

A Congressional “Blueprint for US Intentions”: “Legislating the Way” to World War III?

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The US Congress is doing its part to escalate the tensions with Russia over Ukraine and a host of other issues. In so doing, the legislative and executive branches of the US Government work hand in glove to further the US-NATO agenda in Eastern Europe.

The bill, propagandistically titled the [“Russian Aggression Prevention Act of 2014,”](#) (S.2277) was proposed by right wing Republican Senator Bob Corker, and has been cosponsored by a significant number of prominent Republicans in the Senate. While Democrats have yet to cosponsor the bill, they are almost without exception behind President Obama and his aggressive policy towards Russia and Ukraine. Indeed, this bill, though obviously partisan in its political character, represents the consensus within the US political establishment – a consensus that presumes US aggression in Eastern Europe to be defensive in the face of Putin’s “expansionism” and “imperial ambitions.”

It goes without saying that such a distorted world-view is par for the course in Washington, where upside-down logic is the predominant way of thinking about the world. However, the proposed legislation is less a response to perceived aggression from Moscow, and more of an attempt to capitalize on the crisis in Ukraine, using it as a convenient pretext for the expansion of NATO, continued militarization of Eastern Europe, promotion of corporate oil and gas interests, and much more.

Essentially, the bill provides a blueprint for US intentions in Ukraine and Eastern Europe for the coming years. Moreover, it reflects the greatest concern of all for Washington and its NATO allies: the loss of hegemony in the post-Soviet space. Seen in this way, S.2277 is not truly about punitive measures to punish Russia for its “aggression,” but rather is about pre-emptively attacking Russia politically and economically, while building up to a possible military confrontation. Needless to say, such dangerous and destabilizing actions are a reflection of the moral bankruptcy, not to mention utter insanity, of the US political establishment and the ruling class it serves.

A Close Reading of S.2277

In examining the language of the bill, one is immediately struck by the all-encompassing nature of the proposals, that is to say, the way in which the bill goes far beyond merely “punishing Russia,” instead advancing a militaristic agenda for all of Eastern Europe that will fundamentally remake the political and military character of the region. Indeed, far from punitive measures, the bill lays out strategic objectives that are designed to escalate the conflict, exacerbate tensions, and generally lead to some kind of disastrous confrontation. There is no conciliatory language in the bill, no concessions, no recognition of legitimate

Russian interests in Ukraine or anywhere else for that matter, nothing to indicate that US political figures have learned anything at all from the last six months.

S.2277 “Directs the President to: (1) implement a plan for increasing U.S. and NATO support for the armed forces of Poland, Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia, and other NATO member-states; and (2) direct the U.S. Permanent Representative to NATO to seek consideration for permanently basing NATO forces in such countries.”

At the outset, the bill establishes the fact that US policy must be rooted in the strategy of NATO expansion and further militarization. The phrase “increasing U.S. and NATO support” is deliberately ambiguous. Rather than enumerating a clear strategy for NATO members in the Baltic and Poland, the bill rather provides an open-ended “support” which could include anything and everything Washington and NATO might want to provide, from advanced weapons systems and additional funding to “boots on the ground.” It should be noted that even the notion of additional military buildup in the Baltic states is an escalation and a provocation considering Russia’s naval fleet at Kaliningrad which, quite likely, would be seen by the Kremlin as under threat from NATO.

Of course, the greatest provocation comes in the second clause regarding consideration from Poland and the Baltic states for permanent basing rights. Such a development would be far more than an escalation, it would be a provocation of the highest order, an attempt to destroy the tenuous peace that has existed since the height of the Cold War.

Even during the tensest days of the US-Soviet conflict, military and political strategists on both sides of the Cold War understood the importance of maintaining a military and strategic balance, without which the world could easily teeter on the brink of yet another world war. It seems that McCain, Corker, and their right wing Republican colleagues, like their predecessors going back to the Truman administration, have not bothered to read George Kennan or heed his advice regarding “containment” and dialogue with Russia. Rather, they have chosen the path of conflict and saber-rattling, a guarantee that an amenable solution that is both pragmatic and desirable will not be found.

S.2277 “Directs the President to submit a plan to Congress for accelerating NATO and European missile defense efforts.”

As if to underscore the fact that these right wing warmongers seek confrontation, rather than dialogue with Russia, the issue of “missile defense” is placed front and center. Recognized by nearly all honest political observers as a means to intimidate and menace Russia, the so-called “missile defense systems” that Washington has been trying to place in Eastern Europe for nearly a decade are a “red line” for Moscow. Moscow made it clear back in 2007 that the deployment of such missile systems would upset the stability created by the nuclear deterrent, and would require a new arms race in which Russia would be forced to acquire and/or develop new, advanced missile systems that would be able to overcome the US “defenses.”

In other words, Putin made clear to Obama, and Bush before him, that any move to place those missiles in Poland, Czech Republic, or elsewhere in Eastern Europe would be regarded as an aggressive action that Russia would respond to. And so, this clause in the proposed bill should correctly be understood as a provocation for military buildup and, ultimately, war.

S.2277 “Directs the President to impose asset blocking and U.S. exclusion sanctions, if Russian armed forces have not withdrawn from Crimea within seven days after enactment of this Act” and “Directs the President to impose asset blocking and U.S. exclusion sanctions, if Russian armed forces have not withdrawn from the eastern border of Ukraine within seven days after enactment of this Act, or if agents of the Russian Federation do not cease actions to destabilize the control of the government of Ukraine over eastern Ukraine.”

These two clauses are particularly insidious as they are deliberately designed to give Washington carte blanche in terms of its economic sanctions against Russia, specifically the language specifying that “Russian forces must have withdrawn from Crimea within seven days of the enactment of the Act.” Of course, this is impossible for a number of obvious reasons, including the fact that Russian forces have been in Crimea, by internationally recognized treaty, for decades. So to “withdraw from Crimea” would mean that Russia would have to voluntarily give up its Black Sea fleet at Sevastopol; withdrawal is clearly an impossibility for Moscow. Secondly, it should be remembered that Crimea voted to reunify with Russia, which Russia ratified and accepted. So, to “withdraw from Crimea” means to withdraw from Russia, an utter absurdity and an obvious non-starter.

As for the demand that Russia “withdraw from the eastern border of Ukraine,” this is yet another manipulative, and deliberately vague, clause which is impossible for Russia to adhere to, even if it wanted to. It doesn’t take a PhD in geography to understand that the “eastern border of Ukraine” is, by definition, the Russian border. So, to demand that Russia remove its armed forces from its own border with a country raging in civil war is utterly ludicrous. No leader of any nation could be expected to accept such an insane demand.

It should also be noted that the clause presumes certain “facts” for which no evidence has been provided. The assertion of “Russian agents” destabilizing the government of Ukraine is false on a number of counts. Not only is there still no evidence, despite the propaganda drumbeat from Western media, of Russian agents operating in eastern Ukraine, it is still unclear what, if any, assistance Moscow has actually provided. If one were to even glance at Russian media and Russian opinion polls, it is obvious that not even the Russian people believe Moscow is doing enough to help their cousins in Ukraine’s East. So, how does one “cease destabilizing” in a place where they are not active? And, if Washington would like to again assert the claim of Russian agents, let them for once provide some evidence.

One should note too that the phrase “government of Ukraine” is problematic considering the boycott of the election by vast swaths of the population in the East whose preferred candidates and parties were intimidated, beaten, or otherwise prevented from participating in the elections. Therefore, the legitimacy of the Poroshenko government, including the imperial toadies Yatsenyuk and Turchinov, is in doubt. Furthermore, the genocidal campaign waged by Kiev against the people of Donbas has robbed the regime of whatever modicum of legitimacy it may have had. And so, Washington demands that Russia not only cease “aiding the resistance,” but de facto force itself and the people of the eastern Ukraine to accept it. This is obviously difficult to swallow, and Corker & Co. know it.

S. 2277 “Directs DOD to assess the capabilities and needs of the Ukrainian armed forces. Authorizes the President, upon completion of such assessment, to provide specified military assistance to Ukraine” and “Expresses the sense of Congress that the President should: (1) provide Ukraine with information about Russian military and intelligence capabilities on Ukraine’s eastern border

and within Ukraine's territorial borders, including Crimea; and (2) ensure that such intelligence information is protected from further disclosure."

Essentially, the above clauses explicitly state that the US should provide military aid to the regime in Kiev. Considering the fact that Kiev is guilty of a number of war crimes, including the deliberate shelling of civilian targets, kidnappings and forced disappearances, and collective punishment, Washington would be wise to remember that Principle VII of the Nuremburg Principles states clearly that "Complicity in the commission of a crime against peace, a war crime, or a crime against humanity as set forth in Principle VI is a crime under international law." By arming the Kiev regime, Washington would knowingly be engaging in a war crime. Naturally, the US has no compunction about committing war crimes, as the people of Iraq, Libya, El Salvador, Yemen and many other countries could attest to.

