

Hearing the Russian Perspective

The neocons and liberal hawks who dominate the U.S. foreign policy and media establishment are pushing the world toward a nuclear showdown with Russia as few people hear a comprehensive response from the other side, an imbalance that a new Russian documentary addresses, writes Gilbert Doctorow.

By Gilbert Doctorow

Without mincing words, the new Russian documentary *World Order* is a devastating critique of U.S. global hegemony justified in the name of “democracy promotion” and “human rights” ever since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1992.

It is directly in line with Russian President Vladimir Putin’s first repudiation of the American unipolar world issued in his speech to the Munich Security Conference in February 2007 and his further, ever more explicit exposés in a succession of speeches that challenged specific manifestations of “American exceptionalism.”

World Order, which is now [posted](#) on YouTube (in Russian) and at [another site](#) (with English subtitles), illustrates through graphic footage and the testimony of independent world authorities the tragic consequences, the spread of chaos and misery, resulting from U.S.-engineered “regime change” and “color revolutions,” of which the violent overthrow of the Yanukovich regime in Ukraine in February 2014 is only the latest example. (Some of the highlights from Putin’s interview are translated into English [here](#) and [here](#).)

The title of the film follows on Putin’s address to the 70th anniversary gathering of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015 which had as its central message that world order rests on international law, which in turn has as its foundation the UN Charter.

By flouting the Charter and waging war without the sanction of the UN Security Council, starting with the NATO attack on Serbia in 1999 and continuing with the invasion of Iraq in 2003 up to its illegal bombings in Syria today, the United States and its NATO allies have shaken the foundations of international law.

As set out in *World Order*, Putin’s identification of the root cause of the failure to bring the U.S. back to reason lies not in given individuals, like Barack Obama or George W. Bush, but in the mentality of Western, and in particular American elites formed by their impunity, their ability to walk away from the catastrophes their policies create without any feeling of responsibility, without being held to account. Their evasion of responsibility and failure to learn from error come from being the richest and militarily most

powerful nation on earth.

World Order presents dramatic evidence of the brutality which flows from American policies when functioning if flawed states are converted into failed states through color revolutions, as has happened across the Middle East and North Africa since the new millennium. We are shown Saddam Hussein's final moments before execution, then the denunciation of this judicial murder by Muammar Gaddafi before a laughing audience of Arab League deputies, then the barbaric mob murder of Gaddafi himself followed by the exultant face of Hillary Clinton after this triumph of U.S. foreign policy.

We also listen to Gaddafi's detailed prediction of the vast flood of refugees and spread of jihadists in North Africa that would follow should his regime be toppled. And we are given video footage from the 2015 refugee flows into Europe with their mob scenes at state borders that bear out those warnings.

Diverse Points of View

The foreign interviewees in *World Order* comprise an impressive and diverse selection of leaders in various domains, including American film director Oliver Stone; Thomas Graham, former National Security Council director for Russia under George W. Bush and current managing director at Kissinger Associates; former IMF Director Dominique Strauss-Kahn; former Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf; former French Foreign Minister Dominique Villepin; former Israeli President Shimon Peres; Wikileaks founder Julian Assange; and deputy leader of the Die Linke party in the German Bundestag Sahra Wagenknecht. Others, like UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, put in cameo appearances.

Strauss-Kahn, Musharraf and others charge that the U.S. plots against and destroys foreign leaders who dare to oppose America's total control over global flows of money, goods and people. Wagenknecht addresses the question of Germany's subservience to American *Diktats* and its de facto circumscribed sovereignty. The statements support Putin's long-standing argument, reiterated in the film, that the Western European allies of the U.S. are nothing more than vassals.

Vladimir Putin's closing remarks about the place of nuclear arms in Russia's military doctrine must not be played down. Saying aloud that Russia has not and will not brandish its nuclear truncheon, is, in effect, doing just that. All of this is of one piece with the way Russia's aerospace forces have conducted their attacks in Syria on the Islamic State and on the armed opposition to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad these past two months.

The use of heavy bombers flying 15,000 kilometers from the Kola Peninsula, in

northwest Russia along the Arctic Circle, with the help of night-time in-flight refueling; the use of cruise missiles fired from frigates in the Caspian Sea at distances of 1,300 km to targets in Syria; and the use of cruise missiles launched from Russian submarines in the Mediterranean have all had a political dimension far exceeding military necessity in the Syrian theater: they demonstrate Russia's capability of waging global war, including global nuclear war. These actions are also depicted in the film.

Is *World Order* propaganda? It most certainly is. Is it directed primarily at the Russian domestic audience, as the *Telegraph* newspaper insists? No. Like all of Putin's foreign policy addresses, whether delivered abroad or at home, as in the Valdai Discussion Club, whether issued with subtitles in English or not, its primary audience is in Washington, D.C. with a secondary audience in Brussels.

One may suppose that the purpose is not to touch off or accelerate an arms race but, on the contrary, to bring the other side to its senses and persuade it of 1) Russia's seriousness about defending militarily what it sees as vital national interests and 2) its ability to deliver massive destruction to an enemy even in the face of a possible first nuclear strike, and so to reinstate the Mutually Assured Destruction deterrence that America's global missile defense was supposed to cancel out.

However, in *World Order*, Putin lists several areas of common concern over which Russia is prepared to cooperate with the West. Indeed these very same prospective areas of cooperation come up repeatedly in the public writings and speeches of the relatively few "fighters for peace" who are trying to draw the world community back from the brink into some kind of détente.

Dangerous Clash

Yet, pulling that raisin out of cake is to seriously misunderstand the very clear message coming out of Russia: that the destruction of world order by U.S.-led "democracy promotion" and its spread of "universal values" will not be tolerated and that Russia has set down certain red lines, such as against NATO expansion into Ukraine or Georgia over which it will fight to the death using all its resources. We ignore these messages at our peril.

As we enter the U.S. presidential electoral season and a vast number of foreign policy and military advisers are emerging to give counsel to the candidates on relations with Russia and other major powers in the hope of securing high posts in the next U.S. administration, it is worth looking again at the lessons of the summer and autumn of 2008, when what became the "reset" policy was formulated, through April 2009 when its implementation began.

That initiative took shape the last time that the United States and Russia were on a course of confrontation leading straight to armed conflict. The context was the Russian-Georgian war and the deployment of U.S. naval forces off the coast of Abkhazia, poised to attack the nearby Russian ground forces.

The imminent threat of war and the ongoing campaigning for presidential elections in November formed a nexus of circumstances not very dissimilar from where we are today when U.S. and allied air forces compete for space in the skies above Syria with a substantial Russian force that includes fighters, bombers and the most advanced air-defense system in the Russian arsenal.

I have set out the origins of the reset policy in the 15-page chapter entitled "Obama Changes US-Russian Relations" in my 2013 book *Stepping Out of Line* to which I refer the reader for full details. Here I will limit myself to several key facts and conclusions as they bear on our present situation.

First among these key facts was the mobilization of America's political and scientific elites to bring about a change in U.S. foreign policy that would take us back from the brink of war. Many of the names which came into play then are once again being summoned by the fighters for peace to weigh in on the side of the angels.

The problem is that those who had created the conventional wisdom about the role of the U.S. in the world were ill-prepared to go beyond tinkering at the edges of that wisdom, resulting in the failure of reset to go to the heart of the dispute with Russia and ultimately this led to many tears of regret all around.

An Incomplete Reset

The starting point of what became the "reset" was the founding on Aug. 1, 2008, of the Commission on U.S. Policy Toward Russia under the aegis of former Senators Chuck Hagel (Republican) and Gary Hart (Democrat), setting the bipartisan course of the initiative. It had as its backers the Nixon Center in Washington, a think tank whose Honorary Chairman was former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. It was also supported by the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, a research center within the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

Members included former U.S. ambassadors to the USSR or Russia James Collins, Jack Matlock and Thomas Pickering as well as former National Security Council or Defense Department officials and top business leaders, such as the former chairman of the world's largest insurance company, Maurice Greenberg. Among those who worked closely with the Commission either inside or outside were former Secretary of State George Schultz, former Defense Secretary William Perry

and former Senator Sam Nunn.

Ultimately the Commission issued a 17-page report entitled "The Right Direction for U.S. Policy toward Russia" which contained many of the points taken up in the papers outlining reset which President Obama's delegation signed off with the Russians when they met in London on April 1, 2009, on the sidelines of the first summit meeting between Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev.

The centerpiece of "reset" as defined in the state papers signed in London was renewal of the 1994 Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (START) that was scheduled to expire in December 2009. It also called for organizing "contacts between our two governments in a more structured and regular way." And it went on to urge greater cooperation between societies: more cultural exchanges, student exchanges, scientific cooperation, and cooperation among NGOs.

START renewal was established as a priority of the Obama administration's overall foreign policy, which called for stopping and reversing deployment of nuclear arms and enforcing non-proliferation. In the end, that objective was achieved. But in the end, that achievement did nothing to prevent the outbreak of a new arms race and ever greater risk of nuclear war among the great powers that we see today.

A major reason for this failure was the timidity of those calling for a new policy on Russia. The report from the Commission assumed continuing U.S. hegemony in world affairs. It stood by the policy of continuing expansion of NATO membership, including to Ukraine and Georgia, and the only concession was to slow down the timetable. It called for the continued roll-out of the global missile defense shield.

While the authors urged ending U.S. restrictions on trade with Russia and its admission to the World Trade Organization, they nonetheless espoused the conventional wisdom on the dangers of Russia's dominant position as energy supplier to Europe and came out in favor of building gas pipelines to Europe skirting Russian territory and thereby diversifying Europe's energy supplies at Russia's expense.

A New Security Architecture

The overriding Russian concern for a new security architecture to be put in place in Europe that would bring them in from the cold received a sympathetic if noncommittal response from the Commission. The proposals in this regard put forward by President Medvedev in April 2008 should be formally reviewed, they said, but without any specific recommendations.

With respect to "democracy promotion" in Russia, the Commission members called

for the volume of criticism of Russia to be turned down. They also called for a show of decency by Americans in their dealings with Russia.

Aside from the new strategic arms reduction treaty, Obama's reset came to naught.

It bears stressing that today's situation is more threatening than in 2008. Against a background of shrill Information Warfare between Russia and the West, the denigration of the Russian leadership and of the country in general by the occupant of the Oval Office and by leading members of Congress has advanced to levels unequalled in the worst days of the Cold War.

Meanwhile Russia's strategic military capabilities in both nuclear and conventional warfare have advanced incredibly from the levels of 2008 when Western military observers expressed their satisfaction that the performance of the Russian military did not seem much improved over the days of the ill-fated Afghan war that brought down the Soviet Union. Today, if we are to escape from the cycle of "resets" from bitter disappointment over souring of relations after a few landmark fruits of cooperation and then the onset of new, heightened risks of nuclear war we must seize the nettle and resolve to address the underlying problems of international relations that the Russian leadership cite, most recently in the documentary film *World Order*.

Détente, i.e., relaxation of tensions and improved atmospherics, is only a good beginning, nothing more.

It's worth noting that the film's director and co-author is one of the most intelligent and fair-minded presenters on Russian television, Vladimir Soloviev, who is best known today for prime-time evening debates on hot domestic and international issues in which the "other side," whether Ukrainian or American or the Russian opposition parties in the Duma, is always present in what amounts at times to astonishing openness of discussion on live television, when it does not descend into shouting matches.

Soloviev has a Ph.D. in economics from the Institute of World Economics and International Relations of the USSR Academy of Sciences. He was an active entrepreneur in the 1990s and spent some time back then in the U.S., where his activities included teaching economics at the University of Alabama. If he is the author of propaganda, one can be certain it is sophisticated and serves certain philosophical and ethical values, not individuals or power for power's sake.

The documentary was released by the state broadcaster *Pervy Kanal* on Dec. 20.

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Accord, Ltd. His latest book *Does Russia Have a Future?* (August 2015) is available in paperback and e-book from Amazon.com and affiliated websites. For donations to support the European activities of ACEWA, write to eastwestaccord@gmail.com. © Gilbert Doctorow, 2015

John Brown's Anti-Slavery Legacy

For some American abolitionists, President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation of Jan. 1, 1863, was a long time coming, but it was a moment for rejoicing among a racially mixed force in Kansas that included veterans of John Brown's anti-slavery uprisings, writes William Loren Katz.

By William Loren Katz

Only the skies were gloomy as Emancipation Day 1863 dawned and the First Kansas Colored Volunteers – a mix of African-Americans, Native Americans and Black Indians – assembled at Fort Scott to celebrate President Abraham Lincoln's long-delayed Emancipation Proclamation.

The men had been fighting the Confederacy since war broke out in 1861. The white officers even longer – as radical abolitionists whom John Brown commanded in his Kansas battles to free slaves in the 1850s (before his failed raid against the armory at Harper's Ferry, Virginia, which led to his trial for treason and his death by hanging in 1959).

Celebrating Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation issued on Jan. 1, 1863 about 500 people gathered at Fort Scott in eastern Kansas. As flags, sewn by women of color, floated above the fort, people sang the "The Star-Spangled Banner," then they shared a barbecue and strong liquor. Next, soldiers and officers burst into *their* song. They honored their "immortal hero" with "the John Brown song." The soldiers added this line: "John Brown sowed, and the harvesters are we."

This self-liberated army was commanded by officers whom John Brown had trained and led in a Kansas guerrilla war to end slavery. By the Civil War, the First Kansas Colored Volunteers included the kind of fighters that Brown had dreamed of rallying to the cause. For this multi-racial force, this was the time to complete "the old man's work."

The men of color were recruited from 10,000 people from the Seminole, Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw and Cherokee Nations who followed Chief Opothla Yahola on what began as a peace march – to avoid serving the Confederate cause – from the Indian Territory. Attacked three times by Confederate cavalry on their desperate

voyage, they finally decided to head for Union lines in Kansas.

By the time they reached Kansas, only 7,000 survived and many decided they were no longer pacifists. As early as October 1862, 225 men of the regiment drove off 500 Confederate troops.

The force continued Brown's work with forays into Missouri to free slaves, relatives, loved ones and strangers. Their white officers – once hunted by the Federal government as "John Brown traitors" – now were appreciated as experts in guerrilla warfare and were deployed in Kansas, then regarded as a less significant Civil War battle zone. There they and their men transformed the Civil War into a Revolution.

This heroic story is told in Mark A. Lause, *Race and Radicalism in the Union Army* (University of Illinois Press, 2009) largely ignored since publication.

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