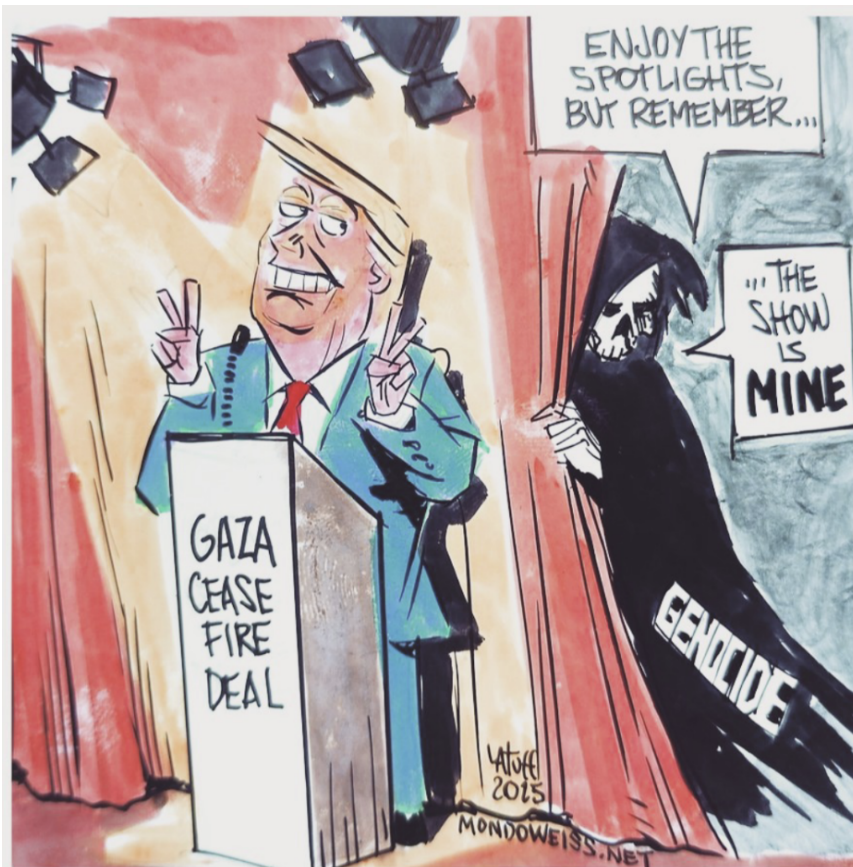


# No Kings, No Empire: Protest and the war economy

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Despite Nobel Prize aspirations, Trump is still

Warmonger in Chief. Every bomb dropped on Gaza is an attack on the working class — not only abroad but here at home. The struggle against fascism is a struggle against empire.

### **Millions filled the streets on Oct. 18.**

The “No Kings” protests erupted in more than 2,700 locations across all 50 states — the largest coordinated action against Donald Trump since his return to office, and perhaps one of the biggest mass mobilizations in recent U.S. history.

Crowds surged through New York, Washington, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Boston. But resistance spread far beyond the major cities. Workers marched in Birmingham, Alabama. Demonstrators filled the streets of Billings, Montana.

The protests were against the authoritarian actions of the Trump administration, ICE operations, federal program cuts, and for constitutional rights.

Yet the leadership of the “No Kings” campaign is firmly rooted in the Democratic Party.

Groups like Indivisible and MoveOn — both pillars of the Democratic establishment — were listed as official sponsors. Their involvement shaped the movement’s limits, especially around foreign policy: the U.S.-NATO proxy war in Ukraine, the genocide in Gaza, and Washington’s escalating confrontation with China.

### **The color of empire**

The official No Kings website encouraged participants to wear yellow, referencing the pro-NATO Yellow Ribbon Movement in Ukraine and the anti-China Yellow Umbrella protests in Hong Kong. Whether coincidence or design, the symbolism signals alignment with U.S. imperialist foreign policy.

Since 2016, Democratic opposition to Trump has often focused not on his attacks on workers or the poor but on his supposed “softness” toward Russia and China. His first impeachment, in 2019, wasn’t for caging migrants or gutting health care programs — it was for delaying weapons to Ukraine.

Biden continued that trajectory. From day one, his administration poured billions into NATO and armed Ukraine to the teeth, even as it funded and defended Israel’s campaign of mass genocide in Gaza. At the same time, it intensified the tech and trade war with China, maintaining Trump-era tariffs while launching new measures to block Beijing’s access to advanced semiconductors. Washington also deepened military alliances: forming AUKUS, strengthening the Quad, and integrating Japan and South Korea into its Indo-Pacific war plans. The strategy is clear — to build a NATO-style military bloc aimed at containing China. “Containing China” is what Obama said.

