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American Elections: Weapons of Mass Distraction

By Gerald Sussman
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Now that the agitprop babble of the conventions is behind us, we might ask, what is all this showman/woman/ship all about? Does the election of the president even matter? On some level perhaps, but the main utility of presidential elections is simply that it's a weapon of mass distraction – creating a fiction that presidents actually rule and that voters actually determine the country's destiny. In truth, presidents and their minions in Congress and the Supreme Court may govern, but they certainly don't rule. Elections serve to transfer power from one set of elites to another set of elites, cloaking the spectacle in democratic legitimacy, as the ruling class watch from their corporate suites, pleased with the quadrennial national consensus-building bread & circus event.

If, a *big* if, Bernie has managed to capture the largest number of delegates, the nomination, and the election, it simply would have left a democratic socialist in the White House with all the levers of power intact to discipline him back to what Noam Chomsky has called “the spectrum of thinkable thought.” A better option than anyone else in the Oval Office for sure. Indeed, if the ruling class were a bit wiser, they would have backed Bernie, instead of the hapless and hopeless Hillary, for the nomination and the presidency just to crush the hopes of the left and sending a solid Thatcherite message: “See, there is no alternative.” The real value of Sanders campaign has been to incite courage in young people to confront the establishment. A Clinton victory in November might bring thousands of protesters into the streets, but a Trump victory would probably bring millions.

If anyone had doubts about the increasing militarization of the Democratic Party under Clinton and her loyalty to the war machine, the party convention speech of retired Marine Gen. John Allen leaves little doubt about where she will take this country. Brought on stage with a military drumbeat and an entourage of military officers and veterans of Middle East wars, Allen began barking a “patriotic” message about national security, while the faithful below him, and Allen himself joining in, bellowed the chauvinist chorus, “USA, USA,” while waving “USA” placards and American flags throughout his speech. It looked like the warmup to a beer hall putsch.

In politically correct pitch, Allen enjoined “every race and creed,” and Muslims too, and “every gender orientation” to back every theater of conflict the US pursues in defense of what he calls “the free peoples of the world.” Who are his free peoples of the world? The Saudi Arabians, the Bahrainians, the Qataris, the Turks, the Egyptians, the Kuwaitis, the Libyans, – all living under the yoke of US-allied radical Islamist dictatorships.

Do the lesser of two evils voters, including Bernie Sanders, imagine that the future holds anything but more wars, more fracking, more ecological disaster, more privatization of public services, more Wall Street ripoffs, more prisons and incarcerations, more deportations, more repression against whistle blowers, more police brutality, more poverty, more wage compression, higher education and health care costs, higher worker underemployment and precarity – all programs or results of the Obama administration. After all, aren’t the Democrats running on the Obama record – good shadow puppets of the Wall Street tycoons?

The Obama years were little more than an extension of Bush’s warmongering initiatives and the Clinton banking giveaways. The Clinton II era, if she makes it all the way to the Great Gravy Train on Pennsylvania Avenue, will be an extension of all three regimes. (The selection of Tim Kaine as VP is a very good clue.) What is Clinton’s forte apart from reading *Goodnight Moon* to Chelsea, as we heard from the daughter’s corny convention introduction? But the outgoing president assured everyone, it’s her State Department experience, stupid!

Michael Crowley, a liberal senior writer for *Politico*, summed up that rich experience. She “backed a bold escalation of the Afghanistan war... pressed Obama to arm the Syrian rebels ... endorsed airstrikes against the Assad regime... backed intervention in Libya, and ... helped enable Obama’s expansion of lethal drone strikes [as] the administration’s most reliable advocate for military action,” in Afghanistan, Libya, and the bin Laden raid, taking “a more aggressive line than [Secretary of Defense Robert] Gates, a Bush-appointed Republican.” Crowley left out

her backing for such “democracy promotion” efforts as the extrajudicial killing of bin Laden, drone assassinations with hundreds of added “collateral damage” murders, the illegal Israeli West Bank disposessions and housing settlements on Palestinian territory, and the 2009 coup in Honduras that forced the democratically elected president, Manuel Zelaya, out of the country. Clinton denied that his removal was a coup even though a leaked document from the US Embassy in Tegucigalpa said, “there is no doubt... [that his ouster] constituted an illegal and unconstitutional coup.” In short, her experience in the State Department was primarily a string of lies and imperialist coups masquerading as support for democracy, just as her ruthless deposing of Gaddafi (“We came, we saw, he died”) and bombing of Libya is portrayed as civilized in spirit.

While somewhat frank about Clinton’s less than impressive State Department credentials, Crowley also echoed the catechism of the liberal media, on both sides of the Atlantic, in calling Trump “the Kremlin’s Candidate.” Not even in the earlier bitter phase of the Cold War, did the American and British mainstream media (MSM) resort to vilifying postwar leaders of the Soviet Union, not Khrushchev, not Brezhnev, not Andropov, the way they do Vladimir Putin. The MSM has constructed a fiction of official Russian interference in the US elections (as if the regular regime change activities by the US State Department, CIA, USAID, and the National Endowment for Democracy are not interference). Is not Obama lecturing the British people to vote against Brexit interference in UK affairs? But aside from some passing diplomatic comments in appreciation for Trump’s stump statement calling for bringing Russia into the fold of fighting ISIS, Putin hasn’t said a single word about the American election. Contrast that with a British parliamentary committee that debated banning Trump, even if he became president, from entering the UK.

It seems that the MSM has highly selective perceptions of what constitutes violations of international politics. They see no problem in America’s uninvited presence in the bombing and droning of Syrian, Libyan, and Iraqi towns and cities, among the 14 Islamic countries the US has attacked or occupied since 1980, but have serious problems with the legal presence of Russia in the fight against ISIS and ISIS-allied groups in Syria. They have no problem with the US-backed coup (the State Department assistant secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs, Victoria Nuland, handpicking the successors to the ousted president Yanukovich) in Kiev and the far right and pro-Nazi elements in Ukraine’s coup-initiated government, but they condemn Russia for defending ethnic Russian citizens in eastern Ukraine from the onslaught of the coup leaders.

They ignore the NATO presence and war games along the borders of Russia, which itself is an act of war, but reacts with Cold War gusto when Russia recovers the Crimea, a part of Russia and the Soviet Union for over 200 years, following the region’s overwhelming vote favoring irredentism. Russian sovereignty concerns given the NATO threat of taking over and eliminating Russia’s critical naval access in Sevastopol to the Black Sea is unacknowledged.

But even in the heavy-handed world of the new Cold War rhetoric, there is always some levity, particularly with regard to the recent DNC exposé. It has become part of the arsenal of mass distraction to blame Russia and Putin for everything that exposes the weakness and corruption of the US and UK. The work of Edward Snowden and Wikileaks and unknown hackers, who have performed the genuinely patriotic task of revealing secrets of state surveillance and other

nefarious behavior that every citizen has a right to know, is deemed by most of the MSM as treason. But rather than look at the substance of what is exposed, as decent journalists and public-minded citizens did during Watergate and the illegal invasions of Indochina, the MSM chooses to focus on the exposé rather than the exposed – as if investigative journalism has gone the way of the rotary telephone.

Did Hillary's Clinton sidekick, Deborah Wasserman Schultz rig the Democratic campaign primaries? You bet she did, and as punishment, she has been put in charge of the Clinton campaign nationwide. Clinton asked a Senate investigative committee, what difference did it make why Libyans attacked the US embassy in Benghazi? One might ask what difference does it make who exposed the DNC illegalities? It can be assumed by their behavior that the MSM is just a megaphone for establishment (i.e., ruling class) power and legitimacy, and uninterested in questions of justice and legality. It is humorously ironic that the Obama administration and its acolytes in the MSM are absorbed in Russian conspiracies while engaging in the greatest conspiracy of all – hiding the truth from the citizens of the US and the world.