

German Intel Clears Russia on Interference

Exclusive: Mainstream U.S. media only wants stories of Russian perfidy, so when German intelligence cleared Moscow of suspected subversion of German democracy, the silence was deafening, says ex-CIA analyst Ray McGovern.

By Ray McGovern

After a multi-month, politically charged investigation, German intelligence agencies could find no good evidence of Moscow-directed cyber-attacks or a disinformation campaign aimed at subverting the democratic process in Germany. Undaunted, Chancellor Angela Merkel has commissioned a new investigation.

Last year, Berlin's two main intelligence agencies, the BND and BfV (counterparts of the CIA and FBI) launched a joint investigation to substantiate allegations that Russia was meddling in German political affairs and attempting to shape the outcome of Germany's elections next September.

Like the vast majority of Americans malnourished on "mainstream media," most Germans have been led to believe that, by hacking and "propaganda," the Kremlin interfered in the recent U.S. election and helped Donald Trump become president.

German intelligence agencies rarely bite the hand that feeds them and realize that the most bountiful part of the trough is at the CIA station in Berlin with ultimate guidance coming from CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia. But this time, in an unusual departure from past practice, analysts at the BND and BfV decided to act like responsible adults.

Whereas former CIA Director John Brennan prevailed on his analysts to resort to anemic, evidence-light reasoning "assessing" that Russia tried to tip the U.S. election to Donald Trump, Berlin's intelligence agencies found the evidence lacking and have now completed their investigation.

Better still, the conclusions have been reported in a mainstream German newspaper, *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, apparently because a patriotic insider thought the German people should also know.

Lemmings No Longer?

If BND President Bruno Kahl thought that his own analysts could be depended upon to follow their American counterparts lemming-like and find evidence – Curveball-style – to support the U.S. allegations, he now has had a rude awakening.

When the joint investigation was under way with his analysts doing their best to come up with reliable evidence of Russian perfidy, Kahl had behaved like his BND predecessors, parroting the charges made by his CIA counterpart, that the Russians were fomenting uncertainty and instability in Germany and elsewhere in Europe.

In a rare interview with the mainstream newspaper, *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, on Nov. 28, 2016, Kahl went out on what he probably thought was a safe limb, denouncing subversive “interference” by the Russians (“as they did in the U.S.”). He was just a few months into his job and may have been naïve enough to consider what John Brennan said as gospel truth. (If he really is that gullible, Kahl is in the wrong profession.)

In the interview, Kahl played the puppet-doll Charlie McCarthy with Brennan in the role of Charlie’s ventriloquist Edgar Bergen. Kahl told the *Sueddeutsche* that he agreed with the U.S. intelligence “assessment” that the Kremlin was behind the cyber attacks aimed at influencing the U.S. election.

He added: “We know that cyber attacks are taking place and that they have no purpose other than to produce political instability. ... Not only that. The perpetrators are interested in delegitimizing the democratic process itself. ... I have the impression that the outcome of the American election has evoked no sadness in Russia so far. ...

“Europe is [now] the focus of these disruption experiments, and Germany especially. ... The pressure on the public discourse and on democracy is unacceptable.” Sound familiar?

Still, one might excuse the novice BND president for assuming his analysts would remember which side their bread is buttered on and follow past precedent in coming up with conclusions known to be desired by their masters in Berlin and the CIA.

So it must have come as an unwelcome surprise to Kahl when he found out that, this time, BND analysts would stand on principle and refuse to be as malleable as their Washington counterparts. His analysts could find no proof that the Kremlin was working hard to undermine the democratic process in Germany, and said so.

Worse still from the U.S. point of view, the two German intelligence agencies resisted the usual pressure from some senior leaders in Berlin (perhaps including Kahl himself) to jam whatever innocuous information they could find into the anti-Russian mosaic that Washington was constructing, a kind of Cubist version of distorted reality.

And So, a Do-Over

So, what do powerful officials do when the bureaucracy comes up with “incorrect” conclusions? They send the analysts and investigators back to work until they come up with “correct” answers. This turned out to be no exception. Absent evidence of hacking directed by the Kremlin, the Germans now have opted for an approach by which information can be fudged more easily.

According to the *Sueddeutsche*, “Chancellor Merkel’s office has now ordered a new inquiry. Notably, a ‘psychological operations group’ jointly run by the BND and BfV will specifically look at Russian news agencies’ coverage in Germany.” We can expect that any articles that don’t portray Vladimir Putin in a devil’s costume will be judged “Russian propaganda.”

For guidance, Merkel may well give the new “investigators” a copy of the evidence-free CIA/FBI/NSA “Assessment: Russia’s Influence Campaign Targeting the 2016 US Presidential Election.” Released on Jan. 6, the report was an eyesore and embarrassment to serious intelligence professionals. The lame “evidence” presented, together with all the “assessing” indulged in by U.S. analysts, was unable to fill five pages; filler was needed – preferably filler that could be made to look like analysis.

And so, seven more pages were tacked onto the CIA/FBI/NSA Assessment, even though the information presented in them had nothing to do with the *cause celebre* of Russian hacking. No problem: The additional seven pages bore the ominous title: “Annex A: Russia – Kremlin’s TV Seeks To Influence Politics, Fuel Discontent in US.”

The extra pages, in turn, were then used to support the following indictment: “Russia’s state-run propaganda machine contributed to the influence campaign by serving as a platform for Kremlin messaging to Russian and international audiences.”

Did an Insider Leak?

It is not clear how the German daily *Sueddeutsche* acquired the conclusions of the joint investigation or even whether it has the full 50-page copy of the final report. The newspaper did make it clear, though, that it now realizes it was played by Kahl with his unsupported accusations last November.

From what the newspaper was told, the analysts seemed willing to give the boss what he had already declared to be his desired conclusion, but the evidence simply wasn’t there. The article quotes one security expert saying, “We would have been happy to give Russia a yellow card,” a soccer metaphor referring to improper conduct. A cabinet source lamented, “We found no smoking gun.”

Initially, the BND and BfV planned to release excerpts of their still classified inquiry, the *Sueddeutsche* reported, but it's now not clear when, if ever, the full report will be released.

The day after the *Sueddeutsche* story appeared, some other media outlets reported on it – briefly. *Newsweek* and *Politico* gave the scoop all of three sentences each. Not fitting with the preferred “Russia-is-guilty-of-everything” narrative, it then died a quick death. I have been unable to find the story mentioned at all in major U.S. “mainstream media” outlets.

If Americans became aware of the story, it was probably via RT – the *bête noire* of the abovementioned CIA/FBI/NSA report condemning Russian “propaganda.” Can it become any clearer why RT America and RT International are despised by the U.S. government and the “mainstream media?” Many Americans are slowly realizing they cannot count on American network and cable TV for accurate news and are tuning in to RT at least for the other side of these important stories.

It was from a early morning call from RT International that I first learned of the Feb. 7 *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* report on Germany's failed hunt for evidence of Russian electoral interference.

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A Dangerous Hysteria on Russia

A grave danger from the U.S.-Russian hostilities bubbling in Official Washington is that both sides have narratives asserting their complete innocence rather than seeing the two sides of the story, observes James W Carden.

By James W Carden

The hysteria that has, for many months now, gripped our media and governing elites, as well as the Democratic Party's chattering class, over Russia's alleged interference in the U.S. election, has also begun to affect the Republic of Letters. Last Sunday's *New York Times Book Review* featured a review of a new novel that begins with the declaration that “Russia once again poses a threat to American democracy.”

This gives us a sense of the environment that the new and struggling Trump administration must confront as it attempts to fashion its policy toward Russia, a daunting task, made even more so by the poisonous – or even what might accurately be described as a McCarthyite – atmosphere that currently envelops Washington.

So, where to begin? I think that in order to help point the direction in which the Trump administration should go, we ought to begin by performing a kind of autopsy on the Obama administration's Russia policy to see what lessons we might draw from the mistakes that were made over the past eight years.

This, unavoidably, entails a discussion of the Obama "Reset" policy, and the U.S.-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission, which oversaw the implementation of that policy at the inter-governmental working level. After what could fairly be described as a brief period of tangible achievements in 2009-2010 – during which time the U.S. and Russia signed the NEW START treaty and together formed 21 working groups focusing on issues as diverse as Space, Agriculture, Education, and Military Cooperation – things quickly foundered.

I would submit that one of the primary reasons things unraveled so quickly is that President Obama made a miscalculation by over-personalizing the relationship with his counterpart, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and placed unrealistic hopes in someone who was essentially a placeholder president.

While it was obvious to many that that was exactly what Medvedev was, the Obama administration clung to the unrealistic (and in retrospect, baffling) hope that the U.S. could somehow convince then-Prime Minister Putin to stand aside and not run for election in 2012. Indeed, Vice President Biden went so far as to make the point explicit during an appearance at Moscow State University in 2011.

But to be fair, Obama was not the first U.S. president to substitute personality for policy: we can recall Bill Clinton's courtship of Boris Yeltsin – and we recall how well that turned out. But in the context of the Obama years, it was particularly damaging because once you stripped away the personal chemistry between Obama and Medvedev, and as well-intentioned as the Reset policy was, it was largely small ball. Sponsoring "people to people" programs like high school sports exchanges are great and should be encouraged, but they don't add enough ballast to balance and stabilize a great power relationship when things go off track.

And go off track they did: by mid-2011 and early-2012 decisions made at the very top ensured the premature death of the Obama Reset: Obama's nomination of democracy promotion/regime change theorist Michael McFaul as U.S. Ambassador, Putin's decision to return to the Kremlin in 2012, the passage of the Magnitsky

Act and the Russia's retaliatory Dima Yakovlev Act foreshadowed even bigger conflicts to come: such as those in Ukraine and Syria.

A Better Reset

One should note that the approach Obama took in fashioning a Reset was not exactly new. What animated the "Reset" policy – which, according to one its primary architects, was based on the old Reagan-Shultz policy of what was then called "de-linkage" that is, the U.S. would not explicitly link progress on areas like human rights to progress on issues like nuclear non-proliferation.

Obama's rationale was similar to Reagan's: Where we are in conflict with Russia, we will speak up – but where we find there are areas of cooperation – then we will move forward on those. In other words: progress in one area is not necessarily contingent on progress in other areas. As it turns out, this approach – which worked rather well 30 years ago toward the end of the Cold War – worked rather less well under President Obama.

Part of the problem is that the world – and Russia in particular – had changed during the intervening three decades – and so a simple updating of the Reagan-Shultz formula proved to be inadequate to the challenges we face today. Another part of the problem is that during the intervening years between the end of the Cold War and the election of President Obama, successive U.S. governments began to distain pragmatism in favor of a pursuit of global liberal hegemony, by which I mean, the promotion of American-style democratic norms and social values came at the expense of the pragmatic engagement characteristic of the late-Reagan/George H.W. Bush era.

To put it plainly then: since the early 1990s, the mission to spread our values has come at the expense of our interests, at home and abroad. Consider the expansion of NATO, a project begun in the early-mid 1990s under the Clinton administration, where the U.S. mistook membership in – and the expansion of – a military alliance for the advancement of liberal ideals. In creating an exclusionary rather than inclusionary European security architecture, we were inviting problems down the road, such as those that have bedeviled U.S.-Russian relations in recent years.

All of this is to say that we cannot simply address the problem of Russia in 2017 in isolation from the wider, expansionist and hegemonic trends of U.S. foreign policy of the last quarter century. Today, we too often begin the by now well-established narrative of Russian malfeasance and "revanchism" with its 2008 "invasion" of Georgia – or – in recent years, its "annexation" of Crimea and "invasion" of eastern Ukraine in 2014.

Yet the problem with the American version of the story is that it mistakes the middle of the story for the beginning. If we look carefully, and if we are honest with ourselves, the problems with Russia began in the 1990s with the Clinton policy of NATO expansion – problems which were further exacerbated by subsequent American interventions in Serbia and Kosovo, in Iraq, in Libya, and in Syria.

This is not to say Russia has not compounded the current tensions with provocations and missteps of its own. But worryingly, as during the first Cold War, we are in a situation where, as the Christian socialist theologian Reinhold Niebuhr observed in 1952, the U.S. and Russia are engaged in a struggle and – in his words – “are particularly innocent according to their own official myth and collective memory.” Propelled by best of intentions – the situation that obtains on the Continent is perhaps the most dangerous since the Berlin crisis of 1961.

A Troubled Détente 2.0

What does this background mean for prospects for U.S.-Russia policy under President Trump? I would submit that the prospects for a kind of Detente 2.0 are really not very good. To begin with, we would have to address the underlying causes behind the seemingly never-ending problems in the U.S.-Russian relationship.

It seems to me that all (or most) of the problems stem from what are essentially irreconcilable approaches to international affairs; in an odd twist of history, since the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia’s foreign policy has become essentially Westphalian, while it is we Americans who have become the Trotskyite revolutionaries – in thrall to the ideal of waging a permanent “democratic” revolution on the rest of the world. As Americans, we should find this turn of events distressing.

Trump will also have to avoid the mistake of substituting personality for policy – as he seems to be doing with Putin. He will also have to make a definitive break with past thinking – he will have to follow through on his promise to pursue a policy which puts American interests first and in so doing face down Senators John McCain, Lindsey Graham, Ben Cardin and other Russia-paranoiacs (to say nothing of Kiev’s vast number of apologists in the Congress, media and think tanks) in order to break the war fever in Washington.

Yet – so far anyway – the administration has simply echoed the Obama administration’s talking points on Russia. Consider: Ambassador Nikki Haley’s maiden speech to the United Nations condemned Russia in terms no different in their ferocity from what we all had come to expect from Samantha Power, while, at his confirmation hearing to be Defense Secretary, General Jim Mattis claimed

that Russia was a principal adversary of the United States.

On Capitol Hill, a bipartisan collection of senators has just introduced legislation to sanction Russia over its alleged interference in the U.S. election. Meanwhile, the Trump team's obsession with Iran – threatens not only to derail any detente with Russia but may embroil us in yet another war in the greater Middle East.

The final reason I do not see cause for optimism is that frankly, it seems to be amateur hour at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. Consider the Muslim immigration ban. Leave aside the grotesque motives behind it as well as the unconstitutional and dangerously counterproductive nature of the thing and, instead, simply consider its roll-out:

The very agencies which were tasked with carrying it out were left in the dark – no guidance was given – and a situation at the airports developed where customs officials were conducting *ad hoc* loyalty tests on green-card holders; children and elderly travelers were held in detention; and people who had valid visas were cruelly turned away and boarded on to flights out of the United States against their will. Whether Trump even read the text, widely assumed to be the handiwork of a hard-right advisers Steve Bannon and Stephen Miller, is something we still don't know.

And so to conclude: It seems clear to me that the Trump administration is flying blind, and its national security team seems to be firmly in the grip of the bipartisan foreign policy consensus of the last 25 years. And while it is still very early on – I would submit that Trump's first three weeks in office should be cause for grave concern, and that hopes for a detente with Russia are quite overblown.

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Trump's Dysfunctional White House

In less than a month, President Trump has proven many of his critics right when they warned that his erratic temperament would be a poor fit for his White House

responsibilities, notes Lawrence Davidson.

By Lawrence Davidson

There is something both horrifying and fascinating about the behavior of President Trump, as we watch him fail to cope with – or perhaps even recognize – the differences between the no-holds-barred world he created for his campaign and the much more polite and temperate world expected of leaders of a constitutional government.

As a result, the present White House appears to be a dysfunctional place. Apparently neither President Trump nor most of his staff have considered that there are real differences, different rules of behavior, between private and public life. Maintaining the model of the abusive boss, the know-it-all CEO (Trump's preferred modus operandi), has, in quick order, proved both inappropriate and self-defeating. Here then are some of the consequences:

–The President has refused to stop being the avaricious businessman and relinquish control of his assets. As a result he will soon be facing an increasing number of lawsuits brought by various ethics organizations charging that his refusal to place his holdings in a blind trust violates the “emoluments clause” of the Constitution. The contention is that this can only lead to “scandal, corruption and illegitimacy.”

–The rush to impose a ban on immigration into the United States from seven predominantly Muslim countries – imposed by executive order within ten days of inauguration – proved a sloppy piece of work. Trump simply assumed public opinion to be on his side and that this opinion could stand in for legal legitimacy. It didn't work. The ban caused chaos and hardship, and quickly the courts temporarily set it aside as unconstitutional. The Justice Department lawyers, who had largely been kept out of the loop by the White House, did not have evidence that there was any real danger, historically or immediate, from immigrants of the countries cited in the ban. Pending a “total rewrite” or an appeal to the Supreme Court, Trump's immigration ban is at a dead end.

–In the meantime, Trump has, in a manner that has become typical for him, attempted to delegitimize judicial opposition – opposition that anyone who is constitutionally savvy knows is solidly lawful. Thus, his “so-called judge” statement. It may be an indication of the President's enduring immaturity that he believes that anyone who stands in his way is a target for bullying and slander. And, indeed, in the private sphere where Donald Trump has been able to use his money to make his own rules, this tactic apparently did sometimes work.

So, as if by habit, he has carried it over to the public sphere, where it is

completely out of place and only makes him look childish. Except to those adoring fans who were so visible on the campaign trail, his loose verbiage also makes Trump look like a “loser.” Trump’s own nominee for the Supreme Court, Neil Gorsuch, has described the President’s bad-mouthing the federal judge who suspended the immigration ban as “disheartening” and “discouraging.”

There is one other point that is to be made about this “so-called judge” episode. It has turned the judge, James Robart (who is a “mainstream” Republican), into a potential target for violence. Having used abusive language throughout his campaign and seen the emotions it aroused, Trump is very likely to be aware that he is risking incitement to violence.

–There are many other moments of Trumpian bluster, such as his yelling at the Australian prime minister during an official phone call, or his threatening to send troops across the Mexican border during a call to the president of Mexico. All of this might reinforce his image as a tough guy, but in the political and diplomatic world that now holds him in a spotlight, he starts to remind people of other past cases of bullies in power, most of whom happen to be fascists of the 1920s and 1930s.

A Shift in Protest Personnel

As a result of Trump’s bravado, there has been a rapid shift in public activism from the Right to what in the U.S. passes for the Left. Just as is the case with the populist Republicans, there is a segment of the Democratic Party base that feels disenfranchised. Some of them tried to do something about this by backing Bernie Sanders. But that was unsuccessful. However, with Trump’s victory, rightwing populism abated, and almost immediately, it was replaced by the inchoate mass of “Left” populists you see hitting the streets today.

It is the Sanders folks plus a whole array of special interest groups who feel very threatened by an empowered Right. There is no reason to believe that the anti-Trump array is going to be intimidated and give up. Indeed, the Left activists’ challenge is to coalesce into a real united front.

That should be made easier if Trump stays true to form, lurching from one outrageous move to another. And all the signs point down that road. The “so-called president” has ratcheted up his deportation efforts, allowing individual immigration officials discretion to go after any immigrant without proper documentation no matter of what age or the length of time they have been here. This is the equivalent of giving an army open-ended marching orders, and it is bound to result in abuses of power. He has begun his wall project for the southern border – an effort modeled after Israel’s infamous and illegal “separation (aka apartheid) wall.”

He has begun the gutting of environmental and consumer safety regulations, a move which will poison the air and water for the sake of greater corporate profit. He has started to deregulate the banks – a strategy that, historically, has always eventually led to economic crisis. And, of course, attacking abortion and LGBT rights is also on his agenda. There is enough here to keep millions agitated for at least the next four years.

Opportunities and Risks

Thus, even though we are still early in his administration, there is no sign that anyone can control the President's addiction to gaffes. He is an immature, thin-skinned egotist, and in the end, this may well cost the Republicans dearly.

However, one does have to give President Trump his due. He has a really exceptional ability to stir up the American political scene. For progressives such agitation creates opportunities and risks. There is now an opportunity for a truly united front of progressives that can reform the Democratic Party and give us, in the near term, a viable alternative to the manic CEO and rightwing radicals now occupying the White House.

On the other hand, there is the risk that the apparatchiks who now control the Democratic Party will misread their situation. They might well fail to understand the meaning of the Tea Party movement's capture of the Republican Party, and resist meaningful reform of their own party. If they can get away with this, it will leave the progressives without a political home. That will make reclaiming a progressive future much harder and the reign of the Right much longer. We will have to wait and see.

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Progressives Pile on Flynn's Ouster

President Trump is so despised by progressives that many are rallying behind neocon-driven demands for a New McCarthyism to silence those who object to a costly and dangerous New Cold War, as Sam Hussein describes.

By Sam Hussein

Many liberals and so-called progressives are stoked that President Trump's National Security Advisor, Michael Flynn, resigned over accusations surrounding his discussions with a Russian ambassador while Trump was president-elect.

Congressional Democrats want to use this to go after Trump. Rep. Nancy Pelosi: "After Flynn resignation, FBI must accelerate its investigation of the Trump Administration's Russian connection." Even before Flynn's resignation, Rep. Maxine Waters did a segment on "Democracy Now:" "Trump Should Be Impeached If He Colluded with Russians Ahead of Election."

There's certainly reasons to want to see Flynn go – he recently put Iran "on notice" while the White House tried to gin up the case against Iran. And there are others reasons for trying to impeach Trump. Many of his critics cite the Constitution's "emoluments clause" which bars government officials from receiving gifts or other "emoluments" from foreign states.

But it's perhaps easier, more "nationalistic" and ultimately horrifying for "progressives" and others with an alleged interest in peace to be harping on the Russian angle. The Clinton campaign took that tack time and again during the campaign – with disastrous results. Clinton talked about Russia and Trump talked about jobs in the Rust Belt. Guess who won the presidency?

Many so-called progressives are in effect making an alliance with the most war-mongering parts of the U.S. establishment. They are, in effect, buttressing incredibly dubious notions of U.S. victimhood and demonizing official enemies with the result of increasing U.S. militarism and the likelihood for confrontation with the other nation that could destroy the planet a hundred times over.

Trump had just reportedly turned down Elliott Abrams's bid to be number two at the State Department. That was a good thing. Elliott Abrams was part of the Iran-Contra scandal and needed a Christmas Eve pardon from President George H.W. Bush to expunge his criminal record. He backed death squads in Central America.

Abrams then did a stint in the George W. Bush administration in charge of "democracy promotion" and was almost certainly behind still unaccountable horrors by Israel and in Iraq and elsewhere. But he somehow gets depicted as "reasonable" by many, especially now that he was turned down by the Trump administration.

Indeed, just as the major media were closing in on Flynn, Elliott Abrams appeared on CNN, saying he thought Trump's political adviser Steve Bannon was behind him not getting the State Department job. Damn that crazy Bannon for apparently blocking a certifiable war criminal.

Trump won the presidency in large part because he was a Republican who could with minimal credibility talk about being against the “Establishment.” I didn’t buy it, but lots of people did. He won an election that I doubt many in the vast Republican field could have. Trump talked about non-intervention abroad; he talked about preserving Social Security and Medicare; he defied much of the Republican orthodoxy at home and overseas.

One upshot of the Flynn resignation is that Vice President Mike Pence, a white “Christian” nationalist who is also a darling of both Wall Street and the neocon interventionists comes out smelling like roses. Trump is a twisted narcissist and a political opportunist. But Pence is much more in line with what the Republican establishment wants done.

Surveillance Target

Flynn was compelled to resign in large part because the “intelligence community” apparently had recording of his talks with Russian representatives that he allegedly mischaracterized. This implies that people will be held accountable for their falsehoods or faulty memories if – and only if – their stance upsets the CIA, NSA, et al.

It’s worth keeping in mind that when Trump seemed to challenge this part of the permanent government in January, leading Democrat Chuck Schumer said Trump was “really dumb” for attacking the intelligence agencies. Said Schumer: “Let me tell you, you take on the intelligence community, they have six ways from Sunday at getting back at you.”

And what else did we just see happening as Flynn was resigning? Steven Mnuchin, from the good folks at Goldman Sachs, was confirmed as Treasury Secretary. The case against Mnuchin is so massive and his Wall Street/Goldman Sachs/Soros/foreclosure king/Skull and Bones pedigree is so not “populist” that it’s quite remarkable that he was able to get through.

Virtually all the Democrats in the Senate did vote against Mnuchin. But they all knew that that wouldn’t stop him. Schumer got to put out some populist rhetoric, conveniently ignoring his own deep ties to Wall Street. Four of Schumer’s top funders through his political career are in insurance and finance: Goldman Sachs, Citigroup, JPMorgan Chase & Co, Credit Suisse Group. Heck, he even took money from Mnuchin himself.

Wall Street and other corporate interests are quite firmly in control of the Democrats in Congress and Trump has put them in power in his cabinet.

Trump is an obvious con artist and is not to be trusted. I’d bet his attempts at a detente with Russia have to do with profiteering – or worse, with trying to go

after China or such. But the criticism to date bears more resemblance to the Republican obsession with Benghazi than with an attempt to meaningfully try to change U.S. aggression around the world.

But any meaningful critique of Trump can't possibly be one that demonizes the other major nuclear power, especially given the litany of U.S. illegal aggressions around the world, including its provocations against Russia – such as violating promises and expanding NATO to Russia's border.

If only these liberals scrutinized presidents when they want to go to war like they do Trump when he wants to make peace with Putin.

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