

Large audience for interview with David North, author of *A Quarter Century of War: The US Drive for Global Hegemony, 1990-2016*

Our reporter
29 September 2016

On Wednesday, September 27, the *World Socialist Web Site* held a live online Facebook interview with David North, chairman of the WSWS International Editorial Board, on his recently published book, *A Quarter Century of War: The US Drive for Global Hegemony, 1990-2016*.

The interview, hosted by WSWS reporters Andrea Peters and Andre Damon, dealt with a broad range of issues covered in the book and their relationship to contemporary politics.

The interview has been widely followed, with more than 8,000 views on Facebook as of the time of this writing. North's comments prompted a lively discussion in the comments section and the author responded directly to a number of questions from listeners.

Peters opened by noting that the book, which deals with the expansion of US military actions since 1991, was "immensely timely," as Washington's military interventions around the world "increasingly threaten a direct confrontation" with Russia and China.

North began his remarks by noting that the period since 1991 "both chronologically but also in fact" forms a distinctive period. He pointed out that *A Quarter Century of War* develops arguments in his earlier book, *The Russian Revolution and the Unfinished 20th Century*, whose title is a reply to historian Eric Hobsbawm's concept of the "Short 20th Century." Hobsbawm argued that the 20th Century concluded in 1991 with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, marking an end to the period of war and revolution.

North argues, by contrast, that the period following the dissolution of the USSR remains, in fundamental

continuity with the preceding period, an epoch of "wars and revolutions."

North noted in the interview that "the end of the Soviet Union in 1991... was followed by a wave of triumphalism," based on the claim that the end of the Cold War marked a "new beginning in which the conflicts of the past had been superseded."

"We have the ability now, after a quarter century, to critically evaluate" that claim, he said. "Far from being an end of history," he continued, "what we are witnessing today is the repetition on a higher scale of the very conflicts which produced the catastrophes of the 20th century."

Peters said she was struck by the fact that although the book consists of "a collection of speeches, articles and correspondence written between 1990 and 2016," it stands up as an integrated whole. North wrote as far back as 1991, she pointed out, that the first Persian Gulf War marked the beginning of an explosive eruption of US military violence that would ultimately bring the US into conflict with Russia and other rival powers.

North replied that this analysis was based on the antecedent body of theoretical work carried out by the International Committee of the Fourth International, of which he has been a leading member for more than four decades.

Those who work within the traditions of Marxism and the Fourth International, North said, "have the benefit of basing themselves on this enormous political, theoretical, intellectual legacy, associated above all with Leon Trotsky."

Damon asked North to comment on why, in lectures such as *From Preventive War to World Domination*, he

placed such emphasis on the criminal character of US foreign policy, particularly in regard to the doctrine of “preemptive war.”

North pointed to the speech he gave at Trinity College in Dublin in 2004, in which he argued that the waging of aggressive war is illegal and was, in fact, the fundamental crime for which the leading architects of Nazi foreign policy were tried and convicted at the Nuremberg trials of 1945-46.

North also commented on the relationship between political analysis and practice. “We believe there is an objective reality that can be known, that can be understood,” he said. “To the extent that it is possible to understand objective reality, it is possible to formulate policies upon which we can intervene in a manner that advances the interests of the working class.”

In the latter half of the interview, North addressed the implications of the book’s analysis for contemporary politics.

Referring to the September 26 debate between US presidential candidates Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, North warned that behind the degrading spectacle of mudslinging, what is being prepared, no matter who is elected, is an acceleration of the drive to war.

Responding to a reader’s question about how the working class will be moved to take up the struggle against war, North replied, “Events will play a colossal role in the reawakening of political consciousness and class consciousness.” However, he added, “The greatest danger today is the enormous gulf between the... very real danger of war, even nuclear war, and the fact that this danger is not widely appreciated.”

“We are going to witness a tremendous political radicalization, and that is an objective process,” he said. “However, the spontaneous development of radicalization does not lead automatically to Marxist and socialist consciousness... That requires a deliberate, organized struggle for the development of Marxist consciousness... under conditions in which the objective situation will predispose an ever larger section of the population to take an interest in politics.”

North concluded his remarks by pointing to the significance of the conference scheduled for November 5th, Socialism vs Capitalism and War. He noted that a video promoting the conference had been viewed

nearly 50,000 times, pointing to the fact that there exists a broad audience for a genuine struggle against war.

A Quarter Century of War: The US Drive for Global Hegemony , 1990 – 2016 is available from Mehring Books.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact