

HIDE

<http://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/ny->



TOPICS

14-year-old Brooklyn girl reported missing after apparent breakup

EXCLUSIVE: DiNapoli divests NYS pension funds from private prison companies

Rosenstein indictments > Mueller probe

in war on the democratic world order

By **CLAIRE BERLINSKI**
JUL 12, 2018 | 6:00 PM



President Donald Trump addresses a news conference after a summit of heads of state and government at NATO headquarters in Brussels on Wednesday. (Markus Schreiber / AP)



We all know what’s happening. We can see it. The very structures that made Western countries the most powerful, successful, free, prosperous, creative, decent and envied societies in human history are being hollowed out from within, attacked from without, and crumbling before our eyes

undermine the foundations of the postwar global order. In Brussels this week, that is just what he did.



The NATO summit did not represent, as he claims, “tremendous progress.” Nor have our allies “substantially upped their commitment.” Nor are they “very happy and have a very, very powerful, very very strong NATO, much stronger than it was two days ago.”



The opposite is true. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg was forced to call an emergency meeting about the President’s erraticism. Our allies firmly believe Trump is — literally — mentally impaired, and no one can blame them for thinking this, or for their dread of who and what he is empowering.



The Soviet Union collapsed but the Russian security state survived, institutionally intact, freed from its last ideological constraints and armed with the world’s largest nuclear arsenal. Russian President Vladimir Putin has inflicted critical damage to the liberal world order, using techniques developed by the Soviet Union, to wage a successful war of subversion against the West.



The Kremlin’s goal is systematically to discredit liberal democracies and their values, to render us unable to distinguish fact from fiction, right from wrong; to pit Europe against itself, the United States against itself, and Europe against the United States. and to replace, wherever it can, Western-style democratic regimes allied with the United States with illiberal, populist, or nationalist ones sympathetic to the Kremlin — regimes where the rights and freedoms we now enjoy don’t exist.

It is succeeding.

During our last election, Russia mounted a sophisticated attack on the United States, comparable in recklessness and audacity to the attacks on Pearl Harbor and Sept. 11.

The Kremlin sought to bring a corrupt and sympathetic kleptocrat to power, undermine our confidence in our institutions plunge the United States into chaos and

As if we're rats infected by the *Toxoplasma gondii* virus, our brains have been scrambled: We should fear this predator, but instead our President finds him fascinating and wants to get closer to him.



The Kremlin invaded Georgia, then Ukraine, then attempted to assassinate the prime minister of Montenegro; it has engaged in chemical warfare on British soil; its proxies shot a passenger plane full of Dutch civilians from the sky. Putin's *Anschluss* in Crimea was the first naked invasion and annexation of a European country since the Second World War. The Baltics are under immediate threat. NATO has never been more necessary.

But the President of the United States has declared NATO obsolete. Despite the pleas of his national security advisers, he has refused clearly to endorse Article V of the NATO Treaty. Our President undermined our deterrence — on which the safety of the West reposes — as surely as if he had personally sunk our entire blue-water fleet. The cost is incalculable, the mistake irrecoverable. Yet Americans don't grasp the enormity of what he has done.

Throughout the West, an astonishing array of Nazi, neo-Nazi, populist, chauvinist, racist, anti-Semitic and populist movements have re-emerged from the sewer, as dumb, mean, and dangerous as their forebears. The doctrinal, Marxist left — thought to have died with the fall of the Berlin Wall — is resurgent. From UKIP in Britain to Syriza in Greece, from reigning Corbynite wing of British Labour to Spain's Podemos to Germany's PEGIDA, from Jobbik in Hungary to Golden Dawn in Greece, from the Northern League in Italy to France's Front National Front, kooks, far-leftists and blood-and-soil nationalists are gaining power, feeding on the Eurozone's stagnation and the refugee crisis — which ended two years ago. All are cultivated and financed by the Kremlin.



They are coming ever-closer to power in Austria, the Netherlands, France and Sweden,

they don't care. Audiences are happier living in a morally inverted world where the bumbling and bureaucratic (but benign) EU is likened to the Soviet Union and Vladimir Putin is respected as the Moral Custodian of the West, even as Russia — relying on largely unreconstructed Soviet organs of statecraft — literally invades Europe.



The United States has inexplicably undermined, if not destroyed, its relationship with Germany, the foundational relationship of the postwar world order and the reason the world has endured no great-power war since 1945. It did so not because of a great friction of strategic interests, but because the President attempted publicly to shake down the chancellor like a real estate contractor in New Jersey.

Angela Merkel, normally given to understatement, has declared that henceforth America and Britain must be seen as unreliable allies of Europe. Astonishingly, she is right.

Britain has been since the declaration of the Magna Carta the most stable constitutional order the world has known. It is now unable to do anything right. The most successful multinational state in modern history unfathomably faces the risk of breaking up.



In France, one of the oldest democracies in the Western world, the stable political parties that governed the country since the founding of the Fifth Republic collapsed almost overnight. Its recent presidential election pit the National Front's Marine Le Pen, whose political intimates deny the existence of the Nazi gas chambers, against an untested 39-year-old with no experience of governing and no political party of his own.



In Poland, which of all countries in Eastern Europe should have learned the lessons of the 20th century, the so-called Law and Justice Party has done away with both. Having seized control over Poland's executive arm of government, it has dismantled the liberal democracy for which Poles fought, with immense bravery and at such high cost, throughout years of communist enslavement: eradicated civil liberties; taken control

In Hungary, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, too, has rewritten the constitution, centralized power, weakened checks and balances, empowered an oligarchic class, dispensed state awards and ceded cultural policy to extreme right-wing lunatics, rendered parliament a rubber stamp, turned public media institutions into partisan outlets, harassed civil society and reoriented Hungary's foreign policy toward Russia.



Orbán has presided over a campaign to obscure the nature of the Holocaust and the Hungarian state's active collaboration in it. He has ushered in rule of absolute control, characterized by illiberal values and centralization of power. He has infamously boasted that his country is an "illiberal democracy." Such a system of governance is quickly being legitimized as a viable alternative to liberal democracy — in the heart of the West.



In both Poland and Hungary, these illiberal governments were democratically elected. Neither Orbán nor then-Polish Prime Minister Beata Szydło hid their intentions. Both were elected by substantial margins.

In America, political ads praising our glorious leader, reminiscent of North Korean propaganda, are beamed out to a public that finds them compelling instead of revolting. Student activists in our universities have adopted the language and mentality of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Our established political parties are incapable of putting the country's interest above their own, unable to legislate or govern. Our government agencies are unstaffed. We are completely unprepared to confront a hurricane, no less a global war, and we face both.

The leader of a nation that strides the earth like a colossus, the heir to the complexity of thought and rhetorical tradition of Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and Franklin Delano Roosevelt, is incapable of expressing a single coherent English sentence — or a true one. He instead issues garbled, illiterate Twitter proclamations

from the can at 4 a.m. as a transfixed, terrified world stares in astonishment, unable to believe that this could really be happening

a free, united, prosperous, Western world was the greatest achievement of American history, the work of generations, achieved at incalculable cost in life and treasure—and we are cheerfully pissing it away.

The speed of the self-destruction of the West is astonishing. It took more than a millennium for the Roman Empire to fall, but a historic collapse of similarly epic proportions is happening in our own lifetimes. Had you been told, 10 years ago, that this is what the world would look like today, you would not have believed it. Many don't believe it. They are in denial, or too stunned to realize the ramifications of the events taking place before their eyes.

Last week, Trump assured his supporters that “Putin is fine.” Ignoring his advisers, he is now running to Helsinki to meet him. Meanwhile, he says, Europe “is killing” the United States.

Thursday morning, Trump declared himself willing to halt military exercises in the Baltics. When asked if Georgia might join NATO, he replied, “at a certain point they'll have a chance. Not right now.” “Immigration is taking over Europe,” he said, “and the far right is dealing with it best.”

I live in Europe. Immigration is not taking it over. But like every Jew in Europe — like every sane human being in Europe — I am sick with fury, fury that this could happen in 2018, fury that the President of the United States, my President, supports it, fury that Americans support this. Our allies have good cause to feel the United States has betrayed them.

So do we.

Berlinski is author of “There is No Alternative: Why Margaret Thatcher Matters,” “Menace in Europe” and other books.

HIDE



Download our mobile app

Subscribe for unlimited access

Contact Us

Site Map

Place an Ad

Contests

BestReviews

The Daily Meal

Privacy Policy

Careers

Feeds

Media Kit

Special Sections

Manage Subscription

The Active Times

Terms of Service



Copyright © 2018, New York Daily News