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## 2014's Watershed Events

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History will mark 2014 as the year of shifting global alliances and the beginning of the end of America's self-styled unipolar dominance under the rubric of the «New American Century». The corporate media is largely using the same «bucket list» of 2014's most memorable events but the relative overall importance of these news stories are in the eyes of the beholder.

Because of the hype conferred by a corporate media eager to sell advertising on repetitive 24 x 7 cable news channels, the corporate media, including the Associated Press, has settled on American police shootings of mainly African-American civilians, the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in the Middle East, the Republican sweep in the U.S. elections, the Ukraine conflict, the rollout of Obamacare, the

disappearance of Malaysian Airlines flight 370, the approval of state-by-state gay marriage in America, and the U.S. Veterans Department scandal as among the top ten news stories of 2014. This U.S.-centric list does not represent realism when it comes to determining the top events of the past year. The police shootings in the United States are important in a wider context of the battle lines being drawn between the economically-squeezed middle and lower classes in the United States and the forces of uber-capitalism as represented by an unrestrained Wall Street and U.S. politico-corporate dictatorship backed by the brute force of racist police forces and the omniscient surveillance powers of the National Security Agency, FBI, CIA, and other intelligence agencies.

For the rest of the world, America's «navel gazing» list of top news stories is meaningless.

Major news was found in the political and economic realignment of world powers. The consolidation of the BRICS economic alliance of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa as a bulwark against the traditional but expanding dominance of the United States and Western Europe over international financial structures gained steam during the past year.

The past year also saw new geopolitical flashpoints emerge that pit regional powers against one another. This was especially true in Eastern Europe where a NATO intent on moving its forces closer to Russia's frontiers engineered a pro-NATO coup d'état in Ukraine. In Asia, China squared off against a neo-militarist Japan with a backdrop of President Barack Obama's «pivot to Asia» shifting more U.S. military forces to the Asia-Pacific region.

The consolidation of power by the U.S.- and European Union-backed Ukrainian putschist government in Kiev resulted in aggression against Russian speakers in Crimea, eastern Ukraine, and the Odessa region. The popular referendum in Crimea that resulted in a «yes» vote to join the Russian Federation was met by Ukrainian military and paramilitary aggression against the self-declared eastern Ukrainian Republics of Donetsk and Lugansk. There were a number of Ukrainian attacks against civilians in eastern Ukraine that were largely ignored by the Western media, which, instead, was used to hype support for Western economic sanctions against Russia. The manipulated drop in world oil prices, coupled with the sanctions, represented a wilful declaration of economic war on Russia by the West.

The neo-conservative cabal that exercised so much domination over the George W. Bush administration continued their hold over Obama's foreign policy. This was especially apparent in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Latin America. The neo-con cabal inside the Obama administration was particularly represented by Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Victoria Nuland, the wife of the arch neo-con from the Bush era Robert Kagan of the infamous Kagan family of «New American Century» infamy; U.S. ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt; and Daniel Rubinstein, the special envoy for Syria who helped punish Russia for the retrocession of Crimea by expelling Syrian diplomats from Washington and closing Syrian honorary consulates in Houston and Michigan. The neo-con Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, Roberta Jacobson, was involved in the diplomatic rapprochement between Cuba and the United States. The Havana-Washington deal hinged on the release by Cuba of an American Jewish spy, Alan Gross. Not surprisingly, the first two American officials scheduled to visit Havana were Jacobson and her ideological comrade-in-arms, Commerce

Secretary Penny Pritzker, the heiress of the Hyatt Hotels fortune.

2014 began with Japan's new right-wing Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, just five days in office. No sooner had Abe appointed him as Defense Minister, Itsunori Onodera ordered Japan's military intelligence agents around the world to step up their surveillance of Chinese and North Korean officials. Japanese intelligence also aggressively targeted South Korea, Russia, and Pakistan. By year's end, Japan and South Korea reached an accommodation to share intelligence, a move that sparked fury in South Korea, which remains as wary of Japanese military intentions as do their cousins in the North.

While the rise of ISIL was a major news story of 2014, the U.S. media ignored the parties behind the rise of the Islamist jihadist force that proclaimed itself a new «caliphate» and took over large swaths of Syria and Iraq. Little was mentioned in the Western news media about how ISIL grew out of the CIA-organized and Saudi- and Turkish financed «Free Syrian Army». In comparison to ISIL, «Al Qaeda» in Syria was actually called «moderate» by the Western media. However, there was no real difference between Al Qaeda's branches, including Jabhat al-Nusra, and ISIL. Lurking behind al-Nusra and ISIL was the not-so-hidden hand of Israel, which was discovered to be supplying logistical, medical, intelligence, and military assistance to the Syrian rebels, regardless of their affiliation with ISIL. Israel's perfidy in aiding ISIL was ignored by a media that takes its cues from Israel's lobbying organizations embedded in the world's major capitals.

Israel also used every opportunity to stoke military tensions with Iran. The Israelis and their Republican Party allies in Washington criticized U.S.-Iranian bilateral discussions. On numerous occasions Israel beat the war drums for a pre-emptive military attack on Iran, whether as a sole Israeli operation or one carried out with the support of the United States. U.S.-Iranian military collaboration in attacking ISIL positions in northern Iraq threw a spanner into Israel's grand designs.

Another major story of 2014 was the lack of security and control over America's sizable nuclear weaponry. There were major breakdowns in the command-and-control of the U.S. nuclear arsenal at Malmstrom, Minot, and F. E. Warren Air Force Bases, as well as the U.S. Strategic Command at Offutt Air Force Base. These events and the relief-for-cause of commanding officers of nuclear-armed U.S. Navy warships throws into doubt the ability of the United States to adequately control its vast arsenal of nuclear weapons. Washington's criticisms leveled against Russia's nuclear arsenal are laughable in the face of the severe breakdown of Barack Obama's ability to control his nuclear weapons.

The move in the United States to abandon «net neutrality» and corporatize the Internet is another major overlooked story of 2014. Obama's selection as the head of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), Tom Wheeler, a former cable industry executive, appeared willing to cut deals with America's telecommunications/infotainment sector to hand over ultimate control – and content – of the Internet to some of America's most predatory corporations. The alleged hacking of Sony Entertainment's computers, blamed by the Obama administration on North Korea, appears to have been an «inside job» prompted by an eagerness by the U.S. Cyber Command to exercise more control over the Internet, with the support of the New York / Hollywood infotainment industry.

Based on the advent of a totally Republican (and neo-con)-controlled U.S. Congress, 2015 will see Obama increasing his adventurism abroad. The world will react to American neo-imperialism by continuing to realign political, economic, and military blocs. Rather than NATO expanding, the possible fall from power of conservative governments in Greece, Germany, Spain, and the United Kingdom may see a number of NATO members distancing themselves from the Cold War anachronism.