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The West continues to put pressure on Ukraine

By Alexander Arfaoui

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Yesterday it was announced that Russia has given Ukraine a discount of almost a third on Russian gas and said it would buy billions of dollars' worth of Ukrainian government bonds. The cost of Russian gas supplied to Ukraine has been slashed from more than \$400 (£245; 291 euros) per 1,000 cubic metres to \$268.5. President Vladimir Putin said the assistance was not "tied to any conditions". This is likely to seal a closer partnership between Russia and Ukraine, completely dismantling European Union's plans to pull Ukraine away from Russian influence. This news is likely to bring more condemnation from the West and USA. From the very beginning they have been accusing Russia of blackmailing and using unfair means to prevent Ukraine from signing an Association Agreement with the EU. While it is correct to state that

Russia did indeed put pressure on Ukraine to re-think its move towards Europe, nobody has been putting as much pressure on Ukraine as the West.

The level of Western involvement reached new heights when John McCain, the American senator, arrived in Kiev on Saturday to support the anti-government protesters. He told the crowd: "To all Ukraine, America stands with you." He went on to say: "The free world is with you, America is with you, I am with you. Ukraine will make Europe better and Europe will make Ukraine better." It would have been fascinating to see how America would have reacted if one of Russian State Duma deputies or Alexei Pushkov, the chairman of the State Duma Committee on Foreign Affairs, visited the US during the Occupy Movement protests a couple of years ago and encouraged the protestors to overthrow the American government. It is likely that the so-called international community would have once again criticised Russia and Putin for interfering with international issues and meddling in other nation's problems. And yet when McCain calls for the protestors to keep fighting against Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich, the world stays silent. Once again, the fact that America is currently the most powerful nation, has allowed it to engage in hypocritical and, frankly, unacceptable behaviour.

Europe has also been interfering in Ukrainian affairs without any guilt or shame. Since the start of the pro-EU protests against the Ukrainian government, former boxer Vitali Klitschko has emerged as one of the main challengers against Yanukovich, and the German Chancellor Angela Merkel has been backing (perhaps even financially) to overthrow Yanukovich and help Klitschko to become the new leader of Ukraine. Klitschko is the perfect man for Europe - he is desperate to forge closer ties with the EU and is happy to become another Western puppet. Klitschko attended a preliminary meeting of conservative European leaders in Vilnius about two weeks ago, spending long hours in conversation with key members of the European Parliament. While "regime change" may be too strong a term for what Europe is currently seeking in Ukraine, it is not too far off. This is how the West operates in countries that have not yet become their stooges - first they look to pull them in through economic actions, such as sanctions, loans, agreements, etc. If this fails, then the second stage is the overthrow of the government through Western backed "opposition", for example currently in Syria, US backed coup d'état in Iran in 1953, many Latin American countries and now Ukraine. If this step fails, the last resort for the West is military intervention, such as in Iraq in 2003 and Libya in 2011.

As much as the West will continue to claim that Russia are being bullies, who are not allowing Ukraine to join Europe, it is in fact the West that is looking to exert as much pressure as possible on Ukraine, by financing the opposition, blackmailing to put sanctions on Ukraine and sending individuals such as McCain to rally the crowd. It will be up to Russia to fight back against this another invasion from the West. Thus far, Russia has done an excellent job and the productive talks with Yanukovich seem to have brought Ukraine closer to its natural ally, Russia. However,

Europe and the US will not give up easily and this battle for Ukraine looks likely to heat up even more.