

# LVIV SECURITY FORUM

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(text reconstructed from notes at the time)

## **"WHY PUTIN LIKES THE WEST"**

Sincere thanks to the Co-Chairs of this upcoming Forum, Deputy Head of the Ukrainian Parliament, Oksana Syroyid and L'viv Mayor Andriy Sadovyy. Sincere thanks, as well, to the Forum sponsors, partners, organizers and contributors, and to the hosts of this dinner, Mr. Sadovyy and the Prosvita Institute. And much appreciation for the tremendous work done by Mrs. Marta Suprun and her colleagues in pulling all this together. She, I know, has been in touch with all of us in her remarkably efficient and always gracious manner.

Allow me to make two observations before I turn to my remarks. The Mission statement of the Forum's website asks that we be honest and direct. And so, although I do not wish to appear overly harsh in my observations, nevertheless I am obliged to be frank and open. Otherwise, why have a conference such as this at all? Also, I want to emphasize that when I speak about the "West", or use the term "we", I do not at all include the people in this room who are not from Ukraine, and who know and understand far more than the general citizenry of the countries that they represent. They and their institutions have labored tremendously on the very issues that we are so concerned about, and deserve much credit.

"Why Putin Likes the West" may seem to be an anomalous title for my remarks. After all, what we incessantly hear is that Putin is blaming the West for everything. We hear about Russia's "lost pride," that it is "humiliated," "embittered," "insulted," "lost," "confused." One of the advisors to Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders in the last presidential campaign said, "Putin has been trying hard to find love, appreciation and recognition."

The demonstrable facts are opposite. Fiona Hill is formerly from the Brookings Institution, a well-recognized think tank in Washington, and is now with the National Security Council in the White House. She is recognized in many circles as a Russia and Putin expert. A few years ago, she wrote a book about Putin where she said that Putin is "unable to understand the mindset of Americans and Europeans and their political dynamics."

For someone who doesn't understand us, however, Putin has done quite well. Let's just take one example. We have his money in our bank. We hold the key. Yet he brazenly expands his aggression. Russia--one country--taunts, menaces, intimidates, and threatens with nuclear war the collective of Western democracy. And Putin doesn't in the least feel that his money is at risk. Why not? Where does he get his self-assurance from? We gave it to him.

Putin is not brilliant. But he knows and understand very well the hundred-year history of relations with the West. He has identified patterns of Western behavior, thinking and emotions that are clear, predictable, and reliable. His conclusions, based on those patterns, are also themselves predictable. He sees repeated strategic blunders by the West, squandered opportunities, and an inability and absence of political will to think and act strategically, in an affirmative, and not a reactive, manner. But how can this possibly be the case if, as we tell ourselves, it was the West that "won the Cold War"? We'll return to that question later.

What is the history that Putin sees? In 1918, Ukraine declared independence, was recognized by Lenin and was promptly invaded. Ukraine turned to the West, requesting aid in the form of surplus WWI equipment and medication. Ukraine was denied. Ukraine warned that in a generation the West would be confronted directly by Russia. Ukraine was ignored. Moscow of course conquered and occupied Ukraine, and its control of Ukraine was pivotal to the formation and viability of the Soviet Union.

In 1933, the United States extended diplomatic recognition to the Soviet Union at the same time that Moscow was using starvation to break the back of Ukrainian resistance, thereby ensuring the regime's survival. In the eyes of the world, recognition represented America's legitimization, acceptance and approval of Stalin's murderous regime. Furthermore, this was legitimization, acceptance and approval by America, the devil of the capitalist world, the intended victim of the very regime that had declared itself the leader in the world campaign to destroy capitalist America. How should Putin assess our strategic sense?

In World War II, the West liberated Europe, but only part of it. We facilitated one tyrant, Hitler's partner, replacing the other. The West in effect measured the dimensions of the Iron Curtain. America's Lend/Lease program delivered to the Kremlin far more equipment and material, both in type and quantity, than necessary for military needs. Unfortunately, Moscow used the "Made in America" label to crush the underground resistance movements in Ukraine and in the Baltics, and also the uprisings in the Gulag in the early 1950's.

