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Hillary Clinton and American Empire

By Rob Urie
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Despite the lack of evidence linking Orlando mass murderer Omar Mateen to Daesh (ISIS) in any operational (direct) sense, the first inclination of U.S. Presidential hopeful Hillary Clinton was to renew American bombing of Syria, Iraq and Libya—the very nations that were destroyed by U.S. bombs directed by Mrs. Clinton and from whence Daesh arose. In so doing Mrs. Clinton made it evident that she is an unrepentant militarist whose bloodlust, combined with her longstanding interest in promoting American business interests, ties her to the U.S. imperial project of the last century and one-half. The precise moral difference between mass murders for personal and state reasons depends on a theory of the state at odds with this imperial project.

The company that employed Omar Mateen, G4S, is a British-based ‘security’ company that operates in 120 countries and as a ‘private’ supplier of public services to the Department of Homeland Security, the U.S. Army and to the very same State Department that Mrs. Clinton led as Secretary of State. The company advertises itself capable of ‘mitigating liability’ for the U.S. government—the ruse used by the CIA and other clandestine and quasi-clandestine government agencies to circumvent civil prohibitions on their activities by employing ‘private’ companies to carry them out. The NSA’s domestic surveillance programs tie to those of the FBI, DEA and CIA through this legalistic dodge. And ‘private contractors’ were behind some of the more grotesque slaughters in recent American wars.

The classical liberal separation of economic from political interests used to legitimate state violence is one that the Clintons have spent their ‘public’ careers undermining. As leading

proponents of neoliberalism, the Clintons have spent three decades conflating ‘private’ interests with the public interest. In history this tie of U.S. business interests to U.S. military incursions runs from residual European imperialism, including genocide against the indigenous population and slavery, to direct wars, proxy wars, coups, assassinations, murders and particularly odious ‘wars of attrition.’ What is corruption in the liberal worldview is the nature of the capitalist-state acting in / on imperial interests in a Marxian frame. If this corruption is ‘solvable,’ such has yet to be demonstrated in the U.S.

Hillary Clinton’s use of the horrific crime in Orlando to instigate further crimes against untold innocents abroad is hidden behind manufactured fears of a lunatic and craven enemy (ISIS) that is in fact both a product of earlier U.S. atrocities across the Middle East and but a pale ghost of the savagery of combined U.S. actions in the region. The American leadership’s practice of creating crises that it must then ‘respond’ to led the way to the sequential slaughters, disruptions and dislocations that now finds substantial portions of the Middle East in ruins and millions of refugees flooding an increasingly xenophobic Europe. That this leadership never seems to learn from its ‘mistakes’ suggests motivations at work other than those presented at press conferences.

Where G4S, Omar Mateen’s employer, fits in is that Mr. Mateen was in many respects the perfect mercenary— ‘our psychopath’ if we were paying for his services. Murdering 49 people and wounding 50 more is, in addition to being an atrocity, a crime and a moral calamity, a complicated logistical feat. In 2004 U.S. Colonel James Steele was brought to Iraq, in a war that Bill Clinton publicly supported and Hillary Clinton voted for, to engineer like atrocities. Mr. Mateen’s crimes would have been business-as-usual in U.S. led slaughters of innocent civilians in Nicaragua and El Salvador in the 1980s and in Iraq in the 2000s. And G4S is precisely the type of ‘public-private partnership’ favored by the Clintons to ‘mitigate liability’ behind a veil of ‘private’ actions.

This isn’t to suggest that Hillary Clinton had any part in the murders carried out by Mr. Mateen. It is to suggest that in any human and / or moral sense she is congenitally unfit for public office. The most generous explanation of her support for George W. Bush’s criminal slaughter in Iraq is that she was misled by the manufactured evidence proffered by the Bush administration. That the war tied through history to the Clinton’s own sanctions against Iraq that resulted in half a million innocents dying from privation and to eight years of bombing that left much of the country in ruins suggests that Mrs. Clinton probably well understood that Iraq posed no threat to the U.S. in 2001. That the war was coincidentally a boon to Western business interests was / is as grotesque as it was predictable.

If conceptual clarity around these issues seems wanting here— that is the point. Neoliberalism as some unified theory of political economy ties through history to the Washington Consensus that in turn ties to American imperial history. Western imperialism— state-corporatism as division of the global economic spoils through insertion / assertion of ‘national’ interests, has five centuries of reasonably well defined history behind it. In this regard Donald Trump’s relative rhetorical reticence to use military force as a first choice is a threat to this imperial order whereas Hillary Clinton’s willingness to destroy an entire region of the world on a whim to benefit Exxon Mobil and Goldman Sachs makes her the ‘safe’ choice from the institutional perspective.

