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by CARL BOGGS
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The Road to Disaster?

The monotonously endless anti-Russia crusade serves a number of political agendas for Democrats and the Washington power structure. It rationalizes Hillary Clinton's stunning defeat, delegitimizes and weakens the Trump presidency, sets momentum for impeachment, and helps drive up Pentagon (and intelligence) spending. Often forgotten is a yet another, deeper factor: Russia has long been targeted as an intolerable obstacle to U.S. Eurasian supremacy, years before the Trump phenomenon was on the horizon.

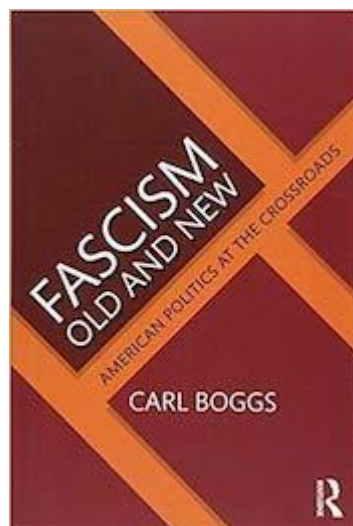
A mixture of aggressive U.S. moves – tightening economic sanctions on Russia, increased nuclear “flexibility”, new (hardly veiled) military threats against the Putin regime, and a much-hyped shift from counter-terrorism to expanded confrontation with designated enemy states – is not quite the radical departure being touted. Quite the opposite: it perfectly fits well-established neocon agendas, nowadays pervasive at the White House (Bolton, Matteo, Mattis), as well as within sectors of Congress (Graham, McCain, Menendez, et. al.), the Democratic Party (Clintonites), and corporate media (CNN, *New York Times*, etc.). While this same media pretends outrage over Trump's supposed weakening of NATO, the president and his stable of warmongers move to upgrade the American nuclear triad in Europe and rehearse simulated attacks on Moscow and other Russian cities. As for the economic punishment, has been described as “sanctions from hell” by one of its senate backers.

The new Pentagon budget calls for expanded U.S./NATO military forces along Russian borders, its purpose to “defeat Russian aggression”, for which nearly seven billion dollars has been specifically earmarked. Army Chief of Staff General Mark Milley says Western

troop buildups are needed to “ensure deterrence of further Russian territorial aggression”, the evil Putin supposedly ready to launch an all-out invasion of Europe (reminiscent of many false warnings going back to the Cold War era). General Curtis Scaparotti, head of the European military command, argues for large additional NATO troop deployments beyond the present 62,000, again to counter Russia’s “heavy military presence” that in fact (aside from Syria) is confined to the home front. In any event, for Washington the great fear of anti-American terrorism, whether Al Qaeda, ISIS, or other groups, now seems to have lost its moral urgency.

The U.S. is actually pursuing an old stratagem – targeting Russia as a mighty obstacle to its imperial designs in the Balkans, Middle East, Central Asia, and beyond. Close Russian ties with Iran only strengthen this geopolitical fixation. As for “terrorism”, it was something to be fought episodically but never given serious primacy over national challengers; the real threats were always Russia, China, and Iran. The events surrounding 9/11 did force a concerted “war” against Islamic militants, but these were the very groups the CIA and Pentagon had so extensively used against Soviet power in Afghanistan during the 1980s and against Yugoslavia and Serbia in the 1990s. And those groups were clients of an important U.S. ally – Saudi Arabia.

Washington, the U.K., and Israel have long preferred the chaos, violence, and dispersed power of insurgent Muslim “rebels” to the nationalist (usually secular and leftist) governments in the region: Iraq, Serbia, Syria, Libya, Ukraine, Iran. These same actors



enjoyed – and still enjoy – cozy relations with a Saudi regime that ideologically motivates and materially funds thousands of Sunni militants to oppose Iran and its allies. On the other hand, American interventions one after the other – in Afghanistan, Yugoslavia, Iraq, Syria, North Africa, Ukraine – keep their gaze on Russia as the ultimate prize, especially after the nationalist Putin came to power in 2000. It is

Russian independence, not its military threat, that Washington considers a major roadblock to its world supremacy. Anti-Russia hysteria promoted by the corporate media thus contains a definite logic, even if that logic is mostly obscured by a public discourse saturated with phony narratives and political opportunism.

Heightened access to the Balkans, Middle East, and Central Asia (locale of several former Soviet republics) has consumed American ruling elites since the moment Soviet power disintegrated. After all, these areas are extremely rich in energy resources, vital metals, and scarce minerals. A 1992 Pentagon document first outlined a post-Cold War agenda in which the main objective was to checkmate the rise of any threat to regional, and by extension global, U.S. domination, that is “to prevent any hostile power from dominating the region whose resources would . . . be sufficient to generate global power.” That “region” happens to be rather expansive, covering Western Europe, the Middle East, and Central Asia.

An imperial strategy potentially leading to the gates of Moscow was laid out by Zbigniew Brzezinski in a 1997 Council on Foreign Relations study titled *The Grand Chessboard*. A top Soviet expert before entering the Carter administration, Brzezinski would be starkly forthright about U.S. global objectives. He believed that Washington, the noble superpower, was entitled to whatever resources it could exploit across Eurasia, a territory stretching all the way to China. For reasons perhaps connected to his academic background, Brzezinski was preoccupied with Soviet and then Russian power; China was something of an afterthought. He noted that as world energy consumption was likely to double from the late 1990s to 2020, vital areas (North Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia, Caspian Sea basin) possessed gas, oil, and mineral reserves dwarfing those to be found anywhere else on the planet.

