The Apprentice: Donald Trump & His Russia Problem

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The United States presidential election of Nov. 8, 2016 will likely rank as one of the biggest upsets in US political history. Most analysts had expected the Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton to win the presidency over the anti-establishment Republican nominee, Donald Trump, despite political setbacks in the closing days of the hotly contested campaign. Controversially, this included the leak of a letter dated Oct. 28, 2016, just 10 days before the election, by the then director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), James Comey. His letter informed Congress that his organization was reopening its investigation of Clinton for mishandling classified US government information on her private email server.

But as remarkable as Donald Trump's rise from dark horse candidate on the fringes of the Republican party in July 2015 to the 45th president of the United States was, the November 2016 election is becoming even more known for the growing body of evidence regarding interference by Russia and possible collusion by key members of the Trump campaign with Russian officials. Both houses of the US Congress have begun investigations into Russian involvement in the election, while the US intelligence community has been running its own investigation since the summer of 2016. On May 17, 2017, the Justice Department appointed former FBI Director Robert Mueller to be a special prosecutor to oversee an investigation of Russian contacts with the Trump campaign that could potentially involve criminal charges against current and former members of the Trump administration.

In the meantime, Trump's transition from celebrity businessman to president has been exasperating, especially for a man so used to having the unquestioned decision-making authority that comes with leading a large, privately-owned company. Trump has consistently demonstrated that he is prepared to reject the US government's complex and highly-developed system of checks and balances. He has also overlooked the difference between public service and his own personal agenda, as well as the underpinnings of US national security, America's role in the world, and the policies which have guided US leaders — both Republican and Democrat — since at least the beginning of the Cold War. As such, his amateur approach and selfish personality have alienated the US bureaucracy and courted political controversy *(Photo 1)*.

Photo 1: The White House

President Donald J. Trump, America's 45th president

His Own Boss

Only a few months into his presidency, it has become obvious that Trump is a political novice more comfortable negotiating business deals in the boardroom than crafting complicated legislation or developing public policy in the Oval Office. Yet, here he is, the current occupant of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue because in part he listened to white, middle-class American voters who saw in him a highly successful, if controversial, businessman who would "drain the swamp" in Washington and bring back manufacturing jobs to the US that had been in decline for several decades. Many of his core followers believed him when he said he would "Make America Great Again" — whatever that meant. It did not hurt, of course, that the real estate mogul had been a permanent fixture in the US media — and the name recognition that went with it — since the 1980s.

For his entire adult working life, Trump has been his own boss. Thin-skinned, intellectually soft, and prone to spreading falsehoods in the pursuit of his own agenda or that of his company, Trump was handed control of the family real estate business by his 26th birthday. To succeed at the Trump Organization, employees reportedly needed to give the chairman absolute loyalty. If Trump ever felt the slightest bit betrayed or lack of support, his employees heard about it and he reportedly fired them quickly. This type of domineering and highly volatile behavior defined Trump's management style.

Nevertheless, Trump was also blessed with good timing, an ability to coin a phrase and tell people want they wanted to hear, as well as a reputation for bullying those sitting across from him at the conference table. He was able to transform the Trump Organization from a New York-centric and largely residential real estate development company in the 1970s into today's global, $9.5 billion conglomerate with approximately 20,000 employees centered around himself and his massive personality. Under his firm leadership, the Trump Organization became involved in everything from construction, real estate management, and the development of luxurious resorts and casinos to beauty pageants, jewelry, furniture, accessories, and

other high-end retail products.

Trump's rise began in the 1980s. He was not only one of the first businessmen to invest heavily in the reconstruction and management of exclusive hotels and private clubs in the then relatively-depressed Manhattan real estate market, but he also became a constant subject of gossipy news and tabloid fodder because of his very public divorces. He was so successful that he made money selling his formula for success in his book *The Art of the Deal*, and later at Trump University, which taught unsuspecting students paying expensive tuition his "tricks" for making money. The epitome of the so-called "Me generation", Trump took self-gratification and self-promotion to new heights. Indeed, for both his detractors *and* his supporters, Trump embodied the unscrupulous corporate raider Gordon Gekko from the 1987 film *Wall Street* whose most remembered line is "Greed is good."

Trump's success in commercial property development and flashy lifestyle became a springboard for "The Donald" to expand his reputation and further develop the Trump brand. From 2004 until 2015, Trump was the focus of his own reality television show, *The Apprentice*, in which contestants vied for a lucrative job working for the boss himself. Those who did not make the cut were forced to hear Trump give them a humiliating dressing down for not performing to his arbitrary standards, ending each program with his famous tagline "You're fired!"

Donald Trump's extravagant persona, however, stands in stark contrast with his lack of political acumen and judgment. In the 1980s, he was a loud critic of President Ronald Reagan for being too soft in nuclear arms negotiations with the Soviet Union and for having no "backbone" in negotiating trade deals with US allies such as Japan, which he claimed were enjoying US protection on the cheap.

As such, Trump developed no firm political convictions, but always seemed to gravitate toward positions, however controversial, that simply brought him the media spotlight. During a television interview in March 2011, for example, when he hinted as he so often did that he might run for president, Trump openly began propagating a conspiracy theory regarding Barack Obama's US citizenship and his eligibility to serve as president. Because Trump seemed continually to exhibit the behavior of a political apprentice, the Washington establishment greatly underestimated his chances of winning the White House.

Russian Meddling

Understanding Trump's personality is critical to understanding the likely future direction of the US relationship with Russia. Guiding this relationship during the Trump administration, however, has been the ongoing revelations of Russian meddling in the US election and Trump campaign ties to Moscow.

It is believed that Russian intelligence first gained access to the Democratic National Committee (DNC) computer networks as early as July 2015 and enjoyed continuous access at least until June 2016. During that time, Russian hackers were able to collect emails and other private correspondence of key people working with and on behalf of Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign. Moreover, it is believed that Russia's intelligence agencies provided the stolen data to intermediary organizations such as Guccifer 2.0 and DCLeaks.com to leak the information to the public, as well as to online publishers of classified and private information such as Wikileaks. Besides revealing correspondence demonstrating DNC favoritism toward Clinton over her Democratic challenger Bernie Sanders, which fed a Trump campaign narrative of political entitlement by the former First Lady, some hacked emails were allegedly used to discredit key Clinton officials. Trump and several high level people in his campaign, of course, openly encouraged this.

Trump, however, also repeatedly signaled on the campaign trail that as president he would push for better relations with Moscow. In part, at least, Trump saw Russian collaboration in the Middle East as an opportunity for the US to extricate itself from one of its thorniest foreign policy challenges — fighting and defeating the Islamic State, or ISIS. One of the most famous lines from his stump speech was, "Wouldn't it be nice if we actually got along, as an example, with Russia? I'm all for it and let's go get ISIS because we have to get ISIS and we have to get them fast."

It would be wrong to suggest that Trump was unique in seeking better relations with Moscow. President George W. Bush looked President Vladimir Putin "in the eye" at their first meeting in 2001 and "was able to get a sense of his soul", while then Secretary of State Clinton met Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and famously tried to "reset" US-Russian relations following the 2008 Russian invasion of Georgia. Both of these attempts, however, failed. Nevertheless, Trump's consistently praising comments regarding Russia while disparaging America's NATO allies contradicted decades of US foreign policy and seemed to suggest that Trump was, at best, naïve to think that working with an autocrat such as Putin would be in the US national interest. This unorthodox approach certainly raised eyebrows in the US intelligence community.

Because the Trump Organization is a privately held company, little is known about Trump's financial ties to Russia without examining his tax returns, which he has so far refused to release to the public. What is known from published reports, however, is that Trump's relationship with Russia dates back to the period of *glasnost* and *perestroika* in the 1980s, when he travelled to Moscow to work on hotel renovation projects. After the fall of the Soviet Union and the rise of Russia's oligarchs, the Trump Organization was able to attract a great deal of investment from Russia into his real estate projects around the world. During a visit to Moscow in 2008, Trump's son, Donald Trump Jr., told investors in Moscow that "Russians make up a pretty disproportionate cross-section of a lot of our assets; say in Dubai, and certainly with our project in SoHo and anywhere in New York…We see a lot of money pouring in from Russia. There's indeed a lot of money coming for new-builds and resale reflecting a trend in the Russian economy and, of course, the weak dollar versus the ruble."