By adopting the color yellow, the “No Kings” organizers effectively tried to merge domestic opposition to Trump with support for U.S. wars abroad. But anti-imperialism is not a distraction from the struggle against authoritarianism — it is central to it. A movement that fails to challenge empire cannot defeat Trumpism, because empire is the source of its power.

### **The war that never sleeps**

From Gaza to Ukraine, from Haiti to Venezuela, from Somalia to Yemen, and across the South China Sea, Washington’s war machine never rests.

Secretary of War Pete Hegseth has vowed to wage a “war on woke.” Every progressive cause, from Black Lives Matter to reproductive rights, from trans liberation to union power, is recast as a threat to national security. “Making America Great Again” now means silencing dissent at home and expanding war abroad.

Whenever U.S. imperialism goes on the offensive, it demands unity — and obedience. Behind the MAGA slogan lies the same order as always: Shut down the class struggle.

Every bomb dropped on Gaza, every missile launched from a U.S. destroyer, every naval drill off China's coast is not only an attack on people abroad — it's an attack on workers here. War budgets drain the public purse; social programs wither. The empire wears different faces, but the engine beneath never changes.

The Biden-Harris years presided over drone wars and unconditional backing for Israel's genocidal siege of Gaza. Trump's second term has intensified those same policies with open brutality. On Oct. 15, his administration authorized a new round of covert CIA operations in Venezuela — including lethal "paramilitary action" aimed at regime change.

While claiming to end "endless wars," Trump surrounds himself with defense contractors and private mercenaries. Pentagon deployments in the Caribbean — including at least eight U.S. warships, a submarine, B-52s, F-35s, and thousands of troops — are an escalation of war, not a withdrawal.

Democrats, for their part, denounce Trump's rhetoric but fund the same war budgets. They compete over who can arm Israel, Ukraine, or Taiwan faster. Their unity is bipartisan — the unity of capital.

Meanwhile, the war economy expands.

In munitions plants across Tennessee and Texas, production lines run nonstop. Workers die in preventable explosions while inspectors are furloughed under budget freezes. Defense CEOs cash in on record stock options. This is not "national defense." It is organized theft — the conversion of public wealth into private profit.

## **Lessons of the past**

We've seen this pattern before.

A century ago, President Woodrow Wilson — a Democratic demagogue and open white supremacist — promised to keep the U.S. out of war. Many progressives believed him. They abandoned the independent workers' movement to back the "peace candidate."

Within three years, Wilson plunged the nation into imperialist slaughter in World War I — and jailed socialists who opposed it. Eugene V. Debs, who urged workers to fight their real enemies at home, was imprisoned for speaking the truth.

The lesson endures: Every promise of "peace with honor," from Wilson to Biden to Trump, conceals the same reality — a capitalist state beholden to Wall Street and the Pentagon. Both parties serve the same system, even as they trade places in power.

### **Failure to build unity against racism**

The early socialist movement made another tragic error. It fought courageously for labor rights, but too often neglected the central question of racism. Many believed socialism would come first, and liberation later.

But socialism without an active struggle against racism was — and remains — an illusion. That failure fragmented the working class. Employers exploited racist divisions to crush strikes, exclude Black, Mexican, Asian, and Indigenous workers from unions, and sustain the hierarchy that capitalism requires.

Marx and Engels recognized the revolutionary role of the Black freedom struggle during the U.S. Civil War. They saw that slavery was not an aberration but the foundation of U.S. capitalism itself. Yet much of the socialist movement refused to learn that lesson, and it disintegrated under the twin pressures of racism and imperialist war.

## **The war economy and the working class**

Today, the movement resisting Trump's authoritarian project cannot repeat those mistakes.

A real resistance must be anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-transphobic and anti-imperialist. The fight for liberation is one struggle with many fronts.

Look at the economy.

Manufacturing for civilian needs continues to decline, while militarized production surges — aircraft, missiles, drones, surveillance systems. Every major product from Silicon Valley ends up under a Pentagon contract. AI firms design targeting algorithms. Cloud companies build “battlefield networks.” Energy corporations secure war profits while ordinary households face shutoffs and rent hikes.

This is capitalism in its imperialist stage — a parasite that survives by producing destruction.

Workers feel it directly. Union jobs vanish while defense firms boom. Inflation erodes wages. Public services collapse. But the stock prices of Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, and Northrop Grumman soar.

The same machine that bombs Gaza and threatens Beijing is the one that closes hospitals, guts schools, and evicts tenants.

Every bomb dropped on Gaza is an attack on the working class — not only abroad but here at home.

That's why fighting against war is inseparable from the fight against King Trump.

War dominates all issues. But it also unites our struggles — because every front, from Gaza to health care, from trans rights to housing, leads back to the same

system. In that unity lies the power to change it.

