

“Operation Novichok”: Prime Minister May’s “Conspiracy Theory”

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Introduction

A British M16 agent, **Sergei Skripal**, is found in a public bench at Salisbury, and taken to hospital with symptoms of poisoning. Simultaneously, Western media refers the event as to the “Russian spy attack”, [1] and the expression “Russian Novichok” filled its headlines [2]. Ensuing, PM Therese May affirmed, “highly likely” that Russia was behind, and carried in with highly publicized diplomatic sanctions.

Amidst the *public* discussion in UK government and political elites on whether would be necessary to call for N° 5 NATO-clause on ‘solidarity armed response’, NATO **Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg** quickly declared “this incident is of great concern to NATO” [3].



Prof Ferrada de Noli @ProfessorsBlogg · Mar 13

IF AT A GANG-FIGHT in a restaurant, one guy is sent to hospital after a rival hit his head with a Coca-Cola bottle, would anyone's first reaction be to blame the #U.S. because Coca-Cola was created there?

#Novichok wasn't created in #Russia, but by #Uzbekistan 🇺🇿 , 1991
#svpol #UK

Furthermore, **Nikki Haley**, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, declared that her government “stands in absolute solidarity with Great Britain.” [4] Fair enough, expected. But The Guardian, UK utmost state-megaphone after BBC, thundered this fake news: “The U.S. Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, said *the attack* clearly came from Russia, and would have consequences.” [5] In fact, Tillerson did instead say, “*Nerve agent* in Salisbury attack clearly came from Russia” [6] [See image below].



The daring spin by the Guardian exposed in my tweet of 13 March seen above (The Guardian changed later its phrasing on Tillerson’s declarations) [7] indicates one important purpose of this anti-Russia campaign’s design: It is about gather international support for a *retaliation* against the one who is presented as “*clearly the attacker*”.

Concomitantly, the distinction between “*the attack* clearly came from Russia” and “*the nerve agent* clearly came from Russia” is also relevant in refuting the UK allegations.

Because, even if it would be established that the nerve agent was created time ago in the Soviet Union, that by no means is proof that the attack was Russia's design, neither that its perpetrators came from Russia.

Nevertheless, as recently pointed out in my interview with Sputnik International (13 March), [8] the TASS wire (16 March) [9] and Izvestia TV (16 March) [10] neither the nerve agent *Novichok* was ever been produced in Russia, but in Uzbekistan. See details in Section I, below.



I

While no evidence has been presented to sustain the above-mentioned allegations, there are fact-based, logical, and contextual issues that tell against PM Therese May's conspiracy theory of an official involvement of Russia in those events.

First, on the facts around the nerve agent. To the best of my knowledge, the imputed nerve agent "Novichok" allegedly used in the poisoning of the British spy, was not originally produced in Russia, but instead in the former Soviet state Uzbekistan, at the Scientific Research Institute for Organic Chemistry and Technology, in Nukus. It is also documented that after its independence in 1991, Uzbekistan have been working together with the United States aiming to sanitize the locations where 'Novikoch' was produced.

In 1999, the Pentagon announced "it intends to spend up to \$6 million under its Cooperative Threat Reduction program" to demilitarize the Nukus plant in Uzbekistan (The New York Times, 25 May 1999) [11].



And the possibility of a transporting of that nerve agent samples out of Uzbekistan, for control tests by the country performing the 'sanitation operation' would be understandable. Neither the smuggling of the poison out of Uzbekistan can be absolutely ruled out. This, particularly considering that it is a so called binary substance, meaning that for its use, two components must be mixed. Thus, it could eventually be transported separately and with lesser risk. One of the characteristics ascribed to 'Novikoch' in the literature is that it would be "safer" for transporting, and less detectable.

In my opinion, trying to make the current government of Russia accountable for what would have possibly been smuggled by from Uzbekistan around the sanitation period (1991) of the nerve agent, added completely absence of evidence for that allegation, is preposterous.

Besides, to automatically blame a country for a deed committed elsewhere with an agent originally manufactured in that nation, is equally absurd. As an illustration: If in a gang-fight taking place in a restaurant, one individual is sent to hospital after a rival hit his head with a Coca-Cola bottle, would the government's first reaction be to blame the United States, because Coca-Cola was created there?

II

Also there are multiple *logical* issues that contradict the Johnson/May hypothesis:

1) The British spy Skrypal has been exposed, already pardoned, allowed to go abroad, and currently he did not pose any danger to Russian national security.

2) There is no historical precedent of any proven action taken by any government against a spy who has been pardoned and further released to go abroad via a prisoner-swap.

Since many years, former KGB officials live unmolested in both UK and the United States. One example is Colonel Oleg Antonovich Gordievsky, a high-rank KGB officer who did cause considerable more damage to Russia during the past Cold War. He still lives in the UK.

Another example is KGB General Oleg Danilovich Kalugin, exiled in the U.S. and who even voluntarily testified in court accusing Colonel George Trofimoff, a retired officer in the U.S. Army, of being in the past a KGB agent. Oleg Kalugin is also known as a harsh spoken critic of President Putin.

3) Even considering - only for the argumentation's sake - PM May's assumption that a foreign super power would have had interest in the disappearance of a hostile spy, it appears absurd that such a government would have preferred 'to send a hit squad to England' and risk a mayor international incident, instead of punish the hostile spy while he was under that government's custody in its own territory.

In sum, Johnson-May conspiracy theory just makes no sense. In the main. It lacks demonstrable evidence to sustain such an allegation against Russia. The conclusion that 'Russia did it', based in the misconception that the nerve agent would have been manufactured in Russia, constitutes a blunt logical fallacy of classic type. And is not only about a "Logical Fallacy of Appeal to Probability".

III



Finally, constitutes the "poison allegations" a real casus belli, as to wage such a magnified aggression against Russia? Which is the geopolitical context in the background of Boris Johnson's and Therese May's allegations, and their ensued disproportionately "reprisal" against Russia?

In my opinion, the UK government is in high need to divert international focus from these two issues:

Yemen. Our organization Swedish Doctors for Human Rights has monitored during the last week an increasing international criticism against the UK for its participation in the Yemen war. Concretely, the providing by UK of bombardment weaponry to the Saudi-led coalition.

The United Nations published a "moderate estimation" [12] giving a total of almost 14,000 civilian casualties in Yemen, counted only in the period March 2015 - September 2017. The breakdown indicates 5,144 killed and 8,749 injured as a result of such a bombing and military actions by the UK-backed coalition led by the Saudis. Added 8,873 injured at the period, for the same reason. Human Rights Watch reports higher figures of civilian casualties for the same period. [13]

The UK needs to swift the attention of the international opinion from the atrocities committed in Yemen with such a UK participation, and the so called Salisbury incident is

clearly serving those purposes.

The devastating situation for the Yemenis is not only the direct result of the bombardments, but also principally, the catastrophic public health panorama that the war has ensued. The Cholera epidemics, where over half a million of Yemenis have been infected, [14] the malnutrition [15], etc.

Syria and Sochi. Also another international criticism that has increased in the later weeks refers to the organization White Helmets, and NGO funded by the UK and principally financed by the UK and the U.S. The level of exposures around that organization constitutes an embarrassing chapter for the UK. For instance the close collaboration of White Helmets with the jihadist forces that govern the occupied territories of Syria under violent means. It is about organizations that in the main seek the establishment in Syria of an Islamic state. [16]

Paradoxically (or also expected), the series of false-flags operations assayed by Western powers in the last period have been made against the backdrop of serious advances by Russia and allies in the war front of Syria. While Russia has completed the decimation of IS presence in Syria, the US-led coalition in which the UK is also prominent has not been able to achieve a similar result. The advances of Russia in regard to the situation in Syria has not only been visible in the military level, but also in the diplomatic one, such as measured by the positive results of the Sochi talks.

With that said, a main context explaining the current (and future) accusations against Russia is to be found in the renewal of NATO's strategic aggression plans. In geopolitics we have always to distinguish between pretext and cause.

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Notes

[1] [Russian spy attack: UK encouraged by support from allies, says Johnson](#). The Guardian, 13 March 2018.

[2] ["RUSSIAN NERVE AGENT - What was the Russian Novichok programme and where was the military grade nerve agent made?"](#) The Sun, 16 March 2018.

[3] ["NATO 'in touch' with UK about nerve gas attack](#), Politico, 12 March 2018

[4] ["Spy poisoning: allies back UK and blast Russia at UN security council](#). The Guardian, 15 March 2018.

[5] See Ref. [1].

[6] "[Nerve agent in Salisbury attack 'clearly came from Russia', says Tillerson](#). Jersey Evening Post, 13 March 2018.

[7] Originally, The Guardian used this phrasing: "The U.S. Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, said *the attack* clearly came from Russia" (Retrieved 14 March 2018). The Guardian changed it afterwards into, "Tillerson...had told reporters the attack on Sergei and Yulia Skripal 'clearly came from Russia' and would have consequences."

[8] [Russian Ex-Spy's Poisoning Seems Like Ploy to Derail UK-Russia Ties - Analysts](#). Sputnik International, 13 March 2018.

[9] [Accusations in the case of Skripal appeared against the background of Russia's successes in Syria - Swedish journalist](#) [Russian]. TASS wire, 16 March 2018.

[10] Video interview 16 March 2018 conducted by Alena Bondarenko. Not yet published.

[11] "[U.S. and Uzbeks Agree on Chemical Arms Plant Cleanup](#)". The New York Times, 25 May 1999.

[12] [Yemen: An "entirely man-made catastrophe" - UN human rights report urges international investigation](#). United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner, 5 September 2017.

[13] [Yemen - World Report 2018: Yemen | Human Rights Watch](#). WRW, not dated (2018).

[14] [How War Created the Cholera Epidemic in Yemen](#). New York Times, 12 November 2017.

[15] [Yemen conflict: A devastating toll for children](#). UNICEF, 29 December 2017.

[16] [Which rebel groups are fighting in Syria's eastern Ghouta?](#) Deutsche Welle, 20 February 2018.

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