

Fox News Says Refugee Crisis Is “Putin’s Scheme”. The Backstory

By [Eric Zuesse](#)

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Region: [Russia and FSU, USA](#)

Theme: [Media Disinformation](#)

The show aired on September 5th, and interviewed their contracted expert:

TRANSCRIPT, starting at 4:45pm:

4:45, Interviewer: *The other place that nobody seems to want to go these days is Russia and China, and Russia and China are both the two countries that have really gotten behind Assad, and certainly try to prop him up and those kinds of things; and as we look at pictures from China’s military day parade [posted onscreen], how much of this is Russia and China trying to slough off these refugees on Europe and everybody else ... to try to gain political and global capital?*

McFARLAND: *Well, in China I think less so, but Russia, certainly, because we’ve seen even in the last week that Russia has increased its military presence in Syria. Russia is trying to prop up the Assad government, like the Iranians are; and so Russia is sending military equipment; it’s sending it by sea, it’s sending it overland, it’s sending it by air, to try to prop up the Assad government to continue the fighting.*

Q: *To continue the refugee crisis?*

McFARLAND: *Oh, sure, exactly.*



<http://video.foxnews.com/v/4466018186001/european-union-leaders-struggle-to-deal-with--migrant-crisis/?#sp=show-clips>

THE BACKSTORY:

Whereas back in 2002 and 2003, the U.S. aristocracy’s biggest push for “regime change” was to remove Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq; and whereas in 2011 the biggest push for “regime change” was to remove Muammar Gaddafi from power in Libya; and whereas next in 2011 the biggest push for “regime change” became to remove Bashar al-Assad from power in Syria; and whereas in 2013 the biggest push for “regime change” became to remove Viktor Yanukovich from power in Ukraine; the biggest push for “regime change” now is to remove Vladimir Putin from power in Russia.

Media-lies have been crucial to them all.

On 2 October 2003, the media-watch organization, worldpublicopinion.org, headlined

“Misperceptions, the Media and the Iraq War: Study Finds Widespread Misperceptions on Iraq Highly Related to Support for War: Misperceptions Vary Widely Depending on News Source: Fox Viewers More Likely to Misperceive, PBS-NPR Less Likely.” In fact, the people who received their news primarily through NPR or PBS exhibited the lowest rate of misperceptions, and Fox News Channel viewers exhibited the highest misperceptions-rate: Whereas 77% of NPR/PBS listeners/viewers gave correct answers on all three factual news questions asked, only 20% of Fox News Channel viewers did; and whereas only 23% of the NPR/PBS audience got one or more of these three factual questions wrong, 80% of Fox viewers did.

So, the George W. Bush Administration forced NPR and PBS to adhere more fully to Bush’s (the U.S. aristocracy’s) line.

NPR’s David Folkenflik reported, on NPR’s “Morning Edition” 20 May 2005, that, the “culture gap became evident as long as two years ago. At one closed board meeting, according to two former CPB officials, Tomlinson suggested bringing in Fox News Channel anchor Brit Hume to talk to public broadcasting officials about how to create balanced news programs.”

This Bush gang had no objection whatsoever to moving toward fascism; after all, it’s where they had personally come from. Eric Boehlert headlined at salon.com on May 26th, “‘Fair and Balanced’ — the McCarthy Way,” and he reported:

“CPB head Kenneth Tomlinson, who is leading a jihad against ‘liberal bias’ in public broadcasting, and one of his two new ombudsmen both worked for the late Fulton Lewis, a reactionary radio personality associated with Sen. Joe McCarthy.”

