

Bipartisan congressional war consensus emerges, bringing together progressive ‘left’ and Republican right

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On Tuesday, US President Joe Biden and leading NATO powers escalated the war provocations against Russia by announcing the imposition of substantial economic sanctions in response to Russian President Vladimir Putin’s recognition of the independence of Donetsk and Lugansk from Ukraine.

In the United States, a bipartisan consensus is emerging for even greater military and economic pressure to be brought to bear against Russia, increasing the risk of a war between nuclear-armed powers. This consensus has brought together a broad spectrum of the political establishment, from the Republican right to the so-called “progressive” wing of the Democratic Party.

This ruling class consensus is part of an attempt by the Biden administration to effect a new “national unity” aimed at securing American imperialism’s interests abroad, controlling the domestic political crisis and distracting from growing inflation and a daily US COVID-19 death toll of over 2,000 people.

Democrats and Republicans alike are expressing criticism that the Biden administration had been insufficiently ruthless in measures taken against Russia.

Ultra-right Republican Senator Ted Cruz (R-Texas) declared, “Biden-Harris officials are to an enormous extent directly responsible for this crisis. He and his administration instead settled for an endlessly deferred and wholly uncredible strategy of responding to Putin’s aggression after an invasion.”

A leading Trump supporter in the House, Representative Jim Banks (R-Indiana), said that he is “still hopeful that President Biden will show the backbone that’s been missing all along and we’ll hit Putin where it counts, by restoring the Trump sanctions on Nord Stream 2.”

Anti-Trump Republicans were less critical of Biden and equally enthusiastic about a belligerent policy towards

Russia. MSNBC’s Andrea Mitchell welcomed former Trump national security advisor John Bolton on her program yesterday, providing him a chance to demand Biden take an even more aggressive stance toward Russia.

NBC wrote that Senator Lindsey Graham (R-South Carolina) has “been on the phone ‘all morning’ working with Democrats on an emergency supplemental funding package” aimed at expanding sanctions, as well as military aid for the Ukrainian government.

Biden faces substantial pressure from within the Democratic Party as well. Representative Jim Hines (D-Connecticut) stated that Biden was wrong for not immediately calling Russia’s actions in Donetsk and Lugansk an “invasion,” tweeting, “If you know the history of aggressive dictators, you know it’s critical not to lose clarity. Putin is invading Ukraine. Full stop. He’s done it before, and he will do it again if we don’t impose full sanctions.”

Senator Bob Menendez (D-New Jersey) similarly declared, “I think we can stop equivocating as to whether we have an invasion or not. I think the West, the United States has to make it very clear to Putin that the consequences begin now.”

Three of the Democrats who were part of the official congressional delegation to the Munich Security Council last weekend were former CIA, military and State Department officials, including Elissa Slotkin of Michigan, Jason Crow of Colorado and Tom Malinowski of New Jersey. Slotkin, a longtime CIA and National Security Council official, emphasized the broader geopolitical issues in the Ukraine confrontation, tweeting, “Make no mistake: this is about more than just Russia and Ukraine. China is watching our every move to see if the international community will stand up against Putin’s aggression. This is a moment to show that we won’t let

them rewrite the next century.”

Democrats and Republicans are working together to force the Biden administration to launch more aggressive sanctions. In an article titled “Biden faces bipartisan calls for more punishing Russian sanctions,” NBC reported yesterday that “lawmakers across the political spectrum called on President Biden to impose crushing new sanctions,” including Biden’s “Democratic allies in Congress,” as well as the Republican minority.

In the House, Democrats and Republicans are introducing the SUPPORT Act to assess how American imperialism can provide weapons to a Ukrainian military. Representative Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-Illinois) said, “We need to get ready to assist our Ukrainian friends secure their sovereignty if the Russians invade, and second, we need to send a strong message to the Russians and others that the costs of invading Ukraine will be prohibitive.” The Ukrainian military includes neo-Nazi outfits like the Azov Battalion.

In the Senate, a similar bill introduced by Senator Menendez is sponsored by 80 percent of Senate Democrats, including self-described “progressives” like Chris Murphy of Connecticut and Jeff Merkley of Oregon.

The bipartisan delegation of Democratic and Republican senators and representatives returned from the Munich Security Conference this weekend and issued a joint statement calling for emergency legislation to further fund Ukraine’s military. The statement, signed by 21 legislators, reads:

“It now appears increasingly likely that Russian forces will initiate hostilities against a free and peaceful Ukraine. We as a bipartisan delegation will bring home the same unity and resolve we have seen among our Atlantic allies against Russian aggression. We pledge to work toward whatever emergency supplemental legislation will best support our NATO allies and the people of Ukraine and support freedom and safety around the world. No matter what happens in the coming days, we must assure that the dictator Putin and his corrupt oligarchs pay a devastating price for their decisions.”

The delegation’s emphasis on the “unity” of the Republican and Democratic delegations underscores a fundamental purpose of the present drive to war. Racked by immense internal divisions that are exacerbated by the worsening coronavirus pandemic, spiraling inflation and the ongoing threat of fascist coup plotting at home, the American ruling class is attempting to use a foreign conflict to suppress social discontent at home.

As Representative Betty McCollum (D-Minnesota) said at a press conference held by the Munich congressional delegation: “We’re bicameral, we’re bipartisan, we’re united. NATO’s united, the EU’s united and we’re ready to do what it takes if Russia walks away.”

A particularly important role in the bipartisan warmongering is being played by the self-styled progressive Democrats.

Senator Bernie Sanders issued a belligerent statement yesterday in support of Biden’s sanctions against Russia, placing blame entirely on Russia for the present crisis and making no reference to the role of NATO and the United States:

“Vladimir Putin’s latest invasion of Ukraine is an indefensible violation of international law, regardless of whatever false pretext he offers. There has always been a diplomatic solution to this situation. Tragically, Putin appears intent on rejecting it. The United States must now work with our allies and the international community to impose serious sanctions on Putin and his oligarchs.”

Sanders himself voted to support the 1999 US war against Serbia, which was also “an indefensible violation of international law,” and the Clinton administration’s claims of genocide were also false. The same is true of the US invasion of Afghanistan, which Sanders also voted to support.

In the House, Democratic Socialists of America member Jamaal Bowman (D-New York) shared a tweet from former US Ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul comparing Putin to Hitler, denouncing Russia for “taking territory from smaller powers,” and calling for the US “to respond now. Right now.” Declaring his support for these threats, Bowman stated, “Absolutely devastating.” Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-New York) has not issued a single tweet opposing Biden’s war provocations.

On Saturday, February 26, the World Socialist Web Site is hosting an international online webinar to oppose the US-NATO drive to war against Russia. In this webinar, an international panel of leading members of the International Committee of the Fourth International and WSWs writers will review the causes and consequences of the US-NATO war drive and present the political basis for a fight against war. Register here.



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