

# Clinton preparing a bipartisan government of austerity and war

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With Election Day less than two weeks away, the Hillary Clinton campaign and the Democratic Party are stepping up their preparations for the first 100 days of a Clinton administration. At the center of these efforts is an attempt to forge a bipartisan consensus with the Republican Party establishment on a government dedicated to intensifying US military operations in the Middle East and internationally and making the working class bear the cost through stepped-up austerity measures.

Most of the US media and political establishment have concluded that a Clinton victory over Republican candidate Donald Trump is a virtual certainty. While the opinion polls in general have swung in Clinton's favor in recent weeks, this conclusion could still prove to be premature. Despite her edge over Trump, Clinton continues to be viewed as honest and trustworthy by just 39 percent of the electorate, making her the second most disliked presidential candidate in US history, behind Trump.

The Republican candidate continues to attract broad support on the basis of his demagogic appeals to the anger and frustration of broad layers of workers and middle class people whose living standards have been decimated by the corporate-financial establishment the billionaire real estate mogul claims to oppose. The Clinton campaign, for its part, is strengthening its orientation to the Republican establishment and wealthier social layers that normally vote Republican but are put off by Trump's overt racism and extreme nationalism and his overall anti-establishment pose.

Developments such as Monday's government announcement that Obamacare premiums will rise an average of 25 percent next year, or revelations contained in Clinton emails yet to be released by WikiLeaks, or an unanticipated economic or political shock could have unforeseen consequences for the outcome of the vote.

What is clear, however, is that this presidential election will bring to power the most right-wing government in modern American history, regardless which of the two major party candidates wins.

Clinton, the candidate favored by most of Wall Street and

the corporate elite and large sections of the Republican Party establishment, is seeking to assemble something akin, within the framework of the US political setup, to a grand coalition between the Democratic Party and the Republican leadership.

Earlier this week it was reported that Clinton had initiated back-channel talks with congressional Republican leaders over the basic policies and leading personnel of a Clinton administration. It was also reported that Clinton's transition team had hired more staff and stepped up its efforts to put together a new Democratic administration.

Clinton's transition team is chaired by Ken Salazar, a former senator from Colorado and secretary of the interior during President Obama's first term. Salazar is on the right wing of the Democratic Party. He has spent his political career fronting for big oil and other energy interests and sparked controversy within the Democratic Party when he introduced George W. Bush's extreme right nominee for attorney general, Alberto Gonzales, and sat beside Gonzales during the latter's Senate confirmation hearing.

The central political axis of a future Hillary Clinton administration is evident in the anti-Russian, McCarthyite-style campaign she is waging against Trump. She is seeking and gaining support across virtually the entire bourgeois political spectrum on the basis of an intensification of the US war for regime-change in Syria and an even more aggressive and reckless confrontation with Russia. In Syria, she is calling for the imposition of no-fly zones, which top US military figures have acknowledged would mean war not only with Syria, but also with Russia.

The Russia-baiting is intended to stampede and disorient public opinion, which is broadly anti-war, and enable an incoming Clinton administration to claim a mandate for military escalation. There have been numerous media commentaries pointing to broad dissatisfaction within the American foreign policy establishment, cutting across party lines, with Obama's policies. The basic argument is that his administration, which has continued the war in Afghanistan, extended it into Pakistan, carried out devastating wars in

Libya and Syria, launched a new war in Iraq, backed a Saudi-led war in Yemen and carried out hundreds of drone missile attacks across the Middle East and Africa, is too timid.

Last week, the *Washington Post* reported: “The Republicans and Democrats who make up the foreign policy elite are laying the ground work for a more assertive foreign policy, via a flurry of reports shaped by officials who would probably play senior roles in a Clinton White House.”

The article noted that the Democratic secretary of state under Bill Clinton, Madeleine Albright, is leading a “bipartisan and international team looking at US strategy in the Middle East” for the Atlantic Council. It quoted her as saying, “We do think there needs to be more American action—not ground forces but some additional help in terms of the military aspect.”

The ruling class knows that in carrying out such a foreign policy it risks a further growth of social anger and anti-capitalist sentiment. This has already found an initial expression in the mass support for the Sanders campaign and, in a more distorted form, the support for Trump’s supposed challenge to the status quo.

The problem facing the ruling class is compounded by the fact that the domestic side of a foreign policy tied to increased military spending is deeper social cuts. Clinton’s talk of taxing corporations and the rich to pay for a vast program of jobs and social reforms, such as “debt-free” college, is belied by the lopsided support for her campaign on Wall Street and among corporate CEOs.

To cite a few relevant facts:

\* Of the \$88 million donated by billionaires to the presidential candidates of the two major parties, \$70 million has gone to Clinton.

\* Corporate-funded super PACs have favored Clinton over Trump by a two-to-one margin.

\* As of July, not a single CEO of a Fortune 100 company had donated to Trump’s campaign or endorsed him. Clinton had received contributions from 11 of the corporate chiefs.

\* According to polls, 45 percent of households earning more than \$100,000 a year plan to vote for Clinton, compared to 28 percent for Trump. For those earning \$250,000 or more—the top 5 percent—the margin for Clinton is even greater, with 53 percent planning to vote for the Democrat and 25 percent favoring Trump.

Transcripts released by WikiLeaks of Clinton speeches to Wall Street bankers, for which she received six-figure paychecks, show her praising the recommendations of the 2010 Simpson-Bowles deficit-reduction commission, which called for sweeping cuts to Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid; the elimination of 200,000 federal jobs; a tax on employees’ health benefits; and huge cuts in income taxes for the wealthy and corporate taxes.

Incoming Senate Democratic Leader Charles Schumer told CNBC last week that Clinton will propose allowing US corporations to repatriate their \$2.5 trillion in profits stashed overseas at tax rate far below the corporate rate of 35 percent (perhaps as low as 10 percent), providing a huge windfall for big business.

To carry out such policies and fend off mass opposition from below, the ruling elite wants a united front of the two corporate-controlled parties. This may become all the more critical should the Republicans lose control of the Senate, considered likely, or even the House of Representatives, and find itself irreparably split.

A central task before an incoming Clinton administration would be to rescue and rehabilitate the Republican Party and shore up the two-party system. This is what Clinton and the Democrats are seeking to deliver, as evidenced by Clinton’s increasingly pronounced effort to present herself as the candidate of the entire political establishment.

Speaking Monday in New Hampshire, for example, she declared: “I’m proud to see Americans coming together—Democrats, Republicans and independents—to reject hate and division... I’m proud to have the support of more than 150 Republican leaders in the state who put country before party.”

As *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman, a media surrogate for Clinton and the Democrats, put it in a column on Wednesday: “The country desperately needs a healthy center-right party...”



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