Subject: Re: Ukraine
Posted by Wayne Parham on Mon, 16 Sep 2024 17:44:22 GMT
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I think there's a huge disconnect between the populations of all the former-Soviet countries and their governments. And I think that's largely true here too. I think we are growing more and more disconnected from our government here.

But that is maybe sort of beside the point. I think the point is - one that we seem to agree upon - that Russia and frankly, all of the former-Soviet countries were largely ignored by the United States until fairly recently. We did nothing to help their economies or to pull them into any sort of alignment with the United States.

To be very honest, I wondered why we did that. It seemed to me that when the cold war wall fell, we would want to embrace that. To "finish the job," so to speak, but in a good way. It seemed so possible to me. There were literally millions of Russians - from all of those countries - that wanted to embrace the west. They were starving and living in what you or I would consider cheap apartments. Families with a mother and father having advanced degrees living in squalor and starving to death. They definitely wanted change and saw the west as the way to get that change. They idealized us.

I remember back then very well. In the early 1990s, many of my customers were oil companies, mostly manufacturers of equipment for oil-well completions. These were companies that made pump-jacks, engines, tubing, packers, liner-hangers, etc. They started trying to trade with companies in the former Soviet Union. But the problem had already started. The novi-russki had already started buying up the stock in the oil companies there. Our American companies couldn't do business with them - not because they were afraid of ethics laws (which would have been another hurdle to jump) - but because control of the oil companies was already being taken over by thugs. It was literally unsafe to do business with them.

So these American oil equipment manufacturers didn't even have a chance to start talking about how to navigate what would have been Russian regulations and tariffs, many of which were actually bribes. But bribes there aren't always the same as what you would think of here. Some are almost more like a tip that you pay a waitress - not actually some big crime - but American rules may have made that hard to navigate. Still, that's a side-issue, not the main point.

The main point is that even in the early 1990s, Russia had a problem just beginning. The problem was that the novi-russki had started taking over business there. The privatization idea was a good one - to give every Russian worker stock in the company they worked for - but it was maybe a little naive 'cause most people had no idea what value stock ownership was, and they were hungry, so they sold it cheap. Who was there to buy it? People that were already corrupt and had some disposable income. The mob families that sold drugs and prostitutes on the black market had money. So they bought stock in the oil companies and anything else with value.

I wondered to myself, why aren't we doing anything about that? There are millions of good people over there that actually want to live the "American dream." They idealized us. Why not help them? Many of them were highly skilled, and most were wanting to be safe and free. We had a

lot of goodwill over there.

But we did nothing. We let the novi-russki take over and gain strength for a couple decades. The Russian government now is just a bunch of mobsters with nukes. They're truly horrible people. It's nothing like the Soviets were. It's much, much worse.
