

Fake intellectuals working for Think Tanks funded by the Arms Industry are driving support for war after war after war

By [Jeremy Kuzmarov](#) (Posted Jan 14, 2024)

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Jonathan Panikoff [Source: atlanticcouncil.org]

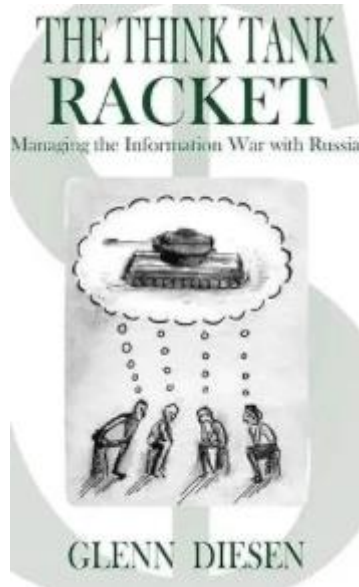
A few days after the October 7 attacks in northern Israel, The Atlantic Council ran an [inflammatory article](#) on its website by Jonathan Panikoff, a former deputy national intelligence officer, entitled “It doesn’t matter whether Iran planned the Hamas attack—Tehran is still to blame.”¹

The article referenced a *Wall Street Journal* article that claimed unfoundedly that Iran was responsible for planning the attacks, and expressed belief that even if Iran didn’t directly plan it, Iran was still responsible because it had supported Hamas in the past.

The article went on to support an aggressive military response by the U.S. and Israel that could potentially entail bombing Iran. The latter was a long-held dream of neoconservatives who have wanted to overthrow the regime of the Ayatollahs since it took over from the Shah, a U.S. and Israeli client, in a 1979 revolution.

Glenn Diesen, *The Think Tank Racket: Managing the Information War With Russia* (Clarity Press, 2023) looks at the influence of think tanks like The

Atlantic Council in driving gargantuan U.S. military budgets and endless wars that have no end in sight.



[Source: [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)]

The Atlantic Council has been particularly hawkish with regards to Russia, helping to fuel a proxy war between the U.S. and Russia in Ukraine that has decimated a generation of Ukrainian and Russian youth and left us on the threshold of World War III.

Diesen is an associate professor at the University of Southeast Norway and an associate editor of the journal *Russia in Global Affairs*.

His book emphasizes the undue influence that think tank pseudo-intellectuals play because of their ubiquitous presence in the mainstream media as well as academia and because of their authorship of policy reports that often guide government policy.

Rather than being even-handed or in any way objective in their analysis, the think tank fellows follow a preordained narrative.

According to Diesen, their job is to manufacture consent for the goals of their paymasters—weapons manufacturers and oil companies who profit off of war along with foreign governments courting more U.S. military aid.



Hillary “the hawk” Clinton at 2013 Atlantic Council awards ceremony. [Source: mronline.org]

Diesen writes that “think-tanks have become a symptom of hyper-capitalism in which all aspects of society have become an appendage to the market. Even political influence is regulated by the free-market, in which think tanks are an important component.”

Diesen notes that a brilliant achievement of propaganda has been to convince the population that propaganda is only an instrument of authoritarian states—that the U.S. is supposedly combating—and not liberal democracies.

The think tanks help condition the public to fear foreign threats and support wars of aggression under the veneer of providing independent expert analysis.

Paul Craig Roberts, the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Economic Policy under Ronald Reagan, has called The Atlantic Council the “marketing arm of the military-security complex,” while Diesen calls it “NATO’s Propaganda Wing.”

The Atlantic Council’s financial report from 2019/2020 reveals that it received over \$1 million from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), according to Diesen. It also received major contributions from the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Facebook, Goldman Sachs, The Rockefeller Foundation, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), U.S. State Department, a Saudi oil billionaire (Bahaa Hariri), Ukrainian oligarch Viktor Pinchuk, Crescent Petroleum, and Burisma, an energy company owned by

Ukrainian oligarchs which appointed Hunter Biden to its board along with former CIA counter-terrorism director Cofer Black.



[Source: thelibertybeacon.com]

The Atlantic Council's close ties to the CIA were further evident when its former executive vice-president, Damon Wilson, was appointed CEO of the NED, a CIA offshoot that promotes propaganda and supports dissidents in countries whose governments have been targeted by the U.S. for regime change.

Former CIA Director James R. Woolsey is listed as a lifetime director of the Atlantic Council, while former CIA Directors Leon Panetta, Robert Gates and David Petraeus are listed on its Board, along with such war criminals as Henry Kissinger, and Condeleezza Rice.

Over the past decade, the Atlantic Council has published countless reports on Russia's kleptocracy and disinformation being spread allegedly by Vladimir Putin, and has hosted anti-Russian dissidents and Belarusian opposition figures such as Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, who called for more aggressive intervention by the U.S. in Belarusian politics.

One of The Atlantic Council's fellows, Michael Weiss, spreads his anti-Russia invective as an editor at the popular online media outlet, The Daily Beast. He helps run a neo-McCarthyite website, PropOrNot that promotes the worst kind of fear mongering imaginable, attacking independent media outlets, including the Ron Paul Institute, for allegedly advancing Russian propaganda.

In 2015, the Atlantic Council helped prepare a proposal for arming the Ukrainian military with offensive weaponry like Javelin anti-tank missiles—the same year that it presented its Distinguished Leadership Award to Marilyn Adams Hewson, then the CEO of Lockheed Martin, which produces Javelin missiles and many other lethal weapons.

Since the commencement of Russia's special military operation in Ukraine, The Atlantic Council has doubled down on its long-standing Russophobia, calling for bombing Russia and starting World War III.



Then-Vice President Joe Biden at the 2011 Atlantic Council Distinguished Leadership Awards ceremony. [Source: grayzoneproject.com]

Last February, Matthew Kroenig, the Deputy Director of the Atlantic Council's Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security, argued for consideration of the U.S. preemptive use of 'tactical' nuclear weapons.² This would not only kill thousands of people directly but likely cause what scientists characterize as a "nuclear winter" by injecting so much smoke and debris into the air that it will block sunlight and cause a precipitous drop in global temperatures, affecting food production across the globe.

Triggering New Cold and Hot Wars

The Atlantic Council's support for war with Russia is characteristic of think tanks which played a crucial role in pushing the decision to expand NATO after the Cold War.

George F. Kennan and other foreign policy experts had warned against this because NATO was perceived as a hostile military alliance by Russia and it would undermine new European security initiatives involving Russia. Vietnam War architect Robert S. McNamara at the time also called for a new "peace dividend" by which the U.S. would reduce its military budget and address social needs with taxpayer dollars.

The overriding imperative of the weapons industry, however, was to revitalize cold war thinking to ensure continuously high military budgets and the expansion of NATO and the think-tanks were enlisted to fulfill that end.



George F. Kennan [Source: [history.com](https://www.history.com)]

Diesen points out that the Brookings Institute, one of the oldest American think tanks, played an instrumental role in the [Russia Gate hoax](#), which greatly contributed to the spread of Russophobia underlying the U.S. proxy war against Russia in Ukraine.

A primary researcher and contributor to the Steele dossier, the seminal document in Russia Gate which spread false information about Donald Trump being blackmailed because of an alleged encounter with Russian prostitutes, was an employee of the Brookings Institute named Igor Danchenko, who was indicted by Special Counsel John Durham for lying to the FBI.

Working under Fiona Hill, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institute and renowned anti-Russian hawk, Danchenko claimed to have accrued incriminating information against Trump from a meeting with Russian-American Chamber of Commerce President Sergey Millian, who said that this meeting never actually took place.³



[Source: bitcoinist.com]

The Atlantic Council was another false purveyor of Russia Gate whose revenues increased tenfold from 2006-2016 when it began demonizing Vladimir Putin and smearing politicians like Tulsi Gabbard who advocated for cooperative diplomacy between the U.S. and Russia.

Leaving out the fact that Putin revitalized Russia's economy after the failed privatization and shock therapy initiatives of the 1990s, The Atlantic Council made people believe that Putin invaded Ukraine on a whim and would destabilize all of Europe if he was not stopped.

This kind of analysis obscures the true origins of the conflict in Ukraine and the Western role in supporting NATO expansion and a 2014 coup against Ukraine's legally elected government led by Viktor Yanukovych, which led to the outbreak of civil war.

The Atlantic Council continues today along with other think-tanks to whitewash Ukrainian war crimes, corruption and close ties with the far-right and neo-Nazis.



[Source: europeanloaded.com]

Michael McFaul of the Hoover Institute even celebrates Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's crackdown on opposition politicians and media, while hypocritically framing the struggle against Russia as one of authoritarianism versus democracy.

McFaul and others have made clear that a primary U.S. foreign policy goal is to try and delink Ukraine and the rest of Europe from Russia while expanding U.S. natural gas sales in Europe.

In 2019, the RAND Corporation, the think tank of the intelligence agencies, issued a report calling for threatening NATO expansion and the arming of Ukraine in order to draw Russia into a conflict that would facilitate its overextension militarily and economically and cause the Russian government to lose domestic and international support.



The think tanks' favorite: Alexei Navalny [Source: [cnn.com](https://www.cnn.com)]

The same report advocated for intensifying the ideological and information war against Russia to weaken the legitimacy and stability of its government, and voiced support for the anti-corruption crusade of opposition leader Alexei Navalny, whom Diesen identifies as a British intelligence asset supportive of policies designed to weaken the Russian Federation.

RAND earlier had advocated for provoking civil war within Syria through covert action and informational warfare and by capitalizing on the sustained Shia-Sunni conflict in order to undermine the nationalist Assad regime and draw Russia into the conflict there.

RAND also advocated for the destabilization of the Caucasus in order to cause a fissure between Russia and its traditional ally, Armenia, hence weakening Russia.

This latter goal was achieved when Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan expressed no-confidence in Russia's ability to protect it after Azerbaijan—heavily armed by the U.S. and Israel—invaded the Armenian enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh.

RAND had also issued policy recommendations for reducing Russian influence in Moldova and undercutting Russian trade with Central Asia and promoted regime change in Belarus to destabilize a Russian ally and alter the country's orientation westward.

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Vladimir Putin shakes hands with Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. RAND advocated for trying to weaken Russian relations with its Armenian ally, which has been achieved in the face of an Azerbaijani invasion of the Armenian enclave of Nagorno Karabakh. [Source: [reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com)]

Following this prescription, the NED and other U.S. agencies provoked an uprising in 2020 against Belarus' socialist leader Alexander Lukashenko, who was demonized in western media though he helped curb inequality and poverty considerably while resisting the rapid privatization initiatives carried out by other post-Soviet leaders.

CNAS and Team Biden

One of the most influential think tanks today is the Center For a New American Security (CNAS), which received huge sums from oil companies like Chevron and BP, financial giants like Bank of America, and J.P. Morgan Chase, and Amazon and Google from Big Tech.

CNAS's former CEO, Victoria Nuland, was a former adviser to Dick Cheney and a key architect behind the 2014 coup in Ukraine.⁴

CNAS' founder, Michèle Flournoy, was a board member of the defense contractor Booz Allen Hamilton who as the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy helped develop counterinsurgency policy for Afghanistan and contributed to convincing Barack Obama to invade Libya. More recently, she has advocated for an aggressive military buildup in the South China Sea to counter a rising China.

When Joe Biden became president, at least 16 CNAS alumni were selected for foreign policy positions. CNAS had pushed heavily for making Kamala Harris Vice President as her foreign policy team consisted of an army of CNAS think-tankers—including Flournoy.



The appointment of CNAS alumni to prestigious positions and their lobbying influence epitomizes the so-called revolving door in which high level White House and Pentagon officials who serve corporate-military interests while in power are rewarded with lucrative paying jobs in which they continue to serve the same underlying interests.

Diesen emphasizes at the end of his book that think tanks in the modern U.S. have helped to subvert democracy and obstruct U.S. foreign policy in the interests of wealthy corporations that profit from endless wars. He sees

as a solution more public disclosures about the sources of think tank funding and public pressures that could help reduce their influence.

Another more radical solution is a socialist revolution that would result in the nationalization of the weapons industry, taking profit out of war, and reorganizing research, development and production toward fulfilling human needs.

Notes:

- ↪ Panikoff is the Atlantic Council's Director of the Scowcroft Middle East Security Initiative.
- ↪ In John Bellamy Foster, John Ross, and Deborah Veneziale, *Washington's New Cold War: A Socialist Perspective* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2023), 42.
- ↪ The New Knowledge think-tank fabricated a story of Russian interference in the 2017 Alabama state election with the intent of causing the defeat of Republican candidate Roy Moore.
- ↪ Nuland was also a fellow at the Brookings Institute.

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About Jeremy Kuzmarov

Jeremy Kuzmarov (<https://jeremykuzmarov.com>) is Managing Editor of CovertAction Magazine and author of *The Russians Are Coming, Again*, with John Marciano (Monthly Review Press, 2018).