
Russia, Europe, USA and fundamental geopolitics

By F. William Engdahl
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As details of the larger strategic picture emerge over what is at stake in the Georgia and larger Caucasus crisis it is becoming clearer that Moscow is determined to roll back not to the borders of Stalin and the Cold War of 1948.

What Putin and now Medvedev have begun is a process of defusing the highly dangerous NATO expansion, led by the Washington warhawks since the end of the Cold War in 1990.

Had events progressed as Washington had planned up until the surprise rejection of NATO membership from no less than 10 European NATO member countries, including Germany and France, at the April NATO Summit, Georgia would today have been in the admission process to NATOization along with Ukraine. That would have opened the door to full-scale encirclement of Russia militarily and economically.

In a certain sense it is not interesting who fired the first shot in South Ossetia in the night of 8 August. Clear is that Russia had prepared well for such a shot. To understand events, we need to go back to the basics of geopolitical fundamentals and US or Anglo-American strategy since 1945. This is what Russia has challenged by its response to Georgia's attack.

Fundamental axioms of geopolitics

What few people realize is that the architect of America's post-1945 grand strategy was a British national, Sir Halford Mackinder. Mackinder, the grand strategist of British imperial power since his landmark 1904 paper, the *Geographical Pivot of History*, defined how the United States could dominate the post World War Two world in a contribution to the leading foreign policy organ of the United States, Foreign Affairs.

In his July 1943 Foreign Affairs article, written a few years before his death but when it was clear that the United States would replace the British Empire in the postwar world, Mackinder outlined the vital strategic importance for American global strategy of controlling what Mackinder called the 'Heartland.' He defined the Heartland as the northern part and the interior of Euro-Asia, essentially Russia-Ukraine-Belarus -- what was then the USSR. For Mackinder the strategic import of the Heartland was its special geography, with the widest lowland plain on earth, great navigable rivers and vast grassland zones.

Mackinder compared the strategic importance of Russia in 1943 to that of France in 1914-18: 'Russia repeats in essentials the pattern of France, but on a greater scale with her open frontier turned westward instead of northeastward.'

In the present war the Russian army is aligned across that open frontier. In its rear is the vast plain of the Heartland, available for defense in depth and for strategic retreat.' Mackinder noted to his American policy readers, ' . . . if the Soviet Union emerges from this war as the conqueror of Germany, she must rank as the greatest land power on the globe . . . the power in the strategically strongest defensive position. The Heartland is the greatest natural fortress on earth.' [1]

What Mackinder went on to suggest in that little-known essay was that Western Europe, above all the German industrial challenge to the Anglo-American hegemony, would be best contained by a hostile Heartland USSR power to the east and a militarily strong American power on the Atlantic. In a certain sense it did not matter whether that USSR power was still friendly to Washington or a Cold War foe. The effect would still be to contain Western Europe and make it a US sphere of influence after 1945.

US war plans in 1945 against Moscow

As I detail in my book, *Full Spectrum Dominance: Totalitarian Democracy in the New World Order*, dealing with present US military policy in the wake of the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact some 17 years ago, US President Harry Truman and Churchill both considered an immediate war against the Heartland the moment Germany had surrendered. [2]

Only a US veto of Churchill's geopolitical plan delayed the Cold War by three years. Difficult to understand for many is that the Cold War was in large part a US geopolitical strategy to dominate the postwar global order by using a hostile Russia and a hostile China in Asia after the Korean War, to make United States military protection, via NATO and via various Asian defense arrangements, the essential fact of postwar life.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s suddenly confronted Washington policymakers with a devastating strategic dilemma. Their "enemy image" -- the Soviet Bear, was gone. China was an economic partner. There was no need for NATO to continue beyond a period of careful disarmament on both sides.

That lack of an enemy image, Russia, for strategists like US adviser to Barack Obama, Zbigniew Brzezinski, was a strategic threat to continued American Sole Superpower domination. In his 1997 essay in the same *Foreign Affairs* magazine as his mentor, Mackinder, Brzezinski, who like Henry Kissinger, has implicitly and even explicitly deployed Mackinder geopolitical ideas to shape US foreign policy, outlined the goal of US foreign policy, post-Cold War:

America's emergence as the sole global superpower now makes an integrated and comprehensive strategy for Eurasia imperative.

Eurasia is home to most of the world's politically assertive and dynamic states. All the historical pretenders to global power originated in Eurasia.

The world's most populous aspirants to regional hegemony, China and India, are in Eurasia, as are all the potential political or economic challengers to American primacy . . . Eurasia accounts for 75 percent of the world's population, 60 percent of its GNP, and 75 percent of its energy resources. Collectively, Eurasia's potential power overshadows even America's.

Eurasia is the world's axial supercontinent. A power that dominated Eurasia would exercise decisive influence over two of the world's three most economically productive regions, Western Europe and East Asia. A glance at the map also suggests that a country dominant in Eurasia would almost automatically control the Middle East and Africa . . . What happens with the distribution of power on the Eurasian landmass will be of decisive importance to America's global primacy and historical legacy.

