Drain the Intelligence Swamp!

by G. Murphy Donovan

Director of National Intelligence James Clapper appeared on Public Television shortly before the presidential election for an extended [interview](#) with Charlie Rose. Mister Rose, like many of his peers these days, swings between hard news at dusk and bimbo chat at dawn. Indeed, Charlie is the very model of a Beltway double-dipper, a celebrity groupie who feeds at public and commercial troughs, PBS and CBS.

On any given day, Rose might be seen giggling with celebrities in the morning and then lofting softballs to political touts in the evening. The Council on Foreign [Relations](#) was the venue for the recent Clapper show. "Impartial, non-profit" think tanks are often used to provide the appropriate gravitas to administration spin. The Clapper performance, just before the November election, seemed to be of a piece with several other Intelligence officials who campaigned against Donald Trump.

And the Clapper interview, like many administration dog-and-pony shows, was not about transparency or openness or even

information *per se*. In another day, any public chat with an Intelligence official might have been relegated to the *desinformatsiya* file. Today, Intelligence officials like Clapper and CIA Director John Brennan play other, and some might say sinister, if not partisan roles.

Whether the subject is Islamism, Vladimir Putin, or fake news; the name of the game at the moment is overtly [political](). Call it spin control.

Clapper's appearance on Public Television was a subtle version of partisan Intelligence spin. Michael Morell, former acting director of CIA and Michael Hayden, former director of NSA have been on the anti-Trump stump since the 2016 campaign began. Recall that Hayden (aka Elmer Fudd) presided over the worst warning failure in American history and that Morell was a principal in the Benghazi fiasco.

Clapper suggests that the world of Intelligence is binary, a world of secrets and [mysteries](). Secrets are the knowable unknowns and mysteries are the secrets that might never be known, or at least not until disaster strikes. The Saudi

kamikaze air force takes a bow here.

Alas, the "wilderness" of mirrors has other dimensions that Clapper didn't mention. The third dimension of Intelligence "knowns" is those that are engineered for budget or policy reasons. The Putin bogeyman or the Russian phantasm might be examples.

The fourth dimension of Intelligence is things that are known, yet so toxic that they are minimized, ignored, or dismissed. The Shia and Sunni Islamist threats are the premier examples of fourth dimension threats where books are regularly [cooked](#) to a fare-thee-well.

A fifth dimension is public relations, facts or fictions that might be spun to some institutional or regime advantage. Leon Trotsky, and later Goebbels, would have called the "fifth" dimension of Intelligence indoctrination or propaganda. If "fake [news](#)" is a problem in America, the US Intelligence Community could be its poster child.

Intelligence is a perennial lamb to the [policy lion](#)