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PUTINISM AS THE MAIN EXISTENTIAL THREAT TO RUSSIA'S EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE

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In the article the authors analyze the retrospective aspects of the origin of Putinism in Russia, the essence of Putinism and the dangers arising from it. The authors compare two variables – Putinism and Stalinism. The authors assess a hypothesis that Putinism is a weak attempt to reincarnate Stalinism, which is manifested in revisionism, territorial expansionism, clan rule, absence of the rule of law, persecution of opponents, etc. The authors argued, that "Putinism" brought the dead bodies of journalists, civil activists, politicians and ordinary citizens both in Russia and beyond its borders. At the same time "Putinism" has

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returned to Russian citizens the belief in a bright future and the great Russia of Soviet times. Those citizens don't matter that this bright future did not mean overcoming totalitarianism. Civility and defeated totalitarianism did not bother the majority of the population. They only needed a bright and, at the same time, rich future. These sentiments proved to be enough to create Putinism. In the paper authors stressed that, despite everything, the vast majority of Russian citizens, including Russian liberals, who are fighting against Putin's regime and for the establishment of liberal values, at the same time, are not completely free from imperialist consciousness. In the end, everyone comes to the same conclusion – the goal is "Great Russia". Indeed, they do not like the "means", but they support the "goal". Kasparov, one of the most decent people – "is going to protect Crimean Russians from the atrocities of the Ukrainian army". The authors bring to light the question of the responsibility of Russian citizens in the creation of Putinism and talks about the need to overcome imperialist consciousness on the part of Russian citizens, just as it happened in Germany after the overthrow of fascism.

Keywords: Putinism; existential threat; autocratic leader; occupation and annexation; human rights; Stalinism; imperialist mentality; totalitarian thinking

Джиджеїшвілі К., Хевцуріані А. Путінізм як головна екзистенційна загроза європейській перспективі Росії

У статті автори здійснюють ретроспективний аналіз основних аспектів зародження путінізму в Росії, намагаються визначити сутність путінізму та небезпеки, які з нього випливають. Автори порівнюють дві змінні – путінізм і сталінізм. Автори оцінюють гіпотезу про те, що путінізм є слабкою спробою реінкарнації сталінізму, яка проявляється в ревізйонізмі, територіальній експансії, клановому пануванні, відсутності верховенства права, переслідуванні опонентів тощо. Автори стверджують, що «путінізм» несе із собою смерті журналістів, громадських активістів, політиків і простих громадян як в Росії, так і за її межами. Водночас автори зазначають, що «путінізм» повернув певній частині російських громадян віру у світле майбутнє та велику Росію радянських часів. Водночас російське громадянське суспільство не бачить проблеми в тому, що обіцяне світле майбутнє не означає подолання залишків тоталітаризму. Цивілізованість і переможений тоталітаризм не турбували більшість російського населення. Йому було потрібне лише світле і, водночас, багате майбутнє. Цих настроїв виявилось достатньо для створення путінізму. Автори роботи підкреслюють, що, незважаючи ні на що, переважна більшість російських громадян, у тому числі російські ліберали, які борються проти режиму Путіна і за утвердження ліберальних цінностей, водночас не повністю вільні від імперіалістичної свідомості. Зрештою всі приходять до одного висновку – мета – «Велика Росія». Дійсно, їм не подобаються «засоби» поточної влади, але їх цілком влаштовує «мета». Наприклад, Каспаров, один із найпорядніших людей сучасної російської опозиції – «збирається захищати кримських росіян від звірств української армії». Автори висвітлюють питання про відповідальність російських громадян у створенні путінізму та говорять про необхідність подолання імперіалістичної свідомості російських громадян, як це сталося в Німеччині після повалення фашизму.

