

Australian Alert Service dossier

Britain takes the lead against Russia

The articles in this dossier appeared in the *Australian Alert Service*, weekly publication of the Citizens Electoral Council of Australia, in 2017-18.

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Moscow points to London, Obama as drivers of war danger

By Rachel Douglas

18 Apr.—As the Trump Administration of the USA exercised a quick trigger-finger in attacking Syria's Shayrat airbase with cruise missiles on 7 April and has made increasingly ominous statements about unilateral action to terminate North Korea's military programs, Russian political leaders and diplomats, so far, have kept the door open for the fundamental improvement in Russian-American relations they had hoped for after Donald Trump's election as President. That the possibility of such an improvement is still alive, was evident both in the reception accorded American Secretary of State Rex Tillerson during his visit to Moscow on 12 April, and in the latest sharply worded Russian responses to events in Syria.

From President Vladimir Putin to Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov to Acting Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations Vladimir Safronkov, Russian officials are saying with increasing precision: We know that there is a "party of war" in the West, we see that it continues to be orchestrated out of the British Foreign Office and other institutions in London, and we have observed the special role of the Barack Obama Administration, which tried to put its confrontationist policies on autopilot when leaving office in January; but, these actions run counter to President Trump's avowed desire for improved relations and fewer military adventures overseas, and we still hope that he will stick to those commitments.

Safronkov intervened dramatically in UN Security Council sessions on 7 April, the day of the cruise-missile attack on Syria, and again on 12 April, when Russia vetoed a UK-USA-French resolution that posed the need for an investigation of the 4 April alleged chemical weapons incident in terms that blamed the Assad government for it in advance. In both cases, he directly addressed UK Permanent Representative to the UN Matthew Rycroft, who had categorically blamed Syrian President Bashar Assad for the reported 4 April attack and had chastised Russia for backing "the toxic Assad regime that poisons its own people".

While responsibility for the reported 4 April attack remains uninvestigated and unproven (p. 5), lack of evidence has not been an obstacle for Foreign Office functionary Rycroft in the past. In 2002, as private secretary to Prime Minister Tony Blair, he played an important role in the run-up to the West's invasion of Iraq, based on fabricated evidence and other lies about Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction. Rycroft was the author of an infamous 23 July 2002 "Downing Street Memo"—top secret at the time, but leaked in May 2005 and published in the *Times* of London—on consultations between Blair and other British officials on the progress of their efforts, together with war-party allies in the George W. Bush Administration, to overthrow Saddam Hussein "by massive military action". Then-head of British foreign intelligence (MI6) Richard Dearlove, referred to in the memo only as "C", reported back from a trip to Washington that "Military action was now seen as inevitable." (Today Dearlove is active in efforts to frame Trump as a Russian agent, as in his interview for the May 2017 *Prospect* magazine, in



Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson with their delegations at the 12 April talks. Photo: Russian Foreign Ministry, www.mid.ru

which he attacked the American President as a "nationalist" and insinuated that Trump was personally dependent on "Russian money".) Rycroft in the 2002 memo, paraphrasing then-Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, wrote that the case for attacking Iraq "was thin", but that the UK could "work up a plan for an ultimatum to Saddam to allow back in the UN weapons inspectors. This would also help with the legal justification for the use of force".

On 7 April Safronkov advised Rycroft to stop using "un-professional arguments against my country". He added, "These are not diplomatic. They are lies. Don't even try to get into fights in the Arab world. Nothing will be achieved. All Arab countries recall your colonial hypocrisy."

On 12 April, when Rycroft presented the resolution and accused Russia of having "abused" the veto it holds as a permanent member of the UNSC, in blocking previous biased resolutions on Syria, and had "preferred to take the side of barbarians and criminals", Safronkov let loose at the special British role again: "You got scared, you lost sleep over the possibility that we would work with the United States. That's what you were afraid of. You are doing everything possible to undermine that cooperation. And that is the reason—look at me, don't look away, what are you looking away for?!—that is the reason why you said nothing today about the political process. You deliberately didn't listen to [UN Syria special envoy] Mistura's presentation.... Don't you dare offend Russia any more!"

Historical memory

"You got scared, you lost sleep over the possibility that we would work with the United States." Safronkov was speaking about Syria, but his remark captured the inner wheelworks of the entire Cold War. At the end of World War II, when President Franklin Roosevelt's vision of a post-war world in which the USA, Russia and China would lead the way to economic development and an end of colonialism, the famous Soviet officer Marshal Georgy Zhukov said to Gen. Dwight Eisenhower, the American commander in Europe and future President, "If the United States and Russia will only stand together through thick and thin,

success is certain for the United Nations. If we are partners, there are no other countries in the world that would dare to go to war when we forbade it."

The hope for such a world was dashed, when the Anglo-American (City of London/Wall Street) oligarchy's men like Dean Acheson and the Dulles brothers took over American policy under President Harry S Truman. Still today, the unreconstructed devotees of British imperial thinking persist in both the UK and the USA, under the post-1991 banners of neoconservatism and liberal interventionism.

On the eve of Secretary of State Tillerson's Moscow visit and during it, the Russian leaders continued to remind that such policies have led to nothing but disaster, and that they expect better from the United States.

Just hours after the American attack on Shayrat base, the Kremlin Press Service issued an unusual written comment, stating that "The President of Russia regards the US airstrikes on Syria as an act of aggression against a sovereign state, delivered in violation of international law under a far-fetched pretext.... This move by Washington has dealt a serious blow to Russian-US relations, which are already in a poor state. Most importantly, this move will not bring us closer to the ultimate goal of combatting international terrorism, but will instead create a major obstacle to the establishment of an international counterterrorist coalition and to effective struggle against this global evil, something that US President Donald Trump declared as one of his main goals during his election campaign."

In Moscow on 12 April, Tillerson held several hours of talks with Lavrov, before Putin received them for two more hours. Summing up, at a joint press conference that evening, Lavrov said that during the talks, "It was stated that the current stage in our bilateral relations and in the international situation is quite unstable. There are many issues, including those left by Barack Obama's Administration as delayed-action mines. We are realists, and understand that serious efforts are needed to overcome these barriers. We are clearly committed to undertaking these efforts, while expecting our US colleagues to do the same. Today, President of Russia Vladimir Putin once again reaffirmed our unwavering commitment to moving in this direction. We are seeing attempts to impede our cooperation and even exacerbate the confrontation. We view this approach as short-sighted, especially since it has been proven time and time again over the course of history, that when Moscow and Washington work together, not only our nations, but the whole world stands to win."

At another point, Lavrov insisted, "I think both the United States and Russia have enough sensible people who are able to 'separate the wheat from the chaff' and be guided by the cardinal, rather than merely expedient, interests of our peoples, countries, and the world community."

In reply to a question about pressuring Assad in Syria, Lavrov said, "As for the issue of Syria, including Bashar al-Assad, today we looked back at the history of the matter, and Rex Tillerson said that he is a new man and prefers not to delve into history, but to deal with today's problems. However, the world is such a place that unless we draw lessons from the past, we are unlikely to succeed in the present. I recalled the situations when a group of states, above all the Western countries, NATO members, were absolutely fixated on liquidating this or that dictator, an authoritarian or totalitarian leader." Lavrov then reviewed the US/NATO regime-change wars in former Yugoslavia, Iraq, Libya and Sudan, and their brutal consequences for the population in each instance, concluding,

"So, this kind of experiment based on the obsession with replacing a dictator, totalitarian or authoritarian leader—we've been there before. We know only too well what the outcome is."

Bilateral commission

Tillerson spoke more briefly than Lavrov in reply to questions raising specific crisis spots, but gave this crucial summary: "I expressed the view that the current state of US-Russia relations is at a low point and there is a low level of trust between our two countries. The world's two foremost nuclear powers cannot have this kind of relationship." This formulation directly echoed what Trump had set forth at his first lengthy press conference as President, on 16 February: "If Russia and the United States actually got together and got along—and don't forget, we're a very powerful nuclear country and so are they.... I've been briefed. And I can tell you, one thing about a briefing that we're allowed to say because anybody that ever read the most basic book can say it: Nuclear holocaust would be like no other. They're a very powerful nuclear country and so are we. If we have a good relationship with Russia, believe me, that's a good thing, not a bad thing."

Lavrov and Tillerson reported that they had covered the long roster of specific issues, set forth in a Russian Foreign Ministry press release on the eve of the talks: Syria, the broader fight against the Islamic State and other terrorists, the war in Yemen, the conflict in Libya, renewing Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, Afghanistan, Ukraine, Korea, strategic arms treaties and economic ties. Overarching these, the two countries will establish a bilateral commission, with special representatives from the Russian Foreign Ministry and the US Department of State, to analyse in detail, as Lavrov put it, "the irritants that have piled up in our relations over recent years, primarily during the Obama Administration's term, and do it without emotion or any artificial exacerbation."

In further comments the next day, TASS reported, Lavrov said, "The results of the talks may take a while to manifest themselves. At least we agreed to establish day-to-day online dialog on a number of major issues, including taking inventory of the problems that were created by the previous Administration in bilateral relations, as well as mechanisms on matters related with the implementation of the agreements we have in the military-political sphere and the mechanisms that are expected to narrow disagreements or improve the understanding of each other's positions on various regional crises, first and foremost, the Syrian settlement.... [I]t is always better to talk face to face, instead of making loud statements over a microphone.... Therefore, this is not a speedy process, but at least, if everything that we have agreed upon ... would come into reality—it would be for the good."

Lavrov has been quoted here at some length, because when reading articles in the world media under headlines like "Putin meets with Tillerson as Syria rift deepens" (CNN) or "Tillerson and Putin find little more than disagreement in meeting" (*The New York Times*), it is hard to believe they were reporting on the same diplomatic talks as described by the diplomats at their press conference. UK journalist Mary Dejevsky, writing 13 April in *The Independent*, was far more honest when she observed that though "any thaw in relations is now clearly some way off", neither are they deadlocked. "Tillerson's talks marked a beginning, not an end."

On 14 April Lavrov met with the foreign ministers of

Iran and Syria, and the same day held a phone consultation with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on coordinating Chinese and Russian diplomacy on both Syria and the Korean Peninsula. All the while, he kept hammering at the Anglo-American war party, and holding out an olive branch to Trump.

At the press conference following the Iran-Russia-Syria talks, Lavrov sharply questioned the behaviour of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)-UN Joint Investigative Mission (JIM) for Syria. He pointed out that the JIM was set up in 2015 as a joint US and Russian initiative (following the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons under international supervision, as initially proposed by Putin in 2013 when the Anglo-American war party was on the verge of bombing Syria), but that Russia had not "signed on" to the JIM's investigations being carried out only remotely, without visits by experts to the sites of alleged incidents. He also questioned why the JIM's two working groups—one to investigate accusations of chemical weapons use by the Syrian government and the other to investigate such accusations against opposition forces—"by some strange coincidence" are both headed by officials from the UK. "Without impugning the professionalism of our British colleagues, one must ask why an international organisation, which is supposed to

maintain a balance, ... would have such a tilt."

Yesterday, pressed again by journalists about rising tensions around North Korea, Lavrov expressed regret over US Vice-President Mike Pence's warning to North Korea "not to test [Trump's] resolve or the strength of the Armed Forces of the United States", as demonstrated in the Shayrat strike and the subsequent dropping of a huge bomb in Afghanistan. If this "figure of speech", Lavrov replied, "is to be understood as meaning the unilateral use of force, then this is a very risky path.... I hope that there will be no unilateral actions like the ones we saw recently in Syria, and that the USA will follow the line repeatedly stated by President Trump during the election campaign."

Asked about National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster's recent call for "tough discussions" with Russia because of its assistance to the Syrian government and alleged "subversive actions in Europe", Lavrov said that Moscow would not be derailed by every remark by every official, but would "orient towards what President of the USA Trump himself has reiterated, namely that he does want to improve relations with the Russian Federation. We are also ready for that." Trump had tweeted on 13 April, "Things will work out fine between the USA and Russia. At the right time everyone will come to their senses & there will be lasting peace!"



Unhinged hereditary dictatorship threatens nuclear first strike

By Richard Bardon

Western governments and media have been strangely silent in the face of threats by the rubber-stamp Parliament of one of the world's most notorious hereditary dictatorships to precipitate a nuclear Armageddon.

"In the most extreme circumstances, we have made it very clear that you can't rule out the use of nuclear weapons as a first strike", UK Defence Secretary Michael Fallon told BBC Radio Four on 24 April. Asked what those circumstances might be, Fallon declared them "better not specified or described", for to do so "would only give comfort to our enemies and make the deterrent less credible. The whole point about the deterrent is that you have got to leave uncertainty in the mind of anyone who might be thinking of using weapons against this country."

Similar warnings directed towards the United States by North Korean leaders are portrayed as the ravings of dangerous madmen. The comparison is not entirely fair, of course: for one thing, North Korea is still formally at war with the United States, which has explicitly threatened it with regime change on and off for decades—though the threat level today is being greatly exaggerated by the Western, and especially the British establishment media (p. 9) in their never-ending efforts to spark wars the world over. Secondly, North Korea is one of just three nuclear powers—the others being China and India—to have pledged no first use of nuclear weapons.

It is also ironic that the same media now lionising Fallon for his willingness to nuke first and ask questions later, a year ago were calling then-US presidential candidate Donald Trump a dangerous lunatic for expressing nearly identical sentiments—only to then turn around and accuse him of being a Russian agent when he warned after his election that picking a fight with the Eurasian superpower would end in nuclear holocaust.

Fallon's rant is part of the ruling Conservative Party's ongoing campaign to paint Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn as "soft" on national security issues, which escalated yet again after Corbyn told BBC host Andrew Marr on 23 April that he would pursue a strict no-first-use policy, should Labour win the upcoming 8 June general election. "Any use of nuclear weapons is a disaster for the whole world", he said. "Nuclear weapons are not the solution to the world's security issues." Asked whether he would shut down Britain's submarine-based Trident nuclear deterrent, which he has long opposed but which a majority of Labour MPs voted last year to renew, Corbyn said: "We will have a strategic defence review immediately, which will include all aspects of defence—as most incoming governments do, actually; in fact, I think all have." The party is discussing the issue and will address it in full in its policy manifesto, which is to be released in early May, he said.

