

The New Cold War: “The Russians are Coming ... Again ... and They’re Still Ten Feet Tall”

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So, what do we have here? In Libya, in Syria, and elsewhere the United States has been on the same side as the al-Qaeda types. But not in Ukraine. That’s the good news.

The bad news is that in Ukraine the United States is on the same side as the neo-Nazi types, who – taking time off from parading around with their swastika-like symbols and calling for the death of Jews, Russians and Communists – on May 2 burned down a trade-union building in Odessa, killing scores of people and sending hundreds to hospital; many of the victims were beaten or shot when they tried to flee the flames and smoke; ambulances were blocked from reaching the wounded. Try and find an American mainstream media entity that has made a serious attempt to capture the horror.

And how did this latest example of American foreign-policy exceptionalism come to be? One starting point that can be considered is what former Secretary of Defense and CIA Director Robert Gates says in his recently published memoir:

“When the Soviet Union was collapsing in late 1991, [Defense Secretary Dick Cheney] wanted to see the dismemberment not only of the Soviet Union and the Russian empire but of Russia itself, so it could never again be a threat to the rest of the world.”

That can serve as an early marker for the new cold war while the corpse of the old one was still warm. Soon thereafter, NATO began to surround Russia with military bases, missile sites, and NATO members, while yearning for perhaps the most important part needed to complete the circle – Ukraine.

In February of this year, US State Department officials, undiplomatically, joined anti-government protesters in the capital city of Kiev, handing out encouragement and food, from which emanated the infamous leaked audio tape between the US ambassador to Ukraine, Geoffrey Pyatt, and the State Department’s Victoria Nuland, former US ambassador to NATO and former State Department spokesperson for Hillary Clinton. Their conversation dealt with who should be running the new Ukraine government after the government of Viktor Yanukovich was overthrown; their most favored for this position being one Arseniy Yatsenuk.

My dear, and recently departed, Washington friend, John Judge, liked to say that if you want to call him a “conspiracy theorist” you have to call others “coincidence theorists”. Thus it was by the most remarkable of coincidences that Arseniy Yatsenuk did indeed become the new prime minister. He could very soon be found in private meetings and public press

conferences with the president of the United States and the Secretary-General of NATO, as well as meeting with the soon-to-be new owners of Ukraine, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, preparing to impose their standard financial shock therapy. The current protestors in Ukraine don't need PhDs in economics to know what this portends. They know about the impoverishment of Greece, Spain, et al. They also despise the new regime for its overthrow of their democratically-elected government, whatever its shortcomings. But the American media obscures these motivations by almost always referring to them simply as "pro-Russian".

An exception, albeit rather unemphasized, was the April 17 Washington Post which reported from Donetsk that many of the eastern Ukrainians whom the author interviewed said the unrest in their region was driven by fear of "economic hardship" and the IMF austerity plan that will make their lives even harder:

"At a most dangerous and delicate time, just as it battles Moscow for hearts and minds across the east, the pro-Western government is set to initiate a shock therapy of economic measures to meet the demands of an emergency bailout from the International Monetary Fund."

Arseniy Yatsenuk, it should be noted, has something called the Arseniy Yatsenuk Foundation. If you go to the [foundation's website](#) you will see the logos of the foundation's "partners". Among these partners we find NATO, the National Endowment for Democracy, the US State Department, Chatham House (Royal Institute of International Affairs in the UK), the German Marshall Fund (a think tank founded by the German government in honor of the US Marshall Plan), as well as a couple of international banks. Is any comment needed?

Getting away with supporting al-Qaeda and Nazi types may be giving US officials the idea that they can say or do anything they want in their foreign policy. In a May 2 press conference, President Obama, referring to Ukraine and the NATO Treaty, said:

"We're united in our unwavering Article 5 commitment to the security of our NATO allies". (Article 5 states: "The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them ... shall be considered an attack against them all.")

Did the president forget that Ukraine is not (yet) a member of NATO? And in the same press conference, the president referred to the "duly elected government in Kyiv (Kiev)", when in fact it had come to power via a coup and then proceeded to establish a new regime in which the vice-premier, minister of defense, minister of agriculture, and minister of environment, all belonged to far-right neo-Nazi parties.

The pure awfulness of the Ukrainian right-wingers can scarcely be exaggerated. In early March, the leader of Pravy Sektor (Right Sector) called upon his comrades, the infamous Chechnyan terrorists, to carry out further terrorist actions in Russia.

There may be one important difference between the old Cold War and the new one. The American people, as well as the world, can not be as easily brainwashed as they were during the earlier period.

Over the course of a decade, in doing the research for my first books and articles on US

foreign policy, one of the oddities to me of the Cold War was how often the Soviet Union seemed to know what the United States was really up to, even if the American people didn't. Every once in a while in the 1950s to 70s a careful reader would notice a two- or three-inch story in the New York Times on the bottom of some distant inside page, reporting that Pravda or Izvestia had claimed that a recent coup or political assassination in Africa or Asia or Latin America had been the work of the CIA; the Times might add that a US State Department official had labeled the story as "absurd". And that was that; no further details were provided; and none were needed, for how many American readers gave it a second thought? It was just more commie propaganda. Who did they think they were fooling? This ignorance/complicity on the part of the mainstream media allowed the United States to get away with all manner of international crimes and mischief.

It was only in the 1980s when I began to do the serious research that resulted in my first book, which later became *Killing Hope*, that I was able to fill in the details and realize that the United States had indeed masterminded that particular coup or assassination, and many other coups and assassinations, not to mention countless bombings, chemical and biological warfare, perversion of elections, drug dealings, kidnappings, and much more that had not appeared in the American mainstream media or schoolbooks. (And a significant portion of which was apparently unknown to the Soviets as well.)

But there have been countless revelations about US crimes in the past two decades. Many Americans and much of the rest of the planet have become educated. They're much more skeptical of American proclamations and the fawning media.

President Obama recently declared: "The strong condemnation that it's received from around the world indicates the degree to which Russia is on the wrong side of history on this."Marvelous ... coming from the man who partners with jihadists and Nazis and has waged war against seven nations. In the past half century is there any country whose foreign policy has received more bitter condemnation than the United States? If the United States is not on the wrong side of history, it may be only in the history books published by the United States.

Barack Obama, like virtually all Americans, likely believes that the Soviet Union, with perhaps the sole exception of the Second World War, was consistently on the wrong side of history in its foreign policy as well as at home. Yet, in a survey conducted by an independent Russian polling center this past January, and reported in the Washington Post in April, 86 percent of respondents older than 55 expressed regret for the Soviet Union's collapse; 37 percent of those aged 25 to 39 did so.(Similar poll results have been reported regularly since the demise of the Soviet Union. This is from USA Today in 1999: "When the Berlin Wall crumbled, East Germans imagined a life of freedom where consumer goods were abundant and hardships would fade. Ten years later, a remarkable 51% say they were happier with communism.")

Or as the new Russian proverb put it: "Everything the Communists said about Communism was a lie, but everything they said about capitalism turned out to be the truth."

A week before the above Post report in April the newspaper printed an article about happiness around the world, which contains the following charming lines:

"Worldwide polls show that life seems better to older people - except in Russia." ... "Essentially, life under President Vladimir Putin is one continuous

downward spiral into despair.” ... “What’s going on in Russia is deep unhappiness.” ... “In Russia, the only thing to look forward to is death’s sweet embrace.”

No, I don’t think it was meant to be any kind of satire. It appears to be a scientific study, complete with graphs, but it reads like something straight out of the 1950s.

The views Americans hold of themselves and other societies are not necessarily more distorted than the views found amongst people elsewhere in the world, but the Americans’ distortion can lead to much more harm. Most Americans and members of Congress have convinced themselves that the US/NATO encirclement of Russia is benign – we are, after all, the Good Guys – and they don’t understand why Russia can’t see this.

The first Cold War, from Washington’s point of view, was often designated as one of “containment”, referring to the US policy of preventing the spread of communism around the world, trying to block the very idea of communism or socialism. There’s still some leftover from that – see Venezuela and Cuba, for example – but the new Cold War can be seen more in terms of a military strategy. Washington thinks in terms of who could pose a barrier to the ever-expanding empire adding to its bases and other military necessities.

Whatever the rationale, it’s imperative that the United States suppress any lingering desire to bring Ukraine (and Georgia) into the NATO alliance. Nothing is more likely to bring large numbers of Russian boots onto the Ukrainian ground than the idea that Washington wants to have NATO troops right on the Russian border and in spitting distance of the country’s historic Black Sea naval base in Crimea.

The myth of Soviet expansionism

One still comes across references in the mainstream media to Russian “expansionism” and “the Soviet empire”, in addition to that old favorite “the evil empire”. These terms stem largely from erstwhile Soviet control of Eastern European states. But was the creation of these satellites following World War II an act of imperialism or expansionism? Or did the decisive impetus lie elsewhere?

Within the space of less than 25 years, Western powers had invaded Russia three times – the two world wars and the “Intervention” of 1918-20 – inflicting some 40 million casualties in the two wars alone. To carry out these invasions, the West had used Eastern Europe as a highway. Should it be any cause for wonder that after World War II the Soviets wanted to close this highway down? In almost any other context, Americans would have no problem in seeing this as an act of self defense. But in the context of the Cold War such thinking could not find a home in mainstream discourse.

The Baltic states of the Soviet Union – Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania – were not part of the highway and were frequently in the news because of their demands for more autonomy from Moscow, a story “natural” for the American media. These articles invariably reminded the reader that the “once independent” Baltic states were invaded in 1939 by the Soviet Union, incorporated as republics of the USSR, and had been “occupied” ever since. Another case of brutal Russian imperialism. Period. History etched in stone.

The three countries, it happens, were part of the Russian empire from 1721 up to the Russian Revolution of 1917, in the midst of World War I. When the war ended in November

1918, and the Germans had been defeated, the victorious Allied nations (US, Great Britain, France, et al.) permitted/encouraged the German forces to remain in the Baltics for a full year to crush the spread of Bolshevism there; this, with ample military assistance from the Allied nations. In each of the three republics, the Germans installed collaborators in power who declared their independence from the new Bolshevik state which, by this time, was so devastated by the World War, the revolution, and the civil war prolonged by the Allies' intervention, that it had no choice but to accept the fait accompli. The rest of the fledgling Soviet Union had to be saved.

To at least win some propaganda points from this unfortunate state of affairs, the Soviets announced that they were relinquishing the Baltic republics "voluntarily" in line with their principles of anti-imperialism and self-determination. But it should not be surprising that the Soviets continued to regard the Baltics as a rightful part of their nation or that they waited until they were powerful enough to reclaim the territory.

Then we had Afghanistan. Surely this was an imperialist grab. But the Soviet Union had lived next door to Afghanistan for more than 60 years without gobbling it up. And when the Russians invaded in 1979, the key motivation was the United States involvement in a movement, largely Islamic, to topple the Afghan government, which was friendly to Moscow. The Soviets could not have been expected to tolerate a pro-US, anti-communist government on its border any more than the United States could have been expected to tolerate a pro-Soviet, communist government in Mexico.

Moreover, if the rebel movement took power it likely would have set up a fundamentalist Islamic government, which would have been in a position to proselytize the numerous Muslims in the Soviet border republics.

Notes

1. See [RT.com](#) (formerly Russia Today) for many stories, images and videos
2. Robert Gates, *Duty* (2014), p.97
3. If this site has gone missing again, a [saved version can be found here](#).
4. [Voice of Russia radio station](#), Moscow, April 18, 2014; also see Answer Coalition, "[Who's who in Ukraine's new \[semi-fascist\] government](#)", March 11, 2014
5. RT.com, news report March 5, 2014
6. CBS News, March 3, 2014
7. Washington Post, April 11, 2014
8. USA Today (Virginia), Oct. 11, 1999, page 1
9. Washington Post print edition, April 2, 2014; [online here](#)

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