

After the elections: Obama escalates war drive in the Middle East

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The war in Syria, portrayed by a broad stratum of so-called liberals and “lefts” as a crisis demanding “humanitarian” intervention, has emerged with ever-greater clarity as an exercise in ruthless and brutal conquest. Washington and all of the major powers have joined in fomenting a bloody sectarian civil war and preparing ever-more direct military intervention with the aim of toppling the regime of Bashar al-Assad and preparing a far greater war against its ally, Iran.

The Obama administration is preparing a “deeper intervention” in Syria to “help push President Bashar al-Assad from power,” the *New York Times* reported on Thursday.

The front-page lead of the *Times* was based on statements by unnamed US “strategists” and “senior administration officials.” Invariably, such leaks to the media are designed to prepare public opinion for what is to come, or—more likely—for what Washington has already covertly begun.

The article notes that the Obama administration and NATO are set to approve Turkey’s request for the deployment of Patriot missile batteries on that country’s border with Syria next week. While the pretext for such a deployment is to protect Turkey from a nonexistent threat of missile attacks from Syria, its real purpose, the *Times* suggests, is to “intimidate” Syria’s air force and prevent it from bombing northern Syria border areas seized by the Western-backed “rebels.”

This would in turn pave the way for the declaration of a no-fly zone and the imposition of a puppet regime on supposedly “liberated” territory as a key preparation for more direct US and NATO military intervention.

In addition, according to the *Times*, the proposals being considered by the Obama administration include “directly providing arms to opposition fighters rather

than only continuing to use other countries, especially Qatar, to do so,” and acting to “insert CIA officers or allied intelligence services on the ground in Syria, to work more closely with opposition fighters in areas that they now largely control.”

The article states that all of these options were discussed “before the presidential election,” but that Obama’s reelection “has made the White House more willing to take risks.”

The political implications are clear. While Obama and his aides were discussing more direct US military aggression in Syria before November 6, they wanted to postpone implementation of these plans until after the election was over, thereby assuring that the escalation of militarism did not become an issue of broader political discussion. Just as with his predecessor in the White House, Obama’s aim is to drag the American people into war without their prior knowledge, much less their consent.

The bipartisan support for these war plans within America’s ruling establishment was spelled out in a column by Condoleezza Rice, George W. Bush’s secretary of state and national security advisor, published in the *Washington Post* last week.

Rice concluded her piece with a recognition that the presidential contest had required a brief hiatus in the escalation of military intervention in Syria. “War is not receding in the Middle East,” she wrote. “It is building to a crescendo. Our elections are over. Now, America must act.”

Rice advocates much the same proposals that the *Times* refers to, including the imposition of a no-fly zone and the direct provision of US arms to the so-called rebels.

She argues that “the great mistake of the past year has been to define the conflict with Bashar al-Assad’s

regime as a humanitarian one.” Yes, she acknowledges, “many innocent people have been slaughtered,” but “much more is at stake.”

What is at issue in Syria, Rice suggests, is not merely the imposition of a US-backed stooge regime in that one country, but rather the neocolonial reorganization of the entire region. With the exceptions of Egypt, Turkey and Iran, she argues, “Every other important state is a modern construct, created by the British and French, who drew borders on the back of an envelope.” The unmistakable implication is that these “artificial states” can be dispensed with, borders redrawn and the strategically vital and oil-rich region remade to suit the interests of US imperialism.

This is a project in which Rice herself was intimately involved, with the launching of the US wars of aggression in Afghanistan and Iraq. It has been pursued in the wake of last year’s mass uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt with the wars in Libya and Syria.

The instruments being utilized to achieve such far-reaching aims are both direct US military intervention and the fomenting of region-wide sectarian warfare, with Washington aligning itself with the Sunni regimes of Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the other Gulf monarchies—not to mention the faction of Sunni Islamism that produced the 9/11 terrorist attacks and which is now the backbone of the Syrian “revolution”—against Iran and its allies. This is the bloody “crescendo” of which she speaks, one that could well draw in other outside powers, including Russia and China, and potentially claim the lives of millions.

What is being prepared is an imperialist redivision of the region, much as the major powers carved up Africa, Asia and the Middle East in the period preceding World War I.

The regimes set up by the national bourgeoisie in these countries are organically incapable of opposing this reconquest. Moreover, within the countries that are targeted, from Libya to Syria to Iran, there have emerged substantial constituencies within the more privileged classes that welcome being recolonized and share a far greater affinity with imperialism than they do with the working people in their own countries.

The same could be said for a whole range of pseudo-left organizations in the United States and Europe, whose politics reflect the interests of more privileged

layers of the middle class. Their role in these developments now stands totally exposed. They have all done the dirty political work of legitimizing a campaign of imperialist conquest as a “humanitarian” intervention, while portraying the bloody sectarian war being waged by Islamist militias and suicide car bombers as “a social revolution.”

This stretches from the French New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) and German Left Party, to the state capitalists of the British Socialist Workers Party and the US International Socialist Organization.

These organizations, their names notwithstanding, have nothing to do with socialism or opposition to capitalism. In their lining up with the war for regime change in Syria, all of them have functioned as adjuncts of the CIA and are deeply implicated in an unfolding crime of monstrous and historical proportions.

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