

The Media Octopus and How to Fight It

By [Michael Walsh](#) |

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The unholy alliance between the Compromised Media and the Democratic Party is today inarguable. The two have become largely indistinguishable in both ideology and, often, in personnel, with mainstream-media reporters moving into any given Democrat administration, then returning to the media when the Republicans win. The late Andrew Breitbart famously referred to this syndicate as the “Democrat-Media Complex”—a play on president Eisenhower’s warning, in his farewell address, about the “military-industrial complex”—and noted that this one is far more dangerous to our political health.

Like the “Octopus” in Frank Norris’s [novel of the same name](#), which depicted the conflict between the wheat growers in California’s Central Valley and a vicious railroad conglomerate trying to steal their land, the Democrat-Media octopus has snaked its tentacles into nearly every area of our lives, and aims to seize not only hegemonic control of the culture, but also a permanent electoral majority—something it believed was within reach during the 2016 presidential campaign, only to see its hopes bitterly dashed by a corrupt, unlovely, unskilled legacy candidate so weighed down by her own repellent persona that even the mighty media couldn’t hoist her over the finish line.

And yet even the election couldn’t put paid to what has become known as the “resistance,” as if the defeated progressives and

their media mouthpieces were the *maquisards*, bravely battling the Nazis in rural France, instead of urban *poetasters* they really are, tweeting insults

from their urban redoubts in the Upper West Side and west Los Angeles. Notice, *en passant*, the celerity with which the term “Nazi” was reintroduced to the journalistic lexicon, with a new meaning (Republicans), and how prolonged this damaging fantasy has now become.

“Resisting” the results of a legitimately conducted American election speaks poorly of the Democrats, but they are, after all, the “loyal” opposition. The media, however, has no such motivational fig leaf behind which to hide. Beginning with the Clinton impeachment, they have gradually let the mask of objectivity and political impartiality slip, until now there is no pretense to the former impartial standards that more or less held from World War II until the late 1990s. Today’s Compromised Media have much more in common with the partisan European broadsheets of England, France, Italy and, to a lesser extent, Germany (whose media, like its political parties, essentially speaks with one voice) than they do with their former incarnations as the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*.

Journalists will come to regret the abandonment of their professional principles, and their descent into rank partisanship, just as surely as the radical Left regrets having nominated Hillary Clinton over the Brooklyn-born “socialist” senator from Vermont, Bernie Sanders. Still, there is a chicken-or-egg question here: which came first? The abandonment of principles under Clinton (“everybody does it,” “it’s just sex,” “it didn’t affect his job performance,” “hypocrisy is a good thing,”

and “screw you”), or the untrained and unethical character of today’s journalists? A little of both, probably.

The next few weeks and months will not be kind to the profession. The Fusion GPS affair—in which a group of former journalists moved into opposition research, got entwined with members of the intelligence services of at least two (and probably three, including Russia) nations, passed off fanciful, if not outright fabricated information, which then very likely was used by rogue elements of the American intelligence community to justify the FISA application to tap the Trump campaign and later, the nascent administration—is one unholy mess. And when the [Fusion banking records](#) are finally released, along with the [Nunes memo](#) outlining how journalists effectively tried to short-cut Woodward and Bernstein and take down a Republican administration by creating their very own “scandal” out of the whole cloth of ideological resentment... well, heads should roll.

Meanwhile, throughout its first year, the Trump White House’s “what-me-worry?” communications shop has been slow to react and loath to punish its tormentors. Any pushback against individual reporters or news organizations immediately brings cries of censorship as partisan scribblers and airheads with microphones suddenly rediscover the First Amendment. Never mind that many of them (David Axelrod, [George Stephanopoulos](#), David Gergen) have been working both sides of the street for decades; what was once conflict of interest is

now excused in the name of “access,” “sourcing,” and “up yours.”

What can be done? The administration should not be in the business of choosing which individual reporters are credentialed, but surely it has the right to withdraw the passes of reporters of proven and demonstrable hostility, which renders them incapable of covering the news fairly. The promiscuous tweeting of a pair of White House correspondents employed by the implacably Trump-hostile *New York Times* became so egregious that the newspaper’s editor, Dean Baquet, had to issue an [edict against it](#).

The administration took an early step in the right direction when it opened the press corps up to non-traditional media, including bloggers and web-only publications. But this has only exacerbated the problem as, in many cases, the alternative right-wing media was even more rabidly

partisan than the Compromised Media, setting off a race to the bottom that has ultimately been won by CNN and Jim Acosta.

So perhaps some time in the penalty box is in order. The press has a constitutional right to cover the news any way it sees fit, but the White House is under no obligation to [indulge its grandstanding](#), or to provide a forum for its axe-grinding.

If, for example, the *Times* cannot control its employees from contradicting its own stated mission of objectivity and fairness —“If our journalists are perceived as biased or if they engage in

editorializing on social media, that can undercut the credibility of the entire newsroom,” Baquet’s memo read—then the White House and other governmental agencies should have the right to pull individual credentials. And if the publication refuses, then to pull its institutional credentials as well, for a defined period: say, nine months, in honor of the human gestation period they so adamantly deny is human.

The Trump campaign took a step in this direction when it [banned the *Washington Post*](#) from its events. While this only intensified the *Post*’s hostility, it didn’t prevent the paper from writing about the campaign, or expressing its opinions about the unsuitability of the candidate in both its editorial and news columns. No administration has the right to dictate the tone and tenor of its coverage, but it does have a right to institutional fairness. Why, it’s all spelled out right here in the Society of Professional Journalists’ [Code of Ethics](#). Among its strictures:

- Take responsibility for the accuracy of their work. Verify information before releasing it. Use original sources whenever possible.
- Identify sources clearly. The public is entitled to as much information as possible to judge the reliability and motivations of sources. Consider sources’ motives before promising anonymity. Reserve anonymity for sources who may face danger, retribution or other harm, and have information that cannot be obtained elsewhere. Explain why anonymity was granted.
- Avoid undercover or other surreptitious methods of gathering information unless traditional, open methods will not yield information vital to the public.
- Avoid stereotyping. Journalists should examine the ways their values and experiences may shape their reporting.

Stop laughing; this was once the ideal. Lately, however, these rules have been replaced by the Alinskyite rules of the hard

Left:

- Do unto others before they can do unto you.
- The political end justifies the means.
- By any means necessary.


The older journalists sold their birthright for a mess of pottage: a temporary gig in the Clinton or Obama administrations; some face time on TV; lucrative publishing deals that cheated their employers out of scoops in order to withhold them for their books. The younger ones, looking on in admiration, simply followed their lead, and their own noses.

And here we are. Unless and until journalism undergoes a thorough reformation, including a return to its former principles, it's doomed. And we are all the poorer for it.

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