The US media's neo-McCarthyite campaign for war against Russia

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The American population is being subjected to a furious barrage of propaganda by the media and political establishment aimed at paving the way to war.

The campaign was sharply escalated this week, beginning with Wednesday's publication of a lead article in the *New York Times*. Based entirely on unnamed sources and flimsy and concocted evidence, it was presented as definitive proof of Russia's hacking of Democratic Party emails and waging of "cyberwar" against the United States.

These allegations were followed Wednesday by a press briefing in which White House spokesman Josh Earnest declared that media outfits in the US, in reporting on the Democratic Party emails released by WikiLeaks, "essentially became the arms of Russian intelligence."

On Thursday, Earnest declared that president-elect Trump had encouraged "Russia to hack his opponent because he believed it would help his campaign." Later that day, President Obama threatened to retaliate against Russia, telling National Public Radio, "I think there is no doubt that when any foreign government tries to impact the integrity of our elections, that we need to take action and we will."

These warmongering comments by the Obama administration were accompanied by editorials in leading US and international newspapers denouncing Trump's accommodative stance toward Russia and clamoring for a more aggressive response to the alleged hacking. News reports, based on unnamed intelligence officials, breathlessly proclaim that Russian President Vladimir Putin directly ordered and oversaw the hacking.

The *Times* followed up its inflammatory article with an editorial Thursday all but accusing the president-elect of acting as a Russian agent. "There could be no more 'useful idiot,' to use Lenin's term of art, than an American president who doesn't know he's being played by a wily foreign power," the *Times* declared. The editorial further defined Russia as "one of our oldest, most determined foreign adversaries," adding, "Kremlin meddling in the 2016 election" justifies "retaliatory measures."

The declarations by the *Times* and other media outlets combine all of the noxious elements of 1950s McCarthyism, with capitalist Russia replacing the Soviet Union: hysterical denunciation of "wily" Russia, shameless lying and attacks on domestic opponents as spies, traitors and agents of foreign governments.

There are bitter and raging conflicts within the state, and a faction of the military-intelligence apparatus is determined that there be no retreat from an aggressive confrontation with Russia. This is connected to anger over the debacle of the CIA-led regime-change operation in Syria. Trump has packed his cabinet with generals and is planning a massive escalation of war, but he has also indicated a preference for greater accommodation with Russia.

Bound up with this internecine conflict within the ruling class, there is a concerted effort to politically bludgeon the American people into supporting further military escalation, both in the Middle East and against Russia itself.

The propaganda campaign alleging Russian interference in the US election parallels a related media blitzkrieg claiming that Syrian government troops, backed by Russia, are carrying out massacres as they retake the Syrian city of Aleppo.

The *Times*' lead editorial on Thursday, titled "Aleppo's Destroyers: Assad, Putin, Iran," declares: "After calling on Mr. Assad to 'step aside' in 2011, Mr. Obama was never able to make it happen, and it

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may never have been in his power to make it happen, at least at a cost acceptable to the American people." The front-page lead of Thursday's *Times* bemoans the fact that efforts to whip up public support for US military intervention in Syria have "not resonated" as much as previous propaganda campaigns.

The international press has joined in the hysteria. An op-ed in Germany's *Der Spiegel* bitterly complains that "Obama sought a diplomatic, not a military solution" to the crisis in Syria. It "made him popular, both in the United States and here [in Germany]," the piece states, but adds that such "self-righteousness is wrong."

Such media propaganda campaigns are not new. Without exception, they have preceded every bloody military adventure: the attempts to blame Afghanistan for the September 11 terrorist attacks in the run-up to that country's invasion in 2001; the lying claims about "weapons of mass destruction" before the 2003 invasion of Iraq; and the reports of an imminent massacre of civilians in Benghazi that preceded the US bombing and destruction of Libya in 2011.

The difference now, however, is that this campaign is directed not at a virtually defenseless and impoverished former colony, but at Russia, the world's second-ranked nuclear power. None of the figures carrying out this campaign care to explain how a war against Russia should be fought, how many people will die, and how such a war could avoid a nuclear exchange leading to the destruction of human civilization.

Behind the banner headlines and vituperative editorials, real steps are being taken to prepare for warfare on a scale not seen for 60 years. Earlier this year, US Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Milley told the Association of the United States Army that the military must prepare for wars against great powers, which will be "very highly lethal, unlike anything our Army has experienced since World War II."

The campaign that has developed over the past two weeks makes clear what the policy of a Clinton administration would have been. The Democratic Party and its allied media outlets have rooted their opposition to Trump not on the basis of his losing the popular vote by nearly three million ballots, or that he is appointing a cabinet dominated by right-wing, reactionary billionaires, bankers, business executives and generals, but on the charge that he is "soft" on Russia. That is, the Democratic Party has managed to attack Trump from the right.

Whatever the outcome of the conflict within the state, the American ruling class is preparing for war. The dissolution of the USSR 25 years ago was greeted with enraptured declarations of an era of perpetual peace, in which a world under the unrivaled hegemony of the United States would be free of the wars that plagued mankind in the 20th century. Now, after a quarter century of bloody regional conflicts, the blood-curdling declarations of the press make it clear that a new world war is in the making.

Among broad sections of workers and young people, there is deep skepticism toward government lies and hostility to war. However, this opposition can find no reflection within any faction of the political establishment. The building of a new anti-war movement, based on the international unity of the working class in opposition to capitalism and all the political parties of the ruling class, is the urgent task.

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