

Edward R. Murrow's Timeless Warnings

As the Russia-gate hysteria expands, it is coming to resemble the McCarthyism of the 1950s, except this time liberals and progressives are promoting the insidious "guilt by association," as Michael Milillo describes.

By Michael Milillo

Does the American government requiring "RT America" – a Russian news organization – to register as a foreign agent under the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) constitute censorship by the government?

If registration in this context is NOT censorship as many latter-day "liberal" McCarthyites contend, then Americans should NOT be afraid to appear on "RT America" as commentators presenting their opinions which may be different from the current narratives that are being propagated by the mainstream media across the United States.

But Americans will be afraid to appear due to "Guilt by Association," which in its current form is being used to suggest that any Russian who happens to be attending the same social event as President Trump is therefore proof that Trump is a Russian collaborator. Thus, by extrapolation, "Guilt by Association" will be used to denounce any American who appears on "RT America" and presents a narrative that conflicts with the narrative being broadcast by the mainstream media.

The mainstream media will immediately indict that American commentator as a "Russian agent" – or at least that will be the reasonable fear – and thus other Americans will be prevented from listening to and/or reading these alternative opinions – and that amounts to censorship.

Some mainstream media outlets have already censored stories when the analyses conflict with the current liberal narrative for what caused Hillary Clinton to lose to Donald Trump in the November 2016 elections. That narrative is that Hillary Clinton was defeated due to the Russian government hacking into the computer servers at the Democratic National Committee, i.e., "Russia-gate."

Some liberal web sites now are censoring material that conflicts with this Russia-gate narrative. Case in point is an article written by HuffPost's contributor Joe Lauria entitled "[On The Origins of Russia-gate.](#)"

One day after Lauria posted his article on the "HuffPost" web site, the "HuffPost" editorial staff deleted – censored – the article, citing supposed factual errors. However, the editors did not attempt to contact Lauria before

the deletion or to discuss with Lauria what facts he used in his article that were deemed false or misleading. His real offense appears to have been that the story raised doubts about the current narrative accepting the certainty of Russian “meddling” in the 2016 election.

Although some have argued that “HuffPost” has the right to censor material published on its web site, the “HuffPost” readers should NOT be involved in that determination (without at least the author getting a chance to provide a defense). That is censorship by “Mob Rule.”

McCarthyite Blacklists

To further explain what censorship looks like, watch the [“70th Year Commemoration of the Hollywood Blacklist”](#) on C-Span. The commemoration cites the statements or the testimonies of the “Blacklisted” entertainers who appeared before the “House Un-American Activities Committee” [HUAC] in 1947.

If today’s liberals are infuriated by the 1947 proceedings of HUAC and the McCarthyism that challenged the patriotism of Americans, then these liberals should NOT be in favor of today’s censorship either. What HUAC and McCarthyism did was to make Americans fearful of being called “Un-American” just because their opinions or politics were different from what either HUAC or Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy said they should be.

Beyond that, Americans came to shun neighbors, fellow workers, and acquaintances – in order to protect themselves from ending up on the “Blacklist” – because you didn’t know who might be accused or might be pressured to make accusations, such as the case of director [Elia Kazan](#).

As “RT America” has been accused by the American government to “speak in the U.S. on behalf of a foreign government” – Russia, therefore “RT America” must register under FARA. But the BBC “speaks in the U.S. on behalf of a foreign government” – the United Kingdom. Then why hasn’t the American government requested that the BBC register as well under NARA as “RT America” was forced to do under protest?

Is it because the BBC has accepted without question the dominant narratives of the U.S. mainstream media in the BBC’s reporting of the news? Unlike the BBC, “RT America” has allowed alternative opinions to be heard by its audience rather than stringently following the mainstream media’s narratives.

There are some liberals who argue that “RT America” is a tool used by the Russian government to disseminate Russian propaganda. But Americans who have appeared on “RT America” present their own alternative opinions, NOT the opinions of the Russian government.

If you think the U.S. government requiring "RT America" to register as a foreign agent is NOT censorship, then you have NOT heard of "The Case of Milo Radulovich." When Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy was looking for communists employed by the U.S. government, he supposedly found one such person in Milo Radulovich, a Lieutenant in the Air Force Reserve.

In 1953, Air Force regulation 35-62 stated, "A man may be regarded as a security risk if he has close and continuing associations with communists or people believed to have communist sympathies."

When Lieutenant Radulovich refused to resign from the Air Force as he did nothing wrong, a special Board "recommended that Radulovich be severed from the Air Force" despite the fact that the board never questioned the loyalty of Lieutenant Radulovich.

Radulovich was an easy target because his father "subscribed to several Serbian newspapers, one of which was classified as Communist by the US government." And as his sister supported liberal causes, she was declared to be a communist sympathizer.

With this "Guilt By Association" in mind, CBS correspondent Edward R. Murrow said, "We believe that the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, even though that iniquity be proved, and in this case it was not."

As an archive of Edward R. Murrow's work noted, "Not only were the witch hunts affecting the military, Hollywood, government, and academia, this case proved that the average guy can be targeted."

Murrow's Lament

During the broadcast of "See It Now" on March 9, 1954 by CBS TV, Edward R. Murrow said: "We must not confuse dissent with disloyalty. We must remember always that accusation is not proof and that conviction depends upon evidence and due process of law. We will not walk in fear, one of another. We will not be driven by fear into an age of unreason, if we dig deep in our history and our doctrine, and remember that we are not descended from fearful men – not from men who feared to write, to speak, to associate and to defend causes that were, for the moment, unpopular.

"We can deny our heritage and our history, but we cannot escape responsibility for the result. There is no way for a citizen of a republic to abdicate his responsibilities. As a nation we have come into our full inheritance at a tender age. We proclaim ourselves, as indeed we are, the defenders of freedom, wherever it continues to exist in the world, but we cannot defend freedom abroad by deserting it at home."

Putting what Murrow said into perspective as it relates to “RT America,” both the U.S. government and many liberals are now using the same tactic of “Guilt By Association” by insinuating that “RT America” is a Russian news organization and thus must be a puppet of the Russian government without providing any proof to support that accusation.

Murrow’s comment is just as relevant today as it was back in 1954. Perhaps even more so because liberals are supposed to be the good guys.

[For more on this topic, see Consortiumnews.com’s [“Russia-gate Breeds Establishment McCarthyism.”](#)]

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America’s Righteous Russia-gate Censorship

Exclusive: Arriving behind the anti-Trump “resistance” and the Russia-gate “scandal” is a troubling readiness to silence dissent in the U.S., shutting down information that challenges Official Narratives, writes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

A stark difference between today’s Washington and when I was here as a young Associated Press correspondent in the late 1970s and the early 1980s is that then – even as the old Cold War was heating up around the election of Ronald Reagan – there were prominent mainstream journalists who looked askance at the excessive demonization of the Soviet Union and doubted wild claims about the dire threats to U.S. national security from Nicaragua and Grenada.

Perhaps the Vietnam War was still fresh enough in people’s minds that senior editors and national reporters understood the dangers of mindless groupthink inside Official Washington, as well as the importance of healthy skepticism toward official pronouncements from the U.S. intelligence community.

Today, however, I cannot think of a single prominent figure in the mainstream news media who questions any claim – no matter how unlikely or absurd – that vilifies Russian President Vladimir Putin and his country. It is all Russia-bashing all the time.

And, behind this disturbing anti-Russian uniformity are increasing assaults against independent and dissident journalists and news outlets outside the mainstream. We're not just entering a New Cold War and a New McCarthyism; we're also getting a heavy dose of old-style Orwellianism.

Sometimes you see this in individual acts like HuffingtonPost taking down a well-reported story by journalist Joe Lauria because he dared to point out that Democratic money financed the two initial elements of what's now known as Russia-gate: the forensic examination of computers at the Democratic National Committee and the opposition research on Donald Trump conducted by ex-British spy Christopher Steele.

HuffingtonPost never contacted Lauria before or after its decision to retract the story, despite a request from him for the reasons why. HuffPost editors told a BuzzFeed reporter that they were responding to reader complaints that the article was filled with factual errors but none have ever been spelled out, leaving little doubt that Lauria's real "error" was in defying the Russia-gate groupthink of the anti-Trump Resistance. [[A version of Lauria's story](#) appeared at Consortiumnews.com before Lauria posted it at HuffPost. If you want to sign a petition calling on HuffPost to restore Lauria's article, [click here.](#)]

Muzzling RT

Other times, the expanding American censorship is driven by U.S. government agencies, such as the Justice Department's demand that the Russian news outlet, RT, register under the restrictive Foreign Agent Registration Act, which requires such prompt, frequent and detailed disclosures of supposed "propaganda" that it could make it impossible for RT to continue to function in the United States.

This attack on RT was rationalized by [the Jan. 6 "Intelligence Community Assessment"](#) that was, in reality, prepared by a handful of "hand-picked" analysts from the CIA, FBI and National Security Agency. Their report included a seven-page addendum from 2012 accusing RT of spreading Russian propaganda – and apparently this Jan. 6 report must now be accepted as gospel truth, no questions permitted.

However, if any real journalist actually read the Jan. 6 report, he or she would have discovered that RT's sinister assault on American democracy included such offenses as holding a debate among third-party candidates who were excluded from the Republican-Democratic debates in 2012. Yes, allowing Libertarians and Greens to express their points of view is a grave danger to American democracy.

Other RT "propaganda" included reporting on the Occupy Wall Street protests and

examining the environmental dangers from “fracking,” issues that also have been widely covered by the domestic American media. Apparently, whenever RT covers a newsworthy event – even if others have too – that constitutes “propaganda,” which must be throttled to protect the American people from the danger of seeing it.

If you bother to study the Jan. 6 report’s addendum, it is hard not to conclude that these “hand-picked” analysts were either stark-raving mad or madly anti-Russian. Yet, this “Intelligence Community Assessment” is now beyond questioning unless you want to be labeled a “Kremlin stooge” or “Putin’s useful idiot.” [An earlier State Department attack on RT was equally ridiculous or demonstrably false.]

And, by the way, it was President Obama’s Director of National Intelligence James Clapper who testified under oath that the analysts from the three agencies were “hand-picked.” That means that they were analysts personally selected by Obama’s intelligence chiefs from three agencies – not “all 17” as the American public was told over and over again – and thus were not even a full representation of analysts from those three agencies. Yet, this subset of a subset is routinely described as “the U.S. intelligence community,” even after major news outlets finally had to retract their “all 17” canard.

So, the myth of the intelligence community’s consensus lives on. For instance, in an upbeat article on Tuesday about the U.S. government’s coercing RT into registering as a foreign agent, Washington Post reporters Devlin Barrett and David Filipov wrote, “U.S. intelligence agencies have concluded that the network and website push relentlessly anti-American propaganda at the behest of the Russian government.”

In the old days, even during the old Cold War and President Reagan’s ranting about “the Evil Empire,” some of us would have actually examined the Jan. 6 report’s case against RT and noted the absurdity of these claims about “relentlessly anti-American propaganda.” Whether you want to hear the views of the Greens and Libertarians or not – or whether you like “fracking” and hate Occupy Wall Street – the opportunity to hear this information doesn’t constitute “relentlessly anti-American propaganda.”

The U.S. government’s real beef with RT seems to be that it allows on air some Americans who have been blacklisted from the mainstream media – including highly credentialed former U.S. intelligence analysts and well-informed American journalists – because they have challenged various Official Narratives.

