

# US House Speaker John Boehner Demands that Obama go after Putin

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US House Speaker John Boehner called the President of the Russian Federation «a thug» and urged the Obama administration to do more to safeguard the interests of the U.S. and its allies in Europe. Boehner said the Russian head of state was treating Russia's neighbors in a «disrespectful way» obviously meaning Ukraine, where US officials (Victoria Nuland, for instance) so unceremoniously interfere into internal affairs. The lawmaker said that he hasn't met the Russian leader and doesn't want to. President Barack Obama «ought to stand up to him and better protect America's interests and our allies, especially in Eastern Europe», Boehner said in the interview, which was broadcast overnight in the U.S. [on January 23](#).

The comment was an obvious attempt to influence the administration's foreign policy made just five days before President Obama's annual State of the Union address from the House chamber on January 28.

Last September the Speaker turned down a request from Russian diplomats who came to the US to discuss Syria with American counterparts.

The same month last year John Boehner criticized President Barack Obama for negotiating with Russia over Syria but refusing to strike a deal with Congress over the debt ceiling. The attack came in an Internet video. «*The Obama administration on working with the Russian President on Syria*», the ad continues before showing the president and his team talking about negotiations with Russia over Syria's chemical weapons. «*Why is the Obama administration willing to negotiate with the Russian President on Syria, but not with Congress to address Washington's spending problem?*» it [asked](#). Back then the Speaker also said that he was insulted by Russian President's New York Times article on Syria denouncing the US exceptionism notion.

As the October 2013 shut-down deliberations showed Mr. Boehner's position as Speaker of the House is fragile enough. With no overwhelming amount of support, he has to toe the line between moderate, though far right leaning, Republicans and the extreme right-wing radicals, who enjoy enough power to threaten his position as Speaker. Off and on he just has to make statements to placate the hard right. It all looks like sailing a ship without a rudder.

As I get it, the real reason for his exasperation is the situation in Ukraine, the country the US would like to be in the sphere of Western influence. Still it does not justify this kind of behavior. If it were said by a journalist, a think tank expert or even just another run-of-the-mill politician rarely seen in public spotlight, it would have been different. But Mr. Boehner is the third man in the US power structure to become Chief Executive in case President and

Vice President are not able to carry out their functions according to the succession line. Now he really outdid himself with his latest broadside against the Russian President. It's a violation of all norms of civilized behavior for such a big-time public figure.

Joining the trend

What strikes an eye is that Mr. Boehner starts to speak the same rude language Senator McCain does. The rhetoric proves that Russia is seen as an enemy in the US, calling names is all right in hot war times. It proves that Washington's elite finds it normal to make personal remarks talking about the leader of another state. Personal insults were not used even in the days of Cold War. Perhaps the US political elite gets jittery because the country's global clout is waning.

For instance, well-known Republican Senator Lindsey Graham went as far as to compare the upcoming Sochi Olympic Games with the 1936 event in Germany calling for boycott. Graham apparently sees a boycott as a threat the Russian President could not ignore. Graham even threw in a comparison to the 1936 Berlin Olympics that Adolf Hitler promoted as a demonstration of Aryan superiority. *«If you could go back in time, would you have allowed Adolf Hitler to host the Olympics in Germany?»* Graham asked, referring to the Berlin games as a «propaganda coup». *«I'm not saying that Russia is Nazi Germany»,* Graham [added](#), *«but I am saying that the Russian government is empowering some of the most evil, hateful people in the world».*

Republican John McCain [is leading](#) the trend since a long time. (4) After the Russian head of state published an article in the [New York Times](#) last year espousing the reasons for abstaining from a military strike against Syria, McCain responded in Russian Pravda. Not minding his manners much, [he wrote](#) about the Russian President, *«He is not enhancing Russia's global reputation. He is destroying it. He has made her a friend to tyrants and an enemy to the oppressed, and untrusted by nations that seek to build a safer, more peaceful and prosperous world».*

In September 2013 former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, co-host of CNN's«Crossfire» said, *«While we have to deal with him as the President of Russia, we don't have to respect his views. We don't have to respect his opinions».* He [added](#), *«And frankly, we should laugh at him when he tries to lecture America about exceptionalism, because he ain't exceptional. He's just one more in a long tradition of dictators [and thugs](#)».* Going back to his New York Times article, the Russian President really rattled some high-profile politicians in the US, when he took issue with the idea of America being the proverbial shining city on a hill. *«It is extremely dangerous to encourage people to see themselves as exceptional, whatever the motivation»,* he wrote. His comment was a jab at President Barack Obama who said America has an obligation to respond to situations like the alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria. The list of examples can go on; the trend of US top politicians getting personal to earn brownie points among some sectors of their voters is obvious.

No escape from reality

Like it or not, you can't change the reality. Russia does matter a great deal to the U.S. government seeking to defend and advance its national interests. Russia saved President Obama allowing him to escape an awkward situation over Syria. A very convincing

example. Thanks to Moscow's efforts the Geneva-2 process has become a reality now. Russia's cooperation is crucial for tackling the issue of Iran's nuclear program. The country plays an essential role in preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Russian intelligence support is essential for fighting effectively transnational terrorist groups. Aside from being Russia is the world's largest oil and second largest gas producer, the country is an important player in today's international system. It's one of the five veto-wielding, permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, a member of the G-8 and G-20, it exerts large influence among BRICS members, and it enjoys a leading position in SCO and CSTO among many other things.

### US image waning

A global survey was conducted by the Worldwide Independent Network and Gallup at the end of 2013. Citizens were asked: «Which country do you think is the greatest threat to peace in the world today?» The US has been voted as the most significant threat to world peace across 68 different countries. Anti-American sentiment was not only recorded in antagonistic countries, but also in [many allied](#) NATO partners like Turkey and Greece.

The US topped the list, with 24 percent of people believing America to be the biggest danger to peace. The survey showed that even Americans regard their country as a potential threat with 13 percent of them voting the US could disrupt global status quo.

In the survey participants were also asked: «If there were no barriers to living in any country of the world, which country would you like to live in?» Despite being the perceived largest threat to world peace, the US still topped the tables by a narrow margin of 9 percent.

In general 2013 saw a drop in approval ratings for the Obama Administration. A poll conducted by the AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research revealed that 50 percent of those asked thought that the political system in the US needed a «complete overhaul». In addition, 70 percent of Americans believe the government lacks the ability to make progress on the important problems and issues facing the country in 2014.

The American government's credibility was dealt a blow earlier this year when President Obama made a call to strike Syria following a suspected chemical weapons attack by the Syrian government on civilians. The US public and the international community both opposed the action. Much of the animosity toward America comes from Muslim Middle Eastern and North African nations for well-known reasons.

\* \* \*

Getting personal is a sign of weakness. Normally it is done by people who face problems with watching their manners. They lose control lacking arguments. The US role in the world is gradually waning. Russia is an important global player. That the way it is and there is no way to escape from obvious facts, calling names solves no problems and brings no gains. It won't help politicians in the countries paying a high price for committed mistakes...

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