

LOSING MILITARY SUPREMACY

THE MYOPIA OF AMERICAN STRATEGIC PLANNING



Russian Sukhoi Su-24 makes a low
pass over destroyer *USS Donald Cook*
in the Black Sea, 12 April 2016.

ANDREI MARTYANOV

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STRATEGIC PLANNING

Andrei Martyanov



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AMERICA'S DANGEROUS NARCISSISM

Alexis de Tocqueville's widely renowned book, *Democracy in America*, addresses this aspect of the American character:

All free nations are vainglorious, but national pride is not displayed by all in the same manner. The Americans in their intercourse with strangers appear impatient of the smallest censure and insatiable of praise. The most slender eulogium is acceptable to them; the most exalted seldom contents them; they unceasingly harass you to extort praise, and if you resist their entreaties they fall to praising themselves. It would seem as if, doubting their own merit, they wished to have it constantly exhibited before their eyes. Their vanity is not only greedy, but restless and jealous; it will grant nothing, whilst it demands everything, but is ready to beg and to quarrel at the same time. If I say to an American that the country he lives in is a fine one, "Ay," he replies, "There is not its fellow in the world." If I applaud the freedom which its inhabitants enjoy,

he answers, “Freedom is a fine thing, but few nations are worthy to enjoy it.” If I remark the purity of morals which distinguishes the United States, “I can imagine,” says he, “that a stranger, who has been struck by the corruption of all other nations, is astonished at the difference.” At length I leave him to the contemplation of himself; but he returns to the charge, and does not desist till he has got me to repeat all I had just been saying. It is impossible to conceive a more troublesome or more garrulous patriotism; it wearies even those who are disposed to respect it.¹

This observation from 1837 should have been a warning to the American political and intellectual elites long ago. Sadly, it has been ignored and has cost everyone dearly. The American vaingloriousness described by Tocqueville has today become a clear and present danger to the world and it is, in the end, a direct threat to what’s left of America’s democratic institutions and processes. It threatens a shaky republic and it is embedded in the very foundation of a now increasingly obvious American decline. Of course, there are many opinions about American decline on the public discussion stage—some opinions reject the whole idea of an American decline out of hand as propaganda; others go to the other extreme by proposing an imminent collapse and disintegration of the United States into several states. What is lost in this contentious debate is the troubling fact of the very real and very dangerous decline of American cognitive faculties, which is also accompanied by what Robert Reilly termed de-Hellenization²—a complete loss of sound reasoning across the whole spectrum of national activities from foreign policy, to economics, to war, to culture.

This decline is more than visible, it is omnipresent in the everyday lives of many Americans and even affects people from other nations and continents. This decline has deeper roots than the mere change of some economic paradigm, albeit this too matters

a great deal. It portends a total existential crisis of American national mythology—a crisis of the American soul that has nothing to do with the superficial, mass-media driven ideological or party affiliations—rather, it is the decline of a national consensus. This decline reflects the American failure to form a real nation, a process which, as paradoxical as it may sound, was prevented by a sequence of historic events in the 20th century, which turned the tables on American fortunes. As strange as it may sound, it was the continental warfare of WWII that the United States did not experience on its own soil, and the lack of experiencing any invasion by a peer foreign power, that failed to provide it with the historic glue, which was responsible to a large degree for the formation of modern nations. This may have played in favor of America's post-WWII greatness, but it also bore the seeds of the American myth's destruction with it. Those seeds, overlooked by a non-inquisitive American political and intellectual class in the 20th and 21st centuries, were pivotal in reinforcing stereotypes and clichés which, otherwise, they would have rejected as not having a solid grounding in real life.

There is no denial that the United States and its people form a truly great nation. It is a powerful nation, a superpower with a short but bright history. American entrepreneurship and technological genius still continue to amaze the world. But there is a real downside to it; a real rot which becomes more evident with each passing day. It has happened before and if any historical parallels are to be drawn—a process which must be done in the most cautious and educated manner—one example of a dramatic change in historic fortunes comes to mind: the British Empire. English military historian Corelli Barnett, who experienced and documented Great Britain's final departure from her superpowerdom, made one of the most relevant scholarly observations on the fundamental causes:

... swift decline in British vigor at home and the failure to exploit the empire were not owing to some inevitable senescent process of history....

That cause was a political doctrine.... The doctrine was liberalism, which criticized and finally demolished the traditional conception of the nation-state as a collective organism, a community, and asserted instead the primacy of individual. According to liberal thinking a nation was no more than so many human atoms who happened to live under the same set of laws.... It was Adam Smith who formulated the doctrine of Free Trade, the keystone of liberalism, which was to exercise a long-live and baneful effect on British power.... Adam Smith attacked the traditional “mercantilist” belief that a nation should be generally self-supporting...³

Today, when one observes the catastrophic level of American deindustrialization, with the American heartland still not fully recovered from the financial crisis of 2008, or when one sees the current opioid crisis raging across American cities, or one counts the real number of people who are still unemployed, or are already unemployable, one is forced to recall the fate of America’s mother, the British Empire, on which the sun was never supposed to set and how this scenario, granted with some major adjustments, is being played out in a front of our eyes in the United States.

But if the British departure from greatness was hidden within the momentous events of WWII, with the Suez Crisis being merely a legal conclusion to this drawn-out process, the American departure threatens to unleash a global thermonuclear war which may completely obliterate human civilization, and this is an outcome which must be prevented by all means. It is not easy when one considers the incompetence of the contemporary American political and intellectual classes, especially their complete obliviousness to the realities of war and the horrors it unleashes, as will be further addressed herein. It is here, in this obliviousness, where both American idealism and moralism most manifest themselves, here at this very juncture, that an

exceptionally unique American hubris and a complete loss of a sense of scale and proportion in its self-aggrandizement, as well as loss of the sense of commensuration between effort and outcome, begin to dictate the logic of America's view of itself. It is a disturbing vision, as the events of the last 20 or so years have proved.

But as Orwell's dictum goes, "Those who control the past control the future, and those who control the present control the past". American "elites" proved themselves to be master manipulators of that vision. As a relatively recent 2015 poll showed, the West's awareness of the realities of WWII is appalling, in fact, it is scandalous.⁴ It is doubtful that such a miscarriage of a historical justice will be challenged successfully in the combined West, let alone in the US itself, where many media figures, politicians and "scholars" are in overdrive, doing their utmost to falsify the actual truth about the birthplace of American, real and perceived, superpowerdom—World War II. The real danger from such manipulations arises not when those manipulations are done out of knowledge of reality which is distorted accordingly for propaganda purposes, but when those who manipulate information begin to sincerely believe in their own falsifications, when they buy into their own narrative. They stop being manipulators, and they become believers in a narrative. They become manipulated themselves.

This is what has happened in the modern United States. The wrong lessons have been learned. During the Vietnam War, Senator J. William Fulbright echoed Tocqueville's sentiments: "it would seem as if, doubting their own merit, they wished to have it constantly exhibited before their eyes". He identified some of the serious ills which were affecting America's vision of itself and of her foreign policy: "It is simply not necessary for us to go around forever proclaiming: 'I am the greatest!' The more one does this sort of thing, in fact, the more people doubt it. . . ."⁵ But that is what the essence of America's vision of itself engendered: the need to parade its own real and perceived strengths around the world. It was this "morality of self-assurance fired by crusading spirit"⁶

which, in the end, won over the American soul. More importantly, it won over America's political class, those people who formulate policies. It happened again during the Cold War, where the collapse of the Soviet Union was perceived as an American victory, reinforcing what its already very high opinion of itself, even despite warnings from those very few real Russia scholars such as the late George F. Kennan who saw the damage being done to the globally crucial Russian-American relationship and to the American psyche. Kennan noted: "What did the greatest damage was not our military preparations themselves, some of which (not all) were prudent and justifiable. It was rather the unnecessary belligerent and threatening tone in which many of them were publically carried forward."⁷

In the end, in the words of the same J. William Fulbright, "words are deeds and style is substance insofar as they influence men's mind and behavior."⁸ Apart from influencing America's main Cold War foe, those words and style influenced America itself with the eventual ascendancy of belligerent neo-conservatives to the very top of America's foreign policy hierarchy, who apart from wrecking the whole Middle East, almost started a direct confrontation with Russia and domestically resulted in the remaking of America into an increasingly less confident, economically stagnating, divided society. All that was not the result of some political process going haywire at some point of time due to some unfortunate coincidence, far from it, America's present-day situation was, with slight variations, inevitable, however avoidable, in a nation which for many generations didn't experience war on their own home front. Neither US civilians nor America's infrastructure suffered in any way in relation to the Vietnam War. For an overwhelming majority of Americans, it was a TV war.

In a grim historic irony, it was America's main geopolitical foe of the 20th century, the Soviet Union, whose history, should it have been studied properly, could have given answers to some important questions on what America proclaimed to be the best at, while failing time after time to deliver precisely on that claim: modern warfare. But nothing prevented the US from

claiming victory in WWI and WWII, nothing prevented it from proclaiming its military to be “the finest fighting force in history.”⁹ While speaking to the US military at Fort Bragg after the official conclusion of US operations in Iraq in 2011, in what can only be described as an acute case of myopia and ignorance, President Obama doubled down on a his dubious “finest fighting force in history” claim, assuring all that “we know too well the heavy cost of that war.”¹⁰ Here was the problem: America doesn’t. With the exception of those who fought and died or were wounded in Iraq or Afghanistan and their immediate families, America, as it was with every American foreign war, never knew the real costs. Even as bodies of American GIs started to arrive in coffins into the US from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Americans continued, as if nothing really happened, to go to work, buy lattes at espresso stands, sell and buy cars, go on vacations, travel around the world and pay their mortgages. Normal life went on as if nothing of significance happened. The very phenomenon which was responsible for the United States emergence as a superpower—war, WWII in particular—was never a factor which had a real impact on the nation and created no real inhibitors in the political elites to their often ignorant, boastful and aggressive rhetoric nor created a necessity to study the subject, which was foundational to American prosperity and success after WWII.

This still hasn’t been done. The outcomes, in full accordance to Clausewitz’ dictum that “it is legitimate to judge an event by its outcome for it is the soundest criterion,”¹¹ have accumulated today into a body of overwhelming empirical evidence of a serious and dangerous dysfunction within America’s decision making process. From the debacle in Iraq, to the lost war in Afghanistan, to inspiring a slaughterhouse in Syria, to unleashing, with the help of its NATO Allies, a conflict in Libya, to finally fomenting a coup and a war in Ukraine—all of that is a disastrous record of geopolitical, diplomatic, military and intelligence incompetence and speaks to the failure of American political, military, intelligence and academic institutions. Moreover, the spectacular failure of several US Administrations and the US

“experts” who supposedly know Russia, to build normal working relations, and, ironically, their even greater failure in sabotaging those relations and Russia herself, are a clear indication of an almost complete ignorance of real Russian history and culture among people who are responsible for an increasingly irrational US foreign policy.

This failure is more than spectacular—it is spectacularly dangerous. This book addresses some of the reasons for America’s sad and dangerous state today. The pivot of this book is war and power and how these two have been abused and misinterpreted by the American political and military class. Importantly, it is viewed against the background of Russian-American relations and how Russia, the only country in the world which can militarily defeat the United States conventionally, has been reduced to a caricature by the American “Russian Studies” field, so much so that today it makes any meaningful dialogue between Russia and America’s politicians virtually impossible. It is also impossible because of a dramatic difference in cultural attitudes towards war, a gap which policymakers should at least attempt to narrow.

THE TRUE MEASUREMENTS OF MILITARY POWER

Most people and even entire nations like power. Some of them love it, others desire it above all else in the world and are ready to go to extremes to obtain it. But what is power? Leo Tolstoy, in what can arguably be considered the greatest work of prose ever written, *War and Peace*, gave this definition of power: “Power is the collective will of the people transferred, by expressed or tacit consent, to their chosen rulers...”¹ This is a definition of political power, which fits the subject matter of *War and Peace* and Tolstoy’s view of history. But in general, power is the ability to influence anything—from war, weather, space, thought, to in the end, the events of human life and even the fate of the world. More generally, power is the ability to achieve a desired state of affairs. The more powerful anything or anybody is, the higher is their probability of achieving their desired state of the affairs. Nazi Germany circa 1940 was truly powerful, especially in warfare, and in a stunning move achieved a desired state of affairs by eliminating the Anglo-French armies and briefly subjugating all of Western Europe to its rule.

The results of the application of power speak volumes and they are the main criteria in assessing power. This applies equally

to personalities and to nations. For nations, however, the definition of power must be broadened due to the wide spectrum of activities in which nations are engaged. British military historian Corelli Barnett came the closest to providing both a comprehensive and a succinct definition of the measurements of the power of a nation-state:

The power of the nation-state by no means consists only in its armed forces, but also in its economic and technological resources; in the dexterity, foresight and resolution with which its foreign policy is conducted; in the efficiency of its social and political organization. It consists most of all in the nation itself, the people, their skills, energy, ambition, discipline, initiative; their beliefs, myths and illusions. And it consists, further, in the way all these factors are related to one another.²

There are, of course, many variations in the definition of power, but Barnett's is still the best in listing most of the crucial factors which influence power and mentioning what really matters—the interaction, or relation, of all those factors. Nazi Germany in 1940 faced an Anglo-French-Belgian force equal to it, in materiel and personnel, which still failed to prevent Hitler and his generals from annihilating this force in an unprecedentedly short amount of time. German power then manifested itself in a combination of many factors which allowed Nazi Germany to achieve her political objectives in Western Europe in 1940. Noteworthy in that combination, apart from the German economy, was the doctrine of Blitzkrieg and the extremely high morale of the Wehrmacht, boosted by the clarity of their military-political objective and by their desire for revenge. It was not just that power itself but the way it was used, how it was applied, both militarily and politically, which determined the outcome—the subjugation of Western Europe.

The immediate question which arises today is: how powerful, really, is the United States of America? There is very little doubt that the United States is very powerful, but this broad and un-nuanced statement hardly provides a good feel for how powerful the United States, indeed, is. This is not a trivial question. Given the backdrop of the global events of the last two decades, pondering this question becomes more than a good exercise in mental acrobatics for political science majors; it is a vital question in the first half of the 21st century, answers to which will define the state of human civilization and its survival.

Is America powerful in relation to, say, a nation such as Iraq? The answer seems quite obvious. American power in general, and its military power in particular, when compared to Iraq or Egypt's, is enormous. The United States can easily obliterate both nations from the map, if it so desires, even by only using its conventional forces. The United States certainly out-produces these two nations by a colossal margin, it has an educated population, and highly developed educational, healthcare and social institutions. In the end, Americans have a much higher standard of living and all this reality is easily visible and can be comprehended by just about anybody with even most rudimentary knowledge of the world.

Yet, once the power of the United States is compared to that of Russia, the picture changes dramatically. Many crucial metrics, such as those presented by Barnett, become much more difficult to relate and, in the end, to compare. The task becomes even more arduous once one gets into the realm of the spiritual and other factors of a similar nature, such as morale, foresight or fortitude, let alone national psyche, myths and illusions. Yet, those factors, especially when properly integrated with other material factors, are as important as those of a purely material nature, such as the number of combat aircraft or the industrial output of the nation, as an example.

Once viewed within this comprehensive framework, national powers can not only be compared, but this comparison can also give a good grasp of the strategic reality which is derived from the actual relation between powers. Moreover, such a

comparison will give a good feel for the dynamics within both dyadic national relationships and global, multi-pronged relations. In other words, power should be viewed as, and compared within, a complex framework of relations both within and outside of the nations of interest. Corelli Barnett, whose literary and military-historic brilliance was never in doubt, nowadays should feel very good about his seminal work, *The Collapse of British Power*, and some fundamental conclusions he derived in it, since his definition of power was repeated almost verbatim by Russia's Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, on March 23rd, 2017 when he delivered his landmark geopolitical speech to the officers-students of Russia's Military Academy of the General Staff (VAGSh) in Moscow. Lavrov remarked as follows:

Of course, it takes more than just the size of a country's territory for it to be considered "big and strong" in today's world. There is also the economy, culture, traditions, public ethics and, of course, the ability to ensure its own security and the security of the citizens under any circumstances. Recently, the term "soft power" has gained currency. However, this is power as well. In other words, the power factor in its broad sense is still important in international relations. Its role has even increased amid aggravated political, social, and economic contradictions and greater instability in the international political and economic system. We take full account of this fact in our foreign policy planning.³

The choice of location for Lavrov's speech was not accidental. Speaking to the officers studying in the famed General Staff Academy, among whose graduates were such military leaders of global recognition as the late Marshal Vasilevskiy or current Chief of General Staff of Russia's Armed Forces Valery Gerasimov, the message was clear—military power was, is and will remain for

the foreseeable future one of the most important pillars on which the national power of Russia rests. While remaining within the confines of a broader definition of power, Lavrov also affirmed that military power matters a great deal and, rephrasing the famous Clausewitzian dictum that the war is merely a continuation of politics by other means, one can easily arrive to the inverse conclusion that politics (and diplomacy) is a continuation of war by other means. Military power in humanity's conflict-ridden history mattered, matters and will continue to matter as one of the main, if not *the* main, pillars on which national power rests. It remains the case that, in the modern world, first rate military power is a function of a first rate nation-state which possesses the wherewithal to have such military power. Great military power by definition is a continuation of a greatly developed, economically strong nation-state.

Russia's position stood in stark contrast to that of the United States during the Soviet war in Afghanistan, where the US invested a huge effort in unleashing the forces of jihad which today have metastasized globally. Yet, despite this effort, the end result—as it was for the United States in Korea, Vietnam or present day Iraq—was the same: no victory in sight. As a longtime observer of Russian and American affairs, Patrick Armstrong, put it: “I can't get two questions out of my mind: When was the last time the USA won a war? When was the last time US-trained troops fought effectively?”²⁴

Obviously, America can make some very serious claims concerning its standing in naval warfare. Undeniably, the US Navy and Marines' magnificent performance during WWII in the Pacific can create only admiration and deep respect for their highest professionalism and heroism when fighting Imperial Japan. Indeed, there is no doubt about American naval power in the 20th century being the premier global one from the moment Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet set sail around the globe in 1907. But here is a conundrum for the contemporary American political class, also known as the ruling elite: if the United States is as powerful as is alleged by many—some even invented a term, hyper-power, when describing America—then where

are the tangible results in what throughout human history has served as the most important test of power: victories in wars?

In the end, the United States, by virtue of its geography, was defined as a World Island by the late and legendary US Navy Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Admiral Elmo Zumwalt.⁵ Zumwalt captured the American geopolitical conundrum perfectly when he concluded in the early 1970s: “To begin at the beginning, the Soviet Union is a land power in both an economic and political military sense, while the United States... every activity is bound up with the use of the seas. If it had to, the Soviet Union could feed itself and keep its industry going without ever sending a ship beyond its coastal waters.”⁶

Russia, despite inevitable geopolitical losses in the wake of the Soviet collapse, has retained her premier position as a land power, doing so even while suffering in the 1990s the virtual annihilation of her navy due to the policies of the young “reformers”. By the mid-2000s, however, Russia regained, albeit on a much lower level, her position as a serious naval power too. By the mid-2010s the Russian Navy made a claim for a return to the number two position in the world as a serious Sea Denial naval force capable of effectively defending Russia’s maritime approaches. It also developed a limited capability for projection of power within the confines of seas adjacent to the Eurasian landmass. Russian naval nuclear deterrent, meanwhile, is being modernized with state-of-the-art strategic missile submarines capable of providing nuclear retaliation around the globe against any adversary. In general, strategically, modern day Russia could be defined as a well-rounded military and economic power almost completely capable via her own resources to meet any challenge to her national security and her quite limited geopolitical objectives.

Historically, Russia established herself as a continental power and has a very impressive record to back it up. While the US Navy, undeniably, the strongest in the world is a real defender of the American motherland against any threats, the same cannot be said of the US Army which has never fought a single skirmish, let alone a serious battle, defending its own borders, let alone

defending Boston or Seattle. The United States, as a superpower, lays claims to a whole set of interests which are global in scale but once the realities of the American experience in continental warfare are understood, they hardly testify to the US being the continental warfare power it claims to be. For a nation whose foreign policy elites, mostly made up of neoconservatives and liberal interventionists, count the US as a source of benevolent hegemony or even call it a benevolent empire, its continental warfare record is not that impressive.⁷ That record would have been no issue if the United States hadn't based her real and perceived hegemony on military power but that is not the case.

And yet, as cited by the late Samuel Huntington in his seminal 1996 work, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Jeffrey R. Barnett gave the following 14 reasons for why the West dominates the global order. The West:

1. Owns and operates the international banking system;
2. Controls all hard currencies;
3. Is the world's principal customer;
4. Provides the majority of the world's finished goods;
5. Dominates international capital markets;
6. Exerts considerable moral leadership within many societies;
7. Is capable of massive military intervention;
8. Controls the sea lanes;
9. Conducts most advanced technical research and development;
10. Controls leading edge technical education;
11. Dominates access to space;
12. Dominates aerospace industry;
13. Dominates international communications;
14. Dominates the high-tech weapons industry.⁸

No person with common sense could deny that, with possibly some minor additions to this list, it is a generally correct framework for identifying the key factors which make a civilization, or a specific nation, strong and, in many cases, dominant.

This list would, no doubt, have found a tacit approval even by many Marxists, especially those who had firsthand experience with industrialization. Looking at points 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14, from the list above, one can easily notice that all of those are the result of manufacturing. We may narrow it down even further. They are the result of a highly developed machine-building complex. The very term industrialization is identical to the term mechanization and to machine-building. No doubt, cottage industries making some trinkets are industries too, but they hardly influence the status, power or security of the nation of which they are a part. Machines, however, do. They are foundational to this very power. The more complex and numerous those tools and machines are, the more powerful is the society which produces them. As Jeremy Rifkin described it:

Every society creates an idealized image of the future—a vision that serves as a beacon to direct imagination [*sic*] and energy of its people... In the modern age, the idea of a future technological utopia has served as a guiding vision of industrial society... Nowhere has the techno-utopian vision been more passionately embraced than in the United States. Technology became the new secular God, and American society soon came to refashion its own sense of self in the image of its powerful new tools.⁹

Rifkin, while being generally correct in his assessment, misses one serious historic fact: the no less passionate embrace of the techno-utopian vision by Soviet Russia of the 1930s. The USSR was then going through industrialization on a massive scale, with massive pain, which included the debilitating famine of 1932-33. Stalin, certainly, was no humanitarian. The debates on the Soviet peasantry's willingness, or lack thereof, to pay the huge price for industrialization, will not cease any time soon. But Stalin's premise explained in his speech on the 4th of May 1935

was not incorrect in identifying the factors which played such a terrifying role in Soviet industrialization:

You know that we received as an inheritance from the past a technically backward and impoverished ruined country. Ruined by four years of imperialist war, ruined again by three years of civil war, a country with a semi-literate population, with a low technical level, with some islands of industry which were lost in a sea of tiny peasant farms—that was the country we received as a legacy from the past. The task was to transform this medieval and dark country into a country of modern industry and mechanized agriculture. A task, you can understand, serious and difficult. The issue was as follows: either we solve this task quickly and strengthen socialism in our country, or we don't solve it and then our country, which is technologically weak and culturally backward, would lose its independence and become an object for the games of imperialist powers . . . It was necessary to create a first class industry. It was necessary to direct this industry so that it could raise the technological level not only of industry but also of agriculture and of our railways. For this it was necessary to make sacrifices and carry out the strictest economies.¹⁰

That speech was predated by Stalin's even more famous (or notorious, depending on the point of view) one-liner: "We are 50 or 100 years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this distance in 10 years. Either we do it, or we shall go under."¹¹ Later, during Stalin and Churchill's first meeting in Moscow in August 1942, Stalin would confess to Churchill that "the Collective Farm policy was a terrible struggle."¹² Attributing Georgian Stalin's assessments to some Russophobia

endemic in initially Jewish-dominated Bolshevism would be very shortsighted. The facts of Russia's backwardness through peasants' communes occupied the minds and invoked passions not only of Bolshevik economic theorists. The famous Russian Constitutional Democrat, Pavel Milyukov, among many others, rationalized the economic noose the Russian peasant communes and perpetually backward agriculture had around Russia's industrial neck.¹³

The pre-1917 sequence of famines, due to what Milyukov termed the "medieval character" of Russia's pre-1861 Peasant Emancipation economy, merely confirmed the pitiful state of Russia's society.¹⁴ The surprising coincidence of Stalin and Milyukov's "*medieval*" terminology in referencing late 19th and early 20th Century Russia was not accidental. For all the Russian industrialization dynamics prior to WWI and some very real successes in developing industries and society, it was inevitable that, however courageous and often brilliant it was operationally and strategically, the Russian Army would bleed on the Eastern Front whenever encountering Germans, and that bleeding would result in horrendous losses. The Russian Army was still largely a peasant army with all that came with the territory: from being less educated than Russia's adversaries and Entente Allies to, in general, not being materially up to the task. Being the fifth largest economy in the world on the eve of WWI couldn't hide how remote this fifth place was from that of Russia's nearest WWI adversary: Germany. By 1913, a favorite talking point of many Russian monarchists and some nationalists, was that the Russian economy, with Russia's population around 132 million, was responsible for 4.4% of world's industrial output, while Germany, with a population half the size of that of the Russian Empire, was responsible for 14.3%.¹⁵ When compared to the United States' 35.8% share of global industrial output, with the US population being about 35 million smaller than that of the Russian Empire, the picture becomes very grim. Even France, which had less than one third the population of Russia, held a distinct advantage over Russia, having a 7% share of industrial output.¹⁶ Moreover, the actual share of Russia's industrial output was declining, even

when compared to the turn of a century data for 1901.¹⁷ In terms of electrical energy production Russia ranked 15th in the world.¹⁸

No amount of strategic brilliance or operational genius could offset the overall backwardness of Russia, since the army itself was recruited from a population which by 1913 was only 30% literate and WWI was the first global conflict in which, unlike the relatively less resource-dependent warfare of 1812, the size of industry and the ability to produce an abundance of food and machines mattered more than the sheer numbers of soldiers. So it came to pass that the old order of things collapsed when faced by the only true litmus test of real power: war. In some sense defeat was inevitable in a country which lagged in every single metric behind the developed West. Combined with the humiliating defeat at Tsushima in 1905 during the Russo-Japanese War which had a profound effect on Russia even in WWI, the outcome was, indeed, inevitable. So much was the Russian political system, as a direct result of WWI, in disarray, that even rabid anti-communist Alexander Solzhenitsyn was forced to admit that the Bolsheviks merely lifted political power in Russia from the ground where it was lying, abandoned by everybody.¹⁹ With the Bolsheviks came the greatest modernizing impulse in Russian history since Peter the Great.

It was a tough struggle, but it was with the Soviet industry and machinery of the 1930s that Soviet Russia started to, rephrasing Rifkin, *refashion its own sense of self in the image of its powerful new tools*. Modernization was the very essence of that refashioning. Among the indelible images of that time in the USSR were not only the propaganda posters related to agriculture or fast growing heavy industry and infrastructure but also propaganda posters with slogans such as “Komsolmolets—on the airplane”, or posters calling on young people to join OSOVIACHIM (Union of Societies of Assistance to Defense and Aviation-Chemical Construction of the USSR) that dominated the public spaces. Ideas of a techno utopia also dominated art, from music to cinematography, with the enormously popular Isaak Dunaevsky’s March of Enthusiasts, from the last optimistic pre-war Soviet cinematographic flick

Radiant Path with the incomparable Lyubov Orlova, becoming a signature song of the era, an anthem to science, Soviet industry and, in a larger sense, modernity.

There is no denying that the Soviet Union was going through a profound change in which machinery, and especially what would be considered even today high-tech industry (aviation, both civil and military, and the navy) dominated the public imagination. It was a massive cultural transformation, and technology became a *secular God* for Russians. It was this very secular God which would provide an overwhelming empirical proof of its power, when in 1945 the Red Army, supplied and armed with mostly domestic weapons, albeit with some important Lend-Lease additions, stood triumphant in conquered Berlin on the ruins of the Nazi Reich. From combat aviation, to world-renowned tanks, to artillery and rocketry, to elaborate logistic chains, to small arms: Soviet industry and a mobilization type of economy came through in a spectacular fashion when it was truly needed. There is no denying not only Soviet military success; but the fact that behind this success stood an economic system which had provided all that was needed and more to defeat the most powerful military machine in history.

Soviet Russia had learned how to produce world-class machines. This fact had massive ideological, political, and indeed geopolitical, implications. Soviet WWII military production overall roughly matched that of the United States and surpassed by far Nazi Germany's output. By the end of WWII it was not just the Red Army whose power was uncontested; the Red Air Force was the largest tactical-operational air force in the world.²⁰ As the US Military Academy at West Point WWII History series stressed:

Communist ideology which tends to equate human achievement with industrial production and emphasizes the effect of production on history, prompted the Soviet to seek victory in the factory. In this endeavor they enjoyed astonishing success under very difficult circumstances.²¹

But far from being emphasized solely by “Communist ideology”, industrial and agricultural output numbers mattered to everyone. In fact, these were the numbers by which the balance of power was established in the post-WWII world. Apart from its obvious purely military achievement in defeating Nazism, the fact that the Soviet Union could, largely on its own, produce machinery which could defeat any enemy, even despite the stupefying scale of destruction the USSR sustained, placed the Soviet Union squarely into superpower status. Those numbers, indeed, mattered and formed the foundation of one of the most popular power “indices” of modern times: the Composite Index of National Capability (CINC).

The Composite Index of National Capabilities is a (statistical) measure of national power formulated by J. David Singer for the Correlates of War project in 1963.²² This index uses an average of percentages of world totals in six different categories. The categories represent demographic, economic, and military strength, and each component is a share percentage of world’s totals. The formula for CINC looks like this—an average of 6 variables, which themselves are ratios:

$$\text{CINC} = (\text{TPR} + \text{UPR} + \text{ISPR} + \text{ECR} + \text{MER} + \text{MPR}) / 6$$

Where:

TPR = total population of country ratio

UPR = urban population of country ratio

ISPR = iron and steel production of country ratio

ECR = primary energy consumption ratio

MER = military expenditure ratio

MPR = military personnel ratio

Each component is a dimensionless percentage of the world’s total:

$$\text{Ratio} = (\text{Country}) / \text{World}$$

Those resources are considered to be most important, or as Stephen Biddle defines them, “*most consequential*,” for the assessment of military power.²³ A simple calculation, for the sake of those who do not like numbers or formulas, will work

like this: let’s assume that we have two nations, A and B, and we want to calculate their respective CINC’s. Let us also come up with purely abstract numbers for the world, let’s say that all six world’s values, from TPR through MPR are, for simplification of calculations, equal to 10. Equating every parameter of the world to 10, because of the equality of the denominator, would allow us to proceed directly to adding respective national values, but we will still divide them by 10 to preserve a mathematical sense of this endeavor. (In reality, of course, the nations of the world’s actual numbers in all six categories would differ drastically.) Now let us invent some numbers for, respectively, nations A and B and enter them into a table.

	Nation A	Nation A Ratio	Nation B	Nation B Ratio
TPR	1	$1/10=0.1$	1.5	$1.5/10=0.15$
UPR	3	$3/10=0.3$	2	$2/10=0.2$
ISPR	2.5	$2.5/10=0.25$	3	$3/10=0.3$
ECR	4	$4/10=0.4$	4.2	$4.2/10=0.42$
MER	5	$5/10=0.5$	3.8	$3.8/10=0.38$
MPR	1	$1/10=0.1$	1.2	$1.2/10=0.12$
SUM:		1.65		1.57

Now, what is left for us to do is to divide the respective sums by 6. For Nation A, its CINC will equal $1.65/6=0.275$ and for Nation B it is $1.57/6=0.262$. From here, after comparing respective CINC’s ($0.275 > 0.262$) we can conclude that Nation A is more “capable,” or militarily more powerful, than Nation B.

No index ever was, is or will be exact in reflecting the complex realities of economic and military power, but CINC could be useful as a very rough predictor of a military contest and it does reflect some of the most crucial material and human elements required for conducting modern war. But in reality, obtaining objective (and huge) sets of data describing all those 6 factors is a very difficult task and the CINC in and of itself shows

a rather unconvincing correlation between itself and victory with the outcomes of only 56% of cases predicted correctly based on the CINC.²⁴

Another factor is the simplicity of the CINC, which does not take into account the complexity of modern industry. China may produce more than ten times the amount of steel compared to the US, but the US still has companies that do cutting edge work in the chemical, aerospace, and defense industries, where China still lags considerably behind.

Nor are the five more general factors (or variables) of the Material Preponderance Predictor of victory and defeat reliable in accordance to Biddle. Those five factors include: GNP (Gross National Product), Population, Military Personnel, Military Expenditure and the CINC. Remarkably, however, the strongest correlation of 62% was in case of GNP. One may agree or disagree with Biddle's conclusions but it was WWII which made the Material Preponderance Predictor one of the most important metrics for trying to forecast the outcome of the war or to assess a nation's general and military power. Importantly, Jeffrey Barnett's 14 points presented above and the Material Preponderance Predictor are very closely related and, in fact, complement each other. The real issue is whether there is correct data (or assessment) of the factors constituting this predictor. Any predictor is only as good as the data which is being used for its calculation. A correlation between GNP and the outcome of WWII is undeniable, the same as the fact of WWII being a war in a league of its own, since it produced a global humanitarian, economic, social and cultural shock on an unprecedented scale with nothing equaling it before or after in human history.

In other words, WWII, as a conflict, has to be viewed on its own and once viewed as such it provides a very strong correlation between the Material Preponderance Predictor and victory. There is also a strong correlation between it and a nation-state's power in general, and its military power in particular. In the end, the Soviet Union and the Western Allies simply out-produced the Axis powers and that was the most decisive factor, coupled

with the way their forces were employed, which sealed the fate of both Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan.

In essence, Barnett's 14 points are a more adequate, expanded and updated index for the technological realities of the modern age, a continuation of the Material Preponderance Predictor which can be used effectively for overall power assessments. That is, until one gets into the realm of modern Western economics and the virtual world of monetarism and financialization. In the 1960s the term "post-industrial society and economy" was coined by Daniel Bell.²⁵ By the 1970s the term found its practical and very real embodiment in the American economy which was the first in the world where services accounted for more than half of its employment and GNP.²⁶ By 2015, with some few but important exceptions, the US economy had deindustrialized dramatically. Some of this deindustrialization was natural, due to technological development which tends to remove people from the manufacturing process, but much of that deindustrialization was due to a massive outflow of manufacturing elsewhere, especially as a result of agreements such as NAFTA. The effect of NAFTA alone on American manufacturing jobs was devastating with 2,491,479 jobs lost by 2011.²⁷ With deindustrialization came the meme of the Fire, Insurance, Real Estate (FIRE) Economy and the domination of the financial sector's supposedly economic indices, which would describe anything but the real economy. With this grossly distorted economic reality came a grossly distorted understanding of power.

This had profound geopolitical consequences due to a sequence of very wrong policy decisions in a triumphant United States, which in 1989 proclaimed itself the Cold War victor. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the geopolitical, military and intelligence fields. Decisions made on the basis of distorted or downright false perceptions of what Michael Hudson broadly identified as "the fictitious economy,"²⁸ began to dominate and, sadly, continue to dominate minds across the whole spectrum of American policy-makers and academia, to say nothing of the general public. As Hudson himself stated, when describing what he

addressed in his new book: “My point was that the way the economy is described in the press and in University courses has very little to do with how the economy really works. The press and journalistic reports use a terminology made of well-crafted euphemisms to confuse understanding of how the economy works.”²⁹

Far from being euphemisms and terminology for the economy alone, this whole convoluted worldview migrated into the military and intelligence fields. With this doublespeak it was just a matter of time before the most basic and classic strategic dictum by Sun Tzu— “If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles”³⁰—was completely discarded in favor of a very gratifying, albeit short-lived, self-aggrandizement. The whole notion of a nation being economically self-sufficient as was called for by mercantilists³¹ was sacrificed on the altar of free trade fundamentalism and the financial voodoo of the stock market. The financial balance sheet killed manufacturing planning and impeded the retention and development of real manufacturing skills required for true national greatness. There is no national greatness without the ability to build complex machines and weapons. The crucial lesson of WWII that real military power must rest on the solid foundation of a real economy was also forgotten. Surely, the United States could still produce a lot of weapons, many of them astronomically expensive even for the US itself, but increasingly even this capability was called into doubt.

Eventually, being drunk on self-declared exceptionalism and military greatness would lead to a very severe hangover. As US Army Colonel Daniel L. Davis bitterly admitted in 2016:

In the aftermath of Operation Desert Storm in 1991, there was great celebration in America that the crushing military victory over Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, “kicked the Vietnam syndrome once and for all” and demonstrated the United States was now the world’s sole military superpower. That was no empty bluster. Even Beijing and Moscow

were impressed and openly lamented they were militarily inferior. Americans across the board were optimistic and proud. However justified that pride might have been at the time, it quickly mutated into distasteful arrogance. Now, it is an outright danger to the nation. Perhaps nothing exemplifies this threat better than the Pentagon's dysfunctional acquisition system.³²

Far from offering any serious military lessons, this turkey shoot of the Iraqi enemy—which was frequently grandiosely referred to as “the world’s fourth largest army” but in reality was nothing more than a large, badly-trained and equipped conscript army, which Colonel Douglas Macgregor implied had a lack of even “a modicum of capability in its armed forces,”³³—became an obsession of the American elite. Not only did the elites’ obsession with that war become something of a drug but it also showed a profound misunderstanding of modern warfare. Somehow, the fact that Saddam Hussein’s Iraq having prior to the 1990 hostilities a GDP of \$26 billion,³⁴ a figure 19 times smaller than the Gross Domestic Product of New York City in 1990,³⁵ and not having any serious machine building complex at all, to say nothing of operating “monkey models”³⁶ of imported weapons, was completely ignored.

It also betrayed something very significant. Behind all the fanfare of victory over Saddam, was a desperate American desire, post-Vietnam, to still be counted as capable of large-scale continental warfare. While there was never any doubt about American naval superpowerdom after WWII, given the US Navy’s magnificent performance in the Pacific, there were many professionals who continued to ask the very inconvenient question of what was the real, not propaganda, significance of the Coalition headed by the US demolishing a third rate military force of a state which didn’t even register in any serious economic or military metric? But the ad nauseam propaganda campaign of American success against Saddam’s Army somehow was able

to convince the general public, including a significant strata of what can be defined as western-style liberals in Russia, that the victory over an army which didn't have any operational air force to speak of during *Operation Desert Storm*, was achieved primarily by precision guided munitions. This was not the case. In the end, Saddam's formations were simply, as was expected, grossly outmatched by the well-trained US military and were effectively bombed and shelled into panic retreat by uncontested air power and armor. Ninety percent of the munitions used to destroy Iraq's Army were good old "dumb" munitions³⁷ and in effect, the campaign was very reminiscent of many operations of WWII, albeit fought against a grossly incompetent adversary.

It would take the emergence of the internet to start putting *Desert Storm* in the appropriate economic, strategic and operational contexts. It was especially puzzling for Soviet military professionals to hear about a "new era" in Precision Guided Munitions, which were used as a defining element when describing the "American way of war" when it was the Soviet war in Afghanistan, which predated *Desert Storm*, which first saw a small, but not insignificant use of laser-guided munitions by both SU-25s of Soviet Air Force³⁸ as well as the use of other guided munitions including TV-guided bombs and laser-guided shells—all developed in the 1970s, as a declassified CIA report corroborated.³⁹

Nonetheless, the defeat of Saddam's forces combined with the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union created an American euphoria in which practically all reference points, measures of scales and proportions were lost. But behind the fanfare lay what Army Lt. Col. and defense analyst, Daniel L. Davis, compressed to a few words: "The truth is, the United States is nowhere near as powerful and dominant as many believe."⁴⁰ It was a truth utterly lost, rendered invisible by a bubbling and crusading exceptionalism, now dominated by neoconservative ideologues from the Project for a New American Century, among others. The economic and military realities of what was regarded as a "defeated" Russia were completely discarded

by American Russian “expertdom”, which for lack of better descriptors, could only be defined as a combination of badly educated but “ideologically” pure subsidiaries of American non-governmental and intelligence grants recipients who, like many Soviet dissidents, instead of providing great insights, instead said what was expected from them: a constant affirmation of American exceptionalism in everything America did. Russia was to be viewed merely as an example of how things go bad when not following US prescriptions. In fact, Russia was supposed to be completely disposed of as a nation, a view which none other than Henry Kissinger nonchalantly affirmed in his interview to Jacob Heilbrunn in 2015.⁴¹

Even military options against Russia were not off the table. It was conceivable for many policy makers in D.C. to view the defeat of a third-rate Arab military as a good reference point when trying to project American power against a nation, which, even in a disassembled state in the wake of the Soviet collapse, remained a nuclear superpower, which had inherited a lot of industries from the USSR and which, even despite constant efforts of liberal pro-western “reformers,” had managed to largely preserve a main pillar of national independence and future development: her military-industrial complex. This preservation reflected the almost genetic cultural orientation of a nation which had fought non-stop against unending invasions by contemporary superpowers, from the Teutonic Knights, to Napoleon, to Hitler.

Yet, as it seemed then, in the 1990s, the numbers were not in Russia’s favor; certainly not using the Material Preponderance Predictor. On the account of GNP (we will start using GDP instead for simplification) the United States was towering over Russia in the 1990s. Russia’s population was half that of the United States, not to speak of its Military Expenditure compared to that of the United States, which was counted in hundreds of billions of dollars, and was supposed to be larger than the whole of Russia’s GDP throughout the 1990s.

But there was one problem with all those indices. The problem was structural and, for the most part, it was beyond

the grasp of Wall Street economists and bankers, the precise category of people who dominate American economic and even military analytical organizations. While there was no denying that Russia was literally dying from the brutal and inhumane politico-economic reforms implemented with the help of these very American “professionals”, Russia inherited many features from Soviet times that were her saving grace. Even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia remained the largest nation by area in the world, and the richest in resources while still having a very significant population. She also still retained something which couldn’t have been taken away, albeit even that was tried: her unrivaled *military history and experience*. Amidst the sheer economic “analytical” idiocy of the 1990s when comparing the size of Russia’s economy to that of nations such as the Netherlands or even Portugal was becoming very fashionable among Russia’s liberals and US mainstream media economic analysts, somehow they missed what even the greatly weakened post-Soviet Russian, or pre-collapse Soviet armed forces really still were.

While trailing behind the US military in some issues related to communications and computers, the Soviet Armed Forces by the 1980s were fast closing the gap. For some in the West it was too fast. Massive “digitizing” started as early as the mid-1970s. By the 1980s the gap was narrowing very fast and becoming extremely slim. It was precisely then, in 1980-1982, when MiG-29s and SU-27s started to be procured in large numbers for the Soviet Air Force. Arguably the best strategic bomber of its generation, the TU-160 Blackjack, went into production. Other new and capable weapons systems were being deployed, including first-rate Electronic Counter Measures (ECM) and Electronic Counter Counter Measures (ECCM) capabilities. Computerization was in full swing. Nowhere did this state of the affairs manifest itself more than in the Soviet Navy. The introduction in 1986 of submarine-launched S10 Granat (SS-N-21 ‘Sampson’ GRAU: 3M10) cruise missiles, with a range of 3000 kilometers, was one of many such developments. By the mid-1980s the Soviet Navy was deploying one of the best submarine forces in the world and led some of the

most advanced research in cutting edge technologies. In the army, the procurement of very advanced T-90 tanks was expected by the early 1990s. The nomenclature of weapons systems was that of a first world country.

True, Russia's military-industrial complex was left to fight for its survival. But by 1994 Russia had opened new export markets, such as the UAE, Malaysia, even South Korea. The weapons that went there were effectively Soviet weapons and should have given a rude awakening to the *Desert Storm* triumphalists. The fact that, even in the 1990s, Russia was producing some of the most advanced weapons systems which were on par with, and sometimes better than, the best the US could offer, not only for itself, but for sale abroad, generally went over the heads of many people. All that, and much more, was lost on those who declared "the end of history," the unfolding of the "New World Order" and other clichés for the consumption of a jubilant public. The very notion that what Russia was selling on the global weapons' market place was as good, if not better, than what US had to offer seemed blasphemous to many. Sure, Saudi Arabia, which featured and continues to feature in all kinds of ratings, including taking top spots for her military expenditures, and thus is counted as having, for unknown reasons, one of the best armed forces in the world, had a much larger military budget than Russia's throughout 1990s and 2000s. In fact, even today Saudi Arabia continues to be almost on a par with Russia, trailing Russia's 2016 military budget by a mere \$6 billion.⁴² But for anyone with even a modicum of common sense it wouldn't even come to mind to compare the actual military capabilities of Russia and Saudi Arabia—they are simply in a different universe.

The riposte to this rather dramatic discrepancy between many indices and reality, especially when applied to Russia, is the self-evident truth that second, let alone third, world economies and even the majority of first world economies do not research, design and produce state-of-the-art and, arguably, the world's best weapons systems such as SU-35 fighter jets, S-500 air defense complexes, or nuclear-powered submarines of the Borey

or Severodvinsk-class. Indeed, to follow the logic of modern Western economics, the size of Russia's GDP should not allow her by any means to produce anything of value, as Scott Gilmore "observed" in the *Boston Globe*, when he declared Putin's Russia a "poor, drunk, soccer hooligan."⁴³ In his rather emotional piece, demonstrating his hatred for Russia, this US diplomat, in the fine tradition of contemporary American elites, passed a judgment on a subject on which he had no clue, disparaging Russia as a country with an economy smaller than that of South Korea.⁴⁴ Obviously Gilmore spoke more about his desires than the reality of Russia's economy, which when appropriately compared through the still inaccurate but more realistic PPP (Purchasing Power Parity) numbers, is much larger than that of the Republic of Korea.⁴⁵ But even that fact isn't what matters. As one of the fathers of modern Western liberalism, Herbert Spencer, noted in 1896:

Whence it follows that the desire "not to be dependent on foreigners" is one appropriate to the militant type of society. So long as there is constant danger that the supplies of needful things derived from other countries will be cut off by the breaking of the hostilities, it is imperative that there shall be maintained a power of producing these supplies at home and to this end the required structure shall be maintained. Hence there is a manifest direct relation between militant activities and a protectionist policy."⁴⁶

Russia's national history was and still remains a history filled with warfare. Russia's military history, especially that of the 19th and 20th centuries, dwarfs that of any other nation in the world. Russia's desire, as Spencer put it, *not to be dependent on foreigners*, is more than what Pipes termed as the ability "to assess the rewards of defense in much more realistic terms."⁴⁷ It runs deeper than merely some economic peculiarities, and justified necessities, of historic Russia; it is a national cultural code.

This code dictates a constant need to maintain a large number of enclosed technological cycles, those cycles being the ability to extract resources, refine them and then produce a world class weapon. Those enclosed cycles mandate an extremely high level of education, a very impressive scientific development and they do require absolutely the industrial base which must inevitably be anchored by the development of the military-industrial complex and the weapons it produces.

Arthur J. Alexander came up with a quantification of what he called “classes of forces” (or constants) influencing aggregate defense expenditures for USSR. This quantification remains virtually unchanged for modern day Russia. To quote Alexander, two of the most “heavy” constants he mentions are: “History, culture and values—40-50 percent. International environment, threat and internal capabilities—10-30 percent.”⁴⁸ Taken by their maxima, $50+30=80\%$, we get the picture. Eighty percent of Russia’s military expenditures are dictated by real military threats, which, time after time over centuries, proved to be realities for Russia and resulted in destruction and human losses on a scale incomprehensible for the people who write US military doctrines and national security strategies. This is especially true for Neocon “strategists” who have a very vague understanding of the nature and application of military power. Expeditionary warfare simply does not provide a proper angle on the issues of actual defense. The nation whose 20th Century losses due to wars from WW I, to the Russian Civil War, to WW II number roughly in the 40-45 million range, would certainly try to not repeat such ordeals. This is the reality from which most of the US elites are completely detached. In layman’s lingo, the United States lacks the geographic, historic, cultural, economic and technological pressures to develop and have a coherent defensive military doctrine and weapons which would help to implement it. Russia lives under these pressures constantly and, in fact, Russians as an ethnos were formed and defined by warfare.

Russia is also defined by her weapons and it is here where we may start looking for one of the most important rationales for

the anti-Russian hysteria in Washington which has proceeded unabated since the return of Crimea to Russia in 2014, and in reality even earlier. The Western analytical and expert community failed utterly in assessing both Russia's economic and, as a consequence, its military potential. This was caused mainly by Russia's departure in the 1990s from a "militant" society model, which saw unprecedented suffering and economic dislocation of Russians due to Yeltsin's (in reality US-tailored) "liberal reforms" which almost resulted in national suicide, lowering overall Russian longevity by almost a decade. This national tragedy was largely ignored by the Western media, but where not, it was gloated over.

It took the complete and embarrassing failure of the West's economic sanctions on Russia for the West to recognize that the actual size of Russia's economy is about that of Germany, if not larger, and that Russia was defining herself in terms of enclosed technological cycles, localization and manufacturing long before she was forced to engage in the war in Georgia in 2008. Very few people realistically care about Russia's Stock Market; the financial markets of Germany are on an order of magnitude larger. But Germany, not to speak of South Korea, cannot design and build from scratch a state of the art fighter jet, and Russia can. Germany doesn't have a space industry, and Russia does. The same argumentation goes for Russia's microelectronics industry and her military-industrial complex, which dwarfs that of any "economic" competitor to which Western "economists" consistently try to compare Russia, with the exception of US and China, and then on bulk only, not quality. As was stated earlier, and is worth reiterating, third or second world economies do not produce such weapons as Borey-class strategic missile submarines or SU-35 fighter jets, or stealth SU-57 fighters, for that matter. They also do not build space-stations and operate the only global alternative to US GPS, the GLONASS system.

Most of the American analysts, who pass in the US as specialists on Russia and who are, with some notable military and, to a lesser degree, intelligence exceptions, produced by the US humanities and economics academic fields, simply have no grasp

of the enormous difference between the processes involved in a virtual monetized economy and those involved in manufacturing of the modern combat informational control system or of the cutting-edge fighter jet. For people who think that the iPhone is a real high tech product, the very notion of having enclosed technological cycles which require a very complex machinery and processes in extracting ore resources, refining them and then turning them into complex products, is simply beyond their grasp.

The number of technologies and scientific efforts which go, as a single example, into creation of the most complex machinery in human history, nuclear powered submarines, is overwhelming and is truly beyond the scope of a few indices. Only four nations in the world are capable, completely on their own, of producing state-of-the-art nuclear submarines, even fewer can produce the best of them, and only two nations can produce and maintain serious submarine forces with global reach. Those two nations are the United States and Russia.

How could this be, one may ask, when many still believe that Russia's economy is the size of South Korea's or even Australia's? Assuredly, one could play with all kinds of intuitive economic argumentation to doubt Russian capacity, including the fact that Russians generally are less well off than Americans and that they devote a much larger share of their GDP to defense. That is legitimate, but only to a certain degree. Indeed, if one uses indices such as the US GDP, which officially hovers around \$19 trillion⁴⁹ with American PPP GDP being the same as her nominal GDP, due to the US Dollar being the main reserve currency, one is forced to reconsider a general ratio of the Russian and US GDPs. No doubt, the US economy is much larger than Russia's, but it is not as much larger as was fashionable to speak of in the last two decades. The actual ratio of national PPP GDPs of Russia to the US is about 1 to 4. It is certainly not 1 to 10 nor, as some proposed, is the economy of Texas larger than that of Russia.

But the real issue lies not with Russia's economy, however grossly undervalued, it is with the grotesque *overvaluing* of the US economy, much of which coming from "industries" which

realistically do not define the actual power of a nation. Everyone has heard of the Big Mac Index⁵⁰ used for an adjustment of national purchasing power. It is somewhat humorous and is not very precise in defining the actual economic capabilities which populate indices of national power in general and military power in particular. Based on GNP (GDP) numbers alone in the Material Preponderance Predictor, the United States should have an overwhelming advantage over Russia, but this is not the case, as many in the US grudgingly admitted, and as indeed we will demonstrate in the later chapters of this book. Putting aside serious factors of doctrines and strategies, on economic merit alone it is clear that a much more serious Military Big Mac Index must be used. Anybody can make a Big Mac or a hamburger, only a few exceptional nations make commercial jets and fly into space.

Once viewed against this background, the picture becomes much clearer. Some snapshots of this are already available;

- Russia, in a planned and well-executed manner, without any unnecessary fanfare, launched a complete upgrade of her naval nuclear deterrent with state of the art ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs) of the Borey-class (Project 955 and 955A). Three submarines of this type are already afloat while five others are in different stages of completion. This is the program which most US Russia “analysts” were laughing at ten years ago. They are not laughing any more. Today it is the US Navy which is in dire need of an upgrade of its nuclear deterrent, with the youngest of its Ohio-class SSBNs, *SSBN-743 USS Louisiana*, being 20 years old. The future replacement of the venerable Ohio-class SSBNs, the Columbia-class, is slated to go into production in 2021. But one has to consider a feature which became defining of US R&D and weapons procurement practices: the delays and astronomical costs of US weapons, which, despite constantly being declared “superior,” “unrivaled” and “best in the world” are not such at all, especially for the prices

at which they are offered, both domestically and abroad. As in the case with the above mentioned Columbia-class SSBN, the GAO expects the cost of the whole program to be slightly above 97 billion dollars in 2017 Dollars and that means that the average cost for each sub of this class will be around 8.1 billion dollars.⁵¹ That is much more than the cost of the entire program (8 advanced submarines) of Russia's naval nuclear deterrent.⁵² This is more than just stunning, it is downright scandalous.

- The same pattern begins to emerge across the whole spectrum of American and Russian military capability. In terms of cost/effectiveness criteria, also known as the proverbial *bang for the buck*, practically everywhere Russia emerges unrivaled. While the case can be made that Russian workers are paid less than their American counterpart—which is true in direct dollar for dollar comparison—this is not how real power is calculated. It is also obvious that Russians' consumer patterns differ substantially from those of Americans. Yet what are often viewed in the West as sacrifices, are for most Russians merely tradeoffs. The overwhelming majority of Russians would rather have one car instead of two in the family, if the trade-off is a good investment in Russia's defense sector and armed forces, making them more than adequate to the task of defending what those Russians have.
- While Russia continues to remain the number two exporter of weapons globally, behind the US, unlike the US, Russia makes what is commonly known as a “killing” selling her state-of-the-art weapons abroad. As the recent contract and deliveries of arguably the best jet fighter of the 4++ generation in the world, the SU-35, to China testify, it is a “killing” since for 24 fighters China paid in excess of \$2 billion,⁵³ which amounts to around \$83 million per aircraft, with some characteristics even American 5th

generation aircraft cannot achieve. This sale price is well in excess of the costs of production.

As US Marine Corps Captain Joshua Waddle admitted in a moment of both lucidity and respectable professional integrity:

Judging military capability by the metric of defense expenditures is a false equivalency. All that matters are raw, quantifiable capabilities and measures of effectiveness. For example: a multi-billion dollar aircraft carrier that can be bested by a few million dollars in the form of a swarming missile barrage or a small unmanned aircraft system (UAS) capable of rendering its flight deck unusable does not retain its dollar value in real terms. Neither does the M1A1 tank, which is defeated by \$20 worth of household items and scrap metal rendered into an explosively-formed projectile. The Joint Improvised Threat Defeat Organization has a library full of examples like these, and that is without touching the weaponized return on investment in terms of industrial output and capability development currently being employed by our conventional adversaries.”⁵⁴

This is the reality US Russia Studies “experts”, and American intellectual elites in general, should have been facing from the get-go. Doing so could have possibly prevented calamities such as unleashing a war in Ukraine or in Syria. Should they have known—as opposed to being informed, two very different states of awareness—they would have noticed that in the 14 points Jeffrey R. Barnett used as criteria for domination, Russia, even during her economic breakdown in the 1990s, remained not only present, but a key player in many fields which do define real national capability and power: *most advanced technical research and development, leading edge technical education, access to*

space, aerospace industry and the high-tech weapons industry. In fact, it seems this economy which was “left in tatters”⁵⁵ or was the economy of a “gas station masquerading as a country,”⁵⁶ is the only other economy in the world which can and does produce the whole spectrum of weapons ranging from small arms to state-of-the-art complex weapon- and signal- processing systems. No other nation with the exception of the US and Russia, not even China, can produce and procure cutting edge military technology which has capabilities beyond the reach of everyone else.

Today other, purely civilian industries are being constantly added to the massive list of Russia’s civilian world class expertise and capability—from Rosatom’s giant contracts portfolio worth hundreds of billions of dollars, to the rebirth of Russia’s civilian aviation with extremely competitive commercial aircraft. So one is bound to ask: what were those American experts on Russia thinking when they continued to predict Russia’s demise against all empirical evidence to the contrary? What kind of experts are they really? Yes, different indices are important but they are important merely as tools which permit the conversion of vast data information into knowledge. It is here where the whole field of American “Russia experts” failed miserably, since they followed rigid and mistaken ideologies and mythologies, not to mention methodologies. As one of the commenters on one of the many political forums online succinctly observed: “all this is reminiscent of the situation on the Wheel of Fortune game, when the player guesses all letters correctly but still fails to read the phrase correctly.”

The problem, however, is even deeper. Far from simply being ignorant on Russia and the processes taking place there, American analysts are not even capable of making an accurate assessment of their own capabilities. As one Russian economic expert noted, it is useless to follow American economic data and indices, as they long ago stopped reflecting the real state of the affairs in America and are so convoluted that it is not worth applying them for real analysis. Faced with the inexorable march of history and sensing their own failure, many in the US, from the political top to the

media, have been afflicted with what Bryan MacDonald brilliantly defined as *Russophobia*—“a condition where the sufferer believes Russia is both about to collapse, and to take over the world.”⁵⁷

It is a sad state of the affairs when most of this Russian expertdom and think-tankdom simply doesn't know what it is dealing with nor is capable or trained in applying the appropriate criteria when providing mostly useless, if not outright dangerous and misleading, forecasts. A frustrated, indeed uncultured attitude is widespread among American “elites”. Take Graham Allison, who noted: “However demonic, however destructive, however devious, however deserving of being strangled Russia is, the brute fact is that we cannot kill this bastard without committing suicide.”⁵⁸ However crude this statement of a supposedly great American political scientist is, it is better than the ad nauseam declaration of American supremacy. It also could be a good first step in relieving American national security, foreign affairs and other defense “experts” of their utter ignorance on pretty much any matter related to modern Soviet/Russian history and the history of the modern warfare, especially as it manifested itself in WWII. This they owe, if not to Russians or even to the world at large, but primarily to the overwhelming majority of the American people who never wanted any part of American military adventurism and its history of military defeats and strategic miscalculations—to say nothing of a suicidal confrontation with Russia, whether conventional or nuclear.

No amount of doctored or distorted indices can cover up America's economic struggles and the decline of its grossly overrated—if still impressive and premier—military power. Admitting this fact of life and getting back to basics, as the same Allison suggests, could be a good and needed first step in America's preservation of its status as a major global player.

THE BIRTH OF MODERN AMERICAN MILITARY MYTHOLOGY

Carl Sandburg, in what is considered arguably the best biography of Abraham Lincoln, noted, when describing the realities of American military thought during the Civil War:

Southern West Pointers saw the North as having realized no Napoleon in McClellan, no Wellington in Hooker or Burnside. The North had its own Suvorov, however, they told Mrs. Chesnat; it would be just like Yankees to find a merciless, primitive warrior patterned after a Russian tradition. "Grant... is their right man, a bull-headed Suvorov."¹

Both warring sides of the American Civil War eventually would end up bathed in glory. They also ended up bathed in post-bellum acrimony and never-ending debate on the merits of their respective military leaders. The question here is not in the quality of the respective military leadership of the North and the Confederacy, despite an undeniable drama of graduates of the same military academy fighting against each other on

the battlefields of the American Civil War. The issue lies rather in the American military still viewing what came to be known as the first genuine war of the industrial age through the eyes of Swiss military theorist Antoine Henri Jomini's² writings on the Napoleonic Wars. Jomini's

view of history and of war was static and simplistic. He saw war as a "great drama," a stage for heroes and military geniuses whose talents were beyond the comprehension of mere mortals. He saw the revolutionary warfare in which he himself had participated as merely the technical near-perfection of a fundamentally unchanging phenomenon, to be modified only by superficial matters like the list of *dramatis personae*, technology, and transient political motivations. He drew his theoretical and practical prescriptions from his experiences in the Napoleonic wars. The purpose of his theory was to teach practical lessons to "officers of a superior grade."³

But here was a conundrum. These very same "primitive warriors patterned after a Russian tradition" had not only defeated Napoleon in Russia in 1812, but also managed to defeat him yet again, and in 1814, represented by Tsar Alexander I, received the keys to the city of Paris delivered personally by Talleyrand. It was a point emphasized in Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, in Prince Andrei's monologue to Pierre about German soldiers (including Clausewitz) talking about war on the eve of Borodino: "They lost all Europe to Napoleon and now are trying to teach us? Some teachers!"

Obviously no parallels could be drawn between Suvorov's military exploits, which saw him never losing a battle, including against the best Europe could throw at him and his troops, and the American Civil War. While Suvorov never fought Napoleon, as he dreamt of (he died in 1800 with the rank of Generalissimo),

the Russian Army certainly did. Despite the “Russian tradition”, this army was directly responsible for the demise of Napoleonic France. Was Napoleon a military genius? Undeniably so, but the sense of scale and measure as well as the understanding of the nature of a war seems to escape many, when trying to draw parallels. There were no repeating action rifles, no telegraph, nor, for that matter, railroad transportation—features which defined the American Civil War—in the times of Suvorov and Napoleon.

While Jomini’s geometry of battlefield maneuvers might have held a key to a commander’s genius and this criterion could be applied to the Civil War’s realities, what Suvorov, Napoleon or Alexander I, or for that matter Kutuzov, represented was a type of warfare completely different from the Civil War warfare. This was continental warfare at its worst in which different political, economic, language, cultural, and in the end, worldview systems collided. This was nation against nation, empire against empire warfare—unlike civil wars, which are called “civil” for a reason. Every soldier at any American Civil War battlefield, be he Union or Confederate, spoke the same language and was an offspring of very similar cultures, if not in fact the same one. Indeed, the American Civil War was a brutal war but apart from being brutal, it still was a civil one.

In the case of Napoleon’s invasion of Russia, however, the issue wasn’t civil, it was international. In fact, adjusted for the XIX century’s geopolitical realities, it was global. It concerned both revenge and the conquest by one culture of another and it was what, in general, would remain an illusion in American military history to this day—a war undertaken as Clausewitz put it, for “reasons of state” or a war for national survival—depending on which end of it you were. As Anatol Rappaport succinctly observed:

The wars waged by the United States in the nineteenth century were punitive or exterminating actions against Indian tribes, an unsuccessful expedition against Canada in 1812, and easy wars

of conquest against Mexico and the moribund Spanish empire. Neither of the two serious American war experiences before the Second World War (the Civil War and First World War) were perceived by Americans as wars in the Clausewitzian sense to promote national interest.⁴

With the minor exception of a possible but improbable direct interference of Great Britain into the American Civil War, the United States was not under any real danger of any kind of foreign invasion and all the consequences which followed in such a scenario. There never were more important reasons than the survival of the state, which faced the legal reconfiguration of the nation. The American state was never in danger from an external force—a crucial determinant in history. For Russians in 1812 dealing with Napoleon was more than just a matter of elegant maneuvers on the battlefield—a feature which propelled Napoleon into the pantheon of tactical geniuses. Russians hated invaders. Later Tolstoy gave a fictional account of the war in *War and Peace* that resonance with reality through Prince Andrei's monologue on the eve of the Borodino Battle:

“Yes, yes,” answered Prince Andrew absently. “One thing I would do if I had the power,” he began again, “I would not take prisoners. Why take prisoners? It's chivalry! The French have destroyed my home and are on their way to destroy Moscow, they have outraged and are outraging me every moment. They are my enemies. In my opinion they are all criminals. And so thinks Timokhin and the whole army. They should be executed! Since they are my foes they cannot be my friends, whatever may have been said at Tilsit.”⁵

Thus there was nothing “elegant” or, in a more general sense, Napoleonic in the mutual French and Russian slaughter at

the Borodino Battle, where in 8 hours the Russians lost 48,000 and the French 37,000 troops; it was the bloodiest battle in history until the start of WWI, with only the three-day Battle of Leipzig in 1813 barely surpassing those terrifying numbers. That single day resulted in 85,000 casualties, or roughly 14% of all American Civil War deaths during four years of hostilities. Historian Gwyn Dyer gave a visual of the battle when he compared the carnage at Borodino to “a fully-loaded 747 crashing, with no survivors, every 5 minutes for eight hours.”⁶ This is a no small matter, even when one considers the carnage of Napoleon’s invasion of Russia where by different accounts more than 600,000 servicemen on both sides were killed or perished as a direct result of combat and other hostilities-related causes, while the number of civilian dead, displaced or missing can hardly be counted with any degree of accuracy, as General Bogdanovich wrote in 1812. Civilian losses were at least comparable to those from combat, and likely much higher. Moscow, with a population of 270,000 inhabitants prior to Napoleon’s entry, was abandoned and burned, and a number of other major Russian cities were destroyed as a result of the war. The damage to the Russian economy amounted to an astronomical sum of 1 billion rubles.⁷ Bogdanovich reported a noticeable depopulation of many of Russia’s governorships.⁸ All that happened within a timespan of less than 6 months.

Scales and proportions always mattered, still matter and will continue to matter a great deal, especially once warranted comparisons are made. One of the pivotal moments of the American Civil War was Sherman’s burning of Atlanta, which at the time had a population of barely 9,500 inhabitants, that is more than 27 times smaller than Moscow of 1812.⁹ Even Smolensk with its 1812 population of around 13,000, which saw a ferocious battle around it and was set on fire by French artillery, was still considerably larger. In the end, Russia’s population in 1812, which was around 35 million, matched roughly the American population of 1860 which was 31.5 million.¹⁰ Yet, the difference couldn’t be starker—Napoleon attacked Russia with what then

was the largest military force in history, which represented much of Western and Eastern Europe. Napoleon's *Grande Armee*, which numbered 685,000 troops, had under its banners French, Saxons, Poles, Prussians, Italians, or what Tolstoy called a "force of a dozen European languages or nations."

The United States has never experienced anything of such a nature and scale and bar the 1814 burning of Washington D.C. which had much symbolic meaning in what is known in the US as the War of 1812, this barely registers against the background of the massive seismic events of Napoleon's invasion of Russia and the global remake of the world order which followed Napoleon's defeat. American culture simply doesn't know what fighting off an invader is like. This fact, however, never prevented Tchaikovsky's famed 1812 Overture addressing the battle of Borodino from being considered by many in the US as written specifically as a dedication to the American War of 1812.¹¹ This misconception still persists even today, rather a peculiar testimony to the overall ignorance to the rest of the world's military and political history, which is a norm in the US, including among those in the American political class.

The notion that there was nothing really exceptional militarily in US history prior to WWII is anathema for proponents of American exceptionalism. To question why a great Russian composer would write an overture dedicated to some very limited backwater conflict half-a-world away from the pivotal events of world history seems totally unreasonable to many. Yet, compounding this problem is the American view of warfare as an exercise of tactical wits on the battlefield in a set-piece battle without regards to the larger picture in which winning the war was the key. The idea of a nation fighting by all means for its survival was completely alien to this vision. Yet, it was the same Tolstoy who encapsulated the meaning of war "Russian style" and of a "tradition":

And it is well for a people who do not—as the French did in 1813—salute according to all

the rules of art, and, presenting the hilt of their rapier gracefully and politely, hand it to their magnanimous conqueror, but at the moment of trial, without asking what rules others have adopted in similar cases, simply and easily pick up the first cudgel that comes to hand and strike with it till the feeling of resentment and revenge in their soul yields to a feeling of contempt and compassion.¹²

Elegant maneuvering and tactics, however important, were just a part of the overall dynamics of wars fought since Napoleon's invasion. Yes, generals would visit a battlefield after the battle was over to give their impression of it even in WWII but the era of a single decisive "general battle" came to a halt in 1812 in Russia. With it the reputation of Napoleon as a great strategist received a major blow. A great strategist he was not, despite having a whole school of thought which for centuries would continue to find excuses—from the grossly exaggerated "General Winter" argument to other reasons, including ignoring the role of Russian Army altogether—designed to mitigate the obvious fact of Napoleon sustaining his greatest defeat in what was supposed to be his greatest campaign.

Yet, the allure of Napoleon's achievements, real and perceived, never weakened among military-historical circles in the West in general, and in Anglo-American circles in particular. The parallels, however misplaced, continued to be drawn between the Napoleonic Wars and the American Civil War well into the 20th Century. But as Sir Michael Howard noted: "There the masters of operational strategy were to be found, not in victorious armies of the North, but among the leaders of the South. Lee and Jackson handled their forces with a flexibility and imaginativeness worthy of Napoleon or a Fredrick; nevertheless they lost."¹³ The inevitable question which arose was, of course, if Lee and Jackson were worthy of Napoleon there was something else which negated whatever Napoleonic qualities that were to be found in those Southern Generals which made them lose to what many of them

considered a “primitive” Russian warrior such as Grant, who was a “bull-headed Suvorov”. Southern Generals did have one up on Napoleon—they certainly didn’t abandon their armies at their most desperate times and those such as Robert E. Lee had enough fortitude and honor to call for reconciliation. It is inconceivable to imagine Robert E. Lee issuing anything even remotely comparable in cynicism to the conclusion of Napoleon’s 29th Bulletin with its description of their own health against the background of their defeated and abandoned armies.

There were, however, at different times, different assessments of Russian military capacity coming from American officers. During the Crimean War, Major R. Delafield, who observed the Crimean War, wrote about the Russian evacuation of Sevastopol where not a single Russian man was lost: “A masterly retreat that does great credit to Russian military genius and discipline.”¹⁴ Those different times saw America standing alone by Russia during the Crimean War. As Douglas Kroll noted:

with scarcely a dissenting voice, the American press and public appeared to conclude that the world was picking on its overseas friend, Russia. President Franklin Pierce... all but went to war with Britain and France on Russia’s behalf. U.S. Navy crews rescued the crew of the Russian ship *Diana* in the Far East. The U.S. Government furnished Russian forces with arms and sent a whole shipload of gunpowder to the defenders of the Siberian coast. Three hundred Kentucky riflemen offered to go to the Crimea, where volunteer American surgeons were already serving with Russian forces. The Russian Embassy in Washington D.C. was flooded with requests for letters of marque from American citizens who wanted to enter the service of the tsar as privateers against Britain. Frank Golder, no Russophile, would later write of the Crimean War, ‘By the time

it was over the United States was the only nation in the world that was neither ashamed nor afraid to acknowledge boldly her friendship for Russia.’ The behavior of the United States during this war unquestionably impressed the Russians and strengthened the goodwill between two nations.”¹⁵

This is a historic irony today in the context of the American political and economic war on Russia precisely for accepting the return of Crimea back to Russia,¹⁶ the defense of which in 1854-55 the United States had so enthusiastically helped.

All this denigration of Russian military accomplishments reflects the deep-seated Russophobia within a large swath of the Western elites. Russians represented an existential threat to what was viewed as an enlightened West. Russians were Asiatic and inhuman according to Astolphe de Custine, who through his *La Russie en 1839* colored Western perception of Russia for centuries. Russians were barbaric and primitive and, as the logic of Custine and later of the whole dominant Western school of thought on Russia went, had no right to resist whatever the combined West was throwing at them. Each defeat of the combined West was viewed as an insult, no matter how many of those Asiatic barbarian Russians were killed in the process.

This attitude persisted into the 20th century. All-American WWII hero General George C. Patton’s knowledge of Russia was so minimal that he left an “insight” on Russians which would make Goebbels proud:

The difficulty in understanding the Russian is that we do not take cognizance of the fact that he is not a European but an Asiatic and therefore thinks deviously. We can no more understand a Russian than a Chinaman or a Japanese and, from what I have seen of them, I have no particular desire to understand them except to ascertain how much lead or iron it takes to kill them. In addition

to his other amiable characteristics, the Russian has no regard for human life and is an all-out son of a bitch, a barbarian, and a chronic drunk.¹⁷

Remarkably, Patton believed in reincarnation, and thought himself to have been Napoleon's Marshall in a past life, a rather ironic aspiration for a man deeply afflicted with Russophobia since all Napoleon's misfortunes, which eventually lead to the demise of Napoleonic France, had their origins on the battlefields of Russia.¹⁸ Russian Field-Marshal Kutuzov, Russian Tsar Alexander I, and in general Russian officers, soldiers and citizenry played a pivotal role in stopping Napoleonic warfare which was a direct cause of millions of deaths and brought so much suffering to Europe.

That Patton, as well as very many in the American military and political environment, came to view war as a sporting event was not an accident. No doubt, any military always had and still has people who do view war as such—it is a given, as is the inevitable competitive dynamics between opposing military leaders. But it was in the US where the “hunt for glory” among the military reached a rather grotesque embodiment in George S. Patton, whose public persona also found an enthusiastic response among some American historians and media personalities for a number of cultural and Cold War ideological reasons. This was enabled by a complete lack of understanding of modern continental warfare as represented by the German Blitzkrieg in WWII and its impact primarily on civilians. Surely, American GIs did encounter the brutalities of warfare as did anyone else who saw combat, though war on the Eastern Front, as many German veterans stated, was an unmitigated horror, when compared to the Western Front where war was “proper sport”.¹⁹ But even warfare in Western Europe in WWII created a phenomenon which Fussell described in a chapter with symptomatic title “The Real War Will Never Get in the Books.” He wrote:

What annoyed the troops and augmented their sardonic contemptuous attitude towards those

who viewed them from afar was in a large part this public innocence about the bizarre damage suffered by the human body in modern war. The troops could not contemplate without anger the lack of public knowledge of the Graves Registration form used by the US Army Quartermaster Corps with its space indicating “Members Missing.”²⁰

This ignorance of the realities of war was a strictly American and, to a lesser degree, British phenomenon. The American public was insulated from the horrors of war by the ocean and by a culture which was groomed in a very different way than was the case with historic Russia. As Studs Terkel observed,

In 1982, a woman of thirty, doing just fine in Washington D.C., let me know how things are in her precincts: “I can’t relate to World War Two. It is in schoolbook texts, that’s all. Battles that were won, battles that were lost. Or costume dramas you see on TV. It is just the story in the past. It is so distant, so abstract. I don’t get myself up in a bunch about it.”²¹

For Russia, however, far from the real war never getting in the books, real war was an everyday reality. Russians were constantly dealing with death and the horror of war, even in the deep rear, to say nothing of in the cities and villages at the front line or deep in the Nazi-occupied territories. Nazi atrocities in occupied Soviet territories, where mass rape, torture and executions of Slavs and Jews became a norm, were just a part of the picture. Many major Soviet cities were utterly destroyed. While the whole world knew the names of Stalingrad or Leningrad as symbols of the sacrifices of civilians in wartime, very many other places remained unknown such as the city of Voronezh, among very many others, which after liberation on January 25th, 1943 by the Red Army was nothing more than rubble with 96% of housing demolished, all

communications, all utilities utterly destroyed, all administrative buildings, museums, churches, and schools blown up on purpose. Mass executions of the civilian population were carried out by the Germans. Everything of value, including bronze monuments of Lenin and Peter the Great were shipped to Germany.²²

Against this reality, any view of war as a noble undertaking or a competitive event was incomprehensible. The sentiment so well captured by Tolstoy in Prince Andrei's monologue on the eve of Borodino slaughter was amplified by orders of magnitude. It was not possible to refer to WWII as the "Good War" for Russians, nor could a military leader such as Patton have emerged from the realities of that war or for that matter, from such a history as Russia's.

THE MANY MISINTERPRETATIONS OF WORLD WAR II

American military historian Carlo D'Este, in his laudatory work on US General George S Patton, noted: "Ask virtually any American born after World War II what immediately comes to mind when the name 'Patton' is mentioned, and chances are they will conjure an image of a large, empty stage dominated by an enormous, oversize American flag."¹ There was even a film which bore his name, moving some to contend that, "The film turned Patton the legend finally into Patton the folk hero."²

Yet, there was a real downside to the famous 1970 Hollywood flick and genius acting of George C. Scott which contributed not only to the Patton myth but to an always foggy, very skewed American understanding of World War II and warfare. While the movie was a cinematographic triumph in the United States, those who knew war first hand—the Germans—had a different opinion. Ladislav Farago was blunt in stating the obvious:

German interest in Patton was still so spotty many years later that the famous motion picture with George C. Scott, a smash hit everywhere else, flopped dismally in Germany. After a week or two playing to empty houses, its showing had to be cancelled. Rommel, yes. Zhukov, surely.

Montgomery, maybe. But the vast majority of the Germans simply didn't know why General Patton rated a film.³

Nor did Russians, who, after the liberalization of the 1980s and the spread of VHS culture, were not amused by the movie which glorified, in Paul Fussell's words about Patton, "a master of chickenshit".⁴ For Russians, who had a pretty good idea of the scale of WWII and were used to its imagery, the film raised the inevitable question of why so much pathos would be generated about a general who commanded a single army at the Western Front in the last year of WWII. Even in the 1980s the names of the Wehrmacht's best military leaders such as Von Bock, Guderian, Manstein, Hoth, Model or Kleist were very well-known in the USSR. In the 1970s, as an example, any school child in Sevastopol knew that their city fell in 1942 to Erich Von Manstein's forces. Every Stalingrad/Volgograd inhabitant knew and still knows who Field-Marshal Paulus was. Not only was Soviet cinematography producing a vast number of movies about the Great Patriotic War, with those movies ranging from cringe-worthy propaganda to true masterpieces, but some of them became nation-wide events. Yuri Ozerov's five-part movie epic *Liberation (Osvobozhdenie)* played in 1970 and 1971 to packed theaters and mile-long lines to box offices. It provided an excellent portrayal of Hitler's marshals and generals, who were played by actual Germans speaking in German, close-captioned in Russian in the movie to give it a flavor of authenticity. This is not to speak of the famed Fritz Diez performing what can arguably be stated as the best portrayal of the Fuhrer of them all, with honorable mention to Robert Watson as a close second.

This public immersion in the war was reinforced and complemented with a semi-fictional insight into the SD/SD/Gestapo operations in what amounted to a national TV phenomenon of *Seventeen Moments of Spring (Semnadtzat' Mgnovenyi Vesny)*, which literally emptied streets in the Soviet Union every evening for 12 days in 1972. The TV series entered the Russian national consciousness and remains there to this day.

In general, the Soviet cultural milieu was such that awareness of the war was very high and so was the more nuanced knowledge of many particulars of some of its largest and most decisive battles—inevitable in a culture where war was part of public schools’ literature and history curriculum, and where the names of Konstantin Simonov, Alexander Tvardovsky or Boris Vasilyev and their literary and movie adaptations, from *The Alive and The Dead* (*Zhivye I Myortvye*) to *The Dawns Here Are Quiet* (*A Zori Zdes’ Tikhie*) were, indeed, household names and titles. But in the 1980s, one Soviet picture stood out for the Western public: Elem Klimov’s movie adaptation of Ales Adamovich’s script titled *Come and See* (*Idi I Smotri*)⁵. Here was the reality of the Soviet War with all of its ultimate horror and atrocity as experienced by tens of millions of Soviet citizens. As one American movie critic wrote:

Stalingrad-born Elem Klimov’s “Come and See” is an undiluted expression of cinematic poetry in the service of an unspeakably turbulent anti-war narrative about the 628 Byelorussian Villages burnt to the ground along with their inhabitants by the Nazis during WWII. The film is a disorienting vision of hell on Earth that would pale Hieronymus Bosch’s most gruesome compositions. An electricity-buzzing stench of human death and social decay hangs over the remarkable picture’s constant volley between neo-realistic, formal, and documentary styles that take the viewer on quick descent into the existential madness of war through the eyes of its fourteen-year-old peasant protagonist Florya. Alexei Kravchenko’s phenomenal performance as Florya is of such an enormous dramatic magnitude that he physically transforms the audience.⁶

For Patton it was “one hell of a war”; for the Soviet people it was hell—a moral distinction which never entered American

consciousness on any level, from households to the political elites. There was simply no appropriate mechanism in a moral and spiritual sense which would allow Americans to internalize those experiences. The smell of rotten flesh, bodies disfigured by explosions, raped dejected women (a popular entertainment by SS and even Wehrmacht's servicemen), children's concentration camps, or Soviet school children sitting in the classrooms with no roofs or windows and writing between the lines of old newspapers used as notebooks—all that was so beyond American experience that an American movie such as *Patton*, a cultural phenomenon addressing their own experiential and thus cultural understanding, was in some form, bound to appear. Patton, certainly, entered the American consciousness as a great general, or as even Fussell admitted, a man with a reputation for a "genius with armor".⁷ Attempts to find justifications to prove why he was a "genius" with armor, however, continue even today in US historiography, but Russians, who on average were moderately—with D-Day and Ardennes being well known—well-acquainted with the Western Allied war efforts, certainly knew who Montgomery was and knew Eisenhower. They also liked Ike. Eisenhower registered in Russian historic memory in a generally very positive place both as Allied Supreme Commander and as, in general, just a decent-looking American fellow who in some sense embodied the Soviet/Russian idealized view of America of the 1940s and 1950s. Nobody, except possibly Soviet professional military historians working closely with the issue of the Western Front, paid attention to Patton.

It was, in the end, yet again this issue of scale and other relevant military, strategic and operational matters which made the role of General Patton simply not that significant in the overall picture of WWII. Surely, in the American psyche even today, as David Glantz observed in 2001:

The paucity of detailed information on the war available in the English language reinforces the natural American (and Western) penchant for viewing the Soviet-German War as a mere

backdrop for more dramatic and significant battles in western theaters, such as El Alamein, Salerno, Anzio, Normandy, and the Bulge. This distorted layman's view of the war so prevalent in the West is understandable since most histories of the conflict have been and continue to be based largely on German sources, sources which routinely describe the war as a struggle against a faceless and formless enemy whose chief attributes were the immense size of its army and the limitlessness supply of expendable human resources.⁸

Attempts to rationalize the differences, and myths, of Soviet and Western views on the dynamics of WWII existed even during the Cold War. *The Russian Version of the Second World War: The History of the War as Taught to Russian Schoolchildren*, edited by Graham Lyons and first published in the United Kingdom in 1976, analyzed the event through Soviet public school history text books. Naturally, as the author admitted: "Particularly during the long Cold War period Western readers were given an unfavorable impression of Soviet policies and actions prior to and during the Second World War. British and American commentators presented these policies as being cynical, treacherous and immoral."⁹ But even the original cover of the book with the review by Robert Skidelsky of the *Spectator*, was stunning for a Western reader: "The Russian perspective on the war, clearly put together by Graham Lyons from Soviet school textbooks, is not more distorted than the standard Western offerings. The Russians believe, quite rightly, that it was they who bore the brunt of the fighting and the horror. They also claim, in my view rightly, that it was they who defeated the Germans with rather minimal help from the Western Allies."¹⁰ In 1978, the closing year of the East-West Détente and before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, a massive 20-part documentary titled *The Unknown War*, narrated by the incomparable Burt Lancaster, was produced. This series

was pulled from the air after just one showing in the US.¹¹ There was, of course, some propaganda in it, but the message was still focusing on what really mattered in that war—contributions and costs; those mattered hugely, in fact, they were the only things that mattered. In the end, the very success of *Operation Overlord*, the code name for the Battle of Normandy, hinged on the success of the Red Army on the Eastern Front. No matter how one viewed the ideological and moral intricacies of pre-WWII politics, it was clear that the moral high ground was on the side of those who, irrespective of what one thought often, were annihilating most of what already was clearly defined by 1941 as the ultimate evil, which later events proved beyond the shadow of a doubt.

By July of 1941 it became plainly clear that the Soviet Front would be decisive. That wasn't lost on either Marshall or Eisenhower, both of whom out of a sense of duty were urging for a second front as early as 1942. Eisenhower left a striking note in his diary after his and Marshall's operational plan, Sledgehammer, a risky 1942 attempt of an amphibious landing in Europe to help the Red Army, was defeated primarily by Churchill at the ARCADIA conference. "If the Western Allies allowed the Germans 'to eliminate an Allied Army of 8,000,000 men, when some stroke of ours might have saved the situation', then they 'would be guilty of one of the grossest military blunders of all history.'"¹² It is, of course, doubtful that Sledgehammer was practical in 1942, especially given the chances of the main (British) contribution to the force of six divisions being assembled in the area were, as Eisenhower himself assessed, very low, namely 1 in 5.¹³ Yet, against the titanic scale of the struggle on the Eastern Front where 5.7 million Red Army Troops fought a desperate campaign to stop 3.8 million Axis forces' advance on all fronts, even this attempt at relieving the Red Army couldn't have been lost on the Russians.¹⁴ Long after the war, the politics of WWII remained strongly pronounced in the Soviet Union. Even against the background of contemporary Russophobia and outlandish claims of Russians interfering in the American 2016 Presidential elections, the *Washington Times* referred to how Eisenhower was liked in the Soviet Union:

To be sure, it wasn't a Page One story, but on Jan. 12, 1960, months before the American presidential primaries began, Moscow-based Priscilla Johnson, a reporter for the American Newspaper Alliance, wrote a story that appeared in West Virginia's Charleston Gazette under the title "Eisenhower Candidacy Favored by Russia." Johnson's main point in the article was that ordinary Russians as well as high officials couldn't understand why the likeable Ike couldn't run again for the White House. As one Moscow cab driver put it: "If the people want him, why can't he run for a third?" Explaining the 22nd Amendment's limitation on presidential terms didn't help the matter because in the Soviet Union giving up the premiership position was exceedingly rare. Ike was liked because the summit between him and Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev in September 1959 seemed to quiet Cold War tensions (It was a far cry from the heated "Kitchen Debate" over capitalism and communism between Vice President Richard Nixon and Khrushchev at the opening of the American National Exhibition in Moscow in July 1959)."¹⁵

Of course, the American journalist missed the point completely. Ike was liked in Russia not just because he was likable, which he was, but primarily because he was the Soviet Union's Ally in WWII, an event which completely redefined Russia's psyche—who just happened to be likable. The importance of that simple fact, as well as the importance for Russians, even today, of the Allied relations during the Soviet-American link-up at Torgau on the Elbe on April 25, 1945 being embedded forever in the national historic memory, was completely lost on the American journalist. In the end, the Russian logic went like this: people like Eisenhower surely knew what the Soviets went through, and made

an effort to understand that actual confrontation with the West was the last thing on their mind.

It was the same perhaps misplaced assumption which later defined the fairly amicable Russian attitude towards America's 43rd president, George H. W. Bush, who as a bona fide combat veteran, was viewed by many ordinary Russians with a great deal of compassion. Photos of young George H.W. Bush in his *Grumman TBM Avenger* or being rescued from the water by the *USS Finback* after his plane was shot down by the Japanese, were extremely important in generating such attitudes, especially against the background of the late 1980s-early 1990s exchanges between Reagan and Gorbachev, mistakenly perceived by Russians as a mutual agreement on stopping the Cold War.

Eventually, with more information being disclosed in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union and with a great deal of discussion, and some positive revision of the role of Western Allies in the European theater of operations in WWII and Lend-Lease, the persona of Eisenhower as much more than just a Supreme Allied Commander Europe but a truly great military strategist started to emerge for Russians. Late Academician Georgii Arbatov, a famed Director of Moscow's Institute of the USA and Canada, in his April 1996 address at Eisenhower's Presidential Library in Abilene, KS, concluded his Q and A session with a good-natured smile: "For Russians Ike was an American Zhukov."¹⁶ That was sincere praise despite a dramatic difference in the theaters of operations and the forces both men, who would become real life friends, commanded and faced.

What was clear, albeit not militarily, with Ike and Patton being in completely different leagues in terms of command and responsibilities, was the fact that Eisenhower was the complete antithesis of Patton in a larger, metaphysical sense. For Eisenhower war was a horrible ordeal to be faced with stoicism and to be overcome; for Patton war was a sports competition to be desired, in fact craved. In such a setting, Eisenhower was much closer to the Russian view of war and Russian sensibilities than Patton could ever be. This could explain the lack of any serious

and major motion picture (which, bar some TV series and a very low-key movie with Tom Selleck ably portraying Ike) about an American general who truly did merit appreciation as a world-class strategist, who was worth one huge movie epic by any criteria. But Eisenhower was too strategic and too intellectual for Hollywood, as was George C. Marshall—another outstanding military strategist and leader in his own right. Ike was too boring, too conventional and insufficiently flamboyant to fit a grossly distorted and amateurish Hollywood view of war in general and of WWII in particular. The average American then and even today¹⁷ views the war as a sequence of dashing triumphal advances against an off-balance enemy who is overwhelmed and demoralized by the US Army's armor columns led into battle by able generals, such as Patton.

Obviously, the latter image has nothing in common with the actual strategic, operational and tactical realities of the war in Europe. One of the most shocking revelations for the consumers of American WWII mythology is usually the fact not only of the relative unimportance of the theaters of operations in which the US Army, under Churchill's pressure, had deployed and fought prior to the landing in Normandy but also the issue of numbers. Even prior to the commencement of *Operation Torch* in November of 1942, during the Western Allies' strategic discussions it became clear that the North African theater's importance was miniscule.¹⁸ The numbers simply were not there to support Churchill's insistence on the strategic importance of the theater in the overall strategy of fighting the Axis forces.

While it had already been stated by the British representatives in no uncertain terms that the European theater was the place where "the decision should be sought,"¹⁹ as further events would show, they would seek the decision anywhere but. The Red Army, by the time of the Allied Invasion of French North Africa, was in the middle of the battle of Stalingrad which would see the annihilation of the Wehrmacht's 6th and parts of its 4th Armies in addition to four other Axis armies which accounted for more than 700,000 Axis personnel.²⁰ It would see more than

half a year of German production wiped out. The butcher bill for the Stalingrad battle was appalling with the total of both sides' casualties reaching upward of 2 million.

A comparison of the scale of Stalingrad with the North African campaign was inevitable. The British 8th Army at the Second Battle of El Alamein defeated a 116,000-man strong German-Italian Force while in the process dealing, by different estimates, around 50,000 casualties to an Axis force far removed from main theater of operations in Europe and having virtually no influence on the fate of Nazi Germany. In the aftermath of the Stalingrad battle which received global praise, the British *Telegraph* went as far as declaring that the Soviet victory at Stalingrad saved European civilization.²¹ There was a lot of truth to this emotional conclusion.

But the idea, in Patton's own words, of people of a "Mongolian nature" having a decisive hand in saving Western civilization prevented many in the American elites from accepting the military-strategic realities of WWII.²² This notion of non-Anglo-American armies doing the bulk of heavy lifting in ridding the world of Nazism was responsible to a large extent for fanning the flames of the Cold War, insofar as the Soviet role challenged the notion that it is America that is the global savior—as did the primary Russian role in the defeat of ISIS in Syria—upon which the American exceptionalist narrative depends. While the battle of Stalingrad was nearing its conclusion in January 1943, the Western Allies held their conference in Casablanca. It was there at Casablanca that General Stanley Embick of Marshall's OPD, a man who already had been a serious advocate for the earliest American commitment to European Theater at the ABC-1 conferences, circulated a memorandum in which he expressed the consensus of the US Army and War Department that since April 1942

America had been led down the "primrose path" by Britain's "agreement in principle" to Overlord; that under the cover of these agreements the British, satisfied with stalemate of the Eastern

Front, pursued a traditional balance-of-power strategy aimed solely at preserving the Empire and British interests in a post war world... British designs in the Balkans and the Mediterranean... were not war measures against Germany, but aimed at checking the Soviet advance into these regions.”²³

Preserving its Empire superseded Britain’s concern with bearing a fair share of the Allied war effort, and seeing the Nazis, with whom many in the British elite had sympathy, bleed the USSR, was not an anathema. That America might perceive and seem to resist the British orientation seemed, to Russians, to be the manifestation of an America which Russians had already idealized during the war—admiring US-made trucks and *P-39 Aerocobras*, and appreciative of Lend-Lease Spam, which was responsible for so many Russian lives saved from hunger, to say nothing of the American whiskey often inserted by American assembly workers into the barrels of Lend-Lease M-4 Sherman and Grant tanks shipped to the Soviet Union. To Russians, their Western allies, in general, were not unknown faceless entities. In the end, the Soviets had their Russified cover of the famed 1943 Jimmy McHugh and Harold Adamson smash hit, sung by Briton Anne Shelton, “Coming in on a Wing and a Prayer”, played by the famous Leonid Utesov’s Jazz Band and Tatiana Sikorskaya singing, with “prayer,” in keeping with the Soviet atheistic tradition, replaced by “honest word”.

But however delusional the warm feelings about the Allies were among Russians, numbers, in the end, defined everything. By the conclusion of the Stalingrad battle it became clear that the Soviet Union not only would not lose the war but most likely would expel the Axis invasion, as it had done to other invaders in past times in Russian history. This fact played a key role in Roosevelt’s unconditional surrender statement at Casablanca, which showed a serious deficiency in understanding the nature of the Soviet-German war which saw an unprecedented level

of brutality and had already become very personal for Russians by 1941. As JT Dykman, a historian from Eisenhower Institute, noted, while describing Soviet experience in World War Two: “In Europe Hitler’s goal was to conquer and subjugate populations. In the USSR his written goal was annihilation of everyone suspected of being capable of resistance and depopulation of the rest by starvation. The USSR was the only theatre of war in which Einsatzgruppen task forces were used to follow the combat troops and kill civilians. People, measured in the millions, were forced to starve because their livestock was sent to Germany and their grain was used to feed the 6.7 million horses needed to transport Wehrmacht artillery and supplies.” No American soldier ever had similar experiences. There couldn’t have been any separate arrangements or settlements between the Soviet Union and Hitler—the fight between the two was a war of annihilation and no additional stimulus was needed to keep the Soviet Union and the Red Army mobilized and committed.

But it would be the Kursk Battle which played a decisive role in the final decision on *Overlord*. It was also this battle which left no doubt about the outcome of the war, not only on the Eastern Front but for the Nazi regime as a whole. David Eisenhower, in what became a number one national bestseller about his legendary grandfather, conspicuously omitted any mention of the cataclysm at Kursk in his description of the Allied discussion leading to Tehran. He merely stated that: “In November 1943 British candor about the hazards of *Overlord* was no longer welcome.”²⁴ During the days of the Kursk battle in which, by different estimates, three million men, 8,000 tanks and 5,000 planes on both sides clashed, the American press’s main attention was concentrated elsewhere²⁵—on the landing in Sicily, leaving the Battle of Kursk to the last pages of most newspapers, thus creating a precedent which would play such a baneful role in distorting the history of WWII in the West, and later have serious geopolitical ramifications.²⁶

What was the real contribution of the US 7th Army of 66,000 men led by Patton or of Montgomery’s 115,000 men facing about 60,000 German troops, most of them later evacuated,

in a campaign which, as Carol King insisted, “changed the course of World War II,” compared to a titanic struggle on the Eastern Front?²⁷ Later, western historiography would continue to quote in unison a dubious Manstein assertion that the allied operation *Husky*, as the Sicily landing was known, would force Hitler to shift some of his crack divisions from Kursk to Italy. What was omitted was the fact that the only German division which actually made it to Italy, completely without its heavy equipment, was the *Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler* Division. Both Das Reich and Totenkopf Panzer Divisions were never transferred to Italy and were redeployed to the so-called Mius-Front, a heavily fortified German defensive line along the river Mius in Southern Russia. There they would face another Red Army offensive. Moreover, the *Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler* Division was deployed to, and then remained stationed in, Northern Italy mostly for garrison and punitive functions, which could hardly be called combat tasks.²⁸ This Division would find its end on the Eastern Front, with some remnants of this once crack unit surrendering to the US Army in the West.

Despite the question of how an extremely limited, by numbers, geography and impact, Allied operation could “influence the course of WWII” beyond making a small dent in Germany’s military machine and many headlines in friendly press, *Husky* would nonetheless provide a principal orientation towards describing what happened in WWII in the West. Indeed, for many years Western historiography would continue, sometimes justifiably, to complain about Soviet allegedly “inflated”, or otherwise problematic, numbers. This was inevitable given Western historiography’s ready adherence, sometimes against common human, not to speak of military, sense, to the Wehrmacht’s numbers and explanations of the war on the Eastern front.²⁹ Yet, in 1943 very few people in the Allied camp leadership had any doubts about the significance of what was happening on the Eastern Front not only for the Allied effort but for the world as a whole. It was the scale of the German Blitzkrieg’s defeat at Kursk and the Soviet Union’s gaining complete strategic initiative

in the war which played a crucial role in convincing the Allies to finally, with Winston Churchill still having very tense exchanges with Stalin at Tehran, firmly commit to *Overlord* by which time there were already very serious doubts about it being “essential to defeat Germany.”³⁰

Here, on the road to *Overlord*, lies one of the most controversial junctures of WWII and the Cold War. The late Stephen Ambrose pondered what might have been if, indeed, the Allies had opened the Second Front in 1943.³¹ Would the Soviet Union then extend both its military and political will to Eastern Europe? Could the Allies have advanced in 1943 well into the Poland by means of overrunning Nazi Germany and meeting the Red Army somewhere on the old Polish-Soviet border? This is not a vain or trivial question, it is one of the most important questions of the 20th century. Even when the outcome of the war in Europe was not in any doubt, with the Kursk battle and then a series of Red Army strategic offensives unfolding one after another starting in December of 1943, the Soviet Union never stopped asking for the opening of the Second Front—even despite a short-lived lull in Soviet requests for this front, which raised concern between Roosevelt and Churchill about whether Stalin was simply giving up on the Allies. Yet, even despite being bled white on the Eastern Front for two years and even after a strategic reversal of fortunes in the wake of the Kursk battle, the Wehrmacht still remained a very potent force, which was still capable of inflicting massive pain. Could the Allies, if their military resources weren’t used in secondary theaters and the fundamental strategic principle of a maximum concentration of resources and forces been followed, have been able to land in Europe in mid-1943?

The answer to this question will never be known for sure but there is no doubt that both the US War Department and US Army thought that they could, given an appropriate time for preparation. That, obviously, was not an option with the Allies constantly being involved since 1942 in operational planning and preparation for *Torch*, *Husky* and, eventually, landing in Italy. One of the favorite excuses of apologists for the delay of

Overlord until the summer of 1944 is the issue of the American defeat at Kasserine Pass, which often is presented as some kind of American baptism by fire and a learning experience.³² Learning experience it certainly was, as it was a considerable blow to American confidence, yet the scale of this whole event was, again, miniscule, underscoring how inconsequential the North African theater was, compared to that in Europe when even after the baptism by fire and necessary adjustments to training procedures and fighting doctrine were made, the Allies still didn't encounter the real might of Wehrmacht.

They never would. In the famous collection of the so-called "green books," *History of US Army in World War Two* first published in 1965, in the conclusion of the volume dedicated to the Ardennes, known as the Battle of the Bulge, there is a serious and entirely legitimate American complaint about the Red Army taking partial credit for preventing a "rout" of the US Army in the Ardennes. The US Army not only had a completely justified but overwhelmingly strong case concerning what they called "Russian propaganda," when reacting to a series of articles by Colonel Nikiforov, which traced Stalin's statements, the source of such claims in 1948, later repeated by Marshal Grechko in 1960.³³ Churchill's telegram to Stalin with a request for help with the situation in the Ardennes, as well as Tedder's group traveling to Moscow on behalf of Roosevelt and carrying Eisenhower's message to Stalin, together with a box of cigars, were, indeed, used by the Soviets as an excuse to tie together the massive Soviet offensive in Poland and to construe it as a *relieving* effort for the Allies' benefit in the Ardennes—which of course, was not the case: in reality, by the start of the massive Red Army Vistula-Oder offensive on January 12, 1945 there was very little doubt that the US Army was able to contain and reverse the German counterstrike in the Ardennes. But that is not what makes the American case peculiar; it is the fact that this Soviet bending of facts was presented as providing the pretext for the "untoward result for relations between east and west in post-war era."³⁴

Yet, from the distance of the years passed since the

momentous events of WWII this complaint, however justified, seems almost trivial when compared to the fact that an overwhelming majority of the American public, 55%, think the US contributed the most to the defeat of Germany with only 11% thinking it was Soviet Union, as one of many similar polls testify.³⁵ If those astonishing numbers are not the result of propaganda, one is then forced to contemplate how, other than due to propaganda, such a complete obliviousness to the basic facts of WWII could have been achieved. If Russians bent the truth in the case of the Ardennes, what kind of bending did it take to convince so many people that corps level engagements, at most, in North Africa or Sicily, against second-rate German units and totally demoralized Italians, defeated the Nazi military machine?

No personality of WWII embodies such a skewed, if not outright false, sense of the events of that war with, indeed, its untoward result for Soviet-American relations than General George S. Patton. This came down to my own personal experience when for once since the 1990s discussing the events in the Bulge, not having the luxury of having great maps from the WWII Atlas Volume of *The West Point Military History of the Second World War*, I was forced to confront many of my American friends' largely Hollywood-inspired views not only on the Soviet role in WWII, but to their astonishment, and sometimes to mine, on the American one. But if with friends such discussions always ended up in jokes, open forums for decades provided a rather different experience, when confronting militant "patriots" bred on Patton's gospel. In 2011, the site of the US Army's 99th Infantry Division Association published an essay titled "Explaining the Silence Surrounding Elsenborne Ridge Battle" where it referred to a booklet by a Belgian historian Leon Nyssen who, far from adhering to Patton and Bastogne mandatory worship, made a conclusion which was looking anyone in the face once the map of Ardennes Battle was opened. As Nyssen noted:

Many different battles were fought all through
the Battle of the Bulge, also called the Ardennes

Battle. The Elsenborn battle has a specific place in history. In fact, it is known as the area where the German attack was held in check from the second day. Any action following this battle was nothing else but an inevitable consequence of this fiasco. This did not mean that the skirmishes, which occurred during the following weeks and pitted the opposing forces, were not important or were lacking rage. Far from it. It is just as unreasonable to maintain that the American success during the Elsenborn battle was enough to assure the Allies' victory during this lengthy and bloody Ardennes campaign. However, this battle definitely ruined Hitler's hopes of crushing the western front.³⁶

The truth, however, about why this crucial event and sector of the Ardennes Battle found so little resonance in American historiography was succinctly observed by Eliot Wager:

Neither generals Clarke nor Hasbrouck in Saint Vith, nor Colonels Butler or O'Brien in Montjoie (Monschau), nor Generals Lauer or Robertson at Elsenborn and Col. Daniel at the Butgenbach estate had the free time to pronounce a historical word [such as the much-bruited "Nuts!" by Brigadier General Anthony McAuliffe]. If they ever did there were no war correspondents there to capture and relay them. They all did their duty with the goal of being efficient. They didn't try becoming popular [like Patton] by carrying revolvers decorated with mother-of-pearl grips, wearing defused hand grenades hooked up to their shoulder straps or go to the front line to take potshots at the enemy. This usually provoked the enemy to retaliate and caused unjustified losses to the GIs.³⁷

The whole notion that war for the average American Joe, far from the glamour and posturing for which Patton was known, involves more than triumphant armor dashes and the liberation of cities accompanied by an ecstatic liberated populace greeting their liberators would seem an anathema. That indeed, far from being glamorous, war is primarily a bloody slugfest under conditions which no normal person should ever be subjected to and that all of it is accompanied by constant fatigue, hunger, thirst, stench, with constant fear of a torturous death or horrendous wounds; this is not the image of war Patton projected. Certainly not bloody and grinding defensive battles of attrition, as happened at the Battle of Elsenborn Ridge, or in general, on what has become known as the Northern Shoulder of the Bulge. It was there that, together with the US 2nd Infantry Division, the 99th stopped the advance of the Germans. The battle there proceeded under the overall command of the British general, Montgomery, after a tense discussion between Omar Bradley and Bedell Smith, a discussion which settled the issue and forced Eisenhower to place the US First and Ninth Armies under Montgomery's command. That transfer became a moral problem for Americans: they didn't want American soldiers under British command, and even here, as it relates to preservation of the American exceptionalist narrative, they didn't want the British to gain credit for the victory.

So thus it was that Patton's War became a staple of American WWII history diet, and played a rather destructive role in the evolution of many American political and military views and careers. As Wager noted:

One should also mention the rivalry between General George S. Patton, Commander, 3rd U.S. Army and General Hodges, Commander, 1st U.S. Army. Each wanted to claim that he was the one who stopped the Germans. General Patton had a knack of getting the press to talk or to write about him. General Hodges was not concerned about his reputation. This created an

atmosphere concerning the performance of his men as a reflection of his own less flamboyant management style. However, it is General Hodges who should have been given credit for defeating the Germans.³⁸

It is impossible to argue with this conclusion. The whole notion that defense, which Hodges and his subordinates masterfully organized, can win a battle may seem completely alien to many in the US but it is certainly well known to Russians who knew that *the counterstrike is based on extinguishing the enemy's momentum* and bleeding the enemy as much as possible. The actions of Vasily Chuikov's 62nd (later 8th Guards) Army in Stalingrad, or the whole massive defense of two whole fronts (army groups) around Kursk were classic cases of mitigating the penetrating power of the Blitzkrieg and of extinguishing its momentum. In general, both the German Blitzkrieg and the later Soviet Deep Operations became known precisely for their momentum which, in the case of combined arms operations, is the ability to employ a sustained mass of forces with a sustained speed.³⁹

On a strategic level, the whole war on the Eastern Front up to the summer of 1943 was about extinguishing the Wehrmacht's momentum, which had destroyed Western European armies in a matter of weeks in 1940. This simple, physics-derived principle of a product of mass and force, seems to be completely lost whenever the Battle of the Bulge and Patton are mentioned in the same sentence. There is absolutely no doubt that the momentum of the German offensive, especially once one considers the fact of Dietrich's 6th Army being the best supplied and fit for initial penetration in the north towards the main objective of Antwerp, was supposed to be built there. Later, some sources called American fierce resistance "unexpected", yet it was this heroic resistance which stopped Dietrich's Army, also plagued by shortages of fuel, in its tracks.

In general, it was the US First Army, commanded by Hodges, which experienced and dealt with what Patton never

experienced in his career: the true might of the Nazi army. While a shadow of its own self circa 1941-43, in 1944 the Wehrmacht was still able to apply what it had become known for: a concentrated armor offensive. It fell on Hodges' and his army's corps commanders, especially Gerow's V Corps, to deal with this calamity head on. They were the ones, on the northern shoulder of the bulge, who withstood the initial, and most dangerous, German thrust. They were the ones who extinguished the momentum and Patton, who in Eisenhower's words was immersed "in his favorite pastime of attack and pursuit," would have hardly fared better, if at all, with the realities of meeting a first rate and properly mobilized opposition, let alone one which attacked with massive force.⁴⁰

Patton's campaign in Lorraine for which a lot of a credit was given to him and on which much of his fame depended, far from demonstrating outstanding ability in armored warfare, saw his Third Army encountering forces which, far from being first rate, were not even second rate. Contextualization of that campaign is an absolute must in order to understand some peculiarities of the American view of war in general and of WWII in particular:

Few of the Germans defending Lorraine could be considered First-rate troops. Third Army encountered whole battalions made up of deaf men, others of cooks, and others consisting entirely of soldiers with stomach ulcers. The G2 also identified a new series of German formations designated *volksgrenadier* divisions). These hastily constituted divisions numbered only 10,000.⁴¹

Nor could facing 3 Panzer divisions, each barely managing to field 10 tanks, be considered a feat of great generalship when having an advantage in tanks of 20 to 1 and 25 to 1 in artillery.⁴² Even the legitimate factor of a gasoline shortage which impeded Patton's advance cannot obfuscate, despite many attempts, the simple fact of Patton facing in Lorraine a rather weak, undermanned,

undertrained, demoralized and underequipped force. This was not the Wehrmacht of massive offensives with millions of troops and thousands of tanks and aircraft of the Eastern front. This was not even a pale shadow of it; it was a ghost of a force.

Nor can Patton's operations before Metz be considered successful, either. Famous War Correspondent Eric Margolis described the bloody and protracted taking of Metz as forgotten "by media glory-makers."⁴³ Nor were Patton's maneuvers in the Ardennes that impressive. There he encountered, for the first time, true attrition warfare, this very same extinguishing of momentum, this time by a more or less determined German force. But this force was still far from impressive and, as John Rickard noted:

It is important to remember that despite the reconditioning achieved during the fall, the panzer divisions were "full strength" based solely on the late 1944 reduced TO&E established to address diminished production and expansion in the number of divisions. Compared with earlier in the war, they were woefully understrength and experienced a drastic reduction in their combat power. Moreover, maintaining a state of high operational readiness would prove difficult.⁴⁴

Yet, even against such an enemy "there was nothing brilliant about his performance in the Bulge."⁴⁵ Being fast, the image Patton cultivated about himself, was not in and of itself a virtue without consideration for strategic and operational realities. Especially those where the opposition actually had the will and means to fight back seriously, thus creating an attrition environment.

Patton never fought once against the type of opposition Hodges encountered in the first days of German offensive in the bulge, especially against the background of bad weather which impeded the operations of the US Army Air Force which held a decisive advantage over the anemic Luftwaffe. Yet, the media image of Patton as a fast, unstoppable military genius, greatly

reinforced after the general's untimely death, endured and, in fact, became a pivot around which American WWII mythology would revolve, together with a great deal of Russophobia for which Patton was well known. This eulogizing of Patton provides one of the best examples of American military culture's complete detachment from the scale of WWII and its inability to analyze or learn from it.

There is very little doubt that there were normal military professional competitive dynamics between the Red and US armies after the Normandy landing in June 1944. It was inevitable with two armed forces pursuing, from two opposite directions, the same objective of demolishing the Nazi military machine. As Eisenhower noted, the mood in Telegraph Cottage, Ike's residence in the UK, was one of "professional envy" once the Red Army's *Operation Bagration* unfolded and its massive scale and scope became evident.⁴⁶ Nor was Winston Churchill, who by June 1944 had lost a lot of his influence in the allied camp, immune to the temptation of comparisons when he gave his, in the words of Eisenhower, "generous" prediction that the developments in Normandy "might eclipse the Russian victories to date."⁴⁷ Of course, there was no "eclipsing" for the simple reason that the Allies were facing a much smaller and much less fit and tenacious Wehrmacht than had been the case on the Eastern front. In the end, the western theater was still considered by the Wehrmacht to be a semi rest area up to January 1944 and even after that the Wehrmacht was hemorrhaging far more personnel on the Eastern front.⁴⁸

Nor did the undeniably impressive success of the Allies at Falaise measure up to the monstrous scale of the operations in the East. The Wehrmacht still maintained the bulk of its best forces, including a majority of its SS divisions, in the East. By the end of 1944 the Wehrmacht, once the losses in the Bulge are added, sustained 520,000 casualties in the West, while in the same time period losing more than 1.2 million men on the East.⁴⁹ Lastly, while the American complaints about Soviet misrepresentation of the Vistula-Oder Offensive in January of 1945 are legitimate,

since this offensive did not prevent any “rout” in the bulge where the allies were clearly winning by then, there is also no denying that even while Battle of the Bulge was still being fought, the Nazis’ 6th Panzer Army, among other formations, was transferred to the eastern front on January 16, 1945, reflecting their view of where their greater priority and urgency lay.

Were those basic facts known to Patton? Some certainly were, otherwise it is difficult to comprehend Patton’s delusional comment to the Undersecretary of War Patterson whom he hosted on May 6, 1945. Patton wanted to attack the Red Army. Patterson warned Patton that he didn’t “realize the strength of those people.” Patton’s reply not only put into doubt his psychological state but his qualities as a military leader, who, by all accounts, was supposed to be a scholar of military history. Patton’s diatribe was almost surreal:

Yes, I have seen them. They have chickens in their coops and cattle on the hoof—that’s their supply system. They could probably maintain themselves in the type of fighting I could give them for five days. After that it would make no difference how many million men they have, and if you wanted Moscow, I could give it to you.⁵⁰

As Farago speculated, Patton might have been going “berserk in his cravings for another hot war” or, “it could have been Patton’s vision of a Cold War.”⁵¹ This was the embarrassing braggadocio of a man who thought himself the better of military leaders of the scale of Guderian, Manstein or Zhukov and Rokossovsky, among many—a delusion that never seemed to bother those people who for decades later would continue to drive home the claim of Patton’s “genius” and the validity of some of his most outlandish ideas. Obviously, the grasp of scale and proportion seemed to escape Patton in May of 1945 since he didn’t recognize that what he would face, just in the sector of his Third Army alone, would be the forces of Second and Third Ukrainian Fronts plus

those of some other formations which numbered more than 2.1 million battle-hardened personnel armed with superb armor and supported by the largest and most experienced operational-tactical air force in the world. In general, by that time the Red Army fielded, together with its new Eastern European allied armies, 6.1 million soldiers, superbly trained and combat hardened by four years of brutal combat and supplied with the best weaponry of the war, be that tanks, artillery or aircraft.

But Patton wrote in his diary:

the American Army as it is now exists could beat the Russians with the greatest of ease, because while the Russians have good infantry, they are lacking in artillery, air and in tanks, and in knowledge of the use of combined arms, whereas we excel in all three of these.⁵²

These ideas would be seized, held onto and propagated by the proponents of American exceptionalism despite the overwhelming historic empirical evidence of their complete detachment from any reality, be it military or civilian. For Patton, Russians were a “scurvy race and simply savages” and he thought he could “beat the hell out of them.”⁵³ Patton’s delusions would continue when visiting the headquarters of Marshal Tolbukhin, a Commander of the Third Ukrainian Front. There, Patton was presented with the Order of Kutuzov 1st Class. Patton described Tolbukhin as “a very inferior man” who “sweated profusely at all time [*sic*].”⁵⁴

Patton probably didn’t know that he was being received by a man who, apart from being in WWI and the Russian Civil War, had experience fighting Manstein’s forces, then had distinguished himself at Stalingrad in command of the 57th Army, which stopped the Nazis’ 4th Panzer Army, and was later to assume command of the 4th and, eventually, 3rd Ukrainian Front, which together with Marshal Malinovsky’s forces would number more than 1.3 million men. These forces would conduct a series of brilliant strategic offensives among which the Jassy-Kishinev offensive

stood out: There, the 1.2 million men strong German-Romanian Army Group South Ukraine was demolished in a matter of a week, Romania was forced out of the alliance with Nazi Germany and the road into the Balkans was left wide open. Tolbukhin led the liberation of Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, having under his direct command more than 650,000 troops, thousands of tanks and an air army at his disposal. The man was loved among his troops and was known for being humble, thoughtful and much less ambition-driven than were his peers such as Konev or Zhukov. Moreover, for all his “inferiority,” Tolbukhin was married to a representative of Russian nobility, Countess Tamara (nee Bobyleva). Those were hardly signs of an inferior man, who became an outstanding military leader fighting the best of the best of the Wehrmacht and SS at their peak of power and form. Those were experiences Patton didn’t have and couldn’t have had. Later, Martin Blumenson tried to “moderate” Patton’s outbursts, unconvincingly trying to justify his attitudes by claims such as:

The caustic and unflattering comments about his contemporaries were the product of impulse. He was an impetuous man, and his diary was a luxury that allowed him to unburden himself without self-restraint. It served to give him balance. The entries make clear the ambivalence he had toward his associates as well as his uncertainty toward himself. How much of what he wrote he really meant or actually believed is continually open to question.⁵⁵

But Patton’s view of warfare in general and of WWII in particular, as well as his rather outlandish assessments of himself, the US Army, the Germans and the Russians had much more sinister consequences, primarily for the US military. As Pulitzer-prize-winning author Rick Atkinson admitted in his introduction to the posthumous publication of Patton’s memoirs, *War As I Knew It*, in 1995, he could see in Patton:

The creeping arrogance, the hubris, which would cost the American Army so dearly in Vietnam. Summing up the achievements of his troops in crushing the German counterattack of December 1944, Patton with pardonable pride claims to have “moved farther and faster and engaged more divisions in less time than any other army in the history of the United States—possibly in the history of the world... No country can stand against such an Army.” These memoirs are valuable not least in showing, however unwittingly, that a disastrous presumption of invincibility took root in the ranks of officers who led the American military after World War II.⁵⁶

Should Atkinson have known how his words would resonate in 2017, he probably would have chosen a different view of Patton altogether since, combined with his own efforts, greatly assisted by the US press and later by Hollywood, General George S. Patton has laid the foundation for a completely false narrative of the American role in World War II, a foundational event for the 20th and 21st centuries. He also helped to dispel any remaining sense of commensuration in war that ever existed in US war mythology.

THE AMERICAN ELITES’ INABILITY TO GRASP THE REALITIES OF WAR

The late Paul Fussell, in what some peer reviewers branded as the best book about the Second World War, *Wartime, Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War*, dedicated a whole Chapter which he called Deprivation¹ to his own idea of wartime travails. For anyone who experienced WWII east of Warsaw, the deprivation he described would have been very desirable compared to what was happening to people in the USSR. Fussell noted, when writing about Great Britain’s rationing, that it was much worse than American WWII deprivation:

Rigorous rationing began in January, 1940, and it did not end entirely until nine years after the war, in 1954. Virtually everything you liked to eat or drink was available only in minuscule quantities: meat, butter, cheese, eggs, sugar, sweets, apples, grapes, melons, fats, white bread (replaced by a gray “utility loaf”), tea, coffee, whiskey and pepper; and some things were so rare as to be virtually unobtainable and among some people not even known, like onions, oranges and lemon, and bananas....²

Portraying this situation as a “sorry scene” would have astounded and disgusted an overwhelming majority of the Soviet citizenry during and immediately after WWII, to say nothing of the people of Leningrad, who experienced a 900-day siege and who died in the hundreds of thousands from starvation. Between not having bananas or only having meat in minuscule quantities and what they were facing, the choice of the majority of Soviets would have been quite obvious, and the gray “utility loaf” certainly sounded, and probably tasted, way better than the Leningrad siege rations of a daily 125 grams of black, low quality, barely eatable, bread.³ That was the measure separating life and death, when not being killed by enemy bombing and shelling, for Leningraders. It is very doubtful that the lack of coffee and pepper would have registered at all on the chart of overwhelming needs and difficulties the Soviet people had to overcome to destroy the Nazi war machine. It was bread which mattered the most of all, which after the war led to the sacralization of it. One of many post-WWII Russian sayings, used to make capricious children eat what they didn’t want to, reminded them of Leningrad children during the siege and what those children wouldn’t give just for the discarded piece of yesterday’s white bread, let alone for a bowl of kasha, not to mention a pork chop with mashed potatoes or a bowl of borsch.

War and its consequences were still in the air in the USSR in the 1960s and even the 1970s. It was a sacrilege to see a piece of bread lying on the ground and pass by without picking it up and, as my grandmother did more than once after the war, put it on some elevated place, even if it was on the edge of a street trashcan. Even today such attitudes can easily be found among many Russians in the 40-50 years old category, and even among those younger. For the WWII generation bread remained sacred to the end of their lives. In the city of Sevastopol, even during the 1970s, it was not recommended for schoolchildren to visit alone what is known as Maximova Dacha near Sevastopol. It was a place of especially brutal combat in 1942. It was not uncommon, while hiking in Dacha’s area to stumble upon rusted weapons and, what

was most dangerous, munitions. That was just the fact of life; each year Sevastopol's public school administrations would instruct students on the dangers of playing with grenades, shells and other types of explosives left after the war. Each year there were children who were maimed or killed because of careless games played with deadly reminders of the war past. Old Luftwaffe bombs, some as large as 1 ton, are still being found even today. Evacuations, sometimes massive, follow. War was and is still there and it still kills in other places in Russia. But that wasn't the only war which, in the case of Sevastopol, was and is omnipresent. Old batteries from the Crimean War of 1854-1856 are still preserved over the city, including the famed 4th Bastion, where young artillery officer Count Leo Tolstoy served with distinction and where *Sevastopol's Sketches*, which brought him Russian literary fame, was conceived. Later, many impressions of those short stories would be used for Tolstoy's most important literary work called, quite symptomatically for Russia, *War and Peace*. War always was and is a part of Russia's understanding of the world.

Fussell, though himself a former GI who was severely wounded in WW II, demonstrated in his work not only cultural ignorance but also, unintentionally, made his whole treatise a case in point of the American intellectual elites' complete detachment from the strategic, operational and social realities of continental warfare on a massive scale and what this warfare brings to those who fight it. As Michael Lind, ASU Future of War Fellow at the Washington New America think tank, observed:

The possibility of military defeat and invasion are usually left out of discussion ... in the United States and Britain. The United States, if one discounts Pearl Harbor, has not suffered a serious invasion from 1812; Britain, though it has been bombed from the air in the (20th century), has been free from foreign invasion even longer.... Elsewhere in the world, political elites cannot as easily separate foreign policy and economics.⁴

The whole notion of experiencing continental warfare's horrors, especially those on the scale of WWII—such as a massive destruction of property, starvation, massive dislocation, spread of diseases, rape, robbery, lawlessness—is completely alien to the overwhelming majority of the American public, including its military elite, which can experience those horrors only as observers who cause them, not as those on the receiving end. They do not have to think about their families being subjected to such horrors, since no military in the world has any contingency planning for combined arms operations on a Chicago-Cleveland strategic axis, or for bombing Boston or Portland into rubble before putting boots on the ground to take these American cities. American GIs going to battle anywhere in Europe or in the Pacific knew very well that their families remained in the safety of the continental United States and the probability of them experiencing devastating bombing raids, rapes, executions, being shipped as slaves to the Reich, was approaching zero. It was non-existent. In the end, as was the case with the *Malmedy* massacre, or with the horrifying realities of liberated concentration camps, the US Army would avenge, those atrocities “by not taking any SS prisoners” but not any committed against their families. There was nothing to avenge, there.

There was a reason Studs Terkel titled his seminal book “*The Good War*”. Of course WW II was “good” for the United States and not only for clearly defined moral reasons. Late admiral Gene Larocque summarized the strategic and operational, as well as cultural, realities of the American WWII experiences to Terkel this way:

After the war, we were the most powerful nation in the world. Our breadbasket was full. We enjoyed being the big shots. We were running the world. We were the only major country that wasn't devastated. France, Britain, Italy, Germany had all felt it. The Soviet Union, our big ally, was on its knees. Twenty million dead... We

are unique in the world, a nation of thirty million war veterans. We're the only country in the world that's been fighting a war since 1940. Count the wars—Korea, Vietnam—count the years. We have built up in our body politic a group of old men who look upon military service as a noble adventure. It was the big excitement of their lives and they'd like to see young people come along and share that excitement. We are unique. We've always gone somewhere else to fight our wars, so we've not really learned about its horror. Seventy percent of our military budget is to fight somewhere else.⁵

It is, indeed, difficult to explain to any person in a nation which knows nothing but expeditionary, that is, "not here" warfare what those war horrors are. While Fussell or Hollywood can offer literary or visual imagery of warfare to a public, those images do little to provide a real feel of a war on the scale of WWII, with its brutality and destruction. That imagery also will do nothing for the cultural conditioning of the people. But in general, any war is a cultural affair in every sense of this term, culture being, of course, the behavioral matrix of people, and it is here where Russian and American cultures diverge dramatically. As Russian and American attitudes to warfare differ dramatically, so do their defense policies. Unlike Americans, the Russian ethnos was formed by continental warfare and its horrors. Americans as a nation experienced nothing even remotely comparable to it, a fact not easily accepted by many Americans, since it goes directly to the American military myth's jugular. Even the tragedy and horror of 9/11, despite its globally televised drama and shocking images of mayhem couldn't provide "conditioning". In a larger sense, Americans have not been conditioned by continental warfare at all; they didn't have to, due to a most outstanding geographic location of the country. Real defense of the realm is simply not in American history, nor is it in their culture, due to a complete lack

of any credible continental threat. Americans are not required to think about what would happen to them if Mexico invaded the US and started a mass annihilation of the US civilian population. This is simply beyond the realm of possibilities and even if it had been possible, the current generation of Americans simply lack any points of reference or shared historic experience of resisting an invasion, any invasion. But that was the very essence of WWII.

As James Madison wrote in *Federalist* #41:

“America united, with a handful of troops or without a single soldier, exhibits a more forbidding posture to foreign ambition than America disunited.”⁶ A similar sentiment was followed 50 years later by Abraham Lincoln in his address before the Young Man’s Lyceum: “At what point shall we expect the approach of danger? By what means shall we fortify against it? Shall we expect some transatlantic military giant, to step the Ocean, and crush us at a blow? Never! All the armies of Europe, Asia and Africa combined, with all the treasure of the earth (our own excepted) in their military chest; with a Buonaparte for a commander, could not by force, take a drink from the Ohio, or make a track on the Blue Ridge, in a trial of a thousand years. At what point, then, is the approach of danger to be expected? I answer, if it ever reach us it must spring up amongst us. It cannot come from abroad. If destruction be our lot, we must ourselves be its author and finisher. As a nation of freemen, we must live through all time, or die by suicide.”⁷

The Russian psyche from the earliest times has been formed by living with the very real threat of invasion. Be that fighting Teutonic Knights in 1242, or the Mongols at Kulikovo

Pole in 1380, or the Battle of Borodino in 1812 or the cataclysms at Stalingrad and at the Kursk salient in July of 1943, those events are ingrained in the Russian psyche. This psyche is also shaped by the horrors of burned villages and cities, atrocities on a massive scale against the civilian population and the all too real deprivation which comes with it. It is impossible not to be taken by it, when Leningrad alone, in 900 days, lost more people than the United States lost in all of its wars combined. As Richard Pipes, hardly a Russophile or military thinker, noted in 1977: "Such figures are beyond the comprehension of most Americans. But clearly ... Such a country (Russia) tends also to assess the rewards of defense in much more realistic terms."⁸

A clear demonstration of a vast cultural divide in terms of the attitudes to war horrors came in 1983 with the international release of *The Day After* movie for which ABC and its affiliates opened toll free hot lines for counseling of overly impressionable American viewers. There were very many. It is very difficult to judge Russian reaction to that movie but from the feel on the streets in 1987, when this film was released in the USSR openly (it was available for viewing on VHS much earlier), hardly anyone needed hot lines for counseling, despite the movie making an impact. The issue was not Russian desensitization to the horrors of war which were being shared nationally through memories of survivors, combat veterans, literature, movies or television, but in its much clearer understanding of the consequences, that is, anticipating horror as a consequence of a war. As anybody, Russians treasure life and are afraid of death, and it doesn't take Sting's Grammy winning song to convince anyone that Russians love their children, too. The movie was frightening for many in USSR but no more than that; it added very little (such as the artistic depiction of the effects of radiation) to what was already generally known by everybody: war means suffering for all and Soviet Cold War ideological necessities included a wide public exposure to terrifying documentaries on the consequences of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Those documentaries were often shown in public schools in the course of training for

Civil Defense. Needless to say, those training films never failed to mention which country bombed these Japanese cities. Nuclear war meant taking the suffering to yet another, even higher, wholesale level. Yet none other than Stalin, himself, compared the impact of WWII on the Soviet Union to a nuclear war⁹ and he was not that far off in his assessment. While the physical devastation was terrifying and unparalleled in human history, the emotional and psychological trauma was even larger.

It was this trauma which shaped, and continues to color even today, Russian military, and even civilian, strategic thinking with a *never again* attitude being the main driving force behind the overwhelming majority of Russia's military preparation. This trauma entered every single Russian household, including those people who were responsible for formulation of defense policies after the war. Stalin himself lost a son in the war, while most sons of top Soviet political leaders went to fight in different capacities in that war. In the end, the Soviet political elite itself fought this war in different capacities, from semi-civilian positions in charge of unprecedented evacuation of 1500 industrial plants to the Urals, beyond the range of the Luftwaffe's bombers, to actually fighting at the front lines. Leonid Brezhnev, despite being reduced to a caricature of himself in his last days as the head of the Soviet State in the early 1980s, was actually a very real military hero, who saw some of the toughest combat of the entire war, being a political officer present periodically at a small bridgehead near the city of *Novorossiysk*, which later became known as *Malaya Zemlya* (Small Land). While Brezhnev in his latter days exaggerated his *Great Patriotic War* exploits, including in his notorious memoirs, he definitely earned his wartime combat awards honestly and on real merit. The Soviet political class was intimately acquainted with the horrors and deprivations the Soviet population and soldiers experienced during and immediately after the war.

This is not the case with American political class. And it was precisely this fact which was dismissed out of hand by those in the combined West who, for different reasons and with different intentions, started to view the extent of Soviet advance into Europe

as a result of the Red Army's WWII combat operations against the Wehrmacht (and other Axis forces) as yet another manifestation of the expansionist intentions of historic Russia. No matter that this time Russians could point out a dramatic discrepancy between the West's evidence of *Russian* historic expansionism and that of the post-WWII USSR. On the West's side WWII recollection foregrounded a collection of abstract geopolitical ideas and Democracy sermons; the Soviet side focused on the complete destruction of their country and 26.6 (at that time the number was estimated at 20) million dead by the hand of this very same combined West in accordance to most reliable Soviet Archives data presented by Lieutenant-General Krivosheev in his seminal *Russia In Wars of the XX Century*.

Harry Truman, still a US Senator in 1941, left an indelible mark on geopolitical theory with his dictum: "If we see that Germany is winning we ought to help Russia and if Russia is winning we ought to help Germany, and that way let them kill as many as possible, although I don't want to see Hitler victorious under any circumstances."¹⁰ For Russians, who had just emerged from the most devastating war in human history and bearing the brunt of struggle against Nazi military machine, the contrast between FDR and his constitutional heir couldn't have been starker. FDR was viewed in the USSR as a true ally, certainly not one who would lower himself to calculating, wrongly at that, the "benefits" of seeing Soviets and Germans slaughter each other on an industrial scale. Yet, there it was, a cynicism which was an open affront to the Russian historic sacrifice which was made not on the altar of communist ideas, or of the idealistic democratic pathos of the *Atlantic Charter* but for the most moral act of them all, national survival against the most malignant and powerful force in history. For Russians it was the *Great Patriotic War*, harking back to the first Patriotic War of 1812, immortalized by Tolstoy and Tchaikovsky, all over again.

This moral and most important point for Russians, in the larger scheme of things, was completely ignored by Truman, who was hell-bent on "not being afraid of Russians"¹¹ even if

that required a complete blindness and deafness to the terrifying outcomes of the war for the Soviet Union—not to mention legitimate Soviet post-war grievances and surely there were quite a few of those. These outcomes and grievances were, with some minor caveats and exceptions, ignored by the combined West where it mattered most, at the level of its political and intellectual elites. Truman, however, was not an intellectual in any meaningful sense, with only a high school diploma as his formal educational credentials. Having missed the most important decisions FDR had to make during WWII, it was no surprise that he had a very skewed idea about the events on the fronts of WWII, when he stated that: “Force is the only thing the Russians understand.”¹² Here it was, a concentrated and ignorant doctrine reflecting American attitudes toward Russia which would exercise such a baneful effect not only on the Russian people, but, in the end on the American nation itself and the world as a whole.

Surely, some pro-forma homages to Russian sacrifice were made once in a while but even those, some as late as 2012 in the 2012 Republican Party Platform, which, after paying short tribute, still proceeded with moralizing and pontificating ad nauseam, which would become a defining characteristic of American foreign policy. The very “homage” statement, contained in the GOP Platform in three sentences, exhibited an abyss of ignorance of modern Russian history when it stated:

The heroism—and the suffering—of the people of Russia over the last century demand the world’s respect. As our allies in their Great Patriotic War, they lost 28 million fighting Nazism. As our allies in spirit, they ended the Soviet terror that had consumed so many millions more.¹³

The issue with this un-nuanced pop-history statement, as it was with Truman’s assessment of Russians understanding only force, is not with Stalinism or Communism, or any other Sovietism, which became a propaganda staple in the West. It was the complete

ignorance of the fact that it was this very Soviet system which had ensured the survival of the USSR and its peoples in WWII. The overwhelming majority of Russians even today are keenly aware of that. These were mobilization mechanisms native to the Soviet industrial and political system which allowed, in short time, for the Red Army to recover and start fighting back. It was this very Soviet system which ensured the survival of the Russian ethnos. Glantz and House concluded in their massively influential and important work on Eastern Front history, that Soviet “enormously sophisticated war-fighting capability redounded to the credit of Stalin and of his entire government and party as well. The German invasion gave the Communist regime unprecedented legitimacy as the organizer of victory.”¹⁴ The issue, thus, is with the fact that be it in 1945 or in 2012, or even 2017, the American body politic remained and continues to remain utterly ignorant on the history and thinking processes of the overwhelming majority of people from the only nation in the world which has the capability to destroy the United States and which knows intimately what real war is, a knowledge American political and intellectual classes do not have.

In reality, such a set of moralizing attitudes among America’s intellectual class was nothing new. In the foundation of such attitudes there was more than just some political or even ideological, albeit still present, reasoning. After all this tendency was also present on the Soviet side. But foundational to American moralizing there was still a combination of ignorance and plain and simple Russophobia, dressed into different geopolitical and pretentiously verbose and pathos-ridden ideological doctrines. Paul Fussel provides a good demonstration of such attitudes when he noted “the relative impurity of the Allied ethical cause once Joseph Stalin joined in,”¹⁵ disregarding the contradictory fact of the Soviet Union’s pre-WWII efforts to build a system of European Collective Security, headed by the People’s Commissar of Foreign Affairs Maxim Litvinov, and the sabotage of this effort by the very people to whom Fussel ascribed some *ethical cause*. The pictures of Anglo-French sabotage of Collective Security were well captured by Alexander Werth in his seminal *Russia at*

War 1941-1945, where he didn't hesitate to point out the complete inadequacy of British and French state institutions to the task of containing Hitler.¹⁶ Barnett was even more blunt: "But although France desperately wanted a Russian alliance—which had saved her in 1914—and although Churchill and Lloyd George too passionately advocated it, Chamberlain stubborn was as ever, confident in his own judgment as ever, was not convinced."¹⁷ Fussell and a very large number of those in the US who still bought into some purity of the Allied cause would have been unpleasantly surprised with the pre-WWII setup, which in terms of today's American geopolitical realism, or one of many versions of it, wouldn't have passed even a basic test of historical facts and causality. As succinct as ever Barnett continued his accusations of the combined West's myopia and moralizing:

Germany, not France and England, had won Russia, and won her by swift decision, prompt action, and realistic willingness to pay the full purchase price. What the British Chiefs of Staff had warned against... had thus come to pass: Chamberlain and his colleagues in their squeamishness about making an alliance with Russia had indeed driven her into the German camp; had indeed, in Chatfield's words... committed a mistake of 'vital and far reaching importance'. Once again a British Government had been unable to bring itself to make clear-cut choices: in this case between Poland and Russia, and between Russian alliance and the sovereign rights of Poland and Baltic States."¹⁸

This pattern, this time with no Polish or Baltic States' sovereign rights at stake, continues to manifest itself in unprecedented Russophobia in the US, the fever pitch of which precludes completely any constructive cooperation on a host of extremely important global issues.

Fussell's notion of Stalin's tarnishing of the Allied *ethical cause* culminated in 2017 with former US Director of National Intelligence James Clapper accusing Russians as an ethnos having a genetic predisposition to "co-opting" and "penetration,"¹⁹ a rather stark statement which would have made even Josef Goebbels happy with this description of a Russian *untermensch*. No protestations were heard from the American mainstream media. Clapper's venturing into Russian genetics and Fussell's *impurity of Allied ethical cause*, as well as Hillary Clinton comparing Vladimir Putin to Hitler²⁰ are very tightly related and are a very American phenomena.

But it is also very difficult to pinpoint every single impetus behind this American version of history, especially when one declares such things about the very nation whose human, military and moral sacrifice in defeating the Nazi war machine and its many allies dwarfed that of the Western Allies. This fact, however, may be among the most important reasons for the American elites' attitudes since it is this fact which completely contradicts the American messianic exceptionalist view of its role in the world. Russians, and generally Soviet citizens, not only stopped but turned the tide of Nazi conquest, while annihilating 80% of the Axis' best troops, and at the loss of 27 million of her own citizens saved Western Civilization well before the Allied landings on Normandy beaches in June of 1944.

Remarkably, non-stop accusations of first the Soviet Union and now Russia, addressed in terms of immorality, impurity and whatever else was and is viewed as politically expedient at the moment were preceded with a rather more conventional, or, generally, common sense approach which did take into account the scale of both Russian achievement, and of the losses the Soviet Union incurred, in the immediate aftermath of WWII.

In the 1945 *US Armed Services Memorial Edition History of WWII* the tone towards Russians was rather reflective and, for the lack of better term, appropriate even when it went somewhat overboard with pathos. There, the issue of the failure, largely precipitated by "western democracies," of the Soviet Collective

Security effort was presented in a way which can give an aneurism to many contemporary Western WWII revisionists: "The western democracies, still confused by German-fostered fear of the 'Bolshevik menace', remained aloof and diffident toward Russia. When Prime Minister Chamberlain went to Munich to deal with Hitler, he reflected this state of mind by ignoring Moscow, despite Russia's obvious major interest in any European settlement."²¹

Russian interest in a European settlement in 1945 was justified, not to mention offering an inevitable solution in Eastern Europe, especially Poland, where David Eisenhower termed the Soviet presence an "invasion,"²² despite the obvious nature of that invasion being also a liberation from Nazi occupation—a fact the present Polish elites vehemently deny and go even further to accuse the Soviet Union of unleashing WWII together with Nazi Germany.²³ Under the pretext of fighting Communism in Poland, monuments to the Red Army's fallen, around 600,000, will be removed. In some sense that was expected when one begins to view the evolution of Western in general, and American in particular, views on WWII. As Glantz and House note: "... many Westerners quickly forgot the enormous contribution that the Soviet people had made to the Allied victory."²⁴ That remark was in relation to the baneful effects of German interpretation of the WWII on American views, an interpretation called "facile"²⁵ and for a good reason. Far from the geopolitical, ideological and cultural necessities of the unfolding Cold War, the massive, albeit unseen, contribution of former Nazis employed by US intelligence organizations in fanning the flames of Soviet-American tensions has been ignored altogether.

The full impact of the former Nazis' massive disinformation campaign, conducted by what became known as Nazi spy-master General Reinhard Gehlen's Org even today is difficult to assess, despite many CIA documents opened under the Nazi War Crimes Disclosure Act.²⁶ As declassified CIA documents testified:

General Gehlen frequently exaggerated the Soviet threat in order to exacerbate tensions between

the superpowers. At one point he succeeded in convincing General Lucius Clay, military governor of the U.S. zone of occupation in Germany that a major Soviet war mobilization had begun in Eastern Europe. This prompted Clay to dash off a frantic, top-secret telegram to Washington in March 1948, warning that war ‘may come with dramatic suddenness.’ Gehlen’s disinformation strategy was based on a simple premise: the colder the Cold War got, the more political space for Hitler’s heirs to maneuver. The Org could only flourish under Cold War conditions; as an institution it was therefore committed to perpetuating the Soviet-American conflict.”²⁷

It is hardly surprising that under such circumstances an objective and non-ideological American view of WWII, or Soviet intentions, did not emerge. But even when one dismisses the moral, or rather moralizing, factor which long ago became a defining feature of America’s messianic message, one has to keep in mind that there was a very rational and structured driver behind America’s refusal to accept the realities and outcomes of WWII. Far from the United States having its economy booming in the immediate wake of WWII, with a new sense of optimism dominating American social life and with America’s greatest generation settling into what would become the definition of the American Dream, a peculiar brand of American geopolitical “realism” began to emerge. As one of its fathers, Hans Morgenthau, would tell his audience at the US Naval War College in 1957, while giving the Spruance Lecture:

I would say, and I have said many times before, that if the czars still reigned in Russia, that if Lenin had died of the measles at an early age, that if Stalin had never been heard of, but the power of the Soviet Union were exactly what it is today,

the problem of Russia would be for us by and large what it is today. If the Russian armies stood exactly where they stand today, and if Russian technological development were what it is today, we would be by and large confronted with the same problems which confront us today.²⁸

Here it was, indeed, a much more honest, albeit ominous approach which, realistically, had very little to do with Stalin or Communism. Here was a complete rejection by the combined West of Russia and Russians as such—irrespective of Western anti-communism—an attitude not uncommon in the West today, despite the fact that this very West, for all intents and purposes, was saved from itself by those very same Russians.

EDUCATIONAL DEFICITS AND CULTURAL CARICATURES

Bertrand Russell, when trying to explain to Lady Ottoline Morell the nature of Russia's communist revolution, concluded that, appalling though Bolshevik despotism was, it seemed the right sort of government for Russia: "If you ask yourself how Dostoevsky's characters should be governed, you will understand."¹ So when Russia's President Vladimir Putin declared the Soviet Union's collapse "The greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century," Western media and pundits went apoplectic.² In their minds the Soviet Union forever remained a Reaganesque evil empire which existed for the sole purpose of infringing on Western democracy and oppressing its own people, all for the purpose of achieving a global proletarian revolution—to be perpetrated by these very same Dostoevskye characters. Admittedly, earlier Russian communists, who later became known as Trotskyists, had had such an idea of using historic Russia as kindling for the fire of global revolution, but by the 1930s they had been purged from the party, which became preoccupied with much more practical matters at home, namely industrialization and collectivization.

Americans' bizarre reduction of its view of an extremely

complex, huge and diverse society such as Soviet Russia into a simple black and white picture fit naturally into the American view of the world in general, since American history was shaped to a large degree by a Manichean worldview of good guys vs. bad guys. But at least in the case of the Soviet Union, traditional Western Russophobia was dressed up in much less racist and more prudent ideological terms as anti-communism and, thereby, anti-Sovietism. But Vladimir Putin, when speaking in 2005 of this geopolitical catastrophe, wasn't referring to the collapse of the communist ideology; that happened much earlier than the collapse of the Soviet system. In fact, communism, apart from its slow evolution, inevitable in the context of the huge scale of industrial and agricultural post-World War II restoration, compounded with the explosive educating effort, had already started to become a political abstract in Stalin's time. It did retain, for sure, a lot of formal ideological and aesthetic features of the original Bolshevism but Russian communism continued to evolve constantly. As George F. Kennan was forced to admit: "Not all that went by the name of communism in Russia was bad; nor were all of those who believed in it."³

As for its collapse, while agreeing in principle with the thesis of former US Ambassador to the USSR Jack Matlock at the Valdai Conference in 2015 that the fundamental reasons for Soviet collapse were of domestic origin, Putin pointed out that the Soviet Union's "geopolitical rivals were not sitting idly either."⁴

The issue here is not whether what went in Russia by the name of communism was bad or good. Our point is that in the combined West the understanding of the Soviet period of Russian history had been distorted, and become such a dark caricature that, in the end, it completely prevented the West itself from understanding modern Russia even if only for its own sinister purposes: understanding it for the purpose of bringing it down. There is no understanding modern Russia without knowledge of the enormously complex impact of the Soviet period on modern Russia and this understanding requires an unbiased assessment of Soviet failures and achievements based on their merits or

lack thereof. Sadly, this is impossible to achieve in the modern West, and especially in the US, without being accused of pro-communist sympathies or of being a downright Stalinist. It is also impossible because for decades, those who passed in the West as people deemed “appropriate” to speak about Russia and Russians can hardly be regarded—with some minor, albeit notable, exceptions—as qualified to do so. The only criterion for their being allowed access to the Western public tribunal was the fact that they spoke what was expected and desired from them, hardly problematic as most were Soviet dissidents.

The most prominent of those was Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who joined a raft of similarly anti-communist/dissident Nobel prizewinners in 1970.⁵ Lauded by Western literary luminaries, he confirmed, indeed literally “solzhenitsified,” the already negative Western view of Russian history by critical works such as *The First Circle*, *The Cancer Ward* and *The Gulag Archipelago*. His critique was so unrelentingly one-sided that even representatives of the anti-communist Russian Orthodox Church were forced to voice their concern. As Ierey (Holy Father) Alexiy Moroz stated:

I am not a fan of Solzhenitsyn’s writings. In places his books create not only misunderstanding but a sense of rejection. In [some of] his books he exposed Russians to the West in an unrepresentable fashion. We know that when he left for the West he was actively published there and was perceived there as the “bullhorn [herald] of the truth” about Russia, but sadly, he said not a single good word about people and Russia. He describes atrocities, accidents, betrayals, lies, deceptions, which, of course, were always present in our history, but in his books there is nothing positive, as if the Russian people consisted only of thieves, murderers, liars, cowards and scoundrels. No positive examples are present in his books. And when the western reader accepts

such information as the ultimate truth about Russia, he imagines a very specific image of Russian people, but one that is an absolute lie.⁶

What Alexiy Moroz, being a man of faith, failed to recognize was the fact that Solzhenitsyn was accepted in the West precisely for the very reasons Moroz, as well as many Russian and even some reputable Western historians, seriously questioned; that is, the West wanted that depiction for propaganda reasons. What the West, in its turn, has failed to understand was that, having been exiled from the USSR Solzhenitsyn therefore had no knowledge whatsoever of the generation born in the late 1950s and early 1960s and how this generation could and would reshape Russia starting approximately around the mid-1980s, a decade before Solzhenitsyn's return to a nation he hardly knew and couldn't understand.

The direction of this Russian reshaping, for lack of a better word—it was much more complex than *Perestroika*—was far from Solzhenitsyn's prescriptions which were so gladly received in the West. Indeed, how could it have been otherwise in the nation which, starting from 2012, has time after time, as demonstrated even in what would have been termed “liberal” polls, a continued veneration of Stalin as the most important figure in Russian history, together with Alexander Pushkin, Yuri Gagarin, Peter The Great and, quite expectedly, Vladimir Putin himself.⁷ How could it be that somebody of Solzhenitsyn's self-proclaimed status as the “conscience of the Russian people” could have been so wrong in understanding his own people, as events after his return to Russia so amply demonstrated?

The answer to this is quite simple: a wishful-thinking ideological setup, which is endemic in the American self-image after World War II. There is a school of thought in Russia which, not without merit, assigns the appearance of the “Solzhenitsyn-the-prophet” meme not only to the will of Khrushchev who obviously influenced Solzhenitsyn's promotion into the ranks of the Soviet literary elite, but also to the American intelligence

services, who also “helped” in his literary Nobel Prize quest.⁸ In the end, one has to ask why Vladimir Putin in December 2014 joined a session of Russia’s State Council and a Council on Culture and made the point that: “Alexander Isaevich Solzhenitsyn paid attention to the problems of our society not because he somehow had a hostile predisposition towards the country. Quite the contrary, he was a patriot, he wanted to preserve the country but it didn’t preserve itself because we didn’t pay timely attention to what he was paying attention to.”⁹ Why would the Russian President, who, supposedly, is enamored, as many in the West still believe, with Solzhenitsyn’s literature and wisdoms wish to assert from the highest podium, in no uncertain terms, that Solzhenitsyn was not an enemy of own people and really cared about them? Leo Tolstoy, as well as Alexander Pushkin, and, for that matter, most significant Russian writers, were often in opposition to the regime or political system they lived in. Leo Tolstoy was even excommunicated by the Russian Orthodox Church. Yet, somehow, no one doubts or questions the serious patriotism and sincere love for their own people of Leo Tolstoy, Pushkin or Turgenev.

But strangely, Solzhenitsyn’s intents merited a deliberate clarification from the President of Russia, possibly because of the fact that Russians as a whole do not like Solzhenitsyn or trust his intentions, or take seriously the overwhelmingly wrong, so-called prophecies and sometimes utterly outlandish political suggestions put forward in his *Rebuilding Russia*. Very many consider him a traitor and, in literary terms, a mediocre writer. Remarkably, Putin himself is not exactly consistent in this matter.

Nor could the invocation of Solzhenitsyn’s greatness by Russian TV networks hide the obvious fact of the embarrassingly limited number of people who attended his funeral which was opened to general public in August 2008. This contrasted dramatically with, for instance, the reaction and huge crowds attending the funeral of the famous Soviet bard Vladimir Vysotsky in July of 1980. Vysotsky was known and loved in Russia not only for his poetry which became a part of modern Russian culture, but

also for his famous retort to Western journalists: “I have questions for my government but I will not discuss them with you.”

The opening of the Soviet NKVD, KGB, and GULAG archives dealt a devastating blow to the whole premise of both Solzhenitsyn’s and most of Soviet dissidents’ contentions. During the times of great Russian turmoil from the late 1980s and through the 1990s, they had based their thesis of the utter evilness of the Soviet system on simply outlandish anti-historic and statistically impossible numbers of people persecuted and killed during the repressions. This opening of the Soviet archives literally blew out of the water all Solzhenitsyn’s numbers, proving he lied by not just one but two orders of magnitude.¹⁰

While the GULAG did exist and repressions did take place, the archive’s revelations about the real numbers and, importantly, the reasons for the existence of this prison system, still vast but on an order of magnitude smaller than stated by Solzhenitsyn or even genuine GULAG writer, Varlam Shalamov, were fairly limited. This was a penal system like many states have at their disposal, not least the United States. Intent mattered for Russians. Shalamov, despite suffering greatly in the GULAG and leaving a stunning literary record of his life and very real horrors experienced in the GULAG, much of it being not only a result of “political repression” but also due to the atmosphere created by the actual criminals therein, aka *Blatnye*, was very explicit in forbidding access to his archives to Solzhenitsyn. As Shalamov wrote in his notebook: “No bitch from ‘progressive humanity’ should be allowed near my archive. I forbid writer Solzhenitsyn and all those having thoughts similar to his to have acquaintance with my archive.”¹¹

Nonetheless, large parts of Solzhenitsyn’s *Gulag Archipelago* were “borrowed” from Shalamov’s archive, this time with added “commentaries” in an appropriate ideological tone by the literary Nobel Prize winner.

But while Solzhenitsyn and, in general, most of the dissidents were to a different degree tools in the ideological struggle of the Cold War, eventually a whole host of false premises about the USSR took hold in the West as a reality, however grossly

distorted, even among those who were supposed to know better. As Yuri Nosovsky noted:

Solzhenitsyn wrote in *The Grain between the Millstones*: “My God, I was not calling for war, the US press distorted it, but that’s how it reached our compatriots ... Try to prove them otherwise now.” In 1975, he believed that we should not fight with the United States. According to him, we needed the policy of “open hand.” Three years after his appearances in the US, Solzhenitsyn wrote in *The Grain* that America no longer seemed to him as an honest ally of Russian liberation. According to the US Congress, it was not communism, but Russia that was the global oppressor, and the writer realized that.¹²

Nosovsky goes further to reveal a key to the understanding of how not only Soviet dissidents became completely discredited in modern Russia but how a majority in the generation of which Solzhenitsyn and his ilk knew nothing, that is, the majority of those who are in their 40s to early 60s today, and who are in power, repudiated the solzhenitsified, essentially Western view of Russia’s past:

As it turns out, the author of *The Gulag Archipelago* woke up in three years. He realized that the West could care less about what kind of regime there was in Russia. It was Russia that was the prime enemy. However, the “patriot” did absolutely nothing to reach both the world and his country fellows to tell them about it. Well, let’s assume that Solzhenitsyn was angry with communists and did not want to return to the USSR. If he had announced his “revelations” in the USSR during the 1980s, when the Union

was strong, Solzhenitsyn would have become a national hero. However, during all those years, the “Russian patriot” was peacefully living in Vermont, guarded by US special services, writing books exposing the crimes of the Soviet regime. Naturally, he did not mention a word about the achievements of the Soviet regime—free medicine, free education, free apartments, and very low public utility tariffs—nothing.¹³

It is rather fascinating to observe, even despite the fact that Putin personally insisted on including Solzhenitsyn in Russian public schools’ literature curriculum, how the dissident ideas of Sakharov, Solzhenitsyn and Bonner, all darlings of American democratic exceptionalists, have been flatly rejected by an overwhelming majority of Russians. An important Russian Orthodox conservative contemporary Russian thinker, Natalya Narochnitskaya, explaining the nostalgia for Stalin, didn’t mince words:

The West hates Stalin namely for restoration of the territory of the historic Russian state, and for Yalta, and for Potsdam. These are the outcomes which do not allow them to calm down. You know, I am no Stalinist and I clearly understand that all the nostalgia for Stalin has its roots in a non-stop trampling of our history, making a mockery out of the lives of our fathers. It is useless trying to prove to the West that Ivan Grozny (The Terrible) in 30 years of his reign killed 10 times fewer people than Catherine De’ Medici killed during the St. Bartholomew’s Day massacre. We are going to be counted as barbarians no matter what, while the West will remain good!”¹⁴

Solzhenitsyn, as well as the whole cohort of Soviet/Russian dissidents, was not needed to provide an alternative and,

allegedly, more realistic view of the Soviet system. In the end even the *GULAG Archipelago* is largely a work of fiction, being cautiously subtitled by Solzhenitsyn himself as *An Experiment in Literary Investigation*,¹⁵ a qualifier largely ignored in the West, where this work is generally viewed as documentary evidence of the evils of the Soviet regime. But even at the height of the purges in 1937-38 the picture of an utter terror which allegedly gripped the Soviet Union hardly corresponds to the everyday reality for the overwhelming majority of Soviet people. As Robert Thurston observed:

Only some who lived through the period spoke of pervasive fear; others pointed to quite different themes in their experiences. In many areas of Soviet life, Stalin's power was far from complete. Neither workers nor collective farmers were totally under central control... Strong tensions and differences of opinion existed within Communist Party, even during and after the late 1930s. The party line was often unclear and sometimes was contradictory.¹⁶

Even at the height of what are called Stalin's purges, not to mention throughout the whole period of Stalin's rule, the average annual number of people inside Soviet penal system, including a majority of those being actual criminals, was around 1.7 million with the total number of those sentenced for political reasons from 1921 through 1953—a 32 year-long period—being around 4 million people.¹⁷ One can better grasp those numbers when one compares them with the peak of US incarceration in 2010 at 2,270,000 and for 2016 numbering 2,217,000 total for a nation of around 310 million.¹⁸ While the American number of incarcerations is the highest in the world, including being highest in the per capita category for decades, there are very few, if any, signs of fear gripping the United States and its citizens of being taken off the streets and thrown into prison.

Yet, the whole notion that, despite all hardships and dramatic events, life in the Soviet Union, even under Stalin, with the obvious exception of the war-time period, could have gone on in some mode of normalcy is a complete anathema to the whole Kremlinology and Sovietology industry in the US, which continues to portray the life of Soviet people as one continuous unmitigated horror. The Soviet Union, for all its legitimate failings, was intended to remain in the American mind as a complete mad house populated with psychotic characters incapable of distinguishing good from evil and having no agency whatsoever in their own lives. The author's personal experiences with this American view included a number of occasions when in the early 1990s some Americans, who visited Russia for the first time, were enthusiastically debating native Russians, confidently stating that no free movement was allowed over the Soviet Union without special permission to anybody even in the 1960s and 1970s. That picture was so patently out of touch with reality—granted that there were several so-called “closed” cities and areas in the USSR which housed military bases and research institutes—that it was almost impossible to convince the American counterparts that the Soviet people were travelling in their millions all over the Soviet Union during their—notably quite long and paid—vacations each year without any “permission”. Numerical facts of the Soviet population's continuous growth or economic development, even after the horrendous losses of the Great Patriotic War, remained largely ignored in the West—except as it concerned using economic indices as a foundation for what today has come to be known as *Threat Inflation*, for the purpose of justifying ever-increasing military budgets. The fact of Soviet peaceful accomplishments was largely forgotten or was completely ignored immediately after the conclusion of World War Two, as the alliance devolved into the Cold War.

Space exploration historian, the late Thomas A. Heppenheimer, in what could be defined as an example of classic American historical myopia in regard to Russia listed Soviet achievements in 1997:

Looking back upon this sorry century, one notes a striking contrast between the utopian hopes of Lenin's revolutionaries and the limited achievements that they and their descendants in time could claim. They defeated Nazis, bearing the brunt of battle. They established an admirable system of public education, which in important respects continues to surpass that of the United States. They led the way into space.¹⁹

Heppenheimer's assessment, far from being unique in the US where many wouldn't extend Soviets the credit for even this short list, is a great illustration of the American insulation from the world of the 1940s and realities of World War Two. In this list the rebuilding of the Soviet Union after the utter devastation of World War Two should rank equal, if not greater, than the Soviet industrial effort in out-producing Nazi Germany during the war which ensured the victory over Hitler's armies. Immediate Soviet post-war devastation was unparalleled in history. Apart from crippling human losses of 27 million, the Soviet Union faced a rebuilding effort on a historic scale. Almost 1,700 cities and towns were partly or completely destroyed, 70,000 villages were wholly or partially demolished; more than 30% of national wealth was destroyed, including 40,000 miles of railroad track and 13,000 bridges. A catastrophe marked the agricultural sector with tens of millions of livestock killed or shipped to Germany, 137,000 tractors and 5 million pieces of other agricultural mechanical equipment destroyed.²⁰ It was beset with widespread homelessness, vast numbers of orphans, hunger, sickness, and a psychological condition known today as PTSD. Such numbers and conditions continue to remain beyond the grasp of most in the US, including those who write history.

In addition to those horrendous conditions, the Soviet Union found itself in a Cold War with recent, however tentative, allies who, for the most part, had no comprehension of the scale of its devastation nor any inhibitions in finding excuses for launching one. Yet, within only 12 years after such a calamity, the Soviet

Union launched *Sputnik* into the Earth's orbit and revealed some unsettling (for the West) truths about some very real and far from utopian achievements which happened under what generally is known as Stalin's rule.

Life was not easy in the USSR in the mid-1950s but to the astonishment of many the country started to recover from the devastation of World War Two. Hunger, a historic occurrence in Russia for centuries, was overcome. True, the Soviet Union would continue to remain the nation of many consumer deficits, including gastronomical ones, but never again would it experience the massive famines which had plagued historic Russia for so long. Enormous efforts were made in the construction of free, livable, separate apartments for the Soviet people, an effort which changed the Soviet landscape dramatically. Later, those five-story buildings would become known as Khrushchevki after Nikita Khrushchev who initiated the mass construction of those apartment blocks in the 1950s. For a country which just ten years before laid in ruins, the perspective of moving from some wooden barracks or barely livable huts, or even dugouts, into modern apartments with conveniences inside, a balcony and a separate personal kitchen included, all without paying a single ruble for such a dramatic improvement was a huge uplifting factor which influenced morale tremendously. True, legendary Soviet "kommunalkas"—large flats split into several separate living units-rooms with a common kitchen and restroom—would continue to dominate the Soviet housing landscape well into the 1960s but the massive resettlement into separate apartments had already started in the early 1950s.

There could be very legitimate parallels drawn between the American post-WWII economic boom which fell on Eisenhower's two terms as President and the Soviet economic recovery of 1950s. In the US the recovery was driven by coffers filled with payments for Lend-Lease equipment and the US supplying huge consumer markets in Western Europe which, while not as badly demolished as the USSR, were still in grave need of rebuilding and fighting off a very real threat of mass starvation. Thus the *European Recovery Program*, known as the Marshall Plan was launched in 1947.

The Soviet Union did not have a Marshall Plan and had very different views on Germany's fate, as the March 1947 Moscow meeting between George Marshall, then Secretary of the State, and Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs Vyacheslav Molotov demonstrated. There could have been not much of a compromise between the US and the USSR on the issue of German reparations and a compromise could hardly be found.²¹ On one side of the issue was a nation which, with the exception of the Pacific theater, came into the war late and even then against a greatly weakened, de facto defeated, Wehrmacht, whose losses in the war barely amounted to 400,000 killed and who was in the midst of an economic boom; on the other side was a nation which for all intents and purposes was utterly devastated by German Nazism and paid an overwhelming price for its defeat. The points of view on the German problem couldn't have been more removed from each other than in 1947.

But Soviet recovery, despite military and political pressures from the combined West, was nothing short of miraculous for the outside observer and it would take *Sputnik* to give the US at least some glimpse into the mechanisms of the Soviet defeat of Nazi Germany, its economic recovery and eventual transformation into a scientific and military powerhouse. One of the major reasons for that was the fact that while it was 70% illiterate in 1913, by 1940 the Soviet population had become not just literate but one of the most educated countries in the world. Once the excesses of radical or experimental pedagogy in early Soviet Russia had been overcome, a system was established which not only was good at addressing general literacy issues, with literacy rates by 1939 reaching 90.8% among males and 72.5% among females—an outstanding accomplishment in itself—but the system itself became arguably the best in the world in preparing a scientific, technological and military elite. American political scientists and ideologues naturally concentrated on the ideological rigidity, indoctrination and egalitarianism of the Soviet educational system and gave merely lip service to the extremely high emphasis on the precise sciences in Soviet schools.²²

Things changed after *Sputnik* and its namesake moment in the US. In 1958 *Life* Magazine ran a five part photo-series about the life of Soviet and American teenagers Alexei Kutzkov from Moscow and Stephen Lapekas from Chicago. The comparison was not in favor of the American teenager, nor was it in favor of the American school system as a whole. The list of subjects Lapekas studied in school was rather short when compared to the same in the USSR.²³ The *Sputnik Moment* was responsible for two things in America: the creation of *NASA* and the start of a never-ending, acrimonious and grossly ineffective “reform” in American public school STEM education which as of 2017 continues to lag in most important fields which define national intellect: mathematics, physics and chemistry. The 1958 post-Sputnik National Science Foundation’s report on the state of American education, titled *The Year of the Earth Satellites*, was openly alarmist. There, the report came to some conclusions which are as valid today as they were in 1958 and underscored that it was not a financial problem, since the United States was and remains a very wealthy nation; not infrastructure, the American public schools are the envy of the world; but rather a cultural problem which is in the foundation of the pitiful state of American public schools:

Quality of the Nation’s schools was observed to be what community and its citizens made it. So long as students disdained difficult studies in English, foreign languages, science, and mathematics; so long as they were supported by parents who derogated learning and culture with contemptuous references to eggheads and longhairs; so long as citizens were reluctant to continue to vote the increased taxes needed to provide well-equipped schools and well-paid teachers—then so long did the quality of the educational system jog along over an improvised and bumpy road.²⁴

A bumpy road it has been ever since. Despite all the

efforts in trying to improve public school education in precise sciences, problems persisted and persist even today. The issue is as simple as it is complex: unlike humanities studies, physics largely does not exist as a separate subject in American schools, being substituted for by a hodge-podge collection of random scientific facts which pass for a *generic* science subject. While the American educational bureaucracy argued and continues to argue today about some abstract concepts of pedagogy or fights non-stop for ever-increasing budgets which are per capita (student) in the top 5 highest in the world, things continue to deteriorate non-stop.²⁵ Obviously, one of the counter-arguments for this state of affairs in education can be and is reduced to a simple formula: if the education in US schools is so bad, why is the US prosperous and a leader in the technological development? This argument might have some merit to it, if the main premise of it were entirely true, which it is not.

The simple fact is this: the United States long ago stopped being the undisputed leader in very many technological and scientific fields. As an instance, it is rather historically ironic that today the United States needs to hitch rides to the International Space Station on Russian updated Soyuz space-ships and has to purchase Russian-made *RD-180* rocket engines to power its *Atlas* program. No doubt, the United States still remains a powerhouse in many fields, including a magnificent non-piloted space program and holds the leading edge in microchip technologies, among many others. But this leadership is by no means assured and, in fact, is now being challenged.

The rationality of American weapons procurement programs overall is being called into doubt since some military technology programs, far from being engineering marvels, defy both financial and operational common sense. It was not accidental that one of the first people who pointed out the massive national security implications of the Soviet educational system for the US were US military professionals. Admiral Hyman Rickover, the father of the American nuclear navy, attacked the myth of the superiority of American education even before *Sputnik* was

launched. In fact, Rickover was in the business of challenging this myth as early as 1953.²⁶ Rickover ended up issuing an indictment of the entire American educational system:

...part of the “best schools in the world” myth was the claim that American textbooks were the envy of the world. Rickover had difficulty locating these non-Americans who were so envious. On the contrary, he cited numerous foreign analyses of American school curricula and textbooks which found them to be “bland, superficial, and repetitive”. Under the shocking impact of Russian scientific successes, Soviet mathematics and science texts were being translated for use by American students because no similar approach to the subject matter was available. Many of these translated texts were being used in American colleges although the Soviets were using them with 14-year-olds in their ten-year schools.²⁷

Time magazine noted in 1958 that the amount of instruction in mathematics, physics or biology an average Soviet student received before graduating from a public school was three times larger than stipulated for the entrance into Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

The Soviet graduates, however, were at least two years ahead of their American counterparts in mastery of “sound, basic education.” By that Rickover meant mathematics, the sciences, mastery of the mother tongue, knowledge of their own classical literature and that of major foreign nations, foreign languages, and history, though their history study is colored by Marxist doctrine. Even Russian graduates of her seven-year schools at ages fourteen and fifteen knew as much about

these “solid subjects” as many American high school graduates.²⁸

The list of subjects studied was much longer, though, and included physical and, later, economic geography; it also included astronomy for the final school year. Russians were extremely aware of this advantage. Indeed, by the late 1970s American public schools may have had better furniture or may even have had a computer, but by the 9th grade Soviet students were solving problems on Newtonian mechanics in a course on physics and had a comprehensive course of trigonometry spanning both courses in algebra and geometry, and that is what really mattered the most. In the introduction to his famed and startling comparative study of “humanities” education, *What Ivan Knows That Johnny Doesn't*, Arther S. Trace Jr. was blunt:

The concern of the recent comparative studies of American and Soviet schools has been to show that American schools are lagging woefully behind Soviet schools in the teaching of mathematics and sciences. These studies have emphasized that all Russian students who graduate from high school have studied physics for five years, chemistry for four years, and biology for six years, and astronomy for one year. Only some American high school graduates have studied biology or physics or chemistry for one year.²⁹

In Russia, while liberal experimentation, a euphemism for the destruction of Russia’s education system, began in the late 1990s and continued through the early 2000s in an effort to demolish a systemic and tightly interconnected complex of knowledge procurement resulting in a holistic world view inherent in Soviet/Russian public education, the resistance to those retrograde liberal reforms in education, among many other fields, was growing in Russia. The “Westernization” of Russian

education was being adapted toward bringing Russia into the supposedly globalist world (led by America). A holistic picture of the world was not needed in this system, nor was a needed crucial feature of a healthy society: a highly developed cognitive process.

But as the 2015 *TIMMS* study showed, Russia still led the Western world, including the US, educational systems, in scores for advanced math and physics.³⁰ This study also underscored the surprising flexibility and survivability of the Russian educational system which simply refused to surrender to radical experimentation and lower its academic demands. In a defiance of the regressive “western” educational reforms, which included the introduction of standardized state testing, known as the Unified State Exam (EGE), a number of key Russian universities still retained their right to conduct independent entrance exams for high school graduates applying there. Thus the key feature of the US educational system—standardized, multiple choice answers, language and math tests—has been rejected, while the key feature of the Soviet educational system, which made it so effective has been preserved. True, many contemporary Russian high school graduates still get into the higher learning institutions directly out of high school based on the Unified State Exam results, but they have to take more than just mandatory language and math tests, which are required only for a high school diploma, known in Russia as an Attester of Maturity.

But where truly elite education mattered, even amidst the “reforms” of the late 1990s and early 2000s, higher learning institutions such as Moscow State University, St. Petersburg State University, to say nothing of such centers of education as Bauman Moscow State Technological University—the alma mater for such people as Chief Designer Sergei Korolyov and many Soviet/Russian cosmonauts and designers of weapon systems—retained their right to their own entrance exams. Remarkably, this school which was and is responsible for producing a good share of the Soviet/Russian technological elite ranging from radio electronics to space flight, among many other fields, is ranked as #379 in the 2011/2012 *QS World University* rankings well below King Saud

University. In 2017 this school's position "improved" to #306 slightly below another academically "shiny" Saudi institutions such as King Abdulaziz University or American University of Beirut—schools hardly known for their contribution to space exploration, laser technology, state-of-the-art complex weapon systems and other things of similar nature which are on the resume of Bauman University.³¹ There is a dark spot on Bauman's outstanding resume, however. Alfred Rosenberg, one of the major ideologues of German National-Socialism was one of its alumni.

The entrance requirement for Bauman University, however, as is true for a number of leading universities in Russia, is a true trial. This is, incidentally, how the adjudication process is called today—entrance trials—and it involves intimidating, by any measure, exams in mathematics, physics, language, foreign language, biology and history. The academic level of entrance exams to Bauman University and many other universities in Russia is such that some students who feel not quite ready for trials attend a yearlong preparatory college which gives them enough of an academic boost for taking entrance exams. No US institution of higher education is even in the same universe in STEM requirements for its students, even those universities which are listed in top 20 of very many "rankings". Novosibirsk State University, as an example, even today requires for its entrance exams a level and volume of mathematics and physics knowledge which has its deep roots in old Soviet programs which allowed the USSR to not only produce a world-class scientific and technological elite but to seriously challenge the United States in most fields of human activity while catching up from a position of serious disadvantage as a result of the catastrophe of World War Two.

The situation was even more dramatic in the preparation of the Soviet military elite, which apart from an already very high public school level of education, was taking entrance exams into the military academies. Only Combined Arms academies (military officer colleges) by the 1960s had study programs of four years. Academically those programs would amount to around

5 years' studies, and to 6 years academic courses for 5-year long naval, air force and other technologically-oriented military academies—everybody studied in the USSR on Saturdays. Apart from exhaustive entrance exams in math, physics, language-literature, chemistry and where applicable, a whole host of tough physical and psychological tests was to be taken. Those admitted and who survived a boot camp were immediately subjected to an intensive academic routine which from the get go was dominated by advanced precise science courses ranging from differential equations, physics, mechanics, radio-electronics to military-specific subjects, such as tactics, introduction to theory of operations or, as an example, missile weaponry or aerodynamics for pilots and flight engineers. The result of that was an officer with enough general and specialized education, capable of self-improvement in most cases. As military manuals stated, the main form of education for the officer, other than attending a war college or any other post-graduate professional institution, was self-preparation.

The good educational level of the Soviet public schools was also responsible for a large portion of Soviet military recruits, especially the ones who were drafted into the Navy and Border Guards, becoming good level specialists after one year of service preceded by a half-year spent in the lower military study schools known in the USSR and Russia as *Uchebka*. The same was largely true for many Chief Petty Officers, some of who even had some college degrees.

The above elaboration on Soviet military training is intended, not so much to assert its superiority to that offered in top flight US military schools, but rather to counter the image, cultivated and perpetuated in the West, of the Soviet Armed Forces as a faceless, colorless, indoctrinated mass of nearly human-robots. This had no more truth to it than the Soviet myth of Americans caring only about money. While not without its share of problems, which grew exponentially the further one was removed from serious combat training and actual combat tasks, the Soviet Armed Forces, especially its technological and operational

elite, were well-read and extremely well-educated from the top of the officer corps down to regular recruits. Reading was huge, as it always was in the Navy; the Soviet Union was the best read country in the world—not only the best read country but, by the 1980s indisputably the most educated one in the broadest sense of the word. It was also the most militarily prepared country starting precisely from the high school level, having a separate mandatory subject called Initial Military Training (NVP-Nachalnaya Voennaya Podgotovka) which included, apart from the study of weapons ranging from small arms to WMD, firing of actual live ammo in firing ranges of the army units stationed in the area. By the age of 16 pretty much any high school student in the Soviet Union knew exactly how to handle and shoot an AK-47/AKM automatic rifle, throw grenades, operate in squads and platoons, among many other basic military skills. Girls, who had a separate course within NVP as combat nurses, were always welcome to partake in weapons training. After the official removal of NVP during the 1990s from Russia's public school curriculum, things changed back again with not only basic military training being re-introduced to schools, but with the *Youth Army* (YunArmia) movement offering school children basic military training, including through military-sports games. In Kazakhstan NVP never went away and still remains a part of school education.

This educational setup, sometimes wrongly interpreted as some kind of Russian version of the Boy Scout movement, is very different and heavily militarily influenced, which is not the case with the Boy Scouts. This movement is unique to Soviet history and goes back in its roots to the 1930s *OSOVIAHIM* (*Union of Societies of Assistance to Defense and Aviation-Chemical Construction of the USSR*) and, later, the still existing *DOSAAF* (*Volunteer Society for Cooperation with the Army, Aviation, and Navy*). Nothing of like exists and it cannot exist in the American educational system; there are simply no precedents in US history simply because American school children have never needed to fight in defense of their motherland. In the Great Patriotic War millions of Russian children went to work in factories and some

fought as partisans, with others being adopted by Red Army's military units as sons of regiments, many of whom, despite their tender age did experience all the horrors of combat on the Eastern Front. Many were awarded combat medals and orders, many posthumously. This is a heritage which even Russia's liberals couldn't kill. The nation-wide importance of the status of the *Youth Army* was underscored on May 9, 2017 when the unified detachment of youth marched in Red Square in the Victory Day Parade.

Paradoxically, the seismic changes which affected the Soviet Union in the post WWII period were largely due to this educational feat without parallel in human history. As Nobel Peace Prize nominee Johan Galtung noted:

This situation arose from the fact that the Soviet Union had the highest number of intelligentsia in the world, thirty five million—fifteen million who had university degrees and twenty million who in the United States would be community-college graduates. In some statistical reports, this is supposed to account for some 25 percent of intelligentsia in the world.³²

This fact somehow goes missing in the American discussion on what is more responsible for the “defeat” of the Soviet Union in the Cold War. Yet, this fact is a key to understanding the events preceding the collapse of the Soviet Union since, already by the 1960s life in the Soviet Union was not half-bad, though by no means a paradise. In fact, Russians had never lived that well in their history. By the 1970s life was, indeed, good. Once one considers the fact that the Soviet Union pioneered satellite television and Soviet TV, despite providing few channels, provided often superbly staged and acted TV films and serials, often based on classic and contemporary, albeit ideologically “tempered” Western dramaturgy, among others. Intellectually and aesthetically life was rich, despite the War still being present in

the background even in the 1970s. It is difficult to imagine a TV adaptation of 16th century Spanish playwright Lope de Vega's *The Dog in the Manger*; among many other classics, becoming a nationwide TV event in the US, but that is precisely what Soviet TV could provide, as an instance, not because of the shortness of the TV menu, but because of superb acting and a good treatment of the classics. Nor were Soviets insulated from the best Western culture could provide. Whole generations of Soviet kids grew up on Stanley Kubrick's immortal *Spartacus*, or *Mackenna's Gold*, just to name a few Hollywood titles which were widely available in movie theaters all over the Soviet Union.

The age of reel-to-reel decks and turntables exploded in the USSR with jazz and rock music, initially slowly and later by a wide stream flowing into the country. A feature of the Soviet so called Houses of Home Chores (Doma Byta), usually a large combination of laundry, hair salons, dry cleaning and other everyday necessities, were the so called Studios of Sound Recording, where one could officially bring their own reel of tape and choose from the list of artists to get the recording. Needless to say, those lists contained anything from albums by *Mahavishnu Orchestra* and *Led Zeppelin* to *Suzi Quattro* and *Slade*. The USSR was impacted greatly also by British Glam rock of the early 1970s. Those realities never made it into Western mass-media, who for decades drew a picture of a grim, joyless and primitive society for a consumption of an oblivious public. As was noted in 1988 by Whitman Bassow in an openly apologetic work for a drab, at best, US journalism in the USSR, *The Moscow Correspondent*,

Thirty years ago as UP correspondent, I met a middle-aged Florida couple in Metropole dining room who were astonished that the average Russian seemed so well dressed. "Why," exclaimed the woman, "they even wear fur hats!" The American scolded me for not reporting such important news. I countered that I frequently wrote features on women's styles, clothes, and

shopping in Moscow but that not a single editor on the thousands of newspapers served by the agency would print a story, if I did write one, that a quarter million Russians walked down Gorky Street today wearing shoes. Americans, I said, should have learned in high school, not from the pages of their local newspaper, that Russians wear coats and hats.”³³ Since then, things didn’t get better, they have gotten much worse, especially with Russians being aware of the outside world, including the US, on several orders of magnitude more than the same could be said about Americans.

It is no surprise today that most Russians, with the sole exception of a narrow strata of fanatical pro-Western “liberals”, many subsisting on the grants or direct payrolls of US NGOs, meet any mentioning of the “objectivity” of US media or about “freedom of speech” with a sarcastic smile or, even, laughter. It is a dramatic change from the 1970s or even 1980s where many Soviets did believe that such values were unassailable in the US, except for one thing: Nothing good was allowed to be reported on the USSR then, nor on Russia today. The same Bassow indicted US News Networks long ago: “TV has by and large failed to convey the flavor of life in the USSR in a systematic way.”³⁴ As was the case with the Soviet Union in the past, modern Russia should remain in the mass Western mind a grim, dark, hopeless place or, as American-Canadian Russia “scholar”, Ph.D. in American History, John Robson stated in an editorial in the *Ottawa Citizen* in 2000:

Normal for Russia is filthy, corrupt, menacing and hollow. Nothing good has happened there, nor will it. Russia is a lump of dung wrapped in a cabbage leaf hidden in an outhouse. Russia is doomed by history and culture. It stinks, literally and figuratively, and always has. People there

have no manners. . . . The bottom line is: Russia has sucked, sucks and will suck.³⁵

Here it was, a concentrated, however sometimes camouflaged, sometimes hidden but always near the surface, representation of the core values of Western scholarship and journalism on Russia. It was precisely this Americanized system of views, ignorant and uneducated, which completely missed the whole significance of the Russian transformation in the 20th century which, far from being merely communist, or socialist, or Soviet or any other ideological cliché used to describe it, was primarily Western. What neither Peter the Great and his reforms nor the Emancipation Reform of 1861, nor what the Russian intelligentsia of the 19th Century could do, Soviet communists did, with ruthless efficiency—it modernized and Westernized Russia in less than 40 years since the October Revolution of 1917. Doing so, it largely overcame the technological gap with the West, defeated German Nazism, laid the foundation for scientific, technological and industrial might and even further, in so doing, it completely changed Russians' cultural outlook from that of a semi-literate, largely peasant nation to one of the best educated nations in the world. Great Russian/Soviet writer pochevennik (from Russian *pochva*—ground, hence village literature) the late Vasyli Shukshin wrote about himself and the drama of many Russians in the 1960s: “It so happened to me that by the age of forty I stopped being a villager but I am not a city person yet. It is not even like being between two chairs, more like: one foot is still on the shore while the other is already in the boat. You cannot avoid sailing but it is still scary to sail.” Most of the enormously popular Shukshin's literature and many movies based on it dealt with this existential Russian issue of unbecoming a peasant nation and getting finally to be a center of learning and real advanced civilization.

Today very little of that problem remains in Russia. But even today each Friday in Summer or early Autumn big Russian cities suffer from enormous traffic jams with millions of Russians

driving, or taking a train to their dachas or village homes to not only tend to their gardens and garden beds, small agricultural additions to houses, which in the hard times of the 1990s inhuman “reforms” allowed many to survive. Many still escape the city for the calm and relaxation of pastoral living, going back to their village roots, from where the Russian nation sprouted. It is a totally normal picture to see some Ph.D. in electronics or a designer of crucial parts for aircraft to enthusiastically tend their cabbage, or potatoes with carrots on their country side plots next to often solidly built luxury houses which are still built on the ground from which, throughout centuries, nobody could uproot the Russian soul.

THREAT INFLATION, IDEOLOGICAL CAPTURE, AND DOCTRINAL POLICY QUESTIONS

American journalist and historian Daniel Larison, who writes on foreign policy issues in *The American Conservative* magazine, loves to use the term “threat inflation”¹ whenever speaking out about American foreign policy, and justifiably so. It is not necessary to elaborate on the nature of threat inflation: every nation in the world has its own way of exaggerating threats to itself. As the late Samuel Huntington noted “States respond primarily to perceived threats.”² But those threat inflations are as different as are the nations which inflate them. The degree of the inflation also matters a great deal. It is one thing to inflate a threat of a terrorist act, however disruptive, in some locality, and completely another to inflate that same threat to the level of a perceived clear and present danger to the very existence of the nation.

As always, scales and proportions matter. It is self-evident, as an example, that threats from North Korea to the US are not congruent to the threats from the US to North Korea. Thus, the veracities of threat perceptions vary. North Korea cannot obliterate

the United States even if it really wanted to, though granted the North Korean nuclear program can finally succeed in creating a credible, i.e. accurate and long range, working nuclear deterrent. The United States, on the other hand, can easily obliterate North Korea by nuclear weapons and there are some chances that it might even be able to win the war purely conventionally, if the South Korean Armed Forces perform as it is thought they can perform. The costs of this war could be horrendous in blood and treasure and would have a dramatic if not revolutionary impact on the world order, or disorder, depending on your point of view, even if it could be contained and prevented from escalating to the nuclear threshold, leading to conflict between major regional and global players: China and Russia on one hand and the United States on the other.

While there is little doubt that North Korea is a bizarre Orwellian society, even when one disregards propagandistically-inflamed horror stories from escapees from North Korea, one has to take proper account of the totalitarian nature of Pyongyang's regime. This is not even Stalinism, as it usually portrayed in the West, far from it: North Korea is something completely different. Yet, the jury is still out on the rationality, or lack thereof, of North Korean leadership. As Andrew Stigler of the US Naval War College points out: "North Korea has been pilloried for decades as among the most dangerous and untrustworthy nations in the world. But despite the dire predictions of American security experts over many decades, the peninsula has been free of large-scale conflict since 1953."³

What is worth noting, however, is that in general, the record of American "security experts" is dismal and is heavily biased towards confrontation and gross exaggeration— inflation— of the intentions (and capabilities) of the potential enemy. Stigler does impose a necessary caveat that:

The fact that an opposing state sees the United States as the aggressive party should not, in and of itself, be cause for revising our assessment of

the right course of action. A state motivated to attack America for misguided reasons could still pose a threat, and preemptive action could still be warranted.”⁴

It has to be noted that most, not all, American expertise in the military-strategic field is a product of the American education system, especially of the Ivy League schools. Most of these experts have never served a day in the uniform, let alone in operational combat zones and are sometimes not even “book-smart”, skipping most of the world’s history and warfare experiences. For the most part the “expertise” that fills the rank and file of many US think-tanks—which deal mostly with earning money and pushing agendas, such as neoconservative “institutes”, which mostly promote the state of Israel’s interests—is grotesquely biased towards American military exceptionalism. This is the strata of people who formulate US foreign and defense policies and it is no longer a theorem but an axiom that the United States’ current geopolitical position has been weakened tremendously thanks to those “experts” concentrated effort.

Otherwise, how is one to explain the 2003 aggression against Iraq based on WMD lies that has so tarnished America’s international reputation and that of its supporting media—to say nothing of destroying Iraq’s secular government that had served US interests, and the US absolute mismanagement of the aftermath? What about the debacle of US policies in Syria? Here, the US supported al-Qaeda-related groups, despite officially regarding al-Qaeda as the perpetrator of the 9/11 attack, leading to the US attack on Afghanistan on this basis, where it remains bogged down at a cost running into the trillions, by some estimates.⁵ The US Syrian efforts led to the Pentagon’s humiliation during a Congressional inquiry, in which the Pentagon was forced to admit that, after its \$500 million expenditure, it had only managed to produce “four or five” fighters⁶ against ISIS. And indeed, at one point, the Syrian effort even led to Pentagon-supported militias fighting CIA-supported militias.⁷

This is precisely the same cohort of mostly civilian warmongers who continue to push the United States into all kinds of other foreign military adventures. Here Stigler, despite a generally coherent argument, is incorrect on the most basic of points, which relates to the foundational issue of its basic inability to see itself as others see it. The United States is not “perceived” as an aggressive nation: It *is* one. In international affairs, the US has been responsible for unleashing a host of wars, all of them based on false justifications. This very threat inflation algorithm has become a trade mark of the United States in the 20th and (especially) 21st centuries, antecedent and/or supplementary to its *casus bellis*. The US has a “stellar” record to back these “perceptions”.

One of the reasons for the failures of US military analysis, apart from a general intellectual degeneration of US power elites, is the fact that the people who impact or formulate American foreign and military policies, apart from often pursuing their own or somebody else’s agendas, are utterly unqualified for developing sound military and diplomatic solutions. It is really difficult to even conceive that a family trio like Robert Kagan with all his purely “humanities” credentials can have a competent, professional opinion on things military, and the doctrine-mongering and largely incompetent faux-strategy fodder of his brother Frederick (Ph.D. in Soviet-Russian military history from Yale, former professor of military *history* at US Military Academy West Point, now scholar in residence at the American Enterprise Institute), and his wife, Kimberley Kagan (President of another think tank, the Institute for the Study of War, which she herself founded) should be viewed as providing serious professional input. Nonetheless, Frederick Kagan was said to have influenced George W. Bush’s “surge” in Iraq, as well as the strategic thinking of Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, reportedly influencing Gates’ decision to support sending 30,000 additional troops to Afghanistan.”⁸

There is a reason that most military professionals, officers, in the world receive an extremely strong physics-mathematics education: this allows them to deal with very complex weapon

systems and with tactical and operational issues which require a good level of understanding of operational theory, which is crucial for making weighted decisions. In this particular case, studying the military history of the adversary—though obviously not in the way Soviet efforts in WW II were portrayed in the US until recently—is only a minute part of the larger intellectual apparatus required for the competent discussion of serious geopolitical, strategic and operational issues. The whole notion that anyone with a degree in government or journalism, or finance, could have a meaningful grasp of tactical, operational and strategic issues without having a very intensive background in military technology—which requires serious engineering, tactical, operational training and the knowledge of the way all those disciplines are interconnected and interact through economics, history and doctrines, among many other things—is absolutely inconceivable. It assuredly doesn't mean that military professionals will always be adequate for serious policy tasks but there is no doubt that their insights are both crucial and, most of the time, beyond the grasp of what has become known as the “civilian leadership.”

US military professionals such as these effectively stopped US aggression against Iran in 2008.

Admiral William Fallon, commander of U.S. Central Command, is reported to have stated that the operations against Iran proposed by civilian leaders were, in his opinion, “very stupid” and that bombing should be avoided unless the Iranians did something considerably more reckless than they had up to that point. Fallon's sober assessment of the threat may have prevented an unnecessary war.⁹

However commendable the actions of Admiral Fallon were, it remains the case that the whole system in the US since 2008 has not improved in terms of its ability to exercise common sense and a highly necessary military restraint, which is often a function

of military competence. Instead, it increasingly reminds one of a runaway engine in doctrinal, strategic and operational terms. This is inevitable in a nation which has a very vague, if any, idea about war and which has been fed a steady diet of exceptionalism, greatly based on a falsification of history, for decades. It is also inevitable in a nation whose military-strategic school's ideas, far from being unique, with a few notable exceptions, are beginning to sound more and more like ideologically polished proclamations from the podiums of the party congresses in North Korea or Mao's China. This world view is not only risky for the nation which becomes captive to such ideological "wisdoms", but in the case of the US in the modern world, it carries a real danger for the whole of human civilization. Exercising this ideological dogma via the modern armed forces may lead to disastrous outcomes.

The United States is not unique in the history of common military sense-bending when dealing with defense, or rather, in the American case, offense issues. Before addressing this further, let us examine a classic example of an ideology and wishful thinking's triumph over common sense and realistic operational requirements which is applicable to the situation of the contemporary US. The French military's *Jeune Ecole* (Young School) school of naval thought in the late 19th century greatly impeded the development of the French Navy's required combat capabilities for decades. Remarkably, this entire movement in the thinking of the French Navy, which found itself in the wake of the 1870 Franco-Prussian War lacking financing,¹⁰ was led, together with French Admiral Teofilo Aube, by a man utterly unqualified for the development of serious military doctrine: a journalist and a supposed "scholar" of foreign relations, Gabriel Charnez.

The reasons for the *Jeune Ecole* springing to life were ideological, financial and technological. The new technology of naval cannon shells and torpedoes, as opposed to cannon-balls, seemed to be a good means for an anti-British, anti-commerce strategy in which, so Aube's thinking went, a coordinated attack of swarms of small torpedo and cannon boats, aided by commercial raiders, would be able to disrupt British shipping lanes. Young

French naval officers, hence the *Young School*, were enthusiastic about those ideas which were opening chances for their faster career advancement during the transformation of all navies from sailing ships to smaller steam and screw-driven naval forces. Some even called torpedo boats “democratic,” increasing their acceptability along the lines of French press democratic rhetoric of the time. As Eric Dahl points out: “Charmez knew little of naval matters, but he and Aube became close friends and colleagues... Charmez was the primary advocate of the *Jeune Ecole* in the press, frequently stressing the political nature of its reforms, writing that: “It will be the reign of justice succeeding that of favoritism, it will be equality replacing privilege.”¹¹ The fact that Charmez was a journalist, ideologue, political observer or anything but a qualified and experienced naval officer or, in general a military professional, did not prevent him from advocating a concept which simply was, in Biddle’s restrained words, “premature”.¹² The result of such promotion was a doctrinal dead-lock which resulted in the French Navy failing to offer any serious competition to its Royal British counterpart.

This situation is very reminiscent of a famous 1915 pre Bolshevik revolution short story by Russian humorist Arkady Averchenko titled *A Specialist in Military Affairs, From the Chronicles of Local Press*, in which some local Russian newspaper hired a war journalist who was to review the progress of WWI for local readers. All his reviews of the war ended up with a detailed analysis of the shoes and boots of the opposing armies since, as it was later learned, he was a cobbler by profession. In short, that incompetent civilians’ influence on incompetent, and sometimes even competent, military people has led to the appearance of all kinds of strange military concepts and even actual military hardware is nothing new or unique. In the end, the Russian Navy became a practitioner of *Jeune Ecole* ideas, abandoning at the height of the *Jeune Ecole*’s popularity its own battleship construction plans. The Russian Navy also dabbled in a completely round-shaped monitor known as the *Popovka*. The bizarre-looking ship was christened the *Novgorod* and was viewed more as an oddity rather than a

real combat ship and viable naval concept designed for defending Russia's shores. Eventually, the whole concept, as envisioned by Aube and Charmez, would be abandoned.

Even contemporary Russia was not immune from the calamity of utterly incompetent people being pushed by changing political circumstances into powerful positions, from which they could deal devastating blows to systems which, while not perfect, could still do the job fairly well. Following the abandonment of communism, a hurricane of so-called "reforms" by former Russian Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov passed through the Russian Armed Forces during his 5-year tenure from 2007 to 2012. They almost brought about the complete destruction of the command and control structure of the Russian Armed Forces and resulted, generally, in some of the most bizarre and damaging decisions, which were, if not lauded, at least met with understanding in the West. Vladimir Putin's appointment of Anatoly Serdyukov, a specialist in finance and furniture, to the post of Russia's Defense Minister was justified by Putin himself as a measure required in the face of a massive inflow of money for modernization of Russia's Armed Forces. The move not only created a feeling of utter dismay in Russia's Armed Forces, which, indeed, needed a reform, but also among the general Russian public. An anecdote was widely circulated of Putin dealing a death blow to American intelligence services—who died in the dozens from laughter upon learning who would lead Russia's Defense Ministry.

But Serdyukov, however utterly unqualified for any kind of military activity, wasn't acting on his own volition or ideas. Behind some of his most devastating "reforms" such as the virtual destruction of the unique and high quality higher military officer education system or his fanatical pursuit of a brigade structure for the ground forces, among many other devastating measures, was a very serious *ideological* base, much of which was formulated by such people as former GRU Colonel Vitaly Shlykov.

Shlykov's rank of GRU Colonel should not mislead anyone. Shlykov was a patriot, a spy and an economist and linguist by education, though he had also completed a full course

of study in a Military-Diplomatic academy. Shlykov is branded in his biography—on the site of the organization he helped to found, The Council of Foreign and Defense Policy—as the “Founder of the school of liberal military analysis,”¹³ (whatever “liberal” military analysis might mean, it was at least *au courant* with the political winds). This Moscow-based think-tank counted many luminaries among its members.

Shlykov’s major contribution to Russia’s military “reform” was his famous treatise, *What Killed the Soviet Union, The General Staff and Economy*, in which Shlykov narrated his ordeal as one of the officers in the GRU’s 10th military-economic analytical department while trying to convince his higher ups that their assessment of American military potential was wrong and in some fields, such as tank production, was exaggerated 50-100 fold.¹⁴ He also became known for following popular pro-Western narratives about the War on the Eastern front, such as the grossly underrated tank strength of Nazi Germany. In his piece *Our Tanks Are Fast* in 1988 he used data from the March-April 1981 issue of the American *Armor* magazine as valid data. According to this data, in 1944 alone the Soviet Union produced more tanks and self-propelled guns than Nazi Germany throughout the whole of WWII.¹⁵ The absurdity of this number, which counts “battle tanks” only, especially today, is undeniable, once one comes to learn the actual number of Nazi production of tanks without self-propelled guns, throughout WWII, which is at least twice as large as stated.¹⁶ The value of this kind of “analysis” based on grossly false numbers is easily predictable. Shlykov’s activity until his very last days would confirm it. He applauded the appointment of Serdyukov to the post of Defense Minister, even when the Armed Forces became functionally unprepared to fight as a result of the so-called “reforms”.

While never having served a day in a tactical or operational command capacity, Shlykov still had the nerve to suggest that “Our officers do not even understand what it means to be military professionals.”¹⁷ His “ideas” about removing the General Staff from the operational command of Russian troops were not merely

his own, as he himself insisted: “It doesn’t matter if Russia’s General Staff likes it or not, but the American system of command and control undeniably proved its effectiveness. Nobody says that we should copy this American experience, but to ignore it, let alone act against it as General Staff suggests is unwise.”¹⁸ It was a rather startling admission once one considers the vast abyss separating the historical Russian and American military experiences, not to mention the rather unimpressive results of the American wars since Korea and America’s lack of any experience in combatting even a mildly competent adversary.

Yet, the ghost of Gabriel Charmez could be seen in all of Shlykov, Serdyukov and his Chief of General Staff Makarov’s “reforms” of Russia’s Armed Forces. All those “reforms”, from the forceful imposition of a brigade structure on the ground troops to the inherently dangerous assumption that the combined West in the form of NATO was not a real threat to Russia, to the demolition of military educational institutions, and finally, to the scandal resulting from ridiculous and wasteful attempts to purchase two useless amphibious ships from France—all that came crashing down when the utter incompetence and corruption of the people in charge of those “reforms” became obvious even to people who had no relation to the Armed Forces at all.

For many Western observers the removal of Serdyukov, who became an embarrassment and a liability to Vladimir Putin, and the undoing of Serdyukov’s “reforms” came as an unpleasant surprise. Those “reforms” also became an embarrassment for many Western “experts” in Russia’s military. Many had seriously considered the systemic destruction of combat capabilities of Russia’s Armed Forces to be a viable “reform”. Roger McDermott in his 2010 review of Serdyukov’s reforms and how they were tied with the net-centric Warfare, left an interesting testimony to a general Western propensity to apply their own standards to Russia, or to try to fit anything Russia does into strictly Western frameworks, which were often totally incompatible.¹⁹ Of course, the problem lay in the popular western liberal myth that mass combined arms warfare was obsolete in the era of counterinsurgency warfare

(COIN) and fighting gangs of non-state actors, and should be pursued instead by means of hi-tech, mostly stand-off weaponry, with periodic use of special forces for high value terrorist or insurgent targets. The whole notion of division-, corps- or army-size formations being engaged in war seemed still to be a heresy, even after the Russo-Georgian War of 2008. General Makhmut Gareev, however, warned about not getting carried away with purely stand-off warfare and stressed the necessity to develop a full contact combined arms capability in parallel.²⁰ That required a major reversal of Shlykov's and Serdyukov's "reforms". That was done. On May 22nd, 2013 Russia's new Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu shocked the Russian Duma when he briefed them in a closed session on Serdyukov's "inheritance".²¹ As one MP stated, after the briefing, especially based on data presented by the Accounting Chamber, the report "could simply be given to Prosecutor's Office to issue indictments."

The purported reform of the Russian military was a result of the activity of people who simply, out of a deadly combination of arrogance, incompetence and ambition, almost brought the Armed Forces of the very nation which has an unparalleled record of being subject to foreign aggression to a non-functional state, even despite vast sums of money being available for much-needed true reforms. Vitaly Shlykov may have been a Russian patriot and an excellent spy, but a good military historian and military thinker of scale he was not. Those allowances cannot in any way be extended to Anatoly Serdyukov who already has a special place in the memory of the Russian Armed Forces and the Russian people in general as a man utterly unqualified for the task. It took a Western-inspired bloody coup in Ukraine in 2014 to finally dispel all the mythology about modern warfare, with Kiev and LDNR forces engaged in brutal full-contact combined arms combat in the Donbas Region.

On May 4, 2016 the semi-official Russian portal *Vzglyad* came out with an article with a telling title: *To Defend against NATO Larger Formations Are Needed*.²² Russia started the restoration of divisions and combined arms armies on her

Western borders. With that, after almost 25 years of doctrinal sleepwalking and experimentation, the fundamental constant of the Russian geopolitical thinking—that the combined West was a real threat—returned to Russia’s political and cultural discourse. Answering a question from a German academician on October 24, 2017 at a public forum in Russia, Vladimir Putin was very brief in stating Russia’s key geopolitical issue in the 21st Century: “Our biggest mistake was that we trusted you too much. You interpreted our trust as weakness, and you exploited that.”²³ Here it was, a sober, not inflated, statement of the threat Russia faced. Here was a return to what even Richard Pipes had to admit: the Russian ability “to assess the rewards of defense in much more realistic terms.”²⁴ This also was an admission, however implicit, of the grave mistakes it made in the recent past. Yet, no matter how bad those mistakes were, they were at least admitted, and that, as with most admissions, left the door open for redemption.

This is no longer the case with the US and its whole corps of experts. The United States, certainly, has earned a very special place among those nations of the world that allow utterly unqualified people to promote sometimes truly outlandish military ideas or assessments, which, to no surprise, often lead to catastrophic results. The above-mentioned cases of Serdyukov and Shlykov are good examples, though far from threat inflation, they concern, unsurprisingly, just the opposite: threat deflation. However, the American military and geopolitical “expertdom” of the late 20th and 21st centuries excels in the opposite: threat inflation while, paradoxically, simultaneously denigrating the capabilities of those who supposedly pose those huge threats. This seemingly mutually exclusive approach is absurd only on the surface. In reality it has its own logic which, however perverted, still works to a certain extent for the current US “elites”. Here, one has to be very clear on three accounts.

There are three types of military threats, or, rather three ways those threats are perceived:

1. Is the capability itself a threat? This concerns a threat which is perceived as an adversary's ability (capability) to deal serious damage to or completely obliterate, in our case, the United States. The immediate question, as it relates to Russia, is this: Can Russia obliterate the United States? She surely can, since she has this capability. Russia can also defeat the United States conventionally in her immediate geographic vicinity since she also possesses such a capability. But can Russia defeat the United States conventionally in the United States proper? Absolutely not, since no sane person in the Russian military command would develop any plans for an amphibious landing somewhere in Oregon or on the Massachusetts coast; Russia does not have such a capability. But as George Baer noted, observing the mindset of the US Navy during the times of détente in the 1970s: "The Navy looked to Soviet capabilities, saw a challenge, and stressed preparation *for an imminent conflict* [italics added]."²⁵ The Soviet Navy was closing the technological gap with the US Navy by the mid-1970s and was taking a lead in some crucial technological matters, but it remained a dedicated sea denial force designed strictly for deterrent, both nuclear and conventional and the Soviet Navy's force structure and doctrine reflected that perfectly. The Soviet Navy, like the modern Russian Navy today, was built largely for a single purpose: to prevent a NATO attack on the USSR from the sea. Power projection in its classic, US Navy interpretation, was the last thing in mind for Soviet strategists. There simply was no intent to start a war, the intent was to prevent it. This was and remains natural for such a country as Russia. Russia does have the capability to deal major damage to NATO's European members but, apart from Article 5 of the NATO treaty which would bring the United States into the conflict, even if there hadn't been such an article, the immediate question is: Why would Russia attack or damage European countries which are worth way more for Russia free and prosperous than they would be if damaged and theoretically, subjugated? Basic logic and common sense, supported by a real knowledge of Russia's 20th and 21st century history, answer this question unequivocally. Russia can but she won't. And that brings us to the second type, intent.

2. Is there an intent? Does Russia or any other state have an intent to get those capabilities? The answer, as already indicated above, is a resounding no. It is not enough to have a capability, to be a danger, the prospective enemy has to have an intent to use it. Of course, intent alone, without capability, doesn't amount to much. Intent can, however, motivate the creation of such a capability. There is no denying that some Islamic fighters do want to attack the United States, which has been instrumental in the destruction of seven Muslim-majority states, but it is doubtful they have the capability to damage the United States in any meaningful way, other than through propaganda, and do not represent a real existential threat, that is unless they should get extremely lucky at hitting one of the key areas of American statehood—which is an infinitesimally low probability. Even their intent to attack the US is not enough to enable them to obtain the capability required to present serious damage, let alone an existential threat, to the US. The US, Israel and Saudi Arabia's enemy, Iran, doesn't have any seriously manifested intentions to attack the United States. It is doubtful that this will change even if Iran were able to develop intercontinental ballistic missile and possibly, a nuclear warhead. Iran would still have no intent to make a suicidal attack on the United States. Iran possibly already is and possibly will become in the future an even greater regional "threat" to Israel and Saudi Arabia's regional interests—both these states have an anti-Iran agenda and are in pursuit of that through terrorist groups—but it is absolutely inconceivable to even contemplate a scenario in which Iran actually develops a taste, let alone a capacity, for damaging America's existence or even her most important national interests. The same, with some caveats, could also be applied to North Korea. So intent, or lack thereof, matters a great deal and it takes a very serious analytical effort, in our world dominated by catchy sensationalist headlines and overwhelmed with fake news including from supposedly "reputable" sources, to separate puffy threatening rhetoric, even originating at the official political level, from actual intent. That brings to the fore the threat which can be described as a fusion of these two.

3. A combination of capability and intent. This does represent a very real and clear-cut threat. Today, there is only one country in the world which has an overwhelming record of combining, at least theoretically, military capability and intent to practical ends: It is the United States. The United States in the post WWII period not only has had the real capability to destroy any nation, it indeed took steps to do so, whether by means of nuclear²⁶ or conventional weapons, as indicated in pretty much all cases of its extraterritorial interferences, from Korea to Vietnam, to Iraq, Libya and Afghanistan. This is not even counting US support for its proxies in the 21st century. The list of America's military interventions in the last 70 years is unrivaled. It is no surprise then that the US consistently tops a wide range of global public opinion polls as the main threat to the world peace.²⁷ No other nation can undertake such a massive range of wars all over the globe as does the US.

To achieve the needed capacity and public support for such an intent, the United States needs to run a very tight routine. It has to simultaneously present, sometimes by gross inflation, a set of threats to itself by means of conflating threats 1 and 2 into threat 3, while nonetheless insisting on American overwhelming military superiority over any power. It is a very schizophrenic policy requiring a constant reconciliation of opposites: If one claims itself to be almost omnipotent militarily, as the US does non-stop, it is really difficult to prove that one is also and simultaneously very vulnerable. In some psychiatric sense it is very close to the more specific *Russophobia* phenomenon, where Russia is simultaneously about to collapse and about to overtake the US, and the combined West. It is a classic Orwellian scenario from *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, which also involves such ideological imperatives as hate sessions and public affirmation of one's loyalty to the powers that be.

From the outside, this does not look healthy, and the world at large has started to react to the now well-understood American threat inflation, including its absurd "human rights" fig leaf rationale for a bloated military and war budget and for removing

any government not to the liking of the US. The world at large also took note of American internal policies, which increasingly are making less and less practical sense, indicating a serious mental crisis within America's ruling elites. The US military is not an exception. It is, however, less affected and, on average, more educated than its civilian leadership, producing a whole Pleiades of top military brass which now dominates Washington's political scene. But it is hardly proficient in both formulating practical strategies and providing able leadership in America's countless wars.

In general, American strategies fail because they are wrongly formulated by the wrong people and are not commensurate with America's actual military capability. They are also not commensurate with the real American military-technological and industrial capability. The American technological edge in warfare was grossly inflated along with its threats. As was pointed out in Chapter One of this book, the realization of the limitations, sometimes severe, of US military power is slowly making its way into both its military and political power circles. In fact, this process is not a novelty, far from it. Common sense and competent voices were heard in the US at the height of the Cold War tensions, long before the collapse of the Soviet Union, and those voices were not of second-tier military leaders. While by no means "friendly" to the Soviet Union, some American officers did indeed make honest attempts to assess and react to the realities of possible warfare with the USSR despite facing both professional in-service and political pressures arising against any such common sense and practical ideas.

There is no better an instance of such a person than the US Navy's Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) from 1970-1974, Admiral Elmo Zumwalt. Amongst the lay public he may also be known, on the one hand, for his efforts in fighting racism in the US Navy, and on the other, for his order to spray *Agent Orange* in Vietnam to clear river banks of vegetation, a decision which would have catastrophic health consequences both for many Vietnamese and US servicemen, not least of them Zumwalt's

son, a naval officer himself, who died from cancer as a result. It should be noted, however, that at the time the severe carcinogenic properties of defoliants were not known. Zumwalt may also be known today due to a three-ship namesake class of very innovative, but dubiously combat effective and astronomically expensive, destroyers. In fact, the Zumwalt-class DDGs cost \$4.4 billion for the first ship, with the last having a price tag of \$3.7 billion.²⁸ Ironically, this is precisely the type of naval weapons and procurement policies against which Zumwalt fought during his tenure at the highest positions within the US Navy and there is little doubt that he would have been horrified by the costs, inefficiency and waste of his namesake class of ships that could not fire their guns because the ammunition was too expensive.²⁹

During those times which eventually led to the US Armed Forces in general, and the US Navy in particular, becoming known as a hollow force, Zumwalt encountered a Soviet naval capability which was built around ever-improving missile technology. On October 21, 1967, a three-missile salvo from a Soviet-built, 62-ton, Egyptian *Komar*-class missile boat sank the *INS Eilat* with a new weapon, the P-15 *Termit*-class antishipping missile (ASM), and changed naval warfare dramatically. In fact, the revolution the *Jeune École* sought to launch a century before had finally happened because the technology had arrived. The Soviet Navy immediately recognized both the advantages and shortcomings of this new technology and saw its enormous promise. But the U.S. Navy didn't consider any cruise missile to be important enough to supplement, let alone substitute, U.S. carrier aviation. America's post-WWII Navy remained a carrier-centric force, which saw carrier-borne aviation as the main strike weapon of the US Navy, against both surface and land targets.

Zumwalt recognized a strategic flaw in such a force structure and was the first US naval leader who would try to address this problem. He wanted the US Navy to have a serious anti-shipping weapon present on a variety of naval platforms, from patrol aviation, such as the P-3 Orion aircraft, to frigates and destroyers. His efforts to develop a good (for its time) anti-

shipping cruise missile, such as the *Harpoon*, ran against a wall of extremely stiff resistance from what he termed the carrier aviators' "trade union". Later, Elmo Zumwalt would recall in his memoirs a message he received (at the time he was serving as the head of the Division of Systems Analysis) through the Chief Naval Officer's aide system that the new *Harpoon* cruise missile should not have a range of more than 50 miles.³⁰ As he himself admitted, the aviators' "union" was extremely sensitive to its prerogatives,³¹ which, as the history would later prove beyond a shadow of a doubt, would have extremely serious operational and strategic ramifications not only for the US Navy but for US foreign policy, which increasingly depended on military force, not diplomacy. Furthermore, this demonstrated the lack of a strategic culture based not only on a real assessment of both the capability of the opponent but also of the national interest based on a defensive, rather than offensive and purely imperial, considerations.

To be sure, Zumwalt succeeded, even if in part, in what today goes in the US as the "distributed lethality" concept. Not only did *Harpoons* enter service but even the initial appearance of Tomahawk cruise missiles as primarily anti-shipping weapons, can all be attributed to Zumwalt's efforts, as well as those of the group of high-ranking US naval officers, such as Admiral Stansfield Turner, a future head of the CIA, who, under the auspices of the Navy's internal document known as *Project 60*, was able to push through such a work horse of the US Navy as the *Oliver Hazard Perry-class* frigate. It was a very numerous class, 71 of those affordable and extremely durable ships were built and they deserve a very good reputation as a capable platform not only in the US Navy but even among Soviet and Russian naval professionals. Needless to say, most of those ships were armed with *Harpoons*.

Zumwalt recognized early the danger of a carrier-centric navy and the tremendous psychological and operational impact the loss of even one US Navy nuclear-powered carrier would create.³² Already by 1977 a single nuclear-carrier cost around \$1.44 billion, an astronomical price for a platform which carried

a comparable monetary value on its decks in the form of combat aircraft, thus presenting a very attractive, and extremely large, target for any adversary. While the US Navy carried on with its subsonic and relatively short-range anti-shipping missiles, with *Tomahawks* being reconfigured strictly into *TLAM* (Tactical Land Attack Missiles), the Soviet Navy never relented in its pursuit of advanced anti-shipping weapons (ASMs). The Soviet Navy, not burdened by the politics of internal “trade unions,” had no range issues and wanted both the range and speeds of its ASMs to be as great as possible.

At the end of the day, the Soviet Union had no plans to land its marines on American shores. The same could not be said in reverse. Hence for the Soviet Navy the issue of Sea Denial—not allowing the enemy to project power on its shores and into its territory—was a necessity and would require the sinking of the US Navy’s (and NATO’s) ships. No doubt, massive carriers and their CBGs provided excellent visuals and represented an embodiment of American power but the ASMs’ crossing of the supersonic speed barrier and acquiring the capacity to launch underwater was a technological reality for which the US Navy wasn’t ready. This caused a paradigm shift, putting the viability of carrier-centric navies into question when three major technological conditions for antishipping cruise missiles (ASCMs) were met:

1. ASCMs ranges became comparable to those of carrier aviation;
2. ASCMs became capable of underwater launch;
3. ASCMs became supersonic.

All three of these conditions were met in the early to mid-1970s with the early maturing of ASCM technology embodied in the ultimate Soviet, primarily anti-carrier, weapon, the *P-700 Granit* (*NATO: SS-N-19 Shipwreck*), carried by Soviet nuclear battle cruisers of the *Kirov* class and the enormous *Oscar* class missile submarines. This, in combination with the Soviet Naval Missile-carrying Aviation (MRA), which by the early 1970s was deploying the Mach 3-capable *AS-6 Kingfish* missile, made cost effectiveness central to the viability of carriers since they now had

to face the possibility of a massive and coordinated ASCM salvo both from underwater and from the air.³³

By that time, U.S. nuclear carriers not only had become the U.S. Navy's main strike force, they had become prohibitively expensive, generating inevitable questions of risk aversion and risk avoidance. As retired Navy Captain Jerry Hendrix noted: "The carrier has been operating in low-threat, permissive environments almost continuously since World War II. At no time since 1946 has a carrier had to fend off attacks by enemy aircraft, surface ships, or submarines. No carrier has had to establish a sanctuary for operations and then defend it."³⁴ But even before Hendrix, a few others were not silenced by the politics of appropriations and dubious combat performances combined with uncritical self-praise. None other than Stansfield Turner pointed out the necessity of a new strategy in 1984 by committing a US Naval operational sacrilege:

Spreading the Navy's striking power over more ships would help avoid a problem of the past. History shows that military commanders in the field have a tendency to back away from opportunities if the odds of winning are not very high and the consequences of defeat would be high. This tendency has already beset the US Navy whose fighting power is concentrated in its few large carriers. Small aircraft carriers are more appropriate, then, for both the sea control and the intervention missions."³⁵

To be sure, those calls were dismissed. While an argument could have been made about the targeting problems the Soviet Navy faced when "hunting" for the U.S. Navy's carrier battle groups (CBGs) in the 1970s or even the 1980s, the eventual improvement in targeting was predictable. Sailing undetected 70-80 nautical miles off the coast of the Kamchatka Peninsula, as was done on a couple of occasions in the 1970s and even early 1980s by the U.S. Navy's CBGs, is not an option today. By the

mid-1990s, with new, deadlier Russian ASCMs and more capable sensors emerging, the necessity for US aircraft carriers to adapt to new technological realities could not be denied. In Arnold Toynbee's parlance, a new-fangled technique had finally arrived.³⁶

This technique fully matured by the mid-2000s and offered a combination of level 1 threats which dramatically exposed the vulnerability of carriers and with it raised a serious doubt about the whole concept of a carrier-centric navy. It put the real strength of the main pillar of American might under serious doubt. Admitting that at that time was tantamount to admitting an utter and costly failure, without parallel in history, of the whole concept not only of the American naval force but, as a consequence, of the US military as a whole. In 2007 Professor Roger Thompson published a watershed study of the US Navy's "status quo culture" in a volume symptomatically titled *Lessons Not Learned*. The book was published by the US Naval Institute Press, a rather telling sign of a worry which could no longer be either ignored or hidden. In addition to the many valid points concerning the technological and combat readiness failures of the US carrier-centric naval force, Thompson also addressed an overall cultural problem which had hampered American military views since the end of World War Two:

Through his many bestselling books and movies, author Tom Clancy has created a crisp, sharp, spit-polished, efficient, and patriotic image for the U.S. Navy. Some think he might be a paid public relations consultant or recruiter for the American submarine force. It may come as a shock to some of his readers, however, that the American ships, submarines, aircraft, equipment, and sailors in his books are too good to be true. In 2001, Shuger suggested that Americans have placed too much stock in Clancy's writings, and that is perhaps especially damaging since Clancy moved from novels to nonfiction. The result ... is that millions

and millions of people have gotten most of what they know about warfare and the US military from an ex-insurance agent who never served a day on active duty.³⁷

Here was the Charmez “effect” all over again, also Pattonesque in its detachment from the reality. But if professionals, at least many of them, could filter out Clancy’s propaganda, very many in policy making circles could not. And most especially, neither could people in the media. Yet, with Clancy or without him, technological development continued and force mismatch continued to grow. A decade before Roger Thompson’s important treatise, Douglas MacGregor cited Marine Major General James L. Jones in his *Breaking the Phalanx* as saying: “All it takes to panic a battle group is seeing somebody dropping a couple of 50 gallon drums into the water.”³⁸ Defending against a salvo of six, eight, or even 16 supersonic ASCMs in an extremely active and hostile Electronic Counter-Countermeasures (ECCM) environment, is practically impossible, making the CBG’s air defenses considerably less effective and deployment of even the most advanced and defended CBGs within the range of modern supersonic ASCMs extremely risky. Getting within the range of hypersonic ASCMs will spell the doom of any naval force, in the event of any engagement.

It is here that the issue of threat inflation begins to be seen in a completely new light. There is no denying that US policy-makers and the media are in a league of their own when inflating, exaggerating, and embellishing just about any real or often non-existent threat. Yet, for decades the real threat to the main pillar on which Pax Americana rests—its naval power projection forces built around hugely expensive and increasingly vulnerable aircraft carriers and large amphibious landing ships—was never realistically addressed. That raises a number of very serious policy and doctrinal questions. Sure, one may continue to insist on a Clancyesque view of US weapon systems that are undeniably impressive on paper and in advertisement videos loaded with computer-generated imagery (CGI), such as a part of the Aegis

combat system, *AN/SPY 1*, and its numerous upgrades. But it is no secret that the US Navy trains in shooting down supersonic target simulators in what seems to be settings for so-called “augmented” (i.e. scripted) exercises.³⁹ Furthermore, from its very inception, serious flaws in the Aegis system have been covered up and have almost led to the abandoning of the program altogether.⁴⁰ There is absolutely no empirical or theoretical data indicating any reliable probability of any combination of the US Navy’s air defense systems intercepting a salvo of modern supersonic ASCMs. The math is simply not there.

Yet, the investment in and building of gigantic and increasingly vulnerable carriers continues even despite many in the carrier aviation “union” itself warning that this is a doctrinal dead end. As highly experienced carrier aviators, Commanders Joseph A. Gattuzo and Lori J. Tanner, warned in 2001:

In the past, the successful nations were those who best tailored force structures to meet political objectives... Cruise missiles will replace manned aircraft and sink the ships that carry them... Money spent furthering manned aircraft technologies and programs—the CVNX (proposed *Nimitz*-class carrier replacement) being one of them—is like polishing cannonballs so they will fly a little farther.⁴¹

Today the US Navy, as well as the US military overall, doesn’t have a force structure to face very real technological threats to themselves due to trying to apply aggressive, rigid and outdated doctrines with technology to match. It is a well-known fact that the US lags behind Russia and even China in developing serious long-range supersonic anti-shipping missiles, nor is it a secret that Russia’s new-generation air-defense complexes such as the S-400 or upcoming S-500 have already changed the paradigm for both carrier and ground-based aviation. When defending Russia they can and will make its use extremely dangerous and

very costly. The simple tactical fact that the US Navy's carriers and most of its expensive and capable ships, to say nothing of its largely defenseless and criminally expensive Littoral Combat Ships, become merely good fat targets in littoral environments can no longer be denied. In the words of Roger Thompson, echoed by many serious military professionals both in the US and around the globe: "... with all due respect, there is a good reason to believe that mighty U.S. Navy is simply overrated..."⁴²

This applies fully to all US military forces. And this is a very real and not an inflated threat both to the US and to the world at large, since there are numerous reasons to believe that many US policy makers and in its military leadership simply fail to grasp the consequences of their making a decision on the use of force based both on grossly-inflated threats while betting on the grossly-overrated capabilities of their own forces. It's not a case where two equal and opposite wrongs make a right. People who cannot formulate appropriately-weighted and proportionate military-political responses are hardly qualified for NON-Threat Inflationary assessments. Thus the question is, if those threats were and are so great, how come the defense measures and technology were and remain so patently inadequate to those threats?

The answer to that is simple: Nobody realistically threatens the existence of the United States, nobody plans to attack it unless attacked first, and that removes any pressures to be actually commensurate in the military sphere, or follow a common sense path of defense expenditures and technological development which necessitates hardware and fighting doctrines which actually work. Without those pressures the world is presented with a shaky, violent, disintegrating Pax Americana and its tools which do not and will not work against those US targets who have the will and capability to resist a very real, not-inflated threat by the American exceptionalists.

This is very bad news for the current American elites.

THE FAILURE TO COME TO GRIPS WITH THE MODERN GEOPOLITICAL REALIGNMENT

In 2007, when Vladimir Putin gave his landmark speech in Munich in which he merely stated the obvious—that the fundamental principles on which US foreign policy was built were unilateralism based on both real and perceived national power, and that he rejected that—reactions varied. But Senator John McCain’s response was bizarre. He described Putin’s remarks as “the most aggressive remarks by a Russian leader since the end of the Cold War.”¹

Three years prior to Putin’s Munich speech, Karl Rove summarized the essence of US foreign policy in his now famous dictum: “We’re an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you’re studying that reality—judiciously, as you will—we’ll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that’s how things will sort out. We’re history’s actors . . . and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do.”² In some sense it was a very contemporary American statement insofar as it was offered by a man who had no background, skills, education or life experience whatsoever in the fields which define real national power, a pattern which today

defines US decision making. It was offered by a political operative with a major in political science, a discipline which hasn't fared that well as a "science" and has a rather startling record of failures in its forecasts.

Yet, this boastful statement gave a great insight into the mindset of the American political class at the time. This class and its academe didn't hesitate to assign to itself the credit for the collapse of the Soviet Union and were still in full awe with how the US Armed Forces demolished a demoralized, corrupt and underequipped Iraqi Army in a battle in which the outcome was never in doubt. Nobody remembered then that in 1991, during the collapse of the Soviet Union, in the words of Pat Buchanan: "The Russian people, having extended a hand in friendship [had] seen it slapped away..."³

At that time it seemed simply unimportant how Russia or China would react. After all, in Rove's words, the USA was creating its own reality. This self-made reality approach to actual reality was unavoidable in a nation where the fields of geopolitics and what amounts to national security studies were and still are dominated by people of the likes of Francis Fukuyama or the late Zbigniew Brzezinski, of Polish rather than American origin, whose rabid Russophobia, became legendary. Nor were Soviet/Russian dissidents or emigres, who had very strong urges to settle accounts with the Soviets, much better as sources of knowledge on either the Soviet Union or contemporary Russia. As Colonel Pat Lang noted, commenting on CIA Director Mike Pompeo:

You cannot overestimate the effect of the long term baleful effect [*sic*] of the anti-Russia school at Garmisch* and the spread of the effect of the influence of the opinions of its graduates. I don't know if Pompeo took Russian as a language at WP (West Point). All cadets were required to take a language. If it was Russian, that faculty in the language department were all Russophobes and led on by an aged White Russian civilian

permanent type who foamed at the mouth at the word, Bolshevik. The head of the Russian language group was an immigrant Siberian colonel who had grown up in Shanghai where his father was an inspector in the Chinese customs. He didn't like the modern Russians much either.⁴

Ideologically or otherwise biased experts cannot provide the kind of expertise or training environment states want or need when trying to develop a long-term national geopolitical strategy based on an objective understanding of the only other state which has the means to obliterate every living creature in the world several times over. But even today this is exactly the type of people who define US Russia policies. This is also how mid to long-term prognoses were and are being made. Released in 2000, the CIA's predictions for 2015, titled *Global Trends 2015: A Dialogue about the Future with Nongovernment Experts*, didn't fare that well in predicting anything Russia-related. This prediction was rather bland and unimaginative: "The international community will have to deal with the military, political, and economic dimensions of the rise of China and India and the continued decline of Russia."⁵ In hindsight many of those predictions turned out to be completely wrong.

On the other hand, the 1999 NATO aggression against Serbia would sober Russia dramatically with regard to the combined West's intentions. This started the process of Russia returning to the global stage which she had left pretty much on her own volition under the impression that Western values were fully applicable to Russia and they were worth trying. But those primarily globalist values exported to Russia by the combined West, once operationalized in Russia, led to a wholesale rejection by the majority of Russians, after seeing their collective longevity plummet by nearly 10 years as a result.

This rejection was wrongly interpreted by Western observers as Russians hating their inability to deter NATO's destroying Russia's historic Orthodox brethren in Serbia. To be sure, Russia then was not in the best of shape. What hadn't been

understood at that time, however, was that even in 1999 Russia still had the resources to influence the outcome of NATO's campaign over Serbia. But at that time the extremely pro-Western political elites in Russia had sabotaged any serious attempt to offer military help to Serbia. Nonetheless, that gave rise to the understanding in Russia that Russia's passive, if not outright submissive, position on the international arena, which was greatly influenced by Russia's very real internal weakness due to the completely alien robber-baron capitalism resulting from Western-induced restructuring, should not be maintained anymore. It was the NATO aggression against Serbia in 1999—not the global war on terror that followed the dramatic and tragic events of 9/11 that started a major shift in the global balance of power—that gave rise to Russia's realization that she was not being taken seriously as either an ally or as part of the combined West. As Vladimir Putin himself admitted, it was the war on Serbia which became a watershed moment in Russia's post-Cold War history, symbolized by the famous U-turn over the Atlantic by the plane of Russia's then foreign minister, Evgeniy Primakov, on his way to the US, once the first reports of attacks on Serbia were received.⁶

Undeniably, the factor of China's economic growth was important as early as the late 1980s when considering the emerging geopolitical structure. But while China's Most Favored Nation status was made permanent in December 2001, this status was not extended to Russia, despite her having already had her democratic institutions operational for a decade and having, for all intents and purposes, what would qualify, in the US at least, as a "market" economy. Nor was Jewish immigration from the USSR, a central point of *Jackson-Vanik Amendment*, which tied trade preferences to "human rights", an issue in 1990s Russia. Yet, it was the *Jackson-Vanik Amendment* which continued, under all kinds of pretexts, to be applied to Russia.

Apart from its economic effects, the Amendment became a lasting symbol of the unrelenting aggressive American approach to Russia. If that approach could have been at least partially justified by realities of the Cold War, the question for Russians

in the 1990s or 2000s was not only warranted but unavoidable: why was this Cold War relic still in place when by the end of the 1990s there was very little doubt of Russia getting to the point of self-humiliation in trying to accommodate the West's demands and wishes? The answer, realistically, was never a secret for the majority of Russia's military, intelligence and real—not Western grants-supported—academe. The issue was Russia herself as such and the general Western desire, and that of America in particular, to see this nation simply removed as a serious geopolitical actor.

Moreover, the realities of NATO expansion towards Russia's borders have not been lost on many in the Russian elite either. In the end, for Russians it was, apart from the obvious massive military strategic implications, a moral issue of the West's broken promise not to enlarge NATO. While many in the West vehemently denied any promises being given to Soviet leaders, for Russians there was never any doubt that the promise was given and that it was broken. This remains the case even today. As *Der Spiegel* concluded:

After speaking with many of those involved and examining previously classified British and German documents in detail, *SPIEGEL* has concluded that there was no doubt that the West did everything it could to give the Soviets the impression that NATO membership was out of the question for countries like Poland, Hungary or Czechoslovakia. On Feb. 10, 1990, between 4 and 6:30 p.m., Genscher spoke with Shevardnadze. According to the German record of the conversation, which was only recently declassified, Genscher said: 'We are aware that NATO membership for a unified Germany raises complicated questions. For us, however, one thing is certain: NATO will not expand to the east.' And because the conversion revolved mainly around East Germany, Genscher added explicitly: 'As far as the non-expansion of

NATO is concerned, this also applies in general.’ Shevardnadze replied that he believed “everything the minister (Genscher) said.”⁷

Very few in the West, at that time, bothered with calculating the consequences of their geopolitical triumphalism and assessing the moral dimension of the West’s decisions. At that time, Russia was wrongly considered a declining and, bar her nuclear arsenal, a departing power. Indeed, Russia’s economic troubles in the 1990s had very American origins. The entire program of economic restructuring—termed shock therapy—developed and implemented under the supervision of Jeffrey Sachs of Harvard University resulted in a spectacular failure which not only brought much suffering to the Russian people together with a drastic weakening of the Russian state, but had metaphysical implications. The ultimate failure of economic “reforms” in Russia forced Sachs to admit that the “patient had a different anatomy.”⁸ Ideas of “democratic capitalism” and the core values of liberal economics simply did not go down well in Russia. That created confusion among the ideologues of Western liberalism and universalism.

Thus the danger of which the late Samuel Huntington warned came to pass. The world was much more complex and intricate than the American view of it. Huntington was prescient when he actually stated: “In the emerging world of ethnic conflict and civilizational clash, Western belief in the universality of Western culture suffers three problems: it is false; it is immoral; and it is dangerous.”⁹ The Western imposition of its capitalist culture on Russia exemplified all three, thus becoming emblematic of the US’s doctrinal fallacy in thinking that the nations of the world could be brought into a global capitalist system under Western domination with sufficient reward to themselves as to quell opposition. Indeed, by many major metrics Russia could have conceivably been viewed as a Western nation. Even the Russophobic Brzezinski couldn’t deny the fact that “Given that Russia’s demographic center of gravity is in Europe, and that

its culture is derived from Byzantine Christendom, Russia can be legitimately seen as the Eastern extremity of Europe, in both geopolitical and cultural terms.”¹⁰ But in the wake of the Cold War, it became clear that the West had no belief in its ideological postulates as policy-determining factors in any event; even an allegedly “defeated” Russia was still to be treated as defined in 1952 by Lord Ismay’s famous *raison d’être* for NATO: “to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down.”¹¹

Undeniably, for all of Russia’s largely European character, Russians themselves had a long list of very legitimate grievances towards the combined West. Russia’s Europeanism was to a very large degree contingent upon the West’s behavior towards her. There were, however, very few, if any, signs that the combined West looked at Russia as an organic part of itself.¹² While there were serious economic interests linking Russia to Western Europe, the Western aggression against Serbia began the contemporary process of alienation. It was just a matter of time before a final cultural break with West in general and Europe in particular would happen.

Indeed, Russia does have different anatomy. It couldn’t have been otherwise with a nation whose history had forced it to be in survival mode for a millennium and required, as Czar Alexander III put it, only two reliable allies: “her army and the navy.”¹³ Unlike his largely incapacitated and despicable predecessor, Boris Yeltsin, Vladimir Putin took Alexander’s truism to heart. It was also what the overwhelming majority of Russians were calling for. The brief period of Russian-American rapprochement in the wake of the 9/11 tragedy and an enormous outpouring of sympathy and support from Russians for the United States lasted only until the start of the *Operation Iraqi Freedom* in 2003—a folly of such an enormous scale and consequences that there were no doubts left in Russia about the *irrationality* of American foreign policy.

With NATO creeping closer to Russia’s borders and with the United States deploying Islamic terrorism against the very people who could help contain it in the Middle East, it became

plainly clear that the American vision of the world order was built on military supremacy. But it also became clear that this vision was completely detached from any understanding of the consequences of warfare and the resources it required, even from such a nation as the US, which then was considered the largest economy in the world. The very notion that the US would bankrupt itself through those wars, as was predicted by many, not least Osama Bin Laden, was considered a sacrilege.

In fact, this has been at the heart of the historical American expansionist vision.¹⁴ Its contemporary version has been built on a whole host of neoconservative doctrines, concurrent with their emergence as a major power in American political life. Ever since the Reagan presidency, neoconservatives have been running the show in Washington D.C. through both Democratic and Republican administrations. As testament to the flippancy with which war is regarded, Jonah Goldberg cited one of the major neoconservative ideologues, Michael Ledeen's so-called "doctrine": "Every ten years or so, the United States needs to pick up some small crappy little country and throw it against the wall, just to show the world we mean business."¹⁵ This, in the end, amounted to what could only be termed as political, military, and even operational, short-sightedness, and it became a defining characteristic of US foreign policy and of its perception of its own, greatly exaggerated, military power.

To exist in such a world, where American military power protagonists were omnipresent in the American policy setting and academic institutions, required a drastic revision of Russia's posture. Indeed, how could one negotiate anything with people who were constantly wound up to fever pitch by Russophobia and the desire to fight Russians? As early as the Russo-Georgian War of August, 2008, Vice-President Dick Cheney and people from his staff were pushing for at least considering a US military response to Russia, including bombing Russian troops in the Roki Tunnel.¹⁶ But Russia's Army, often portrayed in the West as backwards and not on par with Western Armed Forces (namely formations of the 58th Army), disposed of the American-trained and -armed

Georgian Army in a matter of 96 hours. In an effort to salvage the Georgian training and spin the evident defeat, one analytical report stated:

Indeed, at the tactical level, in direct fire engagements between Russian and Georgian units of relatively equal size, Georgian forces seem to have inflicted more damage than they suffered. In part, this was due to superior Georgian equipment—many Georgian tanks and infantry fighting vehicles were equipped with reactive armor, night vision equipment, advanced radios, and superior fire control systems installed under contract by an Israeli defense firm, while most Russian vehicles lacked these improvements. Georgian forces also benefited from training administered by U.S. and other Western countries designed to prepare them for their deployments to Kosovo and Iraq. While generally focused on stability operations or counterinsurgency, this training taught skills relevant to conventional engagements at the tactical level as well—skills such as reacting to contact and using firepower to support maneuver against the enemy.¹⁷

How American training had “benefited” an utterly destroyed Georgian Army was difficult to conceive by anyone with even an iota of common military, strategic and tactical sense.

It was impossible to hide this significant political and military outcome from Russia and the embarrassing fact that American COIN-oriented training had been a waste of time and resources in geopolitical arenas in which combined arms operations and nation-states mattered. Obviously, the fact that the 58th Army was an army equipped specifically for counter-terrorism operations in the Caucasus, which were less dependent on hi-tech warfare, had been ignored by very many American

analysts. But here, for the first time in her post-Cold War history, was an American proxy, which was considered militarily capable of defeating Russia by one of America's favorite Russian military "analysts," Pavel Falgenhauer,¹⁸ completely demolished, leading to the country of Georgia being broken up, all that within five days. This was like the Ledeen Doctrine in action but as deployed by Russia, albeit with one very important caveat: Russia didn't attack first. Later even such American political heavy weights as former National Security Adviser and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice were forced to admit that it was Georgia which started the war.¹⁹ The Russo-Georgian War showed that Russia's conventional military power mattered. It also showed the complete and not entirely sincere myopia of the combined West when dealing with any issue related to Russia. The West's actions finally convinced the Russian elites of the impossibility of any rational dialogue with the US, and, as a consequence with Europe. The only way for Russia to deal with this situation was by returning itself to the status of superpower and that is exactly what was done.

It is very difficult to pinpoint the exact time when Russia distinctly decided for itself that the US is not a treaty-worthy party but there is no denying that there was a growing realization in Moscow that any agreement with the US on any serious geopolitical matter was not worth the paper it would be written on. At the same time it was inevitable that Russia would start her serious rapprochement with China. The financial crisis of 2008 and the continued turmoil within the American elites were clear signs of a systemic, institutional crisis in the combined West. If by 2012 the attitudinal and policy revision towards the West was gaining steam inside Russia, the 2014 coup in Ukraine, unleashed by the US and its European allies,²⁰ would become a turning point for what commonly became known (and justified) as *Pax Americana*.

It would also become a moment of cultural suicide committed by the combined West, demolishing the West's standing in Russia. In a distinctly historic first in what, even ten years before, would have been considered inconceivable, the

blood of Russian and Russo-phone civilians had been shed in the Donbas region of Ukraine. All that was done with the direct political and financial assistance from the US and that changed internal Russian dynamics dramatically. Everything Russians had been saying about the West in general, and the US in particular, *sotto voce*, was finally spoken openly and some of it became the foundation of Russia's new foreign and internal policies. Though never xenophobic towards Americans, the majority of Russians started, in a grim historic revision, to openly view the United States government as heading an evil empire. Europe, and her political, not to speak of cultural, values, were openly scorned. In what was a historic first in Russia, Europe began to be viewed not with envy but with contempt. For decades the communist propaganda machine in the USSR had been trying to convince a new post-WWII generation of Russians that the combined West, headed by the US, was an enemy but had largely failed. And now here was the understanding that the massive Soviet propaganda effort had failed to achieve in 70 years, accomplished by modern communications technologies, in a stunningly short time and on an unprecedented scale. The internet played a decisive role, allowing Russians to see the West's actions in almost real time.

May 9, 2015 marked the 70th Anniversary of victory in the Great Patriotic War. Western media coverage of the Victory Day Parade at Red Square was frenzied. They were witnessing the new Russian Armed Forces, modern, superbly equipped and featuring state of the art military hardware. Some of it, such as the *T-14 Armata* main battle tank, epitomized a revolution in military technology. Worse, the procession marched in a front of a podium where Vladimir Putin and China's Xi Jinping, along with the leaders of India, other former Soviet republics, and Serbia stood side by side.

But however impressive, it wasn't the Red Square military parade which was the main event. Rather, it was what followed, which should have given a combined West a real shock yet was barely covered by Western media: massive marches in all Russian cities of what became known as the *Immortal Regiment*. More

than 12 million people marched all over Russia that day. In the evening, a stunning concert-remembrance in Red Square marked a decisive repudiation of Russia's policies of the last 25 years of its existence as an independent state. While the West largely ignored what was happening after the parade, William Engdahl in a profound and justifiably emotional piece titled "*Why I Wept at the Russian Parade*," encapsulated the massive shift in global dynamics which manifested itself that day:

In what can only be described in a spiritual manner, the events of May 9, Victory Day over Nazism, that took place across all Russia, transcended the specific day of memory on the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II in 1945. It was possible to see a spirit emerge from the moving events unlike anything this author has ever witnessed in his life. When the television cameras zoomed in on President Vladimir Putin who was also marching, he was walking freely and open amid the thousands of citizens, holding a picture of his deceased father who had served in the war and was severely wounded in 1942. Putin was surrounded not by bulletproof limousines that any US President since the assassination of Kennedy in 1963 would have, were he even to dare to get close to a crowd. There were three or four presidential security people near Putin, but there were thousands of ordinary Russians within arm's length of one of the most influential world leaders of the present time. There was no climate of fear visible anywhere. My tears at seeing the silent marchers and at seeing Putin amid them was an unconscious reaction to what, on reflection, I realized was my very personal sense of recognition how remote from anything comparable in my own country, the United States



Immortals Regiment Mar.ch. The streets of Moscow.



Putin with picture of his father, Immortal Regiment March.

of America, such a memorial march in peace and serenity would be today. There were no “victory” marches after US troops destroyed Iraq; no victory marches after Afghanistan; no victory marches after Libya. Americans today have nothing other than wars of death and destruction to commemorate and veterans coming home with traumas and radiation poisonings that are ignored by their own government.²¹

Similar to Tolstoy’s prose, in his reflection on the events following Borodino Battle in *War and Peace*, the events of May 9, 2015 showed a reacquired national history and sense of self so long denied to Russians due to the malignant consequences resulting from misinterpretations of the West’s intentions:

But all the generals and soldiers of [Napoleon’s] army...experienced a similar feeling of terror before an enemy who, after losing half his men, stood as threateningly at the end as at the beginning of the battle. The moral force of the attacking French army was exhausted. Not that

sort of victory which is defined by the capture of pieces of material fastened to sticks, called standards, and of the ground on which the troops had stood and were standing, but a moral victory that convinces the enemy of the moral superiority of his opponent and of his own impotence was gained by the Russians at Borodino...The direct consequence of the battle of Borodino was Napoleon's senseless flight from Moscow... and the downfall of Napoleonic France, on which at Borodino for the first time the hand of an opponent of stronger spirit had been laid.²²

The 2015 Victory Parade was an event and outcome whose significance very few in the West could really grasp. It made an emotional, rather than formal political, statement of Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping's closeness, as they sat still next to each other during the stunning Red Square evening performance, underscoring the emerging alliance between Russia and China. Here, the worst nightmare of American geopolitical and foreign policy consensus was on display: the two most powerful Eurasian nations declaring full independence from the American vision of the world.

This new alternative vision was displayed that same year with Russia's involvement in the war in Syria. A Professor of Strategy from the US Naval War College, Nicholas Gvosdev, while still repeating all the clichés and simulacra, which had led the US into the state it found itself by 2015, nonetheless bluntly admitted in 2017 that:

It is no secret that Russia has taken steps in its foreign and domestic policies in recent years that clash with U.S. preferences. A series of proposals were advanced—and some adopted by the Obama administration—in the hopes of changing the Kremlin's calculus and bringing about a change

in behavior. For the most part, those hopes have been dashed, and confident statements made by the outgoing team for the last several years about Russian isolation and weakness have not been borne out by events.

After three years of sanctions, increased confrontation between Russia and the West, and the first major combat operations undertaken by Moscow “out of area” since the collapse of the Soviet Union, it is clear that a number of the verities taken as gospel truth about Russia, particularly by American politicians, need to be revisited. Contrary to many public statements of U.S. experts, the Putin administration has seemed to be able to survive Western economic sanctions, collapsing energy prices and the strains caused by military action. Why? One area that appears to have largely been ignored is to examine how much maintenance of Russia as a great power seems to matter to many Russians’ own sense of personal identity and well-being....there does seem to be something there—that Russians believe that Russia’s standing in the world connects in a personal way to their own sense of worth.²³

Here it was, a display of a complete abrogation of understanding of even the basic facts of Russia’s history and culture which has plagued American thinkers and policy makers for decades, thus resulting both in the gross underestimation of Russia’s capabilities and a no less gross overestimation of their own. It was even more remarkable against the background of the free flow of information and unprecedented openness of Russian society for decades but here it was—a complete implosion of American geopolitics which had failed miserably to track and understand the nature of the tectonic changes taking place in the world precisely due to the American myopic and unrealistic vision

of herself and the surrounding world. The very basic idea that other nations do have their own visions of themselves and have their own interests which do not involve Americans favorite memes of “global leadership” and “democracy”—as seen by the United States—somehow escaped American elites who for decades have constructed a bizarre picture detached from the reality of the outside world and have continued to live in it despite many indications of such a world being nothing more than a fantasy.

That dangerous fantasy was built around what for more than two decades was viewed as the denuclearization of military conflict. For decades the myth of American military power rested on the assumption of the US being capable of defeating any power conventionally. In 2008, in an interview to one of Russia’s news outlets, Yuri Solomonov, chief designer of a number of Russia’s ballistic missiles, including the Bulava SLBM carried by Russia’s latest nuclear powered strategic missile submarines of the Borey-class, stressed that prospective conflict denuclearization was emanating primarily from the United States which at that time saw itself as unrivaled in military technology and specifically, in its ground and air forces. US naval dominance was never in doubt, of course, but even here with some caveats. It was only natural that the nation which at that time possessed a decisive advantage in Precision-Guided Munitions (PGMs) would try to denuclearize warfare.²⁴

In the end, the majority of military professionals around the globe agreed that PGMs are capable of having a strategic impact equal to that of nuclear weapons. Nor was it a secret that Barack Obama simply didn’t “like” nuclear weapons which at that timewere a foundation of Russia’s across the board deterrent. This was explicitly stated in Russia’s year 2000 *Military Doctrine*. By the time the *Military Doctrine 2010* came about it contained, however, for the first time, a rather startling point. Admitting increasing technological complexity and the impact of non-nuclear weapons, unlike the previous doctrine, the new Doctrine explicitly stated in Article 22 that Russia’s measures of strategic force containment would use Precision Guided Weapons.²⁵

That was new for those in the US who studied Soviet and Russian military developments through the late Tom Clancy's books. For those who knew better it was not only expected, it was long overdue. That didn't prevent one of America's Russian purported military experts, Dmitry Gorenburg of Harvard University and of the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, from asserting that in Syria "For the first time, Russian aircraft used precision-guided munitions (PGMs) in combat."²⁶ The fact that both the Soviet Union in Afghanistan and Russia in both Chechen Wars were using PGMs somehow escaped Gorenburg's expertise.

Obviously, all great powers in history produced their own visual and mental symbols which reflected their conception of the pillars on which their power rested. Throughout the ages much of that symbolism was represented by weaponry. For the United States since the early 1990s that symbolism was represented by the vision of screens of multi-function displays with pictures of American PGMs hitting unsuspecting enemy targets—videogame warfare. PGMs became an American symbol, together with a modified utopian vision of Duhe's air power and the concept of a clean, standoff weapons-driven war mostly from the air.

Very few inside the US were ready to face what unfolded in Donbas in 2014 and 2015. If the Russo-Georgian War was the first serious sign of combined arms warfare remaining a principal means of fighting a real war, events in Ukraine produced a cultural shock for many in the US military and political establishment. Far from being clean, the clash between the armed forces of Ukraine and the Donbass formations produced results which completely overturned all American warfare assumptions of the previous 20-plus years. Unlike in the Middle East, here were derivatives of the former Soviet Armed Forces which were fighting each other. Here were two militaries which were distinctly not Arab ones which provided a glimpse into a real conventional war. While the American pop-myth about Russian Army regular formations being present in Donbass persisted, the ferocity and complexity of the operations in Donbass stunned many American military

observers. Indeed, how could it be that the numerically vastly superior (albeit still stuck operationally and hardware-wise in the early 1990s), Ukrainian Armed Forces continued to sustain one defeat after another and, eventually, ended up with two catastrophic encirclements at Ilovaisk and Debaltsevo.

On August 2, 2015 Joe Gould fired the first real serious shot at the edifice of American military symbolism with the piece symptomatically titled “Electronic Warfare: What the US Army Can Learn from Ukraine.” There, while narrating Russia’s Electronic Warfare capabilities which were employed by Russia in support of the Donbass forces, and which Lt. General Ben Hodges described as “eye watering,”²⁷ Gould singled out a one-liner from an adviser to the Ukrainian Defense Ministry who was very down to point when he stated that the “future of war is in Ukraine.”²⁸ But by far most revealing was Laurie Buckhout’s admission that “Our biggest problem is we have not fought in a [communications]-degraded environment for decades, so we don’t know how to do it. We lack not only tactics, techniques and procedures but the training to fight in a comms-degraded environment.”²⁹ In fact, the United States military hadn’t fought any adversary which could provide a serious fire response on the ground, in the air and on the water since WWII. Douglas Macgregor warned about what was demonstrated in Donbas in *Time* magazine four years before events in Ukraine unfolded:

In 110 days of fighting the German army in France during 1918, the U.S. Army Expeditionary Force sustained 318,000 casualties, including 110,000 killed in action. That’s the kind of lethality waiting for U.S. forces in a future war with real armies, air forces, air defenses and naval power. Ignoring this reality is the road to future defeats and American decline. It’s time to look beyond the stirring images of infantrymen storming machine-gun nests created by Hollywood and to see war for what it is and will be in the future: the

ruthless extermination of the enemy with accurate, devastating firepower from the sea, from the air, from space and from mobile, armored firepower on land.³⁰

But it would take salvos of land attack cruise missiles of the Kalibr family, 3M14, launched from the Russian Navy's small missile ships in the Caspian Sea and strategic bombers launching other cruise missiles, X-101s, at the Islamic State and other terrorist targets in Syria on October 7, 2015 which would finally answer the question of why the long talked-about multipolarity and American decline had become hard facts of life. The answer did not even lie in Russia's successfully conducting an air operation in Syria or in demonstrating an impressive array of PGMs. That Russia had those capabilities and expertise was not a secret to real experts. The issue was that for the first time it was openly demonstrated, and the world took the note, that the American monopoly on symbols of power was officially broken. Moreover, events in both Ukraine and Syria had shown that clean, standoff wars were nothing more than anomalies and that there was no data which could point out how dynamics of the possible peer-to-peer conventional conflict would be influenced in a guaranteed case of the "finest fighting force in history" fighting under conditions in which it would be severely impacted by a range of serious military factors. Several important conclusions were not only warranted but irresistible.

1) The United States military in future conflicts will have to deal, in the case of conventional conflict against a near-peer, let alone peer, with an adversary who will have C4ISR capability either approaching that or on par with that of the US. This adversary will have the ability to counter US military decision cycles (OODA loop) with equal frequency and will be able to produce better tactical, operational and strategic decisions.

2) US real and perceived advantage in electronic means of

warfare (EW) will be greatly reduced or completely suppressed by present and future EW means of the adversary thus forcing US forces to fight under the conditions of partial or complete electronic blindness and with partially or completely suppressed communications and computer networks.

3) The US will encounter combat technologies not only on par but often better designed and used, from armor to artillery, to hyper-sonic anti-shipping missiles, than anything the US military has ever encountered.

4) Modern air-forces and complex advanced air defense systems will make the main pillar of US military power—its Air Force—much less effective.

5) Today the US military will have to deal with the grim reality of its staging areas, rear supply facilities and lines of communications being the target of massive salvos of long-range high subsonic, supersonic and hyper-sonic missiles. The US military has never encountered such a paradigm in its history. Moreover, already today, the US lower 48 is not immune from a conventional massive missile strike.

This was not what American hegemony was supposed to look like but that is how is increasingly global military theatres it may faces will look like. But if the United States doesn't have an overwhelming conventional military advantage over at least two of the world's major powers—Russia, and, to a lesser degree, China—the question thus is inevitable: what was the real extent of American dominance? There certainly is no special American way of war, just as there is no Russian, or any other specific country's way of war. Most importantly, in military matters, the record of the US doesn't look that good. Most conflicts the US has been involved in since the Korean War were either brought to a bloody draw or lost. This is not a trivial problem. In fact, it is a crucial one—any major power needs to have the record to back its claims to being such.

In what can only be described as a total detachment from rationality or any awareness of the outside world so characteristic of the American elites, Dominic Tierney, in his piece titled “Why Has America Stopped Winning Wars?” came to an astonishing conclusion: “Since 1945, the United States has experienced little except military stalemate and loss—precisely *because* it’s a superpower in a more peaceful world.”³¹ How this could make any practical sense is difficult to comprehend but Tierney recovered and beautifully at that, when he concluded “It’s limited war for Americans, and total war for those fighting Americans. The United States has more power; its foes have more willpower.”³²

Here is the answer to why the US military doesn’t work. Surely when America fought against a third-rate adversary it was possible to rain death from the skies, and then roll over its forces, if any remained by that time, with very little difficulty and casualties. That will work in the future too against that type of adversary—similar in size and flimsiness of Iraqi Forces circa 2003. But Ledeen’s Doctrine had one major flaw—one adult cannot continue to go around sand box constantly fighting children and pretend to be good at fighting adults. There is no doubt about the American soldier (and sailor) being a great one, certainly among the best in the world, but all of it is contingent upon the circumstances of war. Real wars with peers require far more than a mere technological advantage—a very hard commodity to get today—they require the proverbial Clausewitzian “Maximum exertion of force”³³ in which the adversary’s will is one of two components, and remembering his strategic truism that “the war never consists of a single short blow,”³⁴ as the United States learned the hard way in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is difficult to predict what morale and what exertion would come from Russians fighting a war in the immediate vicinity of their country having everything they love and treasure behind their backs and how it can be even matched by any other nation, especially when armed, unlike Iraqi forces in 2003 or Afghanistan’s Taliban, with state of the art weaponry capable of a conventional reach to a strategic depth—a reality Americans never encountered in their history. As

Patrick Armstrong, a former analyst in the Canadian Department of National Defence specializing in the USSR/Russia, noted: “I don’t think the Americans are nearly as good as they think they are—they’ve been spoiled by success (*initial* success that is) against second- and third-rate enemies which are swiftly overwhelmed by their air power and fancy weapons. Overwhelmed in the first few weeks; after that it’s different.”³⁵

In both Donbass and especially in Syria, Russia called the American geopolitical and military bluff. In doing so, she not only demonstrated her military and economic might, she demonstrated clearly some very serious limitations of American power. This fact is largely in the foundation of the present historically unprecedented anti-Russian hysteria in the US. A multipolar world today is not some political theory anymore, it is a *fait accompli* with the emerging Russian-Chinese alliance, albeit still informal, becoming a massive global military, economic and political force. This force may help to mitigate or even contain in the foreseeable future an inevitable attempt of US power elites, who are split for the first time in contemporary American history, to use a war to try and solve their economic and political problems. But one cannot completely discount a suicidal scenario of the US trying to engage Russia or China in what she may convince herself will be a controllable conventional brinksmanship. This scenario is not just possible, it is fairly probable, once one considers the deadly combination of contemporary American elites’ ignorance, hubris and desperation—hardly a good combination of factors to be influencing life and death decisions. In the end, it could be Russia’s and China’s unified military capabilities that will be the factor which would prevent the US from taking everyone else with herself rather than lose her purported exceptionalism.

