

Russia invades Ukraine: Political, military leaders' reactions

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[1/3] Russian President Vladimir Putin delivers a video address announcing the start of the military operation in eastern Ukraine, in Moscow, Russia, in a still image taken from video footage released February 24, 2022. Russian Pool/Reuters TV via REUTERS



Feb 24 (Reuters) - Following are reactions from political leaders and other senior figures shaping events after Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

RUSSIAN PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN

"I have decided to conduct a special military operation... to protect people who have been subjected to bullying and genocide... for the last eight years.

"And for this we will strive for the demilitarisation and denazification of Ukraine. And to bring to court those who committed numerous bloody crimes against civilians, including against citizens of the Russian Federation."

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UKRAINIAN PRESIDENT VOLODYMYR ZELINSKIY

"Russia treacherously attacked our state in the morning, as Nazi Germany did in the WW2 years.

"As of today, our countries are on different sides of world history. Russia has embarked on a path of evil, but Ukraine is defending itself & won't give up its freedom no matter what Moscow thinks."

NATO SECRETARY-GENERAL JENS STOLTENBERG

"This is a deliberate, cold-blooded and long-planned invasion...

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"Peace on our continent has been shattered Russia is using force to try to rewrite history, and deny Ukraine its free and independent path..."

"We have no plans to send NATO troops in Ukraine. What we do is defensive."

U.S. PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN

"President Putin has chosen a premeditated war that will bring a catastrophic loss of life and human suffering."

The U.S. president said Washington would also coordinate with NATO allies "to ensure a strong, united response that deters any aggression against the alliance."

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EUROPEAN COMMISSION PRESIDENT URSULA VON DER LEYEN

"President Putin is responsible for bringing war back to Europe..."

"We will target strategic sectors of the Russian economy by blocking their access to key technologies and markets. We will weaken Russia's economic base and its capacity to modernise."

"In addition, we will freeze Russian assets in the EU and stop the access of Russian banks to the European financial market."

EUROPEAN COMMISSION FOREIGN POLICY CHIEF JOSEP BORRELL

"These are among the darkest hours of Europe since the Second World War.

"The EU will respond in the strongest possible terms and agree on the harshest package of sanctions we have ever implemented."

GERMAN CHANCELLOR OLAF SCHOLZ

"Putin is bringing suffering and destruction to his direct neighbours, he is violating the sovereignty and borders of Ukraine.

"He is endangering the lives of countless innocent people (and)... the peace order on our continent. For all that there is no justification. This is Putin's war."

GERMAN ECONOMY MINISTER ROBERT HABECK

"The impact of this package (of sanctions) will have consequences, and thus contribute to opening or reopening the chances for diplomacy."

FRENCH PRESIDENT EMMANUEL MACRON

"The events of last night mark a turning point in the history of Europe.

"We will respond to this act of war without weakness, with cold blood, determination and unity."

BRITISH PRIME MINISTER BORIS JOHNSON

"President Putin has chosen a path of bloodshed and destruction by launching this unprovoked attack on Ukraine...

"This is a catastrophe for our continent."

ITALIAN PRIME MINISTER MARIO DRAGHI

"We have our allies at our side... Together we will do whatever it takes to preserve Ukraine's sovereignty, Europe's security, and the integrity of the international order based on the rules and values we all share."

CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESPERSON HUA CHUNYING

"You are using a typical Western media question method of using the word 'invasion'.

"China is closely monitoring the latest situation. We call on all sides to exercise restraint to prevent the situation from getting out of control."

VATICAN SECRETARY OF STATE CARDINAL PIETRO PAROLIN

"There is still time for good will, there is still space for negotiation, there is still room to exercise a wisdom that prevents partisan interests from prevailing, that protects everyone's legitimate aspirations and spares the world from

the folly and horrors of war.

"We believers do not lose hope for a glimmer of conscience in those who hold the destinies of the world in their hands."

GERMAN ARMY CHIEF LIEUTENANT GENERAL ALFONS MAIS

"The army which I have the honour to command, is standing there more or less empty-handed. The options we can offer the government in support of the (NATO)alliance are extremely limited..."

"We have all seen it coming but were not able to get through with our arguments to draw the consequences after (Russia's) annexation of Crimea. This does not feel good. I am fed up with it."

TURKISH FOREIGN MINISTRY

"This attack is a grave violation of international law and poses a serious threat to the security of our region and the world.

"We call on the Russian Federation to immediately end this unjust and unlawful act."

HUNGARIAN PRIME MINISTER VIKTOR ORBAN

"With our EU and NATO allies, we condemn Russia's military attack."

PORTUGUESE PRIME MINISTER ANTONIO COSTA

"The answer to this crisis should be a diplomatic solution... NATO will not intervene or act in Ukraine.

"Ukrainian citizens who have family, friends and acquaintances here are welcome in Portugal."

ISRAELI FOREIGN MINISTER YAIR LAPID

"Russia's attack on Ukraine is a grave breach of international order. Israel condemns the attack."

RUSSIAN EX-OIL TYCOON AND ARCH KREMLIN CRITIC MIKHAIL KHODORKOVSKY

"It is Putin and his entourage who started the war in order to hold on to their power - not the Russian people.

"Unleashing a war of aggression and using the armed forces for personal gain signifies that a junta led by Putin has seized power in Russia."

Reporting by Reuters bureaus; editing by John Stonestreet



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