

US media steps up campaign for Clinton

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This week has seen a series of editorials by usually pro-Republican newspapers denouncing Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump in scathing terms. The commentaries have been accompanied by a series of press exposés of the real estate billionaire's shady business practices.

The stepped-up intervention by major media outlets reflects the broad consensus within the American corporate and political establishment, including prominent Republicans, behind the Democratic presidential candidate, Hillary Clinton. This support is based mainly on Clinton's bellicose stance toward Russia and her close ties to Wall Street and the military/intelligence complex.

The flurry of anti-Trump and pro-Clinton editorials is at the same time a reflection of concern within the ruling class over the lack of popular enthusiasm for Clinton, particularly among younger voters, who largely see her as a corrupt representative of the status quo. The near-unanimity of the major media in support of the Democratic candidate stands in stark contrast to the broadly felt distrust and dissatisfaction with the candidates of both major big business parties. This disjuncture is one expression of the chasm that exists between the entire political system and the general population.

USA Today, the largest-selling US newspaper, with a combined print and digital circulation over 4.1 million, denounced Trump Friday as a "dangerous demagogue" and urged its readers not to vote for him. The flagship publication of Gannett Corporation, the largest US media holding company, said it had never taken a position on a US election in its 34-year history, but was breaking with that tradition because the Manhattan real estate billionaire was "unfit for the presidency."

The newspaper attacked Trump for appealing to racism, taking advantage of small businesses in the operation of his real estate and casino empire, refusing to release his tax returns, and systematically lying. But its main criticism was on foreign policy, where it echoed the attacks on Trump from the right by Clinton.

"Trump has betrayed fundamental commitments made by all presidents since the end of World War II," *USA Today*

declared. "These commitments include unwavering support for NATO allies, steadfast opposition to Russian aggression, and the absolute certainty that the United States will make good on its debts... He is ill-equipped to be commander in chief."

The newspaper said its editorial board "does not have a consensus for a Clinton endorsement," but it called Clinton "the most plausible alternative to keep Trump out of the White House," while allowing that others might vote for a third-party or write-in candidate or abstain. But it categorically urged its readers not to vote for Trump.

This approach was echoed by the *Chicago Tribune*, long a standard-bearer for the Republican Party, which nevertheless endorsed Barack Obama for president in his two campaigns. The newspaper endorsed Libertarian candidate Gary Johnson in an editorial published Friday. Like *USA Today*, the *Tribune* called Trump "a man not fit to be president of the United States."

Hillary Clinton, "by contrast, is undeniably capable of leading the United States," the newspaper wrote. But it refused to support her, citing her supposedly left-wing views on expanding federal spending. Instead, it backed the Libertarian ticket, which it described as "two moderate Republicans--veteran governors who successfully led Democratic states."

The *Arizona Republic*, which has never endorsed a Democratic presidential candidate in its 126-year history, endorsed Clinton earlier this week, declaring, "The 2016 Republican candidate is not conservative and he is not qualified." The editorial declared, "Despite her tack left to woo Bernie Sanders supporters, Clinton retains her centrist roots." In other words, Clinton is a thoroughly right-wing Democrat, completely subservient to corporate America.

Other traditionally pro-Republican newspapers that have backed Clinton over Trump include the *Dallas Morning News* and the *Cincinnati Enquirer*. Clinton has dozens of endorsements from major daily newspapers. Johnson, the Libertarian candidate, has six, including the *Detroit News*, the *New Hampshire Union Leader*, the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* and the *Winston-Salem Journal*. Trump so far has none.

An editorial board member of the *Wall Street Journal* which spearheaded the impeachment drive against President Bill Clinton and has long vilified Hillary Clinton as a corrupt semi-socialist, denounced Trump in a column published in the newspaper Friday under the headline, "Hillary-Hatred Derangement Syndrome."

Dorothy Rabinowitz blasted Trump's "casual disregard for truth, his self-obsession, his ignorance, his ingrained vindictiveness." She noted the fascistic character of the Trump campaign, writing, "No one witnessing Mr. Trump's primary race--his accumulation of Alt-Right cheerleaders, white supremacists and swastika devotees--could fail to notice the menacing tone and the bitterness that came with it."

The choice in the election, she continued, "will be either Mr. Trump or Mrs. Clinton--experienced, forward-looking, indomitably determined and eminently sane."

Adding fuel to the anti-Trump campaign are press exposures of the operations of his business empire and his eponymous foundation. The *Washington Post* continued Friday with the latest in a series of investigative reports on the Donald J. Trump Foundation, which had already revealed an illegal campaign contribution of \$25,000 to the Florida state attorney general just before she quashed an investigation into the bogus "educational" efforts of Trump's real estate institute, and a dubious payment of \$258,000 to settle legal bills owed by various Trump-owned businesses.

Reporter David Farenthold discovered that the Trump Foundation had never been registered with the state of New York to obtain the certification required under state law before a charity can solicit donations from the public. The Trump Foundation raised more than the \$25,000 threshold for seeking certification in each of the last 10 years. By failing to seek certification, the Trump Foundation avoided audit of its transactions.

Newsweek magazine chimed in with a cover story devoted to blasting Trump as a stooge of the Castro regime in Cuba, claiming he authorized spending \$68,000 in Cuba to explore potential hotel and casino operations, at a time, in 1998, when such spending was illegal without approval by the US government. The clear purpose of the article, which was of a right-wing, anticommunist character, was to depress Trump's support among older Cuban-American voters in south Florida, a critical "battleground" state where polls show a tight race between Trump and Clinton.

Meanwhile, the parade of prominent Republicans who have either denounced Trump or endorsed Clinton, or both, continues to swell. The latest was former Senator John Warner of Virginia, a former secretary of the Navy with close ties to the military-intelligence apparatus.

The Clinton campaign *continues* to highlight endorsements from former Republican congressmen and officials of the administrations of George W. Bush and his father, George H. W. Bush. A conference call Thursday featured former commerce secretary Carlos Gutierrez, former secretary of the Air Force Mike Donley, former deputy White House Chief of Staff Jim Cicconi, and three former congressmen.

The increasingly right-wing appeal of the Clinton campaign was underscored in an op-ed column by billionaire Steve Case, former CEO of AOL Time Warner, who cited as one of his major reasons for backing the Democratic candidate: "I agree with Clinton on the need to control the deficit." He added that Clinton was "our best hope to remain the most innovative and entrepreneurial nation in the world."

Nearly all of the newspaper editorials and endorsement statements have cited foreign policy and Clinton's greater reliability as US "commander-in-chief" in a future confrontation with Russia. This has been particularly the standpoint of the bevy of former Bush administration officials who spearheaded the war in Iraq, including neo-conservatives such as Paul Wolfowitz, Eliot Cohen and Robert Kagan.

A driving force behind this outpouring of ruling class support for Clinton is concern that the former secretary of state is so unpopular, as the personification of wealth, privilege and the reactionary status quo, that she could actually lose the election to Trump.

Trump makes an appeal, albeit of an entirely demagogic and right-wing character, to layers of the working class and lower middle class devastated by plant closures, declining real wages and deteriorating social conditions. He says crudely what millions are experiencing in their own lives: America is sinking into ever-deeper social and economic crisis. Clinton's complacent pledges to continue the "progress" made under Obama only further discredit the Democratic Party and her campaign.



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