

The Elective Affinities of Hillary Clinton

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God has not been preparing the English-speaking and Teutonic peoples for a thousand years for nothing but vain and idle self-contemplation and self-admiration. . . . He has made us adept in government that we may administer government among savage and senile peoples.” — Senator Albert J. Beveridge of Indiana, during the US annexation of the Philippines, 1898.

A grotesque power-fest at the Democratic Party Convention in Philadelphia left me feeling about Hillary Clinton the way P. G. Wodehouse’s Bertie Wooster felt about his Aunt Agatha—“the one who chews broken bottles and kills rats with her teeth.”

There is something disquieting and secretively lascivious about her open-mouthed cackle. She doesn’t so much laugh as lusts. She reminded me, too, of the mythical basilisk in the bestiary at the convention—the queen among the serpents. The basilisk of legend, wearing a king’s crown on his head, is only twelve-fingers long, but his venom withers all living plants in his wake. His gaze is enough to kill, according to Pliny the Elder. Only the droppings of a weasel have the potent odor to kill him, but it didn’t work with this basilisk. Her weasel endorsed her, embraced her, kissed her. His odor and her venom neutralized each other and merged into the unity party of the Serpent and the Weasel.

Her party’s opponent is Charybdis, “a huge bladder of a creature whose face was all mouth and whose arms and legs were flippers” according to Jorge Luis Borges’ *Book of Imaginary Beings* (1957). As if that were not enough, this Charybdis is reputed to be the troll of a foreign monster, Mandrake, the Demon in the Kremlin. Neither the basilisk’s party nor Charybdis’ own party, a sort of mollusk like the Kraken, likes him. See [here](#) and [here](#).

I’m raving, you say? This is the Age of Empire, and empire breeds monsters. We live with them now. Imperialism is our political and economic reality. Nothing material or substantial can be reformed within this colossal juggernaut. Yet, we continue to pretend that this has no bearing on our lives. In 2003 alone, the Iraq invasion cost \$60 billion, three times the yearly budget for education, yet, we wonder why schools are starving for funds. When we clamor for reforms without mentioning imperialism, it is as if we were told we would be dead in three weeks and reacted by scheduling an appointment for a facelift.

A facelift is exactly what elections have produced in the last two decades. Bill Clinton’s Nero, saxophone in lieu of harp; George Bush’s Claudius, malapropisms for stutters; Obama’s Titus, fortunate son, charm and treachery—they are all faces of imperialism, exceptionalism, hegemony, capital penetration, globalization, neoliberal reconolization, “full spectrum dominance,” “rebalance.” They are the CEOs of international capitalism in the White House. Their charge is to do away with the sovereignty of nations, economically when possible, militarily when necessary. They destabilize and destroy whole countries through

open, economic, proxy, or clandestine wars; they organize and train terrorist organizations; they foment regime change; they privatize the public wealth; they impose deadly economic reforms on countries they indebt in perpetuity; they launch economic sanctions, often in tandem or in the run-up to war. The goal they serve is the domination of the planet to extract resources, secure markets, and depress wages. In Haiti, workers are paid 62 cents per hour. Why would any sane investor hire an American worker for \$7 per hour when a Haitian, whose dependent country has stripped him/her of all workers' protection rights, works for pennies?

We are the Lotus Eaters, if we don't know the cost and suffering of imperialism.

In this predatory process, the masters of the world—the economic elite—have amassed mountains of money over tree decades, and are desperate for “opportunities” for investment. They know that money must move, or it dies. At this stage of disinvestment in industrialization in the capitalist centers because of diminished returns, money becomes the chief export commodity. To secure astronomical returns, lands and resources that belong to other people must be seized and controlled. To achieve this goal, they need a strong, autocratic, and authoritarian state and an appointed dictator. An *imperator*, head of the army, whose rule is characterized by weak legislative and judicial branches.

Ruthless, ambitious, violent, and conniving, Hillary Clinton's Roman imperial analog is Agrippina, Nero's mother and Claudius' niece and murderous wife. Her ferocious chemistry makes her kindred by choice to the ferocity of the empire. The two are bound by “elective affinities”—*Die Wahlverwandtschaften* (1809) of Goethe's third novel, which examines the possibility that human passions are ruled by chemical affinities, the preference of one substance for another. I am convinced that the imperial candidate with the most affinities with the ruling elite is Hillary Clinton. If Donald Trump is sincere in saying he wants peace with Russia, he would have to be a Titan to reverse a centenary robotic American foreign policy by 360 degrees. That would go against all the laws of political motion, including inertia, which were set down at the birth of the United States. The prize was always to be fabled Eurasia—“he who controls Eurasia controls the world,” wrote that other cobra-eyed basilisk, Zbigniew Kazimierz Brzezinski, the veteran Zbiggus Dickus of foreign lunacy at the State Department and the NSA.

And so this woman, the Agrippina on the Potomac, will sit behind the “grand chessboard,” playing with human pawns. She will make a good empress, even though less than 40 percent of the country's voters consider her “trustworthy.” But the people's trust is irrelevant. They are themselves untrustworthy. Having come out from under the spell of “charming” Obama to realize that he was a magician's trick, the people are spinning off center—the “extreme center,” as Tariq Ali wittily calls it. The people need whipping back into the herd. For that, a virago will do. She will ride rough-shod with Sin and Death, the moral allies of the empire, over hurdles of sovereignties and international law. She will further ravish the already enfeebled Constitution before eating it whole because the inevitable cost of an expansionist foreign policy is the loss of economic and political freedom at home.

They all trust her. She has affinities with them all.

The Financiers

The financial empire trusts Hillary Clinton. Top mega-financiers and hedge fund founders

and managers who have contributed to her campaign since March 2015 include: George Soros, hedge-fund billionaire, \$7 million; Haim Saban, Israeli hawk and entertainment mogul, \$5 million; James Simon, founder, Renaissance Technologies, hedge fund billionaire and former code-breaker for the military, \$ 3.5 million; Herbert Sandler, founder of Golden West Financial Corporation, the California savings and loan enterprise; Donald Sussman, hedge-fund manager, \$2.5 million.

There was no way that the new world order of financial monopoly capitalism would consider for CEO of the neoliberal empire someone like Bernie Sanders, not because he was “progressive” but because he was “regressive,” and in their view no doubt an unrealistic fantasist. The idea of bringing back the New Deal, a liberal order they had been overthrowing since the 1980s, must have had them belly-laughing in private, but they saw no harm so long as the senator from Vermont fed the illusion in the people that capitalism could be reformed and become a good thing. Ditto for Donald Trump: his regression consists of offering the people another fantasy, a return to a long gone Fordist America, the industrial powerhouse of the planet, in which American workers were the “aristocrats” of labor. At one point in history, Detroit was the capital of this aristocracy, the best-paid white workers in the world. Thus, both candidates offer a spectacle to the voters of a quarrel with their respective parties, but not with their parties’ de-facto bi-partisan pursuit of economic world supremacy. All the same they were useful. They helped to deflect, diffuse, confuse, and veil that stark, existential reality that is the cause of our woes and those of the planet: American economic and military expansion—the weasel more so than Charybdis.

Hillary Clinton is not a retro-fantasist, apart from being a fantasist of the neoliberal order. Her fantasy is their fantasy. Thus they back her.

The Liberal Humanitarian Carnivores

The liberal humanitarians trust Hillary’s exemplary ability to sell a war crime as a service to humanity.

The modern idea of “humanitarian war” is as old as Columbus; as old as the *conquistadores*. White, civilized Europeans, arriving in the “New World,” killed “savages” in order to civilize whoever survived. And then worked them to death and took their lands. In that tradition, the modern liberal humanitarian must be a flesh-eater. “A liberal society cannot be defended by herbivores. We need carnivores to save us,” wrote Michael Ignatieff, former Professor of Human Rights Policy at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government, in a New York Times magazine op-ed piece, May 2, 2004. There is no need to recite the litany of Hillary Clinton’s bloody deeds since 1990. Gary Leupp covers them comprehensively in a [2015 CounterPunch article](#) but for carnivorism, who can forget her maenad-possessed laughter on watching the tearing apart of Qaddafi’s flesh on video—a scene reminiscent of Euripides’ tragedy, “The Bacchae”?

Bill Clinton’s administration in the 1990s disemboweled Yugoslavia on humanitarian grounds, after portraying it as the resurgence of the genocidal Third Reich and its president, Slobodan Milosevic, as the new Hitler. Milosevic, by the way, has just been exonerated of all crimes for which Clinton’s kangaroo International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia had formerly condemned him. In 2003, casting her vote for the invasion of Iraq, Hillary Clinton cited the persecution of Milosevic as the example to follow for removing Saddam Hussein. It’s worth listening to her self-assurance in demonizing a man she, and Bill Clinton’s

administration, knew to be innocent of the charges—*knew* because they trumped them up:

We and our NATO allies did not depose Mr. Milosevic, who was responsible for more than a quarter of a million people being killed in the 1990s. Instead, by stopping his aggression in Bosnia and Kosovo, and keeping on the tough sanctions, we created the conditions in which his own people threw him out and led to his being in the dock being tried for war crimes as we speak.

But Bill Clinton didn't just scrap Yugoslavia; he junked international law by removing from the Security Council the legal monopoly on authorizing war. He set a precedent in the Kosovo War by claiming Responsibility to Protect (R2P), which gives humanitarian intervention the pseudo-legal means to overthrow a sovereign state. The UN Charter specifically disallows humanitarian intervention for a very good reason: it was that responsibility Hitler's rogue regime claimed for invading Poland—the protection of German minorities—to start WW II.

Never mind. The Kosovo precedent opened the gates to all the “humanitarian” wars that followed, including Hillary Clinton's war on Libya in 2009, consistent with her approval of her husband's intervention in Kosovo. During a meeting with Code Pink on 6 March 2003 at the US Capitol, defending her vote in favor of attacking Iraq, Senator Clinton applauded her husband's war in Kosovo, claiming that he saved Kosovar Albanian from ethnic cleansing—a lie—while commending his initiative to go it alone, without the “international community's” consent:

With respect to whose responsibility it is to disarm Saddam Hussein, I do not believe that given the attitudes of many people in the world community today that there would be a willingness to take on very difficult problems were it not for United States leadership. And I am talking specifically about what had to be done in Bosnia and Kosovo, where my husband could not get a Security Council resolution to save the Kosovar Albanians from ethnic cleansing. And we did it alone as the United States, and we had to do it alone. It would have been far preferable if the Russians and others had agreed to do it through the United Nations — they would not. I'm happy that, in the face of such horrible suffering, we did act.

She's praising here her husband's international crime, the interference with a country's sovereignty for fictional humanitarian reasons. No, the goal of the war in Kosovo was not ethnic defense (Bill Clinton's policy throughout the 90s in the former Yugoslavia was to foment and prey on ethnic anarchy) but the expansionist penetration of a foreign territory and the construction of one of the largest military bases in Europe, at Camp Bondsteel, costing the American people a good chunk of social services—possibly, his welfare “reform,” for example.

Liberal humanitarian warmongers peddle the ludicrous claim that “America is the essential country” (Madeleine Albright) for safeguarding liberal democracy throughout the world, sublimely indifferent to the evidence that the world can't wait to get America's essentialism off its back. Hillary Clinton's belligerent foreign policy is notorious. She has promised to bomb Iran. She has managed and supervised the destruction of Libya. She has organized the coups in Paraguay and Honduras. Her neo-con team at the State Department funded and organized the coup in Ukraine, Nazified its political, military, and cultural life, triggering a civil war (while calling Putin “Hitler”).

There's no reason to believe that her carnivorous humanitarian resources have been depleted since then. While Secretary of State for Obama, she authorized the [sale of weapons](#) to Qatar that she knew would go to the Libyan rebels to topple Qaddafi and then go to Syria to arm al Qaeda to overthrow Assad. She denied any involvement under oath. In an exclusive interview with [The Telegraph](#), her campaign foreign policy adviser, Jeremy Bash, former Chief of Staff at the Pentagon and CIA, said that she would work to get President Assad "out of there":

A Clinton administration will not shrink from making clear to the world exactly what the Assad regime is. It is a murderous regime [that violates human rights](#); that has violated international law; used chemical weapons against his own people; has killed hundreds of thousands of people, including tens of thousands of children.

If Assad is as guilty as she was sure at the time Milosevic was, we're in for another international crime.

On Russia, the Council on Foreign Relations reports that she's calling for strengthening NATO and "tougher measures against Putin to punish him for invading Ukraine and annexing Crimea as well as for supporting Syrian President Bashar al-Assad." "I remain convinced," they quote her, "that we need a concerted effort to really up the cost on Russia and, in particular, on Putin." She considers that Russia's intervention in Syria creates "[chaos](#)":

I think it's important too that the United States make it very clear to Putin that it's not acceptable for him to be in Syria creating more chaos, bombing people on behalf of Assad, and we can't do that if we don't take more of a leadership position, which is what I'm advocating.

[Russia Today](#) blames Clinton's outrageous Russophobia—"Hillary Clinton is the Bachman Turner Overdrive of US politics"—on Obama's mistake for allowing the Neo-con contingent to dominate the State Department:

Obama's other mistake was to allow Hillary, as Secretary of State, to retain neocon holdovers from the Bush administration on her Eastern Europe team. Even more incredibly, Kerry then inherited them for the second term. "Obama allowed US officials on the ground (in Ukraine and elsewhere) to pursue a grossly irresponsible and provocative anti-Russian policy," Anatol Lieven recently told the Valdai Club. "What on earth, one may ask, was Victoria Nuland, a neo-conservative State Department official married to the arch neocon Robert Kagan, doing in the Obama administration at all, given that her attitudes run clearly counter to his?" Lieven also pointed out that "figures like Nuland are still favored by Hillary Clinton (Kagan is now moving into her political camp) and much of the US foreign and security establishment; and that with regard to Russia, that establishment is still conditioned to pursue what are in effect Cold War attitudes."

The Neo-Cons and "New" Imperialists

Hillary Clinton represents the personification of rehabilitated imperialism, the overarching geopolitical focus of American politics. That is why she will be the establishment's choice—tested and proven. She will press hard against the political independence of Russia

and the economic rise of China, a pressure that encapsulates American foreign policy in the foreseeable future.

Neo-con and neo-liberal promoters of the “new imperialism” are Western regime intellectuals and historians such as Max Boot, Niall Ferguson, and Michael Ignatieff.

As a result, by 2003, the year of the invasion of Iraq, media pundits were busy domesticating the word “empire.” American propaganda had proscribed the word for decades on account of there being only one empire, which was “evil”: the USSR. With the Soviet Union gone, America congratulated itself on being #1, the sole super-power, the essential country, and, the old standby, the exceptional country. None of these brands resonated with the force that the scope of conquering the world required. To make matters worse, critics of the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, were floating the un-American term “imperialism.” Something had to be done. With the evil empire dead, the good empire could re-emerge. Max Boot, Senior Fellow in National Security Studies at Council on Foreign Relations, proposed “an American might to promote American ideals”—messianic political morality at the point of a gun. He explained,

In the early twentieth century, Americans talked of spreading Anglo-Saxon civilization and taking up the ‘white man’s burden’; today they talk of spreading democracy and defending human rights. Whatever you call it, this represents an idealistic impulse that has always been a big part in America’s impetus for going to war.

Soon after 9/11, 2001, Boot had already invoked this impetuous idealism to respond to the lament of suffering nations pining for the . . . return of a British-style imperial ministration.

Afghanistan and other troubled lands today cry out for the sort of enlightened foreign administration once provided by self-confident Englishmen in jodhpurs and pith helmets.

And in 2002, Boot wrote, “Imperialism used to be the white man’s burden. This gave it a bad reputation. But imperialism doesn’t stop being necessary because it is politically incorrect” (*New York Times Magazine*, July 28, 2002). Neoconservative William Kristol, of *The Weekly Standard*, said more tersely on Fox television at the time, “if people want to say we’re an imperial power, fine.” If there is a place on earth that is testy about Western imperialism, that place is China. If there is an American official who has sorely tested China’s anti-colonial sensibility, that person is Clinton. As First Lady, she rousingly declared that “women’s rights are human rights” in Beijing at the UN World Conference on Women in 1995. As Secretary of State, in 2011, she denounced China’s “deplorable” record of human rights in an interview with Jeffrey Goldberg of *The Atlantic*. Again in 2011, she proposed a US policy toward China as one “of advancing democracy and human rights” in a [Foreign Policy](#) article, titled “America’s Pacific Century.”

To Chinese officials’ ear this aggressive insistence on human rights sounded suspiciously like a systematic call for color revolution in China. Her hostile intent, had already become apparent in 2010. At the ASEAN Regional Forum in Hanoi, she confirmed China’s suspicion that she advocated a US policy of containment by intervening in the territorial disputes of the South China Sea. Recommending a “rebalance” of power in the disputed areas, [she asserted](#) that the US had “a national interest in freedom of navigation, open access to Asia’s maritime commons, and respect for international law in the South China Sea.”

China's Foreign Minister at the time, Yang Jiechi, at first walked out of the meeting, only to return an hour later with the [ominous reminder](#) that "China is a big country and other countries are small countries, and that's just a fact."

On the unpopular Trans-Pacific Trade Agreement, a pact China correctly perceives as economic containment, she said in her debate with Bernie Sanders on 4 February 2016 that she now opposes it after having strenuously and enthusiastically supported it as Obama's Secretary of State until 2012 and beyond. Her flip-flops on the TPT are well documented [here](#).

These three affinities—with finance, war, and imperialism—make Hillary Clinton the perfect mate for president of the financial-imperial White House. Picture her in jodhpurs and pith helmet astride the financial bull, taking on the "white woman's burden," and riding the humanitarian "savage wars for peace." Stop worrying about Donald Trump "Charybdis" and learn to avoid where the Basilisk treads, which will be difficult. You can prepare by reviewing her record as "empire-slayer" [here](#).

In choosing between presidential candidates today, it's best to stick to Bertie Wooster's advice about aunts: "It is no use telling me there are bad aunts and good aunts. At the core, they are all alike. Sooner or later, out pops the cloven hoof."

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