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Why Are Russia and China (And Iran) Paramount Enemies for the U.S. Ruling Elite?

Once an Enemy Always an Enemy

BY JOHN V. WALSH

5/22/2014

Does it not seem strange that, with the Cold War long over, the Paramount Enemies of the United States remain Russia and China? That is not a bad question to ponder during Vladimir Putin's visit with Xi Jinping in Beijing.

And there is no doubt that Russia and China hold this pariah status in the eyes of the U.S. imperial elite. In the last months we have watched the U.S. try to push Russia East and tear it apart. At the same time Obama traversed East Asia trying to stitch together an anti-China military and economic alliance in the Western Pacific with Japan as the linchpin. In fact it is striking that the U.S. has allied itself with neo-Nazism in Ukraine and Japanese militarism on the other side of Asia. This is happening despite the considerable changes that have taken place in both Russia and China, neither of which would any longer claim to be interested in an anti-capitalist crusade. The only country that comes close in the opprobrium heaped upon them by the West is Iran. Why do these countries, especially Russia and China, remain the enemies of the

West? With the struggle against Soviet-style Communism long over, the reason is certainly not ideological.

This riddle finds its answer in a suggestion by Jean Bricmont in his *Humanitarian Imperialism*. He observes that the main political development of the last 100 years was not the defeat of fascism nor the fall of Soviet style Communism, but the battle against Western colonialism. And this battle is far from over, for most of the world is still subject to total or partial domination by the West, a condition that Sartre and Nkrumah dubbed neocolonialism. The colonized peoples of the world, the overwhelming majority of humanity, still live under the worst of material conditions. Originally Nkrumah described neocolonialism thus

The result of neo-colonialism is that foreign capital is used for the exploitation rather than for the development of the less developed parts of the world. Investment, under neo-colonialism, increases, rather than decreases, the gap between the rich and the poor countries of the world. The struggle against neo-colonialism is not aimed at excluding the capital of the developed world from operating in less developed countries. It is aimed at preventing the financial power of the developed countries being used in such a way as to impoverish the less developed.

In the post Cold War world, the domination of the West has increasingly taken the form of direct military action by the U.S. with its Empire of Bases, subversion of defiant governments or “integration” of their military with the West, as is proceeding apace in Africa now.

How do Russia and China fit into this sweep of history?

Before the Bolshevik Revolution Lenin saw WWI as a war between the great European colonial powers, pitting England and its allies against Germany and its allies, for colonial spoils and imperial power. Or as has been said, England owned the world and Germany wanted it. That inter-imperial war precipitated the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, with the simple call for “Bread, land and peace,” and also a German Socialist Revolution which failed, forcing the Bolsheviks to turn inward.

The Bolsheviks were deadly serious. They took Russia and then the rest of the USSR out of the Western orbit, out of the ambit of the Western colonial powers, and they brought industrial development to their backward land. The failure of a revolution in Europe and the post WWI military assault on Russia by the West, including the U.S., meant that the USSR could no longer look to the West for advancement toward “socialism.” And because of Lenin’s view that the colonized nations needed to rebel against imperialism to advance and develop, the Bolsheviks

also took up the cause of anticolonialism – from Africa to Latin America to Asia and, most importantly, to China.

In the end Russia became a great power and it remained out of the orbit of the West for over 70 years, almost three generations. Socialism and Communism were certainly not achieved, whatever one might mean by them. And that is a thing that disturbs most Left wing or “progressive” Western intellectuals to this day, most notably the Trotskyites and their ideological fellow travelers mired in the past. That outlook, however, misses the essential point in light of the struggle against colonialism. A proud independence, an escape from poverty and a severing of almost all institutional and economic ties with the West became accomplished facts in Russia. Few Russians studied abroad and few Westerners studied in Russia. There were no old school ties between the two.

Then came WWII, an attempt by Germany to conquer Europe and to destroy the Soviet Union. Out of this war came another great revolution, the Liberation of China. China had tried many things to escape the humiliation imposed on it by the West, including an attempt by Sun Yat-Sen and his followers to set up a Chinese democracy, Western style. One of those followers was Mao Zedong. With the failure of Sun and the victory of Lenin, Mao saw his chance, and he too adopted a Leninist Party structure but with emphasis on the peasantry. As Mao himself put it in July, 1949, *“The Russians made the October Revolution ... and the revolutionary energy of the...laboring people of Russia, hitherto latent and unseen by foreigners, suddenly erupted like a volcano, and the Chinese and all mankind began to see the Russians in a new light. Then, and only then, did the Chinese enter an entirely new era in their thinking and their life.”*

By 1946 China had defeated Japan and by 1949 the Chinese Communist Revolution secured victory. And then China closed the door to the West and established its independence. Ties with the West were severed decisively for nearly two generations. With its independence secured by Mao and baseline development achieved, China could “open the door” but from a position of strength. Deng’s reforms turned China into a great economic power. China today is the second most powerful nation on the planet, once again interacting with the West – but on its own terms, as does Russia.

So the Communists of Russia did not achieve Communism. But they did achieve independence and great economic and military power. Surely China’s achievement was the greatest blow against colonialism in the wake of WWII and the greatest anticolonial victory in history. Western Europe and the U.S. did all they could to defeat the Chinese Communists, and they failed. They

were on the wrong side of history – the colonial side, the side of domination and humiliation of entire peoples.

So today we find these two great powers, Russia and China, recently driven into one another's arms by the endless crusades of the West to undermine them. Together they constitute a great power center outside the control of the U.S. Empire. Bent on global domination, the U.S. cannot tolerate such a defiant and alternative center of power. The reason is that such a center provides an alternative for others who would gain their independence from the West. Such an organization as BRICS would not exist, or if it did would not mean much, without the "R" and the "C."

But the battle against colonialism has not ended. Certainly India, most of Latin America, much of East Asia and most of Africa have yet to break free of the West and develop their full economic potential. (They certainly have not escaped underdevelopment while in the embrace of the West.) In some places governments defiant of the U.S. have emerged as in Bolivia, Venezuela and Ecuador. *Where once the U.S. fought battles against insurgent liberation movements, now it fights to bring down defiant governments or leaders, another insight of Bricmont.* That is also a feature of neo-imperialism. Some, like Mossadegh, Allende and Chavez, were genuine democrats who wished to bring their people out of poverty. Others have not been so democracy minded, but defiance of the West has been the common denominator for those whom the West seeks to destroy. As the world knows by now, "democracy" and "human rights" have nothing to do with U.S. neo-imperial strategy. The two cross paths only by accident.

Let us be clear about this outlook. This view is not intended to be a paean to the Communist nature of the great 20th Century revolutions. In fact these revolutions were failures in terms of the goals that they set themselves. They did not achieve an egalitarian society at any point. But they did find the road to independence and development and now to advanced development, which they are still undertaking today. And they serve as an alternative to the West – a powerful one. In this sense they might be termed accidental revolutions. Little in history goes according to script no matter who writes it. It can be said, though, that in terms of the great struggle against colonialism and for human development the Russian and Chinese revolutions were on the right side of history. And they were the major steps in that battle in the 20th Century.

Finally, Iran is the third of the big three Paramount Enemies of the U.S. and the West. Interestingly, Iran followed the same course as China and Russia. After the overthrow of the duly elected social democrat and nationalist Mossadegh by the CIA and the imposition of a brutal dictator, the Shah, a revolution, led by clerics in this case, and a peaceful one at that, overthrew the Shah and cut ties with the West. The clerical establishment played the same role in Iran that

the Communist Parties of China and Russia played there. They led a revolution for independence and development and they have kept Iran largely outside the orbit of the West for 35 years. They will engage the West now largely on their own terms, just as China and Russia have done. The form of organization to break free is not critical nor is the ideology. It can range from Communism to Islam and other ideologies and organizations may serve as well. Perhaps we are witnessing some new forms of organization in Ecuador, Bolivia and Venezuela. The resolve and intelligence with which the break is carried out and the degree to which the common people support and benefit from it are the crucial factors.

But for those on the Left, religious antiwar activists and Libertarians who have campaigned over the years against the wars of the West, this is good news. Those who have fought against Western “interventionism” have been on the right side of history – wittingly or more often unwittingly. Given the different ideologies that the anticolonial movements in the West have adopted, it might well be that the core motivation is the side of us which is humane, perhaps our inner Bonobo versus our inner Chimpanzee.

Now, unfortunately, the dominant “progressive” strain in the West has largely abandoned an anticolonial stance. The world is no longer viewed through the lens of the far from finished anticolonial struggle but through the dubious categories of “human rights” and “real, true democracy.” The likes of Pussy Riot have replaced Mao in the eyes of the Western “progressives.” And all too many progressives, Juan Cole and Amy Goodman among them, for example, cheered for the Obama/Hillary war on Libya as Gaddafi was crushed. It went unmentioned in such “progressive” circles that Gaddafi gave Libya the highest Human Development Index in all of Africa, stood in the forefront of the struggle against U.S.-backed Apartheid, both in South Africa and Israel, and advocated a Pan-Arabism and Pan-Africanism that would make for independence from the West.

In sum the “progressives” of the West are now viewing events on the world stage through the wrong lens, the same one used by their rulers when it suits them. It is time to return to the proper way of looking at what is going on in the world. Only then will the anti-colonial and anti-interventionist movement be restored on the Left.

For the genuine libertarians the matter is simpler. They have always held to the view that our government has no business interfering in the life of other nations. For them the emphasis has been on the other side of neocolonialism, neo-imperialism. They simply do not want their government intervening abroad, do not believe it is moral, and do not want to pay for it, a bit of good solid Ayn Randian self-interest. If progressives pull free of the faux cry for democracy and

human rights peddled to them, the door is open for a very broad antiwar, anti-Empire movement. And the need for such cooperation is essential lest we stumble into a world conflagration.