Tomlinson, in fact, had “worked as an intern for Lewis,” and the new Tomlinson-appointed ombudsman, William Schulz, was an executive colleague of Tomlinson’s at *Readers Digest*, and before that, “was a writer for Lewis.” These two men had, in fact, first met nearly 60 years ago, as acolytes of this fascist radio commentator, who was comparable to today’s Rush Limbaugh. “In 1949, the *New Republic* noted that Lewis’ ‘wild charges were part of his campaign over many years to smear in every way possible the [FDR] New Deal, the [Truman] Fair Deal, and everybody not in accord with the most reactionary political beliefs.” Furthermore, “According to a flattering 1954 biography of the broadcaster, ‘Praised and Damned: The Story of Fulton Lewis, Jr.,’ Lewis was ‘as close to Senator Joseph R. McCarthy as any other man in the national scene.’ *Look* magazine agreed, calling Lewis one of McCarthy’s ‘masterminds.’”

That, of course, positioned Lewis — and, by extension, Tomlinson and one of the two PBS/NPR ombudsmen — far to the right of the then-mainstream Republicans, such as Dwight D. Eisenhower. Of course, George W. Bush himself represented this very same far-Right Republican Party contingent, which — thanks to decades of financial contributions from aristocrats like Scaife and Coors, building the fascist intellectual infrastructure — subsequently became today’s Republican mainstream.

Word was now out, among journalists throughout the world, that President Bush aimed to turn his country’s public broadcasting system into a domestic propaganda organ; and so, on May 30th, The *New York Times* headlined “Ombudsmen Rebuff Move by Public Broadcasting,” and reported — datelined May 27th from London — that: “An [international]

association of news ombudsmen has rejected an attempt by two ombudsmen from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to join their organization as full-fledged members, questioning their independence. The Organization of News Ombudsmen, which represents nearly a hundred print and broadcast ombudsmen from around the world, more than half of them from the United States, voted at its annual conference here last week to change its bylaws to allow full membership only to those who work for news organizations," which excluded representatives from CPB, because "it does not itself gather or produce news." Observed one member, who happened to be the ombudsman from NPR, "We want members who are responsive to readers, not to governments or lobby groups."

The *Los Angeles Times* media critic David Shaw took a broad historical view of this matter, headlining May 29th "There's a 'Nuclear Option' for PBS' Woes," opining that no PBS at all would be better than a PBS that's a propaganda organ for the White House, and reminding readers:

"The Bush administration is not the first to challenge the independence of PBS. Back in the 1970s, the Nixon administration was so estranged by PBS coverage of Watergate and the Vietnam War that it stacked the board of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting with Nixon sympathizers. 'There were tremendous fights, with the Nixon administration trying to prevent public television from doing any public affairs programming at all,' Lawrence Grossman, the former president of PBS, subsequently told the New York Times. The Bush administration, which has already accomplished the heretofore seemingly impossible by becoming even more media-averse than the Nixon administration, seems determined to surpass the wizard of Whittier and Watergate in bringing the CPB to heel as well."

Mr. Shaw, like other major-media commentators about the national media, had previously stood by in silence, during 2002 and 2003, while America's major media cavalierly spread amongst the U.S. public, as virtually unchallenged, the false rumors coming from the Bush Administration, and from its allies such as the Bush-Administration-financed group of exiles, the Iraqi National Congress, saying that Iraq's leader Saddam Hussein had been proven to be storing huge quantities of weapons of mass destruction and to be working in cahoots with Al Qaeda to threaten the United States. However, now, just a few years later, these very same "news" media were so frightened at the rising extent of this Administration's control over their "news," that these commentators were publicizing what those fascists were doing to force them, 'journalists,' into a military lock-step. This change in atmosphere was stunning; America's press were now trying to extricate themselves from the prison they had only recently helped to construct for themselves. They didn't think that they might get caught up in the prison that they had helped construct to contain the general public.

On 9 May 9 2005, Eric Alterman headlined in *The Nation*, "Bush's War on the Press," and he observed that, contrary to conservative cant, "Media insiders appear to like Bush a great deal more than the public does." He was correct there (Bush's public approval ratings were then around 45%), and likewise correct in concluding that, "The press may be the battleground, but the target is democracy itself." Even if conservatives had hired the major media's executives, there was a growing discordancy between the objectives of this government and of the press, and worries were thus rising within the press that things were now perhaps going too far.

