New York Times' fraudulent "election plot" dossier escalates anti-Russia hysteria

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The *New York Times* published a fraudulent and provocative "special report" Thursday titled "The plot to subvert an election."

Replete with sinister looking graphics portraying Russian President Vladimir Putin as a villainous cyberage cyclops, the report purports to untangle "the threads of the most effective foreign campaign in history to disrupt and influence an American election."

The report could serve as a textbook example of CIA-directed misinformation posing as "in-depth" journalism. There is no news, few substantiated facts and no significant analysis presented in the 10,000-word report, which sprawls over 11 ad-free pages of a separate section produced by the *Times.*

The article begins with an ominous-sounding recounting of two incidents in which banners were hung from bridges in New York City and Washington in October and November of 2016, one bearing the likeness of Putin over a Russian flag with the word "peacemaker," and the other that of Obama and the slogan "Goodbye Murderer."

It acknowledges that "police never identified who had hung the banners," but nonetheless goes on to assert that: "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 does it "appear" to be the Kremlin? What is the evidence to support this claim? Among the 8.5 million inhabitants of New York City and another 700,000 in Washington, D.C., aren't there enough people who might despise Obama as much as, if not a good deal more than, Vladimir Putin?

This absurd passage with its "appeared" and "may well have" combined with the speculation about the Kremlin extending its evil grip onto "United States soil" sets the tone for the entire piece, which consists of the regurgitation of unsubstantiated allegations made by the US intelligence agencies, Democratic and Republican capitalist politicians and the *Times* itself.

The authors, Scott Shane and Mark Mazzetti, complain about a lack of "public comprehension" of the "Trump-Russia" story. Indeed, despite the two-year campaign of anti-Russian hysteria whipped up in Washington and among the affluent sections of the upper-middle class that constitute the target audience of the *Times*, polls have indicated that the charges of Russian "meddling" in the 2016 presidential election have evoked little popular response among the broad masses of the American population.

The "special report" attempts to remedy this problem by ginning up the meddling allegations, claiming that the Kremlin staged a "stealth cyberage Pearl Harbor" against the United States and succeeded in "hijacking" both "American companies like Facebook and Twitter" and "American citizens' feelings about immigration and race."

The reporting is all couched in "maybes" and "appears," with the claim made that "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." In other words, the *Times'* reporters cannot substantiate their claims.

Mazzetti and Shane strain to portray the actions of Putin, assuming for the sake of argument that he was the mastermind behind the Facebook postings, as something uniquely horrible in the annals of international relations.

But as is well known, the US spends tens of billions of dollars every year to influence foreign elections, subvert governments viewed as obstacles to US interests and buy politicians, intellectuals and other agents of influence. It has backed coups and waged direct wars to effect regime change. Many of these coups have been supported by the *New York Times*. Many of its reporters collaborate with US intelligence agencies and dish up the propaganda required to advance the international interests of the United States.

There is not a country in the world whose political system has not been targeted by the United States. This includes Russia and the former Soviet republics, where it has carried out continuous regime-change operations, while extending the NATO military alliance across vast swaths of territory and spheres of influence vacated by the Soviet Union, deploying US-led armed forces right to Russia's borders, in contravention of agreements reached between Washington and Moscow at the time of the Stalinist bureaucracy's dissolution of the USSR.

This is passed over lightly by the *Times* special report, which presents the alleged Russian "meddling" as all a product of Putin's personal grudges against President Barack Obama and

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Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton.

In the context of US global operations, what the *Times* article alleges, even if it were all true, amounts to less than a hill of beans.

It claims that Russian "trolls, hackers and agents" assigned to influence the 2016 US election "totaled barely 100." Their task, it states, was "to steer millions of American voters" and "sabotage an election."

To that end, the article states, Russians allegedly spent $100,000 on Facebook ads, "a trivial sum compared with the tens of millions spent on Facebook by both the Trump and Clinton campaigns." Far less than trivial compared to the nearly $7 billion spent on all US federal elections in 2016.

The ads, the *Times* claims, were directed at "sowing division" in the American body politic, as if the US was not already a country torn by the deepest social inequality of any of the so-called advanced capitalist countries, with a population seething with anger over declining living standards for the masses of the working population, while a financial and corporate oligarchy has registered the biggest income gains in history.

The article refers to a handful of demonstrations allegedly promoted by Russian Facebook ads that attracted a few dozen people as evidence that Moscow's "trolls" could act as "puppet masters for unsuspecting Americans." One only need compare this to Washington's spending of what former State Department official Victoria Nuland acknowledged was $5 billion to promote an armed fascist-led coup that toppled a pro-Russian government in Ukraine in 2014.

The most sinister side of the *Times* report is its indictment of WikiLeaks and its founder and editor Julian Assange for the leaking of emails of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) and Clinton campaign chairman John Podesta. The emails laid bare the DNC's rigging of the primaries in favor of Clinton against Bernie Sanders and made public the texts of slavish and well-paid speeches given by Clinton to Wall Street audiences, guaranteeing she would defend their interests and making clear her readiness to escalate the war in Syria and bomb Iran.

The *Times* report complains that Clinton's self-damning words were "taken out of context" and "subjected to the most damaging interpretation."

The report paints Assange as either a witting or unwitting agent of the Kremlin at a moment in which the WikiLeaks founder is facing imminent threat of losing his refuge in the Ecuadorian embassy in London followed by arrest and extradition to the US to stand trial for espionage.

Also resurrected in the report is the neo-McCarthyite vilification of Jill Stein, the Green Party's presidential candidate in 2016. "The Russian operation also boosted" her candidacy, the *Times* claims, in order "to draw votes from Mrs. Clinton."

The political thrust of the "special report" is clear. It is aimed at criminalizing domestic dissent, delegitimizing and suppressing any opposition to the political monopoly exercised by the capitalist two-party system and outlawing the use of the internet to report any news or express any opinions that have not first been vetted by "authoritative sources" like the CIA-embedded stenographers of the *Times* .

Mazzetti and Shane are *Times* national security correspondents. In an accompanying piece posted on the newspaper's website, they claim that their "special report" was modelled upon two special issues of the *Times* magazine section published in July 1973 and the following January detailing the background and development of the Watergate scandal that ultimately brought down the Nixon presidency.

While they may be attempting to signal that their reporting could bring down Trump, the comparison is as ludicrous as it is self-serving. The pieces produced by the *Times* 45 years ago provided cogent political analysis that served to at least partially expose the crimes and conspiracies of the US government. They came just three years after the newspaper had defied the Nixon administration in publishing the Pentagon Papers—leaked to the paper by Daniel Ellsberg—exposing the lies and crimes associated with the US war in Vietnam.

Mazzetti and Shane have produced a poorly written propaganda potboiler, parroting the unsubstantiated allegations of US intelligence agencies and making the case for the criminal prosecution of Julian Assange for exposing similar crimes.

Mazzetti is notorious for his secretly passing to the CIA in 2011—prior to publication—a piece written by *Times* columnist Maureen Dowd, along with a note reading, "this didn't come from me … and please delete after you read."

Shane was the author of a 2012 article titled "The moral case for drones," which attempted to justify the assassination program being run out of the White House that claimed the lives of thousands in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen and elsewhere.

The authors are, to put it bluntly, a pair of broken-down hacks, embedded with the US military and intelligence apparatus and held in contempt by serious journalists.

Their "special report" expresses the thoroughgoing repudiation of any democratic principles by the *Times* and the rest of the major media, which have adopted the role of guarantors of state secrecy and apologists for war and political repression.

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