**Analysing the role of Intelligence Agencies in the War on Terror, with special reference to Kurdistan**

*Talk and paper by Felix Padel, draft of 20th October*

Right now, in October 2021, we witness many situations of almost total breakdown of democratic norms in many countries, thanks (especially) to the ‘War on Terror’. Among these, we witness almost unbearable conflicts over large areas of Kurdistan. In Turkey, a situation of [huge repression](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/850840/turkey-ffm-report-2019.pdf), with hundreds of HDP (People’s Democratic Party) members in jail, despite electoral gains; similar yet different [repression in Iran](https://www.thenational.scot/news/18700522.denied-freedom-thought-action-kurds-fighting-back-iran/), with frequent jailings and armed conflict; and in Kurdish areas in northern [Syria](https://www.thedefensepost.com/2021/09/15/syrian-kurds-afrin/) and [Iraq](https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/north-africa-west-asia/turkeys-invasion-of-northern-iraq-could-lead-to-kurdish-civil-war/), huge violence from Turkish incursions. Here, [occupation and ethnic cleansing](https://dckurd.org/2021/05/11/turkey-presence-in-iraq/) has involved settling jihadist fighters affiliated with IS (Islamic State) and similar extremist organisations in areas where Kurdish communities have been violently displaced. In this article we ask: how have Turkish forces been allowed to get away with this? Why has there been so little protest by foreign governments? Why so little media coverage, considering the [gravity of attack](https://morningstaronline.co.uk/article/w/turkey-accused-using-chemical-warfare-agents-again-its-ongoing-war-kurds) on civilians and civil society? And what has been the [role of intelligence agencies](https://www.mei.edu/publications/irregular-warfare-case-study-cia-and-us-army-special-forces-operations-northern-iraq), both in specific operations, and in this marginalisation from world coverage?

The history and methods of intelligence agencies call out for proper analysis, and deserve much wider exposure. Those of Britain, the USA, Turkey, Israel and other countries have assumed an ever more significant place in the overall structure of power and foreign relations since the 2nd world war; not just in their traditional role of spying or gathering ‘intelligence’, but also in influencing events and steering the media narrative, employing the black arts of [psy-ops and propaganda](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/4079464-spies-lies-and-the-war-on-terror). Post-war, these involved projects such as the CIA’s [Operation Mockingbird](https://spartacus-educational.com/JFKmockingbird.htm), that exercised huge control in the media, and the [MKUltra program](https://www.npr.org/2019/09/09/758989641/the-cias-secret-quest-for-mind-control-torture-lsd-and-a-poisoner-in-chief) in mind control, which extended Nazi medical experiments. One of their latest manifestations is UK secret services’ [‘Integrity Initiative’](https://thegrayzone.com/2018/12/17/inside-the-temple-of-covert-propaganda-the-integrity-initiative-and-the-uks-scandalous-information-war/).

Controlling the narrative starts with who we call terrorists. The [UK Terrorism Act](https://www.peaceinkurdistancampaign.com/campacc-report-20-years-of-terrorism-acts-20-years-of-injustice/) (2000), like anti-terrorist legislation in many countries, follows an intelligence agency definition of terror tactics that excludes government use of terror; even though most of what this discourse calls ‘terrorism’ can be understood as a reaction to state terror. This is the argument in Herman’s book [The Real Terror Network](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/1044637.The_Real_Terror_Network) (1982) and in [Manufacturing Consent](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/12617.Manufacturing_Consent) (Herman and Chomsky, 1998/2002). In Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Pakistan and other countries, it is painfully apparent that US-led attacks on ‘terrorists’ have escalated conflicts and ‘terrorist attacks’ exponentially; and the same is true, for example, of Turkish attacks on the PKK.

Following the attacks in the USA on 11th September 2001, as the War On Terror was conceived and acted out through US-led attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq, intelligence agencies – which were deemed to have let the USA [down on that date](https://www.brookings.edu/blog/fixgov/2021/08/27/9-11-and-the-reinvention-of-the-u-s-intelligence-community/) – have played a rapidly expanding role carrying out surveillance and orchestrating operations, at the same time as constructing a mainstream narrative of the War On Terror.

So if we fail to analyse the role of intelligence agencies, we remain trapped in this narrative they have constructed, in which disinformation is entangled with truth, and the experience of Kurdish people, among countless other communities, is systematically marginalised out of mainstream consciousness.

One starting point for analysing the intelligence agencies is to look at their formal structure. The three best known British ones are MI5 (Military Intelligence, Service 5), MI6 (the Secret Intelligence Service or SIS, focused on foreign affairs) and GCHQ (Govt Communications HQ), which grew out of the codebreaking outfit at Bletchley Park during the 2nd world war. MI5 and MI6 are well known through many histories, as well as spy novels and films. Le Carré novels and James Bond films give a conventionalised image of MI6, both glamorous and cynical, emphasising the danger and violence. The [existence of MI6 was not even officially admitted](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-29938135) until 1994, and [GCHQ](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/8021683-gchq) has been surrounded by far greater secrecy still.

So have other intelligence units, such as [‘spy cops’](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/oct/28/secrets-and-lies-untangling-the-uk-spy-cops-scandal) who infiltrated environmental and anti-war movements by forming sexual relationships and steering movements towards extreme actions to discredit them; and the Information Research Department (IRD) - a Foreign Office propaganda unit (1948-1977). Eric Blair (George Orwell) wrote a list of [‘crypto-communists’ for the IRD](https://www.openculture.com/2015/02/george-orwell-communist-list.html) just after its formation – no small matter when one understands the momentous, hidden role this organisation played in [Iran to oust Mossadeq](https://www.middleeasteye.net/big-story/religious-operations-how-british-propagandists-used-islam-wage-cultural-cold-war) (1952-4), and in [Indonesia to oust Sukarno](https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/how-we-destroyed-sukarno-1188448.html) (1965), where [IRD’s black propaganda](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/oct/17/slaughter-in-indonesia-britains-secret-propaganda-war) and lists of communists supplied to Suharto’s forces led to the slaughter of an estimated half a million Indonesians. In [Northern Ireland](https://declassifieduk.org/the-man-who-knew-too-much/), the IRD’s dangerous psy-ops role (1975-7) was exposed by its key agent Colin Wallace, [‘the man who knew too much’](https://www.filmsforaction.org/watch/the-man-who-knew-too-much/). Each of these operations, among dozens more in other countries, witnessed a wide range of extreme activities, including violent use of [agents provocateurs](https://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/sites/crimeandjustice.org.uk/files/Spycops%20in%20context%20%E2%80%93%20a%20brief%20history%20of%20political%20policing%20in%20Britain_0.pdf) to escalate protests. [Recent British government initiatives](https://theconversation.com/british-governments-new-anti-fake-news-unit-has-been-tried-before-and-it-got-out-of-hand-90650) aimed at ‘countering fake news’ are replicating these campaigns, amplifying them through the latest surveillance technology.

The FBI and CIA are far better known, through a very different image, for the role they have played in internal and external US affairs. The CIA (formed post-war to replace the Office of Strategic Services, OSS) is well known to have played a major role in aiding and abetting at least 70 [regime changes](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/39277917-covert-regime-change) in different countries since the 2nd world war. The FBI and CIA figure prominently in histories of the assassinations of John and [Robert Kennedy](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/39719468-lie-too-big-to-fail-a-the-real-history-of-the-assassination-of-robert), Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. [‘Conspiracy theories’](http://projectunspeakable.com/conspiracy-theory-invention-of-cia/), as a term used to undermine critique, was [first propagated](https://www.nytimes.com/1977/12/26/archives/cable-sought-to-discredit-critics-of-warren-report.html) through these agencies’ influence over hundreds of prominent journalists and media consortia, essentially to discredit those alleging FBI/CIA involvement in the conspiracies that gave rise to these killings. Conspiracy is the essence of how intelligence agencies work, especially obvious in regime changes, and the 1967 CIA cable that uses the term recommends counteracting conspiracy theories through [‘propaganda assets’ in the media](http://22november1963.org.uk/cia-warren-report-critics). As we shall see, this remains a key technique.

