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Another Sarajevo?

By Justin Raimondo
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While the world is focused on the conflict in the Middle East, and the threat to Europe posed by increasing terrorist attacks, the reality is that the “war on terrorism” is being displaced by the West’s renewed cold war with Russia. This is true for a couple of reasons:

- 1) For all the dramatic headlines they generate, ISIS and similar groups are minor players in the scheme of things. Yes, al-Qaeda brought down the World Trade Center and even got a shot at the Pentagon, but it and its mutant offspring never represented an existential threat to the United States and its allies. The most they can do is harass, provoke – and provide a convenient pretext for Western governments to launch military expeditions and extend their powers on the home front.
- 2) Foreign and domestic policy cannot be separated out, one from the other, and there is little political motivation for Western political elites to continue what was effectively a war on Islam launched by the administration of George W. Bush. Indeed, they are seeing in the rise of Donald Trump a good reason to put an end to it, as calls to ban Muslim immigration and a domestic political backlash against our keystone alliance with Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states is threatening the sacred “international order.”

With the “war on terrorism,” and the war weariness of the American public providing little justification for huge expenditures on armaments and military force projection, the War Party is

looking for new enemies to demonize – and finding the perfect candidate in Vladimir Putin’s Russia.

This shift has been going on for some time, and the process has recently escalated due to domestic political pressures in the US. As Donald Trump has called into question the range of alliances that have created tripwires from the Pacific to the steppes of Central Asia, the staunchly internationalist Democrats and their neoconservative allies have responded with an all-out smear campaign linking Trump to Russia. The Clinton campaign has released a new online ad that all but says Trump is a Russian agent. Indeed, former CIA head Michael Morrel wrote an op ed piece for the *New York Times* endorsing Clinton, in which he wrote:

“Mr. Trump has also taken policy positions consistent with Russian, not American, interests – endorsing Russian espionage against the United States, supporting Russia’s annexation of Crimea and giving a green light to a possible Russian invasion of the Baltic States.

“In the intelligence business, we would say that Mr. Putin had recruited Mr. Trump as an unwitting agent of the Russian Federation.”

To say this is disgusting nonsense is an understatement. Anyone who questions the utility of NATO is an “unwitting” KGB agent? If you want to “get along” with Russia, as Trump has said, you’re a tool of the Kremlin? Where have we heard this kind of demagoguery before? I’ll tell you where: in the darkest days of the cold war, when any effort to prevent World War III – and the potential annihilation of the human race – was treated as if it were sedition.

The reality is that NATO *is* obsolete, as Trump has said: far from serving American interests, it serves the interests of the socialist states of Europe, who refuse to honor their treaty obligations to fund the alliance and meanwhile have no problem lavishing their citizens – and hundreds of thousands of refugees – with cradle-to-grave subsidies.

How is this in America’s interest?

Worse, the cost of NATO includes running the risk of war over some obscure boundary dispute in the tangled miasma of Eastern European power politics. Will we go nuclear over Moldova’s dispute with Transnistria? Or the status of Kalingrad? And then there’s Ukraine ...

The War Party – and the Democrats (or do I repeat myself?) – is making a Very Big Deal over the GOP’s platform plank on Ukraine. Rather than acknowledge the plain fact that anti-interventionist sentiment is growing inside the Republican party, they accused the Trump campaign of deleting a statement that would have supported arming Ukraine with offensive weapons. But of course the GOP platform has never had such a plank: this was an addition that was rightly rejected. Polls show the American people don’t want to start World War III over Ukraine – and that the less they know about Ukraine’s actual location, the more they favor US intervention.

For what seems like years, the Ukrainian coup leaders – brought to power when they overthrew the elected President by force – have been yelping about an “imminent” Russian invasion of their

country. Now they're saying it could happen "at any minute"! They've been singing the same song for so long that they have even begun to believe it: certainly the US political class wants to believe it. Indeed, we are told that the invasion has already occurred – this in spite of the rather obvious lack of Russian tanks parading through the streets of Kiev. Of course, if Putin wanted to invade he would've done so a long time ago, and wouldn't have had too much trouble taking the whole country. But this is a country that isn't worth conquering: bankrupt, rife with corruption, crawling with criminals and neo-Nazis, the whole place is a ramshackle mess that is practically ungovernable. Why would Putin want it?

But reality and war propaganda are two different matters: it suits the purposes of the War Party to market this myth, and there are a number of "journalists" in the mainstream media who live to spread this nonsense. It may be a coincidence that a good many of them are Russian émigrés – Julia Ioffe, Miriam Elder, Max Boot, to name a few – and then again one might surmise that there's a common agenda at work here. All three of these characters are in Clinton's camp, and have been energetically promoting the cold war hysteria that has become a major theme of the Democratic campaign.

