



Bring the Troops Home Now!
No to Empire, Escalation and Privatization!

A Democratic Socialist Perspective for the Anti-War Movement

Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) is proud to be part of the movement against the war in Iraq and stands with those calling for an immediate end to the U.S. occupation. As the recent congressional elections demonstrated, a majority of Americans now support our view that the United States military plays no genuinely democratic or progressive role in Iraq and that U.S. troops must be brought home now. The prolonged presence of U.S. occupation forces has only served to strengthen sectarian armed conflict in Iraq. Only the withdrawal of U.S. troops would facilitate the possibility of the Iraqi people resolving their differences peacefully.

Iraqi civil society, particularly in urban areas, had long been characterized by mixed Sunni and Shi'a neighborhoods and considerable intermarriage. The U.S. occupation has empowered schismatics with guns while disempowering the modern, secular elements in Iraqi civil society.

A stable civil society in Iraq cannot be instituted under U.S. auspices and certainly not through U.S. force of arms. The Bush administration's escalation of the conflict (covered by the fig leaf of a temporary "surge" in troops) will only exacerbate sectarian warfare, while putting more U.S. troops in harms way. Therefore DSA calls upon Congress to set the shortest feasible timetable for immediate withdrawal of troops and military advisors from Iraq and to use its power over the spending to cut off military funding for any purpose other than this immediate withdrawal. All U.S. military bases must be dismantled, all intelligence agents and civilian occupation personnel repatriated, all "free-market" economic de-

crees annulled, and all sweetheart contracts and appointees made revocable and removable at the democratic discretion of the Iraqi people. The Bush regime must also accept the consequences of its march to empire by committing reparations to fund Iraq's reconstruction.

The anti-war movement organizes under the slogan "Out Now—Bring the Troops Home." It is the only politically effective and morally appropriate stance to take. Not only does the U.S. have no right to occupy Iraq, it has no overarching good reason to be there. From the standpoint of "spreading democracy"—the Bush regime's latest excuse for causing the deaths of tens of thousands of Iraqis and more than 3,000 Americans—that effort is backfiring.

It is now obvious that the majority of Iraqis oppose the U.S. presence and that continuing the occupation strengthens reactionary forces and leaves our troops in the middle of a sectarian civil war. Only an end to the occupation can undermine support for the civil war and create the political space that could allow Iraqi democratic, secularist and trade union movements—the forces DSA supports—to grow.

But our opposition to the U.S. occupation of Iraq does not mean that we support the Iraqi armed resistance or armed militias. While some participants in the insurgency are Iraqis legitimately angered by the U.S. occupation and its brutality, its corporate self interest, and its affront to national dignity, the dominant political tendencies in the armed resistance are profoundly reactionary. The Ba'athist faction seeks to regain state power in the name of the Sunni

"Congress must use the power of the purse to bring the troops home."

minority, and is murdering its way through Baghdad. The Sunni attacks on Shiite religious sites engendered the expected Shiite armed response. The resulting sectarian warfare has enhanced the power of the Shiite militias at the expense of those political forces in the Shi'a community who favored compromise with nonsectarians in the Kurdish and Sunni communities.

The political-Islamist wing—calling itself “Al Qaeda in Iraq”—seeks to establish a theocratic totalitarian state where, in its own words, “we will fight a bitter war against democracy and all those who seek to practice it.” These currents have tortured and murdered trade unionists and election workers. They do not represent a national liberation movement for Iraqi self-determination, and genuine democrats cannot stand in solidarity with them. We believe that the whole of the anti-war movement must recognize this and make it clear to all, lest we appear to ordinary Americans as apologists for cold-blooded killers, and hence no better than the Bush regime.

Moreover, the anti-war movement must follow the lead of U.S. Labor Against the War and act in solidarity with the Iraqi trade union movement. We applaud USLAW's reaching out to Iraqi trade unionists and their organizations. We join in these leaders' condemnation of terrorist attacks on civilians and targeting of trade union and other civil society leaders for intimidation, kidnapping, torture and assassination.

U.S. withdrawal is a precondition for a struggle for political and civil rights and liberties in Iraq. With sufficient international labor movement support, and backing from the anti-war movement, Iraq's labor unions, along with the forces for democratic secularism and those religious leaders who recognize that the Iraqi state must not be theocratic, may have a chance to build a truly democratic state.

DSA also urges anti-war and labor-movement support for the Organization for Women's Freedom in Iraq and other organizations campaigning against Islamist attempts to subject women to Shari'a law.

The continuing occupation of Iraq, combined with the Bush regime's failure to rebuild and repopulate New Orleans and secure the Gulf Coast against the threat of natural disasters, reveals a government whose priorities are skewed toward empire building, privatization and the narrow interests of corporate profiteers. Instead of conducting a brutal war in Iraq and leaving low-income com-

munities at sea, we need a government committed to rebuilding communities at home and abroad.

The results of the recent elections pose new challenges for the anti-war movement, too. The new Congress was elected to end the war, and many candidates ran as explicit anti-war candidates. We even see Republicans distancing themselves from the president and opposing the new escalation. Each voice and vote against our continued presence in Iraq is a political victory for the anti-war movement, yet sadly there is not yet a majority in Congress capable of using the power of the purse to force Bush to bring the troops home. We must not rest until congressional action matches anti-war rhetoric and the troops are brought home as expeditiously as possible.

Finally, the U.S. must contribute generously to multilateral aid efforts to reconstruct Iraq — but such reconstruction monies must be controlled by a democratically elected Iraqi government working with independent transnational institutions, such as the United Nations.

Only continued mobilization that keeps the pressure on Congress and the president can end this war and the needless death and destruction that it creates. We will accept no political excuse from any elected official for keeping troops in Iraq to maintain the failed policies of the Bush Administration.

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