

## II. Strategic Realignment

# Putin: NATO Policy Represents an Existential Threat to Our Country

*Feb. 23—Due to its importance as a major policy address, and to the fact that it has been largely blacked out by the mainstream media, we are providing excerpts from Russian President Vladimir Putin's Feb. 21, 2023, annual address to the Federal Assembly. The Federal Assembly is Russia's legislative branch, comprising the State Duma and the Federation Council. The final third of President Putin's presentation includes the much-cited announcement that Russia is suspending its participation in the New START treaty. It also includes an important discussion of culture and science as crucial features of Russian civilization, and of all civilizations. The speech lasted about 1 hour and 45 minutes. We strongly encourage our readers to read the full speech to grasp the profound impact that the speech will have on the Russian people, and thus, the global strategic situation. The full text can be found [here](#). Subheads have been added.*

Good afternoon, Members of the Federation Assembly—Senators, State Duma Deputies, Citizens of



Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation. Kremlin.ru

Russia,

This Presidential Address comes, as we all know, at a difficult, watershed period for our country. This is a time of radical, irreversible change in the entire world, of crucial historical events that will determine the future of our country and our people, a time when every one of us bears a colossal responsibility.

One year ago, to protect the people in our historical lands, to ensure the security of our country and to eliminate the threat coming from the neo-Nazi regime that had taken hold in Ukraine after the 2014 coup, it was decided to begin the special military operation. Step by step, carefully and consistently we will deal with the tasks we have at hand...

This appalling method of deception [by the West around the Minsk accords—ed.] has been tried and tested many times before. They behaved just as shamelessly and duplicitously when destroying Yugoslavia, Iraq, Libya, and Syria. They will never be able to wash off this shame. The concepts of honor, trust, and decency are not for them... [They] got used to spitting on



NATO



James Rea

*“To protect the people in our historical lands, to ensure the security of our country in [the face of] NATO's expansion to our borders, and to eliminate the threat coming from the neo-Nazi regime that had taken hold in Ukraine after the 2014 coup, it was decided to begin the special military operation. The West will never be able to wash away the appalling deception [around the Minsk accords].”*  
—Vladimir Putin. Here, Jens Stoltenberg, Secretary General of NATO, and Angela Merkel, former Chancellor of Germany.

the whole world. It turned out that they treat people living in their own countries with the same disdain, like a master... the Western elites have become a symbol of total, unprincipled lies.

[Putin explained:] We were open and sincerely ready for a constructive dialogue with the West; we said and insisted that both Europe and the whole world needed an indivisible security system equal for all countries, and for many years we suggested that our partners discuss this idea together and work on its implementation. But in response, we received either an indistinct or hypocritical reaction, as far as words were concerned. But there were also actions: NATO's expansion to our borders, the creation of new deployment areas for missile defense in Europe and Asia....

The whole world witnessed how they withdrew from fundamental agreements on weapons, including the treaty on intermediate and shorter-range missiles, unilaterally tearing up the fundamental agreements that maintain world peace.... Finally, in December 2021, we officially submitted draft agreements on security guarantees to the U.S.A. and NATO. In essence, all key, fundamental points were rejected....

Let me reiterate that they were the ones who started this war, while we used force and are using it to stop the war. Those who plotted a new attack against Donetsk in the Donbass region, and against Lugansk understood that Crimea and Sevastopol would be the next target. We realized this as well. Even today, Kiev is openly discussing far-reaching plans of this kind. They exposed themselves by making public what we knew already.

### **The Western Military Build Up**

It has already spent over \$150 billion on helping and arming the Kiev regime. To give you an idea, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the G7 countries earmarked about \$60 billion in 2020—2021 to help the world's poorest countries. Is this clear? They spent \$150 billion on the war, while giving \$60 billion to the poorest countries, despite pretending to care about them all the time, and also conditioning this support on obedience on behalf of the beneficiary countries....

The recent Munich Conference turned into an endless stream of accusations against Russia. One gets the impression that this was done so that everyone would forget what the so-called West has been doing over the past decades. They were the ones who let the genie out of the bottle, plunging entire regions into chaos.



MSC/Michael Kuhlmann

*“The Munich Security Conference of Jan. 28, 2023 turned into an endless stream of accusations against Russia, ... the aim being Russia's strategic defeat.” —Vladimir Putin.*

According to U.S. experts, almost 900,000 people were killed during wars unleashed by the United States after 2001, and over 38 million became refugees. Please note, we did not invent these statistics; it is the Americans who are providing them. They are now simply trying to erase all this from the memory of humankind, and they are pretending that all this never happened. However, no one in the world has forgotten this or will ever forget it.... [They] impose neoliberal and essentially totalitarian values, to brand entire countries and nations, to publicly insult their leaders, to suppress dissent in their own countries and to divert attention from corruption scandals by creating an enemy image.

### **An Existential Threat to Our Country**

I would like to recall that, in the 1930s, the West had virtually paved the way to power for the Nazis in Germany. In our time, they started turning Ukraine into an “anti-Russia”.... Quite recently, a brigade of the Armed Forces of Ukraine was named Edelweiss after a Nazi division whose personnel were involved in deporting Jews, executing prisoners of war and conducting punitive operations against partisans in Yugoslavia, Italy, Czechoslovakia and Greece. We are ashamed to talk about this, but they are not. Personnel serving with the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the Ukrainian National Guard are particularly fond of chevrons formerly worn by soldiers from *Das Reich*, *Totenkopf* (Death's Head) and Galicia divisions and other SS units. Their hands are also stained with blood. Ukrainian armored vehicles feature insignia of the Nazi German Wehrmacht....



Azov Battalion's Vkontakte page

*“The people of Ukraine have become hostages of the Kiev regime and its Western handlers ... using Ukraine as a battering ram against Russia....”*  
*—Vladimir Putin. Azov Battalion members, wearing chevrons formerly worn by World War II Nazi SS soldiers, are now integrated in the Armed Forces of Ukraine.*

In fact, the anti-Russia project is part of the revanchist policy towards our country to create flashpoints of instability and conflicts next to our borders. Back then, in the 1930s, and now the design remains the same and it is to direct aggression to the East, to spark a war in Europe, and to eliminate competitors by using a proxy force.

We are not at war with the people of Ukraine. I have made that clear many times. The people of Ukraine have become hostages of the Kiev regime and its Western handlers.... The West is using Ukraine as a battering ram against Russia and as a testing range.... The longer the range of the Western systems that will be supplied to Ukraine, the further we will have to move the threat away from our borders. This is obvious.

The Western elite make no secret of their goal, which is, I quote, “Russia’s strategic defeat.” What does this mean to us? This means they plan to finish us once and for all. In other words, they plan to grow a local conflict into a global confrontation. This is how we understand it and we will respond accordingly, because this represents an existential threat to our country.

### **The West: Leading Its People to a Spiritual Disaster**

Look what they are doing to their own people. It is all about the destruction of the family, of cultural and national identity, perversion and abuse of children,

including pedophilia, all of which are declared normal in their life.... Millions of people in the West realize that they are being led to a spiritual disaster. Frankly, the elite appear to have gone crazy, and it looks like there is no cure for that. But like I said, these are their problems, while we must protect our children, which we will do. We will protect our children from degradation and degeneration....

[We foster] true patriotism—a feeling that is historically inherent in our nation. It is stunning in its dignity and deep understanding by everyone—I will stress, everyone—of the inseparable link between one’s own destiny and the destiny of the Fatherland.

### **High-Tech Modernization: Rail, Roads and Ports**

Let me reiterate that the sanctions against Russia are merely a means, while the aim as declared by the Western leaders, to quote them, is to make us suffer. “Make them suffer”—what a

humane attitude. They want to make our people suffer, which is designed to destabilize our society from within.

However, their gamble failed to pay off....

Russian businesses have restructured their logistics and have strengthened their ties with responsible, predictable partners—there are many of them, they are the majority in the world....

