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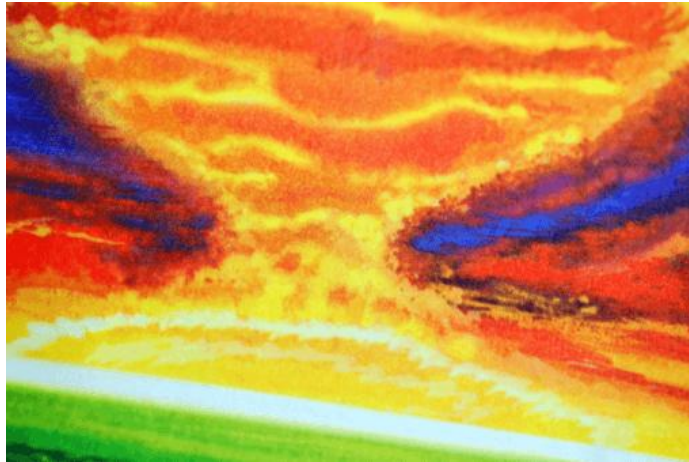
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Careening Toward Nuclear War: the Political Paralysis of Europe, Russia and China

By Dimitris Konstantakopoulos
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Never since the Cuban Missile Crisis has there been such an unstable situation in the global political system, including the system of management of nuclear arms and US power.

To the already exceptionally tense and dangerous atmosphere around North Korea there has now been added a crisis over Iran, which is pushing the European powers and Russia to become

aligned against the policies of USA and Israel preparing a new, greater and, very probably, nuclear war against Iran. A very serious political crisis is smoldering in Washington itself, with some people believing it is the most serious in the history of the United States.

In the most official way, in front of the representatives of all the nations of the world, for the first time since the defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945, the President of the United States, Donald Trump, has spelled out the threat of annihilating a nation of 25 million people.

His speech represents the negation of all achievements of human civilization. And this speech did not provoke any serious, proportionate or meaningful reaction in the world.

The absence of such reaction can be attributed to various factors and different calculations. But its consequence is none other than to legitimize that kind of threats today and their realization tomorrow.

Such a lack of reaction does not deter and discourage, it encourages and facilitates the use of nuclear weapons and it increases the obvious risk of a global catastrophe, something which was proven especially in the 20th century. In the wake of the 1st World War both camps believed the other one was bluffing, and that, in any case, the conflict would not last more than a few months. The conflict lasted four years and destroyed all Europe.

The policy of trying to appease and accommodate Hitler has also been the main policy of Britain, France and USSR, before the 2nd World War. It only encouraged Nazi German aggression and facilitated the War. Germany all but won it, its troops having been stopped only some miles from the Kremlin. It was finally defeated, but only at an unbelievably enormous cost paid by all European nations, and in particular by the Soviets, the Yugoslavs, the Greeks and the British.

The deafening silence of Europe, the European Left, Russia and China

It is obvious that the actions and the policy of the US government under President Trump took all major powers by surprise and shocked them. They did not expect them, did not forestall them and now limit themselves more or less to a role of spectator of actions that literally could involve the survival of humanity.

Europe hopes it will wake one day with the Trump problem having been resolved by itself. From time to time they say to Americans that what they are doing is terrible and dangerous (it is indeed terrible and this is exactly why they are doing it!). In Germany many top specialists on foreign policy published an appeal in *Zeit*. They believe German “anti-Americanism” is the danger, not the US policy that is fueling it!

The European Left seems interested only in defending pensions, and it is not doing very well even at that. They don't want to identify themselves with a regime like the North Korean, but they forget that what is going on has nothing to do with the type of the regime. On the contrary, the external, imperialistic pressure on non-Western countries, beginning from the USSR, has always been a strong factor contributing to the rise of authoritarian types of government, as the

best suited for a country to oppose a threat of aggression. At the very least it can plausibly justify this authoritarianism.

Western interventions in the Third World have played a great role in the advent of authoritarian regimes. Imposing “democracy” was never the aim of the West in the Arab and Muslim World and the results of 25 years of disastrous wars in the Middle East are here for everybody to see. Even in Russia it was the US administration which pushed and enthusiastically supported the violent dissolution and bombing of the Russian Parliament by President Yeltsin in 1993 (probably the most democratically elected parliament in Russian history), in order to permit the passage of Soviet property to a handful of oligarchs from 1994 onwards. “Democracy” seemed useful only as a means for destroying the Soviet regime, not as a system of government. Now the West criticizes the human rights record of Putin’s government as it never did with the much more serious crimes of the Yeltsin era, or it does not do with the regime imposed in Kiev after a coup organized by the US Deputy Secretary of State Victoria Nuland.

