

## Primakov Clan's Trap for the West or a Little About Putin's Peace Roadmap

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In the last essay of the "[Putin's Russia](#)" series we have reviewed the assumptions that suggest that namely [Rogozin's clan was the main architect and executor behind the Ukraine's events](#). Therefore it would be natural to explore which Russian government clans are the most active in opposing the aggression towards Ukraine, and how they do it.

However, the events in Ukraine make us respond to the hottest issues. Moreover, these events, if seen from Putin's standpoint, will help better explain the system which we are addressing in this whole series of articles.

In addition to that, it can help reveal possible errors that the West might make simply led by the most noble aspirations of peace. This essay, so to speak, is about the wolves disguised as sheep or the influence of Yevgeny Primakov's (who is a former Russian Prime Minister, the head of Foreign Intelligence and Minister of foreign affairs) clan to Kremlin's foreign policy in general, and particularly the current "Putin's peace plan" in Ukraine.

### Eloquent look to the past

First of all, I will present some chronology that now, looking back, seems rather eloquent.

As if it was a sudden coincidence, on 26 August, before the start of negotiations between the Russian and Ukrainian presidents Vladimir Putin and Petro Poroshenko, Russian newspaper "Komersant" and the website of one very

influential American foreign policy magazine, "The Atlantic", announced a 24-point Ukraine's peace plan. This plan has allegedly been developed by the American and Russian experts who met in Finland's Boisto island. By the way, it was immediately announced that the meeting was held June, but it was not explained why there has been no coverage about it until now.

On the same day, based on the information from the representative of Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the global news agency "Associated Press" announced that the secret negotiation between the US and Russia about Ukraine was held in Finland in June. It is obvious that all the sources mean the same meeting, but Finland's representative seemingly deliberately referred to it as the secret negotiation of US and Russia instead of just calling it some sort of an expert meeting.

Later on, this announcement published by the Associated Press was confirmed by the Finnish Minister of foreign affairs Erkki Tuomioja. He did not reveal who exactly participated in the negotiations, but stated that "the Ministry of Foreign Affairs helped organize the meeting at the request of the US and Russia." President's Sauli Niinistö's representative said that the president did not participate in the Russian-

American talks, but did not deny that the meeting has happened.

Officially calling this alleged expert meeting the "secret US-Russia negotiation" or at least a

meeting that has been organized by the Foreign Ministry “at the request of US and Russian parties” leaves plenty of room for consideration. Thus we need to go further back to the past.

It was officially announced that on June 9 Russia's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov paid a visit to Finland where he not only met with Finnish colleague Tuomioja but also the President Niinisto. It would simply be naive to think that in the face of Ukraine crisis they only discussed bilateral issues between Finland and Russia. The sources in Russia are very specific - they say that Lavrov and Finnish leaders discussed the venue and format of the US-Russian summit.

There are no publications on when exactly the meeting took place in Boisto island. However, it can be assumed that it could have taken place between June 9 and June 20 when Ukraine's president Petro Poroshenko first announced a peace plan and truce. I would venture to say that the whole logic of events indicates that negotiations in Boisto were not held behind Poroshenko's back - Ukraine was at least informed about it.

At the exact same time Russia seemingly intentionally demonstrated “a proof of good will” - on June 25 it suddenly canceled Putin's permission to use country's armed forces in Ukraine that was approved by the Federation Council on March 1. The explanation for this withdrawal was based on “the national interests of Russia.” Meanwhile on July 5 (so after the collapse of the truce and Girkin's forced escape from Slavyansk) Konstantin Dolgov, the official spokesman of Russia's ministry of foreign affairs, claimed that the “military conflict phase in Ukraine will end within a few weeks.”

Looking from the current perspective, the fact that separatists did not respect the truce and basically ruined them by refusing to participate in any talks can be explained by the fact that they were supervised by the envoys of Rogozin's clan - Igor Girkin and Alexander

Borodai, who were led not by the ideas of peace but more of Russia's direct intervention.

