

Two years of the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine

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Two years ago today, on February 24, 2022, American imperialism and its European allies succeeded in provoking Russia into invading Ukraine. Washington, Berlin, London and Paris had long sought to incite an all-out war with Vladimir Putin's reactionary nationalist regime, with the aim of subordinating Russia to the status of a semi-colony and consolidating imperialist dominance over the Eurasian landmass.

The war is the bloodiest in Europe since the mass slaughter of World War II. Approximately half a million Ukrainians and tens of thousands of Russians have been massacred, and millions have been forced to flee their homes. American and German imperialism are recklessly escalating the conflict with utter disregard for the consequences. This includes the imminent prospect of a nuclear exchange between the US and Russia, which would call into question the very survival of humanity.

In a statement issued just hours after Russia's invasion titled "Oppose the Putin government's invasion of Ukraine and US-NATO warmongering! For the unity of Russian and Ukrainian workers!", the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) decisively rejected the incessant propaganda emanating from the political establishment and media portraying the conflict as "Putin's unprovoked war of aggression." According to this bogus narrative, the Russian president masterminded the Ukraine war as part of a grand plan for the conquest of Europe. Only military force could stop him.

In reality, the US led from the 1990s onward systematic efforts to extend NATO's territory eastwards to encircle Russia, in violation of promises made to the Stalinist regime as it dissolved the Soviet Union. Then, in February 2014, Washington and Berlin sponsored the Maidan coup, a far-right movement spearheaded by outright fascist forces that overthrew the elected pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovich and installed a pro-Western puppet regime in Kiev. In response, Russia annexed Crimea following a referendum.

Analysing the broader historical roots of the conflict, the ICFI wrote:

The present confrontation with Russia is the outcome of a geopolitical strategy pursued by the United States since the dissolution of the USSR 30 years ago. Its aim has been US global hegemony, using military power to offset economic decline. This has been the source of the numerous and

unending series of wars launched by the US, involving the invasion and/or bombing of Iraq, Somalia, Serbia, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria. Of course, this history of illegal wars goes unmentioned in the media today.

The intervening two years have fully borne out this analysis. The primary source for the escalation of the conflict has been American imperialism, with strong support from Germany, Britain, France and Canada. The imperialists have pumped tens of billions of dollars and euros worth of high-powered weaponry into Ukraine to fuel the conflict, organised the deployment of tens of thousands of additional NATO troops to Eastern Europe, and menaced the world with the threat of a nuclear war against Russia. At home, they have subordinated all aspects of society to the waging of imperialist war through massive military spending hikes, the gutting of social programmes, and an open turn to authoritarian forms of rule and far-right political forces to suppress popular opposition.

While repeatedly proclaiming their determination to defend "democracy," the imperialist powers have cooperated closely with fascist forces in Ukraine—the political descendants of Nazi collaborators during World War II who participated in the war of annihilation against the Soviet Union and the Holocaust.

There is nothing incidental about the intimate alliance between the NATO powers and Ukraine's fascist-infested military and political establishment. Rather, it expresses the reality that the present conflict, like the Nazis' war against the Soviet Union eight decades ago, is an imperialist war being waged for plunder, markets and geostrategic hegemony. This fact was underscored by the unanimous standing ovation given to Waffen-SS veteran and Nazi war criminal Yaroslav Hunka last September by Canada's parliament and the ambassadors from the other G-7 member states.

The imperialist governments have not a shred of concern for "democracy" in Ukraine. In reality, they intend to bring Ukraine into their sphere of influence as part of their drive to carve up the Russian Federation, seize its natural resources and thereby prepare for military conflict with China. In pursuit of this strategy, they are ready to fight to the last Ukrainian, as shown by the hundreds of thousands of overwhelmingly young Ukrainians they have sacrificed on the battlefields.

