

# Rupert Murdoch's Bid to Persuade Gen. David Petraeus to Run as Republican Candidate in the 2012 Presidential Election

Why the Washington Post killed the story of Murdoch's bid to buy the US presidency

By [Jonathan Cook](#)

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Region: [USA](#)

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*Carl Bernstein, of All the President's Men fame, has a revealing commentary in the Guardian today, though revealing not entirely in a way he appears to understand. Bernstein highlights a story first disclosed earlier this month in the Washington Post by his former journalistic partner Bob Woodward that media mogul Rupert Murdoch tried to "buy the US presidency".*

A taped conversation shows that in early 2011 Murdoch sent Roger Ailes, the boss of his most important US media outlet, Fox News, to Afghanistan to persuade Gen David Petraeus, former commander of US forces, to run against Barack Obama as the Republican candidate in the 2012 presidential election. Murdoch promised to bankroll Petraeus' campaign and commit Fox News to provide the general with wall-to-wall support.

Murdoch's efforts to put his own man in the White House failed because Petraeus decided he did not want to run for office. "Tell [Ailes] if I ever ran," Petraeus says in the recording, "but I won't ... but if I ever ran, I'd take him up on his offer."

Bernstein is rightly appalled not just by this full-frontal attack on democracy but also by the fact that the Washington Post failed to splash with their world exclusive. Instead they buried it inside the paper's lifestyle section, presenting it as what the section editor called "a buzzy media story that ... didn't have the broader import" that would justify a better showing in the paper.

In line with the Washington Post, most other major US news outlets either ignored the story or downplayed its significance.

We can probably assume that Bernstein wrote his piece at the bidding of Woodward, as a covert way for him to express his outrage at his newspaper's wholesale failure to use the story to generate a much-deserved political scandal. The pair presumably expected the story to prompt congressional hearings into Murdoch's misuse of power, parallel to investigations in the UK that have revealed Murdoch's control of politicians and the police there.

As Bernstein observes: "The Murdoch story - his corruption of essential democratic institutions on both sides of the Atlantic - is one of the most important and far-reaching political/cultural stories of the past 30 years, an ongoing tale without equal."

What Bernstein cannot understand is why his media masters don't see things the way he does. He reserves his greatest dismay for "the ho-hum response to the story by the American press and the country's political establishment, whether out of fear of Murdoch, Ailes and Fox - or, perhaps, lack of surprise at Murdoch's, Ailes' and Fox's contempt for decent journalistic values or a transparent electoral process."

But in truth neither of Bernstein's explanations for this failure is convincing.

A far more likely reason for the US media's aversion to the story is that it poses a danger to the Matrix-like wall of static interference generated by precisely the same media that successfully conceals the all-too-cosy relationship between the corporations (that own the media) and the country's politicians.

The Petraeus story is disturbing to the media precisely because it tears away the façade of US democratic politics, an image carefully honed to persuade the American electorate that it chooses its presidents and ultimately decides the direction of the country's political future.

Instead, the story reveals the charade of that electoral game, one in which powerful corporate elites manipulate the system through money and the media they own to restrict voters' choice to two almost-identical candidates. Those candidates hold the same views on 80 per cent of the issues. Even where their policies differ, most of the differences are quickly ironed out behind the scenes by the power elites through the pressure they exert on the White House via lobby groups, the media and Wall Street.

The significance of Woodward's story is not that it proves Rupert Murdoch is danger to democracy but rather that it reveals the absolute domination of the US political system by the global corporations that control what we hear and see. Those corporations include, of course, the owners of the Washington Post.

The saddest irony is that the journalists who work within the corporate media are incapable of seeing outside the parameters set for them by their media masters. And that includes even the most accomplished practitioners of the trade: Woodward and Bernstein.

**Jonathan Cook** won the Martha Gellhorn Special Prize for Journalism. His latest books are "Israel and the Clash of Civilisations: Iraq, Iran and the Plan to Remake the Middle East" (Pluto Press) and "Disappearing Palestine: Israel's Experiments in Human Despair" (Zed Books). His new website is [www.jonathan-cook.net](http://www.jonathan-cook.net).

### **Guardian**

**story:** <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/dec/20/bernstein-murdoch-ailes-petraeus-presidency>

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