Ever the crusader for U.S. imperialism, Brzezinski would point out that “Eurasia [bordering Russia] was the globe’s central arena. Hence, what happens to the distribution of power on the Eurasian continent will be of decisive importance to America’s global primacy and to America’s historical legacy.” With a foothold there, Washington could secure enough leverage to simultaneously neutralize Russia, China, and Iran, Brzezinski adding: “A power that dominates Eurasia would control two of the world’s three most advanced and economically productive regions. A mere glance at a map also suggests that control over Eurasia would almost automatically entail Africa’s subordination, rendering the Western Hemisphere geopolitically peripheral.”

A neocon before that label became almost faddish, Brzezinski looked wistfully toward eventual U.S. penetration of the old Soviet republics, starting with Ukraine and then targeting Georgia, Armenia, Uzbekistan, and Azerbaijan. The first priority was “to prevent the emergence of any hostile coalition that could eventually seek to challenge America’s primacy.” Brzezinski concluded, chillingly: “America is not only the first, as well as the only truly global superpower, but it is also likely to be the very last.” The historic downfall of the Soviet bloc was just the beginning.

Later neocon statements would echo Brzezinski’s predatory globalism, including the notorious 2000 Project for a New American Century (PNAC) call for unchallengeable American world supremacy, although these were generally couched in more noble pretenses: bringing democracy to the world, fighting WMD, “humanitarian” intervention.

An enlightened ruling elite would surely have the power, but also the entitlement and *legitimacy*, to dominate the planet and assert control over its natural resources. (PNAC disappeared in 2006 and was eventually replaced by Foreign Policy Initiative, founded by neocons William Kristol and Robert Kagan.)

Brzezinski’s post-Soviet world was in fact one of grand imperial delusions: the U.S. would have the power to do essentially what it wanted, when it wanted, although there was always the problem of inconvenient constraints (usually in the form of “evil dictators”). It could exploit resources, labor, and markets to the fullest extent possible. It could bring massive economic and military violence to societies, preferably with impunity and without fear of serious blowback. Violation of United Nations statutes, global treaties, and international law would be no problem. This outlook has come to define the “American consensus” and now underpins the hyper-ventilating anti-Russian panic – a laughing matter except for the unpleasant realization that it risks bringing the world closer to nuclear catastrophe. The specter of escalating hostility between two hyper-nuclear powers, in the absence of strong counter-forces on both sides, is hardly comforting.

In purely economic terms, of course, some things have changed – for example, the fact that the U.S. is now more self-sufficient in energy resources owing to massive fracking operations and widespread shale development. Yet the geopolitical impulses described by Brzezinski unfortunately remain intact: Washington still covets supremacy in the Middle East and Eurasia for the purpose of accessing *other* resources (scarce metals and minerals), undercutting national competitors, and bolstering Israeli power. Against this backdrop, as always, the sprawling Russian behemoth lurks.

American geostrategy currently follows a five-pronged “hybrid” attack on Russia that is eventually directed toward regime change – a neocon goal achieved in Ukraine, with the 2014 U.S.-orchestrated neo-fascist coup, but not yet in Syria, Iran, or other post-Soviet nations. The attack includes escalating sanctions, intensifying cyberwarfare, NATO military encirclement, refined nuclear deployments, recurrent military threats accompanied by neighborly “maneuvers”. The nonstop propaganda campaign waged by the corporate media might be regarded as a sixth prong.

Caught up in all the *Sturm und Drang*, Washington seems to have grown disinterested in fighting radical Muslim groups, nowadays considered an asset behind regime change in Syria. When once asked about the curious U.S. alliance with such groups, Brzezinski casually responded: “What is more important for the history of the world? The liberation of Europe or a few stirred-up Muslims?” Here the imperialist sage was referring to the U.S./NATO-engineered breakup of Yugoslavia and destruction of Serbia, assisted by recruitment of thousands of Muslim fighters in support of neo-fascist forces in Bosnia. Present-day neocons, now fully in charge of U.S. foreign policy, have taken this strategy to heart. So too have the fanatically anti-Russian Democrats, a party aligned with the suddenly rehabilitated security state and its legion of media shills.

The reality is that Brzezinski’s brazen imperial schemes were destined to fail, even backfire, for reasons that cannot be fully explored here. Neocon debacles in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya speak volumes. Meanwhile, hybrid warfare of the sort conducted by Washington is unsustainable, and in any case it works inexorably to push Russia, Iran, China, and probably some others into a formidable rival global constellation that the U.S., with or without NATO, cannot hope to neutralize, much less dominate. It is no secret that overreach has been the death knell of all empires, and the U.S. (with all its military prowess) will be no exception. Napoleon and Hitler brought their imperial hubris to Russia and were destroyed.

Economic warfare like the U.S. is conducting not only against Russia but across the globe will boomerang as the dollar erodes, global competition sharpens, resources shrink, and the world capitalist system begins to unravel. How the American warfare state might react to such cascading deterioration obviously cannot be known, but it is a worrisome prospect to consider as the risk of global disaster mounts.