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A More Dangerous World is Probably Coming After the US Election

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The level of irrationality, confusion and negative energy is the most astonishing signal emanating out of the US presidential election. It is a strong indication that, whatever the result, we should be prepared for an escalation in the already serious tensions dominating our world.

It is probably the first time, since the crisis of Weimar Germany, that such phenomena have appeared in the centre of the world, in its strongest country.

80% of the population of the USA do not trust and do not appreciate either of the two candidates. The strongest argument for voting Trump is not so much what he says as opposition to Clinton being elected. And the main argument for voting Clinton is not to have Trump elected!

The other day, as I was struggling to finish this article, I sent mails to some good friends in the USA, very critical, experienced and serious observers, telling them that I am a little confused by what I am reading about their elections and asking them for their opinion on the foreign policy Trump will really follow if elected.

From the answers I received, I realized that they too are not at all sure about what is at stake here and what the future course of the United States will be. One of them, a well-known economist with quite radical ideas, answered in this way: “YOU’RE confused? Ha ha ha. Nobody has a clue! Trump is such a narcissist that he may easily be manipulated. His intuitive policy is to pull BACK from war. At least a blind choice is better than Hillary’s push for war, definitely. But who knows?” Really, who knows?

Another one, also a leftist and a seasoned student of international realities, who had written an angry article last summer, protesting, in very strong terms about the kinds of attacks the US mainstream media have launched against the Republican nominee, was more sober than in his article: “Nothing is worse than Clinton. Trump will rely on the Republicans in Congress for foreign policy, which makes him very dangerous. If he breaks with the party elites he will mend ties with Russia and Syria, but it is a big if. If he sticks to a protectionist trade policy he will face problems with China and the West coast. Nothing positive will result from these elections”.

The simile of a political life

In his *Republic* Plato describes a cave inside which a group of prisoners is able to see only

the shadows of beings and of their movements. But nowadays, to follow world politics, including US elections, one sometimes has the impression of looking merely at the shadows of the shadows! The real game is very far away from the scene of the drama between Clinton and Trump, and we are kept in the dark concerning the real object of the competition. Are different strategic lines really behind it, and if so which ones? At one level they seem to exist. At another, some conspiracy theorists would argue that, at a deeper strategic level, all this is about the same "establishment of the establishment" proposing different products to different sections of its clientele. Who knows? as my friend put it.

During the previous eight years the strategic image was quite clear, at least for those who wanted to see it. On the one hand we had President Obama and people like Brzezinski. Obama was elected on the basis of opposition to imperial overextension and a crazy program of wars in the Middle East which many people inside the US and international establishment, large sections of public opinion, the US Armed Forces, etc. believed to be extremist, dangerous and not corresponding to any US interest.

On the other hand we had Clinton and the neocons (strongly supported by Netanyahu, who was also opposed by forces inside his own establishment). This camp pushed for escalation in the Middle East (and Ukraine), in order to complete the program announced long ago by the most extremist forces of the international establishment, around the project for a "new American century". Obama resisted these plans, albeit in a not always consistent and often unspoken way. He was reluctant to stop the wars in Libya and probably did not understand, until it was too late, what was at stake in Ukraine. His political alternative to the "extremely extremist", but nevertheless more coherent, project of the forces behind neocons, such as "political Islam" or Erdogan, proved to be very weak. And you cannot have a very serious policy when Clinton and Nuland are following other agendas than the President, nobody in the Administration is really sure what the CIA is doing, and senior military people rely on Seymour Hersh to put a brake on extremism!

Brzezinski has also very strongly and consistently resisted extremist policies in the Middle East, but he was blind to the dangers of escalation in Ukraine. The forces behind neocons used his deep, near pathological hostility to Russia to undermine his opposition to their plans.

Obama is rightly criticized for Afghanistan, Libya and other things, but we should remember that the President of the United States opposed the extremists, and he could not do it otherwise, in the general context of pursuit of American imperial politics. History will credit him (and Russian intervention) for stopping military intervention in Syria and sealing a nuclear agreement with Iran. Under his presidency, international neocons had to use mainly the services of Sarkozy in Paris and Cameron in London to launch the war which destroyed Libya. Clinton was helpful in this connection.

The fact that the President of the United States was unable to close Guantanamo for instance, something he obviously wished to do, says a lot about the kind of forces that all but hijacked US state after the collapse of the USSR. And about their strength: a veritable state within the state.

