

Empire and the Criminalization of the Media: The Fourth Estate is Bankrupt

By [William Bowles](#)

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Region: [Europe](#)

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From the middle of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth imperialism was the dominant national ideology, transcending class and party divisions. Britain was saturated in the ethos and attitudes of empire. They infused plays and books and, later, films. They informed school textbooks. They inspired paintings, prints and engravings. They filled newspapers and magazines. They figured in advertisements and packaging. The impact was arguably greater than that of any previous dominant ideology because its pre-eminence coincided with the rise of the mass market and the mass media. — 'Imperialism and juvenile literature' edited By Jeffrey Richards. Manchester University Press, 1989

So what's changed? **Not much really.** Today of course, the ideology of imperial expansion now masks itself as 'humanitarian intervention' or 'democracy-building'.

Our Victorian ancestors were less coy about colonizing, claiming to be on a 'civilizing mission'. But 'civilizing' the Libyans, the Iraqis or the Afghans would be a step too far in these allegedly politically correct times but it's the same thing by another name.

Yet the abysmal failings of Western 'democracy' are all around us. We have governments that regardless that an 'opposition' exists are effectively one-party states and have been ever since the early years of the 20th century. From 1945 to 2009 it was a Tory/Labour 'coalition' and now we're back to the pre-WWI war Tory/Liberal version. It makes little difference that every five years we vote for one or the other. Successive governments are an intrinsic part of an ossified and corrupt state self-'regulated' for generations and it still is the expenses scandals and now the News of the World/News Corp fiasco notwithstanding.

The ever-expanding scale of the criminal enterprise that is Murdoch's News Corp, reveals the awful truth about capitalism's version of democracy; namely that it only works for those in power and for those with power. For a single corporation to have direct access and control at the very heart of government smacks of the days of [William Randolph Hearst](#), made famous by Orson Welles in [Citizen Kane](#), where rich and powerful individuals are able to determine the fate of a nation.

The questions that are never asked

Rupert Murdoch's takeover of BSkyB appeared to be dead in the water last night after proof emerged that executives at his British newspaper empire mounted a cover-up of the full scale of alleged criminal wrongdoing at the News of the World. — [News International knew hacking was widespread](#)

[in 2007](#), The Independent, 11 July 2011

When Rebekah Brooks, then editor of the *News of the World* (*NotW*), blurted out in a Commons committee in 2007 that the *NotW* was paying cops for information, it slid, Teflon-coated right off the backs of our 'independent' media, never mind the MPs who were listening at the time! Now it's *mea culpas* all round.

It's become a cliché that Murdoch's four major newspapers (*The Times*, *The Sunday Times*, *The Sun* and the now defunct *News of the World*) between them can make or break governments but it's true, or at least it was until the utterly corrupt relationship between the corporate/state media, the political class and the police/legal system fell apart.

At the same time, the Met cop in charge of investigating the phone hacking allegations, [John Yates](#) (who doubles as head of the anti-terrorism unit), was never challenged over his conclusion that there was nothing further to investigate beyond the two people convicted of phone hacking at the *NotW*.

"In a letter to the Home Affairs Select Committee, Keir Starmer QC, the Director of Public Prosecutions, took issue with the evidence given to the committee last week by Acting Deputy Commissioner John Yates. Mr Yates had repeatedly stressed the inquiry had been limited by Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) advice that officers had to prove messages had not been heard by their intended recipients before they were intercepted." — ['Prosecutor questions evidence of Met's Yates'](#), The Independent, 6 April, 2011

In other words, Yates decided what lines of inquiry should and should not be pursued. He chose the absolute minimum, ignoring 4000 or so emails and texts that were in his possession. These questions and many more are only now being addressed in the MSM, but is the MSM asking the right questions?

['Not a big deal' - former NoW reporter on phone hacking](#) — BBC News
5 July, 2011

There is more than a little irony involved in that what got the ball rolling were the revelations that the *NotW* had been hacking the cellphones/emails of murdered teenagers and soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan, and what has been obvious for years, the collusion of the police in covering up evidence that would implicate the *NotW* hierarchy in the hacking/bribery scandals. Instead, a private investigator and an *NotW* journalist did time.

The 'outrage' expressed by the MSM only got up a head of steam following the exposure that the murdered Milly Dowler and dead imperial soldiers had had *their* phones hacked as well as those of the 'celebs'! The very people the *NotW* makes its money from! Not a good move, image- or advertizing-wise.

This is the irony: it didn't make waves when four years ago, we found out that the *NotW* was not only hacking emails and phones but bribing cops and colluding with the police to suppress evidence, but it matters now that it's Milly Dowler or a soldier in Afghanistan. And this is not just a British issue:

Murdoch's media empire includes Fox News, the Wall Street Journal, and the New York Post. Murdoch has enormous political and cultural influence over our media. In fact, Murdoch's hand-picked selection to run the Wall Street Journal was longtime loyalist Les Hinton, who oversaw News Corp's British newspapers during the height of News of the World's alleged hacking activity. Hinton twice testified to the UK parliament that he had conducted a rigorous inquiry into the papers he oversaw and claimed hacking was limited to one reporter. That's right: Hinton, who ran the show for Murdoch as phone hacking became standard operating procedure, is now publisher of the one of the largest newspapers in the U.S. — [Media Matters for America](#), 11 July 2011

No wonder the word 'toxic' has been appearing with increasing frequency in the MSM, a word that parallels the state's 'loss of legitimacy' in its significance. Such events put the fear of God in the ruling elite. Put the two together and you'd think that it would be obvious that it's not only about corporate/state power ganging up to suppress knowledge of the unholy alliance that exists between Murdoch's News Corp and the ruling political class. And not just News Corp. And not just the [News of the World](#). And not just the current government, Labour had an equally comfortable, incestuous relationship with Murdoch's empire. It's about a global conglomerate, News Corp deciding what kind of government we get and of course, what kind of economy.

BSkyB

Ed Miliband: "I won't rest until we ensure this deal cannot go ahead until after criminal investigations are complete"

Labour leader Ed Miliband has said Rupert Murdoch should "drop the bid for BSkyB" which he said was "untenable" in the light of phone hacking allegations.' — [Drop BSkyB bid, Miliband tells Murdoch](#), BBC News 11 July 2011

BSkyB is the pearl in the pig's ear (the pig being the *NotW*, now shuffled off to the slaughterhouse, the bits to be reassembled as the *Sun on Sunday* no doubt). This is what all the fuss is about. £9 billion a year income for Murdoch. And just how fearful the elite are of the implications of the *NotW* scandal we learn that Murdoch's attempt to take complete control of BSkyB is no longer on, News Corp have [withdrawn](#) their bid. Another step too far for a ruling elite once more in disarray.

Clearly the 'Digger' didn't just come over to the UK to fire/promote or whatever, Rebekah Brooks but to talk to the government about what to do about a crisis that has the potential bring about the fall of the government, if the media goes for the jugular. An unlikely occurrence given as it is just as culpable by ignoring the obvious and publishing the mundane and titillating instead of actually *investigating* these events when they first emerged. This is why we need Wikileaks.

But if it was okay for the government to okay Murdoch's takeover of BSkyB before, why is it now 'not a fit and proper person' to have a virtual media monopoly in the UK now?

"Ofcom, the media regulator [sic], is to consider whether News Corporation would make a "fit and proper" owner of satellite broadcaster BSkyB.

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""[Ofcom] regards evidence that the News of the World's newsroom was out of control for many years as relevant to a judgement on whether News Corporation would be a fit-and-proper owner of BSkyB," our correspondent said." — ['BSkyB bid: Ofcom wants 'fit and proper' information'](#)", BBC News 11 July 2011

It's pretty obvious that the coverups that the ruling elite thought would work, that is the collusion between the police, government and News Corp to hide the true extent of the illegal activities of News Corp staff has unravelled in truly spectacular fashion. The latest 'revelation' concerns the fact that as far back as 2002 the police knew that the murdered girl Milly Dowler's phone was being hacked (and her emails deleted by the hackers) though apparently they did nothing about it, not even informing her parents. It just gets worse. And to add fuel to the fire there are now allegations surfacing that both the *The Times* and *The Sun* have been at it as well. No wonder Murdoch is thinking of selling off all his UK newspaper holdings, after all it's clear that owning them was not expressly about making money but using them to influence government to the advantage News Corp and capitalism in general.

◆The truth is, we have all been in this together◆the press, politicians and leaders of all parties◆and yes, that includes me.◆ — David Cameron

What an admission! The question to ask is: will any of the *mea culpas* make any difference to a corporate/state media that is both the cause *and* effect of the current crisis? What emerges firstly is a state media 'regulation' framework (OfCom) that is toothless and expressly designed to the bidding of the corporations. And the MSM 'regulates' itself through the Press Complaints Commission (PCC), yet another toothless institution, now thoroughly discredited. In other words it's a replay of the Financial Services Commission created allegedly to 'regulate' the banking/financial services sector.

Secondly, it's all too obvious that the media's cosy relationship with the state extends way beyond the News Corp affair. All the major media employ journalists who have close *working* relationships with the various arms of government to the point where access to their sources are dependent on them 'doing the right thing'. The degree to which they 'switch sides' is made all too obvious by the scandal of Cameron employing the former editor of the *NotW*, Andy Coulson ([now under arrest](#)) under whose watch as they say, the hacking, bribery, pay-offs and coverups took place. (The elite has no shame.)

How can such a press be considered free or independent in any real sense of the word? Controlled either by the state or three large corporations, the MSM plays an intrinsic role in maintaining the status quo and it does it quite openly. Until now that is...

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Articles by: **William Bowles**

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