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***PUTIN AND UKRAINE; BACK TO THE USSR?***

**Tünde Nagy, Ph.D. Student, Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj Napoca**  
**Tiberiu Popa, Ph.D. Student, Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj Napoca**

*Abstract: Putin and his administration seem at last decided to show their hand. Mother Russia has to become strong and mighty. "Today we are subjected to outside pressures, to sanctions, to intimidations of all sorts and threatened with isolation. Nobody and no one could dare threaten a strong country in such a way. It is vital that we should be able to integrate other peoples the way our beloved Rodina did before. This must be our political axis in the long run."<sup>1</sup> This bold and direct declaration is connected with the very possible organization of referenda in 2015 in Abhazia and South Osetia in order to legitimize their annexation to Russia. If we follow attentively and analyse Russia's geopolitical doctrine we can easily perceive that Putin's policy is clearly focused on Eastern Ukraine, Donetsk, Lugansk, Mariupol ...*

*In order to achieve this, first he occupied Crimea using a so called referendum and backed by the Russian Army in a covert operation based on "maskirovka and disinformatsia"<sup>2</sup>. Now it becomes very clear that Russia's first step was to create a precedent and based on this, and surrounded by a veritable frozen conflicts belt the next logical step is the return of the Soviet Union. In other words it's back to the USSR, (we should have believed the Beatles).*

***Keywords: Putin, Ukraine, Soviet Union, Rodina***

In the present state which we may call "forward by freezing", Russia is intensely preparing itself to revive the Soviet Union using stealth. The motivation of the Russian strategy is based on the recovery little by little of the former territories of the satellite states.

They were formerly consolidated in the period of immediately following World War 2. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the revolutions from 1989 led to the disappearance of these zones. Russia in the 1990' held a new strategic position which was worse than before the War probably the worst since the 17-th century; in the newly created situation of the 90's NATO's positions were less than 200 km away from Sankt Petersburg.<sup>3</sup> If the Ukraine and eventually Belarus had followed the same way, the distance between Moscow and NATO territories would have been about 400 km. All Russia could do in those critical moments was to hush up and wait. The waiting and the silence lasted a long time, too long for Russia anyway. Putin's coming to power which was a desperate solution of Yeltsin's administration and coincided with an economic boom and the restoration of national pride. Gas and oil revenues brought stability to the economy and guaranteed better standards of life for the Russian people. In a very short time came the consolidation of the economy and thus possibilities opened for the new development of the military industrial complex. After considerable expenditures Putin raised the standards of the Army, modernizing it, restoring its

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<sup>1</sup> Discourse held in The Duma, September 15. 2014, by Vadim SOLOVIEV, Vice- President of the Constitutional Legislative Comission, and one of Putin's closest advisers on legislative matters.

<sup>2</sup> Nagy Tünde, Claudiu Marian; "The war which brings in the cold – Ukraine and Crimea – Maskirovka and Disinformatsia", in *Research and Science Today Supplement*, Târgu Jiu, Academia Brâncuși Publishing, 2014, pp.87.

<sup>3</sup> George Friedman, appreciates 150 km in an analysis published in may 2014 on the site of Stratfor

pride and morale and creating the necessary instrument for backing the new Russian foreign policy.

The main objective of Moscow's diplomacy was to make its presence felt everywhere in the world<sup>4</sup> – its priority being the blockade of NATO and EU expansion by all possible means. Both NATO and EU were considered particularly dangerous to Russia as they could mobilize the military capacity of (NATO) and the economic power (EU) turning into a real threat to Russia's hegemonic dreams.

Consequently the Russian establishment began to openly oppose internationally NATO and EU Eastern expansion. One of the objectives was to prevent the Alliance to deliver Ukraine to the West. The recent events in Ukraine clearly proved it.

An important component in Russia's foreign policy is the diplomacy which plays a very important role in the Russian expansion. Diplomacy plays an active dynamic part in the line of propaganda and disinformation. It controls effectively the giant centralized Russian mass media which is in the front line of battle spreading false news, fabricating and intoxicating the world's opinion, generating panic and insecurity, camouflaging the real Russian interests.

It carries everywhere the Kremlin propaganda inside and outside the country. It is also badly undermining beliefs and the morale of the international public. It also helps justifying any action taken by the Russian government, presenting it as true and lawful, normal and natural.

It reacts quickly and decisively, clearly targeting selected segments of the Western world.

One such action can be seen in an article recently published.

“Russia must defend itself with an iron fist<sup>5</sup>” (Sergey Karaganov, honorary President of the Council for Foreign Policy and Defense of the Russian Federation). He comes out in the open by making the following statement.”Although the disintegration of the Soviet Union does not represent a defeat of the Russian people, the West treats Russia like a defeated nation.<sup>6</sup>”

At the same time he considers that Putin's efforts to consolidate the economic alliance of the Russian Federation with several ex-Soviet republics would have benefic effects on the economic development and regional stability of these countries. This fact would have affected the plans of expansionist strategy of the West. According to Karaganov – the Kiev leadership was obviously not able to direct Ukraine to prosperity, economic progress and social peace.

Ukraine's politicians were incapable and avaricious, staying in power through treachery and by playing both ends against the middle, between Russia and the West. They were attempting to obtain personal advantages in exchange for the so called “attachment to Russia”. When the EU for instance, after many delays and procrastination offered rather unconvincingly a treaty of association, which could have blocked completely Ukraine's

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<sup>4</sup> Andrei, Folbert; "Cum câștigă Putin războiul informațional cu Occidentul", in *Revista Lumea*, No. 8(257)/august 2014, București. p.14.

