



Hysterical pro-Russian rant goes over the top

As a general rule, the most successful man in life is the man who has the best information

The Internet is both a powerful tool for the instant spread of information and the worst scourge of the 21st century when such information finds its way into the wrong hands or the writers of tweets, blog posts and articles are bent on character assassination, revenge or good old-fashioned propaganda.

While professional, widely respected newspaper columnists used to have millions of readers following them daily, now anyone with a keyboard and an Internet connection can profess to be a so-called expert on everything from DIY to international affairs. Case in point: An [article I read this week on 321gold.com by Clive Maund](#). Now I don't know Mr. Maund's background, other than he lives, or used to live, in the United Kingdom, but his rambling opinion piece, which can be described in numerous ways including meandering, vague, hyperbolic, hysterical, outrageous and just plain wrong, deserves a response. At Ahead of the Herd we take pride in doing deep research backed up by facts in the construction of our arguments, none of which is present in Mr. Maund's disturbing pro-Russian rant. It's telling that this author has not provided a single link to an outside source throughout the piece. In other words, it's all based on his opinion, not facts.

It begins with this provocative introduction:

Russia has done nothing to deserve its appalling treatment by Western powers and their totally controlled and subservient media - the only thing Russia did was to move into the Crimea, an area smaller than the island of Taiwan, which suited the people there as most are Russian speaking, and the reason they did that was to protect their naval base at Sevastopol after the Western inspired coup in the Ukraine. Apart from that they have done nothing and reports that they are planning to take back parts of Eastern Europe are pure fantasy.

The key phrase here is "appalling treatment". What have the Western powers done to Russia that can be described as appalling? Presumably Mr. Maund is talking about the accusations levelled at Russia over the past couple of weeks that it was responsible for a nerve agent attack on double agent Sergei Skripal

and his daughter, Yulia, in Salisbury, England. Maybe he's also referencing fresh [sanctions slapped on the Kremlin to punish them for meddling in the 2016 presidential election and a worldwide cyberattack in 2017](#). Is Britain not entitled, even expected, to react to a chemical attack on its own soil, something that has never happened since NATO was formed? Is asking Russia for an alternative explanation for the attack, other than its involvement, really appalling? Maybe he's talking about global derision regarding Russia's sham elections in which Putin received 76% of the vote?

Mr. Maund minimizes Russia's annexation of Crimea, irrelevantly referencing the size of the area being "smaller than Taiwan", implying that the West shouldn't have been concerned with the invasion of Crimea – an area that was ceded by the USSR to Ukraine in 1954 – because of its relatively small area and the fact the people speak Russian. So what matters to him is the size of the invaded country, and the language they speak, rather than the protection of internationally recognized borders. I couldn't help thinking that Putin's seizure of Crimea was similar to Hitler's occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1938. The areas on Czechoslovakia's northern and western borders were known as the Sudetenland, and Hitler decided that since ethnic Germans were living there, he should annex it. The European powers did nothing to stop him, and Putin likely predicted no-one would step in against his seizure of Crimea either. He was right. The Russians got the area back without firing a shot, with 50 aircraft and by spending just half a billion dollars, the same amount the US spent on training Syrian rebels. It's ironic that Mr. Maund uses Taiwan as a size comparison, a country that has been a hated adversary of China's since the Kumontaing forces of Chiang kai-Shek, the former leader of China, fled to the island and set up a government in exile. Its desire to remain independent, backed by the US, is a constant thorn in the side of the Chinese who want it back.

I have to admit Mr. Maund is right when he says the Russians invaded Crimea to protect the port of Sevastopol – of key strategic importance because it is their only deep-water access to the Black Sea and the base of the Black Sea Fleet. But I take issue with the "Western-inspired coup" in the Ukraine, a frequently-cited turn of phrase that even a brief historical reading of the events of the mid-2000s shows is inaccurate. What actually happened was in 2004, perceived electoral fraud in the Ukraine election caused widespread protests and a general strike, following the election of Russia-backed Victor Yanukovych. A re-vote was ordered by the Supreme Court whereby his opponent, Victor Yushchenko, won, during what was then called the Orange Revolution. Then in 2010, Yanukovych was again elected, with his rule lasting four years before being ousted in 2014 in the Euromaidan Revolution.

