

WELCOME, TRAVELERS!

- OP ED -

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Obama vs. Putin, Timetables, Ukraine, and Terrorists*

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When President Barack Obama announced that the U.S. would pull out of Afghanistan in 2016, I did not so much think that he had given a timetable to the terrorists (which he did) as some have argued but rather that he had inadvertently given one to Vladimir Putin.

Now Czar Putin knows that he has roughly two years to take control of all of Ukraine under the guise of a civil war as he awaits for a new American president (an unknown entity) while taking full advantage of America fighting two wars simultaneously. And as of this writing, the group ISIS seems to be gaining ground in Iraq and that, too, adds to America's preoccupation. Putin more than likely will never have this perfect storm opportunity again to climb back onto that Balance of Power scale where the Soviet Union once stood in the era of Nikita Khrushchev. Putin wants this; he wants Russia to return as a player on the international game board. And from the looks of it, he is enjoying toying with President Obama knowing that he doesn't have to play chess or checkers when he's dealing with an opponent who is playing jacks. He's had Obama standing at podiums announcing that he and Putin are speaking via phone, discussing, and all the other pronouncements that talks with Putin were moving towards some meaningful resolve to the Ukrainian crisis only to end up as one-sided conversations.

On May 28, 2014 when President Obama gave his commencement speech to the graduates of West Point Academy, I listened to him not so much as his being the president of the 'Number One Nation' in the world but as his being a commander-in-chief of the 'Number One Nation' in the world. I am sure Czar Putin was listening, too, along with terrorist groups ranging from the sophisticated ones who know the primer of chemical warfare and guerilla tactics to the ragtag ones who get their kicks from kidnapping defenseless little girls. Both sectors want to take down the Number One Nation mainly for no other reason than just to say they took out the Number One Nation. By its very nature being Number One invites challenges. That type of warfare mindset

goes back all the way to ancient times and not much has changed in a 21st Century. There will always be those who 'want to rule the world' and that forces war and change.

All roads at one time led to Rome and once upon a time the sun never set on the British Empire.

What was monumental in the president's speech as the commander-in-chief was his making a demarcation that the U.S.A. will not continue to act as a savior to nations that find themselves in conflict and running to the U.S.A. for help. Ironically, this is what is happening now with Iraq which now wants the U.S.A.'s help in putting down the group ISIS which is said to be more aggressive than Al Qaeda.

Of course, when the U.S.A. stays beyond that help, it is run out of town on a rail; thus, incurring the tag 'loser' which this nation has been labeled post World War II. Then, of course again, nations are more prone to become saviors to secure their own interests when it's about oil and other natural resources than they are when it's about humanitarian reasons. Historically, powerful nations have the propensity to put in place the weakest of leadership they know they can control; thus, such situations as ISIS moving into Iraq should have been expected because ISIS knows, too, the leaders put in place in the name of democracy are essentially rabbits and will run at the first sign of a scuffle (I haven't the space to expound on this but will do so in a later article).

I agree with Obama that this nation must send the message that it is not the world's savior. However, in foreign policy, even though the average citizen doesn't want to think about foreign policy to begin with, perception is a quasi-living being. At the West Point commencement, he sent this message with a posture of weakness, and somewhere Theodore Roosevelt's "Speak softly and carry a Big Stick" posture was lost in Obama's highly anticipated speech to set his "vision" for America's foreign policy.

He began strongly: "Today, according to self-described realists, conflicts in Syria or Ukraine or the Central African Republic are not ours to solve. And not surprisingly, after costly wars and continuing challenges here at home, that view is shared by many Americans. A different view from interventionists from the left and right says that we ignore these conflicts at our own peril; that America's willingness to apply force around the world is the ultimate safeguard against chaos, and America's failure to act in the face of Syrian brutality or Russian provocations not only violates our conscience, but invites escalating aggression in the future. And each side can point to history to support its claims. But I believe neither view fully speaks to the demands of this moment. It is absolutely true that in the 21st century American isolationism is not an option. We don't have a choice to ignore what happens beyond our borders..."

After the president began with this strong statement that the nation would no longer engage itself in every (or every other) conflict, he dragged his speech into what I thought was one for goldfish to swim in. The fish were pretty but they really weren't going anywhere.

The speech became so intellectualized that it was sanitized. It gave little reference to the Russo-Ukraine conflict other than the Ukrainian citizens had voted for a new president and a few other mild mannered sentences.

There was no force or fire which would have stressed his vision that America's new stance did not mean that the world and/or terrorists should take its kindness for weakness.

The speech dragged on in such an unconvincing tone that West Pointers seemed about as disinterested as Obama himself in the speech. He even went into global warming so I can only view that if the sun went out that would end all wars anyway. This speech created a 'disconnect' between himself as commander-in-chief and those under his command. There was nil applause where he obviously wanted more enthusiasm. Sure, he made reference to Dwight D. Eisenhower, stating: "As General Eisenhower, someone with hard-earned knowledge on this subject, said at this ceremony in 1947: 'War is mankind's most tragic and stupid folly; to seek or advise its deliberate provocation is a black crime against all men.' Like Eisenhower, this generation of men and women in uniform know all too well the wages of war, and that includes those of you here at West Point..."

What Obama failed to mention is that Eisenhower was a realist. I would venture to say that Eisenhower as most people didn't want war or liked war, but there are in fact people who do like war and people who want war and people who have no problem in engaging in war. How hard is that to figure out? Eisenhower was a manager of warfare, a strategist in warfare. Had America gone to war after he had become president, you can bet your bottom dollar Eisenhower would have behaved as a true commander-in-chief. Allies or not, Khrushchev would not have tested Eisenhower as he did Kennedy. Kennedy stood up and Khrushchev backed down; thus, mutual respect and maybe even mutual fear set the agenda. Yes, Eisenhower had met enough tests in World War II. Kennedy served in World War II and knew war up close and personal having been wounded in it. The point being made here is that neither presidents wanted war but they found themselves engaged in war and stepped up to the plate either on the battlefield or from the Oval Office.

Obama is such an elitist, such an intellectual, that he seemingly thinks he can continually sit down and talk and talk to the enemy and make them see reason because underneath his own reasoning is that he has the upper hand because he is the suave sophisticated intellectual who prides himself on being so above the fray that he doesn't recognize the fray. To make matters worse, he views (or rather gives the impression) those whom he is trying to make see reason as essentially having no intelligence. This is not an administration which seeks out those with different opinions or those with expertise; this is an administration which seeks heaven on earth. It is an administration that seemingly thinks the likes of a Sen. John McCain or those in his ilk are so Vietnam-centric and hawk-driven that they are relics in a 21st Century. When in fact McCain is a realist who does not love war, but knows there can be war. Furthermore, he knows you damn well better win the war or there will be hell to pay in trying to attain heaven. One cannot give out timetables and have nothing to back it except goodwill and smiles. ISIS loved the goodwill and smiles and more than likely loved Obama's pretty little speech before the nation's most esteemed warriors. These groups, too, are warriors. They thrive on war. And their perception of a leader is their truth. And to reiterate, perception in international relations is a quasi-living being.

Ironically, Obama's viewpoint and estranged philosophy is no more than the extreme left version of why America's foreign policy fails just as it does with the extreme right version. Why? Because both versions reside in an archaic Western/Euro-centric thinking that the 'natives' can be controlled, never realizing that the 'natives' can think, too. The natives epitomized as the Third World/Developing Nations and/or the terrorist

groups from those with a sophisticated technological network to the rag tag terrorist groups that kidnap little girls now perceive America's commander-in-chief as weak.

And to be politically incorrect, let me mention the elephant in the room because he's sitting right there: Unfortunately, Black males in America are already perceived as 'weak' post King and Malcolm X. For the record, I did not say they were 'weak' but perceived as weak. Whoever becomes the first female president will have this same problem to deal with. This is a world perception of the Black American male and of females regardless of female's race, color or creed. Any woman who aspires to achieve can attest to the latter. Mandela, an African male leader would not have been tested as would have an African American male head of state. Moving on.

Putin certainly sees Obama as weak; he toys with him while the 'natives' are sitting in the balcony eating popcorn watching these two world leaders duke it out. And they are rooting for Putin in that 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend'. They may not like him, but they respect him because he comes off as strong by telling Obama to go to hell in so many words and gestures.

America's foreign policy remains common-sense challenged, because the foreign policy makers have yet to learn – from left to right—that when weak and controllable persons are propped up as 'presidents' of newly formed democracies (e.g. South Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, etc.) they will be easily toppled when America pulls out, especially when a 'specific' timetable is given. You don't put the cats in charge and not expect the dogs to come in.

