

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نباشد تن من مباد بدین بوم و بر زنده یک تن مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

NOVEMBER 6, 2018

by T.J. COLE – MATTHEW ALFORD

07.11.2018

US-British Threats Against Russia Have a Long History



What your media and professors don't tell you about British foreign policy

In their new book [Union Jackboot: What Your Media and Professors Don't Tell You About British Foreign Policy](#) (Até Books), doctors T.J. Coles and Matthew Alford debate the rationale of Anglo-American policy towards Russia.

Alford: There seems to be a consensus that we need a strong military because Russia is on the rise. What do you think about that rationale?

Coles: There's no consensus, except among European and American elites. Europe and America are not the world.

There are a lot of issues to consider with regards to Russia. Is it a threat? If so to whom? What kind of threat is Russia? So let's consider these questions carefully. As far as the British establishment is concerned, Russia is an ideological threat because it is a major power with a substantial population. It's also self-reliant where oil and gas is concerned, unlike Britain. So there's lots of potential for Russian political ideology to undermine Britain's status. In fact, there are European Council on Foreign Relations papers saying that Putin's Russia presents an "ideological alternative" to the EU.^[i] And that's dangerous. Britain, or more accurately its policymaking elites, have considered Russia a significant enemy for over a century. Under the Tsar, the so-called Great Game was a battle for strategic resources, trading routes, and so on. The historian Lawrence James calls this period the first Cold War, which went "hot" with the Crimean War (1853-56).^[ii] Britain had a mixed relationship with the Tsars because, on the one hand, theirs' were repressive regimes and Britain tended to favour repressive regimes, hence their brief alliance with Russia's enemy, the Ottomans. On the other hand, Russia was a strategic threat to Britain's imperial interests, and thus the Crimean War (1853-56).

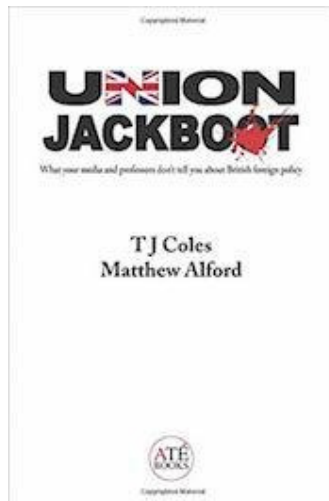
When the Bolsheviks took over Russia, beginning 1917, the relationship became much less ambiguous – Russians, and especially Bolsheviks, were clearly the enemy. Their ideology posed a threat internally. So Winston Churchill, who began as a Liberal and became a Conservative, considered the Labour Party, which was formed in 1900, as basically a front for Bolsheviks.^[iii] That shows the level of paranoia among elites. The Labour Party, at least at the beginning, was a genuine, working man's political organisation – women couldn't vote then, remember. So by associating this progressive, grassroots party representing the working classes as an ideological ally or even puppet of the brutal Bolshevik regime, the Tories had an excuse to undermine the power of organised, working people. So you had the Zinoviev letter in 1924, which we now know was a literal conspiracy between the secret services and elements of the Tory party to fabricate a link between Labour and Moscow. And it famously cost Labour the general election, since the right-wing, privately-owned media ran with the story as though it was real. It's an early example of fake news.^[iv]

That's the ideological threat that Russia has posed, historically. But where there's a threat, there's an opportunity. The British elites exploited the "threat" then and as they do today by associating organised labour with evil Bolshevism and, in doing so, alienate the lower classes from their own political interests. Suddenly, we've all got to be scared of Russia, just like in 1917. And let's not forget that Britain used chemical weapons – M-Devices,

which induced vomiting – against the Bolsheviks. Chemical weapons were “the right medicine for the Bolshevik,” in Churchill’s words. This was in 1919, as part of the Allied invasion of Russia in support of the White Army. [v]

So if we’re talking about the historical balance of forces and cause and effect, Britain not Russia initiated the use of chemical weapons against others. But this history is typically inverted to say that Russia poses a threat to the West, hence all the talk about Novichok, the Skripals, and Dawn Sturgess, the civilian who supposedly came into contact with Novichok and died in hospital a few days later.