The NSA (National Security Agency) only became widely known to the public through a leak at the end of 2005 about its [surveillance program](http://edition.cnn.com/2005/POLITICS/12/30/nsa.leak/index.html), vastly expanded after 9/11. Public knowledge was amplified by the defection of Snowden in 2013, who revealed the extent of electronic surveillance on Americans and foreigners alike, also [especially by GCHQ](https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2013/jun/21/gchq-cables-secret-world-communications-nsa) in Britain, and comparable agencies in Canada, Australia and New Zealand (‘the five eyes’, taken together).

Other countries whose intelligence agencies have played critical roles in the Kurdish areas include Germany, France, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan, Iran, Syria, as well as Israel, whose secret agents have carried out a notorious yet celebrated series of [assassinations abroad](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/33598223-rise-and-kill-first), and above all Turkey, whose MIT (*Millî İstihbarat Teşkilatı,* National Intelligence Organization) has played a [many-sided role](https://stockholmcf.org/turkeys-mit-officers-captured-by-outlawed-pkk-make-revelations-on-paris-killings/) in anti-Kurdish operations, from assassinating the [three Kurdish women activists](https://www.turkishminute.com/2021/02/19/intel-chief-strengthen-suspicions-of-mit-role-in-killing-of-3-kurdish-women-in-paris/) in Paris in January 2013 to [present plans for more incursions](https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/turkey-plans-military-action-against-syrian-kurdish-ypg-if-diplomacy-fails-2021-10-15/) into Rojava.

**Patterns of disinformation**

During the 2nd world war, the effectiveness of British intelligence agencies was extraordinary, both in deciphering enemy codes and in disseminating elaborate disinformation. The contrast between British and German spy operations could not be more dramatic. The British (with [crucial Polish help](https://www.warhistoryonline.com/featured/polish-mathematicians-role-in-cracking-germans-wwii-codesystem.html)) had deciphered the ‘enigma’ code and read most German coded messages on a daily basis. They maintained an extensive network of spies in continental Europe, while all of Germany’s spies in Britain had been captured, and either [killed or turned](https://www.goodreads.com/en/book/show/13154628-double-cross). The German intelligence services continued receiving messages from hundreds of spies and their agents in Britain; but every one of these was a fictitious construct, brilliantly maintained through Bletchley Park’s mass employment of several thousand workers deciphering foreign codes and constructing disinformation-woven messages from the fictitious German spies to be put together by Nazi intelligence. All these workers signed the Official Secrets Act. Demobbed at the end of the war they were told ‘careless talk costs lives’, and were forbidden to tell even their families about the secret work they had done. Britain had won the war in large part thanks to the brilliance of its intelligence network; but the extent of this expertise in decipherment and disinformation was not to be known too widely. Only since historians of espionage have researched declassified archives since the 1970s has this history become known.

One of the most influential deceptions was [Operation Mincemeat](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/7632329-operation-mincemeat), in which a dead body was dressed in a special services uniform, and dropped in the sea off the Spanish coast, carrying what purported to be vital letters to allied commanders in Gibraltar and North Africa. These outlined a plan to invade southern Europe from North Africa not through the obvious route of Sicily, but through southern France and Sardinia. The deception worked. Hitler acted on the intelligence and withdrew key forces from Sicily, which was actually the real intended target and therefore was overwhelmed fairly fast.

As the allied soldiers fought northwards, they captured Italy and then Germany, area by area. What is less known is that they did this partly through secretly enlisting the help of key mafiosi, fascists and Nazis; and set up a secret anti-communist organisation [called Gladio](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/22245430-operation-gladio) after an ancient Roman sword. In [Operation Sunrise](https://www.stephenhalbrook.com/law_review_articles/operation_sunrise.pdf), Allen Dulles, as Swiss Director of America’s Office of Strategic Sevices (OSS), and James Angleton (in charge of OSS for Italy), did clandestine deals with key fascist and Nazi commanders, including Karl Wolff, an SS General who had been posted to collaborate with Mussolini after months in charge of concentration camp transports, Prince Junio Valerio Borghese, a top fascist naval commander, and Reinhard Gehlen, Lt-General in charge of intelligence on Germany’s Eastern front. Each of these was helped by OSS agents to avoid execution for war crimes, enlisting them in the fight against communism. Gehlen, working closely with the CIA, brought about 1500 spies who had worked in Nazi intelligence into an intelligence network named the [Gehlen organization](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/1081967.The_Service), and oversaw its transformation into the Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND, West German foreign intel service) in 1956.

