

Politicized Intelligence Kneecapping Trump

The back story behind the CIA's leaked claim of Russia helping Donald Trump is an attempt to hobble Trump's less-hawkish foreign policy before he even gets into the White House, says ex-British diplomat Alastair Crooke.

By Alastair Crooke

It is not difficult to understand the dynamics of the recent U.S. presidential election. These same dynamics played a part in Brexit, and continue to unfold throughout Europe: there has been little or no real "growth" since 2005 – for many Americans and Europeans. Good quality jobs for native-born Americans and Europeans are rare, and those employment increases that have occurred, are mostly in the minimum wage sector – and have been filled by recent immigrants.

Many native-born Americans and Europeans are feeling the economic pips squeezed to the limit, at the same time that zero or negative interest rates has eviscerated savings income, and is threatening their pensions.

This is the economic malaise. And on top of this has been the political malaise and widespread reaction against the center-leftist "values-based," identity politics that stressed the rights and interests of a growing spectrum of "victims" in society: specifically defined in polar opposition to the mainstream American and European way-of-life.

The aggressiveness behind this polar oppositional positioning, intentionally demonizes and weakens the cultural mainstream: in effect, ordinary people who worked, had loving wives or husbands and children, and attended church, became the "deplorables," bigots or racists. It was against this supposed cultural "tyranny" that identity victims needed to be supported.

Gender relations were twisted as new genders proliferated, the propaganda of gender diversity exploded, and parent-children relations eroded. Indeed, "white," "male" and "Christian" are the only identities you may freely and gratuitously abuse in the U.S. and Europe today. Many ordinary Americans and Europeans find this intolerable. They are pushing-back.

Nothing About Russia

None of these dynamics have anything at all to do with Russia or President Vladimir Putin – except that many Russians express bewilderment that Europe has become so embroiled in this gender politics, and in a war against traditional

cultural and moral values.

But today, certain Western intelligence services – the CIA and MI6 – want to suggest that Putin had his “thumb on the scales” of the U.S. election, and “may manipulate a series of key elections [to be held] in Europe next year” too. The narrative has evolved from one of Russian influence in U.S. elections, to that of a *decisive* influence.

As one former CIA officer and U.S. national intelligence co-ordinator, Graham Fuller puts it: “And now, in perhaps the most volatile delegitimization gambit ever, Trump is now whispered to be ‘Putin’s candidate,’ a Russian pawn who has infiltrated the White House itself ...

“This is all very ugly stuff. Worse, it looks like questioning the electoral process and the legitimacy of the election itself may become a permanent feature of our domestic politics, inciting further divisiveness and bitterness on both sides of the political divide, rendering the country (even more) ungovernable.”

Indeed, it *is* ugly stuff. The politicization of intelligence has reached new heights. Russia is not responsible for the widespread opposition to globalization in the U.S. and Europe: simply, the original theory behind globalization (David Ricardo’s comparative advantage theory) no longer retains validity or meaning in the changed reality of today’s world (see here, for an explanation).

And economic growth is proving elusive for a number of reasons, which reflect deep-seated changes under way in the world today (aging demography, China’s stall, and more generally, the failure of debt-led growth policies to work any more, *inter alia*). For sure, the leadership of the CIA understands these longer-term dynamics at work in recent U.S. and European elections.

A recent *Pew* survey, for example, shows: “The Republican Party made deep inroads into America’s middle-class communities in 2016. Although many middle-class areas voted for Barack Obama in 2008, they overwhelmingly favored Donald Trump in 2016, a shift that was a key to his victory ... In 2016, Trump successfully defended all 27 middle-class areas won by Republicans in 2008. In a dramatic shift, however, Hillary Clinton lost in 18 of the 30 middle-class areas won by Democrats in 2008 ... Overall, Democrats experienced widespread erosion in support from 2008 to 2016. Their share of the vote fell in 196 of the 221 metropolitan areas examined. The loss in support was sufficiently large to move 37 areas from the Democratic column to the Republican column ...”.

A Charge Lacking Evidence

And, so far, the American officials have stated explicitly that there is no

evidence to sustain their claim of Russian involvement – and National Security Agency, which, alone, might have such evidence – were it to exist – has not come forward to confirm the CIA “assessment.” Other American intelligence agencies have directly contested the leaked CIA “finding.”

In short, we are told that the CIA claims are based on “inference”: which is to say that the CIA officials are “confident,” based on their psychological profile of President Putin, that the latter would prefer Mr. Trump as President; that since it was the Democrats who experienced leaks – and not the Republicans – it may be *inferred* that a hostile power was behind the leaks; and since Putin lies at the apex of Russian power, it may “confidently” be inferred that he personally would have authorized and directed such leaks.

Of course, this is *not* intelligence. This is simply a given conceptual framework (or group think), which may be right or may be wrong, being played out. It is blatantly political – unless sustained by hard intelligence.

And it is pernicious. Regardless of what may be said officially, in due course, in respect to the CIA claims, a cloud of illegitimacy will hang over the Trump Administration, and, as Graham Fuller rightly observes, this supposed illegitimacy, derived from the *decisive* influence of Russia on the election, may not be ephemeral, but rather continue to haunt the President throughout his incumbency. (It is hard to lay to rest CIA *inferences* once made, beyond repeating that there is no definite evidence to support them.) Such a finding would hardly dissipate the smoldering antipathies.

The allegation of Russian malfeasance may also derail the confirmation of Rex Tillerson, official “friend of Russia,” as Secretary of State. It may thus hobble Trump’s ability to reach *détente* with Russia – and may taint any *détente* that subsequently may be reached with Russia.

It is likely too, to make President Putin more wary of reaching any accord with Tillerson – suspecting that any new *détente* with the U.S. will unleash a further torrent of abuse of Russia from a polarized America. Even were Putin personally to welcome a Trump political initiative, further abuse of Russia in America and Europe might not be judged by President Putin to be worth the candle. No people, and not least the Russian people, like to see their country traduced publicly, and at length, in the world press. The onslaught is already having its impact: Russians will be asking themselves can Trump command such a divided and soured country.

Delegitimizing a President

Can one conclude that this outcome (a delegitimized Presidency) was somehow

other than that which the CIA intended? Pat Buchanan (himself a thrice-time U.S. Presidential candidate) has no doubts: “The [New York] Times editorial spoke of a ‘darkening cloud’ already over the Trump presidency, and warned that a failure to investigate and discover the full truth of Russia’s hacking could only ‘feed suspicion among millions of Americans that ... (t)he election was indeed rigged.’

“Behind the effort to smear Tillerson and delegitimize Trump lies a larger motive. Trump has antagonists in both parties who are alarmed at his triumph, because it imperils the foreign policy agenda that is their *raison d’être*, their reason ‘for being.’

These people do not want to lift sanctions on Moscow. They do not want an end to the confrontation with Russia. As is seen by their bringing in tiny Montenegro, they want to enlarge NATO to encompass Sweden, Finland, Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova.

They have in mind the permanent U.S. encirclement of Russia ... Their goal is to bring down Putin and bring about ‘regime change’ in Moscow.”

In short, the Russia “hype” is about blocking Trump from making his foreshadowed shift away from the new Cold War, pursued by the present U.S. establishment, and towards initiating *détente* instead, and perhaps the playing up of the Russian “threat” extends even to hoping to frighten enough presidential electors to change their vote on Dec. 19 (though that prospect seems improbable).

If there are indeed foreign intelligence services with their “thumb” in the American election, arguably it is those European services that are feeding the “profound” propaganda threat from Russia meme – and thereby helping in the delegitimization of the U.S. President-elect, and to keeping the new Cold War alive. (There are European states deeply opposed to any rapprochement between the U.S. and Russia).

But this politicization of intelligence is pernicious in another way – to which Graham Fuller also alludes. The allegations that Trump is a knowing or unknowing pawn of Russia is explosive emotional material thrown into an already enflamed, splintered and embittered American national psyche. The “not my President” meme may make it impossible for Trump to operationalize his policies – as polarized government departments turn upon each other (as is already occurring amongst the intelligence agencies). In short, it can paralyze the very operationality of government.

Buchanan states the obvious conclusion, when he writes: “early in his presidency, if not before, Trump is going to have to impose his foreign policy upon his own party and, indeed, upon his own government. Or his presidency will

be broken, as was Lyndon Johnson's."

Profound Polarization

But let us be clear: de-legitimation can be a two-edged sword. Were, by some pretty unimaginable event, Hillary Clinton to be enacted as President *vice* Trump, she would find her ability to command the authority of the state as hobbled by the bitterness and anger – as would a delegitimized Trump.

Politicization of intelligence services is not new, nor are "black" (i.e. false-flagged) information operations conducted by Western services, but the scale of the present assault on a U.S. President-elect marks, perhaps, a different order of potential consequences.

How can this have happened? The war in Syria has had, it seems, a hugely corrosive effect on services such as CIA and MI6. Firstly, there was the tension of contradiction: the deceit to be maintained of ostensibly fighting terrorism, while secretly supporting such bloody forces (in order to weaken President Bashar al-Assad and subsequently Russia).

Secondly, that of pretending to be pursuing a "principled" policy of off-shored "identity politics" (Sunnis as victims), while quietly accepting – and becoming dependent on – the "off-balance sheet" subventions flowing from the very patrons of such forces (shades of Clinton Foundation pay-to-play ethos).

And thirdly, by becoming the echo chamber of claims, however improbable, however false, thrown up by sundry armed movements and their paymasters – with the intent to force the hand of Western military intervention. In short, these services cease to be observers; they become investors. They become lost in a maze of contorted realities, false propaganda, and of acquired hubris. Like Prometheus, they think to secretly steal from Zeus, the god of war: they aspire to dictate war and peace.

Into this heady world of "strategic communication" warfare, has intruded Mr. Trump, spoiling their Syria gambit – and promising *détente* with Russia. It must indeed seem intolerable.

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