

What should President Putin do?

By Paul Craig Roberts, 5 September 2018

Andrei Martyanov <http://www.unz.com/article/russia-as-a-cat/> has answered my question <https://www.paulcraigroberts.org/2018/08/31/can-war-be-avoided-and-the-planet-saved/>.

I agree with everything Martyanov says. But I believe my question remains unanswered.

Probably it is my fault. Perhaps I framed the question so sharply that it came across as an attack on Putin's level-headed policy. Also, my use of the phrase "turning the other cheek" could have implied denigration of Putin rather than my admiration for his level-headedness and humane approach to his great responsibility.

I understand Putin's policy. I agree with Martyanov that it is the only policy that makes sense. I also agree with Martyanov that the correlation of forces has changed dramatically in Russia's favor. But to use another phrase, I am concerned about the slip between the cup and the lip. I think something needs to be done to halt Washington's provocations before they become so extreme that matters get out of hand.

Historically, provocations do tend to get out of hand, more often than not.

Perhaps Russia has prevented, by exposing it in advance, the false flag chemical attack that Washington had in the works in order to have an excuse for another missile attack on Syria, an attack designed by Washington to disrupt Syria's elimination of the last stronghold of Washington's proxy army in Syria. That Washington would actually use an obvious false flag chemical incident to attack Syria a second time in defiance of Russia does not indicate that Washington understands that its power is not what it was. I agree with Martyanov that Washington *should* understand that, but I am not sure Washington does.

Further evidence that Washington does not understand the new correlation of power is the political, academic, and media treatment of Professor Stephen Cohen, perhaps America's premier Russian scholar. Cohen sees all the dangers in the current level of tensions that I see, and he is denigrated as a Putin stooge for his balanced analysis. I am on the CIA- or George Soros- or National Endowment for Democracy- or Israel Lobby-funded PropOrNot list of "Russian agents/dupes." Indeed, Martyanov's own excellent book, which I recently reviewed, explains the extraordinary myths in which Washington lives. I doubt Washington escaped, as Martyanov seems to think, from its self-made Matrix between 2014 and 2018. Countries as full of themselves as America is don't sober up in four years without a revealing military defeat or an economic collapse for which no fix is available. Indeed, Martyanov begins his excellent book with Alexis de Tocqueville's analysis of American hubris in 1837. Hubris is the definition of American existence.

Or consider this for example: The open wound of Novorussia is festering. Washington is pouring arms into Ukraine <https://russia-insider.com/en/trumps-envoy-kurt-volker-us-eager-dramatically-expand-military-aid-ukraine/ri24663>. I think that Putin left this wound open, because he did not want to enable Washington's propaganda to inflame Europe's fears of more "annexations" on top of the alleged "annexation" of Crimea. This was a sound decision consistent with Martyanov's explanation, but it is an opportunity for the neoconservatives who

Martyanov correctly understands to have a tendency to be unrealistic. It is those unrealistic times that are dangerous.

I don't think Washington has yet lost its hubris. My reference to Napoleon and Hitler is meant only as examples of the extraordinary mistakes that people lost in their hubris can make. Ordinary peoples probably do not perceive the limitations on American power that Martyanov describes. What they hear are belligerent US accusations and threats against Russia and the presentation of their own president as a traitor who has to be impeached because he wants peace with Russia and is involved in a conspiracy with Putin against America. With their own perceptions influenced by Washington's propaganda, populations in the US and Europe cannot serve as constraints on their governments' belligerence toward Russia. When we read in the British press that the militarily impotent UK is preparing for war with Russia, where is there realization of the real correlation of forces? To say that the UK is preparing for war against Russia is like saying that the local Boy Scout troop is preparing for war against Russia. It makes no sense, and this absence of sense is a big concern.

It seems to me that some decisive response by Russia that signaled a clear defeat for Washington would bring awareness to Western populations that their governments are risking all of our lives by provoking incidents in which Washington does not hold a winning hand. The idea that the militarily impotent European countries, who are incapable of preventing themselves from being overrun by refugees from Washington's wars in behalf of Israel in the Middle East and North Africa, serve as any sort of NATO constraint on Russian military power is totally absurd. Jean Raspail's *The Camp of the Saints* is happening before our eyes. Europe is ceasing to exist. Already London, England, has a Muslim Mayor.

There are a lot of things Putin could do short of the easy task of sinking US ships—every one of which is totally indefensible against Russian hypersonic missiles. The US Navy is poised to attack Syria. Syria is a Russian ally that Putin has spent Russian lives, money, and prestige helping to clear Syria of the “insurgents” Washington sent to overthrow Syria in order to establish chaos in place of an organized country. Putin could have equipped Syria with the S-300 and/or S-400 air defense system. Russia (and China) could enter into an alliance with Syria and Iran that suggests or implies, without declaring it, mutual defense provisions. This would introduce an element of caution in the West that is missing. The more the West has caution, the less the risk of war. If Russia stands aside or accepts attacks on Syria and Novorussia, Russia tells Washington that there is no need for caution.

My concern is that there are many ways to end up in war. Unanswered provocations and unaddressed open wounds are two ways of getting there. All that I am suggesting is that some thought be given to these possibilities. If provocations produce an unintended showdown, a mistake made with nuclear weapons would be the last mistake of the human race.

The Saker intends to answer my question. We will see where he takes this issue. I will say that this discussion has risks for each of us, because those we are attempting to alert, warn, and to bring out of their insouciance will characterize us as “Russian agents” and “Putin stooges” for doubting US primacy. We will be accused of trying to protect Russia with a peace campaign.

What I think tells most against Martyanov's optimism is that it is he, The Saker, Stephen Cohen, Pat Buchanan, and myself who are marginalized, not the crazies who are responsible for the dangerous and irresponsible provocations of the world's most capable and best armed nuclear power—Russia. The crazies are in control of the US National Security Council, office of Homeland Security, office of National Intelligence, CIA, US Department of State, Pentagon,

the US media, and the US Democratic Party. Republican Senator John McCain is being made into a hero for his hatred of Russia and support for war. The National Endowment for Democracy, the private foundations, the Council on Foreign Relations, NPR, CNN, MSNBC, the New York Times, Washington Post—the entirety of monied and loudspeaker America is organized for the demonization of Russia and any American who questions this demonization. Who could have ever imagined that a candidate for President of the United States—Hillary Clinton—would declare the elected president of Russia, elected with a majority vote never achieved by any American president, to be “the new Hitler?” Hillary’s accusation breached all known diplomatic protocols, yet she was not held accountable.

In contrast, what is controlled by Martyanov, The Saker, Professor Cohen, Pat Buchanan, and myself? Perhaps we are buttressed by truth, but the truth is not widely acknowledged and few hear it. In an important way, Putin’s strategy relies on the recognition of truth and on good will, whose prospects are not favorable in the West. Indeed, the United States government and the interests that control it have turned a deaf ear to all facts and all truth.

We also need to consider that for centuries Germanic and other tribes continued to attack Roman legions that they had no prospect and no success for the longest time in defeating. Humans do crazy things, and there are no more crazy humans than American neoconservatives. It is these crazy humans who are in control of the US government, its foreign policy, its military policy, its media, and its organizations such as the National Endowment for Democracy that are its tools for the destabilization of targeted countries.

Whatever the correlation of forces, the Russian government is so insouciant that it permits Washington-funded NGOs inside Russia to operate against the Russian government; it permits Washington-funded newspapers inside Russia to demonize Putin and the Russian government; it permits Russian oligarchs and Russian companies to keep money abroad where it can be seized, thus creating animosity against the Russian government from holders of wealth. The Russian government continues to describe its current enemy, which is far more dangerous than Hitler ever was, as “our partner.” Imagine the consciousness-changing effect if Putin and/or Lavrov used the words “our enemy.”

Martyanov is correct. Russia holds the correlation of forces, but it doesn’t know what to do with it. The Russian government permits attacks on itself from an inferior power. It is this that is the danger.