A couple of years ago, I launched my *Unz Review*, providing a wide range of different alternative perspectives, the vast majority of them totally excluded from the mainstream media. I’ve also published a number of articles in my own *American Pravda* series[1], focusing on the suspicious lapses and lacunae in our media narratives.

The underlying political strategy behind these efforts may already be apparent, and I’ve sometimes suggested it here and there. But I finally decided I might as well explicitly outline the reasoning in a memo as provided below.

**The Mainstream Media is the Crucial Opposing Force**

Groups advocating policies opposed by the American establishment should recognize that the greatest obstacle they face is usually the mainstream media.

Ordinary political and ideological opponents surely exist, but these are usually inspired, motivated, organized, and assisted by powerful media support, which also shapes the perceived framework of the conflict. In Clauswitzian terms, the media often constitutes the strategic “center of gravity” of the opposing forces.

**The Media Should Be Made a Primary Target**
If the media is the crucial force empowering the opposition, then it should be regarded as a primary target of any political strategy. So long as the media remains strong, success may be difficult, but if the influence and credibility of the media were substantially degraded, then the ordinary opposing forces would lose much of their effectiveness. In many respects, the media creates reality, so perhaps the most effective route toward changing reality runs through the media.

**Discrediting the Media Anywhere Weakens It Everywhere**

The mainstream media exists as a seamless whole, so weakening or discrediting the media in any particular area automatically reduces its influence everywhere else as well.

The elements of the media narrative faced by a particular anti-establishment group may be too strong and well-defended to attack effectively, and any such attacks might also be discounted as ideologically motivated. Hence, the more productive strategy may sometimes be an indirect one, attacking the media narrative elsewhere, at points where it is much weaker and less well-defended. In addition, winning those easier battles may generate greater credibility and momentum, which can then be applied to later attacks on more difficult fronts.

**A Broad Alliance May Support the Common Goal of Weakening the Media**

Once we recognize that weakening the media is a primary strategic goal, an obvious corollary is that other anti-establishment groups facing the same challenges become natural, if perhaps temporary, allies.

Such unexpected tactical alliances may be drawn from across a wide range of different political and ideological perspectives—Left, Right, or otherwise—and despite the component groups having longer-term goals that are orthogonal or even conflicting. So long as all such elements in the coalition recognize that the hostile media is their most immediate adversary, they can cooperate on their common effort, while actually gaining additional credibility and attention by the very fact that they sharply disagree on so many other matters.

The media is enormously powerful and exercises control over a vast expanse of intellectual territory. But such ubiquitous influence also ensures that its local adversaries are therefore numerous and widespread, all being bitterly opposed to the hostile media they face on their own particular issues. By analogy, a large and powerful empire is frequently brought down by a broad alliance of many disparate rebellious factions, each having unrelated goals, which together overwhelm the imperial defenses by attacking simultaneously at multiple different locations.

A crucial aspect enabling such a rebel alliance is the typically narrow focus of each particular constituent member. Most groups or individuals opposing establishment positions tend to be ideologically zealous about one particular issue or perhaps a small handful, while being much
less interested in others. Given the total suppression of their views at the hands of the mainstream media, any venue in which their unorthodox perspectives are provided reasonably fair and equal treatment rather than ridiculed and denigrated tends to inspire considerable enthusiasm and loyalty on their part. So although they may have quite conventional views on most other matters, causing them to regard contrary views with the same skepticism or unease as might anyone else, they will usually be willing to suppress their criticism at such wider heterodoxy so long as other members of their alliance are willing to return that favor on their own topics of primary interest.

**Assault the Media Narrative Where It is Weak Not Where It Is Strong**

Applying a different metaphor, the establishment media may be regarded as a great wall that excludes alternative perspectives from the public consciousness and thereby confines opinion to within a narrow range of acceptable views.

Certain portions of that media wall may be solid and vigorously defended by powerful vested interests, rendering assaults difficult. But other portions, perhaps older and more obscure, may have grown decrepit over time, with their defenders having drifted away. Breaching the wall at these weaker locations may be much easier, and once the barrier has been broken at several points, defending it at others becomes much more difficult.

For example, consider the consequences of demonstrating that the established media narrative is completely false on some major individual event. Once this result has been widely recognized, the credibility of the media on all other matters, even totally unrelated ones, would be somewhat attenuated. Ordinary people would naturally conclude that if the media had been so wrong for so long on one important point, it might also be wrong on others as well, and the powerful suspension of disbelief that provides the media its influence would become less powerful. Even those individuals who collectively form the corpus of the media might begin to entertain serious self-doubts regarding their previous certainties.

The crucial point is that such breakthroughs may be easiest to achieve in topics that seem merely of historical significance, and are totally removed from any practical present-day consequences.

**Reframe Vulnerable “Conspiracy Theories” as Effective “Media Criticism”**

Over the last few decades, the political establishment and its media allies have created a powerful intellectual defense against major criticism by investing considerable resources in stigmatizing the notion of so-called “conspiracy theories.”[2] This harsh pejorative term is applied to any important analysis of events that sharply deviates from the officially-endorsed narrative, and implicitly suggests that the proponent is a disreputable fanatic, suffering from delusions, paranoia, or other forms of mental illness. Such ideological attacks often effectively destroy his credibility, allowing his actual arguments to be ignored. A once-innocuous phrase has become politically “weaponized.”
However, an effective means of circumventing this intellectual defense mechanism may be to adopt a meta-strategy of reframing such “conspiracy theories” as “media criticism.”

Under the usual parameters of public debate, challenges to established orthodoxy are treated as “extraordinary claims” that must be justified by extraordinary evidence. This requirement may be unfair, but it constitutes the reality in many public exchanges, based upon the framework provided by the allegedly impartial media.

Since most of these controversies involve a wide range of complex issues and ambiguous or disputed evidence, it is often extremely difficult to conclusively establish any unorthodox theory, say to a confidence level of 95% or 98%. Therefore, the media verdict is almost invariably “Case Not Proven” and the challengers are judged defeated and discredited, even if they actually appear to have the preponderance of evidence on their side. And if they vocally contest the unfairness of their situation, that exact response is then subsequently cited by the media as further proof of their fanaticism or paranoia.

However, suppose that an entirely different strategy were adopted. Instead of attempting to make a case “beyond any reasonable doubt,” proponents merely provide sufficient evidence and analysis to suggest that there is a 30% chance or a 50% chance or a 70% chance that the unorthodox theory is true. The very fact that no claim of near certainty is being advanced provides a powerful defense against any plausible accusations of fanaticism or delusional thinking. But if the issue is of enormous importance and—as is usually the case—the unorthodox theory has been almost totally ignored by the media, despite apparently having at least a reasonable chance of being true, then the media may be effectively attacked and ridiculed for its laziness and incompetence. These charges are very difficult to refute and since no claim is being made that the unorthodox theory has necessarily been proven correct, merely that it might possibly be correct, any counter-accusations of conspiratorial tendencies would fall flat.

Indeed, the only means the media might have of effectively rebutting those charges would be to explore all the complex details of the issue (thereby helping to bring various controversial facts themselves to much wider attention) and then argue that there is only a negligible chance that the theory might be correct, perhaps 10% or less. Thus, the usual presumptive burden is completely reversed. And since most members of the media are unlikely to have ever paid much serious attention to the subject, their ignorant presentation may be quite weak and vulnerable to a knowledgeable deconstruction. Indeed, the most likely scenario is that the media will just continue to totally ignore the entire dispute, thereby reinforcing those plausible accusations of laziness and incompetence.

Individuals distressed by media failings on a controversial topic often accuse the media and its individual representatives of being biased, corrupted, or quietly under the control of powerful forces allied with the establishment position. These charges may sometimes be correct and sometimes not, but they are usually quite difficult to prove, except in the minds of existing true-believers, and they do carry the taint of “paranoia.” On the other hand, claiming that media failings are due to venial sins such as laziness and incompetence are just as likely to be correct, and these charges are much less likely to risk a backlash.
Finally, once the media itself has become the primary target of the criticism, it automatically loses its status as a neutral outside arbitrator and no longer has as much credibility in proclaiming the winning side of the debate.

