

# We Face A Climate Abyss, But There Are Sparks Of Hope, Robert Pollin Says



*Robert Pollin*

The energy transition from fossil-based systems of energy production and consumption to renewable energy sources is moving slowly, and scores of global conferences on climate change over the past few decades have failed to produce the desired results. From the look of things, fossil fuels are going to be around for a long time to come, even though there is undeniable evidence that humanity is moving, as economist Robert Pollin puts it, “relentlessly towards a climate abyss.”

But even so, the Green New Deal and the fight for a more sustainable future are anything but dead, argues Pollin, one of the world’s leading progressive economists. In the exclusive interview for *Truthout* that follows, Pollin argues that there are many positive developments here in the U.S., as well as in Europe and other parts of the world, to suggest that the fight against climate change is not yet lost. Pollin is distinguished university professor of economics and co-director of the Political Economy Research Institute (PERI) at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. He is the author or co-author of a large number of books and academic articles, including *Climate Crisis and the Global Green New Deal* (with Noam Chomsky and C.J. Polychroniou, 2020) as well as major green economy transition programs for several U.S. states (including California, Maine New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Colorado, Washington and West Virginia) and different countries, including the U.S., India, South Korea, Spain, Brazil, South

Africa, and Indonesia.

*C. J. Polychroniou: Bob, we seem to be losing the fight against global warming. 2022 has been described as “[the year the energy transition went off the rails](#)” as carbon emissions from fossil fuels last year are projected to hit record high and the Copernicus Climate Change Service said that summer 2022 was Europe’s hottest on record, causing over 20,000 excess deaths. Meanwhile, another global climate conference (COP 27) ended with no progress on fossil fuels. Why do fossil fuels continue to remain essential to the global economy, and why does the energy transition appear to be proceeding at a snail’s pace?*

*Robert Pollin: To begin with, I don’t think the current status of the fight against global warming is quite as bleak as the *Forbes Magazine* headline you are quoting conveys. Of course, there is a great deal of evidence demonstrating that we continue to move relentlessly toward a climate abyss. And yet, some significant positive countertendencies have also emerged over the past year. These countertendencies are not yet nearly adequate to move us onto a viable climate stabilization path. But we still need to embrace these developments so that we can build effectively from them.*

But let’s start by recognizing some grim realities. Here are a few indicators from the World Meteorological Organization’s 2022 report, “[Provisional State of the Global Climate](#)”:

- Concentrations of the three main greenhouse gases — carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide — reached record highs in 2021, with preliminary evidence finding that this upward trend continued in 2022.
- The average global temperatures for 2015-2022 are likely to have been the eight warmest years on record.
- The temperature in the U.K. reached 105° Fahrenheit for the first time on record, while three states in Germany experienced their driest summer on record.
- Average daily temperatures were sustained at over 110° F during the heat wave in India this past May, while monsoon flooding in Pakistan in July and August inundated about 9 percent of the country’s total land area.

A *Washington Post* article from last July titled “[India’s Deadly Heatwave Will Soon Be a Global Reality](#)” reported that,

“As the climate warms, conditions once experienced only in saunas and deep

minshafts are rapidly becoming the open-air reality for hundreds of millions of people, who have no escape to air conditioning or cooler climes. After a few hours with humid heat above 95° F — a measure known as the wet-bulb temperature — even healthy people with unlimited shade and water will die of heatstroke. For those carrying out physical labor, the threshold is closer to 88° F or even lower.”

By far, the major driver of rising global temperatures is burning fossil fuels — oil, coal and natural gas — to produce energy. Therefore, the first and most important task for fighting global warming must be, simply, to stop burning oil, coal and natural gas to produce energy. *Forbes* is correct that 2022 brought a series of devastating setbacks on this front. To begin with, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine led to oil and gas supply shortages, especially in Europe, which is heavily dependent on Russian supplies. These supply shortages enabled the oil giants to jack up prices and reap unprecedented profits. In fact, as has been widely reported, the six largest Western oil companies — ExxonMobil, Chevron, Shell, BP, Equinor and Total — made [\\$200 billion in profits in 2022](#), more than any previous year in the history of the industry.

The oil companies, in other words, are feasting as the world burns. Should we be surprised that Wall Street has registered its strong approval? Thus, the *Financial Times* [reported](#) that, “U.S. giant ExxonMobil, which has resisted pressure to decarbonize more than any other energy major, increased production in 2022 and its shares rallied more than 50 percent in the year as it raked in a record \$55.7 billion in profits.” Then there is the case of BP, the oil major that had previously gone the furthest in its commitments to decarbonize. But those commitments went out the window in the face of exploding profit opportunities. The *Financial Times* noted that this decision “stirred anger from environmentalists ... yet the market approved. BP’s shares rallied more than 10 percent over the following 48 hours, reaching their highest level in 3 ½ years.”

Coal was also revived in 2022. This was due in part to the natural gas shortages created in Europe by the Ukraine war. But the largest increases in coal consumption were not due to the war, but rather to the continued increases in consumption in India and especially China. China now accounts for about [50 percent of all global coal consumption](#).

These developments led Chevron’s chief executive Mike Wirth to triumphantly pronounce that, “The reality is [fossil fuel] is what runs the world today. It’s going

to run the world tomorrow and five years from now, 10 years from now, 20 years from now.” What if Wirth is correct? Then we are certainly moving closer to the climate abyss exactly in step with the Mike Wirths of the world engorging themselves on fossil fuel profits.

Amid this, where can we possibly also see significant positive developments? We can start in the U.S., with the enactment of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) last August. The law is deliberately misnamed. It is mostly a measure to channel large-scale financing into clean energy investments. But the Biden administration couldn't openly advertise this fact without losing the support of West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin. In any case, as a result of the IRA passing, [clean energy investments immediately spiked](#) in the last three months of 2022 to \$40 billion, equal to the total level of such investments for all of 2021. Moreover, most of this new investment money has been flowing into Republican-dominated states, where, as the *Wall Street Journal* [pointed out](#), not a single Republican member of Congress voted for the law. Still more, a large percentage of the new jobs being created by these investments, including in the Republican-dominated states, are [reserved for union members](#).

In short, a fundamental new reality could be emerging out of the IRA: that working people will begin to see how the green energy transformation can be a major engine for creating good union jobs, in red states just as much as in blue states. This is a central idea behind the Green New Deal, as has been advanced in the U.S. for over a decade by excellent groups like Labor Network for Sustainability, the BlueGreen Alliance and Reimagine Appalachia. If this point does become broadly recognized, it could deliver unprecedented levels of support for a global Green New Deal. For example, it would mean that, as opposed to the Yellow Vest movement that emerged in France in 2018 insisting that economic justice be prioritized over climate justice, the global Green New Deal will be understood as the means through which economic justice and climate justice movements can become unified.

There have also been major positive developments in Europe over the past year, which responded to the collapse of Russian oil and gas supplies by sharply increasing energy conservation measures and accelerating the roll-out of solar, wind, and other renewables. Thus, in 2022 for the first time, [solar and wind power combined](#) generated more electricity in Europe than either coal or gas. Going further, the European Commission enacted its REPowerEU program after

Russia's invasion. Its goal is "a massive scale-up of renewables, as well as faster electrification and replacement of fossil-based heat and fuel in industry, buildings, and the transport sector." The target is for renewables to supply 45 percent of all energy in Europe by 2030. That would mean [more than doubling](#) the current 22 percent renewable share of overall energy supply in only 6 ½ years.