The Ukrainians since the break-up of the Soviet Union have been pushing for closer ties to the European Union (Kiev is more European than most former Soviet cities), while Yanukovych was seen as too pro-Russian. Things came to a

head when successive Ukrainian governments sought an association agreement with the EU which would have involved funds in exchange for liberalizing reforms. Yanukovich refused to sign the treaty, choosing instead a multi-billion-dollar loan with Russia as well as promises for cheap natural gas. Violent confrontations between police and protesters broke out, including the use of live ammunition that killed up to 100; afterwards Yanukovich fled to Russia and a new parliamentary coalition was created.

In the aftermath of the Euromaidan Revolution, Russia took advantage of unrest in southern and eastern Ukraine to go into the Crimea, which became part of the Russian Empire in 1783. With Putin's backing Russian troops captured strategic cities across Crimea, leading to the installation of a pro-Russian government and a referendum which was [believed to be rigged in favor of the new government](#); Crimean independence was declared on March 18, 2014.

So rather than a Western-inspired coup, the Ukrainian revolution was a popular revolt against Russian meddling in their elections (sound familiar?) and the defensive strategy of its president, Yanukovich, to prevent closer ties to Europe. The annexation of Crimea (Russians call it "self-determination") was no small move either. [Foreign Affairs explains the rationale as three-fold](#): a defense against NATO's expansion along Russia's western border; a part of Putin's dream to reunite old territories lost with the collapse of the Soviet Union; and an opportunistic land grab following the power vacuum left by the departure of Yanukovich.

Crimea's annexation also had repercussions. After Crimea was declared independent, pro-Russian populations in eastern Ukraine started agitating, and Russian-backed separatists took over parts of Donbass. Presumably Mr. Maund is referring to Donbass when he states "reports that they are planning to take back parts of Eastern Europe are pure fantasy" but actual reporting from the area shows this to be false. Jane's 360 reported that [Russian nationals fighting with the separatists number 11,000](#). Russian forces have 650 tanks, 1,310 armored combat vehicles, 500 artillery pieces, almost 260 rocket launchers and up to 100 anti-aircraft missiles. [Aljazeera compiled up to 10,000 people including 2,000 civilians have been killed](#) and 1.2 million forced to flee their homes. In January the Ukraine parliament passed a law declaring Russia an aggressor in the war while Russia sees the bill as "preparation for a new war." But Mr. Maund thinks all this is pure fantasy.

This latest hyped up hysteria about Russia poisoning a retired spy in England is clearly a total fabrication. As Putin just said, it is not logical for Russia to do such a thing just ahead of the election in Russia and the football World Cup there. Perhaps the most astounding thing about it is that it happened just up the road from Porton Down, the top secret government center for developing biological

and chemical weapons, which I happen to know about as I grew up in that area. Scientists used to spend countless happy hours torturing animals there as they developed very nasty substances, and clearly unless proven otherwise, that is where this nerve agent came from. It is a measure of how stupid they think the public is that they believe that they can pull a stunt like this about 10 miles from where the stuff was produced, and then blame it on Russia!

Mr. Maund probably read [media reports quoting the Russian Ambassador to the EU](#), who linked the March 4 attack on Skripal and his daughter with Porton Down, the UK's chemical weapons research facility. The pair were exposed to novichok, a nerve agent developed by the Soviet Union during the 1980s to defend against chemical weapons from the United States. There is no country outside of Russia known to have developed the substance and no evidence it was produced at Porton Down. Foreign Minister Boris Johnson says the UK government has evidence that Russia has been creating and stockpiling novichok for the last decade. But that doesn't stop Mr. Maund from making a direct link between the facility and the attack due solely to its proximity to the location, 8 miles from a park bench in the center of Salisbury, where the victims were found unconscious. So far 38 other people are known to have been exposed. Is Johnson lying? Did someone at Porton Down make a batch of novichok and expose Skripal and his daughter, while at the same time affecting almost 40 other civilians? Was there a leak at Porton Down and the novichok somehow found its way to the two intended targets of the attack? It all seems pretty far-fetched.

The facts are that [the novichok was in a powdered form and that it circulated through the vents of Skripal's BMW](#). Intelligence agencies also believe the nerve agent was [planted in Yulia's suitcase before she left Moscow](#). A Russian chemist who worked inside the secret military installation where novichok was developed, said there is no way a non-state actor, including oligarchs living in the UK or a criminal organization, could have weaponized the substance, owing to the "multiple layers of expertise that would be required to prepare such an attack." Vil Mirzayanov said [the perpetrator of the attack must therefore have been the Russian state](#).

Russia has been subjected to an intensifying and coordinated hate campaign that has become hysterical in recent days. The politicians engaging in this and NATO etc are corrupt unscrupulous opportunistic lying scoundrels who have their own agenda. A particularly odious example of this is Theresa May, the Prime Minister of Britain, the toothless lion. Mrs May, a weak and insipid leader, who looks like she would be more at home pushing a trolley around Safeway, has seized upon the Russia business as an opportunity to grandstand on the world stage, and level scurrilous and totally ungrounded accusations against Russia in the most insulting manner imaginable, which is a pretty dumb thing to do when you consider that Russia has the capacity to reduce Britain to a smoking ruin in a matter of

minutes.

The only hysterical hate campaign that seems to be going on here is Mr. Maund's obviously intense dislike for UK Prime Minister Theresa May, along with other unnamed politicians and NATO. May's vow to prevent acts of terrorism – whether state-sponsored by Russia or some other country or group – and punish the perpetrators is something you'd expect of a strong leader, but Mr. Maund dismisses May as a sort of dottering housewife who dares to call out Russia. In fact according to Mr. Maund, standing up to Russia could even result in a pre-emptive attack on the UK, something that is so unlikely to happen that even suggesting it in such exaggerated terms, "... reduce Britain to a smoking ruin in a matter of minutes," shows a complete misunderstanding of the current geopolitical balance of power. An attack on Britain is an attack on NATO and the US, which is treaty-bound to defend its members including its staunchest historical ally, the UK. So it would be a suicidal move equivalent to North Korea attacking the United States. Putin does not strike me as suicidal.

As to the charge of "an intensifying and coordinated hate campaign", one assumes Mr. Maund is referring to the expulsion of Russian diplomats and May's statement that Russia is in "[flagrant breach of international law](#)" and the [Chemical Weapons Convention](#), words and actions that have been backed by France, Germany and the US. But hey, this isn't the first time that Russia has been accused of carrying out attacks on Russian spies in Britain. In 2006 a UK inquiry found that two Russian agents poisoned Alexander Litvinenko at a London hotel bar by slipping polonium-210 into his tea. The highly radioactive substance caused a slow and horrible death. On March 12 Russian businessman Nikolai Glushkov, sentenced to eight years in prison for stealing from Russian airline Aeroflot, was found dead in London. Police gave the cause of death as "compression to the neck," or strangulation. Glushkov was a friend of Putin critic and oligarch Boris Berezovsky, who was found hanged at the home of his ex-wife in Berkshire, UK, in 2013. The coroner did not record suicide as the cause of death.

According to The Independent, [British police and M15 are now investigating suspicions of Russian state-involvement in 14 deaths in the UK](#), including Berezovsky, Alexander Perepilichnyy who may have been poisoned and died while jogging (he was a whistle-blower to Swiss police investigating a Russian fraud case involving government officials), and Gareth Williams, a British scientist who was stabbed to death after his involvement in the Litvinenko case. [Other Putin critics that ended up dead](#) include Anna Politkovskaya, a Russian journalist shot point blank outside her apartment, Natalia Estemirova, another reporter, who uncovered human-rights abuses in Chechnya, Boris Nemtsov, Russia's former deputy PM under Boris Yeltsin who accused Putin of being bankrolled by oligarchs, and Sergei Yushenkov, who tried to prove that the Russian Federal Security

Service (FBS) was behind the bombing of an apartment block to generate support for the Chechen War.

One of the odd and distasteful aspects of this episode is the way that most Western countries have ganged up on Russia like a bunch of schoolyard thugs who have selected their victim and are enjoying putting the boot in – but they will be laughing on the other side of their faces if they push Russia too far, since it has the power to physically destroy them all, although of course it wouldn't survive either.