The Advantage of Flooding Media Defense Zones

Individuals who challenge the prevailing media narrative with unorthodox claims are often reluctant to raise too many such controversial claims simultaneously lest they be ridiculed as “crazy,” with all their views summarily dismissed.

In most cases, this may be the correct strategy to pursue, but if handled properly, an exact opposite approach might sometimes be quite effective. So long as the overall presentation is framed as media criticism and no inordinate weight is attached to the validity of any of the particular claims being presented, attacking along a very broad front, perhaps including dozens of entirely independent items, may “flood the zone” of the media, saturating and overwhelming existing defenses. Or as suggested in a quote widely misattributed to Stalin, “Quantity has a quality all its own.”

Consider the example of entertainer Bill Cosby. Over the years, one or two individual women had come forward claiming that he had drugged and raped them, and the charges had been largely ignored as unsubstantiated or implausible. However, over the last year or two, the dam suddenly burst and a total of nearly sixty separate women came forward, all making identical accusations, and although there seems little hard evidence in any of the particular cases, virtually every observer now concedes that the charges are likely to be true.

Suppose it is established that there is a reasonable likelihood that the media completely missed and ignored an important matter that should have been investigated and reported. The impact is not necessarily substantial, and many individuals stubbornly wedded to a belief in their establishment media narratives might even resist admitting the possibility that the media had seriously erred in that particular situation.

However, suppose instead that several dozen such separate examples could be established, each strongly suggesting a serious error or omission on the part of the media. At that point, ideological defenses would crumble and nearly everyone would quietly acknowledge that many, perhaps even most, of the accusations were probably true, producing an enormous credibility gap for the mainstream media. The credibility defenses of the media would have been saturated and overcome.

The key point is that all of the particular items should be presented as reasonable-likelihood cases, and indicative of media shortcomings rather than being proven or necessarily as important issues in and of themselves. By remaining aloof and somewhat agnostic regarding any individual item, there is little risk of being tagged as fanatic or monomaniacal for raising a multitude of them.
My American Pravda Series and Unz Review Webzine as Examples

The political/media strategy outlined above was the central motivation behind my American Pravda articles and Unz Review webzine.

For example, in the original 2013 American Pravda article[3] I raised over half a dozen enormous media lapses, all of them now universally acknowledged: Enron’s collapse, the Iraq War WMDs, the Madoff Swindle, the Cold War spies, and various others. Having thereby set the stage by presenting this admitted pattern of major failure, demonstrating that a considerable suspension of disbelief was warranted, I then extended the discussion to three or four important additional examples, none of them yet acknowledged, but all of them perfectly plausible. Perhaps as a consequence, the article received reasonably good attention[4] including by elements of the mainstream media itself, who are often willing to acknowledge the errors of their class so long as these are presented persuasively and in a responsible manner.

Following that piece, I intermittently produced additional elements in the series, some more comprehensive than others, and am now embarking upon a regular series[5].

The McCain/POW examples[6] in the series perfectly illustrate the strategy I have suggested above. The Vietnam War ended over forty years ago, the POWs have probably all been dead for decades, and even John McCain is in the very twilight of his career. The practical significance of raising the scandal or providing evidence establishing its likelihood is virtually nil. But if it were to become widely recognized that our entire media successfully covered up such a massive scandal for so many years, the credibility of the media would have suffered a devastating blow. Several such blows and it would be in ruins. Meanwhile, the powerful vested interests that once so vigorously maintained the official narrative in that area are long gone, and the orthodox case has few remaining defenders in the media, greatly increasing the likelihood of an eventual breakthrough and victory.

A similar strategy in broader form is applied by my Unz Review alternative media webzine, which hosts numerous different writers, columnists, and bloggers, all tending to sharply challenge the establishment media narrative along a wide variety of different axes and issues, some of them conflicting. By raising serious doubts about the omissions and errors of our mainstream media in so many different areas, the goal is to weaken the perceived credibility of the media, leading readers to consider the possibility that large elements of the conventional narrative may be entirely incorrect.

For Further Reading

- Our American Pravda[7]
- John McCain: When “Tokyo Rose” Ran for President[8]
- American Pravda: How the CIA Invented “Conspiracy Theories”[9]

Source References


