

About

From Editor Robert Parry: When we founded Consortiumnews.com in 1995 – as the first investigative news magazine based on the Internet – there was already a crisis building in the U.S. news media. The mainstream media was falling into a pattern of groupthink on issue after issue, often ignoring important factual information because it didn't fit with what all the Important People knew to be true.

Indeed, that was the original reason that I turned to what was then a new media platform to create a home for well-reported stories and to challenge the many misguided conventional wisdoms.

As one of the reporters who helped expose the Iran-Contra scandal for The Associated Press in the mid-1980s, I was distressed by the silliness and propaganda that had come to pervade American journalism. I feared, too, that the decline of the U.S. press foreshadowed disasters that would come when journalists failed to alert the public about impending dangers.

Also by 1995, documents were emerging that put the history of the 1980s in a new and more troubling light. Yet, there were fewer and fewer media outlets interested in that history. The memories of Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush were enveloped in warm-and-fuzzy myths that represented another kind of danger: false history that could lead to mistaken political judgments in the future.

Some of our early articles reexamined important chapters of the 1980s (such as the “October Surprise” controversy from Election 1980 and evidence of Nicaraguan contra-cocaine trafficking).

Though we have struggled with funding – surviving for more than two decades through a combination of our own frugality and the generosity of our readers – we have managed to produce groundbreaking journalism on many of the most significant issues of the day, including national security, foreign policy, politics and the environment.

We also looked at the underlying problems of modern democracy, particularly the insidious manipulation of citizens by government propaganda and the accomplice role played by mainstream media. Rather than encouraging diversity in analyses especially on topics of war and peace, today's mainstream media takes a perverse pride in excluding responsible, alternative views.

It's as if The New York Times, The Washington Post, CNN and the others have learned nothing from the disaster of the Iraq War when they pushed the groupthink about WMD and betrayed their responsibilities to the American people

and the people of the world. Despite all the death, destruction and destabilization caused by the Iraq invasion, there was almost no accountability in the U.S. press corps, with many of the worst offenders still holding down prominent jobs and still engaging in the same terrible journalism.

When I was a young reporter, I was taught that there were almost always two sides to a story and often more. I was expected to seek out those alternative views, not dismiss them or pretend they didn't exist. I also realized that finding the truth often required digging beneath the surface and not just picking up the convenient explanation sitting out in the open.

But the major Western news outlets began to see journalism differently. It became their strange duty to shut down questioning of the Official Story, even when the Official Story had major holes and made little sense, even when the evidence went in a different direction and serious analysts were disputing the groupthink.

Looking back over the past two decades, I wish I could say that the media trend that we detected in the mid-1990s had been reversed. But, if anything, it's grown worse. The major Western news outlets now conflate the discrete difficulties from made-up "fake news" and baseless "conspiracy theories" with responsible dissenting analyses. All get thrown into the same pot and subjected to disdain and ridicule.

We have seen travesties, such as legendary investigative journalist Seymour Hersh having to take his important story debunking the Obama administration's claims about the Syria-Sarin case of 2013 to the London Review of Books because his normal outlets in the United States wouldn't run his exposé.

Now, even as the fate of the world becomes more tenuous amid a resumption of Cold War tensions between the West and Russia, we are seeing the Western media engaging in a self-inflicted blindness that has left the West's citizens blind as well. This dilemma – this crisis in democracy – has made the role of Consortiumnews even more essential today than it may have been in 1995.

Robert Parry, Editor

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