In any case, to annihilate North Korea is not a method for imposing democracy in that country.

What about the alternative centers like Russia and China? Moscow still seems to be trying to gain as much as possible out of the supposedly pro-Russian trends of Trump and has left most of the handling of the Korean crisis to China. China wants at all costs to avoid any clash with Americans. But if it abandons North Korea, President Xi is in reality running the risk of experiencing, in a very different form and through very different ways, his own “Gorbachev moment”.

One error brings more!

It is not easy of course, for political forces and people inside the US and around the world which supported Trump, claiming he is a kind of “anti-establishment”, “anti-war”, “anti-oligarchy”, “anti-globalization”, “anti-NATO”, “pro-Russia” candidate, to accept the degree to which they were deceived. Sometimes this love of Trump has verged on the ridiculous. For instance, the quite popular Russian newspaper *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, commenting on Trump’s election, drew a parallel between his entering the White House and the storming of the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg in October 1917!!! It defies not only reason but every possible form of human imagination for one to confuse a deal maker and casino owner, family friend of Murdoch and Netanyahu, with Lenin, Trotsky, the Bolsheviks and the Russian Revolution!

Sometimes, not always, the intentions behind such an enormous error of judgment were good. People were becoming desperate about “globalization” and US-driven Wars. They therefore tended to believe everything and everybody who seemed to be an opponent. The same thing by the way happened in the inter-war period, leading to the rise of fascism and Nazism and to the 2nd World War.

To dismiss what Mr. Trump is now saying and doing, to dismiss the serious threat to the world his administration represents on the implicit or explicit excuse that he is not serious, he is mad, he is bluffing, is not very convincing, especially coming from people who until recently suggested to us that we should take very seriously what the same Trump was promising, or rather

what they thought he was promising before he was elected. Trump is nothing other than what he and his administration are doing.

Coherence behind Madness

Of course Trump himself is not consistent. Probably he is not even wholly conscious of what he is doing. But history (or, more probably, the forces trying to control and manipulate it, and who most probably were also able to help Trump from behind the scenes to assume power) needs exactly such a person. If he is really “mad”, as some people claim, then he is the ideal candidate to apply the reckless “madman” strategy. In dealing with Korea and the Middle East, indirectly with China and Russia, Washington and its extremist allies are now trying to bring the nuclear card into the game. If Trump himself is not fully conscious of the terrible repercussions this game will have, he is more, not less, effective to play the role assigned to him.

(I believe the Empire did the same under Reagan. They applied the maximum of threats against the USSR, to provide the arguments for Soviet reformers who had already accepted integration into the West through surrender to the West. The threat to China now comes with an implicit false promise: “Give us North Korea and we will let you develop unimpeded”. If President Xi agrees to play this game, he runs the risk of himself provoking, in a very different form and through very different ways, what he is most afraid of: a Chinese “Gorbachev moment”. One of the reasons the Chinese regime did not collapse like the Soviet one, was that the Chinese Communist Party kept intact and central to its communication policy the image of the West as an enemy).

The Empire hopes that by bringing nuclear arms and madness into the equation, it will oblige the other players, who are rational, to succumb to its demands. That is all that it is about. It is extremely dangerous, it is madness, but, as Polonius said (*Hamlet*, Act II), there is a method to it. The opposing forces are those lacking in method!

History, or those who are trying to control and manipulate it, needs exactly this kind of character in order to achieve what is to be achieved. Only by bringing the nuclear card into play, only by bringing on a character who can persuade that he is ready to use it, can they have a realistic, as they see it, hope for reversing the colossal, potentially strategic, defeat they have already suffered in the Middle East, with the introduction of Russian troops into Syria, and also to avert the otherwise unavoidable consequences of the economic and technological ascent of China. Their calculus is that the other world players are “rational” and that they will not risk a global catastrophe. By bringing uncertainty and irrationalism into world politics they hope to win by having their opponents retreat.

