

RINGLORD

The story of how President Putin builds on Brexit to rule the world

By Andy Ross

0 Lord

President Vladimir Putin of Russia was ambitious to restore the fortunes of the Russian people. As a former intelligence officer in the Soviet Union, he had watched the collapse of the USSR with dismay and vowed to devote all his energies to restoring the dignity and pride of his people. His chance came when as president he met weakness and discord in the West.

His primary target was America and his secondary target was Britain. In 1945, the US president and the UK prime minister had shared the victory over fascism with Josef Stalin, then leader of the USSR, but they soon mobilised against him. Now the Americans and the British deserved to be humbled for so brutally opposing the ambitions of the Russian people.

1 Brexit

Global Britain unleashed its latent power from imprisonment in membership of the European Union on 29 March 2019. The pain of its transition to a buccaneering future of making advantageous trade deals with friendly natives around the world was considerable, and previous dire forecasts from the experts in financial, economic, and business institutions both in Britain and overseas appeared to be confirmed in grim reality. True believers in the Brexit cause began to look around for scapegoats as their shining vision of Empire 2.0 dissolved.

Ardent Brexiteers in 2016 had forecast a booming economy that would quickly outgrow its European neighbours, who were still bound up in the liberal orthodoxies of Brussels. Freed to pursue its own destiny, the United Kingdom would become a paradise of free trade and low taxes that would suck in money and talent from a business world grown weary of environmental regulations and expensive social provisions. The vision fooled enough people for long enough to release British yearnings for a more heroic national destiny from the EU safety harness.

Although many UK economic statistics looked reasonable enough, productivity levels looked bad. Political critics diagnosed a deficient work culture that failed to instil pride in harnessing personal achievement to the national good. Empire 2.0 loyalists blamed immigrants for adulterating the national spirit and for lacking the requisite passion for Queen and country.

In the cold reality of the months after the great continental divorce, lacking a grand plan for national salvation, the UK government stumbled from crisis to crisis. Former Brexiteers lost patience and joined UKIP, where party leader Tommy Rotten loudly blamed Muslim immigrants for undermining traditional British values. A snap general election left both major parties in minorities, with UKIP holding enough seats to act as kingmaker.

Putin smiled as the news from Britain grew ever worse. His small but cleverly placed investment in promoting the Leaver cause in 2016 had paid off handsomely by triggering the entire Brexit fiasco, and now the bellicose former imperial power that had dared to defy him with its nuclear arsenal was a shadow of its former self. Better still, social-democratic Europe was now divided, with no real hope of putting up a united front against his efforts to secure a Russian influence in their corridors of power. The rump of the EU was fatally weakened, dominated ever more obviously by Germany, and now it had to reach out to Russia.

2 Anglo-American Alliance

America suffered its own misfortunes as the Trump administration went from bad to worse. The president finally lost patience with his NATO allies in Europe and pulled the United States out of the alliance. The UK government followed America out and sealed a new Anglo-American Alliance (AAA) with Trump, to the accompaniment of much tweeting and fanfare from the White House. At the insistence of both Trump and the UKIP leader Rotten, the AAA alliance was aimed not against Russia but against the entire Islamic world and China.

The response in Europe to the creation of the transatlantic alliance was frosty. Officials in both the EU and the European rump of NATO saw the AAA as an attempt to undermine both of the older institutions and to further separate the continental powers from the Anglophone world. Their first step was to close ranks and insist they were not the guilty parties in the divorce proceedings.

The response in East Asia was no warmer. China saw the AAA as a xenophobic and destructive reaction to the historic rise of Chinese power in global affairs and vowed not to relent in its efforts to extend its benign influence around the world. Japan and Korea saw that their security alliances with America were more of a liability than an asset in a world where China was rising and America was sinking fast, and both Asian powers sought to distance themselves from the AAA. Following reunification, Korea slid gently into the Chinese embrace, while Japan sought to stay neutral.

