

British Establishment lays out its plan to control the internet

By Richard Bardon

16 Apr.—Behind a smokescreen of feigned concern over the welfare of children and the prevention of terrorism, the UK government's 8 April 2019 Online Harms White Paper is nothing less than an attempt to usher in a level of censorship the totalitarian regimes of the past could only dream of. Unless PM Theresa May's government disintegrates in the meantime, the end of a twelve-week "public consultation" whose outcome, if history is any guide, is already pre-determined, will see legislation introduced to control everything Britons see, hear and say on the internet.

In a speech to mark the White Paper's launch, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) secretary Jeremy Wright MP said that the internet is in many ways "a powerful force for good ... [which] can forge connections, share knowledge and spread opportunity across the world. But it can also be used to promote terrorism,

undermine civil discourse, spread disinformation, and abuse or bully", and so must be controlled to protect "the most vulnerable in our society", beginning with the estimated 99 per cent of 12- to 15-year-olds who spend time online. The government therefore proposes to create an "independent" regulator empowered to direct news websites, social media providers and any other "online companies" that "[allow] users to share or discover user-generated content, or interact with each other online"—pretty much the entire internet, in other words—to remove "harmful" materials. "We are consulting in the White Paper not just on remedial notices and substantial fines", Wright said, "but also on senior management liability and the blocking of websites. ... [T]his will be a regulatory approach designed to encourage good behaviour as well as to punish bad behaviour." A joint press release from the DCMS and Home Office (which co-produced the White Paper) added that online companies' new responsibilities "will

include a mandatory ‘duty of care’ ... to take reasonable steps to keep their users safe and tackle illegal and harmful activity on their services” (emphasis added).

Legality and truth irrelevant

And there, as Shakespeare might say, is the rub. Though several examples of “online harms” are given, the term itself is not defined. The categories of “harms” onto which Wright, Home Secretary Sajid Javid and PM May have sought to direct the public’s attention—such as child sexual exploitation and abuse, the dissemination of terrorist propaganda, racial and religious vilification, and incitement to violence—are *already illegal*, and therefore already within the bailiwick of one or another law-enforcement or security agency, whose powers could be clarified or expanded at need with only minor amendments to existing law. By including in its scope “behaviours which are harmful but not necessarily illegal”, the legislation mooted in the White Paper will rather be aimed at inducing social media, online news services and the general public to police their own and each other’s behaviour, out of fear that any content which “undermines” the Establishment’s agenda will be arbitrarily criminalised as “disinformation” and get them banned from the internet.

Moreover, the White Paper makes clear that truth is no defence: “Companies will be required to ensure that algorithms selecting content [in news searches and on social media] do not skew towards extreme and unreliable material in the pursuit of sustained user engagement. Importantly, the code of practice that addresses disinformation will ensure the focus is on protecting users from harm, not judging what is true or not” (emphasis added). With truth eliminated as a criterion, the standard for what can be considered “disinformation” would appear to be anything that reduces “confidence in public institutions, [and] trust in electoral processes”—quite ironic coming from a government that has spent nearly three years undermining confidence in itself by trying to pin blame for Brexit, and all its myriad other problems, on a Russian “foreign interference” campaign (of whose existence it has presented not a shred of evidence) it has been powerless to stop. Britain has also been exposed recently, including by this news service, as itself the greatest disseminator of disinformation in the world, via agencies such as the Integrity Initiative, a fake NGO that uses its networks of political, military, academic and media contacts to interfere in the politics of allied countries;¹ and the 77th Brigade, a British Army info-war unit specialising in cyber operations at home and abroad, including psychological warfare via social media.²

The White Paper leaves open whether the “independent regulator” responsible for enforcing the censorship regime will be created anew, or new powers will be handed to an existing body. The most likely candidate is an expanded version of the so-called Rapid Response Unit (RRU), a task force created on a trial basis in April 2018 and made permanent in February of this year. Government Communications Service (GCS) Executive Director Alex Aiken first foreshadowed the RRU’s creation in a January 2018 column for public-relations industry magazine *PRWeek*. As *AAS* reported at the time,³ “Aiken wrote that among GCS’s



