During the previous US Administration we heard a lot of talk about connections with Russia, and Trump supposedly doing Putin’s bidding. Trump was depicted as the most pro-Russian president in the land of the Alger Hiss spy scandal, Joe McCarthy and the Red Scare and Trygve Lie being forced out of the UN because he was allegedly filling it with Communists.

However this view may be in need of some revision. By asking the standard journalistic question: who benefits? We may find that Russia is better off with Biden than Trump – and that Biden is not only aware of this, but perfectly happy with it.

Russians Under the Pipes

Look at the current situation in the oil market. The State of Texas, a major supplier, is happy with current fuel prices, especially compared to last year. But it is not because the much-touted pro-energy policies of Donald Trump did the industry any good.

Trump was always considered pro-oil, but due to his policies production kept increasing, resulting in prices crashing and burning. Last year they were in single digits, and oil even went negative on the futures market for a bit, a most extreme occurrence.

As soon as Biden came in he cancelled the Canadian Keystone pipeline permit and then suspended leasing on federal lands, acreage. So which President is best for Russia? And then too, the close nexus when talking about oil prices, as natural gas contracts sometimes linked to oil price so natural gas prices are higher too, much higher.
The current high oil price and the waived sanctions on Nordstream 2 are the best outcomes Russia could have hoped for from the change of Administration—almost like Manna from Heaven. Biden wasn’t obliged to take the steps he did, but everything has mysteriously fallen into Russia’s lap.

Some of the military withdrawals in the Central Asia could also be considered favourable, as Biden picked up when Trump left off in rapid action – and scored the touchdown, albeit fumbling the ball in the process by the way he handled the exit strategy.

Trump detailed with great humour in a recent speech just how Biden turned everything over to the Taliban. He makes valid points about why Biden screwed up the withdrawal from Afghanistan and turned over so much equipment, most of it the most modern that America has to offer.

Borscht on the Other Foot

You can hear Ted Cruz (R-TX) attacking Biden in a YouTube clip, where he claims Biden’s decision helped Nord Stream 2, and that the American political establishment, think tanks and the Atlanta Council and many more, need to wake up and review their talking points. Cruz was the sponsor of the sanctions on the Republican side, with Shaneen from New Hampshire as the Democrat, so he is understandably upset that Biden waived it.

It is true that there are energy shortages on all fronts, and any US president has to address this issue. However they also have to address it in a way which takes the public with them, as Jimmy Carter found when the public stopped listening to his own pleas on energy after his infamous “malaise” speech, despite the fact his approval went up in the short term.

Russia is actually honouring all its contractual obligations by constructing the pipeline. It is trying to keep up with increased demand, and thereby serving European consumers, probably on better terms than they can get by stopping Nord Stream 2 and investing in other sources of energy, which may not be as readily available or developed as peddled.

But will Americans accept a situation where essential energy they rely on, which they produce at home, is only available to them if they do political deals with Russia? Ted Cruz is not the most popular or credible US politician, but he is making a point which will resonate with a majority of US electors, like it or not, and his party is better positioned than the Democrats to take advantage of that.

Evening Up To Nothing

The US was dependent on foreign energy once, despite its own vast resources, but has now become even more dependent. This would never have happened if the US had believed in its own professed values, rather than slogans and profit. It has left the US unable to act in accordance with its own values, because in order to get anything done it has to use energy, and that is only available on terms other countries allow.

Increasingly, US infrastructure is owned by Chinese state companies. As Americans don’t do irony, it cannot be called ironic that the apostles of unrestricted free enterprise sold all this to state companies from a Communist nation, often without due process.

The term is not ironic but criminal. If you believe in American values, you don’t support Communist states and the political, social and human repression which inevitably come with them. It is outright treason to put your country in a position where it can’t act unless Communists allow it, and those Communists can pull the plug at any moment.

Carter linked energy and infrastructure directly in his malaise speech. Subsequent presidents ignored that link and got big bucks from the Chinese. We are led to believe that they were unaware that according to their own economic laws, if Americans are to compete with these Chinese companies, in a very different labour and social environment, they will have to join them and follow their direction.

Russia has raised the spectre of Chinese infrastructure control more than previous US politicians have done. What has been Biden’s response? Firstly, to increase US and European energy dependence on Russia, thus, intentionally or not, to create a Russian-Chinese partnership with more effective control over the US economy than the US military-industrial complex itself.

At least Biden has redressed the balance by giving Russia a bigger foothold. No longer does Chinese policy present a greater threat to the US. But with Russian dominance of the energy sector, the US is not only hamstrung but outvoted. Neither real change nor real continuance will be possible without the approval of both the Chinese and the
Russians.

The Hole in the Head

Ted Cruz is making speeches in the hope he can run for the Republican Party’s nomination in two years. He hopes he can replace Biden, or whoever has replaced him in the meantime, discounting the VP in waiting. He has no more real concern over the situation he is complaining about than Biden has, and his own party and votes have helped to create it just as much the Democrats have.

The totality of Biden's policies, especially his shift in midcourse from what Trump and previous presidents started, could not have come at a better time for the Russians. Others may have created a situation where Biden’s policies would have the effect, but Biden has made it happen.

Joe Biden visited the Republic of Georgian when he was Vice-President, during Saakashvili’s time. It is well known he was not impressed with Misha’s gang, reportedly telling Obama as soon as he got back, “these guys don’t understand democracy”, as if he and his country had only just found that out.

Biden is therefore well aware of what has happened since. The “new” Georgian government has been in power nine years, yet still it is living off old in-glories. Simply by saying “we are not criminals like Saakashvili’s gang” they are given a free pass by a population which knows they are telling the truth, and can generally tolerate their own failures for the sake of not getting the criminals back.

Biden and the Democrats’ honeymoon period may equally last two or more presidential terms. As long as he is demonstrably not Trump, he can do what he likes, whatever “not being Trump” actually means, and whatever its consequences.

Biden’s COVID relief packages and infrastructure plans have faced accusations of being traditional Democrat “pork barrel” measures, ways of channelling funds to their own pet projects and supporters. This is expected of Republicans, because no one takes any notice when they do it, but Democrats usually suffer from such assertions as they are supposed to be the party of the many, rather than the few.

Not this time. With a huge anti-Trump industry behind him, Biden can do anything Trump didn’t do, even if that means handing energy control to other states, and have it presented as righteous and progressive.

Oiling False Gears

If the US and Europe really wanted “energy independence” they would have promoted the extraction of hydrogen, with water as a source material. They are beating the same old drum over pipelines to try and disguise the politics of the situation, not provide domestic energy supplies controlled by domestic actors.

Energy diversity comes at a price, and requires stable policies, which don’t come because politicians are too scared to make energy a high enough priority, and thus produce a consensus no government would dare go against for fear of the public backlash. Many countries are running out of once taken for granted amounts, just as Carter said they would, for the very reason he said - “Human identity is no longer defined by what one does, but by what one owns”, and that is the basis of policy.

At present there is little alternative to the Nord Stream 2 pipeline because such politics have created that situation. If it goes ahead, it could be accompanied by investments to ensure its eventual redundancy, but that will involve another Carter-like appeal for values, and Biden does not feel that is necessary as long as he isn’t Trump.

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