

WHAT WE HEAR IN THE WESTERN MSM ABOUT RUSSIA, AND WHAT THE TRUTH IS

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Following on from Part I:

Russia Resurgent? What we hear: [Russia is a resurgent power](#) and one of the chief threats to US interests.

The facts: Firstly, we need to ask just what exactly those ‘American interests’ are. Secondly, there is one glaring inconsistency with the notion that Russia is ‘resurgent’: If she were seeking increased military *belligerency* and power, her defense spending would be sharply up. The reality is that [Russia has decreased her defense spending](#).

Russian defense spending is a mere fraction of what the US annually spends on defense. In 2017 it amounted to [42 billion dollars, or 3.1% of their GDP](#). This is less even than the *increase* in US defense spending of the Trump administration. To put that in perspective, US defense spending in 2017 was [773 billion dollars](#). So, Russia’s defense spending is roughly 6% that of the US, based on available figures. Even from Russian sources, the figure is 11% of what the US spends. Russia ranks 4th in defense spending worldwide, behind China and Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia – think on why that would be for a few minutes. So, we might rightly ask: Is Russia a resurgent military power? That depends upon one’s perspective. Based on Russia’s size and population, its defense spending seems comparatively small in relation to that of the US.

If one sees the US as the sole guarantor of world peace and security, that the dominance of the US dollar should remain intact, then yes, Russia is a resurgent power. Russia seeks a multipolar world. On the other hand, if one sees the US as an imperialistic nation that threatens other nations’ security and sovereignty if they do not conform to US demands, then Russia’s ‘resurgence’ is seen as a good thing. Then, there are mixed views in between. Russia seeks to avoid military confrontation if at all possible. [What she seeks instead is commercial cooperation](#) and the opening of world markets for the benefit of economic prosperity. The view from within Russia is that the US and its allies threaten Russian security and sovereignty, especially given Russian experiences of the 1990s. Their view is also based in the fact that the US has broken many agreements with them, and the Washington establishment is therefore not to be trusted. The [Russians feel double-crossed](#) by the US and much of the West. Even in recent months, [NATO has committed to a major escalation](#) of force on Russia’s Western flank, supposedly to counter ‘Russian aggression’ toward eastern Europe and the Baltic States. This leads to our next point.

Seeking to reclaim the USSR? What we hear: [Russia is seeking to reclaim the former states of the USSR](#)

What we actually see: Russia is not trying to bring back the USSR, but “...nobody wants to believe it”, [Vladimir Putin has said](#).

Where Russia has taken military intervention in the ex-Soviet republics are in those of Georgia and [Chechnya](#). The Russian action in Chechnya was not their finest hour, either militarily or in the lead-up, even though they eventually prevailed. Chechnya is still a part of Russia, since the 2nd Chechen war, whereas Georgia seceded at the end of the Soviet Union, except for the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which are under Russian control and were lost to Russia in the 2nd Georgian conflict, a war which the Georgians started. [Georgia has since ousted its president Saakashvili](#), who was installed after the 2003 so-called ‘Rose Revolution’ (a coup by any other name) and is now the governor of Odessa in Ukraine, and a known US neocon favorite. His salary for that gift is greater than that of the governor of Maine, far above those of other Ukrainian officials. Russia has also intervened in Crimea and in the Ukrainian regions of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts (the Donbass),

although arguments are ongoing about whether those Ukrainian interventions were of the regular military sort.

There is no evidence that Russia is seeking to reclaim the former Soviet states. Their main aim is to look after ethnic Russians in the old Soviet republics, but that does not amount to wishing to restore the Soviet Union. What we hear is conjecture and propaganda instead, meant to keep the European states afraid and in the arms of NATO (which can be read a couple of ways), and the West in the mind of seeing Russia as a threat. [Trump's recent NATO summit](#) with European leaders has amply illustrated that, with his diatribes to those leaders essentially amounting to a what is protection racket, especially focused on Germany. It was also an attempt to get Germany to buy US gas at three times the price of Russian gas, which was a useless and antagonizing ploy, as well as the rest of the NATO nations to buy US arms. That summit essentially illustrated – really put into bold relief – that without the United States, NATO is a non-entity. Europe would have to fend for itself militarily. But what enemy would they have to face, if any? It is certainly not Russia at the moment, and their economies would certainly be better off not focusing on such matters. [42% of Germans want the US out of Germany](#) anyway, so where is the problem, really?

Actually, it is the West, primarily the US, who are seeking to claim the former Soviet states. Of the 17 former Soviet States, [virtually all of them](#) are now NATO members. Somehow, this is supposed to ensure against ‘Russian aggression’. In Russia, this is seen as Western aggression. We are told nothing of this in the Western press. There were three main events that woke Russians up to the realities of the actions of the West, Washington in particular: The breakup of Yugoslavia and the bombing of the Balkan states, the latter having historically close ties with Russia, the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the 2014 coup in Ukraine, the latter of which resulted in the spilling of ethnic Russian blood. Ukraine was the final straw for Russians.¹ Russians are now fairly well united in their distrust of Western motives, [proud of their heritage and accomplishments](#) and aware that they must fully protect themselves against the eventuality of war.

Russia seized Crimea? What we hear: Russia invaded and [forcefully annexed Crimea](#)

The truth: We have been lied to about Crimea and Ukraine. You can read the various arguments for and against the legality of the annexation of Crimea [here](#). The annexation happened just after the 2014 Maidan riots in Kiev and the takeover of the Ukrainian government by far-right nationalists and neo-Nazis. The annexation of Crimea was *requested* by the people of Crimea. There was no invasion. The people voted on the basis that there were to be Maidan-type protests to take place in Crimea shortly after those of Kiev. Rumors circulated in Crimea that the organizers of the coup in Kiev would be merciless to those who opposed them and they were fearful of the Kiev government, and not without reason. [This has since proven to be true in other parts of Ukraine](#).

What is commonly called the ‘2014 Ukrainian Revolution’ by the West was in reality a coup d’état, orchestrated by Western powers using by now a [well-orchestrated method](#) for regime change that is [employed largely by the US](#). The current Ukrainian government is illegal. It is not talked about at all in the MSM, but [Ukraine has quite a dark record with Nazism](#) and with its neighbors. If you want to know what really happened in Ukraine, there is an excellent [documentary film](#) that goes through both the history and events. There is [also a book](#) that details it all quite well. That method of regime change has been used in numerous nations, such as in all the Arab Spring revolutions, for instance. It was tried in Syria, but failed. It is [currently being tried in Iran](#), which will also fail in all likelihood. To make a long story short, the coup in Ukraine installed a far-right, Western-friendly government in Kiev that is in reality [littered with neo-Nazis](#), and which is strongly anti-Russian. The coup has split the country, and has caused alarm among Russian-speaking people there. This is what we see in the eastern Ukrainian republics and in Crimea. Ukraine is in great danger now of becoming a failed state and of splintering. The coup also gave rise to an oligarchy which has

plundered the nation, much as what we saw immediately after the fall of the Soviet Union in Russia. It gives a good reflection of what happened to Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union, minus the civil war and the neo-Nazis. The coup has caused great concern in Russia and has shown the true intentions of Washington.

Russia has long had a naval base in Sevastopol, on the Crimean peninsula. Until 1954, Crimea was part of Russia, when it was given to Ukraine by Khrushchev, who was Ukrainian. After the 2014 coup, the people of Crimea, fearing what might befall them if the Maidan forces took hold in Crimea, opted to leave Ukraine, overwhelmingly so, and go back to Russia. They held their own referendum, with the support of Russia, of course. But they voted, democratically, and Russia took them in. The Russian forces in Sevastopol just walked out of their barracks after the referendum and into the general populace. There was no violence, no coercion. Of course, it is not quite as simple as that, but essentially that is what happened. Crimea is where the real revolution in Ukraine took place, not in Kiev. The people of Crimea are now happy for the most part, except for the Tatars, and feel secure. To Russians, Crimea has been rightfully returned to Russia. There is a rather humorous video by [an intrepid American](#) which illustrates the current attitude of the people of Crimea.

Russia will never willingly give up Crimea. They have since [built a bridge](#) from Russia to Crimea at great expense to the Russian Federation, if that is any indication, which was a strategic measure and which ensures rapid deployment of supplies and troops should anything untoward happen near Crimea. [The bridge is also meant to bring the economy of Crimea up to Russian standards](#), gradually increasing the average annual income of Crimeans four-fold, all being well, as well as integrating Crimea into the transport system of Russia. The bridge will be a real boon to Crimea, which used to be one of the poorest regions in Ukraine. And, as far as economics and resources go, Crimea seceding was no great loss to Ukraine. It was more the fact they returned to Russia

Russia arming Ukrainian rebels? What we hear: [Russia is arming and supporting rebels in eastern Ukraine](#)

Probably more to the point: Russia is supporting ethnic Russians in eastern Ukraine against hostilities from Ukrainian nationalist factions from Kiev. These eastern Ukrainian ‘rebels’ staged protests in eastern Ukrainian districts when it became clear that the perpetrators of the 2014 coup would be against anything Russian and would very likely persecute the same.

Russia has been cast as the aggressor in Ukraine by the Western media. But in reality, Ukraine is a divided nation. The eastern part of the country is heavily [ethnic Russian](#) and Russian-speaking. The regime in Kiev outlawed the Russian language after taking power, which gave an indication of their leanings, and protests against the Kiev government took place in eastern Ukrainian cities as a result, eventually leading to tragedy. It also led to the region of Donbass proclaiming their independence from Ukraine. The Kiev government proclaimed this as a terrorist act and sent in troops to suppress it, without success thus far. As a result, there is now a civil war in eastern Ukraine, [depending on which source one cites](#). This is from where the idea of Russia arming separatists in Ukraine arose. In a perverse twist, the US for a time was arming the neo-Nazis ([Azov Battalion](#)) from Kiev who were fighting on the front lines in the Donbass region, before being pointed out by Congress, and now [Israel is arming them](#), being used as a proxy by the US to do so. If memory serves, the West fought against the Nazis in WWII, as did the Russians. Russia has denied sending regular troops into the region, although mercenaries are a probability. [There are many factions fighting](#) in the Donbass. If the situation worsens, direct Russian military action could take place, although they really do wish to avoid it. As it is, the Ukrainian military is quite weak, and the Donbass fighters are able to hold them off. There were also anti-Maidan protests in southern Ukraine, but they were effectively crushed by Kiev. Odessa, the major city in that region, was too valuable a piece of real estate to be let go, as it is also the largest port in Ukraine. But for ‘Russian aggression’ in Ukraine, the view of many Russians is as follows:

“I consider it impossible to create a direct clash between Ukraine and Russia. We share common roots, for centuries we together have experienced the hardest trials and shoulder to shoulder we defended our freedom and independence during the Second World War. I am convinced that in our common historical memory there will never be a place of mutual confrontation or enmity.”

Sergey Shoigu, Russian Defense minister

Russia undermining our moral authority? What we hear: Russia “...aims to diminish the appeal of the Western democratic model and attempts to [undermine America's moral authority](#).”

A dose of truth: There is quite a lot we could say here, but we will stick to basics. The quoted statement is from a recent address from General James “Mad Dog” Mattis, US Defense Secretary, to the US Naval College graduation. He added further that Putin seeks to shatter NATO, that, “For the first time since World War II, Russia has been the nation that has redrawn international borders by force of arms in Georgia and Ukraine, while pursuing veto authority over their neighbors' diplomatic, economic and security decisions...His [Putin's] actions are designed not to challenge our arms, but to undercut and compromise our belief in our ideals,” he added. The truth is somewhat different.

As to undercutting beliefs in America's ideals, Russia had firsthand experience with the Western democratic model in the Yeltsin years, and the nation suffered as a result. [Russians remember those years](#) well. Life expectancy dropped, as did GDP dramatically. The period gave rise to the oligarchs and let the mafia take hold. Corruption was widespread, the state was unable to provide basic services and prices spiraled out of control. Workers went unpaid, as did pensions. These things were not all the result of Western values, as part of it was caused by endemic corruption in the Russian political class, a holdover of the Soviet Union. But, the newfound freedoms were instituted much too quickly and the Russian populace was not able to adapt in kind. What we saw in Russia during the Yeltsin years was [a mix of factors](#), between Western wishful thinking, lack of knowledge about Russian culture, miscalculation and even outright meddling on the Western side; and lack of leadership, a disconnect between theory and practice, endemic corruption among the Russian elites – which basically created a power vacuum – an inability to make a complete break with the past, and no civil society that could push back against the tide of privatization and government corruption: in effect, a disorganized and immobilized populace on the Russian side.

As things happened in Russia during the Yeltsin years, a system was set up that caused a failed move toward democratization and encouraged a return to authoritarian rule, which Putin inherited from Yeltsin, rather than the latter instituting it himself. As a result of all the preceding, Russians were soured on the idea of Western-style democracy and economic neoliberalism, perhaps rightly so. Russians will find their own way toward a more democratic society, if that is what the public eventually wants. From a more esoteric perspective, the soul of Russia inclines itself toward order and ritual² anyway, so any form of democracy that emerges there will have differences from what we call democracy in the West. It is worth noting, too, that with the combination of her more devotional Leo personality³, and the Uranian Aquarian soul, Russia inclines itself to more centralized, nationalist government, especially in times of crisis, like she has had, and this is a dynamic that we do not seem to or want to understand in our models of democracy. Russians, for their part, prefer order and stability over our more chaotic democratic and economic processes.

As for the NATO, it is increasingly being seen as [an irrelevant institution](#). The Warsaw Pact is no more. Russia is not threatening her neighbors. And, for a real eye-opener, Russia at one time had [applied to become a member of the NATO](#), but was refused by the West. The [stated purpose of the organization](#) from its inception, was to “...keep the Soviet Union out, the Americans in, and the Germans down...” referring to Western Europe. Apparently, that is still its stated, and probably only purpose. [Trump's recent statements to Angela Merkel](#) at this year's NATO summit are clearly

meant to keep Germany in line, the Americans in and the Russians out. This even goes so far as to [demand that member states divest themselves of Russian arms](#), which quite a number of them have. They are simply seen as better value for less money than their American or European counterparts. Russia, for its part, seeks rapprochement with Western and Central Europe, and many leaders in Western Europe seek the same with Russia, largely for economic reasons. Russia is a natural trading partner with the EU. We can probably see reasons here why Russia would be more than happy to see the NATO go the way of the Warsaw Pact.

As for Russia undermining America's 'moral authority', many people – indeed, among them an increasing number of Americans – are now genuinely questioning whether America has anything resembling moral authority in our comportment of domestic and foreign policy. When we say 'America' here, we refer largely to the Washington establishment and media outlets. We could list, among other things, advocating [the use of torture](#) (so-called “enhanced interrogation techniques”), [abuse of veto power](#) in the UN Security Council, [providing military support to 73% of the world's dictators](#), interference in the affairs of numerous other nations, etc...it's a long list and illustrates the openly duplicitous attitude the US Geminian personality when it comes to its own interests vs. those of the wider world.

Russians are oppressed? What we hear: [Russians are an oppressed people](#) suffering under a yoke of harsh authoritarian rule

That depends on who one asks: The recent experiences of the 1.5 million foreign visitors to the Fifa World Cup have put pay to that notion, at least in their own minds. For another view, I have travelled to China, briefly, around a decade ago, and at one point to the Tibetan autonomous region. Admittedly, it was on a tour, but we were able to walk around in the cities without interference, and we really did not feel any sort of threat or need to be worried. The Han Chinese were quite happy, were helpful, were well-dressed and fed, and so forth. This goes to a point: China has a more autocratic rule than Russia, but the Chinese do not feel themselves to be particularly oppressed, from what I could see. The various minority groups do, such as the Tibetans, but we will have to leave that for now. The point is, freedom is a relative concept.

Compared to a few decades ago, the Chinese have more freedoms than they did. If one has lived under a totalitarian regime and then, over the course of several decades have progressively more freedoms, can earn some money, can travel and study abroad, have an increasingly better standard of living, and so on, then the government does not feel so oppressive. This might seem simplistic or naïve, but only a few of us have lived under such regimes. And fewer still lived through the nightmare that was Russia under Yeltsin and [perestroika](#). The overarching point to be made here is that we in the West project our ideas about freedom onto these other nations, without really thinking about what freedom actually means to someone else. Russians, from what I hear and can tell, are happy with the way things are going, although the sense is they could go a little faster, but they are pragmatic. They see Putin as a [harsh, but just ruler](#) who on the whole is doing his best for his country.

There are many types of oppression, economic and basic living standards among them, and Russians are certainly less oppressed in the latter ways now than they were in the '90s and '00s. On the other side, Putin has had to try to rein in the oligarchs and foreign interests and restore control to the state, which means that for the moment there has been a move toward a more autocratic rule. Whether it stays that way in the long term remains to be seen. [As one Russian recently stated the matter:](#)

“Does freedom presuppose a framework of rules and order? Or does it just mean that everyone does whatever they want?”

The latter is the American view of freedom, which I can vouch for as an American, but the Russians prefer the former, so long as the leadership shows moral strength and acts in line with the will of the people. The American view tends to be more individualistic, whereas the Russian view is more toward a collective effort, wherein the individual operates within the existing order. These views very much reflect the Rays and astrology of both the US and Russia. European views run the gamut in between the two extremes of those two views.

Russia and human rights: What we hear: [Russia has an abysmal human rights record.](#)

Glass houses and stones: This sort of meme never fails to hook a society and especially liberals and otherwise pacifists into motivating them to endorse military actions, for instance, or actions they would not otherwise endorse. It is an [age-old propaganda tool](#). It is a theme that cynically plays on people's moral sensibilities and it has been used time and again to keep the American public especially aligned against Russia and any other nation that does not conform to 'American interests' or ideals of 'democracy'. In the US it is used to promote the idea of a [Pax Americana](#). Reported human rights abuses used as a tool of coercive propaganda have been done repeatedly in other nations in order to demonize opponent nations. ([here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#))

There are a few points to keep in mind when we talk about human rights. I could write a long paper on that topic, but given the current climate, such a piece would probably be even less well received than this one. We in the West single out countries like China and Russia for human rights abuses. We did the same about every nation in which we interfered in their affairs and disrupted their state. It was part of the propaganda effort in the lead-up to intervention. But there is more than one type of human rights abuse. Aside from the physical aspect, there is economic abuse, which we see through sanctioning another nation in an effort to bring it to heel. There is wealth disparity. There is [wrongful imprisonment](#), but the latter is often supported by 'law and order' advocates who do not really know any better. There is regime change, which frequently creates failed states and [an immense scale of human suffering](#). There is [segregation](#) and racial discrimination. There is the suffering of dictatorship. There is debt slavery, especially where government policy makes it impossible for people to pay their bills or repay their loans. There is forced starvation of populations, and the list goes on.

Most Western nations have engaged in these practices at one point or another. If we want to be really honest about this sort of thinking, even large parts of the populace of the US suffer human rights abuses, especially people of color, whereas the Washington establishment engages in far worse atrocities overseas, in the name of 'spreading democracy and freedom' and especially 'defending human rights'. As the saying goes, "When you point the finger, there are three more pointing back at you." Russia's human rights record is certainly much better than it was say, under Stalin. The gulags are gone, for instance, since 1961. Russia is not what we would call a 'free and open society' in Western terms, but compared to places like Saudi Arabia, North Korea and China, it is certainly has a better human rights record. Yet every little instance of oppression that takes place in Russia that the MSM finds out about is rolled out and the fingers pointed, whereas [most Russians see their society as developed and progressive](#).

Journalists unsafe in Russia? What we hear: [Journalists and people who oppose Putin are routinely killed in Russia.](#)

The truth: The number of journalists killed in Russia was comparatively [higher during the Yeltsin years](#), when there was supposedly a more Western-friendly government. There was also higher crime then, the emergence of the Russian mafia and a more lawless state. Even then, the number killed in Russia each year is far below those killed worldwide. [In terms of general press safety](#) and freedom, Russia ranks with the likes of Mexico, most African

republics, India, Pakistan, Turkey and Indonesia. The safest country is Finland. The US is classed as ‘satisfactory’, but [that might change](#), given the current political climate.

According to [The Committee to Protect Journalists](#), between 1992 – 2018, there have been 58 journalists killed in Russia. That figure does not include media workers. If one includes media workers in the list, then Russia ranks 5th, behind Pakistan, Mexico, the Philippines and Iraq. Of those journalists killed, 12 were killed in crossfires, 8 were killed on dangerous assignments and 38 were murdered. Of those murdered, 25 were killed after Putin took office. This is compared to the 596 journalists who were murdered worldwide from 2000 (when Putin took office) to present, so only 5% of those murdered were in Russia, and some perhaps not even by Russians. There are other regions bordering Russia who have problems with Russian journalists. During that same period, for comparison, 35 journalists were murdered in Mexico, which were probably due to the drug wars ongoing in that nation. There have only been 9 journalists imprisoned in Russia since Putin took office. The figures for [journalists jailed in 2016](#) is quite revealing, with the highest number by far being in Turkey (81, re: the coup), followed by China (38) and Egypt (25). These figures vary widely according to other sources. For example, some Wikipedia articles misreport such figures (as [an example](#)). Russia does not have a good record as to press freedom, but it is not the worst offender. [It is ranked 148 out of 180](#), with China and North Korea right at the bottom of the list. Some of our allies are ranked worse than Russia. However, there is scant reporting in the MSM about those other nations where press freedom is not good and where journalists are jailed and killed. The more probable reason that journalists are killed in Russia is due to criminal activity, and we are not talking about the government. There is indeed a Russian mafia, and it operates outside the state. And there is one more point: Where are the facts that say Putin ordered these people killed? So, why all the focus on Russia?

Russia assassinating its opponents abroad? What we hear: [Russia has a history of assassinating its opponents](#) on foreign soil

Or do they? If so, they are not the only ones. ([here](#) and [here](#))

The most recent allegations of Russian shenanigans come from England again, with the alleged poisoning of a couple a few miles away from the Porton Down chemical weapons facility, of which the woman has since succumbed to her poisoning. This follows upon the [Skripal affair](#) back in March, which was likewise blamed on Russia. No proof has been offered that Russia did it, only accusation, and common sense says that the poisonings are the result of other factors rather than Russian actors. Many of the cases of assassinations by Russians leveled at the Kremlin [have not been adequately explained/investigated](#), which only adds to the intrigue and the mystery. They may have been ordered by the Russian government, or they may have been committed by underworld figures with a vendetta against those people, for instance, or they could even have been committed by the secret services of the state in which they were committed – by MI6 or the CIA, for another instance. Who can say definitively? It does make for a good film script or spy novel, though. We are not saying the Russians didn’t commit these acts, nor are we saying they did. But these sorts of accusations go back to the point of the anti-Russian narrative cited at the start of this piece. It is enough to make one wonder who really *is* behind such assassinations. A good place to start is by asking ourselves: Who benefits? There is no nation with clean hands in such cases.

Russians don’t innovate? What we hear: [Russia does not innovate](#)

The facts: This was a foolish statement for several reasons, by a president on his way out of office. Obama went on to say that, “They are a smaller country, they are a weaker country, their economy doesn’t produce anything that anybody wants to buy except oil and gas and arms...” It was foolish statement, to start, because it is not true, and we will see why shortly. But it was even more so because it perpetuates the notion to the American public that Russia is a backwards, ignorant nation that could never match or stand up to the US. It also

perpetuates the notion, held by many lawmakers in Congress, that somehow we could ‘take’ Russia in a fight. More knowledgeable people might then rightly ask, for example, “Then why have we not gone into Syria and finished the job we started?”

Russia is hardly a backwards, ignorant nation, as the world has seen with the Sochi Olympics and the recent Fifa World Cup. It is a modern, advanced society, at least in its major cities, its people are informed and well-educated. They have access to Western media and the internet. The [literacy rate is almost 100%](#), just ahead of the US, UK and Australia. Just over half of the population goes on to [complete tertiary education](#), on par with Canada, and with those two nations having the highest such attendance rates in the world. When one looks at four-year degrees (university level), Russia tops the world. Educational levels in the US especially [have steadily degraded](#) over the past decades. The focus in the US is no longer so much on the ‘three Rs’ in schools, nor an emphasis upon how to think or take responsibility for oneself, but instead on funding, test scores, the individual instead of how that individual functions within society, feelings instead of facts, etc.

As for innovation, much of our technology and hence manufacturing arises out of military research, little as we may realize it. ([HERE](#), for example) Manufacturing in the West has declined rapidly with the onset of neo-classical economics, with the result that education is based more in services and tech in the West, with a corresponding loss of infrastructure and skilled people. Such is not the case in Russia – quite the opposite. If it can be rightly stated that “necessity is the mother of invention”, then Russia has taken that idea and run with it. Sanctions since 2014 and the economic downturns of the late ‘90s and 2008 have also aided in that process, along with the attempted isolation of Russia by many Western powers. Russia has had to innovate to survive. She has had to reach out to other markets. She has had to build up her infrastructure and create industries in order to replace domestically what was imported in the past. She now exports such things as rocket engines to the US. Her agriculture industry is now thriving. Her military hardware is second-to-none in many areas. There is a very strong emphasis now on building up a microelectronics industry. Software engineering in Russia is world class.

There is an excellent accounting of all this in a recent book by Andrei Martyanov: *Losing Military Supremacy: the Myopia of American Strategic Planning*. Russia knows well the way to survive and even thrive in very difficult circumstances. Russia has come from a backwards, uneducated peasant economy at the start of the 20th century, to a world power and technological and innovative leader in the space of one century, having done so really in the space of 50 years, truth be known. It industrialized and created its massive militarily-industrial complex in the space of a mere ten years during the rise of fascism in Europe. No nation does that sort of thing without innovating and having a strong will.

Russia myth-making about NATO? What we hear: Russia is “[myth-making](#)” about NATO

The truth: Or in this case, the Russian view: “NATO has been publicly promoting a simplified ‘black and white’ picture of the history of complicated relations between the Alliance and Russia, accusing Russia of ‘myth-making’ about NATO’s ‘impeccable’ actions. NATO has regularly updated its fact sheets with a view to persuade the public that only NATO has been strengthening European security and stability without any critical self-evaluation of its actions and hard lessons of the military operations in the Balkans, in Afghanistan and Libya. But most importantly, perhaps, there have been no proposals about ways to promote a positive agenda which would allow to overcome current highly risky tendencies in the military-political situation on the continent. The efforts undertaken by the Russian Federation to strengthen the security architecture in the Euro-Atlantic area have been silenced.”

Russia influences elections abroad? What we hear: Russia interfered in the 2016 presidential

election and routinely interferes in the elections and affairs of other nations.

The facts: [It's very doubtful the Russians hacked the DNC servers](#). The evidence just does not add up. The fact is, we do not know the facts about who actually did. What we hear are the words 'highly likely', that the US Intelligence Community '[is confident](#)' that the Russians did it, '[based on previous judgements](#)', and so forth, but with nothing concrete presented. In other words, what we have again, referring back to the Skripal affair, is what would otherwise be called circumstantial evidence, for which the burden of proof would fall upon the prosecution in a court of law.

There is room for doubt here, and [most Americans have serious doubts](#) about the 'Russia-gate' story. There has been a parade of 'expert testimony' in American media about this affair in support of the idea that 'Russia did it'. Whether or not Russia made an effort to interfere in the 2016 election ignores certain facts and distracts from others, though. Firstly, and perhaps foremost, it ignores the fact that the [US government routinely has interfered in the electoral processes of numerous nations](#), aside from actively encouraging and engaging in regime change, [and has done so for a least two centuries](#). It recently did so in the [Ecuadorian elections](#) and is now [actively pursuing regime change in Iran](#), which is against international law.

