



Convergence of the War Hawks Hillary Clinton and a Bipartisan Plan to Extend American Power

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Warhawk. Photo: Billy Hathorn/Flickr

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Introduction

Perhaps it goes without saying, but whenever a new president of the United States comes into office, his or her foreign policy direction is developed in accordance with or in reaction to the outgoing president's policies. President Barack Obama's foreign policy record is a grab-bag of sorts. He oversaw continued military involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq in futile, violent attempts to control these states. In Libya he facilitated regime change and regional chaos through a NATO bombing campaign. His military actions have contributed to the hellish conditions from which millions are fleeing in Syria. According to his Deputy National Security Adviser, Ben Rhodes, Obama has, "without second thought,"¹ ordered drone strikes in Yemen, Pakistan, and East Africa killing hundreds indiscriminately. To

top it all, tensions with Russia and China are at an all-time high due, not the least, to unnecessary American provocations and sabre rattling.

From a slightly more positive angle, he did successfully rein in the hawkish senior officials of his administration. The United States' military is not occupying Libya in some sort of nation building attempt. In Syria, Obama chose not to pursue regime change—preventing horrific consequences born from a larger power vacuum. War with Iran is considerably less probable due to the deal managed under his administration, and Obama has refrained from backing the Ukrainian forces with lethal aid in their fight against the Russian-backed separatists. For all who understand what atrocities follow US military intervention, these examples should not be blown off as insubstantial. Recognizing the pressure Obama was under to employ more military force in these areas, his ability to put his foot down is notable.

Although Obama may be “gambling that he will be judged well for the things he didn't do,”² many prominent foreign policy analysts as well as his current and former government officials are unsatisfied with his lack of action, and frustrated because of his exclusive decision making style. Former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates stated, “You know, the president is quoted as having said at one point to his staff, ‘I can do every one of your jobs better than you can.’”³ Obama has grown to loathe the foreign policy establishment; and, for better or worse, he has opted to make many foreign policy decisions with minimal guidance from his cabinet.⁴ As such, many within his administration will leave, or have already left, feeling short-handed—not the least of which being Hillary Rodham Clinton (HRC).

After a tough fought campaign, a younger, more inspiring candidate in Barack Obama foiled HRC's presidential aspirations in 2008. As Secretary of State, she was one of the most hawkish members of Obama's cabinet—pushing her aggressive policies as far as possible before butting heads with the president. She was the driving force behind the military surge in Afghanistan and in Libya, “she was among the biggest champions of the intervention.”⁵ HRC was (and remains) a strong proponent of brinkmanship—“threatening war to back up demands on other governments”⁶—as opposed to peaceful diplomacy. The Secretary of State is one of the most influential positions one can hold in the United States' government, but HRC had to fight tooth and nail to have her policies executed. Some have praised her service as Secretary of State for “displaying impressive humility” in the times that President Obama shot down or resisted her recommendations.⁷ In anticipation of becoming the next President of the United States (POTUS), HRC is done with her days of showing humility, and eager to wield the power of the final say. She believes that the leadership and prowess of both her-

self and the United States have been diminished under President Obama. Her aim as president will be to redeem them. In contrast to Obama who entered office self-restricted by his fear of failure and his “don't do stupid shit” policy, HRC's political career has already seen its fair share of failures, and she will not be nearly as conflict-averse in the White House as Obama.

Moreover, this election season is setting up a monumental realignment of the United States' political parties and their policies.⁸ The Republican Party is in disarray as Donald Trump stands as its presidential candidate. Bernie Sanders pulled many young Democrats to the left of where HRC, the party's candidate, stands. These candidates came to prominence mostly because of their domestic policies rather than foreign ones, but it is precisely within the foreign policy establishment where the most overt shifts are occurring.

In the absence of a traditional Republican candidate, neoconservatives who have long supported the most hawkish Republicans are now pledging their support to HRC. Her advisers are welcoming these newcomers, and together they have formulated a bipartisan foreign policy for her to adopt if she wins the presidency. This phenomenon is best exemplified by the Center for a New American Security's report, *Extending American Power (EAP)*⁹. The report “is likely to be the best guide to date of where a Hillary Clinton presidency will want to take the country's foreign policy. It's not only ‘bipartisan’. It's the point of convergence between liberal interventionism (as represented by Flournoy, Campbell, Rubin, and Steinberg) and neoconservatism (as represented by Kagan and Edelman).”¹⁰ This paper in no way supposes that Trump is a better candidate. He inspires fear and hate, and is liable to drop bombs on anyone who dares to criticize him. In terms of foreign policy platforms, Trump and HRC both wish to edify America's role as global leader, but Trump is too unpredictable and untrustworthy for established foreign policy hawks. With HRC, these people know what to expect, and are eager to work with her to make it happen. Through the analysis of the EAP reports contributors and policy recommendations as well as HRC's advisers, deeds, and rhetoric, this report will reveal the partisan shift within American foreign policy and the potential consequences it will bring if Hillary Clinton is elected president.

Not so Different After All: Neoconservatism & Liberal Internationalism

To understand neoconservatism and its relevance, it may be best to first refer to one of its most influential figures, Robert Kagan, for his take on the nature of the ideology. He states that “it connotes a potent moralism and idealism in world affairs, a belief in America's exceptional role as a promoter of the principles of liberty and democracy, a belief in the preservation of American primacy and in the exercise of power, including military power, as a tool for defending and advancing moralistic and idealistic causes, as well as a suspicion of international institutions and a tendency toward unilateralism.”¹¹ The transition of neoconservatism from a political philosophy of former Trotskyists who converted to anti-communist liberals who then joined the ranks of hawkish Republicans over the course of the last two thirds of the 20th Century is certainly a fascinating development. Currently, the only resemblance of Trotskyism the neoconservatives (neocons) boast is the adherence to the principle of perpetual revolution—except with the end goal being not of global socialist rule, but rather a world order of American-centric neo-liberal ideals.



Gage Skidmore/Flickr

The EAP report follows in the tradition of many other neo-conservative policy papers, starting with the *Defense Planning Guidance* (DPG, 1992). Top neocons in George H.W. Bush's administration, Paul Wolfowitz, Lewis Libby, and Zalmay Khalilzad, wrote the memorandum which was praised by then Secretary of Defense, Dick Cheney. DPG was leaked to the New York Times, and in its respective article, the author writes that in "a broad new policy statement that is in its final drafting stage, the Defense Department asserts that America's political and military mission in the post-cold-war era will be to insure that no rival superpower is allowed to emerge in Western Europe, Asia or the territory of the former Soviet Union."¹² The leaked draft provoked widespread criticism of such a hegemonic policy from members of the United States' government as well as from abroad.¹³ The influence of the DPG should not be underestimated despite the negative backlash it initially gained itself. Michael Mastanduno's words give a more realistic idea to thoughts on the DPG which would define the United States' foreign policy for the beginning of the twenty-first century:

"Although U.S. officials publicly distanced themselves from the Guidance at the time it was leaked, its logic and arguments have in fact shaped U.S. security policy. [...] U.S. officials have in fact followed a consistent strategy in pursuit of a clear objective – the preservation of America's preeminent global position."¹⁴

When Bill Clinton was elected president, the neocons who embraced the DPG lost their official positions. Even without these figures, Bill Clinton was a vocal advocate of United States' leadership. By administering so-called humanitarian interventions (the war in Yugoslavia) and ensuring that United States' weapons manufactures held a virtual monopoly over the international arms trade, the necessary military infrastructure remained in place to seek hegemony under a new president.

