

Forbes

Preview To November Campaign: Hillary Clinton, Goddess Of War, Criticizes Donald Trump, King Of Hype

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June 4, 2016

Distrusted by most Americans and generating little enthusiasm even among supporters, Hillary Clinton has fallen behind Donald Trump in the polls. Her antidote? A brutal attack on Trump for what she terms his rants, feuds, and lies.

It's an ironic tactic for someone whose dubious behavior stretches back decades to personal enrichment via cattle trades and obstruction of justice with subpoenaed evidence staging a mysterious disappearance. She's no softie in the political wars, once attacking her opponents for imagined conspiracies. And she has offered her own tall tales, such as landing under sniper fire in Bosnia.

Nevertheless, Clinton's biggest problem is her foreign policy record. Most Americans don't want to intervene more overseas, but Clinton is not most Americans. She is the Democratic neoconservative, a veritable goddess of war, who backed every major conflict fought by the U.S. over the last quarter century. If someone's views on America's international role should not be taken seriously, it is Hillary Clinton. She routinely advocated sacrificing U.S. wealth and lives in conflicts of choice which actually harmed American security. Her needless foreign adventures inevitably turned out badly, creating new crises and consequent demands for more U.S. intervention and war.

On Thursday Clinton spoke in San Diego. Her basic message was that Donald Trump was "temperamentally unfit" for the presidency and that all he has offered is "a series of bizarre rants, personal feuds, and outright lies." Of course, he has provided more than a little evidence to back her charges. Trump's egoism and incivility promise an even more vicious politics. His ignorance and inconsistency make rational policy-making unlikely. His disdain for the Constitution would undermine the rule of law.

Yet the brunt of her talk was not about character—something which would prove embarrassing given her manifold lapses—but about policy. And criticizing Trumpisms is like shooting fish in a barrel. No one, other than Donald Trump, believes his thinking to be well-informed and systematic.

Nevertheless, common sense occasionally surfaces in the Trump world view. It virtually never makes an appearance as Clinton backs Washington's role as global dominatrix. Ultimately, she seems most appalled that Trump sometimes opposes the conventional wisdom that Washington is destined to micro-manage the globe, lecturing, hectoring, subsidizing, sanctioning, bombing, invading, and occupying other nations as it sees fit. Even worse, in her view, he says that consequences, such as the catastrophe in Iraq, matter, a shocking challenge in America's accountability-free capital.

Her address—the fancy term used to describe politicians attempting to establish their gravitas—could have been given by any number of Democrats or Republicans, who differ little in their support for promiscuous intervention and permanent war. Her talk was filled with the usual meaningless blather, unrealistic assumptions, and dangerous policy recommendations. Her dedication to a status quo which has utterly failed warns Americans about her likely (mal)performance if elected president.

For instance, she began by posing “a choice between a fearful America that's less secure and less engaged with the world, and strong, confident America that leads to keep our country safe and our economy growing.” She also criticized Trump's belief that the U.S. is “weak.” Yet despite her claim to be convinced that America was strong, her willingness to constantly meddle overseas betrays an extraordinary fear of the world, as if the U.S. was but a helpless Third World state, constantly at risk if it stopped deploying the military in every possible contingency.

Worse, promiscuous Clinton-backed military interventions, which go back to her husband's presidency, have left America poorer and less secure. In her speech she imagined Trump “leading us into war just because somebody got under his very thin skin.” Sure, he could do that. But she apparently doesn't even require that much justification for going to war. She has backed U.S. involvement in virtually every unnecessary, foolish, expensive conflict.

She pushed her husband to remake the Balkans, tearing apart some nations and supporting other artificial states, all the while ignoring the criminality of America's allies, which joined Serbia in engaging in ethnic cleansing. The *New York Times* recently detailed how the gangster state of Kosovo has become “a font of Islamic extremism and a pipeline for jihadists.” She was a strong supporter of the Iraq invasion, one of America's worst foreign policy blunders, which has proved to be the gift which keeps on giving: thousands of dead Americans, hundreds of thousands of dead Iraqis, sectarian war, widespread murder and “cleansing” of religious minorities, an aggressive Islamic State, and an empowered Iran. (Her presidential ambitions finally forced her to admit her eye vote was a mistake.)