Putin was mightily amused by the historic global mess his big bet on backing Trump in the 2016 presidential election had triggered. He saw the AAA alliance as a doomed attempt to reanimate the old Western front against Russia, but one fatally flawed by having left the entire mass of continental Europe weakened and exposed to his invigorating influence. He could now trade raw materials from his vast hinterland for new technology from Germany unhindered by the neoconservative animosities of future occupants in the White House or by the imperialist posturing of the pantomime villains in the Westminster parliament.

For China too, where Putin had built up a solid personal relationship of trust with premier Xi Jinping, the AAA was a dud. It exposed the historic racism of the West and recalled the times three centuries earlier when English traders had begun the Western rape of the glorious Chinese civilisation of old. The AAA was a recrudescence symbol of what modern China had to defeat once and for all.

3 European Union and Russia

The European Union was struggling to recover economically from the loss of the UK and suffering militarily from the continuing need to keep NATO alive until it could stabilise relations with Russia. Since no electorate on the continent, except for those in the Baltic States, was eager to increase defence spending enough to counter Russian military strength, and none at all was prepared to do anything that raised the risk of war returning to their lands, Brussels officials soon found their way to making a deal with Russia. They called it the Customs and Migration Agreement, or ZZZ, from its German acronym.

The ZZZ deal established a unified customs area spanning the Eurasian land mass from the Atlantic to the Pacific and set basic ground rules for economic migration within Eurasia. It was a big step toward the Eurasian Union that President Putin had been hoping to establish for many years. If Russia could wait a few years for the modern ways of EU member states to become ingrained as ground rules for civilised coexistence across its territory, the Eurasian Union would likely become a reality.

Many of the elements of the ZZZ deal were incorporated into a secondary deal the EU made with China. Given the trading relationship Russia already had with China, which was growing steadily as mutual trust took firmer root, the transcontinental network of deals created the biggest economic community in the world. It was not long before that community formalised an effective fence of tariff barriers against the AAA and its economic satellites.

Putin was pleased by his progress toward the Eurasian Union. Once the irritating presence of the UK had been removed from the continental chessboard, progress with the EU had been swift and painless. As a welcome side-benefit, the risk of war had been substantially diminished across the entire supercontinent. The increased risk of war with the AAA powers was a relatively minor cost.

The UK and Japan were now front-line states in the global confrontation between the AAA and ZZZ blocs. So far as Putin was concerned, both island nations were fair targets for nuclear attack. Any lingering radioactive contamination on them could be contained by quarantining or depopulating the entire island groups for as long as necessary without loss to the rest of the world.

4 AAA Global Dominance

President Trump in America and the prime minister in London wasted no time in widening their alliance into a global club embracing also the ANZAC nations of Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. Some media wits called the extended alliance the All-American Anglophone (AAA) death cult, because its paramount leader Donald Trump demanded a personal oath of loyalty from US civil and military officials and claimed global dominance in sea, air, and space power for what in his tweets he called his Five-Star League of Superheroes.

Global dominance was in fact far away, since most of the Eurasian land mass was off-limits for AAA projections of force. Still, AAA military technology was ahead of the pack on all the main metrics and AAA military spending was far ahead of the rest on all measures. The Earth's oceans were policed by AAA navies, and only Eurasian littoral waters were effectively denied to them.

In space, Europe and Russia worked together to contest AAA supremacy and succeeded in building partial defences against US ballistic missile attack. China forged ahead with its peaceful voyages of exploration to the Moon and elsewhere and began to negotiate space cooperation with Japan. But the US lead in space did not extend to cyberspace, where both sides were strong, and persistent complaints about ZZZ hacking became a regular obsession in AAA media coverage.

The writing was on the wall for AAA space supremacy too. Together, European, Russian, and Chinese space activities were greater in terms of volume and growing in terms of sophistication. As private investors increasingly took over from government in the US space sector, AAA technology initiatives shrank in ambition and signs of disorganisation and internal conflict began to appear.

Putin knew that full-spectrum global dominance was a long game. He and his team in the Kremlin, plus corresponding teams in Beijing and Brussels, were well prepared for the long game, and it was only a matter of time before the internal contradictions of capitalist societies fronted by showy but dysfunctional democratic structures began to crack the steely front of the AAA monolith.

