

“Socratic Dialogue” and New York Times Style Debates

By [Stephen Lendman](#)

Global Research, August 10, 2012

10 August 2012

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Media Disinformation](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

French moralist/essayist Joseph Joubert (1754 - 1824) said it's "better to debate a question without settling it than settle a question without debating it."

He wasn't alone. Debating is an ancient tradition. Socrates and Plato debated political, social, and other issues. The Socratic method involves opposing sides asking and answering questions.

Ideas are freely aired. Beliefs are challenged. Truths are sought. Critical thinking is stimulated. Opinions are formed. Conclusions are reached through free and open dialogue and discussion.

Debates should involve opposing sides given full opportunity to air views and challenge those of others. New York Times editors changed the rules.

Views contradicting state policy are prohibited. Constraints prevent truth and full disclosure. Public thinking and perceptions are manipulated and controlled.

News and views are filtered. Acceptable residue only is reported. Dissent is marginalized. Government and corporate interests alone matter. Groupthink is sought. It manufactures consent and conformity despite contrary facts proving other conclusions.

On August 8, The Times headlined [“How to End the War in Syria.”](#) Socratic dialogue was absent. Three similar views were aired.

Former Assistant Secretary of State/current RAND Corporation International Security and Defense Policy Center director [James Dobbins](#) headlined “Step Up Opposition Support.”

RAND Corporation is a virtual shadow government. It supports militarism, imperial wars, and technocrat run world government. Its ideal world isn't fit to live in. Views Dobbins expresses shows why.

Addressing Syria earlier, he compared it to Gaddafi's Libya. In both countries, he said, "an aroused population" seeks ouster of a "long established dictator, and is being savagely repressed as a result."

America has much to gain from regime change, "even more in Syria than in Libya," he added.

On August 8, he repeated the same theme. He substituted Saddam's Iraq for Libya. He described Syria as "a country divided by religion and ethnicity, held together by a brutal regime that is drawn from a minority element of the population, which has, in turn, profited at the expense of the majority."

Equating Assad to Saddam or current regional despots is like calling hilly terrain Everest, Kilimanjaro, or McKinley.

Dobbins gave it his best shot and failed. His rhetoric didn't pass the smell test. His solutions contradict international and constitutional laws and norms. It was right out of imperial Washington's playbook.

Promote peace by stoking conflict, he urged. "American ability to encourage a peaceful transition in Syria will likely be in direct proportion to the help the U.S. provides the opposition."

"Washington needs to do more now than provide advice and nonlethal assistance...." Stopping short of endorsing Western intervention, he implied it.

Council on Foreign Relations Middle Eastern studies senior fellow [Ed Husain](#) headlined "Stop Fanning the Flames."

Ideologically divergent insurgent fighters "have conflicting visions of what a post-Assad Syria should look like," he says. Differences bode ill for Syria's future, he added.

"Different factions in Syria must work together, while other countries supporting these factions should be wary of the power they yield."

Syrians should decide their own fate, he urges. Pro-Western ones alone should choose. Perhaps he believes Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya provide templates for Syria.

Husain represents monied interests. They seek dominance by any means. He'd prefer less violent and contentious ways of getting it. Nonetheless, he's uncompromising on imperial goals.

FREE-Syria hardliner [Rafif Jouejati](#) headlined “Oust Assad with Plan in Place.”

Overthrow Assad, she urged. “No attempts to stabilize the country can be successful unless the originator of the armed conflict – Assad and the single-party system he represents – is deposed.”

Assad and millions of Syrians are victims of conflict. Western-recruited death squads bear responsibility. Syria was calm and peaceful before they arrived. Washington’s longstanding plan involves ravaging the country to control it.

Jouejati supports the scheme. “Assad must go,” she urges. Bring Syria “freedom, democracy and dignity,” she says. Perhaps she believes mass killing and destruction can achieve them.

Her agenda, in fact, endorses imperial dominance. Her notion of democratic freedom is none at all.

Times articles, commentaries, editorials, and debates prohibit truth and full disclosure. One-sided views are presented. Stakes involved, international law, and other core issues aren’t addressed.

The Times features news it calls fit to print except what readers most need to know. They’re betrayed. They’re treated like mushrooms – well-watered and in the dark.

Journalism is sacrificed on the alter of monied interests uber alles and imperial wars waged to get them. America, other Western nations, Israel, and Middle East sheikdoms aren’t fit to live in.

Power-hungry leaders want all societies transformed into one size fits all ones they control. Opposition isn’t tolerated. Neither are rule of law principles, human rights, and other democratic values.

Orwell described their world best, saying “(i)f you want a vision of (their) future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face – forever.”

He also called truth “a revolutionary act” in times of “universal deceit.” Add betrayal when communication gatekeepers support elitist interests at the expense of everyone else.

A Final Comment

Syrians want peace, dignity, democracy, and free choice to decide who’ll lead them. Washington has other goals in mind.

Longstanding objectives involve replacing independent governments with subservient pro-Western ones it controls. Dark options are employed including war.

The battle for Syria rages. Violence ravages the country. Washington and other Western leaders spurn conflict resolution. No end of struggle looks imminent. Another nation is being destroyed to control it.

Good news along the way is welcome. On August 9, [SANA](#) state media headlined “Armed Forces Take Control of Salah Eddin Neighborhood in Aleppo, Terrorists Crossing Border from Lebanon Repelled,” saying:

Syrian forces routed insurgents and took control of Aleppo’s Salah Eddin neighborhood. Other neighborhoods are being liberated. Progress is slow to minimize casualties and damage.

Nonetheless, insurgents suffered heavy losses. Some surrender. Large weapons caches are seized or destroyed.

A Mayer area storehouse was targeted. Insurgents used it to hold weapons. It was completely destroyed “along with seven trucks full of weapons and ammo which militants were unloading.” Many were killed during the operation.

SANA also said security forces and border guards “repelled two terrorist groups” trying to enter Syria from Lebanon. Many were killed or injured. Others fled back cross-border.

Other parts of Syria are being liberated. Insurgents keep coming back. Confrontations continue. No end of struggle looks imminent.

On August 9, US Col. Doug Macgregor told [Russia Today](#) that Aleppo insurgents “are in serious trouble.” They’re no match for Syria’s military capability and tactics.

He called it the Arab world’s most competent and disciplined army. “That suggests that they probably moved to seal off the rebels in the enclaves in the areas that they currently hold.”

“To do that, they had concentrated armor and artillery for direct fire, not for indirect fire.”

“As long as the Syrians avoid any sort of future difficulties with the Turks along their borders, I suspect that (Prime Minister) Erdogan – however sympathetic he is to Sunni Islamist rebels....he will try to stay out of it.”

He faces considerable internal opposition. It’s not a majority to stop him. Opposition leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu heads Turkey’s Republican People’s Party (CHP).

He strongly opposes intervention. "Why should Muslim nations" fight each other, he asks? Why is Turkey involved when Western interests harms their own? Kilicdaroglu also opposes Ankara forces in Afghanistan.

Turkey is one of 28 NATO countries. The organization operates as Washington's imperial tool. It's America's missile. It's an alliance for war, not peace. Membership means going along when asked.

One day perhaps Turkey and other partners will fall on their swords sacrificially or otherwise. Living by them assures bad endings.

Leaders taking those risks have no legitimacy to govern. Replacing them with others choosing peace, stability, security, and survival is urgent.

Stephen Lendman lives in Chicago and can be reached at lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net.

His new book is titled "How Wall Street Fleeces America: Privatized Banking, Government Collusion and Class War"

<http://www.claritypress.com/Lendman.html>

Visit his blog site at sjlendman.blogspot.com and listen to cutting-edge discussions with distinguished guests on the Progressive Radio News Hour on the Progressive Radio Network Thursdays at 10AM US Central time and Saturdays and Sundays at noon. All programs are archived for easy listening.

<http://www.progressiveradionetwork.com/the-progressive-news-hour>

The original source of this article is Global Research
Copyright © [Stephen Lendman](#), Global Research, 2012

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

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Stephen Lendman](#)

About the author:

Stephen Lendman lives in Chicago. He can be reached at lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net. His new book as editor and contributor is titled "Flashpoint in Ukraine:

US Drive for Hegemony Risks WW III."

<http://www.claritypress.com/LendmanIII.html> Visit his blog site at sjlendman.blogspot.com. Listen to cutting-edge discussions with distinguished guests on the Progressive Radio News Hour on the Progressive Radio Network. It airs three times weekly: live on Sundays at 1PM Central time plus two prerecorded archived programs.

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