

## Not So SWIFT

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February 28, 2022

### Don't Just Sit There: Undo Something

I've been trying to think about what the days after Putin's invasion of Ukraine remind me of. And I have. They remind me of the days after 9/11. Like over 90 percent of Americans, I was angry at the terrorists who murdered almost 3,000 people in one day. And like some similarly high percent of Americans, I'm upset at an evil man, Putin, who attacked another country.

In the days after 9/11, though, I didn't agree with what so many people were advocating: the USA PATRIOT Act, which took away a lot of our financial privacy and some of our liberties, and the invasion of Afghanistan, to name two. I wanted to keep our civil liberties and our already diminished financial privacy intact and I thought that U.S. Special Forces could get Osama bin Laden without the U.S. government overthrowing the Afghan government. And, of course, it turned out that it was U.S. Special Forces who got Osama bin Laden, not in Afghanistan but in Pakistan.

While I've been loving watching brave Ukrainians **take to the streets** with guns and **make fun of Russian tank drivers**, I'm against hurting millions of innocent Russians by taking down Russian banks' ability to use SWIFT and I'm against the U.S. government getting in another war. The foreign policy analyst I've paid most attention to for the last few decades, one reason being that he never gets stampeded or bullied into favoring wars that the U.S. can easily stay out of, is Doug Bandow. He has a **great article** at antiwar.com today laying out why the U.S. government should stay out of this one.

Now, if I could contribute \$1,000 to someone in Ukraine to help fight the Russians, I would. Of course, I would want to make sure it gets to the right cause. But my understanding is that long-standing U.S. law has made this illegal. No way do I want the U.S. government to get into another war in Europe.

There are three things I *would* like the U.S. government to do: lay off Iran, as co-blogger **Scott Sumner has argued** well and succinctly, so that the Iranians could increase oil output, bringing down the price; sell some oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, bringing down the price and doing a little to reduce the huge federal budget deficit; and deregulate oil exploration and

production. The first two would have an immediate impact on the output and price of oil, and the last would have a long-term impact.

These previous 3 are instances of an approach I've taken for a long time. Given how much governments in the United States meddle in people's lives, I've had a saying since about 1990: **Don't Just Sit There: Undo Something**. In other words, look for the regulations, taxes, and spending programs that the government can eliminate or reduce where doing so would help the situation at hand.

*Postscript:* Even the **Swiss** are getting into the act. And check out this statement from the same *NY Times* news story:

Switzerland said it was departing from its usual policy of neutrality because of "the unprecedented military attack by Russia on a sovereign European state,"

Unprecedented? Has this government official heard of Stalin and his **1939 invasion of Poland**?