

Democrats jump to defense of Zelensky and Ukraine war

Patrick Martin
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A trio of prominent Democratic senators appeared on Sunday television interview programs to denounce President Trump and Vice President JD Vance for their Friday gang-up on Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, which ended with Zelensky being asked to leave the White House and Trump aides suggesting that the administration might cut off military and economic aid to his country.

All three Democrats—Amy Klobuchar, who was interviewed on ABC, Chris Murphy, who appeared on CNN, and Bernie Sanders, who spoke on NBC—suggested that Trump was doing the work of Russian President Vladimir Putin. They all backed the Democratic Party’s pro-war line, calling for stepped-up military aid to Ukraine and intensive efforts to defeat the Russian forces, which occupy about one-fifth of Ukraine’s territory, in the east and south.

Klobuchar, who was a candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2020, said she “just couldn’t believe” how the Friday meeting between Zelensky, Trump and Vance developed into a shouting match. “We stand with our friends, not our enemies,” she said. “The great country of America goes into negotiations with strength, not surrender.”

The Minnesota Democrat told ABC anchor George Stephanopoulos that the conflict with Zelensky “is not in President Trump’s best interest.” She suggested that the meeting had been an “ambush setup,” adding, “It was Vice President Vance, particularly, who was on the offense, who was berating President Zelensky, who simply was trying to explain that... we needed a strong security commitment from all of our allies to be able to have a lasting peace, which is something that President Trump says that he wants to see.”

In an earlier interview on CNN Friday, after the White House meeting, Klobuchar rejected the demands

for an apology from Zelensky, declaring, “I think it is not an exaggeration to say, the future of Europe, the future of the free world, is before us.” At the same time, she called on Zelensky to sign a deal proposed by Trump to give US control over much of Ukraine’s mineral resources.

Appearing on CNN’s “State of the Union” program, Connecticut Senator Chris Murphy used far more apocalyptic language. He denounced the conduct of the White House as “absolutely shameful... The White House has become an arm of the Kremlin. Every single day, you hear from the national security adviser, from the president of the United States, from his entire national security team Kremlin talking points.”

Murphy claimed that Trump was rewriting history “in order to sign a deal with Putin that hands Putin Ukraine. That is disastrous for US national security. That means that China will be on the march. Putin may not stop. America may be at war with a nuclear power.”

While claiming he had “no problem” with a diplomatic solution to the war, the Democratic senator declared, “What Trump is suggesting is that there is going to be a cease-fire that will require Ukraine to withdraw from the front, which then allows Putin to just march straight into Ukraine.”

When interviewer Dana Bash pointed out that Murphy had voted to confirm Senator Marco Rubio as secretary of state, Murphy said he had made a mistake. “I think a lot of us thought that Marco Rubio was going to stand up to Donald Trump on an issue like this... that when Donald Trump would come to him and say, help me move America closer to Russia and to Russian values, Marco Rubio would stand up to him. Marco Rubio has not, and that’s been a great disappointment to many of his former colleagues in the Senate.”

The third senator to appear was the nominally

independent Senator Bernie Sanders, who has twice sought the presidential nomination of the Democratic Party. He is currently engaged in a campaign to plead with “moderate” House Republicans to oppose Trump’s budget cuts, conducted in rallies held under the fraudulent slogan of “Fighting Oligarchy.”

The first question from “Meet the Press” moderator Kristen Welker was about his reaction to the Oval Office meeting and the suggestion by House Speaker Mike Johnson, who preceded him on the program, that it might be necessary for Zelensky to resign as part of a peace deal with Russia.

Sanders replied, “I think that is a horrific suggestion. Zelensky is leading a country, trying to defend democracy against an authoritarian dictator, Putin, who invaded his country. And I think millions of Americans are embarrassed, are ashamed, that you have a president of the United States who says that Ukraine started the war, that Zelensky is a dictator. He’s got it exactly backwards.”

Wrapping himself in the American flag, Sanders continued, “And our job is to defend the 250-year tradition that we have of being the democratic leader of the world, not turn our backs on a struggling country that is trying to do the right thing.”

The two top congressional Democrats sounded the same theme in comments on the Trump-Zelensky meeting. Senate Democratic Leader Charles Schumer said, “Trump and Vance are doing Putin’s dirty work. Senate Democrats will never stop fighting for freedom and democracy.”

House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries called the Oval Office meeting “appalling,” saying it will only serve “to further embolden Vladimir Putin, a brutal dictator. The United States must not reward Russian aggression and continue to appease Putin.”

This barrage of criticism is far noisier than anything the Democrats have mounted over Trump’s ferocious assaults on federal workers, his demonization and persecution of immigrants, his efforts to establish a presidential dictatorship, or his support for massive cuts in federal spending on health care, with Medicaid as the most likely target. This disparity only confirms that the central issue dividing the two corporate-controlled parties is foreign policy, as it was during Trump’s first administration, when he was first impeached for temporarily holding back a shipment of weapons to

Ukraine.

Schumer gave the clearest expression of the real priorities of the Democrats when he announced that Senator Elissa Slotkin of Michigan, a former CIA officer, would give the official Democratic rebuttal to Trump’s nationally televised address to a joint session of Congress on March 4.

Slotkin spent years in Iraq with the CIA, after the US invasion of that country in 2003. She then headed the Iraq desk at the National Security Council—the White House agency that coordinates US foreign policy—first under Republican George W. Bush, then under Democrat Barack Obama, before moving to the Pentagon and finishing her military-intelligence career as a top aide to John Negroponte, the first US director of national intelligence.

Slotkin was one of more than a dozen “CIA Democrats” first elected to the House of Representatives in 2018 as the Democratic Party positioned itself as an aggressive proponent of US military intervention abroad, particularly against Russia. Her selection is a further indication that the US-NATO war in Ukraine remains the central priority of the Democratic wing of the US corporate elite.



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