

Facebook Censorship of Alternative Media 'Just the Beginning,' Warns Top Neocon Insider

At a Berlin security conference, hardline neocon Jamie Fly appeared to claim some credit for the recent coordinated purge of alternative media, report Max Blumenthal and Jeb Sprague.

By Max Blumenthal and Jeb Sprague

Gray Zone Project



..... This October, Facebook and Twitter deleted the accounts of hundreds of users, including many alternative media outlets maintained by American users. Among those wiped out in the coordinated purge were popular sites that scrutinized police brutality and U.S. interventionism, like The Free Thought Project, Anti-Media, and Cop Block, along with the pages of journalists like Rachel Blevins.

Facebook claimed that these pages had “broken our rules against spam and coordinated inauthentic behavior.” However, sites like The Free Thought Project were verified by Facebook and widely recognized as legitimate sources of news and opinion. John Vibes, an independent reporter who contributed to Free Thought, accused Facebook of “favoring mainstream sources and silencing alternative voices.”

In comments published here for the first time, a neoconservative Washington insider has apparently claimed a degree of credit for the recent purge – and promised more takedowns in the near future.

“Russia, China, and other foreign states take advantage of our open political system,” remarked Jamie Fly, a senior fellow and director of the Asia program at the influential think tank the German Marshall Fund, which is funded by the U.S. government and NATO. “They can invent stories that get repeated and spread through different sites.

So we are just starting to push back. Just this last week Facebook began starting to take down sites. So this is just the beginning.”

Fly went on to complain that “all you need is an email” to set up a Facebook or Twitter account, lamenting the sites’ accessibility to members of the general public. He predicted a long struggle on a global scale to fix the situation, and pointed out that to do so would require constant vigilance.

Fly made these stunning comments to Jeb Sprague, who is a visiting faculty in sociology at the University of California-Santa Barbara and co-author of this article. The two spoke during a lunch break at a conference on Asian security organized by the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik in Berlin, Germany on Oct. 15 and 16.

The remarks by Fly – “we are just starting to push back” – seemed to confirm the worst fears of the alternative online media community. If he was to be believed, the latest purge was motivated by politics, not spam prevention, and was driven by powerful interests hostile to dissident views, particularly where American state violence is concerned.

Fly: A Rising Neocon

Fly is an influential foreign policy hardliner who has spent the last year lobbying for the censorship of “fringe views” on social media. Over the years, he has advocated for a military assault on Iran, a regime change war on Syria, and hiking military spending to unprecedented levels. He is the embodiment of a neoconservative cadre.

Like so many second-generation neocons, Fly entered government by burrowing into mid-level positions in George W. Bush’s National Security Council and Department of Defense.

In 2009, he was appointed director of the Foreign Policy Initiative(FPI), a rebranded version of Bill Kristol’s Project for a New American Century, or PNAC. The latter outfit was an umbrella group of neoconservative activists that first made the case for an invasion of Iraq as part of a wider project of regime change in countries that resisted Washington’s sphere of influence.

By 2011, Fly was advancing the next phase in PNAC's blueprint by clamoring for military strikes on Iran. "More diplomacy is not an adequate response," he argued. A year later, Fly urged the US to "expand its list of targets beyond the [Iranian] nuclear program to key command and control elements of the Republican Guard and the intelligence ministry, and facilities associated with other key government officials."

Fly soon found his way into the senate office of Marco Rubio, a neoconservative pet project, assuming a role as his top foreign policy advisor. Amongst other interventionist initiatives, Rubio has taken the lead in promoting harsh economic sanctions targeting Venezuela, even advocating for a U.S. military assault on the country. When Rubio's 2016 presidential campaign floundered amid a mass revolt of the Republican Party's middle American base against the party establishment, Fly was forced to cast about for new opportunities.

He found them in the paranoid atmosphere of Russiagate that formed soon after Donald Trump's shock election victory.

PropOrNot Provides the Spark

A journalistic insider's account of the Hillary Clinton presidential campaign, *Shattered*, revealed that "in the days after the election, Hillary declined to take responsibility for her own loss." Her top advisers were summoned the following day, according to the book, "to engineer the case that the election wasn't entirely on the up-and-up ... Already, Russian hacking was the centerpiece of the argument."

Less than three weeks after Clinton's defeat, *The Washington Post's* Craig Timberg published a dubiously sourced report headlined, "Russian propaganda effort helped spread 'fake news.'" The article hyped up a McCarthyite effort by a shadowy, anonymously run organization called PropOrNot to blacklist some 200 American media outlets as Russian "online propaganda."

The alternative media outfits on the PropOrNot blacklist included some of those recently purged by Facebook and Twitter, such as The Free Thought Project and Anti-Media. Among the criteria PropOrNot

identified as signs of Russian propaganda were: “Support for policies like Brexit, and the breakup of the EU and Eurozone” and “Opposition to Ukrainian resistance to Russia and Syrian resistance to Assad.” PropOrNot called for “formal investigations by the U.S. government” into the outlets it had blacklisted.

According to Timberg, who uncritically promoted the media suppression initiative, Propornot was established by “a nonpartisan collection of researchers with foreign policy, military and technology backgrounds.” Timberg quoted a figure associated with the George Washington University Center for Cyber and Homeland Security, Andrew Weisburd, and cited a report he wrote with his colleague, Clint Watts, on Russian meddling.

Timberg’s piece on PropOrNot was promoted widely by former top Clinton staffers and celebrated by ex-Obama White House aide Dan Pfeiffer as “the biggest story in the world.” But after a wave of stinging criticism, including in the pages of *The New Yorker*, the article was amended with an editor’s note stating, “The [Washington] Post.. does not itself vouch for the validity of PropOrNot’s findings regarding any individual media outlet.”

PropOrNot had been seemingly exposed as a McCarthyite sham, but the concept behind it – exposing online American media outlets as vehicles for Kremlin “active measures” – continued to flourish.

Taxpayers Pay for Russian Bot Tracker

By August, a new, and seemingly related initiative appeared out of the blue, this time with backing from a bipartisan coalition of Democratic foreign policy hands and neocon Never Trumpers in Washington. Called the Alliance for Securing Democracy (ASD), the outfit aimed to expose how supposed Russian Twitter bots were infecting American political discourse with divisive narratives.

It featured a daily “Hamilton 68” online dashboard that highlighted the supposed bot activity with easily digestible charts. Conveniently, the site avoided naming any of the digital Kremlin influence accounts

it claimed to be tracking. The initiative was immediately endorsed by John Podesta, the founder of the Democratic Party think tank the Center for American Progress, and former chief of staff of Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign.

Julia Ioffe, the Atlantic's chief Russia-gate correspondent, promoted the bot tracker as "a very cool tool." Unlike PropOrNot, the ASD was sponsored by one of the most respected think tanks in Washington, the German Marshall Fund, which had been founded in 1972 to nurture the special relationship between the U.S. and what was then West Germany.

The German Marshall Fund is substantially funded by Western governments, and largely reflects their foreign-policy interests. Its top two financial sponsors, at more than \$1 million per year each, are the U.S. government's soft-power arm the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the German Foreign Office (Auswärtiges Amt). The U.S. State Department also provides more than half a million dollars per year, as do the German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development and the foreign affairs ministries of Sweden and Norway. It likewise receives at least a quarter of a million dollars per year from NATO.

Though the German Marshall Fund did not name the donors that specifically sponsored its Alliance for Securing Democracy initiative, it hosts a who's who of bipartisan national-security hardliners on the ASD's advisory council, providing the endeavor with the patina of credibility. They range from neocon movement icon Bill Kristol to former Clinton foreign policy advisor Jake Sullivan and ex-CIA director Michael Morell.

Jamie Fly, a German Marshall Fund fellow and Asia specialist, emerged as one of the most prolific promoters of the new Russian bot tracker in the media. Together with Laura Rosenberger, a former foreign policy aide to Hillary Clinton's 2016 campaign, Fly appeared in a series of interviews and co-authored several op-eds emphasizing the need for a massive social media crackdown.

During a March 2018 interview on C-Span, Fly complained that "Russian

accounts” were “trying to promote certain messages, amplify certain content, raise fringe views, pit Americans against each other, and we need to deal with this ongoing problem and find ways through the government, through tech companies, through broader society to tackle this issue.”

Yet few of the sites on PropOrNot’s blacklist, and none of the alternative sites that were erased in the recent Facebook purge that Fly and his colleagues take apparent credit for, were Russian accounts. Perhaps the only infraction they could have been accused of was publishing views that Fly and his cohorts saw as “fringe.”

What’s more, the ASD has been forced to admit that the mass of Twitter accounts it initially identified as “Russian bots” were not necessarily bots – and may not have been Russian either.

‘Not Convinced on This Bot thing’

A November 2017 investigation by Max Blumenthal found that the ASD’s Hamilton 68 dashboard was the creation of “a collection of cranks, counter-terror retreads, online harassers and paranoiacs operating with support from some of the most prominent figures operating within the American national security apparatus.”

These figures included the same George Washington University Center for Cyber and Homeland Security fellows – Andrew Weisburd and Clint Watts – that were cited as experts in the Washington Post’s article promoting PropOrNot.

Weisburd, who has been described as one of the brains behind the Hamilton 68 dashboard, once maintained a one-man, anti-Palestinian web monitoring initiative that specialized in doxxing left-wing activists, Muslims and anyone he considered “anti-American.” More recently, he has taken to Twitter to spout off murderous and homophobic fantasies about Glenn Greenwald, the editor of *The Intercept* – a publication the ASD flagged without explanation as a vehicle for Russian influence operations.

Watts, for his part, has testified before Congress on several occasions to call on the government to “quell information rebellions”

with censorious measures including “nutritional labels” for online media. He has received fawning publicity from corporate media and been rewarded with a contributor role for NBC on the basis of his supposed expertise in ferreting out Russian disinformation.

However, under questioning during a public event by *Grayzone* contributor Ilias Stathatos, Watts admitted that substantial parts of his testimony were false, and refused to provide evidence to support some of his most colorful claims about malicious Russian bot activity.

In a separate interview with *Buzzfeed*, Watts appeared to completely disown the Hamilton 68 bot tracker as a legitimate tool. “I’m not convinced on this bot thing,” Watts confessed. He even called the narrative that he helped manufacture “overdone,” and admitted that the accounts Hamilton 68 tracked were not necessarily directed by Russian intelligence actors.

“We don’t even think they’re all commanded in Russia – at all. We think some of them are legitimately passionate people that are just really into promoting Russia,” Watts conceded.

But these stunning admissions did little to slow the momentum of the coming purge.

Enter the Atlantic Council

In his conversation with Sprague, the German Marshall Fund’s Fly stated that he was working with the Atlantic Council in the campaign to purge alternative media from social media platforms like Facebook.

The Atlantic Council is another Washington-based think tank that serves as a gathering point for neoconservatives and liberal interventionists pushing military aggression around the globe. It is funded by NATO and repressive, US-allied governments including Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Turkey, as well as by Ukrainian oligarchs like Victor Pynchuk.

This May, Facebook announced a partnership with the Atlantic Council’s Digital Forensic Research Lab (DFRLab) to “identify, expose, and explain disinformation during elections around the world.”

The Atlantic Council's DFRLab is notorious for its zealous conflation of legitimate online dissent with illicit Russian activity, embracing the same tactics as PropOrNot and the ASD.

Ben Nimmo, a DFRLab fellow who has built his reputation on flushing out online Kremlin influence networks, embarked on an embarrassing witch hunt this year that saw him misidentify several living, breathing individuals as Russian bots or Kremlin "influence accounts." Nimmo's victims included Mariam Susli, a well-known Syrian-Australian social media personality, the famed Ukrainian concert pianist Valentina Lisitsa, and a British pensioner named Ian Shilling.

In an interview with *Sky News*, Shilling delivered a memorable tirade against his accusers. "I have no Kremlin contacts whatsoever; I do not know any Russians, I have no contact with the Russian government or anything to do with them," he exclaimed. "I am an ordinary British citizen who happens to do research on the current neocon wars which are going on in Syria at this very moment."

With the latest Facebook and Twitter purges, ordinary citizens like Shilling are being targeted in the open, and without apology. The mass deletions of alternative media accounts illustrate how national security hardliners from the German Marshall Fund and Atlantic Council (and whoever was behind PropOrNot) have instrumentalized the manufactured panic around Russian interference to generate public support for a wider campaign of media censorship.

In his conversation in Berlin with Sprague, Fly noted with apparent approval that, "Trump is now pointing to Chinese interference in the 2018 election." As the mantra of foreign interference expands to a new adversarial power, the clampdown on voices of dissent in online media is almost certain to intensify.

As Fly promised, "This is just the beginning."

This article originally appeared on the Grayzoneproject.com

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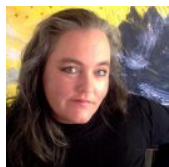
class" (Temple University Press, 2019), "Paramilitarism and the assault on democracy in Haiti" (Monthly Review Press, 2012), and is the editor of "Globalization and transnational capitalism in Asia and Oceania" (Routledge, 2016). He is a co-founder of the Network for the Critical Studies of Global Capitalism.

Max Blumenthal is an award-winning journalist and the author of books including best-selling Republican Gomorrah: Inside the Movement That Shattered the Party, Goliath: Life and Loathing in Greater Israel, The Fifty One Day War: Ruin and Resistance in Gaza, and The Management of Savagery, which will be published later this year by Verso. He has also produced numerous print articles for an array of publications, many video reports and several documentaries including Je Ne Suis Pas Charlie and the forthcoming Killing Gaza. Blumenthal founded the Grayzone Project in 2015 to shine a journalistic light on America's state of perpetual war and its dangerous domestic repercussions.

Report Says Russia-gaters Should Go Quietly in the Night

After more than two years of mania about Russia stealing the 2016 election for Trump and demonization of anyone who questioned it, an embarrassing end may soon be near for the Russia-gaters, says Caitlin Johnstone.

By Caitlin Johnstone



In a new article titled "Mueller report PSA: Prepare for disappointment", *Politico* cites information provided by defense attorneys and "more than 15 former government officials with investigation experience spanning Watergate to the 2016 election case" to warn everyone who's been lighting candles at their Saint Mueller altars that their hopes of Trump being removed from office are about to be dashed to the floor.

"While [Mueller is] under no deadline to complete his work, several sources tracking the investigation say the special counsel and his team appear eager to wrap up," *Politico* reports.

"The public, they say, shouldn't expect a comprehensive and presidency-wrecking

account of Kremlin meddling and alleged obstruction of justice by Trump?—not to mention an explanation of the myriad subplots that have bedeviled lawmakers, journalists and amateur Mueller sleuths,” the report also says, adding that details of the investigation may never even see the light of day. “It will be up to DOJ leaders to make the politically turbo-charged decision of whether to make Mueller’s report public,” *Politico* reported.

So that’s it then. An obscene amount of noise and focus, a few indictments and process crime convictions which have nothing to do with Russian collusion, and this three-ring circus of propaganda and delusion is ready to call it a day.



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This is by far the clearest indication yet that the Mueller investigation will end with Trump still in office and zero proof of collusion with the Russian government, which has been obvious since the beginning to everyone who isn’t a complete moron. For two years the idiotic, fact-free, xenophobic Russia-gate conspiracy theory has been ripping through mainstream American consciousness with shrieking manic hysteria, sucking all oxygen out of the room for legitimate criticisms of the actual awful things that the US president is doing in real life. Those of us who have been courageous and clear-headed enough to stand against the groupthink have been shouted down, censored, slandered and smeared as assets of the Kremlin on a daily basis by unthinking consumers of mass media

propaganda, despite our holding the philosophically unassailable position of demanding the normal amount of proof that would be required in a post-Iraq invasion world.

As I predicted long ago, “Mueller isn’t going to find anything in 2017 that these vast, sprawling networks wouldn’t have found in 2016. He’s not going to find anything by ‘following the money’ that couldn’t be found infinitely more efficaciously via Orwellian espionage. The factions within the intelligence community that were working to sabotage the incoming administration last year would have leaked proof of collusion if they’d had it. They did not have it then, and they do not have it now. Mueller will continue finding evidence of corruption throughout his investigation, since corruption is to DC insiders as water is to fish, but he will not find evidence of collusion to win the 2016 election that will lead to Trump’s impeachment. It will not happen.” This has remained as true in 2018 as it did in 2017, and it will remain true forever.

None of the investigations arising from the Russia-gate conspiracy theory have turned up a single shred of evidence that Donald Trump colluded with the Russian government to rig the 2016 election, or to do anything else for that matter. All that the shrill, demented screeching about Russia has accomplished is manufacturing support for steadily escalating internet censorship, a massively bloated military budget, a hysterical McCarthyite atmosphere wherein anyone who expresses political dissent is painted as an agent of the Kremlin and any dissenting opinions labeled “Russian talking points”, a complete lack of accountability for the Democratic Party’s brazen election rigging, a total marginalization of real problems and progressive agendas, and an overall diminishment in the intelligence of political discourse. The Russia-gaters were wrong, and they have done tremendous damage already.

In a just world, everyone who helped promote this toxic narrative would apologize profusely and spend the rest of their lives being mocked and marginalized. In a world wherein pundits and politicians can sell the public a war which results in the slaughter of a million Iraqis and suffer no consequences of any kind, however, we all know that that isn’t going to happen. Russia-gate will end not with a bang, but with a series of carefully crafted diversions. The goalposts will be moved, the news churn will shuffle on, the herd will be guided into supporting the next depraved oligarchic agenda, and almost nobody will have the intellectual honesty and courage to say “Hey! Weren’t these assholes promising us we’ll see Trump dragged off in chains a while back? Whatever happened to that? And why are we all talking about China now?”

But whether they grasp it or not, mainstream liberals have been completely

discredited. The mass media outlets which inflicted this obscene psyop upon their audiences deserve to be driven out of business. The establishment which would inflict such intrusive psychological brutalization upon its populace just to advance a few preexisting agendas has proven that it deserves to be opposed on every front and rejected at every turn.

And those of us who have been standing firm and saying this all along deserve to be listened to. We were right. You were wrong. Time to sit down, shut up, stop babbling about Russian bots for ten seconds, and let those who see clearly get a word in edgewise.

This [article](#) originally appeared on Medium.

Caitlin Johnstone is a rogue journalist, poet, and utopia prepper who publishes regularly at [Medium](#). Follow her work on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), or her [website](#). She has a [podcast](#) and a new book [Woke: A Field Guide for Utopia Preppers](#). This article was re-published with permission.

AUDIO: Shady Claims by NYT on Russia-gate: Peter B. Collins interviews Gareth Porter

Gareth Porter discusses with radio host Peter B. Collins his Consortium News [article](#) exposing exaggerated claims of Russian skulduggery on Facebook in 2016.

By Peter B. Collins



Journalist and historian Gareth Porter returned to the Peter B. Collins [show](#) to discuss his new article, exposing exaggerated claims of Russian skulduggery on Facebook in 2016. Porter's [article](#) was published last week at **Consortium News**, showing inaccurate claims in the late-September [recap of Russia-gate](#) by *New York Times* reporters Scott Shane and Mark Mazzetti.

Both Porter and your humble host consider Shane to be a credible reporter, and credit him with caveats in stories on Russia-gate, including the quote from the September 26 report that these claims “can neither be proven nor disproven.”

We note how many “progressive” media figures, including Thom Hartmann, claim

that Mueller's convictions and plea deals amount to proof of "collusion", even though Manafort and the others have not been tried on such charges.

Porter explains that the numbers cited by the *Times* about Facebook are grossly exaggerated, with "potential impressions" being treated as click-throughs. He notes that Facebook estimates that only 1 out of 10 posts in a news feed are actually read by the user. When you compare the modest traffic attributed to all Russians, including government actors, it's infinitesimal compared to the \$80 million-plus the Trump campaign spent on dark-targeted Facebook ads.

Porter also looks at the role of Twitter bots in amplifying tweets by the candidates, and argues that the impacts cited by Shane and Mazzetti are not significant. Listen to Peter B. delve deep into the deceptions of Russia-gate with Gareth Porter. Running time 35:14.

Peter B. Collins, a veteran radio host on the airwaves in the San Francisco Bay Area, is host of the [Peter B. Collins Show](#).

The Shaky Case That Russia Manipulated Social Media to Tip the 2016 Election

The idea promoted by the NYT's Shane & Mazzetti that the Russian government seriously threatened to determine the 2016 election does not hold up when the larger social media context is examined more closely, reports Gareth Porter.

By Gareth Porter

Special to Consortium News



In their long recapitulation of the case that Russia subverted the 2016 election, Scott Shane and Mark Mazzetti of *The New York Times* painted a picture of highly effective Russian government exploitation of social media for that purpose. Shane and Mazzetti asserted that "anti-Clinton, pro-Trump messages shared with millions of voters by Russia could have made the difference" in the election.

"What we now know with certainty: The Russians carried out a landmark intervention that will be examined for decades to come," they write elsewhere in the 10,000-word article.

But an investigation of the data they cite to show that the Russian campaigns on Facebook and Twitter were highly effective reveals a gross betrayal of journalistic responsibility. Shane and Mazzetti have constructed a case that is fundamentally false and misleading with statistics that exaggerate the real effectiveness of social media efforts by orders of magnitude.

'Reaching' 129 Million Americans

The Internet Research Agency (IRA), is a privately-owned company run by entrepreneur Vevgeny V. Prigozhin, who has ties with President Vladimir Putin. Its employees poured out large numbers of social media postings apparently aimed at stoking racial and cultural tensions in the United States and trying to influence U.S. voters in regard to the presidential election, as Shane and Mazzetti suggest. They even adopted false U.S. personas online to get people to attend rallies and conduct other political activities. (An alternative explanation is that IRA is a purely commercial, and not political, operation.)

Whether those efforts even came close to swaying U.S. voters in the 2016 presidential election, as Shane and Mazzetti claimed, is another matter.

Shane and Mazzetti might argue that they are merely citing figures published by the social media giants Facebook and Twitter, but they systematically failed to report the detailed explanations behind the gross figures used in each case, which falsified their significance.

Their most dramatic assertions came in reporting the alleged results of the IRA's efforts on Facebook. "Even by the vertiginous standards of social media," they wrote, "the reach of their effort was impressive: 2,700 fake Facebook accounts, 80,000 posts, many of them elaborate images with catchy slogans, and an eventual audience of 126 million Americans on Facebook alone."

Then, to dramatize that "eventual audience" figure, they observed, "That was not far short of the 137 million people who would vote in the 2016 presidential elections."

But as impressive as these figures may appear at first glance, they don't really indicate an effective attack on the U.S. election process at all. In fact, without deeper inquiry into their meaning, those figures were grossly misleading.

A Theoretical Possibility

What Facebook general counsel Colin Stretch actually said in testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee last October was quite different from what the *Times* reporters claimed. "Our best estimate is that approximately 126,000

million people may have been served one of these [IRA-generated] stories at some time during the two year period,” Stretch said.

Stretch was expressing a theoretical possibility rather than an established accomplishment. Facebook was saying that it estimated 126 million Facebook members *might* have gotten at least one story from the IRA -- not over the ten week election period but over 194 weeks during the two years 2015 through 2017. That, figure, in turn, was based on the estimate that 29 million people might have gotten at least one story in their Facebook feed over that same two-year period and on the assumption that they shared it with others at a particular rate.

The first problem with citing those figures as evidence of impact on the 2016 election is that Facebook did not claim that all or even most of those 80,000 IRA posts were election-related. It offered no data on what proportion of the feeds to those 29 million people was, in fact, election-related. But Stretch did testify that IRA content over that two-year period represented just four ten thousandths (.0004) of the total content of Facebook newsfeeds.

Thus each piece of IRA content in a Facebook feed was engulfed in 23,000 pieces of non-IRA content.

That is an extremely important finding, because, as Facebook’s Vice President for News Feed, Adam Moseri, acknowledged in 2016, Facebook subscribers actually read only about 10 percent of the stories Facebook puts in their News Feed every day. The means that very few of the IRA stories that actually make it into a subscriber’s news feed on any given day are actually read.

Facebook did conduct research on what it calls “civic engagement” during the election period, and the researchers concluded that the “reach” of the content shared by what they called “fake amplifiers” was “marginal compared to the volume of civic content shared during the U.S. elections.” That reach, they said, was “statistically very small” in relation to “overall engagement on political issues.”

Shane and Mazzaetti thus failed to report any of the several significant caveats and disclaimers from Facebook itself that make their claim that Russian election propaganda “reached” 126 million Americans extremely misleading.

Tiny IRA Twitter Footprint

Shane and Mazzetti’s treatment of the role of Twitter in the alleged Russian involvement in the election focuses on 3,814 Twitter accounts said to be associated with the IRA, which supposedly “interacted with 1.4 million Americans.” Although that number looks impressive without any further

explanation, more disaggregated data provide a different picture: more than 90 percent of the Tweets from the IRA had nothing to do with the election, and those that did were infinitesimally few in relation to the entire Twitter stream relating to the 2016 campaign.

Twitter's own figures show that those 3,814 IRA-linked accounts posted 175,993 Tweets during the ten weeks of the election campaign, but that only 8.4 percent of the total number of IRA-generated Tweets were election-related.

Twitter estimated that those 15,000 IRA-related tweets represented less than .00008 (eight one hundred thousandths) of the estimated total of 189 million tweets that Twitter identified as election-related during the ten-week election campaign. Twitter has offered no estimate of how many Tweets, on average were in the daily twitter stream of those people notified by Twitter and what percentage of them were election-related Tweets from the IRA. Any such notification would certainly show, however, that the percentage was extremely small and that very few would have been read.

Research by Darren Linvill and Patrick Warren of Clemson University on 2.9 million Tweets from those same 3,814 IRA accounts over a two year period has revealed that nearly a third of its Tweets had normal commercial content or were not in English; another third were straight local newsfeeds from U.S. localities or mostly non-political "hashtag games", and the final third were on "right" or "left" populist themes in U.S. society.

Furthermore, there were more IRA Tweets on political themes in 2017 than there had been during the election year. As a graph of those tweets over time shows, those "right" and "left" Tweets peaked not during the election but during the summer of 2017.

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The Mysterious 50,000 'Russia-Linked' Accounts



Twitter also determined that another 50,258 automated Twitter accounts that tweeted about the election were associated with Russia and that they have generated a total to 2.1 million Tweets – about one percent of the total of number election-

related tweets during the period.

But despite media coverage of those Tweets suggesting that they originated with the Russian government, the evidence doesn't indicate that at all. Twitter's Sean Edgett told the Senate Intelligence Committee last November that Twitter had used an "expansive approach to defining what qualifies as a Russian-linked account." Twitter considered an account to be "Russian" if any of the following was found: it was created in Russia or if the user registered the account with a Russian phone carrier or a Russian email; the user's display name contains Cyrillic characters; the user frequently Tweets in Russian, or the user has logged in from any Russian IP address.

Edgett admitted in a statement in January, however, that there were limitations on its ability to determine the origins of the users of these accounts. And a past log-in from a Russian IP address does not mean the Russian government controls an account. Automated accounts have been bought and sold for many years on a huge market, some of which is located in Russia. As Scott Shane reported in September 2017, a Russian website BuyAcqs.com offers tens and even hundreds of thousands of Twitter accounts for bulk purchase.

Twitter also observed that "a high concentration of automated engagement and content originated from data centers and users accessing Twitter via Virtual Private Networks ("VPNs") and proxy servers," which served to mask the geographical origin of the tweet. And that practice was not limited to the 50,000 accounts in question. Twitter found that locations of nearly 12 percent of the Tweets generated during the election period were masked because of the use of such networks and servers.

Twitter identified over half of the Tweets, coming from about half of the 50,000 accounts, as being automated, and the data reported on activity on those 50,000 accounts in question, indicates that both the Trump and Clinton campaigns were using the automated accounts in question. The roughly 23,000 automated accounts were the source of 1.34 million Tweets, which represented .63 percent of the total election-related Tweets. But the entire 50,000 accounts produced about 1 percent of total election-related tweets.

Hillary Clinton got .55 percent of her total retweets from the 50,000 automated accounts Twitter calls "Russia-linked" and .62 percent of her "likes" from them. Those percentages are close to the percentage of total election-related Tweets generated by those same automated accounts. That suggests that her campaign had roughly the same proportion of automated accounts among the 50,000 accounts as it did in the rest of the accounts during the campaign.

Trump, on the other hand, got 1.8 percent of this total "likes" and 4.25 percent of his total Retweets for the whole election period from those accounts, indicating his campaign was more invested in the automated accounts that were the source of two-thirds of the Tweets in those 50,000 "Russia-linked" accounts.

The idea promoted by Shane and Mazzetti that the Russian government seriously threatened to determine the winner of the election does not hold up when the larger social media context is examined more closely. Contrary to what the *Times'* reporters and the corporate media in general would have us believe, the Russian private sector effort accounted for a minuscule proportion of the election-related output of social media. The threat to the U.S. political system in general and its electoral system in particular is not Russian influence; it's in part a mainstream news media that has lost perspective on the truth.

Gareth Porter is an independent investigative journalist and historian writing on US national security policy. His latest book, *Manufactured Crisis: The Untold Story of the Iran Nuclear Scare*, was published in February of 2014. Follow him on Twitter: [@GarethPorter](#).

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Seven Days in September

A new book, an anonymous Op-Ed and an Obama speech in the first seven days of September appeared to reveal dangerous insider moves against a dangerous, but constitutionally elected president, writes Joe Lauria.

By Joe Lauria

Special to Consortium News



In the first seven days of September efforts to manage and perhaps oust a constitutionally elected president were stunningly made public, raising complex questions about America's vaunted democratic system.

What unfolded appears reminiscent of the novel and film *Seven Days in May*: the story of an attempted military coup against a U.S. president who sought better relations with Russia. The fictional president was based on the real one, John F. Kennedy, who opened the White House in 1963 to director John Frankenheimer to film the only scenes of a Hollywood movie ever made there.

Kennedy was well aware of the Pentagon brass' political fury after his refusal to proceed with a full-scale assault against Cuba in the Bay of Pigs operation. It was compounded by his desire for detente with Moscow after the Cuban Missile Crisis, which Kennedy expressed forcefully in his seminal American University address, five months before his death.

This is the essential (must watch) scene in the film, a brilliant 2:25 minutes of screen history:

The key quote from the character playing Kennedy is: "You have such a fervent, passionate, evangelical affection for your country, why in the name of God don't you have any faith in the system of government you're so hellbent to protect?"

You didn't have to know Jack Kennedy to know that Donald Trump is no Jack Kennedy. Trump has staked out a raft of positions dangerous to the interests of most Americans and people around the world: on climate, billionaire tax breaks, health insurance, drone warfare, torture, immigration, Iran, Palestine and more.

But Trump has ostensibly tried to improve relations with Russia and North Korea to defuse the most sensitive nuclear trigger points on earth. And for that he at least appears to be getting the pre-1963 Kennedy treatment.

Circumstantial

Until the first seven days of September there was only circumstantial evidence that intelligence agencies worked with the party in power to undermine the opposition party candidate before the election and the president afterward.

These included:

- a series of anonymous leaks to undermine the president from Obama's intelligence officials, one admitted to by then FBI Director James Comey;
- a series of anti-Trump political messages between FBI officials Peter Strzok and Lisa Page, including one that admits to there being "no there, there" regarding Trump-Russia collusion, even though Strzok joined Special Counsel Robert Mueller's team precisely to look for a "there, there;"
- the use of a Democratic Party paid-for opposition research dossier (not an intelligence agency vetted report) to be later used to obtain a warrant to spy on the Trump campaign and form a basis for the Mueller probe;
- a CIA and FBI operative, linked to the firm that produced the dossier, who had infiltrated Jimmy Carter's 1980 campaign, and in 2016 courted Trump campaign operatives in a possible sting operation to connect Trump to Moscow.

This created a picture of the Democrats, the ruling party in the executive branch, using its intelligence agencies to undermine first a candidate and then a constitutionally elected president. Most of the corporate media buried or dismissed these leads as a "conspiracy theory," while relentlessly pushing the so-far unproven conspiracy theory that Trump colluded with Russia to steal the election.

The effort appeared to be classic projection onto Russia to deflect attention from Hillary Clinton's self-made defeat and, in centuries-old political tradition, to falsely blame a hostile foreign power for rising domestic unrest resulting instead from bi-partisan, unjust policies, which have indeed "undermined our democracy" and "sowed social divisions." It was that unrest that helped elect Trump.

As much of a danger as he may be to the republic, Trump will be gone in two or six years. The greater danger may well have been out-of-control, unelected intelligence officials inserting themselves into the electoral process and now, allied with Trump administration officials, into the governing process. A saying at the National Security Agency is: "Administrations come and go, but we will still be here."

Long-time Suspicions

There have always been suspicions of forces behind the scenes holding the real

power over American presidents. We only occasionally get glimpses of this.

Defense Secretary Ash Carter openly defied President Barack Obama when he sabotaged a plan to cooperate militarily with Russia against extremists in Syria by killing dozens of Syrian Arab Army soldiers just as Secretary of State John Kerry was nailing down the details of the agreement, which was then abandoned. This came as unelected officials pressured Obama to directly intervene in Syria.

Most of the time we are left to speculate about the unseen forces controlling a president.

But in September's first seven days we had three unusually public indications of unelected people trying to undermine an elected president: the revelations in Bob Woodward's new book; the anonymous op-ed in *The New York Times* and an unusual speech by Barack Obama about Trump.

Masha Gessen, a strong critic of Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin, explained the danger this way in *The New Yorker*:

"Having this state of affairs described in print further establishes that an unelected body, or bodies, are overruling and actively undermining the elected leader. While this may be the country's salvation in the short run, it also plainly signals the demise of some of its most cherished ideals and constitutional norms. An anonymous person or persons cannot govern for the people, because the people do not know who is governing."

Real Evidence Emerges

On Sept. 5, *The New York Times* took the highly unusual decision to publish an anonymous op-ed article. Titled, "I Am Part of the Resistance Inside the Trump Administration," it had the subtitle: "I work for the president but like-minded colleagues and I have vowed to thwart parts of his agenda and his worst inclinations."

The official, who has yet to be unmasked, provides clear evidence of unelected officials trying to control a less-than aware president: "The dilemma – which he does not fully grasp – is that many of the senior officials in his own administration are working diligently from within to frustrate parts of his agenda..."

But here is the key. This behind-the-throne power has a distinct political agenda. They're not really concerned about "rising above politics, reaching across the aisle and resolving to shed the labels in favor of a single one:

Americans” as the writer professes. Their concern is determining policy.

For instance this cabal has no problem with some of the most regressive parts of Trump’s program. The writer celebrates them. “Don’t get me wrong,” he writes. “There are bright spots that the near- ceaseless negative coverage of the administration fails to capture: effective deregulation, historic tax reform, a more robust military and more.”

Deregulation to let the private sector run roughshod over workers. Deregulation to worsen climate change. Tax reform to put millions more into billionaire’s pockets while average Americans remain mired in debt. And a more robust military to multiply human suffering around the world.

This, instead, seems like the real problem the insiders have with Trump: “On Russia, for instance, the president was reluctant to expel so many of Mr. Putin’s spies as punishment for the poisoning of a former Russian spy in Britain. He complained for weeks about senior staff members letting him get boxed into further confrontation with Russia, and he expressed frustration that the United States continued to impose sanctions on the country for its malign behavior. But his national security team knew better – such actions had to be taken, to hold Moscow accountable.”

It is Trump’s Russia policy—the only rational part of his agenda—that is their problem, not unlike the generals in Frankenheimer’s masterpiece.

Obama Slams Trump

On Sept. 7, Obama broke with the tradition of former presidents and criticized his successor in a speech at the University of Illinois. It’s an unwritten rule in Washington then when you leave the White House you don’t look back. Of course it’s been broken before. Teddy Roosevelt called Taft a “puzzlewit” and a “fathead.” But the idea is that when you are no longer an elected president you shouldn’t undermine the one who is.

“How hard can that be, saying that Nazis are bad?” Obama said, referring to Trump’s reluctance to condemn neo-Nazis in Charlottesville, VA last year.

As Obama was still president when his intelligence agencies apparently went to work on Trump, it was a bit rich for him to say: “It should not be Democratic or Republican, it should not be partisan to say that we don’t pressure the Department of Justice or the FBI to use the criminal justice system as a cudgel to punish our political opponents.”

Evidently recalling his own battles with administration officials who pressured him, Obama however recognized that it is undemocratic for a president’s team to

try to undermine him. "The idea that everything will turn out OK because there are people inside the White House who secretly aren't following the President's orders," Obama said of the anonymous op-ed, "... is not a check. I am being serious here. That is not how our democracy is supposed to work."

Fear Over Fear

The most alarming revelations about the effort to control a president come from Woodward's book, *Fear: Trump in the White House*, which first appeared in the media during the first seven days of September on Sept. 4. Woodward said in an interview that he "looked hard for evidence of collusion with Russia, but didn't find any."

That did not stop members of Team Trump from interfering in his duties as chief executive, going well beyond the role of counseling the president.

Much of Woodward's reporting is from anonymous and second hand sources. Assuming that what he writes is true he reported that former White House economic adviser Gary Cohn "stole a letter off Trump's desk." Had Trump signed it, the U.S. would have withdrawn from a free trade agreement with South Korea. Woodward quotes Cohn in the words of an unnamed official as saying, "I stole it off his desk....I wouldn't let him see it. He's never going to see that document. Got to protect the country."

That would appear to cross the line.

However it then becomes a lot more complicated than *Seven Days in May*.

"He drafts a tweet saying, 'We are going to pull out dependents from South Korea ... Family members of the 28,000 people there,'" Woodward told CBS News.

According to CBS:

That tweet was never sent, because of a back channel message from North Korea that it would regard a pullout of dependents as a sign the U.S. was preparing to attack. "At that moment there was a sense of profound alarm in the Pentagon leadership that, 'My God, one tweet and we have reliable information that the North Koreans are going to read this as an attack is imminent,'" Woodward said.

According to the book, Trump also told Defense Secretary Jim Mattis to assassinate Syrian President Bashar al-Assad after the April 2017 chemical attack. "Let's fucking kill him! Let's go in. Let's kill the fucking lot of them," Trump said, according to Woodward. (That would not please the Kremlin,

his supposed master, but whatever) .

Mattis supposedly told Trump he'd "get right on it" but ignored the order. Mattis devised pin prick strikes instead.

Is that insubordination? Or was that saving the U.S., the Middle East and perhaps the world from a major war?

It certainly sets up an excruciating dilemma. This time it may be the generals preserving the peace.

Seven Days in September may indeed be the reverse of *Seven Days in May*.

Joe Lauria is editor-in-chief of Consortium News and a former correspondent for *The Wall Street Journal*, *Boston Globe*, *Sunday Times* of London and numerous other newspapers. He can be reached at joelauria@consortiumnews.com and followed on Twitter [@unjoe](https://twitter.com/unjoe) .

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The Battle for Our Minds

There are battlefields in Syria, Ukraine, Yemen, and elsewhere, but given the state of corporate media, perhaps the most consequential battle now being fought is for our minds, says Patrick Lawrence.

By Patrick Lawrence

Special to Consortium News



After reading *The New York Times* piece "[The Plot to Subvert an Election](#)" I put the paper down with a single question.

Why, after two years of allegations, indictments, and claims to proof of this, that, and the other did the newspaper of record—well, once the newspaper of record—see any need to publish such a piece? My answer is simple: The orthodox account of Russia-gate has not taken hold: It has failed in its effort to establish a consensus of certainty among Americans. My conclusion matches this observation: The orthodox narrative is never going to achieve this objective.

There are too many holes in it.

“The information age is actually a media age,” John Pilger, the noted British–Australian journalist, remarked during a symposium four years ago, when the Ukraine crisis was at its peak. “We have war by media; censorship by media; demonology by media; retribution by media; diversion by media—a surreal assembly line of obedient clichés and false assumptions.” Pilger revisited the theme in a piece last week on Consortium News, arguing that once-tolerated, dissenting opinion has in recent years “regressed into a metaphoric underground.”

There are battlefields in Syria, Ukraine, Yemen, and elsewhere, but perhaps the most consequential battle now being fought is for our minds.

Those who dispense with honest intellectual inquiry, healthy skepticism of *all* media, and an insistence that assertions require supporting evidence should not win this war. The *Times* piece by Scott Shane and Mark Mazzetti—two of the paper’s top-tier reporters—is a case in point: If the Russia-gate narrative were so widely accepted as their report purports, there would have been no need to publish such a piece at this late date.

Many orthodox narratives are widely accepted however among a public that is not always paying attention. The public too often participates in the manufactured consent. Usually it takes years for the truth to be widely understood. Sometimes it comes when the U.S. admits it decades later, such as the role of the CIA in the coups in Iran and Chile. Other times it comes through admissions by former U.S. officials, such as former Defense Secretary Robert McNamara about the Vietnam War.

Even Recent Narratives are Fraying

There are more recent examples of official narratives quickly fraying if not starting to fall apart, though Establishment media continues to push them.

For instance, there are serious doubts about who was responsible for alleged chemical weapons attacks in Syria. The most significant was in Eastern Ghouta in August 2013 followed by attacks in Khan Sheikhoun (April 2017) and Douma (April 2018).

The corporate media accounts of each of these attacks have been countered with persuasive evidence against the prevailing view that the government of Bashar al–Assad was to blame. It has been provided by journalists (Seymour Hersh), a scientist (Theodore Postol), and on-the-ground correspondents and local witnesses. These reports are subject to further verification. But by no means do official narratives stand without challenge.

There is also the case of Malaysian Flight MH-17, shot down over Ukrainian territory in June 2014. The official report, issued a year later, concluded that the plane was downed by Ukrainian rebels using a Russian-supplied missile. The report was faulty from the first: Investigators never visited the site, some evidence was based on a report produced by Bellingcat, an open-source web site affiliated with the vigorously anti-Russian Atlantic Council, and Ukraine was given the right to approve the report before it was issued.

Last week the Russian military disclosed evidence that serial numbers found in the debris at the MH-17 crash site indicate the missile that downed the plane was produced at a Soviet military-production plant in 1986 owned by Ukraine. Let us see further verification of this evidence (although I seriously doubt any Western correspondent will seek any). The official report of 2015 noted the serial numbers, so we know they are authentic, but it did not use them to trace the missile's provenance.

There is also the seriously muddled case of the poisoning of the Skripals in Britain. Why hasn't the Western media dug into this story rather than accept at face value the pronouncements of the British government?

A month ago I lamented the damage Russia-gate has done to many of our most important institutions, the press not least among them. What is the corporate media thinking? That once President Trump is dumped, all will return to normal and professional standards will be restored? One can also argue the reverse: that adversarial journalism has returned to the White House beat largely out of personal animus towards Trump and that it will disappear again once a more "normal" president is in office.

As Pilger put it, "This is a seismic shift, with journalists policing the new 'groupthink,' as [Robert] Parry called it, dispensing myths and distractions, pursuing its enemies."

In other words, Establishment journalism has shifted far afield from its traditional ideals of non-partisan, objective reporting and is instead vying for your mind to enlist it in its agenda to promote American interests abroad or one party or the other at home.

We can't let them get away with it. Our minds are our own.

Patrick Lawrence, a correspondent abroad for many years, chiefly for the International Herald Tribune, is a columnist, essayist, author, and lecturer. His most recent book is *Time No Longer: Americans After the American Century* (Yale). Follow him @thefloutist. His web site is www.patricklawrence.us.

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The New York Times as Judge and Jury

Seeking to maintain its credibility, The New York Times dispenses with the criminal justice system and basic principles of journalism to weigh in again on Russia-gate, reports Joe Lauria.

By Joe Lauria

Special to Consortium News



We've seen it before: a newspaper and individual reporters get a story horribly wrong but instead of correcting it they double down to protect their reputations and credibility—which is all journalists have to go on—and the public suffers.

Sometimes this maneuver can contribute to a massive loss of life. The most egregious example was the reporting in the lead-up to the invasion of Iraq. Like nearly all Establishment media, *The New York Times* got the story of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction—the major *casus belli* for the invasion—dead wrong. But the *Times*, like the others, continued publishing stories without challenging their sources in authority, mostly unnamed, who were pushing for war.

The result was a disastrous intervention that led to hundreds of thousands of civilian deaths and continued instability in Iraq, including the formation of the Islamic State.

In a massive *Times*' [article](#) published on Thursday, entitled, “‘A Plot to Subvert an Election: Unravelling the Russia Story So Far,” it seems that reporters Scott Shane and Mark Mazzetti have succumbed to the same thinking that doubled down on Iraq.

They claim to have a “mountain of evidence” but what they offer would be invisible on the Great Plains.

With the mid-terms looming and Special Counsel Robert Mueller unable to so far come up with any proof of collusion between Russia and the Trump campaign to steal the 2016 election—the central Russia-gate charge—the *Times* does it for him, regurgitating a Russia-gate Round-Up of every unsubstantiated allegation

that has been made—deceptively presented as though it’s all been proven.

This is a reaffirmation of the faith, a recitation of what the Russia-gate faithful want to believe is true. But mere repetition will not make it so.

The *Times*’ unsteady conviction is summed up in this paragraph, which the paper itself then contradicts only a few paragraphs later:

“What we now know **with certainty**: The Russians carried out a landmark intervention that will be examined for decades to come. Acting on the personal animus of Mr. Putin, public and private instruments of Russian power moved with daring and skill to harness the currents of American politics. Well-connected Russians worked aggressively to recruit or influence people inside the Trump campaign.”

But this schizoid approach leads to the admission that “no public evidence has emerged showing that [Trump’s] campaign conspired with Russia.”

The *Times* also adds: “There is a plausible case that Mr. Putin succeeded in delivering the presidency to his admirer, Mr. Trump, though it cannot be proved or disproved.”

This is an extraordinary statement. If it cannot be “proved or disproved” what is the point of this entire exercise: of the Mueller probe, the House and Senate investigations and even of this very *New York Times* article?

Attempting to prove this constructed story without proof is the very point of this piece.

A Banner Day

The 10,000-word article opens with a story of a pro-Russian banner that was hung from the Manhattan Bridge on Putin’s birthday, and an anti-Obama banner hung a month later from the Memorial Bridge in Washington just after the 2016 election.

On public property these are constitutionally-protected acts of free speech. But for the *Times*, “The Kremlin, it appeared, had reached onto United States soil in New York and Washington. The banners may well have been intended as visual victory laps for the most effective foreign interference in an American election in history.”

Why? Because the *Times* tells us that the “earliest promoters” of images of the banners were from social media accounts linked to a St. Petersburg-based click-bait farm, a company called the Internet Research Agency. The company is not legally connected to the Kremlin and any political coordination is pure speculation. IRA has been explained convincingly as a commercial and not

political operation. Its aim is get and sell “eyeballs.”

For instance the company conducted pro and anti-Trump rallies and social media messages, as well as pro and anti-Clinton. But the *Times*, in classic omission mode, only reports on “the anti-Clinton, pro-Trump messages shared with millions of voters by Russia.” Sharing with “millions” of people on social media does not mean that millions of people have actually seen those messages. And if they had there is little way to determine whether it affected how they voted, especially as the messages attacked and praised both candidates.

The *Times* reporters take much at face value, which they then themselves undermine. Most prominently, they willfully mistake an indictment for a conviction, as if they do not know the difference.

This is in the category of Journalism 101. An indictment need not include evidence and under U.S. law an indictment is not evidence. Juries are instructed that an indictment is merely an accusation. That the *Times* commits this cardinal sin of journalism to purposely confuse allegations with a conviction is not only inexcusable but strikes a fatal blow to the credibility of the entire article.

It actually reports that “Today there is **no doubt** who hacked the D.N.C. and the Clinton campaign. A [detailed indictment](#) of 12 officers of Russia’s military intelligence agency, filed in July by Mr. Mueller, documents their every move, including their break-in techniques, their tricks to hide inside the Democrats’ networks and even their Google searches.”

Who needs courts when suspects can be tried and convicted in the press?

What the *Times* is not taking into account is that Mueller knows his indictment will never be tested in court because the GRU agents will never be arrested, there is no extradition treaty between the U.S. and Russia and even if it were miraculously to see the inside of a courtroom Mueller can invoke states secrets privilege to show the “evidence” to a judge with clearance in his chambers who can then emerge to pronounce “Guilty!” without a jury having seen that evidence.

This is what makes Mueller’s indictment more a political than a legal document, giving him wide leeway to put whatever he wants into it. He knew it would never be tested and that once it was released, a supine press would do the rest to cement it in the public consciousness as a conviction, just as this *Times* piece tries to do.

Errors of Commission and Omission

There are a series of erroneous assertions and omissions in the *Times* piece, omitted because they would disturb the narrative:

-Not mentioning that the FBI was never given access to the DNC server but instead gullibly believing the assertion of the anti-Russian private company CrowdStrike, paid for by the DNC, that the name of the first Soviet intelligence chief found in metadata proves Russia was behind the hack. Only someone wanting to be caught would leave such a clue.

-Incredibly believing that Trump would have launched a covert intelligence operation on live national television by asking Russia to get 30,000 missing emails.

-Ignoring the possible role of the MI6, the CIA and the FBI setting up Trump campaign members George Papadopoulos and Carter Page as “colluders” with Russia.

-Repeating misleading statements about the infamous Trump Tower meeting, in which Trump’s son did not seek dirt on Clinton but was offered it by a music promoter, not the Russian government. None was apparently produced. It’s never been established that a campaign receiving opposition research from foreigners is illegal (though the *Times* has decided that it is) and only the Clinton campaign was known to have obtained any.

-Making no mention at all of the now discredited opposition research dossier paid for by the Clinton campaign and the DNC from foreign sources and used by the FBI to get a warrant to spy on Carter Page and potentially other campaign members.

-Dismissing the importance of politicized text messages between FBI agents Peter Strzok and Lisa Page because the pair were “skewered regularly on Mr. (Sean) Hannity’s show as the ‘Trump-hating F.B.I. lovebirds.’”

-Putting down to “hyped news stories” the legitimate fear of a new McCarthyism against anyone who questions the “official” story being peddled here by the *Times*.

-Seeking to get inside Putin’s head to portray him as a petulant child seeking personal revenge against Hillary Clinton, a tale long peddled by Clinton and accepted without reservation by the *Times*.

-Pretending to get into Julian Assange’s head as well, saying he “shared Mr. Putin’s hatred of Mrs. Clinton and had a soft spot for Russia.” And that Assange “also obscured the Russian role by fueling a right-wing conspiracy theory he knew to be false.”

-Ignoring findings backed by the Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity that the DNC emails were leaked and not hacked.

–Erroneously linking the timing of WikiLeaks’ Podesta emails to deflect attention from the “Access Hollywood” tape, as [debunked](#) in Consortium News by Italian journalist Stefania Maurizi, who worked with WikiLeaks on those emails.

Distorts Geo-Politics

The piece swallows whole the Establishment’s geo-strategic Russia narrative, as all corporate media do. It buys without hesitation the story that the U.S. seeks to spread democracy around the world, and not pursue its economic and geo-strategic interests as do all imperial powers.

The *Times* reports that, “The United States had backed democratic, anti-Russian forces in the so-called color revolutions on Russia’s borders, in Georgia in 2003 and Ukraine in 2004.” The *Times* has also spread the erroneous story of a democratic revolution in Ukraine in 2014, omitting crucial [evidence](#) of a U.S.-backed coup.

The *Times* disapprovingly dismisses Trump having said on the campaign trail that “Russia was not an existential threat, but a potential ally in beating back terrorist groups,” when an objective view of the world would come to this very [conclusion](#).

The story also shoves aside American voters’ real concerns that led to Trump’s election. For the *Times*, economic grievances and rejection of perpetual war played no role in the election of Trump. Instead it was Russian influence that led Americans to vote for him, an absurd proposition defied by a Gallup poll in July that [showed](#) Americans’ greatest concerns being economic. Their concerns about Russia were statistically insignificant at less than one percent.

Ignoring Americans’ real concerns exposes the class interests of *Times* staffers and editors who are evidently above Americans’ economic and social suffering. The *Times* piece blames Russia for social “divisions” and undermining American democracy, classic projection onto Moscow away from the real culprits for these problems: bi-partisan American plutocrats. That also insults average Americans by suggesting they cannot think for themselves and pursue their own interests without Russia telling them what to do.

Establishment reporters insulate themselves from criticism by retreating into the exclusive Establishment club they think they inhabit. It is from there that they vicariously draw their strength from powerful people they cover, which they should instead be scrutinizing. Validated by being close to power, Establishment reporters don’t take seriously anyone outside of the club, such as a website like Consortium News.

But on rare occasions they are forced to take note of what outsiders are saying.

Because of the role *The New York Times* played in the catastrophe of Iraq its editors took the highly unusual move of [apologizing](#) to its readers. Will we one day read a similar apology about the paper's coverage of Russia-gate?

Joe Lauria is editor-in-chief of Consortium News and a former correspondent for *The Wall Street Journal*, *Boston Globe*, *Sunday Times* of London and numerous other newspapers. He can be reached at joelauria@consortiumnews.com and followed on Twitter [@unjoe](#) .

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CN Radio—Episode 3: Gareth Porter on DHS Deception & Bi-Partisan Fear of Revolt

The DHS deceptively pushed the story that Russia hacked U.S. voter databases; and both Democratic & Republican elites fear popular revolt against their failed polices but refuse to change, as Gareth Porter explains.

The guest on Episode 3 of Consortium News Radio is Gareth Porter, a long time contributor to Consortium News. Gareth is an independent investigative journalist and historian who has been studying the national security state for nearly two decades and is the author of two books on the subject: [Perils of Dominance](#) on the U.S. going to war in Vietnam and [Manufactured Crisis](#), on the false narrative about the Iranian nuclear program.

Gareth speaks about two of his articles recently published on Consortium News. The first is an original piece about how the [Department of Homeland Security Created a Deceptive Tale of Russia Hacking US Voter Sites](#). The second story was originally published on Truthout. We gave it the title: [The Establishment's Bi-Partisan Fear of Popular Revolt](#).

The runtime is 23 minutes and 46 seconds. The episode is also available as a podcast on Consortium's [podcast page](#).

And now Gareth Porter on Consortium News Radio:

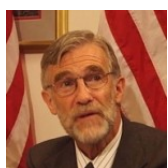
If you enjoyed this original interview please consider [making a donation](#) to Consortium News so we can bring you more stories like this one.

Justice Dept Likely to Slow-Walk Declassification

President Trump has ordered Russia-gate data to be declassified but will likely be stonewalled, raising questions about whether Trump is his own man, writes Ray McGovern.

By Ray McGovern

Special to Consortium News



Don't hold your breath. While the media is breathlessly describing yesterday's order by President Donald Trump's "to provide for the *immediate* (emphasis added) declassification" of Russia-gate materials as a "showdown," any likely showdown is months away, if it comes at all.

The word "immediate" can mean different things to different people. Had the President set a deadline, or had he given the declassification task to his own National Security Council, the word "showdown" might be closer to what to expect.

The tragic-comedy now on stage in Washington is beyond bizarre. Can President Trump be unaware that those he "ordered" to do the declassification – top officials of the Justice Department, the FBI, and the intelligence agencies – have zero incentive to comply "immediately." And they have minus-zero incentive, as the top echelons see it, to throw their former bosses, colleagues, and co-conspirators under the bus by releasing the family jewels.

Most of today's commentary by anonymous officials on declassification are transparently bogus. To suggest, for example, that "death could occur," as one MSNBC pundit predicted this afternoon, is beyond ludicrous. Do not expect Establishment media, however, to stop its feeding frenzy at the Deep State trough.

Stakes High For Russia-gate Pundits

The stakes could hardly be higher not only for the Deep State, but also for the media – including erstwhile "progressive" pundits not yet recovered, after 22 months, from the virulent virus I call "HWHW" (Hillary Would Have Won). Observations by Mark Twain and, more recently, Patrick Lawrence apply in spades to the widely shared predicament of Russia-gate. Twain: "It is easier to fool people than to convince them that they have been fooled."

Lawrence put it this way in Consortium News: “The most ordinary standards of evidentiary procedure are forgone. Many of our key institutions—the foreign policy apparatus, the media, key intelligence and law-enforcement agencies, the political leadership—are now extravagantly committed to a narrative none appears able to control. The risk of self-inflicted damage these institutions assume, should the truth of the Russia-gate events emerge—as one day it surely will—is nearly incalculable. ... Russia-gate, in a phrase, has become too big to fail.”

Trump has now put the ball in the miscreants’ court but, with the media on their side, Deep State functionaries enjoy the equivalent of home-court advantage. House Intelligence Committee Chair Devin Nunes (R, CA) has pretty much warned of this. Speaking of classified passages Trump has now ordered released, Nunes in late July expressed hedged confidence “that once the American people see these 20 pages, **at least for those that will get real reporting on this issue**, (emphasis added) they will be shocked by what’s in that FISA [Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act] application” to surveil Carter Page, an American citizen, and member of Trump’s campaign team.

Sure, Nunes is a Trump supporter. But he also has this strange – these days one might say romantic – notion that the way the U.S. Constitution set things up, he and his committee have the power – and the duty – to oversee the agencies that Congress established and funds, and to uncover any abuses. The behavior of the chairs of the House Judiciary and Oversight Committees shows they share that view.

On February 18, Nunes threw down a heavy gauntlet during an interview with journalist Sheryl Attkisson:

“FISA abuse ... as it relates to the Department of Justice and the FBI, if they need to be put on trial, we will put them on trial. The reason that Congress exists is to oversee these agencies that we created. DOJ and FBI are not above the law. Congress created them, we oversee them, and we fund them. And if they’re committing abuse for a secret court, getting warrants on American citizens, you’re darn right that we’re going to put them on trial.”

Trump Agonistes

Nunes put that on the record back in February. What can possibly explain Trump’s reluctance to order declassification of relevant FISA and other documents (with such redactions that might be truly necessary) until seven months later, and just seven weeks before the mid-term elections? And why did Trump throw down a cautious, paper-thin gauntlet, with no firm deadline – inviting Deep State stonewalling?

The need to play ball with the Deep State is normally made clear to incoming presidents before they are inaugurated, and such was the case with President-elect Trump. Just two weeks before he took office, Trump was paid an official visit by National Intelligence Director James Clapper, FBI Director James Comey, CIA Director John Brennan, and NSA Director Michael Rogers. Trump was put on notice by none other than the Minority Leader of the Senate, Chuck Schumer. Schumer has been around and knows the ropes; he is a veteran of 18 years in the House, and is in his 20th year in the Senate.

On Jan. 3, 2017 Schumer said it all, when he told MSNBC's Rachel Maddow, that President-elect Trump is "being really dumb" by taking on the intelligence community and its assessments on Russia's cyber activities:

"Let me tell you, you take on the intelligence community, they have six ways from Sunday at getting back at you," Schumer told Maddow. "So even for a practical, supposedly hard-nosed businessman, he's being really dumb to do this." Did Maddow ask Schumer if he was saying the President of the United States should be afraid of the intelligence community? No, she let Schumer's theorem stand.

Three days after the Schumer-Maddow warning, at the January 6 meeting with the Deep State brass, Trump was handed an evidence-free, rump intelligence "assessment" – published the same day – that Russian President Vladimir Putin had done what he could to get Trump elected. Adding insult to injury, after the others had left then-FBI Director Comey told the President-elect about the dubious findings of the so-called "Steele dossier," opposition research paid for by the Democrats, with unconfirmed but scurrilous stories about Trump cavorting with prostitutes in Moscow, etc., etc.

Did Trump get the message? Is he his own man? A clue is in the almost embarrassing abundance of caution he has exercised vis-a-vis the Deep State – and the military, as well. He is likely to let himself be slow-walked on declassification past the mid-term elections, after which the scenery is likely to look very different in Congress.

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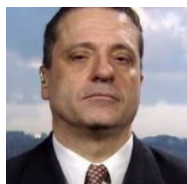
Letter from Britain: The Real Reason for the 'Anti-Semite' Campaign Against Jeremy Corbyn

Panic drives the smear attack against Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn whose background as a radical socialist, not his criticism of Israel and support for the Palestine, threatens the British establishment's hold on power, argues Alexander Mercouris.

By Alexander Mercouris

in London

Special to Consortium News



Any discussion of the current “anti-Semitism crisis” in the British Labour Party needs to start with an understanding that there is no “anti-semitism crisis” in the British Labour Party, or in Britain.

Anti-Semitism did once have a place in British society. By way of example, readers of Agatha Christie stories written before World War II will come across stock anti-Semitic representations of Jewish characters. As recently as the 1970s, I can remember what would today be considered Semitic stereotypes being commonly used to represent Jewish people in many of the unfunny comedy shows broadcast by British television in that period, including some the BBC broadcast.

Racist stereotyping of this sort was commonplace in Britain right up to the 1970s, and was certainly not exclusive to Jews, as Irish people, black people and people from the Indian subcontinent well recall. Some still persists today, but by and large racial stereotyping is socially unacceptable, except (worryingly) with respect to Russians.

By comparison with other European countries, anti-Semitism in Britain has, however, not been a major phenomenon in modern British society and recent British history. There has been no official persecution of Jews in Britain since they were allowed to resettle in England by Oliver Cromwell in the 1650s, while the attempt by Oswald Moseley's British Union of Fascists to stir up political anti-Semitism in the 1930s provoked fierce resistance.

Jewish people now play a full and active role in British life, and this happens without notice or comment.

As for the formal institutions of Britain's Jewish community, these form an integral part of British life. The chief rabbi has enjoyed a measure of recognition as the nominal leader of the British Jewish community from the British state ever since the 1870s. Since the 1980s, by convention, the chief rabbi has been admitted to the British Parliament as a peer of the House of Lords, though the present chief rabbi, Ephraim Mirvis, has not yet been so admitted. The British Jewish community's major institution—the Board of Deputies of British Jews—has had a continuous existence since the 1760s.

Though there are anti-Semites in Britain as there are everywhere else, they are very much a minor and ugly fringe, and moreover a generally despised and disliked one, with no influence or traction in British politics or in British life.

Despite lurid claims to the contrary, actual cases of anti-Semitic violence and property damage in Britain are relatively few, and certainly appear to be less than other types of racial violence.

Indeed, Jewish people today are so much an integral part of British society and of British life that I for one question whether it is even accurate to speak of a distinct "Jewish establishment" among British Jews. Rather, it seems to me that it would be more accurate to say that there are some prominent British Jews and some prominent British Jewish institutions—such as the chief rabbi and the Board of Deputies of British Jews—which today form an integral part of the larger British establishment, whose general perspectives and interests they share.

Which brings me to the present "anti-Semitism" campaign against Jeremy Corbyn.

The Left-Wing, Anti-Imperialist Labour Tradition

The British Labour Party was formed in 1900 before World War I, and if there has been one political movement in Britain that has stood rock solid against all manifestations of anti-Semitism in British life (perhaps more than any other group), it is the British Labour Party, and first and foremost its left wing.

This is consistent with the traditional stance of the left wing of the British Labour Party, which can be broadly defined as anti-racist, anti-fascist, and, above all, anti-imperialist. The latter has been important in a country like Britain—historically the preeminent imperialist power—where imperialism was justified in racist terms. British left-wing anti-imperialists, who are mostly drawn from the working class (a fact which gave British anti-imperialism a strong class-conflict character) strongly were predisposed to be anti-racist.

Not surprisingly, British Labour left-wing anti-racism extended to staunch

opposition to anti-Semitism, which is, of course, the reason why so many British Jews were drawn to the Labour Party in the first place.

The key point to understand about Corbyn is that it is from within this left-wing, anti-imperialist Labour tradition that he comes. His parents after all first met each other in the 1930s attending a rally in support of the Spanish Republic at the time of the Spanish Civil War. He has been loyal to the traditions of the Labour Party's anti-imperialist left ever since he began his career in politics, as his long record of opposition to all the West's interventionist wars shows. Needless to say, that includes strong and consistent anti-racism and the opposition to anti-Semitism which goes with it. Strikingly, Corbyn's acceptance speech following his election as Labour leader included a declaration of support for refugees.

To insinuate that Corbyn is an anti-Semite—as is increasingly happening—and to insinuate that the left wing of the Labour Party to which he belongs is riddled with anti-Semitism and poses an “existential threat to British Jews” (as several of the British Jewish community's newspapers have alleged) is more than just absurd. It stands reality on its head. Corbyn is not an anti-Semite. Anti-Semitism, on the contrary, is what he always has defined himself against, and to claim otherwise is dishonest and even surreal.

Corbyn's well-known support for the Palestinian people's struggle does not contradict his opposition to anti-Semitism. Rather, it is the product of his consistent anti-imperialism, making Corbyn's support for the Palestinians and his opposition to anti-Semitism consistent.

All this is well understood by those who are conducting the anti-Semitism campaign against Corbyn within the Labour Party and outside it. Corbyn has been a fixture of British political life ever since he was first elected a member of Parliament in 1983. The British establishment—including those members of the British establishment who are Jewish—know him well, and they know well what his actual beliefs are. It is not credible that they believe him to be an anti-Semite, or that they think that the left wing of the British Labour Party, which supports him, is riddled with anti-Semitism.

The Push to Stop Corbyn

The essential mendacity of the whole anti-Semitism campaign and the true motives behind it is shown by the exceptionally narrow frame of reference in which it is being conducted. It is universally acknowledged that the allegations of anti-Semitism being made against Corbyn and some of his supporters stem from Corbyn's longstanding support for the Palestinian people's struggle and his equally longstanding criticisms of Israel's response to that struggle. As'ad AbuKhalil

has discussed this aspect of the affair for Consortium News with great thoroughness and detail.

It is worth pointing out, however, that the criticisms being made against Corbyn barely touch on the Palestinian question at all. Anyone looking at these criticisms for a discussion of the Palestinian issue, even one from a position sympathetic to Israel and hostile to the Palestinians, will fail to find it.

The Palestinian struggle, the plight of the Palestinian people, the whole history of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the current policies both of Israel and of the Western governments which support it, are barely mentioned. When Palestinians do get mentioned at all, it is purely as terrorists. The entire campaign is being conducted as if Corbyn and those who support him hate Zionism and Israel and therefore all Jews.

It is, of course, impossible that those who are conducting the campaign against Corbyn are any more ignorant of the basic facts of the Palestinian struggle and of the Arab-Israeli conflict than they are ignorant of Corbyn's actual beliefs. If they are not mentioning these facts, it is not because they are ignorant of them. It is because they choose not to mention them.

In other words, the campaign against Corbyn has very little to do with the situation in the Middle East. I say this, though I have no doubt that the Israeli embassy is playing an active role in the campaign, a fact which is apparently freely admitted within Israel itself, though not in Britain.

However, it is a mistake to see the campaign against Corbyn as principally Israeli inspired. If it were, I would expect those conducting it to say far more about the situation in the Middle East than they do. Nor, in my opinion, is the campaign exclusively or even primarily the work of British Jews. As it happens, the Jewish community in Britain is far from united behind the campaign, with many British Jews expressing doubts or even outright opposition to it.

Instead, the campaign should be seen for what it is: the latest in a long series of attacks by the British establishment against Corbyn, the one British politician who more than any other embodies the threat to the current status quo and to the British establishment's hold on power.

These attacks have at various times sought to portray Corbyn as a Communist, a Russian agent, a terrorist sympathizer and a traitor. Adding a charge of anti-Semitism to this catalogue is an obvious further step, and given Corbyn's well-known advocacy of Palestinian rights an easy one. The only surprise is that it has not happened before.

That the anti-Semitism campaign is the latest in a long series of establishment

attacks on Corbyn, which extend all the way back to his election as Labour's leader, is shown by the sheer breadth of the campaign. The parliamentary Labour Party, the entire Conservative Party and the media (including the BBC and the supposedly left-wing *Guardian* newspaper) have all embraced it. Certainly, it extends far beyond those members of Britain's Jewish community who form part of the greater British establishment and who initially spearheaded it. As it happens, the great majority of British politicians and commentators who have joined in the campaign are non-Jews.

A New Political Dynamic

As for the campaign's greater vehemence by comparison with earlier campaigns, that is the product of the changed political dynamic in Britain since the June 2017 general election.

Before that election, the British establishment did not take Corbyn seriously, since it assumed that the British electorate would reject him in any election which he fought. The horrifying realization following the June 2017 election that the opposite is the case has—not surprisingly—caused panic and has led to the establishment pulling out all the stops. That explains not just the greater vehemence of this campaign but why it has persisted for so long.

In other words, what is driving the campaign is not some overarching loyalty on the part of British Jews to Israel or a belief that Corbyn is an anti-Semite. Rather, it is British establishment panic. As Britain's Conservative government disintegrates, Corbyn stands poised to become Britain's next prime minister. That terrifying prospect—of a radical socialist in 10, Downing Street—is one which must be averted at all costs. That is the reason for the anti-Semitism campaign we have been witnessing, and thus all the other campaigns against Corbyn we have witnessed, of which there are certainly more to come.

While the causes of the anti-Semitism campaign are mainly domestic, there is a wide consensus among Corbyn's supporters that he has not handled his response to the campaign well. The general opinion—that he has been far too accommodating to his critics—has been forcefully argued in Consortium News by [Jonathan Cook](#).

Corbyn himself has conceded too much ground on anti-semitism. As a lifelong anti-racism campaigner, the accusations of anti-semitism have clearly pained him. He has tried to placate rather than defy the smearers. He has tried to maintain unity with people who have no interest in finding common ground with him.

And as he has lost all sense of how to respond in good faith to allegations made in bad faith, he has begun committing the cardinal sin of sounding and

looking evasive – just as those who deployed the anti-semitism charge hoped. It was his honesty, plain-speaking and compassion that won him the leadership and the love of ordinary members. Unless he can regain the political and spiritual confidence that underpinned those qualities, he risks haemorrhaging support.

This widespread view that Corbyn has been accommodating to people who seek only his destruction has even produced some curious examples of drafts of “speeches” written for him by some of his sympathizers setting out the sort of things which they think he should say.

While I have considerable sympathy for this view, I think it is only fair to add that Corbyn happens to be one of the most polite and diffident personalities in British politics. The contrast with, say, Donald Trump in the United States, could not be greater. It is not in Corbyn’s nature to respond to his critics with the same forcefulness that they extend to him. While this makes Corbyn an indifferent orator and blunts his impact in debates in the House of Commons, his politeness and diffidence is an integral part of his appeal. To call on him to act differently is to call for a different man, with no guarantee that that man would command anything remotely approaching the level of support that Corbyn has.

Is the Campaign Working?

It is important to stress this point because as of the time of writing it is far from clear to me that—contrary to what Jonathan Cook fears—this latest campaign against Corbyn is succeeding.

The poll numbers barely have shifted, with Conservative and Labour both polling around 40 percent of the vote since the June 2017 general election, and most opinion polls put Labour ahead. Though the anti-Semitism campaign may have lost Labour some Jewish votes in places like the London district of Barnet, the generality of the British voters seem indifferent and unimpressed by the whole affair.

I suspect that the truth is that Corbyn has been around in British politics for so long that the British electorate long ago formed its view of him. Knowing Corbyn as well as they do—as well as the left-wing tradition from which he comes—the vast majority of British center-left voters who make up Corbyn’s electoral base find the whole idea that he is an anti-Semite just too fantastic to take seriously. Besides the fact that the anti-Semitism campaign is merely the latest in a series of campaigns against Corbyn launched from the moment he became Labour’s leader makes the true motives of his critics in the end

altogether too obvious.

Cook has expressed the fear that if the Labour Party adopts the four additional working examples of anti-Semitism drafted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA)—which it has hitherto resisted doing because of the way they limit criticism of Israel—that will make future criticism of Israel by Corbyn and by other members of the Labour Party all but impossible, and will open the way to a purge of Palestinian sympathizers within the Labour Party. [Editor's note: The Labour Party altered its anti-Semitism definition on Sept. 4 at its National Executive Committee meeting and adopted the four additional working examples of anti-Semitism drafted by the IHRA.]

Similar concerns have been expressed by Norman Finkelstein, who sees the whole attempt to impose any sort of definition of anti-Semitism on the Labour Party as an attack on the party's traditions and on free speech.

These concerns are far from groundless. On the contrary, there is no doubt that silencing criticism of Israel is very much a part of the agenda of some of the people behind the campaign, with the British establishment (not just its Jewish part) united in support of Israel in the same way as are the political establishments of all the other Western countries. Consider, for example, this extraordinary article by Andrew Feldman in *The Evening Standard*, a newspaper edited by former Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron's friend and former Chancellor George Osborne, which contains this passage:

Anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism are the same thing. They are two sides of the same coin. Anti-Zionism is the belief that the state of Israel should not exist. That it should be dismantled. This is not the same as saying, quite legitimately, that you disagree with the policies of the current or any other Israeli government; or calling for the reversal of the settlement programme in the West Bank; or demanding a return to earlier borders and the creation of a two-state solution.

Some historical context is important here. Two thousand years ago, at the end of a long and bloody revolt, the Temple was destroyed and the Jewish people were dispersed far and wide, across the Roman Empire and beyond. They settled in many places. Some made them welcome for a time. Others less so. Jewish people lived in a constant state of trepidation. Periods of peace and prosperity punctuated by pogroms, inquisition and expulsion.

In Europe, the Holocaust was the crescendo of centuries of rumbling antipathy. Jews sought to escape the horror but the numbers who found refuge were pathetically small. Even the UK only accepted 70,000 Jewish refugees before

the Second World War and 10,000 during it.

Quite simply, there was nowhere for them to go, so six million people perished out of a total global Jewish population of 17 million.

Finally, after this destruction, the world decided that enough was enough. The Jewish people needed their own place to go when things went wrong. And the ancient homeland was chosen. It was to be shared with the Palestinians on lines established by a United Nations resolution in 1948.

This was not the only work for the cartographers after the Second World War. The demise of empire, the calls for national determination and the need for pragmatic solutions brought about the creation of new states in Europe, Africa, the Indian subcontinent and elsewhere in the Middle East. Lines were drawn on maps. Sometimes they respected geographical, religious and tribal boundaries; sometimes they did not. Everyone was doing the best they could to make sense of the cataclysmic events of the previous decades.

The State of Israel served its purpose. A national homeland for the Jewish people existing alongside the Jewish communities that continued to live around the world. And when things did not go well for some of those communities – in Russia, Iraq, Morocco and elsewhere – it was a place of sanctuary. It accepted refugees in huge numbers without question.

Note that the Palestinians are barely mentioned in the whole article, which claims that anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism and does so by linking anti-Zionism to the whole history of anti-Semitism in the West, culminating in the Nazis and the Holocaust.

Needless to say, though Feldman appears to admit that it is legitimate to criticize Israel, he makes no criticisms of Israel anywhere in his article. In practice, on the basis of his article, it is difficult to imagine what criticism of Israeli policy toward the Palestinians Feldman would not define as anti-Semitic.

Having said this, it is important to retain perspective. Even though the Labour Party changed its anti-Semitism definition, that will not end criticism of Israel within the Labour Party or in British society. Corbyn himself will not change his views, nor will other supporters of the Palestinian struggle within the Labour Party or in British society.

Ultimately, what is causing the growing criticism of Israel in Britain as elsewhere are Israeli policies, and attempts to silence criticism of those policies by conjuring up the specter of anti-Semitism or by resorting to purges

and inquisitions that can only, in the end, threaten to provoke a backlash.

How the Anti-Corbyn Campaign Is Like Russia-gate

The anti-Semitism campaign against Corbyn in Britain bears more than a passing resemblance to the Russia-gate scandal in the United States.

In both countries, the establishment has been shocked by popular insurgencies on the right and left and the rise of a seeming outsider: Corbyn in Britain, and Trump (with far less cause) in the U.S. In both countries, this has provoked a shrill establishment campaign against the outsider. In both countries, the allegations which form the basis of the campaign—of anti-Semitism in the case of Corbyn, of being an agent of the Russians in the case of Trump—are to anyone with even a basic grasp of reality utterly fantastic. In neither country does the sheer absurdity of the allegations seem to matter for those who have invested in the campaign. Instead, the political class in both countries pretends to believe them, while the media has embraced them. A media effort has been made to link Corbyn to Russia too.

In both countries, interested outside powers are involved in the campaigns—Israel in the case of the anti-Semitism campaign against Corbyn in Britain, Britain and some other U.S. European allies in the Russia-gate scandal against Trump in the U.S. But the origins of both campaigns are domestic.

In both Britain and the U.S., the core electoral base of both Corbyn and Trump remains unmoved by the hysteria and the swirl of allegations, but in the meantime, real damage to the political system is being done. Both countries are unable to formulate rational foreign policies, whether with respect to the situation in the Middle East in the case of Britain, or with respect to relations with Russia in the case of the U.S.

Corbyn and the movement he leads have far deeper roots within British society than Trump does in the U.S. There has been a continuous tradition of political radicalism in Britain going back to the period of the French Revolution. Corbyn stands squarely within that tradition, a fact which is perhaps better understood in Britain than it is outside it. That tradition for the moment is rising in the case of younger Britains.

That, of course, is why, against all expectations, Corbyn, was elected leader of the Labour Party, and why, again contrary to all expectations, he increased the Labour's share of the vote so dramatically in the June 2017 general election.

That is reason for the intensity of the campaign against him, but it also explains why he has been able to withstand it up to now. The shape of British politics in the future will be determined by whether or not he is able to

continue to do so.

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