Ключові слова: путінізм; екзистенційна загроза; самодержавний лідер; окупація та анексія; права людини; сталінізм; імперіалістична ментальність; тоталітарне мислення

The term "Putinism" appeared in the Russian press on January 11, 2000, when Vladimir Putin had just started to perform the duties of the head of the country. In an article published by Andrei Piontkovsky in the newspaper "Sovetskaya Rossiya", "Putinism" was defined as "the highest and final stage of thuggish capitalism ... when democratic freedoms and human rights are denied ... the nation is "consolidated" around the hatred of some ethnic group ... Freedom of speech is persecuted and the process of "brainwashing" of the masses is underway... Russia is isolated from the outside world and the process of economic degradation continues" [1].

After Piontkovsky, many researchers became interested in the phenomenon of "Putinism". However, "Putinism" in the broad sense appeared long before the beginning of Vladimir Putin's rule. The peculiarity of Russian history contributed to the formation of this phenomenon. Historically, Russia has always faced the dilemma of creating a successful system of government that would be suited to a strong autocratic leader. Once left without a strong hand, Russia always tended towards instability. The administration of the vast territory of this country was much easier under a strong leader, given its unguarded borders, shrinking population, and internal structure. That is why in the history of Russia, the era of prosperity always coincided with the arrival of a strong person as the head of the country. Moreover, in the history of this country not a single example can be found that without an authoritarian government, any significant, constructive transformation was carried out. We cannot remember any moment of visible achievements in the history of Russia if it is not connected with a specific authoritarian political leader: Alexander Nevel, Ivan the Terrible, Peter the First, Lenin, or Stalin. As soon as "weak" rulers appeared in this country, failure and troubles came with them.

People created historical legends about Ivan the Terrible, Peter the Great and other autocrats, just to glorify their personalities and confirm the goodness of a strong government. Historically, the people of this country have

always sided with the leader, whether it would be Alexander Nevelli or Joseph Stalin. Along with the people, the leaders always came against some middle class of society – boyars, nobility, officers, intelligentsia, etc. The leader in Russia always "passed" directly to the masses. The idea of no need (or less need) for intermediate structures of society was confirmed in people's consciousness. In this way, a rectilinear relationship was formed: leader-mass without an intermediate layer. This is the solid foundation of an authoritarian regime, although, as a rule, the process of changing power has always been characterized by great chaos, which is called "Smut" in Russia. This is confirmed by the two centuries of statistics of Russian history, during which 12 emperors of Russia were killed, and only 2 – Elizabeth and Alexander III died of natural causes. 1. Peter I has been poisoned; 2. Catherine I has been poisoned; 3. Peter II has been frozen; 4. Anna, the daughter of John, has been poisoned; 5. John VI has been imprisoned at the age of 1 (as a result of the coup d'état of Peter I's daughter Elizabeth) and after 25 years of imprisonment has been shot by the order of Catherine II; 6. Peter III has been strangled by the order of his wife Catherine II; 7. Catherine II has been killed with a spear in the palace; 8. Paul I has been strangled by conspirators, among whom was his successor Alexander I; 9. Alexander I has been lost during the journey; 10. Nicholas I disappeared without a trace (even his grave does not exist); 11. Alexander II has been blown up with a bomb by the "Narodovolets"; 12. Alexander III died of incessant alcoholism (that is, his natural death, as we have already mentioned); 13. Nicholas II has been shot with his whole family in the Urals by the order of Lenin and Sverdlov [2.47].

The same thing happened again in 1924, after the death of Lenin when in the power struggle, Joseph Stalin defeated all his rivals, led by Leon Trotsky, who has been killed after being expelled from the country. In 1953, after Stalin's death, Khrushchev and Lavrenti Beria opposed which ended with the death of the latter.