It is not clear that these goals will be actually achieved. To date, the level of EU funding behind REPowerEU does not match the rhetoric, at only about 0.2 percent of EU GDP annually through 2027. But here again, the point should become increasingly evident throughout Europe that the green energy transformation will be an engine for expanding job opportunities and raising working-class living standards — in other words, a clear alternative to the austerity economics that dominates in Europe today. As this point sinks in, the level of political support for funding REPowerEU at much higher levels could also grow correspondingly.

The election of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in October, returning him to the presidency of Brazil, was unquestionably a third major positive development over the past year. Lula's predecessor, Jair Bolsonaro, was hell-bent on razing the Amazon rainforest to make room for corporate agriculture and mining. Aside from burning fossil fuels for energy, deforestation is the most significant force causing climate change. Lula is committed to stopping deforestation and protecting the Amazon. But it is also true that Lula's commitments on this issue will be tested, for the simple reason that big profits can be made from destroying the rainforest.

Lula's election victory needs to now be buttressed by large increases in financial support for forest protection in Brazil and elsewhere, and more generally, for Green New Deal projects in the Global South. This hasn't happened so far, despite [pledges made by rich countries](#) at the most recent November climate summit in Egypt. In short, Lula's victory, as well as the rapid scaling up of clean energy investments and jobs in the U.S. and Europe, need to be embraced as major positive developments. But we still have far to go in defeating the ongoing corporate project of destroying the planet in the name of profits.

*There is growing emphasis on the need for adaptation strategies to reduce the adverse effects of global warming. Shouldn't there be concern with shifting the climate policy focus from mitigation to adaptation?*

Large-scale climate adaptation investments are an absolute imperative. Let's come back to the brutal heat wave last spring in India. One obvious way to protect people during heat waves is with air conditioning. However, only 8 percent of Indian households now own air conditioning units. The situation in most of the rest of the world is not that different than India. The climate crisis has made access to air conditioning — along with cheap electricity generated by renewable energy sources to power the units — a necessity.

More generally, the global Green New Deal must incorporate a range of robust protections against climate change impacts. This includes greatly expanding available storage facilities for food, seed and fresh water, and ensuring that these structures are themselves strongly protected against climate events. It must also include water demand management infrastructure, including — where they can be introduced without damaging local ecologies — sea walls, dams, pumping capacity, permeable pavements and abundant water-buffeting vegetation. Existing buildings in vulnerable areas should be retrofitted to incorporate protective walls and green roofs to deal with both rainwater and heat. New buildings in vulnerable areas should be built with higher foundations or on stilts. Organic farming also provides important benefits in terms of climate protection. This is because organic farming is more effective than industrial agriculture in retaining the available water supply, using that water more efficiently, as well as mitigating soil erosion. Crop yields are also higher through organic farming under drought conditions and other forms of stress.

In addition to all these and other forms of physical protections, people and communities need to have access to effective and affordable financial insurance against climate change damage. More generally, protecting people against the worst effects of climate change will cost money. But this doesn't mean that funding for adaptation should be seen as competing with funding for mitigation. Both are absolute necessities. It's also not as if there is no money to be found. In addition to Big Oil's record-shattering profits in 2022, [global fossil fuel subsidies also doubled](#), from roughly \$500 billion to \$1 trillion in 2022. This spike in fossil fuel subsidies came *after* the 2021 Glasgow Climate Pact committed to phasing out these subsidies. Both mitigation and adaptation investments will more than pay for themselves over time, by protecting both the workforce, the physical infrastructure and the food and water supply, by expanding job opportunities, and by delivering cheaper and more reliable energy. All of this is in addition, of

course, to providing the only humane course of action in the face of the climate crisis.

*There is increasing concern among conservationists that the fight against global warming to save the planet is treating climate change apart from the broader ecological footprint. For example, it is contested that climate change is not the principal driver of biodiversity loss. Can global warming and biodiversity be tackled together?*

Global warming and biodiversity loss can certainly be tackled together to a significant extent, even while there is not a one-for-one overlap between them in terms of either causes or solutions. The single biggest driver of biodiversity loss is land use change. This includes the destruction of animal habitats through deforestation and related human encroachments, as well as the disruption of the remaining habitats through the increasing frequency and severity of heat waves, droughts and floods. More generally, a [2018 study](#) by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) found that two degrees Celsius of warming would risk “shifts of species to higher latitudes, damage to ecosystems (e.g., coral reefs, and mangroves, seagrass and other wetland ecosystems), loss of fisheries productivity (at low latitudes) and changes to ocean chemistry (e.g., acidification ... and dead zones.” The ecologist Pamela McElwee further [notes](#) that “if we reach the 2° C threshold, it is projected that 18 percent of insects, 16 percent of plants, and 8 percent of vertebrate species will lose over half of their geographic range, and localized extinctions are a near certainty.” The solution here is straightforward: do not allow global warming to cross the 2° C threshold or, for that matter, the more stringent 1.5° C threshold that the IPCC now insists is necessary.

But it is also the case that, as a 2021 IPCC study emphasized, “technology-based measures that are effective for climate change mitigation can pose serious threats to biodiversity.” For example, this IPCC study describes how the increased demand for minerals needed for wind turbines, solar panels, electric car motors and batteries can produce serious negative impacts on land areas as well as oceans, to the extent that seabed mining becomes a major new source of mineral supplies. Some solutions here are at once obvious but difficult to achieve. They include greatly expanding the system of recycling the minerals where demand is growing, developing technologies in the renewable energy sectors in which mineral requirements are less intensive, as well as insisting on strong

[environmental and social sustainability requirements](#) in mining operations.

In other words, the challenges of advancing an effective unified framework for addressing both climate change and biodiversity loss are formidable. But we simply have no alternative other than continuing to build the movement that is capable of meeting these challenges.

*This interview has been lightly edited for clarity.*

Source: <https://truthout.org/>

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# Chomsky: A Stronger NATO Is The Last Thing We Need As Russia-Ukraine War Turns 1



*Noam Chomsky*

The war in Ukraine is almost a year old, with no end in sight to the fighting, suffering and destruction. In fact, the war's next phase could turn into a bloodbath and last for years, as the U.S. and Germany agree to supply Ukraine with battle tanks and as Volodymyr Zelenskyy urges the West to send long-range missiles and fighter jets.

It is becoming increasingly obvious that this is now a U.S./NATO-Russia war, Noam Chomsky argues in the exclusive interview for *Truthout* that follows, excoriating the idea that, in light of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, there needs to be a stronger NATO rather than a negotiated settlement to the conflict. "Those calling for a stronger NATO might want to think about what NATO is doing right now, and also about how NATO depicts itself," Chomsky says, warning of "the growing threat of steps up the escalation ladder to nuclear war."

