

# 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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## **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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# 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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# The French Are Going, But The War In The Sahel Continues



*Vijay Prashad*

On February 9, 2023, around 100 armed men [drove](#) to Dembo, Burkina Faso, on motorcycles and in pickup trucks. They opened fire on a militia group called Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland (VDP), which works with the Burkinabé military to protect the areas of northwest Burkina Faso near its border with Mali. These men [killed](#) seven members of the VDP. Three days later, on February 12, at the other end of Burkina Faso near the border with Ghana and Togo, armed men entered Yargatenga and [killed](#) 12 people, including two VDP fighters. Meanwhile, in another incident that took place from February 9 night until the next day—further north of Burkina Faso near the border with Mali—men on motorcycles [arrived](#) at the Sanakadougou village and killed 12 people, burning homes, and looting “the few goods and livestock of the villagers,” [reported](#) a survivor to Agence France-Presse. These are not isolated incidents. They have become commonplace in Burkina Faso, where about [40 percent](#) of the country is now largely controlled by a wide range of armed groups who began to target the Sahel after 2012.

Captain Ibrahim Traoré, who leads the Burkinabé government, came to power through a [coup d'état](#) in September 2022. He ousted Lieutenant Colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba, who had himself come to power through a coup in January 2022. Neither of these coups was a surprise. Both followed after the two

coups in neighboring Mali (in [2020](#) and [2021](#)), where the military took over out of frustration with the civilian government's inability to quell the armed violence. Much of the same dynamics that propelled Mali's interim President Colonel Assimi Goïta to power pushed Damiba and Traoré to their successive coups. Pressure has been mounting on the military establishment in Mali and Burkina Faso, which are controlled by men in their late 30s and early 40s, to defeat the armed violence that has wracked their region for the past 10 years. Part of the motivation for these coups was the desire to remove the presence of the French military, which intervened in the Sahel region in 2013 to end the violence, but instead—it is widely believed—actively participated in inflaming the violence further. In May 2022, Mali's Goïta [told](#) the French to leave the country, a move [repeated](#) by Traoré in January 2023.

### *Armed Men*

When the Algerian civil war (1991-2002) ended, members of the Armed Islamic Group of Algeria (GIA) fled southward and set up bases in Mali, Niger, and southern Libya. Attempts to restart a war by GIA failed, since the Algerian population was exhausted after the decade-long civil war. In 2007, some hardened former elements of the GIA [formed](#) Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), which—as I experienced firsthand in the northern Sahel—became an integral part of the trans-Sahara smuggling networks. AQIM members began to work with a group called Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MOJWA), led by [Hamada Ould Mohamed El Khairy](#). Everything changed for these groups with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) war on Libya in 2011, which [destroyed](#) the Libyan state and provided Al Qaeda-aligned groups free rein in the region (many of them are now being armed by NATO's Arab allies in the Gulf). By 2012, AQIM joined hands with many of the Arabs who had been brought to Libya during the war [as well as](#) with Tuareg groups from the northern Sahel who had been pursuing their own [territorial aims](#) against the government in Mali.

France, which had driven the NATO war against Libya, intervened militarily in Mali to [block](#) the rapid movement of these jihadist forces south toward Bamako, Mali's capital. [Operation Serval](#), the name of the first French mission, pushed these forces out of the major cities of central Mali. Then-French President François Hollande went to Bamako to celebrate these gains in 2013, but [said](#), “the fight is not over.” France established [Operation Barkhane](#) thereafter, which expanded through the Sahel region and operated alongside the massive U.S.

military presence in the region (which [includes](#) one of the world's largest military bases in Agadez, Niger, not far from France's garrison at the uranium mine in Arlit, Niger). The inability of France to halt the onrush of these armed groups into the heart of the Sahel has led—largely—to the [anti-French sentiment](#) in the region.

