ISSE meetings in Britain to mark fifth anniversary of US-led invasion of Iraq

14 February 2008

March 20 marks the fifth anniversary of the war against Iraq, a war that is regarded as a criminal venture by the vast bulk of the world's population. Most people also believe that US and British troops should be withdrawn from Iraq, and yet the occupation continues.

The media is now claiming that an end to the war is in sight, with the end of the Bush presidency and his possible replacement with Democrats Barack Obama or Hillary Clinton. In reality, neither Obama nor Clinton is proposing the immediate withdrawal of troops, nor more fundamentally can they offer an alternative to the aggressive military policy of the United States.

Obama, who makes the greatest play of being an opponent of the Iraq war, opposes what his campaign described as a "precipitous withdrawal," stating that he "has always believed that our troops need to be withdrawn responsibly" and that troops involved in "counterterrorism" operations would stay. In practice this means maintaining the occupation indefinitely.

This month the Bush administration took the extraordinary decision to nullify Congressional legislation barring the use of funds for the construction of permanent US bases in Iraq, with barely any protest from the Democrats. And a planned reduction in the number of US troops in Iraq was put on hold by Defense Secretary Robert Gates, meaning that four of the five additional army brigades sent to implement Bush's "surge" will remain there. Even the implementation of the planned withdrawal of troops would still leave 130,000 there—*the same number as pre-surge levels.*

Washington is secretly negotiating with the puppet regime in Baghdad to establish an indefinite occupation after the Bush administration leaves office. A joint declaration signed by Bush and Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki last year commits the US military to protect Iraq from "foreign aggression" and internal threat, while the Iraqi regime must facilitate and encourage "the flow of foreign investments to Iraq, especially American investments."

Not only is the Iraq war and occupation still an explosive situation, but it now threatens to involve Turkey in a conflict with the Kurds. More fundamentally, the motive force for the war against Iraq was the striving by US imperialism—with the support of British imperialism—to offset its declining world position against its major rivals in China, Russia and Europe by securing control of vital energy reserves by military force.

There can be no retreat from this struggle for global hegemony. In a recent speech defending the policy of preemptive war, Labour's Foreign Secretary David Miliband admitted as much—declaring that "divisions" over the invasion of Iraq must not be allowed to "obscure our national interest."

In every part of the world, the competition between the great powers for resources, cheap labor and markets is intensifying. Thus the danger of war is spreading to encompass not only other major oil producers such as Iran, but the rest of the Middle East, as well as Central Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The International Students for Social Equality is committed to mobilising students and workers throughout the world in a struggle against the growth of imperialist militarism. Bitter experience has demonstrated that the millions of people internationally who oppose war, imperialist occupation and neo-colonialism cannot do so on the basis of pacifist protests that appeal only for a change in policy by the ruling elites of the US and Europe. Rather the ruling elites and their governments must be brought down by a unified struggle of the working class in a new international socialist political movement—dedicated to the replacement of the capitalist profit system with one

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based on planned production for social need.

University of Glasgow
Tuesday, March 4, 6:30 p.m.
Lecture Theatre A
Boyd Orr Building, Room 407
Glasgow

University of Manchester
Thursday, March 6, 6:30 p.m.
International Society
327 Oxford Road
Manchester

University of Sussex
Thursday, March 6, 6 p.m.
Conference Centre (Level 3)
Bramber House
Brighton BN1

London School of Economics
Monday, March 10, 6 p.m.
Room H705
Connaught House
Aldwych, London

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