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## Trump and Putin: the bros in arms

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# MINNPOST

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## Trump and Putin: the bros in arms

By [Nick Hayes](#) | 11/17/16



The

REUTERS/Sergei Karpukhin

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bromance continues. Russian President Vladimir Putin did more to help President-elect Donald Trump than, for example, Gov. Chris Christie. **The Kremlin is suspected of hacking into the Democratic National Committee's emails and letting Julian Assange deliver Hillary Clinton's and others' emails to the Trump campaign.** After the election, emboldened Russian diplomats admitted to their contacts with the Trump entourage and effectively implied that Moscow had a hand in Trump's success. To use the jargon of the espionage world, Putin has played Trump and is dealing the next hand.

There are precedents for this. Russian leaders have a gift for playing American presidents. During World War II, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt referred to Russia's Joseph Stalin as a fond "Uncle

Joe” and boasted that he could handle Stalin in the same way FDR dealt with Chicago politicians. Years later, one of FDR’s key advisers and diplomats, Chester Bowles wrote that FDR never understood that Stalin was “a bastard.”

At the 1987 Reykjavik Summit, President Ronald Reagan thought he had resolved the Cold War when he persuaded Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev that the two of them should address each other by their first names. Then, Reagan pitched his big request. He asked Mikhail if Russia would come to the aid of the United States if it was attacked by extraterrestrial aliens. The Russian president promised to help, let Reagan take this as victory of sorts, and today, nearly 30 years later loves to tell this anecdote for the amusement of audiences.

## Bush saw Putin's soul, while others saw KGB

President George W. Bush looked into Putin’s eyes and saw his Russian soul. Others saw the eyes of a former KGB agent. Putin has never said what he saw in Bush’s eyes.



Nick Hayes

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From 2008 to 2012, Moscow played a game of musical chairs. After two terms as president, Putin stepped aside assuming the modest position as prime minister and setting up the virtually unknown Dmitry Medvedev as president. President Barack Obama believed this fiction, threw his support behind his friend “Dmitry,” and looked rather foolish when Putin took back the presidency in 2012.

Enter President-elect Trump. During the 2016 campaign, Trump praised Putin as a “strong leader,” sent music to Putin’s ears when he called NATO

“obsolete and expensive,” and exaggerated his friendship with Putin — whom, by the way, he had never met.

Shortly after the announcement of Trump’s victory, Putin played his next card. His congratulations arrived by **telegram**. Putin reminded Trump that “burning issues are on the international agenda” and invited him to work together to restore normal relations between Washington and Moscow. “It is not our fault,” Putin added, “that Russia-U.S. relations are as you see them.”

## Putin's praise

Flattery, Putin knows, will get you everywhere with Trump. The Kremlin accompanied Putin's statement with praise for Trump whom it said "had averted WWII" and implied that a Trump/Putin "deal" was already in place.

The deal is simple. Putin encourages Trump to play Richard Nixon to a new détente ending the new cold war between Moscow and Washington.

- No friend of NATO, Trump will, first of all, concede to Russian demands in Crimea and the eastern Ukraine.
- Secondly, Trump will cancel the plans for a missile shield in Central Europe.
- Third, he will accept the continuation of the Assad regime in Syria or at least the installation of a new regime sympathetic to Moscow in Damascus.
- Finally, the U.S. and Russia will join in a strategic alliance against ISIS.

Trump's invitation to Moscow is probably already in the mail.

Whoever in the Trump entourage has his ear on foreign policy would certainly point out that such a Trump/Putin deal would face fierce and bipartisan opposition in Congress and betray our friends in Europe.

## All the new friends ...

Never mind, Putin would tell the new American president. Forget them. Donald, look at all the new friends you have: **Marine Le Pen**, head of France's anti-immigration party, France's National Front; **Nigel Farage**, head of the UK Independence Party and leader of the Brexit movement; **Frauke Petry**, head of the neo-fascist Alternative for Germany (AfD); Heinz-Christian Strache, head of Austria's far right Freedom Party, Viktor Orbán, prime minister of Hungary and Putin ally. Welcome to your new friends, the deplorables of Europe.

By the way, be sure to read your mentor, **Silvio Berlusconi's**, glowing praise and congratulations on your victory.

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