As another strand in this secret network, Lucky Luciano, ‘father’ of the mafia in New York, was freed from jail (where he had been since 1932) through [Operation Underworld](https://www.thedailybeast.com/the-devil-himself-explores-mobs-fight-against-nazis-during-wwii), giving OSS an introduction to Don Calo - [Calogero Vizzini](https://www.nytimes.com/1994/05/24/world/villalba-journal-how-don-calo-and-patton-won-the-war-in-sicily.html), *Capo di tutti capi* of the Sicilian mafia, who had also been recommended by Monsignor Giovanni Montini in the Vatican (who became Pope Paul VI). Don Calo appears to have given indispensable help to the allied invasion after US tanks made straight through German defences for his home. He was made honorary colonel in the US army, and Mayor of Villalba. Many mafia jailed by Mussolini in large numbers were released to help occupy Sicily, and this collaboration with the Allies seems to have re-established their power as never before. Evidently they were considered a necessary tool by Americans and Britons determined to prevent communists coming to power, and many leftwingers were assassinated under Don Calo’s regime in Sicily. This close relationship between the CIA and mafia has persisted, and paying for Gladio involved raising money for black ops through the drugs trade, with mafia help transporting heroin to New York, in [a pattern replicated](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/152038.The_Politics_of_Heroin) to fund the notorious [Phoenix Program](https://www.counterpunch.org/2017/09/29/armies-addicts-and-spooks-the-cia-in-vietnam-and-laos/) in the Vietnam war, and under cover of Reagan’s ‘war on drugs’ to [fund the contra guerrillas](https://theintercept.com/2014/09/25/managing-nightmare-cia-media-destruction-gary-webb/) in Nicaragua.

Operation Gladio was first discovered by Italian magistrate Felice Casson in 1972, investigating the Peleano bombing, that was initially blamed on leftists. Italian Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti admitted Gladio’s existence in Parliament in October 1990; and Judge Guido Salvini, heading an inquiry, found evidence of CIA and [NATO involvement](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/765633.NATO_s_Secret_Armies), fomenting a ‘strategy of tension’, and training by the British SAS – similarly the case for the equivalent Gladio organisation in Switzerland, called P26, also revealed in 1990, and in other countries.

In Turkey, Prime Minister [Bülent Ecevit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/B%C3%BClent_Ecevit) admitted the existence of Gladio in 1973, in the form of [‘Counter-Guerrilla’](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Counter-Guerrilla), after people who had been tortured in Ziverbey villa (where leftwingers were interrogated after the 1971 coup) revealed that their interrogators had said they were members of this organisation. The Turkish network of clandestine organisations was evidently set up around 1947 through close collaboration with the CIA as well as NATO, which kept in close contact with Turkish security, paramilitary and intelligence forces with a view to preventing communists coming to power. Ecevit alleged Counter-Guerrilla involvement in the Taksim square massacre of 1977; and it is also alleged in countless bombings and atrocities since then, especially after the war with the PKK started in 1984, and often involving false flag attacks. For example, [Selahattin Demirtaş](https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/hdp-co-leader-slams-erdogan-govt-for-attack-that-claimed-95-lives-89681) put [blame on the MIT](https://hakikatadalethafiza.org/en/statements-from-hdp-amnesty-intl-and-human-rights-watch/) for the series of bombings during mid-2015 in Diyarbakır (5 June), Suruç (20 July, killing over 30 youth who were about to cross the border into Rojava, bringing aid to Kobane, under attack by IS) and Ankara (10 October, killing over 120 at a peace demonstration).

