

The Return of Strangelove 'The Second Cold War is Here'

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Somewhat prophetically, Patraeus looks to the transfer of power with an ominous analysis of long-term strategy in Iraq.

With the rise of ISIS, one thing is for certain; the US absolutely did not win in Iraq—at least not in the manner that Patraeus claims to have won. Otherwise, a group that formed out of Al Qaeda in Iraq, funded and armed by the US, would not have seized such a large portion of Iraq and Syria virtually overnight—unless the rapidly-growing hegemony of a US-funded terrorist group like ISIS manifests some sort of US victory. Likely not.

But to find the root of the failure in Iraq, where Al Qaeda is now apparently battling ISIS for primacy in the global jihadist showdown, we don't have to look to Patraeus. He is not entirely to blame; he was just following orders. A wider-angle view will put in range the doctrine of "discriminate deterrence," a funky Cold War-era doctrine produced by Henry Kissinger, Samuel Huntington, and Albert Wolhstetter.

It was the end of the Cold War, and a pivot in nuclear arms strategy seemed necessary. The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty had just been signed, and a combination of clear signs from the Soviet Union of a coming apocalypse, along with a general populist feeling that mutually assured destruction wasn't a viable election platform, led to the understanding that the US-Soviet conflict should be played down. Focus should be brought, instead, to conflict in the

Third World, where a broader consensus on “ends and means” seemed necessary.

Wohlstetter emerged out of the Machiavellian school of philosophy the he learned, or rather interpreted, from fellow-German immigrant Leo Strauss. Working with the RAND Corporation, he became one of the leading figures of deterrence strategy, and the leading example for Kubrick's Dr. Strangelove. He sat on the committee for Paul Wolfowitz's dissertation, and a teenage Richard Perle dated his daughter. Joining with Kissinger, a realist, and Huntington, was an exercise in condescension for this mogul of the Cold War.

The position paper that the commission presented was in keeping with what was to come; the coming invasion of Panama and the Persian Gulf War. Keep the conflicts small and measurable; ensure a minimum of US American casualties, but make sure to publicize the fact that the US is involved in the conflict. Proxy wars were passé; the conflict with the Soviet Union was no longer hystericizing to the point of generating electoral mandate; war in the Third World would produce consensus and a general understanding of the US as the good guys, as the winners.

The triumphant neo-conservative return to the White House heralded the re-emergence of Wohlstetter's children, and the reinauguration of Cold War geopolitics. The invasion of Afghanistan was executed with infrastructure in mind; the attack on Iraq led to sweeping privatizations and financial reforms along with the resource takeovers. But the first generation of Cold Warriors left a problematic legacy; the religious militants whom they had trained and armed in a campaign to destroy the Left in the Arab World would now militate against the US invasion.

Attempting to play the terrorists against the secular states has created explosive situations that led to the chaos in the region today. But never fear, nuclear war is back in style. Russia ran a two-aircraft thrill ride last week practicing a nuclear cruise missile launch against US targets, synchronizing the exhibition with a NATO summit. Sure enough, the US State Department called Russia out last month for violating the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty—the same treaty that helped assuage the threat of US-Soviet Conflict. As if this doesn't make one nervous enough, the Kiev government is not only allegedly using white phosphorus on Donetsk, but has threatened to restart the nuclear weapons program if NATO does not show its love.

NATO chief Anders Fogh Rasmussen, who acts as if he'd just come out of Dr. Strangelove's War Room, is emerging at the forefront of the Machiavellian new order. Having claimed that anti-fracking protestors in Europe are paid Russian agents attempting to undermine NATO energy security, Rasmussen now insists that Russia seeks to “establish a zone of influence in its near neighborhood.” The Polish Institute of International Affairs believes that Russia will act in late-October to annex a “land corridor” ensuring a supply line from Russia to the Crimea. Another, “30 percent likely” scenario is “Novorossiya”: a full-scale annexation of southern Ukraine, held by more than 50,000 soldiers.

The ratios and statistical mappings are easily as exacting as those devised by Wohlstetter at RAND Corporation. The only problem is the old credo: if you think the enemy is going to attack in five years, attack them now. Princeton professor and scholar of Russian studies, Stephen Cohen, has declared that nuclear war would be the result of Ukraine joining NATO.

As Russia creates a formidable alliance with China and the South China Sea falls under the Nine-Dash line, conflict tears apart West Asia, and it appears that the US is retreating behind its poorly maintained and infamously disorderly nuclear arsenal. Earlier this week Tom Nichols at

the Naval War College published a rousing essay in The National Interest called “If America Could Rebuilt Its Nuclear Weapons Force from Scratch...,” directing the reader to “Start from zero, add enough survivable nuclear weapons to destroy the regime of any nation that attacks us with nuclear arms.”

It’s sad but true. The Second Cold War has surfaced. The think tanks are whirring with data on how best to annihilate the world.

Alexander Reid Ross is a contributing moderator of the *Earth First! Newswire*. He is the editor of *Grabbing Back: Essays Against the Global Land Grab* (AK Press 2014) and a contributor to *Life During Wartime* (AK Press 2013). This article is also being published at earthfirstjournal.org/newswire.
