

4-22-2019

Three Coins in the Fountain: The Mueller Report and Russian Active Measures

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Recommended Citation

Editor, IBPP (2019) "Three Coins in the Fountain: The Mueller Report and Russian Active Measures," *International Bulletin of Political Psychology*. Vol. 19 : Iss. 4 , Article 3.
Available at: <https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp/vol19/iss4/3>

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Title: Three Coins in the Fountain: The Mueller Report and Russian Active Measures

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The 1954 film *Three Coins in the Fountain* (Director, Jean Negulesco) centers on the motif of wishes coming true by tossing coins into Rome's Trevi Fountain. And wishes come true for three women. A close reading of Volume I of special counsel Robert Mueller's (redacted) *Report on the Investigation into Russian Interference in the 2016 Presidential Election* centers on the motif of three coins—three generic techniques of Russian *active measures*—facilitating wishes coming true for those in control of the Russian Federation. The wishes consolidate around facilitating Donald J. Trump being elected United States President. And *active measures* conceived as methods of political warfare short of but potential adjuncts to official armed conflict—with examples including but not limited to interdependent and overlapping varieties of deception, espionage, agents of influence, double agents, front groups, disinformation, subversion, support for proxy forces against a target, and other covert, clandestine, and counterintelligence activities.

The first coin into the fountain comprises a nexus of actual and attempted accessing, modifying, and/or transmitting of protected information. Sources of these actions may or may not be disguised. Targets and recipients may be chosen serendipitously or with more significant degrees of forethought. The degree of protection for the information before active measures commence also varies, as does the degree to which the consequences are predicted or anticipated. Another important variable is the timing of accessing, modifying, and, especially, transmittal both proactive and reactive to information transmitted and/or acted on by others.

The second coin into the fountain comprises participating within the dialectics among various micro-societies and micro-cultures. One may join in with information that is accurate, inaccurate, or combinations of the two amongst members of existing interest groups. Or create legends and sources for non-existing groups and individuals. The desired consequence is to keep differences of opinion ongoing—to keep the pot stirring. This can even include informationally and materially supporting those whom one does not actually support, and not supporting those whom one does support. It's the churn, not what people learn.

The third coin into the fountain comprises strategically and randomly placed items of information or actual events that impede accurate analysis of collected information by one's targets. Desired consequences include seemingly greater consistency or inconsistency of conclusions than warranted by what actually is occurring and what adaptive interpretations should be. In essence, one engages in figurative bomb throwing or strewing or embedding a path with improvised explosive devices designed to bamboozle through crystal clearness or thick fog.

The film *Three Coins in the Fountain* had a script. A script, however, had not been purloined or anticipated by target intelligence capabilities concerning Russian efforts.

So the coins were not adequately detected/interpreted leading to inadequate deterrence and response. This version of Russian three coins in the fountain is now a story for the ages. And coins already are being wagered on when or whether there'll be payback.

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Keywords: Active Measures. Deception. Disinformation. Russian Federation. Trump.

Abstract/Description: This article identifies non-political elements of Russian Federation political warfare as inferred from the *Report on the Investigation into Russian Interference in the 2016 Presidential Election*.

Disciplines: Other Psychology, Philosophy, Philosophy of Science. Political Science, Other Political Science, Psychology, Defense and Security Studies, International Relations

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