

## **Crimea and Donbas reflect Putin's "All Victories - No Defeats" strategy, Mironov says**

### **Opinion**

Posted by:

Posted on : 2018/2/26 12:13:34

**About Putin's expanding use of mercenary military units, Maxim Mironov says. "If we want to have a strong and successful army, then the military must fight under the flag of their native country. And generals must take responsibility not only for victories but also for defeats. And the families of those who die in that cause must be taken care of."**

By Paul Goble for "Window on Eurasia": Like crony capitalists elsewhere, Vladimir Putin has promoted "the privatization of profit and the nationalization of losses," an approach that has played a larger role than falling oil prices or anything else in the continuing stagnation and degradation of the Russian economy, Maxim Mironov\* [pictured] says. But now the Kremlin leader has extended that idea to foreign policy, insisting that "all victories are ours" but that any defeats are things Moscow has nothing to do with and indeed knows nothing about, an approach that may give tactical advantages but that in the longer term leads to the degradation of the Russian military ([echo.msk.ru/blog/mmironov/2150560-echo/](http://echo.msk.ru/blog/mmironov/2150560-echo/)). Mironov, who teaches economics in Madrid, argues that Putin's application of a domestic model for foreign affairs was clearly in play during the beginning of the Russian moves in Ukraine. When no one resisted as in Crimea, he proclaimed victory and was celebrated for it; when Ukrainians did resist in the Donbas, he claimed Moscow wasn't involved. This approach has allowed Putin to avoid responsibility for the Donbas and the obvious Russian involvement in the shooting down of the Malaysian jetliner, the economist says; and the Kremlin leader is seeking to extend it to Syria, where all victories are ascribed "to the glory of Russian arms and the genius of Putin personally." But defeats in contrast "are either minimized or even recognized as such" as has been the case with the massive number of deaths of Russian mercenaries on the night of February 7-8. One can only imagine how Moscow media would have covered the events if the mercenaries had not lost but succeeded in seizing the oil processing facility. However, "the operation failed, and Russia by all possible means has tried to separate itself from this defeat: these are not our soldiers, we in general aren't aware of what occurred there, and so on and so forth." Many see this as a brilliant play by Putin, and at the tactical level, it may be, Mironov says. But just as in the economy where the Kremlin refused to recognize reality and instead after 2008 covered with tax money all the losses of its oligarch allies, this approach is leading to the degradation of the Russian armed forces and for the same reason. If Russia is to be successful, "every defeat should be analyzed. Generals responsible for them must be punished." If weapons don't work, they must be changed and so on. But that is possible only if those in positions of power are honest about what is happening and admit to both victories and defeats. "In Russia now," however, "the military take responsibility for victories," Mironov says; "but none of the military commanders, including the minister of defense take responsibility for defeats." The presence of mercenary units who do not fight under the Russian flag make that even easier. Everyone responded with hysteria when Russian athletes were compelled to appear at the Olympic under a flag other than

Russia's, but they have not recognized that "our military already for many years has been fighting without any flag. The state has intentionally sent them into battle as "nothing," ready to disown them if they do not succeed. This is extremely destructive over the longer term, Mironov says. "If we want to have a strong and successful army, then the military must fight under the flag of their native country. And generals must take responsibility not only for victories but also for defeats." And the families of those who die in that cause must be taken care of. Otherwise, the economist says, what Russia will have is "not an army but a band of people with guns from whom you never know what to expect."

###

The commentary above is from Paul Goble's "Window on Eurasia" series and appears here with the author's permission. Contact Goble at: [paul.goble@gmail.com](mailto:paul.goble@gmail.com) \* Maxim Mironov, Professor of Finance, IE Business School, Madrid 12, 4 izda Madrid 28006, Spain  
maximmironov.xyz Phone: (34) 91-782-1716