From the late 1940's and for 40 years, the West--essentially the United States--pursued a policy of containment, seeking to contain Soviet expansionism. Containment, however, did not contain. Compare the relative position of the United States and the Soviet Union after WWII, and then 40 years later. For all the treasure spent and precious lives lost on "containment", there was a dramatic shift, with the Soviet Union massively increasing its global influence and military capacity as America retreated.

The problem with containment was that it was exclusively reactive, with no sense of the West undertaking any affirmative measures to bring about the dissolution of the USSR. We surrendered situational control to the Kremlin. We concluded that the only way to deal with a pyromaniac was to build a very expensive, very large and very mobile fire department that would run around the world, putting out fires that were set by the Kremlin, at its choice of time, place and intensity. Containment was based on hope. But if hope is not a policy or strategy for the stock market, how can it be the basis for national security? Not surprisingly, the prominent American journalist at the time, Walter Lippmann, described containment not as a strategy, but as a "strategic monstrosity."

But containment's most fundamental flaw was that it didn't recognize, in the least, the multi-national structure of the Soviet Union, that it was a colonial empire. Containment perpetuated the "Russia"/"Soviet Union" equivalence that distorted Western thinking from the very first days of the Soviet Union. This was a massive and continuing blunder, one that helped Moscow's repression of the submerged nations of the Soviet Union. Today, a full generation after the fall of the USSR precisely because it was not simply "Russia," US government officials at the very highest levels often repeat that same "Russia"/"Soviet Union" equivalence.

The Reagan Administration broke the mold, and went beyond the purely reactive restrictions of containment. He undertook affirmative measures to cause the dissolution of the USSR. After the election of George Bush, Sr., however, the US reversed. Astonishingly, we worked to preserve the USSR intact. Jack Matlock, the US ambassador to the Soviet Union at the time, said directly: "The common assumption that the West forced the collapse of the Soviet Union and thus won the Cold War is wrong. The breakup of the USSR into 15 separate countries was not something the United States caused or wanted." As we know, Ukraine ignored Washington, declared independence, and the rest is history. So, if "winning the Cold War" meant the collapse of the Soviet Union, did that occur because of, or in spite of, America's containment policy?

What happened after the fall of the USSR? We never implemented or even conceived of establishing a "Marshall Plan" to secure the independence and security of the former captive nations as a bulwark against Russia. We did not do what we did with the Marshall Plan in Europe in WWII, even though the necessity for doing so after the fall of the Soviet Union was ten times greater. Unlike the devastated economy and military capacity of Germany, the Soviet economy, though in poor shape, was intact. And its military capability was very much intact as well. But most critically, while Germany came to terms with its past, and admitted, apologized for its crimes, Moscow accelerated in the opposite direction. It celebrates its crimes.

Why were we so passive? Because, again, we simply "hoped" that things would change. How, why? What, exactly, did we think the millions in the KGB, in the *nomenklatura*, would do, where would they go? They would somehow become democrats overnight? Why? How? What about the secret people making secret poisons in secret laboratories in secret cities? How could we possibly consider that that vast repressive system, with such a bloody history, would simply suddenly change. Again, we simply "hoped" that it would. This total lack of responsibility by

Western democracies for their very own security, the passivity and refusal to face reality and anticipate the future, is startling. Unfortunately, it was not the first time.

History is another name for experience, and experience is another name for a book of lessons. What lessons does Putin draw from all this? His first conclusion is that the West itself has learned no lasting lessons. We have not learned from our experience, and therefore have no predictive capacity. Our experience was never sufficiently painful to leave a lasting imprint on our societal memory or political institutions. Thus, for example, President Obama came into office wholly innocent about Moscow, but at the end he was hopefully at least somewhat more aware. But the revolving door in politics preventing the solidification of lessons to be learned. What conclusions do we expect Putin to reach?

Furthermore, Putin knows that we don't have any understanding that Russia is a predator state. We have no conception of the Soviet system, and cannot grasp the significance of Putin's background, his resurrection of Stalin, and its implications for the West. We don't bat an eyelash over the fact that there is a "KGB Bar" in New York City, or that Jay Kearney, President Obama's press secretary, has Soviet propaganda posters in his home, and splashed on the pages of a major Washington magazine with no objection by anyone.

In 1999, Putin celebrated Stalin's birthday. In that year, we also saw the Moscow's false flag operations in the Moscow apartment bombings, serving as a pretext for Moscow war against Chechnya. His so-called Millennium Speech at the end of that year was an unmistakable blueprint for his future. Only months later, in 2000, Condoleezza Rice was asked at a conference in the US what was the key issue that would indicate to her what kind of person Putin was, if he would be the kind of person that the US "could work with". She replied that it would depend on what kind of tax reforms he would undertake.

Later that year, we saw no significance in Putin's celebration of Felix Dzerzhinsky's birthday, the notorious founder of the Cheka, precursor to the NKVD and KGB. And that was on 9/11, the day of the destruction of the World Trade Center towers. In February 2002, at the Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, Utah, Putin, in his typically probing manner, tested a "light" version of Soviet symbolism. No reaction by the West. In the following year, in 2003, Michael McFaul, President Obama's future ambassador to Russia, published a book predicting that Russia was no longer a threat to the West. By April 2005, when Putin lamented that the fall of the Soviet Union as a "tragedy", he had already for six years been celebrating its bloody past. The West ignored it all. Today, Che Guevara remains a fashion statement.

Putin sees the West in a historically self-imposed requirement "not to offend" or "not to antagonize the Russians." On July 2, 1934, the British Foreign Office received an inquiry from the House of Commons about Moscow's starvation of Ukraine. The internal memo circulated within the Foreign Office read: "We do not want to make it [information about the Ukrainian genocide] public, because the Soviet Government would resent it and our relations with them would be prejudiced. We cannot give this explanation in public."

George Orwell's Animal Farm was rejected by 14 publishers because they "didn't want to offend the Russians."

In the 1970's and 80's, Western intelligence knew that the Kremlin was organizing, directing and financing Middle East terrorism against the West under the name of "Arab Nationalism". Later it also extended to terrorism by local actors in Germany, Italy and Ireland. Yet Western politicians wanted to keep this quiet, not wanting to "offend the Russians."

The United States, in particular, seems to be particularly compelled to "make nice." "Can't we just get along and be friends?" President Truman is generally recognized as having been more hard headed than President Roosevelt, but even Truman wrote in his diary, after the war was over and when it was already clear that Stalin had deceived the West about Eastern Europe: "I'm not afraid of Russia. They've always been our friends, and I don't see why they shouldn't always be . . . so let's just get along." The same approach we see repeated by Presidents Carter, Bush and Obama. Only months after Putin invaded Georgia, President Obama initiated his infamous "reset" with Russia. How can it be that it is we who made the overture to Putin, and not the other way around?

Putin sees us trying to transfer our commercial genetic code and our deal making culture to our relations with the Kremlin. That does not work. The words "stability" and "management" appear endlessly in Western writing and commentary about Russia. That is what "doing business" requires. But that has never been the way that the Kremlin operates. It thrives, needs and therefore creates instability. It is always on the offensive. It exerts a hydraulic pressure of pushing, accusing, blaming, distorting, demanding and attacking. Relentlessly. The West, on the other hand, is reactive only, perpetually responding from one crisis to another to another. We are Pavlovian.

And, of course, doing business means entering into agreements. In our psyche, an agreement is a roadmap to resolving a problem. Agreements with Russia do work, but in the very opposite direction and with the opposite result that the agreements are meant to achieve. We scrupulously comply with agreements. Russia scrupulously does not. Indeed, the one exception to our trying to superimpose our commercial heritage in dealing with Russia is that we tolerate and encourage the very kind of behavior that we would never tolerate in a business setting--endless breaches of agreements by the other side of the table. The only exception to our lack of predictive capacity that I mentioned earlier is that we have superb predictive capacity about Moscow's breach of the very next agreement. Inexplicably, we simply ignore the breaches, always coming back for more. After WWII, the US was #1 in the world, the sole superpower, economically and militarily. Only the US had the atomic bomb. After forty years of containment and dozens of agreements with Moscow, what was the result? The USSR immeasurably expanded its global influence, and its military/nuclear capacity had at least reached parity with the US. So much for agreements.

