



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on December 22, 2016

## U.S. Has Interfered in Foreign Elections Multiple Times

President Barack Obama recently said he told Russian President Vladimir Putin to “knock it off” back in September. Obama’s alleged demand was a result of the supposed “hacking” of the computers of the Democratic National Committee (DNC), in what has been presented as an attempt by the Russians to influence the outcome of the presidential election in favor of Donald Trump.



This alleged effort by the Russians was even cited as a reason to block Trump’s election in the Electoral College. Some presidential electors even asked for an intelligence briefing before they cast their votes, so they would know exactly what Putin’s government did. Of course, almost all those asking for the briefing were Democrat electors already voting for Trump’s Democrat opponent, Hillary Clinton, so it could be dismissed as just a political ploy.

But, if the Russians *did* covertly attempt to alter the outcome of the presidential election, it would seem somewhat hypocritical of the U.S. government to take umbrage. After all, the United States, under several presidents both Democrat and Republican, has repeatedly interfered in foreign elections, both covertly and overtly, multiple times in the past several decades.

Most recently, President Obama told British voters that they better not vote for Brexit — the public vote for the United Kingdom to leave the European Union (EU) — or they would find themselves “at the back of the queue [line]” in getting any sort of trade deal with the United States. Of course, with Obama leaving office on January 20, he would not be making any trade deals with anyone much longer anyway.

Obama went on to say, “I think this [membership in the EU] makes you guys bigger players,” at a joint press conference with then-British Prime Minister David Cameron, a staunch supporter of remaining in the EU. In the end, the British did not take Obama’s “advice,” and opted to leave the EU.

It was not the first time that the Obama administration attempted to determine the outcome of a foreign election. In the last Israeli election, the Obama State Department funneled hundreds of thousands of dollars in taxpayer money to the opposition of Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations found that the State Department and a group called One Voice coordinated political activities — including the building of a voter database, the training of activists, and the hiring of a political consulting firm tied to President Obama himself.

Yet, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has charged that Russia interfered with the 2016 U.S. presidential election by releasing e-mails damaging to the Clinton campaign effort. But why is it acceptable for the United States government to interfere in another nation’s election campaign efforts, but not acceptable for other countries — including Russia — to (allegedly) interfere in U.S. elections?

The Brexit vote and Israeli election are not the only times this has happened. Don Levin of Carnegie Mellon University has documented 81 times the United States has attempted to influence presidential elections in other countries between 1946 and 2000. And then, of course, there are the military coups backed by the United States and the regime changes imposed by military actions. In his study, Levin



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described “intervention” as including funding of the election campaigns of selected political parties, the dissemination of political propaganda, training of local activists in political techniques, and public comments by high-ranking U.S. officials, favoring or disfavoring one side or the other. He also included public threats to withdraw foreign aid, or even promises to provide it if one side were to be elected.

In 1948, the United States probably did make a difference in the Italian elections. Levin noted that the United States, under President Harry Truman, “threw everything, including the kitchen sink” at helping the Christian Democrats beat the communists in Italy, including delivering “bags of money” to cover campaign expenses. Other ways the United States helped the Christian Democrats were by subsidizing “pork” projects and threatening to cut off aid to Italy if the communists actually got elected. The Christian Democrats won, and the United States reportedly continued to support them during the next several elections.

In South Vietnam, the United States essentially imposed Ngô Đình Diêm on that country, first as prime minister, then as president. He even earned the nickname “the parachuted one,” meaning he had simply been “dropped” into the nation’s political leadership after having lived for several years in America, where he was highly regarded by both Democrats and Republicans in the American political establishment. Later, when Diêm objected to the U.S. effort to dictate all of his decisions, “military, economic, and political,” President John F. Kennedy gave his personal approval to a coup d’état by South Vietnamese generals to remove Diêm from power in November 1963.

President Ronald Reagan funneled support to the anti-Communist Nicaraguan Contras, who were fighting against the Marxist Sandinista regime in that country, in an effort to force Nicaraguan dictator Daniel Ortega to agree to an election. When he finally did agree to an election, which took place in 1990, during the time of Reagan’s successor, President George H.W. Bush, the CIA leaked damaging information on alleged corruption by Ortega. Considering the margin of his loss to Violeta Chamorro, 51 percent to 42 percent, it is unlikely that this made the difference, but it was still “interference” in a foreign election.

In 1989, the United States sent in troops to overthrow the regime of Panamanian leader, Manuel Noriega. The CIA also undermined the candidacy of Jean-Bertrande Aristide in Haiti in the early ’90s and again in 2004, leading to a coup de’état.

In perhaps the most audacious act of hypocrisy, considering the current charge that “the Russians” have intervened in the recent presidential election, the United States made a move to help the reelection effort in 1996 of Russian President Boris Yeltsen. President Bill Clinton endorsed a \$10.2-billion loan from the International Monetary Fund, supposedly to help Russia move toward a capitalist economy. Yeltsin then used the fact that he got this loan as a reason for voters to support him. Some of the money was used in social spending just before the election, to bolster his popular support.

In 1996, President Clinton openly supported Israel’s Labor Party candidate Shimon Peres over Likud Party choice Netanyahu. Aaron David Miller, with the State Department at that time, defended the Clinton actions: “We were persuaded that if Netanyahu were elected, the peace process would be closed for a season.” Three years later, in 1999, Clinton political strategist James Carville was dispatched to advise Labor Party hopeful Ehud Barak in another election involving Netanyahu.

Then, of course, there was the 2003 invasion of Iraq, to effect “regime change,” by ousting Iraqi strongman Saddam Hussein.

These are only a few examples of direct and indirect U.S. actions to influence the political leadership in



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foreign countries. While Americans should be happy the Communists did not take over in Italy, and they were ousted in Nicaragua (although Ortega is back in power today, albeit much quieter about spreading Marxism throughout Central America), it is a fact that the United States has repeatedly done what it is presently accusing the Russian government of doing.

Perhaps Obama should tell his own CIA and State Department to “knock it off.” Better yet, perhaps he should look in the mirror and say, “Knock it off.”

Of course, come January 2<sup>0</sup>, it will not really matter what he says.



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