

What is behind the anti-Russia campaign in the US?

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A major theme of the 2016 US presidential campaign has been the campaign to depict Russia as intent on manipulating the election through cyber warfare.

Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton declared in this week's final debate that "the Russian government has engaged in espionage against Americans" and "given that information to WikiLeaks for the purpose of putting it on the Internet." She said the operation has "come from... Putin himself, in an effort... to influence our election." She accused Republican candidate Donald Trump of being a "puppet" of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Clinton presented her accusations as incontrovertible facts, citing as supposed proof the October 7 declaration of James Clapper, the director of national intelligence, who declared that the "US intelligence community" was "confident" that the Russian government was responsible for hacking Democratic Party and Clinton campaign computers and passing on the information for publication by WikiLeaks.

No evidence has been presented to the public by the US government or any other source to substantiate the claims of Russian hacking. Clapper's word is worthless. He is a perjurer, having lied under oath to the US Senate Judiciary Committee in March of 2013 when asked point blank whether the government was carrying out large-scale surveillance of private communications.

Clinton and her surrogates, including the *New York Times*, seem to think that the American people have forgotten the lying claims of the US "intelligence community," promoted uncritically by the same media organizations that are retailing the anti-Russian narrative today, about Iraqi weapons of mass destruction in the run-up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

Ultimately, whether or not Russia is involved in the leaking of emails exposing the corruption and dishonesty of Clinton is a secondary question. Clinton, the Democratic Party and the media have seized on this story and made it central to the 2016 election campaign because it serves definite political ends.

First, the charge of Russian espionage has allowed the

Clinton campaign, together with the great bulk of the corporate-controlled media, to downplay the highly compromising, if not incriminating, contents of the emails released by WikiLeaks. (Her groveling speeches to Wall Street, her campaign's connivance with the Democratic Party leadership to subvert the primary challenge by Bernie Sanders, the efforts to influence official investigations into her illicit use of a private email account for official State Department business, the corrupt relations between the Clinton Foundation and various organizations and governments, etc.).

It is a classic example of seeking to discredit the message by attacking the messenger.

But there are more fundamental issues involved in the Russia-baiting. Washington deems Russia to be an obstacle to its drive for hegemony over Eurasia. Moreover, the whipping up of tensions with Moscow serves to keep America's allies in Western Europe lined up behind the geo-strategic and economic agenda of US imperialism. A major function of the Cold War was to maintain US political supremacy in Europe by cultivating an external threat on the European imperialist powers' eastern flank. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union 25 years ago, this role has been transferred to capitalist Russia—still the second biggest nuclear power in the world.

It is worth noting that today marks the 54th anniversary of President John F. Kennedy's speech announcing to the American people that the Soviet Union had stationed nuclear missiles in Cuba and that the US government had instituted an embargo to intercept and search all Russian ships heading for Cuba. The Cuban missile crisis was the closest that human civilization had come to nuclear destruction.

The reckless and incendiary war program of the United States has today brought the world closer to nuclear annihilation than at any time since those 13 days in 1962. The US proxy war for regime-change in Syria and other bloody interventions in the Middle East, and the US-led militarization of Eastern Europe, have once again brought Washington and Moscow perilously close to war. The

current demonization of Putin by the presidential front-runner Clinton only heightens the danger.

The Cold War was accompanied by a fanatical anti-communist ideology that affected all aspects of American politics and society. The US obsession with the USSR was driven by the hatred and fear of the American ruling class for the legacy of revolutionary socialism expressed, in however distorted its form, by the continued existence of the Soviet Union. But the Cold War was also about securing the dominant position in the global geopolitical order of the United States, by means of NATO and other institutions, vis a vis Washington's imperialist allies.

Following the dissolution of the USSR, the US proclaimed itself the only super-power and announced that it would tolerate no regional, much less global, challenge to its hegemony. The 25 years since the dissolution of the USSR, however, have seen a series of strategic disasters for the United States, undermining the basis of its preeminent global position. Its drive to reorganize the Middle East under its own domination, beginning with the first Gulf War in 1991, has, despite upending the state structures of the Middle East and turning the region into a slaughterhouse, failed to produce any clear strategic advantage for the United States.

Meanwhile the rise of China and other Asian economies, as well as the transformation of a unified Germany into the world's largest capital exporter, has further undermined the supremacy of the United States in the global economy, even as the country's economic life has become increasingly dominated by various forms of parasitism and speculation.

Under these conditions, the United States has confronted growing tensions with its closest NATO allies, which have erupted in a series of disputes over trade, taxation and military policy. These have included the breakdown of negotiations over the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership and the European Union's demand that Apple, the largest US corporation, pay \$13 billion in back taxes.

The United States has hit back by demanding that Germany's ailing Deutsche Bank pay a \$14 billion fine for its role in the 2008 financial crisis, in a move that one high-level German official said "has the characteristics of an economic war." These economic tensions have been coupled by moves to turn the European Union into a military alliance to complement, or even supplant, the US-dominated NATO.

The United States' constant military provocations against Russia, including the 2014 coup in Ukraine, the push for regime-change in Syria, and the NATO buildup on the Russian border, aim at creating a crisis atmosphere within which the countries of Western Europe, faced with the prospect of military retaliation by Russia, remain wedded to the military and economic alliance with the United States.

There is every indication that the military escalation

against Russia will intensify during the next administration. Writing with unusual candor, the *Washington Post* reported Thursday, "The Republicans and Democrats who make up the foreign policy elite are laying the groundwork for a more assertive American foreign policy, via a flurry of reports shaped by officials who are likely to play senior roles in a potential Clinton White House."

The *Post* noted that "the bipartisan nature of the recent recommendations, coming at a time when the country has never been more polarized, reflects a remarkable consensus among the foreign policy elite" for US escalation against Russia and Syria.

These developments represent the greatest danger to human civilization since the end of the Cold War. Over the past month, Russia has responded to the US escalation not only by directly threatening to shoot down US warplanes, but also by moving nuclear-capable missiles into Kaliningrad, its westernmost enclave, directly threatening the countries of Eastern Europe.

With every sign that the administration of front-runner Hillary Clinton would pursue a substantial escalation of Washington's confrontation with Russia, there is a very real possibility of Washington's brinkmanship resulting (as envisaged by a number of recent policy studies) in all-out conventional or nuclear war with Russia.

Despite this, the media and the entire political establishment have remained entirely silent on the threat of war. Only the *World Socialist Web Site* and the Socialist Equality Party are raising the alarm over the war danger. We call on readers of the *World Socialist Web Site* to attend the November 5 conference, "Socialism vs Capitalism & War" and to help build a working-class movement against war and the capitalist system that produces it.



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