Chomsky is institute professor emeritus in the Department of Linguistics and Philosophy at MIT and laureate professor of linguistics and Agnese Nelms Haury Chair in the Program in Environment and Social Justice at the University of Arizona. One of the world's most-cited scholars and a public intellectual regarded by millions of people as a national and international treasure, Chomsky has published more than 150 books in linguistics, political and social thought, political economy, media studies, U.S. foreign policy and world affairs. His latest books are

*Illegitimate Authority: Facing the Challenges of Our Time* (with C.J. Polychroniou; Haymarket Books, forthcoming); *The Secrets of Words* (with Andrea Moro; MIT Press, 2022); *The Withdrawal: Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan, and the Fragility of U.S. Power* (with Vijay Prashad; The New Press, 2022); *The Precipice: Neoliberalism, the Pandemic and the Urgent Need for Social Change* (with C.J. Polychroniou; Haymarket Books, 2021); and *Climate Crisis and the Global Green New Deal: The Political Economy of Saving the Planet* (with Robert Pollin and C. J. Polychroniou; Verso 2020).

*C. J. Polychroniou: The war in Ukraine is approaching its one-year anniversary and not only is there no end in sight to the fighting, but the flow of weaponry from the U.S. and Germany to Ukraine is increasing. What's next on the NATO/U.S. agenda, one wonders? Urging the Ukrainian military to retaliate by striking Moscow and other Russian cities? So, what's your assessment, Noam, of the latest developments in the Russia-Ukraine conflict?*

*Noam Chomsky: We can usefully begin by asking what is not on the NATO/U.S. agenda. The answer to that is easy: efforts to bring the horrors to an end before they become much worse. "Much worse" begins with the increasing devastation of Ukraine, awful enough, even though nowhere near the scale of the U.S.-U.K. invasion of Iraq or, of course, the U.S. destruction of Indochina, in a class by itself in the post-WWII era. That does not come close to exhausting the highly relevant list. To take a few minor examples, as of February 2023, the UN estimates civilian deaths in Ukraine at about 7,000. That's surely a severe underestimate. If we triple it, we reach the probable death toll of the U.S.-backed Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. If we multiply it by 30, we reach the toll of Ronald Reagan's slaughter in Central America, one of Washington's minor escapades. And so it continues.*

*But this is a pointless exercise, in fact a contemptible one in Western doctrine. How dare one bring up Western crimes when the official task is to denounce Russia as uniquely horrendous! Furthermore, for each of our crimes, elaborate apologetics are readily available. They quickly collapse on investigation, as has been demonstrated in painstaking detail. But that is all irrelevant within a well-functioning doctrinal system in which "unpopular ideas can be silenced, and inconvenient facts kept dark, without the need for any official ban," to borrow George Orwell's description of free England in his (unpublished) introduction to *Animal Farm*.*

But “much worse” goes far beyond the grim toll in Ukraine. It includes those facing starvation from the curtailing of grain and fertilizer from the rich Black Sea region; the growing threat of steps up the escalation ladder to nuclear war (which means terminal war); and arguably worst of all, the sharp reversal of the limited efforts to avert the impending catastrophe of global heating, which there should be no need to review.

Unfortunately, there is a need. We cannot ignore the euphoria in the fossil fuel industry over the skyrocketing profits and the tantalizing prospects for decades more of destruction of human life on Earth as they abandon their marginal commitment to sustainable energy as profitability of fossil fuels soars.

And we cannot ignore the success of the propaganda system in driving such concerns from the minds of the victims, the general population. The latest [Pew poll](#) of popular attitudes on urgent issues did not even ask about nuclear war. Climate change was at the bottom of the list; among Republicans, 13 percent.

It is, after all, only the most important issue to have arisen in human history, another unpopular idea that has been effectively suppressed.

The poll happened to coincide with the latest setting of the Doomsday Clock, moved forward to 90 seconds to midnight, another record, driven by the usual concerns: nuclear war and environmental destruction. We can add a third concern: the silencing of awareness that our institutions are driving us to catastrophe.

Let’s return to the current topic: how policy is being designed to bring about “much worse” by escalating the conflict. The official reason remains as before: to severely weaken Russia. The liberal commentariat, however, offers more humane reasons: We must ensure that Ukraine is in a stronger position for eventual negotiations. Or in a weaker position, an alternative that does not enter into consideration, though it is hardly unrealistic.

In the face of such powerful arguments as these, we must concentrate on sending U.S. and German tanks, probably soon jet planes, and more direct U.S.-NATO participation in the war.

What’s probably coming next is not concealed. The press has just reported that the Pentagon is calling for a top-secret program to insert “control teams” in

Ukraine to monitor troop movements. It has also revealed that the U.S. has been providing targeting information for all advanced weapon strikes, “a previously undisclosed practice that reveals a deeper and more operationally active role for the Pentagon in the war.” At some point there might be Russian retaliation, [another step up the escalation ladder](#).

Persisting on its present course, the war will come to vindicate the view of much of the world outside the West that this is a U.S.-Russian war with Ukrainian bodies — increasingly corpses. The view, to quote Ambassador Chas Freeman, that the U.S. seems to be fighting Russia to the last Ukrainian, reiterating the conclusion of Diego Cordovez and Selig Harrison that in the 1980s the U.S. was fighting Russia to the last Afghan.

There have been real successes for the official policy of severely weakening Russia. As many commentators have discussed, for a fraction of its colossal military budget, the U.S., via Ukraine, is significantly degrading the military capacity of its sole adversary in this arena, not a small achievement. It’s a bonanza for major sectors of the U.S. economy, including fossil fuel and military industries. In the geopolitical domain, it resolves — at least temporarily — what has been a major concern throughout the post-WWII era: ensuring that Europe remains under U.S. control within the NATO system instead of adopting an independent course and becoming more closely integrated with its natural resource-rich trading partner to the East.

Temporarily. It is not clear how long the complex German-based industrial system in Europe will be willing to face decline, even a measure of deindustrialization, by subordinating itself to the U.S. and its British lackey.

Is there any hope for diplomatic efforts to escape the steady drift to disaster for Ukraine and beyond? Given Washington’s lack of interest, there is little media inquiry, but enough has leaked out from Ukrainian, U.S., and other sources to make it reasonably clear that there have been possibilities, even as recently as last March. We’ve discussed them in the past and more [bits of evidence of varying quality](#) keep trickling through.

Do opportunities for diplomacy still remain? As fighting continues, positions predictably harden. Right now, Ukrainian and Russian stands appear irreconcilable. That is not a novel situation in world affairs. It has often turned out

that “Peace talks are possible if there is a political will to engage in them,” the situation right now, [two Finnish analysts suggest](#). They proceed to outline steps that can be taken to ease the way toward further accommodation. They rightly point out that the political will is there in some circles: among them the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and senior figures in the Council of Foreign Relations. So far, however, vilification and demonization are the preferred method to deflect such deviation from the commitment to “much worse,” often accompanied by lofty rhetoric about the cosmic struggle between the forces of light and darkness.

The rhetoric is all too familiar to those who have paid any attention to U.S. exploits throughout the world. We might, for example, recall Richard Nixon’s call to the American people to join him in pulverizing Cambodia: “If, when the chips are down, the world’s most powerful nation, the United States of America, acts like a pitiful, helpless giant, the forces of totalitarianism and anarchy will threaten free nations and free institutions throughout the world.”

