

Is it wise to put a super power under sanction?

By

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The reason for the existing cold war between Russia and the United States and its allies is the hostility that the United States started against Russia.

The first hostility started with a provocation from the United States. As Paul Craig Roberts reported, the Clinton regime broke the agreement that the George H.W. Bush administration gave Moscow in 1990. In exchange for Moscow permitting a reunified Germany to be a NATO member, Washington agreed that there would be no expansion of NATO to the east. Gorbachev, US Secretary of State James Baker, US ambassador to Moscow Jack Matlock, and declassified documents all testify to the fact that Moscow was assured that there would be no expansion of NATO into Eastern Europe.

In 1999 President Bill Clinton made a liar of the administration of President George H.W. Bush. Clinton brought Poland, Hungary, and the newly formed Czech Republic into NATO.

President George W. Bush also made a liar out of his father, George H.W. Bush, and his father's trusted Secretary of State, James Baker. He brought Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania into NATO in 2004. Obama regime added Albania and Croatia in 2009 (1).

The second provocation was the encircling Russia with a missile defence system on Polish territory. On August 14, 2008, the United States and Poland announced a deal to implement the missile defence system on Polish territory, with a tracking system placed in the Czech Republic. The United States claimed that the missile defence system would be deployed against Iran and any threats coming from North Africa!

The Russians responded by saying that such action cannot go unpunished. They added that the missile defence system will be

deployed not against Iran but against the strategic potential of Russia. Russia warned Poland that it was exposing itself to attack by accepting a U.S. missile interceptor base on its soil. Russia warned that by deploying the system, it is exposing itself to a strike — 100 percent.

On August 20, 2008, the Agreement Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of Poland Concerning the Deployment of Ground-Based Ballistic Missile Defence Interceptors in the Territory of the Republic of Poland was signed in Warsaw by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Poland's Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski.

Poland, whose government is sufficiently stupid to accept US ABM bases, would be obliterated before the bases could function.

On November 5, 2008, in his first State of the Nation speech, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev stated, "From what we have seen in recent years — the creation of a missile defence system, the encirclement of Russia with military bases, the relentless expansion of NATO — we have gotten the clear impression that they are testing our strength." Russia would deploy short-range Iskander missiles to Russia's western enclave of Kaliningrad, sandwiched between Poland and Lithuania to neutralize, if necessary, a missile defence system."

In his recent annual meeting with the media, Russian President Vladimir Putin replied to a question about the rumoured placement of Russian Iskander missiles in Kaliningrad on Poland's doorstep.

He stated that US missile defence remains a threat to Russian national security and that Russia has the right to place Iskander missiles in Kaliningrad, but claimed that that step had not yet been taken. Putin added however that putting Iskander missiles in Kaliningrad would be a logical response to American plans to build a missile defence system in Europe. Military experts grasp, however, is that the US project to install the so-called Ballistic Missile Defence missiles and special radar in Poland, the Czech Republic, Turkey and Bulgaria is the highly provocative act by Washington against Russia and risks putting the world on a hair-trigger to a nuclear war.

In February 2007, Russia's President Vladimir Putin addressed the annual Germany International Conference on Security in Munich, delivering a keynote speech that was extraordinary by any standards, Putin's remarks caught many in the West by surprise:

“NATO has put its frontline forces on our borders. It is obvious that NATO expansion does not bear any relation to the modernization of the Alliance itself or with ensuring security in Europe. On the contrary, it represents a serious provocation that reduces the level of mutual trust. And we have the right to ask: against whom is this expansion intended? And what happened to the assurances our western partners made after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact?”

Putin continued in his remarks: “It is impossible to sanction the appearance of new, destabilizing high-tech weapons...a new area of confrontation, especially in outer space. Star wars is no longer a fantasy, it is a reality. In Russia’s opinion, the militarization of outer space could have unpredictable consequences for the international community, and provoke nothing less than the beginning of a nuclear era.”

“Plans to expand certain elements of the anti-missile defence system to Europe cannot help but disturb us. Who needs the next step of what would be, in this case, an inevitable arms race?”

Washington's Missile Defence is the most extreme provocation imaginable in a nuclear era. The developing of a US Anti-Missile Defence shield around Russia, far from being defensive, is offensive in the extreme. As it seems, the US is pursuing the possibility of nuclear war with its only present nuclear rival, Russia, as thinkable! This is something that is truly mad.

It’s little wonder then that Russia has or is about to deploy Iskander missiles and take other measures to counter the Washington’s mad AMD deployment (2).

The third provocation is to put Russia under sanction. When Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine, and supported Ukrainian rebels the United States and European Union responded with economic sanctions.

The sanctions are justified because Russia joined Crimea and caused chaos in Ukraine. But we must not forget that Putin watched the disintegration of the Soviet Union due to chaos and unrest invented by the United States at the time of Reagan. The Creative chaos the US is now fuelling in the Middle East was the same that tore the Soviet Union apart. Now the United States and her allies are suffering from the same chaos in Ukraine and more than that the joining of Crimea to Russia.

The population of Ukraine is about 47.72 million. Ethnic Ukrainians make up about 73% of the total, and ethnic Russians make up about 22%. Crimea has 2.3 million people, a majority of whom identify themselves as ethnic Russians and speak Russian. Ethnic Ukrainians made up 24% of the population in Crimea according to the 2001 census, compared with 58% Russians and 12% Tatars. Putin claims that he is protecting his people in both countries, Ukraine and Crimea.

The sanctions the U.S. and her allies imposed on Russia came in two big chunks. The first concerned Crimea and they were only personal sanctions for Crimean and Russian leaders involved in the Crimean drama. Then, important sectorial sanctions were further imposed.

After the sanctions, no money had been going into Russia, and no financial institutions dared to provide Russia with any sort of financing. But would the sanctions had damaged Russia's economy?

The sanctions had of course affected the Russian economy. The oil prices had substantially decreased, meaning that Russia had to cut its imports by half. The prices of wheat had increased as much as 70 percent. Basic foodstuff had increased sharply. The exchange rate was jumping up and down. It was moving either way every so often by 5 percent in a day.

But as it seems, the sanctions had not been successful so far! Putin was able to get so easily around the sanctions. Russia relied on China for the investment it needs to avert the recession resulting from the sanctions.

The Chinese admire Putin. They admire what they see as Putin's dexterity in flipping Barack Obama. First, he spun the US President on Syria in 2013, ruffling out Obama's reluctance to use force and turning it into a way of prolonging the political life of the Russian client dictator Bashar al-Assad. Then this month he turned the possibility of the US arming of Ukraine into a ceasefire that will perpetuate the Russian hold on eastern Ukraine. Soon, if no deal can be struck between the US and Iran on nuclear power, Putin will try again to exploit the crisis to cement an alliance with Tehran.

Strategic Partnership with China was quickly established. China's Export-Import Bank signed framework deals with VTB Group and Vnesheconom bank, Russia's development bank, and a trade financing

agreement with Russian Agricultural Bank. These agreements would certainly inject new impetus to the development of the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership.

China filled the void created by the closing of US and European debt markets to Russia's largest borrowers. A Chinese delegation led by Premier Li Keqiang signed a package of deals in Moscow in areas including energy and finance. Among the accords was a three-year 150 billion yuan local-currency swap deal, a double-tax treaty, satellite-navigation and high-speed rail cooperation and an agreement on implementing a natural gas contract.

China acquired 12.5 percent of Russia's OAO Uralkali, the biggest producer of potash, and China National Petroleum Corp agreed to prepay OAO Rosneft about \$70 billion as part of a \$270 billion, 25-year supply deal. That was followed by Rosneft's \$85 billion, 10-year accord with China Petrochemical Corp. and CNPC's purchase of 20 percent of an Arctic gas project from OAO Novatek for an undisclosed sum.

In return, Russia is preparing to sign contracts for the delivery of S-400 missile systems and Su-35 fighter jets to China as early as the first quarter of next year. Russia may also supply China with its newest submarine, the Amur 1650, and components for products such as nuclear-powered satellites.

Some fairly serious barriers were lifted after the conflict in Ukraine. As Russian companies became more desperate for cash, Russia started lifting restrictions to offer the Chinese a wider pool of potential investments, while continuing to shield certain projects involving gold, platinum-group metals, diamonds and high technology.

