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The Hillary-Tulsi Fault Line

Their feud could foretell trouble for Democrats in 2020.

By Ted Rall

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Rep. Tulsi Gabbard speaks at the Democratic debate in Westerville, Ohio, Oct. 15. PHOTO: JOHN MINCHILLO/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Why would Hillary Clinton attack the 11th-place Democratic presidential candidate, currently polling at 1.2%? In an interview last week Mrs. Clinton said the Russians have “their eye on somebody who is currently in the Democratic primary and are grooming her to be the third-party candidate.”

Rep. Tulsi Gabbard of Hawaii replied on Twitter: “You, the queen of warmongers, embodiment of corruption, and personification of the rot that has sickened the Democratic Party for so long, have finally come out from behind the curtain.” The Clinton-Gabbard spat illuminates the underlying conflict between the grassroots progressive left and the centrists who still dominate the Democratic Party’s leadership and donor class.

Democrats want to avoid a repeat of 2016, when enough progressives didn’t vote for Mrs. Clinton to keep her from winning. Beating Mr. Trump is all that matters, the blue-no-matter-who corporatists insist. Progressives reply by asking how that worked out in 2016.



Tulsi vs. Hillary, and Mayor Pete's Iowa Boost



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One nearly invisible Democratic fault line concerns the president.

Progressives don't like Mr. Trump and disagree with most of his policies. But there is important common ground.

Like the president, progressives favor

economic nationalism—putting American workers first and bringing back high-paid manufacturing jobs. They also want to end the post-9/11 forever wars, close overseas military bases, and avoid new wars of choice.

Whereas centrist Democrats ranted about Russia like Joe McCarthy, many progressives welcomed the prospect of warmer U.S.-Russian relations. They also hoped for the best when Mr. Trump held talks with North Korea's Kim Jong Un. Centrists denounced them as appeasement.

Curiously, Mr. Trump's withdrawal of U.S. troops from Syria brought lockstep condemnation from Democrats. Mr. Biden called this abandonment of the Kurds "the most shameful thing any president has done in modern history in terms of foreign policy." (What about the Iraq war?) Elizabeth Warren allowed that "I don't think we should have troops in the Middle East," but added, "We have to do it the right way, the smart way."

House Democrats voted unanimously for a resolution opposing the pullout from Syria. Ms. Gabbard was absent, but she too criticized Mr. Trump's decision as precipitous. She also called the subsequent Turkish attack "yet another negative consequence of the regime-change war we've been waging in Syria."

Opposition to Mr. Trump's pullout may not be as widespread as the candidates imagine. In a Rasmussen poll, 55% of Democrats (and 69% of Republicans) agreed that "it is time for us to get out of these ridiculous endless wars, many of them tribal, and bring our soldiers home." The pollster didn't identify the speaker of those words—Mr. Trump.

Democrats may be setting themselves up for a loss by being so disciplined in opposing the president. When progressive votes are vital for victory, attacking the president for trying to leave a smaller footprint in the Middle East isn't a smart move.

Mr. Rall is a political cartoonist and author of “Francis: The People’s Pope,” the latest in his series of graphic novel-format biographies. He is an occasional contributor to SputnikNews.com.

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