

TRUMP'S FOREIGN POLICY

A victory for the Deep State

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Summary

*Donald Trump, an outsider who won the Presidency against all odds and predictions, came to the White House apparently determined to chart a new strategic course in foreign affairs. His opponent, Hillary Clinton, was committed to a hegemonistic vision and to specific policies based on the decades-old globalist-liberal orthodoxy. As this paper points out, Trump's "America First" approach in essence rejected the doctrine of America as a proposition nation, criticized its global engagement, questioned NATO's utility and core mission, advocated rapprochement with Russia, and condemned the regime-change focus of earlier administrations. It further emphasizes that Trump explicitly sought to reaffirm the *raison d'état* as the guiding principle of foreign policymaking. His biggest problem all along was that the American "deep state" – key components of the national security apparatus, the military-industrial complex, and the bipartisan political duopoly in Washington – rejected any realist criteria in their definition of "interests" and "threats." They were intent on the maintenance of American global primacy, and they proved effective in imposing agenda contrary to Trump's stated positions on all key global issues. At the same time, as this paper documents, Trump himself has been stepping ever farther away from his campaign pledges. It would be incorrect to say that the permanent state has successfully subverted and undermined the chief executive. It would be more accurate, we conclude, to recognize that a mutinous president has tried, and failed, to alter the long-charted global course of the permanent state.*

Over the years, American “realists” – who accept that the world is imperfect, that violence is immanent to man, and that human nature is immutable – have often lamented the absence of grand-strategic thinking within the U.S. foreign-policy establishment.¹ For the past quarter-century at least, successive administrations have displayed a chronic inability to deploy America’s political, military, economic, and moral resources in a balanced and proportionate manner, in order to protect and enhance the country’s rationally defined security and economic interests.² Washington’s bipartisan, ideologically-driven obsession with global primacy (aka “full-spectrum-dominance”) has resulted in a series of diplomatic, military and moral failures, costly in blood and treasure, and detrimental to the American interest.³

In November 2016 it appeared that Donald Trump, an outsider victorious against all odds and predictions, had a historic opportunity to make a fresh start. The moment was somewhat comparable to Ronald Reagan’s first victory in 1980. Reagan used grandiloquent phrases at times (notably the “Evil Empire”), but in practice he acted as an instinctive foreign policy realist. Likewise, Trump’s “America First” was a call for the return to realism based on the awareness that the United States needs to rediscover the value of *transactional diplomacy* aimed at promoting America’s security,

prosperity, and cohesion in a Hobbesian world.

Some resistance from the upholders of hegemonistic orthodoxy was to be expected, as witnessed even before Trump’s inauguration by the outgoing administration’s frantic attempts to poison the well on every front possible. Giving up the imagined capacity to dominate the world, and recognizing that it cannot be shaped in line with the elite class “values,” was never acceptable to the controllers of the mainstream media discourse and to the government-subsidized think-tank nomenklatura. More seriously, some key components of the intelligence, national-security and military-industrial complex proved effective in resisting Trump’s attempt to introduce transactional criteria in defining “interests” and “threats.”

The 2016 Presidential Election: Strategic Crossroads – The aftermath of the Cold War has seen the emergence of what Robert Kagan and William Kristol have called “benevolent global hegemony” of the United States.⁴ Throughout this period, the leaders of both major parties have asserted that America’s unchallengeable military might was essential to the maintenance of global order. This period of “primacy” was marked by military interventions in the Balkans, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and less overtly in Syria. The exercise of hegemony was validated by the rhetoric of “promoting democracy,” “protecting human rights,” “confronting aggression,” and by the invocation of American exceptionalism: in world affairs the United States was supposedly motivated by values, rather than interests.

¹ See e.g. John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York: Norton, 2001.

² Cf. Srdja Trifković, “Geopolitics Redeemed: Enhancing the Realist Discourse.” *Defence Review: The Central Journal of the Hungarian Defence Forces*. Vol. 144 (2016/1).

³ Cf. F. William Engdahl, *Full Spectrum Dominance: Totalitarian Democracy in the New World Order*. Edition Engdahl, 2009.

⁴ Robert Kagan and William Kristol, “Towards a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy.” *Foreign Affairs*, 75 (4), July-August 1996.

That bipartisan consensus has been codified in the official strategic doctrine. George W. Bush's 2002 *National Security Strategy* declared that the U.S. would "extend the peace by encouraging free and open societies on every continent," and – furthermore – bring about an end to "destructive national rivalries."⁵ The Obama Administration's 2012 *Defense Strategic Guidance*, which is still in force, claimed that the task of the United States was to "confront and defeat aggression anywhere in the world."⁶ Such continuity of utopian objectives reflects the chronic refusal of the policymaking community in Washington to establish a rational correlation between strategic ends and means, or to see America as a "normal" nation-state pursuing limited political, economic, and military objectives in a competitive world.

A major source of instability in contemporary global order is the tendency of the most powerful player to reject a conventionally ordered hierarchy of American global interests. Traditional foreign policymaking may be prone to miscalculations (e.g. Vietnam), but *in principle* it is based on some form of rationally adduced *raison d'etat*. Deterritorialized strategy of full-spectrum dominance, by contrast, has its grounding in ideological assumptions impervious to rational discourse. It consistently creates outcomes – in Iraq, Libya, etc – which are contrary to any conventional understanding of U.S. security

interests. The 2016 presidential election, on the subject of foreign affairs, seemed to confront two polar opposites.

Hillary's Vision – Hillary Clinton was a leading exponent of the hegemonistic consensus. In 2002 she voted in favor of the Iraq war, the greatest foreign policy disaster in recent American history. In 2011 she tipped the balance within the Obama Administration in favor of the Libyan intervention, with devastating consequences for Libya, the region, and the world. She was the first major political figure in the world to compare Vladimir Putin to Hitler. She routinely saw military power as a tool of first resort: In the Obama cabinet she had been "the most hawkish person in the room in every case where she was in the room in the first place."⁷ According to her aides, she subscribed to "a textbook view of American exceptionalism."

Hillary Clinton's strategic vision was a "known-known" of the 2016 campaign: open-ended global commitments in pursuit of hegemonistic goals. During the campaign she still advocated providing arms to the "moderate" Syrian rebels, which in reality meant further enabling non-ISIS jihadists supported by Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Her speech at the American Legion National Convention on August 31, 2016, was an exultant restatement of the two-decades-old doctrine of global hegemony justified by the

⁵ The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, The White House, 2002. <<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/63562.pdf>> (retrieved September 1, 2017)..

⁶ *Sustaining US Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*. <<https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/282223-defense-strategic-guidance.html>> (retrieved July 9, 2017).

⁷ Kevin Drum, "Hillary Clinton Really Loves Military Intervention." *Mother Jones*, April 21, 2016. <<http://www.motherjones.com/kevin-drum/2016/04/hillary-clinton-really-loves-military-intervention>> (retrieved September 1, 2017).

dogma of American exceptionalism.⁸ She provided the blueprint for never-ending wars and crises wholly unrelated to any rational understanding of the country's national interest.

"The United States is an exceptional nation," she told the Legion, and is still the last, best hope of Earth; "And part of what makes America an exceptional nation, is that we are also an indispensable nation. In fact, we are *the* indispensable nation. People all over the world look to us and follow our lead." She asserted that "we recognize America's unique and unparalleled ability to be a force for peace and progress, a champion for freedom and opportunity" and that U.S. power comes with a responsibility to lead, "with a fierce commitment to our values... [W]hen America fails to lead, we leave a vacuum that either causes chaos or other countries or networks rush in to fill the void."

Clinton's triumphalist global vision reflected the post-Cold War consensus, to which both ends of the Beltway Duopoly – neoconservatives and neoliberals – subscribed with equal zeal. Its key tenet was that America's unchallengeable military might is essential to the maintenance of a global order in which the U.S. government treats every spot on the globe as an area of vital American interest, resists any change of regional power balances, and promotes regime changes. The resulting military interventions would continue to be validated by the rhetoric of "peace and progress," "freedom and opportunity," "justice and human dignity,"

and by the invocation of self-awarded exceptionalism and indispensability.

Bipartisan consensus which Mrs. Clinton embodied (and which prompted many establishment Republicans to support her) has been long codified in official strategic doctrine. Clinton's strategic vision was clear: an abiding commitment to ideological fixations unrelated to any pragmatic notion of U.S. interests. The continuity of duopolistic key assumptions, and the escalation of risks and tensions resulting from their application, was clearly predictable.

Donald's Vision – Trump's strategic concepts seemed less ideologically coherent than Clinton's, but he was more rational in espousing his stated guiding principles and more "realist" in policy detail. In the early days of his candidacy he repeatedly asked why must the United States be engaged everywhere in the world and play the global policeman. He raised the issue of NATO's utility and core mission, a quarter-century after the demise of the USSR which it was created to contain. In the course of the campaign he suggested readjustment or creation of a new coalition in order to put America's resources to better use, especially in the fight against terrorism. He repeatedly advocated rapprochement with Russia. He criticized the regime-change mania of earlier administrations, pointing out the "disastrous" consequences of toppling Saddam Hussein in Iraq. He said that he would leave Syria's Bashar al-Assad well alone and focus on degrading the Islamic State.

Trump's 2016 global vision was somewhat fragmentary, but voters knew that many of his positions ran counter to the duopolistic consensus. They *did not know* if he would be consistent, as President, in devising a new grand strategy and related specific policies. Such uncertainty was perhaps inevitable in view of Trump's temperament, but the

⁸ "Read Hillary Clinton's Speech Touting 'American Exceptionalism,'" *Time*, August 31, 2016. <<http://time.com/4474619/read-hillary-clinton-american-legion-speech>> (retrieved September 1, 2017).

possibility of a paradigmatic shift towards a national-interest-based approach apparently did exist. It was conceivable that he would effect a strategic pause in order to take stock of the global map, reconsider priorities, and devise policies on the basis of their likely costs and benefits.

On April 27, 2016, Donald Trump gave a long speech on foreign policy.⁹ It was his first attempt to present his views on world affairs in detail. It contained no standard duopoly references to promoting freedom, democracy and human rights around the world; confronting tyranny and evil; or making the world a better place in the image of the exceptional nation. Trump's team of advisors prepared a coherent case for "offensive realism" instead: Nation-states are the principal actors in the international system; they pursue self-interest in what is still a Hobbesian world; America is not and should not be an exception to that old principle.¹⁰ This was anathema to the elite. The tone of media reaction was set by the *New York Times*: Trump's "strange worldview... did not exhibit

much grasp of the complexity of the world."¹¹ But to those who did not subscribe to the Beltway *Weltanschauung*, Trump gave a summary of what had gone wrong with America's role in the world, and a viable new approach.

"My foreign policy will always put the interests of the American people and American security above all else," Trump declared at the outset of his address. "America First will be the major and overriding theme of my administration." This was a commonsense summary which could have been objectionable only to the proponents of the doctrine of America as a proposition nation, which has created endless problems for both America and the rest of the world at least since Woodrow Wilson's time.

Trump correctly noted that after the Cold War the U.S. foreign policy "veered badly off course," and he named Iraq, Egypt, Libya, and Syria as examples of flawed interventions that had spread chaos in the region and helped the rise of ISIS. His diagnosis – that the U.S. foreign policy "is a complete and total disaster" devoid of vision, purpose, direction, and strategy – was reasonable; so was his warning that America's resources were overextended. Trump promised to look for new advisors in the field of foreign policy, and to shun the establishment responsible "for a long history of failed policies and continued losses at war."¹²

⁹ "Transcript: Donald Trump's Foreign Policy Speech." *The New York Times*, April 27, 2016. <<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/28/us/politics/transcript-trump-foreign-policy.html?mcubz=0>> (retrieved September 1, 2017).

¹⁰ Men are driven by "a perpetual and restless desire of power" for as long as they live. (*Leviathan* XI-2) Hobbes' grim dictum that states "enlarge their dominions upon all pretences of danger and fear of invasion or assistance that may be given to invaders" (XIX-4) accurately reflects the *spiral model* ("security dilemma") of international relations throughout recorded history.

¹¹ "Donald Trump's Strange Worldview," by the Editorial Board. *The New York Times*, April 28, 2016. <<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/28/opinion/donald-trump-to-world-im-willing-to-walk.html?mcubz=0>> (retrieved September 1, 2017).

¹² In addition, Trump lamented America's failure to protect Middle Eastern Christians, who he said were "subject to intense persecution and even genocide." He noted that "we're in a war against

Particularly welcome was Trump's pledge to improve relations with Russia, which "has also seen the horror of Islamic terrorism." This was in marked contrast to his Republican rivals' visceral Russophobia. Trump closed by declaring that he would not try "to spread universal values that not everybody shares or wants," and that he would not "go abroad in search of enemies." These were sound conservative principles. They could have provided conceptual basis for a new foreign policy strategy which the United States needed. Trump's antipathy to the establishment's imperial pretensions and moral absolutism seemed genuine. His closing statement, that "the nation-state remains the true foundation for happiness and harmony," apparently reflected his understanding that the international system – composed of sovereign entities pursuing their interests – is still essentially competitive.¹³ Trump was the only candidate who understood this cardinal fact, and who unambiguously stated that America is not and should not be an exception to that timeless principle.

The Media and "America First" – Trump was the only viable presidential candidate in recent history to return the *raison d'état* to its rightful place as the guiding principle of foreign policymaking. By doing so he had

radical Islam, but President Obama won't even name the enemy," while "Hillary Clinton also refuses to say the words *radical Islam*, even as she pushes for a massive increase in refugees coming into our country." His pledge to work together with any nation in the region threatened by radical Islam was accompanied by the warning that "this has to be a two-way street" – a clear, and long-overdue, allusion to Saudi Arabia's duplicity.

¹³ Waltz would agree. Cf. Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*. New York: Random House, 1979.

made a seminal contribution to the public discourse on world affairs in the United States.

The corporate media responded in unison by asserting, in horror, that the notion of "America First" revived the "ugly" ghost of pre-World War II isolationism. The CNN claimed that the phrase "refers to the America First movement in the early 1940s, in which some elements were associated with anti-semitism and U.S. nationalism in the lead-up to World War II."¹⁴ It is noteworthy that "anti-semitism" and "U.S. nationalism" were banded together, with the implication that they are in the same political-moral league. Bloomberg's columnist Eli Lake explicitly connected "Trump's new slogan" with the "Nazi era," thus reviving this "toxic" phrase which had long been banished from "respectable discourse."¹⁵ The Anti-Defamation League, a leading Jewish-American organization, urged

¹⁴ Tal Kopan, "In invoking 'America First,' Trump stirs memories of pre-WWII isolationist movement." CNN, April 28, 2016.

<<http://edition.cnn.com/2016/04/27/politics/donald-trump-america-first-nationalist-history>> (retrieved September 1, 2017).

¹⁵ Eli Lake, "Donald Trump's new 'America First' slogan has old baggage from Nazi era." *The Chicago Tribune*, April 28, 2016.

<<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/opinion/commentary/ct-donald-trump-america-first-foreign-policy-20160428-story.html>> (retrieved September 1, 2017).

Trump to “reconsider” using the phrase.¹⁶ According to ADL CEO Jonathan Greenblatt, the America First movement was characterized by “the undercurrents of anti-semitism and bigotry.” The claim was incongruous. Explicitly putting their nation first is the *sine qua non* of political leaders everywhere outside America. The real objective of the campaign was to suggest that having the audacity to put one’s own country’s interests first, ahead of the globalist one-world agenda, was reactionary and indicative of toxic, bigoted, intolerant “U.S. nationalism.”

The corporate media machine in the United States is controlled by members of an elite class which promotes cultural Marxism manifested in a corrupt mass culture, multiculturalist indoctrination, and mass immigration; and which opposes any sense of historical and cultural identity. From the very moment he entered the presidential race, Trump encountered intense media hostility. His media detractors have been almost invariably globalists who believe that people should not feel a special bond for any particular country or nation, but should transfer their loyalties to an imaginary global community.

¹⁶ “ADL Urges Donald Trump to Reconsider ‘America First’ in Foreign Policy Approach,” April 26, 2016. <<https://www.adl.org/news/press-releases/adl-urges-donald-trump-to-reconsider-america-first-in-foreign-policy-approach>> (retrieved September 1, 2017). The “America first” artificial controversy was an early example of the establishment’s reductive propaganda against Trump, based on the logical fallacy of false equivalence. Along those same lines, since the *Deutschlandlied* – proudly proclaiming that Germany stands “above all else” – is Germany’s national anthem today, just as it was during the Nazi era (1933-1945), Angela Merkel’s Federal Republic equals the Third Reich.

Since the final decade of the twentieth century, such notions have been internalized by the American elite class and by the establishment of both major parties. Back in 2001, then-Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott felt ready to declare that the United States may not exist “in its current form” in the 21st century, because the very concept of nationhood – in America and throughout the world – will have been rendered obsolete.¹⁷ “All countries are basically social arrangements, accommodations to changing circumstances,” he wrote. “No matter how permanent and even sacred they may seem at any one time, in fact they are all artificial and temporary.” Those who objected to “America First” agreed: since nations are transient, virtual-reality entities, owing emotional allegiance to any one of them is irrational; promoting its interests in preference to those of others is suspect, or outright “fascist.”

Transnational Trumpophobia – One month after Trump’s foreign policy speech, at a press conference at the G-7 summit in Japan (May 26, 2016), President Barack Obama declared that world leaders were “rattled” by Trump, “because a lot of the proposals that he’s made display either ignorance of world affairs or a cavalier attitude or an interest in getting tweets and headlines instead of actually

¹⁷ Strobe Talbott, “America Abroad.” *Time*, June 24, 2001. <<http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,160112,00.html>> (retrieved September 1, 2017).

thinking through what is required to keep America safe.”¹⁸

Obama’s statement was remarkable. He implied that 226 million Americans eligible to vote in 2016 should take note of the fact that his G-7 colleagues were *unnerved or shocked* (the meaning of “rattled”) by the Republican candidate, and that this should influence their decision. Lyndon Johnson during the 1964 campaign against Barry Goldwater and Jimmy Carter in his race against Ronald Reagan in 1980 could have made the same argument; but they sensed how impertinent it would have been to do so.

Obama’s statement was additionally bizarre in view of the fact that *three* of his eight fellow-summiters were *unelected*.¹⁹ Socialist Matteo Renzi was the third successive prime minister of Italy to be appointed through parliamentary backroom deals; Italy’s last elected leader was Silvio Berlusconi in 2008. Luxemburger Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, was nominated by the European Council in 2014 and duly confirmed by the European Parliament, an institution chronically devoid of democratic legitimacy. In that same year, former Polish prime minister Donald Tusk was appointed president of the European Council – by the Council itself. All three belonged to the postnational, globalist elite class, so it was to be expected that they

would support Hillary Clinton.²⁰ For the transnational elite, Trump’s “America first” paradigm was the 2016 equivalent of Reagan’s “Evil Empire” rejection of détente in 1982. The global context is different, but both shared an abiding antipathy to the establishment’s cocksure arrogance and moral absolutism. Trump, too, presented a challenge to the elite world outlook, to the intellectual and emotional power and satisfaction which the global elite class derives from living in a dysfunctional world.

At the same time, throughout the campaign Hillary Clinton was immune from critical scrutiny by the American and other Western corporate media, whose key players were overwhelmingly globalist-liberal oriented. She had so many skeletons in her closet (the

²⁰ Had it been up to the G-7 leaders, John Kerry would have been elected president in 2004. During the 1980 campaign Reagan was viewed with much suspicion by the “world leaders,” to put it mildly. With the exception of Margaret Thatcher, America’s European allies regarded him as a trigger-happy populist who could drag the world into World War III. They were horrified by his description of the USSR as an “evil empire” and his refusal to parrot the platitudes of détente. *Plus ça change*: a year after Reagan’s inauguration, *The Washington Post* asserted that European nations “no longer trust our judgment and good sense...and they are alarmed by the Reagan administration’s compulsive flow of tough talk. Thus, more and more Europeans are asking: can the current administration – or indeed any administration chosen under our prevailing electoral system – ever again develop an informed and sophisticated strategy.” (Editorial: “Why Should the Europeans Trust Us?” *The Washington Post*, January 25, 1982. <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1982/01/25/why-should-the-europeans-trust-us/0a00f3bf-f924-4bd3-be89-9b46d18acaca>> retrieved September 1, 2017).

¹⁸ E. McKirdy and J. Diamond, “Trump on Obama critique: When you rattle someone, that’s good.” CNN, May 26, 2016.

<<http://edition.cnn.com/2016/05/26/politics/obama-g7-ise-shima>> (retrieved September 1, 2017).

¹⁹ See

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/42nd_G7_summit#Participants> (retrieved September 1, 2017).

private server, the Clinton Foundation etc) that the offerings would have provided plenty of material for any genuinely inquisitive journalist; but she remained *de facto* protected by the tacit consensus of editors and commentators on both sides of the Atlantic.

In addition, one of Trump's problems was that the Republican establishment perceived him as a threat. Neoconservative "never Trump!" hawks, such as William Kristol, rather would have seen Hillary Clinton as president than Trump, chiefly because he was skeptical – during the campaign – of America's global engagement, had voiced doubt about the utility of NATO, and said that he'd find a common language with Putin. Such views were anathema for the duopoly inside the Washington Beltway, to the liberal-globalist interventionists, such as Hillary Clinton, Susan Rice and Samantha Power on the quasi-Left side, and the equally hawkish neoconservative interventionists, embodied by Senators John McCain and Lindsey Graham, in the quasi-Right camp. These two bellicose, culturally cosmopolitan, statist camps had far more in common with each other than the Republican Party establishment had with the maverick candidate Trump.

Early in the campaign, Trump was accused of "racism" – primarily because he had said that he would restrict the influx of Muslim immigrants into the United States. That was not "racist": there are Muslims of all color and hue. He was accused of "Islamophobia," but his was a rational position in the context of everything that has happened and is happening, from Brussels and Paris to the London underground, the Madrid suburban train, and the Boston marathon. He reflected the views of many Americans who see the "political process" as a game in which all cards are marked in advance, where it does not matter who is elected.

Throughout the 2016 campaign, numerous West European politicians raised their voices against Trump. Their fear and loathing was due to the same reason the American establishment feared and loathed him: because he is not a consensus politician who accepts the center-left and center-right orthodoxies. As candidate, he rejected the premises of cultural Marxism which have been internalized by the elite class on both sides of the Atlantic. On the other hand, Hillary Clinton shared their cultural-Marxist predilections. They saw in her the guarantee of business-as-usual. *Reductio ad Hitlerum* has been Trump's lot ever since.

The First Duel – On September 8, 2016, Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump spoke at the same prime-time television event for the first time. The NBC "Commander-in-Chief Forum" was not a debate; the candidates appeared back-to-back, answering questions about their qualities and qualifications for the post.²¹

According to Hillary Clinton, the most important characteristic that a commander-in-chief can possess is steadiness: "An absolute rock steadiness, and mixed with strength to be able to make the hard decisions... who is able to sort out the very difficult options being

²¹ Video:

<<https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/commander-in-chief-forum>> (retrieved September 1, 2017).

Clinton notably omitted *honesty* and *trustworthiness* – or the perception thereof – which a commander-in-chief needs in order to gain the trust and personal commitment of those he commands. This is the key to effective *leadership*, which is the essence of *command*. For all his geopolitical acumen and intelligence, in this respect Richard Nixon was fatally flawed. The issue of personal character and integrity – which plagued her husband's second term – had always been a major (ultimately fatal) liability for Mrs. Clinton.

presented.” In terms of decision-making effectiveness, it is indeed critical that a president “who listens, who evaluates what is being told” (as Clinton put it), “who is able to sort out the very difficult options being presented.” Her’s record at the Department of State pointed in the opposite direction on all counts, however, as exemplified by her decision to advocate intervention in Libya in general, and to conduct the high-risk Benghazi operation in particular. When making key decisions she was unwilling to tolerate dissent and delegate authority, which are essential presidential qualities. At the same time, when things went wrong (as in Benghazi), she was loath to accept responsibility and passed the buck to her subordinates.

Asked by a self-designated progressive whether her “hawkish foreign policy will continue” Clinton replied that she viewed “force as a last resort, not a first choice”: “Gadhafi was threatening to massacre his population. I put together a coalition that included NATO, included the Arab League, and we were able to save lives. We did not lose a single American in that action. And I think taking that action was the right decision.”

Clinton’s implication that the civil war in Libya was over was incorrect. U.S. intervention created outcomes far worse than the situation preceding it: the country has descended into Hobbesian mayhem. It is a paradigmatic “failed state” ruled by competing Islamic militias, a safe haven for thousands of battle-hardened jihadists, and the launching pad for the ongoing migrant invasion of Europe. “What we are now seeing in Syria” is a mirror-image of what Clinton still insists was a success in Libya, not its counterpoint. Her implied intention to repeat the exercise in Syria demonstrated to the American people worried about “hawkish foreign policy” that Hillary Clinton would offer more of the same.

By contrast, asked about his plan to de-escalate the tensions with Russia, Trump replied with a media bombshell, saying that he would have “a very, very good relationship with Putin... a very, very good relationship with Russia”: “Russia wants to defeat ISIS as badly as we do. If we had a relationship with Russia, wouldn’t it be wonderful if we could work on it together and knock the hell out of ISIS? Wouldn’t that be a wonderful thing?... I’ve already said, he is really very much of a leader.”

