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Putin and the Press: "The Demonology School of Journalism"

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Theme: Media Disinformation

The major influential western print media are engaged in a prolonged, large-scale effort to demonize Russian President Putin, his politics and persona. There is an article (or several articles) every day in which he is personally stigmatized as a dictator, authoritarian, czar, 'former KGB operative' and Soviet-style ruler; anything but the repeatedly elected President of Russia.

He is accused of hijacking Russia from the '*road to democracy'*,as pursued by his grotesquely corrupt predecessor Boris Yeltsin; of directing the bloody repression of the '*freedom loving Chechens*'; of jailing innocent, independent and critical oligarchs and robber barons; of fomenting an uprising in the '*democratic, newly pro-Western'*Ukraine and seizing control of Crimea; of backing a '*bloody tyrant*' in Syria (elected President Bashar Assad) in a civil war against ISIS terrorists; of running the Russian economy into the ground; and of militarily threatening the Baltic and Eastern European NATO member countries.

In a word, the media have propagated an image of an *'out-of-control autocrat'*, who makes a mockery of 'democratic' norms and 'Western values', and who seeks to revive the 'Soviet (aka *Evil*) Empire'.

The corollary is that '*Western powers*', despite their peace-loving propensities and fraternal attempts to bring Russia into the democratic 'fold', have been 'forced' to now surround Russia with NATO military bases and missiles; to finance a violent coup in the Ukraine (on Russia's frontier) and arm the Ukrainian putsch government and neo-fascist militias to 'restore democracy' and violently suppress ethnic Russian 'separatists' in Eastern Ukraine. We are told that US and EU sanctions against Russia were carefully crafted 'diplomatic' measures designed to punish the Moscow 'aggressor'.

In reality, the Western media has relentlessly demonized Vladimir Putin in a campaign to further NATO military expansion and undermine the Russian economy and its national security. The goal is ultimately to force a 'regime change', restoring the neo-liberal elites who had pillaged Russia's economy during the 1990's and whose brutal economic policies led to the premature death of over 6 million Russians due to deprivation and the collapse of the healthcare system.

Putin: Demon or Realist, Autocrat or Democrat, Vassal or Independent Leader?

The Western media has backed every oligarch, gangster and fraudster who has gone on trial and been convicted during Putin's term in office. The propagandists tell us the reason for this affinity between the Western media and the gangster-oligarchs is that these convicted felons, who claim to be '*political dissidents'* and critics of Putin's rule, have been dispossessed, and jailed for upholding 'Western values'.

The Western media conveniently ignore the well-documented studies on the source of the gangster-oligarchs' wealth: The violent and illegal seizure of multi-billion dollars-worth of natural resources (aluminum, oil and gas), banks, factories, pension funds and real estate. During the Yeltsin period the oligarchs controlled thousands of armed gangsters and engaged in internal warfare during which thousands were killed, including top government regulators, police officials and journalists who dared to oppose or expose their pillage and property grabs.

Putin's prosecution of a mere fraction of the most notorious oligarch-gangsters has won the support of the vast majority of Russian citizens because it represents a return to law and order and the return of stolen public wealth.

Only the Western media has dared to refer to these convicted felons as '*political victims and reformers'*. They did so because theoligarchs had become the most loyal and submissive assets in the US and EU governments' efforts to convert Russia into an irreversibly weak vassal state.

The Western media constantly refer to President Putin as the*'authoritarian ruler'*, despite the fact that he has been repeatedly elected by large majorities in competitive elections against Western backed and funded candidates. His popularity is attested to by opinion polls conducted by Western agencies.

In 2015, President Putin's support soared to over 85%. The pro-Western Russian neo-liberal politicians scored in the low single digits according to the same independent polls.

Clearly the Russian public does not want to return to the poverty and chaos of the Western-backed gangster politics of the 1990's.

Whatever reservations working and middle class Russians have over President Putin's style of decision-making, they clearly value his crackdown on gangster-controlled elections, Chechen terrorism, and his restoration of Russian military defense of its frontiers, including the annexation of Crimea, following the US-engineered coup in Ukraine.

Every day, the Western media recycle reports of the '*decline and demise'* of the Russian economy, blaming '*statist'* mismanagement of the economy by Putin. They claim 'declining living standards', the 'negative growth' of the economy and the 'growing isolation' of an 'expansionist' Russia in the face of Western sanctions.

These media claims are laughable. Readily available data demonstrate that living standards of the vast majority of Russian citizens have significantly increased under President Putin's administration, especially after the utter collapse under the free marketers of the1990's. Russian workers receive their pay, pensioners their pensions, enterprises their loans – on time. During the '*free market'* days of Boris Yeltsin, workers went up to a year without pay, pensioners were selling their heirlooms in the street to survive and enterprises paid extortionate interest rates to oligarch-gangster controlled banks! Comparative data, easily obtained, are deliberately ignored by the mass media because it doesn't fit the demonological narrative.

The mass media present the neo-liberal '*opposition'* and '*liberal critics'* as Russian democrats defending 'Western values'. They forget to mention that these 'liberal critics' have been directly funded by Western foundations (National Endowment for Democracy,

Soros Foundation, etc.) and Russian non-governmental organizations (NGO's) with longstanding ties to US and EU governments, intelligence agencies and exiled Russian billionaires. The so-called '*Russian'* democratic opposition revealed their abject servility to Western interests when they openly supported the Ukrainian coup and Kiev's bloody assault on ethnic Russian-Ukrainians in the eastern 'Donbas' regions of Donetsk, Luhansk and Odessa. Whatever shreds of respectability and credibility the '*democratic opposition'* retained with the Russian public, up to that point, was lost. They were seen for what they are: *propaganda arms of Western imperialism and mouth-pieces for neo-fascists*.

The Western mass media charge Putin's government with the same crimes that their own governments commit. After the US State Department's Victoria Nuland admitted to channeling $5 billion to fund the 2014 coup in Ukraine and after the Polish regime boasted of training far right street fighters, whose mob violence served as a pretext for the coup, and after neo-fascist coalition partners in Odessa of burned alive four dozen ethnic Russian-Ukrainian citizens opposed to the coup, the Western mass media accused Putin of '*intervening'* in Ukraine. This was because Russia had convoked a referendum in Crimea, in which over 80% of the electorate voted to secede from the illegitimate Ukrainian coup regime and rejoin Russia.

In truth, the Putin government is a victim of the Western power grab in the Ukraine, with Russia having to absorbed hundreds of thousands of ethnic Russian refugees driven out of the Donbas, yet the Western media portray Putin as the executioner. Meanwhile the Western coup-makers and their far-right allies are depicted as victims… forced to bomb and decimate the Donbas region.

The charade continued. The Western media portray the subsequent punitive, economic sanctions imposed by the expansionist US and EU on Russia as a result of Putin's '*aggression'*, referring to Russia's defense of Crimea's self-determination and the rights of the millions of bilingual ethnic Russian citizens of Ukraine.

The absurdity and convoluted nature of Western demonological propaganda has reached new even more bizarre heights with their hysteria against Russia's military support of the secular Syrian government against ISIS and other jihadi terrorists.

The Western mass media have launched a global campaign charging that the Russian air force bombs '*non-ISIS military bases'*, presumably the bases of Western-backed 'friendly' jihadi terrorists. This ridiculous '*reportage'* and its accompanying 'photos' were published before the Russian air strikes even took place!!

Apparently timing doesn't matter in Washington's '*alternative universe of lies'*!

NATO passed its political line to the media that Russian support for the legitimate regime of President Assad must be discredited; that the Russian presence is '*provocative'* and responsible for '*creating tensions'* in the region – after years of Western-sponsored jihadi terrorism against Syria!

Obedient to its masters, the Western media breathlessly '*reported'* that the Russians were '*really'* engaged in Syria in order destroy the pro-Western 'fighters' leaving ISIS alone.

No credible evidence for this propaganda was ever presented. They trotted out aerial photos of wreckage, which had likely been lifted from previous US bombings.

The media's clumsy execution of the Pentagon's line managed to embarrass even the US Secretary of Defense, Ashton Carter, who backed off of such claims and called for an explanation from Russia. Even Secretary Kerry, who now seeks to secure Putin's military support for the US against ISIS while withdrawing Russia's political backing of President Assad, has cautioned the media to modify its line, now that the US favors 'greater coordination' with Russia – but under US leadership. The media has recently conformed to this line, although it has not managed to explain how Washington could now work with the demonic President Putin.

Conclusion

Western media is engaged in an intense long-term propaganda campaign to demonize President Putin. Its role is to convince world public opinion and world leaders to blindly follow the US and EU, as well as their 'allies' and vassal states, in a campaign to degrade and undermine Russia, and consolidate a unipolar empire under US tutelage.

The Western mass media is important; but it must be remembered that the media is an instrument of imperial state power. Its lies and fabrications, its demonization of leaders, like President Putin, are one part of a global military offensive to establish dominance and to destroy adversaries.

The more intense the imperial campaign, the riskier the power grab, the greater the need to demonize the victims.

This explains how the escalation of the rabid anti-Putin propaganda campaign coincides with the single biggest Western power grab – the Ukraine coup ('*regime change'*) – since West Germany annexed East Germany, and NATO and the EU incorporated the Baltic States, Eastern Europe and the Balkans into the West's strategic alliance. The West's bloody break-up of the Yugoslav federation was part of this strategic program.

The problem with the Western demonization of adversaries, whether it is Russia, Iran andChina today, or earlier Cuba, Libya and Yemen in the past, is that Washington and the EU face severe economiccrises at home and military defeats abroad by armed Islamic and nationalist resistance movements.

The US had invested hundreds of billions of dollars to prop up a shaky puppet regime in US-occupied Iraq, yet the US-trained and supplied Iraqi Army fled as the Baathist-Islamist '*ISIS*' quickly over-ran half the country.

US troops have occupied Afghanistan for fourteen years, losing tens of thousands of lives and limbs and yet the nationalist-Islamist Taliban can easily take over Afghanistan's third largest city, Kunduz (population 300,000), and occupies three quarters of the rest of the countryside.

Libya and Somalia are a disaster. And still Washington allocates a *half billion dollars* to train pro-Western mercenaries to overthrow Syria's President Assad – mercenaries who give up their arms or join ISIS the moment they cross the border from Jordan or Turkey. The US trained mercenaries have handed over untold millions of dollars worth of heavy and light weapons and armored carriers to ISIS and Al Qaeda. The EU and the US face the dismal reality that Libya, Somalia and Syria are over-run by anti-Western Islamic fighters.

In Asia, China is demonized in the Western media, portrayed as being on the *verge of*

collapse, facing a *hard landing*, even as China grows at 7%. The Western media wring their collective hands over the crisis in China while Beijing finances two new international development banks for $100 billion, raises its contribution to the IMF and brings 50 countries, including most of the EU but minus the US and Japan, into a new infrastructure lending institution.

Two big questions face the US and EU:

Why do the Western media launch a campaign of demonizationthat doesn't correspond to reality? What is the goal of such demonization, which objectively undermines the possibility of forming tactical alliances to end the US' military losses, political defeats and diplomatic isolation? The US needs Russia to defeat ISIS.

For Moscow, the fight against ISIS is crucial to Russian national security: Thousands of Chechen terrorists (some trained by the US) are fighting with ISIS and threaten to return to the Caucuses and terrorize Russia. Unlike the US public's opposition to Washington's role in forcing 'regime change' in Syria, the Russian public supports Moscow's military support for the Syrian government because the Chechens' campaign of terror within Russia, especially the 2004 massacre of hundreds of school children, teachers and parents in Beslan, is seared into their memory – a fact conveniently ignored by Western media when it 'sympathizes' with Chechen 'freedom fighters'.

In reality, Washington should have a common interest to ally with Russia in the fight against ISIS in Syria and Iraq. However Obama is committed to ousting Assad (Russia's ally) to expand US dominance in the Middle East in partnership with Israel and Saudi Arabia. Clearly there are insurmountable contradictions between short-term military objectives (fighting ISIS) and strategic imperial political imperatives (consolidating US-Israeli hegemony over the Middle East and Iran).

Washington has moved to end its isolation in Latin America by re-establishing diplomatic relations with Cuba. Meanwhile, Washington retains the economic blockade of Cuba and its huge US military base in Guantanamo. Cuba is seen as a tactical political ally in '*moderating'* the leftist government of Venezuela and pressuring the Colombian FARC to disarm, even as Washington deepens its military presence in the continent.

Obama signed off on a nuclear agreement with Iran (but the crippling sanctions and blockade remain in place) in order to secure Tehran's support for the war against ISIS in Iraq and the Taliban in Afghanistan. Temporarily, the Western mass media has 'toned-down' its demonological reporting on Iran and Cuba, for tactical purposes.

The Obama regime has adopted a '*good cop/bad cop'* (or schizophrenic) posture with Russia on Syria – Secretary of State John Kerry speaks of *joint co-operation* with Moscow while Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter proposes to militarily confront '*Russian aggression'*. The media hasn't made the switch because they don't know which orders to obey or which line to 'parrot'.

In the meantime, the domestic economic crisis deepens, ISIS advances, the Taliban approaches Kabul, the Russians are arming and defending President Assad and millions of refugees, fleeing the war zones, have over- run Europe. European border wars are raging. And Obama wrings his hands in impotence. Demonology offers no allies, no solutions and no positive path to peace and co-existence.

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