The ZZZ bloc was on a path to ever closer union. Putin was well on the way to full union with the EU and hopeful that China would see no reason to lag behind on the journey of increasing cooperation as its export markets in the AAA lost their importance. China had already absorbed just about all the US intellectual property worth having, and Putin knew China was more interested in developing ties with Africa for the longer term, leaving the Americas to sink into irrelevance.

5 ZZZ Global Diplomacy

Many nations within the Eurasian community included substantial Muslim minorities, and Russia in particular shared a long and barely defensible land border with the Islamic world to its south. Since all the ZZZ states shared a practical interest in peaceful relations with Muslim communities both inside and outside their borders, leaders in the European capitals and Moscow made diplomatic deals with Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan. If these three Muslim-majority nations could learn to work together, which admittedly looked unlikely, they were in a position to dominate the Islamic world and impose a political order that could give Islam a new home in the modern world.

Egypt and Saudi Arabia maintained warmer relations with Washington for a while, as did Israel for deeper reasons. These outliers ensured that instability and occasional chaos disfigured the Mideast region and prevented both the AAA and ZZZ blocs from leveraging their regional assets to any greater purpose. All this made the Mideast look like a useful battleground for a global proxy war.

India was a special case, on account of its long history as the jewel in the crown of the British Empire and its continuing use of English as the language of national administration. India was a sovereign power, unwilling to lose its special identity within the AAA and eager to maintain good relations with Europe, Russia, and China. For these reasons, India chose to become an independent and neutral power on the world stage, like Japan.

Putin was content to steer a pragmatic course in his relations with the Islamic world. He was also eager to do all he could do keep India as free as possible from the AAA bloc. He already exercised considerable influence over the governments in Turkey and Iran, which guaranteed reasonable security on much of his southern flank, and he was content to let China maintain its lead in building up a strong relationship with Pakistan.

For many years, Putin had taken care to maintain good relations with India, partly through sweet export deals for military hardware but also through cultural exchanges and assurances of Russian friendship. He was well aware that a relationship of equality with Russia was widely perceived in India as better than the proposed UK relationship of former colony to former imperial master. He offered India a better future than sanitised nostalgia.

6 Fortress UK

The Brexit dividend turned out to be toil, sweat, and tears. The British economy went from bad to worse and soon began to resemble the dysfunctional mess it had become in the years before the UK joined the EU. In the lingering political aftermath of the Brexit divisions, another general election put UKIP in power, with Tommy Rotten as prime minister.

The new government whipped up a public mood of national emergency to camouflage failings in the provision of social services and lapses in the orchestration of economic regeneration. Rotten blamed Muslims for maintaining alien practices and sustaining hostile militants, and his security services began to arrest them in large numbers and detain them in makeshift camps. The camps were thinly disguised as education facilities, but stories soon spread of neglect, squalor, and atrocities.

In Trump America, Pentagon strategists saw the geostrategic opportunity the British Isles presented and began to station huge military forces in the UK. Here was the AAA bridgehead in the ZZZ world, just as Israel was the US bridgehead in the Islamic world for the Mideast. The Rotten government welcomed the dollar investments that came with the US occupation, and the UK was soon known worldwide as Fortress UK (or FUK to its numerous domestic critics).

Putin was delighted with the progress Britain was making toward deleting itself from world history. As he saw it, both the elitist traditions of the Westminster parliament and the anarchic populism of unrestrained public debate on questions of national policy were overdue for the scrapheap of history. Once the AAA had died of its own absurdity and the resulting British national meltdown had reduced the islanders to cannibalism, the time would be ripe for the Eurasian Union to invade the islands and assimilate them into the transcontinental polity.

7 ZZZ Nuclear Umbrella

The European Union and Russia deepened their cooperation in military matters. This was partly a response to the AAA militarisation of Fortress UK but mainly a matter of internal political necessity. Europe had no hope of countering the Russian nuclear threat militarily without US help and Russia had no hope of matching European economic and industrial strength without EU help.

Russia agreed to extend its nuclear deterrent against the AAA threat as an umbrella for Europe in return for faster progress toward a Eurasian Union. Despite protests by Gaullist diehards, France agreed to run down its independent nuclear deterrent and focus instead on boosting its conventional forces. Germany allowed Russian non-nuclear military units to occupy bases along its North Sea coast in return for the demilitarisation of Kaliningrad, which was now far away from the front line against the AAA threat. Kaliningrad became an open city with renewed links to its German roots.

The Russian navy established bases and supply ports along the North Sea and Channel coasts, and Russian strike aircraft stood ready on airfields just a few minutes away from Fortress UK. In a new Battle of Britain, ZZZ attackers could bomb the islanders back into the stone age without even going nuclear. Russian hackers had compromised the British Trident nuclear deterrent, Russian submarines shadowed the Trident boats ever more effectively when they were out on patrol, and Russian ABM defences could intercept a few warheads approaching Russian targets.

The main thing holding the Russians back from simply taking out FUK was the massive US presence on the islands, which was there at the pleasure of President Trump.

Putin was still nurturing his on-again off-again bromance with Trump, and Trump was still dreaming of extending his post-presidential business empire into the Moscow property market. Putin knew the AAA threat against the ZZZ bloc was largely bluster, since the US economy, with its vast national debt, was far too fragile to maintain a sustained confrontation with the entire north Eurasian community, including China. All Putin had to do was to play it cool, to pluck hard enough at the tense strings to play a stirring melody without plucking so hard as to bust a gut.

As for Trump, his troubles with Congress were mounting, his mental health was ailing, and his hope of a peaceful retirement was all but zero. Putin knew Trump could go crazy and launch a suicidal war at any time just to scratch his itches and blow off steam. Putin was well aware that he and Xi Jinping were the only adults in the global room.

8 America Versus China

Trump America inherited from previous US administrations a pivot from the Atlantic to the Pacific regions. Pentagon planners saw no big need to save Europe from Russia but felt a big need to defend US interests in East Asia from a resurgent China. Korea had already slipped back into the Chinese fold and Japan was going neutral. If Trump failed to act, Americans would face a hostile wall from Kamchatka to Vietnam, and their southern ANZAC allies would be in danger.

China had fortified a chain of tiny islands in the South China Sea. These presented a potential barrier to the free flow of sea trade between Japan and western Eurasia. The US Navy was ready for a fight, with old wartime memories of victories against the Imperial Japanese navy to bolster its confidence. Trump decided to act.

In a surprise attack, AAA forces destroyed several of the tiny fortified islands. Within days, the most surprising naval battle in history resulted in the US Navy losing several of its giant aircraft carriers to Chinese long-range ballistic missiles armed with precision terminal guidance and large conventional warheads. Trump hardly had time to go berserk before Chinese hackers penetrated US command and control networks and forced the AAA to end hostilities. The Singapore Treaty formalised a retreat of all AAA forces from East Asia.

Putin was impressed by the Chinese display of martial prowess. His regular wargames with China, where huge army units conducted mock battles on the open plains around Mongolia, had taught the People's Liberation Army to deploy Soviet-style armour to good effect, but he could do nothing to polish their naval skills. His frank assessment of the Chinese navy was that it was no match at all for the US Navy. But he had forgotten the importance of air and missile power for modern sea battles, and the crippling potential of cyberwarfare.

Premier Xi Jinping had emerged victorious from his battle with America. This left Putin as the second string in the Eurasian power stakes. He didn't plan to take this lying down. The Mideast region was still the crucible of global power – and he was the dominant player there.

9 Mideast Mayhem

Israel was looking increasingly lonely in a sea of Arab lands that were mostly client states of Turkey or Iran. Saudi Arabia had almost fought Iran, but the oil-rich monarchy already lost in the escalation phase by looking in vain to President Trump for massive military backing. Trump said America came first and refused to throw a trillion dollars at Gulf Arabs who should be able to finance their own wars. The result was that Israel had no strong friends in the region.

