

Hillary Clinton: Congressional debate on Iraq is over means, not ends

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During a Sunday breakfast meeting with members of the US Army's 10th Mountain Division in Afghanistan, New York Democratic Senator Hillary Clinton told the troops that however sharp the differences expressed in the debate over the Bush administration's war policy, Democrats and Republicans share the same essential aims.

"I hope that when you hear the debate in Washington that you understand that whatever our differences over the means, we are all agreed on the end," she told the soldiers at a military base in Kabul.

It would be difficult to more clearly characterize the nature of the differences between the new Democratic leadership in Congress and the Bush White House. While criticizing Bush's plans for an escalation of US troop numbers in Iraq, the New York senator declared her own preference for a "surge" in Afghanistan.

"I wish we were discussing additional troops for Afghanistan," she said. "We are hearing increasingly troubling reports out of Afghanistan."

Clinton, considered the front-runner in the contest for the 2008 Democratic presidential nomination, made the remark during a four-day, three-nation tour of US war fronts. The New York senator received private briefings from American military commanders, participated in photo-ops with the troops, and had audiences with the top officials of the US puppet regimes in Iraq and Afghanistan—Nouri al-Maliki and Hamid Karzai—as well as with Pakistan's military ruler, Gen. Pervez Musharraf.

Clinton was accompanied by Democratic Senator Evan Bayh of Indiana, who, like her, voted for the Iraq war and continues to support it, as well as Congressman John McHugh, a Republican from New York.

What is the meaning of Clinton's statement that she

and fellow Democrats disagree with the Bush administration solely on the "means" it is employing in prosecuting its wars, and fully agree on the "end?"

The first question is this: what ends are being pursued through these wars? The Authorization for the Use of Military Force against Iraq, which Clinton and Bayh both supported in October 2002, affirmed that Iraq "possessed a significant chemical and biological weapons capability," was "actively seeking a nuclear weapons capability," and was "supporting and harboring terrorist organizations." Given these "facts," the resolution claimed that a US "preventive" war was justified in order to defend "national security."

In the five years since that resolution was passed and implemented, every claim it made has been proven a lie. Clinton, however, continues to deny that the Bush administration deliberately and knowingly concocted phony "intelligence" to justify an unprovoked war. In an interview with Jeffrey Goldberg published in the January 15 issue of the *New Yorker* magazine, she was asked if she thought she had been lied to. She replied, "I have to tell you, I think they believed, as I believed, that there was, at the very least, residual weapons of mass destruction . . ."

This absurd contention is aimed at concealing the criminal conspiracy in which she participated to terrorize the American people and justify a war of aggression.

The lies about the necessity to overthrow Saddam Hussein in order to prevent imminent nuclear, biological or chemical attacks on American cities represented not the "end" being pursued through the war, but a "means" of foisting it onto the American people and concealing from them the real ends on which Clinton and Bush agree.

Clinton suggested the real aims of the war in a

statement made on her trip. “We need a new course and an end to the current failed policy,” she declared. “I continue to urge a strategy that places pressure on the Iraqi government to resolve the political crisis through phased redeployment of US troops, establishes an Iraqi Oil Trust to end the stalemate over oil, and pursues an aggressive diplomatic strategy . . .”

In fact, her talk of ending the “stalemate over oil” points in the direction of the real “end” of the war in Iraq, in which hundreds of thousands of people have been massacred and an entire society laid to waste.

The adoption of aggressive war as government policy and the use of US military might to seize oil resources and assert global hegemony constitutes the consensus policy of the American ruling elite, promoted by both of its major parties.

This policy was implemented both in Afghanistan, with the aim of asserting American dominance in the energy-rich region of Central Asia, as well as in Iraq, which possesses the world’s second-largest proven oil reserves.

The means employed flow necessarily from the colonialist ends of this policy. How does an imperialist power subjugate a nation and seize its natural resources? The means inevitably involve violence, terror and the fomenting of sectarian strife as part of a strategy of divide and rule in the targeted country, as well as the suppression of domestic opposition to a war of plunder through the imposition of police-state measures at home.

Thus the “debate” between Democrats like Clinton and the Bush White House concerns matters such as whether the “surge” should be directed to Iraq or Afghanistan. It turns on whether more US troops should be sent to Baghdad to terrorize and occupy neighborhoods, or be “redeployed” to strategic bases to be used as a “rapid deployment force,” suppressing resistance to the US occupation through the use of heavy aerial bombardment and lightning strikes to back up puppet military forces.

All the talk, from Democrats and Republicans alike, that “failure is not an option” in Iraq means that these crimes will continue. The criticism leveled by the Democrats against Bush’s escalation in the face of overwhelming popular opposition to the Iraq war is inevitably toothless, given, as Senator Clinton acknowledges, that they are “all agreed on the end” of

this military adventure. Bush, Cheney and company simply reply, “If you agree on this end, what means do you propose to achieve it?”

A criminal end—colonial conquest and seizure of strategic resources—can be pursued only through criminal means. This essential feature of imperialist war was evidenced in atrocities like Abu Ghraib and Haditha, in the slaughter of an estimated 650,000 human beings since the war began and in the ongoing spiral of death and destruction.

Genuine opposition to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan can be mounted only by rejecting the shared “end” of Clinton and Bush and recognizing that the failure of this imperialist project is the *only* option that can bring an end to the bloodshed and advance the interests of working people in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as in the US itself. The only demand that articulates the interests of the Afghan and Iraqi people and the international working class is the demand for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all US and allied troops and the holding of all those who conspired to launch these wars accountable for their war crimes



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