This was the most important segment of Trump’s performance.²² It reflected his crucial understanding that there are no inherent, ideologically or geopolitically determined conflicts between Russia and the United States; and, more importantly in the short term, that there is a community of strategic interests between them in fighting jihadism. He apparently understood that this should be a joint endeavor for two civilizationally kindred nations. This was light years away from Hillary Clinton’s approach – she was the first politician of note to hitlerize Putin – and it was a bold statement in the light of its likely mainstream media treatment. The media performed on cue, attacking Trump for “praising,” or even “embracing,” the Russian president.²³

²² Trump’s position reflected the more elaborate realist view presented in “Rethinking Russia: A Conversation With Russia Scholar Stephen F. Cohen.” *Huffington Post*, July 7, 2016. <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dan-kovalik/rethinking-russia-a-conve_b_7744498.html> (accessed September 1, 2017).

²³ Jessica Taylor, “Donald Trump’s Long Embrace Of Vladimir Putin.” NPR, September 9, 2016. <<http://www.npr.org/2016/09/09/493289326/donald-trumps-long-embrace-of-vladimir-putin>> (retrieved September 1, 2017).

Expectations After Trump's Victory – History never repeats itself, but certain pivotal events are comparable in the quest for meaning and order in an apparently chaotic world. Ronald Reagan's victory in 1980 and Donald Trump's unexpected triumph in 2016 differed in countless detail of foreign and domestic context, but they shared one key commonality: ordinary Americans in the "flyover country" had risen against a cosmopolitan, globalist America which subscribed to radically different moral, cultural, and civilizational standards.

In foreign affairs, Trump's victory opened the possibility of a radically new grand strategy. "America First" was a call for the return to diplomatic realism based on the recognition that the United States is a great power – for the time being (but not for ever) the globally predominant power – in a world of lesser powers which act in accordance with the rational calculus of promoting their security, prosperity, and cohesion in a competitive world.

In practice, the first task seemed clear: to improve relations with Russia and to have a workable *modus vivendi* with China. Outreach to Russia has been (and still is) vital to the settlement of the European civil war that erupted in 1914, continued in 1939, and resulted in the frozen conflict called the Cold War. Trump's victory seemingly provided the prospect of a pan-European entente that would embrace the whole of the Northern Hemisphere, from the British Isles to Valdivostok to the Americas. He had the historic opportunity to effect a *paradigm shift in the West that would pave the way for a genuine Northern Alliance of Russia, Europe, and the United States, as all three face similar existential demographic and ideological*

*(primarily Jihadist) threats in the decades ahead.*²⁴

That opportunity had been open to the United States ever since the end of the Cold War, but no American leader had recognized it or acted upon its imperative. Bush I, Clinton, Bush II, and Obama had all opted to pursue global hegemony. Trump appeared intent to reintroduce strategic sanity. His supporters voted against the Deep State duopoly, but in doing so they also voted for the candidate who "can do business with Vladimir Putin," who declared that "Crimea is none of our business;" who dared say that "NATO is obsolete;" and who said, "read my lips: no more regime change."

Donald Trump the candidate was neither a dogmatic neoconservative nor a consistent, principled non-interventionist. His impulses were on the whole instinctively nationalist, and thus consistent with his views on immigration and trade. His guiding principles were non-ideological. They amounted to a practical matter, distinguishing where America's vital interests are (Mexican border) and where they are not (Ukraine, Syria, South China Sea, etc.). "What's in it for us? Let's make a deal!" was no weakness, it was – potentially – statecraft.

In terms of any traditionally understood calculus of national security, at the moment of Trump's election the United States was the most invulnerable country in the world. America is armed to the teeth, sheltered on two sides by oceans, and capable to project her power to the distant shores. Unlike today's three major telurocratic nations – Russia,

²⁴ See: Srdja Trifkovic, "The North Worth Saving." *Orthodoxy Today*, February 19, 2009. <<http://www.orthodoxytoday.org/articles-2009/Trifkovic-The-North-Worth-Saving.php>> (accessed July 1, 2017).

China, and India – America has no territorial disputes with her neighbors, and her integrity is not threatened by separatist forces based on ethnicity or religion. In brief, America has the potential to be a *satiated power*, like Rome under the Five Good Emperors, Britain for many decades after Napoleon, or the German *Kaiserreich* under the Iron Chancellor until 1890. That status did not imply those powers' withdrawal from world affairs. Trajan, Castlereagh and Bismarck were not isolationists; they were prudent fine-tuners of their external environment, always cognizant of proportionate costs in pursuit of limited objectives. Trump seemed to understand the essence of the argument even without knowing the details.

His biggest problem all along was that the American “deep state”, and especially the shadow government's key components in the national security *apparat* and the military-industrial complex, rejected all conventional criteria in their definition of “interests” and “threats.”²⁵ Contrary to Trump's many statements and clear instincts, *they* were intent on the maintenance of American global primacy.

Politicized Intelligence Agencies vs. Trump – Knowing what is going on in the Hobbesian world is an essential function of the state apparatus. Detecting, assessing and countering external threats, real and potential, has helped the Byzantine empire survive a thousand years longer than its Western counterpart – well beyond its strictly geopolitical potential for endurance. Essential to its longevity was its decision-makers' ability to

gather reliable data from hundreds of postmen (*verdarii*), merchants, and missionaries.

Half a millenium later, the British developed intelligence gathering and processing into a fine art. It was a tool of maintaining a global trading empire with a minimum of force and expense. Its key ingredient was the work of professionals and willing amateurs who were engaged in collecting, processing and evaluating information from all over the world. *La perfide Albion* functioned very well for some three centuries in no small part due to its depoliticized and decentralized “secret service.” It relied on countless businessmen, ship captains, tourists and adventurers whose loyalty and reliability could be taken for granted, because they all belonged to the same cultural milieu.

The United States has the most highly developed intelligence gathering and processing apparatus known to man, as is to be expected from the mightiest power in history. It is very expensive, technologically unsurpassed, and capable of making assessments necessary to the task of making America invulnerable to external threats. Its major defect is that its top appointees have become willing – since the end of the Cold War – to produce the findings desired by their political bosses, regardless of their field operatives' inputs.

Historically, this phenomenon has plagued totalitarian regimes rather than democracies. Soviet spies had provided ample warnings of the coming Operation Barbarossa. Stalin's *a priori* refusal to take them seriously made his intelligence chiefs reluctant to argue otherwise, with devastating results. Hitler's rejection of his own services' assessments of the Soviet war-fighting potential had greatly contributed to the defeat of the Reich. By contrast, throughout the Cold War the U.S. government

²⁵ See: Mike Lofgren, *The Deep State: The Fall of the Constitution and the Rise of a Shadow Government*. Penguin Books reprint, 2016.

could rely on a professional intelligence apparatus created by Harry Truman in 1947. Its inputs were unhindered by political considerations, notably during the Cuban missile crisis in 1962.

The collapse of the USSR, and the onset of an ideologically driven concept of full-spectrum U.S. global dominance, has produced an unexpected degradation of the intelligence community's institutional culture. The greatest foreign failure in recent American history, the war in Iraq, was justified by tragically flawed "intelligence," as demonstrated by Colin Powell's UN Security Council performance in February 2003. Two years earlier, the machine was unable to detect and prevent the 9/11 attacks – numerous alarming leads notwithstanding – in part due to the political blinkers imposed by the Bush team's Saudi connection.

The problem of politicized intelligence gathering and processing became obvious, only weeks after Trump's victory, with the CIA claim that the Russian government (including Vladimir Putin personally!) had ordered and supervised the hacking of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) and Hillary Clinton campaign's emails. On December 16, 2016, Obama's CIA appointee and former counterterrorism advisor John Brennan asserted that the Kremlin effectively swayed the election in Trump's favor. The FBI under James Comey and James Clapper's Directorate of National Intelligence both begged to differ. Brennan nevertheless falsely claimed that they all agreed with his assessment of Moscow's nefarious role in the U.S. election. In the end, America's intelligence community turned out to be filled with obedient servants of the Deep State. This indicated that one of Donald Trump's primary tasks in the field of national security should have been to discard the practice of his predecessors to demand

intelligence which supports previously developed policy decisions.

The "Adults" Resume Control – At the security conference in Munich (February 17, 2017) and at the EU headquarters in Brussels two days later, Vice-President Mike Pence offered profuse assurances to the European elite class that the Trump administration supports unity and cohesion in the face of various threats allegedly facing the Western alliance.²⁶ His remarks amounted to an explicit repudiation of Trump's campaign statements and promises.

"The United States strongly supports NATO and will not waver in our commitment to our transatlantic alliance," Pence said, in contrast to Trump's remarks before the election that NATO was "obsolete." In a conference dominated by the narrative of the "Russian threat" and hacking, Pence did not sound a single discordant note. He paid tribute to "our shared values," our "noble ideals – freedom, democracy, justice and the rule of law." "As you keep faith with us," he went on, "under President Trump we will always keep faith with you."

Newly appointed Defense Secretary James Mattis, who also attended the Munich conference, made similar points – points which until then would have been considered distinctly un-Trumpian. President Trump has "thrown his full support behind NATO," Mattis declared, and warned of threats "on multiple fronts as the arc of instability builds on NATO's periphery and beyond." Earlier in that week Secretary of State Rex Tillerson went

²⁶ "Vice President Pence Remarks at Munich Security Conference," C-SPAN, February 18, 2017. <<https://www.c-span.org/video/?424248-1/vice-president-pence-remarks-munich-security-conference>> (retrieved September 1, 2017).

to Germany for the Group of 20 foreign ministers' meeting. As he left the meeting, "there was a palpable sense of relief" among the Europeans, which "stemmed in part from a sense that Tillerson is a serious man who came to Bonn... willing to hear their viewpoints."²⁷ According to the *Post*, after Tillerson's meeting with Russian's FM Lavrov, "Diplomats said they got the sense that there would be no radical shift in the U.S. stance toward Russia."

After Munich Pence went to Brussels, where he said that it was his privilege "on behalf of President Trump to express the strong commitment of the United States to continued cooperation and partnership with the European Union." He pledged the U.S. would keep working with the EU to protect eastern EU states from Russia's supposed designs. He reiterated the pledge he made in Munich that the Trump administration would "continue to hold Russia accountable" for the violence in eastern Ukraine.

"Pence is looking like an adult," commented James Jeffrey, Obama's ambassador to Iraq and a fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. "The question is will Trump listen to him?" The same question was repeated by several European commentators worried about "Trump's next tweet." But in the aftermath of national security adviser Michael T. Flynn's demolition by the Deep State operatives – a sordid affair in which Mike Pence played a significant role – that was the wrong question. The real question was

whether *Trump can resist the straitjacket* which the Russophobic, NATO-for-ever "foreign policy community" had been hewing for him ever since November 2016.

The answer, only a month after Trump's inauguration, was "probably not." The clue was provided by the appointment of Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster as Flynn's replacement. In contrast to his predecessor, McMaster sees Russia as an adversary and seems to reject the possibility of partnership. In May 2016, at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, he pointed out Russia's annexation of Crimea and support for "rebels" in eastern Ukraine as evidence of Moscow's broader effort "to collapse the post-World War Two, certainly the post-Cold War, security, economic, and political order in Europe and replace that order with something that is more sympathetic to Russian interests."²⁸ Overall, McMaster's views were diametrically opposed to Trump's previously stated objectives. The Duopoly was delighted. "The selection encouraged Republicans who admire General McMaster and waged a behind-the-scenes campaign to persuade Mr. Trump to select him," noted *The New York Times*, adding that a group of national security conservatives, "including a top aide to Senator John McCain of Arizona, also lobbied for him, and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, who has worked with General

²⁷ "Tillerson Eases Concerns Over Foreign Policy Under Trump." *The Washington Post*, February 17, 2017. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/tillerson-eases-concerns-over-foreign-policy-under-trump/2017/02/17/8a20acfc-f2fd-11e6-9fb1-2d8f3fc9c0ed_story.html?utm_term=.d080744b492b> (retrieved September 1, 2017).

²⁸ "Trump's New Security Advisor Differs From Him on Russia, Other Key Issues." *U.S. News & World Report*, February 21, 2017. <<https://www.usnews.com/news/top-news/articles/2017-02-21/trumps-new-security-advisor-differs-from-him-on-russia-other-key-issues>> (retrieved September 1, 2017).

McMaster, encouraged him to take the job.”²⁹ McCain himself praised McMaster in a tweet as “outstanding choice for nat’l security advisor – man of genuine intellect, character & ability.”

These words of praise for Trump’s choice came from the man who also went to Munich, to deliver what one analyst calls “a calculated, planned attack on Trump’s entire system of beliefs.” It was “without modern precedent, and it was out of bounds.”³⁰ A war it was, and Trump could not hope to win it by making key appointments pleasing to Messrs. McCain, Graham and their ilk. But already by the second half of February 2017 *Trump had effectively caved in to the establishmentarian Russophobes. This only encouraged the perpetrators of the soft (“seed crystal”) coup d’etat to be relentless. By early March Steve Bannon was at the top of their list, and that objective was finally attained five months*

*later.*³¹ *The final prize was Trump himself – impeached, humiliatingly tamed, or dead.*

Russophobia Unleashed – Already by the end of Trump’s first month in office, a paranoid, hysterical quality to the public discourse on Russia and all things Russian had taken root in the United States. The corporate media machine and its Deep State handlers had abdicated reason and common decency in favor of raw hate and fear-mongering. We had not seen anything like it even in the darkest days of the Cold War.

The roots of Russophobia’s emotional appeal to the Left is clear: it comes as a huge mental relief to the ultrasensitive liberal mind to be able to *hate* an outside group with impunity, and appear virtuous in the process. The object of the animus is a Christian and European nation which refuses to be postmodernized, or to become gripped by self-hate and morbid introspection; a nation not ashamed of its past and unwilling to surrender its future to alien multitudes; a nation unobsessed by transgender bathrooms, microaggressions, and other “issues” indicative of a society’s moral and intellectual decrepitude.

The liberals’ ideological and emotional Russophobia has blended seamlessly with the bread-and-butter hostility to Russia shared by Deep State operatives in the intelligence and national security apparatus, in the military-industrial complex, and in the Congressional duopoly. The result is a surreal narrative which mixes supposedly unprovoked “Russian

²⁹ “Trump Chooses H.R. McMaster as National Security Adviser.” *The New York Times*, February 20, 2017.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/20/us/politics/mcmaster-national-security-adviser-trump.html?_r=0> (retrieved September 1, 2017).

³⁰ “The McCain-Trump feud” (editorial). *The Washington Times*, February 20, 2017. <<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/feb/20/editorial-the-mccain-trump-feud/>> (retrieved July 1 2017). McCain’s words came close to a declaration of war on Trump; and the fact that he made the remarks on foreign soil is particularly offensive. It suggested that the senator apparently accepts the Democratic line that Trump resides today at the White House “only because Vladimir Putin successfully manipulated American public opinion and thereby influenced the election in the 50 separate American states.”

³¹ See e.g. “The fall of Steve Bannon is a win for the globalists.” *The Guardian*, August 18, 2017.

<<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/aug/18/steve-bannon-fired-donald-trump-jared-kushner-what-next>> (retrieved September 1, 2017).

aggression” in Ukraine, hostile intent in the Baltics, serial war crimes in Syria, political destabilization in Western Europe and gross interference in America’s “democratic process.” It includes an altogether fictitious “existential threat” which has made President Trump’s intended détente with Moscow impossible. He may have been serious about turning a new leaf, but the Deep State counterpressure proved just too great. A solid rejection front had emerged, left and right, conservative and liberal. It extended even into his own team, and finally inhibited Trump from making moves that could have appeared too friendly to Putin.

Considering the toxic Russophobia nurtured by the Beltway establishment, the first meeting between presidents Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin in Hamburg (July 7, 2017) went reasonably well. It was not perceived by its principals in terms of zero-sum game. It was a businesslike encounter between two grownups and their foreign ministers. The meeting did not include various staffers and advisors: the danger of leaks was thus eliminated, and the setup was more conducive to candor. It went on for two hours, longer than either side had anticipated, and covered a broad range of topics. Their initial agreements, notably on Syria, did not look earth-shattering, but it was significant that they were reached in the first place.³²

³² With this agreement, for the first time since the Syrian conflict erupted in 2011, the United States has become a party to a formal accord to reduce violence. According to Lavrov, the ceasefire would be supervised by Russian military police “in coordination with the Jordanians and Americans.” This implied de facto acceptance of Russia’s military presence in Syria as legitimate and acceptable. Tillerson hailed the agreement as proof that the U.S. and Russia were able to work together

On the subject of Russia’s alleged meddling in the 2016 election, the two leaders agreed that it is time to move on rather than litigate the past. We do not know whether Trump accepted Putin’s denials of interference (according to Sergei Lavrov), or acknowledged them without prejudice (according to Rex Tillerson, who also emphasized the two leaders’ “positive chemistry”). Either way, he was just going through the motions: Trump did not believe the elite narrative on Russian hacking.³³ On the other side, Putin effectively put his credibility on the line by giving Trump his personal assurances that there had been no meddling. In March 2018 he will be reelected to another six-year term, probably his final. He will therefore need to develop and maintain a solid relationship with Trump until at least January 2021, possibly even until 2024. If various ongoing investigations in the U.S. produce evidence of official Russian interference, that would be a fatal blow to the relationship of trust which Putin hopes to establish with his American counterpart. Putin’s readiness to disregard that possibility indicates his confidence that, in reality, no such evidence exists.

Trump’s first meeting with Vladimir Putin showed that he had not completely succumbed to the Swamp’s pressure. It offered a glimmer of hope that a new start in U.S.-Russian relations was still possible, regardless of what *The New York Times*, CNN, John McCain or Marco Rubio say. The Russophobes promptly

“to de-escalate the areas and the violence, once we defeat ISIS.”

³³ A day earlier in Poland Trump gave notably tepid support to the assertion that Moscow interfered in the 2016 election process: “I think it was Russia, but I think it was probably other people and/or countries, and I see nothing wrong with that statement. Nobody really knows; nobody really knows for sure.”

proceeded to undo the results, however. Their basic narrative (“Putin wins, Trump loses!”) was fact-free and unrelated to Russia’s actual policies. It reflected a deep odium of the elite class towards Russia-as-such.³⁴

Russophobic narrative has two key pillars. In terms of geopolitics, we see the striving of maritime empires – Britain before, and the United States after World War II – to “contain” and if possible control the Eurasian heartland, the core of which is of course Russia. Equally important is the already noted cultural antipathy, the desire not merely to influence Russian policies and behavior but to effect an irreversible transformation of Russia’s identity.³⁵

The Russophobic frenzy comes at a cost. It further devalues the quality of public discourse

³⁴ It has been developing in its current form since the Crimean War, when in his *Letters From Russia* Marquis de Custine said that the country’s “vener of European civilization was too thin to be credible.” “No human beings, black, yellow or white, could be quite as untruthful, as insincere, as arrogant – in short, as untrustworthy in every way—as the Russians,” President Theodore Roosevelt wrote in 1905. John Maynard Keynes, after a trip to the USSR 1925, wondered whether the “mood of oppression” might be “the fruit of some beastliness in the Russian nature.” J. Robert Oppenheimer opined in 1951 that, in Russia, “We are coping with a barbarous, backward people.” More recently, Senator John McCain declared that “Russia is a gas station masquerading as a country.”

³⁵ All along, some of the most viscerally Russophobic stereotypes come from Russia itself, from those members of Moscow’s “intelligentsia” who feel more at home in New York or London than anywhere in their own country. The late Anna Politkovskaya thus wrote in the *Los Angeles Times* 13 years ago that “it is common knowledge that the Russian people are irrational by nature.” It is impossible for a mainstream publication to publish a similar statement about Jews or Muslims.

on world affairs in the United States, which is already dismally low. It has already undermined the prospects for a mutually beneficial new chapter in U.S.-Russian relations, based on the realist assessment that those two powers have no “existential” differences – and share many actual and potential commonalities. It perpetrates the arrogant delusion that there is a superior, “Western” model of social and cultural thought and action which can and should be imposed everywhere, but in Russia in particular. Saddest of all, Russophobic mania prolongs the European civil war which exploded in July 1914, continued in 1939, and has never properly ended... not even with the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The Saudi Fiasco – A clear sign of President Trump’s surrender to the establishment came soon after he started his first foreign tour in Saudi Arabia on May 20, 2017. His two-day visit was filled with a series of embarrassingly poltroonish statements and gestures to his hosts.³⁶ For his part, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson asserted that the battle against “extremism” had “nothing to do with

³⁶ See: Justin Raimondo, “Donald of Arabia.” Antiwar.com, May 22, 2017. <<http://original.antiwar.com/justin/2017/05/21/donald-of-arabia-a-disgusting-spectacle>> (retrieved September 1, 2017). Trump’s visit culminated in a macabre sabre-handling spectacle, the moral equivalent of playfully tossing Zyklon B canisters in a Silesian compound in 1944. To paraphrase Winston Churchill’s paean to the RAF Fighter Command, never in the history of U.S. foreign policy have so few let down so many so soon.

religion.”³⁷ Had President Trump merely fine-tuned some of candidate Trump’s positions, the adjustment likely would have been unsurprising and prudent. What we have seen instead was a comprehensive reversal of his stated positions on most specific issues (Russia, NATO, EU, Syria...) and a retreat on the key question of America’s grand strategy.

“Saudi Arabia and many of the countries that gave vast amounts of money to the Clinton Foundation want women as slaves and to kill gays,” candidate Trump opined a year earlier. He accurately described the Saudis as “mouth pieces, bullies, cowards” who were “paying ISIS” and imagined that they could “control our US politicians.” He demanded release of the missing 28 pages redacted from the Congressional report on the 9/11 terrorist attacks, hinting that the Saudi rulers had helped the hijackers.

This position was light years away from President Trump’s speech in Riyadh on May 21, 2017. He was “honored to be received by such gracious hosts” and pleased to announce “even more blessed news”: a “historic agreements with the Kingdom that will invest almost \$400 billion in our two countries” and “help the Saudi military to take a greater role in security operations.” Furthermore, he added, “We will make history again with the opening of a new Global Center for Combating Extremist Ideology – located right here, in this central part of the Islamic World... co-chaired by the United States and Saudi Arabia...”

Trump cannot be unaware that Saudi Arabia is the true “Global Center” of

promoting and financing Islamic extremism, and that no partnership with it is possible for as long as the nature of its regime remains unchanged. Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab’s legacy is alive and well: the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the most intolerant Islamic regime in the world.³⁸ While it continues to build mosques all over the world, tens of thousands of Christians among the millions of foreign workers from Asia, Europe and America must worship in secret, if at all. The Saudi religious police continues to routinely intimidate, abuse, and detain citizens and foreigners. Its detainees are subjected to beatings and torture. Punishments include flogging and amputation; hundreds of executions by beheading, stoning, or firing squad are carried out every year. The only expanding industry is that of Islamic obscurantism. Five Islamic universities produce thousands of clerics, many more than will ever be hired in the country’s mosques. Thousands end up spreading and promoting Wahhabism abroad.

Trump did not mention the ongoing Saudi military intervention in Yemen, which is illegal and has killed thousands of civilians. The real threat to the Kingdom’s long-term stability is internal. The royal family is addicted to a lifestyle of parasitic idleness and adverse to change. If and when the Ibn Saud dynasty collapses, a populist Islamic regime is more likely to triumph than a reformist, modernizing movement. The decades-long Beltway conspiracy of silence on Saudi Arabia’s role in abetting Islamic terrorism is now certain to continue. Its Islamic “charities” that finance

³⁷ Mallory Shelbourne, “Tillerson in Saudi Arabia: ‘This is a fight of good against evil.’” *The Hill*, May 21, 2017. <<http://thehill.com/homenews/administration/334474-tillerson-in-saudi-arabia-this-is-a-fight-of-good-against-evil>> (retrieved September 1, 2017).

³⁸ See: Srdja Trifkovic, “The Green Corridor: Implications of Islamic Geopolitical Designs in the Balkans,” Chapter 14 in Sarah N. Stern (Ed.), *Saudi Arabia and the Global Islamic Terrorist Network: America and the West’s Fatal Embrace*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

terrorists – notably the *Al Haramin Foundation* – will go on filling extremist coffers, and the country's true role in the 9-11 attacks will remain concealed from the American public.

It seems likely that, under Trump, the Washingtonian establishment will continue to treat Saudi Arabia as a valuable ally. America will not set herself free from the need to pander to Saudi whims, including the “right” of its government to bankroll thousands of mosques and Islamic centers around the world that preach intolerance and provide the logistic infrastructure to extremists. Operationally, this policy still requires not only overlooking the nefarious activities of the supposedly friendly Muslim states – such as Saudi Arabia's crucial early support for ISIS in 2013-2014 – but also a consistent U.S. bias in favor of the Muslim party in virtually every conflict with Christians, and for the Sunni side against the Shiites.

Trump's silent tolerance of Saudi Arabia's involvement in Yemen sets the stage for a new set of problems with Iran, with Riyadh strongly siding with Israel's leaders and the War Party in Washington in their desire to see the U.S. involved in a new, potentially disastrous Middle Eastern war. On this issue, and many others, he has succumbed to the Swamp. This was an act of betrayal of all those who took his rallying call, *America First*, seriously.

Surrender on Afghanistan – President Donald Trump's address to the nation on Afghanistan (August 21, 2017) was carefully

crafted and well delivered.³⁹ It did not provide a blueprint for *winning the war*, however, which remained his stated objective. Trump has settled for a compromise between all-out escalation, advocated by some of his generals, and disengagement he had favored on the campaign trail. His approach, presumably based on the doctrine of “principled realism” – seeing the world as it is, not seeking to remake it – in this case is likely to result in an open-ended continuation of the Afghan stalemate.⁴⁰

Trump was aware that people were tired of the longest war in American history, and said that he shared their frustration “over a foreign policy that has spent too much time, energy, money, and most importantly lives, trying to rebuild countries in our own image, instead of pursuing our security interests above all other considerations.” He admitted that he has changed his mind: “*My original instinct was to pull out*; and, historically, I like following my instincts,” but “decisions are much different when you sit behind the desk in the Oval Office...” America should “seek an honorable and enduring outcome worthy of the tremendous sacrifices that have been made.” A rapid exit “would create a vacuum that terrorists, including ISIS and al-Qaeda, would instantly fill.” He invoked Obama's “hasty and mistaken” withdrawal from Iraq in 2011, and pledged not to repeat that error.

³⁹ Rebecca Shabad, “Trump outlines new U.S. strategy in Afghanistan.” CBS News, August 21, 2017. <<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-addresses-nation-on-new-afghanistan-strategy-live-updates>> (retrieved September 1, 2017).

⁴⁰ “Trump's ‘principled realism’ call on Afghanistan” (editorial). *New York Post*, August 21, 2017. <<http://nypost.com/2017/08/21/trumps-principled-realism-call-on-afghanistan>> (retrieved September 1, 2017).

Trump's outright rejection of a timetable for withdrawal was ostensibly pragmatic: "A core pillar of our new strategy is a shift from a time-based approach to one based on conditions." It is counterproductive "to announce in advance the dates we intend to begin, or end, military options... Conditions on the ground – not arbitrary timetables – will guide our strategy from now on. America's enemies must never know our plans or believe they can wait us out. I will not say when we are going to attack, but attack we will."

The problem is that this statement of intent does not amount to "a new strategy." It is reminiscent of George W. Bush's 2003 pledge that "our forces will be coming home [from Iraq] as soon as their work is done,"⁴¹ and his promise (two years later) that the troops would depart as soon as they "complete the mission." Trump did not spell out the "conditions" that would make disengagement possible at some future date, which was at odds with his subsequent rejection of open-ended responsibility for the final outcome ("Our commitment is not unlimited, and our support is not a blank check").

There was a gap between Trump's boldly stated overall objective ("One way or another, these problems will be solved... and in the end, we will win") and the strategy for its attainment. This was the key structural weakness of his address. Trump said that "from now on, victory will have a clear definition: attacking our enemies, obliterating ISIS, crushing al-Qaeda, preventing the Taliban from taking over the country, and stopping mass terror attacks against Americans before they emerge" – but that was not "realism," principled or otherwise. It was a

wish list, unsupported by any clearly defined means for its attainment.

An additional contingent of four thousand U.S. troops – the equivalent of one brigade combat team – would not be able to change the game and secure "victory" as defined by him. At best, those troops' deployment would only prolong the existing stalemate. They would not be able to do anything that 100,000 soldiers could not do; they would make little difference to the offensive potential of the existing U.S. contingent of 8,500 soldiers, contrary to Trump's assurance that "attack we will" and that "our troops will fight to win."

The only encouraging part of Trump's address was his warning to the authorities in Islamabad that they could run with the hares and hunt with the hounds for ever. "We have been paying Pakistan billions and billions of dollars at the same time they are housing the very terrorists that we are fighting," Trump said. "But that will have to change, and that will change immediately. No partnership can survive a country's harboring of militants and terrorists who target U.S. servicemembers and officials. It is time for Pakistan to demonstrate its commitment to civilization, order, and to peace."

This was an immensely significant declaration of intent. For years Pakistan's powerful Directorate for Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) has been a key source of support, finance, and protection for various jihadist movements, from Kashmir to Kandahar and beyond.⁴² Pakistan is an irredeemably flawed entity, inherently unable to turn itself into a

⁴² For a comprehensive media record, see *The New York Times*' archive on "Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI)."

<<https://www.nytimes.com/topic/organization/interservices-intelligence-isi?inline=nyt-org>> (retrieved September 1, 2017).

⁴¹<<https://www.globalpolicy.org/political-issues-in-iraq/withdrawal.html>> (retrieved September 1, 2017).

stable polity or a benign global presence, let alone a half-decent regional neighbor. It needs to be quarantined and its disintegration along its many ethnic-tribal lines actively encouraged. It is the epicenter of global jihad, a breeding ground for the new echelons of “martyrs.”

The role of the ISI in supporting Islamic insurgents in Afghanistan is well documented, notably by a comprehensive, decade-old RAND study that accused “individuals within Pakistan’s government” of effectively crippling American attempts to stabilize the country.⁴³ The long list of Pakistan’s proven or suspected links with numerous terrorist attacks over the years – notably the 7/7 bombings in London in 2005 and the outrage in Bombay in 2008 – illustrate the problem. The Taliban and many other Islamic extremist and terrorist movements all over the world were born out of ideas conceived in the battlefields of Afghanistan and subsequently matured and spread from Pakistan’s political, military, and religious establishment. The ISI grew rich and mighty, primarily thanks to the U.S. role in helping Islamic fundamentalists fight the Soviets in the 1980s.

Trump’s abject surrender to the establishment’s failed course on Afghanistan was paradigmatic of his overall failure to follow his instincts and promises. He is aware that, sooner or later, Afghanistan will revert to its usual state of Hobbesian pre-modernity and that the war there is unwinnable. The lessons, not only of the Soviet intervention which started on Christmas Day 1979, but also of the British intervention known as the First Afghan

War (1839-1842), should have been Trump’s guide for the future. Tragically, he has accepted defeat (“decisions are much different when you sit behind the desk in the Oval Office”).

Systemic Incoherence – In today’s Washington, foreign policy decision-making process has become arguably more diffuse than ever in this nation’s history. In July 2017, U.S. Congress enacted legislation imposing new sanctions on Russia and limiting Trump’s authority to lift them on his own. This was done despite objections from the White House that this would inappropriately infringe on the chief executive’s ability to direct foreign policy. On a key foreign policy issue the president was thus barred from acting as utility-maximizing rational decision-maker. His hands are effectively tied.

More unprecedentedly still, systemic incoherence – occasionally bordering on outright schizophrenia – reigns inside Trump’s own camp. To wit, on the very day he said that it was “time to move forward in working constructively with Russia” (July 10, 2017), U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley flatly contradicted him by declaring, “We can’t trust Russia and we won’t ever trust Russia.” Such blatant discrepancy within the upper echelons of the U.S. executive branch was literally unprecedented.

In late July 2017 it was announced that the CIA would discontinue its program of arming and training “moderate” anti-Assad rebels in Syria, which was launched under Obama in 2013. This was ostensibly a long-overdue decision: the CIA-sponsored “Free Syrian Army” was ineffective at best, jihadist-friendly always. The program carried the danger of mission-creep in a multifaceted civil war in a country of little consequence to America’s strategic interests, and it increased the risk of

⁴³ Seth G. Jones, “Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan.” RAND Counterinsurgency Study – Volume 4.
<<https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG595.html>> (retrieved September 1, 2017).

needless confrontation with Russia. The move appeared to be a logical extension of the ceasefire agreement covering southern Syria, which the U.S. and Russia announced after Trump's meeting with Putin in Hamburg on July 7, 2017.

It soon became obvious, however, that the decision to terminate the program was not the result of a strategic executive directive to disengage from Syria, which all organs of the state would duly implement. It was, in fact, internal bureaucratic politics at play: a victory for the Pentagon over Langley in an interdepartmental contest of long standing. Whatever Trump may have agreed with Putin, American arms, equipment and money will continue to flow into Syria – except that from now on they will be channelled solely to the Kurdish YPG militia.⁴⁴

An even more dangerous mix of forces is at work vis-à-vis Iran. The pressure for yet another Middle Eastern war is relentlessly building up. “Iran must be free,” Newt

Gingrich says; “The dictatorship must be destroyed. Containment is appeasement and appeasement is surrender.”⁴⁵ This is nonsense – the U.S. defeated the Soviet Union in the Cold War by following the strategy of containment – but in Washington the drumbeat of toxic oratory is creating a sense of near-inevitability. “We’ll celebrate in Tehran in 2019,” John Bolton assured the world.⁴⁶ His claim was reminiscent of the propaganda blitz before the 2003 attack on Iraq: an exaggerated threat was coupled with the false assertion that nonviolent options are not viable, and with the assurance that the military operation would be a cakewalk.

Trump is aware of the huge risk, his anti-Iranian rhetoric notwithstanding. The danger is that on this issue, too, he may succumb to pressure in order to improve his own domestic standing. The praise he received from otherwise unfriendly quarters for launching cruise missiles against a Syrian government airfield in April 2017 illustrates the temptation. The same systemically catastrophic but politically functional calculus may apply to his dealings with North Korea, where bellicose rhetoric is present on both sides.

