



Integrity Initiative: Britain's foreign interference machinery exposed

By Richard Bardon

It is a longstanding maxim of wartime propaganda, variously attributed to Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin, Adolf Hitler and Joseph Goebbels, that one should always accuse one's enemy of that of which oneself is guilty. Thus the UK government, the source of never-ending accusations that a hostile Russia has infiltrated, undermined and subverted Western "democratic" politics, is itself doing exactly that to its supposed allies in Europe and North America.

Documents released 5 November by "hacktivist" group Anonymous reveal that the UK-based Integrity Initiative, established in late 2015 and which bills itself as "a network of people and organisations from across Europe dedicated to revealing and combating propaganda and disinformation" spread by "the Kremlin and its various proxies", is funded mainly by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)—with help from NATO Headquarters; the US State Department; Lithuania's Ministry of Defence; various US-based private foundations and think tanks; and Facebook—to spread anti-Russian propaganda and prevent Russia-friendly officials reaching positions of authority, in as many nations as possible.

"Hiding behind benevolent intentions, Britain has in fact created a large-scale information secret service in Europe, the United States and Canada", wrote the hackers who posted the files, "which consists of representatives of political, military, academic and journalistic communities with the think tank in London at the head of it". This apparatus, they reported, "has time and again intervened into the domestic affairs of independent European states. A most demonstrative example is operation 'Moncloa' in Spain. Britain set to prevent [pro-Kremlin] military intelligence officer Col.] Pedro Baños from appointment to the post of Director of Spain's Department of Homeland Security [in June 2018]." It succeeded in just hours: an Initiative document details how the group's "Spanish cluster" heard of Baños's upcoming appointment at midday; started a Twitter campaign and had assembled a smear dossier for media by 2:00 PM; and at 2:45 alerted UK head office, which activated the Initiative's network to "generate international support for the Twitter campaign", which it coordinated via Facebook-owned messaging service WhatsApp. By 7:45 that evening, contacts in the governing Socialist Workers Party confirmed that Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez had "received the message".

Anonymous reported that at present Britain is capable of staging similar operations in France, Germany, Italy, Greece, the Netherlands, Lithuania, Norway, and Serbia-Montenegro; and that London has "near-term plans" to create similar clusters in Latvia, Estonia, Portugal, Sweden, Belgium, Canada, Armenia, Ukraine, Moldova, Malta, the Czech Republic, various countries of the Middle East and North Africa, Poland, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Georgia, Hungary, Cyprus, Austria, Switzerland, Turkey, Finland, Iceland, Denmark, and the USA. "All the work is done under absolute secrecy via concealed contacts in British embassies", who seem to be establishing "a global system of information influence and political interference into affairs of other countries ... [a] quiet colonisation of both former British neighbours in the EU and NATO allies is taking place."

Strategic and security consultant Philip Giraldi, a former US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) officer and founding

member of watchdog group Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS), told Sputnik News on 21 November that the Integrity Initiative "is undoubtedly a covertly funded front NGO carrying out media and agent of influence manipulation that is actually being run out of the embassies' intel shops."

"Using an NGO provides plausible deniability when the activity is revealed", Giraldi explained. "Every intelligence agency worth its salt does the same thing to a greater or lesser degree, including [those of] Russia, China and the USA."

Beating the war drums

The difference is that whereas most countries' operations seek to influence others' policy decisions to their own advantage, the British are using theirs to agitate for war. A case in point is a 26 November article for the Initiative website by Edward Lucas, former Russia editor for the City of London's *Economist* magazine and now senior vice-president of Washington, DC think tank the Centre for European Policy Analysis. Lucas demands the 25 November Kerch Strait incident, in which Ukrainian naval vessels were seized and their crews arrested after they attempted to pass through Russian territorial waters without permission,¹ be seen as equivalent to Nazi Germany's 1939 attack on Poland. The "correct" response, he insists, "would have combined kinetic, symbolic and financial measures" including increased military assistance to Ukraine and the deployment of a NATO naval flotilla to the Ukrainian port of Mariupol on the Sea of Azov. Since the Kerch Strait is the only entrance to the Sea of Azov, such a flotilla would have to force its way through Russian waters—an act of war in anyone's language, though one for which NATO has thus far shown no appetite.

Lucas is listed as a member of the "inner core" of the Initiative's UK cluster. Joining him are a who's who of anti-Russia propagandists and warmongers including Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House) Senior Consulting Fellow Keir Giles; London School of Economics professor and former *Economist* editor Anne Applebaum; Atlantic Council digital analyst Ben Nimmo, who sees "Kremlin bots" behind every Twitter hashtag; and US-British hedge fund operator and tax fraudster Bill Browder, whose lies about the 2009 death in custody of his accountant Sergei Magnitsky provided the impetus for the US-led sanctions campaign against Russia which continues to this day. Also on the list is former UK Ambassador to Russia Sir Andrew Wood, also of Chatham House, who in 2016 fed "former" MI6 officer Christopher Steele's fabricated dirt dossier on then-US presidential candidate Donald Trump to Russophobe Sen. John McCain, thus kicking off the still-ongoing "Russiagate" circus that has thus far derailed whatever plans Trump might have had to normalise relations with Russia.

Another Initiative document describes discredited internet sleuthing outfit Bellingcat—which falsely claims to have proven Russia guilty of shooting down Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 over Ukraine in 2014, and the Syrian government of having used chemical weapons on several occasions—as a "partner organisation".

1. "Escalation around Ukraine threatens Trump-Putin diplomacy", AAS 28 Nov. 2018