

WAR AND GLOBAL CAPITALISM: “Money for Jobs Not for War”: American Chauvinism and Reformist Illusions

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“Money for Jobs and Education! Jobs and Education, Not War and Occupation!”

This slogan put forth by several US social movements is profoundly wrong and harmful—both in terms of morality that’s actually in the interests of humanity, and in terms of a scientific understanding of imperialism and war.

Why should antiwar demands focus first and foremost on the war’s impact on Americans and their lives—and not on the victims of U.S. aggression: Pakistanis murdered in U.S. drone strikes, Iraqis rounded up and tortured by U.S. forces, Afghans seized and terrorized in night raids, and countless others? Aren’t their lives every bit as precious as the lives of those who happen to live in the U.S.?

“Money for jobs, not for war” argues that American lives are more important than other people’s lives. This logic goes right along with—and amplifies—the mindset relentlessly fostered by the system’s rulers and their media machine: that American lives come first. This is the very mindset the rulers count on to justify and build public support (or acquiescence) for their predatory wars of empire.

The slogan also promotes the idea that the political powers-that-be—if pressured by enough people—could scale back their military, stop attacking other countries, and instead use the money for jobs, education, and other social welfare programs at home. But that’s not how the system actually operates! Wars, invasions, and occupations are not policies of one set of politicians or another, or arbitrary choices made by this or that president. At this stage in history, capitalism is a global system, with the U.S. the world’s most dominant capitalist-imperialist power, presiding over a worldwide empire of exploitation. This empire rests on the domination of the oppressed countries where the vast majority of humanity lives, and on control of labor, markets, and resources. This entails the violent suppression of the masses of people in the dominated areas—and also entails fighting off challenges from other imperialists as well as rising forces in those countries that stand in the way. This requires a monstrously huge military that is deployed worldwide, with bases in over 100 countries, and wars when necessary.

The wars for domination in the Middle East, Central Asia, and elsewhere don’t “interfere” with the functioning of U.S. capital—they’re absolutely essential to it, and to the U.S.’s overall global dominance. This is why the U.S. rulers are compelled—and willing to—spend

trillions on the military, including during periods of severe economic and fiscal stress, no matter who happens to sit in the White House or Congress.

This system of global capitalism-imperialism headed by the U.S. is the main source of the horrors that torment so many across the globe—from the ethnic cleansing and slow genocide of the Palestinian people by the U.S. and Israel, to the mass incarceration and slow genocide of Black people in the U.S.; from the rape of the planet to the systematic degradation and violence against women—here and around the world; from the extreme deprivation and starvation faced by billions across the planet to the growing poverty and desperation faced by millions in the U.S.

The rulers in these imperial metropolises distribute some of the spoils of empire to provide a higher standard of living than in the oppressed countries and buy social peace and loyalty at home (which “Money for Jobs, Not For War” encourages). People in the U.S. should reject that foul pact! The vast majority in the U.S. have a profound interest in making common cause with oppressed people worldwide, not in siding with “their” rulers. That means fostering a morality that declares: “American lives are not more important than other people’s lives!”—not pandering to American chauvinism, which strengthens the system responsible for so much misery. It means people shouldn’t appeal to those on the top to “spend more on jobs,” but to clearly and unequivocally demand a STOP to the horrors the U.S. is committing around the world.

Through this process of actively opposing U.S. aggression and the “America Number 1” mindset fostered to justify it, people can and must be won to increasingly see that this capitalist system and state is utterly un-reformable and that it’s going to take revolution to get rid of it, end its predatory wars once and for all, and bring into being a whole new system and state that is in the actual interests of the people in the U.S. and around the world.

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