Truth be told, it should be acknowledged that at the time the talks between Putin and Poroshenko did not progress from death point. As it appears now, Poroshenko's plan was nowhere near to complying with the proposals of the Boisto's group or the demands from Russia's side. Lavrov even called this plan “more of an ultimatum”, and the initiative failed.

However, specifically after the failure of the negotiations the aforementioned successful attack from Ukrainian forces has commenced, hence giving the terrorists a hard time. Although the weapons and mercenaries from Russia to Ukraine were transported through the unprotected border (Putin did not oppose that), direct intervention never happened, though Rogozin's clan openly campaigned for it.

On the contrary - the Girkin's discredit campaign has started, and it was especially difficult to explain by traditional Russian analysis methods. There are enough assumptions that suggest that Sergey Kurginyan, who is a political scientist close to Kremlin and has become the face of this campaign, acted according to the orders of Igor Sechin, leader of one of the most influential clans. But let's expand on that in the upcoming articles.

Focusing on the role of Primakov's clan, there is one important fact that seemingly opposes the logic of Russia's military plans. There have also been rumours (especially after the terrible crash of Malaysian airplane) that Kremlin was determined to eradicate all terrorist leaders. They were ostensibly no longer instrumental for Moscow. Therefore there have been hopes that the military completion of anti-terrorist operation was just around the corner. However, it was not only Rogozin's clan that could not let Ukraine end the conflict without any visible benefit to Russia.

### After the tragedy - diplomatic activity

At the end of July, after the Malaysian plane shoot-down over Donbass, the US organised a traditional annual Aspen Security Forum in Colorado. The whole US foreign policy elite participated in the event including political heavyweights such as the former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Condoleezza Rice, the former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, various other former and current representatives of the US administration and the most influential foreign policy experts.

Aspen discussion witnessed a wide spectrum of opinions on how to deal with Russia, but some sources state that behind the scenes the Boisto group's plan was brought up again despite the fact that even now, at least formally, it is not supported by Obama's administration and the majority of US foreign policy elite.

However, at the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, Finland (Boisto group's facilitator) took a sudden initiative. Initially the country stood for stronger opposition to sanctions against Russia, but after the Malaysian passenger plane tragedy Finland changed its mind, and agreed that it was crucial to take action. But when Russia announced the retaliatory sanctions, Finland started a buzz around the negative impact they will have on countries economy, and president Tuomioja announced that the sanctions to Russia will be "gradually canceled".

On August 15, when the whole world was discussing the threats of the alleged Russian humanitarian convoy, Niinisto arrived to Sochi. He met with Putin and publicly opened up about the need to address the crisis in Ukraine. Immediately after that Niinisto went to Kiev to meet with the Ukrainian president Poroshenko. On September 19 Poroshenko announced the negotiations with Putin (that were planned in Minsk after one week) and his new peace plan.

Immediately after that Russia showed an unexpected sign of good will to Finland - made

a few exceptions in the retaliatory sanctions that included lactose-free milk and milk products for allergy sufferers. Experts immediately noted that this exception was made for one particular company - the Finnish giant "Valio", which has the lion's share of the country's food export to Russia. Ostensibly this exception would allow the company to renew at least 10 percent of its export to Russia.

By the way, in terms of the clan battles in Russian government and the fact that Putin and the top leadership are not necessarily always the ones who make all the decisions, it is worth noting that "Valio's" export (which has been renewed in August) suddenly began to experience difficulties on Russian border, at least temporarily. Allegedly some documents were missing. Although Putin had no apparent reason to complain about Finland's behavior.

But let's get back to the peace talks. Since mid-August, there have been signs from Russia's side that it may be ready for a peaceful solution, so the negotiations in Minsk seemed very promising in the international arena.

Anders Aslund, the famous Swedish expert on Russian and Ukrainian affairs, publicly stated that Putin will be willing to negotiate the truce in Minsk. As an argument for that he named the elimination of Girkin, Borodai and one other terrorist warlord - Igor Bezler.

