

Russia's Invasion of Ukraine, the Maneuvers of the U.S. Ruling Class, and Some Key Tasks for U.S. Communists

Maoist Communist Union — March 28th, 2022¹

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has significant ramifications across the globe, and Communists will need to take stock of these ongoing developments. In the current situation of economic instability, which is teetering on the edge of a major economic crisis, competition between these powers is intensifying, and the people, especially those in contested countries like Ukraine, are caught in the cross-fire.

The Russian invasion is the latest and most severe episode in a series of struggles that have played out over the past few decades over which imperialist power will have dominant control of the population and resources of Ukraine, with the U.S., NATO, and the EU on one side and Russia, partially supported by China, on the other. This is the latest iteration of the “Great Game” in which the big bullies of the world fight for global supremacy, and use the small and oppressed countries as their battlegrounds, with the potential of a catastrophic world war lurking in the background. On the one hand, Russia's invasion marks how much the U.S.'s position has declined in Eastern Europe and globally of late, a positive development. However, the relative rise of another imperialist power and bloc and related aggressive expansion is no cause for rejoicing. Furthermore, in its anger, the US camp is dangerously provoking the Russians ever-more at present, threatening to further expand the conflict beyond Ukraine's borders. Despite the dangerous if not dire global situation, in the face of growing inter-imperialist competition, new openings for growth of the revolutionary camp in the U.S. and internationally must be seized on.

The situation is still developing rapidly, both in terms of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and economic and political retaliation from the U.S. and its allies. There is also a major intensification of war propaganda in the U.S. right now, as well as significant support for a U.S. military intervention among the U.S. masses broadly.² Related demands are being raised in the media and in the political sphere for further crackdowns on dissent and democratic rights.³ In this document we lay out some provisional analysis of

1 This document was first published on March 28th, 2022. Minor formatting updates were made March 30th, 2022.

2 For example, just prior to the Russian invasion, [polls showed](#) that 74% of Americans opposed the U.S. playing a major role in the war. However, another [poll](#) taken just after the invasion showed 42% of Americans in favor of the U.S. using military action to stop Russia's invasion should sanctions fail to do so. While it is still a minority who support military action, and this poll phrased support for war with Russia as contingent on sanctions failing to change Russia's approach, the war drums are beating loudly and many in the U.S. may change their views in the coming weeks and months in face of increasingly bellicose calls from the ruling class. A more [recent poll](#) showed that 35% of Americans favor the U.S. taking military action in Ukraine, *even if it risks sparking a nuclear conflict*.

That said, there have also been some countervailing tendencies, including many libertarians calling for the U.S. to leave NATO and for Biden to promise not to fight a war with Russia or get involved in Ukraine. DSA also issued a statement condemning the Russian invasion while also criticizing U.S. aggression and calling for people to oppose “all violent escalations” in the conflict.

<https://www.dsausa.org/statements/on-russias-invasion-of-ukraine/>

On the other hand, other prominent social democrats and liberals in the U.S., including popular Youtuber Vaush and The Young Turks talking head Cenk Uygur, have been parroting U.S. state talking points and pushing for further escalation.

3 See <https://www.cnn.com/2022/02/28/google-facebook-battle-to-stop-spread-of-russian-disinformation.html>. Not

these trends and their implications, acknowledging that the present situation is unstable and developing quickly.

We Must Condemn Not Only Russia's Invasion, But Also, and Principally, U.S. Imperialism

Generally among the masses in the U.S. there is outrage against Russia's invasion of Ukraine. This reaction has a divided nature. On the one hand, it is positive that people are disturbed by the invasion of a sovereign country and by the brutality of an aggressive war. On the other hand, when the U.S. was the invader in Iraq and Afghanistan, or the architect of the assault on Libya, many of these same people were in support. Overall, outrage about the war is being funneled into support for the U.S. ruling class to a large degree. This is in part due to the fact that the vast majority of people in the U.S. are ignorant of the machinations of U.S. imperialism in Ukraine and other countries, and thus are blind to the ways in which the U.S.'s own aggressive expansion in the region precipitated the present crisis and served to provoke Russia into invading Ukraine.

This does not justify Russia's invasion, which is a blatant act of aggressive expansion and is already bringing new forms of misery and suffering to the Ukrainian people. However, within the framework of inter-imperialist competition, there are certain lines set by the imperialists that, if crossed, will likely trigger a military response. For example, the U.S. still basically follows the Monroe Doctrine, forbidding any other "Great" Power from stationing troops in the Western Hemisphere. If Russia had staged a coup in Mexico, began to rapidly arm the Mexican military with new weaponry, aided the government's efforts to acquire nuclear weapons, and worked to expedite Mexico's incorporation into the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)—a treaty organization which replaced the Warsaw Pact—then the U.S. would almost certainly respond with military means, including by invading Mexico.

However, given the beating of the war drums, and long-standing inculcation with U.S. chauvinist ideology, the parallels between this hypothetical scenario and U.S./NATO expansion in Eastern Europe are not commonly understood by the masses in the U.S. That being said, some within the U.S. state did see this clearly, and were worried that continued NATO expansion, especially in Ukraine, would cross the line for Russia. For example, former Secretary of Defense and former CIA director Robert Gates summed up the errors of U.S. policy towards Russia (in terms of the interests of the U.S. ruling class) in his memoir *Duty*:

When I reported to the president [George W. Bush] my take on the Munich conference [in 2007], I shared with him my belief that from 1993 onward, the West, and particularly the United States, had badly underestimated the magnitude of Russian humiliation in losing the Cold War and then in the dissolution of the Soviet Union, which amounted to the end of the centuries-old Russian Empire. The arrogance, after the collapse, of American government officials, academicians, businessmen, and politicians in telling the Russians how to conduct their domestic and international affairs (not to mention the internal psychological impact of their precipitous fall from superpower status) had led to deep and long-term resentment and bitterness.

only are Russian news sources being banned, those who don't support the U.S. state narrative promoting Russia as the primary evil in the world at present are being called traitors. C.f. <https://greenwald.substack.com/p/romneys-treason-smear-of-tulsi-gabbard>. We discuss this dynamic more below.

What I didn't tell the president was that I believed the relationship with Russia had been badly mismanaged after Bush 41 left office in 1993. Getting Gorbachev to acquiesce to a unified Germany as a member of NATO had been a huge accomplishment. But moving so quickly after the collapse of the Soviet Union to incorporate so many of its formerly subjugated states into NATO was a mistake. Including the Baltic states, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary quickly was the right thing to do, but I believe the process should then have slowed. U.S. agreements with the Romanian and Bulgarian governments to rotate troops through bases in those countries was a needless provocation (especially since we virtually never deployed the 5,000 troops to either country). The Russians had long historical ties to Serbia, which we largely ignored. Trying to bring Georgia and Ukraine into NATO was truly overreaching. The roots of the Russian Empire trace back to Kiev in the ninth century, so that was an especially monumental provocation. Were the Europeans, much less the Americans, willing to send their sons and daughters to defend Ukraine or Georgia? Hardly. So NATO expansion was a political act, not a carefully considered military commitment, thus undermining the purpose of the alliance and recklessly ignoring what the Russians considered their own vital national interests.⁴

Gates was far from alone in warning about how U.S. policy was provoking Russia and risked triggering a military conflict between the world's two largest nuclear powers.⁵ Over the past several decades, there has been a tug-of-war between the U.S./NATO and Russia over Ukraine. The Western-backed so-called "Orange Revolution" in 2004 replaced the pro-Russian president Leonid Kuchma with Viktor Yushchenko. He made some moves towards integration with the EU, and announced in 2008 that Ukraine would join NATO in the future. Yushchenko was in turn replaced by pro-Russian leader Viktor Yanukovich in 2010. Yanukovich, flagrantly and extravagantly corrupt, pursued stronger relations with Russia, controversially extending Russia's lease on naval facilities in Sevastopol in Crimea, and initially carried forward Ukraine's application for EU membership, before terminating it in 2013.

This led the U.S. and its assemblage of NGOs like George Soros' Open Society to help foment unrest in Ukraine. They drew on mass anger at outrages and oppression faced under Yanukovich, including fear among sections of the population of being annexed into the Russian sphere of influence. However, by channelling this outrage into the pro-EU Euromaidan protests in 2014,⁶ they were able to install Petro

4 Robert Gates, *Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War*, p. 157-158. In 1999 the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland joined NATO. In 2004, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia joined. In 2009, Albania and Croatia became part of NATO. In 2017 Montenegro joined, as did North Macedonia in 2020. See also William Burns' (then ambassador to Russia, now current director of the CIA) warning in 2008 that U.S. machinations in Ukraine were seen in Russia as precipitating a civil war in Ukraine and as forcing Russia's hand to intervene despite the inclinations of the Russian state to maintain the status-quo: https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08MOSCOW265_a.html

5 Since the Clinton administration, major figures ranging from [George Kennan in 1997](#) (architect of the U.S. Cold War strategy of Containment) to [Henry Kissinger in 2014](#) have been warning against Ukraine joining NATO. In his memoir *My Journey at the Nuclear Brink*, Clinton's Defense Secretary William Perry noted that he almost resigned in 1996 over the Clinton Administration's push to expand NATO eastward.

Then-ambassador to Russia (and current CIA director) Bill Burns in a 2009 memo warned then-Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice that "Ukrainian entry into NATO is the brightest of all red lines for the Russian elite (not just Putin)," and that "In more than two and a half years of conversations with key Russian players, from knuckle-draggers in the dark recesses of the Kremlin to Putin's sharpest liberal critics, I have yet to find anyone who views Ukraine in NATO as anything other than a direct challenge to Russian interests."

6 A leaked 2014 discussion between then-Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland and then-U.S. Ambassador to

Poroshenko—a pro-EU and pro-NATO oligarch—as the ruler of Ukraine, thus pulling Ukraine back under their control. Russia saw Ukraine slipping out of its grasp, so it seized on the political crisis to sponsor anti-Euromaidan groups, leading to the Russian annexation of Crimea and the proclamation of the DPR and LPR,⁷ the separatist “People’s Republics” in eastern Ukraine’s Donbas region.

The Russian government’s claim that it supported the DPR and LPR to protect Russian speakers there from oppression carries some elements of truth, especially in the context of regional cultural divides within the country set against the backdrop of the unrest fomented by U.S./NATO aligned interests. However, the recent invasion of Ukraine—which involves the bombardment of numerous Russian-speaking cities—is clearly not fundamentally about protecting Russian-speaking people. There are a large number of Russian speakers in Ukraine; accurate numbers are difficult to come by, but polls indicate that somewhere around 30% of the people in Ukraine use Russian as their main language, and in some parts of the country upwards of 90% of people speak Russian fluently. The Russian language in Ukraine stems from long-standing social, linguistic, and cultural links between Ukrainian and Russian people, which are the result of a series of complex historical processes, including the expansion of the Russian empire (and related policies of Russification), but also efforts in the USSR to promote greater fraternal ties between people of different nations and nationalities, as well as other factors. Since 2014, at the behest of the U.S. government, the Ukrainian government has undertaken a series of policies of Ukrainianization in the name of protecting Ukrainian sovereignty and national identity. Laws have aimed to restrict or eliminate use of the Russian language in education and other spheres.⁸

These imperialist maneuvers to try to gain control of Ukraine are driven by efforts to control markets, resources, and ultimately the lives of the Ukrainian people themselves, but there are also larger strategic and security concerns at play. For Russia, having Ukraine join NATO means the U.S. and NATO would have a major military staging ground right on its border. In that sense, part of the Russian calculation to invade Ukraine seems to have been that “it’s now or never,” as the U.S. and NATO have been steadily selling Ukraine more and more arms for the past few years, and the Ukrainian government recently announced plans to double the size of its armed forces. In the past year or so Ukrainian leaders have also announced their intentions to acquire nuclear weapons; given the presence of numerous nuclear reactors in Ukraine, this was not an idle threat.⁹ Even if not officially a NATO member, a heavily-armed Ukraine right on the border is still functionally a U.S./NATO outpost—not something the Russian ruling class is

Ukraine, Geoffrey Pyatt gives a sense of just how involved the U.S. state was in supporting and directing the Ukrainian opposition leaders: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26079957>

7 Donetsk People’s Republic and Lugansk / Luhansk People’s Republic, respectively. They are also sometimes abbreviated DNR and LNR, from the Russian name for the separatist republics: Donetskaya Narodnaya Respublika/DNR (Донецкая Народная Республика/ДНР) and Luganskaya Narodnaya Respublika/LNR (Луганская Народная Республика/ЛНР).

8 For instance, in January 2022 a law came in to effect requiring all print media in the country to be in Ukrainian, effectively banning Russian-language publications due to the difficulties of translating and providing both languages: <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-language-law-russian/31656441.html>. This followed a 2017 law which banned importing books from Russia, a move no doubt supported by Ukrainian publishers since Russian books accounted for 60% of the Ukrainian book market before the law took effect: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/feb/14/ukraine-publishers-speak-out-against-ban-on-russian-books>. A law with similar aims in the educational sphere was signed by former president Poroshenko in 2017 requiring some schools to educate in Ukrainian language, but has yet to be fully implemented: <https://www.unian.info/society/2159231-new-education-law-becomes-effective-in-ukraine.html>

9 <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/europe/ukraine-mulls-nuclear-arms-if-nato-membership-not-impending-envoy>

willing to tolerate. Many within the U.S. state were well aware of this, and went forward with their plans to arm the Ukrainians to the teeth anyways.

