

# The political and historical background to the US war drive against Russia

Statement of the WSWs International Editorial Board  
22 February 2022

On Monday evening, the United Nations Security Council held an emergency meeting dedicated to denunciations by the major capitalist powers of the decision by Russian President Vladimir Putin earlier in the day to recognize the independence of two regions in Eastern Ukraine.

Also on Monday, the Russian government reported that two Ukrainian armored personnel carriers entered its borders and were destroyed, killing five Ukrainian soldiers. Russia announced that it was sending military forces into Eastern Ukraine, which has been targeted by massive military barrages from the Ukrainian government.

These developments mark a significant escalation in the development of the conflict in Ukraine into an all-out war involving Russia, the United States and the major European powers in the NATO military alliance.

Under conditions of crisis, it is necessary not to be swept up by the militarist propaganda that is promoted relentlessly in the media. For this, current developments must be placed in their broader historical context. The present conflict did not arise overnight. It is a culmination of a whole series of provocations and actions by American and European imperialism, which have worked relentlessly to expand NATO into Eastern Europe.

Six years ago, on February 18, 2016, the International Committee of the Fourth International published a statement, "Socialism and the Fight Against War," which anticipated the current war danger with remarkable precision.

The WSWs is reposting portions of this statement below. The fact that the statement could foresee so clearly developments that are now erupting is itself a powerful refutation of the claims by the Biden administration that its war threats are an immediate response to "Russian aggression" and a defense of the "sovereignty and territorial integrity" of Ukraine. The statement should be carefully studied by all those who want to understand the driving forces behind the present crisis and what must be done to stop the danger of World War III.

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*Excerpts from "Socialism and the Fight Against War,"  
Statement of the International Committee of the Fourth  
International, February 18, 2016*

Fifteen years after the United States launched the "war on terror," the entire world is being dragged into an ever-

expanding maelstrom of imperialist violence. The invasions and interventions organized by US imperialism have devastated Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria. NATO is engaged in a massive rearmament program in preparation for war with Russia...

The world stands on the brink of a catastrophic global conflict. The statements of heads of capitalist governments grow increasingly bellicose. The proxy wars in Ukraine and Syria have drawn NATO and Russia closer to a full-scale confrontation... As in the years that preceded the outbreak of World War I in 1914 and World War II in 1939, political leaders and military planners are approaching the conclusion that a war between major powers is not a remote possibility, but, rather, highly probable and, perhaps, even inevitable...

The drive to war is centered in the efforts of the United States to maintain its position as the global hegemonic power. The dissolution in 1991 of the Soviet Union was seen as an opportunity to assert unrivaled US domination throughout the world. It was glorified by imperialist propagandists as the "end of history," creating a "unipolar moment" in which the unchallengeable power of the United States would dictate a "New World Order" in the interests of Wall Street. The Soviet Union had encompassed a vast expanse of the globe, stretching from the eastern boundaries of Europe all the way to the Pacific Ocean. Thus, the vast regions of Eurasia, occupied by a debilitated Russia and newly independent Central Asian states, were again "in play," open for corporate exploitation and plunder. The Stalinist restoration of capitalism in China, its police-state repression of working-class resistance in 1989 and the opening up of "free trade zones" to transnational investment made available a vast reservoir of cheap labor...

The application of such geostrategic plans is evident in both Europe and Asia. A systematic buildup of American and allied military power is underway in the Indo-Pacific against China, while Russia has been confronted with NATO deployments in Eastern Europe and US pledges of military support to the ultra-nationalist regimes in the Baltic states and Ukraine. The American ruling class has drawn the conclusion that the nuclear-armed states in Beijing and Moscow must be brought to heel, sooner rather than later. Washington's objective is to reduce China and Russia to the status of semi-colonial client states,

control the “heartland,” and rule the world....

Seventy years after the fall of Hitler’s Third Reich, the German ruling class is once again demanding that its state assert itself as the unquestioned overlord of Europe and as a world power. In the face of deeply felt anti-war sentiments within the German population, Berlin is deploying military force to assert its interests in the Middle East and Africa. It is pouring money into rearmament, while apologetics for the crimes of the Nazi regime are being advanced across the political establishment, media and academia, with the aim of justifying the revival of German imperialist ambitions...

British imperialism, for its part, sees in the US decline an opportunity to expand the still significant global operations of the banks and finance houses based in the City of London. France is striving to regain its grip over its former colonial dominions in North and West Africa...

The crisis of the capitalist nation-state system gives rise to two irreconcilable perspectives. Imperialism strives to overcome the clash of economic and geostrategic interests inherent in the capitalist nation-state system through the victory of one world hegemonic power over all its rivals. This is the aim of imperialist geostrategic calculations, and its inevitable outcome is global war.

Opposing the geopolitics of the capitalist class, the international working class is the social force that objectively constitutes the mass base for world socialist revolution, which signifies an end to the nation-state system as a whole and the establishment of a global economy based on equality and scientific planning. Imperialism seeks to save the capitalist order through war. The working class seeks to resolve the global crisis through social revolution. The strategy of the revolutionary party develops as the negation of imperialist nation-state geopolitics. The revolutionary party, as Trotsky explained, follows “not the war map but the map of the class struggle.”...

The Russian government is the representative of the oligarchs who emerged from the Stalinist bureaucracy after it dismantled the Soviet state and abolished nationalized property relations. Its promotion of “Great Russian” nationalism is the extreme outcome of Stalinism itself, which was a violent and counterrevolutionary repudiation of the internationalist program of Marxism...

World economy and world politics have entered a new stage. The period of capitalist triumphalism that opened up with the restoration of capitalism in Eastern Europe and reached fever pitch with the Stalinist dissolution of the USSR is over. The speculative house of cards that has underwritten the parasitic wealth of the ruling class is collapsing. The fall of stock market valuations is not only deflating the size of portfolios, but shattering the reputations and credibility of pro-capitalist theorists and political leaders.

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The eruption of the COVID-19 pandemic that began two

years ago has intensified the tendencies identified by the ICFI six years ago. The pandemic is a “trigger event” that has accelerated all the fundamental contradictions of contemporary capitalist society.

The present crisis confirms both the analysis of the ICFI six years ago and the conclusions that the statement drew. “A new international movement against war, uniting the great mass of working people and youth in opposition to capitalism and imperialism, must be built,” the ICFI declared. “The same capitalist crisis that produces the insanity of war also generates the impulse for social revolution.”

The statement outlined the following essential political foundations for a movement against war:

- The struggle against war must be based on the working class, the great revolutionary force in society, uniting behind it all progressive elements in the population.
- The new anti-war movement must be anti-capitalist and socialist, since there can be no serious struggle against war except in the fight to end the dictatorship of finance capital and put an end to the economic system that is the fundamental cause of militarism and war.
- The new anti-war movement must therefore, of necessity, be completely and unequivocally independent of, and hostile to, all political parties and organizations of the capitalist class.
- The new anti-war movement must, above all, be international, mobilizing the vast power of the working class in a unified global struggle against imperialism.

This is the urgent political task confronting the international working class.

On Saturday, February 26, the *World Socialist Web Site* is hosting an international online webinar, “Fight COVID and Save Lives! Stop the Drive to World War 3!” We call on all our readers throughout the world to register and make plans to attend this critical international event today.



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