

Liberal Totalitarianism and the Trump Diversion

By [Ajamu Baraka](#)

Global Research, February 03, 2018

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#), [Law and Justice](#)

The ongoing political circus in the capital of the world's most powerful empire opens almost daily with a new act each day showcasing an even more bizarre and more revealing display of the internal rot of a culture and a political system in decline.

The day before Donald Trump's first State of the Union address, the Russia-gate drama took an unexpected and dangerous turn with the vote by the House Intelligence Committee to release a now classified memo that alleges that senior members of the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) may have misled the U.S. Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court (FISA court) in order to secure a warrant to engage in what Republicans assert is a politically motivated effort that spied on the Trump campaign before he won the 2016 election and attempted to undermine his presidency.

Right-wing neoliberal Democrats who have engaged in a vigorous defense of the intelligence agencies of the U.S. state are concerned about the possible fallout with the public. They argue Republicans are deliberately undermining confidence in U.S. institutions by irresponsibly hurling allegations that support a growing public perception that the government and the individuals who populate governmental institutions are inherently corrupt.

Republicans now refer to this as "FBI-gate" and Democrats counter by appealing to the dubious belief that the FBI is some kind of neutral political force populated by people of unrepachable character—those who would never engage in the kind of crass partisanship being alleged by Republicans in Congress.

Even members of the Congressional Black Caucus — the one caucus that traditionally has always been wary of the FBI because of its history abuse against Black activists, including the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. — [joined in the effort](#) to prop up this institution and its former director [Robert Mueller](#).

This new narrative of FBI integrity and neutrality is predicated on the assumption that most of the public has forgotten or is unaware of the notorious history of the FBI and its founder, J. Edgar Hoover. Hoover was a racist anti-Semite and fascist sympathizer. He shared his obsessive anti-communism and anti-Semitism with Heinrich Himmler, Hitler's Gestapo chief, who Hoover corresponded with personally and kept on the FBI's mailing list right up until the eve of the Nazi invasion of Poland in 1939.

As the nation's political police, the FBI has been at the center of domestic repression and political manipulation for decades. From Hoover's early career working as special assistant to Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer, when Hoover was given the responsibility to plan and execute the infamous "Palmer raids" in which thousands were arrested in twenty-three states for "subversive activities," to his and the FBI's role in the first McCarthy period of

repression in the 1950s through to the COINTELPRO program against the anti-war, Black Liberation and Civil Rights movement. The intelligence gathering, counter-insurgent role of the FBI has been consistent.

When the history and role of the FBI is objectively understood as a central component of the repressive state apparatus, it is not farfetched to accept the meaning of the August 2016 message Peter Strzock, the director of the FBI's counter-intelligence division, sent to Lisa Page, a high-level official with whom he was romantically involved. In that message, it is clear that Strzock thought it prudent to develop a strategy to undermine a Trump presidency, even when the chance of Trump getting elected seem impossible to many.

[Strzock is quoted](#) as texting to Page over a secure device:

I want to believe the path you threw out for consideration in Andy's office—that there's no way he [Trump] gets elected—but I'm afraid we can't take that risk. It's like an insurance policy in the unlikely event that you die before you're 40.

This quote reveals two things: (1) the thinking of individuals who hold institutional power and are well versed in the exercise of "extra-democratic" institutional power, or what some refer to as the power of the Deep State; and (2) the specific rationale for implementing what appears to have been a classic counter-intelligence project to influence, manipulate and control a political process, in this case the election for the presidency of the United States.

In response to the information coming out about the memo and the explosive allegations of governmental malfeasance, [Rep. Adam Schiff](#), ranking Democratic member of House Intelligence Committee made the laughable statement that the vote to release the memo "politicize(s) intelligence process." Perhaps Schiff hoped that the public had forgotten all of the instances of politicized intelligence from the manufactured data supporting the [Gulf of Tonkin Resolution](#) to the manufactured data about the existence of weapons of mass destruction that justified the disastrous attack on Iraq.

But what Schiff, as well as some Republicans, are concerned with is how the public will process and respond to the existence of a massive, coordinated effort to exercise unelected political power.

They are concerned the extent of the coordination between the state and elements of financial and corporate sectors exposes the hidden reality of how real power is exercised in Washington and the financial center in New York, the power behind the reach of the atrophied mechanisms of democratic accountability and control.

Beyond the Circus: Strengthening the Ideological and Political Mechanisms of Domination

It's ironic, or perhaps just a reflection of the power of propaganda, that it is now just becoming apparent that while the attention of the people was mobilized and directed to fictitious external sources of electoral interference by the Russians, the real culprits working to undermine the limited democracy that does exist were always in the United States and in plain sight.

They are the ones who re-authorized extending [FISA section 702](#) that allows the state to collect communications from U.S. citizens and even tap into communications databases of

companies like Google to collect information without a warrant. They supported inserting provisions of the “[Countering Foreign Propaganda and Disinformation Act](#)” into the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) as one of Obama’s last legislative acts. They were silent as the government prosecuted whistleblowers under the Espionage Act, which justified expanded National Security Agency (NSA) surveillance and called for the head of former federal contractor-turned-whistleblower Edward Snowden. They think it is a good idea for Facebook to establish “[counter speech](#)” controls and for Google to adjust its algorithms to bury alternative news sites and sources of “radical” analysis.

And while Trump has been a [useful idiot for the Deep State](#), it is important to clearly identify the forces driving this process and giving it political legitimacy—liberal Democrats!

Despite the phony news of economic prosperity that came out of Trump’s State of the Union speech on Tuesday night, the more insightful and “responsible” members of the ruling elite recognize the explosive potential of real opposition to the elite agenda and understand the crisis of confidence in and legitimacy of the system will continue to deepen.

The recognition of that has resulted in ruling-class elements being united in one very important area— “domestic national security.” That is to say not the threat of “terror attacks” or other physical threats, but the security that the ruling class is attempting to acquire for itself by strengthening the repressive state apparatus against the people. Using the gift of “Russia-gate” given to it by the Democrats, the state, in collaboration with the [capitalist communication sector](#), has attempted to tighten its ideological grip on the public by limiting the range of information available to the public.

The neo-liberal right has always understood much better than many elements of the left what Cuba revolutionary Jose Marti meant when he said that “trenches of ideas are more powerful than weapons.”

So, while we are entertained by the theatrics of Trump and shudder with horror after his latest antic, the real forces of totalitarianism are working right under our noses, normalizing the capitalist dictatorship in the name of upholding freedom.

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This article was originally published by [Dissident Voice](#).

Ajamu Baraka is a board member with Cooperation Jackson, the national organizer of the Black Alliance for Peace and was the 2016 candidate for vice president on the Green Party ticket. He is an editor and contributing columnist for the Black Agenda Report and contributing columnist for Counterpunch. He can be reached at www.AjamuBaraka.com [Read other articles by Ajamu](#), or [visit Ajamu’s website](#).

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