

# The US/UK attack on Yemen and the global eruption of imperialist war

WSWS Editorial Board  
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The *World Socialist Web Site* unequivocally condemns Thursday's attack by the United States and United Kingdom against Yemen. With no popular mandate, with no congressional or parliamentary authorization, without even an attempt at a serious explanation, the Biden administration in the US and the Sunak government in the UK have carried out an illegal act of war against an impoverished nation.

The attack on Yemen is a major escalation of the developing war in the Middle East. Since the beginning of Israel's genocide in Gaza, the US and its imperialist allies in NATO have overseen a massive militarization of the region, directly targeting Iran. This is itself part of an expanding global war, including the US-NATO war against Russia and the developing economic and military conflict against China.

US President Joe Biden did not even see fit to go on national television to explain the launching of a new war, under conditions in which there is overwhelming popular opposition to the expansion of war in the Middle East. As the Pentagon was planning to attack Yemen, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin was admitted to the intensive care unit of Walter Reed Hospital, with the knowledge of the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff but unbeknownst to the president. This bizarre episode underscored the reality that US war-making is operating on autopilot, increasingly outside the pretense of civilian oversight.

As always, the rationale provided to justify the war is a pack of lies. Biden declared that the missile strikes were "defensive" and "a direct response to unprecedented Houthi attacks." The American media, with the same breathless reporting that has accompanied every US military operation, proclaims that a country with a gross domestic product 700 times smaller than the United States is carrying out

"intolerable" actions, against which the American military is "forced" to defend itself. Overnight, Yemen's Houthis have been turned into a new bogeyman, requiring urgent military action without any discussion or explanation.

In coordination with the Israeli genocide in Gaza, the United States has dispatched to the Middle East a massive military armada, consisting of two aircraft carrier battle groups, multiple guided missile destroyers, an unknown number of submarines and dozens of warplanes. These forces have provided logistics, reconnaissance, and target selection to Israel in a deliberate effort to provoke retaliation from Iran and its allied forces such as the Houthis.

Yet, supposedly it is Yemen that is the "aggressor," carrying out "unprecedented attacks" on US military forces deployed in the Red Sea, thousands of miles from the US border. American imperialism, which has a military larger than that of the next 10 countries combined, claims to be waging a "defensive" war on the other side of the world against a small, oppressed and impoverished country.

"We're not interested in a war with Yemen," asserted the Pentagon on Friday, "We're not interested in a conflict of any kind."

In fact, the imperialist powers have been waging a war against the population of Yemen for nearly a decade. The Houthis in Yemen have been subject to ruthless slaughter, waged by Saudi Arabia but armed and financed by the United States. According to the United Nations, 377,000 people have been killed in a genocidal campaign that has involved blockades resulting in mass starvation and disease. First under Obama and then under Trump, the US financed this assault with more than \$54 billion in military equipment, aided and abetted by its imperialist allies,

including the UK.

The devastation of Yemen is part of more than 30 years of unending and expanding war, spearheaded and led by American imperialism, following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1990-91. This included the first Gulf War in 1990; the dismantling of Yugoslavia, culminating in the war against Serbia in 1999; the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001; the second war against Iraq in 2003; the war against Libya in 2011; and the CIA-backed civil war in Syria that began the same year.

Every single administration since that of Bill Clinton has authorized military operations, airstrikes, and destabilization operations in Somalia, across the Gulf of Aden from Yemen, seeking to control the critical waterway leading to the Suez Canal.

The launching of military strikes against Yemen marks a new stage in the deepening imperialist military offensive throughout the Middle East and beyond. The US and its imperialist allies are waging a de facto war against Iran, working to eliminate Iran's military allies throughout the Middle East. The strikes against Yemen are directed at encircling Iran and provoking it into retaliation against US forces, which could be used to justify a full-scale war against Tehran.

The immediate antecedent for the escalating war in the Middle East, of which the genocide in Gaza is a part, is the collapse of Ukraine's "spring offensive." But the imperialist powers are doubling down. "Backing Ukraine is key to the West's security," declares *The Economist*, while *Foreign Affairs* asserts that "Victory Is Ukraine's Only True Path to Peace."

Overriding all of this, the United States is involved in a struggle to fend off the challenge posed by China to its global hegemony, which threatens to trigger a shooting war in the Pacific. In the US media and political circles, there is growing talk of a new "axis of evil" involving Iran, China and Russia.

Each one of these conflicts cannot be understood in isolation. The bombing of Yemen is part of a global counter-revolution, in which the imperialist powers are seeking to reestablish direct control over their former colonies.

The countries carrying out this agenda are the old imperialist powers: the US, UK, France, and Germany. The British ruling class, unable to carry through its policies independently, seeks to exploit the so-called

special relationship, that is, Britain's role as the principal ally of American imperialism, to advance its own interests on a global stage.

Every war launched by the US and its imperialist allies has ended in one bloody debacle after the other, with millions of people killed. But each disaster only reinforces the determination of US imperialism to use war as a means to secure its global hegemony.

American Imperialism, to paraphrase the words of Leon Trotsky, is "tobogganing towards disaster with eyes closed."

Over the past three months, millions of people all over the world have marched in protest of the US-backed Israeli genocide in Gaza. The US strikes on Yemen occurred on the same day as the International Court of Justice heard devastating evidence that Israel, and by extension the United States, were responsible for genocide in Gaza.

The response of US imperialism to these mass popular protests and exposures of its war crimes has been to accelerate its war plans. This is because the eruption of war, genocide and political repression is not an aberration. Imperialism, as Lenin explained, is not merely a policy, but rather a specific historical stage of capitalist development. Opposition to imperialism is, therefore, a revolutionary question.

It is not a matter of appealing to the capitalist governments responsible for these crimes to alter course, but rather mobilizing the working class, fusing the struggle against war with the developing struggles of workers all over the world against inequality and exploitation. The logic of these struggles requires the conquest of political power by workers all over the world, the expropriation of the capitalist oligarchs and war criminals, and the socialist reorganization of economic life on a world scale.



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