

Trump the Russian Puppet. A Story That Just Will Not Die

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*Certainly, there are many things that **President Donald Trump** can rightly be criticized for, but it is interesting to note how the media and chattering classes continue to be in the grip of the highly emotional but ultimately irrational “Trump derangement syndrome (TDS).” TDS means that even the most ridiculous claims about Trump behavior can be regurgitated by prominent journalists without anyone in the media even daring to observe that they are both professional dissemblers of truth who lie regularly to enhance their professional resumes.*

There are two persistent bogus narratives about Donald Trump that are, in fact, related. The first is that his campaign and transition teams collaborated with the Russian government to defeat Hillary Clinton. Even Robert Mueller, he of the famous fact-finding commission, had to admit that that was not demonstrable. The only government that succeeded in collaborating with the incoming Trumpsters was that of Israel, but Mueller forgot to mention that or even look into it.

Nevertheless, Russia as a major contributing element in the Trump victory continues to be cited in the mainstream media, seemingly whenever Trump is mentioned, as if it were demonstrated fact. The fact is that whatever Russia did was miniscule and did not in any way alter the outcome of the election. Similarly, allegations that the Kremlin will again be at it in 2020 are essentially baseless fearmongering and are a reflection of the TDS desire to see the president constantly diminished in any way possible.

The other narrative that will not die is the suggestion that Donald Trump is either a Russian spy or is in some other, possibly psychological fashion, controlled by Russian **President Vladimir Putin**. That spy story was first floated by several former senior CIA officers who were closely tied to the Hillary Clinton campaign, apparently because they believed they would benefit materially if she were elected.

Former CIA Acting Director **Michael Morell** was the most aggressive promoter of Trump as Russian spy narrative. In August 2016, he wrote a *New York Times* [op-ed](#) entitled “I Ran the CIA. Now I’m endorsing Hillary Clinton.” Morell’s story began with the flat assertion that

“Mrs. Clinton is highly qualified to be commander in chief. I trust she will deliver on the most important duty of a president – keeping our nation safe... Donald J. Trump is not only unqualified for the job, but he may well pose a threat to our national security.”

In his op-ed, Morell ran through the litany of then GOP candidate Trump’s observed

personality and character failings while also citing his lack of experience, but he delivered what he thought to be his most crushing blow when he introduced Vladimir Putin into the discussion. Putin, it seems, a wily ex-career intelligence officer, is “trained to identify vulnerabilities in an individual and to exploit them. That is exactly what he did early in the primaries. Mr. Putin played upon Mr. Trump’s vulnerabilities... In the intelligence business, we would say that Mr. Putin had recruited Mr. Trump as an unwitting agent of the Russian Federation.”

How can one be both unwitting and a recruited agent? Some might roll their eyes at that bit of hyperbole, but Morell, who was a top analyst at the Agency but never acquired or ran an actual spy in his entire career, goes on to explain how Moscow is some kind of eternal enemy. For Morell that meant that Trump’s often stated willingness to work with Putin and the nuclear armed state he headed was somehow the act of a Manchurian Candidate, seen by Morell as a Russian interest, not an American one. So much for the presumed insider knowledge that came from the man who “ran the CIA.”

The most recent “former intelligence agents” blast against Trump appeared in the *Business Insider* last month in [an article](#) entitled “US spies say Trump’s G7 performance suggests he’s either a ‘Russian asset’ or a ‘useful idiot’ for Putin.” The article cites a number of former government officials, including several from the CIA and FBI, who claimed that Trump’s participation at the recent G7 summit in Biarritz France was marked by pandering to Putin and the Kremlin’s interests, including a push to re-include Russia in the G-7, from which it was expelled after the annexation of Crimea.

One current anonymous FBI source cited in the article described the Trump performance as a “new low,” while a former senior Justice Department official, labeled Trump’s behavior as “directly out of the Putin playbook. We have a Russian asset sitting in the Oval Office.” An ex-CIA officer speculated that the president’s “intent and odd personal fascination with President Putin is worth serious scrutiny,” concluding that the evidence is “overwhelming” that Trump is a Russian asset, while other CIA and NSA veterans suggested that Trump might be flattering Putin in exchange for future business concessions in Moscow.

Another recently retired FBI special agent opined that Trump was little more than “useful idiot” for the Russians, though he added that it would not surprise him if there were also Russian spies in Trump’s inner circle.

The comments in the article are almost incoherent. They come from carefully selected current and former government employees who suffer from an excess of TDS, or possibly pathological paranoia, and hate the president for various reasons. What they are suggesting is little more than speculation and not one of them was able to cite any actual evidence to support their contentions. And, on the contrary, there is considerable evidence that points the other way. The US-Russia relationship is at its lowest point ever according to some observers and that has all been due to policies promoted by the Trump Administration to include the continuing threats over Crimea, sanctions against numerous Russian officials, abrogation of existing arms treaties, and the expansion of aggressive NATO activity right up to the borders with Russia.

Just this past week, the United States [warned Russia against](#) continuing its aerial support for the Syrian Army advance to eliminate the last major terrorist pocket in Idlib province. Once against, Washington is operating on the side of terrorists in Syria and against Russia, a conflict that the United States entered into illegally in the first place. Either Donald Trump

acting as “the Russian agent” actually thinks threatening a Moscow that is pursuing its legitimate interests is a good idea or the labeling of the president as a “Putin puppet” or “useful idiot” is seriously misguided.

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