

2025

Reviewing the Steele dossier



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1. Introduction

Regarding Trump and the incredible number of actions his administration has taken in a truly brief period of time, and that is undeniable, we have recovered the Steele dossier which was the **very first allegations of Trump's closeness to Russia**.

Although a **controversial document**, for some a complete fake, and for others a revered file of truth about Trump, what stands out is that the author, Christopher Steele, was once the head of the Russia desk at the British SIS (MI6). His knowledge of the functioning of Russian circles of power cannot be circumvented, by no means.

On the other hand, he has always been very clear about the origin of the dossier and he himself has marked (in terms of credibility of the information gathered by his network) the veracity of some of the most controversial parts of the reports (although it is known as the Steele dossier, it is in fact a collection of reports gathered in one file).

We have extracted from the dossier **the commitments, as stated in the different reports, that Trump had acquired with Russia**. We just want to gauge if those commitments have been or are being accomplished and if Trump is working in that direction. It is a way to **assess the credibility of the information displayed in the Steele dossier**.

We should bear in mind that the dossier was written (and the information delivered in it) just before the elections in 2016, when Russia had already invaded Crimea and the divide between democrats and republicans was at its peak. Let's remember that Biden was Vice president, and Trump's opponent was Hillary Clinton. Two completely different worlds were clashing at polling stations.

The international community had imposed some sanctions on Russia due to the covert invasion of Crimea, but diplomatic relations had not been greatly damaged, and Europe was doing business with Russia as usual. It's two years before the Skripal's poisoning in Salisbury, four before Navalny's and five before the attack on the Colonial pipeline. We are six years off the invasion of Ukraine. What we mean is that **international relations-degrading events have unfolded quickly**.

2. Main takeouts

Based on the Steele dossier, the political exchanges or common goals between Putin and Trump included:

1. **Lifting Sanctions on Russia:** Trump's foreign policy advisor, Carter Page, indicated that if Trump were elected, sanctions on Russia would be lifted. This was discussed during a secret meeting with Igor Sechin, the President of Rosneft, who offered a brokerage of up to a 19% stake in Rosneft in return.

2. **Sideline Russian Intervention in Ukraine:** Trump's team agreed to sideline Russian intervention in Ukraine as a campaign issue and to raise US/NATO defence commitments in the Baltics and Eastern Europe to deflect attention away from Ukraine. This was a priority for Putin, who needed to cauterize the subject.
3. **Exchange of Intelligence:** Trump's team provided intelligence to Russia on the activities of Russian oligarchs and their families in the US. This exchange had been running for at least 8 years. In return, the Kremlin supplied Trump's team with valuable intelligence on his political rivals, including Hillary Clinton.
4. **Disruption of the Liberal International Status Quo:** The Kremlin viewed Trump as a divisive, anti-establishment candidate who would shake up the current international status quo in Russia's favour. This included disrupting the liberal international order and potentially easing Ukraine-related sanctions.
5. **Exploitation of Leaked Material:** The Kremlin aimed to exacerbate divisions within the US by exploiting already disseminated material from WikiLeaks. This included targeting educated US youth to turn them against Clinton and towards Trump.
6. **Support for Anti-Clinton Operations:** The Kremlin engaged in operations to support Trump and damage Clinton, including the hacking and leaking of DNC emails. This was motivated by Putin's fear and hatred of Hillary Clinton.
7. **Political Manoeuvring:** The Kremlin aimed to shift the US political consensus in Russia's perceived interests regardless of who won the election. This included pushing both candidates away from President Obama's policies, particularly on trade agreements like TPP and TTIP, which were viewed as detrimental to Russian interests.

These political exchanges and common goals reveal the **strategic alignment between Putin and Trump**, with both sides working towards mutual benefits in terms of lifting sanctions, disrupting the international order, and exchanging valuable intelligence.

3. Analysis

Let's go through one by one of these takeouts and see how Trump has been dealing with everyone and each of these issues:

1. **Lifting Sanctions on Russia:** Sanctions have been increasing on Russia since 2016. Trump has recently spoken about lifting sanctions as a means of negotiating with Russia in order to strike a peace deal. However, Trump signed the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions act (CAATSA), enacting new sanctions on Russia, Iran, and North Korea in **2017**. He also banned the use of Kaspersky Labs software on government computers due to Kaspersky's ties to Russian intelligence services in **2017**. In **2017** the National Security Strategy released by the White House, identified Russia and China as adversarial to the United States.

In early **2018** the Department of Defence released its National Defence Strategy, identifying Russia and China as strategic competitors to the United States, in line with the White House. In **2018** the Department of the Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network proposed a new rule to ban ABLV Bank AS, Latvia's third-biggest bank, for its involvement in illicit Russia-related activity. More sanctions were imposed on Russian citizens due to the invasion of Crimea. That year 5 Russian entities and 19 individuals were sanctioned for conducting a series of cyberattacks and interfering in the 2016 U.S. elections, **although those actions were to favour Trump**. Later, 33 Russian individuals and entities were sanctioned for their role in U.S. election interference and their involvement in supporting military operations in Syria and Ukraine. In August, 7 Russian oligarchs and the companies they own or control, 17 senior Russian government officials, and a state-owned Russian weapons trading company (and a bank it owns) were sanctioned for their roles in advancing Russia's malign activities – including the continued occupation of Crimea, engaging in cyberattacks, and supporting Assad's regime.

In **2019** there were further sanctions on Russian individuals and entities related to the support provided to Maduro's regime in Venezuela and the situation in Ukraine.

2. Sideline Russian Intervention in Ukraine: In addition to the sanctions depicted above, Trump's team issued statements against the activity of Russia in Ukraine related to:

- a) In **2018**, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced a formal policy reaffirming the U.S. rejection of Russia's annexation of Crimea.
- b) In **2018**, the United States issued a joint statement with France, Germany, Canada, and the United Kingdom, reiterating its outrage at the use of a chemical nerve agent in Salisbury and expressing full confidence in the British assessment that the suspects were officers of the Russian military intelligence service (GRU).
- c) In **2018**, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley condemned Russia's decision to intercept, fire on, and seize three Ukrainian navy vessels in the Black Sea. In February **2019**, Pompeo issued another statement with the same spirit.
- d) In April **2019**, the U.S. Department of State condemned Russia's decision to grant expedited citizenship to residents of Russia-controlled eastern Ukraine.

The U.S. administration approved a plan to provide Ukraine with enhanced defensive capabilities to help it fight off Russia-backed separatists in **2017**. In December **2018**, the U.S. Department of State announced it would provide an additional \$10 million in Foreign Military Financing to further build Ukraine's naval capabilities in response to Russian attacks near the Kerch Strait.

3. Exchange of Intelligence:

In December **2017**, the US told Russia to close its consulate in San Francisco and buildings in Washington and New York that housed trade missions. It didn't include the expulsion of Russians citizens.

In March **2018**, 48 Russian intelligence officers from the Russian embassy in Washington were expelled, and the Russian consulate in Seattle was ordered to close, in response to the Skripal poisoning in the United Kingdom. In the same month, 12 Russian intelligence officers from the Russian Mission to the United Nations in New York were expelled for actions deemed to be abuses of their privilege of residence.

4. **Disruption of the Liberal International Status Quo:** Trump first tried to exit WHO during his first term in 2020. In 2025 he has already signed an executive order to start the process to exit the organization.

It is undeniable that Trump is disrupting the world order. He is against what has been mainstream lately: agenda 2030, NATO, United Nations and so on. Trade relationships are being strained under his tariffs policy.

He has also sent messages to acquire Greenland, to control the Panama Canal or include Canada as the 51st state of the United States. Reduction of US troops in Europe is also likely to happen. His steadfast support to Israel is also another disruption.

5. **Exploitation of Leaked Material:** This topic is very much limited to the time of the elections in 2016 and has no translations in actual times.
6. **Support for Anti-Clinton Operations:** This is only comparable to the continuous declarations against Biden mandate. Whenever he can he inserts a disqualifying comment against Biden and his administration. It's very well-known Trump's dislike on the Obamas. Biden should not feel jealous at all.

Political Manoeuvring: Despite the measures taken by Trump administration in his first term against Russian interests, is also true that both have met on several occasions and always transmitted a clear understanding and sympathy. They both have defended each other's standpoints and never dissented in public. The most evident took place in **2018** after they held a summit in Helsinki. Trump sided with Putin against the FBI regarding the Russian interfering in the elections in 2016.

In his second mandate has made clear that he prefers dealing with Putin than dealing with Zelensky.

4. Conclusions

Given the data presented above, it is easy to defend that Trump acts tantamount against as in favour of Russia. However, **if we consider that it was exceedingly difficult for Trump (who did not expect to win the elections) to control all the levers of power under his responsibility**, we can better devise the insights of Trump's first mandate.

Opposition against his mandate within the ranks of his administration was high, and his knowledge and that of his team was limited. Thus, many of the actions

against Russia were taken independently, without necessarily passing through the sieve of the White House.

In addition to the lack of internal control, Russia happened to poison Sergey and Yulia Skripal. It forced the Western world to react. **Trump could not circumvent the situation**. But it is also likely **that if it happened today, Trump would react differently**, given his experience of power at the helm of the US.

Both leaders have kept a good and smooth relationship which has survived Biden term in good shape, as it is obvious in the current peace negotiations and the swift restoration of diplomatic ties (new Russian Ambassador appointed to Washington).

Unaware of the existence of *kompromat* (sensible information on Trump in the hands of Russia), **the fact is that Trump favours Russia**, alleviating the consequences of its actions and minimising its excesses. Another noteworthy fact is the **good relationship between the two leaders**. Their relationship has not been tarnished by the ups and downs of the international situation, the economy, war in Ukraine, Syria and Gaza or accusations of all kinds.

It is not a master-servant relationship at all. Each does what he believes works in their respective best interests. **Their understanding of the world seems to coincide and that creates a stream of sympathy**. Even when decisions taken go against the interest of the other, they both find ways to deactivate the misunderstanding.

It would be naif to believe that it happens naturally, especially when we are talking about personalities which take themselves very seriously, with a touch of narcissism and an outstanding self-confidence. We cannot conclude but to assess that the Steele dossier spoke the truth with a high level of veracity regarding the understanding and cooperation between Trump and Putin. Needless to say, that the way they relate to each other is that of 'I know you know I know' and it makes unnecessary to explicitly mention nothing. And it makes even more credible the existence of some kind of *kompromat*, taking into account Trump's conviction (his trend to compromising sexual behaviour) and Putin's background as a member of the former KGB.

Whether Trump cooperates unwittingly with Russia or not, is irrelevant regarding the consequences it brings along.