There is also a longstanding belief by the Russian ruling class that Ukraine is rightfully not only part of their sphere of influence but rightfully *part of Russia*. Putin emphasized this point of view last summer when he published a long essay arguing that Russians and Ukrainians were actually a single people and that, for that reason, there was no basis for an independent Ukrainian state. A few days before launching the invasion, he argued in a speech that the Ukrainian state was formed only as a result of Lenin and the Bolsheviks' nationality policy, which he described as driven by "utopian, odious, destructive fantasies." He also claimed that "by giving any concessions to the nationalists inside the country, from the point of view of the historic destiny of Russia and its people, Lenin's principles of building the state weren't a mistake, they were much worse than a mere mistake." In the same speech he argued that Ukraine is "fiction" and said, "you want de-communization? We are quite happy with that, but don't stop halfway, we are ready to show you what actual de-communization for Ukraine is."¹⁰ Such words were used by Putin to frame the Russian invasion, and shows that while Russia is concerned about NATO expansion to its border, there is also deep-seated Russian chauvinist and imperialist ideology being promoted to whip up popular sentiment for the invasion within Russia.¹¹ This speaks to the larger designs behind this, which go beyond the official Russian state narrative that this is a "security operation" to demilitarize Ukraine.

Clarity on the actual ideological justifications of the Russian imperialists and their designs and interests in Ukraine is important to opposing Russian imperialism. But it can also play a role in defusing the present boom in U.S. chauvinism and related Russophobia by demonstrating the distinct interests and self-justifications of the Russian imperialists as opposed to the interests the entire Russian people.

Right now the U.S. ruling class is framing Russia's invasion of Ukraine as in part the result of some supposed unchanging essence of the Russian people who are fundamentally "Eastern" and not "Western."¹² Countering these narratives and exposing the ways in which the U.S. ruling class have precipitated this crisis and the actual designs of the Russian imperialists is essential to developing anti-imperialist sentiment in the U.S.

Domestic Dynamics in the U.S. and Some New Openings

In the U.S. there has been mass outcry against the invasion, but generally muddled reactions beyond this. There has been widespread anger about this happening "on Biden's watch," signifying that a more capable U.S. executive-in-chief would have kept Putin "in check."¹³ Without much clear analysis of what such "checking" would consist of, it is likely that the state will corral such sentiment into support for hawkish policies abroad¹⁴ and more domestic controls at home. There are a few liberal views that have

10 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lJl6u13LqeQ&t=1457s>

11 In the leadup to the invasion Russian state television also broadcast a map of Ukraine with different sections labelled after those responsible for, in the Great Russian worldview, ceding rightfully Russian territory to create the national borders of Ukraine. Crimea is labelled "gift of Khrushchev," a reference to the 1954 transfer of the Crimean Oblast from the Russian SFSR to the Ukrainian SSR; Donetsk, Lugansk, and Kharkiv Oblasts are labelled "gifts of Lenin;" Western Ukraine is a "gift of Stalin;" and so on. <https://24hourworlds.com/politics/104033/>

12 <https://www.newyorker.com/news/q-and-a/stephen-kotkin-putin-russia-ukraine-stalin>

13 <https://news.gallup.com/poll/390086/biden-ratings-economy-foreign-affairs-russia-near.aspx>

14 For instance, a recent poll indicated that 74% of Americans supported the idea of the U.S. and NATO imposing a "no-fly zone" over Ukraine: <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/exclusive-americans-broadly-support-ukraine-no-fly-zone->

blamed NATO expansion particularly (and U.S. militarism generally) in part for the crisis.¹⁵ It is the responsibility of revolutionaries to clarify the need not just to restrain the appetite of U.S. imperialism, but to overthrow it. Without such clarity, it will be difficult to develop a revolutionary movement and to avoid ever greater horrors in the months and years ahead.

At present, there are new openings emerging to expose the rotten logic of capitalist-imperialism and to demonstrate the dirty game being played by the “Great Powers” as they compete for global supremacy. As communists organizing within the U.S., the principal task is to expose the nature of the U.S. state’s maneuvers to the masses of this country, and show them that their interests ultimately lie in the revolutionary overthrow of the ruling class. In particular there is a need to clarify the dangers of a world war and the brinkmanship of the U.S. ruling class as they flirt with the idea of a direct military confrontation with Russia.¹⁶ While many in the U.S. are unaware of dangers of nuclear war, the present conflict provides ample room to expose this reality, and the fact that competition between these imperialist powers holds the whole world hostage to their deadly battle for global dominance.

The U.S. ruling class is working hard to feign outrage at Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and the resulting civilian casualties, while also presenting themselves as humanitarians concerned with the wellbeing of the people of Ukraine and the world. It is quite audacious of them to try this stunt, given the long history of U.S. wars and slaughter around the world. While many are marching to the beat of the war drums right now, others are more skeptical, and communists must work to provide repeated exposures of how the

[russia-oil-ban-poll-2022-03-04/](https://www.reuters.com/world/ukraines-president-says-no-fly-zone-is-needed-avert-humanitarian-catastrophe-2022-03-09/). However, the poll did not explain to people that the enforcement of any no-fly zone would mean NATO shooting down Russian jets, which would almost certainly lead to open warfare between nuclear-armed countries. This reflects the increasingly bellicose rhetoric that many U.S. politicians and media figures have been spewing since the invasion, with calls for a “no-fly zone” being made by politicians (e.g. <https://twitter.com/AdamKinzinger/status/1497354030904975364>), military figures (e.g. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/02/27/breed-love-nato-commander-russia-ukraine-war/>), and from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky (<https://www.reuters.com/world/ukraines-president-says-no-fly-zone-is-needed-avert-humanitarian-catastrophe-2022-03-09/>)

In our preliminary investigations and engagement with U.S. demonstration against the invasion of Ukraine, the main message of most large protests has been decrying Russia’s invasion and calling for NATO intervention, including a no-fly zone. There have been countervailing tendencies, and protests that call for de-escalation and oppose the maneuvers of the U.S. and NATO, but at present these are a much more marginal trend.

15 For example, see <https://scheerpost.com/2022/02/24/hedges-the-chronicle-of-a-war-foretold/> and <https://www.newyorker.com/news/q-and-a/why-john-mearsheimer-blames-the-us-for-the-crisis-in-ukraine>

16 While starting World War III is still a minority view among the ruling class, there are some significant voices calling for it. For example, former Director of National Intelligence and current CNN commentator James Clapper recently reversed his earlier opposition to giving fighter jets to the Ukrainian government and said that “I think at some point, we are going to have a confrontation with the Russians. It is not a question of if.” https://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2022/03/15/clapper_my_thinking_has_changed_we_should_consider_giving_ukrainians_fighter_jets.html Congressman Adam Kinzinger has been one of the most bellicose voices in the government, repeatedly calling for a no fly-zone over Ukraine, and recently suggesting that NATO attack Belarus if it gets directly involved in the Ukraine War, because “Belarus is not in a Warsaw Pact” and according to Kinzinger therefore “It’s a way to indirectly respond without directly attacking Russia.” It is unclear if Kinzinger is aware that the Warsaw Pact was dissolved in 1991, that Belarus was part of it before its dissolution, that it was replaced by the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) of which Belarus has been a member since 1993, and that Article 4 of the Collective Security Treaty establishes that an aggression against one signatory would be perceived as an aggression against all. <https://twitter.com/AdamKinzinger/status/1502442141787865093> Kinzinger is also a lieutenant colonel in the Air National Guard.

U.S. leveled whole cities in Iraq¹⁷ and Syria;¹⁸ how they have used cluster bombs, chemical weapons like white phosphorous, and depleted uranium shells in recent wars;¹⁹ how they have slaughtered millions in their wars in recent decades; how they have been working with the Saudis and UAE to starve Yemen for the past seven years; and other such atrocities. These are all clear examples of the true nature of the U.S. ruling class, which has no qualms about mass murder, civilian casualties, leveling whole cities, and reducing whole countries to rubble. Given the overall short attention span of Americans brought about in part by years of cable news soundbites and social media, many are quick to forget these realities, but not everyone. There is a small but significant minority within various circles—from libertarians and peace activists to college students, social democrats, and others—pointing out these basic facts. Uniting with their efforts and bringing together various forces across different sections of the society is key to building up a significant opposition to the designs of U.S. imperialism in Ukraine and beyond.

It is also necessary to expose the two-faced nature of the U.S. ruling class's feigned concern for the Ukrainian people. First and foremost is the fact that, while some in the U.S. state were pushing for Ukraine to join NATO, part of the calculus for doing so was that if Russia did invade before this happened then Ukraine could serve as a sacrificial pawn in the game to weaken Russia, slow its inroads into European markets, and to help rally a new “coalition of the willing” to isolate the country globally (as the U.S. ruling class is attempting to do right now). In a recent MSNBC appearance, Hillary Clinton spoke fairly explicitly about U.S. plans to turn Ukraine into a military quagmire for the Russians, just as was done in Afghanistan in the 1980s.²⁰ Comments like these provide a window into the logic of U.S. imperialism. The war in Ukraine has already created millions of refugees, seen cities bombarded in a brutal fashion, and now threatens global food production in ways that could well lead to numerous famines around the world. However, all of this is considered by some in the ruling class to be a small price to pay if it hurts their Russian rivals. In short, the U.S. ruling class is ready and willing to fight the Russians to the last Ukrainian.

