

Appointment of “Warrior-Scholar” McMaster signals intensification of anti-Russia confrontation

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The appointment Monday of Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster, an active duty military commander, as national security advisor has been welcomed by both Democratic and Republican critics of the foreign policy being pursued by the Trump White House.

He has been hailed by virtually all sections of the corporate media as a “warrior-scholar” or “soldier-intellectual,” whose record supposedly stands in stark contrast to that of his recently ousted predecessor, Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn (ret.), the former head of the Defense Intelligence Agency, a partisan Trump supporter whose worldview encompassed a global war against Islam.

Flynn’s forced resignation last week was the product of a bitter internecine struggle within the American ruling elite and its state centered on Washington’s conflicting strategies involving relations with Russia and US preparations for global war.

Trump’s suggestion that Washington should shift from a policy of direct confrontation with Moscow to one of first preparing war against Iran and a showdown with China aroused intense opposition from within a military and intelligence apparatus that has devoted enormous resources to the buildup against Russia.

Officials from within the US intelligence agencies leaked wiretapped conversations held in the run-up to the Trump inauguration between Flynn and the Russian ambassador to the US that included discussion of anti-Russian sanctions that had been imposed by the Obama administration.

The claim that Flynn lied to Vice President Mike Pence about the content of these discussions and further leaks that the Trump administration had known about them for weeks provoked a firestorm of criticism, replete with overblown Watergate-style demands for an answer to the question: What did the president know, and when did he

know it?

All of this was used to feed the anti-Russia hysteria that has been the stock-in-trade of the Democratic Party’s opposition to Trump since the 2016 presidential election, when the party’s presidential candidate Hillary Clinton and her supporters attempted to paint Trump as an agent of Vladimir Putin and promoted unsubstantiated allegations that Moscow hacked Democratic National Committee emails and interfered in the election in favor of Trump.

McMaster’s appointment follows a series of statements made in Europe by other top administration officials, including Vice President Pence, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Defense Secretary James “Mad Dog” Mattis, during meetings of the G20, NATO and the Munich Security Conference. All three voiced US support for NATO, an alliance that Trump had described as “obsolete,” and made statements sharply critical of Russia, indicating that there would be no imminent agreement on military collaboration between Washington and Moscow.

Unease within Europe over Trump’s policies remained, however, particularly given the unusual refusal of all three officials to answer questions following their prepared remarks.

With the naming of McMaster, however, there is a sense within Washington that the anti-Russian campaign unleashed against the Trump administration—replete with multiple congressional investigations—has begun to have an effect.

Last year, McMaster headed up an initiative known as the “Russia New Generation Warfare Study,” designed to reorient the US military toward military confrontation with Russia. He is also the author of a 2015 report titled “Continuity and Change: The Army Operating Concept

and Clear Thinking About Future War,” which calls for the Pentagon to prepare “to prevent the aggressor from doing what Russia has in Ukraine.”

In Moscow, the appointment was taken as an unmistakable signal. “McMaster is...a 100 percent threat to Russia from the US, and it’s not getting weaker or smaller. Defense and intelligence wing of Washington will carry out a Russophobic policy,” the first deputy chairman of Russia’s Federation Council Committee on Defense and Security Franz Klintsevich told *Sputnik* on Tuesday.

John McCain, the Republican chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee and one of Trump’s most strident critics for going “soft” on Russia, was among those congratulating the White House on McMaster’s appointment. After having delivered extraordinary remarks at the Munich Security Conference over the weekend describing his own party’s administration as in “disarray,” McCain issued a statement Monday giving Trump “credit for this decision, as well as his national security cabinet choices. I could not imagine a better, more capable national security team than the one we have right now.”

Democratic Senator Sheldon Whitehouse of Rhode Island also praised the naming of McMaster, declaring: “Every time they add a grown-up into the equation we should all be happy. And I think McMaster is a certified, card-carrying grown-up and a very, very respected military officer [among] his peers.”

The media response was similar. The right-wing editorial board of the *Wall Street Journal* commented: “President Trump likes a government of billionaires and generals, and on Monday he chose another one as his National Security Advisor... This could be an inspired choice if Mr. Trump heeds his counsel and White House politicians don’t interfere.”

The editorial acknowledged that “with former Marine General Jim Mattis at Defense and retired Marine General John Kelly at Homeland Security, the Trump administration is top-heavy with distinguished Pentagon brass.”

It continued: “But someone—and we don’t mean Mr. Bannon—has to plot and steer a strategy for reclaiming US influence as China, Russia and Iran press to drive the US out of what they consider to be their spheres of influence in Asia, Europe and the Middle East. This means turning Mr. Trump’s ‘America First’ instincts into policies that don’t merely mimic President Obama’s strategic retreat.”

The *Journal* has ample grounds for trusting McMaster

to pursue such a strategy. In addition to his anti-Russia credentials, the army general has voiced open opposition to the idea that the US can pursue its objectives by means of drone assassination strikes and special operations raids. He is a proponent of “going in big” and a critic of the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, *Washington Post* columnist David Ignatius, who has close ties to US intelligence, was ecstatic. “McMaster is the real deal,” he said in a television interview Tuesday. “He is a warrior intellectual; he is someone who has made his name through his career speaking to power.”

The appointment of McMaster exposes the utterly reactionary and undemocratic character of the official debate surrounding the Trump administration. The Democratic Party has chosen to oppose Trump on the basis of a neo-McCarthyite campaign depicting the president as Putin’s stooge and demanding a more aggressive military confrontation with Russia.

Both Democratic and Republican critics of the administration are now openly placing their hopes on a cabal of generals controlling the majority of security posts to counter what they see as the destabilizing influence of Trump’s fascistic chief White House strategist, former Breitbart news chief Stephen Bannon.

Neither of the two major parties and none of the extreme right-wing and militaristic factions contending for power within the Trump administration have anything to do with defending the democratic and social interests of the vast majority of the population, which are under unprecedented attack.

Rather, behind the scenes, elements within the state and its vast military and intelligence apparatus, unelected and unaccountable, are fighting out matters of US imperialist war strategy that have deadly implications for the population of the United States and the entire planet.



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