A constant refrain.

*Putin’s invasion of Ukraine has clearly hit the buffers, but as is the case with any war, there is dishonesty, propaganda and lies flying left and right from all sides involved. On some occasions, there is also outright madness in the thinking of some commentators which, unfortunately enough, passes itself off as analytical discourse worth publishing in so-called world leading opinion pages. “Russia must lose this war and demilitarize” argued the authors of a recent piece that appeared in [Project Syndicate](#). In addition, they claim that the West does not want to see Russia defeated. And they cite you as one of those who is somehow naïve enough to believe in the idea that the West bears responsibility for creating the conditions provoking Russia’s attack on Ukraine. Your comments and reaction to this piece of “analysis” on the ongoing war in Ukraine, which I presume may in fact be widely shared not only by Ukrainians but also by many others in Eastern Europe and the Baltic states, not to mention the United States?*

There’s not much point wasting time on “outright madness” — which, in this case, also calls for devastation of Ukraine and great damage far beyond.

But it’s not complete madness. They’re right about me, though they might add that I share the company of [almost all historians](#) and a wide range of prominent policy intellectuals since the ‘90s, among them leading hawks, as well as the top

echelon of the diplomatic corps who know anything about Russia, from George Kennan and Reagan's Ambassador to Russia Jack Matlock, to Bush II's hawkish defense secretary Robert Gates, to the current head of the CIA, and an impressive list of others. The list in fact includes any literate person capable of reviewing the very clear historical and diplomatic record with an open mind.

It is, surely, worthwhile to think seriously about the history of the past 30 years since Bill Clinton launched a new Cold War by [violating the firm and unambiguous U.S. promise](#) to Mikhail Gorbachev that "We understand the need for assurances to the countries in the East. If we maintain a presence in a Germany that is a part of NATO, there would be no extension of NATO's jurisdiction for forces of NATO one inch to the east."

Those who want to ignore the history are free to do so, at the cost of failure to understand what is happening now, and what the prospects are for preventing "much worse."

*Another unfortunate chapter in human mentality in connection with the Russian-Ukraine conflict is the degree of racism manifested by many commentators and policy makers in the Western world. Yes, fortunately enough, Ukrainians fleeing their country have been welcomed with open arms by European countries, which is not of course the treatment accorded to those fleeing parts of Africa and Asia (or from Central America in the case of the United States) because of persecution, political instability and conflict, and desire to escape poverty. In fact, it's hard to miss the racism hidden behind the thinking of many who claim that one should not compare U.S.'s invasion of Iraq with Russia's invasion of Ukraine because the two events are on a different level. This is, for instance, [the position taken by the neoliberal Polish intellectual Adam Michnik](#), who, incidentally, also cites you as one of those who commits the cardinal sin of failing to draw distinctions between the two invasions! Your reaction to this type of "intellectual analysis?"*

Outside the self-protective Western bubble, the racism is [perceived in even starker terms](#), for example, by the distinguished Indian writer and political activist/essayist Arundhati Roy: "Ukraine is certainly not seen here as something with a clear moral tale to tell. When brown or black people get bombed or shocked-and-awed, it does not matter, but with white people it is supposed to be different."

I'll return directly to the "cardinal sin," a most revealing aspect of contemporary high culture in the West, mimicked by loyalists elsewhere.

We should recognize however that Eastern Europe is a somewhat special case. For familiar and obvious reasons, Eastern European elites tend to be more susceptible to U.S. propaganda than the norm. That's the basis for Donald Rumsfeld's distinction between Old and New Europe. Old Europe are the bad guys, who refused to join in the U.S. invasion of Iraq, encumbered by antiquated ideas about international law and elementary morality. New Europe, mostly the former Russians satellites, are the good guys, free from such baggage.

*Finally, there are even some "leftist" intellectuals out there who have taken the position that the world now, in light of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, needs a stronger NATO and that there shouldn't be any negotiated settlements to the conflict. I find it hard to digest the notion that anyone who claims to be part of the left-radical tradition would be advocating the expansion of NATO and be in favor of the continuation of the war, so what's your take on this particularly strange "leftist" position?*

I somehow missed the calls from the left for a revival of the Warsaw Pact when the U.S. invaded Iraq and Afghanistan while also attacking Serbia and Libya — always with pretexts, to be sure.

Those calling for a stronger NATO might want to think about what NATO is doing right now, and also about how NATO depicts itself. The latest NATO summit extended the North Atlantic to the Indo-Pacific, that is, all the world. NATO's role is to participate in the U.S. project of planning for a war with China, already an economic war as the U.S. dedicates itself (and by compulsion, its allies) to preventing Chinese economic development, with steps toward possible military confrontation lurking not far in the distance. Again, terminal war.

We've discussed all of this before. There are new developments as Europe, South Korea and Japan ponder ways to avoid severe economic decline by following Washington's orders to withhold technology from China, their major market.

It's also of no slight interest to see the self-image that NATO is proudly constructing. One instructive example is the U.S. Navy's latest acquisition, the amphibious assault ship *USS Fallujah*, named to commemorate [the two Marine attacks on Fallujah in 2004](#), among the more atrocious crimes of the U.S. invasion

of Iraq. It's normal for imperial states to ignore or seek to explain away their crimes. It's a shade more unusual to see them celebrated.

Outsiders don't always find this amusing, including Iraqis. Reflecting on the commissioning of the *USS Fallujah*, [Iraqi journalist Nabil Salih describes](#) a football field "known as the [Martyrs' Cemetery](#). It is where residents of the once besieged city [of Fallujah] buried the women and children massacred in repeated United States assaults to repress a raging rebellion in the early years of occupation. In Iraq, even playgrounds are now sites for mourning. The war entailed showering Fallujah in depleted uranium and white phosphorus."

"But US savagery didn't end there," Salih continues:

"Twenty years and incalculable birth defects later, the US navy is naming one of its warships the USS Fallujah.... This is how the US Empire continues its war against Iraqis. Fallujah's name, bleached in white phosphorus implanted in mothers' wombs for generations, is a spoil of war, too. "Under extraordinary odds," reads a US Empire [statement](#) explaining the decision to name a warship after Fallujah, "the Marines prevailed against a determined enemy who enjoyed all the advantages of defending in an urban area."... What is left is the haunting absence of family members, homes bombed into nonexistence and photographs incinerated along with the smiling faces. Instead, a lethally corrupt system of cross-sectarian camaraderie-in-theft was bequeathed to us by the unpunished war criminals of Downing Street and the Beltway."

Salih quotes Walter Benjamin in his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*: "Whoever has emerged victorious participates to this day in the triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostrate."

"Through this historical revisionism," Salih concludes, "the US has launched another assault on our dead. Benjamin had warned us: 'Even the dead will not be safe from the enemy if he wins.' The enemy has won."

That's the true image of NATO, as many victims can testify.

But what do Iraqis know, or other Brown and Black people like them? For "The Truth" one can turn to a Polish writer who obediently repeats the most vulgar American propaganda, echoing many of his counterparts among the commissars at home.



Let's be fair, however. At the time of the massacre, the U.S. media did report what was going on. I can do no better than to quote at length from the [damning compilation](#) of much of that reporting that Australian journalist John Menadue published in 2018:

[On October 16, 2004, the Washington Post reported](#) that *"electricity and water were cut off to the city just as a fresh wave of [bombing] strikes began Thursday night, an action that US forces also took at the start of assaults on Najaf and Samarra."* The Red Cross and other aid agencies were also denied access to deliver the most basic of humanitarian aid — water, food, and emergency medical supplies to the civilian population.

On November 7, a [New York Times front page story](#) detailed how the Coalition's ground campaign was launched by seizing Fallujah's only hospital: *"Patients and hospital employees were rushed out of the rooms by armed soldiers and ordered to sit or lie on the floor while troops tied their hands behind their backs."* The story also revealed the motive for attacking the hospital: *"The offensive also shut down what officers said was a propaganda weapon for the militants: Fallujah General Hospital with its stream of reports of civilian casualties."* The city's two medical clinics were also bombed and destroyed.

In a November 2005 editorial denouncing its use, the [New York Times described white phosphorous](#), *"Packed into an artillery shell, it explodes over a battlefield in a white glare that can illuminate an enemy's positions. It also rains balls of flaming chemicals, which cling to anything they touch and burn until their oxygen supply is cut off. They can burn for hours inside a human body."*

In early November 2004, alongside the *New York Times* reports that Fallujah's main hospital had been attacked, the *Nation* magazine referred to *"reports that US armed forces killed scores of patients in an attack on a Fallujah health centre and have deprived civilians of medical care, food and water."*

The [BBC reported on 11 November 2004](#) *"Without water and electricity, we feel completely cut off from every one else ... there are dead women and children lying on the streets. People are getting weaker from hunger. Many are dying from their injuries because there is no medical help left in the city whatsoever."*

On 14 November 2004, [the Guardian reported](#) *"The horrific conditions for those who remained in the city have begun to emerge in the last 24 hours as it becomes*

*clear that US military claims of 'precision' targeting of insurgent positions were false.... The city has been without power or water for days."*

That's NATO, for those willing to learn about the world.

But enough of this deplorable whataboutism. Orders from on high are that it is outrageous to compare the new Hitler's assault on Ukraine with the misguided but benign U.S.-U.K. mercy mission to help Iraqis by ousting an evil dictator — whom the U.S. enthusiastically supported right through his worst crimes, but that's not proper fare for the intellectual class.

Again, however, we should be fair. Not all agree that it's improper to raise questions about the U.S. mission in Iraq. Recently, there was much ado about [Harvard's rejection of Human Rights Watch Director Kenneth Roth](#) for a position at the Kennedy School, quickly rescinded under protest. Roth's credentials were lauded. He even took the negative position in a debate, moderated by noted human rights advocate Samantha Power, on whether the Iraq invasion qualifies as humanitarian intervention. (Michael Ignatieff, director of the Carr Center for Human Rights, argued it did qualify.)

How lucky we are that at the peak of the intellectual world, our culture is so free and open that we even can have a debate on whether the enterprise was an exercise in humanitarianism.

The undisciplined might ask how we would react to an analogous event at Moscow University.

Source: <https://truthout.org/>

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# The Foreign Fighters On The Front Lines Of The Russia-Ukraine War



*John P. Ruehl*

On February 2, 2023, former U.S. Marine Peter Reed [was killed](#) in Ukraine while evacuating civilians in the front-line city of Bakhmut. [Two days later](#) on February 4, the bodies of two British volunteers, Christopher Perry and Andrew Bagshaw, were returned as part of a prisoner swap deal with Russian forces. Their deaths mark some of the latest Western casualties in Ukraine one year after Russian forces invaded the country in February 2022.

Foreign fighters have flocked to Ukraine [since the initial round of Russian military intervention](#) in 2014. But following the Russian invasion in February 2022, the number of fighters making their way to Ukraine has skyrocketed. After Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy [asked](#) foreigners to join the International Defense Legion of Ukraine at the beginning of the war on February 27, around [20,000 volunteers from more than 50 countries](#) arrived in Kyiv over the next two weeks.

Many traveled to the country [for ideological reasons](#). In contrast to the

disillusionment many Western veterans felt after combat tours in [Afghanistan](#) and [Iraq](#), the belief that they would be helping to “[ease Ukrainian suffering](#)” and would be [defending democracy](#) have been powerful motivators in bringing thousands of volunteers to Kyiv.

However, the vast majority of foreign arrivals [returned home before the summer of 2022](#) for several reasons. Some [lacked credible experience](#) and were accused of being “[war tourists](#)” instead of being dedicated to Ukraine’s liberation. Western soldiers who volunteered also found themselves [operating](#) without strong air support and other key technological advantages enjoyed over militant groups in the Middle East.

Language barriers have often inhibited foreign fighters from not being able to [communicate](#) clearly with their Ukrainian counterparts. Allegations of criminality, [both in their home countries as well as in Ukraine](#), have also been levied on some foreign volunteers.

Most estimates place [between 1,000 and 3,000 foreign fighters](#) currently supporting Ukrainian forces, largely serving in three battalions of the International Legion. Hundreds of more professional foreign volunteers are believed to be serving in smaller units separate from the International Legion.

These include groups dominated by citizens from across the former Soviet Union, such as the [Georgian Legion, Chechen battalions](#), and [Kalinoŭski Regiment](#), a group of Belarusian fighters. Western-dominated military units include groups like [Alpha, Phalanx, and the Norman Brigade](#). However, even these units have faced controversy. The leadership of the Norman Brigade, a Canadian-led unit, for example, [has been repeatedly criticized by former members](#).

Western private military and security companies (PMSCs) are also active in Ukraine. The [Mozart Group](#), a U.S. PMSC, styled to counter the Russian PMSC Wagner Group (similarly named after a German composer), was active in the Ukrainian conflict in the early days. But as funding dried up and remarks by some of its members drew negative attention on social media, [the Mozart Group fell apart](#). Its remaining leadership is currently attempting to reorganize itself and get back to the front line.

The involvement of U.S. volunteers in Ukraine has also raised questions over potential [violations of the Neutrality Act](#), enacted in 1794 to prevent American

citizens from getting involved in foreign wars. Yet while the U.S. State Department has [recommended against](#) U.S. citizens from traveling to Ukraine, Washington has done little to prevent [thousands of its citizens](#) from traveling there.

The U.S. is not alone in its mixed messaging over foreign fighters. The British government has [stated it is illegal](#) for British troops and ex-service personnel to travel to Ukraine to fight, but just days into the Russian invasion in February 2022, then-Foreign Secretary Liz Truss [announced her support](#) for British individuals traveling to Ukraine to do so. Other Western governments have, meanwhile, declared they would discourage individual citizens from traveling to Ukraine but [would not prosecute those who did so](#).

This has not prevented some legal action from being taken against those who are caught. [In June 2022](#), a court in the Russian-controlled separatist region of Donetsk sentenced two British citizens and a Moroccan to death for fighting in the Ukrainian military. “Such treatment of prisoners of war constitutes a war crime, but the Russians claimed that they were mercenaries and, thus, the rules of war did not apply to them,” [stated](#) the Harvard International Review.

Wary of instigating a wider war between NATO and Russia, Western officials have refrained from putting official boots on the ground. Nonetheless, U.S. special operations forces [have been active in Ukraine](#) since before the war and continue to operate in the country, along with CIA personnel. Additionally, special forces from Britain, France, Canada, Lithuania, and other Western allies [are also active](#) in Ukraine.

Alongside the lack of clarity over the intelligence and special forces operations, it is difficult to confirm the exact number of Westerners in Ukraine, what type of roles they are serving, where exactly they are, and how many have died. Seemingly erroneous claims are also often made regarding their casualties. On January 25, 2023, a Turkish website, allegedly citing what is assumed to be data from Israel’s intelligence agency Mossad, [stated that thousands of soldiers from NATO countries](#) had been killed, including hundreds from the U.S. and the UK. This claim was quickly [denied by NATO](#).

The Kremlin has, meanwhile, highlighted how Russia is [not just fighting Ukraine, but NATO itself](#), and [captured](#) Western fighters are key to portraying this

message to both the Russian public and international audiences. Moscow has [sought to frame the conflict](#) as a wider struggle against the West, which it believes will resonate with other populations around the world.

[In March 2022](#), Russian President Vladimir Putin called for foreign fighters to help liberate the Donbas, while according to Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, 16,000 foreigners had indicated they were willing to fight alongside Russian forces in Ukraine, according to Newsweek.

Yevgeny Prigozhin, the financier of Wagner Group, [declared on his company's Telegram channel](#) in February 2023 that more than 10 million U.S. citizens had signed up with the group to fight for Russia. While Wagner has found most of its new recruits [from Russian prisons](#), the Kremlin has had some luck in recruiting foreign fighters to Ukraine. Many Russian PMSCs have typically [recruited from former Soviet states](#), and Central Asian fighters are [suspected to be fighting on both sides](#) of the conflict.

Many Serbians also resent the [West's historical role in their country's affairs](#) and small groups of Serbian nationals have been fighting alongside Russian forces in Ukraine [since 2014](#). Serbian officials noted in January 2023 that they were [monitoring reports](#) of additional Serbians serving Russia in Ukraine. Montenegrin officials are also attempting to prevent their citizens, many of whom share pro-Serbian and pro-Russian sentiment, [from going to Ukraine](#), with some having already done so since 2014 as well.

Iranian soldiers and personnel are [in Ukraine helping Russians](#) operate Iranian-made drones, and according to a Ukrainian official, [10 Iranians were killed](#) during an attack on Russian positions in October 2022. Hundreds of Syrian fighters are [also suspected to be in Ukraine](#), mirroring the dynamics of the Syrian civil war where Iranian, Syrian, and Russian troops have fought together since 2015.

The possibility of additional volunteers from other countries joining the war on both sides remains high. [In August 2022](#), Russian state media began suggesting that up to 100,000 North Korean volunteers could end up supporting the Kremlin's campaign in Ukraine. While that number is clearly optimistic, North Korean volunteers may come to exceed the handful of [South Korean citizens](#) known to have traveled to Ukraine to fight for Kyiv.

Additionally, [small numbers of U.S. citizens](#) have also gone to fight for Russia,

alongside U.S.-trained Afghan commandos [also now fighting for Russia in Ukraine](#). Though the Kremlin [denies the reports](#), it is believed Afghan soldiers have been [actively recruited](#) by the Kremlin for months.

The Russia-Ukraine war is clearly more than a war between two countries. In addition to the material aid, both [Russia](#) and [particularly Ukraine](#) have received from their allies, thousands of foreign fighters from around the world have arrived to fight alongside them. As more volunteers continue to arrive, there is a greater risk of other countries becoming entangled in the conflict. Establishing safeguards to deal with foreign volunteer casualties and prisoners of war is crucial to preventing the conflict from escalating further.

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*Source:* Globetrotter

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## **The Global South Refuses Pressure To Side With The West On Russia**



*Vijay Prashad*

At the G20 meeting in Bengaluru, India, the United States arrived with a simple brief. U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen [said](#) at the February 2023 summit that the G20 countries must condemn Russia for its invasion of Ukraine and they must adhere to U.S. sanctions against Russia. However, it became clear that India, the chair of the G20, was not willing to conform to the U.S. agenda. Indian officials [said](#) that the G20 is not a political meeting, but a meeting to discuss economic issues. They contested the use of the word “war” to describe the invasion, preferring to describe it as a “crisis” and a “challenge.” [France](#) and [Germany](#) have rejected this draft if it does not condemn Russia.

Just as in Indonesia during the previous year’s summit, the 2023 G20 leaders are once again ignoring the pressure from the West to isolate Russia, with the large developing countries (Brazil, India, Indonesia, Mexico, and South Africa) unwilling to budge from their practical view that isolation of Russia is endangering the world.

The next two G20 summits will be in Brazil (2024) and South Africa (2025), which would indicate to the West that the platform of the G20 will not be easily subordinated to the Western view of world affairs.

Most of the leaders of the G20 countries went to Bengaluru straight from Germany, where they had attended the Munich Security Conference. On the first day of the Munich conference, France’s President Emmanuel Macron [said](#) that he was “shocked by how much credibility we are losing in the Global South.” The “we” in Macron’s statement was the Western states, led by the United States.



What is the evidence for this loss of credibility? Few of the states in the Global South have been willing to participate in the isolation of Russia, including [voting](#) on Western resolutions in the United Nations General Assembly. Not all of the states that have refused to join the West are “anti-Western” in a political sense. Many of them—including the government in India—are driven by practical considerations, such as Russia’s discounted energy prices and the assets being sold at a lowered price by Western companies that are departing from Russia’s lucrative energy sector. Whether they are fed up with being pushed around by the West or they see economic opportunities in their relationship with Russia, increasingly, countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America have avoided the pressure coming from Washington to break ties with Russia. It is this refusal and avoidance that drove Macron to make his strong statement about being “shocked” by the loss of Western credibility.

At a [panel discussion](#) on February 18 at the Munich Security Conference, three leaders from Africa and Asia developed the argument about why they are unhappy with the war in Ukraine and the pressure campaign upon them to break ties with Russia. Brazil’s Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira—who later that day [condemned](#) the Russian invasion of Ukraine—[called](#) upon the various parties to the conflict to “build the possibility of a solution. We cannot keep on talking only of war.”

Billions of dollars of arms have been sent by the Western states to Ukraine to prolong a war that needs to be ended before it escalates out of control. The West has [blocked](#) negotiations ever since the possibility of an interim deal between Russia and Ukraine arose in March 2022. The talk of an endless war by Western politicians and the arming of Ukraine have resulted in Russia’s February 21, 2023, withdrawal from the New START treaty, which—with the unilateral withdrawal of the U.S. from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2002 and the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty in 2019—ends the nuclear weapons control regime.

Vieira’s comment about the need to “build the possibility of a solution” is one that is shared across the developing countries, who do not see the endless war as beneficial to the planet. As Colombia’s Vice President Francia Márquez [said](#) on the same panel, “We don’t want to go on discussing who will be the winner or the loser of a war. We are all losers, and, in the end, it is humankind that loses everything.”

