

A World War in the Offing: Why US-NATO Geopolitics Could Lead to a Third World War

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This essay makes the case that the ongoing political crisis in the Ukraine is one which has the potential to explode into a confrontation between the United States-led alliance of NATO states and the Russian Federation.

The implications of this are grave in the extreme as this could evolve towards the use of nuclear weapons.

It makes clear that far from the Western mainstream press's narrative of Russian President Vladimir Putin being the belligerent party who is seeking to create a new Russian imperium, the crisis is actually the result of the application of two canons presently influencing the conduct of American foreign policy namely, that of the 'Wolfowitz Doctrine' and the 'Brzezinski Doctrine'. The former is an amoral philosophy permitting the pursuance of American hegemony at almost any cost and the latter, is an aggressive policy resolved to prevent the rise of any other nation as a competitor to American global domination.

It strives to place the crisis in the historical context of America's longstanding financial and military domination through the post-World War Two institutions created in the wake of the Bretton Woods agreement and the North Atlantic military alliance, in the process making the case that an expanded North Atlantic Treaty Organisation essentially functions as the enforcer of America's financial and corporate dominance.

It argues that NATO's expansion into eastern Europe is in breach of the agreement reached by American and Soviet leaders at the end of the Cold War and that although largely identified with the previous Republican administration of George W. Bush, neo-conservative influence on the policies of the United States are still strong and have not only led to destructive interventions during the Obama administration in both Libya and Syria, but threaten through American policy in Ukraine to push Europe and the world into an abyss.

There is a tendency, particularly on the part of his detractors, to perceive President Barack Obama as being a temperamentally 'detached' individual; this a supposedly perceptible character trait that feeds into the notion of his being broadly 'isolationist' in his foreign policy stance so far as the projection of American power and authority is concerned, and, ultimately leads to the judgement that he is a weak leader.

Those wholeheartedly subscribing to such a view may point to his disengagements respectively from the United States-invaded nations of Iraq and Afghanistan; this, notwithstanding the fraudulent basis on which the invasion of the former was based, and in

regard to both, the inordinate lengths of the respective combat engagements as well as the colossal waste of human lives and the financial cost to the treasury and the national debt of the country.

They may also fault Obama for 'weakness' by his refusal to cross the self-designated 'red-line' in regard to the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian conflict.

His 'backtrack' in not bombing the military command structure of the Assad government in the wake of the August 2013 chemical attack at Ghouta remains, to his critics, an example of the president's lack of resolve and courage, notwithstanding the analysis of the dubiousness of the evidence attributing the attack to Assad's government which significant actors within the US Intelligence Community were relaying to the president.

This, also notwithstanding the visible feedback relayed to members of the United States Congress by constituents fatigued by the human and material resources of their nation being expended on a seemingly unending series of conflicts.

Obama of course is the president who tenaciously stuck to his guns over his controversial healthcare reform. The man who ordered the risky operation that led to the assassination of Osama Bin Laden. He also went back on an election promise to close down Camp Guantanamo in the full knowledge of the level of opprobrium that would be directed his way.

He has, if anything strengthened the civil rights-curtailing Homeland Security regime which was constructed in the wake of the September 11th attacks by enacting and renewing the National Defence Authorization Act and has cheerfully sanctioned the extra-judicial assassinations of numerous persons designated as terrorists including some who possessed United States citizenship.

Yet, for all his supposed prevarications and what his adversaries aver to as his 'timidity', the reality is that the forty-fourth president of the United States sits at the helm of a nation which is as far from 'isolationism' as it ever could be.

He presides over a foreign policy that is as firm and as uncompromising as is befitting of a country which by its actions remains resolved in a solemn quest to both protect and extend its global hegemony.

The key to understanding this is to be first reminded about the existing international financial structures and agreements which undergird America's global power and authority, as well as the expansion of the military alliance which it commands and uses as the instrument of enforcing this domination.

It is further necessary to examine the guiding principles underlying the contemporary course of American foreign policy.

Such an examination also serves to inform us of the rationales behind the decisions to remove the leaders of certain countries and, given the severity of their present situations, about why the fortunes of the nations of Iraq, Syria and Ukraine are intertwined

The institutions which emanated from the Bretton Woods agreement in the aftermath of the Second World War such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank

(formerly the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development), are widely considered as key levers through which the United States maintains control over a large swathe of the world community of nations.

Imperial in their construct and predatory in their tasks, these bodies have been seen as the tools through which American and Western banking concerns have effectively looted the resources of other nations under the pretence of designing strategies which will promote lasting and efficient internal economic practices; the benefits of which for many only seem to be the systemisation of a neo-colonial order of perpetual servitude through a usurious cycle of indebtedness.

Such servitude it is argued has been buttressed by the formation of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) which is seen by some as a mechanism geared to pave the way for the unhindered access of American-led corporations to global markets.

The other component of American hegemony is the military organisation known as the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). Formed in 1949 as an alliance of Western European nations to counter the post-World War threat posed by the Soviet Union, the alliance has in the post-Soviet era grown even larger to cover an area farther in extent than the north Atlantic and has absorbed more countries into its command structure.

