

The West Alliance vs Russia

What is the issue?

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- Russia is increasingly getting rough in the International Forum, which is brewing diplomatic tensions akin to the cold war days.

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- As this has caused considerable polarisation in issues around the world, the western countries must work to evolve a truce with Russia.

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What are the recent developments?

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- **Spy Fiasco** - Russia was suspected to be involved in a nerve agent attack on an ex-Russia spy, who was freed by a treaty and is living in exile in U.K.

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- Consequently the UK expelled many Russia diplomats in a sign of protest, and US, 14 EU countries and Australia followed suit in solidarity with the UK.

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- While this is the most dramatic and concerted purge since the Cold War years, it wasn't totally unexpected as tensions were already brewing underneath.

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- **Election Tampering** - Even before the current expulsions, U.S. had slapped sanctions against multiple Russian individuals and entities close to Mr. Putin.

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- The sanctions were in context of alleged interference in the 2016 US presidential election through covert online propaganda, including fake news.

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- **Other issues** - Russia's alleged nexus with Afghani Taliban that is threatening American operations have added to the crisis matrix.

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- Also, Mr. Trump accused Russia of aiding North Korean to circumvent UN sanctions and is undermining the international pressure exerted.
- EU had also voted to extend sanctions prohibiting businesses from investing in “Crimea” (which was illegally annexed by Russia from Ukraine in 2014).

How does the future look?

- **US Perspective** - US has been inconsistent in its stands towards Russia, as Mr Trump had continuously wavered his position vis-a-vis Russia.
- Notably, despite harsh diplomatic actions, he congratulated Mr. Putin for his electoral victory despite sharp criticism from across party lines.
- Some also feel that the expulsion of Russian diplomats was to distract investigations into Trump Campaign’s collusion with the Russians during the elections.
- **Russian Perspective** - Moscow seems determined to tighten its strategic grip on global geopolitics, through all possible means to reclaim its stature.
- It may continue to influence foreign elections, undermine western forces in Syria, and Afghanistan, or even collude covertly with North Korea and Iran.
- Given the high stakes in these international engagements, it is imperative that U.S. and EU bring Russia to the negotiation tables to avert a crisis.

Source: The Hindu