And finally, there is the question of money. During the course of a century, Western democracies were the source of untold amounts in economic value to Moscow, whether in forms

of credits, technology, know how, or other direct or indirect economic benefit. Without the West having economically propped up the Soviet Union it would have collapsed much, much earlier. The other side of it is that today it is we who are captive to Russia's money, and not the other way around. In 2006, a British citizen was assassinated by a miniature nuclear device in the front yard of Buckingham Palace, so to speak. Alexander Litvinenko, a British citizen, was the victim of nuclear warfare on British territory. What did three successive British Prime Ministers do? Nothing. Russian money purchased London.

So, what are the consequences when the West has such a character profile? We are hugely susceptible to what I call "strategic deception". George Orwell called it "reality control." The late historian, Robert Conquest, was more direct and call it simply "mind slaughter." When *dezinformatsia*, *maskirovka*, *provokatsia*, *kompromat*, *agitatsia* combine together and superimpose a total disorientation, a false perception, whether upon a person or upon an entire nation, it creates not just an alternative reality. It creates total reality reversal. It's doubly dangerous, because it's in our subconsciousness. I sometimes give the example of your waking up in the middle of the night and finding yourself in the wilderness. You look for the bright star in the sky, the North star, in order to get your bearings. You see the star, or you think you do. However, you do not realize that while you were asleep you were transported to the Southern Hemisphere. All of your decisions and actions are correct, based on the assumption of that bright star that you see is what you assume it is-- the North Star. But it's not. You wind up walking in the opposite direction. You don't even think about questioning the accuracy of the assumption because you're not even aware of it.

What is the first reality reversal that confronts us? That Russia is merely being "defensive." You've heard it all before, and I know that no one here shares that view. Nevertheless, it remains an enormously powerful one, regardless of the fact that Russia's most recent intrusion into the electoral processes in Europe and the US. You all know the litany--that Russia has "security needs," that it requires "spheres of influence," that it is "afraid of NATO encirclement", that it has "legitimate interests" and "historic claims," that it feels "victimized" by World War II, that it needs a "buffer," etc.

This is nothing new. President Roosevelt assured us: "Stalin doesn't want anything but security for his country, and I think that if I give him everything I possibly can and ask nothing from him in return, he won't try to annex anything and will work with me for a world of democracy and peace." That, obviously, was during the war. But after WWII, and similar to what President Truman had said, Secretary of State Dean Acheson added: "To have friendly governments along her borders is essential both for the security of the Soviet Union and the peace of the world."

Much credit is due to Mitt Romney and his advisers, when during the first presidential debate with President Obama Romney identified Russia as America's primary geopolitical foe. Unfortunately, Mr. Romney later wrote an article in The Wall Street Journal that America should give the Kremlin assurances that we wouldn't threaten Russia's influence in Kyiv. This is reality reversal.

"Russia's immense contribution in World War II is part of their proud history of standing up to imperialist powers." This is in the introduction of an extended speech that US Ambassador to the UN, Samantha Power, gave in January of this year. I was pleased to hear that, in the balance of the speech, and after many years Ambassador Power had begun to understand some of the hard reality about Russia, but her statement at the beginning is inexcusable. In the 1890's, the Russian General Staff conducted a study of military campaigns between 1700 and 1870. Russia waged thirty-eight wars. Two were defensive. How else do you become the largest empire, and also the largest country, in the world, encompassing an entire one-third of Asia and much of the European sub-continent? You do not do so by being "defensive."

When we participate in such reality reversal we become multipliers in the denial of history, in the denial of the victimization of entire nations, and in the applause of the perpetrator. Why don't they have the right to exist? It is the victim nations that the Kremlin has persecuted for generations, and in many instances for centuries, that have the right to feel secure, who have "historic claims" against Russia, who need "spheres of influence," and who require a "buffer." And it was the failure of the West to recognize this that has led to the situation that now confronts us.

