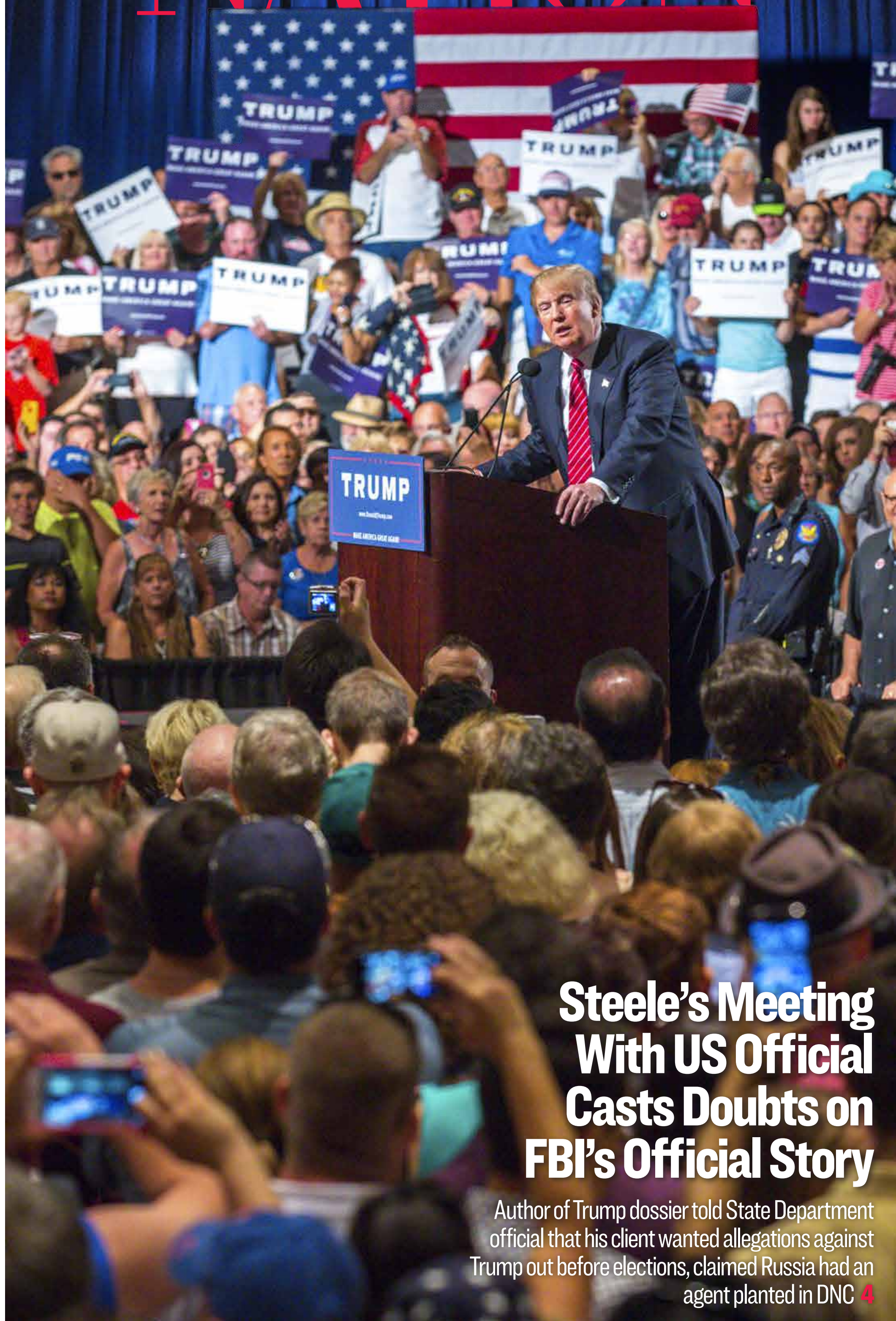


THE EPOCH TIMES

OUR NATION



Steele's Meeting With US Official Casts Doubts on FBI's Official Story

Author of Trump dossier told State Department official that his client wanted allegations against Trump out before elections, claimed Russia had an agent planted in DNC **4**

LEADER OF NXIVM SOLE DEFENDANT

as Former Members Testify Against Him

BOWEN XIAO

NEW YORK—Keith Raniere sat at the top of every pyramid scheme under the expansive umbrella organization known as NXIVM, according to the office of the U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of New York. As the ongoing trial capped off its first week, Raniere sat alone again, as the sole defendant—a fitting image for the founder and “grand master” who sat at the apex of the secret pyramid scheme.

At the federal court in Brooklyn, Raniere appeared enthusiastic and high spirited, sporting a slight smile of sorts as witnesses, all former members of NXIVM (pronounced Nex-ee-um), testified against him. Switching between gray and blue cardigans, Raniere, referred to as “Vanguard” by his devotees, scribbled notes and whispered to his defense attorneys—Paul DerOhannesian to his right and Marc Agnifillo to his left. He rarely looked at the witnesses.

Two former members described a pattern of manipulation, blackmail, humiliation, and outright deception. One spoke about being a sex slave in a secret society within NXIVM called DOS, while another spoke about the group’s financial workings and rankings. Both broke down in tears as they recounted their years in the group.

Raniere, 58, faces a maximum sentence of life in prison for seven criminal counts, including sex trafficking, forced labor conspiracy, and racketeering. The other five co-defendants in the U.S. v. Raniere et al. case have all pleaded guilty: some pleas came after prosecutors added child exploitation charges against Raniere based on evidence he had sex with a 15-year-old girl.

Prosecutors say Raniere founded “several pyramid-structured organizations” including NXIVM, which he called a “self-help organization for women.”

During testimony on May 9, Mark Vicente, a former member who served on the executive board, provided an inside look into the company’s ranking system dubbed the “strike-path.” Beginning members were given a white sash to wear around their necks before they could move up in the company by recruiting more participants and enrolling in more classes themselves. After moving up in rank to a yellow sash, members could apply to become a coach. Members could only start earning money in the next rank, called “proctor,” where they earned a 10-percent commission for every new recruit they brought in. Vicente said there were more than 60 companies under NXIVM.

“He was always fascinated by pyramid schemes,” NXIVM’s ex-publicist-turned-whistleblower, Frank Parlato, told The Epoch Times in a phone interview.

Before forming NXIVM, Raniere was a member of a multi-level marketing company called Amway before starting his own company in the 1990s. That company, Consumers Buyline, was later shut down by the New York state attorney general. Raniere was forced to pay fines and was banned from operating such a scheme again. But Parlato said Raniere skirted the terms of his agreement when he began NXIVM by not listing himself as an owner.

“Many of the members out there selling the courses were not aware that he [Raniere] was leading financially,” Parlato said. “He pretended to be a renunciate. He pretended to have no attachments to women or money, [that he] only had one ideal to elevate the consciousness of his followers and those who chose to take his exalted classes.”

Vicente said that while he was a member, he was always “in the red” financially and struggled to earn a profit, and that many others reported the same. One intensive class usually cost around \$6,000. Vicente said he had to work without pay for 16 to 18 hours per day for about a year before he could move up in the ranks. This, he testified, was regarded as moving up quite fast in the company. Each intensive class lasted about 8 days.

Parlato said most members spent the bulk of their years in the group selling and taking courses, believing they would earn big money from it one day.

“They made \$75,000 or 80,000 a year in commission, they would be spending \$40,000 taking more classes,” Parlato said. “Keith continued to profit.”

‘Earth Shattering’ Testimonies

Raniere has pleaded not guilty to all charges. His lawyers, in their opening statements, called on the jury to focus on the motivations and not the specific actions of Raniere, arguing that it was all consensual and that people needed to take more personal responsibility for their actions.

Cathleen Mann, a legal consultant who has worked in about 100 cases involving cults and runs an independent practice in Colorado, told



ELIZABETH WILLIAMS VIA AP

A sketch of Keith Raniere (2nd R), leader of the purported self-help organization NXIVM and “master” of the secret society within it, DOS, attends his trial in Brooklyn federal court in New York on May 7, 2019.

“I kind of call it the Charles Manson defense, which is where he said I never was there, I never killed anybody. ... I think it’s a very, very risky defense—it’s the only one they have.”

Cathleen Mann,
legal consultant

The Epoch Times in a phone interview that Raniere’s attorneys have only two options in their defense, since there is such an extensive trail of government evidence.

“My theory is the defense is going to argue, one, that Raniere didn’t know anything about all of these activities, that he was kept separate, and two, that cults don’t exist,” she said. “What has been testified to already is just earth-shattering; it’s so damaging that I don’t know how he can sit there and listen to all this.”

According to Vicente, high-ranking members of the group also objected to the use of the word “cult.” “They brought up the word ‘cult’ and said the word doesn’t exist. There’s no definition for it,” he said during his testimony.

Mann called that argument a “terrible” defense, but that Raniere’s lawyers don’t have much choice. She explained how a racketeering or labor conspiracy charge alone could send Raniere behind bars for 25 years.

“What else can they say? I kind of call it the Charles Manson defense, which is where he said I never was there, I never killed anybody. ... I think it’s a very, very risky defense—it’s the only one they have,” she said.

Charles Manson, the leader of the infamous Manson Family cult, originally received the death penalty, which was later commuted to life with possible parole after California invalidated the state’s death penalty statute in 1972. He died at the age of 83 in 2017.

It would be a “big mistake” if Raniere testifies, although he probably wants to, Mann said. She referenced Raniere’s “narcissistic” tendencies and said that if the prosecution is critical in their cross-examination, “he is going to have a bad reaction to that.”

She added that his lawyers will advise him not to testify because he comes off as “very arrogant” and that “no one wants to hear about how great or how high his intelligence is.”

“It’s a unique case because a lot of these charges and arguments have never been used in a cult case before,” she said. “So the way that this turns out is going to be a template for a lot of cult cases going forward. It’s being watched very, very carefully because a lot of cults do these things, but I don’t know of any that have been charged.”

Parlato told The Epoch Times previously that former “Smallville” actress Allison Mack, a top

recruiter in the secret DOS scheme, may testify against Raniere. DOS is an acronym for the Latin “dominus obsequiosus sororium,” loosely translated as “master of the slave women.”

A source told Mann that if Mack does testify, the prosecution will ask her to show her “brand” to the jury. The brand is a symbol made up of Raniere’s initials and burned onto the skin with a cauterizing pen during a process that took “20 to 30 minutes,” according to court documents.

“From what I’ve heard from a good source is that they are going to show the brand to the jury,” Mann said.

Secret Slave Society

The master-slave society known as DOS employed a pyramid structure involving levels of “slaves” headed by “masters”; slaves were then expected to recruit their own slaves, thus becoming masters themselves. Raniere was the “highest master” of DOS and made other members—all women—have sex with him.

In DOS, directly under Raniere were six so-called “first-line masters,” who were slaves only to him. Those in the first line, which would be equivalent to the second tier in a pyramid scheme, had to recruit six more women each as their own slaves. Then each of those six would then recruit their own slaves as well.

The government is charging Raniere for forced labor conspiracy, stemming from the evidence that slaves were required to work for their masters.

DOS members were allegedly recruited on the condition that they would give up personal, often embarrassing, information about themselves, including compromising images or videos, as “collateral.” Once inside, members were regularly required to provide additional collateral to ensure that they kept the group’s activities secret.

“There was no [monetary] cost in DOS, but it was still a pyramid scheme—the payment was in slavery,” Parlato said. “Raniere created the world’s first blackmail and branding pyramid scheme.”

Raniere brought a Mexican family with three girls and a boy to live in upstate New York, where NXIVM’s headquarters was located, under the guise of tutoring children.

“Instead, he had sex with all three daughters and, in order to do it, he turned family against family, sister against sister,” Assistant U.S. Attorney Tanya Hajjar said in her opening statement.

One sister is expected to testify about how Raniere locked her in a room for nearly two years with nothing but a mattress and “pen and paper,” as punishment for falling in love with another man. She was then sent back to Mexico without her documentation papers because Raniere couldn’t forgive her, despite countless apology letters.

The Epoch Times previously explored Raniere’s childhood through interviews with some of his former classmates, who revealed how his moral descent could have stemmed from a deep resentment of girls and women he developed after experiencing rejection in his youth. This apparent hatred of the opposite sex, coupled with a need to be adored, hinted at what he would later become.

SAMIRA BOUAOU/THE EPOCH TIMES



Facebook founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg testifies at a joint hearing of the Senate Judiciary and Commerce committees in Washington on April 10, 2018.

Conservatives Ponder Options to Counter SOCIAL MEDIA CENSORSHIP

PETR SVAB

After a seemingly endless stream of conservative personalities being banned from social media platforms, the right-leaning community and even many anti-censorship supporters on the left have increasingly backed the idea that the government, not the private sector, may need to step in after all.

Conservatives have been reluctant to embrace government intervention in big tech’s policing of content, even while largely disagreeing with the policing framework, which includes a heavy focus on stamping out “hate speech,” a hatchling of the ideology of political correctness bemoaned by the majority of Americans, but more vocally on the right.

But with the censorship showing no sign of abating, ideas are beginning to be formulated by representatives on how to counter it.

Publisher Designation

One of the most commonly debated ideas is stripping social media companies of their “platform” designation if they continue to enforce rules akin to editorial policy.

Interactive computer service providers are shielded from liability for content created by their users under Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act of 1996.

Some conservatives have argued that social media giants such as Facebook and Twitter have gone so far in restricting, filtering, and sorting users’ content on their platforms that they should be treated as providers of that information, and thus be liable for it.

Rep. Devin Nunes (R-Calif.) made the argument in a defamation and negligence suit against Twitter and several Twitter users, claiming damages of at least \$250 million.

“Twitter uses its platform, including proprietary algorithms, selectively to convey its corporate/institutional viewpoint, its position on issues and candidates for office,” the suit states.

Nunes elaborated in a March Fox News interview:

“When they’re regulating us ... and then they’re proliferating out things that they agree with with the algorithms that they develop, they need to come clean—they are not a ‘public

square,’ they are content developers.”

Hate Speech

The tech companies have denied political bias in their content policing, but some parts of their content rules, especially those on “hate speech,” could be described as partisan.

A 2017 Cato survey showed that Democrats were much more likely to call a variety of statements “hateful,” while Republicans were more likely to call them “offensive, but not hateful.”

Only 17 percent of conservatives considered saying that transgender people have a mental disorder as “hateful,” compared with 59 percent of liberals. Only 8 percent of conservatives characterized saying that homosexuality is a sin as “hateful,” compared with 49 percent of liberals.

A recent study by Northwestern University researchers showed that the Google News tool exacerbates the existing liberal bias in media by about 50 percent by promoting left-leaning legacy outlets such as CNN and The New York Times more often.

Moreover, by aligning themselves with the progressive ideology of political correctness, the companies have picked a minority position, since 52 percent of Americans are against the United States becoming more politically correct and are “unsettled that there are too many things people can’t say anymore” versus 36 percent who are “in favor of the United States becoming more politically correct,” according to a Nov. 28-Dec. 4 NPR/PBS/Marist poll. The responses were noticeably partisan, with 55 percent of Democrats wanting more political correctness and just 14 percent of Republicans wanting the same.

Treating heavily moderated social media as publishers may force them to ease some of the more draconian content regulation, but it would depend on where the courts draw the line between platform and publisher.

The Blumenthal v. Drudge case of 1997 established that online platforms are immune to defamation suits under Section 230 even if they give a special platform to certain

“Access to the large social media platforms—Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram—is a prerequisite to meaningful free speech in 2019.”

Will Chamberlain,
lawyer and publisher



Rep. Devin Nunes (R-Calif.) on Capitol Hill on May 17, 2018.

SAMIRA BOUAOU/THE EPOCH TIMES

users. The company would only be liable if it solicited the defaming content itself, said Eugene Volokh, a law professor and First Amendment expert at the University of California in Los Angeles, in a prior phone call.

Back then, there was no Facebook or Twitter, so it remains to be seen where the courts will draw the line now. Nunes’s suit may give judges the opportunity to address that.

Platform Access as Civil Right

Another anti-censorship idea has been getting traction recently—making online platform access a civil right. As the argument goes, private businesses like hotels, restaurants, theaters, and banks had the right to refuse service to black people until the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Thus, it has been suggested that if an online platform opens its doors to the public, it shouldn’t exclude or disadvantage people based on political beliefs either.

One of the proponents of this idea is conservative lawyer Will Chamberlain.

“Free Speech is more than the First Amendment, which only protects you from the government infringing on your rights,” he said in a May 3 article on Human Events, an online media of which he’s the publisher. “In 2019, that is woefully inadequate. Access to the large social media platforms—Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram—is a prerequisite to meaningful free speech in 2019.”

He proposes that conservatives should have legislation passed on

both state and federal levels that would prohibit large social media platforms from banning users who didn’t engage in unlawful speech.

“If a large social media company wrongfully denies you access to or removes you from their platform,” he said. “You should be able to walk into court, get an injunction against the company that forces them to restore your account, and be awarded substantial statutory damages.”

While the federal government is less likely to act on the issue, Republican-led state legislatures may be sympathetic, he argued. Even if just one state threatened lawsuits and fines on these tech companies, it may force them to change their behavior.

But there’s a problem with this approach—Section 230 specifically says that online platforms and their users shouldn’t be held liable for “any action voluntarily taken in good faith to restrict access to or availability of material that the provider or user considers to be obscene, lewd, lascivious, filthy, excessively violent, harassing, or otherwise objectionable, whether or not such material is constitutionally protected.”

Federal law trumps state law, so as long as the companies can make an argument that they sincerely believe some conservative positions to be “objectionable,” they would still be free to block them.

Amending Section 230 would currently be a long shot in the split Congress, where each party controls one chamber.

SAMIRA BOUAOU/THE EPOCH TIMES



Facebook founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg testifies at a Senate Judiciary and Commerce Committee Hearing in Washington on April 10, 2018.

STEELE’S MEETING WITH US OFFICIAL CASTS DOUBTS ON FBI’S OFFICIAL STORY

Author of Trump dossier told State Department official that his client wanted allegations against Trump out before elections, claimed Russia had an agent planted in DNC

JEFF CARLSON

News Analysis

A recently released State Department memo revealed that dossier author Christopher Steele met with Kathleen Kavalec, then-deputy assistant secretary for European and Eurasian affairs, on Oct. 11, 2016, just 10 days prior to the FBI obtaining a FISA warrant on Trump campaign adviser Carter Page on Oct. 21, 2016. Notably, Victoria Nuland is the former assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs. Nuland admitted to receiving an early version of Steele’s dossier in July 2016. As noted in a May 10, 2019, letter sent by Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) to both Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Inspector General Michael Horowitz, “Ms. Kavalec’s contacts with Steel may have been the most significant and memorialized communications with him by a U.S. government official prior to the issuance of the Carter Page FISA warrant.” Kavalec was mentioned during the Aug. 28, 2018, testimony of DOJ official Bruce Ohr, who stated that Kavalec was an “official at the State Department and she had also, I believe, spoken with Chris Steele at some point. And whatever I had from her, I gave to the Department as well, because I thought it related to the same subject matter.” Kavalec is misspelled as Cavilick in the Bruce Ohr transcript. It appears that at least one meeting between Ohr and Kavalec took place on or prior to Nov. 21, 2016, based on dates in emails from Kavalec to Ohr in which a meeting between the two was referenced. Ohr reiterated to congressional investigators that he “reported the conversation to the FBI.” On Oct. 11, 2016, Kavalec met with

Steele and Tatyana Duran, who was referenced as being with Steele’s firm Orbis Security. Information regarding Duran remains minimal at this point, and she recently took down her LinkedIn profile. The meeting was likely brokered by Jonathan Winer, a former deputy assistant secretary of state for international law enforcement and former special envoy for Libya, whom Steele had known since at least 2010. Winer was thanked by Kavalec on the following day in an email that was released as part of the State Department documents obtained by Citizens United through a FOIA request. “Thanks for bringing your friend by yesterday - it was very helpful. I’ll be interested in seeing the article you mentioned.” Winer received a separate dossier, very similar to Steele’s, from longtime Clinton confidant Sidney Blumenthal. This “second dossier,” compiled by longtime Clinton operative and former journalist Cody Shearer, echoed claims made in the Steele dossier. Winer gave Steele a copy of the “second dossier.” Steele then shared it with the FBI, which may have used it as a means to corroborate Steele’s own dossier. “J. Winer” is also listed at the top of notes from the meeting taken by Kavalec. Also included are multiple references to former Trump campaign adviser Carter Page (spelled as “Paige” in Kavalec’s typed notes); former Trump campaign manager Paul Manafort; Sergei Millian, who is often described as a source for Steele’s dossier; former Trump lawyer Michael Cohen; and Russian Alfa Bank. Interestingly, “Alfa” is spelled correctly in Kavalec’s notes unlike in the Steele dossier, which misspelled the institution as “Alpha.” It seems clear from Kalevec’s notes,

which contain redactions, that Steele gave a full rundown of the unverified information compiled in his dossier to that date. Unknown is what, if any, information was provided back to Steele by Kavalec or the State Department. Page, Manafort, Millian, and Cohen are all U.S. citizens. Steele, as a British citizen, would have no right to any information on any American citizen. In Kavalec’s typed notes, she writes that Steele told her, “The institution approached them [Steele’s firm, Orbis] based on the recommendation of Glenn Simpson and Peter Fritch (specialists in economic crime, formerly of the WSJ) and is keen to see this information come to light prior to November 8.” In his letter, Graham attributes the following statement to Steele, which has received significant media attention: “Ms. Kavalec met with Steele ten days prior to the issuance of the initial Carter Page FISA warrant and was told by Steele that he was ‘keen to see this information [the dossier] come to light prior to November 8.” It would seem likely that the “institution” Steele is referring to is the Democratic National Committee, whose claims of its servers being hacked by Russia have been widely reported. If indeed it was the DNC that wished to have the information come out prior to the 2016 presidential election, this would seem a far larger issue than personal wishes on the part of Steele. Notably, we know from an Oct. 24, 2017, response letter sent by Perkins Coie that the law firm engaged Fusion GPS “to assist in its representation of the DNC and Hillary for America” in April 2016. Fusion, in turn, hired Steele. Kavalec, in her typed notes, also refers to leaks stemming from the



