

Twitter and the Smearing of Corbyn and Assange: A Research Note on the “Integrity Initiative”

By [Mark Curtis](#)

Global Research, December 30, 2018

[Mark Curtis](#) 28 December 2018

Region: [Europe](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice](#), [Media](#)
[Disinformation](#)

The UK government-financed Integrity Initiative, managed by the Institute for Statecraft, is ostensibly a “counter disinformation” programme to challenge Russian information operations. However, it has been revealed that the Integrity Initiative twitter handle and some individuals associated with this programme have also been tweeting messages attacking Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn. [i] This takes on special meaning in light of the numerous UK military and intelligence personnel associated with the programme, documented in an important briefing by academics in Working Group on Syria Propaganda and Media. [ii]

Several journalists have been named as associated with the Integrity Initiative, either in programme “clusters” or having been invited to an Integrity Initiative event, in the documents that have been posted online. [iii] Analysis of 11 of these individuals has been undertaken to assess to what extent their tweets have linked Corbyn unfairly (for a definition see below) to Russia. The results show two things:

- first, the smearing of Corbyn about Russia is more extensive than has been revealed so far;
- second, many of the same individuals have also been attacking a second target – Julian Assange, trying to also falsely link him to the Kremlin.

Many of these 11 individuals are associated with The Times and the Guardian in the UK and the Atlantic Council in the US. The research does not show, however, that these tweets are associated with the Integrity Initiative (see further below).

Linking Corbyn to Russia

The Integrity Initiative twitter page states that “we are not ‘anti-Russian’ and do not ‘target’ Mr Corbyn”. [iv] However, before issuing this statement, it has tweeted:

- “Skripal poisoning: It’s time for the Putin left to confront its Putin problem”. [v]
- “An alleged British Corbyn supporter wants to vote for Putin”. [vi]
- “‘Mr Corbyn was a ‘useful idiot’, in the phrase apocryphally attributed to Lenin. His visceral anti-Westernism helped the Kremlin cause, as surely as if he had been secretly peddling Westminster tittle-tattle for money’”. [vii] This tweet was a quote from an article by Edward Lucas (see below) in the Times, entitled: “Corbyn’s sickening support of Soviet Empire”. [viii]

Here are examples of tweets from the 11 individuals.

Times columnist Edward Lucas has published an article on the Integrity Initiative website and been quoted as saying that his work with the Initiative has not been paid or involved anything improper.[ix] On twitter, he has accused Corbyn of “*his blind spot on Putin’s plutocracy*”[x] and for his “*blind spot for Kremlin imperialism*”[xi]. He has also tweeted:

- “*Why does Corbyn not see that Russia is imperialist and Ukrainians are victims?*”[xii], and:
- “*It’s not just Corbyn. Here’s Swedish leftie @AsaLinderborg explaining why Nato not Putin is the real threat to peace*” - linking to the latter’s article in a Swedish newspaper[xiii].

Lucas has also tweeted:

- “*German hard-leftist GDR-loving wall-defending @SWagenknecht congratulates Corbyn on win*” [in the Labour leadership contest][xiv]
- “*More excellent stuff on Corbyn’s love of plutocrats so long as they are Russian*”[xv].

Lucas has also written of Corbyn “*playing into Russia’s hands on the Skripal poisoning*”.[xvi]

Deborah Haynes[xvii], until recently Defence Editor of The Times and now foreign affairs editor at Sky News, has tweeted:

- “*Talking tough, v quick to demand end to UK arms sales to Saudi Arabia after Khashoggi death in stark contrast to his feeble response towards Russia over Skripal attack*”[xviii], and
- “*Displaying staggering naivety and a complete failure to understand this state-sponsored attack by Russia on the UK. Appalling. Is he for real?*”[xix]

Haynes has also tweeted: “*Incredible that @jeremycorbyn is attempting to score party-political points in wake of hugely significant statement by @theresa_may on Skripal attack by Russia*”.[xx]

Washington Post columnist Anne Applebaum has tweeted that Corbyn is a “*useful idiot*” of Russia[xxi], of a “*precise echo of Kremlin propaganda from Corbyn*”[xxii], that “*Surprise! Russia sides with Corbyn against Cameron*”[xxiii] and that “*Jeremy Corbyn isn’t anti-war. He’s just anti-West*”[xxiv].