Deception, virtual realities and conspiracies

Bear in mind that we have been living internationally, especially since the supposed end of the Cold War, in a historic era of deception and virtual realities. And it could not be

otherwise. The infinitesimal minorities of power, money and knowledge ruling our world cannot announce their program and the future they are preparing for us. If they did, they would provoke a revolution. They are also unable at this time to launch head-on confrontation with societies and nations. Conspiracies have existed throughout history, but now they are tending to become the norm. There is no more effective weapon than the kind of smart (and evil) power that enables you influence your own opponent and lead him into choices that will seal his defeat. Classic political, social and geopolitical analysis is still the key to understanding social and international phenomena, but it must be supplemented by a deep and not always straightforward understanding of the real strategies in play.

Look how many incredible things have happened in a period of 30 years and are continuing to happen. The leader of the Soviet Union and "world communism" himself destroyed his own country and system, in a way the most powerful foreign army could not dream of. In Iraq Sunnis who so bravely resisted the US invasion were provided with a Wahhabi ISIS leadership arranged by the CIA and other allied services laboratories. In Greece the (verbally) most radical of the European "radical Left" parties is now following a policy most neoliberals would regard as extremist. And in the USA we are following a presidential campaign which is merely the distorted reflection, the tip of the iceberg, of huge battles going on behind the scenes, among the main centres of Imperial Power such as Wall Street, the CIA, the army, the lobbies, etc.

Not many sensible people would disagree with some of the ideas put forward by Trump on foreign policy, especially in relation to US-Russia relations and Syria, in his latest interview with Reuters. But does he mean them? Can we believe that he will do what he says? Is he speaking the truth or he is just performing a manoeuvre that Professor James Petras predicted as early as June , when he wrote that "Trump's electoral victory will hinge on his capacity to cover-up his neo-liberal turn and focus voters' attention on Clinton's militaristic, Wall Street, conspiratorial and anti-working class politics" (http://petras.lahaine.org/?p=2086)

Trump has said too many contradictory things on various subjects, from Cuba to Korea and from Islam to Ukraine (which he visited after Maidan) for it to be easy for the uninitiated to know what star he will really follow if elected. He is a very intelligent man and everything he says can be read two ways. (For instance, he said he will not automatically defend the Baltics, which is music to Russian ears, but he explained that US allies have to do more for NATO defenses if they are to count on the US. The probability of Russia invading Baltics is near zero. The second part of the equation, the increase in military spending by NATO allies is what really remains from such declarations).

Generals do not win the same battles a second time: in order to win one must change tactics, always bearing in mind that war remains to a great extent a continuation of politics by other means. Clinton appears much more than Trump the war candidate. But let us remember that Clinton will be, politically, a very weak president, if elected. Trump will be much stronger if elected "against the Establishment". His rise embodies the anger of the popular and middle strata in the USA. The million dollar question is: in which direction will he channel their anger?

Globalization and Nationalism

After all, globalization is not only, or not as much, about subjugating and destroying nations, as nationalists claim. It is doing that, and nationalists are right to protest and oppose it. But,

behind its amorphous surface and ideology there also lies the domination of some nations by others and, also, the domination of the strategically coherent wing of finance over everybody. As the decade of the 30s should have taught us, domination can be effected not only by crushing nations but also by exploiting their nationalism. Some smart unorthodox generals of globalization, such as the member of the steering committee of Bildeberg Peter Thiel, are drawing up their own plans on how to use Trump and the deep protest of the American demos to the service of the forces they provoked it, the classic example how such a turn around can be achieved, remaining again German history of the 20th century (https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/jul/21/peter-thiel-republican-convention-speech)

People in the USA, but also around the globe, are so fed up with the policies of the Western establishment, especially the US and the banking establishment and, also, so discouraged at their own capacity to stop these policies, that they are ready to believe blindly and follow uncritically any politician, of the Left or of the Right, promising a radical change, taking at face value whatever they say. As the tragic European experience of the 20th Century amply proves, this can be the road to disaster.

Isolationism, Interventionism, Militarism

Many people believe for instance that the election of Mr. Trump will lead to a sort of withdrawal of America from world affairs. This would be a very positive evolution, given the role America is playing in the world. But if Trump really wants to get America back, then why he is proposing an increase in military spending and why is he saying that America must be militarily stronger than any other power? What is the meaning of his slogan “America First”? Who will be the second, the third, the fourth, or the 100th in this hierarchy? By what means and through what policies, other than intervention, he will be able to deliver this result?

In fact, no one should give much credit to what US politicians say about the role of USA in the world. It is much wiser to see what they do.

