

The New York Times' Outrage at Donald Trump's Refusal to Demonize Russia

By [Matt Pepe](#)

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After baseless allegations from the Democratic National Committee (DNC) that the Russian government was behind a hack of the DNC's emails, Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump sarcastically quipped that he hoped Russia would find and release the deleted emails from Hillary Clinton's private server from her time as secretary of state. The New York Times failed to note the sarcasm and treated the comments as evidence of high crimes against the state. It was an example of the modern day red-baiting against Trump, who is portrayed as being in league with Russian President Vladimir Putin to conspire against the United States itself.

The [Times](#) said Trump was “essentially urging a foreign adversary to conduct cyberespionage against a former secretary of state.” While Trump is such a narcissistic buffoon that it is often difficult to discern when he is being facetious, he was clearly making a joke.

But treating the comment in the spirit it was intended would mean passing up a golden opportunity to bash Trump for what has become common knowledge in mainstream political analysis: Trump is anti-American for being diplomatic instead of vilifying Russia and Putin at every opportunity. They scrutinize and make a point of every statement Trump makes that fails to antagonize Russia for actions the US government doesn't antagonize other countries for.

While they merely imply “urging” cyberespionage is treasonous rather than state it explicitly, the *Times* finds it so important that they place it in the lead paragraph. This is curiously prominent, much more prominent than when President Barack Obama literally joked about incinerating a family with a remotely guided missile.

At the White House Correspondents' Association dinner in 2010, [Obama said](#):

The Jonas Brothers are here. (Applause.) They're out there somewhere. Sasha and Malia are huge fans. But, boys, don't get any ideas. (Laughter.) I have two words for you - predator drones. (Laughter.) You will never see it coming. (Laughter.) You think I'm joking. (Laughter.)

Unlike Trump's joke, which warranted its own headline (“Donald Trump Calls on Russia to Find Hillary Clinton's Missing Emails”), Obama's joke wasn't mentioned in the *Times*' headline about the event (“[Obama and Leno Share a Time Slot](#)”) nor the lead. Their summary of the night's newsworthiness noted “jokes about Representative John Boehner's tan, Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr.'s lack of restraint and the Fox News-MSNBC

divide.”

You had to go all the way down to the eighth paragraph to find the briefest possible mention of Obama’s obscene drone murder joke/threat:

Mr. Obama noted the presence of the Jonas Brothers, who can count Sasha and Malia Obama among their fans. But the First Father warned the band: ‘Two words: predator drones.’

If another world leader hypothetically ran a global assassination under which he unilaterally assumed the power to kill anyone he wanted in the world, anywhere, any time, with the only criteria needed to order someone’s death being internal deliberations within the executive branch, it would produce such a frenzy in corporate media they would devote themselves nearly exclusively to beating the drums for regime change, much as they did leading up to the Iraq War.

If that hypothetical leader then joked about people he was killing, it would undoubtedly be a banner headline on the front page for days or weeks. There would certainly be apoplectic outrage, and you most definitely wouldn’t have to scroll down to the eighth paragraph to learn about it.

[Mark Karlin](#) wrote in Buzzflash at Truthout in 2014 that Obama’s mock threat to the Jonas brothers “evoked the US indifference to those persons killed overseas by drone strikes. That is because the guffaws of the corporate media were based on the subconscious premise that Obama’s boasting of his power to authorize kill strikes is limited to people of little note to DC insiders, Middle-Eastern civilians (collateral damage) and persons alleged to be terrorists or in areas where terrorists allegedly congregate.”

As Jeanne Mirer, president of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, writes in [Drones and Targeted Killing](#): “If the person against whom lethal force is directed has not been convicted of a crime for which a death sentence is permissible in the state where the killing occurs, the targeted killing is also an ‘extrajudicial’ killing, outside of any legal process. Targeted extrajudicial killing is, by its very nature, illegal.” [1] But corporate media like the New York Times could not care less that Obama is violating international human rights law and the US Constitution by assassinating people.

What produces the greatest moral outrage in the *Times* and the media elites is perceived attacks on the American state, or perceived threats to American supremacy. Thus the *Times* calls Trump’s joke “another bizarre moment in the mystery of whether Vladimir Putin’s government has been seeking to influence the United States’ presidential race.”

What is supposedly bizarre is unclear. What is dubbed a “mystery” is really nothing more than a conspiracy theory. The *Times* cites the DNC’s accusations that Russian intelligence agents hacked the committee’s emails. The DNC’s frantic finger pointing at Russia are a transparent tactic to distract from the damning content of the emails themselves, as [Nadia Prupis](#) has written at Common Dreams.

WikiLeaks founder [Julian Assange](#) noted in an interview with Democracy Now that any such claims are “simply speculation” and when Hillary’s campaign manager Robby Mook was asked in a TV interview to name the experts he was citing as evidence, Mook refused flatly.

The *Times* validates the DNC's objective evidence-free accusations by saying American intelligence agencies have confirmed with "high confidence" the Russian government was behind the attack. They have not publicly presented any evidence at all, but their word at face value is good enough for the *Times* to consider it damning proof.

American intelligence agencies and the military have a motive to hype the Russian "threat" to justify their own budget requests and advance the US government's policy of global hegemony, presumably unaware that the Cold War ended 25 years ago.

In case Russia's transgressions are not self-evident enough for *Times* readers, they call attention to Trump's refusal to condemn Russia's "seizure" of Crimea and willingness to consider whether to lift sanctions against the Russian government as a "remarkable departure from United States policy."

It would be a departure from US policy against Russia. But it is not US policy to sanction countries for incorporating territory outside their recognized borders in general. Quite the opposite in fact. Unlike Crimea, which voted with roughly 97 percent support to join Russia in a peaceful transition to re-integrate itself into the country it had been part of for several centuries, Israel seized the Palestinian territories nearly 50 years ago through violent military aggression against the unanimous wishes of both the Palestinians themselves and nearly the entire Middle East and beyond. In the subsequent half century, the US has showered Israel with more than \$150 billion in aid while fighting tooth and nail any attempt in the United Nations to hold Israel to account for its indisputable violations of international law.

The US has also generously gifted millions of dollars in aid to countries like Indonesia after they had seized East Timor and carried a genocidal assault against nearly one third of the country's population and sponsored France's attempts to reconquer their former colony Vietnam after World War II (before stepping in directly and unleashing the most horrific military assault on a country's people and environment in modern times.)

But policies of supporting other country's human rights and international violations are not of interest to the *Times* if those countries are seen as allied with US "interests" or "values." It is only when someone questions whether it is necessary to continue treating another government as an enemy that they are called on to take a hard-line in standing up for international law.

The *Times* calls Russia "often hostile to the United States" while NATO continues to encircle the country from all sides and Obama has ordered what amounts to a permanent [buildup](#) of NATO personnel and weapons along Russia's borders and instigated a new nuclear arms race by spending [\\$1 trillion](#) to upgrade the US nuclear arsenal and make weapons more usable, i.e., more likely to be employed.

In another article titled "[As Democrats Gather, a Russian Subplot Raises Intrigue](#)," the *Times* asks what they purport to be a widespread question: "Is Vladimir V. Putin trying to meddle in the American presidential election."

While this is merely another conspiracy theory without any actual evidence supporting it, it is the case that countries often do meddle in the elections of other countries. But it is almost always the US government itself doing it to others, which explains why it is ignored by the *Times* and the rest of the media establishment.

In [Rogue State](#), William Blum lists twenty cases of US interference in the elections of sovereign countries (including Russia itself):

- Philippines, 1950s
- Italy, 1948-1970s
- Lebanon, 1950s
- Indonesia, 1955
- Vietnam, 1955
- British Guyana, 1953-64
- Japan 1958-1970s
- Nepal, 1959
- Laos, 1960
- Brazil, 1962
- Dominican Republic, 1962
- Chile, 1964-1970
- Portugal, 1974-75
- Australia, 1974-75
- Jamaica, 1976
- Nicaragua, 1984, 1990
- Haiti, 1987-1988
- Russia, 1996
- Mongolia, 1996
- Bosnia, 1998

But the actions themselves are not the issue. Not all violations of international law or subversion of state sovereignty are created equal. If the US government is the perpetrator of such actions, they are glossed over or ignored entirely. But when the US itself is seen as the subject of such violation (even when it is purely in the imaginations of conspiracy theorists and others seeking to demonize official enemies, as appears to be the case in the current moment) any one who doesn't join forcefully in the demonization is vilified relentlessly, as Trump is experiencing in the pages of the *Times* and across the mainstream media.

References

[1] Cohn, Marjorie. *Drones and Targeted Killing: Legal, Moral, and Geopolitical Issues*. Olive Branch Press, 2014. Kindle Edition.

[2] Blum, William. *Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower*. 2016. Kindle Edition.

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