A comparison with Hitler and the lead-up to World War II demonstrates how far off the mark Mr. Maund is here, too. Perhaps if British PM Neville Chamberlain and other European leaders at the time had “ganged up on” Hitler, instead of allowing him to invade Poland without lifting a finger, 80 million people wouldn't have died including 6 millions Jews gassed to death in Nazi concentration camps. Or maybe if Western leaders had been a little more apt to “put the boot in” to North Korea under Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il, the US would not be in a nuclear face-off with Kim Jong-un. While his approach is certainly undiplomatic, President Donald Trump is the first US president with the guts to draw a line in the sand and say to North Korea, “cross it and you're done.” Why should Russia be treated any differently? When a country [hacks into your power plants and other critical infrastructure](#), then orchestrates an Internet campaign to decide the result of your election, are these not acts of aggression punishable by, at minimum, economic sanctions?

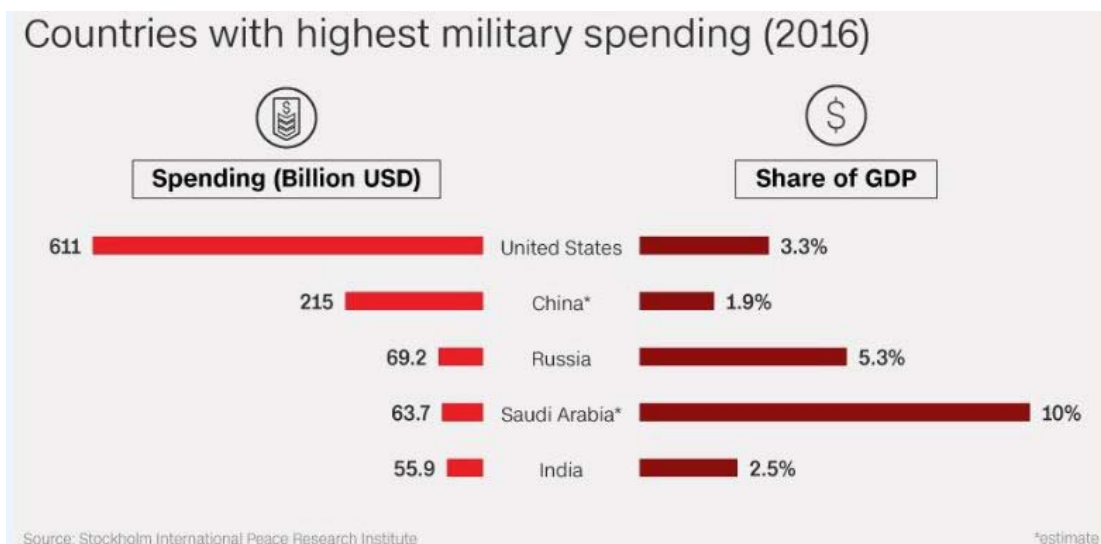
So what's the agenda – why are they doing this? There are several interlocking reasons. A core reason is that the US Neocons are running out of time to bring to fruition their grand plan, the “Project for the New American Century”, which is a plan for world domination – two countries stand in the way of achieving their dream, Russia and China, and in just a few years China, which is growing rapidly in strength, will overtake the US as the dominant world power.

The [Project for the New American Century](#), built from the ashes of the Clinton Administration by neo-conservatives, was indeed bent on restoring American clout on the world stage to a kind of Reagan 2.0 level, but Mr. Maund is really misinformed if he thinks that Russia and China are standing in the way of achieving PNAC's goal of “benevolent global hegemony.” Why? Because its antecedent, globalization, was never an American idea. Globalization, which wants free trade, open borders, and is perpetuated by elites like the big banks and the [Bilderberg Group](#), has been put forth by both Americans and Europeans – it is, no pun intended, a global effort. The neo-cons bought into it, because they saw the potential in a world whose values and economic systems monochromatically reflect those of the United States, but they didn't invent it. It should also be noted that PNAC was disbanded in 2006.

As we have recently argued, the current shift toward populist leaders like Trump and far-right politicians in Europe reflects a [distaste for globalism and all its elitist, kumbaya jargon](#). So if anything is preventing the US from achieving some kind of world domination, it's populism. The world is becoming more territorial, not less so, with nationalism and the nation-state, not the UN or the EU, now preferred by many Europeans and most Americans, at least those who voted for Trump.

Mr. Maund's statement that China will overtake the US as the dominant world player "in just a few years" is dead wrong, because the United States will never allow that to happen. Sure, economically, China is ascending, and Beijing has been vigorously promoting its yuan as a competing currency to the dollar, even setting up an oil futures contract denominated in yuan and convertible into gold. But it's nowhere near replacing the greenback. According to Swift, the global interbank system that transfers trillions worth of currency daily, [only 1.61% of global payments were in yuan](#) in December – compared to 40% denominated in US dollars.

