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Trump Laments Russia's Absence From the G7. Why Was It Tossed Out?

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Simon Dawson / No 10 Downing Street

"The G7 used to be the G8," U.S. President Donald Trump told reporters in Kananaskis, Alberta, where Canada is currently hosting a meeting of G7 leaders.

"Barack Obama and a person named Trudeau didn't want to have Russia in. And I would say that was a mistake because you wouldn't have a war right now," Trump said, seemingly unaware of the fact that Stephen Harper was the prime minister of Canada when Russia was removed from the G8 in March 2014.

Trump repeatedly brought Russia up at this week's G7 summit, saying that President Vladimir Putin was "no longer at the table, so it makes life more complicated."

"Putin speaks to me. He doesn't speak to anybody else. He doesn't want to talk because he was very insulted when he got thrown out of the G8, as I would be, as you would be, as anybody would be," Trump said.

So, why was Russia excluded from the then-G8?

Russia's expulsion has everything to do with its annexation of Crimea and its support of separatist forces in Eastern Ukraine in Ukraine in 2014 following the ouster of Kyiv's pro-Russian president in the Revolution of Dignity.

At the time, Canada's Harper helped lead the effort to have Russia removed from the group.

"I don't think it takes much imagination for you to figure out what my view on that is," Harper said in Kyiv in March 2014.

"Furthermore, all of us who desire peace and stability in the world must recognize that the consequences of these actions will be felt far beyond the borders of Ukraine or even the European continent itself," Harper continued.

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That month, the leaders of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Britain, the United States and the European Union cosigned a statement called the Hague Declaration, which formalized Russia's removal from the group.

The statement condemned Russia's actions in Ukraine, calling Russia's referendum in Crimea "illegal" and a "clear violation of international law."

"This Group came together because of shared beliefs and shared responsibilities. Russia's actions in recent weeks are not consistent with them. Under these circumstances, we will not participate in the planned Sochi Summit. We will suspend our participation in the G8 until Russia changes course and the environment comes back to where the G8 is able to have a meaningful discussion and will meet again in G7 format at the same time as planned."

At the time, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov brushed the decision off, calling the G8 "an informal organization that does not give out any membership cards and, by its definition, cannot remove anyone."

Russia remains a part of the G20 group of the world's 20 largest economies.

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