The next question: What sort of threat is Russia? According to the US Army War College, since the collapse of the Soviet Union and since pro-US, pro-“free market” President Boris Yeltsin resigned in 1999, Russia has pursued so-called economic nationalism. And the US doesn’t like this because markets suddenly get closed and taxes are raised against US corporations.[vi] That’s the real threat. But you can’t tell the public that: that we hate Russia because they aren’t doing what we say. If you look through the military documents, you can find almost nothing about security threats against the US in terms of Russian



expansion, except in the sense that “security” means operational freedom. You can find references to Russia’s nuclear weapons, though, which are described as defensive, designed “to counter US forces and weapons systems.”[vii] Try finding that on the BBC. I should mention that even “defensive” nukes can be launched accidentally.

The real goal with regards to Russia is maintaining US economic hegemony and the culture of open “free markets” that goes with it, while at the same time being protectionist in real life. (US protectionism didn’t start under Trump, by the way.) Liberal media like the New York Times run sarcastic articles about Russian state oil and gas being a front for Putin and his cronies. And yes, that may be true. But what threat is Russia to the US if it

has a corrupt government? The threat is closing its markets to the US. The US is committed to what its military calls Full Spectrum Dominance. So the world needs to be run in a US-led neoliberal order, in the words of the US military, “to protect US interests and investment.”^[viii] But this cannot be done if you have “economic nationalism,” like China had until the “reforms” of the ‘70s and ‘80s, and still has today to some extent. Russia and China aren’t military threats. The global population on the whole knows this, even though the domestic US and British media say the opposite.

Alford: What about military threats?

Coles: The best sources you can get are the US military records. Straight from the horse’s mouth. The military plans for war and defence. They have contingencies for when political situations change. So they know what they’re talking about. There’s a massive divide between reality, as understood from the military records, and media and political rhetoric. Assessments by the US Army War College, for instance, said years ago that any moves by NATO to support a Western-backed government in Ukraine would provoke Russia into annexing Crimea. They don’t talk about Russia spontaneously invading Ukraine and annexing it, which is the image we get from the media. The documents talk about Russia reacting to NATO provocation.^[ix]

If you look at a map, you see Russia surrounded by hostile NATO forces. The media don’t discuss this dangerous and provocative situation, except the occasional mention of, say, US-British-Polish war-gaming on the border with Russia. When they do mention it, they say it’s for “containment,” the containment of Russia. But to contain something, the given thing has to be expanding. But the US military – like the annual threat assessments to Congress – say that Russia’s not expanding, except when provoked. So at the moment as part of its NATO mission, the UK is training Polish and Ukrainian armed forces, has deployed troops in Poland and Estonia, and is conducting military exercises with them.^[x]

Imagine if Scotland ceded from the UK and the Russians were on our border conducting military exercises, supposedly to deter a British invasion of Scotland. That’s what we’re doing in Ukraine. Britain’s moves are extremely dangerous. In the 1980s, the UK as part of NATO conducted the exercise, Operation Able Archer, which envisaged troop build-ups between NATO and the Warsaw Pact countries. Now-declassified records show that the Russians briefly mistook this exercise for a real-world scenario. That could have escalated into nuclear war. This is very serious.^[xi]

But the biggest player is the USA. It’s using the threat of force and a global architecture of hi-tech militarism to shape a neoliberal order. Britain is slavishly following its lead. I

doubt that Britain would position forces near Russia were it not for the USA. Successive US administrations have or are building a missile system in Europe and Turkey. They say it's to deter Iran from firing Scud missiles at Europe. But it's pointed at Russia. It's a radar system based in Romania and Turkey, with a battery of Patriot missiles based in Poland. The stationing of missiles there provoked Russia into moving its mobile nuclear weapons up to the border in its Kaliningrad exclave, as it warned it would do in 2008.^[xiii] Try to find any coverage of that in the media, except for a few articles in the print media here or there. If Western media were interested in survival, there would be regular headlines: "NATO provoking Russia."

But the situation in Ukraine is really the tipping point. Consider the equivalent. Imagine if Russia was conducting military exercises with Canada or Mexico, and building bases there. How would the US react? It would be considered an extreme threat, a violation of the UN Charter, which prohibits threats against sovereign states.

Alford: So we've extended NATO to pretty much the Russian border? But there's a hard border there. Everyone knows we're never going to attack Russia, both for reasons of morality and self-preservation. So maybe this situation is safer than you imply.

Coles: There's no morality involved. States are abstract, amorphous entities comprised of dominant minorities and subjugated majorities who are conditioned to believe that they are relatively free and prosperous. The elites of those states act both in their self-interests – career, peer-pressure, kickbacks, and so on – and in the interests of their class, which is of course tied to international relations because their class thrives on profiting from resource exploitation. So you can't talk about morality in this context. Only individuals can behave morally. The state is made up of individuals, of course, but they're acting against the interests of the majority. As we speak, they are acting immorally– or at least amorally – but creating the geopolitical conditions that imperil each and every one of us.

As for invasion, we're not going to invade Russia. This isn't 1918. Russia has nuclear weapons and can deter an invasion. But that's not the point. Do we want to de-escalate an already tense geopolitical situation or make it worse to the point where an accident happens? So while it's not about invading Russia directly, the issue is about attacking what are called Russia's "national interests." Russia's "national interests" are the same as the elites' of the UK. National interest doesn't mean the interests of the public. It means the interests of the policymaking establishment and the corporations. For example, the Theresa May government sacrificed its own credibility to ensure that its Brexit White Paper (2018) appeased both the interests of the food and manufacturing industries that

want a soft Brexit – easy trade with the EU – and the financial services sector which wants a hard Brexit – freedom from EU regulation. Everyone else be damned. That’s the “national interest.”

So for its real “national interest,” Russia wants to keep Ukraine in its sphere of influence because its oil and gas to Europe pass through Ukraine. About 80% of Russia’s export economy is in the oil and gas sector. It’s already had serious political tensions with Ukraine, which on several occasions hasn’t paid its energy bills, so Russia has cut supplies. If Europe can bump Ukraine into its own sphere of influence it has more leverage over Russia. This is practically admitted in Parliamentary discussions by Foreign Office ministers, and so forth.[xiii] Again, omitted by the media. Also, remember that plenty of ethnic Russians live in eastern Ukraine. In addition, Russia has a naval base in Crimea. That’s not to excuse its illegal action in annexing Ukraine, it’s to highlight the realpolitik missing in the media’s coverage of the situation.

T. J. Coles is a postdoctoral researcher at Plymouth University’s Cognition Institute and the author of several books.

Matthew Alford teaches at Bath University in the UK and has also written several books. Their latest is Union Jackboot (Até Books).

SOURCES

[i] Mark Leonard and Nicu Popescu (2007) ‘A Power Audit of EU-Russia Relations’ European Council on Foreign Relations, Policy Paper, p. 1 http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR-02_A_POWER_AUDIT_OF_EU-RUSSIA_RELATIONS.pdf.

[ii] ‘Anglo-Russian relations were severely strained; what was in effect a cold war lasted from the late 1820s to the beginning of the next century’. The Crimean War seems to have set a precedent for today. James writes:

[It] was an imperial war, the only one fought by Britain against a European power during the nineteenth century, although some would have regarded Russia as essentially an Asiatic power. No territory was at stake; the war was undertaken solely to guarantee British naval supremacy in the Mediterranean and, indirectly, to forestall any threat to India which might have followed Russia replacing Britain as the dominant power in the Middle East.

Lawrence James (1997) *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire* London: Abacus, pp. 180-82.

[iii] Churchill said in 1920:

All these strikes and rumours of strikes and threats of strikes and loss and suffering caused by them; all this talk of revolution and “direct action” have deeply offended most of the British people. There is a growing feeling that a considerable section of organized Labour is trying to tyrannize over the whole public and to bully them into submission, not by argument, not by recognized political measures, but by brute force ...

But if we can do little for Russia [under the Bolsheviks], we can do much for Britain. We do not want any of these experiments here ...

Whether it is the Irish murder gang or the Egyptian vengeance society, or the seditious extremists in India, or the arch-traitors we have at home, they will feel the weight of the British arm.

Winston Churchill (1920) Bolshevism and Imperial Sedition. Speech to United Wards Club. London: The International Churchill Society
<https://winstonchurchill.org/resources/speeches/1915-1929-nadir-and-recovery/bolshevism-and-imperial-sedition/>.

