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VLADIMIR PUTIN AND ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF LEADERS IN THE FORMATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE POLICY IN CONTEMPORARY RUSSIA – REVIEWS AND CRITICS OF PUTIN’S REGIME

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Abstract: After the collapse of the Soviet state, during the last decades of the 21st century, Russia found itself in the system crisis in cataclysmic measures that threatened to disintegrate this once powerful state. Political and economic power was significantly displaced outside the institutions of the system in the hands of oligarchs and regional governors, which threaten to disintegrate the federal system and problems in the economic, social, demographic and military sphere shook the foundations of the Russian state. On the international stage, Russia's influence was marginalized. All the elements of its hard and soft power were reduced. Russia has lost the attributes of a superpower and the leader of the former socialist camp was reduced to the level of a regional power. With the arrival of Vladimir Putin as the President of the RF in 2000 began a new phase in the development of post-Soviet Russia. Initiated extensive internal political, economic and social reforms, as well as changes in foreign and security policy, resulted in a gradual recovery and consolidation of the Russian state and society. An essential feature of political life in Russia is the personalization of the power and the institution of the President of the RF, which largely depends on the personality of the president and his inner circle. This distinction is rooted in the political tradition and culture, and the imperial legacy. Some Western authors state that

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the tradition of the autocratic rule is in the heart of Russian political culture, while Russian authors believe that a strong central government, embodied in the institution of the head of state in modern Russia is a necessity in the initial phase of democratization and social transition. From the beginning, Putin has sought to pour “people from their inner circle” “into all levels of government and spheres that generate social and political power.” This profiled the structure of Putin’s regime, which is a very active process of permanent change of position, role and importance of individual personalities, as well as their “migration” from one sphere of government to another. In the process, the overall fluctuations of high-ranking politicians, divided into clans and influential groups (the so-called siloviki, technocrats and liberals), Putin is the “headquarters” of the entire regime. Estimates of the regime of Russian President V. Putin, his personality, as well as a trail that is left in modern history, are more polarized and controversial than estimates of many other figures of Russia, and even global politics. However, the importance that Putin has for Russia and its position and role in the XXI century is undeniable, as well as his controversial planetary authority, or his global popularity. Putin is one of the most influential politicians in the world and the authors’ opinions of him are so divided, conflicting, contradictory and “ideologically colored” that any attempt of his generalization represents an endeavor foredoomed to failure. The amplitude of reactions is ranging from awe and glorification, to protest and scorn. It is undisputed that he is a charismatic, pragmatic and capable statesman. It is also an indisputable fact that the implementation of his policy has the outright support of the Russian people. Critics of Putin’s regime as its main characteristic state the rigidity of the government, inflexibility, lack of transparency, bureaucratic domination of political and economic elites, instability in the sense of being based on the personality of the President and not on the balance of institutions.

Key words: the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, the political-security system.

INTRODUCTION

During the last decade of the twentieth century, after the collapse of the Soviet state, Russia found itself in the system crisis of cataclysmic proportions that shook all aspects of political and social life and threatened the complete disintegration of the once powerful state. Political and economic power is largely relocated outside the institutions of the system and is increasingly concentrated in the hands of big businessmen (oligarchs) and regional political elites (governor), which threaten to seriously undermine the federal structure and integrity of the country (Knežević, 2009). The military power of the country has been severely weakened. The problems in the social sphere and the decline in the living standard of the population below the lower acceptable limit shook the foundations of the Russian state. This is a dramatic effect on the demographic situation, which exceeded all comparative examples in Russian history (Solženicin, 1997). On the international

stage, Russia's influence was marginalized. All the elements of its hard and soft power have been drastically reduced. Russia has lost its superpower attributes and the once powerful state and the leader of the socialist political and ideological groups of countries in the bipolar period, according to the opinion of a significant number of authors, was reduced to the status of a regional power. Such an unsound state of the country with a proud history, which existed in the early years of post-Cold War "Yeltsin" era, was in sharp contrast to its glorious imperial periods of the past in which the Russian state had a leading role in terms of military power and political, cultural and civilization impacts. In Russia, this created a deep sense of disappointment and humiliation.⁴

Personnel changes in the state management, the appointment of Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin as acting President of the Russian Federation from 31 December 1999 and his subsequent victory in the presidential elections in the spring of 2000, created the preconditions for the start of a new phase in the development of post-Soviet Russia. During the first presidential term of V. Putin were initiated and launched extensive internal political, economic and social reforms, as well as changes in foreign and security policy, which resulted in a gradual recovery, stabilization and consolidation of the Russian state and society.⁵ In order to consolidate economic opportunities and eliminate anomalies and negative trends in the economy, as well as the negative consequences of privatizations, Putin's regime began the process of very complex and long-term measures aimed to demopolization of other competing power centers - the economic elite, or oligarchs. Apart from the fact that the disturbances in the Russian economy were largely the result of the so-called "vaucher privatization",⁶ many of whom had a criminal and

⁴ "Humiliation of a big country, if at the same time does not weaken, always is a dangerous game. Russia has decided not to allow ever again to be surprised" ... (Kisindžer, 2008, p. 162.).

