Democratic Socialists of America-backed candidates line up behind war drive, denounce DSA

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The Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) has come under attack from the Democratic Party apparatus after issuing two brief statements on the Ukraine-Russia conflict. The backlash from the Democratic Party, including many elected officials that the DSA endorsed and campaigned for, has caused a crisis within the already unstable organization.

The first statement was issued on January 31 by the "DSA International Committee" under the headline "DSA IC opposes US militarization and interventionism in Ukraine and Eastern Europe and calls for an end to NATO expansionism." The statement proclaimed opposition to the "ongoing US brinkmanship, which only further escalates the crisis" and reiterated the organization's long-standing call for the US to withdraw from NATO.

A month later, on February 26, the DSA National Political Committee published their official statement on the conflict, "On Russia's invasion of Ukraine," which was significantly watered down even from the earlier statement. Following on the long-standing tradition of the DSA to say as little as possible on the most complicated and consequential topics, it came in at a whopping 266 words. The only lingering political content was a "reaffirmation" of the demand for the US to withdraw from NATO.

After the DSA published its second statement, a whole host of Democratic Party politicians took to social media to denounce it as anti-democratic and pro-Putin propaganda. Some even claimed it could cost the Democratic Party the midterm. The attack was clearly discussed and coordinated at the highest levels of the Democratic Party.

Mike Gwin, Director of Rapid Response at the White House, retweeted the DSA's post of the statement calling it "shameful." Mikie Sherrill, Democratic representative from New Jersey, tweeted: "I could not disagree more strongly with the DSA's call to pull out of NATO. That we would leave NATO, the security alliance that helped end the constant cycle of war in Europe—wars we were pulled into—is irresponsible, not supportive of democracy, and contrary to our ideals."

Similar posts were made by Conor Lamb, a Democratic representative from Pennsylvania running for the Senate, and Kathleen Rice, a Democratic representative from New York.

On Tuesday the *New York Times* weighed in, publishing an article headlined: "Socialists' Response to War in Ukraine Has Put Some Democrats on Edge," by Dana Rubinstein and Katie Glueck.

The *Times* article notes that the center of the DSA-Democratic Party conflict is in New York, home to the DSA's largest chapter and the greatest number of DSA elected officials. Rubinstein and Glueck explain that the DSA's position has "created a challenging dynamic for politicians aligned with the organization."

In other words, the so-called "left" Democratic Party politicians endorsed by, and in some cases even official members of the DSA, are rushing to distance themselves from even a hint of criticism of US foreign policy and the drive to war against Russia.

Perhaps most notable is the response from New York Democratic congressman and DSA member Jamaal Bowman. Bowman was enthusiastically endorsed by the DSA and hailed in the pages of *Jacobin* magazine as an "insurgent socialist" that would take on the "establishment" Democrats.

Bowman issued a statement declaring that he said he "support[s] NATO and will continue to do so during this crisis." Bowman criticized "Putin's unchecked imperialism" and went on to add that he fully backs the actions of President Biden:

> The decision to involve the U.S. military in war is the constitutional responsibility of Congress, which is why I recently joined more than 40 of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle in reaffirming Congressional War Powers. I applaud President Biden for his commitment not to involve our troops in direct conflict, and urge the international community to avoid further conflict.

Now Vedat Gashi, a Democrat challenging Bowman in the next election, is calling on Bowman to fully and publicly

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disavow the DSA stance.

Bowman produced a controversy within the DSA last year for his two back-to-back votes to provide $1.1 billion for Israel's Iron Dome armament program and $3.3 billion to the Israeli military. Bowman later traveled to Israel as part of a Democratic Party delegation, taking a photo op with Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, former chief of staff to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and present leader of the far-right Yamina Party.

The DSA decided against revoking Bowman's membership despite his open support for US imperialism.

In January of this year *Jacobin* wrote that all of the DSA electoral victories represented "more state power than New York City socialists have enjoyed since the 1920s." However, at every turn these officials toe the Democratic Party line with great enthusiasm.

The *Times* notes that none of the nine New York City candidates that the DSA endorsed and campaigned for this year would consent to an interview on the war drive and their stance on the DSA line.

Bowman is not the only one who has made public statements openly disagreeing with the DSA statement. Rana Abdelhamid, a DSA member challenging Rep. Carolyn Maloney in a New York City district, recently stated, "I don't agree with the DSA's stance on the US exiting NATO." She continued: "NATO is one of the primary lines of defense that we have to address Russian aggression towards Ukraine."

That is, in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which all socialists must oppose, the answer is to aggressively back the US and NATO, which have worked for decades to expand NATO's borders to the edge of Russia, militarize Eastern Europe and do whatever possible to incite an invasion of Ukraine.

Ironically, the DSA's position has been openly supported by only one elected official, Kristin Richardson Jordan, a councilwoman from Harlem and member of the DSA who was not backed by the organization in her campaign for office.

Moreover, neither of the most prominent political figures promoted by the DSA, Sen. Bernie Sanders and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, have made any criticism of the Biden administration's policy. In an extensive tweet thread posted last week, Sanders sought to bolster the US war drive against Russia by pointing to the fact that Russia is a country riven by inequality and controlled by billionaires. Sanders made no mention of the fact that almost every argument he made against Russia could be made about the US.

The DSA's pretense of opposition to war has always been fraudulent. It functions as a faction of the Democratic Party and is continuously seeking to provide cover in some form for the right-wing, pro-war policy of one of the two parties of the American corporate and financial oligarchy.

The statements of the DSA are typical in this regard. They call on the Democrats to end a conflict that they themselves have been instigating for years. It should be recalled that it was under Barack Obama that in 2014 the US orchestrated a far-right coup in Kiev that overthrew a pro-Russian government that had opposed Ukrainian membership in NATO. The more recent preparations for war with Russia and the arming of Ukraine were at the center of the Democrats' first attempt to impeach Donald Trump in 2019.

However, confronted with a staggering domestic crisis, the Democratic Party is signaling that even the most timid opposition is out of bounds. They are acutely aware that war with Russia does not have broad popular support within the working class. Moreover, social tensions have risen to an all-time high within the US, triggered above all by the enormous crisis brought on by the disastrous handling of the pandemic by both parties.

The reaction of Democrats to the timid DSA statements on the conflict in Ukraine only expose the utter bankruptcy of the DSA's claim to be shifting the framework of politics to the left. The campaign for war, moreover, will be used by Biden and the Democrats to quickly jettison its pretense of a social program. This was seen in the Democrats' decision to remove a meager $15.6 billion COVID pandemic allocation from a massive $1.5 trillion measure to fund the entire federal government, which included nearly $800 billion in military spending and $14 billion for the US intervention in the Russia-Ukraine war.

The conflict has clearly thrown the DSA into crisis. Its official publication, *Democratic Left*, has published nothing on the war crisis and has not posted an article to their online site since February 23. The right-wing and warmongering policies of the Biden administration make the DSA's effort to provide the Democrats with a pseudo-left cover difficult, but there is no doubt that the DSA will do whatever it can to rise to the occasion.

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