

Mamdani responds to right-wing attacks with accommodations to the Democratic Party and big business

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In the week after his victory in the Democratic primary for New York City mayor, Zohran Mamdani has become the target of a ferocious campaign of threats and denunciations led by the fascist Republican Party and fueled by the corporate media and Democratic officials.

At the center of the campaign is Trump, who has repeatedly denounced Mamdani, a Democratic Socialists of America member, in fascistic terms. On Fox News Sunday, Trump warned that if Mamdani becomes mayor, “he’s going to have to do the right thing or they’re not getting any money.” At a press event Friday, he again attacked “this communist from New York,” declaring, “That’s a terrible thing for our country.”

Other Republican lawmakers, including Representative Andy Ogles of Tennessee, have called for Mamdani to be denaturalized and deported, and Trump’s fascistic “border czar” has threatened to increase mass detentions of immigrants.

The Democratic Party leadership, which backed Andrew Cuomo in the primaries, has done nothing to oppose the vicious threats from the far-right, with some even joining in attacking Mamdani. Most prominently, Democratic New York Senator Kirsten Gillibrand falsely claimed that Mamdani supported “global jihad” and is an “antisemite” because of his past comments in opposition to Israel’s genocide of the Palestinians in Gaza.

During a press briefing Friday, when asked by a reporter to respond to Republican calls for Mamdani’s deportation, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer simply stated, “that’s disgusting,” before quickly turning to the next question.

While some leading Democrats have endorsed Mamdani for the general election, both Schumer and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries have withheld support. Cuomo has signaled he will stay on the ballot as an independent, alongside current mayor Eric Adams. Billionaire Bill Ackman—former Democratic donor turned Trump supporter who bankrolled Cuomo’s primary campaign—has pledged to “take care of the fundraising” for a “centrist” alternative to Mamdani.

What the ruling class and its political representatives fear is not Mamdani’s minor reform proposals, but the popular sentiments behind the vote and expectations that will accompany his elevation to mayor of the city that is the home of Wall Street. Mamdani appealed to enormous hostility to social inequality, as well as opposition to the genocide in Gaza and the Trump administration’s assault on immigrants and moves to establish a presidential dictatorship.

Mamdani has himself responded by shifting rapidly to the right, seeking to reassure the Democratic Party establishment and sections of the corporate and financial oligarchy that his mayoral campaign represents no serious threat to capitalist interests.

In relation to his economic proposals, Mamdani has stressed the establishment character of his main priorities, including freezing rents (which was done during the previous administration of Bill de Blasio) and creating a “pilot program” of five city-run grocery stores, one in each of the boroughs of New York City.

In an interview with Kristin Welker on NBC News’ *Meet the Press* on Sunday, Mamdani was asked how he would pay for economic reforms, particularly under conditions in which New York’s Democratic Party

governor, Kathy Hochul, has vowed that she will not support any tax increases.

In response, Mamdani stressed that he wanted to “just tax [those making more than \$1 million a year] by 2% additional,” and to bring corporate tax rates to the same level as in New Jersey. In relation to Hochul, he said that his aim was not to “twist arms” but rather “build partnership. And I’m looking forward to having that with the governor.”

Mamdani was also asked to respond to statements from John Catsimatidis, the billionaire owner of Gristedes grocery chains, that “if the City of New York is going socialist,” he will shut down his stores and move the franchise.

Mamdani replied that his “vision for this city is for every single New Yorker, including business leaders,” arguing that even proposals like raising the top corporate tax rate to match New Jersey’s would benefit them by addressing the cost-of-living crisis that “prevents them from attracting and retaining the talent they need to grow their business.”

On meeting with these “business leaders,” Mamdani continued, “Ultimately, I am looking forward to having those meetings, having those sit-downs to make clear why this vision will benefit all.”

When asked, “do you think that billionaires have a right to exist?” Mamdani responded: “I don’t think that we should have billionaires because frankly it is so much money in a moment of such inequality. Ultimately, what we need more of is equality across our city, across our state and across our country. And I look forward to working with everyone, including billionaires, to make a city that is fairer for all of them.”

If it is the case that billionaires should not exist because of the levels of inequality, how is this to be squared with Mamani’s proposal to “work with” the billionaires in addressing the crisis and implementing politics that will “benefit everyone”?

Revealed in these comments is the basic contradiction of Mamdani’s perspective. While appealing to the mass social anger that propelled his election victory, Mamdani claims that the issues that drove his support can be resolved through the Democratic Party, which is a party of Wall Street and the ruling class, and without challenging the foundations of capitalist rule.

The interview followed reports that Mamdani is

actively seeking meetings with corporate and financial leaders. Kathy Wylde, head of the Partnership for New York City—a coalition of over 300 companies—said Mamdani called to request a meeting with the group’s members to discuss his policies. A spokesperson stated, “As Zohran has said throughout this campaign, he will meet with anyone and everyone to move our city forward.”

As part of this effort to consolidate support among sections of business and the political leadership of the Democratic Party, Mamdani has also “amped down” his opposition to Israel’s genocide in Gaza.

In the Meet the Press interview, Mamdani was pressed by Welker to condemn the phrase “globalize the intifada,” which he did not. In responding, however, Mamdani accepted the fiction of a “moment of antisemitism in our country and in our city.” He made no reference to the ongoing genocide in Gaza, which was a central issue in the broad popular support for his campaign.

Mamdani then revealed the central issue of his campaign, “What would it take to bring them [workers and youth in New York City] back to the Democratic Party?” He answered his own question, “A relentless focus on an economic agenda.”

The aim of strengthening the Democratic Party, a party of the ruling class and war, is incompatible with advancing the interests of the working class and realizing the aims of the hundreds of thousands who voted for Mamdani. Opposition to inequality, war and dictatorship cannot be waged through the Democratic Party and the institutions of the state. This is evident in both the ferocious reaction of the ruling class to Mamdani’s victory, and in Mamdani’s rapid political shifts in response to these attacks.



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