

America on a War Footing: Three Members of Congress Just Reignited the Cold War While No One Was Looking

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Late Thursday night, the House of Representatives unanimously passed a far-reaching Russia sanctions bill, a hydra-headed incubator of poisonous conflict. The second provocative anti-Russian legislation in a week, it further polarizes our relations with Russia, helping to cement a Russia-China alliance against Western hegemony, and undermines long-term America's financial and physical security by handing the national treasury over to [war profiteers](#).

Here's how the House's touted "unanimity" was achieved: Under a parliamentary motion termed "unanimous consent," legislative rules can be suspended and any bill can be called up. If any member of Congress objects, the motion is blocked and the bill dies.

At 10:23:54 p.m. on Thursday, a member rose to ask "unanimous consent" for four committees to be relieved of a Russia sanctions bill. At this point the motion, and the legislation, could have been blocked by a single member who would say "I object." No one objected, because no one was watching for last-minute bills to be slipped through.

Most of the House and the media had emptied out of the chambers after passage of the \$1.1 trillion government spending package.

The Congressional Record will show only three of 425 members were present on the floor to consider the sanctions bill. Two of the three feigned objection, creating the legislative equivalent of a 'time out.' They entered a few words of support, withdrew their "objections" and the clock resumed.

According to the [clerk's records](#), once the bill was considered under unanimous consent, it was passed, at 10:23:55 p.m., without objection, in one recorded, time-stamped second, unanimously.

Then the House adjourned.

I discovered, in my 16 years in Congress, that many members seldom read the legislation on which they vote. On Oct. 24, 2001, House committees spent long hours debating the Patriot Act. At the last minute, the old bill was swapped out for a version with draconian provisions. I voted against that version of the Patriot Act, because I read it. The legislative process requires attention.

Legislation brought before Congress under "unanimous consent" is not read by most

members simply because copies of the bill are generally not available. During the closing sessions of Congress I would often camp out in the House chamber, near the clerk's desk, prepared to say "I object" when something of consequence appeared out of the blue. Dec. 11, 2014, is one of the few times I regret not being in Congress to have the ability to oversee the process.

The Russia Sanctions bill that passed "unanimously," with no scheduled debate, at 10:23:55 p.m. on Dec. 11, 2014, includes:

1. Sanctions of Russia's energy industry, including Rosoboronexport and Gazprom.
2. Sanctions of Russia's defense industry, with respect to arms sales to Syria.
3. Broad sanctions on Russians' banking and investments.
4. Provisions for privatization of Ukrainian infrastructure, electricity, oil, gas and renewables, with the help of the World Bank and USAID.
5. Fifty million dollars to assist in a corporate takeover of Ukraine's oil and gas sectors.
6. Three hundred and fifty million dollars for military assistance to Ukraine, including anti-tank, anti-armor, optical, and guidance and control equipment, as well as drones.
7. Thirty million dollars for an intensive radio, television and Internet propaganda campaign throughout the countries of the former Soviet Union.
8. Twenty million dollars for "democratic organizing" in Ukraine.
9. Sixty million dollars, spent through groups like the National Endowment for Democracy, "to improve democratic governance, and transparency, accountability [and] rule of law" in Russia. What brilliant hyperbole to pass such a provision the same week the Senate's CIA torture report was released.
10. An unverified declaration that Russia has violated the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, is a nuclear "threat to the United States" and should be held "accountable."
11. A path for the U.S. withdrawal from the INF Treaty, which went into force in 1988. The implications of this are immense. An entire series of arms agreements are at risk of unraveling. It may not be long before NATO pushes its newest client state, Ukraine, to abrogate the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which Ukraine signed when it gave up its nuclear weapons, and establish a renewed nuclear missile capability, 300 miles from Moscow.
12. A demand that Russia verifiably dismantle "any ground launched cruise missiles or ballistic missiles with a range of between 500 and 5,500 kilometers ..."—i.e., 300 and 3,300 miles.

[Read the legislation](#), which Congress apparently didn't.

As reported on [GlobalSecurity.org](#), earlier that same day in Kiev, the Ukrainian parliament approved a security plan that will:

1. Declare that Ukraine should become a "military state."

2. Reallocate more of its approved 2014 budget for military purposes.
3. Put all military operating units on alert.
4. Mobilize military and national guard units.
5. Increase military spending in Ukraine from 1 percent of GDP to 5 percent, increasing military spending by \$3 billion over the next few years.
6. Join NATO and switch to NATO military standards.

Under the guise of democratizing, the West stripped Ukraine of its sovereignty with a U.S.-backed coup, employed it as a foil to advance NATO to the Russian border and reignited the Cold War, complete with another nuclear showdown.

The people of Ukraine will be less free, as their country becomes a “military state,” goes into hock to international banks, faces structural readjustments, privatization of its public assets, decline of social services, higher prices and an even more severe decline in its standard of living.

In its dealings with the European Union, Ukraine could not even get concessions for its citizens to find work throughout Europe. The West does not care about Ukraine, or its people, except for using them to seize a strategic advantage against Russia in the geopolitical game of nations.

Once, with the help of the West, Ukraine fully weighs in as a “military state” and joins the NATO gun club, its annual defense budget will be around \$3 billion, compared with the current defense budget of Russia, which is over \$70 billion.

Each Western incitement creates a Russian response, which is then given as further proof that the West must prepare for the very conflict it has created, war as a self-fulfilling prophecy.

That the recent Russia sanctions bill was advanced, “unanimously,” without debate in the House, portends that our nation is sleepwalking through the graveyards of history, toward an abyss where controlling factors reside in the realm of chance, what Thomas Hardy termed “crass casualty.” Such are the perils of unanimity.

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