

## **How US climate deniers are working with far-right racists to hijack Brexit for Big Oil**

Nafeez Ahmed

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New evidence reveals how a tightly concentrated global network of politicians and corporations with close ties to the Trump administration is working on behalf of powerful US fossil fuel interests in Britain and Europe.

Several candidates who were in the running to become the next British Prime Minister — Boris Johnson, Jeremy Hunt, Dominic Raab, Michael Gove, Andrea Leadsom, and Steve Baker — are part of this pro-Trump network.

The evidence comes thanks to a network map produced by independent investigative media outlet DeSmog UK, exposing for the first time the astonishing array of connections between President Donald Trump, right-wing lobbies in the US, and far-right parties in the UK and Europe.

Published after a leaked recording showed US secretary of state Mike Pompeo threatening to interfere in British democracy to block opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn, the map unveils the extent to which US corporate lobbies with a direct line to senior Trump officials are backing both mainstream British politicians and European far-right extremists.

### **An alliance to fracture Western Europe**

The map released by DeSmog UK exposes how UK Conservative politicians competing for leadership of the party — and of the country — are embedded in a Trumpist lobbying network with funding from US oil and gas companies.

The connections go through a nexus of hardline pro-Brexit lobbying groups campaigning for the break-up of the EU, concentrated around a single, unremarkable-looking road in London, Tufton Street. The Tufton Street network not only works closely with well-known British politicians, it also has extensive ties to far-right parties in Europe with roots in neo-Nazism, from the Sweden Democrats to the Brothers of Italy. Tufton Street groups have received \$5.6 million from anonymous US donors since 2008.

The network map uncovers how this nexus of British groups around Tufton Street is being used, through funding and personnel, by the Atlas Network, a neoconservative non-profit based in Washington DC. Funded by the Kochs, Exxon and other fossil fuel giants, Atlas' main London

partner is the Institute for Economic Affairs (IEA), which has lobbied key UK government ministers including several competing to become the next prime minister.

The Atlas Network has direct connections with top Trump administration officials and supports over 450 organizations around the world to promote its vision of the ‘free-market’ — a euphemism for eliminating government regulations, rolling back environment laws, and slashing public spending in the interests of the wealthiest.

Atlas Network think tanks are funded by some of the biggest US fossil fuel producers and funders of climate science denial — such as the Koch brothers (through the Koch Foundation and Donors Trust), ExxonMobil and MasterCard.

The map thus reveals the lines of influence by which US fossil fuel interests are using British lobbying groups based around Tufton Street to interfere in British politics.

Among the map’s implications is that the UK’s hardline Brexit lobby is far from truly ‘nationalist’ — but is actually operating as a front for Trump’s ‘America First’ lobbying efforts to break into European markets.

Mat Hope, editor of DeSmog UK, explained the map’s findings:

‘The map shows how connected this network of people are that portray themselves as neutral experts, but who are actually campaigners for a very specific cause. It shows how a US style politics of funding highly ideological groups to spread a message that suits politicians with a particular radical free-market agenda is now infiltrating the UK.’

The result, he said, is that Brexit has been hijacked by ‘major US funders of climate science denial including the Koch Brothers, and think tanks with strong ties to Donald Trump’, whom he accused of ‘influencing UK politics at the highest level.’

DeSmog UK’s network map encompasses a sprawling, complicated web of over 2,000 connections between politicians, think tanks, lobby groups, business leaders, corporations and other entities across the US, UK and Europe. Derived by painstakingly poring over public record data, the map took four years to produce. Much of the data, which portrays a highly complex interlocking network of interests, is pulled from the DeSmog Climate Disinformation Research Database — a [detailed online repository](#) exposing anti-climate lobbyists.

‘The DeSmog map provides a glimpse of the diffuse nature of political power in the 21st Century,’ said Dr Phil Parvin, an associate professor in politics and chair of the Ethics in Public Life Research Group at Loughborough University. Although he pointed out that lobbying in itself is not necessarily a bad thing, the problem is that in a world where money and power aren’t constrained by national borders: ‘It’s not always clear where the influence is coming from, or who’s funding it... Global developments like the rise of Big Data and the massive concentration of wealth among an ever smaller number of high net worth individuals create real challenges for democracies around the world: wealth and political influence are closely connected,’ he told me. ‘At the very least, we need more clarity from our politicians about the interests they represent, and who is backing them.’

**The Atlas Network — an arm of US soft power**

The revelation that senior UK Conservative Party politicians are part of a hardline Brexit lobbying network dominated by Atlas raises urgent questions about the extent to which powerful Trump lobbies are attempting to influence British politics to accelerate a break-up of the EU.

According to *Intercept* journalist Lee Fang, Atlas has long ‘operated as a quiet extension of US foreign policy, with Atlas-associated think tanks receiving quiet funding from the State Department and the National Endowment for Democracy [NED], a critical arm of American soft power.’

The NED has been criticized for using State Department funding to facilitate ‘regime change’ in countries antithetical to American interests — an approach that Atlas may be using to manipulate Britain’s Brexit course in the interests of its wealthy donors.

Fang’s investigation revealed that the Atlas Network has systematically penetrated the top layer of the Trump administration through a wide range of political appointments of Atlas connections, including Sebastian Gorka, Trump’s former top counterterrorism advisor (who lost his job after his membership in a Nazi-linked group in Hungary was exposed — his wife Katharine has served as an advisor to Trump’s homeland security department and has been picked for the role of White House press secretary for US Customs and Border Protection); Vice-President Mike Pence; Education Secretary Betsy DeVos; and Judy Shelton, an Atlas Network senior fellow who advised the Trump campaign and transition team before being appointed chair of the NED — the White House now wants to appoint her to the Federal Reserve.

In the US, the Atlas Network affiliates include a host of think tanks dabbling in climate science denial like the Cato Institute, Heritage Foundation, Heartland Institute and Competitive Enterprise Institute.

Its most prominent British members are part of the Tufton Street network, including its global partner, the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) — situated around the corner from Tufton Street on Lord North Street. Further Atlas/IEA partners around Tufton Street include Taxpayers’ Alliance, Centre for Policy Studies, Adam Smith Institute, and Civitas, among many others.

### **Fossil fuels and climate denial**

David and Charles Koch, the owners behind Koch Industries — America’s largest private fossil fuel company — are major Atlas Network donors. They are notorious for funding climate science denial to the tune of more than one hundred million dollars over two decades, and have massive influence over the Trump administration through relationships with key federal staffers. ExxonMobil, one of the top funders of climate science denial, has financed Atlas-affiliates like the climate denying Heartland Institute and donated to the ‘American Friends of IEA’, a US-based fundraising vehicle for the IEA, Atlas’ chief London partner.

The map suggests that the Trump-connected Atlas Network is directly implicated in secretive US lobbying efforts to subvert British democracy. Atlas’ chief London partner, the IEA, was outed last year as having offered to broker access to senior British politicians for American donors trying to influence Brexit. The IEA denied the allegations, but the alleged scam appears to have been part of a wider strategy.

The IEA is closely connected to the notorious climate denial propaganda unit, the Global Warming Policy Foundation (GWPF), situated on 55 Tufton Street. Three IEA trustees — Nigel

Vinson, Neil Record, and Michael Hintze — are GWPF funders. Both the GWPF and IEA were among a total of nine Tufton Street-based organizations accused in court documents of breaking election laws in a coordinated push for a hard Brexit that would torpedo Britain's climate targets and leave 'gaping holes' in environmental regulation.

By illustrating for the first time how embedded these Tufton Street networks are within Washington's Atlas Network, the new map indicates that these hard-Brexit British lobbies acted in concert with powerful fossil fuel interests with significant leverage inside the Trump administration.

### **Tufton Street — a far-right lobbying nexus**

DeSmog UK's map illustrates how Conservative Party candidates competing to become Britain's next prime minister are deeply embedded in the Atlas Network through its Tufton Street partners.

Former foreign secretary Boris Johnson (Trump's favourite for prime minister) helped Tory MEP Daniel Hannan found the Tufton Street outfit Initiative for Free Trade (IFT), whose staffers have been hosted by Atlas-affiliated groups, from the American Enterprise Institute to the Heritage Foundation.

Home Secretary Sajid Javid is being advised by Tufton Street veteran Matthew Elliott — whose wife is a member of Americans for Tax Reform, the Koch-funded lobbying vehicle.

Jeremy Hunt has been hosted by the Tufton group, New Culture Forum, where Elliott is on the board. After Trump quoted white supremacist Katie Hopkins' tweet attacking the Muslim Mayor of London, Hunt said he agreed with Trump's overall sentiment '150 percent'.

Other candidates who have worked with the Atlas Network's main London partner, the IEA, include former Brexit secretary Dominic Raab, described as 'the IEA's man in government'; environment secretary Michael Gove and former Brexit minister Steve Baker who were both linked to an IEA lobbying scandal to allow US donors to influence British policy advice; and former environment secretary Andrea Leadsom, a longstanding member of the IEA's Free Enterprise Group.

The same nexus works intimately with far-right movements in Europe.

Tufton veteran Tory MEP Daniel Hannan — who has himself been hosted by Atlas affiliates — cofounded the Conservative Party's EU network of political parties, the Alliance of Conservatives and Reformists in Europe (ACRE).

ACRE has cultivated contact with Spain's anti-Muslim Vox party; Matteo Salvini's anti-migrant League, part of Italy's populist government; and Brothers of Italy, a fringe anti-migrant party with fascist roots. For years, Hannan has worked alongside fellow ACRE member, Morten Messerschmidt, a Danish People's Party MEP who promoted ideas reminiscent of the 'great replacement' theory — the racist notion that white populations are being replaced by predominantly Muslim migrants. ACRE's newest members include the Sweden Democrats, another party with neo-Nazi roots, some of whose officials are former Nazis.

By far one of the most disturbing Tufton Street connections goes through Nigel Farage, founder and former head of the racist-harboring UKIP party, and Vice Chair of Leave Means Leave, a hardline Brexit group, which is based on the next street along.

During Farage's leadership of UKIP, at one point the party mysteriously removed its ban on racists becoming members. Farage also met secretly with two anti-Semitic officials from the notorious neo-Nazi British National Party (BNP): one of whom had authored a pamphlet blaming a Jewish conspiracy for orchestrating 'the mass immigration of non-Europeans into every White country on earth.'

Farage later negotiated UKIP's alliance with an European Parliamentary grouping comprised largely of white-supremacist and pro-Nazi parties. This year, he formed the Brexit Party, which won the largest number of British votes in the European elections in May. Apart from cavorting with racists, Farage has a long sordid history of climate science denialism, as do numerous politicians from his new party.

Given his embeddedness in the Atlas-dominated Tufton network, Farage's private meeting with Donald Trump during his recent London visit speaks volumes.

'We need effective regulation, although it's difficult to know how that might be designed,' professor Parvin told me on the unknown impact of foreign lobbying.

Farage exemplifies how this European nexus of climate science denialism and white supremacy is being weaponized by US fossil fuel giants with leverage over Trump's government, to co-opt the Brexit agenda for their own ends. This would seem to offer little to European citizens, and even less to Europe's minorities — but a great deal to US corporations.