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The Imperial Rot of Armchair Warriors *US Foreign Policy Comes Unhinged*

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An occasional misconception of history is the contention that geo-political outcomes are the result of rational calculation. Or put differently, local rationalities don't always, or even most of the time, aggregate to global rationalities. The Obama administration used the CIA to organize a neo-nazi putsch in Ukraine after NATO spent the last twenty years squeezing (heavily) nuclear-armed Russia and immediately involved the IMF and Western oil company executives in Ukrainian ‘government’ affairs? At about the same time part of the Syrian ‘opposition’ that the U.S. had armed and financed morphed into IS (Islamic State) and promptly marched into Iraq to confiscate and use the weapons the U.S. had supplied leading Mr. Obama to once again bomb the country while re-committing combat troops. Given that there is no conceivable ‘good’ outcome to any of this, just what local ‘rationalities’ could be driving the serial disasters of U.S. foreign policy?

The common links between Ukraine and Iraq are oil and the alleged regional political interests of the U.S. But the regional political interests tie to oil—reserves, pipelines and strategic control of all things oil related. Restarting the Cold War with Russia represents a business opportunity for

arms manufacturers. And no effort is being spared in demonizing the highly accommodative IS. Both of these represent an urgent need to exercise rare political judgment by the citizens of the U.S. The risk of the growing hot war in Ukraine pits cloistered demagogues (neo-cons) in Washington against a Russia that has seen little more from the U.S. (NATO) than relentless aggression and broken promises for twenty years. And IS is in the early stages of demonstrating the folly, and rapidly escalating cost, of the ‘contained chaos’ strategy for maintaining U.S. political control over the Middle East. In short, U.S. foreign policy is wildly reckless at present, if not outright unhinged.

The American people’s determined ignorance of U.S. foreign policy practices and outcomes might be described as heroic if it weren’t so deadly. Selling IS as brutal savages, which they apparently are if the reports that find their way into the U.S. are accurate, is posed as an opposition to U.S. history when no such opposition exists. Reports of hundreds of bound, blindfolded, tortured and executed Iraqis showed up within days of the arrival of U.S. Ambassador John Negroponte in Iraq in 2004. Mr. Negroponte was the Reagan administration’s Ambassador to Honduras when thousands were slaughtered in nearly identical fashion in the CIA engineered war there in the 1980s. The U.S. dropped white phosphorous by the tanker-load on the people of Fallujah in one of the great under-reported war crimes of the Iraq War. And Mr. Obama personally ordered the murder of American children with drones in Yemen. The hypocrisy of U.S. political leadership accusing IS of waterboarding Iraqi civilians after the (George W) Bush administration revived and defended the practice gives new meaning to the term cognitive dissonance.

What appears to be at work in both Ukraine and Iraq is the stranglehold that neo-cons have over U.S. foreign policy despite the serial catastrophes that they have created. The omnipresent charge that some U.S. politician or political Party is ‘weak on defense’ would seemingly be easily countered: the ‘strong on defense’ crowd is a combination of munitions industry hacks that want to sell their wares, oil industry hacks who want someone else to liberate ‘their’ oil from its current owners and career sociopaths who never met a horrific slaughter they didn’t like. The reason why the Middle East is in such persistent disarray is that the U.S. (and British) fund and arm proxy armies to keep it that way. And lest this seem the brilliant strategy, ‘contained chaos,’ that neo-cons flatter themselves is intentional, the (George W) Bush administration was blindsided by the regional de-stabilization that their war and occupation of Iraq caused. The U.S. was building the (captive) institutions and infrastructure in Iraq for what war proponents believed would be a long stay. Every— EVERY, aspect of the U.S. war on and occupation of Iraq turned out differently than the neo-cons predicted.

So much for history, current U.S. President Barack Obama could at least have put a dent in the neo-con reign of terror by pursuing (allowing) fair trials of the senior Bush administration officials responsible for war crimes and given a full airing of the lies and misdirection that were used to sell the war on Iraq. Mr. Obama's claim that 'he wanted to look forward, not back' in declining to do so could be interpreted as not wanting to poison the domestic political well if (1) it weren't already so conspicuously poisoned when he made his decision public, (2) the neo-cons had been effectively exiled from U.S. foreign policy circles for the remainder of the century, (3) the needed clean break with U.S. wars of aggression, torture and murder had been affected and (4) the public had been made to understand how it had been conned into supporting the war. But clearly, as subsequent events have demonstrated, Mr. Obama was brought in to more competently manage the neo-con project, not to end it.

As with the U.S. war on Iraq begun in 2003, current U.S. machinations in Ukraine and Iraq are premised on a dim arrogance that 'the world' can be bombed into submission, that once the coups are engineered and the bombs dropped events will follow the intended script and that those on the other side of U.S. ' largesse' won't dedicate their lives to seeing the U.S. destroyed. As the standard bearer of American foreign policy Barack Obama apparently feels little need to explain what the U.S. is doing abroad. In contrast to the outright lies of his predecessors Mr. Obama's admission of foreign policy 'confusion,' as in the absence of a plan, might seem more convincing if he hadn't already had the CIA engineer the overthrow the government of Ukraine. And the U.S. was apparently bombing IS in Iraq for months before it was made publicly known. Were Mr. Obama genuinely confused over 'what to do' when he launched the coup in Ukraine and re-bombed Iraq his actions would have been criminally reckless. Implied is that his motives are hidden, not 'confused.' But these are not mutually exclusive charges.