‘strategic challenges’ for 2018 would be to build a ‘rapid response social media capability’, led by a new team in the Cabinet Office, to ‘reclaim’ public debate by ‘challenging declining trust in institutions through honest [sic], relevant and responsive campaigns’. In order to do so, he continued, GCS must: ‘Work harder to master the techniques of behavioural science [i.e. how to manipulate public opinion] and start considering audiences by personality as well as demographic’; ‘Create engaging content that will be shared and owned by audiences—pictures, videos and facts’; and ‘Transform the mass of data we have about audiences into actionable insight, which will be used to improve government campaigns.’” And because it works from the Cabinet level, we reported, the RRU “[has] at its disposal the resources of the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), the UK’s electronic espionage agency ... [which] monitors every electronic communication (emails, telephone calls, internet traffic, online shopping and instore funds transfers, you name it) in the UK—and most of the world besides, through the UK’s ‘Five Eyes’ intelligence-sharing partnership with Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the USA—and stores all of it, forever.”

In a 19 July 2018 GCS press release, Aiken bragged of how well the RRU had worked to promote the government’s lying justification of the April 2018 US-UK-French missile strikes on Syria as a response to Syria’s use of the banned chemical weapon Sarin. Aiken wrote: “following the Syria airstrikes, the unit identified that a number of false narratives from alternative news sources were gaining traction online. ... Due to the way that search engine algorithms work, when people searched for information on the strikes, these unreliable sources were appearing above official UK government information. In fact, no government information was appearing on the first 15 pages of Google results. ... The unit therefore ensured those using search terms that indicated bias—such as ‘false flag’—were presented with factual [sic] information on the UK’s response. The RRU improved the ranking from below 200 to number one within a matter of hours.” Of course, it turned out that the “false narrative” was the one being spread by the UK government: the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons’ (OPCW) investigation of the alleged incident categorically ruled out the use of Sarin, and could not even determine that any chemical weapon (e.g. chlorine) had been used at all, let alone who might have been responsible if it had.⁴

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1. “Integrity Initiative: Britain’s foreign interference machinery exposed”, *AAS*, 5 Dec. 2018.

2. “British Intelligence reactivates Empire’s tools for worldwide dirty tricks”, *AAS*, 30 Jan. 2019.

3. “Welcome to Mrs May’s Ministry of Truth”, *AAS*, 31 Jan. 2018.

4. “OPCW Douma report does not implicate Syrian government in ‘gas attack’”, *AAS*, 13 Mar. 2019.

by some combination of MI6 and the FBI to entrap low-level Trump campaign aide George Papadopoulos.

Congressional investigation

Democrats are now up in arms over House Intelligence Committee Co-Chair Nunes's seeking a meeting with Attorney General Barr to obtain further details for his probe into the perpetrators of the Trump-Russia collusion hoax. Nunes has asked Barr to meet with him and fellow Committee member John Ratcliffe, a Republican and former Federal prosecutor.

Increasing the Democrats' nervousness is the fact that Representative Mark Meadows (Republican of North Carolina) and fellow Freedom Caucus Republican Jim Jordan have met with the inspector general of the Justice Department. On 21 March these two Congressmen demanded in writing that Barr act on the criminal referral by IG Horowitz regarding former FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe, a central figure in the unfolding of the Russia-Trump collusion hoax. McCabe was already cited by Horowitz in an earlier IG report on the FBI's

mishandling of an investigation into candidate Hillary Clinton's email server. He was named as one of a number of FBI officials whose well-documented animus towards Trump has coloured their behaviour, in violation of the law.

In the TV interview in which he announced the criminal referrals, Nunes expressed confidence that Attorney General Barr will treat seriously any collusion by the FBI, DOJ, and CIA with British intelligence figures to bring down a President. He described the hoax as "McCarthyism meets Watergate", alluding to the anti-Communist witch hunts of the 1950s and the scandals that led to President Richard Nixon's resignation in 1974.

The ultimate test of the seriousness of the new investigation is whether it fully takes on the official British role in kicking off the assault. It didn't start or end with MI6 hoaxer Christopher Steele, but went to the very top of the GCHQ. Robert Hannigan suddenly and mysteriously resigned as GCHQ head on 23 January 2017, just days after Trump was inaugurated. What does he know?

Carter tells Trump: China is getting ahead of us because it's not focused on war

15 Apr. (EIRNS)—President Trump and former President Jimmy Carter had a phone conversation over the weekend, discussing relations with China.

According to a tweet by Emma Hurt from National Public Radio's Atlanta affiliate, Carter commented on his discussion with Trump while speaking at Sunday School at his church in Plains, Georgia, where he said that during their telephone conversation, the US President was rightly concerned that "China is getting ahead of us".

"Carter said that's true. He suggested maybe it's because China hasn't been spending money on war like the USA. They haven't been at war since we normalised diplomatic relations. He pointed out that of 242 years of existence, the United States has been at peace for only 16 of them", Hurt tweeted.

The USA, Carter said, "is the most warlike nation in the history of the world", because it seeks to impose its values on the world. China, on the other hand, is investing its resources in such projects as high-speed rail. "How many

miles of high-speed rail do we have in this country?" he asked, according to NPR. He estimated that the USA has wasted about \$3 trillion in military spending, while "China has not wasted a single penny on war, and that's why they're ahead of us, in almost every single way."

"And I think the difference is if you take \$3 trillion and put it in American infrastructure, you'd probably have \$2 trillion left over. We'd have high-speed railways. We'd have bridges that aren't collapsing. We'd have roads that are maintained properly. Our education system would be as good as that of, say, South Korea or Hong Kong."

The former President said he thought President Trump had called him in response to a letter Carter had written him on relations between the USA and China, *The Washington Examiner* reported. According to *The Hill*, citing the White House, Trump said he had received a "beautiful letter" from Carter, about the administration's ongoing trade negotiations with China. The White House said they discussed China and "numerous other topics".

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Australia on board

The Five Eyes apparatus has wasted no time taking Britain's internet censorship global, and as usual, Canberra is in the vanguard. The *Australian* reported 19 March that in the wake of Australian terrorist Brenton Tarrant's 15 March attack on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, which was live-streamed on Facebook for 17 minutes, Prime Minister Scott Morrison had written a "strident" letter to his Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe, the current chairman of the Group of 20 (G20) industrialised nations, declaring it "unacceptable to treat the internet as an ungoverned space" and demanding that the forum "elevate social media governance as a top-order agenda item for the world leaders' meeting in June". In a 30 March press release Morrison announced that legislation would be introduced the following week "to force social media companies to get their act together and work with law enforcement and intelligence agencies to defuse the threat their technologies can present", making Australia the

first country in the world where said companies will be fined millions of dollars and their executives jailed should they fail to comply. The *Criminal Code Amendment (Sharing of Abhorrent Violent Material) Act 2019* was rushed through Parliament on 4 April and received royal assent the following day. As it has done with other recent draconian "national security" laws, Labor ignored the warnings of experts—such as Law Council of Australia president Arthur Moses SC, who cautioned in a 4 April statement that "Laws formulated as a knee-jerk reaction to a tragic event ... can have myriad unintended consequences. Whistleblowers may no longer be able to deploy social media to shine a light on atrocities committed around the world.... It could also lead to censorship of the media"—and waved the bill through with no debate, saying it would amend the law should it win government at the 18 May federal election. Sooner or later it may dawn upon Mr Moses and other well-meaning critics that these "unintended consequences" are nothing of the sort.