

Europe Has Lost Its Guiding Myth. The Neocons “Rising Fever for War with China”

There seems to be more cultural energy present in the U.S. today, than there is in Europe, which has long since severed from living myth.

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The message sent by the Chinese Defence Minister's three-day visit [to Russia](#) is clear. His reception – a high-profile event – was intentionally invested with high visibility. And at its symbolic centre was a meeting with President Putin on (Orthodox) Easter Day which was consequential, both for being far beyond the norms of protocol, and for occurring on Easter Day, when Putin would not customarily work.

Its key message may be surmised from remarks earlier [framed](#) by Hu Xijin, the former editor-in-chief of China's *Global Times*:

“The U.S. repeatedly claims that China is preparing to provide “lethal military aid” to Russia in the ongoing Ukraine conflict”. But that war has “has been going on for more than a year: And according to the West's previous calculation, Russia should have already collapsed by now ... And, whilst NATO is supposed to be much stronger than Russia, the situation on the ground doesn't appear as such – *which is why it causes [such] anxiety in the West ...*”.

Hu Xijin continues:

“If Russia alone is already so difficult to deal with, what if China really starts to provide military aid to Russia, using its massive industrial capabilities for the Russian military? [If] Russia alone ... is more than a match for the Collective West. If they [the West] really forces China and Russia to join hands militarily – the question that haunts them is that the West will no longer be able to do as it pleases. Russia and China together, would have the power to check the U.S.”.

This essentially was what the Defence Minister's visit was all about: Events have moved on

since Hu wrote that piece in the *Global Times* a few weeks ago and, if anything, recent developments have lent added dimension to his clarion warning that a Sino-Russian joining of hands – militarily – would mark a paradigm change.

The recent event of the U.S. Intelligence leaks (as well as earlier reports from Seymour Hersh) seem to point to deep internal schism in the U.S. ‘Permanent State’:

One element is convinced that the Ukrainian Spring Offensive is a disaster in the making – with major consequences for U.S. prestige. The Neo-con contingent, on the other hand, bitterly refutes this analysis, and instead demands *escalation* via immediate preparation (arming Taiwan) against a U.S. war to be waged against *both China and Russia soon*. The neo-cons claim a Russian panic and collapse could happen within 24 hours of an Ukrainian attack.

To put it plainly, the sudden ignition of neo-con war fever against China has just done what Hu earlier foresaw: It has forced Russia and China to join hands militarily, not necessarily in Ukraine, but rather to plan and prepare for war with the West.

In the wake of the Intelligence leaks, the focus on Ukraine in the U.S. has waned, and been replaced in the U.S. with a rising fever for war with China.

The Chinese Defence Minister’s extended Moscow visit was the tangible evidence that now, China and Russia are convinced that the prospect of war is real, and they are preparing for it. Putin underlined the ‘jointery’ by, inter alia, prioritising the strengthening of the Russian *Pacific* fleet, and upgrading generally Russian Naval capacities.

This is just crazy: Hu was ‘spot on’. If NATO does not have the military industrial capacity to defeat Russia on its own, how can the U.S. and Europe expect to prevail against China and Russia combined? The notion seems delusional.

Historian Paul Veyne, a towering figure in the history of the ancient Roman world, once [posed](#) the question: *Did the Greeks Believe in Their Myths?* All societies, he wrote, contrive to some notional distinction between ‘truth’ and ‘falsity’, but in the end, according to him, this too, is just another ‘fishbowl’, the one we happen to inhabit, and it is in no way superior, as a matter of epistemology, to the fishbowl in which ancient Greeks lived and made sense of their world, in no small part through myths and stories about the gods.

In respect to the myth of the Roman Empire which nourishes U.S. foreign policy, Veyne’s position is profoundly contrarian. For his basic [claim](#) is that Roman imperialism had little to do with statecraft, nor economic predation or the assertion of control and the demand of obedience, but rather that was motivated by a collective wish to create a world in which Romans might be left alone, not simply secure, but undisturbed. That is all.

Paradoxically, this account would place the American traditionalist ‘Right’ – which leans to a Burkean-Buchanan perspective – closer to that of Veyne’s Roman ‘reality’ than to that of the neo-cons: i.e. what most Americans wish is for America to be left alone, and to be secure.

Yes, the gods and myths were *tangible* to the Ancients. They lived through them. The point here is Veyne’s warning against our ‘lazy treating’ of ancient Romans as versions of ourselves, caught up in different contexts, to be sure, but essentially interchangeable with us.

