

“Repeater Journalism” versus the Biggest Underreported Stories of 2016

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“The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organised habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society...is the true ruling power...we are governed, our minds are moulded, our tastes formed...it is they who pull the wires which control the public mind.”

Thus wrote Edward Bernays in his book Propaganda, the nephew of Sigmund Freud and the father of modern propaganda, at whose suggestion, the United States’ War Department, at the time called the National Military Establishment, was renamed the Department of Defence in 1949.

In the ‘age of the corporate media’, where 90 percent of the American media is owned by six corporations — General Electric, News Corp., Disney, Viacom, Time Warner and CBS — down from 50 back in 1983, it is not difficult to understand how what the majority of the ‘public see and doesn’t see’ depends and is controlled by the agenda of a small number of corporations and ultimately, by those who control them. This is especially the case as it is also the ‘age of the repeater journalists’. Where you have the majority of mainstream journalists worldwide simply ‘repeating the narrative’ portrayed in the powerful quarters of the world media, namely the Western (American) media, and the information they receive from the biggest news agencies (Western mostly), instead of doing their job — ‘questioning what happened’ and ‘investigating how’ it did.

When such impervious power rests in the hands of a handful of individuals, you will of course have a select number of stories being regularly reported by the media. And some stories, never. So what were some of those stories worthy of being covered in the news that were not?

Well one of them is related to the story perhaps most covered in the world media — the US elections. Or rather one who contested the elections — Hillary Rodham Clinton. Throughout 2016, as she was campaigning to become the next US President, Wikileaks constantly proved to be a thorn in her side. But the revelations made public by Wikileaks have largely gone unreported in the mainstream press.

And one of the main reasons is because they involved the media itself. For example, according to Wikileaks, 65 mainstream reporters were working “hand-in-glove with the Hillary Clinton campaign to rig the US elections” (Wikileaks exposes secret list of 65 mainstream media reporters who are part of the Clinton mafia, The Duran, October 28, 2016).

And for those who find it hard to believe that she, or the Democratic Party itself, would dare

to do something so un-democratic, 20,000 e-mails released by Wikileaks also showed how the Democratic Party worked against Bernie Sanders and “derailed his campaign” (Wikileaks Proves Primary Was Rigged: DNC Undermined Democracy, The Observer, July 22, 2016). Despite the near media blackout, the incident was so scandalous that the Democratic National Committee Chairwoman, Debbie Wasserman Schultz, was quietly forced to step down from her position.

The leaks also revealed that CNN’s political commentator Donna Brazile had sent Presidential Debate questions to Ms. Clinton prior to the debate which, again, forced CNN to drop her. But, perhaps the most important revelations came during an interview of Julian Assange, the founder of Wikileaks, by John Pilger, when he said that Hillary Clinton had urged John Podesta, the then advisor to Barack Obama, to “bring pressure” on Qatar and Saudi Arabia, “which are providing clandestine financial and logistic support to ISIL [Islamic State, IS, ISIS] and other radical Sunni groups”.

He further said, “All serious analysts know, and even the US government has agreed, that some Saudi figures have been supporting ISIS and funding ISIS... But that email says that it is the government of Saudi Arabia, and the government of Qatar that have been funding ISIS.” In the same vein, he added that what is most ironic is that some of the biggest donors to the Clinton campaign also happen to be the governments of Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

The next story which has criminally gone underreported also involves the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It is the war being waged ‘on’ Yemen. Journalist Rose Delaney wrote on September 2, 2016, for the Inter Press Service that “The sheer gravity of Yemen’s conflict should subsequently ignite a deafening global cry for justice, however, as long as the public are ‘strategically’ kept in the dark, little change can realistically be implemented.”

I have already written a piece highlighting the scale of the violence taking place in Yemen in a previous article titled ‘The Tragedy in Yemen’ published by The Daily Star on August 29, 2016. The article also includes facts and figures which show the massive amounts of weaponry being supplied by the US and the UK to Saudi Arabia that have been used on the Yemeni people. But what I would like to highlight now is the fact that no Saudi airstrikes would be possible without the help of the US and UK as Saudi Arabia has no means to refuel its own warplanes (also US and British manufactured) mid-air. Once you understand how damaging it would be for the US to have people learn about what is really going on in Yemen, it is not difficult to unravel why the media has so blatantly failed to cover it.

And while underreporting is what is most often used to shape public perception, one which is even more effective, is misdirecting the public through false reporting. And 2016 revealed further, the extent of the misconception created in the public mind by the media, in regards to the Syrian crisis.

And this relates to another topic that has gone underreported — the mountain of evidence that has come out in 2016 showing that the Syrian crisis, rather than being a civil war, is a proxy war being waged against Syria by outside forces. Some of these ‘evidences’ were presented at the United Nations on December 9 by activist Sara Flounders, lawyer and human rights and peace activist Donna Nassor, Member of the Coordinating Committee for the Hands Off Syria and Organisation Secretary of US Peace Council Dr. Bahman Azad, and independent Canadian journalist Eva Bartlett, ‘who have all visited Syria’ themselves, including Aleppo, recently.

At the conference, Bartlett, who has visited Syria six times in the past two years and has spoken with Syrians in Arabic, in agreement with the other panellists said, “whatever you hear in the corporate media is exactly the opposite of reality [of what is happening in Syria]... our media and the Gulf media has made Syria out to be sectarian which is something the Syrians themselves have denied...it’s a tool to make people confused...believe it’s Sunnis against Bashar al-Assad.”

When the truth, according to the panellists, was that people in Syria overwhelmingly support the government and the army. And they “are tired of the lies and are very well aware of the lies that our [Western mainstream] media and human rights groups are reporting”.

The last, but not least, important topic that has not been reported in the mainstream press has been the collapse of public confidence in the mainstream media. People across the world, as more and more stories are underreported or falsely reported by the media, have shown, more than ever in 2016, that they have lost all faith in the sincerity of the mainstream press to be truthful and unbiased.

Hence, we have had organisations such as Wikileaks filling the vacuum created by the absence of an unbiased press, attracting more and more people to look towards it for information. And although it is a real shame that these stories and so many others have gone unreported in 2016, what 2016 has taught us is that they can no longer be blacked out completely, largely because of organisations such as Wikileaks and others. And that, dear reader, is the biggest story of 2016, regardless of whether it was reported, or not.

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