

The Trump scandal and the US gutter election

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The generally degraded state of American politics entered a new low this weekend. The entire media and political establishment was consumed with the scandal that erupted in the wake of the release of video of Republican candidate Donald Trump boasting in 2005 of his ability to use his position of wealth and celebrity to assault women with impunity.

Dozens of Republican office-holders and candidates have announced they will not vote for Trump or called for his replacement as the party's nominee—a practical impossibility, given the widespread distribution of ballots for early, absentee or mail-in voting. Democrats jumped at the chance to denounce Trump. Media commentators, who never fail to cheer on every war launched by the American military, expressed their horrified indignation at Trump's treatment of women.

As far as Trump's comments are concerned, there was nothing that would surprise or shock any serious observer of the appalling decay in the political culture of the Republican Party and the capitalist two-party system as a whole. Trump in his persona embodies the backwardness of the American ruling class, a product of the sordid nexus of the New York City real estate market, Atlantic City casinos, Las Vegas and the entertainment industry.

More significant than the comments themselves are the uses to which they are being put. It is clear that a significant section of the ruling class has decided that a Trump presidency cannot be accepted. The scandal is a mechanism for fighting out differences while concealing any discussion of the extremely reactionary character of the Clinton campaign. The Democrats prefer to fight Trump on the most debased level, the politics of pornography.

Sex scandals have become a standard mechanism employed by the US ruling class to regulate its conflicts without alerting the great mass of the population to what the real issues are. Such methods have long been a feature of American politics—FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover notoriously kept folders full of such personal scandals in his desk, for use in blackmailing congressmen, executive

branch officials and presidents.

There is little doubt that the video from the *Access Hollywood* program on NBC was located and set aside for use at a time when it would do the maximum damage, only 30 days before the election. There is also little doubt that if this particular salvo fails to finally sink the Trump campaign, more torpedoes are in the water.

What the real issues are came out to some extent in Sunday night's Town Hall debate. Behind the mudslinging and name-calling, Clinton's agenda was expressed in the limited discussion over foreign policy, during which she repeatedly denounced "Russian aggression" and called for a major military escalation in Syria.

Responding to a question about a leak from WikiLeaks that included excerpts of her speeches to Wall Street banks—including one in which she said that it was necessary to have a "public" and a "private" position on political issues—Clinton quickly shifted to an attack on Russia, charging that it was seeking to influence the elections in favor of Trump. "Our intelligence community has just come out and said in the last few days that the Kremlin, meaning Putin and the Russian government, are directing the attacks [i.e., the exposure of DNC emails], the hacking of American accounts to influence our election. And WikiLeaks is part of that."

Clinton later added that she supports a "no-fly" zone in Syria—which Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Joseph Dunford said last month would mean war with Russia—in order to establish "leverage." "Russia has decided that it's all in in Syria," Clinton said. "And they've also decided who they want to see become president of the United States, too, and it's not me. I've stood up to Russia. I've taken on Putin and others, and I would do that as president."

This is what the American ruling class is planning, and indeed already implementing. Clinton was not asked by debate moderators Anderson Cooper or Martha Raddatz how many people she was prepared to sacrifice in the pursuit of this policy.

The American media expresses consternation over Trump's sexual predations, but does not bat an eyelash over the appetites of an imperialist predator who threatens the lives of thousands, if not millions. There has been no equivalent media furor over Clinton's television interview where she chortled over the murder of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, declaring, "We came, we saw, he died."

As far as the outcome of the debate goes, it is evident that it did not go as Clinton and the Democrats had hoped. While they seek to capitalize on hostility to Trump, the Democrats have for their own candidate an individual who is deeply despised, steeped in criminality and corruption. Clinton had no real answer to the right-wing demagoguery of Trump, who denounced her as a "liar," whose words have no relationship to her actions.

The exposure of Trump's backwardness is obviously revealing, but it points to the illegitimate and fraudulent character of the two-party system and the electoral process as a whole. The Democratic Party, with its nomination of a corrupt political hack and warmonger, is no alternative. Out of a country of 325 million people, the two candidates are the most hated in modern US history, and deservedly so.

The installation of Hillary Clinton in the White House would only insure that the policies that represent the consensus in the American ruling elite—a more aggressive and interventionist foreign policy, directed above all against China and Russia, and a crackdown against democratic rights and working class living standards at home—will be pursued by an experienced and trusted representative of big business, rather than by an erratic billionaire who has served his purpose in pushing the political system further to the right and encouraging the development of extreme-right and fascistic forces.



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