

Why We Need Russia Experts  
Posted On:December 31, 1969

Our president claims repeatedly at his rallies that "I know more about war than my generals," more about windmills, more about toilets, more about intelligence than my Intel community, more about foreign policy (befriending authoritarian leaders), more about economics (give big tax cuts to the rich), and more about global warming (a hoax) than thousands of scientists.

His go-to for truth are Vladimir Putin and Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince. Putin smiles as Trump carries out Putin's mission of discrediting liberal democracy. The Crown Prince gazes soulfully into the camera as he denies responsibility for the hacksaw murder of a Saudi journalist who worked for an American newspaper. Trump avers belief in them both rather than his own State Department, CIA, Defense Department, and his investigative journalists (fake news).

I hope that we can be lucky enough to have no foreign policy disasters during this president's tenure, before a grownup can take over the reins of power in the next election. Putin has almost succeeded in sowing discord in once-flourishing liberal democracies. Poland and Romania are sliding back into fascism, thanks to fraudulent elections and Russian-produced conspiracy theories. And Turkey's elected dictator (another "good friend" of Trump) has done his own dismantling of his country's democracy.

The United Kingdom, Great Britain, has been conned into removing themselves from the European Union, formerly one of the best things to create a united Europe for the first time since Rome. This folly is now threatening to further dismantle the UK. Scotland and Ireland may well choose independence so that they can rejoin the EU. But Putin has not yet succeeded in demolishing our independence, or that of Western Europe. NATO still lives, thank goodness.

If disaster does not strike before we have a new president, some very concerning Russian actions are in the offing, in addition to problems with China, and the rogue state, North Korea. Any of these could push us into war if not handled deftly. A wrecking ball is no substitute for informed governance.

Russia has gone on a spree of assassinations in Europe. Russian assassins succeeded in poisoning three Bulgarian arms manufacturers (selling arms to Ukraine) by smearing poisons on the door handles of their car in a parking garage. Emilian Gebrev, his son, and another executive were all hospitalized, but recovered. Then they were poisoned again at their summer home on the Black Sea. Our own intelligence community has zeroed in on this as part of a campaign by Russia to reestablish themselves as a world power.

A special Assassination Group, Unit 29155, has for years been assigned to carry out killings and political disruption campaigns in Europe. In March 2018, a former Russian spy and his daughter were poisoned in the English town of Salisbury. The British have even identified the chief assassin: Sergei Fedotov, a pseudonym for Denis Sergeev, a high ranking Russian military intelligence officer. His passport reveals his travels to Serbia, Spain, Switzerland, London, and Bulgaria. Is sunny Florida also on his future agenda?

Is our "Climate-Denier-in-Chief" keeping an eye on what is happening in the thawing Arctic? When the world started to notice that the ice-bound Arctic Ocean was thawing and that it might soon be possible to shorten world trade routes by using the Arctic, all the countries with boundaries on the Arctic, led by the US, formed a treaty organization with rules for what would and wouldn't be permitted. Russia immediately planted a Russian flag on the Arctic sea bottom and then began intimidating with threatening incursions on the seven other nations bordering the Arctic. They mean business.

The warming temperatures are opening up shipping lanes and uncovering the polar region's abundant natural resources, according to Jackie Northam, an NPR radio reporter (Nov. 3, 2019). Several countries are building up their military in the Arctic in response. Russia is growing menacing with new fighter jets and navy vessels, and its submarines are pushing farther north. Norway is taking the threat seriously, and is maintaining a border post to keep watch, funded by a US radar system. American leadership is desperately needed, and needed right now.

684 words

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