

ACCORDING TO PROPORNOT'S CONSPIRATORIAL CRITERIA, WAPO IS A US INTELLIGENCE OUTLET

I hope to have more to say about the whackjob story the WaPo peddled over the weekend about the shady "PropOrNot" effort to identify and blacklist Russian influenced media outlets, which according to the anonymous people behind it include Naked Capitalism, TruthDig, Consortium News, and Truthout. In the meantime, I've put some resources below (and am working on a page curating links about all the claimed Russian plots this year, credible and no).

But I wanted to look at how WaPo itself stacks up according to one of the criteria laid out in WaPo's "news" piece on propaganda.

Here's how the WaPo's propaganda hunters identify propaganda outlets directed by the Russian state:

The researchers used Internet analytics tools to trace the origins of particular tweets and mapped the connections among social-media accounts that consistently delivered synchronized messages. *Identifying website codes sometimes revealed common ownership.* In other cases, exact phrases or sentences were echoed by sites and social-media accounts in rapid succession, signaling membership in connected networks controlled by a single entity. [my emphasis]

One of the clues, these researchers say, is to ID common ownership between known state entities and other media outlets.

That got printed in the Washington Post, a media outlet owned by Jeff Bezos. Bezos is an oligarch currently worth around \$62 billion dollars, largely through his ownership of almost 17% of Amazon's stock.

And Amazon is a US government contractor, providing cloud services to the Intelligence Community.

In other words, WaPo and the Intelligence Community's cloud contractor share a common owner, one of the world's richest oligarchs, the kind of link that if Bezos were a well-connected Russian oligarch would easily mark the news outlet as propaganda.

I'm not making that argument. Thus far, at least, WaPo's editorial focus doesn't seem to have changed in the Bezos era (aside from decisions about coverage of DC areas news). It'd be hard to distinguish an IC-directed editorial slant from what the Neocon WaPo editorial page has had for a decade and a half under Fred Hiatt. WaPo's news, on the other hand, has continued to provide a range of both great and questionable reporting; its reporters are roughly about as tied into the IC as the NYT.

In other words, WaPo remains what it was before an oligarch with financial ties to the intelligence community bought it. But we know that reading its content with a critical view, not by mapping out perceived and real connections. Doing that mapping would mark the WaPo as a clear government propaganda outlet that it is not.

This kind of conspiracy theorizing gets dangerous quickly. Even the WaPo – especially the WaPo – cannot afford such games.

Critiques of PropOrNot

- Matthew Ingram judges that the effort to expand known Russian outlets to a global

- conspiracy gets out of hand.
- Max Blumenthal examines some of the funding and past politics of those involved in campaign.
 - Hannah Gais examines PropOrNot's weird definition of propaganda and (in an update) wonders whether its secretive team has ties to Ukraine.
 - Ben Norton and Glenn Greenwald map out how sketchy the PropOrNot group is.
 - Matt Taibbi notes that the left has become as conspiratorial as the right traditionally has been.

Responses from those blacklisted

- ZeroHedge
- David Swanson
- Dave Lindorff
- Chris Floyd