President Wilson, for instance, proclaimed in 1917 that Americans would never become involved in the European slaughter. Two months later the United States intervened military in the First World War, sealing the defeat of Germany and initiating their own domination of Europe for a century! (*)

Ask any political scientist worldwide about the US Democrats and Republicans. You will invariably get the answer that Democrats are the interventionists, Republicans the isolationists. But how is it then to be explained that it was the Republican George Bush Jr. that invaded Iraq, inaugurating a “strategy of chaos” and jeopardizing peace around the globe?

Are political scientists stupid? Of course not. They simply don’t want to face the constant reality of US imperial policy since the Monroe doctrine was proclaimed in 1902. They don’t have any desire to uncover the deep roots of this phenomenon in the economic structure of the USA, the role of its multinationals, etc. This is why they prefer to focus on important but still secondary factors such as the personalities of presidents or the ideology of the two parties. The same is true of many politicians around the globe, who prefer not to look straight into the eyes of the monster and, instead, try to accommodate its existence, one way or another.

The phenomenon of US imperialism is not the result of the particular character of one president or another. It is deeply rooted in the economic structure of the USA and in the relationship they build with the outside world.

The USA was built as an empire during the 20th century. Only a very deep social, economic and cultural transformation could change the character and the role of this country.

If one wants to make predictions about future US policies, it is better to look at the military programs of the United States than to study various declarations and ideologies. US militarism emerged in a big way in 1914, first as a means of supplying Europeans with what they needed to kill each other and, after 1917, Americans with what they needed to dominate the world. It has been developing unabated since that time, even after the post-World War II enemy, the Soviet superpower, decided to commit suicide! The United States spend on weapons as much as all other countries together. They have troops and bases in more than 50 countries around the globe. They have renounced to the ABM treaty, which was the cornerstone of the arms control system during the Cold War. (And it was the Americans who insisted on, and finally secured, the agreement of the Soviets for this treaty).

Both Clinton and Trump are in favour of increasing military spending: (http://www.defenddemocracy.press/no-matter-wins-election-military-spending-stay/). Only Sanders, during his campaign, proposed to lower military spending , in order to provide more money for social needs. Doing this, he confirmed that only a strong popular movement and the existence of strong outside opposition to imperialistic plans (from Europe, Russia or China, or a combination of these) can really contain US imperialism and militarism. (The same is true of Keynesian politics, proposed by some western economists. Such politics would not have become the capitalist orthodoxy of their time if there had not been strong workers movement and if the USSR had not existed at the time. Nobody would have forgiven Germany's debt after the War, nor would there have been any thought of the Marshall Plan if there had not been very strong Communist parties in Western Europe after the War and a very powerful Red Army in Berlin).

Only the emergence of a big popular peace movement such as the one existing in the West in the past can stop the descent to war that is rooted in the very structure of the prevailing economic and social system. And such a movement can have a chance only if combined with efforts to defend the achievements of Western societies after 1945 and to create a better order than the existing one.

More and more forces around the globe are emerging to resist the terrible aspects: social, ecological, military-geopolitical, of an emerging "totalitarian Empire of globalization". But they still lack an alternative vision.

(*) Another classic example of "isolationist" talk preparing an interventionist policy is Yugoslavia. In 1990, as the USSR was collapsing, nobody seemed to need the USA in the Balkans. All the peninsula was looking to Europe for its future and, at the same time, it had strong economic, cultural and military ties with Russia. When Germany, Austria and the Vatican encouraged the war in Yugoslavia, Washington kept a distance, letting the Germans do the dirty job with the Serbs and provoke a lot of dissatisfaction with their own partners, especially the French, British, Greeks. From time to time US politicians were even saying that they would leave the Balkans, that they were not interested in Europe. Of course they had no intention of leaving, otherwise they would not at the same time have built one of

their greatest military bases abroad in FYROM. Every time the Americans said they were leaving a kind of panic came over European capitals. Berlin had inaugurated the destruction of Yugoslavia, but it could not finish the job. The war in Yugolsavia was meant in Berlin as a way of reaffirming the new international role of a reunited Germany. In the end Europeans were begging Americans to come back.

When Germany was sufficiently exposed and Europe had failed miserably, the Americans stepped in with NATO airplanes and Holbrook diplomacy to finish the job in two phases (the Dayton agreement and the Kosovo War). They sealed the defeat of Serbia, the exclusion of Russia (which failed to protect its Serbian brothers) and the end of any ambition of an autonomous European foreign and defense policy for the foreseeable future. Nobody needed them in 1990, but in 2000 they were again fully dominating the strategic landscape in the Balkans, a region of capital importance for any future war with Russia and also a possible energy transit road (by the way, what happened inYugoslavia has many similarities with the debt war against Greece and the Germany/IMF role).

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