With 28 member nations and a host of so-called 'partnership programs', it is the largest military alliance in history with the combined members expenditure amounting to a trillion dollars per annum.

The member states it is important to remind, including the former colonial powers of Britain and France as well as the unified German nation, remain the junior partners of the United States in this enterprise.

While the United States may have started out dedicated to the ideals of a renewed civilization cherishing the rights and freedoms of man and disavowing a policy which condoned engaging in "foreign entanglements", its political culture would over a period of time evolve to encompass foreign policy dictums which espoused the idea of regional supremacy. This was the idea behind the Monroe Doctrine which was formulated in the early part of the nineteenth century.

This would be followed by the Roosevelt Corollary enunciated at the beginning of the twentieth century and the Good Neighbour Policy which succeeded it.

These policies it should be reminded involved the use of aggressive forms of diplomacy as well as the implementation of military force to protect American commercial interests in Latin America which came to be referred to as America's 'backyard'.

And when it assumed the mantle as a world superpower after the Second World War, as it vied with the Soviet Union for global power and influence, the United States formulated the Truman Doctrine by which it resolved itself to 'contain' the spread of communism; a fear which was predicated on the so-called 'Domino Theory' which served as the guiding principle for American foreign policy from the 1950s to the 1980s.

The features of 'containment' as has been well-documented involved a potent brew of fighting proxy wars, overseeing the operation of death squads and instigating military coups.

The war in Vietnam, the murder squads of Central America, and the violent overthrow of Salvador Allende's government in Chile were emblematic of the times.

These events were inevitably facilitated by covert actions and such means found their most diabolical expression through the use of secret armies and alliances with fascist groups in the urban guerrilla warfare that was waged on the streets of Western Europe during what the Italians refer to as the *anni di piombo* or 'Years of Lead'.

There is evidence implicating NATO and the United States intelligence services in the atrocities which had the aim of creating a 'Strategy of Tension' through 'False Flag' methods.

The Cold War of course ended, but the dismantling of the communist system of government in the Soviet Union and its eastern European satellites did not create the inexorable surge toward the reformation of the world global community into what some postulated as the end point of mankind's socio-cultural evolution.

And any pretensions that the United States could benevolently bring about such a condition; namely that of an aggregate of nations operating under liberal democratic and free market-orientated systems has long been put to rest.

The neo-conservative agenda which involved the promotion of these goals is explicitly predicated on the notion of asserting America's national interests at the point of a gun.

This programme still persists despite the removal of identified neo-conservative actors from political office with the replacement of the administration of George W. Bush with that of Obama.

It is complemented by an equally uncompromising doctrine which continues to form the basis of aggressively directing challenges at the Russian Federation.

The two canons presently guiding American foreign policy in the post-Cold War world may thus be identified respectively as the Wolfowitz Doctrine and the Brzezinski Doctrine; each the creature of the belief that American political and economic hegemony must remain unassailable.

Both geo-political strategies were formulated in the circumstances of the United States emerging as the sole superpower after the Cold War and both embraced the idea of a resurrected American militarism as the means of securing its access to key natural resources.

The key tenet of the Wolfowitz Doctrine was that the United States needed to take advantage of the vacuum created by the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the circumstance of being the sole global power by increasing the amount it apportions to its military budget and applying its vast military capability to enforce its interests even if the result is a failure to adhere to its international treaty obligations.

While this doctrine was centred on American policy in the Middle East, the Brzezinski Doctrine is fixated on Eurasia. Its general premise is based on the idea that the United States must do all that it can to prevent the rise of another world power which can compete with it in terms of economic and military clout.

More specifically is its fear that a resurgent Russia in combination with China would form the basis by which the power wielded by the Anglo-American world will be finally broken.

The application of the Wolfowitz Doctrine found expression via in the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq; both of which followed the attacks of September 11th 2001.

These acts of mass murder which were blamed on al-Qaeda, the Sunni Islamist movement led by Osama Bin Laden, propitiously provided the “catalyzing event” which neo-conservatives clearly outlined in their paper *Rebuilding America’s Defenses* (2000) would be required in order to win over American public opinion to support a grand scheme of taking out a series of Middle Eastern and North African governments whose stances challenged the “interest and values” of the United States.

The list began with Saddam Hussein’s Iraq and ended with Iran. In between were the governments of Libya and Syria. The justification for the removal of the leaders of regimes representing the remnants of an Arab nationalist spirit as well as the sort of secularism espoused by Gamal Nasser was much sounder in regard to the rationale based on shared “interests” rather than that of “values” since there is little shared in terms of the practised political and civic values of the Arab kingdoms and emirates which the United States continues to prop up.

But they made sense so far as the matter of “interests” is concerned. The United States is apt at pressurizing and even taking down those governments that do not follow its dictates or which threaten its power.

Saddam Hussein for instance made the decision in 2000 to shift the method of payment for Iraq’s oil from dollars to euros on the grounds that it did not want to deal “in the currency of the (American) enemy”.

Muamar Gaddafi’s Libya, which had more control over its oil industry than other oil-producing states and which was not beholden to the international banking system, had begun making serious plans to stop selling Libyan oil in dollars and instead to demand payment in a gold-backed African currency to be named the ‘dinar’.

