

# Donald Trump's False Martyrdom

**Exclusive:** Donald Trump is presenting himself as a martyr absorbing the “slings and arrows” of false charges that he groped and abused women, even though he boasted about doing exactly that, writes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

Yes, The New York Times is the newspaper of the Establishment and reflexively accepts almost anything that the powers-that-be say is true, but Donald Trump undercuts that valid critique when he spins a conspiracy theory about the Times plotting with women who simply confirm what Trump has said about his own sexual predations.

It wasn't a couple of women who announced Trump's compulsion to kiss and grope women and rely on his wealth and star power to keep them silent. It was Trump in his “locker room talk” with Access Hollywood host Billy Bush in 2005:

“You know, I'm automatically attracted to beautiful – I just start kissing them. It's like a magnet. Just kiss. I don't even wait. And when you're a star, they let you do it. You can do anything. ... Grab 'em by the pussy. You can do anything.”

And, it wasn't Miss Arizona and a few other beauty pageant contestants who described Trump's creepy interest in ogling naked teen-age girls in backstage dressing rooms. It was Trump in a radio show with shock jock Howard Stern.

“I'll tell you the funniest is that I'll go backstage before a show and everyone's getting dressed,” Trump told Stern in recordings of Stern's show. “No men are anywhere, and I'm allowed to go in, because I'm the owner of the pageant and therefore I'm inspecting it. ... ‘Is everyone OK?’ You know, they're standing there with no clothes. ‘Is everybody OK?’ And you see these incredible looking women, and so I sort of get away with things like that.”

In other words, Trump does a disservice to anyone who seeks to analyze the actual interplay between the mainstream U.S. media and the politically powerful when he exploits that serious concern by using it to cover up his own unconscionable behavior.

“I take all of these slings and arrows gladly, for you,” Trump told a cheering crowd in West Palm Beach, Florida, on Thursday. “I take them for our movement, so that we can have our country back. Our great civilization here in America and across the civilized world has come upon a moment of reckoning.”

Yet, Trump is not some innocent martyr for the cause. The simple and obvious

truth is that he did what he bluntly described himself doing, forcing himself on unsuspecting women and satisfying his prurient interest in seeing naked women, even girls as young as 15.

That he is now attacking the honesty of women who simply confirm what he himself has said about his own behavior is truly bizarre. His recent assertion that his self-admissions were not to be taken seriously – and that thus the confirmations of his own words by a variety of women coming forward – must be false stands as one of the most audacious lies ever told in U.S. politics, which is saying something.

This is not a “he said/she said” situation. It is a moment in which “he” confessed to the actions that “she” – or in this case, multiple she’s – is confirming, except now the “he” says he was lying when he made his un-coerced confessions and thus the confirmations must also be a lie.

### **Spinning a Conspiracy Theory**

As bad as that is, Trump has made matters worse by wrapping his self-contradictions about his own actions in the web of a global conspiracy. That means his cover-up also discredits the valid concerns about the real coordination of policies by the wealthy and the political/media elites. Trump’s conspiracy theory is like many other conspiracy theories that divert attention from some genuine wrongdoing by postulating an absurd alternative reality that is easily disproved.

In this case, Trump enables the Times, which does deserve criticism for a long pattern of falling in line behind the falsehoods of the Establishment, to now wrap itself in the cloak of courageous journalism reporting facts that Americans need to know to function as informed citizens in a democracy. With his preposterous threat to sue the Times, Trump gives the Times unearned credibility as the protector of the public interest.

Trump further undermines his generally accurate contention that the powers-that-be are enriching themselves at the expense of regular people when he surrounds that important point with various right-wing nostrums about slashing taxes on the rich and wiping away regulations that somewhat constrain the actions of big banks and big corporations.

How it follows that the way to rein in the abuses of the powerful is to give them more money and freedom to do whatever they want is never explained in Trump’s “populist” appeals.

To say that Trump is a flawed messenger for a reasonably valid message about the elites having little concern about the suffering of the commoners is a gross

understatement. He is the personification of a rich and powerful individual exercising dominion over vulnerable people who can't fight back. He is, in a word, a phony. And, if you wanted to add another word, he is a demagogic phony.

It is a sad predicament that people who want desperately to challenge the unbridled, corrupt and dangerous power of the global elites find themselves stuck with Donald Trump as their avatar, a person who was happy to hobnob with those elites and share their grotesque control over "lesser" people until he suddenly found "populism" as the way to accumulate even more power.

**Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his latest book, *America's Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)).**

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## 'End of Growth' Sparks Wide Discontent

The global elites' false promise that neoliberal economics would cure all ills through the elixir of endless growth helps explain the angry nationalist movements ripping apart the West's politics, observes ex-British diplomat Alastair Crooke.

By Alastair Crooke

Raul Ilargi Meijer, the long-standing economics commentator, has [written](#) both succinctly – and provocatively: "It's over! The entire model our societies have been based on for at least as long as we ourselves have lived, is over! That's why there's Trump.

"There is no growth. There hasn't been any real growth for years. All there is left are empty hollow shiny S&P stock market numbers propped up with ultra-cheap debt and buybacks, and employment figures that hide untold millions hiding from the labor force. And most of all there's debt, public as well as private, that has served to keep an illusion of growth alive and now increasingly no longer can.

"These false growth numbers have one purpose only: for the public to keep the incumbent powers that be in their plush seats. But they could always ever only pull the curtain of Oz [Wizard of Oz] over people's eyes for so long, and it's no longer so long.

"That's what the ascent of Trump means, and Brexit, Le Pen, and all the others.

It's over. What has driven us for all our lives has lost both its direction and its energy."

Meijer continues: "We are smack in the middle of the most important global development in decades, in some respects arguably even in centuries, a veritable revolution, which will continue to be the most important factor to shape the world for years to come, and I don't see anybody talking about it. That has me puzzled.

"The development in question is the end of global economic growth, which will lead inexorably to the end of centralization (including globalization). It will also mean the end of the existence of most, and especially the most powerful, international institutions.

"In the same way it will be the end of -almost- all traditional political parties, which have ruled their countries for decades and are already today at or near record low support levels (if you're not clear on what's going on, look there, look at Europe!)

"This is not a matter of what anyone, or any group of people, might want or prefer, it's a matter of 'forces' that are beyond our control, that are bigger and more far-reaching than our mere opinions, even though they may be man-made.

"Tons of smart and less smart folks are breaking their heads over where Trump and Brexit and Le Pen and all these 'new' and scary things and people and parties originate, and they come up with little but shaky theories about how it's all about older people, and poorer and racist and bigoted people, stupid people, people who never voted, you name it.

"But nobody seems to really know or understand. Which is odd, because it's not that hard. That is, this all happens because growth is over. And if growth is over, so are expansion and centralization in all the myriad of shapes and forms they come in."

Further, Meijer writes: "Global is gone as a main driving force, pan-European is gone, and whether the United States will stay united is far from a done deal. We are moving towards a mass movement of dozens of separate countries and states and societies looking inward. All of which are in some form of -impending-trouble or another.

"What makes the entire situation so hard to grasp for everyone is that nobody wants to acknowledge any of this. Even though tales of often bitter poverty emanate from all the exact same places that Trump and Brexit and Le Pen come from too.

“That the politico-econo-media machine churns out positive growth messages 24/7 goes some way towards explaining the lack of acknowledgement and self-reflection, but only some way. The rest is due to who we ourselves are. We think we deserve eternal growth.”

### **The End of ‘Growth’**

Well, is global “growth over”? Of course Raul Ilargi is talking “aggregate” (and there will be instances of growth within any contraction). But what is clear is that debt-driven investment and low-interest-rate policies are having less and less effect – or no effect at all – in producing growth – either in terms of domestic or trade growth, as Tyler Durden at ZeroHedge writes:

“After almost two years of the quantitative easing program in the Euro Area, economic figures have remained very weak. As GEFIRA details, inflation is still fluctuating near zero, while GDP growth in the region has started to slow down instead of accelerating. *According to the ECB data, to generate €1.0 of GDP growth, €18.5 had to be printed in the QE, ... This year, the ECB printed nearly €600 billion within the frame of asset purchase programme (QE).*”

Central Banks can and do create *money*, but that is not the same as creating *wealth or purchasing power*. By channelling their credit creation through the intermediary of banks granting loans to their favored clients, Central Banks grant to one set of entities purchasing power – a purchasing power that must necessarily have been transferred from another set of entities within Europe (i.e. transferred from ordinary Europeans in the case of the ECB), who, of course will have less purchasing power, less discretionary spending income.

The devaluation of purchasing power is not so obvious (no runaway inflation), because all major currencies are devaluing more or less *pari passu* – and because the authorities periodically steam hammer down the price of gold, so that there is no evident standard by which people can “see” for themselves the extent of their currencies’ joint downward float.

