

Ukraine: Countering the Spin. “The Propaganda War”. Max Blumenthal

By [Michael Welch](#), [Yves Engler](#), [Glenn Michalchuk](#), and [Max Blumenthal](#)

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“The propaganda war that we’ve seen waged by the Ukrainian government is a U.S. propaganda war. It is a British propaganda war. And in Kiev and across the country there are just highly educated young tech-savvy people ready to wage that war. And they have invented so many false stories.” – Max Blumenthal, from this week’s interview

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Right now, in Ukraine it is said by multiple media sources in the West that Russia is behind a campaign to fabricate illusions about what President Vladimir Putin’s troops are and are not doing in the battlefield in order to bend sympathies of the public inside and outside of Russia. [1][2][3]

The Communications Security Establishment (CSE), a Canadian signals intelligence agency, has observed the Russian war messaging online and says via twitter:

“We are sharing this information as part of the government of Canada’s efforts to help inform Canadians so they can protect themselves from disinformation.”
[4]

Fair enough, in principle. But the point MUST be emphasized that the United States is DEFINITELY shaping coverage of war to their strategic advantage.

In 1964, the [Gulf of Tonkin incident](#), in which North Vietnamese boats attacked two US destroyers resulting in the Vietnam War, never actually happened.

In 1990, news of [Iraqis taking babies out of incubators](#) and throwing them on the floor sparking a surge in support for the Persian Gulf War the following year never actually happened. Same scenario with the claim of [weapons of mass destruction in Iraq](#) which served the purpose of instigating massive bloodshed during the lengthy Iraq War.

And more recently: In Venezuela, after widespread accusations of President **Nicolás Maduro's** troops torching a humanitarian convoy coming over the border from Colombia, it was established first by independent media that [hooligans from Columbia threw molotov cocktails](#) on the truck and then looting the trucks!

And as we have covered elsewhere on this site, including this program, accusations of [chemical weapons attacks waged by the president of Syria](#) in recent years were more likely waged by the opposition. [Humanitarian corridors](#) for civilians subjected to attacks by Syrian and Russian forces were actually struck by the opposition forces.

Given their record of distorting the truth, it would seem extremely out of character for the U.S. – NATO corporate media press to suddenly be addicted to the TRUTH!

On this week's Global Research News Hour, we will feature major instances of the holes in journalistic coverage not addressed by those who want "to help inform Canadians so they can protect themselves from disinformation."

Our first guest, journalist Max Blumenthal of [The Gray Zone](#), takes us through his site's multiple examples of how the stories pointing to Russian nastiness is not verified and even corrupted by the make-up of their press corps.

My next guest, author and activist Yves Engler explains the unacknowledged work of Canadians in the set-up for the war, and the building up of NATO to the outrage of Russia. Finally, Glenn Michalchuk finishes expressing his continued opposition to this war since February 24, and what listeners can do who wish to stop increased military funding in the upcoming Federal Budget of 2022.

Max Blumenthal is the founder and editor-in-chief of [The Gray Zone](#). He is an award-winning journalist and the author of several books, including best-selling [Republican Gomorrah](#), [Goliath](#), [The Fifty One Day War](#), and [The Management of Savagery](#).

Yves Engler is a Montreal based activist and author of twelve books including [House of mirrors: Justin Trudeau's Foreign Policy](#) and his latest [Stand on Guard for Whom? A People's History of the Canadian Military](#).

Glenn Michalchuk is chair of Peace Alliance Winnipeg and president of the Winnipeg branch of the Association of United Ukrainian Canadians.

(Global Research News Hour Episode 350)

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Transcript – Interview with Max Blumenthal, March 28, 2022

Global Research: We're going to touch base on the topic of disinformation, but not from the Russian side, from the US-NATO side. For this, I got hold of Max Blumenthal. He's an award-winning journalist, author of several books, and editor-in-chief of thegrayzone.com, which he describes as shining a spotlight on America's state of perpetual wars and its dangerous domestic repercussions. I started our conversation by asking Max to provide some examples of fake news manufactured in opposition to the Russians.

