

HOT WAR OR COOL PEACE?

TRUMP'S DILEMMA

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Tag of war between the White House and Congress is part of the routine of American politics. But it is not without risk. Democrats, still reeling from their humiliating defeat in the November 2016 election, are desperate to undermine and wound President Trump in any way they can *irrespective of costs to the United States*. Republicans, meantime, are of two minds about the Trump presidency. The party elite, still smarting from Trump's easily eliminating all "proper" candidates to win the nomination, is stand-offish, if not negative, towards the president.

So far, neither the president nor the more rational individuals in the legislature (if there are any left standing) have been able to work out a *modus vivendi* uniting the White House and the Capitol Hill in pursuing the national interest. The latest shot in this trench warfare was the Russia sanctions bill, [reluctantly](#) signed by President Trump. The bill is a huge step in the wrong direction. Riding on the back of anti-Russia hysteria, the bill remarkably united both sides of the aisle against the president. To this day, however, none of Trump's accusers has been able to produce any concrete proof that Russia "hacked" the US election. The hack "tin-foil hat drama" has been shot down by experts [including](#) no other than Obama's Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson. Yet, no one wishes to take notice.

This is hardly the time to play congressional hardball with perilous political weapons. Syria is a battleground where the US and Russia are involved in a proxy war. Syria is superimposed on rising tensions in Europe where former Eastern bloc countries clamor for more NATO protection from the Russian "threat."

The push for NATO expansion to include former communist states adds to tensions as it touches upon the age-old Russian fear of encirclement by hostile forces. And sending NATO troops to conduct war games on Russia's doorstep is hardly the way to promote "detente." As for the Ukraine imbroglio, ["the United States and its European allies share most of the responsibility for the crisis."](#) Approval for a Nazi sympathizer regime in Kiev, and pushing

the bungling European “union” to claim the Ukraine as its next expansion target are, in Russian eyes, potential causes for war. [Warnings](#) against getting the US deeper into the Ukraine mess will be almost certainly rejected by the vociferous “pro-democracy” war mongers. A similar “pro-democracy” scenario has unhinged the Balkans by collapsing Yugoslavia in the nineties and presently threatens the region with recurring ethnic violence.

The sanctions bill renews the post-Soviet debate on adopting “new thinking,” instead of Cold War behavior, in relations with Russia. However, being “tough” on Moscow still commands significant political benefits for those who adopt a “determined” posture vis-a-vis the Bad Big Bear. “Determination” is still a key ingredient of how to control perceived Russian expansion (see [this opinion](#), for example.) Unsurprisingly, more balanced views, such as [this](#), have a limited audience, albeit one that puts reason ahead of fear-mongering, an ingredient at the core of “determined” postures throughout history. As for the bill being unconstitutional, as it is [suggested](#) by even virulent opponents of the president, has been bluntly dismissed by Trump’s congressional enemies.

By ramming the sanctions bill down the throat of the presidency, the bi-partisan opposition to Trump set a dangerous political trap for the president. If Trump was to oppose sanctions, he could be easily branded a “collaborator” of Russia and attacked from every direction, with the “mainstream” media as the vanguard of the self-appointed Proper and Righteous. Both the House and Senate could then sabotage the White House every step of the way and thus render the Trump presidency dead in the water. At the same time, and on a different front, the [Mueller investigation](#) is working on a parallel path that can potentially scuttle the Trump presidency by delving, among others, into issues *unrelated* to the purported Russian hack and utilizing devices like a secret grand jury investigation.

George Kennan, the famous American diplomat who fathered the concept of Containment of the USSR, was aware of the inherent weaknesses of American politics when addressing Russia. He was clear-minded and farsighted, like all those rare individuals blessed with the gift of seeing clearly in the political mist, and [scathingly straightforward](#) concerning the direction of American power:

The left’s desire to save the world by good works and the right’s desire to save it by military adventure are, in Kennan’s view, just two versions of an ill-informed, ahistorical, and doomed romanticism. Saving the world is beyond America’s capacities, and is likely to harm both us and those we are trying to save, he says. Weariness and exasperation mark his descriptions of American policymaking.

“One stands stupefied at the frivolity and irresponsibility reflected in this response. . .” “We would do well... to avoid histrionics and over-reaction.” One should avoid “the abundant pitfalls of attempting to strike noble poses with relation to a situation one did not create, cannot remove, and understands very poorly.” “I had been struck by the contrast between the lucid and realistic thinking of early American statesmen of the Federalist period and the cloudy bombast of their successors of later decades.”

In a similar vein, and on January 17, 1961, President Dwight Eisenhower delivered his famous warning about the “military-industrial complex” in his farewell speech to the Nation from the White House:

In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists, and will persist.

Eisenhower was eminently qualified to deliver this warning: as a military man, who had reached the pinnacle, he understood the link between the corporate balance sheet and the proverbial “profits of war;” and he had also learned the hard way, as US president, how the Washington establishment (‘the swamp’ according to Trump) operated when it came to the interconnection between politicians and the armaments industry.

But Eisenhower’s wise advice was tossed out the window almost immediately. By 1965, the US was fully committed to “stopping communism” in Vietnam in order to block it from jumping across the Pacific and onto the California shores. The nine-year long war that followed cost millions of lives, including 58, 220 US military KIAs, and shook America to its very core causing unprecedented political and social divisions that marked American politics forever.

Despite the Vietnam debacle US interventionism continued in the ensuing years. American involvement in Afghanistan is now in its sixteenth year with Trump [displaying](#) little interest in this war with [no end in sight](#). The invasion of Iraq disintegrated that country and caused a disastrous chain reaction throughout the Middle East. Bombing Libya eliminated Qaddafi and transformed the former Jamahiriya into a lawless jungle tortured by tribal warfare, not to mention making it into the springboard for an illegal immigration invasion of Europe. And “regime change” tactics in Syria turned her into a seething cauldron which threatens world peace as we speak. Against the background of it all, we came to know the horror of the new Islamic outrage, ISIS/IS/Daesh.

Tragically for our collective future, Trump faces an uphill battle if he still wishes to normalize US-Russian relations. The opposition, scathing, virulent, and shrill, is deeply entrenched and determined to fight to the death.

There are those who choose to aggressively prepare for nuclear war (the loony component;) those who use “rationality” and academes to conceal their inevitable war-fighting “solutions” (as, e.g., [here](#);) and those who craftily conceal their inclination towards confrontation and interventionism behind “soft power” and the need to “spawn democracy” by actually *ruining* the unfortunates chosen for salvation (according to the infamous Vietnam-era maxim of ‘We had to destroy the village in order to save it.’)

The bottom line of all of the above is the same: *prepare for and fight yet another war.*

Although American *real* power [exceeds](#) that of Russia’s by a commanding margin, and Russia lacks the global reach to challenge the US, the “Russian threat” community won’t give up warning us about how we are imperiled by a sudden Russian attack. For those with historical memory this obsessive pattern is familiar: it dominated the US political discourse in the “missile gap” and “mutual assure destruction” years of the fifties and sixties.

Those were the days when the [Megadeath Intellectuals](#), men like Herman Kahn, Bernard Brodie, and Albert Wohlstetter, dominated warfighting theory and spent much of their time

pondering first-strike “winning” scenarios and the “survivability” of a nuclear war with the USSR (hint: all three believed, more or less, that nuclear war could be endured with ‘acceptable casualties’ numbering in the tens of millions.)

The present “Russian threat” push has many similarities with that bygone era but with one significant difference: Putin’s Russia is a pale copy of the extinct Soviet Union with her imperial schemes and distant military projection capabilities. Yet, this critical, and indeed defining, distinction is pushed aside as the [clamor](#) to “contain,” “roll back,” and defeat “what is Russia doing to us” proliferates in the public forum.

War mongering, according to Paul Craig Roberts, has [succeeded](#) in now pushing Trump to become “the war president.” Says Roberts:

Losing the chance for peace might cost all of us our lives. Now that Russia and China see that Washington is unwilling to share the world stage with them, Russia and China will have to become more confrontational with Washington in order to prevent Washington from marginalizing them. Preparations for war will become central in order to protect the interests of the two countries. The situation is far more dangerous than at any time of the Cold War.

The foolish American liberal-progressive-left, wrapped up as they are in Identity Politics and hatred of “the Trump deplorables,” joined the military/security complex’s attack on Trump. So did the whores, who pretend to be a Western media, and Washington’s European vassals, not one of whom had enough intelligence to see that the outcome of the attack on Trump would be an escalation of conflict with Russia, conflict that is not in Europe’s business and security interests.

An escalatory spiral is in the making. But Trump’s detractors are unmoved. And even his own vice president is striking a [hawkish note](#) foreign to the president’s earlier promises for cooperation with Moscow. The plot thus thickens, the drummers of war unsheathe their drumsticks, and the politics of betrayal proceeds unencumbered.