Part of that same "defensive" deception is Russia's re-engineering of World War II. "Had it not been for the colossal sacrifices made by the Soviet Union in WWII--in which they lost more than 20 million people, many times more than any other nation, friend or foe--the war would have dragged on much longer." Again, this is Ambassador Power speaking on that same occasion. And note that Power again equates "Russia" with the "Soviet Union," and even describes the Soviet Union as a "nation." It was not. It was an empire. A quarter of century after the fall of the USSR, far too many Western politician and commentator continue to speak and think in precisely the same terms. This is inexcusable, and again illustrates that we have never grasped the very essence of the USSR, or the meaning of Putin's celebration of it.

As to World War II, itself, let's be clear that Stalin and Hitler were not simply allies. They were equal partners, joint venturers. When Hitler was appointed Chancellor in January 1933, thanks to the Soviet Union the German armaments industry was already far along the path toward being rebuilt. Under the Treaty of Rapallo with Germany, in the 1920's Moscow provided critical resources for the rebuilding of Germany's military capability, much of it plundered, ironically, from Ukraine. German military maneuvers took place on Soviet territory. Tours of the growing GULag were provided. And this was at the same time that Western, particularly American, industrial assistance was flowing to the Soviet Union. How does Putin assess our strategic acumen?

How many decades have passed since the end of World War II? Why don't we ever hear about Hitler's purpose for the war? It was to colonize Ukraine. Only during this past summer did Yale's Professor Timothy Snyder address the German Bundestag reminding Germany of its history. It's an astonishing distortion when Germany feels guilt about WWII and "*Russland*", when it was "*Russland*" that started the war together with Germany, and when it was not

"*Russland*" but Ukraine that was Germany's target and greatest victim. The number of Allied troops that invaded Normandy was 132,000. The number of *Wehrmacht* and other troops that invaded the Soviet Union in Operation Barbarossa on June 22, 1941, was 3.2 million. And that did not just include Germany troops, but Hungarian, Rumanian, Slovakian, Finnish, and Italian troops as well. Do we refer to those countries today as "Nazi"? It's no wonder that Ukraine suffered more than any other country during World War II, whether measured in terms of loss of humanity or physical destruction. Four times more Ukrainian civilians were killed in World War II than the combined military deaths of the United States, France, Italy, Great Britain, Canada. Millions more Ukrainians were killed serving in the military and taken as slave laborers to Germany. Ukrainians are Nazis? It's another massive reality reversal, another strategic deception.

Yet another example in the strategic deception that Russia is merely being "defensive" is the drumbeat of NATO "encirclement". First, I suggest we look at a map. How many NATO countries border Russia? "Encirclement" is a geographic impossibility. And even if it were possible, we are to somehow feel guilty about it? Second, Putin **knows** that NATO is defensive. He **knows** there that is no chance, whatsoever, that NATO will invade Russia. Stalin knew about NATO and its purpose before it even formally existed. Third, we never exhibited the psychology of affirmative, "take the offensive" thinking about Russia during the last 100 years even where there was never any military component. Fourth, if there was ever a time for fear of an invasion, it was during WWII and immediately thereafter. That never happened, and could not have, given the absence in the West of any understanding of Moscow's threat. Fifth, how, exactly, will more than two dozen nations be coordinated? For what purpose? To achieve what? Finally, for us to believe that "NATO encirclement" is something that Putin in fact fears would also require that we simply ignore the hard, demonstrable reality that he knows and understands our political dynamics better than we do. He has proven that. Does anyone here in the room really think that public panic (due to what, exactly?) in the West about Russia will rise to the level that it translates into political decisions for a coordinated military invasion of Russia? This is nonsense. Putin and Lavrov may beat that drum for domestic and foreign consumption, but they know reality well enough. So should we.

The second example of reality reversal is Western talk about "engaging" Russia in fighting ISIS. Where is the logic of that, however, when the roots of ISIS and Al Qaeda reach back to the genetic code for "Arab nationalism" that the Kremlin created in the 1970's and '80's at Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow and the surrounding KGB training camps? Today, Moscow does not have to be directing or controlling ISIS. It simply receives the benefit of a weakened, disoriented, disheartened and dispirited West. Furthermore, consider the "genius" that it took for Moscow to be able to turn the Middle East against the West a generation or more ago. First, the Soviet Union was an atheistic state. Second, it --and before that, the Russian Empire--had a violent history of suppressing the Muslim nations of the Caucasus and Central Asia. And yet the Kremlin prevailed, and a Nobel Prize was awarded to its creation, Yasser Arafat. Truly, a remarkable achievement.



Finally, Ukraine. I know there are those present for whom Ukraine is not on the mental map as are other "traditional" countries of Europe, such as Poland or Italy, for example, even though Ukraine's now internationally recognized status is not questioned. I will not get into the distortions of Russian historiography that were put in place in the 18th and 19th centuries, and will only mention that Russian historiographers who emigrated to the West after the Bolshevik *coup d'état* established the foundation of so-called "Russian studies" in the West. Though the historiographers may not have been supportive of the Bolshevik regime, they nevertheless transplanted to the West the imperial history that they themselves fashioned and absorbed.

We've all heard the assertions: "Russia traces its 1000 year history to its beginnings in Kiev", "Ukraine is a historic part of Russia," "Kievan Russia was the beginning of modern Russia," "a thousand years of Russian Christianity." As a result, as Putin whispered in President Bush's ear, Ukraine does not exist. Neither did it for Hitler, who identified Ukrainians in the camps as either Russians or Poles.

So let's examine the reality reversal, the strategic deception that is grounded in the anomaly of the periphery of the Kyivan Rus' state, Russia, pre-empting and laying claim to the center, Kyiv. And remember, at that time the amount of Russian territory that was part of the Kyivan Rus' empire was only some 3% or so of Russia that we know today.

Firstly, I know of no other instance in history or geography where the creation of an artificial 1000 year pedigree is used to justify war, invasion and terrorism today and accepted so totally uncritically by the West. Indeed, it is more logically and intellectually consistent to justify Kyiv's "historic claim" to Russia, as part of Kyiv's former empire.

Secondly, even if we accept the "1000 year history" argument, then what is the result? Because of the Viking influence in the establishment of the Kyivan Rus' state, Ukraine today can claim Oslo, Stockholm or Copenhagen as the beginnings of Ukraine? Norwegians, Swedes and Danes are "really" Ukrainians", or "Little Ukrainians" or "younger brothers"? The same holds true with the influence of Byzantium on Kyivan Rus', complete with the Cyrillic alphabet and religion. Ukraine "really" began in Byzantium/Istanbul? Today's France, as Spain, Germany and Israel, were part of the Roman Empire, as was part of Russia a part of the Kyivan Rus' state. Does that mean that France can claim that Rome is "really" French, and that Italians are Frenchmen? And what of Romania, which appropriated even the name of Rome, as Russia did with "Rus"? What is the German word for France? *Frankreich*. Land of the Franks, a Germanic tribe. What are we to conclude from that? France has a claim to Germany, or is it the other way around? I will not belabor the point. Ignorance of history, and the lack of critical thinking on something that is not very deep, makes the West, again, a prime target for such reality reversal.

So why does Putin like the West? First, the West does not understand how and why it finds itself in the situation that it is in today. One country, with nothing to offer to the world, has managed to put the Western democracies on the ropes. How, why, is any of this possible? And why are we suddenly so very surprised? But where do we see any self-examination? Second, Western attention to Ukraine has historically been at the opposite end of the spectrum compared

to Moscow's razor focus. Even today, Western concern doesn't even begin to approach the degree of seriousness that is necessary, given that Ukraine drove the nail into the coffin of the USSR, and in a very real sense saving the world from it. In addition, as we know Ukraine surrendered its nuclear arsenal, in large part to its historic persecutor. What do we think that Putin makes of all this? What conclusions does he draw about our strategic sense? His money is safe with us, and existing sanctions are and will remain inconsequential in impacting the situation on the ground.

I suggest that in the next two days we seek to benefit from the Forum so that we can return to our respective countries in order, ultimately, to work for their national security interests. And that is achieved by anchoring the security and independence of Ukraine as the best chance we have of turning Russia inward. We must think strategically and escape from the perpetual defensive, reactive position that we have frozen ourselves into. And let there be no mistake. Only then will tyrants in the Middle East, China, and North Korea also understand that the West recognizes and has the will to act in its own self-interest.

Thank you very much.