[iv] The fake letter says:

A settlement of relations between the two countries [UK and Russia] will assist in the revolutionising of the international and British proletariat, ... [and] make it possible for us to extend and develop the propaganda and ideas of Leninism in England and the colonies. It also says that ‘British workmen’ have ‘inclinations to compromise’ and that rapprochement will eventually lead to domestic ‘[a]rmed warfare’. It was leaked by the services to the Conservative party and then to the media. Richard Norton-Taylor (1999) ‘Zinoviev letter was dirty trick by MI6’ Guardian <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/1999/feb/04/uk.politicalnews6> and Louise Jury (1999) ‘Official Zinoviev letter was forged’ Independent <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/official-zinoviev-letter-was-forged-1068600.html>. For media coverage at the time, see James Curran and Jean Seaton (1997) Power without Responsibility London: Routledge, p. 52.

[v] Paul F. Walker (2017) ‘A Century of Chemical Warfare: Building a World Free of Chemical Weapons’ Conference: One Hundred Years of Chemical Warfare: Research, Deployment, Consequences pp. 379-400 and Giles Milton (2013) Russian Roulette: A Deadly Game: How British Spies Thwarted Lenin’s Global Plot London: Hodder, eBook.

[vi] ‘The Russian Federation has shown repeatedly that common values play almost no role in its consideration of its trading partners’, meaning the US and EU. ‘It often builds relationships with countries that most openly thwart Western values of free markets and

democracy’, notably Iran and Venezuela. ‘In this regard, the Russian Federation behaves like “Russia Incorporated.” It uses its re-nationalized industries to further its wealth and influence, the latter often at the expense of the EU and the U.S.’. Colonel Richard J. Anderson (2008) ‘A History of President Putin’s Campaign to Re-Nationalize Industry and the Implications for Russian Reform and Foreign Policy’ Senior Service College, US Army War College, Pennsylvania: Carlisle Barracks, p. 52.

[vii] Daniel R. Coats (2017) Statement for the Record: Worldwide Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Washington, DC: Office of the Director of

National Intelligence, pp. 18-19
<https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/Newsroom/Testimonies/SSCI%20Unclassified%20FR%20-%20Final.pdf>.

[viii] US Space Command (1997) Vision for 2020 Colorado: Peterson Air Force Base
<https://ia802705.us.archive.org/10/items/pdfy-j6U3MFw1cGmC-yob/U.S.%20Space%20Command%20Vision%20For%202020.pdf>.

[ix] The document also says: ‘a replay of the West-sponsored coup against pro-Russian elites could result in a split, or indeed multiple splits, of the failed Ukraine, which would open a door for NATO intervention’. Pavel K. Baev (2011) ‘Russia’s security relations with the United States: Futures planned and unplanned’ in Stephen J. Blank (ed.) Russian Nuclear Weapons: Past, Present, and Future Strategic Studies Institute Pennsylvania: Carlisle Barracks, p. 170, www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdf/files/PUB1087.pdf.

[x] Forces Network (2016) ‘British troops to deploy to Poland’
<https://www.forces.net/news/tri-service/british-troops-deploy-poland>.

[xi] For example, Nate Jones, Thomas Blanton and Christian F. Ostermann (2016) ‘Able Archer 83: The Secret History’ Nuclear Proliferation International History Project Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars
<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/able-archer-83-the-secret-history>.

[xii] It was reported in the ultra-right, neo-con press at the time that:

[Russian] President Dmitri Medvedev announced in his first state-of-the-nation address plans to deploy the short-range SS-26 (“Iskander”) missiles in the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad if the U.S. goes ahead with its European Ballistic Missile Defense System (BMDS). Medvedev told parliament that the deployment would “neutralize” U.S. plans for a missile defense shield based in Poland and the Czech Republic [now in Romania], which

the U.S. claims as vital in defending against missile attacks from ‘rogue states’ such as Iran.

Neil Leslie (2008) ‘The Kaliningrad Missile Crisis’ The New Atlanticist, available at <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/the-kaliningrad-missile-crisis>.

[xiii] For example, a Parliamentary inquiry into British-Russian relations says of the newly-imposed US-British ally in Ukraine:

President Poroshenko’s Government is more openly committed to economic reform and anti-corruption than any previous Ukrainian Administration. The reform agenda has made considerable progress and has enjoyed some successes including police reform, liberalisation of the energy market and the launch of an online platform for government procurement ...

The annexation of Crimea also resulted in a ban on importing products from Crimea, on investing in or providing services linked to tourism and on exporting certain goods for use in the transport, telecoms and energy sectors.

House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee (2017) The United Kingdom’s relations with Russia Seventh report of session 2016-17, HC 120 London: Stationary Office, pp. 28, 31 <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmfaaff/120/120.pdf>.