As was the case with Saddam’s edict, this constituted a threat to the global dominance of the US dollar. Neither Iraq nor Libya or the other five states on the ‘hit list’ of countries revealed by former US General Wesley Clark to be “taken out” in five years happened to be listed among the member banks of the Bank for International Settlements (BIS).

By contrast, American interests are served by those who operate in a manner which preserves its economic hegemony; such as is the case with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The relations between these nations, the one self-avowedly democratic and republican and the other unabashedly autocratic and steeped in medieval-era feudalism, is one that is riddled with contradiction and hypocrisy. Yet it is a mutually beneficial one.

In 1971, with the aim of propping up the faltering dollar after taking the US off the gold standard, President Nixon negotiated a deal whereby the United States would guarantee to militarily protect the Saudis in return for the Saudis guaranteeing the sale of their oil in dollars.

The aim and the effect of this pact was to assure the survivability of the US dollar as the

world's most dominant reserve currency.

In its quest to ensure its unimpeded access to the natural resources of the Gulf and the Middle East upon which it will remain dependent for the foreseeable future, the United States has overseen and alternately acquiesced to the Saudis stirring the pot of a highly volatile region. It is a strategy which over the course of time may lead to an all-out regional war based on sectarian affiliations. Exploiting the Sunni-Shia divide by fomenting conflict between both groups is a strategy explicitly outlined in a report produced in 2008 by the Right-wing RAND Corporation titled *Unfolding the Future of the Long War: Motivations, Prospects and Implications for the U.S. Army*. This 'divide and rule' plan, which would take place along an oil resource rich geographical route coincident with what it termed the "powerbase of the Salafi-Jihadist network", would involve a "long war" facilitated by means including covert action and the prosecution of unconventional warfare.

A few years earlier, the Pulitzer Prize-winning writer Seymour Hersh had identified what he termed a "re-direction" of US policy in so far as its waging a 'war on terror' was concerned. This meant backing Sunni Islamists, effectively al-Qaeda-linked groups, in operations in Lebanon against the Iranian-backed Shia Hezbollah militia. There the Saudis were the conduit through which these operations were conducted and it is the method which has been followed in the attempt to unseat the Assad government in Syria.

The Saudis for instance were recorded by the *New York Times* and the *Daily Telegraph* as having paid for a "major lift of arms" from Zagreb to Syrian rebels, who are comprised of a large contingent of foreign Islamist jihadists, in a transaction undertaken at the behest of the United States.

The fate of Syria, which for the past three years has suffered from an insurrection that was in the words of Roland Dumas, "prepared, pre-conceived and planned" by the United States and other Western governments, was not helped by the Assad government's refusal of the plan by America's allies Saudi Arabia and Qatar, to build a pipeline from the Gulf through Syria and Turkey which would supply natural gas to the European continent. Such a pipeline, Assad reasoned, would harm the market position of Russia which is the dominant supplier of natural gas to European markets and Assad did not want to undercut an ally which has played a significant part in aiding the survival of his government.

Russian aid and support for Syria, where it maintains a base at the port city of Tartus, has been a stumbling block to the consolidation of United States hegemony in the Mediterranean.

The destruction of the Assad government would serve as a means of undermining and eventually neutralising Russian power and influence; the decisive factor which enabled Putin to prevent the United States from bombing Syria after the incident in Ghouta. That act of Putin doubtlessly irritated the still influential neo-conservative elements in Washington who re-set their cross hairs on the Russian leader. The Brzezinski Doctrine ultimately seeks to break up the Russian Federation into smaller, militarily marginal states which would service the energy requirements of the West. The desire to effect change in Russia for the purpose of exploiting it for the purpose of attaining American economic goals is a course of action which has already been attempted before the rise of Vladimir Putin.

But evidence of the active pursuit of such a goal need not be delimited to the period of the immediate aftermath of the post-Soviet era when Boris Yeltsin was president. It arguably

goes back to the early part of the 20th Century when the Russian empire was in tumult and on the threshold of revolution.

According to the late Antony Sutton, an economist and historian, Wall Street was involved in the financing of the coming to power of the Bolsheviks. This involvement, he argued, was based on the premise that the installation of a socialist mode of government would remove Russia's ability to compete economically and, as he put it, make it into "a captive market and a technical colony to be exploited by a few high-powered American financiers and the corporations under their control".

The breakup of the Soviet Union at the end of the century provided opportunities for the international apparatus of American dominance to apply its neo-liberal economic theories to the benefit of American banks and corporations to the detriment of the country subjected to the therapeutic regime. This so-called 'shock therapy' of austerity as applied in the 1990s by Yeltsin's government under advice from a coterie of American economists involved the large scale selling off of national assets under a programme of privatisation from which only a few Russians profited -leading to the rise of the oligarchs- while the majority suffered from the drastic decline in living standards. Along with hyper-inflation came a host of social ills such as declining birth rates, shorter life expectancy and higher rates of suicide and alcoholism. This traumatic episode was arrested by the emergence of Vladimir Putin whose policies arrested the degeneration of the Yeltsin years. After pledging in his inaugural address to impose "basic order and discipline", the economy was stabilised and standards of living, aided by the implementation of state subsidies, improved.

Putin was also concerned with the restoration of Russian prestige. His speech impliedly referred to the aspiration of regaining its status as a military power to be reckoned with soon after NATO had bombed its ally Serbia into submission. Russia has been a great power for centuries and remains so. It has always had and still has legitimate zones of interest ... We should not drop our guard in this respect; neither should we allow our opinion to be ignored. By the time Putin had ascended the presidency three former members of the Warsaw Pact had joined NATO.

NATO expansion towards the borders of Russia is a key factor in understanding of the current crisis in Ukraine. The Russian position is that the United States and the West are reneging on an agreement reached during the negotiations which led to the reunification of Germany. This is that there was an undertaking on the part of the West to former Soviet chiefs of state not to expand NATO into Eastern Europe and that the American-led Western alliance have consistently violated this promise. Key players on the Western side, most notably James Baker who was the US secretary of state at the time of the negotiations, have denied such undertakings, however, a detailed examination conducted by *Der Spiegel* magazine in 2009 of previously classified British and German documents vindicate the Russian stance. The West appeared to be at pains to convey the impression that NATO membership was out of the question for countries such as Poland, Hungary and the former Czechoslovakia.

The following record of a conversation involving the West German foreign minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher sheds some light:

"We are aware that NATO membership for a unified Germany raises complicated questions. For us, however, one thing is certain: NATO will not expand to the east. Given that negotiations were centred on East Germany, Genscher added that "as far as the non-

expansion of NATO is concerned, this also applies in general.”

The understanding appears to have been that in return for allowing a reunited Germany to join NATO, the West would not extend membership to former members of the Warsaw Pact. The overwhelming majority view of Russian political thought which is consistent through the whole political spectrum is that the West broke its word and cheated Russia when it was weak.

Another wave of Central and East European nations joined NATO in 2004; namely Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania and Bulgaria. Five years later, Albania and Croatia followed suit. More wait in the wings: Macedonia and Cyprus, as well as Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Georgia, which has a stated desire to join, has been at the centre of the prodding and jousting between NATO and Russia. The decision in 2008 by the then Georgian president Mikhail Saakashvili to attack South Ossetia was viewed in certain quarters as a provocation calculated to test the Russian resolve to maintain its designated sphere of influence. The Russians responded vigorously in what turned out to be a bloody five-day war.

The Russo-Georgian War was just one of several episodes to result from American efforts to destabilise Russia's border regions. After bombing Serbia, the American intelligence services have mounted so-called 'Color Revolutions' in an attempt to portray peaceful popular uprisings against pro-Russian governments. These included Georgia's 'Rose' in 2003, Ukraine's 'Orange' in 2004 and Kyrgyzstan's 'Tulip' in 2005. All of which have led up to the current crisis in Ukraine.

The cultural and economic ties of the Ukraine to Russia, together with its historically geo-strategic importance -invaders, including those from Germany, France and Britain have often favoured it as their point of entry- make this the most serious confrontation to date. The goal of prising Ukraine from Russia is a central plank of the Brzezinski Doctrine, and the United States has worked ceaselessly in seeking to accomplish this. In fact, in February of 2014, the Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, Victoria Nuland spelled it out starkly when admitting that the United States had spent approximately five billion dollars over the past two decades in this endeavour.

This has involved the use of front organisation such as the Albert Einstein Foundation, Freedom House and others who operate under the direction of the National Endowment for Democracy; a hybrid organisation whose role can be briefly articulated as the facilitating the political subversion of foreign governments not in step with the dictates of the United States. The present crisis was begun by the European Union's outright rejection of a Russian economic proposal for Ukraine which would have involved a Russia-EU-US package.

The sustained campaign conducted by the EU in seeking to get the government of Viktor Yanukovich to sign an agreement tying Ukraine to the EU was doubtlessly instigated by the United States. The agreement included a provision allowing for 'closer associations' with NATO. While open to closer economic ties with the EU, he balked at a number of conditions which were set, notably those relating to the extreme austerity package that would have to be implemented and that which was accommodating to future cooperation with NATO.

Yanukovich's insistence that a balance in trade should include Russia and his insistence that Ukraine would never join NATO resulted in pressure being applied via the United States covert manipulation of the increasingly violent street protests. At the heart of the protests

was a core of unemployed young people who were bussed in from parts of Western Ukraine and whose presence was actually paid for. Protecting them and leading the charges against the Ukrainian police at key government establishments in the capital city Kiev where members of the neo-Nazi group, Pravy Sektor (Right Sector).

It culminated in the coup of 22nd February 2014 which overthrew the democratically elected government of Victor Yanukovych and installed a coalition of Ukrainian nationalists and neo-Nazis with an explicitly anti-Russian agenda. Prior to the coup, evidence of the involvement of the United States in this overthrow was provided by the release of tapes of a recorded conversation between Victoria Nuland and Geoffrey Pyatt, the United States ambassador to Ukraine during which Nuland appeared to be determining who would and who would not be in the government to be formed after the putsch.

