

# The hidden claims of some western left about the war in Ukraine

Thursday 14 July 2022, by [DUTCHAK Oksana](#) (Date first published: 13 July 2022).

**Disclaimer #1: I want to stress that there are also a lot of leftists who take the position of solidarity and have zero to do with these claims. However, here I write not about them.**

Disclaimer #2: I don't speak about the nuances here – this is just a very long facebook post and not an analytical piece.

Disclaimer #3. I'm frustrated, angry and, hence, often sarcastic here. And yes, I have the right to be so. And yes, I use this post to channel my frustration and anger.

Discussions with some part of the (mostly) western left are extremely disillusioning. There are some points in their positions which are the most disillusioning and partially – hypocritical and/or cynical. And, on my opinion, have little to do with left principles. These points are sometimes not expressed directly, so I want to dig them briefly out.

## **1. If another country attacks my country, I would just flee.**

Well, I've done the same because I have two children. Unvoiced full version of the claim: "In a hypothetical situation which is highly unlikely, I would not support resistance to the invasion in any way and oppose those who do it". This claim is mostly expressed by people from the countries without any modern history of being a subject or under the threat of imperial domination. We are not in an abstract war here. It is a very concrete imperial invasion with the rhetoric of total submission behind. Sometimes it also reaches the level of genocidal rhetoric. Of course, you can choose the option of not resisting here. But blaming others for a different choice has nothing to do with left principles. A Marxist should have a triple facepalm hearing that the war against imperial oppression is not worth fighting.

## **2. I would never fight for my government.**

Unvoiced full version of the claim: "1) Ukrainians are fighting for their government, 2) I think so for no reasons and I either have not checked this claim with Ukrainians or 3) I don't think Ukrainians' opinion should be taken into account anyway". Well, quite obvious – this war has nothing to do with our shitty (like many others) government. If it ever had to do anything with it, it stopped to do anything with it at least the same second Russian propaganda started to talk about "the solution of the Ukrainian question" and "denazification" of the masses of population. The second part of this unvoiced claim is about the total detached from material reality. The third part of it has, of course, nothing to do with left principles.

Probably the most stunning variations of this position are "analysis" with numerous factual mistakes by people who knows nothing about the region and manifestos "against the war" without a single Ukrainian signature.

### **3. Our government support Ukraine and I can never take the side of my government.**

The unvoiced and full message of this claim is: "In fact I do support my government in many instances, but in such a way I justify my stand against Ukrainian resistance and/or rely on identity politics instead of materialist principles to make my life conform and simple". Of course, these people support their governments on some occasions and criticize and oppose it on others. The reality is complicated, you know. Sometimes even the shitty governments do the right things, especially under the pressure of popular progressive struggle. It is like opposing migrants and refugees, which the government decided to "let in", because it was government's position. (I know, I know that some do this because they will "take our workers' job"). Imagined principle opposition to own government is simply used, again, as a justification of opposition to Ukrainian resistance. But relying on this claim is relying on identity politics which allows blind universalization instead of analyzing the material reality of the events in Ukraine.

### **4. Ukrainian and Russian workers, instead of fighting with each other, should turn their guns against their own governments.**

The unvoiced message here is: "I prefer to do nothing in this situation where there is no direct threat to my life and I want to find a nice justification for, which would sound very left". Yeah, we should better pretend to be stones and wait for a global proletarian revolution. Well, I'm afraid at some moment those people will go as far as to say that there is no need of struggle for labor rights or any other social struggle until the global revolution (I know, I know that some almost do). This position, however, is (often) a position of a privileged individual which hides ideological individualism behind a nice rhetoric. Sometimes it also hides all the other thoughts, like supporting any cannibalistic regime against western imperialism. It is also a product of the years of decline in left mobilization and all the reactionary turns of the global system. A very good and universal shit, if somebody wants to do the shitbath, I recommend this one.

### **5. Who benefits from this war?**

The unvoiced message is: "I know that some parts of elite capitalist class benefits almost from anything in this world, because it is how the system works, but I still use this question (which is not really a question) to express my opposition to Ukrainian struggle for self-determination". Opposing such a struggle because western elites benefit from it is like opposing industrial action because a capitalist competitor benefits from it. Another variation of this claim is part of the NATO weapon discussion (though, of course, I know the discussion is more complicated). Sorry, but we are living in a world where there is no progressive power of the required scale to provide material support for any struggle of this scale and to benefit from its victory (if you are not considering other imperial powers like China to be progressive). This claim often goes together with denial, devaluation or even favoritism of Russian imperialism. And by the way, most of the discussion about the "spheres of influence" falls into this shithole too. Taking this position seriously means taking the side of the reactionary status quo we have been living in for decades.

### **6. What about far right on Ukrainian side?**

The hidden claim here is: "I use the far right problem as a fig leaf to hide my opposition to Ukrainian resistance". Those who voice this claim mostly don't care about the far right on the side of Russia or the general scary far-right path of the Russian politics with respective implications for its internal and foreign "affairs" (like, yeah, the war). They don't know about how big is the participation of far right in Ukrainian resistance, they don't care about participation of other ideological groups and the scale of the resistance on general, they don't know how the empty signifier of "nazi" is used by Russian propaganda to whoever they want. It is just a fig leaf which, thanks to Russian propaganda

and some other factors, has grown into a colossus.

## **7. Russia and Ukraine should negotiate: here are our propositions for a peace deal.**

This claim has many hidden variations, which depends on the propositions of a peace deal those people voice. Depending on these propositions, the unvoiced message can be: "1) Ukraine should capitulate / 2) we are detached from reality and think our relatively reasonable propositions of a peace deal are realistic now". In the first options the propositions basically presuppose that Ukraine should give up on newly captured territories. In the second option the proposed peace deal is close to the one that was on negotiation table at the beginning of the full scale invasion. One of the main point of the proposed peace deal is that Russian army must retreat from the newly captured territories - to the border of 23<sup>rd</sup> of Feb. This point makes the whole proposition meaningless at the moment and the proposers cannot give a reasonable answer to the question why should Putin regime do that now. The uglier version of the unvoiced message: "we are sane, knowing our relatively reasonable propositions are unrealistic, but we still voice them to show that those stupid Ukrainians don't want to negotiate".

## **8. We won't even talk to you because you are for weapons.**

The hidden message: "we don't care about the material reality of this war and sorry-not-sorry that you were unlucky enough to be attacked by a non-western imperial country, just do not make uncomfortable interventions into our imagined monolithic unipolar and west-centric internationalism".

## **9. West should stop supporting Ukraine because it may escalate into a nuclear war.**

The hidden message: "any nuclear country can do whatever she wants because we are afraid". You know, I'm also afraid of nuclear war. But keeping to this position is supporting the reactionary status quo and facilitating the imperialist politics. And what is missing from this discussion are disastrous consequences of Russia's attack for the global movement for nuclear disarmament. Now I can hardly imagine why any country would give up its nuclear arsenal voluntary.

## **10. Good Russians vs. bad Ukrainians.**

And last, but not least - actually this one triggers me the most. This shit triggers me immensely and bring some irrational emotions I'm ashamed of. There is no hidden message behind. One of the extreme examples is when the left meeting is addressed by a Russian anti-war activist and everybody listens, while when the same meeting is addressed by a Ukrainian left with basically the same messages - and some people demonstratively leaves the room. Ukrainian left have no right to participate in a discussion about this war if no Russian war-opposer is involved (even if just in a few days there is another discussion with Russian anti-war representatives). And doesn't matter that Russian anti-war resistance voices the same claims and fully support Ukrainian left in relation to the war. The explanation is simple. Russian anti-war resistance is comfortable, it is corresponding to all the hidden claims. They are against their government. They are brave and worth listening to, unlike poor/stubborn/nationalistic inconvenient Ukrainian left, who refused to be a comfortable victims. You know why this difference between Ukrainian left resistance and Russian anti-war resistance appears? Because it is not Russia which is under imperial attack, and it is not Russian opposition which is waging a defensive war for self-determination.

I know some hidden claims are missing. Some of them are too obvious shit to discuss (like "socialist Russia" or "nazi regime in Kiev", or "14000 civilians, killed by Ukrainian government"). Some of them are too painful for me to discuss now. But anyway, which is your favorite one?

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