**Humanity at a crossroads**

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Saturday, Apr 08, 2023

To scale the pinnacles of corporate, political or military power in the United States requires certain rigid deficiencies of character, specifically the absence of compassion, decency and humanity. In their personal lives, powerful individuals may possess these qualities, but as an elite class, they lack them utterly.

How else to explain the abandoned cruelty of US foreign policy since 1945, the wars, with napalm and Agent Orange in Vietnam, depleted uranium and white phosphorus in Iraq, the massive bombing campaigns that destroyed 85 percent of all buildings in Korea, to say nothing of the deliberate destruction of Iraq and Vietnam, the millions upon millions of dead all over the planet, the regime changes, setting countless countries back, developmentally, decades, even centuries, and installing fascist rulers throughout what used to be called the Third World?

True, a president, four-star general or corporate chieftain can be a nice guy, somebody you’d like to have a beer with, someone who’s polite, cultured, agreeable. But to get to where they got in this system, they did things that are unforgiveable. Just look at Washington’s role in provoking and prolonging the war in Ukraine. What geopolitical American interest can possibly be worth this bloodshed, the sacrifice of hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian soldiers and tens of thousands of Russian ones?

For the Russians, this war is existential. Russian leaders believe, probably correctly, that this is a fight for their survival. Ukrainian leaders, ditto – except there’s no ‘probably’ about it; it’s definitely. And it is pointless to attempt to judge those leaders under such circumstances. But for American leadership, this is a proxy war. It is not existential. It is a proxy war of choice. That’s what makes the US role, instigating and prolonging it, so horrible.

President Biden and his neocons – secretary of state Antony Blinken, undersecretary of state Victoria Nuland, national security advisor Jake Sullivan – all knew damn well that expanding Nato into Ukraine would provoke Russia into a war. They knew because top advisors had said so for generations and because the Russians told them so for decades. The only conclusion is that they wanted this conflict – something no person of any compassion, decency or humanity could want.

Given reports that the Biden team’s plans to blow up the Nordstream pipelines predated Russia’s invasion by several months, it sure looks like these neocons engineered this war without a scintilla of regret for the lives it would claim. But maybe they’re not to blame.

The job description demanded sacrificing the supposedly irrelevant virtues of compassion, decency and humanity and so they, along with presidents Clinton, Obama, Trump and Bush are just merely deficient. When they leave office, some will repent of the blood they shed. Others won’t. Maybe that means something for them personally. It doesn’t matter. Their actions speak for themselves. The dead stay dead.

But these character deficiencies present a geopolitical problem. How does the rest of the world deal with, negotiate with such people, people whose gargantuan arrogance in the end understands only one thing – force? And it’s not a mere matter of changing the individuals. These character deficiencies are self-perpetuating: there are always new defectives, deep ranks of them, to replace the ones who leave office and, worse, they never stop.

Because of their deficiencies they can’t conceive of conducting world affairs any other way. The American system requires such character deficiencies at the top. The stupendous pressure to be less is taken for granted, and most of those who climb the political, corporate and military mountains are not made of stern stuff to begin with.

I bet candidate Obama in 2008 never imagined that in a few years he would be saying, “It turns out I’m really good at killing people.” That’s what our American governance has shriveled into, a grave not only for its victims across the globe but for those who cause the slaughter. Because someone who’s good at killing people – well, there’s nothing else to say about such a person. That’s all that matters.

For Americans at the top, winning is everything. No one pauses to care whether they tarnished their integrity or ditched it entirely in the process. And since winning is everything, any lie, cheat or subterfuge will do, an attitude to which, sadly, our European allies have shown themselves easily susceptible: for instance, former German chancellor Angela Merkel and former French president Francois Hollande admitting that the Minsk Accords were all a ruse, to buy time to arm Ukraine so it could attack and reclaim the Donbass – who cares about the 14,000 murdered residents of that region? Winning was all that mattered for these rulers. But now that these Europeans have shown their hand, they’ve essentially spoiled chances for a negotiated settlement. For surely the Russians won’t want those liars to guarantee it.

The deficiencies in the American character have rotted the world. And that’s without discussion of the abyss of human wickedness of senators who, like Lindsay Graham or Tom Cotton, call for war which would end in nuclear winter and five billion starving, then dead humans, or Joe Manchin, who wanted a no-fly zone – with, of course, the same radioactive results. But these character deficiencies at the top also have had unintended consequences that could spell a swerve off the US-caused fatal trajectory of human destiny.

American bullying and relentless aggression has created problems for itself, namely the tremendous Russia/China alliance and the eagerness and support that union receives from the Global South. Washington elites would like nothing better than to splinter that alliance, and thus perhaps succeed at destroying first Russia then China, separately. But Beijing and Moscow have caught on. So has the Global South, whose members pile as fast as they can into Russian and Chinese-led groups like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and BRICS, which has now outstripped the G-7 in how much wealth – and certainly population – it represents.

Humanity stands at a crossroads. The American Empire’s hubris has brought our fate to a point where the two most heavily nuclear-armed nations could get into a shooting war. If nuclear war erupts, we’re not just talking about the incineration of American and Russian cities, but more – to repeat, those five billion people who starve to death due to nuclear winter. But this was the atrocious risk American elites were prepared to take when they provoked Russia.

Excerpted: ‘Human Destiny in Ukraine’. Courtesy: Counterpunch.org