The Diplomacy of Regime Change

On Thursday February 6th, 2014 a recorded telephone conversation between US Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland and US Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt surfaced. During this call, the two discuss a number of issues including how they would like the new government of Ukraine to be constituted, including specific roles for the opposition leaders. The recording lays bare the fact that, despite the rhetoric of “democracy” and “self-determination”, Washington’s intention in Ukraine is to use the political crisis as a means of manufacturing a government amenable to Western interests and openly hostile to Moscow.

During the conversation, Pyatt states “We’re trying to get a read really fast on where he [Klitschko] is on this stuff…[A call to Klitschko] is the next phone call we want to set up…I’m glad you put [Yatsenyuk] on the spot on where he fits in this scenario.” Nuland responds by saying, “I don’t think Klitsch[ko] should go into the government…I don’t think it’s a good idea…Yats[enyuk] is the guy, he has the experience…” This short excerpt from the phone call illustrates very clearly that, rather than simply supporting the opposition, Nuland and her superiors in Washington are directly managing it for the purposes of manufacturing a government of their choosing. Moreover, it demonstrates the inescapable fact that, for all its rhetoric about “democracy”, the Obama administration, like previous administrations, merely uses this as a cover for a regime change agenda designed for geopolitical advantage.

Although many political observers and analysts have known for decades that the US uses such tactics, there are still many in the political establishment and Western corporate media who refuse to acknowledge this fact, dismissing it as mere “speculation.” The leaked call has conclusively shown, through incontrovertible hard evidence, that the United States cynically manipulates political and social movements internationally.

Different Countries, Same Strategy

All over the world, the United States has used diplomacy as a cover for the destabilization of governments it considers hostile. One particularly egregious example is the repeated attempts to overthrow the government of President Mugabe and his ZANU-PF party in Zimbabwe. Washington has long supported US darling Morgan Tsvangirai and his opposition party known as the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC-T), because of their willingness to implement what is euphemistically referred to as “economic liberalization” – coded language for collaboration with neoliberal finance capital – as well as its dedication to undermining the China-allied government of Mugabe.
In 2010, WikiLeaks released diplomatic cables between former US Ambassador to Zimbabwe Christopher Dell and his superiors in Washington. The cables reveal how the United States has been actively working and preparing for regime change in Zimbabwe. Ambassador Dell wrote that:

*Our policy is working and it’s helping drive changes here. What is required is simply the grit, determination and focus to see this through. Then, when the changes finally come we must be ready to move quickly to help consolidate the new dispensation...He [Mr. Tsvangirai] is the indispensable element for regime change, but possibly an albatross around their necks once in power.*

The cables show the intimate working relationship that exists between the so-called opposition and their Western backers. Although this is no secret in Zimbabwe, it comes as news to many in the West who have been thoroughly propagandized to believe that the MDC-T and Tsvangirai represent substantive change and a move toward increased democracy. Sadly, Zimbabwe is not alone in being targeted by the US for regime change under the guise of “democratization.”

Venezuela became a principal regime change target of the US once the late Hugo Chavez was elected President. Correctly viewed as a critical threat to the political and economic hegemony of the US in Venezuela and throughout Latin America, Chavez and his Bolivarian socialist government was the subject of a variety of strategies aimed at destabilization and/or overthrow. Aside from the 2002 coup that temporarily (for a matter of hours) deposed Chavez and put in his place a US-backed, US-recognized right wing government, Washington made a number of attempts at regime change using a vast network of NGOs and other organizations financed from outside the country.

In a diplomatic cable released by WikiLeaks, former US Ambassador to Venezuela William Brownfield detailed the myriad ways in which the US was attempting to infiltrate the political base of Chavez’s supporters for the purposes of creating divisions that could be exploited to destroy the Bolivarian movement. Brownfield explained in detail how the United States utilized the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) and other organizations to distribute funds and provide technical assistance to a variety of NGOs who were actively working against the elected government of Chavez.

As evidence of this continued commitment, one need look no further than a Council on Foreign Relations paper written by former US Ambassador to Venezuela Patrick Duddy in which he presents a number of scenarios for destabilization of Chavez’s government in the wake of the 2012 elections. One of the more sinister scenarios involved the use of violence in the days after the election as a means of delegitimizing the results. This is precisely what took place, though Chavez and his party were able to maintain control. In addition, it is an open secret in Venezuela that the opposition Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD) is merely a puppet of the US Chamber of Commerce and other US interests and that their candidate Henrique Capriles is merely a surrogate for Washington.

Venezuela was certainly not the only Latin American nation led by a charismatic and popular leftist president targeted by the US for regime change. Bolivia and Ecuador have both been on the enemies list of Washington. In fact, Bolivian President Evo Morales took the extraordinary step of expelling altogether USAID, stating that there was “no lack of US institutions which continue to conspire against our people and especially the national government, which is why we’re going to take the opportunity to announce...that we’ve decided to expel USAID.” Morales pointed out that USAID’s programs have “political rather than social ends.” Despite vigorous denials by USAID officials and the US political establishment, there is ample evidence backing up the Bolivian president’s assertions.

As in Africa and Latin America, the US has attempted to manipulate political opposition for the purposes of regime change in Russia. During the 2011-2012 protests against Russian President Vladimir Putin, accusations surfaced that US Ambassador Michael McFaul was involved in organizing the opposition leaders and leading the movement from the shadows. Although the State Department and McFaul himself both denied the accusation, evidence was made public that verified the accusations. In one viral video uploaded onto youtube, we see Boris Nemtsov (co-chair of RPR-PARNAS opposition party) and other leading figures of the opposition filing out of the US embassy in Moscow after a meeting with the US Ambassador. The relationship between the Russian opposition and the US can be seen from such personal associations, but also in terms of financial assistance provided by US organs such as the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). This is of course part of the broader US agenda to destabilize the Putin government and replace it with a US friendly puppet government. These revelations begin to paint a very ugly picture of a US foreign policy based on cynical manipulation of supposedly democratic institutions. Using a variety of political and diplomatic tactics, Washington projects its power into nations that it deems to be “adversarial”. In so doing, the US reveals itself to be hypocritical insofar as it claims to “promote democracy” while actively working to
undermine democratically elected governments all over the world.

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