Alongside Trump's financial ties to Russia, a colorful cast of characters that occupied various senior positions in the Trump campaign caught the attention of the US intelligence community

Photo 2: Defense Intelligence Agency Public Affairs

Retired Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn, US Army

because they engaged in suspicious contact with Russia and Kremlin-backed surrogates. This included the Republican political strategists Roger Stone and Paul Manafort, the energy analyst Carter Page, retired US Army Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn, and even the president's own son-in-law, Jared Kushner.

Flynn is perhaps the most intriguing connection between the Trump campaign and Russia. As a former director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, Flynn brought instant credibility and experience to the Trump campaign when he became its top national security advisor. Known to have strong anti-Muslim views and inclined to believe falsehoods spread by social media despite being the former head of a major US intelligence agency, his opinions on Russia were generally out of step with other senior US military officials *(Photo 2)*.

Following his retirement from the US military, Flynn lobbied in Washington for a closer relationship with Russia to boost the US coalition's fight against the Islamic State. A firebrand, he raised the issue of Clinton's private email server during a signature moment of the Republican National Convention in July 2016, leading the audience in a series of chants to "lock her up". Flynn later drew the attention of the US intelligence community for his allegedly strong ties to Moscow, particularly his attendance at a December 2015 Russia Today gala in Moscow. When a video of Flynn later surfaced showing him seated near Putin at the gala dinner, and when it was revealed he received a significant speaking fee from the Kremlin-backed news agency, doubts were raised about his credibility.

After Trump's election victory, and on the orders of President Obama, the US intelligence community delivered its verdict in a mid-December 2016 report regarding Russian interference. Its main conclusion was that "Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered an influence campaign in 2016 aimed at the US presidential election. Russia's goals were to undermine public faith in the US democratic process, denigrate Secretary Clinton, and harm her electability and potential presidency. We further assess Putin and the Russian Government developed a clear preference for President-elect Trump. We have high confidence in these judgments."

On Dec. 29, 2016, in one of its final actions in office, the Obama administration announced sanctions against four Russian individuals and five Russian entities as punishment for interfering in the election. The administration also ordered 35 Russian diplomats to leave the country and two Russian compounds in the US to be shut down. These sanctions were in addition to previous sanctions already in place following the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014.

Trump Versus US Intelligence Community

The cloud of suspicion regarding the Trump campaign and its ties to Russia followed it into the transition. The US intelligence community raised concerns when Trump appointed Flynn early on to be his national security advisor. In addition, a very public argument developed on Jan. 10, 2017 when reports of an unsubstantiated secret dossier claiming Russia had compromising personal and financial information about the president-elect surfaced in the American media. Both Trump and Obama had been briefed on the contents of the secret dossier the previous week along with the intelligence community's assessment of Russian influence on the election.

Trump, however, felt double-crossed by the leak of the secret dossier and publicly responded the next day at a heated press conference in the lobby of Trump Tower. On the one hand, he acknowledged for the first time that Moscow was behind the hacking of the DNC, though he disagreed with the conclusions of the intelligence report that Russia had specifically tried to help him win. After all, recognizing that Russia favored him would diminish the credibility of his election victory. On the other, he went after the US intelligence community publicly, accusing it of leaking the embarrassing secret dossier and claiming it was "something that Nazi Germany would have done". Still showing a clear desire to improve US-Russian relations despite the controversy, Trump noted that, "If Putin likes Donald Trump, guess what folks, that's an asset not a liability."

The deterioration of Trump's relationship with the US intelligence community continued into his presidency as news reports surfaced that during the transition, on the same day that the US announced new sanctions against Russia, Flynn and the Russian ambassador in Washington, Sergey Kislyak, had multiple telephone conversations, which many in Washington saw as evidence of collusion between Trump's inner circle and Russia. Despite initial statements by the Trump transition team to the contrary, it was believed that Flynn told Kislyak that Moscow should ignore responding to the new sanctions until the new incoming Trump administration arrived to lift those sanctions and develop closer relations.

Flynn, however, put himself in jeopardy for working on behalf of an administration that had not yet taken power and for assuring Vice President Michael Pence that his conversations with Kislyak during the transition were "strictly coincidental" and had nothing to do with the Obama administration's decision to punish Russia for meddling in the election. Pence went on several American television networks to back up Flynn's story. The vice president, however, had obviously been lied to when it later came out the US intelligence community had recorded Kislyak's conversations with Flynn and that Flynn could no longer be certain the issue of US sanctions never came up in the calls. Acting Attorney General Sally Yates privately warned the White House about its ongoing Russia investigation and that because of his lie to Pence, Flynn was vulnerable to blackmail by Russian intelligence. On Feb. 13, 2017, after only 24 days on the job, Flynn resigned as national security advisor.

The Loyal Foot Soldier

Photo 3: US State Department

Trump's loyal foot soldier, US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson

Trump was elected president of the US to bring change to Washington. In his inaugural address of Jan. 20, 2017, and true to his CEO background and personality, Trump vowed every decision in the White House would be designed to put "America first". In practice, this meant the president's foreign policy would be completely self-serving and narrowly based on short-term goals that brought obvious immediate benefit. If the Trump administration was going to put US-Russian relations on a better footing, Trump needed a loyal foot soldier who knew Russia and could "negotiate good deals" as US secretary of state.

Trump's nomination of a businessman like himself, Rex Tillerson, the former chairman of Exxon Mobil, was designed to augment Trump's own transactional approach to diplomacy as well as to demonstrate the new administration's Russian credentials. As the head of the US's largest oil company, Tillerson enjoyed a strong relationship with Russia dating back to the 1990s, when he negotiated several oil exploration agreements with President Boris Yeltsin. Tillerson later developed a friendship with Putin as Exxon Mobil continued to invest in the Russian energy sector, highlighted by the 2011 bilateral agreement to begin Arctic drilling. In 2013, Putin awarded Tillerson the Order of Friendship for his role in developing cooperation in the Russian energy sector *(Photo 3)*.

Beyond this, Trump also prized Tillerson's unbending loyalty to Exxon Mobil, joining the company in 1975 right after finishing his university degree and steadily rising through the ranks over the next 40 years. Affable and plain-spoken with a north Texas drawl, Tillerson is not known as a particularly deep thinker or someone who is going to present big ideas on complex international issues. He is, however, someone who will take close direction and always support his boss.

Tillerson's first diplomatic test with respect to Russia occurred on April 6, when Trump ordered US warships in the eastern Mediterranean to launch a missile strike against Syria in response to the chemical attack by Syrian government forces on a rebel-held area that killed more than 80 civilians. Although most of the international community praised the American launch of 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles against the Al Sharyat airbase where the warplanes that carried out the chemical attacks were based, Russia stood firmly in support of its ally Syrian President Bashar al Assad and the government in Damascus.

Some observers thought that US notification to Moscow of the impending strike, giving only a few hours' notice, was a sign that US-Russian relations were not moving closer. Less than one week later, however, Tillerson was in Moscow meeting with Lavrov and Putin to discuss global challenges ranging from not only the Syrian civil war, but also the situation in Ukraine, and the provocations of the North Korean regime. Although Tillerson went to Russia calling out the Kremlin for its backing of Damascus after the horrific chemical weapon attack, his public comments were conciliatory in tone, observing that although "there is a low level of trust" between Washington and Moscow, "The world's two foremost nuclear powers cannot have this kind of relationship." Indeed, in keeping with Trump's vision of a negotiated partnership with Russia, the two governments agreed to form a bilateral working group to examine "the irritants" standing in the way of better relations *(Photo 4)*.

Photo 4: US State Department

Secretary Tillerson and Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov shake hands before their bilateral meeting in Moscow, April 12, 2017.

Growing White House Pressure

If loyalty was the personal characteristic Trump valued above all else, he certainly did not have it in his first FBI director. Trump was highly critical of James Comey through most of the presidential campaign for being too easy on Clinton regarding her mishandling of classified data. He completely changed his tune, however, when Comey's Oct. 28 letter to Congress was leaked indicating that the FBI was reopening its investigation on Clinton. In the days leading up to the election, Trump consistently praised Comey for finally "doing the right thing". In perhaps one of the most monumental decisions he has made so far affecting his presidency, Trump asked Comey during the transition to remain as FBI director in the new administration *(Photo 5)*.

The relationship between the new president and Comey was doomed from the start. Indeed, Trump probably did not fully understand Comey or what he stood for. In spite of the hit to his reputation for his handling of the Clinton investigation, Comey had made a name for himself as a person of integrity by famously standing up to senior White House officials in 2004 against the Bush administration's warrantless wiretapping program. Over the first few months of 2017, tensions between the two men grew as Trump tried to enlist Comey's personal loyalty, while Comey increasingly distanced himself. According to reports about their first private meeting on Jan. 27, 2017, Trump twice asked Comey to pledge his loyalty to him. Comey backed away and only offered to be honest with the president.

Photo 5: Federal Bureau of Investigation

President Trump's first FBI director, James Comey, testifies before Congress.

Photo 6: @RealDonaldTrump Twitter Account

One of President Trump's angry tweets, March 4, 2017

There were other examples where Trump was clearly losing the ability to control the Russia investigation. On Feb. 14, 2017, the day after Flynn's resignation, Trump invited Comey to the White House for another private discussion. According to contemporaneous memos kept by Comey, the president tried to influence the FBI investigation into Flynn's connection to Russia by observing that Flynn did nothing wrong and saying, "I hope you can see your way clear to letting this go, to letting Flynn go." Trump was again frustrated when Comey ignored his request. Later in the month, Trump was reportedly furious when his attorney general and Comey's boss in the Justice Department, Jeff Sessions, recused himself from the Russia investigation. Sessions was initially found to have misled the Senate Judiciary Committee during his confirmation hearing regarding at least two meetings he had with Ambassador Kislyak during the campaign.

Trump usually responded to the news regarding the Russia investigation by taking to Twitter to vent his frustrations. As the US media continued to focus on the growing number of reports highlighting contacts by senior members of the Trump campaign with Russian officials, Trump directed his anger at the US bureaucracy's "illegal leaks of classified and other information". In a series of tweets on March 4, Trump also made several unsubstantiated accusations against Obama and the US intelligence community, accusing them of illegally wiretapping the Trump campaign during the final days of the election. It was an obvious attempt to gain the US public's sympathy and confirm the US intelligence community's bias against him *(Photo 6)*.

On March 20, 2017, the FBI director's testimony before the House Intelligence Committee greatly increased political pressure on the president. Not only did Comey directly refute Trump's baseless claims of wiretapping by Obama, but he also publicly confirmed for the first time the FBI's investigation of Russian connections to members of the Trump campaign. Further testimony by Comey on May 3, 2017 before the Senate Judiciary Committee revealed just how conflicted the FBI director had been on the eve of the election regarding why he notified Congress he was reopening the Clinton investigation and why he kept the Russia investigation on the Trump campaign concealed. In words that infuriated both Democrats and Republicans for different reasons, Comey said, "It makes me mildly nauseous to think that we might have had some impact on the election. But honestly, it wouldn't change the decision." Moreover, Comey highlighted that Russia represented the "greatest threat of any nation on Earth ... One of the biggest lessons learned is that Russia will do this again. Because of the 2016 election, they know it worked." The Trump administration was also aware that Comey had requested a significant increase in funding and personnel to expand the FBI's Russia probe.

"This Russia Thing"

Trump had had enough. On May 9, he fired the FBI director, setting off a political firestorm in Washington not seen since the Watergate era. Because Trump was in effect removing the person responsible for investigating his own presidential campaign and its possible ties to Russia, Democrats rallied to Comey because of the timing of his firing. They asked why Trump initially kept Comey on as FBI director only to fire him at this point, suggesting the FBI was getting close to a breakthrough in its Russia investigation.

The manner in which Trump fired Comey only created more speculation regarding the president's motives. The White House initially claimed it was based on the recommendation of Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, whose memo charged that Comey acted inappropriately in the handling of the Clinton investigation. This clumsy ploy fooled no one.

Two days later, Trump went on national television for an interview where he tried to discredit Comey, calling him "a showboat" and a "grandstander". He also all but admitted that Russia was his reason for firing Comey saying, "In fact, when I decided to just do it, I said to myself, I said, 'You know, this Russia thing with Trump and Russia is a made up story, it's an excuse by the Democrats for having lost an election that they should have won.'" Trump created further confusion when he went on to say that he had already made the decision to fire Comey long before receiving Rosenstein's memo, directly contradicting the earlier statements coming out of the White House.

If Trump wanted to add insult to injury in his fight with the US intelligence community, he did so when he received Lavrov and

Photo 7: Russian Foreign Ministry

President Trump receives Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Ambassador Sergey Kislyak in the Oval Office, May 10, 2017, where American journalists were barred, but Russia released photographs.

Kislyak for meetings in the Oval Office on May 10, the day after Comey's firing. That a photographer from the Russian media outlet TASS was the only news agency allowed in the meeting area to take pictures was an obvious slap against the US intelligence community and their collaborators in the US media which had been receiving and publishing leaked information. Even Lavrov got involved, joking to the press on his way into the meeting that he had not heard Comey had been fired *(Photo 7)*.

In the days following Trump's meeting with Lavrov and Kislyak, further details about the US-Russia conversation were leaked to the press. Trump reportedly discussed highly classified intelligence from an Israeli counterterrorism operation regarding an Islamic State plot to blow up airliners with bombs planted in laptops. That Trump chose to share this information with an ally of Iran cast doubt on his administration's reliability to handle the intelligence of a close US ally. Trump also reportedly told the Russian delegation that by firing "the nut job" Comey, he was relieved of the "great pressure" that was on him because of the Russia investigation.

Given the political circus that grew out of Trump's firing of his FBI director, and the now almost daily revelations of discussions and contacts between members of Trump's inner circle and the Russians, along with Trump's own personal confrontations with US intelligence and law enforcement officials, Rosenstein appointed Robert Mueller as special prosecutor to investigate any collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia. Mueller's reputation is above reproach according to both Republicans and Democrats. Since his appointment, Mueller has reportedly already expanded the Russia investigation to include examining President Trump's conduct for possible obstruction of justice following his decision to fire Comey. It will now be up to Mueller "to follow the facts to wherever they may lead" in order to pull the US out of its domestic political crisis over Russia.

The Apprentice

As the first several months of the Trump administration have shown, the president has a Russia problem that is not going away anytime soon. His campaign's connection to Russia has not only become the prism through which US relations with Russia have been framed, but also the context for how several other political issues both domestically and internationally will be addressed. Over the next several months and years, through the 2018 midterm elections and even to the 2020 presidential campaign, Trump's connections to Russia and the investigations by various branches of the US government will be a constant theme running through all political life in Washington.

Trump's very public disagreements with NATO allies and his June 1, 2017 announcement that he was initiating the US withdrawal from the Paris Climate Accord demonstrate that Trump is comfortable ignoring the traditional foundations of American national security and abrogating US global leadership — all to Russia's benefit — in support of his narrow, personal agenda. During his first NATO Summit in May 2017, Trump's failure to endorse Article 5 of the NATO Treaty regarding the keystone principle of collective self-defense — going against his own national security team — did more to undermine the unity of the Western Alliance than the confrontation with the Soviet Union did throughout the Cold War.

As such, Trump has very much shown himself to be a political apprentice. His transactional style of politics and diplomacy will continue to hamper his administration, while he has yet to recognize that is it not enough for his actions as president to be "merely legal". Just because Trump is within his *right* do something (such as fire the FBI director investigating him or share classified information from a close ally) does not mean it is *appropriate* for him to do so. In terms of the Russia investigation, the president must learn that he cannot be merely innocent of collusion, but must also *seem* to be innocent of collusion if he wants to survive politically in Washington. Republicans in Congress have so far remained supportive of Trump, although cracks in party unity have started to develop among some of the party's moderates as his poll numbers have steadily declined.

Beyond Russia, the president's actions to date demonstrate the great difficulties of electing a private businessman to the highest office in the US, especially one with Trump's personality. It has been more than irritating to Trump, so used to controlling his own narrative about how great the Trump Organization was always doing, that there is a constant stream of leaks of embarrassing information about the Oval Office's inner workings and the administration's pressure-cooker atmosphere. Indeed, Trump is learning the hard way that he cannot demand loyalty from his own bureaucrats and then expect them to carry out his policies or fulfill his agenda if he is not loyal to them. While being a successful businessman and media personality may have helped Trump get elected, these qualities have not helped him in terms of working in the rough and tumble world of Washington politics or US foreign relations. And for Putin and the Kremlin officials sitting around him in Moscow, the political chaos and confusion created in Washington by the Trump administration suits them just fine. JS

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