

# Vice-presidential debate: Political humbug covers up US drive to global war

Patrick Martin  
2 October 2024

Tuesday night's debate between the Republican and Democratic candidates for vice president amounted to a conspiracy to hide the truth from the American people, engaged in by Senator JD Vance of Ohio, Donald Trump's running mate, and Governor Tim Walz of Minnesota, picked by Kamala Harris to be her vice president, and assisted by the moderators from CBS News.

The goal of this conspiracy was to suppress as much as possible the issue of imperialist war, under conditions where the Biden-Harris administration, and its Republican "opposition," are hell-bent on fueling conflicts in the Middle East and Ukraine which threaten to explode into a third world war.

CBS moderator Margaret Brennan devoted her first question and follow-up to the prospect of a preemptive attack by Israel on Iran, after Tuesday's barrage of Iranian missiles in response to the Israeli assassinations of the leader of Hezbollah, in Beirut, and the leader of Hamas, during a visit to Tehran. After eliciting statements of unconditional support of Israel from both candidates, she moved on, and there was no further discussion of foreign policy during the remainder of the 90-minute debate.

A search of the debate transcript shows that the words "Ukraine" and "Russia" do not appear, that "Putin" appears only twice, both in reference to Trump's alleged friendliness towards the Russian leader, and that the word "war" itself appears only once, referring to the US "trade war" with China, not the deployment of American bombs, warplanes, ships and troops all over the world.

No one relying on the debate for information would have any idea that the United States and NATO are on the brink of a direct military conflict with nuclear-armed Russia, whose president declared last week that

Russian military doctrine provided for nuclear retaliation if Ukraine uses long-range missiles supplied by NATO countries to attack Russian cities. Russian officials have suggested that they will be obliged to use military force against the supplier countries, not merely Ukraine.

Neither candidate was asked to comment on the genocidal massacre of Palestinian civilians in Gaza, now approaching the end of its first year, with anywhere from 41,000 to well beyond 200,000 dead, according to various official and scientific estimates. Nor were they asked about Israel's bloody bombardment of Lebanon, or the ground invasion that began only hours before they took the debate stage.

And while there were numerous questions on domestic policies, and bogus promises from both candidates about spending money on vital social needs, the question of the single biggest item in the federal budget, the more than \$1 trillion spent annually on the military, was passed over in silence.

In other words, on the most decisive issues facing the American working class, and the population of the entire world, the vice-presidential candidates said nothing, concealing the real program of war and social counterrevolution that the American ruling class intends to carry out, regardless of which party wins on November 5.

Despite incessant claims from the media and political establishment that there is a vast political gulf between the Democratic Party and the Republican Party, Tuesday's debate featured frequent declarations of agreement between Vance and Walz. This posture of bipartisan unity—dubbed "civility" by the approving corporate media—was actually one of the few truths to surface during this festival of lies and diversions.

The Republicans and Democrats are in fundamental

agreement on a policy of imperialist war abroad and waging war against the working class at home. But for electoral purposes they pretend to be engaged in a furious war over opposed political principles. This is especially the case when Trump takes the stage, either at a debate or one of his campaign rallies, and claims that America will be destroyed if Harris and Walz are elected, while threatening to jail his opponents.

But the debate between Vance and Walz featured no such fulminations. Vance, the former Trump critic turned fanatical ultra-right supporter, sought to portray the fascist policies advocated by Trump as “common sense” measures favored by the supporters of both parties—including Walz himself, whom he tried repeatedly to separate from Harris. As one press commentator noted, “In the vice-presidential debate Tuesday night, Sen. JD Vance (R-Ohio) proved he could match his running mate on the falsehood meter, though with a bit more verve and polish.”

Walz was deferential, even unctuous toward Vance, indicating agreement with him on policy measures related to housing, the child tax credit, paid family leave, immigration and gun violence. He made no reference to some of Vance’s most notorious and inflammatory comments, such as his claim that Haitian immigrants in Springfield, Ohio were eating the pets of local residents, or that childless women like Kamala Harris had undue influence on US government policies.

Only at the very end of the debate did the fascist horns growing out of Vance’s head become visible, and it was not through any initiative by Walz. Moderator Norah O’Donnell asked both candidates about the events of January 6, 2021, when a mob of Trump supporters, summoned and directed by the then-president, stormed the US Capitol, halting the congressional certification of Trump’s election defeat for hours until they were driven out by state and local police.

Vance transparently dodged the question of whether Trump had been defeated in the 2020 election, denied his responsibility for the January 6 attack and other illegal efforts to overturn the results of the election, and sought to change the subject to supposed “big tech” censorship of online commentaries and posts by fascist Trump supporters.

He was particularly insistent on claims that the Biden-Harris administration had attacked the democratic

rights of vaccine denialists like Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and other opponents of measures to mitigate the impact of the COVID pandemic. In truth, both Trump and Biden worked assiduously to prevent any disruption of capitalist profit-making to save lives and avoid the health catastrophe for millions.

Walz replied to Vance’s evasiveness with a few long-winded reproaches before summing up Vance’s refusal to give any response to the direct question, did Trump lose the 2020 election, calling it “a damning non-answer.” One could just as correctly reply that for the Democrats, the defense of democratic rights against Trumpian fascism is “a damning non-question.” If the CBS moderators hadn’t raised the issue of January 6, there is no reason to believe Walz would have on his own.

Neither Walz nor the moderators sought any assurance from Vance that he and Trump would accept the outcome of the 2024 election if they lose. Nor was there any discussion of Trump’s threat to suspend the Constitution and act as a “dictator” on day one, and round up tens of millions of migrants and expel them from the country.

There was no mention of Trump’s threats to put his political opponents in prison or of the decision by the pro-Trump majority on the US Supreme Court declaring that a US president is immune from prosecution for illegal acts committed while in office. And there was no reference to his call last weekend for a “rough day,” in which police would be given immunity for 24 hours to take any action they pleased against supposed “criminals.”



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**