

Clinton campaign lurches to the right

Barry Grey
10 May 2016

Since last week's Indiana primary and the emergence of Donald Trump as the presumptive Republican presidential candidate, the campaign of Hillary Clinton has veered sharply to the right, setting the stage for arguably the most right-wing presidential contest in modern US history. This is under conditions where the primary season has been dominated by the eruption of popular anger and disgust with the entire political establishment.

No sooner had Trump's remaining rivals for the Republican nomination, Ted Cruz and John Kasich, dropped out of the race than Clinton began to downplay her populist-sounding rhetoric, aimed at countering the appeal of Democratic rival Bernie Sanders to frustration over social inequality and Wall Street criminality. She is focusing on overtures to Republican leaders and donors wary of Trump's unilateralist foreign and trade policies and general unpredictability.

With an apparently insurmountable lead over Sanders in both pledged and so-called super delegates, Clinton is preparing to run in the general election as the trusted and experienced candidate of the corporate and political establishment, the Pentagon and the CIA. She is cynically assuming that the young and working class voters who have rallied behind the self-described "socialist" Sanders will in the end support her over the fascistic Trump, and concentrating on winning the votes of wealthier and more-privileged social layers who make up a large part of the independent and Republican voter base.

Already on Wednesday, the day after the Indiana primary, Clinton told CNN, "I invite a lot of Republicans and independents who I've been seeing on the campaign trail, who've been reaching out to me, I invite them to join with Democrats. Let's get off the red or the blue team. Let's get on the American team."

Clinton's first line of attack against Trump was to brand him a "loose cannon" on foreign and national security policy. This is in part an appeal for endorsements and support from leading figures in the military, intelligence and foreign policy establishment, including Republicans, on the basis of her long record as first lady, senator and

secretary of state in aggressively promoting the interests of American imperialism abroad. The Clinton campaign and its media backers, such as the *New York Times*, have made a point of stressing her central role in the wars in Libya and Syria that have destroyed entire societies and brought the United States to the brink of war with nuclear-armed Russia.

Interviewed on the Sunday news show "Face the Nation," Clinton told program host John Dickerson, "Well, I have to say, the Republicans themselves are raising questions about their presumptive nominee. And I think that's in large measure, John, because they do understand how hard the job of being president is.

"When you have former presidents, when you have high-ranking Republican officials in Congress raising questions about their nominee, I don't think it's personal, so much as rooted in their respect for the office and their deep concern about what kind of leader he would be. ... You see, at the end of the day, John, I really believe that Americans take their vote for president seriously because they know it's not only the president, but the commander in chief who they are selecting."

The *New York Times*, which has functioned as an unofficial organ of the Clinton campaign, published a front-page article Saturday advertising the Democratic frontrunner's bid for Republican support. Headlined "Clinton Moves to Lure Votes from GOP, Aiming at Republicans Who Reject Trump," the article began by reporting that Clinton was "hoping to gain the support of Republican voters and party leaders including former elected officials and retired generals disillusioned by the party's standard-bearer. ..."

It noted that Priorities US Action, a pro-Clinton super-PAC, intended to "reach out to Republican megadonors disillusioned by their party's presumptive nominee." It continued: "More broadly, Mrs. Clinton's campaign is repositioning itself, after a year of emphasizing liberal positions and focusing largely on minority voters, to also appeal to independent and Republican-leaning white voters turned off by Mr. Trump."

The *Times* reported that after spending the past year seeking to mobilize the “liberal wing and labor leaders” in the Democratic Party, Clinton, “confident that the young people and liberals backing Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont will come around to support [her] in November,” would concentrate on appealing to suburban voters, including well-off women “whose most important issues are national security and terrorism.”

The article noted that the Clinton campaign plans to assemble a “Republicans for Hillary” group and had already obtained the endorsement of Mark Salter, a top adviser to the 2008 Republican presidential candidate Senator John McCain. It would also, the *Times* suggested, seek the endorsement of Republican national security figures such as former defense secretary Robert Gates and former CIA director and Iraq War commander David Petraeus. Gates oversaw Bush’s 2007 “surge” in Iraq and continued to head the State Department during Obama’s first term. Petraeus was quoted as saying Clinton would be “a tremendous president.”

One indication of the general election strategy of the Clinton campaign is the treatment being accorded, at least to this point, by the party bureaucracy, firmly in the Clinton camp, to the Sanders campaign in regard to this summer’s Democratic National Convention. Sanders sent a letter Friday to Democratic National Committee Chairwoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz complaining that the DNC was virtually excluding Sanders supporters from the main convention committees. He said his campaign had submitted 40 names for inclusion on the rules, credentials and platform committees, as well as the platform drafting committee, and only 3 had been chosen between all four bodies.

Pointing out that to date he had won 45 percent of the pledged delegates, he threatened to conduct a floor fight at the convention and “force as many votes as necessary to amend the platform and rules.”

An extraordinary column appearing Saturday in the *Financial Times* by right-wing journalist, author and Republican think tank veteran Anne Applebaum vouches for Clinton’s right-wing and militarist credentials. Applebaum is a ferocious anti-communist. She is married to Radoslaw Sikorski, who was foreign minister in the nationalist, anti-Russian government of Polish prime minister Donald Tusk between 2007 and 2014. Last August, she penned a commentary in the British *Telegraph* raising the need for Ukraine and its eastern European allies to prepare for “total war” against Russia.

In her column, she poses as the question facing

American conservatives: “Who should they support? Who is actually the more conservative candidate in this election?”

Considering the categories “fiscal conservative,” “free-trade conservative,” and “national security conservative,” she concludes that on balance Clinton is the clear choice. On fiscal policy, Applebaum praises Clinton as “a person who believes in balanced budgets and careful spending,” and cites her web site as calling debt a “national security threat” that she is opposed to increasing.

On national security, Applebaum writes, “whether realist or interventionist, there is no nuance at all. ... Mrs. Clinton is the only possible candidate.”

Orienting to the Republican right is nothing new for Clinton. She and her ex-president husband were among the pioneers of the so-called New Democrat faction that openly repudiated the social reform policies of the New Deal and Great Society. Bill Clinton’s second term was dominated by his so-called triangulation strategy of adopting traditional Republican policies, including abolishing federal welfare and enacting law-and-order legislation that condemned millions of working class and minority youth to long prison terms for drug offenses and other non-violent crimes.

Along with the final deregulation of the banks and hedge funds, these policies were richly rewarded after the conclusion of the Clinton presidency, as the couple took in more than \$150 million for giving speeches to corporations, most of it coming from Wall Street.

And the bribes keep coming. The *Wall Street Journal* reported Monday that the Democratic frontrunner has raised \$4.2 million from Wall Street thus far, \$334,000 in March alone. A total of 53 percent of her campaign donations in March came from Wall Street firms.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact