

Dangerous Crossroads: US-NATO vs. Russia-China in a “Hybrid War” to the Finish?

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Let's start with comic relief: the “leader of the free world” has pledged to prevent China from becoming the “leading” nation on the planet. And to fulfill such an exceptional mission, his “expectation” is to run again for president in 2024. Not as a hologram. And fielding the same running mate.

Now that the “free world” has breathed a sigh of relief, let's return to serious matters – as in the contours of the [Shocked and Awed 21st Century Geopolitics](#).

What happened in the past few days between Anchorage and Guilin continues to reverberate. As Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov stressed that Brussels “destroyed” the relationship between Russia and the EU, he focused on how the Russia-China comprehensive strategic partnership is getting stronger and stronger.

Not so casual synchronicity revealed that as Lavrov was being properly hosted by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Guilin – scenic lunch in the Li river included –, US Secretary of State Tony Blinken was visiting NATO's James-Bondish HQ outside Brussels.

Lavrov made it quite clear that the core of Russia-China revolves around establishing an economic and financial axis to counterpunch the Bretton Woods arrangement. That implies doing everything to protect Moscow and Beijing from “threats of sanctions by other states”; progressive de-dollarization; and advances in crypto-currency.

This “triple threat” is what is unleashing the Hegemon's unbounded fury.

On a broader spectrum, the Russia-China strategy also implies that the progressive interaction between the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the Eurasia Economic Union (EAEU) will keep apace across Central Asia, Southeast Asia, parts of South Asia, and Southwest Asia – necessary steps towards an ultimately unified Eurasian market under a sort of strategic Sino-Russo management.

In Alaska, the Blinken-Sullivan team learned, at their expense, that you don't mess with a Yoda such as Yang Jiechi with impunity. Now they're about to learn what it means to mess with Nikolai Patrushev, head of the Russian Security Council.

Patrushev, as much a Yoda as Yang Jiechi, and a master of understatement, delivered a not

so cryptic [message](#): if the US created “though days” for Russia, as they “are planning that, they can implement that”, Washington “would be responsible for the steps that they would take”.

What NATO is really up to

Meanwhile, in Brussels, Blinken was enacting a [Perfect Couple](#) routine with spectacularly inefficient head of the European Commission (EC) Ursula von der Leyen. The script went something like this. “Nord Stream 2 is really bad for you. A trade/investment deal with China is really bad for you. Now sit. Good girl.”

Then came NATO, which put on quite a show, complete with an all-Foreign Minister tough guy pose in front of the HQ. That was part of a summit – which predictably did not “celebrate” the 10th anniversary of NATO’s destruction of Libya or the major ass-kicking NATO “endured” in Afghanistan.

In June 2020, NATO’s cardboard secretary-general Jens Stoltenberg – actually his US military handlers – laid out what is now known as the [NATO 2030](#) strategy, which boils down to a Global Robocop politico-military mandate. The Global South has (not) been warned.

In Afghanistan, according to a Stoltenberg impervious to irony, NATO supports infusing “fresh energy into the peace process”. At the summit, NATO ministers also discussed Middle East and Northern Africa and – with a straight face – looked into “what more NATO could do to build stability in the region”. Syrians, Iraqis, Lebanese, Libyans, Malians would love to learn something about that.

Post-summit, Stoltenberg delivered a [proverbially somnolent](#) press conference where the main focus was – what else – Russia, and its “pattern for repressive behavior at home, aggressive behavior abroad”.

All the rhetoric about NATO “building stability” vanishes when one examines what’s really behind NATO 2030, via a meaty “recommendation” report [written by a bunch of “experts”](#)

Here we learn the three essentials:

1. “The Alliance must respond to Russian threats and hostile actions (...) without a return to ‘business as usual’ barring alterations in Russia’s aggressive behavior and its return to full compliance with international law.”
2. China is depicted as a tsunami of “security challenges”: “The Alliance should infuse the China challenge throughout existing structures and consider establishing a consultative body to discuss all aspects of Allies’ security interests vis-à-vis China”. The emphasis is to “defend against any Chinese activities that could impact collective defense, military readiness or resilience in the Supreme Allied Commander Europe’s (SACEUR) Area of Responsibility.”
3. “NATO should outline a *global blueprint* (italics mine) for better utilizing its partnerships to advance NATO strategic interests. It should shift from the current demand-driven approach to an *interest-driven approach* (italics mine) and consider providing more stable and predictable resource streams for partnership activities. NATO’s Open Door Policy should be upheld and reinvigorated. NATO should expand and strengthen partnerships with Ukraine and Georgia.”

Here's to The Triple Threat. Yet the Top of the Pops – as in fat, juicy industrial-military complex contracts – is really here:

The most profound geopolitical challenge is posed by Russia. While Russia is by economic and social measures a declining power, it has proven itself capable of territorial aggression and is likely to remain a chief threat facing NATO over the coming decade.

NATO may be redacting, but the master script comes straight from the Deep State – complete with Russia “seeking hegemony”; expanding Hybrid War (the concept was actually invented by the Deep State); and manipulating “cyber, state-sanctioned assassinations, and poisonings – using chemical weapons, political coercion, and other methods to violate the sovereignty of Allies.”

Beijing for its part is using “force against its neighbors, as well as economic coercion and intimidatory diplomacy well beyond the Indo-Pacific region. Over the coming decade, China will likely also challenge NATO’s ability to build collective resilience.”

