

Analysis

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YOUSUF S. AL-ALYAN

Editor-in-Chief
ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYAN

EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432
ADVERTISING : 24835616/7
FAX : 24835620/1
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 163
ACCOUNTS : 24835619
COMMERCIAL : 24835618

P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.
E MAIL: info@kuwaittimes.net
Website: www.kuwaittimes.net

Washington Watch

Balfour: Shame and dangers of ignoring Arab opinion, rights

By Dr James J Zogby

In 1919, following the first World War, the victorious Allied Powers met in Paris to remake the world. The prime ministers of Italy, France, and Great Britain as well as US President Woodrow Wilson, collectively known as "The Big Four," were the decisive diplomatic players at the meeting. Under their leadership, the lands of the defeated Central Powers were picked apart. The Austro-Hungarian Empire was dissolved into smaller central European nations. Germany lost territory and was served with an extremely punitive and expensive peace treaty. In several cases, the triumphant Big Four parceled out bits of land to themselves.

It was in this context of post-war imperial conquest that the fate of the Arab lands of the defeated Ottoman Empire was decided. During WWI, the Allies had overcome the Ottomans with the important assistance of local Arabs who had rebelled against Turkish rule. Among these formerly Ottoman subjects was Emir Faisal, the son of Sharif Hussein of Makkah. Faisal arrived in Paris seeking assurance that the British would honor the commitment they had made to his father: post-war independence for all the Arab lands that had been liberated from Turkish control.

The conference also heard from Chaim Weizmann, a leader of the British Zionist movement. Weizmann argued for the establishment of a Jewish homeland in the Arab territory known as Palestine. During his presentation, Weizmann cited in its entirety the Balfour Declaration - the 1917 promise made to the Zionist movement by British Foreign Secretary, Lord Balfour, stating that the British government favored the establishment of a Jewish Homeland in Palestine.

It was exactly this conflicting maze of treaties and agreements that led to the outbreak of the World War. And it was with the very aim of preventing another such calamity that in 1919 Woodrow Wilson proposed the foundation of a League of Nations - a body designed to bring international diplomacy into the light of day and rule of law. Wilson believed that by promoting international agreement and democracy, sovereignty, liberty, and self-determination, an environment for a lasting peace would be created. Wilson, therefore, did not arrive in Paris with an agenda of expanding US territory in the East, but with the idea that a lasting peace was achievable and the best outcome.

So when the Ottoman question arose, Wilson made a proposal in keeping with his ideal of self-determination: Ask the people who live there what they want. This was, of course, an idea completely alien to the imperial ambitions of France and Britain and certainly out of place at the Paris conference, where the unofficial motto was "To the victor belong the spoils." Yet Wilson was not daunted by the radical nature of his suggestion. Instead, he declared that the newly liberated Arabs should shape their own destiny and that any settlement "of territory [or] of sovereignty [should be determined on] the basis of the free acceptance of that settlement by the people immediately concerned."

Survey

With that, Wilson commissioned the first survey of Arab opinion. In June of 1919, an American commission, led by the President of Oberlin College, Dr Henry King, and a businessman and diplomat named Charles Crane, arrived in the Mediterranean coastal city of Jaffa to begin the first-ever Arab public opinion survey. The Commission traveled throughout what was then known as Greater Syria, including modern-day Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Palestine. They visited three dozen towns, met with representatives of 442 organizations and received nearly 2,000 petitions.

At each stop they tried to ascertain what the local population wanted for their political future - to be independent or placed under the mandate of a foreign power. They asked how the people viewed British and French plans to divide their region. They also questioned local populations about Britain's intention to support the Zionist goal of a "Jewish Homeland" in Palestine. At the time, the population of the region in question was 3,247,500, of whom 2,365,000 were Muslim, 587,560 were Christian, 140,000 were Druze and 11,000 were Jewish.

The results were particularly adamant on certain issues. Among them: "The non-Jewish population of Palestine - nearly nine-tenths of the whole - are emphatically against the entire Zionist program [...] There was no one thing upon which the population of Palestine were more agreed than upon this." This feeling was also shared by the broader population of the entire Arab East: "Only two requests - those for a united Syria and for independence - had a larger support," continued the King-Crane report.

Based on the responses of the local populations, the King-Crane report made a series of suggestions. With regard to the fate of Palestine, they suggested that the Zionist project, to which they had been initially sympathetic, should be dramatically scaled back-both by limiting Jewish migration and by dismissing the eventual goal of a Jewish state in Palestine. The report's suggestions continued on for pages on certain specific issues, but strikingly, what comes across is the recognition that local, in this case largely Arab, opinions mattered.

