

Hailing election security, New York Times drops its “Russian meddling” narrative

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25 November 2020

On November 22, the *New York Times* published an editorial titled “A Great Election, Against All Odds.” The editorial hails the fact that, despite Trump’s wild claims of a rigged election, “The 2020 election was not simply free of fraud ... it was from an administrative standpoint, a resounding success.”

In the course of the editorial, the *Times* raises the issue of election-related “disinformation,” arguing that “America needs a far more aggressive and coordinated response to the massive disinformation campaigns polluting social media and people’s dialog with one another.” In other words, internet censorship must be dramatically expanded.

Singling out the Republican Party as the source of “most of the disinformation,” the newspaper writes, “Social media companies need to confront that reality head-on and stop worrying about being called biased.”

What is remarkable is that the *Times*’ discussion of election “disinformation” omits any mention of Russia. For the past four-plus years, the *Times* has been relentlessly promoting the narrative that the greatest threat to American democracy and the “sanctity” of US elections emanates from Russia and Vladimir Putin.

The *Times* initiated this propaganda campaign during the 2016 election, claiming that Putin was the mastermind behind a campaign of hacking and disinformation aimed at undermining Hillary Clinton and electing Donald Trump. *Times* columnist Paul Krugman launched this absurd and unsubstantiated conspiracy theory with his July 2016 op-ed piece titled “The Siberian Candidate,” contending that Trump was the witting or unwitting puppet of the diabolical Russian president.

Russia, went the story, was behind the hacking and leaking of Democratic National Committee and Clinton campaign emails that exposed the party’s efforts to

sabotage the campaign of Bernie Sanders and Clinton’s lavishly-paid speeches to Wall Street audiences, in which she pledged to do their bidding. Trump colluded with the Russians, utilizing the services of WikiLeaks and Julian Assange, who were essentially Russian agents, according to the lurid tales spun out by *Times* reporters.

This was the line of the CIA, which issued reports both before and after the election contending, again without any substantive evidence, that Russia and Putin had intervened massively in the election to put Trump in the White House.

After Trump’s inauguration, the “Russian meddling” canard formed the political basis of the Democratic Party’s opposition to the far-right administration. For four years, the Democrats have opposed Trump not on his authoritarian abuses, his attacks on working class living standards, his tax breaks for the rich, his economic nationalism or his militarism. Rather, they have opposed him on issues of imperialist foreign policy, attacking him for being “soft” on Russia and insufficiently aggressive in combating Russian influence in the Middle East.

This became the basis for the Mueller investigation, and, when that collapsed, the abortive impeachment campaign. That too was based on the anti-Russia narrative. Trump had to be removed from office because he had temporarily halted military aid to Washington’s puppet government in Kiev in the midst of its hot war against Russian-backed forces in eastern Ukraine.

The anti-Russia campaign took on the character of a McCarthyite-style witch hunt. The Democrats used it in an attempt to channel popular opposition to Trump behind their policy of stepped-up aggression and, ultimately, war against both Russia and China.

Stenographers for the CIA at the *Times* such as David Sanger, Maggie Haberman, Eric Schmitt and others continued to churn out sensationalist stories about Russian meddling in the months and weeks leading up to the November 3 election.

To cite some examples:

* February 20, 2020: “Lawmakers Are Warned That Russia Is Meddling to Re-elect Trump,” by Adam Goldman, Julian Barnes, Maggie Haberman and Nicholas Fandos

* March 10, 2020: “Russia Trying to Stoke US Racial Tensions Before Election, Officials Say,” by Julian Barnes and Adam Goldman

* June 26, 2020: “Russia Secretly Offered Afghan Militants Bounties to Kill US Troops, Intelligence Says,” by Charlie Savage, Eric Schmitt and Michael Schwartz

* September 1, 2020: “Russians Again Targeting Americans With Disinformation, Facebook and Twitter Say,” by Sheera Frenkel and Julian Barnes

* September 10, 2020: “Russian Intelligence Hackers Are Back, Microsoft Warns, Aiming at Officials of Both Parties,” by David Sanger and Nicole Perlroth

* September 22, 2020: “Putin Most Likely Directing Election Interference to Aid Trump, CIA Says,” by Julian Barnes and David Sanger

* October 20, 2020: “As Election Nears, Government and Tech Firms Push Back on Russia (and Trump),” by David Sanger and Nicole Perlroth

* October 21, 2020: “Iran and Russia Seek to Influence Election in Final Days, US Officials Warn,” by Julian Barnes and David Sanger

* October 22, 2020: “Russia Poses Greater Election Threat than Iran, Many US Officials Say,” by David Sanger, Julian Barnes and Nicole Perlroth

* October 22, 2020: “Iran and Russia Are Using Voter Data to Try and Influence the Election, Officials Say,” by Julian Barnes and David Sanger

The basic feature of these articles, and the scores of similar ones that preceded them, is their lack of any factual substantiation, and, in many cases, the absence of any actual facts. They consist of bald assertions made by government or intelligence sources, for the most part anonymous. In some cases the claims made by the sources are accompanied by “evidence” compiled by computer and hacking “experts,” inevitably with backgrounds in US intelligence.

Clearly, had Trump won the election, the “Russian meddling” bogeyman would have once again been employed to explain the Democrats’ loss.

The fact that it is entirely absent from the November 22 editorial makes absolutely clear one basic fact: the entire anti-Russia narrative is a deliberate fabrication. It is an example of the Hitlerian technique of the Big Lie.

This means that in conjuring up the baseless claim that his loss in 2020 is the result of massive vote fraud, Trump is utilizing essentially the same playbook—the Big Lie technique—employed by the Democrats to explain their loss in 2016.



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