

The Empire Must Die

The democratic world needs a new policy towards Russia

Western help for Ukraine is thwarted by two major constraints: the fear of the Kremlin using nuclear weapons, and the fear of the disintegration of the Russian Federation.

The fear of disintegration comes from reasonable concerns about the fate of Russia's nuclear potential, the possible rise to power in newly formed states of Islamist and other radical forces, and about ethnic and/or territorial conflicts between newly established states, etc.

These fears are constantly and successfully fuelled both by the Kremlin, and by anti-Putin "Moscow-Petersburg" opposition groups: "Russia of the Future," "Free Russia Forum," "Open Russia," and "Free Russia".

Western policy toward Russia relies on reacting to Moscow's actions. It consists of refraining from action that the Kremlin could interpret as a direct attack and thereby as a pretext for military conflict between Russia and the West, or as an existential threat to Russia that would be manipulated by the Kremlin to justify the use of nuclear weapons.

This policy gives Moscow the strategic upper hand which it exploits through the extensive use of nuclear blackmail. It also inevitably leads to one of two dire outcomes: either Western loss of world leadership arising from humiliating concessions to Russia; or Moscow's use of nuclear weapons. Both outcomes would be catastrophic for the free world.

Moreover, Western Russia policy fails to take into account new realities in Russia and its emigrant communities since February 24, 2022. In addition to the above-mentioned opposition groups who aim to "replace Putin with a democratic leader," ethnic and national groups with anti-imperial objectives have emerged.

Helping these groups achieve their pro-democracy, anti-imperialist goals should become the cornerstone of a new strategy with the goal of the controlled decolonization of the Russian Federation.

The international legal basis for supporting Russia's decolonization is the principle of self-determination of nations enshrined in the United Nations (U.N.) Charter, as well as the 1960 U.N. General Assembly "Declaration on Granting Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples," which declared the need put an end to colonialism and affirmed the inalienable right to full independence and freedom of the peoples of all colonial countries and other non-self-governing territories.

The policy objective of controlled decolonization of Russia will benefit the democratic world in the following ways:

1. A radical change in the global balance in favour of democracy with the "global South" realigned from the anti-western orbit to the democratic camp.
2. The disappearance of the Russian Federation's direct military threat to neighbouring nations and other states.
3. A radical reduction of China's capabilities to escalate its confrontation with the democratic world, because:
 - a) it will halt the current trajectory of totalitarian and economically weak Russia - with its resource base and additional nuclear and military arsenal - to become a vassal of China,
 - b) it could potentially set a model of decolonization for China that would free the Uyghurs, Tibetans and other enslaved peoples.
4. Disintegration of Russia will eliminate Moscow's nuclear blackmail. The decolonized nations of the Russian Federation can be persuaded to declare their non-nuclear status as former Soviet states did after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Some anti-imperialist opposition groups in Russia already champion denuclearization - for example, the "Forum of the Free Peoples of Post Russia" proclaims the goal of the nuclear free status for newly free states.
5. It will reduce the likelihood of territorial conflicts between newly independent states. The "Forum of Free Peoples of Post-Russia" has declared that new borders will be set based on the current administrative boundaries. The newly independent states will commit to negotiated settlements of any territorial disputes.

Therefore, the mission of the global democratic community should be to replace the passive doctrine of deterring aggressive Russia with an active strategy, relying on assistance to national and regional movements in the Russian Federation seeking independence.

Ukraine, Poland, and Lithuania could become hubs for such movements. The 54 nations of the Ukraine Defence Contact Group, supporting Ukraine's military defence against Russian aggression, could become natural partners of the nations in the Russian Federation seeking decolonization and democratization. This will ensure the integration of new states into the democratic world, and prevent them from aligning with totalitarian and extremist regimes.

This is a winning strategy towards Russia - not be the fear of its disintegration.

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