ABSTRACT

CRISIS REPORTING:

91 DAYS TO THE INVASION OF IRAQ SEEN THROUGH U.S. ELITE MEDIA

Elise (Lisette) Poole Interdisciplinary Studies, International Reporting (2011)
Research Advisors: Diane Beeson, Ph.D., Agha K. Saeed, Ph.D., Chair Donna Wiley, Ph.D.

This study examines a consecutive 91-day reporting period in The New York Times as it peaked leading up to the invasion of Iraq in March 2003. It analyzes the newspaper’s role through the type and scope of information it offered the public about the administration’s arguments for war.

A content and quantification analysis method using 1,038 articles is illustrated in charts, graphs and tables to determine whether the reporting (a) balanced American government or military voices on the subject of weapons of mass destruction, and Iraqi affected groups; (b) fairly represented military achievements or movements with possible massive damage to-- institutions of law and order, infrastructure, public health, the environment and to civil order, resulting from expected massive high ordnance bombing; (c) represented the voices of Iraqis or other Arab/Islamic/antiwar groups in the conflict.

The study reaches back to the Civil War for historical context to show, with examples, the media-government relation pattern set then and followed in each U.S. intervention, except Vietnam, up to the latest in Iraq when the Internet disrupted it as The Times readers could compare their information to that from other sources.

Results from this study, as reflected in the data extracted from this research, may be useful for (a) understanding the type of pressures administration and military officials can bring to bear upon the media in times of war and how news stories about a country designated as an “enemy” are reported; (b) journalism educators to demonstrate to reporters and editors the pitfalls they should avoid, and to be aware of incidents when the interests of the U.S. military and politicians override those of the US media; and to seek out ways to resist them, and be independent of government; (c) helping readers understand how newspapers see their role as the public’s watchdog, and how they interpret their task during periods of national crisis.
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A University Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of
California State University, East Bay

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Masters of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies, International Reporting.

By Elise (Lisette) B. Poole
September 2011
Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my family—mother Mireille, Chrissy and Jen whose unwavering support and help made this moment possible. Also, to James who lives on in our minds and in my hearts.

Very special thanks to my long-time Associated Press colleagues and friends Earleen and Libby who encouraged me with notes and phone calls as deadlines approached, and to my childhood friend Annie who listened to my stories of triumphs and trials. Last, but not least, to Tony for entertaining conversations on American history, and to Pat and Bruce for their counsel and friendship.

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I am deeply grateful to the members of my thesis committee for their support, guidance, and expertise throughout this graduate experience.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This study of the 91 days of reporting leading up to the invasion of Iraq analyzes the role of *The New York Times* through the type and scope of information it offered the public about the administration’s arguments for war. The goal of this thesis is to better understand what forces act on the media during times of heightened tension and armed conflict and to contribute to the debate over the critical role of the press in the age of instantaneous communication.

In the summer of 2001, Americans were preoccupied with ordinary issues such as the debate over the scientific controversy of cloning, embryonic stem cell research, and how the six-month-old administration of George W. Bush would govern in the wake of a bitter election. Legislators were looking for tax cuts and trade promotion to ease the threat a sluggish economy would pose to members of Congress up for re-election, and Vice President Dick Cheney was arguing in speeches in Florida that to avoid becoming too dependent on oil imports from foreign producers “who do not wish us well” America should allow oil companies more drilling and exploration rights on federal lands.¹ In the world of sports a young Australian defeated a favorite American in the title match at the U. S. Open in New York City; and, as the hot days of summer morphed into early September back-to-school week, many states required their public school districts to adopt

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dress codes to combat the Britney Spears and *CosmoGirl* inspired fashion trends -- inching up shirts and skirts, slipping down pants.²

Overseas, news headlines reported contracting economies in several Asian markets including Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore; violence and despair in the Middle East pitted Palestinians against their Israeli occupiers; drought in Central America threatened famine for 1.4 million people; and in Europe the International Criminal Court, convening in The Hague, investigated former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic on war crime charges after convicting the former Bosnian Serb general of genocide.

The 11th of September 2001 was a day seemingly like any other. The air was crisp and the sky over New York City was a bright blue…and then it went black. New Yorkers, and countless others around the globe, watched helplessly as two airplanes smashed into the World Trade Center towers and later another into the Pentagon, killing nearly 3,000 people in the deadliest act of terror ever perpetrated on U.S. soil. "These acts of mass murder were intended to frighten our nation into chaos and retreat, but they have failed," President Bush said in his first speech to the nation from the Oval Office. "Our country is strong. Terrorist acts can shake the foundation of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America,”³ he added.

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The following day he told the nation that the “deliberate and deadly attacks which were carried out yesterday against our country were more than acts of terror. They were acts of war.” He added, “This will require our country to unite in steadfast determination and resolve…this will be a monumental struggle of good versus evil, but good will prevail.”

These remarks and similar ones by other officials “helped frame September 11th to unite the country behind the Bush administration’s interpretation and response to the attacks and to exclude other understandings.” The mainstream media meanwhile adopted their traditional role: patriotic rallying around a president when America is under attack. Nationally and internationally, the days between September 11, 2001, and March 2003 were packed with reaction and new realities.

On September 20, 2001, in an address to a joint session of Congress, President Bush put nations of the world on notice, saying “Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime.” Some two weeks later, on October 7, The United States military and its ally the United Kingdom launched their first attack in the “War on Terrorism” with what Bush described as “strikes on terrorist camps of al-Qaeda, and the

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6 Ibid.

military installations of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.” In a televised address he said the mission of Operation Enduring Freedom was to stamp out Afghanistan's Islamic fundamentalist Taliban regime, which he said aided and abetted al-Qaida and its leader Osama Bin Laden, a Saudi national who lived in the remote Afghan mountains. By November 12, the Taliban government left the capital, Kabul, and Bin Laden, identified by Bush as the mastermind of the 9/11 attack, reportedly fled his hideout in the Tora Bora Mountains.

There were new realities at home, too. On October 26, Bush signed into law sweeping new powers to help law enforcement curtail activities related to terrorism. These measures were commonly known as the USA PATRIOT Act, Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism. The law, still in effect over the protests of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), authorizes covert searches of homes and computers in any criminal investigation without notifying the individual; allows the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to gather intelligence in America, about Americans for the first time; allows information sharing among the CIA, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the National Security Agency (NSA), the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS), Secret Service and the military; permits law enforcement to seek warrants from any jurisdiction to initiate a search anywhere in the country; allows the detention of non-

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8 http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/president-bush-announces-military-action-in-afghanistan
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
citizens for up to seven days without charge and without judicial review; sanctions
wiretaps without probable cause, and authorizes the FBI to secure and search bookstore
and library records without judicial review. The PATRIOT ACT was presented by the
administration as a means of security for the nation. However, The ACLU dubbed it a
"surveillance monster," arguing that it gives the government a free hand to use its
expanded authority— with no checks. They were sensitive to public concerns that the
trade-off for necessary security seemed like throwing away the fourth amendment to the
U.S. Constitution which states:

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects,
against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants
shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and
particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be
seized.

As a new year loomed, Americans travelling by air had to submit to physical
searches, restrictions on items to be carried in luggage, and more rigorous passport
scrutiny. Armed National Guard personnel were visible in airports, tourist areas, and
public places, and young and old became familiar with a five-tiered, color-coded terror
warning.

The word “terror” entered the daily lexicon. Government officials used it;
journalists repeated it in news stories. It was in the opening symphony of TV newscasts,
it was the prime time theme song of news bulletins, and it was blasted across newspaper

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12 PBS." Flashpoints. Available from
headlines. By January 29, 2002 in the constitutionally required State of the Union Address, President Bush identified Iraq, Iran, and North Korea as an "axis of evil." And he added "The United States of America will not permit the world's most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world's most destructive weapons."\(^{15}\) Over the next few months, his administration debated what to do about the three countries and communicated with European allies through Bush’s close contacts with British Prime Minister Tony Blair. Iran, whom the administration called a destabilizing force in the Middle East because of its radical Islamic leadership, was closely monitored by the State Department; while North Korea was encouraged to engage in multilateral talks to stop its resumed reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel to extract plutonium for weapons purposes.\(^{16}\)

Two important events in September gave the public an indication of where the administration appeared to be headed. On September 12, 2002, President Bush addressed the United Nations and warned that disarming Iraq of its alleged weapons of mass destruction (banned by the U.N. after the 1991 Gulf War) "will be enforced" by the U.N. or, if necessary, by the United States acting unilaterally in self-defense. Less than a week later, on September 17, the administration of President Bush released a new defense strategy document titled "The National Security Strategy of the United States of America,” which allows the U.S. “pre-emption” in a conflict.\(^{17}\)

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The policy, which became known as the “Bush Doctrine,” like his speech at the U.N, was sharply criticized by leading Democrats for over-reach. Strategy analysts including two leading ones joined the debate. John Mearsheimer, co-director of the University of Chicago's Program on International Security Policy, said “Most people in the American military believe Iraq can be deterred even if it has nuclear weapons, and I think they are correct.” Anthony Cordesman, a senior military strategist with the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington warned "Pre-emption is always a matter of judgment and not cost free. It's always a balance.” He further acknowledged “there's a lot of division within the military about when and how. But they [the military], more than anyone else, can see that in five years proliferation in the Persian Gulf can create a nightmare in a part of the world with two-thirds of the world's oil reserves.”

Others commented as well: "Even when the administration makes an approach to international institutions, as it did in its September 2002 demands on the U.N. Security Council [over Iraq], it does so with the explicit reservation that it intends to pursue in any event its chosen course, thus impugning the authority of the council even in the appeal to it," said an article in the World Policy Journal, and it argued that by going it alone in the world, American power loses its legitimacy and America would be perceived as a bully.

Critics accused the administration of pursuing a policy of preventive war, not pre-emptive war-- the distinction being that a pre-emptive war is one against an enemy

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19 Ibid.
preparing to strike right away. [while] a preventive one is against an enemy that will pose a danger in the future, they said, noting that preventive war is illegal under international law.\textsuperscript{21} They specifically cited the United Nations Charter, chapter 1, article 2 section 3-4, and chapter 7, article 51, which prohibit the unilateral use of force by one member against another:

3- All Members shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security, and justice, are not endangered.

4- All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.\textsuperscript{22}

And (article 51) Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence (cq) if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security...\textsuperscript{23}

Some 18 months after the invasion, U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan denounced the war in Iraq as “illegal.” In an interview with the BBC, he explained that the United States and Britain had “violated the United Nations Charter by attacking Iraq without a Security Council Resolution explicitly authorizing the use of force.”\textsuperscript{24} His remarks infuriated Washington hawks who accused the Secretary General of meddling in the U.S. presidential election campaign. The New York Times reported that critics of “Annan and of the United Nations accused him of trying to influence politics in important member countries, notably the United States. Others saw his statements as a reflection of

\textsuperscript{24} [http://www.agenceglobal.com/index.php?show=article&Tid=245], also [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/3661134.stm]
his pessimism about the postwar chaos in Iraq.” 25 U.S. Senator John Cornyn of Texas said: "Kofi Annan and those on the campaign trail who share this view must explain the inconvenient fact that if they had their way, Saddam (Hussein) would be in power (in Iraq), mass graves would still be growing in size, and tens of millions of newly liberated people would still be under the boot of a brutal dictator."26

In Britain, Australia, Poland and Japan, leaders who normally supported the U.S. also reacted sharply, claiming they were satisfied that there was an adequate legal basis for the war.27 Annan had disapproved of the war when it was launched, but according to the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), this was the first time he spoke in terms of legality, and it came in the context of the failure to discover weapons of mass destruction (WMDs).28

However, in January 2001, after the inauguration of the 43rd president, there was much going on behind the scenes concerning Iraq, one member of the administration reported. “From the start, we were building the case against [Iraqi President Saddam] Hussein and looking at how we could take him out and change Iraq into a new country. … It was all about finding a way to do it. That was the tone of it. The President [was] saying, ‘Fine. Go find me a way to do this,’” Secretary of the Treasury, Paul O’Neill, recalled of the very first National Security Council meeting on January 30, 2001. His report was included in the book The Price of Loyalty: George W. Bush, the White House

28 Ibid.
and the Education of Paul O’Neill,29 published in 2004. Also, in another memoir, A Journey: My Political Life, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair recalled a meeting at Bush's ranch in Crawford, Texas, in April 2002, where the two leaders discussed a possible attack on Iraq.30

Still, the first public indication that Iraq would become a target came on August 26, 2002. In a speech to the Veterans of Foreign Wars convention in Nashville, Vice President Richard Cheney charged that Iraq’s President Saddam Hussein will "seek domination of the entire Middle East, take control of a great portion of the world's energy supplies, directly threaten America's friends throughout the region, and subject the United States or any other nation to nuclear blackmail."31

Six days earlier, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld told Fox News that the Iraqi government was "hosting, supporting, or sponsoring" an al-Qaeda presence in Iraq. Citing various "intelligence reports," he rejected calls for the administration to disclose evidence that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, saying "Think of the prelude to World War II. Think of all the countries that said, well, we don't have enough evidence," he argued. "I mean, Mein Kampf had been written. Hitler had indicated what he intended

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to do. The people who argued for waiting for more evidence have to ask themselves how they are going to feel at that point where another event occurs.”

Beginning in the fall 2002, The New York Times published several scoops alleging the presence of WMDs in Iraq, claiming it was developing, producing, and storing chemical agents in violation of weapons sanctions imposed in 1991 after Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait. On September 7, 2002, Judith Miller and Michael R. Gordon reported the interception of metal tubes bound for Iraq. Their front page scoop titled “U.S. says Hussein Intensifies Quest for A-Bomb Parts” quoted unnamed "American officials" and "American intelligence experts" who said the tubes were designed to be used to enrich nuclear material. The story also cited unnamed "Bush administration officials" who said that in recent months, Iraq "stepped up its quest for nuclear weapons and has embarked on a worldwide hunt for materials to make an atomic bomb.” It added:

Mr. Hussein's dogged insistence on pursuing his nuclear ambitions, along with what defectors described in interviews as Iraq's push to improve and expand Baghdad's chemical and biological arsenals, have brought Iraq and the United States to the brink of war.

President Bush seems to share the hard-liners' concerns, and officials say, is determined to resolve the Iraq problem on his watch. In drawing up plans for military action, the administration is preparing to act while Iraq's conventional forces are still reeling from the effects of United Nations sanctions and the Gulf War, while Iraq's nuclear arsenal is nonexistent, and while the shock of the Sept. 11 attacks have made many Americans receptive to the idea of pre-emptive military action.

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32 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
The aluminum tubes story published on September 8 was especially significant, because “Not only did it put the *Times*' imprimatur on one of the administration's chief claims, but it also established a position at the paper that apparently discouraged further investigation into this and related topics,” wrote a leading media critic in the *New York Review of Books*.

Justification for this Study

By the time *The Times* itself reported the invasion, and then the discovery that no weapons of mass destruction were hidden in Iraq, and its editors admitted that its reporting "was not as rigorous as it should have been," an estimated 100,000 Iraqis had perished and, more than 920 U.S. and coalition soldiers were reported dead and injured, this according to a mortality study undertaken by Johns Hopkins University’s Bloomberg School of Public Health, and Iraq’s Al Mustansiriya University’s School of Medicine, in cooperation with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s Center for International Studies.

The role of influential American media in the march to war has been investigated and heavily criticized in various studies, prompting in-house audits at elite newspapers, among them *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. Editors of both apologized.

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to their readers for not probing more deeply into the administration’s justification for war. Several of the studies, including one by the University of Maryland's Center for International and Security Studies on March 9, 2004 examined the media's coverage of WMDs specifically before and just after the war in several daily newspapers and weekly magazines. Others, among them Media historian and journalist Phillip Knightley have said the American news outlets—T.V., radio, and print—covering the pre-invasion of Iraq in general showed “aggressive patriotic reporting” and that “even revered institutions like The New York Times seemed to accept uncritically the administration line on the war.”

A content analysis study of some 80 days of The New York Times reporting on the WMD at the very beginning of the administration’s campaign, from September 12 to November 30, 2002, found that of the 205 stories published, 151 (representing 73.6%) contained “specific statements that favor the WMD charges” as reflected in direct quotes from Bush administration or British officials, while 19 (representing 9.3%) included statements that were skeptical of or refuted the WMD charges, and these quoted Saddam Hussein or Iraqi officials; a total of 29 stories (representing 14.1%) were balanced articles that contained “positive” and “negative” references about the likelihood that Iraq possessed WMD. Two detailed studies, one published on February 26, 2004, by Michael Massing in the New York Review of Books, and the other shortly after, in March-April

39 Knightley pg xi
2004, by Chris Mooney in the *Columbia Journalism Review*, portray a timid and docile Washington press corps. \(^{41}\)

The current study examines a consecutive 91-day reporting period as it peaked leading up to the invasion of Iraq in March 2003 as portrayed in *The New York Times*. An extensive search of communication journals yielded these aforementioned studies and others that examined various aspects of the post-9/11 media environment, but none, to the best of my knowledge, used a systematic detailed analysis to document *The Times*’ coverage in the critical pre-invasion phase over a lengthy and continuous period.

There has been much speculation as to why the United States waged war on Iraq. The reasons for the war remain in dispute, more than eight years after the U.S. invaded Baghdad. The National Security Archives have posted declassified documents from the Bush and Blair administrations; however, the release notes: “Britain’s Chilcot inquiry have provided some insights about that country’s participation in the conflict, but from the U.S. side much remains to be discovered. In time, the narrative of the war will be clarified as more insiders write their personal accounts and as more documents enter the public domain.”\(^{42}\)

Scott McClellan, who served as White House Press Secretary, from 2003 to 2006, laid the blame at the foot of the press. In his book titled “*What Happened: Inside the Bush White House and Washington’s Culture of Deception*” he criticized the press corps

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for not asking questions more aggressively, and for allowing themselves to be blindsided by the “permanent campaign” mode that makes them “complicit enablers of its polarizing effect.” He said in the run-up to the war the media “emphasize conflict, controversy and negativity focusing not on the real-world impact of policies and their larger, underlying truths but on the horse race aspect of politics—who’s winning, who’s losing, and why.”

McClellan said he resigned after discovering that three of his White House superiors, Karl Rove, Dick Cheney and the president himself had told him a lie which he repeated to the press upon their assertions that it was the truth. The non-partisan Center for Public Integrity documented 935 false statements (in addition to hundreds more categorized as questionable claims) by President Bush and seven of his top officials before the war concerning the alleged national security threat posed by Iraq.

Purpose of this Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of The New York Times through the type and scope of reporting it offered the public about the administration’s arguments for war. From World War I to the Iraq War in 2003 the performance of the media has been scrutinized to see how they fulfilled a watchdog role, ideally intended to produce for their readers an independent critique of government and military actions on their behalf, and how that measures up to needs of a democratic society. The First Amendment “rests on the assumption that the widest possible dissemination of information from diverse and

antagonistic sources is essential to the welfare of the public, [and] that a free press is a condition of a free society.”

This researcher uses a content and quantification analysis method using 1,038 articles to determine whether the reporting (a) balanced American government or military voices on the subject of weapons of mass destruction, and Iraqi affected groups and (b) fairly represented military achievements or movements with possible massive damage to institutions of law and order, infrastructure, public health, the environment and to civil order, resulting from expected massive high ordnance bombing; (c) and represented the voices of Iraqis or other Arab/Islamic/antiwar groups in the conflict.

Following this background, chapter two reviews commentaries, scholarship and research on the role of the media in the war on Iraq; chapter three explores the media’s historical role; chapter four lays out categories of data collected and reviews the methodology drawing on an operational definition of framing: “selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution.” Chapter five examines the findings and chapter six lays out conclusions and discusses future research.

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Chapter 2

Literature Review

This section provides an overview of relevant research used to study the role of *The New York Times*. Many of the media studies were published after January 26, 2004, when U.S. weapons inspector David Kay testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee about efforts to find WMDs in Iraq. "It turns out we were all wrong," Kay stated. He explained that he and his 14,000 men had found no weapons of mass destruction. His comment, in fact debunking the administration’s professed reason for preemptive war, fueled a storm around the media’s performance.

Overview

In a flurry of reports by watchdog groups and books, the most common criticism leveled at *The New York Times* and other mainstream media faulted journalists for not asking the right questions of the administration and for giving up objectivity in exchange for patriotism in the wake of the September 11 attacks. Still others blamed the “scoop” mentality—the desire by journalists to be the first to break a story. A handful argued that the American journalistic practice of starting a story with the most important event, and or the most important person may have given the administration undue advantage because a statement from the White House or president could take precedence

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over any other.\textsuperscript{51} Others, meanwhile, charged that journalists were intimidated and manipulated by members of the administration,\textsuperscript{52} and some countered that too few dissident voices were heard in the media.\textsuperscript{53} According to these critiques and others, mainstream media were perceived to have failed in their responsibility to democracy\textsuperscript{54} and could even be seen as “enablers” in the march which led this country to a costly war.\textsuperscript{55}

Only a handful of media organizations, most prominently Knight Ridder, consistently challenged the conventional wisdom that was pushing America to war, a study in the \textit{American Journalism Review} pointed out. However, even though \textit{Knight Ridder News Service} was distributing the stories to the company's 32 newspapers across the country, as well as to other clients, most newspapers chose to go with \textit{The New York Times} and \textit{Washington Post} version of events. Thus the study showed that the skeptical articles produced by \textit{Knight Ridder} reporters often received minimal play and attracted little national attention. "Some of our own newspapers didn't use our stuff. It was


\textsuperscript{55} McClellan, p xiv, also Okrent \url{http://delong.typepad.com/sdj/2006/02/hearts_and_mind.html} and also \url{http://www.mediagiraffe.org/node/438} (Accessed June 12, 2011)
extremely frustrating and extremely disappointing," national security and intelligence correspondent, Jonathan S. Landay was quoted as saying.\footnote{http://www.ajr.org/article_printable.asp?id=4459. Also note Landay currently holds the same job with McClatchy, which acquired Knight Ridder in 2006.}

The controversy swirling around the media’s pre-war reporting prompted The New York Times and The Washington Post to publish unprecedented apology letters to their readers for the pre-war news coverage relevant to the weapons of mass destruction and for the use of some of the sources on which they relied for this topic. Many newspapers, magazines and TV networks and news organizations also examined their own records.\footnote{http://www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/btw/citations.html (Accessed January 20, 2010)} The Boston Globe, The Chicago Tribune, Vanity Fair, The New Republic, Cable News Network (CNN), Columbia Broadcasting Service (CBS), and The Associated Press (AP) were among the prominent ones.\footnote{Ibid.}

Some American news organizations forged further. They investigated the administration’s pre-war intelligence evidence, and put on record intelligence analysts who had been skeptical about the rush to war. Among them was The New Yorker’s May 12, 2003 “Selective Intelligence” article which described how the Pentagon set up its own intelligence unit, the Office of Special Plans, to sift for data to support the administration's claims about Iraq.\footnote{Hersh, Seymour. "Selective Intelligence." The New Yorker. 12 May 2003, also available at http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2003/05/12/030512fa_fact (Accessed 9 January 2009)} Later, “Truth, War and Consequences,” a Frontline documentary that aired October 9, 2003, on Public Television interviewed, for the record, a procession of intelligence analysts who testified to the administration's use of what one of them called "faith-based intelligence."\footnote{http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/truth/view/}
The New York Times Failed to Ask Tough Questions

“Why didn't we learn more about these deceptions and concealments in the months when the administration was pressing its case for regime change—when, in short, it might have made a difference?” asked Michael Massing (a contributing editor of the Columbia Journalism Review who writes frequently on the press and foreign affairs.) in an article published in the New York Review of Books. His report published on February 26, 2004, criticized the media community in general but singled out The New York Times’ performance in the run up to the war as “especially deficient.” He added: “While occasionally running articles that questioned administration claims, it [The New York Times] more often deferred to them. (The Times’ editorial page was consistently much more skeptical.) Compared to other major papers, The Times placed more credence in defectors, expressed less confidence in inspectors, and paid less attention to dissenters,” he wrote. He noted that some of the most conspicuous errors were basic journalistic practice: failing to verify information, failure to ask tough questions, and lack of skepticism.

Chris Mooney in the Columbia Journalism Review portrayed a timid and docile Washington press corps. He studied the editorial performance of six influential newspapers The New York Times, the Washington Post, The Chicago Tribune, USA Today, the Wall Street Journal and The Los Angeles Times, and like Massing, declared the papers shared “a passive willingness to write about the Iraq debate on the president's

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62 Ibid.
own terms.”63 He questioned the lack of alternative views regarding the Bush “pre-
emptive doctrine” pointing out that a Carnegie Endowment report had challenged the
concept calling it instead a “preventive war under the cloak of legitimate preemption.” He
added “the country could have profited from a much more searching examination of the
so-called preemption doctrine.”64 As for the presence of WMD he said “As a group,
the papers failed to exercise skepticism … They simply should have demanded more
proof that they could verify with their own eyes.”65

Massing and other press critics, meanwhile, specifically targeted the WMD stories
of Judith Miller of The New York Times. They said Miller exaggerated the WMD threat,
limited her sources mostly to Iraqi opposition leaders, and accepted uncritically
information from U.S. sources who later proved to be misleading. Miller defended her
reporting in a brief letter to The New York Review of Books, saying simply that she "wrote
about the intelligence that was available from government and nongovernment sources."

But a study by the University of Maryland's Center for International and Security
Studies published on March 9, 2004, agreed with Massing’s critique. It examined the
coverage of weapons of mass destruction before the war and just after, October 11-31,
2002, and May 1-21, 2003, and concluded that, “on the whole, the media tended to refer
to all types of WMD as a single group, gave too much credence to the administration's

63 http://ics.leeds.ac.uk/papers/vp01.cfm?outfit=pmt&folder=193&paper=1416, also Mooney,
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
arguments and failed to air dissenting views.” The report by Susan D. Moeller, a University of Maryland journalism professor, supported five key findings:

1. Most media outlets represented WMD as a monolithic menace, failing to adequately distinguish between weapons programs and actual weapons or to address the real differences among chemical, biological, nuclear, and radiological weapons.

2. Most journalists accepted the Bush administration’s formulation of the “War on Terror” as a campaign against WMD, in contrast to coverage during the [1998] Clinton era, when many journalists made careful distinctions between acts of terrorism and the acquisition and use of WMD.

3. Many stories stenographically reported the incumbent administration’s perspective on WMD, giving too little critical examination of the way officials framed the events, issues, threats, and policy options.

4. Too few stories offered alternative perspectives to[the] official line, a problem exacerbated by the journalistic prioritizing of breaking-news stories and the “inverted pyramid” style of storytelling. 67

This report also noted an “important substantive omission” in media coverage during the specific periods examined:

It would have been especially irresponsible for the United States military to have initiated military action against Iraq believing that the country might be able to improvise massively destructive retaliation but not knowing where the relevant assets were located. It seems evident in retrospect, however, that American military commanders were in fact confident in Fall 2002 and Spring 2003 that Iraq did not have any truly serious capacity to harm the United States or any country in the region. That judgment, which would have undermined the justification for war, was not recorded in the news reports reviewed. 68

The report credited The Christian Science Monitor for covering stories other mainstream media overlooked. “So, for instance, The Monitor was the only major news outlet in the country to run a story in May 2003 on the radiation hazards in Iraq left by

67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
American depleted uranium (DU) armor-piercing shells,” it pointed out and added *The Monitor* article by Scott Peterson, ran 2784 words — almost four times the length of an average story, (5/15/03). The study explained the performance of *The New York Times* and other mainstream news outlets in terms of “pack mentality,” a journalism term which suggests that several journalists write a story with the same approach and mindset. *The New York Times, The Washington Post, The LA Times,* and *National Public Radio’s Morning Edition and All Things Considered* “all took the panoply of WMD breaking news events seriously and covered them accordingly…they also deviated relatively little from each other in regards to what stories were covered and how they were prioritized,” once questions of print vs. broadcast and regional demographics are taken into account, the study said. It explained the paper’s niche:

> Of all the news outlets in the study, the *Christian Science Monitor* was the medium apart: a daily newspaper that operates on a delayed deadline. It couldn’t compete for breaking news with the metro dailies. It couldn’t compete on background analytical stories with the weekly newsmagazines. It has a small international news hole.... Because it couldn’t follow the pack, it was freed from pack journalism.\(^{70}\)

**Giving Up Objectivity for Patriotism**

Regarding the charge of patriotism, an analysis titled “Revival of the Propaganda State -US Propaganda at Home and Abroad since 9/11,” published in the *International Communication Gazette,* noted: “when *The New York Times* apologizes for its uncritical coverage of the 2003 Iraqi conflict, it is a pretty good clue that wartime-like patriotism

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\(^{70}\) Ibid.
has won over once cherished democratic norms.” It also said that the mainstream media in the US was “on message” with the Bush administration, and fully supported the war against Iraq. It, too, pointed out that the media “reproduced virtually uncritically the administration’s agenda, including any misinformation about WMDs and the al Qaeda–Iraq connection.” It emphasized that US administrations are “constitutionally forbidden from conducting any form of psychological warfare against the American people,” and therefore questioned the legality of using “disinformation” as a weapon and it asked to what degree the media cooperated with the Pentagon’s Office of Strategic Influence (OSI).

The article used the case of a veteran reporter, Peter Arnett, to demonstrate the consequences to the media if they were perceived by the military or the administration to have stepped out of line. Arnett was fired in late March 2003 by National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) for telling an Iraqi TV interviewer that Iraqi military resistance was stiffer than U.S. military planners had expected. Arnett, a seasoned war correspondent, had covered the 1991 Gulf War for Cable News Network (CNN) and received a Pulitzer Prize while covering the war in Vietnam for The Associated Press (AP).

He began the interview by praising Iraqi officials for the way they’ve handled journalists during both Gulf wars: "I'd like to say from the beginning that the 12 years I've been coming here, I've met unfailing courtesy and cooperation – courtesy from your people,

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73 Snow p.399
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
and cooperation from the Ministry of Information, which has allowed me and many other reporters to cover 12 whole years since the Gulf War with a degree of freedom which we appreciate. And that is continuing today."  

Later on in the interview he said:

Clearly, the American war planners misjudged the determination of the Iraqi forces. That is why now America is reappraising the battlefield, delaying the war, maybe a week, and rewriting the war plan. The first war plan has failed because of Iraqi resistance now they are trying to write another war plan.

Arnett was initially backed by his network, NBC, which issued a prepared statement:

Peter Arnett and his crew have risked their lives to bring the American people up-to-date, straightforward information on what is happening in and around Baghdad. Arnett’s impromptu interview with Iraqi TV was done as a professional courtesy and was similar to other interviews he has done with media outlets from around the world. His remarks were analytical in nature and were not intended to be anything more.

However, the controversy continued and within days NBC announced he was out:

It was wrong for Mr. Arnett to grant an interview to state controlled Iraqi TV – especially at a time of war – and it was wrong for him to discuss his personal observations and opinions in that interview. Therefore, Peter Arnett will no longer be reporting for NBC News and MSNBC.

“Dissent is muffled out of fear of appearing unpatriotic, and self-censorship in the media takes place from the sacking of Arnett,” the analysis stated.

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77 Ibid.

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid.

80 Ibid., 397
Scoops Mentality

The strive to be first, known in journalism as writing a “scoop,” was addressed by several critical reports, among them “‘Scoops’ and Truth at the Times," published in The Nation, June 23, 2003, which chided Judith Miller, a Pulitzer Prize reporter who covered the weapons of mass destruction story, for: “playing with the kind of fire that starts or justifies wars, gets people killed and plays into the hands of government officials with partisan axes to grind.”\(^{81}\) Others, who also took her reporting to task, included "The Times Scoops That Melted," Slate, July 25, 2003;\(^{82}\) "Miller's Latest Tale Questioned," Editor & Publisher Online, September 23, 2003;\(^{83}\) "Miller Brouhaha," AJR, August/September 2003; and John R. MacArthur, "The Lies We Bought," CJR, May/June 2003.

The Times own Public Editor, hired in December 2003 as the first outsider charged with publicly evaluating the paper’s integrity and news performance, pointed out that while “newspaper people live to be first” the stakes are especially high in the case of crisis. “War requires an extra standard of care, not a lesser one. But in The Times’ W.M.D. coverage, readers encountered some rather breathless stories built on unsubstantiated "revelations" that, in many instances, were the anonymity-cloaked assertions of people with vested interests. …This is not a compliment,” wrote Daniel Okrent.\(^{84}\)

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One suggestion offered to explain why the news material was not more skeptical appeared in a recently published book, *Gray Lady Down: What the Decline and Fall of The New York Times Means to America*. It said that according to accounts in *The Los Angeles Times* and *New York Magazine*, editors at *The New York Times* were instructed by then Gerald Boyd, Managing Editor, and Howell Raines, Executive Editor, to get Miller’s articles into the newspaper and not to hold them back. 85 Consequently the paper did not heed knowledgeable colleagues who expressed “reservations” about Miller’s reporting, and questioned whether she had “uncritically bought the policy line of her sources” in the upper reaches of the administration, and was turning the *Times* into a conduit for the administration’s “propaganda” 86

Journalistic Practices Give Administration Advantage

Critics of the media’s performance also point to what they see as an inherent flaw in the style in which newspapers, including *The New York Times*, report stories. The “Media Coverage of Weapons of Mass Destruction” study suggested that the “inverted pyramid” style of news writing taught in journalism schools as the customary method for writing breaking-news stories may have given the administration’s comments greater news prominence because the standards teach that basic news stories should lead with what the most “important” player — the President or Prime Minister, for example — has to say. The technique was developed by *The Associated Press* wire service soon after its birth in 1848 as a way of leading into a story with “the facts” of who, what, when, where,

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86 Ibid.
why and how. A “perspective” paragraph higher up in the story would serve to avoid the apparent bias, the report recommended. 87

The pattern of leading with the most prominent person addressing an issue was also the subject of a research paper titled “Whose Views Made the News? Media Coverage and the March to War in Iraq.” 88 It agreed with the previous report. That conclusion was based on the analysis of 1,434 Iraq-related evening news broadcasts by \textit{ABC}, \textit{CBS}, and \textit{NBC} during eight months before the invasion of Iraq. Their findings can be summarized in five points: News coverage, as exemplified by the network broadcasts, was “more favorable toward the Bush administration’s rationale for war than its opponents’ arguments against [war];” in a plurality of news stories focused on Iraq’s alleged weapons programs, administration officials were quoted more frequently than any other source; and … TV news reports cast a possible invasion in a “more positive than negative light.” 89 The study noted that domestic opposition received some attention “only in the earliest months of the debate” and the focus on military planning beginning in January 2003 implied an inexorable march toward war. 90 In sum, these findings support the view that the media’s performance did not live up to the democratic standards most journalists hold themselves to, much less those expected by their critics, it said.


89 Ibid.

90 Ibid.
Media Manipulation

The findings of both reports support two major theories of media content during foreign policy debates. Both are advanced by political science and communications studies professors. One by W. Lance Bennett suggests that news outlets tend to mirror the range of ideological and policy perspectives expressed by prominent political officials, and the other advanced by Robert M. Entman suggests that when international events and issues are ideologically ambiguous reporters rely heavily on elite sources and mostly those in positions of official government authority, to frame their news stories.

The press was intimidated by the high levels of patriotic cant from Fox reporters, anchors and talk show hosts, wrote W. Lance Bennett in a critique published in the Political Communication Report. He said that would explain why “the American press allowed the president to dismiss” the world’s largest coordinated public demonstration--10 million people across the globe protesting U.S. pro-war policies on February 15, 2003-- as the ramblings of a ‘focus group’ to which he would not respond.

Entman, too, explained that the criticism levied at the media for accepting without question or investigation, the administration’s version of the need to go to war was the result of the White House’s “successful” rhetoric. “By conveying an unambiguous and emotionally compelling frame, Bush promoted assent from Congress and the media—and

overwhelming public approval,” he said referring to President George W. Bush’s declaration on the morning after the September 11 attacks:

“The deliberate and deadly attacks which were carried out yesterday against our country were more than acts of terror, they were acts of war …this will require our country to unite in steadfast determination and resolve…this will be a monumental struggle of good versus evil, but good will prevail.”

