

April 23, 2014

A couple of mainstream liberal media types think our country has a leadership deficit. First is Ron Fournier of National Journal.

*President Obama came to office nursing dreams "of forging a new partnership" with a stubborn rival. When times got tough, he abandoned the relationship and adopted dusty zero-sum gain policies of his predecessors. To allies and rivals alike, he looks naïve, weak, and disconnected.*

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Then Edward Luce of Financial Times.

*The president's real pivot is not to Asia but to America, inspired by domestic sentiment*

*When Barack Obama took office, he pledged a new overture to the world's emerging powers. Today each of the Brics – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa – is at loggerheads with America, or worse. Last month four of the five abstained in a UN vote condemning the fifth's annexation of Crimea. Next month India is likely to elect as its new leader Narendra Modi, who says he has "no interest in visiting America other than to attend the UN in New York". As the world's largest democracy, and America's most natural ally among the emerging powers, India's is a troubling weathervane. How on earth did Mr Obama lose the Brics?*

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Roger Simon posts on lying presidents.

*What happens when presidents lie?*

*The American public has had plenty of experience with this in recent years. Liar-president could be the new hyphenate occupation like writer-producer or architect-contractor. Almost every*

*president has shaded things a bit, but three modern ones have been unabashed bull artists — Richard Nixon, Bill Clinton and, of course, Barack Obama.*

*Clinton ultimately got a pass for his prevarications. Nixon didn't. Neither deserved one. But our current liar-president deserves one even less, because his lies have been of substance, affecting policy. Nixon and Clinton just lied in self-defense — normal human cowardice.*

*Obama is something else again. He lies proactively and often reflexively. By proactively I mean the obvious, such as “If you like your health plan, you can keep your health plan. Period!” By reflexively I mean that emotional no-man's-land when someone says something they don't really mean, but they say it anyway because they think it sounds good or makes them seem as if they are doing the right thing.*

*The red line against Syrian chemical weapons is a perfect example. Did Obama ever have any intention of following up on that? Who knows? ...*

**Jennifer Rubin** thinks the foundering David Gregory is a good match for the clueless, hapless, feckless, hopeless presidency.

*It is hard to say who is in more trouble — President Obama or “Meet the Press” host David Gregory.*

*Gregory's ratings stink, and his bosses let it be known that they hired a consultant to find out why his close friends and family like him since most viewers don't seem to. (As an aside, let me say that as bad as Gregory may be as a host — and we saw this coming well over a year ago — the execs who thought up this idea, spent their employer's money on it and then leaked it should be banished.) He seems disengaged, prone to playing favorites and incapable of staying a few steps ahead of guests and pursuing much-needed follow-up inquiries. He seems laconic on screen, as if he just rolled out of bed and grabbed his script on the way to the set.*

*Come to think of it, Obama's ratings stink, he's disengaged (and “dithering”) on foreign policy crises and he lacks strategic thinking. Lucky for him, Valerie Jarrett hasn't hired a “brand consultant,” but journalists of all political stripes are despairing about his lack of leadership and international weakness. And unfortunately for the country, having a president who stumbles along, a prisoner of events, is much more dire than a failing TV host. (Really, do we need all these Sunday shows?) NBC may lose ratings, but the West loses freedom, stability and security when the U.S. president is so slow to recognize danger to our interests and even slower to come up with a response, let alone an effective one.*

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**Ed Morrissey** posts on Sharyl Attkisson's interviews since leaving CBS.

CNN's Brian Stelter broadcast a two-part interview with former CBS reporter Sharyl Attkisson to review her accusations of political bias at CBS News — and to take on the critics she has acquired over the last year or so. Attkisson told the *Reliable Sources* host that the departure of top executives in the wake of Katie Couric's flop brought in “ideologically entrenched” managers who resented her investigative reporting on the Obama administration (via Jim Hoft):

STELTER: Let me read this from “The Washington Post.” This is in March 10th, right around the time you were resigning from CBS. And Erik Wimple wrote, according to a CBS News source you felt you were being kept off “CBS Evening News” because of political considerations. Did you feel that way? I mean, were there political considerations at times?

ATTKISSON: You know, it's fairly well discussed inside CBS News that there are some managers recently who have been so ideologically entrenched that there is a feeling and discussion that some of them, certainly not all of them, have a difficult time viewing a story that may reflect negatively upon government or the administration as a story of value. ...

Sharp eyes at Legal Insurrection spot a damning admission from Attkisson about help she was getting on stories from Media Matters.

On the most recent airing of the CNN Sunday talk show, *Reliable Sources*, former CBS reporter, Sharyl Attkisson, revealed a rather stunning accusation about the far left online news organization, Media Matters.

Media Matters, as my understanding, is a far left blog group that I think holds itself out to be sort of an independent watchdog group. And yes, they clearly targeted me at some point. **They used to work with me on stories and tried to help me produce my stories...**

And I was certainly friendly with them as anybody, good information can come from any source. But when I persisted with *Fast and Furious* and some of the green energy stories I was doing, I clearly at some point became a target... [Emphasis Added]

Of course, anyone who has read Media Matters would scoff at the idea that it is a politically “independent” media watchdog group.

Given the obvious leanings of the organization, the revelation that Media Matters is actually assisting, in some manner, in producing content for one of the “Big 3” (ABC, NBC, CBS) network news programs carries significant implications. Most notably, these three networks are still viewed by many in the public as the place to get your least politically slanted news. For many Americans, the brief 30-minute or hour long nightly news program from these networks is the only news they get all day. ...

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## National Journal

### Obama Handles Russia Like Republicans: Overpromise, Under-Deliver, and Write Off

*Democratic ally says of Obama: "He's just not a natural leader."*

by Ron Fournier

President Obama came to office nursing dreams "of forging a new partnership" with a stubborn rival. When times got tough, he abandoned the relationship and adopted dusty zero-sum gain policies of his predecessors. To allies and rivals alike, he looks naïve, weak, and disconnected.

This is the portrait presented Sunday by Peter Baker in his front-page *New York Times* story titled, ["In Cold War Echo, Obama Strategy Writes Off Putin."](#) What struck me about the piece is the unstated parallel between Obama's handling of Russia and Republicans, and how in both cases the gap between promise and performance illustrates a fundamental failure of leadership.

Baker writes:

WASHINGTON—Even as the crisis in Ukraine continues to defy easy resolution, President Obama and his national security team are looking beyond the immediate conflict to forge a new long-term approach to Russia that applies an updated version of the Cold War strategy of containment.

Just as the United States resolved in the aftermath of World War II to counter the Soviet Union and its global ambitions, Mr. Obama is focused on isolating President Vladimir V. Putin's Russia by cutting off its economic and political ties to the outside world, limiting its expansionist ambitions in its own neighborhood and effectively making it a pariah state.

The policy shift is defensible in light of Putin's dismissal of U.S. overtures on Ukraine and the broader attempt by Obama and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to "press the restart button" with Russia. I have been among the critics who have accused Obama of [misjudging](#) Putin and raising expectations beyond his capacity to meet them.

Giving context to the Russia shift, Baker writes:

That represents a remarkable turnaround from the start of Mr. Obama's presidency, when he nursed dreams of forging a new partnership with Russia. Now the question is how much of the relationship can be saved. Mr. Obama helped Russia gain admission to the World Trade Organization; now he is working to limit its access to external financial markets.

The turnaround on Russia is no more remarkable than the pivot Obama took after the 2008 election, when he abandoned his post-partisan brand at the first sight of Republican intransigence and forced the Affordable Care Act through Congress without GOP backing. Once poisoned, the well went dry: The candidate who had the "audacity to hope" for a new kind of politics surrendered to the toxic culture he promised to change. Obama wrote off Republicans. He said House Speaker John Boehner can't or won't bargain on the budget, then wrapped the white flag of surrender around the debt, gun control, tax reform, immigration, and other issues. Obama stopped looking for compromises, and then expressed outrage when he couldn't find them.

Baker reports on a debate inside the administration about how to contain Putin:

So far, economic advisers and White House aides urging a measured approach have won out, prevailing upon a cautious president to take one incremental step at a time out of fear of getting too far ahead of skittish Europeans and risking damage to still-fragile economies on both sides of the Atlantic.

