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***“Disinformation as a matter of violation media ethics:
The case of the international USA’s propaganda on Iraq war”***

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Ethics In Global Communication

Disinformation as a matter of violation media ethics: the case of The International U.S propaganda on Iraq War

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“The jaws of power are always open to devour, and her arm is always stretched out, if possible, to destroy the freedom of thinking, speaking, and writing. Liberty cannot be preserved without a general knowledge among the people, who have ... a right, an indisputable, unalienable, indefeasible, divine right to that most dreaded and envied kind of knowledge, I mean the characters and conduct of their rulers.”

John Adams

: “The only security of all is in a free press. The force of public opinion cannot be resisted when permitted freely to be expressed. The agitation it produces must be submitted to. It is necessary, to keep the waters pure.” Thomas Jefferson



Disinformation as a matter of violation media ethics:

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ETHICS IN GLOBAL COMMUNICATION
((Disinformation as a matter of violation media ethics:
the case of The International U.S propaganda))

Abstract

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Nobody can deny that the American Mass Media is the most dominant in the global communication systems .

This fact is embodied with many implications such as the following:

- 1) The American messages convey the American values, way of life and interest..
- 2) The American rhetoric on these messages depends on a false information which carry pseudo warranties depending on pseudo events.

The dominance of the American Mass Media in the global arena affects the content and the form of mass media messages.

The global millue nowadays, depends on the American Agenda and accepts what the American propaganda says.

The political power of the United States as a sole and monothilic power in the world makes its might and word as the only voice which must be heard.

The main pillars of media ethics are:

- Truth
- Fairness
- Objectivity
- Respecting other cultures

This paper will discuss how global American Propaganda dealt with international issues, depending on allegations rather than facts, and deception rather than straightforwardness. The International U.S propaganda dealing with Iraq, Palestine, and Islamic Culture is a case of examining the ethics of American mass media.

The Global American Propaganda promotes some warranties such as, freedom, democracy and peace, yet in reality the propaganda was offering lies instead of truth, bias instead of fairness, subjectivity instead of objectivity as well as/and condemning and insulting other cultures instead of respecting them.

The analysis of this hypothesis depends mainly on American and European writings.

This conveys that the ethics in global field is a matter of power. Who has the power has the influence which ultimately leads to disinformation .

A pseudo-event, then, is a happening that possesses the following characteristics:

- (1) It is not spontaneous, but comes about because some one has planned, planted, or incited it. Typically, it is not a train wreck or an earthquake, but an interview.

- (2) It is planted primarily (not always exclusively) for the immediate purpose of being reported or reproduced. Therefore, its occurrence is arranged for the convenience of the reporting or reproducing media.
- (3) Its success is measured by how widely it is reported. Time relations in it are commonly (fictitious) or factitious; the announcement is given out in advance “for future release” and written as if the event had occurred in the past. The question, “Is it real?” is less important than, “Is it newsworthy?”
- (4) Its relation to the underlying reality of the situation is ambiguous. Its interest arises largely from this very ambiguity. Concerning a pseudo-event the question, “What does it mean?” has a new dimension. While the news interest in a train wreck is in what happened and in the real consequences, _ interest in an interview is always, in a sense, in whether it really happened and in what might have been the motives. Did the statement really mean what it said? Without some of this ambiguity a pseudo-event cannot be very interesting.
- (5) Usually it is intended to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. The hotel’s thirtieth-anniversary celebration, by saying that the hotel is a distinguished institution, actually makes it one. (DANIEL J. BOORSTIN, THE IMAGE A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America Atheneum: New York 1978. p.p.11-12)

Deni Elliott, What the U.S. government has labelled the “War on Terrorism” is clearly not metaphorical as were the previous administrations’ “War on Drugs” and “War on Poverty,” but a war that targets terrorists world wide, as well as U.S. proclaimed “Axis of Evil” is a significant departure from what used to be meant by the concept of war. For the first time in history, the U.S. is engaged in a pre-emptive rather than retaliatory strikes. In this paper, I am not going to argue that military intervention in Afghanistan or Iraq is morally acceptable. Nor I will argue that it is not. However, I will argue that U.S. news media should not report these conflicts or conflicts of the future from a nationalistic perspective. While I explain the motivation for the U.S. governments, as well as other governments, to adopt nationalistic arguments and descriptors, I will argue that news media are morally prohibited from doing so. The job of government is to protect and promote national interests; the job of journalism is to provide citizens with a contextual understanding of their nation’s interest, as that is what is necessary for educated self-governance. (Deni Elliott, Terrorism, Global Journalism and the Myth of the Nation-State, DRAFT revised 20- 09-2002)

While, the job of news media is to provide citizens with information that they can use to make educated decisions about self-governance, which includes being able to contribute to the decisions made on their behalf by their leaders.(Elliott, D. (1986). “Foundations of Press Responsibility,” in Deni Elliott, (ed), **Responsible Journalism**. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Press.)

While the primary audience for a particular news organization may be a local audience, such as one in Missoula, Montana, or Sydney, New South Wales or Tehran, Iran, or the United States as a whole, the job of journalists, regardless of their national base, is to provide their citizen audiences with the global perspective needed to understand the political world of today.

Definition of “Nation”:

As the initial definition of “nation” came from intellectuals in nations that had taken land that they could seize, how land was acquired was not traditionally considered important in determining the legitimacy of a “nation.” What mattered was that the ruling body was recognized by powerful individuals and other nations as being legitimate.

Buchanan believe that a state that has “recognitional legitimacy” has special powers that no other group wishing to speak for that particular territory can simultaneously have. These powers include:

1. the right to territorial integrity;
2. the right to non-interference in internal affairs;
3. the power to make treaties, alliances, and trade agreements; thereby altering juridical relations with other states;
- 4.the right to make just war; and
- 5.the right to promulgate, adjudicate, and enforce legal rules on those within its territory.(Buchanan, A. (1998). “Recognitional Legitimacy and the State System.” *Philosophy & Public Affairs*. V. 28, N. 1, pp. 46-78; p. 49.)

In order to do their special job of educating citizens during conflict, news organizations should provide citizens with a global rather than a nationalistic perspective. Reporting from a global perspective includes providing historical and cultural context for the views expressed by governmental leaders. It includes providing the perspective of our enemies as clearly as possible, as that is the only way that citizens can truly understand the motives of those who would attack us. Reporting from a global perspective also includes the requirement that news media seek language that provides citizens alternatives to and context for governmental rhetoric. It includes the need for journalists to refrain from being the nation’s cheerleaders. I’ll conclude by examining these last two aspects in turn.

News organizations should not adopt governmental rhetoric or perspective as the sole way of understanding the conflict. News organizations have the responsibility to provide their audiences with messages that are alternative to governmental views. The purpose of providing alternatives is not to harm the impact of governmental messages, but to open those messages to broad examination and understanding. Support for governmental perspective, if warranted, will be stronger when citizens can understand that view against opposing alternatives.

If news media build an independent rhetoric, news coverage could avoid the reflective strategy response that mirrors the terrorists. The U.S. government has created “us vs. them and good vs. evil” way of describing the crisis.

An alternative, non-reflective democratic rhetoric includes respect for the other, the goal of full information and intellectual honesty. Non-reflective rhetoric provides a way for news media to raise appropriate questions for governmental speakers by leading a conversation on how to judge the legitimacy of response rather than simply repeating governmental explanations for why a particular response is justified. Doing so, according to scholar Richard Leeman, “would enact democracy, a valued process that, intrinsically, terrorism cannot embody. Democratic rhetoric would thus model the process of democracy, re-creating the values of democracy at the same time that it perhaps lessened the incidence of terrorism. (Leeman, R. (1991). *The Rhetoric of Terrorism and Counterterrorism*. New York: Greenwood Press, p. 115.)

An example of non-reflective media coverage includes an article from November, 2001 in the New York Times. Here, the writer Barbara Crossette provided context for examination of U.S. strategy by quoting an authority who argued that excluding enemy voices breeds more terrorism.

In the article, a former undersecretary general of the U.N., Sir Brian Urquhart, who worked on early peace keeping missions in the Congo and Middle East, claimed that the U.S. was making a mistake in insisting that anyone associated with the Taliban be excluded from the process of rebuilding Afghanistan and that the U.N. was wrong in giving in to U.S. demands for this. Urquhart called this exclusion reminiscent of early Mideast policy errors involving the PLO because the Taliban represents the Pashtun, Afghanistan's largest ethnic group. "You can't have a Middle East peace conference without including the PLO," he said, "but that's what we tried to do for 40 years and got into a hell of a mess. It's an old old story. We don't deal with somebody for supposedly moral grounds and then we get something infinitely worse. We wouldn't deal with the PLO and now we've got Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Some element of the Taliban should be in these talks. They were the previous government, after all"(Crossette, B. (2001). "How To Put a Nation Back Together Again," The New York Times, 11/25.)

The mainstream coverage that followed 9/11 found the news industry in full patriotic garb. Newspapers carried flags. Television news anchors lapels sprouted ribbons and banners. Television news graphics rippled with red, white and blue and gave greater legitimacy to the administration's pet phrases, "Attack on America," and "War on Terrorism." As was the case with the 1991 Gulf War, journalistic rhetoric became more vehement as public approval rating for military intervention soared, which resulted in higher public approval both for the action and the media. "On the Fox News Channel Tuesday (a week after the aerial attacks), the anchor Jon Scott told Wolfgang Ischinger, the German ambassador to the United States, "We look forward to working with your country in wiping out these terrorists." On "Late Show with David Letterman," the same day, CBS anchor Dan Rather said, "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.(Rutenberg, J. and Bill Carter (2001). "Draping Newscasts With the Flag". **The New York Times**, September 20, p. C8.)

Steve Dunleavy from the New York Post wrote, "The response to this unimaginable 21st Century Pearl Harbor should be as simple as it is swift – kill the bastards.....As for cities or countries that host these worms, bomb them into basketball courts." Dave Kopel from the National Review wrote, "To prevent future attacks, the perpetrators of Tuesday's infamies must be utterly destroyed, even if that means infringing the territorial sovereignty of nations which harbor these war criminals." Charles Krauthammer from the Washington Post wrote, "War was long ago declared on us. Until we declare war in return, we will have thousands of more innocent victims.(Kurtz, Howard. (2001) "Commentators Are Quick to Beat Their Pens into Swords". **The Washington Post**. 9/13.) And, in a November 5 column, Newsweek columnist Jonathan Adler suggested that a way to deal with terrorists was to use legal forms of psychological torture at home and then transfer "some suspects to our less squeamish allies" for a taste of the real thing. <http://fair.org/extra/0201/pro-pain.html>

Journalists, like people and nations everywhere, should be outraged by violent attacks on innocent civilians, no matter where they occur or who the attackers might be. But, for self-governance, citizens, of this country and all others, need news media to play a role different from that of outraged citizen or from national government trying to figure out its role in a changing world. The appropriate role for news media in reporting 21st Century conflict necessitates distancing from a narrow, nationalistic perspective. The difference between who news media label "terrorists" and who they call "militants"

should be a difference larger than the number and nationality of civilians killed in the World Trade Center and those killed on the streets of Jerusalem.

• **The Role of USA's Propaganda of Mass Media**

The current battlefield for these issues involves amendments to a classified Department of Defense directive, titled "3600.1: Information Operations," which would enshrine an overarching Pentagon policy for years to come. (Thom Shanker and Eric Schmitt, Pentagon Debates Propaganda Push in Allied Nations December 16, 2002 New York Times)

Many administration officials agree that the government's broad strategy to counter terrorism must include vigorous and creative propaganda to change the negative view of America held in many countries. The fight, one Pentagon official said, is over "the strategic communications for our nation, the message we want to send for long-term influence, and how we do it." As a military officer says that the Americans have the assets and the capabilities and the training to go into friendly and neutral nations to influence public opinion. And they could do it and get away with it. And that doesn't mean they should.

It is not the first time that the debate over how the United States should marshal its forces to win the hearts and minds of the world has raised difficult and potentially embarrassing questions at the Pentagon. A non clandestine parallel effort at the State Department, which refers to its role as public diplomacy, has not met with so much resistance. (Thom Shanker and Eric Schmitt, Pentagon Debates Propaganda Push in Allied Nations December 16, 2002 New York Times)

In February, Mr. Rumsfeld had to disband the Pentagon's Office of Strategic Influence, ending a short-lived plan to provide news items, and possibly false ones, to foreign journalists to influence public sentiment abroad. Senior Pentagon officials say Mr. Rumsfeld is deeply frustrated that the United States government has no coherent plan for molding public opinion worldwide in favor of America in its global campaign against terrorism and militancy.

Many administration officials agree that there is a role for the military in carrying out what it calls information operations against adversaries, especially before and during war, as well as routine public relations work in friendly nations like Colombia, the Philippines or Bosnia, whose governments have welcomed American troops. (Thom Shanker and Eric Schmitt, Pentagon Debates Propaganda Push in Allied Nations December 16, 2002 New York Times)

When the sludge of propaganda is afflicting the politic body of the U.S, news outlets have a crucial role to perform. Media can function as a circulatory system for the nation; the free flow of information and debate is the lifeblood of democracy. But right now, the USA's media arteries are clogged.

If seeing a "Terror Alert: High" sign on your TV screen makes you feel edgy, imagine what it's like to be living in Baghdad or Basra. For people in the United States, the odds that terrorism will strike close to home are very minimal compared to the chances that any particular Iraqi family will be decimated before summer. "We desperately need a full national debate on whether we as a society ought to condemn terrorism—across the board—no matter who is doing the terrorizing. Clearly, politicians will be the last to initiate such a nationwide discussion. And, sad to say, few journalists show much inclination to ruffle the feathers of the hawkish gang that rules the roost in Washington. So, let's stop waiting for others to rise to the occasion. If we want to get an authentic debate going, we'll need to do

it ourselves”.(Norman Solomon, Playing the “Terrorism” Card February 13, 2003ZNet) The Defense Department is considering issuing a secret directive to the American military to conduct covert operations aimed at influencing public opinion and policy makers in friendly and neutral countries, senior Pentagon and administration officials say. Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld has not yet decided on the proposal, which has ignited a fierce battle throughout the Bush administration over whether the military should carry out secret propaganda missions in friendly nations like Germany, where many of the Sept. 11 hijackers congregated, or Pakistan, still considered a haven for Al Qaeda’s militants.

Such a program, for example, could include efforts to discredit and undermine the influence of mosques and religious schools that have become breeding grounds for Islamic militancy and anti-Americanism across the Middle East, Asia and Europe. It might even include setting up schools with secret American financing to teach a moderate Islamic position laced with sympathetic depictions of how the religion is practiced in America, officials said. (Thom Shanker and Eric Schmitt, Pentagon Debates Propaganda Push in Allied Nations [December 16, 2002New York Times](#))

In hostile countries like Iraq, such missions are permitted under policy and typically would include broadcasting from airborne radio stations or dropping leaflets like those the military has printed to undermine morale among Iraqi soldiers. In future wars, they might include technical attacks to disable computer networks, both military and civilian. But the idea of ordering the military to take psychological aim at allies has divided the Pentagon - with civilians and uniformed officers on both sides of the debate. Some are troubled by suggestions that the military might pay journalists to write stories favorable to American policies or hire outside contractors without obvious ties to the Pentagon to organize rallies in support of American policies.

- **The Effects of USA’s Propaganda on the American Public Opinion: Misinformation and Public Misconception.**

Current policy claims that **aggressive information tactics** are “to affect adversary decision makers” - not those of friendly or even neutral nations. But proposed revisions to the directive, as quoted by senior officials, would not make adversaries the only targets for carrying out military information operations - abbreviated as “I.O.” in the document, which is written in the dense jargon typical of military doctrine. “In peacetime, I.O. supports national objectives primarily by influencing foreign perceptions and decision-making,” the proposal states. “In crises short of hostilities, I.O. can be used as a flexible deterrent option to communicate national interest and demonstrate resolve. In conflict, I.O. can be applied to achieve physical and psychological results in support of military objectives.”(Thom Shanker and Eric Schmitt, Pentagon Debates Propaganda Push in Allied Nations December 16, 2002New York Times)

Although the defense secretary is among those pushing to come up with a bolder strategy for getting out the American message, he has not yet decided whether the military should take on those responsibilities, the officials said. There is little dispute over such battlefield tactics as destroying an enemy’s radio and television stations. All is considered fair in that kind of war But several senior military officers, some of whom have recently left service, expressed dismay at the concept of assigning the military to wage covert propaganda campaigns in friendly or neutral countries. “Running ops against your allies doesn’t work very well,” Adm. Dennis C. Blair, a retired commander of

American forces in the Pacific, advised Pentagon officials as they began re-examining the classified directive over the summer. "I've seen it tried a few times, and it generally is not very effective."

Those in favor of assigning the military an expanded role argue that no other department is stepping up to the task of countering propaganda from terrorists, who hold no taboo against deception. They also contend that the Pentagon has the best technological tools for the job, especially in the areas of satellite communications and computer warfare, and that the American military has important interests to protect in some countries, including those where ties with the government are stronger than the affections of the population. (Thom Shanker and Eric Schmitt, Pentagon Debates Propaganda Push in Allied Nations December 16, 2002New York Times) For example, as anti-American sentiment has risen this year in South Korea, intensified recently by the deaths of two schoolgirls who were crushed by an American armored vehicle, some Pentagon officials were prompted to consider ways of influencing Korean public opinion outside of traditional public affairs or community outreach programs, one military official said. No detailed plan has yet emerged. Those who oppose the military's taking on the job of managing perceptions of America in allied states say it more naturally falls to diplomats and civilians, or even uniformed public affairs specialists. They say that secret operations, if deemed warranted by the president, should be carried out by American intelligence agencies.

In addition, they say, the Pentagon's job of explaining itself through public affairs officers could be tainted by any link to covert information missions. "These allied nations would absolutely object to having the American military attempt to secretly affect communications to their populations," said one State Department official with a long career in overseas public affairs. (Thom Shanker and Eric Schmitt, Pentagon Debates Propaganda Push in Allied Nations December 16, 2002New York Times) Even so, this official conceded: "The State Department can't do it. We're not arranged to do it, and we don't have the money. And U.S.I.A. is broken." (He was referring to the United States Information Agency, which was absorbed into the State Department.)

One effort to reshape the nation's ability to get its message out was a proposal by Representative Henry J. Hyde, an Illinois Republican who is chairman of the House International Relations Committee. Mr. Hyde is pushing for \$255 million to bolster the State Department's public diplomacy effort and reorganize international broadcasting activities. "If we are to be successful in our broader foreign policy goals," Mr. Hyde said in a statement, "America's effort to engage the peoples of the world must assume a more prominent place in the planning and execution of our foreign policy."(Thom Shanker and Eric Schmitt, Pentagon Debates Propaganda Push in Allied Nations December 16, 2002New York Times)

Frank Davies describes the effects of U.S propaganda on the American public opinion:

One third of the American public believes U.S. forces found **weapons of mass destruction in Iraq**, according to a recent poll, and 22 percent said Iraq actually used chemical or biological weapons. But no such weapons have been found, nor is there evidence they were used recently in Iraq. Before the war, half of those polled in a survey said **Iraqis were among the 19 hijackers** on Sept. 11, 2001. But most of them were from Saudi Arabia. While none were IraqisHow could so many people be so wrong about information that has dominated the news for nearly two years? The poll results startled the pollsters who conducted and analyzed the surveys.

"It's a striking finding," said Steve Kull, director of the Program on International Policy Attitudes at the University of Maryland, which asked the weapons questions during a May 14-18 poll of 1,265

respondents.” Given the intensive news coverage and high levels of public attention,” he said, “this level of misinformation suggests some Americans may be avoiding having an experience of cognitive dissonance.” That is, having their beliefs conflict with the facts.

Kull said the poll’s data showed the mistaken belief that weapons of mass destruction were found “is substantially greater among those who favored the war.” Pollsters and political analysts see several reasons for the gap between fact and belief : the public’s short attention span on foreign news, fragmentary or conflicting media reports that lacked depth or skepticism, and Bush administration efforts to sell a war by over simplifying the threat. Most people get little whiffs and fragments of news, not in any organized way,” said Thomas Mann, a scholar at the Brookings Institution, a centrist think tank. “And there have been a lot of conflicting reports on the weapons.”

Polls show support for Bush and the war, though 40 percent in the May survey found U.S. officials were “misleading” in some of their justifications for war. A majority, 55 percent, said they were not misleading. (Frank Davies ,Poll Shows Errors in Beliefs on Iraq, 9/11 Many Misinformed about Banned Weapons, June 14, 2003 , Charlotte NC Observer) The polling, conducted by the Program on International Policy (PIPA) at the University of Maryland and Knowledge Networks, also reveals that the frequency of these misperceptions varies significantly according to individuals’ primary source of news. Those who primarily watch Fox News are significantly more likely to have misperceptions, while those who primarily listen to NPR or watch PBS are significantly less likely.

An in-depth analysis of a series of polls conducted June through September found 48% incorrectly believed that evidence of **links between Iraq and Al Qaeda** have been found, 22% that **weapons of mass destruction** have been found in Iraq, and 25% that world public opinion **avored the US going to war with Iraq**. Overall 60% had at least one of these three misperceptions.

Such misperceptions are highly related to support for the war. Among those with none of the misperceptions listed above, only 23% support the war. Among those with one of these misperceptions, 53% support the war, rising to 78% for those who have two of the misperceptions, and to 86% for those with all 3 misperceptions. Steven Kull, director of PIPA, comments, “While we cannot assert that these misperceptions created the support for going to war with Iraq, it does appear likely that support for the war would be substantially lower if fewer members of the public had these misperceptions.” The frequency of Americans’ misperceptions varies significantly depending on their source of news. The percentage of respondents who had at least one or more of the three misperceptions listed above is shown below. (**Study Finds Direct Link Between Misinformation and Public Misconception Misperceptions Vary Widely Depending on News Source October 2, 2003 Truthout**)

	FOX	CBS	ABC	NBC	CNN	Print Sources	NPR/ PBS
None of the 3	20%	30%	39%	45%	45%	53%	77%
1 or more misperceptions	80	71	61	55	55	47	23

In the run-up to the war misperceptions were also highly related to support for going to war. In February, among those who believed that Iraq was directly involved in September 11, 58% said they would agree with the President's decision to go to war without UN approval. Among those who believed that Iraq had given Al Qaeda substantial support, but was not involved in September 11, approval dropped to 37%. Among those who believed that a few Al Qaeda individuals had contact with Iraqi officials 32% were supportive, while among those who believed that there was no connection at all just 25% felt that way. Polled during the war, among those who incorrectly believed that world public opinion favored going to the war, 81% agreed with the President's decision to do so, while among those who knew that the world public opinion was opposed only 28% agreed. (October 2, 2003 *Truthout*)

The level of misperceptions varies according to Americans' political positions. Supporters of President Bush and Republicans are more likely to have misperceptions. However, misperceptions do not appear to only be the result of bias, because a significant number of people who do not have such political positions also have misperceptions. **For the entire study of seven polls the total sample was 9,611 respondents, and for the in-depth analysis for the polls conducted June through September the sample was 3,334 respondents. The polls were fielded by Knowledge Networks using its nationwide panel, which is randomly selected from the entire adult population and subsequently provided internet access** (October 2, 2003 *Truthout*)

• Justification for War:

A) Is it a "War of Liberation"?

Ex-Bush Speechwriter Mike Gerson: I Was to Provide a Justification for War

In late December 2001, chief presidential speechwriter Mike Gerson "was parcelling out the components of the forthcoming State of the Union speech. His request to me," recalls David Frum in his new book *The White House in The Right Time: The Surprise Presidency of George W. Bush*, "could not have been simpler: I was to provide a justification for a war." And so was born the phrase "the Axis of Evil."