A Crippled Presidency – We have seen coups of sorts in Washington before, not that anyone calls them that (e.g. the killing of John

⁴⁴ See: Kareem Shaheen, “US decision to arm Kurds in Syria poses threat to Turkey, says Ankara.” *The Guardian*, May 10, 2017. <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/10/ankara-calls-us-arming-of-kurds-fighting-isis-in-syria-a-threat-to-turkey>> (retrieved September 1, 2017). It is of course preferable to support nationalists over jihadists, but continued U.S. engagement of any kind is bound to create complications. Support for the Kurds may yield short-term tactical dividends in the battle against ISIS; in the long term it will cause further friction with Ankara. Erdogan may act to prevent the establishment of an autonomous Kurdish statelet in northern Syria, which he sees as a major threat to Turkey's stability and territorial integrity. If he does, the U.S. would be forced to choose between abandoning its Kurdish protégés and risking terminal breach with a major regional power and NATO partner of long standing.

⁴⁵ Patrick Buchanan, “Is Iran In Our Sights Now?” *Creators.com*, July 21, 2017. <<https://www.creators.com/read/pat-buchanan/07/17/is-iran-in-our-gun-sights-now>> (retrieved July 21, 2017).

⁴⁶ “John Bolton: Iran Regime Must Not See Its 40th Birthday.” *Iran Focus*, July 3, 2017. <http://www.iranfoc.us.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=31737:john-bolton-iran-regime-must-not-see-its-40th-birthday&catid=4:iran-general&Itemid=109> (retrieved September 1, 2017).

F. Kennedy, the ouster of Richard Nixon). The rolling coup against Trump is of a different order of magnitude. It had been plotted by the Deep State even before he was inaugurated. Significant power nodes in the United States had always refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of his presidency, and at the time of this writing (September 2017) they remain relentless. Regime media ceaselessly pump out false stories designed to smear the president and his team. The leaks had turned into unpunished deluge a long time ago. The courts still usurp executive powers. Wanton street violence is condoned if perpetrated by “antifascists” for reasons which are deemed ideologically correct by the elite class, and the President is condemned for effectively upholding the rule of law.

All this is without American precedent; but Deep State regime-change perpetrators did it in Ukraine in February 2014, and elsewhere over the years (Tbilisi, Belgrade etc), and pronounced it marvelous. Why not do the same at home? The Constitution has been a near-dead letter for decades anyway. The judges have substituted their ideological preferences for the constitutional and statutory authority of the president – the border security equivalent of *Roe* and *Obergefell*. The message is that even in the areas most directly under legitimate Executive authority (as opposed to presidential usurpation of Congress’s war power, with which the plotters are perfectly pleased), the judiciary has declared: “We rule here, not you.”

The only way to defeat the creeping coup would have been to proceed with shock and awe. Trump needed to keep changing the narrative on his enemies so as to keep them off balance, including a vigorous campaign of legal prosecutions against and/or related to Hillary Clinton, Podesta, the Clinton Foundation, Pizzagate, Flynngate, etc.

Doubling down on his populist domestic and foreign policy had to be part of the counter-coup, Russia included. Most self-described Republicans supported Trump’s declared desire for constructive relations with Russia. This was a potentially winning policy, but he had to spell it out, brave the hysteria, and serenely go about dominating the national debate. He did not do it, however.

The most important motivation for *die Putschisten* in the Deep State was forestalling any rapprochement with Moscow. The mobs of useful Leftists protesting Trump’s victory on the streets were motivated by disparate enthusiasms that all converge on their loathing of the identity and values of the traditional American nation. But the paymasters behind the disorders, notably George Soros, were concentrated like a laser on the Russophobic primary goal of the Deep Staters. They encouraged leaks, and launched calls for a removal of Trump by the intelligence professionals as America’s supposedly last line of defense against a legally elected president. Thus the “progressives” thus revealed the undemocratic, even totalitarian, impulse at the core of their worldview.

By early spring 2017, Trump’s surrender on practically every issue of foreign policy was in full swing. With the removal of Flynn and installation of McMaster in February – along with global-interventionist, Russophobic, NATO-for-ever enthusiasts already on board, like Pence, Mattis, Haley and McFarland – the chief aim of the plotters vis-à-vis Moscow appeared within reach. Their final objective was not to finalize the palace coup, Petrograd 1917 style. They aimed, wisely from their vantage point, to let a neutered, boxed-in President Trump remain in office as a colorful, twitterful figurehead, while they ensured a continuation of the hegemonist strategies

pursued by Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama.

By the seventh month of Donald Trump's presidency, the process was well-nigh complete. It was reflected in a surreal quality to American foreign policy decision-making process. The phenomenon was literally unprecedented, at odds with both the standard theoretical model of international relations and known historical practice.

The concept of the "behavior" of states presumes the process in which key decision-makers define objectives, select specific courses of action conducive to their attainment, and allocate resources (diplomatic, military, economic, etc.) proportionate to the perceived value of those objectives. All along it is assumed that the state – especially a great power – is a *rational* and *unitary* actor. Foreign policy decisions and their implementation may be deemed on the whole beneficial (the Truman/Kennan Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, defending Korea, responding to the Cuban missile crisis) or detrimental (the Bay of Pigs, Tonkin/Vietnam, interventions in the Balkans and the Middle East). Nevertheless, all along the process of formulating and prioritizing problems, reaching decisions, and implementing those decisions had been based on a standard mechanism, known and accepted as both legal and legitimate.

Domestic restraints on the conduct of foreign policy are always present; but as we neared the first anniversary of Trump's victory, they were becoming extreme. Starting even before the inauguration, the permanent state has been imposing its agenda on a president who wanted to chart a new course – on Russia, on Syria, on Afghanistan, on NATO, on the very concept of global empire.

At the same time, a pliant Trump has been stepping ever farther away from his campaign

pledges. He gave up on "America First," which meant primarily getting involved less in foreign quarrels and acting like a normal nation-state freed from the self-defeating shackles of global-imperial delusions. In the ninth month of his presidency, it would not be exactly correct to say that the permanent state has subverted and undermined the chief executive. It would be more accurate to recognize that a mutinous president has tried, and failed, to alter the long-charted course of the permanent state. As far as its operatives are concerned, Donald Trump need not be impeached after all; he has been effectively tamed and neutered.

ТРАМПОВА СПОЉНА ПОЛИТИКА**Победа „Дубоке државе“****Кључне ријечи**

Трамп, дубока држава, глобална хегемонија, спољнополитички реализам, америчка изузетност, дуопол, естаблишмент, елита, медији

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Сажетак

Доналд Трамп, аутсајдер који је победио на америчким председничким изборима упркос свим предвиђањима, дошао је у Белу кућу наизглед решен да зацрта нови стратешки курс у спољној политици САД. Његова супарница Хилари Клинтон била је свесрдни следбеник хегемонистичког концепта „доминације комплетног спектра“ и конкретних опција заснованих на деценијама старим глобалистичко-либералним претпоставкама. Са друге стране, како овај чланак истиче, Трампова визија „Америке на првом месту“ пре свега је одбацила доктрину Америке као „пропозиционе нације“ засноване на апстрактним „вредностима“ и идеолошким аксиомима који је наводно чине изузетном, чак незаменљивом. Из те кључне премисе проистекла је његова критика глобалног ангажмана САД, проблематизовање улоге и мисије НАТО пакта, залагање за дијалог и детант са Русијом, као и одбацивање интервенција у циљу промена режима у далеким земљама. Аутор чланка истиче да је, као кандидат, Трамп изричито тежио да реafirмише државни разлог као идеју-водиљу спољнополитичког одлучивања. Његова највећа препрека, међутим, није била непријатељска медијска машина, већ америчка „дубока држава“ коју чине кључни елементи безбедносно-обавештајних структура, војноиндустријски комплекс и двостраначки дуопол у Вашингтону. Перманентна држава, тврдо решена да истраје на одржавању америчког глобалног примата, вазда је одбацивала критеријуме реализма у дефиницији „интереса“ САД и „претњи“ националној безбедности. Њени оперативци показали су се успешним у наметању спољнополитичке агенде која је била у дубокој супротности са Трамповим претходно изнесеним ставовима по свим битним светским питањима. Истовремено, као што чланак документује, сам Трамп је – испрва постепено, а потом све брже – одступао од својих предизборних обећања, притом наступајући као да прихвата наметнуте ставове. У закључку аутор констатује се да није дубока држава САД толико однела превагу над Трампом, колико је он – као испрва бунтовни реметитељ двостраначког консензуса – претрпео неуспех у покушају да промени зацртани курс трајне државе.