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Trump Calls to Allow Russia to Join G7, Moscow Responds With Skepticism

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Susan Walsh / AP / TASS

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Tuesday it would be appropriate to let Russia join the G7 group of advanced industrialized countries.

Speaking to reporters at the White House, Trump noted his Democratic predecessor, Barack Obama, had wanted Russia out of what used to be the G8 "because Putin outsmarted him."

Embed:

> Trump: "I think it would be asset to have Russia back in. I think it would be good for the world. I think it would be good for Russia. I think it would be good the United States ... I think the G8 would be better" https://t.co/SnAz2kciCs https://t.co/HAHzT4WCFI
>
> — CNN Politics (@CNNPolitics) June 9, 2018

"But I think it's much more appropriate to have Russia in. It should be the G8 because a lot of the things we talk about have to do with Russia," Trump said.

"I think to say that without any conditions Russia can return to the table would be signing off the weakness of the G7," French President Emmanuel Macron told the French presidential press following Trump's remarks.

"It would be a strategic error for us and the consecration of this age of impunity."

Macron said the Ukraine crisis had to be resolved before Russia could return to the fold even if it remained vital to continue discussing international crises with Moscow. The conflict between Ukrainian troops and Russian-backed forces in eastern Ukraine has killed more than 13,000 people since it broke out five years ago.

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said Russia would need to receive a formal, tangible proposal before considering a return to the group.

"It is necessary to move the discussion of this topic from the sphere of public entertainment to the professional one if the Group of Seven wants to position itself as a serious format," Interfax quoted her as saying.

Senior Russian lawmaker Konstantin Kosachev balked at the idea of reviving the G8 and instead offered to include China and India into a G10.

"I think Russia's return would make sense only if it's possible to avoid the 'seven against one' trap," Kosachev, the chairman of the international affairs committee in Russia's upper house of parliament, wrote on Facebook.

Transforming the G7 into the G10, given the scale of China and India's economies and impacts on world politics, "would be a powerful phenomenon," Kosachev wrote.

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Russia was pushed out of the G8 in 2014 because of its annexation of Crimea from Ukraine.

It was not the first time Trump has floated the idea of Russia getting back together with the G7, which groups the United States, Germany, Japan, France, Britain, Italy and Canada.

In June 2018, Trump suggested Russia should attend a forthcoming G7 summit in Canada. A Kremlin spokesman seemed to reject the idea, saying Russia was focused on other formats.

Two days later, President Vladimir Putin said Russia did not choose the G7 and would be happy to host its members in Moscow.

Trump has periodically called for closer ties with Russia, although his administration's policy has included strong sanctions against Moscow.

Reuters contributed reporting to this article.

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