And now it looks like their efforts may well come to fruition.

The conflagration of World War I was sparked by a Serbian ultra-nationalist who assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in Sarajevo – an act that set into motion a series of events that claimed millions of lives, destroyed the old European civilization, and set the stage for World War II. Now another assassination in the volatile Balkans has the potential to plunge the world into an even more hellish firestorm....

The elected President of the Republic of Luhansk in what used to be eastern Ukraine barely survived an assassination attempt when a bomb exploded underneath his car. He has been seriously injured. There seems little doubt that this was the work of the SBU, the notorious Ukrainian secret police outfit that has been implicated in a series of mysterious attacks and "suicides" that have killed opposition journalists and politicians in recent months. Unable to put down the popular rebellion in the east, the coup leaders in Kiev have resorted to terrorism – which is fitting, since fighters formerly affiliated with ISIS are now in their ranks.

Just as the Serbian "Black Hand" murdered the Archduke and set off World War I, so the ultra-nationalist Ukrainians – just as crazy as their Serbian counterparts of a century ago – may have sparked World War III. The system of alliances that brought all the European powers into what was initially a local conflict, setting the Entente against the Central Powers, is similar to the set up we see today, with NATO involved hip-deep in Ukraine, arrayed against Russia and its allies in eastern Ukraine, Belarus, and quite possibly Hungary, which is increasingly friendly to the Russians.

What's driving the escalating aggression of the Ukrainians is, in part, American domestic politics. Urged on by a highly-placed network in the upper reaches of the US political class, led by former NATO commander Gen. Philip Breedlove, and now by Hillary Clinton's political campaign linking Trump to the Russians, the Kiev gang has every incentive to create a catalyzing incident – and it looks like they just did.

The attempted assassination of President Igor Plotnitsky will doubtless set off renewed fighting in eastern Ukraine, as Kiev tries to take back territory and the rebels – who have the support of the local populace – continue to hold on. “President” Petro Poroshenko, the principal coup leader, has seen his support plummet as the economy tanks and Western creditors squeeze the bankrupt country of its last drop of blood. For Poroshenko and his gang, war is a welcome distraction from all this – and a good excuse to crack down on the opposition, which can be accused of “sedition” and jailed, as was journalist Ruslan Kotsaba.

By creating a diversion, Poroshenko not only shores up his faltering base of support, he also gives his putative allies in America a shot in the electoral arm: with Ukraine once back in the headlines, and the cry of “The Russians are coming!” once again being heard in the land, the Clintonistas and their journalistic camarilla can have a field day with their Trump-is-a-KGB-agent smear campaign.

You scratch my back, I’ll scratch yours.

Meanwhile, the world heads toward another cold war, one that could turn hot at a moment’s notice.

I can’t recall a more dangerous time since the days of the Cuban missile crisis. Indeed, we may yet see a reenactment of that scary episode in eastern Europe before Election Day. And while “liberals” like David Corn of *Mother Jones* magazine are screaming about “Moscow gold” fueling the GOP campaign, our political class is united in their Russia-baiting and shameless warmongering. I’d compare them to Joe McCarthy, but “Tailor-Gunner” Joe had least had some facts on his side; these people have nothing but crude innuendo and archaic prejudices.

Here at last is a cause the “progressives” and the neoconservatives can unite around: hatred of Russia, all nicely wrapped up in an “anti-Trump” package. The entire political class, from left to right, is coalescing around this crazy anti-Kremlin crusade – and the politics of it is pushing us to a direct military confrontation with nuclear-armed Russia.

I have been warning about this dangerous trend for years, and Antiwar.com has taken the lead in trying to head off these Dr. Strangeloves at the pass – but we can’t do it without your support.

The War Party has unlimited funds, my friend – that’s right, there’s no ceiling on the resources they can pour into a campaign that can only end in World War III. We, on the other hand, only have *you* – our readers and supporters. Ah, but we do have one built-in advantage: they are inveterate liars, and the American people are increasingly aware of it. After decades of war propaganda, ordinary people are beginning to rebel – but they need the facts, the vital information, which is the antidote to the War Party’s poison.

That’s where Antiwar.com comes in.

We’ve been exposing the lies of the War Party since 1995 – but we can’t continue to do it without your financial contributions. And our task has never been more vitally important than it

is right now. The warmongers are on the march, in search of new enemies to demonize – will they succeed, unopposed?

We can't stop now. We can't let years of work be undone.

Yes, *we can stop the march toward World War III* – and that's why you must make your tax-deductible donation to Antiwar.com right now.

As the war hysteria around us builds to a crescendo, the lack of rational voices should worry the heck out of you, as it does me. There's just one way to fight back: give the voices of peace a megaphone.