

# The Rule for Respectable Commentary in the Western Mainstream Media: A Recipe for Demonization and War

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Theme: [Media Disinformation](#)

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There is a simple rule that is followed scrupulously by U.S. commentators of every stripe on world affairs and war – with a very few notable exceptions, Paul Craig Roberts and Pepe Escobar among them.

This rule allows strong criticism of the U.S. *But* major [official adversaries](#) of the U.S., Iran, Russia and China, must never, ever be presented as better than the US in any significant way. The US may be depicted as equally bad (or better) than these enemies, but never worse.

## The Rule

Major Adversaries: Never better than the U.S.

U.S. (and the rest of West): Never worse than the Major Adversaries.

Of course this is a recipe for demonization and war. In essence the U.S. must be presented *at worst* as the lesser evil. That is the Rule for Respectable Commentary.

Who or what is the enforcer? I have written to other writers who admit that they avoid speaking well of Major Adversaries even when it is warranted. They know that they will come under attack and their credibility will be questioned. They know that editors, ever conscious of their credibility (as they should be) and of their donors (as they should not be) will turn down the writing of one who violates The Rule for Respectable Commentary, hereafter known as The Rule.

So it is censorship that enforces The Rule, but largely self-censorship of the very kind which runs rampant in the Corporate/State Media and which is so often bemoaned in the alternative press. “We have met the enemy and they are us.”

This of course is a silly rule when you think about it. The world is a complex place and it would be foolish to regard major powers like Russia, China and Iran as lacking any achievements in any area that eclipse those of the U.S. When confronted by overwhelming evidence of a considerable achievement by a Major Adversary, the Rule has a corollary which counsels silence. Avoid the subject. If you do not have anything bad to say, then do not say anything. Of course this leads to lack of perspective and to half-truths. And half-truths are full lies, as an Israeli expat reminds me constantly.

Let us take China as an example. There are many things to admire about China, if we speak frankly. It administered the most devastating blow to colonialism when it broke free of Western and Japanese domination after suffering colonial devastation of the most cruel sort. (If one does not know about the Opium Wars and the way China was turned into a nation of addicts, impoverished by merciless indemnities imposed by the West, then take a look at this [brief account](#). It is free.)

Not only that, but China has pulled hundreds of millions out of poverty, 600 million plus, according to the UN. That is a staggering achievement, unparalleled in world history. China has a long history of non-aggression overseas and even though it is the world's number one economy based on Purchasing Power Parity according to the IMF, it still has no overseas military bases. Even Henry Kissinger in his book *On China*, has to admit that China has no tradition of overseas conquests. When China was the world's number one power, including maritime power, and sailed a vast fleet to Africa almost a century before Columbus set sail, it did not conquer, did not enslave. That is quite a different story from the conquering imperial West. (I just broke the Rule in that paragraph!)

If one mentions such accomplishments too prominently, one is called a "China lover" or, in a return to good old fashioned anti-Communism, a lover of the CCP (Chinese Communist Party). I have had the honor of such opprobrium.

And here I must note the almost irrational animus toward China amongst certain progressives. It was all too evident in the recent demonstrations in Hong Kong funded by the National Endowment for Democracy, with highly manipulable high school students in the "lead" and with other leaders meeting with Joe Biden. Such elements were dismissed as marginal even as the neo-Nazi elements that led the Maidan revolt were dismissed as "marginal" when their presence became undeniable. For these progressives, the evils of China and the U.S. are the same which keeps them comfortably within the confines of The Rule. (These worthies have a blind spot not just for the strengths of China but also for those of the U.S. There is a lot of blindness in this vision.)

Why this animus? It seems that progressives of a certain age feel that China "betrayed the world revolution." (Unfortunately for these armchair revolutionaries, the Chinese people had very different goals for the revolution they made.) Others see no value in defeating colonialism and poverty but regard only the struggle for Western democracy worthwhile, even as they bemoan the shallowness or the downright fraudulence of such democracy. In any event the animus helps them keep to The Rule.

As I have [written at DV](#), there is a simple antidote to all this. Take a few moments on a daily basis and look at the headlines of *China Daily*, *RT.com*, and even Iran's *PressTV*. If the headlines strike your fancy, read on. And compare what you read there, including the perspective and narrative, with what you encounter in the NYT, NPR, etc. Make up your own mind.

And if you write on world affairs whether books or letters to the editor, then for the sake of truth and peace, it is time to Break The Rule – into a thousand pieces.

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