The White House has prepared another list of Russian figures and institutions to sanction in the next few days if Moscow does not follow through on an agreement sealed in Geneva on Thursday to defuse the crisis, as Obama aides anticipate. But the president will not extend the punitive measures to whole sectors of the Russian economy, as some administration officials prefer, absent a dramatic escalation.

The more hawkish faction in the State and Defense departments has grown increasingly frustrated, privately worrying that Mr. Obama has come across as weak and unintentionally sent the message that he has written off Crimea after Russia's annexation. They have pressed for faster and more expansive sanctions, only to wait while memos sit in the White House without action. Mr. Obama has not even imposed sanctions on a list of Russian human-rights violators waiting for approval since last winter.

That last paragraph reminds me of Democrats who privately gripe about Obama's lack of engagement with Congress, his unwillingness to build meaningful relationships, his allegiance to polls and focus groups, and his cautious nature that, in their minds, holds him back from greatness. "He can't handle Putin. He can't handle Republicans," said a veteran Democratic consultant and part-time adviser to both of Obama's presidential campaigns. Speaking on condition of anonymity, the Democrat added, "He just is not a natural leader."

Being a fair-minded reporter, Baker gave space to the White House spin:

The prevailing view in the West Wing, though, is that while Mr. Putin seems for now to be enjoying the glow of success, he will eventually discover how much economic harm he has brought on his country. Mr. Obama's aides noted the fall of the Russian stock market and the ruble, capital flight from the country, and the increasing reluctance of foreign investors to expand dealings in Russia.

The White House makes the same case against Republicans, noting demographic trends that threaten the future of the GOP as a national party. The trouble with this thinking is that being right about the future doesn't assure success in the present. For instance, looking weak while being "right" on foreign policy can actually affect future outcomes.

In politics, being a bit more ["right"](#) than the GOP is no badge of honor. Voters want changes, not excuses.

I may be reading too much into it, but Baker's story on the Putin reset raises a series of familiar questions. Did the president promise too much? Deliver too little? Or a bit of both? As much as he might try, history won't completely absolve Obama for the sins of his rivals.

## Financial Times

### How Obama lost friends and influence in the Brics

by Edward Luce

The president's real pivot is not to Asia but to America, inspired by domestic sentiment

When [Barack Obama](#) took office, he pledged a new overture to the world's emerging powers. Today each of the Brics – Brazil, Russia, India, [China](#) and South Africa – is at loggerheads with America, or worse. Last month four of the five abstained in a UN vote condemning the fifth's annexation of Crimea. Next month India is likely to elect as its new leader [Narendra Modi](#), who says he has “no interest in visiting America other than to attend the UN in New York”. As the world's largest democracy, and America's most natural ally among the emerging powers, India's is a troubling weathervane. How on earth did Mr Obama lose the Brics?

Some of it was unavoidable. Early in his first term Mr Obama called for a “reset” of US relations with Russia. His overture was warmly received by Dmitry Medvedev, then Russia's president, who was considerably less anti-western than his predecessor, Vladimir Putin. Unfortunately for Mr Obama, Ukraine, Pussy Riot and many others, Mr Putin repossessed the presidency. The US president can hardly be blamed for that. Things have gone downhill since then.

The trajectory of US relations with China has also been in the wrong direction. Within his first year in office, Mr Obama made his much-feted “G2” visit to China, in which he offered Beijing a global partnership to solve the world's big problems, from climate change to financial imbalances. Alas, the Chinese did not feel ready to tackle problems on a global level that they were still struggling with at home. Mr Obama was rudely spurned by his hosts.

The following year he replaced his G2 charm offensive with a rhetorical “pivot to Asia”. Washington presented it as a long overdue rebalancing to a rising Asia Pacific region but it was seen by Beijing – with some justification – as a thinly veiled US attempt to shore up its military alliances with China's neighbours.

This week Mr Obama will visit Japan, South Korea, the Philippines and Malaysia – the first three of which are treaty allies of the US. It is his first visit to Asia in two years. China is not on the itinerary. Meanwhile, the anti-US rhetoric coming from Beijing is the toughest in years.

The fallout with Brazil is more specific. Mr Obama made a big play in 2009 to woo the main Latin American countries – even attending the summit of the Organisation of American States in Trinidad. But relations with Brazil took a nosedive after Edward Snowden's leaks about the National Security Agency last year. Dilma Rousseff, Brazil's president, cancelled a state visit to Washington last October in protest at US spying. It did not help that Mr Obama promised only Americans – but not foreigners – that the NSA was not tapping them. US-Brazil relations are now in a deep freeze.

The same is true of India – again, a far cry from Mr Obama's warm opening act with Manmohan Singh, India's outgoing prime minister. Mr Singh, whom Mr Obama once described as his “guru”, was given Mr Obama's first state dinner at the White House in 2009. That goodwill has evaporated. Last month Nancy Powell, the US ambassador to India, resigned, having been treated virtually as a persona non grata in New Delhi since she took the job. It remains to be seen what the

Modi effect will be. The fact that he is still denied a visa to visit the US – stemming from the gruesome 2002 anti-Muslim pogrom – would obviously need to be fixed.

Among the Brics only South Africa has what could be described as normal relations with the US. But even here, they are hardly close. If South Africa had spent half as much time wooing the US as it did lobbying to join the Bric club (and thereby adding the S to the acronym), things might be different. Nobody batted an eyelid when it joined the rest in refusing to censor Russia over Crimea.

Each of these deteriorating relationships has specific narratives. But there are two larger themes linking them together. First, the world is adjusting to declining US power. America retains by far the world's largest military force. But it gets a little less so each year. China's defence budget continues to grow by double digits while that of the US is falling in real terms. The US miscalculated badly in its 2003 invasion of Iraq.

Mr Obama's latest defence budget would preclude another Iraq-style invasion. That, of course, is a good thing. But other observers, including those who are beginning to resist American power around the world, are adjusting their behaviour. They see a US that is increasingly unwilling to project global force – except using remote control. Meanwhile, the Brics' economic growth rates are slowing. But they are still growing faster than the US, and are likely to continue to do so. The economic centre of gravity will continue to shift their way.

Second, the US public is tiring of its country's global responsibilities. Mr Obama's real pivot is not to Asia but to America. In this he is only taking his cue from domestic sentiment. Yet his pivot to home is not going too well either. As Lawrence Summers, the former US Treasury secretary, recently observed, the US has two parties, one of which, the Democrats, refuses to endorse any kind of trade deal; the other of which, the Republicans, appears to detest all international institutions. Neither of the two parties listens to what Mr Obama wants. If you believe the television ratings, the US public long ago tuned out from what he says.

Little surprise, then, that the Brics are getting into the habit of talking among themselves.

**Roger L. Simon**

**[Iran Won't Have a Nuclear Weapon. Period!](#)**

What happens when presidents lie?

The American public has had plenty of experience with this in recent years. Liar-president could be the new hyphenate occupation like writer-producer or architect-contractor. Almost every president has shaded things a bit, but three modern ones have been unabashed bull artists — Richard Nixon, Bill Clinton and, of course, Barack Obama.

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Obama is something else again. He lies proactively and often reflexively. By proactively I mean the obvious, such as “If you like your health plan, you can keep your health plan. Period!” By reflexively I mean that emotional no-man’s-land when someone says something they don’t *really* mean, but they say it anyway because they think it sounds good or makes them seem as if they are doing the right thing.

The red line against Syrian chemical weapons is a perfect example. Did Obama ever have any intention of following up on that? Who knows? (Not only are most of those weapons still in Syria, the French say Assad may still be [using them](#).)

Does the president himself know he is lying? I am not sure. Obama would not be the first person to think that pronouncing something made it so — and he has spent his life from a very young age surrounded by people who have not contradicted him. The implications of this are quite disturbing, if you think about them.

It’s a form of what shrinks call “magical thinking” and is an indication of a disconnected personality. It is so, if you think so, as Pirandello famously put it (alternatively translated as “Right you are, if you think you are.”)

But whatever the case, Obama’s lies have far greater impact than the other presidents’ because almost no one across an increasingly fractious world believes him anymore. What a relief that must be to the Iranians not to have to pay attention to his huffing and puffing about sanctions or whatever pathetic amount of saber-rattling, already pro forma, he might do. The nuclear talks can now go on in the spirit to which the mullahs are accustomed — a charade. Obama is one of them — he lies too. Everybody lies. Hahaha.

