

Persisting Madness: The Media's Spin On Putin Interviews

Maxim Nikolenko: Even prior to premiere, The Putin Interviews were prejudged by the corporate media in what is a continuing spew of unjustified hostility against Russia.



Sometimes the popularly-indoctrinated narrative overwhelms any sense of rationality. It blinds a journalist from making his own assessment based upon his own investigation. Why to bother sparing time if everything is already obvious, with all pieces of puzzle presumably placed on their correct spots? One side is a beacon of democracy, when the other side is authoritarian dictatorship with intentions of destabilizing American democracy. When that “other” side is given voice, there are already preexisting certainties about a trivial value of its wisdom. These preexisting certainties represent an unchallengeable truth. Their repetition presents a proper judgment from a properly constructed journalistic piece. Thus, facts don't matter, geopolitical stance is unipolar and democratic principles validate accusations, of course, against the “right kind” of government. The journalist produces a new piece which confirms the already entrenched opinion, speculated by hundreds of his colleagues, on the “trusted” mainstream corporate press.

Only this can summarize the hysterical reaction of popular mainstream media outlets on The Putin Interviews, directed by an Oscar award-winning screenwriter and film

director, **Oliver Stone**.

The four-part series provides Western viewer an exclusive access to Russian President, his working space and most importantly, his position on the various geopolitical questions. For instance, a Russian perspective on the expansion of NATO and Western-backed right-wing government in Ukraine. Vladimir Putin discusses the need for a new philosophy of geopolitical cooperation, which is based on fair competition and respect for sovereignty, thus outlining hope for the future U.S-Russian relations. Stone's work shines a light on Putin's background, his charismatic character, his hobbies and opinions on various, not often comfortable topics. In the film, Putin discusses changes Russia had experienced since the shock therapy of the 90s, a brutal economic period of privatization, crime and conflicts, praised by Western leaders and escalated by Western economic institutions. Putin also gave his stance on the concept of power, the fundamental principles of Russian statehood and questions about oligarchy. Other subjects of interviews were surveillance, the fight against terrorism, the legacy of Russian figureheads such as Stalin, the current arms race and the deteriorating relations with Western countries.

In overall, it was quite a valuable and "analytically" informative documentary series. Without a doubt, Putin does express strong interested in constructing better relations with Washington. He did denounce the current policies of the West, yet without losing the sense of diplomacy. In this, Russian President is different from leaders of Iran, Cuba and Venezuela who openly, and validly so, have condemned Western imperialism. Throughout the film, Putin often referred to the West as "our partners", even when the topic went to discuss Washington's withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2002, a move which facilitated the new arms race, with NATO increasing its military presence in Eastern Europe and Russia, in response, working on developing the new defense mechanisms. In the end, Putin is a strong defender of Russian sovereignty and interest, while also a leader who pursues negotiations and agreements. That's why when Oliver Stone pointed: **"So stop referring to them as partners, our partners. You said that too much."** Putin replied: **"But dialogue should be pursued further."**

Indeed, nothing of this was discussed in the media. The media response was pointlessly hostile, at times echoing an outright propaganda. This trend **went** beyond the American news **outlets**.

The American-based Newsweek had **published an article** already condemning the interviews in its title: Oliver Stone's **The Putin Interviews' Were a Masterclass in Self-Destruction**. At the time of writing, there was no way to find what hides behind the title. The article page had undergone its own "self-destruction." Other articles from recent days, however, were not deleted. **One of them discusses** Putin's "**rough, cheap but effective**" response to NATO's missile buildup in Eastern Europe. This is where Oliver Stone asked Putin: "**So stop referring to them as partners**", with Putin answering: "**but the dialogue should be pursued further.**" This segment of the interview was not deemed important. In another article, Newsweek was **concerned about** the "**perfectly stage-managed farce**" that was the Stone's tour through Putin's office. This piece also outlines: "**With any analytical expectations out the window, the film can entertain.**" According to SimilarWeb, Newsweek rank 3,901 among the most popular websites on internet.

The Washington Post had **published a piece** in days prior to airing of Putin Interviews. This article complains that Stone did not confront Putin on presumably important issues, the most urgent of them being Russia's interference in the American election. A baseless, unproven scandal which had poisoned American politics, particularly the Democratic Party, with corporate media spinning the hawkish line. Certainly, the United States, a country deeming righteous to hold hundreds of military bases across the world, spending billions of dollars for spying on its adversaries and "**friends**", staging overthrow of numerous governments, had suddenly become **Russia's Poodle**. Ludicrous, right? In fact, Putin made a point about Washington's meddling in Russian elections, with excerpt from Victoria Nuland's speech providing value to the stated claim. Of course, this segment has not been reported. **The New York Times article** has diagnosed such critique of American diplomacy as "**revisionist views**", and the non-confrontational interview was presented as weakness.

Currently, New York Times **rank** 127th among the most popular websites on the

interest. Washington Post [rank](#) 182.

Presumably, the real dialogue with interviewee should resemble Mike Wallace's interview with Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, on the 60 Minutes, where the Iranian leader was tutored by a journalist, without receiving a chance to convey his points of concern.

The lack of confrontation [signaled CNN](#) that Oliver Stone will become a useful public relations tool for the Russians. That's because Putin was unchallenged to speak **"how democratic Russia is."** He was not **"pressed or fact-checked much on matters like Russia's propaganda law aimed at gays or his treatment of political foes."** A [column on Reuters](#) went further in demonizing Oliver Stone and Russia: **"A free and successful man in a democratic country with a strong civil society, he chose in his series to amplify Russian propaganda and to ignore the suppression of dissent, the chocking of critical news media, the support for Ukraine secessionists trying to destabilize their country, Moscow's enthusiastic efforts to win victory for the brutal regime of Syria's President Bashar al-Assad of Syria."** Basically, a whole bouquet of justifications to label Russia an evil adversary. Of course, America is a beaconing light of democracy, where the 2.8 [million excess in popular vote](#) did not affect the results in recent election, a country holding bipartisan system where the two parties are barely distinguishable in foreign policy agendas. The concern for democratic principles of other governments is compromised by \$109.7 billion arms sales to a theocratic and autocratic kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the last country in the world where women can't drive, while the **"law aimed at gays"** is a death penalty. Yet, here will come a response: It is in our **"national security interest."**

Corporate CNN [rank](#) 99th among the most popular websites on the internet, Reuters [rank](#) 563.

It will be useless to spare space reviewing the Rolling Stone's [piece](#) titled: **10 Most WTF Things We Learned From Oliver Stone's Putin Interviews**, a review for the "liberal" audiences of popular culture magazine. The mainstream media's anti-

Russian hysteria can explain why Stephen Colbert, on his show, **pressed Oliver Stone** on softness to Putin without even watching the documentary series. The narrative and intellectual value of Putin Interviews were already prejudged before the June 12th premiere, with liberal Daily Beast, **outstripping many competitors in its unjustified criticism.** The beginning of an article echoed Trump's first speech about immigration coming through the Mexican border. Only now: **"When America sends its people to interview Vladimir Putin, they're not sending their best."** Further down the lines, the piece proclaims Stone is **"a revisionist history buff."** His reputation is darkened with **"qualifying Hitler and claiming the Jews run the media."** Daily Beast **rank** 1,429 with a total of 34 million monthly visits on the site.

In total, the media reaction was concerned little on covering the analytical aspect of Stone's documentary. Perhaps, some segments were purposely ignored. If following the line of reviews, Oliver Stone is a political lunatic who challenges reality. The documentary series is entertaining but contains little value. Vladimir Putin is evil totalitarian whose opinion is predestined to be trivial.

No **"our partners"** is coming from the American side. The clouds are dark in Washington D.C, with persisting accusations going against Russia without valid evidence to support. The assumptions, the "strongly believe" claims and vague reports from the intelligence, are engulfing politicians in tough talk competition.

John McCain, the hawkish Cold War era militarist, can perhaps lead this contest. **"Putin is a killer"** he **stated on the floor of Congress.** **"I repeat: there is no moral equivalence between that butcher and thug and KGB colonel and the United States of America, the country that Ronald Reagan used to call a shining city on a hill."** It's valuable for perspective to view Putin's description of McCain in the interviews.

The most damaging aspect of this political absurd is its origin in the Democratic Party. The mainstream left is becoming increasingly corporate and hawkish, with ruthless Republicans providing no sanctuary. The anti-war movement is once again being compromised, with liberals uniting in hatred against Trump, while ignoring the

neoconservative agenda of their party.

Putin asked Stone at the very end of the fourth episode: **Have you ever been beaten?**

Stone replied: **Ou yes, I've been beaten.**

Putin: **So it's not going to be something new, because you are going to suffer for what you are doing.**

Indeed, he was right.

Challenging the mainstream narrative is difficult because of its wide reach to the public. An inevitable wave of criticism follows, undermining the value of a message.

Yet, the message is clear. There is naturally no reason for the two nuclear powers to be in a state of Cold War. This conflict escalates militarization and greenlights potential for more instability in small countries of developing world. Thus, reversing this trend is extremely vital for peace. Russian leader had numerously demonstrated diplomacy while talking about "our partners." Now, it's time for us, the partners, to make the necessary step.

However, the current step has been a **new package of sanctions**. The corporate press will justify their usefulness. Persisting tensions with Russia are profitable, with militarization of Eastern Europe being justified by a mysterious threat from Moscow. If no justifiable tools will work, the "national security interest" can always be the answer. More precisely, it is the interest of the uncontrolled Military and Industrial Complex.