

As Iraq war enters fourth year

For the immediate withdrawal of all US troops

The WSWs Editorial Board
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The following leaflet is available in PDF format to download and distribute at demonstrations organized for Saturday, March 18, to protest the third anniversary of the US war on Iraq.

As the war in Iraq enters its fourth year, opposition to the US occupation has never been greater. A clear and growing majority of the American people is opposed to continuing the bloody attempt to subjugate 26 million Iraqis to the interests of the US corporate elite.

Even a recent poll conducted among US troops on the ground in Iraq—support for whom is endlessly invoked to justify continuing the war—showed 72 percent in favor of complete withdrawal of all US forces within a year, and over half saying that the US should get out within no more than six months.

This sea change in public opinion has taken place despite the absence of any serious opposition or even critical analysis of the war by either the mass media or the Bush administration's ostensible political opposition, the Democratic Party. Indeed, millions of American working people have drawn their own conclusions in the teeth of a ferocious propaganda campaign aimed at terrorizing the public with a supposedly omnipresent threat of terror, against which unrestrained US militarism is posed as the only answer.

No amount of government propaganda or media distortion, however, can conceal the fact that this criminal enterprise, begun on the basis of lies, has yielded an unmitigated catastrophe.

For the Iraqi people, the US intervention, from the “shock and awe” bombardments of three years ago to the daily massacres taking place now, has constituted a historic tragedy.

While no one has counted the bodies of the slain Iraqi men, women and children, there is no question that the death toll since the US invasion now numbers well into the hundreds of thousands.

In addition, the lives of over 2,300 US soldiers—the bulk of them drawn from the working class and the poor—have been sacrificed, with tens of thousands more wounded, injured or left psychologically damaged as a result of their participation in a dirty colonial-style war.

As the occupation has dragged on, the carnage has only intensified, with scores killed and wounded daily as a result of US military operations and sectarian violence provoked by the social disintegration wrought by the US war. Bodies pile up in the Baghdad morgue, shot or garroted, the victims of the torture and execution carried out by Iraqi police-military death squads, financed and trained by the Pentagon.

The latest US military operation, Operation Swarmer, which has seen a combined US and Iraqi airborne force storming villages near Samarra and conducting house-to-house raids, is an ominous warning of the strategy that the Bush administration and the Pentagon intend to pursue. Iraqi troops, overwhelmingly Shiite, are being deployed against Sunni population centers near the very city where the bombing of the Golden Mosque triggered an eruption of bloodletting. This represents a clear threat that, unless the resistance to the US occupation ends, Washington is prepared to unleash a war of ethnic slaughter.

This strategy is spelled out in the current issue of *Foreign Affairs* by Stephen Biddle of the US Army War College: “The United States must threaten to manipulate the military balance of power among Sunnis, Shiites, and Kurds to coerce them to negotiate. Washington should use the prospect of a U.S.-trained and U.S.-supported Shiite-Kurdish force to compel the Sunnis to come to the negotiating table.”

There is every indication that these methods are already being employed. While defenders of the war insist that the US cannot withdraw without risking a bloodbath, Washington is deliberately initiating such a bloodbath in a desperate attempt to maintain its hold over Iraq.

All of the reasons given for the US invasion three years ago—nonexistent weapons of mass destruction and fabricated

terrorist ties—have long ago been exposed as lies. Now the Bush administration promotes the ongoing war as a struggle for “freedom” and “democracy.” This is undoubtedly the most obscene lie of them all.

The war was not about freedom, but rather enslavement. It was launched as an act of conquest and plunder, aimed at seizing control of the world’s second-largest oil reserves in order to boost the declining fortunes of US capitalism on the world market, and to further Washington’s drive for global hegemony against its rivals in Europe and Asia.

It has been accompanied by an unprecedented assault on democratic rights in the US and around the world, from the use of torture to illegal detentions and covert government spying. And within Iraq, there not only exists no democracy, but no real government either—outside of the death squads and torture centers.

That the US intervention in Iraq has produced a monumental fiasco is now openly acknowledged, even by a growing number of right-wing erstwhile supporters of the Bush administration. No one should believe for a moment, however, that this means the American ruling elite will mend its ways and eschew future use of military force to impose its will on the world arena.

On the contrary, new and even greater wars are already being prepared, as the Bush administration made clear with its release this week of a new National Security Strategy document reiterating the doctrine of “preemptive”—that is, unprovoked—wars of aggression, and making it clear that Iran is already being targeted—again with unsubstantiated claims about nuclear weapons and terrorist ties.

The drive to war is a direct product of a profound crisis of the capitalist system, which finds its sharpest expression in the unrelenting growth of social inequality. The war in Iraq and the growth of militarism generally expresses the interests of a ruling oligarchy, which is determined to use force to further its aims of dominating world markets and resources. This policy is pursued at the expense of the broad mass of working people, who face unrelenting attacks on jobs, living standards and basic democratic rights.

Ending the Iraq war and defeating plans for future wars that are already being developed cannot be achieved based on an electoral strategy of supporting the Democrats for Congress in 2006 or the White House in 2008. The Democratic Party is fully complicit in the war against Iraq and, like the Republicans, defends the interests of a ruling financial elite, from which an increasing number of its principal political figures are drawn.

In the run-up to the 2006 election, the Democratic Party leadership has made it clear it has no intention of giving political expression to the broad-based demand of the American people for an end to the war. On the contrary, it

has actively sought out issues from which to attack Bush from the right, from Iran to the Dubai ports deal.

Consider the latest statement on Iraq issued by the Democratic Leadership Council, the political grouping with which Senator Hillary Clinton of New York, considered the front-runner for the party’s 2008 nomination, is most closely identified: “We should press the White House to refine and meet its benchmarks, and put a new leadership team in place that inspires confidence. Above all, Democrats must make it clear to the public that we stand for winning in Iraq, not a rush for the exits.”

Sections of the Democrats are now advocating a policy of “strategic redeployment,” which essentially involves pulling US troops out of Iraqi cities and using American air power and rapid reaction forces, supplemented by the US-trained Iraqi military and police, to continue the war against the people of Iraq.

This is the position, for example, of Howard Dean, the party’s chairman and one of the 2004 candidates who attracted the greatest support in the Democratic primaries from those opposed to the war. “We’re not going to cut and run, that’s just Republican propaganda,” he declared in a speech last month, adding that the party was merely advocating a “sensible plan” to “redeploy our troops.”

The struggle against war, social inequality, and the intensifying attacks on democratic rights requires a break with the two-party system and the building of a new mass political movement of working people, based on a socialist program and an internationalist perspective.

This is the alternative fought for by the *World Socialist Web Site* and the Socialist Equality Party. The SEP in the US will run candidates in this year’s mid-term elections, fighting on demands for an immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all American troops from Iraq and for all those responsible for conspiring to launch this illegal aggression to be held accountable through trials before a war crimes tribunal.

We urge all those who agree with these demands and who want to fight against militarism, social inequality and the assault on democratic rights to contact the SEP and the *World Socialist Web Site*. Join in the petition drives to place our candidates on the ballot and the fight for this program among the broadest possible layers of working people!



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact