

# *Jacobin* proposes to subordinate opposition to war to the interests of imperialism

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11 March 2026

On March 9, *Jacobin*, the online publication affiliated with the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), published an article by Eric Blanc headlined “Why Is There No Antiwar Movement in the US?” The piece is essentially a political brief for the Democratic Party, calling for the subordination of antiwar sentiment to the interests of American imperialism.

Blanc is a Rutgers professor and member of the DSA and its Bread and Roses caucus. A former member of the now-defunct International Socialist Organization (ISO), he is a regular *Jacobin* contributor. Since joining the DSA after the ISO’s implosion in 2019, Blanc has repeatedly argued that workers must orient to the trade union apparatus and the Democratic Party.

Blanc’s latest article appears under conditions in which polls show that a majority of Americans oppose the war in Iran and that, by every measure, no war in modern American history at its outset has had so little popular support as this war.

The central problem confronting the political establishment is the danger that this widespread opposition will develop into an independent anti-war movement outside the framework of the Democratic Party and American bourgeois politics. Blanc’s article serves a definite function in this context.

To explain the absence of an anti-war movement, Blanc first advances a series of psychological explanations. Americans, he claims, “feel powerless,” are “overwhelmed” by the scale of Trump’s attacks and lack “inspiration.”

Blanc’s answer to resignation is to offer “inspiring examples of successful struggles.” But the examples he provides only underscore the bankruptcy of his perspective.

He points to Minnesota and claims that “mass resistance” against ICE led to a “successful” outcome. This is false. ICE and CBP continue to operate. Federal agents continue to abduct people, and the Trump administration is expanding ICE operations throughout the country. Democratic Party officials, local authorities and the union apparatus are containing, diverting and suppressing support for a general strike to abolish the immigration police and drive the fascists from Washington.

The same applies to the calls for a general strike that emerged from below in Minneapolis. These did not arise from the Democrats or the trade union bureaucracy but in opposition to them. The union apparatus did everything it could to suffocate

that movement, just as it has done nothing to mobilize workers against the war in Iran, the genocide in Gaza or the proxy war against Russia in Ukraine.

Blanc’s arguments all share a common premise: Responsibility for the absence of a mass movement lies primarily with the population itself. Workers and youth, he suggests, are demoralized, distracted or insufficiently motivated.

Blanc can speak for his own mental state. As for millions of workers and youth, they are in fact angry and outraged over the war, social inequality and the escalating assault on democratic rights. They are looking for a way to fight. To the extent there is a feeling of powerlessness, this is due particularly to the role of the Democratic Party and the DSA itself in encouraging at every point a feeling of demoralization, that nothing can be done.

Leon Trotsky wrote in *Class, Party and Leadership*, analyzing the defeats of the Spanish Revolution by those who sought to foist upon the masses responsibility for their own treachery, that “classical trick of all traitors, deserters and their attorneys.” Changing what needs to be changed, Blanc is performing a similar operation.

After indulging in armchair psychology, Blanc turns to what is for him the central issue.

“Sectarianism,” he writes, has “helped marginalize anti-war activity.” The problem, according to the learned professor, is that “rather than build the broadest and deepest possible opposition to US military aid and interventions abroad, too much antiwar activity in recent years has leaned into alienating, excessively radical rhetoric and slogans.”

Blanc is particularly upset that “a bizarrely high amount of activist energy has gone toward calling out elected officials like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez,” even though, he claims, “she has never voted for US military aid to Israel and has vociferously opposed the war in Iran.”

By “sectarianism,” Blanc means the *World Socialist Web Site*’s political opposition to the Democratic Party, an imperialist party that supports war. And by the “broadest and deepest” possible opposition, he means subordination to the Democratic Party. That is, he proposes an “anti-war movement” subordinated to the interests of American

imperialism.

Blanc does not in fact refer to the Democratic Party once by name in his entire article, since his aim is to cover up for its role. Members of the so-called “opposition party” in Washington are already preparing to offer Trump billions more in Pentagon funds to continue the imperialist war against Iran. *Politico* reported last week that “Several Democrats on the Senate Armed Services Committee aren’t ruling out supporting more Pentagon funding,” including “Sen. Jack Reed of Rhode Island, as well as Sens. Gary Peters of Michigan, Tim Kaine of Virginia and Elissa Slotkin of Michigan.”

Slotkin said, “I need to know the goals and the plan ... I don’t rule anything out. I mean, we’re in it.”

As for Ocasio-Cortez, a fellow DSA member, Blanc’s statement that she “never voted for US military aid to Israel” is a political fraud.

Ocasio-Cortez has repeatedly functioned to trap left-wing opposition within the Democratic Party. She backed Biden while his administration armed and financed the destruction of Gaza. During the mass anti-genocide protests that erupted in 2023, Ocasio-Cortez played a critical role in politically disorienting the movement.

She hosted pro-Israel lobbyists in an online forum that portrayed critics of Israel’s assault on Gaza as “antisemitic,” providing a platform for the narrative used by the Democratic Party and university administrations to smear student protesters. Even when she occasionally issued rhetorical criticisms of the assault, these were repeatedly paired with reaffirmations of support for Democratic Party policy and Israeli military “defense” systems.

Whatever tactical disagreements may exist within the Democratic Party over tone, messaging or timing, the fundamental issue is that it defends US imperialism and capitalism. The fact that Ocasio-Cortez occasionally calls herself a socialist makes her role all the more insidious. She is not a target of WSWS polemics because she is a unique or exceptional bourgeois politician but because of the role she and the DSA as a whole play in disorienting workers and youth looking for an alternative to capitalism.

As for Mamdani, the other leading member of the DSA, whom Blanc does not mention, he shook hands with Trump in the White House days before the criminal assault on Iran.

What Blanc and the DSA are in fact absolutely opposed to is a genuine anti-war movement that is rooted in the working class and fights for the international unity of the working class to put an end to capitalism and establish socialism. They reject any perspective that does not appeal to the war makers and their enablers but instead seeks to stop war through mass action from below, including strikes and the independent organization of workers and youth across workplaces, schools and neighborhoods.

Instead, Blanc proposes as a central strategy a movement to “quitGPT,” which will do absolutely nothing. He then writes

that the 2028 presidential election must “in part” be “a referendum” on military spending, imperialist war and support for Israel.

Workers are told not to build an independent movement now but to channel opposition into the Democratic Party and wait for the next election. This is a program for political paralysis.

Moreover, it ignores the actual political trajectory of the regime. Trump has threatened to run for a third term, spoken openly of extending his grip on power and is calling for the passage of the anti-voter “SAVE America act” while his political allies threaten to deploy immigration police at November polling sites. To orient workers and youth to 2028 under these conditions is to counsel prostration before a ruling class rapidly escalating towards dictatorship and global war.

As the ruling class careens towards war and dictatorship, the working class, the vast majority of society, is moving in the opposite direction. In the last year millions have participated in “No Kings” protests in the US and internationally. In the face of right-wing threats and police violence, high school students on a daily basis throughout the United States are walking out of class in support of their immigrant brothers and sisters.

The social basis for a genuine, mass anti-war movement exists. The problem is not lack of popular anger. It is the subordination of workers and youth from the Democrats, the trade union bureaucracy and the capitalist system.

The task is to build rank-and-file committees in workplaces, schools and neighborhoods, independent of both capitalist parties and the trade union apparatus, and to unify workers across national lines in a common struggle against war and the system that produces it.

Blanc’s *Jacobin* article is not an explanation for the absence of an antiwar movement in the United States. It is propaganda aimed at blocking the development of such a movement.



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