### *Rooted in the Countryside*

In [March 2017](#), many of these armed Islamic groups affiliated to Al Qaeda formed the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM), whose leader Iyad Ag Ghali participated in the Tuareg fight against the Malian state (in 1988, he [founded](#) the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Azawad). The JNIM rooted itself in the local struggles in the region, capitalizing on the separatist sensibility of the Tuareg people and in the Fulani [clashes](#) with the Bambara people of the center of the country. A year after the founding of the JNIM, one of its emirs, Yahya Abu al-Hammam, released a [video](#) message that France's retreat into the cities left the countryside in the hands of the JNIM and its allied forces, who will win "with patience."

By rooting themselves in the smuggling networks and in the local conflicts over land and resources, the various armed groups affiliated to Al Qaeda made themselves a difficult target. The new governments in Mali and Burkina Faso accuse the French of both bringing these wars into their territory from Libya and exacerbating these conflicts by making deals with the armed groups to prevent attacks on French military bases. Rather than break the insurgency, the French war in the region has resulted in the [creation](#) of the Islamic State Sahel Province in March 2022 with the group extending its operations in Burkina Faso's Oudalan and Seno provinces, Mali's Gao and Ménaka regions, and Niger's Tahoua and Tillabéri regions. Now, France departs, leaving behind military governments ill-equipped to deal with what appears to be an unending war.

### *Russia*

In December 2022, Burkina Faso's Prime Minister Apollinaire Kyélem de Tambèla [visited](#) Moscow to [apparently](#) seek assistance from Russia in the war against the Al Qaeda insurgency. During his visit, he [told](#) RT that he visited the Soviet Union in 1988 and regretted that Russian-Burkinabé relations have weakened. It is likely that more Russian aid will enter these countries, provoking a reaction from the West, but this aid by the Kremlin is unlikely to help the Sahel in breaking away from the entrenched set of conflicts that trouble the region, set in motion under

France's colonial supervision.

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# Asking The Oppressed To Be Nonviolent Is An Impossible Standard That Ignores History



*Justin J. Podur - Photo: York University*



In January 2023, after five police officers [killed](#) Tyre Nichols, President Joe Biden quickly issued a statement [calling on protesters to stay nonviolent](#). “As Americans grieve, the Department of Justice conducts its investigation, and state authorities continue their work, I join Tyre’s family in calling for peaceful protest,” said Biden. “Outrage is understandable, but violence is never acceptable. Violence is destructive and against the law. It has no place in peaceful protests seeking justice.”

In June 2022, when the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, Biden [made the same call](#) to protesters. “I call on everyone, no matter how deeply they care about this decision, to keep all protests peaceful. Peaceful, peaceful, peaceful,” Biden [said](#). “No intimidation. Violence is never acceptable. Threats and intimidation are not speech. We must stand against violence in any form, regardless of your rationale.”

It is a curious spectacle to have the head of a state, with all the levers of power, not using that power to solve a problem, but instead offering advice to the powerless about how to protest against him and the broken government system. Biden, however, showed no such reluctance to use those levers of power against protesters. During the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020 after the murder of George Floyd, when Biden was a presidential candidate, he [made clear](#) what he wanted to happen to those who didn’t heed the call to nonviolence: “We should never let what’s done in a march for equal rights overcome what the reason for the march is. And that’s what these folks are doing. And they should be arrested—found, arrested, and tried.”

In the face of murderous police action, Biden called on [protesters](#) to be “peaceful, peaceful, peaceful.” In the face of non-violent protesters, Biden called on police to make sure the [protesters](#) were “found, arrested, and tried.”

Are protesters in the United States (and perhaps other countries where U.S. protest culture is particularly strong, like Canada) being held to an impossible standard? In fact, other Western countries don’t seem to make these demands of their protesters—consider Christophe Dettinger, the boxer [who punched a group of armored, shielded, and helmeted French riot police](#) until they backed off from beating other protesters during the yellow vest protests in 2019. Dettinger went to jail but became a [national hero](#) to some. What would his fate have been in the United States? Most likely, he would have been manhandled on the spot, as

[graphic footage](#) of U.S. police behavior [toward people much smaller and weaker](#) than Dettinger during the 2020 protests would suggest. If he survived the encounter with U.S. police, Dettinger would have faced criticism from within the movement for not using peaceful methods.