Several years before the 2000 presidential election, a group of neocons came together to form the think tank, Project for a New American Century (PNAC). Its *Statement of Principles* (1997) recalls the grandeur of foreign policy under President Ronald Reagan, and voices the urgent need to assert American leadership throughout the world by means of greater military action as well as the growth of the free market economic system.¹⁵ As it would turn out, ten out of the twenty-five signatories to its *Statement of Principles* were appointed positions in the administration of President George W. Bush, including Dick Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz, and Donald Rumsfeld—all names synonymous with the heinous crimes associated with the War on Terror, especially in Iraq and Afghanistan. Where PNAC really made its mark was in its report, *Rebuilding America's Defenses*. Substantial portions of this document, published in September 2000, would be written into the official foreign policy of George W. Bush when he took office shortly thereafter. The terms *preemptive war*, *regime change*, and *pax Americana* are all found in the report as well as reflected in the Bush administration's policy decisions. The "FOUR CORE MISSIONS for U.S. military forces" given in the paper are: "(1) defend the American homeland; (2) fight and decisively win multiple, simultaneous major theater wars; (3) perform the 'constabulary' duties associated with shaping the security environment in critical regions; and (4) transform U.S. forces to exploit the 'revolution in military affairs'."

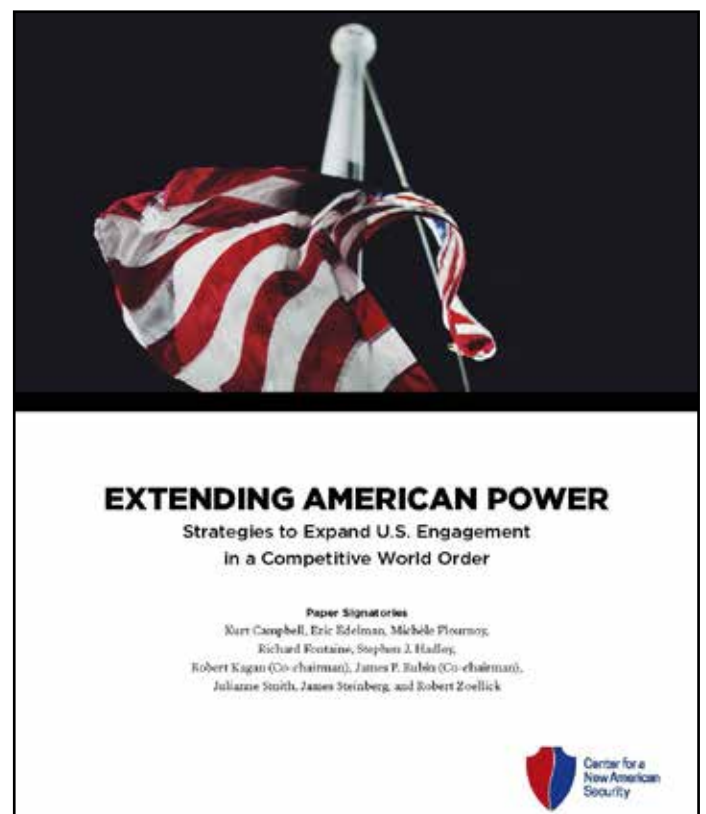
The attempt to carry out these "missions" was evident throughout the entire Bush presidency. A few examples are: (1) The creation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS); (2) Starting wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and on *Terror* (anywhere and everywhere); (3) Acting as the world's police force, e.g. setting up illegal prisons outside of the US for torture and interrogation

of thousands of people who never received due process under the law; and (4) Investing heavily into the research and development of military weapons and systems (emergence of drone warfare, spending +\$1 trillion on F-35, etc).¹⁶

The Project for a New American Century's *Rebuilding America's Defenses* report took neoconservatism into the political mainstream through the War on Terror. As the war went on, however, the American people began to realize that spreading pax Americana was not serving their interests. By 2005, "About half (51% [of US citizens]) disapprove of Bush's handling of the nation's overall foreign policy, and 57% disapprove of his handling of Iraq."¹⁷ PNAC would close its doors in 2006, around the same time that neocons Paul Wolfowitz, Donald Rumsfeld, and Lewis Libby all lost their roles in George W. Bush's administration. In an attempt to maintain a neoconservative voice within the foreign policy establishment, four men came together in 2009 to form the think tank, Foreign Policy Initiative, as a way of keeping the ideas of PNAC present. Two of these men, Robert Kagan and Eric Edelman, would later go on to join the project for the EAP report.

Differentiating between neoconservatism and liberal internationalism is tricky due to the fact that the two camps share the same goals for creating a world rid of anti-American leaders where free market capitalism and American-style democracies dominate. Both camps push for military actions in order to bring about their desired worldview. Where there has traditionally been nuance between the groups, as alluded to by Kagan earlier, is how they view the role of international or multilateral institutions such as the UN and NATO. These institutions provide an air of legitimacy to the United States' military actions when conducted with their approval or support. Liberal internationalists have preferred multilateral cooperation throughout the planning and execution of military interventions when possible. Neoconservatives tend to see the United States' hard power as sufficient legitimacy in itself to act unilaterally, and avoid international institutions when possible.¹⁸

As of late, the nuances between neocons and liberal internatio-



Extending American Power: Signatories

Liberal Internationalists



Michèle Flournoy: Chief executive officer of CNAS and former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy during Obama's first term. She declined his offer for Secretary of Defense due to ideological differences. She is also an adviser to HRC's campaign, and there is massive speculation that she will be named secretary of defense if Clinton wins the election.²⁶



Kurt Campbell: A former top aide to HRC, Campbell served as Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and the Pacific until 2013. Upon his departure from Foggy Bottom, HRC gave him the Distinguished Service Award. He was originally working on Marco Rubio's presidential campaign, but has changed sides to lead HRC's campaign foreign policy working group on Asia.

James P. Rubin: The other co-chair of the EAP project, Rubin was a former Assistant Secretary of State and Chief Spokesperson in Bill Clinton's presidency.

Julianne Smith: The former Deputy National Security Adviser to Vice President Joe Biden is now employed at CNAS and Hillary's campaign team where she leads the working group on Europe and Russia.

James Steinberg: As former Deputy National Security Adviser to Bill Clinton and Deputy Secretary of State to HRC, Steinberg is well connected with the Clintons. He is now leading HRC's campaign working group on the Middle East.

Photos: US-State Department/Pentagon

Neoconservatives



Robert Kagan: One of the biggest names in the neocon community. Kagan was a leading member of PNAC, and has written articles pushing for the growth of the American empire for the Brookings Institute, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the German Marshall Fund, and others. He served as chief adviser to the presidential campaigns of John McCain and Mitt Romney, but has endorsed HRC for president this term. He was co-chair of the EAP project.



Stephen Hadley: A friend of HRC's from Yale and former National Security Adviser to President George W. Bush. He was influential in justifying the 2003 invasion of Iraq. He is on the board of directors for the weapons manufacturing company, Raytheon.

Eric Edelman: One of Dick Cheney's protégés, Edelman served as Under Secretary of Defense for Policy throughout George W. Bush's presidency. He was a founding member of the Foreign Policy Initiative—PNAC's attempt to rebrand itself.

Richard Fontaine: President of CNAS and former foreign policy adviser to Senator John McCain.

Robert Zoellick: Another former member of PNAC and a trade representative in George W. Bush's administration. President of the World Bank from 2007-2012.

nalists are blurring even more. Some neoconservatives, such as Kagan, now prefer to be labeled liberal interventionists, a term synonymous with liberal internationalist. Perhaps he believes this title does not carry as much baggage as neocon.¹⁹ Members of either ideological group could more aptly be labeled, American imperialists, and their leader could very well become Hillary Clinton if she is elected president. Her war in Libya perfectly encapsulated a style of intervention endearing to American imperialists with its vain humanitarian pretexts and NATO support used to justify the intervention, regime change, and destabilization conducted. Neocons are now more open to justifying wars under more humanitarian, multilateral auspices, and the liberal internationalists have become friendlier to the idea of taking unilateral action. Several American imperialist think tanks and consulting firms have come to prominence in recent years to guide and influence whoever may become the next POTUS. As this election cycle has provided a choice between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, the obvious preferred candidate for these groups is the latter. Neocons and liberal interventionists have merged together, sharing in the frustrations Hillary suffered while working for Obama, and trying to push her already hawkish foreign policy a step further in order to help bring about either their ideological visions of the United States' empire, or to fatten the wallets of themselves, their businesses, and their clients.

Center for a New American Security (CNAS)

In 2007 Michèle Flournoy and Kurt Campbell founded CNAS "to develop strong, pragmatic and principled national security and defense policies."²⁰ CNAS has quickly become one of the most influential think tanks in the Capital Beltway area, publishing scores of research articles and reports on how the United

States can best grow and apply its power.²¹ Currently it employs around 131 researchers, directors, advisers, interns, and other staff.²² Many of these people are former government employees, or have ambitions of future government positions. Although heavily Democratic, the organization prides itself on its bipartisan approach to foreign policy issues at a time when political polarization has plagued Congress with years of deadlock. CNAS exemplifies the partisan shift between Republicans and Democrats as both sides are coming together to maintain and build upon the status quo of an American-led world. Some Lifelong Republican neoconservatives are flocking to the Democrat camp as they see Hillary Clinton as the embodiment of their ideology while Donald Trump's foreign policy positions are, in their opinion, either too incalculable or not aggressive enough.²³

At CNAS, the consensus for American foreign policy is to vastly build up and utilize the United States' military while simultaneously reinforcing and spreading the neoliberal economic order. The organization itself is largely funded by arms manufacturers (Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Raytheon, Northrop Grumman; etc.), financial firms (Bank of America, Morgan Stanley, Prudential Financial; etc.), and multinational corporations (Chevron Corporation, Exxon Mobil, Google; etc.) all with a shared interest in increasing their profits through the spread of neoliberalism and conflict.²⁴ As the 2016 election approaches, the hawks at CNAS have their eyes on a victory for HRC, and on securing as many positions in her administration as possible.

CNAS appears as a PNAC 2.0, the latest model of hawkish think tanks trying to renew the sense of urgency for United States' global leadership expansion. Like a disease that has developed antimicrobial resistance, CNAS, too, poses a more formidable threat than PNAC in the ways it is organized and operated. Its emphasis on bipartisanship gives CNAS' work the appearance

of policies able to finally break the deadlock in Congress. Every incoming president claims that he will be the one to get both parties working together, all to no avail. By following the policies put forward by CNAS, HRC will appear as a masterful mediator between the two adversarial sides. Moreover, the HRC campaign is hoping to win the votes of anti-Trump Republicans without losing her core Democratic supporters, and CNAS may provide the bridge to do so.

Strategies to Extend American Power

The grand strategy report of CNAS, *Extending American Power* (EAP), is eerily similar to *Rebuilding America's Defenses* in content, just adapted to the contemporary geopolitical environment. It crams recommendations for militaristic measures and free trade deals in a format that “is long enough to appear substantial, but short enough that some people will actually read it.”²⁵ Robert Kagan is quoted saying of HRC, “If she pursues a policy which we think she will pursue... it's something that might have been called neocon, but clearly her supporters are not going to call it that; they are going to call it something else.”¹⁹ The EAP report resembles what could reasonably be considered the policy he thinks she should and will pursue—thus, the foreign policy manifesto for the Clinton administration.

The EAP report is the result of a one-year project where CNAS members and guest scholars met for dinner six times and discussed how the next president should reassert America's leadership in the world. The report is premised on the notion that the world has become chaotic and dangerous as a result of the United States' poor leadership recently. It argues that the world order of the glorious past 70 years has recently been disturbed by Russia, China, terrorist organizations, the cyber world, a changing economy, etc. In fewer than twenty pages, the report puts forward a one-size-fits-all approach to a slew of threats—most of which were created or exacerbated by the United States as a result of the exact policies advocated in the report.

The signatories of the EAP report (see box, p. 4) consist of former HRC officials, current HRC campaign workers, and also notary neoconservatives. Some of them have worked on the campaigns for Republican presidential candidates before Donald Trump beat them out in the primaries.

The fact that these ten individuals came together to write and publish the EAP report demonstrates a major shift in the typically partisan politics of the United States. They recognized that both supporters of Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump pose a threat to the status quo. With no other Republican candidate available to support, the foreign policy establishment of D.C. has united behind a hawkish Hillary Rodham Clinton to execute the policies in the EAP report. The prospect of policymakers in D.C. finally coming together to accomplish tasks may sound productive to an uninformed citizen, however, the bipartisan policy guided by this report would be detrimental to the security and wellbeing of everyone. The following sections will analyze the introduction, Middle East, Europe, and Asia sections of the report, and compare its recommendations to HRC's stance on the issues.

Core Principles of the Report

Before delving into the specific issue areas, the report lays out “core principles” that both Republicans and Democrats can support with minimal debate; namely, preserving United States hegemony. Specifically, they are:

1. “*Extend American power and U.S. leadership in Asia, Europe, and the Greater Middle East — regions where threats to the international order are greatest and where either new approaches or more consistent application of time-honored approaches are most urgently needed.*”

This report makes reference to the “international order” quite often without ever defining what that is or what it looks like. It is clear that the international order is really meant to be an *American* order all over the world. The “time-honored approaches” mentioned must be the sort of policies put in place during the Bush administration, formed by some of the people who drafted this report, which led the US into disastrous failures in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. This quote appears to argue that the reason these wars can be considered “time-honored” and still failed is not because of a problem in the policy, but because they were not given “more consistent application.” At any rate, this perspective fits with HRC's determination to bring back American leadership all over the world.

2. “*An urgent first step is to significantly increase U.S. national security and defense spending and eliminate the budgetary straitjacket of the Budget Control Act. A second and related step is to formulate policies that take advantage of the substantial military, economic, and diplomatic power Washington has available but has been reluctant to deploy in recent years.*”

Even with the Budget Control Act, the U.S. will spend at least \$585 billion in 2016 on defense (only including the Department of Defense's budget), more than the next seven top defense-spending countries in the world.²⁷ How anyone could justify this current spending while social welfare programs in the U.S. are complete rubbish in comparison to that of any other developed state is beyond comprehension. Furthermore, the United States is situated between two massive oceans and two benevolent states (Mexico and Canada) making the argument that the United States security is in dire risk also a tough sell. The second part of this principle statement is blatantly pandering to Hillary. Her “diplomatic power” was hardly, in her opinion, appreciated or made of use during Obama's presidency. She pushed for use of military force more than anyone else in the administration, but Obama only did what he thought was best, often without heeding her advice.²⁸

3. “*As a result (of the US bouncing back from the recession), a substantial increase in spending on military, international economic, and diplomatic capabilities is well within our means.*”

Virtually repeating the first principle is not just poor writing style, but also offensive to millions of United States' citizens who are not reaping the benefits of perpetual war. Although the banks might be back on their feet after a massive bailout at the beginning of Obama's presidency, many Americans are still struggling to find employment, pay off their loans, or afford health care. The only way increased spending in these areas will be possible is at the expense of American citizens. Perhaps only the wealthy with stocks in arms manufacturers or multinational corporations would benefit from this kind of increased spending—the people who pay HRC half a million dollars every time she speaks at one of their events.²⁹

4. “*For the next president then, the question is not whether America has the wherewithal to provide more active internatio-*



Photo from the Libyan War, which was heavily promoted by Clinton. Photo: mojomogwai/Flickr

nal leadership, but whether America's government has the will. And if it does have the power and the will to lead, the relevant question for the United States is how to do so in a manner that reflects reasonable ambitions as well as necessary limits."

Seeing as substantially increasing defense spending is about as unreasonable as one can be, one can assume that the ambitions and limits that the report will argue are also not reasonable, but here they come.