Unsurprisingly, the Russians were immediately alerted by the threat such a government would pose to its Black Sea fleet in Crimea –its only outlet to the Mediterranean sea- if it subsequently announced that it was going to join NATO. The result was the prompt action of the Russian military to secure its naval base at Sevastopol and other military establishments in the Crimea before arranging the plebiscite which consented to the proposition that the region be merged with the rest of Russia. The propaganda emanating from Western governments and largely trumpeted by the mainstream Western media is to describe the actions of Vladimir Putin as an act of aggression on par with Hitler's annexation of the Sudetenland instead of the measured, defensive response that it was. The imposition of American sanctions, meagre at first but growing as the months pass appear designed to isolate Russia and turn it into a pariah state.

It may be interpreted as a strategy aiming for a new format Cold War which America's leaders perceive over the course of time would disadvantage Russia and achieve the Brzezinski goal of marginalising Russia to a point at which it is weakened and would have to submit to the economic and political suzerainty of the United States. But there is another dimension to what some analysts perceive to be the end point of America's aggression, and this is war. Certainly, a number of actions of the government in Kiev who are effectively under orders from Washington appear designed to provoke Russia into a response which American officials have lately been saying would merit a response from NATO.

It would seem inconceivable that the United States, through NATO action, would wish to engage in a conflict with Russia which would inevitably lead to an exchange of thermonuclear weapons. The accepted view during the Cold War was that any such encounter would lead to the mutually assured destruction of both sides. However, there are clues that the course of American policy, again fitting into the aggressive pattern of the Brzezinski Doctrine, in which the pre-conceived 'encirclement' of Russia through the United States' deployment of nuclear defensive shields in countries such as Poland, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria and Turkey, is indicative of a belief that a nuclear war can be engaged in and can be won. That these deployments are considered as a threat to Russian security was clearly spelled out by Putin in a February 2007 speech to the German International Conference on Security held in Munich.

NATO has put its frontline forces on our borders. It is obvious that NATO expansion does not bear any relation to the modernisation of the Alliance itself or with ensuring security in Europe. On the contrary, it represents a serious provocation that reduces the level of mutual trust. And we have the right to ask: against whom is this expansion intended? And what

happened to the assurances our Western partners made after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact?

The protestations by America that these anti-ballistic launchers were designed to counter the threat from the overly hyped but non-existent threat of a nuclear attack on Europe from Iran did not read as plausible to Putin:

As we say in Russia, it would be like using the right hand to reach the left ear.

Putting American sincerity to the test, the Russians offered to share the security burden of such a presumed threat by co-managing radar technology that would be located in Azerbaijan on the border with Iran. To the surprise of none, this offer was not taken up. The deployment of such missile shields may be an important element in an attempt to ratchet up the cost of arms spending which, as was the case with the fallen Soviet Union, American policymakers may believe the Russian economy would, in the long run, find to be unsustainable.

On the other hand, the idea of embarking on a nuclear war which is winnable is not new. Back in the 1960s Herman Kahn, a director of the Right-wing RAND Corporation, postulated the thesis that the United States could win a war with the Soviet Union by destroying it in a pre-emptive nuclear strike. And while major American cities such as New York and Los Angeles would be expected to be incinerated by a Soviet response, life would go on as it had after the Black Death had decimated Europe in the Fourteenth Century.

It was a viewpoint which appears to have been fully embraced by a large number of senior officers in the United States military including General Lyman Lemnitzer, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Curtis LeMay, the air force chief; the latter of whom according to Robert McNamara was a proponent of “pre-emptive nuclear war to rid the world of the Soviet threat”.

The Cuban Missile Crisis presented a means by which the likes of LeMay felt that this could be achieved. But they would ultimately be frustrated by President John F. Kennedy who engineered an agreement with Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev.

An analogy with the situation in Ukraine may not be totally amiss given what is at stake. The co-opting of Ukraine into the Western camp and the possibility of NATO expanding its military resources right up to its border offends the Russians in the manner that the plan by the Soviets to place nuclear warheads on Cuba soil offended the United States.

While some analysts have even intimated at a revival or even a continuum of the ‘first strike’ doctrine held by influential US policymakers, the drift of US policy means that a situation may arise where in order to avoid been ‘locked in’ by the ever expanding anti-Ballistic Defence Shield (ABM) programme, the Russians may feel drawn at some critical point in the future to exercise the first strike option.

Indeed in 2012, the Russian Chief of General Staff Nikolay Marakov publically stated that Russia would consider a pre-emptive strike under certain circumstances:

Considering the destabilising nature of the (American) ABM system, namely the creation of an illusion of inflicting a disarming (Nuclear) strike with impunity, a decision on pre-emptive deployment of assault weapons could be taken when the situation gets harder.

For the moment Putin's responses have been measured. He made the decision to retake the Crimea –a territory which has for long been part of the Russian empire until 'gifted' to the Ukraine by decree in 1954- as an understandable matter of national self-protection. And whatever the misgivings voiced in the West about this action, it was consented to by an overwhelming majority of the people of Crimea. Although there was a build up of Russian forces at the border with Ukraine, no invasion followed, even though a sizeable number of Russian speakers in Eastern Ukraine; fearful of the edicts of issued by the illegally installed regime in Kiev would have welcomed such a move. If any were in doubt about this, then the war presently being waged in the eastern Donbas Region, where in May referendums in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts were held to legitimise the establishment of independent republics, has convinced the majority.

The loss of civilian life is increasing as intense exchanges of firepower occur within densely populated urban areas. A report produced at the end of August 2014 by the United Nations' Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) estimates that an average of 36 people were being killed every day.

The report covers the period from July 16th to August 17th.

The growing level of casualties, including a massacre in Odessa in May when thugs of the Pravy Sektor group threw incendiaries into a public building, has put Putin under great pressure at home.

The breach of a ceasefire on the part of the Kiev government and the ensuing battles have created a humanitarian crisis complete with internally displaced persons and those who have sought refuge in Russian territory which amount to the hundreds of thousands.

This state of affairs would have been avoided, his critics argue, if referendums along the lines of that held in Crimea had been arranged and a Russian incursion had followed cutting across the 'natural' border of the Dnieper River.

Yet, Putin has refrained from taking the drastic action of invasion. In fact, in order to allay fears that he would opt to pursue a belligerent course, Putin in June requested that the Upper House of the Russian Federation revoke the right that it had granted him to order a military intervention in the Ukraine in defence of the Russian-speaking population. Putin's strategy against the United States is to play a longer game; one in which Russia is seeking to strengthen its economic and military ties with other nations in the Eurasian sphere as well as on the global level.

The goal appears to be one predicated not on the illusion of a modern form of Tsarist expansionism but on the idea of multi-polarity. This concept of a post-Cold War era world order was one to which he explicitly alluded at the aforementioned conference in Munich.

I consider that the unipolar model is not only unacceptable but also impossible in today's world. And this is not only because if there was individual leadership in today's –and precisely in today's- world, then the military, political and economic resources would not suffice. What is even more important is that the model itself is flawed because at its basis there is and can be no moral foundations for modern civilisation.

Putin criticised the United States' "monopolistic dominance in global relations" and "almost uncontained hyper use of force in international relations."

Russia is a signatory state to the Organisation for Collective Security Treaty (CSTO) a military alliance of former Soviet states and the Shanghai Co-operation Organization (SCO), a political, economic and military organisation founded in 2001. Furthermore, it is a member of the BRICS nations which consist of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. And it is in with regard to BRICS that it has made a recent contribution toward diminishing the hold over the American global economic infrastructure. The Fortaleza summit held in Brazil in July announced the creation of a monetary reserve fund with an initial capital outlay of 100 Billion dollars. This Reserve Fund could in the long run serve as an alternative to the IMF and the World Bank, and in the process eradicate the position of the United States dollar as the *de facto* world reserve currency.

It is not particularly difficult to determine that the basis of a global conflict is a real one given the presence of certain essential prerequisites.

First, is the existence of two distinctive 'camps' that are based on divergent economic and political objectives. Second, is the motivation of either of these camps to remodel the global economic order or entrench the existing order. And thirdly, the existence of potential trouble spots of which an incident whether deliberately provoked or spontaneously evolved would light the fuse to the powder keg.

The Great War was a contest between the Triple Entente and the Triple Alliance. And although much of the historical narrative posits the blame on the latter; Germany and its allies, the background of an alliance system and a rationale for why a coordinated war should be fought on this basis can be found in the context of the British foreign policy of the day.

This policy, although one predicated on the ostensibly defensive sounding preservation of the balance of European continental power was actually informed by an aggressive motive of encircling those who posed a threat to British global hegemony.

These were the 'Central Powers' of Germany and Austria-Hungary which the British sought to eventually break by constructing an alliance of nations which would surround them.

The chief architect of this was none other than King Edward VII whose initiatives such as the Entente Cordiale and the Anglo-Russian Naval Convention were explicitly anti-German; so much so that he became known as 'Eduard der Einkreiser': Edward the Encircler.

As the early part of the 20th century developed, Edward and his apostles, among them prominent politicians such as Sir Edward Grey and top military officials like Admiral Jackie Fisher, realised that German military and economic power would continue to grow and to threaten British power.

The idea was to fight a preventative war against Germany and to subdue it when a crisis suitably materialised at some point. That point, of course, came with the events which spiralled out of the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo in 1914.

A century later, the alliance system of the United States, composed on the one hand in the economic sphere with the nations of the European Union, and militarily with those nations belonging to NATO, have set the wheels in motion against their Russian target. A target which, as mentioned earlier in regard to the objectives of the Brzezinski Doctrine, has been subjected to a policy of encirclement.

The United States, needless to remind, is the superior partner in both trans-Atlantic relationships. And what has become glaringly obvious is the manner in which it brings pressure to bear on its European partners to pursue actions which militate against their own national interests.

The sanctions being applied by the EU run counter to the economic interests of the major nations of the EU with the Germans dependent on Russian natural gas, the British economy's enjoyment of the financial boost provided by Russian oligarch interests and the French who supply the Russians with weaponry.

Further, Germany has for years pointedly stood in opposition to continued NATO expansion to Ukraine and Georgia.

