

## Putin Lays Down The Law At Valdai

By Tom Luongo, Zerohedge, 22 October 2018

*Every year Russian President Vladimir Putin speaks at the Valdai Economic Forum. And each year his talk is important. Putin isn't one to mince words on important issues.*

With tensions between Russia and the West reaching Cold War levels, Valdai represented the first time we've heard Putin speak in a long-form discussion since Helsinki and the events thereafter — IL-20, Khashoggi, etc.

So, this talk is worth everyone's time. And when I say everyone's I mean every single person who could be affected by the breakdown of the U.S. political system and how that spills over onto Russia's shores.

In other words, pretty much everyone on the planet.

Because **what Putin did at Valdai was to lay down the new rules of conduct in geopolitical affairs.** He put the U.S. and European oligarchs I call *The Davos Crowd* on notice.

There is a limit to your provocations and attempts to undermine Russia. So don't cross that line.

### Peace Through Strength

**The big quote from his talk is the one everyone is focusing on, and rightly so, Russia's policy about using nuclear weapons.**

It's not that Putin's stance was any different than in the past. Russia will strike back at an aggressor under any circumstance where the future of Russia is at stake. It was his assurance that in doing so 1) it would be just and righteous "dying like martyrs" and 2) so swift and brutal the aggressors would "die like dogs" bereft of the chance to ask for salvation.

*Those are strong words. They are the words of a meek man. And the word meek, as Jordan Peterson reminds us, describes someone who has weapons, knows how to use them and keeps them sheathed until they have no other option.*

The reaction from the audience (see video at <https://www.zerohedge.com/news/2018-10-20/putin-lays-down-law-valdai>) was nervous laughter, but I don't think Putin was having one over on anyone.

**He was serious.** This is the very definition of meek.

It is really no different than the attitude of Secretary of State James Mattis who said, *"I come in peace. I didn't bring artillery. But I'm pleading with you, with tears in my eyes: If you f\$\*k with me, I'll kill you all."*

Men like this are not to be tested too hard. And Putin's response to the shooting down of the IL-20 plane and its crew was to cross a bunch of diplomatic lines by handing out S-300s to Syria and erecting a *de facto* no-fly zone over Western Syria and the Eastern Mediterranean.

**Notice how there have been no attacks or even harsh language coming out of Israel or the U.S. in the past few weeks. The failure of the British/French/Israeli operation to sucker Trump into an invasion of Syria is now complete.**

And I'm convinced that Nikki Haley paid the price.

All of this highlights the major theme that came out of Putin's comments.

Strength through resolve. Resolve comes as a consequence of defending culture.

**Putin wasn't boasting or grandstanding about Russia's hypersonic weapons capability. He told everyone they are deployed. He did this to shut up the U.S. neoconservative chattering class who he rightly says whisper in President Trump's ear that they can win a nuclear conflict with Russia.**

They are insane. And you have to treat them that way.

### **Culture First**

Putin sees himself, quite rightly, as the custodian of the Russian people and, as such, the Russian state as the reflection of Russian culture. If you are going to have a state and someone is going to be the head of it, this is the attitude that you want from that person.

In his dialogue with an Orthodox priest **Putin wholeheartedly agreed with the idea that “the state cannot dictate culture”** but rather, at best, be the facilitator of it through its applications of law.

In a back and forth with a very enthusiastic Russian dairy farmer, who was quite proud of his cheese, Putin reminded the man that **while he loved sanctions (from European competition) protecting his business today he should not get used to them.** They will be removed at some point and the farmer would have to stand on his own wits to survive in the international market.

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**Putin understands that subsidies breed sloth.** That was a message he made loud and clear.

It's why when the sanctions first went into effect in 2014 over the reunification of Crimea and during the Ruble crisis Putin shifted state subsidies away from the petroleum sector which had thrived and gotten soft during years of \$100+/bbl oil and shifted that money to agriculture.

The fruits of that successful policy shift he confronted head on at Valdai. **Russia's food production across all sectors is flourishing thanks to a cheap ruble, which the U.S. keeps beating down via sanctions, and the Russian state getting out of the way of investment.**

At the time he incurred the wrath of Rosneft CEO Igor Sechin and Putin ignored him, much to everyone's surprise. The message was clear, we'll help you out of your current troubles but it's time to do business differently. Because it was Rosneft that needed the biggest bailouts in late 2014/early 2015 having tens of billions in dollar-denominated debt which couldn't be rolled over thanks to the sanctions.

### **The Limits of Empire**

**Ultimately, Putin looked resigned, if confused, to the insanity emanating from U.S. policy. But it's obvious to him that Russia cannot get caught up in the tit-for-tat nuisances put up to derail Russia's future.**

He mentioned the Empire loses its way because it believed itself invulnerable or as my dad used to say about certain athletes, “He reads his own press clippings too much.”

**There is a solipsism that infects dominant societies which creates the kind of over-reactions we're witnessing today. Power is slipping away from the U.S. and Trump is both helping the process along while also trying to preserve the core of what's left.**

And no interaction during Putin's talk was more indicative of his view of the U.S. empire than his interaction with a Japanese delegate who asked him about signing a peace treaty with Japan.

And Putin's answer was clear. It's Japan's pride and political entanglements that preclude this from happening. Signing the peace treaty is not necessary to solving ownership of the Kuril Islands. Russia and Japan are both diminished by having this obstacle in the way.

**The issue can resolve itself after the peace treaty is signed. The current state of things is silly and anachronistic and keep the divide between Russians and Japanese from healing. Create trust through agreement then move forward.**

That's what is happening between Russia and Egypt and that is why Putin is winning the diplomatic war.

And it's why Trump is losing the diplomatic war. Putin knows where Trump is. He was there himself seventeen years ago, except an order of magnitude worse. The problems Trump is facing are the same problems Putin faced, corruption, venality, treason all contributing to a collapse in societal and cultural institutions.

**Putin knows the U.S. is at a crossroads, and he's made his peace with whatever comes next. The question is, have we?**