The first trials of PKK members in any European country took place in Germany, lasting from 1989 to 1995 in Düsseldorf. Many saw these as a ‘show trial’, and they helped promote the view of PKK as a terrorist organisation. In the analysis of Duran Kalkan, a senior PKK official who was imprisoned during these years, [Germany has remained an intrinsic part](https://www.peaceinkurdistancampaign.com/germany-was-and-still-is-part-of-the-war-against-the-kurds-text-of-kck-brochure/) of Turkey’s war on the Kurds, with the clandestine Gladio network and numerous arms sales to Turkey obvious links.

The back-story to today’s close collaboration between Turkey’s MIT and IS, and NATO allies’ toleration of this, has a long history. Britain’s MI6 is understood as the main instigator of the subversion leading to the overthrow of Mossadeq’s socialist government in Iran in 1953, largely through agent provocateurs and aid to hardline Islamic opponents of Mossadeq. Similar aid to the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt during this period was aimed at removing Nasser from power, with [MI6 plotting his assassination](https://www.nlpwessex.org/docs/BBCSuez.htm). The Shah dynasty, reinstated in Iran in 1953, lasted until the Islamic revolution of 1979, and here too, despite appearances, MI6 played a hidden role in aiding [Khomeini’s passage to power](https://sputniknews.com/20190211/iran-britain-secret-support-1072256246.html), passing on names of Tudeh party members (communists) to the new Iranian authorities, who killed over 1000.

The most overt aid to hardline jihadists has been CIA funding for Osama Bin Laden and other mujahideen in Afghanistan to undermine the Soviets there. This was done largely through the [ISI in Pakistan](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/1021209.Deception) (Inter-Services Intelligence). Even though certain CIA agents showed that the ISI was siphoning off half the money to develop and proliferate nuclear weapons, this was ignored, partly because US arms sales to Pakistan overrode this.

This is a brief outline of how intelligence agency principles of mass deception and propaganda, used so effectively against the Nazis, were steered post-war towards undermining socialism in Europe and worldwide. There is much evidence that essentially the same tactics are still being used, with far more elaborate propaganda campaigns. This is especially evident in the case of Syria and Turkish orchestrated attacks on the Kurds.

**Controlling the media narrative**

The Guardian newspaper was selected by Snowden and Wikileaks as an outlet for the mass of new material they were revealing in 2013. The Guardian had ignored ‘D notices’, sent by the Defence & Security Media Advisory (DSMA) Committee ‘to prevent inadvertent public disclosure of information that would compromise UK military & defence operations’, and GCHQ sent a team who forced them to destroy hard drives containing the Wikileaks material. Following this pressure, the Guardian has evidently become much more observant of [the carefully veiled dictates](https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2019-09-11-how-the-uk-security-services-neutralised-the-countrys-leading-liberal-newspaper/%20(from%20LES)%20%20Alongside%20this:%20Guardian%20as%20recipient%20of%20Wikileaks%20material%20June%202013,%20targeted%20by%20IAs%20as%20'ignoring%20D%20notices'...%20since%20then%20G%20given%20'privilege'%20of%201st%20ever%20interviews%20by%20heads%20of%20MI5%20(2016)%20&%20MI6%20(2017)%20%5Brefs%5D) of the intelligence agencies, and was rewarded by being granted the first ever interviews with the acting heads of MI5 (Andrew Parker) in November 2016 and MI6 (Alex Younger) in March 2017. The latter appeared just two weeks after the High Court was set to review an earlier decision not to prosecute MI6’s 2004 acting head, Sir Mark Allen, over his complicity in the rendition of Abdel Hakim Belhaj, an opponent of Gaddafi, to Libya in 2004, where he was tortured.

[What motivated Snowden](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/46223297-permanent-record#:~:text=Edward%20Snowden%2C%20the%20man%20who,try%20to%20bring%20it%20down.) was the realisation that the NSA was engaging in mass surveillance in the USA. By 2018, it was common knowledge that [Britain’s spy agencies were doing the same thing](https://www.theregister.com/2018/07/23/investigatory_powers_tribunal_gchq_15_years_illegal_surveillance_no_penalty/), and that British courts could fine them for this, but not stop them doing it.

[Like the BBC](https://www.goodreads.com/en/book/show/39105646-propaganda-blitz), the Guardian follows the dictated line on key subjects, frequently and systematically distorting them. Nowhere is this clearer than on the vexed issue of the Syrian White Helmets, which takes us to the heart of the propaganda war on Syria. In December 2017 the Guardian [published a defence](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/18/syria-white-helmets-conspiracy-theories) against many critics of the organisation. This was immediately attacked for numerous factual errors by [Eva Bartlett](https://ingaza.wordpress.com/2018/01/06/how-the-mainstream-media-whitewashed-al-qaeda-and-the-white-helmets-in-syria/), [Tim Hayward](https://renegadeinc.com/the-guardian-white-helmets-and-silenced-comment/).) and [others](https://off-guardian.org/2018/01/13/journalists-academics-attacked-in-solon-hit-piece-denied-a-platform-to-reply/), but the Guardian would publish no replies at all. The White Helmets’ funders include the British, US and other governments, and the pattern of [entities involved in funding](https://politicallyincorrect.news/2019/09/23/whos-funding-the-white-helmets/) makes clear its links with vested interests that are trying to bring down the Syrian government.

The foreign-funded [Free Syrian Army](https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v36/n08/seymour-m.-hersh/the-red-line-and-the-rat-line) dissolved fast into the various jihadist groups fighting not only the Syrian government but also the Rojava Kurdish-led administration. Many reports by 2015 were showing that [Turkish intelligence](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-turkey-arms/exclusive-turkish-intelligence-helped-ship-arms-to-syrian-islamist-rebel-areas-idUSKBN0O61L220150521) (primarily MIT) was funding Islamic State and other jihadist groups, just as it is blamed for many [‘false flag attacks’ within Turkey](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/35254276-frontline-turkey).

The role of the CIA has been very complex in relation to the Kurds: supporting [north Iraq’s breakaway](https://www.mei.edu/publications/irregular-warfare-case-study-cia-and-us-army-special-forces-operations-northern-iraq) from the Iraqi government in advance of destroying Saddam’s government in 2002-3, and [supporting the Rojava fighters](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/02/world/middleeast/cia-syria-rebel-arm-train-trump.html) intermittently, through the Syrian Democratic Forces. It seems highly significant that Wikipedia carries an informative article about a [‘Timber Sycamore’](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timber_Sycamore) CIA program of arming the Syrian rebels, while keeping to the line on [White Helmets](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Helmets_(Syrian_Civil_War)) that all criticism is ‘conspiracy theory’.

All the intelligence that Assad’s government has used [chemical weapons](https://renegadeinc.com/assad-gas-people/) appears to have been concocted through the White Helmets and associated outlets. In other words, the Syrian war is [exceptionally dirty](https://store.globalresearch.ca/store/the-dirty-war-on-syria-washington-regime-change-and-resistance-pdf/) in this far-reaching use of [propaganda](https://thewallwillfall.org/2018/02/13/pierre-le-corf-speaks-on-war-propaganda-and-white-helmets-from-aleppo/) by intelligence agencies; while well-documented use of chemical weapons by the Turkish military against Kurds in northern Iraq have been [ignored by mainstream media](https://morningstaronline.co.uk/article/w/turkey-accused-using-chemical-warfare-agents-again-its-ongoing-war-kurds).

Many news reports have revealed the role of MI5 and MI6 in allowing [British jihadists](https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/sorted-mi5-how-uk-government-sent-british-libyans-fight-gaddafi) to go and fight in Libya and Syria, while fighters with the YPG or PKK who have taken part in fighting IS [have been jailed](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/aidan-james-isis-fighter-british-jailed-syria-a9190511.html) on return to the UK. Investigation shows that the [BBC has invested heavily](https://thegrayzone.com/2018/12/17/inside-the-temple-of-covert-propaganda-the-integrity-initiative-and-the-uks-scandalous-information-war/) in promoting the White Helmets, in collusion with British secret services, in line with the pattern of propaganda apparent in the [Integrity initiative](https://thegrayzone.com/2018/12/17/inside-the-temple-of-covert-propaganda-the-integrity-initiative-and-the-uks-scandalous-information-war/).

