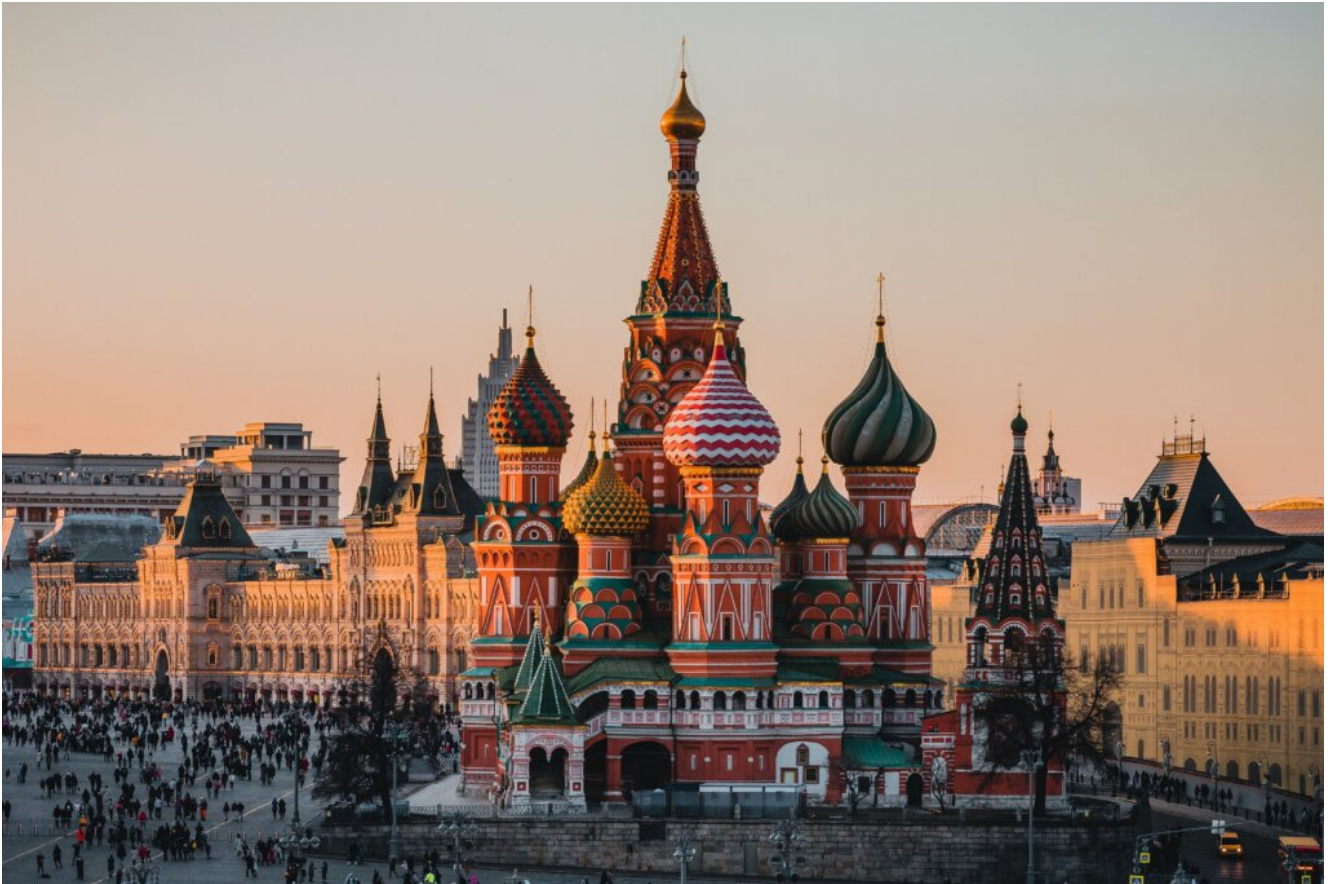


# Putin is not Joking; He is not Bluffing, are we? - Mehmet Ögütçü



It is part of a familiar strategy that Russia organizes separatist forces in two regions (Luhansk and Donetsk) on the Russian-Ukrainian border, instructs them to declare independence, recognizes them, signs a friendship and military assistance agreement, and finally sends Russian soldiers as a “peacekeeping force”.

Now this country has been invaded from all directions, air defense and attack systems

are being destroyed to prevent Ukraine from responding militarily.

He did the

same thing when tearing South Ossetia and Abkhazia apart from Georgia in 2008. Except for weak Western condemnation/sanctions, no one did anything about that intervention. It didn't surprise us either, six years later, in 2014, when Russia broke off Crimea from Ukraine. Again, except for some weak noise, no counter-intervention came from the West.

We all

accepted the new status quo imposed by Putin.

It is also

known that there are new intrigues on Moldova's Trans-Dniester, the Baltic Republics, the North Sea Route, the Azerbaijan-Armenia corridors, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Kosovo. These continue, and we do not know which direction they will unfold. Putin's talk that Kazakhstan, with which it shares a 5.600 km border, is a part of Russia historically and that the Kazakh nation has never existed in that geography is a reflection of this way of thinking.

The point

is, Putin, who could not digest the collapse of the Soviet Union, openly described it as a "great geopolitical disaster" and accused Gorbachev and Yeltsin of "treason" for closing eyes to the process led by the West. It wants to create a security circle around Russia, the largest geographical area in the world (18 million Km<sup>2</sup>), which is 11 percent of the world's land, and to eliminate its "legitimate security concerns".

He showed

this with the tough decisions and actions he took by brute force, disregarding concepts such as "territorial integrity" and "sovereignty", leaving no doubt that he will continue to show it. The Russian leader he took as a role model in

history is Peter I, who we call “the Mad” and Russians “the Great”. Guess the rest.

The cornerstones of the new world order have not yet settled. China and Russia do not accept the limited regional roles drawn for them. They shout to all of us that if a rightful place directly proportional to their power is not opened, they will take the position they think they deserve without leaving anyone to their pleasure.

Suppose the “logical marriage” between them goes like this. In that case, if Russia and China continue to be viewed in the “enemy” category by the West if the containment strategy does not give way to cooperation, I guess it may turn into a “Catholic marriage”.

***The new Cold War has started as of February 22, 2022.***

We saw that the response of the “West” (formerly seen as the USA, NATO, EU, OECD, and Japan) to the fait accompli and realpolitik moves of these two powers is relatively weak and far from being a deterrent. Maybe they’re not strong enough. They rumble, but the result does not change.

Restriction on five Russian banks, freezing the assets of three or five oligarchs, suspension of the certification of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, which may be opened in a few months, deployment of several thousand military personnel to the Baltic states, which are already NATO members and will benefit from the provisions of Article 5’s “one for all, all for one” - these are measures far from deterring Putin.

Since

coming to power, Putin has been experiencing sanctions and repulsing them skillfully. As of December 2021, he had \$630 billion in foreign exchange reserves in his vault. Export income from weapons, oil, natural gas, coal, mine, metal, and nuclear gives comfort.

What's

more, China has said it's ready to help if Russia gets too stuck at the latest Vladimir Putin-Xi Jinping Beijing summit. NATO, OSCE, UN sanctions, and condemnations are not as valuable as the paper on them.

That's why

useless sanctions, calling for moderation and calmness, inviting the parties to the diplomatic table to comply with international law, and other classical diplomatic jargons do not make much sense. As Putin has passed the KGB bench since the age of 16, he takes and implements decisions based on sound intelligence in a Cold War mindset. He knows very well the weakness and strengths of the West and how far he can go. He is a master chess player.

Turkey is

at the center of the fire in this crisis, was in the previous ones, and will be in those that will erupt in the future. The entrance to the Black Sea is under Turkish control thanks to the Montreux Convention. There is an asymmetrical relationship with Moscow; the "win-win" proposition doesn't work. The Turkish trade deficit with Russia is heavy and favors Moscow. Interdependence is high on fossil fuel, food, weapons purchase, and nuclear. One out of every four foreign tourists comes from Russia (and Ukraine).

***Putin's leadership and the lack of leaders in the West play a role in Russia's success beyond its real economic, military, and diplomatic power.***

## President

Erdogan has repeatedly forced the gates of Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and Sochi, but Putin only came a few times when his interests required. He did not stop by Ankara during most of his official visits but met in Istanbul. Turks and Putin are not on the same line and frequency in Syria, Iraq, the Balkans, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. Despite this, it is admirable that the two leaders maintained good working relations and kept the channels of dialogue open.

## Russia will

continue its side-by-side approach, taking strength from the West's "appeasement" policy, both in Ukraine, in the former Soviet republics and satellite countries that it describes as its "backyard" or "near abroad" as well as in the Middle East, Africa, and the Far East. Here, Putin's leadership and the lack of leaders in the West play a role in Russia's success beyond its real economic, military, and diplomatic power.

## Turkey

urgently needs to increase the quality and agility of its foreign policy, security and intelligence management and demonstrate the reliability and weight required for being a trusted regional power. Putin can easily follow similar strategies for separatist movements within and around Turkey.

## Therefore,

without being excessively dependent on Russia, re-establishing relations with Russia on a realistic "win-win" basis, restoring the distorted balance with the West, and re-integrating the region's countries into the equation based on the balance of power. Turkey must defend and advance its well-defined security and economic interests consistently and resolutely with Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Middle East, Southeast Europe.

Otherwise, Putin's

Russia has the potential to hit us in the heart in unexpected ways and times as he will in other countries in Europe and Asia.

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**To cite this work:** Putin is not joking; he is not bluffing, are we?', *Panorama*,  
Online, 27 February 2022,  
<https://www.uikpanorama.com/blog/2022/02/27/putin-joking/>

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