

Message to Joe Biden: ‘You have promised to defend “every inch of NATO territory.” Are you going to bomb Russia now?’

The Medium – An Appeal For Support

By [Media Lens](#)

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On November 15, as 90 Russian cruise missiles struck at Ukraine’s energy network, a companion US-UK propaganda blitz blamed the Russian missiles for the deaths of two workers on a farm in Poland.

This was a big deal. Poland is a member of Nato and Article 5 of Nato’s treaty [reads](#):

‘The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all...’

The fear being, obviously, that treating a Russian attack on a Nato member as an attack on the United States or Britain could lead to rapid escalation and possible nuclear confrontation. Accurate media reporting of events in Poland was therefore vital. On November 16, the headlines said it all.

The Times:

‘Russians blamed for fatal strike on Poland’

The Telegraph:

‘Russian missile strikes Poland’

The [Guardian](#):

‘Russian barrage strikes Ukraine amid claims missiles hit Poland’

The Daily Mirror:

'RUSSIAN MISSILES HIT POLAND'

Metro:

“RUSSIAN MISSILES” HIT POLAND'

The Daily Express:

'Russian missiles kill 2 in Poland'

Daily Star:

'Putin bombs NATO'

Online, Sky News [reported](#):

'Reports Russian missiles have killed two people in Poland...'

Channel 4 [News](#):

“Russia missiles” kill two in Nato member Poland claims US official'

With little known about the explosions and much at stake, the Pentagon's spokesman Patrick Ryder was more [cautious](#):

'I don't want to speculate when it comes to our security commitments and Article 5. But we have made it crystal clear that we will protect every inch of NATO territory.'

In an extraordinary message aimed at President Joe Biden, Anders Aslund of the Atlantic Council said:

'You have promised to defend “every inch of NATO territory.” Are you going to bomb Russia now?'

Aslund added that Biden's first move should be to establish a no-fly zone in Ukraine before 'clean[ing] out the Russian Black Sea fleet'.

Ukraine was also quick to stoke the tension. President Zelensky called it 'a Russian missile attack on collective security' and, as such, 'a very significant escalation'. Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said it was 'a conspiracy theory' to suggest missiles were part of Ukrainian air defences.

In fact, this version of events was rubbished on the same day the front pages appeared. Even the BBC [admitted](#) of Zelensky and Kuleba's comments:

'These claims about Russia subsequently appear unfounded.'

[And](#):

'Polish President Andrzej Duda has said there are no signs of an intentional attack after a missile strike killed two people on a farm near the western border with Ukraine.'

'Earlier, US President Joe Biden said it was “unlikely” the missile had been fired from

Russia.'

After nine months of relentlessly propagandising against Russia and for Ukraine-Nato, the Guardian struggled to adapt to this new situation where it was actually *good* – because it led away from nuclear war – to blame the Ukrainians. A Guardian news report [read](#):

'Polish village struck by Ukraine war missile struggling with trauma'

What is a 'Ukraine war missile'? Is it a Ukrainian missile? Or is it a missile fired by one of the sides fighting the war in Ukraine? Might it, then, have been fired by Russia? The mangled grammar – was the 'Ukraine war missile' 'struggling with trauma'? – suggested editors desperately trying to massage the message.

Like numerous other media, NBC News [reported](#) that the missile was 'Russian-made':

'The Polish government said a Russian-made missile killed two of its citizens Tuesday near the border with Ukraine, but U.S. President Joe Biden said that it was "unlikely" that it was launched from Russia.'

This will surely have bewildered many readers into thinking the missile might well have been fired by Russia. Although it was clear who fired the missile, NBC described the investigation as 'ongoing'. As Seinfeld once [said](#): 'It's a hazy mystery.'

In fact, Reuters [reported](#) on November 16 that Biden had confirmed that the blast in Poland had been 'caused by a Ukrainian air defence missile'.

Responding to this astonishingly reckless propaganda blitz, Mark Curtis, co-founder and editor of Declassified UK, [said](#) it all:

'It's almost as if the British press sees its primary role as backing the state's foreign policy rather than accurately informing the public.'

And that is indeed the key role of the dozen or so major UK newspapers and also other news media ostensibly serving the British public a diet of impartial, balanced fact – their primary task is to promote, defend and whitewash US-UK foreign policy driven by corporate greed for resources, power and profit (especially fossil fuels).

But what is so fascinating and terrible about this propaganda system – the reason we have continued writing about these issues for more than two decades – is that this is only one of the 'mainstream's' smaller brainwashing functions. The real work goes much deeper.

A Sad Heart At The Supermarket

In 1962 – long before the full eruption of the global, 24/7 corporate monoculture – poet, literary critic and acutely sensitive soul, Randall Jarrell, captured the truth of 'mainstream' media exactly. In his collection of essays, 'A sad heart at the supermarket', Jarrell wrote that 'the media' should actually be termed the 'Medium':

'For all these media – television, radio, movies, newspapers, magazines, and the rest – are a single medium, in whose depths we are all being cultivated. This Medium is of middle condition or degree, mediocre; it lies in the middle of everything, between a

man and his neighbor, his wife, his child, his self; it, more than anything else, is the substance through which the forces of our society act upon us, and make us into what our society needs.' (Randall Jarrell, 'A sad heart at the supermarket; essays & fables', Atheneum, 1962, pp.65-66)

But what does the Medium want?

'Oh, it needs for us to do or be many things: workers, technicians, executives, soldiers, housewives. But first of all, last of all, *it needs for us to be buyers; consumers; beings who want much and will want more - who want consistently and insatiably...* It is the Medium which casts this spell - which is this spell. As we look at the television set, listen to the radio, read the magazines, the frontier of necessity is always being pushed forward. The Medium shows us what our new needs are - how often, without it, we should not have known! - and it shows us how they can be satisfied: they can be satisfied by buying something. The act of buying something is at the root of our world.' (p.66, our emphasis)

Of course, it is this same Medium on which many of us are relying now to tell the truth about the results of a system that trains us to 'want consistently and insatiably'. We are relying on the Medium to tell us how the Medium and its consumerism is destroying us. We are hoping for the Medium to urge us to rise up and overthrow... the Medium.

The classic science fiction movie, 'The Day The Earth Caught Fire', foresaw our current predicament with astonishing accuracy, with one failing. It assumed that the Medium - and as a consequence, the public - would become more and more concerned, more and more determined to do something in the face of an authentically existential crisis. But the Medium is far too deeply entrenched in greed for that to happen. Ironically, the film's leading character, Peter Stenning, is a journalist at the Daily Express - filming took place in the newspaper's actual offices.

In reality, record-breaking carbon emissions, temperatures, floods, hurricanes, droughts, wildfires, animal and plant extinctions have become the new 'normal' for our press, 'just the way things are'.

Across Europe, heavily botoxed and surgically enhanced hosts of glitzy TV chat shows are being forced to mention temperature rises so extreme that even weather forecasters look worried, with even members of the public interviewed on beaches no longer smiling. But these are rarely glimpsed moments, quickly drowned out by the celebrity gossip, royal tittle-tattle and sports - the Medium is fundamentally unmoved.

No surprise, then, that in October the corporate-advertising packed, profit-maximising, warmongering Guardian, [reported](#):

'Concerns about climate change shrank across the world last year, with fewer than half of those questioned in a new survey believing it posed a "very serious threat" to their countries over the next 20 years.

'Only 20% of people in China, the world's biggest polluter, said they believed that climate change was a very serious threat, down 3 percentage points from the last survey by Gallup World Risk Poll in 2019.

'Globally, the figure fell by 1.5 percentage points to 48.7% in 2021. The survey was

based on more than 125,000 interviews in 121 countries.'

Incredibly, as carbon emissions, temperatures and extreme weather events rise precipitously, concern is falling. But why?

In September, Media Matters [described](#) a typical case of Medium performance:

'In late August a massive, unrelenting heat dome began impacting much of the western United States - breaking numerous temperature records. California is bearing the brunt of the heat, with the state's power grid stretched to its limit. Climate scientist Daniel Swain called the heat wave in California "essentially the worst September heat wave on record... By some metrics, it might be one of the worst heat waves on record, period, in any month, given its duration and its extreme magnitude."

'While the size and scope of the heat wave is not being ignored by major national TV news networks - there have been 153 segments and weather reports on the heat and the fires it helped spawn since August 31 - *only 18 of the segments (12%) mentioned climate change*. Even worse, only 3 of these climate segments mentioned the need for climate action in order to stave off worsening heat waves like this one in the future.' (Our emphasis)

Media Matters added:

'This is a pitiful performance by TV news reporters, especially considering the fact that a year ago they mentioned climate change in a collective 38% of segments on a similar record-breaking heat wave in the Pacific Northwest. There are clear links between the emissions from burning fossil fuels and the growing frequency, duration, and intensity of extreme heat. This record-breaking heat event occurs alongside a devastating flooding event in Pakistan that has displaced millions and can be seen from space, and after a summer of extreme heat and drought events in both Europe and China. The western U.S. heat wave should thus not be treated as a one-off, freak-of-nature incident, but rather contextualized in the larger global climate emergency.'

Peter Kalmus, a climate scientist who has been repeatedly arrested on direct action protests, [commented](#):

'Just unbelievable the media's lack of concern about ongoing, intensifying climate and Earth breakdown. It's all around us now. A few years ago I thought for sure, by this point, these levels of flooding and heat, the media would be sounding the alarm loudly, clearly, skillfully.'

Kalmus [added](#):

'As a climate scientist trying to sound the alarm for the good of us all, I can't even tell you how infinitely harder this makes it'

The Independent's climate columnist, Donnachadh McCarthy, [responded](#) to Kalmus:

'Rather in my experience, uk's oligarch media have gone in opposite direction on a frenzy attacking all action on climate, since the 40C heatwave set Britain on fire & extreme weather engulfed all continents. Dealing with it in interviews is beyond depressing.'

As the latest pitiful climate conference, COP27, ground to a halt this week, the BBC [reported](#):

‘The final overarching deal did not include commitments to “phase down” or reduce use of fossil fuels.’

If this was shocking news, economic historian Matthias Schmelzer placed it in astonishing [context](#):

‘In 30 years of UN climate negotiations, eliminating the primary cause of global heating – fossil fuels – has never been mentioned in the decisions, not even in the COP27 in 2022.’

What on earth has become of us, of humanity? Who are we? How can we be responding like *this* to the literal destruction of the stable climate on which we depend? Jarrell explained:

‘The Medium shows its People what life is, what people are, and its People believe it: expect people to be that, try themselves to be that. Seeing is believing; and if what you see in Life [magazine] is different from what you see in life, which of the two are you to believe? *For many people it is what you see in Life (and in the movies, over television, on the radio) that is real life*; and everyday existence, mere local or personal variation, is not real in the same sense.’ (p.78, our emphasis)

In our lives, we see the parched grass, experience the 40 degrees of heat, the fires and floods, but this is ‘mere local or personal variation’. In Life, as it were, we see car adverts, holiday offers, Black Friday deals on tech. And this genuinely seems more real.

This is the final truth of why we are unable, most of us, to *feel* the disaster that is overwhelming us in plain sight:

‘The Medium mediates between us and raw reality, and the mediation more and more replaces reality for us.’ (p.78)

This is not a struggle between good and evil; it is a struggle between reality and unreality. It is a struggle between human agency and an automatic profit-maximising machine that was built by human beings but which automatically seeks to neutralise any internal or external human opposition. The state-corporate system is a runaway train, a Frankenstein’s monster.

Ultimately, we are engaged in a struggle between truth and lies. Infinite profit-maximising on a finite planet is a lie; human survival depends on the extent to which enough of us can perceive the truth and act.

For more than 21 years we have argued that the Medium is the lynchpin, the Achilles’ heel, for anyone hoping to stop this runaway train, to break this spell.

When Julian Assange tried to challenge this system, the Medium [turned on him](#), crushed his reputation, and thereby crushed the public support that might otherwise have protected him.

When Jeremy Corbyn challenged the system, the Medium tried and failed with everything, until it [threw](#) the ultimately despicable sink, barbarically exploiting the suffering and deaths of six million Jews in the Holocaust to crush him.

Now that the courageous, smart and principled heroes of Just for Oil, Insulate Britain and Extinction Rebellion are trying to save their lives, your lives and our lives by exposing the truth of fossil fuel industry insanity, the Medium is [branding](#) them narcissists, traitors, public enemies. Trashy, billionaire-owned, capitalist tabloids are assailing the opponents of runaway capitalism in the name of ordinary working people.

It's all very well trying to expose US-UK military crimes, to reform the Labour Party from within, to shine a bright light on climate crisis, but the real battle, the deepest need, is to destroy the credibility of the Medium that controls the public mind and politics through illusions, false allies, false promises and false hopes. We must persuade the public to reject this system and to seek out and support genuinely human, compassionate, rational alternatives not poisoned by limitless greed.

As Noam Chomsky has commented, corporate propagandists will continue subordinating people and planet to profit until they are up to their necks in climate change floodwater. Our plan is to continue challenging them, refuting them, until that happens.

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