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Geopolitical Overhaul: What Will A Post-Obama World Look Like?

Submitted by Gregory R. Copley via OilPrice.com,

US President-elect Donald J. Trump in many ways faces the most circumscribed – begrenzte - strategic options of any modern U.S. President entering office. **Not only has the global context changed — and will change rapidly even further — so also has the United States’ abilities, tools, and resources to assert itself** – sich behaupten - **on the world stage.**

The options, opportunities, and threats, then, are substantially new, not only to the US, but to the rest of the world, and therefore require clean-sheet analysis for every society. Similarly, the scale of urban-regional political divides – Kluft, Spaltungen - in the United States and in most other countries is now unprecedented – beispiellos - , and this makes the immediate future less predictable than in the past, especially when coupled with global population movement and growth and decline trends.

The two significant structural changes of 2016 — the United Kingdom’s vote to leave the European Union and the U.S. election of Donald Trump — were the confirmation that the globalism era was being forcibly – nachdrücklich - rejected by electorates – Wählerschaften - in modern societies, even though the structures and tools of globalization (communications, access) will continue to flourish in a changing environment.

Strategic re-thinking may be most difficult for the U.S. itself, given that the U.S. was the pre-eminent – überragende - global power and perhaps the sole superpower just a decade or two prior. The context in which that condition prevailed – obwaltete -- has now changed, and faces significant variables **in the coming decades.** As a result, attempts to posture – fortsetzen, verlängern -- U.S. strategic policy and actions as a mere – bloße -- linear extrapolation of the past era of unquestioned dominance will result merely – lediglich -- in delaying – verzögern, hinausschieben -- the US’ ability to respond appropriately to the new global architecture.

Much of the rest of the world is already on the move in terms of policy thinking.

The most reluctant – widerwilligsten -- to adjust strategic policy thinking are the close historical allies of the US, most particularly, for example, Australia and some European states. This is particularly evidenced by their sense of denial – Verleugnen, Abwehren -- of the voting changes in the U.S. and the UK, and their belief that the U.S. and UK must return to the status quo ante. Even Canada and Japan are stirring in their understanding that the world is changing, even if they are as yet unaware of the scope – Umfang, Tiefe -- of change they require – benötigen -- .

Several “new” macro-level realities are evident, and which are creating new and evolving dynamics:

- Russia and the People's Republic of China have broken out of their earlier containment by the West;
- The Five+one deal with Iran in 2015 was one of the factors which changed the Middle East dynamic irreversibly – unwiderrufflich -- . That factor was compounded – verstärkt -- by the strategic decline now facing Saudi Arabia, which had (because of the collapse of Iranian governance in 1979 and the decades of isolation which followed for Iran) enjoyed an artificial period of regional dominance;
- The artificial structure of the European Union is in profound – tiefgreifend - -decline, but its continued existence in its present form will make it difficult for member states and their allies to achieve any strategic flexibility, which may set the stage – die Phase einleiten von -- for implosion. The euro currency is being deployed as a holding measure to ensure a degree of control, but it is also inhibiting – verhindern -- flexible economic recovery mechanisms within member states;
- Some parts of Africa and the Middle East, now without overarching – übergreifend - - external power and economic influence to give them structure, are reverting to the influence of traditional factors. Inherent – angeborene -- concepts of nationhood and sovereignty will begin to emerge, but will be resisted by the “modern” power structures — the post-colonial nation-state structures and borders of Africa and the Middle East — which were created in the 20th Century, and which **have benefited from the exploitation of the inherent wealth of those societies**. In other words, older ethnic, linguistic, and cultural structures will begin again to re-assert – neuerlich erlangen -- influence;
- New security technologies and structures are emerging which render obsolescent – überflüssig machen, ersetzen -- many older systems and doctrines, and yet capital-intensive legacy systems – Altlasten - and thinking cannot yet be entirely abandoned. This is its own technology version of the **“Thucydides Trap”**: **rising new security options versus declining older capabilities**. As a result, the risk of miscalculation in attempting strategic confrontation has risen substantially, and in many respects **this represents a generational gap in thinking as to how to technologically and doctrinally approach the transformed global architecture**;
- Totally transformed population cohesion – Zusammenhalt -- in many societies — due to population decline (in many areas), urbanization and trans-national migration — significantly impacts national productivity and economic planning, but in turn **raises the viability – Durchführbarkeit, Wiederbelebung -- of earlier (pre-globalism) approaches to self-sufficiency – Autarkie -- within nation-states**; and so on.

Managing the Post-Containment Era

It is not merely a matter of recognizing that **the past two centuries or so of containment of Russia and China have ended**, it is worth looking at the separate original and evolving reasons for those policies in the first place, as well as **understanding the reality that the containment policies could not even be reinstated adequately even if that was a desirable policy**. But the fact that the rigid architecture has now been breached – durchbrochen -- , it behooves – obliegt -- analysts to look at the options which are afforded to all the parties.

Does this mean that the ostensible neutrality of the global commons — the oceans and open skies/space — has also now been breached? Not necessarily. **Does it mean that absolute Western dominance over these commons will continue? Absolutely not.** These basic factors mean that new diplomatic thinking is required to deal with global commons issues **which are now of multi-polar concern.**

Does the end of containment mean that the sea lines of communications (SLOCs) are now less assuredly in the hands of the US-led West? Absolutely, and this condition has been transforming for more than a decade. In some respect, the SLOCs and maritime choke-points are up for negotiation, and the PRC itself has been moving globally to assert its commercial/diplomatic position of choke-point/SLOC control even before, in 2016, it had acquired the military capacity to do so, a situation which is still evolving.

Russia's recent and current diplomacy with Turkey and Ukraine has had this issue as a primary driver, too: to ensure expanded, even unfettered, maritime access to Russia's south. Arguably, the covert and proxy warfare of the U.S. against Russia for the past eight years, attempting to dominate Ukraine and Georgia in particular, has had as its primary motivation the continued containment of Russia.

Significantly, U.S. Pres. Ronald Reagan (1981-89) had — along with UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher — the objective themselves of ending the containment of Russia, a policy which had solidified with the Crimean War (1853-56). The Reagan view was that the Cold War should be won as quickly as possible and that the Russian/Soviet peoples should be integrated with the West.

Successive U.S. administrations failed to allow this to happen, or actively campaigned to ensure that it would not. Particularly emerging as anti-Russian post-Cold War U.S. administrations were those of Presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama. Significantly, present in both of these administrations was the contributing influence of Hillary Clinton and others who had profoundly identified with the Soviet philosophies in the USSR, which the end of the Cold War also brought to an end. As a result, the past eight years of the Obama Administration saw a hardening of U.S. anti-Russian policies and a consequent defensive posturing of Russia which, however, fell short of being expressly anti-Western.

For the incoming U.S. Trump Administration, the difficulty will be in moving away from the U.S. confrontational posture toward Russia (in particular), without further diminishing the perceived national standing of the US. This will see a difficult set of strategic-diplomatic challenges for Washington, if it is not to further erode its standing in the Middle East and Mediterranean while damping down concerns within the European community, particularly in the Balkan states and Poland.

This will require Washington to avoid being led, particularly by Poland and Lithuania and their historical concerns and rivalries with Moscow, into strategies which are against broader U.S. interests while at the same time preserving a stable balance in Europe. But at this time, for the first time since World War II, Washington must ask itself whether its interests still lie in seeing a prosperous Europe, or whether the U.S. can afford to once again be a guarantor of European peace. It is possible that the

U.S. must now consider the cost-benefit ratio of such a commitment, given that the U.S. itself is not at present in a position to offer unlimited largesse.

The end of the containment of the PRC poses different questions for the US.

The maritime challenge for the U.S. must now differentiate between being able to counterbalance the PRC's People's Liberation Army-Navy (PLAN) on the global commons and being able to counter-balance it (and other PRC military capabilities) in China's near-ocean areas, such as the South China Sea. For the former, the USN's legacy capabilities and doctrine retain the advantage; for the latter, the PRC has gained the advantage. In the broader Indo-Pacific realm, and the attendant ASEAN, Suez-Red Sea, Cape of Good Hope and other areas, the power projection capabilities of the US' allies (Japan, Australia, the ROC, ROK) and India will be a critical component of the equation, but that fabric requires Washington to sit down for a sober reassessment of the framework.

It is insufficient for the U.S. to complain that its key allies in the region have done insufficient work to manage this situation; the U.S. itself has comprehensively and progressively failed in this arena for the past decade, in large part causing its Asian and Australasian allies to doubt whether the continued alliance with the U.S. could be sustained.

The situation vis-à-vis the PRC begs for a revised approach by the U.S. to its strategic allies, bearing in mind that the old doctrine of containing the PRC within the First Island Chain has been breached, requiring the U.S. and its allies to think of a more flexible strategy for assured dominance of trade routes to, for example, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of China (ROC: Taiwan), and the ASEAN states, given that the Philippines (an ASEAN member) has removed itself from the US-aligned security bloc.³

New sea line doctrines will emerge, including the prospect of some Asian maritime traffic from the Indian Ocean skirting the South China Sea in times of crisis or tension. The viability of sea routes south of Australia and into the broader Pacific, northward to Japan, the ROK, and ROC, will be considered. As far as the East China Sea is concerned, it is now clear that Japan's strenuous maritime and air power projection capabilities have caused Beijing to approach projection into that region with greater caution than it has done in the South China Sea.

The abject failure of the Obama Administration to take up the proposals by then ROC Pres. Ma Ying-jeou on August 5, 2012, to create an East China Sea Peace Initiative, which would have enabled harmonious management of the area's resources, setting aside questions of sovereignty. There was strong evidence that the Japanese Government would have supported that, as well as the PRC, but for the hasty and incompletely-thought-through response of the U.S. Dept. of State supporting a move by the then-Governor of Tokyo to attempt to assert Japanese sovereignty over the Diaoyutai/Diaoyu/Senkaku islands, something the Tokyo Governor had no jurisdiction to proclaim.⁴ The East China Sea situation deteriorated from there, only re-stabilized by a major Japanese investment in naval and air power capabilities, a process which is ongoing.

Inevitably, the question arises in Japan, the ROK, and the U.S. as to whether the transformed situation calls for Japan or South Korea to consider the adoption of

nuclear weapons as part of their deterrence against further strategic loss to the PRC or the DPRK (North Korea). This would be a reversion to 20th Century thinking and realities. Nuclear weapons no longer represent the most cost-effective (or, indeed, effective) military capability under such circumstances, and the cost of building and maintaining a military nuclear capability would be much higher than the cost of adopting anti-nuclear capabilities and cyber/information dominance capabilities which could more adequately contain a PRC or DPRK nuclear threat.

As history shows, when weapons can be countered by cheaper defenses, or can be leapfrogged by cheaper and more flexible technologies, there is little argument to be had in favor of the more expensive systems. Forcing an adversary to depend on expensive systems which can be countered by cheaper (and therefore potentially more pervasive) systems is a path to strategic success. Building nuclear capabilities in today's strategic environment only has a short-term psychological viability, but a long-term economic/force structure distortion cost.

But this would not obviate a move by the ROK or Japan into the adoption of nuclear weapons for tactical functions, such as anti-fleet or other counter-force doctrines.

Iran and the New Middle Eastern Framework

Iran's position vis-à-vis the U.S. remains a point of emotional and jingoistic policymaking for both Washington and Tehran, but this defies strategic logic. **The reality is that Iran has also broken out of the regime of sanctions containment of it which has prevailed since 1979, and Iran is poised to once again be the dominant power in its region, based simply on historical unity, resources, industrial and scientific capability, its agricultural base, and its geopolitical situation.**

It can also be argued that Iran's "revolutionary" internal dynamic is now settling on a path toward normalization in historical Persian terms. Its framework — although declared as an "Islamic republic" — actually parallels the Persian norm: its "Supreme Leader" is essentially akin to the sultans and sultan-shahs of the Qajar and Sassanid eras, which combined the secular and theocratic leadership of the state or empire into what the Turks would have dubbed an "ethnarchic"⁵ post, much as the British sovereign combined (and nominally still combines) the post of secular and religious symbolic leadership.

Continuing to view Iran as a solely theocratic state, driven by Shi'ism, overlooks the reality that Iran continues to be a Persian geopolitical entity. It is geopolitics which drives Iran, and it is Shi'ism which gives on-ly nominal legitimacy to the clerics who currently control the governance of the State.

Equally, it would be outmoded for the incoming U.S. Administration to view Iran, or the greater Middle East, in terms of its significance as an energy supplier. The age of concentrated oil and gas dependence on the region is over, particularly for the US, and the main importance of the Middle East to the U.S. — apart from its dominance of trade crossroads — is how the region spends its largely energy-derived wealth. With the impending economic constraints facing Saudi Arabia, the medium-term play for the U.S. to gain access to the spending of the region should largely be focused on Iran. Thus, for the U.S. to believe it is "punishing" Iran by denying it the ability to buy

U.S. (Boeing) commercial aircraft, for example, or (because of the high U.S. parts content) Airbus aircraft, is almost ludicrously short-sighted.

Similarly, the outrage which entered the U.S. political campaign season in 2016 over the release of US-held Iranian funds as a result of the 2015 Five+one accords with Iran misses the point that the release of Iran's own funds to the Iranian Government opened the way for a normalization of relations which would have benefited the U.S. perhaps even more than it would benefit Iran. The claim that the accords did not definitively stop Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons itself missed the point: Iran already has a stockpile of nuclear weapons, including at least several weapons designed and developed by Iran itself.⁶

But even that debate over Iranian nuclear weapons capabilities misses the point. Ultimately, it is Iran which is the key to accessing Central Asia, at least as far as the U.S. is concerned, and it is also a key area of southward projection by Russia and the PRC into the Middle East. **Thus, the incoming Trump Administration would do well to undertake a clean-sheet analysis of its position in the Northern Tier, including an evaluation of whether the time has come to support the creation of a Kurdish state which would break up the resurgent Islamist offensive intent of Turkey against the West, the Middle East, and the Caucasus.**

It is clear, in this regard, that Turkey is no longer a "Western bulwark" against Russia. Quite the contrary.

Similarly, while the outgoing Obama Administration is still attempting to maneuver the U.S. into a long-term military engagement in Yemen and Syria (Barack Obama's intended legacy to the next U.S. Administration), the reality must be faced as to whether such an engagement is, in fact, in the US' strategic interest. That particularly must be considered given the questionable stability of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia which, like Turkey, faces a fracturing or collapse of the state within a decade.

The Trump Administration must ask itself what is important to it in the Middle East in the medium- to long-term. **For the U.S. to re-start its influence and prestige in the region, the answers must include:**

- Security and freedom of transit through the Mediterranean, Suez Canal, and Red Sea;
- Security and freedom of transit through the Arabian Sea, Strait of Hormuz, and Persian Gulf;
- Stable and reliable access to the entire Mediterranean littoral, including access through the Levant to the Persian Gulf and Iran (which implies a settled relationship with Syria, Iraq, and Iran);
- A cessation of the ability of Turkey to interfere with, or directly oppose, U.S. interests in the region and in the Black Sea (which is currently the case), and therefore whether this demands U.S. support to break up Turkey to allow for a Kurdish state, and the withdrawal of Turkish hostile influence over Cyprus and the Aegean. In essence, this also begs the question as to whether it is now time to

restructure the alliance with Greece, to the extent that a dysfunctional Greek Government would also consider its own longer-term interests;

- Rapid development of the Eastern Mediterranean gas deposits by Israel, Egypt, Cyprus, Lebanon, and Greece to strengthen the already-developing regional bloc(s) which are essentially stabilizing to the region;
- Assist in the evolution of a nascent common market area engaging, initially, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, and Western Saudi Arabia, possibly extending over time to include Syria and Lebanon;
- Rapid cessation of the conflict in Yemen and Syria;
- Cooperative resolution of Nile waters issues, particularly between Egypt and Ethiopia, but also including possible development of White Nile expansion, linking to Congo River to boost overall Nile water flow;
- Containment of the destabilization efforts against Ethiopia, by Eritrea, supported by others;
- Preparation for a potential break-up of Yemen, and preparation to help ensure continuity and stability in Oman in preparation for a post-Qabus Government;
- Isolating Turkish support for DI'ISH (Islamic Caliphate) operations, particularly in Syria, Libya, and the Sinai;
- Reversing the past eight years of U.S. support for the Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan);
- Promoting international recognition of the Republic of Somaliland and promoting a return to political stability and normalcy there, to attain improved security on the Red Sea egress to the Indian Ocean;
- Seeking a new modus vivendi in the RedMed region (Eastern Mediterranean and Red Sea) to balance PRC expansion into that region;
- Reconsider U.S. dependence on Qatar, and the encouragement given to Qatar (by virtue of the Obama Administration's explicit pro-Muslim Brotherhood policy) to support regional jihadism;
- Ending the US' ambiguity in supporting its oldest ally in the region, Morocco, on the question of sovereignty recognition of Morocco's Sahara territory, and working with Algeria to rebuild Algeria-Morocco relations, and thus bring Morocco into the African Union (AU) fold.

Looking Beyond the EU in Europe

The continued decline in the political cohesion of the European Union, and Britain's decision to exit the Union means that the U.S. will need to revert to a country-by-country approach to its relationships in Europe. This will also accord with the incoming Trump Administration's commitment to backing away from a confrontational

approach to Russia. It will also mean explicitly stepping away from outgoing Pres. Barack Obama's warning to the UK that the U.S. would put Britain "at the back of the queue" in trade negotiations. Even the Canadian Government, threatened with disruption of its free trade agreement with the EU by Wallonian regionalists in Belgium, has re-evaluated its position with Europe, recognizing that almost 50 percent of Canadian trade with the EU has been with the UK, and that it could actually boost trade even further by pursuing a better trade relationship bilaterally with the UK.

Given that the UK has, by following the same dynamic which elected the Trump Government in the US, proven to be moving toward a more resilient global economic basis, and recognizing that the U.S. needs to re-galvanize its strategic links, the Trump Administration may need to consider bolstering its strategic links with the UK. This would mean upgrading the Five Eyes accords (the UKUSA Accords, providing intelligence exchanges between the US, UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand) to a peer strategic relationship which may ultimately be more beneficial to the U.S. than NATO and ANZUS.

By rebuilding the alliance with the UK, the U.S. could also tap into the UK's ability to re-launch the Commonwealth as a more meaningful global trading and political alignment.

In short, the Trump Administration cannot continue the Obama Administration policy of thinking of the European Union as Europe, and needs to cease the Obama Administration policy of insisting on the inclusion of Turkey within the European Union. Moreover, the U.S. should consider how best to help bolster the protection of European borders against the organized political strategy of Turkey to create the conditions which generate a refugee flow out of the Middle East and North Africa into Europe.

The Trump Administration has been saddled with the former Clinton Administration's move to create criminal-jihadist strongholds in the heart of the Balkans, in Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina. That the Administration of Pres. George W. Bush did nothing to contain this threat to U.S. and European interests (and the Obama Administration continued to promote it) does not mitigate the need for the Trump Administration to find ways to remedy the damage being done by the continued unfettered behavior of the Bosnian (ie: not the Bosnian Croatian or Bosnian Serbian) and Kosovo leaderships in supporting jihadism, narco-trafficking, and human trafficking (including organ trafficking).

Dealing With a New Africa

The same forces of identity politics which led to the election of the Trump Administration and the Brexit vote in the UK are at work in Africa, largely undermining the colonially-based modern nation-state structures. As a result, the Trump Administration National Security Council, State Dept., and Defense Dept. should be encouraged to begin re-thinking how best to re-set U.S. relationships in Africa.

Can some, or all, of the present nation-states of sub-Saharan Africa be preserved? And if so, to what extent will this necessitate helping the modern governance

structures in those states better reflect the groundswell of internal group identities now resurging? Virtually no attention has been paid by the U.S. to what are presently sub-national (or eclipsed) traditional structures in Africa, and it may be that these will be the key determinants of stability or otherwise in the Continent in the coming decade, as well as in, for example, Ethiopia.

The International Strategic Studies Association's Center for the Study of Monarchy, Traditional Governance, and Sovereignty (the Zahedi Center) has identified many hundreds of currently active sub-national monarchies or traditional governance systems in Africa, and in many areas — particularly, for example, in Uganda, Nigeria, Ghana, and South Africa — these are of growing importance in stabilizing domestic societies.⁹

Again, the clean-sheet approach to Africa, or any of the other challenges facing the Trump Administration, must include a fresh view as to what the U.S. wants or needs from Africa. If it requires new markets, or stable access to resources, then it will need to help ring-fence those societies which offer them. If the U.S. requires stability of strategic reach over sea lanes around the Continent, or the denial of the geography and its resources and markets to, say, the PRC, then it will also need to prioritize its approaches in that regard.

Avoiding the Technology/Doctrine “Thucydides Trap”

The incoming Trump Administration has, on several occasions, showed an understanding of the reality that the “Nuclear Age” — the age dominated by strategic nuclear weapons — is now over, and has been replaced by the Information Dominance age, spearheaded by strategic cyber warfare. President-elect Trump has shown less commitment to basing his strategies on the continued emphasis on nuclear weapons (both stressing their continued validity for the U.S. and preventing them in others) than has the outgoing Obama Administration.

This means that the Trump Administration is likely to be more dispassionate in its approach to U.S. Defense spending than the outgoing Administration in that it may be able to see that future defense planning cannot be based around merely a linear continuation of past technology and doctrine. It is likely to promote a far more innovative approach to resurrecting U.S. defense leadership than the Obama Administration's so-called “Third Offset” approach. There is no doubt that the Third Offset strategy, introduced by then-Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel in 2014 to offset the disadvantages the U.S. faces against (primarily PRC) anti-access and area-denial (A2/AD) systems, recognized the sliding into defensiveness of the U.S. position.

And yet despite the Third Offset strategy, the vested U.S. defense interests have pushed largely for linear extrapolations of older technologies and doctrines, rather than for something totally innovative to leap-frog the technological advantages — particularly in A2/AD — of PRC and Russian systems and deployments. The “technological/doctrinal Thucydides Trap” for the US, as well as for most Western societies, lies in determining how much funding and weight to give the linear improvement in existing forces and structures and how much to give to totally new strategic thought. Too much one way or the other, depending on timing, could leave the nation vulnerable, but getting it right could regain the global high ground.

The incoming Administration in Washington will, however, face significant resistance from the existing military command structure, which was basically purged and molded by the past eight years of the Obama White House's insistence on subservience rather than sound military advice, as well as from the defense industrial establishment, which gave heavily in many instances to Hillary Clinton via the offshore mechanism of the Clinton Foundation. Pres. Trump will be required to reach deep into the military leadership to bring into prominence officers who have not made their promotions based on subservience to Pres. Obama.

In short, Pres. Trump will need to de-politicize the military, possibly the first time an incoming President has been required to undertake such an action. He will also need to incentivize creative strategic thinking in Defense, and to encourage the next generation of U.S. military and diplomatic officials to think outside the stove-piping which has meant that "whole of government" cooperation has been avoided. Indeed, the U.S. has yet to see the George W. Bush Administration's attempts at a broader policy approach to security, exemplified by the Homeland Security Department, achieve anything like harmony and efficiency.

Successful regeneration of U.S. strategic capability and prestige will not, in fact, come from increasing defense and diplomatic spending. Such spending has been increasing even during the Obama years, but to no effect. It will only come through a reconsideration of policies, which may — as with the intelligence community — be better served by leanness than by over-indulgence.

Similarly, U.S. space strategies need to be seen as part of the holistic review of U.S. repositioning. Significantly, the Trump Transition Team seems to have grasped this rapidly and is expertly advised on the matter, but it cannot allow space strategy to be considered separately from diplomatic, military, and scientific strategies. And, within the Strategic Information Dominance (SID) era, now emerging, consideration needs to be given to redundancy and defensive hardening of space assets. It may also be the case that the militarization of space will occur within the period of the Trump Administration.

Within this context, academic cyber analysts have postulated the potential threat to modern computer and electrical grid frameworks from electro-magnetic pulse (EMP) weapons, but much of this stems from — once again — extrapolating older technologies from the nuclear era. EMP weapons are, in many respects, expensive to deploy and are strategically viable mostly if linked with strategic delivery systems and, in some instances, nuclear weapons themselves. This makes them, in the cyber/SID age, far too expensive and clumsy to be viable, compared with more flexible offensive cyber weapons.

The proponents of an EMP threat have overstated its viability, but have still underestimated the vulnerability to a "virtual EMP threat" from disguised-source cyber infiltrated attacks on infrastructure. Moreover, the supposed threat of an EMP destruction of low-earth-orbit space assets ignores the reality that such an action damages the offensive power to the same degree that it damages the target. Very few actors on the world stage would risk such a capability; even the DPRK is increasingly space reliant (albeit to a lesser degree than its supposed adversaries).

What is clear, however, is that international cyber conflict has already begun, perhaps on a restricted scale, but also, perhaps, with the installation of pre-placed cyber triggers on the scale required to effectively bring down grids on a major scale. The loss of the integrated electrical grid which reaches from south of Washington, DC, up to Ontario, Quebec, and Nova Scotia, even for a matter of weeks would result in the death of many millions and literally the collapse of the U.S. economy.

Even without a major cyber-attack, the U.S. overall infrastructures — water, electricity, bridges, and more — are now geriatric, and it is beyond the scope of a single electoral term to adequately remedy this challenge. The capability of cyber warfare to push the structures beyond the tipping point is clearly there. And the U.S. with gaping holes in its infrastructures cannot be made “great again”. A number of those who have advised President-elect Trump during the campaign are indeed aware of this, but how much will Mr Trump be able to do in a single term to start the process of hardening the grids and other infrastructural networks in the face of established lobbies for spending on traditional areas of investment?

Not that, for example, the U.S. Navy’s desire — and President-elect Trump’s support — for a plan to move the Navy back to at least a 350-ship fleet is unreasonable. Indeed, that, too, is critical, but with the caveat that this may be the opportunity to look seriously at what may be the most cost-effective way forward to achieve an effective all-ocean fleet. Certainly, the lessons of unjustifiable mission creep which was seen in the Littoral Ship project should be grasped and avoided.

As well, real grounding in learning the nature of the emerging global strategic context is critical before scarce defense funding is committed to linearist thinking on the modernization of the Minuteman III inter-continental ballistic missile (ICBM) fleet or the nuclear payloads. Innovation and creativity are required before committing to next-generation manned aerial penetrators such as the B-21 Raider bomber.

For the first time in almost a century, the U.S. will need to comprehend that innovation is best driven by the threat, and not only the threat from an external rival, but also the threat of budgetary limitation. Britain’s example of frugality driving genius in World War II weapons development and production is apposite.

The Threat of “Strategic” Terrorism

The U.S. will need to move decisively against the principal state sponsors of terrorism. Today, the principal enabler of terrorism is Turkey, functioning largely through its National Intelligence Organization, the Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı (MIT), but with considerable covert support and alliance with the governments of Qatar and Saudi Arabia. This has been not only tolerated, but in many instances, actively supported and encouraged, by the outgoing U.S. Obama Administration.

It is critical to be aware that the present overall weakness of most states — including the U.S. and the People’s Republic of China and others — means that they will conduct their warfare as much as possible through proxies in the immediate future. In this regard, it is important to remember that no terrorist force in history has ever survived and succeeded without support from a hidden sponsor. Forces such as al-Qaida or Da’ish — the so-called Islamic Caliphate — all have foreign state sponsors,

just as the marxist terrorists of the Cold War era had. But also remember that there are second and third order consequences of this sponsorship of proxy warfare which have been shown many times to ultimately rebound to impact the sponsors.

US sponsorship of the jihad against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan is what is impacting U.S. now. The ongoing rumblings of the marxist proselytization by the Soviets in the 1950s and '60s is what gives U.S. the Bernie Sanders support base in the U.S. today, or the "Occupy" movement, decades after the Soviet Union — and the viability of communism — crumbled and died.

But it is important to recognize that terrorism only becomes strategically viable with the compliance of the target audience, and Western media networks (indeed, the global Internet) has become complicit in giving terrorism breathing space. What is significant is that the U.S. George W. Bush Administration also gave the jihadist terrorism movement oxygen by recognizing it as a strategic threat, when largely its threat level was actually dependent on the U.S. elevating a tactical adversary to strategic status.

At that point, U.S. and allied counter-terrorism capabilities became essentially de-professionalized by be-coming symbiotic partners in the terrorism business. A Trump Administration de-emphasis on terrorism would help balance U.S. national security thinking, budgeting, and capabilities.

Achieving Domestic Cohesion and a Return to Economic Growth

The first step in the strategic recovery of the U.S. would be in its return to strength, something which can only be achieved by improved prestige. And if, as the great strategist Dr. Stefan Possony noted, "***prestige is the credit rating of countries***", then a poor economic credit rating axiomatically affects the strategic pres-tige of the United States.

Debt reduction, stimulated domestic economic growth and employment, the visible reduction of what is seen internationally as overbearing statism in the U.S. economy, and creative attempts to build a new era of investment in the U.S. will be critical to building back long-term U.S. global capabilities. This would imply a process to reduce U.S. debt creation through the creation of Federal budget surpluses, something which several U.S. administrations until this point have felt disinclined to attempt. Deficit spending by the U.S. Government has been a short-term tool to buy votes, creating a longer-term certainty of economic self-strangulation.

A full four-year term by the Trump Administration spent on achieving stable economic growth would almost certainly guarantee Pres. Trump a second term in office, but it does not mean that such a domestic focus should represent a return to U.S. isolationism. Quite the contrary, adept management of a growing economy — even in a situation in which stimulus is created by incentivizing domestic investment and purchasing — can stimulate the revival of the U.S. as a net exporter of cash (investments).

In short, **the U.S. has not seen such an opportunity for strategic reversal since the Reagan Administration.** But only if the incoming Administration adheres to the

principles which won it the election, and **avoids the compromises which the bureaucratic base of government will attempt to force on it** to avoid disruption of the status quo. -- *emphasis, zero hedge, m.z.* --