BOCA RATON, Fl. – The final side-by-side between Mitt Romney and Barack Obama was at times not really a debate. On U.S. policy involving Egypt, Iran, Libya, and Pakistan, terrorism and Osama Bin Laden, Romney largely agreed with President Obama's policies.

The result was a marked contrast between the first two presidential debates. Obama was clearly more well-versed and fluent on the issues, bragging about his success in killing Osama Bin Laden and winding down wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Romney aides had signaled before the debate the view that their candidate would be less effective than in the first two sessions, which were mostly about the economy. He was.

Romney's strategy seemed to be to agree with Obama on the broader policy, suggest he would execute it slightly better if in office, and then shift attention to the economy, stronger ground for the ex-governor. He was less eager to talk and interrupt Obama and the moderator than in the first two debates.

Obama dominated in terms of cutting, attacking lines, unlike the more even first two debates. He mocked Romney for holding a campaign fundraiser on his trip to Israel over the summer, blasted his rival as having been "all over the map" on the Middle East, and referring to Romney's recent highlighting of Russia as a security threat said, "you seem to want to import the foreign policies of the 1980′s, just like the social policies of the 1950′s and the economic policies of the 1920′s."

"You mentioned the Navy, for example, and that we have fewer ships than we did in 1916. Well, governor, we also have fewer horses and bayonets, because the nature of our military's changed. We have these things called aircraft carriers, where planes land on them. We have these ships that go underwater, nuclear submarines," Obama said in his most memorable riff of the night, after Romney defended his call for increased defense spending.

Romney almost didn't seem to try to "win" the debate. Instead, he repeatedly used questions about foreign policy to give his familiar talking points on domestic policy, noting his five-point plan to improve the American economy, the increase in scores on state tests for students when he was governor of Massachusetts and the millions of unemployed Americans under President Obama's leadership. His strategy seemed to be to concede defeat in this debate while showing enough competence on foreign policy issues to appeal to undecided voters wary of Obama's record on the economy.

At times, this was very civil, as Romney echoed Obama's stances, in contrast to the three very contentious debates this year. On Obama's push for new leadership in Egypt last year, Romney said, " I supported his action there." On Israel, Romney said, "I want to underscore the same point the president made," that the U.S. would defend its ally if it were attacked by Iran. He praised Obama for going into Pakistan and killing Bin Laden without that nation's permission, saying "that was the right thing to do."

Perhaps anticipating Romney would try to minimize their differences, Obama tried to cast Romney as being slow to grasp foreign policy and unwilling to commit to positions. He repeatedly argued that Romney's flip-flops on issues would make it hard for other countries to view him as a credible leader.

"What we need to do with respect to the Middle East is strong, steady leadership, not wrong and reckless leadership that is all over the map. And unfortunately, that's the kind of opinions that you've offered through this campaign, and it is not a recipe for American strength or keeping America safe over the long haul."

And Romney did not back down on all issues. He suggested, as he has in the past, that Obama has "apologized" for American actions during the Bush administration, not been tough enough on rogue leaders in Syria and Iran and weakened U.S. relations with Israel.

The most important exchange of the night was perhaps when the subject turned to Obama's decision to bail out the American auto companies. (The question was about the U.S. relationship with China). Romney again tried to explain away his opposition to a policy that has created thousands of jobs in states in the Midwest that could determine who wins the presidential election.

"Governor Romney, you keep on trying to, you know, airbrush history here. You were very clear that you would not provide, government assistance to the U.S. auto companies, even if they went through bankruptcy. You said that they could get it in the private marketplace," Obama replied.

Polls conducted by television networks after the debates suggested the president won this one. But it's not clear whether this will shift the poll numbers. Romney surged into a tie after the first debate, but the vice-presidential debate and the second presidential debate did not seem to move the numbers, even as Joe Biden and the president had strong performances in each of them.