Two defenders of American imperialism

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In the final debate of the US presidential election, to be held Monday night in Boca Raton, Florida, President Barack Obama and his Republican challenger Mitt Romney can be expected to tout their contrasting "visions" on US foreign policy. However, on the fundamental issues of concern to the American corporate and financial elite, the two candidates are entirely united.

They will both declare themselves defenders of "democracy" and "freedom," even as American money and weapons prop up dictatorships like the Saudi monarchy, the kleptocratic rulers of Congo and other resource-rich African states, and military-backed regimes from Honduras to Egypt. They accept unquestioningly the necessity to use military force and political subversion to safeguard the economic and strategic interests of the American financial aristocracy anywhere in world.

There will presumably be verbal clashes. Romney will seek to take advantage of the debacle last month, when armed attackers overran the US consulate in Benghazi, Libya, killing the US ambassador and three other Americans. Obama will seek to counter by citing the greatest "success" of his foreign policy, the killing of Osama bin Laden by an assassination squad of US Navy Seals.

These disputes, however, take place within a common political framework. They amount to wrangling about which individual will be more effective in implementing a policy on which they fundamentally agree.

Behind the backs of the American people, the United States is preparing new military interventions and wars of aggression against Syria and Iran, first of all, and ultimately against China, Russia and other rival powers.

The entire process demonstrates the thoroughly undemocratic character of the election itself, in which the American people have no say on any of the fundamental issues.

Obama won the Democratic Party nomination in 2008 over Hillary Clinton in large measure because he positioned himself as the more "antiwar" of the two candidates, in part by repeatedly citing her 2002 vote to authorize George W. Bush's war of aggression against Iraq. He won the general election over McCain by taking advantage of the massive popular discontent with the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Once in office, however, Obama reappointed Bush's secretary of defense, Robert Gates, selected a former general as his national security adviser, and his "hawkish" former rival Hillary Clinton as secretary of state. He doubled and then tripled the US troop commitment to Afghanistan, while adhering to the withdrawal schedule in Iraq negotiated by the Bush administration.

Last year, Obama played the decisive role in facilitating the NATO war against Libya, which led to the overthrow and murder of Muammar Gaddafi and 50,000 deaths. Now his administration is preparing a similar fate for the Assad regime in Syria, where the US-instigated civil war has already claimed 30,000 lives.

US troops, warplanes and drone missiles are now deployed over a far wider area than under the Bush administration, including the Arabian Peninsula, the Horn of Africa, and much of the Sahara and North Africa, in addition to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The maneuvers of the US Navy in the western Pacific and the Indian Ocean, as well as Obama's agreements to forward-deploy American ground troops in Australia and the Philippines, are part of a long-range strategy of encircling China with US military bases and client states, to preserve American domination of the Asia-Pacific region despite China's rise as an economic power.

Recent polls have found that the vast majority of

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Americans favor a rapid withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan, and similar levels of opposition to US military-political involvement in the Middle East. There is virtually no popular support for a new US war in Syria or in Iran. Yet within the financial aristocracy and among its leading political operatives, Democrats and Republicans alike, the necessity for such future military aggression is taken for granted.

For more than a decade, there has been a widening gulf between the imperialist foreign policy pursued by the ruling elite and the sentiments of the broad masses. In election after election, the two ruling parties have worked together to deprive the American people of any opportunity to influence decisions on war and peace.

In October 2002, House and Senate Democrats voted to authorize war with Iraq in an effort to take the issue off the table only weeks before the congressional elections. In 2004, Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry positioned himself as a war hero auditioning for the role of commander-in-chief, not an opponent of the war in Iraq. In 2006, when the Democrats were catapulted by antiwar sentiment into control of both the House and the Senate—to their own surprise and dismay—they immediately declared that impeaching George W. Bush for the lies that paved the way to war in Iraq was off the agenda.

In 2008 came the biggest swindle of all. The supposed “antiwar” Obama won the White House and proceeded to conduct an even more militaristic foreign policy than that pursued by Bush. The response among the liberals and pseudo-left elements that backed Obama as the alternative to the Republicans was to fold up their antiwar banners and rally to the side of the administration as it escalated the war in Afghanistan, waged war in Libya, and prepared for even bloodier adventures in Syria and Iran.

The American ruling class has dragged the population of the country—and the entire world—into unending war and neocolonialism, which is leading inexorably to a global conflict of unimaginable dimensions. This process can be halted only through the independent intervention of the American and international working class.

Obama and Romney are both representatives of American imperialism, the most reactionary and anti-democratic force on the planet. The Socialist Equality Party urges workers, young people and all those opposed to militarism and war to vote for our candidates, Jerry White for president and Phyllis Scherrer for vice president, and attend the regional conferences called by the SEP this weekend and the next.

For more information on the SEP campaign and to attend a conference in your area, visit www.socialequality.com.

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