TA Tomorrow's Affairs
Analysis of today
Assessment of tomorrow

By: Sergei Stepancev, TA Moscow

# Putin played the long game, and it paid off—he is no longer a pariah

The Munich Security Conference and the earlier telephone conversation with US President Donald Trump mark a new milestone for Vladimir Putin.

Russia believes it has won a victory over America. In the current Russian reality, this victory can even be compared to the victory in the Great Patriotic War.

Russia is convinced that it has not only defeated America ideologically and economically in Ukraine but also in Europe.

The Kremlin believes it has won this round against America with an almost perfect record.

This round, which has been in the hot phase for almost three years since the Kremlin launched the full-scale war against Ukraine, realistically began with Russia's aggression against Georgia in 2008.

The trophies that Vladimir Putin now possesses are numerous. Firstly, he is no longer a pariah.

He has already been invited by President Trump to decide the fate not only of Ukraine but very likely of other countries around the world, some of which are apparently not even in Europe.

## Divisions in the West

The concessions made by Pete Hegseth, the new US secretary of defence, to Vladimir Putin in relation to Ukraine were made in advance, even though negotiations have not yet begun.

The role of Keith Kellogg, whom the Kremlin regards as the true representative of the Pentagon, in the negotiations with the Kremlin has been diminished, while the role of Steve Witkoff, a businessman through and through, has been elevated to the top.

American Vice President JD Vance seems to care more about the fate of the openly pro-Kremlin Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, while the fate of the Ukrainian people fighting against Russian aggression and imperialism does not seem to interest him as much.

> No matter what President Trump offers Vladimir Putin, it will not be enough

The division between America and Europe is obvious and feeds Putin, because dividing America and Europe was one of his strategic goals. Putin has been playing a long game, and it has paid off.

Putin has outlasted five different American administrations and is now on track to wait out President Trump's second term in the White House.

No matter what President Trump offers Vladimir Putin, it will not be enough. After 25 years in power and 3 years of war, Vladimir Putin will not stop his imperial expansion unless he is truly stopped, which, from the messages the Kremlin has received from Washington, does not seem to be an option at this time.

The Munich conference was a signal to Putin that he is doing everything right.

## Is there a new round?

Vladimir Putin has no intention of changing Russia's behaviour or even ending the war permanently. He loves the current aggressive and militant Russia.

On the other hand, the Russian people love the idea that their leader has defeated America and that President Trump can be in Moscow on Victory Day on 9 May, according to Russian propaganda.

There will certainly be another round of the US-Russian standoff because Russia will not give up its aggression and imperial expansion. Moreover, Russia will never cease to regard America as the number one global enemy of Russia and Russian hegemony, even if America

withdraws from a typical American global power on the European continent, as demonstrated in Munich.

> The initiative for a new approach towards Russia must come from Russia itself

So far, the American approach to Russia has definitely not come close to forcing the country to abandon its deviant and aggressive behaviour. But no one can accuse the Americans of having misjudged Russia.

The initiative for a new approach towards Russia must come from Russia itself.

Russia's pro-Western representatives, the true advocates of Russia's Westernisation, should have had the wisdom and insight to explain to the global community long ago that the West must be politically and economically integrated into Russia in order to normalise it.

## A new approach

The integration of America and the West into Russia cannot be achieved by selling off European and American assets, including oil refineries, pipelines, and various facilities, to Putin, as the West has done in recent decades. Instead, it is necessary to deeply integrate Western companies and elites, especially American ones, into the core of Russia.

A change of ownership of Russian assets and even elites is not fantastic in the Russian reality. It has happened more than once and can happen again.

*A change of ownership of Russian assets and even elites is not fantastic in the Russian reality. It has happened more than once and can happen again - Gazprom Gas Station*

It will happen in Russia one way or another, with or without Western influence on this process. With Western involvement, however, this will be the best scenario for everyone, including the Russian people.

The idea of absorbing Russian assets should not scare the American and Western leadership. The Russian people can realistically be better off with America than with a traditionally anti-American and imperial Russian regime.

The average pension in Russia is USD 250-300 per month, while food and grocery shop prices are regular and close to those in America and Europe.

The majority of the Russian people survive and suffer but are convinced by the state-controlled media that things can be even worse without Vladimir Putin and that other countries suffer even more because they adopt Western values.

The concept would not be foreign to the Russian people either. Centuries ago, it was customary in Russia to invite foreign rulers to rule over various Russian tribes.

This can, of course, be the subject of future Munich conferences, as the current one took place in light of the overwhelming victory of the Russian doctrine over the American doctrine not only in Europe but worldwide.