

# SEAN PENN'S DELIRIOUS MADNESS AND THE DANGER OF NUCLEAR WAR

by Bob Avakian

Sean Penn is an Academy Award winning actor, who is also known for his humanitarianism. But in the context of the war in Ukraine, Penn seems to have lost his mind and gone to a very bad place—descending into what can only be described as dangerous madness—vehemently arguing for a more aggressive U.S. role in the war in Ukraine. This has also been marked by Penn's delirious worship of Volodymyr Zelensky, the president of Ukraine, who has acted in a way that itself heightens very grave dangers for humanity.

In response to the unjust Russian invasion of Ukraine, Zelensky has not only sought to rally the people of that country to resist Russian aggression. He has gone beyond that in making highly irresponsible statements and extremely reckless demands. For example, Zelensky has claimed that what the Russians have done in Ukraine represents the worst mass atrocities (“the most heinous war crimes”) since World War 2. This is an incredibly ridiculous and outrageous statement: It completely ignores the *far greater* crimes that have been carried out *by the U.S.*—in Vietnam, in Indonesia, in Korea before that, and many other countries—just since World War 2.

Outrageous claims like this by Zelensky are in the service of very dangerous actions on his part. For Zelensky it is not enough that the U.S. and NATO countries are massively arming Ukraine. He has insisted that they need to directly intervene in the war, for example by instituting a “no fly zone” over Ukraine. Well, what would be the result if this demand by Zelensky were met? The blunt truth is this:

**If Zelensky had his way, there would be a direct U.S./NATO war with Russia. That would be a war that could very easily escalate to the use of nuclear weapons, and could pose a dire threat to the very existence of humanity as a whole.**

And Sean Penn himself has called for military actions by the U.S./NATO which would greatly increase the danger of a direct war with Russia—which, again, would greatly raise the risk of nuclear war.

Especially given the deadly serious nature of this situation, it is worthwhile considering what could be the cause and the path of Penn's descent into this dangerous madness—as it may hold broader and deeper lessons.

## **Shameless Chauvinism for America and Its Murderous Military**

Like so many others in this country who would like to think of themselves as enlightened, Sean Penn's approach to the war in Ukraine is saturated with rank American chauvinism—which involves mindlessly ignoring (or rationalizing) this essential truth: *The U.S. by far holds the record for invasions, coups and other violent interference in other countries. It has continued, right down to today, to be responsible for atrocities—for example, in Yemen—which are far worse than what Russia has done in Ukraine.* (At [revcom.us](http://revcom.us) there is extensive exposure and analysis of the towering crimes of U.S. imperialism.)

And it seems that the difficulty that Russia has had, at least in the first phase of the war in Ukraine, has had the effect of amplifying the American chauvinism of certain people (like Sean Penn and the musician and actor “Little Steven” Van Zandt, who has called for the U.S. to bomb Russian targets in Ukraine) making them drunk with the notion that, somehow, it would be “no big deal” to get into a war directly with Russia—that the U.S. could easily defeat the Russians decisively—when in fact such a war could lead to devastating nuclear exchanges posing an existential threat to humanity.

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In Penn's case there is also a particular dimension which may help explain his descent into this dangerous madness. As I pointed out in a previous article:

In the aftermath of a devastating earthquake in Haiti in January, 2010, Penn devoted himself for an extended period to relief efforts in that country. That, taken by itself, would be admirable. But, proceeding from his cooperation with the U.S. military in relation to those relief efforts, Penn has completely misrepresented and covered over the overall and essential nature and actions of the U.S. military, and he has gone so far as to glorify this military which, by its very nature and in accordance with the system it serves and seeks to enforce, has been and continues to be guilty of the most horrendous war crimes and crimes against humanity.<sup>1</sup>

What is involved here—and what is a very important lesson—is not simply, or even essentially, a matter of Penn's delusions personally, but an illustration of the terrible trajectory that one can descend on, from “prettifying” and promoting the murderous U.S. military to the madness of backing highly reckless and irresponsible calls for actions that could in fact lead to World War 3, with potentially catastrophic consequences.

### **The Interests of the Imperialists Are Not Our Interests**

Even leaving aside the very real danger and terrible consequences of a direct war between the U.S./NATO and Russia, it would also seem that his totally wrong-headed glorification of the imperialist military of this country has made it easier for Penn to ignore (or even to fail to recognize) what “his own country” is actually doing with the war in Ukraine. The motivation of the U.S. in supporting Ukraine in the war against Russia is *not* to help a weaker country defend itself against a more powerful aggressor (again, the U.S. itself by far holds the record for invading and waging war against weaker countries throughout its history, including the wars in recent years in Iraq and Afghanistan). The U.S. and its “allies” are extensively arming Ukraine in order to *use Ukraine as a means of furthering their own imperialist interests— weakening Russia (and those allied with it), while strengthening the “western” imperialist alliance (NATO) headed by the U.S., which is itself a vehicle for military aggression.*

Something which cannot be stressed too many times—especially given the lies and distortions in the relentless propaganda offensive by U.S. imperialism and its media—is the reality that the confrontation between the U.S./NATO on the one side, and Russia on the other, is *not* a conflict “between democracy and autocracy” but between rival imperialists. (As I have pointed out before, Turkey, which is a member of NATO, is itself ruled by an “autocratic” government—and the same is true of Poland, also a member of NATO.)

Another truth which cannot be stated too many times is this:

[N]ow, with Russian, and Chinese, challenges of various kinds to U.S. dominance in the world, the argument of the U.S. ruling class, and those who parrot its American chauvinist rationalizations, amounts to essentially nothing more than this: “We have established, through massive force and violence, an ‘order’ in the world that is favorable to our ‘national’ (that is, *imperialist*) interests, and no one has the right to use force to change this in a way that threatens those interests.”<sup>2</sup>

As I have emphasized before:

What is called for, and urgently now, is to oppose all imperialist marauders and mass murderers, and all systems and relations of oppression and exploitation, while giving particular emphasis to opposing “our own” imperialist oppressors who commit their monstrous crimes “in our name” and seek to rally us to support them on the basis of a grotesque American chauvinism, which we must firmly reject and fiercely struggle against.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Sean Penn, COVID-19 And Mass Murderers, *Penn's Myopia Is Malignant.*” This article is available at revcom.us.

<sup>2</sup> “Shameless American Chauvinism: ‘Anti-Authoritarianism’ as a ‘Cover’ for Supporting U.S. Imperialism.” This article is also available at revcom.us.

<sup>3</sup> “Shameless American Chauvinism: ‘Anti-Authoritarianism’ as a ‘Cover’ for Supporting U.S. Imperialism.”