The most powerful statement in Munich was made by Namibia's Prime Minister Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila. "We are promoting a peaceful resolution of that conflict" in Ukraine, she [said](#), "so that the entire world and all the resources of the world can be focused on improving the conditions of people around the world instead of being spent on acquiring weapons, killing people, and actually creating hostilities." When asked why Namibia abstained at the United Nations on the vote regarding the war, Kuugongelwa-Amadhila said, "Our focus is on resolving the problem... not on shifting blame." The money used to buy weapons, she said, "could be better utilized to promote development in Ukraine, in Africa, in Asia, in other places, in Europe itself, where many people are experiencing hardships." A Chinese [plan](#) for peace in Ukraine—built on the principles of the 1955 Bandung Conference—absorbs the points raised by these Global South leaders.

European leaders have been tone-deaf to the arguments being made by people such as Kuugongelwa-Amadhila. The European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell had earlier shot himself in the foot with his ugly [remarks](#) in October 2022 that "Europe is a garden. The rest of the world is a jungle. And the jungle could invade the garden... Europeans have to be much more engaged with the rest of the world. Otherwise, the rest of the world will invade us." In the February 2023 Munich Security Conference, Borrell—who is originally from Spain—[said](#) that he shared "this feeling" of Macron's that the West had to "preserve or even to rebuild trustful cooperation with many of the so-called Global South." The countries of the South, Borrell said, are "accusing us of [a] double standard" when it comes to combating imperialism, a position that "we must debunk."

A series of reports published by leading Western financial houses repeat the anxiety of people such as Borrell. BlackRock [notes](#) that we are entering "a fragmented world with competing blocs," while Credit Suisse [points](#) to the "deep and persistent fractures" that have opened up in the world order. Credit Suisse's assessment of these "fractures" describes them accurately: "The global West (Western developed countries and allies) has drifted away from the global East (China, Russia, and allies) in terms of core strategic interests, while the Global South (Brazil, Russia, India, and China and most developing countries) is reorganizing to pursue its own interests."

This reorganization is now manifesting itself in the refusal by the Global South to bend the knee to Washington.

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*Source:* Globetrotter

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# Five Reasons Why Much Of The Global South Isn't Automatically Supporting The West In Ukraine



*Krishen Mehta -*

*Photo:*

*[usrussiaaccord.org](#)*

In October 2022, about eight months after the war in Ukraine started, the University of Cambridge in the UK harmonized surveys conducted in 137

countries about their attitudes towards the West and towards Russia and China.

The [findings in the study](#), while not free of a margin of error, are robust enough to take seriously.

These are:

- For the 6.3 billion people who live outside of the West, 66 percent feel positively towards Russia and 70 percent feel positively towards China, and,
- Among the 66 percent who feel positively about Russia the breakdown is 75 percent in South Asia, 68 percent in Francophone Africa, and 62 percent in Southeast Asia.
- Public opinion of Russia remains positive in Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, India, Pakistan, and Vietnam.

Sentiments of this nature have caused some ire, surprise, and even anger in the West. It is difficult for them to believe that two-thirds of the world's population is not siding with the West.

What are some of the reasons or causes for this? I believe there are five reasons as explained in this brief essay.

*1. The Global South does not believe that the West understands or empathizes with their problems.*

India's foreign minister, S. Jaishankar, summed it up succinctly in a recent interview: "Europe has to grow out of the mindset that Europe's problems are the world's problems, but the world's problems are not Europe's problems." He is referring to the many challenges that developing countries face whether they relate to the aftermath of the pandemic, the high cost of debt service, the climate crisis that is ravaging their lives, the pain of poverty, food shortages, droughts, and high energy prices. The West has barely given lip service to the Global South on many of these problems. Yet the West is insisting that the Global South join it in sanctioning Russia.

The Covid pandemic is a perfect example—despite the Global South's repeated pleas to share intellectual property on the vaccines, with the goal of saving lives, no Western nation was willing to do so. Africa remains to this day the most unvaccinated continent in the world. Africa had the capability to make the vaccines but without the intellectual property they could not do it.

But help did come from Russia, China, and India. Algeria launched a vaccination program in January 2021 after it received its first batch of Russia's Sputnik V vaccines. Egypt started vaccinations after it got China's Sinopharm vaccine at about the same time. South Africa procured a million doses of AstraZeneca from the Serum Institute of India. In Argentina, Sputnik became the backbone of their vaccine program. All of this was happening while the West was using its financial resources to buy millions of doses in advance, and often destroying them when they became outdated. The message to the Global South was clear—your problems are your problems, they are not our problems.

## *2. History Matters: Who stood where during colonialism and after independence?*

Many countries in Latin America, Africa, and Asia view the war in Ukraine through a different lens than the West. Many of them see their former colonial powers regrouped as members of the Western alliance. The countries that have sanctioned Russia are either members of the European Union and NATO or the closest allies of the United States in the Asia Pacific region. By contrast, many countries in Asia, and almost all countries in the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America have tried to remain on good terms with *both* Russia and the West, and to shun sanctions against Russia. Could it be because they remember their history at the receiving end of the West's colonial policies, a trauma that they still live with but which the West has mostly forgotten.

Nelson Mandela often said that it was the Soviet Union's support, both moral and material, that helped inspire Southern Africans to overthrow the Apartheid regime. It is because of this that Russia is still viewed in a favorable light by many African countries. And once Independence came for these countries, it was the Soviet Union that supported them even though it had limited resources itself. The Aswan Dam in Egypt which took 11 years to build, from 1960 to 1971, was designed by the Moscow based Hydro project Institute and financed in large part by the Soviet Union. The Bhilai Steel Plant in India, one of the first large infrastructure projects in a newly independent India, was set up by the USSR in 1959. Other countries also benefited from the support provided by the former Soviet Union, both political and economic, including Ghana, Mali, Sudan, Angola, Benin, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Mozambique.

On February 18, 2023, at the African Union Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the foreign minister of Uganda, Jeje Odongo, had this to say, "We were colonized and

forgave those who colonized us. Now the colonizers are asking us to be enemies of Russia, who never colonized us. Is that fair? Not for us. Their enemies are their enemies. Our friends are our friends.”

Rightly or wrongly, present day Russia is seen by many countries in the Global South as an ideological successor to the former Soviet Union. These countries have a long memory that makes them view Russia in a somewhat different light. Given the history, can we blame them?

*3. The war in Ukraine is seen by the Global South as mainly about the future of Europe rather than the future of the entire world.*

The history of the Cold War has taught developing countries that getting embroiled in great power conflicts generates few benefits for them yet carries enormous risks. And they view the Ukraine proxy war as one that is more about the future of European security than the future of the entire world. Furthermore, the war is seen by the Global South as an expensive distraction from the most pressing issues that they are dealing with. These include higher fuel prices, food prices, higher debt service costs, and more inflation, all of which have become more aggravated because of the Western sanctions that have been imposed on Russia.

A recent survey published by Nature Energy states that up to 140 million people could be pushed into extreme poverty due to the higher energy prices that have come about over the past year.

