

Facing attacks from billionaires, Mamdani reassures ruling class by embracing police

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The New York City financial and political establishment has escalated its campaign against Zohran Mamdani, the Democratic Party nominee for mayor, since his upset primary victory over former governor Andrew Cuomo on June 24. In response, Mamdani, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), has scrambled to show the ruling class that it has nothing to fear from him.

The latest pretext for public attacks on Mamdani was a mass shooting in Midtown Manhattan on Monday that left four people dead, including a police officer.

The gunman, who then shot himself, left a note claiming that he suffered from chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE), and blaming the National Football League (NFL) for covering up the role of the violent sport in causing this fatal brain disease. The office building on Park Avenue, not far from the Grand Central Station transport hub, is home to offices of the NFL.

New York has some of the strictest gun laws in the US, but the gunman drove across country from Nevada where he had purchased the assault rifle. It is clear that no amount of security could have prevented this suicidal attack. But that did not stop Mamdani's critics from seizing on it. Their reaction made plain that if this shooting had not occurred, another pretext would have been found to advance their law-and-order campaign and paint Mamdani as "anti-police." They were aided, as usual, by the media, which has waged a nonstop campaign to whip up hysteria about crime in New York, despite statistics showing that street crime is at or near record lows.

The funeral on Thursday for slain police officer Didarul Islam, an immigrant from Bangladesh, was addressed by both New York Governor Kathy Hochul and Mayor Eric Adams, underscoring the role of the

police as an instrument of the capitalist state.

Adams, running for reelection as an independent because his administration is so unpopular he had no hope of winning the Democratic primary, used the funeral to denounce Mamdani for proposing to disband the NYPD's Strategic Response Team, notorious for its brutal crackdowns on peaceful protests. "When you start dismantling the pieces of the law enforcement apparatus that are specifically designed to carry out functions, that is extremely dangerous," said Adams.

Andrew Cuomo, also running an independent campaign after his decisive loss to Mamdani in the primary, chimed in: "Public safety is job one. It always has been, and the assemblyman shows a disdain for NYPD and seems like he has no concept of the importance of public safety."

Mamdani, fresh off a vacation in Uganda, responded by rushing to meet with the slain officer's family in the Bronx and holding a press conference where he sought to distance himself from earlier positions. "I am not defunding the police. I am not running to defund the police," he said. This about-face marked a public embrace of the NYPD and a repudiation of past calls by Mamdani and the DSA to shift some funds from police repression to social services.

At his press conference, he declared that he was a "candidate who is not fixed in time, one that learns and one that leads, and part of that means admitting as I have grown." In other words, Mamdani is fully prepared to abandon any positions deemed unacceptable by the ruling class and the Democratic Party establishment.

This public realignment with the repressive apparatus of the capitalist state is part of a broader campaign by Mamdani to reassure the ruling class.

In recent weeks, Mamdani has been conducting a

behind-the-scenes charm offensive, meeting with executives from Uber, Pfizer, Hearst, Loews and other corporate giants. At a closed-door gathering hosted by the real estate conglomerate Tishman Speyer, Mamdani also signaled his willingness to retain NYPD Commissioner Jessica Tisch, daughter of billionaire James Tisch.

Earlier this month, Mamdani signaled his further integration into the Democratic Party establishment with the appointment of former Democratic National Committee political director Jeffrey Lerner as his communications chief. Lerner previously served in the Obama White House and helped coordinate Obama's 2012 re-election campaign, and also worked under Cuomo when he was New York state attorney general.

A significant faction of the ruling class is opposed to the election of Mamdani—not so much because of the candidate himself, but out of fear of the popular sentiments behind his primary victory. This surprise result has unnerved a political and financial establishment that views any expression of mass discontent as a threat to its control over the political system.

Trump backers are prominent among those raising funds for Adams and Cuomo. The city's ruling elite is also concerned that it has not yet fully consolidated behind a single candidate. Super PACs are working in parallel to raise money from overlapping networks of multimillionaires. Betsy McCaughey, who served as New York's Republican lieutenant governor nearly 30 years ago, issued an invitation to a fundraiser for one such PAC, warning wealthy donors: "Fighting Mamdani is expensive. But allowing him to win will cost you more."

These frantic efforts to block Mamdani's election, despite his clear efforts to reassure the ruling class, speak to the depth of the crisis within the political establishment. This underscores the real role played by the DSA: to provide a political safety valve within the Democratic Party and a mechanism for diverting growing opposition among workers and youth back into the dead end of capitalist politics.

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