She backed doubling and trebling down in Afghanistan, lengthening a foolish attempt at nation-building in Central Asia. She orchestrated the campaign in Libya, which resulted in a failed state, loose weapons, civil war, and a vacuum filled by ISIS. She accepted if not advocated ever widening “drone wars” in Pakistan and Yemen. Her early demand for Bashar al-Assad's ouster in Syria discouraged a compromise settlement and she now advocates that the U.S. get more involved militarily in Syria, a multi-sided civil war in which America has no vital interest and for which Washington has no answer. Virtually every war she supported created new problems which were used to justify new interventions.

Yet she believes this list of mistakes entitles her to the presidency: “I’m proud to run on my record, because I think the choice before the American people in this election is clear.” Yes, it is. Vote Hillary Clinton and we can be sure there will be more meddling, more intervention, more wars, more dead Americans, more wasted dollars, and more international chaos—requiring even more meddling, intervention, and wars. She praised her efforts on behalf of America’s service personnel and veterans, but her policies would create many more war veterans requiring help.

Of course, she doesn’t put it quite that way. First, she declared, “we need to be strong at home.” Who doesn’t believe that? She complained that Trump had no “clue about what to do,” but her ideas almost invariably would harm the economy: more costly programs, uncontrolled spending, burdensome regulation, federal controls, corporate welfare. As well as a big spending Pentagon. That’s no improvement over Trump.

Second, she said “we need to stick with our allies,” which make “us exceptional. And our allies deliver for us every day.”

This is one of the silliest things she’s ever said, quite an achievement. America is not exceptional because it has acquired dozens of whiny dependents which expect the U.S. to subsidize, coddle, reassure, and defend them. Actually, nations all over the world continue to beg Washington to do so. The post-Cold War expansion of NATO, rushed during her husband’s presidency, treated the military alliance like an international gentleman’s club. The latest applicant? Montenegro, with a couple thousand soldiers, has been invited to join NATO. No doubt it will “deliver” for America every day. At least requests for financial aid and other assistance.

Alliances should make the U.S. stronger. America should not take on other nations’ threats without commensurate benefit. The Europeans are not only wealthier and more populous than Russia, their only serious potential antagonist, but also America, which does most of the heavy lifting in defending the continent. In effect, Washington is subsidizing the Europeans’ generous welfare states.

South Korea has more than 40 times the GDP and twice the population of North Korea. Why does America still have nearly 30,000 troops stationed on the peninsula to defend the South? When will the Republic of Korea, which years ago became a serious industrial power, spend as large a share of its economy to defend against the existential threat next door as America does to protect its global network of wastrels?

She bizarrely calls these alliances a “source of strength.” Rather, they are a source of conflict. Decades after they were created—in a different world at a different time—they threaten to draw the U.S. into fights which are not vital to Americans. Washington has no cause to risk war, and especially nuclear war, over the Baltic States, Japan’s claims to the Senkaku Islands, or who controls the Korean peninsula. Far better for the prosperous and populous nations, which benefited from America’s defense shield for decades and have far more at stake, take on those duties. Maybe, some day, a few of them might even help defend America.

Ironically, for someone so horrified at Trump’s dismissal of America’s costly alliances, she doesn’t like the idea of these friendly states better arming themselves. She recoiled from Trump’s suggestion that South Korea and Japan consider developing nuclear weapons. It’s

admittedly a radical thought, but only because policymakers like Clinton cannot imagine a world different than one dominated and controlled by Washington.

Why should the U.S. be satisfied by an East Asia in which all of the “bad” actors, China, Russia, and North Korea, have nuclear weapons while none of Washington’s democratic allies has a deterrent capability? Why should America remain entangled in the unstable region, ready to sacrifice Los Angeles and Seattle to protect Seoul and Tokyo? How to get Beijing to act against the North’s nuclear program except to share the nightmare—after all, a nuclear Japan could deter not only Pyongyang but also the People’s Republic of China. Surely it’s worth a debate, which won’t come from Clinton or the Neoconservatives who until now have dominated the Republican Party. Only Trump is advancing any new ideas.