On Friday June 10th, the *New York Times* headlined "Panel Would Cut Public Broadcasting

Aid,” and reported:

“A House Appropriations panel on Thursday approved a spending bill that would cut the budget for public television and radio nearly in half. ... The cuts in financing went significantly beyond those requested by the White House.”

Republicans said that this was necessary “at a time of growing deficits,” but Democrats “took a different view.” In any event, this move proved that the assault on public broadcasting wasn’t just a Bush initiative; it was a Republican Party Crusade, going even beyond the Republican President’s thrust. Democrats managed to reverse most of the cuts. However, the overtly conservative media cited this restoration as ‘proof’ that public broadcasting was in bed with the Democratic Party, just as Kenneth Tomlinson and the rest of the Bush team were claiming.

On June 25th, Sam Singer, of the overtly conservative *Chicago Tribune*, headlined “Battle Lines Are Forming Over Public TV, Radio,” and reported that

“the Corporation for Public Broadcasting” (which was, in a sense, misleading — the *actual* targets here were instead PBS and NPR) was “reeling from a House effort to cut its funding and a series of attacks over perceived political bias.”

Singer, slyly using there the passive tense, didn’t note that this supposedly “perceived” bias was being “perceived” *by the Bush Administration*. However, he did observe that “CPB Chairman Kenneth Tomlinson, an outspoken critic of PBS’ content, seems determined to force changes at PBS and NPR,” and that “Democrats and others are waging a battle ... to curtail Tomlinson’s influence.” Singer’s article implicitly agreed with Tomlinson’s charge that this conflict was simply between “Democrats” versus “Republicans”; it wasn’t at all between democracy versus fascism. Karl Rove could have written this article: its implicit viewpoint was that public broadcasting ought to represent the party in power, and that this party used to be Democrats, but was now Republicans, and so Republicans were now simply claiming what was theirs, no different than Democrats had previously done. Perhaps this kind of fraudulent ‘reporting’ was what Kenneth Tomlinson meant by ‘balance’; but what the Republicans were now doing had actually no precedent whatsoever in anything that any Democratic presidential administration had ever done — such a view of ‘history’ was merely a lie, more conservative mythmaking.

The *Chicago Tribune*’s ‘reporter’ mentioned, in passing, that “Tomlinson also has come under questioning for naming Patricia Harrison, a former co-chairwoman of the Republican National Committee, to head CPB. Democrats argue Tomlinson is guaranteeing it will have a partisan nature by bringing in a former GOP partisan.” The false idea here was that Harrison was merely “a former” partisan, and that there was nothing unprecedented about appointing such a partisan political hack as the head of CPB. These lies were all deception by implication, rather than by assertion; the technique is classic propaganda — very professional, but not as journalism, professional only as propaganda.

The Republican Party’s takeover of the CPB then faded from the news, for three months, until Paul Farhi headlined, but buried deep inside the *Washington Post*, on 27 September 2005, “CPB Taps Two GOP Conservatives for Top Posts,” and reported: “A leading Republican donor and fundraiser was elected chairman of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting yesterday, tightening conservative control over the agency that ... is supposed

to act as a buffer against outside political influence. ... The board also elected another conservative ... as its vice chairman. ... With the changes, conservatives with close ties to the Bush administration have assumed control of every important position at the agency. ... 'It's mind-boggling,' Ernest J. Wilson II, one of two Democrats on the eight-member board, said in an interview."