A year later, the impending all-out assault on Iraq is spinned as "a War of Liberation." And there's a certain truth to the claim. It will be a war that could liberate up to 500,000 Iraqis of their lives, according to the British healthcare group, Medact. It will be a war that could liberate 200,000 Iraqis of their homes, and 10 million of their security against hunger and disease, according to a new UN report.

And, above all, it will be a war that will liberate Iraq of its oil wealth and put America more wholly in charge. And one long in the making. The Bush cabinet members had been pushing for a take-over of Iraq and its oil fields for some time.

In September, 2000, Dick Cheney, now vice-president, along with his current chief of staff Lewis Libby, and Donald Rumsfeld, now Secretary of Defense, along with his Deputy Paul Wolfowitz, laid out a plan to create a new American century, in which the United States would be supreme in the world, the first truly global empire. The plan adumbrated regime change in Iraq, that is, the installation of a US puppet regime in Baghdad. The events of 9/11 were pressed into service to provide the trigger. Within hours of hijacked jets careening into the World Trade Center and Pentagon, Rumsfeld was

ordering his staff to find something that could be used to pin the blame on Iraq. (Stephen Gowans Ex-BushSpeechwriter: I Was to Provide a Justification for War January 8, 2003 ,*What's Left*)

B) The US wants to Democratize Iraq

There is no serious US interest in a democratic transition in Iraq, because this could ultimately encourage the Shi'ite majority in the country to pursue a closer relationship with Shi'ite in Iran - a nightmare scenario for Washington. Washington was content for Saddam Hussein to stay in office for as long as he was useful to its geo-strategic interests in the region. There was no mention of a transition to democracy in Iraq during the 1980s. It's more likely that a dissident former General, possibly involved in war crimes against Iraq's Kurdish or Shi'ite communities, will be returned from exile and presented as the "democratic opposition" to Saddam Hussein. The US is interested in compliance and obedience rather than democracy. It has rarely, if ever, expressed an interest in democracy in the Middle East where all but one of its friends and interlocutors are authoritarian states. Ideally, a pro-Western, anti-Iranian, secular "iron fist" would do. The recently rehabilitated Iraqi opposition in exile (with whom until recently the US refused to deal) has no democratic credibility and is largely unknown inside Iraq (or in the US for that matter). (Scott Burchill Counterspin: Pro-War Mythology January 28, 2003 Sydney Morning Herald)

C) Iraqi Regime as one of the Axis of Evil is a Western made.

The present Iraqi regime is a product of the Ba'athist Party, which the CIA helped bring to power. The CIA officer in charge of the operation described it as "my favourite coup". During the 1980s, America and Britain supplied Saddam Hussein with every weapon he wanted, often secretly and illegally. The relationship was known cynically in Washington as "the love affair".

When Blair and Bush incessantly refer to Saddam as the man who uses chemical weapons against his own people, specifically the Kurdish village of Halabja in 1988, they never explain that Britain and America were accomplices. Not only did both governments secretly and illegally approve the sale of chemical weapons' agents, officials in Washington and Whitehall tried to cover up the Halabja atrocity, with the Americans even faking a story that Iran was responsible

And while the gassing was going on, Saddam Hussein was being congratulated on his wise leadership by David Mellor, a Foreign Office Minister, whose turn was to sit at the feet of the dictator. Almost as a reward, the Thatcher government gave Saddam £340million of British taxpayers' money in export credits. When Bush and Blair call Saddam "a threat to his neighbours", they never mentioned that George Bush Senior, as head of the CIA and later President, pushed Iraq to attack Iran and supplied crucial intelligence to the Iraqi military that ensured the war went on for eight years. The result was millions of dollars in profits for American and British arms firms, and a million young men dead on both sides. A congressional investigation, long forgotten, described this as a "great crime". (John Pilger: Myths and propaganda, December 3rd 2002)

D) Saddam Hussein's link with Al-Qaeda

The USA's administration has continued to link Saddam Hussein, a man Bin Laden has called "an apostate, an infidel and a traitor to Islam", with al-Qa'ida. In his State of the Union address last year, President Bush said he had new evidence of the link: "Evidence from intelligence sources, secret communications and statements by people now in custody, reveal that Saddam aids and protects terrorists, including members of Al-Qaeda." Nothing was produced to support the assertion. (Paul Lashmar and Raymond Whitaker Ordinary Americans Think Bin Laden and Saddam Are the Same February 2, 2003 Independent)

Furthermore, Magnus Ranstorp, a terrorism expert at St Andrews University, said justifying the war on Iraq by accusing President Saddam of both concealing weapons of mass destruction and supporting Bin Laden "is like mixing apples and oranges". But the strategy appears to have been very successful domestically. As one observer commented, "ordinary Americans ... repeat these claims, and sometimes seem to think Bin Laden and Saddam are the same man".

However, the BBC was shown intelligence data indicating that Al-Qaeda had built a small "dirty bomb" in western Afghanistan while the Taliban regime was still in power. But there was no evidence of any Iraqi involvement, and the report served as a reminder that while the world's attention is focused on Iraq, the war against terrorism in Afghanistan is far from over. (Paul Lashmar and Raymond Whitaker Ordinary Americans Think Bin Laden and Saddam Are the Same February 2, 2003 Independent)

Dr Ranstorp believed the US would seek to establish a link between Iraq and Al-Qaeda through Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi. A Jordanian leader of Al-Qaeda, he was badly wounded in the leg in the allied bombing of Afghanistan. In late 2001, say US intelligence sources, he sought treatment in Iran but was deported and fled to Baghdad, where his leg was amputated. Afterwards Zarqawi is said to have gone to northern Iraq and joined up with Ansar Al-Islam, a militant Islamist group of 700 Kurds who control a string of villages in the Kurdish self-rule area.

It appears that Ansar Al-Islam is the second string to America's evidence. The group is said to boast some 120 Al-Qaeda refugees who are helping fight a turf war with the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. Some US sources say it is run by Saddam's intelligence agency. The Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, has accused it of being involved with the Algerian-linked ricin poison plot uncovered in North London. (Paul Lashmar and Raymond Whitaker Ordinary Americans Think Bin Laden and Saddam Are the Same February 2, 2003, Independent). But Mullah Krekar denied links between Ansar Al-Islam and Saddam, saying: "Not in the past, not now and not in the future. I am a Kurdish man, Saddam is our enemy." He also denied any link with the ricin plot.

US officials also say that Al-Qaeda members held at Guantanamo Bay, Diego Garcia and elsewhere have told their interrogators that Baghdad was attempting to train Al-Qaeda in the use of chemical weapons, but there is no independent verification of this. It has also been pointed out that Al-Qaeda may be seeking to provoke a US war with Iraq.

Even members of the intelligence community remain skeptical. "What we have is a few strands of highly circumstantial evidence, and to justify an attack on Iraq it is being presented as a cast-iron case," said one insider. "That really is not good enough." (Paul Lashmar and Raymond Whitaker Ordinary Americans Think Bin Laden and Saddam Are the Same February 2, 2003, Independent)

E) Mass Destruction

“Terrorists live precarious lives. Nobody trusts them, not even those who finance, train, and hide them. If apprehended, they cannot count on the help of others. They have learned how to use conventional weapons to some effect. Nuclear weapons would thrust them into a world fraught with new dangers. “Terrorists work in small groups. Secrecy is safety, yet to obtain and maintain nuclear weapons would require enlarging the terrorist band through multiplication of suppliers, transporters, technicians, and guardians. Inspiring devotion, instilling discipline, and ensuring secrecy become harder tasks to accomplish as numbers grow. Moreover, as the demands of terrorists increase, compliance with their demands becomes harder to secure. If, for example, terrorists had told Israel to abandon the occupied territories or suffer the nuclear destruction of Tel Aviv, Israel’s compliance would have required that a lengthy and difficult political process be carried through. However they may be armed, terrorists are not capable of maintaining pressure while lengthy efforts toward compliance are made. “One more point should be made before concluding this section. If terrorists should unexpectedly decide to abandon tactics of disruption and harassment in favour of dealing in threats of wholesale death and destruction, instruments other than nuclear weapons are more easily available. Poisons are easier to get and use than nuclear weapons, and poisoning a city’s water supply is more easily done than blowing the city up. (Scott Burchill Counterspin: Pro-War Mythology January 28, 2003 Sydney Morning Herald)

As Mearsheimer and Walt argue: “The threat of Iraqi nuclear blackmail is not credible. Not surprisingly, it is unexplainable how Saddam could blackmail the United States and its allies when a rival superpower like the Soviet Union [with 40,000 nuclear weapons] never seriously attempted to blackmail Washington, much less did it.” (Mearsheimer & Walt 2002, pp.10-11).