The whiff of behind-the-scenes handwringing by the United States on a set of reluctant allies is indicated, for instance, by the recent protests by French President Francois Hollande over criticism levelled at that nation's plans to sell warships to the Russians.

Victoria Nuland's wiretapped conversations which formed the prelude portrayed a more aggressive stance on the part of the Americans as compared to the EU; her now infamous "Fuck the EU" aside being indicative of this. Nuland is the wife of Robert Kagan, a co-founder of the aforementioned Project for the New American Century. In 2006, he identified Russia and China as the greatest "challenge liberalism faces today". And his wife's disdainful view of the EU's 'softer' approach is probably reflective of his "Americans are from Mars and Europe is from Venus" thesis postulated in his 2003 book, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order*. There Kagan controversially viewed Europeans as favouring peaceful resolutions in contrast to the American penchant for resorting to violence.

NATO has also been activated, first covertly, as in the case in April of a number of Western military officials posing as observers for the Organization for Security and Co-operation (OSCE) who were captured and detained by Russian-speaking separatists, and more lately the plan to send what is termed an "expeditionary force" of 10,000 troops composed of seven nations to be led by Britain.

In response, the Russians have not only co-created the aforementioned monetary reserve fund under the auspices of the BRICS nations, the collapsing relations with the EU and the United States has led to a reinvigoration of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization which in August held its largest ever joint military exercise in China's Inner Mongolia Province. With a set of broadly opposing alliance groups in place all that is needed is the detonator. But if a shooting war, and not merely a Cold War of economic attrition via sanctions and of proxy wars is what is desired by the United States, the question which needs posing is what the nature of the 'New World Order' which would succeed the present one is expected to be?

This is naturally difficult to ascertain given the prospect of the mutual annihilation that would be expected to result. The calculation is that the aftermath of war would expect a realignment of the global power structure, or from the American perspective, a reaffirmation of its hegemony at the expense of both Russia and China.

It is clearly the case that the United States' covert support of the anti-Russian government in Kiev as well as of the efforts of by Islamist forces to overthrow the government of Bashar al Assad are keyed into the notion of weakening Russian power and influence and securing

economic advantage. Both nations host key gas pipeline corridors which are coveted by the United States and its Western allies.

The resources of both western and eastern Ukraine are highly desirable assets which Western corporate interests are keen on securing. The western part of the country is rich in forest land and also has the capacity for the mass production of crops. The east, on the other hand, is heavily industrialised, a legacy of its Soviet past, and is rich in coal, iron ore and other natural resources.

The EU Association agreement signed in March was announced as being intended to upgrade the Ukrainian economy, but far from exporting good governance and efficient economic practice, it would as Russia experienced in the Yeltsin years amount to a recipe for looting and plundering of the country's resources.

The scenario is an often replayed one that involves the imposition of stringent austerity measures with attendant social spending cut-backs, higher taxes, removal of subsidies and so on. The pressures of maintaining a surplus budget then produces an obligation to sell off public infrastructure at knock down bargain prices to Western concerns.

It is in order to extend the global reach of American and Western commercial interests that war is being risked.

There is another thesis to contend with, and it is that the United States' is coming to the end of its cycle of global pre-eminence. That it is in decline. One symptom of the decline of empires and great powers is, it is argued, a tendency to resort to violent means in order to manage the faltering foundations on which its power is based.

And again far from spreading the promised freedom and democracy under the Jeffersonian conceived concept of America as an 'Empire of Liberty', those nations subjected to NATO invasion and to covert action in recent years, can only testify to the misery and destruction that such United States directed interventions have brought.

Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria and Ukraine have all borne the brunt of this intermeddling.

Despite the millions spent by the United States in 'nation building', Afghanistan remains a troubled land with a corrupt political class and a combustible mixture of tribal powerbases that threaten to erupt at a moment's notice.

Iraq has been on the verge of formal fragmentation since the overthrow of Saddam's Baathist government. The ISIS crisis is merely the latest of a litany of sectarian-based violent incidents to beset the country which include the United States directed episode involving the use of Shia death squads to defeat an initially successful Sunni insurgency.

Libya, once the 'Switzerland of Africa', with no foreign debt and a constructed Man River Project lies in ruins; a failed state in which rival militias violently squabble over territory and resources and in which foreign embassies are either closed down or trimmed to a minimum.

Syria, presently subject to a civil war or more accurately, to an invasion of mercenary Islamist death squads facilitated by American-NATO intervention, is a broken nation with the greatest refugee crisis in modern times and a death toll of almost 200,000. But if analyses of American power postulating it as an empire in decline are false as forcefully argued by Robert Kagan in a 2012 essay entitled *Not Fade Away: The Myth of American Decline*, the

preservation of the present world order through as he put it “constant American leadership and constant American commitment” has unquestionable wrought malign consequences.

It is a commitment in which the export of liberty has served as a mask for the extension of American power and the perpetuation of an inequitable and exploitative economic order. And the instrument of achieving this is NATO, the “hidden fist” which according to *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman enforces the agenda of neoliberal globalisation. This twin concept of American commercial and military imperialism is of course not new as the aforementioned reference to the Monroe Doctrine and its variations make clear. For many decades, United States policy allowed for numerous military interventions of its Latin American neighbours based on the interests of American businesses.

