

Behind the US midterm elections: economic crisis, world war and the drive to dictatorship

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The US midterm elections conclude Tuesday under conditions in which the objective factors that will determine American policy, whoever emerges with control of Congress, are entirely excluded from the campaign. Three interrelated processes will shape what follows the vote.

First is the economic crisis. This week brought the most serious indications yet that the speculative bubble on which American capitalism rests is beginning to collapse. Alphabet, the parent company of Google, lost a record \$482 billion in market value on a single day after reporting a free-cash-flow deficit of some \$9 billion—driven by spending on AI. On Friday, the Nasdaq fell 2.86 percent. Intel plunged 28.6 percent, and the chip index fell 7.2 percent, for a monthly loss of more than 15 percent.

The speculative bubble is a reflection of a protracted crisis of American capitalism, which is entering a new stage. The yield on the 10-year Treasury bond stands near 4.9 percent, the national debt has passed \$40 trillion, the global position of the dollar is under increasing threat, and the Federal Reserve is discussing further rate hikes.

The collapse of this house of cards will have incalculable consequences. Whatever their tactical differences, both parties will respond, as they did in 2008, with a massive bailout of the financial oligarchy, paid for by the working class.

Second is the escalating global war. The administration has postponed its plans to expand the war against Iran until the votes are counted. According to Axios, US and Israeli officials are preparing a week-long bombing campaign against Iran's leadership, nuclear facilities, energy installations and infrastructure, to begin after November 3. Washington has told governments in the region to prepare for Iranian retaliation.

At the same time, the war against Russia in Ukraine is moving toward a direct clash between nuclear powers. In

September, Russia warned that it was ready to use “all its arsenal, including nuclear weapons,” if NATO moved to isolate Kaliningrad. On October 18, Ukraine attacked Russia with more than 1,000 drones. The European powers are escalating the conflict, and the principal aim of the Democratic Party is to ensure that American imperialism plays the leading role in a war against Russia.

Third is the growth of social anger and the class struggle. In Europe it has already erupted. In France, hundreds of thousands of workers and students have marched for six weeks against cuts to schools and the soaring cost of living, and the movement has spread across the continent.

The American ruling class is acutely aware that the same conditions exist here. When the movement in France erupted, the *Wall Street Journal* warned its readers, “Don’t think it can’t happen in the US given the current state of American politics.” *Fortune* ran the headline “France is rioting over surging inflation, skyrocketing national debt and crumbling schools. America is its sleeping twin.”

It is the complete suppression of the actual reality that will shape American policy that gives the entire spectacle its degraded character. Neither party can tell the population the truth, because both defend the interests of the capitalist oligarchy that rules the United States.

Trump, representing the most ruthless factions of that oligarchy, has spent the nearly two years of his second term erecting the framework of a dictatorship. He has sent the National Guard into American cities, built a network of immigration prison camps, carried out mass raids and worked systematically to criminalize political opposition.

Anticipating major losses in the midterm elections, Trump is working to overturn the results. The Justice Department has sued to block certification of the Senate election in Alaska if the Republican incumbent, Dan Sullivan, loses. On Thursday, it filed a revised complaint,

along with some 40 subpoenas and document-preservation demands, over claims that operatives aligned with the Democratic candidate, Mary Peltola, recruited a second candidate also named Dan Sullivan.

In California, after federal courts rejected the administration's demand to set aside 20,000 ballots, the Justice Department has issued grand jury subpoenas to local election officials. Under Secretary of Defense Elbridge Colby reportedly told senators in September that deploying the National Guard to the polls had been discussed, and Trump has refused to rule out invoking the Insurrection Act.

The drive to overturn the vote is bound up with fascist and racist agitation without precedent in American politics. Trump has denounced Abdul El-Sayed, the Democratic Senate candidate in Michigan, as a "jihadist Muslim Brotherhood member," and told a rally that Michigan must "stand up and fight just like Todd did to stop a jihadist from walking into the Capitol," invoking the passengers of 9/11 United Flight 93. Federal agents have raided the home of Representative Ilhan Omar and the White House is seeking to strip her of citizenship and deport her.

The Democrats' opposition to Trump centers on the war against Russia. When Trump licensed imports of Russian diesel on October 9, Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer, together with Senators Jeanne Shaheen and Elizabeth Warren, denounced the decision as "a total betrayal of Ukraine," declaring, "Putin only responds to strength."

The Democrats are running 67 "CIA Democrats"—congressional candidates drawn from the military and intelligence agencies—more than in any of the previous four elections. In the weeks before the vote, the *New York Times* has fed a stream of reports on Russian "sabotage" and "shadow war" to the affluent upper-middle class layers that form the party's base.

This anti-Russia hysteria is being whipped up so that the Democrats can present their expected gains as a mandate for war. On the rest of Trump's agenda, including the attack on democratic rights, they will seek an accommodation with the White House and the Republicans.

In a lecture at George Mason University outside Washington on Wednesday, David North, chairman of the WSWS International Editorial Board, summed up the two parties. Trump, he said, "is the representative of the American capitalist oligarchy. He epitomizes its ruthlessness, its gangsterism and its stupidity." The

Democratic Party "is the indispensable second half of the capitalist two party system. To the extent that it has a distinct role to play in American politics, it is to divert and deflect mass social discontent."

In carrying out this role, the Democratic Party relies on the Democratic Socialists of America—its public relations arm—to direct the growing anti-capitalist sentiment among young people back into the party of Wall Street and the intelligence agencies. On Friday, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez held a campaign rally with Representative Eugene Vindman—a former Army officer, National Security Council official and anti-Russian war hawk—on the edge of the Quantico Marine base in Virginia.

The answer to dictatorship and war, social inequality and fascism lies in the development of the class struggle. War and dictatorship cannot be stopped by pressuring the Democrats or through bourgeois elections, but only through a complete break with the Democratic Party and the independent and revolutionary mobilization of the working class. The Democrats, the trade union apparatus that functions as their arm, and the pseudo-left all sow complacency and downplay the danger of dictatorship.

The Socialist Equality Party is building the political alternative to this entire rotten establishment. It fights to mobilize the strength of the working class against war and dictatorship through the formation of rank-and-file committees in every factory and workplace, independent of the union apparatus and linked across industries and national borders through the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees.

American workers face the same attacks as the workers and youth now in the streets of Europe, and their struggles must be unified on the basis of a socialist and internationalist program: the expropriation of the oligarchy's wealth, the reorganization of economic life to meet social needs and an end to imperialist war.



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