

Trump's Embrace of the Kremlin Throws Russian Elites and Propagandists Into Disarray

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U.S. President Donald Trump's pursuit of a thaw in U.S.-Russia relations has caught many in Moscow by surprise, bewildering Russia's elites and disrupting some of Russian propaganda's key narratives.

While some elites are dusting off their Visa cards and celebrating the possibility of no longer being cut off from the West, others are wary of a potential U.S. deep-state trap.

Trump's early foreign policy moves — especially regarding the war in Ukraine and relations with Moscow — have sent shockwaves across Europe. But they have also left Russian officials, diplomats, state-linked businessmen and propagandists scrambling to make sense of the shifting reality, several sources admitted to The Moscow Times on condition of anonymity.

Nowhere is this upheaval more evident than within the ranks of Kremlin-controlled media, which has spent years portraying the U.S. as Russia's chief adversary.

As Trump seeks dialogue with Moscow and openly criticizes Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, Russian officials are rushing to adjust state media's messaging, two government insiders said.

"The worldview we have meticulously built over the years, at a great cost, is now fractured," said a Kremlin insider involved in ideological planning. "It was brilliantly simple: Washington was the enemy. Europe was its obedient satellite, lacking agency, acting solely on U.S. orders."

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For nearly two decades, President Vladimir Putin and his closest confidants including Nikolai Patrushev, Sergei Lavrov and Sergei Shoigu have argued that Russia's conflicts were engineered by Washington and that European leaders cut ties with Moscow under American duress.

Yet Trump's overtures to Moscow have flipped that script. While his administration has initiated dialogue with Russia, European leaders continue to back Ukraine, contradicting years of Kremlin propaganda that framed the continent as an extension of U.S. influence.

Signs of this ideological shift are emerging in Russian media. During a primetime broadcast on the state-run Rossia 1 network, where hosts highlighted Washington's growing criticism of Zelensky, one pundit made an unexpected admission.

"I'd like to say on federal television that, of course, the idea of some monolithic Anglo-Saxon conspiracy being responsible for all our troubles has proven unconvincing and unproductive," [said](#) Evgeny Minchenko, a Kremlin-linked political strategist. "I've said this many times."

Since Russia's annexation of Crimea and its hybrid invasion of eastern Ukraine in 2014, anti-American sentiment has been a staple of public discourse, with cars bearing bumper stickers reading "Obama is a s***bag [ОБАМА - ЧМО]" a common sight in Moscow. Later, state television openly mocked President Joe Biden.

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Now, however, the Kremlin has issued strict orders to state media and officials to avoid any offensive gestures toward the new U.S. president.

This week, in the southern city of Stavropol, a lawmaker from the ruling United Russia party was ordered to remove a doormat featuring Trump's face outside his office. The deputy, a veteran of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, later [admitted](#) he had to comply due to "adjustments in the team's general position."

The apparent de-escalation of tensions with the U.S. has sparked mixed reactions within Russia's political and business elite.

Some expect Trump's presidency to bring tangible changes and open up economic opportunities.

"In my circle, people have mostly swallowed this [believed in real reconciliation]. Everyone is tired of war. They think Putin has won. Trump benefits too — he's a businessman, he makes deals. Europe hasn't adapted. Blah blah blah," said a senior executive at a major state-linked corporation.

"Some of my acquaintances are already quietly dusting off their Visas and Mastercards, hoping that sanctions will be lifted and new opportunities will arise," said a former high-ranking Russian official in the banking sector.

However, many remain skeptical that Washington will take a cooperative stance.

"The thaw is good. Tensions with Europe and Ukraine are bad. We need to negotiate with everyone," said a former Kremlin official.

Opinions are similarly split among diplomats and policymakers.

"Our community is also divided. Some say: 'Don't believe it, nothing will come of this. It's all a circus — Trump doesn't make the real decisions, the deep state does'," said a current Russian diplomat. "But there are also enthusiasts who have always hoped for something like this."

"[Rapprochement with the U.S.] is an illusion! The only thing worse than an Anglo-Saxon enemy is an Anglo-Saxon friend," said a former senior government official now working at a state corporation.

"Trump is a talented performer and a master strategist. He's luring us into a long-planned script designed to daze, then weaken and subdue Russia. The intrigues of the U.S., NATO and the EU are part of a coordinated policy. We mustn't trust them — we must continue pursuing our own interests," warned another Russian diplomat.

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