



Has Trump Broken the Left's Propaganda Machine?

"There's no such thing as bad publicity except your own obituary," quipped Irish writer and activist Brendan Behan. Yet the no-bad-publicity notion certainly isn't true for politicians, who must win not only fame but elections. Hence an old pattern: Republicans would be condemned by a monolithic mainstream media.

They'd then fold like a cheap camera and apologize for their "trespass" — whether it reflected turpitude or Truth.

But those days are over, proclaims commentator J.B. Shurk, and he credits President Donald Trump with ending them. As Shurk [wrote](#) Friday in "Trump breaks the left's propaganda machine":



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Over at [Twitchy](#), writer Warren Squire collected a number of social media reactions to the "Schumer Shutdown" to make an interesting point: Corporate news personalities have lost the ability to shame non-leftist Americans into doing what leftist corporations want.

Well known social media commentator "Western Lensman" describes CNN's Kaitlin [sic] Collins as being stunned that the White House continues to mock Democrats during the shutdown. "They simply don't care about the criticism," Collins says. Lensman argues, "That's exactly what's driving the propaganda press insane. They're powerless."

"Planet of Memes" posted a cartoon showing Homer Simpson discovering "how to be happy." The answer is simple: "Make memes of Libtards until they cry. Then make memes of them crying." The "Planet of Memes" account excels in this pursuit of happiness.

"Flopping Aces" gets to the nub of the issue: "Once you've been called Hitler 10,000 times, the insults lose their sting. It's like chemo: your pain receptors get fried, and suddenly a reporter shrieking 'racist!' feels like a mosquito bite." Ol' "Flopping Aces" is entirely correct. As he says, "Their big scary words are now background noise."

Faint Heart Never Won Fair Campaign

Shurk states that, far from the erstwhile GOP norm of groveling in the face of criticism, Trump is never cowed. Rather, he doubles down.

Then he doubles down on the double-down.

This isn't just Trump's instinct (he's not exactly thick-skinned); it's also a strategy apparently championed by longtime advisor Steve Bannon. What's more, asserts Shurk, this stout-hearted stand by the guns has inspired other Republicans to follow suit.



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on October 4, 2025

To understand fully this strategy's value, however, an analogy is instructive. As [I wrote in 2016](#), illustrating Trump's appeal:

Imagine it's the old Soviet Union, and there's a colorful dissident saying everything other citizens want to say but fear to. Now imagine the government sends its secret police to silence him, and they just get consumed. Bullets have no effect on him, and with every assault he simply becomes bigger. Imagine how frustrated and fearful the Kremlin commissars would become.

And imagine how the people would be in his corner.

When Saying Sorry Is Not-so-sweet Sorrow

On the other hand, what befalls the cowering apologizer? As I stated in a second analogy:

Imagine you went to a John Wayne movie years ago and the Duke, instead of being an intrepid champion of good, sheepishly apologized to the villain. You might have wanted your money back. For a hero stands up for what's right, against all odds and even in a hail of bullets. And were he to back down, he would relinquish hero status.

None of this is to say that contrition is never in order. Apologizing when warranted to people in interpersonal relationships is a sign of character and builds respect, affection, and loyalty. It is to say, however, that apologizing to cutthroat (and sometimes psychopathic) politicians is to be a lamb to slaughter. Such people aren't interested in reconciliation, but in personal destruction. They react to an apology not with compassionate eyes, but with a predator's glare. They smell blood — and close in for the kill.

And your erstwhile supporters won't be there, either. For if a general starts folding in battle, his lines will break and his troops flee. How many people will stand up for you when you won't stand up for yourself?

It's Not Just Trump, Though

Yet there's another reason the "propaganda machine" is broken. My father, who'd been a Senator Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.) supporter in the 1964 presidential election, once told me something about how Goldwater's candidacy had been destroyed by the people who "buy ink by the barrel."

"When the media paint you in a certain way," my dad said in essence, "that's it."

While that's true, the media today are different. They have a quality the Left should love: diversity.

In the mid-1970s, the alphabet networks still controlled more than 90 percent of the television market. The major newspapers were mostly left-leaning, talk radio was still a bit player, and the internet didn't exist. Consequently, the media could and did act as a monolith and shape an anti-conservative narrative.

Today, however, the alphabet networks' TV market share has shrunk to 19 percent. Podcasters such as Joe Rogan and social media are far more influential, and establishment narratives no longer dominate. There's a plethora of different voices and perspectives and, as the *X-Files* motto goes, "The Truth Is Out There." And it's far easier to find than before (you still need an open mind and sincere heart, though).



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As Shurk puts it, “In the recent past, television talking heads framed the acceptable parameters of ideological debate. We call it the ‘Overton Window’...” This brings us to another reason it’s harder now to be canceled for anti-wokeness — and why radicalism is burgeoning.

The Overton window has not shifted as much as it has *widened* — precipitously.

Finding Your Ideological Happy Place

If you harbored “unfashionable” beliefs decades ago, you might feel quite alone. You probably wouldn’t interact with many (or any) other like-minded people, so you could be reluctant to voice the ideas. Moreover, if you dared, you’d be the nail that sticks up and gets hammered down.

Today, though, you can go on the internet and find tens or hundreds of thousands, or even millions, of people who share your beliefs. (Elon Musk’s purchase of Twitter was invaluable in this regard.) There’s strength in numbers, too, and tongue-loosening anonymity on the net. And a multitude of voices singing the same tune illustrates how it’s not so uncommon after all. The position in question then can become more mainstream.

(Another factor is that since humans are social beings, they generally don’t want to be scorned and ostracized. Hence the reluctance to espouse the unfashionable. But the internet can provide them with a virtual community where the unfashionable is fashionable — and mentionable. This also, again, means the unfashionable may not be so for long.)

This is a double-edged sword, do note. It allows for the voicing of both once-unfashionable truths and once-unfashionable lies. *Ergo* the Overton window’s expansion — and radicalism’s explosion.

Of course, this could all change if the censorship-loving Democrats retake the executive branch in 2028. As for our new-media landscape’s allowing for the rearing of ugly heads along with the ethereal, well, at least we now can know who the barbarians inside the gate are.



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