

Putin's Endgame 2-23-22 after SL

Welcome to the February 24, 2022 edition of The Meyers Report. Starting in 1985, our discussion group has a simple goal: We want to know what is right, not who is right. We seek unbiased truth and welcome fact-based divergent opinions.

Tonight, we are talking Ukraine, Russia and what it means to the US, Europe and China.

As Shakespeare said, "What is Past is prologue." To that end, to understand Putin and Russia today, we have to look to back to the 1600 and 1700s and Peter the Great.

Following in Peter's thought 'footsteps,' our analysis is operating with the following assumptions:

- a. To prosper, Russia needed to be aligned with and needed to be like the West.
- b. Russia needed warm-water ports on the Pacific and in the south (with access to the Mediterranean) for commerce and for protection.
- c. The greatest threats to Russia then were China and the Moslem horde to the south (today, nuclear armed Turkey and Pakistan among other threats)

Nothing has changed. Peter was right then, and he is today.

Our other assumptions include:

1. Putin is very smart and very disciplined and plans well.
2. Biden is not smart and is weak. Putin knows this and that Biden is very dangerous to everyone.
3. Putin is a nationalist and is an anti-globalist—just like Trump.
4. Biden is a Globalist, which Putin dislikes.
5. To advance Mother Russia and to avoid being swallowed by China, Putin needs to prevent the West from being weakened or for Russia to be in military conflict with the West.
6. Putin knows China wants to make Russia a vassal state.
7. Biden in his entire career has never been right about anything. He is capable of enormous blunders. To quote Barak Obama, "don't underestimate Joe's ability to f*** things up."

As we see it, Putin has the following objectives:

1. He does not want China to swallow Russia, which it could economically and eventually militarily. China is a much greater threat than the US or Europe.
2. Russia must protect its borders from invasions both from the East and the West.

As such,

3. Ukraine must be neutral and not part of NATO. (Russia remembers the 1900s and two German invasions and one from Western Europe after WWI, the 1800s by Napoleon/France, the 1700s by Sweden, the 1600s by Poland.) So, Russia's paranoia about the West is well-founded, but so is their need to be part of the West.
4. Putin wants influence over Ukraine, but would prefer not to govern Ukraine, at least for now. However, if he can control the lion's share of Europe's natural gas supply, he would endure governing Ukraine.
5. Putin wants to sell more Russian natural resources, which is what they have now, while they increase their industrialization later. This means:
 - a. The West's sanctions must be removed, or Russia's trade will not expand, and he will be at China's mercy.
 - b. Putin wants increased sales with China, but in addition to trade with the West. (Use Walmart vendor comparison.)
6. Does not want to give Biden a win, because a credible Biden is harmful and dangerous to everyone.
7. Putin wants implementation of the as-yet unfulfilled Minsk Agreement of 2015

End Game

1. No sit-down with Biden.
2. Settlement could be directly with Ukraine, possibly brokered by France or Germany, thereby robbing Biden of any credit.
 - a. Parts of the “separatist” regions might become semi-autonomous and still part of Ukraine, for now. Later, they will separate and possibly vote to become part of Russia.
 - b. Biden gets no credit.
 - c. Putin will be relatively humble with the outcome.
3. China will be the big loser in both influence and leverage.

Now for our discussion leaders.