

Bernie Sanders attacks Biden from the right on China trade

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Vermont Senator and 2020 Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders has attacked former Vice President Joe Biden for remarks on China and trade. In language that would not be out of place coming from President Donald Trump, Sanders accused Biden of downplaying the economic threat represented by China and criticized him for supporting the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the normalization of trade relations with Beijing.

Biden, considered the early frontrunner for the Democratic Party presidential nomination, said at a campaign event Wednesday in Iowa, “China is going to eat our lunch? Come on, man.” He added, “They’re not bad folks. But guess what, they’re not competition for us.”

Biden spokesman Andrew Bates later stated that Biden had meant “it’s never a good bet to bet against America and the fundamental strength, resilience, and ingenuity of its people.”

In a response the same day, Sanders criticized Biden from the right, saying in a tweet, “Since the China trade deal (in 2000) I voted against, America has lost over 3 million manufacturing jobs. It’s wrong to pretend that China isn’t one of our major economic competitors. When we are in the White House we will win that competition by fixing our trade policies.”

Sanders’ crude economic nationalism is not new. He has long linked his populist rhetoric to policies of trade war and anti-immigrant chauvinism. He fully supports the efforts of the trade union bureaucracy to pit US workers against their class brothers and sisters around the world and infect American workers with nationalism—the better to subordinate them to “their” corporate exploiters within the US.

Just four weeks ago, Sanders denounced “open borders” at a campaign event in Iowa, warning that

decriminalizing undocumented immigrants would lead to “impoverished people” around the world flooding into the US.

Trump also criticized Biden for his comments on China. In an interview with Fox News on Thursday, he hailed the tariffs that his administration has imposed on Chinese goods, while saying of Biden, “But for somebody to be so naïve and say China is not a problem, if Biden actually said that, that’s a very dumb statement.”

Like Trump, Sanders has hailed his anti-free trade record. This week he boasted of his votes against NAFTA and normalization of trade with China. On Monday, he released his trade platform, calling for renegotiation of all US trade agreements and demanding that China be labeled a currency manipulator, something Trump has threatened but pulled back from carrying out up to now. Officially naming a country a currency manipulator is tantamount to full-scale trade war. Such a declaration triggers a whole series of punitive trade measures against the targeted country.

Sanders, who calls himself a “democratic socialist,” has sought to outflank Trump from the right on trade issues. At an April 13 rally, he denounced Trump for being insufficiently aggressive in his trade war drive against China and other countries. “For once in your life,” he said, “keep your campaign promises...go back to the drawing board.”

On Monday, after releasing his trade plan, he said: “We need a president who will actually fight for American workers, keep their promises, and stand up to the giant corporations who close down plants to send jobs overseas.”

By equating the defense of American jobs with economic attacks on countries such as China and

blaming plant closures, layoffs and wage-cutting on trade policies rather than capitalism, Sanders aids the effort of the ruling class to create a war fever and prepare the way for military conflict with nuclear-armed powers such as China.

While he has tried to tap into anti-war sentiment by saying, “I voted against the war in Iraq. [Biden] voted for it,” Sanders has no qualms about using the military in pursuit of US imperialism’s interests. During the 2016 campaign, he stated that he would use “drones, all that and more.”

Notwithstanding his rhetorical criticisms of big business, Sanders’ goal is to prevent the independent movement of the working class by diverting its struggles behind the Democratic Party. In this, he is aided by pseudo-left organizations such as the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA).

The DSA functions as a faction of the Democratic Party, attempting to provide a phony left veneer to this party of Wall Street and the CIA. That is why it is dedicating its efforts to promoting the campaign of Sanders in the 2020 elections.



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