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# FACEBOOK CENSORSHIP OF ALTERNATIVE MEDIA JUST THE BEGINNING

“We are just starting to push back.”

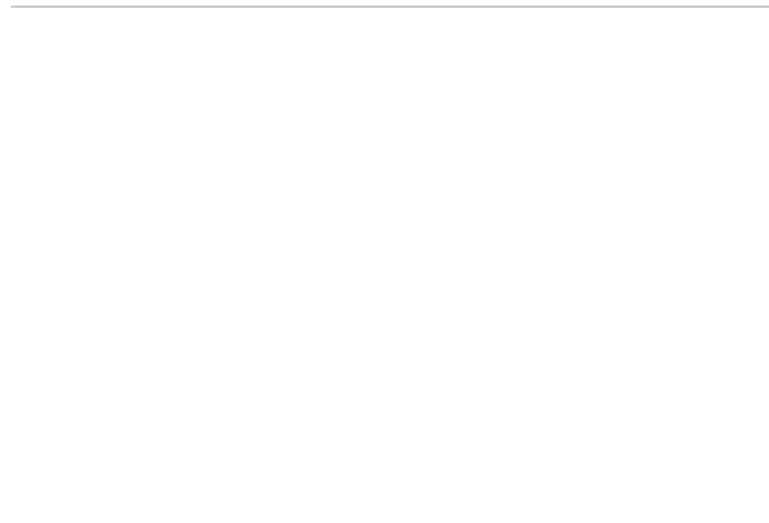
Max Blumenthal and Jeb Sprague | [GrayZoneProject.com](http://GrayZoneProject.com)

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 Facebook Censorship Of Alternative Media "Just The Beginning," Warns Top Neocon Insider

IMAGE CREDITS: JAAP ARRIENS/NURPHOTO VIA GETTY IMAGES.

*security conference, hardline neocon Jamie Fly appeared to claim for the recent coordinated purge of alternative media...*



or, Facebook and Twitter deleted the accounts of hundreds of users, and alternative media outlets maintained by Americans

any alternative media outlets maintained by American  
**ng those wiped out in the coordinated purge were popular**  
**crutinized police brutality and U.S. interventionism**, like The  
ht Project, Anti-Media, and Cop Block, along with the pages of  
ike [Rachel Blevins](#).



[aimed](#) that these pages had ***“broken our rules against spam and  
l inauthentic behavior.”*** However, sites like The Free Thought  
e verified by Facebook and widely recognized as legitimate sources  
l opinion. John Vibes, an independent reporter who contributed to  
ht, [accused](#) Facebook of “favoring mainstream sources and  
:ernative voices.”

ts published here for the first time, **a neoconservative**

**n insider has apparently claimed a degree of credit for the  
ge — and promised more takedowns in the near future.**

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and other foreign states take advantage of our open political system,” remarked Jamie Fly, and director of the Asia program at the influential think tank the German Marshall Fund, [by the U.S. government and NATO.](#)

**nt stories that get repeated and spread through different sites. So we are just  
h back. Just this last week Facebook began starting to take down sites. So this is  
ing.”**

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to complain that **“all you need is an email” to set up a Facebook  
account, lamenting the sites’ accessibility to members of the  
blic.** He predicted a long struggle on a global scale to fix the  
rd pointed out that to do so would require constant vigilance.

ese stunning comments to Jeb Sprague, who is a visiting faculty  
sociology at the University of California-Santa Barbara and co-  
is article. The two spoke during a lunch break at a [conference on](#)

ity organized by the [Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik](#) in Berlin,

t below, Fly is the third person from the left who appears seated at

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ity to discuss Asian security in Berlin, with an excellent group of experts from the  
[Berlinpic.twitter.com/Ogdc9d5BVK](#)

an (@GarimaMo) [October 15, 2018](#)

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s by Fly — “we are just starting to push back” — seemed to confirm  
ars of the alternative online media community. If he was to be  
e latest purge was motivated by politics, not spam prevention, and  
by powerful interests hostile to dissident views, particularly where  
ate violence is concerned.

### **RISE OF A NEOCON CADRE**

an influential foreign policy hardliner who has spent the last year  
r the censorship of “fringe views” on social media. **Over the years,**  
**located for a military assault on Iran, a [regime change war](#) on**  
**iking military spending to unprecedented levels. He is the**  
**nt of a neoconservative cadre.**

y second-generation neocons, Fly [entered government](#) by  
nto mid-level positions in George W. Bush’s National Security  
Department of Defense.

was appointed director of the [Foreign Policy Initiative \(FPI\)](#) a

was appointed director of the [Foreign Policy Initiative \(FPI\)](#), a version of Bill Kristol's Project for a New American Century, or rather outfit was an umbrella group of neoconservative activists that he case for an invasion of Iraq as part of a wider project of regime countries that resisted Washington's sphere of influence.

was advancing the next phase in PNAC's blueprint [g](#) for military strikes on Iran. "More diplomacy is not an adequate he argued. A year later, Fly [urged](#) the US to "expand its list of and the [Iranian] nuclear program to key command and control the Republican Guard and the intelligence ministry, and facilities with other key government officials."

and his way into the senate office of Marco Rubio, a active pet project, assuming a role as his top foreign policy advisor. her interventionist initiatives, Rubio has taken the lead in harsh economic sanctions [targeting Venezuela](#), even advocating for [ry assault](#) on the country. When Rubio's 2016 presidential ounded amid a mass revolt of the Republican Party's middle ase against the party establishment, Fly was forced to cast about ortunities.

**hem in the paranoid atmosphere of [Russiagate](#) that formed Donald Trump's shock election victory.**

### **IT SPARKS THE ALTERNATIVE MEDIA PANIC**

**tic insider's account of the Hillary Clinton presidential Shattered, revealed that "in the days after the election, Hillary take responsibility for her own loss."** Her top advisers were the following day, according to the book, "to engineer the case ction wasn't entirely on the up-and-up ... Already, Russian hacking

terpiece of the argument.”

**Three weeks after Clinton’s defeat**, the Washington Post’s Craig published a [dubiously sourced report](#) headlined, “Russian effort helped spread ‘fake news.’” **The article hyped up a the effort by a shadowy, anonymously run organization called to blacklist some 200 American media outlets as Russian paganda.”**

Some media outfits on the [PropOrNot blacklist](#) included some of those later purged by Facebook and Twitter, such as The Free Thought Anti-Media. Among the [criteria](#) PropOrNot identified as signs of paganda were “Support for policies like Brexit, and the breakup of Eurozone” and “Opposition to Ukrainian resistance to Russia and Syria, and support for Assad.” PropOrNot called for “formal investigations by the government” into the outlets it had blacklisted.

So Craig Timberg, the Washington Post correspondent who promoted the media suppression initiative, ***Propornot was by “a nonpartisan collection of researchers with foreign policy, law, and technology backgrounds.”*** Timberg quoted a figure associated with the George Washington University Center for Cyber and Homeland Security, Drew Weisburd, and cited a report he wrote with his colleague, on Russian meddling.

**The piece on PropOrNot was promoted widely by former top Clinton aide and celebrated by ex-Obama White House aide Dan Pfeiffer as the best story in the world.”** But after a wave of stinging criticism, on the pages of the [New Yorker](#), the article was amended with an addendum stating, “The [Washington] Post... does not itself vouch for the PropOrNot’s findings regarding any individual media outlet.”

had been seemingly exposed as a McCarthyite sham, but the kind it — exposing online American media outlets as vehicles for “disruptive measures” — continued to flourish.

## **OF THE RUSSIAN BOT TRACKER — WITH U.S. GOVERNMENT**

**a new, and seemingly related initiative appeared out of the blue with backing from a bipartisan coalition of Democratic and neocon Never Trumpers in Washington.** Called [for Securing Democracy](#) (ASD), the outfit aimed to expose how Russian Twitter bots were infecting American political discourse with disinformation. It featured a daily “[Hamilton 68](#)” online dashboard that tracked the supposed bot activity with easily digestible charts. Surprisingly, the site avoided naming any of the digital Kremlin influence operations it claimed to be tracking.

