

Fooled Again: “The Naive Hopes of Bernie Sanders’ Supporters... to Push Hillary Clinton to the Left”

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The naive hopes of Bernie Sanders’ supporters—to build a grass-roots political movement, change the Democratic Party from within and push Hillary Clinton to the left—have failed. Clinton, aware that the liberal class and the left are not going to mount genuine resistance, is running as Mitt Romney in drag. The corporate elites across the political spectrum, Republican and Democrat, have gleefully united to anoint her president. All that remains of Sanders’ “revolution” is a 501(c)(4) designed to raise money, including from wealthy, anonymous donors, to ensure that he will be a senator for life. Great historical events happen twice, as Karl Marx quipped, first as tragedy and then as farce.

The multibillion-dollar extravaganza of our electoral Circus Maximus is part of the smokescreen that covers the ongoing devastation of globalization, deindustrialization, trade deals such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership, endless war, climate change and the intrusion into every corner of our lives by the security and surveillance state. Our democracy is dead. Clinton and Donald Trump do not have the power or the interest to revive it. They kneel before the war machine, which consumes trillions of dollars to wage futile wars and bankroll a bloated military. To defy the fortress state is political suicide. Politicians are courtiers to Wall Street. The candidates mouth the clichés of justice, improvements in income equality and democratic choice, but it is a cynical game. Once it is over, the victors will go to Washington to work with the lobbyists and financial elites to carry out the real business of ruling.

While there is a difference in the temperament of the two major presidential candidates, that difference will play out only in how our poison will be delivered. Political personalities serve global corporate centers of power. They do not control them. Barack Obama illustrates this. 



A Hillary Clinton rally in Cleveland in June. (Andrew Harnik / AP)

To neoliberals, everyone and everything are disposable. The failed states that have risen up across the Middle East, Africa, the Caucasus and Asia in the wake of the Cold War herald a neoliberal world driven by violence, corruption, greed and desperation. The drug traffickers, smugglers, pirates, kidnappers, jihadists, criminal gangs and militias that roam huge swaths of territory where central authority has vanished are the real faces of globalization. These nihilists define Islamic State just as they define the corporate state. Corruption may be more naked and cruder in Afghanistan or Iraq, but it has its parallel in the for-sale politicians and political parties that dominate the United States and Europe. The common good—the

building of community and solidarity—has been replaced through decades of corporate indoctrination with the callous call to amass all you can for yourself and leave the stranger bleeding on the side of the road.

Is the Goldman Sachs commodity trader, who hoards futures of rice, wheat, corn, sugar and livestock to jack up prices on the global market, leaving poor people in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America to starve, any less morally repugnant than the drug trafficker? Are F-16 pilots who incinerate families in Raqqa morally distinct from jihadists who burn a captured Jordanian pilot in a cage? Is torture in one of our black sites or offshore penal colonies any less barbaric than torture at the hands of Islamic State? Are the decapitations of children by military drones any more defensible than decapitations of Egyptian laborers on a beach in Libya by self-described holy warriors? Is Heather Bresch, the CEO of Mylan, who raised the price of [the lifesaving EpiPen](#) by 400 percent or more and whose compensation since 2007 has risen by 600 percent to above \$18 million a year, any less venal than a human trafficker who sends an overloaded boat and its occupants to their doom on the coast of Libya?

There is a new world order. It is based on naked exploitation. It—not democracy—is what we have exported across the globe. And it looks a lot like the [anarchic state that Hobbes feared](#). The criminal gangs that deliver migrants to Europe make about \$100 million a month for their work. They exploit and traffic human beings just as highly paid CEOs do.


The failed states of Iraq, Syria and Libya, a direct result of globalization, have their counterparts in Detroit, St. Louis, Oakland, Memphis, Baltimore, Atlanta, Milwaukee and the south side of Chicago. They are our versions of Mogadishu, complete with lawlessness, senseless killings, armed gangs, widespread hunger, fear, a population retreating into the numbing embrace of opiates, crippling poverty, dysfunctional state institutions, the growth of private security companies that protect the elites, and indiscriminate police violence that creates reigns of terror aimed at the poor. The more the global corporate forces extract from us in the name of austerity and the maximization of profit, the more parts of the U.S. will descend into domestic versions of the failed states overseas. The same system exists here and abroad. And it has the same result here and abroad. It may appear first in Somalia, Mali, Guinea-Bissau and Libya, but it will soon come to characterize much of America. The proliferation of weapons will do to our society what it has done to every other failed state where there has been unchecked access to arsenals—hand power to those with a penchant for violence.

“Anyone who wants to rule men first tries to humiliate them, to trick them out of their rights and their capacity for resistance, until they are as powerless before him as animals,” [Elias Canetti](#) wrote in “Crowds and Power.” “He uses them like animals and, even if he does not tell them so, in himself he always knows quite clearly that they mean just as little to him; when he speaks to his intimates he will call them sheep or cattle. His ultimate aim is to incorporate them into himself and to suck the substance out of them. What remains of them afterwards does not matter to him. The worse he has treated them, the more he despises them. When they are no more use at all, he disposes of them as he does of his excrement, simply seeing to it that they do not poison the air of his house.”

History has amply demonstrated where this will end up. The continued exploitation by an unchecked elite, and the rising levels of poverty and insecurity, will unleash a legitimate rage among the desperate. They will see through the lies and propaganda of the elites. They

will demand retribution. They will turn to those who express the hatred they feel for the powerful and the institutions, now shams, that were designed to give them a voice. They will seek not reform but destruction of a system that has betrayed them.

Failed states—czarist Russia, the Weimar Republic, the former Yugoslavia—vomit up political monstrosities. We will be no different.

A form of fascism has already taken hold in two nations on the edges of the European Union, Hungary and Poland. Far-right parties, reacting to the flood of more than a million migrants that descended on Europe last year, are gaining ground in France, Austria, Sweden, Germany and Greece. Nationalism, buttressed by a deification of the military, will be used to compensate for individual powerlessness and a loss of national identity. Dissent in the U.S. will become “anti-American,” a form of treason. Enemies at home will be vilified along with enemies abroad. And this will lead to even more warfare in the Middle East. The far-right political parties in Eastern Europe flirt rhetorically with military conflict with Russia. And because of its membership in NATO, the United States would be obligated to enter any hostilities. 

Voting for Hillary Clinton will not halt this slide into the apocalypse. It will only accelerate it. Donald Trump may vanish from the political landscape, but someone even more venal, and probably more intelligent, will take his place. Our job is to dismantle the machinery that is pushing toward the cliff. And this means sustained and massive civil disobedience. As exemplified by the protests at the [Standing Rock Sioux Reservation](#) and by prisoners across the nation who carried out [work stoppages](#) last Friday, it means doing everything possible not to cooperate with the elements of authority. It means disrupting the mechanisms of power. It means overcoming fear. It means no longer believing the lies we are told.

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