

# Australian Greens' phony posturing against Iran war

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In Australia, as internationally, the utterly criminal US-led war against Iran has provoked widespread shock and anger. Those sentiments are particularly directed against the Labor government, which has been among the most enthusiastic supporters of the war and is an active participant.

Under those conditions, the condemnations of the war by the Australian Greens have elicited a response. The Greens have denounced Labor's participation in the war and have branded it as illegal, something that no other parliamentary party has done.

The political function of the Greens' criticisms, however, is to direct opposition back behind the very Labor government and parliamentary establishment that is complicit in the war. The Greens' posturing goes hand-in-hand with appeals to Labor to change course based on suggestions that its participation in the war is an unfortunate mistake that could easily be remedied.

The line was set in the very first statement issued by the Greens the day after US President Donald Trump launched his sneak attack on February 28. "The Greens condemn these illegal, abhorrent and unilateral attacks," Greens leader Larissa Waters declared.

Waters took note of the fact that Labor Prime Minister Anthony Albanese had immediately declared his government's support for the war, branding this as "disgraceful." But in the very next breath, she stated: "The Labor government must immediately rule out Australian support for Trump and Netanyahu's illegal war. No resources. No intelligence. No more cover."

To use a colloquialism, the horse had well and truly bolted on that front. The Australian military is deeply integrated with the US war machine, the US-Israeli war depends on real-time intelligence relayed from the joint Pine Gap spy base in Central Australia, and the Labor government parrots all of Washington's lies to justify the war.

In the same statement, Greens Senator David Shoebridge introduced another theme of the party's position on the war. The rapidity with which Labor had supported the war, he stated, "proves without a shadow of a doubt that Labor has outsourced Australian foreign policy to Washington."

Waters declared that "Australia must be a force for peace and diplomacy across the world." She has said in parliament that "we deserve an independent foreign policy." The Greens have linked this to their calls for an end to AUKUS, the militarist pact of the US, the UK and Australia and for an end to the US alliance.

The Greens have not shifted their position even as Australia's participation in the war has become more open and direct. They condemned the involvement of Australian personnel in a murderous attack on an unarmed and defenceless Iranian vessel off the coast of Sri Lanka, as well as last week's announcement by Labor that it is dispatching a warplane, missiles and troops to the Gulf to aid the war against Iran.

But despite these developments, proving that Labor is an active, willing and important participant in the war, the operative call of the Greens,

featured on its website, remains: "We call on the Albanese Government to: Withdraw support for the US-Israeli war against Iran and clearly condemn the bombing."

In practice, that is to encourage workers and young people to simply plead with the government that is involved in waging the war, not to mount a political struggle against it.

It is the exact same position that the Greens have advanced over the course of more than three years of the genocide in Gaza. While at times noting that Labor is complicit in those historic war crimes, the Greens have insisted that with sufficient "pressure," Labor can be compelled to end its backing for the US and Israeli atrocities against the Palestinians.

That argument politically wrecked the mass movement against the genocide, subordinating it to the pro-genocide government. Labor has not shifted to the left, but has shifted further to the right, identifying itself even more openly with the Israeli regime and conducting an ongoing anti-democratic rampage against opposition, including through laws potentially criminalising protests and even anti-Zionist political speech and organisations.

In putting forward the same position in relation to the war on Iran, the Greens make no reference to the experience of the anti-genocide movement. They do not want political lessons to be drawn, as they put forward the same bankrupt protest politics oriented to Labor. And in fact, the Greens make virtually no reference to any antecedent developments.

That is not accidental. The premise of the Greens' appeals to Labor is that its support for the war is a policy of the day, unconnected to its record or class character.

However, the record shows that Labor is the preeminent party of imperialist war. It has frequently been brought to power by the ruling class in times of war, including the two world wars of the last century. And it has either directly overseen or backed Australia's participation in all the criminal US-led wars in the Middle East, beginning with the 1991 Gulf War against Iraq.

In that context, Labor's support for the onslaught against Iran is not a surprise, but the logical continuation of its participation in wars that have spanned almost 40 years, in which American imperialism has sought to offset its protracted economic decline through militarism. The aim is to secure control over the resource-rich and strategic Middle East, as part of a confrontation with Washington's rivals, above all Russia and China, which is leading to world war.

The related fact that the Greens cover up is that Australia is now and has been since its federation in 1901 an imperialist power, pursuing the interests of its banks and corporations through militarism and war. Shoebridge's laments about Australia having "outsourced" its foreign policy to Washington, and the calls for a more "independent foreign policy," cover up Australia's imperialist record, presenting it instead as the hapless victim of the US. In reality, the US alliance is the mechanism through which Australia, as a middle-order imperialist power, advances its own predatory interests, particularly in the South Pacific.

The calls for an “independent foreign policy” reflect the interests, not of workers and young people, but of a minority wing of the Australian capitalist class itself.

This layer is not opposed to militarism or war in the slightest. However, it is fearful of the economic implications of the complete alignment with the US, under conditions where Washington is preparing for war against China, which remains Australia’s leading trading partner. And it is worried that Australia’s frontline role in such a war, which has been deepened under the Labor government, will provoke mass opposition from the working class.

