

# The Trump administration and the crisis of American capitalism

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President Donald Trump will deliver an address to both houses of Congress tonight, broadcast live throughout the United States. According to talking points released by the White House yesterday, the speech will “lay out an optimistic vision for the country” and “invite all Americans of all backgrounds to come together in the service of a stronger, brighter future for our nation.”

The very fact that Trump will be delivering the address is proof that the “state of the union” is neither optimistic nor bright. Trump and his administration of political thugs are testament to the horrifying decay of political culture in the United States. The agenda that the administration is rapidly implementing holds out for the working class of the entire world a future of unending war, dictatorship and social devastation.

The first five weeks of the Trump administration have given ample demonstration of this fact. Trump is packing his administration with CEOs, billionaires, ex-generals and individuals dedicated to what his chief strategist Stephen Bannon referred to last week as the “deconstruction of the administrative state.” In a policy directive released yesterday, the Trump administration calls for a massive 10 percent increase in spending on the military, to be paid for through cuts in everything else: public education, mass transportation, housing, job training, the arts, pollution controls, and health and safety regulations.

The “administrative state” is to be replaced with the “garrison state,” with all the resources of American society subordinated to the preparations of the ruling class for world war.

Among the first actions of the new government is a brutal crackdown on immigrant workers. Thousands are being rounded up and deported, and the Trump administration is setting up the framework for mass internment camps. The government is encouraging the most backward and reactionary elements, expressed in the

wave of bomb threats against Jewish community centers and the racially-motivated shooting of two Indian men in Kansas last week.

In all its actions, the new government is implementing a definite political strategy. One should not hesitate to use the word “fascism.” The denunciation by Bannon of the “corporate globalist media,” Trump’s demand for “total allegiance to the United States of America” and his call for a “new national pride” founded on the “blood of patriots”—this is language inspired by Mussolini and Hitler. The Trump-Bannon government is using the immense power of the presidency to develop a fascistic movement, which will increasingly take on extra-parliamentary forms.

Throughout his campaign and in the first weeks of his administration, Trump has pitched his rhetoric to the discontent and frustration of broader sections of the population. With lying and empty rhetoric about the “forgotten man” and pledges to “Make America Great Again,” he is seeking to direct social anger against the “enemy” abroad and establish the base for an authoritarian and militarist agenda.

Trump does not have mass support. Indeed, his presidency is the most unpopular in the history of the United States. Polls make clear that his attack on immigrants and other reactionary measures are broadly opposed. In the first weeks of his administration, Trump has confronted protests involving millions of people in the United States and internationally.

However, in the absence of any progressive political outlet for this anger, it is the extreme right that is benefiting. This is true not only in the United States, but also in Europe, where far right and fascistic political movements are also on the rise.

The administration’s greatest asset is the spineless and reactionary character of his critics within the political establishment. The Democrats are doing everything they

can to divert and disorient popular opposition. Along with their allies in the media, they are promoting a vile, neo-McCarthyite campaign focused on denunciations of the Trump administration for being too soft on Russia. Their strategy is two-pronged. They want to pressure Trump to adopt positions that conform to the demands of dominant sections of the military-intelligence apparatus, while at the same time diverting the anger of millions of workers and youth away from any challenge to the capitalist system.

Responsibility for the rise of Trump lies squarely with the Democratic Party and what is generally presented as “left” politics in the United States. The Democratic Party, no less than the Trump administration itself, is a political instrument of Wall Street and the intelligence agencies. The policies of the Obama administration for the eight years that followed the economic crash of 2008 were dedicated to rescuing and enriching Wall Street. Far from being held accountable for the swindling and criminality that produced the crisis, the financial aristocracy is richer than ever. The Obama administration continued and expanded the wars of the Bush administration, while escalating the attacks on democratic rights and increasing the power of the intelligence agencies.

During the 2016 election campaign, Hillary Clinton ran as the candidate of Wall Street and the status quo, refusing to even acknowledge mass social discontent. While the leftward movement of broad sections of workers and youth was expressed in support for the campaign of Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders and his call for a “political revolution” against the “billionaire class,” Sanders’ task was to channel this anger behind Clinton, an action that helped assure Trump’s victory. Sanders is now reprising this role in his new position as part of the leadership of the Democratic Party in the Senate.

The obsessive fixation of the Democratic Party and the political organizations that surround it on various forms of racial, ethnic and gender identity politics plays into Trump’s hands. The Democrats and their apologists are opposed to any movement against Trump that is associated with policies of social reform and economic redistribution, beyond a more agreeable distribution of wealth within the top 10 percent. As such, they are incapable of advancing a viable basis for opposing the reactionary chauvinism of the fascistic right.

In the final analysis, the rise of Donald Trump is the expression of the protracted and now terminal crisis of American capitalism. He is not an intruder in an otherwise healthy society. However bitter the dispute within the

ruling class, they are all united on the conviction that American imperialism must control the world and the attack on the working class must be intensified. Under Trump, the ruling class is embarking on a new stage in this catastrophic project.

Essential political conclusions must be drawn. It is impossible to separate the fight against the Trump administration from the fight against the social and economic order that has produced it: capitalism. The social force that must be mobilized against Trump is the working class. It is in the working class that real and enduring opposition to the new administration will develop.

The Socialist Equality Party is fighting to arm the working class with a political program that offers a real solution to the great problems that it confronts. The working class can only secure its basic rights—to a secure and good-paying job, health care, housing, education, retirement—by means of a frontal assault on the wealth of the corporate and financial elite. It must reclaim the massive fortunes accumulated by the super-rich through fraud and speculation. The stranglehold of the financial aristocracy must be broken through the transformation of the gigantic banks and corporations into publicly-owned utilities, democratically controlled to meet social need, not private profit.

The social interests of the working class must be connected to the fight against imperialist war, which threatens the entire globe with catastrophe. The SEP fights to counter the reactionary and fascistic nationalism promoted by Trump and similar political tendencies internationally through the unification of workers of every nationality, race and gender on the basis of their common class interests.

The basic and urgent task is the building of a revolutionary leadership, the SEP and our worldwide organization, the International Committee of the Fourth International. The Trump administration represents a clear and present danger. It must be fought through the systematic, persistent and urgent organization of the working class in the fight for socialism.

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