There is a related need to expose the fact that the U.S. imperialists' plans for Ukraine, even had Russia not invaded, were not ultimately in the interests of the Ukrainian people. While the U.S. media has largely framed this conflict in Ukraine in terms of “standing up for democracy” the reality is that Ukraine was far from even bourgeois ideals of democracy. In 2015, Ukraine was labeled as “the most corrupt country in Europe”²¹ and in 2017 Ernst & Young found it to be the 7th most corrupt country in the world.²² The Hunter Biden Burisma scandal is emblematic of the way in which the U.S. ruling class contributed to this corruption, with the son of the then-U.S. Vice President being installed on the board

17 For example, it is estimated that the U.S. led coalition killed 40,000 civilians in the siege of Mosul alone: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/mosul-latest-iraqi-government-forces-recapture-city-heaviest-defeat-a7832186.html> and <https://www.counterpunch.org/2017/07/20/the-massacre-of-mosul-more-than-40000-civilians-feared-dead/>

18 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/14/staggering-civilian-deaths-from-us-led-airstrikes-in-raqqa-says-un>

19 <https://www.counterpunch.org/2012/04/25/the-children-of-fallujah/>

20 <https://twitter.com/MSNBC/status/1498490752065757184>. See also, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/19/us/politics/us-ukraine-russia-escalation.html>, <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2022-03-22/niall-ferguson-putin-and-biden-misunderstand-history-in-ukraine-war>, <https://news.yahoo.com/exclusive-secret-cia-training-program-in-ukraine-helped-kyiv-prepare-for-russian-invasion-090052743.html>, and <https://news.yahoo.com/cia-trained-ukrainian-paramilitaries-may-take-central-role-if-russia-invades-185258008.html>

21 <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2015/feb/04/welcome-to-the-most-corrupt-nation-in-europe-ukraine>

22 <https://web.archive.org/web/20181107104015/https://fraudsurveys.ey.com/ey-global-fraud-survey-2018/detailed-results/>

of one of the biggest gas companies in Ukraine and paid \$50,000 a month despite no prior experience in the industry and a recent discharge from the U.S. Navy related to abusing hard drugs. When Hunter Biden came under investigation for corruption (including currying favor with his father for various wealthy people around the world, including some in Russia and China), Joe Biden used his influence to pressure the Ukrainian government to fire the officials investigating this corruption.²³

More broadly, integration into the EU and NATO for poor Eastern European countries has historically come with a series of structural adjustments that have opened them up in new ways to plunder by major U.S. and EU corporations. EU membership for poor countries has historically led to an exodus of working age people, many of whom become migrant workers throughout the EU, as the capitalists in the wealthy EU countries eagerly work to exploit the new labor pool they have access to. For example, after Poland joined the EU in 2004, millions of people left the country each year.²⁴ The conditions for these migrant laborers are often brutal. A 2016 Al Jazeera investigation found that many Romanian and other Eastern European migrant workers in the UK—at that point still part of the EU—worked in conditions akin to a form of “modern slavery.”²⁵ The report also documented how huge numbers of young women from Eastern European EU member states were forced into sex slavery in the wealthy EU countries. This investigation was just one of dozens of reports documenting similar conditions.²⁶

So the future in store for the Ukrainian people, had they joined the EU and NATO, would have been far from rosy. Furthermore, in recent years the U.S. state has been arming, training, and supporting far-right and Neo-Nazi groups in Ukraine, such as the Azov Battalion.²⁷ These groups have committed a number of documented atrocities against Ukrainian people. Support for these far-right forces is not an aberration or isolated episode, but rather was part and parcel of the U.S. strategy for ruling Ukraine. Policies of banning Russian language and books were only the tip of the iceberg. For example, earlier this year the Ukrainian government created a series of new censorship laws which made spreading ill-defined “disinformation” punishable by a \$195,000 fine for an initial offense—a huge sum for a country with a per-capita GDP of \$3,727—and imprisonment of up to five years for “repeat offenders.”²⁸

By exposing the designs and maneuvers of the U.S. ruling class it is possible to show the masses of people in this country that the former are not champions of freedom and democracy, and that behind their “support” for the Ukrainian people is little more than the cynical calculus that these people can be sacrificed to slow down Russia’s military, economic, and political expansion in Eastern Europe and beyond. These sort of exposures are key to raising the consciousness of the masses, showing them that it doesn’t

