

# On eve of “Super Tuesday” primaries in US: A political system in crisis

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Today is “Super Tuesday” in the primary election process for the selection of the presidential candidates of the two major US capitalist parties. Candidates for the Republican and Democratic parties will be contesting ballots in 12 states and one US territory, making March 1 the day when the largest number of delegates is chosen for party conventions.

The US political system is entering this decisive stage in the run-up to the 2016 election in a state of deep crisis.

On the Republican side, billionaire Donald Trump is far in the lead, according to polls. A CNN/ORC poll released yesterday estimated Trump’s nationwide support among Republican voters at 49 percent, followed by Senators Marco Rubio (15 percent) and Ted Cruz (10 percent). Trump is expected to win the bulk of the delegates to be apportioned in today’s contests.

Over the past week, the Republican campaign has descended ever deeper into political reaction and backwardness. Last Thursday’s debate in Houston, Texas—with the various candidates hurling insults and seeking to outbid each other from the right—has been followed by ever more openly fascist comments from Trump.

On Sunday, Trump displayed extreme reluctance in an interview with CNN to repudiate the support of white supremacist and former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke. “You wouldn’t want me to condemn a group that I know nothing about,” he said. “I would have to look.” In a separate interview with NBC’s “Meet the Press,” Trump defended his favorable citation of a quote attributed to Italian fascist dictator Benito Mussolini.

While Trump later sought to backtrack on his comments on Duke, the incident highlighted the racist character of his campaign, which has featured denunciations of Mexican immigrants as “rapists” and proposals to ban all Muslims from entering the country.

An article posted yesterday on the web site of the *New*

*York Times* (“Donald Trump’s message resonates with white supremacists”) noted the enthusiastic support for Trump from the likes of Jared Taylor, the editor of *American Renaissance*, who is described by the *Times* as “long one of the country’s most prominent white supremacists.” Taylor told the *Times*: “Someone who wants to send home all illegal immigrants and at least temporarily ban Muslim immigration is acting in the interest of whites, whether consciously or not.”

Trump has also received the enthusiastic support of the Nazi-inspired *Daily Stormer* magazine.

An element of violence and thuggishness pervades Trump’s rallies, highlighted yesterday in the physical assault on a *TIME* magazine photographer by a member of the Secret Service as the event was disrupted by protests from members of Black Lives Matter.

The incredible level of hypocrisy in the disavowals and expressions of surprise from the media and political establishment (including sections of the Republican Party) in response to Trump’s statements recalls the line from the classic film *Casablanca*, “I’m shocked, shocked to find that gambling is going on in here!” The Republican Party has long cultivated the most backward layers, going back to Nixon’s “southern strategy,” after George Wallace’s third-party bid in 1968, in opposition to the civil rights movement. In 1980, Reagan opened his general election campaign by delivering a speech invoking “states’ rights” in Philadelphia, Mississippi, the scene of the 1964 Ku Klux Klan murder of three civil rights workers.

After a decade and a half of war and political reaction—under Republicans and Democrats alike—the ugly reality of American capitalism is metastasizing in the Trump campaign. Trump’s appeals, moreover, are a particular expression of the incessant focus of the political establishment as a whole on issues of race and identity, aimed at covering over the enormous class divide in the

United States.

On the Democratic side, the campaign is closer, with national polls split on who has more overall support, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton or Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders. Clinton has a significant lead over Sanders in polls in the southern states voting today, following her large victory in South Carolina over the weekend, with Sanders polling ahead or competitive in Massachusetts, Oklahoma, Vermont, Colorado and Minnesota.

While the Republican Party is poised to nominate a fascistic thug, the Democratic campaign has highlighted the fact that millions of people in the US are prepared to vote for a candidate who presents himself as a “socialist,” despite the fact that socialism has been barred from political discourse for decades.

In his campaign, Sanders has continued to focus his stump speeches broadly on issues related to social inequality, including criticisms directed at Clinton over her paid speeches to Goldman Sachs. He is advancing proposals for a number minor social reforms without challenging the economic domination of the giant corporations and banks.

What is most striking about the Sanders campaign is how ineffectual it is. Sanders and the various pseudo-left political organizations that have been mobilized around his campaign are quite consciously seeking to maintain the political authority of the Democratic Party after more than seven years of war and reaction under Obama.

Almost nothing is said by either candidate on foreign policy or democratic rights, though both have fully embraced the militaristic policies of the Obama administration.

In an interview on NBC’s “Meet the Press” on Sunday, Sanders was asked to respond to a report in the *New York Times* detailing Clinton’s direct and active role in the 2011 war in Libya, including the overthrow and murder of its then leader, Muammar Gaddafi. Sanders sought to cast his criticism of Clinton’s involvement in criminal actions in as mild a tone as possible, saying, “You can’t just go forward with regime change—you’ve got to be thinking about the day after... I would have worked more patiently.”

Over the past month, Sanders has given his full support to the Obama administration’s policy of militarizing Eastern Europe and its threats against Russia. On Sunday, he backed the “truce” in Syria negotiated by Secretary of State Kerry with his Russian counterpart, behind which the White House is preparing a “plan B” of major military

escalation in the proxy war.

Sanders said nothing about the extraordinarily provocative statements made by Obama officials in recent days, including the declaration by US Deputy Secretary of Defense Robert Work that the recent test-launch of intercontinental ballistic missiles was intended as “a signal... that we are prepared to use nuclear weapons in defense of our country if necessary.”

In an indication of the important political function that he serves, some sections of the Democratic Party leadership have moved to endorse Sanders, including Congressman Tulsi Gabbard, who resigned her position as the Democratic National Committee vice chair on Sunday in order to back the Sanders campaign. Gabbard, an active duty member of the Hawaii Army National Guard and a member of the House Armed Services Committee, said it was necessary “to have a commander in chief who exercises good judgment.”

Underlying the crisis in both parties, and the divisions within the political establishment itself, are the explosive social tensions in the United States. At the same time, the ruling class is preparing, behind the backs of the American people, a massive escalation of military violence.

The outcome of the primary campaigns is highly uncertain. Whether the eventual candidates for the primary campaign have even entered the race yet is not clear. What is absolutely certain is that the contradictions tearing apart American society cannot be contained within the framework of the two-party capitalist system.



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