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TRUMP'S FOREIGN POLICY: FOUR MORE YEARS OF BUSH-OBAMA?

by Jacob G. Hornberger
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What will President-elect Trump do with respect to foreign policy? Will he follow in the footsteps of George W. Bush and Barack Obama and pursue another four years of death and destruction in the Middle East and Afghanistan? Or will he move America in a different direction by finally bringing U.S. troops home?

Unfortunately, he will be coming under tremendous pressure by both liberals and conservatives to continue the death and destruction.

Reflecting the moral bankruptcy of the left on the issue of foreign policy, so-called liberal revolutionary Bernie Sanders penned an op-ed entitled “Where the Democrats Go From Here” in last Friday’s issue of the *New York Times*. In his more than 800-word op-ed, Sanders enumerated the standard litany of socialist and regulatory programs that he says liberals should continue promoting: The minimum wage. Public works. Education grants. Social Security. Medicare. Paid family leave. Public housing. Progressive income taxation. Of course, what Sanders fails to recognize is that it is his socialism that is the root cause of America’s economic woes.

Nonetheless, there is one glaring omission from Sanders’ op-ed: Not one single reference to the U.S. government’s death machine in Afghanistan and Iraq, which has been operating now for some 25 continuous years.

I find that absolutely amazing ... and appalling ... and incredible. Imagine: a liberal remaining silent about the military-industrial complex, the CIA, the NSA, coups, assassinations, indefinite detention, Guantanamo, and the massive death and destruction from U.S. interventionism in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Libya, Yemen, and elsewhere. Yeah, some “revolution.”

All that continuous death and destruction at the hands of the U.S. national-security state doesn't matter to liberals. Having supported it throughout the eight years of the Obama administration, which followed the same interventionist road that President George W. Bush took, liberals find themselves stuck into hoping and pushing for another four years of death and destruction under a Trump administration.

Of course, it's no different with conservatives. They are on the same death-and-destruction page as liberals, if not more so. Having supported the road to death and destruction that George W. Bush led America, and having supported that road throughout the Obama administration, no one should count on conservatives to suddenly abandon their death thirst.

The question is: Will Trump be able to withstand the pressure from both liberals and conservatives for more death and destruction in the Middle East and Afghanistan? Will he want to? Or will he become one of them with respect to foreign policy?

Indeed, will he be able to withstand the pressure from the national-security establishment, or what President Eisenhower called the military-industrial complex, which would love another four years of military intervention given that perpetual wars and crises mean ever-increasing warfare largess? No president since John Kennedy has opposed the national-security branch of the government, and we all know who won that political and ideological war. (See *JFK's War with the National Security Establishment: Why Kennedy Was Assassinated* by Douglas Horne, *Regime Change: The Kennedy Assassination* by Jacob Hornberger, and *The CIA, Terrorism, and the Cold War: The Evil of the National Security State* by Jacob Hornberger.)

So far, there are good signs and bad signs.

On the good side, Trump has indicated that he intends to cease U.S. support of Syrian rebels. That very well could mean that he is going to abandon efforts by the Pentagon and the CIA to bring about regime change in Syria. That would be a good thing. It would certainly mean a lot less lives lost in Syria's civil war.

A second good sign is that Trump has expressed little interest in a second Cold War with Russia, which the national-security establishment has done its very best to incite and which Clinton would have pursued with vigor if she had been elected president. That would be a good thing too, especially since it diminishes the chances of a nuclear war between Russia and the United States.

A third good sign is that Trump has expressed criticisms of NATO, the old Cold-War era organization that should have been dismantled a long time ago. Clinton loved NATO and would have used it to ramp up the new Cold War against Russia.

A fourth good sign is that during the campaign Trump courageously pointed out that the U.S. government's invasion of Iraq was based on fraudulent claims regarding WMDs. While Clinton acknowledged that her support of the

Iraq War was a "mistake," she never would have pointed out that Bush and his national security establishment lied their way into a war of aggression against a Third World country that had never attacked the United States.

What's the bad? Trump's eagerness to smash ISIS. My hunch is that he feels the same about the Taliban in Afghanistan. If he goes down that road, which is likely, he will be stepping into the quicksand of interventionism. That will inevitably mean another four years of Bush-Obama — another four years of death and destruction at the hands of the Pentagon and the CIA, accompanied by the totalitarian powers of the president that have come with them, including indefinite detention, torture, and assassination.

There is a force for good in all this — the millions of Americans who are sick and tired of U.S. foreign interventionism and who embrace the libertarian position of non-interventionism. As Texas A&M professor Elizabeth Cobbs pointed out in her July 4, 2016, *Los Angeles Times* op-ed entitled "For U.S. Foreign Policy, It's Time to Look Again at the Founding Fathers' 'Great Rule'" (which I highly recommend reading and forwarding to others), the Pew research organization recently reported that 57 percent of Americans now want the U.S. government to mind its own business and to let foreign countries work out their own problems. That is an incredibly positive and encouraging statistic. That's up from 52 percent just three years ago. We need to get that number up to 70 percent.

Undoubtedly, many of the people who are sick and tired of continuous death and destruction (including for U.S. troops and their families) voted for Trump. They know that America is on the wrong track with foreign interventionism. The question is: Will Trump succumb to the pressure from the left and the right to continue the death and destruction, or will he move American in a different direction — in the libertarian direction of America's founding principles of freedom, peace, prosperity, and a limited-government republic?