

Primary Election Results Highlight US Political Crisis

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Billionaire demagogue Donald Trump and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton took significant leads in the contests for the Republican and Democratic presidential nominations, based on results of primaries and caucuses held in 12 states on Tuesday.

Trump won seven of the 11 states with Republican contests, including Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Massachusetts, Tennessee, Vermont and Virginia, with Senator Ted Cruz carrying his home state of Texas and neighboring Oklahoma, and Senator Marco Rubio of Florida winning the caucuses in Minnesota. The outcome of the Alaska caucuses was still undetermined as of this writing.

Clinton took seven out of 11 states where Democrats went to the polls, including Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Massachusetts, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia. Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders won his home state as well as Colorado, Minnesota and Oklahoma.

NBC News projected that Clinton would win 525 delegates and Sanders 335, bringing their total of elected delegates to 641 and 401 respectively. Clinton has a huge lead of 425 to 22 among so-called super delegates—members of Congress, state officials and members of the Democratic National Committee—giving her a combined total of 1,066, about half way to the total required for nomination.

The delegate totals in the Republican race showed a less decisive lead for Trump, but over a highly fragmented opposition. The belief is growing that even if Trump fails to win a majority of delegates in the primary contests, no other candidate will, and the nomination will be decided at the Republican National Convention in July.

With the nomination contest in the big business parties now close to the one-third mark, with primaries or caucuses having been held in 15 of the 50 states, the US political system has clearly entered into an historic crisis, marked by unprecedented political polarization.

The Republican Party is revealed as the incubator of a fascistic movement. The Trump campaign represents the union of reactionary, racist and militaristic politics and the gangster economics personified by the real estate speculator-turned politician. More important than any of the specific policies he advocates is his promotion of authoritarianism: Trump as the great man who will call the shots in Washington.

This was symbolized on the night of the March 1 primaries when Trump discarded the usual victory rally, where the candidate thanks his supporters, in favor of a press conference, staged in quasi-presidential style in front of a bank of American flags and held in the ballroom of Trump's own luxury hotel in Palm Beach, Florida.

He was introduced by New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, who has made the degrading transition from campaign rival to cup bearer and court jester.

Trump was asked about criticisms from Republican congressional leaders of his refusal to promptly disavow the support of Ku Klux Klan figure David Duke. He replied by dismissing the criticism, then warning House Speaker Paul Ryan that if he crossed President Trump, he would “pay a tremendous price.”

As one observer, former House Republican Whip Tom Delay, commented on MSNBC, Trump appeared ignorant of the constitutional separation of powers between the executive, legislative and judicial branches, and seemed to be running for king rather than president.

While Trump represents the rise of a personalist, authoritarian movement on the right, broad sections of the population have given their support to the campaign of Bernie Sanders, demonstrating that there are large numbers of people who are moving to the left and inclined towards socialism, but who are trapped in the Democratic Party for lack of a visible alternative.

More than two million votes were cast on March 1 for Sanders, a self-described “democratic socialist.” On top of this, the Sanders campaign reported that in the month of February it raised \$42 million, virtually all of it from small donations coming over the Internet. This is more than double the amount raised in January and a record sum for any US presidential campaign.

The United States is becoming politically polarized to an extraordinary degree. The danger is that while the millions backing Sanders are sincerely looking for an alternative to the domination of Wall Street, Sanders is not. He functions as a longtime trusted agent of the Democratic Party, seeking to trap this broad movement to the left and keep it confined within the political straitjacket of the two-party system.

If Clinton and Trump become the nominees of the Democratic and Republican parties, the candidates of both capitalist parties will be deeply unpopular. A CNN/ORC poll published Monday found that Trump was regarded unfavorably by 59 percent of those polled, while 53 percent had a negative view of Clinton. A Wall Street Journal/NBC poll found 49 percent “very negative” towards Trump and 39 percent “very negative” towards Clinton—triple the level of such feelings toward the Democratic and Republican candidates in 2008.

Trump makes an appeal, in a very right-wing form, to the tremendous sense of frustration and anger building up among workers and sections of the middle class after years of economic stagnation, financial crisis, the loss of jobs, and the deterioration of social services and infrastructure, through both Republican and Democratic administrations.

At his press conference Tuesday night, he denounced what he called “Third World” conditions in the United States, while indicting Hillary Clinton as sharing the responsibility, as part of the Obama administration, for the deteriorating conditions of life in America.

Sanders offers no alternative because, in the final analysis, he is committed to the Democratic Party and supporting its presidential nominee, whether Clinton or someone else, and its right-wing, pro-Wall Street program. He defends the Obama administration, which has presided over an intensification of social inequality at home while expanding the military operations of American imperialism around the world.

Trump faces many obstacles to his rise to power. The initial success of his campaign has brought the political crisis in the Republican Party to a head, with leading figures denouncing him and declaring they could not support him as the nominee. At the same time, he has received his first top-level endorsements, beginning with Christie and including two governors, a senator and four congressmen, with more likely to come after his Super Tuesday victories.

Whatever the immediate outcome of the Trump campaign, however, it is the inevitable byproduct of the decay of the political culture in America, embracing both capitalist parties and the entire political, media and corporate establishment.

Since the 1960s, when Nixon sought to co-opt the Southern segregationists and the George Wallace movement, the Republican Party has encouraged and drawn sustenance from the most reactionary, racist and chauvinist tendencies in American society.

The growing intimacy between the Republican Party and semi-fascist elements has long been the dirty secret of official American politics. Both the Democratic Party and the corporate-controlled media have sought to cover this up, downplaying periodic eruptions such as the presidential campaigns of Patrick Buchanan, the close ties between Southern Republicans and white supremacist groups, and, more recently, the rise of the Tea Party and the “birthers” (those, Donald Trump most prominent among them, who claimed that Barack Obama was born in Kenya and therefore not eligible to become president).

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