We will continue working with our partners to create a sustainable, safe system of international settlements, which will be independent of the dollar and other Western reserve currencies that are bound to lose their universal appeal with this policy of the Western elite, the Western rulers. They are doing all this to themselves with their own hands.

We are not the ones reducing transactions in dollars or other so-called universal currencies—they are doing everything with their own hands.... New, promising global markets, including the Asia-Pacific, are taking precedence, as is the domestic market, with its research, technology and workforce no longer geared toward exporting commodities but manufacturing goods with high added value. This will help Russia unleash its immense potential in all spheres and sectors...

I would like to point out and to emphasize that the essence of our task is not to adapt to circumstances. Our strategic task is to take the economy to a new horizon. Everything is changing now, and changing extremely fast. This is not only a time of challenges but also a time

## Russian Federation: Rail Routes



Source: EIRNS/John Sigerson 2014

*“Our strategic task is to take the Russian economy to a new horizon, fast ... by expanding promising foreign economic ties and building new logistics corridors ... [including] expedited modernization of the eastern railways—the Trans-Siberian Railway and the Baikal-Amur Railway....” —Vladimir Putin.*

will continue developing this corridor.

Our plans include expedited modernization of the eastern railways—the Trans-Siberian Railway and the Baikal-Amur Railway (BAM)—and building up the potential of the Northern Sea Route. This will create not only additional freight traffic but also a foundation for reaching our national goals on developing Siberia, the Arctic and the Far East.

## Investment Tax Credit for Industry

The infrastructure of the regions and the development of infrastructure, including com-

munications, telecommunications and railways will receive a powerful impetus. Next year, 2024, we will bring to a proper condition at least 85 percent of all roads in the country’s largest metropolises, as well as over half of all regional and municipal roads. I am sure we will achieve this.

We will also continue our free gas distribution program. We have already made the decision to extend it to social facilities—kindergartens and schools, outpatient clinics and hospitals, as well as primary healthcare centers. This program will now be permanent for our citizens—they can always request a connection to the gas distribution system....

We will need to significantly expand our economy’s production capabilities and to increase domestic industrial capacity... Therefore, I would like the Government to expedite the launch of these projects, give a hand to businesses and come up with systemic support measures, including tax incentives....

So, starting this year,

of opportunities. This is really so today. And our future depends on the way we realize these opportunities...

What areas should we focus the partnership of the state, the regions and domestic business on?

First, we will expand promising foreign economic ties and build new logistics corridors. A decision has already been made to extend the Moscow-Kazan expressway to Yekaterinburg, Chelyabinsk and Tyumen, and eventually to Irkutsk and Vladivostok with branches to Kazakhstan, Mongolia and China. This will, in part, allows us to considerably expand our ties with Southeast Asian markets.

We will develop Black Sea and Sea of Azov ports. We will pay special attention to the North-South international corridor, as those who work on this every day know. Vessels with a draft of up to 4.5 meters will be able to pass through the Volga-Caspian Sea Canal this year. This will open up new routes for business cooperation with India, Iran, Pakistan, and the Middle Eastern countries. We

communications, telecommunications and railways will receive a powerful impetus. Next year, 2024, we will bring to a proper condition at least 85 percent of all roads in the country’s largest metropolises, as well as over half of all regional and municipal roads. I am sure we will achieve this.

We will also continue our free gas distribution program.

## Eurasia Canal



Source: EIRNS/John Sigerson 2014

*Projected route of the Eurasia Ship Canal connecting the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea via the Don River, which will supplement the existing Volga-Don Canal in developing the entire region.*



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CC/Dmitry Dikolenko

*Powered by nuclear energy, an energized Russian economy will increase trade with reliable partners, especially in Southeast Asian markets. Shown: The Leningrad Nuclear Power Plant, a barge transiting Lock No. 14 on the Volga-Don Canal, and a bulk carrier vessel in the Bosphorus.*



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Russian companies will be able to reduce their revenue taxes if they purchase advanced domestic IT solutions and AI-enhanced products. Moreover, these expenses will be credited at one and a half times the actual cost, meaning that every ruble invested in purchasing such products will result in a tax deduction of 1.5 rubles. I propose extending these deductions to purchases of all kinds of Russian high-tech equipment....

Putin then took aim at the process of free market liberalism, privatization, and “offshorization” of the financial system which prevailed after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

### **De-Offshorization of the Economy**

I would like to ask the Government to suggest, in close cooperation with Parliament, additional measures for speeding up the de-offshorization of the economy.... Trust me, not a single ordinary citizen in our country felt sorry for those who lost their assets

in foreign banks, lost their yachts or palaces abroad, and so on. In their conversations around the kitchen table, people have all recalled the privatization of the 1990s, when enterprises that had been built by our entire nation were sold for next to nothing and the so-called new elites flaunted their lavish lifestyle....

There is another option: to stay with your Motherland, to work for your compatriots, not only to open new businesses but also to change life around you in cities, towns and throughout your country.... Everyone must know that the sources of their prosperity and their future can only be here, in their native country Russia.... Today, we see huge potential in the development of infrastructure, the manufacturing sector, in domestic tourism and many other industries.

I would like those who have come up against the predatory mores of the West to hear what I have to say: running around with cap in hand, begging for your own money makes no sense, and most importantly, it accomplishes nothing....

Launch new projects, earn money, work hard for Russia, invest in enterprises and jobs, and help schools and universities, science and healthcare, culture and sports. In this way, you will increase your wealth and will also win the respect and gratitude of the people for a generation ahead. The state and society will certainly support you.

### **Culture: Serve the Good, Beauty, Harmony**

Russia is an open country and at the same time, a distinct civilization. There is no claim to exclusivity or superiority in this statement, but this civilization of ours—that’s what matters. Our ancestors passed it to us and we must preserve it for our descendants and pass it on to them.... It is the people of Russia that are the foundation of our national sovereignty and our source of power. The rights and freedoms of our citizens are immutable—they are guaranteed by the Constitution and we will not depart from this despite the external challenges and threats....

It is not genres or trends that matter. Culture must serve the good, beauty and harmony, ponder some very complicated and contradictory issues in life, but its main mission is not to tear down society but to nurture the best human qualities.

Cultural development will be a priority of rebuilding peaceful life in Donbass and Novorossiya. We will have to rebuild, repair and provide equipment to hundreds of cultural facilities there, including museum



CC/Ivan Susanin

*“We will rebuild and repair, and provide ... cultural facilities for a peaceful life in Donbass and Novorossiia.” —Vladimir Putin. Here, a building destroyed by Kiev government shelling. Snizhne, Donbass, Aug. 6, 2014.*

collections and buildings, which help people feel the connection between the past and the present and create a link to the future, to feel their affiliation with the common cultural, historical and educational space of the centuries-old great Russia.

### **Fundamental Science Makes Its Own Rules**

We have brilliant, talented young people who are willing to work for the benefit of our country in areas like scientific research, culture, the social sphere, business and public administration....

At the recent meeting of the Council for Science and Education, we discussed the need to prioritize our efforts, to concentrate resources on obtaining specific and fundamentally meaningful scientific results, primarily in areas where we have done a fair amount of work and which are of critical importance to our country, including transport, energy, housing and utilities, public healthcare, agriculture, and the manufacturing industry.

Innovative technology invariably relies on existing fundamental research. Here, just like in culture—and I want to emphasize this—we must give researchers greater freedom for creativity. We should not have everyone just focused on the results that we will need tomorrow. Fundamental science makes its own rules....

The task is clear: in the next five years we need to train about a million specialists of working professions for the electronics industry, the robotics industry, me-

chanical engineering, metallurgy, pharmaceuticals, agriculture and the defense industry, construction, transport, nuclear and other industries that are key to ensuring the security, sovereignty and competitiveness of Russia.

### **We Suspend Participation in New START Treaty**

Colleagues, I will talk about one more issue.

In early February, the North Atlantic alliance made a statement with actual demand to Russia, as they put it, to return to the implementation of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, including admission of inspections to our nuclear defense facilities. I don't even know what to call this. It is a kind of a theatre of the absurd.

