Jeff Bezos's Washington Post delivers a hypocritical sermon on American values

Andre Damon
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On Thursday, the *Washington Post*, a newspaper wholly owned by Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos, published an editorial branding Russia a "hostile power" because it is opposed to "bedrock American values" like self-determination and a free press.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, writes the *Post*, "favors spheres of influence over self-determination; corruption over transparency; and repression over democracy."

One reads these lines not knowing whether to be more amazed by their arrogance or their utter blindness. Bezos's newspaper indicts Russia for a set of circumstances that apply to the US as much as—or more—than they do to Russia.

There is no doubt much to be criticized in Russian society and the Putin regime. The Russian working class, as it recovers from the trauma of Stalinism and the restoration of capitalism, will draw upon the lessons of its revolutionary history and deal as it must with this reactionary regime. But the Russian working people and youth, as they prepare to settle accounts with the Russian oligarchs, will not need (or heed) lessons in morality from the American oligarchs and their editorial mouthpieces. "Dear American physicians of imperialist morality," they might rightly reply to Bezos and the scribes of the Washington Post, "heal thyself!"

The *Post* accuses Vladimir Putin and his "cronies" of "becoming immensely wealthy" at the expense of Russian society. But the editorial appears in a newspaper owned by a man who, as America's second-richest person, controls more wealth than the five richest Russian oligarchs.

The United States is the most socially unequal developed country in the world. Every aspect of American society is dominated by exploitation and social inequality. It is a society with levels of concentrated poverty and social misery seen only in former colonies.

Mr. Bezos, who may well have commissioned the editorial, exemplifies this great social ill. This sweatshop kingpin, with a net worth of over $80 billion, earns $25,000 every minute by paying hundreds of thousands of people poverty wages.

Why doesn't Mr. Bezos walk through an Amazon factory and look at the conditions that his workers are forced to toil under? The workers who make $12 an hour or less are monitored every second of the workday and are penalized for going to the bathroom. And yet this modern-day slave-driver wants to lecture others about becoming "immensely wealthy."

The *Post* further complains that Putin has "maintained the trappings of democracy—a parliament, national elections—even as he has made them meaningless by shuttering most independent media and eliminating most political opposition."

That is an interesting observation, given the fact that Russia's parliament has six political parties, while the United States House and Senate have only two! The despised two-party duopoly in the US maintains its grip simply because any oppositional party that attempts to get on the ballot is systematically excluded, whether through restrictive ballot access laws, spurious challenges by the established parties, or just the overriding domination of money over the whole process.

The *Post* adds that Putin favors "corruption over transparency; and repression over democracy." Yet in the United States, despite two voluminous reports, one by the Senate and another by a special government commission, detailing widespread and specific criminal actions that led to the 2008 financial crisis, not a single banker has gone to jail.

In no country are elections more openly bought by the rich than in America. The US is so corrupt that one researcher recently calculated exactly how much money it takes in "campaign contributions"—i.e., legalized bribes—to get a law passed in Congress.

As for the "independent media," the major news outlets in the US are so derided that the word "media" has become a swearword. They simply spout whatever lies the military, intelligence agencies and billionaire oligarchs demand of them.

The *Post* declares that in Russia, unlike in the US, "when people try to expose the corruption, they are imprisoned or killed." We are simply expected to forget Chelsea Manning, who was imprisoned for seven years and subjected to what the United Nations called "cruel, inhuman and degrading" treatment for exposing American war crimes.

And then there is Julian Assange, who has been effectively imprisoned in London's Ecuadorian embassy for exposing official corruption and criminality. Edward Snowden was forced to flee his home country to Russia because he revealed systematic violations of the Constitution by the US

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government.

As far as Americans being killed for exposing corruption, there is no shortage of dark rumors, from the unexplained death of Democratic Party staffer Seth Rich, who Assange said may have leaked the transcripts of Hillary Clinton's speeches to Wall Street, to journalist Michael Hastings, who died in a suspicious car crash after he ran afoul of General Stanley A. McChrystal.

The *Post* 's editorial has one more crowning hypocrisy: its lionization of the corrupt and hated war criminal Hillary Clinton. Putin's "antipathy toward Hillary Clinton," writes the *Post*, "was not personality-driven but based on her advocacy of values that would threaten his rule."

The name Clinton "stinks to high heaven." After leaving the White House, Hillary and Bill Clinton amassed a huge fortune, racking up a quarter-billion dollars in personal wealth over the past 15 years.

So mad for money was this American Lady Macbeth that she decided—against the advice of many of her staffers—to give paid speeches to banks like Goldman Sachs, which were vastly enriched by the elimination of financial regulations under her husband's presidency.

But Clinton, who laughed over the fact that her actions led Libyan President Mummar Ghadaffi to be sodomized to death with a bayonet, is held up as the ideal of "democratic" values. After all, the newspaper declares, she "supported Ukraine's democratic aspirations." This is what Bezos' newspaper terms the 2014 fascist-led putsch aimed at reversing the outcome of the country's 2012 election.

The *Post* declares that Russia, unlike America, favors "spheres of influence over self-determination." This comes in defense of a country that spends more on its military than the rest of the world combined, and which declares itself to be the only military hegemon—not just globally, but in every region of the world. Russia maintains military bases in eight countries; the United States maintains them in over 70.

According to the *Post*, Russia is a "hostile power." But Saudi Arabia, if one is to rate it by the scale of US arms exports, is America's closest ally.

The United States spies on the people of every nation, including its allies (such as German Chancellor Angela Merkel). It has sponsored coups and destabilization operations throughout South America, Asia, the Middle East and Africa. It has killed more people in wars than any country since Adolf Hitler's Germany.

The *Post* has the gall to dispense its cheap moralism in the very week that the press has been flooded with images of the ruins of the Iraqi city Mosul, in what Amnesty International described as an American war crime.

And perhaps one should ask the people of Haiti, Iraq or Afghanistan about the United States government's attitude toward "self-determination."

Ultimately, the *Post* argues that the conflict between the United States and Russia is of an entirely moral character, devoid of economic and geopolitical interests. The US and Russia, the *Post* declares, are not "about to go to war"—they "are two continental powers on opposite sides of the world with no territorial disputes."

But this is just a half-hearted lie, contradicted by repeated statements of US military officials. In testimony before Congress in May, General Curtis M. Scaparrotti, head of United States European Command, said a "resurgent Russia" is seeking to "reassert itself as a global power," leading the United States military in Europe to "return to our historic role as a war fighting command."

"Five or six years ago, we weren't concerned about being ready [to fight] today," Scaparrotti added. "That has changed."

This state of affairs has "changed," despite the insistence of the *Post*, because Russia got in the way of the United States' plans for regime change in Syria.

There is perhaps no better analysis of the *Post's* sad attempt to wrap US geopolitical machinations in cheap moralism than that offered over a century ago by the critic of British imperialism John A. Hobson, who wrote:

> It is precisely in this falsification of the real import of motives that the gravest vice and the most signal peril of Imperialism reside. When, out of a medley of mixed motives, the least potent is selected for public prominence because it is the most presentable, when issues of a policy which was not present at all to the minds of those who formed this policy are treated as chief causes, the moral currency of the nation is debased. The whole policy of Imperialism is riddled with this deception.

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