**It was immediately endorsed by John Podesta**, the founder of the Democratic Party think tank the Center for American Progress, and former chief of staff of Hillary Clinton’s 2016 presidential campaign. Julia Ioffe, the chief Russiagate correspondent, [promoted](#) the bot tracker as “a very

important tool.” OrNot, the ASD was sponsored by one of the most respected think tanks in Washington, the [German Marshall Fund](#), which had been founded in 1954 to nurture the special relationship between the US and what was then the Soviet Union.

**German Marshall Fund is substantially funded by Western governments, and largely reflects their foreign-policy interests.** Its top two sponsors, at more than \$1 million per year each, are the U.S. State Department’s soft power arm the U.S. Agency for International Development



US soft-power arm the U.S. Agency for International Development  
the German Foreign Office (known in German as the Auswärtiges  
.S. State Department also provides more than half a million dollars  
do the German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and  
nt and the foreign affairs ministries of Sweden and Norway. It  
eives at least a quarter of a million dollars per year from NATO.



*rnment and NATO are top donors to the German Marshall Fund*

German Marshall Fund did not name the donors that specifically  
ts Alliance for Securing Democracy initiative, it hosts a who's who  
n national-security hardliners on the ASD's [advisory council](#),  
re endeavor with the patina of credibility. They range from neocon  
icon Bill Kristol to former Clinton foreign policy advisor Jake

from Bill Kristol to former Clinton foreign policy advisor Jake  
Fly and ex-CIA director Michael Morell.

**German Marshall Fund fellow and Asia specialist, emerged as most prolific promoters of the new Russian bot tracker in the**  
ether with Laura Rosenberger, a former foreign policy aide to  
Trump's 2016 campaign, Fly appeared in a series of [interviews](#) and co-  
authored several [op-eds](#) emphasizing the need for a massive social media



In a March 2018 [interview on C-Span](#), Fly complained that “Russian  
agents were “trying to promote certain messages, amplify certain content,  
create divisions, sow discord, divide Americans against each other, and we need to deal with  
this growing problem and find ways through the government, through tech  
companies, and through broader society to tackle this issue.”

through broader society to tackle this issue.

**the sites on PropOrNot's blacklist, and none of the alternative were erased in the recent Facebook purge that Fly and his take apparent credit for, were Russian accounts. Perhaps the notion they could have been accused of was publishing views that cohorts saw as "fringe."**

As a result, the ASD has been forced to admit that the mass of Twitter accounts initially identified as "Russian bots" were not necessarily bots — they might have been Russian either.

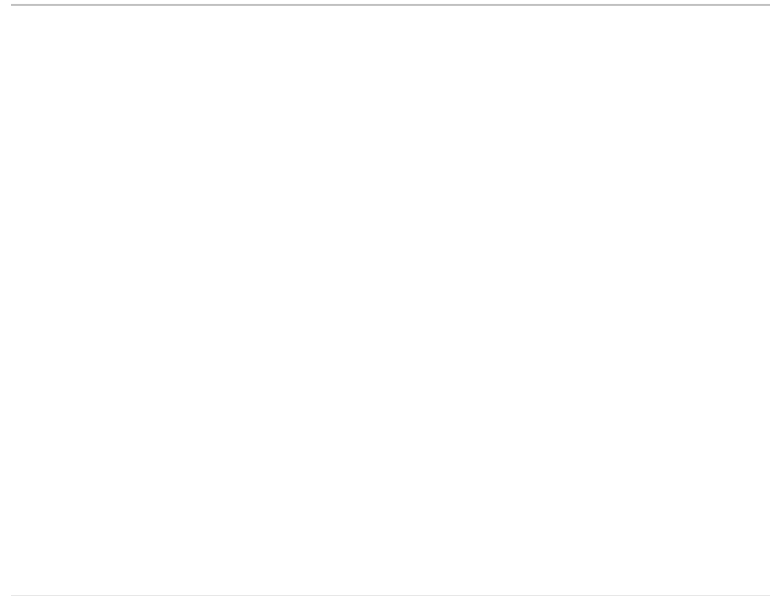
### **CONVINCED ON THIS BOT THING"**

For a 2017 [investigation](#) by Max Blumenthal, a co-author of this article, ***the ASD's Hamilton 68 dashboard was the creation of "a collection of counterterrorism retreads, online harassers and paranoiacs operating out from some of the most prominent figures operating within the national security apparatus."***

