

GLENN GREENWALD'S SELF HACK: "I COULD GO ON AND ON"

As you've no doubt learned, Glenn Greenwald left The Intercept in a huff after editors wouldn't let him publish an article repeating the last illogical rant he made about "censorship" of a non-story about Joe Biden (I unpacked the earlier piece here, and did an interminable thread on the interminable piece he wanted to publish as part of this thread).

Glenn has released a selection of the emails, not all with accompanying metadata, that led up to his departure (I had to sign an NDA when I worked at The Intercept and I'm wondering if he had to or whether all NDAs – including those about the now defunct Snowden archive – are invalid now). I consider this a self-hack, because they actually show Glenn conceding the point his editor, Peter Maass made, and then labeling it censorship.

The thread starts with a story memo (with no timestamp, though it may have been a Doc) laying out ways for Glenn to make his column better. It starts by affirming the value of a column criticizing "liberal" journalists for not asking tougher questions. Glenn even emphasizes this by bolding it.

Glenn, I have carefully read your draft and there is some I agree with and some I disagree with but am comfortable publishing. However, there is some material at the core of this draft that I think is very flawed. Overall I think this piece can work best **if it is significantly narrowed down to what you first discussed with Betsy – media criticism about liberal journalists not asking Biden the questions he should be asked more forcefully, and why they are failing to do that.**

That is, from the very start Maass committed to his willingness to post a column questioning why Biden hasn't had to answer more questions about this topic. He committed to call out other journalists who won't be more confrontational with Joe Biden.

What Maass disagreed with are the many places where Glenn, absent any evidence, makes insinuations about Biden corruption.

There are many places in which the explicit or implied position is a) the emails expose corruption by Joe Biden and b) news organizations are suppressing their reporting on it. Those positions strike me as foundations to this draft, and they also strike me as inaccurate, and that inaccuracy undercuts narrower points that are sound.

This is the story that Glenn wants to tell. Not that the "liberal" media is going easy on Biden, but that emails that have shown no evidence of corruption somehow reflect corruption.

There's a lot nutty in Glenn's response, but the most important is this passage, where he claims to address concerns raised by Maass.

3) For almost every **personal opinion** you express about Biden that you claim I omitted, I actually already included it explicitly in the draft. Just a few examples:

- *YOU: "But it's very significant that the Journal found no corroborating evidence either of Joe Biden's involvement in any such deals, or those deals being consummated.*

These are major issues that I feel undermine the draft's thesis and are downplayed in the draft."

- **MY DRAFT:** *"Thus far, no proof has been offered by Bobulinski that Biden ever consummated his participation in any of those discussed deals. The Wall Street Journal says that it found no corporate records reflecting that a deal was finalized and that "text messages and emails related to the venture that were provided to the Journal by Mr. Bobulinski, mainly from the spring and summer of 2017, don't show either Hunter Biden or James Biden discussing a role for Joe Biden in the venture."*
- **YOU:** *"You can certainly note that Shokin's successor let Burisma off the hook, but that's not evidence he was installed by Biden in order to achieve that end."*
- **MY DRAFT:** *"It is true*

that no evidence, including these new emails, constitute proof that Biden's motive in demanding Shokhin's termination was to benefit Burisma."

▪ **YOU:** *"A connected problem is that your draft asserts there is a massive suppression attempt by the entire major media to not report out these accusations, but then doesn't explore how major news organizations have done significant stories, and those stories, such as the Journal's, have not found anything of significance. The Times has also reported on the China deal and found the claims wanting."*

▪ **MY DRAFT:** *"The Wall Street Journal says that it found no corporate records reflecting that a deal was finalized and that "text messages and emails related to the venture that were*

provided to the Journal by Mr. Bobulinski, mainly from the spring and summer of 2017, don't show either Hunter Biden or James Biden discussing a role for Joe Biden in the venture."...The New York Times on Sunday reached a similar conclusion: while no documents prove that such a deal was consummated, "records produced by Mr. Bobulinski show that in 2017, Hunter Biden and James Biden were involved in negotiations about a joint venture with a Chinese energy and finance company called CEFC China Energy."

I could go on and on. [my emphasis]

Note that, first of all, Glenn paints Maass' observations about logical problems in Glenn's piece as "personal opinion."

In each case, Glenn is misrepresenting what Maass said. The first quotation, in context, is Maass' first example of the ways in which Glenn's assertions about Biden are not backed by the evidence. Maass introduces the few published emails, and then notes that the WSJ didn't find anything nefarious in them.

There are many places in which the explicit or implied position is a) the

emails expose corruption by Joe Biden and b) news organizations are suppressing their reporting on it. Those positions strike me as foundations to this draft, and they also strike me as inaccurate, and that inaccuracy undercuts narrower points that are sound.

There are a couple of published emails and texts in which Hunter Biden or his business partners suggest or hint that Joe Biden might be aware of, or involved in, their dealings with China.

[snip]

But it's very significant that the Journal found no corroborating evidence either of Joe Biden's involvement in any such deals, or those deals being consummated. These are major issues that I feel undermine the draft's thesis and are downplayed in the draft.

The second quotation comes from a paragraph *that quotes Glenn's response!!!!* but lays out generally that years of reporting have shown there's no evidence for Glenn's insinuations.

In addition, I feel there are substantive problems with the way you present the material on Ukraine. As your draft notes at one point, "It is true that no evidence, including these new emails, constitute proof that Biden's motive in demanding Shokin's termination was to benefit Burisma." However, there are many places in the piece where you say that the material raises serious questions about Biden's motives, yet you never present any evidence that supports such questions. You can certainly note that Shokin's successor let Burisma off the hook, but that's not evidence he was installed by Biden in order to achieve that end (indeed, it appears from the

quote Taibbi cites that Biden initially had no idea who Shokin's proposed successor was). Despite years of reporting by a lot of journalists, American as well as Ukrainian, as well as an exhaustive GOP-led U.S. Senate investigation, no evidence has surfaced of Biden acting corruptly with respect to the replacement of Shokin. (Taibbi's findings are equivocal, I believe.) The reasonable conclusion, by now, would be that it most likely didn't happen.

The third quotation notes that *once you take into account actual reporting*, Glenn's preferred thesis "starts to wobble."

A connected problem is that your draft asserts there is a massive suppression attempt by the entire major media to not report out these accusations, but then doesn't explore how major news organizations have done significant stories, and those stories, such as the Journal's, have not found anything of significance. The Times has also reported on the China deal and found the claims wanting. There are other pieces I can point to. You should give full notice to those –but once you do, the draft's overall thesis on suppression starts to wobble. Please note that I nonetheless believe you still have a valid albeit narrower argument about the failure of many journalists to confront the Biden family directly and aggressively with relevant questions about the materials and the legalized corruption of Hunter Biden that they document.

That is, all three of these quotes that Glenn responds to are quotes pointing out that his thesis – that there must be something in these emails that the reporting on the emails have thus far not found that if only "liberal"

journalists asked harder questions they could find – is basically bullshit. There's no evidence of wrong-doing.

And Glenn points that out!!! “I could go on and on,” Glenn asserts, seemingly promising there are endless examples of Glenn admitting there's no evidence for the claims he is making.

There may well be. But that seems to concede Maass' argument: that the thesis Glenn wanted to publish – corrupt Joe Biden – isn't backed by any evidence, even if “corrupt liberal journalists not asking hard questions of Joe Biden” might be.

Immediately after laying out how he conceded over and over that there's no evidence to support the insinuations he's making against Biden, he includes this paragraph.

What's happening here is obvious: you know that you can't explicitly say you don't want to publish the article because it raises questions about the candidate you and all other TI Editors want very much to win the election in 5 days. So you have to cast your censorship as an accusation – an outrageous and inaccurate one – that my article contains factually false claims, all as a pretext for alleging that my article violates The Intercept's lofty editorial standards and that it's being rejected on journalistic grounds rather than nakedly political grounds.

But your memo doesn't identify a single factual inaccuracy, let alone multiple ones. And that's why you don't and can't identify any such false claims. And that, in turn, is why your email repeatedly says that what makes the draft false is that it omits facts which – as I just demonstrated – the draft explicitly includes. [my emphasis]

“What's happening here is obvious” Glenn asserts

(after a long passage in which he lays out proof that he's aware there's no evidence to back his insinuations about Biden). He claims that it is obvious that "you don't want to publish the article because it raises questions about [Biden]," then suggests Maass (and presumably Betsy Reed, as well) "can't explicitly say" that, that their attempts to improve Glenn's argument about what he sees as the failures of "liberal" journalists to ask questions and their refusal to let him post a screed that, over and over, admits he has no evidence to back his insinuations are really all an attempt to protect Joe Biden.

As he does with Biden himself, he does with his editors: they have pointedly *not* said they're doing what they're doing because they want to protect Biden, and in fact Maass said he was trying to improve Glenn's argument that journalists, generally, are protecting Joe Biden. But Glenn says it's "obvious" that's what's really going on, even though the evidence says something else.

And he does it after laying out three admissions that there's no evidence to back his insinuations about Biden, and promising he "could go on and on" providing more examples where he admits he has no evidence to back the claims he'd like to make.

I have asked Maass and Reed for the full email chain (there appear to be earlier emails in this exchange, and Glenn did not include the metadata for communications on October 28). And while I didn't ask Maass and Reed for this, it bears noting that Glenn has made repeated claims about his contract with The Intercept. If Glenn wants to make these claims, he should be asked by everyone demanding tough questions to prove that his contract says what he claims it does.

Update: Here's The Intercept's statement, which is quite good.

Update: I initially spelled Maass' last name incorrectly here. My apologies to him. Yet more

proof everyone can benefit from a good editor.

Update: I keep butchering Maass' last name. I think it is correct now.