So they can produce a faux document, assuming we even get to read it, that no one adheres to and move on. Does anyone expect otherwise? Could a man who could not even be honest about the details of a health insurance plan be trusted to negotiate the enrichment of uranium in a secretive country on another continent governed by religious fanatics who have been hiding their activities for decades and for whom deception is a way of life?

What will Obama say if and when a dirty nuke explodes in one of our shopping malls, thousands die and the global economy goes into free fall? Maybe he will forget he ever said “Iran won’t have a nuclear weapon. Period!”

Okay, he never said “period” in this case. Everyone would have doubled over in hysterical laughter. Maybe he’d just press that old reset button with Russia and get Vladimir on the line to help solve things.

Outrageous, isn’t it? It would be if it weren’t so tragic. But what is to be done?

Mark Dubowitz of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies has an article in the *Telegraph* — [Why Washington needs to open its eyes to Iran’s intentions](#) — in which he warns the administration to take the nuclear discussions seriously and stay firm on sanctions. Mark, as usual, makes sense, but at the same time admonishing the administration in April 2014 to “open its eyes” on Iran seems a tad late, to put it mildly.



After all, it was only a few years ago that Iranian democracy protestors by the hundreds of thousands were marching in the streets of Tehran shouting “Obama, Obama, are you with us — or are you with them?” I’m pretty sure we all now know the answer to that one.

## Right Turn

### Obama floundering, just like NBC host David Gregory

by Jennifer Rubin

It is hard to say who is in more trouble — President Obama or “Meet the Press” host David Gregory.

Gregory’s ratings stink, and his bosses let it be known that they hired a consultant to find out why his close friends and family like him since most viewers don’t seem to. (As an aside, let me say that [as bad as Gregory may be as a host](#) – and we saw this coming well over a year ago – the execs who thought up this idea, spent their employer’s money on it and then leaked it should be banished.) He seems disengaged, prone to playing favorites and incapable of staying a few steps ahead of guests and pursuing much-needed [follow-up inquiries](#). He seems laconic on screen, as if he just rolled out of bed and grabbed his script on the way to the set.

Come to think of it, Obama’s ratings stink, *he’s* disengaged (and “[dithering](#)”) on foreign policy crises and he lacks [strategic thinking](#). Lucky for him, Valerie Jarrett hasn’t hired a “brand consultant,” but journalists of all political stripes are despairing about his lack of leadership and international weakness. And unfortunately for the country, having a president who stumbles along, a prisoner of events, is much more dire than a failing TV host. (Really, do we need *all* these Sunday shows?) NBC may lose ratings, but the West loses freedom, stability and security when the U.S. president is so slow to recognize danger to our interests and even slower to come up with a response, let alone an effective one.

Obama’s troubles metastasize from one region of the globe to another. He fails to check Syrian President Bashar al-Assad (who is reportedly back to using chemical weapons), prepares to bug out of Afghanistan with few if any troops to try to cement gains and makes a rotten deal with Iran. “*Ah, this is a man who will blink!*” concludes Vladimir Putin. So he gobbles up Crimea. When he has digested that, he continues the pattern of subversion and staged violence in eastern Ukraine. In three years, will the Baltic states be back in the Russian orbit? Seeing events in Europe, the leaders of China and North Korea say, “*Ah, this is a man who won’t act!*”

It is hardly surprising then that our Asian allies are rattled on the eve of Obama’s visit. The [conservative Foreign Policy Initiative explains](#):

Security issues are sure to be at the top of the agenda as the president and congressional lawmakers meet with Asian leaders. For one, as the People’s Republic of China continues its decades-long program to modernize its military, it is shifting the Indo-Pacific’s balance of power in worrisome ways. For another, North Korea’s growing nuclear, missile and conventional military capabilities are posing grave and growing dangers to South Korea, Japan, and the United States.

Meanwhile, the president has failed to conclude “the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a far-reaching free trade agreement that would promote economic integration and liberalization between the United States and 11 other countries — namely, Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, and Vietnam.”

If the past is prologue, then we can expect Obama to make many bland statements of support and issue platitudes about the much-ballyhooed Asian “pivot” or “rebalancing.” All that is as useless as his idle threats to Putin. Instead, he and his advisers need to junk their obsession with slashing the defense budget. (China is hiking its defense budget by more than 12 percent and developing “advanced short-and medium-range conventional ballistic missiles, land-attack and anti-ship cruise missiles, counter-space weapons, and military cyberspace capabilities.” Oh, and let’s not forget its huge naval expansion.) And, for once, the president must be specific on his policy commitments and make good on his promises. That means completing the TPP, affording allies closer military cooperation and helping allies boost their defense capabilities. It would also behoove the president to raise the issue of human rights and stress that America’s closest relationships are with democratic countries that respect human rights.

Remember all the shrieking from right and left that we “can’t be the world’s policeman”? Actually, that is precisely what is missing right now and why Putin, Assad, the mullahs, North Korea and China feel emboldened to pressure their neighbors and increase domestic repression. Being the world’s policeman doesn’t mean continually intervening militarily or intervening in every small regional squabble. But it does mean that we, in concert with allies, are going to uphold some basic international norms — no use of WMDs, no invasion of neighbors, no mass murder, etc. Like New York City criminals in the 1970s, the thugs on the international stage now run rampant without fear that they will suffer adverse consequences. That leaves the innocent out in the cold and security in decline; aggression without consequences tears at the fabric of the civilized system of nation states established over decades.

The president is fortunate in one respect. You can get rid of or compensate for a rotten Sunday talk show host, but he’s got job security for the next 2 1/2 years. For the rest of us, the prospect of a world without a strong American president for that long is downright frightening. Let’s hope the U.S. reputation holds up better than NBC’s.

## Hot Air

### [Attkisson: CBS News too “ideologically entrenched” to air stories critical of the Obama administration](#)

by Ed Morrissey

CNN’s Brian Stelter broadcast [a two-part interview](#) with former CBS reporter Sharyl Attkisson to review her accusations of political bias at CBS News — and to [take on the critics](#) she has acquired over the last year or so. Attkisson told the *Reliable Sources* host that the departure of top executives in the wake of Katie Couric’s flop brought in “ideologically entrenched” managers who resented her investigative reporting on the Obama administration (via [Jim Hoft](#)):

STELTER: Let me read this from “The Washington Post.” This is in March 10th, right around the time you were resigning from CBS. And Erik Wimple wrote, according to a CBS News source you

felt you were being kept off “CBS Evening News” because of political considerations. Did you feel that way? I mean, were there political considerations at times?

ATTKISSON: You know, it’s fairly well discussed inside CBS News that there are some managers recently who have been so ideologically entrenched that there is a feeling and discussion that some of them, certainly not all of them, have a difficult time viewing a story that may reflect negatively upon government or the administration as a story of value.

STELTER: So you’re saying they are liberal or Democrats?

ATTKISSON: I don’t know what their registered party is, I just know that the tendency on the part of some of these managers who have key influences has been they never mind the stories that seem to, for example, and I did plenty of them, go against the grain of the Republican Party, but they do often seem to feel defensive about, almost, personally defensive about stories that could make the government look bad. Even if it’s something as simple as a government waste story that doesn’t pinpoint anybody in particular and it takes on both parties. It seems as though some of them were sensitive about any story that might appear as though it criticizes the government.

STELTER: A couple of news story about your resignation cited one particular executive, Patricia Shevlin, who was executive producer of the “CBS Evening News”, as someone that you clashed (ph) with. Is that an example of someone you felt had this ideological stand and was uncomfortable with stories about the administration that were unflattering.

ATTKISSON: Pat Shevlin was the executive producer of the “Evening News”, and I think there’s no secret that there were a number of people at CBS News that had some serious issues, but it wasn’t isolated to that alone. I think –

STELTER: You said serious issues. What do you mean?

ATTKISSON: There were discussions about certain types of stories that got on the air. There were discussions about the heavy-handed editing. In other words, we had not experienced — at least I had not experienced and some of them said they had not experienced the extent to which some of the editing went on.

That may not be just her. There are certainly a group of managers in what they call the fishbowl of New York who are responsible. So, it’s hard to say it’s all at the guidance of her, but that she is executive producer of the show.

In the second part of the interview, Attkisson took on her critics — including Media Matters, which she suggested may have gotten paid to target her:

ATTKISSON: I do think, again, that’s a campaign by those who really want to controversialize the reporting I do so you wouldn’t listen to it, because if anybody took a few minutes really just do a Google search, you would see the dozens and dozens of stories I’ve done that were, in many cases, complemented by liberal press and other liberals as being a very good story, and I have been criticized by the conservative side in the past.

So, I think it wouldn’t take — it wouldn’t take much for someone –

STELTER: Do you think that's what Media Matters is doing? Media Matters has been campaigning against you and saying you've been inaccurate in your reporting, is that what they're doing? They're just trying to controversialize the issue?

ATTKISSON: Media Matters, as my understanding, is a far left blog group that I think holds itself out to be sort of an independent watchdog group. And yes, they clearly targeted me at some point. They used to work with me on stories and tried to help me produce my stories, and at some point –

STELTER: That's interesting.

ATTKISSON: Well, I think they call — don't they call you? I mean, they call journalists and they're trying to –

STELTER: Right, they're always emailing things, making us –

(CROSSTALK)

STELTER: — try to act outraged about something, right?

ATTKISSON: And I was certainly friendly with them as anybody, good information can come from any source. But when I persisted with Fast and Furious and some of the green energy stories I was doing, I clearly at some point became a target, that they — you know, I don't know if someone paid them to do it or if they took it on their own. But they were very much –

STELTER: Do you think that's possible that someone paid them?

ATTKISSON: Well, they get contributions from — yes, they get contributions from –

STELTER: But specifically to target you?

ATTKISSON: Perhaps, sure. I think that's what some of these groups do, absolutely.

Does it really go that far? It's possible, I suppose, but it seems a little far-fetched. Media Matters goes after any media outlet and any story that reflects poorly on the Obama administration. The problem for Attkisson is that she was one of the relatively few reporters willing to pursue in-depth investigative work on Operation Fast & Furious, the disaster of Healthcare.gov, and especially on Benghazi. Jan Crawford at CBS is another, and she got the same treatment. That's more or less Media Matters' mission — to act as media bodyguard for the Obama administration — and Attkisson, Crawford, and anyone else who dares to speak a little truth to power will get targeted as a matter of course.

The link to the departure of Couric is a little intriguing, especially since conservatives generally derided Couric for the same kind of bias and lack of hard-news instinct that Attkisson now reveals at CBS News. The change in executive management after the failure of the Couric era seems to have spelled the beginning of the end for Attkisson. Perhaps for conservatives, this is a case of being careful what one wishes for, or maybe just a moment of clarification by CBS about what kind of news division it really wanted after Couric's departure. After all, someone hired the new "ideologically entrenched" management of which Attkisson ran afoul, and they don't appear to be going anywhere in the wake of her accusations.

## Legal Insurrection

### Media Matters' relationship with mainstream media in focus after Sharyl Attkisson's accusations

by Bryan Jacoutot

Merely accusing Attkisson of “shoddy reporting” is an insufficient response to accusations that Media Matters assists network news in producing stories.



On the most recent airing of the CNN Sunday talk show, *Reliable Sources*, former CBS reporter, Sharyl Attkisson, [revealed](#) a rather stunning accusation about the far left online news organization, Media Matters.

Media Matters, as my understanding, is a far left blog group that I think holds itself out to be sort of an independent watchdog group. And yes, they clearly targeted me at some point. ***They used to work with me on stories and tried to help me produce my stories...***

And I was certainly friendly with them as anybody, good information can come from any source. But when I persisted with *Fast and Furious* and some of the green energy stories I was doing, I clearly at some point became a target... [Emphasis Added]

Of course, anyone who has read Media Matters would scoff at the idea that it is a politically “[independent](#)” media watchdog group.

Given the obvious leanings of the organization, the revelation that Media Matters is actually assisting, in some manner, in producing content for one of the “Big 3” (ABC, NBC, CBS) network news programs carries significant implications. Most notably, these three networks are still viewed by many in the public as the place to get your least politically slanted news. For many Americans, the brief 30-minute or hour long nightly news program from these networks is the only news they get all day.

In the immediate wake of Attkisson’s Sunday appearance, Media Matters elected only to [respond](#) to the assertion by Attkisson that she had been targeted by the organization:

Sharyl Attkisson is continuing a pattern of evidence-free speculation that started at the end of her tenure at CBS. We have never taken contributions to target her or any other reporter. Our decision to post any research on Attkisson is based only on her shoddy reporting.