A role of Israeli intelligence is implied in news reports that wounded Al Nusrah or IS fighters have been [treated in Israel](https://foreignpolicy.com/2014/06/11/exclusive-israel-is-tending-to-wounded-syrian-rebels/) – where Priti Patel notoriously [visited some](https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/priti-patel-israel-golan-heights-al-nusra-syria-sunni-shia-muslims-dfid-international-aid-a8046356.html). Israel has also [supplied arms](https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-israel-just-admitted-arming-anti-assad-syrian-rebels-big-mistake-1.6894850) to Syrian rebels.

The PKK, though still counted as ‘terrorists’, were credited with [saving the Yazidis](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2014/08/11/a-u-s-designated-terrorist-group-is-saving-yazidis-and-battling-the-islamic-state/) in the Sinjar mountains when IS attacked them so brutally in 2014 and the Iraqi Peshmarga failed to protect them. Turkey’s attack on thousands of Kurdish civilians and the PKK in the Qandil and Zagros mountains of north Iraq, which started in 2007 and has escalated hugely [to 2021](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/apr/04/iraq-turkey-pkk-drones-kurds-kurdistan), becoming a large-scale occupation, has met with near-silence in mainstream media, contrasting with periods of constant reports of Syrian government forces attacking civilians in East Ghouta and Idlib – extraordinarily one-sided when contrasted with the silence on Turkish and jihadist attacks, predominantly on civilians, in Afrin as well as in the rest of Rojava and Iraq.

US military hardware in Iraq was swiftly [taken over by IS](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/11/mosul-isis-gunmen-middle-east-states) in 2014 – just as it was by Taliban in Afghanistan in 2021. Along with government forces of Iraq and Syria, Kurdish-led forces of the Rojava administration have been at the forefront of the fight against IS – the world’s most women-liberated society pitted against the world’s most misogynist. When Turkish forces have supported jihadists so openly, with so little criticism from their NATO allies, it is hard not to see a conspiracy of intelligence agencies in allowing this rise of IS, following the history of black operations back to the overthrow of Mossadeq.

Colin Wallace left the IRD when he was ordered to become involved in MI5’s secret campaign to smear Harald Wilson as a KGB agent while Wilson was Labour Prime Minister. The role of intelligence agencies in [discrediting Jeremy Corbyn](https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-03-11-how-the-uk-press-supports-the-british-military-and-intelligence-establishment/) through antisemitism smears seems equally apparent. Corbyn made frequent [pro-Kurdish comments](https://www.thecanary.co/global/world-news/2019/10/11/corbyn-says-sanctions-on-turkey-could-be-needed-if-appalling-attacks-on-kurdish-areas-of-syria-continue/), following the Kurdish situation with sympathy and acumen, as he did events in Palestine and many other areas, [calling out Islamophobia](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/feb/18/jeremy-corbyn-attacks-islamophobia-during-mosque-visit) alongside antisemitism and all forms of racism. The new Labour leader, Keir Starmer, during his time as Director of Crown Prosecutions (2008-13) is known to have [curtailed investigations into MI5, MI6 and spycops](https://wikispooks.com/wiki/Keir_Starmer), and bolstered the case against Julian Assange. It almost seems that Starmer is the UK intelligent services’ man in government, and it is hard to imagine him proactive in supporting the Kurds as Corbyn did. Just like Turkish attacks on Kurdish communities in Syria and Iraq, the CIA plot to assassinate Assange has been [ignored by mainstream media](https://fair.org/home/deathly-silence-journalists-who-mocked-assange-have-nothing-to-say-about-cia-plans-to-kill-him/).

[Over 40,000 ISIS](https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/23/thousands-foreigners-unlawfully-held-ne-syria) fighters with their wives and children remain stranded in prison camps in Rojava, that foreign governments take no responsibility for. From this perspective, don’t the intelligence agencies of the UK, US, among other countries, bear a large part of responsibility for Syria’s refugee crisis? How intelligent, actually, are the policies these agencies have been pursuing?

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