Over 10 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when Russia was in complete chaos – it lost its influence on the satellite countries of Eastern and Central Europe and the former Soviet republics, which created a kind of buffer around Russia when the bloody war raging in the North Caucasus threatened the final collapse of the Russian Empire, and inflation in the country reached 84%, Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin came as the head of the government of the Russian state. Putin, traditionally, like his political ancestors, has made a complete usurpation of power, where the president is everything, and state institutions are practically non-existent. The government of the Russian Federation is weak and powerless, and the parliament is a proxy. After Putin's second four-year presidential term expired in 2008, when he moved to the prime minister's seat, constitutional amendments were passed that changed the presidential term to six years instead of four, although the limit on serving two consecutive terms remained in place. In 2012, Putin was elected for a third term, and in 2018 – for a fourth term, after which the limit of being elected twice "in a row" expired, and again working on a new package of constitutional amendments has been begun, according to which the previous terms of Putin's presidency were simply "reduced to zero" and by 2024, Russians will elect Putin as if they have never chosen him before. In this way, Vladimir Vladimirovich extended his power until 2036.

Nor is the existence of the "Silovik" (forces) clan, the main pillar of Putinism's power, out of the context of Russian history. The reins of political and financial power are in the hands of the "Silovics". Putin himself is a "silovik" and his espionage past is no secret to anyone. More than 20 main federal agencies of Russia are controlled by siloviki. They are former employees of the Federal Security Service, militia, army, national guard and other law enforcement agencies. Putin's coming to power is often called a "Chekist coup", which means that at the time Boris Yeltsin did not leave of his own free will, bringing Putin to power was a pre-planned operation, and the "Siloviks" created his public image, which ultimately ended in an internal coup and Putin's presidency.

The concentration of power in the hands of one person and the formation of the cult of Putin returned the feeling of "pride" and "dignity" to a part of Russian citizens, making them feel that the Kremlin is still strong and that the Soviet Union can exist in some other form. At a certain stage, Putin's rule had economic successes, which strengthened this feeling even more. "Pride" and "dignity", in addition to the Russian citizen, were also regained by the Russian state as well. It was able to occupy the territories of neighbouring countries, recognize some of them as independent states, declare some of them as its own land, and only establish effective control over several of them. The bureaucratic machine of the state and the media under the control of the Kremlin tried to present Putin as a "national hero" who was able to "put Russia on its feet" and "return its dignity" after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Attempts to glorify him sometimes go so far as to present the state and Putin as equivalent concepts.

According to many researchers, in the 21st century "Putinism" is a term with the same meaning as "Stalinism" was in the 20th century. "Putinism" is largely nourished by its nostalgia and strives for its reincarnation. This manifests itself in revisionism, territorial expansionism, clan rule, absence of the legal state, persecution of opponents, etc. In foreign policy, "Putinism" actively romanticizes the Soviet past. In the prism of Putinism, the Soviet Union was the strongest superpower that created a balance in the bipolar world and represented a worthy opponent for the West, and primarily for the United States of America. Today, Putin is trying to partially correct the "greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century", become an accountable power and create a new reality. Over the 22 years, a cult of personality similar to "Stalinism" was gradually formed, which separated Russia from the civilized world for a long time.

In the popular French weekly magazine "L'express" under the title – "Putinism – a kleptocracy of thugs who pretend to be civilized people" an interview with Princeton University (USA) professor Steven Kotkin is published, in which he compares Putin and Stalin and notes that Joseph Stalin belongs to the small group of despots who sow death, in which, apart from him, Adolf Hitler and Mao Zedong are included. Compared to them, Vladimir Putin is a less important figure. The intention to rebuild the Soviet Union is beyond his capabilities. Perhaps in Russia's "pantheon of great men"

he wanted to occupy a place between Joseph Stalin, Alexander the First and Peter the Great. Peter the Great defeated the Swedish king Karl XII and obtained for Russia the "window to Europe" (exit to Europe through the Baltic Sea) and turned the empire into the arbiter of European affairs; Alexander I defeated Napoleon Bonaparte and occupied Paris; Joseph Stalin won over Reichsführer Adolf Hitler and occupied Berlin. And Vladimir Putin will remain only the person who invaded Ukraine and unsuccessfully tried to occupy Kyiv, killed many civilians, destroyed many historical monuments and symbols of Slavic culture, which at the same time are symbols of Russian culture as well.

