

The war that must be waged is the war on COVID-19

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Despite the efforts by capitalist governments and the corporate media to declare the COVID-19 pandemic over, the virus continues to spread throughout the world, and the death toll continues to mount.

The highly contagious Omicron variant has officially infected over 140 million people globally since mid-December, with the real figure estimated at over 1 billion. This has caused record surges in hospitalizations and near-record numbers of deaths.

According to Worldometer, nearly 5.9 million people have died from COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic, and just over 10,000 people are now dying worldwide each day. In the United States, the official death toll reached 952,240 on Wednesday, and 2,034 people are dying each day. In Russia, 342,383 have officially died from COVID-19, and 702 are dying daily. In Ukraine, 103,565 people have succumbed to COVID-19, and 230 are now dying each day. Throughout Europe, nearly 1.7 million people have died since the start of the pandemic.

Even these horrific figures are known to be vast undercounts due to inadequate public health resources to track infections and deaths globally. In the past two months alone, according to estimates by *The Economist*, there have likely been 2.1 million excess deaths worldwide, reaching a peak of 44,600 per day at the end of January.

In total, an estimated 19.5 million people have needlessly perished since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic two years ago, roughly equivalent to the four-year death toll from World War I. This includes 1.1 million Americans, 1.2 million Russians and 220,000 Ukrainians.

Amid this deepening global catastrophe, the American ruling class is tobogganing towards war with Russia, which threatens to spiral out of control and

initiate a nuclear World War III. In a speech Tuesday, US President Joe Biden menacingly threatened Russia: “Make no mistake, the United States will defend every inch of NATO territory with the full force of American power. An attack against one NATO country is an attack against all of us.”

Without providing a shred of evidence, Biden accused Russia of preparing a “war of choice” against Ukraine, which he contrasted to the “war of necessity” of World War II. In reality, instead of fighting the “war of necessity” against the pandemic, American imperialism is preparing a “war of choice” against Russia.

In this manic war drive, no amount of military spending is too much. After orchestrating a far-right coup in Ukraine in 2014, American and European imperialism have funneled billions of dollars in weaponry to the Ukrainian government to prepare for war with Russia. This includes over \$20 billion in military and economic aid from 2014-2019 alone.

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the US has engaged in near continuous interventions abroad, including in Yugoslavia, Serbia, Somalia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Ukraine and more. The combined cost of these wars and overall military spending amounts to tens of trillions of dollars.

On Wednesday, news broke that Biden will request more than \$770 billion for the military in the 2023 budget, with one of the top priorities being the modernization of the nuclear “triad” of bombers, ballistic missile submarines and land-based missiles. According to Reuters, “sources said that the nuclear modernization effort is seen as ‘must pay’ in addition to Pentagon plans to continue to invest in research and development of weaponry to fight any potential future wars against China and Russia.”

The eruption of American imperialism over the past 30 years has coincided with the wholesale destruction of social services and public health infrastructure domestically. Left to rot for decades, the entire health care system is now crumbling under the weight of the pandemic.

While no cost is too great for the ruling elites to wage imperialist war, when it comes to the war against COVID-19 they ran up the white flag long ago.

In almost every advanced capitalist country, there has been a full-scale capitulation to COVID-19 during the Omicron surge. Politicians have dropped all pretense that they were seeking to end the pandemic with limited mitigation measures and adopted the “herd immunity” strategy pioneered by Donald Trump, Jair Bolsonaro, Boris Johnson and others in 2020. Throughout the world, this homicidal strategy is being imposed with unscientific claims that the virus has become “endemic” and therefore nothing to worry about.

The reality of “endemic” COVID-19 in the US was bluntly elaborated by immunologist Dr. Kristian Andersen on a podcast Monday, in which he stated, “We should probably expect that most people will get infected a couple of times a year, and we should expect 200 to 250,000 deaths or so in this country alone.” He noted that such a scale of reinfections and deaths could continue for 10 years, if not longer.

In addition to perpetual mass morbidity and mortality, “endemic” COVID-19 will consign tens or hundreds of millions more people around the world to Long COVID. A growing body of research shows the horrific long-term impact that the virus can have on the body, damaging numerous organs including the brain, heart, lungs, kidneys, immune system and more.

The pursuit of “herd immunity,” including under the guise of “endemicity,” is a distinctly eugenicist policy that amounts to the deliberate culling of the elderly and immunocompromised, who disproportionately die or suffer the most severe impacts of COVID-19. It evokes the crimes of the Nazi regime in Germany that killed tens of thousands of chronically ill people deemed “unfit to live.”

The Biden administration’s open adoption of eugenicist policies domestically and support for fascist paramilitary groups like the Azov Battalion in Ukraine are two sides of the same coin. As took place in the 1930s, the crisis of world capitalism, now exacerbated

by the pandemic, is propelling a turn to fascism and war.

As the military theorist Carl von Clausewitz famously wrote, “War is the continuation of politics by other means.” The escalating drive to war against Russia arises out of the insoluble domestic crisis and coincides with the increasingly fascistic pandemic policies demanded by the capitalist class. The criminal domestic and foreign policies of American imperialism, which threaten further mass death and suffering, and the potential for nuclear holocaust, must be opposed.

In a major statement published Monday, the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) wrote:

The social force that must be mobilized to stop the catastrophe being prepared in Ukraine is the international working class. The fight against war is directly connected with the fight against exploitation and the murderous herd immunity policies of the capitalist governments. Imperialism and finance capital will tolerate as many deaths as it takes to secure their plunder and profits. Millions of war dead must not be added to the millions dead from the pandemic. It is of the utmost urgency that workers build an independent anti-war movement on the basis of a socialist and internationalist perspective.

The working class must declare war not on Russia, but on the pandemic! The fight to build a mass movement against war and to stop the pandemic requires the forging of a revolutionary socialist leadership to guide the coming struggles of the international working class towards a successful conclusion.



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