

IGOR YURGENS

Chairman of the Management board of the Institute of Contemporary Development in Moscow

Virginie Robert, Foreign Desk Editor at *Les Échos*, Vice President of the European-American Press Club in Paris

Now, we are going to turn to Igor, who is Russian and he is going to talk to us about his view of the American elections but also the Russian election, because Putin should very soon announce that he is a candidate, which should not be a big surprise. How is it viewed from the inside, especially when a war is going on, people and soldiers are being killed, how does he present himself to the Russian people? Also, what is your take on the American elections?

Igor Yurgens, Chairman of the Management board of the Institute of Contemporary Development in Moscow

Thank you very much and thanks to Thierry de Montbrial because being a participant in the World Policy Conference since 2008 is worth an award. There is no suspense in the Russian election. If it takes place on March 2024, as explained, 80% of the population that votes will vote for Mr. Putin. This is the genesis of the system, its history and the geopolitical situation.

Virginie Robert

Does war not change that?

Igor Yurgens

Having said that, you have to believe me that sociology shows that first, young people are very tired of his face because Mr. Putin has been in power for the last 23 years and clearly some young people want a change. Second, even if something very unexpected happens and for example, Mr. Putin says he is not running, the same young people divide into two equal categories, one that wants someone stronger from the military as their leader and the other that is strongly against any military influence and with a desire for peaceful, civil development of the Russian Federation. Here you have a split even among the young category of voters, forgetting about the older ones who would vote 60% for someone with a military background as their leader. Both categories and both age groups would vote for more social justice and they talk about progressive income tax, which has been discussed for decades and there is still a flat 13% rate. They also talk about the oligarchs around the Kremlin and that they are running the country rather than the people, etc. Whoever wins, should take this into very serious consideration.

There was a very telling reply about the mutiny this summer of a certain Mr. Prigozhin, which you probably heard about. This was somebody very close to power, the owner of the private army that has fought in Syria, Ukraine, etc., and all of a sudden he rose up from Rostov-on-Don and went to Moscow and was stopped just 100 kilometers away. The response from both the young and the old was 50% support for what happened, which is very telling in terms of the general mood of those who are going to vote. Therefore, you have to take into

consideration the sense of social injustice, the need for change, at least among the younger part of the population, and despite that, a desire for a strong hand and preferably someone military leading us.

I will end this part by saying that 80% of those who vote will vote for Mr. Putin, which is how it is organized, but there is also genuine support for the figure who is currently leading the country. There are very strong and influential people around Putin who are visible on the political stage of our country, who ask why we need an election anyway. 80% is a given, the support is a given, we are fighting a war, so why bother, why attract the attention of the people. I would say that Putin will not buy this because he needs a referendum on what is going on, so he will probably need real, clean results from the different territories. Do not forget that Russia is a seventh of the world's land mass with a hundred nations and nationalities and it is very telling and interesting to know who reacts to what and how at the current stage of serious geopolitical conflict.

Virginie Robert

It is like an instant survey for him.

Igor Yurgens

It is a survey and a referendum for him and the people around him who run the country in his name or together with him.

Having said this, I should say that given the circumstances, about 30% of those who participated in the social survey did not know that we were having an election and did not care less. From this point of view, it is also very important to take into account this indifference for anybody who is doing the politicological management of the situation.

In view of this, the American election is of more hype than interest for the average Russian that it probably is for us. From this point of view, there is no question that the mainstream media is for Trump, regardless of whether they are advised to do that or that is their honest opinion. It is obvious from all the analysis of the mainstream media, I am not talking about Telegram channels and social media, but the mainstream definitely provides all kinds of support to Trump, while saying that Biden is old, falling on the tarmac, etc. The same thing would happen in the French election if it happened tomorrow, with the same kind of arguments in favor of Le Pen and against Macron. If Great Britain's decision on participating in the EU happened tomorrow, they would be for Farage and against anyone Eurocentric. That is obvious, that is the result of the geopolitical situation and no matter what, after March 24, if everything goes to the normal plan, very serious messages will be delivered to the Kremlin to take care of what is going on. From this point of view, of course, we are now the junior partner with the Chinese People's Republic and certain elements will be taken care of not only in Moscow but in Beijing too.

Virginie Robert

Are you saying there will be a big reshuffle of the political staff?

Igor Yurgens

We will see what happens and in terms of reshuffling, that is something they talk about all the time but we know that Mr. Putin is very loyal to his entourage. I do not think there will be a big reshuffle but there should be a serious change to the accents.

Virginie Robert



Thank you for this assessment.