

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS: A TWO-EDGED SWORD IN THE HANDS OF THE LIBERAL MAINSTREAM

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By Dmitry Babich

The Voice of Russia Staff Writer

The recent report about the arrest in the Moscow region of a Russian-born terrorist Yulai Davletbayev and the liquidation of his two accomplices who took part in the military action against the NATO forces in Afghanistan before plotting a terrorist act in Moscow raises a whole array of questions – not just about our security environment, but about our information environment too. Why is the media feeding Americans and Russians the cold war style stories about our nations, when the real enemy is acting against both of us? Why are we being constantly fed the traditional menu of “junk food news” which actually blocks the public’s vision of really important news instead of enlightening us on what is really going on? (For example, the heavy coverage of the “William Marries Kate” royal saga mysteriously squeezed out of the spotlight reports on attempts to censor the Internet via SOPA “copyright protection” Act; equally extensive coverage of general Petraeus’ love affair jammed with its noise the sensitive question about certain government officials acquiring the right to read the general’s personal correspondence.)

OBAMA’S HYPOCRISY

In an array of interviews, the reporters of the Voice of Russia’s American and UK services have been continuously trying to answer these questions. On our waves, authors like Mickey Huff, the director of the Project Censored, and Andy Lee Roth, the author of research on Obama administration’s “police state” leanings, had a chance to express themselves.

Why is denouncing this administration’s hypocrisy important?

Because during the last 20 years the American government routinely accused its opponents – the governments of Iraq, Libya and former Yugoslavia – of thwarting media freedom. It became a standard practice actually. It is implied that denying to people this fundamental human right (freedom of speech) is reason enough for war. But somehow this philosophy did not prevent the Obama administration from being involved in some of the most damaging media freedom scandals in the last several decades. The seizure by the Obama administration of two months of phone records of The Associated Press’ reporters, the scandal around the attempts by the IRS to target conservative political groups, the seizure of the personal emails of the Fox Channel’s reporter James Rosen are just the most recent examples. In all these cases, there was evidence of the government’s coverup of unlawful actions of certain officials, who obviously did not want the public to know the “undesirable” truths.

In some cases, government-induced “blank spaces” in the media can not only distort the public’s understanding of certain developments, but lead to wrong government decisions. This is especially true when the issue of terrorism is involved. Here are some examples.

From the very start of the Syrian conflict, the Voice of Russia reported on the presence of jihadist elements in the Syrian opposition and on those elements’ links to al-Qaeda. But the mainstream American press remained largely deaf to this kind of information until the end of 2012, when the Al-Nusra Front, the Islamist organization inside the Syrian opposition, openly declared its allegiance to al-Qaeda. Before that, the Obama administration already broke all diplomatic ties to the Syrian government and threw its lot with the rebels. Meanwhile, the most recent report by the Turkish service of the Voice of Russia revealed that the Turkish authorities detained several al-Nusra members in Turkey’s southern Adana province on suspicion of preparing a terrorist explosion at the NATO’s Incirlik base near the Syrian border. Earlier the VoR’s Turkish service reported that Turkish special anti-terror forces have detained 12 people suspected of having links with Al Nusra Front carrying a 2 kilogram cylinder with nerve agent sarin – a dreadful chemical weapon.

The truth is that the Obama administration got entangled with terrorist forces probably intent on using chemical weapons – but the press was somehow “discouraged” from reporting it.

CAN FREEDOM BE RATED?

The American traditional stance on the issue of progress – to lead by example – kept this country happily aloof of Europe’s tribulations in the nineteenth century and during much of the twentieth century. But the benefit of the doubt, which Americans traditionally gave to other countries’ ways of pursuing happiness, was in a strange way denied to Russia and a lot of other countries by the recent ideological “dynasty” of liberal American diplomats-in-chief – from Madeleine Albright to Hillary Clinton. These politicians were certainly more teachers than “leaders by example” – not only in foreign, but also in domestic politics. There was no lack of “scientific” research to justify this kind of attitude. Pushing Russia to the very bottom of various international “transparency ratings” and “freedom indexes” has become the domineering fashion of the last two decades. But can freedom of press be measured and “rated”? And why were the foreign policies of Madeleine Albright and Hillary Clinton such disasters if indeed they were so open to criticism and so free of ideological delusions, as their authors claim they were?

We certainly FEEL what the absence of free press means. The impossibility to state one’s opinions or to deliver to the public the information one considers important can produce intense suffering and cost dearly to society.

People sometimes go to great lengths in order to deliver their message – and this is an important way to measure the freedom of press in a certain country. It is a common feature of dictatorships to put whistle-blowers before a choice between silence or death and lifelong suffering.

So, how can one “rate” the suffering of, say, Private Bradley Manning, who spent several years in solitary confinement and is now facing court-martial (with life sentence) for making public certain documents which the government wanted to hide? “I want public to see the truth, because without information you cannot make decisions,” Manning stated at his trial. If such a phrase had been uttered by a Russian serviceman accused of making government information public, this person would certainly enjoy full support of the Obama administration. So, why is this administration, after Manning’s pleading guilty to charges that could bring him 20 years in prison, still after putting him in jail for life?



Illustrated by Elena Kulinich

MAINSTREAM DELUSIONS

Unfortunately, government control and draconian laws are not the only enemies of the freedom of press. Experience shows that commonly held delusions can be as dictatorial as the much-maligned government control. This is especially true in modern society, where, thanks to the Internet, governments lost their monopoly on multiplying delusions or enflaming passions.

By some twist of fate, Russia has become the focal point of the “mainstream” Western delusions. There is no need to go far in search of examples. When Russian president Vladimir Putin in 2003 opposed America’s decision to “set Iraq free,” this stance of his was labeled “a throwback to Soviet past” and denounced as “an anti-American move” by the bulk of the American media. Those of the Russian media outlets that opposed the invasion were automatically supposed to be “unfree” or “under government control.” Now, with four thousand American lives lost and Iraq bracing up for a civil war again, who cracked up to be “unfree” of delusions and “anti-American”?

This is just one example of delusions stemming not from government control, but from generally accepted misconceptions spread by the mainstream media. The general Western expectations of the dawn of democracy in the Middle East, symbolized in the term of the “Arab spring” (a clear reference to the anti-Soviet Prague spring of 1968), immediately collided with Russia’s less optimistic expectations of the dawn of Islamism in power in

the region. This lack of enthusiasm on the part of Moscow was commonly explained in the United States by the Kremlin’s fear of similar “democratic” developments in Russia. Meanwhile, the developments that followed the Arab Spring were anything but democratic. The American ambassador was murdered in Libya, which Mrs. Clinton expected to be “free” and “grateful” to its American liberators. Now the former US representative in the UN, Susan Rice, who presented this terrorist act as “expression of protest,” is going to be Obama’s chief adviser on national security. Presumably “liberated” Egypt started evicting Christians and other minorities. Ideas and facts obviously did not jive well here. But this did not hamper the liberal mainstream: if facts do not support their accepted ideological scheme, then so much worse for the facts.

Instead of working on its errors, the Obama administration is silencing its critics. Instead of analyzing its policy in Yemen, the American government, represented by the administration’s Justice department, started tapping the phones of the AP’s journalists investigating the CIA’s disruption of a Yemen-based terrorist plot. The AP’s head Gary Pruitt, unraveling the story of this eavesdropping, revealed the administration’s innovative way of silencing the media: “The government is sending a message to officials that if you talk to the press, we are going to go after you”.

WHY RUSSIA?

Why has Russia become a focal point for the mainstream media delusions, which threaten freedom of press sometimes more than the old-fashioned state control? The reason is history. Undeniable crimes of Stalinism and decades of justified American resistance to Stalinism’s global ambition have provided a seemingly solid ground for numerous negative misconceptions about modern Russia, which is often presented as some modern version of a Stalinist state. This simplification branches out into misconceptions about other countries – for example, into idealizing the Syrian opposition simply because it fights a formerly pro-Soviet regime. The fact that yesterday’s truths may become today’s stereotypes (and, in fact, tomorrow’s lies) is often forgotten.

A former friend of mine, a British journalist working as the Moscow correspondent of an influential British newspaper, once had to leave for vacation and asked me to replace him in case London wanted some stories from the Russian capital during his absence. Here are his instructions. “Make sure your stories start with several potential beginnings – “in another blow to Russia’s democracy” or

“in another sign of Putin’s support of anti-Western dictators”, he instructed me. Life (and journalism) is indeed an easy game to play with this kind of worldview...

Actually, some of the phrases about freedom of press uttered by prominent modern conservative thinkers from the US could be very enlightening about Russia – when applied to Russia, they break the net of lies that the liberal mainstream press has created between an average Western reader and the Russian reality. For example, when reading numerous Western liberal press reports about the trial in Moscow against the anti-religious and anti-Christian Pussy Riot punk band, I remembered a phrase by Rush Limbaugh – a conservative thinker who does not need to be introduced to a Washington Times’ reader: “The way liberals are interpreting the First Amendment today is that it prevents anyone who is religious from being in government. They say that violates the prohibition against a merger of church and state.” One could say the same about many of the Pussy Riot’s supporters’ interpretation of freedom of expression.

TOWARD A US-RUSSIA DIALOGUE



«We wish not to meddle with the internal affairs of any country»

Thomas Jefferson

DESPITE PAST BLUNDERS AND PRESENT HOSTILITY, RUSSIA AND THE US CAN BE ALLIES

By Edward Lozansky and Vlad Sobell



More than two decades ago, in August 1991, Communist hardliners in Moscow launched a coup against the reformist regime of President Mikhail Gorbachev. Thankfully, that insurrection quickly fizzled out and the menace of Communism was finally dealt a fatal blow. The collapse of the Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe ushered in the unraveling of the Soviet Union itself. The Cold War, with its threat of a nuclear Armageddon, was over.

Events of such magnitude demanded fresh and visionary thinking. For the first time since the end of World War II the European architecture was ripe for reconstruction. The dismantling of the Soviet bloc and the final settlement of the post-war status of Germany made possible that country's reunification. At the same time, the foundations were laid for the integration of all European countries under the EU and NATO.

Unfortunately, this historic opportunity to establish peace and harmony in Europe was squandered. George Bush Sr. was too preoccupied with his 1992 re-election campaign to think about Russia, while his NSC adviser, Condoleezza Rice, was not of much use, despite her PhD in Russian studies. But the most damage was done by the Clinton and George Bush Jr. administrations, which failed to realize they were sowing the seeds of a new conflict. While extending the NATO umbrella to the former Soviet bloc and even to the former Soviet Baltic republics, the US failed to develop a constructive policy toward Russia. The vision and resolve that had sustained the West during the Cold War and its immediate aftermath appeared to have suddenly dried up.

In the 1990s the West could have tried to bring Russia fully on board: that country could have been enlisted as a member of NATO and granted economic aid on a massive scale, not unlike that dispensed under the Marshall Plan for the reconstruction of post-war Europe. "A friend in need is a friend indeed", as was amply demon-

strated when US aid to defeated Germany and Japan proved instrumental in turning both of those wartime foes into America's staunchest allies. However, this wise approach was not applied to Russia, which could have become another key member of the US-led alliance.

What assistance Russia did receive was often misdirected and, arguably, fell well short of what might have been offered and what Russia desperately needed. Amid collapsing industrial output and the chronic social deprivation caused by the demise of its centrally planned system, Russia was subjected to the hasty introduction of cutthroat capitalism based on the Washington Consensus model, which included the rapid privatization of its huge natural resources. Instead of benefiting the Russian people, this "theft of the century" (conceived and enforced by the IMF) brought yet more hardship, while a small group of newly baked Russian entrepreneurs became billionaires overnight – aided and abetted by numerous Western (chiefly American) advisers who had flocked to Russia often in pursuit of personal enrichment.

Thus, instead of serving as the foundation of friendship, US policy toward Russia in the 1990s became a source of resentment. This unfortunate episode ended with the financial crisis and devaluation of August 1998, when the follies of that policy were fully exposed once and for all.

But the list of strategic blunders does not end there. As soon as the Russian economy started to recover following the election of Vladimir Putin in early 2000, Western pundits and politicians bombarded his regime with withering and often unfair

criticism. The increasingly popular Putin, perceived by most Russians as their savior, was depicted in the West as an illegitimate dictator bent on restoring autocracy. The series of Western-aided "color revolutions" in Russia's neighborhood – most notably in Ukraine in 2004 – posed a direct threat to the Putin regime, prompting the Kremlin to strengthen its defenses by deploying "controlled democracy". This only intensified the hostile media campaign against Putin.

However, the most damaging strategic blunder came in August 2008, when America's close ally in the former Soviet Union, the president of the Republic of Georgia Mikheil Saakash-

vili, attempted to restore his country's integrity by launching a military campaign against the long-standing secessionist regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The initial attack resulted in a large number of civilian, including ethnic Russian, casualties as well as the killing of Russian peacekeepers. The Russian army's riposte was to expel Georgian forces from both regions, thereby increasing the number of casualties on either side. The brief Russo-Georgian war was both unprecedented and potentially very dangerous: even at the height of the Cold War, the West and the Soviet Union had avoided direct military engagement. But instead of censure, President Saakashvili's regime received generous aid from the West and Russia was vilified as the aggressor.

More recently, America and Russia have increasingly clashed over the planned deployment of US global ballistic missile defense (BMD) in Europe. From the Russian perspective these weapons can be seen as offensive and their deployment along Russia's borders as a potentially hostile move. However, those concerns have repeatedly fallen on deaf ears in Washington and Brussels.

But despite the long list of strategic blunders over the past two decades and the US's continued hostile attitude toward Putin and his regime, it is reassuring to find that Russians remain largely positively disposed towards America. According to the highly respected Levada Center (an independent opinion research agency in Russia), two-thirds of Russians said they were "sympathetic" toward the US in late

2011 while only 23 per cent expressed a "negative attitude". While this favorable picture has deteriorated since the passage by the US Congress of the Magnitsky Act – the US was recently voted into second place on the list of "principal enemies of Russia," with the Republic of Georgia in first place – there continues to exist in Russia a significant and enduring goodwill and admiration toward the United States and the American people. This was most recently evident from the wave of heart-felt sympathy for victims of the terrorist attacks in Boston and the Russian government's offer of assistance in investigating the background of the perpetrators. Moreover, there is also ample evidence that ambitious young Russians continue to view America as the country where they would most like to study or which they would at least like to visit.

The articles that appear in this insert have been written by the members of the international Expert Panel organized by the American University in Moscow. The aim of the Panel is to provide regular commentary on current foreign-policy developments in order to develop a dialogue and generate actionable proposals on how to overcome the issues that impact negatively on US-Russia relations. It is our strong belief that despite the mistakes of the past and despite the hostility that continues to emanate from some quarters to this day, the US and Russia can be allies. Indeed, this would be in the interests not just of these two great nations but of the entire globe.

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WASHINGTON NEEDS TO OVERCOME ITS 'VALUES TRAP'

By Nicolai N. Petro

The ongoing debate over the policy the US should take toward Russia has avoided the central question: is the current Russian political system really on the verge of collapse as it critics suggest, or is it likely to be with us for a good long while?

Those who believe in the regime's longevity say that prioritizing the promotion of values over all other concerns would be self-defeating. Given the global challenges the United States faces, it would be better to mute our public criticism of Russia and foster an agenda of cooperation rather than competition.

Putin's critics, on the other hand, say that since his days are numbered it makes more sense to prepare for his replacement. One way to build bridges to his successor is by emphasizing American values and principles.

This debate is hardly new. Indeed, it runs like a red skein, through the history of our relations with the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, and now the Russian Federation. What has persisted throughout, however, is a dismal view of Russian politics, which serves to justify hostility toward Russia's rulers. The late UC Berkeley historian Martin Malia liked to say that since Western animosity toward Russia did not arise from Communism, there was no reason for it to disappear with Communism's collapse.

One consequence of this jaundiced narrative is that it makes negativity about Russia the norm. This prevents Western observers from recognizing positive opportunities when they present themselves, and leads them to attribute policy differences with Russia to a "values gap."

President Obama's reset policy is a good example. The reset is over not

because it failed to bring tangible benefits, but because it can no longer be defended. It was destined for a short lifespan because even as American diplomats were negotiating agreements with Russia on arms control and logistical assistance in Afghanistan, they saw no possibility of ever forging a lasting strategic partnership with Russia.

The reset therefore followed the fate of its predecessors, from Eisenhower's "spirit of Camp David" to détente. As soon as its immediate objectives are achieved, the policy loses its rationale for bipartisan support and is condemned for "failing to be true to American values."

The result is what I call "the values trap."

Every US administration since that of President Ford has had to deal with the values lobby, which promotes some combination of human rights and democracy as the fundamental objective of US foreign policy. Because the pursuit of these values often runs into conflict with the overall objectives of Washington's foreign policy, presidents try to compartmentalize them in ways that prevent it from causing too much damage. The Obama Administration's low-key implementation of the Magnitsky Bill, followed by the reassuring message carried to Moscow by National Security Advisor Thomas Donilon, are both typical in this regard.

This suggests that, contrary to the assumptions of most pundits, disagreement over values is not what is poisoning our relations with Russia. Much more damaging is the stubborn unwillingness of many to acknowledge Putin's enduring popularity, and to recognize that it is rooted in the genuine appeal of his centrist political agenda. Putin has remained at the helm because

he consistently delivers what the Russian electorate demands.

By contrast, Putin's political opponents garner only marginal public support not because of repression, but because they are plagued by personal rivalries, internal dissension, organizational incompetence and sheer political immaturity. The prospect of regime change in Russia is therefore so slim as to be risible. And since the rationale for putting values first in our relationship with Russia hinges on the imminent collapse of the Putin regime, it can only lead to another cycle of disappointment.

The values trap elevates the US foreign policy above its true merits, while castigating America's erstwhile adversaries beyond their true sins. The net result is that periods of realism alternate with bouts of moralism in American diplomacy, sucking the life out of every potential breakthrough in Russian-American relations – even Russia's abandonment of Communism!

We could bring to an end this vicious circle by acknowledging that there is no real values gap between the West and Russia, at least one no greater than that with Turkey, Israel, Greece or Italy. In fact, as Dmitry Medvedev pointed out during his first visit to the West as President of Russia, "Russian and European democracy share common roots. We share the same set of values



and the same sources of law: Roman, Germanic and French law. . . . We have a common history and we share the same humanitarian values."

Emphasizing the abiding unity of our values, rather than a harping on the occasional differences, would create an intellectual and cultural framework in which Russian and American interests could be seen as complementary rather than antagonistic. The burden of proof would shift from those who are striving to build up a friendship with Russia, to those who assume Russian hostility.

Western opposition to many Russian proposals on security since the end of the Cold War often boils down to the fact that they would create a new security framework of which Russia would be an inextricable part. Arguably, that is precisely what would make such a frame-

work more robust. And would that not be for the benefit of everyone?

There is a strong analogy here with the vision of the French statesman Robert Schuman, whose proposal to make nations mutually dependent in their use of the strategic resources of his day – coal and steel – ultimately led to the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community, the forerunner of the European Union. When Western leaders embrace a similar view of Russia, the Cold War in our minds will truly be over.

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WASHINGTON AND MOSCOW MUST REVIVE THE ARMS CONTROL PROCESS

By Vladimir Kozin

Despite efforts to improve US-Russia relations, the two countries remain at loggerheads in a number of areas. It has been particularly difficult to achieve a breakthrough in arms control owing to its direct impact on national security. Several agreements are in the works – in fact, some of them have been for decades – yet few tangible results have been achieved to date.

In recent years, the failure to make any real headway over arms control has been most evident in ballistic missile defense (BMD). This technologically rapidly evolving field, which is rooted in President Ronald Reagan's visionary "Star Wars" program, has the potential to minimize, if not completely eliminate, the risk of a nuclear missile attack against the United States. Moscow accepts the need for such a strategy and is developing its own missile defense "roof". Some people may therefore wonder why Russia would oppose Washington's deployment of BMD, currently pursued under President Obama's "European Phased Adaptive Approach" (EPAA). Why should Moscow worry about the deployment of an inherently defensive system? The problem is that when viewed from Russia's perspective, the American BMD looks like a weapon that can undercut Russia's own nuclear deterrent and hence increase that country's vulnerability to a first (that is, offensive) nuclear strike by the US.

For this reason, it is not surprising that Russia is skeptical about the BMD restructuring announced in mid-March by US Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, which, it says, has fallen well below its expectations. Given the deployment in Europe (and very close to the Russian territory to boot) of US strategic and tactical nuclear arms as well as conventional weapons, America and NATO's BMD "defense umbrella" is for all intents and purposes a "forward based weapon".

At the same time, Russian strategic



planners point out that Moscow has no intention to develop and position its BMD systems on the American continents. Therefore, the obvious question to ask is how would the US respond if roles were reversed – that is, if Russia (or China) were deploying BMD systems around the coast of the US? Would Washington not have the same concerns about US security, and would it not insist on its right to respond to the perceived potential threat as it deemed appropriate? Would it not be incumbent upon it at least to seek explanations of Moscow's intentions?

In response to America's BMD deployment plans, Moscow has threatened to withdraw from the latest strategic offensive arms (SOA) agreement as well as from the Prague Treaty signed in 2010 (labeled in the US as a New START and in Russia as START-3). The treaty permitted the two sides to

have 1,550 strategic nuclear warheads each by 2017 – a formidable force outweighing nuclear capabilities of the rest of the world combined.

Since 1945, when the nuclear era began, the US and Russia have held no talks on downsizing their tactical nuclear weapons (TNW) that can be delivered from a distance of up to 500 km by aircraft or short-range missiles. Given the ramifications in Europe of Washington's global BMD program, to be implemented in addition to the US weapons already stationed there, Moscow is reluctant to address the TNW issue. It also refuses to launch any confidence-building measures related to such weapons, such as inspections at the Russian TNW sites.

Furthermore, there is no agreement between Moscow and Washington on preventing the militarization of outer space or on issues such as the preven-

tion of collisions of nuclear-powered submarines. A new treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), which is required by changes in military balances since 1990, has yet to be negotiated. In Moscow's view, the treaty should entail no flank limitations or any linkage with potential conflicts.

The main cause of this failure has not changed for decades: there simply is not enough trust between the two countries to make tangible progress on all these fronts.

It is high time that we move on. The vision of a nuclear weapons free world may well be unattainable, but that is no excuse for failing to take at least limited steps in that direction. And here both the US and Russia carry special responsibility. In order that all states are involved in a nuclear arms reduction process, the following steps must be taken:

1. Russia and the US must reach a deal on downsizing their nuclear capabilities to an aggregate level equal to the number of nuclear weapons at the disposal of all other states (such a deal could be reached during START-5, START-6 and START-7).

2. All nuclear weapon "haves" – both de jure and de facto – must set up an approximate deadline for the creation of a nuclear-free world (for example, 2045 or later). Such a Rubicon is needed as an incentive to make more solid calculations as regards the production and elimination of nuclear weapons.

3. All nuclear-weapon states must declare a no-first use of nuclear weapons against one another – no later than 2015.

Russia and the US could go one step further, such as pushing for even lower limits for their SOA. This would necessitate the full cancellation of the EPAA, the signing of reciprocal legally-binding guarantees not to use BMD against each other and the withdrawal of all American TNW to the continental United States, which would remove the "the legacy of the Cold War in Europe".

Presidents Obama and Putin have a historic opportunity to rise to the challenge. They should meet this year to begin tackling the bilateral and multilateral arms control agenda – other important issues should be debated at separate talks. Their goal should be to restore mutual trust and to revitalize the inexorably flagging arms control process between their countries.

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A SPY STORY: WHAT WENT WRONG FOR RYAN FOGLE?

A real spy would know...

By Armen Gasparyan

The Voice of Russia Analyst

On the night of May 13th the third secretary of the US Embassy's political department, Ryan Christian Fogle, was arrested in Moscow. The Russian counterintelligence service had accused him of espionage and offered irrefutable evidence to support the claim. Nevertheless, the pictures that were published, though clear to professional observers, sparked numerous sarcastic commentaries in the mass media. The most vicious were those who, after watching James Bond movies, thought they knew for certain how spies should be equipped and how they should behave. In the real world though, things are somewhat different.

Every intelligence service has a standard recruitment procedure. In their routine reports, agents list people who might be of interest. A detailed dossier is compiled and, after a thorough examination of all the information, a decision is made about a possible agent's viability. The potential "spook" is assigned an alias and a "handler", usually an experienced intelligence officer. Ideally, they develop a relationship of trust, which is why psychologists prepare a detailed psychological profile of both the future agent and his or her mentor.

Only after all of that does the formal recruitment process begin, undertaken by professional intelligence officers. There are such people in every diplomatic mission, and thanks to thriller novels it is commonly believed that they all occupy the positions of embassy secretaries, cultural attachés or ambassadors' advisors. That, sadly, is not quite the case. Intelligence service employees may indeed hold the position of cultural attaché, but they tend to be the so-called "legal" intelligence people. They are closely watched by counterintelligence services while their aides, in fact, do most of the work and are officially employed in pretty much any role, like for example a gardener.

Sometimes though there are exceptions. A potential agent may appear so important that the preparatory work is cut to a minimum, with the resident intelligence service head conducting the recruitment; such was the case with Fogle. The CIA believed that one employee of the Russian secret service could provide vital information about tactics, technical equipment and training methods. Fogle was tasked with investigating that individual, and that's exactly where it all went downhill for the poor spy. Great fiasco... While disguised in a wig, he left the US Embassy in the back of a car which then stopped at a Moscow auto repair shop. There, Fogle changed his wig and clothing before walking to meet his recruitment target. During his second phone conversation the would-be spy had managed to persuade the potential agent to meet with him. Here, though the storyline diverts from the stuff of fiction, instead of a recruitment talk, Fogle was arrested and declared persona non grata in Russia. It was a logical outcome in a string of countless miscalculations.

Everything that was confiscated from the spy was displayed to the whole



world, but the FSB had miscalculated. While putting all the items in one pile, the counterintelligence people failed to explain which objects were to be handed over to the potential agent and which were used by the American intelligence officer himself. Let's examine the photos once again.

Wigs and glasses - a "must-have" for any spy. This basic equipment is used all over the world to evade surveillance and so that agents never know what their "curator" really looks like. Fogle was arrested wearing one of the wigs when he approached the planned rendezvous with his recruitment target. Prior to that he had changed his route, attempting to ensure he was not being followed. The US intelligence agent should have spent some time studying the good old spy stories and learned from the sad experience of his predecessors, since it also became clear later that the confiscated wigs were identical to those found on Michael Sellers in 1986, another CIA agent exposed in Moscow. One high-ranking employee at the Langley headquarters made a bitter remark that the CIA's agent network in Moscow was virtually non-existent. Years have passed but US intelligence seems to have barely learned a thing from its mistakes. Indeed, its agents appear to be acting on guidelines drawn from Somerset Maugham's spy stories.

It is interesting that, when discussing the Fogle fiasco, the world's media, for some reason, chose not to compare it to another very public unveiling of an American spy. In 1977 CIA employee, Martha Peterson, was arrested while working under diplomatic protection at the US Embassy in Moscow. She was the handler for Alexander Ogorodnik, personal assistant to the USSR's Minister of Foreign Affairs who, in Wash-

ington, was known by the alias "Trigon". Back then, Peterson pulled black pants and a jacket over her dress in a cinema, she buttoned up and let down her hair but, not even that masquerade could help her to escape surveillance. Peterson was arrested on the spot while trying to establish a hiding place. Instructions, questionnaires, microphotography equipment, gold, money and two ampoules of poison (for the agent) were discovered. CIA Director Stansfield Turner commented on Peterson's outing saying they should have thought better than to hush up the Moscow flop and its aftermath.

One hundred euros is the standard sum today for recruiting an agent. Psychologists believe that just about anyone could be tempted by that amount. The intelligence service has its own rules; by offering a hundred euros to a potential agent they demonstrate their interest. By agreeing to accept the money he automatically provides compromising information about himself and subsequent payments are significantly reduced. As a rule, such payments never exceed three thousand USD per month. For example, Alexander Litvinenko, an FSB agent who defected to Great Britain, was paid about 2.5 thousand USD by British Intelligence.

Detailed paper atlas of Moscow. Today, when every other mobile phone carries GPS navigation and a set of maps, carrying a detailed paper atlas of Moscow appears absurd; but only to those with no idea of how intelligence agencies work. First, one must avoid leaving tracks, in this case, digitally. No self-respecting spy in the world would plot his route to a meeting with a potential target on Google Maps and then save the search, thus making the street map, in such situations, an absolute necessity. As a rule, the city guide is kept in the car and in itself arouses no suspicion.

A cheap Nokia telephone and a SIM card from a Russian mobile service provider. In such cases a "front man" signs the contract and payments are made at anonymous electronic terminals, no credit cards are used. For the intelligence service this is a way to control a telephone number completely, to urgently contact an agent as well as hide the identity behind a specific phone number. Another SIM card for 4G services is used for data transfer and is also registered under a false name. Without knowing the SIM card's number, there's no voice or text messaging service attached to it and it cannot be traced.

A compass. The exhibition of this simple device provoked special malice. For some reason, nobody considered it as merely a reliable method of orientation. Secret places are very rarely established inside cities, as a rule, they are set up

in remote forests. Nothing more convenient, or reliable, than the tried and tested compass has been invented to locate such places. In addition, it is impossible to verify where or when a compass has been used.

A frequency scanner with a wireless headset can be used to determine whether or not you are being followed and it is a standard device in the modern spy's inventory. An RFID (radio frequency identification) Shield allows the transmission of encrypted information and reduces the need for regular meetings with an agent to a minimum. He can be given new assignments on a regular basis using an ordinary smart phone and avoid the unnecessary risk of contacting a resident spy.

One of Fogle's key mistakes was riding in the back seat of the car to the meeting with the potential agent. In intelligence circles it is considered bad form to repeat oneself. That trick was discovered by the USSR counterintelligence back in 1985, when a number of cars with darkened glass were delivered to Moscow, specifically for intelligence purposes. Mannequins were brought, which imitated embassy staff, as well as special face masks. US spies expected all that to fool other surveillance services. Various methods of disguise were used for that purpose; for example, a mannequin of the spy who planned a meeting with an agent was overtly driven in the opposite direction in a regular car. The intelligence employee himself travelled in a car with darkened windows in a completely different direction. The masks were used for the same purpose, to distract the attention of counterintelligence. That is why Fogle's change of clothes at a gas station was a signal to surveillance officers that he was preparing to meet with the agent.

Imagine if Ryan Fogle hadn't been arrested that day. Then the story would have followed one of three possible scenarios. In the first one, he could have recruited the decoy Russian spy who would have served as a channel for a considerable amount of truthful leaks until a fake one would have blown Fogle's cover and discredited the CIA. Or the Russian spy could have dodged Fogle's attempts to recruit him, tricking Fogle into pursuing him until he had sleepwalked in the crosshairs of Russia's counterintelligence agents, who would have arrested the third secretary of the US Embassy in Moscow when the time was ripe - with all that it entailed. And finally, in the last scenario, Fogle would have seen through the Russian agent's cover and reported to Washington that he had been approached by Russia's counter intelligence. The doubtful CIA would have made him double check this suspicion. Fogle would have done as he was bid and as a result brought on himself more attention and eventual arrest.

Was there a way for the third secretary of the US Embassy to avoid his outing? Practice shows he couldn't, since intelligence often takes on too much risk when fishing for a valuable agent. As often as not these attempts are doomed. But that's the thing about espionage: you mustn't let even the slimmest chance slip through your hands.

The most significant question though is why Russian counterintelligence felt the need to arrest Fogle? In the eyes of the average Joe, who judges intelligence agencies by the movies he or she has seen, the answer is obvious - they made a mistake! Moscow had no choice but to simply have allowed the American spy to recruit their own reliable employee and allow the CIA to receive true information on a regular basis until, at the right moment, misinformation could be fed through the informant. Yet still, they arrested Fogle. The truth though is very clear; the intelligence community is one of the most conservative in society, it is customary in such circles not to forget their own failures and, wherever possible, to respond correspondingly. But the main rule is to never forgive or forget. A few years ago, Russian spies along with Anna Chapman, were arrested in the US. Their equipment, once found and displayed, also gave rise to mockery in the world's mass media, and so, Fogle was arrested. It adhered to all the unspoken secret service rules, one of which says that, while ordinary people laugh at unfortunate spies, the professionals will always, in the shadows, continue to play their spy games.



IS GOLD THE SAVIOR OR THE KILLER OF THE US DOLLAR?

Controversies, conspiracies and experts' forecasts

By Valentin Mândrășescu

The Voice of Russia Analyst

Gold is the most controversial asset of the financial world. An American business magnate Warren Buffett believes that gold is "a valueless asset". Deutsche Bank's analysts Daniel Brebner and Xiao Fu believe that gold is "an officially recognized form of money" because central banks hold gold in their reserves. There are a growing number of investors who believe that a cartel run by the world's central banks or the US government is artificially suppressing the price of gold in order to save the dollar-based monetary system from collapse. The mainstream media labels those who believe in gold market manipulation as "conspiracy theorists". Who is right? Is gold really dangerous for the dollar?

Andrew Maguire, a former Goldman Sachs gold trader and whistleblower, believes that JP Morgan and HSBC are using the COMEX futures exchange in Chicago to suppress the prices of gold and silver through concentrated shorting of massive amounts of futures contracts. The whistleblower has informed both the CFTC and the Department of Justice's Antitrust Division about the manipulation but there has been no official conclusive investigation regarding the allegations made by Maguire.

At the same time, there are financial experts who believe that the arguments that support the gold manipulation theories are rather speculative. Karl Denninger, a financial pundit and publisher of The Market Ticker, gave a skeptical answer when asked whether he thinks there is a gold conspiracy:

"Yes and no. Wherever there are markets people will try to take advantage of inefficiencies in that market. But most of the claims of conspiracy are predicated on a large short interest in the futures market. **This is speculation rather than fact-based, never mind that nobody seems to cry conspiracy or cartel when the price rises rapidly – only when it falls or fails to rise,**" he told the Voice of Russia.

In an exclusive interview, Peter Koenig, a former World Bank economist with 30 years experience, talked about the organizations behind the gold market manipulation which he believes has become evident in the last months: "This has been recently shown, when the gold price dropped by some US\$200 per ounce. It is now hovering between US\$1,400/ounce and US\$1,500/ounce. **The chief manipulator of the gold market is the Bank of International Settlements, representing the interests of the chief stakeholders in the world's financial system, dominated by Wall Street and the Rothschild Group.**"

Why would the US government or the Bank of International Settlements try to manipulate the gold market? One of the reasons could be the creeping worldwide remonetization of gold. In an exclusive interview with the Voice of Russia, James Rickards, an investment banker and the author of the national best-seller Currency Wars: The Making of the Next Global Crisis, explained the process: "what we

are witnessing today is the slow remonetization of gold. This is evidenced by the following events: Russia has increased its gold reserves by 50% in the past four years, China has increased its gold reserves over 200% in the past four years, Germany is requesting that its gold kept in New York and Paris be delivered to Frankfurt, the Netherlands is considering repatriating its gold from New York, as are others. Vietnam, the Philippines, Mexico and others have all made significant gold purchases recently. This is a slow-motion run on the bank in terms of gold reserves. **There is no reason for a central bank to acquire gold or demand physical possession unless you believe that gold is money. If gold is money, then the implications for the price of gold based on the ratio of gold to paper money are an implied price of \$7,000 per ounce, or higher.**"

If gold is money as some experts believe, then there are two distinct possibilities. Either gold will replace the dollar as the main element of the global monetary system or the dollar will revert to the gold standard and will be backed by gold.

Peter Koenig, who explored the topic of a new gold standard in his novel *Implosion - an Economic Thriller*, believes that the gold standard may be introduced to help the American economy: "it is quite possible that the US may want to return to some kind of a gold standard to salvage the dollar... The return to the gold standard could be a very simple scheme; using a fixed unit of gold vs. a debt ratio close to the one of the highest interested debtor nation. A new gold standard would help Uncle Sam by revaluing the dollar and at the same time purging its enormous debt on the rest of the world, mostly on the backs of those countries which have no or limited gold reserves. Many of them are developing countries with natural resources, sought-after by the West – resources that would help pay their skyrocketing debt service."

In his view, the reinstatement of the gold standard would deal a financial blow to the developing countries, while the European countries will see it as a

last chance to save their economies: "Most OECD economies with gold reserves – and especially the co-opted Europeans – might go along with the scheme. Mainly, because their economies are in shambles since the 2008 Wall Street / IMF imposed artificial 'crises'. Their short-term thinking might see the new gold standard as the salvation of the beaten euro. But what else is there to expect, when the President of the European Central Bank is a former Goldman Sachs executive?"

One of the problems of such a scheme would be the evident mistrust that exists between the central banks of the world. Recently, the Bundesbank requested that its gold held by the US be returned to Frankfurt. The Federal Reserve stated that it will need seven years to return the gold, sparking concerns that the Federal Reserve's gold vaults are actually empty and that the US has no gold reserves left. The lack of an official and regular auditing process fuels the conspiracy theories which imply that all of the gold has been sold in order to suppress its price.

While the reinstatement of the gold standard is possible, Karl Denninger points out that it is neither likely nor desirable: "the downside to gold as a currency is that the cartel controlling the supply (those who own the mines) is in fact more-centralized and less subject to the people than existing fiat currency sources are! We could (as Americans) replace The Fed, but how do you "replace" a miner in South Africa?"

In order for an economy to remain balanced, the supply of currency and credit must be correlated with economic output. If currency and credit expands faster than economic output you have inflation, and if the converse occurs you have deflation, both in a monetary sense. Properly managed fiat currencies can surpass gold in this regard." One of the best-known arguments in favor of the gold standard is attributed to the famous economist Friedrich August von Hayek who said that "with the exception only of the period of the gold standard, practically all governments in history have

used their exclusive power to issue money to defraud and plunder the people". While the "plundering" part may be true in regard to some governments and administrations, Karl Denninger points out that the gold standard is not immune to governmental debasing: "that modern fiat currencies have tended to be manipulated politically toward devaluation as a means to cost-shift and hide the impact of government deficit spending is no more inherent in them than does Rome's historical debasement of gold currency imply that all metallic currencies are subject to debasement."

The negative consequences of the eventual reinstatement of the gold standard should not be interpreted as proof of the irreplaceability of the US dollar. Peter Koenig told the Voice of Russia about one of the alternatives to the dominance of the American currency: "**Today the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) have the power to replace the dollar as their international trading unit with their local currencies, a blow to the US, hardly anybody dares speaking about. As an alternative to the dollar – or gold for that matter – they might propose a basket of currencies – similar to Special Drawing Rights (SDR – issued by the IMF), with their combined currencies having a majority weight in the basket.**"

Besides being an alternative to the dollar, gold attracts investors with its supposed ability to be a wealth preserver in times of economic trouble. That is why, not only central banks are interested in buying gold. Ordinary people often use it as an investment best suited for times of economic recession. The Obama administration seems to have a fairly optimistic view on the future of the US economy, which implies that purchasing gold is a waste of money. But what if the future of the US economy is not bright? Karl Denninger has done impressive research on the mechanisms behind the economic problems that plague the US economy and described them in his book *Leverage: How Cheap Money Will Destroy the World*. In his view, the US economy is far from a swift recovery: "**The**

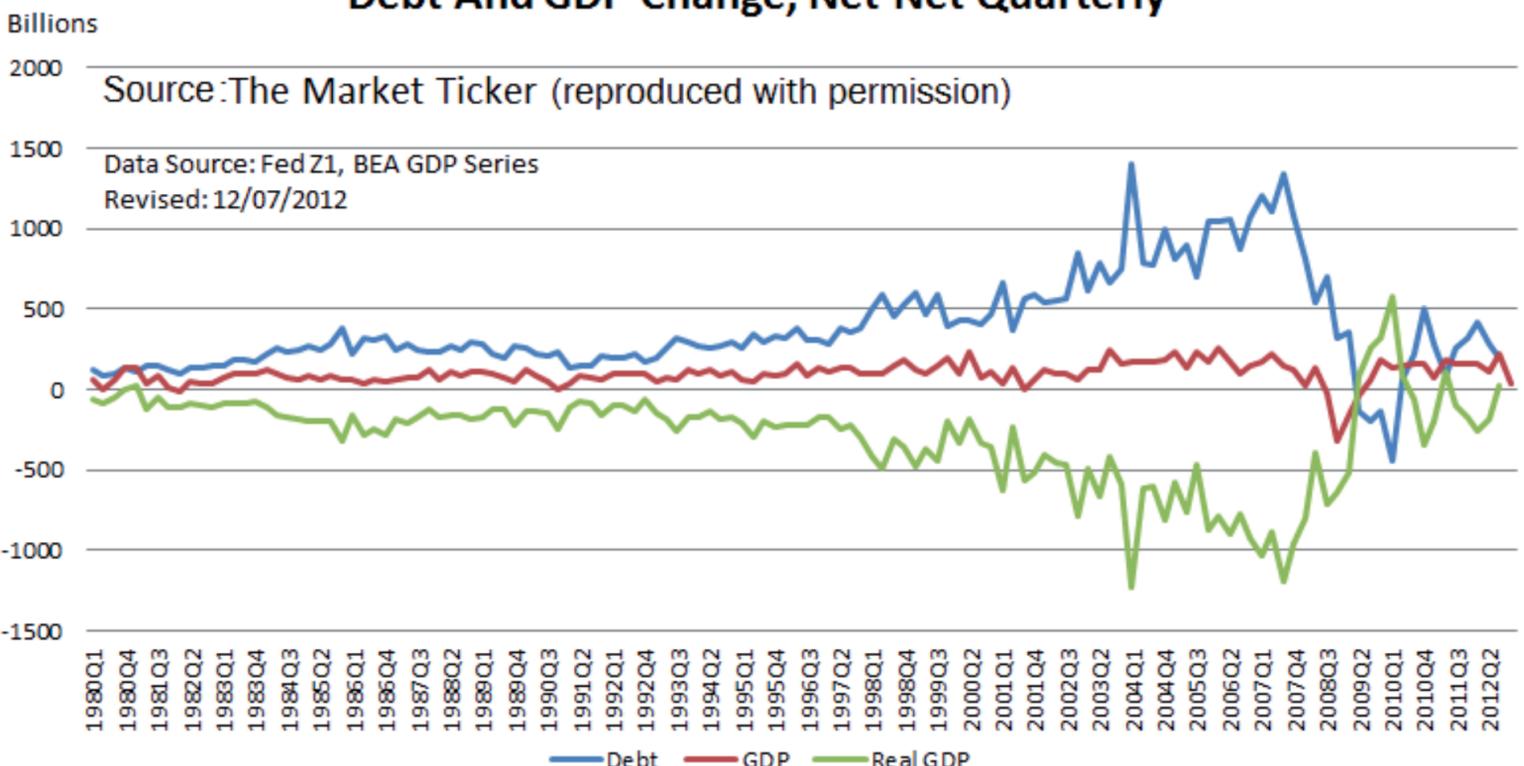
last 30 years have been a time where credit expansion has powered a false economic picture. That credit expansion cycle has ended and despite multiple attempts, refuses to restart. The likely reason is that there are no longer any willing and able marginal credit takers (those willing and able to take on more debt) in the private sector. **Since the United States, along with Europe, have refused to allow those who imprudently granted that credit to go bankrupt (the large banks, primarily) and clear the market in this regard it is unlikely that a strong recovery can be obtained in the near future.**"

If the economy is unlikely to recover, is gold a good investment for the near future? The opinions presented by the experts we've interviewed are divergent. In his interview, James Rickards told the Voice of Russia that gold is a great investment because "it performs well in conditions of inflation and deflation". Peter Koenig and Karl Denninger have a different view. The arguments brought forward by the former World Bank economist concern the instability of the value of gold and its unproductiveness: "Gold, in my humble opinion, is not even a short-term viable investment. Its value is vulnerable. A sound economy must grow on stable ground. Land, productive land and home-grown industries – not speculative real estate – might be the soundest investment for the US and the European economies to recover". Karl Denninger pointed out that gold is an investment that has several flaws: "Gold is an excellent geopolitical hedge but it makes a terrible inflation hedge; you would have been far ahead of gold since the 1930s, for example, to buy common stocks rather than gold. Indeed even from 1980 you'd be well ahead of the game to have bought stocks. I do not expect high inflation to be sustainable, say much less hyperinflation. As such, I do not find the premise of gold to be a particularly attractive opportunity."

In the financial media and the blogosphere there is a fierce debate about the gold standard, gold investments and the existence of a grand manipulative scheme in the gold markets. To a certain extent, it doesn't really matter whether the gold conspiracy theorists are right or wrong and whether gold is a great or a terrible investment. If we compare the health of the economy with the health of a human body, it can be said that a feverish interest in gold is a like a fever in the human body. Just like how a fever signals that the body is not healthy, a feverish interest in all things related to gold signals that the economy is very sick. The interest in gold investments and gold conspiracy theories shows that there is a profound lack of trust in the government and in its ability to save the economy. In this context, every ounce of gold bought by an individual investor in the US or a central bank from Russia or China is not an investment per se but actually a political statement and a demand for change in Washington's economic policies. If the decision makers in Washington are not willing to pay attention to the critics of its economic policies then maybe they will start paying attention when private investors and the world's central banks start dismantling the dollar system, ounce by ounce.

"The last 30 years have been a time where credit expansion has powered a false economic picture" Karl Denninger

Debt And GDP Change, Net-Net Quarterly



AMERICA'S NEOCON MAINSTREAM

By Gilbert Doctorow

In this essay I present talking points about how the Neoconservative movement has captured and held the high ground in American foreign policy, distilling arguments I have made in more complete and substantiated form elsewhere.¹

While the Neoconservative label is today most commonly associated in the public mind with Republicans and with an aggressive, militarized pursuit of American foreign policy objectives across the globe, Russia was a key factor shaping the Neoconservative movement from the very beginning. The movement was born in the late 1970s and early 1980s among alienated former Leftists who were disillusioned with Soviet Communism and ardently criticized the Realpolitik policy of détente with the USSR begun by President Nixon and his Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. They rejected merely managing relations with the Communist homeland and called instead for action to overturn Communism and bring freedom to the “captive nations” of Eastern Europe.

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 touched off a triumphalist mood in America at large, where the negotiated understandings between Reagan and Gorbachev and the Kremlin's freely chosen decision to part with empire were barely understood in the public, while the political class scrambled to claim the spoils of “victory.”

The first major work of political science to explain what was happening in historical-philosophical terms and to set out roadmaps for the future of a post-Cold War world was Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History* (1992), which brilliantly harnessed the new triumphalism to Neoconservative principles with their Positivist certainty about mankind's eventual destiny. Others in the movement carried the torch further, insisting that with this knowledge of the future the pace of change could be hastened. In a world where, it was now asserted, only democratically governed nations can live in peace, America's security called for democracy promotion and the removal of all vestiges of autocracy globally. In this form the thinking became the common property of Democrats and Republicans.

With Europe in safe hands at the end of the 1990s, the Neocons turned their attention to the Middle East and calls went out to resume unfinished business of regime change in Iraq, which, it was said, would bring human progress and freedoms to the hapless region.

Meanwhile, the latent Russophobic prejudices of the Neoconservatives and their fellow-thinkers lay dormant. Indeed following the Russian default of 1998, the American establishment assumed its erstwhile foe was finished as a geopolitical force.

Russia's economic turnaround which began soon after the election of President Vladimir Putin and his restoration of federal authority were as unwelcome in the United States as they were unanticipated. Nonetheless, in the period immediately following 9/11, there was a tangible warming of state-to-state relations

due to the spontaneous and substantial assistance which Russia provided by opening its backyard, Central Asia, to American bases. However, George Bush failed to reciprocate in kind and quashed the Russians' hopes for a new security arrangement in Europe bringing them in from the cold. Instead, NATO expansion proceeded apace, moving into the Baltics.

Against this background as a spurned suitor, Russia joined Belgium, France and Germany in vociferously objecting to the coming US invasion of Iraq in the spring of 2003. American fury at perceived French perfidy was intense but quickly dissipated when Jacques Chirac backtracked. However, moral posturing in the UN Security Council by Russia, a revisionist power, incited a deep current of resentment in the American foreign policy establishment. The Neocons, who had been the cheerleaders of George W. Bush's Iraqi invasion in the first place, now took the lead in retaliation. Russia would be cast as a recidivist autocratic state, with which democracies could not, by definition, engage in strategic partnerships.

The result, a little more than a year later, was the issuance in September 2004 of an Open Letter to the Heads of State and Government of the European Union and NATO. This document on the letterhead of the Project for a New American Century, the Neocon mainstay, castigated the Putin regime for backsliding from the mythical democratic achievements of Boris Yeltsin in the 1990s and for an imperial revival in Russia's behavior towards its neighbors.

The Open Letter established a successful Neocon formula of soliciting bipartisan sign-up by prominent US politicians, diplomats and thinkers together with prominent East European freedom fighters and West European statesmen for what became heavily mediated anti-Kremlin public petitions and meetings. The most recent iteration was the gathering in the Senate office building in Washington on 4 March 2013 to promote the notion of “no business as usual” with the Russian Government, whose election the organizers treat as illegitimate.

Between 2004 and 2013, Neocon led or inspired public relations blows directed against Russia have occurred periodically. One such case was an article published under the name of Yulia Tymoshenko in the May-June 2007 issue of *Foreign Affairs* magazine, America's most prestigious and widely read journal in its domain. Here the leader of Ukraine's Orange Revolution threw every accusation about Russian villainy, corruption and degradation from the Neocon handbook at President Putin's Kremlin. This ghostwritten piece of deception was in response to Putin's speech at the Munich Security Conference of February 2007 with its discursive critique of American unilateralism.

A blistering anti-Kremlin offensive came in the wake of the Russian-Georgian War of August 2008. Still another wave followed President Obama's launch of the “reset” policy. One noteworthy item from this campaign was another fabricated docu-

RUSSIA'S TOUGH REGULATION OF FOREIGN FINANCED NGOs IS MOTIVATED BY LEGITIMATE CONCERNS

By Martin Sieff



“Hard cases make bad law,” according to an old saying, and this is certainly true of Russia's tough new law demanding non-governmental organizations register with the government. The furor over the law in Europe and America has opened up a massive new chasm between Russia and the West when it is in the true long range interests of both sides to learn to understand each other better, and cooperate more.

The current generation of leaders, policymakers and pundits across Western Europe and the United States are not only ignorant of the broad sweep, and terribly hard-earned lessons of Russian history, they are also blithely ignorant of the appalling post-Soviet decade of the 1990s when more than 25 million Russians died premature deaths because of the collapse of living standards and social support systems.

However, Russian policymakers and the general public remember those terrible times well: Those traumatic memories explain why Russia's leaders are determined to uphold their “vertical,” the effectiveness and integrity of their central government, and why there are determined not to let Western-based NGOs, or Russian-based ones that are inspired and guided by Western mentors, from transforming their state along lines approved by editorial writers in Washington, New York, London and Brussels.

At the heart of the row over the regulation, or lack thereof, of NGOs in Russia is the classic debate between Westerners and Slavophiles that goes back at least to the 1840s. Had Alexander Solzhenitsyn still been alive, one can easily predict he would have unhesitatingly backed the Kremlin on the issue, just as Fyodor Dostoevsky would have done in the 1860s. On the other side of the debate, Russian liberals today are the clear heirs of Alexander Herzen.

But what gives teeth and weight to the Russian government's line on NGOs today is that it is not just repeating ancient justifications for authoritarian rule that were wheeled out 170 to 150 years ago. The Russia of Vladimir Putin and Dmitri Medvedev is manifestly not the isolated, impoverished and ferociously disciplined Hermit Empire of Tsar Nikolai I. The Russian government today is not reacting to imaginary or prophetic fears about a terrible revolution half a century in the future. It is responding to the vivid, fresh memories of a “time of troubles” that ended only in 1999, less than 15 years ago.

The actions of liberal, pro-human rights NGOs in Russia who have refused to accept the terms of the new law have been catastrophic to their own cause. Eleven of them have appealed to the European Court of Human Rights while at the same time seeking – and obtaining –

moral support for their opposition to the new law from the Council of Europe and the European Union.

This move guarantees two things: First, it confirms the government in its view that all unregulated, NGO activity in Russia is potentially and probably subversive in nature. Second, far from strengthening the forces of democracy, pluralism and tolerance, it discredits them. The 11 NGOs may now seem in the eyes of much of the Russian public as trying to undermine the nation and seeking the protection of hostile outside powers. Liberal groups critical of government policies in the United States over the past half century have often fallen into this same trap.

Western governments and international human rights organizations need to initiate a series of dialogs with the Kremlin rather than simply descending into a shouting match with it. Their leaders and spokesmen need to learn and understand the legitimate concerns of the Russian government based on the appalling experiences and costs of the country's recent history.

Western policymakers also need to understand that the Kremlin's fear of a destabilizing Western-engineered “color” revolution are born of real observations and experiences, and are not groundless fantasies. Such revolutions did overthrow the previous governments of Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan during the past decade. They led to an era of corruption, impoverishment and shameless looting in Ukraine, upheaval, civil clashes and eventually even war with Russia in Georgia, and to unprecedented ethnic riots in Kyrgyzstan in which many hundreds of innocent ethnic minority Uzbeks were killed.

Russian policymakers and millions of people in Russia fear that a similar revolution in Russia could lead to a new “time of troubles” of powerlessness, economic ruin and universal suffering that could cost millions of innocent lives. Western leaders and NGO officials who lecture Russia have shown no signs at all of understanding this history: They appear blithely ignorant of it.

Russia's concern over the unregulated activities of international NGOs is shared by legitimate governments that both are and are not democratic, and that together rule well over one third of the population of the world, and more than three times the combined populations of the United States and the European Union. Western leaders need to address this growing “crack in the world” and seek constructive dialogs and cooperation with the governments on the other side of it, including Russia's. This would do far more good for ordinary people everywhere than indulging in more childish public rebukes.

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ment – the Open Letter to President Obama of July 2009 signed by Lech Walesa, Vaclav Havel and heroes of the East European liberation movements. This seeming cri de coeur over Russian threats and abuses was disseminated by The New York Times and mainstream media. Its authorship was later traced back to the Brussels

office of the German Marshall Fund and its Neocon director.

I mention these dirty tricks to highlight the Neocons' overriding principle of “the end justifies the means.” Double standards and cynical distortions are apparent in most criticism of Kremlin policies they have fed to the media. Meanwhile, the Neocon brain trust brandishes their academic credentials as doctors of political science and humanities to enhance their authority, luring their would-be debating partners into what is a hopeless poker match with card cheats.

Key Neocon planners and thinkers are merely the most visible offenders against truth. Despite fine words about intellectual independence, America's universities and think tanks were swept up by Neoconservative principles and triumphalism from the 1990s along with the general public. Even cursory perusal of the public lectures and conferences on present-day Russia which they host reveals almost exclusive skewing towards seditious Russian opposition personalities who are presented as the freedom fighters of our day.

During the 2012 American presidential campaign, Republican candidate Mitt Romney made what was

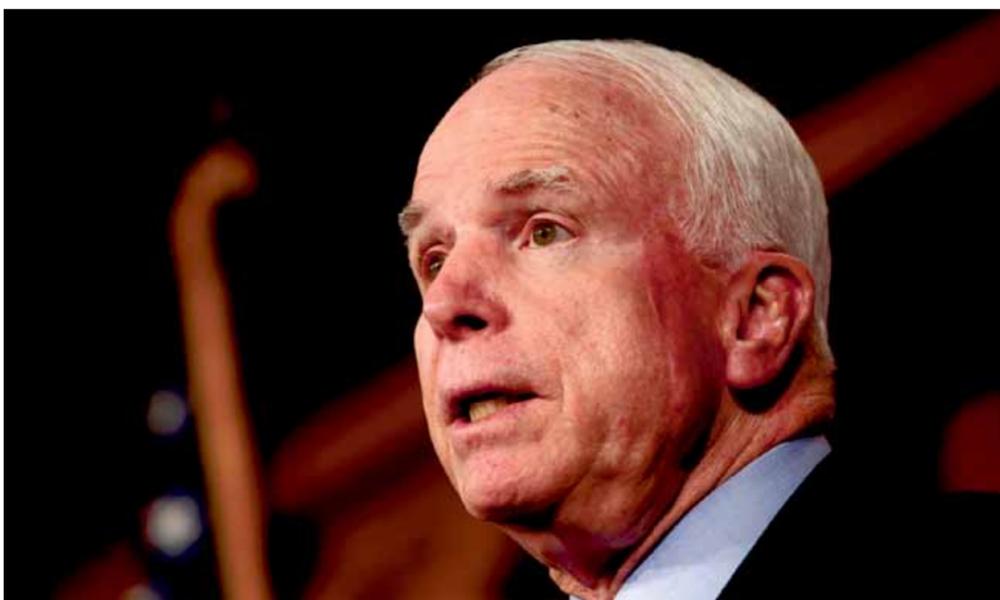
widely lampooned as a serious gaffe when he remarked that Russia is America's number one geopolitical opponent. His observation erred only in failing to pay obeisance to political correctness. There can be no denying that ever since it registered its strong opposition to American plans to invade Iraq in 2003, Russia has been obstructing US-led initiatives to remake the world in its image. The very latest instance is the conflict in Syria.

Need it be this way? Of course not!

However, for a more constructive relationship with Russia to come about, a first and essential step is for Americans to acknowledge the grip which Neoconservative thinking has had on the country's foreign policy establishment these past 20 years. These fundamental premises of international relations which have been taken on faith must be openly debated. Only then can we begin to address lost opportunities with Russia... and with many other powers as well.

¹See Gilbert Doctorow, *Stepping Out of Line: Collected (Nonconformist) Essays on Russian-American Relations, 2008-12.*

Gilbert Doctorow, Research Fellow of The American University in Moscow



Sponsored by The Russia House Associates

GEORGIAN REFLECTIONS

By Patrick Armstrong

For two decades Georgia has been the favourite stick with which to beat Russia; for two decades we have been told Moscow is trying to eat Georgia; for two decades Georgia has been the contrast to illustrate what Russia could be if it weren't so Russian; for two decades Georgia has been painted as the victim of Moscow's worst impulses; for two decades Westerners have believed everything from Tbilisi and nothing from Moscow. A cornerstone of the anti-Russia edifice indeed and the "mine canary" of Russian intentions.

For two decades Russia has been interpreted through memes; assumptions deemed so true as to need no evidence; assumptions that reveal the facts that prove them; assumptions so resistant to reality that they create reality; assumptions that are non-falsifiable. Of the many memes three important ones are: Moscow wants its empire back; Moscow wants to control energy routes; Moscow hates democracies. Georgia was the perfect demonstration: formerly part of that empire, it had a pipeline route and was a stout democracy. QED. Facts were hammered to fit the memes. I have set out the larger argument in *The Fire Below: How the Caucasus Shaped Russia*, available on Amazon and elsewhere.

We were told three things about Saakashvili's Georgia. It was a true democracy improving in all ways, as true democracies should, not least economically; Saakashvili had courageously taken a serious bite at corruption; Georgia was a true ally of the West – worthy indeed of NATO membership and a proud contributor to the War on Terror. These Georgian merits were contrasted with Russian deficiencies: Georgia was a democracy, Russia wasn't; Georgia was overcoming corruption, Russia was sunk in it; Georgia was an ally, Russia was an enemy, of us but especially of our new Georgian friend. Western media, Western politicians lapped this stuff up.

Until August 2008. Many noticed that Moscow had its chance to do what it supposedly wanted to: its victorious army was on the ground; the Georgian army had fled; the West was flubbing. But it didn't: didn't seize Georgia, didn't seize the pipeline, didn't drive to Tbilisi and overthrow the government. The memes were shaken. The August 2008 War shattered Saakashvili's veracity, bona fides and reliability. I and others have written much about this. As the war changed from the expected victory march into a disaster, Saakashvili's explanations became ever less credible. The US Embassy, despite a serious clue, swallowed Saakashvili's story whole. Even the exquisitely precious EU report scoffed at Saakashvili's stories. Altogether an embarrassing display of the West's credulity and one better forgotten.

As it pretty well has been forgotten.

But the new government is proving to be a much more effective destroyer of Saakashvili's cornerstone myths of democracy, anti-corruption and reliable ally. Based on the large opposition Saakashvili created over the years (his adulators seldom noticed how many former colleagues and allies had given up on him), members of the new government know reality better than Western consumers of Saakashvili's propaganda. And ordinary Georgians, living in that reality, overwhelmingly support the new government and approve its actions as an April National Democratic Institute poll shows.

Democracy. Objective observers had already observed the improbable turnout figures for Saakashvili's first election after the "Rose Revolution". The OSCE described enough finagling in its 2008 report to have given Saakashvili the three or four percentage points he needed to avoid a runoff election against a single opposition candidate. In a case that even the Saakashvili-worshipping media could not ignore, an anti-government demonstration was suppressed with far more violence (and a remarkable array of expensive technology, paid for by whom?) than we have ever seen in Moscow. Critical media outlets were squashed – in one famous case, by armed police in mid-broadcast. The media was tightly controlled. Georgia had political prisoners (the current parliament's expression, not mine) in its over-stuffed prisons. Not so "democratic"

after all.

Corruption. Saakashvili eliminated the Soviet-era traffic police; an organisation that did little but extract bribes from drivers. A good step indeed. However, corruption exists in several forms. There is the low-level highly visible form of a traffic cop with his hand out but there is also the higher, more important but less visible, form of money disappearing at the top power levels. We are now hearing about this in Georgia. Saakashvili's elaborate presidential palace is hardly appropriate for a poor country; neither are his personal expenses. Charges and arrests are coming: two of Saakashvili's allies; the Mayor of Tbilisi; a governor. In May the former Prime Minister and former Health Minister were arrested; the charges include election-fixing and several other crimes. There is a gigantic disparity between the claimed growth rate and the staggeringly high unemployment rate: the survey mentioned above has nearly 50% claiming to be unemployed and looking for work. I can think of only two ways high growth can be consistent with spectacular unemployment rates: either the growth is a façade of luxury hotels and other fripperies or corruption and cronyism have kept the money locked in a tiny group of connected people.

Ally. There have long been stories that Tbilisi was encouraging, training and/or hosting jihadists. Over the years I have seen assertions that Tbilisi sponsored a conference of jihadists in 2009. Russian authorities have claimed that this is happening and so has a former Georgian parliamentarian; I filed these away in the "possible but not proven" file. In August 2012 several Georgian soldiers were killed in a firefight; the official story was that it was an operation against kidnappers who had infiltrated from Dagestan in Russia. But today's Public Defender has a different theory: he says the "armed group, involved in the clash, was formed, armed and trained by then leadership of the Georgian Interior Ministry, which recruited members of the group mainly from Chechen exiles by promising them to give free passage to Russia's North Caucasus via Georgia." Both Prime Minister Ivanishvili and the US Ambassador (made suddenly wiser by the Boston Marathon bombing) think this accusation should be investigated. Just what would such an investigation find? And, more interesting, would any of Saakashvili's loyal sponsors in Washington have been aware of this?

And there are more questions still. Ivanishvili thinks the August 2008 war should be investigated; Saakashvili, of course, does not. Will the death of Zurab Zhvania be satisfactorily investigated? there are those who think he was murdered. Will we ever find out who paid for the significant number of weapons Georgia acquired under Saakashvili? (Accord-

ing to the widely-used SIPRI Arms Transfer Database, Georgia received from Ukraine 12 2S3 152mm self-propelled guns, 40 BMP-2 IFVs, 23+ BTR-80 APCs, 6 Mi-24P/Mi-35P/Hind-F combat helicopters, 2 Mi-8/Mi-17/Hip-H Helicopters, 16 T-72 Tanks, 1 9K33 Osa/SA-8 Mobile SAM system, 48 9M33/SA-8 Gecko SAMs. It obtained from the Czech Republic, over the same time, 55 T-72 tanks, 24 Dana 152mm self-propelled guns, 6 RM-70 MRLs and 55 guns or large mortars.) None of these (well, OK, maybe the HIPs and BTRs) is appropriate to the alleged purpose of the US training scheme. Will we ever learn the inside details of the "Rose Revolution" that brought Saakashvili to power in the first place? And how about Georgia as a conduit of efforts to de-stabilise Russia? (Fanciful? Go to the Russian Spectrum website, read Konstantin Lebedev's confession and ask yourself, if you think it credible – but what's credible these days?: Georgia has no money, from where did it get the sums Lebedev is talking about?) It's all melting away.

Washington's schemes for Russia and its neighbours are not looking so good now. The "Orange Revolution" is dead and Ukraine will not be joining NATO (not that Ukrainians ever wanted to in the first place). The "Tulip Revolution" was always DOA. Putin turns out to have been telling the truth when he said Chechnya was a jihadist war. Russians still prefer Putin to the oppositionists by a substantial margin. Moscow has checkmated the foreign N"G"Os by replicating Washington's own law designed at a time when powerful foreign interests were trying to sway American opinions. The Russian economy is still in business. Latest news suggests Washington has accepted Moscow's line on Syria; namely that Assad and his government cannot be excluded if there are to be meaningful talks.

And Georgia's "Rose Revolution" was a sham: not democratic, not incorruptible, not an ally. Believers were manipulated. As were the Georgians, who have had a pretty wretched time of it since 1989.

And, by the way, before anyone makes the customary retort (I've run afoul of the Georgia lobby before) no, I do not work for the KGB, FSB or any other three-letter Russian acronym, Putin pays me nothing and has probably never heard of me. What motivates me is that we not make Russia into an enemy because we're too stupid to see reality or too arrogant to see anything but our own reflection in the mirror. The story we were told about Georgia was false and the Georgians themselves are telling us so.

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A FRENCH PERSPECTIVE ON THE RUSSIAN - AMERICAN RELATIONSHIP

By Alexandre Latsa



At the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union, in 1991, America triumphed in the sands of Iraq and announced the birth of a new world order dominated by the West. The end of the USSR marked the beginning of an era in which the Euro-American alliance assumed unchallenged control of the world's economic, political, military and moral order. On the European continent, the Western alliance seemed destined to gradually incorporate the entire former Soviet world for eternity.

From that moment, the Europeans, freed from Communism, seemed to finally have won the right to join the Euro-Atlantic community and develop their market economy. In a world that had become unipolar, they also appeared to have the right to choose between the West and the East, between NATO and NATO and between Coca-Cola and Pepsi.

This myth of the new unipolar world order did not last very long, however. Only 10 years after its birth, on 11 September 2001, America, the mightiest power the world has seen, was attacked on its own territory. A year earlier, in Moscow, another fundamental geostrategic event took place, although very few analysts paid attention to it at the time: the election of President Vladimir Putin. That election marked the political birth of a new Russia.

A few hours after the attacks on the World Trade Center, the Russian president was the very first head of state to speak to President Bush and offer him political and military support in the fight against terrorism. Russia, which at that time was facing an Islamist guerrilla insurgency in the Caucasus and terrorism on its own territory, clearly understood the fundamental importance of global, comprehensive and long-term cooperation in the fight against this scourge.

Unfortunately, Russia's outstretched hand was not grasped by US strategists. The wars against terrorism – initiated by America during the last decade in Afghanistan and Iraq but also to a limited extent in Pakistan, Somalia and indirectly in Libya – did not pay off. Worse, they have arguably contributed to the weakening of America's finances, exacerbated its post-2008 economic downturn and laid bare the flaws of the Western financial system. Moreover, all the above-mentioned military interventions have increased the diplomatic isolation of the United States. Meanwhile, the regional wars that were triggered in the Muslim world did not prevent terrorism from proliferating in America, Europe and elsewhere in the world.

Indeed, the world seems to be inexorably entering a multipolar paradigm – one in which regional organizations are playing a greater role and want to conduct independent policies. But nobody knows what this change will bring or what this new world order will look like.

Parallel to the expansion of NATO, projects in which America is not directly involved have emerged that point to embryonic pan-European collaboration. A significant such development is the growing economic, energy and political integration between Paris, Berlin and Moscow. We are witnessing a marked reduction of tensions, driven by Russia's proposals for a European security architecture that would be independent of NATO.

Further to the east, a Russo-Chinese alliance seems to be taking shape. The integration between these two superpowers is growing in the political, economic, energy and military fields, particularly in the context of anti-terrorism activities conducted through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which is slowly becoming a "Eurasian NATO."

In this new multilateral paradigm, Russia has become a key economic partner for the European Union, a privileged partner of China and a very active member of the group of countries known as the BRICS.

A new strategic deal could have been struck between the Americans, Europeans and Russians in the wake of the dissolution of the Warsaw pact in the 1990s. Unfortunately that was not to be, owing mainly to the advance of NATO to Russia's border and pro-Western putsches – poetically labelled "color revolutions" – in the countries of the former Soviet Union. More recently, Washington has pushed ahead with its missile defense shield deployment, riding roughshod over Moscow's objections.

Yet just as in 2001, Russia has once again affirmed its support for the US in the wake of the Boston terrorist attacks. Building on this new momentum, US strategists should finally acknowledge that Russia is not the Soviet Union and that America should work with it in an alliance against terrorism and totalitarianism. Could there be a more fitting tribute to the sacrifices made by both countries in the Second World War?

Alexandre Latsa is a French journalist and blogger for Dissonance



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