The Reiss Center at NYU's Law School: A think tank for the national security establishment and the Democratic Party

Part 2: The Reiss Center's role in the impeachment crisis and anti-Russia campaign

The New York University IYSSE
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Through both its fellows and its publication, *JustSecurity.org*, the Reiss Center is closely integrated into the anti-Russia campaign of the national security apparatus and the Democratic Party, and their efforts to impeach Trump on a pro-war and anti-democratic basis.

There is a direct connection to the anti-Russia campaign and impeachment efforts by the Democratic Party and intelligence agencies through Andrew Weissman, who is a distinguished senior fellow at the Reiss Center. Before he came to the Reiss Center, he was the lead prosecutor in Robert Mueller's Special Counsel's Office from 2017 to 2019, while the Mueller report was being prepared.

Moreover, the executive director of the Reiss Center, Rachel Goldbrenner, has connections to Eric Ciaramella, identified in some publications as the CIA whistleblower who released the transcript of Trump's calls with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. She reportedly visited Ciaramella at the White House along with her former boss Samantha Power twice in 2016.

The Reiss Center's public involvement proceeds through its *JustSecurity.org* publication. First established in 2013, the website was based at the Law School's center for Human Rights and Global Justice, before being relocated to the Reiss Center in September 2018, shortly after the latter's renaming. It is funded by NYU's School of Law as well as the Atlantic Philanthropies and Open Society Foundations—both founded and chaired by George Soros.

The website describes itself as "an online forum for rigorous analysis of U.S. national security law and policy" and as occupying "a special place in the information ecosystem as an independent and trusted voice of expertise." Primarily, it is concerned with "very real threats to justice and security here at home in the United States, from the welcoming of foreign election interference to the deliberate dissemination of disinformation."

The co-editor of *JustSecurity.org* is Ryan Goodman. He is another ex-Obama official at Reiss: he served as special counsel to the general counsel of the Department of Defense in 2015-2016 and is a current member on the Council on Foreign Relations, the Department of State's Advisory Committee on International Law and the US Naval War College's board of advisors. He specializes in international human rights law and has advocated for international law to be changed so that UN member states—the US in particular—can engage in unilateral military interventions under the pretext of defending human rights without a vote of the Security Council. The sorts of imperialist "human rights" interventions that Goodman supports have led to the slaughter of millions and the unleashing of the largest refugee crisis since the end of World War II.

JustSecurity.org has provided an important platform for former CIA and military officials to agitate for impeachment and provide the Democratic Party-aligned media with "resources" for their coverage. Thus, the Center has published two major timelines: one is called the "Trump-Russia timeline," which purports to document the president's decade-long ties to Russian oligarchs and the Kremlin. The second is a timeline on "Ukrainegate," which is the focus of the impeachment hearings.

MSNBC's Rachel Maddow has congratulated the site for publishing a "Public Document Clearinghouse: Ukraine Impeachment Inquiry." In a tweet, she proclaimed: "All hail Just Security for doing this. Excellent." Meanwhile, following an interview with Ryan Goodman, the *New York Times* 's Spencer Bokat-Lindell wrote an article headlined, "Should the House Just Start Jailing Trump Officials?"

In line with the systematic cover-up for and glorification of the far-right forces with which US imperialism works in Ukraine, the website's timeline of "Ukrainegate" describes the Washington-backed fascist groups that carried out the February 2014 coup in Ukraine as "anti-corruption campaigners." It also sharply criticized the Ukrainian parliament's resistance to the National Anti-Corruption Bureau (NABU). The NABU was founded with American money following the coup and set up a High Anti-Corruption Court, the purpose of which was to crack down on opposition to the fascist coup. Indeed, the first head of the NABU was Tetiana Chornovol, who had close ties to the paramilitary wing of the of the openly anti-Semitic and neo-fascist Svoboda party at the time of the coup.

In another article, "War Is as War Does: World Order and the Future of Conflict," *JustSecurity.org* states, "The United States is at war with Russia!" The article accuses Washington's adversaries of seeking to replace US military domination of the world with "more self-interested alternatives." This is followed by the declaration that "the fundamental goal of American foreign policy is to ensure that the

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United States shapes the future world order…we must construct a view of warfare that fits that end." Yet another recent article, a comment on Trump's pardoning of a US Navy SEAL who had committed war crimes, was titled, "President Trump is damaging our military: War crime cases are the latest example". It was authored by David Lapan, a DC think tank figure who spent 30 years in the US military and has worked as an advisor to several secretaries of defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and US forces in Afghanistan.

On December 6, *JustSecurity.org* published an article by Marc Polymeropoulos, who retired from the CIA in June after 26 years of work for the murderous spy agency. It is titled: "A Call to Arms: Taking the Russia Threat Seriously." Spelling out the pro-war agenda behind impeachment, Polymeroupoulos writes, "since my retirement in June, two events have given me significant pause that our [the CIA's] counter-Russia campaign faces new and even greater challenges. ... My fear stems primarily from the president, who has, in a matter of several months, quite overtly set back the overall U.S. government effort with his unfortunate meddling in Ukraine, as well as the pullback of U.S. troops from Syria. Trump has provided Putin a massive gift on both fronts. ... All is not lost, however, as the Call to Arms [against Russia] remains a valid battle cry. In particular, Congress now has a responsibility to ensure that the U.S. government remains fully focused on the counter Russia effort. ... Our national security institutions cannot fight with an arm tied behind their backs. Congress—both Democrats and Republicans alike—must hold this president accountable and ensure we counter the Kremlin on a global scale, not ceding an inch. After all, the 2020 presidential election—with the Russian security services poised to act once again—is just around the corner."

The same author praised the state officials who testified in the impeachment inquiry for possessing "Herculean ethical strength" in another article on the website, and congratulated the CIA, claiming "the decades of persistent ethics training and the hiring of the 'best and the brightest' has paid off."

What is remarkable about the Reiss Center at NYU and the *JustSecurity .org* publication is their brazenness. This is not a covert operation. Their hysterical pro-war agitation is there for all to see. The biographies of their fellows and board members are published online with pride over their direct connections to the CIA and Obama administration. The Center also enjoys explicit support from Wall Street and the billionaire-owned mainstream media. It is a significant cog in the Democratic Party machine that is driving for the establishment of a dictatorship of the state intelligence agencies.

That the Reiss Center can function in such a way is the outcome and symptom of a decades-long the integration of academia into the state apparatus, and the growing dependence of universities on the financial aristocracy. Universities like NYU, one of the most expensive in the country, are increasingly resembling degree-granting corporations. They own huge real-estate and stock portfolios and employ executives on multimillion-dollar salaries (see also: New York University's ties to Trump, Wall Street banks and Gulf Monarchies).

While particularly stark, the role of the Reiss Center in the anti-democratic impeachment process is not unique. On the first day of Trump's impeachment hearing on November 5, the witnesses put forward to give testimony by the Democratic Party were all professors from elite law schools: Noah Feldman (Harvard), Michael Gerhardt (University of North Carolina), and Pamela Karlan (Stanford). Feldman served as a political adviser to the Iraqi Governing Council in 2003, while Karlan served in Obama's Department of Justice between 2014 and 2015, at a time when the agency was leading attacks on Edward Snowden and Julian Assange for exposing mass surveillance and brutal US war crimes.

The Reiss Center's involvement in the impeachment hearings and anti-Russia campaign of the Democratic Party lends the greatest urgency to the work of the IYSSE at NYU and its fight to mobilize students and workers independently from the Democratic Party and on a socialist basis against the Trump administration.

This semester, the IYSSE organized a major meeting on the 1619 Project of the *New York Times* as part of a national series sponsored by the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and the IYSSE on "Race, Class and the Coming Revolution in the US." With its racialist falsification of history, the 1619 Project is the ideological corollary to the war preparations and the impeachment by the Democrats and the CIA, and aimed at disorienting and dividing the working class as it is beginning to enter into struggle against capitalism.

In response to the IYSSE meeting, the NYU administration organized at short notice a meeting with Nikole Hannah-Jones, the director of the 1619 Project, which was moderated by NYU's president, Andrew Hamilton. At the meeting, a representative of the Socialist Equality Party was prevented from asking a question and Nikole Hannah-Jones argued that there was "no anti-Semitism in Germany" because there were "no Jews" left after the Nazi genocide (see also: Nikole Hannah-Jones, race theory and the Holocaust).

The next day, the IYSSE held a successful meeting at NYU, which refuted the politically motivated falsifications of the 1619 Project and provided a perspective for the coming socialist revolution to an audience of workers and students. This fight must be continued and expanded at NYU and throughout the country. We urge all students and youth who want to join this struggle against imperialism and for socialism to contact and join the IYSSE.

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