

The NATO Afghanistan War and US-Russian Relations: Drugs, Oil, and War

Peter Dale Scott

[The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus](#)

Preface to the talk in Moscow

I delivered the following remarks at an anti-NATO conference held in Moscow on May 15, 2012. I was the only North American speaker at an all-day conference, having been invited in connection with the appearance into Russian of my book *Drugs, Oil, and War*.

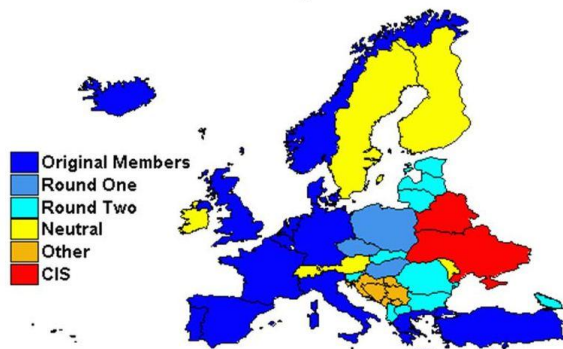
¹ As a former diplomat worried about peace I was happy to attend: as far as I can tell there may be less serious dialogue today between Russian and American intellectuals than there was at the height of the Cold War. Yet the danger of war involving the two leading nuclear powers has hardly disappeared.

Unlike other speakers, my paper urged Russians -- despite the aggressive activities in Central Asia of the CIA, SOCOM (US Special Operations Command), and NATO -- to cooperate under multilateral auspices with like-minded Americans, towards dealing with the related crises of Afghan drug production and drug-financed Salafi jihadism.

Since the conference I have continued to reflect intensely on the battered state of US-Russian relations, and my own slightly utopian hopes for repairing them. Although the speakers at the conference represented many different viewpoints, they tended to share a deep anxiety about US intentions towards Russia and the other former states of the USSR. Their anxiety was based on shared knowledge of past American actions and broken promises, of which they (unlike most Americans) are only too aware.

A key example of such broken promises was the assurance that NATO would not take advantage of détente to expand into Eastern Europe. Today of course Poland and other former Warsaw Pact members are members of NATO, along with the former Baltic Soviet Socialist Republics. And there are still proposals on the table to expand NATO into the Ukraine -- i.e. the very heart of the former Soviet Union. This push was matched by U.S. joint activities and operations -- some of them under NATO auspices -- with the army and security forces of Uzbekistan. (Both these initiatives began in 1997, i.e. in the Clinton administration.)

NATO Expansion



There are other broken agreements, such as the unauthorized conversion of a Russian-approved UN Force for Afghanistan in 2001 into a force under the direction of NATO. Two speakers complained that America's determination to locate a missile shield system against Afghanistan in Eastern Europe (rebuffing Russia's suggestion that it be placed of in Asia) constituted "a threat to world peace".

The speakers saw these measures as aggressive extensions of the old American drive under Reagan to destroy the Soviet Union. Some of the conferees I spoke to see Russia as having been threatened for two decades after World War Two by active US and NATO plans for a nuclear first strike against Russia, before it could gain nuclear parity. While obviously these plans were never implemented, those I spoke with were sure that the ultras who desired them have never abandoned their desire to humiliate Russia and reduce it to a third-rate power. I cannot refute this concern: my recent book *American War Machine* also describes a relentless push since World War Two to establish and sustain global American dominance in the world.

Conference presentations were by no means limited to criticism of US and NATO policies. The conference speakers bitterly opposed to Putin's endorsement, as recently as April 11 of this year, of NATO's military efforts in Afghanistan. They are particularly incensed by Putin's agreement this year to the establishment of a NATO base in Ulyanovsk, nine hundred kilometers east of Moscow in Russia itself. Although the base has been sold to the Russian public as a way to facilitate US withdrawal from Afghanistan, one speaker assured the conference that the Ulianovsk outpost is described in NATO documents as a military base. And they resent Russia's support of the US-inspired UN sanctions against Iran; they see Iran instead as a natural ally of Russia against American efforts to achieve global domination.

Apart from the remarks below, I was mostly silent at the conference. But my mind, almost my conscience, is heavy when I think of the recent revelations that Rumsfeld and Cheney, immediately after 9/11, responded with an agenda to remove several governments friendly to Russia, including Iraq, Libya, Syria and Iran. ² Ten years earlier the neocon Paul Wolfowitz told Gen. Wesley Clark in the Pentagon that America had a window of opportunity to remove these Russian clients, in the period of Russian restructuring after the breakup of the USSR.) ³ The agenda has not yet been completed in the case of Syria and Iran.

What we have seen under Obama looks very much like a progressive implementation of this agenda, even if we acknowledge that in Libya and now Syria Obama has shown greater reluctance than his predecessor to put US boots on the ground. (Nevertheless, under Obama, small numbers of US Special Forces were reportedly active in both countries, stirring up resistance to first Qaddafi and now Assad.)

What particularly concerns me is the relative absence of public response in America to a long-term Pentagon-CIA agenda of aggressive military hegemonism – or what I will call dominationism. ⁴ No doubt many Americans may think that a global pax Americana will secure a period of peace, much like the pax Romana of two millennia ago. I myself am confident that it will not: rather, like the imperfect pax Britannica of a century ago, it will lead inevitably to major conflict, possibly nuclear war. For the secret of the pax Romana was that Rome, under Hadrian, withdrew from Mesopotamia and accepted

strict limits to its area of dominance. Britain never achieved that wisdom until too late; America, to date, has never achieved it at all.

And so very few in America seem to care about Washington's global domination project, at least since the failure of massive protests to prevent the Iraq War. We have seen much critical examination of why America fought in Vietnam, and even the American involvement in atrocities like the Indonesian massacre of 1965. Authors like Noam Chomsky and William Blum⁵ have chronicled America's criminal acts since World War Two, but without any prominent concern about the recent acceleration of American military expansiveness. Only a few, like Chalmers Johnson and Andrew Bacevich, have written about the progressive consolidation of a war machine that now dominates America's political processes.

It is also striking that, until quite recently, the nascent Occupy movement has had little to say about America's unprovoked wars; I am not sure they have even targeted the militarization of surveillance, law enforcement, and detention camps which are so important a part of the domestic apparatus of repression that threatens their own survival⁶ – the so-called “continuity of government” (COG) measures by which America's military planners have prepared never again to have to deal with a successful American anti-war movement.⁷

If I were to return to Russia I would again, as a former diplomat and as a Canadian, call for US-Russian collaboration to deal with the world's pressing problems. The challenge is to move beyond the crude trade-off of so-called “peaceful coexistence” between superpowers a half-century ago, which in fact permitted and even encouraged the violent atrocities of client dictators like Suharto in Indonesia and Barre in Somalia. The alternative, a total breakdown of détente, seems likely to lead to increasingly dangerous confrontations in Asia, most likely over Iran.

But can this breakdown be avoided? For a week I have been wondering whether I have not perhaps been blinding myself to the realities of America's intransigent striving towards dominance.⁸ Here in London I recently met with an old friend from my diplomatic days, a senior UK diplomat and Russian expert. I was hoping that he would dissuade me from my negative assessment of US and NATO intentions, but if anything he increased them.

So I am now publishing my talk with this preface for a North American and international audience. I believe that the most urgent task today to preserve the peace of the world is to curb America's drive towards unchallenged dominance, and to re-energize the UN's prohibition of unilateral and preemptive wars, for the sake of coexistence in a peaceful and multilateral world.

To this end, I hope that Americans will mobilize against American dominationism, and call for a policy declaration, either from the administration or from Congress, that would

- 1) explicitly renounce past Pentagon calls for “full spectrum dominance”⁹ as a military objective for American foreign policy,
- 2) reject as unacceptable the deeply-ingrained practice of preemptive wars,
- 3) renounce categorically any US plans for the permanent use of military bases in Iraq, Afghanistan, or Kyrgyzstan, and

4) recommit the United States to conducting future military operations in accordance with the procedures set out in the United Nations Charter.

I encourage others to join me in urging Congress to introduce a resolution to this effect. Such a resolution might not initially succeed. But it would help focus American political debate on what I consider to be a topic that is both urgent and too little examined: American expansiveness as a current threat to global peace.

Notes

¹ Also invited were the Swiss researcher Daniele Ganser, author of NATO's Secret Armies, and the Italian politician Pino Arlacchi, former head of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime.

² Rumsfeld initially wanted to respond to 9/11 with an attack against Iraq rather than Afghanistan, on the grounds that there were "no decent targets for bombing in Afghanistan" (Richard Clarke, *Against All Enemies*, 31).

³ Wolfowitz told Clark that "we've about five or ten years to clean up those old soviet client regimes - Syria, Iran, Iraq -- before the next great superpower comes on to challenge us" (Wesley Clark, Talk to San Francisco Commonwealth Club, October 3, 2007, [link](#)). Ten years later, in November 2001, Clark heard in the Pentagon that plans to attack Iraq were "being discussed as part of a five-year campaign plan, ...beginning with Iraq, then Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Iran, Somalia and Sudan" (Wesley Clark, *Winning Modern Wars* [New York: Public Affairs, 2003], 130).

⁴ Hegemony can have a soft as well as a hard sense, connoting friendly leadership in a confederation. The American drive for unchallengeable unipolar dominance of the globe is unprecedented, and deserves a name of its own. "Dominationism" is a hideous word, replete with perverse sexual overtones. That is why I have chosen it.

⁵ William Blum's most recent books are [Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II](#) (2003), and *Freeing the World to Death: Essays on the American Empire* (2004).

⁶ Paul Joseph Watson, "Leaked U.S. Army Document Outlines Plan For Re-Education Camps In America," [Infowars.com](#), Thursday, May 3, 2012 : "The manual makes it clear that the policies also apply 'within U.S. territory' under the auspices of the DHS and FEMA. The document adds that, 'Resettlement operations may require large groups of civilians to be quartered temporarily (less than 6 months) or semipermanently (more than 6 months).'"

⁷ See Peter Dale Scott, "[Is the State of Emergency Superseding the US Constitution? Continuity of Government Planning, War and American Society](#)," Peter Dale Scott, "['Continuity of Government' Planning: War, Terror and the Supplanting of the U.S. Constitution](#)."

⁸ Two nights ago I had a vivid and unnerving dream, in which at the end I saw the opening of a conference where I would again speak as I did in Moscow. Immediately after my talk the conference agenda called for a discussion of the possibility that "Peter Dale Scott" was a fiction serving some nefarious covert end, and that no real "Peter Dale Scott" in fact existed.

⁹ “Full-spectrum dominance means the ability of U.S. forces, operating alone or with allies, to defeat any adversary and control any situation across the range of military operations” (Joint Vision 2020, Department of Defense, May 30, 2000; cf. “[Joint Vision 2020 Emphasizes Full-spectrum Dominance](#),” U.S. Department of Defense).