



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on August 1, 2017

Are Worsening U.S.-Russian Relations a Victim of American Politics?

"We have waited long enough, hoping the situation would perhaps change for the better," lamented Russian President Vladimir Putin, as he announced the expulsion of 755 American diplomats from his country. The move came in reaction to the decision of Congress to place tougher sanctions on Russia, for allegedly interfering in the U.S. presidential election last year. Also mentioned was Russia's annexation of the Crimea — in 2014.



Writing in *The Duran*, Alexander Mercouris suggested that the real impetus behind the congressional sanctions was American politics: "For much of the U.S. elite — including most of the U.S. media — the new sanctions bill is not really aimed at damaging Russia but rather at damaging President Trump."

While this is a dangerous way to play American domestic politics, Mercouris argued, "To achieve that objective all other interests are being sacrificed."

Since the 2016 presidential election ended in a surprising victory for Donald Trump over Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton, much of the American media has been insistent in advancing the narrative that his victory was achieved as a result of alleged Russian "meddling" in that election. This supposedly happened by the "hacking" of computers at the Democratic National Committee and candidate Clinton's own computers. According to the allegation, the Russian government then turned the damaging information over to WikiLeaks, which then released it to the media, thus injuring Clinton's chances in the election and helping Trump win.

The reason that sanctions on Russia could be said to damage Trump is that the narrative is that the Trump campaign "colluded" with the Russians in this "hacking."

President Barack Obama's actions in December of last year, just after the election, in ordering 35 Russian diplomats out of the United States and closing down a couple of summer homes, allegedly because the Russians used them for spying activities, left the incoming President Trump with soured Russian relations to mend.

At the time, Putin opted to wait and see what the new president would do, rather than immediately retaliate in kind.

Now, with Congress passing legislation placing sanctions upon Russia (in the absence of any such request to do so from the Trump administration, which is not the way foreign policy is usually handled), President Trump will be forced to either sign the legislation, making better relations with the Russians unlikely, or veto the sanctions bill, thus opening himself up to even more accusations of collusion with the Russians.

The imposition of these sanctions, which look suspiciously more like domestic politics than a prudent foreign policy decision, are supposedly to punish provocations and aggressions of the Russians. The



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Russians are condemned for their military action in Ukraine, their intervention in Syria, and the alleged hacking of the 2016 presidential election.

Writing for the Ron Paul Institute for Peace and Prosperity, Daniel McAdams raised concerns that the bill might lead to suppression of free speech of Americans. He noted that the legislation also proposes to impose sanctions with a “United States person,” which would include a U.S. citizen, a permanent legal resident of the United States, or “an entity organized under the laws of the United States or of any jurisdiction within the United States, including a foreign branch of such an entity.”

McAdams called this “interesting” because in April, CIA Director Mike Pompeo condemned Russian state-funded TV station RT as “Russia’s primary propaganda outlet.” Then, in May, Pompeo stated that RT was attempting to “muddle” Russian intelligence’s involvement with WikiLeaks. (Wikileaks has denied receiving their material from the Democrat computers via the Russians).

“It is clear,” McAdams wrote, “that Pompeo, and other hawks in the Trump administration, along with Beltway neocons, have long endeavored to tie RT to Russian intelligence. Might this bill not open the door for sanctions against ‘persons’ including possibly U.S. citizens who are employed by — or even appear on — RT?”

Ron Paul condemned the sanctions, writing that they demonstrate “how little thought goes into U.S. foreign policy.” The former Texas congressman and presidential candidate added, “Sanctions have become kind of an automatic action the U.S. government takes when it simply doesn’t know what else to do.” Sanctions are intended, Paul continued, to “make life as miserable as possible for civilians so they will try to overthrow their governments.” But, he added, “Foreign leaders and the elites do not suffer under sanctions.”

Paul asked, “Why is Congress so eager for more sanctions on Russia?” He contends that though the neocons and the media have designated Russia as the latest enemy, Trump should veto the bill.

Were that to happen, practically all the Democrats in Congress would vote to override the veto, even though it was Hillary Clinton who gave the Russians the infamous “re-set button,” and it was Obama who told them he would be more “flexible” once he got reelected. The Democrats loved all those communist dictators from Stalin through Gorbachev. Senator Teddy Kennedy even privately offered to help the Soviets stop the reelection of President Reagan in 1984.

But why would the Republicans vote to override a Trump veto? Probably because any Republican voting to sustain the veto could be expected to be condemned by the mainstream liberal media as in support of “our enemy.” And some Republicans in Congress hate Trump just as much as the Democrats do. To some, sticking it to Trump is more important than doing what is best for the country.

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