

Trump administration in question as political warfare in Washington intensifies

Joseph Kishore
24 December 2018

The year 2018 is coming to a close amidst a historic political crisis in the United States. In the past week, Washington has been convulsed by conflicts over Donald Trump's decision to withdraw US troops from Syria and reduce troop levels in Afghanistan, and the ensuing resignation of Defense Secretary James Mattis. This has coincided with a sharp drop on the stock market and a partial government shutdown that could extend well into next year.

It is not Trump's fascistic attack on immigrants, his war on the working class or his belligerence toward China that has triggered paroxysms of rage within the state and from the Democratic Party. It is, rather, his seeming intention to wind down the wars in Syria and Afghanistan, both of which are undeclared and illegal.

The future of the administration is being called into question. Chuck Todd, the host of NBC's "Meet the Press" program, said on Sunday that the resignation of Mattis in protest over the troop withdrawals could be the "beginning of the functional end of this presidency." He cited the erosion of support for Trump among Senate Republicans, who have served as a buffer against the investigations, centered on the probe by former FBI Director Robert Mueller into Trump's personal dealings and the Trump campaign's alleged ties to Russia.

In Trump's foreign policy shifts, the Democrats, speaking for the military and intelligence apparatus, see an abandonment of what they consider to be a fundamental premise of American foreign policy: That control over the Middle East is critical in countering Russia, which in turn is necessary in order to confront China. Democratic Senator Chris Coons declared on CBS's "Face the Nation" Sunday that "President Trump is handing a great big Christmas gift to Vladimir Putin in Russia and to the Ayatollah Khamenei of Iran."

In the process, the Democrats are unashamedly aligning with the most reactionary forces within the state apparatus

and the military. "Mad Dog" Mattis, the butcher of Fallujah, who once declared that "it's fun to shoot some people," has been transformed into a pillar of moral virtue. Dick Durbin, the second-ranking Democrat in the Senate, declared on "Meet the Press" that "it breaks my heart" to see Mattis leave. He said he begged Mattis to "stay, stay as long as you possibly can," because "we desperately need your mature voice, your voice of patriotism."

The war criminal Mattis, still alive, is following the path to political sainthood the Democrats and the media previously laid for the deceased John McCain and George H.W. Bush.

There is more than a hint of calls for a direct intervention by the military against Trump. Were there a move to remove Trump through some sort of palace coup, it would be welcomed by the Democrats and the media. From the statements that are being made, one can only conclude that this would be followed by an immediate escalation of war in the Middle East and aggression against Russia.

The ferocious reaction against Trump's moves in Syria and Afghanistan exposes the fraud of the "war on terror," supposedly launched to combat Islamist terrorists. Trump justified his plan to withdraw US troops by pointing out that ISIS has been routed in Syria. But as scores of indignant opponents of the move have stated, the real issue is not ISIS, but rather the struggle against Washington's geopolitical rivals in the Middle East and Central Asia, above all Russia and Iran.

In fact, the events of September 11, 2001 were merely the pretext for the implementation of expansionist plans prepared long before, beginning with the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq under Bush, followed by the war against Libya and the CIA-backed civil war in Syria under Obama. The original rationale has largely been dropped and American foreign policy exposed for what it is—the

effort to control the world through military force.

To point this out is not to diminish in any way the reactionary character of the Trump administration. The White House is pursuing its own brand of imperialist policy, which harkens back to the “America First” campaign of Charles Lindbergh prior to America’s entry into the Second World War. Lindbergh was pro-Nazi. But while his main ruling class opponents—even as they pushed for US intervention in the imperialist slaughter—retained some commitment to democratic processes, there is no such commitment within the anti-Trump factions of the ruling class and the state today.

Trump’s focus is more on China. While hoping to capitalize on the popularity of withdrawing troops from the Middle East and Central Asia, his administration has outlined a foreign policy focused on great power conflict with American’s biggest economic rival.

Confronting the failure of American foreign policy over the past quarter-century, the Trump administration represents a turn to a more unilateralist and nationalist geopolitics. And as Trump faces growing opposition from within the state, he will double down on his efforts to cultivate a fascistic base, including within the military and police forces.

To speak of “left” and “right” within this framework is meaningless. The conflict is between different forms of extreme reaction.

Serving as auxiliary props of the Democratic Party are the various organizations that comprise the pseudo-left, which speak for privileged sections of the upper-middle class. The Democrats have relentlessly promoted the politics of race and gender, which for the past year has been waged under the banner of #MeToo. A central purpose has been to cultivate within these layers a base for their war policies.

Amidst the raging political warfare in Washington, there are certain voices notable by their silence. *Socialist Worker*, the publication of the International Socialist Organization, has said nothing. *Jacobin* magazine, aligned with the Democratic Socialists of America, has said nothing. Socialist Alternative has said nothing. Nor have the Democratic Party politicians they have promoted—Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, incoming New York Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, etc.

They are silent because they support the line of the Democratic Party. They support war and they support American imperialism.

Their real political line is articulated by the *Nation’s* Joan Walsh, frequently cited by *Socialist Worker* and

other pseudo-left publications. In “As Trump Rages, God Bless Us Every One,” Walsh bemoans Trump’s decision to neglect the counsel of “a lifelong military leader and public servant like Defense Secretary Jim Mattis.”

Nowhere in all of this—from the Trump administration, to the Democratic Party, to the pseudo-left—is there any expression of the interests of the vast majority of the population, the working class. The working class cannot allow itself to be diverted behind any faction of the ruling class. It must advance its own solution to the capitalist crisis: socialist revolution.

Analyzing the conflicts within Washington at an earlier stage, the WSWS wrote in its June 13, 2017 statement “Palace coup or class struggle: The political crisis in Washington and the strategy of the working class,” that “Trump’s opponents within the political establishment, including both Democrats and Republicans, speak for a faction of the corporate and financial elite.” Their differences with Trump “are centered primarily on issues of foreign policy.” The current state of political warfare confirms this analysis.

The statement added that an “altogether different conflict is developing—between the ruling class and the working class.” The WSWS anticipated that “the interaction of objective conditions of crisis, both within the United States and internationally, and the radicalization of mass social consciousness will find expression in the eruption of class struggle.”

This prognosis too has been realized. The past year has seen a significant growth of working class struggle, in the United States and around the world. This is only an anticipation of the social explosions that will characterize 2019.

The critical task is the building of a political leadership, the Socialist Equality Party, to impart an ever-greater level of understanding and consciousness to the working class movement, and to connect the growth of class struggle to a socialist, internationalist and anti-imperialist movement to take state power and reorganize economic life on the basis of social need, not private profit.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact