

The Deep State, Russiagate, and Donald Trump

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From the new book by journalist [Michael Wolff](#) about bickering inside the current White House to President Donald J. Trump's latest foul-mouthed display, the year is beginning with a lot of distracting "news" about U.S. national politics. Of course, the situation is fueled by Trump himself, with his addiction to publicity.

Admittedly, Trump is an unusual president in the sense that one-percenters have tended to keep at arm's length from the Oval Office (at least directly). But [The Donald's](#) been in our lives for many years. Maybe incompetent, he's never been shy. Take his Russian business ties; he appeared at the end of a 2013 [music video](#) starring the son of Russian oligarch Aras Agalarov.

More than personality searches, though, things-Trump make more sense in the context of the deep state, a term cropping up in all forms of media lately. A popular interpretation is it has something to do with covert government actions. Referring to security services and criminal groups operating outside the law, the term traces the term's actual can be traced to the Ottoman Empire. Turkey's Kurdish minority would often be targeted by deep state operations. The shooter in the 1981 assassination attempt on Pope John Paul II belonged to a far-right group tied to the Turkish branch of [Operation Gladio](#).

Recently in *The Nation*, historian [Greg Grandin](#) suggested that the deep-state concept is best understood in the context of all competing interests in the power structure, including both the intelligence community and big business.

Aside from Swiss bank accounts and high-profile assassinations, little is really secret about the deep state. A good example is the controversy about Russian interference in the Election of 2016. Here are the highlights of what is publicly known about "Russiagate":

In the summer of 2016, a hacker, or group of hackers ("Guccifer 2.0") stole tens of thousands of documents from the Democratic National Committee's server and gave them to Wikileaks, which thereupon released them to the public. The DNC claimed the material came from "the Russians." At the same time, a joint CIA-FBI-NSA probe began under the auspices of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. A few weeks later, the FBI warned that election systems in Arizona and Illinois were infiltrated by foreign actors.

In October 2016, Wikileaks released thousands of emails drafted by Clinton campaign director John Podesta. In addition to behind-the-scenes workings of the campaign, the emails dealt with [Hillary Clinton's](#) Wall Street speeches and the Clinton Foundation. Whereupon, a DNC law firm hired Fusion GPS to collect information on how the Kremlin tried to suborn Trump. Fusion GPS hired a former British spy to write a report. Based on hear-say,

the [Steele dossier](#) was passed to U.S. intelligence agencies. The Obama administration expelled 35 Russian diplomats in December. President Vladimir Putin kicked 755 U.S. diplomats out of Russia several months later.

A year ago, the ODNI committee released an [Intelligence Community Assessment](#) summary. It argues Putin authorized cyber hacks of the election. Although it does “not make an assessment of the impact that Russian activities had on the outcome of the 2016 election” or “analyze US political processes or US public opinion,” the report sees a pattern of Russian media interference. Then there’s this statement in small print:

“Judgments are not intended to imply that we have proof that shows something to be a fact. Assessments are based on collected information, which is often incomplete or fragmentary, as well as logic, argumentation and precedents.”

The report was embraced by the bipartisan establishment and mainstream media as gospel truth.

On March 20 2017, then-FBI director James Comey testified before the [House Intelligence Committee](#). He said a cybersecurity firm hired by the DNC named Cloud Strike concluded “with high certainty” in the spring of 2016 that Russian cyber-spies hacked the DNC. Shortly after, the FBI started a “counter-intelligence” probe of Trump-Kremlin ties. Interestingly, Comey had already told the Senate Intelligence Committee that the DNC refused to give the Bureau direct access to its computer servers (so his later claim to the same committee that Trump wasn’t under FBI investigation was technically consistent).

In early May, The Donald fired Comey. Within days, Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein appointed [Robert Mueller](#) to run a probe of Russian election meddling. Comey was Mueller’s FBI successor.

The witch hunt picked up tempo in the summer of 2017, sweeping up leftwing dissidents. The Senate Intelligence Committee subpoenaed documents possessed by [Jill Stein](#) in connection to her Green Party presidential campaign. Pressure was brought to bear on [Black Live Matter](#) too. Trump was a pretext. The first articles of impeachment filed against him in the House in July were dismissed in December. A few days later, high-level Department of Justice official [Peter Strzok](#) was kicked off the Mueller probe for making anti-Trump comments.

Evidence is even emerging that the Clinton campaign [preferred](#) Trump as its general election opponent.

Historian [Jackson Lears](#) recently wrote that the “religion of the Russian hack” is a manifestation of domestic austerity and wars of aggression abroad. He wonders why the intelligence community should be revered when it’s no secret it opposes democracy and peace.

Russiagate shows how deeply ingrained is the ideology of American Exceptionalism. There are many examples. Take self-described liberal [Van Jones](#) talking about Russia’s “active attack on our country.”

Russiagate is self-serving. Investor Bill Bowder, beloved of the mainstream media these days, vents outrage about Russia's oligarchs. Yet his self-righteous words ring hollow when [his own activities](#) are considered. In November, [Donna Brazile](#), who briefly ran the DNC after Debbie Wasserman Schultz lost the position in the summer of 2016, claimed the Democratic primary was rigged by the Clinton campaign. But in a book released at the same time, she argues there was also [Russian hacking](#).

What's little heard from establishment circles is the reason why the election was subverted: The DNC favored Hillary Clinton over Bernie Sanders and voter suppression guaranteed the favored outcome. Wikileaks emails show DNC operatives plotting to subvert the Democratic primary. Related to this are the emails written by Clinton when she was Secretary of State. They suggest she used her office to raise funds for the Clinton Foundation; they also shed light on the Obama administration's negotiation of the Uranium One agreement with Putin.

According to the [New York Times](#), the Justice Department knew about Bill Clinton's 2010 overtures to Russian nuclear regulatory authorities. The FBI "investigation" that began in the summer of 2015 ended with Mrs. Clinton's absolution over a year later.

There are many conclusions we can make about this. One lesson stands out: The only response America's deep-state elites have to growing public dissension with neoliberalism is to promote organized hysteria at the risk of explosive contradictions, be they in the form of conspiracy theories like Russiagate or fraudulent presidents like Donald Trump.

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