

# More NYT 'Spin' on the Syria-Sarin Case

**Exclusive:** The New York Times is at it again with another slanted report on the April 4 chemical weapons incident in Syria, applying ridicule rather than reason to prevent a real evaluation of this war-or-peace moment, reports Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

In blaming Syrian President Bashar al-Assad for the April 4 chemical incident in Khan Sheikhoun, The New York Times and other Western news outlets have made a big deal out of discrepancies in the timing and other details provided by the Syrian and Russian governments.

The Times and the others also have chided anyone who notes that Assad had no logical reason to undertake a sarin attack since his forces were making solid gains and he had just learned that the Trump administration was dropping the longstanding U.S. goal of "regime change" in Syria.

To those of us outside the mainstream media bubble, there seemed to be little or no military advantage to be gained. Instead, Assad would be risking more international intervention, which has ripped his country apart for the past six years. But the Times and other major outlets dismissed our logic by arguing that Assad was simply announcing his impunity in some particularly brutal Arab-sort-of-way.

However, neither the value that the Times and others placed on the Russian-Syrian timing discrepancies nor the strange explanation of Assad's motive made any sense. After all, if Assad were making some bizarre public declaration of his impunity, why would he then deny that his forces were responsible for the chemical attack? Wouldn't he simply say, "yes, I did it and I don't care what anyone thinks"? Isn't that what impunity means: that you do whatever you want knowing that no one can hold you accountable? Instead, Assad has consistently denied ordering the attack.

The gotcha observation about the time element of the bombings fails the logic test, too. Why would Syria and Russia say Syrian warplanes carried out a conventional attack on Khan Sheikhoun around noon if the actual attack occurred around 6 a.m., as it apparently did? There was nothing to be gained for them by having the timing off by six hours, since the point that Syria and Russia were making was that there were indeed airstrikes but that they were conventional bombs that may have unintentionally struck an Al Qaeda depot holding chemical weapons and thus released them. The timing element was immaterial to that point.

What this apparent timing error suggests is confusion, not “spin,” as the Times insists in a tendentious April 27 video by Malachy Browne, Natalie Reneau and Mark Scheffler, entitled “How Syria and Russia Spun a Chemical Strike.”

The Syrians and Russians appeared perplexed by what had happened. Their officials understood that a conventional airstrike had been carried out and stated what they believed the time was. The time discrepancy either meant the Syrian air-wing commander had dispatched warplanes earlier than expected or that some other entity carried out the 6 a.m. strike. But the Syrians and the Russians would seem to have no reason to lie about this detail.

The Times also makes a big deal out of Assad denying that the attack took place – and the video then shows some bombs exploding. But that is just the Times deceiving people. Assad is not denying that a bombing raid took place; he’s denying his military’s deployment of chemical weapons.

### **Intervention by Air**

Another false assumption pervading the Western accounts on this and other chemical incidents in Syria is that only the Syrian government and its Russian allies have control of the skies. That is clearly not true. Various military forces, including those of the U.S. and its allies, as well as Israel and – to some degree – the rebels have air capabilities in Syria.

According to Syrian accounts, the rebels have captured some government helicopters and apparently used one in what United Nations investigators were told by multiple eyewitnesses was a staged chemical-weapons attack in 2014 with the goal of sticking the blame on the Syrian regime.

Further, the U.S. and its allies have been conducting airstrikes across much of Syria in campaigns against Islamic State and Al Qaeda-linked terror groups, which have been supported by Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Qatar and other Sunni-led sheikdoms. Turkey has been active, too, with strikes against Kurdish forces. And Israel has hit repeatedly at Syrian targets to promote what it regards as its interests, including destruction of Iranian weapons believed headed to the Lebanese militant group, Hezbollah.

Some – if not all – of these entities had a far stronger motive to create a chemical-weapons incident in Syria on April 4 than the Syrian government did. At the end of March, the Trump administration announced that it was no longer a U.S. priority to overthrow the Assad government, an announcement that upset several of the countries involved in the Syrian conflict, including Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States and Israel.

All of them – having committed resources and prestige to achieve “regime change”

in Syria – had motive to overturn President Trump’s pronouncement. (Israel has had “regime change” in Syria at the top of its to-do list since at least the mid-1990s.) How better to keep that hope alive than to stage another chemical-weapons attack and blame it on Assad?(Another sarin attack in August 2013 also now appears to have been a staged incident by Al Qaeda that killed hundreds while almost tricking President Obama into ordering a massive U.S. military strike on government forces.)

Shortly after the incident at Khan Sheikhoun, I was told by an intelligence source that U.S. satellite imagery had picked up what looked like a drone in the vicinity at around the time that the poison gas was released. Despite some technical difficulties in tracking its route, the source said the analysts believed that it may have come from a Saudi-Israeli special operations base in Jordan, used to assist the rebels.

There are also other combinations of factors that should have been carefully evaluated before President Trump jumped to his Assad-did-it conclusion and fired off 59 Tomahawk missiles at a Syrian airbase on April 6, but they weren’t given serious thought in the rush to blame Assad.

For instance, Al Qaeda’s clever propagandists could have again staged a chemical attack on the ground by creating a crater in the road and inserting what was purported to be a chemical-weapons canister. The Times and others have noted that the crater was not visible in earlier satellite images but that observation doesn’t mean the crater had to be created by an aerial bomb; a ground explosion or simple digging could have done the trick – with the crushed canister inserted later.

### **Dubious Narrative**

The canister-in-the-crater story struck MIT’s technology and national security expert Theodore Postol as particularly odd because on-scene photos showed people climbing into the supposedly sarin-saturated crater wearing minimal protection and not keeling over dead. Postol also said the canister appeared to have been crushed rather than exploded.

There is also the possibility that some third party with access to sarin or other powerful chemical weapons could have delivered the poison gas by air – possibly from that drone – with the rebels either coordinating with that delivery before the fact or reacting to the opportunity after the fact.

The hard truth is that intelligence services from a number of countries could fit the bill in terms of producing sarin or some similar substance that could mimic what Syria once had in its arsenal, although those chemical weapons were

supposedly destroyed in 2014 as part of an agreement hammered out by Russia and the United States.

And there are plenty of ruthless intelligence operatives on all sides who would have found the deaths of 80 or so people acceptable collateral damage to advance a geopolitical priority. The timing, so close to the Trump administration's major announcement that Assad no longer had to go, would have represented a logical motive for such a ruse.

The other problem in assessing what has or hasn't happened in Syria over the past six years is that all sides, but particularly those seeking "regime change," have deployed sophisticated propaganda operations to the combat zone.

Anti-regime activists – financed and supplied by the West and the Gulf States – understand the emotional value of showing dying children. These propagandists have regular and uncritical access to major Western media outlets, from the hipsters at VICE to the neocons and liberal-interventionists at The New York Times.

In other words, what is still desperately needed in this latest chapter of the Syrian tragedy is some honest broker who could conduct a serious investigation that isn't contaminated by all the previous propaganda-infused narratives. But the chances of finding that person or group are slim to none.

**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](#)).**

---

## Learning the Health Benefits of Cannabis

State-by-state legalization of marijuana is opening eyes to the possible health benefits from parts of the cannabis plant, but the federal government remains an obstacle, as Martin A. Lee explained to Dennis J Bernstein  
by Dennis J Bernstein

Despite breakthroughs in understanding the curative possibilities of CBD – essentially the non-psychoactive part of the cannabis plant – the stigma of marijuana's criminalization is delaying progress as is the refusal of the federal government to support state-by-state legalization.

I spoke with Martin A. Lee, the director of Project CBD and a leading expert on

the breakthroughs and breakdowns when it comes to the use of CBD as a healing tool on April 20, 2017. Lee is also the author of *Smoke Signals: A Social History of Marijuana – Medical, Recreational, and Scientific*

Dennis Bernstein: Okay. Well, let's just start with a sweeping overview. Trump is in. We've got an extremely right-wing attorney general. On the macro level do you anticipate... is there a sense that the landscape is changing?

Martin Lee: No one really knows what lays ahead. Obviously, the uncertainty coming from the federal government is problematic for the "cannabis industry" – we used to call it a community, now it's an industry.

But there are also countervailing forces. You know, Trump's folks have talked about coming down on the recreational market, as opposed to medical. They seem to be conceding medical. But there are countervailing forces particularly with respect to the CBD industry. CBD, cannabinoid, as you are mentioning, is basically a non-psychoactive component of the cannabis plant with a lot of therapeutic applications.

So, whereas there's concerns about the pharmaceuticalization of CBD, once it is approved as an isolated pharmaceutical, and soon it will be by the federal government, what will happen to the so-called grassroots hemp industry... CBD oils are derived from hemp. This is all over the place, online. And there is significant political support for an indigenous hemp industry in the United States, coming particularly from the Kentucky senator's. Mitch McConnell, of course, is a very powerful senator, Majority Leader in the Senate, representing Kentucky, a hemp growing state. So, how this is all getting played out, who's going to control it, how it will be regulated remains to be seen, because of all these different variables. It's hard to predict.

DB: And, in that context, there is some major confusion. Some people are being busted, some people are having their stuff taken. Talk about... there's been a number of raids all over the country in the context of hemp and CBD. Talk about what's been going on in Alaska.

ML: Well, just in general, before Alaska, there's been an idea promoted by businesses online that CBD, cannabinoid, is legal in all 50 states, which is not true according to the federal government. And there's been a lot of confusion both... really on the state level, also, how this compound and these products made with this compound, will be regulated. Some states have not legalized medical marijuana, but have legalized the CBD, just one compound in the plant. Sounds a little crazy but there's now 15 states without medical marijuana laws where, technically speaking, CBD is legal.

And this has given people an idea that they can just access this stuff from the wholesalers, CBD oil, and hang a shingle, so-to-speak, and start selling it. Well, some folks who have done that in various states are in for a rude surprise. In Alaska, a state where marijuana is legal for adults, as well as for medical use, there have been raids of all the medical marijuana facilities that are providing CBD products, on the grounds that they weren't being produced, these products, within the state of Alaska.

Most medical marijuana states stipulate the product has to be grown and produced and sold and consumed within that state. And since these CBD hemp oil products are coming from all over, from Europe, from Colorado, from Kentucky, not from Alaska that was the reason why there were a series of raids, I think it was seven in total, dispensaries were hit as part of the same drag net, in February, in Alaska.

And there's been half a dozen other states where there have been some sporadic raids like this. I don't think this is a result of a unified policy. I think this is a local law enforcement affair. But it underscores the confusion with respect to the legal status of CBD which is ultimately grounded in the contradictions of prohibition, a policy that doesn't make any sense at all. It's built on a mountain of lies, basically.

DB: Perhaps the most interesting, outside of Alaska, in terms of those raids is Kentucky. So, even though the majority leader of the Republican Senate is Mitch McConnell, Kentucky is being hit. It's an interesting sort of back and forth there.

ML: Yes, again, they've been hit, in Princeton, Kentucky, actually, the name of the town, there was a law enforcement raid of a storefront that was selling CBD rich products, oil products. But presumably made in Kentucky, but that store did not have a license to do that. And, again, this idea that's being promoted by vested interests that CBD is legal everywhere, and you can just do whatever you want with it. That has sort of collided with the realities and confusion at the local law enforcement level, and the state level as well. In Missouri, the attorney general actually brought an action against a couple of stores that were selling CBD without a proper license.

DB: Marty, let's turn the focus to... tell people a little bit more about the possibilities of CBD. There have been some breakthroughs, of course, this is difficult because of the federal government's unwillingness to relent in considering all of this a very dangerous drug. But there has been more and more research, breakthroughs. Tell us about some of the possibilities that we now know exist in terms of the use of CBD.

ML: Well, there's a huge amount of scientific research that's been going on now for several decades, focusing on CBD, it's cannabinoid and other components of the plant. But what's interesting is that now we're seeing some reports from doctors, clinicians, in states where there's a robust medical marijuana program, such as California, who are actually reporting what they're finding when they're treating patients, including pediatric epilepsy patients, which has gotten a lot of attention. Little kids with intractable seizure disorders, terrible, where they're seizing hundreds of times a week.

It so happens, for certain conditions, CBD as a molecule, even as an isolated product, can be very effective depending on what is the underlying breakdown molecularly, so-to-speak, in the brain that leads to these disease disorders. And there could be hundreds of factors that feed into epilepsy. But, what I find really interesting here, is that what these doctors recently reported in a peer reviewed scientific journal, was that the CBD isolate, the high CBD, low THC oils, which are very effective in some cases, are not effective in all cases. In fact, are not effective in most cases. We need to say most cases, there might be a reduction of seizures but not an elimination, as there are in, let's say, 10 – 15% of these cases.

And what the doctors clearly found was that they have to have an array of different kinds of cannabinoid medicine, different ratios, of CBD and THC, different components of the plant have to be available for the doctor and the patient to test and to figure out ultimately what works for each individual.

And what that really calls into question, in my mind, is the whole pharmaceutical model, where there's one compound, one ratio, in this case it's going to be all CBD, and nothing less that's going to be approved very soon as a legal medicinal tool. But the science and the clinical experience clearly shows while that's a very, very valuable medical instrument (the pure CBD), what you really need is some options available from the whole plant. And without that you have a very, very limited possibility of helping people out.

DB: So, what you're saying is there is an important synergy between the non-psychoactive and the psychoactive and that it's a formula, it would be, I guess, a prescription from the pharmacy in terms of what are you dealing with, what is the makeup and the breakdown of...adding one or the other to accommodate each case?

ML: Yeah. So it really goes back to old style medicine. And it's happening today in the sense that...it's not many physicians who are doing this, but some can take out their pad and write a recommendation, because technically a prescription is not allowed from what is still a schedule 1 substance, an illegal substance. And they can tell you what ratios THC and CBD should be in the oil, what

terpenes—the compound that gives a particular smell to the plant—and many different combinations, thereof. Those terpenes also have significant medical effects. They've found that in some cases of epilepsy if there are certain terpenes present that the compounds that smell like lemon or lavender, respectively called limonene and linalool. When these are present in the oil that has a great accentuating effect in terms of an anti-seizure property.

So, all these things are being discussed, explored and discovered. And it's very, very exciting. And it's tremendous potential I think for medical science, and practical medicine, and ultimately to reduce the costs of health care. It's that dimension, I think, that is not being discussed, but I think that's kind of the elephant in the living room. That given the health care crisis we face in this country we should really be taking very seriously the implications of this plant.

DB: Now that is the breakthrough. The breakdown, once again, is law enforcement, isn't it? It's been that way for years, in which the research is still being held up by the arcane laws of yesteryear.

ML: Yes, definitely on the federal level, this is true, and it has a huge influence. But things are happening on a state level now. I think the prohibition is so absurd, particularly with respect to medical research, that some states are going their own way. And I think in California what there's been a noticeable shift to observe is that Sacramento [the state capital] is now behind the industry, as it were. It's supportive of the industry. Whereas a year ago you couldn't say that clearly. But there's clearly been a shift and hopefully that will manifest itself, in part, in allocation of funds for serious research in this area.

DB: Marty, could you take a moment to talk a little bit about the social history, and how the law enforcement and how the criminalization has been a devastating problem, and which we still face. I mean people are going to be in jail long after the things that put them in jail are legal and sort of helping to float the entire economy of the United States.

ML: Yeah, it is ironic that something that is such a huge economic boon is still penalized, in terms of personal use, although that's happening less and less. Clearly the history of marijuana prohibition as an instrument of social control by the government is quite significant.

And we've seen that clearly in terms of the ... arrest statistics, the disproportionate targeting, arrests, persecution, if you will, of young people, particularly people of color, that continues. But, even more than that, and that's quite enough to be opposed to this prohibition, carte blanche, but it's



not just different segments of society, specific segments of society that have suffered; Everybody has, in terms of the impeding of important medical research. So this is something in many, many different ways that has really hurt society because of the laws have been a convenient instrument to “keep people in their place.”

DB: Are you aware, Marty, that according to the New York Times of April 15th you now live in America’s cannabis bucket?

ML: Yes, I was aware of that. And the triangle, this is the cannabis bud feast in the United States. It’s been such historically since the early 1970’s. And it’s part of that, the region that includes the [S.F.] Bay Area. Yeah, you could say it’s the cannabis capital of the United States. But, really the whole cannabis phenomenon and there’s been a huge pro-cannabis cultural shift socially and culturally. This is now a nation-wide phenomenon. It’s not just California, or Colorado or Washington anymore.

DB: And so, Marty, coming up is 420 [April 20], what does 420 mean in the world of marijuana? And what will you be doing on 420?

ML: Well, April 20th has become kind of a national cannabis holiday, if you will. In my mind, it’s sort of part of a rite of spring that also involves so-called bicycle day, that’s a day in which Dr. Albert Hofmann discovered the effects of LSD in the 1940’s, and Earth Day. And 420 altogether seem to be, like I say, an annual rite of spring to certain elements in our community. And this 420 I’ll be at Animal Farms, that’s a dispensary up at Hopland at the Solar Living Center, with the Real Goods Store, 12 acre permaculture oasis, we described. They’re having an all day party. Everybody is invited. I think a lot of people are going to be there. We’ll have a speaker’s circle, music, food, a whole array of things.

DB: I don’t want to go out, I don’t want to be a bummer. I just want to give folks who are using marijuana in various ways who are going to dispensaries, what is your recommendation to people ... in terms of being careful? Should they be frightened now of vape oil, of using these vapes? How does one be cautious in the age, in the 21st century, in the age of marijuana?

ML: Well, I think there are really three challenges, three big problems facing the consumer now. One is just the lack of adequate labeling on the products. Also, the pesticide residues, and there’s a lot of products tainted with pesticides in the cannabis area. And it’s a very significant problem. We’re actually working on this issue now, Project CBD.

But then, as you point out, the issue of vape pens. The problem is with these

vape oils, oftentimes they're cut with thinning agents. And some to watch out for that are apparently legal to include in these things but particularly potentially dangerous, very dangerous: propylene glycol and polyethylene glycol, if you see this on any of the marketing collateral for these vape oils, avoid those. Because when heated and inhaled, those particular compounds, propylene glycol and polyethylene glycol, turn into carcinogens, and can cause cancer. And it's terrible, but it's trouble in these vape pen oils. It's not impossible to find some good ones. But we have seen, when we looked at those, vape oils, made from the hemp derived CBD, we haven't found one yet that hasn't been tainted by these toxic thinning agents. And these are products that are directly used for medical patients. You wouldn't use a vape oil pen with high concentration of CBD for recreational purposes.

But also, just in general, e-cigarettes, tobacco cigarettes have this propylene glycol in it, and I just fear we're going to have a terrible day of reckoning, when these aren't regulated. Unfortunately these things are regulated as being safe for oral consumption.

But they've never really been tested for heating and inhalation. And now there's scientific reports that are coming in, not tested by the government, incidentally, but by individual scientists are quite ominous. So it's something to avoid.

**Dennis J Bernstein is a host of "Flashpoints" on the Pacifica radio network and the author of Special Ed: Voices from a Hidden Classroom. You can access the audio archives at www.flashpoints.net.**

---

## Comparing Tweeting Trump and Silent Cal

President Trump's tax-cut plan charts a bonanza for himself, his friends and his family, getting rid of taxes that bite the rich and leaving debts behind for future American generations to pay, say Bill Moyers and Michael Winship.

By Bill Moyers and Michael Winship

Republican Calvin Coolidge, who in 1923 ascended to the presidency following the death of the corrupt and dunderheaded Warren Harding, was a man of few words. But some of the most famous of the few were, "The chief business of the American people is business."

Donald Trump, on the other hand, is often a man of many words, but rarely do

they fit together to make a coherent sentence or complete thought. And we know for sure that he, too, believes the chief business of America is business, especially when it's *his* business. Oh, and Jared and Ivanka's, whose junkets on Dad's behalf appear to be merchandising missions for The Trump Empire. And his two safari-loving sons still holding forth from the family palace in New York, putatively running Pop's business while protected by a moat of barriers and security guards – take that, you huddled masses.

Coolidge was known as "Silent Cal." When a dinner party hostess told him, "You must talk to me, Mr. Coolidge. I made a bet today that I could get more than two words out of you," Coolidge replied, "You lose." The last thing our current president would be described as is silent. Trump can't stop tweeting and gibbering. And he doesn't like losers.

The taciturn Coolidge has been described as the most conservative president in American history. No one is quite certain what Trump is, as his opinions and moods shift depending on the last person to whom he has spoken or something he's just seen on *Fox & Friends* or heard from conspiracy theorist Alex Jones. They point rightward for sure, but as with so many conservative spokesmen these days, tinged with lunacy and utterly devoid of reason.

And yet there on the august pages of *The New York Times*, Charles R. Kesler, a senior fellow of the right-wing Claremont Institute, gushes:

"Mr. Trump remains the kind of conservative president whom one expects to say, proudly and often, 'the chief business of the American people is business.' Although Calvin Coolidge said it first, Mr. Trump shows increasing signs of thinking along broadly Coolidgean lines, and of redirecting Republican policies toward the pre-New Deal, pre-Cold War party of William McKinley and Coolidge, with its roots in the party of Abraham Lincoln."

### **Not Making Sense**

Oh brother. Professor Kesler is projecting onto Trump a consistency of thought and belief that thus far seems unproven. Comparing him to McKinley is a stretch, and to Lincoln – well, absurd. Really now, does this remotely sound like Donald Trump?

"We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

On the one hand, Kesler's adoration of Trump makes sense, given that last September it was the Claremont Institute that published a pseudonymous and now-notorious essay titled "The Fight 93 Election," basically telling conservative Republicans that if they did not support Trump's presidential candidacy, their world was doomed.

Why? Because Republican opposition to Trump, the author warned, "is the mark of a party, a society, a country, a people, a civilization that wants to die. Trump, alone among candidates for high office in this or in the last seven (at least) cycles, has stood up to say: I want to live. I want my party to live. I want my country to live. I want my people to live."

Clunky pearls of wisdom from what passes today for conservatism. Where have you gone, George Will, now that they need you? Next thing we know, Ann Coulter will be running the Library of Congress.

Calvin Coolidge would never have gone for such histrionics. Yet it's worth taking a moment to consider what did occur during his administration. His years in office were the height of "The Roaring '20s" – a time of economic whoopee marked by wild financial speculation, extravagant bank loans and debt that contributed to the 1929 market crash and the Great Depression.

Coolidge himself was the epitome of frugality and respectability but like Donald Trump (who fancies himself "the king of debt," by the way – a real conservative, no?) he favored enormous tax cuts, slashing spending, high tariffs on imports and cramming regulatory agencies with pro-business types.

Unlike Trump, he favored a low profile and as far as policy goes preferred inertia to action. Here's what the noted columnist Walter Lippmann said at the time: "This active inactivity suits the mood and certain of the needs of the country admirably. It suits all the business interests which want to be let alone... And it suits all those who have become convinced that government in this country has become dangerously complicated and top-heavy..."

At that last part, you can just see all Trump's plutocratic Cabinet members and advisors nodding their heads in vigorous agreement.

When he died, Calvin Coolidge's net worth was less than a million in 2016 dollars and he left it all to his wife Grace. Trump, who says his net worth may be as much as \$10 billion (how can we hope to know if he won't release his tax returns?), and his family are using the White House to make the family fortune multiply, as if the presidency were a perpetual goose laying golden eggs. Each news cycle brings more stories of conflicts of interest, and the tax cut plan announced on Wednesday is a sweeping bow to the rich.

"It is striking," Neil Irwin at *The New York Times* noted, how much the proposal favors Trump and his kin: "He is a high-income earner. He receives income from 564 business entities, according to his financial disclosure form, and could take advantage of the low rate on 'pass-through' companies. According to his leaked 2005 tax return, he paid an extra \$31 million because of the alternative minimum tax that he seeks to eliminate. And his heirs could eventually enjoy his enormous assets tax-free."

So conservatism under Trump and his cronies now running government has brought back a revised version of the gold standard: How much gold you can mine from privatizing the mother lode of government is the mark of your success.

No wonder Trump admires Vladimir Putin so much: They are the Midas and Ali Baba of autocracy. But conservatives they are not, unless to conservatives greed has become the coin of the realm.

One more thing: President Trump doesn't sleep much at night, reportedly getting about five hours of shut-eye (obviously, the cause is not a guilty conscience). President Coolidge loved to sleep, as much as twelve hours at a time. When he awoke from a White House nap he often would ask his butler, "Is the country still there?"

He meant it as a joke. Today, the question isn't funny.

**Bill Moyers is the managing editor of Moyers & Company and BillMoyers.com.**

**Michael Winship is the Emmy Award-winning senior writer of Moyers & Company and BillMoyers.com. Follow him on Twitter at @MichaelWinship. [This story originally appeared at**

**<http://billmoyers.com/story/forget-andrew-jackson-the-right-thinks-trump-is-calvin-coolidge/>**

---