

Trump's Biggest Gift to Putin is New Eurasian Alliance of Authoritarian Regimes, Zharkov Says

Opinion

Posted by:

Posted on : 2017/12/7 0:15:17

"The incompetence of the individual now sitting in the White House is most clearly demonstrated on issues of international relations with the saddest consequences for all sides," he says. Trump has violated the careful, perhaps overly so, policies of his predecessor by "violating the most important practical principles" that must guide a US interested in international security.

By Paul Goble for "Window on Eurasia": Dec 3 - Many in Russia and the West expected Donald Trump to make a deal with Russia on issues like Ukraine and sanctions, but that view is the wrong one because it considers what the US president has been and is capable of doing in too narrow a framework, according to Moscow political analyst Vasily Zharkov. "The growing conflict of Russia and the West is the product in the first instance of the needs of Russian domestic politics which requires for the legitimization of the existing regime the presence of an external enemy and the threat of war," the commentator says (novayagazeta.ru/articles/2017/12/02/74776-kontury-novoy-holodnoy-voyny). But as has been "justly noted," Zharkov continues, "up until now, Moscow has been forced to play the game 'on its own side' of the net, defending domestic authoritarianism from a global democratic movement." That position was, it would seem, "doomed" from the outset. But now developments abroad have changed the nature of the game. These extremely "dangerous trends in world politics have given a priceless service to the Kremlin and other autocratic regimes by allowing them not simply to preserve the status quo but at the same time strengthen their own positions." Donald Trump has been the trigger of this change, but it in fact reflects a deeper crisis of Western liberal democracies. And it is already having the most negative consequences not only for them but for all "who would like to have an international order based on peace, freedom and stable development," the Moscow commentator says. When Trump was elected, many in Moscow celebrated because they expected he would quickly make a deal with Putin on Ukraine and sanctions; but such hopes were misplaced because "the American political system would not allow for this." Instead, what has happened, Zharkov argues, is something "much worse." "The incompetence of the individual now sitting in the White House is most clearly demonstrated on issues of international relations with the saddest consequences for all sides," he says. Trump has violated the careful, perhaps overly so, policies of his predecessor by "violating the most important practical principles" that must guide a US interested in international security. Many years ago, Zbigniew Brzezinski warned that no US government must put pressure on Russia, China and Iran at one and the same time because "such pressure can lead to a new continental alliance of autocracies." Despite all their differences, these three countries can come together if they feel a foreign threat. But what has Trump done? Zharkov asks. "He has restored the sanctions regime against Iran ... he has put the US on the brink of a trade war with China ... [and despite his obvious preference not to have this happen] he has served as a trigger of a powerful anti-Russian campaign" in the US and the West more generally. According to

Zharkov, "the White House with its own hands is doing the impossible, provoking unity among countries, different in culture and economic weight but concerned in the first instance about the preservation of their domestic regimes." Such "a new 'Holy Alliance,' if it is put in place" will change the balance of forces in the world and make a new war more likely.

If this alliance takes off, "it will be a genuine tragedy for the first flowerings of civil society to the east of Narva and Gorlovka. Especially for Russia which in such a course of events will risk finally annulling the results of its own liberal transformations that were carried out after the collapse of communism." Moreover, it will push Russia further away from a European path of development, "destroying the remains of the Enlightenment of Modern Times and with a higher degree of probability throwing the country into the darkness of Asiatic life and a new version of military communism." Putin may not be unhappy about that because it will save his position; but no one else can possibly be, Zharkov suggests. And even he may come to regret it because this turn of events will ensure the rise of the hawks in the West who will be able to point to the existence of this New Holy Alliance as the reason for continuing to spend money on armaments. But even more, this alliance will leave Russia weaker over time and ultimately collapse because of its internal contradictions. Most immediately and more worrisome, Zharkov says, it makes military clashes around the world more likely, possibly leading to a global conflagration, and it means that efforts to promote democratization in a large portion of the world will slow down or even stop altogether for a significant period.

###

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