Max Blumenthal: It's really obvious that there are so many fake stories that you can't even count them. And it's hard to understand why they're so necessary when there is real civilian suffering in a city like Mariupol which Russia is taking street by street back from the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion, which has been incorporated into the Ukrainian military. There are civilians being killed in the fire or suffering enormously, but what the Ukrainian side has done, they've been, I mean, if you look at Syria or Venezuela, and how much the US intelligence cut-outs have invested there in training and cultivating their, not just their armed proxies but their information warriors. So much more has gone into Ukraine, and Ukraine has been controlled by this pro-US pro-NATO regime since 2014.

So it's just open season for funding PR operatives and tech startups to do the kind of information warfare that is the dream of the US. The propaganda war that we've seen waged by the Ukrainian government, it is a US propaganda war, it is a British propaganda war. And in Kiev and across the country there are just highly educated young tech-savvy people ready to wage that war and they have invented so many false stories, for instance the ghost of Kiev, or Keev as we're supposed to call it [laughter], a fighter pilot who has taken down 40 Russian jets like representative Adam Kinzinger, this wannabe n McCain tweeted about, the ghost of Kiev. And it turns out it's a completely fake story, no such fighter pilot exists. The Ukrainian Air Force doesn't even exist.

Then you got the Snake Island story of 13 soldiers, Ukrainian border guards, who stood up to a Russian battleship and said, you know, to screw off, I mean, they used harsher language than that, and then they all died fighting. It turned out there were way more than 13 border guards. All of them were captured, none of them defied the Russian warship at all, and they were then safe and sound as POWs. There was no brave standoff, but this incident, you know, was reported in the Washington Post, the New York Times, the Military Times as something real.

Then you've got something I've been looking at, using kind of open-source intelligence, otherwise known as reporting [laughter], and it's the bombing of the Mariupol theatre, which is said to be the deadliest incident of the war. CNN and BBC are reporting that 300 were killed in this theatre that women and children sheltered in, and that the theatre was marked with signs reading "children," to ward off Russian bombers, but they bombed it anyway. And it appears pretty clear that no one was inside the theatre when it was bombed, there are no images of rescuers or dead or survivors that can be found, and that the only source of this claim is an assistant to the exiled mayor of Mariupol, who has run away days ago, and who was working hand-in-glove with the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion, who is pro-Azov.

This is the only source for the BBC and CNN. It's just pure hearsay. They have not been able to independently verify anything, and just looking at the, you know, the photographic evidence, I found that there were cars parked all around this theatre the day before the bombing, and that the day of the bombing there were no vehicles. No vehicles damage, no vehicles present, and no people present.

GR: Wait a second, I mean, the press, aren't they supposed to verify before they go to print? I mean they're just taking the message from this one mayor as the basis for everything that's going on?

MB: Exactly. And so this is one of the worst performances, or maybe you could call it one of the best performances by US corporate media, because essentially, what we're seeing, is that they are an arm of the information war being waged by US intelligence through its Ukrainian proxies. And the assistant to the Ukrainian mayor, I was reading in Ukrainian media, just using translation tools, he said we had to abandon Mariupol in order to preserve our intelligence network. That was the language he used. So this is just an intelligence game.

And what is the agenda of the Azov Battalion in Mariupol—aside from establishing a fascist bastion, which they've sort of effectively done for years. They have been calling for a no-fly zone because they're desperate, they're losing the fight there against a much larger military force, just like the armed opposition in Syria was. So we've seen their commanders issued pleas in English on YouTube for NATO to intervene militarily. But NATO doesn't want to do it. Biden doesn't want to do it. They don't want a direct confrontation with a nuclear power. And so they're trying to generate emotionally potent incidents that will cause the Western public to demand that their leaders intervene.

And that was the point of the theatre story I think. Where Azov had controlled the theatre, they've controlled everything around it, and as they were retreating, it appears that an explosive charge was detonated with no one inside the theatre, or no one near the charge, that's what it looks like to me, I could be completely wrong, it's been 12 days since this tip took place and there's still no footage of dead people or rescue crews or anything.

So maybe that will turn up, and I'll be proven completely wrong, but it looks like they were trying to stage something to generate the emotional impact needed to get the West on board with getting in there, just like the Syrian rebels did, the so-called rebels in Douma, April 2018, when Jaish al-Islam, this extremist faction backed by Saudi Arabia was losing in a Damascus suburb, was retreating, had everyone, all the other battalions around it had been defeated by the Syrian Army, they were closing in. And suddenly they allege a chemical attack, a chlorine attack and produced video through all of these networks that have been set up through Turkish and US intelligence so they have like pretty powerful communication networks still even though their military capacity had collapsed. They produce, just video and a photograph of dead civilians in a basement. No evidence of any chlorine attack.

And then they gather a bunch of civilians together including children and start hosing them off through their auxiliary so-called rescue crews like the White Helmets and then, and then corporate media and the West broadcast all of it. "Allegations of a chemical attack," and they show children being hosed off. And then the leaders have to respond, and so they do pinprick missile strikes on Damascus.

That's the model that the Ukrainian forces are operating under.

GR: Well, they used to talk about the White Helmets was also providing a lot of disinformation and today they actually have Azov Battalion showing some of the theatre footage of the attacks in Mariupol. Is it the same tactic or there might be a little bit of a difference this time?

MB: What's different is that they didn't, what they could have done, which is what appears to have been done in Douma, was that these civilians had actually been killed. They may have been killed in a conventional, by a conventional weapon by the Syrian Army, or they could have been executed by these vicious forces. And I can tell you, like I've been in the ruins, in Ghouta, which is just west of Douma, and talked to civilians there about the conditions. They lived under just, a miniature Saudi Arabia but more tyrannical, for several years. They said that women were trafficked, people were used as slave labour, all the aid that came in was pillaged, and that people were used as human shields towards the end and held in a stable, and that the Syrian government was told that they will kill everyone in the stable if they enter the area.

So that was, and that's what sort of been going on Mariupol these past days, except the Azov Battalion apparently didn't kill anyone or take any dead bodies that had been killed by the Russian army and attempt to claim that they were killed inside the theatre. And that's what makes this incident so strange. I mean, they haven't really backed up any of their claims with the kind of photographic and video evidence that was so potent in Syria, and I'm waiting for that to come, but it just hasn't come, so it really looks like the Azov people let everyone just go the day before. We do hear a lot of talk about people leaving the day before, around the theatre.

GR: Yeah. Well you mentioned just a few days ago, there was a press article about an incident involving how some press agencies had biased their reporting by setting up an individual as a reporter and fixer for press agency BBC. And this reporter was working formally as the head of the PR firm linked to boosterism for Ukraine in as late as October 2021. So she brings the stories of this theatre in Mariupol, completely consistent with what the architects wanted people to see. Orysia Khimiak is her name. Could you describe a little bit about what you could see as some of the holes running through their news narratives?

MB: Well, the most obvious hole is that they did not have any evidence, photographic or video evidence, of even a rescue taking place or being attempted. The descriptions, they have two eyewitnesses, and these reporters are in Lviv or Lvov. which is in the west of Ukraine, very far from Mariupol, and so they're interviewing two people who said they were eyewitnesses delivering a very cinematic account, who themselves were not able to see who was responsible for the blast, they just said they felt a blast and that they had gone there to get lunch. I think what Azov appeared to be doing was just gathering people there with a field kitchen they said they had.