The State Department in Washington on Sept. 19, 2018. SAMIRA BOUAOU/THE EPOCH TIMES

alleged hack of the DNC emails. She quotes Steele as saying, “According to their source, while there will continue to be leaks of DNC material, ‘all the best stuff’ has already been leaked and there will not be any bombshells coming.” In other words, Steele and his source claim to have direct knowledge of precisely what WikiLeaks had in their possession. Steele also told Kavalec of “a technical/human operation run out of Moscow targeting the election.” In Kavalec’s notes, she disputes some of the details asserted by Steele—indicating these were both researched, and disproven. Item 3 from Kavalec’s notes is short but also a potential bombshell. The only thing written is “The Russians have succeeded in placing an agent inside the DNC.” It doesn’t appear that the FBI has ever investigated this, nor is there any additional detail or clarity provided in Kavalec’s notes. This item, combined with Kavalec’s dispute of earlier details, presents a problem for the FBI. Either Steele is a credible witness for the FBI, or he isn’t. If the FBI took his information seriously, there should have been parallel investigations of these other, equally serious claims. If this information was quickly proven false, why did the FBI use Steele as a primary source of evidence for the Page FISA? The FBI told the FISA court that Steele’s “reporting has been corroborated and used in criminal proceedings and the FBI assesses [Steele] to be reliable.” The final item covered in Kavalec’s notes from the Oct. 11, 2016, meeting with Steele concerns Sergei Millian, who has been reported as being a source in the dossier. Kavalec specifies that “Per Steele, Millian is connected to Simon Kukus (who took

over management of Yukos when Khodorkovsky was arrested).” On Nov. 21, 2016, Kavalec would reference Millian again in a follow-up email that was sent to DOJ official Bruce Ohr: “Just re-looking at my notes from my convo with Chris Steele, I see that Chris said Kukus has some connections to Serge [misspelled] Millian,” she wrote. The mentions of Alfa Bank, Millian, and Carter Page were particularly noteworthy because of ongoing and concurrent events. Alfa Bank Allegations On Sept. 19, 2016, FBI General Counsel James Baker met with Perkins Coie partner Michael Sussmann. Baker told congressional lawmakers in an Oct. 3, 2018, testimony that Sussmann presented him with documents and electronic media. The information that Sussmann gave to Baker was related to alleged communications between Alfa Bank and a server in Trump Tower. These allegations, which were investigated by the FBI and proven false, were widely covered in the media. Baker’s testimony also shows that Sussmann was speaking with the media about Alfa Bank at the same time he had approached Baker, who noted that Sussmann told him that “The New York Times was aware of this.” Several significant articles regarding Alfa Bank would be published on Oct. 31, 2016. Carter Page Reveals Steele in Letter to FBI The more fascinating sequence of events concerns Carter Page. On Sept. 23, 2016, Michael Isikoff of Yahoo News published his infamous article “U.S. intel officials probe ties between Trump adviser and Kremlin,” concerning Page. Steele was the source for Isikoff’s

article, but nowhere in that article is Steele referenced. Two days later, on Sept. 25, Page sent a letter to FBI Director James Comey: “I am writing to request the FBI’s prompt end of the reported inquiry regarding my personal trip to Russia in July 2016—an investigation which has been widely mentioned in the media.” In the letter, Page noted that “the source of these accusations is nothing more than completely false media reports.” Page closed with an offer to meet with the FBI: “Although I have not been contacted by any member of your team in recent months, I would eagerly await their call to discuss any final questions they might possibly have in the interest of helping them put these outrageous allegations to rest.” Page had previously met with the FBI on March 2, 2016, in relation to the case of Russian spy Evgeny Buryakov. Page was assisting in the case and met with FBI and SDNY prosecutors just nine days before Buryakov pleaded guilty. Page would not meet with the FBI again until March 2017, in a series of five meetings. He has never been charged with any crime. On Oct. 28, 2016, Page sent another letter. By this time, he was under active surveillance, as the FISA warrant had been obtained on Oct. 21, 2016. Page references the Isikoff article and refers to it as being “almost entirely attributable to the ‘Hillary for America’ campaign.” A bit later in his letter, Page dropped this bomb: “I have learned from a reliable source that a law firm close to the Clinton campaign has hired a London-based private investigator to investigate my trip to Russia.” Page was aware that DNC law firm Perkins Coie had hired—through Fu-

“The Russians have succeeded in placing an agent inside the DNC.” State Department official Kathleen Kavalec, recalling in a memo what Christopher Steele told her

This is the first public reference to Steele, and with hindsight, the description is obvious. It also falls directly in line with the description provided by Page in his Oct. 28, 2016, letter. All of which raises a question: Why did Steele decide to effectively go public at this time? Corn’s article noted Steele’s existence and led to his termination as a source for the FBI in the first days of November 2016. On Oct. 28, 2016, then-FBI Director Comey sent a letter to Congress whereby he informed members that he was reopening the Clinton investigation in response to the discovery of emails contained in Anthony Weiner’s laptop. This event has been repeatedly noted as the cause for Steele’s sudden outreach to Corn, including in The New Yorker: “Steele was therefore shocked when, on October 28, 2016, Comey sent a letter to congressional leaders: the F.B.I. had come across new e-mails bearing on its previously closed investigation into Hillary Clinton’s use of a private server as Secretary of State.

“At Fusion’s urging, Steele decided to speak, on background, to the press. Identified only as a ‘former Western intelligence officer,’ he told David Corn, of Mother Jones, that he had provided information to the F.B.I. as part of a ‘pretty substantial inquiry’ into Trump’s ties to Russia. He noted, ‘This is something of huge significance, way above party politics.’” Glenn Simpson gave this same story in his Nov. 14, 2017, testimony to the House Intelligence Committee: “I felt like the rules had just been thrown out and that Comey had violated the sort of one of the more sacrosanct policies, which is not announcing law enforcement activity in the closing days of an election. And so, we began talking to the press—again about—we decided that if James Comey wasn’t going to tell people about this investigation that, you know, he had violated the rules, and we would only be fair if the world knew that both candidates were under FBI investigation.” The FBI almost certainly knew before the Corn article that Steele had been speaking with the media. The Hill’s John Solomon reported on the discovery of a chain of emails that reportedly detailed exactly that: “The exchanges also indicate FBI officials were aware that Steele, the former M16 British intelligence operative then working as a confidential human source for the bureau, had contacts with news media reporters before the FISA warrant was secured.” Additionally, we know that Kavalec was aware of this fact after just one meeting with Steele on Oct. 11, 2016; her notes mention “Wash Po/ NYT” under a section listed as “Managing.” And we also know that her typed notes were passed on to “other government officials” on Oct. 19, 2016—two days prior to the issuance of the Page FISA warrant. It seems more likely that Page’s Oct. 28 letter is what forced Steele to effectively out himself, which could indicate that the directive to do so came from the FBI. Notably, Steele has stated in UK court documents that he was instructed to speak with Corn by Fusion GPS. This theory was first explored—to my knowledge—by an internet researcher who publishes under the anonymous account “Mon-sieur America” on Jan. 25, 2019. On Jan. 10, 2017, BuzzFeed News published the Steele dossier, which created some problems, as the document could now be readily examined for inaccuracies. The dossier referenced several sources, referring to them as “Source A,” “Source B,” and so on. During Bruce Ohr’s testimony, he revealed that Glenn Simpson had called him on Jan. 20, 2017—Trump’s inauguration day—conveying concern that one of Steele’s sources was about to be exposed. The likelihood that Simpson should have this knowledge was highlighted by Rep. Mark Meadows (R-N.C.) during Ohr’s testimony: “[H]ow would Glenn Simpson know that and the intel community and the Department of Justice and FBI not know that? I mean, what made Glenn Simpson so uniquely qualified to call you on Inauguration Day about a concern about a source being outed?” Ohr said that he didn’t know Simpson’s sources, prompting a reply from Meadows: “So you mean he must have talked to media. Did he share with you that he had talked to the media, that he was concerned about that?” Four days later, on Jan. 24, 2017, The Wall Street Journal reported that Millian, a Belarusian-American businessman and onetime Russian government translator, was both “Source D” and “Source E” in the dossier. But there is a problem with the Journal’s reporting. The dossier appears to conflict with the newspaper’s article in at least one material aspect. According to the dossier, Source E was used as confirmation for Source D—meaning they can’t be the same person. Notably, since Steele relied on second- and third-hand sources, Millian wouldn’t have been a direct source to Steele, but instead would have given his information to an intermediary, who then relayed to Steele what Millian had reportedly said. Millian has denied being a source for the dossier and has stated that “they were protecting their real source and framing others.” This would seem to make more sense. If Millian was the true source—the original source—why would those involved want to expose Millian, as he would, in turn, know the identity of the person who spoke with Steele? Intentional misdirection away from the true source appears a likelier answer.

Prague Reference There has been some discussion of a Cohen-Prague notation contained in the second to last page of Kavalec’s notes. The reference appeared noteworthy given that Steele’s meeting with Kavalec took place on Oct. 11 and prior to an Oct. 19 Steele memo that stated Steele’s source did not know the location of Cohen’s alleged meeting. However, a close examination of that page reveals a few timing hints, including a reference to a “Reuter’s story today.” The note reads in part: “703 of 2044 are LLC Zip code - 1200 R-born residents” On March 17, 2017, Reuters published an article titled, “Russian elite invested nearly \$100 million in Trump buildings.” Two quotes from the article: “The analysis found that at least 703 - or about one-third - of the owners of the 2044 units in the seven Trump buildings are limited liability companies, or LLCs.” “The Zip code that includes the Sunny Isles Buildings has an estimated 1,200 Russian-born residents, among the most in the country, U.S. Census data show.” It appears that the final two pages contained in the notes are from March 17, 2017, unlike the earlier pages that stem from the Oct. 11, 2016 meeting.

New Tariffs Show Trump’s Determination to Squeeze China Over Trade

WASHINGTON—Confidence about the U.S. economy has emboldened President Donald Trump to take a tougher stance on China, raising tariffs on May 10 to span \$200 billion worth of Chinese imports. Trump in a May 13 series of tweets warned, “China will be hurt very badly if you don’t make a deal.” Tensions escalated between the United States and China the week of May 6 as Beijing backedtracked on delivering key structural reforms and Trump raised tariffs on Chinese imports. A two-day meeting on May 9 and 10 between the U.S. and Chinese delegates in Washington yielded no trade agreement amid the rising dispute. The Chinese Finance Ministry announced on May 13 that Beijing would raise tariffs on \$60 billion in U.S. goods in retaliation for Trump’s decision to raise duties on \$200 billion in Chinese products to 25 percent on 10 percent. In a series of tweets, Trump accused China of backing out from “a great” and “almost completed” deal. “I say openly to President Xi & all of my many friends in China that China will be hurt very badly if you don’t make a deal because companies will be forced to leave China for other countries,” he wrote. In a separate tweet on May 11, Trump said

China had tried delaying tactics “to see if they could get lucky & have a Democrat win” in the 2020 U.S. presidential election. “The only problem is that they know I am going to win,” Trump wrote, citing the strong economy and jobs numbers. According to analysts, Trump is emboldened by the strength of the U.S. economy and the stock market, as well as his enhanced reelection odds. He also is confident the U.S. economy can endure all retaliatory measures from China. Despite renewed tensions, Trump said the negotiations with Beijing would continue. However, he warned the new tariffs “may or may not be removed depending on what happens with respect to future negotiations!” Trump also told reporters that Washington was preparing to impose 25 percent tariffs on the remaining \$325 billion in Chinese goods, which would cover 60 percent of consumer goods imports from China, according to Citi. Trump uses the threat of tariffs as part of a negotiation tactic to crank up the pressure on China, according to analysts. And in a full-blown trade war, China has more to lose economically, they say.

