

DSA promotes Democrats' fake opposition to Iran war

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The Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) and their affiliated magazine *Jacobin* are seeking to undermine mass opposition to the criminal war in Iran and channel it behind the Democratic Party. The Democrats, meanwhile, are supporting the neo-colonial aims of the war, while for the most part criticizing the manner in which Trump is carrying it out.

In a statement issued by the DSA on the first day of the US-Israeli attack, Saturday, February 28, the organization called for a “return to diplomacy on the part of the United States.” This is despite the fact that both last June’s unprovoked US assault and this week’s war were launched in the midst of negotiations, making it crystal clear that for Washington, “diplomacy” is a cover for military aggression. Iran has up to now rejected further talks with the gangster regime headed by Trump.

The statement when on to say:

We call on the American people to organize and participate in mass mobilizations against the attacks on Iran, contact their representatives in Congress and demand that they vote for the Iran War Powers Resolution. ... A popular solidarity movement across the country can shift the political terrain and exact a political cost of warmongers.

What is the meaning of this proposal?

The DSA is well aware that mass protests against the war and the fascist Trump administration will emerge. But as far as it is concerned, this mass opposition from below must be channeled behind the Democratic Party and its anti-war posturing and rendered impotent by the delusion that popular pressure can force the ruling class and its government agents to abandon their policies of war, dictatorship and austerity.

The Democrats’ Iran War Powers Resolution, already defeated in the Senate, is a purely performative fraud. Were it to be enacted, it would require Trump after 30 days to seek congressional authorization to continue the war. It is unlikely that it will pass in the House, narrowly controlled by the Republican Party. This is all the more the case since three Democratic House members—Josh Gottheimer of New Jersey, Jared Moskowitz of Florida and Greg Landsman of Ohio—have already declared that they will vote “No.”

If it had somehow passed, it would have been vetoed by Trump. Overriding his veto would have required a two-thirds majority in each chamber, which had no chance of happening.

The Democrats have supplied the votes to pass every military funding bill proposed by the White House. Last October, the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2026, which authorized nearly \$900 billion, cleared the Senate on a 77-20 vote, with 26 Democrats voting for the bill. In the House, 17 Democrats voted “Yes” to ensure passage of the bill.

As for the efficacy of mass appeals to capitalist governments in ending war and repression, the experience of the past three years provides definitive proof to the contrary. Tens of millions in the US and around the world demonstrated against the genocide in Gaza and millions in the US demonstrated against mass raids, detentions, deportations and violent repression by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP), with no impact on government policy. This did not prove the futility of mass mobilizations from below, but rather the bankruptcy of the reformist perspective and program of those pseudo-left groups, such as the DSA, that politically dominated the demonstrations.

On the same day as the DSA statement on the war, February 28, *Jacobin* published an article by staff writer Branko Marcetic criticizing the launching of the war against Iran not from the standpoint of the Iranian and international working class, but on the grounds that it is harmful to the interests of US imperialism.

In line with Democratic Party critics of the war, Marcetic wrote: “There is no universe where this war serves the interests of the United States.”

There can be only one meaning in this context of the phrase “United States,” i.e., the economic and political establishment that rules the country. Marcetic and *Jacobin* imply that the US killing machine could be more productively employed against a different population, in which case it could have the support of the DSA.

Indeed, he goes on to suggest one such target:

In fact, Iran is just the latest in a series of relatively weak, WMD-less states that have come into Washington’s regime-change crosshairs in the twenty-first century, which include Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and, more recently, Venezuela and Cuba—all while the armed-to-the-teeth North Koreans remain safe from US attack and Trump writes love letters to its leader.

Further on, he writes:

So whose interest *does* this serve? The obvious answer is a war-hungry Israeli leadership ... this really is an Israeli war, outsourced to Americans to fight and die for. Benjamin Netanyahu has been trying to get the United States into this war for more than thirty years, including repeatedly when the feeble, ailing Joe Biden was in power. Yet it was only once Trump took office that he got his wish, proving to be an even bigger doormat for the Israelis to wipe their shoes on.

Jacobin and Marcetic doubled down on the line of the US waging a war dictated by Israel in an article published on March 4, headlined “The US

Is Fighting Israel's War on Iran."

This assertion that Trump is a stooge of the Israelis, who are really calling the shots when it comes to US foreign policy, directly echoes the line of overtly antisemitic elements within the fascist MAGA movement that are denouncing the war as a Jewish conspiracy and accusing Trump of betraying the "America First" program. This faction includes such prominent far-right figures as Tucker Carlson and Marjorie Taylor Greene.

It also aligns with the pretext for the war given at one point by Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who said the US preemptively attacked Iran because it knew Israel was about to strike the country, prompting Iran to launch attacks against US forces and interests in the Middle East.