But beyond that, I mean, you have a co-author of these BBC articles, you look at who they are, they're a public relations operative from Lviv, and who also worked in Kiev on a app produced by a start-up that the Washington Post called one of the top Ukrainian war information messaging apps. And it's called Reface. It gives users the ability to put their face on celebrities' bodies in like famous film scenes...what they do is they've gathered millions of people into this network, and now they're pumping out messages urging them to stand with Ukraine, to send aid, to support the war effort, to support the Ukrainian military to everyone who participates in this app. And it seems like it was all done by design.

GR: Yeah. I mean, all my time in journalism, whenever you had any kind of potential conflict, you have to state it outright, you have to be transparent, and here it's presented as if it's totally fair, and I just don't get it.

MB: Well, it just shows what the BBC is. It's just another information weapon. And they just

cast aside any pretense of objectivity.

Like, on their site, one of the first things you see is that they're the most trusted network. And that you could trust them more than other outlets, and that they're against disinformation. And then you have them, you know their correspondent in Ukraine sharing a byline with someone who is a nationalist Ukrainian PR operative. I went on her Twitter account, and she's openly saying that she hates all Russians. She's saying, like, I cannot, I can no longer suspend my impulse to hate all Russians because of what they're doing.

So it's just like, it's right out there in the open. Her Twitter header is a meme referring to the phony incident of Snake Island, which she treats as real. This is the BBC. I mean, it's everything they say about RT... It just shows what a projection all of the denunciations of RT are.

GR: Yeah, now I know that the press keeps insisting that the idea that neo-Nazis are in Ukraine, that's Russian disinformation. I can't even hear any news about the Nazi Azov faction on the show like Democracy Now, which is held up as a high beacon of independent news reporting. And I don't think you can get a sense of what the war is unless you have acknowledgement of their existence. But it is only mentioned as Russian disinformation. And they say that there is a Jewish president, so how could the Nazis be taking over. That sort of thing. Give us a few short descriptions of how you, I guess, bulk up your insistence of the Nazis in Ukraine, and indeed how they are a major presence versus the Russian fairy tale.

MB: Well right now you could just look at who's doing the fighting in the key theatre of battle. It is Mariupol. And it is the Azov Battalion. That's their base. They captured it in 2014 and they maintained it on behalf of the Ukrainian State. The Azov Battalion emerged from the so-called black-shirts of the Maidan revolution of dignity which I would consider a US backed coup. They were the street muscle.



They themselves emerged out of the Patriot of Ukraine which was a gang of Fascist hooligans who assaulted migrants and Roma people, homosexuals, you know, the usual suspects, they were just literal, they were a literal neo-Nazi street gang that turned into one of the most ferocious and important battalions of the Ukrainian National Guard. The Azov Battalion which wears neo-Nazi insignia on its uniforms, has a civilian wing called a National Corps which operates openly intimidating citizens and political opponents in Kiev and cities across Ukraine under the auspices of the Ukrainian Interior Ministry.

They are sponsored officially by the Ukrainian Interior Ministry to keep order and they are armed by the state, their uniforms are provided by the state, and they go around intimidating city councils and mayors that will not do their bidding. And they've stolen elections by just going to the polls and telling people, we want.

They have another gang, C14, its name was inspired by the famous 14 words by the dead American Neo-Nazi leader David Lane, which has been funded and sponsored by the Ukrainian minister of culture. One of their leaders gave a talk at the America house in Kiev, which is an NGO sponsored by the US government, and the Kiev city council sponsored this group, C14, it's a literal neo-Nazi terrorist organization, to attack Roma people who are sleeping near a train station. It was considered part of a public clean-up campaign.

They filmed themselves pepper spraying women and elderly Roma people and beating them with clubs. These are leaders that have participated in negotiations with Zelensky and held veto power over the Minsk agreement because they have their forces in the east. And when Zelensky attempted to get them to pull back they just told him to go to hell and he left.

And Zelensky himself, while Jewish, has not only downplayed his Jewish background, he has said that it is cool and normal for a part of the Ukrainian population to revere Stepan Bandera, who is the hero of all Ukrainian nationalists and was the leader of the organization of Ukrainian nationalists during World War II who collaborated with Nazi Germany and participated in the Holocaust of Bullets, in which hundreds of thousands of Jews, ethnic Poles, and other minorities were exterminated across Ukraine.



That is just a small slice of the kind of collaboration between the Ukrainian state and literal neo-Nazis that we've witnessed since the birth of the Maidan regime in 2014, and what sets Ukraine apart from a country like the United States or Russia, which both have neo-Nazis and white supremacists, is that their neo-Nazis and white supremacists are part of the military, and part of the state, and they're officially recognized as such and celebrated.

GR: You know, your coverage has been quite refreshingly at odds with what we see in media. Have you been subjected to attacks of any origin? I mean, putting out Russian disinformation, or are they just, ignore you all together?

MB: Well, you can look at my Wikipedia page. It says that I'm like a regular free contributor to RT and Sputnik, and that is one of the first things you'll read. And while I value RT and Sputnik as news sources that provide a different point of view for Americans, we need to follow all sorts of media, I've been on RT I think twice in the past two or three months, and I have been on Sputnik maybe once.

I've been on other networks much more, but it doesn't list me that way, pretty much that you just follow, just look down through my Wikipedia page, and it basically makes me look like a psychotic holocaust-denying self-hating Jew who is an Assadist genocide denier, and it's just pure propaganda. None of the facts are engaged, and in fact, The Grayzone, the site that I run, while we've never had to really issue a factual correction, we've never had anyone debunk any of our articles, we are listed as a deprecated source on The Grayzone, sorry on Wikipedia, so the denigrations start there.

And then you have mainstream journalists just drawing on that to create and cobble together a phony narrative about us in order to discredit our work. What they want to do is frighten people away from our factual journalism because it's doing so much damage to their disinformation narrative. And I'm waiting for some mainstream...

I was attacked in the Times of London last week, which is like the MI5's favorite paper in the UK, because an academic in the UK retweeted one of my articles. They want to get him fired. I was sort of peripherally attacked. But I got a Newsweek reporter reached out to me and I was just, like, it was a strange request, so I assume there'll be some more attacks incoming.

No one in mainstream media can be treated as a good-faith operator or someone who will honestly quote you and present your side because if you just look at the whole spectrum of US media right now, there is only one side, and that is the Ukrainian nationalist narrative and the State Department side.

GR: I really congratulate you on your work, you and your colleagues out there at The Grayzone. Sounds like you're doing the kind of work that you should be doing if you're getting attacked to the extent you are. So I want to thank you for coming on the show, and maybe we can have you back at a later date.

MB: Thanks a lot Michael. Absolutely I would love to come back.

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WZBC 90.3 FM in Newton Massachusetts is Boston College Radio and broadcasts to the greater Boston area. The Global Research News Hour airs during Truth and Justice Radio which starts Sunday at 6am.

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CJMP 90.1 FM, Powell River Community Radio, airs the Global Research News Hour every Saturday at 8am.

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[Cowichan Valley Community Radio CICV 98.7 FM](#) serving the [Cowichan Lake](#) area of Vancouver Island, BC airs the program Thursdays at 9am pacific time.

Notes:

1. Ismail Shakil (April 1, 2022), "Russia using disinformation to back Ukraine invasion, Canadian agency says", Reuters; <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/canada-agency-finds-russia-backed-disinformation-campaigns-support-ukraine-2022-04-01/>
2. David Klepper And Amanda Seitz (April 1, 2022), "Russia aims Ukraine disinformation at Spanish speakers", Associated Press; <https://www.thestar.com/news/world/us/2022/04/01/russia-aims-ukraine-disinformation-at-spanish-speakers.html?rf>
3. Caroline Vakil (April 1, 2022) "Canadian agency says it's observed 'numerous Russia-backed disinformation campaigns'", The Hill; Canadian agency says it's observed 'numerous Russia-backed disinformation campaigns'
4. Ismail Shakil, op cit

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