



28 February 2022

**Vandenberg Coalition Statement on the
Russian War of Aggression against Ukraine**

Vladimir Putin's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine has ignited a needless war and returned the horrifying reality of authoritarian aggression to the European continent. Unless far heavier costs are imposed, the world will see more such murderous assaults—by Putin and others—in Asia as well as in Europe.

It is Putin, not the people of Russia, who chose this path. Many voices in Moscow have rejected Putin's false narrative and his invasion across recognized international boundaries—and unsurprisingly, thousands of arbitrary arrests have followed. The Russian people know the truth: Ukraine poses no security threat to Russia, which is vastly more powerful and more heavily armed. But Putin also knows this. Putin's fear is not “terrorism,” “genocide,” or the security of his citizens. His fear is for his own power, for the only “threat” within Ukraine's borders is the freedom and independence of the people who now defend them. Ukraine's success as a post-Soviet democracy is a direct challenge to the brutal dictatorship Putin has imposed for two decades in Russia.

In our own country, we must reject the moral equivalency that refuses to distinguish between aggressor and victim, and the isolationist arguments that the United States has no interest in resisting aggression in Europe. We are free today because previous generations of Americans rejected these foolish and short-sighted counsels. We must protect the frontiers of freedom once again.

Senator Arthur Vandenberg reached across party lines to support Democratic presidents in the struggle against first Nazi and then Soviet aggression, arguing that in moments of crisis, national security is more important than partisan advantage. That conduct should be a model for all Americans today. Accordingly, we support the President's initial actions against Russia, as well as those of the European Union, the United Kingdom, and other nations to punish Putin for instigating war. That said, more steps are needed. More sanctions on the Russian economy, particularly the energy sector; support for Ukrainian self-defense; and further steps to fortify NATO front line states now exposed to direct confrontation with Russia will show our determination, our unity, and our ability to ensure that Putin's vicious gamble will not pay off.

Putin's brutal aggression poses a test to the United States and our allies. The Vandenberg Coalition will do all we can to help—and press—the Biden administration to meet that test with firmness, courage, and moral clarity.