### Forced to accept Russia's terms?

However, on August 24, not Russian mercenaries but the regular heavily-armed soldiers invaded Ukraine and started to push Ukrainian troops from their occupied territories in Donetsk and Lugansk.

What is that? A sign that Russia can only be understood by reading the famous book "1984" written by George Orwell, as commented by Timothy Snyder, a famous American expert on Eastern European affairs? Or maybe yet another proof of Putin's insincerity?

I believe that this was a deliberate and consistent policy that the Russians describe using the term “prinuzhdienyjie k miru”. There is no direct translation to other languages but it basically means “partner coercion to agree to the imposed conditions of peace talks”.

And most importantly, this scenario of limited invasion of regular army units was acceptable to all clans. To the agents of war it was acceptable because of the impact on Ukraine's forces and their desire that Russian troops finish the occupation of at least the Eastern part of Ukraine. For the architects of peace talks it was acceptable because this limited invasion actually increased Ukraine's and the West's determination to be more flexible if instead of further military escalation of the conflict the truce was proposed.

Knowing that even after the Russian invasion things went in the direction of peace instead of war (diplomatic efforts to achieve peace did not stop even when Poroshenko and Putin failed to reach an agreement in Minsk), it can be assumed that the aforementioned "prinuzhdienyjie k miru" scenario was the actual one.

Although on August 29 Putin allegedly said to Jose Manuel Barroso (the president of European Commission) that he could “occupy Kiev within two weeks” if he wanted, on September 1 the contact group held another meeting in Minsk during which the separatists announced what conditions were necessary for them to agree to leave Donbass to Ukraine.

As a matter of fact, Alexander Zakharchenko, the new Prime Minister of the so-called People's Republic of Donetsk, denied that separatists could be willing to refuse the idea of separation from Ukraine. However, on September 3 Poroshenko called Putin again. After the conversation he announced that the truce agreement was reached. Shortly after that Putin addressed the Donbass separatists to ceasefire and announced his 7-point peace plan. On

September 5 the official truce agreement was signed in Minsk although some separatists stated again that it does not mean that they completely refuse the idea of separating from Ukraine.

### **Who does Putin listen to?**

Such a long story of all the efforts paid to hold the negotiations which, at first glance, is not related to Russia's government clans, is necessary to illustrate that Russia, which was actively fighting in Donbass (with efforts from Rogozin's, Chemezov's and Ivanov's clans), basically never rejected the idea of truce and diplomatic solution, and actively aimed for it. Because other government clans were also pursuing that - even the big part of those who not only supported Crimea's annexation but directly contributed to it. Clans' balance turned the other way after the Crimea.

It can explain why back in May, after the behind-the-scenes negotiations with the West, Putin encouraged Donbass separatists not to hold a referendum on the separation, and later did not recognize its results, unlike in the Crimean case. In addition to that we can go further back into the past and remember that immediately after Lavrov's and John Kerry's (US Secretary of State) negotiations in London on March 14 (so before the referendum in Crimea) Russia announced its peace roadmap.

This plan from March can be divided into several main points that are still visible in both Boisto group's proposals and separatists' conditions on leaving Donbass to Ukraine that were presented in Minsk. Among them were the following conditions: making Russian language the second official language, Ukraine's neutrality liabilities (in other words - not joining NATO), country's federalization (or in the current case - a wide autonomy of Donbass) that would provide regions to independently develop economic ties with Russia, even if Ukraine signed a free trade and Association agreements with the European Union. Moreover, there shall

be some negotiations on Crimea's status, more specifically - validation of Russian annexation.

It would be fairest to call this a plan of Primakov, not Putin who does not interfere (at least not actively) Rogozin's clan and its allies to seek completely opposite goals.

Primakov himself, who turns 85 years in October, currently does not hold any official positions in government. In February 2011 he resigned from a very influential position of the President of Russian Chamber of Commerce and now is "merely" a chairman of the board at the military-civilian concern RTI and the study research centre manager (which he established himself) at the Russian Academy of Sciences. However, as we noted in the first essay of "Putin's Russia" series, the official positions in Russia do not necessary reflect the real power and influence.

For instance, Primakov's influence can be perfectly illustrated by the fact that he was chosen to present in detail the decision to cancel the permission for Putin to use armed forces in Ukraine on TV channel "Rosija 24".

Primakov basically announced a few things: further escalation of the conflict is not only unnecessary to Russia but also harmful for a couple of reasons. First of all, it would seemingly destroy the relationship with the West, and Russia is not ready for that. Also because the state is standing behind in terms of technology. Secondly, in a strategic sense it would be beneficial for Russia if US and Europe distanced from each other, and the events in Donbass result in quite the opposite - these Western allies are closer than ever. To add more, Primakov strongly criticized Russian media that uses propaganda (Primakov used this exact term!) and acts as if it was preparing the country for war, while the war is the last thing this country needs. The permission to use armed forces in Ukraine was purportedly authorised specifically for the Crimean situation.

These words of Primakov were one of the hottest topics in Russia for a few upcoming days.

### Who is a real author of the peace plan?

But let's get back to the so-called Boisto's group and its peace plan who basically led to the second try of truce and peace talks in Ukraine. By the way, some of the Ukraine's Parliament members directly linked Putin's peace plan (that was announced in September) to Boisto group's plan.

To start with, it is important to understand who were these Russian experts and political scientists who coordinated this plan together with American colleagues. One of two chairmen of the group (it was managed by one American and one Russian) was Alexander Dynkin, the director of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO). There are plenty of reasons to consider IMEMO one of the influence structures of Primakov and his clan, but Dynkin was Primakov's advisor back then when he lead Russian government. He was then seen as a very close figure to Primakov's environment.

In the group you will also find Vyacheslav Trubnikov, the former Director of Russian Foreign Intelligence Service and currently the First Deputy of Foreign Minister of Russia. Primakov first promoted his companion Trubnikov to be his deputy in Russian Foreign Intelligence Service where Primakov held the Director's position, and when he resigned - Trubnikov became his successor. Another member of the group is Alexey Arbatov. He is also close to Primakov's environment and is the son of Georgy Arbatov who was Primakov's companion and friend back in Soviet Union days.

IMEMO is represented by yet another two members of Boisto's group - Fyodor Voitlovsky and Andrey Ryabov. Another member of the group is Artion Malgin, vice-rector at Moscow Institute of International

Relations and a member of Russian Council of International Affairs - yet another structure close to Primakov.

The seventh member of this group from Russia's side is Victor Kremenyuk, director at the Moscow's Institute of U.S. & Canadian Studies. Back in 2007 he became a member of the group "Russia-US. A look into the future" which was established by Primakov and Henry Kissinger, a patriarch of American foreign policy. By the way, in terms of Russian government clans, it is interesting that namely Kremenyuk, not Sergey Rogov, (who is the director at the Institute of US and Canada) is the one working with Primakov.

All this information confirms the spreading claims in Russia that Primakov is the one hiding behind the curtain of Boisto's group. It is him who, although not directly involved in the talks, exploits the old relationship not only with Kissinger but with other member of the group "Russia-US. A look into the future" in US (one of them is Thomas Graham, the chairman of Boisto's group from US's side). In order to make this plan work and reach what has been openly said at the TV channel "Rosija 24" and later in his essay in a newspaper "Rosiskaja Gazeta", the former Russian prime Minister skillfully exploits all his connections and influence both in Russia and in the international arena.

### **Primakov and the "reset" policy**

Truth is, no one should be fooled by the apparent peacefulness of Primakov, his willingness to cooperate with the United States and other major countries of the Western world, and even a public acknowledgment that destroying the relationship with the West would be inexpedient to Russia also in terms of technological backwardness.

It can be argued that Primakov or at least his clan largely controls Russian foreign policy. Lavrov, the current minister of Foreign Affairs, is a member of Primakov's clan and the one

who published the aforementioned Russia's peace roadmap on March 14 as well as preparing the ground for negotiations of Boisto group in Finland. Igor Ivanov, Lavrov's predecessor, is also linked to Primakov's clan and even his personal environment. He took over the leadership of state's diplomacy from Primakov himself.

So Primakov and his clan have been shaping Russian foreign policy at least since 1996, when Andrey Kozyrev, who sincerely advocated the genuine partnership with the West, resigned from his post. This influence was determined not only by the posts of Minister of Foreign Affairs but various other structures and the power of Primakov's clan itself.

How should Russian Foreign Policy towards US be seen after the resignation of Kozyrev? I would dare to say that the answer is unambiguous - since that time the talks about any cooperation rather than confrontation with the West have remained only talks.

However, it is worth to separately discuss, for example, the situation since 2007, when Primakov and Kissinger established the above-mentioned group "Russia - USA. A look into the future". From the very beginning the group significantly contributed to forming the agenda of the US-Russia bilateral relations. However, it did not prevent Russian aggression in Georgia in 2008.

What is more, this group largely contributed to the implementation of the so-called "Restart Policy" after the war in Georgia. The creation of the All-party Commission for US policy towards Russia was announced on August 1, 2008, a few days before the start of Georgian war. A few direct member of the group "Russia-US. A look into the future" became members of the Commission. And Kissinger, inspired by relations with Primakov, formed the Commission using the forces of the promoters of the Nixon centre (currently the Centre for the National Interest), where he was and still is the honorary chairman, and other advocates of the

so-called “realist” school of thought (as opposed to the “idealist” school of thought).

Despite the war in Georgia in March 2009, the commission published a report “The Right Direction for U.S. Policy towards Russia” that has become the ideological basis for the “Reset Policy”. Primakov and Kissinger from the aforementioned group “Russia-US. A look into the future” helped popularize this policy in Moscow. The confidence in successful cooperation was also boosted by the hopes that the new Russian President Dmitry Medvedev will lead the country to the direction of democracy and collaboration with the West. In the first essay of this series we discussed the reasons why, from the perspective of Russian government clans, it is a fundamental mistake.

### **Collaboration or influence?**

After two years it became clear that the hopes of the supporters of Russian engagement strategy failed. At the end of Medvedev’s term there have been lots of open talks about the failure of the “Reset policy” and public discussions on the necessity to abandon this policy.

But well before that Primakov and his comrades had already created yet another structure called Euro-Atlantic Security Initiative both in Russia and in the other parts of the world. Truth be told, the former Prime Minister is not among the participants of the forum that was formally created in December 2009 by the initiative of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. However, the project’s chairman from Russian side was the above-mentioned clan member Ivanov (the former Minister of Foreign Affairs). The main participants from Russian side were Dynkin, Trubnikov and one other person from Primakov’s environment - Vladimir Lukin who is Russian President’s authorized representative for human rights.

By the way, Lukin’s name in this respect is important because in 2007 he founded Russian-American Round Table of democracy and human rights issues together with Jessica

Mathews who was the official author of the idea of the Euro-Atlantic Security Initiative and the president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Meanwhile, various people became participants of the Euro-Atlantic Security Initiative. Not only the architects of the US “Reset Policy” (that was initiated by Kissinger and Primakov) - former US Senator Sam Nunn, the country’s retired general Charles G. Boyd, but many Europeans as well - the former German defense Minister Volker Ruhe, the country’s former deputy foreign minister, current head of the Munich security Conference Wolfgang Ischinger, the former British Minister of Defence Desmond Brown, former Turkish Minister of foreign affairs Hikmet Cetin, and lots of other former high-ranking European politicians and diplomats (in the context of Boisto group we should note Finnish diplomat Rene Nyberg ) as well as industry representatives.

