Greg Miller, a national security reporter for The Washington Post reminds us that Donald Trump and Robert Mueller have superficially similar backgrounds. Both were born to wealth in New York City in the 1940s. Mr. Trump and Mr. Mueller share German-Scottish descent, attended all male private schools, and earned degrees from Ivy League universities. Each exudes self-confidence.

The similarities end there. Robert Mueller enlisted in the Marine Corps soon after he graduated from Princeton and earned a bronze star in Vietnam. Mr. Trump relied on a medical disqualification for bone spurs to avoid the draft. Mr. Mueller spent four decades in federal law enforcement, including more than a decade as FBI director. A real estate mogul, who rebounded from multiple bankruptcies, Mr. Trump became a reality TV star, and in 2016 was elected president of the United States. Mr. Mueller is, by all accounts, a straight arrow. Mr. Trump is, well, not addicted to the truth.

And, now, of course, Robert Mueller is conducting an investigation of allegations of collusion between the Trump campaign and the Russian government that the president claims were cooked up by “Crooked Hillary” and her Democratic allies.

In “The Apprentice: Trump, Russia and the Subversion of American Democracy,” Mr. Miller provides a comprehensive examination of the Kremlin’s efforts to subvert our democracy, Mr. Mueller’s investigation, and the impact on the Trump presidency. Although Mr. Miller’s book contains no new “smoking gun” disclosures, it does offer lots of new information. Most important, “The Apprentice” demonstrates, to anyone willing to assess the evidence, that the Russia probe is anything but a hoax or a witch hunt.
Greg Miller documents the massive scale and scope of Russia’s social media disinformation campaign. Drafted by trolls in St. Petersburg, “Being Patriot” posts generated more than 4 million Facebook shares, reactions or comments. In Tennessee, a Russian group with the Twitter handle @TEN_GOP attracted 145,000 followers with strident tweets about gun rights, illegal immigration, and attacks on police. The fake Facebook group, “Woke Blacks,” declared that neither party represents African-Americans: “Don’t go to vote. Only this way we can change the way of things.” A group called “Heart of Texas” organized a rally to “Stop Islamization.”

In attracting followers, Mr. Miller reveals, free posts inserted into Facebook News Feeds and then shared with “friends” dwarfed paid advertising. Just about everyone on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram got reports about Hillary Clinton’s use of a private email server, the Benghazi investigation, and hacked Democratic National Committee communications. Overall, the Russian campaign reached at least 126 million Americans, more than half of the population. A BuzzFeed analysis concluded that “fake news” spread farther than legitimate stories.

Although U.S. intelligence agencies did not assess the impact of the cyber assault on the 2016 election, President Trump claimed they had determined that Moscow’s meddling didn’t affect the outcome. In an election decided by 80,000 votes spread across three states, his assertion, Mr. Miller suggests, is “increasingly difficult to believe.”

In a narrative that takes us into the summer of 2018, “The Apprentice” reminds us as well of efforts by the president to derail, discredit, and obstruct the investigation into Russia’s subversion operations and collusion by individuals in the Trump campaign, including Mr. Trump himself, his son, son-in-law, campaign manager, personal lawyer, and his first National Security adviser.

Mr. Miller takes the title of the book from Mr. Trump’s reality television show. He uses it, however, to point to Mr. Trump’s lack of experience for the most powerful position in the world. The nation’s apprentice president, Mr. Miller indicates, has presided over a dysfunctional executive branch. Nor does he seem interested in learning about urgently important issues.

According to Mr. Miller, the term apprentice may also explain Mr. Trump’s subservience to Russian President Vladimir Putin. It remains to be seen, he acknowledges, whether the president will be indicted or face impeachment. That said, some CIA officials have speculated
to Mr. Miller that Mr. Putin’s leverage, and the collusion between them, may be hiding in plain sight.

President Trump, they point out, cannot admit that the Kremlin was responsible for his election. And so, he must count on Mr. Putin to maintain the fantasy that Russia’s interference was inconsequential. Had the Russian leader admitted during the Helsinki summit that he had engineered a disinformation campaign to tip the balance in 2016, Mr. Miller speculates, he “would have told everyone but the president what they already knew.”

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