But this legislation suggests far more than military aid, as it presumes direct military collusion in intelligence-sharing, materiel support and more. And so, S.2277 would aim to engage the US deeply in the war itself, going far beyond the diplomatic and political row that is already raging; a dangerous development indeed. Furthermore, how would Russia respond if Russian citizens or troops were killed by US weapons supplied by Washington to its puppets in Kiev? Would this not likely be interpreted as an act of war? Or, at the very least, Moscow would hold Washington culpable, thereby complicating the current conflict ever more.

Of course, the military angle doesn't stop there, as S.2277 also:

"Provides major non-NATO ally status for Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova (during the period in which each of such countries meets specified criteria) for purposes of the transfer or possible transfer of defense articles or defense services, ...[and] "Directs the President to increase: (1) U.S. Armed Forces interactions with the armed forces of Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia; and (2) U.S and NATO security assistance to such states."

The above language can be interpreted only as the de facto enlargement of NATO outside even NATO's own procedures for new membership. By providing "defense articles" and "defensive services" to Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova, these countries are essentially made into NATO protectorates in all but name. In doing so, Washington would be sending a dangerous message to Moscow, escalating the conflict in order to provoke the very much expected response from Moscow. This goes far beyond "brinksmanship" and into the realm of the completely unhinged.

And what exactly does "increase interactions" mean in the context of that long list of countries? It is not a stretch to interpret such language as, again, de facto NATO protectorate status for these non-NATO states. Were such a policy carried out, it would mean the absorption of nearly every country in Eastern Europe into the NATO orbit. Undoubtedly, the Kremlin would view this as yet another act of aggression and would be forced to respond in kind.

Toward the end of S.2277 one finds a seemingly innocuous clause that, when read carefully, may just be one of the most important in the whole bill. S.2277 "Amends the Natural Gas Act to apply the expedited application and approval process for natural gas exports to World Trade Organization members," and

“Urges the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Trade and Development Agency, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), the World Bank Group, and the European Bank for Reconstruction to promote assistance to Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova in order to exploit natural gas and oil reserves and to develop alternative energy sources.”

It would seem then that the bill is not solely about Ukraine’s security, but also that of the major energy corporations who seek to make massive profits from the unrest in Ukraine. The clause provides that energy exports could be expedited, ostensibly as a means to undermine Russia’s energy dominance in Europe. As has been reported, major US officials and executives have been chomping at the bit to get their hands on the lucrative Ukrainian gas reserves, as well as its pipeline infrastructure. In this provision, the US congress would essentially provide the political cover for the major energy companies to do this. [Hunter Biden](#), US Vice President Joe Biden’s son who sits on the board of Burisma Holdings Ltd., a major Ukrainian oil and gas company, as well as his high-powered colleagues from the energy sector, likely made sure that the legislation provided provisions for the exploitation of the energy sector. Now, with the international trade obstacles out of the way, it should be an easy, relaxing ride straight to the bank.

S.2277 “Directs the Secretary of State to: (1) strengthen democratic institutions, the independent media, and political and civil society organizations in countries of the former Soviet Union; and (2) increase educational and cultural exchanges with countries of the former Soviet Union” and “Directs the Broadcasting Board of Governors and the Voice of America (VOA) to provide Congress with a plan for increasing and maintaining through FY2017 the quantity of U.S.-funded Russian-language broadcasting into countries of the former Soviet Union, with priority for broadcasting into Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova.”

Last but not least are the provisions for the expansion of US soft power into Russia and the former Soviet space. Anyone who has studied how soft power functions, and specifically the role of “democratic institutions” and “civil society” then understands that these are code words for US-funded subversion. As has been seen in Russia, Venezuela, Ukraine, and a number of other countries, so-called “civil society” organizations such as NGOs represent a tool of US foreign policy, a means with which to foment unrest, stage political protests regardless of their lack of broad-based support, and generally control discourse to the liking of US foreign policy.

Voice of America has long been understood as the propaganda organ of the US State Department. To “increase the quantity of Russian language broadcasting” is merely a means of proliferating the US narrative into targeted countries. This is a direct result of the recognition that the West no longer maintains a monopoly on news, information, and media penetration. VoA has long since been regarded as a means of destabilization, and should continue to be regarded as such.

S.2277 should come as no surprise to anyone who has been following US conduct in Ukraine since the outbreak of the conflict. It is an attempt to legislate a confrontation with Russia in order to further the imperial agenda of the US and NATO. It is not the first, and certainly not the last, attempt by the political establishment in the US of escalating the conflict. Those of us interested in peace, stability, and opposition to US imperialism are certainly not shocked. That being said, S.2277 should remind us all that Ukraine is not the whole conflict, it is

merely a theater in the larger war being waged by Washington – a war for power, hegemony, and another century of control. However, resistance to these forces continues. Exposing dangerous legislation such as S.2277 is merely a start.

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