In practice, the calls for an independent military build-up amount to an alternative strategy for the aggressive prosecution of Australian imperialist interests. That was demonstrated in the lead-up to last year’s May federal election. The Greens, which in the past projected a pacifist coloration, issued their first-ever costed military policy, calling for the development of “sovereign” Australian missile and drone capabilities.

Those offensive weapons would inevitably be used to advance Australian interests in the Pacific. And notwithstanding the Greens’ condemnations of the US alliance, in the event of a war with China, the weaponry would be integrated into American imperialism’s military operations in the Indo-Pacific.

The Greens’ costed military policy was a signal to the ruling class that it had “matured” and could be trusted with playing a central role in the oversight of Australia’s military-intelligence complex. Having denounced the onslaught on Gaza as genocide for months, the Greens dropped the issue in the election campaign. Their entire pitch was to beg for a coalition with Labor, if it failed to achieve a majority of seats as polls at the time suggested. That is, the Greens were ready and willing to join a government that was participating in the genocide and overseeing AUKUS.

The Greens electoral calculations proved mistaken and Labor formed government in its own right. But the Greens have continued to collaborate with Labor. That has been the case even as Labor has joined the war on Iran, with the Greens helping it to pass changes to superannuation taxation, while pointing to the limited and essentially pro-business character of the measure itself. For the Greens, the historic war against Iran, like the genocide, is one issue among many, and is not an obstacle to “working with” the pro-US, pro-war Labor government.

### **The pro-imperialist record of the Greens**

Just as Labor’s open support for the war is not an aberration, so too the bogus posturing of the Greens is rooted in its class character. Notwithstanding its occasional “left” rhetoric, the Greens is a capitalist party, committed to the parliamentary order and to the defence of capitalism and Australian imperialism. The Greens’ record on war has been either to divert opposition back behind the political establishment, or to openly support imperialist operations.

The Greens denounced the 2003 invasion of Iraq and Australia’s participation. But as with their current calls for an “independent foreign policy,” their opposition was largely from the standpoint that the Australian military should focus its operations in the Indo-Pacific to secure “our interests,” i.e., those of Australian imperialism. At the same time, the Greens repeatedly lent support to the brutal neo-colonial occupation of Afghanistan.

This more open support of imperialist intervention became even more pronounced in the 2010s. In 2011, the Greens were the most frothing supporters of a US-led regime-change operation targeting the Libyan government of President Muammar Gaddafi. The Greens outflanked the

then Labor government from the right, being the first Australian parliamentary party to demand that NATO impose a “no-fly zone,” meaning a direct US bombardment of Libya.

That operation having laid waste to Libya, the Greens then backed a similar US-led operation targeting Syria. They hailed the CIA-funded Islamist rebels, and again condemned the Australian government for not “doing enough” to aid the war effort, including with the imposition of sanctions.

More recently, the Greens have been the most vociferous supporters of the US-NATO proxy war against Russia in Ukraine. They have depicted the war as an effort to defend “democracy” and “human rights” in Ukraine, covering over the reality that the conflict was deliberately provoked by Washington and has been used by it to try and inflict a decisive defeat on Russia.

The Greens’ support for that war is particularly significant, because it is a graphic demonstration of where all the imperialist operations of the past 40 years are leading. Contrary to the Greens’ depiction of the wars in the Middle East and elsewhere as essentially disconnected episodes, they are components of a single US-led drive to reestablish its imperialist hegemony, the trajectory of which is to a world war with Russia and China.

By supporting the war against Russia in Ukraine, the Greens have demonstrated that whatever their tactical criticisms, they are on board.

That has also found expression in the Greens’ support for imperialist provocations against Iran. In 2022, for instance, the Greens issued a statement in response to an Iranian government crackdown on demonstrations, demanding that the Australian government “uphold human rights in Iran.”

It called upon the Labor government to impose sanctions on Iranian government and business figures, similar to those that have targeted Russia. And it demanded that the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, a key component of the state apparatus, be listed as a “terrorist organisation,” a step the Labor government eventually took last year.

The statement was framed from the standpoint of opposition to the repression of the Iranian regime. But the call for the same Western powers who have laid waste to the Middle East to oppose such repression is staggering hypocrisy and an exercise in imperialist propaganda.

Socialists oppose the Iranian regime from the standpoint of building a socialist movement of the Iranian working class against it. Such opposition is inseparable from complete and intransigent opposition to all imperialist provocations and measures against a historically-oppressed country, which have nothing to do with “human rights,” but are simply the pretext for predatory operations and war.

The Greens are hostile to a socialist perspective, not only in Iran, but everywhere including in Australia. They are seeking to cover up the reality that the current war and the eruption of imperialist militarism are the expression of a breakdown of the global capitalist system.

The critical task is to build a revolutionary anti-war movement uniting the working class internationally and directing its struggles to the socialist reorganisation of society as the only means of halting the plunge into barbarism. In Australia, that struggle requires not only the most determined political fight against the Labor government, but also against the Greens.



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