On October 30th, three groups — Common Cause, The Free Press, and the Center for Digital Democracy — jointly issued a press release headlined "Cronyism and Secrecy Run Rampant at Corporation for Public Broadcasting: New president fills the CPB offices with partisan propagandists; Inspector General's report on political meddling by ex-chairman [Kenneth Tomlinson] kept from the public." The viewpoint expressed was: "The CPB is being governed more like a private, secret society than an agency supported by taxpayers." For more than a year, there was a pause regarding the Republican war against PBS. Then, on 5 February 2007, tvweek.com bannered "Bush Proposes Steep Cut to PBS Funding," and Ira Teinowitz reported that, "President Bush is reopening the fight over government support of public television, unveiling a 2007 government fiscal year budget that would cut federal funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting by nearly 25 percent." This cut would be 31% "when cuts in related programs are added." Leaving PBS and NPR to depend more and more on support from the large corporations, which were controlled by executives who donated overwhelmingly to the Republican Party, would virtually compel those networks to become even more politically compliant than they already were. (And this is what happened.)

If anything, the Bush Administration's war against public broadcasting was due to public broadcasting being not sufficiently biased, rather than to its being too biased. On Thursday November 10th, of 2005, the trade journal, *Broadcasting & Cable*, had headlined "Survey Says: Noncom[mercial] News Most Trusted," and opened: "Some Republicans ... have griped about the fairness and balance of public broadcasting's news, but ... A Harris telephone survey commissioned by the Public Relations Society of America and released Thursday found that 61% of the general public generally trusted news on PBS and NPR, while 56% trusted papers like the *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal* or *New York Times*, and 53% trusted the commercial broadcast and cable news operations." Bush's war against public broadcasting reflected nothing but his desire to increase, even further, the ratio of propaganda to news. Despite PBS being slanted toward the Right, it was less so than was commercial broadcasting. (That's no longer the case.)

Six days later, on November 16th of 2005, the *Wall Street Journal* headlined (also buried inside the paper) "Report Concludes Tomlinson Broke Law Involving PBS," and reported: "The former head of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting violated federal law and internal ethical guidelines by improperly interfering with programming to include more shows featuring conservatives and by using 'political tests' in hiring decisions, according to CPB's inspector general." Just the day before that, on the 15th — which was the very same day when the IG's report was released — the media blogger Timothy Karr, at mediacitizen.blogspot, had headlined "CPB Report Tells Only Part of Story," and he stated: "Missing from the report is email traffic between Tomlinson and White House political advisor Karl Rove, reportedly provided to Inspector General Kenneth Konz by investigators at the State Department. This evidence, which reveals the White House's hand in manipulations of public broadcasting programming [and this involved the State Department; it was about international matters, which are the category of national affairs that an aristocracy is more concerned about than any other, because aristocrats control international corporations], is still under lock and key at the heavily partisan CPB."

On 30 August 2006, the *Washington Post* bannered “Tomlinson Cited For Abuses at Broadcast Board: CPB Ex-Chief Put Friend on Payroll, State Dept. Says.” Paul Farhi reported that,

“A year-long State Department investigation has found the chairman of the agency that oversees Voice of America and other government broadcasting operations improperly used his office, putting a friend on the payroll and running a ‘horse-racing operation’ with government resources. ... Although the Broadcasting Board of Governors and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting are unrelated entities, Tomlinson’s alleged violations overlapped both federal agencies. He conducted CPB work and ‘personal matters’ while working for the Broadcasting Board, and directed BBG employees to do the same. ... The investigation also found that Tomlinson — a former Reader’s Digest editor and longtime Republican ally of White House political adviser Karl Rove — helped hire a friend as a BBG contractor without the knowledge of other board or staff members. ... The most sensational complaint against Tomlinson might be that he used government resources to support his stable of thoroughbred racehorses, potentially violating federal embezzlement laws. ... A White House spokeswoman, Emily Lawrimore, said Bush continues to support Tomlinson’s pending renomination as BBG chairman.”

America’s major commercial media were especially concerned about Bush’s attempt to enslave public broadcasting, because any success in that effort would mean that commercial “news” media would have even less freedom-of-action than they currently did — which already was not much.

