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www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

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by ROB URIE
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Mueller, Russia and Oil Politics

Dunder-Mifflin as Troll Farm

The Mueller [indictment](#) made public on Friday charges 13 Russian nationals with trolling the American electoral process to ‘sow discord’ by falsely representing themselves as American dissident personas. Once the field of presidential aspirants had been narrowed in 2016, their goal became to support Donald Trump’s candidacy while disparaging Hillary Clinton. There is no charge that the outcome of the 2016 election was changed by these actions.

The form of the alleged conspiracy was a ‘troll farm,’ an office populated by various functionaries who worked together from 2014 to today to magnify already existing social tensions on social media. Those charged were likewise mainly functionaries— IT workers, managers, etc. Despite allegations to the contrary in the American press, no links between the alleged troll farm and the Kremlin and / or Vladimir Putin were put forward.

The 13 people charged are Russian nationals presumably living in Russia. As of this writing none have been arrested. Unless they plan to voluntarily return to the U.S., an unlikely move, the charges will never be contested in a courtroom. This most certainly was understood by Mr. Mueller before the indictments were handed down. Lest this remain unclear, charges made without the likelihood of a trial are unlikely to ever be resolved.

In reading through the charges, what is striking is that the Russians aren’t charged with creating social tensions. They are charged with exploiting and exacerbating them. It is

their personas that are deemed to be false, not the familiar chatter of quasi-anonymous voices on social media. The point is that the social tensions preceded the chatter. Mr. Mueller's term 'sowing discord' literally means that discord was planted. The actual sequence is of discord being exploited.

This distinction is important for a number of reasons. Following the electoral debacles in Florida in 2000 and in Ohio in 2004, the continued use of electronic voting machines provides a legitimate basis for believing that the American electoral system is compromised. The national Democrats did [conspire to undermine Bernie Sanders](#) in order to secure the nomination for Hillary Clinton. The racist subtext of the Clintons' 1994 Crime Bill ('Black criminality') is a rational reason for Blacks to vote for someone else.

These points are necessary because the discord the Russians are alleged to have sown related to rational political grievances. What is insidious in Mr. Mueller's charges is conflation of trolling with the substance of political dissent. The certainty officials have that no votes were changed by the Russians comes from the fact that the election machinery isn't connected to the internet. This means that distant trolls can't get to it to change votes. But this does not assure that entirely home-grown 'meddling' didn't compromise the integrity of the election.

The indictments *are* a major political story, but not for the reasons given in mainstream press coverage. Once Mr. Mueller's indictment is understood to charge the exploitation of existing social tensions (read it and decide for yourself), the FBI, which Mr. Mueller directed from 2001 – 2013, is precisely the wrong entity to be rendering judgment. The FBI has been America's political police since its founding in 1908. Early on former FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover led legally dubious [mass arrests](#) of American dissidents. He practically invented the slander of conflating legitimate dissent with foreign agency. This is the institutional backdrop from which Mr. Mueller proceeds.

In the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s the FBI's targets included the civil rights movement, the antiwar movement, the American Indian Movement (AIM), the Black Panther Party and any other political organization Mr. Hoover deemed a threat. The secret (hidden) FBI program [COINTELPRO](#) was intended to subvert political outcomes outside of allegations of criminal wrongdoing and [with no regard for the lives of its targets](#). Throughout its history the FBI has sided with the powerful against the powerless to maintain an unjust social order.

Robert Mueller became FBI Director only days before the attacks of September 11, 2001. One of his first acts as Director was to arrest 1,000 persons without any evidence of

criminal wrongdoing. None of those arrested were ever charged in association with the attacks. The frame in which the FBI acted— to maintain political stability threatened by ‘external’ forces, was ultimately chosen by the George W. Bush administration to justify its aggressive war against Iraq.

It is the FBI’s legacy of conflating dissent with being an agent of a foreign power that Mr. Mueller’s indictment most insidiously perpetuates. Russians are ‘sowing discord,’ and they are using Americans to do so, goes the allegation. Black Lives Matter and Bernie Sanders are listed in the indictment as roadblocks to the unfettered ascension of Hillary Clinton to the presidency. Russians are sowing discord, therefore discord is both suspect in itself and evidence of being a foreign agent.

The posture of simple reporting at work in the indictment— that it isn’t the FBI’s fault that the Russians (allegedly) inserted themselves into the electoral process, runs against the history of the FBI’s political role, the tilt used to craft criminal charges and the facts put forward versus those put to the side. Given the political agendas of the other agencies that the FBI joined through the charges, they are most certainly but a small piece of a larger story.

In the aftermath of the indictments it’s easy to forget that the [Pentagon created the internet](#), that the NSA [has its tentacles](#) in all of its major chokepoints, that the CIA has been [heavily involved](#) in funding and ‘using’ social media toward its own ends and that the FBI is only reputable in the present because of Americans’ near-heroic ignorance of history. The claim that the Russian operation was sophisticated because it had corporate form and function is countered by the fact that it was, by the various agencies’ own claims, ineffectual in changing the outcome of the election.

I Have a List

While Robert Mueller was busy charging never-to-be-tried Russians with past crimes, Dan Coats, the Director of National Intelligence, [declared](#) that future Russian meddling has already cast a shadow over the integrity of the 2018 election. Why the Pentagon that created the internet, the NSA that has its tentacles in all of its major chokepoints, the CIA that has been heavily involved in funding and ‘using’ social media toward its own ends and the FBI that just landed such a glorious victory of good over evil would be quivering puddles when it comes to precluding said meddling is a question that needs to be asked.

The political frame being put forward is that only these agencies know if particular elections and candidates have been tainted by meddling, therefore we need to trust them to tell us which candidates were legitimately elected and which weren’t. As generous as this

offer seems, wouldn't the creation of free and fair elections be a more direct route to achieving this end? Put differently, who among those making the offer, whether personally or as functionaries of their respective agencies, has a demonstrated history of supporting democratic institutions?

The 2016 election was apparently a test case for posing these agencies as the meddling police. By getting the bourgeois electocracy— liberal Democrats, to agree that the loathsome Trump is illegitimate, future candidates will be vetted by the CIA, NSA and FBI with impunity. It's apparently only the pre-'discord, ' the social angst that the decade of the Great Recession left as its residual, that shifts this generous offer from the deterministic to the realm of the probable. The social conditions that led to the Great Recession and its aftermath are entirely home grown.

More broadly, how do the government agencies and people that spent the better part of the last century undermining democracy at home and abroad intend to stop 'Russian meddling?' If the FBI couldn't disentangle home grown 'discord' from that allegedly exploited and exacerbated by the Russians, isn't the likely intention to edit out all discord? And if fake news is a problem in need of addressing, wouldn't the [New York Times](#) and the [Washington Post](#) have been shut down years ago?

The Great Satin (sic)

While Russia is the villain of the day, week and year due to alleged election 'meddling,' the process of demonization that Russia has undergone has shown little variation from (alleged) villain to villain. It is thanks to cable news and the 'newspaper of record' that the true villainy of Vladimir Putin, Muammar Gadhafi, Saddam Hussein, Nicolas Maduro and the political leadership of Iran has been revealed. In the face of such monsters, questions of motivation are moot. Why wouldn't Mr. Putin 'sow discord?'

The question as yet unasked, and therefore unanswered is: is there something besides base villainy that brought these national leaders, and the nations they lead, into the crosshairs of America's fair and wise leadership? This question might forever go unanswered were it not for the secret list from which their names were apparently drawn. No, not *that* secret list. This one is publicly available— hiding in plain sight, as it were. It is the list of proven oil reserves by country (below). This is no doubt unduly reductive— evil is as evil does, but read on.

The question of how such a list could divide so evenly between heroes and villains I leave to the philosophers. On second thought, no I won't. The heroes are allies of a small cadre of America's political and economic elite who have made themselves fabulously rich

through the alliances. The villains have oil, gas, pipelines and other resources that this elite wants. Reductive, yes. But this simple list certainly appears to explain American foreign policy over the last half-century quite well.

Proven Oil Reserves

- 1 Venezuela
- 2 Saudia Arabia
- 3 Canada
- 4 Iran
- 5 Iraq
- 6 Kuwait
- 7 UAE
- 8 Russia
- 9 Libya
- 10 Nigeria

Red = In US Foreign Policy Crosshairs

Source: gulfbusiness.com

It's almost as if America's love for humanity, as demonstrated through humanitarian interventions, is determined by imperial competition for natural resources— in this case oil and gas. Amongst these countries, only one (Canada) is 'democratic' in the American sense of being run by a small cadre of plutocrats who use the state to further their own interests. Two— Iraq and Libya, were recently reduced to rubble (for the sake of humanity) by the U.S. Nigeria is being 'brought' under the control of AFRICOM. What remains are various and sundry petro-states plus Venezuela and Russia.

Following the untimely death of Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, the horrible tyrant kept in office via [free and fair elections](#), who used Venezuela's petro-dollars to feed, clothe and educate his people and was in the process of creating a regional Left alliance to counter American abuse of power, the [CIA](#) joined with local plutocrats to overthrow his successor, Nicolas Maduro. The goal: to 'liberate' Venezuela's oil revenues in their own pockets. At the moment Mr. Maduro is down the list of villains, not nearly the stature of a 'new Hitler' like Vladimir Putin. But where he ends up will depend on how successfully the CIA (with Robert Mueller's help) can drum up a war against nuclear armed Russia.

What separates Russia from the other heroes and villains on the list is its history as a competing empire as well as the manner in which Russian oil and gas is distributed. Geography placed it closer to the population centers of Europe than to Southeastern China

where Chinese economic development has been concentrated. This makes Europe a ‘natural’ market for Russian oil and gas.

The former Soviet state of Ukraine did stand between, or rather under, Russian pipelines and Europe until Hillary Clinton had her lieutenants engineer a coup there in 2014. In contrast to the ‘new Hitler’ of Mr. Putin (or was that Trump?) Mrs. Clinton and her comrades demonstrated a preference for the old Hitler in the form of Ukrainian fascists who were the ideological descendants of ‘authentic’ WWII Nazis. But rest assured, not all of the U.S.’s allies in this affair were ideological Nazis.

Potential Oil and Gas Pipeline Routes



Chart: Demonization of Russia centers on competition for oil and gas revenues. Pipelines to deliver oil and gas from the Middle East to Europe run through North Africa (Libya) and Syria and / or Turkey. These pipelines are substantially controlled by Western interests with imperial / colonial ties to the U.S., Britain and ‘developed’ Europe. Russian oil and gas did run through Ukraine, which is now negotiating to join NATO, or otherwise hits a NATO wall before entering Europe.

In contrast to the alternative hypotheses given in the American press, NATO, the geopolitical extension of the U.S. military in Europe, admits that the U.S. engineered coup in Ukraine was ‘about’ oil geopolitics with Russia. The American storyline that Crimea was seized by Russia ignores that the Russian navy has had a Black Sea port in Crimea for decades. How amenable, precisely, might Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats and his friends be if Russia seized a major U.S. naval port given their generous offer to take over the U.S. electoral system because of a few Russian trolls?

Although Russia is toward the bottom of the top ten countries in terms of oil reserves, it faces a problem of distribution that the others don't. Imperial ties and recent military incursions have left the distribution of oil and gas from the Middle East to Europe largely under Western control. Syria, Turkey and North Africa are necessary to moving this oil and gas through pipelines to Europe. That Syria, Libya and Turkey are now, or recently have been, militarily contested adds credence to the contention that the 'international community's' heroes and villains are largely determined by whose hands their oil and gas resources are currently in.

Democratic Party loyalists who see Putin, Maduro et al as *the problem* first need to answer for the candidate they put forward in 2016. Hillary Clinton led the carnage in Libya that murdered 30,000 – 50,000 innocents for Western oil and gas interests. Russia didn't force the U.S. into its calamitous invasion of Iraq. Russia didn't take Americans' jobs, houses and pensions in the Great Recession. Russia didn't reward Wall Street for causing it. Democrats need to take responsibility for their failed candidates and their failed Party.

Part of the point in relating oil reserves to American foreign entanglements is that the countries and leaders involved are incidental. Vladimir Putin certainly seems smarter than the American leadership. But this has no bearing on whether or not his leadership of Russia is broadly socially beneficial. The only possible resolution of climate crisis requires both Russia and the U.S. to greatly reduce their use of fossil fuels. Reports have it that Mr. Putin has no interest in doing so. And once the marketing chatter is set to the side, neither do the Americans.

By placing themselves as arbiters of the electoral process, the Director of National Intelligence and the heads of the CIA, NSA and FBI can effectively control it. Is it accidental that the candidate of liberal Democrats in the 2016 election was the insiders'—the intelligence agencies' and military contractors,' candidate as well? Implied is that these agencies and contractors are now 'liberal.' Good luck with that program if you value peace and prosperity.

There are lots of ways to create free and fair elections if that is the goal. Use [paper ballots](#) that are counted in public, automatically register all eligible voters, make election days national holidays and eliminate 'private' funding of electoral campaigns. But why make elections free and fair when fanciful nonsense about 'meddling' will convince the liberal class to deliver power to grey corpses in the CIA, NSA and FBI for the benefit of a tiny cabal of stupendously rich plutocrats. Who says America isn't already great?