

# NYT Shows How Propaganda Works

**Exclusive:** The U.S. mainstream media pretends it operates with professional standards of objectivity and fairness, but especially in its international reporting the only real standards are double standards, as the New York Times has shown on Ukraine and Syria, writes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

In the multilayered double standards of its international coverage, the New York Times demonstrates how propaganda works: Outrage is the only appropriate response when an adversary breaks a rule but a shrug is okay when it's "our side." Plus, there must be perfect evidence to accuse "our side" of an offense but anything goes when it's an adversary.

Recent Times' articles illustrate how this hypocrisy works. Take, for example, international law, especially prohibitions against aggression. When the topic is Ukraine and the alleged violator is Russia, no extreme is too extreme in denouncing Russia's President Vladimir Putin. But the concern about international law simply disappears when discussing Syria and the desirability of U.S. President Barack Obama overthrowing the government there.

In Ukraine, despite the murky circumstances surrounding last February's coup d'état ousting the elected president and unleashing war in the ethnic Russian east, the Times refuses to see any merit in the Russian side of the argument. It's all about the sacred principle of non-intervention; the mitigating circumstances don't matter.

However, when it comes to demanding Obama dispatch the U.S. military to take out Syria's government, the Times forgets international law; it's all about the mitigating circumstances that justify the U.S. bombing of Syrian government troops and paving the way for a rebel victory.

A good example of this is a Nov. 28 [article](#) by Times correspondent Anne Barnard that hammers Obama over the supposed inconsistencies in his policy of bombing Islamic State radicals inside Syria but not also turning the U.S. military loose against the Syrian government of President Bashar al-Assad.

Barnard writes that anti-Assad forces inside Syria "conclude, increasingly, that the Obama administration is siding with Mr. Assad, that by training United States firepower solely on the Islamic State it is aiding a president whose ouster is still, at least officially, an American goal.

"Their dismay reflects a broader sense on all sides that President Obama's

policies on Syria and the Islamic State remain contradictory, and the longer the fight goes on without the policies being resolved, the more damage is being done to America's standing in the region."

It may be a fair point that the U.S. military strikes inside Syria against Islamic State radicals, who have also seized territory in Iraq, is at least a technical violation of international law, but the Syrian government has acquiesced to these attacks since they are aimed at a rebel force that is widely regarded as terrorist. Thus, the bombings have some color of legitimacy.

However, attacking Syrian government forces is a horse of an entirely different color. That would be a clear-cut violation of international law. It would be a war of aggression deemed by the Nuremberg Tribunal after World War II to be the "supreme international crime" because it "contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole." Yet, this important legal point is entirely missing from the Times article, which focuses instead on how Obama has offended Assad's opponents by attacking the Islamic State, not Assad.

In effect, the Times is pushing the neoconservative line that the United States should first undertake "regime change" in Syria before it deals with the Islamic State. In making that case, the Times not only leaves out the question of international law but gives short-shrift to the danger that destroying Assad's military might open the gates of Damascus to the Islamic State or al-Qaeda's affiliate Nusra Front, the only two effective fighting forces among the Syrian rebels.

### **Addressing International Law**

A more professional news article would have seriously addressed both the international law issue and the dangers inherent in a U.S.-driven Syrian "regime change," including the very real possibility that a jihadist victory in the heart of the Middle East could force a full-scale U.S. military intervention, requiring hundreds of thousands of troops and costing hundreds of billions of dollars.

Indeed, the Times' coverage of the Syrian crisis often looks like a replay of the newspaper's gullible acceptance of the neocon-predicted "cakewalk" through Iraq in 2003. In the Iraq War, too, there was scant attention paid to the question of the United States violating international law and to the chance that the invasion might not go as smoothly as the neocons dreamt.

While ignoring the issue of U.S. aggression in a war on Syria, the Times presents the Ukraine crisis as a simple matter of Russian "aggression" by leaving out the context of a U.S.-backed coup on Feb. 22 that forced

President Viktor Yanukovich and his officials to flee for their lives and prompting resistance to the new order from eastern and southern Ukraine which had been Yanukovich's political base.

As former Rep. Dennis Kucinich has written, this important background and the earlier expansion of NATO into eastern Europe would put the Ukraine story in a very different light: "NATO encirclement, the U.S.-backed coup in Ukraine, an attempt to use an agreement with the European Union to bring NATO into Ukraine at the Russian border, a U.S. nuclear first-strike policy, are all policies which attempt to substitute force for diplomacy.

"Russia's response to the terror unleashed by western-backed neo-nazis in Crimea and Odessa came after the local population appealed to Russia to protect them from the violence. Russia then agreed to Crimea joining the Russian Federation, a reaffirmation of an historic relationship.

"The Western press begins its narrative on the Crimea situation with the annexation, but completely ignores the provocations by the West and other causal factors which resulted in the annexation. This distortion of reality is artificially creating an hysteria about Russian aggressiveness, another distortion which could pose an exceptionally dangerous situation for the world, if acted upon by other nations. The U.S. Congress is responding to the distortions, not to the reality."

### **Propaganda Vehicle**

Another way that the New York Times makes itself useful as a neocon propaganda vehicle is by applying two radically different standards for proof when an accusation is made. If, for instance, anyone notes that U.S.-funded "non-governmental organizations" played a behind-the-scenes role in instigating the Ukrainian coup even though there is clear documentary evidence from the public reports of the National Endowment for Democracy and similar U.S.-funded entities that is deemed a "conspiracy theory."

However, if you want to accuse the Russians of secretly financing anti-fracking groups in Romania, you don't need any evidence at all, just vague assertions. So, on Dec. 1, the Times published a lengthy article by Andrew Higgins promoting the Romanian government's suspicions that local environmental groups which have blocked Chevron's use of hydraulic fracturing for shale gas are fronts for Russia's energy industry.

The article acknowledges that "this belief that Russia is fueling the protests, shared by officials in Lithuania, where Chevron also ran into a wave of unusually fervent protests and then decided to pull out, has not yet been backed

up by any clear proof. And [Russia's] Gazprom has denied accusations that it has bankrolled anti-fracking protests.

"But circumstantial evidence, plus large dollops of Cold War-style suspicion, have added to mounting alarm over covert Russian meddling to block threats to its energy stranglehold on Europe."

It's not exactly clear what the Times' "circumstantial evidence" is either, but the article next turns to more unsubstantiated accusations aired in September by then-NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, who "pointed a finger at Russia" by citing its alleged support for NGOs, another hypocritical twist because many NGOs are actually funded by the U.S. government and are deployed to disrupt or destabilize adversaries around the world.

Ignoring this hypocrisy, Rasmussen declared: "Russia, as part of their sophisticated information and disinformation operations, engaged actively with so-called nongovernmental organizations, environmental organizations working against shale gas, to maintain dependence on imported Russian gas."

Again, the Times notes that Rasmussen presented no proof, saying that his judgment was based on what NATO allies had reported. Yet, despite this admitted lack of evidence, the Times still devotes portions of two pages to this Russian-hand-hidden-behind-the-anti-fracking-cause hypothesis. If such flimsy speculation were aimed at the United States, it would be laughed off as a paranoid conspiracy theory or labeled "disinformation."

Also not noted in the Times article is Rasmussen's record for getting facts wrong. As Danish prime minister in 2003, he supported the U.S. invasion of Iraq and famously declared that "Iraq has WMDs. It is not something we think; it is something we know. Iraq has itself admitted that it has had mustard gas, nerve gas, anthrax, but Saddam won't disclose. He won't tell us where and how these weapons have been destroyed. We know this from the UN inspectors, so there is no doubt in my mind."

Of course, pretty much everything that Rasmussen declared about Iraq's WMD was wrong, but it succeeded in tricking the Danish parliament into voting to join Bush's "coalition of the willing" to invade Iraq. Rasmussen was later rewarded for his role in this aggressive war against Iraq by getting a plum job as NATO secretary general where he similarly has hyped alarms about Russia.

Yet, the New York Times ignores this history as this "newspaper of record" applies its endless double standards to ratchet up tensions in Syria and Ukraine.

**Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for**

The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his latest book, *America's Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)). For a limited time, you also can order Robert Parry's trilogy on the Bush Family and its connections to various right-wing operatives for only \$34. The trilogy includes *America's Stolen Narrative*. For details on this offer, [click here](#).

---

## Consider Consortiumnews on 'Giving Tuesday'

**From Editor Robert Parry:** Dec. 2 is "Giving Tuesday" when people take a break from shopping and donate to charities and while Consortiumnews might not jump to mind, it is crucial that our non-profit journalism keeps shedding light into the dark corners of global affairs because facts are the first line of defense against war and other horrors.

Just think of the devastation that has come from a misinformed American public enabling deceitful politicians (aided by the complicit mainstream media) to lead the world's most powerful nation into ill-considered wars. Think of the damage just from the Iraq War alone and how those lies of the last decade still wreak havoc today, inflicting death and suffering on tens of thousands of innocents across the Middle East.

An even greater danger to the future of the planet looms behind the crisis in Ukraine where U.S. government propagandists and the mainstream media have teamed up to present another one-sided and dishonest narrative of what's going on and this time the violence is on the border of nuclear-armed Russia. Consortiumnews has been one of the few voices filling in the context and explaining the nuances.

So, when you're deciding where to donate on this "Giving Tuesday," please consider a contribution to Consortiumnews so we can continue our efforts to stop the thoughtless actions that have caused so much pain and bloodshed. [For more about our history, [click here](#).]

Here are several ways you can help:

You can make a donation to our tax-exempt non-profit. You can use a [credit card online](#) (we accept Visa, Mastercard or Discover) or you can [mail a check](#) to Consortium for Independent Journalism (CIJ); 2200 Wilson Blvd., Suite 102-231;

Arlington VA 22201. For readers wanting to use PayPal, you can address contributions to our account, which is named after our e-mail address: "consortnew @ aol.com". (Since we are a 501-c-3 non-profit, donations by American taxpayers may be tax-deductible.)

For donations of \$100 or more, we are offering special thank-you gifts. If you want one of the gifts, just send us an e-mail at [consortnew@aol.com](mailto:consortnew@aol.com) including your mailing address and saying whether you would like either:

A CD of the historic joint appearance of the late Gary Webb and me, speaking in December 1996 about the Contra-cocaine scandal at the Midnight Special bookstore in Santa Monica, California. Plus, an autographed copy of my book, *Lost History: Contras, Cocaine, the Press and Project Truth*, which describes how the CIA's inspector general finally acknowledged that the CIA did know about the Contra-cocaine smuggling and helped cover it up. (This information is featured in the new movie, "Kill the Messenger.")

Or a DVD of the 1991 Frontline documentary, "Election Held Hostage," which examines whether Ronald Reagan's campaign exploited the 1980 Iran hostage crisis to win the presidency. Plus, a signed copy of my newest book, *America's Stolen Narrative*, which provides the latest documentary evidence on that Republican skullduggery.

Another way to help Consortiumnews survive is to buy my three-book trilogy on the Bush dynasty *Secrecy & Privilege*, *Neck Deep* and *America's Stolen Narrative* for the discount price of only \$34, less than half the cover price. Just go to Consortiumnews.com's "[Donate](#)" button and make a \$34 "donation" using Visa, Mastercard or Discover. We will read a "donation" of that amount as an order for the trilogy. If your mailing address is the same as your credit card billing address, we will ship the books to that address. If your mailing address is different, just send us an e-mail at [consortnew@aol.com](mailto:consortnew@aol.com) and we will make the adjustment.

You can also take advantage of this trilogy offer by mailing a check for \$34 to The Media Consortium; 2200 Wilson Blvd.; Suite 102-231; Arlington VA 22201. Or you can use our PayPal account, "consortnew @ aol.com." Just make sure you include your mailing address in the message. (A portion of each sale will go to support our investigative journalism.)

For U.S. orders of the trilogy, we will pay for the shipping. **(Regrettably, this three-book offer can only be made for the United States because of increased international postal rates.)**

Other ways to help:

If you purchase items through Amazon, you can go to AmazonSmile and select Consortium for Independent Journalism as your preferred charity to receive a fraction of each purchase that you make at Amazon at no extra cost to you.

You can donate stock or other equities, which can offer a tax advantage to you if the stock has appreciated in value. If this stock-donation option appeals to you, I suggest you discuss it with your broker and then contact me at [consortnew@aol.com](mailto:consortnew@aol.com) for specific instructions on how to transfer the stock.

Again, thanks for your support and for making our 19 years of honest journalism possible.

**Robert Parry is a longtime investigative reporter who broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for the Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. He founded Consortiumnews.com in 1995 to create an outlet for well-reported journalism that was being squeezed out of an increasingly trivialized U.S. news media.**

---