Washington Consensus precepts are:

*Fiscal discipline

*A redirection of public expenditure priorities toward fields offering both high economic returns and the potential to improve income distribution, such as primary health care, primary education, and infrastructure

*Tax reform (to lower marginal rates and broaden the tax base)

*Interest rate liberalization

*A competitive exchange rate

*Trade liberalization

*Liberalization of inflows of foreign direct investment

*Privatization

*Deregulation (to abolish barriers to entry and exit)

*Secure property rights

Against this imperial history the U.S. view that national elections are an internal matter places U.S. voters as the nominal ‘choosers’ of political economy for much of the world. In political terms, the 800+ military bases that the U.S. keeps around the globe serve as quasi-private security forces to assure repatriation of ‘profits’ for multi-national corporations in the form of resources, plentiful, cheap labor and the broader economy of imperial conquest. In fact, as opposed to theory, these profits are the reciprocal of the death, misery, subjugation and immiseration inevitably put forward by Western economists and politicians as the result of ‘free-choice’ by those on the losing end of American imperial fortune. That increasing numbers of Americans are on this losing end helps explain current (and heretofore slight) political unrest and its reciprocal in establishment support for Mrs. Clinton.

Hillary Clinton’s toxic jargon that “America never stopped being great” poses a seeming conundrum for her supporters who aren’t dedicated sociopaths. If U.S. wars in Southeast Asia, Central America, the Middle East and Northern Africa are evidence of this greatness, then what are the moral and political bases of such a judgment? Mrs. Clinton’s nostalgia for the days of alleged national unity following the attacks of September 11, 2001 is apparently for the erasure of the history that led to the attacks and not for unity per se. Conversely, given the absence of any operational link to Daesh, Omar Mateen could just as well have claimed that his crimes were motivated by Napoleon Bonaparte or Jesus Christ were ISIS not such a well-implemented foe.

Externally, and in contradiction of to the exceptionalists, the democratists and Western neoliberals, the U.S. is broadly considered the greatest threat to world peace on the planet.

Brought to the fore in the current Presidential election cycle is that Western elites— inherited wealth, bailout-dependent bankers, the corporate lootocracy dependent on wildly goosed (by the Federal Reserve) asset prices and various and sundry agents, functionaries and court pleaders, are now well-understood to have interests diametrically opposed to those of the vast majority of Americans. The conceptual leap not yet taken by the American electorate is the international nature of this class divide.

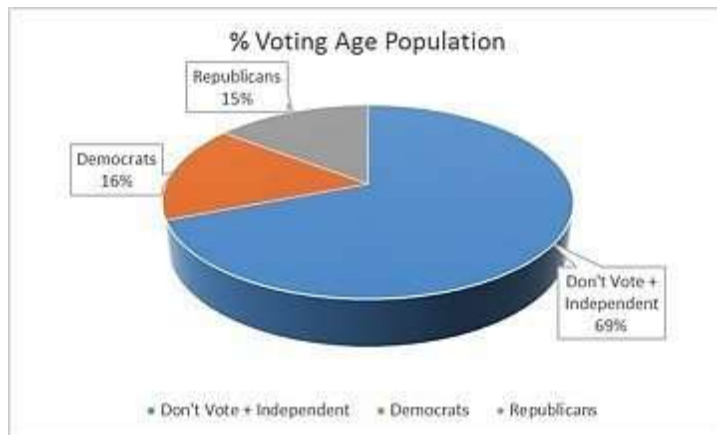


Chart: the bi-Party system of electoral control in the U.S. is put forward as representing majority political views when combined it represents less than one-third of voting-age political affiliation. In terms of global political reach, the American political leadership represents such a small minority's interests that even relatively minor rebellions could quickly overwhelm it. Source: Gallup, Pew Research.

This international 'footprint' is fact regardless of whether or not Americans consider it when voting. Internal economic dislocations, such as jobs lost and stagnant wages from trade agreements, find their reciprocals in indigenous economies destroyed, in 'developing market' industries shut out through subsidized 'competition,' in IMF 'workouts' that place ownership of developing industries in Western hands and through commodification and expropriation of millennia of accumulated knowledge to be put back as alien product against the peoples and cultures that developed it. In this respect, the 'Clinton model' of sweatshop labor as economic development joins the 'Obama model' of subverting civil law in the interests of corporate-state plutocrats.

Calls to unify behind Hillary Clinton in her bid to become President pose the heavily engineered outcome of the Democratic primaries as the popular will. In this sense they are roughly analogous to the calls to unite behind George W. Bush following the Bush v. Gore Supreme Court decision in 2000. The Clintons paved the way for Mr. Bush's brutal militarism much as Barack Obama maintained the institutional infrastructure of the 'unitary Presidency' and the capacity for launching criminal wars of opportunity. Between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, it is Mrs. Clinton who has the proven record as guardian of empire and imperial prerogative. Her unbridled militarism is an expression of this prerogative.

The question for Democrats is how evil can someone be to still be worthy of voting for? Alleged stark differences between Hillary Clinton and George W. Bush find very high degrees of

synchronicity between their actual policies (and those of Barack Obama). And lest this be unclear, it is the Democratic establishment that chose Mrs. Clinton as its candidate (chart above), and not the politically and economically dispossessed electorate. The grift that American elections reflect the popular will, and therefore confer political legitimacy, contrasts with the facts that the dominant Parties are largely and increasingly unpopular and that the popular will bears no relation to the policies decided upon and enacted by the American political establishment.