

The Obama Game: Is Putin Being Lured Into a Trap?

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Global Research, April 15, 2014

[CounterPunch](#)

Region: [Russia and FSU](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

“Russia ... is now recognized as the center of the global ‘mutiny’ against global dictatorship of the US and EU. Its generally peaceful .. approach is in direct contrast to brutal and destabilizing methods used by the US and EU.... The world is waking up to reality that there actually is, suddenly, some strong and determined resistance to Western imperialism. After decades of darkness, hope is emerging.” – Andre Vltchek, [Ukraine: Lies and Realities](#), CounterPunch

Russia is not responsible for the crisis in Ukraine. The US State Department engineered the fascist-backed coup that toppled Ukraine’s democratically-elected president Viktor Yanukovych and replaced him with the American puppet Arseniy Yatsenyuk, a former banker. Hacked phone calls reveal the critical role that Washington played in orchestrating the putsch and selecting the coup’s leaders. Moscow was not involved in any of these activities. Vladimir Putin, whatever one may think of him, has not done anything to fuel the violence and chaos that has spread across the country.

Putin’s main interest in Ukraine is commercial. 66 percent of the natural gas that Russia exports to the EU transits Ukraine. The money that Russia makes from gas sales helps to strengthen the Russian economy and raise standards of living. It also helps to make Russian oligarchs richer, the same as it does in the West. The people in Europe like the arrangement because they are able to heat their homes and businesses market-based prices. In other words, it is a good deal for both parties, buyer and seller. This is how the free market is supposed to work. The reason it doesn’t work that way presently is because the United States threw a spanner in the gears when it deposed Yanukovych. Now no one knows when things will return to normal.

Check out [this chart](#) at Business Insider and you’ll see why Ukraine matters to Russia.

The overriding goal of US policy in Ukraine is to stop the further economic integration of Asia and Europe. That’s what the fracas is really all about. The United States wants to control the flow of energy from East to West, it wants to establish a de facto tollbooth between the continents, it wants to ensure that those deals are transacted in US dollars and recycled into US Treasuries, and it wants to situate itself between the two most prosperous markets of the next century. Anyone who has even the sketchiest knowledge of US foreign policy—particularly as it relates to Washington’s “pivot to Asia”— knows this is so. The US is determined to play a dominant role in Eurasia in the years ahead. Wreaking havoc in Ukraine is a central part of that plan.

Retired German Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Jochen Scholz summed up US policy in an open letter which appeared on the Neue Rheinilche Zeitung news-site last week. Scholz said the Washington’s objective was “to deny Ukraine a role as a bridge between Eurasian Union and

European Union....They want to bring Ukraine under the NATO control” and sabotage the prospects for “a common economic zone from Lisbon to Vladivostok.”

Bingo. That’s US policy in a nutshell. It has nothing to do with democracy, sovereignty, or human rights. It’s about money and power. Who are the big players going to be in the world’s biggest growth center, that’s all that matters. Unfortunately for Obama and Co., the US has fallen behind Russia in acquiring the essential resources and pipeline infrastructure to succeed in such a competition. They’ve been beaten by Putin and Gazprom at every turn. While Putin has strengthened diplomatic and economic relations, expanded vital pipeline corridors and transit lines, and hurtled the many obstacles laid out for him by American-stooges in the EC; the US has dragged itself from one quagmire to the next laying entire countries to waste while achieving none of its economic objectives.

So now the US has jettisoned its business strategy altogether and moved on to Plan B, regime change. Washington couldn’t beat Putin in a fair fight, so now they’ve taken off the gloves. Isn’t that what’s really going on? Isn’t that why the US NGOs, and the Intel agencies, and the State Dept were deployed to launch their sloppily-engineered Nazi-coup that’s left the country in chaos?

Once again, Putin played no part in any of this. All he did was honor the will of the people in Crimea who voted overwhelmingly (97%) to reunite with the Russian Federation. From a purely pragmatic point of view, what other choice did they have? After all, who in their right mind would want to align themselves with the most economically mismanaged confederation of all time (The EU) while facing the real possibility that their nation could be reduced to Iraq-type rubble and destitution in a matter of years? Who wouldn’t opt-out of such an arrangement?

As we noted earlier, Putin’s main objective is to make money. In contrast, the US wants to dominate the Eurasian landmass, break Russia up into smaller, non-threatening units, and control China’s growth. That’s the basic gameplan. Also, the US does not want any competitors, which we can see from this statement by Paul Wolfowitz which evolved into the US National Defense Strategy:

“Our first objective is to prevent the re-emergence of a new rival, either on the territory of the former Soviet Union or elsewhere, that poses a threat on the order of that posed formerly by the Soviet Union. This is a dominant consideration underlying the new regional defense strategy and requires that we endeavor to prevent any hostile power from dominating a region whose resources would, under consolidated control, be sufficient to generate global power.”

This is the prevailing doctrine that Washington lives by. No rivals. No competition. We’re the boss. What we say, goes. The US is Numero Uno, le grande fromage. Who doesn’t know this already? Here’s more from Wolfowitz:

“The U.S. must show the leadership necessary to establish and protect a new order that holds the promise of convincing potential competitors that they need not aspire to a greater role or pursue a more aggressive posture to protect their legitimate interests. In non-defense areas, we must account sufficiently for the interests of the advanced industrial nations to discourage them from challenging our leadership or seeking to overturn the established

political and economic order. We must maintain the mechanism for deterring potential competitors from even aspiring to a larger regional or global role.”

In other words, “don’t even think about getting more powerful or we’ll swat you like a fly.” That’s the message, isn’t it? The reason we draw attention to these quotes is not to pick on Wolfowitz, but to show how things haven’t changed under Obama, in fact, they’ve gotten worse. The so called Bush Doctrine is more in effect today than ever which is why we need to be reminded of its central tenets. The US military is the de facto enforcer of neoliberal capitalism or what Wolfowitz calls “the established political and economic order”. Right. The statement provides a blanket justification for the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria and now Ukraine. The US can do whatever it deems necessary to protect the interests of its constituents, the multi-national corporations and big finance. The US owns the world and everyone else is just a visitor. So shut the hell up, and do what you’re told. That’s the message. Here’s Wolfowitz one more time:

“We continue to recognize that collectively the conventional forces of the states formerly comprising the Soviet Union retain the most military potential in all of Eurasia; and we do not dismiss the risks to stability in Europe from a nationalist backlash in Russia or efforts to reincorporate into Russia the newly independent republics of Ukraine, Belarus, and possibly others.”

Wolfowitz figured the moment would come when the US would have to square off with Moscow in order to pursue it’s imperial strategy in Asia. Putin doesn’t seem to grasp that yet. He still clings to the misguided notion that rational people will find rational solutions to end the crisis. But he’s mistaken. Washington does not want a peaceful solution. Washington wants a confrontation. Washington wants to draw Moscow into a long-term conflict in Ukraine that will recreate Afghanistan in the 1990s. That’s the goal, to lure Putin into a military quagmire that will discredit him in the eyes of the world, isolate Russia from its allies, put strains on new alliances, undermine the Russian economy, pit Russian troops against US-backed armed mercenaries and Special Ops, destroy Russian relations with business partners in the EU, and create a justification for NATO intervention followed by the deployment of nuclear weapons on Ukrainian territory. That’s the gameplan. Why doesn’t Putin see that?

Putin has agreed to a meeting this week with foreign Ministers from The United States, the European Union, and Ukraine. This is another mistake. Originally, Putin refused to acknowledge the coup-government as legitimate. Now he’s changed his mind. Now he’s agreed to meet with their representatives. This is a victory for Washington and a defeat for Russia. The Obama team will see this as a sign of weakness, which it is.

According to Al Jazeera: “The meeting will involve US Secretary of State John Kerry, EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Ukraine’s Foreign Minister Andriy Deshchytzia, the EU said on Tuesday. A spokesman for Ashton said the talks were aimed at “de-escalating” the crisis in Ukraine.”

The meeting has nothing to do with “de-escalating” the crisis.” It’s a public relations stunt. These talks have all the credibility of the Israel-Palestine peace talks, which is to say, none at all.

There’s no sense talking to people who don’t want peace. It just makes them look like they are being sincere, when they’re not. Obama and Co. don’t want peace. They want regime

change. They want to weaken and dismember Russia. They want to reduce Moscow's influence over energy-dependent states in Europe by disrupting the flow of gas through Ukraine. And they want to create a justification for carrying out their imperial agenda, which means they need to make Putin look like a dangerous aggressor. The coup government's crackdown on ethnic Russians in Donetsk and Kharkiv could lead to a Russian intervention which would provide the justification that Washington is looking for. However painful it is for Putin to watch Russian speaking Ukrainians get beaten and perhaps killed by Nazi thugs and foreign mercenaries dressed up as Ukrainian Security Forces, he should avoid sending in the troops. It's a trap.

At present, Ukraine's currency plummeting, its debts and deficits are growing, and its economy is broken and near default. The IMF has promised to provide a \$27 billion loan package that will be used to repay wealthy banks and bondholders in Berlin and Salzburg, but will do nothing to lift the economy out of the doldrums. None of the money from the IMF loans will be used to repay the \$2.2 billion in unpaid gas bills to Gazprom or to compensate Russia for the more than \$34.4 billion in subsidies Moscow has provided for its ailing neighbor in the last few years. Bondholders come first.

According to the World Socialist Web Site: "The "tough" measures required by the IMF in return for a \$27 billion loan is already being spelt out by a 120 percent hike in gas and heating prices, the cutting of social benefits, including free medical assistance, and the closure of several hospitals."

Naturally, the IMF's conditions will involve more privatizing of public assets and services, more pension and wage cuts, more easing ("flexibility") of labor protections, and more cannibalizing of the economy. Ukraine's economy will undoubtedly slip into the same severe depression experienced everywhere that these failed policies have been implemented. At the same time, voracious investment banks and private equity speculators will make out like bandits skimming billions of dollars in plunder off the distressed and vulnerable country.

The US media has made a big deal out of the fact that Putin "has threatened to turn off the gas to Ukraine". While the allegation is certainly true, we've seen no similar headlines about energy producers in the US cutting off the fuel for American families who are too broke to pay their gas bill and who've been "left to freeze to death in the dark." Nor have we seen similar coverage of the 7 million Americans who were booted from their homes as part of a mortgage laundering scam that was concocted by crooked Wall Street bankers. Putin is actually looking for a way to avoid turning off the gas and has asked for help on the matter from leaders of the US and EU. Here's what he said just last week:

"Russia is prepared to participate in the effort to stabilize and restore Ukraine's economy. However, not in a unilateral way, but on equal conditions with our European partners. It is also essential to take into account the actual investments, contributions and expenditures that Russia has shouldered by itself alone for such a long time in supporting Ukraine. As we see it, only such an approach would be fair and balanced, and only such an approach can lead to success."

Clearly, Putin doesn't want to continue shouldering the burden by himself, which is why he made the statement to begin with. The new coup government has repeatedly missed deadlines for payment on its gas supplies. Some believe they have deliberately stopped paying so Putin will cut off the gas thus opening himself up to harsh criticism the western

media. Whether it's true or not is impossible to know, but so far, Washington has had little success selling the idea that Putin is "the new Hitler". The US is still viewed as the country that poses the greatest threat to world peace, while the Russian president is widely admired as a sober and restrained leader. However, that could change quickly if Putin sends troops to defend protestors in Donetsk and Lugansk. Even so, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov warned US Secretary of State John Kerry on Sunday that if the coup government uses force on the protestors who have seized government buildings then Russia will not participate in the upcoming four-party talks on the crisis. Lavrov added that "the acute political crisis in Ukraine in general and in its south-eastern regions in particular was caused by the present Kiev authorities' failure to take into account the legitimate needs and interests of the Russian and Russian-speaking population."

On Sunday, Ukrainian imposter-President Oleksandr Turchynov announced a plan to launch a "large-scale anti-terrorist operation" in Donetsk and Lugansk to avoid a "repeat the Crimean scenario in Ukraine's east." The operation will involve "military forces, anti-terrorist forces and law enforcement of Ukraine" and is scheduled to begin at 9 AM yesterday morning.

It's clear, that Turchynov is trying to lure Russia into a fight, just as it's clear that the president would not have approved the crackdown without a green light from Washington.

Putin will not allow Russian-speaking people to be killed in Ukraine, that's the red line the junta government must not cross if they want to avoid a confrontation with Russia. Unfortunately, Washington wants Russia to invade so it can put its "proxy war" plan into motion.

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