

# How Generations of Russians Have Tried to Influence American Elections | The New York Times

By Timothy Naftali

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On Election Day 2016, the United States braced for a crippling sneak attack by a foreign power. “It was very high alert,” Barack Obama’s deputy adviser for homeland security, Amy Pope, recalled for David Shimer, a journalist and current graduate student at Oxford, whose extraordinary and gripping “Rigged” not only reveals the drama on that fateful day and the weeks that led up to it, but is also the first book to put the story of Russian interference into a broader context.

The attack that President Obama and his lieutenants most feared — a Kremlin effort to engineer chaos by deregistering voters or altering outcomes in swing counties — didn’t occur. But, as most of us know, an enormous and consequential Russian mind-bending intervention — involving hacking Democratic servers, releasing politically embarrassing materials and using social media to spread disinformation — did. In a sense, having feared a nuclear attack, Washington watched as Moscow won a conventional battle instead.

Shimer provides a subtle and evenhanded portrait of a White House in an unprecedented crisis. President Obama’s Cold War predecessors would have envied the quality of intelligence available to him at this time. After the public release of emails stolen by hackers from the server of the Democratic National Committee in June 2016, the American intelligence community quickly determined that Russian intelligence was responsible for the hack and, even more strikingly (thanks to a still highly classified source), that President Vladimir Putin had ordered it.

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