Yet, as events in Syria showed, the conventional paradigm did shift. Size does matter and so does range and speed whenever anyone talks about weapons. It seems that there is a great deal of confusion concerning the relatively small Russian military contingent in Syria. The most popular indicator is the never-ending discussion of a possible American attack on the Russian forces in

Syria, primarily on the air base in Khmeimim. Could any such attack, once one considers the size of forces the US can deploy in Syria, succeed in “defeating” the Russians? After all, there are many people of prominence in the US who apart from considering such a terrifying scenario are actually pushing for it. Lieutenant-Colonel Ralph Peters doesn’t mince words when it comes to attacking Russians, writing: “This could spin out of control very, very fast. If it does, we have to win rapidly and decisively—and keep it within Syria.”³⁶

There is no doubt that Peters and the many of US military and political people he represents did partake in the strategic wisdom of the past, from Clausewitz to Moltke to Guderian, but it is here, where a seemingly legitimate question on the probability of American success in bombing the Russian military contingent into the stone age at Khmeimim and elsewhere in Syria, stops being serious—indeed becomes almost unprofessional. Of course, the US can unleash whatever it has at its conventional disposal at Khmeimim and it will eventually overwhelm whatever the Russians presently have there—from several SU-35s to S-300s and S-400s. And this would work against any nation’s military contingent except Russia’s. At issue here is not the fact that Russia is a nuclear superpower—everyone knows that. Even the most rabid American Russophobes know this and can grasp, however slightly, the concept of turning into radioactive ash pretty fast if they do the unthinkable, such as attacking Russia proper with nuclear weapons. Syria, however, is a bit different—the escalation to a nuclear threshold could, indeed, be controlled by those who hold a decisive advantage conventionally. At issue here is the fact of conventional war—a precise type of a conflict US military has prided itself on for the last 30+ years, boasting of being able to handle any kind of adversary. The foundation of the US self-assurance has been the real and not so real US advantage in stand-off weapons. Its aggression against Yugoslavia showed the US military could overwhelm the air-defenses of a nation such as Serbia fairly fast and from distances far beyond the reach of Serbia’s obsolete air defenses. There were Tomahawk cruise

missiles, which were launched at Serbia in the thousands and which rendered her air defense almost useless after the first couple of weeks of incessant bombing.

But today in Syria, here is the problem for the US: Russia can carry on this hypothetical conventional conflict from well outside the borders of Syria any time it wants. So we are not talking about Russia returning to other strategic theaters, such as Ukraine, to “compensate” for a hypothetical “defeat” in Syria. The reason for this is purely technological—Russia can now go tit-for-tat conventionally in Syria and anywhere in the Middle East—without having to be in the country concerned. In fact, the Russian military has in its possession the most advanced arsenal of high precision stand-off weapons—weapons which may be launched at a distance sufficient to allow attacking personnel to evade defensive fire from the target area—which have been demonstrated in action for the whole world to see.

This is what makes the whole talk about “defeating” the Russian *contingent* in Syria so very amateurish. War is much more than some shoot-out between belligerents; war starts in the operational rooms and political offices well before any shot is fired. If the Russian contingent had been deployed in Syria in 2005 or 2006, there would have been no problem in imagining Ralph Peters’ scenario. But it is no longer 2005 and the 800-pound gorilla in the room, which many continue to ignore, is Russia’s stand-off capability—it is simply much better than the American one and it opens an operational door, in case of a hypothetical conventional attack on Kheimim, for a massive retaliation against any US asset in the region. Immediately, in the wake of the death of Lieutenant General Asapov in Syria, accomplished allegedly with “help” from some so-called Coalition in the vicinity of liberated Deir-ez-Zor, Russia’s strategic aviation launched long-range stealthy X-101 cruise missiles at ISIS targets in Syria.

There is nothing new now in Russia’s using 5,500+ kilometer range cruise missiles, nor is it news any longer for the Russian Navy to be able to launch a 2,500+ kilometer-range 3M14 of the Kalibr family from anywhere in the Eastern Mediterranean

or the Caspian Sea. These are ranges which are simply beyond the reach of any present stand-off weapon in the US arsenal. The Tomahawk TLAM-A Block II has a maximum range of around 2,500 kilometers while the TLAM Block IV, currently the most produced variety, has a range of 1,600 kilometers. The key here is range and precision, and here the US is not in the leading position, to put it mildly. Range gives an unprecedented operational flexibility and the launch from Russian Tu-95 Bear strategic bombers had a very serious message—not in terms of the X-101's range, as even longer-range cruise missiles are getting ready for procurement, with ranges around 10,000 kilometers.

The message was in the fact that missiles were launched from Iranian and Iraqi air space. They didn't have to be launched from there, this could have been easily done from the area of the Caspian Sea and not necessarily by long-range bombers. But the Bears launched while being escorted in Iranian airspace by Su-30s and Su-35s of the Russian Air Space Forces and that, apart from the obvious hint at the full Russian capability to reach any US ground asset in the area, provided some ominous signs..

But that also opens another serious operational possibility in case of a real conventional conflict in the area between Russia and the US—a scenario Neocons, due to their military illiteracy and overall detachment from strategic reality, are dreaming about. Putting inevitable emotions aside and looking at the factual side of things, Russia's Military Doctrine since 2010, reaffirmed in the 2014 Edition, views the use of stand-off high precision weapons as a key in strategic force containment, as Article 26 of the doctrine clearly states. Russia doesn't want war with the US, but if push comes to shove Russia is totally capable of not only reaching US ground assets, such as CENTCOM's Qatar forward installation but, what is even more significant, also the naval ones in the Persian Gulf. Apart from 66 long-range strategic bombers, the Tu-160s and Tu-95s, Russia has at her disposal more than 100 TU-22M3 bombers many of which are capable of both inflight refueling and of carrying a rather intimidating weapon—the X-32 (Kh-32) cruise missile whose range is 1000 kilometers and has a speed in

excess of Mach 4.2. This missile, apart from being able to attack anything on the ground, is capable, in fact was designed primarily for the purpose, of hitting anything moving on the surface of the sea. The missile, let alone a salvo of them, is incredibly difficult, if even possible at all, to intercept and as the above-mentioned demonstration showed, Iran most likely would have no problem with allowing these very TU-22M3s to operate from her airspace in the event of a worst case scenario. Launched anywhere from the Darab area, the hypothetical salvo would not only cover all of the Persian Gulf but will reliably close off the Gulf of Oman for any naval force. No ship, no Carrier Battle Group would be able to enter this area in the event of a conventional conflict with Russia in Syria—the strategic ramifications of this are enormous.

Even the salvo into Syria of 3 M14s from Caspian Sea on October 7, 2015 made such an impression that the *USS Theodore Roosevelt* and her CBG almost immediately left the Gulf. Moreover, this simple, single operational fact shows precisely why for two years a relatively small Russian military contingent has been able to operate so effectively in Syria and, in fact, dictate conditions on the ground and in the area of its operations. The answer is simple, and here's an analogy—many adrenaline junkies are lowered in a cage into the water to face sharks, with only metal rods separating them and the sharks' deadly jaws. Yet, up there, in the boat, one can always put a man with a gun which can be used in case of emergency to a deadly effect, should the cage give. Similarly, the Russian military contingent in Syria is not just some military base—it is a force tightly integrated with the Russian Armed Forces, which has enough reach and capability to make anyone face some extremely unpleasant facts, and in particular the fact that it is Russia, not the US, who controls escalation to a threshold.

That certainly adds to, if not totally explains, the non-stop anti-Russia hysteria in the US media since the outcome of the war in Syria seems to be becoming clear. Today, while the United States in general, and her military in particular, still remain a premier geopolitical force, increasingly they will have to

contend with the fact that their short-lived era of self-proclaimed superiority in every single facet of modern nation-states' warfare is over, if it ever was superior to start with. Will the US "deep state" unleash a preventive war to prevent Russia from serving the US with a pink slip for its position as the world's chaos-monger, or will it happen, rephrasing the magnificent English military historian Corelli Barnett's words concerning the UK, like this: "US Power had quietly vanished amid stupendous events of the 21st Century, like a ship-of-the-line going down unperceived in the smoke and confusion of battle". This is the 21st century's most important question for human civilization to date.

THE “HOLLOW FORCE” SPECTER

Nations define themselves in many ways but none more so than in the image of their machines and especially those machines which are designed to make war. It is sad but it is also a part of human nature. Warfare is humanity’s most important pastime; conflict is embedded in our cultural DNA. However regrettable, this fact is irrefutable. Military hardware thus becomes a material representation of every single emotion of superiority and pugnacity. As William McDougall noted in 1915: “The instinct of pugnacity has played a part second to none in the evolution of social organization, and in the present age it operates more powerfully than any other in producing demonstrations of collective emotion and action on a great scale.”¹

The United States brought the public demonstration of modern weapons to an art form and remains unrivaled in advertising, promoting and showing off her weapons in what many sarcastically define as weapon pornography. It is through the new mediums of the 20th century—TV and eventually, internet—that the imagery of weapons came to dominate the American psyche. War, a bloody and gory midwife of a nation’s cohesion, largely spared the United States and the American obsession with weapons

can be viewed in part as a longing for a missing formative factor of most modern nations. It is in this field of weapons design and manufacturing that the United States ultimately sees the extension of its own self and needs a constant validation of itself as a global superpower via proof of the superiority of its military technology. The US also proclaims this superiority non-stop and herein lies the problem—empirical evidence does not favor American weapons. At least most of them. Michael Howard may have decried the abandonment of serious considerations of the social dimension of strategy in favor of its technological aspect, but there should be no mistake here—weapons and technology do matter—a great deal.²

Any weapon is created for only one purpose—to kill, or in a larger sense, destroy. No weapons means no tactics, no operational art, no strategy, no military-industrial complex. For a weapons system it is not enough to kill, the weapon has to do it very efficiently and here is where the whole science of weapons technology springs to life. American weapons surely can kill but American military technology, especially its 21st century creations, far from being “best in the world” or “superior”, as is constantly proclaimed from all kinds of podiums, including the highest political ones, in many respects followed the trajectory of American decline. In fact, they became a good indicator of this decline. The secret of American weaponry of the 21st century is not really a secret—American weapons are made for sale. They are made for profit as commercial items, be it commerce inside the US or internationally. This was inevitable in a nation which never fought a foreign invader in its history nor, by dint of geography, had much to fear. It is very telling that a small American military-technological idiosyncrasy of using the term “sophisticated” instead of “effective” when passing the judgment on the quality of its weapons systems, took such a profound hold inside American military culture.

Surely, the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter is a very “sophisticated” weapon system, apart from being immensely expensive, but the question remains—does it even work? It doesn’t.³ In fact, programs such as the F-35 are perfect illustrations of a complete doctrinal

and technological mess which befell the American military-industrial complex. It surely can produce “sophisticated” weapons but increasingly their effectiveness is being questioned against serious near peer or peer adversaries, not some backward third world militaries or non-state actors who altogether have no access to any modern technology to counter American technological superiority. *Wunderwaffe* attitudes in the US regarding its own military technology--when a single capability, such as stealth, is over-emphasized at the expense of many other crucial features required for a weapon to be effective—has become the undoing of US military technology in both air, ground and even in the naval field where the United States maintained until recently a significant technological lead. Those advantages which the US allegedly enjoyed, are now long gone and the US increasingly finds itself lagging technologically behind Russia and even behind some strictly European weapon systems.

The F-35’s alleged advantages, especially in stealth, seems to have failed to impress manufacturers and operators of the superb French-made Dassault Rafale fighter, or even the Eurofighter Typhoon.⁴ The issue is not even relatively short range dog-fighting—here no US fighter can counter a Russian SU-35C, known for flying contrary to the laws of aerodynamics, due to its all aspect thrust-vectoring and state-of-the-art engines and avionics, let alone the SU-57, whose IOC is planned for 2019.⁵ The issue is that stealth on military aircraft had the cover of mystery torn from it long ago. Modern radar, such as the *Irbis-E* of the SU-35C not only can see stealth aircraft at ranges of up to 100 kilometers but can also use weapons against stealth targets, while maintaining an overwhelming advantage in supermaneuverability which is already bad news for US military aerospace. New radiophotonics technologies which are already in the R&D phase with actual location devices already working will completely change the technology of locating military targets in the air, ground, and surface, and even under water.⁶ *They will render stealth completely obsolete.*

An immense American investment into reduced observa-

bility in radio-diapason thus went largely to waste, as was so well demonstrated in Yugoslavia in 1999 where the largely obsolete Serbian Air Defense was able to shoot down a darling of the US media—the F-117 Stealth fighter-bomber. Today, modern Air Defense Systems such as the Russian S-400 do not have any difficulties in detecting, tracking and locking on any current or prospective low-observable targets, which the sale of these systems to major US NATO ally, Turkey, and even to Saudi Arabia, a traditional US customer, illustrates. This is especially unnerving for the US military-industrial complex given the embarrassing failure of the Saudi Patriot anti-missile complexes to intercept obsolete Iranian Scud knock-offs launched by Yemen's Houthi rebels at Riyadh.⁷

The partial answer to some of these rather dismal failures of American military technology is that those weapons never had to be realistically effective since they were never used in actual defense of the United States. Russian military technology was honed in non-stop fighting against external enemies, including those such as Napoleon or Hitler, who, at the time, occupied leading military technological and operational positions in the world. In the Russian view, the weapon must work since the nation's survival depends on it and that is what dominates Russian military-technological thought. Effectiveness, cost/effectiveness ratios and reliability were and remain defining characteristics of Russian weapons. Surely, Russians have managed to produce their own share of questionable weapons or pursue questionable technologies, but Russian military history is too violent to allow commercial and profit considerations to eclipse what mattered and matters the most—the weapon must reliably kill.

During the Cold War the leading motif in American comparative analysis of Soviet and US weapons was that Soviet weapons were "crude" and were not "sophisticated". Obviously, once the Iron Curtain fell and more information became available, a rather different reality unfolded, but the US 1991 victory in the Gulf-induced *folie de grandeur* prevented a recognition of the fact that US weapons were not actually that great, even against the Iraqis'

“monkey models” of Soviet weapons. No doubt, the United States at that time led the world in radio electronics and that allowed a good lead in what became known as C4ISR (Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance). What was missed then was the fact of massive scientific advances the Soviet Union had made precisely in the weapons’ design field. Yes, Soviet electronics at that time lagged but for anyone with a good eye for substance could see ominous signs already in the 1960s in the field in which the United States was the undisputed global leader—the navy.

The story actually starts in the very late 1950s. No, it wasn’t sparked by the Sputnik moment and the educational shock to the western establishment that provided. The event, which went largely unnoticed by the general public, was the commissioning of what is known in the West as the *Echo-II SSGNs* (Cruise Missile-Carrying Nuclear Submarine), which in the Soviet Union and Russia is still known as the “screaming cow”, for its horrendous noise levels. The issue of noise, albeit mitigated by the excellent professionalism of the COs and crews of these submarines, while very important, was not what made those subs unique. Their missile, communications and guidance complex was what made these subs very special.

Their combination of *Argument* radar and the *Kasatka* communication complex, among others, allowed this ungainly sub to be able to launch her cruise missiles, from the older *Pyatyorka* models to later P-6’s, in a salvo with target selection and separation in it. This was a first. Those subs, also known correctly as *kamikaze* and *suicides* (as you are bound to be when launching from the surface, thus revealing your position for both radar and visual observers) were capable of receiving targeting information from satellites and TU-95RTs (Bear D). Later, the updated system received the name of *Uspekhi*. The trick of this whole system was in the fact that the *Bear D* was translating the real time radar picture of the area or rather targets, to the consoles of the weapons operators on the sub, who, using an electronic pencil (in reality—gun), selected targets on the screens of their

displays. This targeting method was used when the ranges of launch were larger than sub's radar range. These salvos, while extremely risky for surfaced subs (hence their *kamikaze* title), were possible and actually were done without being detected. This was in the 1950s and 1960s—prior to solid state electronics. Yet, what has been just described, today are known as elements of Net Centric Warfare.

This whole system of targeting and launch, at that time, was nothing short of revolutionary, even when one considers reliability and other, purely tactical and operational, issues. The moment to spring into action for any ASW or Patrol Aviation is the moment of the *flaming datum*, a moment of a submarine revealing itself, and Echoes were really good at that. But it was this whole vacuum tube-driven system which attracted very serious attention from the Killian Committee as early as the mid-1950s, in their report to Eisenhower of the dawning of the age of the missile, both ballistic and cruise. *Echoes* were one of the horsemen of the apocalypse, since they were capable of delivering both conventional and nuclear payloads against both sea and ground targets. It was thanks in large degree to those *Echoes* that the US Navy eventually developed and then put its first *Harpoon* anti-ship cruise missiles on *P-3 Orion* patrol planes. It took a lot of ingenuity and plain and simple sheer engineering brilliance to come up, time after time, with at least adequate, and often superior, responses to just about anything the combined West was throwing at the Soviet Union. This trend in Soviet and later Russian weapons design and procurement practices was largely discarded by many in the intelligence community and military analytical environment in favor of a Clanciesque view of American military technology which was supposed to be better and more "sophisticated" merely on the merit of it being American and nothing else.

Even in the 1960s some of those Russian weapon systems were far from crude and surely were very "sophisticated" where it really mattered. The technological ramifications of such weapons systems' developments were completely lost on many decision-makers and strategists in the US where the faith in the superiority

of American weapons had taken a firm hold. Fifty years later this conviction is no more. The technology mismatch about which many American military visionaries warned has arrived. With it arrived operational and strategic mismatch.

A true systemic shock came with the revelation of Russia's Electronic Warfare capabilities in 2014 in Crimea and later, in Donbas. This capability was superior to anything the United States ever had at its disposal. The conflict in Syria only confirmed the highest level of integration of Russian Command, Control, Communications and Sensor systems which allowed them to monitor the battlefield in real time and control air and ground operations accordingly. The whole notion that Russia's weapons were in no way inferior or, in most cases, superior to what the US military-industrial complex could field seemed an anathema and in some cases was met with disbelief or outright denial of facts in the US. Yet, as Roger McDermot noted after observing both Russian Armed Forces exercises, such as *Zapad* and the operations in Syria:

Russia has integrated electronic warfare and offensive and defensive electromagnetic spectrum capabilities into its operations and strategies, in a way not seen from NATO forces in Europe... NATO does not conduct any training on that scale, nor does it routinely include EW in its exercises. On its periphery, Russia has escalation dominance.⁸

Here was a country which was supposed to be a remnant of a supposedly defeated Soviet Union, a large part of whose "defeat" was achieved by alleged American dominance in military technology. Yet somehow Russia continued, time after time, to produce not only very sophisticated and state-of-the-art weapons but weapons which performed well in actual combat conditions. In Syria Russian dominance in EW and in Air Defense systems was demonstrated by its shutting down the attack on two Russian

military bases by swarms of jihadi drones, which were either defeated electronically or were shot down by Pantsir air defense complexes.⁹

No less impressive is Russia’s anti-satellite capabilities. In his Senate Select Committee on Intelligence testimony on May 11, 2017, the Director of National Intelligence, Daniel R. Coates, while grossly inflating a number of threats to the United States, was, however, correct in pointing out a number of trends in the development of warfare in the coming decades. He noted:

Some new Russian and Chinese ASAT weapons, including destructive systems, will probably complete development in the next several years. Russian military strategists likely view counterspace weapons as an integral part of broader aerospace defense rearmament and are very likely pursuing a diverse suite of capabilities to affect satellites in all orbital regimes. Russian lawmakers have promoted military pursuit of ASAT missiles to strike low-Earth orbiting satellites, and Russia is testing such a weapon for eventual deployment. A Russian official also acknowledged development of an aircraft-launched missile capable of destroying satellites in low-Earth orbit.¹⁰

What Daniel Coates was describing to Senate’s Committee were capabilities of what in the US traditionally were ascribed to so-called military peers. In general, however, “peer” is a misleading term and implies a very close matching of military capabilities between supposed peers. This orientation simply doesn’t work today. The United States Navy is peerless, as an example, in its massive aircraft carrier component and Russia is nowhere near these American carrier capabilities. But then, she doesn’t have to be to defend herself. She has a much cheaper and more terrifying alternative in her arsenal of super and hyper-

sonic anti-ship missiles which could be launched from anywhere. Some call it asymmetry, others—real combat capability designed to achieve objectives. For many years the United States was defining its military-technological capability in terms of Offset Strategies—a fancy term for technological cutting edge. Today the United States has largely lost this edge and the issue is not only is the world reaching a plateau in processing power, making Moore's Law (the observation that the number of transistors in a dense integrated circuit doubles approximately every two years) no longer be applicable by different estimates by the mid-2020s.¹¹ Most of the American real and alleged advantages were based on this computing power which was giving the US the edge in information and signal processing. This is no longer the case.

Today Russia's processing capabilities are in no way inferior in the military field to those of the US. In fact, the unveiling of Russia's National Control Defense Center to the public in 2015 was a visual demonstration of Russia's massive processing power. Some viewed it with disdain, others admitted that it was impressive. It also showed how such a massive military machine such as Russia's Armed Forces could be controlled in the new millennium. It was clear that this center was a demonstration of Russian world-class industrial, scientific and technological expertise. Here was an embodiment of a super-computer-driven unified battlespace. Western media took note.¹² The US military-industrial establishment started to talk about yet another offset, the third one. For anyone who was a serious scholar of Russia's history and of Cold War 1.0 it was clear it wouldn't matter if this third offset would succeed or not. The game had changed and it was the United States which was increasingly becoming the side lagging behind or barely keeping dead heat. Some critical areas in which US lags will only increase in number, in others the United States was never even a contender.

In naval warfare the new generation of air independent propulsion non-nuclear submarines is not just coming, it is already here. While capable of ocean-deployments such submarines in a littoral present a deadly threat to any nuclear-powered submarine.

The US Navy doesn't have any plans to develop any such capability. This automatically creates a huge problem for the US Navy's nuclear submarine component in operating in Russia's near and remote sea zone. Extremely silent non-nuclear submarines have an advantage over their nuclear-powered peers. Moreover, a shocking video of the Russian Navy's newest SSK shooting 6 Kalibr 3M14 missiles, in time intervals of less than 5 seconds between each missile, at terrorist targets in Deir ez-Zor in Syria on October 5, 2017, was revealing.¹³ For specialists it was a shocking revelation. The revelation was not in the fact that Russian submarines could shoot land-attack or anti-ship cruise missiles at targets, the issue was in the fact that the configuration of such a salvo was thought not possible for submarines of such class. Such a missile volley could easily be launched with the super-sonic anti-ship version of Kalibr missiles, thus providing a very high density for such a salvo. This dramatically increases the probability of breaking through any, even well defended, high value surface target, which automatically imposes severe operational limitations on any adversary.

The message was clear—the areas of operation of such submarines, be it in the Eastern Mediterranean and Black Sea, or in the Russian Navy's Pacific zones of responsibility, where the next six brand new Project 636 SSKs will be deployed, are becoming completely closed zones to any adversary. The appearance of the hyper-sonic Zircon (3M22) changes the naval balance of power dramatically. These are technologies which the United States Navy was not ready for and has nothing in its arsenal which can effectively deal with them. To be sure, all kinds of exotic and very expensive solutions, such as underwater drones, are being proposed. But, apart from the same technologies being developed by Russia and China, those still are not able to solve the most important problem any navy faces—the problem of a "leaker", that is, the missile which gets through. Today, the US Navy has no effective means to defend against the latest anti-ship cruise missiles. Moreover, there is still no viable super, let alone hypersonic, anti-ship missile on the horizon for the US Navy. The US stop-gap measure of using the underpowered SM-6 missile from the air-defense complex as

an anti-ship missile is a testimony to a desperate situation which has its roots in the US Navy's history, when it basically sabotaged development of serious anti-ship weapons in favor of immensely expensive and increasingly vulnerable aircraft carriers. Despite fanfares in some US military-related media, even those who hailed this experience with the SM-6 as a viable substitute for distributed reality, had to admit, however cautiously, that the SM-6 is not really a good anti-ship missile.¹⁴ It is, indeed, strange to consider a missile which has a claimed top speed of $M=3.5$ and a warhead of a mere 140 pounds of explosives to be anything but a desperate attempt to show something which, at least on paper, can pass as adequate technology. One hundred forty pounds of explosives on an SM-6 certainly pales in comparison to 440 pounds in the Russian dedicated anti-ship missile 3M54 (Kalibr) which still vastly outranges the SM-6. Against the P-880 Onyx missile with its 550 pounds of explosives, the SM-6's explosive power seems simply tiny.

For the US Navy, the most disturbing part of its lag in anti-ship missiles, to say nothing of non-nuclear submarines, is the immense costs of US underwater technology. A single Virginia-class submarine today goes for more than \$2.5 billion, an astronomical cost for a submarine, which when even compared to the latest Russian SSKs of the Project 636 class has a very mediocre anti-ship capability. Moreover, in littorals, hunter Virginia-class submarines can become hunted by non-nuclear subs. SSKs are simply stealthier, especially in littorals, than any modern US nuclear submarine. In fact, US naval specialists raised a serious alarm at the Virginia's passive sonar technology not being effective at all against diesel submarines.¹⁵ Russia builds this class of submarines with a respectable speed—six subs of this type already built for the Black Sea Fleet and two being constructed for the Pacific Fleet. They are also, on an order of magnitude, less expensive than any modern US nuclear-powered submarine. Once factored into the respectable Russian nuclear submarines component it becomes clear that many of the self-proclaimed technological advantages being touted by the US military-industrial-media complex are very relative and, often,

merely a matter of very lax “interpretations” by very partial people. All this doesn’t bode well for future US capabilities (or their sale) which are not only being matched where needed, but also are much more affordable.

Furthermore, if in the naval field the United States still maintains some strong positions, not least through the sheer size of her navy, the current situation and trends are even worse in the other military-technological fields. The F-35 or Littoral Combat Ship disaster are just few indications of the overall slide in American conventional capabilities, such as American air defense for the US proper which is simply non-existent—a rather telling fact for the nation which thought it didn’t need to have one. This shouldn’t be mistaken with anti-ballistic missile defense which does exist in the US—which is absolutely useless against sea- and air-launched land attack cruise missiles which have the capability to attack crucial American military infrastructure—a capability Russia demonstrated to dramatic effect in Syria. Unlike Russia which boasts arguably the best, deeply echeloned, national air defense, which today deploys the best anti-air and anti-missile complexes in the world, American shores are virtually defenseless. Deployment of batteries of the Patriot PAC-3 system, whose reputation is not very high to start with, or of the AEGIS ships along the American shoreline, does not provide a guarantee against conventional or even nuclear retaliation against the US proper in case of a major conflict. With the project 885 Severodvinsk-class nuclear-powered submarines coming on-line, together with the modernized project 949A class, all armed with the latest TLAMs, it is very difficult to foresee any measure which can realistically secure the US proper from a massive cruise missile attack.

Hence, the hysteria in the US about the alleged violation of the INF Treaty by Russia, as a pretext for deploying US weapons to Europe, as well as the dramatic overhaul of Obama’s 2010 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) by the Trump Administration. A lot could be said about the new American nuclear posture, which puts US use of nuclear weapons on a hair trigger alert and represents a manifest departure from conventional options.¹⁶ In

a bitter ironic twist, the United States in 2018 finds itself in an even worse position than Russia in the late 1990s-early 2000s which viewed her nuclear weapons as her only guarantee against an existential external threat. The new US NPR 2018 goes even further by considering an utterly insane scenario of using nuclear weapons in case of cyber-attacks. For the lack of a better word, the new NPR is a testament to a complete collapse of America's confidence in her own weapon systems and cyber capabilities—this is unprecedented in American post-WW II history and, especially, against the euphoria in the wake of the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991. Today the United States military increasingly begins to remind one of Russia in the 1990s. The specter of Hollow Force, a term coined in 1970s to describe post-Vietnam US military, begins to dominate Pentagon thinking.

No doubt, the United States still remains a scientific and industrial powerhouse, but in the military field a lot of bets have been placed wrongly, and now the chickens are coming home to roost. As of 2018 no serious military analyst counts American ground capability against a so-called “peer” as viable. Even much touted American air superiority is not that superior anymore, especially in the immensely dense air-defense and EW environment which this Air Force will encounter in case of a suicidal contingency of attacking Russia at her periphery. For decades the US media and punditry cultivated the image of the American military as some kind of unassailable hi-tech Camelot and for a brief period of time it was almost true. This is not the case anymore. Huge numbers of US Air Force aircraft are simply not flyable anymore, others are cannibalized for parts—granted, not strictly an American problem. But the shiny image is not there anymore and the question lies not just with the budget cuts. As Fox reported in 2016:

The B-1 issues are a symptom of a broader resource decline. Since the end of the Gulf War, the U.S. Air Force has 30 percent fewer airmen, 40 percent fewer aircraft and 60 percent fewer

fighter squadrons. In 1991, the force had 134 fighter squadrons; today, only 55. The average U.S. Air Force plane is 27 years old. After 25 years of non-stop deployments to the Middle East, airmen are tired. "Our retention rates are pretty low. Airmen are tired and burnt out," said Staff Sgt. Tyler Miller, with the 28th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron based at Ellsworth."¹⁷

American ground forces are altogether fighting on their last legs in wars which make neither military nor political sense for the United States. Even today, one still can theoretically finance some revamping of the forces, such as buying a large number of F-35s, or trying to "upgrade" the Littoral Combat Ships to a "frigate". One can also "invest" in a continuous search for some exotic space weapons—all this can still be financed against a gigantic national debt and tens of trillions of dollars of waste and theft in the Pentagon, thus increasing this debt even more, but it is still not going to change the outcome.¹⁸ For all the astronomical sums of money given to the Pentagon and its subcontractors, no world-class military technology has been produced by the ever-praised American military-industrial complex in decades. Even in the field in which Russian military professionals would agree with their American colleagues—naval nuclear deterrent—where US Navy Ohio-class SSBNs are nearing their service age, even here the situation is, for the lack of better word, surreal. Apart from a shocking price tag, the strategic missile submarine coming as a substitute for the aging Ohio-class, the Columbia-class SSBN, in accordance to GAO Report already envisions a host of unproven critical technologies which potentially can turn the new submarine into a nuclear analogue of the F-35.¹⁹ Judging by the recent track record, they most likely will.

In general, the United States continues to produce military technology which, apart from operational concepts detached from reality, is good mostly for fighting weak, underdeveloped adversaries. Despite an impressive edifice and some impressive

visuals for its technology, such as the US Navy's Carrier Battle Groups sailing in the ocean, the bulk of it will fail when dealing with a determined and well-prepared enemy. Today such enemy for the United States is Russia, despite the fact that Russia doesn't want from the United States anything but to be left alone in her historical habitat. For the United States the existence of any military peer is unacceptable. The thought of this peer being in many respects better armed is altogether—unbearable. Thus the warranted, in fact irresistible, question arises—are Russian weapons better than American ones? Some surely are, including in the most important field on which the US always prided itself, C4ISR. In the end, one has to explain how Russians manipulate or jam GPS, or how they are able to disrupt and then appropriate the control of drones—this is a testimony to an extremely advanced signal processing and electronics.

For a nation with such a military history as Russia's the issue of military technology is an issue of survival. As such, weapons in Russia are sacralized because behind them are generations of Russians who shed blood to make those weapons what they are. They have become a part of the culture to such a degree that commercial considerations take a very distant second place to a main purpose of these weapons—to actually defend the nation. This is absolutely not the case in the United States, with some exception for its Navy, with Americans having no knowledge or recollection of what real war is and what instruments for fighting and winning it are needed. Those things cannot be paid for in money, they are paid for in blood.

THE THREAT OF A MASSIVE AMERICAN MILITARY MISCALCULATION

On August 29, 2017 a Senior Fellow at the American Foreign Policy Council, Dr. Stephen Blank, published a piece for the Atlantic Council titled “How Trump Can Get Putin’s Attention”.¹ Dr. Stephen Blank has impressive credentials. He is a Senior Fellow at the American Foreign Policy Council in Washington. From 1989 to 2013 he was a Professor of Russian National Security Studies and of National Security Affairs at the Strategic Studies Institute of the U.S. Army War College in Pennsylvania since 1989. From 1998 to 2001 he was the Douglas MacArthur Professor of Research at the War College. His M.A. and Ph.D. are in Russian History from the University of Chicago. His B.A is in History from the University of Pennsylvania. Blank also consulted with numerous private and government agencies on issues related to the USSR and Russia. This is what Doctor Blank does for a living so presumably he should know everything about the former USSR and Russia.²

So his analytical piece for Atlantic Council should immediately ring all kinds of warning bells, because if it is indicative of the level of American expertise on Russia, it doesn’t bode well for the future of not only Russian-American relations

but for the global order as well. Following heated paragraphs, this Russia “expert” put forward a startling idea of how to deal with Russia and provide support for the junta in Ukraine, writing that:

In practice this means that Washington should send US Navy warships into the Sea of Azov through the Kerch Strait to demonstrate our commitment to Ukraine’s sovereignty and integrity and the freedom of navigation on the seas, which has been a cornerstone of US foreign policy since 1789.³

Aside from the sheer military insanity of this proposition—there are very many people in Washington who would support such a proposition—the question is how an expert so heavily loaded with Russia-related academic credentials failed to notice that the deepest part of the Sea of Azov is only 14 meters. Furthermore, these deeper depths of 10 to 14 meters are “packed” into the middle of the Sea of Azov into a square of about 25 by 25 nautical miles, making it a perfect tiny box for easy missile seeker lock on anything located inside it; the expression “shooting fish in a barrel” comes immediately to mind. The rest of the Azov Sea? The average depth of the Sea of Azov is 7 meters, which is roughly 2.3 meters less than the normal draught of 9.3 meters of the main surface combatant of the US Navy, a destroyer of the Arleigh Burke-class. Aside from the fact that any naval force approaching Kerch Strait would immediately be tracked by Russian missile systems and naval and air force aviation capable of sinking anything entering the Black Sea, one has to ponder this question—what ships of the U.S. Navy is Doctor Blank proposing to deploy to the Sea of Azov? The only ships in the U.S. Navy’s arsenal capable of actually navigating the Sea of Azov, as opposed to plowing its sea bed with their keels, are the Littoral Combat Ships with a draft of approximately 4 meters, and which, far from demonstrating any force, will be demonstrating the sheer lunacy of the American acquisition and procurement system since those

ships, sarcastically known in the US Navy as a “self-propelled 57-mm gun,” will present very expensive and defenseless targets even for the older, Soviet-era, anti-shipping missiles with outdated guidance systems.

Sadly, Russian expert Stephen Blank is not alone in demonstrating ignorance, delusions of grandeur, and barely restrained highly-charged Russophobia. Far from it, he is very typical for what passes in the US today as Russia expertise. But “credentialism” is no substitute for actual knowledge and the ability to draw cogent conclusions from it. This is a huge problem. Geopolitical and military credentialism often conceals the incompetence of the policies these so-called experts help generate. America’s overall policy is very simple: America’s “experts”—those with the most credentials and who are purported to know Russia best—have established Russia as not just the opponent but as the existential enemy of the United States. Now even the Russian people as such are being portrayed as—and becoming—the enemy of the United States of America.

This perception is making more and more inroads into the minds of the American public at large. As Gallup reported in February of 2016: “Only four years ago, half of the American public viewed Russia favorably, and only 2% viewed it as the United States’ greatest enemy. But a series of events pitting the U.S. and Russia against each other has soured the relationship. Only 30% now have a favorable view of Russia, and 86% regard *Russia’s military power* as either an important (47%) or a critical threat (39%) [emphasis added].”⁴ It is, indeed, a fascinating result when one considers the fact that the US has been at war non-stop since 1990, leading to the obliteration of seven Muslim countries, and causing widespread suffering, death, destruction, and acute refugee crises—all of it on false grounds.

But these poll results should not obfuscate the results of another very disturbing poll Gallup conducted, this time among Russians in November of 2017. Here, less than one third of Russians thought that good relations between the United States and Russia were important. In fact, the overwhelming majority

of Russians preferred that Russia act firmly with the US, while 7% preferred to have no relations at all. More importantly, the more educated (people with college degrees) respondents were, the more they wanted Russia to act firmly.⁵ This is a startling departure from the Russian outpouring of sympathy to the US and Americans after the tragedy of 9/11, and indeed from their historical attraction to the US, that opened itself wide to America after the fall of the Soviet Union, to what is tantamount today to a complete Russian rejection of the American worldview and values. A far more incisive poll was conducted by the famous Russian news portal *Vzglyad* in May of 2017, according to which more than 80% of Russians wanted to have either neutral or even hostile relations with the US.⁶ Only 14.7% wanted allied relations with the US. The US is simply no longer attractive as a model, whether economic, cultural or social, in Russia and the majority of Russians view the United States as a very real threat.

These dry statistics, however, do not reflect the intensity and the scope of this cultural shift, which for all intents and purposes can be called the cultural suicide of the image of the combined West in Russia, insofar as it was self-inflicted. Today, very many Russians actually are expecting and are resigned to the possibility of a hot war with the West in general and the US in particular and in this, it is they who are on an order of magnitude more informed and knowledgeable than Americans about the consequences of such a conflict, even if it would somehow be restricted to a conventional, not nuclear, framework.

In fact, running from propaganda demonizing Putin to enforcement of sanctions on both the nation and individuals to affronts to consular norms to exclusion of Russia from the 2018 Olympics, the war has already begun and it cannot be obfuscated anymore by hefty diplomatic rhetoric. Worse, the US is losing this war on a scale which, considering the fragile mental state of the American elites, especially after Donald Trump's victory, may force them to do the unthinkable and provoke a global military conflict. This must not be allowed to happen. Here are several key realities which have to be digested for this effort to avoid a global conflict to succeed:

The Socio-cultural Reality

What has to be understood at this point of time is the fact that the current United States is neither an actual nation-state nor can it continue to be considered to be Western in its many important manifestations. While the veracity of Scruton's definition of Western Civilization can be debated, there is very little doubt that the American cultural dynamic is anything but Western. The vector is distinctly anti-Western and anti-European, or at least as it concerns what was traditionally regarded as European civilization.

No nation has ever existed based strictly on an ideological and political creed—not even the Soviet Union.⁷ Blood, race, ethnicity and, as a result, common culture matter, in fact—they define the nation whether it has Republican system of governance or a fascist one, which are merely derivatives of cultures. Evidently, the lessons of the Soviet collapse have not been learned in the US, or in Europe, where the merits of liberal dogma are wrongly accepted as a main reason for their alleged Cold War “victory”. The dangerous and manifest divisions in the US today are more than just differences of political opinion, they are a symptom of a serious illness. A large part of those divisions originates in a substantial segment of the American population seeing no value in American real, not perceived, liberties. The liberal progressive coastal populations do not like the “fly-by” states, and vice versa. The secularists don't like the evangelical Christians, who in turn don't like the “permissive”/LBGT culture. The ethnic minorities (Blacks, Hispanics, Puerto Ricans) see no collective advantages accruing to them despite their efforts to participate in the political system. What many regard as the deep state's effort to remove Donald Trump is nonetheless able to ignite latent rabid prejudices in all directions. In fact, large swaths of the American population simply do not like the United States for a whole host of reasons—racial, religious, cultural, economic, moral and political.

Moreover, a common denominator of the reasons for not liking the US is the fact that the US is still, albeit increasingly less

so, under White Anglo-Saxon (WASP) domination. Furthermore, many “new” Americans as they are known today simply do not like this European cultural and intellectual emphasis, to the exclusion of other ethnicities. The late Arthur Schlesinger was overly timid in explaining the emerging divisions in American society when he stated in 1998: “The rising cult of ethnicity was a symptom of decreasing confidence in the American future.”⁸ That was wrong—ethnicity and its “cult”, especially among non-European peoples, existed well before the United States existed as a nation, nor is this “cult” going anywhere in the future. Nor was Schlesinger prescient when stating that “Americans have had a vigorous sense of national identity.”⁹ They may well have had it, a long time ago but not anymore. So-called multicultural societies do not work well, if at all. They never did, it is a cold hard historic fact. The contemporary United States is an exhibit of this truism, inexorably following in the steps of the Soviet Union. The United States is currently undergoing the phase of a relatively non-violent Balkanization, where non-territorial issues related to race and gender nonetheless are most strongly expressed territorially.

This process is relatively non-violent for now, but the attack on American Europeanism, due to sometimes justified historic grievances and present inequalities, only grows in intensity. The new race- and gender-based agenda and grievances culture has slowly but surely displaced an old left whose main focus were jobs and wages for the majority of working Americans, be they white, black or any other race or gender. The old left is gone today, being supplanted with what Steve Sailer calls the “Democrats’ coalition of fringes”—a combination of interest groups, also known as social justice warriors, associated with the Democratic Party and vying for resources and influence in shaping the future of the United States. It is a profoundly depressing outcome for anyone who came to appreciate and treasure the best that American culture offered in the past—most of it European in origin. But the so-called establishment conservatives in the US are in no position to be critical—they were the ones who conflated American patriotism, often justified, with a culturally and economically debilitating

militarism. They were also the ones who continue to push ahead with a destructive neo-liberal globalist economic agenda. And the ones who controlled American corporations and off-shored them, depleting American manufacturing, and thereby unions and jobs.

Fever pitch anti-Russian hysteria is another manifestation of the complete inability of the US establishment and those who pass for its intellectual elite to deal with reality. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union American geopolitical scholarship and thought has remained manifestly sterile when it comes to producing viable reality-based assessments and ideas. The late Samuel Huntington's magnum opus on the clash of civilizations, is still filled with misconceptions and downright ignorance of some crucial facts, such as the influence of WW II and continental warfare on the world in general, and the combined West in particular. Most of what came from the American geopolitical Parnassus, be it Fukuyama's delusional manifesto of *The End of History* to the late Brzezinski's ideas, didn't even get this limited record of success, their predictions haven't exactly panned out. In fact, all of it never materialized. It couldn't—repeating ad nauseam liberal economic and social mantras was not a substitution for knowledge of the world, of which American elites, for the most part, know very little.

No better proof of that exists than the whopping failure of US scholarship, intelligence and diplomacy to calculate at least the immediate consequences of US actions first in 2003 in Iraq, then in 2008 in Georgia, then in 2014 in Ukraine, and in the end, in Syria where the US has supported Islamic jihadists, including those from terrorist organizations it held directly responsible for the tragedy of 9/11. One is also forced to ask if there is even anything left of American diplomacy, one which at some point of time was associated with competent and intelligent people of the scale of Secretary of State James Baker or the esteemed Ambassador to Russia, Jack Matlock. Those times are gone. Indeed, at this writing, one year into the Trump administration, State Department personnel remains depleted—perhaps not surprisingly as US diplomats lined up solidly behind the Democrats in the 2016 election. American so-called “diplomacy” today exists primarily for two reasons: to

assist in regime changes, a euphemism for illegal and violent overthrow of governments in nations the US doesn't like, and to dictate orders to those who cannot resist its diktat, which is the modus operandi of the US foreign policy establishment. This type of "diplomacy" is also, by definition, profoundly incompetent.

Delusions of grandeur at home, despite overwhelming empirical evidence to the contrary, feed the same delusions in the international arena. It was this very American establishment, including media and academia, which didn't recognize the real appeal of Donald Trump's slogans to many, mostly white, Christian-background, working Americans, and failed spectacularly and miserably in predicting the outcome of the last presidential election. The America which actually works and makes a living is not interested in non-stop wars, either cultural or actual ones. It is also not interested, sensibly not, in the opinions and prescriptions of the "experts" who far from improving their own nation, helped to bring it into the most serious moral crisis since the Vietnam War.

But the question is: with the exception of American military professionals ranging from Andrew Bacevich and Philip Giraldi to Colonels Patrick Lang or Wilkerson, can this American elite, its diplomats, and indeed its military experts, even grasp what real war is and how the military and economic paradigms have changed? Their record explicitly says that they cannot. While US Naval War College Sovietologist Tom Nichols lamented America's loss of faith in expertise,¹⁰ one is forced in this case to ask this question: why should Americans have this faith to begin with, once the record is considered, and why didn't they lose it earlier? All the results of this "expertise" point to very solid grounds for Americans' inevitable loss of faith. Working America wants what most normal people want—to have a decent job, some promising future for their children, stability, and the ability to freely express their opinion without being boxed inside suffocating political correctness. This America doesn't want to fight non-stop wars abroad for the interests of Israel, Saudi Arabia or anyone else who has the ear and pocket of US legislators. In

general, this America wants things which are described by very normal, moral terms of human decency, not some liberal social and economic orthodoxy, or Hollywood so-called values. These are things which are worth saving and fighting for.

But it is these very American elites, with their attendant scholarship and expertdom, the supposed voice of American higher understanding, who continue to reside in their own make-believe world in which the US is still a “benevolent hegemon” and an omnipotent industrial and military power. This no longer has anything in common with reality, if ever it had, to start with. Far from being scholarly in a deep meaning of the word, American establishment scholarship and expertdom is simply not adequate to the real challenges of an emerging new global order and is on the way of getting itself in the situation which Nichols describes:

Experts need to remember, always, that they are the servants of a democratic society and a republican government. Their citizen masters, however, must equip themselves not just with education but also with the kind of civic virtue that keeps them involved in the running of their own country. Laypeople cannot do without experts, and they must accept this reality without rancor. Experts, likewise, must accept that they get a hearing, not a veto, and that their advice will not always be taken. At this point, the bonds tying the system together are dangerously frayed. Unless some sort of trust and mutual respect can be restored, public discourse will be polluted by unearned respect for unfounded opinions. And in such an environment, anything and everything becomes possible, including the end of democracy and republican government itself.¹¹

Nobody epitomizes the decline of American “expertise”

better than US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Hailey—a person utterly uncultured and unqualified for a diplomat’s position, especially of so high a profile—to say nothing of her greater concern with protecting Israel’s interests than those of the United States.

Against such a background, it is difficult to see how this trust and mutual respect can be restored. US elites have simply stopped producing any truly competent people; the US stopped producing real statesmen, not just politicians, even earlier. When experts fail, as they failed America, not least due to many of them not being real experts at all, actors, comedians, sportsmen, conspiracy theorists and demagogues from the mass-media take their place. Remarkably, Nichols fails to note that the current American expertdom is especially responsible for the unmitigated disaster which US foreign policy has become. Now threatening this very “democratic society”, or whatever is left of it, is a powerful neocon and liberal interventionist establishment which has a virtual veto power and is working hard, both consciously and not, to end this very republican government. In general, the current American elites and their so-called expert enablers have betrayed American vital interests both at home and especially abroad. What has specifically and greatly contributed to their miserable failure is an almost complete lack of understanding of the nature of military power, of war and its consequences. It couldn’t have been otherwise in the country whose military history is, to a very large degree, a triumphalist myth.

Former CIA analyst Philip Giraldi once succinctly described the rather unimpressive range of the skills of American (and Israeli) neoconservatives—people who have dominated the formulation of American foreign and military policies for at least the last 20 years—as follows: “Neoconservatives are characteristically better versed in reading and writing about battles than actually fighting them, though that deficiency has not inhibited their initiation of vast schemes to remake half the world through force of arms.”¹² As this book argues, American military history is as much a matter of PR spin as it is a matter of reality.

All nations, without exception, tend to have their own military mythologies and this is normal as long as those mythologies have at least some basis in reality. Military historians may argue about the validity of claims about the massive armor clash at Prokhorovka on July 12, 1943 during the Battle of Kursk, but no serious military historian doubts the battle itself, its gigantic scope and scale, and the massive influence it had not only for the war on the Eastern front but on the outcome of World War Two. How can one even claim any success militarily for the United States in the last 70 years when, with the exception of a turkey shoot in the First Gulf War, the United States as a nation and its much-vaunted military didn't win a single war?

The latest massive geostrategic failure in Syria only underscores the sad state of American fighting doctrine and of its war technology. As Geoffrey Aronson's title to his article on Syria states: "Washington Relegated to Bystander Status in Syria Talks. Yet it is still attempting to manipulate, and will lose at that, too."¹³ Manipulation and PR are no substitute for actual victory which is defined universally as achieving the political objectives of the war, or in Clausewitz's one liner—the ability to compel the enemy to do our will. The United States military's balance sheet on that is simply not impressive, despite a mammoth military budget, immensely expensive weapons and a massive, well-oiled PR machine. All this is the result of the US military-industrial complex long ago becoming a jobs program for retired Pentagon generals and an embodiment of the neoconservative "view" on war—a view developed by people, most of whom never served a single day in uniform and do not possess even basic fundamental knowledge of the physical principles on which modern weapons operate and how technological dimensions reflect upon tactical, operational and strategic aspects of war (they are all tightly interconnected and do not exist separately). But talking up or blowing out of proportion, or grossly exaggerating US military capabilities does not require a serious academic and experiential foundation—today it is enough to have that desire and a good command of the English language to do so. Lawyers, journalists,

insurance agents, people with dubious backgrounds—all walks of professional, and not so much, lives, are represented today in the American “discussion” on military issues. It is not surprising, then, to see catastrophic outcomes, one after another.

It also matters that many of America’s foremost “strategists” have loyalties to Israel, not to the United States, and really don’t care about losses in American blood and treasure, to say nothing of reputational losses, when planning yet another military adventure which inevitably results in disaster. They surely care even less about the lives of hundreds of thousands of innocent people who are targeted for this kind of “democratization” with precision-guided and dumb bombs.

Hopefully by the time this book is published the United States will still not be involved in a war with Iran, though Israel and its powerful lobby in the United States are hard at work trying to get the United States to unleash an attack on Iran under the false pretext of Iran’s non-compliance with the *Iran Nuclear Deal Framework and Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action*.¹⁴ The problem with a possible war with Iran is that the US military simply does not have the capacity to put enough boots on the ground to fight in a country, which, unlike Iraq, is much larger in area and population and is very complex in terms of terrain. Iran also has a more or less competent and battle-seasoned military. Moreover, Iran has a reliable land and sea access, through friendly Azerbaijan, and the Caspian Sea, to Russia, which will not stay idle in the face of unfavorable developments on her Southern underbelly. Weapons, expertise and volunteers will flow to Iran. Yet, despite the US military being stretched to the limit by non-winnable or already lost wars, many political factions in Washington do not mind initiating yet another defeat with all the consequences in blood, treasure and reputation that follow. The saddest part of it is in yet another possible instance of the United States attacking a nation which actually presents no real threat to American national interests.

The US may again end up fighting for Israel’s interests as it effectively did in 2003. In terms of US weapons and

doctrines, the United States is bound to continue to experience a dramatic reversal of the very thing it proclaimed for decades as an established fact—its military’s technological superiority. Most American technological capabilities, which for decades were extolled as unrivaled, do not look that impressive against the weapons technologies which achieve a dramatic asymmetrical and synergetic effect for a fraction of the cost. Much touted Stealth technologies as a cornerstone of US alleged domination in the aerospace field are not really that stealthy with even Russian generation 4++ fighters, such as the SU-35C, with their Irbis radar capable of “seeing” even an F-22 fighter as far as 90 kilometers away, to say nothing of modern Air Defense complexes such as the S-400 which can track and engage any aero-ballistic targets.

The coming of the revolutionary S-500 air-defense system may completely close Russia and her allies’ airspace from any aerial or even ballistic threats. These developments alone completely devalue the astronomically expensive USAF front line combat aviation and its colossal investment into the very limited benefits of stealth, a euphemism primarily for “invisibility” in radio diapason, the mediocre F-35 being a prime example of the loss of common engineering, tactical and operational sense. Radiophotonics detection technologies will make all expenditures on stealth, without exception, simply a waste of money and resources.¹⁵ No better experts on how to waste resources exist than those sponsored by the US military-industrial complex.

The situation is no better at sea. The introduction into service in 2017 of the 3M22 Zircon hyper-sonic missile¹⁶ is already dramatically redefining naval warfare and makes even remote sea zones a “no-sail” zone for any US major surface combatant, especially aircraft carriers. Currently, and for the foreseeable future, no technology capable of intercepting such a missile exists or will exist. The US Navy still retains a world-class submarine force, but even this force will have huge difficulties when facing the challenge of increasingly deadly and silent non-nuclear submarines which are capable, together with friendly sea and shore-based anti-submarine forces, to completely shut

down their own littorals from any kind of threat. Once access through littorals and the sea and even some oceans zones that matter are shut down, as is possible now, one of the main pillars of American naval doctrine and strategy—the ability to project power—collapses. With it collapses the main pillar of American superpowerdom, or, at least, of its illusion. The late Scott Shuger formulated an American naval contradiction:

Because navies can go quietly over the horizon in ways armies can't, naval development presents a country with unique opportunities for going wrong. When a continental power like the United States disregards its natural defense barriers and builds big battle fleets, it has turned from geopolitical realities towards a troublesome kind of make-believe. This kind of navy exists only to defeat other navies that are similarly inclined. That's justifiable only if other navies like that already exist.¹⁷

No carrier-centric navies, other than the US Navy, exist, nor will they exist in the nearest future since all major naval players in the world, with the exception of the US and Royal Navies, took the doctrine of distributed lethality¹⁸ to heart and continued to invest in serious anti-shipping capabilities across a huge variety of platforms, with the Soviet Union, and today's Russia, leading the way in the development of deadly super- and hyper-sonic weapons. New very long-range land attack cruise missiles become very effective deterrent and power projection tools against any kind of adversary. The United States is not, as of yet, in this league and it may yet occur to many American experts that Russia's procrastination in building her own aircraft carriers is not just the result of a lack of expertise or of shipbuilding facilities, but primarily it is the result of a recognition of the dawning of the realities of modern anti-ship weapons and how they can instantly change the balance of naval power by the mere

threat of their use. In fact, the future of navies is anything but a carrier-centric paradigm. This is the equivalent of a doctrinal Stalingrad, with carrier-centrism being born in 1940s and 50s not so much out of actual strategic necessities but as an instrument of institutional survival. This is not a good way to develop an actual military capability, as required by strategic reality.

The day of reckoning is upon us. Even the staunch American nationalist, Pat Buchanan, bitterly observed: “Nobody’s quaking in their boots, anymore.”¹⁹ The United States, both wittingly and not, in the last 20-plus years, through a series of badly-conceived and largely falsely-premised military adventures, exposed the dramatic limits of its military, and as a consequence geopolitical, capabilities and power, and the world took a notice. Short of nuclear exchange, the United States cannot conventionally defeat Russia or China in their immediate geographic vicinities. A military superpower—which the United States certainly still remains—which cannot defeat any other superpower is hardly a good embodiment of the superlative military terms it uses to describe itself. Constantly proclaiming itself militarily omnipotent without presenting universally accepted evidence of such omnipotence does not make a good case for such claims. This is not how things work in reality, as with anything in life—reputation, which is a first derivative of a record, matters a great deal. Spin and propaganda campaigns can go only so far and become increasingly less effective the more time passes by without presenting a real record of achievement.

The problem with the US military, however, is even deeper than that. It is even deeper than being thinly stretched or being subjected to mindless demoralizing social experimentation on the troops. The real problem with the US military lies in its betting for decades on the wrong technological and doctrinal “horse,” which, emphasized a utopian vision of warfare based on expensive and unproven technologies and concepts. It also saw American wars as being fought far away from America proper. But due to the evolution of military/technological capacity, bringing the battlefield to the American homeland is no longer impossible.

This profound conceptual failure is a sad but at the same time inevitable outcome for a country whose military planning was based on a delusion and myth originating in a firm conviction that American victory in WWII had very little to do with the Soviet Union and had everything to do with American industrial capacity, ingenuity and an American way of war. Thus the sense of commensuration between effort and outcome was completely lost.

Coming to grips with reality from such a deep delusion is not an easy task; for some this obstacle becomes insurmountable. Former Secretary of the Navy in the Reagan administration, John Lehman, recently weighed in on the anti-Russian conspiracy hysteria which gripped the American political and media establishment with the absurd statement that the U.S. military is losing its technological edge in part because Russian cyber forces have penetrated the defense industry and are stealing information.²⁰ There is very little doubt that Russia spies on US, but the same is absolutely true for the US, which has a historically unprecedented spying machine, spying on Russia. Moreover, most modern Russian weapon systems bear no signs of being “borrowed” from the US, especially in such fields as advanced air-defense systems in which the Soviet Union/Russia historically held leading positions, and in submarine development which by 1980s was propelled not by spying only but by an enormous technological, tactical and operational experience with very advanced submarine technologies. In 1988, Anthony Batista, senior staff member of the Armed Forces Committee, speaking about the Soviet Project 971 (*Schuka-Pike*, NATO *Akula*) nuclear submarine declared, “The *Akula* is the best submarine in the world today.”²¹ Since then submarine technologies didn’t, despite the collapse of the Soviet Union, stay idle and Russia, despite the economic and social catastrophe of the 1990s, never stopped with advanced research in this field.

Meanwhile the scope, capability and variety of the Russian Navy’s weapons development is simply astonishing and includes weapons, among many others, such as Shkval missile-torpedoes or 3M22 Zircon hyper-sonic antishipping missiles,

which effectively rewrote naval tactics and presented a capability which the US Navy simply didn't and doesn't have, and which it simply refused to anticipate. Those technologies are not result of espionage since very little exists that could have been spied on in the US. The logical question in this situation is this: After all, who will be more tempted to spy on an opponent? As indicated by the 2000 case of Edmond Pope,²² an alleged American engineer who "accidentally" ran into an active Canadian intelligence operation bent on obtaining Shkval technology in Russia, Mr. Lehman is being a little bit disingenuous when complaining about Russia presently having a lead in systems in which she has been in a close second or in leading positions since the 1960s. Lehman's accusations, however, are symptomatic of the elites' total denial of the reality in which the United States is neither a military hegemon nor is it any longer capable of sustaining its military posture which has contributed enormously to the moral and economic bankruptcy of the nation.

This is an effect the United States, which always prospered through a war, never more so than from World War Two, is simply not ready for. Indeed, how could the shining city on the hill, which allegedly "defeated" Imperial Germany in 1918 and Nazi Germany in 1945, and then "defeated" the Soviet Union in 1991 possibly end up with its economy wrecked, its armed forces paralyzed, its political system and discourse becoming a more expensive version of the Jerry Springer Show, and with its very brief, in historic terms, moment of unipolarity gone?

The American experience with war and her elites' conviction that they knew what war is was the main factor that precipitated American decline. As Richard Pipes noted:

America has tended to rely on its industry to protect it from aggressors, and on its unique industrial capacity to help crush its enemies once war was underway. The United States is accustomed to waging wars on its own choosing and on its own terms. This approach to warfare has

had a number of consequences. The United States wants to win its wars quickly and with the smallest losses in American lives... Extreme reliance on a technological superiority, characteristic of U.S. warfare, is the obverse side of America's extreme sensitivity to its own casualties; so is indifference to the casualties inflicted on the enemy.²³

The era of fast, relatively inexpensive and greatly beneficial wars in economic, political and ideological terms that America enjoyed in the 20th century world wars is over. Even in the case of a conventional conflict, a scenario much preferred to nuclear exchange, American territory, her political and military power institutions and infrastructure are no longer insulated from conventional missile strikes and this vulnerability together with nuclear-conventional ambiguity will only grow—modern military technologies have made this possible.

While military futurologists may speculate on the nature of future conflict it has become increasingly obvious that the United States is losing, and fast, her leading positions in many crucial conventional capabilities. Today, the United States doesn't even have a serious air defense system, other than early warning infrastructure, capable of defending against a massive cruise missile attack from several directions on American continental installations. In the coming decade this threat will grow exponentially with Russia getting ready to resume production of her TU-160M2 strategic bombers and with new, 10000-kilometer range cruise missiles getting ready to be deployed. The combined air and submarine launch of hundreds of such weapons could effectively incapacitate, with minimal damage to civilians, the American state.

This is a new reality for the United States, which has gotten used to being able to easily and quickly overcome weak opposition through overwhelming technological and war materiel superiority. She should wake up to the reality that there may be conflict situations where it's doubtful she can prevail and should cease threatening other nations which may be her military equals,

if not superiors. If not, we all will remain under the threat of a massive American miscalculation—a highly probable scenario considering the incompetence and delusion of the American establishment—and as a result, uncontrolled escalation to a very dangerous nuclear threshold to which the United States will be forced to move closer in an attempt to save her own dwindling reputation. This may happen in case of the war against Iran if some high value American targets, such as an aircraft carrier were to be hit, or of the US facing another Syria-scale humiliation—to say nothing of that potential in relation to Ukraine and North Korea.

Modern America is ill; she is not in a good place in any important metric which defines a prosperous and successful nation. Much more goes into success than mostly meaningless Wall Street economic indices and capitalization of the markets, let alone companies which produce nothing of value. It is difficult to explain to people who consider iPhones' marketing gimmicks or another useless computer contraption in cars, or yet another wasteful feature on Facebook to be hi-tech. It is not. Money is not a good measure of human accomplishment—the new smartphone and marijuana-addicted generation is not an indicator of any success just because they can afford yet another new model of some electronic toy, while being increasingly less educated, less knowledgeable and much less competent than the generation which preceded them. It is this generation which is already in the process of inheriting a country which in the last quarter century lost most of its appeal for the rest of the world as the bastion of democracy, human rights and sound economic model due to its hubris and the permanent wishful thinking moment it resides in. Today, any mentioning of “democracy”, “freedom of press”, of an incorruptible political class or of economic prosperity in relation to the United States will create an ironic smile at best, sarcastic laughter at worst, around the world, especially so in Russia.

Almost four years ago, when the United States initiated a bloody coup in Ukraine, I wrote in my blog:

I observed for decades now a consistent pattern of the wrong assessments, loony strategies and deliberate misrepresentation (lies?) of facts coming from the top of US establishment, which since 1991 lives in the make-believe world built by the triumphalists. It is difficult to explain to the average Joe that the Baseball World Series, or Superbowl ‘World Champions’ have no relation to the World and are purely internal American affairs. That there is a huge wide world outside and that it lives and moves not in accordance to the American narrative. Explaining to the American ‘elite’ the fact that the US didn’t ‘win’ WW II, that ‘winning’ the Cold War came about because Soviet people simply decided to end it, that the Wall Street ‘economy’ has no relation to the real economy and that real wars produce misery and destruction on a scale which is incomprehensible for the ‘populace’ of the Washington D.C. ‘strategists’, it is not just difficult—it is next to impossible. So, the events must run their course. But it is already clear that by failing to achieve any sensible political objectives in Ukraine and in Russia, and, by this, starting a massive global realignment, the United States sustained a defeat. What will be the consequences of this defeat? I hate to speculate, I just know that they are already big and that the moment of facing the reality is coming. My suggestion to those who are still making decisions—open and start reading *War and Peace* by Leo Tolstoy. I don’t hold my breath, though. The moment US handlers of their Kiev puppets conceived that the Ukrainian Army can ‘win’ in Donbass, the stopwatch started.

This was in 2014. By today, in 2018, all those predictions

have come true and we all face this moment of encounter with reality. Pax Americana turned out to be just a figment of imagination of the American “academe” which for decades treated war and military power as merely a safe tool in the constant pushing of the American political and economic agenda on the world. This age is over. The main task today is to prevent by all means any possibility of this delusional, self-proclaimed exceptional nation unleashing Armageddon because of frustration with its own weakness which was so suddenly and brutally exposed for the whole world to see.

Where does this leave us all on the globe in general and in the US in particular? There is no denying that the economic decline both in relative and absolute terms is a fact of life for the United States and the order it came to embody. This order is a globalist liberal vision—America’s crisis is a crisis of liberalism and of global financial capitalism. The utopian modern liberal orthodoxy (a euphemism for free trade) remains based on money and profit as a measure of everything. This doesn’t work anymore. No matter what the capitalization of Facebook is, it still cannot deliver crucial and highly needed products and services which provide benefits across the whole spectrum of human activity. In the end, a lot hinges on the national productive capability. Yes, the United States still remains a manufacturing powerhouse but it has already lost supremacy in this competition to China. As James Petras noted:

As a point of history, the United States didn’t start out as a bloated, speculative state of crony capitalists and parasitical allies: The US was once a powerful industrial country, harnessing finance and overseas investments to securing raw materials for domestic industries and directing profits back into industry for higher productivity.²⁴

Today the reality for the US manufacturing sector is grim:

Unlike the US, China has nourished its manufacturing sector, and not starved it of

investment. The average factory in the US is twice as old as those in China. To even dream of catching up with Chinese production, the US would have to invest over \$115 billion a year in manufacturing for the next three decades.²⁵

These are startling figures which show the real depth of American decline. Without a strong manufacturing sector any serious and lasting progress in scientific, educational and other fields is also doubtful. It also places huge restraints on weapons' development programs and, as a result, affects dramatically the geopolitical standing which, in the American case, is based on a perceived military omnipotence. But few American weapons of the last quarter century produce a strong impression. Many of them simply do not work at all. The Eurasian economic realignment is another factor which, effectively, leaves the United States out of any influential position in shaping a new, multipolar, world order.

This is certainly not the future American elites envisioned. They certainly didn't believe that American decline was in the cards—they were, as they are most of the time, very wrong. This decline manifests itself daily, from the inability to present any sensible industrial recovery program which actually benefits people, not the Wall Street speculators, to altogether self-humiliating attempts to credit the US with the victory over ISIS in Syria.²⁶ Behavior of this kind is not the behavior of a confident superpower open to global challenges. The behavior of the current American elites is an embarrassment to the American people. In fact these American so-called elites bear a lion's share of responsibility for corrupting American political discourse, destabilizing the world, driving American industry and standard of living into the ground and, in the end, simply selling out to the highest bidder.

If the United States has any future as a stable and relatively well-working Republic it must start a really serious nationwide discussion on the competence or rather lack thereof, and indeed the malice of the Washington lobbies and corrupt politicians, many of whom, far from serving people, as they claim, should be

serving serious prison terms for precisely *not* serving Americans but rather their own financial and power interest. Will such a discussion be sustainable on a nation-wide scale in the Orwellian world of the US mass media? President Trump ran on a “Drain the Swamp” agenda. Today, it becomes increasingly evident that the so-called “swamp” will stop at nothing to preserve its own power. The more the American general public is educated on that, the higher are the chances for a recovery, even if it takes a long time.

Most importantly, however, is the need to remove the neoconservatives and other warmongering elements from power. This starts with the reassessment of the American role in the world and its relation to war. The whole militarism cult in the US is built on a consistent mythologizing of American military history and her weapons based on a lack of serious knowledge among the American political and intellectual elites of precisely what real war is. Exposing this and educating the American public on that will have a positive long-term effect.

But the main issue still remains. In what can only be described as the strategic folly of the 21st century—the United States missed a historic opportunity to ally with Russia based on equal and mutually beneficial relations. This opportunity today is gone. Pushing Russia, through condescension, blackmail, humiliation and ignorance, away from itself in the 1990s, the United States committed the cardinal sin of Anglo-Saxon and now neo-conservative geopolitical calculus—they pushed Russia and China together, while simultaneously providing China with all the necessary tools, from investment to access to markets, thus making her the largest economy in the world. Today, the United States faces two nuclear and industrial superpowers, one of which fields a world-class armed forces. If the military-political, as opposed to merely economic, alliance between Russia and China, is ever formalized—this will spell the final doom for the United States as a global power. It is yet to be seen if such an alliance is possible but it becomes increasingly clear that if the United States wants to stay globally relevant it must start talking to Russia—a task simply beyond the capability of the current American elites.

The events of 13 April, 2018—the American, British and French attack on alleged Syrian “chemical weapons” facilities—left no doubt about the present state of the American real, not virtual, military capability. As a popular senior American military intelligence professional who, for the reasons of personal security, goes under the pseudonym of Publius Tacitus noted in the wake of the illegal and utterly failed strikes:

The Russians and Syrians were not lying when they claimed to have downed more than 70 of the U.S., UK and French missiles. I understand the reluctance of the U.S. military leaders to admit the truth about this debacle. It would undermine the confidence of the American people in our supposedly invincible weapon systems and would embarrass and enrage the man child that inhabits the White House. Better to tell him lies and let him believe the fantasy. But this is a very dangerous game. So far the Russians have not pursued significant PR efforts to expose the U.S. lie about the missiles. Maybe they are choosing to keep quiet, like a good poker player, and not tip their hand to the American public. One of these days Trump and company will over bet in trusting the Russians not to punch back (and punch back hard) and the American people will be in for a rude awakening. They will discover that the Russians have a decided advantage over us when it comes to air defense.²⁷

Deploying Soviet era missile defense, but upgraded and fully integrated with Russia’s air-defense assets in Syria, the Syrian Air Defense performed admirably—granted, having targeting provided by Russians. One can only extrapolate these numbers which the modern and constantly expanding Russian Air Defense contingent in Syria may provide against any type of

attack. More importantly, however, was the fact of the difficulty to hide Russian-American military “choreography” of such an attack in a judicious attempt to avoid any kind of danger to Russian personnel and assets in Syria which would have triggered a Russian response with incalculable consequences. As highly informed Russian military observer, Chief Editor of the magazine *Natsionalnaya Oborona* (National Defense), retired Colonel Igor Korotchenko, informed the public, after meeting with his high positioned sources in the General Staff, Russian forces were ready to attack NATO assets in case of any cruise missile presenting a danger to Russian personnel on the ground in Syria.²⁸

This cannot continue. The United States, represented by its elites, must understand a simple truth of the new millennium: COIN operations and the technological dominance the US enjoyed over backward and badly trained third world militaries is over. From here on the only adversary the United States can possibly expect to encounter, in case of any increasingly likely military conflict, is Russia—the power with enough economic, military and technological expertise to call the 70-year long American military bluff and with it, end Pax Americana once and for all. The fact that at least some people in Washington D.C. can grasp consequences of such a conflict gives some hope for a relatively peaceful and much less dramatic departure of the United States from her self-proclaimed position of a global hegemon towards the status of just another great power in an increasingly complex and multi polar world. The choice is America’s.

PUTIN'S GAME CHANGER: PEACE THROUGH STRENGTH

During the August 2008 Russo-Georgian War, which saw an attempt by the Georgian state to seize the de-facto independent, secessionist and pro-Russian region of South Ossetia, leading to a Russian military intervention,¹ Russia termed the operations of its 58th Army “coercion into peace”. It is an appropriate term once one recalls what truly was at stake at the time. Russians did win that war and, indeed, coerced Georgia into a much more peaceful mood. In Clausewitzian terms the Russians achieved the main object of the war by compelling the enemy to do Russia’s will, which was to maintain peace and stability in the region. Russians, as the events of the last 19 years have showed, no longer have illusions about the possibility of any kind of reasonable civilized mediation with the combined West, least of all with the United States which continues to reside in her bubble which insulates her from any outside voices of reason and peace, as we have outlined in the preceding pages of this book. The dismal global American track record of the last few decades does not require any special elaboration—it is a record of military and humanitarian disasters.

Vladimir Putin’s March 1, 2018 address to Russia’s Federal Assembly was not about Russia’s upcoming presidential

elections, as many in the election-obsessed West suggest. Rather, Putin's speech was an effort to similarly coerce America's elites, if not into peace, at least into some form of sanity, given that they are currently completely detached from the geopolitical, military and economic realities of the newly emerging power configurations of the world. As was the case with Georgia in 2008, Putin's illustration of Russia's powers of coercion was based on military power. The Pre-Shoigu Russian Army, for all its real and perceived shortcomings, disposed of the US-trained and partially equipped Georgian force in a matter of five days—the Russian Army's technology, personnel and operational art was simply so much better. Obviously such a swift and relatively painless scenario is not possible between Russia and the United States—unless the American myth of technological superiority can be blown out of the water and forestall military engagement altogether.

American power elites are simply not qualified to grasp the complexity, the nature and application of military force. The majority of them have never served a day in uniform nor ever attended high-ranking military academic institutions; their expertise on cutting edge military-technological and geopolitical capacities and issues is limited to a couple of seminars on nuclear weapons and, in the best-case scenario, imbibing the efforts of the Congressional Research Service. They simply have no reference points. Yet, being a product of the American pop-military culture, also known as military porn and propaganda, these people—this collection of lawyers, political “scientists”, sociologists and journalists who dominate the American strategic kitchen which cooks non-stop delusional geopolitical and military doctrines—can understand one thing for sure: a bulls-eye on their backs or foreheads.

Putin's message to the United States was extremely simple: he reminded the US about its condescending refusal to even consider Russia's position on the ABM Treaty. As Jeffrey Lewis, in a surprising moment of sobriety for *Foreign Policy* magazine put it:

The real genesis of Russia's new generation of bizarre nuclear weapons lies not in the most recent Nuclear Posture Review, but in the George W. Bush administration's decision in 2001 to withdraw from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, and the bipartisan failure by both the Bush and Obama administrations to engage meaningfully with the Russians over their concerns about American missile defenses. Putin said as much in his remarks. "During all these years since the unilateral U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty," Putin explained, "we have been working intensively on advanced equipment and arms, which allowed us to make a breakthrough in developing new models of strategic weapons." Those technological breakthroughs are now here. Sadly, we're never got the diplomatic ones we needed.²

Putin's message was clear: "You didn't listen to us then, you will listen to us now". After that he proceeded with what can only be described as a military-technological Pearl-Harbor-meets-Stalingrad. The strategic ramifications of the latest weapon systems Putin presented are immense. In fact, they are historic in nature. Of course, many American pundits, expectedly, dismissed that as bluster—it is to be expected from the US military "expert" community. Others were not as dismissive and some were, indeed, deeply shocked. The overall impression today, a day after Putin's presentation, can be described in simple terms as this: *the missile gap is real and, in fact, it is not a gap but a technological abyss*. Paradoxically, this abyss is not where many do admit it—such as it concerns the *RS-28 Sarmat* ballistic missile, whose existence and approximate characteristics were more or less known for years. It is, undeniably, an impressive technological achievement to have developed a ballistic missile with not only practically unlimited range but also *capable of trajectories which render any*

kind of Anti-Ballistic Defense useless—thereby signaling it's time to reconsider the massive military boondoggle that was Star Wars/National Missile Defense, and an array of related projects. In the end, to be attacked from the South Pole, through South America, is not a contingency the US military is capable of facing. Probably not for very many years.

Nor is the Russian M=20+ hypersonic glider weapon system called *Avangard*, which is already in series production,³ an unexpected development—the United States has its own, albeit not yet successful program for such types of weapons and those ideas were being floated in the US since the mid-2000s under the tutelage of the PGS (Prompt Global Strike).

Yes, these are stunning technological achievements by Russia with Jeffrey Lewis' term “bizarre” being a euphemism for “we don't have anything comparable”, but it wasn't even here where the real shock should be. Several of my articles on this resource have been focused precisely in the area where the United States was more than lagging—cruise missiles, all kinds of them.⁴ I predicted the real American real military decline coming via this path many years ago; today it is patently clear that Russia holds an overwhelming military-technological advantage in cruise and aero-ballistic missiles and leads the US by decades in this crucial field.

While Western punditry was discussing all those exotic and, no doubt, stunning weapon systems designed for the delivery of nuclear weapons to any point on the globe with very high precision, many true professionals were gasping for the air when the *Dagger (Kinzhal)* was unveiled. This is a complete game changer geopolitically, strategically, operationally, tactically and psychologically. It was known for some time that the Russian Navy was already deploying a revolutionary M=8-capable *3M22 Zircon* anti-shiping missile. As impressive and virtually uninterceptable by any air defenses the *Zircon* is, the *Kinzhal* is simply shocking in its capabilities. This, most likely based on the famed *Iskander* airframe, M=10+ capable, highly maneuverable, aero-ballistic missile with a range of 2000 kilometers, carried by MiG-31BMs,

just rewrote the book on naval warfare. It made large surface fleets and combatants obsolete. No, you are not misreading it. No air-defense or anti-missile system in the world today (maybe with the exception of the upcoming S-500 specifically designed for the interception of hyper-sonic targets) is capable of doing anything about it, and, most likely, it will take decades to find the antidote. More specifically, no modern or prospective air-defense system deployed today by any NATO fleet can intercept even a single missile with such characteristics. A salvo of 5-6 such missiles guarantees the destruction of any Carrier Battle Group or any other surface group, for that matter—all this without use of nuclear munitions.

The usage of such a weapon, especially since we know now that it is already deployed in Russia's Southern Military District is very simple—the most likely missile drop spot by MiG-31s will be in the international waters of the Black Sea, thus closing off the whole Eastern Mediterranean to any surface ship or group of ships. Russia can also close off the Persian Gulf completely. It also creates a massive no-go zone in the Pacific, where MiG-31BMs from Yelizovo in Kamchatka or Centralnaya Uglovaya Air Base in Primorsky Krai⁵ will be able to patrol vast distances over the ocean. It is, though, remarkable that the current platform for the *Kinzhal* is the MiG-31—arguably the best interceptor in history. Obviously, the MiG-31's ability to reach very high supersonic speeds (well in excess of M=2) is a key factor in the launch. But no matter what the procedures for the launch of this terrifying weapon are, the immediate strategic consequences of *Kinzhal's* operational deployment are as follows:

1. It finally moves aircraft carriers into the niche of pure power projection against weak and defenseless adversaries, and away from the remote sea zone of Russia, be it the Mediterranean, Pacific or North Atlantic. This also means a complete no-go zone for any of the 33 Aegis-equipped US Navy destroyers and cruisers which are crucial for American Ballistic Missile Defense.⁶
2. It makes classic CBGs as a main strike force against a peer

or near-peer completely obsolete and useless; it also makes any surface combat ship defenseless regardless of its air-defense or anti-missile capabilities. It completely annuls hundreds of billions of dollars of investment into those platforms and weapons, which suddenly become nothing more than fat defenseless targets. The whole concept of Air-Sea Battle, aka *Joint Concept for Access and Maneuver in the Global Commons (JAM-GC)*, which is a cornerstone of American global dominance becomes simply useless—this is a doctrinal and fiscal catastrophe.

3. Sea Control and Sea Denial change their nature and merge. Those who have such weapons simply own vast spaces of the sea limited by the ranges of the *Kinzhal* and its carriers. It also removes completely any crucial surface support for submarines in the area, thus exposing them for Patrol/ASW aviation and surface ships. The effect is multiplicative and it is profound.

Russia has many of those carriers—the program of modernization of MiG-31s to BM was in full steam for some years now, with front line Air Force units seeing a considerable inflow of these aircraft.⁷ It is clear now why such modernization was undertaken—it made MiG-31BMs into launch platforms for the *Kinzhal*. As Marine Major General James L. Jones went on record in 1991, after the First Gulf War, “All it takes to panic a battlegroup is seeing somebody dropping a couple of 50-gallon drums into the water.” The *Kinzhal* effectively removes any non-suicidal surface force thousands of miles away from Russia’s shores and renders its capabilities irrelevant. In layman’s lingo that means only one thing—the US Navy’s whole surface component becomes a complete hollow force good only for parades and flag demonstration near and in the littorals of weak and underdeveloped nations. This can be done for a tiny fraction of the astronomical costs of US platforms and weapons.

It is very difficult at this stage to fully predict the political fallout of Putin’s speech in the US. What is easy to predict, however, is the use of the beaten-to-death cliché of asymmetry. The use of this cliché is wrong. What happened on March 1 this year with the announcement and demonstration of new Russian weapons

is not asymmetry, it was the declaration of the final arrival of a completely new paradigm in warfare, military technology and, as a consequence in strategy and operational art. Old rules and wisdom have ceased to apply. The United States was not and is not prepared for this, despite many real professionals, including in the US itself, warning about the new unfolding military-technological paradigm and the complete American myopia and hubris in anything military related. As Colonel Daniel Davies was forced to admit:

However justified that pride might have been at the time, it quickly mutated into distasteful arrogance. Now, it is an outright danger to the nation. Perhaps nothing exemplifies this threat better than the Pentagon's dysfunctional acquisition system.⁸

It is not imprudent to predict today, against the background of an American approach to war that has been provided herein, that there will be no sensible technological American response to Russia in the foreseeable future. The United States simply has no resources, other than turning on the printing presses and completely bankrupting itself in the process, with which to counter Russia. But here is the point: Russians know this and Putin's speech was not about directly threatening the US which, for all intents and purposes, is simply defenseless against the plethora of Russia's hyper-sonic weapons. Russia does not have the objective of destroying the United States. Russia's actions are dictated by only one cause—the equivalent of pulling a gun on a drunk, rowdy, knife-wielding bully in the bar and get him to pay attention to the ramifications and personal dangers of his actions. It seems that this is the only way to deal with the United States today.

If warnings and the demonstration of Russian military-technological superiority will have an effect, as was the Russian intent from the beginning, some sensible conversation on the new world order may start between key geopolitical players.

The world can no longer afford the antics of a pretentious, self-aggrandizing and hollow bully which knows not what it does and threatens the world's stability and peace. American self-proclaimed hegemony is over where it really matters for any real and perceived hegemon—in the military field. It has been over for some time now, it just took Putin's speech to demonstrate the good old Al Capone truism that one can get much further with a kind word and a gun than with a kind word alone. After all, Russia did try a kind word alone, it didn't work and the United States has only itself to blame.

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Chapter 1

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The insufficiency of food is thus ... associated with an abundance of working power. To find additional food and to spend additional work in producing it, two methods are possible: either to increase the productivity of the given plot, or to increase the plot itself. But the productivity of the soil cannot be increased without new investment of capital, if even we admit, what many writers do not grant, that such increase is possible at all on lands in communal ownership and in precarious possession of the single cultivator. Now the peasant in distress does not possess any capital, and rural credit for improving land does not exist in Russia. The other, and, under existing conditions, the only possible, method, is to buy or rent additional plots of land. This has always been the most ardent desire of the peasants, and a real struggle for buying or renting land has been going on during the whole period under consideration. Owing to the large number of estates of nobles offered for sale, and also to the material help of the Peasants’ Bank (since 1883), the agriculturists have succeeded in increasing the property of the peasant communes since 1875 by 10 per cent. But even though we add such land as has been purchased by individual peasants, independently

of the communal allotments, which would increase the amount by another 13 per cent., this general increase of 23 per cent does not prove equal to the increase of the peasant population during the same period, which was 48 per cent, or more than double. As a result, the holdings have constantly decreased and it became necessary to rent neighboring land. This necessity has been so great, and opportunities for renting land have been so comparatively few, that rent has risen enormously. Contrary to the laws of classical economy, the rent has not only reached the amount of the “unearned increment,” but has far exceeded it, swallowing up the profits and, very often, the very wages of the tenants. Such exorbitant rent may be compared to what is known to have been the case in Ireland before the great famine of 1846-47, when the competition among the tenants “reminded one of a struggle for food in a besieged city or on a ship in open sea.” The same kind of competition is going on among the Russian peasants owing to the absolute insufficiency of their plots for mere subsistence. Of course, no profits are looked for from such renting, the only aim of the peasants—and the only economic explanation of the possibility of such a rent—being to apply their own and their horses’ gratuitous labor to produce some more grain for their sustenance. Otherwise this possibility of subsidiary work would be lost, and both man and horse must starve. No wonder that they count their work as nothing.

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