

# Trump's "America First" speech and the US war election

Patrick Martin  
28 April 2016

As the American political establishment enters the final stages of the primary contests to choose the presidential nominees of the Democratic and Republican parties, the acute danger confronting the US and international working class emerges more clearly. The leading contenders in both parties, Democrat Hillary Clinton and Republican Donald Trump, are committed to a vast military escalation following the November election.

In a speech on foreign policy delivered Wednesday, Trump combined virulent nationalism with a pledge to carry out a massive buildup of the American military to overcome any and all opposition to the drive of US imperialism for world domination.

Declaring "America First" to be the guiding principle of his foreign policy, Trump proclaimed, "We will develop, build and purchase the best equipment known to mankind. Our military dominance must be unquestioned, and I mean unquestioned, by anybody and everybody."

The billionaire real estate mogul linked military supremacy with the restoration of the once dominant economic position of American capitalism, pledging to eliminate "quickly" the US trade deficit with China, now more than half a trillion dollars a year, as well as the \$1 trillion US manufacturing trade deficit.

These figures underscore the delusional character of Trump's grandiose ambitions. The trade deficits are not the result of poor trade deals, but the outcome of the protracted decline of American capitalism over nearly half a century. It is this historical crisis that drives US imperialism to the ever more reckless use of military force.

Insofar as he criticized American foreign policy in the past three administrations—those of Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama—it was for an inordinate

focus on the Middle East, with the result that the region is today, in Trump's words, "more unstable and chaotic than ever before."

The slogan of "America First," the axis of Trump's speech, is associated historically with sections of the US ruling elite oriented more towards dominance of the Pacific than the Atlantic. That might explain Trump's relatively conciliatory language towards Russia, in contrast with his strident demands that China toe the US line on trade, North Korea and the South China Sea—demands that are central to the Obama administration's "pivot to Asia."

Trump made an open appeal to the military for support. "Our generals and military leaders," he said, should be given free rein once an armed conflict begins. "If America fights," he said, "it must fight to win." Referring to US soldiers and veterans, he added, "A great country takes care of its warriors. Our commitment to them is absolute, and I mean absolute."

Trump concluded the speech with a denunciation of "the false song of globalism," declaring, "The nation-state remains the true foundation for happiness and harmony." This was not the only part of his address that recalled the speeches of Hitler and Mussolini.

Trump's remarks were notable for the openness with which they expressed the American ruling class's ambition of global domination. However, the policy of his probable Democratic opponent, former secretary of state Hillary Clinton, a more experienced representative of American imperialism, is, if anything, even more ruthless.

The likely contest between Trump and Clinton will be a clash of warmongers. As an admiring *New York Times* profile explained last week, Clinton is the most hawkish of the remaining Democratic and Republican candidates and has the closest ties to the military-

intelligence apparatus, particularly the Pentagon brass. “For all their bluster about bombing the Islamic state into oblivion,” the *Times* wrote, neither Trump nor Senator Ted Cruz “have demonstrated anywhere near the appetite for military engagement abroad that Clinton has.”

It is noteworthy that her campaign delegated its response to Trump’s speech to former secretary of state Madeline Albright, one of the principal architects of the 1999 war against Serbia and a leading advocate of a confrontational policy against Russia in Eastern Europe.

Clinton’s Democratic rival Bernie Sanders is playing a critical role in preventing anti-war sentiment from finding any expression in the 2016 elections. He combines rhetorical denunciations of the “millionaires and billionaires” and fraudulent claims to represent a “democratic socialist” perspective with uncritical support for the predatory foreign policy of the Obama administration. On Monday, in an interview on MSNBC, he declared his support for Obama’s latest increase in troop levels in Syria and the White House’s “kill list” of people targeted for drone-missile strikes.

There is enormous opposition to war in the American and international working class. The elections have been dominated by mass anger and hostility to the political establishment, largely of a left-wing character. Yet the outcome will be a campaign between the most right-wing, pro-war candidates in generations.

The real alternative to the program of imperialist militarism is the campaign of the Socialist Equality Party. Our candidates for president and vice-president, Jerry White and Niles Niemuth, are the only ones who tell the truth to the working class about the crimes committed by American imperialism and the even greater ones being prepared for after the election. Tens of millions of youth and working people must be mobilized against the warmongers in Washington and on Wall Street.

To take forward the building of an international anti-war movement based on the working class and the fight for socialism, the International Committee of the Fourth International is holding an International May Day Online Rally this coming Sunday, May 1, at 1:00 pm Eastern Daylight Time. We urge all readers and supporters of the *World Socialist Web Site* to register today and join the rally.

*For more information and to register, visit [internationalmayday.org](http://internationalmayday.org).*



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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