On 4 October 2006, Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting headlined “Study: Lack of Balance, Diversity, Public at PBS NewsHour,” and reported:

“The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer, PBS’s flagship news program, ... fails to provide either balance or diversity of perspectives — or a true ... alternative to its corporate competition.” For example, “Republicans outnumbered Democrats by 2-to-1” among their guestlist. A news story from the AP on this study noted that it found that, “In stories about the Iraq war, people who advocate a U.S. withdrawal were outnumbered by more than five-to-one.”

The FAIR study covered the period between October 2005 and March 2006; throughout that period almost exactly half of respondents to the ongoing USAToday/Gallup Poll, when they were asked, “Do you think the U.S. should keep military troops in Iraq until the situation is stabilized, or do you think the U.S. should bring its troops home as soon as possible?” chose the latter. So, approximately half of the guests on PBS should have been advocating withdrawal, too. But obviously, Republican thuggery was having its intended effect upon PBS: a pronounced conservative slant. Perhaps this slant wasn’t as conservative as was that of the corporate media, but it was still conservative.

If fascism ever is, or becomes, the reality in the U.S., then the nation’s media won’t even call it “fascism”; it’ll be called merely “conservatism,” and its practitioners won’t be called “fascists,” but simply “Republicans” — the American public will never be informed, by their “news” media, what has actually happened to their country. (And they weren’t.)

This struggle between the press and this Administration was subterranean, and it occurred on many different fronts. The very ability of the “news” media to function as news media

was now being eroded away, and so the presslords inevitably recognized that even *they* were now losing their freedom. They didn't like this. On 24 April 2005, the *Boston Globe* headlined "In War's Name, Public Loses Information," and reported that, "Federal agencies under the Bush administration are sweeping vast amounts of public information behind a curtain of secrecy in the name of fighting terrorism, using 50 to 60 loosely defined security designations that can be imposed by officials as low-ranking as government clerks. ... There is no system for tracking who stamped it, for what reason, and how long it should stay secret. There is no process for appealing a secrecy decision." One of these classifications was "Not for Public Dissemination." Another was "For Official Use Only." The provisions of the Freedom of Information Act could now be ignored at will, merely by employing one of these 50 to 60 classifications.

On 21 June 2007, americanprogressaction.org headlined "Conservatives Dominate The Airwaves" and linked to a joint study by the Center for American Progress and the Free Press, titled "The Structural Imbalance of Political Talk Radio." It documented that radio had a higher penetration than any other medium in the U.S., that talkradio was second only to country music as the dominant radio format, and that "91 percent of the total weekday talk radio programming is conservative, and 9 percent is progressive." Furthermore, it documented that this fascism wasn't due to talkradio audiences being overwhelmingly conservative (they were only slightly to the right of the general American public), but rather to the takeover of radio stations by huge chains of radio stations, which were far more conservative than the public: Salem, Cumulus, Citadel, and Clear Channel. Even the most liberal of the big chains, CBS, was 74% conservative and only 26% progressive in the programs it aired. Salem, Cumulus and Citadel were 100% conservative. The largest chain, Clear Channel, was 86% conservative. The fascist propaganda pouring out of America's highly concentrated "news" media was a veritable ocean to drown any truth.

Nor was this President backing down from his bald program to use tax dollars to produce propaganda packaged and given away to "news" media as "news" stories. This program just expanded. On 18 July 2005, the *New York Times* headlined "Public Relations Campaign for Research Office at E.P.A. May Include Ghostwritten Articles," and reported, "The Office of Research and Development at the Environmental Protection Agency is seeking outside public relations consultants, to be paid up to \$5 million per year" to "ghost-write articles 'for publication in scholarly journals and magazines.' The strategy ... includes writing and placing 'good stories' about the E.P.A.'s research office in consumer and trade publications." The reporter, Felicity Baringer, asked the editor of *Science* magazine what he thought of this: "He found the idea of public relations firms ghostwriting for government scientists 'appalling.'"

