

## COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH AND CRIMEA CRISIS

### “2 dreams for one bed”

Sometimes during a crisis management process, there is a mistake made in good faith which can fail a robust strategy as certain as wind and sea would dismantle a cliff: a human penchant to see any situation as we would like it to be, and not as it actually is. History of conflicts is seasoned with examples which are now obvious and lessons learned allowed us to discover and to correct our misconceptions.

The current crisis in Crimea is no exception to the rule and while M. Putin is beefing up his statements, Western democracies' governments must keep in mind that if History is an eternal renewal, each new situation is far different from the old ones. Some obvious facts have to be precisely studied before considering a clear and peaceful future for Ukraine.

First obvious fact: Crimea is neither a part of Ukraine nor Russia; people who affirm that, are doing a historical and political mistake. No need to go back to the Greek or Genovese factories, the domination of Khans and Turks and the final annexation by Katrina 2<sup>nd</sup> of Russia to realize that Crimea has always been a land of disputes, even after becoming, at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> Century, a land of break for privilege few or white Russians under duress. When in 1954 Nikita Kroutchev gave the Crimea as a present to the Ukraine, his native country, he did not imagine the serious consequences for the future, thinking probably that USSR will be a thousand years Empire. Nowadays, Crimea looks like no other separatist provinces over the world, certainly not like Kosovo or South Ossetia. With a special status, its own constitution and its financial autonomy, Crimea symbolizes an exception, which the harbor of Sebastopol is another exception in, as the Mayor of the town is not elected but appointed by Kiev. Complex systems always generate complex crisis. Just keep in mind the subprime financial meandering...

Second obvious fact: Vladimir Putin will never give up Russian military facilities along the Black Sea. For him, this is a question of strategic and political survival. The continual extension of NATO members' countries, the creation of an artificial sovereign Kosovo or the periodic resurgence of Islamic threats along South border of Russia as well as the international community commitment against Syria and Iran give the President of Russia the feeling of a meticulous encirclement elaborated by the USA strategists and their Allies. The Arctic ices in the north and the great China in the east are completing a grim tale in which he could be the great loser. Even if Sebastopol harbor has lost a great part of strategic interest, if the Russian fleet moving is planned to Novorossiysk harbor, it is imperious to observe this crisis with a global view and not only a spyglass. Putin will never accept to lose face, especially for political and psychological reasons. For all that, has NATO got any interest in a Russian president political setback? Do US authorities want to see Russia and China coming closer, in a political or military point of view?

Third obvious fact, which is the natural conclusion of the previous ones: the situation in the Crimea will drastically change in the following months and nobody will be one-hundred percent happy with the new one. Vladimir Putin knows he has taken a huge risk by annexing Crimea like Katrina 2<sup>nd</sup>. Not at a military

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level, because no country or international organization will escalate the crisis by countering potential Russian troops movements, including the USA which are focalized today on the Persian area and the Pacific zone. Vladimir Putin knows that and as a poker player he is ready for an "all-in". But for a man who likes to be the hero, the political consequences could be tragic. From Tsar to Star, there is only a different order of letters! When confidence is the fundament of international agreements, what could be Russian Federation guarantees in future military or economic negotiations, if words mean nothing for him? For the moment, he has the initiative but for how long? Any pure military victory in Crimea, or in East Ukraine, will be a short-term success. And the bill will be difficult to pay for a country which economy is partially subordinated to oil and gas exportations.

Now, what is it possible to do for Ukraine, UE and USA to stop this terrible chain of events based on a geopolitical misunderstanding? For sure, Western foreign offices are brainstorming on different scenarios, on both sides of Atlantic Ocean. There are three preconditions of success: first, new Ukrainian authorities must avoid any direct clash with Russian troops or Russian supporters, wherever they are. And make sure that no maverick group or person will be tempted by an isolated and inconsiderate action that will set on fire the whole country. We can imagine how difficult it could be, to convince paramilitary groups not to move their ideological fight from Kiev to eastern towns. In the same time, new Ukrainian authorities must reassure Russian supporters that no exactions will be performed against them, to take the main argument away from Putin. Finally, new Ukrainian authorities have to think about what they are ready to negotiate with Russia, and what is not acceptable, keeping in mind all what has been said previously. What will be the solution, it must be accepted by those who are the most concerned: the inhabitants of Crimea. Let's talk frankly: an independent Crimea won't change the face of the world, regarding the current situation, even if Putin's aggression has to be condemned to prevent any precedent. That is why he has to give some guarantees, concerning the eastern territories of Ukraine which must remain under Ukrainian sovereignty, the definitive renouncement of the former Ukrainian president and the possible future integration of Ukraine in UE. In that big game of poker, USA could initiate advantageous discussions about the Russian support to Syria and Iran, reassuring in the same time Putin that Ukraine won't become a member of NATO in the following years. Then, let History play its role and I have no doubt that the economic development of Ukraine will be soon observed by Crimean population with desire. European countries know perfectly that one people who want to live together can't be eternally separated.

Of course, the solution of an autonomous or independent Crimea will require a huge effort of communication from the new Ukrainian authorities as it could be interpreted as a victory for Putin. But it'll be a short-term victory because it will be a success for the international community too. And more than that, it will show the ability of the new Ukrainian authorities to solve a crisis situation at a low level. Who win a war, force the minds. Who win a peace, convince the hearts. A perfect example of comprehensive approach, in short...

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