. . . In the short run, the United States should consolidate and perpetuate the prevailing geopolitical pluralism on the map of Eurasia. This strategy will put a premium on political maneuvering and diplomatic manipulation, preventing the emergence of a hostile coalition that could challenge

America's primacy, not to mention the remote possibility of any one state seeking to do so . . . [3]

Mackinder and the Bush Doctrine

Briefly restated, US foreign policy, whether under George H.W. Bush, guided by Kissinger, or under Clinton or under George W. Bush, has followed the Mackinder outline suggested in the Brzezinski statement -- divide and rule, balance of power politics. Preventing any 'rival power' or groups of power on Eurasia from 'challenging' American sole Superpower dominance was codified in the official National Security Strategy of the United States, published in September 2002, a year after September 11. [4]

That Bush Doctrine policy went so far as to justify for the first time 'preemptive' war, such as the attack on Iraq in 2003, to depose foreign regimes that represented a threat to the security of the United States, even if that threat were not immediate. That doctrine ended definitively for much of the civilized world the American legitimacy in foreign affairs.

Since 2002, Washington has pushed relentlessly with an agenda of covert regime change, most exemplified by its covert organizing of pro-NATO regime changes in Georgia and Ukraine in 2003-2004. Washington has organized, in violation of the agreement it had pledged when James Baker III met with Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, namely that the US would not extend the borders of NATO eastwards in return for Moscow allowing a united Germany to be a member of NATO. [5]

Washington conveniently suffered a case of diplomatic amnesia as people like John McCain's foreign policy guru, Randy Scheunemann, a leading neoconservative hawk, led the campaign after 1991 to bring Poland, the Baltic States, the Czech Republic and other former Warsaw Pact states into NATO.

Moscow, not surprisingly, became alarmed at the pattern. Understandably so.

Finally, when Washington announced in early 2007 that it planned to station its missile 'defense' array in Poland, including US missiles, and in the Czech Republic, then-President Putin reacted loudly. His remarks were largely censored by the ever-watchful US media, and only the comments of US officials expressing 'shock' at the hostile reaction of Russia to the US missile defense plans, were reported.

Washington made the ludicrous argument that the Polish and Czech installations were necessary to defend US security interests in event of a potential nuclear missile attack by Iran. When Putin exposed the fraud of the Bush administration's Iran defense argument by proposing an alternative site for US interceptor radar far closer to Teheran in Azerbaijan, a surprised Bush was left speechless. Washington simply ignored the Azerbaijani option and rammed ahead with Poland and the Czech sites. [6]

What few people outside military strategy circles know is that missile defense, even primitive, is as one leading American missile defense strategist put it, "the missing link to a nuclear first strike capability." [7] If the United States is able to deploy missile defense on Russia's borders and Russia has none, the US has won World War III and is in a position to dictate terms of unconditional surrender to Russia, its dismemberment as a viable nation, its entire dismantlement. Little wonder that Putin reacted. Moscow strategists know full well what US military adventures have been since the 1940s.

Eurasian geopolitics post 8-8-8

This all leads us back to the consequences of the Russian response in Georgia after 8.8.08. What Russia has done by swiftly responding with military force, followed by the announcement by President Medvedev of Russia's Five Points of Russian foreign policy, which some western commentators have dubbed the Medvedev Doctrine. The five points include, in addition to Russia's reaffirmation of its commitment to the principles of international law, a simple statement that 'the world should be multipolar.'

Medvedev notes, 'A single-pole world is unacceptable. Domination is something we cannot allow. We cannot accept a world order in which one country makes all the decisions, even as serious and influential a country as the United States of America. Such a world is unstable and threatened by conflict.' Then after stating its wish to have peaceful friendly relations with Europe the USA and others, and its intent to protect its citizens 'wherever they may be,' Medvedev comes to the decisive fifth point: 'as is the case of other countries, there are regions in which Russia has privileged interests. These regions are home to countries with which we share special historical relations and are bound together as friends and good neighbors. We will pay Particular attention to our work in these regions and build friendly ties with these countries, our close neighbors.' [8]

If we follow the latest Russian foreign policy moves with the recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as sovereign independent states, Russia's August 29 agreement with Tajikistan that allows Russia to expand its presence at Tajikistan's Gissar Airport. The fact of that agreement was a potentially devastating blow to Washington's Eurasia geopolitical strategy. Tajikistan, a remote central Asian country with dependence on Russia for export of its uranium and dependent on heroin for much of its income, was drawing closer to a strategic link with Washington after 2005. In the wake of the Russian reaction in Georgia, Tajikistan's dictator, President Emomali Rakhmon, clearly decided his best security guarantee lay in closer ties with Moscow not Washington.

The government of pro-NATO 'Orange Revolution' President Viktor Yushchenko in Ukraine collapsed on September 3, when Yushchenko pulled out of the ruling coalition over the refusal of Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko to back the president in his support for Georgia and condemnation of Russia in the recent conflict over South Ossetia. Yushchenko accused Tymoshenko of 'treason and political corruption,' over her failure to back a pro-US stand. He also withdrew over new laws passed by Tymoshenko's party in de facto coalition, stripping the president of his veto on prime ministerial candidates, and facilitating a procedure for impeaching the president. According to Russia's RAI Novosti, Ukraine's pro-Russian former prime minister, Viktor Yanukovich, who heads the Party of Regions, has said that he does not rule out the possibility of forming a parliamentary majority with the Yulia Tymoshenko bloc.

Such a move would likely remove from the discussion the entire issue of a Ukrainian application to join NATO.

American global strategy is in crisis, and this is clearly what Moscow has sensed. The United States has insufficient power to cope with the war in Iraq and increasingly in Afghanistan. Both were to have been an essential part of a US policy to militarily control Eurasian rivals, especially Russia and China.

However, to act militarily beyond sabre rattling against Russia in Georgia has now been exposed for all Georgia's neighbor states as essentially a US bluff.

Continuing the current US strategy means dealing with the war on Islam rather than the Russian one. The confluence of US presidential political posturing,

a devastating US economic and financial crisis that is worsening by the day and the loss of credibility for US foreign policy around the world since the Bush administration came to Washington in 2001 have created the opening for other powers to begin to act on what would be Halford Mackinder's worst nightmare: A Russian Heartland that is vital and that is able to forge strategic relationships, primarily not through guns as during the Cold War, but through economic and trade cooperation, with China, Kazakhstan and other members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Washington has made devastating strategic miscalculations, but not merely in Georgia. They began back in 1990 when there had been a beautiful opportunity to build bridges of peaceful economic cooperation between the OECD and Russia.

Instead, George Bush senior and the US sent NATO and the IMF east to create economic chaos, looting and instability, evidently thinking that a better option. The next president will bear the consequences of having lost that opportunity.

Notes

1. Sir Halford J. Mackinder, *The Round World and the Winning of the Peace*, New York Council on Foreign Relations, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 21, No. 4, July 1943, pp.599-601.

2. While still ostensible allies, during the World War II the United States started to prepare for war with the Soviet Union. In the summer of 1945, at the time of the Conference in Potsdam, the United States had secretly adopted a policy of 'striking the first blow' in a nuclear war against the Soviet Union. To that effect a secret document JCS 1496 was drafted on July 19, 1945.

The first plan for nuclear attack was drafted soon afterwards by General Dwight Eisenhower at the order of President Truman.

The plan, called TOTALITY (JIC 329/1), envisioned a nuclear attack on the Soviet Union with 20 to 30 Atomic-bombs. It earmarked 20 Soviet cities for obliteration in a first strike: Moscow, Gorki, Kuibyshev, Sverdlovsk, Novosibirsk, Omsk, Saratov, Kazan, Leningrad, Baku, Tashkent, Chelyabinsk, Nizhni Tagil, Magnitogorsk, Molotov, Tbilisi, Stalinsk, Grozny, Irkutsk, and Jaroslavl." Detailed in Michio Kaku and Daniel Axelrod, *To Win a Nuclear War: The Pentagon's Secret War Plans*, Boston, South End Press, 1987, pp. 30-31.

The secret Pentagon strategy since the end of the Cold War to use modernization of its nuclear strike force and deployment of missile defense technology is but a modern update of a policy established in 1945 -- Full Spectrum Dominance of the world, via the destruction of the only power capable of resisting that dominance -- Russia.

3. Zbigniew Brzezinski, *A geostrategy for Eurasia*, New York Council on Foreign Relations, *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 1997.

4. Condoleezza Rice, et al, *National Security Strategy of the United States*, Washington D.C., National Security Council, September 20, 2002.

5. Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice, *Germany Unified and Europe Transformed*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1995, pp. 180-184. US Ambassador to Moscow at that time, Jack Matlock, confirmed in personal discussion with German researcher, Hannes Adomeit, of the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, that he had been present and noted in his diary that US Secretary of State James Baker III had agreed in talks with Soviet President

Mikhail Gorbachev that 'Any extension of the zone of NATO is unacceptable.' Curiously, Baker omitted the pledge entirely in his memoirs.

6. Richard L. Garwin, Ballistic Missile Defense Deployment to Poland and the Czech Republic, A Talk to the Erice International Seminars, 38th Session, August 21, 2007, in www.fas.org/RLG/. Garwin, a senior US defense scientist demonstrated the fraudulent nature of the US Government's motivation for its missile policy, p.17. Garwin asks, 'Are there alternatives to the Czech-Polish deployment? Yes . . . An Aegis cruiser deployed in the Baltic Sea and another in the Mediterranean could thus provide equivalent protection of Europe against Iranian missiles.' Garwin as well reaches the same conclusion as Putin: the US missiles are aimed directly at Russia.

7. Robert Bowman, Lt. Col. and former head of SDI research under President Ronald Reagan, cited in, National Security Council Institutional Files, POLICY FOR PLANNING THE EMPLOYMENT OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS, 17 Jan 1974, NSDM 242.

8. RAI Novosti, Medvedev outlines five main points of future foreign policy, August 31, 2008.

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