

“The US has been at war the entirety of our lives”—Students in the US denounce warmongering against Russia

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Students across the United States have expressed opposition to the frenzied war drive of US imperialism against Russia, a reflection of the deep anti-war sentiments that exist in the broader population. This comes amid the outbreak of armed conflict in Ukraine after Russian forces initiated a large-scale military strike involving extensive aerial and artillery bombardment along with a ground invasion by troops and tanks.

The Putin regime’s assault on Ukraine, which is deeply reactionary and serves only to inflame the crisis while dividing Russian and Ukrainian workers, must be opposed by the international working class. However, this opposition must be conducted on a class basis, without adapting to the criminal designs of US imperialism, which has done everything in its power to provoke war.

Reporters from the *World Socialist Web Site* interviewed students from universities across the country on their attitude to the Ukraine crisis, the threat of war and the social conditions in the United States.

Cassidy, a student at a charter school in Oakland, California, told the WSWS, “I would describe the situation as a setup to get American citizens riled up and to get more power against Russia.” She continued, “Overall, it’s a war for the benefit of the US. The way it’s been shown in the media is that Russia is trying to invade, and the US is trying to save everyone. In reality, the US is trying to stir things up to gain more power.”

Cassidy continued, “Something you don’t see anywhere is how far-right the US-backed coup in Ukraine was, completely far-right, and nobody talks about that.”

The outbreak of war in Ukraine has been seized upon by the US government and media to divert public attention from the pandemic, even as the official death toll in the US approaches 1 million. Asked about the parallels between the US government’s handling of the war drive and the pandemic, Cassidy commented, “Both of them involve the US using large amounts of hurt or death and pushing aside the lives of regular people to advance their own power. They are going for what is going to make them more powerful and richer rather than what will help any of their citizens.”

Speaking of the role of the Democrats and Republicans, Cassidy asserted, “In general, they’re not very different ... in both situations, it seems like the Republicans might be more outright about some things, the Democrats end up arguing with them but end up going the same way.”

Concerns about the threat of war were expressed by an anonymous high school senior from Massachusetts, “I think it’s pretty horrifying. Historically, the Cold War was called the Cold War because we didn’t actually physically fight Russia. We fought Russia politically and also through proxies using other countries. Now we’re back to the threat of nuclear war; it seems like it’s almost unprecedented, the way that we’re aggravating Russia now.”

When asked about the prevailing views among her fellow students, she stated, “I think it is much more likely that there is a lack of understanding with the majority of people. There are certainly some people that take a pessimistic view, but the majority of students that I know at least I feel are most likely not serious about the situation because of a lack of understanding about the severity of it and the

consequences of it...

“The majority of the media that we watch is just so void of anything, any serious conversations. You see talk shows, and they are not really saying anything political. This is what the majority of people watch, and they are not becoming aware of the real imminent dangers that were facing.”

Seth, a student at Appalachian State University in North Carolina, said, “When I see Biden and other Western elites saying that Americans must defend Ukraine from Russia, I see the capitalist class desperately grasping at straws to do anything that will distract Americans from reality.

“The elite ruling class of America, and the Democratic and Republican parties that represent them, will do anything in their power to prevent the working masses from realizing who the true enemy is. They want Americans to believe that it isn’t the capitalist class who’s the enemy, but rather that it’s the Russians.

“We cannot ignore the reality that American imperialism has devastated the peoples of this world. We cannot ignore that it is the representatives of the capitalist class who vote for these wars. American elites want to keep workers afraid of each other and reliant on them. A divided working class can be controlled, but a united working class is unstoppable.”

The revulsion of broad layers of the population towards the prospect of war is due in no small part to the fact that the US has been involved in an unending series of wars for decades. The youth now coming of age cannot remember a time when the US was not at war. These predatory wars have not only devastated entire societies abroad (in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, to name just a handful), they have also poisoned the fabric of society within the US.

David, a student at San Diego State University (SDSU) and a member of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), spoke about the profound impact of permanent war on youth. “The US has been at war the entirety of our lives. Young people must start thinking about that fact. The US has started war after war, subjugated nation after nation. All while the youth have no opportunities and the ruling class is starting global war ... the US is the aggressor, it is the source of all backwardness and reaction across the globe.

“While the US is provoking this conflict that threatens the world, it’s up to the working class to stop it. I can’t help but think back to history. In World War II, there was a mass movement of the working class, the masses were moving very rapidly to the left, around the US and around the world. ... The reason why World War II happened the way it did, it was not the fault of the working class, it was the capitalists’ fault, but it did not have to end that way if the working class had a principled leadership.”

Max, another member of the IYSSE at SDSU, spoke about the immense dangers of the conflict being stoked by the imperialist powers: “Coming from a military family, war is chaotic; it cannot be overemphasized how dangerous the situation is. A war doesn’t serve any working person’s interests. Considering these are nuclear-armed powers, it could not be any more important for the working class to orient itself against war and fight for its interests.”

He continued, “If the working class doesn’t fight for its interests, they will be forced to fight for the capitalist interests... The youth must turn to the working class for the coming struggles. We need to educate ourselves for a clear perspective to make a future for the next generation.”

IYSSE SDSU member David concluded his statement with the following, “We have to fight for a future, fight to end war and rid ourselves of the capitalist system that is destroying our lives before they really begin. War is not inevitable; no outcome is inevitable without struggle. Take up the struggle for the working class. A better future is possible, and it must be fought for.”



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