Militarily, the idea of China overtaking the US is really a joke. To beat the United States, China would have to project its military power, and it's currently unable to do that. China has one aircraft carrier, [the United States Military has 19](#). While the Chinese are apparently [modernizing their military and increased military spending by 8% this year](#), it's a drop in the bucket compared to what the US spends and the military equipment it has at its disposal. In 2016 the US spent \$611 billion – the most of any country by far. The next closest was China at about a third, or \$215 billion. China's military spending is 1.9% of GDP compared to 3.3% in the US; Russia's is 5.3%, but it only spent \$69.2 billion in 2016 – a tenth of US expenditures. The United States maintains 800 military bases in over 70 countries, compared with 30 between Britain, France and Russia combined. China just opened its first one, in Djibouti.



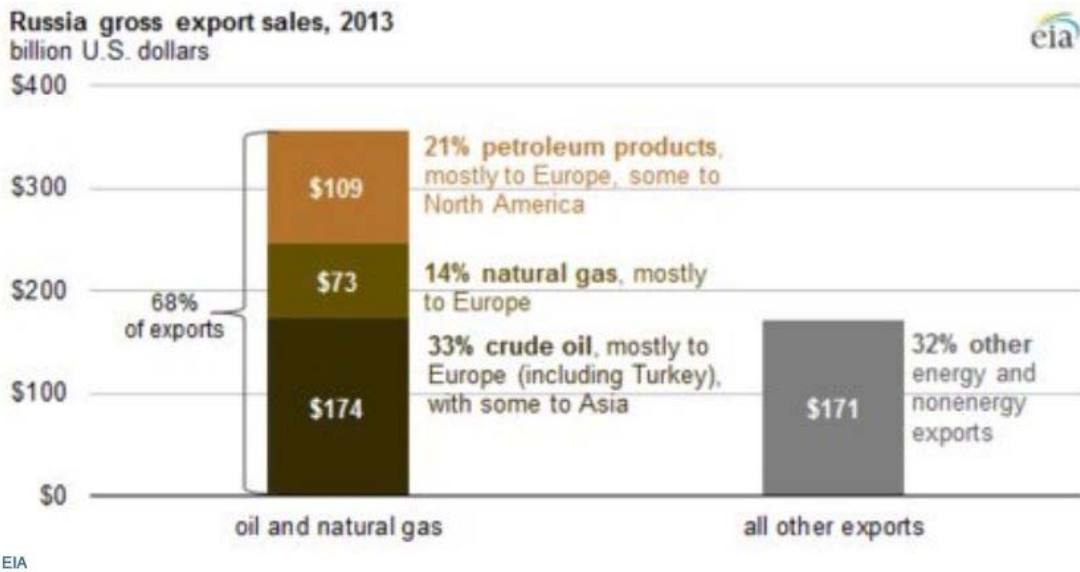
If the West keeps the war against Russia at the conventional level, they should take heed of what happened to Napoleon and Hitler when they tried to march on Moscow. The Russians are fighting for their survival, which is why with a relatively small outlay they have created weapons that outclass what the US military has, because most of the defense budget in the US disappears down a black hole of corruption, graft and kickbacks.

Russia isn't in any position to challenge the US, either. While Russia has shown it is more willing than the Chinese to engage its military forces – China hasn't fought a war since a border skirmish with Vietnam in 1979 - the fact is that Russia has old equipment paid for with oil money, has virtually no R&D capabilities, and relies on a revolving door of conscripts, compared to the [US Military](#) whose members are extremely well trained and stay in their careers for years, if not for life. While the [Russian Military](#) has more personnel than the US, 3,371,027 vs 2,363,675, they are outgunned in equipment, with total aircraft strength about a quarter of the US (3,794 vs 13,672) and less naval assets (352 vs 414). A conventional war between Russia and the US would see massive Russian casualties, the opposite outcome of the the Battle of Stalingrad. I won't deny that there is corruption, but to suggest that the 2017 defense budget of \$587 billion “disappears down a black hole of corruption, graft and kickbacks” rather than washed through the extremely lucrative and powerful US military-industrial complex is, frankly, laughable.

If this situation wasn't so dangerous it would simply be farcical and funny, but it now looks like the West is going to ramp up the military provocations against Russia until it escalates into a World War. This they will do by taking on Russian forces in Syria and by trying to invade eastern Ukraine. At some point Russia will have no choice but to react, which is what they want – they will keep poking the bear until they get a response. They seem to think, however, that a “1st strike” is their prerogative, but what if Russia decides to get in first and “take out” all the missile batteries aimed at it in eastern Europe and sink the missile bearing US carriers in the eastern Med first, which although clearly dangerous, actually makes sense militarily? Then what? – if the US / West responds by escalating, possibly with nukes, then Russia may feel it has no option but to make the aggressor pay the ultimate price, and could nuke cities like London and Washington, which it has the power to do. You think it couldn't happen, right? – just go ask the people of Dresden and Hiroshima or Nagasaki whether their ancestors thought in 1935 that their cities would vanish within 10 years.

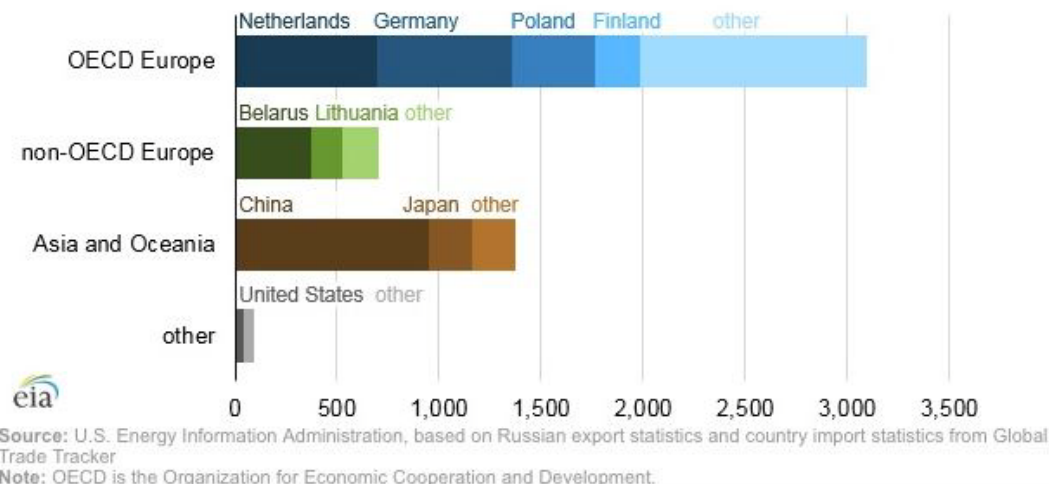
What is really dangerous here is Mr. Maund's baseless claim that the West is gearing up for a full-out assault on Russia. Why would the West attack Russia? Other than taking out what seems to be a constant irritant in international affairs – everything from cyber-attacks to backing Syrian dictator Assad to starting civil

wars in Ukraine and poisoning ex-spies in Britain – there is no need to attack Russia. Why? Because if the West really wanted to hurt Russia, all they need to do is stop buying their oil. If there is any doubt as to how much a complete ban on Russian oil and gas would squeeze the Russian economy, take a look at the graph below. 68% of its exports come from oil and gas. With no petroleum sales, and no hard currency coming in to support the ruble, the Russian currency would plummet. Within months Russia would start to look like Venezuela, with mass shortages, long queues for food, and hyperinflation. 36% of Russia's federal budget comes from oil and gas revenues.



Ironically, when Mr. Maund suggests the West would feel the wrath of Russian aggression, what he's really saying is the same countries that buy Russia's oil and gas would be attacked, effectively destroying the chief markets for its exports. Why would Russia do that? According to the EIA the majority of Russia's crude oil goes to Europe (2.4 million barrels a day in 2016), while [Germany, Turkey, Belarus, Italy and the UK are the main buyers of Russian natural gas.](#)

Russia crude oil and condensate exports by destination (2016)
thousand barrels per day



It's also worth mentioning that the West is heavily invested in the Russian economy so attacking it is not really in anyone's business interests. Foreign investors make up over a third of Russian sovereign bonds. In fact the US Treasury Department recently warned that [sanctioning the Russian debt market could risk global financial turmoil](#).

What's really happening in Syria? The US is trying to enforce a UN ceasefire to allow 1,000 sick and wounded civilians to evacuate, but Assad's forces continue to bash rebel-held areas. Russia said if US forces attack Damascus (due to "reliable information" about militants planning a fake chemical attack on civilians) [it will retaliate against the United States](#). So who is the aggressor here? Assad and Russia.

Mr. Maund warns us that Russia would, due to repeatedly "poking the bear," be justified in launching a pre-emptive strike at missiles aimed at it from Eastern Europe ([those NATO missiles are defensive](#) by the way, not offensive ie. Aimed at shooting down incoming Russian missiles) and the US Sixth Fleet, headquartered in Naples. If that were to actually happen, as mentioned earlier, it would be a suicidal move on the part of Russia, and Putin knows it. An attack on the 6th Fleet would be an attack on NATO, and Russia would suddenly find itself the target of US and European conventional forces – a war it would lose. If the conflict escalated into a nuclear war, there would obviously be no winner in Armageddon, but what's curious is how Mr. Maund thinks Russia would "make the aggressor pay the ultimate price" when the aggressor in his scenario is quite clearly Russia, not the West.

In pursuit of their immediate objective of weakening and eventually subjugating Russia, they have already imposed sanctions on Russia, which had no justification, but they didn't let that minor detail stop them, and they also crashed the oil price several years ago, in order to reduce Russia's income, even though this caused a major crisis in the US oil industry. While these efforts did weaken Russia, they were not enough to turn the people against their beloved leader, Vladimir Putin, one big reason being that he is a Statesman, instead of a corrupt lying self-serving hypocrite like most Western leaders.

Clearly Mr. Maund is a fan of Vladimir Putin. He's not alone. A lot of Russians like Putin for standing up to the West and "making Russia great again." They'll get another six years of him. But "a Statesman (Maund even goes so far as to call Putin a dignified statesman), instead of a corrupt lying self-serving hypocrite like most Western leaders?" That's pretty rich. A little research shows that Putin is very likely the most corrupt, and wealthiest, politician in modern history. According to the Kremlin, Putin earns a modest \$133,000 a year and lives in a small apartment. But his lavish lifestyle puts paid to this ridiculous sum. Putin's actual wealth has been the source of endless speculation, with estimates ranging

from \$70 billion to \$200 billion – the latter [quoted by American financier Bill Browder in the Atlantic](#), accumulated through ill-gotten gains. Putin is widely thought to be the richest man on the planet, owning a fleet of luxury yachts, several high-end properties including a billion-dollar palace.

So how did he get so rich? The Panama Papers revealed he likely hides and bolsters his fortune through proxies. “A network of secret offshore deals and vast loans worth \$2bn has laid a trail to Russia’s president, Vladimir Putin,” [the Guardian reported in 2016 and illustrated through the graphic in this link](#):

Putin's inner circle includes a cellist whose businesses control around \$2 billion. In 2013 it was reported that Putin's cousin and Russia's security agency, the FSB, were [using a Danish bank with a branch in Estonia to launder billions](#). Another means for hiding the money is through close family members. A new book titled *Russian Roulette: The Inside Story of Putin's War on America and the Election of Donald Trump*, reveals that [Putin's daughters have secret bank accounts in Latvia](#). Donald Trump's financially troubled hotel in Toronto was [lent hundreds of millions by a Russian bank according to a 2017 Wall Street Journal article](#). The Trump Organization denied any involvement with the bank, called VEB, and Trump asked his lawyers to release a letter showing limited income from Russian sources.

Of course, Putin's corruption began well before he became Russia's apparent President for life. Ruth May's book [Putin: From Oligarch to Kleptocrat](#), reveals Putin's desire to smash the system and set up his own playbook, modelled on Machiavellian principles like getting rid of your enemies, came early in his rise to power. Examples include cracking down on independent media critical of him, along with a government raid on a TV station set up by an important oligarch, who was later arrested. Putin then went after Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the owner of Russia's largest oil company, Yukos Oil, at the time the richest man in Russia. Putin had him arrested for tax evasion and fraud, and he was sentenced to 10 years in a Siberian prison. Putin also changed the legal system to appoint his own judges, extended executive power over all law enforcement and security agencies, and replaced regional elections with a system of presidential appointments. Rather than “statesmanlike”, Putin has shown himself to be a ruthless consolidator of power who has enriched himself and his family through illegal and thickly opaque means. To this of course should be added Putin's either direct or tacit approval of Russian-state sponsored cyber-hacking and interference in European and US elections for which 13 Russian nationals have been indicted. Does a statesman hold rigged elections (Crimea, the March 18 presidential election) where [videos show Russians stuffing fake ballots into election boxes](#) and observers and cameras were banned from polling stations?

Europe is already paying a heavy price for this, as having assisted Washington in its “wars for Israel” rampage around the Mid-East, they have been inundated with millions of refugees. These refugees, freed from the deterrent of being flogged or

stoned or having their hands chopped off for crimes as they would be back home, are having a field day taking advantage of their weak and limp-wristed liberal - socialist hosts who are finding that saying "Please don't do that, it's not very nice" doesn't seem to stop them. So they rape and rob at will with the politically correct and useless "authorities" siding with them against their own people.

Mr. Maund, where are the refugees coming from? Mostly from Syria, a country whose civil war began in the aftermath of the Arab Spring when a fearful and suppressed population began to push back against despot Bashar al-Assad and demanded his resignation. When Assad responded with military intervention, opening fire on demonstrators, rebel brigades were formed. A fight between government forces and the rebels escalated into a full-blown proxy war, with Syria backed by Russia and the rebels supported by the US. Hezbollah, the Islamic State and Kurdish forces are also involved. The point being, Syria is not a "war for Israel" but an attempt to contain a Middle East dictator who has so far refused to make concessions in a brutal war that has cost over a quarter-million lives. As to Mr. Maund's criticism of the refugees who he describes as taking advantage of their European liberal hosts, perhaps he should examine who the real threats are. A January article by Reuters showed that while violent crime is rising in Germany and it is attributable to refugees, [over 90% of crimes were committed by young male refugees](#), many from North Africa (only 1% of refugees) with next to no chance of being granted asylum. Asylum seekers with a good chance of getting asylum, like Syrians, were far less likely to commit crimes, according to the German government survey.

The average American couldn't care less about what happens to people on the other side of the world as a result of the actions of its military, views it as entertainment, and considers himself immune from this kind of misfortune. What he really should know, however, is that the Neocons don't have any more respect for the everyday American than they do for distant foreigners, and once they are done disarming the American populace, after however many false flag school shootings or whatever it takes, the average American citizen will feel the full force of the Patriot Acts, which have already consigned the Constitution to the dustbin of history, as the country becomes a lock down Police State – ever wondered why the police now have all that military equipment? – well now you know.

At the end of the article Mr. Maund goes way out on a limb, thus destroying any ounce of credibility he may have had left. Is he really saying that police are going into American schools and shooting kids so the government can enforce the Patriot Act? It would appear so, by the use of the phrase "false flag school shootings." Does anybody but an exceedingly paranoid fringe element of the American public believe this could be true? The idea is right up there with 9/11 conspiracy theories and a fake lunar landing, and doesn't deserve the dignity of a response. It's also disrespectful to the students and teachers killed and injured by unhinged school shooters whose crimes should be dealt with by the full extent of the justice systems in the states where they were committed.

Conclusion

Articles on world affairs should be treated the same way by readers as by investors reading financial stories and technical reports. Do your due diligence before investing in a stock, and check the facts, or notice the lack thereof, in articles before "buying" what the author is saying. This article by Mr. Clive Maund is a good example of a poorly researched article whose only value lies in the opinions of its author. Every author is entitled to their opinion, but when opinions are disguised as facts, the reader is at risk of being misled. A good article puts out the facts as the author can best find them, builds arguments around those facts, and then lets the readers come to their own conclusions as to whether to believe the arguments or dismiss them. These days, it's "reader beware".

Think critically, red-flag emotional language, and if you aren't convinced, do your own research. That's the only way to get to the truth in an Internet universe bombarded with lies, half-truths and agendas fuelled by propaganda and false information.

Richard (Rick) Mills

aheadoftheherd.com

Just read, or participate in if you wish, our free [Investors forums](#).

Ahead of the Herd is now on [Twitter](#).

[Newsletter Archives](#).

Legal Notice / Disclaimer

This document is not and should not be construed as an offer to sell or the solicitation of an offer to purchase or subscribe for any investment.