The media does not pay much attention to sideshows. Decisions are made about what constitutes mainstream news, and that is all we get to hear. But those who have seen this happen often enough can identify from the stories we hear what the real story we don’t hear is likely to be.

All we have seen in the American media for the past week is this... ‘At least 10 killed in college shooting in Oregon’ - BBC News, (found at). This shooting happened at a very convenient time for Barack Obama. He has long sought to get the whole of the US talking about gun violence by advocating gun control measures, and this tragic incident reignites this debate just when he needs it.

Why does Obama want people to talk about gun violence? Because by highlighting the lives lost as a result of it he can pretend that he is doing something about it. Therefore if violence is taking place anywhere in the world it can’t be the fault of the US, because although gun violence deaths there are far greater per capita than in any other Western country it is now seeking to address the problem.

Obama does not say that if he wanted to he could take executive action to ban personal firearms ownership. The “Right to Bear Arms” which is supposed to be an inviolable part of the US Constitution was actually introduced as an amendment, like Prohibition was. He can’t overturn that by himself, but he can force a vote on it by using executive powers to interpret that amendment in a particular way. Even if his actions were declared unconstitutional, this would create pressure on Congress to decide whether it should be, and thus make gun control closer to reality.

But this does not happen because the US has long adopted the old Soviet policy of spouting unashamed doublespeak. As the US now knows, citizens of the old Eastern bloc had unenviable lives for the most part but had one great advantage over citizens of Western countries. They knew more about what was really going on in their governments than people in the West generally did, or do now. Not because they were told, but because they weren’t.

Long experience of official lies had given people in Communist countries a sophisticated interpretive sense. They heard what was said and understood what was really meant, because they could decipher what sort of lie meant what sort of reality. This is why there have been no great revelations about the Communist era. What we have since found is what the man in the street already knew, it is only the extent of certain crimes which was hidden, not the fact that they were being committed, by whom, and at what time.

Westerners don’t yet have that advantage, and with most Westerners still believing that their mainstream Western media are free, rather than controlled by the US military-industrial complex through one agency or another, they are unlikely to develop the necessary interpretive skills. What can we tell them about the doublespeak on gun control? What is the story which lies behind this, which can be deciphered from what is allowed to be said?

**Deadly painful analogies**

As the gun control issue is about violence and death, the story we are not being told is about the same things. We
therefore need to look at the world’s trouble spots and see whether there is a disconnect between what the West says it is doing in these theatres of violence and war and what it is really doing, the story it doesn’t want us to see.

An obvious candidate is the Islamic State. The recent Russian airstrikes in Syria have laid bare the true nature of US involvement with ISIS. It has long been demonstrable that not only is ISIS being armed and funded by the US through various mechanisms, people are being taken off the streets in compliant allied countries such as Georgia and then reappearing in Syria fighting for ISIS. It is therefore obvious why the mainstream US outlets are not reporting that the Russian airstrikes have severely weakened ISIS, which US bombing should have done long ago, and that the US has now admitted CIA involvement in the Syrian conflict.

However it is unlikely that the gun control debate is a cover for US patronage of ISIS and its evil deeds, precisely because we are able to draw this conclusion. As former Communist citizens know, the truth is something never otherwise drawn attention to. ISIS itself creates debate, and that debate too serves a purpose. Its primary one is to pretend that regime change in the region ISIS is active in is inevitable, but there is another idea working subtly behind that.

What we are supposed to see most of all with ISIS is the cross-border nature of its activity. We are supposed to see a wide swathe of territory, in countries we know little about apart from the fact that they are “other” from a Western viewpoint, being inflicted with this deadly virus which allegedly springs from the essential quality of some of the natives. We are supposed to think, “that part of the world is nothing but trouble, and the US doesn’t agree with that”. Consequently, when trouble flares up somewhere else the US is not involved, doesn’t want it and will try and oppose it, we would logically assume.

So the US posturing on gun control is designed to disguise its involvement in another conflict in the same part of the world, which it cares deeply about but is trying its hardest to keep hidden for some reason. There is one obvious candidate, and again it is one which is going unreported by mainstream media. At first glance it appears a big jump to connect gun control with this conflict – until you see the forces involved, and how the US is increasingly powerless to resist them, and seeking a way out which does not expose its growing weakness.

For Oregon read Karabakh

We don’t hear much about the “frozen” Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict now. If the news we read reflected what policymakers are thinking about, this conflict at the heart of the Eurasian transit system, between countries on either side of the East-West divide, would be in front of us daily. Yet even when important issues it directly impacts, like energy routes, ethnic conflicts, defence agreements and self-determination, are being discussed it is ignored, because the position it puts the US in is too unpleasant to contemplate.

Both sides of this conflict have tried to keep it on the news pages. There is a very entrenched Armenian lobby in the US, which is constantly campaigning about historic territorial claims, recognition of the Armenian Genocide and many other matters, and pursues “entryist” tactics, a consistent feature of Armenian Diaspora life for centuries all over the globe, to win its arguments. Azerbaijan counters this by pointing to its oil and gas reserves and the West’s need to get hold of these, this leaving the US in an unpleasant dilemma.

No US administration can afford to go against the Armenian lobby, which has a powerful weight of opinion within US allies that it can use against it, persuading them not to contribute to NATO forces, etcetera. At the same time, no US administration can afford to compromise the country’s energy interests. As those two interests are at war, and have been since 1993-94, the US has kept the conflict frozen through mechanisms such as the OSCE Minsk Group, which resolves nothing and is not intended to. But this has left the US increasingly vulnerable to either crashing politically or going without energy, neither of which are acceptable to it.

It has also put the US in another position it doesn’t want to admit to being in. Armenia is subject to an international blockade due to its occupation of the ethnic Armenian enclave of Nagorno Karabakh and seven ethnic Azeri districts surrounding it. Its only friend is Russia, which remains its only significant trading partner.

Bowing to the Armenian lobby means being on the same side as Russia, which the US blames for everything, and opposing Turkey, its own ally, which is the main sponsor of Azerbaijan. The US cannot pursue its broader objectives as long as this situation remains, but can’t change its policy without making those same objectives untenable, as it needs the international support guaranteed by being sympathetic to the Armenian lobby to get anything done nowadays.

Keeping the Karabakh conflict out of the news has prevented US weakness being too obviously exposed, but has not
made that weakness go away. At any time, Russia can walk into both Armenia and Azerbaijan in an advisory capacity and leave the US without either international support or energy. So what is it doing about it? Exactly what it is doing in the neighbouring Middle East? The conflict has to be reignited and we all have to think there is no alternative. One conflict will be used to justify the other, while Americans debate gun ownership to pretend it is nothing to do with them.

Same old story which isn’t a story

Two weeks ago, following some Armenian losses, Armenian President Serzh Sarkisian (and that is how you spell his name, headline writers – there is no Saint Sargs!) practically said that if Azerbaijan keeps looking for war they’ll give it one.

For many years snipers have been shooting at each other across the border between Azerbaijan proper and the areas occupied by Armenia, and over the last year both sides have begun using heavy artillery in what is supposed to be a frozen conflict. The fighting has also spread to the border between Azerbaijan and Armenia proper, specifically to the Armenian province of Tavush which borders the north-western extremity of Azerbaijan.

Naturally the sources differ when they come to describing what is going on. Both claim the other fired first. The Nagorno-Karabakh Prime Minister’s spokesperson, Artak Beglaryan, has said that there are sixty to eighty wounded Azerbaijani soldiers in Azerbaijani military hospitals and his army, meaning the Armenian national army, has destroyed several [Azerbaijani] bases and barracks, along with their military equipment. Meanwhile the Azeri media is saying that 20 Armenian soldiers have been killed at the front and the Armenians opened fired 823 times in September.

Those close to this conflict, like the unfortunate victims of the ISIS advance, are unlikely to think that 10 people being shot in a school in Oregon is news. They can see as well as the US how difficult a situation the West is in over Karabakh, and why it won’t talk about it. Both sides have long assumed that war will break out again eventually, and Azerbaijan has made no secret of the fact that it is building up its military with a view to eventually regaining its territory.

All the elements are there for the US to manipulate regime change in both countries to change the situation and run away from its own weakness - provided it can be made to look as if this is mere collateral damage from broader world events, arising from some defect in the locals, which the US is actively opposing rather than sponsoring for its own ends. Of course, if it openly admitted this it would have to admit the depth of its own problem too. So it has to be buried behind what we are allowed to see. It is the Soviet propaganda machine all over again.

If you look at what dictates US policy everywhere – energy, maintaining particular international alliances and attacking others, changing regimes to serve what the US defines as its interests – the importance of the Karabakh conflict becomes clear. Nothing happens there without the US wanting it to. If the US wants us to think about domestic gun violence, you can be sure it doesn’t want us to know it is sponsoring a resurgence of violence elsewhere. Welcome to the real “collateral damage”, energy consumers everywhere.

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