

Trump Blames Mueller for Poor Relations with Russia



President Trump started off Wednesday with a tweet that grabbed quite a bit of attention:

Russia vows to shoot down any and all missiles fired at Syria. Get ready Russia, because they will be coming, nice and new and “smart!” You shouldn’t be partners with a Gas Killing Animal who kills his people and enjoys it!

– Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) April 11, 2018

It was uncharacteristically tough talk against Russia – perhaps the most combative rhetoric our president has ever used against Vladimir Putin. While Trump has traditionally felt more inclined to flatter or make excuses for the Russian president, Wednesday was different. Trump called out Putin for his partnership with the murderous Assad regime, and promised to defy Russia’s wishes in the form of U.S. missile strikes in Syria.

The message was clear: Russia’s the bad guy, America’s the good guy, and our country is finally going to do something

about those chemical-weapon strikes on Syrians.

But less than an hour later, on Twitter again, the president's tone on Russia was a little more nuanced:

Our relationship with Russia is worse now than it has ever been, and that includes the Cold War. There is no reason for this. Russia needs us to help with their economy, something that would be very easy to do, and we need all nations to work together. Stop the arms race?

– Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) April 11, 2018

While U.S. relations with Russia are undeniably bad (and perhaps getting worse), it would be pretty tough for someone to make a reasonable case that things are worse now than during the Cold War. I would venture to say that the Cuban Missile Crisis, for example, was a more tense situation for the United States than the one we're currently dealing with.

But that's a side argument. The more significant takeaway from this tweet is the notion that there is "no reason" for this bad relationship. Did the president honestly forget what he had tweeted just minutes earlier about Russia aligning itself with the likes of Bashar al-Assad? How about Russia's unprecedented interference in our 2016 election? Those seem like reasons to me, and there are plenty more to choose from.

But things got much weirder almost an hour and a half later, when President Trump returned to Twitter with this dandy:

Much of the bad blood with Russia is caused by the Fake & Corrupt Russia Investigation, headed up by the all Democrat loyalists, or people that worked for Obama. Mueller is most conflicted of all (except Rosenstein who signed FISA & Comey letter). No Collusion, so they go crazy!

– Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) April 11, 2018

So now, “much” of our poor relationship with Russia is not the fault of anything Putin’s doing, but rather Robert Mueller and his Justice Department investigation team.

You can’t make this stuff up, folks.

While it’s legitimate (though possibly not wise considering the public’s lack of knowledge of the investigation) to question whether or not Mueller’s team has exceeded its bounds, the investigation has absolutely nothing to do with the problems that exist between the United States and Russia. Claiming otherwise is patently absurd.

I know, I know. Because Trump’s “not a seasoned politician,” we’re supposed to judge him by his *deeds* and not his *words*. That’s the message often echoed by his supporters whenever the president says something as stupid as this.

But I never have and never will subscribe to that mindset. While a president’s actions are undeniably important, so are his words. And when an American president declares that our nation’s problems with (whom most people now seem to agree is) our “top geopolitical foe” are the fault of U.S. Justice Department investigators who are looking into that foe’s interference in our free elections, that’s a big deal.

Will Trump follow through with his vow to strike Assad’s forces, in defiance of Russia? Almost certainly. But now there’s a narrative (put forth by the leader of the free world himself) that we’ve gotten to this point because of something having to do with Robert Mueller’s investigation, and by extension our national institutions.

What kind of signal does that send to other governments, and even American citizens?

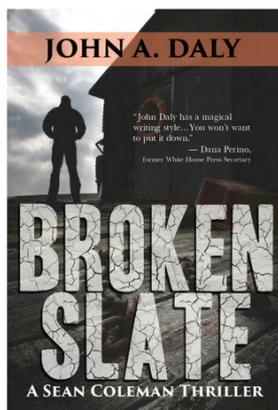
Sadly, the inclination to *Blame America First*, when it comes to international tensions, didn’t end with the Obama administration. That sentiment is still very much alive in the

Oval Office, fueled by one man's ego.

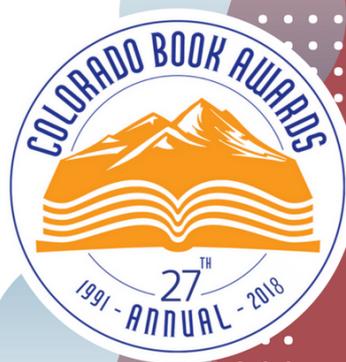
And if you were one of those people (like me) who thought such rhetoric was damaging to our country back then, why don't you think so now?

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