

Clinton seizes on Brexit Vote to Tout her Credentials as Defender of Washington's Global Interests

By [Patrick Martin](#)

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Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton responded to the referendum vote in Britain to leave the European Union by reaffirming her claim to be the most qualified commander-in-chief for American imperialism in a crisis situation.

In initial statements from her campaign, and then in a speech delivered Sunday to the US Conference of Mayors meeting in Indianapolis, Clinton evaded the political issues posed in the Brexit campaign, particularly the anti-immigrant prejudice pumped out by both sides, Leave and Remain. Instead, she pledged to maintain the “special relationship” between Washington and London, i.e., Washington’s reliance on London to line up behind its policies in Europe and internationally. She also reiterated her support for the NATO alliance.

Clinton then turned to her central message—the argument that she is the most reliable and trustworthy defender of the status quo, declaring: “This time of uncertainty only underscores the need for calm, steady, experienced leadership in the White House to protect Americans’ pocketbooks and livelihoods, to support our friends and allies, to stand up to our adversaries, and to defend our interests.”

This has been the axis of the Clinton campaign since winning enough delegates to forestall the challenge of Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders. Clinton has concentrated on challenging her Republican opponent Donald Trump’s qualifications for holding the highest US office on grounds of temperament and character, rather than rebutting his anti-immigrant chauvinist, militarist and authoritarian policies.

In this way, she hopes to appeal to significant sections of Wall Street, the Republican Party establishment and the military-intelligence apparatus that view Trump as an erratic figure who could provoke mass opposition within the United States and internationally.

As she has done repeatedly, Clinton sought to link Trump to Russian President Vladimir Putin in her Indianapolis speech, declaring, “No one should be confused about America’s commitment to Europe—not an autocrat in the Kremlin, not a presidential candidate on a Scottish golf course.” A constant theme in her foreign policy pronouncements has been the suggestion that Trump is the choice of Moscow in 2016.

Speaking to the mayors Sunday, she referred to the impact of Friday’s plunge in financial markets worldwide, noting that \$100 billion was lost from 401(k)s. Wall Street lost far more than that amount, and that is what Clinton and the US financial aristocracy are really concerned about, not what American workers lost in their meager retirement accounts.

“Our priority now must be to protect American families and businesses from the negative effects of this kind of tumult and uncertainty,” she continued. Clinton made the speech only hours after being endorsed by Republican banker Henry Paulson, former chairman of Goldman Sachs, secretary of the Treasury under George W. Bush, and principal organizer of the 2008 Wall Street bailout.

Without mentioning Trump, Clinton cast herself as the more reliable defender of the global interests of American imperialism. She said, “We need leaders...who understand that bombastic comments in turbulent times can actually cause more turbulence; and who put the interests of the American people ahead of their personal business interests. And we need leaders who recognize that our alliances and partnerships are among our greatest national assets, now more than ever.”

This was a clear reference to Trump’s typically vulgar comments, made at the golf course he owns in Turnberry, Scotland, where he boasted that the plunging value of the British pound would generate more customers from the US and other countries for his Scottish venture and put more money in his pocket.

But Clinton said nothing about Trump’s public embrace of the Leave campaign before the referendum, his endorsement of its racist anti-immigrant appeal, or his celebration of the outcome as a harbinger of a Republican victory in the US election in November.

Trump sent out a fundraising email Friday night hailing the Brexit result. “These voters stood up for their nation—they put the United Kingdom first, and they took their country back,” he wrote, while asking for campaign contributions. “With your help, we’re going to do the exact same thing on Election Day 2016 here in the United States of America.”

Clinton has avoided any discussion of the issue of immigration as a factor in the Brexit result, even though both the Leave and Remain campaigns, in different ways, sought to foment and appeal to anti-immigrant prejudice.

One of her chief aides, Jennifer Palmieri, a former Obama White House official, did take up the issue of immigration at a press briefing Friday. “Britain and the United States are different countries,” she said, going on to point out that the nonwhite population of the United States is 26 percent, double the 13 percent in Britain. The logic of this argument is that while racist demagoguery might be successful in Britain, it would be less so in the United States because white voters make up a smaller proportion of the electorate.

Clinton made a remark along similar lines in her speech in Indianapolis, saying, “We have to reaffirm that the United States and the United Kingdom are different countries in many important ways—economically, politically, demographically.”

Such comments shed light on the cynical electoral calculations of the Clinton campaign. The Democratic candidate aims to combine backing from Wall Street and the national-security establishment with support from minority voters historically tied to the Democratic Party and the votes of layers of the upper-middle class, including substantial sections of Republican voters offended by Trump’s vulgar racism and misogyny.

The Clinton campaign offers nothing to the working class, white, black or Hispanic, because the Democratic Party long ago abandoned any policy of social reform to create jobs and improve the living standards and social conditions of working people, becoming instead a

more and more open and direct instrument of Wall Street.

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