

We Can't Rely On Superficial Mainstream Media Reporting At A Time of Deep Crisis

As the New Year Begins, Things to Think about More Deeply

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Theme: [Media Disinformation](#)

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The New Year may be here but last year's problems and crimes have stuck to our shoes and we can't seem to scrape them off. This was the least festive New Years in memory, and for good reason.

In Gaza, an Israeli invasion posing as an act of self-defense escalates with targeted assassinations and an expected ground invasion. American political leaders are for the most part silent, unwilling, perhaps even afraid to encourage the UN's call for a ceasefire and humanitarian aid.

Chris Hedges, a journalist with deep convictions and high conscience, and who spent seven years covering wars and the Middle East for the New York Times, can now write without the pretense of a forced detachment and feigned neutrality. His anger is not just directed at Israel, writing:

"Our self-righteous celebration of ourselves and our supposed virtue is as false as that of Israel. We have become monsters, militarized bullies, heartless and savage. We are a party to human slaughter, a flagrant war crime, and do nothing. We forget that the innocents who suffer and die in Gaza are a reflection of ourselves, of how we might have been should fate and time and geography have made the circumstances of our birth different.

We forget that we are all absurd and vulnerable creatures. We all have the capacity to fear and hate and love. "Expose thyself to what wretches feel," King Lear said, entering the mud and straw hovel of Poor Tom, "and show the heavens more just."

... Israel uses sophisticated attack jets and naval vessels to bomb densely crowded refugee camps and slums, to attack a population that has no air force, no air defense, no navy, no heavy weapons, no artillery units, no mechanized armor, no command and control, no army, and calls it a war. It is not a war. It is murder."

Such passionate voices are rarely found in our media where calculated nuance can rationalize everything and everyone.

Few in the media even recognize how they are being manipulated and spun on this war by an organ of state power, not a mere advocacy group.

The Guardian reveals: "Israel believes its has won broad international support in the media for its actions in Gaza thanks to its PR strategy, which through a new body has for months

been concerned with formulating plans and role-playing to ensure that government officials deliver a clear, unified message to the world's press.

....Israeli officials have also enjoyed a clear edge with coverage. An Israeli foreign ministry assessment of eight hours of coverage across international broadcast media reported that Israeli representatives got 58 minutes of airtime while the Palestinians got only 19 minutes. Speaking for the Israeli military, Major Avital Leibovich said: "Quite a few outlets are very favourable to Israel, namely by showing [it] suffering ... I am sure it is a result of the new co-ordination."

Speaking to the Jerusalem Post, the former Israeli ambassador to the UN Danny Gillerman said: "I don't know how long it will last but at this moment Israel has no small measure of understanding and support, and even approval, from many countries."

"No small measure of Understanding and support!"

Translation: Their propaganda has become our propaganda. smoothly infiltrated into our news. The Other has been dehumanized and demonized as The Enemy. There are few reports in our press like this one in the Times of London explaining:

"Gaza is a secular society where people listen to pop music, watch TV and many women walk the streets unveiled ...while the horrific scenes in Gaza and Israel play themselves out on our television screens, a war of words is being fought that is clouding our understanding of the realities on the ground."

Its not just foreign issues that are sanitized this way. The economic crisis here at home gets the same treatment.

We were told that Ponzi King Bernie Madoff would reveal all by New Year's Day. And indeed he submitted a disclosure form to the court but then had it marked confidential so we the public and those who were defrauded still don't know how much Bernie, under house arrest in his luxury apartment, lost or profited.

In fact, it was on only on New Years Day that Reuters which specialized in financial coverage pointed out that our whole economy may be a ponzi-scheme.

Quoting Tim Lee of the consultancy pi Economics in Stamford, Connecticut, the news service reported:

"We too thought our retirement funds and houses were growing miraculously, though ours was an illusion fueled by debt rather than fraud, and we too made plans based on those asset values that now stand in ruins.

"The financial system as a whole has had the characteristics of a Ponzi scheme if we look at it fundamentally," said Lee, who was very early in warning about deflation.

"By this I mean that we should think about the true value of assets as being derived from the future flow of goods and services that the assets can lay claim to or produce. If market prices of financial and real estate assets rise a lot but there is no increase in the ability of

the economy to provide goods and services in the future, then the apparent increase in wealth is illusory.”

The key word in the paragraph above is “think,” something too many of us are often too rushed to do. Think about the sources and spin of the news we read. Think about the agendas and practices of the financial wizards who claim to know so much even as they lose millions.

And think about what our next President should do and can do about the crisis we are in. I was interviewing Newsweek’s Johnathan Alter who wrote a bestseller about FDR and the New Deal about parallel’s with the moment we are in. His response:

“Well my book about Franklin Roosevelt is called the defining moment and Obama election night in Chicago and in several other speeches he said we’re in a new defining moment where we are about to redraw again the American social contract what we owe each other as a people. I think Obama has been very very smart in what he is barrowing from FDR. He’s not barrowing every particular of every program even some particular ideology. The most important words in that famous first inaugural were not the only thing we have to fear is fear itself its action and action now.”

Action? What kind of Action? To benefit whom? And how? All questions and issues we need to think about, and then act on ourselves.

News Dissector Danny Schechter is making a film based on his book PLUNDER: Investigating our Economic Calamity (Cosimo Books at Amazon.com) Comments to Dissector@mediachannel.org

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