Impact on China’s Economy

The United States began imposing tariffs on Chinese imports in July 2018. Together with the previous two rounds of tariffs, the 25 percent levy on a total of \$250 billion worth of Chinese goods “is estimated to reduce China’s exports by 5.6 percent, GDP growth by 1 percentage point, and employment by 4.4 million,” according to Citi. In addition, businesses in China caught in the crossfire are planning to relocate their operations to avoid tariffs. A prolonged U.S.-China trade war will force more companies to shift their supply chain activities out of China, according to experts. New tariffs also revealed the vulnerability of China’s stock market. The Shanghai Stock Exchange Composite Index fell nearly 6 percent since tensions broke out. To prevent a dramatic slide, state-backed funds bought stocks to help the index rebound more than 3 percent on May 10. U.S. consumers also will suffer to some extent from the trade dispute, according to analysts. “The effect from tariffs on Chinese imports has been modest so far as tariffs focused on a smaller share of consumer goods and on goods that are easy to substitute,” Citi analysts wrote in a report. The new tariffs on Chinese imports will add an additional 0.03 percentage point on U.S. core



Workers at a swimwear factory in Jinjiang, Fujian Province, China, on Aug. 2, 2018.

inflation while a 25 percent tariff on the remaining \$325 billion can add nearly 0.24 percentage point to the core inflation over a year, according to Citi’s estimates. Trump is aware of the burden on farmers who are a critical voter group in the 2020 race. Soybean farming states such as Iowa have been among those most heavily hit by the tariff war. U.S. stocks also tumbled after China announced retaliation on May 13. Both the S&P 500 and the Dow Jones Industrial Average fell nearly 2.5 percent in early trading. Escalating tensions since May 6 sent both indices down more than 4 percent. A hardened stance toward Beijing, however, draws strong bipartisan support in Washington, which gives Trump leeway in the trade fight despite stock market turbulence. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.), one of the most prominent critics of the administration in the Senate, urged Trump to “hang tough on China.” “Strength is the only way to win with China,” he wrote on Twitter on May 5. Investor Reactions Investors believe the United States and China ultimately will reach a deal. However, the markets’ reaction is a sign that they are still concerned with the ramifications of a potential trade war. Prior to last week’s events, the U.S. stock market had priced in a resolution of the trade dispute between Washington and Beijing, said Robert Johnson, chairman and CEO of Economic Index Associates and finance professor at Creighton University. “With tariffs actually being put in place on

Friday, we will likely see a very strong negative reaction in the U.S. equity markets if progress is not made on the trade dispute in the coming weeks,” he said. “I say openly to President Xi & all of my many friends in China that China will be hurt very badly if you don’t make a deal because companies will be forced to leave China for other countries.” President Donald Trump According to David Dietze, president and chief investment strategist of Point View Wealth Management, the trade war is “more important to China than the United States.” “The issues and remedies are so complicated, don’t expect this news story to get resolved any time soon,” he said, adding that he was still bullish for the longer term. “The trade talks were just one part of the bullish story. Earnings this year will be greater than last year. Interest rates are far lower than last year and seem tethered,” he said. “The American economy is much bigger than trade with China.”

President Trump’s Lawyer Giuliani Cancels Ukraine Trip

IVAN PENTCHOUKOV

President Donald Trump’s attorney Rudy Giuliani canceled a trip to Ukraine on May 11, saying he changed his mind after learning that his planned meetings were set up by a group of Ukrainians who are “enemies” of Trump.

Giuliani originally planned to travel to Ukraine to push the nation’s leaders to carry out two investigations: one into presidential candidate Joe Biden and his son, Hunter Biden, and another into the origins of the Trump–Russia probe.

As vice president, Joe Biden boasted that he forced Ukraine to sack its top prosecutor. At the time of his firing, the prosecutor was reportedly investigating alleged corruption by a company at which Hunter Biden was a board member.

“I’m not going to go because I think I’m walking into a group of people that are enemies of the president, in some cases, enemies of the United States, and in one case, an already convicted person who has been found to be involved in assisting the Democrats with the 2016 election,” Giuliani said.

“I think this was a setup,” he added later.



Former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani arrives in Franklin Township, Ind., on Nov. 3, 2018.

AARON P. BERNSTEIN/GETTY IMAGES

Giuliani identified the “convicted person” as a “gentleman by the name of Leshchenko,” a reference to Serhiy Leshchenko, a member of the Ukrainian Parliament. In response to Giuliani’s comments, Leshchenko clarified that he was never convicted of a crime.

A Ukrainian court ruled in December last year that the release of a “black ledger” by Leshchenko and another Ukrainian official amounted to interference in the 2016 presidential election in the United States. The ledger detailed financial transactions by then-Trump-campaign Chairman Paul Manafort. Manafort resigned from the campaign when the ledger surfaced.

Before Giuliani canceled his trip, Democrats attacked Giuliani’s plan, saying it amounted to

an attempt to solicit foreign help to influence the 2020 election. Giuliani dismissed the criticism in an interview with Fox News on May 11.

“The reality is this has nothing to do with the election of 2020. The election of 2020 is a long time from now. And if I wanted to meddle in that election—which I don’t—I could have held this for a year and dropped it right before the convention,” Giuliani said.

“The reality is I came about this by accident investigating Ukrainian collusion with Democrats to affect the election and also to create a false narrative against the president,” he added.

Speaking about the “Ukrainian collusion with Democrats” Giuliani specifically pointed to an alleged January 2016 meeting at the White House during which, Obama administration officials reportedly asked Ukrainian officials to revisit an investigation into payments to American citizens from Ukraine’s Russia-backed Party of Regions. The FBI’s investigation of the payments previously led to Manafort, but the bureau dropped the investigation in 2014 without charging him.

Giuliani added that he canceled the trip to avoid adding the perception of politicizing the matter.

“I will get out of it. In order to remove any political suggestion, I will step back and watch it unfold,” Giuliani said.

Giuliani first revealed his plans to The New York Times on May 9. At the time, he defended the decision as legal and proper.

“We’re not meddling in an election, we’re meddling in an investigation, which we have a right to do,” he told the newspaper.

“There’s nothing illegal about it,” he added.

“Somebody could say it’s improper. And this isn’t foreign policy—I’m asking them to do an investigation that they’re doing already and that other people are telling them to stop. And I’m going to give them reasons why they shouldn’t stop it because that information will be very, very helpful to my client, and may turn out to be helpful to my government.”

Senate Subpoena of Donald Trump Jr. ‘Harassment of Our Family,’ Lara Trump Says

Lara Trump, the wife of Eric Trump, labeled the Senate Intelligence Committee’s issue of a subpoena for the president’s eldest son, Donald Trump Jr., as “harassment of our family.”

The president’s daughter-in-law, who is also a 2020 campaign adviser, told Fox News’ “Tucker Carlson Tonight” that “this is over,” in reference to the findings of special counsel Robert Mueller’s report.

“We know [collusion] did not happen,” she said on May 9. “Whatever they think they’re going to do is not going to change that. It’s not going to make Hillary Clinton the president of the United States, like I know they all wanted so badly for so long.”

“[Donald Trump Jr.] has already spent dozens of hours testifying in front of congressional committees. Endless investigations—by either party—won’t change the fact that there was NO collusion. It’s time to move on. It’s time to focus on ISSUES, not investigations.

Kevin McCarthy, House minority leader, in a tweet

The Republican-led Senate Intelligence Committee is investigating Russian interference in the 2016 election. In February, the committee revealed there was no evidence of collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia.

Lara Trump said she was “shocked and appalled” that committee Chairman Richard Burr (R-N.C.) issued the subpoena. Burr is now facing pressure from Republicans to cancel his subpoena against the president’s son. She noted that Trump Jr. had already testified for hours last year before the same panel.

“This is harassment of our family, harassment of the president,” she said.

President Trump, in reaction to the subpoena during a press conference on May 9—the day after it was issued—said he “very surprised.” He noted that Burr had changed his tone.

“I saw Burr saying there was no collusion two or three weeks ago,” he said. “I was very surprised to see my son—my son is a good person, he works hard. The last thing he needs is



SAUL LOEB/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Lara Trump during a campaign rally hosted by President Donald Trump in Houston on Oct. 22, 2018.

Washington, D.C. He’d rather not be involved.” The president said his son is a “good person” and brought up the “hours and hours” of testimony that he previously provided.

“My son was totally exonerated by Mueller, who doesn’t like Trump—me. And for my son, after being exonerated to now get a subpoena to speak again after telling everyone about a nothing meeting, I’m pretty surprised.”

Asked if he would block his son from complying with the subpoena, Trump added, “We’ll see what happens.”

Republicans Respond

House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) said it’s time for lawmakers to move past the Russia investigations.

“[Donald Trump Jr.] has already spent dozens of hours testifying in front of congressional committees. Endless investigations—by either party—won’t change the fact that there was NO collusion. It’s time to move on. It’s time to focus on ISSUES, not investigations,” he wrote on Twitter.

A source close to the president’s son said he testified before the Senate Intelligence Committee for at least eight hours and in front of congressional committees for a total of 27 hours. When Trump Jr. testified before the

panel in 2017, it was agreed that he would only have to appear once, as long as he stayed as long as necessary, which he did, the person said.

“Don continues to cooperate by producing documents and is willing to answer written questions, but no lawyer would ever agree to have their client participate in what is an obvious PR stunt from a so-called ‘Republican’ senator to cowardly to stand up to his boss Mark Warner and the rest of the resistance Democrats on the committee,” the source told Guardian reporter Ben Jacobs.

In March, Mueller finished his investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election and concluded that there wasn’t evidence to establish that any American knowingly colluded with Russia. Two separate investigations, one by the House Intelligence Committee and another jointly by the House Oversight and Judiciary committees, also concluded there was no evidence of collusion.

News of the subpoena surfaced a day after Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) said that the “case is closed” about the Mueller probe.

“Apparently, the Republican chair of the Senate Intel Committee didn’t get the memo from the Majority Leader that this case was closed,” Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) wrote on Twitter.

Key Meeting at Origin of Russia Probe Wasn’t Set-Up, Australian Ex-Diplomat Says

PETR SVAB

Former Australian ambassador to the UK Alexander Downer has denied that the purpose of his 2016 meeting with George Papadopoulos, then-adviser to the presidential campaign of Donald Trump, was to entice the aide to talk about Russian meddling in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

“I didn’t go to the meeting thinking he was going to even mention Russia in that context like the election campaign,” Downer told Sky News Australia in recent interview. “I had no idea what he would say.”