Middle East I: Libya

Despite the rhetoric used to justify the intervention in Libya and to prevent mass atrocities, it has become clear that the purpose of the operation in 2011 was more about toppling another anti-American regime than doing anything to save innocent lives. Obama, in appearance, was initially reluctant about the intervention. One reason for this could have been that the intelligence he received did not prove that the people of Benghazi were at imminent risk of murder by Gaddafi's forces. Another, more plausible reason would be because of his fear of getting the United States caught up in another military quagmire in another Muslim state.

To make sure the finger of blame would not be solely focused upon him when things went wrong, he first ensured that he would have the backing of NATO and twisted the interpretation of UNSC 1973 for some sort of international legitimacy. Obama expressed his desire for Gaddafi to step down two weeks before the NATO bombing campaign even started, totally invalidating the humanitarian intentions of the intervention. Even as Gaddafi attempted multiple times to broker a deal where he could safely

step down, the US and NATO were never interested. To top it all, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch—both of whom were on the ground during the uprising—did not express concern for an impending massacre by Gaddafi, and US intelligence groups were not convinced the situation was so dire.³⁰ To be sure, the US foreign policy establishment wanted Gaddafi dead; the only discrepancy in opinions was that Clinton and others wanted to remain in Libya to build up a nation friendly to US interests whereas Obama was eager to get out. Moreover, it was HRC whose internal and international efforts to promote the intervention pushed an indisposed Obama to go through with it.³¹ Anne-Marie Slaughter, former Director of Policy Planning at the State Department sent HRC an email titled, "Bravo," congratulating the then Secretary of State. Slaughter writes, "I cannot imagine how exhausted you must be after this week, but I have NEVER been prouder of having worked for you," and "Turning POTUS around on this is a major win for everything we have worked for."³² Nevertheless, the failure of the Libyan intervention resulted in HRC losing future leverage with the president.

Not planning ahead for what to do in Libya after killing Gaddafi remains Obama's biggest regret of his presidency.³³ As is always the case in places where the United States or NATO intervenes, the situation in Libya today is extremely volatile and violent. Rival Tripoli-based and Tobruk-based governments along an ISIS presence and many other small factional groups give evidence to the messy aftermath of Western-led regime change. The UN sponsored treaty between the two governments has failed to bring about closer unity, creating further uncertainty as to how territory retaken from small militant groups will be governed in the future. HRC continues to defend the decision to intervene in Libya, stating the situation there would be much worse had they

opted out. Again, this is a troubling comment as it reveals her inclination to push regime change for reasons based on falsified intelligence. Her campaign website says, “the current unrest in Libya is concerning and must be addressed,”³⁴ although she presents no outline as to how she plans to “address” the unrest.

In specific regards to ISIS, the EAP report, in emphasized font writes, “It is imperative that the international effort against ISIS is scaled up substantially. The United States should be prepared to lead such an effort, the aim of which should be to uproot ISIS from its sanctuary.” This statement asserts that the US should in no way limit its fight on ISIS, meaning that taking the fight to Libya is just as important as in Iraq and Syria. One can expect that HRC’s plans for handling instability in Libya will have a foundation in eradicating ISIS from the torn state, especially now that Obama has begun a new military campaign against the ISIS-held city of Sirte. HRC’s Republican critics have given her more heat over Libya and the Benghazi Scandal—blaming her for allowing the murders of an American ambassador and other government officers—than perhaps on any other issue. Libya will undoubtedly be a place where she will try to knock out ISIS and shut the mouths of all those who refuted her. As always, more bombing will not produce peace nor stability. The United States will support one of the Libyan governments more than the other, creating more tensions, and prolong the conflict indefinitely.

Middle East II: Syria

From the beginning of the uprising in Syria, Clinton pushed for the arming and training of Syrian rebels to facilitate the downfall of Bashar al Assad. As she articulated in leaked emails, “The best way to help Israel deal with Iran’s growing nuclear capability is to help the people of Syria overthrow the regime of Bashar Assad.”³⁵ Taking out the Syrian regime would put a hole in the so-called Shia Crescent between Hezbollah in Lebanon and Iran. She argues that Hezbollah and Iran would both suffer immensely without their Syrian ally, and this would ensure Israel’s security and position as regional hegemon. The email HRC wrote promoting this policy was heavily influenced by a co-chair of the EAP report, James P. Rubin. He emailed HRC a copy of an article he was about to publish for Foreign Policy titled, “The Real Reason to Intervene in Syria.”³⁶ HRC’s leaked email paraphrases the same key interventionist policies. It is not, therefore, surprising that the EAP report also states, “any such political solution must include the departure of Bashar al-Assad (but not necessarily all members of the ruling regime), since it is Assad’s brutal repression of Syria’s majority Sunni population that has created both the massive exodus and the increase in support for jihadist groups like ISIS.” Republican and neoconservative Senator, John McCain, shares similar sentiments with this policy: “The end of the Assad regime would sever Hezbollah’s lifeline to Iran, eliminate a long-standing threat to Israel, bolster Lebanon’s sovereignty and independence, and inflict a strategic defeat on the Iranian regime. It would be a geopolitical success of the first order. More than all of the compelling moral and humanitarian reasons, this is why Assad cannot be allowed to succeed and remain in power: We have a clear national security interest in his



Quelle: valeriy osipov/Flickr

defeat. And that alone should incline us to tolerate a large degree of risk in order to see that this goal is achieved.”³⁷

His remarks provide further evidence of the foreign policy convergence between Republican and Democratic policy makers.

Like HRC, the EAP report supports an increased effort to take out both ISIS and Assad. In terms of the first enemy, “The United States should show a new resolve by increasing significantly its military contribution across the board, including providing more unique air assets, additional intelligence assets and a larger contingent of special operation forces capable of identifying and destroying high value and other critical ISIS targets.”

The United States frequently drops bombs over Syria and conducts attacks with its special operations forces up through today. This quote shows clear intention to put more American soldiers on the ground, but how one chooses to interpret “unique air assets,” of which the EAP report believes more should be provided is up to question. Considering “intelligence” receives its own separate mention, it would not be far-fetched to assume the report means more bombs or possibly even drones. Regarding the Syrian regime issue, the report concedes that due to military assistance from Russia and Iran, “the military balance tilts heavily in favor of the Assad regime.” In this tricky geopolitical quagmire, the report does not directly support using American military might to topple the Assad regime, but rather to carve out a “no-fly zone” and, “to create a safe space in which Syrians can relocate without fear of being killed by Assad’s forces and where moderate opposition militias can arm, train, and organize.” How exactly this could be executed without sparking confrontation with Russia, Iran, or Assad is left unmentioned.

After the horrific chemical weapons attacks in Ghouta, Syria, Obama, against the counsel of nearly all his advisers, went back on his red-line, and nearly the entire foreign policy establishment went livid. Obama had stated prior that the use of chemical weapons would cross a red line and would “change [his] calculations significantly.”³⁸ Assuming that the threat of the United States would be enough to deter Assad from using chemical weapons, Obama was dumbfounded when reports of the Ghouta attack were confirmed (rebel responsibility for the attack was

never given consideration by the administration). He obviously did not know how to react, but he definitely wanted to avoid bombing another Arab autocrat out of power. After bumbling his way to an agreement with Russia to remove chemical weapons from Syria, Obama played off the fiasco as if he had planned it that way all along. Many people in the government are of the opinion that Obama was called on his bluff, and that the United States lost a great deal of credibility by not raining bombs on Damascus. Hillary was no longer Secretary of State, but has stated that she, unlike Obama, would have pulled the trigger: “If you say you’re going to strike, you have to strike. There’s no choice.”³⁹ But in one of the world’s most violent and tumultuous regions, it does not make sense to send more weapons, use more bombs, or create ‘better’ opposition forces to bring about peace. All of these escalations she and the EAP report support reveal complete disregard for Russian or Iranian involvement in Syria, and willingness to risk a larger confrontation that would make the current war pale in comparison.

