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## Dems crippling Trump's plans to cooperate with Russia out of own ambitions – Stephen Cohen

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Stephen Cohen - the contributing professor emeritus at Princeton U

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**Sophie Shevardnadze:** Dr. Stephen Cohen, professor emeritus at the Princeton University, contributing editor, welcome to RT. It's really great to have you back.

**Stephen Cohen:** Thank you, Sophie.

**SS:** President Trump is having a lot of scandals - the alleged sharing of classified information, his supposed meddling into an election, his firing of the agency's director. With growing calls for impeachment - does anybody here think that could lead to that?

**SC:** No, there's no evidence at all that there was any kind of plot here, with a parallel to Watergate. There's no evidence that somehow Trump was involved with the Russians who helped Trump get elected, and I don't know if he had any contact politically with Russians, and so far there are no investigations. There are maybe some allegations, but no actual evidence has been produced. The reason it's so dangerous is that it makes it so dangerous. I guess most Americans probably know that in January of last year, the intelligence agencies published a report that showed that Russia and President Putin in particular were trying to interfere in America to help Trump and they did it through democracy and Russia "hijacked" the election. They did it with these allegations with the help of WikiLeaks, which I think is probably true to it,

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**SS:** What kind of democracy is this? What kind of democracy is this RT? But then, me and you and maybe General Flynn can get together, because he's off duty now, and help America get its democracy back?

**SC:** You know, it's easy to joke about this, except that we're at, maybe, the most dangerous moment in U.S.-Russian relations, in my lifetime, and, maybe, ever. The reason is, that we're in the new Cold War, by whatever name. We have three Cold War fronts that are fought with the possibility of hot war - in the Baltic

region, where NATO is carrying out an unprecedented military buildup on Russia's border, in Ukraine, where there's a civil and proxy war between Russia and the West, and, of course, in Syria, where Russian aircraft and American warplanes are flying in the same territory. Anything could happen.

**SS:** *That is the question. Because I know the allegations that Trump spilled state secrets to the Russians during a White House meeting are also being treated as impeachment-worthy. Trump defended himself saying it was about fighting Islamic State. But most politicians on Capitol Hill don't consider Russia an ally in the fight against terrorism - would this have worked fine if Trump had told something secret to the Germans or the Brits?*

**SC:** Well, we share, and the President of the U.S. shares the intelligence with other state leaders, and there's a long history of this, and, American presidents have shared intelligence with most Soviet and Russian leaders. Not so long ago, Obama set up what was called - this was during the so-called "reset" - an intelligence roundtable with Russia, with the Kremlin, where the intelligence at least on two subjects was shared: international terrorism and international corruption. So there's the long history of this.

**SS:** *So why make such a big deal about sharing information about fighting ISIS - isn't it supposed to be a common cause, to fight ISIS?*

**SC:** To answer to that question - I am not sure I know the answer - you would have to ask why are all these, I think, false allegations being made against President Trump? Because the narrative that Trump somehow is Kremlin agent is what broke out after Lavrov and Trump met in the White House, in the Oval office. Because it was a normal meeting, it was an important meeting, it was part of trying to build, between Trump and Putin, an alliance against international terrorism, particularly in Syria. So that would've been a good thing, and it is a good thing, but the enemies of that, and the enemies of Trump, turned it into a scandal that does not exist.

**SS:** *Something about the media making this information public knowledge - isn't it them compromising intelligence here, putting undercover agents at risk? It's not the first such leak of info related to national security...*

**SC:** Russia, Israel - because that was the third country - and

the United States share intelligence all the time. If that intelligence is acted upon, say, Moscow or Israel or the U.S. prevents an act of terrorism because someone inside the terrorist organisation is an informer - the moment that act of terrorism is prevented, the terrorist organisation knows it has an informer, and they go looking for that person. So if we take this rule, that you can never endanger a source, that means you can never act on intelligence. But this is ridiculous. Moreover, the Israelis have said "nothing was revealed" - this is just part of the narrative against either Trump personally or the attempt to build a new relationship with Russia based on cooperation. But Sophie, please understand, this is a unique moment - there's never been anything like it in my lifetime, in American-Russian relations, and it's exceedingly dangerous.

**SS:** *I'm also thinking that this is nothing like we've ever seen in the American White House administration before. I mean, the leaks that the newspapers are citing are from high-up people close to Trump. Is there some kind of sabotage going on inside Trump's own team, are they not loyal to him? Why undermine the presidency that you're a part of?*

**SC:** So there's a discussion underway in the United States. Not in the mainstream media, but in what we call "alternative" media. This is broadcast and print media outlets that are smaller, but present alternative people and points of view, and what's being asked now is is there a fourth branch of the American government - our constitution is based on three branches of government: judicial, legislative and executive, but people are saying - what about the intelligence services? They have operated sometimes, but more than once, independently, over many decades. So people are asking - are elements, not the entire intelligence services, but elements in the CIA, in the FBI, for example - have they been running an operation which involves this leaking you mentioned, against Trump, which is now going on for almost a year. If so, it began last July, with these charges about Trump's illicit relations with the Kremlin. Now, bear in mind, Sophie, that all of these allegations are based on leaks, intelligence leaks. There's no evidence they're coming from Trump's people. But Trump doesn't control the intelligence services. We're not sure who does, and therefore, we are now asking, some of us: who is doing this leaking and for what purpose? But it doesn't stop, it continues, and it has continued since Trump became president. So, you've posed a bia question, but I want to add - it's only a question, we don't

have an answer. It needs to be discussed in the United States, that's for sure.

**SS:** *While you guys are looking for answers, is it even possible to do any actual governing when it seems like all Trump is doing is running around deflecting media scandals all day long?*

**SC:** You're right, and that's an equally big question, because if my analysis of the state of the new Cold War as being more dangerous than the preceding Cold War, we need constructive cooperation between President Trump and President Putin. And can Trump do it? I don't know, but let me point out something that's rarely pointed out: again, I didn't support Trump, and I understand people in the United States who say Trump is an inadequate President, and that he has broken his word and that he doesn't know what he's doing and he can't be trusted - but on one issue, Sophie, he's been remarkably consistent: during the campaign, he said repeatedly, and I quote: "Wouldn't it be great to cooperate with Russia?" He meant, in the war against international terrorism. And I thought, and many others thought here - "Yes, it would be great!", despite everything that's happened, and think about this, Sophie - Trump has not stopped trying to negotiate with President Putin of Russia.

There have been conversations between Trump and Putin, your foreign minister, Lavrov, and our Secretary of State Tillerson have met, they appeared to be talking regularly, there's a plan, but it may be sabotaged, for Trump and Putin to meet in July. So, this is the one issue. Whatever else Trump has not been consistent on, on that he has been consistent on.

**SS:** *Trump's now on a world tour of sorts. While you'd expect the American president's first foreign visit to be Mexico or Canada. Trump is heading to the Middle East - Saudi Arabia and then to Israel. What's he on to with this ambitious agenda?*

**SC:** Well, new American presidents travel abroad, because they want to show that they're statesmen, that they're in charge of American national security. What's interesting about Trump's trip is that he's going to three religious capitals of the world - Saudi Arabia, Israel and to the Vatican. The symbolism - because Trump has been a sort of ethically-challenged political figure - I think, part of the purpose is to be embraced by the actual or symbolic leaders of three different religions: Catholicism, Islam and, of course, the Jewish faith in Israel. I think that's part of it.

**SS:** *Is the scandal about Russian info sharing - going to distract from what's being done on this tour - for instance, a one hundred billion dollar arms deal with Saudi Arabia?*

**SC:** If you were in the U.S., Sophie, you would not have asked me that question. I mean, the American media - I don't know about the American people, I think not so much, but our political establishment is obsessed with this Russia story. Every night on television we have all these talk shows, the way Russia has, in prime time, that's all they talk about. The newspapers, today there's three stories on the front page of NYT about Trump and Russia. So, nothing will distract from it. The more interesting question is - how will Trump's foreign visits be reported here. Will they be reported as they should be, about what diplomatic and international matters Trump was discussing in these countries, or would it all be filtered through this alleged conspiracy. Again, there's no conspiracy with Russia, but it dominates the media.

**SS:** *Do you think Trump's going on a tour actually as an attempt to escape the heat at home?*

**SC:** No. This was long planned and long established. He may be happy to be going abroad to escape heat at home, but in the modern day world, as we know from Sophie Shevardnadze, television is international. We can go to a hotel room in any country and see the same thing we can see in the United States or Moscow - so he's not going to escape anything. We don't know, by the way, it's an interesting question, how the press corps, in these countries, when he has press conferences, whether or not they'll raise this issue.

**SS:** *What do you make of it? What happens to Trump's "We're going to get along with Russia" idea? Is the logic of American policy stronger than the ideas of whoever becomes president?*

**SC:** That's an enormous question. First of all, much depends on what President Putin does. If there's going to be a Trump-Putin detente, cooperation against terrorism, and for me, that's the number one threat, then, how much longer can president Putin put up with the White House that seems incapable of acting as a partner. After all, Obama and Putin had an arrangement, a deal, to cooperate in Syria, last year, and it was sabotaged, in Washington. So, president Putin could've thrown up his hands, and I'm sure some of his advisors are telling him to do that, and say: "the Americans are impossible, we have to find other partners". On the other hand, Russia needs America and

America needs Russia. So a lot comes down to the capability of Putin and Trump. We will know very soon whether Trump can continue this attempt to cooperate with Russia, with Putin, on international terrorism. Sophie, let me add one thing - "international terrorism" sounds bland, but if these terrorists get ahold of radioactive material or chemical weapons, we are talking about a catastrophe like Chernobyl. This is not some secondary issue. This is existential.

**SS:** *Trump has said that U.S.-Russia relations are at an all-time low - but high-level meetings are being conducted, both in Moscow and in the White House; classified intelligence, as we are told, is being shared at meetings, etc. It seems to me, joke aside, that behind the scenes cooperation is really going on quite intensely, what do you think?*

**SC:** We know that. I think you're absolutely right. Because they don't tell us everything they're doing and they should not. We know that between Trump and Putin there have been conversations both at the level of the Russian foreign minister Lavrov and the American Secretary of State Tillerson, but also, with other people playing a role. I would guess that Henry Kissinger has played a role. But there are official and non-official people, but nonetheless, the enemies of this cooperation are so powerful in the United States, and there are enemies of it in Moscow too, let's be candid - the question is, whether these leaders can do it. And Trump is crippled, but he's not fully crippled, and he's pushing ahead, best we can know, but every time he does, we get a new fake scandal, like what happened in the Oval office about the intelligence. It's completely bogus, Sophie, there's nothing to it.

**SS:** *With allegations against Trump and Russia mounting - is this going to make Trump think twice now before even dealing with Moscow?*

SC: I'm sure he thinks 43 times a day about it, but as I said before, based on what we know, he hasn't quit. You yourself just said - they seem to be talking, they seem to be making plans, and pushing ahead. This is some kind of commitment and courage on the part of Trump. Whether he has a motive, we don't know, I doubt, but he seems to believe, and he said this during the campaign, that we're gravely threatened by international terrorism and we need Russia as a partner. That is a very patriotic, wise, stance. So I hope they can continue, but it's not certain, you're absolutely right.

**SS:** *Why is this idea not taken at face value - why is it that whoever says “Maybe we should change our attitude towards Russia” is immediately suspected or branded as being the Kremlin’s spy?*

**SC:** This has happened before in our history, but it's been kind of in bars and in minor newspapers, gossip. It's never become the national narrative, as it is today. Part of it, I think, is the absolute hatred of Trump on the part of the Democratic party and its allies. Part of it is very strong opposition in Washington. Not only in the intelligence agencies, but in the United States Senate, on the part of people like Senator McCain and his allies in the Democratic party, against any cooperation with Moscow. Part of it is a lack of high political culture in our kind of international, diplomatic discourse here. We are not terribly informed nation about foreign affairs. Sometimes, when American journalist call me up and ask me a question, it's clear to me they don't even understand their own question. We're a provincial nation, Sophie, we're not part of Europe, and many young people and old people, who do journalism in this country, have very little experience. So the discourse becomes primitive and crude, but there are a lot of factors working into this. I would say, the loathing for Trump and the opposition to any President's - they sabotaged Obama too, at one point - cooperation with Russia.

**SS:** *Trump is set to attend a NATO meeting for the first time in his life. The president's previous statements about NATO's irrelevance had alliance members on edge - do you expect something new to come out of this summit?*

**SC:** No, that's repaired. That's another example of bogus allegations against Trump. If you wanted to ask me about the scandal involving General Flynn, that may be the silliest part of the whole thing, but all Trump said was: "I wonder if NATO is obsolete". But, Sophie, since the end of the Soviet Union in 1991, that has been a regular discussion topic in Washington, and every think-tank in Washington. People have said: "What's the mission of NATO, when the Soviet Union no longer exists" - and NATO found a new mission, didn't it: expanding towards Russia. That's been its only mission. Trump has asked, "Is it an obsolete mission?" and he later decided that no, it's not obsolete. It's a legitimate question.

**SS:** *The Foreign Policy magazine is reporting that NATO is reworking its usual discussion format to suit Trump's gusto*

*rewriting its usual discussion format to suit Trump's, quote, "short attention span", asking heads of state to limit statements to four minutes. How ridiculous can this get? I mean, isn't the president of the United states - the president of the United states, not a child?*

**SC:** Sophie. Fortunately, you live in Russia and you are spared some of this media stuff. I just saw, what I think is the cover of the new Time magazine - used to be a very-very popular magazine, less so today - and the cover has a drawing of a White House that has been turned half into the Kremlin. So, they've merged Kremlin and the White House, and this is the motif, that there's some kind of Putin-Trump access in the White House which New York Times columnists write about all the time. So what's published in Foreign Policy magazine ought not to be taken seriously. Scarcely anything in the mainstream media today can be taken at face value. Everybody has to study for his or herself in America today.

**SS:** Speaking about the mainstream media, Fox News says the DNC is planning to spend a million dollars on the so-called "Resistance summer" - that's supposed to be a series of meetings and rallies against Trump across the country - are they hoping to ride a grassroots anti-Trump wave, and where could it take them?

**SC:** Well, it's already started, there's no mystery here. Through my wife, the editor of the Nation magazine, I'm fairly close, if not close, at least I see and hear them, leading figures of the Democratic party. And the Democratic party, particularly the Hillary Clinton wing of the Democratic party, has already made it clear that it's going to push this Trump-Russia story, at least until the Congressional elections in 2018. They think it's a winning issue, and I think it's fairly clear, that this is Mrs. Clinton's hope to run again, because she will say: "I did not run a bad campaign, I did not lose - Putin stole my election from me and gave it to Trump". And they're going to push this at the grassroots, it's already there at the town meetings, at Democratic grassroots, and they're going to push it and push it at least until the elections, off-year elections, we call them, in 2018. So this is a given. No matter what facts emerge, the Democratic party is going to push this as they are now every day.

**SS:** Oh well, let's see what happens. Thanks a lot for this wonderful interview. It's been great talking to you, Stephen, we were talking to professor Stephen Cohen, the Nation magazine

*we're talking to professor Stephen Cohen, the national magazine contributing editor, professor emeritus at the Princeton University. We were talking about the latest wave of scandals surrounding the Trump administration. That's it for this edition of SophieCo, I will see you next time.*

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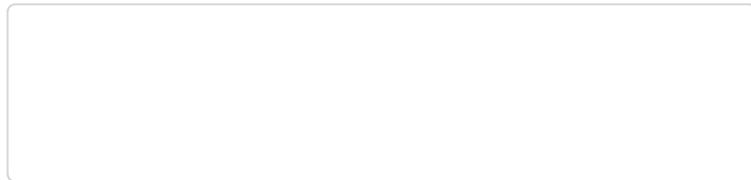
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good one. like both sophie and stephen. stephen appears to not be a zionist.

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**Olivia wildeFAN ★ Leader ➔ Blue Bullhorn**



Blue Bullhorn. I get the same feeling.

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Edited  
War is part of the US economy and it has been for a long time. America is simply a warmonger nation. And we all know it.

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"We "must be more where we can make a difference for the better.

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Karl Bike ★ Influencer ➔ wilso

Indeed but what's next if America goes to war with Russia which I am sure they are eager too we are all finished.

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Orange Corn ➔ wilso

No question about it.

Eisenhower warned about: "The Military-Industrial Complex" in his farewell speech to Congress

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Olivia wildeFAN ★ Leader

I can't resist watching Sophie, she's very bright smart and 'oh so pretty . . .

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Land\_der\_Wunder ★ Leader

Wonderful interview. Thanks to Sophie and Stephen for these valuable insights and cultivated, moderate tone of their exchange. Of course, US, UK and German anti-russian Storm Troopers will again defame him as "Putin propagandist". Can these intellectual underlings sink any further? Yes, they

definitely can ...

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### Red Toast



It's not only that bad, but they (the Democrats) are also risking WW3 in the process just like they did with Ukraine and the coup there.

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### Karl Bike ★ Influencer



Donald Trump like all US Presidents is just a puppet for the warmongering Neocons the real rulers of America!

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