As included the same George Washington University Center for Homeland Security fellows — Andrew Weisburd and Clint Watts — cited as experts in the Washington Post's article promoting

who has been described as one of the brains behind the Hamilton dashboard, once maintained a one-man, anti-Palestinian web monitoring site that specialized in doxxing left-wing activists, Muslims and anyone he deemed "anti-American." More recently, he has taken to Twitter to spout off homophobic and homophobic fantasies about Glenn Greenwald, the editor of The Intercept — a publication the ASD flagged without explanation as a vehicle for influence operations.

his part, has testified before Congress on several occasions he government to “quell information rebellions” with censorious including “nutritional labels” for online media. He has received publicity from corporate media and been rewarded with a contributor on the basis of his supposed expertise in ferreting out Russian ion.



was urged Congress to “quell information rebellions”

under questioning during a public event by Grayzone contributor os, **Watts admitted that substantial parts of his testimony and refused to provide evidence to support some of his most claims about malicious Russian bot activity.**

In the interview with [Buzzfeed](#), Watts appeared to completely disown the Hamilton 68 bot tracker as a legitimate tool. “I’m not convinced on this bot activity,” he confessed. He even called the narrative that he helped create “overdone,” and admitted that the accounts Hamilton 68 tracked were not necessarily directed by Russian intelligence actors.

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*think they're all commanded in Russia — at all. We think some of them are legitimately people that are just really into promoting Russia,"* Watts conceded.

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Running admissions did little to slow the momentum of the coming

## **ATLANTIC COUNCIL**

In conversation with Sprague, the German Marshall Fund's Fly stated that **working with the Atlantic Council in the campaign to purge media from social media platforms like Facebook.**

The Council is another Washington-based think tank that serves as a go-to point for neoconservatives and liberal interventionists pushing their aggression around the globe. It is **funded** by NATO and **repressive, US-ally governments** including Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Turkey, as well as by oligarchs like Victor Pynchuk.

**Facebook announced a partnership with the Atlantic Council's Disinformation Research Lab (DFRLab) to "identify, expose, and explain disinformation during elections around the world."**

The Council's DFRLab is notorious for its zealous conflation of online dissent with illicit Russian activity, embracing the same PopOrNot and the ASD.

John, a DFRLab fellow who has built his reputation on flushing out Kremlin influence networks, **embarked** on an embarrassing witch hunt that saw him misidentify several living, breathing individuals as

s or Kremlin "influence accounts." Nimmo's victims  
Ariam Susli, a well-known Syrian-Australian social media  
the famed Ukrainian concert pianist Valentina Lisitsa, and a British  
named Ian Shilling.

interview with Sky News, Shilling delivered a memorable tirade against  
5.

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online contacts whatsoever; I do not know any Russians, I have no contact with the  
government or anything to do with them," he exclaimed.

any British citizen who happens to do research on the current neocon wars which  
in Syria at this very moment."

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most Facebook and Twitter purges, ordinary citizens like Shilling are  
targeted in the open, and without apology. The mass deletions of  
social media accounts illustrate how national security hardliners from the  
Hershey Fund and Atlantic Council (and whoever was behind  
them) have instrumentalized the manufactured panic around Russian  
espionage to generate public support for a wider campaign of media

confrontation in Berlin with Sprague, **Fly noted with apparent approval**  
**that the mantra of foreign interference expands to a new adversarial**  
**campaign. A lampdown on voices of dissent in online media is almost certain to**

be followed, ***"This is just the beginning."***

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