NOTE: Dr James J Zogby is the President of the Arab American Institute



How Russians pried into Clinton emails

It was just before noon in Moscow on March 10, 2016, when the first volley of malicious messages hit the Hillary Clinton campaign. The first 29 phishing emails were almost all misfires. Addressed to people who worked for Clinton during her first presidential run, the messages bounced back untouched. Except one. Within nine days, some of the campaign's most consequential secrets would be in the hackers' hands, part of a massive operation aimed at vacuuming up millions of messages from thousands of inboxes across the world.

An Associated Press investigation into the digital break-ins that disrupted the US presidential contest has sketched out an anatomy of the hack that led to months of damaging disclosures about the Democratic Party's nominee. It wasn't just a few aides that the hackers went after: it was an all-out blitz across the Democratic Party. They tried to compromise Clinton's inner circle and more than 130 party employees, supporters and contractors.

While US intelligence agencies have concluded that Russia was behind the email thefts, the AP drew on forensic data to report Thursday that the hackers known as Fancy Bear were closely aligned with the interests of the Russian government. The AP's reconstruction - based on a database of 19,000 malicious links recently shared by cybersecurity firm Secureworks - shows how the hackers worked their way around the Clinton campaign's top-of-the-line digital security to steal chairman John Podesta's emails in March 2016. It also helps explain how a Russian-linked intermediary could boast to a Trump policy adviser, a month later, that the Kremlin had "thousands of emails" worth of dirt on Clinton.



Clinton campaign was profoundly destabilized by sudden exposures

Phishing for victims

The rogue messages that first flew across the internet March 10 were dressed up to look like they came from Google, the company that provided the Clinton campaign's email infrastructure. The messages urged users to boost their security or change their passwords while in fact steering them toward decoy websites designed to collect their credentials.

One of the first people targeted was Rahul Sreenivasan, who had worked as a Clinton organizer in Texas in 2008 - his first paid job in politics. Sreenivasan, now a legislative staffer in Austin, was dumfounded when told by the AP that hackers had tried to break into his 2008 email - an address he said had been dead for nearly a decade. "They probably crawled the Internet for this stuff," he said. Almost everyone else targeted in the initial wave was, like Sreenivasan, a 2008 staffer whose defunct email address had somehow lingered online.

But one email made its way to the account of another staffer who'd worked for Clinton in 2008 and joined again in 2016, the AP found. It's possible the hackers broke in and stole her contacts: the data shows the phishing links sent to her were clicked several times. Secureworks' data reveals when phishing links were created and indicates whether they were clicked. But it doesn't show whether people entered their passwords.

Within hours of a second volley emailed March 11, the hackers hit pay dirt. All of a sudden, they were sending links aimed at senior Clinton officials' nonpublic 2016 addresses, including those belonging to longtime Clinton aide Robert Russo and campaign chairman John Podesta. The Clinton campaign was no easy target: several former employees said the organization put particular stress on digital safety.

Work emails were protected by two-factor authentication, a technique that uses a second passcode to keep accounts secure. Most messages were deleted after 30 days and staff went through phishing drills. Security awareness even followed the campaigners into the bathroom, where someone put a picture of a toothbrush under the words: "You shouldn't share your passwords either."

Two-factor authentication may have slowed the hackers, but it didn't stop them. After repeated attempts to break into various staffers' hillaryclinton.com accounts, the hackers turned to the personal Gmail addresses. It was

there on March 19 that they targeted top Clinton lieutenants - including campaign manager Robby Mook, senior adviser Jake Sullivan and political fixer Philippe Reines. A malicious link was generated for Podesta at 11:28 am Moscow time, the AP found. Documents subsequently published by WikiLeaks show that the rogue email arrived in his inbox six minutes later. The link was clicked twice. Podesta's messages - at least 50,000 of them - were in the hackers' hands.

A serious breach

Though the heart of the campaign was now compromised, the hacking efforts continued. Three new volleys of malicious messages were generated on the 22nd, 23rd and 25th of March, targeting communications director Jennifer

Palmieri and Clinton confidante Huma Abedin, among others. The torrent of phishing emails caught the attention of the FBI, which had spent the previous six months urging the Democratic National Committee in Washington to raise its shield against suspected Russian hacking. In late March, FBI agents paid a visit to Clinton's Brooklyn headquarters, where they were received warily, given the agency's investigation into the candidate's use

of a private email server while secretary of state. The phishing messages also caught the attention of Secureworks, a subsidiary of Dell Technologies, which had been following Fancy Bear, whom Secureworks code-named Iron Twilight. Fancy Bear had made a critical mistake. It fumbled a setting in the Bitly link-shortening service that it was using to sneak its emails past Google's spam filter. The blunder exposed whom they were targeting. It was late March when Secureworks discovered the hackers were going after Democrats.

"As soon as we started seeing some of those hillaryclinton.com email addresses coming through, the DNC email addresses, we realized it's going to be an interesting twist to this," said Rafe Pilling, a senior security researcher with Secureworks. By early April Fancy Bear was getting increasingly aggressive, the AP found. More than 60 bogus emails were prepared for Clinton campaign and DNC staffers on April 6 alone, and the hackers began hunting for Democrats beyond New York and Washington, targeting the digital communications director for Pennsylvania Gov Tom Wolf and a deputy director in the office of Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel.

The group's hackers seemed particularly interested in Democratic officials working on voter registration issues: Pratt Wiley, the DNC's then-director of voter protection, had been targeted as far back as October 2015 and the hackers tried to pry open his inbox as many as 15 times over six months. Employees at several organizations connected to the Democrats were targeted, including the Clinton Foundation, the Center for American Progress, technology provider NGP VAN, campaign strategy firm 270 Strategies, and partisan news outlet Shareblue Media.

As the hacking intensified, other elements swung into place. On April 12, 2016, someone paid \$37 worth of bitcoin



This June 29, 2016 photo shows signs posted in a bathroom at Hillary Clinton's campaign headquarters in the Brooklyn borough of New York, reminding campaign workers to keep their computers and passwords secure. —AP photos

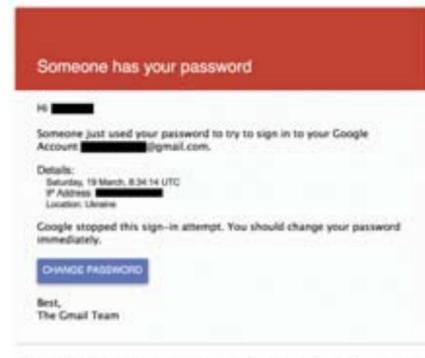
to the Romanian web hosting company THCServers.com to reserve a website called Electionleaks.com, according to transaction records obtained by AP. A botched registration meant the site never got off the ground, but the records show THCS received a nearly identical payment a week later to create DCLeaks.com.

By the second half of April, the DNC's senior leadership was beginning to realize something was amiss. One DNC consultant, Alexandra Chalupa, received an April 20 warning from Yahoo saying her account was under threat from state-sponsored hackers, according to a screengrab she circulated among colleagues. The Trump campaign had gotten a whiff of Clinton email hacking, too. According to recently unsealed court documents, former Trump foreign policy adviser George Papadopoulos said that it was at an April 26 meeting at a London hotel that he was told by a professor closely connected to the Russian government that the Kremlin had obtained compromising information about Clinton. "They have dirt on her," Papadopoulos said he was told. "They have thousands of emails." A few days later, Amy Dacey, then the DNC chief executive, got an urgent call. There'd been a serious breach at the DNC.

'Don't even talk to your dog about it'

It was 4 p.m. on Friday June 10 when some 100 staffers filed into the Democratic National Committee's main conference room for a mandatory, all-hands meeting. "What I am about to tell you cannot leave this room," DNC chief operating officer Lindsey Reynolds told the assembled crowd, according to two people there at the time. Everyone needed to turn in their laptops immediately; there would be no last-minute emails; no downloading documents and no exceptions. Reynolds insisted on total secrecy. "Don't even talk to your dog about it," she was quoted as saying.

Two days later, as the cybersecurity firm that was brought in to clean out the DNC's computers finished its work, WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange told a British Sunday television show that emails related to Clinton were "pending publication". "WikiLeaks has a very good year ahead," he said. On Tuesday, June 14, the Democrats went public with the allegation that their computers had been compromised by Russian state-backed hackers, including Fancy Bear. Shortly after noon the next day, William Bastone, the editor-in-chief of investigative news site The Smoking Gun, got an email bearing a small cache of documents marked "CONFIDENTIAL". "Hi," the message said. "This is Guccifer 2.0 and this is me who hacked Democratic National Committee." —AP



A portion of a phishing email sent to a Hillary Clinton campaign official on March 19, 2016.