

The Mueller report and the campaign against Russia

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The release of the report by special counsel Robert Mueller on allegations of Russian interference in the US election and alleged collusion with the Trump administration has reignited the ferocious factional warfare within the American ruling class.

An editorial published Friday evening by the *New York Times* very clearly reveals, after two years, what this conflict was all about. As the *World Socialist Web Site* has repeatedly insisted, dominant factions of the military-intelligence apparatus, whose demands have been channeled by the Democratic Party and the media, would not accept any retreat from an intensification of the conflict with Russia.

The editorial board statement is published under the headline, “The Mueller Report and the Danger Facing American Democracy,” with the subhead, “A perceived victory for Russian interference poses a serious risk for the United States.”

It begins, “The report of the special counsel Robert Mueller leaves considerable space for partisan warfare over the role of President Trump and his political campaign in Russia’s interference in the 2016 election. But one conclusion is categorical: ‘The Russian government interfered in the 2016 presidential election in sweeping and systematic fashion.’”

This statement is a backhanded acknowledgement that the Mueller report fails to substantiate many of the wild claims, promoted by the media including the *Times*, of collusion or direct coordination between the 2016 Trump campaign and the Russian government. However, what the *Times* is more concerned with is the underlying—and no less unfounded—claim, that Russia has attacked “American democracy,” and that an aggressive response is necessary.

“Russia’s interference in the campaign was the core issue that Mr. Mueller was appointed to investigate,” the *Times* writes, “and if he stopped short of accusing

the Trump campaign of overtly cooperating with the Russians—the report mercifully rejects speaking of ‘collusion,’ a term that has no meaning in American law—he was unequivocal on Russia’s culpability: ‘First, the Office determined that Russia’s two principal interference operations in the 2016 US presidential election—the social media campaign and the hacking-and-dumping operations—violated US criminal law.’”

In the key passage, the *Times*’ complains that Trump has failed to take this supposed interference in American politics seriously. “Culpable or not,” the editors write, “he must be made to understand that a foreign power that interferes in American elections is, in fact, trying to distort American foreign policy and national security.”

“Distort foreign policy...” By this is meant the CIA-backed imperialist operations in Syria and the campaign against Russia itself.

In addition to the conflicts over foreign policy, the anti-Russia campaign has been aimed at criminalizing domestic opposition and justifying an unprecedented attack on free speech, including the censorship of the internet, utilizing Google, Facebook, and other social media companies, under the absurd pretext that the online operations of Russia are responsible for social conflict within the United States.

Regurgitating the unsubstantiated assertions of the intelligence agencies, which the Mueller report also accepts, the *Times* denounces “a social media campaign [by Russia] intended to fan rifts in the United States.” Significantly, this same assertion was accepted by Trump’s attorney general, William Barr, who proclaimed upon releasing the report Thursday that it proved that Russia had engaged in a systematic campaign to “sow social discord among American voters.”

As if the growing wave of social unrest in the United States, propelled by unprecedented levels of social inequality, is simply the product of the nefarious intervention of Vladimir Putin! This is simply the resurrection of hysterical McCarthyite red-baiting, with capitalist Russia assuming the place of the Soviet Union.

A particularly noxious expression of the attack on democratic rights is the agreement, across all factions of the US ruling elite, to target WikiLeaks. The Mueller report was issued only days after British police seized WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange and the US government revealed that it was seeking his extradition, to face indefinite detention or worse.

The *Times* editorial repeats the allegation—again, never substantiated, but asserted by the Mueller report—that the Russian government was involved in hacking “the Clinton campaign and the Democratic National Committee and releasing reams of damaging materials through the front groups DCLeaks and Guccifer 2.0, and later through WikiLeaks.”

“The real danger that the Mueller report reveals,” the *Times* repeats, “is not of a president who knowingly or unknowingly let a hostile power do dirty tricks on his behalf, but of a president who refuses to see that he has been used to damage American democracy and national security.”

It adds, “A perceived victory for Russian interference poses a serious danger to the United States. Already, several American agencies are working, in partnership with the tech industry, to prevent election interference going forward.” That is, Google and Facebook have already instituted far-reaching measures to censor the internet. “But the Kremlin is not the only hostile government mucking around in America’s cyberspace—China and North Korea are two others honing their cyber-arsenals, and they, too, could be tempted to manipulate partisan strife for their ends.” That is, further measures are needed.

Here we have combined the twin and interrelated aims of all factions of the ruling class—to intensify war, not only against Russia, but also against China, and suppress social opposition.

The *Times* ends with an olive branch to Trump and the Republicans. “The two parties may not agree on Mr. Trump’s culpability,” the editors write, “but they have already found a measure of common ground with

the sanctions they have imposed on Russia over its interference in the campaign. Now they could justify the considerable time and expense of the special counsel investigation, and at the same time demonstrate that the fissure in American politics is not terminal, by jointly making clear to Russia and other hostile forces that the democratic process, in the United States and its allies, is strictly off limits to foreign clandestine manipulation, and that anyone who tries will pay a heavy price.”

Thus we have it, as they say, straight from the horse’s mouth. The opposition of the Democrats and their affiliated media outlets to the Trump administration was never about its right-wing and fascistic policies, its illegal and unconstitutional agenda, or its authoritarian methods of rule, but over concerns that he has undermined what are considered key geostrategic interests of American imperialism.

As far as the ruling class is concerned—and here we speak of both the Democrats and the Trump administration—the “heavy price” is to be borne not only by the foreign policy rivals of the American ruling class abroad, but also by the working class at home.

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