We know that the West is directly involved in the Kiev regime's attempts to strike at our strategic aviation bases. The drones used for this purpose were equipped and updated with the assistance of NATO specialists. And now they also want to inspect our defense facilities? In the current conditions of confrontation, it simply sounds insane.

I would like to draw your attention specifically to the fact that they are not letting us conduct full-scale inspections under this treaty. Our repeated applications to inspect different facilities remain unanswered or are rejected under formal pretexts, and we cannot verify anything on the other side.

I would like to stress that the United States and NATO are openly saying that their goal is to inflict a strategic defeat on Russia. And what, after such statements they are supposed to tour our defense facilities, including the latest ones, as if nothing happened? A week ago, I signed an executive order putting new land-based strategic systems on combat duty. Are they going to poke their nose there as well? Do they think we will let them go there just because?

Having made this collective statement, NATO actually claimed to be a participant in the Treaty on Strategic Offensive Arms. We agree with this, please go ahead. Moreover, we believe this framing of the issue is long overdue. Let me recall that the US is not the only nuclear power in NATO. Britain and France also have nuclear arsenals. They are developing and upgrading them, and these arsenals are also directed against us—they are also directed against Russia. The latest statements by their leaders merely confirm it—listen for yourselves....

The Treaty of 2010 that is in force contains criti-

cally important provisions about indivisible security and the direct link between strategic offensive and defensive arms. All of that has long been forgotten. The United States withdrew from the ABM Treaty. It is now a thing of the past. Importantly, our relations have degraded which can be credited entirely to the United States.

After the Soviet Union broke up, they began to revise the outcomes of World War II and to build an American-style world ruled by one master. To do this, they began to rudely destroy the foundations of the international order laid down after WWII in order to cross out the legacy of the Yalta and Potsdam conferences. Step by step, they proceeded to revise the existing international order, to dismantle security and arms control systems, and plotted and carried out a series of wars around the world.

To reiterate, all of that was done for the sole purpose of dismantling the post-WWII architecture of international relations. This is not a figure of speech. This is how it all unfolded in reality. After the Soviet Union collapsed, they sought to perpetuate their global dominance regardless of the interests of modern Russia

or other countries for that matter....

But the United States trying to refashion the international order to suit exclusively its own needs and selfish interests is unacceptable.

Now, they are using NATO to give us signals, which, in fact, is an ultimatum whereby Russia should, no questions asked, implement everything that it agreed to, including the New START treaty, whereas they will do as they please. As if there is no connection between strategic offensive weapons and, say, the conflict in Ukraine or other hostile Western actions against our country. As if there are no vociferous claims about them seeking to inflict a strategic defeat on us. This is either the height of hypocrisy and cynicism, or the height of stupidity, but they are not idiots. They are not stupid after all. They want to inflict a strategic defeat on us and also to get to our nuclear sites.

In this regard, I am compelled to announce today that Russia is suspending its membership in the New START treaty. To reiterate, we are not withdrawing from the Treaty, but rather suspending our participation. Before we come back to discussing this issue, we must have a clear idea of what NATO countries such as France or Great Britain have at stake, and how we will account for their strategic arsenals, that is, the Alliance's combined offensive capabilities.

Their statement comes, in fact, as a request to join this process. Well, come onboard, we do not mind. Just try not to lie to everyone this time and present yourselves as champions of peace and detente. We know the truth. We are aware of the fact that certain types of US nuclear weapons are reaching the end of their service life. In this regard, we know for certain that some politicians in Washington are already pondering live nuclear tests, especially since the United States is developing innovative nuclear weapons. There is information to that effect.

Given these circumstances, the Defense Ministry and Rosatom must make everything ready for Russia to conduct nuclear tests. We will not be the first to proceed with these tests, but if the United States goes ahead with them, we will as well. No one should harbor dangerous illusions that global strategic parity can be disrupted....

Russia will meet any challenges because we are all one country, a big and united nation. We are confident in ourselves and confident in our strength. The truth is on our side.



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