Pre-empting Labour's decision, Fallon wailed that Corbyn is "against the nuclear deterrent, would stop building the submarines which we have already started building, he wouldn't control our borders, and earlier he has even questioned our NATO deployment" of 800 troops to the Estonia-Russia border. At an event the previous week marking



The UK's trigger-happy Defence Secretary Michael Fallon. Photo: Wikimedia

the beginning of that deployment, Fallon had declared that "Russia will be watching Labour's feebleness that Jeremy Corbyn has not supported this deployment.

"He has questioned it. He has questioned this deployment. Russia will be watching that", Fallon raved. Back in January, Armed Forces Minister Mike Penning even accused Corbyn of "collaborating with Russia" after the Labour leader suggested demilitarisation of both sides of the border.

A political leader being labelled a traitor and a danger to national security for merely *questioning* foreign policy is surely the mark of an authoritarian state; but in any case, Corbyn told Marr that were he made PM he would in fact leave the troops in place for the time being, while he worked with NATO leaders to build "an effective, sensible relationship with non-NATO countries such as Russia ... [and] try to de-escalate tensions around the world".

Russian Senator: Russophobia will not win election

In response to Fallon's outbursts, a senior member of the Russian Federation Council—the upper house of Parliament, analogous to Australia's Senate—suggested that "reckless sabre-rattling, militarism and Russophobia" have no place in an election campaign, and may even drive away voters. "It is frustrating that the leading British politicians apparently need lecturing on the importance of tact and graciousness in politics and diplomacy", Frants Klintsevich, deputy chairman of the Committee for Defence and Security, told RT on 27 April. "Calling the leader of the opposition a 'collaborationist' simply because he expressed a different point of view from the establishment's militarist stance vis-à-vis Russia is utterly inappropriate and counterproductive."

Dismissing Fallon's threat of a pre-emptive strike as "unprofessional", Klintsevich pointed out that "if the threat is directed against Russia or China then it is a simple fact that Britain will not be able to withstand an appropriate response". Russia stands willing to resume normal relations with Europe and the United States, he said, but only on equal terms. "Someone should remind Mr Fallon that it is not the 90s anymore", he said, "when Russia was weak and unable to oppose the Western powers." He added, "It is ironic that Western officials constantly accuse Russia of some imaginary aggression, whilst themselves expressing such trigger-happy views on nuclear weapons."



May's Russophobia is a smokescreen for imperialism

By Richard Bardon

UK Prime Minister Theresa May's denunciation of Russia as the principal threat to international order, which Britain and other "free and open societies" are duty-bound to defend, has no basis in fact. It should, rather, be viewed as an escalation in the Anglo-American Empire's drive to re-establish the divisions of the Cold War, and if necessary launch world war, to preserve its waning power.

In her keynote address to the 13 November Lord Mayor's Banquet, held at Guildhall in the heart of the City of London, May complained that "the rules of the game for this century are increasingly being shaped by emerging economies and powerhouses in the East", and that therefore "the task of a global Britain is clear: To defend the rules-based international order against irresponsible states that seek to erode it." Chief amongst these, May said, is Russia, whose actions "threaten the international order on which we all depend". She ranted:

"Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea was the first time since the Second World War that one sovereign nation has forcibly taken territory from another in Europe. Since then, Russia has fomented conflict in the [eastern Ukraine] Donbass, repeatedly violated the national airspace of several European countries, and mounted a sustained campaign of cyber espionage and disruption. This has included meddling in elections, and hacking the Danish Ministry of Defence and the Bundestag [German Parliament], among many others.

"It is seeking to weaponise information. Deploying its state-run media organisations to plant fake stories and photo-shopped images in an attempt to sow discord in the West and undermine our institutions.

"So I have a very simple message for Russia: We know what you are doing, and you will not succeed. ... The UK will do what is necessary to protect ourselves, and work with our allies to do likewise. That is why we are driving reform of NATO so this vital alliance is better able to deter and counter hostile Russian activity."

All of these accusations, bar one, are old and tired. It was not Russia that "fomented conflict in the Donbass", but the Western powers, including the UK, which in February 2014 used neo-Nazi militias to run a coup d'état against Ukraine's elected government (p. 11). Crimea was not "annexed", but seceded from Ukraine and reunited with Russia via referendum, in a manner consistent with international law. As for airspace violations and cyber espionage, no credible technical evidence has been produced to support either charge.

Election meddling

What is new is that May's government, taking a leaf from failed US presidential candidate Hillary Clinton's book, is now blaming Russia for Brexit.

The day after May's speech, the *Guardian* reported that University of Edinburgh researchers had identified 419 social media accounts operating from the so-called Internet Research Agency (IRA)—allegedly a Kremlin-run propaganda unit in St. Petersburg, Russia—that had been "attempting to influence UK politics" by "sowing discord among Britons over the [Brexit] referendum". Conservative MP Damian Collins, chairman of the House of Commons Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee, had demanded that Twitter supply him examples of IRA posts about

British politics, the *Guardian* reported. "What is at stake is whether Russia has constructed an architecture which means they have thousands of accounts with which they can

bombard [us] with fake news and hyper-partisan content", he said. "We need to understand how widespread it is and what the impact is on the democratic process."

As it happens, the answers to those questions appear just a few paragraphs later: according to the University of Edinburgh's Prof. Laura Cram, the 419 accounts had tweeted about Brexit 3,468 times—about 78 per cent of them after the 23 June 2016 Brexit vote. Separately, Oxford Internet Institute researcher Yin Yin Lu told Sky News that she had cross-referenced the 2,752 accounts with her own database of 22.6 million tweets posted between March and July 2016, and found a grand total of 416 matches. "That is a very infinitesimal fraction", Ms Lu told Sky. "So the word interference is perhaps a bit exaggerated."

May later told Parliament that the "Russian interference" she had referred to happened "in a number of countries in Europe", not in the UK. It would be tempting to write off these accusations as a bad charade, but for one thing: the NATO "reforms" May spoke of include a push to include cyber attacks as a trigger for collective military action under the mutual defence clause in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. The more anti-Russia hysteria the UK can generate, the lower it can set the bar for a "counterattack", which could precipitate thermonuclear war.

Threat to international order

May also declared the UK's right—responsibility, even—to wage war as it sees fit, especially in the Middle East. "In the past we have sought to remake countries or even entire regions at great cost to their people and ultimately to our own willingness to intervene when necessary", she said. "Of course we must never be paralysed by the myth that armed intervention is doomed to fail. And the UK is not and will not be afraid to deploy its hard power where necessary."

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova replied 14 November that not only were May's accusations against Russia "irresponsible and groundless", but that "the idea of protection of world order sounds particularly cynical from a British Prime Minister.

"Suffice it to recall the aggressive actions of the United Kingdom in Iraq and Libya, which have led not to the strengthening of international law, but to numerous casualties and suffering of millions of people and destabilisation of whole regions. At the same time, London shows fundamental incomprehension of current processes in the world and of the essence of the very UN Charter-based international legal order that the United Kingdom is vowing to protect", she said.



UK Prime Minister Theresa May telling the City of London Russia is an enemy of the rules-based international order. Photo: Gov.uk



British and American neo-Cold Warriors gun for showdown against Russia

By Rachel Douglas

23 Jan.—Fasten your seatbelts! The closer the next global financial blow-out looms, as specialists ranging from the US Treasury Department's Office of Financial Research to the ex-chief economist of the Bank for International Settlements acknowledge it does, the more intense become attempts by the Anglo-American Party of War to divert the attention of politicians and populations around the world onto a dangerous showdown with Russia and China. This article concerns actions related to Russia.

Just in the past month's time, new danger signs have appeared.

The Supreme Rada (Parliament) of Ukraine passed a law authorising the use of military force to retake the eastern Donbass regions, which declared autonomy in 2014. The move came less than a month after the US State Department for the first time approved supplying lethal armaments to Ukraine (page 12).

Gen. Sir Nick Carter, British Army chief of the General Staff, gave a bloodcurdling speech 22 January at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), in which he declared that Russia under President Vladimir Putin was "the most complex and capable security challenge we have faced since the Cold War". Claiming that Russia presents an immediate threat to "the West's stability" and to the newer NATO members on Russia's own borders (article, p. 13), Carter demanded a sharp UK military spending increase "to keep up with our adversaries".

Back in Washington, Secretary of Defence James Mattis was reading from the same page as the British general, when on 19 January he unveiled the latest US National Defence Strategy. Contrary to President Donald Trump's pledges to seek better relations with Russia, Mattis declared that "great power competition, not terrorism, is now the primary focus of US national security", and that America's "principal priorities" are to mobilise military, economic, financial, diplomatic, law enforcement, intelligence and "information" assets to confront Russia and China as its primary adversaries.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, interviewed by the newspaper *Kommersant* during his three-day visit to New York for United Nations sessions last week, said that developments of this sort make the global situation worse than at the height of the Cold War. "This cranking up of Russophobia is really unprecedented", said the diplomat. "There was nothing like this during the Cold War. There were some kinds of rules then, and mutual civility. Now all proprieties have been cast aside.... Today, when NATO has advanced to the East, there really are no rules."

Sanctions as regime-change

While diplomatic rules may have fallen by the wayside, the US Congress is using the force of law to escalate hostile actions against Russia. In June 2017 the US Senate passed, by a vote of 98 to 2, a law that came to be named, after its 419 to 3 passage by the House of Representatives in July, the *Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act* (CAATSA). The AAS Washington Insider column of 21 June 2017, "Senate takes insane action against Russia, Iran and Trump",



Left, US Defence Secretary James Mattis announces the new National Defence Strategy which emphasises the return of great-power rivalry. Right, General Sir Nicholas Carter, Chief of the General Staff UK, addresses RUSI on the same subject. Photos: US DoD; YouTube screenshot

reported about Russia's addition to what was to have been an anti-Iran law—a change justified by the still unproven charge of "election meddling" by Russia. The President, whose veto would have been overridden had he tried to block the bill, signed CAATSA into law on 2 August 2017.

Several of the Russia-related sanctions in CAATSA were enhancements of ones imposed in 2014, after Crimea declared independence from Ukraine in the wake of the overthrow of that country's elected President and government, and then petitioned to join Russia (events treated by the Western media and politicians as a Russian invasion and annexation). These measures included the blacklisting and banning from the United States of Russian officials deemed to have been involved in the Crimea events or hostile to the coup-installed Kiev regime, as well as some current and former close associates of Putin.

By upgrading the prior sanctions, the US Congress has taken the approach set forth in a June 2015 report issued by the UK's Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House), "The Russian Challenge". The Chatham House authors had stated that "[t]he effectiveness of sanctions against Russia depends on their duration as well as severity".

CAATSA mandated new sanctions, as well, against "persons engaging in transactions with the intelligence or defence sectors of the government of the Russian Federation"; sanctions against any party that sells equipment to Russia for the purpose of building oil and gas export pipelines; and sanctions against anyone who invests in Russian state-owned assets when they are privatised, if such investment "unjustly benefits officials of the Government of the Russian Federation; or close associates or family members of those officials". The penalties against such persons include the denial of licenses, and measures to block credit for such deals.

Several clauses use the terminology that the President "shall" impose sanctions, rather than "may" impose them, wording that makes the implementation of several measures not optional for Trump.

Other CAATSA provisions require certain actions to be taken by the Administration within six months, a deadline falling due next week, around 29 Jan.-2 Feb. These include Section 241 of CAATSA, which demands from the Administration a "report on oligarchs and parastatal entities of the Russian Federation", specifically "identification of the most significant

senior foreign political figures and oligarchs in the Russian Federation, as determined by their closeness to the Russian regime and their net worth”, and the same for their spouses, children, parents and siblings. This coming document is informally known as “the Kremlin report” or “the Kremlin list”. Section 242 demands an assessment, on the same deadline, of what the effect would be of expanding sanctions to include Russian sovereign debt, i.e., a possible ban on purchases of Russian bonds by US citizens or companies. Section 243 requires an annual report, beginning in August 2018, on what US agencies are doing against “illicit finance relating to the Russian Federation”.

The reports and other CAATSA implementation are being worked on by several parts of the Trump Administration—the

Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), the State Department, and the Office of National Intelligence, according to government announcements. On 27 October 2017, the State Department published a list of 33 Russian companies and several agencies which come under the “intelligence and defence sectors” of the Russian government.

There are also task forces at various non-governmental Anglo-American establishment institutions, working on making this new phase of sanctions as nasty and damaging to Russia, and Putin personally, as possible. One such group is at the Atlantic Council, the think tank known as NATO’s biggest booster in Washington, as well as for having actively supported the coup in Ukraine and the “hacking” allegations side of the US Russiagate scandals. Another group assembled in

Dangerous escalation in Ukraine

On 18 January the Verkhovna Rada, Ukraine’s Parliament, passed a law on reintegrating the eastern Donbass region, where the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Lugansk People’s Republics are located, into Ukraine. The terms of the law wipe out those of the February 2015 Minsk accords, reached between Ukraine and the Donbass governments, with the participation of France, Germany, Russia and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The Minsk accords were a framework for peaceful settlement of the conflict in eastern Ukraine, ongoing since shortly after the Western-backed February 2014 coup in Kiev, the capital. The Rada declared that the Donbass is “temporarily occupied” by an “aggressor” (Russia—which denies having forces there), and empowered Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko to use the Army without the Rada’s permission.

The law, which Poroshenko enthusiastically welcomed, was perceived “everywhere” as open preparation for war, Russian state TV said in its coverage.

Chairman of the Russian Federation Council (Senate) Valentina Matviyenko commented, “This law buried the Minsk agreements. This law is conducive to the unaccountable and uncontrollable use of military power, the use of weapons, and it allows imposing martial law. Not one step has been taken towards a peace process. This is very alarming and troublesome.”

The Minsk agreements called for local elections to be held in the Donbass in accordance with a law “On the temporary order of local self-governance in particular districts of Donetsk and Lugansk Regions”, which the Rada was to adopt after the pullback of heavy weaponry. The guns were largely pulled back, but from the beginning the Rada has refused to pass such a law.

Boris Gryzlov, former speaker of the Russian Duma and currently Russia’s authorised representative to the southeast Ukraine conflict resolution group, said of the Rada’s new action, that “announcing Russia as an aggressor, Ukraine is basically taking a step not towards political regulation, but towards a military conflict resolution. And all of this is happening against the backdrop of the USA’s decision to supply Ukraine with lethal weapons.”

On 22 December 2017, the US State Department for the first time authorised sending anti-tank and other armaments to Kiev. It has also emerged that US Army advisors have paid several visits to Ukrainian National Guard units, including the Azov Battalion, which sports Nazi symbols and espouses racist, fascist ideology. The American decision came amidst the heaviest clashes in the Donbass



In his 21 January broadcast Russian TV anchorman Dmitri Kiselyov said the new Ukraine law on the Donbass region of Eastern Ukraine marked the beginning of preparations for war. Photo: Twitter/Julia Davis

since 2014, the first year of this Ukrainian civil war, which has taken more than ten thousand lives.

Gilbert Doctorow, a member of the American Committee for East-West Accord based in Belgium, wrote in Consortium News 21 January under the headline “The Coming (Big) War in Ukraine”, that many Russians believe the new Ukrainian law “amounts to a declaration of war”, intended to give Russia a “black eye” after its success against the Islamic State and other terrorists in Syria. He pointed to the seriousness of Moscow’s response, shown by state TV anchorman Dmitri Kiselyov’s 21 January broadcast. Kiselyov said that the law marked an end to Kiev’s participation in the Minsk accords and the beginning of preparations for war; the Donbass republics are no longer treated as parties to negotiations, but only as Russian “occupation administrations”.

Wrote Doctorow, “It is not the law itself that is the issue. It is the mood in favour of war in Kiev.... Poroshenko has done nothing to implement the Minsk Accords; not one ceasefire along the lines of contact has been observed; there are attacks and deaths every day.... Kiev has written off the population of the two republics. It has cut off all transport and telecom links. It does not pay pensions and assistance to the needy. It closed the banking system and there are no commercial ties.” He suggested that Poroshenko’s now extremely unpopular regime sees full-scale war as a way to get money from the West, given that the European Union has withheld €600 million in credits for Ukraine due to corruption, and the International Monetary Fund recently refused to release an US\$800-million tranche of its credit line to Ukraine because of failure to introduce reforms. Ukraine will soon have to pay US\$14 billion per year in interest and principal, equal to half its GDP.

December in Vilnius, Lithuania, under the auspices of former chess champion Garry Kasparov's Free Russia Forum, to work up recommendations for the Treasury Department, concerning who should be on the Kremlin list.

John Helmer, the Australian-born, Russia-based analyst who publishes the *Dancing with Bears* blog, observed in a 3 July 2017 post, "The targeting of Section 241 includes almost every major Russian corporation, its control shareholders, associated banks, and their offshore businesses. The stated aim is nothing less than to destroy those of them who side with the Kremlin; recruit the remainder for US-backed regime change; and pit each against the other, all against the Kremlin."

Pot calls kettle black

The scenario of attacking Russia's current leadership, and its economy as a whole, through a crackdown on criminal economic activity—which was fostered by the West in the first place—has been under development for some time. At least as early as April 2016, Luke Harding of the *Guardian* crowed that the Panama Papers (documents leaked in 2015 from the law firm Mossack Fonseca, which deals in offshore transactions) had opened up a way to get Putin, because offshore accounts of personal friends of his were mentioned in them.

Anders Åslund is a liberal economist who did much economic injury to people in Eastern Europe as an adviser to several governments there in the 1990s, promoting a deregulation and privatisation agenda. A senior fellow at the Atlantic Council, he is part of its CAATSA task force; another member is Daniel Fried, an Atlantic Council "senior fellow" who had been assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs under George W. Bush (2005-09), and came back as sanctions coordinator against Russia in the Obama State Department in 2014. In a 22 August 2017 Project Syndicate article titled "The Achilles Heel of Putin's Regime", Åslund chimed in on the anti-corruption theme. He declared that "Putin's authority is weaker than it seems", and could be shaken by going after criminality and corruption surrounding monies held by his associates in offshore tax havens. Calling for "comprehensive investigations into the assets of sanctioned people", he wrote that the USA and the UK, "which presumably hold the vast majority of Russian offshore wealth", must prohibit the anonymity of such Russian accounts, and identify and punish their holders.

CAATSA is the occasion to do this, according to Åslund. For him, the agenda is nothing short of regime-change in Russia. Citing a Russian opposition activist who had claimed that the Russian state was "a very fragile construct", he proposed that it could be destroyed by anything "from the fight against

corruption, to efforts to oust kleptocratic officials. Given the vast stocks of Russian capital that have piled up in New York, London, and elsewhere, the West is ideally positioned to exploit this fragility."

Readers of the AAS, who know a thing or two about the crimes of the City of London, Wall Street, and other major international banks—from money-laundering for drug-traffickers and terrorists, to a wide variety of market-rigging and tax evasion—should smell a rat here. (To refresh your memory, see examples in "[Behind the Magnitsky hoax: HSBC's offshore crime](#)", AAS 26 July 2017; and "[Banks are complicit in the drug trade](#)", from a 1997 interview with Luke Cornelius, national secretary of the Australian Federal Police Association, in the 27 Sept. 2017 issue.) Isn't it a classic case of the pot calling the kettle black, for a proposed crackdown on criminality and corruption to be the Anglo-American establishment's track for a planned escalation against Russia, and for the Wall Street banking veterans who staff the Treasury Department to be compiling a list of Russian financial transgressions?

It's worse than that. In the case of Russia, we can say that the "pot" made the "kettle" black in the first place. During the first decade of post-Soviet Russia, in 1991-98, US, UK and European government institutions, as well as international financial organisations and various non-governmental agencies (including the "big four" accounting firms), imposed their own, heavily criminalised financial system on Russia. Within a very few years, Russia was not only looted through the crash privatisation of state-owned Soviet-era industries, but it became an important component of the City of London-centred offshore system. At various times, as much as 70 per cent of all foreign direct investment in Russia has come from Russian companies, which under the 1990s liberalisation program were free to register themselves offshore. The US National Bureau of Economic Research estimate, that Russian money taken offshore totals US\$1 trillion (more than three-fourths of Russia's GDP and as much as is held by all Russians residing inside the country), is shared by some leading Russian economists. None of Putin's several "de-offshorisation" programs have worked.

But the Russian offshore phenomenon was not caused by the personality of Vladimir Putin, or the wealth connections of his associates. Russia's economy as a whole remains captive to the City of London's "Pirates of the Caribbean". To try and manipulate those financial relationships in order to topple Putin and further destabilise a country that is still the world's #2 nuclear weapons power, is to ask for something far worse than a new Cold War.

Part 2 to follow.

'Not one inch eastward': Declassified docs expose broken promises to Russia on NATO

By Richard Bardon

US and Western European policymakers have long denied that Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachov consented to the reunification of Germany on the condition that the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) not expand eastward. They argue that no such assurance was ever given, and that US Secretary of State James Baker's famous 9 February 1990 pledge to Gorbachov, that "NATO's jurisdiction would not shift one inch eastward from its present position", applied only to discussions of stationing NATO forces in the territory of East Germany after German reunification, and that Russian claims of a broader pledge are President Vladimir Putin's way of justifying his alleged "aggression" towards Russia's neighbours

and the West in general.

Research published late last year by the Washington, DC-based George Washington University's National Security Archive proves that this is a lie.

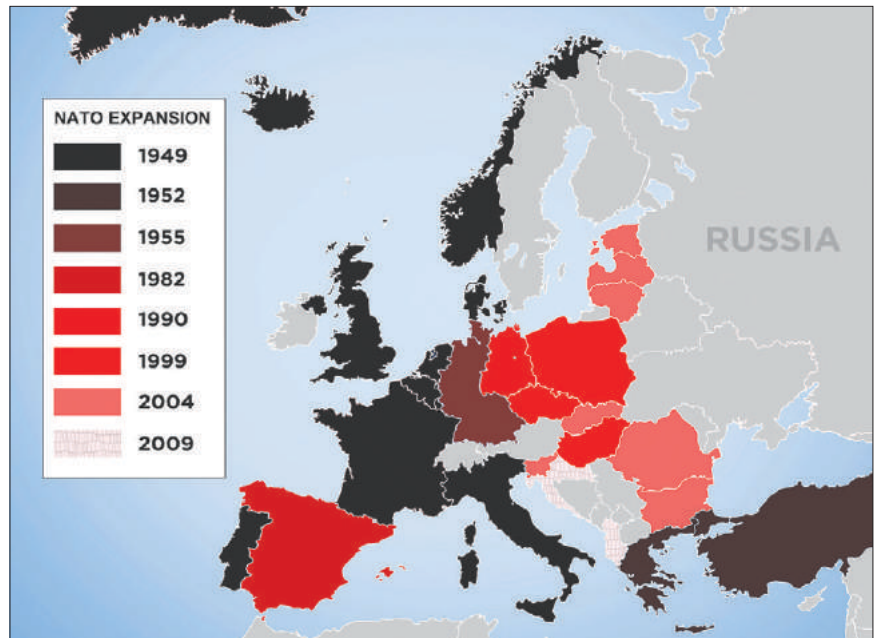
In a 12 December 2017 report titled "[NATO expansion: What Gorbachov Heard](#)", researchers Svetlana Savranskaya and Tom Blanton analyse 30 diplomatic cables, telephone transcripts and other records from both sides of the 1990 negotiations, some of them declassified as a result of Freedom of Information Act requests for the project, which prove that Baker was far from the only official to make such a promise. "The documents show that multiple national leaders were considering and rejecting Eastern European membership in

NATO as of early 1990 and through 1991, [and] that discussions of NATO in the context of German unification negotiations in 1990 were not at all narrowly limited to the status of East German territory”, they write. Baker’s was just one of a carefully coordinated “cascade of assurances” which began when West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher gave a speech on reunification in Tutzing, Bavaria on 31 January 1990. According to a cable to Washington from the US Embassy in Bonn (the West German capital), Genscher made clear “that the changes in Eastern Europe and the German unification process must not lead to an ‘impairment of Soviet security interests’. Therefore, NATO should rule out ‘an expansion of its territory towards the east, i.e. moving it closer to the Soviet border’.”

By the end of the reunification negotiations, US President George H.W. Bush, Chancellor of West Germany Helmut Kohl, France’s President François Mitterrand, NATO Secretary-General Manfred Wörner, and UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher had all promised Gorbachov and other Soviet leaders that NATO would not expand into Eastern Europe, and that the Soviet Union would see its national security, vital interests and traditional sphere of influence respected. Mitterrand even told Gorbachov in May 1990 that he was “personally in favour of gradually dismantling the [NATO and Warsaw Pact] military blocs”, in such a way as to “create security conditions for you, as well as European security as a whole”. Even in March 1991, less than a year before the Soviet Union dissolved, British Ambassador to Moscow Sir Rodric Braithwaite recorded in his diary that Thatcher’s successor, John Major, had told Gorbachov and Defence Minister Dmitri Yazov in person that no East European countries would ever be allowed to join NATO: “Nothing of the sort will happen.”

But happen it did, not only to former Warsaw Pact countries starting with Poland, Czechia, and Hungary in 1999, but even to some former Soviet republics (map). In his famous speech at the [2007 Munich Security Conference](#), [Putin demanded](#): “Against whom is this expansion intended? And what happened to the assurances our Western partners made after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact? Where are those declarations today? No one even remembers them. But I will allow myself to remind this audience what was said. I would like to quote the speech of NATO General Secretary Mr Wörner in Brussels on 17 May 1990. He said at the time that: ‘the fact that we are ready not to place a NATO army outside of German territory gives the Soviet Union a firm security guarantee’. Where are these guarantees?”

Those guarantees should have been inherited by the Russian Federation, as the legal successor state to the Soviet Union. Instead, as American Russia expert Prof. Stephen Cohen [observed 10 January in *The Nation*](#), “Ever since Bush’s successor, President Bill Clinton, began the still ongoing process of NATO expansion [in 1999], its promoters and apologists have repeatedly insisted there was no such promise, that it had all been ‘myth’ or ‘misunderstanding’.... Russians can cite other instances of deceit, including President George W. Bush’s 2002 unilateral abrogation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and [President Barack] Obama’s broken promise



The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), founded 1949, was a Cold War institution confronting the Soviet Union. After the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, Soviet leaders believed 1990 statements by German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, US Secretary of State James Baker III, and others, that the eastern part of a reunified Germany would not be in NATO (let alone Soviet then-allies in Eastern Europe). Germany’s 1990 reunification did include full entry of its East into NATO, but with the end of the USSR in 1991, Russian leaders continued to expect non-confrontation. The West was now supposed to be Russia’s friend, and Western officials poured into Moscow to direct all areas of policy (dictating “free market reforms” that devastated the economy). As Russia, under the Primakov and Putin governments, began to resist such subjugation in 1998-99, NATO escalated its expansion by admitting former Soviet allies Hungary, Poland and Czechia. Dick Cheney, US vice-president in 2001-09, pushed the forward basing of anti-missile batteries in Eastern Europe, threatening Russia’s nuclear deterrent, as well as further eastward expansion. Subsequently, NATO has exploited the Western-fomented Ukraine crisis, to step up activity on Russia’s borders.

that he would not use a 2011 UN Security Council resolution to depose Libyan leader Gaddafi. But it is the broken promise to Gorbachov that lingers as America’s original sin, partly because it was the first of many such perceived duplicities, but mainly because it has resulted in a Russia semi-encircled by US-led Western military power, an encroachment that continues today.”

Another recent document declassification underscores how far the world has come from the broken promises of 1990, to today’s entrenched beliefs in “Russian aggression”. Documents released by the British National Archives, also in December 2017, reveal that President George H.W. Bush planned to discuss with Russian President Boris Yeltsin a revival of President Ronald Reagan’s Strategic Defence Initiative program, designed to end the reign of terror under the strategic nuclear war doctrine of “Mutual Assured Destruction”. *The Telegraph* reported 20 January that the hitherto secret Cabinet documents show that Bush, Sr. “was prepared to discuss sharing that technology with Boris Yeltsin, after they met at Camp David in February 1992, and declared a formal end to the Cold war”. Material in the disclosed files includes descriptions of what the program would entail, including “a mixture of land-based and space-based systems”, and “particle beams, lasers, and even chemical lasers to knock out incoming missiles”.

The papers show a hostile response from the UK at the time, as Sir Stephen Wall, Private Secretary to Prime Minister John Major, warned the Foreign Office that America “assumed Russia would permanently be a good guy”, adding, “We could not make that assumption.” British diplomats noted that (clearly under British pressure), Washington had “taken to heart” the inherent problems of the East and West sharing defence systems, and backed off from the proposal.



Mrs 'M' draws Western allies into dangerous confrontation with Russia

Schiller Institute chairman Helga Zepp-LaRouche on 17 March wrote a lead article for the German weekly newspaper Neue Solidarität, from which we quote in draft translation. A full translation will be available soon from larouche.pub.com.

"It was only one day after Chancellor Angela Merkel swore in her oath of office to 'protect the German people from harm', that she fully supported the irresponsible provocation of the British government against Russia in a joint declaration of the French, US, British and German governments. Presidents Macron and Trump, Prime Minister May and Merkel agreed that there was 'no plausible alternative explanation' for the nerve agent attack on former double agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia, other than that Russia was responsible for it. But this operation is so blatant, that there is only one plausible explanation for it: The British Empire wants to drag the entire West into an escalation of the new Cold War and possibly more. And Mrs Merkel is playing right into it with no hesitation.

"In the meantime, a series of well-known experts have pointed out that the one-day ultimatum which Theresa May gave the Russian government to explain how the nerve agent 'Novichok' got from Russia to Great Britain, is a clear breach of the rules of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), of which the UK is also a member. It would have been necessary, they note, to submit samples of the poison to the OPCW for an independent investigation, and the accused party, in this case Russia, should have been given ten days in which to answer the charges.

"The former British Ambassador to Uzbekistan, Craig Murray, characterised the 'Novichok' story, for which the British government has not produced a shred of evidence, as a swindle in the tradition of accusations about Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction. (It will be recalled that a memo of the British foreign intelligence service MI6 presented the submission.)

"Murray stated that the head of the UK's only chemical weapons facility, Dr Robin Black, had stressed in a prestigious scientific journal in 2016 that the evidence for the existence of this agent was scant and its chemical composition was unknown [p. 12]. Therefore, although Great Britain obviously had no samples—that is, it had nothing with which it could have compared the toxic substance used in the attack against Skripal—Theresa May nevertheless claimed that Russia bore sole responsibility for it. Incidentally, the chemical weapons facility is located in Porton Down, which, interestingly enough, is only 12 kilometres away from Salisbury, where the attack took place. Given the dubious character of the existence of Novichok, the OPCW decided not to add it to its list of chemical weapons.

"Things get even more interesting when it comes to the role of Christopher Steele in this affair. Sergei Skripal, who worked for the Russian military intelligence agency at the time, was apparently 'turned' in 1995 by an MI6 agent by the name of Pablo Miller, in an operation that was coordi-



Does Theresa May think she is James Bond's "M"? Photos: Flickr; Screenshot

nated by Steele who was working in Moscow under diplomatic cover at the time. When Steele 'left' MI6 in 2009, he founded the private security firm Orbis Business Intelligence, whose trademark is to market charges against Russia in PR style. One of its operations was 'Operation Charlemagne' about so-called Russian interference into elections in France, Italy, Great Britain and Germany, as well as the alleged financing of Marine Le Pen, Silvio Berlusconi and the Alternative for Germany (AfD), and a Russian campaign to destroy the EU.

"But the absolute masterpiece of his career as a 'spook' is the attempted coup against Donald Trump, via the collusion among the intelligence chiefs of the Obama Administration, the Democratic National Committee, the Hillary Clinton campaign and the British secret services, entirely based on the 'salacious dossier' on Trump which Steele and Orbis had produced. Just now, the Intelligence Committee of the US House of Representatives has just released the results of its over one-year-long investigation, which found there was no collusion whatsoever between the Russian government and the Trump team."

Later in her article, Zepp-LaRouche mentions that another actor in the Orbis operation was Andrew Wood, the former British ambassador to Moscow at the time that Skripal was being recruited by Miller in an operation coordinated by Steele. Moreover, Steele himself was the MI6 case officer for the charges against Russia in the 2006 death of Alexander Litvinenko, the Russian spy-turned-MI6-collaborator whom London alleged Russian agents had poisoned with radioactive polonium-210, on Putin's order ("Prelude to Trumpgate: MI6's Litvinenko affair", AAS 18 Jan. 2017).

"In other words, the same circle of 'former' MI6 agents which was in charge of the propaganda operation on alleged collusion between Trump and Russia, which has now been discredited as fake news, was and is in the centre of the Skripal attack. If it walks like a duck, quacks like a duck and looks like a duck, then it is in all likelihood a duck, that is, an operation of the British secret service."

Zepp-LaRouche goes on to urge Germany to refuse to go along with the hysterical campaigns against Russia and also against China, and instead to join the new paradigm of international cooperation exemplified by China's Belt and Road Initiative. Her conclusion:

"If Mrs Theresa May imagines she has to imitate Judi Dench as the 'M' in a James Bond movie, that is a matter of bad taste. To let oneself be drawn into a confrontation with Russia by such a role model is irresponsible."



London leads insane drive for conflict with Russia

By Rachel Douglas

23 Oct.—This month saw the 25th anniversary of a grim turning point in post-Soviet Russia, the 3-4 October 1993 showdown in which Russian President Boris Yeltsin sent Army tanks to fire on the country's elected Parliament. The date was largely ignored around the world, but the consequences of that event are still being felt.

When the Soviet Union disintegrated in 1991, the group who seized control of Russian economic policy, under Yeltsin, were young economists trained in radical neoliberalism at London's Institute of Economic Affairs.¹ IEA spokesmen at the time told the *Times* of London that Russia would be “the perfect new laboratory” for these policies.

While London's proteges engineered the takeover and looting of the former Soviet economy, the “neoconservative” war party in both London and Washington (essentially indistinguishable from the “neoliberals” in economic policy) was pushing a parallel plan: the so-called Wolfowitz Doctrine, which said that no power must ever again be allowed to rise to the stature of the Soviet Union.² Instead, there should be a “unipolar” world, dominated by the United States on behalf of the Anglo-American power nexus.

In the summer of 1993, a coalition of Russian MPs, including but not limited to the Communist Party, resisted laws meant to hasten the privatisation of Russian industry. Yeltsin and the government, along with most of the international media, dubbed them “red-brown” (communist-fascist) obstructionists. On 21 September 1993 Yeltsin dissolved the Parliament permanently, by decree, and abolished the Constitution. MPs, joined by then-Vice President Gen. Alexander Rutskoy, refused to comply, and blockaded themselves in the Parliament building. Two weeks later they were smashed by force, with an unknown number of people killed there and at the main TV transmission tower in Moscow.