As we already said, Trump is nothing other than what he is doing. In economics he did not deliver all power to the ... Soviets, but to Goldman Sachs. In ecology, he launched a war against life. In social matters he wants to curtail benefits to poor Americans. In geopolitics, during his presidency, we have seen the appearance of enormous risks of nuclear conflict in both Korea and the Middle East (if they remain limited there), the testing of new, extremely destabilizing “conventional” and nuclear weapons, a military threat against Venezuela, an extremely

aggressive development of NATO forces on the perimeter of Russia and of US forces around China. Mosul, the second most important city of Iraq, was flattened.

All that in just seven months! That can make any person of sound mind ask the question: Are we going to be here at the end of his term?

Trump's geopolitics are nothing other than a renewed, expanded, more extremist and more clearly nuclear re-edition of the known neocon program, spelled out initially by President George Bush in his famous speech against the Axis of Evil. It is the organization of a proactive drive to full world hegemony, in order both to limit the consequences of the Chinese economic-technological ascent and to reverse the results of the Russian intervention in Syria. If fulfilled, Trump's goals will transform Finance and US Empires into a totalitarian system dominating the whole planet – or, they will lead to the termination of life.

Recently, Mr. Lavrov, the Russian Foreign Minister said that Western decline is “objective” in character. This is true, but it is only a part of truth. There is not such determinism in human history and Russian history in particular testifies amply exactly that. In critical historical junctures there are many possible results, as people may react in different ways to a given objective situation. If you don't stop Western intervention in Libya, then you will have an intervention in Syria. If you send troops to Syria, you will make the other side think twice before escalating the conflict. This is an example of the “correlation” between “objective” and “subjective” factors. If China for instance, believes that by giving North Korea to the Americans it will avoid a clash with them, it will risk confronting them under more dangerous and difficult conditions, even if we avoid, which already seems extremely difficult, the disastrous global, ecological, civilizational and economic consequences of a Korean conflict and if such a conflict remains contained and “limited”. Manoeuvring and tactics of course have an important place in policy – but they cannot substitute for strategy and they should not become a substitute for taking the really hard decisions.

It is not that the Empire does not see what Mr. Lavrov sees. It is exactly because it sees the same picture a determined fraction in its leadership wants to do something about it! The “something” is to use its influence on the President to push war into his agenda and create the conditions that will render it unavoidable.

Crisis in the Palace

When in a system no politics is admitted, no open discussion of the perspectives of society is permitted, whether by police or by indirect, totalitarian control of the representatives of a given society (the media and the political class) and by the systematic destruction of even the capacity to formulate political thought, as happens now in modern day Western societies, the problems and contradictions banned from the public sphere do not disappear. Because they have objective roots, they reappear at the very center of the system and are expressed there. A classic example is the Soviet Union, which had banned any expression of public disagreement and any possibility of open foreign influence. They disappeared from society only to reappear at the center of the system, inside its ruling *nomenclatura*, inside the Politburo and the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the ruling Communist Party.

In Washington itself a political crisis is now smoldering (certain commentators judge it to be the most serious in all the history of the United States), naturally rendering even more serious and intrinsically unstable the situation on the nuclear front. This has been demonstrated beyond the shadow of a doubt through the exchanges of “moron” insults and challenges to competitive IQ tests between President Trump and his Secretary of State Tillerson.

The unprecedented statement by the Republican head of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee (one of the three most important people, institutionally, as far as US foreign policy is concerned) that the policies of President Trump could lead to the Third World War, are absolutely characteristic of the atmosphere in Washington. Never in the history of the United States have there been such public conflicts, at such levels and on such subjects.

Even if we confine ourselves to what is on public sight, it becomes clear that two camps are in opposition regarding war against both Iran and Korea: a war which one has difficulty in imagining how it cannot be nuclear and how it will remain limited. What is certain is that its global repercussions, ecological, civilizational and economic will be unprecedented.

The Pentagon, the State Department and the CIA made quite clear they wish to exhaust all peaceful means of resolving the conflict with North Korea and disagree with the view that Iran has violated its nuclear agreement. Given the power of these three institutions in the USA, one can easily understand that there is a hidden part of the iceberg. There is a “Party of War”, which is able to exert pressure on Donald Trump, to control him and manipulate him in one way or another. There is no other explanation of all this Washington infighting.

