

Elections in the U.S.: Political Culture or “Culture of Money”?

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Quite a few journalists and analysts in the world emphasize the wealth of political candidates, the millions of dollars required for getting elected, and additional candidates' and elected Congresspersons' revenues from lobbying, corruption and the cutthroat rivalry between the two parties. However, almost everyone in the world, including in the U.S., knows this. Why is it harmful to cultivate the notions of candidates rolling in millions of dollars, involvement in corruption and the discredited internecine party squabbling as issues for the people to be concerned about?

By emphasizing these features, the main characteristics of the American political system (which are so important that they constitute a crucial part of its political culture) are covered up. By political culture, I mean the thinking, outlook and activities, in this case regarding the political system, as pursued and propagated by the ruling elites.

What are some of these features that people the world over should be aware of? Regarding money, the more *subtle* marketing through the media is far more important. For example, the recent mid-term election campaign and the results are presented by the elite media in the North, and in many cases copied in the South, as a battle of the good against the evils represented by Trump. However, how did Trumpism come about? By March 2016, corporate media (especially CNN), under the cover of reports, interviews and endless panels featuring pro-Trump panellists, had already given Trump's GOP takeover gambit \$2 billion in free media.

This accounted for more free “ads” than all the other candidates from the Democratic Party and the GOP combined. By the end of the 2016 presidential general election campaign, corporate media had provided a total of \$5 billion in free exposure for Trump. One could not watch CNN at the time without hearing the name “Trump.” Thus, the elite media created Trump and, in the process, increased the *number* of ads from businesses as well as the *rates* of these ads.

Given the all-encompassing and overbearing predominance of anti-Trumpism, what better source of revenue for CNN than the Obamas playing the role of the *de facto* alternative to Trump? Just one week after the October mid-term elections, CNN aired on prime time two of its recent documentaries, one featuring Michelle Obama and the other Barack Obama. The latter documentary is geared to nostalgia focusing on Barack Obama's last hours in the White House. Thus, in turn, CNN is the non-official spokesperson and promoter of the Democratic Party, fielding Barack Obama as the *de facto* next president, irrespective of who the actual presidential and vice-presidential candidates will be for 2020.

The two-party system and the lesser of two evils are ingrained in the consciousness of many

Americans and others in the West and the South, such as in Latin America, who are inundated with this feature of U.S. political culture. All the American corporate media are united in the ongoing daily cacophony to present one wing of the two-party system as “left” (the Democratic Party) and the other as “right” (the Republicans).

There are not merely a few journalists and analysts who succumb to this. This is being highlighted right now in the wake of the resignation of General Mattis. In his letter to President Trump, he disagrees with the U.S. pulling out of Syria and what Mattis calls Trump’s conciliatory attitude toward China and Russia. This resulted in the Democrats, CNN and the other liberal media gushing over Mattis as an iconic hero of the U.S. and, among other things, as a symbol of stability. Together, they expanded the “left” to include a four-star Army General: another plank in the Democratic Party 2020 presidential elections platform. This example, among many others going beyond the scope of this article, shows that there is basically no difference between the two parties on domestic and foreign affairs.

Electoral fetishism is a hallmark of official American political culture. We are overwhelmed with a virtual international media-imposed “non-stop election campaign.” Just to take the most recent example of the mid-terms, it is in the common political domain that the summer/fall 2018 campaign and the TV ops the night and following days of the results – all combined and accumulated – are considered merely a warm-up and first step toward the 2020 presidential elections. At present, the 2020 campaign is already in full gear.

The main spinoff effect of this does not just mean being burdened and bored. The outcome of this fetish is the daily anti-status quo and progressive (not the self-proclaimed Democratic “progressivism”) actions in the streets, workplaces and educational institutions by the people who are substantially dampened if not virtually smothered. If not so, the corporate media quite deftly coopt many of these grassroots activities into the electoral hype. This is facilitated by some cases wherein these actions – consciously or not – are designed for electoral consumption.

As a direct outcome of this situation lies another feature of American political culture: cooptation. And the powerful role of the media, at once cultivating *and* profiting from naiveté, is a poison that cannot be underestimated. There are so many examples of how revolutionary or progressive movements in the U.S. are coopted into the dead-end of the two-party system. One key example is dealt with below.

This issue of cooptation leads us to the overriding issue of racist violence against African Americans and Native Americans. This feature of reactionary political culture goes all the way back to the very founding of the Thirteen Colonies in the 17th century and into the 18th century. In fact, history and current events indicate that the American state constitutes a vestige of slavery and genocide against the Native Americans. This realistic appreciation of the state must – or should – permeate the evaluation of the American elites’ imposed political culture. This is far more complex than the superficial corporate news outlets themes concerning financing, corruption and inter-party jungle warfare in the electoral system, the full measure of which is all too evident to the extent that it is normalized: anything goes to cover up the American state as a vestige of slavery and genocide.

African Americans have always been – and are today – at the forefront of revolutionary opposition to the status quo political culture as a necessary and inevitable outcome of their historical condition steeped in revolutionary and Marxist ideologies. To discuss the American

electoral process such as the mid-terms without dealing with this historical contradiction of the American state, as a vestige of slavery and genocide as a cornerstone of the dominant political culture, is tantamount to analyzing a long-term political process for example in a Latin American country while refusing to take into account the effects of European colonialism and then U.S. imperialism and their servile local oligarchies in the region.

What then is the current situation of African Americans and Native Americans regarding their historical vocation yet to be fulfilled? African Americans *are* at the forefront of opposition to the dominant political culture. However, one would never know it by reading and listening to most of the elite journalism and analysis.

Nonetheless, the cruel reality of the two-party system confronting the Black counteroffensive's journalistic and other activities is that their own movement is blunted and limited by the ability of the Democratic Party to coopt a small section of African Americans into its ranks as it does with other progressive mass movements. Thus, an essential part of the ruling circles' political culture is that the Democratic Party, far from being left-leaning or at least more progressive than the modern Republican Party, as it is made out to be, is in fact the *graveyard* for progress and a real left alternative.

The most stunning current example consists in how the Democratic Party and CNN are jumping onto General Mattis's resignation so as to herd any section of the progressive left that opposes Trump for the right reasons into the Democratic Party. The cruel twist of fate is that, as we see today on the Mattis issue, it confirms what many of us have always claimed: the Democratic Party since World War II is the real party of war and aggression.

Regarding the Democratic Party earning its living as the *graveyard* for progress and a real left alternative, left-wing revolutionary forces in the U.S. are *very familiar with this phenomenon*: they have and are suffering tragically and enormously from this *grave-digging* role of the Democratic Party, especially since World War II.

*This article was originally published in Spanish for the Cuban political/cultural website [La Jirabilla](#) in November 2018 (*Jirabillano*. 850, 22 de noviembre al 27 de diciembre del 2018). It enjoyed unexpectedly wide interest in Cuba and was reproduced on many websites in North America, Ecuador, Venezuela and Europe, including in [Global Research](#). This version in English has been updated, modified and adapted from the original Spanish-language variant for an English-speaking audience.

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