

Why Washington Wants 'Finito' with Putin

By F. William Engdahl, 9 January 2012

Washington clearly wants 'finito' with Russia's Putin as in basta! or as they said in Egypt last spring, Kefaya--enough!. Hillary Clinton and friends have apparently decided Russia's prospective next president, Vladimir Putin, is a major obstacle to their plans. Few however understand why. Russia today, in tandem with China and to a significant degree Iran, form the spine, however shaky, of the only effective global axis of resistance to a world dominated by one sole superpower.

On December 8 several days after election results for Russia's parliamentary elections were announced, showing a sharp drop in popularity for Prime Minister Putin's United Russia party, Putin accused the United States and specifically Secretary of State Hillary Clinton of fuelling the Russian opposition protesters and their election protests. Putin stated, "The (US) Secretary of State was quick to evaluate the elections, saying that they are unfair and unjust even before she received materials from the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (the OSCE international election monitors-w.e.) observers."¹

Putin went on to claim that Clinton's premature comments were the necessary signal to the waiting opposition groups that the US Government would back their protests. Clinton's comments, the seasoned Russian intelligence pro stated, became a "signal for our activists who began active work with the US Department of State."²

Major western media chose either to downplay the Putin statement or to focus almost entirely on the claims of an emerging Russian opposition movement. A little research shows that, if anything, Putin was downplaying the degree of brazen US Government interference into the political processes of his country. In this case the country is not Tunisia or Yemen or even Egypt. It is the world's second nuclear superpower, even if it might still be an economic lesser power. Hillary is playing with thermonuclear fire.

Democracy or something else?

No mistake, Putin is not a world champion practitioner of what most consider democracy. His announcement some months back that he and current President Medvedev had agreed to switch jobs after Russia's March 4 Presidential vote struck even many Russians as crass power politics and backroom deal-making. That being said, what Washington is doing to interfere with that regime change is more than brazen and interventionist. The same Obama Administration which just signed into law measures effectively ripping to shreds the Bill of Rights of the US Constitution for American citizens³ is posing as world supreme judge of others' adherence to what they define as democracy.

Let's examine closely Putin's charge of US interference in the election process. If we look, we find openly stated in their August 2011 Annual Report that a Washington-based NGO with the innocuous name, National Endowment for Democracy (NED), is all over the place inside Russia.

The NED is financing an International Press Center in Moscow where some 80 international NGOs can hold press briefings on whatever they choose. They fund numerous "youth advocacy" and leadership workshops to "help youth engage in political activism." In fact, officially they spent more than \$2,783,000 in 2010 on dozens of such programs across Russia. Spending for 2011 won't be published until later in 2012.⁴

The NED is also financing key parts of the Russian "independent" polling and election monitoring, a crucial part of being able to claim election fraud. They finance in part the Regional Civic Organization in Defense of Democratic Rights and Liberties "GOLOS." According to the NED Annual Report the funds went "to carry out a detailed analysis of the autumn 2010 and spring 2011

election cycles in Russia, which will include press monitoring, monitoring of political agitation, activity of electoral commissions, and other aspects of the application of electoral legislation in the long-term run-up to the elections.”⁵

In September, 2011, a few weeks before the December elections the NED financed a Washington invitation-only conference featuring the Russian “independent” polling organization, the Levada Center. According to NED’s own website Levada, another recipient of NED money, ⁶ had done a series of opinion polls, a standard method used in the West to analyze the feelings of citizens. The polls profiled “the mood of the electorate in the run up to the Duma and presidential elections, perceptions of candidates and parties, and voter confidence in the system of ‘managed democracy’ that has been established over the last decade.”

One of the featured speakers at that Washington conference was Vladimir Kara-Murza, member of the federal council of Solidarnost (“Solidarity”), Russia’s democratic opposition movement. He is also “advisor to Duma opposition leader Boris Nemtsov” according to NED. Another speaker came from the right-wing neo-conservative Hudson Institute. ⁷

Nemtsov, one of the most prominent of the Putin opposition today is also co-chairman of Solidarnost, a name curiously enough imitated from the Cold War days when the CIA financed the Polish Solidarnosc workers’ opposition of Lech Walesa. More on Nemtsov later.

And on December 15, 2011, again in Washington, just as the series of US-supported protests were being launched against Putin, led by Solidarnost and other organizations, the NED held another conference titled, *Youth Activism in Russia: Can a New Generation Make a Difference?* The featured speaker was Tamirlan Kurbanov, who according to the NED, “most recently served as a program officer at the Moscow office of the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, where he was involved in developing and expanding the capacities of political and civic organizations; promoting citizen participation in public life, youth engagement in particular.” ⁸ The National Democratic Institute is an arm of the NED.

The shady history of NED

Helping youth engage in political activism is precisely what the same NED did in Egypt over the past several years in the lead up to the toppling of Mubarak. The same NED was instrumental by informed accounts in the US-backed “Color Revolutions” in 2003-2004 in Ukraine and Georgia that brought US-backed pro-NATO surrogates to power. The same NED has been active in promoting “human rights” in Myanmar, in Tibet, and China’s oil-rich Xinjiang province. ⁹

As careful analysts of the 2004 Ukraine “Orange revolution” and the numerous other US-financed color revolutions discovered, control of polling and ability to dominate international media perceptions, especially major TV such as CNN or BBC is an essential component of the Washington destabilization agenda. The Levada Center would likely be in a crucial position in this regard to issue polls showing discontent with the regime.

By their description, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) is a “private, nonprofit foundation dedicated to the growth and strengthening of democratic institutions around the world. Each year, with funding from the US Congress, NED supports more than 1,000 projects of non-governmental groups abroad who are working for democratic goals in more than 90 countries.”¹⁰

It couldn’t sound more noble or high-minded. However, they prefer to leave out their own true history. In the early 1980’s CIA director Bill Casey convinced President Ronald Reagan to create a plausibly private NGO, the NED, to advance Washington’s global agenda via other means than direct CIA action. It was a part of the process of “privatizing” US intelligence to make their work more “effective.” Allen Weinstein, who helped draft the legislation establishing NED, said in a *Washington Post* interview in 1991, “A lot of what we do today was done covertly 25 years ago by the CIA.”¹¹ Interesting. The majority of funds for NED come from US taxpayers through Congress. It is in every way, shape and form a US Government intelligence community asset.

The NED was created during the Reagan Administration to function as a *de facto* CIA, privatized so as to allow it more freedom of action. NED board members are typically drawn from the Pentagon and US intelligence community. It has included retired NATO General Wesley Clark, the man who led the US bombing of Serbia in 1999. Key figures linked to clandestine CIA actions who served on NED's board have included Otto Reich, John Negroponte, Henry Cisneros and Elliot Abrams. The Chairman of the NED Board of Directors in 2008 was Vin Weber, founder of the ultraconservative organization, Empower America, and campaign fundraiser for George W. Bush. Current NED chairman is John Bohn, former CEO of the controversial Moody's rating agency which played a nefarious role in the still-unraveling US mortgage securities collapse. As well today's NED board includes neo-conservative Bush-era ambassador to Iraq and to Afghanistan, Afghan-American Zalmay Khalilzad.¹²

Putin's well-rehearsed opposition

It's also instructive to look at the leading opposition figures who seem to have stepped forward in Russia in recent days. The current opposition "poster boy" favorite of Russian youth and especially western media is Russian blogger Alexei Navalny whose blog is titled LiveJournal. Navalny has featured prominently as a quasi-martyr of the protest movement after spending 15 days in Putin's jail for partaking in a banned protest. At a large protest rally on Christmas Day December 25 in Moscow, Navalny, perhaps intoxicated by seeing too many romantic Sergei Eisenstein films of the 1917 Russian Revolution, told the crowd, "I see enough people here to take the Kremlin and the White House (Russia's Presidential home-w.e.) right now..."¹³

Western establishment media is infatuated with Navalny. England's BBC described Navalny as "arguably the only major opposition figure to emerge in Russia in the past five years," and US *Time* magazine called him "Russia's Erin Brockovich," a curious reference to the Hollywood film starring Julie Roberts as a trade union organizer. However, more relevant is the fact that Navalny went to the elite American East Coast Yale University, also home to the Bush family, where he was a "Yale World Fellow."¹⁴

The charismatic Navalny however is also or has been on the payroll of Washington's regime-destabilizing National Endowment for Democracy (NED). According to a posting on Navalny's own blog, LiveJournal, he was financed in 2007-2008 by the NED. His Washington NED contact person was Frank Conatser.¹⁵ A facsimile of an email exchange between Navalny and Conatser from November 17, 2007 is partially reproduced here.

ГРАНТЫ

From: Frank Conatser [mailto:frankc@NED.ORG]
Sent: Saturday, November 17, 2007 12:12 AM
To: Navalny Alexey; Aleksey Navalny
Cc: John Squier; Marc Schleifer
Subject: NED Agreements No. 2006-576 & No. 2007-688

...