As a response to the sanctions, Russia and China are also working in tandem on efforts to curb the dominance of the dollar in the global financial system. Yuan transactions on the Moscow Exchange, the first

bourse outside of China to offer regulated trading in the currency, jumped 50 percent to the equivalent of \$1.1 billion, according to the exchange. Though still tiny compared with the \$367 billion in dollar-for-ruble sales, importers now pay for 8 percent of all Chinese goods with yuan instead of dollars, up from 2 percent four years ago. Those volumes will rise exponentially if Russia decides, as it is now debating, to accept yuan under Gazprom's \$400 billion gas contract.

Three days after the first sanctions against Russia, the Russian Foreign Ministry published a list of reciprocal sanctions against certain American citizens, which consisted of ten names, including Speaker of the House of Representatives John Boehner, Senator John McCain, and two advisers to Barack Obama. The ministry said in the statement, "Treating our country in such way, as Washington could have already ascertained, is inappropriate and counterproductive", and reiterated that sanctions against Russia would have a boomerang effect. Russia further banned thirteen Canadian officials, including members of the Parliament of Canada, from entering the country.

On 6 August 2014, Putin signed a decree On the use of specific economic measures, which mandated an effective embargo for a one-year period on imports of most of the agricultural products from Europe, including a ban on fruit, vegetables, meat, fish, milk and dairy imports. Prior to the embargo, food exports from the EU to Russia were worth around €11.8 billion, or 10% of the total. Food exports from the United States to Russia were worth around €972 million. Food exports from Canada were worth around €385 million.

Russia will also replace dollar with local currencies in Bilateral Trade with Egypt. Russian President Vladimir Putin said that Russia is going to exclude US dollars in the bilateral trade with Egypt and use national currencies – roubles and Egyptian pounds – instead. This measure will open up new prospects for trade and investment cooperation between the two countries, reduce its dependence on the current trends in the world markets.

This option brings multiple benefits for both nations, according to Russian President Vladimir Putin. These include direct payments, greater transparency between concerned banks and foregoing of charges for currency conversion.

Highlighting the fact that Russia already uses its national currencies for trade with countries such as China, he added that the practice would "prove its worth."

According to Putin, more than \$4.5 billion worth of bilateral trade took place between Moscow and Cairo in 2014 – an increase of almost 50% from what was last year. Nearly 40% of grain consumed in Egypt is imported from Russia while Moscow buys fruits and vegetables from Egypt.

Egypt then announced it would increase agricultural deliveries to Russia by 30 percent.

"We see promising prospects in the field of high technology, particularly in the areas of nuclear energy, outer space use and sharing of the Russian GLONASS satellite navigation system," Putin said.

Observers say this is also a way for Russia to prove to the rest of the world that US sanctions will never isolate Russia from the rest of the world. It is also a strategy by Putin to chip away at Washington because Egypt is also close to the United States (3).

According to Russian sources, Moscow has also been seeking a change to the use of national currencies in mutual bilateral trade with countries including China, India, Thailand and Turkey. Russia is also in talks with Iran to exclude the US dollar from bilateral transactions.

Ever since the West slapped punitive sanctions on Russia in response to its military intervention in Ukraine, Pro-Kremlin commentators in the Russian media have been making bold statements about their economy's resilience. Russia, they say, will move swiftly and boldly into an import-substituting mode of development whereby domestic production entirely fills the void left by sanctions. Russia might even emerge from the crisis with a stronger economy than it had before!

The sanctions imposed on Russia do not punish Russia but only punish the West itself: Western firms will lose

access to Russia's substantial domestic market and, even if the sanctions are eventually lifted, they will find themselves facing a fundamentally changed reality in which they are unable to effectively compete with a new generation of Russian entrepreneurs (4).

As it shows, Putin came out of the sanction stronger. Before the sanction was placed on Russia, America and her allies seemed to forget that the Russians are now united in support of their leader and, with \$455 billion in foreign currency and gold reserves, the country is not broke (5).

On the political level, Putin feels like a winner as America declines. The Kremlin has had the power over the past year to switch the Ukraine conflict on or off at will. Now Putin has placed it on energy-saving standby mode. The crisis has been frozen, Ukraine rendered dysfunctional, its prospects of joining NATO or the EU receding by the day.

The Russian President has changed pace partly because he wants to consolidate his gains but chiefly because of his ideologically based strategy that oscillates between Europe and Asia. Russian identity is, he believes, Eurasian, a fusion that relieves Moscow of the need to commit to European rules of behaviour or Asian standards of courtesy and efficiency. Guided by the nationalist thinker Alexander Dugin, the leaders of the 21st-century Russia really do believe that "whoever controls Eastern Europe rules the heartland, which controls the heartland rules the world". For the Kremlin that means the struggle going on in Ukraine is part of a much broader global contest, a Western attempt to bottle up Russia.

The next Western target, in the Kremlin view, is central Asia. As the US withdraws from Afghanistan, so the central Asian republics become prime strategic real estate. That's why Putin is wooing the region's key external players, China, India, Turkey and Iran. And that's why Kazakhstan is next on Putin's list of Neighbours that require Special Attention. Its ruler, Nursultan Nazarbayev, is ageing and there is no clear successor — the US could in the Kremlin mind set try to install a Western-friendly government. Kazakhstan's population is one-third Slavic and therefore falls into Putin's Eurasian heartland (6).

No wonder that when Putin goes east, he is seen as a winner, as the man who has the measure of American decline.

America and the NATO cannot by any means fight Russia in Eastern Europe. We all saw what the US/NATO airpower could do in the best possible conditions in Kosovo: nothing. And that is going against 1970 Russian air defences. You can imagine what the same airpower would do against modern 2014 Russian air defences. Same thing for air-to-air: it is one thing to fly against early export version of the MiG-29 and quite another to take on SU-35s and MiG-31BMs or even SU-27s modernized to SM1/SM2 standards. NATO has extremely weak and old air defences. Once the Russian Air Force begins striking NATO ground forces with SU-34s escorted by SU-35 it will get very ugly very fast, at least for NATO. Russia also has the advantage in artillery, in tactical ballistic and cruise missiles, in anti-tank weapons, in airborne tactical cruise missiles and many other aspects of warfare. But most importantly, the foot-soldier, is far more capable and way tougher in the Russian military than in any NATO country. True, the US/NATO still have superior communications, including battlefield communications and generally better reconnaissance capabilities, but that would not be enough to tip the balance (7).

Recently, a lot has been said about so-called "sixth-generation wars" and high-precision long-range weapons that should ensure victory over enemy without coming into direct contact with its armed forces. This concept is highly questionable. The US failed to achieve victory in such a way both in Iraq and Afghanistan. Yet, this is the point, where Russia enters the parity line as well. The proof is long-range cruise missiles of a new generation that will soon be deployed on submarines of the Black Sea Fleet and missile ships of the Caspian Flotilla.

Russia has taken to arguing that it is not fighting Ukraine, but America in Ukraine. The Ukrainian army is just a foreign legion of NATO, and American soldiers are killing Russian proxies in the Donbas. Russia says that the rebels are well-supplied, with high morale and plenty of Russian aid, including Russian officers offering their services as volunteers. What's more, the rebels are in a good position to launch an offensive into the late winter and spring to establish a hardened front line that will crack Ukraine in pieces.

Russia feels threatened not by any individual European state, but by the European Union and NATO, which it regards as expansionist. It sees them as "occupied" by America, which seeks to exploit Western values

to gain influence over the rest of the world. America “wants to freeze the order established after the Soviet collapse and remain an absolute leader, thinking it can do whatever it likes, while others can do only what is in that leader’s interests,” Putin said recently. “Maybe some want to live in a semi-occupied state, but we do not.”

Vladimir Putin has won in Ukraine. The only question now is what he wants next. That’s the sobering conclusion of some veteran Kremlin-watchers who say the Russian president has already achieved his goal of crippling Ukraine while consolidating his power in Moscow.

George Soros, the Hungarian-born billionaire investor says Putin has outmanoeuvred Western governments in the conflict, taking advantage of their desire to avoid military confrontation with Russia. “Putin’s Russia has proved to be in some ways superior to the European Union—more flexible, and constantly springing surprises,” Soros writes in a forthcoming article for the New York Review of Books. The U.S., Soros says, has offered Ukraine “a façade of support with little substance behind it,” as the country skids toward economic collapse.