To those who slept through history class and / or have fond memories of WWII, aligning militarized Ukrainian neo-nazis with NATO forces against Russia on the Russian border might be considered clever-lite. Russia lost ten million people defeating the German army in WWII. And to this day Russia has forgone building a U.S. style interstate highway system to prevent invading armies from quickly reaching Moscow. That European leaders would support U.S. predations against Russia in Ukraine could only be (in)sanely explained through vague understanding that Russia's thermo-nuclear weapons could reap even more devastation on the U.S. than yet another land war would on Europe. But it isn't the threats of WWIII and global nuclear holocaust alone that call these adventures into question. There is the flip side—the actual motives over which Mr. Obama is 'confused' and D.C. neo-cons are once again the 'deciders' of the policies of the military state.

Oil geopolitics that serve at least as a partial explanations of U.S. machinations in Iraq and Ukraine proceed from the premise that ‘the world’ will continue to exist in something resembling its current form despite the rising costs of the oil economy in terms of blood, treasure and environmental devastation. Global warming, dead and dying oceans and the coerced use of mis-tested suicide seeds and franken-crops in global food production challenge this complacency. If wars, torture, mass destruction and murders aren’t sufficient deterrence to steady-as-she-goes imperial U.S. foreign policy the radical un-sustainability of Western ways of doing things should be. What is implied in ongoing U.S. geopolitical machinations around oil supplies and distribution is that there is no intention / capacity on the part of the U.S. to do things differently no matter the consequences. ‘Liberal’ democrat Barack Obama can explain with some nuance the causes and likely impact of impending environmental catastrophes and yet his only actions as nominal leader of the U.S. are to double down on the oil economy through engaging in pre-global warming oil geopolitics.

The question for political moderates and reformers is: how will this, wars for oil, continuing dependencies on the oil economy and the seeming incapacity for resolution through ‘official’ political channels, be resolved? Those who believe that nuclear annihilation is either impossible or extremely unlikely probably haven’t spent too much time with the de-centralized capacity for launching a Dr. Strangelove style nuclear war by both the U.S. and Russia. Nuclear annihilation is something that sane people and political leaders who care about ‘their’ people don’t risk. And a quick note to Mr. Obama and the CIA: neo-nazis, Ukrainian or otherwise, aren’t known for their nuanced views of world events or for their intellectual flexibility. Confidence that unleashing these forces will lead to intended results has two central detractions, (1) the intended results are drawn from a discredited 1950s – 1960s playbook that assumes that the oil economy can continue as it has without catastrophic consequences and (2) that the relation of intended to actual outcomes remains strong given the last six decades of U.S. geo-political catastrophes.

The rise of IS (Islamic State) is being ‘explained’ in the U.S. as a natural outcome of Islamic fundamentalism when it could be better described as an unintended, if predictable, consequence of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. Whatever his detractions, and as an occasional tool of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East they were legion, Saddam Hussein led a secular state in Iraq. Through their colonial administrator’s view of Iraq and the Iraqi people the (George W) Bush administration broke Iraq along sectarian lines. IS isn’t a home grown force in Iraq but the willingness of Iraqis to support any challenge to the corrupt quasi-colonial government that the U.S. left behind created the opening it needed to get a foothold there. Whatever fantasies Americans harbor about U.S. policies in Iraq and throughout the Middle East, a more perfect

method of driving people to a radical hatred of the U.S. and all things Western could hardly have been purposely conceived.

By moving the wholly delusional neo-con plan for world domination forward Mr. Obama's foreign policy 'confusion' can most likely be found in trying to reconcile the utter implausibility of the project with any conceivable good outcome. Even if a temporary cease-fire is negotiated between ethnic Russians and the newly imposed 'government' of Ukraine American neo-cons have made it known that nothing short of full, and wholly untenable, capitulation by Russia will prevent ongoing political, economic and military assault from Western forces. And here the burden of history comes into play— twenty years of Russian capitulation and broken agreements from the Americans have proved that capitulation would 'buy' no reprieve from the American assault. Again, given their ability to end the world with the push of a few buttons the wisdom of putting the Russian state and people's backs to the wall is in doubt. While it might be a reasonable bet that no one but the American neo-cons are crazy enough to push the buttons of nuclear annihilation, does Mr. Obama really see it in the West's (or anyone's) interests to ascertain with certainty who is crazy, or desperate, enough to do so and who isn't?

The only meaningful resolution to the geo-political turmoil the U.S. is causing is reconciliation with 'the world,' including the environment. If the near total destruction of Iraq didn't bring about the intended outcomes how could more bombing do so? To be clear on this point, after six years in office with no effort at energy conservation and no plan to materially address global warming Mr. Obama is serving oil company, munitions manufacturer and Wall Street interests alone with his ill (barely) conceived and highly destructive foreign military adventures. One cure for the neo-cons is to put them in uniform on the front lines of the military adventures they believe worth fighting. The imperial rot of armchair warriors sitting in cushy chairs in Georgetown mansions deciding who lives and who dies must be brought to an end. And lest this remain unconsidered, some fair portion, a majority maybe, of Americans are themselves on the outside of this imperial divide, else why the need for the serial 'big lies' about American actions and outcomes?