And getting back to the man of the hour, Putin: He picked up on Obama's naiveté when Obama threatened sanctions on him and his inner circle of plutocrats. They were no doubt filing their fingernails as Obama gave them weeks upon weeks notice that he was going to put sanctions on Russia's billionaires. If you were a Russian billionaire, would you not move your funds and secure your funds seeing that you got weeks of advance notice that someone was coming after your money? How dumb was that? That was so dumb that I am sure the Russian plutocrats and Putin (one of the richest men in the world) are munching on caviar and vodka resting their feet on gold bars while managing to see secure international bankers who had no problem accommodating them for the right price. Putting sanctions on Russia has made Putin more popular to Russians who view this act with the same indignation as Americans who would behave the same way were sanctions put on the U.S.A. Like it or not: Russia is Russia and to have put sanctions on it is also in the same vein as putting sanctions on Great Britain or France. As a matter of fact, one does not see Great Britain or France or Germany—our allies—chomping at the bit to really punish Putin. They need Russian pipelines and if the truth be told, they are sick and tired of engaging in America's wars where there are no exit strategies or as in Obama's case, no common sense of any consequence of what can happen once you pull out.

Then the Czar has stood before the world and announced that he wants America to get the hell off the International Space Station by 2020 and that Russia will no longer be NASA's BFF. Of course, he can smile and tell this president anything and could very well kick NASA out before 2020. As I said before, Putin thrives on underestimation. Coupled with all this is the waltz Putin has orchestrated in Ukraine by bringing his troops two steps inside Ukraine and taking one step back as his ski-mask wearing agitators work

their way inside Ukraine's belly to provoke civil war while he cuts off Ukraine's utilities. To reiterate, he probably now has a two-year plan to pull off a 'civil war' victory—physically and symbolically.

Yes, Putin is making all of these overt moves before 2016, because he knows he's dealing with a president who wears rose-colored glasses.

As I've written: Czar Putin is a bastard but a brilliant bastard. He continually makes a fool of Obama each time Obama picks up the phone thinking Putin is going to see reason. Seemingly Obama actually believes he can talk the Czar into seeing reason. Seemingly he actually believes he is the more intellectual of the two and that somehow intellectualism will win out. Putin laughs and instead runs to the U.N. demanding that the U.N. should make Ukraine cease fire immediately. He paints Ukraine as the aggressor, knowing no one believes it, but it makes a mockery of the Obama.

At the end of the day Putin would have positioned himself to go into Syria, Iran or anywhere else that is anti-American or anti-American inclined and set up his own NATO-like organization to reincarnate the Warsaw Pact. So what will we have here? A New Axis? Already he is more welcomed in these places because he stood up to the U.S. sanctions. If he takes all of Ukraine under the guise of a civil war, he can send his own envoys in to dialogue with practically every terrorist group from the sophisticated (such as ISIS) to the ragtag ones at some point in time.

What should the U.S. do now? Certainly not boots on the ground because that's embracing the conventional for the unconventional. What has to happen is for newly-elected Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko (with all his billions and contacts) to bring in his own mercenaries and soldiers under that same guise of civil war as Putin has done. Poroshenko needs to play the same mind games as Putin. Such as when Putin went to the U.N. to demand that Ukraine cease fire; Poroshenko needs to go to the U.N. and to make worse accusations against Russia. In other words, Ukraine needs to be ready to win its 'civil war' and play chess. The U.S. needs to be even more open about supporting Ukraine's efforts and then clandestinely aid and abet Ukraine to provide weaponry to Poroshenko's 'loyal' mercenaries who should be expert in guerilla warfare. Furthermore, Polish troops also should go in clandestinely in with their ski masks, and other troops from nations that feel themselves threatened should Russia revert to re-gathering Cold War territories.

Yes, one can certainly see the role of "Captain Phillips" being recast. Putin is now simply saying to Obama: "Look at me. Look at me. I am the Captain now." Getting Crimea was good; getting all of Ukraine would be even better in re-establishing Russia on the Balance of Power.

Bottom line: Ukraine has to win the 'civil war' because it is the 'civil war' which is the real war, and the U.S. has to at least look like it has backed a winner for a change.

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*The above is on the Black Paper, Op/Ed, Editorial, and International lanes on The Mid-South Tribune and the Black Information Highway on www.blackinformationhighway.com . *Welcome, Travelers!*