

Ahead of Electoral College vote: Democrats intensify McCarthyite campaign against Russia

Patrick Martin
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The 538 members of the US Electoral College are casting their votes Monday in 50 state capitals. All indications are that, with a handful of exceptions, the Electoral College vote will follow the results of the voting on November 8, giving Republican Donald Trump 306 electoral votes to Hillary Clinton's 232.

In the nearly six weeks since the election, Trump has announced his nominations for nearly all major cabinet and executive positions. His government will be the most right-wing in the history of the country, comprised of billionaires, corporate executives, generals and individuals determined to dismantle bedrock social programs and eliminate all regulations and restraints on corporate profit.

The fact that the Electoral College vote is even a subject of discussion and controversy is a measure of the palpably undemocratic character of the election. For the second time in less than two decades, the candidate with the most electors lost the popular vote. The scale of Trump's popular vote defeat, nearly three million ballots, is historically unprecedented for a president-elect.

Following the election, sharp divisions within the political establishment and the state have erupted to the surface, intensifying over the past two weeks. Sections of the Democratic Party have backed a campaign appealing to individual electors not to cast their ballot for Trump, or insist that they receive a report from US intelligence agencies on alleged Russian interference in the election before the Electoral College vote is held.

What is remarkable about this campaign is that it is not based on Trump's decisive defeat in the popular vote, nor on his White House and cabinet appointments. The Democrats and their media allies

such as the *New York Times* are not making an issue of Trump's installation of Stephen Bannon, CEO of the fascistic Breitbart.com, as his top White House aide, or his plans to round up millions of undocumented workers, destroy Medicaid and Medicare, and move toward the privatization of Social Security.

The campaign being carried out by Democratic politicians and most of the corporate-controlled media is focused solely on unsubstantiated charges of Russian hacking of Democratic Party emails and Trump's refusal to acknowledge or condemn it. The Democratic Party is continuing its election campaign strategy of attacking the fascistic billionaire Trump from the right, on the basis of a warmongering barrage against Russian President Vladimir Putin and the charge that Trump is his political stooge.

In opposing Trump, the Democrats are appealing not to working people, but to the military and the intelligence agencies.

In appearances on national television Sunday morning, Clinton campaign chairman John Podesta, Democratic Representative Don Beyer of Virginia, and Democratic elector Clay Pell, grandson of a US senator, all urged that the electors meeting on Monday refuse to cast ballots until they receive a detailed briefing from US intelligence agencies about the alleged Russian interference in the election.

Both Podesta and the interim chair of the Democratic National Committee, Donna Brazile, refused point-blank to respond to the question of whether the voting on Election Day, November 8, constituted "a free and fair election." Podesta said "it was distorted by the Russian intervention." Brazile declared, "We were attacked by a foreign adversary," adding that the

outcome “was tainted by this intrusion.”

Podesta, in his first appearance on a Sunday television interview program since the election, cited the op-ed by *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof published the same day, describing Trump as “a Russian poodle.” “I never thought I would see a dispute between America’s intelligence community and a murderous foreign dictator in which an American leader sided with a dictator,” Kristof wrote.

Podesta went even further than Kristof, suggesting that “it’s very much unknown whether there was collusion” between the Trump campaign and the Russian government. He declared, “I think really not what Mr. Trump knew, but what did Trump Inc. know and when did they know it, were they in touch with the Russians? I think those are still open questions.”

This is an appeal of a neo-McCarthyite character, in which capitalist Russia is substituted for the Soviet Union in a campaign by one of the two major capitalist parties against its rivals based on the accusation that they are Russian agents.

Short of actually preventing Trump’s entry into the White House, the anti-Russian campaign by the intelligence agencies and the Democrats has as its goal making it more difficult for Trump to shift away from the current orientation of US foreign policy, which is toward an intensified confrontation with Russia.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* has emphasized, the conflict over alleged Russian hacking reveals the essential content of the US presidential election campaign, as far as the US ruling elite and its military-intelligence apparatus were concerned. In her campaign against Trump, Clinton combined an appeal to privileged sections of the upper-middle class on the basis of identity politics with an attack on Trump as someone who would be “soft” on Russia and insufficiently aggressive in defending the interests of US imperialism in the Middle East and elsewhere.

All the scandalmongering and mutual accusations of criminality and corruption concealed the real issue in the election: the direction of US foreign policy in the wake of the debacles suffered by the Obama administration in Syria and Iraq.

Clinton advocated essentially a continuation of the policies of Obama, escalating tensions with Russia in the Middle East and Eastern Europe, while Trump called for a different approach, with an eye to targeting

China and other trade rivals of American banks and corporations. Significantly, in a report from Trump Tower Sunday, ABC correspondent Tom Llamas said that he had been told by a senior Trump adviser that China, not Russia, was “the most important foreign policy assignment for President-elect Trump.”

More generally, there is a sense of foreboding within the US national-security establishment. Senator John McCain, in an appearance on CNN, cited the intervention of Russia in Syria as “a sign of a possible unraveling of the world order that was established after World War II,” in other words, an end of the dominant position of the United States.

No section of the US ruling elite will accept such an outcome peacefully. The incoming Trump administration and its critics, both Democratic and Republican, are in conflict over tactics and methods, but not over the fundamental goal. US imperialism will resort increasingly to military violence, up to and including world war, to defend its global position against all challenges, both from foreign rivals and the working class.



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