

Vladimir Putin: Statements on National Security, Terrorism, Meetings with Donald Trump, Nuclear Weapons, Russian Identity

Vladimir Putin Meets with Members of the Valdai Discussion Club.

By [Pres. Vladimir Putin](#) and [Fyodor Lukyanov](#)

Global Research, October 22, 2018

Valdaiclub.com

Region: [Russia and FSU](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#)

This speech by Vladimir Putin coincides with the commencement of the largest NATO war games in Scandinavia, the Baltic states and Eastern Europe since the end of the Cold War.

It also coincides with Trump's announcement to withdraw from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces, or INF agreement, signed by former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and President Ronald Reagan in 1987.

Meanwhile, major changes in military alliances are occurring, with several of America's staunchest allies establishing military cooperation agreements with Russia and China.

The World is at a dangerous crossroads.

Russia is presented by the Western media as a threat to Global Security.

Below are selected statements from Putin's speech focussing on a number of issues.

Putin addresses the war in Syria and the defeat of terrorism. He also focusses on the anti-Russian campaign in the US, Britain and the EU.

He recalls his meetings with Donald Trump.

He outlines in detail Russia's military capabilities as well as Moscow's strategies in the case of an attack directed against the Russia Federation.

It is important to assess the statements of Vladimir Putin in relation to the ongoing geopolitical crisis. .

To read the complete transcript published by [Valdai, click here](#)

Michel Chossudovsky, Global Research, October 22, 2018

Vladimir Putin took part in the plenary session of the 15th anniversary meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club. in Sochi on October 18. This year's theme is The World We Will Live In: Stability and Development in the 21st Century.

The plenary session moderator is Fyodor Lukyanov, Research Director of the Foundation for Development and Support of the Valdai Discussion Club.

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Mr President, in case you have forgotten, you are here for the 15th time. How are you?

President of Russia Vladimir Putin: First, I would like to speak to the permanent participants of our meeting. It is true, 15 years is quite something. I believe that the Valdai Club, as we called it because the first events took place in Novgorod, has become a good international platform over these years, a platform for professionals who are interested in global politics, the economy, culture as well as the work of media. Of course, in relation to Russia.

As a rule, these are experts on Russia. And we would like very much for people who work with Russia to have such a platform, so that we could meet and you could hear our position on all matters of interest for you, your countries, and for us, for Russia, not in someone's retelling, but firsthand, from me and my colleagues.

These discussions have always presented different and sometimes even opposite points of view. I think that this is the advantage of this discussion club; we call it a discussion club because where there is only one, right point of view, there is no place for discussion.

Truth is born from comparing different approaches to the same phenomena and various assessments. Thanks to your participation, we can reach this result.

I see many world-famous politicians in this hall; here, on my right; and I would like to welcome them all, including the President of Afghanistan and our colleagues from the EAEU. I can also see scientists, cultural figures and journalists. I hope that today's meeting will also be not only useful but interesting as well.

However, I am a bit confused about the format today. Usually we have several people on this stage, and the discussion lasts for quite some time. Of course, I am ready to fly solo, as the organisers suggest, but I hope that it will not take four or five times longer than usual.

Thank you and let's just skip the long welcoming remarks and go straight to our conversation, our work and our discussion.

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Selected Quotations

[Terrorism]

Warfare with the use of aviation and military hardware and so on, a huge number of militant groups on the territory of this country, with militants coming mostly from terrorist organisations based abroad, including Al-Qaeda who were active in this country.

Thank God, we got rid of this but we have not eradicated terrorism per se. Of course, terrorism still poses a great threat to our country as well, which was why we launched these operations in Syria.

Terrorism is a great threat to our neighbours, including Afghanistan – I see President [Hamid] Karzai here. If he is given the floor, he will tell us what is going on in his country today – this is also a serious threat. I mean that we have not defeated terrorism globally, of course, but we have delivered a tremendous blow to it and have certainly drastically changed the situation at home – in the Russian Federation – for the better.

...

[Terrorism in Syria]

But we have largely ruled out that risk by our actions, because we did a lot of damage to the terrorists in Syria. Many of them were eliminated, and some of them, thank God, decided they wanted out: they laid down their arms after losing faith in the principles they considered right. This, I would say, is the most important outcome.

The second, no less important thing, is that we have preserved Syrian statehood and in this sense helped stabilise the region. We talked about this in some detail with the President of Egypt just yesterday; he shares this position, and it is shared by many other countries. Therefore, I believe we have generally achieved the goals we had set for ourselves in starting the operation in the Syrian Arab Republic; we have achieved a result.

Look, after all, for some years before us, countries that agreed to participate in these anti-terrorist operations, most often voluntarily, and maybe even with less than perfect goals and objectives – what result have we seen in the previous three years? None. While we have liberated almost 95 percent of the entire territory of the Syrian Republic. This is my first point.

Second. We supported Syria's statehood, prevented the state from collapsing. True, there are still many problems. Now we see what is happening on the left bank of the Euphrates. Probably, our colleagues know: this territory is under the patronage of our American partners. They rely on the Kurdish armed forces.

But they have obviously left a loose end: ISIS remains in several locations and has begun to expand its area of influence recently. They took 130 families hostage – almost 700 people.

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[Military Deescalation in Syria]

The demilitarised zone, on which we agreed, is being created in the Idlib de-escalation zone with a depth of 15–20 kilometres. Not all heavy weapons have been withdrawn yet, and not all members of the terrorist organisations ISIS and Jabhat an-Nusra have left, but our Turkish partners are doing their best to fulfil their obligations.

...

[Russia-Gate]

Are we the ones creating problems? No. Instead, we are being accused of things. They say that Russia was “highly likely” to have done this or that, intervened at one place and wreaked havoc at another. But, no one believes it is necessary to produce any evidence.

For me it is clear, and I have said this: this is the result of the internal political struggle in the Western world as a whole. Now they are fighting over the conditions for Britain’s exit from the EU; the Democrats and the Republicans are fighting in the United States, and there is controversy among the Republicans themselves. So someone has apparently decided that playing the anti-Russia card would be a very convenient way to resolve domestic political problems. This is bad for everyone.

I hope this will pass, but apparently we need to wait for internal political crises to be resolved. Whether this will happen after the Congressional election or not, I do not know yet, but maybe. Or maybe it will happen in 2020, with the next US presidential election, and then he will no longer have to constantly deal with those who speculate with anti-Russia rhetoric.

Were our meetings with President Trump harmful or helpful? I believe that, despite the attempt to discredit these meetings, they nevertheless were more positive than negative. Why? Because we can see what is happening there.

We can certainly see, we know how to read after all, we look at what is happening there in the domestic political landscape. Still, it is better to communicate and interact with each other than, forgive my language, engage in a never-ending dogfight.

Our meetings have hardly improved US domestic politics, I guess. Probably because, again, there are those who are always trying to play this card in the domestic political struggle.

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[Meetings with Donald Trump]

Fyodor Lukyanov: Several books about Donald Trump have been released, one after another.

Vladimir Putin: We will read them.

Fyodor Lukyanov: Yes, they are very interesting. They create this image of a person who only listens to and hears himself. When you meet with him, does he listen to you?

Vladimir Putin: This is not true. Maybe he behaves this way with someone else – but then they are to blame. We have a comfortable professional dialogue with him. Of course he listens. And not just listens, I see that he reacts to the arguments I make. He may disagree with something I say, just as I would disagree with something he might say. We have different views on some things, different approaches, but this is a normal discussion between partners. I do not share the opinion of those who say that he speaks like a wood grouse calling out and never listening. That is not true.

[Nuclear Capabilities. Missile Defense]

Look, we live in a world where security relies on nuclear capability. Russia is one of the largest nuclear powers. You may be aware, I have said it publicly, we are improving our attack systems as an answer to the United States building its missile defence system. Some of these systems have already been fielded, and some will be put into service in the coming months. I am talking about the Avangard system. Clearly, we have overtaken all our, so to speak, partners and competitors in this sphere, and this fact is acknowledged by the experts. No one has a high-precision hypersonic weapon. Some plan to begin testing it in one or two years, while we have this high-tech modern weapon in service. So, we feel confident in this sense.

Naturally, there are many other risks, but they are shared risks, such as environment, climate change, terrorism, which I mentioned, and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. If we are unable to put an effective end to this, it is not clear where it will lead to, and in whose hands this deadly weapon may end up.

So, in this sense, nothing has changed. We are not going anywhere, we have a vast territory, and we do not need anything from anyone. But we value our sovereignty and independence. It has always been this way, at all times in the history of our state. It runs in the blood of our people, as I have repeatedly said. In this sense, we feel confident and calm.

Fyodor Lukyanov: With regard to us not going anywhere and not needing anything, clearly, there are people who will disagree with you.

Vladimir Putin: Absolutely.

[Crimea]

Fyodor Lukyanov: They will say, “What about Crimea?”

Vladimir Putin: Crimea is our land. We are still not going anywhere. Why is it our land? Not because we went there and took it. Even if someone decides to argue with me, the dispute will immediately come to a dead-end. Everyone is democratic here, right? What is democracy? Democracy is the power of the people. How is it exercised, this power of the people? It is exercised through referendums, elections and so on. People came to a referendum in Crimea and voted for independence, first, and then for being part of Russia.

...

Let me remind you for the hundredth time that there was no referendum in Kosovo, only the parliament voted for independence, that was all. Everyone who wanted

to support and destroy the former Yugoslavia said: well, thank God, we are fine with that. Here, however, they disagree. Ok then, let's have a discussion, go over the UN documents, see what the UN Charter is all about, and where it talks about the right of nations to self-determination. This will be an endless discussion. However, we proceed based on the will expressed by the people who live on that territory.

...

[Media]

Look, there are senior executives from our television company Russia Today sitting across from me. What is happening in some countries where they operate? They are being banned. What does this mean? It means those who do so are afraid of the competition. This is what it means. We do not close anyone here, whereas they are faced with conditions that preclude their operation as mass media. Someone is making it hard for them. That means we are winning. We have just one radio station, and we are not a monopoly on this information field. We do not have global media like CNN, Fox News, BBC and so on. We do not have these. We have just one fairly modest channel. Even if it causes so much heartburn and fear of it being able to influence minds, then we are winning this competition. By the way, in France, I know, they don't really like it, but if I ever have a chance to be in Paris, invite me, and I will come see you, see what is going on there and how things are with work.

...

[Russia. Our National Identity]

Our national identity is what makes us who we are. It is our culture and history.

The preservation of the people, which you just said when you mentioned Solzhenitsyn, is not just about physical preservation, although, maybe, this is, above all, what Solzhenitsyn had in mind, but also about our identity as a people, otherwise we will simply erode and cease to exist. The history of mankind offers us similar examples. We will just be unable to recall the names of those peoples, who have already disappeared from our consciousness. There were lots of them. But why should we follow those examples? We want to be the Russians, or the Tatars, or the Jews, who live here, or the Mordovians, etc. We have 160 ethnic groups living in the Russian Federation. So why should we let ourselves be eroded? We treasure it and we must talk about it. We must strengthen our identity.

...

[Russia, A Multiethnic State]

Russia developed as a multi-ethnic state first, and then as a multi-religious state. But it has lived for a thousand years and remained stable primarily because a very tolerant relationship was initially established between all the ethnic groups within the state and the representatives of different religions. This is the groundwork for Russia's existence. And if we want Russia to remain as it is, to develop and gain strength, while Russians remain a state-forming nation, then the preservation of this country serves the interests of the Russian people. But if we huff out this caveman nationalism and throw mud at people of other ethnic groups, we will destroy this country -

something the Russian people are less than interested in. I want Russia to survive, including in the interests of the Russian people. In this context I have said that I am the most proper and true nationalist and a most effective one too. But this is not caveman nationalism, stupid and idiotic and leading to the collapse of our country. This is the difference.

...

[Nuclear Weapons Doctrine, A Reciprocal Counter Strike if Russia is Attacked]

I will remind you of what I have said. I have said that our nuclear weapons doctrine does not provide for a pre-emptive strike. I would like to ask all of you and those who will later analyse and in one way or another interpret my every word here, to keep in mind that there is no provision for a pre-emptive strike in our nuclear weapons doctrine. Our concept is based on a reciprocal counter strike. There is no need to explain what this is to those who understand, as for those who do not, I would like to say it again: this means that we are prepared and will use nuclear weapons only when we know for certain that some potential aggressor is attacking Russia, our territory. I am not revealing a secret if I say that we have created a system which is being upgraded all the time as needed – a missile early warning radar system. This system monitors the globe, warning about the launch of any strategic missile at sea and identifying the area from which it was launched. Second, the system tracks the trajectory of a missile flight. Third, it locates a nuclear warhead drop zone.

Only when we know for certain – and this takes a few seconds to understand – that Russia is being attacked we will deliver a counter strike. This would be a reciprocal counter strike. Why do I say ‘counter’? Because we will counter missiles flying towards us by sending a missile in the direction of an aggressor. Of course, this amounts to a global catastrophe but I would like to repeat that we cannot be the initiators of such a catastrophe because we have no provision for a pre-emptive strike. Yes, it looks like we are sitting on our hands and waiting until someone uses nuclear weapons against us. Well, yes, this is what it is. But then any aggressor should know that retaliation is inevitable and they will be annihilated. And we as the victims of an aggression, we as martyrs would go to paradise while they will simply perish because they won’t even have time to repent their sins.

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