

Trump Schools ABC-TV Host on Reality

Exclusive: The spectacle of clueless U.S. media personalities, like George Stephanopoulos, chastising Donald Trump for getting facts wrong would be funny if it weren't indicative of a political-media system failing the American people and what's left of the democratic Republic, writes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

Mainstream media and politicians are fond of denouncing Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump for trafficking in conspiracy theories and playing fast and loose with the facts, but some of them slide into the same patterns in attacking Trump or other demonized leaders, such as Russian President Vladimir Putin.

For instance, on ABC-TV's "This Week," host George Stephanopoulos deployed a favorite "conspiracy theory" technique to accuse Putin of murdering journalists and then demanded that Trump explain why he would welcome praise from such a nefarious character. The technique was to cite a sizable number of "mysterious deaths" as proof that the conspiracy-theory target was guilty, even if there was no specific evidence in any individual case.

Stephanopoulos challenged Trump by asking: "When you were pressed about [Putin's] killing of journalists, you said, 'I think our country does plenty of killing too.' What were you thinking about there? What killing sanctioned by the U.S. government is like killing journalists?"

Trump responded that "in all fairness to Putin, you're saying he killed people. I haven't seen that. I don't know that he has. Have you been able to prove that? Do you know the names of the reporters that he's killed? Because I've been – you know, you've been hearing this, but I haven't seen the name. Now, I think it would be despicable if that took place, but I haven't seen any evidence that he killed anybody in terms of reporters."

Stephanopoulos then backed up his murder charge against Putin by saying: "here's what Mitt Romney tweeted about that. He said, there's an important distinction here. Thug Putin kills journalists and opponents. Our presidents kill terrorists and enemy combatants."

Trump answered back, "Does he [Romney] know for a fact that he [Putin] kills the reporters? I don't know – I don't think anybody knows that. It's possible that he does. But I don't think it's been proven. Has anybody proven that he's killed reporters? And I'm not trying to stick up for anybody."

Stephanopoulos: "There have been many allegations that he was behind the killing of (INAUDIBLE) and ..."

Trump: "No, no, allegations. There are allegations. Yes, sure, there are allegations. I've read those allegations over the years, but nobody's proven that he's killed anybody as far as I'm concerned. He hasn't killed reporters that it's been proven. Now, if he has"

Stephanopoulos's next rejoinder was perhaps even more startling: "But what killing has the United States government done?"

Sadly, such cluelessness is now typical of the mainstream U.S. news media as if these "journalists" have been hiding under a rock for the past 15 years if not much longer. But back to the aspect of Stephanopoulos's charge against Putin that just because there are lots of allegations even without supporting evidence we must accept a person's guilt.

Clinton's 'Mysterious Deaths'

That "conspiracy theory" technique should be familiar to Stephanopoulos since he was an aide to President Bill Clinton when right-wing enemies compiled a list of "Clinton's mysterious deaths," which included anyone who had even tangential contact with Arkansas Gov. Clinton and then died in some "suspicious" manner.

The best known of these cases was deputy White House counsel Vincent Foster who became distraught over becoming the subject of other scandal-mongering and committed suicide on July 20, 1993, but the "strength" of the "murder" allegations against Clinton was in the lengthy list of "mysterious deaths."

At the time, a longtime conservative source faxed me the list, marveling at the number and saying that if even a few were true that would be "a big story." I responded that if even one were true that a sitting U.S. president had murdered a single political opponent "that would be a big story, but there's got to be proof."

Many of the cases on the list were murky old tales from Arkansas, but I noticed one fairly recent one with a local angle. A federal bureaucrat who had some minor connection to the investigation of Clinton's Whitewater real-estate investment had died from a fall out of a new apartment high-rise in Arlington, Virginia.

But it really wasn't much of a mystery. My investigation quickly determined that the man was suffering from AIDS and was faced with a grim prognosis. So, he traveled from his home in Washington D.C. to Arlington, asked a real-estate agent to show him a top-floor apartment, went to the balcony, asked the startled

young woman if what he was about to do would hurt, and jumped to his death. (I even interviewed the poor woman.)

President Clinton had nothing to do with this tragedy, a fact that I imparted to my conservative source who was in touch with the makers of the list. Yet, several months later when an updated list was sent my way, the same “mystery” was still there.

In other words, the list creators were not interested in fairness toward Clinton or the merits of any one case. They understood that it was the cumulative number of cases that sent the desired propaganda message, building up a suspicion that Clinton was a murderer. Then, anyone who challenged the methodology and pointed to the absence of any real proof could be dismissed as a “Clinton apologist.”

Stephanopoulos saw these tactics up close in the 1990s. I even met with him once at his White House office to discuss this pattern of right-wing conspiracy-mongering. But now he is practicing the same tactics against Putin and Trump.

The WMD Scam

In the early 2000s, a similar technique was used to trick the U.S. intelligence community into buying into the falsehoods about Iraq’s Saddam Hussein hiding stockpiles of WMD and reviving a nuclear-weapons program. Then, it was a case of the Iraqi National Congress funneling a series of Iraqi “defectors” into the CIA with well-rehearsed tales about supposed first-hand knowledge of Hussein’s trickery.

As at least 19 “defectors” walked in, the CIA analysts succeeded in debunking some of them, but the sheer number combined with heavy White House pressure to find “proof” of its WMD claims led the analysts to begin accepting the allegations as true. Only after the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 did the CIA analysts realize that they had been had by an organized effort at fabrication. [See Consortiumnews.com’s [“Chalabi’s Legacy of Lies.”](#)]

Given the U.S.-inflicted havoc on Iraq, Afghanistan and a wide variety of other countries including a large number of civilian deaths the rest of Stephanopoulos’s tirade toward Trump on Sunday was instructive about other deep-seated biases of Official Washington and its compliant mainstream media.

Though a key principle of journalism is objectivity, Stephanopoulos made it clear that he was part of Official Washington’s team, decrying Putin “when he backs our adversaries like [Syrian President] Bashar Assad, when he backs Iran, when he invades Ukraine.” He then asked Trump, “Is it wise to be praising our adversaries and alienating our allies?”

Stephanopoulos added, “you said, ‘I think our country does plenty of killing too.’ What killing are you talking about there, ordered by the United States government?”

Trump answered: “Well, take a look at what we’re doing in the Middle East. We went into Iraq. We shouldn’t have. You know that I was opposed to going into Iraq many years ago. In 2003/2004 there were headlines in Reuters that Trump is opposed to the war, because you’re going to destabilize the Middle East.

“I said, if you do this, you’ll destabilize the Middle East and Iran will take over. Very simple, Iran will take over Iraq. That’s exactly what’s happening. And on top of that we have ISIS, which is another problem and another complicating factor. Now, we should have never gone into Iraq. When we left, we made a mistake.

“We made a big mistake with Libya. We’ve destabilized all these places. We now have a migration with thousands and hundreds of thousands and even millions of people that don’t know where they’re going. I mean it’s a terrible thing. We have been run by incompetent people, incompetent politicians. They don’t know – and that’s probably why I’m leading so high in the polls because people are tired of seeing very, very stupid and very, very incompetent people running our country into the ground.

“In the meantime, we owe \$19 trillion, soon going to be \$21 trillion and we better get our act together fast, George, because our country is going down if we don’t.”

‘Moral Equivalence’

In stunned disbelief, Stephanopoulos shot back with the old “moral equivalence” argument that was developed by CIA propagandists and neoconservatives during the Reagan administration to justify U.S.-backed slaughters in Central America and elsewhere: “Your comments seem to suggest some moral equivalence for the United States and Russia. Is that what you believe?”

Trump: “I’m not saying anything. I’m saying, when you say a man [Putin] has killed reporters, I’d like you to prove it. And I’m – I’m saying it would be a terrible thing if it were true, but I have never seen any information or any proof that he killed reporters, George. You’re just saying, he killed reporters. You and other people tell me he killed reporters. I don’t know that he killed reporters. I haven’t seen it. If he did, I think it’s despicable. I think it would be horrible. But you’re making these accusations and I don’t – I don’t see any proof. And, by the way, he totally denies that he kills reporters. He totally denied it.”

Stephanopoulos: "I'm still waiting for the evidence that we've been directly involved in killing people as well. You made your points about Iraq. But I do want to move on."

As hard as it may be to believe, Stephanopoulos presenting himself as a leading American journalist pretends to be unaware of the killings associated with the brutal interrogations of "war on terror" and Iraq War detainees, the targeted drone killings that both President George W. Bush and President Barack Obama have signed off on, the mass slaughter of citizens in Fallujah and other Iraqi cities bombarded by the U.S. military, the more recent killings of doctors and patients at a Doctors Without Borders hospital in Kunduz, Afghanistan, and relevant to the issue of journalists the killings of Al Jazeera, Reuters and other reporters in Iraq.

One could go back through history and remind Stephanopoulos of many other examples of the U.S. government slaughtering large numbers of civilians either directly in places such as Vietnam or indirectly through proxies in regions such as Central and South America. But the stance of a "respectable" American "journalist" apparently must be that none of that ever happened or, if it did happen, it was all an unintended mistake.

Though Trump is regularly accused of getting his facts wrong, he responded to Stephanopoulos with incredulity: "Excuse me, take a look at the rampage all over the place. And you know what we've gotten for Iraq? We've spent \$2 trillion, OK? We've – thousands, hundreds of thousands of people killed. We've lost thousands and thousands of our great young people, soldiers.

"So, \$2 trillion, deaths, wounded warriors, we have nothing, and Iran is now taking over Iraq with the second largest oil reserves in the world. We're run by people that don't have a clue."

But Stephanopoulos apparently did not realize that Donald Trump of all people had just taken him to school on the question of who had a better grasp of reality. So, the ABC-TV "newsman" lamely shot back with a non-sequitur: "And Iran has been backed by Vladimir Putin."

While much of what Trump says can be fairly criticized for inaccuracies and exaggerations as well as for offensive and divisive rhetoric the sad reality is that the mainstream media personalities who pose as "truth-tellers" are often more detached from facts and more beholden to delusions than he is.

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](https://www.barnesandnoble.com)).

The Murder of Yitzhak Rabin

Israel's decisive turn to the dark side of Jewish terrorism and religious-based repression of the Palestinians can be marked by the murder of Prime Minister Rabin by a right-wing Jewish extremist in 1995, a moment that also inflicted a fatal wound on the peace process, as ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar describes.

By Paul R. Pillar

The best chance for a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict appeared to arrive in the early 1990s. A combination of deft international diplomacy and political evolution in the two sides' leadership led in 1993 to a secretly negotiated agreement, the Oslo accord, between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization that established a partially autonomous transitional mechanism known as the Palestinian Authority.

The accord was supposed to lead within five years to the establishment of a Palestinian state recognized by Israel. It didn't. Instead, the two sides remain locked in a deadly embrace.

A central figure in the hopeful developments of the 1990s was the prime minister of Israel, Yitzhak Rabin. He had several attributes that qualified him well to play this role. He was the first *sabra*, or native son, to become prime minister of Israel, having been born in Jerusalem when it was part of the British mandate of Palestine.

Rabin's successful military career, including fighting in Israel's war for independence, culminated in service as chief of the general staff, a position in which he oversaw Israel's rout of Arab armies in the Six Day War in 1967. He remained a military officer at heart even after entering politics, always more comfortable talking with generals about security matters than in the other interactions political leaders have to endure.

Succeeding Golda Meir as leader of the Labor Party, Rabin served a first stint as prime minister in the 1970s, when by his own later admission he was insufficiently experienced to do the job well. In 1977, he left office under the cloud of a minor financial scandal dating from earlier service as ambassador in Washington.

Then in 1992, more seasoned at age 70, he led his party to victory over Likud

Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, the former Stern Gang terrorist whose electoral defeat was preceded by enough acrimony with the United States that the George H. W. Bush administration withheld loan guarantees to Israel. Over the next three years, Rabin led his country through the first steps of implementing the Oslo agreement.

Rabin, whom U.S. envoy Dennis Ross described as the most secular Israeli he had ever met, shared none of the belief held by many Israelis that possession of the territory conquered in 1967 was a fulfillment of Jewish destiny. He could argue that Israel would need parts of the West Bank for security purposes but not because of any sacred status of the land itself. He said that clinging to the territories would mean Israel losing its Jewish majority and, using a term few Israelis dared to speak at the time, turn it into an apartheid state.

Rabin had little patience for the settlers, who in turn saw him as a threat. Rabin's role as peacemaker, and possibly with him any real prospect for completing the process envisioned at Oslo, came to an abrupt end on the evening of Nov. 4, 1995, when a young right-wing Jewish fanatic murdered him after the Prime Minister addressed a massive pro-peace rally in Tel Aviv.

Journalist Dan Ephron has written a gripping account of the assassination and the political and social currents in Israel surrounding it. A former *Newsweek* correspondent who reported from Israel at the time, including covering the rally that would be Rabin's last public appearance, his story has been enriched by voluminous interviews in the subsequent years.

Killing a King is an objective and persuasive description of moods as well as facts. As the dual narratives of prime minister and assassin roll toward their convergence point at the site of the shooting, the book becomes a real page-turner.

Ephron begins with Rabin's trip to Washington for the signing of the Oslo accord, a ceremony featuring a carefully choreographed handshake with PLO leader Yasser Arafat. Ephron continues his story until six months past the assassination, when an Israeli election returned Likud to power. The story thus is not just of a single event, but also of a period of less than three years that marked the high tide of hopes for Israeli-Palestinian peace.

The assassination itself was an inflection point: the end of the most significant progress there has ever been toward resolving the conflict (including completion of a detailed implementation agreement, known as Oslo II) and the beginning of the death of the peace process.

Even during that promising era, opposition in Israel to the departure

represented by the Oslo agreement was intense. To obtain approval by the Knesset of the accord, Rabin had to rely on votes of Arab-Israeli members, a nettlesome fact that opponents raised ever after as supposedly rendering the decision, and thus the accord itself, less than legitimate.

Approval of Oslo II in October 1995 was even closer: a vote of 61-59 at 3:00 a.m. after a long and bitter session of the legislature. Opposition was most determined among, but went well beyond, settlers in the occupied territories. The opposition was impassioned and malevolent, with much of the enmity directed at Rabin himself.

Out of this lethal environment emerged the eventual murderer: a short, intelligent law student of Yemeni extraction named Yigal Amir. Amir's own extremism was rooted in the combination of an ultra-Orthodox education and day-to-day exposure to the secular side of Israeli society. The discord between these two aspects of his life appeared to radicalize rather than temper him, as explained by a clinical psychologist who examined him years later.

A sense of guilt over sensual and material longing curdled within him, providing some of the impetus for extreme acts. This syndrome was remarkably similar to that of another famous extremist son of Yemeni emigrants: Anwar al-Awlaki, who would become a leader of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and whose story is expertly told in Scott Shane's recent book *Objective Troy*.

Amir declined the exemption from military service then available to most ultra-Orthodox and did a stint in the Israeli army after completing high school. While in the army his radicalism acquired a more activist tone, in which he disdained as too passive the teachings of his Haredi upbringing that God alone determines the fate of the Jews.

Amir had bigger ideas. He favored the idea that Jews needed to take the initiative in figuring out God's will and implementing it through their own actions. When Amir watched on television the handshake between Rabin and Arafat, he immediately concluded that the Oslo agreement was a disaster for Israel, that Rabin was committing treason by handing over to Palestinians land that God had promised to Jews and that action in response was required.

For the next two years Amir was obsessed with finding ways to undo that perceived act of treason. Some of his initial effort was aimed at assembling a militia, with his principal targets for recruitment being fellow students at Bar-Ilan University, that would disrupt the nascent peace process through attacks and sabotage in Palestinian areas.

Gradually his main focus shifted to killing Rabin. How and where to do so, but

not whether to commit the crime, was a recurrent subject of conversations between Amir and his brother Hagai, who was more nerdy and technically minded than Yigal and contributed ideas about how a homemade bomb might do the trick.

The title of Ephron's book derives from a letter that Hagai, after being arrested as an accomplice to the assassination, wrote to his parents in which he self-servingly strove to place the murder in a Jewish tradition of rebellion against apostasy.

Yigal had thought even longer and harder than his brother about a religious justification for killing Rabin. He settled finally on a Talmudic principle called *rodef*, which refers to someone pursuing another person with intent to kill, making it permissible for a bystander to kill the pursuer to save the innocent victim.

According to Amir's logic, Rabin was a *rodef* because he was in effect killing Jewish settlers. In a further bit of twisted Talmudic interpretation, Amir also considered Rabin to be a *moser*, a person who turns Jews over to a hostile power and for whom the necessary penalty is death.

A more vivid inspiration for Amir came from the massacre that the American-born physician and settler Baruch Goldstein perpetrated in 1994 at a mosque in Hebron, where he murdered 29 Palestinian worshipers and injured over a hundred more. For hardcore opponents of the peace process, the killing spree demonstrated how even a lone gunman could disrupt that process.

Within weeks, Israeli public opinion swung against the idea of forcible removal of settlers; some rabbis pronounced that it was permissible for Israeli soldiers to defy orders for any such removal, and Rabin had to back down from earlier ideas about evicting settlers from Hebron. Amir also saw that Goldstein was lauded in death by the rejectionist community.

Probably the central lesson of Ephron's book is that Amir, notwithstanding how his personal experiences helped to make him what he was, only happened to be the triggerman for something much larger than himself. The story of the assassination is not a tale of how a single extremist crossed the threshold into murder but instead of an entire movement that was so hateful and impassioned, and so sure of the justification for its hatred, that murder was a natural consequence.

As for the religious rationales, twisted though they may be, three prominent settler rabbis, including the rabbi of Hebron, who at Goldstein's funeral had praised him as a holy martyr, issued a letter that essentially agreed with Amir's concept of Rabin as a *rodef* and a *moser*. Amir was further emboldened.

As he later told the commission that investigated the assassination, "If I did not get the backing and I had not been representing many more people, I would not have acted."

In the months prior to the assassination, Amir spoke freely about killing the Prime Minister, and did so to a remarkably large circle of people. Many who heard these remarks, including an informant for Shin Bet, Israel's internal security service, who reported prolifically but did not report these comments from Amir, later said they did not think Amir would follow through.

The talk sounded like bluster that was not much different in tone and in underlying sentiment from what many others were saying even more loudly. The vitriolic talk became the stuff of large street demonstrations.

"It was now standard," writes Ephron, "to hear protesters chant, 'Rabin is a murderer,' over and over, in pulsating fury; to compare Rabin to Hitler or his government to ... the Jewish administrative bodies that enforced Nazi rule during World War II. The ugly invective," says Ephron, "came not just from the political margins but from the top echelons of the Likud Party."

An especially ugly event occurred a month before the assassination, in the form of a huge antigovernment demonstration at Zion Square in Jerusalem while the Knesset was considering the Oslo II agreement. Amid the chants of "death to Rabin" and the burning of pictures of the Prime Minister, other pictures were distributed through the crowd depicting Rabin's head atop the body of a dog or showing him in a Nazi uniform.

The frenzy did not end when the formal program did. Demonstrators marched on the Knesset, and for the first time in Israeli history the legislature seemed in danger of being overrun. When the Prime Minister's driver attempted to bring his limousine to the Knesset, the crowd swarmed the car, rocked it, pounded the roof, climbed on the hood and tore off the ornament.

Later a member of the extremist group Kach brandished the hood ornament during a televised interview and said, "People managed to remove the ornament from the car. And just as we got to the ornament, we can get to Rabin."

Ephron's account lends support to the belief in Rabin's family that responsibility for the lethal mood of this time must be shared by the ambitious and slippery politician who had been leader of Likud since 1993: Benjamin Netanyahu.

According to Ephron, "Netanyahu aligned himself with the hardliners, the settlers and the rabble-rousers, speaking at rallies across the country where crowds branded Rabin a traitor and a murderer, and consorting with rabbis who'd

urged soldiers to disobey evacuation orders." At least once, Netanyahu gently scolded an audience for its rhetoric; "more often, he ignored it. Occasionally he seemed swept up in it."

At the frenzied demonstration in Zion Square, Netanyahu and other right-wing leaders stood on a balcony above the square for two hours "and watched as protestors came unhinged." Ephron writes that "Netanyahu seemed unfazed by the mayhem, even as protesters threw burning torches at the line of policemen. Any effort to call the crowd to order could well have turned the extremists against him, a risk Netanyahu evidently did not wish to take."

Although Ephron repeatedly emphasizes the larger impact of Amir's act, it is easy to reach the conclusion that if Amir had not killed Rabin there is a good chance that someone else with similar sentiments would have done so. For all we know, and for all Shin Bet knows, there may have been other would-be assassins planning to do just that when Amir hit his target.

Some of the findings of the official investigation of the assassination were the sort of hindsight-driven conclusions, especially of the connect-the-dots variety, that are customary after such events. In this case, there was so much malicious and threatening noise directed against Rabin that the signals involving Amir's intentions would have been especially difficult to pick up and to interpret as significant.

What was inexcusable was the porous physical security for Rabin at the site of the rally where he gave his last speech. A parking lot that was supposed to be a secure area never was properly secured. Amir had no trouble entering it through a gate and loitering there within steps of the prime minister's car for nearly three-quarters of an hour, all without being challenged.

Ephron is wisely noncommittal about whether the Oslo-based peace process would have survived if Rabin had also survived, although he seems to lean in the direction that it would have. The question is similar to countless counterfactual queries that have been posed elsewhere about whether a particular leader was indispensable for a particular result.

Speculation about Rabin and the peace process is aided by Ephron's informative treatment of the six months following the assassination. During that period the new prime minister, Shimon Peres, lost an initial large lead in the polls and ended up losing narrowly to Netanyahu in an election in May 1996.

Multiple reasons help to explain Peres's failure, some involving misjudgment and some involving luck. Syrian president Hafez al-Assad was reluctant to conclude a peace agreement when it was uncertain if the Israeli leader he concluded it with

would be around very long. Peres was reluctant to involve Rabin's widow Leah in the election campaign, perhaps a reflection of the long-standing rivalry between Peres and Yitzhak Rabin, a recurrent sub-theme in Ephron's book.

An Israeli military operation in Lebanon may have led some disaffected Arab-Israeli voters to sit out the election. Most of all there was the Israeli assassination in January 1996 of Hamas master bomb-maker Yahya Ayyash, in an operation involving explosives hidden in a phone and detonated by remote control. This assassination almost certainly was the stimulus for a wave of retaliatory suicide bombings against Israel, ending what had been several months of calm. The bombings swung Israeli public opinion in favor of the hardliners and against the idea of territorial concessions to Palestinians.

To assess the counterfactual scenario of these same six months if Rabin were still alive, one must remember that Peres was at least as much committed to the peace process as was Rabin. As foreign minister, he shared the Nobel Peace Prize that also was awarded to Rabin and Arafat. Moreover, had Amir missed his target, Rabin would not have experienced the pro-Labor spike of public sympathy that Peres enjoyed in the first weeks after the assassination.

The outcome of the scenario would have depended most of all on the decision to kill Ayyash. One hypothesis is that for Shin Bet, which was responsible for protecting the Prime Minister and embarrassed by its failure to do so, taking out Ayyash was an opportunity to redeem itself and thus an operation that it pushed especially hard on Peres.

But Rabin might have been just as tempted as Peres to eliminate this important Hamas military figure. If Rabin had given the same green light to Shin Bet, the resulting security and political repercussions probably would have been largely the same as what actually occurred.

Regardless of who was prime minister, if a two-state solution was to be reached according to the Oslo agreement, it had to have been reached fairly quickly and certainly within the five-year interim period the accord specified. One reason was that the gradual, staged approach in the agreement, although it was intended to build mutual confidence, also was an opportunity for opponents on each side to mobilize against the accord.

The longer the process dragged on, the more likely that violent events would disrupt it. Yossi Beilin, a key Israeli negotiator who was one of the architects of the Oslo agreement, later came to have second thoughts about the gradual approach for this reason.

A larger and longer-term reason that time was not on the side of the peace

process was that demographic change, creation of facts on the ground and the political consequences of each have pushed political power in Israel in the direction of holding on to the West Bank and stifling the birth of an official Palestinian state.

The impassioned opposition of the 1990s has morphed into an increasingly entrenched governing coalition. The same Netanyahu who stood on the balcony and looked without objection on the zealots in Zion Square is now the second-longest-serving prime minister in Israel's history, with little apparent prospect for being dislodged from power any time soon. He heads a government in which other major figures are even more direct and blunt than he is in rejecting any Palestinian state.

After being away from Israel for years, Ephron returned in 2010 as chief of *Newsweek's* Jerusalem bureau. The changes in mood and political atmosphere quickly became apparent to him. Israel was safer and more prosperous than what he had seen before, but the very fact that life in Israel was good despite the absence of peace implied that "there was little incentive to revive the process."

Ephron notes that between Rabin's assassination and his own return to Israel the settler population had more than doubled, greatly increasing its political power. The proportionate numbers and resulting political clout of traditionally hawkish Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox Jews also had increased substantially. Israel has indeed been "remade" in the image of Rabin's detractors, as suggested by the book's subtitle.

The direction of Israeli sentiment also is reflected in attitudes toward the assassination itself. Members of the Amir family, far from being stigmatized, lead normal and successful lives. Hagai Amir, who was released after serving 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ years in prison and is now a free man, told Ephron, "We have a lot of support. ... People come up to us on the street and say it clearly."

Yigal Amir is still imprisoned, but a quarter of Israelis favor commuting his sentence. He already has won significant privileges concerning conditions of his incarceration, including being permitted to marry and have conjugal visits.

Israeli views of Amir's act have been further softened by a variety of conspiracy theories that continue to have strong public support and that shift blame for the assassination away from the radical right wing and the individual from its ranks who actually killed Rabin. Certain tidbits from the crime scene feed those theories, such as an extra hole in Rabin's shirt that does not correspond to the direction from which Amir was shooting.

As Ephron was working on his book, Rabin's daughter Dalia entrusted him with carrying the bloodied clothing to the United States so that an independent forensic expert in Arizona could examine it. The expert determined that the hole was not the result of a bullet; most likely it was made in the hospital while doctors were frantically trying to save Rabin's life.

Ephron deserves great credit for carefully exploring the story of Rabin's murder and its aftermath. He unites a reporter's eye with keen analysis. His study offers a vivid portrait of forces and sentiments that not only destroyed one of Israel's finest leaders but also, for years, have been destroying the prospects for Israel to be a peaceful, Jewish and democratic state.

Paul R. Pillar, in his 28 years at the Central Intelligence Agency, rose to be one of the agency's top analysts. He is now a visiting professor at Georgetown University for security studies. (This article first appeared as [a blog post](#) at The National Interest's Web site. Reprinted with author's permission.)

Seeing 'Evil' Everywhere

Today's American politics sees demons everywhere from "evil" foreign leaders to excessive fears about "terrorism" while more mundane threats like crumbling roads, loss of good-paying jobs and inadequate health care get short-shrift, misplaced priorities addressed by ex-CIA official Graham E. Fuller.

By Graham E. Fuller

It is depressing to witness the ongoing vitriolic voices of vituperation spewing out over the airwaves these days in what passes as "political debate," especially in Republican circles. Depressing also to know that we still have nearly a year more to go of this same political circus of infotainment whose chief purpose really is to distract the public from the deeper, darker and more pressing issues that affect the nation and beg urgent discussion.

So history sometimes helps us put these things in a little perspective. A fine article from the New York Times a few days ago, "[Anger: An American History](#)", provides some taste of the raucous history of prejudice, paranoia, fear and anger that seems perhaps always to have been part of the American political and social scene.

It's unsettling in one sense, you can't help but wonder if there's any progress to be perceived over several hundred years. But yet there is progress of a kind. And in another sense it reminds us that things right now are not uniquely bad,

and that perhaps much of this simply has to do with the human condition.

And of course no country is without its prejudice, racism, paranoia, xenophobia and discrimination. Only somehow we expected our immigrant society to aspire more to the ideal of "The City on the Hill."

At least it helps realize that this particular stage too will eventually pass, or give way to something else. And while American Muslims for many reasons now bear the particular brunt of such vituperation, the pithy old Turkish proverb provides perspective as well: *it Ā¼rĀ¼r kervan yĀ¼rĀ¼r* , the dogs bark but the caravan moves on.

Graham E. Fuller is a former senior CIA official, author of numerous books on the Muslim World; his latest book is *Breaking Faith: A novel of espionage and an American's crisis of conscience in Pakistan.* (Amazon, Kindle) grahamefuller.com

In Case You Missed...

Some of our special stories in November focused on the realities behind the Syrian crisis, Turkey's dangerous provocations toward Russia, the many failings of the mainstream U.S. media, and disclosures about Ukraine Finance Minister's self-enrichment at U.S. taxpayers' expense.

["Syria at a Crossroads"](#) by Nicolas J S Davies, Nov. 1, 2015

["Rubio Follows the Big Money"](#) by Jonathan Marshall, Nov. 1, 2015

["Reviving the 'Liberal Media' Myth"](#) by Robert Parry, Nov. 2, 2015

["The Dark Truth in the Movie 'Truth'"](#) by James DiEugenio, Nov. 3, 2015

["America's Chalabi Legacy of Lies"](#) by Robert Parry, Nov. 4, 2015

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