

US Republican presidential campaign in crisis

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The presidential campaign of Republican candidate Donald Trump fell deeper into crisis on Wednesday, with numerous media reports that top Republican officials were considering an “intervention” to redirect the campaign, or even an effort to remove Trump as the Republican nominee.

The discussions within the Republican Party establishment over the fate of the Trump candidacy coincide with a campaign by the Democrats and the Clinton campaign to attack the fascistic candidate from the right, as insufficiently committed to escalating war in Syria and aggression against Russia.

Several publications discussed the intricacies of Republican Party rules under which the Republican National Committee could replace Trump in the event he could be pressured to withdraw from the race—less than two weeks after accepting the presidential nomination at the Republican convention in Cleveland.

Rule 9 of the Republican Party states that the RNC “is hereby authorized and empowered to fill any and all vacancies which may occur by reason of death, declination, or otherwise of the Republican candidate for President of the United States ...” The “otherwise” gives the committee essentially open-ended power to remove the candidate and replace him.

ABC News reported that “senior party officials are so frustrated—and confused—by Donald Trump’s erratic behavior that they are exploring how to replace him on the ballot if he drops out.”

NBC News reported, “Key Republicans close to Donald Trump’s orbit are plotting an intervention with the candidate after a disastrous 48 hours led some influential voices in the party to question whether Trump can stay at the top of the Republican ticket.” NBC named RNC Chairman Reince Priebus, former Republican New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani and former House Speaker Newt Gingrich as among the group seeking to salvage the Trump campaign.

Daily News reported, “Top aides, including campaign Chairman Paul Manafort have become paralyzingly frustrated with their inability to steer their boss away from waging unsavory fights—most recently his ongoing battle with Khizr and Ghazala Khan, the Muslim-American parents of a fallen U.S. soldier whom Trump has attacked repeatedly since their appearance at last week’s Democratic National Convention.”

The *New York Times* chimed in, writing, “Republicans now say Mr. Trump’s obstinacy in addressing perhaps the gravest crisis of his campaign may trigger drastic defections within the party, and Republican lawmakers and strategists have begun to entertain abandoning him en masse.”

CNN said that RNC Chairman Priebus was “especially frustrated” with Trump because of his well-publicized refusal Tuesday to endorse either House Speaker Paul Ryan or Senator John McCain in upcoming Republican primaries, even though both have endorsed Trump in the presidential race.

CNBC reported conflicts within the inner circle of the Trump campaign, quoting an unnamed “longtime ally of Trump campaign manager Paul Manafort,” who said that Manafort had lost control over the candidate. “Manafort not challenging (Trump) anymore,” the source wrote. “Mailing it in. Staff suicidal.”

In a further sign of conflicts within the Republican Party, Trump’s vice-presidential running mate, Indiana Governor Mike Pence, publicly declared his support for Ryan’s reelection Wednesday, although he claimed that Trump had approved his statement.

The media campaign was all the more extraordinary because there has not been the slightest hint from Trump or his top aides that he was considering withdrawal. On the contrary, the candidate has continued to campaign before large crowds, while denouncing his opponents, in both the Republican and

Democratic parties.

There is no doubt that important sections of the financial aristocracy, including some of the most prominent backers of the Republican Party, have decided either to oppose Trump openly or sit out the November election.

The most prolific spenders on behalf of right-wing Republican candidates, Charles and David Koch, refused to give any support to Trump at a conference of some 400 donors Sunday in Colorado Springs. Not only that, they reportedly convinced others to rescind their own pledges of financial support to the Republican presidential candidate.

Hewlett-Packard CEO Meg Whitman, a billionaire who was the Republican candidate for governor of California in 2010, announced Tuesday night in an interview with the *New York Times* that she would be supporting Democrat Hillary Clinton and contributing heavily to her campaign. Whitman, who is close to 2012 Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney, denounced Trump as an “authoritarian character” and a “dishonest demagogue” who “has exploited anger, grievance, xenophobia and racial division.”

Whitman told the *Times* that Clinton had called her personally a month ago soliciting her support. This was part of a larger effort by the Clinton campaign, which reached out to an array of billionaires, including Michael Bloomberg, Mark Cuban and Warren Buffett, during the same period it was supposedly “moving to left” in negotiations on the text of the Democratic Party platform with supporters of Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders.

The Clinton campaign was quite happy to give verbal sops to Sanders supporters while it launched a post-convention shift to the right, currying favor with billionaires and attacking Trump as insufficiently patriotic and deferential in his treatment of the military—as demonstrated in his attack on the Khan family—and insufficiently belligerent on foreign policy, particularly in relation to Russia.

Trump’s claimed opposition to US wars in the Middle East, and his friendly statements about Russian President Vladimir Putin, are at odds with the foreign policy consensus in Washington. Both Democrats and Republicans back the US-NATO buildup in Eastern Europe and the Baltic States, threatening war with a nuclear-armed Russia. The Obama administration is

pouring weapons and special forces troops into the war in Syria, Russia’s lone Mideast ally, and has launched expanded bombing and drone missile attacks throughout the region, including North Africa.

These foreign policy considerations were spelled out most openly in the editorial Wednesday in the *New York Times*, headlined, “The Case for (Finally) Bombing Assad.” The *Times* demanded a harder line from the Obama administration against the Syrian regime of President Bashar al-Assad, including launching bombing raids on Syrian government targets.

The editorial devotes special venom for Russian President Putin, claiming “Mr. Putin is more interested in demonstrating that Russia and its friends are winning in Syria and the United States is losing. He will not alter his approach unless he becomes convinced that it has grown too expensive.” It concludes: “It is time for the United States to speak the language that Mr. Assad and Mr. Putin understand.”

There is an unstated corollary: a US presidential candidate whose commitment to the anti-Russia, anti-Syria campaign is judged questionable, is entirely unacceptable to the *Times* and the Wall Street and military-intelligence quarters for which it speaks.



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