

The Gatekeepers for Empire? “Independent Media” Failed Coverage of Syria

Global Research News Hour episode 187

By [Michael Welch](#), [Daniel Borgstrom](#), and [Vanessa Beeley](#)
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Region: [Middle East & North Africa, USA](#)
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[Media Disinformation](#), [US NATO War](#)
[Agenda](#)

“Democracy Now! is funded entirely through contributions from listeners, viewers, and foundations. We do not accept advertisers, corporate underwriting, or government funding. This allows us to maintain our independence.” – from the [Democracy Now website](#).
(emphasis added)

“If they don’t like what we’re doing, we don’t get funded next year.” – TomPaine.com
Executive Director John Moyers (quoted on [Gatekeepers](#) chart)

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(Note: This installment of the Global Research News Hour is a repeat. Originally posted June 24, 2017. – MAW)

The long-running program Democracy Now [boasts](#) of its independence from corporate and state sponsorship, which would compromise its ability to critique in a sustained way the powerful for-profit and government interests potentially linked to their paymasters. As a result, the program’s coverage of the 2003 Iraq War, the Israel-Palestine conflict and other foreign engagements has generally been superior to that of the Washington Post, CNBC, FOX, the New York Times, and other major outlets.

However, there seem to be media narratives this ‘unembedded, independent news hour’ does not challenge. One of them is Syria.

DN typically [upholds the official line](#) of Syrian president Assad as a tyrant and the principal cause of suffering of the Syrian people. Journalists like [Eva Bartlett](#) and [Vanessa Beeley](#) who cite the US/NATO backed militants as a more significant menace to Syrian society rarely appear as Democracy Now host Amy Goodman’s interview guests. For instance, [Beeley’s credible reporting](#) on the role of the so-called White Helmets as an arm of the terror groups and as a propaganda instrument for US/NATO is completely shunned by producers of the show.

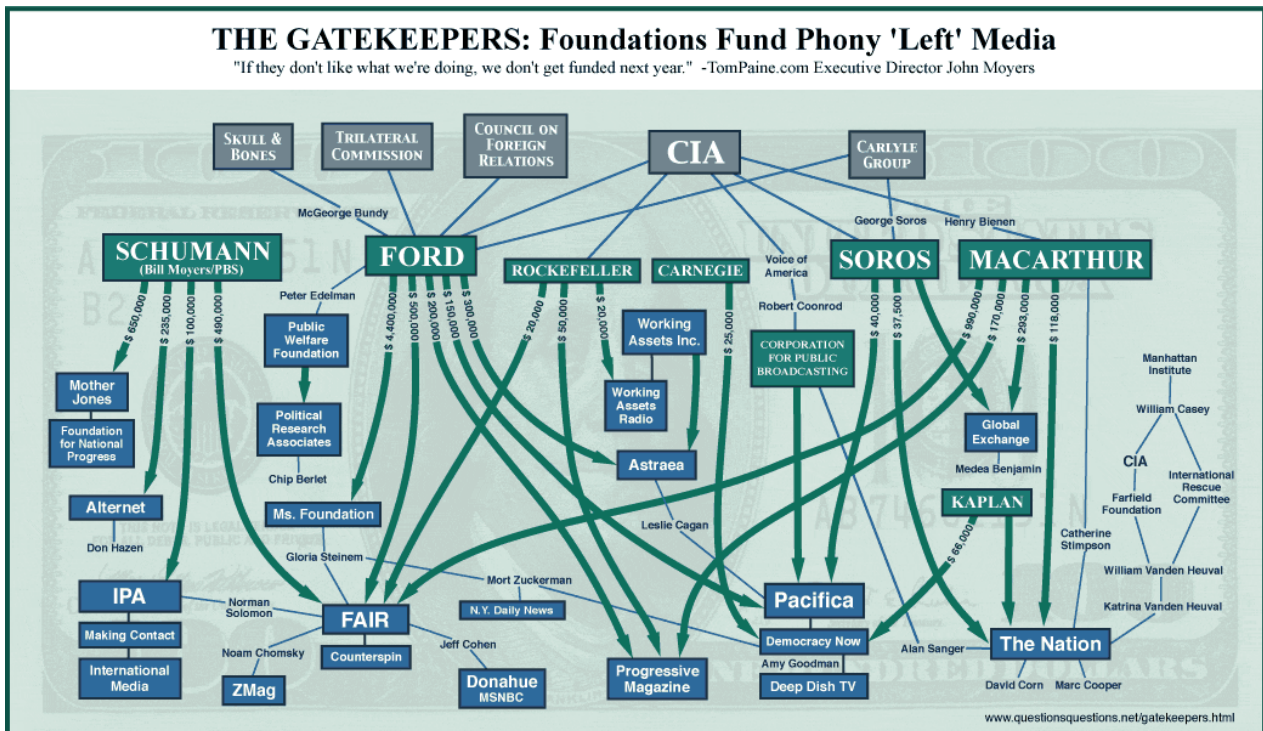
This distortion has become evident to many of the program’s regular listeners. It inspired a [peace group](#) representing Berkeley and the East Bay region in California to compose and

distribute an [open letter](#) and petition calling for more diversified coverage of the Syrian conflict. (Readers can add their name to the petition [here](#).)

One significant reason why DN's Syria coverage may be aligning with U.S. imperialist narratives might be the philanthropic foundations that fund the show.

In a previous interview, journalist [Cory Morningstar](#) explained how foundations with their roots in Wall Street financiers have manipulated much of the environmental movement, thereby restricting the kinds of activities the activists engage in. She posited that environmentalists are channeling their energies into promoting divestment away from fossil fuels and into the so-called 'green economy' which happens to advance the goals of the Rockefellers, Bill Gates, and other wealthy elites seeking new frontiers for investment. Such actions, however do not deconstruct or challenge the very financial system which is destroying the planet and exploiting marginalized peoples around the world. (Listen to that interview [here](#).)

Journalist Bob Feldman explains how this same effect impacts 'dissident' media in his 2007 paper [Report from the Field: Left Media and Left Think Tanks - Foundation-Managed Protest?](#) The Ford Foundation, which is connected to the CIA, the Rockefeller Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Carnegie Endowment, the Tides Foundation, the Open Society Institute have all donated millions into "left" media outlets. These include Democracy Now, Working Assets Radio, Counterspin, The Nation, Z Magazine, and Mother Jones among others.



The critical scrutiny of State oppression is therefore cunningly restricted. To quote journalist [Brian Salter](#), "...the big establishment foundations are successfully sponsoring the kind of 'opposition' that the US ruling elite can tolerate and live with."

The question of how and why trusted alternative media outlets like Democracy Now is failing in its accurate reporting on Syria is the focus of this week's installment of the Global Research News Hour radio program.

In the first half hour we hear from Vanessa Beeley. She is an independent researcher, writer, photographer and peace activist. She has researched the background of the White Helmets and has been visiting Syria since July 2016. Beeley is an Associate Editor and contributor to [21st Century Wire](#), and contributes to [UK Column](#) and [Mint Press News](#), and her work is published at [Global Research](#) among other online outlets. She acquaints listeners with what she has seen and experienced in Syria that leads her to believe the Western Press is wildly misrepresenting the facts on the ground.

We next hear from Daniel Borgstrom. He is a former U.S. Marine who served from 1959 to 1963. He is now an activist and a member of East Bay Veterans for Peace, chapter 162. Borgstrom is the author of the open letter and petition directed at Democracy Now. He explains his campaign and his thoughts about DN's distorted reporting on Syria and other issues near the middle of the program.

Finally, we hear from Bob Feldman. Feldman is a journalist and researcher who has investigated the extent to which philanthropic foundations fund and control left media outlets and think tanks. In 2007, he authored the paper [Report from the Field: Left Media and Left Think Tanks - Foundation-Managed Protest?](#) for the on-line journal [Critical Sociology](#). Before that he, together with colleague Brian Salter, composed a series of articles on the [Left Gatekeeper](#) phenomenon for their site [questionsquestions.net](#). He elaborates on his research in the last twenty minutes of the show. Links to his various blogs can be found at [Where's the Change](#).

Special thanks to journalists Barrie Zwicker and Ann Garrison for their assistance in connecting with this week's guests.

[Correction: In the narration of the episode, and in a previous version of this article, it stated that Daniel Borgstrom served in Vietnam. The veteran never served in Vietnam. - MAW]

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It is also available on 93.9 FM cable in the communities of SFU, Burnaby, New Westminister, Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, Surrey and Delta, in British Columbia, Canada. - Tune in at its new time - Wednesdays at 4pm PT.

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RIOT RADIO, the visual radio station based out of Durham College in Oshawa, Ontario has begun airing the Global Research News Hour on an occasional basis. Tune in at dcstudentsinc.ca/services/riot-radio/

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