

Sanctions on Russia: A New Cold War is Declared

By Maxim Nikolenko.

“My friends: The United States of America needs to send a strong message to Vladimir Putin and any other aggressor that we will not tolerate attacks on our democracy. That’s what this bill is all about!”

(Senator John McCain)

This hawkish rhetoric was delivered by McCain to encourage Senators to vote on a bill which formally proclaims the beginning of a new Cold War, or at least which places sanctions on Russia, Iran, and North Korea.

The rationale behind the vote is extraordinary, constructed upon unsubstantiated claims which were entrenched into the minds of Americans by the corporate press.

Over the past 10 months, Russia has been a constant news theme, accused of hacking the Democratic National Convention, hacking the election, and organizing a propaganda campaign to stop Hillary Clinton from winning the presidency. After the election, Trump’s short-lived National Security Adviser, Michael Flynn, became a “key figure” in the Russia-gate McCarthyism. The shadow of ‘Ruskies’ were spotted in the firing of the FBI director James Comey, in the Alabama bigot, Attorney General Jeff Sessions; it was suspected to be hiding in Jared Kushner, and even in the President’s son, Donald Trump Jr.

In the Russia-gate, most accusations made are baseless, sometimes totally absurd; yet they are echoed by the media as valid facts. Perhaps the most substantiated piece presented so far is the questionable CIA report on Russian meddling in the 2016 election.

Anyone can read [the report](#). In there, eight out of thirteen pages discuss the media entities which serve “Russian propaganda efforts”, not about hacking the election nor for turning Trump [into the](#) “Russian Poodle.” Much of what remains are claims – not facts – supported by the CIA’s “we assess with high confidence” statements. These are presented as the ‘smoking gun’, capable of justifying the current war rhetoric.

In reality, the election was not stolen from Americans by a foreign power. If anything was responsible for the defeat of a neoconservative, Hillary Clinton, it was the American Electoral College system. In the popular vote, Clinton received a 2.8 million lead over Donald Trump. The 2016 election demonstrated the widest gap in history between the popular vote and the electoral consensus.

This was not news.

If the centerpiece of Russian interference is the propaganda effort of its media outlet RT, then such a case cannot provide valid grounds for the ridiculous package of sanctions. In fact, the United States government annually spends over \$1 billion on internal propaganda efforts. Generous donations of taxpayer dollars are also being made to finance “Countering the Russian Influence Fund.” Hiding under the Machiavellian name is the propaganda campaign of the United States in countries of Europe and Central Asia, aimed against Russia. The [sanctions bill](#) assigned \$250 million to the effort in 2018 and 2019.

None of these were considered relevant by CNN, the New York Times, the Washington Post, and other American corporate news entities. There are no intentions to uncover the truth, no interest in what Russia did or did not do, but a precise amplification of the policies of the Deep State and an unhealthy obsession with war.

Scrutinizing the whole administration of President Trump under Russia-gate is a spectacular masterpiece of modern propaganda, an “invisible government” as Edward Bernays called it. The product of this invisible government is evident in the opinion poll. Today, up to 56% of Americans think that Russia tried to interfere in the

election. In some surveys, an even greater percentage believes in Trump's illegal dealings with Russia. This confidence exists amidst the absence of any substantial evidence. That is irrelevant.

Since the inauguration, CNN alone has mentioned "Russia" 15,694 times. Thus, a premise is developed, not with the presence of evidence but with the repetition of accusations.

"If you tell a lie long enough, it becomes the truth," emphasized a Minister of Propaganda in Nazi Germany, Joseph Goebbels.

Techniques of the past, with even greater expertise, are being applied today in the multi-billion-dollar media apparatus. Never has the "invisible government" held such influence over public opinion, an ability to divide society under artificially constructed deceptions and the power to sell wars. In every single conflict of the past decades, the embedded media has guarded the interests of State Department, and when needed, justified those interests to the public and preconditioned them to be silent when that silence safeguards the power.

In 2003, Americans were emotionally and intellectually preconditioned to absorb the 'long-planned' invasion of Iraq. Selling the illegal agenda of George W. Bush, the neocons, and Tony Blair was the goal of the media. Until the invasion, the myth of the Iraqi regime storing weapons of mass destruction went virtually unchallenged. An hour and sixteen minutes of ambiguous lies presented by the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, at the United Nations Security Council was echoed as truth. The public support for invasion surpassed 50%. The United States House of Representatives voted 297/133 and Senate 77/23 in favor of a massacre which would consume over a million lives.

Amidst a propaganda campaign, hundreds of thousands of Americans took to the streets to protest the invasion.

No one protested on the day when a new Cold War was declared.

There was no need for McCains of Washington to convince Congress on ratifying sanctions. On the day of the vote, a meeting in the House of Representatives resembled a self-styled party of war mongers.

Many of these war mongers are representing voices of the so-called liberals. One of them is a Democratic representative for Rhode Island, David Cicilline, who threatened Russia, Iran and North Korea would “suffer consequences for their bad behavior.” This is what the ‘liberal’ peacemaking process looks like. Steny Hoyer, another Democrat, who was called “instrumental” in putting the bill forward, emphasized: “Russia’s power comes from its ability to coerce other nations by its energy distribution.” Thus, the bill aims to “empower other nations to join us in standing up against Russian aggression.”

Russia’s ability “to coerce other nations by its energy distribution” is euphemism for the true goals Washington seeks to achieve with sanctions. Many countries in Europe, particularly Germany, have been importing Russian gas to fulfill their energy needs. The deal maintains the competitiveness of the European industrial sector and profits the supplying corporations in Russia. Currently, the construction of a gas pipeline is under way: the Nord Stream 2 is planned to replace an existing pipeline which transits Russian gas via Ukraine.

The sovereign energy deal between the EU and Russia has been a headache to the theorists of hegemony in Washington, as it deters them from expanding the market of liquefied natural gas, which promises big profits for corporations such as ExxonMobil, Chevron, and Apache. The only problem is that gas by pipelines is cheaper for Europe than shipments of LNG. The sanctions bill aims to change this by force, threatening penalties on companies who work on developing the Russian pipeline project; indeed, a declaration of economic war.

If Europe switches to expensive liquefied natural gas from the U.S., then its industrial economy risks losing competitiveness. No wonder there was an outcry. This is how Washington plans to “empower” its closest NATO allies. Of course, no one asked the opinion of Europeans about sanctions. The primitive self-righteousness of the

American Empire to impose without consent was demonstrated to the whole world.

The day of the vote was July 25, 2017. The vote was unipolar; resembling a one-party state, 419 representatives voted in favor and only 3 against the proposal.

This bill compelled the neoconservative interests of all sides: Democrats stood united in their obsession with war on Russia; Republicans are demonstrating a new degree of enthusiasm to isolate or declare war on Iran; and almost everyone seeks to further isolate the already isolated government of North Korea.

Behind the hostility towards North Korea, a rapid militarization of the Asian Pacific is under way, where the real aim of Washington generals is Beijing, not Pyongyang. The Pivot to Asia is the policy, declared in 2011 by a Noble Peace Prize winner, Barack Obama. Under the plan, two-thirds of U.S. naval forces will be transferred to the Asian Pacific by 2020, forming a giant noose around China. Militarism was not a policy of Beijing before the Pivot to Asia was announced. Not anymore. An uncontrolled militarization of the region is moving us closer to a real possibility of nuclear war.

This is never reported.

Also never reported is the militarization of NATO in Europe. Tanks are once again moving east, resembling memories of 1941, the war that proceeded, and the 27 million Soviet lives (including members of my family) who never lived to see the victory day on May 9, 1945.

No one will survive if a new war begins tomorrow, yet the work is ongoing to make it a real possibility.

After withdrawing from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty under the Bush administration in 2002, the United States began expanding NATO to Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, and most recently Montenegro. These countries became military outposts of an increasingly hegemonic Empire.

Under Barack Obama, a shining hope of 'Western liberal' circles, the expansion took an aggressive leap forward. It was under Obama that the United States supported a fascist coup in Ukraine, installing to power a junta of oligarchs' marionettes, who enslaved Ukrainians under 'reforms' of the IMP, and moved tanks to fight the Russian-speaking majority in Donbass. They also retain an unhealthy bond with the neo-Nazis, an alliance extending to the highest positions within the government, and **NATO is fully** aware of it.

Masquerading as a protector of Ukrainian 'democracy', Obama administered a barrage of sanctions against Russia while preparing his allies for war. Anaconda-2016 was the largest war game of NATO since the Cold War. Indeed, Russia is also preparing. There seems to be no other choice. Vladimir Putin had stressed the importance of maintaining a "balance of power" with "partners" in the West, a concept long broken by NATO.

Before leaving office, President Obama sent an additional 4000 American troops and hundreds of armored vehicles to Poland. Under the new sanctions, this process of ridiculously pointless and extremely dangerous militarization will continue to escalate.

In America, there is silence on the danger of nuclear war. Trump's tweet, where he proposed to reinstate a ban on transgender service in the military, was the news on the day when the House of Representatives ratified sanctions. Hundreds of those who are considered 'the left' went to protest. They marched in New York, decrying the ban, so transgender individuals could join the military drills, perhaps on the borders of Russia or in the Asian Pacific.

On July 27, the Senate held its own party of war mongers. The result was nearly unanimous, as 98 Senators voted in favor and only 2 against the bill. A Cold War-esque document was sent for a final signature at the White House.

While lacking much knowledge or experience on foreign policy, Trump had consistently, perhaps out of pragmatism, refused to take the neocon war policy on

Russia.

He had few options when the war was brought to his table. His signature did not matter. Congress had more than enough war mongers to overrule if the bill is vetoed. Yet, there was the media and an ongoing Russia-gate.

After 5 days of silence, behind closed doors, President Trump signed the document into law, thus stripping himself and future Presidents from the power to lift sanctions, as it was forbidden in the bill to exercise such power without an approval from Congress. Trump called the document he signed “clearly unconstitutional.”

Indeed, it was a coup against White House.

The day was Wednesday, August 2 when the bill was signed. The same day, Vice President Mike Pence was visiting the newest member state of NATO, Montenegro, to discuss war.

“Here in Europe, we must be resolute and uncompromising in the face of aggression from an unpredictable country that casts a shadow from the east.”

A new Cold War is officially declared. The foreign policy of the American Empire is now in the hands of warmongers in Congress. In such an atmosphere, perhaps it will be a decade or more before sanctions are lifted. And at what cost? Destroying sovereignty and Balkanizing Russia are the goals of the fascist-minded security apparatus in Washington. China is the real enemy, and it will be next.

A symbolic date is approaching us just days after the bill was signed. This year, August 6 marks the 72nd anniversary since the United States became the first and only country to have dropped an atomic bomb on people.

How can we be silent? How can we be so careless about an artificially constructed hostility under our names, which risks turning our planet into a radioactive inferno, with bombs far superior of those dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki?