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Democratic convention opens: An agenda of militarism and war

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25 July 2016

The Democratic National Convention opening today in Philadelphia will officially nominate former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton as the party's presidential candidate and Virginia Senator Tim Kaine as her running mate. The selection of Kaine, a member of the Armed Services and Foreign Affairs committees and a vetted ally of big business and the military/intelligence establishment, underscores the right-wing, pro-war axis of Clinton's campaign and the administration over which she will preside if elected in November.

The Democratic Party is the oldest capitalist party in the United States, whose history spans 200 years and includes its role as the party of the pre-Civil War slavocracy and, in the century that followed formal emancipation, of Jim Crow laws that enforced segregation. In the Twentieth Century, it assumed under Franklin Delano Roosevelt the mantle of liberal reform. But the central aim of political initiatives such as the New Deal and, under Lyndon Johnson, the Great Society, was to prevent the emergence of an independent political movement of the working class against capitalism and for socialism.

In the half-century that has passed since the apogee of the Great Society, the Democratic Party has systematically repudiated its association with liberal reformism. Hillary Clinton and former President Bill Clinton played a pivotal role in the 1990s in the severing of all residual links to the policies of the New Deal and Great Society. As leading members of the Democratic Leadership

Council in the 1980s and 1990s, they helped realign the Democrats with the program of social counterrevolution of the Reagan administration.

Now that Donald Trump has been nominated by the Republicans, the Clinton campaign is being presented by these forces as the political firewall against the dark forces of American society.

For whom do Clinton and the Democratic Party really speak? Her campaign and the party she heads represent an alliance of the mainstream military/intelligence establishment and powerful sections of corporate America, especially in the financial industry. Behind all the empty rhetoric that will reverberate in and around Philadelphia's Wells Fargo Center over the next four days, the central issues of concern to the ruling class have to do with the escalation of American imperialism's global military agenda.

This is clearly spelled out in the lead editorial of Sunday's *New York Times*, the newspaper that functions as the unofficial mouthpiece of the Clinton campaign and the Democratic Party. The editorial argues in favor of Clinton over her Republican opponent Donald Trump on the grounds that Trump's foreign policy predilections are not in line with the strategic interests of US imperialism.

It begins by warning that the next president will confront "an increasingly aggressive Russia and a Europe fracturing under economic and security stresses." It then attacks Trump for placing conditions on America's commitment to NATO, "an approach that would threaten the nation's international role and put at risk a Western-led world order."

It denounces the Republican candidate for stating that a Trump administration would make the US commitment to go to war against Russia in defense of the tiny Baltic states on Russia's western border conditional on their having "fulfilled their obligations" to the United States. "Mr. Trump's approach," the newspaper writes, "would play into the hands of Russia's president, Vladimir Putin, who is eager to have NATO unravel, since that would allow him more freedom to expand Russian influence."

That a Clinton administration would reinforce the blanket commitment made by President Obama to the right-wing, rabidly anti-Russian and highly unstable regimes in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia to put US "troops on the ground"—either in response to or in anticipation of alleged Russian aggression—is for the *Times* an unalloyed plus. These states, with a combined population of only 6.6 million people, were formerly part of the Soviet Union and became independent only with the dissolution of the USSR and restoration of capitalism throughout Eastern Europe. They are run by criminal cliques representing oligarchs who enriched themselves by stealing formerly state-owned property and impoverishing the working class.

This commitment, which could at any time lead to a nuclear war with Russia, was made without any public discussion and entirely behind the backs of the American people, the vast majority of whom to this day have no idea that it even exists. But the American military and intelligence complex considers it critical to the US agenda of reducing Russia to the status of a semi-colony and establishing American hegemony over the entire Eurasian continent.

The editorial continues: “Mr. Trump has also questioned the merit of deploying troops overseas, including in Japan and South Korea, where a withdrawal of forces would profoundly affect security in Asia. Such a move would significantly reduce American influence at a time of increasing Chinese aggression.” In other words, Trump cannot be relied on to continue Washington’s diplomatic and military campaign to isolate, encircle and, if necessary, lay waste to China.

Not only that, Trump “has said he would not press President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey, a NATO ally who has suspended, detained or placed under investigation more than 60,000 people in a post-coup attempt frenzy, to respect the rule of law.” That is, Trump might not follow up the US-backed coup attempt that came within minutes of assassinating Erdogan with an intensified campaign to destabilize and ultimately replace his regime with one more submissive to US dictates.

No less troubling to the *Times*, Trump has suggested that he would not make “promoting human rights abroad—a central tenet of American foreign policy under both Democratic and Republican administrations—part of his agenda ...” This would call into question the all-purpose pretext used to carry out savage wars from the Balkans to Libya, Syria and Iraq that have killed millions of people and destroyed entire societies.

In the positive column for Clinton, according to the *Times*, is the fact that as Obama’s secretary of state she carried out his policy of unending war. Indeed, “she is somewhat more willing to intervene militarily,” pushing for a more aggressive arming of Islamist proxy forces in Washington’s drive to topple Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and supporting a “no-fly zone” in Syria, “which would require significant military resources and possibly airstrikes.” What the *Times* omits is the very real possibility of such a policy leading to a military clash with Russia.

Clinton was also, the newspaper notes casually but approvingly, a leading actor in the decision to use force to topple and murder Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, a decision that has, it admits, “sent the country reeling into chaos.”

Thus, Clinton’s role in war crimes that killed hundreds of thousands of people and produced the greatest refugee crisis since World War II is presented as an argument in favor of her candidacy.

The program of global militarism at the heart of the Clinton campaign is combined with the ferocious promotion of racial and gender politics. The purpose of this ideological offensive is to broaden the base of support for imperialist war to include privileged sections of the upper-middle class, black and white, who are intent on carving out for themselves a bigger share of the economic spoils from the impoverishment of workers in the US and around the world.

Hence the relentless promotion of identity politics, and especially racial politics, by the media in general and, in particular, the *New York Times*. The *Times* hardly allows a day to go by without an article, editorial or op-ed piece declaring race to be the overriding issue in American society and depicting a nation seething with white racism. As always, racism and racial politics are weapons in the war of the ruling class to divide and demobilize the working class.

Now Sanders has thrown his full support behind Clinton. He is doing his best to complete his assigned mission for the ruling elite by shamelessly lying about a non-existent “political revolution” in the Democratic Party, while the pack of pseudo-left scoundrels who vouched for his “socialist” credentials and promoted his campaign converge on Philadelphia to channel mass hatred for Clinton and the two-party system behind the Green Party—another bourgeois party dedicated to blocking the development of an independent, socialist movement of the working class.

There is only one political party and only one campaign that are fighting for the political independence of the working class and the building of an international movement against war based on a socialist and revolutionary program: the Socialist Equality Party and the SEP campaign of Jerry White for president and Niles Niemuth for vice president.