Third, Clinton endorsed diplomacy and specifically the Iran nuclear accord. She’s right, but that doesn’t make her much better than Trump. Although he has been inconsistent on Iran, he appears to be more open to diplomacy elsewhere, especially in dealing with the PRC and Russia. And his overall policy, despite the bluster, appears to be more pacific than Clinton’s, given her routine support for war over many years. For Clinton it’s bomb first and then talk.

Moreover, she turned her call for diplomacy into an effort to paint herself as more committed to Israel than Trump. That actually isn’t easy given Trump’s shameless speech to AIPAC earlier this year. On this issue, at least, there is little difference between the two candidates, though in pre-pander mode he suggested the importance of “even-handedness” in dealing with the Palestinians, who have suffered under nearly a half century of occupation. The longer the occupation and the more expansive Israeli colonization of the West Bank, the less likely there will be peace. At least Trump’s diplomatic commitment might reemerge, while Clinton appears to lack any such inclination.

Fourth, she advocated being “firm but wise with our rivals.” Clinton rightly criticized Trump’s sometimes bizarre praise of foreign dictators, but that doesn’t make her views reasonable. Trump is awful on trade. Unfortunately, however, Clinton has moved his direction, denouncing the Trans-Pacific Partnership which was negotiated on her watch as Secretary of State. She supports confrontation with Russia over Ukraine even though the latter is not in NATO and is of far greater interest to the Europeans. (So much for not seeing “the complexity,” as she accuses Trump.)

Fifth, she argued that “We need a real plan for confronting terrorists.” Sure, but she failed to mention the most obvious point. Stop blowing up other societies. Stop bombing, invading, and occupying other nations. Stop killing foreign peoples and intervening in their conflicts. Stop creating enemies around the globe. Terrorism is evil and awful, but it almost always is a political act directed against outsiders, in this case, unfortunately, often Americans. Before whacking yet another hornet’s nest, Washington should consider how Americans would react if another country did the same to the U.S.

Her specific proposals are pure conventional wisdom. More air attacks on the Islamic State, even though the U.S. has allowed everyone else in the region to largely avoid confronting a force which is a far greater threat to them. In fact, Saudi Arabia has essentially dropped its efforts against the Islamic State in favor of fomenting sectarian conflict in Yemen, making Washington complicit in war crimes (Riyadh one of the dubious “allies” Clinton enthusiastically supports).

She also wants Washington to end Syria's civil war. Sure, no problem. Also, "close Iraq's sectarian divide," which America created when it blew that country apart. How should the U.S. put Humpty Dumpty back together? Clinton doesn't say, even though she criticized Trump for failing to offer specifics as to how he would war against the Islamic State.

Sixth, Clinton advocated that Americans "stay true to our values." It's almost comical coming from one of the Clintons, but ignore her personal flaws. Her criticisms of Trump struck home: his support for murdering terrorists' families, as well as "when he makes fun of disabled people, calls women pigs, proposes banning an entire religion from our country, or plays coy with white supremacists." His behavior too often has been grotesque. Yet her public values, which would control her actions as president, are more dangerous: a belief in global social engineering, willingness to go to war for minimal, even frivolous reasons, commitment to power over liberty, and readiness to wreck entire nations while pursuing failed policies.

Seventh, she plays the temperament card as commander-in-chief: "Imagine if he had not just his Twitter account at his disposal when he's angry, but America's entire arsenal." Great line and fair point. Yet her supposedly cool-headed determination to get involved in multiple, needless wars is no better. Hillary Clinton is disposed toward war. She fails to understand America's strategic interests and treats the military as just another policy tool: Clinton, too, is not qualified to be commander-in-chief.

Clinton scored political points with her foreign policy speech. She made a good case that Donald Trump can't be trusted as president. However, she did nothing to demonstrate that she's better qualified. Indeed, her record tells us that she also cannot be trusted as commander-in-chief. Whoever wins in November, Americans are likely to end up in greater danger.

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