There is a paradox here. The United States, the country with nearly [800 military bases](#) across the world, the country that dropped the nuclear bomb on civilian cities, and the country that [outspends](#) all its military rivals combined, expects its citizens to adhere to more stringent standards during protests compared to any other country. Staughton and Alice Lynd in the second edition of their book [Nonviolence in America](#), which was released in 1995, wrote that “America has more often been the teacher than the student of the nonviolent ideal.” The Lynds are quoted disapprovingly by anarchist writer Peter Gelderloos in his book [How Nonviolence Protects the State](#), an appeal to nonviolent protesters in the early 2000s who found themselves on the streets with anarchists who didn’t share their commitment to nonviolence. Gelderloos asked for solidarity from the nonviolent activists, begging them not to allow the state to divide the movement into “good protesters” and “bad protesters.” That so-called “antiglobalization” movement faded away in the face of the post-2001 war on terror, so the debate was never really resolved.

For the U.S., the UK, and many of their allies, the debate over political violence goes back perhaps as far as the white pacifists who assured their white brethren, terrified by the Haitian Revolution, which ended in 1804, that abolitionism did not mean encouraging enslaved people to rebel or fight back. While they dreamed of a future without slavery, 19th-century abolitionist pacifists [understood](#), like their countrymen who were the enslavers, that the role of enslaved people was to suffer like good Christians and wait for God’s deliverance rather than to rebel. Although he gradually changed his mind, 19th-century abolitionist and pacifist William Lloyd Garrison initially insisted on nonviolence toward enslavers. Here Garrison is quoted in the late Italian communist Domenico Losurdo’s book [Nonviolence: A History Beyond the Myth](#): “Much as I detest the oppression exercised by the Southern slaveholder, he is a man, sacred before me. He is a man, not to be harmed by my hand nor with my consent.” Besides, he added, “I do not believe that the weapons of liberty ever have been, or ever can be, the weapons of despotism.” As the crisis deepened with the Fugitive Slave Law, Losurdo argued, pacifists like Garrison found it increasingly difficult to call upon

enslaved people to turn themselves back to their enslavers without resistance. By 1859, Garrison even found himself [unable](#) to condemn abolitionist John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry.

The moral complexities involved in nonviolence in the antiwar movement were acknowledged by linguist, philosopher, and political activist Noam Chomsky in [a 1967 debate](#) with political philosopher Hannah Arendt and others. Chomsky, though an advocate for nonviolence himself in the debate, concluded that nonviolence was ultimately a matter of faith:

*"The easiest reaction is to say that all violence is abhorrent, that both sides are guilty, and to stand apart retaining one's moral purity and condemn them both. This is the easiest response and in this case I think it's also justified. But, for reasons that are pretty complex, there are real arguments also in favor of the Viet Cong terror, arguments that can't be lightly dismissed, although I don't think they're correct. One argument is that this selective terror—killing certain officials and frightening others—tended to save the population from a much more extreme government terror, the continuing terror that exists when a corrupt official can do things that are within his power in the province that he controls."*

*"Then there's also the second type of argument... which I think can't be abandoned very lightly. It's a factual question of whether such an act of violence frees the native from his inferiority complex and permits him to enter into political life. I myself would like to believe that it's not so. Or at the least, I'd like to believe that nonviolent reaction could achieve the same result. But it's not very easy to present evidence for this; one can only argue for accepting this view on grounds of faith."*

Several writings have sounded the warning that nonviolence doctrine has caused harm to the oppressed. These include [Pacifism as Pathology](#) by Ward Churchill, [How Nonviolence Protects the State](#) and [The Failure of Nonviolence](#) by Peter Gelderloos, [Nonviolence: A History Beyond the Myth](#) by Domenico Losurdo, and the [two-part series](#) "Change Agent: Gene Sharp's Neoliberal Nonviolence" by Marcie Smith.

Even the historic victories of nonviolent struggles had a behind-the-scenes armed element. Recent scholarly work has revisited the history of nonviolence in the U.S. civil rights struggle. Key texts include Lance Hill's [The Deacons for Defense](#),

Akinyele Omowale Umoja's [We Will Shoot Back](#), and Charles E. Cobb Jr.'s [This Nonviolent Stuff'll Get You Killed](#). These histories reveal continuous resistance, including armed self-defense, by Black people in the United States.

Even before these recent histories, we have Robert Williams's remarkable and brief autobiography written in exile, [Negroes With Guns](#). Williams was expelled from the NAACP for [saying](#) in 1959: "We must be willing to kill if necessary. We cannot take these people who do us injustice to the court. ... In the future we are going to have to try and convict these people on the spot." He bitterly noted that while "Nonviolent workshops are springing up throughout Black communities [, n]ot a single one has been established in racist white communities to curb the violence of the Ku Klux Klan."

As they moved around the rural South for their desegregation campaigns, the nonviolent activists of the civil rights movement often found they had—without their asking—armed protection against overzealous police and racist vigilantes: grannies who sat watch on porches at night with rifles on their laps while the nonviolent activists slept; Deacons for Defense who threatened police with a gun battle if they dared turn water hoses on nonviolent students trying to desegregate a swimming pool. Meanwhile, legislative gains made by the nonviolent movement often included the threat or reality of violent riots. In May 1963 in Birmingham, Alabama, for example, after a nonviolent march was [crushed](#), a riot of 3,000 people followed. Eventually a [desegregation pact](#) was won on May 10, 1963. One observer [argued](#) that "every day of the riots was worth a year of civil rights demonstrations."

As Lance Hill argues in [The Deacons for Defense](#):

*"In the end, segregation yielded to force as much as it did to moral suasion. Violence in the form of street riots and armed self-defense played a fundamental role in uprooting segregation and economic and political discrimination from 1963 to 1965. Only after the threat of black violence emerged did civil rights legislation move to the forefront of the national agenda."*

Biden's constant calls for nonviolence by protesters while condoning violence by police are asking for the impossible and the ahistorical. In the crucial moments of U.S. history, nonviolence has always yielded to violence.

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# Chomsky And Prashad: Cuba Is Not A State Sponsor Of Terrorism



Cuba, a country of 11 million people, has been under an illegal embargo by the United States government for over six decades.

Despite this embargo, Cuba's people have been able to transcend the indignities of hunger, ill health, and illiteracy, all three being social plagues that continue to trouble much of the world.

Due to its innovations in health care delivery, for instance, Cuba has been able to send its medical workers to other countries, including during the pandemic, to provide vital assistance. Cuba exports its medical workers, not terrorism.

In the last days of the Trump administration, the U.S. government returned Cuba to its state sponsors of terrorism list.

This was a vindictive act. Trump said it was because Cuba played host to guerrilla groups from Colombia, which was actually part of Cuba's role as host of the peace talks.

Cuba played a key role in bringing peace in Colombia, a country that has been wracked by a terrible civil war since 1948 that claimed the lives of hundreds of

thousands of people. For two years, the Biden administration has maintained Trump's vindictive policy, one that punishes Cuba not for terrorism but for the promotion of peace.

Biden can remove Cuba from this list with a stroke of his pen. It's as simple as that. When he was running for the presidency, Biden said he would even reverse the harsher of Trump's sanctions. But he has not done so. He must do so now.

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This article was produced by [Globetrotter](#)

*Noam Chomsky* is a linguist, philosopher, and political activist. He is the laureate professor of linguistics at the University of Arizona. His most recent books are [Climate Crisis and the Global Green New Deal: The Political Economy of Saving the Planet](#) and [The Withdrawal: Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan, and the Fragility of U.S. Power](#).

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