The fear of nuclear terror emerges from the assumption that if terrorists decide to get nuclear weapons they could get them, then “all hell will break loose”. This is equivalent to the equally wrong notion that if weak countries get nuclear weapons they will use them for aggression to prove their potentials. But these two assumptions are false. “Would the courses of action we fear, if followed, promise more gains than losses or more pains than profit? The answers are obvious. Terrorists have some hope of reaching their long-term goals through patient pressure and constant harassment. They cannot hope to do so by issuing unsustainable threats to wreck great destruction, threats they would not want to execute anyway.” (Waltz 1995, pp.94-6)

Imad Khadduri, an Iraqi former nuclear scientist who was instrumental in Iraq’s nuclear weapons program in the 1980s and early 1990s, has charged that recent allegations concerning the competence and progress of the Iraqi nuclear weapons program are baseless and untrue. In an article published on YellowTimes.org before it was taken off-line by its hosting company, Khadduri painted a dismal picture of Iraq’s scientific community with many out of jobs and scrounging for work after the Gulf War and subsequent allied bombing reduced any nuclear hopes to rubble. Khadduri has also charged Khidhir Hamza, a former Iraqi scientist with whom Khadduri worked, with fabricating and exaggerating his importance in Iraq’s nuclear program outlined in Hamza’s book “Saddam’s Bombmaker.” (Firas Al-Atraqchi, Saving Private Lynch Story Flawed Stifling the Voice of Reason February 10, 2003, Scoop)

“... the belief that Saddam’s past behaviour shows that he cannot be contained rests on distorted history and dubious logic. In fact, the historical record shows that the United States can contain Iraq effectively - even if Saddam has nuclear weapons - just as it contained the Soviet Union during the Cold War. And that conclusion carries an obvious implication: there is no good reason to attack Iraq at this time” (Mearsheimer & Walt 2002).

Clearly, however, it has not been demonstrated that Iraq continues to hold unconventional weapons, such as the chemical munitions it used in its war against Iran. (Iraq is barred from possessing or developing such weapons under the ceasefire agreement that ended the 1991 Gulf War.) On the contrary, the 1999 U.N. report that led to the establishment of UNMOVIC summarized the state of Iraq's disarmament this way: "Although important elements still have to be resolved, the bulk of Iraq's proscribed weapons programmes has been eliminated." (The report was issued by the U.N. Security Council's disarmament panel, whose members included senior UNSCOM officials, such as its American deputy executive director, Charles Duelfer.) Rolf Ekeus, who led UNSCOM from 1991 to 1997, agrees with that assessment: "I would say that we felt that in all areas we have eliminated Iraq's capabilities fundamentally," he told a May 2000 Harvard seminar (AP, 8/16/00), adding that "there are some question marks left." (Iraq's Hidden Weapons: From Allegation to Fact February 4, 2003 Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting)

Through constant repetition of phrases like "the search for Iraq's weapons of mass destruction," the media convey to the public the impression that the alleged banned weapons on which the Bush administration rests its case for war are known to exist and that the question is simply whether inspectors are skillful enough to find them. In fact, whether or not Iraq possesses banned weapons is very much an open question, one which no publicly available evidence can answer one way or the other. As they routinely do in other cases, journalists should make a habit of using the modifier "alleged" when referring to Iraq's alleged hidden weapons. (Iraq's Hidden Weapons: From Allegation to Fact February 4, 2003 Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting)

F) Pre-emptive Strikes

By definition, pre-emptive strikes depend on conclusive intelligence. If the intelligence is wrong, as it was on 20 August 1998 when the Clinton Administration attacked the El Shifa pharmaceutical plant in Khartoum, Sudan, mistakenly believing it was an Al Qaeda chemical weapons factory, the results can be catastrophic for the innocent - self-defence becomes aggression. Interestingly, the US has not always supported the 'doctrine' of anticipatory self-defence, even when its closest allies invoked it. On 7 June 1981 unmarked American-built F-16 aircraft of the Israeli airforce attacked and destroyed a nuclear reactor at Osirak in Iraq. The raid was authorised by Prime Minister Menachem Begin, but had been internally opposed by Yitzhak Hofi, the director of Mossad, and Major-General Yehoshua Saguy, chief of military intelligence, because there was no evidence that Iraq was capable of building a nuclear bomb. This was also the view of the International Atomic Energy Authority. At the time of the attack, Israel itself had been developing and accumulating nuclear weapons for thirteen years, primarily at its nuclear facility at Dimona.

Significantly, Israel's pre-emptive attack against the Osirak reactor had the opposite effect to the one that was intended. As Kenneth Waltz explained: "Israel's act and its consequences...made it clear that the likelihood of useful accomplishment is low. Israel's action increased the determination of Arabs to produce nuclear weapons. Israel's strike, far from foreclosing Iraq's nuclear career, gained Iraq support from some other Arab states to pursue it" . (Waltz 1995, pp.18-19).

In the current climate when pre-emptive attacks are being invoked as just responses to terrorism, it is worth recalling Princeton University historian Arno Mayer comments in *Le Monde* shortly after the 9/11 attacks: "...since 1947 America has been the chief and pioneering perpetrator of "pre-emptive" state terror, exclusively in the Third World and therefore widely dissembled. Besides the unexceptional subversion and overthrow of governments in competition with the Soviet Union during

the Cold War, Washington has resorted to political assassinations, surrogate death squads, and unseemly freedom fighters (e.g., bin Laden). It masterminded the killing of Lumumba and Allende; and it unsuccessfully tried to put to death Castro, Khadafi, and Saddam Hussein... and vetoed all efforts to rein in not only Israel's violation of international agreements and UN resolutions but also its practice of pre-emptive state terror."

What is the status of pre-emptive strikes in international law?

There is a regime of international law, binding on all states, based on the UN Charter, UN Security Council resolutions and World Court decisions. In summary, the threat or use of force is banned unless explicitly authorised by the Security Council after it has determined that all peaceful means for resolving a conflict have failed, or in self-defence against armed attack until the Security Council acts. A number of points can be made about Canberra's interest in retrospectively amending international law to legitimise a shift of strategic doctrine from deterrence to pre-emption. It would establish a precedent that others (Pakistan & India; North & South Korea) might be encouraged to follow; it would have a destabilising effect on international order; the difficulty (impossibility) of getting changes through the UN Security Council; the heightened sense of vulnerability for smaller states and for states in the region, etc, etc,. It would open up a can of worms. (Scott Burchill Counterspin: Pro-War Mythology January 28, 2003 Sydney Morning Herald)

Significantly, there is currently only one country which could seriously consider exercising a right to anticipatory self-defence under existing international law - Iraq. It has been directly threatened with attack by both the US and UK. There has been no reciprocal threat from Iraq. The term 'pre-emptive war' isn't strictly accurate. As Steven Miller explains: "Though Bush's approach has been almost universally described, in the media and elsewhere, as a doctrine of preemption, this is incorrect. Preemption refers to a military strike provoked by indications that an opponent is preparing to attack. The logic is: better to strike than be struck. But no one is suggesting that Saddam is preparing to strike the United States. There are no indications that this is the case. Bush is instead making the case for preventive war, for removing today a threat that may be more menacing and difficult in the future. The administration may prefer to label its policy preemption because that is an easier case to make. But it is not an accurate use of the term as traditionally defined." (Miller 2002, p.8)

Christine Gray, author of a seminal modern text on the use of force under international law, argues that the reluctance of states "to invoke anticipatory self-defence is in itself a clear indication of the doubtful status of this jurisdiction for the use of force". According to Gray, in cases where Israel (Beirut 1968, Tunis 1985) and the US (Libya 1986, Iraq 1993, Sudan & Afghanistan 1998) have invoked anticipatory self-defence under Article 51 to justify attacks on their enemies, "the actions look more like reprisals, because they were punitive rather than defensive". The problem for the US and Israel, she argues, "is that all states agree that in principle forcible reprisals are unlawful" (Gray 2000, pp.112, 114, 115, 118).

"... the belief that Saddam's past behaviour shows that he cannot be contained rests on distorted history and dubious logic. In fact, the historical record shows that the United States can contain Iraq effectively - even if Saddam has nuclear weapons - just as it contained the Soviet Union during the Cold War. And that conclusion carries an obvious implication: there is no good reason to attack Iraq at this time" (Mearsheimer & Walt 2002).

G) Weakening the Credibility of The UN & The UN Security Council

In September 2002, the Iraq issue in Australia suddenly centred on the honour and integrity of the UN, a subject not previously thought to have concerned the Howard Government. The international community “can’t afford” to have its authority “brushed aside,” argued foreign minister Alexander Downer, otherwise it will “look meaningless and weak, completely ineffectual.” According to the Prime Minister, “if the United Nations Security Council doesn’t rise to its responsibilities on this occasion it will badly weaken its credibility”. Former chief weapons inspector and Australian Ambassador to the UN, Richard Butler, argued that the Security Council faces the “challenge of its life” and its future would be “terminal” if it didn’t hold Iraq to account this time. His predecessor at the UN, Michael Costello, agrees. “If the UN Security Council won’t enforce its own resolutions against Iraq, the whole UN collective security system will be badly wounded, perhaps fatally.”

One might have thought that the credibility of the UN Security Council had been badly weakened before now, say in Bosnia in 1993, Rwanda in 1994 or in East Timor in 1999 to cite only three recent cases when it failed to protect defenceless civilians from slaughter. Palestinians might wonder why the organisation’s authority hasn’t been “brushed aside” by Israel’s consistent non-compliance with numerous Security Council resolutions calling for its withdrawal from occupied territories, from resolution 242 in 1967 to resolution 1402 in March 2002. Washington clearly has an idiosyncratic view about states complying with UN Security Council resolutions. If the US objects to non-compliance, the country is attacked. If the US favors non-compliance it either vetoes the resolution or disregards it, in which case it is as good as vetoed. Since the early 1970s, for example, the US has vetoed 22 draft Security Council resolutions on Palestine alone - this figure doesn’t include 7 vetoes relating to Israel’s invasion of Lebanon in the 1980s. (Scott Burchill Counterspin: Pro-War Mythology January 28, 2003Sydney Morning Herald)

At the National Press Club and later on commercial talkback radio, Mr Howard seemed to think that because Israel was a democratic state, it shouldn’t be judged by the same standards as Iraq. The future of the UN Security Council is not apparently terminal when its resolutions regarding Palestine and Israel are flouted. He should be reminded that democracies are just as obliged to observe international law as authoritarian dictatorships - there is no exemption. In fact we should expect a higher commitment to the rule of law from countries which pronounce their democratic credentials. Later, the argument shifted slightly. Israel wasn’t obliged to observe UN Security Council Resolutions because they are only invoked under Chapter 6 of the UN Charter, rather than Chapter 7. This is a novel interpretation of international law, to put it kindly.

Despite rhetoric which portrays the UN as a foreign body at its moment of truth, it is nothing more than the states which comprise it - including Australia and the US. If it has become dysfunctional, it is those member states which manipulate it for their own individual purposes which are to blame. Those who think the credibility of the UN is suddenly at risk over the question of Iraq might like to explain why non-compliance now is suddenly a pretext for an imminent attack on Iraq when Baghdad has been in violation of UN Security Council resolutions for four years. The Prime Minister asks if Iraq has “nothing to hide and nothing to conceal from the world community, why has it repeatedly refused to comply with the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council”?(Scott Burchill Counterspin: Pro-War Mythology January 28, 2003Sydney Morning Herald)

H) Control over the World's Greatest Concentration of Energy Resources

From the middle of last century Washington's foreign policy priority in the Middle East was to establish US control over what the State Department described as "a stupendous source of strategic power and one of the great material prizes in world history", namely the region's vast reserves of crude oil. Middle Eastern oil was regarded in Washington as "probably the richest economic prize in the world in the field of foreign investment", in what President Eisenhower described as the most "strategically important area in the world".

The US wants to secure reliable access to the world's second largest oil reserves, 112 billion barrels already known with possibly double that figure still to be mapped and claimed, thus depriving France and Russia of commercial advantages they have developed in Iraq over the last decade when US companies have been excluded. Just as importantly, access to Iraqi oil would also make the US less reliant upon - and therefore less supportive of - the regime in Saudi Arabia. The geo-political dynamics of the Middle East would be transformed. If Russia and France maintain their inside track on Iraqi oil, then US corporations will be partially shut out from an enormous resource prize. No US administration is likely to accept that scenario. Meanwhile, Iraqi dissidents close to Washington have promised to cancel all existing oil contracts awarded to firms which do not assist the US to remove Saddam Hussein from power. Regime change in Baghdad could therefore be a bonanza for US oil companies and a disaster for Russian and French companies which have painstakingly built up their relations with the Iraqi dictator since the Gulf war. When Iraq's oil comes fully back on stream, as many as 5 million barrels of oil (or 6.5%) could be added to the world's daily supply. The implications of this for existing suppliers, the global spot price, economic growth, OPEC and the world's consumers are enormous.

This is not an issue of access, it is primarily about control. The US was just as concerned to control Middle East oil producing regions when it didn't depend on them at all. Until about 30 years ago, North America was the largest producer and the US scarcely used Middle East oil at all. Since then Venezuela has normally been the largest oil exporter to the United States. US intelligence projections suggest that in coming years the US will rely primarily on Western Hemisphere resources: primarily the Atlantic basin - Venezuela, Mexico, Brazil, probably Colombia, but also possibly Canada, which has huge potential reserves if they become economically competitive. Imported supplies accounted for 50% of US oil consumption in 2000 and by 2020 the figure is expected to rise to 66%. (Scott Burchill Counterspin: Pro-War Mythology January 28, 2003 Sydney Morning Herald)

Anyhow, control over the world's greatest concentration of energy resources has two goals: (1) economic: huge profits for energy corporations, construction firms, arms producers, as well as petrodollars recycled to US treasury, etc; and (2) it's a lever of global geo-political control. For those trying to understand the motives behind US behaviour towards Iraq, it is impossible to underestimate the importance which oil has in the minds of Washington's strategic planners. Attempts to discredit arguments about US access to Iraqi oil by claiming that it is interested in access to supplies it could more easily strike a deal with Saddam to satisfy its "thirst for oil" rather than overthrow him, entirely miss the crucial issue - control. (The Australian, 2 January, 2003)

Indeed, America burns a quarter of all the oil consumed by humanity. A study sponsored by the US Council on Foreign Relations says that “the American people continue to demand plentiful and cheap energy without sacrifice or inconvenience”. Transport in the United States alone burns 66 per cent of America’s petroleum. One estimate is that the world’s oil reserves will begin to decline within five to 10 years at the rate of about two million barrels a day. In the Middle East, the only country capable of significantly increasing its production is Iraq, once described by Vice President Cheney as “the great prize”. At present, America depends on Iraq’s neighbour Saudi Arabia, not just for oil but for keeping the price of oil down. However, Saudi Arabia is the home of Al-Qaeda, and Osama bin Laden and 15 of the alleged September 11 hijackers. The grievance against the Americans for their imperial interventions in the Middle East is said to be deepest in the country that was invented by British imperialism and has since been maintained by the US as an oil colony. If America installs a colonial regime in Baghdad, certainly its dependence on Saudi Arabia will be dramatically eased, and its grip on the world’s greatest oil market will be tightened. The price, for the people of the region, for Americans and the rest of us, will be an enduring turmoil similar to that of Palestine, exemplified by last week’s terror bombing of an Israeli hotel in Kenya.

This is the hidden agenda of the “War on Terrorism” - a term that is no more than a euphemism for the Bush administration’s exploitation of the September 11 attacks and America’s accelerating imperial ambitions. In the past 14 months, on the pretext of “Fighting Terror”, US military bases have been established at the gateways to the greatest oil and gas fields on earth, especially in Central Asia, which is also coveted as a “great prize”. Iraq is a clear and present threat to everything America holds dear. This is what Bush and his team would have everyone believe. They’d have people believe Iraq could cripple their economy.

Yet, North Korea, now, is no big threat. Yes, they have nuclear weapons, and the capacity to make one nuclear bomb a month, and the missiles to deliver them, and the gall to throw the UN out on its collective butt, and a leader that makes Saddam look almost sane by comparison, but they are no big deal. Iraq has no proven weapons, no proven missile technology, and has allowed the UN weapons inspectors to go everywhere and do everything they please, but they are the pressing threat. What? Terrorist connections to Saddam? He’s in cahoots with Al-Qaeda and Osama? That would be remarkable, considering the fact that Hussein has been viciously repressing Islamic fundamentalism in Iraq for thirty years. If you proselytize for Wahabbi Islam in Iraq, that sect which is practiced by Al-Qaeda and Osama, you get shot. Period. Osama and al Qaeda have said many, many times that they want to see Saddam dead. So why would Saddam give them weapons? He is nothing if not a survivor, and he could conceive of better ways to commit suicide. What could Iraq possibly have that North Korea does not have? Oil? Shhhhhhh. That’s just crazy talk. Let’s stick to the facts, shall we? The fact is that a basis for war has not been laid. (William Rivers, Pitt Just the Facts, January 6, 2003truthout)

● **The Current Lying Game of Black Propaganda**

A) Playing the “Terrorism” Card:

The people in control of U.S. foreign policy are now determined to treat 9/11 as a license—their license—to kill. Although even the most fanciful statements from the Bush administration have not claimed that the Iraqi regime had anything to do with the events of Sept. 11, the murderous actions on

that day are being cited to justify a military attack on Iraq sure to take thousands of civilian lives. .(Norman Solomon, Playing the “Terrorism” Card February 13, 2003ZNet)

These days, it’s a crucial ace up Uncle Sam’s sleeve. “Terrorism” is George W. Bush’s magic card. For 17 months now, the word has worked like a political charm for the Bush administration. Ever since the terrible crime against humanity known as 9/11, the White House has exploited the specter of terrorism to move the GOP’s doctrinaire agenda. Boosting the military budget, cutting social programs and shredding civil liberties are well underway.(Norman Solomon, Playing the “Terrorism” Card February 13, 2003ZNet)

The word “terror” has become a linguistic staple in news media. For keeping the fearful pot stirred, it’s better than the longer word “terrorism,” which refers to an occasional event. The shortened word has an ongoing ring to it. At the end of February’s first week, when Attorney General John Ashcroft announced an official hike in the warning code, the cable networks lost no time plastering “Terror Alert: High” signs on TV screens.

...The next day, a White House spokesman did what he could to bolster the thin wisps of supposed links between Al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein. “If that is not an unholy partnership, I have not heard of one,” said Ari Fleischer, who trumpeted “the linking up of Iraq with Al Qaeda.” It was, he said, “the nightmare that people have warned about.”

...In the propaganda end game prior to an all-out attack on Iraq, the Bush crew is playing a favorite card; as a word, terrorism can easily frighten the public and keep competing politicians at bay. And now, Washington’s policymakers are on the verge of implementing a military attack that will, in effect, terrorize large numbers of Iraqi people.

Pentagon war plans, dubbed “Shock and Awe,” call for sending many hundreds of missiles into Baghdad during the first day. Numerous articles in the daily British press have been decrying these plans. In contrast, with few exceptions, mainstream U.S. journalists have been shamefully restrained. .(Norman Solomon, Playing the “Terrorism” Card February 13, 2003ZNet)

B)The deceptions and outright lies: frighten the public with apocalyptic warnings

John Pilger wrote on 3rd December 2002 about Myths and propaganda: Lying as government strategy is known as black propaganda. The British invented its modern form. Josef Goebbels, the Nazis’ propaganda chief, was full of admiration for the British model. Since September 11, 2001, every attempt by black propagandists in Whitehall and Washington to justify an unprovoked attack on Iraq by linking the regime in Baghdad with Al-Qaeda terrorism has failed. First, there was the charge that Iraq was responsible for last year’s anthrax scare in the United States, then it was claimed that Mohamed Atta, one of the alleged September 11 hijackers, had made contact with Iraqi intelligence in Prague. Both claims have been proven false, along with stories planted in newspapers by American intelligence that Iraq has been training Al-Qaeda terrorists at a secret base. Surmounting the truth that the secular Iraqi regime actually fears and loathes Osama bin Laden and his Islamic militants has always been difficult for American and British propagandists - even though George W Bush currently babbles nonsense about “exporting this evil Al-Qaeda threat to the world”. Blair is more careful; but his implied message is the same: that the “scourge” of world-wide terrorism is linked to Saddam Hussein, whose

demonology must now rival that of the “baby-eating Boche” during the First World War, an early triumph of black propaganda.

These deceptions and outright lies are aimed at the great majority of the British people who, as the polls show, are opposed to attacking Iraq, a country that offers them no threat. However, if you frighten the public with apocalyptic warnings about evacuating cities and incessantly link Iraq, September 11 and the Bali bombing, then people may change their minds and be ready for war - or so the propagandists bargain. “It’s a softening up process,” says a former intelligence officer familiar with the black art, “a lying game on a huge scale”. It is also an indication of the Blair government’s desperation. Blair knows that, however successful his enfeeblement of parliamentary democracy, public opinion matters and, at times, has unforeseen power. (John Pilger: Myths and propaganda December 3rd 2002)

Andrew Gumbel states :All of a sudden, brutal reality is kicking in. Before the Iraq invasion started, many Americans imagined the campaign in terms of Hollywood movies or the video-game abstraction of the television coverage of the first Gulf War – that virtual reality in which we drop bombs and only the enemy dies, and off-camera at that. But after the setbacks, guerrilla-style ambushes, downed helicopters and disturbing images of US soldiers dying or being taken prisoner over the past two days, the mood has changed abruptly, “My God, this is getting much messier than I thought,” was the reaction of one young Californian nursery school teacher yesterday. Her colleagues all concurred. (Andrew Gumbel, Mood Changes as America Finds War Is Not a Video Game ,March 25, 2003 , Independent) ACROSS LOS Angeles, the mood was overwhelmingly one of consternation and just a little dread. “I have a sick feeling about where this is all heading. They made us believe this would be a cakewalk, and now look what is happening,” another woman, a writer married to an entertainment lawyer, said. “This can only make the world hate us Americans more.” In what is perhaps a sign of the times, she did not want to be identified by name. It is hard to know exactly how representatives of such views are, especially since southern California has been a bastion of anti-war sentiment. At least some people who believe in the war were quoted yesterday saying that casualties and setbacks were to be expected as part of the mission.

