

Power and the Global Ruling Class. Who Rules the World?

The End of Democracy as We Know It

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This paper starts with summarizing the major theoretical elements in the definition of a global ruling class. It then examines how neoconservatives in the US took power and used regime change to create chaos in other regions. A strategy of tension is used to press the population into conformity. But the real revolution is to what extent factual politics escape any attempt to democratic control. Three case studies show how far the Deep State already goes. Democracy is on the brink of survival.

1. Theory

In the earlier paper (Hamm, B. 2010) I suggested an analytical framework for the study of power as it relates to the future of global society. This outline specifically addressed four questions: (1) How is the global ruling class structured internally? (2) Is it theoretically correct to use the term class for the ruling elite? (3) Which are the major instruments of power? (4) How do these analytical insights impact on the probable future of human society?

Drawing on C. Wright Mills' seminal work on *The Power Elite*, recent power structure research suggests an ideal-type model of four concentric circles: In the inner circle, we find the global money trust, the richest individuals, families or clans, all with fortunes well above one billion Euros. The CEOs of big transnational corporations and biggest international financial players make up the second circle. They are mostly concerned with increasing the wealth of the inner circle, and with it their own. Top international politicians, some active in governments and international institutions, some more in the background as advisers, plus the top military, compose the third circle. This political class has assignments: organize the distribution of the social product in such a way as to transfer as much as the actual power balance allows into the pockets of the inner and second circles, and secure the legitimacy of government by organizing the political circus of an allegedly pluralistic structure. The fourth ring will be composed of top academics, media moguls, lawyers, and may sometimes include prominent authors, film and music stars, artists, NGO representatives, few religious leaders, few top criminals and others useful for decorating the inner circles. They enjoy the privilege of close access to those in power, they are well paid and will make sure not to lose such benefits (Hamm, B. 2010:1008-9; see also Phillips, P., Osborne, B. 2013).

It appears that the degree of internationalization of the powerful correlates with their status on the ring hierarchy. The two inner circles have always been international. The third and fourth rings, however, tend to be much more nationally bound (by ownership, by elections) than the first and the second. The inner circle is not static but relatively solid. It builds on

financial and social capital often accumulated by former generations, the steel, banking, weapons, or oil barons. The major source of power is being borne to a family of the inner circle. The Rockefellers, the Rothschilds, the Morgans, the DuPonts, the Vanderbilts, the Agnellis, the Thyssens or the Krupps would provide illustrative examples (see, e.g., Holbrook, 1953; or more recently Landes, 2006; Marshall, A.G. 2013).

There are also the *nouveaux riches*. Names like George Soros, William Gates, Warren Buffett, Marc Zuckerberg, Sheldon Adelson, or the Koch brothers come to mind (Smith, Y. 2013); Russian or Eastern European oligarchs like Alisher Usmanov, Mikhail Chodorkowski, Boris Berezowski, Mikhail Fridman, Rinat Ahmetov, Leonid Mikhelson, Viktor Vekselberg, Andrej Melnichenko, Roman Abramovich; as well as Carlos Slim Helu, Lakshmi Mittal, Mukesh Ambani, Jorge Paulo Lemann, Iris Fontbona or Aliko Dangote from the so-called less developed countries. These parvenus tend to be politically more active, at least on the front stage, than the old rich families: George Soros with his Open Society Foundation and his permanent warnings of the evils of unregulated capitalism is the best known for his liberal leanings, while the Koch brothers, Sheldon Adelson or Robert Murdoch are aggressively right-wing (Heath, T. 2014; Snyder, M. 2013; Webster, S.C. 2013). The oligarchs of the former Soviet block have almost all grabbed their fortunes during the presidency of Boris Yeltzin who, pathological alcoholic as he was, made room for large scale privatization of state corporations and raw materials after the collapse of the socialist regime.

Shock therapy was pushed through under the influence of Western advisors, especially the Harvard privatization program with Jeffrey Sachs as the leading figure, as well the International Monetary Fund. Jegor Gajdar, Anatoli Tschubais, an oligarch himself, and Alfred Koch [1] were their local executives in Russia, Vaclav Klaus in Czechoslovakia, Leszek Balcerowicz in Poland. The method how to create oligarchs, and social polarization, is easy to understand and has been practiced by the IMF time and again to this very day as part of their structural adjustment policy (later cynically called poverty reduction strategy): Abolish all price control and public subventions, lay-off civil servants, limit wages, devalue the currency, and privatize public corporations and infrastructure, i.e. the Washington Consensus. Widespread poverty is the immediate result and the other side of the coin of extremely concentrated wealth in few hands.

Does this global oligarchy constitute a social class in the theoretical sense of the term? If so, it should (1) be in control of the means of production, (2) be bound together by class consciousness, and in-group mentality; (3) be party in a global class struggle over the distribution of the social product. The second criterion has been discussed in the 2010 paper, and answered positively: "The GRC will tend to see themselves, very much like feudal kings, as being of divine superiority placing them far above all other human beings. Fascism is very likely to be a basic pillar of their ideology, and war will be just one of the tools to increase their power and profits" (Hamm, 2010:1010; see also Turley, J. 2014; Dolan, E.W. 2013). As the money elite generally tends to focus their social contacts inside, groupthink is permanently reinforced. This might hold true even if it is not homogeneous in other respects (Lofgren, M. 2013).

For the first question it must be emphasized to what extent the financial sector has taken over control of productive industries. Here, the enormous amount of freshly printed dollars injected in the global economy since the abolishing of the gold standard in 1971 is decisive. The Federal Reserve Bank under successive US administrations has followed this policy up to the present day. The amount of money strolling around for profitable investment is not underpinned by production or services but rather by printing fiat notes. It allowed the

financial industry to buy up real businesses by shares and bonds and their respective derivatives inside and outside the US. Thus, the financial industry acquired in fact control of large parts of the real economy including, via production chains, small and medium-sized businesses, fertile lands, and raw materials. It is also highly influential on science and technology and, through its lobbying and campaign donations, on political decision-making. In fact, as US lawmakers tend to belong to the upper strata of the financial hierarchy, and thus to the third circle of our power model, they also tend to widely identify with the interests of the inner rings (Money Choice 2013). Therefore, it is correct to conclude that the financial industry is in control of the means of production.

Too often writers understand class struggle as action taken by workers for working class interests, overlooking the equally significant (and in our times considerably more important) class struggle organized and directed by the ruling class via the state:

“The entire panoply of neo-liberal policies, from so-called ‘austerity measures’ to mass firings of public and private employees, to massive transfers of wealth to creditors are designed to enhance the power, wealth and primacy of diverse sectors of capital at the expense of labor. ... Class struggle from above is directed at enhancing the concentration of wealth in the ruling class, increasing regressive taxes on workers and reducing taxes on corporations, selectively enforcing regulations, which facilitate financial speculation and lowering social expenditures for pensions, health and education for workers families.”

Class struggle from above aims at maximizing the collective power of capital via restrictive laws on labor organizations, social movements and workers’ collective bargaining rights. State budgets over bailouts are sites of class struggle; banks are sites of class struggle between mortgage holders and households, creditors and debtors. “Trillions of dollars are transferred from the public treasury to bailout bankers. Hundreds of billions in social cuts are imposed on workers, cutting across all sectors of the economy” (Petras, J., 2013). Governments are instrumental to extract money from the population via taxation and transfer it to the rich via the banking system. What they are doing, with help of the IMF, to Greece, Portugal, Ireland, or to Cyprus, or Spain, and what they hope to do to Ukraine, Egypt, Thailand, Venezuela or Lybia, they have been doing to developing countries yesterday with exactly the same medicine.

“They want it all. Profit and power. Our world is dominated and being re-shaped by a tiny global financial, corporate, political and intellectual elite. And all must suffer so that they can have what anyone in their position would want to have: more, they want it all. And they want you to just shut up and let them take it all. If you have a problem with that, well, that’s what riot police, prisons, and fascism are for” (Marshall, A.G., 2013; Drum, K. 2013).

We also find a global power hierarchy among nation-states. To paraphrase what was said above of the attitudes of members of the ruling class: The most powerful nation will tend to see itself as being of divine superiority placing it far above all other nations. Fascism is very likely to be a basic pillar of its ideology, and war will be just one of the tools to increase its power and profits.

“According to this self-righteous doctrine [of US exceptionalism], America is

the indispensable country. What this means is that the US has been chosen by history to establish the hegemony of secular 'democratic capitalism' over the world. The primacy of this goal places the US government above traditional morality and above all law, both its own and international" (Roberts, P.C., 2013).

The claim to the role of world hegemon is having a high price (Nader, R., 2014). Socio-economic polarization increased sharply. Hundreds of thousands of families have been driven out of their homes by foreclosures. Some twenty per cent of all households are on food stamps. Increasing numbers of households can no longer pay their rents, let alone care for retirement; thousands live in shanty towns and tent cities. Some city governments have begun to drive the poor out of the downtown areas so they become more and more invisible [2]. While the trend is general, women, children and non-whites are especially affected. The consequences in form of reduced health care and increasing mortality rates have often been reported [3]. A baby born today in the U.S., when it takes its first breath of air, it is 50.000\$ in debt (Ventura, J., 2013). The prison industry profits from a policy of incarceration which does not even stop short of lifelong sentences to children.

The installment of the US Dollar as world reserve currency constituted the economic pillar of the US as the only remaining super power. As the US was able to export all newly printed money, it could appropriate the products of other societies for the simple price of printing paper and by this force other countries to pay for its luxury as well as for its overwhelming military power and war mongering. Add to this the structural adjustment policy exerted by US-controlled World Bank and International Monetary Fund, plus the CIA covert actions around the globe. Therefore it is analytically correct to say that the US became the adversary in the global class struggle. It follows that the nucleus of a global ruling class resides in the US. As in Galtung's structural theory of imperialism (Galtung, J. 1980), the hegemon will rely on vassals in subordinate nations in the form of allied governments. Elites in subordinate nations are assigned to guarantee the unchallenged role of the global hegemon, to allow its unrestrained access to local resources and control rights while securing immunity to its representatives. Therefore, we can tentatively locate the global ruling class in the power elite of the United States.

The lacmus test of power is, on the individual as on the collective level, based on two criteria: the possibility to avoid prosecution for crimes committed, or impunity, and the degree to which appropriation of others' wealth is possible. An eminent example is given by the attacks of 9/11. Those who succeed in preventing a new and thorough investigation questioning the official narrative (among many Ruppert, M., 2004) are obviously in a power position. So are those who initiated war and are responsible for hundreds of thousands of people murdered and are not brought to trial in the aftermaths. Neither has anyone in the US government been held accountable for torture, targeted killings and drone victims, prohibited crimes under US law and the Geneva Conventions, or for violating constitutional rights-spying without warrants, warrantless searches, violations of habeas corpus, murder of citizens without due process, denial of legal representation, conviction on secret evidence. Who is to be held accountable for the long-term effects of the nuclear bombings on Hiroshima and Nagasaki? or the spread of Agent Orange in Vietnam? or the use of depleted uranium ammunition in Iraq? The war criminals could be identified - but who tries them? Not only that the US murdered one and a half million people, mostly Iraqis and some Americans, and ruined the country, and inflicted costs of almost three trillion US\$ on the taxpayer, they also inflamed the Sunni-Shia conflict (Stone, O., Kuznick, P., 2013:521-34).

“The Obama justice department, in particular the Chief of its Criminal Division, [...], never even tried to hold the high-level criminals accountable. What Obama justice officials did instead is exactly what they did in the face of high-level Bush era crimes of torture and warrantless eavesdropping: namely, acted to protect the most powerful factions in the society in the face of overwhelming evidence of serious criminality” (Greenwald, G., 2013).

Who would bring to trial the banksters which plundered the middle class? (Whitney, M. 2014; Cantu, A. 2014)

2. Who Ruled the World - Yesterday, and How?

2.1 *The Rise of the Neocons*

Americans regularly insist that it is only the global governing authority of the United States that underpins the degree of security and prosperity that exists in the world. Without this there would be widespread chaos, economic stagnancy, and far more frequent international warfare. The proponents of this conception emphasize the dependency of world order on US military, economic, diplomatic, and ideological capabilities (Falk, R., 2014). Falk mentions Michael Mandelbaum as the most passionate proponent of such a position as worked out in his books [4]. Recently Mandelbaum has restated this argument in a short essay (2014): “The United States stands alone as the world’s de facto government.” This world government although administered from its statist headquarters in Washington, is according to its promoters, meta-political, and unselfish. It should be appreciated by all people of good will as contributing to the betterment of humanity.

The “neoconservative offensive” (Hamm, B., 2005, 1-18) started in August 1971 with the Powell Manifesto (Nace, T., 2003 [5]) and had its first great success when Ronald Reagan came into power and brought many of the neocon hawks with him. They had been in place before and were waiting for their chance. The end came probably with the Edward Snowden’s revelations in June 2013 when people, corporations and governments around the world woke up to the fact that their entire electronic communication was spied upon by the NSA.

Ronald Reagan was the worst informed president, an old man who napped off even in meetings of the National Security Council, and who perceived the world through the lens of Hollywood movies:

“A man of limited knowledge but deep religious beliefs and strong conservative convictions, he provided little guidance on policy and had no interest in or grasp of detail. ... Reagan’s disengaged style and lack of foreign policy experience left the door open to palace intrigue among his subordinates, who were eager to fill the void” (Stone, O., Kuznick, P., 2012:421-4).

By the mid-1970s, then US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld began to argue that the Soviet government would be ignoring bilateral treaties and secretly building up weapons with the intention of attacking the United States. Together with Paul Wolfowitz he wanted to create a much more severe view of the Soviet Union, its intentions, and views about fighting and winning a nuclear war. When George H. W. Bush became Director of Central Intelligence in 1976, he set up a team of sixteen outside experts who were to take an independent look at highly classified data used by the intelligence community to assess Soviet strategic

forces, commonly referred to as Team B. Their allegations proved all wrong. The CIA director concluded that the Team B approach set “in motion a process that lends itself to manipulation for purposes other than estimative accuracy.”

Team B was partly recruited from the Committee on the Present Danger which first met in 1950. It lobbied the government directly and sought to influence public opinion through a publicity campaign. This iteration of the CPD was disbanded in 1953 when its leaders were offered positions in the administration of Dwight D. Eisenhower. It was privately revived in March 1976 and provided 33 officials to the Ronald Reagan administration including Director of Central Intelligence William Casey, National Security Adviser Richard V. Allen, United States Ambassador to the United Nations Jeane Kirkpatrick, Secretary of the Navy John Lehman, Secretary of State George Shultz and Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle. In June 2004 a third incarnation of CPD was being planned, to address the War on Terrorism, which is still active.

“Today, the CPD includes over 100 former White House officials, Ambassadors, Cabinet Secretaries, academics, writers, and other foreign policy experts. Its Co-Chairmen are the Honorable George Shultz, Secretary of State under President Reagan, and R. James Woolsey, Director of the CIA under President Clinton. Senators Joe Lieberman and Jon Kyl serve as Honorary Co-Chairs” [6].

In 1997, a group surfaced under the name of Project for a New American Century (PNAC), a think tank based in Washington, D.C. founded by William Kristol and Robert Kagan. The PNAC’s stated goal is “to promote American global leadership.” Fundamental to the PNAC were the views that “American leadership is both good for America and good for the world” and support for “a Reaganite policy of military strength and moral clarity.” With its members in numerous key administrative positions, the PNAC exerted influence on high-level government officials in the administration of George W. Bush and shaped its development of military and foreign policies.

The first military test after the collapse of the Soviet empire was how Iraq President Saddam Hussein was lured into the Kuwait trap in 1990. The 28 nations “coalition of the willing” was bought together, and war was waged over the people of Iraq, a war that first was fought with murderous weapons, then with sanctions, and did not end until this very day. The most ridiculous of all adventures PNAC pushed the world’s strongest military force into was certainly Grenada (1983). “The restoration of direct US imperial interventions, unhindered by Congressional and popular opposition, was gradual in the period 1973-1990. It started to accelerate in the 1990’s and then really took off after September 11, 2001” (Petras, J., 2013).

The goal of regime change in Iraq remained the consistent position of PNAC. On January 16, 1998, members of the PNAC, including Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, and Robert Zoellick drafted an open letter to President Bill Clinton urging him to remove Saddam Hussein from power. They argued that Saddam would pose a threat to the United States, its Middle East allies, and oil resources in the region if he succeeded in maintaining what they asserted was a stockpile of Weapons of Mass Destruction. The PNAC also supported the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998. Some have regarded the 1998 letter as evidence that the 2003 invasion of Iraq was a foregone conclusion (Mackay, N., 2004).

It should not be forgotten that the war against Afghanistan, too, was being planned well

before the 9/11 attacks. US officials had been in talks with the Taliban about building an oil pipeline from the Caspian Sea to Karachi, Pakistan, via Afghanistan in order to avoid crossing Iran. In July 2001, a German diplomat was reported saying that the talks ended with the announcement from the US side: “Either we cover you with a carpet of gold [if you comply], or we cover you with a carpet of bombs”. Even the date when bombings would begin was given as of October 2001 [7]. This had nothing whatsoever to do with the 9/11 attacks, nor with Osama bin Laden.

Rebuilding America’s Defenses, the most widely circulated document of the PNAC group, was developed by Rumsfeld, Cheney, Wolfowitz and Scooter Libby, and devoted to matters of “maintaining US pre-eminence, thwarting rival powers and shaping the global security system according to US interests.” Section V, entitled “Creating Tomorrow’s Dominant Force”, includes the sentence: “Further, the process of transformation, even if it brings revolutionary change, is likely to be a long one, absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event--like a new Pearl Harbor”. Though not necessarily implying that Bush administration members were complicit in those attacks, it was often argued that PNAC members used the events of 9/11 as the “Pearl Harbor” that they needed--that is, as an “opportunity” to capitalize on in order to enact long-desired plans.

By the end of 2006, PNAC was “reduced to a voice-mail box and a ghostly website”, with “a single employee left to wrap things up”. In 2006, Gary Schmitt, former executive director of the PNAC, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute and director of its program in Advanced Strategic Studies, stated that PNAC had come “to a natural end” [8]. Instead, untiring neocon hawk Robert Kagan replaced it by the Foreign Policy Initiative.

2.2 Regime Change

The strategic reasoning followed by PNAC and the Bush jr. administration was formulated by former National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski: “The world’s energy consumption is bound to vastly increase over the next two or three decades. Estimates by the US Department of Energy anticipate that world demand will rise by more than 50 percent between 1993 and 2015, with the most significant increase in consumption occurring in the Far East. The momentum of Asia’s economic development is already generating massive pressures for the exploration and exploitation of new sources of energy, and the Central Asian region and the Caspian Sea basin are known to contain reserves of natural gas and oil that dwarf those of Kuwait, the Gulf of Mexico, or the North Sea.” (Brzezinski, Z., 1997:125). “Moreover, they [the Central Asian Republics] are of importance from the standpoint of security and historical ambitions to at least three of their most immediate and more powerful neighbors, namely Russia, Turkey, and Iran, with China also signaling an increasing political interest in the region (ibid., 124).

From 1991 on, the United States relentlessly pursued a strategy of encircling Russia, just as it has with other perceived enemies like China and Iran. It has brought 12 countries in central Europe, all of them formerly allied with Moscow, into the NATO alliance. US military power is now directly on Russia’s borders. The actual Ukraine crisis is in part the result of a zero-sum calculation that has shaped US policy toward Moscow since the Cold War: Any loss for Russia is an American victory, and anything positive that happens to, for, or in Russia is bad for the United States. As much as this reality might be contested by Western rhetoric and subdued by the Western media, as much is it the dominant perception in Russia, China, or Iran.

Slowly, under President Gerald Ford and, especially President Jimmy Carter, an imperial revival emerged in the form of clandestine support for armed surrogates in Southern Africa and neoliberal military dictatorships in Latin America. The first large-scale imperial intervention involved massive support for the Islamist uprising against the secular government of Afghanistan and a mercenary jihadist invasion into the Southern member states of the Soviet Union, sponsored by Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and the US (1979). Since September 11, 2001, US Special Operations forces have grown in every conceivable way. In the waning days of the Bush presidency, Special Operations forces were deployed in about 60 countries around the world. In 2013, elite U.S. forces were deployed in 134 countries around the globe. This 123% increase during the Obama years demonstrates how the U.S. has engaged in growing forms of overseas power projection. Conducted largely in the shadows by America's most elite troops, the vast majority of these missions take place far from prying eyes, media scrutiny, or any type of outside oversight, increasing the chances of unforeseen blowback and catastrophic consequences. SOCOM is reportedly on track to reach 72,000 personnel in 2014, up from 33,000 in 2001. Funding for the command has also jumped exponentially as its baseline budget, \$2.3 billion in 2001, hit \$6.9 billion in 2013 (\$10.4 billion, if you add in supplemental funding) (Turse, N. 2014).

In order to install governments obedient to US wishes and interests, US governments have been involved in and assisted in the overthrow of numerous foreign governments without the overt use of US military force. Often, such operations are tasked to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) or, more tacitly, to the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), (Lopez, A. 2014). Regime change has been attempted through direct involvement of US operatives, the funding and training of insurgency groups within these countries, anti-regime propaganda campaigns, coups d'état, and other activities [9].

The art of regime change, soft and hard, has been a well developed and important part of US foreign policy since the Iran coup in the early 1950s. Beginning with Serbia in 2000, "colored revolutions" have spread over most parts of the former Soviet allies (unsuccessful in Belarus), to Myanmar 2007 (unsuccessful) and North Africa. The propaganda is always the same, centered around catch words like democracy, human rights, prosperity, justice and freedom while in reality it is about installing capitalist friendly governments, deregulation, privatization, natural resources, military bases and armament sales, and containment of potential rivals (Moglia, J. 2014). Mass media, especially TV advertising, public opinion polls together with revolutionary cells plus indefinite money mostly from US public and private sources or exiled Russian oligarchs help to orchestrate the process of transition. The Open Society Fund with numerous subsidiaries including the Central European University are illustrative examples.

Conceived for the OK'98 civic campaign in Slovakia, the strategy has been progressively perfected and adapted to other contexts. In Serbia, this gave birth to what would be called the "Bulldozer Revolution" and led to the end of the Milosevic regime. It then spread to other contexts, featuring protests and regime changes in Georgia, Ukraine, and to a limited extent, Kyrgyzstan. The deployment of that strategy is perfectly visible, with all the events in a clear sequence: unpopular regime, falsification of elections, street protests and the political death of the current president. Because of their high non-violent component, they resemble more a massive party than direct confrontation with the authorities. Whilst regimes in countries like Belarus and Uzbekistan tightened control on international funding and NGOs, Georgia and Ukraine remained relatively liberal in this respect. Both countries were open to Western influence whilst still keeping decent relations with Moscow. The

Central European University is selecting what is to become the elite of those countries. Programs of assistance to Ukrainian and Georgian students are well established in the USA and in loco. One could interpret each of those “color revolutions” as arm wrestling between Moscow and Washington, with the EU timidly trying to have a voice (Polese, A. 2011).

US governments’ actions for regime change implied many thousands of people murdered (Blum, W., 2004). Operation Gladio, supervised by NATO and masterminded by Washington, had the sole purpose of preventing leftist parties in Europe of being democratically elected (Ganser, D., 2005). Operacion Condor (Calloni 2010) used terror regimes and death squadrons throughout Latin America to secure subservient governments, no matter how cruel (Davies, N.J.S. 2014). At the very moment of writing, regime change operations can be observed in Egypt, Thailand, Venezuela, Syria, Ukraine. They all are being prepared and accompanied by carefully planned propaganda campaigns. In none of these and the many former cases have such meddlings brought about democratic governments. Quite opposite, the result was usually some sort of corrupt junta grabbing power whose sole benefit was to further enrich a small cabal of local criminals plus their US accomplices. Widespread poverty, social polarization and conflict are the common consequences (Mitchell, G. 2014; Gosztola, K. 2014; Vance, L.M. 2014). PNACs foreign policy has failed everywhere, without exception. Instead of regimes favorable to the US and obedient to its rule, they created chaos, fear and hostility. PNAC has prepared the coffin in which US global power is going to be buried.

Their greatest achievement was to what extent they got through with their neoconservative ideology, and made it the basic political philosophy in Western and, even more so, in the transition countries of Eastern Europe. Their greatest mistake of truly global impact was the diligent dismissal of disarmament and peace proposals submitted by Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev from 1986 on. They did not even test the seriousness of his proposals. Eager to deliver a deadly blow to the global competitor, they helped to oust its charismatic leader and replace him with a pathological alcoholic, Boris Yeltsin. The primary people behind this project were Richard Perle, Paul Wolfowitz, and Dick Cheney. The same can be said with respect to President Putin’s proposals for confidence building and closer cooperation which have been rejected right away by the Obama administration.

“Why does the Obama administration choose this type of foreign policy? The main reason is that the above-targeted countries had slid out of the US orbit of control, and only these far-right groups are interested in getting their country back into the US orbit. Ultimately, US capitalists gain mountains of profit when a country is dependent on US loans, US-made weapons, manufactured goods, foodstuffs, etc. This is why the US establishment — now represented by the Obama administration — will not simply leave Latin America, the Middle East, or Eastern Europe to be independent or fall into the orbit of a competing regional power like Russia. There is simply too much profit at stake. Peace is not an option” (Cooke, S., 2014).

2.3 The Strategy of Tension

How was all this made acceptable to the American people? The strategy of tension is a tactic that aims to divide, manipulate, and control public opinion using fear, propaganda, disinformation, psychological warfare, agents provocateurs, and false flag terrorist actions. [10]. The strategy played a special role inside the US. Americans who grew up in the 1950s lived lives of constant fear—fear that communists were everywhere, fear that communism

was a contagious illness of the mind that was spreading throughout America and the rest of the world, and fear that the Soviet Union was going to initiate a nuclear attack on the United States. Fear became the coin of the realm for the national-security state. Peaceful coexistence with the Soviet Union was the last thing that US officials wanted. It wouldn't justify the rise of the permanent military establishment, a foreign empire of military bases, a CIA, a NSA, covert operations, spying, foreign interventionism, coups, assassinations, torture, surveillance, spying, and support of foreign dictatorships (Hornberger, J.G. 2013).

In 2013, President Obama, almost echoing infamous Senator Joseph McCarthy, brought the enemy even closer, arguing in a speech at the National Defense University that “we face a real threat from radicalized individuals here in the United States” — radicalized individuals who were “deranged or alienated individuals — often U.S. citizens or legal residents.” The subtext is that if we want to catch them we need to start looking within. The pretext for the surveillance state is thus established.

“By sowing mistrust, by stripping us of our privacy, by taking away our rights, by subjecting us to arbitrary and irrational rules, and by constantly reminding us that this is the only thing between us and death by the hands of terrorists, the T.S.A. and its ilk are sowing fear. And by doing so, they are playing directly into the terrorists' hands.”

A perfect example of such misdirection of fear took place in the case of the Boston Marathon bombings on April 15, 2013, in which the Boston Police Department effectively imposed martial law and seized control of people's homes. The bombings were terrible (three people died and more than 260 were injured), but just two days later another terrible thing happened: a giant explosion in a fertilizer plant in Texas killed at least 14 people and injured more than 160. Could it have been terrorists? Saddam Hussein allegedly developed WMDs – and Condoleezza Rice already warned of a “mushroom cloud over America”. But while the US spends more than 7 billion dollars a year on the T.S.A.'s national security theater in which over 58,000 T.S.A. employees make sure not too much toothpaste or shampoo is being carried onto airplanes, the budget for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration is under \$600 million per year (Ludlow, P. 2014).

The term “nation” is a frequent trigger to create the unthinking crowd reaction. George Bush's 9/11 address is an example of how he went about creating crowd support for his policies. Over and over, his words stressed the idea that the terrorism of that day was an attack on every American. He led off with “Our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack.” He went on to shape the psychological reactions that would provide the ground for his policies: “...have filled us with disbelief, terrible sadness and a quiet, unyielding anger.” At this point he invoked the nation: “These acts of mass murder were intended to frighten our nation into chaos and retreat. But they have failed. Our country is strong. A great people has been moved to defend a great nation.” “I've directed the full resources for our intelligence and law enforcement communities to find those responsible and bring them to justice” (Rozeff, M.S. 2014). Most ironically, not one person has been brought to justice because of the 9/11 attacks! Patriotism is a major device to secure blind conformity with the governments dealings (Sullivan, C. no date; Kimberley, M. 2014).

The strategy of tension will work best in an environment where general education is poor (The War on Kids 2014; America 'Dead Last' In Education, 2013) and where the media are

more or less streamlined. There are more than 1,400 daily newspapers in the United States. But there was no single paper, nor a single TV network, that was unequivocally opposed to the American wars carried out against Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan, Yugoslavia, Panama, Grenada, and Vietnam (Blum, W. 2014; Lobe, J. 2014; Lyngbaek, A. 2014). Media have never been more consolidated; six media giants control some ninety percent of what US citizens read, watch, or listen to. Some of them do cooperate, directly or indirectly, with intelligence agencies (Solomon, W. 2014).

3. The Deep State

In reality, the world is increasingly governed by the Deep State (also called the Secret Government, Moyers, B. 1987), uncontrolled by democratic mechanisms, time and again discussed by some “conspiracy theorists”, with massive evidence only recently revealed by Wikileaks and Edward Snowden. Although President Obama cannot enact his domestic policies and budgets due to incessant Republican stonewalling, he can liquidate alleged terrorists without due processes, detain prisoners indefinitely without charge, conduct dragnet surveillance without judicial warrant and engage in unprecedented witch hunts against federal employees (the so-called “Insider Threat Program”). Within the United States, this power is characterized by massive displays of intimidating force by militarized federal, state and local law enforcement. Abroad, he can start wars at will and engage in virtually any other activity whatsoever.

In 2011 when political warfare over the debt ceiling was beginning to paralyze Washington, the government somehow summoned the resources to overthrow Muammar Gaddafi regime in Libya and to provide overt and covert assistance to French intervention in Mali. At the time of heated debate about continuing meat inspections and civilian air traffic control because of the budget crisis, the government was somehow able to commit \$115 million to keeping a civil war going in Syria and to pay at least £100m to the United Kingdom’s Government Communications Headquarters to buy influence over and access to that country’s intelligence. Since 2007, two bridges carrying interstate highways have collapsed due to inadequate maintenance of infrastructure, one killing 13 people. During that same period of time, the government spent \$1.7 billion constructing a building in Utah that is the size of 17 football fields. This mammoth structure is intended to allow the National Security Agency to store a yottabyte of information, the largest numerical designator computer scientists have coined. A yottabyte is equal to 500 quintillion pages of text. They need that much storage to archive every single trace of our electronic life (Lofgren, M., 2014).

“Yes, there is another government concealed behind the one that is visible at either end of Pennsylvania Avenue, a hybrid entity of public and private institutions ruling the country according to consistent patterns in season and out, connected to, but only intermittently controlled by, the visible state whose leaders we choose.”

The Deep State is a hybrid of national security and law enforcement agencies: the Department of Defense, the Department of State, the Department of Homeland Security, the Central Intelligence Agency and the Justice Department. I also includes the Department of the Treasury because of its jurisdiction over financial flows, its enforcement of international sanctions and its organic symbiosis with Wall Street. All these agencies are coordinated by the Executive Office of the President via the National Security Council. Certain key areas of the judiciary belong to the Deep State, such as the Foreign Intelligence

Surveillance Court, whose actions are mysterious even to most members of Congress.

“There are now 854,000 contract personnel with top-secret clearances — a number greater than that of top-secret-cleared civilian employees of the government. Since 9/11, 33 facilities for top-secret intelligence have been built or are under construction in and around the Washington suburbs. Combined, they occupy the floor space of almost three Pentagons — about 17 million square feet. Seventy percent of the intelligence community’s budget goes to paying contracts. And the membrane between government and industry is highly permeable: The Director of National Intelligence, James R. Clapper, is a former executive of Booz Allen Hamilton, one of the government’s largest intelligence contractors [Edward Snowden’s former employer; owned by the Carlyle Group]. His predecessor as director, Admiral Mike McConnell, is the current vice chairman of the same company; Booz Allen is 99 percent dependent on government business. These contractors now set the political and social tone of Washington, just as they are increasingly setting the direction of the country, but they are doing it quietly, their doings unrecorded in the Congressional Record or the Federal Register, and are rarely subject to congressional hearings.”

The executives of the financial giants even have de facto criminal immunity. On March 6, 2013, testifying before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Attorney General Eric Holder stated:

“I am concerned that the size of some of these institutions becomes so large that it does become difficult for us to prosecute them when we are hit with indications that if you do prosecute, if you do bring a criminal charge, it will have a negative impact on the national economy, perhaps even the world economy.”

They are deeply dyed in the hue of the official ideology of the governing class, an ideology that is neither specifically Democrat nor Republican. Domestically, they almost invariably believe in the “Washington Consensus”: financialization, outsourcing, privatization, deregulation and the commodifying of labor. Internationally, they espouse “American Exceptionalism”: the right and duty of the United States to meddle in every region of the world with coercive diplomacy and boots on the ground and to ignore painfully won international norms of civilized behavior. Through long established though more and more intensified forms of cooperation, the Deep State reaches far beyond the borders of the US (Lofgren, M., 2014).

When the House voted not to rein in the NSA’s phone-spying dragnet, it turned out that the 217 “no” voters received twice as much campaign financing from the defense and intelligence industry as the 205 “yes” voters. The investigation showed that defense cash was a better predictor of a member’s vote than party affiliation. House members who voted to continue the massive phone-call-metadata spy program, on average, raked in 122 percent more money from defense contractors than those who voted to dismantle it. Political action committees and employees from defense and intelligence firms such as Lockheed Martin, Boeing, United Technologies, Honeywell International, and others ponied up \$12.97 million in donations for a two-year period ending December 31, 2012. Lawmakers who voted to continue the NSA dragnet-surveillance program averaged \$41,635 from the pot, whereas House members who voted to repeal authority averaged \$18,765 (Boehm, E. 2014).

America's national-security elites act on the assumption that every nook and cranny of the globe is of great strategic significance and that there are threats to US interests everywhere. Not surprisingly, they live in a constant state of fear. There must be a policy of global domination to make the world safe for America. A short look at the map shows that this perception is ridiculously wrong. The ruling class is creating those very enemies it strives to combat. The national security state is remarkably unchecked and unbalanced. In recent times, that labyrinthine structure of intelligence agencies morphing into war-fighting outfits, the US military (with its own secret military, the special operations forces, gestating inside it), and the Department of Homeland Security, a monster conglomeration of agencies that is an actual "defense department," as well as a vast contingent of weapons makers, contractors, and profiteers bolstered by an army of lobbyists, has never stopped growing (Kravets, D. 2013, London, E. 2014).

"Obama is just a willing executioner. From the ruling class's point of view, he's the perfect figurehead because his mere appearance confuses and disarms so many. He seems to have spent his whole life trying to get chosen to play Judas. And that's all there is in his resume" (Whitney, M. 2014; see also Ford, G. 2014a; Ford, G. 2014b; Chomsky, N. 2014).

A stunning new report compiles extensive evidence on how some of the world's largest corporations have partnered with private intelligence firms and government intelligence agencies to spy on activist and nonprofit groups. Environmental activism is a prominent though not exclusive focus of these activities. One of the groups that has been targeted the most, and by a range of different corporations, is Greenpeace. In the 1990s, Greenpeace was tracked by private security firm Beckett Brown International (BBI) on behalf of the world's largest chlorine producer, Dow Chemical, due to the environmental organisation's campaigning against the use of chlorine to manufacture paper and plastics.

Other Greenpeace offices in France and Europe were hacked and spied on by French private intelligence firms at the behest of Électricité de France, the world's largest operator of nuclear power plants, 85% owned by the French government. Oil companies Shell and BP had also reportedly hired Hackluyt, a private investigative firm with "close links" to MI6, to infiltrate Greenpeace. Many of the world's largest corporations and their trade associations – including the US Chamber of Commerce, Walmart, Monsanto, Bank of America, Dow Chemical, Kraft, Coca-Cola, Chevron, Burger King, McDonald's, Shell, BP, BAE, Sasol, Brown & Williamson and E.ON – have been linked to espionage or planned espionage against nonprofit organizations, activists and whistleblowers" (Ruskin, G. 2013).

The Deep State is built on the structural advantage the executive has over the legislative and the judiciary [11]. It is the executive which is the prime target of lobbying and donations; it has direct access to law enforcement, repressive and intelligence agencies; it is partner in international negotiations; object of the media, and discusses with economic giants. While in theory democracy rests on checks and balances, the executive always has a tendency to undermine democratic control. A disturbing result of such imbalance is the incredible amount of money dumped in the military without any proper accounting (Black Budget 2013). Most of the official excitement over NSA's spying is deeply hypocritical: Of course were intelligence services spying not only on other countries, or dissident groups, but also on industry. This was already the case under the Echelon spy system. As long as executive branches perceive each other in the framework of a competitive world this is

unlikely to change. Democratic control mechanisms are much too weak to be effective. Very often governments are being kept in the dark about their own spy agency's cooperation with NSA (Greenwald, G. 2014; Counter Intelligence: The Deep State).

Covert operations are usually criminal activities conducted by states or state-like institutions. Very often they are close to state terrorism (torture, renditions, false flag, regime change, war mongering, warrantless spying). There is also criminal behavior in corporations [12]. Corporate lobbies, together with bribed politicians, make laws to protect and facilitate unlawful behavior and shield it from law enforcement. Laws are made in their favor [13]. Money laundering helps to wash money of criminal origin and to invest it in legal businesses. The borderlines between legal and illegal behavior is increasingly blurred. Financial industries are especially inclined [14]. Gladio has used Mafia killers to prevent leftists from being democratically elected into office, the German BND uses right wing extremists and criminals to infiltrate neo-Nazi parties. The "enemy within"-theory is used to justify internal repression what, however, has already been practiced for decades to control opposition and dissent. Vice President Dick Cheney was said to command his personal killer squadron and to have personally approved torture, as does Obama (Harris-Gershon, D. 2013; Zenko, M. 2013).

Neoconservative ideology has helped to dismantle state regulations and transfer wealth to the 1%. Now, they are in a position to influence much of state legislation in their favor. They and their fortunes are protected by hosts of lawmakers, managers, accounting firms, lawyers, tax consultants, think tanks, radio stations, film studios, publishers, media outlets, researchers, ghostwriters, lobbyists, body guards and other lackeys in their service. As private property is the golden calf of capitalism, and unregulated capitalism has become the bible of the ruling class, they can even mobilize police forces and ultimately the military on their behalf. Here, the nation-state and its government remain important agencies. Nation-states can easily be played off against each other for, e.g., tax evasion. Still the rich manage to be admired in public as the true heroes of society, the stars of success, and the personification of what was once called the American Dream (Polk, S. 2014).

This is the end of democracy as we knew it, and the definite takeover of plutocracy.

2.6 Case Studies

9/11 - Crime Covered up

The amended Set of Principles for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights Through Action to Combat Impunity, submitted to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights on 8 February 2005, defines impunity as:

“the impossibility, de jure or de facto, of bringing the perpetrators of violations to account - whether in criminal, civil, administrative or disciplinary proceedings - since they are not subject to any inquiry that might lead to their being accused, arrested, tried and, if found guilty, sentenced to appropriate penalties, and to making reparations to their victims” [15].

There are serious doubts with respect to the 9/11 Commission report: Members of the 9/11 Commission, as well as its executive director Philip Zelikow, had conflicts of interest. Zelikow had closer ties with the White House than he publicly disclosed and had tried to influence the final report in ways that the staff often perceived as limiting the Bush

administration's responsibility and furthering its anti-Iraq agenda. Zelikow had at least four private conversations with former White House political director Karl Rove, and appears to have had many frequent telephone conversations with people in the White House. White House lawyers attempted to stonewall the creation of the commission and to hamstring its work from the outset (Shenon, P. 2013).

The two co-chairs of the Commission, Thomas H. Kean and Lee H. Hamilton, believe that the government established the Commission in a way that ensured that it would fail. In their book *Without Precedent: The Inside Story of the 9/11 Commission* (Kean, T.H., Hamilton, L.H. 2006) describing their experience, Hamilton listed a number of reasons for reaching this conclusion, including: the late establishment of the Commission and the very short deadline imposed on its work; the insufficient funds, initially allocated for conducting such an extensive investigation (later the Commission requested additional funds but received only a fraction of the funds requested and the chairs still felt hamstrung); the many politicians who opposed the establishment of the Commission; the continuing resistance and opposition to the work of the Commission by many politicians, particularly those who did not wish to be blamed for any of what happened; the deception of the Commission by various key government agencies, including the Department of Defense, NORAD and the FAA; and, the denial of access by various agencies to documents and witnesses. "So there were all kinds of reasons we thought we were set up to fail."

Troubled by the fact that so many of the facts related to 9/11 remain uninvestigated, in 2013 I asked about a dozen friends and colleagues in the US academe: "Could you please help me to understand why nobody takes the perpetrators to court with all the evidence provided?" I only received one serious reaction which I quote here in anonymity:

"First, I cannot say I believe the official narrative because there was no careful scientific study of the event by government officials. The events of September 11, 2001 are therefore open to alternative theories. All theories about this event, including the official one, are by definition conspiracy theories, i.e. explanations for criminal events by reference to a plot conceived by two or more persons in secret. To trust any theory about a conspiracy (or anything, for that matter) without a careful review of all the evidence would be irresponsible. I remain agnostic on the matter.

Second, I do not believe that the US government will conduct a careful scientific study of the event. Not given things as they stand today. If the official version were shown to be false in any nontrivial regard, then that might risk delegitimizing the war on terror. As a rationale for imperialism and domestic repression, the war on terror is much too important to lose in these times of crisis. Even the perception that things didn't happen the way the government says they did could mean trouble. Therefore the matter is closed. The Commission Report is definitive. There will be no criminal investigation.

Third, anybody in the United States who espouses alternative theories, especially in the academy, is ridiculed and marginalized. The people I know who find several aspects of the official narrative problematic have reckoned that, in light of the almost certain truth that speaking up will have no effect, the personal costs of challenging the government theory are greater than the public benefits. The United States is now a closed and punishing society. People are hunkered down. Why risk one's career for nothing? No alternative theory will gain any popular traction.

Fourth, even if we accept the official narrative, key acknowledged facts prove criminal negligence by the Bush Administration. This event would not have

happened had the government dedicated itself to preventing it. However, for reasons already noted, these facts have and will continue to amount to nothing. Bush and his staff will never be held responsible for the worst security failure in US history. Obama is continuing – indeed expanding and entrenching – the neoconservative policies of his predecessor. He has no interest in pursuing a criminal investigation into criminal negligence.

So, in a real sense, the question of whether this happened the way the government says it did, is somewhat beside the point. It happened the way they did because that's the way they need it to be. However it happened, they would have used it to devastate society.”

To be sure: The point here is not about finding out the truth of what happened how, and who is responsible. Rather, the question is who is actively preventing a new investigation in all the doubts on the table.

“The 9/11 attacks were used to justify an institutional revolution meant to complete a process of integration and coordination of all the assets of US national power through a strategic communication (SC) campaign deployed on a global scale. The ‘Global War on Terror’ (GWOT) nurtured a narrative of crisis associated with this unprecedented public education effort. In order to sell its approaches, the United States government relied on a network of ‘experts’: military veterans, high-ranking officers such as Admirals as well as professional journalists and academics who contributed to forging a consensus, or, as Michel Foucault would call it, a ‘regime of truth’ that claims a certain interpretation to be right and true, while ignoring or discrediting critics and dissenting narratives” (Gygax, J., Snow, N. 2013”).

Much of the official narrative of 9/11 was based on the confessions of Khaled Sheikh Mohammad which, however, were pressed out of him under torture not only of himself but also of his son in his plain sight.

Ukraine – Regime Change

For years, the association agreement between the EU and Ukraine was of minor importance. Many European politicians, first of all the German Chancellor, showed provocative disinterest in Ukraine. When, in November 2013, Russia asked for access to the negotiation table, it was rebuffed by the EU.

While Brussels was playing for time, the US was preparing the overthrow of the government. Since the end of the Cold War the United States has been surrounding Russia, building one base after another, ceaselessly looking for new ones, including in Ukraine. The US deployment of new weapon systems in Eastern Europe is consistent with a plan for antagonizing Moscow that was proposed in the Washington Post by the Obama administration's ideological godfather, Zbigniew Brzezinski, immediately after a group of self-proclaimed Maidan leaders chased away the elected government. It betrays all those who suspect that he might have changed his position in his recent publications:

“The West should promptly recognize the current government of Ukraine as legitimate. Uncertainty regarding its legal status could tempt Putin to repeat his Crimean charade. ... Meanwhile, NATO forces, consistent with the organization's contingency planning, should be put on alert. High readiness for some immediate airlift to Europe of U.S. airborne units would be politically and

militarily meaningful. If the West wants to avoid a conflict, there should be no ambiguity in the Kremlin as to what might be precipitated by further adventurist use of force in the middle of Europe" (Brzezinski, Z. 2014).

The US had tried, but failed, to take Ukraine in 2004 with the Washington-financed "Orange Revolution." According to Assistant Secretary of State (and wife to PNAC godfather Robert Kagan) Victoria Nuland, since this failure Washington has "invested" \$5 billion in Ukraine in order to foment agitation for EU membership for Ukraine [16]. EU membership would open Ukraine to looting by Western bankers and corporations, but Washington's main goal is to establish US missile bases on Russia's border with Ukraine and to deprive Russia of its Black Sea naval base and military industries in eastern Ukraine. EU membership for Ukraine means NATO membership (Roberts, P.C. 2014).

When President Yanukovich declared on 21 November he would not sign the EU association agreement, clashes erupted in the streets of Kiev. Hundreds of thousands took to the streets and to Maidan Square on December weekends. This was the critical stage of a campaign fueled by the three opposition parties "Fatherland" (Yuljia Tymochenko, Arsenji Yatsenyuk), "Bang" (German Konrad Adenauer Foundation funded box champion Vitali Klitschko) and "Freedom" (Svoboda leader and closely tied in the network of European fascist parties, Oleh Tjahnybok). Their common goal was to oust President Viktor Yanukovych whose Party of the Regions had succeeded in the 2012 elections. Kiev's membership in the EU would then not be far off; after which the country could embrace the joys of neo-conservatism, receiving the benefits of the standard privatization-deregulation-austerity package and join Portugal, Ireland, Greece, and Spain as an impoverished orphan of the family. Crimea's deputy prime minister, Olga Kovitidi, described as predatory the terms of an agreement Kiev is ready to accept from the International Monetary Fund (Voice of Russia, 2014).

Since the 2004 revolt, fascist militias had been built up and payed for who would now ignite the actual uprisings and prevent compromise (Svoboda, Right Sector). They call for violence, and occupy provincial governments in the mostly agricultural and right-wing West of the country. In the Western regions of Lwow, Ternopol, Rovno, Luzk and Iwano-Frankowsk and others, they stormed office buildings and pressed governors to sign their resignations. While thousands of people took part in anti-government protests in Kiev, a small group of radical fighters were at the core of the violent clashes. Judging by their looks and actions, they are armed, trained and prepared for war. Apart from individual gear, the rioters know urban guerrilla tactics. The protesters were also well-prepared for offensive. They had a wide assortment of melee weapons.

The National Endowment for Democracy website [17] lists 65 projects that it has supported financially in recent years in Ukraine. Their programs impart the basic philosophy that people are best served under a system of free enterprise, minimal government intervention in the economy, and opposition to socialism in any shape or form. A free-market economy is equated with democracy, reform, and growth; and the merits of foreign investment in their economy are emphasized. The NED would do somewhat overtly what the CIA had been doing covertly for decades, and thus eliminate the stigma associated with CIA covert activities. NED receives virtually all its financing from the US government. Why were Washington officials grooming a replacement for President Yanukovych, legally and democratically elected in 2010, who, in the face of protests, moved elections up so he could have been voted out of office - not thrown out by a mob? Yanukovych made repeated important concessions, including amnesty for those arrested and offering, on January 25, to

make two of his adversaries prime minister and deputy prime minister; all to no avail. Key elements of the protestors, and those behind them, wanted their putsch. Ukraine's junta prime minister announced March 7 that he has invited the NATO Council to hold a meeting in Kiev over the recent developments in the country. "I invited the North Atlantic Council to visit Kiev and hold a meeting there," Arseny Yatsenyuk said during a visit to Brussels, where he met with NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen and EU officials. "We believe that it will strengthen our cooperation" (Blum, W. 2014).

In addition to NED, the foreign donors included the U.S. State Department and USAID along with the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, the International Republican Institute, the NGO Freedom House and the Open Society Institute (Ames, M. 2014). They all have supported non-governmental democracy-building efforts in Eastern Europe since 1988. Each of these social movements included extensive work by student activists.

The most famous of these was Otpor, the youth movement that helped bring in Vojislav Koštunica. In Georgia the movement was called Kmara. In Ukraine the movement has worked under the succinct slogan "Pora" ("It's Time"). Pora was built up in Ukraine in 2004 in order to assist in regime change. "We trained them in how to set up an organization, how to open a local chapter, how to develop a brand with logo, symbols, and key messages", said an Otpor activist in the US-funded Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. "We trained them in how to detect societies' weaknesses and what the most burning problems of the population are." Srdja Popovic, Otpor's founder and director, was found to have close working relationships with US intelligence firm Stratfor. He boasted to be a revolutionary for hire (Gibson, C., Horn, S. 2013; Traynor, I. 2004).

Already in 1992-95, the IMF imposed structural adjustment program had reduced Ukraine's GDP by sixty per cent. Now, conditionalities for new credits include doubling gas prizes, increase fees for public services, cut social services and funds for education, limit wages and pensions, lay-offs in the public sector, investment guarantees for foreign private corporations, and devalue the currency, thus raising the prices of imports which include Russian gas, and open Ukrainian assets to takeover by Western corporations. Ukraine's agriculture lands will pass into the hands of American agribusiness. It was all too clear for President Yanukovich and his partisans that the elections of 2015 could not be won on this basis. Permission to set up a missile shield, also included in the IMF package, was a pure provocation to Russia. Also, the 11 billion euros that the EU is offering Kiev is not aid, it is a loan. It comes with many strings, including Kiev's acceptance of the IMF austerity plan.

The Obama administration's rationale for supporting the fascist-led coup in Ukraine collapsed on March 7 when a hacked phone call between EU foreign affairs chief Catherine Ashton and Estonian foreign minister Urmas Paet revealed that the snipers who fired on protestors in Maidan Square in Kiev on February 20, 2014, were not aligned with President Yanukovich, but with the protest leaders themselves. Estonian foreign ministry has confirmed the recording of his conversation with EU foreign policy chief is authentic. Urmas Paet said that snipers who shot at protesters and police in Kiev were hired by Maidan leaders.

With pro-Russian candidates off the ballot, Svoboda leader Oleh Tyahnybok is a dominant political power in Ukraine. He certainly is a bigger votegetter than Yatsenyuk, whose main responsibility is to negotiate with the West over financial aid and the EU package, and Vitali Klitschko who announced he will be running for mayor of Kiev. In recognition of Tyahnybok's clout, Svoboda members got the posts of Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Agriculture,

Minister of Ecology, and acting prosecutor general. A founder of the Social Nationalist party was made secretary of the Ukraine National Security and Defense Council. Several hundred members and supporters of the militant nationalist Right Sector swarmed Ukraine's parliament building for the second day in a row on March 28 to demand the resignation of Interior Minister Arsen Avakov and an investigation into the suspicious death earlier in the week of one of its leaders [17]. This new though illegal government composed according to US wishes and flattered by Western heads of state, has announced to sign the EU association agreement successively. It has asked the US for far-reaching military assistance. And it has brought the country's gold reserves into US custody (Chossudovsky, M. 2014). They did not wait until a legitimate government were elected on May 25 but were eager to create faits accomplis.

"The conflicts in Ukraine, Venezuela, and Syria have one thing in common: In all three cases there are leading groups steering the "opposition" that want absolutely nothing to do with democracy — these groups are as far-right as politics gets: European-style fascism in Ukraine, Islamic extremism in Syria, and in Venezuela the elite-favored tradition of military dictatorships. But there has been a virtual U.S. media blackout as to the leadership of the movements in Ukraine, Syria, and Venezuela, and for good reason; if these groups come to power, the country will be far worse off than it is now. The American public would give zero support to these groups if they knew the truth, which is why the level of U.S. media misinformation about these groups is as Orwellian as the workings of Obama's NSA. (Cooke, S. 2014). A State Department official was quoted saying that the US would "affirm our support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of both countries and for all post-Soviet states" (Brunnstorm, D. 2014).

In strange uniformity the Western media have adopted an interpretation of events which ignores Western provocative actions as well as selfish interests of the West, and demonize President Putin and Russia (Smith, P. 2014). Interestingly enough, this goes to a large extent against public opinion as revealed in opinion polls. It is mostly the Western media which foment Cold War sentiments and thus play into the hands of neocon politicians.

TIPP/TTIP

In 1995 the World Trade Organization (WTO) grew out of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Its first and most important project was the Multilateral Agreement on Investments (MAI) planned to concede to transnational corporations far-reaching rights against member states. After first draft texts were leaked and developing countries opposed the thrust of the negotiations, the negotiation process was transferred to the OECD, the organization of highly industrialized countries in order to "avoid undue politization". When draft texts were passed over to NGOs, a broad public campaign began to oppose the agreement which finally led first to a moratorium, then to an end of the negotiations. However, some of the intended contents became included in numerous bilateral agreements. Now new efforts are being made to once again establish agreements friendly to TNC wishes: the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), and the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). While both processes are kept behind closed doors in almost total secrecy, it happens, once again, that NGOs could get hold of individual sections of drafts under negotiation.

"Today, 13 November 2013, WikiLeaks released the secret negotiated draft

text for the entire TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership) Intellectual Property Rights Chapter. The TPP is the largest-ever economic treaty, encompassing nations representing more than 40 per cent of the world's GDP. The chapter published by WikiLeaks is perhaps the most controversial chapter of the TPP due to its wide-ranging effects on medicines, publishers, internet services, civil liberties and biological patents."

The TPP is the forerunner to the equally secret US-EU pact TTIP, for which President Obama initiated US-EU negotiations in January 2013. Together, the TPP and TTIP will cover more than sixty per cent of global GDP. Both pacts exclude China. Since the beginning of the TPP negotiations, the process of drafting and negotiating the treaty's chapters has been shrouded in an unprecedented level of secrecy. Access to drafts of the TPP chapters is shielded from the general public. It has been previously revealed that only three individuals in each TPP nation have access to the full text of the agreement, while 600 'trade advisers' – lobbyists guarding the interests of large US corporations such as Chevron, Halliburton, Monsanto and Walmart – are granted privileged access to crucial sections of the treaty text. The Obama administration is preparing to fast-track the TPP treaty in a manner that will prevent the US Congress from discussing or amending any parts of the treaty. The longest section of the Chapter – 'Enforcement' – is devoted to detailing new policing measures, with far-reaching implications for individual rights, civil liberties, publishers, internet service providers and internet privacy, as well as for the creative, intellectual, biological and environmental commons. Particular measures proposed include supranational litigation tribunals to which sovereign national courts are expected to defer, but which have no human rights safeguards. The draft states that these courts can conduct hearings with secret evidence [19].

On April 30, 2007, a Framework Agreement was signed between the EU and the US. With it, the Trans-Atlantic Economic Council was set up to prepare negotiations which then started formally by mid-2013. A High-Level Working Group on Jobs and Growth chaired by US Trade Representative Ron Kirk and EU Trade Commissioner Karel de Gucht was entrusted with bringing the negotiations forward. Its membership was not publicly disclosed until the Corporate Europe Observatory revealed their background in Business Europe and the Bertelsmann Foundation, both with strong neoliberal inclinations. None of them had a democratic mandate.

Primarily, TTIP is about the abolishment of non-tariff trade barriers, rules and standards. This includes, e.g., the clear declaration of genetically manipulated organisms in food which is mandatory in the EU but not in the US. Corporations like Monsanto have since long been critical of such regulations and lobby their being abolished, so they can sell their seeds and products on the European market. Hydraulic Fracturing is common in the US but forbidden in the EU, including the import of shield gas. Another issue on the agenda is the withdrawal of controls and restrictions, introduced after the financial crisis of 2008, for the financial sector, with City of London lobbies on the forefront.

TTIP is heavily criticized by NGOs for being negotiated without any democratic participation. The effects on economic growth and employment put in favour of it by its proponents are expected to be only marginal while being more than offset in a race to the bottom by undermining environmental, health and work standards in the sole interests of corporate profits. A major critical issue is the planned Investor-State Dispute Settlement which gives corporations a one-way right to sue governments in case they see their profits endangered by public regulation, while states would not have similar rights. This mechanism would

exclude any resort to the judiciary. Once signed, the convention could not be altered without unanimous consensus among all member parties.

As is the case with TPP, TTIP negotiations exclude not only the public but also members of national or European parliaments, even members of national governments from insight into the documents. Parallel to attempts to fast-track ratification in the US, it is under debate in the EU whether or not the European Commission shall be the only responsible to sign the final legally binding contract.

The hurry which the US government is imposing on the negotiations is easily understandable: With European Parliament elections on May 25, and Obama's term of office expiring, with Russia's gas deal with China and its efforts to get rid of its US-dollar reserves, the agreements are on high risk, indeed. They might not survive public scrutiny once the texts are fully exposed.

4. Conclusion

“Illegitimate authority is on the rise and democracy is gradually succumbing to the disease of neoliberal ideology so that more and more functions of legitimate government are being assumed by illegitimate, unelected, opaque agents and organisations. This is the case at all levels, national, regional and international.... It is not exactly news that governments have always governed on behalf of certain class interests but this is different from allowing those interests to actually write the legislation and to make policy directly, including budgetary, financial, labour, social and environmental policy in the place of elected legislators and civil servants. It is different from allowing private corporations deliberately to disseminate deception and lies and undermine the public's right to know. It's not just their size, their enormous wealth and assets that make the TNCs dangerous to democracy. It's also their concentration, their capacity to influence, and often infiltrate, governments and their ability to act as a genuine international social class in order to defend their commercial interests against the common good” (George, S. 2014).

Susan George accurately describes the paths our Western societies are following, the US most advanced, others lagging somewhat behind. It seems to be a one-way process without any escape towards democracy.

The global ruling class feeling that US world hegemony is approaching its end and uncertain about its own fate seems to be obsessed by paranoia, and running amok with only one goal left: to fill as much as possible into its own coffers. It even abstains from the impression of following the rule of law. Belligerent behavior towards other countries goes hand in hand with sharply increasing social tensions and conflict within.

US exceptionalism, by its very definition, is the deep conviction of one's general superiority over others. Thus, it is a fundamentally intolerant and pre-enlightenment attitude. At the same time, it tends to turn a blind eye against own shortcomings and deficits. From it follows the self-attributed right to teach others, to impose on others one's role model of morale and of social organization, to exert power on others, to maintain the role of world policeman. Contempt of international law follows from the idea that law is as we do. Little wonder that others in the course of political, economic, and cultural emancipation, decreasingly accept this master-and-serf model of power distribution. There is revolt in other parts of the world, and sometimes violently critical of “the West”. The world will de-

Americanize, as one Chinese diplomat put it. But real and lasting change must come from within US society.

Notes and References

All internet sources have been checked end of march 2014

Notes

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