

RUSSIAN INFLUENCE IN EUROPEAN POLICIES

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ABSTRACT:

THE PAPER WILL TRY TO EXPLAIN THE WAY RUSSIA MANAGED TO INFLUENCE THE EUROPEAN POLICY IN THE PAST 20 YEARS.

IT WILL REFLECT THE ROLE OF THE RUSSIAN BUSINESS DEVELOPERS AND SECRET SERVICES IN THE INTERNATIONAL POLICY, THE METHODS USED BY THEM TO INFLUENCE THE INTERNAL POLICY OF EX-SOVIET, EUROPEAN STATES AND THE INTERDEPENDENCES THAT APPEAR IN TIME BETWEEN EUROPEAN STATES AND RUSSIAN FEDERATION.

WE WILL INCLUDE SOME CASE STUDIES AND ARTICLES ABOUT THE IMPLICATION OF RUSSIA IN THE UNITED STATES ELECTION IN 2017 AND HOW THE TYPICAL DIPLOMATIC WAR GAINED A NEW DIMENSION AND HAS BEEN TRANSFORMED INTO A „HYBRID WAR” USING HACKERS, BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE PRACTICES LIKE BIGDATA THAT OFFERED THE POSSIBILITY OF A MORE EFFICIENT MANIPULATION OF THE POPULATION FROM THE „TARGETED”/„AFFECTED” STATES.

KEY WORDS: RUSSIA, EUROPE, BLACKMAIL, POLICY, CYBERWARFARE.

INTRODUCTION

THE FALL OF THE SOVIET UNION

For more than 60 years, the Soviet Union was an “empire” with a centrally planned economy that represented the second world economy by nominal GDP in 1991.² Until the well-known “Perestroika” reform, all the citizens were hired with a minimum salary and the status of the unemployed person was punished according to the law.

During this period the state controlled all that refers to resources, production, centralization and rationalization of production, purchasing power and the value of the currency. Also, this type of economy has remained in the memory of the population as the period of great discoveries and constructions. Why? Because the state promoted a policy of copying and replying the western world’s innovations and to assume it as a soviet creation. Also they were used to build big constructions like buildings, bridged, roads or factories that were meant to show the supremacy of the soviet power.

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² CIA World Factbook, (1991), <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/25/pg25-images.html> - accessed 19.05.2018.

As we mentioned above, things changed after 1980 with the beginning of “Perestroika”, a program started by the communist party that wanted to “restructure” the political and economic system of the Soviet Union.

The most interesting comes after 1991 when, after the fall of the empire, Boris Yeltsin decided to start the implementation of a series of “radical economic reforms such as price liberalization, mass privatization and stabilization of the ruble”³ that were meant to stabilize the economy of the new Russia. The privatization process had its own “black” part because of the president Yeltsin which allowed the privatization of approximately 70% of the economy and some natural resource by certain influent businessmen in exchange for loans meant to sustain the government budget and political/electoral support.⁴ This plan was fruitful until 2000 when Vladimir Putin won the presidential elections with a score of 53%.⁵

The new president is an ex-K.G.B agent who lived a few years in Germany working for Russian services, who came back after the fall of the Berlin and managed to enter some influent groups of senators and businessmen like Anatoly Sobchak (ex-mayor of Leningrad) that encouraged him to leave K.G.B in 1991⁶ or Sergei Pugachev who was an Russian investor and a member of Vladimir’s Putin inner circle⁷. In 1998 he was named the head of the main Russian intelligence service FSB by Boris Yeltsin. Many public figures and journalist insinuated that this wasn’t a coincidence⁸. His first actions were to give full immunity to the ex-president and to declare that Russia will maintain its democratic route, but no one knew that this were the words of a new “dictator”.

THE NEW ORDER OF “DEMOCRATIC” RUSSIA

Few after, Putin understood that the oligarchs will not let him reach his goals, so he decided to take them down, one by one. Also, he wanted to enhance his credibility by taking radical decisions in some critical situations and by “getting out of game” those journalists that decides to go against Putin.

