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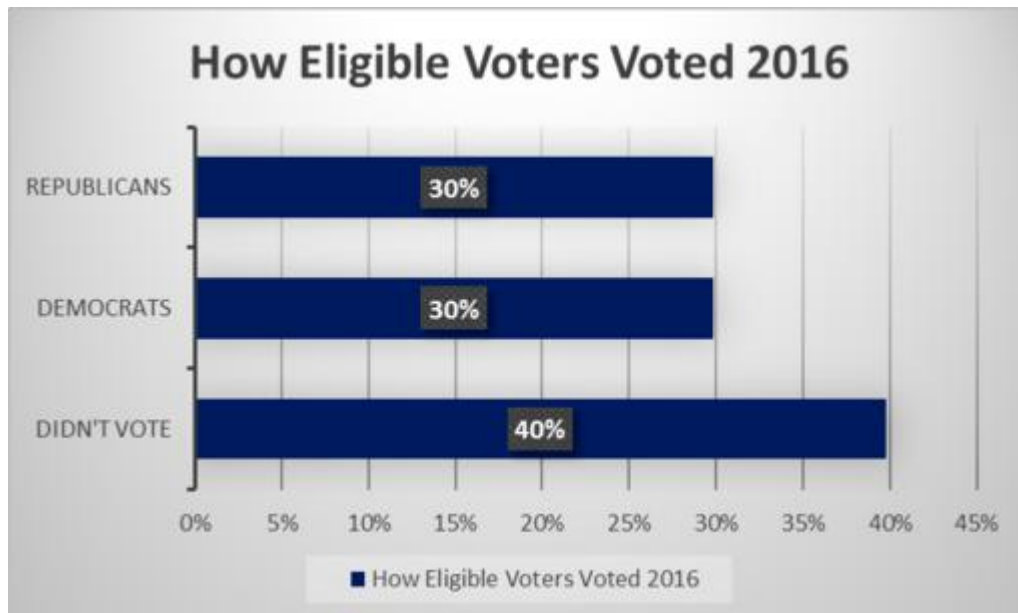
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by ROB URIE
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Why ‘Russian Meddling’ is a Trojan Horse

Prior to the 2016 presidential election, if one were to ask what single act could seal a new Cold War with Russia, align liberals and progressives with the operational core of the American military-industrial-surveillance complex, expose the preponderance of left-activism as an offshoot of Democratic Party operations and consign most of what remained to personal invective against an empirically dangerous leader, consensus would likely have it that doing so wouldn't be easy.

The decision to blame Russian meddling for Hillary Clinton's electoral loss was made in the immediate aftermath of the election by her senior campaign staff. Within days the received wisdom amongst Clinton supporters was that the election had been stolen and that Donald Trump was set to enter the White House as a pawn of the Russian political leadership. Left out was the history of U.S. – Russian relations; that the largest voting bloc in the 2016 election was eligible voters who didn't vote and that domestic business interests substantially control the American electoral process.



Graph: The Democrats' choice to blame external forces, e.g. Russian meddling, for their electoral loss in 2016 ignores evidence of that none-of-the-above is the people's choice. The largest voting bloc in the 2016 election was eligible voters who chose not to vote. In contrast to the received wisdom in political consultant circles, choosing not to vote is a political act. The U.S. has the lowest voter turnout in the 'developed' world for a reason. Source: electproject.org.

More than a year later, no credible evidence has been put forward to establish that any votes were changed due to 'external' meddling. As the Intercept has reported, since the election progressive candidates seeking public office have been systematically subverted by establishment Democrats in favor of those with connections to big-money donors. And the Democratic Party leadership in congress just voted to give Mr. Trump expanded spying powers with fewer restraints. Congressional Democrats are certainly behaving as if they believe Mr. Trump was duly elected. And more to the point, they are supporting his program.

The choice of Russia would seem bizarre if not for the history. Residual propaganda from the first Cold War— itself largely a business enterprise that provided ideological cover for American imperial incursions, had it that substantive grievances against the American government, in the form of protests, were universally the product of 'external' enemies intent on sowing discord to promote their own interests. This slander was used against the Civil Rights movement, organized labor, anti-war protesters and the counterculture of the 1960s.

Therefore, the choice by the Clintonites to invoke a new Cold War by bringing Russia into the American electoral mix is not without a past. Students of history may recall that in the early 1990s Mikhail Gorbachev was given assurances by senior members of George H.W. Bush's administration that NATO would not be expanded to Russia's border in exchange for Russia's help re-integrating East and West Germany. It was Bill Clinton who unilaterally abrogated these assurances and moved nuclear-armed NATO to Russia's border.

In 2013 the Obama administration 'brokered' (Mr. Obama's term) a coup in the former Soviet state of Ukraine that ousted the democratically elected President to install persons favorable to the interests of Western oligarchs. At the time Hillary Clinton had just vacated her post as Mr. Obama's Secretary of State to prepare for her 2016 run for president, but her lieutenants, including Victoria Nuland, were active in coordinating the coup and deciding who the new 'leadership' of Ukraine would be.

An analogy would be if Russia moved troops and weaponry to the Mexican border with the U.S. after giving assurances that it wouldn't do so and then engineered a coup (in Mexico) to install a government friendly to the interests of the Russian political leadership. One needn't be sympathetic to Russian interests to understand that these are provocations. Given U.S. and Russian nuclear weapons stockpiles, the provocations seem more reckless than 'tough.' Then consider Mr. Obama's, later Trump's, move to 'upgrade' the U.S. nuclear arsenal toward 'tactical' use.

This is to suggest that it certainly makes sense that the Russian political leadership would want to keep American militarists, a/k/a the Clintons and their neocon 'crazies,' out of White House. But as of now, the evidence is that the Russians changed no votes in the 2016 election. As far as inciting dissent—the charge that protests were organized by Russian 'interests,' not only does this reek of prior misdirection by the FBI and CIA, but there is no evidence that any such protests had an impact on the outcome of the 2016 election.

Given Mr. Trump's belligerent (unhinged) rhetoric toward North Korea, if enhancing geopolitical stability was the Russians' goal, Mr. Trump must be a disappointment. Unfortunately for Mr. Trump's critics (among whom I count myself), there is a lot of 'theory' from American think tanks that supports crazy as a strategy. And it was *after* Mr. Trump's provocative posture toward North Korea became widely known that senior Democrats voted to give him additional NSA powers with fewer restrictions.

The most cynically brilliant outcome of the ‘blame Russia’ campaign has been to neuter left activism by focusing the attack on Donald Trump rather than the interests he represents. As evidence, the proportion of Goldman Sachs alumni in Mr. Trump’s administration approximates that in Mr. Obama’s and what was expected for Mrs. Clinton’s. If the problem is Donald Trump, then the solution is ‘not Trump.’ However, if the problem is that the rich substantially control American political outcomes, how would electing ‘not Trump’ bring about resolution?

As it is, within days of the 2016 election Mr. Trump, his supporters plus the political opponents of Mrs. Clinton were recast as stooges of the Kremlin. George W. Bush and Dick Cheney had required loyalty oaths from their stalwarts. But even a loyalty oath wouldn’t prove that one isn’t a stooge of the Kremlin. And the larger problem with the theory (of Russian meddling) is that the U.S. electoral system was already thoroughly corrupted by economic power.

As students of the scientific method know, you can’t ‘prove’ a negative. Condoleezza Rice used this knowledge in 2003 to sell the George W. Bush administration’s calamitous war against Iraq through the charge that the proof that Saddam Hussein had an ongoing WMD program is that he hadn’t handed over his WMDs. As history has it, Mr. Hussein couldn’t hand over his WMDs because he didn’t have any to hand over. How then would critics of Mrs. Clinton ‘prove’ they weren’t / aren’t acting on behalf of foreign interests?

The answer lies with Democratic Party loyalists. Much as Bush – Cheney supporters were impervious to logical and evidentiary challenges to the rationales given for the war against Iraq, Clintonites believe what they believe because they believe it. For those with an interest and some knowledge of empirical research, read the myriad articles touting ‘proof’ of Russian meddling and find a single instance where such proof is provided. Or with an eye toward not being the half of Republicans who still believe that Saddam Hussein had WMDs, bring the proof forward if it exists.

Here is the disclaimer taken from the National Intelligence Estimate (link here).

The National Intelligence Estimate, initially claimed to be based on input from 17 intelligence agencies, later reduced to selected representatives from three of the agencies (NSA, CIA and FBI), provides no proof for claims of Russian meddling and states quite openly that it is conjecture. Amongst these agencies, one (NSA) is known for illegally spying on Americans and lying about it to congress, the second (CIA) provided fraudulent ‘evidence’ to drag the U.S. into a calamitous war against Iraq where it ran illegal torture

camps and the third (FBI) has such a checkered history that it was [called](#) ‘Gestapo’ by former U.S. president Harry Truman.

[Here](#) is James Clapper, the former Director of National Intelligence, lying to congress about NSA spying. [Here](#) is Trevor Timm in the Columbia (University) Journalism Review explaining the many ways former head of the NSA and CIA Michael Hayden has lied to congress and the American people. [Here](#) is a brief history of COINTELPRO and FBI attempts to disrupt and discredit the Civil Rights movement. At the time that FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover was accusing Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. of being a communist (link above), the term approximated being an agent of Russia.

(Here is a compendium of links related to claims made in this piece: [Promise](#) by U.S. that NATO wouldn’t expand to surround Russia. Bill Clinton [expands NATO to Eastern Bloc](#) to surround Russia. Barack Obama [admits](#) U.S. role in Ukraine coup. James Clapper [committing](#) perjury. Victoria Nuland [discusses](#) overthrowing the democratically elected government of Ukraine and installing U.S. puppets. [Backstory](#) of CIA and Robert Sheer that supports argument Propornot is government operation with ties to Ukrainian fascists.) There is circumstantial [evidence](#) that the first list of ‘Russian-linked’ websites published by the ‘credible’ media, that of [Propornot](#) published in the Washington Post (in their ‘Business’ section) to which a [disclaimer](#) was subsequently added, was the work of Ukrainians with links to the CIA. The Propornot website (link above) is worth visiting to get a sense of how implausible the whole enterprise is. On it former Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Ronald Reagan, [Paul Craig Roberts](#), is listed prominently as a puppet of the Kremlin. And deep-research political website [Washington’s Blog](#) made the honor roll as well.

More recently, the New York Times [cited](#) the German Marshall Fund as an authority on Russian meddling. The German Marshall fund (U.S.) is headed by [Karen Donfried](#), a former Obama Administration official and operative for the National Intelligence Council. The National Intelligence Council supports the *Director of National Intelligence*. [Here](#) (again) is James Clapper, the former Director of National Intelligence, lying to congress about NSA spying. [Derek Chollet](#), Executive Vice President of the fund, is the former Assistant Secretary of Defense for the Obama administration and a senior member of Hillary Clinton’s Policy Planning Staff.

The question for the Left is why liberals and progressives would align themselves with Hayden, Clapper, the FBI, CIA and NSA, and suspect organizations like Propornot and the German Marshall Fund when most have spent their entire existences trying to

undermine and shut down the Left? The (near-term) cynical brilliance of the Democrats' strategy is through revival of the Cold War frame of national interests that was always a cover for imperial business schemes. As the Intercept articles (links above) have well-uncovered, this is all just business for the Democrats anyway. Can you say class warfare? Assuming for a moment that not everyone is playing the Democrats' one-dimensional checkers, if the Russian political leadership really intended to 'undermine the U.S.-led liberal democratic order,' as the [NIE](#) puts it, it is doing Mrs. Clinton a disservice to suggest that she wasn't up to the job. From the Clintons' 1994 Crime Bill to deregulating Wall Street to support for George W. Bush's calamitous war against Iraq to the U.S. / NATO destruction of Libya, Mrs. Clinton has 'undermine(d) the U.S.-led liberal democratic order' just fine.

Likely not considered when the Russian meddling hypothesis was originally put forward is what happens next? The initial charge that America's 'sacred democratic tradition' was soiled when the Russian political leadership hacked the election has run up against the apparent fact that no votes have been found to have been changed. The charge that AstroTurf protests organized by the Russians led to dissent smells a lot like the last half-century of FBI / CIA lies against / about the Left. And the charge that narcissistic plutocrat Trump has been 'compromised' misses that he was already compromised by the circumstances of his birth and upbringing. This is the problem.

The Democrats, in their wisdom, have given a gift to the U.S. intelligence 'community' that provides political cover for closing down inconvenient commentary and disrupting inconvenient political organizations. A political Left with a brain would be busy thinking through strategy for when the internet becomes completely unusable for organizing and communication. The unifying factor in the initial 'fake news' purge was criticism of Hillary Clinton. Print media, a once viable alternative, has been all but destroyed by the move to the internet. This capability needs to be rebuilt.

Bourgeois incredulity that Donald Trump still has supporters could be seen by an inquisitive Left through a lens of class struggle. Yes, his effective supporters are rich, just as the national Democrats' are—the term for this is plutocracy. But back in the realm of human beings, rising deaths of despair tie in theory and fact to the wholesale abandonment of the American people by the political class. An inquisitive Left would be talking to these people, not at them. The Russian meddling story is a sideshow with a political purpose. But class struggle remains the relevant story.