In other words, Americans are not supposed to hear the other side of the story on important international conflicts, such as the proxy war in Syria or the

civil war in Ukraine or Israel's mistreatment of Palestinians. Only the State Department's versions of those events are permitted even when those versions are themselves propagandistic if not outright false.

For example, you're not supposed to hear about the huge holes in the Syria-sarin cases, nor about Ukraine's post-coup regime arming neo-Nazis to kill ethnic-Russian Ukrainians, nor about Israel's evolution into an apartheid state. All right-thinking Americans are to get only a steady diet of how righteous the U.S. government and its allies always are. Anything else is "propaganda."

Also off limits is any thoughtful critique of that Jan. 6 report – or apparently even Clapper's characterization of it as a product of "hand-picked" analysts from only three agencies. You're not supposed to ask why other U.S. intelligence agencies with deep knowledge about Russia were excluded and why even other analysts from the three involved agencies were shut out.

No, you must always think of the Jan. 6 report as the "consensus" assessment from the entire "U.S. intelligence community." And you must accept it as flat fact – as it now is treated by The New York Times, The Washington Post, CNN and other mainstream news outlets. You shouldn't even notice that the Jan. 6 report itself doesn't claim that Russian election meddling was a fact. The report explains, that "Judgments are not intended to imply that we have proof that shows something to be a fact."

But even quoting from the Jan. 6 report might make an American reporter some kind of traitorous "Russian mole" whose journalism must be purged from "responsible" media and who should be forced to wear the journalistic equivalent of a yellow star.

The Anti-Trump/Russia Hysteria

Of course, much of this anti-Russian hysteria comes from the year-long fury about the shocking election of Donald Trump. From the first moments of stunned disbelief over Hillary Clinton's defeat, the narrative was put in motion to blame Trump's victory not on Clinton and her wretched campaign but on Russia. That also was viewed as a possible way of reversing the election's outcome and removing Trump from office.

The major U.S. news media quite openly moved to the forefront of the Resistance. The Washington Post adopted the melodramatic and hypocritical slogan, "Democracy Dies in Darkness," as it unleashed its journalists to trumpet the narrative of some disloyal Americans spreading Russian propaganda. Darkness presumably was a fine place to stick people who questioned the Resistance's Russia-gate narrative.

An early shot in this war against dissenting information was fired last Thanksgiving Day when the Post published a front-page article citing an anonymous group called PropOrNot smearing 200 Internet news sites for allegedly disseminating Russian propaganda. The list included some of the most important sources of independent journalism, including Consortiumnews.com, apparently for the crime of questioning some of the State Department's narratives on international conflicts, particularly Syria and Ukraine.

Then, with the anti-Russia hysteria building and the censorship ball rolling, Congress last December approved \$160 million for think tanks and other non-governmental organizations to combat Russian propaganda. Soon, reports and studies were flying off the shelves detecting a Russian behind every article, tweet and posting that didn't toe the State Department's line.

The New York Times and other leading news organizations have even cheered plans for Google, Facebook and other technology companies to deploy algorithms that can hunt down, marginalize or eliminate information that establishment media deems "fake" or "propaganda." Already Google has put together a First Draft coalition, consisting of mainstream media and establishment-approved Web sites to decide what information makes the cut and what doesn't.

Among these arbiters of truth is the fact-check organization PolitiFact, which judged the falsehood about "all 17 intelligence agencies" signing off on the Russian "hacking" claim to be "true." Even though the claim was never true and is now clearly established as false, PolitiFact continues to assert that this lie is the truth, apparently filled with the hubris that comes with its power over determining what is true and what is false.

But what is perhaps most troubling to me about these developments is the silence of many civil liberties advocates, liberal politicians and defenders of press freedom who might have been counted on in earlier days to object to this censorship and blackballing.

It appears that the ends of taking down Donald Trump and demonizing Vladimir Putin justify whatever means, no matter the existential danger of nuclear war with Russia or the McCarthyistic (even Orwellian) threats to freedom of speech, press and thought.

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).

NYT's Assault on Press Freedom

Exclusive: The New York Times, which once postured as the champion of a free press, now is seeking crackdowns on news that the public gets from the Internet under the guise of combatting "Russian propaganda," explains Daniel Lazare.

By Daniel Lazare

Once upon a time the danger to a free press came from the right. But since Russia-gate, liberals have been busy playing catch-up.

The latest example is [a front-page article](#) in Tuesday's New York Times. Entitled "YouTube Gave Russian Outlet Portal Into U.S.," it offers the usual blah-blah-blah about Kremlin agents engaging in the political black arts. But it goes a step farther by attempting to discredit a perfectly legitimate news organization.

Reporters Daisuke Wakabayashi and Nicholas Confessore begin by noting that RT, the Moscow-funded TV channel formerly known as "Russia Today," is now an Internet powerhouse and then observes that when it became the first YouTube news channel to surpass one million views, YouTube Vice President Robert Kyncl "joined an RT anchor in a studio, where he praised RT for ... providing 'authentic' content instead of 'agendas or propaganda.'"

Cue the ominous background music. "But now," the article continues, "as investigators in Washington examine the scope and reach of Russian interference in United States policy, the once-cozy relationship between RT and YouTube is drawing closer scrutiny."

Why? Because RT took advantage of its "prominent presence on YouTube's search results" to pepper viewers with negative videos about Hillary Clinton. According to Wakabayashi and Confessore:

"As the presidential election heated up in the spring of 2016, RT consistently featured negative stories about Mrs. Clinton, according to United States intelligence officials. That included claims of corruption at her family foundation and ties to Islamic extremism, frequent coverage of emails stolen by Russian operatives from Mrs. Clinton's campaign chairman, and accusations that she was in poor physical and mental health."

The story quotes "the American intelligence community" describing RT as the Kremlin's "principal international propaganda outlet" and Democratic Sen. Mark Warner of Virginia calling YouTube "a target-rich environment for any

disinformation campaign.”

Then comes the kicker: “Much like the Russian-controlled pages on Facebook, RT’s YouTube videos comply with YouTube’s community guidelines, which cover things like nudity, copyright violations and promoting violence against a group based on race or religion. But not propaganda.”

Bottom line: disinformation and propaganda are what RT is all about. But there’s a problem: the Times article is less than clear about what RT actually got wrong.

Making Real News into ‘Fake News’

The web version, for example, links to an RT interview with WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange that ran shortly before the 2016 election. The topic is a [September 2014 email](#) obtained by Wikileaks in which Clinton acknowledges that “the governments of Qatar and Saudi Arabia ... are providing clandestine financial and logistic support to ISIL and other radical Sunni groups in the region.”

“I think this is the most significant email in the whole collection,” Assange states as interviewer John Pilger murmurs in agreement. “As analysts know, and even the US government has mentioned ... some Saudi figures have been supporting ISIS, funding ISIS. But the dodge has always been that it’s just some rogue princes using their cut of the oil to do what they like and – but actually – the government disapproves. But that email says no, it is the government of Saudi and the government of Qatar that have been funding the ISIS.”

The exchange resumes with Pilger saying: “And, of course, the consequence of that is that this notorious terrorist, jihadist group called ISIL or ISIS is created largely with money from the very people who are giving money to the Clinton Foundation.”

Assange: “Yes.”

Pilger: “That’s extraordinary.”

Is this *dezinformatsiya*, as the Russians call disinformation? The Times implies that is, yet in fact Assange’s statement is perfectly correct. The email’s authenticity is unchallenged while there is also no question that Arab Gulf interests have contributed massively to the Clinton Foundation.

As the foundation’s own records [show](#), Saudi Arabia has given anywhere from \$10 million to \$25 million over the years, Qatar has contributed between \$1 million and \$5 million, while other Gulf governments, corporations, and individuals have kicked in anywhere from \$13 million to \$50 million more.

This is not fake news, but the plain truth. Moreover, it's the *scandalous* truth because it shows Clinton taking money from people funding the same terror organizations she was professing to fight.

It's as if Jesse Jackson had been found taking payoffs from South Africa's white supremacist government during apartheid. If that had occurred, the Times would have been up in arms. Yet not only has it never said a word about the 2014 Clinton email, it is now going after RT for putting out news that it has sat on for months.

What's going on here? Is the Times suggesting that truth is irrelevant and that the only thing that counts is where it originates? Is it arguing that what's said matters less than who's saying it – and that if it's RT, WikiLeaks, or whomever, we must all stop up our ears so that the message will be blocked?

Barring Foreign Information

The article goes on to suggest that "RT's embrace of YouTube shows how difficult it could be to limit foreign influence." Calling for foreign influence to be rolled back for no other reason than the fact that it's foreign is very dangerous. Indeed, it's nothing more than a liberal echo of the isolationist, America-First politics practiced by Donald Trump except that where Trump wants to bar immigrants and imports, the Times wants to bar foreign information, no matter how pertinent or how truthful. Instead of reporting news, it is seeking to block it.

While the Times was chasing after RT, The Washington Post was going public with the truly sensational news that the Clinton campaign's law firm had paid for the notorious Christopher Steele dossier, famous for charging that Trump had paid for a couple of prostitutes to urinate on a Moscow hotel bed once occupied by Barack and Michelle Obama.

After accusing the Trump campaign of collaborating with foreign agents to influence an American election, it turns out that the Democrats, or at least their lawyers, not only collaborated with, but *hired* a foreign agent – Steele formerly worked for MI6, Britain's version of the CIA – to do the same (and Steele claimed to have gotten Russian officials to supply unsubstantiated allegations designed to hurt Trump's campaign).

The result of all this has been nonsense piled on top of nonsense. More than a year after the Democratic National Committee's massive email dump, there is still no evidence that the Kremlin was responsible or even that it was a hack at all. (Wikileaks, with its 100-percent record for veracity, continues to maintain that the emails were leaked by an insider.)

Indeed, the sole basis for the charge is a report by CrowdStrike, a California-based cyber-security firm whose chief technical officer, Dmitri Alperovitch, is known both for his anti-Kremlin bias and his close ties to the Clinton camp. (See Consortiumnews.com's "[The Scandal Hidden Behind Russia-gate.](#)")

The FBI never inspected the DNC's computer servers to see for itself if they were truly hacked while a major CrowdStrike foul-up – it subsequently accused pro-Russian separatists of using similar malware to target Ukrainian artillery units – has gone largely unreported even though the firm was forced to issue a [retraction](#). Certainly, the Times has never breathed a word about the blunder.

The NYT's Motives

What's the goal here? One aim, of course, is to drive Trump out of office – not by opposing him from the left, however, but from the right on the basis of anti-Russian xenophobia. But another is what might be described as an exercise in induced mass conformity.

If, thanks to Russia-gate, the Times succeeds in scaring Americans into believing that the country is being hit with an epidemic of "fake news" even though no one knows what the term even means; if it can persuade readers that news is "disinformation" simply because it comes from a Russian outlet; if it can convince them that "Kremlin-aligned agents secretly built fake Facebook groups to foment political division" even though "Kremlin-aligned" can mean just about anything under the sun – if it can do all those things, then it can persuade them to turn their critical faculties off and believe whatever the U.S. intelligence agencies (and The New York Times) tell them to believe.

The integration of the corporate media and the so-called "intelligence community" will thus be complete. Instead of information, the result will be a steady stream of CIA propaganda aimed at dulling critical faculties and preparing the public for one imperial misadventure after another

The Times, to paraphrase [Chico Marx](#), is essentially asking readers, "Who you gonna believe, the CIA or your own critical faculties?" The correct answer, it seems to think, is the former. Rather than a force for enlightenment, the "newspaper of record," is turning into the opposite.

Daniel Lazare is the author of several books including *The Frozen Republic: How the Constitution Is Paralyzing Democracy* (Harcourt Brace).

Democrats' McCarthyism Hits Greens' Stein

Democratic Party hysteria blaming Russia for Hillary Clinton's defeat has spilled over into McCarthyistic smears against Green Party candidate Jill Stein for attending a dinner in Moscow, reports Nat Parry.

By Nat Parry

Four months since the upset election of Donald Trump over Hillary Clinton, one of the primary scapegoats of the Democrats for its stunning electoral failure remains the Green Party and its 2016 presidential nominee, Jill Stein. Pointing to final vote tallies in Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Michigan that showed Trump's margin of victory as being below the total vote count for Stein, Democrats have coalesced around the conventional wisdom that Stein voters flipped the election by failing to unite behind the Democratic nominee.

As Matthew Rozsa explains the thinking at Salon, "if the Stein voters in those three states had all supported Clinton instead of Trump, the Republican candidate would have only received 260 electoral votes – 10 shy of the minimum necessary to become president." So there you have it. Stein spoiled the election. Case closed.

The problem with this analysis is its flawed logic that anyone's votes actually "belong" to anyone else, and further, it rests on the false assumption that all of Stein's voters would have naturally voted for Clinton had the Green Party not been competing in the election.

The fact is, many of these voters were turned off by Clinton's hawkishness, perceived ethical lapses and close Wall Street ties, and would have never voted for her regardless of whether there was a third party alternative or not. Some would have stayed home, and others might have actually voted for Trump.

The suggestion that smaller parties don't have a right to compete is also deeply anti-democratic and flies in the face of international standards for free and fair elections. Although Democrats rarely come out and openly state their desire for the Green Party to cease to exist, they do pointedly take issue with Green candidates competing in close elections, with the Democratic establishment seeing the Greens' challenge from the left as an affront that complicates their electoral strategies.

Whether they acknowledge it or not, what Democrats seem to be suggesting is that people who do not identify with the candidates or positions of the Democratic

Party simply should not have the option to vote for alternative candidates or to organize oppositional parties.

But according to an agreement signed by the United States in 1990 providing basic principles for democratic elections, individuals have the right “to establish, in full freedom, their own political parties or other political organizations” and governments must provide these parties the “necessary legal guarantees to enable them to compete with each other on a basis of equal treatment before the law and by the authorities.”

Doubling Down

Despite these international commitments, the Democrats have doubled down on their attacks against Stein in the months since the election, now claiming that not only did she spoil the election by siphoning votes from Clinton, but that she may have done so at the bidding of Russian President Vladimir Putin – never mind the fact that Greens have been running presidential candidates in every U.S. election since 1996.

Democratic Party operatives have spread salacious rumors suggesting that Stein is under Putin’s control, using a photo taken in late 2015 of Stein sitting at a table with the Russian leader as proof of possible disloyalty or perhaps even treason.

Viewed within the current context of the “new Cold War” and as part and parcel of the Russian election-meddling allegations, the photo of Stein is all the evidence needed by many Democrats predisposed to assume the worst about the Green Party and its nominee.

It should be kept in mind however that Stein has never attempted to conceal the fact that she attended this “controversial” dinner, which was marking the RT network’s 10-year anniversary, nor that she sat at a table with the Russian president.

In fact, following the dinner, her presidential campaign issued a press release which stated matter-of-factly, “Stein attended a dinner Thursday night, sitting at the table with Russian President Vladimir Putin.”

The press release described Stein’s speech at the dinner in which she admonished both the United States and Russia for pursuing militaristic policies and spending too much money on a pointless arms race.

“The United States is now embarking on a \$1 trillion program to update its nuclear weaponry while we are slashing programs to fight hunger, address homelessness, and provide economic security for our people,” Stein said. “In

Russia also, money runs short for critical needs because of the heavy burden of military spending. Imagine how much better off the world would be if our two nations could lead the way for the major powers to reduce the size of our military establishments.”

Stein also posted on Facebook that she “was in Russia to speak at an RT conference along with many other people, including many fellow activists from the peace movement.” While there, she shared a video message on YouTube – recorded from Moscow’s Red Square – in which she called for an end to militarism, and for an international order based on respect for human rights and international law.

Neo-McCarthyism

Despite her openness about her participation in the dinner, in these neo-McCarthyite times of wild speculation, baseless innuendo and general anti-Russian hysteria, Democratic operatives and bloggers are raising questions about whether the dinner is proof that Stein is actually on the payroll of the Russian government. The insinuation is that her 2016 campaign for the presidency was intended to help throw the election in favor of Trump, acting at the behest of Putin.

Trolling Jill Stein’s Twitter account with these sorts of accusations has seemingly become second nature to many Democratic Party supporters, with every tweet by Stein responded to by dozens of hostile Democrats who continue to blame the Green Party for spoiling the election.

Typical is a response to a tweet Stein sent out on March 2 in support of ranked choice voting. “Democrats used a runoff vote for DNC chair, so why are they fighting runoff voting in places like CA & MN?,” Stein tweeted.

“Are you trying to take focus off of your Russian buddy?” replied a Democratic partisan going by the name of Trice. “Is Vlad paying your bills or are you using the recount \$ you scammed?”

A blogger named Bill Palmer went even further in a Feb. 24 post at the “Palmer Report.” Pointing to a New York Daily News article which alleges that Michael Flynn was paid \$40,000 to attend the dinner with Putin in Dec. 2015, Palmer notes that “this raises a serious question which Jill Stein must now answer: did the Kremlin also pay her to be at the dinner?”

At the Daily Beast, Casey Michel also suggested that Stein is accepting bribes from the Russian government. Michel wrote on Jan. 13, “it remains unclear who paid for Stein’s trip to Moscow and her accommodations there.”

MSNBC's Rachel Maddow has also promoted the Stein-as-Russian-agent conspiracy theory, implying recently that Stein's relative silence on the Russian-hacking story implicates her as a Kremlin stooge.

"So everybody's like, 'Wow, how come this like super, super aggressive opposition that we saw from these third-party candidates – how come they haven't said anything since this scandal has broken?'" Maddow said on Viceland's Desus & Mero show on Feb. 15.

"I don't know, Jill! I can't pronounce it in Russian!" Maddow said mockingly. "Hope you're really psyched about your Wisconsin vote totals!"

Useful Target

While it would certainly be interesting if Stein actually received money from the Russian government to appear at the RT dinner, it should be noted that in her video message from Red Square, Stein started off by thanking Green Party supporters "for making this wonderful and inspiring trip possible." This is an indication from Stein that her grassroots campaign donors paid for the trip.

It should also be pointed out that if Stein's loyalty to America is being called into question for attending this dinner, it would only be fair to raise suspicions about the national loyalties of all the others who attended the event, a guest list that included international diplomats, journalists, a former mayor of London, and senior statesmen.

But of course, these are not the targets de jure of the Democratic Party, which has instead zeroed in on Stein and the Green Party. This gives the appearance of selective outrage, amounting to little more than a smear job by those growing desperate to hold on to voters and donors at a time when a majority of Americans are clamoring for alternatives and identifying not as Democrat or Republican but as independent.

A survey last year by the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research reported that a full 90 percent of voters lack confidence in the country's political system while 70 percent said they feel frustrated about the 2016 presidential election and 55 percent reported feeling "helpless." Forty percent said the two-party structure is "seriously broken."

Another survey taken last summer found that 55 percent of Americans favored having an independent or third party presidential candidate to consider on the ballot, in addition to the two traditional party choices. Of those 29 years of age and younger, 91 percent expressed support for additional choices.

It is in this context of discontent that the current smears against the Green

Party should be understood. The two dominant parties know that Americans are hungry for alternatives, so party operatives are working overtime to discredit the only viable alternatives that exist to the status quo.

It is an undemocratic strategy to sideline genuine competition, and is doubly irresponsible by claiming that a political figure is working at the behest of a foreign power – especially in these days of deepening division and a growing neo-McCarthyism.

As an added bonus, this undemocratic strategy does not appear to be helping the Democrats, and indeed, ever since the party decided some time last fall to zero in on the “Russian hacking” story as their primary line of attack, their poll numbers have plummeted. Their favorability rating has dropped from about 50 percent just before the election to a current low of about 39 percent. Their unfavorability rating is now 49 percent, the highest it’s been for three years.

If the Democrats hope to reverse some of these trends, they might try developing policy ideas that help Americans rather than attacking progressives for throwing their support behind alternative parties, and perhaps consider giving it a rest with the McCarthyite smears against those perceived to be “Russian sympathizers.”

Editor’s Note: In line with this new McCarthyism, a Jan. 6 report by the Director of National Intelligence on alleged Russian interference in U.S. politics included a seven-page appendix, dating from 2012, that accused RT of portraying “the US electoral process as undemocratic.”

The DNI’s “proof” included the accusation that RT had undermined Americans’ faith in the U.S. democratic process because “RT broadcast, hosted and advertised third-party candidate debates.”

Further, the DNI’s report complained, “The RT hosts asserted that the US two-party system does not represent the views of at least one-third of the population and is a ‘sham.’” The fact that these RT assertions are truthful apparently didn’t deter DNI James Clapper from seeing this recognition of reality as evidence of Russian perfidy.

The report also took RT to task for covering the Occupy Wall Street movement and for reporting on the environmental dangers from “fracking,” topics cited as further proof that the Russian government was using RT to weaken U.S. public support for Washington’s policies. **[End Editor’s Note]**

Nat Parry is co-author of *Neck Deep: The Disastrous Presidency of George W. Bush*. [This story originally appeared at

<https://essentialopinion.wordpress.com/2017/03/08/the-democrats-undemocratic-str>

The Orwellian War on Skepticism

Special Report: Official Washington's rush into an Orwellian future is well underway as political and media bigwigs move to silence Internet voices of independence and dissent, reports Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

Under the cover of battling "fake news," the mainstream U.S. news media and officialdom are taking aim at journalistic skepticism when it is directed at the pronouncements of the U.S. government and its allies.

One might have hoped that the alarm about "fake news" would remind major U.S. news outlets, such as The Washington Post and The New York Times, about the value of journalistic skepticism. However, instead, it seems to have done the opposite.

The idea of questioning the claims by the West's officialdom now brings calumny down upon the heads of those who dare do it. "Truth" is being redefined as whatever the U.S. government, NATO and other Western interests say is true. Disagreement with the West's "group thinks," no matter how fact-based the dissent is, becomes "fake news."

So, we have the case of Washington Post columnist David Ignatius having a starry-eyed interview with Richard Stengel, the State Department's Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy, the principal arm of U.S. government propaganda.

Entitled "The truth is losing," [the column](#) laments that the official narratives as deigned by the State Department and The Washington Post are losing traction with Americans and the world's public.

Stengel, a former managing editor at Time magazine, seems to take aim at Russia's RT network's slogan, "question more," as some sinister message seeking to inject cynicism toward the West's official narratives.

"They're not trying to say that their version of events is the true one. They're saying: 'Everybody's lying! Nobody's telling you the truth!'," Stengel said. "They don't have a candidate, per se. But they want to undermine faith in democracy, faith in the West."

No Evidence

Typical of these recent mainstream tirades about this vague Russian menace, Ignatius's column doesn't provide any specifics regarding how RT and other Russian media outlets are carrying out this assault on the purity of Western information. It's enough to just toss around pejorative phrases supporting an Orwellian solution, which is to stamp out or marginalize alternative and independent journalism, not just Russian.

