

Democrats seek to channel opposition to Trump behind anti-Russia offensive

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Two distinct processes have emerged in the month since the inauguration of Donald Trump. Millions of people in the United States and internationally have participated in protests against the fascistic policies of the new government. They are motivated by genuine and deeply felt anger over the administration's attack on immigrants and its cabinet of billionaires and social reactionaries.

At the same time, much of the media and major sections of the political establishment have been carrying out an escalating campaign against Trump that is of a very different character. In close coordination with US intelligence agencies, Trump's establishment critics are seeking to hijack the opposition of workers and youth to Trump and channel it behind their own imperialist and militarist agenda.

The *Washington Post* outlined the essential foreign policy concerns of the ruling class in an editorial published Wednesday, following the resignation of Trump's national security advisor, Michael Flynn. The *Post* wrote that Trump could "begin to undo the damage" of his first month in office by selecting "a new national security advisor." While "the past two weeks have seen some welcome corrections by Mr. Trump to what looked like potentially rash departures from previous US policies," the newspaper continued, Trump still had "some fixes to make." This meant, above all, improving relations with the European powers and changing his "dangerously appeasing stance toward Mr. Putin."

The same basic line is repeated in innumerable newspaper editorials, on cable news programs and late night talk shows, and from both Republican and Democratic politicians.

Republican Senator Lindsey Graham, one of the most rabid Russophobes, declared Wednesday that an

unsubstantiated report in the *New York Times* about contacts between Trump's election campaign and Russian intelligence officials was a "game changer" that justified an independent bipartisan investigation.

Senator Elizabeth Warren, who supposedly represents the left wing of the Democratic Party, issued a statement asserting that Trump "owes the American people a full account of his Administration's dealings with Russia... Congress must pull its head out of the sand and launch a real, bipartisan, transparent inquiry into Russia. Our national security is at stake."

Bernie Sanders, who is nominally an independent but has been elevated into the leadership of the Senate Democrats, called for the Senate Intelligence Committee to "thoroughly investigate if Russia coordinated with Trump and his campaign."

Michael Moore, the documentarian who campaigned aggressively for Hillary Clinton and can be counted on to trail behind the Democratic Party, tweeted, "What part of 'vacate you Russian traitor' don't you [Trump] understand?"

The Democrats are hoping to kill two birds with one stone. They want to contain social tensions and prevent them from giving rise to an independent political movement of the working class. And they want to force a "correction" in the foreign policy of the Trump government, bringing it into line with the economic, political and military campaign against Russia initiated by the CIA under Obama.

The response of Sanders is particularly significant given his central role over the past year in diverting anger over social inequality behind the campaign of Clinton, the candidate of Wall Street, who focused her opposition to Trump on the latter's alleged ties to Russia.

In a meeting of Democratic senators on Tuesday,

Sanders was reportedly asked by party leaders to placate popular anger that has erupted at constituency meetings held by Democratic congressmen. According to Senator Joe Manchin, Sanders was told by Minority Leader Charles Schumer and others that he might be the only person who can make sure that this anger is “directed in all the right proper channels”—that is, exclusively against the Republicans.

After the right-wing campaign of Clinton paved the way for the victory of Trump, the first response of the Democratic Party was to call for accommodation and cooperation. Democrats did everything they could to discourage opposition and ensure a “peaceful transition.”

Obama proclaimed the elections an “intramural scrimmage” in which all sides were “on one team.” Both he and Clinton said they wished Trump every “success,” while Sanders announced that he “and other progressives are prepared to work with” Trump on policies to “improve the lives of working families.” They covered up the ultra-right-wing character of the new administration and downplayed the significance of Trump’s defeat in the popular vote.

Trump’s inauguration, however, was followed immediately by protests involving millions of people—the most significant and widespread international demonstrations since the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. These demonstrations were followed barely a week later by protests at airports across the country against the anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant executive orders of the new administration. Protests of an essentially progressive and left-wing character have continued across the country.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* has warned, these protests lack an independent program and are politically dominated by organizations oriented to the Democratic Party. This creates the danger that they will be suppressed or channeled behind the warmongering policies of the CIA and the Pentagon, to shift the “narrative” in a pro-war direction.

This is precisely what the Democratic Party is attempting to do. The furor over Flynn’s phone calls with Russia and Trump’s ties to Putin has served to bury public discussion of the anti-Muslim ban, the attack on refugees, the fascistic character of the new administration and the cabal of CEOs, bankers and ex-generals in Trump’s cabinet.

What if the anti-Russia campaign is successful? The Democratic Party and the organizations that surround it are committing themselves to a policy that has catastrophic consequences. They would presumably consider the outbreak of war with nuclear-armed Russia a great triumph.

This would not be the first time that a popular movement, lacking a clearly-defined working class character and socialist program, was employed by the ruling class to achieve its own ends. In Egypt, the massive demonstrations that erupted in 2013 against the right-wing Muslim Brotherhood government were utilized by the military and its political agents to reestablish a military dictatorship two years after the downfall of the US-backed dictator Hosni Mubarak.

The political situation poses immense dangers. The brutal character of the Trump administration does not make its opponents in the intelligence agencies any less reactionary. They are conspiring to unleash not only bigger and more bloody wars abroad, but also war on the working class at home. The same think tanks that call for war preparations against Russia in order to maintain US domination of Eurasia insist that workers in the United States must be made to “sacrifice”—in the form of massive cuts in social programs and pensions—to pay for a huge increase in military spending.

The working class does not want war. There is virtually no popular support for a conflict with Russia or China, or an expansion of military aggression in the Middle East. There remains deep opposition to social inequality and the attack on democratic rights.

The radicalization of the working class must be given a conscious and organized political form. It must be guided by a socialist program. The critical question posed by the mounting political crisis and the growth of social protest is that of revolutionary leadership.



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