

# WORLD WAR 3 AND DANGEROUS IDIOCY

by **Bob Avakian**

In a number of recent writings, especially a major recent article (“Ukraine: World War 3 Is the Real Danger, Not a Repeat of World War 2”), I have spoken to lies and distortions about the war in Ukraine—particularly those that serve the aims of the rulers of *this* imperialist country in the war in Ukraine—and how **these lies and distortions contribute to heightening the danger of World War 3, involving direct military confrontation between the U.S./NATO and Russia and the likely use of nuclear weapons in such a confrontation, with potentially devastating consequences, even the real possibility of the destruction of human civilization.**<sup>1</sup>

Here, I will not attempt to repeat all that is said in that article, in terms of very important and extensive analysis of what is actually going on with this war in Ukraine, the aims of the imperialists on the opposing sides, the very serious dangers this involves, and the need for the masses of people, everywhere, to act in *their own* interests, in opposition to those of the imperialists on both sides. What I am going to address here are *certain species of idiocy that ignore, or downplay, the terrible dangers involved in a possible direct military confrontation between the U.S./NATO and Russia*.

There is the argument that a war between the U.S./NATO and Russia would basically be “no big deal,” because the U.S. is so much more “bad ass” and could easily and decisively defeat Russia, with no big cost—at least not to “us Americans.” As I have pointed out, among certain types of American chauvinists, drunk with a sense of the invincible military might of the U.S., this truly ridiculous and outrageous notion (that war with Russia would be “no big deal”) has seemingly been encouraged by the difficulty that Russian forces have had, so far at least, in achieving their objectives in Ukraine—due, in large part, to the massive supply of arms that the U.S./NATO has provided to the government of Ukraine.<sup>2</sup>

But here is a crucial reality in relation to all this: In this war—where the Russian imperialists have invaded Ukraine, and on the other hand the U.S. imperialists (and their NATO “allies”) are backing and heavily arming Ukraine—*both sides* are deeply committed to a “win” in this situation. On the part of the U.S. imperialists, their aim, and what for them constitutes a necessary “win,” is to bring about a defeat of Russia in Ukraine and thereby significantly weaken Russia and its ability to challenge the dominant position of U.S. imperialism in the world. For the Russian imperialists, their objective is precisely to challenge that U.S. dominance, and a key and immediate aim is preventing Ukraine from joining NATO and ensuring that Ukraine does not become part of the U.S./NATO “encirclement” of Russia, which is already very far along (with a number of countries close to, or actually bordering on, Russia already members of NATO). With each side seriously committed to its objectives, and having become seriously involved in war in pursuit of these objectives (with Russia directly at war in Ukraine and the U.S./NATO now indirectly but deeply involved), this means that, *so long as the terms are set by these contending imperialists, neither side can easily back down*. (Again, *so long as the terms are set by these contending imperialists, and the people, on all sides, do not effectively act, in their masses, in such a way as to force things onto different terms, which are in their interests, in opposition to those of the imperialists on either side*.)

## If Neither Side Backs Down—What Then?!

If neither side in this conflict between imperialists is likely to back down and accept defeat, what will this mean—and, specifically, what would it mean if in fact the U.S./NATO were to become directly involved in warfare with Russia, and if this were to result in Russia suffering serious setbacks? Would Putin/the Russian imperialists simply say, “Okay, you win, we

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give up, we will turn tail and retreat in defeat back to Russia?” Does any serious, thinking person really believe that is at all likely?! No, in that situation the far, far more likely response of Putin/the Russian imperialists would be to *escalate* the war, very possibly by using nuclear weapons, most likely not (at first) the most powerful nuclear bombs, but “tactical nuclear weapons,” which they might use not only in Ukraine but also in the territory of NATO countries that had become involved in the war (possibly including not only countries close to Ukraine but countries in western Europe as well, such as France, Germany and the UK).

And, on the other hand, what if—contrary to the expectations of American chauvinists—it turned out that, in direct warfare with Russia (and with Russia then committing much more of its forces to this conflict) the U.S./NATO did not do so well, and they were at least frustrated in their attempts to deliver some kind of decisive defeat to the Russian forces, or were even suffering serious setbacks themselves? Would the imperialist rulers of *this* country—which is *the only country that has actually used nuclear weapons, and has never acknowledged that it was wrong to do so*—would they simply admit that they had failed to defeat Russia and accept a resolution that reflected that? Does anyone really think *that* would be likely?!

No, *the “dynamics” of direct war between the U.S./NATO and Russia would very likely lead to a process of continuing escalation, with neither side willing—or really able—to back down when faced with the prospect of some kind of defeat in this war.*

## **Nuclear Warfare Is a “Big Deal”—a Truly Terrible Prospect**

This brings us to the other main species of idiocy (and actually dangerous lunacy) regarding the prospect of direct warfare between the U.S./NATO and Russia: the truly demented idea that if nuclear exchanges between the contending sides in this war did happen, that itself would be “no big deal”—or at least that it would be restricted to “tactical nuclear weapons” that, yes, would cause real damage, but not something as terrible as “alarmists” are warning about (this argument has actually been made by some seriously deranged and apparently “brain dead” people!).

First of all, even tactical nuclear weapons would themselves bring about terrible devastation, not just for the combatants on the battlefield, but much more broadly, causing horrendous human suffering and destruction of the environment. And, beyond that, for the reasons spoken to here, the very dynamic that would lead to the use of tactical nuclear weapons in the first place *would then very likely lead to the use of even more powerful nuclear weapons—and even the real possibility of such nuclear attacks being directed against the “home countries” of the main adversaries in this conflict, Russia and the U.S.* If either side, or both sides, in this conflict felt that the introduction of tactical nuclear weapons were necessary in order to gain a decisive advantage in this war—or to prevent an unacceptable setback, or an actual defeat—then *the very same logic could impel things beyond just tactical nuclear weapons, toward a fuller use of strategic nuclear weapons, and even possibly direct nuclear attacks against the “home territory” of the main adversary (in other words, nuclear exchanges between the U.S. and Russia aiming directly at each other’s “homelands”)*, which, with its massive devastation and radiation “fallout” worldwide, could even lead to the destruction of human civilization.

## **This Whole Dynamic Must Be Urgently, Radically Changed—in the Interests of Humanity, Not Rival and Contending Imperialists**

**All this emphasizes why it is vitally important for the masses of people, in this country, and other countries aligned with it, as well as in Russia—for people everywhere—to finally and fully wake up now, recognize the real, and profoundly heavy, stakes involved, and act in accordance with our actual interests—the interests of all of humanity: demanding that this war in Ukraine, and the involvement (direct and indirect) of the imperialists on both sides in this war, be STOPPED, before it not only causes even greater suffering for the people of Ukraine but possibly escalates into a far more terrible conflict which causes massive destruction and death, on a whole other level, and even possibly poses a threat to the very existence of humanity itself.**

FOOTNOTES:

1. The major article “Ukraine: World War 3 Is the Real Danger, Not a Repeat of World War 2” is available at [revcom.us](http://revcom.us).

2. See, in addition to the above-mentioned article, “Sean Penn’s Delirious Madness And the Danger of Nuclear War,” which is also available at [revcom.us](http://revcom.us).