

By Dave Lindorff

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The sad state of what used to be the peace movement in the US is on display today in the nation's capital and on highways leading to DC.

As a bloody and dangerous war is raging in Ukraine between the armies of Russia and Ukraine, the latter backed by arms being supplied by the US and its NATO allies, instead of masses of protesters converging on Washington to demand that the US end the conflict in Ukraine by announcing that it would never again permit the expansion of NATO membership to Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova or any other former Warsaw Pact country or former Soviet state of the former Soviet Union, the only demonstration in the nation's capital is truckers protesting Covid vaccine and mask mandates .

For decades since the Korean War (the last time the US sought Security Council approval before going to war), the US has been repeatedly committing the illegal war crime of attacking other countries that do not present any imminent threat of attack on it as required under the UN Charter. Yet not since the Biden administration took office, and only rarely under prior Democratic presidential administrations from Carter through Obama, has a US peace movement risen up to seriously protest US militarism. Against Republican administrations, yet, but not Democratic ones since Lyndon Johnson in Vietnam.

Now we're seeing self-styled peace activists organizing protests against the Russian invasion of Ukraine, joining the US government in denouncing Russian presidential "thug" Vladimir Putin. But that's not a big deal. No risk in doing that. What these protesters *should* be having the courage and integrity to do is demand that the *US take the lead in halting the war* on Ukraine.

Washington could do this, not by sending more lethal arms to Ukraine as Congress is pressing President Biden to do, and as Biden has successfully pressed most of the supine NATO

countries to do — even Germany — but by promising to reverse its now decades old aggressive and threatening policy of admitting to NATO countries closer and closer to Russia's western border.

Ukraine is only the latest and most threatening of these cases. It was the US, after all, which helped foment and orchestrate the 2014 Maidan Coup in Kiev that ousted the elected leader of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovich because, while popularly elected, he was steering the country towards an economic pact with Russia instead of with the European Union.

Here's noted international law expert Francis Boyle's explanation of the real situation and of US responsibility for the current crisis, as laid out over the weekend in an interview with [Dennis Bernstein, host and producer of "Flashpoints"](#) on Pacific Radio in San Francisco:

"This war must be immediately terminated before it expands and sucks in the European NATO States and the United States. Towards that end President Biden must publicly announce that NATO Expansion is over for good and that Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova will not be joining NATO as member States. President Biden must also call for an international peace conference for the conclusion of a treaty that will establish the permanent neutrality of Ukraine which will be guaranteed by the United Nations Security Council under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter. Then negotiations can take place between the United States and Russia over the denuclearization of Europe including the removal of US tactical nuclear weapons from NATO States that are there in violation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and a restoration of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty that was so foolishly and recklessly terminated by the Trump administration. Then a new round of the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty Negotiations should be conducted in order to substantially lessen the tensions on land, sea and air between Russia and the U.S./NATO States including over the emplacement of alleged US ABM sites in Europe that threaten Russia.

"Make no mistake about it: The origins of both the First World War and the Second World War hover like twin Swords of Damocles over the heads of all humanity!"

I asked Boyle, a law professor at the University of Illinois, in an email interview today, why in his view is that it is the US, not Russia, that bears the responsibility of making the first move in trying to end the war in Ukraine, and he replied, "It was our gross and consistent violation of our international law obligations for all these years that was ultimately responsible for this war. So now we have an obligation to honor our international law obligations in order to end it."

I notice that all too many of my supposedly peace-loving and liberal or even leftist friends are quick to echo President Biden, and most US media pundits, in immediately referring to Russia's president as "Thug" Putin, not just Putin. That, I suppose, is to insulate them from any criticism if they should happen to lay any blame at all for the present conflict on the US or on Ukraine itself, though there is plenty of blame to lay against both those latter countries.

But come on! It takes no moral, much less physical courage for Americans to criticize "Thug Putin" or Russia. That courage is being shown by thousands of Russians who have dared to go into the streets or to sign letters protesting Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Courage in the US would be required of anti-war, pro-peace activists in the US to go into the streets and demand that the US stop feeding the conflict by providing lethal aid to Ukraine, and to demand, as Prof. Boyle correctly demands, that the US immediately offer to end all talk of Ukraine's "right" to join NATO, and to promise not to allow any states bordering Russia to join was is specifically an international organization designed to challenge and Russia by encircling it with American missiles and military bases.

In this era of nuclear weapons it is time to stop the big power confrontations with weapons of war, time for the US to stop falsely labeling things like Russia's Nord Stream natural gas pipeline from Siberian gas fields to Germany, or China's massive "Belt and Road" project to link Asia to Europe with modern highways and high-speed rail links as "aggressive" acts.

It's one thing to have economic competition; it's another to have military competition, the latter of which is simply driven by the insatiable profit appetite of the international arms industry, which in the US receives more than half of the Pentagon's now close to \$800-billion annual budget. That's a some of money which, by the way, is about 20 times that of Russia's military and four times China's.

I would add that it's disturbing to see all the public displays of anguish over the suffering of the

people of Ukraine in the US media and in public protests — not because that suffering is, as in all wars, and especially modern ones very real — but because we don't see similar anguish in the US over wars and slaughter of our own making. Look at Afghanistan, where most of the concern and anguish was over the fate, after the US had left, of Afghans who had sided with the US invaders and occupiers of their country, not over the people who had lost loved ones during 20 years of extreme and indiscriminate US violence there. Look at Yemen, where a nation is being genocidally bombed and starved by US ally Saudi Arabia, using weapons, including such monstrous weapons as anti-personnel bombs, and planes provided by the US. Look at Syria, where even the

New York Times

, a supporter of the illegal US war effort in Syria, has shown an obscene lack of concern about massive civilian deaths in US air and drone attacks over almost a decade and a half of US military involvement in that country's civil war — deaths that its own investigative journalists exposed.

I hate to have to ask this, but it must be asked: Is US public and media concern about the war in Ukraine because the victims of Russia's attack in this case are white people (often *blond* white people) and not dark-skinned ones?

It is encouraging that Ukraine is willing to meet without conditions and negotiate with Russia to stop the war. I desperately hope Russia agrees to this. But for negotiations to work, we Americans need to demand that the US not interfere by pressuring Ukraine not to agree to no future NATO membership or to some promise of neutrality in Europe. Instead this is the moment for the US to push for peace by itself agreeing to put in writing that no states bordering Russia will ever be invited to join NATO.

If we had 100,000 American "peaceniks" gathering in Washington or in cities around the country demanding such a position by the US government, it might actually happen.