

# War and the Democratic National Convention

Andre Damon  
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The Democratic Party's 2016 national convention is unfolding as a carefully scripted and staged infomercial in which this right-wing capitalist party, tied at the hip to Wall Street and the Pentagon, postures as some sort of popular representative of the people.

Amidst the humanitarian moralizing and sentimental declarations of universal brotherhood, one thing that is absent is any serious discussion of what kind of foreign policy a Clinton administration would pursue.

Despite fifteen years of the “war on terror,” the convention's headline speakers made no mention of the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, the death of Libyan president Muammar Gaddafi or the White House's drone assassination program. This silence is all the more extraordinary given the fact that the Obama administration is the first in US history that has been at war throughout two full terms in office.

The real decision-makers know, however, that in the background of the 2016 elections are escalating military tensions with Russia and China that raise the danger of world war between nuclear-armed powers.

None of the convention's speakers saw fit to mention the fact that the Obama administration has committed to go to war with Russia if the highly unstable, right-wing governments of Latvia, Lithuania or Estonia launch a provocation against it.

There was likewise no mention of the fact that the vice president is meeting this week with Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte—who has threatened to suspend the country's Congress and has personally bragged about murdering 1,700 people—in order to strengthen the anti-China alliance.

The absence of any discussion of substantive foreign policy issues is all the more striking given recent warnings of a looming great-power conflict from foreign policy journals, military think tanks and high-ranking military officials.

This month, Dennis Blair, the former commander of US forces in the Pacific, told a congressional hearing that, contrary to current policy, the United States should be

“willing to use military force” if China seeks to assert its claims to a set of rocks in the South China Sea that are also claimed by the Philippines. Such a conflict, provoked over dubious territorial claims by a US ally on the opposite side of the world, would have a high likelihood of ending in a nuclear exchange that results in hundreds of millions, or even billions, of deaths.

Chinese officials, under no illusions as to what such statements signify, declared in the state-controlled *Global Times*, “China hopes disputes can be resolved by talks, but it must be prepared for any military confrontation.”

In the latest issue of the journal *Foreign Affairs*, John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt state, “There are regions outside the Western Hemisphere that are worth expending American blood and treasure to defend.” The authors add, “In Europe and Northeast Asia, the chief concern is the rise of a regional hegemon that would dominate its region, much as the United States dominates the Western Hemisphere.”

With regard to Russia, leading generals are calling for an even more maniacal policy than that being proposed against China. Richard Shirreff, NATO's former Deputy Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, has suggested that a war with Russia could well take place next year in a book bluntly titled, *2017: War with Russia: An Urgent Warning from Senior Military Command*.

Shirreff has developed these points in a strategy paper entitled *Arming for Deterrence*, released this week by the US-based Atlantic Council think tank. He declared that Russia has the capacity and possible intention to invade the US's Baltic allies “overnight.” To this end, in a plan of Hitlerian madness, he proposes to convert Poland, currently under the grip of an authoritarian right-wing government, into a military spearhead against Russia. Poland must “reserve the right to attack Russian targets” preemptively, become a staging ground for nuclear weapons and publish “a potential list of targets” inside Russia.

The prospect of a war with Russia after the election is openly being discussed in policy circles, with the *National*

*Interest* declaring in its most recent cover story, entitled “Russia and America: Destined for Conflict?”, “Relations between the two sides have deteriorated to dangerous levels... If Moscow refuses to oblige, Washington should do whatever is necessary to protect its interests.”

In fact, Hillary Clinton is the most open advocate of military intervention to win the Democratic nomination in recent memory.

As Mark Landler, author of *Alter Egos: Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama and the Twilight Struggle Over American Power*, put it earlier this year, “For all their bluster about bombing the Islamic State into oblivion, neither Donald J. Trump nor Senator Ted Cruz of Texas has demonstrated anywhere near the appetite for military engagement abroad that Clinton has.”

As Secretary of State, Clinton proved to be a more open advocate of military force than Obama. “On bedrock issues of war and peace,” writes Landler, “Clinton’s more activist philosophy...collided” with Obama’s “instincts toward restraint.”

The fact that Obama, who as the *New York Times* noted in May, “has now been at war longer than Mr. Bush, or any other American president,” is presented as an example of military restraint is a testament to Clinton’s credentials as a warmonger.

In addition to calling for more aggressive military intervention than Obama in Afghanistan and Iraq, Clinton “pressed for the United States to funnel arms to the rebels in Syria’s civil war (an idea Obama initially rebuffed before later, halfheartedly, coming around to it).” She privately demanded that Obama set up a no-fly zone in Syria after declarations by the US military/intelligence apparatus in 2013 that Syrian President Bashar Assad had used chemical weapons, declaring, “If you say you’re going to strike, you have to strike. There’s no choice.”

Bruce Riedel, a former intelligence analyst who conducted Obama’s initial review on the Afghanistan war, told Landler, “One of the surprises for...the military was...that they have a secretary of state who’s a little bit right of them on [military] issues—a little more eager than they are.”

Writing in the *National Interest*, Yale professor David Bromwich observed the growing convergence between the policies of Clinton, her “left” apologists and the neoconservatives who helped launch the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

“The past few weeks have cemented an extraordinary alliance to defeat Trump that joins two foreign-policy sects that were never entirely distinct: the

neoconservatives who commandeered the Bush-Cheney foreign policy of 2001-2006, and liberal interventionists who supported the Iraq war, the Libya war, an expanded program of drone killings, and military intervention in Syria beyond what the Obama administration has allowed.”

He notes, “With a spate of recent articles and op-eds, these people are preparing the ground for Hillary Clinton to assert that the Russian government is in league with the Trump campaign, and that Russia has intervened in the election by releasing hacked Democratic National Committee emails to embarrass Clinton.”

This campaign has been led by the *New York Times*, whose resident Clinton apologist, Paul Krugman, declared Donald Trump to be a “Siberian candidate” and a proxy for Putin, whom Clinton is determined to oppose.

This theme was taken up in the form of abbreviated remarks by former Secretary of State Madeline Albright at the DNC last night. Albright denounced Russia with a ferocity unheard of since the end of the Cold War. Bemoaning that her “native Czechoslovakia had been taken over by Communists,” Albright declared, “Take it from someone who fled the Iron Curtain, I know what happens when you give the Russians a green light.”

The US ruling class has historically waited to implement long-prepared military escalations until after elections, and the coming year poses enormous dangers. Regardless of who is elected, the struggle against war is the central issue in the building of an independent, socialist movement of the working class in the United States and around the world.



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