

US-NATO arming Ukraine for military offensive against Russia signals a massive and dangerous escalation

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The imperialist character of the US-NATO war against Russia over Ukraine is emerging ever more clearly. The Ukrainian government, armed to the teeth with military equipment supplied by the United States and its European allies, has had initial tactical successes in the first six weeks of the war. The US and NATO powers are now pressing the offensive, with the aim of defeating Russia militarily, instigating a massive political crisis, and implementing regime change in Moscow.

“Slovakia’s decision to provide Ukraine with a Soviet-era S-300 air defense unit, a move made with the blessing of the United States, represents a new phase in the war,” the *New York Times* wrote on Saturday. The “defense unit” is in fact a surface-to-air system that would be used to shoot down Russian aircraft.

The UK also committed over the weekend to sending 120 armored vehicles along with an anti-ship missile system to Ukraine, on top of the \$130 million in additional arms pledged by UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Friday. The anti-ship weapons will allow the Ukrainian military to directly target Russian warships off Ukraine’s coast on the Black Sea. The announcement came as Johnson made an unannounced trip to Kiev on Saturday to pledge unlimited support to the Ukrainian government.

The further armament of Ukraine will make possible direct attacks on Russian soil. “So far, the Biden administration has not been willing to provide weapons that would allow Ukraine to strike deep into Russia,” the *Times* wrote, “though some experts say that damaging Russian military airfields would improve Ukraine’s chances of withstanding a renewed offensive.”

The newspaper quoted retired Army Lt. Colonel Alexander Vindman, one of the main US officials pressing for more aggressive action against Russia, as saying that “the ability to strike deeper targets”—that is, targets within Russia—is a “critical gap” that must be overcome.

The war in Ukraine was instigated by the imperialist

powers through the relentless expansion of NATO into Eastern Europe, the transformation of Ukraine into a NATO arsenal and staging grounds for attacks on Russia, and the refusal to negotiate over Russia’s demands for security guarantees.

The US and NATO want the war to continue. The objective—as blurted out by Biden in his Warsaw speech—is regime change in Russia. The initial setbacks suffered by the Russian military have led the Biden administration to believe that NATO can inflict a major military defeat that will fatally destabilize the Putin regime, and lead to its replacement by a coup d’état led by pro-NATO forces within sections of the oligarchy.

Were this to be the outcome, the political result would be the placing of Russia under a form of US-controlled trusteeship, clearing the way for its territorial breakup and the opening of its vast geographical expanse to unrestricted control and exploitation by the United States and other NATO powers.

The escalating strategic objectives of NATO vastly increase the likelihood of an undisguised military engagement between its forces and Russia. The process of escalation has a logic of its own. It is not difficult to envision any number of scenarios that would transform the proxy war into a full-scale conflict, even to the point of a nuclear exchange.

For example, if Ukraine uses advanced military equipment supplied by NATO to inflict heavy losses among Russian troops, and even launches missile strikes against Russian territory, it is highly likely that Russia would retaliate by targeting the NATO countries that are either supplying or facilitating the transport of the lethal weapons.

The Biden administration’s willingness to risk nuclear war is nothing less than monumentally criminal recklessness. But it is a recklessness driven by economic and political imperatives that it cannot control. Once again, the capitalist class—to borrow a phrase employed by Leon Trotsky in

1938, on the eve of World War II—is tobogganing toward disaster with eyes closed.

The intersection of fundamental historical processes and present-day socioeconomic crises underlies this movement toward disaster. Determined and desperate to maintain its dominant position in the world economy, the United States views eliminating Russia as a territorial and geopolitical obstacle as essential preparation for the inevitable showdown with China. In the new division of the world envisioned by American imperialism, the vast resources of the Eurasian landmass must be brought under its control.

The drive to achieve this semi-crazed ambition of world domination has been accelerated by the extreme internal crisis of the United States. The American ruling class has convinced itself that war will provide the iron vise that will hold together a society being torn apart by social, economic and political contradictions for which it has no rational solutions.

As for Russia, the disastrous decision to launch the war, thereby stepping into the trap laid by the United States and NATO, was a miscalculation that is rooted in the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union 30 years ago, which has placed the masses of workers in Russia at the mercy of a corrupt oligarchy whose greed is matched only by its strategic shortsightedness and political bankruptcy.

Putin deluded himself into believing that he could pressure NATO into providing Russia with security guarantees that would allow the Kremlin to enjoy the benefits of oligarchical rule without excessive intervention from the West. But Putin, the bitter opponent of Marxism and the 1917 October Revolution, thereby displayed a total incomprehension of the driving forces of the imperialist world system.

Having started the war, the Putin regime finds itself more and more being drawn into an existential conflict.

The *World Socialist Web Site* opposed the Russian invasion of Ukraine not because we deny the fact that Russia confronts imperialist encirclement and the prospect of being placed in neocolonial shackles, but because imperialism cannot be opposed through the Russian oligarchy's reactionary methods of military adventurism and national chauvinism.

The Russian and international working class can only stop war and defeat imperialism through the escalation of class struggle, with the aim of taking power, expropriating the capitalist elites, abolishing the nation-state system and creating a world socialist federation.

May Day 2022, now only three weeks away, must be devoted this year to the call for an international struggle against imperialist aggression and war based on the perspective and program of world socialist revolution.

Workers in the United States and NATO countries must

denounce the proxy war and demand that NATO's instigation of the conflict and the delivery of weapons to its Ukrainian agents be immediately stopped.

The Russian working class must emphatically repudiate the Kremlin's invasion. Opposition to NATO imperialism depends upon the revival within Russia and throughout the former USSR of the Leninist-Trotskyist principles of socialist internationalism that inspired the October Revolution.

The crisis of world capitalism has produced all the necessary objective conditions for a movement of the international working class against imperialist war. Two years of mass death and social dislocation produced by the ruling class's response to the COVID-19 pandemic is now followed by the direct impact of the war in the rapid increase in the cost of living.

The cutting off of exports of food and fertilizer from Ukraine and Russia is already creating catastrophic conditions throughout the Middle East, Africa and Asia. It is fueling the growing strike movement in Europe and the United States, where workers confront inflation levels not seen in four decades.

This opposition, however, must be developed as a conscious political movement for socialism. This means the building of the International Committee of the Fourth International and its affiliated Socialist Equality Parties in every country.

It is based on this perspective that the International Committee of the Fourth International is holding its International May Day Online Rally. We call on all our readers, and all workers throughout the world, to register for and attend this rally and take up the fight for socialism and build a worldwide movement against imperialism and war.



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