Friedman in fact was merely echoing the views of the retired United States General Smedley Butler who in his 1933 memoir *War is a Racket* made the following admission: I spent most of my time being a high class muscle-man for Big Business, for Wall Street and for the Bankers. In short, I was a racketeer, a gangster for capitalism. In his day, the United States military served to protect and extend the interests of concerns such as National City Bank, the international banking house of Brown Brothers and Standard Oil. Today NATO serves to protect and extend the interests of Western international banking concerns, oil companies and other corporations.

Or as Bruce Gagnon of the ‘Global Network against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space’ think tank succinctly put it:

The Pentagon’s primary job today is to serve as a resource extraction service on behalf of corporate globalization.

Another useful analogy to be garnered from the ruminations of Smedley Butler, concern the provocation of a rival nation through the use of ‘military war games’; this the technique used together with the later implementation of economic sanctions by the administration of Franklin Roosevelt to ensnare the Japanese into a war over the spoils of the Pacific.

The anti-ballistic missile policy of encircling the Russian Federation, the blatant sponsoring of a coup d’etat, the threat to mobilize several thousand NATO soldiers as a “rapid response force” to protect Eastern European member states ‘threatened’ by Russia’s measures in Crimea –an arguable breach of the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act which forbids the presence of permanent bases in eastern and central Europe- as well as the plans to despatch an expeditionary force to the Ukraine all smack of war games designed to provoke a response.

Putin’s unopposed take over Ukrainian military establishments in the Crimea prior to its referendum has been his only overtly aggressive response. But he was clear that provocations from the West could be tolerated only up to a point.

As he said in his speech after the re-integrating of Crimea into Russia:

If you compress the spring all the way to its limit, it will snap back hard. You must always remember this.

And while he has reacted in a measured way, such a strategy cannot endure if the United States continues to prod in more brazen ways of which the bill introduced into Congress last May by Senator Bob Corker, the Russian Aggression Prevention Act (RAPA) bill s.2277, is

suggestive that the Obama administration could take.

RAPA would require the administration to “use all appropriate elements of United States national power...to protect the independence, sovereignty, and territorial and economic integrity of Ukraine and other sovereign nations in Europe and Eurasia from Russian aggression”.

Included among its provisions is the direction that the United States and NATO should substantially increase support for the “armed forces of the Republics of Poland, Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia” and also that the complement of forward-based NATO forces in those states be significantly raised.

The provisions also allow for de facto membership of NATO on the part of Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova to which the transfer of equipment and personnel could be made without the need for prior consultation on the part of the United States with its NATO partners.

The RAPA bill goes on to propose a set of demands which if enacted and followed as policy would put the United States and Russia on a direct course for military conflict. RAPA demands that Russia “withdraw from the eastern border of Ukraine” and that its forces “must be withdrawn from Crimea within seven days” of the Act coming into legal effect.

While music to the ears of the belligerent nationalist sentiments of the Ukrainian regime typified by the inauguration comments of President Petro Poroshenko that Ukraine would retake Crimea and defence minister Lieutenant-General Valeriy Heletey’s promise that there will be “a victory parade...in Ukraine’s Sevastopol”, RAPA’s provisions can only horrify that strand of thinking bent toward a peaceful solution of the crisis.

Any military action initiated by the Ukrainian military in seeking to repossess Crimea, an affront to Russia’s unarticulated but long subsisting ‘Black Sea Doctrine’, would naturally trigger an uncompromising and resolute response.

At the same time, a Russian incursion aimed at protecting the Russian-speaking territories which have been ceaselessly bombarded for months by Ukrainian artillery and air power, if done under the circumstance of an enacted RAPA with its provisions as they stand, would technically trigger the invocation by the Ukrainian regime of the collective defence principle which is enshrined in Article 5 of NATO’s treaty.

Article 5 provides the following:

If a NATO Ally is the victim of an armed attack, each and every other member of the Alliance will consider this act of violence as an armed attack against all members and will take the actions it deems necessary to assist the Ally attacked.

A collision of US-NATO forces with their Russian opponents on the battlefield would in the shortest time-span immediately put both sides on a nuclear alert with the doctrine of a pre-emptive nuclear first-strike now being a fundamental part of war operations.

Each side would be armed with tactical nuclear weapons. Bombers and submarines capable of carrying nuclear devices would await decisive orders from their relevant commanders, and, of course, intercontinental ballistic missiles will be primed to destroy the other side’s military installations and major population centres.

Even a limited use of such weaponry would risk global destruction.

Alexis de Tocqueville's prediction in 1835 that Russo-American rivalry would define the 20th Century was accurate enough. But the revival of this rivalry in the 21st Century under the auspices of a coalescing of the Brzezinski and Wolfowitz Doctrines; the former seeking aggressively to subdue Russia and the latter; fanatical in its professing of American Exceptionalism and staunchly amoral in the justification of the means by which it can achieve domination, has brought a renewed danger of a nuclear catastrophe.

It is a rivalry which in effect may determine the continued existence of humanity.

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