

The Russian Bear is Now a Snake  
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A friend of mine once commented that Russia never changes. The USSR was still an empire; the "great leader" Stalin was the Czar; the Politburo (parliament) were still the nobility; and Marxist/Leninism replaced the Orthodox Church as the state religion. Does that apply today?

Post-Communist Russia is a shrunken empire, but still extends 11 time zones across Asia; Putin's ambition has given him what looks like lifetime tenure---a Czar; the good old Orthodox Church has been given back its teeth; and the oligarchs (billionaires) are the new nobility. But where does Russia stand as a superpower?

The Cold War impoverished Russia; they could not compete with us. Russia depends upon a commodity, energy (oil and gas) for its revenue. During the Soviet Union and continuing today, they make nothing that anybody really wants to buy, except for Kalashnikov rifles; even their famed vodka has better versions in the Scandinavian countries.

Their armament industry attracts buyers only from Third World countries that cannot afford American weapons. One notorious example of their products were the un-air-conditioned tanks that they sold to Egypt, which broke down and cooked the brains of the soldiers in the Negev Desert in a war with Israel.

But one important change since the end of the Cold War: Russia is no longer an even pretend leftist. Communism had an extremely appealing philosophy: a just society with power to the people. No more nobility; no more Czar; no more oppressive church; and a state that would crumble away in the future. This philosophy drew in many idealists, innocent intellectuals around the world, and peasants and workers who resented their bosses.

This great Communist vision was promoted by an extensive propaganda machine, brainwashing the Russian public and deceiving fools abroad. Russia invited many "useful idiots" to visit the USSR in carefully monitored visits, fooling even President Johnson's housing secretary to report that the Soviets had solved the problem of affordable housing!

What he didn't see was that the majority of such housing did not have indoor toilets (and still don't), or that even elite Air Force barracks in Siberia had floorboards so flimsy that one could see the permafrost beneath. The government had sent the materials for these barracks, but the military officers sold much of it on the black market and let the cadets freeze.

The Russian propaganda machine is still active, but now uses the social media, in addition to traditional conspiracy theories and "fake news." But this time, they are not using it to bring in converts to communism; rather they are trying to bring down liberal democracies (particularly the US), using vulnerable election campaigns to deceive and confuse voters.

They are trying to destroy us and are doing it on the cheap, much more devastating than open warfare would be, which they would lose. They are using our own internal conflicts against us and are seducing a new breed of "useful idiots," "unwitting assets," "witting assets" (traitors), and fifth columns (turncoat spies) among us.

The United States has a history of entering wars late and reluctantly, as we did in World Wars I and II, but when we do enter, we win. Our 2016 election in which the Russians used their full range of seductions, payoffs, and dirty tricks, won for them an American president, Donald Trump, whom they had spotted and seduced with money some decades before. He already shared Russia's dictatorial world view.

The public is only now beginning to suspect that our populist president may be an unwitting asset of Putin's Russia. The FBI and CIA were aware of this danger throughout the presidential campaign and the FBI began its investigation at the beginning of Trump's presidency when their warnings about Russian interference were dismissed by Trump. Why the denial?

Putin is the only beneficiary of Trump's policies: repealing sanctions on Russian oligarchs, insulting all our allies (NATO, EU, Canada, Mexico, Britain, Germany), starting trade wars, and admiring every dictator in power today. Shutting down our government in a temper tantrum pleases only Putin.

The 2018 election was America's wakeup call. Russia will lose this war too.

685 words

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