

Washington's Not-So-Invisible [Economic/Military] Hand

by Jason Hirthler via shirl - Counterpunch *Friday, Jul 1 2016, 9:23pm*

international / prose / post

(Take note occupied colony, Australia)

Scottish philosopher Adam Smith famously noted the “invisible hand” of the market that shaped the character of economies near and far. The rightwing neoliberal capitalist movement, dominant in the West since the early Seventies, has turned this phrase into the sacrosanct dictum of its secular religion. All human behavior must be submitted to the “free market.” (This is the notional credo, but in practice corporate elites are subsidized, bailout out, and given every possible taxpayer benefit to ensure higher private profits.) So now, when nations fail, it is typically said in the media to be the product of a) a crazed dictator threatening counter-intuitive genocide on his own people; or b) foolish state interventions by deranged socialist ideologues.

In other words, if only these benighted nations would embrace free markets and free elections, all would be well. Imagine Voltaire's Dr. Pangloss admonishing “emerging” nations amid the collapsing scenery of the “developed” world. What's more, the media conflates free markets with free elections in a risible construct called “free-market democracy,” despite the fact that markets are neither free nor a foundation of democracy, as the construct suggests.

Moreover, absolutely free markets would instantly prohibit democracy, which is why democracy, and often free elections, must be thoroughly undermined to even enable free-market thinking to reign.

In reality, it isn't the market's hidden hand at work in country after country, but Washington's. It is Washington that intervenes to prop up failed businesses at the behest of corporate campaign donors. It is Washington that stages humanitarian interventions to unlock a guarded nation's resources under the guise of defending the defenseless. It is Washington that negotiates supply gluts in the oil market, crashing the “market price” of crude and producing needless economic trouble for enemies Russia, Iran, Venezuela, and others.

Just as critically, it is Washington that publicly fines miscreant financial concerns in a show of faint justice. It is Washington that first produces a sham publicity campaign slandering a targeted leader in the press, ensuring that, once it summons the requisite cloak of international legitimacy (bogus UN Security Council resolution, a shambling coalition of supplicant nations, etc.), it can prosecute its war of aggression with minimal public agitation. It is Washington that uses engineered capital strikes, commodity price collapse, and debilitating sanctions to cobble together sufficient isolated data points (price of bread, rise in poverty, etc.) to lay the target nation's economic woes at the foot of imbecile socialists who naturally blaspheme the free market faith by using the heavy hand of the state to steer the economy. As such, Russia is authoritarian and imperialist, Iran rabidly ideological, and Venezuela morbidly statist. In short, it is Washington that guides the economic fate of numberless nations around the world.

Pariahs Three

The aforementioned countries form the demonic trifecta that Barack Obama has spent a good chunk of his feckless presidency antagonizing. He annually declares Venezuela to be a national security

threat to the United States, and an extraordinary one at that. The White House actually puts such ideological nonsense in writing, backed with all the pomp of an executive order. Of course, what Obama is really doing is condemning any alternative to neoliberal capitalism and its war and austerity agenda. He's especially afraid of successful alternatives, as Bolivarian socialism proved to be during the Chavez era. But now, with oil prices cutting the legs out from under the state's subsidy program, some ham-fisted economic management by the Maduro administration and a capital strike by private producers have Venezuela in a tailspin.

The coming collapse in Caracas has been aided by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), a Reagan-era front for U.S. subversion, has deposited millions into the hands of the neoliberal opposition both political and media. The assumption with these donations is that the country in question is desperately in need of institutional reform along the lines of Washington-defined "democratic" principles. This pays for the propaganda cliches produced by embedded journalists and the street violence perpetrated by the so-called pro-democracy groups it funds. To some effect, since the Maduro ticket was soundly beaten in Congressional elections last year. And yet a recent radio debate between two Venezuelan analysts, declared the left-leaning, mild-mannered associate professor George Ciccariello-Maher to be the "radical", while contemptuous Venezuelan journalist Francisco Toro was the mainstream voice of reason, despite his petty hysterics. This is very much the typical outcome of domestic propaganda and direct state subversion abroad.

Iran is slowly learning that it was foolish to negotiate in good faith with the United States. Washington rarely keeps its word. The State Department is less a source of policy prescriptions than the media-facing front for Pentagon and White House initiatives. The anti-nuclear pressure Secretary of State John Kerry's department has applied to Tehran is simply part of a larger imperial plan dating back decades, recently reflected in Paul Wolfowitz foreign policy planning for the Clinton administration. Now Tehran, much to the growing disgust of the sharp-tongued Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, are pinioned in a vice of an unprecedentedly intrusive IAEA inspections regime. (In the past, the U.S. has contemptuously brushed aside international efforts to monitor its nuclear activity more closely, as has Israel, which insults the world with its policy of "deliberate ambiguity.") But the larger point is that the United States lifted some nuclear sanctions but of course left non-nuclear sanctions in place, which has predictably deterred investment from European and U.S. banks and businesses because they fear falling afoul of these sanctions, incurring the lavish fines administered to firms like HSBC and Deutsche Bank and smaller ones like Epsilon Electronics. The Department of the Treasury, the punitive financial arm of Washington's virulent anti-independence jihad, uses these publicity ops to cast a gloss of legitimacy over its sanctions regime.

Russia is naturally the kingpin of the trifecta, as the largest and most favorably placed country to influence the development of Eurasia. Washington seems to be mortally afraid of the Chinese-inspired "One Belt, One Road" project that envisions pipelines and power grids and highways and railroads from Vladivostok to Lisbon. Russia and China are cornerstone players in this project, stand to reap substantial economic benefits, and have of course deepened their economic and military ties as a consequence. Yet the central idea of Zbigniew Brzezinski-still jousting with Henry Kissinger for preeminence in the geostrategic Rushmore of their minds-ought to be printed on the entrance to the Pentagon, Congress, and the White House: "Thou Shalt Tolerate No Rivals."

The Visionary

It is Brzezinski, cribbing from Sir Halford Mackinder, and being avidly parroted by Wolfowitz, that placed the monomaniacal emphasis on Eurasia. He claimed that whoever dominated this parcel of earth would necessarily control Western Europe, East Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. God forbid it be anyone but Washington. Rather than pausing to ask himself what right the United States had to

assert its authority halfway across the planet, the venerable don of the Carter administration forged ahead declaring America to be the “indispensable nation”, as President Clinton said, later to be echoed by myriad imperial shills including former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright (the template on which Hillary Clinton has built her depressingly repugnant image) and that erstwhile champion of change Barack Hussein Obama. Brzezinski quickly got to the point in his book *The Grand Chessboard*: the U.S. must prevent the rise of a single state or a coalition of states “that could challenge America’s primacy.” According to the Grand Wizard of Geopolitics, this will take quite a lot of “political maneuvering and diplomatic manipulation.” It might have benefited President Hassan Rouhani to take heed of Brzezinski’s ideas and the degree to which they’ve been internalized by Washington’s neoconservative and faux progressive communities.

This is, of course, why we are through NATO building up rapid response forces and stacking armory and munitions along Russia’s Western borders. This is why we are bribing and blackmailing Japan, Vietnam, and the Philippines, among others, to let us build bases on its sovereign territory in order to surround China with ships, jets, and artillery. This is why Beijing is the conspicuous absence from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TTP) that Obama sees as part of his own majestic legacy. It’s about establishing control over Eurasia, largely by weakening Eurasia’s constituent parts, and ensuring as well that Western Europe and Russia don’t form a dreaded community of states that might pose a challenge to American hegemony.

Fiefs in Tow

You might imagine that Europe would have had enough of this neocolonialism, but it hasn’t. Perhaps German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Francois Hollande fear regime change should they attempt to do what they were hired to do, namely represent the interests of their own people, not those of the Washington elite. Instead of cutting deals with Russia and China and laying the westernmost foundations of the New Silk Road, Europe continues to enforce Washington’s fatuous sanctions against Russia, its natural trade partner, aiding the demise of European economies. Washington couldn’t care less so long as Paris and Berlin toe the line. Through NATO, European nations join the U.S. in illegal attacks on the Middle East, which create waves of refugees that are soon massing on the doorstep of the EU. Another negative outcome for Europeans as a consequence of their subservience to America. Finally, the EU crushes Greece to pay Wall Street creditors and fully reveals itself for the anti-democratic poser every insider already knows it to be. Dismembering national economies and auctioning off the patrimony of sovereign states is no great thing for Brussels, so long as Goldman Sachs, JPMorgan, and hedge funds that hold European debt are “made whole.”

So when a country like Britain, always a Eurosceptic, votes to sever ties with America’s unelected marionettes in Brussels, it shouldn’t surprise anyone outside of 10 Downing Street. Instead, our elite-owned Western presses hyperventilate about the doomsday outcomes of Brexit. Economic collapse is promised. Punitive social cuts are threatened. Petulant cries emerge from Berlin. British citizens are uniformly denounced as racist xenophobes warped by fascist nationalism. But perhaps they conceive the unaccountable corporate nature of the European Union, as they did during the raucous debates about it and the Euro during the late Nineties. Perhaps they intuit the counter-intuitive stupidity of neoliberal austerity. Perhaps they understand after all that the EU (and its NATO military arm) is a project of American force projection and a tool to consolidate and control Europe under a single bureaucratic umbrella.

But the parties of the one percent, the one percent itself, and their media empire, would never concede as much. The sooner the working class comes to understand that this media hegemony does not represent its views, but merely those of an extremist fringe, the more rapidly that false

consensus will falter as an engine of consent. It seems to already be happening. Flaws and misguided notions aside, Bernie Sanders, Donald Trump, Brexit, Jeremy Corbyn, Podemos in Spain and Syriza in Greece, are all symptoms of a global populace that can no longer stomach the lies of the one percent and its increasingly fangless propaganda. Seems the once-invisible hand of Washington has been revealed for the disfiguring implement of war and conquest that it has always been.

Author retains copyright

<http://www.counterpunch.org/2016/07/01/washingtons-not-so-invisible-hand-its-not-economics-its-empire/>

Jungle Drum Prose/Poetry. <http://jungledrum.lingama.net/news/story-2283.html>