Did the Greeks believe in their Myths? Veyne's short answer is 'no'. The public spectacle of authority was an end in itself. It was artifice without an audience – as an expression of authority beyond question. There was no 'public sphere', indeed no 'public' as such. The state was instrumentalist. Its role was to mediate and keep the Empire aligned and attuned with these invisible and powerful forces.

The gods and myths were understood by the Ancients in a way that is almost wholly alien to us today: They were energetic invisible forces that carried distinct *qualities* that both shaped the world and carried meaning. Today, we have lost the ability to read the world symbolically – symbols have become rigid 'things'.

The implication of Veyne's analysis is that Rome is false as a comparison to support the 'myth' of the inevitability of U.S. primacy: The 'mythical' neo-con approach of course is instrumentalised to convince us all that U.S. primacy is ordained (by the gods?), and that Russia is low hanging fruit – a fragile rotten structure that easily can be toppled.

Do then the neo-cons believe their own myths? Well, 'yes' and 'no'. 'Yes', in that the neo-cons are a group of people who come to share a common view (i.e. Russia as fragile and fissiparous), often proposed by a few ideologues deemed to be credentialised. It is a view however, not based in reality. These adherents may be convinced intellectually that their view is right, but their belief cannot be tested in a way which could confirm it beyond doubt. It is simply based on a picture of the world as they imagine it to be, or more to the point, as they *would like it to be*.

Yes, the neo-cons believe their myths because they seem to work. Just look around. As the means of communication have become decentralized, digitized and algorithmic, contemporary culture has forced individuals into herds. There is no standing [apart](#) from this discourse; there is no thinking outside of the Tik-Toc feed; it gives rise to the formation of a pseudo-reality, severed from the World, and generated for wider ideological ends.

Put plainly, there never was a 'public sphere' in Rome in the modern sense, and in today's sense, no *alive* western 'Public Sphere' either. It has been anaesthetised via the social media platforms. The public spectacle of neo-con credentialised ideological authority (say, a Lindsay Graham advocating for war on China) becomes an end in itself. An expression of authority beyond question.

The neo-con myth of Russia on the cusp of implosion makes no sense. But it is a picture of the world as the neo-cons imagine it to be, or more to the point, *would like it to be*. The shortcomings of the Ukrainian forces as detailed in (their own American) Intel leaks: They pretend not to notice – convinced, as [Foreign Policy](#) explains, that once the expected Ukrainian offensive launches, if "the Russian soldiers panic, causing paralysis among the Russian leadership ... then the counter-offensive will be successful".

The more such delusional analysis is pursued, the more functional psychopathy will be exhibited, and the less normal it becomes. In short, it descends into collective delusion – if it hasn't already.

The U.S. may have entered a fever for war (for now! (Let us see how it lasts as events in Ukraine play out)), but what of Europe? Why would Europe seek war with China?

Thomas Fazi [writes](#) that:

“Emmanuel Macron’s [call](#) for Europe to reduce its dependency on the United States and develop its own “strategic autonomy” caused a transatlantic tantrum. The Atlanticist establishment, in [the U.S.](#) as much as [in Europe](#), responded in a typically unrestrained fashion — and, in doing so, missed something crucial:

“Macron’s words revealed less about the state of Euro-American relations than they did about intra-European relations.

“Very simply, the “Europe” Macron speaks of no longer exists, if it ever did. On paper, almost the entire continent is united under one supranational flag — that of the European Union. But that is more fractured than ever. On top of the economic and cultural [divides](#) that have always plagued the bloc, the war in Ukraine has caused a massive fault line to re-emerge along the borders of the Iron Curtain. The East-West divide is back with a vengeance”.

“The end of the Cold War and, then, the CEE countries’ accession to the EU just over a decade later were both heralded as the post-Communist countries’ much-awaited “[return to Europe](#)”. It was widely believed that the EU’s universalist project would smooth out any major social and cultural differences between Western and Central-Eastern Europe ...Such a hubristic (and arguably imperialistic) project was bound to fail; indeed, tensions and contradictions quickly became apparent between the two Europes”.

Belief in an integral European culture has been more a mark of a central European sensibility than of the western edge of Europe. It was not only Russia that was at issue for the East. They resented being cut off from a world of which they had been an essential part. Yet when communism receded, the European culture – as imagined by the dissidents – vanished in a Europe beset by division and a culture war imposed from the centre that purposefully has attempted to strangle any attempt to revive national cultures. For [Milan Kundera](#) and [other writers](#) like him, there is no living culture in Europe, and its posterity inhabits a void created by the disappearance of any supreme values.

Paradoxically, the war in Ukraine has strengthened Russian national culture, but has exposed the façade in the EU. There seems to be more cultural energy present in the U.S. today, than there is in Europe, which has long since severed from living myth.

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