

## Is Joe Biden Enabling Russiagate 2?

His national security team provides the script

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*The old expression that “lightning never strikes the same place twice” is frequently used in the aftermath of a truly awful experience, meaning that the odds are that something exactly like that will never occur again. Unfortunately, however, we Americans will now have to endure lightning striking twice due to the emergence of President Joe Biden and whoever is telling him what to say. I am referring specifically to Russiagate, which is possibly the single most discredited bit of politically motivated chicanery that this country has seen in the past twenty years. Joe is relying on the “evidence” provided by a conveniently timed new declassified “Intelligence Community Assessment” entitled [“Foreign Threats to the 2020 US Federal Election.”](#) The document was dated March 10th but released by Director Avril Haines of the Office of National Intelligence (ONI) on March 16<sup>th</sup>.*

The new report consists of eleven pages of text and charts. It specifically discounts any direct evidence to alter votes electronically, but asserts that Russian President Vladimir Putin personally directed his spies and proxies to turn the US election in favor of Donald Trump. Based in part on the report, Joe Biden subsequently labeled Putin a “killer” and [vowed that](#) both Russia and its president would “pay a price” which we will be “seeing shortly” for their claimed meddling in American politics. The Bidenesque grotesque overreach has led to the Kremlin [recalling its ambassador in Washington](#) home for “consultations” and will at a minimum put US forces in the Middle East at risk.

Does it sound more than a bit like the Democratic Party is still looking for revenge for 2016? You bet, and the name calling that took place during the 2020 campaign made it predictable that they would turn on Russia as soon as an opportunity presented itself, if only because it is always convenient to have a foreign enemy to blame one’s own failings on. And there is also payoff personally for Joe and his sons in the report, which strongly suggests that the claims and evidence of Biden family corruption were actually just disinformation put out by the Kremlin’s spy agencies.

Anyone who reads the report and tries to assess its credibility from the viewpoint of the evidence that it presents to make its case will notice that there is very little solid to back up the conclusions, which themselves are weasel worded. The report in fact concludes with the disclaimer “Judgments are not intended to imply that we have proof that shows something to be a fact.” There is, to be sure, [no evidence](#) that even a single vote was changed or that

anyone succeeded in influencing any persons or policies that emerged from the election. And, as a former CIA field officer, I found that whoever drafted the final report in the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) really doesn't have a clue regarding how and why nations spy on each other, much less still how one runs what it is referred to as "covert action."

The most important key judgement of the report, number two, reads as follows: "We assess that Russian President Putin authorized, and a range of Russian government organizations conducted, influence operations aimed at denigrating President Biden's candidacy and the Democratic Party, supporting former President Trump, undermining public confidence in the electoral process, and exacerbating socio-political divisions in the US."

Every foreign government with an external intelligence capability, including that of the United States, does exactly what Russia is being accused of. If there is another country that is either seen as an adversary or even a threat, the intelligence agencies will attempt to influence opinion of the public and elites in that country to avoid their doing things that do damage to one's own interests. That is accomplished through placements in the media and direct contact with influential politicians in the country being targeted. As the Russians correctly saw a Democratic victory as detrimental to their interests, it is inevitably that they should use their own media resources to surface alternative views that might help the other candidate, in this case Donald Trump.

Lying is, as after all, a traditional role for intelligence services. The Romans had a spy service run out of the imperial palace that provided military and political intelligence all across their vast empire. It included what might be called deception operations carried out to confuse enemies about intentions and capabilities. In more recent centuries, the British became masters of both spying and deception. Major influencing intelligence operations run against the United States can be credited with having led to American involvement in both world wars.

Currently, the world's preeminent spy agency in terms of manpower, resources and global reach is undoubtedly the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). That is not to suggest that it is necessarily the best intelligence agency, as smaller, more nimble, focused organizations can outperform the spies from the large countries in the niche areas that they consider important.

America's federal government's various intelligence agencies are in fact into deception big time, so much so that they have a number of euphemisms that permit them to lie about lying. The CIA regards spreading false information as part of its "covert action" activity while the military prefers variations on "perception management." Both occasionally refer to "influence" or "influencing" operations. Either way, it is in reality a form of "information warfare" in which words and ideas are used to shape a perspective favorable to the country engaging in the practice and damaging to one's adversaries.

The United States Department of Defense defines "[perception management](#)" as "Actions to convey and/or deny selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, and objective reasoning as well as to intelligence systems and leaders at all levels to influence official estimates, ultimately resulting in foreign behaviors and official actions favorable to the originator's objectives. In various ways, perception management combines [truth projection](#), [operations security](#), cover and deception, and

psychological operations.” In other words, perception management is a multi-tasked mechanism designed to get an adversary to think or believe what one wishes, no matter what the truth actually is.

The CIA has historically disseminated disinformation primarily through press placements, using agents and collaborators worldwide to circulate stories that were presumed to be supportive of presumed U.S. interests. When possible, local politicians or journalists might be recruited and paid to support the effort, but the ODNI report does not accuse the Russians of doing that. In fact, given the U.S. disinformation efforts vis-à-vis Venezuela, Iran, China and regarding Russia itself, it would be wise to consider that the largest portion of disinformation circulating on the internet is produced by the United States government itself. And when all of that doesn't work, the U.S. is more than willing to directly interfere in foreign elections. In fact, it has played an active role in elections worldwide, up and including regime change in places like Ukraine, [at least 81 times](#) according to its own publicly available data.

The ODNI report also mentions other countries that “interfered” or attempted to do so in 2020, naming Iran as a Biden supporter in Key Judgment Three: “We assess that Iran carried out a multi-pronged covert influence campaign intended to undercut former President Trump’s reelection prospects— though without directly promoting his rivals— undermine public confidence in the electoral process and US institutions, and sow division and exacerbate societal tensions in the US.” China was let off this time around, with the assessment even conceding that there was no evidence that it had been involved in the election, but reports from Washington suggest that [it will be sanctioned anyway](#), along with Iran and Russia as a consequence of being out of favor with the White House and Congress.

One suspects that in drafting up the report the neoconnish Avril Haines saw what she wanted to see because there is scant evidence to condemn the behavior of either Russia or Iran acting in their own interests without breaking into voting machines or suborning officials. Even the *New York Times* in its own [reporting on the “Assessment”](#) included a judgement taken directly from the document, that “Russian state and proxy actors who all serve the Kremlin’s interests worked to affect U.S. public perceptions” before admitting that “The declassified report did not explain how the intelligence community had reached its conclusions about Russian operations during the 2020 election. But the officials said they had high confidence in their conclusions about Mr. Putin’s involvement, suggesting that the intelligence agencies have developed new ways of gathering information after the [extraction of one of their best Kremlin sources](#) in 2017.” In other words, the Times is taking the assertions in the report as an act of faith as it has no idea what evidence actually supports the claims that are being made.

To be sure the release of the report was greeted by the usual players in Congress, including Adam Schiff, Chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, who [enthused that](#) “The American people deserve to know the full truth when a foreign government seeks to interfere in our elections, and today’s release of the Intelligence Community’s Assessment is an important step.” Schiff predictably does not know what “interfere” means, for which there is no evidence, and he exhibits no curiosity about the report’s omission of the one country that does regularly interfere in American elections down to the local level. That country is, of course, Israel, which Noam Chomsky has referred to, [oberving that](#) “Israeli intervention in U.S. elections ‘vastly overwhelms’ anything Russia has done.” It seems that Biden, Haines and Schiff all missed that little detail.

So here we go again. New president, new national security team, same old nonsense. Russiagate one more time around will not render the entire argument being made about a vast conspiracy to destroy democracy any more credible. Yeah, nations spy on each other and try to influence things their way but get over it. If the whole world is out to “get” the United States it just might be because the whole world has finally realized that Washington is neither exceptional nor a force for good. Leave everyone else alone and they will leave you alone. That’s a law of nature.

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