Middle East III: Iran

Although HRC has been outspoken about the role she played in initiating the negotiations with Iran which led to the now infamous Iran Deal, there is little reason to believe she will give the document much thought if elected president. For now she can boast about her diplomatic prowess in dealing with China, Russia, and Iran—convincing three enemies of the United States to come to the table.⁴⁰ The deal was rather miraculously drafted and ratified in the face of a strong opposition. It had been HRC’s successor, Secretary of State John Kerry who did the real heavy lifting to get the deal through. Anyhow, the deal came as a relief to many; it would decrease the sanctions on Iran, and the tension between Tehran and the West would be given a chance to diminish. It appeared the hawks had lost in their attempt to justify that war against Iran was the only viable option for regional peace and stability. Unfortunately, these warmongers are not entirely willing to accept defeat.

Neither HRC nor those who put together the EAP report trust that the deal is enough to contain Iran. The concern is not that Iran will actually obtain a nuclear weapon, but that it will be able to shift the balance of power in the Greater Middle East, much to the dismay of some of Washington’s closest allies in Israel and the Persian Gulf. Iran is resource rich and has a large, highly educated population, but heavy sanctions have restricted the state from developing. The United States’ number one stated problem with Iran is that it has been meddling with regional conflicts and supporting malicious regimes, yet somehow when Saudi Arabia does the same, there is no issue. Despite the significant role Iran has played in fighting ISIS in Iraq and Syria, the United States acknowledges their actions as purely destabilizing—in contrast to Saudi interference in the Syrian war. The EAP report makes several points on how the United States should form policy regarding Iran: “First, Tehran should understand that Washington is not expecting the nuclear agreement to lead to a changed relationship with the government of Iran. [...] Second, Washington’s declaratory policy should reflect the fact that the United States is now, and will always be, determined to deter Iran from becoming a full-fledged nuclear weapon state. [...] Third, the United States should adopt a comprehensive strategy, employing an appropriate mix of military, economic, and diplomatic resources, to undermine and defeat Iran’s hegemonic ambitions in the Greater Middle East. Whether in Lebanon, Yemen, Syria, or Bahrain, Tehran’s advances and longer-term

ambitions should be regarded as a threat to stability that it is in the U.S. interest to counter and deter.”

These first two points, which are found in similar critiques of the Iran Deal, give one the impression that whoever wrote them was sleeping through the last years of meetings and deliberations between the United States and Iran. There is no other way to describe these two points except superfluous. They reveal that the signatories of EAP either have not read the Iran Deal, or they are dead set on ensuring that there is no possible way for Iran to improve its relationship with the United States, even to the meager extent that war is not eminent between them. The third point essentially is calling for the pursuit of proxy wars against Iran in other conflict areas. Instability within Yemen and Bahrain is largely a result of Sunni and Shia tensions, where a Sunni ruling elite oppresses masses of Shia citizens. Despite Saudi Arabia’s ruthless bombing campaign against the Houthi Yemenis or the royal Khalifa family of Bahrain’s violent discrimination over its majority Shia people, the EAP report considers Iran’s regional interference incalculably more problematic: “We also reject Iran’s attempt to blame others for regional tensions it is aggravating, as well as its public campaign to demonize the government of Saudi Arabia.” The United States sells hundreds of billions of dollars’ worth of weapons to Saudi Arabia and Bahrain with zero concern for how those in power will use these weapons to create further instability and bloodshed. HRC is well-loved by arms manufacturers who donate to her campaign or the Clinton Foundation in turn for her to help approve deals for them.⁴¹ Continuing the sale of weapons to these states and many others is heavily pushed throughout the EAP report: “Gulf allies should have access to sufficient defense articles and services to deter Tehran even if U.S. forces are not present or immediately available to assist.” These arms perpetuate senseless conflicts and sustain the endless need for more weapons—thereby boosting the profits of arms manufacturers who will, in turn, donate heavily to groups like CNAS to encourage further militarization.

At times, Hillary Clinton’s own campaign website uses nearly identical language to the EAP report in discussing her policy towards Iran. At one point, the EAP report states, “...the Persian Gulf should be deemed a region of vital interest to the security of the United States. As such, U.S. military forces in the region should be sufficient to ensure the security of Gulf allies and the Strait of Hormuz against potential Iranian aggression.” An article on HRC’s website similarly calls to, “Reaffirm that the Persian Gulf is a region of vital interest to the United States, expand our military presence in the region and act to keep the Strait of Hormuz open. She (HRC) will increase security cooperation in areas like intelligence sharing, military backing and missile defense with our Gulf allies, to ensure they can defend themselves against Iranian aggression.”⁴² From these statements one can be certain that HRC’s foreign policy is heavily influenced by—or perhaps taken from—the same people who wrote the EAP report. The Strait of Hormuz is a vital route for the oil trade, revealing HRC’s intentions to maintain the control of fossil fuels moving through the area. The United States has no intentions of leaving the Middle East anytime soon, and a HRC administration will have no shortage of plans to increase America’s military presence and activity in the region.

Europe and Russia

In the years following the fall of the Soviet Union, the United States pushed its military and economic ambitions deeper into Europe, particularly to the newly independent states of the ex-



NATO-Exercise Trident Juncture 2015. Photo: Laszlo Kertesz/Nato

Soviet Bloc and the former Warsaw Pact states. NATO went through considerable reformation as its existence as a balancing, deterrent force could no longer be justified against a seriously injured Russia during the 1990s. With so many institutions and jobs tied to NATO and a lingering sense of adversity towards Russia, the alliance's leadership did what was necessary to stay in demand, namely, changing its role—at least officially—to one of maintaining Western interests through the spread of democracy and stability.⁴³ In stark contrast to these ideals, NATO has proved itself to be a vessel of regime change and instability as is evident in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, and Libya. Moreover, it has been encroaching on Russia as it swooped up new members from former Soviet Bloc states. Compounded with the European Union's recruitment of Eastern European states into their economic alliance, Russia has been put in an uncomfortable position to say the least.

Russia's comfort, however, is of no interest to the United States or Western Europe; in fact, stripping away as much of Moscow's influence in Europe and the world remains a major goal today as it did during the Cold War. Russia is interested in regaining its position as a serious player in geopolitics again. This tension between the West and Russia came to a head in Ukraine in 2014 in a crisis that was somewhat prophesied by the former National Security Adviser to US President Jimmy Carter, Zbigniew Brzezinski, in his book, *The Grand Chessboard*. He states: "The key point to bear in mind is that Russia cannot be in Europe without Ukraine also being in Europe, whereas Ukraine can be in Europe without Russia being in Europe. Assuming that Russia decides to cast its lot with Europe, it follows that ultimately it is in Russia's own interest that Ukraine be included in the expanding European structures. Indeed, Ukraine's relationship to Europe could be the turning point for Russia itself."⁴⁴

What Brzezinski does not mention—presumably because his book was written in 1997—is that Russia has never had the option of becoming a part of Europe. Ever since the Cold War ended, the West has insisted on asserting its role as the victor over Russia, and began building its *new world order*, meaning "Moscow [instead] had to give up its global aspiration and agree to obey rules it had played no part in devising."⁴⁵ With NATO and the EU being the two most central institutions of the West,

they had their eyes set on bringing Ukraine into their sphere of influence—quashing Russia's plans for maintaining a relevant role within Europe.

The effort to pull Ukraine into the West was driven mostly by the State Department of the United States. Through groups such as the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the State Department has funneled around \$5 billion into Ukraine for sixty-five projects aimed at stirring anti-Russian and pro-West sentiments throughout the state.⁴⁶ The most recent leader of this scheme was Victoria Nuland, the Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs. She rose to her position through working under Dick Cheney and Hillary Clinton, and she was one of the guest speakers during one of the CNAS dinner series' events. In a leaked phone call, Nuland, can be heard talking with the United States' Ambassador to Ukraine, Geoffrey Pyatt, about "Yats" being the right "guy."⁴⁷ Surely enough, Yats—Arseniy Yatseniuk—would take over as prime minister following the coup in Ukraine. Although it is unclear to what extent the United States' government played a role in the coup, Nuland and Pyatt give evidence that the uprising in Ukraine was perhaps more manufactured than it was organic.

Putin's realist reaction to the coup should have been expected. NATO and the EU's eastward growth jeopardized Russian security, as he had years before affirmed that Georgia or Ukraine joining NATO would be a "direct threat."⁴⁸ Since Russian troops entered Crimea and began supporting pro-Russian rebels within Ukraine, Western sources have manipulated the events by citing "Russian adventurism"⁴⁹ and "aggression."⁵⁰ The United States government has taken zero responsibility for meddling in Ukrainian politics, and no Western government has stood up to claim that the United States played any role in instigating the conflict in Ukraine.

This Western-dominant narrative is being used to justify a resurgence of military buildup in Eastern Europe, and a slew of anti-Russian sanctions and policies. Russia stands as one of the few impediments to United States' hegemony; Europe stands as the United States' most able abettor in diminishing Russian influence, and solidifying the neoliberal world order. Accordingly, the EAP report has much to say on the topic.

The EAP report claims it is crucial to, "Stabilize Ukraine and



Anti-TTIP-Protests. Photo: Backbone Campaign/Flickr

anchor it in Europe. The United States must provide Ukrainian armed forces with the training and equipment necessary to resist Russian-backed forces and Russian forces operating on Ukrainian territory.” Whether Ukraine bases itself in Western neoliberal institutions or a Russian-backed crony capitalist system, Ukrainians will be exploited by a small elite and denied the wherewithal to address their economic grievances. Western and Russian elites are determined to grasp the loyalty of Ukraine, thus, the prospect of anchoring Ukraine in either direction spells anything but stability. It is worrisome that the EAP report expects that Russia would not escalate its military actions in Ukraine in the event that the United States accelerates the arming and training Ukrainian forces. Igniting a proxy war in Ukraine has the potential to spark a larger conflict throughout all of Europe.⁵¹ Nevertheless, Michèle Flournoy has been eager to raise the stakes in Ukraine for quite some time, as she pushed for the delivery of \$3 billion worth of military aid to the Ukrainians early in 2015.⁵² This gives one an idea of what kind of positions she may adopt if selected as defense secretary by HRC.

EAP additionally calls to, “Underwrite credible security guarantees to NATO allies on the frontlines with Russia.” Playing to the concerns of Russia possibly invading the Baltic states, the report contends that, “it is necessary to build upon the European Reassurance Initiative and establish a more robust U.S. force presence...which should include a mix of permanently stationed forces, rotationally deployed forces, prepositioned equipment, access arrangements and a more robust schedule of military training and exercises.” Considering the fact that most of these initiatives have been addressed in some way several months before the EAP report was published leaves to question the extent to which the EAP report’s authors want to take their recommendations, *i.e.* how militarized must Europe be before the American imperialists are satisfied?

Back in February of 2016, the White House “announced an FY2017 Department of Defense funding request of \$3.4 billion for the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI). This request, which quadruples last year’s ERI funding level, represents a significant augmentation of our efforts to ensure peace and secu-

rity in Europe.”⁵³ As the European Reassurance Initiative budget proposal for 2017 was released three months before EAP report was published⁵⁴, it is hard to imagine that all of the signatories of the report somehow missed this relevant budget proposal. One is led to assume then, that increasing the United States’ anti-Russian military funding to Europe four-fold is just not good enough. Although the report is filled with implicit critiques of Obama limiting the United States’ power, it was under his supervision that this proposal was put forward to ensure that the future president will be prepared to beef up the military presence in Eastern Europe. With the conclusion of the NATO summit in Warsaw in July 2016, the United States, Canada, Great Britain, and Germany have each committed to station a battalion in Poland, Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania⁵⁵. Regardless of who wins the presidential elections in November, he or she will be obligated to uphold these commitments.

The EAP report goes on to purport economic advice for the United States and Europe stating, “Europe’s continuing energy dependence on Russia is a particular vulnerability. It will take time to reduce that independence, but that is all the more reason serious efforts should begin now. With this in mind, it is essential that the TTIP be successfully negotiated and approved both by the U.S. Congress and by the European Union. [...] In addition, both the United States and Europe need to build the necessary infrastructure to supply Europe with access to growing American liquefied natural gas supplies and oil. Meanwhile, it is necessary to move forward with and complete the non-Russian gas and oil pipelines (from Bulgaria to Greece, etc.)”

What is jarring about these two quotes is that from whichever angle one analyzes them, they disproportionately contribute towards American imperialist interests with little consideration of Europe. First off, continued dependence upon fossil fuels—regardless of where they come from—will ultimately create a desolate world in which geopolitics will be rendered meaningless.⁵⁶ HRC has received millions in donations from groups associated with fossil fuels,⁵⁷ and as Secretary of State pushed for fracking initiatives around the world. During her campaign she has described liquefied natural gas (LNG) as a

“bridge fuel” to be used until world dependence on fossil fuels dissipates.⁵⁸ Although HRC has not supported the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) during her campaign, as Secretary of State she boasted that it could become an “economic NATO.”⁵⁹ The agreement would benefit multinational corporations at the expense of environmental, health, and labor protection policies, making it incredibly unpopular throughout the United States and Europe. It is possible that she will support TTIP once elected president partly in order to appease her largest donors, but also as a geopolitical move. According to Peter van Ham of the Dutch Clingendael Institute: “The main reason why the European Union and the United States have embraced the ambitious goal of achieving a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) is geopolitical in nature. The rise of China (and other Asian countries), combined with the relative decline of the US and the economic malaise of the eurozone, is spurring the transatlantic West to use its combined economic and political preponderance to write new global trade rules reflecting its economic principles (rules-based market economy) and political values (liberal democracy). TTIP is an essential component of this new strategy.”⁶⁰

A common theme among TTIP, exporting LNG to Europe, and building up NATO is that they all suffocate Russia. Following the military invasion of Crimea, and the subsequent referendum to unite the peninsula with Russia (which some argue qualifies as annexation), the West struck Moscow with heavy sanctions. Amalgamated with plummeting oil prices, the Russian economy suffered a great deal, but not in the devastating fashion that the West had hoped. Europe, China, and the Middle East remain dependent on buying raw materials and natural gas from Russia which has kept the state’s economy afloat.⁶¹ If Europe is ever able to rely on LNG from the United States, the energy sector of Russia’s economy will be devastated, but the only way the United States could feasibly trade such an amount of LNG to Europe would be if TTIP is successfully implemented. Paired with the further economic isolation that TTIP would incur, many citizens of Russia will find themselves in destitution. Perhaps the aim of this development—in the hopes of those who put together the EAP report—is that the Russian people will rise up against the Kremlin in order to force serious concessions, or instate a government that will lead them to unity with the prosperous West. This outcome is, however, far from guaranteed.

Russia has been investing heavily in military weapons and infrastructure in the past several years, and has certainly proved more inclined to use it in situations that benefit its security. There is a reasonable likelihood that if Russia’s economy tumbles as a result of Western sanctions and coerced isolation, Putin will take military action against Europe and the United States in order to rally the populace behind him and compel the West respect the state. NATO has justified the buildup in Eastern Europe as a means of deterrence against exactly this kind of reaction. Differentiating between bulking up defenses and sabre rattling is subject to varying perceptions, and makes the chances of miscalculation dangerously high. War between the West and Russia would be a catastrophe of unimaginable horrors, but given the aggressiveness of NATO and Putin’s desire to have more of a stake in geopolitics, war is certainly possible. Retired Admiral James Stavridis, who last served as Supreme Allied Commander of NATO and was strongly considered by HRC to be her vice president, wrote in the foreword to General Sir Richard Shirreff’s new book, 2017 *War with Russia*, “Of all the challenges America faces on the geopolitical scene in the second decade of the twenty-first century, the most dangerous is the resurgence

of Russia under President Putin. [...] Under President Putin, Russia has charted a dangerous course that, if it is allowed to continue, may lead inexorably to a clash with NATO. And that will mean a war that could so easily go nuclear.”⁶²

These aggressive anti-Russian positions being taken by people close to HRC are disconcerting to say the least. None of them consider the West’s encroachment towards Russia as a reason for rising tensions between the two blocs. Contrarily, they all believe that more meddling in former Soviet states is exactly what is necessary to deter war. With tensions running high between Moscow and the West, efforts to de-escalate rather than militarize are necessary on both sides, and if the United States truly wanted to gain more international respect, it would lead the disengagement from Eastern Europe—this is unfortunately an unlikely prospect.

Due to proximity, Europe is much less inclined to spark a military confrontation with Russia. The continent felt the need to impose sanctions on Russia in order to prove its opposition to the destabilization of Ukraine and prevent further such foreign interference. These sanctions have taken a toll on the European economy,⁶³ thus, taking steps to lift the sanctions and cool relations with Russia appears to be a mutually beneficial position. Even with the decision to extend sanctions on Russia for another six months, it is becoming more plausible that the EU will restore normal trade relations with Moscow in 2017.⁶⁴ TTIP is unfavorable in Europe because it will allow market forces to transcend food, healthcare, and other regulations from which many people of the continent benefit; but, moreover, it will provoke Russia and make for an unsafe environment.

Despite the EAP report’s attempt to create a plan that will advance the interests of Europe and the United States, the policy suggestions are wholly American-centric. Three people who are onboard with the EAP report’s message lead the HRC campaign’s working group on Europe and Eurasian affairs: Julianne Smith, Michael McFaul, and Phil Gordon. As a signatory to the EAP report, Smith’s views are undoubtedly in line with the report’s suggestions. McFaul, a well-known hardliner on Russian issues, served as United States’ Ambassador to Russia from 2012-2014—appointed by HRC—during which time he attempted to lead the “reset” with Russia, but effectively brought widespread resentment upon himself.⁶⁵ His views on Russia are in agreement with what the EAP report has put forward.⁶⁶ Gordon served as former White House Coordinator for the Middle East, and before that as Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs. In the latter-mentioned position, he was the predecessor to Victoria Nuland, and asserted “America’s interest to see an independent, prosperous and irreversibly democratic Ukraine; a Ukraine that is modernizing as a European state.”⁶⁷ As he changed offices, he set the stage for Nuland to oversee the United States’ supported coup in Ukraine under the guise of pro-democratic rhetoric. Clinton herself has stated, “I do think we should do more to help Ukraine defend its borders, [...] New equipment, new training for the Ukrainians. The United States plus NATO have been very reluctant to do that, and I understand it completely because it’s a very sticky, potentially dangerous, situation. But I think the Ukrainian army and the Ukrainian civilians who’ve been fighting against the separatists have proven that they’re worthy of some greater support.”⁶⁸

By taking positions on arming Ukraine, ratifying TTIP, and generally isolating Russia, HRC’s platform portrays the partisan shift taking place in the United States. Harsh, anti-Russia policies such as these used to be a core part of Republican foreign policy. With Donald Trump buddying up to Putin, and opposing

the aforementioned policies, HRC seems to have moved the Democratic Party to the right of the GOP in regards to European and Russian policy.⁶⁹ Neocons coming to the support of HRC's campaign embody this considerable change occurring in American politics.

Clinton's Pacific Century

It comes as no surprise that, in pursuit of global hegemony, the United States would see it fit to gain leverage over the most populated area of the world. Over the last decades, Asia has received significantly less attention within American foreign policy than Europe, Russia, and the Middle East. The region has lacked any major threat to the United States since the surrender of Japan at the end of World War II. With China becoming and behaving like the dominant force in the region, however, the United States is scrambling to devise a way to maintain its global hegemony.

According to a study by the Harvard Belfer Center, in twelve out of sixteen instances in the past 500 years that a rising power rivaled a ruling power, the result was war.⁷⁰ Instances of this *Thucydides trap* phenomenon that did not lead to war were when one side stood down (Great Britain to the United States in the early Twentieth Century), when one side could no longer sustain its power (when the Soviet Union collapsed), or when a rising power turns out to be "benign" (as Germany appeared, shortly after its reunification, in relation to Western Europe).⁷¹ In the case of China and the United States, "...realists see an irresistible force approaching an immovable object. They ask which is less likely: China demanding a lesser role in the East and South China Seas than the United States did in the Caribbean or Atlantic in the early 20th century, or the U.S. sharing with China the predominance in the Western Pacific that America has enjoyed since World War II?"⁷⁰

Within United States' history, however, it has only been in the position of demanding other states to step down. As such, navigating its future relationship with China will require unseen levels of modesty that venture outside of the normal playbook in order to avoid catastrophic war.

Judging HRC's record, her advisers' suggestions, and the EAP report, one does not see much hope for a peaceful, cooperative relationship to develop between the United States and China. The EAP report describes the "talk of a Thucydides trap" as "overblown." Indeed it claims that, "rising powers challenge the status quo militarily when they believe the odds of victory are reasonably good... Therefore, the United States must increase its capabilities and extend its military posture accordingly, for that is the best way to demonstrate its determination to continue enforcing a rules-based order in the Asia-Pacific region."

That is to say, the United States is going to compel, if not coerce, the Chinese to drop its efforts to obtain a more influential position in geopolitics, especially in its surrounding region. The United States is uncomfortable with China's actions in the South China Sea which challenge the US Navy's role as supreme police force of the waters. In the view of the EAP report, it is dangerous to keep so few ships in the South China Sea for fear it will embolden the Chinese to further provocation or attack. The EAP report suggests that, "Conflict between the two powers can be avoided if Washington strengthens its military deterrent and deepens and broadens its growing array of regional alliances and security partnerships." Sending the United States' military to the rescue is once again the solution determined by the creative minds at CNAS.

Hillary Clinton upholds the same position put forward by the

report. According to one of HRC's top foreign policy campaign advisers, Laura Rosenberger, "She (HRC) believes that we need to be very strong in terms of standing up to many of the actions the Chinese have taken. [...] She believes in the principles of freedom of navigation in international waters, that commerce on the high seas is incredibly important to the United States, and that these are really very direct interests that we need to continue to stand up for."⁷²

In campaign speak, this means that HRC will do whatever necessary to ensure that China does not interrupt market forces in the South China Sea. Pursuing a more prominent United States' military presence in the Asia-Pacific region has been in the works since 2011. It was then that President Obama announced the United States "pivot to Asia," a term coined from HRC's article, "America's Pacific Century." Soon thereafter came the plan for the United States Navy and Air Force to position 60% (up from 50%) of its ships or aircraft to the Asia-Pacific region by 2020. Additionally, a Marine Air-Ground Task Force of 2,500 soldiers is gradually being positioned in the area as well.

Certainly one can expect an increased military presence in the Asia-Pacific region if HRC is elected president, but this would not be the only way of reining in China's rise to power. Containing China and expanding the neoliberal world order can be achieved through the implementation of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the Pacific equivalent to TTIP. This free-trade deal aims to join twelve Pacific-rim countries and forty percent of the global economy into one system. It notably excludes China. After seven years of negotiation, TPP was signed on February 4th, 2016 by all members. Before the massive trade deal comes into effect, the United States Congress must ratify the agreement. Fortunately, there is substantial opposition to TPP coming from American people across the political spectrum.

Supporters of Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump agree that the implementation of TPP will bring nothing good to ordinary American workers. People are rightfully concerned that the deal would send thousands of jobs overseas and enforce standardized trade regulations which prioritize profits over consumer safety and wellbeing. Ralph Nader eloquently sums up the deal, "It allows corporations to bypass our three branches of government to impose enforceable sanctions by secret tribunals. These tribunals can declare our labor, consumer and environmental protections [to be] unlawful, non-tariff barriers subject to fines for noncompliance. The TPP establishes a transnational, autocratic system of enforceable governance in defiance of our domestic laws."⁷³

Sanders effectively challenged HRC on this point, and forced her to withdraw support for TPP, but her opposition to the deal is not expected to last past the elections in November 2016. Both her and her vice presidential pick, Tim Kaine, were major proponents of TPP early on, but have suddenly changed—as if enlightened to the horrors of neoliberalism overnight. In 2012 at an American Chamber of Commerce reception and commercial signing HRC said, "And through the Trans-Pacific Partnership, we're working with Vietnam and seven other nations to lower trade barriers throughout the region, as we ensure the highest standards for labor, environmental, and intellectual property protections."⁷⁴ There are at least forty-four other instances of her openly supporting TPP before she was apparently struck with an epiphany. Her most strongly worded denouncement of the agreement came on August 11th 2016 when she said, "I will stop any trade deal that kills jobs or holds down wages, including the Trans-Pacific Partnership, [...] I oppose it now, I'll oppose it after the election and I'll oppose it as president."⁷⁵ A few days later,



Anti-TPP-Protests. Photo: Backbone Campaign/Flickr

she selected a major proponent of TPP, Ken Salazar, to head her transition team—a position responsible for making four-thousand presidential appointments.⁷⁶ HRC's nod to Salazar supports the notion that her stance against the deal is nothing more than a strategic ploy to sustain more voters in order to win the election. If elected president, there will be no shock when she reopens TPP negotiations, claims to have rid the agreement of its flaws, and pushes it onto Congress for ratification.

The EAP report contradicts itself while attempting to sound diplomatic towards China. In one paragraph it states, "Promoting the peaceful rise of a China that is increasingly integrated into the rules and traditions of the liberal international order remains a sound strategy for the United States." If this sentiment were sincere, then including China within the TPP would be a top priority. By excluding China, the TPP only pushes China into further isolation. In the next paragraph, the EAP report offers means of punishing China for its island building and military activity in the South China Sea: "These costs could include new defense partnerships with the Philippines or Vietnam aimed at strengthening regional security, consistent region-wide condemnation of Chinese actions and commensurate economic penalties to slow Chinese dominance of the regional economy."

As if the implementation of the TPP is already not enough of an economic penalty, this quote appears to propose the imposition of sanctions upon China. This, compounded with the United States' efforts to increase its military presence and military alliances with countries in the region is nothing short of a policy for containing China. Nevertheless, the EAP report claims that, "it makes sense to facilitate China's continued integration with the international economy so as to blunt its historical fears of 'containment.'" This comes as utter nonsense after reading through all of the report's proposals. It is a quote that only makes sense if you don't think about it. HRC offers the same sort of contradictory phrases in her article, "America's Pacific Century." In it she states, "Some in our country see China's progress as a threat to the United States; some in China worry that America seeks to

constrain China's growth. We reject both those views."⁷⁷ Several pages later she boasts of the progress being made on the TPP and of all the supposed benefits it will bring. In reality, the necessity of implementing TPP boils down to larger geopolitical tensions.

The flaws of the United States' and the EU's liberal economies have been exposed during the economic crisis of 2008. As such, many states outside of the once-perceived stable, liberal economic zone are becoming more attracted to state capitalist systems represented by China or Russia. China's GDP has grown exponentially over the past decades, and millions have been lifted out of poverty while the United States and EU have remained stagnant. This trend is noted as a threat within the EAP report: "Moreover, the worldwide financial crisis in 2008, which began in the United States, and the subsequent great recession, emboldened advocates for alternative growth models. Calls to move away from the Anglo-American "Washington Consensus" toward systems with greater state influence have since grown louder." In order to prevent the downfall or collapse of the liberal economic system—through which the United States expands and exerts much of its influence worldwide—it is imperative to make the model more attractive than that of China. The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) formed by China has the potential to dramatically decrease the United States' influence in the region and the world if ratified by all fifty-seven members (notably excluding the United States). In the words of President Obama, TPP ultimately sets out to "let America, not China, lead the way on global trade."⁷⁸ The conflict at hand is one between the "Washington consensus" liberal economic order and forms of state capitalism that are found in China and Russia.

Considering that Kurt Campbell (HRC's former Assistant Secretary of State for Asia and now leader of her campaign working group on Asia) is both a founding member of CNAS and signatory of the EAP report, one can be fairly certain that he not only contributed heavily to the "Asia" section of the report, but that he also had HRC in mind as he did so. Securing American hegemony in Asia is contingent upon proving that the United

States' economic and military leadership will bring a better future to the region than China would. Failing to do so will result in a major loss of United States' credibility and power in the globe. This is agreed upon by American imperialists of both liberal and conservative backgrounds, and HRC is the only candidate with the experience and willingness to stand up to China. Should HRC choose to embrace the policies laid out in the EAP report, the "Thucydides Trap" project may have one more example of great powers' stubbornness leading to unnecessary bloodshed.

Conclusion

Maintaining American dominance in the world is something that has always been supported by Republicans and Democrats, but the question of how to do so has, until recently, been a differentiating factor between the two parties. The most hawkish policies have traditionally been embraced by Republicans, while Democrats have been at least a little bit more skeptical of using the military. HRC does not fit into this category of Democrats, and neither do her foreign policy advisers. As the Republican party falls apart trying to find an identity that separates itself from Trump while somehow holding onto his large base of supporters, some neoconservative Republicans are jumping ship to support HRC. The EAP report exemplifies this partisan shift, albeit, if only among those most concerned with foreign policy.

Plenty of think tanks put out reports recommending certain policies to incoming administrations, and most pan out to be insignificant. The EAP report, however, demands to be taken seriously. The ties between the report's signatories and HRC are undeniable, and her own policy record and campaign rhetoric back up much of what is found in the report. HRC and her advisers are determined to reassert America's role as the singular leader of the world order. They will not be made to look weak, and will seek opportunities to call out adversaries' bluffs, *e.g.*, Russia in Ukraine, and China in the South China Sea. If the escalatory steps laid out in the EAP report are executed, armed conflict is bound to erupt. That being said, there are reasons to believe that a HRC administration would not be able to follow through with everything they are pushing.

The strange state of the political system compounded with the discontents of the majority of Americans reflects the weakness of the American government. Bernie Sanders' and Donald Trump's campaigns, however different, both galvanized support from a significant portion of the United States who feel disenfranchised by their government's policies. This population wants change, and is eager for a movement to lead it. It goes without saying, but Donald Trump is not going to be the leader of such a movement for reasons so well circulated that I will not waste my time explaining. Bernie Sanders, despite the hope he instilled among so many young people, would not have been able to deliver on the promises he made if elected president because of the deep-rooted issues within the United States' government. Ending American imperialism is not as simple as electing someone who will say, "it's over." The military-industrial complex circulates money and power between legislators, lobbyists, corporations, research institutes, and the military in order to maintain its growth and longevity. A realization needs to be made that electoral politics are a miniscule part of addressing war and the many other problems of the United States. Grass roots organizations are becoming more prominent across the country in the battle against racism, patriarchy, wealth inequality, war, etc. There is much to be done on all of these fronts, but the momentum sides with those of us who are fed up with systems of violence backed

by a broken government. Paired with the popular resistance of Europeans against military buildup and TTIP, HRC and her like-minded officials will not easily administer the plans of the EAP report. Several years from now, if HRC is elected, we will be able to look back on the EAP report either as a blueprint to her foreign policy—the equivalent of Rebuilding America's Defenses for George W. Bush—or, as a list of wishes denied HRC through widespread resistance. Let's not just hope for the latter, but act to make it a reality.

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