The Global South should be very much aware of NATO’s pledge to save the “free world” from these autocratic evils.

The NATO interpretation of “South” encompasses North Africa and the Middle East, in fact everywhere from sub-Saharan Africa to Afghanistan. Any similarity with the presumably defunct “Greater Middle East” concept of the Dubya era is not an accident.

NATO insists this vast expanse is characterized by “fragility, instability, and insecurity” – of course refusing to disclose its own role as serial instability perpetrator in Libya, Iraq, parts of Syria and Afghanistan.

Because ultimately...it's all Russia's fault: “To the South, the challenge includes the presence of Russia and to a lesser extent China, exploiting regional fragilities. Russia has reinserted itself in the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean. In 2015, it intervened in the Syrian Civil War and remains there. Russia's Middle East policy is likely to exacerbate tensions and political strife across the region as it extends an increasing amount of political, financial, operational, and logistical assets to its partners. China's influence across the Middle East is also growing. It signed a strategic partnership with Iran, is the largest importer of crude oil from Iraq, wedged itself into the Afghanistan peace process, and is the biggest foreign investor in the region.”

Here, in a nutshell, and not exactly in code, is the NATO road map all the way to 2030 to harass and try to dismantle every relevant nook and cranny of Eurasia integration, especially those directly linked to New Silk Roads infrastructure/connectivity projects (investment in Iran, reconstruction of Syria, reconstruction of Iraq, reconstruction of Afghanistan).

The spin is on a “360-degree approach to security” that will “become an imperative”. Translation: NATO is coming for large swathes of the Global South, big time, under the pretense of “addressing both the traditional threats emanating from this region like terrorism and new risks, including the growing presence of Russia, and to a lesser extent China.”

Hybrid war on two fronts

And to think that in a not so distant past there used to be some flashes of lucidity emanating from the US establishment.

Very few will remember that in 1993 James Baker, former Secretary of State under Daddy Bush, advanced the idea of expanding NATO to Russia, which at the time, under Yeltsin and a gang of Milton Friedmansque free marketeers, was devastated, but ruled by “democracy”. Yet Bill Clinton was already in power, and the idea was duly discarded.

Six years later, no less than George Kennan – who invented the containment of the USSR in the first place – determined that the NATO annexation of former Soviet satellites was “the beginning of a new Cold War” and “a tragic mistake”.

It’s immensely enlightening to relieve and re-study the whole decade between the fall of the USSR and the election of Putin to the presidency through the venerable Yevgeny Primakov’s book [Russian Crossroads: Toward the New Millenium](#), published in the US by Yale University Press.

Primakov, the ultimate intel insider who started as a *Pravda* correspondent in the Middle East, former Foreign Minister and also Prime Minister, looked closely into Putin’s soul, repeatedly, and liked what he saw: a man of integrity and a consummate professional. Primakov was a multilateralist *avant la lettre*, the conceptual instigator of RIC (Russia-India-China) which in the next decade evolved towards BRICS.

Those were the days – exactly 22 years ago – when Primakov was on a plane to Washington when he picked up a call by then Vice-President Al Gore: the US was about to start bombing Yugoslavia, a slav-orthodox Russian ally, and there was nothing the former superpower could do about it. Primakov ordered the pilot to turn around and fly back to Moscow.

Now Russia is powerful enough to advance its own Greater Eurasia concept, which moving forward should be balancing – and complementing – China’s New Silk Roads. It’s the power of this Double Helix – which is bound to inevitably attract key sectors of Western Europe – that is driving the Hegemon’s ruling class dazed and confused.

Glenn Diesen, author of *Russian Conservatism: Managing Change Under Permanent Revolution*, which I analyzed in [Why Russia is Driving the West Crazy](#), and one of the best global analysts of Eurasia integration, [summed it all up](#): “The US has had great difficulties in terms of converting the security dependence of the allies into geoeconomic loyalty, as evident by the Europeans still buying Chinese technologies and Russian energy.

Hence permanent Divide and Rule, featuring one of its key targets: cajole, force, bribe and all of the above for the European Parliament to [scotch](#) the China-EU trade/investment deal.

Wang Yiwei, director of the Center for European Studies at Renmin University and author of the best made in China book about the New Silk Roads, clearly sees through the “America is back” bluster: “China is not isolated by the US, the West or even the whole international community. The more hostility they show, the more anxiety they have. When the US travels around the globe to frequently ask for support, unity and help from its allies, this means US hegemony is weakening.”

Wang even forecasts what may happen if the current “leader of the free world” is prevented

from fulfilling his exceptional mission: “Don’t be fooled by the sanctions between China and the EU, which is harmless to trade and economic ties, and EU leaders won’t be that stupid to totally abandon the China-EU Comprehensive Agreement on Investment, because they know they would never get such a good deal when Trump or Trumpism returns to the White House.”

Shocked and Awed 21st Century Geopolitics, as configured in these crucial past two weeks, spells out the Unipolar Moment is six feet under. The Hegemon will never admit it; hence the NATO counterpunch, which was pre-designed. Ultimately, the Hegemon has decided not to engage in diplomatic accommodation, but to wage a hybrid war on two fronts against a relentlessly demonized strategic partnership of peer competitors.

And as a sign of these sorry times, there’s no James Baker or George Kennan to advise against such folly.

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