We cannot easily prove the existence of this “War Party”: or describe its exact structure. We have to deduce its existence by what is happening, and what is happening simply cannot be explained in any other way than by admitting its existence and considerable power and influence. Like mathematicians had to introduce imaginary numbers, out of the need to complete their system, not out of any human experience, we could speak here of an “imaginary”, “unseen” so to say would be Emperor, the first of this kind in Human History, representing the most totalitarian and extremist forces in the leadership of the system. He has to remain secret, because his program is simply not presentable.

We have seen the same “Party of War” in action in Iraq, in Libya, in Syria, in Ukraine and on many other occasions. Probably it is responsible for “letting 9/11 happen”, because if it did not happen it would be extremely difficult to proceed with a dozen Middle Eastern wars and interventions. Its preferred method is the sui generis “entryism” into the US (and other countries’) establishment and the circumvention of the normal institutional state mechanisms, something that happened in all the lead-up to the Iraq war. This party existed all through the Cold War and even before, from 1943, when an important part of the US and British establishment began to work out a plan for launching a Third World War against the Soviet Union.

This is the party which is now trying to push its war agenda through its influence on Trump and which probably contributed from behind the scenes to his election. If anybody has a better explanation of what is going on, he has only to provide it.

There are suggestions in the media and suspicions that Mr. Kissinger, Mr. Kushner or Mr. Netanyahu are behind the “Madman” strategy Mr. Trump has opted for. Given the ideas and the past of all three of them, this could be true. We still don’t have any proof of that, as we are not in a position to know what they advise Mr. Trump and the network of those relations. Maybe some people in the US services know better and maybe this is the reason some of them have repeatedly undermine the plan of a war against Iran, denying the false assumptions about his nuclear program, used to justify a war.

Washington is currently abuzz with rumors that the American “deep state” is preparing a kind of “palace coup” against Donald Trump, possibly evoking Article 25 of the United States Constitution, a possibility already mentioned by Steve Bannon, the dismissed far-right “ideologue” and “strategist” of Mr. Trump. The Breitbart website, controlled by Mr. Bannon, published on October 9th an article on “Columbus Day” entitled “The Nuclear Option”. The article is interpretable as an indirect encouragement to the President of the United States to inaugurate a new historical era, as Columbus did with the discovery of America, by making use of the United States’ nuclear arsenal. Note also that Mr. Trump’s advisor on religious matters, Evangelist Pastor Robert Jeffress, explained, citing the epistle to Romans, that God has authorized Mr. Trump to use whatever means are required to exterminate the North Korean leader.

According to an article in the magazine *Vanity Fair*, reported also by other mainstream US media, such as the NBC, the United States Secretary of Defense Mr. Mattis has already held discussions with other collaborators of the President on what they should do if he decides to launch a nuclear attack.

According to the prevailing regulations, there is no legal way to stop the execution of an order to launch a nuclear war. It is given by the President of the United States and only by him, without asking anybody!!! If he gives it, the US armed forces are obliged to carry it out, without discussion. As was explained recently in reports published in the American media, for such an order not to be executed, more than one American military officer would be obliged to disobey it, with all that would imply for them.

Now some people will probably say that it is not possible for the Pentagon and the CIA to oppose plans that aim to US domination over the world. After all, both institutions exist to pursue exactly that aim.

But in fact there is not any paradox here. It is true that those institutions and the ruling class of the US in general want to use every means to preserve US world domination. But a significant part of them wants of course to dominate the world: they don’t want to destroy the object of their domination, including the United States.

As a significant part of the US establishment and of the US ruling class are becoming conscious of the risks inherent in the “madman”, “chaos” strategy of Trump, it is only normal and fully predictable that they will try to resist it, even by organizing “palace coups”. It is not at all certain that they will manage to stop the President and the forces behind from unleashing with his “fire and fury” a chain of events potentially leading to a global catastrophe.

By their function and their position the US military and the Pentagon are accustomed to making rational analysis of a given situation. They are able to know and to calculate better than anybody else the real dangers inherent in the “madman”, “chaos” strategy pursued by Trump in the world and suggested by Netanyahu in the Middle East. The “rational” kernel of this reckless strategy is that, if America pretends to be mad, then the other players (Russia and China) will succumb to its pressure to avoid a general catastrophe as they are rational.

An Example about the Power of the Example

Such a line of “mad” thinking, provides also with a motivation for the Empire to launch a “limited war” against Korea (it could also be against Iran), because that way they will be able to use this terrible example. An example is always the best way to educate people. When Henry Kissinger visited Europe in 1972, trying to deter the participation of Communist Parties in the Italian and French governments and to torpedo any détente with Soviet Union he said to his interlocutors: “Watch closely what happens in Chile” (information the writer had from Jorge McGinty, responsible for the foreign relations of the Chilean Socialist Party). In 1973, the world was able to watch what happened to Chile and Salvador Allende. Some people did not grasp the message fully, such as Aldo Moro, who was abducted and executed four years later by the “Red Brigades”.

We can't know which of the two imperial camps will prevail. On one hand we have the President of the USA with his enormous powers and a very decisive party of war behind him. On the other we have numerous important forces and institutions. Their problem is they lack a clear strategic alternative to what the extremists are proposing. For example, to accept defeat in the Middle East and co-manage the region with the Russians is not easy to accept. But when a power has already done what the US has done in the Middle East, it is very difficult also to propose another successful alternative for the USA. There will be a cost for all that happened and the US will not avoid it any way. The real choice is behind a huge damage limitation operation and the generalization of disaster and it is really hard for the people who have to take the decisions and fix the strategies.

The fact that no serious reaction to such plans is visible from outside the USA, or from Western societies, facilitates the extremists. For example Roosevelt, Keynes, or European Social Democracy were able to apply their politics, because the existence of the communist Soviet Union and its challenge to Western capitalism it was projecting was providing them with a very strong argument. They had to do something otherwise the Communists would try to seize power.

Vice-versa, if one decides he can go on with a policy without anybody willing to stop him, then he has a serious motivation to proceed.

Unfortunately, for the time being, almost all political players around the world seem absolutely unprepared for what they see unfolding before their eyes, and apparently prefer not to believe it! They hope that God (or the US “deep” or just the normal state) will avert the unprecedented threats in an “automatic”, “objective” way, without them bothering to do anything significant.

War, the Left and Multi-polarism

The potential opponents of the Empire, not only do they facilitate in this way the work of its extremist faction, they also lose a historic opportunity. There is no more urgent and more important task now than to save the world from nuclear war. If the European Left, or Russia, or China will express that need in a clear political way, for everybody to hear, then they will achieve enormous international political results.

For the so-called European “Radical Left”, the situation presents it with a unique, golden possibility to take the initiative and to redress the catastrophic situation in which it found itself after the collapse and the capitulation of SYRIZA, in July 2015, by organizing a strong, mass and internationally coordinated demonstration of its opposition to war against Iran, North Korea and also Venezuela, which is equally under threat.

As Rome developed its imperialism, it destroyed its inner democracy, moving from the Republic to the Empire. If the so-called Left in the West does not do something serious and brave to stop this course, it will simply have no future whatsoever. And perhaps nobody else will have either.

And if there is a chance of Europe reversing its course, moving in a social, democratic and ecological direction, it cannot do it if it remains a passive vassal of the United States, their banks and of NATO. The aggregation of European opportunisms can only help a continental catastrophe.

What is true of European Left is also true of Russia and China. They both represent a possibility of counterbalancing an imperial power which is in the process of becoming totalitarian. Russia has a formidable military power, China a formidable economic power.

These are necessary but not sufficient elements to move to a multi-polar system. But to do this you don't need only force, hard and economic (soft) power, you need also an alternative political and civilizational vision, political (soft) and “smart” (strategic) powers, which Russia and China at the moment lack. They have adopted many of the dominant characteristics of Western Capitalism and a large part of their upper classes want exactly that, they are dreaming of what long ago became the nightmare of the most enlightened segments of the West!

It is somewhat schizophrenic to read, in Chinese and Russian newspapers, critiques of the very sanctions China and Russia are voting against North Korea. Nothing good will come out of such schizophrenia if prolonged. Multi-polarism cannot be born automatically out of objective conditions and it won't be a simple result of rising Russian and Chinese power. It has a chance only if it will be able to become a real international political project.

A first step would be for Russia and China to make the bold move and, instead of trying to appease Mr. Trump, USA and Israel, take the initiative to clearly and loudly denounce his threats and form an international front to deter any prospect of nuclear war. This will be a gigantic political step in the direction of establishing a Multi-Polar World.