

Restoring Dialogue with the Kremlin? Donald Trump and Potential US-Russia Break Points

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The state of challenged Russia-West (especially US-Russia) relations is something questioned by Western realists and some alternative others. Donald Trump made it to the US presidency, despite saying some things that run counter to the biases against Russia, evident in the American political establishment.

Among these elites, Trump faces noticeable Democratic and Republican opposition towards his realist stated views on Russia. He has exhibited a will to do things his way. A US president has the power to keep a lid on aggressive tendencies. Two examples come to mind. During the Cuban missile crisis, John F. Kennedy opposed some of those under him, who favored a more confrontational approach. Barack Obama nixed some of the aggressive positions sought by individuals in his administration.

It remains to be seen whether Trump will continue to second guess the negative establishment views on Russia, or change course as he has done on some other issues. Trump's inner circle of political elites includes some individuals who've expressed negatively inaccurate comments about Russia. On the flip side, during his presidential campaign, he (in at least one instance) favorably spoke of involving folks with fresh foreign policy ideas, who the establishment has shunned. US public opinion might assist in influencing him to maintain a more upbeat impression of Russia. With good reasoning, Americans at large feel they've more pressing issues away from the subject of that country.

It's also true that many Americans have a negative view of Russia, on account of their not spending the time to study the fault lines, regarding the US mass media coverage which has influenced them. Trump seems to understand that dynamic - thus enabling him to successfully counterpunch. There's a part of him that can relate to the concerns of others. This aspect has been downplayed because of some of his provocatively stated views on other issues. (Human nature can include periodic contradictions.)

As it became clear that Hillary Clinton was on the verge of losing the election, the Democratic connected MSNBC host Chris Matthews negatively spoke of her going along with the neocon foreign policy line - a matter relating to where Trump has offered a valid alternative. The adventurist neocon foreign policy desire isn't easily applied in today's geopolitical reality of some powers (notably China and Russia) having considerable clout in their respective near abroad. The faulty neoliberal humanitarian intervention approach (supported by neocons) is much too hypocritically flawed to be taken seriously, when assessed with some realm of objectivity.

In adversarial relationships, the ice can be broken with situations that don't typically get much of the headline coverage - along the lines of taking baby steps that (if successful) lead to giant steps.

Since the Soviet breakup, the disputed former Soviet territories of Nagorno-Karabakh and Pridnestrovia (also known as Transnistria and closely related spellings) have been in a frozen status, short of achieving a mutually agreed settlement. In addition, following the 2008 war in the Caucasus (as well as beforehand), the disputed former Georgian SSR territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, remain far from being fully settled.

There's a definite practical basis for a Russia-West agreement in resolving these disputes and their respective peripheral issues.

In the former Moldavian SSR, the disputed territory of Pridnestrovia is (in majority terms) geared towards a pro-Russian direction. Fortunately, this multiethnic enclave (roughly even with ethnic Russians, Ukrainians and Moldovans), is relatively free of very bad ethnic relations. In the rest of the former Moldavian SSR, there's clear division on what's the best geopolitical route. Of late, the pro-Russian grouping in Moldova has the upper hand, but (perhaps) not enough dominance to easily pursue their preference.

Moldova is regarded as poor and challenged, with a presence of post-Soviet corruption - inclusive of some of those professing a pro-West course. It's frankly a waste of time to be harping on a Russia-West confrontation over the former Moldavian SSR. Of all the disputed former Soviet territories, Pridnestrovia looks to be the easiest to resolve.

My January 10, 2012 *Eurasia Review* article «[Pridnestrovia's Present and Future](#)», presents the basis for the option of a however termed confederation/federation of the former Moldavian SSR. A fully settled former Moldavian SSR can then serve to possibly pave the way to settle the more difficult territorial disputes.

The conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, involving Armenia and Azerbaijan has (over the years) experienced noticeable violence. At the same time, these two former Soviet republics have reasons to be on good terms with Russia and the West. There's a pragmatic thinking out of the box way to settle the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute. Refer to my April 15, 2016 *Strategic Culture Foundation* article «[Settling Nagorno-Karabakh and Reviewing the Peripheral Talking Points](#)» and its slightly expanded [Eurasia Review](#) version.

Georgia shows signs of seeking an improved relationship with Russia, while desiring closer ties with the West. In this spirit, is the possibility of a prolonged agree to disagree status quo, as well as some kind of an eventual settlement, concerning the statuses of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

Not to be overlooked are the differences of opinion concerning Kosovo and Crimea, with northern Cyprus as a reference. Practically speaking, Kosovo has been (like it or not) separated from Serbia. The same holds true of Crimea relative to Ukraine. It has been decades since Turkey enforced the «Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus». The neocon/neolib support for Kosovo's independence and lack of protest over Turkey's position in northern Cyprus underscores the gross hypocrisy in staunchly opposing Crimea's reunification with Russia. (A substantively prolonged debate on this matter will substantiate that observation.)

It's possible for Russia and the West to improve their relations, while not necessarily reaching complete agreement on all or any of the aforementioned disputed territories.

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