The Russia narrative distracts from the fact that the DNC [successfully conspired](#) to deny the nomination of Bernie Sanders as the Democratic presidential candidate in the election, even though that notion, too, [is contested](#). It distracts from the fact that [Clinton ran a failed campaign](#). It ignores the fact that the majority of Americans viewed the establishment as the problem in the election rather than the solution. The question of Russia only became part of the larger media memes after the election. Donald Trump was elected as a protest vote, even though [Trump himself was vetted](#) by the Washington establishment, a few billionaires and Wall Street bankers. It has been argued, perhaps in truth, that [Bernie Sanders would have won the election](#) had he been the nominee. The end point here: In a healthy society, where there is accurate, investigative reporting, informed debate instead of partisan wrangling, some basic knowledge of world affairs and so forth, the 'Russia-gate' phenomenon would have been a non-starter, and we would be focused instead on the matters that really impact us – economy, health care, infrastructure, the future for our children...It's a long list, and the Russians had nothing to do with that. Russia has her own internal problems, which are large, like ours, and she is in process of addressing them.

Russia wants the EU weak or gone? What we hear: [Putin wants to break up the EU](#) and then prey on the remains

The hard truth: This is a silly notion, if we look at it in a historical context. It was a weak and fractured Europe after WWI that allowed fascism and Nazism to take root. It was the Nazis who marched across the western USSR and almost entered Moscow. Why would Russians want to see that happen again? And then there is economics, with Russia seeking to build economic partnerships worldwide. Then there is the fact that an *intact* EU is much more advantageous to the Russian economy than conflicting European states. [Some of Russia's biggest trading partners are European](#), Ukraine, Denmark and Germany being among them.

“Why would Russia attack or damage European countries which are worth way more for Russia free and prosperous than they would be if damaged and theoretically, subjugated? Basic logic and common sense, supported by a real knowledge of Russia's 20th and 21st century history, answer this question unequivocally. *Russia can, but she won't.*”⁴

If Russia had really wanted to intervene in Ukraine, for example, and claim Ukraine as her own (see point: Russia arming rebels in Ukraine?), she easily could have. Ukraine is not a NATO member, which would not have invoked [Article Five](#) had Russia invaded, and given the state of the Ukrainian military (which is weak), Russia probably would have easily prevailed. But what would

Russia have gained, except world condemnation? Plus, if the American experience in Iraq is any indication, Russia would have been bogged down for years in Western Ukraine with a hostile populace. It is far better – and far easier – for Russia to do its best to help maintain Ukrainian sovereignty and better relations than to try to take and occupy that nation by force, not to mention the reaction of the West. This also goes back to the preceding point about Russia seeking to reclaim the old Soviet republics, which in the case of Ukraine, goes against such a statement. Crimea was another matter altogether. There was no armed revolt in Crimea. [The majority of people of Donbass want to go back to Russia](#), or at the least to be free of the oligarchs and neo-Nazis in Kiev.

Additional/optional views on Russia and Russian culture:

(I don't necessarily agree with all views expressed by these sites, but they are worth a look.)

Asia Times: <http://www.atimes.com/>

Information Agency of Greater Russia: (machine translate) <https://novorosinform.org/>

Intellinews: <http://www.intellinews.com/>

Russia Insider: <https://russia-insider.com/en>

Russia Today (RT): <https://www.youtube.com/user/RussiaToday>

Russian Market: <http://www.russianmarket.org/>

The Saker (Andrei Raevsky's blog): <https://thesaker.is/>

The Real News: <https://therealnews.com/stories/growing-up-in-the-ussr-rai-with-a-buzgalin-1-12>

Unz Review: <https://www.unz.com/>

Vesti News: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCa8MaD6gQscto_Nq1i49iew

¹ Martyanov, Andrei. *Losing Military Supremacy The Myopia of American Strategic Planning* (starting p. 150). Ch. 7: "The Failure to Come to Grips With the Modern Geopolitical Alignment". Clarity Press. The entire chapter is quite revealing of what we fail to see or are not told in the West.

² Bailey, *The Destiny of the Nations*, table, p. 67

³ Op cit

⁴ Ibid, p. 138