Ignatius writes: "Stengel poses an urgent question for journalists, technologists and, more broadly, everyone living in free societies or aspiring to do so. How do we protect the essential resource of democracy – the truth – from the toxin of lies that surrounds it? It's like a virus or food poisoning. It needs to be controlled. But how?"

"Stengel argues that the U.S. government should sometimes protect citizens by exposing 'weaponized information, false information' that is polluting the ecosystem. But ultimately, the defense of truth must be independent of a government that many people mistrust. 'There are inherent dangers in having the government be the verifier of last resort,' he argues."

By the way, Stengel is not the fount of truth-telling, as he and Ignatius like to pretend. Early in the Ukraine crisis, Stengel delivered a rant against RT that was full of inaccuracies or what you might call "fake news."

Yet, what Stengel and various mainstream media outlets appear to be arguing for is the creation of a "Ministry of Truth" managed by mainstream U.S. media outlets and enforced by Google, Facebook and other technology platforms.

In other words, once these supposedly responsible outlets decide what the "truth" is, then questioning that narrative will earn you "virtual" expulsion from the marketplace of ideas, possibly eliminated via algorithms of major search engines or marked with a special app to warn readers not to believe what you say, a sort of yellow Star of David for the Internet age.

And then there's the possibility of more direct (and old-fashioned) government enforcement by launching FBI investigations into media outlets that won't toe the official line. (All of these "solutions" have been advocated in recent weeks.)

On the other hand, if you do toe the official line that comes from Stengel's public diplomacy shop, you stand to get rewarded with government financial support. Stengel disclosed in his interview with Ignatius that his office funds "investigative" journalism projects.

“How should citizens who want a fact-based world combat this assault on truth?” Ignatius asks, adding: “Stengel has approved State Department programs that teach investigative reporting and empower truth-tellers.”

Buying Propaganda

After reading Ignatius’s column on Wednesday, I submitted a question to the State Department asking for details on this “journalism” and “truth-telling” funding that is coming from the U.S. government’s top propaganda shop, but I have not received an answer.

But we do know that the U.S. government has been investing tens of millions of dollars in various media programs to undergird Washington’s desired narratives.

For instance, in May 2015, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) issued a fact sheet summarizing its work financing friendly journalists around the world, including “journalism education, media business development, capacity building for supportive institutions, and strengthening legal-regulatory environments for free media.”

USAID estimated its budget for “media strengthening programs in over 30 countries” at \$40 million annually, including aiding “independent media organizations and bloggers in over a dozen countries,” In Ukraine before the 2014 coup ousting elected President Viktor Yanukovich and installing a fiercely anti-Russian and U.S.-backed regime, USAID offered training in “mobile phone and website security,” skills that would have been quite helpful to the coup plotters.

USAID, working with currency speculator George Soros’s Open Society, also has funded the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, which engages in “investigative journalism” that usually goes after governments that have fallen into disfavor with the United States and then are singled out for accusations of corruption. The USAID-funded OCCRP collaborates with Bellingcat, an online investigative website founded by blogger Eliot Higgins.

Higgins has spread misinformation on the Internet, including discredited claims implicating the Syrian government in the sarin attack in 2013 and directing an Australian TV news crew to what appeared to be the wrong location for a video of a BUK anti-aircraft battery as it supposedly made its getaway to Russia after the shoot-down of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 in 2014.

Despite his dubious record of accuracy, Higgins has gained mainstream acclaim, in part, because his “findings” always match up with the propaganda theme that the U.S. government and its Western allies are peddling. Higgins is now associated with the Atlantic Council, a pro-NATO think tank which is partially

funded by the U.S. State Department.

Beyond funding from the State Department and USAID, tens of millions of dollars more are flowing through the U.S.-government-funded National Endowment for Democracy, which was started in 1983 under the guiding hand of CIA Director William Casey.

NED became a slush fund to help finance what became known, inside the Reagan administration, as "perception management," the art of controlling the perceptions of domestic and foreign populations.

The Emergence of StratCom

Last year, as the New Cold War heated up, NATO created the Strategic Communications Command in Latvia to further wage information warfare against Russia and individuals who were contesting the West's narratives.

As veteran war correspondent Don North reported in 2015 regarding this new StratCom, "the U.S. government has come to view the control and manipulation of information as a 'soft power' weapon, merging psychological operations, propaganda and public affairs under the catch phrase 'strategic communications.'

"This attitude has led to treating psy-ops – manipulative techniques for influencing a target population's state of mind and surreptitiously shaping people's perceptions – as just a normal part of U.S. and NATO's information policy."

Now, the European Parliament and the U.S. Congress are moving to up the ante, passing new legislation to escalate "information warfare."

On Wednesday, U.S. congressional negotiators approved \$160 million to combat what they deem foreign propaganda and the alleged Russian campaign to spread "fake news." The measure is part of the National Defense Authorization Act and gives the State Department the power to identify "propaganda" and counter it.

This bipartisan stampede into an Orwellian future for the American people and the world's population follows a shoddily sourced Washington Post article that relied on a new anonymous group that identified some 200 Internet sites, including some of the most prominent American independent sources of news, as part of a Russian propaganda network.

Typical of this new McCarthyism, the report lacked evidence that any such network actually exists but instead targeted cases where American journalists expressed skepticism about claims from Western officialdom.

Consortiumnews.com was included on the list apparently because we have

critically analyzed some of the claims and allegations regarding the crises in Syria and Ukraine, rather than simply accept the dominant Western “group thinks.”

Also on the “black list” were such quality journalism sites as Counterpunch, Truth-out, Truthdig, Naked Capitalism and ZeroHedge along with many political sites ranging across the ideological spectrum.

The Fake-News Express

Normally such an unfounded conspiracy theory would be ignored, but – because The Washington Post treated the incredible allegations as credible – the smear has taken on a life of its own, reprised by cable networks and republished by major newspapers.

But the unpleasant truth is that the mainstream U.S. news media is now engaged in its own fake-news campaign about “fake news.” It’s publishing bogus claims invented by a disreputable and secretive outfit that just recently popped up on the Internet. If that isn’t “fake news,” I don’t know what is.

Yet, despite the Post’s clear violations of normal journalistic practices, surely, no one there will pay a price, anymore than there was accountability for the Post reporting as flat fact that Iraq was hiding WMD in 2002-2003. Fred Hiatt, the editorial-page editor most responsible for that catastrophic “group think,” is still in the same job today.

Two nights ago, MSNBC’s Chris Matthews featured the spurious Washington Post article in a segment that – like similar rehashes –didn’t bother to get responses from the journalists being slandered.

I found that ironic since Matthews repeatedly scolds journalists for their failure to look skeptically at U.S. government claims about Iraq possessing WMD as justification for the disastrous Iraq War. However, now Matthews joins in smearing journalists who have applied skepticism to U.S. and Western propaganda claims about Syria and/or Ukraine.

While the U.S. Congress and the European Parliament begin to take action to shut down or isolate dissident sources of information – all in the name of “democracy” – a potentially greater danger is that mainstream U.S. news outlets are already teaming up with technology companies, such as Google and Facebook, to impose their own determinations about “truth” on the Internet.

Or, as Ignatius puts it in his column reflecting Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy Stengel’s thinking, “The best hope may be the global companies that have created the social-media platforms.

“‘They see this information war as an existential threat,’ says Stengel. ... The real challenge for global tech giants is to restore the currency of truth. Perhaps ‘machine learning’ [presumably a reference to algorithms] can identify falsehoods and expose every argument that uses them. Perhaps someday, a human-machine process will create what Stengel describes as a ‘global ombudsman for information.’”

Ministry of Truth

An organization of some 30 mainstream media companies already exists, including not only The Washington Post and The New York Times but also the Atlantic Council-connected Bellingcat, as the emerging arbiters – or ombudsmen – for truth, something Orwell described less flatteringly as a “Ministry of Truth.”

The New York Times has even editorialized in support of Internet censorship, using the hysteria over “fake news” to justify the marginalization or disappearance of dissident news sites.

It now appears that this 1984-ish “MiniTrue” will especially target journalistic skepticism when applied to U.S. government and mainstream media “group thinks.”

Yet, in my four decades-plus in professional journalism, I always understood that skepticism was a universal journalistic principle, one that should be applied in all cases, whether a Republican or a Democrat is in the White House or whether some foreign leader is popular or demonized.

As we have seen in recent years, failure to ask tough questions and to challenge dubious claims from government officials and mainstream media outlets can get lots of people killed, both U.S. soldiers and citizens of countries invaded or destabilized by outsiders.

To show skepticism is not the threat to democracy that Undersecretary Stengel and columnist Ignatius appear to think it is.

Whether you like or dislike RT’s broadcasts – or more likely have never seen one – a journalist really can’t question its slogan: “question more.” Questioning is the essence of journalism and, for that matter, democracy.

[In protest of the Post’s smearing of independent journalists, RootsAction has undertaken a petition drive, which can be found here.]

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).

Official Washington's 'Info-Wars'

Organs of Official Washington, such as the State Department and The Washington Post, are becoming unhinged over their weakening grip on the narratives that the people are supposed to believe, as William Blum explains.

By William Blum

On November 16, at a State Department press briefing, department spokesperson John Kirby was having one of his frequent adversarial dialogues with Gayane Chichakyan, a reporter for RT (Russia Today); this time concerning U.S. charges of Russia bombing hospitals in Syria and blocking the U.N. from delivering aid to the trapped population.

When Chichakyan asked for some detail about these charges, Kirby replied: "Why don't you ask your defense ministry?"

GC: Do you – can you give any specific information on when Russia or the Syrian Government blocked the UN from delivering aid? Just any specific information.

KIRBY: There hasn't been any aid delivered in the last month.

GC: And you believe it was blocked exclusively by Russia and the Syrian Government?

KIRBY: There's no question in our mind that the obstruction is coming from the regime and from Russia. No question at all.

...

MATTHEW LEE (Associated Press): Let me -- hold on, just let me say: Please be careful about saying "your defense minister" and things like that. I mean, she's a journalist just like the rest of us are, so it's -- she's asking pointed questions, but they're not –

KIRBY: From a state-owned -- from a state-owned –

LEE: But they're not –

KIRBY: From a state-owned outlet, Matt.

LEE: But they're not –

KIRBY: From a state-owned outlet that's not independent.

LEE: The questions that she's asking are not out of line.

KIRBY: I didn't say the questions were out of line.

.....

KIRBY: I'm sorry, but I'm not going to put Russia Today on the same level with the rest of you who are representing independent media outlets.

One has to wonder if State Department spokesperson Kirby knows that in 2011 Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, speaking about RT, declared: "The Russians have opened an English-language network. I've seen it in a few countries, and it is quite instructive."

I also wonder how Mr. Kirby deals with reporters from the BBC, a STATE-OWNED television and radio entity in the U.K., broadcasting in the U.S. and all around the world.

Or the state-owned Australian Broadcasting Corporation, described by Wikipedia as follows: "The corporation provides television, radio, online and mobile services throughout metropolitan and regional Australia, as well as overseas ... and is well regarded for quality and reliability as well as for offering educational and cultural programming that the commercial sector would be unlikely to supply on its own."

There's also Radio Free Europe, Radio Free Asia, Radio Liberty (Central/Eastern Europe), and Radio Marti (Cuba); all (U.S.) state-owned, none "independent", but all deemed worthy enough by the United States to feed to the world.

And let's not forget what Americans have at home: PBS (Public Broadcasting Service) and NPR (National Public Radio), which would have a near-impossible time surviving without large federal government grants. How independent does this leave them? Has either broadcaster ever unequivocally opposed a modern American war? There's good reason NPR has long been known as National Pentagon Radio. But it's part of American media's ideology to pretend that it doesn't have any ideology.

As to the non-state American media ... There are about 1,400 daily newspapers in the United States. Can you name a single paper, or a single TV network, that was unequivocally opposed to the American wars carried out against Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan, Yugoslavia, Panama, Grenada, and Vietnam while they were happening, or shortly thereafter? Or even opposed to any two of these seven wars? How about one?

In 1968, six years into the Vietnam War, the *Boston Globe* (Feb. 18, 1968) surveyed the editorial positions of 39 leading U.S. papers concerning the war and found that “none advocated a pull-out.” Has the phrase “invasion of Vietnam” ever appeared in the U.S. mainstream media?

In 2003, leading cable station MSNBC took the much-admired Phil Donahue off the air because of his opposition to the calls for war in Iraq. Mr. Kirby would undoubtedly call MSNBC “independent.”

If the American mainstream media were officially state-controlled, would they look or sound significantly different when it comes to U.S. foreign policy?

New Cold War Propaganda

On Nov. 25, the *Washington Post* ran an article entitled: “Research ties ‘fake news’ to Russia.” It’s all about how sources in Russia are flooding American media and the Internet with phony stories designed as “part of a broadly effective strategy of sowing distrust in U.S. democracy and its leaders.”

“The sophistication of the Russian tactics,” the article says, “may complicate efforts by Facebook and Google to crack down on ‘fake news’.”

The *Post* states that the Russian tactics included “penetrating the computers of election officials in several states and releasing troves of hacked emails that embarrassed Clinton in the final months of her campaign.” (Heretofore this had been credited to Wikileaks.)

The story is simply bursting with anti-Russian references:

- –An online magazine header – “Trolling for Trump: How Russia Is Trying to Destroy Our Democracy.”
- –“the startling reach and effectiveness of Russian propaganda campaigns.”
- –“more than 200 websites as routine peddlers of Russian propaganda during the election season.”
- –“stories planted or promoted by the disinformation campaign were viewed more than 213 million times.”
- –“The Russian campaign during this election season ... worked by harnessing the online world’s fascination with ‘buzzy’ content that is surprising and emotionally potent, and tracks with popular conspiracy theories about how secret forces dictate world events.”
- –“Russian-backed phony news to outcompete traditional news organizations for audience”
- –“They use our technologies and values against us to sow doubt. It’s starting to undermine our democratic system.”
- –“Russian propaganda operations also worked to promote the ‘Brexit’

departure of Britain from the European Union.”

- –“Some of these stories originated with RT and Sputnik, state-funded Russian information services that mimic the style and tone of independent news organizations yet sometimes include false and misleading stories in their reports.”
- –“a variety of other false stories – fake reports of a coup launched at Incirlik Air Base in Turkey and stories about how the United States was going to conduct a military attack and blame it on Russia”

A former U.S. ambassador to Russia, Michael McFaul, is quoted saying he was “struck by the overt support that Sputnik expressed for Trump during the campaign, even using the #CrookedHillary hashtag pushed by the candidate.” McFaul said Russian propaganda typically is aimed at weakening opponents and critics.

“They don’t try to win the argument. It’s to make everything seem relative. It’s kind of an appeal to cynicism.” [Cynicism? Heavens! What will those Moscow fascists/communists think of next?]

The *Post* did, however, include the following: “RT disputed the findings of the researchers in an e-mail on Friday, saying it played no role in producing or amplifying any fake news stories related to the U.S. election.” RT was quoted: “It is the height of irony that an article about ‘fake news’ is built on false, unsubstantiated claims. RT adamantly rejects any and all claims and insinuations that the network has originated even a single ‘fake story’ related to the US election.”

It must be noted that the *Washington Post* article fails to provide a single example showing how the actual facts of a specific news event were rewritten or distorted by a Russian agency to produce a news event with a contrary political message.

What then lies behind such blatant anti-Russian propaganda? In the new Cold War such a question requires no answer. The new Cold War by definition exists to discredit Russia simply because it stands in the way of American world domination. In the new Cold War, the political spectrum in the mainstream media runs the gamut from A to B.

William Blum is an author, historian, and renowned critic of U.S. foreign policy. He is the author of *Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II* and *Rogue State: A Guide to the World’s Only Superpower*, among others. [This article originally appeared at the Anti-Empire Report, <http://williamblum.org/> .]

The New Propaganda War

Exclusive: Despite Western media dominance, the U.S. government wants to stop the world from hearing the “other side” on foreign disputes by “countering” or discrediting those voices, explains Jonathan Marshall.

By Jonathan Marshall

“[Russia] is conducting an intensive propaganda campaign directed primarily against the US and is employing coordinated psychological, political and economic measures . . . The ultimate object of this campaign is not merely to undermine the prestige of the US and the effectiveness of its national policy but to weaken and divide world opinion to a point where effective opposition to [Russian] designs is no longer attainable by political, economic or military means.”

With that justification, the Truman administration secretly authorized the start of covert operations by the CIA against America’s wartime ally, the USSR, in December 1947. It was one of the seminal decisions that launched the Cold War.

Fast forward now to March 2016, when the “Countering Information Warfare Act of 2016” was introduced in the U.S. Senate – as if nothing has changed in nearly seven decades.

The bipartisan bill, co-authored by Senators Chris Murphy, D-Connecticut, and Rob Portman, R-Ohio, declares that the Russian government uses “disinformation and other propaganda tools to undermine the national security objectives of the United States and key allies and partners” and achieve “a destabilizing effect on United States allies and interests.”

It further asserts that “the challenge of countering disinformation” requires “a whole-of-government approach leveraging all elements of national power,” coordinated by the Secretary of Defense and Director of National Intelligence.

Last year, in the same spirit, the House Armed Services Committee sought to add \$30 million to funding of the U.S. Special Operations Command to combat Russian and Islamist information operations. It accused Russia of challenging “the NATO system” by engaging in “propaganda, diplomatic and economic measures to . . . preserve and extend its perceived sphere of influence” in Ukraine and beyond.

Philip Karber, president of the hawkish Potomac Foundation in Washington, D.C., agreed that Russia’s success in “hybrid warfare,” above all in Ukraine, requires a much bigger response from the American military. “Against the Russian media machine, you cannot just depend on a free press alone to defend against their

multi-front 'Big Lie' campaign," he declared.

Karber is one of many neo-Cold Warriors who warn that the United States and its NATO allies are falling behind Russia in the information war. In 2014, NATO's Supreme Commander, General Philip Breedlove called on the alliance to prepare responses to what he called "the most amazing information warfare blitzkrieg we have ever seen," related to Russia's support for separatists in the eastern Ukraine.

Spreading Hysteria

Similar hysteria spilled into the pages of *The Atlantic* magazine, which complained that Breedlove had actually understated the threat.

"The new Russia doesn't just deal in the petty disinformation, forgeries, lies, leaks, and cyber-sabotage usually associated with information warfare," cried author Peter Pomerantsev. "It reinvents reality, creating mass hallucinations that then translate into political action. . . . We're rendered stunned, spun, and flummoxed by the Kremlin's weaponization of absurdity and unreality."

Pomerantsev is affiliated with the Legatum Institute, a London-based think-tank that brought together "senior British and American officials" and "top Germans" with "frontline information-warriors from Ukraine" in 2014 to help expose "Kremlin propagandists."

Alarmists say Russia's information war is aimed at persuading gullible Westerners to render their governments "largely passive" in the face of Russia's hostile actions, for example, in Ukraine. (The claim of passivity may surprise some Russians, who attribute their serious economic recession in part to Western economic sanctions.)

Russia's deadly weapons in this information war are its TV and web channels, RT (formerly Russia Today) and Sputnik. Edward Lucas, senior vice-president of the U.S.-based Center for European Policy Analysis, calls RT "a fearsome adversary" and "a corrosive, anti-systemic force." [Also, see Consortiumnews.com's "Who's the Propagandist: US or RT?"]

Russia's dastardly tactic is to allocate "disproportionate coverage to speakers who echo the Kremlin's preferred narratives" on controversial issues, according to a recent paper for the House of Commons on "Russia's Information Warfare – Airbrushing Reality," by former NATO press officer Ben Nimmo and Dr. Jonathan Eyal, international director of the Royal United Services Institute, a defense and security think tank.

Among other things, their paper complains, these media channels air Russia's

claim that NATO violated Western promises by expanding after the breakup of the USSR. Apparently, “many Western academics” have been hoodwinked by this claim. (So, apparently, was *Der Spiegel*, whose extensive report on the issue cited Secretary of State James Baker’s explicit promise to Mikhail Gorbachev on Feb. 9, 1990, that there would be “no extension of NATO’s jurisdiction for forces of NATO one inch to the east.”)

As a result, the “Airbrushing Reality” paper claims, “Moscow has succeeded in getting across a set of messages which may well hobble European security, and which need to be urgently confronted.”

RT’s Tiny Audience

These alarmists generally offer no statistics to support their warnings about the mass brainwashing of Western viewers. No wonder: RT garnered “less than 0.1 percent of Europe’s television audience.”

It proved only slightly more popular in Great Britain, where it ranked 175th out of 278 channels. The British government nonetheless deemed RT a big enough menace to threaten to revoke the network’s license. Among other sins, it was apparently guilty of airing “anti-Western comments in a late-night discussion on Ukraine.”

Anti-Russian investigative journalists have also gleefully reported that RT is “woefully failing in its mission” and misleading its Kremlin funders by “pretending that it has had a far bigger impact in the Western media sphere than it has, particularly online.” RT’s most popular videos evidently pertain to natural disasters, crime stories and social reporting, rather than politics.

Ironically it took a reporter for the U.S.-government-funded Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty to admit that the propaganda war isn’t entirely one-sided. As Russia “embrac[es] information warfare for the 21st-century media environment,” he wrote, the “Kremlin has taken a page from Washington’s operations manual.”

The reporter added, as if the USSR had never dissolved, “Soviet intelligence services honed the tactical use of information to gain a strategic military advantage, deploying campaigns of deception, misinformation, and propaganda during the Soviet Union’s decades-long standoff with the United States, *which itself used the CIA and other intelligence and information agencies to shape public opinion throughout the Cold War.*” (emphasis added)

Created at the end of the 1940s as a propaganda arm of the CIA, Radio Free Europe proudly called itself a “political warfare operation engaged in a struggle against Soviet Russian colonialism behind the Iron Curtain.” But it

also sought to counter “communist influence [on] this side of the Curtain” – meaning that it aimed its propaganda toward Western Europe and the United States as well.

Today, the CIA’s former international broadcasting operations enjoy lavish overt support from U.S. taxpayers through the federal Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG). For fiscal year 2017, BBG has requested \$778 million in funding.

BBG works closely with the hawkish Victoria Nuland, assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian Affairs, to counter what she calls the “Kremlin’s pervasive propaganda campaign poisoning minds . . . on Russia’s periphery and across Europe.” (Nuland’s husband Robert Kagan is a veteran of Reagan-era “public diplomacy” and “perception management” programs led by a senior CIA covert operations specialist with the National Security Council.)

BBG has increased spending “to engage young audiences who are impacted by Russian . . . disinformation” and “launch digital teams for Central Asia and other areas where Russia supports frozen conflicts.” It created a Russian-language TV program carried by 25 outlets in eight countries along Russia’s periphery, including Ukraine,” to “correct the disinformation that is driving conflict in the region.”

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty also funds an online magazine, The Interpreter, which in the words of one enthusiastic supporter, “relentlessly exposes the liars, scaremongers and cranks who feature on RT’s programmes.”

So all this heated concern among Western politicians, military brass and policy analysts over Russia’s “information warfare” comes despite the tiny market share of Russia-funded media outlets in the West and enormous spending by the U.S. government on its own propaganda.

It also comes despite the almost suffocating homogeneity of major U.S. media and politicians in their condemnation of Russia governance and policies. As the noted Russia scholar Stephen Cohen, professor emeritus at New York University and Princeton University, has rued, virtually no conflict in recent memory has attracted less debate than America’s dangerous revival of the Cold War with the world’s only other nuclear superpower.

Perhaps the “information warfare” alarmists worry that some Russian claims might contain enough truth to sow seeds of doubt in Western minds and spark that long-overdue debate. But spending tens of millions of additional taxpayer dollars to swamp Russia’s voice with our own government’s version of truth is no way to realize the democratic values we profess.

America needs to hear a wider range of opinion – not because Russia deserves

particular support, but because wise policy cannot emerge from today's group think.

Jonathan Marshall is author or co-author of five books on international affairs, including *The Lebanese Connection: Corruption, Civil War and the International Drug Traffic* (Stanford University Press, 2012). Some of his previous articles for Consortiumnews were "Risky Blowback from Russian Sanctions"; "Neocons Want Regime Change in Iran"; "Saudi Cash Wins France's Favor"; "The Saudis' Hurt Feelings"; "Saudi Arabia's Nuclear Bluster"; "The US Hand in the Syrian Mess"; and "Hidden Origins of Syria's Civil War."]

US/NATO Embrace Psy-ops and Info-War

Exclusive: The U.S. government and NATO have entered the Brave New World of "strategic communications," merging psy-ops, propaganda and P.R. in order to manage the perceptions of Americans and the world's public, reports veteran war correspondent Don North.

By Don North

As reflected in a recent NATO conference in Latvia and in the Pentagon's new "Law of War" manual, the U.S. government has come to view the control and manipulation of information as a "soft power" weapon, merging psychological operations, propaganda and public affairs under the catch phrase "strategic communications."

This attitude has led to treating psy-ops manipulative techniques for influencing a target population's state of mind and surreptitiously shaping people's perceptions as just a normal part of U.S. and NATO's information policy.

"The NATO case and argument is that NATO's approach to psy-ops is to treat it as an essentially open, truthful and benign activity and that, plus the elimination of any meaningful distinctions between domestic and foreign media institutions and social media, means that psy-ops and public affairs have effectively fused," said British military historian, Dr. Stephen Badsey, one of the world's leading authorities on war and the media.

Badsey said NATO has largely abandoned the notion that there should be a clear distinction between psy-ops and public affairs, although NATO officially rules out the dissemination of "black propaganda," knowingly false information designed to discredit an adversary.

"The long argument as to whether a firewall should be maintained between psy-ops and information activities and public affairs has now largely ended, and in my view the wrong side won," Badsey added.

And, as part of this Brave New World of "strategic communications," the U.S. military and NATO have now gone on the offensive against news organizations that present journalism which is deemed to undermine the perceptions that the U.S. government seeks to convey to the world.

That attitude led to the Pentagon's new "Law of War" manual which suggests journalists in wartime may be considered "spies" or "unprivileged belligerents," creating the possibility that reporters could be subject to indefinite incarceration, military tribunals and extrajudicial execution the same treatment applied to Al Qaeda terrorists who are also called "unprivileged belligerents." [See Consortiumnews.com's "[Pentagon Manual Calls Some Reporters Spies.](#)"]

The revised "Law of War" manual has come under sharp criticism from representatives of both mainstream and independent media, including The New York Times' editors and the Committee to Protect Journalists, as well as academics such as Dr. Badsey.

"The attitude toward the media expressed in the 2015 Pentagon manual is a violation of the international laws of war to which the USA is a signatory, going back to the 1907 Hague Convention, and including the Geneva Conventions," said Badsey, a professor of conflict studies at Wolverhampton University in the United Kingdom and a long-time contact of mine who is often critical of U.S. military information tactics.

"But [the manual] is a reflection of the attitude fully displayed more than a decade ago in Iraq where the Pentagon decided that some media outlets, notably Al Jazeera, were enemies to be destroyed rather than legitimate news sources."

The Vietnam Debate

The Pentagon's hostility toward journalists whose reporting undermines U.S. government propaganda goes back even further, becoming a tendentious issue during the Vietnam War in the 1960s and 1970s when the war's supporters accused American journalists of behaving treasonously by reporting critically about the U.S. military's strategies and tactics, including exposure of atrocities such as the My Lai massacre.

In the 1980s, conservatives in the Reagan administration embracing as an article of faith that "liberal" reporters contributed to the U.S. defeat in Vietnam moved aggressively to discredit journalists who wrote about human rights violations by U.S.-backed forces in Central America. In line with those hostile

attitudes, news coverage of President Ronald Reagan's invasion of Grenada in 1983 was barred, and in 1990-91, President George H.W. Bush tightly controlled journalists trying to report on the Persian Gulf War. By keeping out or keeping a close eye on reporters, the U.S. military acted with fewer constraints and abuses went largely unreported.

This so-called "weaponizing of information" turned even more lethal during the presidency of Bill Clinton and the war over Kosovo when NATO identified Serb TV as an enemy "propaganda center" and dispatched warplanes to destroy its studios in Belgrade. In April 1999, acting under orders from U.S. Army General Wesley Clark, American bombers fired two cruise missiles that reduced Radio Televizija Srbija to a pile of rubble and killed 16 civilian Serb journalists working for the government station.

Despite this willful slaughter of unarmed journalists, the reaction from most U.S. news organizations was muted. However, an independent association of electronic media in Yugoslavia condemned the attack.

"History has shown that no form of repression, particularly the organized and premeditated murder of journalists, can prevent the flow of information, nor can it prevent the public from choosing its own sources of information," the group said.

The (London) Independent's Robert Fisk remarked at the time, "once you kill people because you don't like what they say, you change the rules of war." Now, the Pentagon is doing exactly that, literally rewriting its "Law of War" manual to allow for the no-holds-barred treatment of "enemy" journalists as "unprivileged belligerents."

Despite the 1999 targeting of a news outlet in order to silence its reporting, a case for war crimes was never pursued against the U.S. and NATO officials responsible, and retired General Clark is still a frequent guest on CNN and other American news programs.

Targeting Al Jazeera

During the presidency of George W. Bush, the Arab network Al Jazeera was depicted as "enemy media" deserving of destruction rather than being respected as a legitimate news organization and the news network's offices were struck by American bombs. On Nov. 13, 2001, during the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, a U.S. missile hit Al Jazeera's office in Kabul, destroying the building and damaging the homes of some employees.

On April 8, 2003, during the U.S. invasion of Iraq, a U.S. missile hit an electricity generator at Al Jazeera's Baghdad office, touching off a fire that

killed reporter Tareq Ayyoub and wounding a colleague. The Bush administration insisted that the attacks on Al Jazeera offices were “accidents.”

However, in 2004, as the U.S. occupation of Iraq encountered increased resistance and U.S. forces mounted a major offensive in the city of Fallujah, Al Jazeera’s video of the assault graphically depicted the devastation and on April 15, 2004, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld decried Al Jazeera’s coverage as “vicious, inaccurate and inexcusable.”

According to a British published report on the minutes of a meeting the next day between President Bush and UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, Bush suggested bombing Al Jazeera’s headquarters in Qatar but was talked out of the idea by Blair who said it would provoke a worldwide backlash.

During the Iraq War, Dr. Badsey wrote the following observation which I cited in my book on military/media relations, *Inappropriate Conduct*: “The claim that in 2004 at the first battle of Fallujah the U.S. Marine Corps ‘weren’t beaten by the terrorists and insurgents, they were beaten by Al Jazeera television’ rather than that they [U.S. forces] employed inappropriate tactics for the political environment of their mission, is recognizable as yet another variant on the long-discredited claim that the Vietnam War was lost on the television screens of America.”

Although the notion of Vietnam-era journalists for U.S. media acting as a fifth column rather than a Fourth Estate is widely accepted among conservatives, the reality was always much different, with most of the early Vietnam War coverage largely favorable, even flattering, before journalists became more skeptical as the war dragged on.

In a recent interview on NPR radio, Charles Adams, a senior editor of the new “Law of War” manual, was unable to cite examples of journalists jeopardizing operations in the last five wars and that may be because there were so few examples of journalistic misconduct and the handful of cases involved either confusion about rules or resistance to news embargoes that were considered unreasonable.

Examining the history of reporters dis-accredited during the Vietnam War, William Hammond, author of a two-volume history of U.S. Army relations with the media in Vietnam, found only eight dis-accreditations, according to military files.

Arguably the most serious case involved the Baltimore Sun’s John Carroll, an Army veteran himself who believed strongly that it was important that the American people be as thoroughly informed about the controversial war as

possible. He got in trouble for reporting that the U.S. Marines were about to abandon their base at Khe Sahn. He was accused of violating an embargo and was stripped of his credentials, though he argued that the North Vietnamese surrounding the base were well aware of the troop movement.

Toward the end of the war, some reporters also considered the South Vietnamese government so penetrated by the communists that there were no secrets anyway. Prime Minister Nguyen van Thieu's principal aide was a spy and everyone knew it except the American people.

During his long career, which included the editorship of the Los Angeles Times, Carroll came to view journalists "almost as public servants and a free press as essential to a self-governing nation," according to his obituary in The New York Times after his death on June 14, 2015.

Strategic Communication

During the Obama administration, the concept of "strategic communication" managing the perceptions of the world's public has grown more and more expansive and the crackdown on the flow of information unprecedented. More than any of his predecessors, President Barack Obama has authorized harsh legal action against government "leakers" who have exposed inconvenient truths about U.S. foreign policy and intelligence practices.

And Obama's State Department has mounted a fierce public campaign against the Russian network, RT, that is reminiscent of the Clinton administration's hostility toward Serb TV and Bush-43's anger toward Al Jazeera.

Since RT doesn't use the State Department's preferred language regarding the Ukraine crisis and doesn't show the requisite respect for the U.S.-backed regime in Kiev, the network is denounced for its "propaganda," but this finger-pointing is really just part of the playbook for "information warfare," raising doubts about the information coming from your adversary while creating a more favorable environment for your own propaganda. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[Who's the Propagandist? US or RT?](#)"]

This growing fascination with "strategic communication" has given rise to NATO's new temple to information technology, called "The NATO Strategic Communications Center of Excellence" or STRATCOM, located in Latvia, a former Soviet republic that is now on the front lines of the tensions with Russia.

On Aug. 20, some of the most influential minds from the world of "strategic communications" gathered in Latvia's capital of Riga for a two-day conference entitled "Perception Matters." A quotation headlined in all its communications read: "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the

defenses of peace must be constructed” noble sentiments perhaps but not always reflected in the remarks by more than 200 defense and communications experts, many of whom viewed information not as some neutral factor necessary for enlightening the public and nourishing democracy, but as a “soft power” weapon to be wielded against an adversary.

Hawkish Sen. John McCain, R-Arizona, led a delegation of U.S. senators and said STRATCOM was needed to combat Russia and its President Vladimir Putin. “This Center will help spread the truth,” said McCain although “the truth” in the world of “strategic communications” can be a matter of perception.

