

By James W Carden

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Hillary Clinton's nominating convention has focused on domestic issues, but her foreign policy has many anti-war Democrats worried, as she surrounds herself with neocons and liberal hawks, writes James W Carden from Philadelphia.

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The Democratic convention leaves one with an uneasy sense of déjà vu about the potential foreign policy direction of a second Clinton presidency. We've seen this movie before and we know how it turns out: badly.

The mood among some of the Democratic Party's foreign policy cognoscenti here is one of an

unadulterated smugness bred of certainty mixed with a sense of global entitlement. One Democratic U.S. senator lamented to a roomful of well-heeled donors and foreign policy experts on Monday that the U.S. had “lost” Ukraine. Lost? Was it ever America’s to begin with?

Yet the Democratic Party’s foreign policy elites are *certain* that that is so. They are also *certain* Donald Trump is dead wrong about everything; they are *certain*

NATO is the “cornerstone” of American national security and therefore any criticism of the alliance is “dangerous”; and many are *certain*

that the Republican nominee is the Kremlin’s very own Manchurian candidate.

Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton may well be the most qualified candidate for the nation’s highest office since George H.W. Bush, but there the comparisons end. Clinton is not running to extend the Obama legacy (whatever that may be) but to extend the Clinton legacy, and this should worry us deeply.

The foreign policy legacy of the first Clinton administration is this: foreign interventions on the flimsiest of “humanitarian” pretexts. Clinton redux looks to be a continuation of the 1990s, a period that the mainstream media portrays through rose-colored lenses as a time of peace and prosperity for all. But what was it, really?

In foreign policy, it was a period in which liberal hawks like Madeline Albright, Richard Holbrooke, Strobe Talbott and Samuel Berger took the reins of the foreign policy apparatus and abandoned the mostly nuanced realism of the George H.W. Bush administration. It launched a crusade to spread “democracy” and “open markets” abroad which, in practice, amounted to isolating Russia, relegating America’s European allies into vassals and immiserating the developing world.

The Clinton administration embarked upon a series of military interventions, often in the absence of United Nations sanction, in Somalia (1993), Haiti (1994), Bosnia (1995), Iraq (1998), Sudan (1998), Afghanistan (1998) and Kosovo/Serbia (1999).

Yet, rather than undertake serious steps to find and capture Al Qaeda’s Osama bin Laden after

the bombing of the Khobar Towers (1996) and the USS Cole (2000), President Bill Clinton did little more than fire a tomahawk missile into a pharmaceutical factory in Sudan. He repeatedly allowed the Saudis to block FBI Director Louis Freeh's investigation into the Khobar Towers bombing which killed 19 servicemen and wounded 350.

Contributing to Disaster

Under neoconservative pressure – including from Robert Kagan's and William Kristol's Project for the New American Century – Clinton signed the Iraq Liberation Act (1998) which helped set the stage for the Bush administration's disastrous decision to invade Iraq in 2003.



Meanwhile, Clinton embarked on a series of policies in the former Soviet Union which have had dire consequences. The decision to expand NATO by the alliance at its 1994 summit in Brussels came only 12 months into the Clinton presidency and only 24 months after the Soviet Union dissolved itself and peacefully disbanded its own military alliance, the Warsaw Pact.

What Russia did in those 24 months to merit the alliance's expansion to include its own former allies and protectorates remains a mystery. Indeed, by expanding NATO, Clinton and his team

not only went against the advice offered by scores of distinguished Russian experts, savvy politicians and foreign policy thinkers, Clinton also sought to tie the former Soviet Republics of Central Asia and the Caucasus to the United States.

All this took place while Clinton studiously ignored the grotesque abuses of power by Russian President Boris Yeltsin. "Good ol' Boris," as Clinton liked to call him, bombed the democratically elected Russian parliament in 1993, stole the 1996 election with the help of American political advisers and pseudo-academics, and launched a barbaric war in Chechnya, while simultaneously raiding the state treasury and enriching the circle of thieves around him.

It was Yeltsin who subverted Russia's burgeoning democracy, not his successor, Vladimir Putin. And he did it all with Clinton's help.

A Hillary Clinton presidency will more likely than not be a faithful replication of her husband's tenure. Her record as Secretary of State speaks to the kind of foreign policy she will pursue. She continually sought to embroil the U.S. in the Syrian civil war (2011-present), and pushed President Obama to unleash NATO forces in helping to overturn the Libyan government (2011) which cleared the path for ISIS to build dangerous footholds in both countries.

Whenever the option was between military action and serious diplomacy, the nation's chief diplomat would invariably opt for the former, as when she forcefully lobbied the President to send more troops to Afghanistan (2009).

Surrounded by Hawks

As a candidate she has surrounded herself with liberal hawks, like former State Department Policy Planning chief Jake Sullivan and former the Ambassador to Russia, Michael McFaul. She has also smothered the neoconservative establishment in a warm embrace. Leading members of the neocon tribe like Eliot A. Cohen and Max Boot have signaled that "they're with Her" and on July 21 in Washington, D.C.'s tony Logan Circle neighborhood, leading neocon Robert Kagan and former Biden adviser Julianne Smith spoke on Clinton's behalf at a fundraiser.

