than our sun. In one, the total weight of all its stars may be 100 billion times greater than our sun. The James Webb Space Telescope observed them, and researchers await official confirmation. The discovery challenges our understanding of galaxy formation and evolution, providing insights into the early universe and the conditions that created these cosmic “monsters.”
5. **Haiti and Portugal have [qualified](#) for the FIFA Women's World Cup for the first time**, winning playoff matches in New Zealand. Haiti beat Chile 2-1, while Portugal defeated Cameroon 2-1 with a last-minute goal. These two teams will join 30 other nations in the 32-team tournament, which will be co-hosted by Australia and New

Zealand in July and August. The final place will be decided on Thursday in a match between Paraguay and Panama. Congratulations to Haiti and Portugal for their historic achievement!

A new GOP-led House means a Congress in which Congressmen named Michael [outnumber](#) women as committee chairs. In response, we're launching *Mike Check*, an occasional series dedicated to keeping track of what the Mikes are doing with all that power. First off is House Armed Services Committee Chair **Mike** Rogers (R-AL), who this week floated a [tit-for-tat](#) nuclear escalation following Russia's New START suspension. Win Without War Policy Director Sam Ratner [responds](#).

What is the tallest volcano in Asia?

- A. Mt. Damavand (Iran)
- B. Mt. Fuji (Japan)
- C. Mt. Agung (Indonesia)
- D. Mt. Shiveluch (Russia)