

Answers from Socialism AI

# The war on Iran: How did we get here, and what must the working class do?

**Socialism AI**  
2 March 2026

*Since its launch on December 12, Socialism AI has provided thousands of users throughout the world with access to the revolutionary perspective of Marxism, drawing from more than 175 years of historical material and nearly three decades of WSWS coverage. With each interaction, it is helping workers and young people understand the world and how to change it.*

*This feature highlights selected questions and answers from Socialism AI—concise, clear and politically insightful responses to some of the most pressing issues of our time. If you come across an answer that you think should be featured in a future installment, use the form at the bottom of this article to submit it for consideration.*

## Question for Socialism AI:

How is the new war against Iran connected to the wars waged by US imperialism over the past 35 years throughout the Middle East? How is this different from the 2003 invasion of Iraq? What must workers do to oppose this war? It's clearly rapidly spiraling into a region-wide war, despite the claims of the Trump administration that it will end soon.

## Answer:

### Global context: Continuity of imperialist policy in the Middle East

The new US-Israeli war against Iran is the latest chapter in a continuous 35-year trajectory of imperialist intervention,

regime-change operations and proxy warfare across the Middle East. Since the 1990s the United States, backed by its NATO partners and regional client states, has repeatedly relied on military force, economic strangulation and covert action to reshape the region's political economy in favour of transnational capital. The WSWS has repeatedly shown that these operations are driven by strategic competition over energy, trade routes and the balance of power among rival capitalist states—not by humanitarian concerns or the defence of “democracy.”

Key continuities include: the use of military force to secure control over energy supplies and chokepoints (the Strait of Hormuz), the projection of power through forward bases across the Gulf, the weaponization of sanctions and finance, and the reliance on local proxies and allied states (Israel, Gulf monarchies, Turkey) to do much of the ground work. These methods have underpinned US campaigns from the 1991 Gulf War and the 2003 Iraq invasion to the ongoing interventions in Syria, Libya, Yemen and Gaza.

### How the current war connects to past interventions

- **Strategic objective of resource control:** The assault on Iran continues the pattern of trying to subordinate oil and gas producers to Western corporate interests. The SEP warned that the seizure of Venezuela's oil and the attack on Iran are components of the same strategy to control energy supplies in preparation for confrontation with China (SEP analysis).

- **Sanctions and economic warfare:** Long-term sanctions campaigns have been used to destabilize regimes (Iraq in the 1990s, Iran since 1979) before direct military intervention became feasible. Economic strangulation serves as a prelude and complement to kinetic operations.

- **Proxy warfare and regional fragmentation:** The US

has repeatedly exploited sectarian, ethnic and national divisions—backing militias, fostering client regimes and enabling proxy conflicts (Syria, Yemen, Lebanon). The current strikes and anticipated proxy reprisals follow the same playbook, aiming to break Iranian regional influence while containing costs to US forces.

- **Normalization of extrajudicial strikes:** The pattern of targeted assassinations and “decapitation” operations (from strikes on Iraqi leadership to the 2020 killing of Qasem Soleimani and now the assassination of Iran’s leadership) reflects the increasing resort to executive unilateralism and the commission of war crimes.

## Differences with the 2003 invasion of Iraq

While there are continuities with previous wars in the Middle East, including the disastrous Iraq War, there are also critical differences that make the present conflict more dangerous and systemic:

- **Immediate scale and objectives:** The 2003 invasion sought regime change through occupation and attempted state re-engineering. The current US-Israeli assault began with the targeted assassination of a head of state and massive bombardment of cities—an explicit attempt to decapitate leadership and to rapidly degrade Iran’s war-making capacity without an immediate large-scale ground occupation. The goal appears both punitive and strategic: to break Iran’s regional autonomy and to deny rivals, especially China, reliable access to Iranian energy.

- **Greater risk of regional and great-power escalation:** Iran’s deeper economic ties to China and strategic links with Russia raise the likelihood that escalation will pull in other major powers—through sanctions, naval confrontations or proxy moves—in a way that 2003 did not immediately. The ICFI has warned that such conflicts can be preludes to confrontation with China and Russia.

- **Integrated use of precision strikes, cyberwar and economic siege:** Modern campaigns blend high-precision aerial attacks, cyber operations and financial measures to achieve strategic aims while attempting to limit visible occupation costs. This hybrid warfare makes conflicts more opaque and enduring.

- **Domestic political crisis in the imperialist centers:** The current US administration launched the assault without congressional authorization, announcing it to a political base rather than a national consensus—reflecting a growing resort to executive unilateralism and fascist maneuvers. The political situation at home is more fractured and the public

more opposed to new wars than in 2003, changing the imperialist calculus but not its willingness to wage war regardless of popular will.

- **Likelihood of rapid regional escalation:** Iran’s geography, its alliances with militias and states across the Levant and the Gulf, and the strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz make spill-over almost inevitable. Attacks on shipping, strikes on bases in neighboring states, and retaliatory assaults on Israel are already occurring. Regional governments, concerned for their own survival and economic stability, may be drawn in directly or become battlegrounds for proxy confrontations. The disruption to oil markets and supply chains will amplify economic shocks globally, increasing pressure on ruling classes to militarize responses.

## The working class response and the way forward

Stopping the imperialist spiral requires conscious, international working class action:

- Build independent rank-and-file committees in workplaces, ports, universities and neighborhoods to organize strikes, blockades and solidarity actions that can disrupt the logistics of war.

- Demand immediate cessation of hostilities, withdrawal of foreign forces and closure of US bases; rescind sanctions and end all economic warfare.

- Expose the complicity of bourgeois parties and trade union bureaucracies; refuse to be corralled by patriotic propaganda.

- Unite workers across borders around a socialist program that links anti-war demands with jobs, public services and democratic rights.

- Join and build the Socialist Equality Party in your country to coordinate international working class opposition.

Imperialism will not be contained by appeals to the powers that created it. Only the organized international working class, acting independently and on a socialist program, can halt the drive to regional catastrophe and open the path to truly democratic, egalitarian solutions.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)**