

# Cold War Thaw? Navalny Poisoning. Belarus Political Instability. NATO on Russia's Doorstep

By [Michael Welch](#) and [John Helmer](#)  
Global Research, September 19, 2020

Region: [Europe](#), [Russia and FSU](#), [USA](#)  
Theme: [GLOBAL RESEARCH NEWS HOUR](#),  
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*"We understand that not only for the Soviet Union but for other European countries as well it is important to have guarantees that if the United States keeps its presence in Germany within the framework of NATO, not an inch of NATO's present military jurisdiction will spread in an eastern direction."*

- James Baker, in conversation with Mikhail Gorbachev [1]

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A series of setbacks may have put Russia, and leader Vladimir Putin on the defensive.

Alexei Navalny, a critic and opponent of Putin, was poisoned. The German government, and seemingly the western press have blamed the Russian State for this action, even though the Russians deny it.[2]

Meanwhile, in the country of Belarus, right across the Western border from Russia, there is an unprecedented uprising taking place blaming Alexander Lukashenko for fixing the elections against all rivals. Close to one hundred thousand people showed their opposition in weekly demonstrations. Violent crackdowns erupted. Several thousand arrested. [3]

Could this ferocious resistance result with time in another Ukraine style overthrow of the President?

And then there's the more direct approach. NATO has apparently been upping its presence in the Barents sea and the Baltic sea, with more war training, combat manoeuvres and missile tests. This stage of their organization was intended to build a complex defense system for Europe. For that matter, it could just as easily be intended as developing a mechanism to wage war on Russia. [4]

All this while the U.S. gears up for another election and is already being blamed for interfering in the election...again!

Observers are getting the impression that tensions are ramping up, and could escalate going into autumn. Where is this conflict heading? These and related questions are the focus

of this week's Global Research News Hour broadcast.

In our first half hour, John Helmer, a journalist based in Moscow, opens up the Navalny case, outlining that Russia is not likely the culprit, that an opposition critic may be involved, and the motives behind the German government's curious stance while they await the construction of a pipeline taking gas from Russia to Germany.

In our second half hour, Stevan Gijic is our guest. He will enlighten viewers with his breakdowns of Belarus, and of the NATO build-up, and where these events are likely to lead.

*John Helmer is the longest continuously serving foreign correspondent based in Moscow, and directs his own independent bureau there. He has been a professor of political science, sociology and journalism, and has advised government heads in Greece, the United States and Asia. Helmer's blog 'Dances with Bears' can be found at [johnhelmer.net](http://johnhelmer.net).*

*Stevan Gijic is a researcher at the Institute of European Studies in Belgrade. He focuses on European studies (especially the politics in central and eastern Europe and the Balkans), and Russian and post-Soviet politics and international relations. His field of expertise is in political science, diplomacy, history and geopolitics.*

(Global Research News Hour episode 287)

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The [Global Research News Hour](#) airs every Friday at 1pm CT on [CKUW 95.9FM](#) in Winnipeg. The programme is also podcast at [globalresearch.ca](http://globalresearch.ca).

Notes:

1. National Security Archive, 'Record of Conversation between Mikhail Gorbuchev and James Baker February 9, 1990', <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu//dc.html?doc=4325680-Document-06-Record-of-conversation-between>
2. Luke Harder and Kim Willshire (Sept. 14, 2020)'Alexei Navalny continues to improve, say German doctors', [The Guardian](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/14/alexei-navalny-continues-to-improve-say-german-doctors), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/14/alexei-navalny-continues-to-improve-say-german-doctors>
3. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-53637365>
4. <https://www.globalresearch.ca/nato-begins-military-maneuvers-barents-sea/5723488>

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