Vladimir Putin will be remembered for generations as a ruler who wanted Ukraine back under Russian influence, but instead helped consolidate the Ukrainian nation and push them westward; The Russian president will be remembered as the leader who wanted to break up NATO, but in the end, he strengthened the ranks of NATO and revived the alliance in a way that has not been seen since the rule of Joseph Stalin; Vladimir Putin will enter the history books as a leader who, by his actions, but at the same time against his will, questioned the stability of the Russian state. Sure, he can present himself as a winner, but his mistakes will remain as mistakes, and he will always have a reputation as a killer [3].

In the era of Putin, although the power of the state has returned, the average Russian citizen has not received much, not even the minimum standard of welfare – like the level of social guarantees and well-being that existed in the Soviet era. He accepted only Soviet Union-like governance, violent state, clans, usurpation of power, censorship, and the absence of human rights, persecution of opponents – Boris Nemtsov, the most active critic of the Kremlin, was killed by the Kremlin walls on February 27, 2015; Alexei Navalny is still serving his sentence on absurd charges; Various organizations are given the status of "foreign agents" and their activities are prohibited; Ex-agents who fled the country (Litvinenko, Skripals) are persecuted, poisoned and killed. Russian media is almost completely usurped. Russia is considered one of the most dangerous countries in the world for journalistic activity. In the first year of coming to power, 19 journalists were killed in Russia, in total, under Putin's rule – their number is counted in the hundreds. One of the most high-profile cases was the murder of Anna Politkovskaya on October 7, 2006. Significantly, not only weapons are used to kill journalists, but also different types of poison.

Ultimately, "Putinism" brought the dead bodies of journalists, civil activists, politicians and ordinary citizens both in Russia and beyond its borders. But at the same time, "Putinism" has returned Russian citizens the belief in a bright future and the great Russia of Soviet times. It is okay that this bright future did not mean overcoming totalitarianism. Civility and defeated totalitarianism did not bother the majority of the population. They only needed a bright and, at the same time, rich future. These sentiments proved to be enough to create Putinism. Today, Putinism is the only choice of Russian citizens, which is clearly seen in the assessment of the speaker of the State Duma, Vyacheslav Volodin: "Today, when we look at the challenges and threats that the world is facing, oil and gas are not our preference. As we have seen, the prices of both of them, oil and gas, could fall. Our priority is Mr Putin and we are obliged to protect him." [1].

Unfortunately, the consciousness of the Russian statistician person has not changed even in the 21st century.

In May 2022, "Levadi Center" conducted a study to measure the "temperature of society" in Russia. Here is an extract from the report: "Compared to last year, the number of respondents who notice fatigue, confusion, loneliness, shame, fear and despair in themselves and other fellow citizens has decreased sharply. Thus, the number of those who developed hope, self-confidence and pride, increased dramatically. In particular, 36% of Russian citizens are proud of their people (last year – 17%), and 13% feel resentment (last year – 23%) [4].

Based on this, we can conclude that a significant part of Russian citizens like war, at least it seems to satisfy them, and such brutality as happened in Bucha does not prevent them from "feeling proud of their people".

In our opinion, it is very important to understand that, despite everything, the vast majority of Russian citizens, including Russian liberals, who are fighting against Putin's regime and for the establishment of liberal values, at the same time, are not completely free from imperialist consciousness. In the end, everyone comes to the same conclusion – the goal is "Great Russia". Indeed, they do not like the "means", but they support the "goal". Kasparov, one of the most decent people – "is going to protect Crimean Russians from the atrocities of the Ukrainian army"; Khodorkovsky says in an interview after leaving prison that he is fighting to enslave Chechnya; Novgorodsev goes to work on the Medvedchuk Canal; Latynina is going to build some "new Russia" in Ukraine. Journalist Luba Sobol quotes Navalny, "Crimea is not a sandwich that can be returned" [5]. We can cite many such examples from the history of Russian political thought.

