

Provocations Have A History Of Escalating Into War

Posted By *pcr3* On August 31, 2018 @ 9:47 am In Articles & Columns

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Can War Be Avoided and the Planet Saved?

Paul Craig Roberts

The Russian Government and President Putin are coming under pressure not from US sanctions, which are very good for Russia as they force Russia into independence, but from Russian patriots who are tiring of Putin's non-confrontational responses to Washington's never-ending insults and military provocations. Russian patriots don't want war, but they do want their country's honor defended, and they believe Putin is failing in this job. Some of them are saying that Putin himself is a West-worshipping Atlanticist Integrationist.

This disillusionment with Putin, together with Putin's endorsement of raising the retirement age for pensions, a trap set for him by Russia's neoliberal economists, have hurt Putin's approval ratings at the precise time that he will again be tested by Washington in Syria.

In many columns I have defended Putin from the charge that he is not sufficiently Russian. Putin wants to avoid war, because he knows it would be nuclear, the consequences of which would be dire. He knows that the US and its militarily impotent NATO allies cannot possibly conduct conventional warfare against Russia or China, much less against both. Putin also understands that the sanctions are damaging Washington's European vassals and could eventually force the European vassal states into independence that would constrain Washington's belligerence. Even with Russia's new super weapons, which probably give Putin the capability of destroying the entirety of the Western World with little or no damage to Russia, Putin sees no point in so much destruction, especially as the consequences are unknown. There could be nuclear winter or other results that would put the planet into decline as a life-sustaining entity.

So, as I have suggested in many columns Putin is acting intelligently. He is in the game for the long term while protecting the world from dangerous war.

Whereas I endorse Putin's strategy and admire his coolness as a person who never lets emotion lead him, there is nevertheless a problem. The people in the West with whom he is dealing are idiots who do not appreciate his statesmanship. Consequently, each time Putin turns the other cheek, so to speak, the insults and the provocations ratchet upward.

Consider Syria. The Syrian Army with the help of a tiny part of the Russian Air Force has cleared all areas of Syria but one of the American-instigated-financed-and-equipped forces sent by Washington to overthrow the Syrian government.

The remaining US proxy force is about to be eliminated. In order to save it, and to keep a Washington foothold that could permit a restart of the war, Washington has arranged yet another false flag “chemical attack” that the prostitute and obedient Western media will blame on Assad. President Trump’s National Security Adviser, a crazed, perhaps insane, Neoconservative, has told Russia that Washington will take a dim view of the Syrian/Russian use of chemical weapons against “Assad’s own people.”

The Russians are fully aware that any chemical attack will be a false flag attack orchestrated by Washington using the elements it sent to Syria to overthrow the government. Indeed, Russia’s ambassador to the US explained it all yesterday to the US government.

Clearly, Putin hopes to avoid Washington’s orchestrated attack by having his ambassador explain the orchestration to the American officials who are orchestrating it.

<https://www.zerohedge.com/news/2018-08-30/russian-ambassador-gave-intel-us-officials-showing-planned-chemical-provocation> ^[1]

This strategy implies that Putin thinks US government officials are capable of shame and integrity. They most certainly are not. I spent 25 years with them. They don’t even know what the words mean.

What if, instead, Putin had declared publicly for the entire world to hear that any forces, wherever located, responsible for an attack on Syria would be annihilated? My view —

<https://www.paulcraigroberts.org/2018/08/29/a-book-for-our-time-a-time-that-perhaps-has-run-its-course/> ^[2] — and that of Russian patriot Bogdasarov —

<https://www.fort-russ.com/2018/08/a-russian-response-to-a-new-us-attack-on-syria-should-include-sinking-the-carriers-not-just-shooting-at-their-missiles> ^[3] — is that such an ultimatum from the leader of the country capable of delivering it would cool the jets of Russophobic Washington. There would be no attack on Syria.

Bogdasarov and I might be wrong. The Russian forces deployed around Syria with their hypersonic missiles are more than a match for the US forces assembled to attack Syria. However, American hubris can certainly prevail over facts, in which case Putin would have to destroy the sources of the attack. By not committing in advance, Putin retains flexibility. Washington’s attack, like its previous attack on Syria, might be a face-saver, not a real attack. Nevertheless, sooner or later Russia will have to deliver a firmer response to provocations.

I am an American. I am not a Russian, much less a Russian nationalist. I do not want US military personnel to be casualties of Washington’s fatal desire for world hegemony, much less to be casualties of Washington serving Israel’s interests in the Middle East. The reason I think Putin needs to do a better job of standing up to Washington is that I think, based on history, that appeasement encourages more provocations, and it comes to a point when you have to surrender or fight. It is much better to stop this process in its tracks before it reaches that dangerous point.

Andrei Martyanov, whose book I recently reviewed on my website, recently defended Putin, as The Saker and I have done in the past, from claims that Putin is too passive in the face of assaults.

<https://russia-insider.com/en/russia-playing-long-game-no-room-instant-gratification-strategies->

[super-patriots/ri24561](#) [4] As I have made the same points, I can only applaud Martyanov and The Saker. Where we might differ is in recognizing that endlessly accepting insults and provocations encourages their increase until the only alternative is surrender or war.

So, the questions for Andrei Martyanov, The Saker, and for Putin and the Russian government is: How long does turning your other cheek work? Do you turn your other cheek so long as to allow your opponent to neutralize your advantage in a confrontation? Do you turn your other cheek so long that you lose the support of the patriotic population for your failure to defend the country's honor? Do you turn your other cheek so long that you are eventually forced into war or submission? Do you turn your other cheek so long that the result is nuclear war?

I think that Martyanov and The Saker agree that my question is a valid one. Both emphasize in their highly informative writings that the court historians misrepresent wars in the interest of victors. Let's give this a moment's thought. Both Napoleon and Hitler stood at their apogee, their success unmitigated by any military defeat. Then they marched into Russia and were utterly destroyed. Why did they do this? They did it because their success had given them massive arrogance and belief in their "exceptionalism," the dangerous word that encapsulates Washington's belief in its hegemony.

The Zionist neoconservatives who rule in Washington are capable of the same mistake that Napoleon and Hitler made. They believe in "the end of history," that the Soviet collapse means history has chosen America as the model for the future. Their hubris actually exceeds that of Napoleon and Hitler.

When confronted with such deluded and ideological force, does turning the other cheek work or does it encourage more provocation?

This is the question before the Russian government.

Perhaps the Russian government will understand the meaning of the orchestrated eulogies for John McCain. It is not normal for a US senator to be eulogized in this way, especially one with such an undistinguished record. What is being eulogized is McCain's hatred of Russia and his record as a warmonger. What Washington is eulogizing is its own commitment to war.

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[2] <https://www.paulcraigroberts.org/2018/08/29/a-book-for-our-time-a-time-that-perhaps-has-run-its-course/>: <https://www.paulcraigroberts.org/2018/08/29/a-book-for-our-time-a-time-that-perhaps-has-run-its-course/>

[3] <https://www.fort-russ.com/2018/08/a-russian-response-to-a-new-us-attack-on-syria-should-include-sinking-the-carriers-not-just-shooting-at-their-missiles>: **<https://www.fort-russ.com/2018/08/a-russian-response-to-a-new-us-attack-on-syria-should-include-sinking-the-carriers-not-just-shooting-at-their-missiles>**

[4] <https://russia-insider.com/en/russia-playing-long-game-no-room-instant-gratification-strategies-super-patriots/ri24561>: **<https://russia-insider.com/en/russia-playing-long-game-no-room-instant-gratification-strategies-super-patriots/ri24561>**

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