Soaring energy prices not only directly impact energy bills, but they also lead to upward price pressures on all supply chains and consumer items, including food and other necessities. This hurts the developing countries even more than it hurts the West.

The West can sustain the war “as long as it takes” since they have the financial resources and the capital markets to do so. But the Global South does not have the same luxury. A war for the future of European security has the potential of devastating the security of the entire world.

The Global South is also alarmed that the West is not pursuing negotiations that could bring this war to an early end. There were missed opportunities in December 2021 when Russia proposed revised security treaties for Europe that

could have prevented the war and which were rejected by the West. The peace negotiations of April 2022 in Istanbul were also rejected by the West in part to “weaken” Russia. And now the entire world is paying the price for an invasion that the Western media like to call “unprovoked” and which could have been avoided.

*4. The world economy is no longer American dominated or Western led and the Global South does have other options.*

Several countries in the Global South increasingly see their future tied to countries that are no longer in the Western sphere of influence. Whether this is their perception of how the power balance is shifting away from the West, or wishful thinking as part of their colonial legacy, let us look at some metrics that may be relevant.

The U.S. share of global output declined from 21 percent in 1991 to 15 percent in 2021, while China’s share rose from 4 percent to 19 percent during the same period. China is the largest trading partner for most of the world, and its GDP in purchasing power parity already exceeds that of the United States. The BRICS (Brazil, Russia, China, India, and South Africa) had a combined GDP in 2021 of \$42 trillion compared with \$41 trillion in the G7. Their population of 3.2 billion is more than 4.5 times the combined population of the G7 countries, at 700 million.

The BRICS are not imposing sanctions on Russia nor supplying arms to the opposing side. While Russia is the biggest supplier of energy and foodgrains for the Global South, China remains the biggest supplier of financing and infrastructure projects to them through the Belt and Road Initiative. And now Russia and China are closer than ever before because of the war. What does it all mean for developing countries?

It means that when it comes to financing, food, energy, and infrastructure, the Global South must rely more on China and Russia more than on the West. The Global South is also seeing the Shanghai Cooperation Organization expanding, more countries wanting to join the BRICS, and many countries now trading in currencies that move them away from the dollar, the Euro, or the West. They also see a deindustrialization taking place in some countries in Europe because of higher energy costs, along with higher inflation. This makes quite apparent an economic vulnerability in the West that was not so evident before the war. With

developing countries having an obligation to put the interests of their own citizens first, is it any wonder that they see their future tied more to countries that are not Western led or American dominated?

*5. The “rule based international order” is lacking in credibility and is in decline.*

The “rule based international order” is a concept that is seen by many countries in the Global South as one that has been conceived by the West and imposed unilaterally on other countries. Few if any non-Western countries ever signed on to this order. The South is not opposed to a rule-based order, but rather to the present content of these rules as conceived by the West.

But one must also ask, does the rule based international order apply even to the West?

For decades now, for many in the Global South, the West is seen to have had its way with the world without regard to anyone else’s views. Several countries were invaded at will, mostly without Security Council authorization. These include the former Yugoslavia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, and Syria. Under what “rules” were those countries attacked or devastated, and were those wars provoked or unprovoked? Julian Assange is languishing in prison, and Ed Snowden is in exile, for having the courage (or perhaps the audacity) to expose the truths behind these actions.

Sanctions imposed on over 40 countries by the West impose considerable hardship and suffering. Under what international law or “rules-based order” did the West use its economic strength to impose these sanctions? Why are the assets of Afghanistan still frozen in Western banks while the country is facing starvation and famine? Why is Venezuelan gold still held hostage in the UK while the people of Venezuela are living at subsistence levels? And if Sy Hersh’s expose is true, under what “rules-based order” did the West destroy the Nord Stream pipelines?

There appears to be a paradigm shift that is taking place away from a Western dominated world and into a more multipolar world. And the war in Ukraine has made more evident those differences or chasms that are part of this paradigm shift. Partly because of its own history, and partly because of the economic realities that are emerging, the Global South sees a multipolar world as a preferable outcome in which their voices are more likely to be heard.



President Kennedy ended his American University speech in 1963 with the following words: “We must do our part to build a world of peace where the weak are safe and the strong are just. We are not helpless before that task or hopeless for its success. Confident and unafraid, we must labor on towards a strategy of peace.”

That strategy of peace was the challenge before us in 1963 and they remain a challenge for us today. And the voices for peace, including those of the Global South, need to be heard.

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*Source:* Globetrotter

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# The Case For Diplomacy In Ukraine



As 2023 unfolds, we fear that American policy will continue to be characterized by both mission creep and the absence of any sort of diplomatic engagement with Russia.

Throughout the course of the war, the Biden administration has slowly, steadily, even stealthily increased America’s involvement. Calls from Kiev for more and more weapons have, at every turn, been met with President Biden’s acquiescence. Meantime, Congress has continued in its decades-long abdication of its constitutional responsibilities, opting instead to act as a rubber stamp on ever-

increasing amounts of financial and military assistance to Ukraine. All the while, Kiev's appetite has grown larger with the eating.

First went the Javelin anti-tank missiles, sent to Ukraine by President Donald Trump. Then came the Russian invasion and demands for M777 Howitzers; and Bradley fighting vehicles; and Patriot missiles; and HIMARS; and NSAMS; and M1 Abrams tanks; and long-range GLSDBs.

Kiev is now [demanding](#) the delivery of F-16s fighter jets.

Will we soon see the demand for American ground troops? If so, will we witness any political will in Washington to refuse such a request?

Whatever the case, it is worth keeping in mind that [the true beneficiaries](#) of Washington's spending bonanza have been executives in the C-suites of Northrop Grumman, Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, General Dynamics, as well as those companies that are part of [the network](#) of what we might term "[soft-power for-profits](#)."

Withal, there remains an alternative path the Biden administration might take as the year unfolds.

Writing in 1947, at the beginning of the first Cold War, the journalist and grand strategist Walter Lippmann observed that, "The history of diplomacy is the history of relations among rival powers, which did not enjoy political intimacy, and did not respond to appeals to common purposes. Nevertheless, there have been settlements."

American diplomacy has too often been an exercise in strong-arming our friends (should they dare question Washington's prerogatives) or toppling (either covertly or overtly) our perceived enemies, under Mr. Biden and his immediate predecessors, the practice of American diplomacy has been discounted and marginalized; even, thanks to the effects of the largely contrived Russiagate scandal, criminalized.

And while it is true that the ultimate responsibility for the war in Ukraine falls on the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, it is painful to recall that Mr. Biden and his predecessors were presented with numerous opportunities to avoid the current catastrophe.

Yet when presented with such opportunities, to back the Minsk peace process for instance, Washington has unfailingly demurred. When presented with a mainly reasonable draft treaty by the Russians in December of 2021, the Biden administration refused to even consider it. When presented with peace plans *after* the war began, Washington and its allies channeled the spirit of Melville's *Bartleby* and declared that they would "prefer not to."

At this juncture, with Russia at the start of a new offensive, we believe diplomatic engagement is the only moral and realistic policy available to President Biden and his advisors.

We hope they pursue it.

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