Papadopoulos has alleged that the Downer meeting was a set-up.

“The notion that Downer randomly reached out to me just to have a gin and tonic is laughable,” Papadopoulos said in a Sept. 10, 2018, tweet. “Some organization or entity sent him to meet me.”

In his book, “Deep State Target: How I Got Caught in the Crosshairs of the Plot to Bring Down President Trump,” Papadopoulos argues that Trump’s opponents tied to the U.S., Australian, and UK intelligence community orchestrated for Papadopoulos to receive a rumor of Kremlin’s having “dirt” on then-candidate Hillary Clinton, and then dispatched operatives, including Downer, to extract the rumor from him and use it as evidence of supposed conspiracy between Trump and Russia.

Downer denied that the FBI or any intelligence service asked him to meet with Papadopoulos.

“Somebody who is a former foreign minister and Australian high commissioner, or ambassador, in London is hardly going to be somebody who’s used by intelligence services to collect information,” Downer said, with a chuckle. “That would never happen. That simply isn’t how those kind of operations work.”

Downer’s assertion seems to gloss over the known hand-in-glove relationship between diplomacy and intelligence. A secret cable sent out by Clinton’s State Department in 2009, for instance, tasked diplomats to collect a plethora of information from their interactions with United Nations officials. The cable, published in 2010 by Wikileaks, indicates that intelligence collection by the diplomatic corps was already common practice at the time and, if anything, expanding.

Downer, later in the interview, even called himself “somebody who is part of the Five Eyes intelligence community.” Five Eyes is the agreement on sharing signals intelligence between the United States, the UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The alliance has been criticized for opening a way for the countries’ foreign intelligence agencies to spy on their own citizens by outsourcing the task to each other and then sharing the results.

Downer also is connected to the intelligence community through the private sector.

Between 2008 and 2014, he sat on the advisory board of London-based Hakluyt, a security firm founded and staffed by former UK intelligence officials.

While Downer had to leave the firm before joining the Australian diplomatic corps, he continued to attend the firm’s functions, including client conferences, News Corp Australia Network reported in January 2016.

Origins Story

The Downer-Papadopoulos meeting is allegedly the crucial moment that prompted the FBI to begin a counter-intelligence investigation of people in the Trump campaign, which only ended in March. As concluded by special counsel Robert Mueller, who took over the probe in 2017, investigators didn’t establish that any collusion between Trump and Russia occurred.

Papadopoulos “opened up” to Downer in May 2016 “during a night of heavy drinking” at Kensington Wine Rooms in London. The New York Times reported in December 2017, based on information leaked by “four current and former American and foreign officials.”

In his final report, Mueller said that “on May 6, 2016, Papadopoulos “suggested to a representative of a

“The notion that Downer randomly reached out to me just to have a gin and tonic is laughable.

George Papadopoulos former foreign policy adviser to President Donald Trump’s election campaign



ANDREW CABALLERO-REYNOLDS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

George Papadopoulos, foreign policy adviser to President Donald Trump’s election campaign, arrives for his sentencing at the U.S. District Court in Washington on Sept. 7, 2018.

foreign government that the Trump Campaign had received indications from the Russian government that it could assist the Campaign through the anonymous release of information that would be damaging to candidate Clinton.”

The foreign government, presumably Australia, “conveyed this information to the U.S. government on July 26, 2016,” the report stated, four days after Wikileaks started to release emails allegedly hacked by Russians from the server of the Democratic National Committee (DNC).

Alarmed by Papadopoulos’ supposed foreknowledge of the Wikileaks release, the FBI launched the probe.

But there are a number of problems with this portrayal of the events.

Downer said, confirming the two of them and Downer’s counselor, Erika Thompson, had a gin and tonic.

Different Date

Another issue is that both the Australian government and Papadopoulos said the meeting took place on May 10, not May 6. He has said this on many occasions long before the Mueller report came out, and told The Epoch Times via Twitter that his lawyers will look up the relevant records.

The difference is important because, on May 9, former Judge Andrew Napolitano aired a rumor on Fox News that “there’s a debate going on in the Kremlin ... about whether they should release the 20,000 of Mrs. Clinton’s emails that they have hacked into.”

For all Downer knew, Papadopoulos could have just mentioned what he heard on the news.

Papadopoulos said Thompson reached out to him on May 6 to arrange the Downer meeting, but he denied mentioning to her anything about information “damaging” to Clinton and there hasn’t been any public information suggesting otherwise. Moreover, he said he didn’t meet Thompson that day. The meeting was arranged through messages, he said. Thompson would, therefore, have had a record of the communication. The Mueller report doesn’t refer to any such record.

In fact, the rumor about Russians hacking Clinton has been online at least since May 6, 2016, when it was posted on the blog WhatDoesItMean.com, which is not considered a reliable source of original reporting. The article was already up around 1:30 p.m. London time so, theoretically, Papadopoulos could have stumbled upon it before meeting Downer even if the meeting took place on May 6.

Yet, Papadopoulos actually had heard the rumor from a different source and there lies another problem.

Joseph Mifsud

In early March 2016, right after landing his job with the Trump campaign, Papadopoulos was urged by his employer at the time, the London Centre of International Law Practice (LCILP), to attend a conference at the Link Campus University in Rome. There, on March 14, he met Maltese academic Joseph Mifsud, whose job was to attract foreign students for the university and who was also listed on the LCILP website as a board adviser.

Mifsud invited Papadopoulos to London under the pretext that he could help him arrange an official meeting between Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin. Papadopoulos thought such a meeting would be a boon to Trump’s campaign promise to improve relations with Russia.

But it was a sham. Mifsud had mingled with Russian academia as part of his job and had some government contacts in the country, but he was apparently in no position to broker

a Putin audience. The girl he introduced to Papadopoulos as a relative of Putin was actually just a student at the Link Campus who, prior to that, worked for a liquor wholesaler in St. Petersburg, according to Russian journalist Alexander Kalinin, who researched her background.

During their second meeting in London on April 26, 2016, Mifsud, who had just returned from a trip to Russia, said to Papadopoulos, “I have information that the Russians have thousands of Clinton emails,” Papadopoulos later told CNN.

Yet Mifsud told the FBI that was a misunderstanding.

The Mueller report states that when the FBI questioned Mifsud on Feb. 10, 2017, he “denied that he had advance knowledge that Russia was in possession of emails damaging to candidate Clinton, stating that he and Papadopoulos had discussed cybersecurity and hacking as a larger issue and that Papadopoulos must have misunderstood their conversation.”

The report portrays Mifsud as a Russian cut-out, but ignores his extensive ties to high-level Western politicians and government officials, including many tied to national security and intelligence.

Rep. Devin Nunes (R-Calif.) questioned this apparent omission in a May 3 letter to the heads of the FBI, CIA, NSA, and the State Department. “If Mifsud has extensive, suspicious contacts among Russian officials as portrayed in the Special Counsel’s report, then an incredibly wide range of Western institutions and individuals may have been compromised by him, including our own State Department,” Nunes said.

If, on the other hand, Mifsud wasn’t a counterintelligence threat, Nunes said, “then that would cast doubt on the Special Counsel’s fundamental depiction of him and his activities, and raise questions about the veracity of the Special Counsel’s statements and affirmations.”

The Mueller report says that Mifsud “falsely stated” that he hadn’t seen Papadopoulos since March 24, 2016.

Yet there’s no sign the FBI tried to reinterview Mifsud or charge him with lying. The report says that the agents couldn’t question Mifsud effectively because Papadopoulos lied to them.

Papadopoulos indeed lied about his contacts with Mifsud in a January 2017 FBI interview. But after he was arrested on July 27, 2017, he has extensively cooperated with the Mueller probe.

Mifsud was, at the time, still publicly approachable. The Italian newspaper La Repubblica managed to interview him as late as October 2017, when he attended a conference on cyber threat intelligence held at the Link Campus.

After that, he disappeared from the public eye, but was still living in Rome until May 2018 in an apartment apparently provided by Link Campus, according to an April 18 report by Italian list Il Foglio.

It’s not clear where he’s been since.



SCREENSHOT VIA GOOGLE STREET VIEW

The Kensington Wine Rooms bar in London where on May 10, 2016, Trump campaign adviser George Papadopoulos met with Australian High Commissioner Alexander Downer.

Issues

First, Downer described the meeting to the media multiple times and never mentioned any “indications” of Russians offering assistance to Trump.

He said that “there was no suggestion that there was collusion” between Trump or his campaign with Kremlin, neither in what Papadopoulos said, nor in what he reported to Canberra. “All we did was report what Papadopoulos said and that was that he thought the Russians may release information—might release information—that could be damaging to Hillary Clinton’s campaign at some stage before the election.”

Papadopoulos said he doesn’t remember ever saying that to Downer. He was sentenced to two weeks in prison for lying to the FBI, but this was not one of the lies the bureau held against him. Media blamed his lack of recollection on excessive drinking that night, but both Papadopoulos and Downer denied getting drunk.

“It was only for an hour, and it was at six o’clock in the evening, so it was certainly not as the New York Times claimed, an alcohol-fueled evening,”

Obama White House Knew About Clinton Emails Years Earlier Than Previously Admitted



Ultimately, it became known that Clinton had generated more than 50,000 non-secure emails to and from other U.S. government officials and private individuals.



W

MARK TAPSCOTT

ASHINGTON—Top officials working in the White House under former President Barack Obama knew Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was using a private email system for official government business three years before it became public, according to documents obtained by Judicial Watch.

“WH [White House] called—have we received a FOIA request from CREW on the topic of personal use of email by senior officials?”

“Apparently other agencies have. If we have it, can you give me the details so I can call the WH back? I think they’d like it on quick turn-around. Thanks! Sheryl,” read a Dec. 20, 2012 email from Sheryl L. Walter, then-director of the Department of State’s Office of Information Programs and Services. Her email was addressed to several of her subordinates.

She was referring to a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request her office received from Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW), which, like Judicial Watch, is a Washington-based non-profit that advocates for transparency in government.

In the same email thread, Walters forwarded the CREW request to Heather Samuelson, who was then Clinton’s liaison to the Obama White House.

“Hi Heather—Copy attached, it was in our significant weekly FOIA report that we send to L and S/ES also. Do you want us to add you to that list? It’s a subset of things like this that we think likely to be of broader department interest. More detail below re this request.

“As a practical matter given our workload, it won’t be processed for some months. Let me know if there are any particular sensitivities. If we don’t talk later, happy holidays! All the best, Sheryl,” Walter told Samuelson.

The email was among 44 pages of documents in the latest batch that Judicial Watch has obtained in discovery ordered by U.S. District Court Judge Royce C. Lamberth.

There are multiple references within the documents that indicate White House knowledge of Clinton’s non-secure email use, according to Judicial Watch.

In a Jan. 10, 2013, email, for example, Walter asked Samuelson if she had determined whether other agencies received the CREW request.

Samuelson responded that “White House Counsel was looking into this for me. I will circle back with them now to see if they have further guidance.”

Walter’s office told CREW on May 10, 2013, that “no records responsive to your request were located.”

Ultimately, it became known that Clinton

Learn to Spot Trojan Horse Censorship

JOSHUA PHILIPP

The most deceptive form of censorship is the type that wraps itself in a veil of good intentions.

This has long been a favorite tool of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and is now being used in the censorship of video games.

China’s Tencent Holdings Ltd. released a new game, “Game for Peace,” on Chinese platform Weibo on May 8. The same day, the CCP removed the popular “Player Unknown Battlegrounds” game from the same app store, which “Game for Peace” closely resembles.

While Tencent partly owns the popular battle royale game “Player Unknown Battlegrounds”—as well as “Fortnite,” another popular game in the genre—the game is still mainly held by PUBG Corp., which is a subsidiary of South Korean video game company

Bluehole. So, in other words, after a Chinese company partnered with a South Korean company to release its game in China, the CCP just happened to block that game on the same day the Chinese company released its clone.

What’s even more interesting than the use of state regulation for business warfare, however, is how the CCP packaged this move as an act of moral censorship.

The Chinese regime’s State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film, and Television claimed back in 2017 that the “battle royale” genre “seriously deviated from the core values of socialism in China.”

CCP regulators started a new program for game licenses last month, which forbids content deemed harmful to youth, including images of blood, gambling, dead bodies, and marriage between minors. Most decent people probably could agree with this.

But wrapped up in these new censorship requirements are two curious bans: games that show religious elements, and games that reference China before the CCP.

This is a method of censorship that blends moral forms of censorship—such as opposing violence—with other forms of censorship to defend the ruling regime’s persecution of religion and to cover up its destruction of China’s traditional heritage.

The CCP is an oppressive regime that brutally persecutes Christians, Falun Gong practitioners, Tibetan Buddhists, and Uyghur Muslims. Its abuses include the destruction of churches and temples, torture, concentration camps, and live organ harvesting for profit. Through several political campaigns, including the Cultural Revolution, the CCP has also done all in its power to destroy China’s traditional values and national heritage.

This plays on a classic tool of socialist disinformation: package a lie with a grain of truth.

The method of censorship used for video games employs an interesting tactic. It sandwiches policies that continue the regime’s oppression of the Chinese people between censorship rules that many people would agree with. Using this tactic, if a person were to question these censorship policies, CCP defenders could easily reply, “Oh, so you want youth to see dead bodies? You want youth to see blood, and marriage between minors?”

Yet those parts of the policies aren’t the problem. It’s the parts that require censorship of China’s traditional heritage and that back the regime’s abuses.

This type of Trojan horse censorship isn’t limited to the CCP, either. It’s being used in the West as a less-defined form of political censorship. We saw this recently when Instagram and Facebook banned figures, including Alex Jones, Milo Yiannopoulos, Paul Joseph Watson, and others, for spreading alleged misinformation and extremism.

Legacy news outlets, including The Atlantic, backed this censorship move, labeling these individuals as “far-right extremists.” Oddly, they even labeled Louis Farrakhan as a far-right extremist, despite that Farrakhan is the head of the Nation of Islam and a longtime icon of the left.

Just like the Chinese regime with its “China Model” for censorship, these groups often begin censorship campaigns by publicly going after targets that many people would agree with. After the policy is in place, it can then be used discreetly, and anyone who questions the policy can be accused of agreeing with the public figures or issues that were initially targeted.

Yet, as is always the case with socialist censorship, the issue isn’t the individual, but rather the political agenda behind the censorship.

This plays on a classic tool of socialist disinformation: package a lie with a grain of truth. If anyone questions the lie, point to the grain of truth, resort to personal attacks, and use it to shut down the conversation—thereby protecting the lie and true motive from exposure.

The Propaganda Tactics Being Used Against Barr

JOSHUA PHILIPP

An illusion is currently being propped up, by politicians and the media, in the case against Attorney General William Barr. If you’ve only been following the legacy news outlets, you likely see Barr as a villain, compromised by President Donald Trump and attempting to withhold evidence of collusion in special counsel Robert Mueller’s report.

Yet, if you’ve been reading the information yourself, you’ve likely seen that Barr declassified the Mueller report and withheld only the parts related to grand jury investigations—information he cannot make public without breaking the law. Now, Democrats in Congress are holding Barr in contempt for not breaking the law, and all the talking heads are repeating the same slogan of “treason, obstruction, collusion!”

The propaganda tactic the Democrats and legacy news outlets are using comes straight from the propaganda playbook of Adolf Hitler, who wrote in “Mein Kampf”: “The most brilliant propagandist technique will yield no success unless one fundamental principle is borne in mind constantly and with unflinching attention. It must confine itself to a few points and repeat them over and over.”

Strategic Slogans

The effect of these repeated slogans is that Barr is discredited in the minds of those who follow these political figures, news outlets, and talking heads—which ironically were just exposed by Barr and the Mueller report for lying to these same people for close to two years about the now disproven Trump–Russia scandal.

Again, the Democrats are using a tactic from Hitler. “Mein Kampf” states that when there is a change around the points being repeated in the propaganda campaign, “it must not alter the content of what the propaganda is driving at, but in the end must always say the same thing.”

“For instance, a slogan must be presented from different angles, but the end of all remarks must always and immutably be the slogan itself,” he wrote.

This is exactly the tactic they’re using. Democrats and the legacy news outlets have repeated that Trump colluded with Russia and that Trump attempted to obstruct the special counsel investigation. When the Mueller report concluded that Trump neither colluded with Russia nor obstructed the investigation, these same figures continued pushing the same false narratives—and did so by expanding the narratives to include Barr when he exposed their falsehoods.

In other words, they continued using the same slogan (“treason, obstruction, collusion!”), regardless of evidence. Staying true to Hitler’s playbook, the Democrats and legacy news outlets merely presented the slogans from different angles by using them to discredit Barr.

Meanwhile, by discrediting Barr, they’ve also discredited his conclusions on the Mueller report in the minds of their followers—thereby protecting themselves from the fallout to their lies.

Their tactic of discrediting Barr in the public conscious-

ness will also act as an ideological smokescreen going forward. If Barr brings charges against possible crimes committed to create the fake Trump–Russia scandal—or the “Spygate” scandal, in which the Obama administration used the manufactured rumors to spy on the Trump team—the propaganda tactic now being used against Barr will make it appear he’s doing so with partisan intent.

The Art of Deception

The purpose of psychological warfare is to alter the way a person interprets information. To accomplish this, the information doesn’t necessarily need to be altered—just the conclusion that people arrive at.

This is mainly accomplished through the subversion of a target’s “cycle of meaning.” The symbology theory on how people interpret reality, and how groups can manipulate it, is explained in depth in the book “Blood Sacrifices: Violent Non-State Actors and Dark Magico-Religious Activities” by the Terrorism Research Center.

It states, “We, as a species, do not perceive objective reality but, rather, a series of limited, mediated, and interlinked symbolics schemas that we, as individuals, assume to be ‘reality.’”

According to the cycle of meaning, when a person sees an image, the image invokes meaning according to what the person has learned about the image, or the image invokes emotions according to the person’s past experiences. The theory holds that the collective of these experiences constitutes

a person’s worldview.

Propagandists look to manipulate this process, using conditioning tactics similar to Ivan Pavlov’s experiments on dogs, in which dogs were conditioned to salivate at the sound of a bell. By associating food with the sound of a bell, the scientist conditioned the dogs to associate the excitement of eating with the sound of a bell. From the standpoint of propaganda, this subverted the dogs’ cycle of meaning to associate that feeling with the symbol of a bell.

This is also how agitation propaganda works. The propagandist intentionally agitates the emotions of a target, then tells the target to associate the emotion with a political issue. The political issue then becomes a symbol that triggers the intended emotional response.

Using this same tactic, Democrats and legacy news outlets have taught their followers to interpret Barr as a symbol of the same emotions they agitated when framing the false Trump–Russia scandal. Rather than admit their lie, they perpetuated it by expanding the slogans they used in this campaign to include Barr.

Thus, through these methods, the propagandists have turned Barr into a symbol of obstruction. The result is that, in the eyes of their followers, anything Barr now does will be interpreted as obstruction. This tactic has allowed the Democrats and legacy news outlets to avoid the fallout of lying about the Trump–Russia scandal, and to continue their deception.



RICHARD A. BROOKS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

A man walks past an advertisement for the WeChat social media platform, owned by China’s Tencent, at Hong Kong International Airport on Aug. 21, 2017.



REUTERS/AARON BERNSTEIN

Attorney General William Barr testifies before a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on the “Justice Department’s investigation of Russian interference with the 2016 presidential election” on Capitol Hill on May 1, 2019.

OPINION

7 Reasons Why the *Uranium One* Scandal Won't Go Away

SEAMUS BRUNER



The Trump-Russia collusion narrative is officially dead, now that special counsel Robert Mueller has concluded there is no evidence of collusion.

With the cloud of the Mueller probe lifted, President Donald Trump can now go on the offensive with an attorney general who appears ready to drop the hammer on corruption in Washington. Moreover, Attorney General William Barr doesn't appear to be intimidated by Democratic lawmakers who have already threatened him with impeachment and even incarceration.

Former President Barack Obama's allies have lately claimed his term in office was "scandal-free," a claim his critics find "laughable." Abuses of power under the Obama administration ranged from drone-strike assassinations of U.S. citizens to the IRS's targeting of conservatives. In fact, the Obama administration was a magnet for scandals. One of the largest—and perhaps least understood—involves the Russian takeover of Uranium One, a Canadian mining company with large uranium holdings in the United States.

The mainstream press has repeatedly declared the Russian purchase of Uranium One a "debunked conspiracy theory." But it's no theory, nor has it been debunked. The Uranium One deal was complicated and had many moving parts, which also explains why misinformation about it has spread widely.

It's true that the Clinton Foundation received undisclosed millions from Uranium One stakeholders—such as the \$2.35 million from board Chairman Ian Telfer. The Obama administration did allow the Russians to acquire domestic nuclear assets critical to U.S. national security. But minor inaccuracies in the soundbites have allowed self-appointed fact-checkers such as PolitiFact and Snopes to selectively "debunk" the larger story without critically examining the full set of facts.

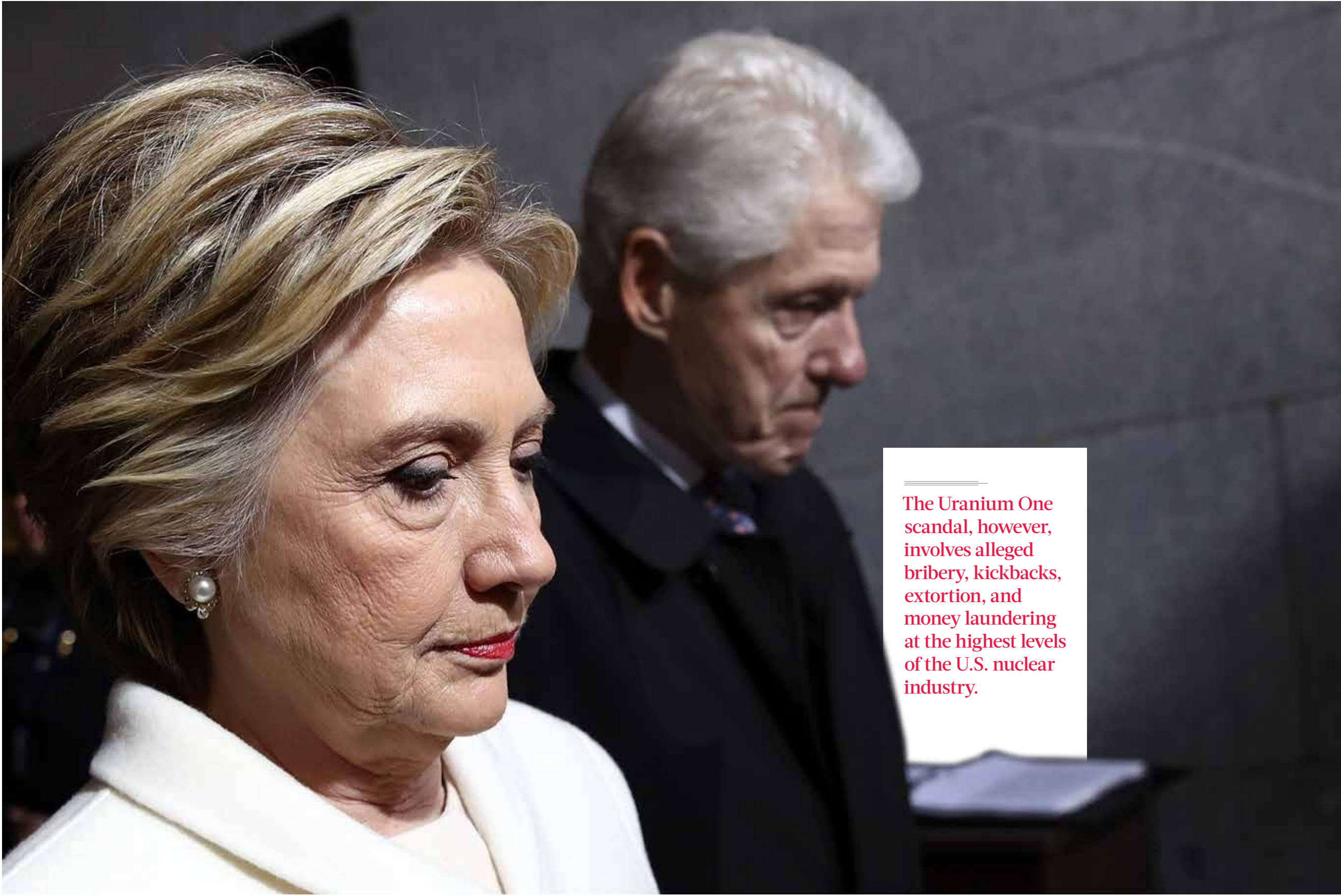
In the coming months, readers may find the Uranium One scandal coming back into focus. For that purpose, it's time to set the record straight.

Here are seven reasons why the Uranium One scandal isn't going away:

1. Uranium One is the largest foreign influence scandal in U.S. history.

Former Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton and former President Bill Clinton arrive for the inauguration ceremony of President Donald Trump on the West Front of the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 20, 2017.

Former President Barack Obama in Oakland, Calif., on Feb. 19, 2019.



The Uranium One scandal, however, involves alleged bribery, kickbacks, extortion, and money laundering at the highest levels of the U.S. nuclear industry.

If you ask any American what the largest political scandal in our history was, you will likely find that former President Richard Nixon's Watergate affair tops the list. Nixon's spying on political opponents left such a bruise on America's collective psyche that adding "gate" to later political scandals is an homage. For Nixon, the coverup was worse than the crime.

Scandals that result in the impeachment of a sitting president are hard to top, which is why the Clinton-Lewinsky fiasco also ranks high among U.S. political scandals. Those shenanigans—and the more recent targeting by Obama of Trump's 2016 presidential campaign—demonstrate clear abuses of power, but have little to do with foreign influence.

The Uranium One scandal, however, involves alleged bribery, kickbacks, extortion, and money laundering at the highest levels of the U.S. nuclear industry. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) informant-turned-whistleblower William Douglas Campbell infiltrated Russian President Vladimir Putin's inner circle and claims to have video evidence of "suitcases full of bribery cash."

It's now known that former President Bill Clinton was paid \$500,000 by a Kremlin-backed bank to deliver a speech in Moscow just months before the Uranium One sale was ap-

proved by the Obama administration. Clinton sought approval from his wife's State Department to meet with a Russian board member of Rosatom, the state-owned nuclear agency. Clinton ended up meeting directly with Putin instead, who thanked the former president for the visit. Soon after, Bill Clinton was paid a half million dollars by Russian interests, and Hillary Clinton's State Department allowed the Russian takeover of U.S. nuclear assets.

When Peter Schweizer first broke the Uranium One scandal in April 2015, Hillary Clinton's apologists immediately claimed that her State Department was just one of several Obama administration agencies that approved the sale—but is that really any better? Because if none of the Obama agencies who approved that deal found any issues with it, perhaps other players were just as conflicted as Bill and Hillary Clinton.

The Uranium One scandal contains elements of corruption and abuses of power. Neither Watergate nor the Lewinsky affair involved payments to top White House officials by foreign adversaries in exchange for favorable policies. However, Uranium One did—and the payments were massive.

The \$145 million figure refers to the collective "commitments and donations" made to the Clinton Foundation by "investors who profited from the deal," as documented extensively in Schweizer's book "Clinton Cash" and confirmed by The New York Times. Any uncertainty in the dates or amounts is due exclusively to the Clinton Foundation, which reports its donations once per year and in wide ranges—or as Schweizer calls it, "the Clinton blur." The bulk of the \$145 million figure came from longtime Clinton friend Frank Giustra.

Another major Clinton donor included in that figure is uranium investor Frank Holmes, who was grilled on his timely donations by CNBC.

2. Uranium One was never just a Clinton scandal: it's also an Obama scandal.

In addition to Obama's State Department, his Department of Justice (DOJ) had a lead role on the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS) that approved the sale. Thus, top DOJ and FBI officials share blame for not blocking the transaction in 2010. That could explain why Obama's top DOJ and FBI personnel stonewalled their own field office investigations involving Hillary Clinton's Uranium One conflicts. Those investigations effectively exonerated her just before the 2016 election.

The DOJ's role in the 2010 CFIUS review is troubling. No one from the DOJ involved with that committee raised any objections to the deal, despite separate ongoing FBI investigations into Russian espionage and racketeering schemes—schemes that specifically targeted the U.S. nuclear industry. Despite hard evidence of these schemes, the FBI, the DOJ, and other Obama agencies nevertheless raised no objections to the Russian takeover of U.S.

nuclear assets.

The fact that Clinton's State Department wasn't the only Obama agency in the CFIUS review with conflicting motives must be fully investigated. The Democrats are right, Clinton couldn't have approved the deal singlehandedly. They seem to think that this exonerates Clinton, when, in fact, it really damns the broader Obama administration.

3. Uranium One likely played a major role in the origins of the Trump-Russia collusion hoax.

Last month, Barr pledged to investigate the origins of the Trump-Russia probe, also known as "Spygate." As this latest saga unfolds, note that many of the same players in the Obama targeting of the Trump campaign also played lead investigative roles in each of the Russian nuclear schemes.

James Comey, Robert Mueller, Andrew McCabe, and Andrew Weissmann all appear to have been involved in both the investigation of long-running Russian nuclear conspiracies and in the attempt to unseat a duly elected president who threatened to expose them.

At the time of the sale, Obama's FBI—headed by Mueller—had intimate knowledge of ongoing Russian espionage and bribery schemes, but the deal went through anyway. McCabe headed the FBI investigation, which began in 2009, into the bribery, kickbacks, and money laundering linked to Uranium One. Weissmann and Rosenstein headed the DOJ prosecution of the Russian principals and announced the charges, years later in 2014.

One felon received 48 months for crimes that could have carried up to a 20-year sentence. Those convictions didn't occur until after Obama's top officials approved the sale. The DOJ's failure to publicly object to the Uranium One purchase, despite knowing about ongoing bribery and espionage schemes, raises a major red flag.

The overlap of the previous Russian influence investigations with the 2016 Trump-Russia investigation deserves a thorough review by Barr.

4. What did Obama know, and when did he know it?

In autumn 2015, an FBI agent sent notices to the Obama CFIUS agencies that required them to preserve their Uranium One records. Those records remain secret but may shed light on the largest questions of all: What did Obama know about the Russians' nuclear schemes, when did he know it, and why did his administration allow them to proceed?

The Director of National Intelligence (DNI)

is legally required to submit a threat analysis of any sale under review to CFIUS. Sen. John Barrasso (R-Wyo.) has demanded the threat analysis performed by Obama's then-DNI James Clapper. Notably, Clapper has a history of lying under oath to Congress and is currently under fire for intelligence leaks that were damaging to the Trump campaign.

Once it's made public, Clapper's threat analysis of the Uranium One deal will be very telling—either the analysis was thorough, or it was not. That's bad news for the Obama administration in either case.

The Hill's John Solomon framed the issue another way in October 2018:

"Since the emergence of [Uranium One whistleblower Campbell's] undercover work, there has been one unanswered question of national importance.

"Did the FBI notify then-President Obama, Hillary Clinton, and other leaders on the CFIUS board about Rosatom's dark deeds before the Uranium One

sale was approved, or did the bureau drop the ball and fail to alert policymakers?"

Neither outcome is particularly comforting.

5. Whistleblowers are ready to talk. An 'avalanche' is coming.

There are now at least three credible Uranium One whistleblowers who have provided information to authorities since the story first broke.

As previously mentioned, William D. Campbell was an FBI operative who had infiltrated Putin's inner circle. Campbell worked directly with Rosatom chief Sergei Kiriyenko, who has since been promoted to Putin's first deputy chief of staff. Campbell documented evidence of the Russians' nuclear ambitions and their strategy to infiltrate the U.S. nuclear supply chain through the Uranium One purchase. According to Campbell, Moscow paid millions in an influence operation targeting Obama administration decision-makers.

Last November, 16 FBI agents raided the home of former FBI contractor Dennis Nathan Cain, a federally protected whistleblower who claims that he can provide documented evidence that the FBI and DOJ failed to investigate possible criminal activity related to the Clinton Foundation and the Russian takeover of Uranium One. Cain recently tweeted his appreciation for Rep. Doug Collins (R-Ga.): "Thank you @RepDougCollins for releasing this testimony. It proves the DoJ under BHO was running a two-tier system of justice that allowed politically connected get away [sic] with serious crimes. What other crimes were ignored?"

Former top Uranium One executive Scott

Melbye attended the conservative CPAC conference this year. Melbye hammered the Uranium One scandal, calling Clinton's role "bizarre," according to The Daily Beast.

"People who say that's exaggerated or there's nothing there—there's definitely something there," Melbye said. "As an American, I'm outraged at that whole episode."

Campbell, Cain, Melbye, and others appear to have more than enough inside information relating to Uranium One to demonstrate widespread corruption at the highest levels of the Obama administration. In addition, more whistleblowers are expected to come forward with more bombshell reports.

6. Top GOP lawmakers are not going to let Uranium One be swept under the rug.

Former Senate Judiciary Chairman Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) has been tracking the Uranium One case since day one, and has sent numerous letters to Obama agencies to clarify their roles.

In a statement last month, Grassley said: "I've been pushing for years for more answers about this [the Uranium One] transaction that allowed the Russian government to acquire U.S. uranium assets. I've received classified and unclassified briefings about it from multiple agencies. And I've identified some FBI intelligence reports that may shed more light on the transaction. ... If the Democrats want to be consistent, they'll have to treat the Clinton, Uranium One, and Russia-related investigations the same [as the Mueller report]. Anything less than that reeks of political gamesmanship and sets a clear double standard."

Barrasso expressed early concerns. In a 2010 letter to Obama, the senator warned: "This transaction would give the Russian government control over a sizable portion of America's uranium production capacity. Equally alarming, this sale gives ARMZ [Uranium Holding Co.] a significant stake in uranium mines in Kazakhstan."

More recently, Barrasso has pushed to expand the investigations of the sale and has demanded answers regarding Uranium One's exports of nuclear materials outside the United States—an unacceptable development, as first reported by John Solomon.

Reps. Devin Nunes (R-Calif.), Mark Meadows (R-N.C.), Jim Jordan (R-Ohio), Matt Gaetz (R-Fla.), and several of their colleagues—notably Lee Zeldin (R-N.Y.) and Ron DeSantis (now Florida governor)—have repeatedly demanded answers about the Obama administration's approval of the Russian takeover of Uranium One. GOP lawmakers introduced a resolution last year excoriating the Obama FBI and DOJ for their roles in the Spygate scandal, which they linked to the Uranium One scandal.

It's safe to say that these lawmakers are invested in the full exposure of Uranium One events and bringing swift justice to the Obama officials who were responsible.

7. President Trump and Attorney General Barr appear to be ready to drop the hammer.

Barr has found the Uranium One matter significant and worthy of a full investigation. In a 2017 interview with The New York Times, Barr said that the DOJ was "abdicated its responsibility" if it wasn't investigating the Clinton Foundation vis-à-vis the Uranium One deal. In Barr's confirmation hearing this year, Democrats grilled him on his support for the Uranium One "conspiracy theory." While Barr seemed to distance himself during the hearing, New York Times reporter Peter Baker subsequently leaked an email in which Barr said he "believed that the predicate for investigating the uranium deal, as well as the foundation, is far stronger than any basis for investigating so-called, 'collusion.'"

It's clear that Barr doesn't believe that the Uranium One deal has been fully investigated.

To date, Trump has been fully cleared of all allegations of collusion with Russia. Multiple separate investigations led by special counsel Mueller, the House Intelligence Committee, and the Senate Intelligence Committee have all concluded that there was no collusion. And yet, Democrats in Congress now want Mueller to testify and want to hold Barr in contempt if he doesn't surrender himself to their endless interrogations.

If the Democrats want to go to war with Barr, he appears to have more than enough evidence to expose corruption that would crush the Obama administration and its defenders—starting with Spygate and ending with Uranium One.

At its core, the Uranium One deal is quite simple: Putin wanted long-term access to the U.S. nuclear supply chain. Decision-makers in Washington were under no obligation to give Putin what he wanted. Politics aside, does anyone really think that Putin deserves any access to an industry critical to the American energy sector and national security? Of course not.

Yet, in 2010, the Obama administration acquiesced and Putin gained a significant stake in an industry critical to U.S. energy and national security. Period.

Seamus Bruner is the author of the book "Compromised: How Money and Politics Drive FBI Corruption."

Views expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.



JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES

OPINION

The Mueller Report and The Great Diversion

Politicians' refusal to accept the conclusion of the Mueller report and the assaults on Barr are tantamount to an attack on the democratic process

ALEX WONG/GETTY IMAGES

MARC RUSKIN



What if the Mueller report had concluded that there was evidence of illegal activity between the Russian government and the Trump campaign?

What if the conclusion had been that Donald Trump and campaign staffers had participated in secret meetings with Russian officials in Prague, London, and in Trump Towers worldwide, and that they had sought and accepted assistance from the Russians in order to game the outcome of a presidential election, subverting the Constitution in the process?

One can barely imagine the volume and persistence of the calls from Congress and the media for the immediate prosecution of anyone and everyone even remotely associated with the president, along with calls for impeachment and imprisonment of the head of state himself.

The “I told you so’s” from all the usual suspects would be incessant: House Intel Chairman Adam Schiff (D-Calif.)—“I have evidence”—House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), and newsmen—or should we say editorialists?—Chris Cuomo and Joe Scarborough. The self-righteous, self-serving platitudes and demands for swift justice would be deafening.

As it is, dissenters on special counsel Robert Mueller’s staff soon displayed displeasure at the failure to find evidence of obstruction of justice by utilizing leaks, which isn’t a technique worthy of those who seek to uphold the law.

And these are prosecutors, mind you, who above all others should know better than to publicly discuss the details of a prosecutorial report, which causes potential harm to individuals falsely accused, incapable of defending themselves and without any mechanism to salvage their reputations.

No Crime

However, absent an underlying criminal act, there is nothing to obstruct. To build an obstruction case, one needs a foundation—there needs to be a crime that was obstructed.

To no one’s surprise, Mueller did find evidence of Russian meddling in the U.S. electoral process. Russia—the former Soviet Union—has been seeking to influence the outcome of elections in the United States since the mid-1950s. That is certainly no secret.

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the memoirs of KGB chiefs such as Oleg Kalugin and Victor Cherkashin have been published, revealing the tactics used to influence the political climate, including false anti-Semitic incidents, manufactured white supremacist propaganda, and the dissemination of all manner of “fake news.”

Shifting the Focus

Undeterred by the absence of a substantive or underlying crime upon which to build a case for obstruction, the Mueller dissenters, the media, and Congress took a new tack. Spearheaded by Schiff and House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.), the House of Representatives has dexterously shifted the focus from the substance of Mueller’s report to the mechanisms, the procedures pertaining to its dissemination by Attorney General William Barr.

Barr was asked by Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.), while testifying under oath upon the release of the lightly redacted report, if there had been any spying. When he answered in the affirmative, he was subsequently attacked by politicians and the media for “raising” conspiracy theories.

The case is that the politicians were frightened by his response—the tone of Shaheen indicated she was clearly surprised, and perhaps unnerved, by the ultimate conclusions Barr’s investigation (which he indicated he might undertake) might lead to.

Suddenly, the very concept of spying came under scrutiny. Former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, in an interview with ABC talk show host Joy Behar, stated that he doesn’t like the term “spying.” This from the nation’s former spy chief? What do intelligence officers do for a living, if not spy? Former FBI Director James Comey, alluding to spying that occurred on his watch, said the activities in question were merely “authorized surveillance.”

The reaction to Barr’s testimony has been an all-out assault against him: the often repeated message being that Barr has lost all credibility. This has been repeated incessantly in the hope that the image will gain credence, and so undermine any conclusions that ongoing and



Rep. Adam Schiff (D-Calif.) at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 17, 2019.

To build an obstruction case, one needs a foundation—there needs to be a crime that was obstructed.



Former KGB Gen. Oleg Kalugin before the Senate POW/MIA Affairs Committee on Jan. 21, 1992.

PUBLIC DOMAIN

future Department of Justice investigations may lead to.

Not satisfied with the offer by Barr to review a less-redacted version of the Mueller report in private, Nadler and his colleagues proceed as though the offer had never been made, carefully avoiding any mention of it, lest their refusal to read the report appear unreasonable.

Instead, they have demanded that the entire, unredacted document be released to the Judiciary Committee, knowing full well that compliance would require the attorney general to violate federal laws that make it a crime to release secret grand jury material.

In return for Barr’s refusal to break the law, he is threatened with contempt citations. But no matter how absurd these shenanigans are, they have succeeded in shifting attention from the substance of the report to what is essentially an insignificant sideshow.

The redacted passages will ultimately prove irrelevant to the conclusions—as Mueller will no doubt confirm in future testimony. Likewise, Mueller’s March 27 letter to Barr carries no legal weight, serving only to muddle an already muddy state of affairs.

Concurrent with the insistence that Barr disclose the redacted portions of the Mueller report have been demands that he himself submit to cross-examination by Judiciary Committee staff attorneys. This is a not-too-subtle attempt to cast Barr in the role of a criminal courtroom defendant. Barr—wilder than Nadler—has signaled he has no intention of playing into the hands of Nadler and his strategists.

Public Discourse

The reaction to the release of the Mueller report is symptomatic of the woeful state of public discourse. What now passes for debate in politics and the media has been reduced to a moronic level. Will a wall stop people from entering the United States? (And so on.) By debating on the level of these politicians, are we—the public at large—lowering ourselves to their level?

Or should we take the high road and simply ignore them, accepting that what is true is true, and move on to setting the debate stage, framing the discussion on our terms, to what really merits discussion. (Walls impede entry, whether on a border or around a house. Whether or not a wall should be built—that is the legitimate subject of informed debate.)

If we waste our energy debating whether a wall can or can’t prevent people from entering, whether Barr is in contempt for not complying with demands that he commit a crime, then these politicians are winning simply by diverting attention to meaningless discussions.

The virtual refusal to accept the conclusions of Mueller and the assault on Barr is tantamount to an attack on the democratic process.

It’s symptomatic of a shift toward tyranny, a snowball picking up momentum, that we can see everywhere.

The evidence is diverse and extensive. The statements by Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.) downplaying the 9/11 terrorist attacks as “some people did something,” taken along with Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s (D-N.Y.) comments regarding her belief in the need for the suppression of images from the World Trade Center attacks, are typical of fascist rewriting of history and denial of inconvenient facts and events.

The repetition of falsehoods, until they are accepted as fact, is additional evidence of a shift toward the acceptance of fascistic propaganda techniques as a substitute for real “news.” Former CIA Director John Brennan, in particular, has repeatedly made conclusory statements—stating his conclusions without articulating facts that would support those conclusions—such as accusing Trump of treason.

Critiques of Brennan and other heads of intelligence agencies and national law enforcement agencies have been consistently, and inaccurately, characterized by the media and Democrat politicians as attacks on the agencies themselves. The rank-and-file of these agencies, the intelligence officers and special agents, know this to be untrue.

And it’s important to note that the only logical outcome served by attempts to prevent criticism of the heads of such agencies is the creation of an atmosphere conducive to the evolution of a police state. What other outcome can there be if the directors of intelligence and national law-enforcement are shielded from legitimate criticism?

Those living through historic events cannot necessarily perceive the stunning significance of what is unfolding before them. History, however, will reveal the dramatic nature of the significant events of the past two years. The assault on the Bill of Rights and the Constitution, the conspiracy to undermine the electoral process and the presidency of the United States, the collaboration between a corrupt media and a power-thirsty Congress—the culprits are no less evil than those who have been responsible for the existence of totalitarian regimes past and present.

Epoch Times contributor Marc Ruskin is a 27-year veteran of the FBI, an adjunct professor at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, and the author of “The Pretender: My Life Undercover for the FBI.” He served on the legislative staff of U.S. Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan and as an assistant district attorney in Brooklyn, New York.

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