

Discrediting Dissenting Viewpoints: US State-Affiliated NewsGuard Targets Consortium News

The Pentagon and State Dept.-linked outfit, with an ex-N.S.A. and C.I.A. director on its board, is accusing Consortium News of publishing “false content” on Ukraine, reports Joe Lauria.

By [Joe Lauria](#)

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Consortium News is being “reviewed” by NewsGuard, a U.S. government-linked organization that is trying to enforce a narrative on Ukraine while seeking to discredit dissenting views.

The organization has accused *Consortium News*, begun in 1995 by former Associated Press investigative reporter Robert Parry, of publishing “false content” on Ukraine.

It calls “false” essential facts about Ukraine that have been suppressed in mainstream media: 1) that there was a U.S.-backed coup in 2014 and 2) that neo-Nazism is a significant force in Ukraine. Reporting crucial information left out of corporate media is *Consortium News*’ essential mission.

But NewsGuard [considers](#) these facts to be “myths” and is demanding *Consortium News* “correct” these “errors.”

Who is NewsGuard?

NewsGuard set itself up in 2018 as a judge of news organizations’ credibility. The front page of NewsGuard’s [website](#) shows that it is “partners” with the State Department and the Pentagon, as well as with several major corporations, such as Microsoft. The nature of these “partnerships” is not entirely clear.

NewsGuard is a private corporation that can shield itself from First Amendment obligations. But it has connections to formerly high-ranking U.S. government officials in addition to its “partnerships” with the State Dept. and the Pentagon.

Among those sitting on NewsGuard's [advisory board](#) are Gen. Michael Hayden, the former Central Intelligence Agency and National Security Agency director; Tom Ridge, the first U.S. Homeland Security director and Anders Fogh Rasmussen, a former secretary general of NATO. NewsGuard [says](#) its "advisors provide advice and subject-matter expertise to NewsGuard. They play no role in the determinations of ratings or the Nutrition Label write ups of websites unless otherwise noted and have no role in the governance or management of the organization."

The co-CEO, with former *Wall Street Journal* publisher Louis Gordon Crovitz, is Steven Brill, who in the 1990s published *Brill's Content*, a magazine that was billed as a watchdog of the press, critiquing the role of the media to hold government to account. NewsGuard is a government-affiliated organization judging media like *Consortium News* that is totally independent of government or corporations.

NewsGuard has a [rating process](#) that results in a news organization receiving either a green or red label. Fox News and other major media, for example, have received green labels.

Getting a red label means that potentially millions of people that have the NewsGuard extension installed and operating on their browsers will see the green or red mark affixed to websites on social media and Google searches. (For individuals that do not already have it installed and operating on Microsoft's browser, it costs \$4.95 a month in the U.S., £4.95 in the U.K., or €4.95 in the EU to run the extension.)

According to NewsGuard, libraries in the U.S. and Britain have had it installed on their computers, and it is also being put on computers of U.S. active duty personnel. *Slate* [reported](#) in January 2019 that NewsGuard:

"[struck a deal with Microsoft](#) to incorporate those ratings into the tech giant's Edge browser as an optional setting. That's when the Guardian noticed that the Mail Online had been tagged by NewsGuard with a 'red' label, a reliability score of 3 out of 9, and the following warning: 'Proceed with caution: This website generally fails to maintain basic standards of accuracy and accountability.' For Microsoft Edge users with the 'News Ratings' feature turned on, that warning appeared alongside every link to the Mail Online—whether in Google search results, Facebook or Twitter feeds, or the Mail's own homepage."



NewsGuard has a partnership with the Pentagon. (Joe Lauria)

Approach to Consortium News

Consortium News was contacted by NewsGuard analyst Zachary Fishman. In his request to speak to someone at *Consortium News* he said categorically that *CN* had published “false content” and that the interview would be on the record. “I’m hoping to talk with someone who could answer a few questions about its structure and editorial processes — including its ownership, its handling of corrections, and its publication of false content,” he wrote in an email.

As editor-in-chief, I informed him that our founder, editors and writers came from high levels of establishment journalism. I told him that in thousands of press interviews I’ve conducted over nearly half a century in journalism I had never known anyone accusing a prospective interviewee of misconduct upfront and then determining that the interview would be on the record, when the ground rules are usually set by the person being interviewed.

Fishman apologized and tried to say his mind wasn’t made up about *Consortium News*, when he had clearly stated that it was. “I do apologize that the wording of my email insinuated that I had come to a predetermined conclusion on whether your website has published false content, when I have not — be sure that I am interested in your responses to my questions,” he wrote in an email.

According to his LinkedIn [profile](#), Fishman had one previous job in science and financial journalism that lasted 15 months for a company called Fastinform that is now defunct. Last month, all the links of his published pieces on LinkedIn went to a site that no longer exists. The links have now been removed.

Fishman has degrees in health, environment and science journalism and engineering

physics. He has no experience in political reporting and especially of the politics of Eastern Europe and U.S.-Russia relations.

NewsGuard's determination on *Consortium News* will be [made](#) by the analyst and, "At least one senior editor and NewsGuard's co-CEOs review every Nutrition Label prior to publication to ensure that the rating is as fair and accurate as possible."

Charge: There Was 'No US-Backed Coup'



Violence during the Maidan coup in Ukraine, 2014. (Wikipedia)

NewsGuard alleges that *Consortium News* has published "false content" by reporting that there was a U.S.-backed coup in Ukraine in 2014 and that neo-Nazis have significant influence in the country.

Fishman took issue with a:

"February 2022 article '[Ukraine: Guides to Reflection,](#)' [which] asserted, 'Hence, the inflation of Russian behavior in Ukraine (**where Washington organized a coup against a democratically elected government** because we disliked its political complexion)'

Fishman then wrote:

"The U.S. supported the Maidan revolution that ousted then-Ukraine President Viktor Yanukovich (sic) in 2014 — including a December 2013 visit by John McCain to Kyiv in support of protesters — but there is no evidence that the U.S. 'organized' a 'coup.' Instead, it has the markings of a popular uprising, precipitated by widely covered protests against Yanukovich's decision to suspend preparations for the signing of an

association and free-trade agreement with the European Union.”

Viktor Yanukovych was democratically elected as president of Ukraine in 2010 in an election [certified](#) by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, a fact not mentioned in NewsGuard’s writings on the change of government in Ukraine. Even though Yanukovych agreed to an EU political settlement and early elections, violence forced him to flee from the capital on Feb. 21, 2014. Reporting that the neo-Nazi Right Sector was at the forefront of the violent overthrow, *The New York Times* (green check) [wrote](#) earlier that day:

“Dmytro Yarosh, the leader of Right Sector, a coalition of hard-line nationalist groups, reacted defiantly to news of the settlement, drawing more cheers from the crowd.

‘The agreements that were reached do not correspond to our aspirations,’ he said. ‘Right Sector will not lay down arms. Right Sector will not lift the blockade of a single administrative building until our main demand is met — the resignation of Yanukovych.’ He added that he and his supporters were ‘ready to take responsibility for the further development of the revolution.’ The crowd shouted: ‘Good! Good!’

A [study](#) on the violence used to overthrow the government, by Prof. Serhiy Kudelia, a political scientist at Baylor University, says the overthrow succeeded because of “the embeddedness of violent groups” in a non-violent protest. The violence began on Dec. 1, 2013 when these violent groups attacked police with “iron chains, flares, stones and petrol bombs” and tried to ram a bulldozer through police lines. The police viciously fought back that day.

As the *International Business Times (IBT)* (green check) wrote about these groups at the time:

[“According to a member of anti-fascist Union Ukraine](#), a group that monitors and fights fascism in Ukraine, ‘There are lots of nationalists here [EuroMaidan] including Nazis. They came from all over Ukraine, and they make up about 30% of protesters.

Different groups [of anarchists] came together for a meeting on the Maidan. While they were meeting, a group of Nazis came in a larger group, they had axes and baseball bats and sticks, helmets, they said it was their territory. They called the anarchists things like Jews, blacks, communists. There weren’t even any communists, that was just an insult. The anarchists weren’t expecting this and they left. People with other political views can’t stay in certain places, they aren’t tolerated,’ a member of the group continued.”

The violence by far-right groups was evidently condoned by Sen. John McCain who expressed his support for the uprising by addressing the Maidan crowd later that month. Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland and then U.S. ambassador Geoffrey Pyatt visited the square after the violence had broken out.

NewsGuard’s [account](#) of the events of Feb. 21, 2014 says that even though Yanukovych agreed to the early elections, “angry protestors demanded Yanukovych’s immediate resignation,” and he fled on that day after “hundreds of police guarding government buildings abandoned their posts.” NewsGuard then says “protestors took control of several government buildings the next day.”

Government Buildings Seized

But protestors had already [seized](#) government buildings as early as December 2013. On Jan. 24 protestors broke into the Agriculture Ministry building in Kiev and occupied it. On the same day barricades were set up near the presidential headquarters. Government buildings in the west of the country had also been occupied. *The Guardian* (green check) [reported](#) on Jan. 24:

“There were dramatic developments in the west of the country on Thursday as hundreds of people forced their way into the office of the regional governor in the city of Lviv, and forced him to sign a resignation letter. Oleh Salo, a Yanukovych appointee in a city where support for the president is in the low single digits, later said he signed the letter under duress and was rescinding his resignation.

Thousands also stormed regional administration headquarters in Rivne on Thursday, breaking down doors and demanding the release of people detained in the unrest there, Unian news agency reported. In the town of Cherkasy, 125 miles south of Kiev, about 1,000 protesters took over the first two floors of the main administration building and lit fires outside the building.

Similar action took place in Ternopil, Ivano-Frankivsk and Khmelnytsky in western and central [Ukraine](#), as well as parts of the north-east, the Party of the Regions said.”

Protestors had begun [occupying](#) Kiev City Hall in December, with a [portrait](#) of Ukraine’s World War II fascist leader Stepan Bandera hanging from the rafters. On the night of Feb. 21, the leader of the Neo-fascist Right Sector, Andriy Parubiy, [announced](#) that the Verkhovna Rada (parliament), the Presidential Administration, the Cabinet of Ministers and the Ministry of Internal Affairs had all come under control of the protestors.

Therefore NewsGuard has published “false content” by reporting that government buildings were occupied the day after Yanukovych fled the capital. It should print a correction.

On the day after Yanukovych fled, the Rada voted without the presence of Yanukovych’s party — the largest in the country — to impeach him after the fact of his violent overthrow. NewsGuard omitted the key fact that the impeachment vote was tainted by the absence of Yanukovych’s party and that the impeachment became largely irrelevant after violence forced him to flee the capital.

Democratically-elected leaders are removed by electoral defeat, impeachment or votes of no confidence, not by violence. NewsGuard writes that “hundreds of police guarding government buildings abandoned their posts” on the day Yanukovych was forced out, but doesn’t say why. As *Jacobin* (NewsGuard green check) magazine [reports](#):

“Whatever one thinks of the Maidan protests, the increasing violence of those involved was [key](#) to their ultimate victory. In response to a brutal police crackdown, protestors began fighting with chains, sticks, stones, petrol bombs, even a bulldozer — and, eventually, firearms, all culminating in what was effectively an armed battle in February, which left thirteen police officers and nearly fifty protesters dead. The police ‘could no longer defend themselves’ from protesters’ attacks,” writes political scientist Sergiy Kudelia, causing them to retreat, and precipitating Yanukovych’s exit.”

NewsGuard calls the events a “revolution,” yet revolutions in history have typically been against monarchs or dictators, not against democratically-elected leaders. For instance, the 1776 American Revolution, the 1789 French Revolution, the 1917 Russian Revolution, the 1952 Egyptian Revolution, the 1979 Iranian Revolution and countless others were against monarchs. Coups have been against both elected and non-elected leaders. Revolutions change political systems, usually from monarchies to republics. Ukraine’s political system was not changed, only its leader.

As a reader, Adrian E.. commented below on this article:

“When a movement that is supported by about half the population and opposed by about half the population violently overthrows a democratically elected government, this may be given different names (e.g. coup), but it is certainly not a “popular revolution”.

The Maydan movement was never supported by more than about half the Ukrainian population. It was supported by a vast majority in Western Ukraine, by very few people in the East and South of the country, with people more evenly split in the center/North. This clearly was not a case of a government that had lost public support to such a degree that there was a general consensus that it should resign. It was the case of one political camp representing about half the country that had lost the last elections imposing its will with brutal deadly violence.”

By any measure, Yanukovych’s ouster was an unconstitutional change in government. His “impeachment” without his party present for the vote came after government buildings had been seized and after violence drove him from the capital.

Circumstantial Evidence



McCain addressing crowd in Kiev, Dec. 15, 2013. (U.S. Senate/Office of Chris Murphy/Wikimedia Commons)

In its [version](#) of these events, NewsGuard only [refers](#) to circumstantial evidence of the coup, interpreting it as U.S. “support” for a “revolution” against a democratically-elected president.

NewsGuard fails to point out that McCain, Sen. Christopher Murphy (D-CT) as well as Nuland appeared on stage in the Maidan with Oleh Tyahnybok, leader of the Neo-fascist Svoboda Party, formerly known as the Social National Party.

NewsGuard does not consider how such events would be seen in the United States if a senior Russian foreign ministry official, two leading Russian lawmakers and Russia’s ambassador to the U.S. appeared on stage with a far-right American leader to address a crowd on the Washington Mall seeking to oust an elected U.S. president. If that president were overthrown violently, would Americans think it a Russian-backed the coup?

NewsGuard discusses Nuland’s 2013 [speech](#) in which she revealed that since 1991 the U.S. had spent \$5 billion to help bring about Ukraine’s “aspirations.” What it fails to point out is that U.S. aspirations were to turn Ukraine towards the West and away from Russia. And the U.S. had work to do.

In a 2008 poll, 17 years after this U.S. effort began, and the year in which the U.S. said Ukraine would one day join NATO, [50 percent of Ukrainians actually opposed NATO membership](#) against just 24.3 percent who favored it. A 2010 Gallup poll showed that [40 percent of Ukrainians viewed NATO as more threat than protector](#). Just 17 percent had the opposite view. So building up civil society through U.S.-funded NGOs to favor the West was the U.S. challenge.

NewsGuard does not mention that part of the \$5 billion the U.S. spent was to help organize protests. There was genuine popular dissatisfaction with Yanukovych that the NED nurtured and trained. *Jacobin* reported of the 2014 events:

“US officials, [unhappy](#) with the scuttled EU deal, saw a similar chance in the Maidan protests. Just two months before they broke out, the NED’s then president, pointing to Yanukovych’s European outreach, [wrote](#) that “the opportunities are considerable, and there are important ways Washington could help.”

In practice, this meant funding groups like New Citizen, which the *Financial Times* [reported](#) “played a big role in getting the protest up and running,” led by a pro-EU [opposition figure](#). Journalist Mark Ames discovered the organization had received [hundreds of thousands](#) of dollars from US democracy promotion initiatives.”

[Writing](#) in *Consortium News* six days after Yanukovych’s ouster, Parry reported that over the previous year, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), which funds NGOs in countries the U.S. targets for regime change, had bankrolled 65 projects in Ukraine totaling more than \$20 million. Parry called it “a shadow political structure of media and activist groups that could be deployed to stir up unrest when the Ukrainian government didn’t act as desired.”

The NED, on Feb. 25, the day after the Russian invasion, [deleted](#) all projects in Ukraine it funded, which are archived [here](#). The NED [meddled](#) in Ukrainian politics in 2004 in the so-

called Orange Revolution. *The Washington Post* (green check) [wrote](#) in 1991 that what the C.I.A. once did in secret — destabilizing and overthrowing regimes — the NED was now doing openly.

C.I.A. or NED-led coups are never made up out of whole cloth. The U.S. works with genuine opposition movements within a country, sometimes popular uprisings, to finance, train and direct them. This U.S. has a long [history](#) of overthrowing foreign governments, the most infamous examples being Iran in 1953, Guatemala in 1954, and Chile in 1973.

In September 2013, before the Maidan uprising began, long-time NED head Carl Gerhman called Ukraine “the biggest prize” in a *Washington Post* op-ed [piece](#), and warned that “Russians, too, face a choice, and Putin may find himself on the losing end not just in the near abroad but within Russia itself.”

In 2016 he [said](#) the NED has been involved in Ukraine since the 1980s and he praised the “overthrow of Yanukovich.”

Nuland-Pyatt Tape Omitted

Most significantly, NewsGuard’s [attempt](#) to refute U.S. involvement in the coup omits the 2014 intercepted and leaked [telephone call](#) between Nuland and Pyatt, the then U.S. ambassador to Ukraine, in which the two discuss who will make up the new government weeks before Yanukovich was overthrown.

On the leaked tape, Nuland and Pyatt talk about “midwifing” a new government; Vice President Joe Biden’s role, and setting up meetings with Ukrainian politicians to make it happen. Nuland says the prime minister should be Arseniy Yatsenyuk, and indeed he became prime minister after the coup.

At the time, the BBC (green check) wrote of the leak: “The US says that it is working with all sides in the crisis to reach a peaceful solution, noting that ‘ultimately it is up to the Ukrainian people to decide their future’. However this transcript suggests that the US has very clear ideas about what the outcome should be and is striving to achieve these goals.”

The U.S. State Department never denied the authenticity of the video, and even issued an apology to the European Union after Nuland is heard on the tape saying, “Fuck the EU.” Mainstream media at the time focused almost exclusively on that off-color remark as a distraction from the greater significance of U.S. interference in Ukraine’s internal affairs.

Why did Nuland say, “Fuck the EU”? At the time she said it, France, Germany and Poland were working for the EU on a political settlement with Russia to the Maidan crisis that would leave Yanukovich in power.

Indeed the E.U. brokered a deal with Yanukovich, who agreed to early elections by December, a restoration of the 2004 Constitution and an amnesty for all protestors, clearing the way for no one to be held responsible for the violent ouster. Yanukovich [announced](#) the agreement, with E.U. officials at his side in Kiev, on Feb. 21, 2014. Later that day he was violently driven from power.

Leaving the historic role of the NED and the essential Nuland-Pyatt conversation out of its reporting is an omission of evidence by NewsGuard, typical of corporate media. Omitting

crucial elements of a story changes its meaning and in this case undermines NewsGuard's account of the events of 2014.

This is an excellent example of why Parry started *Consortium News*: to report on crucial information that corporate media sometimes purposely and deceptively leave out to change the meaning of a story. NewsGuard should correct its [story](#) about the coup, not *Consortium News*. NewsGuard [invites](#) readers to request corrections by emailing them at corrections@newsguardtech.com.

Likely Reasons for the Coup

Wall Street and Washington swept in after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 under a pliable Boris Yeltsin (who received direct U.S. help to win re-election in 1996) to asset-strip the formerly state-owned industries, enrich themselves and a new class of oligarchs and impoverish the former Soviet people.

The ascension of Vladimir Putin to power on New Year's Eve 1999 gradually began to curb U.S. influence in post-Soviet Russia, especially after Putin's 2007 Munich Security Conference speech, in which he [blasted](#) U.S. unilateral aggression, especially in Iraq.

Eventually Putin restored sovereignty over much of the Russian economy, turning Washington and Wall Street against him. (As President Joe Biden has now made [clear](#) on more than one occasion, the U.S. aim is to overthrow him.)

In his 1997 book, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, former U.S. national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski wrote:

"Ukraine, a new and important space on the Eurasian chessboard, is a geopolitical pivot because its very existence as an independent country helps to transform Russia. Without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be a Eurasian empire. Russia without Ukraine can still strive for imperial status, but it would then become a predominantly Asian imperial state."

Thus U.S. "primacy," or world dominance, which still drives Washington, is not possible without control of Eurasia, as Brzezinski argued, and that's not possible without control of Ukraine by pushing Russia out (U.S. takeover of Ukraine in the 2014 coup) and dominating Moscow as it did when this was written in the 1990s.

Deep Western involvement in Ukrainian politics and economy never ended from those early post-Soviet days. When Yanukovich acted legally (the Rada [authorized](#) it) to reject the European Union association agreement in favor of a Russian economic package on better terms, it threatened to curtail Western economic involvement. Yanukovich became a marked man.

Yanukovich had already made Russian an official language, he had [rejected](#) NATO membership, and reversed his pro-Western predecessor's move to glorify Nazi collaborators. Yanukovich's predecessor, President Viktor Yushchenko, had made Ukraine's World War II-era fascist leader Stepan Bandera a "Hero of Ukraine."

There was genuine popular dissatisfaction among mostly Western Ukrainians with Yanukovich, which intensified and became violent after he rejected the EU deal. Within months he was overthrown.

After the Coup

The U.S.-installed government in Kiev outlawed political parties, including the Communist Party, and stripped Russian as an official language. Yanukovych's Party of the Regions was banned in several oblasts and eventually collapsed. An American [citizen](#) became finance minister and Vice President Joe Biden became Barack Obama's virtual viceroy in Ukraine.

Videos have emerged of Biden giving instructions to the nominal president at the time, Petro Poroshenko. By his own admission, Biden forced the resignation of Viktor Shokin, Ukraine's prosecutor general.

Shokin [testified](#) under oath that he was about to investigate Burisma Holdings, the company on which the vice president's son was given a lucrative board membership just months after the U.S.-backed coup.

Biden, other U.S. officials, and the media at the time lied that Shokin was removed because he was corrupt. State Dept. memos [released](#) this year and published by *Just the News* (green-check) actually praise Shokin for his anti-corruption work. The question of whether the leader of a foreign nation has the right to remove another country's prosecutor was buried.

Eight days after nearly 50 anti-coup protestors in Odessa were [burned](#) to death on May 2, 2014 by far-right counter-protestors dominated by Right Sector, the coup-resisting provinces of Luhansk and Donetsk in the Donbass region declared independence from Ukraine. Russia began assisting them and, after a [visit](#) to Kiev by then C.I.A. Director John Brennan, Poroshenko launched a war against the separatists that lasted eight years, killing thousands of civilians, until Russia intervened in the civil conflict in February.

After the coup, NATO began arming, training and conducting [exercises](#) with the Ukrainian military, turning it into a de facto NATO member. These were not just the interests of part of Ukraine that were being served, but those of powerful foreign actors. It was akin to a 19th century-style colonial takeover of a country.

Charge: Nazi Influence 'Exaggerated'

The U.S. relationship with Ukrainian fascists began after the Second World War. During the war, units of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN-B) took part in the Holocaust, [killing](#) at least 100,000 Jews and Poles. Mykola Lebed, a top aide to Stepan Bandera, the leader of the fascist OUN-B, was recruited by the C.I.A. after the war, according to a 2010 [study](#) by the U.S. National Archives.

The government study said, "Bandera's wing (OUN/B) was a militant fascist organization." Bandera's closest deputy, Yaroslav Stetsko, said: "'I...fully appreciate the undeniably harmful and hostile role of the Jews, who are helping Moscow to enslave Ukraine.... I therefore support the destruction of the Jews and the expedience of bringing German methods of exterminating Jewry to Ukraine....'"

The study says: "At a July 6, 1941, meeting in Lwów, Bandera loyalists determined that Jews 'have to be treated harshly.... We must finish them off.... Regarding the Jews, we will adopt any methods that lead to their destruction.'"

Lebed himself [proposed](#) to “‘cleanse the entire revolutionary territory of the Polish population,’ so that a resurgent Polish state would not claim the region as in 1918.” Lebed was the “foreign minister” of a Banderite government in exile, but he later broke with Bandera for acting as a dictator. The U.S. Army Counterintelligence Corps termed Bandera “extremely dangerous” yet said he was “looked upon as the spiritual and national hero of all Ukrainians....”

The C.I.A. was not interested in working with Bandera, pages 81-82 of the [report](#) say, but the British MI6 was. “MI6 argued, Bandera’s group was ‘the strongest Ukrainian organization abroad, is deemed competent to train party cadres, [and] build a morally and politically healthy organization....’” An early 1954 MI6 summary noted that, “the operational aspect of this [British] collaboration [with Bandera] was developing satisfactorily. Gradually a more complete control was obtained over infiltration operations ... “

Britain ended its collaboration with Bandera in 1954. West German intelligence, under former Nazi intelligence chief Reinhard Gehlen, then worked with Bandera, who was eventually assassinated with cyanide dust by the KGB in Munich in 1959.

Instead of Bandera, the C.I.A. was interested in Lebed, despite his fascist background. They set him up in an office in New York City from which he directed sabotage and propaganda operations on the agency’s behalf inside Ukraine against the Soviet Union. The U.S. government study says:

“CIA operations with these Ukrainians began in 1948 under the cryptonym CARTEL, soon changed to AERODYNAMIC. ... Lebed relocated to New York and acquired permanent resident status, then U.S. citizenship. It kept him safe from assassination, allowed him to speak to Ukrainian émigré groups, and permitted him to return to the United States after operational trips to Europe. Once in the United States, Lebed was the CIA’s chief contact for AERODYNAMIC. CIA handlers pointed to his ‘cunning character,’ his ‘relations with the Gestapo and ... Gestapo training,’ that the fact that he was ‘a very ruthless operator.’”

The C.I.A. worked with Lebed on sabotage and pro-Ukrainian nationalist propaganda operations inside Ukraine until Ukraine’s independence in 1991. “Mykola Lebed’s relationship with the CIA lasted the entire length of the Cold War,” the study says. “While most CIA operations involving wartime perpetrators backfired, Lebed’s operations augmented the fundamental instability of the Soviet Union.”

Bandera Revival

The U.S. thus covertly kept Ukrainian fascist ideas alive inside Ukraine until at least Ukrainian independence was achieved. “Mykola Lebed, Bandera’s wartime chief in Ukraine, died in 1998. He is buried in New Jersey, and his papers are located at the Ukrainian Research Institute at Harvard University,” the U.S. National Archives study says.

The successor organization to the OUN-B in the United States did not die with him, however. It had been renamed the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (UCCA), according to *IBT*.

“By the mid-1980s, the Reagan administration was honeycombed with UCCA members. Reagan personally welcomed [Yaroslav] Stetsko, the Banderist leader who oversaw the

massacre of 7,000 Jews in Lviv, in the White House in 1983," [IBT reported](#). "Following the [demise of Yanukovich's regime](#), the UCCA [helped organise](#) rallies in cities across the US in support of the EuroMaidan protests," it reported.

That is a direct link between Maidan and WWII-era Ukrainian fascism.

Despite the U.S. favoring the less extreme Lebed over Bandera, the latter has remained the more inspiring figure in Ukraine.

In 1991, the first year of Ukraine's independence, the Neo-fascist Social National Party, later [Svoboda Party](#), was formed, tracing its provenance directly to Bandera. It had a street [named](#) after Bandera in Lviv, and tried to name the city's airport after him. (Svoboda won 10 percent of the Rada's seats in 2012 before the coup and before McCain and Nuland appeared with its leader the following year.)

In 2010, pro-Western Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko [declared](#) Bandera a Hero of Ukraine, a status reversed by Yanukovich, who was overthrown.

More than 50 monuments, busts and museums commemorating Bandera have been [erected](#) in Ukraine, two-thirds of which have been built since 2005, the year the pro-American Yushchenko was elected. A Swiss academic [study](#) says:

"On January 13, 2011, the L'vivs'ka Oblast' Council, meeting at an extraordinary session next to the Bandera monument in L'viv, reacted to the abrogation [skasuvannya] of Viktor Yushchenko's order about naming Stepan Bandera a 'Hero of Ukraine' by affirming that 'for millions of Ukrainians Bandera was and remains a Ukrainian Hero notwithstanding pitiable and worthless decisions of the courts' and declaring its intention to rename 'Stepan Bandera Street' as 'Hero of Ukraine Stepan Bandera Street.'"

Torchlit parades behind Bandera's portrait are common in Ukrainian cities, particularly on Jan. 1, his birthday, including this [year](#).

Mainstream on Neo-Nazis

From the start of the 2013-2014 events in Ukraine, *Consortium News* founder Robert Parry and other writers began providing the evidence *NewsGuard* says doesn't exist, reporting extensively on the coup and the influential role of Ukraine's neo-Nazis. At the time, corporate media also reported on the essential part neo-Nazis played in the coup.

As *The New York Times* [reported](#), the neo-nazi group, Right Sector, had the key role in the violent ouster of Yanukovich. The role of Neo-fascist groups in the uprising and its influence on Ukrainian society was well reported by mainstream media outlets at the time.

The [BBC](#), the [NYT](#), the [Daily Telegraph](#) and [CNN](#) all reported on Right Sector, C14 and other extremists' role in the overthrow of Yanukovich. The BBC ran this report a week after his ouster:

And this one in July 2015:

After the coup a number of ministers in the new government came from Neo-fascist parties. NBC News (green check) [reported](#) in March 2014: “Svoboda, which means ‘Freedom,’ was given almost a quarter of the Cabinet positions in the interim government formed after the ouster of President Viktor Yanukovich in February.”

Svoboda’s leader, Tyahnybok, whom McCain and Nuland stood on stage with, once [called for](#) the liberation of Ukraine from the “Muscovite-Jewish mafia.” *The International Business Times* (green check) reported:

“In 2005 Tyahnybok signed an open letter to then Ukrainian president Viktor Yushchenko urging him to ban all Jewish organisations, including the Anti-Defamation League, which he claimed carried out ‘criminal activities [of] organised Jewry’, ultimately aimed at the genocide of the Ukrainian people.”

Before McCain and Nuland embraced Tyahnybok and his social national party, it was condemned by the European Parliament, which said in 2012:

“[Parliament] recalls that racist, anti-Semitic and xenophobic views go against the EU’s fundamental values and principles and therefore appeals to pro-democratic parties in the Verkhovna Rada [Ukraine’s legislature] not to associate with, endorse, or form coalitions with this party.”

Such mainstream reports on Banderism have stopped as the Neo-fascist role in Ukraine was suppressed in Western media [once](#) Putin made “de-nazification” a goal of the invasion.

The Azov Battalion, which arose during the coup, became a significant force in the war against the Russian-speaking people of the Donbass, who resisted the coup. Its commander, Andriy Biletsky, infamously said Ukraine’s mission is to “lead the White Races of the world in a final crusade for their survival ... against the Semite-led Untermenschen.”

In 2014 the now Azov Regiment was officially incorporated into Ukraine’s National Guard under the control of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. It is further integrated into the state by [working closely](#) with the SBU intelligence service. Azov is the only known Neo-fascist component in a nation’s military anywhere in the world.

As part of the Ukraine military, Azov members have still sported yellow arm bands (until this [week](#)) with the Wolfsangel once worn by German SS troops in World War II. Including the [atrocities](#) it has continued to commit, Azov shows the world that integration into the state has not denazified them. On the contrary, it may have increased its influence on the state.

The U.S. and NATO have also [trained](#) and [armed](#) Azov since Barack Obama had denied lethal aid to Ukraine. One reason Obama declined sending arms to Ukraine was because he was afraid they may fall into these right-wing extremists’ hands. [According](#) to the green-checked *New York Times*,

“Mr. Obama continues to pose questions indicating his doubts. ‘O.K., what happens if we send in equipment — do we have to send in trainers?’ said one person paraphrasing the discussion on the condition of anonymity. ‘What if it ends up in the hands of thugs? What if Putin escalates?’”

NewsGuard's Objections

NewsGuard's argument against the major influence of neo-Nazi groups in Ukraine rests on Neo-fascist political parties faring poorly at the polls. This ignores the stark fact that these groups engage instead in extra-parliamentary extremism.

In its charge against *Consortium News* for publishing "false content" about Neo-fascism in Ukraine, NewsGuard's Fishman wrote:

"There isn't evidence that Nazism has a substantial influence in Ukraine. Radical far-right groups in Ukraine do represent a 'threat to the democratic development of Ukraine,' according to [2018 Freedom House report](#). But it also stated that far-right extremists have poor political representation in Ukraine and no plausible path to power — for example, in the [2019 parliamentary elections](#), the far-right nationalist party Svoboda won 2.2 percent of the vote, while the Svoboda candidate, Ruslan Koshulynskyy, won just 1.6 percent of the vote in the presidential election."

But this argument of focusing on elections results has been dismissed by a number of mainstream sources, not least of which is the Atlantic Council, probably the most anti-Russian think tank in the world. In a 2019 [article](#), a writer for the Atlantic Council said:

"To be clear, far-right parties like Svoboda perform poorly in Ukraine's polls and elections, and Ukrainians evince no desire to be ruled by them. But this argument is a bit of 'red herring.' It's not extremists' electoral prospects that should concern Ukraine's friends, *but rather the state's unwillingness or inability to confront violent groups and end their impunity*. Whether this is due to a continuing sense of indebtedness to some of these groups for fighting the Russians or fear they might turn on the state itself, it's a real problem and we do no service to Ukraine by sweeping it under the rug." [Emphasis added.]

"Fear that they might turn on the state itself," acknowledges the powerful leverage these groups have over the government. The Atlantic Council piece then underscores how influential these groups are:

"It sounds like the stuff of Kremlin propaganda, but it's not. Last week Hromadske Radio [revealed](#) that Ukraine's Ministry of Youth and Sports is funding the [neo-Nazi group C14](#) to promote 'national patriotic education projects' in the country. On June 8, the Ministry announced that it will award C14 a little less than \$17,000 for a children's camp. It also awarded funds to Holosiyiv Hideout and Educational Assembly, both of which have links to the far-right. The revelation represents a dangerous example of law enforcement tacitly accepting or even encouraging the increasing lawlessness of far-right groups willing to use violence against those they don't like.

Since the beginning of 2018, C14 and other far-right groups such as the Azov-affiliated National Militia, Right Sector, *Karpatska Sich*, and others have attacked Roma groups [several](#) times, as well as [anti-fascist](#) demonstrations, [city council](#) meetings, an event [hosted](#) by Amnesty International, [art exhibitions](#), [LGBT events](#), and environmental [activists](#). On March 8, violent groups launched attacks against [International Women's Day marchers](#) in cities across Ukraine. In only a few of these cases did police do anything to prevent the attacks, and in some they even [arrested](#) peaceful demonstrators [rather than the actual perpetrators](#)."

The Atlantic Council is not the only anti-Russian outfit that recognizes the dangerous power of the Neo-fascist groups in Ukraine. Bellingcat [published](#) an alarming 2018 article headlined, “Ukrainian Far-Right Fighters, White Supremacists Trained by Major European Security Firm.”

NATO has also [trained](#) the Azov Regiment, directly linking the U.S. with far-right Ukrainian extremists.

The Hill reported in 2017 in an [article](#) headlined, “The reality of neo-Nazis in Ukraine is far from Kremlin propaganda,” that:

“Some [Western observers](#) claim that there are no neo-Nazi elements in Ukraine, chalking the assertion up to propaganda from Moscow. Unfortunately, they are sadly mistaken.

There are indeed neo-Nazi formations in Ukraine. This has been overwhelmingly confirmed by nearly every major Western outlet. The fact that analysts are able to dismiss it as propaganda disseminated by Moscow is profoundly disturbing.

Azov’s logo is composed of two emblems — the [wolfsangel](#) and the [Sonnenrad](#) — identified as neo-Nazi symbols by the Anti-Defamation League. The wolfsangel is used by the U.S. hate group [Aryan Nations](#), while the Sonnenrad was among the neo-Nazi symbols at this summer’s deadly [march](#) in Charlottesville.

Azov’s neo-Nazi character has been covered by the [New York Times](#), the [Guardian](#), the [BBC](#), the [Telegraph](#) and [Reuters](#), among others. On-the-ground journalists from established Western media outlets have written of [witnessing](#) SS runes, swastikas, torchlight marches, and Nazi salutes. They [interviewed](#) Azov soldiers who readily [acknowledged](#) being neo-Nazis. They filed these reports under unambiguous headlines such as “[How many neo-Nazis is the U.S. backing in Ukraine?](#)” and “[Volunteer Ukrainian unit includes Nazis.](#)”

How is this Russian propaganda?

The [U.N.](#) and [Human Rights Watch](#) have accused Azov, as well as [other](#) Kiev battalions, of a litany of [human rights abuses](#).”

Neo-facism has infected Ukrainian popular culture as well. A half-dozen neo-Nazi music groups held a [concert](#) in 2019 commemorating the day Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union.

Amnesty International in 2019 [warned](#) that “Ukraine is sinking into a chaos of uncontrolled violence posed by radical groups and their total impunity. Practically no one in the country can feel safe under these conditions.”

Zelensky & Neo-Nazis

One of Ukraine’s most powerful oligarchs from the early 1990s, [Ihor Kolomoisky](#), was an early financial backer of the Neo-Nazi Azov Battalion. According to a 2015 Reuters (green-checked) [report](#):

“Many of these paramilitary groups are accused of abusing the citizens they are

charged with protecting. Amnesty International has reported that the Aidar battalion — also partially funded by Kolomoisky — committed war crimes, including illegal abductions, unlawful detention, robbery, extortion and even possible executions.

Other pro-Kiev private battalions have starved civilians as a form of warfare, preventing aid convoys from reaching separatist-controlled areas of eastern Ukraine, according to the Amnesty report.

Some of Ukraine's private battalions have blackened the country's international reputation with their extremist views. The Azov battalion, partially funded by Taruta and Kolomoisky, uses the Nazi Wolfsangel symbol as its logo, and many of its members openly espouse neo-Nazi, anti-Semitic views. The battalion members have spoken about "bringing the war to Kiev," and said that Ukraine needs "a strong dictator to come to power who could shed plenty of blood but unite the nation in the process."

In April 2019, the F.B.I. began investigating Kolomoisky for alleged financial crimes in connection with his steel holdings in [West Virginia](#) and northern [Ohio](#). In August 2020 the U.S. Department of Justice filed civil forfeiture [complaints](#) against him and a partner:

"The complaints allege that Ihor Kolomoisky and Gennadiy Boholiubov, who owned PrivatBank, one of the largest banks in Ukraine, embezzled and defrauded the bank of billions of dollars. The two obtained fraudulent loans and lines of credit from approximately 2008 through 2016, when the scheme was uncovered, and the bank was nationalized by the National Bank of Ukraine. The complaints allege that they laundered a portion of the criminal proceeds using an array of shell companies' bank accounts, primarily at PrivatBank's Cyprus branch, before they transferred the funds to the United States. As alleged in the complaint, the loans were rarely repaid except with more fraudulently obtained loan proceeds."

Meanwhile, the Azov backer's television channel had by this time aired the hit TV show *Servant of the People* (2015-2019), which catapulted Volodymyr Zelensky to fame and ultimately into the presidency under the new Servant of the People Party. The former actor and comedian's presidential campaign was bankrolled by Kolomoisky, according to multiple reports, including this [one](#) by Radio Free Europe (not rated).

During the presidential campaign, *Politico* reported:

"Kolomoisky's media outlet also provides security and logistical backup for the comedian's campaign, and it has recently emerged that Zelenskiy's legal counsel, Andrii Bohdan, was the oligarch's personal lawyer. Investigative journalists have also reported that Zelenskiy traveled 14 times in the past two years to Geneva and Tel Aviv, where Kolomoisky is based in exile."

Before their run-off election, Petro Poroshenko [called](#) Zelensky "Kolomoisky's puppet." According to the Pandora Papers, Zelensky [stashed](#) funds he received from Kolomoisky off shore.

During the campaign Zelensky was asked about Bandera. He said it was "cool" that many Ukrainians consider Bandera a hero.

☐☐ [#Zelensky](#) the actor who plays President:

"Stepan Bandera is a hero for some percentage of Ukrainians, and that's normal, that's cool"

☐ NOT COOL ☐ pic.twitter.com/pD2HSiorSi

— 21st Century Wire ☐ (@21stCenturyWire) [April 21, 2022](#)

Zelensky was elected president on the promise of ending the Donbass war. About seven months into his term he traveled to the front line in Donbass to tell Ukrainian troops, where Azov is well-represented, to lay down their arms. Instead he was sent packing. *The Kyiv Post* (green check) [reported](#):

"When one veteran, Denys Yantar, said they had no arms and wanted instead to discuss protests against the planned disengagement that had taken place across Ukraine, Zelensky became furious.

'Listen, Denys, I'm the president of this country. I'm 41 years old. I'm not a loser. I came to you and told you: remove the weapons. Don't shift the conversation to some protests,' Zelensky said, videos of the exchange show. As he said this, Zelensky aggressively approached Yantar, who heads the National Corps, a political offshoot of the far-right Azov volunteer battalion, in Mykolaiv city.

'But we've discussed that,' Yantar said.

'I wanted to see understanding in your eyes. But, instead, I saw a guy who's decided that this is some loser standing in front of him,' Zelensky said."

It was a demonstration of the power of the military, including the Azov Regiment, over the civilian president.

After the Russian invasion, Zelensky was asked in April by Fox News about Azov, which were later defeated in Mariupol. "They are what they are," he responded. "They were defending our country." He then tries to say because they are part of the military they are somehow no longer Neo-Nazis, though they still wear Nazi insignia (until Tuesday). (Fox's YouTube post removed that question from the interview, but it is preserved here:)

Outrages Greek Officials

Also in April, Zelensky [infuriated](#) two former Greek prime ministers and other officials by inviting a member of the Azov Regiment to address the Greek Parliament. [Alexis Tsipras](#), a former premier and leader of the main opposition party, SYRIZA-Progressive Alliance, blasted the appearance of the Azov fighters before parliament.

"Solidarity with the Ukrainian people is a given. But nazis cannot be allowed to speak in parliament," Tsipras [said](#) on social media. "The speech was a provocation." He said Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis "bears full responsibility. ... He talked about a historic day but it is a historical shame."

Former Greek Prime Minister Antonis Samaras called the Azov video being played in parliament a "big mistake." Former Foreign Affairs Minister Nikos Kotzias said: "The Greek

government irresponsibly undermined the struggle of the Ukrainian people, by giving the floor to a Nazi. The responsibilities are heavy. The government should publish a detailed report of preparation and contacts for the event.”

Former Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis’ [MeRA25](#) party [said](#) Zelenky’s appearance turned into a “Nazi fiesta.”

Zelensky has also not rebuked his ambassador to Germany, Andrij Melnyk, for visiting Bandera’s grave in Munich, which [provoked](#) this reaction from a German MP: “Anyone like Melnik who describes the Nazi collaborator Bandera as ‘our hero’ and makes a pilgrimage to his grave or defends the right-wing Azov Battalion as ‘brave’ is actually still benevolently described as a ‘Nazi sympathizer.’”

Zelensky has closed media outlets and [outlawed](#) 11 political parties, including the largest one, Eurosceptic Opposition Platform for Life (OPZZh) and arrested its leader. None of the 11 shut down are far-right parties.

Donald Trump was rightly castigated for remarks he made about white supremacists in Charlottesville. But Zelensky, whose oligarch backer funded Azov, and who brought a Neo-Nazi to address a European Parliament, is given a pass by a Democratic administration and the U.S. media though he condones the far worse problem of Neo-fascism in Ukraine.

‘Infested’

NewsGuard’s Fishman took issue with similar phrases that appear in *Consortium News* articles by columnist Patrick Lawrence, and by legendary journalist John Pilger. Lawrence refers to the Ukrainian government as a “Nazi-infested regime” and Pilger to the “the coup regime, **infested with neo-Nazis.**” NewsGuard objects to this characterization because the political wings of violent neo-Nazi groups fare poorly in Ukrainian elections.

Fishman wrote:

“The March 2022 article [‘PATRICK LAWRENCE: Imperial Infantilism’](#) stated: ‘Now the names we have for Putin roll around among like pinballs. ‘Hitler’ has fallen somewhat out of fashion, the hyperbole having proven too silly, or maybe because NATO is now arming a **Nazi-infested regime,**’ which was a reference to the Ukrainian government.

The February 2022 article [“John Pilger: War in Europe & the Rise of Raw Propaganda”](#) stated: “Vladimir Putin refers to the **‘genocide’ in the eastern Donbass region of Ukraine**. Following **the coup in Ukraine in 2014 - orchestrated by former U.S. President Barack Obama’s ‘point person’ in Kyiv, Victoria Nuland** - the coup regime, **infested with neo-Nazis**, launched a campaign of terror against Russian-speaking Donbass, which accounts for a third of Ukraine’s population.” This article makes the claims similar to the ones highlighted in the previous ... articles, and are seemingly false for the same reasons.”

One can quibble over whether “infested” is the best choice of words, but it is clear that the Ukrainian state has long protected influential Neo-Nazism. *Consortium News* gives a wide latitude to columnists and commentators like Lawrence and Pilger, both vastly experienced journalists, to express themselves. There is no doubt about the outsized influence of Neo-fascism in Ukrainian society and government, especially since the events of 2014.

NewsGuard's dismissal of the influence of Neo-fascism by looking only at election results completely misses the point. Fishman has demanded *CN* correct its reporting on neo-Nazism in Ukraine. But Fishman's statement that "There isn't evidence that Nazism has a substantial influence in Ukraine" should instead be corrected by NewsGuard.

The 'G' Word

Fishman also took exception to the use of the word "genocide" in two *Consortium News* articles published about Ukraine.

"I also found some instances where Consortium News appeared to publish false or misleading claims, and I'd like to get your comments on them. I've listed some examples and provided brief explanations on why they seem to be false:

The March 2022 article ['A Proposed Solution to the Ukraine War'](#) stated: 'The government of Ukraine has denied human rights and political self-determination to the peoples of the Donbass. Some 13,000 people have died during the eight years since the 2014 coup, according to the United Nations. **The Ukrainian government has overtly genocidal policies toward Russian minorities.**'

The February 2022 article ["John Pilger: War in Europe & the Rise of Raw Propaganda"](#) stated: 'Vladimir Putin refers to the **"genocide" in the eastern Donbass region of Ukraine**. Following **the coup in Ukraine in 2014 ...** the coup regime ... launched a campaign of terror against Russian-speaking Donbass, which accounts for a third of Ukraine's population.'

Fishman went on:

"The International Criminal Court, the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) have all said they have found no evidence of a genocide in Donbas. For example, [A 2016 report](#) by the International Criminal Court found that the acts of violence allegedly committed by the Ukrainian authorities in 2013 and 2014 could constitute an 'attack directed against a civilian population,' but it also said that "the information available did not provide a reasonable basis to believe that the attack was systematic or widespread.'

And the U.S. Mission to OSCE stated in a [February 2022 Twitter post](#), 'The SMM [Special Monitoring Mission] has complete access to the government controlled areas of Ukraine and HAS NEVER reported anything remotely resembling Russia's claims [of genocide in Ukraine].'"

Genocide is defined in the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, ratified by 153 nations. The [convention](#) says:

"In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;

- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.”

The Convention adds:

“The following acts shall be punishable:

- (a) Genocide;
- (b) Conspiracy to commit genocide;
- (c) Direct and public incitement to commit genocide;
- (d) Attempt to commit genocide;
- (e) Complicity in genocide.”

Based on the convention, an argument for and against genocide in Donbass could be made. The Ukraine military and extreme right militias have undoubtedly carried out attacks on civilians who, by reason of their language and religion, constitute a separate ethnic group. Points (a) and (b) of the definition are certainly true, (c) and (d) are questionable. The question of “intent” is crucial. Have the Ukrainian authorities had the “intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group”?

The charge of “genocide” is thrown about by political opponents with less than due care to its actual definition. For instance, [Biden](#) and [Zelensky](#) have both accused Russia of “genocide” in its ongoing military operation. There is no defined number of civilian deaths that constitute an intent to destroy a people “in part.” Three months after the Russian invasion, the OSCE reports around 4,000 civilians killed. Both sides are shooting and killing civilians.

It is a judgement call whether genocide has taken place. The ICC report, referred to by Fishman, says Ukraine’s military action against Donbass could “constitute” an “attack directed against a civilian population,” but the ICC’s judgement about genocide was not definitive as it was based on “the information available.”

His second reference does not come from the OSCE itself, but from the U.S. mission to the OSCE, undercutting its objectivity since it is a narrow, national view from a country with a distinct political interest in events in Ukraine.

Consortium News has not taken a position that genocide was committed in Donbass. These are the only references made to genocide in Donbass and both *CN* articles are clearly labeled as commentaries with the disclaimer: “*The views expressed are solely those of the author and may or may not reflect those of Consortium News.*”

Pilger only says that Putin “refers to genocide,” while Pilger himself calls it “a campaign of terror against Russian-speaking Donbass.”

Consortium News did not endorse the judgment of these two commentators as it often publishes material with which it does not share editorial positions. Genocide in the context of Donbass is an arguable point, and therefore *CN* published these commentaries.

Financing and Other Questions

NewsGuard has also demanded detailed information about *Consortium News'* financing. **Consortium News** is funded almost entirely by small contributions from its readers raised during three public fund raisers per year.

IRS rules require donors who contribute more than \$5,000 in a year be told to the tax agency. But their names do not have to be revealed to the public to protect the donors' privacy. *CN* has made public its two major donors from its last tax returns. Roger Waters, the rock musician of Pink Floyd fame, donated \$25,000 in both 2020 and 2021. The other major donor is the New York-based [Cloud Mountain Foundation](#), which has donated \$25,000 in each of the past three years.

Consortium News has never taken a penny from any government, corporation or advertiser. To prove this, *CN* is hiring an independent auditor to attest to this fact. It will publish on this website the independent audit statement as soon as it is prepared to once and for all end any smears or suspicions about the sources of *CN's* funding.

Fishman also mistakenly wants to know why authors' bios don't appear below *CN* articles, when they clearly do. NewsGuard wants to know what *CN's* corrections policy is. It is as follows: typos are corrected without a notice, factual errors are corrected with a CORRECTION notice at the bottom of the article.

A History of Dissent

The United States was founded by dissenters. The Declaration of Independence is one of history's most significant dissenting documents, inspiring people seeking freedom around the world, from the French revolutionists to Ho Chi Minh, who based Vietnam's declaration of independence from France on the American declaration.

But over the centuries a corrupt centralization of American power seeking to maintain and expand its authority has at times sought to crush the very principle of dissent which was written into the United States Constitution.

Freedom to dissent was first threatened by the second president. Just eight years after the adoption of the Bill of Rights, press freedom had become a threat to John Adams, whose Federalist Party pushed through Congress the [Alien and Sedition Laws](#). They [criminalized](#) criticism of the federal government.

The Union then shut down newspapers during the U.S. Civil War.

Woodrow Wilson came within [one vote](#) in the Senate of creating official government censorship in the 1917 Espionage Act. The 1918 Alien and Sedition Act that followed jailed hundreds of people for speech until it was repealed in 1921.

Since the 1950s, McCarthyism has become the byword for one of the worst periods of repression of dissent in U.S. history.

The closest we've come to Wilson's troubling dream is the Biden administration's Disinformation Governance Board under the Department of Homeland Security, now on hold.

The roots are in the earliest English settlers in North America, described in *The Scarlet Letter* and applied to McCarthyism in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*. Though its industrial and scientific achievements are most lauded, America's tradition of dissent is probably the greatest thing in U.S. history and it is once again under threat.

The Current Climate

NewsGuard's accusations against *Consortium News* that could potentially limit its readership and financial support must be seen in the context of the West's war mania over Ukraine, about which dissenting voices are being suppressed. Three *CN* writers have been kicked off Twitter.

PayPal's cancellation of *Consortium News'* account is an evident attempt to defund it for what is almost certainly the company's view that *CN* violated its restrictions on "providing false or misleading information." It cannot be known with 100 percent certainty because PayPal is hiding behind its reasons, but *CN* trades in information and nothing else.

CN supports no side in the Ukraine war but seeks to examine the causes of the conflict within its recent historical context, all of which are being whitewashed from mainstream Western media.

Those causes are: NATO's expansion eastward despite its promise not to; the coup and 8-year war on Donbass against coup resisters; the lack of implementation of the Minsk Accords to end that conflict; and the outright rejection of treaty proposals by Moscow to create a new security architecture in Europe taking Russia's security concerns into account.

Historians who point out the onerous Versailles conditions imposed on Germany after World War I as a cause of Nazism and World War II are neither excusing Nazi Germany nor are they smeared as its defenders.

Consortium News can be wrong at times, but never as wrong as mainstream media was on WMD in Iraq or Russiagate. *CN* got both those consequential stories right while they were happening, and contends it is correct in its analysis of the Ukraine crisis. In any case, it is entitled to its analysis. On Iraq, Russiagate and Ukraine, *Consortium News* has clashed with the conventional wisdom forged by powerful forces and its corporate media allies. In response *CN* has been repeatedly smeared as agents of Iraq and Russia.

An overly self-confident Western establishment cannot appear to understand how experienced Western journalists could exercise their own agency and editorial judgment to critique U.S. foreign policy in real time, without them being agents of a foreign power. *Consortium News* [sued](#) the Canadian television network Global News for publishing such a smear.

It is evidently not enough for powerful forces to simply disagree and respect *CN's* constitutional right to free speech.

Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes in *Abrams v. United States* wrote: "[T]hat the ultimate good desired is better reached by free trade in ideas—that the best test of truth is the power of the thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the market...That at any rate is the theory of our Constitution." Justice Louis Brandeis added in *Whitney v. California* that the remedy for ill-conceived speech is more speech, not enforced silence.

NewsGuard's review of *Consortium News* and other independent media is a test case: Can the U.S. establishment tolerate dissent or is it joining the tradition of Adams and Wilson to crush it?

*

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