

Biden's blueprint for a right-wing presidency: Part two

By Patrick Martin
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This is the second part of a two-part article. Part one was posted Monday, August 10.

Biden on foreign policy

The longest single section of the draft Democratic platform is on foreign policy. This was Biden's main concern during the second half of his lengthy Senate career, after he became the ranking Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1997. He played a major role in rallying congressional support for Bill Clinton's bombing of Serbia in 1999, for the war in Afghanistan in 2001, and for the US invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Significantly, foreign policy was not one of the six platform sub-groups in which Sanders and Biden aides worked together. This was both a reflection of Sanders's longstanding refusal to make any serious appeal to the antiwar sentiments of the American people, his overall support for the war policy of the Obama-Biden administration, and his acknowledgement that in this area Biden had to have a free hand in order to make his arrangements with the national-security apparatus.

This platform section includes avowals, traditional in both major American capitalist parties, that the American military must be number one in the world and must be able to go to war anywhere on the planet, no matter how remote from the United States, with the assurance of victory.

The main criticism of Trump by the Democrats is that his "America First" orientation has alienated traditional US allies and weakened the global position of American imperialism. One passage declares sarcastically:

The United States should be at the head of the table whenever the safety and well-being of Americans is at stake, working in common cause with our allies and partners. Time and again, the Trump administration has stormed out, leaving America's seat at the table vacant and American interests on the menu.

This section goes on to note that the US must confront the world "as it is today, not as it was before President Trump's destruction" of US influence. In other words, Washington must seek to reconquer old positions now taken by its rivals: a formula for conflict on a global scale.

The document attacks Trump for weakness towards Russia, claiming, "He has pushed to bring Russia back into the G7 while lambasting our NATO partners and ignoring intelligence about Russian bounties for killing American troops and other coalition forces in Afghanistan." But it says nothing about impeachment, the Mueller investigation, and other efforts by congressional Democrats to use the bogus anti-Russia agitation to undermine Trump or force a more confrontational policy towards Moscow.

The platform claims: "Democrats know it's time to bring nearly two decades of unceasing conflict to an end. Our military engagements, which have spanned from West Africa to Southeast Asia, have cost more than \$5 trillion and claimed more than half a million lives. Our war in Afghanistan is the longest war in American history, with the youngest US

troops now fighting a war that was launched before they were even born."

It notes that Trump had pledged to end "forever wars" but has instead continued and expanded them. The same, of course, could be said of Barack Obama, who ran in 2008 as a supposedly antiwar candidate, and then continued the wars of the Bush administration, adding his own (Libya, Syria, Yemen). Biden's promises to end US military intervention in the Middle East are equally worthless. The core interests of US imperialism are involved: oil, military alliances with Israel, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, the conflict with Iran, the struggle for influence against Russia and China.

The Democratic platform backs a continued US military presence in Iraq "to train our Iraqi partners," and in Syria to keep up "the offensive against ISIS" while restoring the US alliance with Kurdish forces in Syria that Trump reneged on.

The platform declares "Our commitment to Israel's security, its qualitative military edge, its right to defend itself" to be "ironclad." Initially, the platform language referred to the Israeli "occupation" of the West Bank, a term that was removed at Biden's personal insistence. The draft now merely criticizes "settlement expansion" and "annexation."

Biden pledges to "close the detention center at Guantanamo Bay," as Obama pledged in 2008. Twelve years later, the prison still stands and not one of the prisoners has been brought to trial.

On China, the Democratic platform attacks Trump from the right, claiming that his trade war policies have not restored jobs in the United States and pledging to "stand up" to China on its trade practices and alleged theft of intellectual property.

There is also this pledge: "We will underscore our global commitment to freedom of navigation and resist the Chinese military's intimidation in the South China Sea. Democrats are committed to the Taiwan Relations Act and will continue to support a peaceful resolution of cross-strait issues consistent with the wishes and best interests of the people of Taiwan."

In his interview with the minority journalists referenced in the first part of this article, Biden answered one foreign policy question. He said that Trump's tariffs on Chinese goods had provoked retaliation that had devastated US manufacturing and agriculture. "We're going after China in the wrong way," he declared, saying that a Biden administration would review the tariffs and focus on issues such as protecting intellectual property and opposing Beijing's restrictions on US businesses operating in the Chinese market.

Another area where Biden has offered a more reactionary and aggressive foreign policy than Trump is Venezuela, where the US-backed destabilization campaign against the government of President Nicolás Maduro has produced several abortive military operations, but no lasting success.

After Trump recently expressed his loss of confidence in the policy of recognizing former legislator Juan Guaidó as the country's "legitimate" president, and suggested he might be open to meeting with Maduro, the

Biden campaign quickly began running Spanish-language commercials in south Florida appealing to ultra-right Venezuelan and Cuban exiles.

“Donald Trump is no friend to the Venezuelan people fighting for human rights and democracy in their country,” the campaign charged. “Trump is equivocating about recognizing the leader of the Venezuelan National Assembly, the only legitimate democratic institution in the country, and musing about meeting with yet another dictator—this time Nicolás Maduro,” the ad stated.

The Democratic draft platform echoes this line, declaring, “We will reject President Trump’s failed Venezuela policy, which has only served to entrench Nicolás Maduro’s dictatorial regime and exacerbate a human rights and humanitarian crisis.”

Where did Trump come from?

As we noted above, the starkest contradiction in the Democratic Party platform put forward by the Biden campaign is its failure even to attempt to explain how the supposed glory years of the Obama-Biden administration led to the debacle of the Hillary Clinton campaign in 2016 and the election of Donald Trump.

The standard explanations of Democratic Party operatives and their media backers come in two flavors: the Russians did it and the American people are incorrigibly racist.

The first explanation emerged out of the anti-Russia campaign that was launched even before the election by the *New York Times* and the Clinton entourage, who claimed that Russian operatives had hacked into Democratic Party computer servers and leaked unflattering information to WikiLeaks, thus undermining the Democratic campaign.

It mattered not to these neo-McCarthyites that no evidence of a Russian hacking operation was ever provided, only the unsupported claims of CIA Director John Brennan and other intelligence officials. Nor that the documents made public by WikiLeaks were true—which was why they were so damaging, since they exposed both dirty tricks by Democratic Party officials to undermine the Sanders campaign and help Clinton, and Clinton’s own efforts to win support from Wall Street audiences by promising to protect their interests.

The more sophisticated (but no less bogus) argument was that white working-class voters had been alienated by eight years of an African-American president and had taken out their racial resentments by voting for the Republican racist demagogue.

This claim ignored widespread evidence that economic and not racial grievances were responsible for widespread popular discontent with the Obama-Biden administration. This was expressed both by a shift by white working-class Obama voters to Trump or to third-party candidates, and by a significant drop in the African-American vote for the Democrats in many cities, including Milwaukee, Detroit and Philadelphia, which tipped the three states of Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania to the Republicans.

The purpose of both theories was to block any serious examination of the reactionary record of the Obama-Biden administration, particularly its promotion of wage-cutting and the broader attack on working-class living standards and social benefits that underlay such counter-reforms as the Affordable Care Act, a boondoggle for the insurance companies and the drug industry.

The Democratic platform returns to this mythologizing of the Obama-Biden record on the economy, claiming, “President Trump inherited the longest economic expansion in American history from the Obama-Biden administration, and he squandered it.” Again, if the American people “never had it so good” as under Obama and Biden, why was Trump able to eke out an Electoral College victory?

The document contradicts itself, admitting elsewhere that “our economy was rigged against working families and the middle class” long before the impact of the coronavirus. The platform declares:

Working families’ incomes have been largely stagnant for decades, while the costs of basic needs—from housing to health care, higher education to child care—keep rising at precipitous rates. Meanwhile, the rich have been capturing a larger and larger share of the economic pie, with incomes for the top one percent growing five times faster than those of the bottom 90 percent.

This assessment is perfectly true. But who was in power during those decades? For some 16 years the Democratic Party was in the White House, including the Clinton-Gore administration (1993-2001) and the Obama-Biden administration (2009-2017). The Democrats controlled one or both houses of Congress from 1980 to 1994, from 2001 to 2002, and again from 2006 to 2014.

Indeed, over the last four decades, the Republican Party has had full control of the federal government—House, Senate and the presidency—for only seven years: five years under George W. Bush and two years under Trump. The Democrats have had full control for four years, while “divided government” has prevailed for 29 years of the 40.

The Republican Party does not bear sole responsibility for the decades during which working families’ incomes have been “largely stagnant” while the lion’s share of wealth accrued to the top 1 percent of society. This extreme social polarization derived from the operations of the capitalist system, and the capitalist ruling class as a whole was responsible, operating through both of its parties, the Democrats as well as the Republicans.

Should the ruling class turn back to the Democrats in 2020—a distinct possibility judging by the polls, the corporate media coverage and the flow of campaign contributions from wealthy donors—that will not in any way signify a shift “to the left” in the policies of American capitalism. As the Biden campaign makes clear in the draft Democratic platform, while the rhetoric may change and the faces in power become more “diverse,” the same class interests will be served.

A Biden administration would be a right-wing government dominated by Wall Street and the military-intelligence apparatus, committed to defending the profit interests of an infinitesimal fraction of the population at the top under conditions of a vast public health crisis, an economic crisis worse than anything since the Great Depression, and mounting global tensions that will continually threaten the outbreak of major wars between the great powers.

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