

Will Putin Fight or Surrender? Paul C. Roberts

By [Dr. Paul Craig Roberts](#)

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In his meeting the other day with the Russian Defense Ministry Board, Putin discussed the accomplishments of the past year and measures needed to ensure Russia's security from Washington's aspirations for world dominance.

"We see the US administration and the collective West relentlessly trying to preserve their dominance, pushing their rules on the global community and manipulating them as they see fit." Washington, Putin said, is engaged "in an effort to weaken our country and inflict a strategic defeat."

That is true, but why is Putin helping Washington succeed?

Putin complains about the growing instability and violence in the Middle East. Does he realize that he contributed to it by withdrawing Russia's defense of Syria? Did Putin forget "seven countries in five years"? Did Putin forget "Greater Israel"? Did Putin forget Turkey's ambition against the Kurds?

Putin complains about the West's participation with Ukraine in the conflict with Russia. Why did Putin make this possible by dragging out a limited military operation for three years?

How could Putin fail to understand that Washington would test the intervention waters step by step to see if there are any real red lines.

The absence of red lines has reached the point of Washington and NATO firing missiles into Russia, and Putin, despite his warnings to the West, retaliates only against Ukraine. Indeed, Putin's retaliations are measures that should have been conducted on the first day of Russia's intervention in Donbas. Putin has prevented Russian military action that would have made it impossible for Kiev to continue the conflict. What purpose is served by dragging out the conflict? Certainly not the preservation of lives.

The Russian population is hurting not so much from the West's sanctions as from Putin's central bank director's 21 percent interest rates. Sooner or later the population is going to blame the war for the economic deprivation, and support for a war without end will decline. The same central bank director left Russia's central bank reserves where they could be stolen by Washington. I suspect the central bank director's warnings that Russia cannot afford war is the reason the Russian military remains too small for effective deployment, thus forcing Russian reliance on nuclear weapons.

The West has just imposed more sanctions on Russia, and Russia continues to supply energy to Poland and Romania, NATO members hosting US missile bases on their borders with Russia. **It is extraordinary how the Russian government helps Russia's enemies to**

work against Russia.

It is not only Putin who seems unable to get his mind around reality. **The leader of the terrorist group HTS used by Turkey, Washington, and Israel to overthrow Assad, Hayat Tahrir al-Sharaa, complains that Israel has no excuse for continuing military strikes on Syria.** Apparently, al-Sharaa has never heard of “Greater Israel.” **Israel is clearing the way for Syria’s absorption into “Greater Israel,” just as Turkey intends the absorption of the Kurdish area of Syria to become incorporated into Turkey.**

As Israeli strategist Oded Yinon wrote, the Muslim world is too disunited to stand as an obstacle to “Greater Israel.” (See [this](#).) Perhaps that is the reason Putin abandoned his ally. But by sacrificing Syria, Putin has left the road open to Iran and Lebanon. If Iran becomes the mess that Washington has created elsewhere in the Muslim world, the Russian Federation will be open to infiltration by jihadists to cause disruption in Russia’s Muslim areas.

Meanwhile Washington continues to operate against Russia in the former Russian provinces of Georgia and Armenia. **How long before there are American missile bases in Georgia and Armenia?**

It is unclear why US missile bases on Russia’s border with Ukraine are a reason for Russian military action, but not US missile bases on Russia’s borders with Poland and Romania.

It was impossible for Putin to stand aside while the US created a Ukrainian army to destroy the Russian populations of Donbas. The world should appreciate that Putin has not attacked Russia’s tormenters outside of Ukraine. Putin has also accepted sanctions without adequate response. The question is whether Putin’s determination to avoid a larger war presents as weakness and indecision that encourages the West to further provocations that eventually lead to a wider war. The big question in the coming year is whether Putin surrenders or fights.

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***Paul Craig Roberts** is a renowned author and academic, chairman of The Institute for Political Economy where [this article](#) was originally published. Dr. Roberts was previously associate editor and columnist for The Wall Street Journal. He was Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Economic Policy during the Reagan Administration. He is a regular contributor to Global Research.*

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About the author:

Paul Craig Roberts, former Assistant Secretary of the US Treasury and Associate Editor of the Wall Street Journal, has held numerous university appointments. He is a frequent contributor to Global Research. Dr. Roberts can be reached at <http://paulcraigroberts.org>

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