Estimates suggest that as many as 500,000 Ukrainian soldiers have been slaughtered since the war began, including well over

100,000 in the catastrophic 2023 “offensive” instigated by the imperialist powers. The imperialists’ indifference to such a horrendous loss of human life is replicated by their unconditional support for Israel’s genocide in Gaza, where well over 30,000 Palestinians have been butchered in just over four months by weapons supplied by the US to the far-right Netanyahu government.

The imperialist powers’ reckless escalation of the war with Russia in Ukraine and their unrestrained endorsement of Israel’s genocidal onslaught on the Palestinians lay bare what the “rules-based international order”--constantly held up by Biden, Scholz et al. as an alternative to Putin’s “brutality”--really is. The defence of the global hegemonic position of US imperialism, the economic basis for which has steadily eroded over recent decades, can only be undertaken by resorting to increasingly barbaric methods that resemble the horrors experienced during the two imperialist world wars of the 20th century.

The aggressive bloody-mindedness of the imperialist states does not justify, let alone give any progressive content to, the policies of the Putin regime. As the ICFI emphasised two years ago:

The catastrophe that was set in motion by the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 cannot be averted on the basis of Russian nationalism, a thoroughly reactionary ideology that serves the interests of the capitalist ruling class represented by Vladimir Putin.

Putin’s goal in invading Ukraine was and remains creating the best conditions to strike a deal with imperialism. He refuses to acknowledge the existence of any objective processes driving the imperialists to subjugate Russia. Instead, as was demonstrated in his pathetic performance in a recent interview with the fascistic US talkshow host Tucker Carlson, Putin continues to believe that everything was a big misunderstanding that can be put right through a negotiated agreement between Washington and Moscow to support the creation of a “multi-polar” international order.

As a representative of the corrupt Russian capitalist oligarchy, which faces domestic opposition from the working class and mounting pressure from the imperialist powers, Putin cannot acknowledge that the war has objective causes. To do so would require the recognition not only of the bankruptcy of his regime but the disastrous results of capitalist restoration in the Soviet Union for Russian and Ukrainian workers. This admission would raise the spectre of an eruption of social opposition from below that would represent a far greater threat to the Russian oligarchy than the threat from the imperialists.

The intractable contradictions of global capitalism have triggered a new redivision of the world between the major powers. US imperialism’s war on Russia is but one front in what is rapidly developing as a third world war. This conflict takes the form of a counter-revolutionary struggle by imperialism to secure its interests at the expense of its geopolitical rivals and the working class in every country. Other key targets for Washington and its European allies are Iran in the Middle East and, above all, China in

the Indo-Pacific. The prospect of war with China, which poses a direct threat to US hegemony, is no longer discussed as a possibility, but rather as an inevitability.

Two years on from the outbreak of the US-NATO war on Russia, the *World Socialist Web Site* urges workers around the world to take up the fight for an immediate halt to the bloodbath. This requires workers internationally to counterpose the programme of world socialist revolution to the imperialists’ mad escalation of a third world war.

As the WSWs International Editorial Board observed in its New Year’s statement:

The prospects for humanity would be bleak were it not for the historically verified fact that the contradictions that drive capitalism to destruction also set into motion the conditions for its overthrow and the reorganization of society on a new and progressive, i.e., socialist, foundation. The potential for this reorganization is rooted in the objective being of the working class. The class struggle is the means by which the objective possibility of socialist reorganization is realized in practice.

The urgent task on the second anniversary of the US-NATO war against Russia is to make this objective process conscious in the minds of workers around the world, so that it can serve as the basis for the establishment of an international anti-war movement led by the working class. This movement must unify workers in the imperialist centres with those in the countries targeted by US wars of aggression over the past 30 years and workers in Russia, Ukraine and throughout the former Soviet Union.

Their common aim must be the struggle to put an end to the capitalist profit system, which is the root cause of the US and NATO drive to impose their interests on Russia. This struggle must involve implacable opposition to the oligarchic regimes in Russia and Ukraine through a revival of the socialist and internationalist traditions of the Bolshevik-led Russian Revolution of 1917.



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