

Russia-Ukraine: Western Media Are Acting as Cheerleaders for War

Journalists are cheering on the arming of militias and civilians making improvised explosives – acts they usually treat as terrorism

By [Jonathan Cook](#)

Global Research, March 06, 2022

[Middle East Eye](#) 4 March 2022

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

Theme: [Media Disinformation](#)

In-depth Report: [UKRAINE REPORT](#)

All Global Research articles can be read in 51 languages by activating the “Translate Website” drop down menu on the top banner of our home page (Desktop version).

To receive Global Research’s Daily Newsletter (selected articles), [click here](#).

Visit and follow us on Instagram at [@globalresearch_crg](#) and Twitter at [@crglobalization](#).

Today, the dangers of military escalation are beyond description.

What is now happening in Ukraine has serious geopolitical implications. It could lead us into a World War III scenario.

It is important that a peace process be initiated with a view to preventing escalation.

Global Research condemns Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

A Bilateral Peace Agreement is required.

It is simply astonishing how [many](#) western journalists, including normally [cautious BBC reporters](#), are shamelessly [fawning over](#) young women building Molotov cocktails on the streets of Ukrainian cities like Kyiv.

It’s suddenly sexy to make improvised explosives – at least, if the media consider you [white, European and “civilised”](#).

That might surprise other, more established resistance movements, especially in the Middle East. They have invariably found themselves tarred as terrorists for doing much the same.

Western journalists’ difficulty containing their identification with, and support for, Ukraine’s civilian “resistance” must be maddening to Palestinians in tiny Gaza, for example, who have been [locked into a metal cage by an Israeli military](#) occupier for decades.

Palestinians in Gaza make their own Molotov cocktails. But because they can't get close to the Israeli army, they have to pack them into [balloons](#) that drift over the steel barrier surrounding Gaza and into Israel, sometimes setting fire to fields.

[#Kyiv](#) – our report on the city fighting to save itself, with Molotov cocktails and improvised barricades, where lawyers are now manning look-out posts.
[#RussiaInvasion](#) With [@Goktay](#) [@wburema](#) [@N_sosnytska](#) [@TwittPirojok](#)
pic.twitter.com/lc1viGKUht

— Orla Guerin (@OrlaGuerin) [March 2, 2022](#)

No one from the BBC has celebrated these “[incendiary balloons](#)” as a small act of resistance. They are reflexively blamed on Gaza's governing group Hamas, the political wing of which was recently designated [a terror organisation](#) by the British government.

Double standards

Palestinians in Gaza have also suffered [a trade blockade by Israel for the past 15 years](#), one designed to put them on a “[starvation diet](#)”. Protesters, including women, children and people in wheelchairs, have regularly turned out to throw a stone in the direction of distant Israeli snipers, hidden behind fortifications, as a symbolic way to demand their freedom. These protesters have often been [shot by the Israeli army](#) in response.

The western media [offer](#) occasional anguish at the lives lost or the legs amputated of those targeted by the snipers. But none of them cheerlead this Palestinian “resistance” as they do the Ukrainian one. More usually, the protesters are [treated](#) as dupes or provocateurs of Hamas.

Gaza, unlike Ukraine, does not have an army, and its fighters, [unlike Ukraine's](#), are not being armed by the West.

The Guardian newspaper even [censored](#) its cartoonist Steve Bell when he sought to depict one of the victims of Israel's snipers, a nurse, [Razan al-Najjar](#), who had been trying to help the wounded. The paper implied that [the cartoon](#) – of Britain's then prime minister, Theresa May, welcoming her Israeli counterpart, Benjamin Netanyahu, to London, with al-Najjar a sacrificial victim behind them in the fireplace – was antisemitic.

Assuming the media has in the past been reluctant to encourage ordinary people to confront well-armed soldiers – so as to avoid civilian casualties – then why has that policy suddenly been ditched in Ukraine?

The double standards are glaring and everywhere. It is impossible to claim that the journalists doing this are ignorant of reporting conventions elsewhere. They are mostly veterans of Middle East war zones, well used to covering Gaza, Baghdad, Nablus, Aleppo and Tripoli.

Fuelling the fire

Britain and other European states have chosen to fuel the fires of resistance in Ukraine by [sending it weapons](#) that can only lead to greater loss of life, especially of civilians caught in the crossfire. One might have expected the British media to examine the ethical

implications of such a policy, and the hypocrisy. But not a bit of it.

In fact, much of the media have not only been [acting as lobbyists](#) for more weapons to be sent to the Ukrainian army, they have [whipped up](#) support for civilians in the UK to get [more involved](#) in the fighting.

That has been the case even after No 10 [distanced](#) itself from comments by Liz Truss, the foreign secretary, that Britons should be encouraged to volunteer for Ukraine's so-called "[international legions](#)", supposedly to defend Europe.