⁵ Putin's regime by internal reforms made by the centralization of power and monopolisation of political power through complex processes of elimination of negative trends in the state and society. The priority objective was to crackdown on non-institutional sources of political and economic power and positioning of the regime as an independent center within the state administration. For details about these processes in the analysis of the political system of post-Soviet Russia among others papers in papers of Richard Sakwa... (R. Sakwa, *Putin - Russia's choice*, Routledge, New York 2008.; R. Sakwa, *Russian Policy and Society*, Routledge, London 2008.);

⁶ The first wave of privatization of the Russian oil industry in the nineties of the last century, was completed in 1997, resulted in the fact that the state has privatized half of its production and distribution capacity. From 2000 to 2003, began the second wave of privatization of the Russian oil sector, which is a quantitative relationship changed ownership in favor of the corporate capital in relation to the state (four private companies, "TNK-BP", "YUKOS", "Lukoil" and "Surgutnjeftgaz" have become the owners of the best resource base - deposits of energy and were in control of the best production and transport capacities of the Russian oil industry). During this, in 2003, this tendency has reached its peak, after which measures the current government began the process of restoring state control over this strategic industry sectors ... (Milosavljević, 2014, p. 113.);

“predatory” character, originated from collusion between organized crime and some political structures of state power, the reforms of Putin’s regime, which was characterized by extreme complexity, was not possible to implement. The pre-established effective mechanisms of state control in strategic industries (primarily in energy - oil and gas industry and the sector of non-ferrous and precious metals, therefore precisely the most profitable areas of the Russian economy, where is found the largest number of financial empires of the oligarchs), at the same time did not abolish the parallel, competitive and the largely autonomous centers of political power, constituted by regional leaders (governors) and/or groups of oligarchs.

With deft political moves, directed at the oligarchic structure,⁷ the central government has succeeded in a relatively short period of time to regain control over strategic natural resources, through the processes of their nationalization, or through the processes of establishing “control” and the influence of the “loyal oligarchs”,⁸ which contributed not only to the consolidation of the economic situation in the country, but also had a stabilizing effect in the political and social spheres. The end result of the struggle of state structures to neutralize the economic and political power of individual oligarchs, and their “disempowerment” at the end of the first half of the first decade of this century, was the return of state control over the strategic sectors of the economy, with the re-nationalization of huge natural resources,⁹ primarily in the field of energy, as the most profitable segment

⁷ In July 2000, after the arrest of one of the most influential oligarchs Vladimir Gusinsky, the owner of the holding company “Media Most”, a meeting was held with 28 Putin’s oligarchs, where they established a new “game rules”. Oligarchs was told that they must “refrain” from their political ambitions, it must continue to carry out their regular tax liability, and that they must give up part of their wealth in the interests of society... (M. I. Goldman, „*Petrostate: Putin, Power and the New Russia*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2008, p. 102.); Mikhail Khodorkovsky, owner of oil corporation “YUKOS” and one of the most powerful oligarch at the time, was arrested in October 2003 on charges of tax evasion, a campaign “Yukos” in 2004 bought the state company “Rosneft” (dropped from the original intentions that the control package “Yukos” take over “Gazprom” because of the ownership structure and influence of foreign capital in “Gazprom”... (Konofczuk, 2006, p. 33), ([http://www.osw.waw.pl/files/ PRACE_25.pdf](http://www.osw.waw.pl/files/PRACE_25.pdf), 16.11.2011.); Time has begun the process of achieving primacy of the state in the ownership structure of the Russian oil sector, across national energy giants “Rosneft” and “Gazprom”... (O nationalization of Russian oil sector in the works of Russian author Pappé Yakov (Паппэ Яков), More, „How Russia is Nationalized: The Oil Sector“, *Kommersant*, 19.09.2007.);

⁸ An example of the “loyal” oligarchs, for example, represents a Roman Abramovich who has sold part of its country “property” (package of shares “Rosneft”, a part of the shares in the “RusAl” -ui “Aeroflot”, as the action of certain media outlets) he owned... (More: Milinčić, 2007.);

⁹ The re-establishment of state control over the energy sector, the strategy of the existence of two giant energy companies with majority state capital (“Gazprom” and “Rosneft”), had direct implications for the international position of the Russian state, in terms of strengthening its role and importance in international economic – energy relations, but also in the context of strengthening Russian positions in the global political and security sphere... (Milosavljević, 2014, p. 114.)

of the Russian economy. Strong condemn of these actions of the Russian state leadership are mostly coming from the West and are essentially focused on criticism of creating a monopolistic position of the state in the Russian oil and gas sector, as well as the violation of economic rights of foreign companies in Russia. Some authors called this measure of Putin's regime the "state expropriation" of the Russian energy sector, "economic imperialism" (Goldman, 2008, p. p. 322-329) and like, trying to portray Russia as an unreliable partner in the energy sector – which is one of the main pillars of power of the Russian state (Primakov, 2010, p. 93).¹⁰ In addition to these processes, measures of Putin's domestic reforms, in his words, were aimed, *inter alia*, to crack down organized crime, fight against corruption, to raising the living standard of Russian citizens, reduction of poverty and unemployment, preventing the continuation of negative trends in the demographic sphere, etc (Путин, 2010).

VLADIMIR PUTIN – A LEADER THAT MARKED THE BEGINNING OF THE THIRD MILLENNIUM

One of the essential characteristics that determine political life of modern Russia is the personalization of power and the institution of the President of the Russian Federation, which largely depends on the personality of the president and his inner circle. A political scientist and professor at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO - University) MID RF, Elena Ponomareva argues that "in contemporary Russia national-historical situation determines leadership for centuries beyond (...) Sacralization of state power in Russia is deeply rooted in tradition and political culture. More than that, in Russia, as in historical retrospect, so today, the leader perceived as a symbol of national unity, as a form of collective consciousness and behavior" (Понюмарева, 2006, p. 167-168). This definition of the leadership of E. Ponomareva belongs to the conceptual and the best terminological qualification of one of the essential characteristics of the political system of modern Russia. This feature has its roots in the Russian specificity, or the political tradition and imperial heritage. Russian historical experience shows that the personality of the Russian monarchs has always symbolized strength and unity of the Russian empire and reflected the connection between the national identity of the Russian people and the country. In other words, in the essence of the Russian tradition is that Russian people follow and support a successful and charismatic leader. According to the opinion of some Western authors, the tradition of autocratic rule is at the core of the

¹⁰ At the same time, some authors have pointed out the fact that foreign corporations, despite the "discriminatory conditions", frantically tried to keep their participation in projects in Russia's oil and gas industry, motivated by the possibility of gaining huge profits... (Štavljanić, 2009, p. 67)

Russian political culture, which rejects individualism and highlights paternalism, the cult of leaders and mysticism, rationalism and pragmatism instead (Godzimirski, 2008). A large number of Russian authors is of the opinion that a strong central government in Russia, embodied in the institution of the head of state, is a necessity and a need, taking into account its specific historical experience, an imperial tradition, as well as “special psychology of the Russian people,” but both quantitative and qualitative characteristics of the territorial and demographic factors, with the caveat that this attitude only applies to the initial phase of democratization and transition of society, and consolidation of political and economic opportunity (Primakov, 2003, p. 88).

Simultaneously with these processes of struggle with competing centers of power, Putin has sought “people from their inner circle” to pour “into all spheres and levels of government that generate social and political power,” whether it is the highest state functions (high state bureaucracy) or strategic state, mixed or corporate businesses. In this way, the structure of the Putin regime is very quickly profiled, which is a very active process of the permanent change of the position, role and importance of individual personalities, as well as their “migration” from one sphere of government to another. In this entire process of fluctuations and “modeling” of elite groups and clans, Putin is the “center of gravity and Staff” of the entire regime and the main arbiter in the struggle of various influential groups (Vinogradov, 2010). Some Russian authors believe that with the re-election of Vladimir Putin as president of Russia in March 2012, the Kremlin once again became the center of the main political decision-making and that Putin, while retaining the status of the “dominant player” remains a “supreme arbiter” who actually “makes key decisions” (Ria Novosti, 2012b).

One of the most influential groups is called *siloviki*, which originated from representatives of institutions of force and security services, as well as Putin himself (Igor Sechin, Nikolay Patrushev, Viktor Ivanov, Anatoly Serdyukov, Viktor Zubak, etc.) (Bremmer, I., Sharp, S. B. (2006/07). However, the “specific weight” and the real power of the former “superinfluence heavyweights” from the ministries of force at the end of the first decade of this century, has dropped sharply. The same is the case with the decline in the influence of certain oligarchs such as Roman Abramovich and Oleg Deripaska, who at the end of the first decade of XXI century, mostly focused on their own business and finding opportunities for the “survival” of their financial empires in the global economic crisis (Milosavljević, 2014, p. 95). No less power is concentrated in the hands of another Putin’s closest associates called “*technocrats*”, who occupied leading positions in the largest state-owned companies, especially in the energy sector (Alexey Miller, Sergey Chemezov, etc.), or so-called “*liberals*” (German Gref, Sergey Ignatieff, et al.). Apart from the influence of those groups concentrated in various structures of power, it should inevitably be noted that in recent years in Russia certain authors have a great

influence - scientists and experts. That is not a compact group, on the contrary, it is very polarized. The spectrum of their activities and preferences is ranging from unconditional support to the current government to the opposition to the action, even radical criticism of the government (Vinogradov, 2012, p. 54-55). A group of experts “close to the authorities” - the so-called loyal experts actively participate in the development and popularization of the authorities.¹¹ The second group of authors - experts are those with a “neutral” status and position in relation to the regime,¹² while the third group of experts is not in favor of the current regime, some of them even act in opposition movements.¹³ Their activity is characterized by fierce criticism and condemnation of the current government. On the basis of these opinions and the presented facts, we can conclude that regardless of the contradictions between the various interest groups and camps within the government in the near future it should not be expected a major division within these structures. In hypothetical terms, the division is possible in the case of a worse economic situation, decrease of trust and public support to the actual Putin’s regime, or in the case of opposition consolidation and significant increase of its popularity, which is not a realistic option at this moment or in the near future.

REVIEWS AND CRITICS OF PUTIN’S REGIME

Estimates of the regime of Russian President Vladimir Putin, his personality and former political activity, and the mark he left in modern history (though this process is not completed, as he is currently in his new presidential term (2012-18.)), are more polarized and controversial than of any other figure of Russian and even global politics. However, the significance which Vladimir Putin has for Russia and his position and role in the XXI century is undeniable, as well as his controversial planetary authority, or his global popularity. Russian author Fyodor Lukyanov believes that the President of Russia V. Putin is one of the most influential politicians in the world, but opinions about him are contradictory, controversial and intense, that is, “ones praise him, others demonize”.¹⁴

¹¹ The group of experts “close to the authorities” are commonly classified Alexei Arbatov, Sergey Markov, Gleb Pavlovski, Valery Fyodorov, Vitaly Ivanov, Andranik Migranjan, Dmitry Orlov, Alexey Cesnakova etc.

¹² The group of authors from “neutral” status in relation to power belong Karganov S., F. Lukyanov, D. Trenin, N. Petrov, J. Minchenko, D. Badovskiy, I. Bunin, D. Oreshkin, A. Ryabov, etc.

¹³ In this group are among the most common Lila Shevtsova, Miov Vladimir, Vladimir Pribilovskiy, Mikhail Delyagin, Andrey Piontkovsky, Mark Urnov, etc.

¹⁴ In the opinion of a number of authors in the world perceive Putin as a separate phenomenon. “It just turned out that Putin is the embodiment of the state of the world, this smutne transitional situation in which the entire international system and all States of which the system is assembled. He is the symbol of this situation, only the one positive and the other negative”... (Lukjanov, 2012);

A large number of authors, both those who support the policy of Vladimir Putin, and those who criticize, challenge and accuse him of autocracy, agree in their assessment that he is a charismatic, pragmatic and capable personality. The amplitude of the reaction ranges from glorification and admiration to protest and scorn of the results of Putin's policies. Any attempt of generalization represents an endeavor foredoomed to failure. Instead of this approach, it is necessary to identify and carry out an analysis of existing positions and on this basis, if possible, to try to make the appropriate conclusions.

A number of Russian and domestic authors have a positive attitude towards Putin's project of political consolidation and economic stabilization of the situation in post-Soviet Russia. Despite the existing shortcomings and criticisms, they argue that "Russia is consolidated when a charismatic leader came to power", that "Putin's regime represented a response to the historical necessity" (Medvedev, 2007) and that the "freedom that Putin's regime got sometimes standing outside the constitutionality and public accountability enable greater efficiency in the implementation of reforms" (Milosević, 2006). Some Russian authors state that "what is now a world scale referred to as "Putinism", is the result of the specific needs of political and intellectual climate that grew out of a specific historical experience of Russia" (Мигранян, 2004), and that "Vladimir Putin certainly has massive popular support for his political course (Пономарева, 2006), which represents the "center line of the ideological spectrum" (Кортунов, 2011). Also, a number of Russian authors, with an unconcealed bias for Putin, argues that as a leader who "restored Russia", he often draws visionary statesman moves, has "broad aspects of" sense of time in which he lives and the position in which he found the Russian state after the turbulent nineties of the last century.

A number of Russian authors are of the view that the Putin era has enabled the country to consolidate internally and to a gradual return to the role of an unavoidable actor on the international scene. These authors for Vladimir Vladimirovich state that he is the man who went to "historical role to take off the Yeltsin mortgage from the Russian shoulders," the statesman with an incredible ability of a "superior juggler", ready to take the burden of difficult decisions by "balancing as a player on the wire", who does not hide behind generalized rhetorical phrases as a fogging substance. Based on the views of these authors, it can be concluded that the determination of Putin's administration for a strong and powerful Russia represents a milestone which holds all the relevant factors of the Russian state policy for over a decade. And some authors from the West, with a dose of criticism, show a positive attitude towards individual elements of Putin's project of consolidation and stabilization of post-Soviet Russia. These authors argue that "Putin's historic mission is nothing more than consolidation and legalization of social revolution from the Gorbachev-Yeltsin era, and to erase defects of Yeltsin's rule" (Sakwa, 2008, p. 309), that "only semi-

authoritarian rule like Putin's Russia can keep on the right track" (Lieven, 2005), that "Putin has built legitimacy for criticism of Yeltsin's pro-Western policies, responsible for causing chaos and destruction" (Weiss, 2008), and the like.

Harsh criticism of Putin's regime and the "Russian own path of development," both from the West and from Russia itself, are mainly focused on the "authoritarian - bureaucratic nature of government," and the fact that "the regime in the Russian Federation, both in the initial stages of stabilization of the political, economic, social, demographic, security and other conditions, as well as later works often stand outside the boundaries of constitutionality, legality, public accountability and democratic principles" (Godzimirski, 2008). In attempts of qualifications of Putin's regime, that the Russian political system is characterized by heterogeneity of attitudes, the authors use different terms and phrases, such as "managed democracy", "sovereign democracy" (key elements of the concept of "sovereign democracy" organized by the Russian Society of the centralization of power and political integrity, idealization of the goals and personalization of political institutions) (Сурков, 2007), while at the other end of the spectrum is an evaluation and qualification such as "over-managed democracy" (Petrov, 2010), "reactionary modernization" (Морозов, 2006), "semi-authoritarian" or "authoritarian" system. Some Russian authors qualify Putin's regime with the phrase "over-managed democracy", defining it as "a complex system that allows the elimination of a public authority control, avoiding public accountability and preserve the semblance of respect for democratic procedures", and as its essential elements cited a strong presidential system of governance (the expense of all other institutions and actors), state control of the media and control of electoral processes (Petrov, 2010, p. 43-44). As an illustration of the above criticism, interesting are sharp qualifications of Putin's regime by the Russian author Latisha Shevtsova, standing on the part of the opposition pluralist ideological spectrum of Russian political scene, who stated that "Putin's regime, the semi-democratic regime in a uniform and democratic institutions (parliament, political parties, trade unions, youth movements) are a "Potemkin village" masquerade organized by the Russian elite for centuries, in order to hide a system that is both authoritarian, oligarchic and bureaucratic to the point of paralysis" (Shevtsova, 2003).

In general, critics of the Putin regime as its main characteristics cites inflexibility, lack of transparency, bureaucratic, restrictive government, the dominance of special interests and the political and economic elites. At the same time, as an essential feature of the Russian political regime refers to his personal character (with the weakness of other institutions), and its foundation in the person of the President and not in the balance of the institutions, which makes it unstable. Due to this attitude of the personal nature of the Russian political system, a large number of authors state that the political popularity and extremely

high rating of V. Putin (the “United Russia”, as the dominant party) is of vital importance to the pillar on which rests the whole political system (or, as some argue, “the hook on which to hold”), as well as the preservation of a high level of Putin’s popularity is an imperative for the overall political and economic elite in power, due to the fact that “there’s nothing he could have replaced the lack of trust in leaders”.¹⁵

The largest number of arguments for their criticism of Putin’s regime, these authors “found” in the “fact” that the nature of Putin’s authoritarian regime is “semi-authoritarian”; that Russia expressed processes to prevent the opposition movement, even with the elimination of political opponents;¹⁶ that there are ubiquitous violations of political rights and freedoms; that regime is eroding the role and importance of the political institutions; that the system is making crucial decisions extremely centralized, concentrated in the hands of the president and the prime minister and largely determined by the balance of power of influential political groups; and that there is suppression of freedom of the media, while creating a state monopoly in this sphere. These authors also point out the ubiquitous reduce of the rights of ethnic communities through a process of centralization of power, then a violation of eco-heavy corporate rights and freedoms, especially in Russian strategic industries at the expense of strengthening the role of the state (Goldman, 2008, p. 132-134), “suppression and persecution” in the sphere of NGOs, and similar. Even if you reject the good part of the “extremely negative” criticism of Putin’s regime, often expressed with concealed malice and contempt, generally speaking, it is difficult to escape the impression that a large number of such assessment are formed under the strong influence of Western stereotypes and arrogant tendencies to share the lessons of Democracy and human rights.

As for the score (and criticism), these critical authors (who are mostly from the West) believe that the personality of Russian President Vladimir Putin is of a vigorous and decisive leader, who is also “the visionary and political manipulator”, that Putin’s decisions are often a “joint strategic analysis and instinctive reactions.” In their view, a vision is often demonstrated, combined

¹⁵ Indicative is the thesis of some Russian authors, that the popularity of Dmitry Medvedev (President of RF 2008-12, now prime minister), although extremely high, and for only a few percent lower than Putin, essentially represents only a projection of Putin’s rating and popularity, and that is actually the word the popularity of a leader.

¹⁶ In addition to the earlier accusations of official Moscow for the political persecution of political opponents and Russian oligarchs (Berezovsky, Gusinsky, Khodorkovsky and others.) That came from the West, the death of the Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya in 2006, and former Federal Security Service officer Alexander Litvinenko RF from by certain Western circles qualified as “regime’s murder”, for which he was accused by Moscow. These events have had a negative impact on relations between Russia and the West ... (See more: Lukyanov, , 2009, p. 122.);

with ruthlessness to the “internal” opponents who, in his opinion, represent an obstacle in the way of Russia to re-attribute acquiring large countries. In this opus can be singled out “attitudes according to which V. Putin’s personality possesses the character and skill of a dictator, and his own characteristics are used for the development of democratic institutions and the way of the Russian state to the redefinition of the geopolitical code and its own identity. On this path, “Putin’s guiding star has been and remains Russia’s national interest”, viewed through the prism of *realpolitik*. Some critics from the West even went as far as to accuse V. Putin that in certain periods his government bought the popularity by using his “macho image,” to show the hustle and determination, and at the same time presented himself as a man of the people. In response to these and similar attitudes and accusations, the Russian authors who fully support Putin’s concept of development of Russian society and the state, counter-argument that Russia is a huge country with all its specificities and that such operation of regime is a necessity in certain situations because it allows a greater efficiency of the state in protecting national interests. Putin pointed out that “as a realist and a conservative”, he quite soberly observed all the complexities of the current events in the country and on the international scene, but also that “all the more difficult are the answers to the increasing number of challenges” (Lukjanov, 2012).

Summing up, the views of a significant number of Western and Russian authors of Putin’s great popularity and the conclusion are that his success lies in the ability to align the policies with the issues on which there is a broad national consensus in Russia. Topping the list is certainly the idea of a powerful Russian state - great power, economically strong, with respectable armed forces to safeguard a vast expanse of Russia. One of the priorities is the equitable distribution of income, or the use of large export revenues resource potential (primarily energy) to improve the living standard and social status of Russian citizens. State control over natural resources, support to reforms and private enterprise, the modernization of the Russian economy, strengthening the international position of Russia as a great state, are key imperatives of the political course of Putin’s regime. Also, in the opinion of many authors, one of the most term comparative advantages of Putin’s regime is the fact that Putin and the Russian state leadership fundamentally understand all the complexities of Russian historical experience and advantages of inheritance Russian traditions and its peculiarities. Accordingly, proclaiming the diversity of Russia to the West and its particular civilization lines, the inspiration for his political pragmatism sought precisely in the Russian past, and at the same time “sophisticated” acceptance and implementation of those solutions and western values, which can be in Russian social and political discourse. Vladimir Putin’s personal popularity and support that his political concept have among Russian citizens is perhaps best illustrated by the attitude of the Russian author Leonid Polyakova, who believes

that Putin is the leader of custom civilization specificities of Russia, that he will remain the president of Russia until 2018 and that in the future no one will be able to “move” him unless he himself wants to leave.¹⁷

In recent years a number of sociological research has been carried out in Russia on Putin’s support to the government and public opinion about the basic directions of its policies. The results of these studies showed that the level of trust of citizens and public support for the current Russian president and his political concept is stable and ranges between one-half and two-thirds. As the argument of this attitude can serve a large number of results of sociological research relating to citizens’ assessment of the political course of Putin’s government. Another relevant indicator is the results of the presidential elections of 2012 in which the V. Putin convincingly won. Namely, in the presidential elections (according to the official results of the Central Election Commission RF) in the first round 04 March 2012, voted 65.3% of registered voters.¹⁸ Vladimir V. Putin (candidate - United Russia / All-Russia People’s Front), won nearly two-thirds of the votes (63.7% or 45,602,075 votes), defeating in the first round all other challengers,¹⁹ thus becoming the new/old president of RF for the next six years (2012-18.). In the last decade, presidential election results in Russia largely coincide with the results of the parliamentary elections and the success of the party “United Russia”, which is profiled as a party of government and which is essentially led by V. Putin, although an increasing number of politicians alternated as a president of the party. Based on the analysis of the presidential election results (and parliamentary) in Russia in the past decade, it can be concluded that the support of Putin’s political concept is stable and that it is at the level of 60-70%, while his political party United Russia has support from 50 and 60% of the electorate.

¹⁷ “Russia is a unique cultural and historical phenomenon, which is characterized by many specific details of its history and tradition. Tom unity of opposites in the new millennium do not need a dictator, but a political leader who is able to play the role of mediator to act as a mediator in whom they trust all the opposing parties and has the ability to transform the energy of conflict dynamics of development of the country. Russia has received just such a leader who fits its civilizational specificities - V. Putin”... (Poljakov, 2012.);

¹⁸ Результаты выборов, Центральная избирательная комиссия Российской Федерации (ЦИК), http://www.cikrf.ru/banners/prezident_2012/index.html, 03.12.2012.;

¹⁹ KPRF candidate Gennady Zyuganov, won 17.19% or 12,318,353 votes; Mikhail Prokhorov, as an independent candidate, 07.88% (5,722,508); LDPR candidate Vladimir Zhirinovskiy 06.23% (4,458,103); Sergey Mironov (A Just Russia) 03.85% (2,763,935)... (*Протокол Центральной избирательной комиссии Российской Федерации о результатах выборов Президента Российской Федерации 4 марта 2012 года*, („Сводная таблица Центральной избирательной комиссии Российской Федерации о результатах выборов Президента Российской Федерации 4 марта 2012 года, лист № 11,“ http://www.cikrf.ru/banners/prezident_2012/itogi/result.html, 02.12.2012.).

The results of sociological surveys precisely confirm the facts presented to support the allegation that most citizens of Russia positively assesses the activity of V. Putin as the president of the country and expect Russia to continue on the previous political course. The research results show that in comparing the results of Putin's era with Gorbachev's epoch "perestroika" and the Yeltsin era (the period before "Soviet" and "Yeltsin" past), reviews of the achievements of Putin's are much more positive, with the main highlight on the successes of the internal stability, international authority and strengthen of the basic institutions on which the state rests. The areas in which Putin as president had the most success, according to the survey results, are the international relations and increasing living standard. The research results testify that the majority of Russian citizens believe that Putin's regime successfully solved the fundamental issues of economic and national security. Based on the results, the conclusion is that the fundamental citizens' expectations are the development of the economic and social dimensions of Russian society, and that the main tasks of the current Putin regime are economic growth and social development of the Russian state (which must be based on the results achieved in the previous decade, and not as in the previous period related to survival). The conclusion is that Putin is the first Russian leader in the last quarter of the century, whose activity at the highest state functions the majority of respondents assessed positively.

INSTEAD OF A CONCLUSION

Unsound state of the country with a proud history, which existed in the first years of the post-Cold War "Yeltsin" era, has sparked a deep sense of disappointment and humiliation. That is why Russia "decided" never to allow to be brought to a similar position again. During the first presidential term, V. Putin initiated extensive internal political, economic and social reforms, as well as changes in foreign and security policy, which has resulted in the gradual recovery and consolidation of the Russian state. One of the essential characteristics of the political system of modern Russia is the personalization of power. The institution of the President of RF is largely dependent on the personality of the president and his inner circle. These qualities have roots in the Russian political tradition and imperial heritage. Russian historical experience shows that Russian people follow and support a successful and charismatic leader. Some authors point out that a strong central authority embodied in the institution of the head of state in modern Russia is the necessity, whereby V. Putin is the "headquarters" of the entire regime. It can be concluded that despite the contradiction of various influential groups within the government, in the near future should not be expected a major division within these structures. The rift is hypothetically possible in the case of substantial deterioration of the economic situation, the

drastic decline in public trust and support of the current Putin regime, or in the case of consolidation of Russian opposition forces and the significant growth in their popularity, which at the present time, but not in the short term is not an option. Harsh criticism of Putin's regime are aimed at "authoritarian and bureaucratic nature of government"; the fact that "often operate outside the boundaries of legality, public accountability and democratic principles"; a strong presidential system of governance "at the expense of all other institutions"; on state control of the media; control of the electoral process. Critics base their allegation on the main feature of Putin's regime, i.e. the personality of the President. Summing up the views of a large number of Western and Russian authors of Putin's popularity, it can be concluded that his success lies in the ability to coordinate policy issues on which there is a broad national consensus in Russia. In recent years a number of sociological research was carried out on the support of Putin's government and public opinion about the basic directions of its policies. The results of these studies show that the level of trust of citizens for the Russian President and his political concept is stable and around 60%. Instead of a general conclusion, we can only conclude that V. Putin successfully mastered a practical lesson on leadership skills in concrete terms, forcing the concept of a state policy that at the polls in the country and the mood of the nation had and still has a mass support and popularity for more than a decade. Putin and contemporary Russia have not still said their last words when it comes to Russia's domestic political scene and the international relations.

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**VLADIMIR PUTIN I ANALIZA ULOGE LIČNOSTI LIDERA
U FORMIRANJU I SPROVOĐENJU DRŽAVNE POLITIKE
U SAVREMENOJ RUSIJI –
OCENE I KRITIKE PUTINOVOG REŽIMA**

Apstrakt: Nakon raspada sovjetske države Rusija se našla u sistemskoj krizi koja je pretela da dezintegriše nekada moćnu državu. Politička i ekonomska moć bila je u značajnoj meri izmeštena van institucija sistema, u ruke oligarha i regionalnih gubernatora. Problemi u ekonomskoj, socijalnoj, demografskoj i vojnoj sferi potresali su temelje ruske države. Na međunarodnoj sceni, uticaj Rusije bio je marginalizovan. Svi elementi njene tvrde i meke moći, bili su umanjeni. Rusija je izgubila attribute supersile i nekadašnja predvodnica socijalističkog lagera svedena je na nivo regionalne sile. Dolaskom Vladimira Putina na mesto predsednika RF 2000. godine, počela je nova faza u razvoju postsovjetske Rusije. Pokrenute su opsežne unutrašnje političke, ekonomske i socijalne reforme, kao i promene u spoljnoj i bezbednosnoj politici, što je rezultiralo postepenim oporavkom i konsolidacijom ruske države i društva. Jedna od suštinskih odlika političkog života Rusije jeste personalizacija vlasti, odnosno institucije Predsednika RF, koja u velikoj meri zavisi od ličnosti samog predsednika i njegovog najbližeg okruženja. Ova odlika ukorenjena je u političkoj tradiciji i kulturi, odnosno u imperijalnom nasleđu. Pojedini zapadni autori navode da je tradicija autokratskog vladanja u srži ruske političke kulture, dok ruski autori smatraju da snažna centralna vlast, oličena u instituciji predsednika države, u savremenoj Rusiji predstavlja nužnost u početnoj fazi demokratizacije i tranzicije društva. Putin je od početka nastojao da „ljude iz svog najbližeg okruženja „razlije“ u sve nivoe vlasti i sfere koje generišu društvenu i političku moć“. Time se profilisala struktura Putinovog režima u kojoj je veoma aktivan proces permanentne smene pozicija, uloga i značaja pojedinih ličnosti, kao i njihovo „seljenje“ iz jedne sfere vlasti u drugu. U celokupnom tom procesu fluktacije visoko-pozicioniranih političara, svrstanih u uticajne grupe i klanove (tzv. siloviki, tehnostrate i liberali), Putin ima ulogu „stožera“ celokupnog režima. Ocene o režimu ruskog predsednika V. Putina, njegovoj ličnosti, kao i tragu koji je ostavio u modernoj istoriji, polarizovanije su i kontroverznije nego ocene o mnogim drugim ličnostima ruske, pa i globalne politike. Međutim, značaj koji Putin ima za Rusiju i njenu poziciju i ulogu u XXI veku, nesporan je, kao što nisu sporni ni njegov planetarni autoritet, ni njegova globalna popularnost. Putin je jedan od najuticajnijih političara na svetu, ali su mišljenja autora u vezi sa njim toliko podeljena, oprečna, suprotstavljena i „ideološki obojena“, da bi svaki pokušaj njihove generalizacije predstavljao poduhvat unapred osuđen na neuspeh. Amplitude reakcija kreću se od glorifikacije i divljenja, do osporavanja i nipodaštavanja. Nesporno je da je reč o harizmatičnom, pragmatičnom i sposobnom državniku, kao što je nesporna i činjenica da za sprovođenje svoje politike ima natpolovičnu podršku ruskog naroda. Kritičari Putinovog režima kao njegove osnovne odlike navode rigidnost vlasti, nefleksibilnost, netransparentnost, birokratizovanost, dominaciju političko-

ekonomskih elita, nestabilnost u smislu zasnovanosti na ličnosti predsednika, a ne na balansu institucija.

Ključne reči: Ruska Federacija, Vladimir Putin, političko-bezbednosni sistem.

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