David Clark, a former adviser to Robin Cook, has tweeted that Corbyn is an “*apologist*” for Putin[xxv] and that “*It is an article of ideological faith for Corbyn and people like him that everything wrong with the world is the fault of the capitalist West.*”[xxvi]

Anders Aslund of the Atlantic Council in the US, has tweeted, referring to Corbyn: “*Once a communist always so.*”[xxvii] His colleague at the Atlantic Council, Ben Nimmo, sent four tweets on Corbyn’s candidacy for the Labour leadership in August 2015:

- “*Why Russia loves Corbyn, in one headline*”[xxviii]
- “*Russia’s certainly pushing Corbyn’s candidacy*”[xxix]
- “*From Russia with coverage - how RT is campaigning for Jeremy Corbyn*”[xxx], and
- “*How Putin’s @RT_com is backing Jeremy Corbyn - my piece in*

@dailybeast"[xxx].

Natalie Nougayrede, Guardian columnist and on its editorial board, has tweeted on a "*Guardian editorial on shameful Corbyn & Co reaction to Russia behaviour & chemical weapon use*"[xxxii] and retweeted a Nick Cohen article: "*Corbyn. Supposedly anti-war, but in fact anti-West.*"[xxxiii]

Three Guardian/Observer-linked journalists were invited to speak at an Integrity Initiative event in London in November 2018, which title was "Tackling Tools of Malign Influence – Supporting 21st Century Journalism" – Carole Cadwalladr, Nick Cohen and James Ball.[xxxiv]

Carole Cadwalladr has tweeted that "*Labour has a Russia problem*", that Corbyn adviser Seumas Milne is "*pro-Putin*"[xxxv] and that "*Milne's support for Putin has made him a Russian propaganda tool*"[xxxvi]. One of Cadwalladr's tweets noted:

- "*Here's Corbyn's principal advisor Seamus Milne on RT explaining why it was the fault of NATO aggression that Russia invaded Ukraine.*"[xxxvii]

Another tweet by Cadwalladr noted:

- "*'What he has done, wittingly or unwittingly, is to work with the Kremlin's agenda'. Extraordinary quote from MP & expert on Russian active measures @IoWBobSeely in this incredible in-depth profile on Seamus Milne*".[xxxviii]

Nick Cohen has tweeted that "*Labour is led by Putin fans*"[xxxix] and: "*What is worse? Farage and Corbyn and twitter trolls divert attention from Russia's political assassinations because they believe Putin is innocent or because they are morally corrupt?*"[xl]. He has also retweeted an Observer article of his claiming that Labour leaders have promoted "*endorsements of Russian imperialism*" and that Corbyn's policy has given Russia "*a free pass*" in Syria.[xli]

James Ball has tweeted a link to his own article in the New Statesman saying that Corbyn is "*playing into Russia's hands on the Skripal poisoning*"[xlii] and accusing Corbyn to the effect that he "*took money from Russia Today*"[xliii].

Linking Assange to the Kremlin

Many of the same individuals have also been tweeting false statements about Julian Assange and Russia.

The Integrity Initiative twitter site itself retweeted a Guardian smear article, stating "*US lobbyist for Russian oligarch visited Julian Assange nine times last year*"[xliv] – referring to a lawyer, Adam Waldman, visiting the Wikileaks founder. It also tweeted: "*If you still believe Assange is some kind of hero, you deserve pity at best*".[xlv]

Anders Aslund has tweeted that Assange "*represents certain Russian agencies*"[xlvi], that "*Wikileaks, Assange & Snowden are nothing but highly successful Russian special operations*"[xlvii] and "*Kremlin agents*"[xlviii], and that "*Assange is collaborating w[ith] Russia Today as program host. Would be strange if not full-fledged agent*".[xlix]

Carole Cadwalladr has also sought to overtly link Assange to the Kremlin. She has tweeted that *“Assange & Milne... are both Russian propaganda tools”*[i], that Assange is a *“special friend”* of Russian intelligence[li] and that Wikileaks has *“colluded with...the Kremlin”*[lii]. In addition, Cadwalladr has tweeted several times that *“Assange was in direct communication with Russian intelligence in 2016”*[liii] and that *“Wikileaks sought assistance from Russian intelligence officers to disrupt the US presidential election”*[liv].

Cadwalladr is here claiming that Wikileaks knowingly colluded with Russian intelligence by releasing the files on the Democratic Party in 2016: in fact, this is not known or proven at all, while numerous media outlets also published or had contacts with Guccifer 2.0 and DCLeaks in 2016 – though do not figure as targets in her attacks.

Nick Cohen has also made many smears against Julian Assange, variously calling him a *“Russian stooge”* [lv], a *“Putin agent”* [lvi], *“pro-Putin”*[lvii], a *“Russian toady”*[lviii], that he *“works for Russia propaganda machine”*[lix] while *“Wikileaks will think whatever Putin tells it to think”*.[lx]

David Leask, chief reporter of The Herald (Scotland), has described Assange as a *“Kremlin proxy”*[lxi] while Anne Applebaum tweeted: *“Wikileaks is a front for Russian intelligence”*, linking to an article of the same headline[lxii]. Edward Lucas retweeted his Times article suggesting that Assange and Wikileaks are part of the *“Kremlin-loving camp”*[lxiii] while David Clark has tweeted that *“Assange is an active accomplice”* of autocrats such as Putin.[lxiv]

Need for further research

There are some key points to be made about this analysis.

First, some of the tweets made by these individuals on Corbyn and Assange, not all of which are included here, are fair comment, even if, in my view, they are usually wrong. But others go beyond this, inferring that Corbyn (and Assange) are in effect agents of Russia and/or are willingly and knowingly amplifying Russia’s agenda, as little more than “tools” – with no evidence provided (understandably, since there is none). There is also sometimes the association of Corbyn with former communists. These areas are held to constitute smearing.

Second, it is not known and certainly not proven that these tweets are associated with the Integrity Initiative. Little is known of the internal workings of the Initiative. It is possible that some of the individuals may have been chosen by the Integrity Initiative to be associated with it precisely because of their pre-existing criticism of Russia or their willingness to accuse figures such as Corbyn with association with Russia. While I am not suggesting that these individuals’ tweets are necessarily linked to their role in the Integrity Initiative, there does appear to be something of a pattern among these people of smearing both Corbyn and Assange.

Third, and equally important, this is not a full analysis of these individuals’ outputs: it is limited to their tweets. Neither is it a full analysis of the false linking to Russia by individuals associated with the Integrity Initiative: several other journalists and figures named in the documents are not analysed here. Again, further research is needed.

Mark Curtis is an award-winning author and frequent contributor to Global Research

*

Note to readers: please click the share buttons above. Forward this article to your email lists. Crosspost on your blog site, internet forums. etc.

Notes

[i]

<https://www.thecanary.co/uk/analysis/2018/12/14/emily-thornberry-turns-up-the-heat-on-tory-minister-in-row-over-jeremy-corbyn-smears/>

[ii] <http://syriapropagandamedia.org/working-papers/briefing-note-on-the-integrity-initiative>

[iii] Analysis here focuses on individuals named at: section 7.1 of <http://syriapropagandamedia.org/working-papers/briefing-note-on-the-integrity-initiative>; the 'UK' section of the 'Xcountry' document: <https://www.cyberguerrilla.org/blog/operation-integrity-initiative-british-informational-war-against-all-parts-1-3-combined-docs/>; and journalists invited to speak at an Integrity Initiative event in London in November 2018, <https://www.pdf-archive.com/2018/12/13/skillsharingdraft-nov12/skillsharingdraft-nov12.pdf>

[iv] <https://twitter.com/InitIntegrity/status/1073245787595919360>

[v] <https://twitter.com/InitIntegrity/status/1042774920529358851>

[vi] <https://twitter.com/InitIntegrity/status/984160286625222657>

[vii] <https://twitter.com/InitIntegrity/status/966965852892467200>

[viii] <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/corbyn-s-sickening-support-of-soviet-empire-qcpgs70gg>

[ix] See section 7.1.3 : <http://syriapropagandamedia.org/working-papers/briefing-note-on-the-integrity-initiative>

[x] <https://twitter.com/edwardlucas/status/636632548358135809>

[xi] <https://twitter.com/edwardlucas/status/649197808814280704>

[xii] <https://twitter.com/edwardlucas/status/636798147608625152>

[xiii] <https://twitter.com/edwardlucas/status/688842086200819712>

[xiv] <https://twitter.com/edwardlucas/status/642673874870665217>

[xv] <https://twitter.com/edwardlucas/status/633328339978186752>

[xvi] <https://twitter.com/edwardlucas/status/982872506750193666>

[xvii] See section 7.14 of <http://syriapropagandamedia.org/working-papers/briefing-note-on-the-integrity-initiative>

[xviii] <https://twitter.com/haynesdeborah/status/1054401547440926725>

[xix] <https://twitter.com/haynesdeborah/status/973905466794364928>

[xx] <https://twitter.com/haynesdeborah/status/973246686305931265>

[xxi] <https://twitter.com/anneapplebaum/status/630387753499422720>

[xxii] <https://twitter.com/anneapplebaum/status/637891042335956992>

[xxiii] <https://twitter.com/anneapplebaum/status/643830083602530304>

[xxiv] <https://twitter.com/anneapplebaum/status/667299182907011072>

[xxv] https://twitter.com/David_K_Clark/status/983412923652591616

[xxvi] https://twitter.com/David_K_Clark/status/1037612764913721345

[xxvii] https://twitter.com/anders_aslund/status/748303161341812737

[xxviii] <https://twitter.com/benimmo/status/637206541276418048>

[xxix] <https://twitter.com/benimmo/status/636647505241870336>

[xxx] <https://twitter.com/benimmo/status/633512911017766912>

[xxxi] <https://twitter.com/benimmo/status/633381715243888640>

[xxxii] <https://twitter.com/nnougayrede/status/974276865698467840>

[xxxiii] <https://twitter.com/nnougayrede/status/673195744019521537>

[xxxiv] <https://www.pdf-archive.com/2018/12/13/skillsharingdraft-nov12/skillsharingdraft-nov12.pdf>

[xxxv] <https://twitter.com/carolecadwalla/status/1071343451881521152>

[xxxvi] <https://twitter.com/carolecadwalla/status/1071703570112745473>

[xxxvii] <https://twitter.com/carolecadwalla/status/1071409975602360326>

[xxxviii] <https://twitter.com/carolecadwalla/status/1066687690203193346>

[xxxix] <https://twitter.com/NickCohen4/status/951441197989494784>

[xl] <https://twitter.com/NickCohen4/status/1001711386169397248>

[xli] <https://twitter.com/NickCohen4/status/787356358114967552>

[xlii] <https://twitter.com/jamesrbuk/status/1037621632829927424>

[xliiii] <https://twitter.com/jamesrbuk/status/1076498117908983809>

[xliv] <https://twitter.com/InitIntegrity/status/1009441100703125505>

[xlv] <https://twitter.com/InitIntegrity/status/982009101625561090>

[xlvi] https://twitter.com/anders_aslund/status/816694651583397889

[xlvii] https://twitter.com/anders_aslund/status/787396852475760640

[xlviii] https://twitter.com/anders_aslund/status/771167286166028288

[xlix] https://twitter.com/anders_aslund/status/761944206516457472

[l] <https://twitter.com/carolecadwalla/status/1071729534737752064>

[li] <https://twitter.com/carolecadwalla/status/1017829249951195137>

[lii] <https://twitter.com/carolecadwalla/status/1074357508511125505>

[liii] <https://twitter.com/carolecadwalla/status/1072606264327311363>.
<https://twitter.com/carolecadwalla/status/1018078119826280448>.
<https://twitter.com/carolecadwalla/status/1017829249951195137>

[liv] <https://twitter.com/carolecadwalla/status/1072609473074745346>

[lv] <https://twitter.com/NickCohen4/status/994185358270189568>

[lvi] <https://twitter.com/NickCohen4/status/860776646546247680>

[lvii] <https://twitter.com/NickCohen4/status/828313768660725761>

[lviii] <https://twitter.com/NickCohen4/status/1009404409690951681>

[lix] <https://twitter.com/NickCohen4/status/237091644745330688>

[lx] <https://twitter.com/NickCohen4/status/786118773661106176>

[lxi] <https://twitter.com/LeaskyHT/status/930771403028168704>

[lxii] <https://twitter.com/anneapplebaum/status/638705555637424128>

[lxiii] <https://twitter.com/edwardlucas/status/979617875869790208>

[lxiv] https://twitter.com/David_K_Clark/status/1009478640608972801

The original source of this article is [Mark Curtis](#)

Copyright © [Mark Curtis](#), [Mark Curtis](#), 2018

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Mark Curtis](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca