

The Full Story of Trump and Russia

Two years of investigations into the Trump campaign's activities during the 2016 election have revealed a sprawling conspiracy. It is now clear there were [two campaigns to elect Donald Trump](#)—one operating out of Trump Tower and the other out of the Kremlin. These campaigns were in constant contact throughout the election and transition. The two campaigns [discussed tactics and policy](#)—including releasing “dirt” on their mutual opponent Hillary Clinton and rolling back sanctions against Russia—and executed their strategies to maximally benefit Trump's chances of victory.

Their partnership stems from two sources: Putin's geopolitical grievances against the United States and Trump's decades of corrupt business practices. Connecting the two is the Russian oligarchy, businessmen with whom both have long-established, mutually beneficial relationships. For Putin, he has [co-opted his country's wealthiest individuals](#) to act as unofficial agents of his policy both at home and abroad. For Trump, Russian money has [sustained his real estate empire](#) through multiple bankruptcies and a financial crisis, often in ways that raise major red flags for corrupt behavior.

The convergence of their interests—crystallized through Trump's emergence in American politics as a promoter of racist conspiracy theories and his growing ties to Russian oligarchs—led the Kremlin to [throw its weight behind Trump's candidacy](#) in 2016. The two campaigns worked together closely to secure his victory, contacting each other [at least 87 times](#) and holding [at least 26 meetings](#) during the election and transition. These contacts and meetings involved high-ranking members of Trump's inner circle and reportedly included conversations about shared policy goals and election strategy.

Their collaboration has created an ongoing crisis within the American political system as Trump continually [takes steps to repay Putin](#) for his investment. For almost two years, Trump has enacted a startlingly pro-Russia foreign policy, undermining sanctions, criticizing international organizations such as NATO, and repeatedly praising Putin. Meanwhile, Trump and his allies have continually sought to obstruct the investigation by lying, concealing relevant information, and attacking investigators.

The Moscow Project's new report, [“Conspiracy Against the United States: The Story of Trump and Russia,”](#) shows how the Trump campaign colluded with the Kremlin to win the 2016 election and how the U.S. should respond. These recommendations range from ways to empower the Russia investigations, to measures combatting Russia's ongoing aggression, to reforms that will strengthen our defenses against future attempts to undermine American democracy, including the following:

- **Revitalize congressional investigations into Russian interference and enact measures to protect special counsel Robert Mueller and his investigation.** For nearly two years, Republican majorities in both houses of Congress have effectively [stymied attempts](#) to pursue key leads and hold the Trump administration accountable, including refusing to call witnesses or subpoena relevant documents. Meanwhile, bipartisan legislation to protect Mueller from presidential interference has [languished, unpassed](#) in both chambers of Congress. The beginning of a new legislative session, with a new majority in the House of Representatives, offers a golden opportunity to renew both efforts.
- **Impose meaningful consequences on the Russian government for its unprecedented attack on American democracy.** Even before the Trump administration took office, the president and his team were [actively working](#) to undermine President Barack Obama's response to the Kremlin's efforts to interfere in the 2016 election. Since then, Trump has seemingly done everything he could to undermine any attempt to punish Putin and the Kremlin, [stalling and subverting](#)

[sanctions](#) while repeatedly delivering on some of Putin's top foreign policy goals. As a result, Russia has only [continued its attempts to meddle](#) in the American political system. In lieu of presidential leadership, Congress must act to aggressively implement existing sanctions but also enact new legislation to not only impose meaningful consequences on the Kremlin for its behavior but also deter future attempts by any hostile foreign actor to interfere in our democracy.

- **A bipartisan group of senators, led by Lindsay Graham (R-SC) and Robert Menendez (D-NJ), has [introduced legislation](#) to increase pressure on Russia.** In addition to reaffirming America's support for NATO, the legislation expands sanctions on Russian sovereign debt, state-owned companies, and targeted political figures, oligarchs, and family members known to act on Putin's behalf.
- **Protect American elections from foreign interference and corrupting influences.** Along with hacking into the infrastructure of a major political party and a presidential candidate's campaign, the Kremlin [capitalized on](#) the increasing influence of social media and may have even [compromised actual election infrastructure](#). Our lax campaign finance laws and enforcement make it difficult to understand the full reach of Russian influence in the 2016 election. As a result, the Russia scandal has brought to the forefront long-neglected gaps in America's election systems. Reprioritizing the integrity of elections is thus a much-needed fix that will not only remedy these glaring flaws but will also help restore the American public's faith in the democratic process.
 - **Two bills have been introduced that would help close gaps in America's campaign finance laws.** [The DISCLOSE Act](#) would expand the timeframe during which any ads that reference a candidate must be reported to the Federal Election Commission while increasing disclosure requirements for domestic subsidiaries of foreign companies as well as organizations that act as conduits for large amounts of money into the American political system. Another bill, [the Honest Ads Act](#), would subject social media advertisements to the same disclosure requirements as ads in other media, reducing the ability of foreign powers to influence elections through online advertisements.
- **Improve anti-corruption measures and enforcement to reduce the possibility of foreign influence.** The foundation of the Trump campaign's collusion with Russia is Trump's [long history of corrupt practices](#) in business that both helped him forge relationships with potential agents of the Kremlin and left him vulnerable to compromise by foreign powers. This problem goes well beyond Trump; America's porous financial system and lax anti-money-laundering regulations [create major vulnerabilities](#) that hostile actors can easily exploit. Closing the loopholes that enabled Trump to get as far as he did and improving the enforcement of measures already in place to rein in corrupt behaviors will strengthen American democracy, reducing the likelihood that future leaders come to power under the sway of anti-democratic actors and making the government more responsive to the American public rather than wealthy donors.
 - **Congress should pass legislation to curtail the formation and abuse of anonymous shell corporations.** Bills that have already been introduced in both houses of Congress, including [the TITLE Act](#), introduced in June 2017, and [the Corporate Transparency Act](#), introduced in August 2017, would provide much-needed transparency to incorporation processes. Meanwhile, increasing the budget allocated to the Treasury Department's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network and amending the Bank Secrecy Act and Money Laundering Control Act of 1986 to include real estate institutions and brokers among the financial institutions required to disclose suspicious transactions would significantly reduce the ability of bad actors to [launder money through U.S. real estate](#).