

War Without End. What Is Wrong with the United States of America?

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Prussian Major General Carl von Clausewitz famously drew on his own experience in the Napoleonic Wars to examine war as a political phenomenon. In his 1832 book "On War" he provided a frequently quoted pithy summary of war versus peace, writing in terms of politico-military strategy that "War is a mere continuation of politics by other means." In other words, war-making is a tool provided to statesmen to achieve a nation's political objectives when all else fails.

One can reject the ultimate amorality of Clausewitz's thinking about war while also recognizing that some nations have historically speaking exploited war-making as a tool for physical expansion and the appropriation of foreigners' resources. As far back as the Roman Republic, the country's elected leaders doubled as heads of its consular armies, which were expected to go out each spring to expand the imperium. More recently, Britain notably engaged in almost constant colonial wars over the course of centuries to establish what was to become history's largest empire.

America's dominant neocons characteristically believe they have inherited the mantle of empire and of the war powers that go hand-in-hand with that attribute, but they have avoided other aspects of the transition in turning the United States into a nation made and empowered by war. First of all, what comes out the other end after one has initiated hostilities with another country is unpredictable. Starting with Korea and continuing with Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq as well as other minor operations in Latin America, Africa and Asia, American war-making has brought nothing but grief on those on the receiving end with little positive to show for the death, destruction and accumulated debt. Also forgotten in the rush to use force is the *raison d'être* to have a federal national government at all, which is to bring tangible benefit to the American people. There has been none of that since 9/11 and even before, while Washington's hard-line stance on what has become a proxy war against Russia over Ukraine promises more pain - perhaps disastrously so - and no real gain.

If one has any doubt that going to war has become the principal function of both Democrats

and Republicans in Washington, it is only necessary to consider several stories that have appeared in the past several weeks. The first comes from the Republican side, and it includes a [possibly positive development](#). House Minority leader Republican Kevin McCarthy warned two weeks ago that the GOP will not necessarily continue to write a “blank check” for Ukraine if they obtain the House majority in next month’s election, reflecting his party’s growing skepticism about unlimited financial support for the corrupt regime in place in Kiev. McCarthy explained

“I think people are gonna be sitting in a recession and they’re not going to write a blank check to Ukraine. They just won’t do it. ... It’s not a free blank check.”

America’s uncritical support for Ukraine, which has been a contrivance by the White House and media since the fighting started, has led to a growing number of Republicans, particularly some of those aligned with Donald Trump’s “America First” approach, to challenge the need for massive federal spending abroad at a time of record-high inflation at home. Since Russia launched its invasion in February, Congress has approved tens of billions in emergency security and humanitarian assistance for Ukraine, while the Biden administration has shipped billions more worth of weapons and equipment from military inventories, all done with only limited or even no oversight of where the money and weapons are winding up.

But, unfortunately, the GOP is far from unified on its approach to Ukraine-Russia. Congressman Liz Cheney demonstrated that her apple did not fall far from her father’s tree, taking some time off from trying to hang Donald Trump [to denounce](#) what she refers to as the “Putin wing of the Republican Party.” She put it this way:

“You know, the Republican Party is the party of Reagan, the party that essentially won the Cold War. And you look now at what I think is really a growing Putin wing of the Republican Party.”

Cheney criticized Fox News for “running propaganda” on the issue and in particular called out Fox host Tucker Carlson as “the biggest propagandist for Putin on that network... You really have to ask yourself, whose side is Fox on in this battle? And how could it be that you have a wing of the Republican Party that thinks that America would be standing with Putin as he conducts that brutal invasion of Ukraine?”

Cheney notably did not address the issue of how the war developed in the first place because the US and UK preferred saber rattling to diplomacy with Moscow. Or why the United States feels compelled to tip-toe to the brink of a possible nuclear war over a foreign policy issue that is of no real national interest to the American people. And where did she make her comments? At the McCain Institute in Arizona. Yes, that’s a legacy of Senator John McCain another Republican who never saw a war he couldn’t enthusiastically support.

Both President Joe Biden and Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi [have confirmed that](#) the US is in with Ukraine until “victory” is obtained, whatever that is supposed to mean, while other Administration officials have indicated that the actual purpose of the fighting is to weaken Russia and remove President Putin. White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre glibly spouted the party line when asked about McCarthy’s comments. She thanked congressional leaders for bipartisan work to “support Ukraine to defend itself from Russia’s war crimes and atrocities,” adding that “We will continue to work with Congress and continue to monitor

those conversations on these efforts and support Ukraine as long as it takes. We are going to keep that promise that we're making to the brave Ukrainians who are fighting every day, to fight for their freedom and their democracy."

Perhaps more bizarre than Cheney's comments is the tale of [a letter](#) that was prepared by thirty Democratic Party progressives urging US support for negotiations to end the fighting in Ukraine. The letter was prepared in June but not released until last week before being quickly retracted under pressure on the following day. Pramila Jayapal, who heads the Congressional Progressive Caucus, said it was retracted because it "was being conflated with [the] comments" made by McCarthy over his warning about budget cutting for Ukraine. Jayapal referred to the letter as a "distraction," but what she really meant was that her group had no desire to make common cause with the Republicans over any issue, including war and peace in an escalating conflict that is manifestly pointless.

A clueless Jayapal also took pains to contradict the message put out by her own group, emphasizing that there has been no opposition to the administration's Ukraine policy from Democrats in Congress. She said Democrats "have strongly and unanimously supported and voted for every package of military, strategic, and economic assistance to the Ukrainian people." She doubled down on the White House message, affirming that the war in Ukraine will only end with diplomacy after "a Ukrainian victory."

So basically, anyone talking sense about Ukraine in Washington is being shut down by forces within the political parties themselves working together with a compliant national media that is mis-representing everything that is taking place on the ground. It is a formula for tragedy as the Biden administration has shown no sign of seeking diplomacy with Russia to end the conflict despite the president's recent surprising warning that the world is now facing the highest risk of nuclear "Armageddon," which he, of course, blames on Putin. Given all of that, in my humble opinion a government that is unable or unwilling to take reasonable steps to protect its own citizens while also avoiding a possible nuclear catastrophe that could end up engulfing the entire world is fundamentally evil and has lost all legitimacy. It should recognize that fact before submitting its resignation.

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