GlobalResearch
Center for Research on Globalization

Facebook Hires NATO Press Officer as Intelligence Chief

It is now difficult to distinguish where the deep state ends and the fourth estate begins and Ben Nimmo's move from NATO to NATO-aligned think tank to Facebook is just another example of this phenomenon.

By Alan MacLeod
Global Research, February 10, 2021
MintPress News 9 February 2021

Region: USA
Theme: Intelligence

All Global Research articles **can be read in 27 languages by activating the "Translate Website"** drop down menu on the top banner of our home page (Desktop version).

***

Ben Nimmo, a former NATO press officer and current senior fellow at the Atlantic Council, has announced Facebook has hired him to "lead global threat intelligence strategy against influence operations" and "emerging threats." Nimmo specifically named Russia, Iran and China as potential dangers to the platform.

His announcement was greeted with joy by several NATO officials but was not met with such enthusiasm by others. "More censorship on the way as the former NATO press officer turned Pentagon-funded 'researcher' who labeled real people as Russian bots and peddled disinformation to link Jeremy Corbyn to Russian active measures moves to big tech," responded investigative journalist Max Blumenthal.

> More censorship on the way as the former NATO press officer turned Pentagon-funded "researcher" who labeled real people as Russian bots and peddled disinformation to link Jeremy Corbyn to Russian active measures moves to Big Tech https://t.co/XcfGbdPJtv
>
> — Max Blumenthal (@MaxBlumenthal) February 7, 2021

Nimmo's questionable past certainly raises questions over whether such an official having a substantial say in what 2.8 billion Facebook users worldwide see in their feeds is such a positive step for the free and open exchange of information.

"Disinformation agents"

For example, in 2019, U.K. Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn revealed secret Conservative Party documents showing negotiations the Tory government had with the U.S. over the privatization of the National Health Service (NHS). With just days to go before the U.K. general election, the scandal could have toppled the government and brought into power the most radical antiwar, anti-establishment government in the country's history. Corporate

media went into overdrive to spin the news, and Nimmo was a key part of this, immediately announcing, without evidence, that the documents "closely resemble…a known Russian operation." His supposedly expert conjecture allowed the story to become "Corbyn's links to Russia" rather than "Tories privatizing the NHS in secret." Nimmo's work helped the Conservatives to an election victory and consigned Corbyn to the scrapheap.

This was much to the relief of Nimmo's Atlantic Council, who had branded Corbyn the "Kremlin's Trojan Horse" — someone pushing Moscow's agenda abroad. A British Army general was of a similar opinion, claiming that if Corbyn were to win the election, the military would respond. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo also said that the U.S. government was "doing its best" to prevent a radical leftist from winning power in the U.K.

Nimmo has been extremely liberal with whom he labels Russian disinformation agents. In 2018, his research identified one Twitter user, @Ian56789, as a "Kremlin troll." In reality, the user, Ian Shilling, was a British pensioner, as Sky News was easily able to confirm, interviewing him on air and asking him the patently absurd question if he was actually a Russian bot or not. Despite clearly being a flesh and blood human, Shilling's account was later deleted anyway.

In the past, Nimmo has also insisted that Ruslana Boshirova was an influential Russian bot. In reality, she is an internationally known concert pianist, as one Google search would have shown. This sort of behavior does not augur well for those critical of Western foreign policy, who have faced constant harassment, suspension, or outright bans from social media.

> NATO's Atlantic Council "analyst" @benimmo has called me an influential Russian bot.
> Influential? You bet.
> With 170 000 000 YouTube views
> and 400 000 subscribers.
> Russian? Oh well, Ukrainian-American, but take it as a compliment.
> Bot? Yeah. Humans can't play like this. pic.twitter.com/pReCwBBaZ5
>
> — Ruslana Boshirova Альянс пианистов (@ValLisitsa) March 27, 2018

Pro-war putsch

The Atlantic Council began as an offshoot of NATO itself and maintains extremely close connections to the military alliance. It continues to receive major funding from Western governments and weapons contractors, and its board of directors is filled to the brim with senior American statespersons, such as Colin Powell, Condoleezza Rice, and Henry Kissinger. Also appearing on the board are no fewer than seven former CIA directors and a number of top military generals, such as Jim "Mad Dog" Mattis, Wesley Clark, and David Petraeus.

In recent years, the council's employees have penetrated deep into big tech and social media organizations. In 2018, it announced it had partnered with Facebook to aid in the curation of Facebook news feeds of users worldwide, giving it considerable power over what sort of views to highlight and which to demote. One year previously, Jessica Ashooh left the position of the council's Deputy Director of Middle Eastern Strategy to take the position of Director of Policy at Reddit, the eighth-most visited website in the United States. However,

as with many intelligence agencies, it is unclear whether one truly "leaves" the Atlantic Council.

It is not just Russia that is in NATO's crosshairs. Last week, the Atlantic Council published an anonymous, 26,000-word report stating that their goal for China was regime change and advising President Biden to draw a number of "red lines" around it, beyond which the U.S. would respond militarily. Meanwhile, the head of STRATCOM, Admiral Charles A. Richard, wrote that the U.S. must prepare for a potential nuclear war with Beijing.

Greater control

The military escalation has been mirrored by an intensifying online propaganda war, where the U.S. has attempted to isolate China economically and stop advancing Chinese technologies such as Huawei's 5G network, mobile phone, and semiconductor manufacturer Xiaomi, and video sharing app TikTok. Nimmo has played his part in ramping up suspicions of nefarious Chinese activity online, claiming the existence of a wide-ranging pro-Beijing bot network encouraging Americans to believe that China has handled the COVID-19 pandemic far better than the United States. That Americans might have come to that conclusion on their own appears not to have been considered.

There is an enormous government effort to convince its population of the existence of (foreign) government efforts to manipulate their opinions online. In a massive case of projection, Western governmental organizations point the finger at their enemies, all the while securing greater access and control over the means of communication themselves, to the point where it is now difficult to distinguish where the deep state ends and the fourth estate begins. Nimmo's move from NATO to NATO-aligned think tank to Facebook is just another example of this phenomenon. Perhaps the reason Nimmo is not looking for any Western influence operations online is that he is part of one.

*

Note to readers: please click the share buttons above or below. Forward this article to your email lists. Crosspost on your blog site, internet forums. etc.

Alan MacLeod is Senior Staff Writer for MintPress News. After completing his PhD in 2017 he published two books: Bad News From Venezuela: Twenty Years of Fake News and Misreporting and Propaganda in the Information Age: Still Manufacturing Consent, as well as a number of academic articles. He has also contributed to FAIR.org, The Guardian, Salon, The Grayzone, Jacobin Magazine, and Common Dreams.

Featured image: George Washington University School of Media & Public Affairs | Additions and editing by MintPress News

The original source of this article is MintPress News
Copyright © Alan MacLeod, MintPress News, 2021

Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page

Become a Member of Global Research

Articles by: Alan MacLeod

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca