

Trump's speech outlines plans for class war at home and war abroad

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1 March 2017

Speaking before a joint session of Congress on Tuesday, US President Donald Trump reaffirmed the core pillars of his presidency: vastly expanding military spending, slashing taxes on corporations, scapegoating immigrants for the crisis of American capitalism, and promoting economic nationalist trade policies.

In contrast to his inaugural speech, Trump couched his extreme right-wing policies in the traditional conventions of American politics. The media, as if on cue, praised Trump's speech for "reaching across the aisle" and taking a bipartisan approach.

CNN, which last week was included by Trump as part of the "enemies of the people," headlined its article on the speech, "New Tone, Ambitious Vision." In praising his remarks, various media talking heads ignored the fact that the administration, packed with fascistic figures such as Steve Bannon, is in the midst of a massive crackdown on millions of undocumented immigrants.

The official response to Trump's speech by Democrats was given by former Kentucky Governor Steve Beshear, who currently does not hold any elected office, and who is generally unknown to the public. Beshear devoted his brief rebuttal to a defense of Obamacare, the broadly despised pro-corporate health care program, while denouncing Trump for "ignoring serious threats to our national security from Russia."

Despite their tactical differences centering on foreign policy, the generally warm response by the media and half-hearted rebuttal from the Democrats points to the fact that, within the ruling class, there is broad and bipartisan support for the essential goals of the Trump administration: Expanding military spending, strengthening the repressive apparatus of the state, slashing corporate taxes, and eliminating social spending.

The day before his speech, Trump announced plans to increase the military budget by 10 percent, to be paid for by an equal reduction of discretionary social spending. But beyond pledging to provide "the men and women of the United States military with the tools they need," Trump largely ignored the implications of his military expansion and foreign policy in general.

Trump's budget directive was criticized by both congressional Republicans and pro-Democratic publications, such as the *Washington Post*, for not going far enough in proposing to slash spending on social entitlements such as Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security.

In his speech, Trump indicated that he would work with Congress to cut these programs, including by turning Medicaid, the insurance program for the poor, into a block grant system, which could be cut by state governments. "We should give our great state governors the resources and flexibility they need with Medicaid," he declared.

He also proposed a massive attack on public education, in line with the perspective of his new education secretary, Betsy DeVos. "Families should be free to choose the public, private, charter, magnet, religious or home school that is right for them," Trump said.

At the heart of Trump's speech was his program of economic nationalism. Trump called for subsidies for US companies to help them penetrate foreign markets, declaring that his administration is "developing historic tax reform that will reduce the tax rate on our companies so they can compete and thrive anywhere and with anyone." He complained that "when foreign companies ship their products into America, we charge them almost nothing."

Notably, when Trump declared that his

administration will make “it easier for companies to do business in the United States, and much harder for companies to leave,” former Democratic presidential nominee Bernie Sanders applauded. Sanders, together with other Democrats, stated his willingness to cooperate with Trump on nationalist economic policies.

While Trump’s speech was couched in the language of defending “American jobs,” his economic program is, in fact, centered on slashing corporate taxes, eliminating regulations and increasing the exploitation of workers in the United States.

Trump gave a full-throated defense of his vicious crackdown on undocumented immigrants, which has sparked broad popular opposition and demonstrations throughout the country. “As we speak, we are removing gang members, drug dealers and criminals that threaten our communities and prey on our citizens. Bad ones are going out as I speak tonight and as I have promised.”

Trump’s speech included a modification to his earlier immigration proposals, calling for a switch “away from this current system of lower-skilled immigration, and instead adopting a merit-based system.” Such a policy would continue all the cruelty and violence of his ongoing immigration crackdown, while seeking to ensure a steady supply of skilled labor for American companies.

He likewise reiterated his support for his so-called Muslim ban, declaring, “It is not compassionate, but reckless, to allow uncontrolled entry from places where proper vetting cannot occur.... We cannot allow a beachhead of terrorism to form inside America.”

Toward the end of his speech, Trump exploited the presence of Carryn Owens, the widow of a US Navy SEAL William “Ryan” Owens, who died in a raid in Yemen last month. Ignoring the denunciations of the operation by Owens’ father, Trump described the mission as a “highly successful raid.”

Trump’s invocation of this murderous rampage, which led to the killing of 25 Yemeni civilians and eight children, was greeted with the longest standing ovation of the entire speech, from both Democrats and Republicans.

Perhaps the most characteristic aspect of the address was its utterly delusional character. Trump declared, “Everything that is broken in our country can be fixed. Every problem can be solved.” He added that, as a result of his presidency, “Dying industries will come

roaring back to life... Crumbling infrastructure will be replaced with new roads, bridges, tunnels, airports and railways gleaming across our beautiful land.”

All of this is a ridiculous pipe dream. The very fact that Trump, a con-man and scam artist, has been promoted to the highest political office in the state is proof of the deeply decayed state of bourgeois rule in the United States.



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