Therefore, I believe that the main problem of Russia is its imperialism. The imperialist mentality is so deeply rooted in all levels of the Russian psyche that it will take decades for Russia to turn into a friendly power for its neighbours. Russian society must go through a long and difficult path of healing from imperialism, they must take responsibility for the creation, support and promotion of Putinism, to be able to enter the ranks of civilized nations, just as happened in the case of Germany. I completely agree with the assessment expressed in the letter written by Stepan Bandera, a Ukrainian freedom fighter in 1950, where if we replace the word "Bolshevism" with "Putinism", we get a psychological picture of modern Russia.

"This would not be possible, writes Bandera, – if the West had not accepted and propagated the illusion that the Russian people and Bolshevik (Putinist) imperialism are two different things, that the Russian people, are not its carriers, but are only victims, that the majority of the Russian people can be turned to the struggle against Bolshevism (Putinism) as an ally of the West...

There is only one Russia – imperialist, and it will be so until Russian imperialism (Putinism) is emptied, broken, and the Russian people are not cured of it with the awareness that its imperialism brings the most trouble to Russia, in the form of victims, suffering and decline. There is still a long way to go, now the Russian people are obsessed with imperialism like never before." [5] – 72 years have passed since these words were written, and we see that nothing has changed, it doesn't matter whether it is tsarism or Nep, Leninism or Stalinism, communism or Putinism – as long as the Russian people are carriers of the imperialist virus, they will always be its victims at the same time. We should never think that totalitarianism is a thing of the past and will never happen again. Russian totalitarianism, symbolized by Putinism, has not gone anywhere; When a person surrenders his freedom to someone else or gives up his freedom for the sake of comfort when there is no personal development and the formation of personal dignity, there will always be a chance of totalitarianism and the danger of the emergence of a new Putinism.

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ВПЛИВ ПАНДЕМІЇ НА СВІТОВИЙ ПОЛІТИЧНИЙ ПОРЯДОК ТА ОЦІНКА МОЖЛИВИХ НАСЛІДКІВ

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У статті обґрунтовано, що коронавірусна пандемія, що виникла майже 3 роки тому, суттєво змінила світовий політичний порядок в цілому та його складові, зокрема. Метою статті є визначення впливу пандемії на світовий політичний процес та прийняття відповідних політичних рішень щодо боротьби з цим явищем. Предметом дослідження є політичні заходи і окремі політичні аспекти, такі як політична репрезентація, обґрунтування прийнятих обмежувальних заходів, концентрація влади і опозиційні заяви, які стали невід'ємною частиною боротьби з поширенням коронавірусної інфекції. Зроблено аналіз політичних проблем і тенденцій, які спровокували різку зміну політичної спрямованості на регіональному і світовому рівні. Для досягнення мети використовується комплекс науково-дослідних методів, який дозволив виявити причинно-слідчі зв'язки та їх наслідки. Результати проведеного дослідження показують, що амбіції деяких політиків дозволяють порівнювати ефекти коронавірусної пандемії з наслідками Другої світової війни, що веде до спотвореного сприйняття політичних дій, концентрування влади і, як наслідок, придушення демократичних принципів, більшої довіри авторитарним режимам, що особливо наочно на прикладі ряду азіатських і пострадянських держав, таких як Китай, Азербайджан, Росія, Казахстан і т. д. Показано, що роль опозиції є однією з ключових в даному контексті, прикладом чого служать ситуації в Чехії та Італії, де акумулювання домінуючої політичної влади укупі з переважаючою медіальною репрезентацією привели до ряду непослідовних рішень, що коштували владі тисяч людських життів. Ці аспекти вказують на те, що за часів коронавірусної кризи держави просто не можуть дозволити собі ухилятися в політичну пропаганду, або ж приховувати свої наміри за популістськими гаслами. Висновки, зроблені в роботі, корелюють з результатом політичних дебатів між найбільш постраждалими від коронавіруса країнами. Очевидною стає необхідність захищати національні інтереси, не чекаючи можливої консолідації з боку зовнішніх стратегічних партнерів.

Ключові слова: коронавірус, пандемія, політика, політична опозиція, консолідація влади, авторитарний режим, демократія, обмежувальні заходи, політична репрезентація.