Fortress UK made a vainglorious gesture of support to Israel by declaring war on Iran when Iranian-backed Hezbollah militias launched a major missile attack on Israel. Trump America backed Israel more strongly by threatening to nuke Iran. This escalation prompted the ZZZ bloc to step in on the side of Iran against further AAA aggression, on pain of global nuclear holocaust. Trump was forced by his Washington staff to back down, and a fragile cease-fire came into effect.

As a last protest against the ZZZ bloc siding with Iran, FUK commando forces raided Russian positions on the German coast. Small teams of SAS and SBS desperados performed a few acts of vandalism and killed a few Russian troops. Putin reacted firmly and ordered air and naval raids against installations on the FUK coastline. FUK forces offered stiff resistance but pleaded in vain for US support. Trump was a lame-duck president by this time, and his military commanders had lost patience with FUK.

Putin was pleased to have mastered a high-stakes Mideast conflict without destroying Israel or Iran and without nuking anyone. He was delighted at the increasingly automatic solidarity he could command within the ZZZ bloc and pleased that Trump was weakened enough not to persist in what could have been a very dangerous escalation.

As for Fortress UK, the militarist blowhards who bragged about punching above their weight would obviously need to be taught a lesson. His strong response to the irritating commando raids on his military bases was intended as a warning that he refused to cut any slack for FUK and had no fear of the AAA threat. He judged that US generals were unlikely to risk global thermonuclear holocaust for the sake of a small island outcrop infested by rebarbative diehards.

10 Brextinction

At long last, the Trump presidency lurched abruptly to its ugly end. Moderate voices were heard again in Washington, and new political appointees began to reconsider the wilder economic and military adventures and commitments of the Trump years. As a first step, the new president called time on the AAA treaty and invited such nations as Japan, India, Mexico, and France to look forward to enjoying a warmer tone from Washington.

The Rotten government in London was slow to respond to the new mood in America. Bellicose threats directed at Moscow were still blasted out to darken the mood across Europe. Germany in particular got an earful of blood-curdling rhetoric from Tommy Rotten for having hosted the Russian bases his desperados had attacked. The unsurprising result was to tighten solidarity in the ZZZ bloc and harden the hostile confrontation along the coastlines.

The internal crackdown on Muslim communities in Britain continued unabated. New evidence of mass atrocities collected by international journalists threatened to damn the Rotten regime beyond all salvation. While the evidence was still being gathered, thick dossiers supported by video evidence were being circulated that showed beyond doubt the FUK government was committing a systematic genocide against its Muslim minority.

International indignation mounted fast. At the personal instigation of President Putin, ZZZ forces demanded immediate and direct access to the sites of the alleged atrocities in order to prevent further genocide. The Rotten government refused access, so Russian jets launched an air war that opened up corridors to fly in Russian paratroopers, who landed on the campsites and occupied them by force. Clear evidence of crimes against humanity was broadcast worldwide, British army generals toppled the Rotten regime in a violent putsch, and EU officials flew in an emergency team of administrators from Brussels to orchestrate relief supplies.

The big clean-up took a while. EU and British officials drafted a republican constitution for the British Isles, established a new parliament in Oxford, and enlisted the British Republic as a new member of the Eurasian Union. The US occupation forces were asked to leave, the Trident force was scrapped, Ireland was reunited, and Gibraltar was returned to Spain.

Putin had achieved his victory with the downfall of Fortress UK. His big plan had worked out well. Nuclear war had been averted and Mother Russia was at peace.

11 Ring

President Putin was pleased with his efforts. He had made a safe space for Russia between Europe and China by building a political union spanning Eurasia, he had restored the pride and self-respect of the Russian people following the humiliating collapse of the Soviet Union, and he had humbled the American and British foes of the great people's movement that now prevailed on Earth.

The new business-friendly incarnation of communist ideals had established itself across the planet's only supercontinent. The cynical and makeshift fusions of Christianity with capitalism and Islam with autocracies were consigned to history, and a new people's movement was guiding humanity into a future where human civilisation would morph seamlessly into a living environment dominated by machines. Putin had done his historic duty, and Russia now stood peacefully by as China grasped the ring of power on Planet Earth.

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