

These Countries Are Willing to Risk US Ire Over Russia-Ukraine

The Global South is not intimidated and has increasingly refused to ally with the West on sanctions and condemnations.

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Americans are fervently cheering for Ukraine in a war that many believe is a decisive struggle for human freedom. The intensity of our infatuation makes it easy to assume that everyone in the world shares it. They don't.

The impassioned American reaction is matched only in Europe, Canada, and the handful of U.S. allies in East Asia. For many people in the rest of the world, the Russia-Ukraine conflict is just another pointless Western war in which they have no stake.

The two biggest countries in Latin America, Mexico and Brazil, have refused to impose sanctions on Russia or to curtail trade. [South Africa](#), the economic powerhouse of the African continent, has done the same. Asia, though, is where the resistance to joining the pro-Ukraine bloc appears most deliberate and widespread. This has alarmed Washington. To fight back, the United States is [cracking its whip](#) over several Asian nations.

China and India, where more than one-third of the world’s people live, are the most potent dissenters. Both abstained from the recent United Nations vote condemning Russia, and both reject U.S.-backed sanctions. There isn’t much more we can do to punish China, but India might seem more vulnerable. Soon after the UN vote, **Secretary of State Antony Blinken** [announced](#) that the United States had begun “monitoring some recent concerning developments in India, including a rise in human rights abuses.” Then President Biden’s chief economic advisor, **Brian Deese**, warned India that it would face “significant and long-term consequences” if it does not reconsider its “strategic alignment.”

Pakistan, a nuclear power with 200 million people, did more than simply abstain from the UN vote. When the United States asked **Prime Minister Imran Khan** to join the anti-Russia coalition, he [scoffed](#), “Are we your slaves...that whatever you say, we will do?” This came

not long after he told the Pentagon: “Any bases, any sort of action from Pakistani territory into Afghanistan, absolutely not.” On the day **President Vladimir Putin** launched the invasion of Ukraine, Khan was with him in the Kremlin.

Meanwhile, **Assistant Secretary of State Donald Lu** told a Congressional hearing that his people spoke to Sri Lankan and [Pakistani officials on the phone](#) to press them to vote for the resolution. He said he was “disappointed” with the results. On April 9 Khan was removed from office after some members of Parliament who had supported him changed sides and joined the opposition.

Pakistan’s pro-American military had let members of Parliament know that it favored a no-confidence vote. Khan had other problems, including a poor economic record. He has announced that he will seek to return to power in next year’s election, campaigning against an “arrogant and threatening” United States.

Washington is also in near-panic over a new security pact that the Solomon Islands (population 650,000) has signed with China. [The White House said](#) it would “have significant concerns and respond accordingly” if the pact gives China too much military influence in the Solomons. Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare replied that he found it “very insulting” for the United States to brand his country “unfit to manage our sovereign affairs.” Media in the region have speculated about a possible coup, or even an invasion launched from Australia.

Other Asian countries are joining the drift away from America’s sphere of influence. Vietnam abstained from the UN vote condemning Russia and then announced a series of [joint maneuvers](#) with the Russian military. Indonesia, the world’s fourth-largest country, which will host this year’s G20 summit, [insists](#) that Putin will be invited despite U.S. and European efforts to isolate him.

At the other end of the continent, **Prince Mohammed bin Salman** of Saudi Arabia [reportedly refused](#) to speak to President Biden about increasing oil production, but had a long call with Putin ([according to the Kremlin](#)), and has [invited China’s President Xi Jinping](#) to visit Riyadh soon. The United Arab Emirates refused to condemn Russia because, [according to a presidential adviser](#), it “believes that taking sides would only lead to more violence.”

Few world leaders have endorsed Russia’s invasion. Some, however, might be forgiven for wondering how the United States, which bombed Serbia, invaded Iraq, occupied Afghanistan and attacked Libya, can claim that it opposes aggression. They are steeped in accounts of CIA kidnappings and [torture](#) in [secret prisons](#), so calls from Washington to support the “rules-based order” ring hollow.

President Biden’s demand that Putin stand trial for war crimes might be justified by reported atrocities, but could be seen as hypocritical from a country that has [refused to join the International Criminal Court](#) in the Hague and even threatened to invade Holland if the court investigates American war crimes. The United States insists that Ukraine must be free to choose its own path, but sometimes objects when other countries seek to do so.

Forces in Asia, not Europe, will shape the coming century. Many Asian nations see their interests aligning with those of the continent’s giants, Russia and China. They are not as easily intimidated as they once were. The United States is betting that threats and warnings will bring them back into line. That could have the opposite result and alienate them further.

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