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Misreading Trump, Putin and US-Russian Relations

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The ongoing biases against Russia lead to new matters to refute. Matching the gross one-sidedness of her Washington Post (WaPo) employer, Kathleen Parker's January 6 essay «If Obama Is a Muslim, Is Trump a Russian Spy?», overlooks some damning points running counter to her faulty slant. Donald Trump has taken back his comments that questioned whether Barack Obama is American born. For its part, The WaPo continues to denigrate Russia in a factually challenged manner. (The use of the crank Propornot website and the false claim of a Russian hacking of the Vermont power grid being prime examples, along with continuous top heavy anti-Russian op-ed pieces and news reports.)

Parker suggests a double standard favoring Muslim bashing over her presented claim of Russian mischief against the US. She describes Russia as an «enemy». Her overlooked hypocrisy concerns the select outrage over anti-Muslim stances (real and hyped), while being soft on the frequent instances of bias against pro-Russian advocacy.

Lacking specifics, Parker's «proof» against Russia is the faith based US Intel report, which unlike her doesn't refer to Russia as an «enemy», while claiming a concerted Vladimir Putin approved Russian government effort to support Trump by defaming Hillary Clinton. Regarding that report, the mind reading point about the Russian government and Russia's mass media

preferring Trump over Clinton is in the no kidding and so what category. Trump has openly sought better US relations with Russia, as Clinton was the preferred choice of the anti-Russian neocons.

The January 8 exchange between Fox News host Chris Wallace and Trump's Chief-of-Staff Reince Priebus included the latter saying in the beginning that «he thinks» that Trump accepts the claim of Russian hacking of Democratic Party emails. Wallace's persistent questioning led Priebus to change course later on in the discussion, saying that the president-elect accepted the Intel take of Russian hacking. In any event, Trump (for now) doesn't seem to believe that this matter should cloud the effort to improve US-Russian relations.

There's a difference between hacking from the Russian government and Russian hackers who hack en masse, independent of the Kremlin. For several years, there've been reports of hacking from Russia, the US and elsewhere against ordinary Americans and others throughout the world. Ideally, there should be conclusive proof that the Russian government used a third party to advance their purported cause, as has been suggested in some circles.

With confidentiality respected, a CNN host privately asked how I could consider Julian Assange's take over US Intel? For the record, I didn't specifically say such. Is Assange less biased than the Democratic Party utilized CrowdStrike, that has also essentially been used to promote negativity towards the counter-Euromaidan rebels in Ukraine? CrowdStrike has ties to the Atlantic Council - a group that has been overly partisan against Russia.

I'm not alone in believing that the trustworthiness of US Intel is compromised by its politicized element and a past that has been found to not always be honest. This politicization was noted last week by Fox news host Brett Baier, who said that Trump's criticism of Intel has been misrepresented. Opposing politically driven and questionable Intel claims doesn't necessarily belittle the need for accurate Intel and recognizing that not everyone associated with that grouping has the faulty slants of John Brennan, James Clapper, Malcolm Nance and Michael Hayden. (Nance and Hayden are former US Intel personnel, who're frequent US mass media talking heads.)

There's ample reason to seriously question if the released Democratic party emails (however done) made a difference in the outcome of the 2016 US presidential result. To date, I'm unaware of any poll revealing that the released Democratic Party emails had significantly changed the outcome of that vote.

The Democratic Party should be faulted for having a lax cyber security regimen, along with saying some ethically challenging things. Not to be overlooked are the numerous instances of US government meddling in the elections of other countries and the reality of major powers (perceived allies and otherwise) spying on each other.

On January 3, there were two segments featuring different perspectives on the released Democratic Party emails in question. Fox News' Sean Hannity, had a lengthy one on one with

Assange, that brought up the criminal charges made against the WikiLeaks founder. The PBS NewsHour segment with CIA Director John Brennan, included this quote from him:

«We see what he has done in places like Crimea and Ukraine and in Syria. he tends to flex muscles, not just on himself, but also in terms of Russia's military capabilities. He plays by his own rules in terms of what it is that he does in some of these theaters of conflict.

So I don't think we underestimated him. He has sought to advance Russia's interests in areas where there have been political vacuums and conflicts. But he doesn't ascribe to the same types of rules that we do, for example, in law of armed conflict. What the Russians have done in Syria in terms of some of the scorched-earth policy that they have pursued that have led to devastation and thousands upon thousands of innocent deaths, that's not something that the United States would ever do in any of these military conflicts».

Own rules as in what Turkey has done in northern Cyprus and the Clinton led NATO in Kosovo? It was a shameful example of journalism on the part of PBS to let Brennan's comments go unchallenged. PBS had earlier run a pro-CrowdStrike feature. It's not as if there aren't any expert cyber security/ intelligence sources offering a different perspective.

As for the devastation of thousands of civilians during war (raised by Brennan), consider some past US actions like what happened in Japan during WW II, the Cold War activity in Southeast Asia, as well as post-Cold War actions in Afghanistan and Iraq. The collateral damage emphasis has been hypocritically applied. Along with the subjectively dubious comments of Hayden and Nance, the above excerpted comments from Brennan are indicative of a (past and present) politicized element within US Intel.

Among Russia friendly circles, some kudos has been given to *Fox News'* Hannity and Tucker Carlson. Like their employer, these two individuals have a preference for Trump over the Democrats. However, like many pro-Trump sources, Hannity and Carlson maintain some of the anti-Russian biases, as The WaPo and some others speak of a possible unknown money trail linking Trump to Russia.

Trump has had known business interests involving China and some predominately Muslim countries. That aspect hasn't prevented him from saying things that aren't favored in these countries. There're other Americans besides Trump who favor improved US-Russian relations in opposition to the neocon/neolib preference.

Pat Buchanan serves as an example of an anti-Communist patriotic American, who second guesses the negative image of Putin and Russia. There's also the community of anti-Communist White Russians in the US and elsewhere, which have a good number opposed to the current hostility towards Russia. From a more left leaning perspective, Stephen Cohen and some lesser known individuals aren't anti-American in believing that the US (from its interests) shouldn't be so antagonistic towards Russia. American foreign policy realists include disagreement with the need for having unfriendly US-Russian relations.

An example of the ongoing bias is the obligatory «Putin is a thug» disclaimer frequently bandied about. As has been confidentially acknowledged to me, some well meaning folks do this as a means to soften criticism against their commentary, which otherwise goes against the neocon/neolib slant. Talk about «self-censorship».

From a distance, Putin (IMO) doesn't come across as being more mean spirited than Clinton, John McCain and some others who disparage him. With the pro-Trump/anti-Russian leaning people in mind, was Trump elected for being a nice guy? The personal insults against Putin are hypocritically petty. Upon a reasonable objective and comprehensive overview, the litany of negative claims against him are quite suspect. Yet, they keep getting uncritically rehashed in a way that exhibits a lack of diversity in US mass media and body politic.

Short of providing greater attention to the likes of Lindsey Graham and McCain, the provocative name calling and other forms of posturing against Putin/Russia haven't worked. It's not in America's best interests to use Russia as a political football to get at Trump and cater to anti-Russian advocacy. Trump should be accorded the opportunity to pursue better US-Russian relations.