Her position was in conflict with usual government practice, which has treated those heading off to fight in war zones in the Middle East as terrorists. [Shamima Begum](#), who went to Syria aged 15, has been stripped of her British citizenship and denied the right to return for doing what Truss has proposed in Ukraine.

Nonetheless, that did not dissuade the [BBC from travelling to Essex to meet "Wozza"](#), a supplier of surplus British army kit he has been selling cheaply to Ukrainians in Britain so they can head off to the battlefield. Wozza was shown tearing off Union Jack insignia from uniforms so Ukrainian militiamen could use them.

Compare that with the treatment of an entirely peaceful form of resistance by westerners in solidarity with the Palestinians, the international Boycott, Sanctions and Divestment (BDS) movement. It has been [treated](#) as barely better than terrorism, with [bans on support for BDS](#) across [Europe](#) and the US.

Compromised 'impartiality'

It is hard to remember in all the media agitation over Ukraine that this sympathetic coverage flies in the face of its reporting conventions. It is inconceivable, of course, that Britain would ever send arms to help, for example, Gaza liberate itself.

For that reason, the media will never have the opportunity to exercise their vocal chords in outrage at such a development.

In fact, the western media more typically [echo western government](#) opposition to any support for Gaza, even construction materials like cement to rebuild the enclave after one of Israel's intermittent wrecking sprees. That is because reporters treat uncritically [Israeli claims](#) that humanitarian aid will be repurposed by Hamas and bolster "terrorism".

Back in 2010, for example, a BBC Panorama programme [failed](#) to mention that an Israeli naval attack on a humanitarian aid convoy to besieged Gaza was conducted illegally in international waters. Nine activists trying to deliver aid items like medicine to Gaza aboard the Mavi Marmara ship were killed by Israeli commandoes, but the interviews with these masked men were [largely uncritical](#). There was very little sympathy from the BBC for that act of resistance against a brutal occupier.

A year earlier, the BBC [broke with tradition and refused](#) to broadcast a long-established aid appeal because on this occasion it was to provide food and shelter to Gaza, following an Israeli assault that destroyed swaths of the enclave. The BBC [justified](#) the decision on the grounds that it would compromise its "impartiality" – something it seems entirely unconcerned about in Ukraine.

The BBC had not responded to questions about these inconsistencies by the time of publication.

Fog of war

The battlefield is well known for becoming quickly enveloped in the fog of war. That is one reason why inexperienced journalists are cautioned by their editors to wait for evidence and to be alert to propaganda. In practice, however, one can assess where the media's sympathies lie – concealed behind flimsy claims of objectivity – by noting when and for whose benefit these caution rules are abandoned, and which side's narratives are accepted quickly and uncritically.

In the Middle East, it is clear that US, European and Israeli claims are all too readily amplified, even when their veracity is in doubt.

Such media-fuelled lies have been manifold. That Israel urged the Palestinians it [expelled](#) in 1948 to return home. That Saddam Hussein's troops [ripped babies](#) from incubators in Kuwait, and that the Iraqi leader [colluded](#) with his arch-enemy, al-Qaeda, in the 9/11 attacks. That Muammar Gaddafi's soldiers in Libya [took Viagra](#) to rape civilians in Benghazi. That Russia [paid bounties](#) to the Taliban to kill US soldiers in Afghanistan.

These deceptions and fabrications grabbed headlines when they were useful as propaganda, only to be quietly withdrawn much later on.

In the case of Ukraine, a similar pattern appears to be emerging. There were widespread, inciteful and entirely fictitious reports in the western media of Russian troops butchering a contingent of 13 Ukrainian soldiers on Snake Island, in the Black Sea. A fake audio tape was released of the Ukrainians supposedly cursing the Russian invaders. Ukraine's government [promised](#) each of them a Hero of Ukraine award.

But in fact, it was Russian media reports that [were true](#). There were 82 Ukrainian soldiers and they had surrendered. All were alive and well. In another example, a clip from [a video game](#) was [widely promoted as a heroic](#) lone Ukrainian fighter pilot – dubbed the Ghost of Kyiv – shooting down Russian planes and helicopters.

Misinformation has been shared even more aggressively on western social media accounts, and most of it is designed to evoke sympathy for Ukraine and [hostility to Russia](#).

Softening-up operation

But what we are seeing is more than just an appetite in the media for evidence-free stories and falsehoods so long as they are directed against Russia. And it is about more than the media's sympathy for Ukrainian "resistance" denied other groups battling their oppressors, when those oppressors are the West and its allies.

The media is chock full of commentators far more rabidly tribal than even western governments and military generals. The media chorus for "more war" seems to be serving as an ideological softening-up operation, clearing the path for governments as they prepare for more extreme propaganda and undemocratic measures.

Along with many others, Mail on Sunday commentator Dan Hodges has been [calling for a no-fly zone](#) over Ukraine that even Boris Johnson has [rejected](#) for very obvious reasons. It would

lead Europe into a direct confrontation with the Russian airforce and risk confrontation with a nuclear power.

Nonetheless, Hodges has [described](#) any rejection of this idea as “an act of appeasement no different to our appeasement of Hitler in 1938”. Russia’s invasion came after nearly a decade of goading by the US using Nato as cover to forge ever tighter military relations with its neighbour.

Rightly or wrongly, Moscow [interpreted](#) Nato’s behaviour as an aggressive move by the US and its allies into its “sphere of influence”. The idea that no concession could, and can, be made to Russia – that the only “moral choice”, as Hodges calls it, is risking a potential nuclear war – should be understood as the belligerent provocation it clearly is.

NBC News’ chief foreign correspondent, Richard Engel, [tweeted](#) out what he saw as a “risk calculation” and “moral dilemma”: should the West bomb a convoy of Russian tanks on their way towards Kyiv? Apparently concerned by current inaction, he asked: “Does the West watch in silence as it rolls?”

Utter hypocrisy

Condeleeza Rice, an architect of the criminal invasion of Iraq, has not been challenged by the media over her [utter hypocrisy](#) in agreeing that “When you invade a sovereign nation, that is a war crime.” If that is the case – and international law says it is – then Rice herself should be on trial at the Hague.

Russia's intervention in Ukraine has gotten much more coverage, and condemnation, in just 24 hours than the US-Saudi war on Yemen has gotten since it started nearly 7 years ago

377,000 Yemenis have died. US-backed Saudi bombing now is the worst since 2018 <https://t.co/LKyeW0LsNB>

— Benjamin Norton (@BenjaminNorton) [February 25, 2022](#)

Or what about the media’s horror this week at [the shelling of Kharkiv](#), Ukraine’s second city, where “dozens” were reported killed? Compare that to the media’s breathless excitement over the “Shock and Awe” bombing campaign that likely killed [thousands](#) in the opening hours of the US invasion of Iraq in 2003.

What about the media’s mostly [complicit silence](#) over many years of Saudi bombing – using British planes and bombs – of civilians in Yemen, leading to a barely imaginable humanitarian catastrophe there? Those in Yemen who resist the Saudi horror show are not heroes to our media, they are simply dismissed as puppets of Iran?

Veteran BBC journalist Jeremy Vine, meanwhile, [expressed](#) the view that conscripted Russian soldiers “deserve to die” when they put on a Russian army uniform. “That’s life,” he told a shocked caller to his show.

Did Vine think British and US troops – professional soldiers, unlike Russia’s conscripts – also deserved to die when their armies illegally invaded Iraq? And if not, why not?

The racist undertones and overtones of much western coverage – with commentators and interviewees regularly stressing how Ukrainian refugees are “European”, “civilised”, “blond haired and blue eyed”– is [hard to miss](#).

State propaganda

And in the midst of this rampant, often unhinged western war propaganda, much of its coming from the British state broadcaster, Europe has [banned Russia's state broadcaster RT](#) from the airwaves, while Silicon Valley [scrubs its presence](#) from the internet.

There is no doubt that RT generally promotes an editorial line largely sympathetic to Moscow's foreign policy goals – just as the BBC can invariably be relied on to promote an editorial line largely sympathetic to Britain's foreign policy goals.

The problem for western audiences is not their exposure to Russian state propaganda. It is their constant exposure to relentless western state propaganda.

If we seek peace – and there are few indications of that at the moment – then we need the western media held to account for its mindless jingoism, its exaggerations, its credulity, its double standards, and its deceptions. But who is going to act as a watchdog on the supposed watchdog of the Fourth Estate?

Right now, we need voices from Russia to understand what Putin thinks and wants, not what the BBC's “chief international correspondents” think he wants. We need information sources ready to quickly challenge both western and Russian “fake news”.

And most of all we need to stop with our racist view of the world, in which we are always the Good Guys and they are always the Bad Guys, and in which our suffering matters and the suffering of others doesn't.

*

Note to readers: Please click the share buttons above or below. Follow us on Instagram, @globalresearch_crg and Twitter at @crglobalization. Forward this article to your email lists. Crosspost on your blog site, internet forums, etc.

Jonathan Cook is the the author of three books on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and a winner of the Martha Gellhorn Special Prize for Journalism. His website and blog can be found at: www.jonathan-cook.net

Featured image is by MEE

The original source of this article is [Middle East Eye](#)
Copyright © [Jonathan Cook](#), [Middle East Eye](#), 2022

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca