

America's Worldwide Impunity

By [Robert Parry](#)

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After several years of arming and supporting Syrian rebel groups that [often collaborated](#) with Al Qaeda's Nusra terror affiliate, the United States launched an illegal invasion of Syria two years ago with airstrikes supposedly aimed at Al Qaeda's Islamic State spin-off, but on Saturday that air war killed scores of Syrian soldiers and aided an Islamic State victory.

Yet, the major American news outlets treat this extraordinary set of circumstances as barely newsworthy, operating with an imperial hubris that holds any U.S. invasion or subversion of another country as simply, ho-hum, the way things are supposed to work.

But the fact that the U.S. and several allies have been routinely violating Syrian sovereign airspace to carry out attacks was not even an issue, nor is it a scandal that the U.S. military and CIA have been arming and training Syrian rebels. In the world of Official Washington, the United States has the right to intervene anywhere, anytime, for whatever reason it chooses. On Monday, The Washington Post dismissed the devastating airstrike at Deir al-Zour killing at least 62 Syrian soldiers as one of several "mishaps" that had occurred over the past week and jeopardized a limited ceasefire, arranged between Russia and the Obama administration.

President Barack Obama even has publicly talked about authorizing military strikes in seven different countries, including Syria, and yet he is deemed "weak" for not invading more countries, at least more decisively.

Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton has vowed to engage in a larger invasion of Syria, albeit wrapping the aggression in pretty words like "safe zone" and "no-fly zone," but it would mean bombing and killing more Syrian soldiers.

As Secretary of State, Clinton used similar language to justify invading Libya and implementing a "regime change" that killed the nation's leader, Muammar Gaddafi, and unleashed five years of violent political chaos.

If you were living a truly democratic country with a truly professional news media, you would think that this evolution of the United States into a rogue superpower violating pretty much every international law and treaty of the post-World War II era would be a regular topic of debate and criticism.

Those crimes include horrendous acts against people, such as torture and other violations of the Geneva Conventions, as well as acts of aggression, which the Nuremberg Tribunals deemed "the supreme international crime differing only from other war crimes in that it

contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole.”

Justifying ‘Regime Change’

Yet, instead of insisting on accountability for American leaders who have committed these crimes, the mainstream U.S. news media spreads pro-war propaganda against any nation or leader that refuses to bend to America’s imperial demands. In other words, the U.S. news media creates the rationalizations and arranges the public acquiescence for U.S. invasions and subversions of other countries.

In particular, The New York Times now reeks of propaganda, especially aimed at two of the current targets, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and Russian President Vladimir Putin. With all pretenses of professionalism cast aside, the Times has descended into the status of a crude propaganda organ.

On Sunday, the Times described Assad’s visit to a town recently regained from the rebels [this way](#): “Assad Smiles as Syria Burns, His Grip and Impunity Secure.” That was the headline. The article began:

“On the day after his 51st birthday, Bashar al-Assad, the president of Syria, took a victory lap through the dusty streets of a destroyed and empty rebel town that his forces had starved into submission.

“Smiling, with his shirt open at the collar, he led officials in dark suits past deserted shops and bombed-out buildings before telling a reporter that — despite a cease-fire announced by the United States and Russia — he was committed ‘to taking back all areas from the terrorists.’ When he says terrorists, he means all who oppose him.”

The story by Ben Hubbard continues in that vein, although oddly the accompanying photograph doesn’t show Assad smiling but rather assessing the scene with a rather grim visage.

But let’s unpack the propaganda elements of this front-page story, which is clearly intended to paint Assad as a sadistic monster, rather than a leader fighting a foreign-funded-and-armed rebel movement that includes radical jihadists, including powerful groups linked to Al Qaeda and others forces operating under the banner of the brutal Islamic State.

The reader is supposed to recoil at Assad who “smiles as Syria burns” and who is rejoicing over his “impunity.” Then, there’s the apparent suggestion that his trip to Daraya was part of his birthday celebration so he could take “a victory lap” while “smiling, with his shirt open at the collar,” although why his collar is relevant is hard to understand. Next, there is the argumentative claim that when Assad refers to “terrorists” that “he means all who oppose him.”

As much as the U.S. news media likes to pride itself on its “objectivity,” it is hard to see how this article meets any such standard, especially when the Times takes a far different posture when explaining, excusing or ignoring U.S. forces slaughtering countless civilians in multiple countries for decades and at a rapid clip over the past 15 years. If anyone operates with “impunity,” it has been the leadership of the U.S. government.

Dubious Charge

On Sunday, the Times also asserted as flat fact the dubious charge against Assad that he has “hit civilians with gas attacks” when the most notorious case – the sarin attack outside Damascus on Aug. 21, 2013 – appears now to have been [carried out by rebels](#) trying to trick the United States into intervening more directly on their side.

A recent United Nations report blaming Syrian forces for two later attacks involving chlorine was [based on slim evidence](#) and produced under great political pressure to reach that conclusion – while ignoring the absence of any logical reason for the Syrian forces to have used such an ineffective weapon and brushing aside testimony about rebels staging other gas attacks.

More often than not, U.N. officials bend to the will of the American superpower, failing to challenge any of the U.S.-sponsored invasions over recent decades, including something as blatantly illegal as the Iraq War. After all, for an aspiring U.N. bureaucrat, it’s clear which side his career bread is buttered.

We find ourselves in a world in which propaganda has come to dominate the foreign policy debates and – despite [the belated admissions of lies](#) used to justify the invasions of Iraq and Libya – the U.S. media insists on labeling anyone who questions the latest round of propaganda as a “fill-in-the-blank apologist.”

So, Americans who want to maintain their mainstream status shy away from contesting what the U.S. government and its complicit media assert, despite their proven track record of deceit. This is not just a case of being fooled once; it is being fooled over and over with a seemingly endless willingness to accept dubious assertion after dubious assertion.

In the same Sunday edition which carried the creepy portrayal about Assad, the Times’ Neil MacFarquhar [pre-disparaged](#) Russia’s parliamentary elections because the Russian people were showing little support for the Times’ beloved “liberals,” the political descendants of the Russians who collaborated with the U.S.-driven “shock therapy” of the 1990s, a policy that impoverished a vast number of Russians and drastically reduced life expectancy.

Why those Russian “liberals” have such limited support from the populace is a dark mystery to the mainstream U.S. news media, which also can’t figure out why Putin is popular for significantly reversing the “shock therapy” policies and restoring Russian life expectancy to its previous levels. No, it can’t be that Putin delivered for the Russian people; the only answer must be Putin’s “totalitarianism.”

The New York Times and Washington Post have been particularly outraged over Russia’s crackdown on “grassroots” organizations that are funded by the U.S. government or by billionaire financial speculator George Soros, who has [publicly urged the overthrow of Putin](#). So has Carl Gershman, president of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), which funnels U.S. government cash to political and media operations abroad.

The Post has [decried a Russian legal requirement](#) that political entities taking money from foreign sources must register as “foreign agents” and complains that such a designation discredits these organizations. What the Post doesn’t tell its readers is that the Russian law is modeled after the American “Foreign Agent Registration Act,” which likewise requires people trying to influence policy in favor of a foreign sponsor to register with the Justice Department.

Nor do the Times and Post acknowledge the long history of the U.S. government funding foreign groups, either overtly or covertly, to destabilize targeted regimes. These U.S.-financed groups often do act as “fifth columnists” [spreading propaganda designed to undermine](#) the credibility of the leaders, whether that’s Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh in 1953 or Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich in 2014.

Imperfect Leaders

That’s not to say that these targeted leaders were or are perfect. They are often far from it. But the essence of propaganda is to apply selective outrage and exaggeration to the leader that is marked for removal. Similar treatment does not apply to U.S.-favored leaders.



Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

Take, for example, the Times’ MacFarquhar describing a pamphlet and speeches from Nikolai Merkuskin, the governor of Russian region of Samara, that MacFarquhar says “cast the blame for Russia’s economic woes not on economic mismanagement or Western sanctions after the annexation of Crimea but on a plot by President Obama and the C.I.A. to undermine Russia.” The pattern of the Times and Post is also to engage in ridicule when someone in a targeted country actually perceives what is going on. The correct perception is then dismissed as some sort of paranoid conspiracy theory.

The Times article continues: “Opposition candidates are a fifth column on the payroll of the State Department and part of the scheme, the pamphlet said, along with the collapse in oil prices and the emergence of the Islamic State. Mr. Putin is on the case, not least by rebuilding the military, the pamphlet said, noting that ‘our country forces others to take it seriously and this is something that American politicians don’t like very much.’”

Yet, despite the Times’ mocking tone, the pamphlet’s perceptions are largely accurate. There can be little doubt that the U.S. government through funding of anti-Putin groups inside Russia and organizing punishing sanctions against Russia, is trying to make the Russian economy scream, destabilize the Russian government and encourage a “regime change” in Moscow.

Further, President Obama has personally bristled at Russia’s attempts to reassert itself as an important world player, [demeaning](#) the former Cold War superpower as only a “regional power.” The U.S. government has even tread on that “regional” status by helping to orchestrate the 2014 putsch that overthrew Ukraine’s elected President Yanukovich on Russia’s border.

After quickly calling the coup regime “legitimate,” the U.S. government supported attempts to crush resistance in the south and east which were Yanukovich’s political strongholds.

Crimea's overwhelming decision to secede from Ukraine and rejoin Russia was deemed by The New York Times a Russian "invasion" although the Russian troops that helped protect Crimea's referendum were already inside Crimea as part of the Sevastopol basing agreement.

The U.S.-backed Kiev regime's attempt to annihilate resistance from ethnic Russians in the east – through what was called an "Anti-Terrorism Operation" that has slaughtered thousands of eastern Ukrainians – also had American backing. Russian assistance to these rebels is described in the mainstream U.S. media as Russian "aggression."

Oddly, U.S. news outlets find nothing objectionable about the U.S. government launching military strikes in countries halfway around the world, including the recent massacre of scores of Syrian soldiers, but are outraged that Russia provided military help to ethnic Russians being faced with annihilation on Russia's border.

Because of the Ukraine crisis, Hillary Clinton likened Vladimir Putin to Adolf Hitler.

Seeing No Coup

For its part, The New York Times concluded that there had been [no coup in Ukraine](#) – by ignoring the evidence that there was one, including an intercepted pre-coup telephone call between U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland and U.S. Ambassador Geoffrey Pyatt discussing who should be made the new leaders of Ukraine.

Another stunning case of double standards has been the mainstream U.S. media's apoplexy about alleged Russian hacking into emails of prominent Americans and then making them public. These blame-Russia articles have failed to present any solid evidence that the Russians were responsible and also fail to note that the United States leads the world in using electronic means to vacuum up personal secrets about foreign leaders as well as average citizens. The evidence of a coup was so clear that George Friedman, founder of the global intelligence firm Stratfor, said in [an interview](#) that the overthrow of Yanukovich "really was the most blatant coup in history." But the Times put protecting the legitimacy of the post-coup regime ahead of its journalistic responsibilities to its readers, as it has done repeatedly regarding Ukraine.

In a number of cases, these secrets appear to have been used to blackmail foreign leaders to get them to comply with U.S. demands, such as the case in 2002-03 of the George W. Bush administration spying on diplomats on the U.N. Security Council to coerce their votes on authorizing the U.S. invasion of Iraq, a ploy that failed.

U.S. intelligence also tapped the cell phone of German Chancellor Angela Merkel, whose cooperation on Ukraine and other issues of the New Cold War is important to Washington. And then there's the massive collection of data about virtually everybody on the planet, including U.S. citizens, over the past 15 years during the "war on terror."

Earlier this year, the mainstream U.S. news media congratulated itself over its use of hacked private business data from a Panama-based law firm, material that was said to implicate Putin in some shady business dealings even though his name never showed up in the documents. No one in the mainstream media protested that leak or questioned who did the hacking.

Such mainstream media bias is pervasive. In the case of Sunday's Russian elections, the

Times seems determined to maintain the fiction that the Russian people don't really support Putin, despite consistent opinion polls showing him with some 80 percent approval.

In the Times' version of reality, Putin's popularity must be some kind of trick, a case of totalitarian repression of the Russian people, which would be fixed if only the U.S.-backed "liberals" were allowed to keep getting money from NED and Soros without having to divulge where the funds were coming from.

The fact that Russians, like Americans, will rally around their national leader when they perceive the country to be under assault - think, George W. Bush after the 9/11 attacks - is another reality that the Times can't tolerate. No, the explanation must be mind control.

The troubling reality is that the Times, Post and other leading American news outlets have glibly applied one set of standards on "enemies" and another on the U.S. government. The Times may charge that Bashar al-Assad has "impunity" for his abuses, but what about the multitude of U.S. leaders - and, yes, journalists - who have their hands covered in the blood of Iraqis, Libyans, Afghans, Yemenis, Syrians, Somalis and other nationalities. Where is their accountability?

*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](#)).*

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