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Russia sanctions fuel new Cold War

Norman Solomon
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The drive to put more sanctions on Russia might feel good. But fueling a new Cold War can only propel the United States in the wrong direction. It's time to turn away from a collision course, not step on the gas.

Whatever you think of Vladimir Putin — or Donald Trump, for that matter — they are the presidents of the world's nuclear superpowers. Piling sanctions on Russia means escalating tensions. And that's extremely dangerous.

When this year began, the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* moved its risk-estimate Doomsday Clock closer to apocalyptic midnight than at any time since 1953. "The probability of global catastrophe is very high, and the actions needed to reduce the risks of disaster must be taken very soon," the *Bulletin's* expert panel warned.

If new sanctions target Russia, the predictable results will include angry responses from the Kremlin and more polarized attitudes in both countries — damaging the prospects for any détente while boosting a spiral of mutual hostility.

Democratic lawmakers rightly deride Republicans for their "climate change denial," but both parties are locked into a kind of "nuclear war denial" in relation to Russia. The latest sanctions

bill is part of an obsession with denouncing Russia that leaves scant room for considering how to reduce the dangers of nuclear war between the two countries.

Such a war would be horrific. “A war fought with the deployed U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals would leave Earth virtually uninhabitable,” according to Steven Starr, a former member of the Physicians for Social Responsibility national board.

In a warning last winter, former Defense secretary William Perry said, “We’re going back to the kind of dangers we had during the Cold War.” Those concerns are even more relevant and urgent now: “We are starting a new Cold War. We seem to be sleepwalking into this new nuclear arms race.”

While parading for sanctions against Russia, the sleepwalkers on Capitol Hill are endangering the future of humanity.