

The Folly of the New Cold War

By Vladislav Krasnov

When in 1974, after being deported from the USSR and finding refuge in the USA, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn said that he and his books will return to a free Russia, US *sovietologists* met his declaration with disbelief and ridicule. How dare he challenge their wisdom that the best we could do in the foreseeable future was to contain the USSR in its sphere of influence? Communism was indeed the enemy the USA elites *loved to hate*.



I recalled this while reading *Costs of a New Cold War: The US-Russia Confrontation over Ukraine*, a collection of essays by prominent American and Russian scholars. Published by the Center for the National Interest, the book features an introduction

by Paul Saunders and essays by Thomas Graham and Blake Marshall, as well as Fyodor Lukyanov and Igor Yurgens of Russia. Alas, it falls short of its goal “to illustrate the costs that any further unraveling of the US-Russian relationship may have for both Washington and Moscow.”

The reason for this failure is the entrapment of all contributors in the conceptual framework of the Cold War. They differ only as to whether the level of current hostility approaches that of 1962 or 1984. None realizes we are deep into a New Cold War that is *essentially different* from the old one. The essential difference is a 180 degrees exchange of roles.¹ If during the Old Cold War the USSR was pushing the Red Flag of Communism throughout the world, now the USA is marching to convert benighted nations, such as the “authoritarian” Russia, to the blessings of “*democracy, free-market and globalization.*” Now Washington preaches that America’s *exceptionalism* entitles it to run the “unipolar” world the way it wants.

If during the Old Cold War, the West was guided by George Kennan’s *containment strategy*, the booklet under review shows how “the legacy of *Realpolitik* has been... marginalized by the resurgent forces of Neoconservatism in Washington”. So says Gilbert Doctorow, the author of “*Stepping out of Line: Collected (Nonconformist) Essays on Russian-American Relations, 2008-*

¹ See the discussion of *The Reversal of Fortune* by Martin Sieff, including my contribution, W. George Krasnow, *Napoleon, the Neocons and New Russia: A View from Moscow* <http://us-russia.org/95-reversal-of-fortune-how-the-united-states-is-repeating-the-mistakes-that-destroyed-the-soviet-union-by-martin-sieff.html>

12”,² in which he praises *the American dissidents now dissenting from the Washington Pravda line*.

With the arrival of Mikhail Gorbachev, the age of change in the USSR was underway. The US establishment sided with Gorbachev’s reformers who wanted to retain Communism under the cosmetics of human rights. Among the few dissenting think-tanks then was the Center for Contemporary Russian Studies (CCRS) at the Monterey Institute of International Studies in California where I was professor and director of Russian studies. In 1987, jointly with Professor Nicolai Petro, we founded CCRS to educate our students, and public at large, about the forces *inside* Soviet society which would lead to the demise of Communism and birth of a new Russia. We published a series of books that animated a new Russia, such as *Reflections on Russia* by Dmitry Likhachev, a Soviet scholar and former prisoner of the GULAG, who never forsook Christian foundations of Russian civilization, or *Self-Government and Freedom in Russia* by Sergei Pushkarev, a prominent Russian émigré.

The series ended with my book, *Russia Beyond Communism: a Chronicle of National Rebirth*, published in 1991,³ just on time before I could take it to Moscow and hand a copy to Boris Yeltsin after, emerging victorious in the August 19, 1991 coup, he hoisted the Russian national tri-color over the Kremlin. Dedicated to the 1000th anniversary of Russia’s Baptism

² <http://www.amazon.ca/Stepping-Out-Line-Nonconformist-Russian-American/dp/1481270060>

³ <http://www.amazon.com/Russia-Beyond-Communism-Chronicle-Contemporary/dp/0813383617#>

in Kiev in 1988, the book held forth that the country needed not just economic and political reforms, but *a rebirth of its Christian spirituality suppressed during 73 years of atheist Communist rule.*

In May 2014 the book was published in Russian translation. Its thesis remains the same: **Russia, still in the making, is essentially different from both the USSR and Tsarist Russia.** I also argue now, as I argued then, that the USA should not meddle in Russia's domestic affairs. Based on the writings of dozens Soviet authors I envisioned a gradual democratization of the country via an *authoritarian* transitional stage necessary for retaining the orderliness of reforms. The most eloquent champion of such *gradualism* was Solzhenitsyn, the author of "*Letter to Soviet Leaders*", written in 1973 before his exile. Alas, neither his providence nor conciliatory tone moved Soviet or Western elites.



Vladimir Putin receives Virgin Mary 'fertility' relic as Russia fights abortion, population decline|LifeSiteNews.com
US *sovietologists* failed to predict, and prepare for, the downfall of the USSR. But, at least, they stayed back with their *Realpolitik*.

They did not call for a war nor tried to provoke it by stepping into Soviet sphere of influence. This cannot be said of Victoria Nuland, Deputy Secretary of State and a Russia specialist, who made herself famous when she dismissed the EU role in Ukraine, kicked Yats (Yatsenyuk) upstairs, and put Klitch (Klitchko) in his place, all in unprintable language.⁴

Her former diplomatic colleague Thomas Graham, in his contribution to the booklet, attributes all faults to Russia, at least, “since fall 2011, when Putin announced his decision to return to the Kremlin.” He is totally oblivious of US meddling in Russia’s *internal* affairs. It does not occur to him that Russia can present a much longer list of grievances starting from the decision to retain and expand NATO.

As early as 1996, Richard Perle submitted his paper “*A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm*” to Benjamin Netanyahu during his first term as Israel’s PM.⁵ After Netanyahu found this strategy beyond Israel’s means, it was adopted by US government. Thus the current US strategy of *regime change* was born. The expansion of NATO became an adjunct to *the new pre-emptive military strategy* in the Middle East.

In 1997 William Kristol and Robert Kagan launched a new think tank, *Project for the New American Century (PNAC)*.⁶ After Perle joined it, PNAC has spawned a cabal of professors, public

⁴ <http://www.thenation.com/blog/178293/not-so-secret-ukraine-phone-call>

⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Clean_Break:_A_New_Strategy_for_Securing_the_Realm

⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Project_for_the_New_American_Century

officials and journalists, known collectively as the Neo-Conservative. The appropriate name should be *pseudo-conservatives*, for the Neocons have more in common with military adventurism than with social and geopolitical conservatism. The Neocon pernicious influence on US foreign policy under both the Democrat and Republican presidents made the USA hostile to any nation that is not ready to submit to its dictates. *Since the February 21 coup in Kiev, Russia has been its primary target.*

While the booklet seeks forewarn both Moscow and Washington about unpredictable developments and escalating costs to both, *should they fail to come to terms over Ukraine*, it does not put even a flicker of light at the end of the tunnel. Its American contributors fail to point out *the great cost of the Neocon adventures to the health of US economy*. According to Joseph E. Stiglitz, “The recent economic downturn eviscerated the wealth of many. In the US, even after the stock-market recovery, median wealth fell more than 40% from 2007 to 2013...Millions of Americans have lost their homes; millions more face the insecurity of knowing that they may lose theirs in the future.”⁷

A Nobel Prize laureate in economics, Stiglitz was the one high-ranking IMF official who resisted the meddling in Russia’s reform by a band of Neo-Liberal economists from Harvard whose misdeeds caused the renowned institution pay the highest penalty

⁷ <http://www.nationofchange.org/2014/10/13/age-vulnerability/>

in its history.⁸ We do not wish to impute ill-will to all American advisers on Russian reforms, but their zeal in planting democracy and free-market, like potato, to a country that had been 73 years under Communism was a tantamount of reckless folly. If it succeeded in making Russia *capitalist*, it was done at such high cost to ordinary Russians that they still shudder at the corruption, oligarchy, ordered killings, starvation and lawlessness of the Yeltsin era. Judging by what Stiglitz and other critics⁹ of Neo-Liberals say about *their influence on US economy*, it was not much better than the bitter taste it left in the mouth of millions of Russians.

The Russian contributors to the booklet observe that if, by the meddling in Ukraine, US government aimed at dividing Russia, they badly miscalculated. President Putin now enjoys the best rating ever. Lukyanov ingeniously describes Russia's current tactics in terms of judo: Putin, who has a black belt in judo, refrains from attacking his opponent, but rather lets the bully waste his energy by throwing his weight around. This is but a restatement of Kennan's *containment strategy* which now Russia is using, consciously or not, against the United States.

The question is: Why make Russia an US enemy? After the US got bogged down in the Crusade (George W. Bush's word), against Muslim "terrorists", do we need to start a new Crusade

⁸ See my two articles under the name of W. George Krasnow, published by Johnson Russia List. [Would Harvard Ever Help Russia?](#) March 10, 2006; and [Did Shock Therapy Help Russia?](#)

⁹ See Henry Giroux's book *Neoliberalism's War Against Higher Education*, Haymarket Press, 2014, and his interview <http://www.truth-out.org/opinion/item/26885-henry-giroux-on-the-rise-of-neoliberalism>

against a re-born Christian Russia? Some conservative Americans strongly disagree. Patrick Buchanan, a *genuine conservative*, Reaganite, one-time presidential candidate and publisher of *The American Conservative*, was brave to ask: “*Is Putin One of Us?*”¹⁰ While striving to plant *color revolutions* in other countries, the Neocons may well have undermined the unity of the United States.

It’s is a high time that the USA and Russia put their intellectual resources together and start fighting together against the virus of *Ebola* and other disease, against the Islamic and all other terrorist violence, and against the indignity of inequality and poverty that plague much of the world, including the United States, Ukraine and Russia.

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¹⁰ <http://buchanan.org/blog/putin-one-us-6071>