The looting of Russia continued, until it was halted, at least in part, with the ouster of the neoliberal economists from the premiership in 1998 and of their chief sponsor, Yeltsin, from the Presidency in 1999, after global hot-money speculators had crashed the ruble and forced a Russian sovereign debt default. The government of Yevgeni Primakov (1998-99) partially reversed the wholesale destruction of Russian industry. Moreover, both Primakov and Yeltsin's successor as President, Vladimir Putin, rejected the Wolfowitz Doctrine. In the face of NATO's bombing of Serbia in 1999 and a wave of insurgencies in Russia's North Caucasus, which Moscow knew had British Intelligence instigation and backing, Russia moved to rebuild its military and publicly rejected the “unipolar world” of the Wolfowitz Doctrine.

For that, the London proponents of “Global Britain” and similar new versions of the Empire, along with their Washington allies, have not forgiven Russia. Their efforts continue, to force Russia to back down and force the United States

to come along into conflict with Russia, despite President Donald Trump's often voiced belief that it would be better for the world's two biggest nuclear-weapons powers to “get along”.

War games

The British government and intelligence establishment is in overdrive, hyping an alleged Russian threat to Europe. British defence chiefs, the *Sunday Times* reported 7 October, recently war-gamed a cyber attack on Moscow in which the lights in the Kremlin would be shut off—as a means, supposedly, to deter Russian attacks on NATO. They chose this technique because, in their war-gaming algorithms, the only other means the UK had to respond to such Russian aggression would be full-scale nuclear war: a nuclear-armed ballistic missile launch from a Trident submarine. The scenarios tested by the UK were three: Russian occupation of small islands off the coast of Estonia, to test NATO's Article 5 mutual-defence commitment; Russian seizure of Libyan oil fields, setting off a new migration crisis in Europe; and an attack on Britain's new aircraft carriers by irregular forces. The planning exercises left officials “ashen-faced”, the *Times* said, at the speed with which confrontation with Moscow could escalate.

Simultaneous with the *Times* report, former MI6 chief Richard Dearlove went on Sky News to denounce “Russia's DNA”—claiming, like ex-CIA chief James Clapper, that Russians are innately hostile to the West.³ “Soviet espionage has never stopped”, Dearlove intoned. “It's deeply embedded in Russia's DNA to use the capabilities that it has, to disrupt other nations, to pursue their own national interest, to reinforce Putin in power, and the attack in the UK fits a historical pattern. Russia historically has always used assassination as a weapon. It's part of the Russian political DNA. It's a rather terrible thing to say, but it's a violent country and they tend to kill each other.”

The “attack in the UK” refers to the still murky affair of Russian defector to MI6 Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia, who were poisoned last March in the city of Salisbury. As Mary Dejevsky underscores in her guest commentary (p. 11), major questions about the Skripal case remain open, and official Russian culpability has not been demonstrated.

Meanwhile in Washington, the British government-funded Atlantic Council think tank continues its role as chief war-monger against Russia. Magnus Nordenman of its Transatlantic Security Initiative complained in a 9 October commentary on the Defense One website, that the Russian Kalibr submarine-launched cruise missile, tested in combat against terrorists in Syria, has ruined NATO's war plans for reinforcement of NATO forces defending Poland and the Baltic states. Kalibr, he wrote, is a “technological achievement [with] game-changing implications for NATO and America's ability to



Former MI6 chief Richard Dearlove: Russian DNA is innately hostile to the West. Photo: Wikimedia Commons

1. “Russia's 1990s criminalisation was ‘Made in London!’”, Australian Almanac, AAS, 30 May 2018. The IEA is an arm of the Mont Pelerin Society, the British economic warfare unit founded in 1947 with the mission of using free-trade “liberalism”—deregulation of national economies in favour of a free hand for financial speculation—as a bludgeon against nation-states.

2. “Australian government: we serve Pax Americana (and Britannia)”, AAS, 18 July 2018.

3. “The strange ‘genes’ of James Clapper”, AAS, 21 June 2017.

come to the aid of its European allies if Russia and the trans-Atlantic alliance ever comes [sic] to blows in Europe”.

Atlantic Council non-resident senior fellow James Coyle, in a 9 October op-ed in *The Hill*, lamented that the USA is losing out to Russia in a battle for influence in Europe and Central Asia. This is supposedly evidenced by the German government’s desire to go ahead with the Nordstream-2 gas pipeline from Russia to Germany, and by India’s purchase of the Russian S-400 air defence system.

NATO commander Gen. Curtis Scaparrotti, an American, was in lockstep with Dearlove and the Atlantic Council, in a 1 October interview with James Kitfeld for the website Breaking Defense. He cited such things as Russian “social media activity” (!) as being aggressive operations just “below the level of outright war” (Kitfeld’s words), with “the eastern border of the NATO alliance”, like the Baltic states and Poland, as a priority target. Scaparrotti said he has repeatedly ordered NATO historians to look at Cold War combat plans—“analyse battle plans and readiness documents..., beginning in the 1950s”—in order to achieve the “readiness and speed of action” required today.

Also dusting off deadly Cold War scenarios, or the Hollywood version like Stanley Kubrick’s crazed “Dr Strangelove”, ending in nuclear world war, was US Ambassador to NATO Kay Bailey Hutchison, who on 2 October suggested that the US could “take out” Russian missiles that supposedly violate the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty.

The INF Treaty

On 21 October Trump himself stated that the USA intends to leave the INF Treaty, negotiated and signed by President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Michael Gorbachov

in 1987. The decision has not yet been formally implemented, however, and the official Russian news agency TASS hastened to point out that Trump did not rule out signing a new such agreement, this one bringing in China. The fact that China is not a party to the INF has been used by National Security Advisor John Bolton and other neocon hawks as a reason for the USA to leave the treaty, on the pretext that, they allege, Russia’s 9M729 ground-launched cruise missile has a range banned under the INF.

Russian officials warn that rollback of the INF Treaty, on top of wave after wave of unproven allegations against Russia, will create a volatile, dangerous situation. “Intentionally fuelling tensions in relations between the nuclear states, and on the international arena, is a dangerous road”, said Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov, a long-time strategic arms negotiator, on 5 October with regard to the UK’s latest accusations of cyber warfare by Russian military intelligence. Putin himself, speaking 21 October at a Valdai Discussion Club meeting, vowed that Russia will never launch a pre-emptive nuclear strike, but said that any nation attempting a first strike against Russia would be “annihilated”.

At this writing, Bolton is in Moscow for talks with his counterpart, Nikolai Patrushev, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, and President Putin.

Lavrov on 22 October regretted that the United States has not been ready for “full-fledged cooperation” with Russia in Syria and on other issues, such as the Korean Peninsula and Iran’s nuclear program. Nonetheless, TASS reports that a senior US official told the agency 20 October that a direct meeting between Trump and Putin on the sidelines of the G20 meeting in Argentina in late November, or even earlier in France, was still possible.