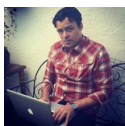


Trump shock victory: New Cold War no more?



Bryan MacDonald is an Irish journalist, who is based in Russia

Published time: 9 Nov, 2016 16:23



© Bria Webb / Reuters

Advocates of a New Cold War got a nasty surprise on Wednesday morning, when it became clear that Donald Trump would be America's next President. For the rest of us, it offers hope of US foreign policy changing for the better.

So, the unthinkable has happened. Donald Trump has won. And the so-called liberal world order, which has ruled almost unchallenged since the demise of the Soviet Union is probably toast.

There's been enough talk already about the repercussions for America itself. So, here we will stick to external affairs. But there's one important domestic proposal which greatly affects America's global position. In his victory speech, Trump made a major point of emphasizing his desire to invest heavily in America's decaying infrastructure. And there's only one feasible way to fund such a plan - sharply cut military spending and foreign aid.

Thus, instead of flinging billions of American tax dollars around the Middle East, Asia and Europe, in what always amounted to bribing nations - or at least their elites - into friendship, Trump intends to bring a good deal of the money home. By any measure, this will amount to a geopolitical earthquake.

Read more



‘Trump win another signal for US & European elites to change policies’

About Turn

Take Syria, for instance, where Washington has plowed huge resources into promoting a “*regime change*” operation against its internationally recognized government. A policy that has helped to destabilize yet another Arab country. In Trump’s [view](#), rather than challenging the government of Bashar Assad, the United States “*should be working with Damascus against the Islamic State.*” If he maintains this position, it will reverse years of wrongheaded thinking from his predecessor, Barack Obama.

And let's not forget Ukraine, which continues to be embroiled in a semi-frozen civil war. The dogs on the street in Kiev know the Petro Poroshenko regime has postponed efforts at building a sustainable peace for one simple reason: the Chocolate King and his advisers were fully sure of a Clinton victory, thus giving them free rein to resume their assault on the breakaway eastern republics of Lugansk and Donbas. Now this dream may lie in tatters.

Whereas Obama insisted upon a sanctions program against Russia for its re-absorption of Crimea, Trump has said he would consider recognizing Moscow's de-facto control of the peninsula. *"The people of Crimea, from what I've heard, would rather be with Russia than where they were,"* he [said](#) in July.

So, Kiev's only option now could be to implement Minsk. Yet, that requires legislation that Poroshenko feels he can't push through his parliament - such as granting semi-autonomy to the rebellious east and providing a pardon and amnesty to insurgents - which is jam-packed with radical nationalists. Furthermore, it's telling that Trump **refused** to meet Poroshenko in New York in September at the United Nations General Assembly. In fact, the president-elect didn't even acknowledge Kiev's invitation. However, Poroshenko did sit down with Clinton, which no longer amounts to a hill of beans.

A Cold Front

Then there's the Baltics. These countries have received an extraordinary deal over the past decade or more. What Washington has effectively said is this: *"We'll pay for your security, so long as you let us use you to annoy the Russians."*

What the NATO blanket has done for the Baltic elites is freed them from having to establish normal relations with Moscow and develop their own military; which of course requires both money and manpower in addition to political will and organization. Something they lack because they've failed to develop their economies to a sufficient level that the vast majority of their own youth would want to stay at home.

Trump may **send them** kicking and screaming into the real world. He's suggested how the United States would not automatically defend NATO members unless they pay their own way. *"You can't forget the bills,"* he **told** the New York Times. *"They have an obligation to make payments."* So far, only Estonia, the most relatively successful of three, shows any interest in doing that.

Moscow Times

And this brings us to Russia. Let's be clear here. Short of an actual shooting war, Moscow-Washington relations couldn't be much worse than they are right now. Both foreign policy establishments are distrustful of each other and it's clear that Obama and President Putin simply don't get along. So, Trump's talk of smoothing matters is truly ground breaking, assuming he follows through on it, of course.

On Wednesday morning, Putin said he looked forward to restoring normal bilateral relations with the United States. *"We heard [Trump's] campaign rhetoric while [he was] still a candidate for the US presidency, which was focused on restoring the relations between Russia and the United States,"* he said. *"[I look forward to] building a constructive dialog between Moscow and Washington, based on principles of equality, mutual respect and each other's positions, [when it] meets the interests of the peoples of our countries and of the entire international community."*

Read more



‘Not a button, but a real reset’: US needs major change in Russia relations, says ex-Pentagon chief

For his part, Trump has spoken of tearing up years of animosity toward Moscow in Washington and working more closely with the Kremlin. He's also suggested the two countries could work together on fighting terror. He also **described** NATO as "*obsolete*" and Putin **himself** as a "*leader*."

Naturally, this was used against him in the campaign, where Hillary's supporters, seemingly unable to fight him on policy, eventually resorted to a smear campaign which **labeled** him a "*Russian agent*," "*Putin's useful idiot*" and a "*Manchurian candidate*." There was even a **website** called "*Putin-Trump*," complete with a

hammer and sickle illustration in case anyone missed the point of the slander exercise.

This is all academic now because Trump has won. And the US establishment, and particularly the interventionist foreign policy bridge that did most to stoke up tension with Russia, has been dealt a crushing defeat.

Nevertheless, there are caveats. Firstly, the US has a deeply ingrained “*deep state*” and they won’t suddenly transform into Russia-loving peaceniks at the flick of a switch. It’s also worth remembering how a Republican-controlled congress mightn’t always do exactly what he wants, despite the party ties. After all, America’s founding fathers deliberately made executive power hard to apply.

And then there’s Trump’s own unpredictability. On the fringes of Sochi’s Valdai conference last week, Russian officials made it clear that they were concerned how he might not deliver on his promises. “*At least with Hillary we get the devil we*

know,” was a feeling expressed so often that it became a theme.

Despite these worries, Trump does offer one thing: the end of Washington insiders controlling the White House, for the first time since Ronald Reagan. In fact, the parallels with the latter are striking. He was also smeared by the establishment and derided as an idiot. But now Reagan is broadly regarded as a great statesman.

Maybe one day we will be able to say the same of Trump.

The statements, views and opinions expressed in this column are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of RT.