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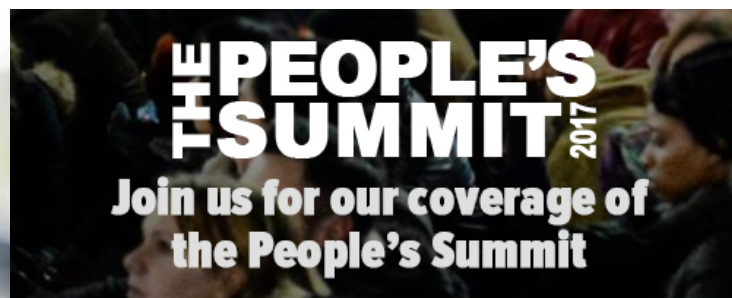
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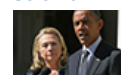
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Warfare State at War with Trump as he Plans Warfare Against Iran - RAI with Norman Solomon (2/4)

Norman Solomon joins Paul Jay on Reality Asserts Itself discussing the Trump/Russia affair and plans to isolate and perhaps attack Iran

FULL EPISODE

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TRANSCRIPT

Paul Jay: Welcome The Real News Network and welcome to Reality Asserts Itself. I'm Paul Jay. We're continuing our discussion with Norman Solomon, and he joins us now in the studio. Thanks for joining again, Norman.



Norman Solomon: Thanks Paul.

Paul Jay: One more time. Norman is executive director of the Institute for Public Accuracy, co-founder of the national group RootsAction.org, and one of his recent books is *Made Love, Got War: Close Encounters with America's Warfare State*. There's a lot going on with America's warfare state right now. Much of America's warfare state seems to be at war with the president and Commander in Chief of the warfare state. In the first segment of our interview, we talked about the fight within the Democratic Party in California and otherwise, and this issue of what is a progressive. Hillary branding herself a progressive and part of the resistance. Everyone is calling them progressive these days. Chuck Schumer is now the latest progressive who's someone who can't be more associated with Wall Street and the oligarchy and such. What do you think is a progressive take on the furor in D.C. about Comey, the firing of Comey, Trump's leaks to the Russians and so on?

Norman Solomon: Well, first I want to say with reference to your initial comments there that Obama eight years had a huge affect of normalizing perpetual war, and many organizations who should have known better collectively played along with it through silence, a very powerful silence as Obama normalized the drone war, made bipartisan the so-called misnamed War on Terror and so forth. When we get to issues like what Trump's foreign policy is, the pressure on Trump and so forth, can the CIA be trusted? All those constellations of issues. There's a been a sort of a dumbing down for lack of a better term politically among part of the progressive liberal, whatever you want to call it, Democratic Party align base.

I think that has handicapped our capacities as organizations quite often to be discerning about what's happening with Comey. Every since inauguration essentially, even before, I've heard many progressive groups cite a statement from say James Clapper, the former director of National Intelligence, saying XYZ and asserting well then it is fact. It's a sort of a political amnesia induced or encouraged by mass media to ever forget that just a few months before Edward Snowden stepped forward with his revelations, Clapper under oath testified before a Congressional Committee and told in response to a question from Senator Ron Wyden the country that the NSA in no way eavesdrops, spies on American citizens through email or phone calls. A flagrant lie, and yet we've been encouraged to believe that people like Clapper in real time now are trustworthy. Same thing with the CIA.

Of course all those agencies were saying the same thing Clapper was saying. It's a lack of I think

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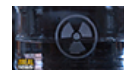
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willingness perhaps to understand the history of what are these intelligence agencies about, and their jobs are and they're run by people whose jobs are to lie. To me, that's an important context for this whole thing about Trump and Russia and foreign policy. One other thing I'd add to this, Paul, is that I fear that quite often we on the left can fall into the media propaganda idea that it's black or white, a binary, it's either/or, and it can be both. There can these intelligence agencies that want to get rid of Trump for nefarious reasons to perpetuate or fulfill their warfare state agenda, and it's also true that Trump lies methodically and he is incredibly greedy. He's with other people incredible greedy, and they want to perpetuate their accumulation of wealth, and they're willing to do that, and they have no respect for democracy. In other words, I mean the CIA might be framing a guilty man so to speak.

Paul Jay: Before we started the interview, we were chatting off camera. We're saying we should look at this whole Comey fight and the Trump war with the warfare state. Look at it not from the point of view of one section of the elite or the other, because there's obviously a great number of fractures amongst the elites. A lot of them are at each other's throats. Through the media and otherwise they would like the people to pick on of the sides of these elites and support them. We're saying well let's look at it from the point of view of the people, what's in the people's interest as opposed to one faction of the elite or the other.

I think this relates to the first segment of our interview. We were talking about the fight within the Democratic Party and the fight against the oligarchy that represents the control of the DNC and the Democratic Party. It comes very much to this question of what you make of Chuck Schumer and his allies. The anti-Russia kick is being used as a way to wound the Trump presidency, and for good reason many people all of whom consider themselves progressive would like to wound the Trump presidency, and for good reason. I mean, I personally think this Trump/Pence presidency will be in terms of foreign policy as or more dangerous as the Bush/Cheney administration. Domestically, they'll be clearly far worse. You can see from the Cabinet appointments and Supreme Court and such. Opposition to that Trump camp that merges with the Schumer camp means merges with the oligarchy within the Democrat Party. Actually winds up just strengthening the people that are really behind the scenes that benefit from an oligarchy domestic policy and oligarchy foreign policy.

Norman Solomon: Yeah, I think we're in a new configuration, to some degree unprecedented, and yet it has a very familiar ring to it. There's that saying, history doesn't exactly repeat itself, but it tends to rhyme an awful lot. Even though in the case of the Trump administration, it's just like in category of you can't make this stuff up; it seems so chaotic and absurd. At the same time, they've always been splits in ruling circles. Progressives who have as you allude to the well being of humanity at heart and that's our aspiration, we deal with these contradictions of on the one hand we can't turn up our nose on reforms. No, it doesn't ring true to say that it doesn't matter who's president. I mean, that's an absurd and somewhat popular position among some factions of the left, where all you got to do is say Ruth Bader Ginsburg or [Alito 00:07:33] or the latest right winger, they put on Gorsuch. This matters. We need to be real about that.

At the same time, there is a warfare state and both parties are part of it, and we can in no way, or we should not in any way accept any of those positions. Doesn't matter if they have a D or R after their name. When they whore themselves out to Wall Street on Capitol Hill, we got to say that is taking food out of people's mouths. That is taking healthcare away from people who will die as a result. I think we need to be crystal clear around that.

Paul Jay: At the heart of this issue of Comey and the elections and such is an underlying assumption in the media, in the political world, that Russia is America's adversary, antagonistic adversary. You hear this word over and over again. I mean, if Trump had been sitting down with the Canadians and gave them some intelligence about ISIS, nobody would have cared. If he had been sitting down with Germany, nobody would have cared because they're our allies. What is a progressive view do you think on this whole demonization of Putin and the Russians?

Norman Solomon: Well, at RootsAction.org which I co-founded with Jeff Cohen, we're unfortunately somewhat unusual in that as a large online action group, and we have one and a half million active people now. We refuse to jump on the anti-Russia bandwagon. It's absolutely tragic that so many people who I believe should know better are jumping in to fueling what amounts to a new cold war. We've got to ask ourselves, where does that lead? This anti-Russia hoopla, this bandwagon. Where is it headed? It's headed toward increased tension with another huge nuclear power. There are 4,000 nuclear weapons pointed from Russia, mostly in U.S. direction and vice versa. What's the end

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game here? Do we want to conflict in eastern Europe or elsewhere, Ukraine that could escalate into nuclear war? Is it really worth it to score some political points real or imagined against Republicans and heighten the chance that the world will end up with nuclear holocaust? I think the irresponsibility of so many left liberal groups in jumping on the anti-Russia bandwagon is mind-blowing. The idea-

Paul Jay: Only because it damages Trump. If Obama had been proposing exactly the same thing, they all about have been for it.

Norman Solomon: Well, it's seen as a tool, a club to hit Trump over the head with. I believe that there are certainly other impeachable offenses. As a matter of fact, Roots Action together with Free Speech for People launched the Impeach Donald Trump Now Campaign. We're on the web doing that as we speak. We're just about at one million signers. We're talking about since day one Trump as president violating the foreign and domestic Emoluments Clauses of the Constitution. You're not supposed to have that financial conflict of interest according to the supreme law of the land. He's doing it. That should be sufficient for impeachment if we had people on Capitol Hill who are willing to move forward on the basis of principle.

I think from the standpoint of world security, the idea that the juggernaut of rhetoric against Russia should be fueled by Democrats, I think it's similar to the CEOs of the corporations who will look at the next two quarters and they think it's to their advantage to do a poisonous dump into the river because they're going to make a profit. People like Pelosi and Schumer and their acolytes in the media and among Democratic Party groups, they are poisoning our future because they think they're going to make headway.

Paul Jay: Well, literally because what they're telling us is that Russia is a greater threat to America than climate change.

Norman Solomon: Yeah, [crosstalk 00:11:27].

Paul Jay: They don't talk about climate change at all and they never shut up about Russia.

Norman Solomon: It's also a way to displace reality about what happened in 2016. They want to pretend that the election of Trump and the anti-Democratic factors in the U.S. came primarily or largely from Kremlin. I think that is absolutely absurd.

Paul Jay: Not talk at all about the substance of what was released in Wikileaks, which is if the DNC hadn't been plodding against Sanders, there never would have been an issue in the first place.

Norman Solomon: It wasn't fake news. It was accurate. We can argue about whether it should have been released or not, but was totally accurate. There was nothing fake about it, and there's no focus at all then on the caging of the hundreds of thousands of registered voters, the way structurally in state after state people of color or poor people were discouraged from or sometimes prevented from voting. The death of a thousand cuts to democracy, that is a panoply of self-inflicted wounds. The absurdity of Democrats or anyone else pointing to the Kremlin when we have a lack of democracy in our own country that is fully homegrown, I think that is a real abdication or moral and political responsibility.

Paul Jay: I mean, as a news organization, we report on Putin's autocracy. We report on the suppression of civil rights and human rights in Russia. We reported on the killing of journalists in Russia. The oligarchs of Russia are ... People have called it a kleptocracy. One of our guests often calls capitalism in Russia Jurassic Park capitalism because it's so barbaric. All of that being said, Russia's done nothing on a global scale that compares with the crimes of U.S. foreign policy. How do these liberals, progressives, whatever they want to call themselves, keep forgetting that?

Norman Solomon: Well, FAIR, the media watch group that I've been an associate with has pointed out that in 1996 Time magazine did a cover story bragging about how the U.S. had gotten Boris Yeltsin re-elected. Direct interference. If we're going to look at the realities, the geopolitical realities, the fact that the U.S. has expanded NATO up to the borders of Russia and therefore greatly increase ... I mean, can you imagine the Warsaw Pact expanding to Mexico or Canada? That action which is contravention of what the first President Bush promised to Gorbachev that this would not happen after the Berlin Wall fell. This is an example where we've got to look at the world from other vantage points, not just the myopic, jingoistic, red, white and blue lenses that we're encouraged to look

through.

Paul Jay: The core of the narrative of the military industrial complex, the core of the narrative that justifies an almost trillion dollar military intelligence, security budget and perhaps more than a trillion dollars. Is Russia the existential threat? They have what? 60 and more years invested in that narrative, and along comes with Trump, and he wants to undo the narrative. It's very interesting that he only lost the popular vote by three million. He wins the Electoral College. Most Americans, they don't need this Russia is the boogiemán story. We're very open to have a more rational policy towards Russia, but it takes out. You don't need aircraft carriers if you're only fighting ISIS.

Norman Solomon: One of the insidious things is that when somebody opens his or her mouth and points out some of these factors, increasingly they're being accused of being some sort of symp for flunky or ideological ally with the Kremlin. When you look at the impact of that, it is calculated to have impact on Trump as well. A broken clock is correct once in a while, and broken as he is politically and psychologically, when Trump says it would be good to get along with Russia, that is what one president after another in his saner moments has said when you got these two huge super powers. As a matter of fact, we're coming up very close to the 50th anniversary of the Spirit of Glassboro meeting where Kosygin from Russia and President Lyndon Johnson met to further détente. If people want to win their jingoistic, nationalistic, ideological war, and blow up the world with nuclear weapons, that's going to be a very small comfort that they stuck to their pride in America as they perceive it.

This is a calculated pressure. I'll give this one other example. A calculated pressure to push Trump away from any rational relationship with the Kremlin. You know that the Center for American Progress, the Podesta outfits, still closely intertwined and aligned with the Clinton wing of the party; they in recent months have launched something called the Moscow Project. They're crowdsourcing explicitly any bit of information that can tie any Trump associate or Trump himself to Russia. They've got a huge amount of money. They explicitly are trying to bring Trump down on the basis of Russia, and I think that's very dangerous.

Paul Jay: I do not personally trust Trump's intent for wanting to reconcile with Russia. I think there's abundance of evidence that it's a foci fuel play. This is why Tillerson got this Friendship Award when he was at Exxon. They want to lift sanctions on Russia because they want to have ... Putin seems to be willing to make a deal where they're going to let western capital, western foci fuel companies come in and make a lot more money out of Russian oil, but who cares about the intent? Maybe that's his intent, but the policy of having a more normalized relationship with Russia and reducing the tensions, that has to be good for people. It also seems so bloody obvious. What do you make of somebody like Rachel Maddow, who's like the spokeswoman now for this liberal supposed progressive position who cannot stop talking about what a great threat Russia is?

Norman Solomon: Rachel Maddow has gotten more and more ratings. She was featured on the front page of the New York Times. This is an example of personal careers being advanced while the future of humanity and odds that humanity can survive and thrive are being diminished in the process. I wrote a piece few weeks ago that was headed something like, Is Rachel Maddow Becoming the Liberal Glenn Beck? With the blackboard and connecting the points. A lot of it doesn't stand up journalistically. She's on a crusade against Russia. I think it's frankly horrendous, and it's taking a lot of people along with her. There was a study published by The Intercept a few weeks ago that actually calibrated how much time she's spent on her primetime program.

Paul Jay: Yeah. That was done by Aaron Maté who works with us.

Norman Solomon: Oh, yeah. It's a very, very important article. It shows if my memory serves me about half of her show going to that. What isn't going to that? First it whips up this defacto war hysteria. This is supposed to be our main problem? It shunts aside or totally eliminates the vast number of assaults on our well being, the social fabric, the environment by the Trump administration itself.

Paul Jay: It goes another step, which I think is even more dangerous, because in spite of all the rhetoric against Russia, I don't think any of these forces are planning a real war against Russia. The military industrial complex love it, love an almost-war because it justifies these massive expenditures. The Democratic Party liberal establishment loves it because they're drawing some blood in terms of partisan politics. Rachel Maddow does something else, and this is more dangerous.

She also goes after Iran in various of her shows. One in particular we replayed on The Real News. She talks about Iran as the greatest source of global terrorism.

Norman Solomon: That's ridiculous.

Paul Jay: She uses the phrase I believe three to four times in one show. Of course not giving any example where Iran's been supportive of global terrorism. Sure, Iran supports Hezbollah, but one can argue about Hezbollah as a legitimate defender of Lebanon. You can go through the other things that Iran's involved with, but if there's a country that that actually the source of global terrorism, and if there's a country that's actually the face of Steve Bannon's Islamic fascism, it's Saudi Arabia, where Trump is going to. I'm not sure when we're airing this episode, whether before or after the trip. That being said, they're planning to build a broad front of Arab countries led by Saudi Arabia that can isolate and perhaps launch some kind of attack against Iran.

Norman Solomon: Well, this is a very insidious hewing to and fueling a party line that has very little to do with reality. The contradiction you're pointing out in terms of Saudi Arabia as a case in point. Brinkmanship has always been popular. The fact is there's a nuclear war trip wire, and the more you engage in as a country, brinkmanship, the greater the danger. Yeah, to just stop short of that, we've had the world almost blown up a number of times, some of them not very publicized. The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists has a doomsday clock, and in January of this year, they moved it even closer to midnight which represents the nuclear holocaust potential of the nuclear arsenals. They cite relations between the U.S. and Russia getting worse as a reason why they've moved the doomsday clock closer. We're looking at members of the Senate, members of the House, people like Rachel Maddow, and many other Democratic Party aligned groups who are willing to not only watch but help move the hands of the doomsday clock closer to midnight, and they think they're going to get partisan advantage from it.

Paul Jay: If Trump does what we think here or I think and people I'm interviewing think, does what we think he's going to do, which use the attack on ISIS to build up American troops in Syria but even more so in Iraq and go back into Iraq. Do what Trump says he's going to do. He said it at the CIA, "Let's have a second crack at grabbing Iraqi oil." If it's all framed as anti-Iran and anti-ISIS, but anti-Iran, well then out there's going to be Chuck Schumer and Rachel Maddow. All of a sudden, Trump's going to be their guy as he was when he threw those missiles at the Syrian airbase.

Norman Solomon: Which is irrational and counterfactual. I mean, just starting with the Iranian government is aligned with ISIS. I mean, either it's ignorance or willful.

Paul Jay: I'm not suggesting he'll ties those two together.

Norman Solomon: Right.

Paul Jay: Tie the two things together.

Norman Solomon: Yes. [crosstalk 00:22:25].

Paul Jay: We need to go fight ISIS and we need to go isolate Iran.

Norman Solomon: Yes. They're incompatible and for many people they're totally compatible. Of course sending more troops back into Afghanistan as well. I mean, this is just ... I went to Afghanistan brief visit in 2009. I came back, I did a report for a couple of Congressional offices. I said, "The wheels are coming off." I'm not brilliant. I just saw what people were experiencing, were telling me, that this is ... There is a belief that these are stupid decisions on their own terms. In a way, if you're running an military industrial complex, if you want to justify huge profiteering for the war contractors, then you've got to keep the whole war machine removing, and so I believe those forces are content. They don't want to end war. They need war. Let me just recall that the great Nobel winning biologist, George Wald in 1969 gave what became a very famous speech at MIT where he said, "The U.S. government is the business of death." That was true then, and it's true now.

Paul Jay: All right. Okay. In the next part of our interview, we're going to learn a little bit about Norman's history and then take his history up to what happened at the Democratic Party Convention with the Sanders/Clinton showdown, because he was very much in the thick of it as a leading member of the California delegation. Join us for the next segment with Norman on Reality Asserts

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