“Repeating these terms helped frame September 11th to “unite” the country behind the administration’s interpretation and response to the attacks and exclude other understandings,” Entman said. The success of the approach was proven when CBS news anchor Dan Rather, commented a week later on a television talk show: “George Bush is the president, he makes the decisions, and, you know, as just one American, he wants me to line up, just tell me where,” Entman pointed out. Rather, 70, even said he would be willing to wear a uniform. “His remarks embody the patriotic fervor that swept through the media” after 9/11, Entman said. He added that the administration “relentlessly pursued its framing strategy, frequently linking [President of Iraq] Saddam Hussein, with Al-Qaeda, 9/11, weapons of mass destruction, and a direct threat to the United States.” This strategy elevated the threat level and “cemented a sense of congruence” between the public and the president “further discouraging journalists from highlighting opposition,” Entman explained.

Massing, too, reached a similar conclusion. He wrote that many reporters and editors "began to muzzle themselves" out of a concern of being labeled unpatriotic or

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94 Ibid.
95 Ibid.
96 Ibid.
97 Entman p 112
98 Ibid.
being out of step "from what everyone else is writing." Some reporters may have also feared losing access to administration sources," Massing said, “When a president is popular and a consensus prevails, journalists shrink from challenging him."

Consistent with this concept of rhetoric, a study suggests that the link that often occurred in the public mind between President Saddam Hussein of Iraq and Osama bin Laden, the self avowed mastermind of the 9/11 attacks, was also the result of framing news. “As the Bush administration prepared its case for war against Iraq in the first half of 2002, officials began to avoid mentioning Osama Bin Laden’s name in public. At the same time [they] increasingly linked Saddam Hussein with the threat of terrorism in an effort to build public support,”99 said a study titled: When Osama became Saddam: Origins and Consequences of the Change in America’s Public Enemy #1. The research data demonstrated that after the 9/11 attacks Bin Laden’s name was mentioned up to 29,979 times in stories published and distributed by The Associated Press wire service to its subscribers some 1,700 newspapers and 5,000 radio and television outlets in the United States and internationally. But as Bin Laden’s trail went cold even as the U.S. pursued him, by March 2002 the study said, the frequency of his name in the media fell to fewer than 1,000 articles per month. Meanwhile, Hussein’s name, mentioned in nearly 300 stories over two months prior to September 2001, and an estimated 400 stories per month through July 2002, rose dramatically as the U.S. prepared for war, the study showed. “In August his [Saddam Hussein’s] coverage more than doubled to 956 stories…[and] doubled again in September to 1,919 stories, and by March 2003, Hussein

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was mentioned in more stories per month than Osama Bin Laden ever was in the aftermath of 9/11”

Other reports also support this connection. The Harris Interactive polls and Opinion Dynamics found that “nearly eight in ten Americans believed Saddam Hussein was responsible for the terrorist attacks.” However, when the question was worded without offering Saddam Hussein’s name, as the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) polls did, only 20 percent of those polled believed Hussein was involved. The study concludes:

“The shift from Osama to Saddam occurred in media coverage during August of 2002, but began four months earlier in the public statements of President George Bush. As bin Laden’s name faded in news coverage and all but disappeared in President Bush’s public statements, clear efforts were made by the Bush administration to replace Osama bin Laden as America’s foremost enemy by linking Saddam Hussein to the War on Terror.”

It also points out that the administration “played into a favorable climate of public opinion, which greatly facilitated its task of building public support for war against Iraq.”

Dissident Voices Not Heard

Existing studies on the reporting of dissent in wartime suggest that prior to a war anti-war protesters receive more favorable than unfavorable coverage. However once the conflict is underway, a “support our boys” consensus sets in. Daniel Hallin, who has written extensively about the war in Vietnam, has termed this phenomenon the “sphere of

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100 Ibid.
101 Ibid.
102 Ibid.
103 Ibid.
legitimate controversy” and when protest persists after a war has started, he has called it the “sphere of deviance.” He expanded on that theory even as the invasion of Iraq started. He said:

> Media coverage both reflects and reinforces [a rallying of the troops]. The troops belong to what I’ve called in my book “the sphere of consensus,” which journalists treat as really above political debate. This is one of the greatest dilemmas that journalists feel after a war actually starts: the tension between that kind of sphere of consensus reporting on the troops—a kind of sacred American commitment that we must support them—and the normal role of the journalist as a skeptical observer of political policy. 104

Moeller, in her study, said newspapers in England put alternative viewpoints on WMD into their stories better than their U.S. counterparts. She added though, that the U.S. media "are not entirely at fault for their more passive coverage" because American politicians -- including most Democrats in Congress -- "substantially supported President Bush’s declaration and articulation of the 'War on Terror'...well into the summer and fall of 2003." In Britain however, there “was more consistent and vocal opposition among senior British political figures to some of the Blair government’s WMD policies," and consequently there were more opposition sources to quote. 105

On the other hand, as Massing’s study demonstrated through the example of Knight Ridder reporters, scientists, too, can be sources for opposing views—not only politicians. He also noted that few reporters used the resources of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Massing wrote that IAEA officials had complained to him that the agency was unable to gets its story out to the U.S. press: specifically that by 1998,


contrary to the Bush administration's warnings of a nuclear attack, "It was pretty clear we had neutralized Iraq's nuclear program. There was unanimity on that."  

Protests and rallies also provided sources of opposition to the march to war. While existing studies indicate that dissent is marginalized in times of war, two studies on this topic examine how leading American newspapers treated antiwar dissent during the run up to the war. One, a precedent-setting study on the content analysis of antiwar protest stories by influential newspapers, including The New York Times, indicated that the U.S. press used more “marginalization techniques” in its coverage of protesters, and these were associated with more negative overall story tone towards the demonstrators in the U.S. than to those in the United Kingdom. For example, the research showed that stories in The Times, Washington Post and USA Today offered more space to reporting on aspects of general lawlessness among demonstrators and confrontation with police and depicting protest as anti-troop and treason than on the reasons of the protest and the national debate. It is the first cross-national content analysis of the presses of two different nations regarding their tendency to invoke the “protest paradigm” within coverage of the same social protest movement, to wit, the antiwar protest regarding the Iraq War. The United States and the United Kingdom marched together to war on Iraq.

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but public opinion about the urgency and necessity of the war differed in each country.
The second study, found that news coverage of the war in American newspapers focused on the military strategy and the progress of the buildup to war rather than on public opinion about the war. In contrast, other countries, like the UK, maintained a public opinion focus.

“In the US, both governmental and popular opinion was well in favor of an invasion, whereas the corresponding sentiment in the UK was much more divided, among both government agents and the general populace,” the study showed.

These findings appear to dovetail reports concerning The New York Times’ coverage of an October 26, 2002, antiwar march and rally in Washington D.C. which coincided with protests around the country coordinated in part by International Action Center (IAC), a grassroots political activism organization. As reported by The American Journalism Review (AJR), an IAC co-director called The New York Times news desk in Washington D.C. to comment on The Times’ web site story-- a 476-word article which said “thousands” had marched in the protest and that “fewer people attended than organizers had said they hoped for…” According to AJR the coordinator offered the IAC version: “We are thrilled [with the turnout]. It was double what we were expecting."

Nonetheless the story was published in its original form on page A-8 in the print edition, the report said. The article also ignored details of other rallies in the nation,


including one attended by an estimated 200,000 in San Francisco. But on October 30, *The Times* published a 936-word story headlined "Rally in Washington Is Said to Invigorate the Antiwar Movement" and said the recent demonstration "drew 100,000 by police estimates and 200,000 by organizers'... The turnout startled even organizers, who had taken out permits for 20,000 marchers." Kathy Park, Manager of Public Relations for *The New York Times Co.*, explained the change in a statement e-mailed to *Editor & Publisher*:

[We] were attentive to complaints from a fair number of readers that the number of demonstrations around the country and the number of participants in Washington warranted further coverage. We also looked at what news agencies and other publications had reported, and we felt that there was more we ought to say.

Other media critics like *Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting* (FAIR) and *On the Media*, a public radio program, also noted *The New York Times*’ story. *Editor and Publisher* the industry watchdog termed *The New York Times* reaction a “watershed event.” It credited reader activism for drawing attention to the newspaper’s inaccuracy and editorial process. “Some media outlets dismiss organized protests -- they say it's not coming from the heart; they're [demonstrators] just whipped up into doing it. But as we see in this case and many other cases now, it does have an effect, and it does call

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111 Ibid.,
newspapers' attention to maybe something that they messed up,” Greg Mitchell, editor of Editor and Publisher added in a media critic’s interview on National Public Radio.\textsuperscript{115}

In a precedent setting move, on May 26, 2004, Bill Keller, The New York Times Executive Editor published an apology to the newspaper’s readers. He said after a thorough audit of their articles.

“We have found a number of instances of coverage that was not as rigorous as it should have been. In some cases, information that was controversial then, and seems questionable now, was insufficiently qualified or allowed to stand unchallenged. Looking back, we wish we had been more aggressive in re-examining the claims as new evidence emerged — or failed to emerge.”\textsuperscript{116}

Keller, a columnist during the run up to the war, noted that the newspaper had relied too heavily on a “circle of Iraq informants” who befriended Bush administration hardliners also “convinced of the need to intervene in Iraq” and had not weighed their motive. Consequently “articles based on dire claims about Iraq tended to get prominent display, while follow-up articles that called the original ones into question were sometimes buried. In some cases, there was no follow-up at all,” he said. He concluded “administration officials now acknowledge that they sometimes fell for misinformation from these exile sources. So did many news organizations—in particular, this one”\textsuperscript{117}

*The Times* Public Editor went further than Keller. “The failure was not individual, but institutional,” wrote Daniel Okrent in an article published May 30,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{115} \url{http://www.onthemedia.org/transcripts/2002/11/01/02} (Accessed January 12, 2011)
\item \textsuperscript{116} \url{http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/26/international/middleeast/26FTE_NOTE.html} (Accessed March 12, 2010).
\item \textsuperscript{117} Ibid., (Accessed March 12, 2010).
\end{itemize}
2004. “Some of The Times’ coverage in the months leading up to the invasion of Iraq was credulous; much of it was inappropriately italicized by lavish front-page display and heavy-breathing headlines… others that provided perspective or challenged information in the faulty stories were played as quietly as a lullaby.” He said a story about CIA analysts who said they felt pressured to prepare Iraqi reports conforming to Bush administration policies, was held up for a week and published after the invasion, and explained that in times of war editors begin to wear “epaulettes” (military shoulder decorations usually in gold or silver). He blamed the “hunger for scoops,” the “coddling of sources,” the lack of scrutiny for the fall from grace, and said the paper’s readers were victims of lies, when reporters allowed anonymous sources to go unchallenged when their information turns out to be erroneous.

An investigation by The Center for Public Integrity and its affiliate the Fund for Independence in Journalism documented 935 false statements in two years --between September 11, 2001 and September 11, 2003—about the national security threat posed by Iraq. “Nearly five years after the U.S. invasion of Iraq, an exhaustive examination of the record shows that the statements were part of an orchestrated campaign that effectively galvanized public opinion and, in the process, led the nation to war under decidedly false

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120 Ibid
pretenses,” wrote Charles Lewis and Mark Reading-Smith in their report titled “Iraq-The War Card”\(^\text{121}\) published in January 2008.

Summary

Results from this study, as reflected in the data extracted from this research, may be useful for understanding the type of pressures administration and military officials can bring to bear upon the media in times of war and how news stories about a country designated as an “enemy” are reported. This study could also serve as a tool for journalism educators to demonstrate to reporters and editors the pitfalls they should avoid, and to be aware of incidents when the interests of the U.S. military and politicians override those of the US media. In addition, it can serve to help readers understand how newspapers see their role as the public’s watchdog, how they interpreted their task during periods of national crisis, and how readers themselves fit their expectations of the media into the equation. If the cynics are correct, the story of relations among the American people, their government, the news media, and the First Amendment is over,\(^\text{122}\) but as Barbara Baerns argues “the First Amendment directs media scholars to work in the public interest” to redress and not accept a media that acts as a government megaphone. “The concept of press freedom” not only entails the freedom of the media to present ideas. The


concept requires the media to be independent of government and to vigorously defend "itself against [even] attempts at influence by" it.\textsuperscript{123}

Over the span of more than 230 years that connect the American people, their government, their news media, and the First Amendment there have been some dramatic moments when the media published reports to inform citizens that their governors or other leaders were doing wrong.\textsuperscript{124} For example \textit{The New York Times} stories on The Pentagon Papers, \textit{The Washington Post}'s articles of the Nixon administration's corruption and \textit{CBS}' battlefield call to disentangle America from Vietnam.

In \textit{The First Amendment is Absolute}, Alexander Meiklejohn, a prominent educator and professor of philosophy and logic, called upon government to "inform and cultivate the mind . . . of a citizen so that [s/] he shall have the . . . dignity of a governing citizen."\textsuperscript{125} The same First Amendment was also invoked to force \textit{The Associated Press} to serve a broader public interest. The "First Amendment…rests on the assumption that the widest possible dissemination of information from diverse and antagonistic sources is essential to the welfare of the public, that a free press is a condition of a free society,"\textsuperscript{126} a landmark Supreme Court ruling said.

\textsuperscript{123} Ibid.
Chapter 3
The Role of the media during national crises:
Commentaries, scholarship and research 1800-2003

To examine the role of The New York Times reporting of the 91 days leading up to the invasion of Iraq, it is helpful to study the template of the media-government relations mindset at the birth of this nation and the changes and accommodations that have evolved from it. A look back provides context and historical perspective to the present and shows similarities in government and media behavior up till the march to war on Iraq in 2003.

The historical legacies are complex. The government’s choice to abridge freedom of expression during national crises has been repeated and strengthened from the earliest days of the Republic through WWII and to this war in an insidious manner; the mindset that the press was “either a tool to be used for the dissemination of government propaganda, or an adversary to be silenced,” was also carried through from the Civil War days into the Cold War, and beyond,\(^\text{127}\) and so were policies intended to coerce, censor and manipulate.

Editors and reporters responded differently in each crisis and the struggles forced the nation to confront its commitment to freedom of speech:

“The themes that emerged in this struggle have returned in different forms throughout our history. Although the context changed from 1798 to 1861 to 1917 to 2004, the most fundamental questions recur. Are those who dissent in times of

war “disloyal”? Do the demands of war justify the suppression of dissent?” How should citizens distinguish the ‘real’ necessities of war from the partisan ‘exploitation’ of a crisis?128

Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798

The years 1789 to 1801 were the first critical test of “reconciling the First Amendment with the felt necessities of wartime” in an atmosphere of bitter internal conflicts, fear, suspicion and intrigue.129 Historians, and political scientists, see the early government responses to domestic and foreign crises as a pattern for government-press relations for subsequent generations.130 For example they cite the Alien and Sedition acts of 1798 as a demonstration of a legal tool designed to intimidate and or silence all foreign policy critics while the government conducted foreign affairs during a phase of extreme tension.

“It is patriotism to write in favor of our government—it is sedition to write against it,”131 a partisan Federalist newspaper, the Gazette of the United States, said. These bills were enacted in the midst of a foreign policy crisis; gave broad grants of power to government officials to silence critics for “virtually any reason,” and assumed

129 Ibid.
that critics of a government in power are “not honorable opponents who simply held different views, but disloyal elements that ought to be suppressed.”\textsuperscript{132}

First Censorship

The first major act occurred in 1812 when the General-in-chief of the Northern forces Winfield Scott stopped the transmission of an Associated Press report that contradicted earlier reports of Northern superiority over the Southern troops at Bull Run, [Manassas, Virginia] the first major clash of the war. “The result… was chaos with the New York newspapers carrying stories of a glorious victory that was, in fact, a scandalous defeat,”\textsuperscript{133} When the Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton, took on the job of enforcing censorship, “inevitably, the intention to suppress only information of value to the enemy became also the desire to suppress material damaging to the Northern side.”\textsuperscript{134} He reduced casualties “to about one third of their actual number,” withheld news of Union troops surrendering to Confederates at Harper’s Ferry, Virginia, suspended newspapers that broke his censorship rules, arrested editors, threatened proprietors with court-martial, and even issued orders for a New York Tribune reporter to be shot for refusing to hand over a dispatch he had written. Still reporters found ways to circumvent his orders until in 1864, Stanton began issuing his own dispatches in the form of a war

\textsuperscript{132} Carpenter, p.2-4
\textsuperscript{134} R. Ogden, ed., The Life and Letters of Edwin Lawrence Godkin. New York Macmillan, 1907:27
diary addressed to the military authority in New York but circulated through The
Associated Press, then in its infancy.135

The “actions of the Union government set the pattern for wartime censorship in
the 20th century,”136 At the beginning of the war, Union authorities asked newspapers to
exercise “voluntary censorship” but provided no adequate guidelines. “As would be the
case in future wars and foreign policy crises when the government failed to get its way by
urging the press to be cooperative and ‘patriotic’ it resorted to coercion.”137

“The northern army censor found that his best weapon of control was the telegraph,” 138 A
censor could refuse to transmit or substantially eliminate information from the story; if a
reporter sent his dispatch by messenger, and it was published, the reporter was punished.

Reporting the Civil War

In the 1860s guidelines for reporters covering the Civil War were deliberately
“vague” ostensibly to allow authorities to cast a wide net “to suppress any criticism of
their war policies, and the motive struck a direct blow at the First Amendment [because]
newspapers were prosecuted for publishing false reports that were deemed harmful to the
Northern cause; Enforcement techniques were handled by the military. In February 1862,
the War Department issued an order taking military control of all telegraph lines, and one
portion of the order “contained a non-too-subtle threat to uncooperative papers: “all

135 Knightley, p.29
136 Ibid., 4-5
137 Ibid.
138 Sloan pp.175-177
newspapers publishing military news, however obtained, not authorized by official authority, will be excluded thereafter from receiving information by telegraph, or from transmitting their papers by railroad.”

“Most correspondents on both sides saw as an integral part of their task the sustaining of both civilian and military morale.” For example reflections by New York Times civil war correspondent Edwin L. Godkin quoted a section of a letter published in his memoirs: “It is not within the province of your correspondent to criticize what has been done by the army or navy; nor will he state occurrences which it may be unpleasant to read,” Godkin wrote in The Life and Letters of Edwin Lawrence Godkin. Most of the 500 correspondents from Northern publications did the same as did the Southerners.

