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Great Game II: America Lashes Out on the Borders of China and Russia 1

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By Loren Goldner

The 19th century 'Great Game' rivalry between Britain and Russia for supremacy in Central Asia is seeing a resurgence, with America taking Britain's place. The stakes are higher than ever, argues Loren Goldner

In the early 1980s, in the first years of Cold War II following the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, the Iranian Revolution and the upsurge and repression of Poland's Solidarnosc, I was working in a university library on the East coast of the United States. I shared an office with a young lady just finishing her master's degree in Slavic languages and already fluent in Russian, Ukrainian and Polish. Suddenly she was awarded a grant from the U.S. government to drop all that and throw herself into the study of Kazakh and Uzbek. A few months later, she got a job with 'some agency' in Washington D.C., and left abruptly. She did write once, a year later, to say that she was reading the tea leaves in the Communist Party press of the Kazakh and Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republics. I never saw her again.

Around the same time, the director of the institute where I was the librarian, himself a close friend of Henry Kissinger, who on any given day received overseas phone calls from half a dozen heads of state, and who seemed about as intellectually inclined as the junk bond traders also emerging into fame in the Reagan years, asked me to get him a classic study of the 2,500-year history of Georgia through interlibrary loan.

It was, perhaps, these anecdotal incidents, along with the headline events of those years of the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, that prompted me to start thinking about the history of what had been called, between roughly 1800 and the 1930s, 'the Great Game'. The term, most simply, designated the rivalry between the British and Tsarist Empires along the perimeter of Russia, a rivalry given its literary fame by Rudyard Kipling. The British wished to protect their Indian colony from a Russian invasion through Afghanistan and the Kashmir.¹ They also wanted to defend their maritime access to India through Suez. Given the size of the Russian land forces, which had, for example, occupied Paris in 1815 at the end of the Napoleonic Wars, and which enabled the Tsarist Empire to annex hundreds of square miles per *day* during in the course of Russia's 300-year long expansion to Vladivostok, this hardly seemed an idle threat. In 1885, for example, a clash between a small contingent of British troops based in India and a small contingent of Russian troops, somewhere near Kamchatka, almost sparked World War I, and stock markets throughout the West briefly plummeted. Earlier, in 1842, 17,000 British troops had occupied Afghanistan with hardly a shot being fired; after the ensuing Afghan uprising, exactly one soldier made it back to India. Frederick Engels, in 1860, had written an article about Afghanistan saying that no Western power should ever get involved militarily there. Afghanistan has long been coveted by players in the Great Game, not for anything in Afghanistan, but because it is a crucial platform for influence in nearby Russia, India, China and Iran.

The consolidation of the Stalinist empire in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe after 1945, the triumph of the Stalinist revolution in China in 1949, and the Western world's Cold War 'containment strategy' for four decades thereafter seemed to 'freeze' history on the perimeters of Russia and China. The 19th century 'Great Game I' was supposedly relegated to antiquarian interest. No one outside Russia and China (and, I suspect, not too many people within them) knew or cared much about Georgians, Azeris, Ossetians, Crimean Tatars, Chechens, Turkmen, Uzbeks, Kazazhs, the Kirghiz, the

Tajiks, the Tibetans or the Uighurs. Many of their regions were closed to Western visitors and were the location of nuclear testing sites and giant technocratic infrastructure projects. True, Soviet dissident Andrei Amalrik, in his book *Will the Soviet Union Survive Until 1984?* (1970), argued that the 'national question' raised by such groups would bring down the Soviet Union; true, Western observers such as Emmanuel Todd² pointed (already in the 1970's) to the negative demographics in Russia compared to the population explosion of these mainly Turkic populations and said something similar. Stalinist and Trotskyist newspapers in the West would occasionally write articles about the post-1917 emancipation of women from Islamic oppression (true enough) in the Central Asian republics. But the 'tone' in the non-Western world was still very much what it had been when Nasser, in secular modernist 1950's Egypt, had shut down the Sufi orders and put their priceless libraries of manuscripts on the sidewalks for scrap, or when the Shah of Iran's 'White Revolution' had socially marginalised the Shi'ite clerics and encouraged the education of women. In those days, so it seemed, only retired Tehran bazaar merchants were boring their grandchildren, glued as they were to their TV sets, with rants about the coming revolution of the Islamic Republic. Those of us on the anti-Stalinist radical left in the West looked to the worker uprisings in East Berlin (1953), Poznan and Budapest (1956) or Gdansk and Gdynia (1970) as harbingers of the revolutionary overthrow of Stalinism. Nothing in our purview prepared us for Polish workers praying to the Black Madonna of Czestochowa in the occupied Gdansk shipyards in 1980, and still less for as-yet-unborn Islamic guerrillas in the mountains of Tajikistan.

The Great Game, with its strong whiff of romance, has always attracted some questionable characters.³ It is generally known that it was theorised ca. 1904 by the British geographer H.J. Mackinder and the German Friedrich Ratzel, working off the ideas of the Swede Hans Kjellen. Mackinder developed the idea of Eurasia as 'the world island' and argued that the power controlling the perimeter of Russia would control the world. 'Geopolitics' was also influenced by Social Darwinian ideas of 'space', and was thus a precursor to Nazi expansionist ideas about 'Lebensraum'.⁴

Mackinder and Kjellen's ideas were taken up by a German school of geopolitics, whose most illustrious figure was Karl Haushofer. Haushofer, as an officer in the army of the Kaiserreich, was a German military attaché in Japan and a close student of Japan's stunning defeat of Russia in the 1904/05 Russo-Japanese war. (The Japanese military was equally enamored of German military science.) Haushofer apparently spoke excellent Japanese as well as Korean and Chinese and was, by some accounts, initiated into an esoteric Japanese Buddhist sect. He served as an officer in the German army in World War I. After the war, he began his academic career in the burgeoning field (with a long pedigree in Germany) of geopolitics, and befriended a young man on the way up named Rudolf Hess. He visited Hess in prison following the failure of the Nazi Beer Hall Putsch of Fall 1923, and is reputed to have influenced the geopolitical sections of *Mein Kampf*, the book of Hess's cellmate Adolf Hitler. But Haushofer was no guttersnipe Nazi. He fell out with the Nazis over the question of race. Ever since the unification of Germany in 1871, the Kaiser's foreign office had been supporting anti-colonial movements against the British and French empires by any means at hand (a little-recognised source of post-1945 'national liberation movements'). The period, before and after World War I, was the high tide of 'yellow peril' ideology in the West, and Japan's defeat of Russia created shock waves as the first important military victory of a 'non-white' country over a major European power. But when the Nazis came to power in 1933, Hitler still preferred an India under white (i.e. British) rule to Indian independence, however much the latter might weaken the British empire, and Haushofer was marginalised. Both he and his son Albrecht, also a professor, were arrested on suspicion of involvement with the July 1944 plot to assassinate Hitler. His son was executed; Karl Haushofer was later tried at Nuremberg but not convicted. He and his wife committed suicide in 1946.

Great Game I intensified in the post-1917 Western attempt to foment counter-revolution in Russia, with the British empire in the forefront. The Bolsheviks in power initially offered independence outright to many non-Russian nationalities in the former Tsarist 'prison house of nations'. The situation evolved quickly as Mensheviks in many such regions, not to mention White forces, collaborated with Western powers to get aid from the latter in the Russian Civil War. White forces won the civil war in newly-independent Finland, and the populist Pilsudski⁵ seized and held power in the newly-created Poland, defeating the Red Army with French help in the Russo-Polish War of 1920, a critical turning point in the isolation of the Russian Revolution.⁶ Other important crises erupted in Georgia (Stalin's birthplace) and in eastern Siberia where the Japanese landed 70,000 troops in 1918.

This encirclement tested the mettle of the early Soviet Republic, and some see in the years 1920-1921 the actual beginning of 'socialism in one country' (as opposed to 1924 and the triumph of Stalin), meaning the predominance of Soviet national interests over the avowed promotion of world revolution⁷. Two years before the 1922 Rapallo Treaty made it official, the German Reichswehr, placed under paralysing restrictions by the punitive Versailles Treaty ending World War I, was allowed by the Soviet government to train secretly in the Ukraine in exchange for helping in turn to train the Soviet Red Army and for arranging deals with German arms producers. According to new documents which became available in the Russian archives after 1991, the peripatetic German general Hans von Seeckt (who would later train the armies of Chiang Kai-shek) wrote from Moscow that a circle around Trotsky (then Soviet Minister of War) wanted to work with Germany. A month later, secret talks about collaboration began and shortly thereafter Lenin indicated his support⁸. The Rapallo Treaty of 1922 made this collaboration official. Details of the high-level contacts between the Reichswehr and the Red Army in these critical years are still murky, but, however sincere the intentions of Trotsky and Zinoviev in exporting the revolution to Germany were, it is a little-known fact that the Reichswehr put down the last uprising of the German revolution in Hamburg in 1923 with an arms shipment from the Soviet Union.

The failure of working-class revolution in the West by 1920 impelled the Bolsheviks to begin looking south and east for possible allies among the anti-colonial movements, above all in the British empire. At the 1920 Baku Congress of the Toilers of the East, Grigori Zinoviev called on the wildly cheering and largely Muslim delegates to launch a 'jihad' against the Western powers.

In fact, by 1910, the intelligentsias of the Central Asian nationalities controlled by the Tsarist Empire had already felt the impact of Marxism in the wake of the (failed) 1905 Revolution in Russia. Out of the ferment of these 'Marxists without a proletariat', as they were sometimes called because of the virtual absence of industry in Central Asia at the time, emerged, for example, the figure of Sultan Galiev who attempted in the early 1920's to theorise a possible cohabitation of Marxism and Islam, arguing that the situation in Central Asia required the Bolsheviks to give special attention to Muslim culture. Whatever the merits or problems of Sultan Galiev's efforts, he was indeed a Marxist and anti-capitalist and is not to be confused with the Islamic fundamentalists of today. He was ultimately denounced as a Trotskyist by Stalin and disappeared into the Gulag.⁹

Further west, other problems for the export of world revolution emerged in the breakup of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of modern Turkey under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal. The Soviet government established ties with the new Turkish regime and, in December 1920, a commercial treaty was negotiated. In January 1921, Mustafa Kemal had the entire leadership of the newly-founded Turkish Communist Party executed. This did not prevent the Turkish-Soviet commercial agreement from being signed in March 1921¹⁰ at the same time that the Anglo-Soviet trade agreement, the crushing of Kronstadt, the defeat of the German 'March Action' and the introduction of the New Economic Policy signaled, at the very least, a delay of the world revolution and a policy retreat in the Soviet Union itself.

Trotsky, who in 1920 was Minister of War and still organising the Soviet forces in the civil war, wrote a secret memo to Lenin and other top Bolshevik leaders that is rarely cited in Trotskyist histories of this period or collections of Trotsky's writings for the very good reason that it is not in accordance with Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution:

âAll information on the situation in Khiva, in Persia, in Bukhara and in Afghanistan confirm the fact that a Soviet revolution in these countries is going to cause us major difficulties at the present time...Until the situation in the West is stabilised and until our industries and transport systems have improved, a Soviet expansion in the East could prove to be no less dangerous than a war in the West...a potential Soviet revolution in the East is today to our advantage principally as an important element in diplomatic relations with England. From this I conclude that: 1) in the East we should devote ourselves to political and educational work...and at the same time advise all possible caution in actions calculated to require our military support, or which might require it; 2) we have to continue by all possible channels at our disposal to arrive at an understanding with England about the east.' ¹¹

This perspective, which the Soviet government initially supported as an independent soviet republic, came to fruition in Spring 1920 in the Republic of Gilan in northern Persia,. By the fall of 1920, however, Soviet relations with the government of Tehran had improved and the Soviets were accordingly advising the Persian Communist Party to limit its activities and that the socialist revolution would have to await the completion of the bourgeois revolution. The Republic of Gilan was crushed in 1921 by Persian government forces backed by the British empire.

The consolidation of the Cold War after 1945, as indicated, buried this history for an epoch in the bipolar confrontation of blocs, above all in Europe.

All this changed in 1979 with the Iranian Revolution and the decision of then-US National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski to 'pay back' the Soviet Union for Vietnam by supporting the future Islamic fundamentalist rulers of Afghanistan. For two decades thereafter, the US began playing the Great Game, (and initially very successfully) in Eurasia.

After 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe, there was some embarrassment over to return to prominence of the concept of 'Mitteleuropa', i.e Central Europe in the parlance of pre-1945 German geopolitics. But this has all been superseded, as the US and NATO have built a decent facsimile of the 1920's Eastern European cordon sanitaire around Russia, with the incorporation of the Baltic states, Poland and the Czech Republic into the EU and NATO, with US bases scheduled to be built in Rumania and Bulgaria, and the the US 'anti-Iranian' missile installations in Poland and the Czech Republic.

The phony made-in-USA orange, etc. 'revolutions' in Ukraine, Georgia and Serbia were part of the same strategy. The US embassy in Kiev, after all, has 700 employees, and they're not all anthropologists studying Ukrainian folklore.

Continuing along the Russian perimeter, we can see US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, possibly soon in Iran and maybe Pakistan, as part of a further strategy to control the perimeters of Russia and China, along with control of access to Middle Eastern oil in the bargain.

The involvement of China and India in the struggle for hegemony in Central Asia is cited by some as a refutation of the Great Game II hypothesis. But as indicated, the No. 1 British interest in the Great Game was protecting India and the Middle Eastern passage to India . Now India and China are no longer colonies and are playing Central Asian geopolitics in their own name. This, in my opinion, changes nothing except, through regional nuclear proliferation, it raises the stakes and creates a more

polycentric dimension to the competition.

Prior to 9/11, the U.S. had 'plausible denial' because it could support various Islamic movements through its proxy Saudi Arabia. We recall that Brzezinski, who more than any mainstream figure has revived interwar geopolitical theory in edulcorated language, mentioned in his (ideologically) important *The Grand Chessboard* (1997) five Eurasian powers that the U.S. needed to keep off balance vis a vis each other: Europe, Russia, China, India and Indonesia. In that same period, Islamic insurgencies were developing in Chechnya, Sinkiang (the Uighurs), Kashmir and Aceh province, to the great irritation of the Russian, Chinese, Indian and Indonesian governments. The aim of the U.S. use of the Saudi proxy (whatever the Saudis' own goals) was not to foment Islamic revolutions per se, but to prod those governments for other ends. After 9/11, this strategy was, shall we say, reviewed. But whatever the case (and someone is still arming these Central Asian Islamic currents), it doesn't take much imagination to see the US periodically using, for example, the Tibet issue, as the CIA has documented ties to the Tibetan resistance since the 1950's¹².

In these latter cases, again, the question is not 'supporting' marginal threats to Russia and China, but merely keeping both of them off balance, first of all vis a vis each other.

And keeping the powers of the Eurasian world island off balance is precisely what the Great Game has always been about.

At the other end of the Eurasian land mass, we see the US, along with Russia, China and Japan, adjudicating the delicate Korean situation (e.g. Bush's recent stirring of the phony Dokdo Island dispute in favor of Korea). And Taiwan is always there as another card to be played.

Thus from Tallinn to Seoul and Tokyo, that makes quite a series of coincidences that critics of the Great Game II hypothesis have to explain.

The US has been kicking Russia while it was down ever since 1991. Even Republican and former U.S. President Richard Nixon denounced the short-sidedness of this policy back in the early 1990's. The US backed the 'democrat' Yeltsin to the hilt while Western capital and advisors ran all over the ex-Soviet bloc, and Clinton's point man, Al Gore, systematically squelched any public criticism of this while Western capital bought up ex-Soviet bloc assets for pennies on the dollar. In the same period, Russia's Mafia oligarchs emerged from the shadows and acquired the rest. The U.S. strategy, as Emmanuel Todd pointed out in his 2002 book *After the Empire*, is to reduce Russia to its 17th century borders and close off its return to world power status. The US pushes for NATO membership for Georgia and Ukraine. And then, when some ex-Stalinists regroup and decide that *they* want their ground rent income from Russia's natural resources, the US and NATO squeal about 'democracy' and 'authoritarianism'. And democrats, Putin and Medvedev certainly are not.

The US elite knows that it is on a medium to long-term collision course with China, so its encirclement policy in Asia is also alive and well, even if it is not what it was.

We need, finally, to see the 'Great Game' in a larger historical perspective. The Eurasian heartland has shaped world history each time the mode of production in the great world civilisations (China, India, the Middle East and Europe) has entered into crisis.

Ca. 1800 BC, the great Indo-European migrations erupted into India, Iran and Europe, disrupted the Middle East oikoumene of Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria, Sumer and Akkad for centuries, and pitched these ancient Near Eastern states into decline.

Ca. 300-400 AD, as the ancient mode of production was approaching its terminal phase, the Huns and other Central Asian peoples invaded China, India and the Roman Empire (following the Indo-European peoples who were camped on its northern borders), again contributing to the end of that phase of the oikoumene.

In 1071, the Seleucid Turks poured out of Central Asia into Anatolia and defeated the Byzantine forces in the Battle of Manzikert, marking the turning point in the future Islamic conquest of what became the Ottoman Empire. Even before the 1453 fall of Constantinople, various Turkic groups (Seleucids, Sejluks, Osmands) in the 14th century conquered much of southeastern Europe. They went on to carry the banner of Islam to the Indian sub-continent, where they founded the Moghul empire.

Ca. 1250 AD, the Mongol empire extended from Korea to Poland, via Baghdad, and was poised to invade western Europe, an invasion stopped only by a fluke of a succession struggle that prompted its retreat.

Only the rise throughout Eurasia of the 16th-17th century 'gunpowder empires' (Habsburgs, Romanovs, Ottomans, Safavids, Moghuls and Ming) finally stopped this Ibn Khaldunian dialectic of pastoral nomadic conquest of internally-weakened sedentary civilisations.

The significance of the Central Asian populations is thus not their own periodic historical eruptions as world historical forces, but the crises in modes of production (and today, at the very least, a massive remaking of the international balance of forces between the major power centers US, Europe, Russia, India, and China) in the main civilisation centers of which they constitute the periphery.

The strategists of the five major world power centers understand the stakes here, of which oil and pipelines are only a part, even if sceptics of the Great Game II hypothesis do not.

Some such sceptics, surveying the evidence presented above, say with a shrug 'very interesting, but politically irrelevant' in the era of killer satellites and drone bombers, or that US involvement in the internal politics of Pakistan is 'small potatoes'.

Certainly, the Great Game II is not about direct control of territory, as Great Game I was.

What then, is the interest of such an analysis, from a radical left point of view? It comes from Marx's 1850 theory of permanent revolution (with regard to Germany), later developed by Parvus and Trotsky (with regard to Russia).

Great Game I, as argued, was Britain vs. Russia, 1800-1917 (and beyond), Russia then being the 'weak link' in world accumulation (with massive French investment in Russian bonds, for example). The breaking of that 'weak link' was the Russian Revolution, subsequently isolated by the failure of world revolution and the triumph of 'socialism in one country' as a result of that isolation.

Great Game II: 1979-present. The US has replaced Britain in a strategy to control the borders of Russia and China and to keep the four Eurasian power centers (Europe- Russia- India- China) off balance while the center of world accumulation moves to Asia, thereby staving off the demotion of the dollar as the world's reserve currency. This will hopefully be followed by the coming proletarian revolution in the new 'weak link', China.

Since the late 1950s, and particularly since Nixon scrapped the Bretton Woods (gold-dollar) agreement in 1971-1973, the US has placed the world on a straight-up dollar standard and, since the anemic 'recoveries' from the 1973-1975 and 1981-1982 world recessions (never really overcome with any dynamism compared to 1945-1973), has been reflating the world economy with massive US balance

of payments deficits.

World central bank reserves this year reached \$7 trillion as a result.

To maintain this ever-growing bubble of hot air and prevent its deflation or replacement, has been the over-arching goal of US foreign policy for decades, and is where the Great Game on the Eurasian land mass comes into clearer focus as an issue of the critique of political economy. The dollar-centered world economy (whatever the now-discredited 'decouplers' might have thought) needs the loot from this arrangement to avoid collapse.¹³ (An important precursor, with far more limited means and geographical reach, was Nazi Germany's Schachtian Mefo-bill reflation from 1933 to 1938, which required an... extension of geographical reach from 1938 onward.)

As Rosa Luxemburg said, answering her critics in 1913, who questioned her thesis of the necessity (in her book *The Accumulation of Capital*) of imperialism for capitalism: why then all the fuss? Why all the running around? Why German warships in the Solomon Islands and German troops in Swaziland?

In the same way, I (modestly, as a mere epigone of the incomparable Rosa) say: if there's no Great Game II, why all the fuss? Why US and NATO military involvement from Estonia to Georgia and Ukraine via Rumania and Bulgaria? Why a major US military involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, and great anxiety over Pakistan, and possibly tomorrow an attack on Iran? Why, in the 'post-Cold War' era, the continuing US attempts to maintain its military presence in and around Japan, Korea and Taiwan?

Why indeed, Great Game II sceptics?

Some point out, in opposition to this argument, that the US, Russia and China are cooperating in the 'war on terror'. Of course they are! To borrow an old analogy, big gangsters often cooperate against smaller gangsters trying to muscle in. Russia has its Chechens, and China has its Uighurs, just as the US had its 9/11. The US paid a high price for its 1990's backing of Islamic insurgents through its proxy Saudi Arabia everywhere from Bosnia (the Iranian mercenaries fighting on the Bosnian side we didn't hear too much about in the US media, as we didn't hear too much about the 'democrat' Bosnian President Izobekovic's long-publicised Islamicist views) to Aceh (Indonesia).

Some sceptics are also fond of pointing to long-term US-China collaboration. Well, let's look at it. It's true that the US and China, since the 1950's, have always collaborated in backing Pakistan against India. We recall that in 1971 both countries backed Yahia Khan in his bloody attempt to prevent Bangladesh's independence, while India was tilting toward the Soviet Union. (1 million dead in the ensuing bloodbath)

The end of the Cold War changed calculations somewhat, and now that both Pakistan and India have nuclear weapons, the US has to modify its policy, with its proposed support for India's nuclear program. The priority right now is preventing an Islamic revolution in Pakistan, with its pro-Taliban military intelligence service, and stopping the Taliban (who have friends in high places in Pakistan) from inflicting a humiliating defeat on NATO forces in Afghanistan, something they seem well on the way to doing.

The US and China were also quite happy to collaborate over Indonesia, where China sat back, doing and saying nothing while the CIA engineered the Suharto coup of 1965 during which upwards of 600,000 Indonesia Communist Party (PKI) members were massacred, after China had urged the PKI into an alliance with the nationalist Sukharno. The US success in Indonesia was a more important foreign policy victory, with control of the strategic naval chokepoint the Straits of Malacca at stake, than its subsequent failure in Indochina.

The US and China also saw eye to eye in 1969 when the Soviet Union and China looked close to going to war at the Amur River. This tacit accord not only set the stage for Nixon's visit in 1972, but led China to damp down support for the Vietnamese war against the US, actually stopping Soviet supply shipments to Vietnam over its territory at times.

The US and China were again on the same page in 1978-1979 when the Vietnamese occupation of Khmer Rouge Cambodia prompted a (US-approved) Chinese border war with Vietnam, raising again the specter of a Soviet-Chinese military clash.

A couple of years later, under Reagan, US officials were reviewing Chinese (People's Liberation Army) troops on the Amur River. Until the collapse of the Soviet bloc in 1989-1991, the US was happy to play the 'China card' against the Soviet Union.

So what kind of collaboration is this? A sign of US-China amity, or a continental alliance against governments and movements (small Mafias) that the big Mafias don't like? In my opinion, it's a page right out of Orwell's 1984, with its constant shift in alliances among the three warring blocs.

9/11 may make us forget that in Bush Jr.'s first year in office, the US was provoking China with intelligence flyovers, and the notorious Boeing 707 delivered to the Chinese government was chock full of listening devices.

We recall the 2003 US State Department- AF of L-CIO conference in Washington, where the subject of discussion was the 'future of the Chinese labour movement'. It's clear as day that if the policy of 'constructive engagement' with China falls to achieve the much-trumpeted full integration of China into the international capitalist 'community', the US has the fallback option of backing a 'Solidarnosc'-type workers' movement there to move things along.

To sum up: the US is playing the Great Game II from Estonia to Korea as a strategy to keep the Eurasian powers off balance and to preserve the ever-growing mass of nomad dollars from deflation and displacement. The 800-pound gorilla in the middle of the ring, whether or not Hu or Paulson or Obama say it openly, is the Chinese working class. The US must necessarily 'ride the tiger' (I apologise for a surfeit of animals in this menagerie) of China's rise, of China's holdings of \$2 trillion in dollar reserves and Fanny Mae and Freddie Mac bonds,¹⁴ of China's growing involvement in Africa and Latin America for natural resources, hoping to either cement China's involvement as an international status quo that will continue to subsidise America's relentless economic decline in coming decades, or failing that, find its Chinese Lech Walesa to lead a Chinese labour movement friendly to 'free markets' and bourgeois democracy.

We must hope that both sides of this strategem fail, and that, unlike in 1917-1921 with Russia, the world working class will this time meet the Chinese working class at the rendez-vous.

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Footnotes

1 This was a famous invasion route from Central Asia ever since the Indo-European peoples had overwhelmed the Mohenjo Daro and Harrapan civilizations of India circa 1800 BC. They were followed by Alexander the Great, the Huns, the Mongols and the Turkic Islamic armies who founded the Mughal empire.

2 Emmanuel Todd. *Essai sur la decomposition de la sphere sovietique.* Paris, 1976.

3 One such questionable character was Ignaz Trebitsch-Lincoln, an international spy with many paymasters and a confidence man of the first decades of the 20th century. In the early 1920's, he was in China, doing liaison work for far-right German military figures with Chiang Kai-shek. He ended his days in China as a robed monk, visited by Westerners on spiritual quests, a kind of Baghwan of his day. Cf. Bernard Wasserstein, *The Secret Lives of Trebitsch Lincoln*, Yale UP 1988. Cf. the bibliography for further background on the Great Game.

4 The idea of 'Eurasianism' is alive and well, as attested by a feature article in the *Financial Times* of London on 9/9/08. Cf. also Stephen Shenfield. *Russian Fascism* (M.E. Sharpe, 2001), for more details on the far-right movements and their ideologues who now, according to the FT, have access to the top levels of power in Russia.

5 Rosa Luxemburg had foreseen the reactionary trajectory of Pilsudski as early as 1909 when he was a member of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), fighting for dominance against Luxemburg's resolutely anti-nationalist Social Democratic Party of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (SDKPiL). Lenin, meanwhile, backed Kautsky in supporting Pilsudski's PPS in a credentials fight in the Second International against the SDKPiL. Luxemburg later warned of the reactionary potential, all too often realised, of the early Bolshevik policy of independence even when it led to the creation of bourgeois governments (cf. R. Luxemburg, *The National Question: Selected Writings*. New York 1976.)

6 The left-communist KAPD, the German Workers' Communist Party, to its credit, blew up some trains carrying arms shipments to Pilsudski's armies.

7 It is not clear what the immediate political consequences were, especially for Soviet and Third International Policy (which in the early 1920's were not yet identical).

8 A remarkable study of these delicate maneuvers, based on the newly-available archival material, is M. Zeidler, *Reichswehr und Rote Armee, 1920-1933* (1993). The information on Trotsky's and Lenin's attitude in 1920 is on pp. 50-53. It is often forgotten that some high-level German officials, military men and capitalists, influenced in part by Karl Radek's maneuvers from his Berlin prison cell in 1919-1920, (in which he received German generals and business figures such as the corporatist businessman Walter Rathenau) were convinced of the necessity of a German-Soviet alliance against

the West. Zeidler's book details some of these developments.

9 Cf. Alexandre Bennigsen, *Sultan Galiev, le pere de la revolution tiers-mondiste*, Paris 1986. A further portrait of this little-known Central Asia intellectual ferment, tracing the evolution of a Soviet dissident of 1968 right up to the Chechen revolts of the 1990's, is G. Derlugian, *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus. A world-system biography*. University of Chicago Press, 2005

10 Kemal thereby became one of the first, if not the first, 'anti-imperialist' figure in a long pedigree that has followed.

11 From Jan M. Meijer (org.), *The Trotsky Papers, 1917-1922*, 2 vols., London, The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1964, 1971, vol. II, p. 209.

12 The Nazis had earlier tried their hand at stirring up trouble for Britain in Tibet. The Swedish fascist and admirer of the Nazis Sven Hedin, an inveterate explorer of Central Asia, made an expedition to Tibet during the 1930's. Not much came of it. On Hedin and some of his predecessors, cf. P. Hopkirk, *Trespassers on the Roof of the World. Secret Explorers of Tibet*. London, 1995.

13 See my article in *Mute*, 'Fictitious Capital For Beginners: Imperialism, "Anti-Imperialism", and the Continuing Relevance of Rosa Luxemburg'. August 2007.

14 As Michael Hudson, author of the excellent book *Super-Imperialism* (1972; 2002 reprint) points out in a September 2008 interview on the Counterpunch website, the first consideration in the U.S. government bailout of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac was to appease the Asian central banks holding a huge portion of their paper.

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