

Putin slams US, NATO for threatening global security

By [Global Research](#)

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Munich, Feb 10 — Russian President Vladimir Putin on Saturday challenged the US and Europe on global security issues including missile defence, NATO enlargement and what he termed America's "hyper-use of military force."

Putin, in a tough-worded speech at the Munich Security Conference, warned that a US-led "unipolar world" was unacceptable and had led to more wars and conflict across the globe.

"Today we are witnessing an almost uncontained hyper-use of military force in international relations," Putin said in a strong jab at the US.

He also said Moscow did not need lessons in democracy from "people who did not practise it themselves."

The annual security conference is the top global forum on defence issues. This year's event is being attended by German Chancellor Angela Merkel, US Secretary of Defence Robert Gates and NATO chief Jaap de Hoop Scheffer as well as numerous foreign and defence ministers.

Putin set a truculent tone in the first few minutes of his speech by warning the new unipolar world led by the US was far less secure than the old balance of power between the US and the former Soviet Union during the Cold War.

"This is very dangerous ... nobody feels secure any more," Putin said.

He also cautioned that the sense of insecurity was fuelling a drive in many countries to produce weapons of mass destruction.

The Russian president sharply criticized the planned deployment of 10 anti-ballistic missile systems by the US - to be stationed in Poland and the Czech Republic.

Putin said that Russian military planners assumed US anti-missile forces could at some point "neutralize" the deterrence threat posed by Moscow's nuclear missiles.

"The balance will be upset," he said, adding that the US would then have "a feeling of complete security" which would give it a free hand to impose its will in local and global conflicts.

The US in 2002 withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty which was signed in 1972 between the US and the former Soviet Union. Washington said this was necessary in order

to build anti-missile systems to protect the US from so-called “rogue states.”

Putin vowed that Moscow would develop cheaper, asymmetrical systems to overcome any American anti-ballistic missile system.

Despite his strong words, the Russian leader went out of his way to praise US President George W Bush.

“He is a decent person and one can do business with him,” Putin said, echoing former prime minister Margaret Thatcher’s assessment of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

Putin was scathing about NATO enlargement into former parts of the Soviet bloc.

“NATO expansion is a serious factor which reduces the level of mutual trust,” said Putin, adding, “We have the right to ask against whom is this aimed?”

The Russian president said he failed to understand the point of expanding NATO bases and infrastructure toward his country when the real global threat was posed by terrorism and weapons of mass destruction.

Putin bluntly questioned western economic domination in the face of the rising economic power of China, India, Brazil and his own Russia which is reaping the benefits of an oil and gas price boom.

The president also staked out Russia’s opposing views to the US and Europe on global flashpoints including Kosovo and Iran.

Rejecting any idea of near-independence for the breakaway Serbian province of Kosovo – as proposed by UN envoy Martti Ahtisaari – the Russian leader said, “Let’s not play God and try to resolve all their problems.”

He said that a decision could be made by Serbia and Kosovo alone and vowed that if Moscow saw that one of the parties was not happy with the proposed solution, “we will not back it.”

Putin admitted concern over Iran’s nuclear programme and said he did not understand why Tehran had not responded constructively to international concerns.

But he defended Russia’s delivery of air defence systems to Iran, saying: “We do not want Iran to feel cornered in a hostile environment.”

He urged the US and Europe to be patient with Tehran and to provide incentives to win over the Iranian leadership. “Cooperation is much better than confrontation,” Putin said.

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