The first one was Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the richest man in Russia at that period⁹ that was arrested in 2003 for 10 years and released after, by the president, with the conditions that he will leave Russia and “would not attempt to win back his shares in Yukos”¹⁰.

After him, we should speak about the second Chechen war and the Moscow theatre siege in 2002.

³ <https://www.investopedia.com/articles/investing/012116/russian-economy-collapse-soviet-union.asp> - accessed 18.05.2018.

⁴ <https://www.investopedia.com/articles/investing/012116/russian-economy-collapse-soviet-union.asp>

⁵ Richard Paddock; *Putin Rolls to Victory, Avoiding a Runoff*, (Los Angeles Times, 2000). <http://articles.latimes.com/2000/mar/27/news/mn-13176> - accessed 19.05.2018.

⁶ <http://tass.ru/politika/4344465> - accessed 20.05.2018.

⁷ http://www.lemonde.fr/europe/article/2014/11/27/le-milliardaire-russe-serguei-pougatchev-recherche-par-interpol_4529890_3214.html - accessed 20.05.2018.

⁸ <http://www.mediafax.ro/externe/viata-si-cariera-lui-vladimir-putin-ascensiunea-presedintelui-rusiei-de-la-periferia-leningradului-la-prima-scena-a-lumii-foto-14000241> - accessed 20.05.2018.

⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/22/vladimir-putin-killer-genius-kleptocrat-spy-myths> - accessed 21.05.2018.

¹⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/26/mikhail-khodorkovsky-life-after-prison-russia-after-putin> - accessed 19.05.2018.

The Chechen war represented an armed conflict between 1999 and 2009. Officially, Russian troops entered this war to establish the rule in Chechnya, but in essence they just wanted to maintain their influence in the region. Putin has been criticized during this war by many journalists, one of them being Anna Politkovskaya, a Russian journalist that spent her time on the battle front and wrote about the reality from Chechnya. She described the life of the refugees from this country, how their families were killed by Russians, how Russia bombed towns and villages with civilians and how she was “hunted” by Russian agents.¹¹

Also Politkovskaya wrote about the 2002 Moscow theatre siege, when 40 Chechen militants headed by Movsar Barayev, took over 900 civilians. After three days, Russian security services entered the building by pumping sleeping gas and killing the terrorists. During this operation 130 civilians died because of the gun shoots and the gas. The bad part is that in this case the security services which are directly subordinated to the president decided to maintain the “secret character” of their mission and to neglect civilian’s life by refusing to negotiate with the terrorist.

Returning to Politkovskaia, she was killed or better say found death in 2007 in the lift of her block of flats located in the center of Moscow.¹² Coincidence or not, but she was killed exactly when president Putin celebrated his birthday, or two days after Ramzan Kadyrov celebrated his birthday. Why not a coincidence? Because both presidents were criticized by the journalist for their decisions, policy and the way they ruled their country. The killer was arrested but there are no more details about him or this case.

The same history had Boris Nemtsov, a successful politician during the ‘90s that played an important role in the process of introducing capitalism in Russia, and one of the biggest critics of Vladimir Putin.¹³¹⁴ He was found killed on a bridge near the Kremlin wall, with nine bullets in his body. In this case, the interesting fact is that Nemtsov was killed hours after he announced at the radio that he will write a book about the implication of Putin in Ukraine war.¹⁵

HOW RUSSIA INFLUENCES?

In this part of the paper we will speak about the manifestation of the Russian influence in Europe in the last two decades.

After 18 years of official governance, at his 4th mandate, president Putin managed to concentrate all the power in his hand through his people. Usually these people are oligarchs that accepted to cooperate with Putin to be able to maintain their business, former secret agents, school and university colleagues or some people who practiced judo with the president.

As we already mentioned above, after his first presidential mandate, Putin “brought the power” from all those who represented a danger for him. They were forced to leave the country (the case with Mikhail Khodorkovsky), forced to surrender their wealth to the state being threatened with criminal files, or they just decided to cooperate on their own initiative.

¹¹ Anna Politkovskaya; *Nothing but the truth*, (Random House, 2010).

¹² http://www.kommersant.com/p711307/r_530/Murder_reporter_Politkovskaya/ - accessed 20.11.2017.

¹³ <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2015/03/04/crossing-kremlin-nemtsov-latest-in-long-line-putin-critics-to-wind-up-dead.html> - accessed 20.05.2018.

¹⁴ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/11441466/Veteran-Russian-opposition-politician-shot-dead-in-Moscow.html> - accessed 10.05.2018.

¹⁵ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/11441466/Veteran-Russian-opposition-politician-shot-dead-in-Moscow.html> - accessed 22.05.2018.

Speaking about the mechanisms Russia uses to influence the European policies? Gas and oil, a simple answer with a complex construction.

Why? Because of the way the presidential administration or better say Putin's influent circle of people have captured this energy sector.

First of all, we should know that, after '90 when the massive privatization process started, most companies/factories from all sectors including the energy one where bought by the state, or by oligarchs. An exception from this "dirty deal" was the Ministry of the Gas, or what is today known as Gazprom. This institution passed through a well-though process and transformed from a Ministry into a corporation where the state owned more than 50% of action. The situation changed in the past years and now the state owns only 38.37%¹⁶, but this is just an official number because the state has the same influence.

About the importance of the natural resources president Putin wrote in his work "Mineral and Raw Materials Resources and the Development Strategy for the Russian Economy."

They managed to maintain their key role in the company by hiring former secret and special services agents as high ranked workers in Gazprom. During the years, the corporation managed to monopolize the energy sector by being helped by the president and his administration. A good example here is the history of "Yukos", once the biggest non-state oil company that was completely dissolved after they claimed their bankruptcy.¹⁷

Another example of favor made by the governance was in 2006 when the rules were changed in favor of big companies that that obtained the full control on their territories. Gazprom used this occasion to create its own "army" equipped with Russian firearms and israeli UAV's that officially had the role of preventing sabotage, hijacks or hostage situations. With the time this service reached a total of 20000 men responsible for intelligence and counterintelligence inside the corporation, transport of valuables, body-guarding and were paid with a salary six or seven times bigger than a security state worker salary.

First cases when Russia used Gazprom to influence other countries policy were reported in 2004 when the gas that passed through "Drujba" pipe to Latvia was stopped, in order to encourage the privatization of some Latvian companies that were responsible for gas import by the Russian oligarchs.

Another case was reported in 2006 when Ukraine remained without gas for 24 hours because of the debts, or when Georgia was forced to accept to pay a double price for the imported gas.

Why is this a problem for Europe? Firstly, it is an example of blackmail and secondly because there are more than 50 gas intermediaries in the whole Europe that are used to represent their own interests. A good example for this can be the ex-German canceler Gerhard Schröder that was named as Gazprom CEO, after he signed an agreement with the company that raised the dependence of his country on Russian gas. Also we have the example with an audio recording between the polish oligarch Marek Dochnal and a Russian agent Vladimir Alganov when they were discussing about the privatization of the polish energy industry.

Talking about Rosneft, we will observe that it is a "giant" with a different story. First of all, if we will analyze its past, and will see that Rosneft was also favorited by the Russian

¹⁶ <http://www.gazprom.ru/investors/stock/> - accessed 22.05.2015

¹⁷ <https://lenta.ru/news/2007/11/22/yukos/> - accessed 18.05.2018.

administration when they “absorbed” Bashneft, after its CEO Vladimir Evtushenko was forced to yield his company, losing \$7.2 billion.¹⁸

Rosneft was a company used more to show the importance of Russian oil, and this was shown when 19% of the company were privatized by unknown persons. Officially, the actions were bought by Qatar, Glencore and the Italian bank Intesa Sanpaolo, making abstraction from the EU sanctions. Some analysts sustain that this was a well thought political move, to show the world that even with the EU sanctions, there are countries who trust Russia and believe in its stability. After some investigations it turned out that the real buyers were not Qatar, Glencore or Intesa Sanpaolo. The only thing that is known is that money and actions passed through some phantom companies from Cayman and Singapore, but nobody is ready to offer more details.¹⁹ Also an interesting case was reported in 2011 when ExxonMobil was allowed to conduct offshore exploration in the Black Sea and the Kara Sea in Siberia.²⁰ There were cases when the company violated sanctions on Russia in the period when actual secretary of state Rex Tillerson was the CEO. In 2017 The Treasury Department of USA fined Exxon Mobil \$2 million, which is not a significant punishment for this “mammoth”.²¹

The third influence mechanism used by Russia is the cyberwarfare.

According to *Oxford Dictionaries*, *Cyberwarfare* is defined as the use of computer technology to disrupt the activities of a state or organization, especially the deliberate attacking of information system for strategic or military purposes.

There were many cases when Russia was accused for attacking a state, institution or company using its special services hackers.

One of this attacks was reported in 2015 in France, when the broadcasting service TV5Monde was attacked by russian hacker. It's network system was destroyed with a malicious software. At the beginning, this attack was claimed by the “Cyber Caliphate”, but after a series of investigations, French authorities linked the attack in a GRU hacker group.²²²³

Another case was reported in 2015, when a german official declared a possible cybertheft of files from the German Parliamentary Committee. In 2016 Bruno Kahl warned of data breaches and misinformation campaigns steered by the Russia special agents.²⁴²⁵

¹⁸ Cătălin Apostoiu. *De ce Rosneft, cea mai mare companie petrolieră a Rusiei, câștigă mereu*. Accessed 20.06.2018, <http://www.zf.ro/business-international/de-ce-rosneft-cea-mai-mare-companie-petroliera-a-rusiei-castiga-mereu-16707949>

¹⁹ Bogdan Cojocaru. *Privatizarea Rosneft, promovată de Moscova ca un vot de încredere din partea investitorilor străini, este îngropată adânc în mister*, accessed 29.05.2018, <http://www.zf.ro/business-international/privatizarea-rosneft-promovata-de-moscova-ca-un-vot-de-incredere-din-partea-investitorilor-straini-este-ingropata-adanc-in-mister-16121643>

²⁰ Donna Borak and Egan Matt. *Trump denies Exxon permission to drill for oil in Russia*. CNN Money, retrieved april 21, 2017. Accessed 05.05.2018, <http://money.cnn.com/2017/04/21/news/companies/trump-exxon-russia-sanctions/index.html>

²¹ Alan Rappoport, *Exxon Mobil Fined for Violating Sanctions on Russia*, The New York Times, accessed 20.06.2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/20/us/politics/exxon-mobil-fined-russia-tillerson-sanctions.html>

²² <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-33072034> - accessed 23.06.2018

²³ <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-37590375> - accessed 23.06.2018

²⁴ <http://www.dw.com/en/russia-behind-hack-on-german-parliament-paper-reports/a-36729079> -accessed 23.06.2018

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Also we have a lot of more examples of cyberattacks committed by the russian hackers all over the world because they wanted to influence elections in some states (Germany 2017, United States 2017), to change the internal and European policy (the Brexit referendum) or to simply demonstrate their power.

CONCLUSION

Even if after the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia had to pass through a series of changes and to completely restructure its administration and structure, it is still an important actor on the international arena because it managed to recover its economy and to extend its authority in the whole world.

After Kremlin decided to invade Crimea, they faced a series of sanctions from Europe and United States that wanted to damage the economy and to make this state more vulnerable and more dependent. Despite of this, russian administration always managed to find a way to promote its interests, to annihilate its enemies and to manifest its influence using and creating new weapons and showing its power on the battle theaters in the Middle East. Also it was always able to use its non-conventional weapons in order to protect its interests and to influence the West Policy, demonstrating that it cannot be neglected because it still represents a big power.

The conclusion is that Russia is still one of the most influent states and it should not be neglected because they demonstrated that their power is not measured just in guns.

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