And world trade is grinding down too, as Lambert Strether of *Corrente* rather elegantly explains: “Back to shipping: I started following shipping ... partly because it’s fun, but more because shipping is about stuff, and tracking stuff seemed like a far more attractive way of getting a handle on ‘the economy’ than economics statistics, let alone whatever books the Wall Streeters were talking on any given day. And don’t get me started on Larry Summers.

“So what I noticed was decline, and not downward blips followed by rebounds, but decline, for months and then a year. Decline in rail, even when you back out coal and grain, and decline in demand for freight cars. Decline in trucking, and

decline in the demand for trucks. Air freight wobbly. No Christmas bounce at the Pacific ports. And now we have the Hanjin debacle – all that capital tied up in stranded ships, though granted only \$12 billion or so – and the universal admission that somehow “we” invested w-a-a-a-a-y too much money in big ships and boats, implying (I suppose) that we need to ship a lot less stuff than we thought, at least across the oceans.

“Meanwhile, and in seeming contradiction not only to a slow collapse of global trade, but to the opposition to ‘trade deals,’ warehousing is one of the few real estate bright spots, and supply chain management is an exciting field. It’s disproportionately full of sociopaths, and therefore growing and dynamic!

“And the economics statistics seem to say nothing is wrong. Consumers are the engine of the economy and they are confident. But at the end of the day, people need stuff; life is lived in the material world, even if you think you live it on your device. It’s an enigma! So what I’m seeing is a contradiction: Less stuff is moving, but the numbers say ‘this is fine.’ Am I right, here? So in what follows, I’m going to assume that numbers don’t matter, but stuff does.”

### **Fake Elixir**

Or, to be more faux-empirical: as *Bloomberg* notes in *A Weaker Currency is no longer the Elixir, It Once Was*: “global central banks have cut policy rates 667 times since 2008, according to *Bank of America*. During that period, the dollar’s 10 main peers have fallen 14%, yet Group-of-Eight economies have grown an average of just 1%. Since the late 1990s, a 10% inflation-adjusted depreciation in currencies of 23 advanced economies boosted net exports by just 0.6% of GDP, according to Goldman Sachs. That compares with 1.3% of GDP in the two decades prior. U.S. trade with all nations slipped to \$3.7 trillion in 2015, from \$3.9 trillion in 2014.”

With “growth over,” so too is globalization: Even the *Financial Times* agrees, as its commentator Martin Wolf writes in his comment, *The Tide of Globalisation is Turning*: “Globalisation has at best stalled. Could it even go into reverse? Yes. It requires peace among the great powers ... Does globalisation’s stalling matter? Yes.”

Globalization *is* stalling – not because of political tensions (a useful “scapegoat”), but because growth is flaccid as a result of a veritable concatenation of factors causing its arrest – and because we have entered into debt deflation that is squeezing what’s left of discretionary, consumption-available, income. But Wolf is right. Ratcheting tensions with Russia and China will not somehow solve America’s weakening command over the global financial system – even if capital flight to the dollar might give the U.S. financial

system a transient “high.”

So what might the “turning tide” of globalization actually mean? Does it mean the end of the neo-liberalist, financialized world? That is hard to say. But expect no rapid “u-turn” – and no apologies. The Great Financial Crisis of 2008 – at the time – was thought by many to mark the end to neo-liberalism. But it never happened – instead, a period of fiscal retrenchment and austerity was imposed that contributed to a deepening distrust of the status quo, and a crisis rooted in a widespread, popular sense that “their societies” were headed in the wrong direction.

Neo-liberalism is deeply entrenched – not least in Europe’s Troika and in the Eurogroup that oversees creditor interests, and which, under European Union rules, has come to dominate E.U. financial and tax policy.

It is too early to say from whence the economic challenge to prevailing orthodoxy will come, but in Russia there is a group of prominent economists gathered together as the Stolypin Club, who are evincing a renewed interest in that old adversary of Adam Smith, Friedrich List (d. 1846), who evolved a “national system of political economy.” List upheld the (differing interests) of the nation to that of the individual. He gave prominence to the national idea, and insisted on the special requirements of each nation according to its circumstances, and especially to the degree of its development. He famously doubted the sincerity of calls to free trade from developed nations, in particular those by Britain. He was, as it were, the arch anti-globalist.

## **A Post-Globalism**

One can see that this might well fit the current post-globalist mood. List’s acceptance of the need for a national industrial strategy and the reassertion of the role of the state as the final guarantor of social cohesion is not some whimsy pursued by a few Russian economists. It is entering the mainstream. The May government in the U.K. precisely is breaking with the neoliberal model that has ruled British politics since the 1980s – and is breaking towards a List-ian approach.

Be that as it may (whether this approach swims more widely back into fashion), the very contemporary British professor and political philosopher, John Gray has suggested the key point is: “The resurgence of the state is one of the ways in which the present time differs from the ‘new times’ diagnosed by Martin Jacques and other commentators in the 1980s. Then, it seemed national boundaries were melting away and a global free market was coming into being. It’s a prospect I never found credible.

“A globalised economy existed before 1914, but it rested on a lack of democracy. Unchecked mobility of capital and labour may raise productivity and create wealth on an unprecedented scale, but it is also highly disruptive in its impact on the lives of working people – particularly when capitalism hits one of its periodic crises. When the global market gets into grave trouble, neoliberalism is junked in order to meet a popular demand for security. That is what is happening today.

“If the tension between global capitalism and the nation state was one of the contradictions of Thatcherism, the conflict between globalization and democracy has undone the left. From Bill Clinton and Tony Blair onwards, the center-left embraced the project of a global free market with an enthusiasm as ardent as any on the right. *If globalisation was at odds with social cohesion, society had to be re-engineered to become an adjunct of the market.* The result was that large sections of the population were left to moulder in stagnation or poverty, some without any prospect of finding a productive place in society.”

If Gray is correct that when globalized economics strikes trouble, people will demand that the state must pay attention to their own parochial, national economic situation (and not to the utopian concerns of the centralizing élite), it suggests that just as globalization is over – so too is centralization (in all its many manifestations).

The E.U., of course, as an icon of introverted centralization, should sit up, and pay attention. Jason Cowley, the editor of the (Leftist) *New Statesman* says: “In any event ... however you define it, [the onset of ‘New Times’] will not lead to a social-democratic revival: it looks as if, in many Western countries, we are entering an age in which centre-left parties cannot form ruling majorities, having leaked support to nationalists, populists and more radical alternatives.”

### **The Problem of Self-Delusion**

So, to return to Ilargi’s point, that “we are smack in the middle of the most important global development in decades ... and I don’t see anybody talking about it. That has me puzzled” and to which he answers that ultimately, the “silence” is due to ourselves: “We think we deserve eternal growth.”

He is surely right that it somehow answers to the Christian meme of linear progress (material here, rather than spiritual); but more pragmatically, doesn’t “growth” underpin the whole Western financialized, global system: “it was about lifting the ‘others’ out of their poverty”?

Recall, Stephen Hadley, the former U.S. National Security Adviser to President George W. Bush, warning plainly that foreign-policy experts rather should pay



careful attention to the growing public anger: that “globalization was a mistake” and that “the elites have sleep-walked the [U.S.] into danger.”

“This election isn’t just about Donald Trump,” Hadley argued. “It’s about the discontents of our democracy, and how we are going to address them ... whoever is elected, will have to deal with these discontents.”

In short, if globalization is giving way to discontent, the lack of growth can undermine the whole financialized global project. Stiglitz tells us that this has been evident for the past 15 years – last month he noted that he had warned then of: “growing opposition in the developing world to globalizing reforms: It seemed a mystery: people in developing countries had been told that globalization would increase overall wellbeing. So why had so many people become so hostile to it? How can something that our political leaders – and many an economist – said would make everyone better off, be so reviled? One answer occasionally heard from the neoliberal economists who advocated for these policies is that people *are* better off. They just don’t know it. Their discontent is a matter for psychiatrists, not economists.”

This “new” discontent, Stiglitz now says, is extended into advanced economies. Perhaps this is what Hadley means when he says, “globalization was a mistake.” It is now threatening American financial hegemony, and therefore its political hegemony too.

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## The Warnings of a New World War

The U.S.-Russia confrontation over Ukraine and now Syria is far more dangerous than is understood by mainstream U.S. analysts as Russia lays down clear warnings that are mostly being ignored, writes Gilbert Doctorow.

By Gilbert Doctorow

In an interview with the *Bild* newspaper on Oct. 8, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who is known for his cautious rhetoric, described the present international situation in the following woeful terms: “unfortunately it is an illusion to believe this is the old Cold War. The new times are different; they are more dangerous. Previously, the world was divided, but Moscow and

Washington knew each other's red lines and respected them. In a world with many regional conflicts and dwindling influence of the great powers, the world becomes more unpredictable."

For these reasons, said Steinmeier, "The USA and Russia must continue talking with each other." He concluded his appeal with fairly balanced recommendations to resolve the humanitarian crisis in east Aleppo, urging both Russia and the other powers to apply their influence with their clients on the ground.

Sad to say, this call to reason fell on deaf ears. On the same day, a U.S. State Department spokesman explained to journalists Washington's decision over the weekend to end the joint peace process with Moscow, saying that there was "nothing left to talk about with the Russians."

Meanwhile, the Russian side took as the last straw this unilateral and trumpeted decision of the Americans to bury the deal signed on Sept. 9 between Secretary of State John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov that had taken 14 hours to negotiate and was seen as a triumph of cooperation versus confrontation.

De facto, from the Russian view, that deal was sabotaged on Sept. 17 by the Pentagon when U.S. and coalition aircraft bombed a Syrian government military outpost at Deir Ezzor killing more than 60 Syrian soldiers. And de facto, the Russians had suspended the implementation of the ceasefire on Sept. 23 when they renewed heavy bombing of east Aleppo in close collaboration with the Syrian air force and ground units. Now that the U.S. had formalized the end of cooperation over Syria, Russia set out its own full-blooded response which it called a "radical change in relations" between the two countries.

Several of the components of the Russian response of Oct. 3 and over the week to follow were noted in the U.S. and Western mainstream media. We heard about the decision to cancel the bilateral convention concluded with the U.S. in 2000 on reprocessing excess weapons-grade plutonium for electricity generation. This was widely considered to be of marginal importance, since the U.S. had been unable to implement its part of the bargain for lack of appropriate conversion installations and costs of upwards of \$18 billion if it did what was necessary.

We heard about Russia holding civil defense exercises to provide for 40 million citizens, though no one could make much sense of it. We heard about the announcement of the Russian Ministry of Defense that it now has brought to Syria and made operational its most advanced air defense missile systems, the S300 and S400, but Pentagon spokesmen professed to be dumbfounded and asked rhetorically what was the purpose of the move.

Finally, we all heard this week that Russia has officially deployed its hypersonic, potentially nuclear-tipped, 500 kilometer-range Iskander ground-to-ground missiles in its Kaliningrad enclave on the Baltic Sea sandwiched between Poland and Lithuania. The Polish military officials immediately expressed dismay, feeling under threat and said they were putting all their defense facilities on alert. But Pentagon spokesmen said there was no reason to view this deployment as different from the last deployment in Kaliningrad two years ago, which was just a training exercise.

### **Playing Down the Danger**

From the foregoing, it would appear that the U.S. government was keen to play down to the general public the significance of the separately noted Russian moves last week. It is in this context that one must appreciate what an unofficial but authoritative Russian state television program last Sunday night did to add a few more important dots, to connect them all and to interpret for laymen what is the significance of the Russian *démarches*.

The state television program on the *Rossiya 1* channel, *Vesti nedeli* (News of the Week), is presented by Dmitri Kiselyov. This two-hour show on prime time is the single most widely watched news broadcast in Russia with tens of millions of viewers. However, in cases like the Oct. 9 show, the real hoped-for audience of the first half-hour segment was in Washington, D.C., where its intent was to pour cold water over hotheads in the Pentagon and CIA – and bring the American leadership back to its senses.

Dmitri Kiselyov is not merely the anchorman of *Vesti nedeli*. He is also the boss of all news and information programming on state radio and television. He is tough and wears his patriotism on his sleeve. We may assume that what he says has been approved by the Kremlin.

Because of the importance of the message Kiselyov was delivering, I am going to quote heavily from my transcript of his narrative, only making minor cuts:

“This past week relations between the USA and Russia went through a sharp but expected turn. To bend over backwards further in the face of [American] lies has lost all sense and is simply harmful. By bending over backwards we mean looking for diplomatic compromises.

“We held endless expectations that the USA will finally separate the non-terrorists from the terrorists [in Syria]. We waited more than a year for this. But it is clear they did not want to. They are taking us and the whole world for fools. America is working on the side of Al Nusra [Al Qaeda’s Syrian affiliate], providing them with diplomatic cover; providing them with additional arms;

helping them by their supposedly mistaken bombing of a Syrian army position.

“See the outbursts of anti-Russian statements in the U.S. mass media. If we continue with the Americans, our very presence in Syria will lose sense. Instead, working with the legal Syrian government, we can rid the country of terrorists, thereby ensuring security of the Middle Eastern region, Russia and Europe.”

Kiselyov continued: “Those who want to can join us. The U.S. seemed to want to join, then thought again and cut their military cooperation with Russia over Syria on Monday, with one exception, the channel of communication to avoid military clashes in Syria remains in force. For the time being.

“Formally the situation returned to where it was before Sept. 9 when Kerry and Lavrov reached their agreement on a truce. But then [U.S. Defense Secretary] Ashton Carter entered the picture. He opened a second front. He forced Kerry to fight on two fronts. If Kerry previously thought he was competing with the Russians, now he came under “friendly fire” from the Pentagon.

“American forces directly bombed a Syrian military outpost. This was no mistake. It was coordinated with the terrorists, who followed up with an attack. Then there came a camouflaged attack on the humanitarian convoy near Aleppo [Sept. 20]. Finally, it became clear to Moscow that diplomacy is merely a ‘service’ for the Pentagon. Kerry, in intellectual style, justifies the actions of the Pentagon. Often, post factum.

“We will review tonight the radical changes in our relations with America. This includes the dispatch to the region of three of our cruise missile vessels with Kalibr on board. The roll-out in Syria of additional air defense systems S300. The dispatch to Egypt of 5,000 of our paratroopers. The tearing up of our agreements with America in the atomic sphere. And the civil defense exercise of the past week which involved 200,000 civil defense personnel covering 40 million population. To my recollection such a constellation of events never before took place.”

### **Terrorists and Hostages**

Kiselyov went on: “The center of attention has been east Aleppo, still in control of terrorists with hundreds of thousands of civilians kept hostage as a human shield. They execute people who want to leave. We cannot tolerate this anymore. The terrorists are not capable of abiding by agreements. The Syrian army is carrying out a storm operation.

“There is so much lying and shrieking going on in the world about this. ... It’s a serious matter that the U.S. is looking at Russia’s actions to combat terrorists

in Syria as a threat to its own exceptionalism. The scenario is not developing according to the U.S. plan, so what is the sense of all the claims to U.S. domination and leadership. It looks as if Barack Obama will leave office before Bashar Assad. And their nasty tricks against Russia, the sanctions, aren't working...

"To be sure, Washington has loudly announced that it is shifting now to the so-called Plan B. Formally there are no details. But in general terms, everyone understands what we are talking about. Plan B is when America applies in Syria direct military force. It is not hard to guess against whom, against Bashar Assad, the government army, and that means against the armed forces of Russia, who are present in Syria on legal grounds.

"Can we exclude such a variation? No. We cannot exclude provocations to justify the start of war, as happened in the past in the two world wars. The Vietnam War also began with a provocation organized by the Americans. See the false pretenses for invading Iraq and the action in Libya. U.S. ignored international law, decided there can be no obstacles in the path of their assaults."

Kiselyov continued: "Moscow reacted calmly to Plan B. Russia saddles up slowly, but then rides fast. To understand how Russian-American relations have just quickly changed directions, we have to rewind and go back to the start of the week. Let us now scrupulously go over events since Monday.

"First I want to direct your attention to the very public speech of [Russian President Vladimir] Putin. He spoke more quietly and more slowly than usual. Formally it was to open the session of the new 7th Duma. But it was addressed to the very core issues of our souls and minds. His words were not about draft laws, but to the essence of the moment. Putin considered it important to talk about the general basis of support. He spoke about unity of the people as an essential element for the existence of our country. Strength is essential to maintaining our statehood.

"At this Duma session, Putin introduced draft law to halt the convention on plutonium with the USA."

Kiselyov here makes an association between Putin's speech to the Duma and the draft law halting the convention on plutonium that would not be obvious to outsiders. Still more important, he called attention to the contents of that draft law, beginning with the reason given for this event, namely what is called a "radical change in circumstances, the emergence of a threat to strategic stability as a result of hostile actions of the United States of America in relation to the Russian Federation and the inability of the United States of America to ensure execution of the obligations it assumed to reprocess the

excess weapons grade plutonium in accordance with the Agreement and the protocols to the Agreement.”

Kiselyov then moved to the all-important Point 2 of the draft law. The text was projected onto the television screen, with its provisions highlighted in yellow as Kiselyov read from it. The highlighted passages are as follows:

“The validity of the Agreement and protocols to the Agreement can be renewed after the elimination by the United States of America of the causes which have led to a radical change in the circumstances which existed on the day of the coming into force of the Agreement and the protocols to the Agreement on condition:

“1) that the military infrastructure and numbers of the contingent of troops of the United States of America stationed on the territories of member states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) which entered NATO after 1 September 2000 be reduced to their levels on the day of coming into force of the Agreement and protocols to the Agreement

“2) that the United States of America renounces its hostile policy with respect to the Russian Federation which must be expressed:

“a) by the repeal of the 2012 law of the United States of America (Sergei Magnitsky law) and the repeal of provisions of the 2014 law of the United States of America in support of freedom of Ukraine directed against Russia

“b) by the cancellation of all sanctions introduced by the United States of America with respect to separate subjects of the Russian Federation – Russian individuals and legal entities

“c) compensation of damages borne by the Russian Federation as a result of the sanctions indicated in line ‘b’ of this point, including losses from the introduction of necessary counter-sanctions against the United States of America

“d) presentation by the United States of America of a clear plan for irreversible reprocessing of plutonium coming under the scope of the Agreement.”

### **A Breathtaking Ultimatum**

Kiselyov rightly called these provisions an “Ultimatum” addressed to the White House. Their scope is breathtaking. But the Kremlin’s message to Washington was action, not just words.

Kiselyov explained that on Tuesday the government stopped an ongoing program of scientific contacts with the U.S. in the nuclear field. On the same day it cancelled a program of cooperation between Rosatom and the U.S. Department of

Energy over nuclear reactors.

Then, as Kiselyov noted, the Russians “moved from the brakes to the gas pedal.” They dispatched three missile bearing naval vessels from the Black Sea fleet to the Eastern Mediterranean as a back-up in case the U.S. proceeds on Plan B. These are equipped with two types of missiles: the *Kalibr* cruise missile which may be nuclear tipped and has a 2,600 kilometer range for striking ground targets plus the supersonic *Oniks* for attacking ships.

Also on what he chose to call “Black Tuesday,” the Russian government confirmed that it has installed its S300 air defense system in Syria. For the explanation, Kiselyov pulled up video recordings of the televised statement by the chief of the press and information service, the Russian Federation Ministry of Defense Igor Konashenkov, who was responding to questions about the Syrian campaign.

Konashenkov said the air defense was installed because of U.S. and French threats to impose a “no fly zone” and because of the lessons learned from the U.S. coalition strike against Syrian forces at Deir Ezzor on Sept. 17. Konashenkov stressed that there will likely be no time for any hot-line discussions with Americans about stealth aircraft or incoming missiles: they will be shot down, “whatever the dilettantes” in American military circles may think.

He explained that Russian military are in settled areas across Syria performing humanitarian work and dealing with local Syrian militia who are laying down their arms under Russian-brokered deals. Therefore, any U.S. air strikes in Syria will likely also hit Russian forces, which is utterly unacceptable.

Next, Kiselyov reminded his audience, on Wednesday, Russia officially notified Washington that it deems the missile defense installations that the United States has built in Romania and is building in Poland are in violation of the convention on intermediate-range missiles since they can be used for offensive as well as defensive rockets.

Russia is not presently withdrawing from the convention on intermediate-range missiles, which was the single biggest arms control agreement of the Reagan-Gorbachev years, but it is preparing the way for abrogation at its choosing. This was the context for Moscow’s announcement on the same day that they have installed their Iskander missile system in Kaliningrad. The suggestion is that this is permanent, not linked to any exercises.

During the same week, the Russian Ministry of Defense announced an unprecedented military exercise in Egypt with dispatch there of 5,000 paratroopers equipped with new, desert-condition uniforms and a new design parachute.

## Russian Overseas Bases

According to Kiselyov, Russian Deputy Minister of Defense Pankov said his ministry is reviewing the question of reestablishing military bases in Cuba and Vietnam. And, on the anniversary of its launch into space of the first Sputnik, Moscow celebrated the Day of the Rocket Corps by showing clips of recent “awesome” rocket launches.

Summing up, Kiselyov acknowledged that all these events give the impression of a highly charged atmosphere. They are, he said, all the consequence of America’s steady campaign of expanding NATO, its renunciation of the ABM treaty, its color revolutions, its vilification of Russia, and its information war based on lies. These unfriendly acts had to be a stop.

He asked rhetorically: is this dangerous? To which he responded in the affirmative.

And yet, if Russia is morally and physically prepared for war with the United States to defend what it sees as its national interests, including in Syria, Kiselyov ended the half-hour segment of his weekly news wrap-up on a non-belligerent note. He said the message of the Russian government was its preparedness for the worst while it hopes for better outcomes. He quoted Dmitri Peskov, Putin’s press secretary, who insisted that Russia is always ready for cooperation.

Bad as the enumeration of Moscow’s “radical change in relations” with the United States sounds, the overview of Russian actions and intentions on the Kiselyov program was not exhaustive. In the same week, there were leaks of Russian plans to establish what never existed in the Cold War, a naval base in Egypt, which it is said would support their operations in the Western Mediterranean.

It bears mention that the whole subject of military bases abroad came up on another prime-time flagship program of Russian state television, the Oct. 9 edition of “Sunday Evening with Vladimir Soloviev,” the most popular and respected talk show of the same *Rossiya 1* channel.

In a departure from common practice, this edition featured only Russian panelists, mostly of high standing. The single highest-rated politician panelist was Irina Yarovaya, the tough-as-nails and very smart Duma deputy known best as the author of what Edward Snowden called the Big Brother law this past July. Yarovaya was newly named as Deputy Chair of the State Duma and opened the show, which focused on U.S.-Russian relations and comparative military strength.

Yarovaya remarked on how in 1992 the U.S. defense budget was 77 times greater than Russia’s whereas last year it was just 10 times greater. Today, she noted,



the U.S. accounts for 36 percent of total global military expenditures while Russia represents 4 percent. Why does the United States need this disproportionately sized military establishment? Answer: to dominate the political landscape. In this context, she explained, Russia now is throwing cold water on that notion of domination.

At this point, the second-ranking politician on the show entered the debate with an important qualification. Vladimir Zhirinovsky is the leader of the nationalist LDPR party, which did remarkably well in the September elections and was given the Duma committee chairmanship of foreign relations as a reward, another detail of Russian political life that has gone virtually unnoticed in U.S. and Western commentary.

Zhirinovsky insisted that the correlation of military capabilities is more favorable to Russia than the gross figures suggest. After all, he explained, a large chunk of the U.S. defense budget goes on toilet paper, sausages and similar housekeeping expenses in support of its 700 foreign bases.

Notwithstanding that caustic remark about bases generally and eyes-open understanding that such force projection is also debilitating, Zhirinovsky later in the program suggested that Russia would do well to establish 100 overseas bases.

To understand properly what this question of possible Russian military bases overseas means, we have to recall that, in the not so distant past, Vladimir Putin pointed to the country's having no overseas bases as a distinguishing point setting Russia apart from superpowers. We have no ambition to be a superpower, he said then.

### **The Risky U.S. 'War Party'**

Those in the U.S. "war party" who talk about Putin's dream of reestablishing the Soviet Union are repeating endlessly complete nonsense. But there is a dream, a very new dream in Moscow which did not exist until the present direct and existential confrontation with the U.S. that Russia will be understood to be not just a great power but a superpower with global interests.

In this sense, by presenting Russia with hostility and enormous challenges, the United States has been creating the very Russia it fears.

All of the information that I have used in this commentary are open source. The television programs are all accessible as they are to the U.S. intelligence officers stationed in the U.S. embassy in Moscow. They are also accessible to any Russian-speaking analysts in Langley who happen to be interested since they are posted within 24 hours on youtube.com.

Moreover, the CIA has its own agent taking part in the prime-time talk shows several days a week. He is a welcome and paid guest of the Russian state television because of his outstanding Russian language skills and his defense of the policy line coming from Washington, which makes him the American that Russian viewers love to hate.

In this capacity, he rubs shoulders regularly with the leading Russian politicians on the shows and has a chance, in the breaks, to put to them the kind of question that one such politician said he raised a week ago: "Will there be a war?"

If the U.S. intelligence establishment is doing its job professionally, and we must assume that is the case, then they have been briefing President Obama and the two presidential candidates on the developments in U.S.-Russian relations that I have outlined above.

In that case, a puzzling and scandalous question arises: why has the President not said a word about the "radical change in relations" with Russia? And why is it that neither candidate when asked about how to respond to the killings in east Aleppo on Debate Two, that very same evening, on Oct. 9, were clueless.

Indeed, the remarks of Hillary Clinton to the effect that the United States must stand up to the Russians and impose a "no-fly zone" in Syria missed the point that to do so now will mean destruction of U.S. aircraft and naval vessels, or, in other words, the onset of World War III. Either she and her policy team do not have their eye on the ball or they are playing a reckless game.

For his part, Donald Trump came out marginally better on the issue of what to do about east Aleppo. He said that, as he understands, it's lost already. That appraisal is much closer to reality.

The end result of the official silence in the U.S. about Russia's message of defiance and about its military wherewithal in place in Syria to defend what it construes as its national interest is that as a nation the U.S. is flying blind.

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