



Russia and Trump's Win

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Russian President Vladimir Putin sent a congratulatory message to Donald Trump on the occasion of winning the US presidential election.ⁱ In his message to Trump, Putin expressed confidence that the dialogue between Moscow and Washington, in keeping with each other's views, meets the interests of both Russia and the US. He also expressed the hope to bring Russian-American relations, based on principles of "equality, mutual respect and each other's positions, meets the interests of the peoples of our countries and of the entire international community",ⁱ out of their current crisis by focussing on the global security challenges, such as those posed by the ISIS.

Putin and President-elect Trump agreed in a telephone conversation on November 14 that relations between their countries were "unsatisfactory" and vowed to work together to improve them, the Kremlin said in a statement. The statement said the two leaders discussed combining efforts in the fight against terrorism, talked about "a settlement for the crisis in Syria" and agreed their aides would begin working toward a face-to-face meeting between them.ⁱⁱ

In a poll conducted by the Russian newspaper *Kommersant* on the US presidential candidates Hillary Clinton and Trump, Russians favoured Trump (with 84 per cent) over Clinton (only 16 per cent favoured her).ⁱⁱⁱ

Trump in his first speech to supporters in New York on November 9 promised to establish good relations with all countries, wishing the same good relations with Russia. According to him, in such cases, the relationship will be built right. "We'll get along with everyone on an equitable basis."^{iv} The 'equitable basis' is an important message to Russia that wants to be treated as an equal partner in the world order by the US.

During the presidential debates and the vice-presidential ones, Russia was the topic that attracted the most attention followed by the Islamic State (IS or ISIS) and taxes.^v Russia faced

sharp attacks from the Democrats, during the presidential election process, after the news of the hacking of Democratic National Committee (DNC) documents broke in June 2016 followed by WikiLeaks' publication of document from the personal account of John Podesta, Clinton's campaign chair, in the month leading up to the election. Russia has been accused of launching a disinformation campaign in the US to ensure the benefits to one of the candidates for the US presidency which the Russian Presidential press secretary Dmitry Peskov has denied.^{vi} Russian diplomats in the US were also barred by the US State Department from observing the presidential elections at the polling stations, to which Russia raised question mark over America's transparency and democratic character of the elections.^{vii} In fact, on December 9, US President Barack Obama ordered intelligence agencies to review cyber attacks and foreign intervention into the 2016 election and deliver a report before he leaves office on January 20, 2017.^{viii} Though three unnamed officials from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) on December 12 expressed their doubts the CIA's assessment on Russia's intervention to help Donald Trump win the presidential election. They said that their agency does not dispute the CIA's findings, yet it would not accept them either.^{ix}

Russia, especially Putin, has never had an amiable relationship with Hillary Clinton since the 2011 demonstration against Putin's re-election that took place in Moscow. She publicly condemned Russian parliamentary elections in 2011.^x Putin had accused the US of encouraging opposition protests against alleged fraud in Russia's parliamentary elections. He added that comments made by the then-US Secretary of State Clinton, in which she expressed "serious concerns" about the polls, acted as "a signal" for the Kremlin's critics.^{xi} The Kremlin saw Clinton as an existential threat for its sovereignty. Russia has been critical of colour revolutions and regime change based on the promotion of democracy by the West especially the US.^{xii} The feelings were evident during Clinton's presidential campaign. In her first press conference on May 9 while running for the election, she expressed "a very serious" concern about Russia's apparent tampering with the US election, implying that Putin and the 'adversarial foreign power he governs are actively trying to elect Donald Trump". During her campaign, she maintained an aggressive stance towards Russia.^{xiii}

Clinton during her campaign stated that she would advocate the reinforcement of alliances in which NATO has a key role and also wants to increase the US efforts at containment of Russia against attempts to change the international order by force and neo-imperial policies.^{xiv} Both the issues make Russia feel insecure.

A member of the Russian Federation Council Committee on Defense and Security, Senator Aleksey Pushkov, tweeted that "*[Playing the] 'Russian card' and portraying Putin as a bad guy did not help Clinton. On the contrary, staking on the conflict with Moscow has only caused fear, doing her a disservice.*"^{xv}

Meanwhile, Trump has been indicating rapprochement with Russia. He said in his speech on foreign policy, during his election campaign, that he believed America and Moscow could find a common ground in the fight against the ISIS. He stated that "they too have much at stake in the outcome in Syria, and have had their own battles with Islamic terrorism". During his speech, he

also noted that Russian intelligence had warned the US about the Boston Bombers.^{xvi}

Putin said, speaking at the presentation ceremony of foreign ambassadors' letters of credentials in Moscow on November 8, *"We heard [Trump's] campaign rhetoric while still a candidate for the US presidency, which was focused on restoring the relations between Russia and the United States."*^{xvii} For things to improve between Moscow and Washington, the US should first and foremost start acting like an equal partner and respect Russia's interests rather than try to dictate terms, Putin said on November 8. The US will have to negotiate with Russia on finding solutions to international issues as no state is now able to act alone, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said, adding that problems in bilateral relations began to mount long before the Ukrainian crisis broke out in 2014.^{xviii}

On November 9, Lavrov said that Russia would judge the new US administration by its actions and take appropriate steps in response. He added that Russia was ready to work with any US leader elected by the US people.^{xix} He also stated that Russia for a long time has shown 'strategic patience' regarding the actions of the US.^{xx}

Russia's Expectations from Trump's Win

The primary expectation that Russia appears to have from Trump's win is the lifting of sanctions over Russia. Russian presidential adviser Sergei Glazyev believes that Donald Trump as president of the US would abolish anti-Russian sanctions. He is hoping that America under the new president would restart the relations between Russia and the country. Kremlin is hoping that the 'restart' would help restore a healthy relationship in trade, financial and economic areas with the US as well as with the West. According to Glazyev, there would be 'restart' of the bilateral relationship because the Kremlin felt that the Obama administration pursued an aggressive foreign policy^{xxi} against Russia which was not fruitful.

Second, Russia might be hoping that Trump would recognise Crimea as a part of Russia and would withdraw the US support of the Ukrainian government. During a news conference in Florida during his presidential election campaign, Trump had said that he intends to consider issues on recognition of Crimea as a Russian region and on removal of sanctions imposed on Russia over the Ukraine crisis.^{xxii} However, it seems difficult once Trump takes the office. The US foreign policy maintains Russia's annexation of Crimea as a 'violation'.^{xxiii}

Based on Trump's statement on reduction in the NATO troops stationed in Europe,^{xxiv} Kremlin might be hoping for a reduction in the NATO troops especially along the borders of Russia, if not a complete pull out. Pulling out or reduction of NATO forces in Russia's neighbourhood helps Moscow to concentrate on its domestic issues, such as strengthening its economy.^{xxv}

Third, Russia would be expecting a political resolution in Syria, without a regime change of the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, through negotiation with the Syrian opposition rebel groups. Kremlin would want Trump to uphold Russia's intervention in Syria from a positive

perspective as a peace moderator. The Obama administration had called for an international war crimes investigation of Russia's actions in Syria.^{xxvi}

Fourth, working with the US would help Russia tackle the Islamic extremism problem including the ISIS. Co-ordinated intelligence-sharing and counter-terrorism exercises between the countries would help in countering international terrorism. The cooperation between Russia and the US might also help in countering the ISIS and many terrorist groups fighting in Syria and the region. After the 9/11 event, Moscow rallied behind the US in the unfolding 'global war on terror' and provided significant assistance in the fight against the Taliban. However, it was not fruitful as just two years after the 9/11 attacks, the relationship again descended into confrontation as US troops marched into Iraq against protest from Moscow. By 2004-2005, the colour revolution was taking root in the neighbouring countries of Russia, such as Georgia and Ukraine that stoked the tensions of Cold War. The intensity of tensions between the two countries could be seen when the Russian troops marched into US-allied Georgia in 2008.^{xxvii}

Fifth, Putin and his administration have been espousing a nationalist agenda that seeks to re-establish Russia as a great world power. It wants to challenge America's position in the world order. Putin has been against the West and the US' 'export of so-called democratic revolution in other countries'^{xxviii} and interference of outside power. The National Security Strategy until 2020, which was approved by the president back in 2009, and was updated on December 31, 2015, which focuses on colour revolution and the Practice of Overthrowing Legitimate Political Authorities along with expansion of NATO and its approach to Russia's borders, as a threat to national security.^{xxix}

Trump during his address on April 27, 2016 in Washington, D.C. on foreign policy approach of the US said that "It all began with a dangerous idea that we could make western democracies out of countries that had no experience or interests in becoming a western democracy. We tore up what institutions they had and then were surprised at what we unleashed."^{xxx}

Trump's appointment of the retired Lieutenant General Michael Flynn as his new national security adviser also might help in the rapprochement between Russia and the US. The former DIA chief has been criticized in US circles for refusing to take an anti-Russian stance. Flynn has been supportive of the idea of Moscow and America working together to resolve the ISIS threat. He said that "We have to understand as Americans that Russia also has foreign policy; Russia also has a national security strategy. And I think that we failed to understand what that is".^{xxxi}

Sixth, Trump announced that the US would signal its withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deal on his first day in the White House, as one of six immediate steps aimed at "putting America first."^{xxxii} Although there is no plan in such, but in future with the nullification of TPP and 'if Putin and Trump works together than some kind of partnership with the US that would help in strengthening Moscow's own Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) project might take place.

Seventh, abiding to the New START treaty might be feasible with the coming together of Putin and Trump. Under the New START Treaty, that was signed in 2010 and entered into force

on February 5, 2011, Russia and the US must meet the Treaty's central limits on strategic arms by February 5, 2018. An aggregate limit on the strategic arms of both countries has been charted out:

- 700 deployed intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), deployed submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), and deployed heavy bombers equipped for nuclear armaments;
- 1,550 nuclear warheads on deployed ICBMs, SLBMs, and heavy bombers equipped for nuclear armaments (each such heavy bomber is counted as one warhead toward this limit);
- 800 deployed and non-deployed ICBM launchers, SLBM launchers, and heavy bombers equipped for nuclear armaments.^{xxxiii}

If one analyzes the data on the strategic offensive arms fact sheet from 2011* (See Annexure), Russia's chart shows an increase in the intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), and deployed heavy bombers equipped for nuclear armaments in 2014 and 2015 however, there is a decline in these two sections of ICBMs, SLBMs and heavy bombers and an increase in its nuclear warheads in 2016. According to the Nuclear Notebook of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, at the beginning of March 2016, the number of nuclear weapons worldwide was estimated at 15,350. Approximately 4000 are operational warheads, of which less than 1800 each of Russian and the US nuclear weapons are on high alert and ready for use at short notice.^{xxxiv} The nuclear weapons possessed by Russia and the US along with the other nuclear weapon states are not a healthy signal to achieve a peaceful and stable world. In its military doctrine which was approved by Putin on 2014, Russia emphasised that nuclear weapons will remain an important factor to prevent nuclear war and military conflicts with the use of conventional weapons (large-scale war, regional war).^{xxxv} On the other side, besides the nuclear arsenals of the nine states possessing (India, Russia, the US, the UK, Israel, France, China, Pakistan and North Korea) or thought to possess, nuclear weapons, five NATO Allies (Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey) host some 180 US non-strategic nuclear weapons at six bases in Europe.^{xxxvi} Both the countries have looming danger of being hit by nuclear arsenals in case of a war.

Conclusion

Russia is observing the outcome of Trump's win. Russian Prime Minister Medvedev said that Moscow is not expecting any ease over the sanctions but there would be an expectation of partial lifting of sanctions. Russia would also be expecting a resolution over Syria as Moscow is becoming entangled in the crisis whose repercussions such as extremist attacks by the foreign-returned militants inside the country and its neighbourhood might be expected. There are other insecurities as well for Russia. For Kremlin, the US and its policies, including the NATO policies, deployments of the US defence missile shields and the colour revolutions in the neighbouring countries of Russia, are still matters of concern (Obama on November 14 said that Trump and the new US administration would be committed towards NATO).

Immediate drastic changes between the two countries might not take place. Trump's policies would need the support of the Senate and Congress that might not be in favour of relaxations with Russia on a variety of issues, including NATO. However, there would be efforts towards some kind of rapprochement between Russia and the US. Russia may also want to ensure that its relationship with China is not thrown into an imbalance by out rightly strengthening Moscow's relationship with the US.

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Disclaimer: The views expressed are that of the Researcher and not of the Council.

Endnotes

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Annexure

The following are the data from the year 2011-2016 on the Strategic Offensive Arms between Russia and the US:

2011

Category of Data	Russia	US
Deployed ICBMs, Deployed SLBMs, and Deployed Heavy Bombers	516	822
Warheads on Deployed ICBMs, on Deployed SLBMs, and Nuclear Warheads Counted for Deployed Heavy Bombers	1566	1790
Deployed and Non-deployed Launchers of ICBMs, Deployed and Non-deployed Launchers of SLBMs, and Deployed and Non-deployed Heavy Bombers	871	1043

New START Treaty Aggregate Numbers of Strategic Offensive Arms: Fact Sheet, 2011.^{xxxvi}

2012

Category of Data	Russia	US
Deployed ICBMs, Deployed SLBMs, and Deployed Heavy Bombers	419	806
Warheads on Deployed ICBMs, on Deployed SLBMs, and Nuclear Warheads Counted for Deployed Heavy Bombers	1499	1722

Deployed and Non-deployed Launchers of ICBMs, Deployed and Non-deployed Launchers of SLBMs, and Deployed and Non-deployed Heavy Bombers	884	1034
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New START Treaty Aggregate Numbers of Strategic Offensive Arms: Fact Sheet, 2012.^{xxxvi}

2013

Category of Data	Russia	US
Deployed ICBMs, Deployed SLBMs, and Deployed Heavy Bombers	473	809
Warheads on Deployed ICBMs, on Deployed SLBMs, and Nuclear Warheads Counted for Deployed Heavy Bombers	1400	1688
Deployed and Non-deployed Launchers of ICBMs, Deployed and Non-deployed Launchers of SLBMs, and Deployed and Non-deployed Heavy Bombers	894	1015

New START Treaty Aggregate Numbers of Strategic Offensive Arms: Fact Sheet, 2013.^{xxxvi}

2014

Category of Data	Russia	US
Deployed ICBMs, Deployed SLBMs, and Deployed Heavy Bombers	528	794
Warheads on Deployed ICBMs, on Deployed SLBMs, and Nuclear Warheads Counted for Deployed Heavy Bombers	1643	1642
Deployed and Non-deployed Launchers of ICBMs, Deployed and Non-deployed Launchers of SLBMs, and Deployed and Non-deployed Heavy Bombers	911	912

New START Treaty Aggregate Numbers of Strategic Offensive Arms: Fact Sheet, 2014.^{xxxvi}

2015

Category of Data	Russia	US
Deployed ICBMs, Deployed SLBMs, and Deployed Heavy Bombers	526	762
Warheads on Deployed ICBMs, on Deployed SLBMs, and Nuclear Warheads Counted for Deployed Heavy Bombers	1648	1538
Deployed and Non-deployed Launchers of ICBMs, Deployed and Non-deployed Launchers of SLBMs, and Deployed and Non-deployed Heavy Bombers	877	898

New START Treaty Aggregate Numbers of Strategic Offensive Arms: Fact Sheet, 2015.^{xxxvi}

2016

Category of Data	Russia	US
Deployed ICBMs, Deployed SLBMs, and Deployed Heavy Bombers	508	681
Warheads on Deployed ICBMs, on Deployed SLBMs, and Nuclear Warheads Counted for Deployed Heavy Bombers	1796	1367
Deployed and Non-deployed Launchers of ICBMs, Deployed and Non-deployed Launchers of SLBMs, and Deployed and Non-deployed Heavy Bombers	847	848

New START Treaty Aggregate Numbers of Strategic Offensive Arms: Fact Sheet, 2016.^{xxxvi}

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