All such claims invert the real relationship between US imperialism, the center of world reaction and militarism, and its attack dog in the Middle East, the Zionist state of Israel.

This support for US imperialism, whatever the left-sounding rhetoric, has deep roots in the history and origins of the DSA. The DSA was founded in 1982 through a merger between the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee (DSOC) and the New American Movement. The latter was comprised of middle-class "New Left" elements oriented to the Democratic Party. The DSOC, led by Michael Harrington, was an outgrowth of the movement led by his mentor, Max Shachtman.

Shachtman was a former leader of the Trotskyist movement in the US who rejected the defense of the Soviet Union and broke from Trotskyism in 1940. He claimed that as a result of the Stalinist degeneration of the state that had issued from the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, there was nothing left in the USSR for the working class to defend in opposition to imperialist military aggression. Expressing deep demoralization in the face of fascism in Europe and the counterrevolutionary Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union, he claimed the USSR was no longer a workers state, but rather some variant of "state capitalism."

By 1950, Shachtman had become a full-blown anti-communist. He became an adviser to the AFL-CIO trade union bureaucracy. He supported US imperialism in the Korean War, the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba and the Vietnam War.

Harrington took on Shachtman's anti-communism and insisted on a policy of operating within the Democratic Party, opposing a break with this party of Wall Street and the CIA. This has remained the policy of the DSA, which functions as a faction of the Democratic Party.

In a 1984 interview with the *New York Times*, Harrington identified his views as defined by "visceral anti-communism." He went on to say:

An illustration of this shift is that when I criticize American foreign policy, our intervention in Central America, I do that in the name of the national security of the United States. ... Our critique is that President Reagan's policy with regard to Nicaragua does not promote the national security, it hurts it.

Forty-two years later, the real attitude of the DSA to US imperialism remains the same. This was underscored last month by New York Democratic Party/DSA Mayor Zohran Mamdani's second White House visit with Trump. Mamdani sought the meeting, which took place two days after Trump's fascist State of the Union rant and as the final preparations were being made by the US war fleet off the coast of Iran to launch Operation Epic Fury. That occurred just two days after Mamdani stood next to a beaming Trump to trumpet a \$21 billion New York public housing scheme that will provide a new profit bonanza for real estate swindlers, no doubt including Trump himself.

It is likely that Trump tipped off his "socialist" buddy that the war was imminent and received assurances from the DSA mayor that he would do

his best to quash popular opposition.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* wrote on February 27:

Mamdani's collaboration with Trump expresses the class character of his politics. And it must be stated plainly: these are the politics of the Democratic Socialists of America as a whole. Mamdani is not a rogue actor. He is the DSA's most prominent elected official, hailed by them as their greatest political success story. What Mamdani does in the Oval Office, the DSA does. His handshake with Trump is the DSA's handshake with Trump.

This was demonstrated one day later, when *Jacobin* published an article by senior editor Meagan Day hailing Mamdani's love-fest with Trump as "savvy" and "smart," and praising Mamdani as a "strategic genius." At the same time she attacked critics of Mamdani's alliance with Trump—the would-be dictator, mass murderer and war criminal—as "sectarians."

Those rank-and-file members of the DSA who joined the organization in good faith, who thought they were joining a movement for socialism, equality, democratic rights and an end to war, must take stock of what the perspective and practice of the DSA have produced: an alliance with the fascist right and defense of US imperialism.

The mass opposition to war that will emerge in the US and internationally in response to the military genocide underway in Iran must reject the treacherous pro-capitalist and pro-imperialist politics of the DSA and other pseudo-left tendencies.

The DSA and *Jacobin* never speak about the objective roots of Trump's fascist politics, as though it were simply a matter of an evil and deranged individual who inexplicitly has come to occupy the most powerful political post in the world. That is because they seek to conceal the source of global war and political reaction, which is the capitalist system, and the need for the independent mobilization of the working class on a socialist and internationalist program to put an end to war and fascism by putting an end to capitalism.

The Socialist Equality Party and the International Committee of the Fourth International advance the only principled and viable strategy:

First, the struggle against war must be based on the working class, the great revolutionary force in society, uniting behind it all progressive elements in the population.

Second, the new anti-war movement must be anti-capitalist and socialist, since there can be no serious struggle against war except in the fight to end the dictatorship of finance capital and the economic system that is the fundamental cause of militarism and war.

Third, the new anti-war movement must be completely and unequivocally independent of, and hostile to, all political parties and organizations of the capitalist class.

Fourth, the new anti-war movement must, above all, be international, mobilizing the vast power of the working class in a unified global struggle against imperialism.

Those who agree with this program should join the SEP and its sister organizations in the ICFI.



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