

Democrats seek to divert opposition to Trump with anti-Russia warmongering

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Six weeks into the Trump administration, there is mounting opposition among workers and young people. Trump is moving to establish a presidential dictatorship, escalate attacks on the working class and carry out mass deportations of immigrants. The frontal assault on federal workers is producing growing outrage, and the broader attack on social programs, including plans to gut Medicaid, will affect millions.

Throughout this escalating crisis, the Democratic Party has been a portrait of impotence and complicity. It has accepted Trump's attacks without any opposition, offering at most gestures and empty statements. Trump's cabinet of reactionaries and fascists has sailed through Congress. Following Biden's pledge to facilitate a "smooth transition," the Democrats have enabled Trump's policies, including their vote to pass the anti-immigrant Laken Riley Act.

Now, suddenly, the Democrats have found their voice—on the question of war. Following Trump's recent meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, the Democrats have launched an all-out campaign, denouncing Trump as an ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin and accusing him of undermining US "national security."

The political dynamic behind this shift is clear: There exist two fundamentally different forms of opposition to the Trump administration. There is the growing opposition of the working class to his attacks on bedrock social programs, his destruction of democratic rights, his persecution of immigrants and his support for the Gaza genocide. And there is the opposition of significant sections of the ruling class, which is opposed to Trump's foreign policy shifts, particularly on Ukraine.

The Democratic Party speaks for the opposition of sections of the ruling class. It supports Trump and the

Republicans' reactionary social policies. Its aim is to channel popular anger into support for its own reactionary agenda—making opposition to Trump synonymous with support for war. This is a continuation, at a more advanced stage, of the strategy the Democrats pursued during the first Trump administration.

This strategy is evident in the Democrats' plan to respond to Trump's address to Congress which will be delivered Tuesday evening. The featured speaker will be Michigan Senator Elissa Slotkin, a former CIA operative who helped oversee US military operations in Iraq before joining the Pentagon. Slotkin, a leading advocate of war against Russia, has denounced Trump over Ukraine, declaring, "Ronald Reagan must be rolling over in his grave."

The basic line has been repeated by every Democrat. According to *Axios*, Democrats are preparing a "Ukraine ambush against Trump nominees" at Senate confirmation hearings Tuesday. "The relationship with NATO, the relationship with Ukraine, the president buddying up to dictator Putin... all of these are big problems," declared Democratic Oregon Senator Jeff Merkley in advance of the hearings.

Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, backed by the Democratic Socialists of America and other pseudo-left organizations, plays a particularly insidious role in the pro-war campaign. He is set to deliver a live-streamed response to Trump's remarks on Tuesday night, tasked with giving the Democratic Party's militarist agenda a populist veneer. His role is to corral working class opposition to Trump behind the faction of the ruling class that demands an escalation of war.

In remarks on *Meet the Press* Sunday, Sanders declared that "our job is to defend the 250-year tradition that we have of being the democratic leader of

the world” by continuing the war against Russia.

This is a disgusting effort to use the great democratic traditions of the American Revolution, which defeated the British monarchy, and the Civil War, which overthrew slavery, to disguise the present-day role of American imperialism, the most reactionary force on the planet.

Since emerging from World War II as the dominant capitalist power, the United States has propped up dictators, overthrown governments and waged wars to maintain the rule of a parasitic financial oligarchy. Sanders, while railing demagogically against the billionaires at home, has unshakeably backed the Democratic Party and its wars abroad.

Sanders followed this up with a three-page statement published Monday under the headline, “Meet Donald Trump’s New Best Friend, Vladimir Putin.” The statement strikes a McCarthyite tone, denouncing Putin as “a former Soviet spy who spent 16 years in the KGB,” then outlining his record as a representative of the Russian oligarchy.

There is no question that Putin is a reactionary representative of the Russian capitalist class, which arose out of the liquidation of the Soviet Union by the Stalinist bureaucracy. But his crimes against the working class, at home and on Russia’s periphery, are dwarfed by the crimes committed by American imperialism during the same period.

Sanders has conducted his entire political career apologizing for and facilitating these crimes. He either supported wars initiated by Democratic administrations (in the former Yugoslavia, Libya and Ukraine) or voted to fund wars launched by Republican administrations and continued by the Democrats (Iraq and Afghanistan).

The primary concern of the Democratic Party is to stifle the development of left-wing, socialist opposition to Trump by subordinating it to demands for escalation of war against Russia. Had they won the election, the Democrats would have continued and deepened Biden’s reactionary policies—war abroad, austerity at home and attacks on democratic rights—while working to suppress any movement of the working class.

Any association with the Democratic Party is politically fatal for a genuine movement in opposition to Trump’s fascist policies. Its attempt to make opposition to Trump synonymous with war against

Russia plays directly into his hands. The war is deeply unpopular among broad sections of workers and youth, and Trump, while fully committed to the interests of American imperialism and the financial oligarchy, cynically exploits this opposition for his own reactionary ends.

The growth of social opposition among workers and youth to the Trump administration must not be tied to the utterly reactionary policies of the Democratic Party, which speaks for the intelligence agencies, the Pentagon and Wall Street. The attempt to use opposition to Trump to strengthen the war drive against Russia must be rejected. The fight against dictatorship must be connected to the struggle against militarism and war, which ultimately means a struggle against capitalism itself.



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