<sup>5</sup> Serghei Karaganov;" Russia needs to defend its interests with an iron fist", 6.March.2014, <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/pubcol/Russia-needs-to-defend-its-interests-with-an-iron-fist-16457>. 01.10.2014.

<sup>6</sup> Mark, Galeotti; Andrew, S. Bowen; "Imperiul din mintea lui Putin", in *Foreign Policy România*, No.40, iunie/iulie 2014, București.

access to the Customs Union promoted by Russia, President Yanukovitch, hoping to obtain a substantial loan from the West, tested the generosity of Russia, hinting that Ukraine's options would be Europe. When Moscow immediately offered a loan of 15 billion dollars<sup>7</sup> to finance Ukraine's soaring debts, president Yanukovitch promptly changed his mind.

Dissatisfied and angered by Yanukovitch's attitude, the people of Kiev took to the streets, where they were joined by groups of right wing extremists, extremely violent, who created public disorder, attacked the government security forces, leading to an armed confrontation, which lasted for several weeks. Immediately, the West intervened and helped the protesters, bringing in huge sums of money, contributing to the reckless anti-Russian propaganda, which culminated during the Olympic Games in Sochi. This extreme offensive reminded the Russian leaders of the true kind of aggressiveness of the western expansion into the East, in spite of Russia's protests, which was passing through difficult moments.

Had the Ukraine gone to the West, Russia's position would have become unbearable.

When the repeated appeals to reason and balance did not yield any results and confronted with NATO's rapid advance – Russia resorted to its fist. In 2008, Russia firmly put an end to the sneaking attack of the Georgian troops, now Russia was forced again to bring in the Army, seeing that the West was trying to consolidate its positions in spite of the moral and geopolitical defeats from the last decade.

Consequently, the Russian propaganda advances the idea of a compromise which could lead to a federalization of the Ukrainian institutions, allowing the inhabitants of the different regions to make their own choices regarding their language and cultural background. In general, all Russian analysts share the same opinions presenting Russia's aggressive actions as justified and legitimate. This is the role of external and internal propaganda and dissemination of information carried out at all levels.

Military intervention or "iron fist"<sup>8</sup>, which is the name of troop deployment, comes only when all diplomatic efforts find no answer.

In this sense, the change in the configuration of power in Kiev carefully orchestrated by the West undermined completely the balance of power between Russia and the West. Obviously, the chaos and military actions which suddenly appeared in some Ukrainian regions marks the end of post-Soviet Russia's passive stance.

In this new context, Russian military intervention in Crimea is justified and fully explains the behavior of the Russian President, who has been lawfully empowered to do so by the Russian parliament (the Duma). This new aggressive stance is meant to bring Russia to the position of an active player in Europe, for the first time after 1989.

Thus, Russia's new interests come to the surface. Geopolitics in New Eastern Europe (which comprises all former satellite states members of the Warsaw Pact) will change fundamentally. According to the Moscow's predictions, the entire ex-Soviet region of the Black Sea, "from Transnistria to Abkhazia and Georgia" will look completely different from today. Georgia will receive (probably) an invitation to become a NATO member, in the long run, Moldavia will enter a situation of instability caused by the confrontation of the pro-

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<sup>7</sup> Michael Stürner, "Putin și Noua Rusie", ed. Litera Internațională, 2014, București, p.15.

<sup>8</sup> Alexandru Omeag, Sandu Botez; "Ucraina și miza jocurilor geostrategice actual", *Revista Lumea*, Nr. 4, 2014, p.52.

Russian and the pro-EU forces. Transnistria will gradually shift towards South-Eastern Ukraine inhabited by Russian speaking population. In the north, very probably will appear a permanent pressure point, taking into account the presence of American troops in Poland and the Baltic States, and a possible adhesion of Finland<sup>9</sup> and Sweden to NATO. The geopolitical competition between Russia and the US will become fiercer and it will not be limited solely to Ukraine. The West will bring in tougher economic and political sanctions, causing unrest in the midst of the Russian population, which will react with increased hostility towards the Moscow government.

These (and the nomination of a new NATO Secretary General, Stoltenberg) are, in short, the difficult moments Russia will have to pass through, suffering social pain and international humiliation. Therefore, the Russian analysts explained strong and determined leadership is needed urgently to guide Russian to this troubled waters and grim future.

President Putin is the kind of leader needed in such complicated circumstances. He is a politician of the Present with a clear vision of the Future. The Kremlin leader does not forget and leaves nothing to happenstance. He is the adept of a very rigorous policy versus the graduality of responses and barriers which have to be overcome.

As a conclusion Putin is a man who understands that no matter of the egos involved; the use of the military force comes only as a last resort, even if the sanctions against Russia will possibly lead to a new Cold War<sup>10</sup>. Putin may be in a very sensitive spot, but he will play his cards to the end against a disoriented EU and a feeble NATO. For the time being, he enjoys popularity at home, is backed by a comfortable and, most of all, he will be around for another 8 years (we wonder if the present day leaders of the European Union and America will be around then), and he, Putin, sees the future and the prestige of Russia only in the revival of the New Soviet Union.

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<sup>9</sup> Although Finland has recently denied these allegations

<sup>10</sup> Simona R. Soare, "Mai mult decâtun un Război Rece 2.0", *Revista Foreign Policy România*, 2014. p.42-46.

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