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NATO, Spearhead of Western Fascism

Resumption of Cold War in Earnest

by NORMAN POLLACK

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The NATO summit in Wales is over. It marked the convergence of fundamental trends long in the making, the Ukraine crisis merely a way to flesh out the details and provide cover for a more ambitious Western geopolitical posture with respect to Russia and, ultimately, China, with US global hegemony its epicenter. America is on top of the earthquake, a world political-military order shaking down along fault lines (i.e., the decentralization of power) no longer susceptible to US unilateral dominance, supervision, and control. The Old World, which is to say, international relations frozen into place during the Cold War, without taking into account changes constantly taking place at the periphery, focused on Russia as America's chief adversary, the Evil One, for which NATO was brought into being to oppose, surmount, and provide the ideological rationale for an inclusive anticommunism to legitimize further preparation for war against it. McCarthyism at home was the tip of the iceberg for the bipartisan outward thrust of American capitalism, Russia conjured up as the ever-present menace to its benevolent spread and as the object of xenophobic fear raising doubt of US survival. NATO was a convenience, also a

preliminary step in the integration of the European economy the better for American commercial-financial penetration.

The Old World, from the US perspective of today, is obsolete, not to be cast off as an historical remnant, however, but integrated into the New World, in which Russia, remaining useful as ideological scarecrow and whipping boy, is made to serve as the domino-theory effect in reverse. No longer, e.g., if ISIS is not exterminated or suppressed in the Middle East, it will storm the beaches of Montauk Point or Key West, though that too is part of the American mindset, so trained are we like Pavlov's dogs to respond to cues as programmed, but slowly realizing the possibilities of the doctrine and, over the last quarter-century, taking the initiative, we have applied it to the Other Side: if Russia falls, or practically speaking, becomes weakened, contained, finally, fragmented into separate parts, then comes China, and after China, an awakening Third World which may or may not be willing to play by the IMF-World Bank ground rules. From the 1980s on, one can taste America's limitless, military-backed, paradigm of domination in world-terms of politics, economics, and ideology, exactly at the historical moment when it is no longer viable of realization.

The shift from Old to New World occurs precisely when American power, still obviously considerable, is being displaced with the rise of multiple power-sectors themselves on the ascendance while America is facing a steady decline through over-commitment to militarism (in the form of military appropriations, interventions, weaponry-and-nuclear modernization, waste and corruption in defense contracts, global system of bases, etc.), the market-fundamentalism orientation which has led to deregulation, capitalism run amuck, a tattered if not shattered social safety net, urban decay, rotting infrastructure, and much more, including wage stagnation and unemployment pointing to widespread class-differentiation that is oiled over through the institutional fostering of false consciousness. Quite a mouthful, yet indicative of what has been driving USG and political-economic-military elites: global showdown to restore American supremacy where in fact this is no longer possible.

Enter the NATO summit, Sept. 4-5, an air of tangible desperation, explicit recognition of a turning point, as though the future of the West was on trial (which may be true, at least as the US would like to define it), measures solemnly taken—a rapid-strike force on a permanent basis, the threat of further sanctions, a 28-nation reaffirmation of collective defense, even the pledge of member states' eventually beefing up their defense spending—all overtly, pointedly directed to

Russia. This, in the face of a peace agreement between Russia and Ukraine that all parties, US and EU/NATO members, would like to scuttle, lest the intended confrontation with Russia go awry. My surmise: the agreement will not be allowed to stand. Too much rides on forcing Russia, as if in a scheme of entrapment, to counter the US-EU-NATO military movements to the Russian border, besides the strike force and missile deployments already in place, the new much-discussed at the meeting infrastructure for use by the strike force, and capable of expansion, in member countries adjacent to Russia; for, if response is made to these offensive developments, then NATO, with the Obama-Cameron-Rasmussen blessing, has the option to start a war, the consequences of which I leave to the imagination.

Unquestionably, this summit is historic. It marks a concrete escalation of purpose, ideology, planning, program. It also confirms the New World-American style. Leaders are more-or-less in agreement on a unified front with respect to Russia, but not necessarily what lies beyond—the “beyond” in this case a clearing the deck, first, willingly to accept America as the architect of world order, to which all members of NATO assent, and second, Obama’s and America’s going the extra mile, containing, isolating CHINA, using Russia both as dress rehearsal and neutralized so as not to come to China’s defense, and then, in counterrevolutionary fashion, define the permissible boundaries of modernization in Africa, Latin America, and, Japan excepted, the remainder of Asia, to which the NATO members have not fully assented (nor are likely to). Here, US hegemony slowly, objectively, shifts to the more pathetic stance and reality of hubris, one sort of the retribution already taking form being Islamic radicalism, but Third World social revolution cannot be entirely gainsaid.

If Obama succeeds (and those who come after operating, as likely, in the same vein), it will be seen that the NATO summit itself is an exercise in hubris. When the world seeks peace, the rapid-strike force, and its acknowledged character as the prototype for global application, including NATO involvement, hardly speaks to that yearning. The summit therefore is seemingly a last-ditch effort to preserve international tensions as the ratifying condition of Western supremacy. In the process, hopefully, as the US-EU-NATO would have it, there is sufficient push-back to reverse the flow of the falling-domino effect, ending in the pacification of all indigenous peoples, the US supreme all the while. Sanctions, the members recognized (although this didn’t stop them from approving further escalation), would not do the trick with Russia, so that explicit use of force, presupposing if not ground troops, then everything short (or long!) of that, would be needed, gave the outcome a sinister edge. Time then to look closer, mindful the Poroshenko-Putin agreement for a ceasefire occurred outside the context and framework of the meeting, rather than attempted and attended to as the main order of business, thus confirming

participants' hostility to an accord and revealing the wish that it fail—a wish easily translatable into ways and means of sabotaging it, including more direct punishment of Russia and regime change in Ukraine.

New York Times reporters Steven Erlanger, Julie Davis, and Stephen Castle summed up the results of the NATO meeting in their aptly titled article, “NATO Plans a Special Force to Reassure Eastern Europe and Deter Russia,” (Sept. 5), a frank avowal of deterrence, not candidly bruted about in these gatherings for a quarter-century, directed specifically to Russia—an accurate reading of what transpired. The reporters write: “The alliance said it would establish a rapid-reaction force with an essentially permanent presence in Eastern Europe and would enhance military cooperation with Ukraine.” The force, but also its contemplated permanence, marks a tangible step toward confrontation with Russia, at the same time that the Poroshenko-Putin ceasefire agreement stands in contradiction to the tenor of the meeting, so that to push forward, in disregard of the latter (except to pay it lip-service), Obama mouths the warning, “‘actions have consequences,’” to reiterate that Russia is not out of the woods. He even suggests at the closing news conference that Putin had buckled because of “enhance[d] deterrence and coordinated sanctions... to agree to a tentative cease-fire in Ukraine” (reporters’ paraphrasing), when in fact Putin had drawn up his plan earlier and favored its provisions from the start. Obama did his best to cast doubt on the plan and Putin’s character, not mentioning that Poroshenko’s own plan, formulated in June, was practically identical to Putin’s. Given the supposed object of the meeting—peace in Ukraine, tough talk was needed to discredit its possibility, and hence, Anders Rasmussen, NATO’s secretary general, noted that the rapid-reaction force would be “‘a continuous presence’” deterring Russian aggression, to which he added: “‘Should you [Russia] even think of attacking one ally, you will be facing the whole alliance.’”

With words of encouragement like that, who needs Poroshenko-Putin—for peace will ring from every rooftop and church spire, in the spirit of US-EU-NATO brotherhood for Putin and Russia. Not quite, for agreement or no agreement, the Triumvirate plowed ahead without missing a step. Trust is everything; here it is totally lacking. (I am being charitable; it is not mistrust we find, but the intention to throw up roadblocks wherever possible so as not realize a condition of peace—much like the Israelis with respect to the Palestinian peace process. NATO wants, not an accommodation, but state of constant tension, in order to carry out its US defined-and-financed mission, the spearhead for achieving a dismantling of all rival power systems and independent sources of development. But first things first: Russia, its crippling.) If the goal is peace, timing works against it, deliberately so, because at the meeting it was decided “to go ahead with new sanctions on Russia” BEFORE the peace agreement was even given a chance, therefore a vote of

no confidence handicapping it from the start, rather than waiting to see, as a good-will gesture to assist in its success. Merkel lent her voice to the procedure: “Everything is in flux. [The reference is to presumed Russian aggression and withdrawal of Russian troops.] Therefore we should expect that these sanctions could indeed be put in force, but with the proviso that they can be suspended again if this process really takes place.” And she is the model of gentleness, Philip Hammond, British Foreign Secretary, calling for “immediately imposing the sanctions and then lifting them if the cease-fire held.”

Less noticed, Ukraine was occasion, at this meeting, for getting member nations to be more militarily involved. The writers again: “NATO also grappled with the unwillingness of most of its members to meet their commitments to spend an amount equivalent to 2 percent of their gross domestic product on defense, an issue on which the United States, which bears most of the alliance’s costs, has become increasingly outspoken.” The tie-in with Ukraine? Rasmussen states: “Russia’s aggression against Ukraine is a wake-up call. [The crisis led NATO countries] to reconsider defense investment because it’s now obvious that we cannot take our security for granted.” One suspects that if Ukraine falls (which is not Putin’s intent), Russian banners will fly over Oslo, London, and Washington. Time, then, for getting the dominoes to fall the other way, Moscow, Beijing, Brasilia, Havana, on down the road. Next, Neil MacFarquhar’s article in The Times, “Ukraine Deal Imposes Truce Putin Devised,” (Sept. 6), presents the details of the peace plan, credits Putin’s authorship, yet—The Times will be The Times—has sufficient caveats to turn the whole thing sour. He begins: “After five months of intensifying combat that threatened to rip Ukraine apart and to reignite the Cold War, the Ukrainian government and separatist forces signed a cease-fire agreement on Friday [Sept. 5] that analysts considered highly tenuous in a country that remains a tinderbox.” Let’s ignore the analysts (usually unnamed, sympathetic to the administration) and come to the point, “that the main thrust of the plan was not just endorsed, but laid out,” by Putin—though like his colleagues, MacFarquhar sees Russian pressure motivating the acceptance of the plan: “The cease-fire was agreed to after a two-week rebel counteroffensive backed by Russian troops, armor and artillery that threatened to roll back most of the gains the Ukrainian military had made.” Force cowed Poroshenko into submission—the US-NYT party line, leaving Obama “hopeful but, based on past experience, skeptical,” sort of like launching a ship with a glass of tea, so far as encouragement goes, and particularly off-base and misleading because, as MacFarquhar points out, “The agreement resembles, almost verbatim, a proposal for a truce issued by President Petro O. Poroshenko in June.” In June, months before any counteroffensive—or claims of Russian interference.

The point is, the agreement is a good one, one US-EU-NATO leaders should by rights have applauded, if peace was their purpose. The reporter: “The 14-point peace plan includes some references to the cease-fire itself, some practical steps toward returning government control to the southeast Donbass region and some nods toward future political changes.... It includes amnesty for those who disarm and who did not commit serious crimes, and the exchange of all prisoners. Militias will be disbanded, and a 10-kilometer buffer zone—about six miles—will be established along the Russian-Ukrainian border. The area will be subject to joint patrols. The separatists have agreed to leave the administrative buildings they control and to allow broadcasts from Ukraine to resume on local television.” What’s not to like, Mr. Obama?

And for good measure, the reporter continues: “For the future, the agreement says power will be decentralized and the Russian language protected.... The agreement says the executive in control of each region, the equivalent of a governor, will be appointed after consultations with each region. It also promises early elections and a job-creation program.” His parenthetical statement between sentences indicates what the southeast was facing and speaks volumes about its protest against Kiev (Russia not needing to play outside agitator): “An early, failed attempt by more extreme members of the Ukrainian Parliament to ban Russian as an official language was one element that spawned the uprising.” Coming from The Times, a solid-gold admission. Contrast the timing, NATO summit before and after, before, both Poroshenko and Putin engaged in the peace effort, after, a unified voice of social wreckage, with Ukraine’s own future irrelevant to the member states. Hence, “Mr. Poroshenko lauded the agreement in a statement posted on the presidential website, paying tribute in his announcement to the fact that Mr. Putin called for a cease-fire with a seven-point plan Wednesday [Sept. 3].” Conversely, the whole kit-and-caboodle on the other side: “A spectrum of politicians, civil society activists, diplomats and other analysts welcomed the proposal but expressed serious doubts that it could hold given the wide rift between Kiev and the restive eastern regions.” Welcomed, with a stiletto, given the expression of serious doubts. The NATO statements and actions speak for themselves, as in the case of the rapid-reaction force and military assistance to Ukraine.

My New York Times Comment on the MacFarquhar article, same date, follows:

Begin with the lead: “Ukraine Deal Imposes Truce Putin Devised.” Loaded: “Imposes.” as though unwarranted, one-sided, favorable to Russia and Putin. Cannot NYT get over its obsession of being anti-Putin, of treating Russia as reincarnation of Soviet Union, of regurgitating the Cold War scenario at the behest of the Obama administration? Where is journalistic independence? The article is all gloom-and-doom, a truce that will not hold, Obama

and his “skepticism,” various “analysts” (the new category of choice to ensure anonymity and/or push a respectable State Dept. line) mouthing shopworn platitudes of doubt, and one more chance to question Putin’s motives and integrity.

Did anyone on the US-EU-NATO side offer a truce plan? I sensed Poroshenko was different from his neofascist colleagues—and apparently I am right. Yet the Western Triumvirate will do anything to disrupt peace. I fear for Poroshenko’s life—or at least his political future. From Obama’s perspective, joined by Cameron and Rasmussen, peace must NOT BE ALLOWED to break out. Eastern Europe must be in a state of disarray so that long-term destabilization will result in Russia’s isolation and dismemberment.

Witness the vitriol coming out of the NATO summit, and the coalition to attack ISIS, partly as distraction from not succeeding in the rupture of East-West relations, partly to affirm US leadership whatever the issue, so long as conflation of the two, identifying Russia and Putin with terrorism succeeds.

Finally, we have the wisdom of The Times editorial board, “A Cease-Fire in Ukraine,” (Sept. 6), which confirms, beyond the use of its intemperate language (revealing uncontrolled animosity,) the foregoing discussion about what I am terming, the spearhead of Western fascism, in this case, the predilection for global domination by means of force, ideological certitude, and our friend, a consuming hubris. Other elements of fascism, including the militarization of advanced capitalism, and the degree of consolidation within the political-economic structure (commercial-financial-industrial), need not be addressed here, their presence nonetheless present and relevant to the wider confrontation between the West and the current periphery. The editorial begins: “With pressures building on all sides, the adversaries in the war in Ukraine announced a cease-fire on Friday [Sept. 5]. Combat in the contested southeastern region that killed some 2,600 people in the past five months paused, perhaps for a while.” Not an encouraging start, nor admission that many of the 2,600 casualties were civilian deaths caused by Ukrainian shelling. Nor do we find other than the customary demonization of Putin: “It would be a mistake to assume that the agreement guarantees a quick and easy path to stability for Ukraine, and that is because [he] has shown himself to be a reckless and unpredictable provocateur in creating the worst conflict with the West since the Cold War.”

In effect, Stalin II. Then the canard about Russian/separatist military successes forcing Poroshenko (“in the last two weeks, Ukrainian forces suffered heavy setbacks, with the separatists opening a third front... around the port of Mariupol”) to come to terms. Even after

citing provisions unexceptionable by any standard, e.g., “compliance overseen by international monitors,” the editorial opens both barrels of denunciation: “In his quest for control and regional power, Mr. Putin poses a serious threat to the international order by disregarding borders, violating agreements and pursuing an expansionist vision without regard to other states or even the effect that economic sanctions and diplomatic isolation could have on Russia.” Save for the last point, since the US sponsors and enforces sanctions and is rarely if ever on the receiving end, The Times editorial board might well be collectively looking in the mirror, or to be exact, presenting an analysis that applies not only to Obama but to American presidents, almost without exception, from Harry Truman on.

The NATO summit, however, was not a total washout. Obama came through splendidly at his Friday news conference, saying NATO would uphold Ukraine’s “sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and right to defend itself,” and, on the military front, praise is further in order: “The 28 NATO members have promised to provide Ukraine with logistics assistance, training and help in organizing the military command structure and related forces. The United States and its allies are also debating going even further and supplying defensive weapons, including radar and anti-tank weapons.” Not that “Ukraine could ever prevail in a war with Russia. But the intent of the NATO summit decisions is to encourage a political solution by raising the cost of further military actions by the rebels and Mr. Putin.” What does “raising the cost” entail? And what kind of political solution (why not get behind the Poroshenko-Putin initiative?), and, given the costs, is a “political solution” even likely or possible?

The Times can’t be bothered by small points, it is important to bull ahead: “The Europeans, who too often hesitated during this crisis, on Friday showed more resolve by agreeing to stronger sanctions that affect Russia’s access to capital markets, defense, dual-use goods and sensitive technology.” Bullying ahead, they must cross the finish line: “Now they must carry them out and also fulfill a commitment to pay for the rapid reaction force and other promised defensive measures.” The Times doesn’t miss a thing. And as a good coach for the American military, the EU, NATO, the whole Free World (!), it closes: “If their pledges are hollow, the Ukraine crisis could get a lot worse.” War is peace; no, war is honor, the American Way, manliness in battle dress.

My New York Times Comment on the Editorial, same date, follows:

This editorial will come back to haunt The Times, as irresponsible, sensational, productive of war. “...perhaps for a while,” hopeful the cease-fire will collapse. “...Putin has shown himself to

be a reckless and unpredictable provocateur in creating the worst conflict with the West since the Cold War.” Create the conflict? What of the coup? the Nuland evidence? the neofascist influence in Kiev? the US-EU-NATO design prior to the coup to advance forces into Eastern Europe to contain Russia? As for reckless, your own MacFarquhar concedes the PEACE plan was initiated by Putin, had the agreement of Poroshenko, and in all respects, including international peacekeepers, was reasonable, workable, intelligent, in contrast to Obama and the NATO summit in general ridiculing it and beefing up anti-Russian rhetoric and military plans: rapid-reaction force, infrastructure, both near Russia.

One would think Poroshenko a traitor, by NYT reasoning, for joining with Putin. If he is assassinated, one knows where to look, for peace in Eastern Europe is anathema to the West and US involvement in regime change (even in Ukraine) does not augur well for Poroshenko. NYT cites provisions of the plan, yet, menacing tone without specific criticisms. What is wrong with it? Why say, Putin “has consistently operated in a deceitful manner,” unless your purpose is to discredit it? And then berating the Europeans for not being more anti-Russian and militaristic. A black day.