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Who will pay for Biden's new "forever war"?

This week, the United States and its NATO allies pledged to increase their troop presence in Europe seven-fold in order to prepare for what they called "warfighting against nuclear-armed peer-competitors"—that is, war against Russia and China.

The NATO members declared that they would increase their "high readiness forces" from 40,000 to 300,000. Biden announced the US would send another 20,000 troops to Europe amid the escalating war with Russia, accompanied by the permanent deployment of guided missile destroyers and F-35 aircraft.



Biden, flanked by Gen. Andrew Poppas and Gen. Mark Milley, in 2016. (AP Photo/Steve Ruark)

The US, which spends more on its armed forces than the next 10 largest militaries combined, has increased its military spending for six years in a row. Biden's military budget for 2023, already the largest on record, was boosted another 6 percent by a vote in the Senate Armed Services Committee, bringing the total to \$858 billion.

Since the start of the Biden administration, the US has pledged over \$50 billion in military and economic aid to Ukraine. Ukrainian President Zelensky stated that the country needs at least \$60 billion a year in aid to continue its war effort, a figure equivalent to nearly half of Ukraine's pre-war economic output.

Last year, when Biden announced the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, he said, "We've been a nation too long at war. If you're 20 years old today, you have never known an America at peace." He declared, "It's time to end the forever war."

Now Biden is committing the American population to a new perpetual war, asserting that there are no limits to the resources that must be devoted to it.

Asked Thursday at a news conference at the NATO Summit in Madrid to "explain what that means to the American people" and whether he was pledging "indefinite support from the United States for Ukraine," Biden said "We are going to support Ukraine as long as it takes."

Another reporter asked about the "high price of gasoline in the United States and around the world," inquiring, "How long is it fair to expect American drivers and drivers around the world to pay that premium for this war?"

Biden reiterated, "As long as it takes."

No one thought to ask Biden an obvious question: How long will "it" take? What will be the cost of this open-ended war, and what will be the consequences?

The United States is spearheading a global conflict that threatens the lives of millions of people and, if it develops into a nuclear exchange, the fate of humanity itself.

Can anyone imagine, moreover, that a war against Russia, the aim of which is to overthrow the government of the world's largest country, coupled with a war against

China, the world's second-largest economy, can be achieved without totally impoverishing the American population?

The social and economic consequences of the militarization of society pledged by the US and its allies at the NATO summit are incalculable. In every country, government spending on public health and social infrastructure is to be gutted to free up resources for the war effort.

The costs of the war are to be imposed onto the working class through the dismantling of social programs and the demand that workers accept a reduction in real wages in the name of the "national interest."

The eruption of the war has been accompanied by the total abandonment of any efforts to stop the spread of COVID-19. According to US government estimates, there will be 100 million new cases of COVID-19 this fall, more than the number of all COVID-19 cases previously reported to date. And Congress has refused to pass any additional pandemic funding, meaning that uninsured people will be forced to pay for COVID-19 vaccines, testing and treatments out of pocket.

This week, New York City announced that it is slashing public school funding by \$215 million in what is expected to be a surge in austerity measures around the country.

Already, the war has fueled demands for slashing "entitlement" spending. "NATO Needs More Guns and Less Butter," Glenn Hubbard, the former chair of the Council of Economic Advisers, wrote in an op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal* earlier this year, demanding cuts in spending on Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. "Spending offsets to accommodate higher defense spending would surely require slowing the growth in social insurance spending," he wrote.

While out-of-control military spending against the backdrop of decades of Wall Street bailouts has contributed to the inflationary crisis, the US political establishment is seeking to impose the full burden of the crisis on the working class. The Federal Reserve has initiated a program of seeking to deliberately increase unemployment by raising interest rates, hoping to restore "balance" to the labor market by throwing hundreds of thousands of people out of work.

The intensification of the war will take place against a tidal wave of layoffs, beginning in the technology and real estate sector and spreading through the auto industry. According to one tracker, there were 26,000 layoffs in the technology sector alone last month, up from 20,000 the month before.

The global war being initiated by the Biden administration is at one and the same time a war against the working class of the United States. Through war, the US ruling class is seeking to at once divert internal tensions outward through the creation of an external enemy and build up the forces of repression to crush strikes and social struggles.

Biden's commitment to unlimited American involvement in the war with Russia enjoys the support of the entire US political establishment. The outcome of the NATO summit was hailed by the editorial boards of the major US newspapers, from the Democratic-aligned *New York Times* and *Washington Post* to the Republican-aligned *Wall Street Journal*.

“Whatever else happens in President Biden's tenure, and no matter how long that tenure lasts, the events this week in Europe will ensure that his presidency is a consequential one,” the *Post* proclaimed.

Not a single Democratic member of Congress has criticized Biden's pledge of endless resources for the war effort.

Despite the unending barrage of propaganda aimed at exciting public hatred of Russia and China, the war in Ukraine is broadly unpopular. In a YouGov poll published this week, 40 percent of respondents said the US should be “less militarily engaged in conflicts around the world,” compared with 12 percent who said it should be more engaged.

Asked what Biden's top priority should be, 38 percent said the White House should seek to address the surging cost of living, compared with 8 percent who said the US should “ensure a defeat of Russia in Ukraine.”

Forty-six percent of respondents said they “oppose the United States military becoming directly involved in combat in the Russia-Ukraine war,” compared to just 23 percent who support such a move.

The American population has not forgotten the crimes carried out by American imperialism against the people of Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, Yemen and dozens of other countries subjected to US destabilization campaigns, proxy wars and murderous economic sanctions.

There does not, outside of the International Committee of the Fourth International, exist any organized political opposition to the war plans of US imperialism. The social basis for the building of a new anti-war movement is the working class. Just as imperialist war abroad is at the same time a war on the working class at home, so too the fight against war is at the same time a fight of the working class against inequality, exploitation and the capitalist profit system.

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