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Petulance as Statecraft: Trump Does Canada



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When it comes to Donald Trump, I tend to ignore his self-centered shenanigans. I figure the substance (when there is any) will become apparent later when his staff clarifies the mad king's meaning. However, the recent series of events around the G-7 were something beyond the norm. This is especially true when one notes that John Bolton was by Trump's side when the now infamous picture of him sitting across the table from much of the rest of the capitalist world with his arms folded and an angry look on his face was taken. The combination of Trump and Bolton is a dangerous one. Bolton's demonic designs for world

conquest have always been part of the neocon program, but other powers have held his most maniacal plans in check. Donald Trump is less likely to do so and John Bolton knows this. One can be sure he is already plotting how to start the next war.

The events before and at the recent G-7 summit were not surprising. Trump and his nationalist advisers live in a world where the US is and always will be the top dog. Their understanding of the nature of modern day capitalism is ill-informed at best and just plain ignorant at worst. The call for an America First policy is reflective of this ignorance. Besides its reference to a non-existent past when the United States pushed the rest of the world around unchallenged, Trump's approach seems likely to lead to a severe economic depression or a war unlike any the world has ever seen. When one considers the devastation wars in the past century caused, that is quite an ominous possibility.

Whether Trump and his people like it or not, they cannot turn back the hands of time without destroying much more than the current system of trade. One cannot simply rebuild factories and give out good paying jobs in 2018; one cannot simply make housing affordable and let everyone who wants to buy a house buy one. This is especially the case if the entire effort at rebuilding is done through greater privatization. Today's financiers are not interested in producing goods, they want quick and easy money made by buying and selling debt and speculating on the futures of the international working class. Even if factories are rebuilt, the wages paid to those working inside them will have to be competitive. In other words, they will not be wages that would get a working person out of debt. Instead, those workers would more than likely incur even greater debt, buying into the lie of a resurgent economy—a phenomenon that only the wealthy will truly benefit from. It is their banks, after all, that own the debt the rest of us carry. No matter what most workers make in salary, their debts are almost certainly greater. That's not an accident, it's the way modern capitalism is designed to work. Despite the near impossibility of returning the US economy to the early days of monopoly capitalism, Trump and his forces are trying to do just that. This is the meaning behind the tariffs and Trump's crossed arms at the G-7. While in Canada Trump also told his fellow capitalist leaders that the US was being robbed by them and their economies. This statement is interesting in that it ignores the post World War Two assumption of power by Washington and Wall Street. Despite the common understanding among US citizens that the postwar Marshall Plan was a generous gift by the US designed to rebuild the destroyed US economy, the real truth is that the Marshall Plan was a very successful effort by the US to put western European economies in the pocket of Wall Street. There was very little generosity involved, unless one

considers the return of one's wallet by the very person who picked your pocket to be generous. Since the US was also insistent on dominating those nations militarily, it spent a lot of money on occupying them. When the Soviet Union dissolved there was an impetus by some of those occupied nations of Europe to build up their militaries. This desire was met with varying degrees of resistance by Washington. Meanwhile, the European economy grew stronger as neoliberal capitalism became the norm around the world. Despite these changes, the US that continues to dominate the world militarily. Trump, like his predecessors, understands this. Unlike his predecessors, however, Trump is resisting the cooperation that has existed for decades between western Europe, Canada and the United States. Instead, he blames the failures of the US economy on its trading partners, changing the target of his accusations seemingly at whim. One week it is China, the next it is the G-7.

This inter-capitalist rivalry is not something new. However, the nature of Trump's intensification of the rivalry is. Indeed, it is reminiscent of the years before World War One. Therein lies the danger. Trump's bellicosity as represented by his words, actions and those he makes his advisers has created an undercurrent of unnecessary danger to trade relations around the world. History proves that when powerful nations refuse to negotiate while they build up their militaries, war becomes ever closer.