

The Schwab-Putin Relationship: Putin's WEF Davos Speech Defined the "World War C Era"

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A Speech For The Ages

President Putin gave what can be regarded as the defining speech of the World War C era during his virtual address at this year's Davos Summit hosted by his close friend Klaus Schwab, the founder of the World Economic Forum (WEF).

The Russian leader intriguingly disclosed from the get-go that he first met the famous globalist in 1992 and regularly attended his organization's annual gatherings all throughout the 1990s. Their last face-to-face meeting was in Putin's hometown of Saint Petersburg in November 2019, during which time Schwab [gifted him his book](#) about the "[Fourth Industrial Revolution](#)". President Putin evidently read it in full since he even cited this controversial concept during his address. All Russia watchers should read his speech in full at the [official Kremlin website](#) if they have the time since this world leader thoroughly articulated the challenges and promises of the [World War C](#) era, the author's term for referring to the [full-spectrum paradigm-changing processes](#) catalyzed by the international community's uncoordinated efforts to contain COVID-19.

COVID-19: Chaos Catalyst

Whether or not one actually does so, the present analysis should still be useful for summarizing Putin's most important points and putting them in the context of this epochal moment. He began by praising the WEF for the crucial role that it's playing in contemporary events by providing a much-needed discussion platform for the global elite to brainstorm solutions to the world's many challenges. He noted that COVID-19 accelerated numerous preexisting structural problems, particularly the accumulated socioeconomic ones that he later postulated in his speech "are the fundamental reason for unstable global growth."

Expanding on this thought, Putin spent some time elaborating how the uneven socioeconomic development brought about by the latest version of globalization at the end

of the Old Cold War only truly benefited the one percent of the population, primarily those who were invested in Western transnational corporations. Mostly everyone else, he said, ended up struggling in one way or another despite misleading macroeconomic growth indicators.

Whither The Washington Consensus?

The Russian leader attributed this to the Washington Consensus' debt-driven development strategies which prioritized people as the means rather than the end that the global elite were pursuing this entire time. He importantly declared that Russia's approach will be the opposite in that people will become the end instead of the means, a vision that he encouraged everyone else to embrace as well. In order to better understand why this is so necessary, one must become familiar with Putin's criticisms of the status quo.

The stimulation of macroeconomic growth through debt has "outlived its usefulness", having directly resulted in the present predicament whereby citizens' real incomes are stagnating even in economically developed Western countries, to say nothing of their current reversal there and all across the Global South as a result of World War C. The systemic economic flaws of the Washington Consensus have made increasingly desperate people vulnerable to social and political radicalization, which sometimes manifests itself by making an enemy out of "the other".

Averting The Hobbesian War Scenario

This isn't just destabilizing on the domestic level, which is itself concerning for the rest of the world considering the complex interdependence brought about by globalization, but also on the international one once states start blaming other countries for their problems. On this note, Putin made a point of remarking that "the degree of foreign policy propaganda rhetoric is growing", especially against "the countries that do not agree with a role of obedient controlled satellites, use of trade barriers, illegitimate sanctions and restrictions in the financial, technological and cyber spheres."

This was a thinly veiled reference to America's unprecedented pressure campaigns against Russia, China, and others, but is also applicable to other states that have followed its lead in this respect, whether against those two targets and/or others. The uncontrollable breakdown of international development, governance, and security models is causing a dangerous chain reaction of instability that might lead to a "war of all against all" in the worst-case scenario, which must be averted at all costs.

Big Tech Has Become More Powerful Than Many States

This risk of a Hobbesian war is made all the more acute by Big Tech becoming more powerful than many states. Putin recalled their recent role in the American elections and its aftermath to warn about this new threat to global security. He asked, "Where is the border between successful global business, in-demand services and big data consolidation and the attempts to manage society at one's own discretion and in a tough manner, replace legal democratic institutions and essentially usurp or restrict the natural right of people to decide for themselves how to live, what to choose and what position to express freely?" This is an issue that concerns the entire world since unaccountable private companies are nowadays running amok and imposing their vision onto literally billions of people, which could exacerbate the preexisting and already naturally worsening social tensions that the Russian

leader drew attention to in his speech. Left unresolved, this might quickly spiral out of control and lead to the worst-case scenario that he warned about regarding the war of all against all.

The World's Four Most Urgent Priorities

The rule of the so-called “golden billion” also can't be allowed to continue, Putin declared, and the trend of increasing state involvement in the economy and the even greater degree of complex interdependence across the world that this implies places an enormous responsibility upon all governments to do their part to avoid another World War. To this end, four key priorities must be jointly pursued by all: ensure comfortable living conditions for everyone; provide promising employment possibilities (made all the more urgent by Putin's prediction that Schwab's seemingly inevitable “Fourth Industrial Revolution” might prompt massive unemployment across the world that could thus lead to the uncontrollable radicalization of society); grant generous healthcare and other social benefits to the population; and guarantee a better future for the next generation through improved educational opportunities. Putin proposed that the state, the business community, and civil society prioritize these urgent tasks for the global good as soon as possible.

The Emergence Of New Multilateral Cooperation Platforms

On the international front, multipolarity is replacing the unipolar moment that he argued never actually came to fruition in the first place, but that existing institutions created after World War II are struggling to adapt to modern-day challenges. Nevertheless, Putin pleaded with everyone to retain and reform them instead of abandoning them since the existence of these platforms is still better than them not being used at all during these unstable times of unprecedented uncertainty. New and more flexible formats will arise to meet unexpected problems as they emerge, with the Russian leader citing his country's trilateral cooperation with Iran and Turkey in Syria, [Armenia and Azerbaijan](#) in Nagorno-Karabakh, and Saudi Arabia and the US through [OPEC+](#) as relevant examples. The author is personally of the view that at least two other frameworks might soon emerge as well between [Russia, India,](#) and [Japan](#) in the Russian Far East and Arctic, and [Russia, Pakistan,](#) and Afghanistan for managing affairs between Central and South Asia.

Epidemiological, Environmental, And Civilizational Security

In terms of epidemiological security, Putin is very passionate about the need for [mass vaccination all across the world](#), particularly in the Global South with a strong focus on Africa. He implies that urgent need to create a global COVID monitoring structure for testing and vaccinating at-risk populations in order to finally eliminate this viral threat once and for all. He also suggested that more must be done to preserve the environment, but cautioned that a balance must be struck between this and economic development. Overall, Putin ended on an upbeat note and even answered a single follow-up question by Schwab about how eager he is for Russia and Western Europe to enter into a long-overdue rapprochement. He reminded his European counterparts that Russia is an inextricable part of their civilization, and that [they can only survive this century by working together](#), including by building a United Europe all the way to Vladivostok. Russia is just waiting for them to reciprocate its love, which must be mutual, he said as his final point of the day.

A Russian-Led “Global Reset”?

Upon pondering the insight that Putin shared during his virtual address, it's clear that his appearance at this year's Davos Summit was intended to endear Russia to the West and position it as one of the global leaders in the unfolding "[Great Reset](#)"/"Fourth Industrial Revolution" (GR/4IR), exactly as the author accurately predicted that he'd seek to do in his analysis published on the first of the year about "[Russia's Five Most Important Tasks For Surviving World War C](#)". The primary difference between Putin and many of his peers who also believe in the inevitability of these processes is that he doesn't blindly endorse them for principle's sake but is very passionate about ensuring that they result in a better form of globalization that benefits everyone equally. Critics might describe him as naive, but there's no doubt that he's sincere in this respect. Putin truly believes that the ongoing GR/4IR can be a force for good if it replaces the Washington Consensus, improves socioeconomic equality, and leads to global peace, with Russia doing all that it can to help that happen every step of the way.

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