

Mainstream Journalist Slams Mainstream Media Coverage of Syrian Crisis: “Incomparably Worse” Than Coverage of Iraq War

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John Rosenthal has been known as a critic of Western intervention in both Libya and Syria since the beginning of both of those crises. Yet, having made a successful career of writing for the Western mainstream press and outlets such as the National Review, the Wall Street Journal Europe, and World Affairs, work has become slower and slower as his views on Anglo-American imperialism become more apparent.

Indeed, Rosenthal has found that mainstream outlets are much less likely to accept material criticizing imperialist measures and that they are virtually united in refusing to print material that does not paint the targets of Western imperialism in an unfairly bad light. While hesitancy to publish material critical of the governments for whom these outlets often speak has surely been a hallmark of the mainstream corporate press for some time, the noose of censorship and the tightening of the grip on information has become even stronger in recent years. Indeed, it is something that Rosenthal himself has been candid about in regard to his own career which he claims has been a victim of such censorship, a trend that he sees as growing with each crisis.

[Rosenthal sat down for an interview with the BRICS Post](#) recently and discussed a number of different topics, one of them being the state of the media and Western media coverage of the crises in Syria and Libya. What he revealed was that, at least from a mainstream journalist's point of view, the journalistic culture in 2016 and the policies of mainstream outlets is more wedded to the idea of pushing agendas and suppressing facts when it comes to geopolitics, international crises, and Anglo-American war aims than even during the period leading up to the Iraq war in 2003.

For instance, *BRICS Post* asked Rosenthal the question:

There has been much criticism in the past few years of how Western press have covered the Syrian civil war.

As a journalist who has written about the conflict, is this criticism warranted?

To which Rosenthal responded at length. He stated:

Absolutely. In fact, even though my writing is 99 per cent just factual, I was less and less able to write about the conflict, because the media did not want

to publish the facts in question.

One of the publications to which I had been a regular contributor – National Review Online, the website of the American conservative weekly National Review – went so far as to “bar” me from publishing.

In other words, they blacklisted me. At least this is what the journalist Michael Weiss claims, and I think Weiss is right.

The editors at National Review did not tell me I was “barred,” but they never again accepted a submission from me and eventually ceased responding altogether.

Weiss, incidentally, is one of the main American proponents of the “Assad-as-root-of-all-evil” view of the Syrian conflict, and he clearly believes that my barring was well deserved.

The reason for my barring was an article I published in June 2012 on the [Houla massacre](#). The massacre represented a major turning point in the Syrian conflict.

Responsibility was almost instantaneously attributed to regime forces and/or affiliated militias, and Western governments responded by cutting off diplomatic relations with Damascus.

Two weeks later, however, Germany’s paper-of-record, Die Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, published a report suggesting that these initial attributions were mistaken and that the perpetrators of the massacre were in fact rebel forces.

I am a specialist in European languages and politics, and it struck me as normal, under the circumstances, to try to make the gist of this report accessible to the English-speaking public.

But very quickly I heard from a contact at National Review that my sources were suspected of being “beholden to Assad”.

The notion that the leading paper of Europe’s richest and most powerful nation is somehow “beholden to Assad” is downright laughable.

But it is a measure of the parochialism of some of America’s would-be “opinion-makers” that it appears to have been taken seriously by the editors at National Review.

Such insinuations – and, I suppose, the fact that I had the temerity to defend the credibility of the report against irrelevant smears – was enough to get me barred.

Another example: As you know, in April 2014 the [Dutch priest Father Frans van der Lugt was killed](#) in a rebel-controlled Christian neighborhood of Homs.

Father Frans’s death made headlines around the world and he was widely eulogized for his good works in Syria. Examining Father Frans’s publications in Dutch, however, I discovered that his own first-hand observations of the beginnings of the anti-Assad rebellion contrasted sharply with the standard view in the Western media.

Undoubtedly most significantly, Father Frans insisted that the protests that sparked the rebellion in 2011 were not strictly peaceful, as they have been almost universally presented to the Western public, but rather contained an

armed and violent element from the start. He also accused rebel forces of committing atrocities and then blaming them on the regime.

By this time, needless to say, I could not even have dreamed of pitching an article on Father Frans's observations to National Review. But I could not place one in any other Stateside outlet either, including venues with which I had an established relationship.

Despite their obvious relevance and newsworthiness – or rather: precisely because of the latter – Father Frans's views were taboo.

If he had still been alive and his observations had become known, he would surely have been attacked as an Assad “propagandist” – as other Syria-based Christian clergy who made similar observations in fact have been.

I could give numerous other examples.

Once Washington and its European allies had established the terms of the politically “correct” narrative of the Syrian crisis, facts that failed to jibe with that narrative were unwanted and anyone who tried to report them was inevitably attacked as “pro-Assad”.

When asked how media coverage of the Syrian crisis compares with the coverage of the Iraq war in 2003, Rosenthal added:

At least as concerns the US media, the situation today is incomparably worse. There was a long debate in the run-up to the war, and in the aftermath no one had any problems questioning the grounds for intervention or even indeed outright accusing the Bush administration of having lied.

This became entirely commonplace. The stifling of debate and the homogenization of the media as regards hot-button foreign policy issues really began under the Obama administration: most notably, in the context of the Libyan war.

But at the time, it was at least still possible to bring up conflicting information in “new” media and indeed in some conservative media.

I published numerous articles on the Islamist roots of the Libyan rebellion and the presence in it of Al-Qaeda-linked militants precisely at National Review Online.

In the aftermath of the war – i.e. when it no longer mattered to policy – even the mainstream US media would to some extent acknowledge this presence; and then, of course, the US experienced its own sort of “chickens-coming-home-to-roost” moment in the form of the September 2012 attack on the US mission in Benghazi.

I suppose it is because the Syrian “playbook”, so to speak, so closely resembled the Libyan one that the screws had to be turned even tighter.

Rosenthal's closing comments are important. When these specific propaganda and fearmongering techniques were relatively new (in terms of recent deployment) in 2003, some limited amount of criticism (albeit tepid and toothless) was allowed in the pages and websites of mainstream outlets. But when those methods of driving a population into support for foreign adventures was used so many times as to make itself evident to even

the majorities who typically fall for every scam rolled out by war seeking governments, even tepid criticism was blacklisted.

Rosenthal's comments highlight even more the importance of reliable alternative media outlets in disseminating the truth surrounding the West's foreign adventures before an elite caught in the grips of a permanent war psychosis and a public rendered utterly useless by the gluttony of entertainment lead us all directly into the abyss of a major military confrontation.

Brandon Turbeville - [article archive here](#) - is the author of seven books, [Codex Alimentarius — The End of Health Freedom](#), [7 Real Conspiracies](#), [Five Sense Solutions](#) and [Dispatches From a Dissident, volume 1](#) and [volume 2](#), [The Road to Damascus: The Anglo-American Assault on Syria](#), and [The Difference it Makes: 36 Reasons Why Hillary Clinton Should Never Be President](#). Turbeville has published over 650 articles on a wide variety of subjects including health, economics, government corruption, and civil liberties. Brandon Turbeville's radio show *Truth on The Tracks* can be found every Monday night 9 pm EST at [UCYTV](#). His website is [BrandonTurbeville.com](#) He is available for radio and TV interviews. Please contact activistpost (at) [gmail.com](#).

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