Yesterday, Media Matters [doubled down](#) on their repudiation of Attkisson’s suggestion they might have targeted her, calling the claims “false.” Again, however, Media Matters failed to address the whole of Attkisson’s assertions.

In explaining away the targeting claims as baseless, Media Matters neglected to respond to the more subtle assertion by Attkisson that it worked with her, as she phrased it, “to help me produce my stories.”

We’ve noted here the numerous times Media Matters has unabashedly attempted to [bring an end to right-leaning news outlets like Fox News](#), and [astroturfed secondary boycott of Rush Limbaugh](#).

If it’s also creating content that the Big 3 network news programs are presenting as “politically neutral,” the American people have a right to know. This is especially so given the new direction Media Matters publicly announced, after [declaring victory](#) in its self-described “war on Fox News.”

According to its strategic plan for the next three years, a copy of which was provided to The Huffington Post, ***Media Matters envisions shifting its focus to new, increasingly influential targets***, including Spanish-language media, social media streams, alternative online outlets and morning and entertainment sources. It will enhance its state media and issue-based monitoring, as well as continue its focus on right-wing radio and legacy outlets. [Emphasis Added]

Irony abounds. Media Matters, the organization that began as an effort to expose right-wing bias in media portrayed as “fair and balanced,” may now be engaging in the inverse of the very thing it sought to prevent through its cooperation with news outlets like CBS.

Media Matters needs to come clean.





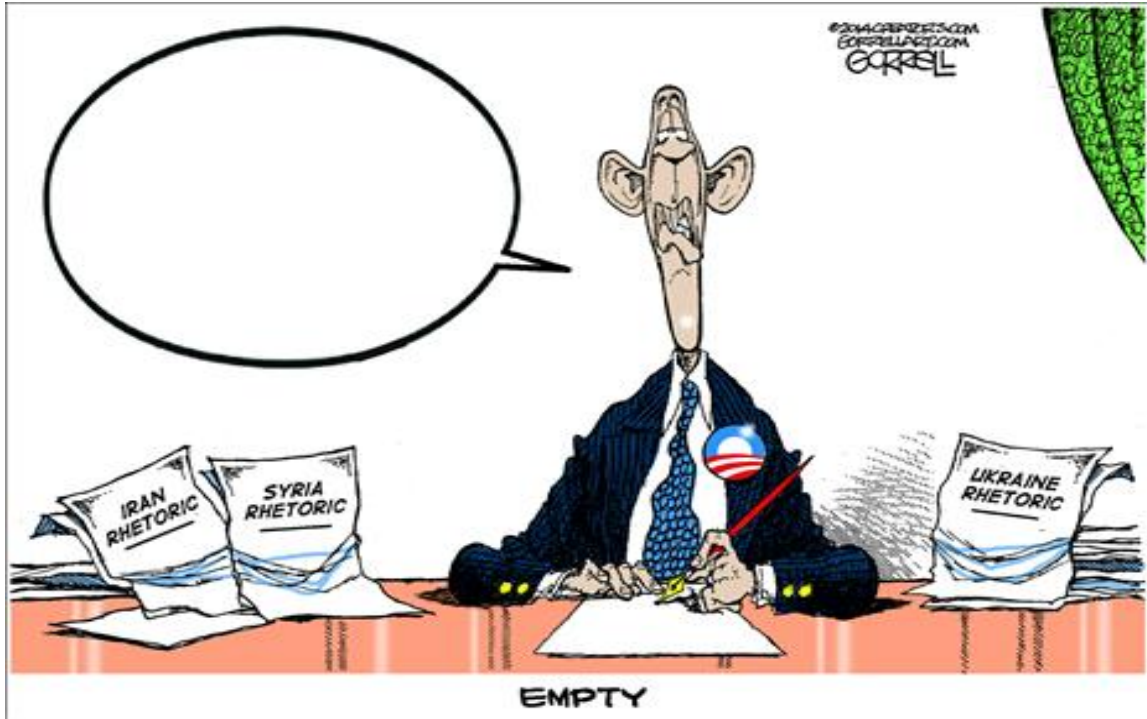
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