After the US midterms: What next?

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The overwhelming defeat of the Republican Party in the midterm elections registers a growing rebellion against the framework of right-wing politics that has dominated the United States and its two-party system for decades.

The vote was the sharpest repudiation of a sitting president's party in the more than half century since the 1974 elections that followed the impeachment and resignation of Richard Nixon. On Tuesday the Democrats won the national House vote by about 13 points and gained at least seven Senate seats, six of them in states Trump carried three times.

The shift ran through every region and every section of the population. It was sharpest among those whom Trump claimed as his base: rural counties, young men and workers without college degrees. Trump made the election a referendum on himself and lost resoundingly.

Within the confines of a political system that permits no alternative to the two parties of big business, the vote reflects opposition to the war on Iran, inflation, extreme levels of social inequality and attacks on democratic rights. It is the continuation, in the context of an election, of the No Kings demonstrations involving millions of people last year and the mass protests against ICE murders in Minneapolis and other cities that erupted at the beginning of 2026.

The vote is part of the international movement of the mass demonstrations of youth and workers that have spread over the past two months across France, Italy, Greece, Belgium, Spain and Germany. Moreover, the debacle suffered by Trump follows by only two weeks the defeat of the fascist Bolsonaro in Brazil.

There is a genuine elation among workers and young people over the humiliation of Trump. But not only does he remain in office—and committed to the pursuit of his fascistic agenda—there is an unbridgeable chasm between the sentiments animating masses of people and the Democratic Party.

For all the election night hoopla, the transfer of a congressional majority for the Democrats will not fundamentally change the policies of the ruling class. The wars will expand, social inequality will increase and the assault on democratic rights will continue. While the working class is moving to the left, the financial-corporate oligarchy will continue its program of imperialist militarism and class war.

Throughout Trump's two terms, the Democrats, far from opposing Trump, functioned as his enablers. Their stance has never changed: bipartisanship, "common ground," a readiness to "work with" the president. They repeated it as Trump sent troops into American cities, built detention camps for immigrants and launched a war on Iran.

The Democrats will rely on the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) to provide this program with a left cover. On Tuesday the number of DSA members in the House rose from two to eight, as six newly elected members from New York, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Colorado and California joined Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Rashida Tlaib.

The DSA contingent will function as a fig leaf for the Democrats. Its members ran as Democrats and will sit in a caucus led by Hakeem Jeffries, for whom Ocasio-Cortez and Tlaib have voted as the party's candidate for Speaker in every Congress since 2023.

The record of the DSA's best-known officeholder shows where this leads. As millions of people demonstrated against Trump, Zohran Mamdani, the DSA mayor of New York, met with Trump at the White House twice and welcomed him to Gracie Mansion in a demonstrative display of political collaboration.

This conduct was not a matter merely of cowardice. The Democratic Party is a party of Wall Street and the ruling class, and what it fears above all is opposition to Trump from below. The one issue on which it waged a relentless campaign against Trump was the war against Russia in Ukraine.

Within hours of the polls closing, the Democrats were back on script. "The American people have chosen the economy over extremism. The American people have chosen hope over hatred," declared Jeffries, who will

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become Speaker of the House in January. “[W]e are ready, willing and able to find bipartisan common ground with the other side of the aisle.”

Millions did not vote for “hope over hatred.” They voted against war, social misery and dictatorship. After two years spent searching for common ground with a would-be dictator, however, Jeffries announced that the search would continue.

Barack Obama sang from the same hymnal, calling for “a politics that brings people together rather than divides them.” It was Obama who, the day after Trump’s first election in 2016, assured the country that the contest had been merely “an intramural scrimmage” between two sides of the same team.

The offer of “bipartisan common ground” to a party that has spent two years working to establish a presidential dictatorship is a pledge to Wall Street, and Wall Street took note. On Wednesday, the Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 1,570 points, or 3 percent, its best day since April 2025 and its second best since Trump was re-elected.

That was the verdict of the financial oligarchy on the election. The bankers are neither naive nor sentimental. They know that the Democrats are not going to implement a policy of social reform, let alone socialism. If they believed the election posed any threat to their interests, they would not be celebrating.

After Bill Clinton’s election in 1992, the Democrats imposed deficit reduction and abolished welfare. After Barack Obama’s election in 2008, they rescued the banks, halved the wages of newly hired autoworkers and offered cuts to Social Security in pursuit of a “grand bargain” with the Republicans. Joe Biden, who followed Trump’s first term, waged war against Russia, armed the genocide in Gaza and prepared the way for Trump’s return.

The other line that predominates in the media is that the election marks a return to normalcy. “The system has held,” the *New York Times* editorial board proclaimed, under the headline “Trump Has Met His Match.”

Do not be deceived: Trump is a symptom, not the cause. He is the political representative of a financial oligarchy that retains its grip on power.

Two forces will dominate policy and the response of the state in the coming period. The first is the economic crisis, which is showing many signs of entering a new stage. With the national debt above $40 trillion and the war driving up prices and borrowing costs, the ruling class will demand that the working class pay. The *Washington Post*, owned by Jeff Bezos, laid out the agenda on Wednesday, proclaiming that “one issue cries out for finding common ground: the looming fiscal cliff,” that is, major cuts to social programs.

The second is American imperialism, which will not be turned into a gentle lamb by a change in the composition of Congress. There is much talk of the election marking an end to the war against Iran, but no faction of the ruling class is prepared to tolerate a major setback in the Middle East. The war on Iran, moreover, is one front of a global war, including the war against Russia in Ukraine, the main priority of the Democrats.

Popular sentiment is far to the left of the Democratic Party. Millions of people want an end to war, the defense of democratic rights and a radical improvement in their conditions of life. Every faction of the ruling class and, one must add, the trade union apparatus is terrified of the radicalization expressed in the vote and of what it anticipates.

For decades, the profound class divisions of American society have been suppressed, by the two parties of big business, by the union bureaucracy and by an official political culture that denied the very existence of class. They are now beginning to erupt, and they will develop with explosive force.

The opposition that found expression at the polls will not remain on electoral grounds. The United States is entering a period of escalating class struggle, in which the issues that drove the vote will be fought out in the factories, the workplaces and the schools.

The basic issue is the gap between the scale of the crisis and the development of the leadership the working class requires. The objective conditions for a mass movement against war, inequality and dictatorship are maturing rapidly. The political consciousness needed to carry that movement forward is only beginning to take shape.

To advance their interests, the working class must develop as an independent political force, united with workers across national borders and armed with a socialist and revolutionary program. The central political task of our epoch, upon which the victory of socialism and the future of humanity depends, is the resolution of the crisis of revolutionary leadership in the working class.

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