After Bush's 2004 "electoral" win, the boom was finally coming down on American democracy. On 8 August 2005, Todd Shields, at mediaweek.com, headlined "FCC Hires Conservative Indecency Critic," and opened, "The Federal Communications Commission has hired an anti-pornography activist and former lobbyist for groups that push for Christian precepts in public policy." They had employed, "as a special advisor in the FCC's Office of Strategic Planning and Policy Analysis," Penny Nance, a board member of Beverly LaHaye's Concerned Women for America. The group "describes its mission as 'helping ... to bring Biblical principles into all levels of public policy.'"

Politically organized Christians had floated this "compassionate conservatism" into office upon a sea of aristocratic money, which wasn't really compassionate at all, and the regime was now baring its theocratic/aristocratic fascist teeth, even over the presslords.

The result was sometimes unpredictable. For example, the *Washington Post's* columnist David Broder had a long history of serving up pabulum to his readers, as bland as can be. However, after the House restored \$100 million to the budget for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to support NPR and PBS, Broder headlined on 30 June 2005, "The Price Of Public TV's Win," and he boldly noted that Republicans had taken this money out of the hides of poor children. "As Ralph Regula, the Ohio Republican who heads the Appropriations subcommittee that drafted the bill, said, 'That takes away from young people's training opportunities' ... to gain ... living-wage jobs." Broder also noted that the Democrats had tried, but failed, to restore this \$100 million via eliminating some of the recent tax-cuts for millionaires, and that "It was defeated on a party-line vote." Broder was even so bold as to close by saying: "It's one more instance of the prevailing political culture — controlled by a budgetary and tax system that puts the lowest value on the needs of those who are the most vulnerable." The difference between that statement, and saying that the United States had become a fascist country, was merely terminological; he chose not to use the clear terminology.

The United States had entered historic new territory after nearly 50 years of aristocratic/theocratic mass-indoctrination of the American people, which had occurred with the full support and cooperation of the nation's presslords. There was now doubt; the old arrangements finally started to become questioned. Things were no longer settled. This was a real change of mentality. Only recently, there had been a total passivity of the U.S. press: it propagandized for the President's Medicaid prescription drug plan; it propagandized for his fabricated accusations against "Saddam's weapons of mass destruction"; it served as an extension of the White House press office on many other of the President's fraud-based programs. But this passivity was now finally replaced by a rising fear within the press, that the U.S. might be transforming into a fascist state, which could threaten the press itself. The presslords themselves were at last becoming disturbed.

However, this President was already near to his goal of a totalitarian lock-down. Consequently, what could the press do, at such a late date? They had already given him the rope to hang not just the public, but themselves. He took it. The American press that stenographically transmitted to the American public the U.S. government's lies about "Saddam's WMD" is continuing as if it hadn't been *sufficiently* compliant. America's great victories in overthrowing Gaddafi and Yanukovych are now supposed to be followed by Assad, and then Putin.

And European nations take this leadership as their own, instead of abandoning the U.S., abandoning NATO, and abandoning the U.S.-controlled EU; abandoning all the mega-corporate, U.S.-aristocracy-controlled, international-corporate fascist system — and now they willingly take in the millions of refugees from the bombs that the U.S. had dropped in Libya and Syria, and that the U.S.-installed rabidly anti-Russian government in Ukraine is dropping onto the areas of the former Ukraine that have rejected the U.S.-imposed ([in February 2014](#)) [government](#) in Kiev.

And the next target is Putin.

So: that's the backstory behind the lie that Putin instead of Obama caused those millions of refugees pouring into Europe.

And, in German 'news' media, Bashar al-Assad and ISIS are being blamed for it, because practically no German is so media-deluded (like America's conservatives are) as to think

that Putin is to blame for it; and [here is a German who states in very clear terms how rotten he thinks Germany's 'news' media are](#) (though America's obviously are even worse).

Investigative historian Eric Zuesse is the author, most recently, of [They're Not Even Close: The Democratic vs. Republican Economic Records, 1910-2010](#), and of [CHRIST'S VENTRILOQUISTS: The Event that Created Christianity](#).

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