

The Council On Foreign Relations Says Domestic Fake News Propaganda Is Necessary For Democrats

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by Tyler Durden

One year ago, a State Department press event included quite possibly the most epic "deer in the headlights" moment in all of government press briefing history.

During the final press briefing in May of 2017, the State Department put high level official Stuart Jones at the podium to give the daily briefing, and he was asked how **the US could call for democracy in Iran while ignoring the fact that one of Washington's closest Middle East allies is an oppressive autocratic state** with an opaque legal system run by strict Islamic sharia courts.

Here's how *Newsweek's* Tom O'Connor [set the scene at the time:](#)

*Stuart Jones, who was appointed as U.S. Ambassador to Iraq by former President Barack Obama in 2014 before assuming the title of assistant secretary of state for near eastern affairs in January, **took a long, silent pause after an Agence France-Presse reporter asked the official how President Donald Trump could criticize Iran's democracy, while standing next to Saudi Arabian officials.***

Saudi Arabia is an absolute monarchy, where every position of power is appointed by either the king or other members of the Al Saud royal family from which the nation derives its name. Trump recently visited Saudi Arabia, a close ally of the U.S., and took the opportunity to deeply criticize the two nations' mutual foe, Iran, and

its commitment to democracy weeks after it held its presidential election.

Alex Emmons 



@AlexEmmons

My favorite moment in US government press briefings - one year ago

today: [twitter.com/alexemmons/sta...](https://twitter.com/alexemmons/status/1000000000)

10:49 AM - May 30, 2018

 281  126 people are talking about this 

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Though clearly hilarious and at the same time appropriately awkward, the incident highlighted the fact that **mainstream journalists rarely ask the obvious questions** that might so easily expose the glaring hypocrisy of US foreign policy and its leaders.

As [Wide Asleep in America blog](#) so aptly described: "In lieu of delivering an actual answer, Jones became **visibly uncomfortable, signed audibly, stared blindly into nothingness and said nothing for roughly 18 seconds**. You could see the squeaky gears laboring to

rotate in his head. You hear the faint trickle of urine run down his thigh. You could feel Jones praying to be [suddenly whisked away](#) by a [dragon-drawn chariot](#) sent to him by the sun god Helios."

It's so beautiful and epic we thought it deserved its own anniversary of remembrance.

But on a more serious note, about six months after Stuart Jones' internal meltdown moment, a leaked [State Department memo obtained by Politico](#) spelled out how Washington merely values the concept of human rights **insofar as it can be molded toward propaganda ends**. The leaked government [memo](#), made public for the first time in December 2017, instructed top State Department leadership that **"Allies should be treated differently — and better — than adversaries."**

"For this reason," the leaked [internal State Department memo argued](#), **"we should consider human rights as an important issue in regard to US relations with China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran.** And this is not only because of moral concern for practices inside those countries. It is also because pressing those regimes on human rights is one way to impose costs, apply counter-pressure, and regain the initiative from them strategically."

As the May 2017 Stuart Jones presser demonstrated, this means countries like Saudi Arabia or Qatar will always be let off the hook in spite of — for example — US ally **Saudi Arabia executing over 50 people so far this year, half of them related to *nonviolent drug charges*, according to HRW**. Or this might further translate into government officials **choosing to look the other way** when allies illegally possess or pursue nuclear or other banned weapons.

Politico explained that the memo encourages government leadership, on up to the level of the Secretary of State, "that we should do exactly what Russian and Chinese propaganda says we do — **use human rights as a weapon to beat up our adversaries while letting ourselves and our allies off the hook.**"

More recently, one year after the incredible and embarrassing State Department scene, the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) has delivered an even more astounding propaganda fail which went largely unnoticed in the media. The CFR is among America's oldest and most establishment think tanks, with a who's who of government insiders filling up its ranks, and has often played an advisory role on important policy questions to elected officials.

The CFR's Richard Stengel, a former editor of *TIME* magazine, told an audience at a CFR event in late April called *Political Disruptions: Combating Disinformation and Fake News* that **governments "have to" direct "propaganda" toward their own populations.**



A screenshot of a tweet from William Craddick (@williamcraddick). The tweet features a video player with a play button icon in the center. The text of the tweet discusses a forum at the Council on Foreign Relations where Richard Stengel, former Editor at Time Magazine, made a statement about propaganda. The tweet includes engagement metrics: 1,117 likes and 1,258 replies.

William Craddick 
@williamcraddick

At a Council on Foreign Relations forum about "fake news," former Editor at Time Magazine Richard Stengel directly states that he supports the use of propaganda on American citizens - then shuts the session down when challenged about how propaganda is used against the third world

12:42 PM - May 11, 2018

♥ 1,117 💬 1,258 people are talking about ...

Stengel, himself a former high level official who [headed](#) the US office for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs at the State

Department from 2013 to 2016, is also a regular pundit on *MSNBC*.

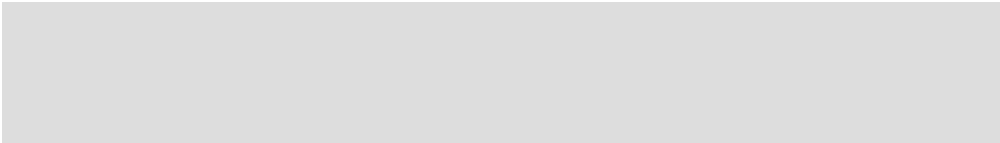
He [explained](#):

*Basically, every country creates their own narrative story and, you know, my old job at the State Department was what people used to joke as the 'chief propagandist' job. We haven't talked about propaganda... **I'm not against propaganda. Every country does it, and they have to do it to their own population, and I don't necessarily think it's that awful.***

Stengel's personal bio site [notes that he](#) "helped create and oversee" the [Global Engagement Center](#) at the State Department whose official mission is to "counter propaganda and disinformation from international terrorist organizations and foreign countries" (with a "[special focus on Russia](#)").

The full CFR event. Stengel openly argues in favor of propaganda against US citizens starting at 1:15:26 of the video.





But more worrisome for a guy who openly expresses views clearly implying that **he's "not against propaganda" on the US government's "own population"** is that he was [recently named a "distinguished fellow"](#) as part of the Atlantic Council's [Digital Forensic Research Lab \(DFRLab\)](#).

Two weeks ago the DFRLab [announced](#) its team has **partnered with Facebook to "monitor disinformation"** and protect elections. The DFRLab [defined the new initiative as follows](#):

*The Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab today announced **a partnership with Facebook to independently monitor disinformation and other vulnerabilities** in elections around the world. The effort is part of an initiative to help provide credible research about the role of social media in elections, as well as democracy more generally.*

*The Digital Forensic Research Lab is launching a partnership with Facebook to support the world's largest community **in its efforts to strengthen democracy...***

Though it currently receives little commentary or attention, it must be recalled that Obama administration [lifted the prohibition](#) on domestic propaganda in 2013.

Disturbingly, we are probably only just now experiencing the beginning phase of what the State Department and intelligence agencies' propaganda planners had in mind when the domestic propaganda ban was overturned but these few short years ago.