

The New York Times ' Nicholas Kristof warns of "Donald the Dangerous"

Eric London
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With Donald Trump continuing to win the majority of primary contests, the American ruling class is beginning to respond to the possibility, if not likelihood, that the real estate speculator and former television host will be the Republican candidate for president in the November general election.

A March 5 column by the *New York Times*' Nicholas Kristof, "Donald the Dangerous," is characteristic of the Democratic Party's response to the Trump campaign. Focusing on foreign policy, Kristof gives voice to the concerns within the foreign policy establishment over the implications of a Trump presidency.

The *Times* columnist epitomizes the bankruptcy of what passes for "left" and liberal politics in the United States. A strong backer of the Obama administration, he has made a career promoting US wars of aggression as crusades in defense of "human rights" and democracy, cheering on the wars in the Balkans, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria.

The basic tenor of his comment is given by the quote from former Bush administration official John Bellinger III at the beginning of the piece: "Trump is a danger to our national security." Here, "national security" is a code word for the global interests of the American ruling class. He goes on to cite approvingly a number of other Bush administration officials, including former secretary of homeland security Michael Chertoff, former national security adviser Peter Feaver, and former deputy secretary of state Robert Zoellick.

Kristof's column exemplifies the dishonesty and hypocrisy that characterize the denunciations of Trump by the Democratic Party (and Republican Party) establishment. It is an effort to cover up the fact that the Trump phenomenon is a product of the permanent state

of war abroad and all of its reactionary consequences domestically, for which the Democratic Obama administration is no less responsible than its Republican predecessor, and for which media mouthpieces of the Pentagon and the CIA such as Kristof bear an immense political responsibility.

On the war in Syria, for example, Kristof writes: "Trump said last year that he would unleash ISIS to destroy Syriza's government. That is insane...and Trump wants ISIS to capture Damascus?" But as Kristof well knows, ISIS was the result of the wars in Iraq, Libya and Syria that he himself supported, and Washington's utilization of jihadist forces linked to Al Qaeda as mercenary proxies in US imperialism's regime-change operations. In Syria, the main component of Kristof's so-called "democratic revolution" against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad is the al-Nusra Front, Al Qaeda's Syrian branch.

Kristof writes that "a second major concern is that Trump would start a trade war, or a real war," with China. But only days before Kristof's column was published, the Obama administration dispatched a naval flotilla to carry out a patrol near Chinese territorial waters in the South China Sea, adding to the almost daily saber-rattling provocations that are part and parcel of the administration's anti-Chinese "pivot to Asia."

US military commanders openly talk of possible war, including nuclear war, with China, while the US and NATO flood troops and arms to right-wing regimes bordering Russia.

Kristof criticizes Trump's belligerent stance toward North Korea even as the Obama administration mounts the Operation Key Resolve Foal Eagle war game exercise with South Korea involving over 300,000 soldiers near North Korea's border.

Trump is a risk "to America's reputation and soft

power,” Kristof writes. “Both Bush and President Obama worked hard to reassure the world’s 1.6 billion Muslims that the US is not at war with Islam. Trump has pretty much declared war on all Muslims.”

What cynicism! In the course of the “war on terror,” the Bush and Obama administrations have killed an estimated one million citizens in mostly Muslim countries. Entire societies have been destroyed by what Kristof calls US “soft power.” His primary concern is that Trump’s openly anti-Muslim comments will alienate US allies in the region, including Turkey and the reactionary Gulf monarchies.

Finally, on Trump’s open support for torture, Kristof writes, “It was a good sign that on Friday [Trump] appeared to reverse himself and pledged that he would not order the US military to commit war crimes, yet that’s such an astonishingly low bar that I can’t believe I just wrote this sentence!”

Trump’s backing of waterboarding, and his proposal to kill the family members of suspected terrorists, is, in fact, less a political novelty and more a public declaration of the criminal policy that has been pursued under both Bush and Obama. Just this week, the White House ordered the massacre of 150 people in Somalia with the justification that they were members of the Al-Shabaab organization, without providing any evidence or even making a pretense of following international law.

The discussion over whether or not the US should openly commit war crimes speaks to the debased character of the entire bourgeois political system out of which Trump has emerged. He is the personification of the toxic runoff from the “war on terror” that Kristof and the Democratic Party establishment have promoted for fifteen years.

Trump is the product of the militarism and jingoism propagated in connection with the neocolonial wars carried out under the banner of the “war on terror,” combined with deepening social polarization and the economic distress resulting from relentless attacks on the jobs and living standards of working people. The fact that Trump, whose politics have a fascistic character, has been able to capitalize on broad and deep anger against the entire political establishment and attract sections of mainly white workers is the result of the bankrupt and reactionary political culture of the so-called “left” that Kristof personifies: a culture of

complacency, hypocrisy and contempt for the working class and its concerns.

Behind their obsession with issues of identity—racial, gender and sexual orientation—the Democratic Party and its “left” periphery, Kristof included, support brutal wars abroad and ceaseless attacks on the democratic and social rights of the working class at home.



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