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[The War Machine Keeps Turning](#)

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The war in Ukraine continues without mercy. Like every war in my lifetime (and like almost every war in history), the day-to-day media coverage of the conflict is a barely concealed combination of lies, exaggerations and nationalist propaganda. Beyond this are discussions of the weaponry and projections of their efficiency in killing humans and destroying their habitat. This is true no matter if one is consuming western media or Russian media. Of course, there are varying levels of censorship involved in each nation's media, as well. For example, no major mainstream media outlet in the United States seems willing to allow any calls for an end to arms shipments or even negotiations. In addition, any coverage of a small but growing antiwar movement have been mostly kept from the public.

Given that this blackout exists, the existence of alternative perspectives on the nature of the conflict have been mostly silenced, as well. Although it is unknown whether or not a greater distribution of such perspectives would change the opinion of many US residents, the fact they have been suppressed indicates the warmongers are afraid such knowledge might make their ongoing escalation of the war untenable. Indeed, people might even begin demanding an end to US sponsorship of NATO's war.

Fortunately, there are still some avenues for antiwar voices to be heard. When compared to the major broadcasting networks and newspapers, the reach of these outlets is small. However, as the war drags on and more people begin to question why, the existence of such alternative viewpoints will prove their worth. A recent publication from the book publishing wing of the longtime independent socialist journal *Monthly Review* is excellent proof of this statement.

Titled *Washington's New Cold War: A Socialist Perspective*, this short book (an extended pamphlet, really) is authored by writer John Bellamy Foster, antiwar activist John Ross, and Italian journalist Deborah Venezia, with an introduction by Vijay Prashad. Its essential message is that, yes there is a new "cold" war and yes, it is different than the previous one that was part of the political reality of the second half of the twentieth century. This new cold war is not a struggle of ideologies, but is instead a contest between capitalist economies. It is the direct result of the disintegration of the Soviet Union—a process that was in many ways the result of Washington's relentless efforts to destroy that nation. Those efforts were both political and economic, involved military

conflicts and economic wars, and were underlined by the fact of each nation's vast nuclear arsenal.

It is those nuclear arsenals which should draw the most concern for those of us who live in their shadows. Both Moscow and Washington have made threats veiled and otherwise that weapons from those arsenals could be used in the conflict in Ukraine. Washington has stored nuclear armaments in Europe for decades—even after the massive protests in the 1980s against this storage—and have moved some of those weapons even closer to Russia as it assimilated the militaries of Poland and other eastern European countries. The current alarm being expressed by members of the US war-making establishment and in US media over Moscow's announcement it will be moving some tactical nuclear weapons to Belarus, while both disheartening and maybe even ominous, reeks with hypocrisy. Of greater concern is the consideration of nuclear weapons use by anyone.

John Bellamy Foster, even more than the other essayists in this book, reminds us that there are powerful people who spend their days seeking to justify the use of nuclear weapons and trying to morally justify that use. The machinations used in their attempts are often nothing more than fabrications based on selective use of data. Sometimes they are just plain lies. This is not a new phenomenon—Henry Kissinger suggested the use of tactical nuclear weapons more than sixty years ago. Furthermore, he and Richard Nixon threatened the northern Vietnamese with their use in 1969. However, the fact this conversation is once again being presented to the public and some are buying it is great cause for alarm, to say the least.

Besides the nuclear factor, there is the fact of China and its rising economic dominance. This element of modern international politics is of great concern to the United States. It knows its unipolar moment will end. As both John Ross and Deborah Venezia point out in their respective essays, the Chinese economic power is only going to grow. Washington understands this, which is why it has continued to expand its military budget with a resultant strengthening of its global military prowess. For those who recall the 1990s, some of us on the Left predicted that it was Washington's military hegemony that would keep it as the world's most powerful nation. Back then, this observation was usually made in regards to the growth of the European and Japanese economies. Indeed, Washington rejected any discussion of any organization besides NATO being formed to defend Europe. Despite the importance of China's role in keeping the

US empire somewhat at bay, both Ross and Venezia remind the reader that a popular and massive movement against US wars—proxy and otherwise—is essential to preventing a potential military conflict between any of the three powers: China, Russia and the United States. As any sane person knows, even considering such a conflict is insane. Unfortunately, there are those in the Pentagon, Congress, industry, the media and elsewhere who not only consider it, but support it as a reasonable avenue under certain circumstances.

Furthermore, without stating so directly, this book makes a convincing argument that those who reject negotiations while supporting continued arms shipments to Ukraine are not really much different than those in the US/NATO foreign policy establishment actually involved in fighting and expanding the war. Both desire a Ukrainian victory that will primarily ensure Washington's expansion policies will continue upon to and including a potential military conflict with China. War is never something most people want to think about, much less talk about. However, ignoring the conflict in Ukraine because it is uncomfortable not to will not make it disappear. Indeed, it will only give the governments involved the rationale they want to escalate the war even more. Similarly, accepting the reasons given by Washington for its escalation of the conflict is accepting complicity in whatever slaughter that might entail.

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