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Welcome to Trumpland: Obama's Legacy

By Luciana Bohne
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A new gang is in power in Washington. No one quite knows how or why, but the old gang is fighting back with all of its might. A charlatan heads the new gang; he says he opposes everything the old boss did. He says he will set it all right at home and in the global neighborhood, yet his cabinet of *consiglieri* is stacked with muscular Pentagon Telamon Ajaxes, avaricious bankers and Wall Street vultures, and the mother of all archaic fossil-fuel planetary polluters—Exxon Mobil.

A clutch of customary villains, no less villainous than the ones before. His boss of Labor opposes raising the minimum wage. His boss of Treasury is a former partner of Goldman Sachs, international economic polluters, big time.

In January 2017, the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists moved up its “Doomsday Clock” by thirty seconds to two-and-a-half minutes to midnight, the closest to Armageddon since 1953. The causes, they wrote, were “nuclear volatility” and climate change. The signs that Trump might reverse the course of doom are unpromising. Rex Tillerson’s appointment means that Exxon-Mobil will function as the virtual Secretary of State. The war state rules: “Let it be an arms race. We will outmatch them at every pass and outlast them all,” Trump said to Mika Brzesinski in a phone call in December, if we can trust the report by the co-host of MSNBC’s “Morning Joe.”

Meanwhile, during and after the electoral process, the circulatory apparatus of two-gang democracy has shown terminal symptoms of arteriosclerosis. As latent system-dementia becomes overt, the polity has been losing its marbles, too. Two and a half million participated in the Women’s March the day after the inauguration, protesting Trump’s threat to women’s rights—a mass never seen in the streets before to oppose Obama’s killings, which included a disproportionate amount of civilians, many of them women. You know the numbers: 50,000 in Libya; 10,000 in Yemen and Ukraine each; 400,000 in Syria; 2,500 in Gaza, to select the most widely known figures. Add to these casualties the millions of internally displaced and refugees (65 millions in 2017, up from 59 million in 2016), fleeing wars and economic depredation by the knights of Obama’s neo-liberal and neo-colonial ministration.

But we mustn’t begrudge late risers.

Behind the old gang lies a regime of mendacity, a tide of greed, a blight of inequality, a plague of wars, a reign of hypocrisy. Before the new gang, a vision of Pandora, opening wider her nasty box of troubles. More evils released to join the ones already loosed. The streets are turned into a bedlam of discord, bathos, alarm, and confusion because the forgetful harpy and serial killer Hillary Clinton lost and the crazed buffoon and gaseous “orange” zeppelin won—billionaire Trump, head of an empire of 111 industrial, commercial, and financial corporations. “Friend of the people.”

I’m not making this up.

The result of the election has been a political cluster bomb. Bomblets continue to explode in the form of protests and marches and media hysteria. None of these focus on what really matters: the future of humanity on an overheated planet, menaced by America’s systematic drive for space and power over the Earth.

It’s the geopolitics, stupid.

Popular pandemonium exploded over the merits and demerits of two evils. How can a polity be brought so low? The two evils are one. In the poisonous air, I hear the echo of Mark Twain’s sardonic rewrite of the “Battle Hymn of the Republic,” to denounce his own time’s descent into the moral quagmire of imperialism in the Spanish-American War of 1898:

Mine eyes have seen the orgy of the launching of the sword
He is searching out the hoardings where the strangers' wealth is stored
He has loosed his fateful lightning, and with woe and death has scored
His lust is marching on.

It would be a relief to hear a country united in such a challenging chorus accusing officials' and backers' domestic and foreign violence. But the night is not yet dark enough for the owl of Minerva to begin her flight and reveal the gangs' collective abuses of our trust in their vainglorious myths. We are stranded on the "darkling plane," in a greyness which the powers that deny us understanding are painting with still more grey. We cannot read the past, so we cannot move into the future. We sense what we think we know is not what is. We are not even sure we are living in the present.

How can such a suspension of time not make one nauseous?

"The Nausea is not within me . . . I feel it out there . . . I am within it." Just so Racontin, the protagonist of Jean Paul Sartre's novel, *Nausea*, explains the physical revulsion he felt on touching reality around him—a chair, a person, a work of art. But where is the rot? "I feel it out there in the wall, in the suspenders, everywhere around me." What does it look like? "A monster? A giant carapace? Sunk in the mud? A dozen pairs of claws or fins laboring slowly in the slime? The monster rises. At the bottom of the water."

Is "Trump" Grendl's new name? In the shock of the weeks before the inauguration, the old gang's media minstrels indeed decried that a monster had been loosed from the slime of the White Lagoon peopled by racists voting in the rustic hinterlands—the Rustofarians. The minstrels spread urban panic. The crowds roared: bugger the elections; have a vote recount; abolish the Electoral College; declare the Trump unfit. This monster, about to squat in an oval-shaped room, like so many elect before him, was supposed to have been Hillary Clinton.

But *she* morphed into *him*.

Her gang pointed the finger at Russia. It was Russia brought this ill wind, not the foulness of the Clinton clan, not the bloodlust of the Obama years, not the political slaughter of the lymphatic social democrat, Bernie Sanders, who could have saved the gang's ass. Given it four more years of failing but respectable life. It was Russia that wove the web of fate—Russia "not born of woman," unnatural, evil, stained with the original sin of communism, the mark of Cain. Russia that brought "great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill" and cut down the Lady Queen of Chaos in the prime of her ascendancy to Empress of a world, large swathes of which she had drained of blood and was herself "in blood stepped so far, that should [she] wade no more, returning were as tedious as go over"

But she was left there, in blood's midstream, and they rued.

The entire gang world—the *Heimat* of the globalist "international community"—went into a chorus of shrieking laments. The political eunuchs in Europe cried along with their American masters. Here was the upstart presidential mirror in which the *Heimat* of the good and the great

could no longer admire itself enlarged, greater, finer, more humanitarian than his crude illiberal vulgarity would now reflect back. The old gang's bad-faith had become unsustainable. Their self-image, propped up by deceptive ideological claptrap—"liberal values"—was shattered. What of the solemnity of slogans—"civil society," rule of law, dedication to universal principles, respect for identities, protection of ethnic minorities, zeal for religious freedoms? What of the pompous phrases, the lubrications of exalted promises? All gone into the vortex of the philistine stupidity of the deplorable masses and their despotic ballot box. Nothing to hear but the howling of an evil new wind.

The hearing of which was new to them.

Before Trump emerged from the electoral swamp the winner, everything already had been the contrary of everything. And became more so. The liberation of 100,000 civilians in Aleppo in December 2016 by the Syrian Arab Army and the Russian allies from four years of Western-backed terror, they called "a war crime." The separation of Crimeans from Ukraine by popular referendum (over 90% in favor) joining Russia, they called "Russian aggression." The US/EU coup in Ukraine (2013-14), planned and executed by the Obama Neo-con State Department and costing \$5 billion dollars, substituting an elected government by a junta of Neo-Nazi ministers and officials, they called the return of "democracy to Ukraine." The fascism, now attributed to Trump as a novelty, was hiding in plain sight in Obama's reign of illegal wars, regime changes, ubiquitous sanctions, and terror proxy armies, studiously ignored or fictionalized by the scribbler-courtiers in the media, the punditry, think-tanks, foundations, and officialdom.

These "fixers" reversed cause and effect. They obscured the fact that Crimea's separation from Ukraine was the *effect* of the US-coup in Kiev. They used it as the *cause* for tightening NATO's military noose around Russia, including with offensive missiles, called "defensive." Thus the *effect* of American regime-change in Ukraine became the *cause* of American militarization of Central and Eastern Europe. With objective Russia. This militarization against the constructed phantom of Russian aggression goes by the grand name of Atlantic Resolve 2017, which the US Department of Defense justifies on its website in these terms:

The United States is demonstrating its continued commitment to collective security through a series of actions designed to reassure NATO allies and partners of America's dedication to enduring peace and stability in the region *in light of the Russian intervention in Ukraine* (emphasis mine).

That bullhorn of the military-industrial complex, John McCain, turned reality upside down in an instruction to the new gang for continuing the sanction regime against Russia:

"In just the last three years under Vladimir Putin, Russia has invaded Ukraine, annexed Crimea, threatened NATO allies, and intervened militarily in Syria, leaving a trail of death, destruction, and broken promises in his wake."

In a rational world, the bulk of this accusation would be lobbed at the planners in Obama's neo-liberal-neo-con gang, but no imperial ego can admit being morally in the wrong. It dresses its violence in cloth of gold, spun obligingly by the official media. The bloody rags of responsibility

are tossed onto someone else, who must be demonized, preferably by a media liberal. Rachel Maddow, for example, graduated as an instant Sovietologist in her incendiary rant linking Putin's capitalist Russia to Stalin's socialist USSR. Tell me what rallies the American public—including and especially the liberals—to the side of the Star and Stripes more precipitously than raising the communist ghost?

The manipulation of news and the distortion of reality are the most powerful weapons in the hands of power. They can make a whole reality disappear. Yemen's, for example. The Saudi "coalition," backed by the US and Britain, began bombing Yemen on 23 March 2015. Since then, 3.2 million Yemenis have been displaced, half the people suffer from malnutrition, 10,000 civilians have been killed (that's 13 civilians per day), 2 million youngsters cannot attend school, nearly 15 million people (55 percent children) have no access to basic medical care.

Yet, we heard nothing of this immense suffering. The US and Britain, in fact, profited from the war in Yemen. The Obama administration sold on the world's weapon market \$200 billion worth of arms, the largest US weapons' sale since WW II—over \$100 billion to Saudi Arabia alone. Britain's contribution to Saudi Arabia's arsenal was \$3.2 billion in the last year alone. The United States and Britain continue to provide intelligence and logistical support to the Saudi-led coalition, which intervened on the side of Yemeni President Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi, who fled to Saudi Arabia in the midst of his people's civil war.

But, throughout the Obama years, all was quiet on the Yemeni front in officialdom and its media mouthpiece over the deliberate targeting of vital civilian infrastructure, schools and hospitals, weddings and funerals. At a funeral in Sana, last October, a Saudi airstrike killed 114 civilians. Before the bombing of Yemen began, the Obama gang imposed sanctions and blockaded Yemen—all without a Security Council resolution or any pretense of adhering to international law. The director of Yemen's Save the Children recently remarked:

"Even before the war tens of thousands of Yemeni children were dying of preventable causes. But now, the situation is much worse and an estimated 1,000 children are dying every week from preventable killers like diarrhea, malnutrition and respiratory tract infections."

In foreign policy, this "racist" is no different from the "post-racist." Trump's "defense" planners are putting Yemen on the media map but only to use it as a cudgel to beat Iran with. On Yemen, they are reported as setting to step up Obama's infamous drone "kill list," ramping up the US role in the civil war, and looking to engage more directly. Taking Yemen as an example, it becomes clear that both the liberal and the illiberal president regard the business of war a national industry. Obama's last words in office exalted the assumed invincibility of America's military prowess. On Dec 22, Trump posted on Twitter, "The United States must greatly strengthen and expand its nuclear capability until such time as the world comes to its senses regarding nukes."

There will be no retrenchment of US belligerence under Trump. In the first aftermath of his inauguration, President Trump directed Defense Secretary James Mattis to

“Initiate a new Nuclear Posture Review to ensure that the United States’ nuclear deterrent is modern, robust, flexible, resilient, ready, and appropriately tailored to deter 21st-century threats and reassure our allies.”

On his first visit to the Pentagon, the president signed an executive action calling for expansion of the US military, including its nuclear arsenal to be ready for war with its “near competitors,” understood as Russia and China. “I am signing an executive action to begin a great rebuilding of the armed services of the United States,” he told the Pentagon during the signing.

Thus was the military-industrial complex pacified for losing their favorite candidate, Hillary Clinton. Reported by the *New York Times*,

the Pentagon itself, anticipating Trump’s directive to Mattis and his executive action, had been preparing “classified options” to expand the use of Special Operations forces, raising the troop level in Iraq and Syria, and expecting the White House to delegate more authority to the Pentagon and field commanders. The “classified options” included arming the Syrian Kurds for the expected battle for Raqqa, in an obvious scheme to drive a wedge between Turkey and Russia in their belated rapprochement over “regime change” in Syria.

There are indications that, contrary to Trump’s stated aversion to “regime change,” Iran will become the new Syria. In the wake of Iran’s test of a medium-range ballistic missile on January 30, National Security Advisor, Michael Flynn, has begun a campaign of verbal belligerence, disinformation, and outright lies against Iran. In a statement Flynn said that

“The recent ballistic missile launch is . . . in defiance of UN Security Council Resolution 2231, which calls upon Iran not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons, including launches using such ballistic missile technology.”

This is a gross distortion of the truth. UN Security Council Resolution 2231 bans Iran from developing missiles capable of carrying a nuclear warhead, but the resolution states no provision preventing Iran from developing defensive capability. The missile tested on January 30 had no capacity for carrying a nuclear warhead; Iran has not violated Resolution 2231.

Flynn’s misrepresentation of Iran’s missile test hums the tune of the fake threat concocted by the Bush neo-cons on the run-up to the fatal invasion of Iraq in 2003 that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction. That lie cost Iraq one million dead, the drawing and quartering of Iraq’s political integrity, internal and external refugees by the millions. Ominously, Flynn ends his statement with a threat, “As of today, we are officially putting Iran on notice.” On cue, came the sanctions targeting 25 individuals and businesses connected to Iran’s missile program, including Chinese persons and companies.

In conclusion, I fail to see the reasons for the gang warfare in DC. Long-standing objectives appear to be shared: the global dominance of the United States by economic and military means. What seems to be the bone of contention is the method of dominating American public opinion. The war is over rhetoric: liberal versus populist “values.” Thus they are fighting over control of

the public's mind. It should not be surrendered to either persuasion. Perhaps the only silver lining in the Trump ascension is the potential empowerment and resurgence of popular resistance.