Don North is a veteran war correspondent who covered the Vietnam War and many other conflicts around the world. He is the author of a new book, Inappropriate Conduct, the story of a World War II correspondent whose career was crushed by the intrigue he uncovered.

Who's the Propagandist: US or RT?

Exclusive: After Secretary of State Kerry lashed out at Russia's RT network over its reporting on Ukraine, a senior aide assembled a list of particulars, which have backfired by showing how weak Kerry's case is and how hypocritical Kerry's State Department has been, reports Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

The U.S. State Department, which has been caught promoting a series of false or dubious stories about Ukraine, is trying to give some substance to Secretary of State John Kerry's counter-complaint that Russia's RT network is a “propaganda bullhorn” promoting Russian President Vladimir Putin's “fantasy.”

In a “Dipnote” of April 29, Richard Stengel, under secretary of state for public diplomacy, made some broad-brush criticisms of RT's content accusing the network of painting “a dangerous and false picture of Ukraine's legitimate government” by citing examples of fascism, anti-Semitism and terrorism surrounding the Kiev regime.

Stengel claims he knows the difference between news and propaganda because he spent seven years as managing editor of Time. He defines propaganda as “the deliberate dissemination of information that you know to be false or misleading in order to influence an audience” and asserts: “RT is a distortion machine, not a news organization.”

But Stengel offers no specific citations of the supposedly propagandistic stories done by RT, making it impossible to ascertain the precise wording or context of the RT content that he is criticizing. One basic rule of journalism is “show, don’t tell,” but Stengel apparently didn’t learn that during his seven years in the top echelon of Time magazine.

Nevertheless, Stengel accuses RT of “disinformation” ranging from “assertions that peaceful protesters hired snipers to repeated allegations that Kiev is beset by violence, fascism and anti-Semitism, these are lies falsely presented as news.”

Though it’s impossible to fully assess Stengel’s complaint because he doesn’t specify the offending stories, the first complaint is an apparent reference to the mystery surrounding the identity of snipers who opened fire on protesters and police during the Maidan protests in Kiev on Feb. 20.

The U.S. government, the U.S. press and the Maidan protesters were quick to blame President Viktor Yanukovich although he denied giving an order to fire on the protests and suggested the shootings may have been a provocation. That suspicion of “false-flag” violence as a way to spur on the coup against Yanukovich also was expressed by some neutral observers on the ground in Kiev.

Two European Union officials, Estonia’s Foreign Minister Urmas Paet and European Union foreign affairs chief Catherine Ashton, were revealed discussing in a phone call their suspicions that elements of the protesters were responsible for the shootings.

“So there is a stronger and stronger understanding that behind snipers it was not Yanukovich, it was somebody from the new coalition,” Paet told Ashton, as reported by the UK Guardian.

In other words, if Stengel is referring to RT’s reporting about the sniper attacks, his assumption that RT was knowingly lying when it referenced a possible role of the Maidan protesters in the sniper shootings is itself false. Further, Stengel must have known that not all the Maidan protesters were “peaceful.”

Hide the Neo-Nazis

Although the State Department has tried to hide the crucial role of neo-Nazi militias in overthrowing Yanukovich’s elected government, it was well known at the time (and acknowledged by the Maidan protesters themselves) that far-right groups had organized 100-man brigades to carry out the final attacks. There was also widely broadcast news footage of these Maidan protesters hurling Molotov cocktails at police, more than a dozen who died in the clashes.

Is Stengel really unaware of the involvement in the coup by neo-Nazi storm troopers from the Right Sektor and the Svoboda party, which both lionize World War II Nazi collaborator Stepan Bandera? Does Stengel really not know about the prevalence of banners honoring Bandera, Nazi insignias at rallies and even the appearance of the Confederate battle flag unfurled at the Kiev City Hall as the universal symbol of white supremacy?

Just because virtually the entire U.S. press corps has joined in the U.S. government's propagandized version of what happened during and after the violent overthrow of Yanukovich doesn't mean that RT and other news organizations have to shut their eyes, too.

For instance, the BBC, which is funded by the British government much as RT is funded by the Russian government, had the courage to run a segment on the Maidan's neo-Nazis, noting that the far-right groups were given four ministries in the new government in recognition of their important contribution.

Most significantly, the new chief of national security, Andriy Parubiy, was one of those neo-Nazis. He founded the Social-National Party of Ukraine in 1991, blending radical Ukrainian nationalism with neo-Nazi symbols. Parubiy also formed a paramilitary spinoff, the Patriots of Ukraine, and defended the awarding of the title, "Hero of Ukraine," to Bandera, whose paramilitary forces joined with the Nazis in exterminating Poles and Jews during World War II.

During the months of protests aimed at overthrowing Yanukovich, Parubiy became the commandant of "Euromaidan," the name for the Kiev uprising. Then, in mid-April as the new regime's national security chief and facing growing resistance in eastern Ukraine, Parubiy warned that he was siccing some of his paramilitary veterans, now incorporated in the National Guard, on the anti-regime protesters. On Twitter, he wrote, "Reserve unit of National Guard formed #Maidan Self-defense volunteers was sent to the front line this morning."

Some leading neo-Nazis have been brazen in their assertion of Ukrainian racial superiority over other ethnic groups in Ukraine, including the ethnic Russians in the east. Like their hero Bandera, these modern-day storm troopers would prefer an ethnically pure Ukraine.

Though it is true that most of the Maidan protesters were there in support of closer European ties and anger over government corruption, it is also true that the neo-Nazi militias surged to the front of the protests for the final clashes on Feb. 20-22. [See Consortiumnews.com's "Ukraine, Though the US 'Looking Glass.'"]

And, as for Stengel's insistence that RT's reporting that "Kiev is beset by

violence” is further proof of RT’s “propaganda,” there’s the inconvenient reality that far-right forces have been clashing with other Maidan protesters over the past few days. Some of these ultra-nationalists want more rewards for their role in Yanukovych’s ouster and some want a harsher crackdown on the uprising in the ethnic Russian east.

Who’s Playing Terrorist Card?

In his unspecified litany of other purported RT offenses, Stengel also cites “the constant reference to any Ukrainian opposed to a Russian takeover of the country as a ‘terrorist.’ Or the unquestioning repetition of the ludicrous assertion last week that the United States has invested \$5 billion in regime change in Ukraine.

“These are not facts, and they are not opinions. They are false claims, and when propaganda poses as news it creates real dangers and gives a green light to violence.”

However, regarding the use of the word “terrorist,” which Stengel finds so offensive, it has actually been applied promiscuously not by RT but by the Kiev regime and the U.S. State Department against the anti-regime protesters in eastern Ukraine though they have not engaged in behavior that is traditionally considered “terrorism.”

The Russian ethnic protesters in the east have engaged in no indiscriminate killing of civilians for political purposes, the classic definition of “terrorism.” Yet, the post-coup regime in Kiev has repeatedly announced plans for an “anti-terrorism” campaign against the east. In other words, Stengel’s “side” is guilty of what he accuses RT of doing.

As for RT’s “ludicrous assertion” about the U.S. investing \$5 billion, that is a clear reference to a public speech by Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Victoria Nuland to U.S. and Ukrainian business leaders on Dec. 13 in which she told them that “we have invested more than \$5 billion” in what was needed for Ukraine to achieve its “European aspirations.”

Nuland also was a leading proponent of “regime change” in Ukraine who personally cheered on the Maidan demonstrators, even passing out cookies. In an intercepted, obscenity-laced phone call with U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt, Nuland said her choice to replace Yanukovych was Arseniy Yatsenyuk, who ended up as Prime Minister after the coup.

If Stengel wants to quibble about whether Nuland’s \$5 billion remark was a reference to “regime change” or not although the European association was a key issue in Yanukovych’s ouster the under secretary can make his argument. But to

ignore the obvious context of Nuland's \$5 billion reference is again either a sign of stunning ignorance or willful deception.

As for Stengel's office of "public diplomacy," it is a segment of the State Department that I have personally dealt with since the 1980s during my days covering the Reagan administration's Central America policies for the Associated Press and Newsweek.

Back then, some of us referred to the "PD" office as "the office of propaganda and disinformation" because of the endless distortions and lies generated in support of U.S.-backed "death squad" regimes in El Salvador and Guatemala and for Ronald Reagan's beloved Nicaraguan Contra rebels who fairly could be called "terrorist" given their proclivity for slaughtering and raping Nicaraguan civilians and for collaborating with cocaine traffickers to make money on the side.

The Earlier Brave Kerry

Ironically, in those days, a younger version of John Kerry was a U.S. senator who bravely investigated these Reagan-affiliated crimes and faced attacks from the State Department's public diplomacy operatives.

Part of Kerry's punishment for being early in his investigation of White House skullduggery in Central America was to be excluded from the Iran-Contra investigation when some of Reagan's crimes and lies surfaced dramatically in late 1986.

Because Kerry had been ahead of the curve, he was judged "biased" on the issue of Reagan's guilt and thus passed over for the "select committee" investigation. Only Democratic senators who had been fooled by the lies or were asleep at the switch were deemed "objective" enough for the high-profile inquiry. [For more on the contrast between Kerry's past and present, see Consortiumnews.com's "[What's the Matter with John Kerry?](#)"]

Another irony of Stengel's defense of Kerry's anti-RT outburst is that one of the senior "public diplomacy" operatives on Central America back in the 1980s was a young neocon named Robert Kagan, whose State Department team developed propaganda themes to undercut Kerry and various journalists, like myself, who would not toe the line.

At one point when Kagan realized that I would not play ball with the administration's propaganda, he informed me that I would have to be "controversialized," that is become the focus of public attacks from pro-Reagan attack groups and thus have my journalistic career damaged, a process that was subsequently carried out.

The irony in this is that Robert Kagan went on to become a leading light in the neocon movement, a Washington Post columnist, a co-founder of the Project for the New American Century, a star proponent of Iraqi “regime change” and the husband of Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland, the recent cheerleader for “regime change” in Ukraine.

That Stengel, the current master of the State Department’s “public diplomacy” operation, is now offended by what he considers “propaganda” by RT has to be considered one of the purest expressions of hypocrisy in the long history of U.S. government hypocrisy. [For more on this topic, see Consortiumnews.com’s [“Kerry’s Propaganda War on Russia’s RT.”](#)]

Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his new 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](#).

Kerry’s Propaganda War on Russia’s RT

Exclusive: Secretary of State Kerry, who has bumbled through a string of propaganda fiascos on Ukraine, decries Russia’s RT network as a “propaganda bullhorn” that Americans should ignore – just trust what the U.S. government tells you, an idea that ex-CIA analyst Ray McGovern rejects.

By Ray McGovern

When specialists with a good sense of history insist that war with Russia is “not unthinkable” precipitated by events in Ukraine, one should take careful note. The “not unthinkable” quote is from pre-eminent American historian of Russia, Stephen F. Cohen, who recently appeared with John J. Mearsheimer, historian of U.S. foreign policy, on [RT’s Crosstalk](#).

That Cohen and Mearsheimer are professors should not be held against them. They typify the best; they are not of the ivory-tower type. And, on Ukraine, they are a far cry from the ersatz-professors, the former U.S. officials and the blathering pundits dominating TV and newspapers, including the New York Times which is supposedly pledged to provide “all the news that’s fit to print.”

The Cohen/Mearsheimer commentary provided much-needed historical perspective for

what is going on in Ukraine. And the possibility of a war between nuclear-armed U.S. and Russia over Ukraine is unsettling. But watch the Crosstalk program; it will help you understand why Secretary of State John Kerry has launched his own personal vendetta against RT, which is funded by the Russian government but offers important on-the-ground reporting and diverse opinions on a wide variety of topics.

Ironically, Kerry was warned three years ago by his predecessor of the steady strides being made by RT as well as Al-Jazeera and CCTV (the new English-language programming set up by China). At a hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee with then-Sen. Kerry in the chair, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton lamented that the U.S. is "losing the information war," and added that she finds watching RT "quite instructive."

Are Kerry and Clinton unable to grasp that the U.S. corporate media's regurgitation of the manifold and manifestly deceitful justifications for U.S. actions abroad is the main reason why RT and others are gaining on us? Despite awesome advances in communications technology, it remains difficult to make a silk purse out of a pig's ear, which is often what U.S. policies abroad are, especially to the people of the targeted countries.

It is easy to blame "Russian propaganda" for just about everything, including the public distrust of the endless propaganda pouring forth from Official Washington and its "fawning corporate media." But people tire of the constant spin from U.S. officials and the one-sided coverage by the U.S. mainstream press. I may be naive about this, but I think people really do prefer the truth.

Yet, it is in vogue to blame Washington's loss of credibility on Kremlin propaganda. At a State Department press conference last Thursday, Kerry lashed out at RT for its coverage on Ukraine:

"The propaganda bullhorn that is the state-sponsored RT program has been deployed to promote actually, RT network has been deployed to promote President Putin's fantasy about what is playing out on the ground," Kerry said, adding that RT spends almost all its time "propagandizing and distorting what is happening, or not happening, in Ukraine."

After years leading CIA's Soviet Foreign Policy Branch, I know what effective propaganda looks like. The "public diplomacy" effort led by Kerry and his merry propagandists at the State Department is a poor facsimile. True, Soviet propagandists played fast and loose with the truth as all propagandists do. But they were pros at it, which led them, *inter alia*, to avoid embarrassing their government for the short-term gain of 24-hour spin.

President Barack Obama needs to have a counseling session with Kerry, who could not resist the temptation to run with the spurious story on new registration requirements for Jews in pro-Russian eastern Ukraine. Nor could he pass up the chance to be able, finally, to adduce “proof” of Russian soldiers in eastern Ukraine by citing photos front-paged by the New York Times, with the photos and story very quickly debunked and retracted. [See Consortiumnews.com’s [“NYT Retracts Russian Photo Scoop.”](#)]

And he wonders why the U.S. is continuing to lose what Hillary Clinton called the “information war?” As for “state-sponsored,” is that not an apt description for what has become of the mainstream U.S. media, given the eagerness of career-minded “journalists” to accept U.S. government handouts as a way to prove their “patriotism” and to shield themselves from accusations that they are pawns of Russian “propaganda”?

Full disclosure: I am a regular guest on RT and an occasional interviewee on Al-Jazeera and CCTV-America. Have I ever been given “guidance” as to what would be acceptable for me to say? No. Am I free to speak on live broadcasts as critically of President Vladimir Putin as of President Barack Obama? Yes. Lately, have I been more critical of Obama and the mischief-making Kerry people than of their Russian counterparts? Yes.

And why is that? Simple. In Ukraine, the U.S. has sponsored one “regime change” too many. And, although this is rather obvious to thinking people, Obama has not yet been able to rein in his neoconservative “regime changers” and do what is necessary; i.e., fold his cards on Ukraine before he makes more of a fool of himself.

And how do Obama and Kerry get a pass from the American people for what they are doing? Because the mainstream U.S. media has left Americans brainwashed. In the biased U.S. coverage, for example, there has been little or no mention of NATO’s eastward expansion despite solemn promises at the highest U.S.-Russian level not to do that. Indeed, a cartful of relevant facts that could provide crucial context goes unmentioned. It’s simply, “Putin bad; Putin very bad. Shame on him; he sometimes has no shirt on, even on a horse. Bad, bad Putin.”

Degraded U.S. Media

It was 51 years ago when I began work in Washington, so I have seen not only a lot of propaganda, but a lot of significant change, as well. By far the most important change I’ve witnessed is today’s near-total absence of a genuinely free U.S. media (elements of the Internet/Web being the sole and salutary exception). There is no way to exaggerate the significance of that sea change.

What has this to do with Stephen Cohen's warning that events in Ukraine could lead to war with Russia, and John Mearsheimer's instructive comments on U.S. exceptionalism? Everything – particularly since most American citizens seem pretty well brainwashed by U.S. government propaganda, even though only a small minority can point out Ukraine on a map. Certainly, the “group think” on Ukraine and against Putin seems almost total among Americans who have access to a TV talk show or a newspaper op-ed page.

True, the corporate media was not able to convince many Americans that the U.S. should attack Syria last summer. Russia is another story, given the animosities engendered by nearly a half century of the Cold War between Washington and Moscow. Thus, it is much easier to conjure up fear and hatred of Russia's alleged “expansionist ambitions.” We all remember the “Red Dawn” movie.

On RT's “Crosstalk,” John Mearsheimer made the important point that Americans view the United States as “the benign hegemon.” He explained:

“We think we're different from other great powers and that when we expand our influence, countries like Russia will understand that we're ultimately not very threatening because we are the good guys in the international system. This is a remarkably foolish way of thinking about the world. But I think that, if you spend any time in Washington, it becomes clear that this delusion is widespread.”

I have always harbored doubts that Official Washington could really believe all that and use it to underpin foreign policy, but I defer to Mearsheimer on this. The point here is that it is the guidance given to, and adhered to, strongly by the corporate media that serves to impoverish the citizenry's store of accurate information. The way things are going, it will be far easier to drum up support for the kind of risk taking that could lead to war with Russia than was the case on Syria. That's one key problem; but there is another.

The Antonym of ‘Indispensable’

Proclaiming that the U.S. is the sole “indispensable” country in the world renders other countries, by definition, dispensable. Putin himself, at the end of his extraordinary op-ed in the New York Times on Sept. 11, 2013, included this unusual admonition: “It is extremely dangerous to encourage people to see themselves as exceptional. There are big countries and small countries, rich and poor. ... We are all different, but when we ask for the Lord's blessings, we must not forget that God created us equal.”

Have U.S. policymakers become so callous as not to care what happens to those with the bad luck to live in “dispensable” countries? It does appear so and that

arrogance about U.S. "indispensability" and "exceptionalism" has caused Official Washington to lose its moral compass.

In 1995, the United Nations reported that U.S. economic sanctions against Iraq had brought death to 500,000 Iraqi children below the age of five. Asked about that by Lesley Stahl on CBS's "60 Minutes" on May 12, 1996, U.S. Ambassador to the UN Madeleine Albright answered, "We think the price is worth it."

Apparently that was the correct answer, at least for Official Washington. A few months later, President Bill Clinton nominated Albright to be Secretary of State and she was confirmed unanimously by the full Senate. No one asked about the children.

"There's only one rule, that I know of, babies god damnit! you've got to be kind," said Kurt Vonnegut writer and prominent humanist/agnostic/atheist. What has become of us? There is no requirement to believe in what George W. Bush calls "The Almighty" in order to know in your bones that some things are plain wrong that human beings do not do such things to other human beings, and especially not to children.

Let Them Come to Fallujah

When one lacks any personal experience with innocent suffering, it is very difficult to empathize much less to take action to end it. I suspect that Anne-Marie Slaughter, current head of the New America Foundation who served for two years under Secretary Clinton, lacks such experience. How else would she think it is okay to slaughter Syrians in order to "change Putin's calculations?"

In a think piece that she published a week ago, she argues cavalierly that the United States should respond to the crisis in Ukraine by mounting a bombing campaign against Syria: "The US, together with as many countries as will cooperate, could use force to eliminate Syria's fixed-wing aircraft as a first step toward enforcing Resolution 2139. After the strike, the US, France, and Britain should ask for the Security Council's approval of the action taken, as they did after NATO's intervention in Kosovo in 1999. Equally important, shots fired by the US in Syria will echo loudly in Russia."

Though Slaughter's plan sounds so antiseptic, Gen. Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, acknowledged to a Senate hearing last September that the U.S. bombing campaign against Syria then on the table would have inflicted civilian casualties. He demurred on stating publicly the number of Syrian civilians who would be killed, saying the Pentagon's classified estimate could be shared with the senators only in closed session.

Do Professor Slaughter and other protégés of Madeleine Albright care about

children and other humans in “dispensable” countries? If so, they should visit the rubble in Fallujah, human as well as material, left behind by U.S. troops ordered to mount reprisal attacks of the kind labeled war crimes at the post-WWII Nuremberg Tribunal. Nuremberg took great care to emphasize the lack of any distinction between indispensable and dispensable countries before the law.

Buildings can always be rebuilt; children not so much. Following the U.S. military assaults of April and November 2004 on Fallujah, the hospitals there were overwhelmed with severe trauma cases. As time went by, physicians in Fallujah gradually became aware of apparent increases in the incidence of cancer, especially childhood leukemia, as well as a broad spectrum of birth defects like congenital heart disease, spina bifida and hydrocephalus (water on the brain).

The causes of the health crises in Fallujah are not yet firmly established but uranium is the prime suspect. Some three years ago, a credible report found elevated amounts of uranium in soil, water and human hair samples from Fallujah. This was not depleted uranium (DU); the U-238/U-235 ratios were consistent with natural uranium or very slightly enriched uranium. Many studies in animals confirm that uranium is not only a strong teratogen (inducer of birth defects), but also a carcinogen and mutagen. Uranyl ions bind to DNA with high affinity and can cause DNA damage and DNA mutations.

While these health problems appear most severe in Fallujah, increases in cancer, leukemia and birth defects have also been reported in many other Iraqi cities. Fortunately, the existence of a sister-university relationship between the University of Basra in Iraq and the University of Washington enabled a reliable statistical analysis of a registry of leukemia cases.

Trends in leukemia since 1993 in children aged 0 to 14 years were evaluated, and the researchers concluded that childhood leukemia rates in Basra more than doubled over a 15-year period; Basra’s rate compared unfavorably with neighboring Kuwait and nearby Oman, as well as with the U.S. and European countries.

As for the country of Iraq at large, precise measurement of changes in cancer incidence in Iraq today, compared with the incidence before the shock-and-awe years of 1991 and 2003, is hampered by two main factors: (1) the general lack of comprehensive cancer registries for Iraq in the years prior to those dates (with Basra the exception), and (2) the determination of the U.S., U.K. and Iraqi governments to cover up post-war health crises in Iraq. The first factor is regrettable but understandable; the second is, in my view, unconscionable.

Another factor hindering such studies, of course, is the bedlam that continues

to exist in and around Fallujah and other Iraqi areas. So, let those savants who glibly advocate for more war, whether with Syria or Russia, come to Fallujah and try to tell the parents of Fallujah that it was worth it.

It would be a fool's errand to depend on the mainstream U.S. media for such inconvenient truth. And if RT should do an investigative report on the moral depravity of inflicting leukemia and other ills on so many Iraqi children, you can bet it would be criticized as stemming from Russia's anti-American "propaganda bullhorn."

We need to find some way to poke holes in the mainstream media, so our fellow citizens can be more fully informed before they are persuaded, a la Iraq, by intelligence "fixed around the policy," to risk war with Russia. To borrow from a common Chinese expression: This would come to a no-good end.

We need to stop it now.

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