

Why ‘Friends with Putin’ Accusations Target the Right: Unpacking the Political Narrative

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Why is it that everyone from the left of politics accuses everyone on the right of politics of “being friends with Putin”?

A fertile ground for accusations to take hold and resonate within public discourse.

Editor

The accusation that politicians or public figures on the right are “friends with Putin” can be attributed to several factors, including geopolitical dynamics, historical events, and specific actions or statements by right-leaning individuals. Here are some reasons why this narrative has gained traction:

1. **Geopolitical Context:**

Vladimir Putin’s leadership in Russia has been marked by authoritarian practices, anti-Western rhetoric, and aggressive foreign policies, such as the annexation of Crimea and interference in various democratic processes abroad. The West, particularly the U.S. and EU, has often been at odds with Russia, framing Putin as an adversary.

2. **Admiration and Support:**

Certain right-leaning political figures have expressed admiration for Putin’s strongman style of governance. For example, former U.S. President Donald Trump has been noted for his relatively conciliatory stance towards Putin, which includes positive statements about his leadership and scepticism about Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. elections. Such attitudes can lead to perceptions of being too close or sympathetic to Putin.

3. **Populist and Nationalist Alignment:**

Putin’s brand of nationalism and his focus on conservative values resonate

with some right-wing populist movements in the West. This ideological overlap can create a perception that right-leaning politicians are more aligned with Putin's worldview, leading to accusations of camaraderie or ideological affinity.

4. Disinformation and Election Interference:

There have been numerous allegations and investigations into Russian interference in Western democratic processes, particularly elections. Reports of Russian support for certain right-wing parties or candidates, either through disinformation campaigns or cyber-attacks, have contributed to the narrative that these figures are in cahoots with Putin.

5. Political Strategy:

Accusing opponents of being friendly with an adversary like Putin can be a potent political weapon. It serves to delegitimize right-leaning politicians by suggesting they are compromised or unpatriotic. This tactic can be especially effective in rallying public sentiment against perceived foreign threats.

6. Historical and Cultural Factors:

The legacy of the Cold War still influences perceptions of Russia and its leaders. For many on the left, who often champion democratic values and human rights, any perceived softness towards an authoritarian regime can be seen as a betrayal of these principles.

In summary, the accusation of being "friends with Putin" against right-leaning individuals is rooted in a combination of geopolitical tensions, specific actions and statements by certain right-wing figures, ideological alignments, and strategic political manoeuvring. These elements together create a fertile ground for such accusations to take hold and resonate within public discourse.