

# Rashida Tlaib gives “progressive” response to State of the Union: Full support for US–NATO war against Russia

Jacob Crosse  
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Following President Joe Biden’s State of the Union (SOTU) address Tuesday evening, Michigan Democratic Representative Rashida Tlaib, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), delivered a speech backing the US/NATO war drive against Russia while attempting to give a “progressive” gloss to the Biden administration’s right-wing domestic policies.

Prior to her speech, billed in advance as a “progressive rebuttal” to Biden’s State of the Union address, Tlaib was denounced by “centrist” Democratic Representative Josh Gottheimer of New Jersey, who told *Axios* that the very act of offering a televised response to Biden was akin to “keying your own car and slashing your own tires.” Rep. Filemon Vela of Texas joined in, telling *Axios*, “In times of crisis, we should all stand by our president.”

In the event, they had nothing to worry about.

Far from attacking Biden for breaking his campaign promises of social reform, a science-based response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the defense of democratic rights against Trump’s fascistic Republican Party, Tlaib promoted Biden’s stripped-down and already dead “Build Back Better” spending plan. She said nothing of his drive to reopen schools and businesses and end all public health restrictions, which has led to over 500,000 COVID deaths since he came to office.

This was of a piece with her full support for the US/NATO military, economic and diplomatic offensive against Russia, using Ukraine as bait to set a trap for the right-wing nationalist Putin regime—a conflict in the heart of Europe that threatens to unleash global nuclear war.

Tlaib declared, “Over the past few days we have watched in horror as Russia launched an illegal and unjustifiable invasion of Ukraine.”

Russia’s action is indeed illegal and unjustifiable, but not unprovoked. Tlaib said nothing about the tens of thousands of US and NATO troops, ships and planes deployed to Russia’s borders in the preceding months, not to mention the eastward expansion of NATO to Russia’s doorstep in the aftermath of the 1991 dissolution of the Soviet Union, nor the series of US-led wars of aggression in the Middle East, Central Asia, north Africa, and the former Yugoslavia that killed millions and destroyed entire societies.

Wearing a blue and yellow ribbon, the colors of the Ukrainian flag, Tlaib said, “We stand with the people of Ukraine,” without mentioning the fascist paramilitary and political forces deeply integrated into the regime in Kiev and its army. She explicitly supported the “targeted sanctions” that aim to destroy the Russian economy and inflict suffering and death on the country’s population, in the hope of effecting regime-change.

Tlaib spoke on behalf of the Working Families Party (WFP), a faction of the Democratic Party aligned with the trade union bureaucracy. Like the DSA, the WFP is a Democratic Party operation that has nothing to do with advancing the interests of the working class or socialism, and everything to do with channeling working class opposition to the two-party capitalist political system back behind the Democratic Party.

Tlaib said nothing about the disastrous economic and social consequences for workers in the US of the war measures being imposed against Russia. Gasoline and natural gas prices are already exploding, accelerating

price rises for all basic commodities. The already inadequate wage increases imposed on workers by the corporatist trade unions are being eclipsed by inflation, resulting in a sharp decline in real wages.

Tlaib is a supporter of the PRO Act, which aims to strengthen and expand the grip of the trade union bureaucracy under conditions where the unions function to suppress strikes or betray them and divide workers rather than unite them. Biden promotes these corporatist organizations because they serve as an industrial police force to boost corporate profits by imposing cuts in real wages and brutal working conditions. Increasingly discredited and despised by the workers, they are now called on to back the war drive against Russia, to be followed by China, and stoke up economic nationalism on the basis of Biden's "Buy American" and "America First" demagoguery.

Tlaib made a point of lauding the United Auto Workers union, which is enforcing the corporate/government back-to-work policy in the midst of the pandemic, keeping workers in the dark about in-plant infections and deaths, and dropping all mitigation measures.

In line with US imperialism's war drive against Russia, the United Steelworkers union is working directly with the White House to block a strike by 30,000 oil refinery and petrochemical workers and impose a contract that cuts real wages and enforces inhuman levels of overtime.

In the case of BNSF rail workers, federal courts have imposed injunctions in the name of "national security" to block strike action.

The unions' collaboration with the Biden administration is being stepped up under conditions in which the war crisis is used to effectively criminalize any industrial action by workers, who will be denounced for supposedly aiding and abetting Putin.

Tlaib boasted of the "progressive" Democrats' complete subordination to the Biden administration. "No one fought harder for President Biden's agenda than progressives," she declared. This was said after a speech in which Biden boasted once again of being a "capitalist" and hailed corporate bosses such as the CEO of Intel.

The timid and thoroughly capitalist character of her own agenda was summed up in her pledge to "work with Biden" to pass such "transformative" measures as

a "\$15 minimum wage" and "the freedom to join a union."

Tlaib's response to Biden's war-mongering SOTU speech was echoed by every other so-called "progressive" Democratic member of Congress.

Appearing Tuesday night as the featured guest on "The Late Show," Bernie Sanders seconded host Stephen Colbert's praise for Biden's description of the war in Ukraine as a struggle "between freedom and tyranny...between democracy and autocracy."

"It cannot be more traumatic," declared the hero of the WFP and the DSA. "What Putin has done is so outrageous, it is so horrible, it is so cruel, it is unspeakable. And there was a diplomatic solution. We were working on a diplomatic solution and apparently that's not what he wanted. He wanted to conquer Ukraine."

In fact, all of Biden's interventions in the run-up to the Russian invasion were calculated to undermine any and all attempts at a diplomatic settlement, including meetings and discussions with Putin held by President Macron of France and Chancellor Scholz of Germany.

Similarly, in a brief interview on "The Rachel Maddow Show" after the State of the Union speech, DSA member and New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, also wearing a yellow and blue ribbon, offered no critique of US imperialism or the danger of nuclear war with Russia. Instead, Ocasio-Cortez complimented Biden on "really projecting a theme of unity."



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