

# **Trump: Dangerous Escalation of U.S. Wars in the Offing - Targeting China rather than Russia**

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**Much more could have been written, including Trump's \$54 billion increase in the already bloated war budget, and the Obama-Trump one trillion \$ program to "modernize" the nuclear arsenal, including developing smaller bombs that would make their use more likely. The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists has moved their doomsday clock up to 2 minutes 30 seconds to midnight.**

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The disarray among the politicians of both capitalist parties seen in last year's election campaign and following the election of Donald Trump, has intensified in the first two months of his presidency.

Charges and counter-charges between the Democrats and the Trump administration are hurled, prompting Congressional investigations that may bring in the FBI, CIA and other spy agencies.

One of these charges being raised by the Democrats is that Trump is colluding with Russia against the United States. Some even say he is a puppet of Vladimir Putin. This serves the Democrats in two ways, domestically and in a dispute over U.S. foreign policy.

Before discussing the foreign policy side, and the danger underlying it, domestically the Democrats are raising the alarm - "The Russians are coming! The Russians are coming!" in an attempt to divert and coopt the deep opposition to Trump's anti-immigrant, Islamophobic, misogynistic, xenophobic, white nationalist, climate change denial, etc. policies into placing hope that the Democrats will be the vehicle to stop Trump one way or another.

They also want to deflect attention from the reality that the Democrats have been part of the bipartisan policies that have set the stage for Trump. One example is the Obama administration's vast increase in the deportation of undocumented immigrants, reaching around two million, more than the total of all previous administrations combined, with Republican support. While Obama did this without fanfare, so most non-Latinos weren't even aware of it, Trump has taken over the deportation machinery that Obama set up to unleash even a greater assault on the undocumented, openly and fanning the flames of intolerance and racism.

Another example is the Islamophobia that the Bush and Obama administrations pushed after the 2001 attack on the World Trade Center to justify their "War on Terror" against largely Muslim countries in the Middle East and Africa, beginning with the wars against Afghanistan and Iraq, widening to Libya, Yemen, and Syria. Trump raised that hatred of Muslims to a new level.

Before Trump's inauguration, Obama, Clinton and even Sanders raised the idea of "working with" the new administration. The Democratic leader in the Senate, Charles Schumer, went so far as to defend Trump's nomination of the notorious racist Senator Jeff Sessions for Attorney General, saying he was a good Senator to work with, and that he had changed and was no longer a racist.

The day after the inauguration saw the huge Women's March against Trump, the largest demonstration in U.S. history in nearly 700 cities, with the actions in Washington, D.C. and New York alone drawing in over one million participants. Many more protests of Trump on various issues have continued.

There were two recent ones. Tens of thousands turned out for International Women's Day on March 8, part of the International Women's Strike that took place in some 30 countries. In past years, there have been very modest March 8 actions in the U.S. The difference this year was the election of Trump and his reactionary agenda.

On March 10, Native Americans marched for their rights in the capital, demonstrating that the many months-long struggle at Standing Rock against the Dakota Access Pipeline has awakened a new fighting spirit among Native Americans.

The Democrats took notice, and feared they would be left behind. They switched gears from "working with" Trump to taking an oppositional stance, in hopes of corralling this new movement into the "safe" channels of trusting the Democrats to somehow stop Trump.

The Democrats' charge that Trump colluded with Russia to influence the U.S. elections and U.S. foreign policy in relation to Russia reeks with hypocrisy. Of course Russia wants to influence U.S. policy toward it, and "meddles" and hacks into computers, etc. etc. just like every other country who has the power to spy and influence does.

But the U.S. as the most powerful country has far outstripped Russia and the rest of the world in this respect. "In slightly less than a hundred years from 1898 to 1994, the U.S. government has intervened successfully to change governments in Latin America a total of at least 41 times," wrote historian John Coatsworth in *ReVista: Harvard Review of Latin America*.

A political scientist at Carnegie Mellon University calculated that Washington intervened in presidential elections in other countries 81 times between 1946 and 2000.

What the Democrats' offensive represents is one side of a tactical debate in the ruling class. Since the overthrow of the Soviet Union by its ruling bureaucracy and the re-establishment of market capitalism, U.S. policy has been to step by step challenge Russia militarily. This has been done by bringing into NATO former countries of the Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe and some former republics of the USSR.

Washington is pressing to also incorporate Ukraine into NATO, completing the military buildup on Russia's western border. This has met with stiff resistance from Russia.

Hillary Clinton ran as the proponent of this aggressive military stance against Russia. Before the election campaign she went so far as to propose establishing a "no fly" zone in Syria, which would be enforced by the U.S. Air Force. This would have meant a direct military challenge to Russia, which was backing the Assad regime with its planes. Either Russia would back down, or there would have been a clash.

Obama rejected her advice as too dangerous.

Trump in his campaign proposed a shift, from mainly targeting Russia to targeting China. This reflected the view of a growing section of the ruling class, a shift in tactics. The Democrats drive to increase the military pressure on Russia may be designed to try to hold together the European Union, which is in danger of disintegrating, by strengthening the NATO military alliance.

At bottom, this is a desperate attempt to maintain the old “world order” in Europe that emerged after the Second World War, where the U.S. dominated the European imperialisms, which did enjoy some of the fruits of this alliance but also became vassal states to the U.S.

Trump (and his advisors) downgraded the importance of NATO, and called into question the old “world order” in Europe. A more aggressive stance toward Europe, and especially Germany, was called for, an economic nationalism as opposed to “globalism.” Russia, which competes very little with U.S. capitalism economically is not the main enemy in this view. And a deal with Russia could open up U.S. penetration of Russia’s vast oil and gas reserves, which former Exxon chief Rex Tillerson had already begun to set in motion before he became Trump’s Secretary of state.

An editorial in the current issue of *Monthly Review* sums up: “...various sections of the U.S. ruling class are increasingly panicked by the decline in U.S. power in the world.... Losing confidence, they have demonstrated a growing support for the use of heavy-handed military means to maintain the U.S.-dominated global order, enlisting the population as a whole in a patriotic quest for increased geopolitical dominance.

“Whichever party was to occupy the White House after the elections, all the indications were that a more aggressive military posture abroad was in the cards. The main dispute ... was whether to primarily to target Russia or China. In this respect, the Trump administration’s grand imperial strategy of directly confronting China, the world’s fastest growing economic powerhouse, before it is too late from the standpoint of U.S. world hegemony, is a change in emphasis rather than broad aims. It promises an even more aggressive, nationalist-imperialist posture, one in line with the Trump administration’s overall ‘America First’ stance...”

In other words, more war.

**Barry Sheppard**

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