Radek Sikorski, Poland’s foreign minister said: “Putin had used the conflict to consolidate his power at home. This was the moment that finally centralized everything into the hands of Vladimir Putin. The conflict has unleashed patriotic euphoria among Russians who overwhelmingly support Putin.”

Liam Halligan, a British journalist and economist specializing in Russia said: “The West will surrender in its new Cold War with Russia. Sanctions against Russia are inflicting severe pain on the German and French economies. And with winter approaching, Vladimir Putin still holds the cards when it comes to supplying gas to Europe.”

The continued fighting in eastern Ukraine underscores the failure of sanctions to curb Russian interference there.

George Soros also said: “After Ukrainian parliamentary elections on Oct. 26, Putin may simply sit back and await the economic and financial collapse of Ukraine.

The likelihood is that Putin will continue to keep the West guessing. Said

French Ambassador Araud: “The question is there on the table: When is Putin going to stop?” (8).

Do sanction works? Normally sanctions do have an economic effect but do not necessarily have the desired political effect. The economic sanctions will force Russia onto a path of greater self-reliance and protectionism, its domestic manufacturing and service industries would almost certainly grow much bigger, even if their quality and productivity fell further behind Western standards.

What would be the political impact in Russia of turning back from a consumer society relying on Western imports into something more akin to Soviet-style self-reliance, Brazilian-style protectionism or South African isolation under apartheid?

Nobody can say for sure, but judging by the experience of other countries that spent years or decades isolated from global markets, it seems likely that the oligarchs would prosper economically in a more protectionist Russia. It is probable that Putin, would go from strength to strength in such an autarkic environment, and that Russia’s military power would grow, rather than erode (9).

Economic sanctions might not work in Russia because Russia is already sitting on roughly half a trillion dollars in foreign exchange, and it exports about 7.5 million barrels a day of crude oil bringing in about \$300 billion a year — not including its sales of natural gas.

The sanction is bad news for foreign companies operating in Russia. Still, some international companies have big stakes there. The biggest U.S. investor in Russia is Exxon Mobil, which has an oil and gas production facility off Sakhalin Island in north eastern Russia and which has joined with Russian oil giant Rosneft to explore the country’s Arctic region. It also has an operation extracting natural gas from complex geological formations. Russia accounts for about 6 percent of Exxon Mobil’s global production.

London-based oil giant BP is even more exposed to Russia. It owns a 19.75 percent stake in Rosneft, whose chief executive Igor Sechin was just added to the U.S. sanctions list. The stake is valued at about \$13 billion, about 9 percent of BP's total market capitalization. The Rosneft holding also accounts for about 30 percent of BP's production, 36 percent of its reserves and contributes about 15 percent to the firm's net income.

Royal Dutch Shell has a stake in a Gazprom oil and gas field in Siberia and is a partner in Sakhalin 2, which has a liquefied natural gas terminal that in 2012 supplied a tenth of Japan's gas needs.

Weatherford, a U.S. oil services company, is also deeply involved in Russia. As of March 2014, Weatherford had 346 rigs, 74 percent of its international rig count, operating in Russia.

Outside the energy sector, international companies with investments in Russia range from those selling luxury consumer goods to those investing in other natural resources. Putin, like other countries' leaders, has insisted that automakers have certain levels of domestic content if they are selling in Russia. Ford and General Motors both have plants in Russia.

The U.S. embargo of Cuba has lasted more than half a century, and the Castros still rule there. The embargo of North Korea has inflicted suffering and starvation on the populace, but the Kim family remains in power. Both countries received oil and economic support from Russia and China, respectively.

Sanctions imposed on Russia might not be significant because if the world loses 9 million barrels a day from Russia, there is no supply elsewhere that could fully compensate for that loss immediately. If Russian exports went to zero tomorrow, there would be a global oil

crisis. Russian President Vladimir Putin criticized the United States saying that sanctions would be "harmful to the national long-term strategic interests of the American state, the American people." (10).

Taking the military power of Russia into account, the US military has also been rattled by the resurgence of the Russian submarine fleet. Moscow is building new generations of giant ballistic missile submarines, known as "boomers", and attack submarines that are equal or superior to their US counterparts in performance and stealth.

There have been sporadic reports in the US press about Russian submarines reaching the American east coast, which have been denied by the US military. But last year Jacoby, the head of Norad and the US northern command at the time, admitted concerns about being able to counter new Russian investment in cruise missile technology and advanced submarines.

"They have just begun production of a new class of quiet nuclear submarines specifically designed to deliver cruise missiles," Jacoby told Congress.

Former UK naval officer Peter Roberts said : "It's something the Americans have been trying to brush off but there is increasing concern about the American ability to track these subs.

The Akula is being superseded by an even stealthier submarine, the Yasen. Both are multipurpose: hunter-killers designed to track and destroy enemy submarine and carrier battle groups. Both are also armed with land-attack cruise missiles, currently the Granat, capable of carrying nuclear warheads.

The Russian emphasis on cruise missiles is in line with Putin's strategy of "de-escalation", which involves countering Nato's overwhelming conventional superiority with the threat of a limited nuclear strike that would inflict "tailored damage" on an adversary.

The evidence is increasingly strong that not only is Moscow routinely sending submarines within an arm's length of the United States coastline, but that these submarines are deployed with nuclear-armed SLCMs.

There is nothing to prohibit the Russians from putting as many nuclear-armed cruise missiles as they'd like aboard submarines and sailing them up and down the East Coast, because there are no arms control agreements that limit the number of Russian SLCMs.

Russia's Nordic neighbors Finland, Sweden and Norway are understandably uneasy about the *Boreis* and *Yasens* nuclear submarines gathering near their waters. U.S. Navy Lt. Cmdr. Tom Spahn, writing in the Naval Institute's influential journal *Proceedings*, insists America should be just as afraid. Spahn says: "the Navy's sub-hunters, including ships, planes, helicopters and America's own submarines, are ill-prepared to track a resurgent Russia's alarmingly sophisticated new undersea boats."

"It only takes one submarine to change an entire geo-political region," Spahn warns. "If you have the threat of even one submarine lurking off the coast undetected, a carrier strike group is going to have to think twice about going to that area."

"Though they lack the intimidating looks of the *Typhoons*, the *Boreis* are much more capable under the skin. For one, they're quieter and therefore harder to detect. The *Borei* class contains the best of modern submarine technology, including advanced sound-silencing and pump jet propulsion similar to that found on the U.S. Virginia class," Spahn writes.

“But the real renovation is in the armament. The submarines carry 16 nuclear-tipped RSM-56 Bulava missiles, each with 10 independent warheads, designed to thwart evolving Western ballistic-missile defence shields,” Spahn explains. The new missile is capable of “post-launch maneuvers” and can “deploy a variety of countermeasures to defend against interception.”

The first of five new *Yasen*-class attack submarines, the *Severodvinsk*, launched in 2010. Costs have exploded for the class. But the rising price is indicative of the new boats’ sophisticated internal systems, which Spahn says “have kept pace with technological advances.”

In addition, the *Yasen* class carries a number of cruise missiles and VA-111 Schval torpedoes, which can travel at 200 knots—so fast “a target would have little or no time to react and take evasive action.”

Russia is the only country on the planet with the ability to build a nuclear submarine quiet enough to evade U.S. warships and America’s extensive network of seabed-mounted sensors.

These devastating submarines are so quiet that the U.S. military cannot detect them? These submarines can freely approach the coastlines of the United States without fear of being detected whenever they want. In fact, a “nuclear-powered attack submarine armed with long-range cruise missiles” sailed around in the Gulf of Mexico for several weeks without being detected back in 2012. And now Russia is launching a new class of subs that have “advanced stealth technology”. The U.S. Navy openly acknowledges that they cannot track these subs when they are submerged. That means that the Russians are able to sail right up to the American coastlines and launch nukes whenever they want. stealth technology, making it virtually undetectable when submerged. These nuclear submarines are already far quieter than anything the U.S. currently has. They have the ability to approach the coastlines of the

United States without the U.S. military even knowing that they were there (11).

The fact that Russia is building subs that are so quiet that the U.S. Navy cannot even detect them is of big concern. It means that at any time the Russians could have their subs pop up right off the American coastlines and deliver an absolutely crippling first strike that would hit America before she would have any chance of responding. As relations between the United States and Russia continue to go downhill, the stage is being set for such a scenario to happen in the future (12).

A Russian attack submarine slipped into the Gulf of Mexico undetected and sailed through US strategic waters for weeks without the US Navy noticing. The Washington Free Beacon, a conservative news site, quoted anonymous military sources as saying the sub was in the gulf for a month.

The US military didn't even know about the presence of the Akula-class nuclear submarine earlier this year until after it had already left the gulf, still carrying a payload of long-range missiles.

The Akula-class vessel is built to slip into an area undetected and destroy American ballistic missile submarines.

The Akula was built for one reason and one reason only: To kill US Navy ballistic missile submarines and their crews.

Russian attack submarine slipped past US Navy and patrolled Gulf of Mexico for weeks undetected (13).

The revelation is part of a startling trend of Russian incursions as the former Cold War foe ramps up its military might under the leadership of President Vladimir Putin.

Defence officials say that a nuclear-powered Russian attack submarine sailed to within 200 miles of the United States last week and was granted safe harbour as Superstorm Sandy struck the East Coast. According to a report published by defence commentator Bill Gertz, a Russian Sierra-2 class submarine was spotted recently not too far away from Kings Bay, Georgia, where the United States stations its own ballistic and cruise missiles, including six underwater-capable vessels also powered by nuclear energy.

Gertz, the editor of The Washington Free Beach, says those US subs docked off of the Georgia coast are known to be a target of potential. (14).

It is not a coincidence that Russia seems to be deploying new SLCMs at the same time it is testing — in violation of the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty — a new long-range ground-launched cruise missile (GLCM). Russia is also said to have a new air-launched cruise missile. What's more, the Russians are boasting of very large deployments to come: In July, Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu announced that Russia "will boost the number of cruise missiles fivefold in the next three years and by 30 times by 2020."

Sadly, most Americans have no idea that any of this is going on.

Vladimir Putin is putting increasing emphasis on nuclear weapons as guarantors and symbols of Russian influence. In a speech primarily about the Ukrainian conflict last summer, Putin pointedly referred to his country's nuclear arsenal and declared other countries "should understand it is best not to mess with us". It is reported that Putin also said: "I'm going to go ahead and invade Ukraine and you're going to look the other way. As long as I don't call it an invasion, you're going to look at my nuclear weapons and say I don't want to push this."

Most Americans just assume that "the Cold War is over" and that Russia will never be a threat to us ever again. Today, Russia is stronger both economically and militarily than it has ever been before. The American people need to wake up.

Russia bombers also fly over America. U.S. fighter jets intercepted Russian bombers off Alaska and California, the latest incidents in a string of recent aerial encounters over the Pacific.

According to U.S. defence officials, four long-range Russian Tu-95 Bear-H bombers, accompanied by an aerial refuelling tanker, flew into the U.S. Air Defence Identification Zone, an area extending 200 miles from the North American coast, off Alaska, where they were intercepted by U.S. F-22 fighter jets.

Two of the Russian bombers peeled off and headed west, while the other two flew south and were identified by U.S. F-15 fighters within 50 miles of the California coast.

Capt. Jeff Davis, a spokesman for the North American Aerospace Defence Command, said it was the first time U.S. jets had intercepted Russian military aircraft off California since July 4, 2012.

Davis said Russian flights into the air defence zone are intercepted about 10 times a year.

Now I pose the questions:

Is it wise to put Russia - a super power - under sanctions?

Is it wise to put Russia under sanctions and China is backing it all the way?

Is it wise to put Russia – a super power under sanctions and its quiet and undetected nuclear submarines are patrolling the American waters and nearby in the Gulf of Mexico?

Is it wise to put Russia – a super power - under sanctions and its nuclear bombers are flying quite close to the US airspace?

Is it wise to put Russia – a super power – under sanctions and it can destroy the whole world 400 times, as America can?

America must understand that she is not the sole super power on earth. America must understand that she is losing by interfering in other nation's affairs. America what is the matter with you, do you not reflect? On what basis do you judge? How ill you judge.

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