23 While this story was initially panned during the 2020 presidential elections as “Russian disinformation,” its credibility has since been acknowledged by major U.S. media outlets like the New York Times: <https://greenwald.substack.com/p/the-nyt-now-admits-the-biden-laptop>

24 https://stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/L_Szacunek_emigracji_z_Polski_lata_2004-2012_XI_2012.pdf

25 <https://interactive.aljazeera.com/aje/2016/uk-slavery-sex-slave-smuggling-investigation/index.html>

26 For example see, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/mar/12/slavery-sicily-farming-raped-beaten-exploited-romanian-women>, <https://cleanclothes.org/file-repository/resources-recommended-reading-labour-on-a-shoestring/view>, https://migrationonline.cz/romania_country_report.pdf, and <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-39196056>

27 <https://jacobinmag.com/2022/01/cia-neo-nazi-training-ukraine-russia-putin-biden-nato/> and <https://www.thenation.com/article/politics/congress-has-removed-a-ban-on-funding-neo-nazis-from-its-year-end-spending-bill/>

28 <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/ukraines-new-media-laws-fighting-disinformation-or-targeting-freedom-speech>

make sense to march in line to the beating of the war drums, and ultimately clarifying to them that their interests lie in overthrowing U.S. imperialism, not aligning with it.

Russophobia, Accusations of Treason, and Other Repressive Measures

Exposures of the U.S. state's maneuvers abroad have to be coupled with struggle against new forms of domestic repression. We have seen the rise of Russophobia in recent years to new and dangerous heights, which has been used to garner mass support for new repressive measures across the board, especially censorship.

This was already gaining momentum for years, especially since the 2016 election. After the defeat of Hillary Clinton there was a large scale coordinated effort by the Democratic Party, associated media outlets, and sections of the intelligence agencies to blame Hillary's loss on Russian state interference in the U.S. election process. While the Russian government doubtless works to meddle in U.S. affairs in various ways, this greatly exaggerated story about Russian interference served mainly to distract liberal supporters of the Democratic Party from the fact that the main reason Hillary lost the election was because of widespread disillusionment and frustration with the Democrats after eight years of the Obama administration.

Blaming Russia also provided convenient cover for new levels of coordination on censorship between the U.S. state, media outlets, tech companies, and social media platforms. For example, the Trusted News Initiative was created by the BBC in conjunction with Reuters, Google, Facebook, Microsoft, and numerous others after the 2016 election to "combat Russian disinformation" and quickly grew to coordinate more broadly to promote censorship.²⁹

The claims that Russian interference in the U.S. election propelled Trump to victory were coupled with the Russiagate story, claiming that Trump and his allies had colluded with Putin and the Russian government in various ways. Despite a lack of any real evidence beyond the Steele Dossier—of which it has since been revealed that Hillary Clinton's campaign played a significant role in drafting and disseminating—many liberal news outlets ran non-stop stories for several years about how Putin was really running the U.S. by blackmailing Trump using lewd video tapes of him and other such nonsense. This helped to build popular support for Russophobia and even future military confrontations with Russia.

Now, in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, these repressive measures have intensified to new heights. A large number of news outlets associated with Russia have been banned on major social media platforms around the world. The popular fervor for censorship has provided cover for far wider sweeping measures, targeting many individuals on social media who are critical of the U.S. and NATO, claiming that they are spreading "Russian disinformation." This trend is likely to intensify in the future.

The ruling class has also been promoting various forms of Russophobia, Cold War mentality, and even tacitly supporting calls for violence against Russian people. For example, Meta changed their rules to allow for users of Facebook and Instagram in some countries to call for violence against Russians.³⁰ There

29 <https://www.bbc.com/beyondfakenews/trusted-news-initiative/about-us/>

30 <https://ottawasun.com/news/world/facebook-instagram-to-temporarily-allow-calls-for-violence-against-russians/wc-m/6bab9dec-5fde-4d8c-882f-5d738e4d03e7> This policy change was not just for Ukraine, but also for Armenia, Azer-

have been numerous calls for Russian athletes to denounce Putin or be barred from competing in international events; in many cases they are already not allowed to play under Russia's flag, but instead must "compete as individuals."³¹ EA Sports and other video game companies have likewise removed Russian teams from their games.³² Many bars have changed the name of the drink the Moscow Mule,³³ and restaurants in the U.S. and around the world have ceased to serve Russian dishes.³⁴ In this climate there has been a sharp uptick in harassment, threats, and vandalism against Russians and Russian small businesses in the U.S.³⁵ In the fervor, many Ukrainian Americans and Ukrainian small businesses are also being targeted, as they are mistakenly identified as Russian by some Americans.³⁶

What's more, even basic criticism of U.S. policy by ruling class politicians is being labeled as treason. For example, Senator Mitt Romney labeled Tulsi Gabbard a traitor for suggesting that the U.S. and Russia should collaborate to ensure that biological laboratories in Ukraine—many of which were funded by the U.S. and were conducting research on dangerous pathogens—are not caught in the crossfire of the war, leading to the possible release of deadly pathogens. Ana Navarro—host of the daytime TV show *The View*—also called for Gabbard and Fox News host Tucker Carlson to be criminally investigated by the Department of Justice for expressing views critical of U.S. policy. This reflects a broader push by a part of the ruling class to suppress dissent across the board. When members of the U.S. ruling class are being targeted with this sort of animus for expressing dissent against the dominant view of the elite, it signals that the masses who stand against the designs of U.S. imperialism will likely face far greater repression in the near future.

Basic Steps Forward to Build an Anti-Imperialist United Front

In this situation there is an urgent need for communists in the U.S. to build up a united front against the present machinations of U.S. imperialism. This is no easy task as there is not a significant anti-war movement in this country, and as a result it will have to be built up from scratch. While there are some liberal anti-war activists, many have been swallowed whole by NGOism and related bourgeois ideology which puts forward appealing to supposed allies in Congress as the only way forward for "peace," despite years of such efforts leading nowhere. Therefore, there is a need to identify those within anti-war circles,

baijan, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russia, and Slovakia.

31 <https://www.tennis365.com/grand-slam/wimbledon/wimbledon-news-denounce-vladimir-putin-dangerous-families-pay-price/>

32 <https://www.axios.com/ea-sports-russian-fifa-video-games-b4a310c6-4d83-409d-89fe-c922806fb98e.html>

33 <https://news.yahoo.com/russia-invasion-bars-rename-moscow-073139434.html>

34 Just a few example: <https://aw-journal.com/bar-da-dona-onca-removes-stroganoff-from-the-menu-in-protest-against-the-war-in-ukraine-03-08-2022-restaurants-2/>, <https://www.news18.com/news/buzz/kerala-eatery-junking-russian-salad-off-menu-in-solidarity-with-ukraine-divides-twitter-4844831.html>, <https://www.dallasnews.com/food/restaurant-news/2022/03/07/north-texas-restaurants-and-bars-are-severing-russian-ties/>, and <https://www.wjbf.com/news/u-s-world-news/restaurant-takes-poutine-off-menu-because-it-sounds-like-putin/>

35 <https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Society/2022/0310/Russian-Americans-face-misdirected-blame-for-war-in-Ukraine>, <https://www.wfaa.com/article/news/local/arlington-restaurant-blacks-out-russian-on-sign-after-receiving-threats/287-1d3ee121-1838-40db-8636-8d4f612aa636>, and <https://jacobinmag.com/2022/03/russophobia-putin-russia-ukraine-war-discrimination-harassment>

36 https://www.santafenewmexican.com/business/some-russian-businesses-facing-u-s-backlash-arent-even-russian/article_babbb798-943f-568f-aa47-dd4fdda3b1ec.html

where they exist to any significant degree, who are not consolidated to this approach and are looking for a new way forward. Likewise, bringing together libertarians, progressive college students, social democrats who are not cheering on the war machine, and other recalcitrant elements in the society is key at present.

This is no easy task, especially when a significant portion of the Democratic Party base—which initially stood more strongly against the Iraq War during the Bush years—is now rabidly chomping at the bit to support the updated designs of U.S. imperialism after being inundated with Russiagate and related conspiracy theories for five years. Many within the Republican base are also likewise supportive of escalation. However, there are other trends within the society, including some of those listed above that can be united with and brought together in various ways. It is also important to take stock of the lessons of the successes and failures of past anti-war movements in this country, in particular during the Vietnam War and the Iraq War. The failures in the latter to properly oppose electoralism and the related widespread hope that Obama would “end the wars” stand out as two major lessons, but a deeper analysis and study is needed.

At present, communist forces are marginal in the U.S. but with the intensification of inter-imperialist competition globally and the economic downturn (which sanctions on Russia will likely exacerbate and intensify) there are new openings emerging to advance on the revolutionary road. The present crisis provides ample opportunities to expose the rotten nature of U.S. imperialism, build a united front, and strengthen basic forms of pre-party organizing that have developed in the past few years.