The interesting thing is that, for example, one particular participant in the Euro-Atlantic Security Initiative - Olexander Chaly, who is the former Ukrainian deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, published his peace plan in the website of the Russian International Affairs Council’s (that is related to Primakov) journal “Rosija v globalnoj politiki”. The plan in many ways resembled Lavrov’s peace plan that was published on March 14 after the meeting with US Secretary of State John Kerry.

Meanwhile, in May this year, after the intensive international behind-the-scenes negotiations and finally reaching public Putin’s disapproval of Donetsk’s referendums and not recognizing their results, another participant in the project - Ischinger - was appointed the OSCE’s mediator of the negotiations between Ukraine’s government and Donbass’s separatists. However, he resigned from the position without reaching any tangible results. Nevertheless, diplomatic sources state that Ischinger has also worked behind the scenes of the Boisto group’s

negotiations, despite the fact that he is neither Russian, nor American.

In the meantime, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, that was the initiator of the Euro-Atlantic Security Initiative, became one of the main partners of Boisto's group from US's side.

All these connections and created structures of Primakov (who has been controlling Russian foreign policy for many years) and his clan are listed here not to spread conspiracy theories about the allegedly existing Munich's or Yalta's agreements. But one thing is obvious - the "Russian engagement strategy" that is prevailing in the West has led to various initiatives of strengthening collaboration and security with people from the same environment in Russia.

Many of them to this day are considered successful (maybe except for "Reset Policy"). But it in no way prevented the Georgian war, Crimean annexation or the further Russian aggression in Donbass

In this case it is not important whether Primakov's clan was always directly involved into destroying Europe's security that was being created by the said initiatives. More important is that these initiatives failed, while Primakov's clan reach a significant part of its plans.

### **Is Primakov's doctrine forgotten?**

Primakov's ideological attitudes were not only familiar to the West but very well examined in 1997-2000 - before Putin came to power. I will only present the header of certain analysis which reflects (eloquently enough) how Primakov's foreign policy and his doctrine were seen back then. Thought never clearly described in one document, it was seemingly rather clear to the West.

"Primakov's Doctrine: Russia's zero-sum game with the United States" - the eloquent title was chosen by Ariel Cohen, a famous US analyst on

Russian affairs, for his analysis in December 1997. Primakov's Eurasian idea of confronting US was not a secret to anyone, though today the idea of Eurasia is usually linked to Dugin and his comrades, or Putin himself.

By the way, Primakov's ideas stretched far beyond those of Dugin. The Russian foreign minister (Primakov held the post at the time) suggested to form a union of Russia, China and India - only to overcome US's dominance in the world. The infamous Primakov's "turning the plane around over the Atlantic ocean when he was flying to US and decided to protest against the bombing of Yugoslavia" in 1999 also cannot be seen as an example of collaboration with the West.

Since the start of the Arab Spring Primakov explained that these are the revolutions organized by US and its secret service CIA. He repeated it many times about Yanuhovich's elimination and US's alleged conspiracy against Russia. In this respect, Primakov's rhetorics are not much different from that of Dugin or Rogozin. And we can go on and on with the obvious signs that clearly show Primakov's international attitudes.

But is it worth it? Especially knowing that the close cooperation of Primakov's clan with the US and Europe in terms of security policy did not prevent the war in Georgia or the aggression in Ukraine. Together with other clans Primakov agreed to the annexation of Crimea, and even publicly declared it. So what can be expected from the current Kissinger-Primakov peace plan in Ukraine, even if it will be implemented? New Russian aggression after a couple of years?

This foreign policy architect, who has enchanted many people in the West, will do everything it takes to "stop US's expansion" again when Russia is even stronger and collaboration with the West - no longer crucial. Wouldn't it appear that with current peace initiatives in Ukraine Russia simply lures the West into the trap instead of acting bluntly as the clans of Rogozin, Chemezov or Ivanov?