In addition President Lincoln suspended habeas corpus—that very judicial mandate directing a government official to present an individual held in custody to the court so that it can determine whether his detention is lawful. In defending his action Lincoln argued that the constitution does not specify who is to suspend the writ and that when a “Rebellion or Invasion comes, the… commander-in-chief… is the man who holds the power, and bears the responsibility” of making the decisions, and furthermore he added that once a rebellion exists, the “writ may be suspended whenever and wherever

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139 Carpenter p.4-5
140 Ibid.
142 Knightley pp.19-22
143 Stone 122
the public safety requires such action, whether or not the rebellion reached that particular locale.”

He suspended the writ eight times but resisted enacting a new sedition act.

Reporting World War I and National Security

For the next 120 years, and until America’s entry into World War I, the United States had no federal legislation against seditious expressions. “The lessons of 1798 carried the nation through the War of 1812, the Mexican War, the Civil War, and the Spanish-American War,” but by World War I the lessons were forgotten. The Wilson administration established two acts designed to squelch debate and dissenting political opinions of the anti-war factions. The Espionage Act of 1917 punished anyone convicted of aiding the enemy, obstructing military recruiting, or inciting rebellion in the military with fines of up to $10,000 and imprisonment for up to 20 years; the Sedition Act of 1918 made it illegal to speak against the purchase of war bonds or to speak, write, print or publish any disloyal, or profane language against the U.S. government or the Constitution.

These two acts severely damaged First Amendment rights. “More than 2,000 people were prosecuted and 1,055 convicted under these laws—the overwhelming majority for merely criticizing the government.” No one was convicted of violating the

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144 Ibid. 122-23
145 Ibid. 81
146 Stone 144-145
147 Ibid.
148 Ibid
149 Carpenter: 13-17
Espionage Act. They also had a chilling effect on the media by establishing a legacy of governmental intolerance towards foreign policy dissenters that has periodically plagued the Republic, particularly during times of crisis; allowed public hysteria that made patriotism synonymous with intolerance of the other; and tolerated the government’s and the public’s abandonment of long-standing commitments to fundamental liberties for the pursuit of foreign policy objectives.\(^{150}\) Furthermore, the Supreme Court decision in *Schenck v. United States* upheld the government’s action.\(^{151}\)

Tension between the requirements of national security as perceived by government officials and freedom of the press as expressed in the First Amendment was best crystallized by Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, when the country engaged in World War I. He said “When a nation is at war many things that might be said in times of peace are such a hindrance to its effort that their utterance will not be endured so long as men fight, and no court could regard them as protected by any constitutional right.”\(^{152}\) He was expressing the opinion of a unanimous, 1919 landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision in the case of *Schenck vs. United States*. During a time of war, argued, Holmes if words are used to create a clear and present danger to the nation the government has the right to suppress such behavior.\(^{153}\)

\(^{150}\) Ibid
\(^{151}\) Ibid
\(^{152}\) [http://www.abanet.org/publiced/youth/sia/holtcases/schenck.html](http://www.abanet.org/publiced/youth/sia/holtcases/schenck.html)
\(^{153}\) Ibid.
This was the third in a total of seven episodes to date in which the United States attempted to punish individuals for criticizing government officials or policies. In each case the nation faced “extraordinary pressures—and temptations—to suppress dissent,”\(^\text{154}\)

In some of these eras, national leaders cynically exploited public fears for partisan political gain; in some, they fomented public hysteria in an effort to unite the nation in common cause; and in others they simply caved in to public demands for the repression of ‘disloyal’ individuals… Although each of these episodes presented a unique challenge in each case the United States “went too far in sacrificing civil liberties particularly the freedom of speech,”\(^\text{155}\).

Public demonstrations of “patriotism” were encouraged by the Wilson administration. Groups like the National Protective Association and the National Security League demanded “100 percent Americanism” in their communities—the price of resistance was a public kissing of the flag, beating, or literally being tarred and feathered.\(^\text{156}\) Control of battlefield information remained paramount; so did censorship. Wilbur Forrest, who covered the war for United Press, claimed that censors forced reporters to describe heavy defeats as ‘strategic withdrawals’ or as ‘taking up new positions according to plan.’\(^\text{157}\) Frederick Palmer, a correspondent for Collier’s magazine, declared that being a “World War I correspondent sometimes cast him in the role of ‘public liar’ for the purpose of maintaining strong public support for the war and the Army at home.”\(^\text{158}\)


\(^{155}\) Ibid.

\(^{156}\) Ibid.

\(^{157}\) Ibid., 327

\(^{158}\) Ibid.
War Reporting Criticized

The quality of the American media’s reporting was criticized by historians. One, accusation for example, was that they “treated America’s actions differently than the actions of enemy countries” In the 1930s journalists expressed their shock and horror about the bombing of civilians in Spain, [by the Germany] and China, [by the Japanese]. “However, once they entered the war the distinction between proper and reprehensible acts of war diminished.” Other critics, noting President Woodrow Wilson's domestic repression of civil liberties against critics of WWI, took reporters of WWII to task for not opposing the repeated erosion of civil liberties; and particularly for giving in to the wartime hysteria like calls for the internment of several thousands of Americans of Japanese ancestry. In WWI similar hysteria had led to discrimination against citizens of German and Italian heritage.

When the United States joined WWI, reporters followed rules set by American military censors. These included: wearing a uniform, later substituted for an arm band with a big letter “C”, “swearing to report the truth, but not anything that would aid the enemy,” clearing copy through the censor’s office, submitting to controlled access to the battlefields, handwriting a personal autobiography, and a $10,000 dollars deposit by the correspondent’s employer to be forfeited if the reporter violated the rules. Cameramen were restricted both on the field and at home, and the U.S. Army Signal Corps produced most of the newsreel footage that American audiences saw. The film industry which had

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159 Sloan p. 345
160 Ibid.
started in 1911 was very popular at the time and so “film was carefully edited to serve military and national war goals,” and was shown in movie theaters,\textsuperscript{161}

Government Sponsored Propaganda in WW1

In both WWI and WWII, information bureaus, established by presidential decree, coordinated the media and war campaign. The Committee on Public Information (CPI) in WW1 included Secretaries of State, War and the Navy, and was headed by George Creel, a newspaper editor, writer and “devotee” of President Woodrow Wilson. A Foreign Section dealt with propaganda abroad, and a Domestic one mobilized opinion at home.\textsuperscript{162}

The CPI was a nation-wide network of public speaking volunteers called the “Four-Minute-Men.” They whipped up “the people’s righteous wrath,”\textsuperscript{163} solicited support for the war through the sale of Liberty Bonds and demonized the enemy. They enlisted “nearly 150,000 journalists, writers, scholars and other communicators in the propaganda campaign…to mobilize public opinion behind the war.”\textsuperscript{164} The set-up included a Bureau of Cartoons, headed by George J. Hecht, who exhorted cartoonists to “use their popular medium to support the war effort.”\textsuperscript{165}

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{161} Ibid., 329
\item \textsuperscript{162} Ibid
\item \textsuperscript{164} Carpenter, p 7-9
\item \textsuperscript{165} "Cartooning for Victory: World War I instructions to Artists." History Matters. Available from http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5052 Internet; (Accessed December 19, 2010).
\end{footnotes}
From June 16, 1917, until their work ended on December 24, 1918, “The Four Minute Men of America, numbering about 75,000 speakers, throughout 37 speaking campaigns, delivered over 750,000 speeches to audiences totaling 315,000,000 persons. The speeches were delivered almost exclusively in the motion picture theaters of the country during four minutes intermissions. The work was organized in 7,448 cities and towns, including every State in the Union.”

Years later the CPI was criticized for its propaganda efforts; still, Creel himself considered he was “contributing to the preservation of freedom of expression.” His propaganda strategy glorified the U.S. war effort as a crusade for the global cause of freedom and democracy, and debased the enemy, led by the “Beast of Berlin,” Kaiser Wilhelm II, and the German people the “sons” of the despot that was seeking control of the Western Hemisphere. The committee “combined the functions of propagandist and censor...[it] originated news favorable to the war and blacked out that which was not... But by the Second World War propaganda had become a much more scientific business.”

Government Sponsored Propaganda World War II

In WWII, unlike WWI, the government did not need to hire the media to persuade the public to go to war—America was attacked and wartime nationalism took

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166 United States. Committee on Public Information. Division of Four Minute Men. Chicago Branch, The Four Minute Men of Chicago. Chicago: 1919. Also http://ia600302.us.archive.org/22/items/fourminutemenofc00unit/fourminutemenofc00unit.pdf
168 Knightley p. 299
over. Consequently, suppression of dissent was less blatant—for example, “there was no repetition of the hundreds of sedition prosecution.”  

Upon the declaration of war following the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) took over the nation’s incoming and outgoing news reports and telecommunications for a week until the appointment and confirmation of Byron Price, an Associated Press editor, as head of the newly established Censorship Office which issued the Code of Wartime Practice (CWP) to publishers and broadcasters. Specific topics were restricted—for example: the Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox, asked the news media to hold off stories involving construction of new ships, and strength of the naval units.  

Some CWP requests bordered on the bizarre… For example man on the street reaction was banned because they might be used to convey coded messages to the Nazi and Japanese agents. Even weather forecasts were severely restricted less the ubiquitous German intelligence apparatus gather information about weather patterns that could facilitate an invasion of North America. The closest German army units were some 3,000 miles away.

President Roosevelt also created the Office of War Information (OWI), headed by Elmer Davis, a veteran New York Times reporter and later CBS broadcast commentator. This office supervised war information programs on the radio, newsreel and other media outlets and acted as liaison between the press and the government. Unlike the CPI’s centralized information control, the WWII’s OWI coordinated with appropriate government departments what news should be released. However key military

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169 Ibid.  
170 Carpenter p.18-20  
171 Ibid.
Departments, War and Navy, tightly controlled their information, and the president deferred to them.\textsuperscript{172}

Voice of America Established

An OWI branch named Foreign Information Service (FIS) ensured America’s version of events would be heard overseas. It was headed by a military officer but came under the direction of Robert Sherwood, a playwright, presidential speech writer, and confident, who was assisted by several dozen journalists and broadcasters – virtually all of them staunch advocates of U.S. intervention in the war.\textsuperscript{173} Their most creative project was Voice of America (VOA). “All U.S. information to the world should be considered as though it were a continuous speech by the President,” Sherwood is quoted to have said.\textsuperscript{174} In addition, recognizing the impact of Hollywood and filmmakers, they produced a stream of feature films which painted the Japanese as “scarcely human,” and undeserving of mercy. But the Soviet Union on the other hand, now a military ally, was elevated to the status of a friendly nation through gushing films like \textit{North Star}, and \textit{Song of Russia} produced to alter the public’s perception.\textsuperscript{175} In later years attempts at expunging the Soviet record came back to haunt in the early 1950s in the witch-hunts for “communist traitors.” The wartime hysteria surfaced again more than five decades later when the United States was attacked on 9/11, 2001. The pattern fashioned at the onset of the Republic’s first encounter with a foreign policy crisis did not bode well for the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{172} Sloan p.345
\item \textsuperscript{173} Carpenter p.23
\item \textsuperscript{174} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{175} Carpenter p.25
\end{itemize}
treatment of dissenters or critics of U.S. foreign policy. As in 1798, foreign policy critics would be silenced.

Reporting The Cold War and the Loyalty Program

At the end of WWII the US and the Soviet Union established leadership over the western and eastern hemispheres respectively, and faced off in what history records as the Cold War. While the U.S. injected massive financial and industrial support to rebuild post-war Europe under the Marshall Plan, even extending assistance to Turkey and Greece under the Truman Doctrine, Soviet Russia stabbed westward, carving into nations all but emptied by war. Gradually, a so-called “iron curtain” dropped down around Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria. By 1950, the Russians detonated an atomic bomb of their own, and Communists took control of mainland China. On the Korean front, Communist troops poured across the 38th parallel into South Korea and U.S. soldiers were sent to stop them.

During this era in the United States, members of the media were scrutinized for links to the Soviet Union. Communists were demonized and blamed for the advances Russia, a former ally against fascism, was now making. Senator Joseph McCarthy of (R-Wis.) charged that Communists in government were responsible for the advances. The House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) searched for Soviet sympathizers and launched espionage probes. In an almost knee-jerk reaction to the Red Scare, a self-confessed ex-Communist and editor of *Time* Magazine, Whittaker Chambers, accused a leading politician, Alger Hiss, of being a Communist intent upon infiltrating the highest offices of government. Hiss, a protégé of Oliver Wendell Holmes, aide to Franklin
Roosevelt at Yalta and one of the organizers of the United Nations, was convicted of perjury and sentenced to five years in prison. Later, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were charged, convicted and executed under the Espionage Act for giving the Soviets atomic secrets.\textsuperscript{176}

President Harry Truman established a “loyalty program” making the political beliefs of every federal employee subject to investigation by the FBI to certify that present and future government employees were not affiliated with totalitarian, fascist, communist or subversive regimes. With all these measures in place, Truman still, argued “we need not fear the expression of ideas, we do need to fear their suppression,” and he cautioned vigilance against “those who would undermine freedom in the name of security.”\textsuperscript{177}

The sensationalist Red-hunt at home and rapidly deteriorating U.S.-Soviet relations fed the growing sense of fear that gripped Americans and it unleashed a frenzy of anti-communist hysteria. “Some of this fear was justified, but much of it was whipped up by the politicians, journalists, religious leaders and businessmen eager to serve their own ends,”\textsuperscript{178} Political candidates used scare tactics to rally support, during election campaigns, but few were more blatant than Richard Nixon's comment: "People react to fear, not love. They don't teach that in Sunday School, but it's true."\textsuperscript{179}

\textsuperscript{176} Stone: pp320-328
\textsuperscript{177} Ibid., 335
\textsuperscript{178} Ibid., 323
The Media, The Red Scare and the HUAC

Walter Lippmann, a well-known syndicated journalist, focused on the environment that triggered instinctive fear in a book titled *Public Opinion*. Referring to the world outside and the pictures in our heads, he explained “the casual fact, the creative imagination, the will to believe, and out of these three elements, a counterfeit of reality to which there was a violent instinctive response,”\(^{180}\) created the common reaction of fear in the nation. The media were specifically targeted by the HUAC investigations—journalists, screenwriters, playwrights, actors connected with Hollywood or *Voice of America* were fair game to Senator Joseph McCarthy (R-Wis.) who claimed he could rid the country of the alleged Communist threat. Later he targeted government employees and other civic groups, but his tactics failed when he took aim at the war-tested military that was popular and respected for their sacrifices during WWII. The media condemned his attacks and so did his peers.

The investigations, and nationally televised HUAC hearings, which dragged on for five years, netted no Communist network. But they sowed the seeds of distrust among friends, wreaked havoc in families and destroyed many careers. Out of 4.7 million individuals investigated, about one percent unearthed enough derogatory information to trigger a full-field investigation by the FBI, only 20 percent of which led to the filing of formal charges before a loyalty board, and it, in turn cleared 90 percent of those investigated finding no reasonable basis to doubt their loyalty.\(^{181}\) Thus, from 1947 to


\(^{181}\) Stone p.348
1953 roughly 350 federal employees were discharged because of doubts about their loyalty.\footnote{182}{Ibid.}

Fear, The Media and the Truman Administration

A “noxious cloud engulfed the nation.”\footnote{183}{Ibid.} It was the result of a combined assault on civil liberties: the “loyal” Americans program “created a pervasive sense of being watched,” the scrutiny of “suspect” individuals by HUAC and the sharing of secret dossiers with the FBI inspired mistrust. Perhaps most important of all, “it reversed the essential relationship between the citizen and the state in a democratic society.”\footnote{184}{Ibid.} Stone argued that the citizens of a self-governing society must be free to think and talk openly and critically about issues of governance. “Under the loyalty program however, it was the government that defined which thoughts and ideas were permitted. Dissenting views, nonconforming opinions were deemed disloyal,” he said.\footnote{185}{Ibid., p. 352}

Few in the press questioned the Truman administration’s Cold War measures or the assumptions that [the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan] were necessary in the struggle to defend the democratic west against the onslaught of communist expansion and that no alternative policy was available. The exceptions were The Chicago Tribune and its sister East Coast publication, the Washington Times-Herald, noted Carpenter, a foreign policy expert at the Cato Institute, a leading libertarian think-tank. He added that recently declassified documents show that much of the anti-communist rhetoric was “a
calculated tactic by the Truman administration to garner public support,” for its interventionist initiatives.186

“The Truman administration was remarkably effective in using the mainstream press to implement its propaganda offensive,” noted James Aronson, a journalist for The New York Times and an outspoken critic of the Cold War media.187 The press parroted Washington’s assertion that “American troops, were fighting and dying in Korea to protect freedom and democracy.”188 Secretary of State Dean Acheson routinely floated “trial balloons”--selective leaks--intended to test a diplomatic move without commitment. Reporters who were “cooperative became privy to valuable information for exclusive stories, uncooperative types were frozen out.”189 Very few stories were written at the time by the American media regarding the “repression” practiced by South Korean dictator Syngman Rhee, although there was plenty of evidence available to journalists. Yet the European, Australian and other non-American correspondents reported about regime brutality, corruption and military incompetence.190 Only the left-leaning National Guardian weekly, co-founded by Aronson, of all the 549 weeklies and 1,772 newspapers191 in the country, denounced the U.S. intervention. The press was so docile that when General Douglas MacArthur criticized initial press reports indicating the troops

186 Carpenter: p. 47
188 Ibid., pp. 106-26
189 Carpenter: p. 45
190 Knightley p. 374
were faring badly in combat against the communist North Korean forces, the media accepted the Army’s “voluntary” censorship code that ruled out any criticism of allied soldiers on the battlefield.\footnote{Carpenter: p. 49}

Ever since WWI and WWII, successive administrations have viewed the media “as part of the nation’s foreign policy team, not as an external monitor,” noted Carpenter. Secretary of Defense James Forrestal, in a meeting with the press in March 1948, expressed the need for “an assumption by the information media of their responsibility in voluntarily refraining from publishing information detrimental to our national security.”\footnote{Quoted in James Russell Wiggins, \textit{Freedom or Secrecy}, rev. ed., New York: Oxford University Press, 1964 p. 100} The same attitude would be reiterated almost two decades later by Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs Arthur Sylvester, who told journalists in 1965 that in time of war (the undeclared Vietnam War) the news media had the obligation to become the “handmaiden” of government.\footnote{Carpenter, p. 46, also Quoted in Morley Safer, “Television Covers The War,” also in U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, August 17 and 31, 1966, 89\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 2d sess., p. 90}

Reporting Vietnam and Four American Administrations

At the end of World War II, in an attempt to support the western alliance, the United States backed France’s efforts to hold onto countries it had colonized in Indo-China since the 1800s. The rise of Mao Tse-Tung in China in the 1940s, the outbreak of the Korean War, and the French defeat in 1954 at Dien Bien Phu, Vietnam—which led to the communist north and a pro-capitalist-democracy south partition-- convinced the U.S.
that it was locked in a global ideological war with Russia. President Truman’s four successors, Gen. Dwight Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson and Richard M. Nixon—all bought into the “domino theory” that any further revolutionary success in the area would start a chain reaction that could sweep more countries behind the Soviet “Iron Curtain.” Consequently, these administrations supported South Vietnam with military advisors to help train its army, and poured millions into France’s efforts. At his inaugural address, President John F. Kennedy extended the Truman Doctrine with a pledge that this nation would “pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, and oppose any foe to assure our survival and the success of liberty.” By the fall of 1963, 18,000 military advisers were in Vietnam, up from 685 when Kennedy took office in 1961, and by 1968 it became a full-blown war with the United States committing over 536,100 men and women to the battle. Each successive administration further stretched the Kennedy pledge, but since Vietnam’s government maintained its intent to resist communism, Washington continued to hope it would provide a “toe-hold” for democracy in the subcontinent.

When some 400 civilians were killed in a rebel uprising in South Vietnam in November 1960 The New York Times sent a veteran war correspondent, the first from a daily newspaper, to join a tiny corps of full-time news agency reporters from the Associated Press (AP), United Press International (UPI), Reuters and Agence France Presse already stationed in Saigon. A major story would bring in correspondents from London, who represented various Australian and American newspapers and sometimes

195 Knightley, p. 409  
197 Ibid.
special correspondents from Tokyo, Bangkok, Hong Kong and Singapore. Other U.S. dailies “relied for their day-to-day coverage on the four news agency men.” 198

The Media Stand Firm

The French withdrew from Vietnam after losing the Battle of Dien Bien Phu, May 1954, the precursor to the Vietnam War. From 1961-1965 “The United States Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) desperately sought to conceal the full extent of American participation in the war against the “Vietcong” and it tried to make the correspondents accomplices in this deception. The correspondents resisted. ‘We seem to be regarded by the American mission as tools of our foreign policy,’ wrote New York Times’ Homer Bigart in the newspaper’s house magazine.” 199 AP correspondent Malcome Browne went a step further and put his experiences on public record. He sent in a dispatch complaining that the United States officials had concealed from correspondents the extent to which American servicemen were performing combat duties, and his story appeared in, The New York Times, among other newspapers, on March 24, 1962. 200

The South Vietnamese government reacted swiftly by expelling correspondents. The Americans put pressure on the press. “So you’re Browne,” said Admiral Harry D. Felt, meeting the AP man at a press conference in Saigon. “Why don’t you get on the team?” he was asked. 201 It was a recurrent question that only served to tighten the bond among the small corps of journalists for whom it became a proof of character and

integrity to resist perceived government interference. At the same time, in Washington, the administration “misled” correspondents to such an extent that many an editor, unable to reconcile what his man in Saigon was reporting with what his man in Washington told him, preferred to use the official version. 202

But British correspondents were not hampered by the same problems. The Sunday Times bluntly reported on March 4, 1962 that the United States military intervention in South Vietnam “has already passed the point where aid can be distinguished from involvement.” 203 More such reports were published every day and at each escalation the United States tried to deny or minimize their effects. Finally, when trying to recruit the press on “patriotic” levels did not work, the administration encouraged correspondents to visit and see Vietnam for themselves in the hope that wining and dining them would win them over. 204

United States information service agencies throughout the world were told to encourage correspondents to come to Vietnam. If they needed money, the American government did its best to provide it, and up to the end of 1966 approximately 35 non-American correspondents were assisted to visit Vietnam in this questionable way. 205 Richard West, a British freelance journalist who paid his own fare to Vietnam, wrote in the New Statesman: “Even those who come at their newspaper’s expense are likely to be

202 Ibid.
203 Knightley, p. 419
204 Ibid.
overwhelmed by the help and hospitality they receive from the American propaganda machine… [they] are bound to be grateful.”

However, by “making every facet of the war unusually accessible to any correspondent who turned up in Saigon, it lost control of the situation.” As the number of war correspondents tipped the scales at 700, it became inevitable that some would refuse to accept the official line at face value and get out into the field to see things for themselves. In this way, Vietnam was a unique war for journalists.

The U.S. military provided credentials based on letters from three organizations vouching for the journalist. The identification card stamped by the U.S. Military Assistance Command in Vietnam (MACV) and the Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO) in Saigon opened doors to daily briefings (known as the five o’clock follies), rides in helicopters and the “right” to go to battle zones. “If you had the energy, courage, and stamina, you could go where you wanted, and a few places more. And we did. If you knew a battle was brewing, you’d go to the military and hitch a ride on a helicopter, a truck, an armored personnel carrier,” recalls George Esper, who reported for *The Associated Press*. “If we wanted to come out, we could anytime, and move on to another major battle. We were rarely with one unit for more than a few weeks.”

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206 Knightley, p. 419
207 Ibid.
Vietnam War Reporting—a Radical Change

War reporting from Vietnam was a radical departure from the traditional choreographed relationship between the military and the press. Previous measures, which included restricting access, prepublication censorship and voluntary restrictions, no longer applied. This was a conundrum for the Kennedy administration—media censorship could not be justified because the conflict was not labeled a war. The military did not control the movement of civilians and thus could not monitor reporters’ movements. So, his administration and each successive ones were forced to improvise. When wining and dining journalists did not work, Washington officials reached out to editors. In one instance, according to several sources, President Kennedy “tried nudging [New York Times publisher] Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, to reassign David Halberstam” because his reports contradicted the official line.\textsuperscript{210} The Johnson administration, however, was blunt. “When you speak to the American people,” Vice President Hubert Humphrey told correspondents in Chu Lai, November 1967, “give the benefit of the doubt to our side… We’re in this together.” Secretary of State Dean Rusk said at a post-Tet offensive background briefing, February 1968, “There gets to be a point when the question is, whose side are you on?”\textsuperscript{211}

Intimidation

Female journalists and photographers faced additional problems. Accompanying marines into enemy territory required an escort, and a reporter’s assignment was aborted.

\textsuperscript{210} Knightley, p.417
\textsuperscript{211} Ibid. p. 419
if the escort was injured. Military officers had their own prejudices against female reporters worrying their troops would be distracted from their primary duty of protecting one another, and instead concern themselves with the safety of a female among them. As for sexism, one commanding officer went so far as to ask a female reporter to “walk around the firebase and pose for pictures with troops as a ‘morale booster’.”

Direct intimidation was common “What the hell is a woman doing in a war zone,” was the prevailing reaction from officers and soldiers to many female correspondents who recall this misguided chivalry in their War Torn memoirs. There was also the issue of accommodations: At Lai Khe, in Military Zone III, “Iron Triangle” 20 miles northwest of Saigon, male reporters could bunk with the troops but women could not. One reporter was loaned a major’s “hootch”—a wooden structure and a sleeping bag—for her tour. Washing was always considered a communal affair for men; however, now special arrangements were required because women were present. A common excuse for forbidding women war correspondents to advance to the front lines or accompany a unit on a mission was the lack of toilet facilities. “Women reporters who go into the field make professional Army officers nervous, for these men must immediately explain that no, repeat, no toilets exist for us,” wrote Gloria Emerson of The New York Times.

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212 Denby Fawcett, Ann Bryan Mariano, Kate Webb, Anne Morrissy Merick, Jurate Kazickas, Edith Lederer, Tad Bartimus, Tracy Wood, Laura Palmer pp. 122-131
213 Ibid.
214 Ibid., p. 116
Military Accuse the Media

Although the military-media relations had improved since Gen. William Sherman announced, almost a century and a half earlier, that he hated newspapermen and regarded them as “spies,” losing Vietnam drew a more visceral reaction. As protests against deepening American involvement mounted, General Westmoreland warned that encouraging the enemy in this way could cost American lives. Vice President Spiro T. Agnew accused the American press of “serving the enemy cause by influencing U.S. public opinion against the war.” The media, Agnew added, was dominated by a “tiny closed fraternity of privileged men, elected by no one,” raising issues of media bias, and unaccountability. President Richard Nixon, commander in chief during the closing days of the war, reflected in his book, *The Real War*, published in 1980:

> The War in Vietnam was not lost on the battlefields of Vietnam. It was lost in the halls of Congress ... in the editorial rooms of great newspapers ...and in the classrooms of great universities.

But a scholarly study of the role of media in Vietnam, by Daniel C. Hallin, determined otherwise. In *Uncensored War* he concluded that: from 1962 on *New York Times* reporting from South Vietnam reflected very closely “the views of Americans in the field.” While objective reporting required that top officials in Saigon --American and South Vietnamese-- be given their due, for the most part the *Times* reporters of this period focused on the views of field level officers. “Their reporting was pessimistic

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216 Carpenter p.16  
219 [http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,985217,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,985217,00.html) (Accessed February 3 2010)  
where these officers were pessimistic, and enthusiastic when they were enthusiastic, it reflected their insights which were many and the limitations of their perspective which were also many.\footnote{222} He drew his conclusions from a study of the complete body of The New York Times coverage from 1961 to 1965, hundreds of 1965-73 television reports and interviews with reporters, photographers and TV crews.

He explained that while the media were closely tied to the official perspectives throughout the war, divisions in the government and contradictions in public relations policies sometimes caused the administrations of Presidents Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon to lose the ability to "manage" the news effectively. Television, too, he noted, presented a highly idealized picture of the war in the early years, and shifted toward a more critical view only after public unhappiness and elite divisions over the war were well advanced.

American war correspondents traditionally have advocated for soldiers, glorifying their exploits and giving voice to their views and interests which often conflicted with those of the administration or the military. "Vietnam was no exception,"\footnote{223} Hallin wrote. For example: the Kennedy administration, did not acknowledge that US troops were in combat in Vietnam because the conflict was not billed as a war and consequently commanders refused to award the Purple Heart to soldiers wounded there. However, in April 1962, The New York Times’ Homer Bigart, reported a story on a wounded sergeant denied the medal. "The withholding of the medal rankled crewmen who believe the

\footnote{222}{Ibid p. 53}
\footnote{223}{Ibid.
hazards of their operations… are getting no recognition,” he wrote. In Washington, the next day the White House rescinded the policy.224

Hallin criticized the American media for not offering context to the story in Vietnam. They did not explain the anti-colonial resistance brewing at the base of the conflict, he noted. This criticism of the media would be repeated in a study of the performance of the leading newspapers in the run up to the war on Iraq in 2003.

Truth and Consequence

The Vietnam experience had consequences for the media, the government and the military. For the media it meant new stringent measures to create conformity through for example, embedding reporters, and or creating “pools” to cover an event and report to other journalists. On the government level, Congress enacted the War Powers Act in 1973, requiring a president to receive explicit congressional approval before committing American troops overseas.225 The war took the lives of two million Vietnamese, 58,000 Americans, and upwards of 350,000 US servicemen were wounded, according to historical records. It lasted ten years and, cost the current equivalent of $738 billion dollars according to a congressional report.226 For the military it remains, to this day, an ongoing debate of extremes. Some like Major Cass D. Howell, United States Marine Corps, believed television should be barred from the battlefield.: “The great difference between, the Vietnam War and its predecessors lay not in its conduct, but its perception,

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an image that was shaped by a powerful new influence—television,” he wrote in a research paper published in 1984. 227 “It was this medium, more than any other single factor, which was instrumental in the shift of American public and Congressional opinion from a position strongly supporting to one strongly condemning the American defense of South Vietnam.” Consequently, he recommended: “In our next war the television cameras must stay home.” 228

By 2002 and eleven military interventions since Vietnam,229 other members of the military, like Major Barry E. Venable, U.S. Army, argued for media inclusion. The media should be included and both parties should be able to perform their duties to the American people, the ultimate authority. “…this ‘post-Vietnam blame the media’ legacy effectively built the stone wall that was erected between the two institutions,” Major Venable, wrote. He urged “military leaders must accept the reality that dealing with the media is part of their past, present, and future….mistrust of the media is akin to mistrust of the American public… Media coverage of military operations has a direct effect on public opinion and will continue to influence wars and conflicts at all levels,”230

Summary

In times of war and national crisis the media has demonstrably closed ranks behind the governing administration. Time and again governments have invoked policies

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228 Ibid.


230 Ibid
reminiscent of those in the early days of the republic—propaganda, patriotism, coercion and censorship to squelch criticism or dissent at home, and the media in many cases have been intimidated into compliance. The military has tried to shut out the media from war zones by making access difficult, imposing censorship or embedding reporters to ensure conformity of reports. Media critics said performance followed the government line in each U.S. intervention—Grenada, Panama, Lebanon, Kuwait, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, Somalia Afghanistan and Iraq. For example in Panama:

“…watching television coverage of Operation Just Cause, we noticed constant updating of US casualty figures without mentioning of Panamanian dead or injured; the playing of stock scenes of heroic American soldiers in helicopter gunships or parachuting onto beaches but no scenes of hospitals with civilian casualties,… the constant descriptions of Manuel Noriega as a voodoo-practicing pervert and drug runner, never as a longtime U.S. ally.231

Also, in Bosnia: The media portrayal of the conflict through the cold war prism of good vs. evil was oversimplified, and added that the lack of historical and cultural knowledge of the area and the people made it easy for reporters to “fall in the disinformation trap” of the feuding parties.232

The shopworn 1930s analogy was brought out once more, with Serbia becoming the 1990s version of Nazi Germany and Milosevic playing the role of the new Hitler, there was a vigorous campaign throughout 1992 and 1993 to demonize Serbia—much as Iraq has been demonized in the months leading up to Operation Desert Storm.”233

In Somalia: analysts criticized the “credulity” with which media accepted the government’s portrayal of the political situation there. “Journalists invariably described

231 Ibid. p.180
233 Carpenter p. 228
feuding Somali political leaders as “warlords” and militia as “bandits,” “gangs”…little more than oversimplified State Department propaganda.” 234 This was comparable to media language used in Afghanistan [1979] where “US officials never described the most authoritarian and ruthless leaders of the mujaheddin as ‘warlords’…or ‘gangs’ instead, Washington called them ‘freedom fighters.’ Most members of the news media slavishly repeated the government’s positive terminology, just as they later echo the negative description of the Somali factions.” 235

In Kuwait, as in Vietnam and Grenada, the military tried to project power. “The structure controlling the press was very, very tight…what the press were able to get out to the public was pretty much what the military wanted them to get out.” 236 News reports described successful interception and destruction of Iraqi Scuds by the Patriot missiles. U.S. commander General H. Norman Schwarzkopf told a press briefing, that “the Patriot’s success, of course is known to everyone. It’s one hundred percent—so far of thirty three [Scuds] engaged, there have been thirty-three destroyed.” 237 “The impression that we got during the course of the war was that we were getting a lot of the SCUDs on the ground and that the Patriot missile was in fact shooting down the SCUDs that got up in the air with some great success. Well, neither was true. It turned out at the end of the war that we didn't get one SCUD on the ground, not one at all.” 238 A report by The House Operations Subcommittee on Legislation and National Security, another from General

234 Carpenter  p. 224
235 Ibid. 225
236 Ibid.
Accounting Office, in 1992, plus MIT studies by scientists concluded that “Gulf War television pictures showing Patriots chasing Scuds were misleading.” Television images didn't fully reflect that a number of Patriots were just wounding SCUDS or pushing them off course; big chunks of both then fell to the ground. A total of 158 Scuds were reportedly fired during the war.240

Chapter 4

Methods

This chapter discusses key features of the research, including the newspaper selection, the articles chosen, the process of coding, the operational definitions, and the analysis of the data gathered.

General overview

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of The New York Times through the type and scope of information offered to its readers about the administration’s argument for war.

Media critics like Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky have long held that the “societal purpose” of the elite media is to serve “privileged groups that dominate the domestic society and the state.” They argue in Manufacturing Consent that the media perform this purpose in several ways: “through selection of topics, distribution of concerns, framing of issues, filtering of information, emphasis and tone, and by keeping the debate within the bounds of acceptable premises.”241 Their inference is that ordinary citizens are being held back from judging public issues in a rational manner because of the media’s selective interpretations.

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Media historian and journalist Phillip Knightley said the American news outlets—TV, radio and print—covering the pre-invasion of Iraq in general showed “aggressive patriotic reporting” and that arguably the best newspaper in the world such as “revered institutions like The New York Times seemed to accept uncritically the administration line on the war.”

Michael Massing, contributing editor at The Columbia Journalism Review, called The Times’ performance “deficient “and criticized its coverage for “placing more credence in defectors…less confidence in inspectors…and [paying] less attention to dissenters” compared to other major newspapers. He singled out The Times’ treatment of a key story—an administration claim that Iraq was acquiring aluminum tubes to process enriched uranium to produce nuclear weapons. “The September 8 story on the aluminum tubes was especially significant. Not only did it put the Times' imprimatur on one of the administration's chief claims, but it also established a position at the paper that apparently discouraged further investigation into this and related topics,” Massing wrote in The New York Review of Books.

The American Journalism Review, Slate, The Nation, Editor & Publisher, were also among the many organizations that rushed to critique the Bush administration’s pre-war charges against Iraq.

An investigation by The Center for Public Integrity and its affiliate the Fund for Independence in Journalism documented 935 false statements in 24 months —between

242 Knightley p. xi
September 11, 2001, and September 11, 2003—about the national security threat posed by Iraq. “Nearly eight years after the U.S. invasion of Iraq, an exhaustive examination of the record shows that the statements were part of an orchestrated campaign that effectively galvanized public opinion and, in the process, led the nation to war under decidedly false pretenses,” wrote Charles Lewis and Mark Reading-Smith in their report titled “Iraq-The War Card”\(^\text{243}\)

By the time *The Times* itself reported the invasion, and then the discovery that no weapons of mass destruction were hidden in Iraq, and it apologized to its readers for coverage it admitted "was not as rigorous as it should have been," an estimated 100,000 Iraqis had perished, \(^\text{244}\) and over 920 U.S. and coalition soldiers were reported dead and injured, \(^\text{245}\) according to a mortality study undertaken by Johns Hopkins University’s Bloomberg School of Public Health, Iraq’s Al Mustansiriya University’s School of Medicine, in cooperation with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s Center for International Studies.

This underlines the importance of the news coverage in the weeks prior to the U.S. invasion.

The period of 91 days (starting December 20, 2002, and ending with the March 20, 2003, issue reporting the overnight invasion) was chosen because it marked a unique pre-war phase, as explained earlier. A content analysis of the newspaper was conducted

using a Microfiche and the Pro-Quest databases via the California State University East Bay’s library database. The necessary data were collected by sifting through all articles related to the U.S. Iraq confrontation, 9/11, terrorism, the Middle East, and Islam. Each “unit of analysis” (story) was placed in a spreadsheet grid according to the content focus categories: news stories, news analysis/ features, editorial/op-ed/, and photography/cartoon/illustration. This first phase selection was analyzed statistically to test percentages of articles that dealt with the U.S.-Iraq confrontation.

In the second phase, a tabulation using the selected items, further categorized these stories into positive charges of stockpiling WMD by the U.S. against President Saddam Hussein and Iraq, denial responses by the Iraqi administration, United Nations weapons inspection statements, the military buildup, and the national and international anti-war movement. One recording unit was used to physically number the articles in each case.

This cross reference tabulation tested the phase I results’ reliability. In addition a content analysis was conducted to measure how frequently a word or phrase, such as “war,” or “unidentified U.S. officials” came up.

Defining categories to code newspaper content: Phase I

**News stories:** Information about events happening inside or outside the United States regardless of the origin of the news connected to the U.S.-Iraq dispute, terrorism, 9/11, the Middle East, and Islam. Topics include general political issues, domestic and foreign policy, administration views, diplomatic relations; economic news include news about oil prices and industry activity; military news include deployments, troop movements, war financing expenses and plans; social news include human rights, refugees, custom, tradition, health, culture, art, religion, morality and ethics.

**News Analysis/Features:** Articles that go beyond the immediate news, add detail important analytical explanations from more than one perspective; features
introduce the story through a person-in-the-street approach rather than a person in authority. Feature writers have a little more latitude in writing. Topics include all news events previously mentioned.

**Opinion column/Editorial**: Both express views of the writer, or the paper. An editorial expresses the views of the newspaper, it is almost always unsigned, is published in a specific page away from news articles. The Op-ed, shorthand for opposite the editorial page, offers opposing views to that of the paper, has a byline. 246 Topics include all news events mentioned previously.

**Photographs/cartoons/Illustrations**: Visual images that stand alone, comment on the news issues mentioned above, or accompany a news feature. Topics include news events mentioned above.

**Defining categories to analyze WMD coverage: Phase II**

**Coverage**: a report about a news event. Although the facts should not differ from one newspaper to another, the tone may vary depending on the newspaper’s publishers or owners. Coverage could be four lines or more in length.

**WMD**: U.S. Assertions with reference to the WMD claims and the need to remove them were documented in this analysis primarily from President Bush, members of his administration, or British officials. No negative or critical claim was seen or made in the article. This category used direct quotes by Western officials Allies alleging the presence of WMD in Iraq.

**No WMD**: Counter assertions were predominantly from President Saddam Hussein or other Iraqi officials and reported within the time frame of statements made by Western officials.

**U.N. Weapons Inspection**: two key figures in the run up to the March 2003 invasion were U.N. Chief Inspectors. Their statements to the press and the U.N. Security Council were highly publicized.

**Preparations for war**: Information about troops being called up and deployed, ships, carriers ordered to specific locations and assignments. This topic also included stories of soldiers bidding their families’ goodbye, workplaces shorthanded by the departure of staff members called for war duty.

**Anti war movement**: Information about dissenting views to the war. Topics include citizen rallies, demonstrations in the United States and overseas, as well as reports that political leaders were chastised by ruling party members for disapproving of the war.

**Ambiguous stories**: Grey areas. Articles which do not fit clearly in one category or another but are related to the general situation. For example stories and commentaries such as French admonitions to some Eastern European countries for following U.S. lead towards war.

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Why Select *The New York Times*

*The New York Times* is an American daily newspaper, internationally renowned and distributed. It leads the list of all time top Pulitzer winning newspapers with a total of 132 awards--106 for itself and 26 more for newspapers in its company. The awards presented each year by Columbia University, are universally regarded as the most prestigious in American journalism.\(^{247}\) The New York Times *Company* which includes the International Herald Tribune, The Boston Globe, 15 other daily newspapers and more than 50 Web sites, including NYTimes.com, Boston.com and About.com, reported $2.4 billion dollars revenue in 2010.

*The Times*, founded in 1851 in New York City, has been publishing continuously since then. When Adolph S. Ochs took over its management in 1896, he sought to distinguish his newspaper from the prevailing sensationalism reporting of the day known as “yellow journalism.” Thus, he introduced and maintained specific characteristics—professional level foreign coverage through an exchange of special news services with the London Times, in addition full and trustworthy coverage of governmental political news with texts of speeches and documents made the paper indispensable to many and gave it an impression of dependability.\(^{248}\) Over time it gained a reputation of being the newspaper of record especially after publishing the *Pentagon Papers* which demonstrated, among other things, that the Johnson administration had systematically lied to the public and to Congress, about the involvement in Vietnam--a subject of transcendent national interest and significance. The newspaper continues to be widely read by national and international dignitaries and is considered an elite newspaper. *The*  

Washington Post, too, is of similar standing for helping topple the Nixon administration through its reporting of the Watergate scandals.

Although today The Times’ daily circulation of 916,911 lags behind The Wall Street Journal’s 2,117,796 and USA Today’s 1,828,099, 249 compared to other major newspapers its website continues to receive the highest number of first time visitors--over 45 million unique hits worldwide each month and reaching 1 in 6 Internet users.250

Public service is an important part of a newspaper’s role in a democratic self-governing society. Journalists provide information that their readers need to make rational choices, and to enrich their lives. Because this responsibility is an implicit bargain in the First Amendment, this study was undertaken to examine the scope and type of information the nation’s leading newspaper provided its readers about the administration’s justification for war.


250 http://nytmarketing.whsites.net/mediakit/online
Chapter 5

Findings

This chapter demonstrates in detail the results of the study in content and quantification analysis.

Of the total 1,962 published articles read, categorized and analyzed covering the period of December 20, 2002, until March 20, 2003, a full 1,038 articles, or 52.9%, were specifically identified as U.S.-Iraq related.

Of these 1,038 articles, or 52.9%, identified as U.S.-Iraq related, a total of 68 stories or 6.5% were assertive statements quoting U.S. and British officials insisting that Iraq had WMDs, was not disarming quickly enough, or was hiding the said weapons. However, when adding 42 instances where the newspaper repeated these charges through published news analysis, scene-setting advance stories, editorials, and op-eds, quoting members of the administration, the volume rose to 110 stories, or 10.6% of the coverage.

By contrast, counter statements by Iraqi officials accounted for 17 stories, or 1.63% of the 1,038 specified U.S.-Iraq related stories. Also, they were not seen in other news analysis, features or other formats. (Figure 1)
Figure 1  Shows the proportion of articles asserting the presence of WMD by the US and Great Britain (Red) and war preparations by the allies (Crimson). Counter arguments by Iraq (Green) and (Tan) respectively, United Nations comments (Blue)

In addition, articles quoting United Nations officials, who gave progress reports about onsite inspections, challenged the U.S. charges against Iraq, and warned that the U.S. would be violating the U.N. charter if it chose military force without U.N. backing accounted for 25 articles or 2.4% of the 1,038 stories. These officials included the two chief weapons inspectors and the Secretary General of the United Nations.
Findings on WMD and War Preparations

Table 1. *New York Times*’ WMD and war preparations coverage
December 20, 2002 - March 20, 2003

(database total 1,038)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>WMD</th>
<th>No WMD</th>
<th>U.N.</th>
<th>U.S. War preparation</th>
<th>Iraq War preparation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of New York Times Stories</td>
<td>110/1,038</td>
<td>17/1,038</td>
<td>25/1,038</td>
<td>98/1,038</td>
<td>14/1,038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of times the types of article was seen in The New York Times coverage</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>1.63%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the other hand, articles detailing military preparation by the U.S. accounted for 73 stories, or 7.0%, and when added to stories about allied preparations, including the training of dissident Iraqis, the volume went up to 98 stories, or 9.4% of the coverage. This included a story about the successful test of the “Largest Conventional Bomb” in the U.S. arsenal. “The new bomb, still in its test phase, could be dropped on Iraq should President Bush order the nation to war,” the article said. It described the device as an 18,000 pound bomb designed to explode a few feet above the ground and send a devastating wave of fire and blast hundreds of yards to kill troops, flatten trees, knock over structures, collapse cave entrances, and in general demoralize those far beyond the impact. Other stories included: White-House-approved targets, a Pentagon war plan to

shock and overwhelm the Iraqi leadership into submission quickly, and plans to replace it.

Military photos and charts depicting massive U.S. carriers, an American armada leaving San Diego, airplanes of the 101st Airborne Division—the Screaming Eagles—tanks and troops and large military convoys were not included in this calculation.

By contrast, articles about what Iraq was doing to avert a war and prepare its defenses in case of an attack accounted for 14 stories or 1.3 percent of the coverage. These included stories about Iraq's air defense concentrated around Baghdad, and another about sandbags on the city streets.

The 52.9% of the U.S.-Iraq policy coverage focused on and revolved around the United States’ charge that Iraq was stockpiling weapons of mass destruction which needed to be destroyed voluntarily or taken out militarily.

In newspaper articles The Times closely followed two tracks—a diplomatic one and a military one. The first reported on the United States’ interaction with other countries through the United Nations to bring about a resolution ordering compliance by Iraq, and failing that, a resolution for war. These included, for example, confrontations at the United Nations between members who opposed the possibility of force, like France and Germany, and those that endorsed it, like Italy and Great Britain. China and Russia joined the dissenters, and Japan endorsed the move to war on the eve of the invasion.

The second track reported on the gradual and persistent projection of U.S. military power through the buildup of American forces in the Persian Gulf 6,000 miles away and
negotiations with countries neighboring Iraq, like Turkey, for use of bases in the event of an attack.

*The Times* also followed a parallel story -- the continuing domestic response to the “war on terror” set in motion after the 9/11 attack. The heightened terror alert set in place on February 7, when the color-coded national terrorism advisory was raised to “Orange” contributed to the atmosphere of anxiety in print news, on television, and radio as did an earlier report on January 22, 2003, about the “U.S. Deploying Monitor System For Germ Peril” to help protect against the “threat of bioterrorism.”

Additional Findings:

1-The volume: of U.S.-Iraq policy related stories in *The Times* increased in proportion to its general reporting on the Middle East, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the war on terrorism and Islam. (Table 2)

2-The news focus: in the 12 days of December 2002, the newspaper published 89 news stories on the Middle East, the war on terror, and Islam, 32 of which dealt with the U.S.-Iraq policy. In January 2003, it published a total of 334 news stories of which 146 were U.S.-Iraq policy related. In February 2003, it published 379 news stories published, 198 of which were U.S.-Iraq policy related. In the 20 days of March, it published 368 news stories of which 225 involved the U.S.-Iraq policy.
Table 2. New York Times Stories in Categories December 20, 2002 until March 20, 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>News</th>
<th>Features/Analysis</th>
<th>Opinion/Editorial</th>
<th>Illustrations/Photographs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dec.'02 (12 days)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/20/2002 to 12/31/2002</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan.'03 (31 days)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/1/2003 to 1/7/2003</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/8/2003 to 1/14/2003</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/15/2003 to 1/21/2003</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/22/2003 to 1/28/2003</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/29/2003 to 1/31/2003</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>334</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb.'03 (28 days)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/1/2003 to 2/7/2003</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/8/2003 to 2/11/2003</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/12/2003 to 2/18/2003</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/19/2003 to 2/23/2003</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/24/2003 to 2/28/2003</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>379</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>138</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar.'03 (20 days)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/1/2003 to 3/7/2003</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/8/2003 to 3/13/2003</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/14/2003 to 3/20/2003</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>368</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>194</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,170</td>
<td>481</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>425</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grand Total = 1,170 + 481 + 311 = 1,962 articles published

3-News Features and news analysis: also increased. In the 12 days of December 2002, of the 30 articles published, ten dealt with the controversy over the efficacy of the weapons inspections. In January 2003, of the 100 articles 34 concerned U.S.-Iraq policy and worries about
how the Kurds would handle a possible war. In February 2003, of the 137 articles 76 were Iraq related, and the 20 days of March of the 214 articles 160 were Iraq related.

4-Op-ed and editorials: also increased. In the 12 days of December 2002, of the 11 published, seven addressed the U.S.-Iraq situation. In January 2003, of the 89 published, 49 dealt with the impasse; in February 2003, of the 107 articles 86 commented on the growing crisis; and in the 20 days of March 2003, of the 104 opinions 91 covered the impending war, and the rift in the U.S. alliance with France and Germany.

The News Focus and Type of Sources:

A documentation of the sources used in the articles published by The New York Times during the 91-day period under review produced this result:

Table 3. Categories of American sources used in The New York Times articles under review. They were not identified by name.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Officials</th>
<th>Experts</th>
<th>Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dec</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>562</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2  The proportional use of the terms American “officials,” “experts” and “sources” that are not identified by name in *The New York Times* stories categorized during the period reviewed.

Table 4  Use of the term Iraqi “official” sources in *The New York Times* articles reviewed. These sources were not identified by name or profession.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>news</th>
<th>features</th>
<th>editorials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dec</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 3  Illustrates the proportional use of the term “Iraqi officials” in *The New York Times* news and feature articles published during the period reviewed. The names and professions were not identified.

Figure 4  Illustrates the proportional use of unnamed Iraqi opposition and dissident sources in stories published by *The New York Times*—news, features and editorials-- during the period reviewed.
Table 5. Iraqi opposition and dissident sources used in stories published by *The New York Times* during the period reviewed. Names were not identified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>News</th>
<th>features</th>
<th>editorials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dec.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Breakdown of “officials” by job affiliation and nationality not by name

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pentagon</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White House</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Dep't</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligence</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.N.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israeli</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurdish</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestinian</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 5  Illustrates the use of the term “officials” by job affiliation and nationality.
Table 7a Documented references to the term “Iraqi citizens.” No names or affiliation with job or profession were mentioned.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>“Iraqi Citizens”</th>
<th>news</th>
<th>features/news analysis</th>
<th>editorials/opinion</th>
<th>photos/cartoons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dec</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7b Documented references to the term “Iraqis.” No names or affiliation with job or profession were mentioned.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>“Iraqis”</th>
<th>news</th>
<th>features/news analysis</th>
<th>editorials/opinion</th>
<th>photos/cartoons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dec</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>43</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7c Documented references to the term “Iraqi people.” No names or affiliation with job or profession were mentioned.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>“Iraqi people”</th>
<th>news</th>
<th>features/news analysis</th>
<th>editorials/opinion</th>
<th>photos/cartoons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dec</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figures 6a, 6b, 6c illustrate the use of the terms “Iraqi citizens,” “Iraqis” and “Iraqi people” in articles within the period reviewed. No professional association was mentioned.
Placement of News Stories Favor the Administration Dwarfing Opposition

Newspapers consider their front-page their strongest asset. Bill Keller, the executive editor of *The New York Times*, from July 2003 to September 2011, described the meaning and mechanics of the front page in the following terms: “The life of a newspaper revolves to a large, possibly ridiculous, degree around the making of a single page--the front page. For most of this paper's history, the news workday has been defined by the launching, refining, windowing and arranging of those few articles that will represent the editor’s best reckoning of what mattered most yesterday.” And he added “The climatic event of the newspaper day is still the afternoon page- one meeting where editors from the various departments--Foreign, National, Metropolitan, Business, Culture, Sports and so on--nominate the articles they deem most important most interesting or right for the mix… page one is still what most stirs our ambition…. the front page is the showcase every reporter aspires to.” 252


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were designed to be used to enrich nuclear material. The story which appeared the following day in the newspaper also cited unnamed "Bush administration officials" who said that in recent months, Iraq "stepped up its quest for nuclear weapons and has embarked on a worldwide hunt for materials to make an atomic bomb."253

It added:

Mr. Hussein's dogged insistence on pursuing his nuclear ambitions, along with what defectors described in interviews as Iraq's push to improve and expand Baghdad's chemical biological arsenals, have brought Iraq and the United States to the brink of war.

President Bush seems to share the hard-liners' concerns and, officials say, is determined to resolve the Iraq problem on his watch. In drawing up plans for military action, the administration is preparing to act while Iraq's conventional forces are still reeling from the effects of United Nations sanctions and the Gulf War, while Iraq's nuclear arsenal is nonexistent, and while the shock of the Sept. 11 attacks have made many Americans receptive to the idea of pre-emptive military action.254

It was the latest in reported steps initiated by the administration to build a public case for going to war against Iraq. Previous reports included statements by State Department officials that 17 Iraqi expatriates were being trained in public relations to learn how to publicize the brutality of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's rule. The trainees were using one of the department’s Middle Eastern radio services.255 The first salvo in this campaign had come from Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Vice President Dick Cheney. The Iraqi government is "hosting, supporting or sponsoring" an al-Qaeda presence in Iraq, Rumsfeld told Fox News. Citing various "intelligence reports" he rejected calls for the administration to disclose its evidence that Iraq has weapons of mass


254 Ibid

destruction and said instead: "Think of the prelude to World War II. Think of all the
countries that said, well, we don't have enough evidence," he argued. "I mean, Mein
Kampf had been written. Hitler had indicated what he intended to do. The people who
argued for waiting for more evidence have to ask themselves how they are going to feel
at that point where another event occurs." 256

Cheney followed up six days later with a warning that a “nuclear-armed Mr.
Hussein would seek domination of the entire Middle East, take control of a great portion
of the world's energy supplies, directly threaten America's friends throughout the region
and subject the United States or any other nation to nuclear blackmail.” 257 He gave the
speech on August 26, 2002, at a Nashville convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.
These stories were front-paged.

The New York Times did not provide the reader with a dissenting opinion on the
story it reported on September 7, 2002, nor did it mentioned whether the newspaper had
attempted to independently confirm the claims. On September 13, 2002, a follow up
story by both reporters (Miller and Gordon) titled “White House Lists Iraq Steps to Build
Banned Weapons,” reiterated that the Bush “administration insists” that despite Iraq's
efforts to hide its activities to develop or acquire nonconventional weapons, “Baghdad
has shown a clear pattern of violating its commitments in all areas.” 258 This story did

256 Ibid.
justifies-attack.html (Accessed January 10, 2010)
258 Miller, Judith and Michael R. Gordon. "Threats and Responses: Baghdad's Arsenal; White
mention the presence of a debate among intelligence experts about Iraq’s intentions for the alleged tubes, but marginalized the opposition by saying “the dominant view in the administration was that the tubes were intended for use in gas centrifuges to enrich uranium.”

(Many months later it was reported that the presence of a debate came to light only because David Albright, a prominent physicist who helped the International Atomic Energy Agency’s inspection team investigate Iraq’s nuclear weapons program in 1991, called The New York Times two times contesting the claims that the tubes were for centrifuges.)

In between the September 7, 2002 (published in the September 8, 2002, newspaper) and September 13, 2002, articles by Miller and Gordon, Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of State Colin Powell, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld appeared on different television talk shows and pointed to The New York Times articles as a contributory motive for going to war.

On September 8, 2002, Vice-President Dick Cheney on NBC’s Meet the Press, said intelligence reports revealed that Iraq had an active weapons of mass destruction (WMD) program. He said:

he [Saddam Hussein] has indeed stepped up his capacity to produce and deliver biological weapons, that he has reconstituted his nuclear program to develop a nuclear weapon, that there are efforts under way inside Iraq to significantly expand his capability... For some 10 or 11 years now, the international community has attempted to deal with this, but it’s been generally ineffective.

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259 Ibid.
260 Isikoff, Michael, Hubris pp 60-61
The sanctions are breaking down. The willingness of nations to trade with Saddam Hussein is increased. He’s also sitting on top of about 10 percent of the world’s oil reserves and generating enough illicit oil revenue now on the sides that he’s got a lot of money to invest in developing these kinds of programs.

There’s a story in The New York Times this morning…it’s now public that, in fact, he has been seeking to acquire and we have been able to intercept and prevent him from acquiring through this particular channel, the kinds of tubes that are necessary to build a centrifuge. And the centrifuge is required to take low-grade uranium and enhance it into highly enriched uranium, which is what you have to have in order to build a bomb.261

Cheney also dismissed a former national security adviser’s view disputing the connection between Iraq and terrorist organizations. Brent Scowcroft, advisor to President George H.W. Bush, wrote an article in The Wall Street Journal saying: “There is scant evidence to tie Saddam to terrorist organizations, and even less to the Sept. 11 attacks. Indeed Saddam’s goals have little in common with the terrorists who threaten us, and there is little incentive for him to make common cause with them. There is little evidence to indicate that the United States itself is an object of his aggression.” Cheney answered “if you look at Osama bin Laden and the al-Qaeda organization, on the one hand, and Saddam Hussein on the other, while they come from different perspectives, one’s religiously motivated, the other is secular, etc., the fact of the matter is they have the same objective: to drive the United States out of the Middle East, to strike the United States, if at all possible. So to suggest there’s not a common interest there, I think, would be wrong.”262

On the same day, Powell confirmed on Fox TV News that Iraq had chemical and biological weapons and was actively building a nuclear weapon. He said:

262 Ibid.
With respect to nuclear weapons, we are quite confident that the continues to try to pursue the technology that would allow him to develop a nuclear weapon. Whether he could do it in one, five, six or seven, eight years is something that people can debate about, but what nobody can debate about is the fact that he still has the incentive, he still intends to develop those kinds of weapons.

And as we saw in reporting just this morning, he is still trying to acquire, for example, some of the specialized aluminum tubing one needs to develop centrifuges that would give you an enrichment capability.

So there's no question that he has these weapons, but even more importantly, he is striving to do even more, to get even more that's why he won't let the inspectors back in. That's why he frustrated the will of the international community, and that's why he's been violating all of these resolutions for all these years.

On the same show, Powell marginalized statements by a former U.S. inspector, criticizing U.S. policy on Iraq. Scott Ritter, a former U.S. Marine Corps intelligence officer who was on the U.N. inspection team that investigated Iraq’s weapons stockpile 1991 to 1998, said, "The truth is Iraq is not a threat to its neighbors and it is not acting in a manner which threatens anyone outside its borders, military action against Iraq cannot be justified." Powell retorted, “Scott is certainly entitled to his opinion, but I'm afraid that I would not place the security of my nation or the security of our friends in the region on that kind of an assertion by somebody who's not in the intelligence chain any longer.”

Rice in a TV Cable News Network (CNN) appearance warned “we don’t want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud.” She explained

“We do know that he is actively pursuing a nuclear weapon. We do know that there have been shipments going into Iran for instance—into Iraq, for instance, of

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aluminum tubes that really are only suited to high-quality aluminum tools that are only really suited for nuclear weapons programs, centrifuge programs.

We know that he has the infrastructure, nuclear scientists to make a nuclear weapon. And we know that when the inspectors assessed this after the Gulf War, he was far, far closer to a crude nuclear device than anybody thought, maybe six months from a crude nuclear device. The problem here is that there will always be some uncertainty about how quickly he can acquire nuclear weapons.

She too dismissed a statement by Iraqi deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz asserting that Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction saying “this is a regime that has lied and cheated.”

On the same day Rumsfeld appeared on TV CBS’ Face the Nation and said

He [President George Bush] has decided to go to the Congress and to the United Nations later this week and make the case of what Iraq has done for 11 years. It has invaded its neighbors; it's violated almost every single U.N. resolution that relates to Iraq. And against the agreement they had to disarm, they proceeded to develop weapons of mass destruction - chemical, biological and nuclear. And they create a problem for the international community that’s significant.

Acknowledging the host’s reference to The New York Times story he added:

The reality is that he agreed, at the end of the Gulf War, to turn over all of his weapons of mass destruction and discontinue developing them. He didn't do the turnover, and he has continued aggressively to develop them, as you pointed out from one of the articles today. 267

The New York Times front paged the comments of the top administration officials noting they were using “almost identical language that signaled a carefully coordinated campaign to move Congress and the United Nations in their direction,” and it mentioned that the president would seek support from these two bodies “for action, including a

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possible military strike.”

It said that while the officials characterized the Iraqi threat as grave, immediate and unavoidable, they acknowledged uncertainties and varying estimates of how long it might take Iraq to use nuclear weapons or pass them to terrorists for use against the United States.

However, The Times did not mention the dissenting opinions included during the interviews--that there were some in the intelligence community who disputed the official stance on the alleged aluminum tubes-- nor did it mention that a former national security adviser refuted claims of a link the Bush administration was trying to make between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda. The newspaper had covered some of these dissenting arguments in an article, published 23 days earlier, on August 16, 2002, titled “Top Republicans Break with Bush on Iraq Strategy.”

Nuclear Theme Sets into Debate

In the following six months the nuclear theme set by the administration representatives, Cheney, Powell, Rice and Rumsfeld, on September 8, would be repeated in The New York Times in various ways: On September 26, 2002, “Why Iraq Can't Be Deterred,” by Kenneth M. Pollack, said “Mr. Hussein can still be kept in check by American threats to respond to any new Iraqi aggression with force -- including nuclear

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bombardment, if necessary;” on January 23, 2003, “Why We Know Iraq Is Lying” by Condoleezza Rice again argued for action against Iraq in the absence of “voluntary disarmament”

The editorial pages of *The Times* did not question the administration’s claims that Iraq still owned Weapons of Mass Destruction. For example:

Baghdad has not provided convincing documentation to back up its dubious claims to have eliminated all its illegal biological chemical, nuclear and missile programs. The report [Iraq’s WMD declaration to the UN Security Council] also omitted data in biological programs that have been disclosed previously and pointed to new violations of restrictions on chemical production and missile tests. In the nuclear area Iraq failed to explain satisfactorily its recent purchase of aluminum tubes that can be used to enrich uranium bomb making. These are not trivial omissions. (“Iraq Stonewalling,” *The New York Times* December 20, 2002)  

While Iraq is ostensibly cooperating with the U.N. weapons inspectors, Baghdad’s overall accounting of its unconventional arms programs has been circumscribed at best and deceptive at worst. The failure to provide a full description of its nuclear weapons projects is especially troubling. (“The Exercise of American Power,” *The New York Times* January 2, 2003)  

Saddam Hussein is obviously a brutal dictator who deserves toppling. No one who knows his history can doubt that he is secretly trying to develop weapons of mass destruction. (“The Race to War.” *The New York Times* January 26, 2003)  

Secretary of State Colin Powell presented the United Nations and a global television audience yesterday with the most powerful case to date that Saddam Hussein stands in defiance of Security Council resolutions and has no intention of

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revealing or surrendering whatever unconventional weapons he may have ("The Case Against Iraq" The New York Times February 6 2003)\(^{275}\)

It is up to the council members—especially the veto-wielding quintet of the United States, Britain, France, Russia and China—to decide whether Iraq is disarming. In our judgment, Iraq is not ("Disarming Iraq" The New York Times February 15, 2003)\(^{276}\)

The United States wants a new resolution reaffirming the conclusion that Iraq has failed to disarm, effectively opening the way to war sanctioned by the U.N. France supported by Germany and Russia prefers to give Hans Blix and his inspectors more time to see if they can disarm Iraq. The American resolution, introduced by Britain deserves the Security Council’s support. ("Facing Down Iraq," The New York Times Feb. 25, 2003).\(^{277}\)

Baghdad is still a very long way from living up to the Security Council’s demands for it to give up its unconventional weapons ("A Fractured Security Council" The New York Times March 8, 2003)\(^{278}\)

America is on its way to war. President Bush has told Saddam Hussein to depart or face attack. For Mr. Hussein, getting rid of weapons of mass destruction is no longer an option. ("War in the Ruins of Diplomacy" The New York Times March 18, 2003)\(^{279}\)


Placement of Stories: Counter-Assertions by Iraq or Others in Inside Pages

Throughout the accusations and buildup to war The Times also gave no prominent space to Iraq’s repeated assertions that it did not possess WMD, nor did it offer the same to other institutions and individuals that made similar assertions. In fact the research covering the period December 20, 2002, to March 21, 2003, showed articles denying the presence of WMD repeatedly relegated to back pages, while American assertions to the contrary on the front page.

For example: President Saddam Hussein’s letter to the United Nations on the subject:

Among [the U.S. president’s] generalizations, which implied deliberate insinuations, he presented the utmost distortions on the nuclear, biological and chemical threats, so as to make American citizens believe the deliberate insinuation that Iraq was linked to the American people's tragedy of Sept. 11 The U.S. administration wants to destroy Iraq in order to control the Middle East oil, and consequently control the politics as well as the oil and economic policies of the whole world….I hereby declare before you that Iraq is clear of all nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. (“In Saddam Hussein’s Words: It’s for Oil,” The New York Times September 20, 2002 A16)280

Assertions by Scott Ritter, a U.S. Marine and a former U.N. weapons inspector in Iraq throughout the 1990s, contradicting the administration’s claims also did not make the front pages of The New York Times. They were, however, reported by The Guardian, a British newspaper.

Since 1998 Iraq has been fundamentally disarmed: 90-95 percent of Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction capability has been verifiably eliminated. This includes all of the factories used to produce chemical biological and nuclear

weapons and long-range ballistic missiles; the associated equipment of these factories; and the vast majority of the products coming out of these factories.\textsuperscript{281} Ritter was profiled in \textit{The New York Times} magazine on November 24, 2002, as “the onetime United Nations arms inspector and now America's most unlikely peacenik.”\textsuperscript{282}

Meanwhile, a Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) unclassified report underlining uncertainty about Iraq’s stockpiling of chemical weapons was submitted early September 2002, to the United States Central Command to assist in planning military operations. But its existence was first disclosed publicly in the June 6, 2003, issue of \textit{U.S. News & World Report} magazine.\textsuperscript{283} The article titled “Iraq-Key WMD Facilities-an Operational Support Study,” said in part: "There is no reliable information on whether Iraq is producing and stockpiling chemical weapons or whether Iraq has or will establish its chemical warfare agent production facilities." \textsuperscript{284} \textit{The New York Times} two weeks earlier had reported about an intelligence review that would include the studies available compared to on-the-ground intelligence but did not mention details.

BAGHDAD, Iraq, Dec. 24- President Saddam Hussein used the occasion of his holiday greetings to Iraq's Christian minority to denounce the United States, saying weapons inspections would demonstrate the fact that Washington merely sought a pretext to seize Iraqi resources."

"We are confident that the outcome of the inspection operations will be a big shock to the United States and will expose all American lies," Mr. Hussein said in a four-page statement. …President Hussein, in his holiday greeting,

\textsuperscript{281} \url{http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2002/sep/19/iraq.features11} (Accessed January 15, 2010) also This article appeared on p 6 of the \textit{G2} section of \textit{the Guardian} on Thursday 19 September 2002.


\textsuperscript{284} \url{http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB80/#doc15}
said that Iraq had been cooperating fully with the United Nations resolution but that Washington was looking for "flimsy pretexts and fabrications" to prove that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction. (“Hussein Says Inspections Will Expose ‘American Lies,’” *The New York Times* December 25, 2002 A16)²⁸⁵

United Nations--Secretary General Kofi Annan said today that Iraq has cooperated up to now with United Nations weapons inspectors, so it would be "premature" to take military action before inspectors report back on their investigations to the Security Council on Jan. 27.

"I think the inspections are going on unimpeded, and everybody has agreed that the inspectors will come back and report to the Council on Jan. 27," Mr. Annan said in an interview from New York with Israeli Army radio in Jerusalem. (“Annan Opposes a Quick attack on Iraq,” *The New York Times* January 1, 2003 A10)²⁸⁶

Baghdad, Iraq--The Iraqi government said today that United Nations weapons inspectors had thus far failed, after five weeks of visits to some 230 sites, to uncover any weapons of mass destruction or evidence of other prohibited programs.

"The inspectors did not find any prohibited activities nor any prohibited items in those 230 sites visited up until now," Lt. Gen. Hussam Muhammad Amin, the chief Iraqi liaison to the inspectors, told a weekly news conference.

The general said that his teams of scientists and engineers who accompanied the inspectors had a pretty good sense of what was during inspection visits and that they had reported nothing unusual. (“Iraq Says U.N. Teams Have Found No Weapons,” *The New York Times* January 2, 2003 A10)²⁸⁷

A week later when a report by UN inspectors working under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) challenged a cornerstone of the American argument for war *The New York Times*, which ran the administrations claims about

aluminum tubes under a page one banner headlines on September 8, 2002, published the IAEA’s debunking of that same claim on page A10.

Washington--The key piece of evidence that President Bush has cited as proof that Saddam Hussein has sought to revive his program to make nuclear weapons was challenged today by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

In his remarks to the United Nations General Assembly in September, President Bush cited Iraq's attempts to buy special aluminum tubes as proof that Baghdad was seeking to construct a centrifuge network system to enrich uranium for nuclear bombs.

But Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei, the director general of the I.A.E.A., offered a sharply different assessment in a report to the United Nations Security Council today. Dr. ElBaradei said Iraqi officials had claimed that they sought the tubes to make 81-millimeter rockets. Dr. ElBaradei indicated that he thought the Iraqi claim was credible.

"While the matter is still under investigation and further verification is foreseen, the I.A.E.A.’s analysis to date indicates that the specifications of the aluminum tubes sought by Iraq in 2001 and 2002 appear to be consistent with reverse engineering of rockets," the agency said in its report. "While it would be possible to modify such tubes for the manufacture of centrifuges, they are not directly suitable for it." ("Agency Challenges Evidence Against Iraq Cited by Bush” The New York Times January 10, 2003 A10)

Yet U.N. criticism of the weapons list submitted by Iraq the same day landed on the front page.

United Nations--The chief United Nations weapons inspectors sharply criticized Iraq today for failing to come forward with new information to clarify its weapons programs, but said they had "not found any smoking gun" indicating that Baghdad was concealing illegal weapons.

American officials seized on the inspectors' report as new proof that Iraq is not cooperating with the inspections as required by Security Council


Another story received similar treatment on January 28, 2003, when a different U.N. report was released on the same day as a statement by a U.S. administration official.

Washington--For months, Secretary of State Colin L. Powell has been the Bush administration's leading advocate of diplomacy, patiently applied, to rally the international community behind a campaign of pressure on Saddam Hussein to cooperate with United Nations inspectors.


Later that day, in a State of the Union address “the Iraqi threat” became more imminent as President Bush testified to the nation that based on a British MI6 intelligence report, Iraq was seeking to “purchase significant quantities of uranium from Africa.” That charge compounded the fear factor because the alleged purchase could, with the use of aluminum tubes, become enriched uranium needed for a nuclear weapon.²⁹² He said:

The British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa. Our intelligence sources tell us that he has attempted to purchase high-strength aluminum tubes suitable for nuclear weapons production. Saddam Hussein has not credibly explained these activities. He clearly has much to hide. The dictator of Iraq is not disarming. To the contrary; he is deceiving.”

Again, the claim was debunked seventeen days later, on February 14, 2003. Hans Blix reported to the U.N. Security Council

Since we arrived in Iraq, we have conducted more than 400 inspections covering more than 300 sites. All the inspections were performed without notice and access was almost always provided promptly. In no case have we seen convincing evidence that the Iraqi side knew in advance that the inspectors were coming.

Regarding Iraq’s WMD, Blix stated “UNMOVIC (United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission) has not found any such weapons.” Report by The Chief Inspector for Biological and Chemical Arms,” The New York Times February 14, 2003)

The New York Times published the text on page A8 and referred briefly to his remarks at the bottom of an 850-word story titled “Powell Urges Security Council to Retain Threat of Iraq Force”

Between the day President Bush gave the State of the Union speech and the day Blix reported to the U.N. Security Council, Secretary of State Colin Powell addressed the U.N. on February 5, 2002, and declared that there was a connection between Iraq and the al Qaeda terrorists and the presence of a poison factory in northern Iraq. His statement

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293 Ibid.
295 Ibid.
296 http://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/14/international/middleeast/14WEB_BTEX.html?
was front paged in *The New York Times*, and was accompanied by a lauding analysis of his performance. But, a field report from Iraq by the newspaper’s C.J. Chivers quoted residents of the area questioning the claim. The story ended up on page A 29 of the February 9, 2003, edition; Powell said:

I want to bring to your attention today the potentially much more sinister nexus between Iraq and the al Qaeda terrorist network, a nexus that combines classic terrorist organizations and modern methods of murder. Iraq today harbors a deadly terrorist network headed by Abu Musab Zarqawi, an associate and collaborator of Osama bin Laden and his al Qaeda lieutenants.

One of the specialties of this camp is poisons. When our coalition ousted the Taliban, [from Afghanistan] the Zarqawi network helped establish another poison and explosive training center camp. And this camp is located in northeastern Iraq You see a picture of this camp.

The network is teaching its operatives how to produce ricin and other poisons less than a pinch of ricin, eating just this amount in your food, would cause shock followed by circulatory failure. Death comes within 72 hours and there is no antidote, there is no cure. It is fatal.

The secretary offered “the nexus” as a reason to consider using force against Saddam Hussein. However, C.J. Chivers, and 19 journalists visited the area in Northern Iraq and under the title “Islamists in Iraq offer a tour of ‘Poison Factory’ Cited By Powell” he reported that the group:

… found a wholly unimpressive place -- a small and largely undeveloped cluster of buildings that appeared to lack substantial industrial capacity. For example, the structures did not have plumbing and had only the limited electricity supplied by a generator.

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298 The Case Against Iraq, Editorial February 6, 2003

When one of the journalists asked why Mr. Khidir [An Ansar official] thought Mr. Powell had singled out the compound as one reason to risk war, Mr. Khidir shrugged. "We ask that question to ourselves, and we are still looking for an answer," he said.

The March 1, 2003 edition of *The New York Times* front-paged a new demand by the Bush administration to avoid war on Iraq—the departure of President Saddam Hussein and his sons from Iraq. The story and its sidbar briefly mentioned that this demand came at a time when U.N. inspectors were reporting “significant” progress with the destruction of short range missiles, but the paper published that portion of the report on page A8. Nor did the story question or explain the significance of the switch in the administration’s goal from seeking WMD to regime change in a sovereign country. The front-page portion of the story was accompanied by a four-column photo of troops from the 101st Airborne Division heading out to the Persian Gulf from Fort Campbell, Ky.

The White House said today that the only way to prevent war in Iraq would be to disarm the country and depose Saddam Hussein. At the same time, Russia’s foreign minister threatened to veto a United Nations Security Council resolution that says Iraq has missed its last chance of avoiding war.

The hardening of positions on both sides increases the pressure on the six uncommitted members of the Security Council, who have looked to the work of Hans Blix, one of the chief United Nations weapons inspectors, for guidance on Iraqi compliance. Mr. Blix’s latest report, formally delivered to Council members today, gives ammunition to both sides and does not offer the kind of unambiguous judgment that could help resolve the doubts of those who are wavering. ("U.S. Says Hussein Must Cede Power to Head Off War" *The New York Times* March 1, 2003, A1)

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A sidebar analysis:

As opposition to war in Iraq stiffened in the United Nations Security Council, the Bush administration today set a new standard for avoiding war that could be out of reach for Saddam Hussein and, perhaps, the world body.

That appeared to be the unmistakable message conveyed by the White House spokesman, Ari Fleischer, when he said President Bush would be satisfied only with Iraq's complete disarmament and the departure of Saddam Hussein.

By resurrecting Mr. Bush's goal of a change of Iraq's government at this critical moment when one of the chief United nations inspectors, Hans Blix, was reporting "significant "progress with the promised destruction of Iraqi missiles this weekend—the White House set the bar beyond the reach of the inspection force that is working on only half of the equation — disarmament ("New Element in Iraq’s Mix," The New York Times March 1, 2003 A1)302

Meanwhile the weapons inspectors for the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection (UNMOVIC), cited several areas of progress, but that was published on page A-8:

UNMOVIC has reported that, in general, Iraq has been helpful on "process," meaning, first of all, that Iraq has from the outset satisfied the demand for prompt access to any site, or inspected.…

Iraq has further been helpful in getting UNMOVIC established on the ground, in developing the necessary infrastructure for communications, transport and accommodation… There have been minor frictions, e.g., demonstrations against inspectors and Iraqi criticism of some questions put by inspectors in the field.

… It is only by the middle of January and thereafter that Iraq has taken a number of steps, which have the potential of resulting either in the presentation for destruction of stocks or items that are proscribed or the presentation of relevant evidence solving long standing unresolved disarmament issues ("In Blix’s Words: Iraq Could Have Made Greater Efforts to Find Illegal items," The New York Times March 1, 2003)303

A week later, on March 7, 2003, a second IAEA report to the U.N. declared that inspectors had found no evidence of any Iraqi nuclear program. This time the agency’s Director General Mohammed El Baradei vigorously countered the U.S.’s Niger and the aluminum tubes stories as fabrications. His rebuttal to U.S. intelligence claims in effect dismantled the basis of the U.S. case for war, but the newspaper did not highlight its significance. This element of the story was woven into a larger article about the split in the Security Council between the U.S. and Britain on one side, and France, Russia, and China on the other over the need to set a deadline for Iraq. The U.N-IAEA element was the ninth paragraph in a 2,177 word story and while the story began on the front page, that section ended up on page A-7.

The assessment from the weapons inspectors took account of Iraq’s cooperation since Nov. 27, when inspections in Iraq resumed for the first time since 1998, after the Security Council passed a unanimous resolution.

In addition to casting severe doubt on the reported Iraqi attempt to buy uranium in Niger, Dr. ElBaradei said that "there is no indication that Iraq has attempted to import aluminum tubes for use in centrifuge enrichment" of uranium into weapons-grade material.

For months, American officials have cited Iraq’s importation of these tubes as evidence that Mr. Hussein's scientists have been seeking to develop a nuclear capability. (U.N. Split Widens as Allies Dismiss Deadline on Iraq, The New York Times March 7, 2003) A-1304

In fact, the March 7, 2003, IAEA statement, read by ElBaradei said in unambiguous terms:

Since the resumption of inspections a little over three months ago the IAEA has made important progress in identifying what nuclear-related capabilities remain in Iraq, and in its assessment of whether Iraq has made any efforts

to revive its past nuclear programme during the intervening four years since inspections were brought to a halt. At this stage, the following can be stated:

There is no indication of resumed nuclear activities in those buildings that were identified through the use of satellite imagery as being reconstructed or newly erected since 1998, nor any indication of nuclear-related prohibited activities at any inspected sites.

There is no indication that Iraq has attempted to import uranium since 1990. There is no indication that Iraq has attempted to import aluminium tubes for use in centrifuge enrichment. Moreover, even had Iraq pursued such a plan, it would have encountered practical difficulties in manufacturing centrifuges out of the aluminium tubes in question.

Although we are still reviewing issues related to magnets and magnet production, there is no indication to date that Iraq imported magnets for use in a centrifuge enrichment programme.

On the eve of the Blix and ElBaradei report on inspection efforts in Iraq, President Bush held his first prime-time news conference in 18 months. His remarks were front-paged along with a three-column wide picture of him standing at the White House lectern adorned with a presidential seal. He reiterated that Iraq continued “to hide biological and chemical agents to avoid detection by inspectors.”

And he said:

These are not the actions of a regime that is disarming. These are the actions of a regime engaged in a willful charade. These are the actions of a regime that systematically and deliberately is defying the world.}

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He added “The attacks of September the 11th, 2001, showed what the enemies of America did with four planes. We will not wait to see what terrorists or terrorist states could do with weapons of mass destruction.” 307 His statement effectively linked for his audience, the 9/11 attacks to Iraq and linked Iraq to the alleged presence of WMD and terrorists. "When it comes to our security, we really don't need anybody's permission," he declared, a jab at the French and Russian U.N. Security Council members who believed diplomatic efforts and the weapons inspections would avoid an armed conflict and thus had threatened to veto an American proposal to use force on Iraq.

President Bush repeated the same accusations on March 8, and again on March 15, 2003, during his weekly radio addresses 309 and once more on March 16th during a news conference with the Prime Minister Jose Manuel Durao Barroso of Portugal, President Jose Maria Aznar of Spain, and Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom in the Azores, Portugal. 310 The New York Times carried his remarks during the event on the front page. There were no follow up stories about either the U.N. weapons inspectors, or the IAEA director general.

On March 17, in a televised address to the nation, the president announced the first change in America’s national security policy in 50 years by declaring the doctrine of “pre-emptive” attack against potential enemies as the rationale for invading Iraq. He said:

307 Ibid
308 Ibid
Intelligence gathered by this and other governments leaves no doubt that the Iraq regime continues to possess and conceal some of the most lethal weapons ever devised. This regime has already used weapons of mass destruction against Iraq's neighbors and against Iraq's people.

The regime has a history of reckless aggression in the Middle East. It has a deep hatred of America and our friends and it has aided, trained and harbored terrorists, including operatives of al-Qaida.

The danger is clear: Using chemical, biological or, one day, nuclear weapons obtained with the help of Iraq, the terrorists could fulfill their stated ambitions and kill thousands or hundreds thousands of innocent people in our country or any other.

The United States and other nations did nothing to deserve or invite this threat, but we will do everything to defeat it. Instead of drifting along toward tragedy, we will set a course toward safety. Before the day of horror can come, before it is too late to act, this danger will be removed.311

The United States of America has the sovereign authority to use force in assuring its own national security. That duty falls to me as commander in chief by the oath I have sworn, by the oath I will keep.312

He personally demanded that President Saddam Hussein and his two sons leave Iraq to head off war—effectively taking matters out of the hands of the U.N. inspectors since their mandate did not cover the departure of the Iraqi head of state.313 The New York Times flanked his picture with stories explaining the new doctrine, reports about his speech, and about the 200,000 troops, mostly American, who were poised for attack along the Iraq-Kuwait border. The list included one story about designated military targets in Iraq, another explained how the troops would take possession of the port city of Basra and secure its oil fields, then push on to Baghdad, the capital, and a five-paragraph

312 Ibid.
story from the Iraqi capital, Baghdad, described how residents were shuttering shops and taping windows in preparation of war in anticipation of the invading army. The article titled “In Iraqi Capital, People Prepare as War Looms,” continued on page A-19, with yet another reiteration by the Iraqi president that his country had no banned chemical, biological or other weapons.

The newspaper did not mention the fact that an invasion of one country by another would implicate the most fundamental aspects of the UN Charter and international law, nor did it include follow up articles about the IAEA or the U.N. weapons inspectors. A photo on page A14 showed them carrying their bags, while the caption said they were headed for Baghdad airport, leaving Iraq at the request of the U.N. Finally, three days after the invasion, on March 23, 2003, an article in The New York Times titled “C.I.A. Aides Feel Pressure in Preparing Iraqi Reports” expressed skepticism. It stated that analysts at the agency said they had felt pressured to make their intelligence reports on Iraq “conform to Bush administration policies.” It also added that these officials had been “suspicious” all along of the documents which the administration alleged proved that Iraq was seeking to purchase uranium from Niger. It added “As the White House contended that links between Mr. Hussein and al Qaeda justified military action against Iraq, these analysts complained that reports on Iraq have attracted unusually intense scrutiny from senior policy makers within the Bush administration. The story was published on page B10.

315 Friel p 17
This story, by James Risen, it was revealed many months later by *The Times*’ Public Editor, Daniel Okrent, had been ready a week earlier but the editors held it back.316

Home-Front Dissent and Global Outrage

Although people young and old had expressed their outrage consistently since September 2002, the month of March 2003 marked a new milestone in globalized protests, according to the author and University of Paris political scientist, Professor Dominique Reynie, who studied the developing public opinion phenomenon. He concluded that the protests against the military intervention in Iraq were “an unprecedented historical event,” and offered this evidence:

Between January and April 2003, nearly 3,000 protests took place across the world, bringing together a total of more than 35 million protestors in 90 different countries. These protestors who took to the streets for one march or another together made up the biggest political mobilization ever observed. Among 58 days of protest listed in this historic series attendance was greatest on seven key dates: 15 February, 15 March, 20 March, 21 March, 22 March, 30 March, and 12 April.317

When more than 100,000 protesters in Manhattan demonstrated in the city’s business center on March 22, 2003, two city blocks from *The New York Times* offices, the story ended up on page B11. The casual tone of the story did not convey the urgency of the day as bombs rained on Baghdad. For example:


It was a beautiful day for a demonstration -- sunny, breezy and just warm enough as more than 100,000 people took to the streets of Manhattan yesterday to protest the war in Iraq.

For four hours beginning at noon, the peaceful crowd ambled danced and marched down Broadway from Herald Square to Waverly Place, and then over to Washington Square Park. Organizers said the crowd exceeded a quarter of a million. The police gave an estimate of "in excess of 125,000." (On New York's Streets and Across the Nation, Protesters Speak Out, The New York Times March 23, 2003. B11)318

In the United States the right to protest is so significant that it is enshrined in the U.S. Constitution. Therefore placing the story about Manhattan’s largest antiwar rally in the back pages trivialized its importance and the tone which came through the narrative-style failed to convey the urgency the protesters were trying to express. However, relegating it to the back pages was in keeping with similar treatment from the earliest antiwar rallies in October 2002. A sample of the newspaper’s reporting demonstrates:

In mid-January 2003 protests were held worldwide in opposition to a war with Iraq. The New York Times reported:

Washington--In a show of dissent that organizers said "shattered the false myth of consensus," for a war with Iraq, tens of thousands of protesters representing a diverse coalition for peace converged here today for a rally and march against the Bush administration's threatened use of military force against Saddam Hussein's regime.

Meanwhile, in San Francisco, swarms of demonstrators filed off buses, ferries and up from the subways along the waterfront for a march heading up Market Street and into the downtown. Among the protesters were a caravan of environmentalists in electric cars with signs that read "Go solar, not ballistic," and the Stroller Brigade, a group of Bay Area parents pushing their children through the crowds. (“Thousands Converge in Capital to Protest Plans for War,” The New York Times, January 19, 2003 A12319

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Again the protesters were under counted and the placement of the story in \textit{The New York Times} marginalized the significance of the dissent. \textit{The San Francisco Chronicle} treated it differently:

From San Francisco to Washington, D.C., from Paris to Tokyo, hundreds of thousands of demonstrators took to the world's streets Saturday to protest potential military action against Iraq by the Bush administration and its allies.

In Washington, where temperatures hovered in the mid-20s, as many as 500,000 protesters rallied outside the Capitol, while in San Francisco tens of thousands of peace activists marched up Market Street from the Ferry Building to City Hall. ("Nation Rallies for Peace: Tens of Thousands in San Francisco Demand Bush Abandon War Plans," \textit{San Francisco Chronicle}, January 19, 2003 A-1)\textsuperscript{320}

On February 15, 2003, demonstrations involving reportedly more than 600 cities were among the largest protests in Europe. In Rome, Italy, an estimated three million made it the largest in history; \textsuperscript{321} Madrid, Spain --whose government had sided with the U.S. in the resolve to war-- came in second with half a million. \textit{The New York Times} used four paragraphs of the 2,763 word story on its front page.


Britain's \textit{The Guardian} report of the events:

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London—Huge waves of demonstrations not seen since the Vietnam War jammed more than 600 towns and cities around the world over the weekend as protesters from Tasmania to Iceland marched against war in Iraq.

Up to 30 million people demonstrated worldwide, including around 6 million in Europe, according to figures from organizers and police, although most conceded there were too many people in too many places to count. (“Millions Worldwide Rally for Peace: Huge turnout at 600 marches from Berlin to Baghdad,” The Guardian February 17, 2003.)

This research data has shown that the type and scope of information The New York Times offered its readers on the subject of Weapons of Mass Destruction was compromised because it showed favoritism by highlighting and repeating the American administration position and was dismissive of many facts of the Iraqi position as well as the position of several critics who were not Iraqi as evidenced in the placement of stories and the choice of sources. In addition, several times, as evidenced by the research, it reported the administration policy without questioning it, or reporting a dissenting, opinion. Sources used in the stories documented leaned towards the administration, were often unnamed. By contrast Iraqi voices were scant.

In addition, as in the case of Vice President Cheney’s opening salvo about the alleged weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, the administration manipulated it to plant stories which it turned around and used as evidence for action.

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Chapter 6
Conclusion

The data collected in this study confirm what earlier research findings suggested concerning the very American administration-centered reporting of alleged weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. The data showed that the debate in Washington dominated news coverage. In addition, the choices that reporters and editors made about who would be heard reflected, in the words of Hallin, the traditional “hierarchy of formal political authority.” The projection of American military power as the build-up progressed effaced the human story in Iraq. It is only in the last days of the pre-invasion that the newspaper readers were reminded of the human, cultural value of the target through stories that highlighted ordinary Iraqi citizens boarding up or fleeing their capital to avoid destruction. The story about the historical art and artifacts collections in the museum reminded readers of the potential loss to humanity.

Not much attention was paid to home front dissent or opposition voices. Arab, Iraqi or Muslim intellectual voices were not given a chance to be heard in the debate either. Millions continue to suffer the consequences to date.

The writer, poet and philosopher, Ralph Waldo Emerson, in The System of Expression\textsuperscript{324} explained that a person who “seeks knowledge and truth must hear all sides of [any] question, consider all alternatives…and make full use of different minds.” The data here

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\textsuperscript{324} Emerson, Ralph Waldo. The System of Expression. New York: Random House, 1970. p.6
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shows that readers were offered a limited view of the debate--echoes of a similar situation during the first Gulf War when the credulity of the media, including *The New York Times*, also led the US military machine to war on the basis of poor evidence.\(^{325}\)

“The reporting has been largely a recitation of what [the] administration” chose to disclose according to a senior U.S. Defense Department official.\(^{326}\)

Future Studies

The current study offers journalism educators a means to analyze the pressures that are placed on the media in wartime, and also as Baerns said, an opportunity to seek out ways to resist them, and be independent of government. Further studies could be helpful in formulating curricula that would encourage students of journalism and news consumers to grasp the consequences of not asking to understand the social, cultural and political worlds we inhabit.\(^{327}\)

\(^{325}\) Jensen, Carl *Twenty Years of Censored News*, New York: Seven Stories Press 1997 p.248

\(^{326}\) Ibid.

\(^{327}\) Wilkins, Dennis M. “Recommendations for Curricula that Stress Reflective Thinking,” *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator* 53 (Spring).1998  p 64-73
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