Frank Conatser
Grants Administrator for Eurasia
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1025 F St, NW, Suite 800
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(excerpt from email exchange between Alexey Navalny and NED)¹⁶

Along with Navalny, key actors in the anti-Putin protest movement are centered around Solidarnost which was created in December 2008 by Boris Nemtsov, Vladimir Ryzhkov and others. Nemtsov is hardly one to protest corruption. According to *Business Week Russia* of September 23, 2007, Nemtsov introduced Russian banker Boris Brevnov to Gretchen Wilson, a US citizen and an employee of the International Finance Corporation, a financing arm of the World Bank. Wilson and

Brevnov married. With the help of Nemtsov Wilson managed to privatize Balakhna Pulp and Paper mill at the giveaway price of just \$7 million. The enterprise was sucked dry and then sold to the Wall Street-Swiss investment bank, CS First Boston bank. The annual turnover of the mill was reportedly \$250 million.¹⁷

CS First Boston bank also paid for Nemtsov's trips to the very expensive Davos World Economic Forum. When Nemtsov became a member of the cabinet, his protégé Brevnov was appointed the chairman of the Unified Energy System of Russia JSC. Two years later in 2009 Boris Nemtsov, today's "Mr anti-corruption," used his influence reportedly to get Brevnov off the hook for charges of embezzling billions from assets of Unified Energy System.¹⁸

Nemtsov also took money from jailed Russian oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky in 1999 when the latter was using his billions to try to buy the Russian parliament or Duma. In 2004 Nemtsov met with exiled billionaire oligarch Boris Berezovsky in a secret gathering with other exiled Russian tycoons. When Nemtsov was detained by Russian authorities for allegations of foreign funding of his new political party, "For Russia without Lawlessness and Corruption," US Senators John McCain and Joe Lieberman and Mike Hammer of the Obama National Security Council came to support of Nemtsov.¹⁹

Nemtsov's close crony, Vladimir Ryzhkov of Solidarnost is also closely tied to the Swiss Davos circles, even founding a Siberian Davos. According to Russian press accounts from April 2005, Ryzhkov formed a Committee 2008 in 2003 to "draw" funds of the imprisoned Khodorkovsky along with soliciting funds from fugitive oligarchs such as Boris Berezovsky and western foundations such as the Soros Foundation. The stated aim of the effort was to rally "democratic" forces against Putin. On May 23, 2011 Ryzhkov, Nemtsov and several others filed to register a new Party of Peoples' Freedom to ostensibly field a presidential candidate against Putin in 2012.²⁰

Another prominent face in the recent anti-Putin rallies is former world chess champion turned right-wing politician, Garry Kasparov, another founder of Solidarnost. Kasparov was identified several years ago as being a board member of a Washington neo-conservative military think-tank. In April 2007, Kasparov admitted he was a board member of the National Security Advisory Council of Center for Security Policy, a "non-profit, non-partisan national security organization that specializes in identifying policies, actions, and resource needs that are vital to American security." Inside Russia Kasparov is more infamous for his earlier financial ties to Leonid Nevzlin, former Yukos vice-president and partner of Michael Khodorokvsky. Nevzlin fled to Israel on being charged in Russia on charges of murder and hiring contract killers to eliminate "objectionable people" while Yukos vice-president.²¹

In 2009 Kasparov and Boris Nemtsov met with no less than Barack Obama to discuss Russia's opposition to Putin at the US President's personal invitation at Washington's Ritz Carlton Hotel. Nemtsov had called for Obama to meet with opposition forces in Russia: "If the White House agrees to Putin's suggestion to speak only with pro-Putin organizations... this will mean that Putin has won, but not only that: Putin will become be assured that Obama is weak," he said. During the same 2009 US trip Nemtsov was invited to speak at the New York Council on Foreign Relations, perhaps the most influential US foreign policy think-tank. Significantly, not only has the US State Department and US-backed political NGOs such as NED poured millions into building an anti-Putin coalition inside Russia. The President personally has intervened into the process.²²

Ryzhkov, Nemtsov, Navalny and Putin's former Finance Minister Alexei Kudrin were all involved in organizing the December 25th Moscow Christmas anti-Putin rally which drew an estimated 120,000.²³

Why Putin?

The salient question is why Putin at this point? We need not look far for the answer. Washington and especially Barack Obama's Administration don't give a hoot about whether Russia is democratic or not. Their concern is the obstacle to Washington's plans for Full Spectrum Dominance of the planet that a Putin Presidency will represent. According to the Russian Constitution, the President

of the Russian Federation head of state, supreme commander-in-chief and holder of the highest office in the Russian Federation. He will take direct control of defense and foreign policy.

We must ask what policy? Clearly strong countermeasures against the blatant NATO encirclement of Russia with Washington's dangerous ballistic missile installations around Russia will be high on Putin's agenda. Hillary Clinton's "reset" will be in the dustbin if it is not already. We can also expect a more aggressive use of Russia's energy card with pipeline diplomacy to deepen economic ties between European NATO members such as Germany, France and Italy, ultimately weakening the EU support for aggressive NATO measures against Russia. We can expect a deepening of Russia's turn towards Eurasia, especially with China, Iran and perhaps India to firm up the shaky spine of resistance to Washington's New World Order plans.

It will take more than a few demonstrations in sub-freezing weather in Moscow and St. Petersburg by a gaggle of corrupt or shady opposition figures such as Nemtsov or Kasparov to derail Russia. What is clear is that Washington is pushing on all fronts—Iran and Syria, where Russia has a vital naval port, on China, now on Russia, and on the Eurozone countries led by Germany. It has the smell of an end-game attempt by a declining superpower.

The United States today is a de facto bankrupt nuclear superpower. The reserve currency role of the dollar is being challenged as never since Bretton Woods in 1944. That role along with maintaining the United States as the world's unchallenged military power have been the basis of the American Century hegemony since 1945.

Weakening the role of the dollar in international trade and ultimately as reserve currency, China is now settling trade with Japan in bilateral currencies, side-stepping the dollar. Russia is implementing similar steps with her major trade partners. The primary reason Washington launched a full-scale currency war against the Euro in late 2009 was to preempt a growing threat that China and others would turn away from the dollar to the Euro as reserve currency. That is no small matter. In effect Washington finances its foreign wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Libya and elsewhere through the fact that China and other trade surplus nations invest their surplus trade dollars in US government Treasury debt. Were that to shift significantly, US interest rates would rise substantially and the financial pressures on Washington would become immense.

Faced with growing erosion of her unchallenged global status as sole superpower, Washington appears now to be turning increasingly to raw military force to hold that. For that to succeed Russia must be neutralized along with China and Iran. This will be the prime agenda of whoever is next US President.

- ¹ Alexei Druzhinin, *Putin says US encouraging Russian opposition*, RIA Novosti, Moscow, December 8, 2011
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Jonathan Turley, *The NDAA's historic assault on American liberty*, guardian.co.uk, 2 January 2012, accessed in <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/cifamerica/2012/jan/02/ndaa-historic-assault-american-liberty>.
- ⁴ National Endowment for Democracy, *Russia*, from NED Annual Report 2010, Washington, DC, published in August 2011, accessed in <http://www.ned.org/where-we-work/eurasia/russia>.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ NED, *Elections in Russia: Polling and Perspectives*, September 14, 2011, accessed in <http://ned.org/events/elections-in-russia-polling-and-perspectives>.
- ⁸ NED, *Youth Activism in Russia: Can a New Generation Make a Difference?*, December 15, 2011, accessed in <http://ned.org/events/youth-activism-in-russia-can-a-new-generation-make-a-difference>.
- ⁹ F. William Engdahl, *Full Spectrum Dominance: Totalitarian Democracy in the New World Order*, 2010, edition.engdahl press. The book describes in detail the origins of the NED and various US-sponsored "human rights" NGOs and how they have been used to topple regimes not friendly to a larger USA geopolitical agenda.
- ¹⁰ National Endowment for Democracy, *About Us*, accessed in www.ned.org.
- ¹¹ David Ignatius, *Openness is the Secret to Democracy*, Washington Post National Weekly Edition, 30 September-6 October, 1991, 24-25.
- ¹² F. William Engdahl, Op. Cit., p.50.
- ¹³ Yulia Ponomareva, *Navalny and Kudrin boost giant opposition rally*, RIA Novosti, Moscow, December 25, 2011.
- ¹⁴ Yale University, *Yale World Fellows: Alexey Navalny*, 2010, accessed in <http://www.yale.edu/worldfellows/fellows/navalny.html>.
- ¹⁵ Alexey Navalny, *emails between Navalny and Conatser*, accessed in Russian (English summary provided to the author by www.warandpeace.ru) on <http://alansalbiev.livejournal.com/28124.html>.
- ¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷ Business Week Russia, *Boris Nemtsov: Co-chairman of Solidarnost political movement*, Business Week Russia, September 23, 2007, accessed in <http://www.rumafia.com/person.php?id=1648>.
- ¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁰ Russian Mafia.ru, *Vladimir Ryzhkov: Co-chairman of the Party of People's Freedom*, accessed in <http://www.rumafia.com/person.php?id=1713>.
- ²¹ Russian Mafia.ru, *Garry Kasparov: The leader of United Civil Front*, accessed in <http://www.rumafia.com/person.php?id=1518>.
- ²² The OtherRussia, *Obama Will Meet With Russian Opposition*, July 3, 2009, accessed in <http://www.theotherrussia.org/2009/07/03/obama-will-meet-with-russian-opposition/>.
- ²³ Yulia Ponomareva, op. Cit.