People thought the Iraqis would be waving little American flags like it was occupied France in World War Two, Vincent Cannistraro, a retired CIA counter-terrorism expert, commented that “This is not an occupied country. It is Iraq and it is run by Iraqis, and for better or worse they are not welcoming Americans as liberators.” Both pro-war and anti-war voices agree, in fact, that this is likely to turn into the most in-your-face conflict that American troops – and, just as significantly, American public opinion – have faced since Vietnam. “This kind of thing has not been seen on US television screens for more than 30 years,” Sandy Cate, an anthropology professor from San Francisco, said. “You’ve got one, perhaps two, generations who have grown up with no idea of what war is really like, other than the cartoon violence they see at the movies. Well, now they are learning.” Part of the change in attitude is due to the media. Unlike the first Gulf War, when journalists were kept well away from the front, reporters are now “embedded” with army units and equipped with the technology to transmit words and images from the field. Some media critics have worried about journalists over-identifying with their units, but they also concede that the arrangement is providing much more detailed and less sanitised coverage than in 1991. (Andrew Gumbel, Mood Changes as America Finds War Is Not a Video Game ,March 25, 2003 , Independent)

But it is also true that the Bush administration massively raised expectations regarding the speed and ease of the military operation to topple Saddam Hussein. Before the war started, the President himself

talked – in his televised statements, in his 6 March news conference and in his weekly radio addresses – as though the fighting was already over and the reconstruction of Iraq had begun. War was already looking inevitable and dominating the news, 43 per cent of respondents in a New York Times/CBS poll said they expected a quick and successful campaign. With the first bombs raining down on Baghdad and ground forces racing to secure the oilfields in the south, that number had risen to 63 per cent. More than half said they thought the war would end in a matter of weeks. (Andrew Gumbel, Mood Changes as America Finds War Is Not a Video Game ,March 25, 2003 , Independent)

Now, however, the trend has been reversed. In another poll published in yesterday's Washington Post, 54 per cent now believe the United States will sustain "significant" casualties in Iraq, up from 37 per cent in a similar poll taken on the first day of the war last Thursday. One respondent in the new Washington Post/ABC poll, Daphne Nugent, 40, from New York, commented: "I didn't expect there to be this much trouble. And I'm a little upset by what I'm hearing in terms of the casualties and the prisoners of war. I thought it would end pretty easily and quickly, the war part of it anyway, not the occupation part." Other New Yorkers, including those who survived the destruction of the World Trade Centre, have also described their mixed feelings at seeing similar scenes of buildings under aerial bombardment in Baghdad. (Andrew Gumbel, Mood Changes as America Finds War Is Not a Video Game ,March 25, 2003 , Independent)

C) Allegations & claims mean Lies:

Norman Solomon in her article "It's More Than Exciting, Christiane" A Failure of Skepticism in Powell Coverage: Disproof of Previous Claims Underlines Need For Scrutiny" states some of the allegations and claims which the reporters treated them as facts:

"... many journalists treated allegations made by Powell as though they were facts. Reporters at several major outlets neglected to observe the journalistic rule of prefacing unverified assertions with words like "claimed" or "alleged." This is of particular concern given that over the last several months, many Bush administration claims about alleged Iraqi weapons facilities have failed to hold up to inspection. In many cases, the failed claims—like Powell's claims at the U.N.—have cited U.S. and British intelligence sources and have included satellite photos as evidence.

Journalists should always be wary of implying unquestioning faith in official assertions; recent history is full of official claims based on satellite and other intelligence data that later turned out to be false or dubious. After Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, the first Bush administration rallied support for sending troops to Saudi Arabia by asserting that classified satellite photos showed the Iraqi army mobilizing on the Saudi border. This claim was later discredited when the St. Petersburg Times obtained commercial satellite photos showing no such build-up (Second Front, John R. MacArthur).

Which reminds us of the Sudan's Pharmaceutical factory incident. (London Independent, 5/4/99). (Norman Solomon , , February 10, 2003 , Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting)

In the present instance, journalists have a responsibility to put U.S. intelligence claims in context by pointing out that a number of allegations recently made by the current administration have already been debunked. Among them:

- Following a CIA warning in October that commercial satellite photos showed Iraq was "reconstituting" its clandestine nuclear weapons program at Al Tuwaitha, a former nuclear weapons

complex, George W. Bush told a Cincinnati audience on October 7 (New York Times, 10/8/02): “Satellite photographs reveal that Iraq is rebuilding facilities at sites that have been part of his nuclear program in the past.” When inspectors returned to Iraq, however, they visited the Al Tuwaitha site and found no evidence to support Bush’s claim. “Since December 4 inspectors from [Mohamed] ElBaradei’s International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have scrutinized that vast complex almost a dozen times, and reported no violations,” according to an Associated Press report (1/18/03).

- In September and October U.S. officials charged that conclusive evidence existed that Iraq was preparing to resume manufacturing banned ballistic missiles at several sites. In one such report the CIA said “the only plausible explanation” for a new structure at the Al Rafah missile test site was that Iraqis were developing banned long-range missiles (Associated Press, 1/18/03). But CIA suggestions that facilities at Al Rafah, in addition to sites at Al Mutasim and Al Mamoun, were being used to build prohibited missile systems were found to be baseless when U.N. inspectors repeatedly visited each site (Los Angeles Times, 1/26/03).

- British and U.S. intelligence officials said new building at Al-Qaim, a former uranium refinery in Iraq’s western desert, suggested renewed Iraqi development of nuclear weapons. But an extensive survey by U.N. inspectors in December reported no violations (Associated Press, 1/18/03).

- Last fall the CIA warned that “key aspects of Iraq’s offensive [biological weapons] program are active and most elements are more advanced and larger” than they were pre-1990, citing as evidence renewed building at several facilities such as the Al Dawrah Vaccine Facility, the Amiriyah Serum and Vaccine Institute, and the Fallujah III Castor Oil Production Plant. By mid-January, inspectors had visited all the sites many times over. No evidence was found that the facilities were being used to manufacture banned weapons (Los Angeles Times, 1/26/03). The Associated Press concluded in its January 18 analysis: “In almost two months of surprise visits across Iraq, U.N. arms monitors have inspected 13 sites identified by U.S. and British intelligence agencies as major ‘facilities of concern,’ and reported no signs of revived weapons building.” (Norman Solomon, “It’s More Than Exciting, Christiane” A Failure of Skepticism in Powell Coverage: Disproof of Previous Claims Underlines Need For Scrutiny, February 10, 2003, Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting)

Secretary Powell huddled on the evidence in New York yesterday with the C.I.A. director, George Tenet. Mr. Tenet was there to make sure nothing too sensitive was revealed at the U.N., but mainly to lend credibility to Mr. Powell’s brief, since there have been many reports that the intelligence agency has been skeptical about some of the Pentagon and White House claims on Iraq. It was Mr. Tenet who warned Congress in a letter that there was only one circumstance in which the U.S. need worry about Iraq sharing weapons with terrorists: if Washington attacked Saddam.

When Mr. Bush wanted to sway opinion on Iraq before his State of the Union speech last year, he invited columnists to the White House. But he invited only conservative columnists, who went from gushing about the president to gushing more about the president. (Maureen Dowd, Powell Without Picasso February 5, 2003 New York Times)

D) Concealing the Truth :The Lies We Are Told About Iraq

Matthew Riemer wrote :The Bush administration’s confrontation with Iraq is as much a contest of credibility as it is of military force. Washington claims that Baghdad harbors ambitions of

aggression, continues to develop and stockpile weapons of mass destruction and maintains ties to Al Qaeda. Lacking solid evidence, the public must weigh Saddam Hussein's penchant for lies against the administration's own record. Based on recent history, that's not an easy choice.

The first Bush administration, which featured Dick Cheney, Paul D. Wolfowitz and Colin L. Powell at the Pentagon, systematically misrepresented the cause of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, the nature of Iraq's conduct in Kuwait and the cost of the Persian Gulf War. Like the second Bush administration, it cynically used the confrontation to justify a more expansive and militaristic foreign policy in the post-Vietnam era. (J. Victor Marshall, *The Lies We Are Told About Iraq*, January 5, 2003 *Los Angeles Times*)

Rumsfeld said, "The coalition in this activity is larger than the coalition that existed during the Gulf War in 1991." Reuters skillfully pointed out that "But the facts put out by the administration itself suggest otherwise. "In 1991 at least 33 countries sent forces to the campaign against Iraq and 16 of those provided combat ground forces, including a large number of Arab countries. "In 2003 the only fighting forces are from the United States, Britain and Australia. Ten other countries are known to have offered small numbers of noncombat forces, mostly either medical teams and specialists in decontamination, making a comparable alliance of about 13 countries. "U.S. officials have named 33 countries which support the U.S. invasion of Iraq but this includes countries which are providing overflight and basing rights and which are giving only diplomatic or political support for the invasion . (Matthew Riemer, *Pentagon Press Briefing: Farce, Charade and Deception* March 21, 2003, *Yellow Times*.)

It is true that Saddam Hussein has used these weapons before, against those who couldn't respond in kind - Iranian soldiers and perhaps most infamously on 17 March 1988 against "his own people" in the Kurdish city of Halabja. Within half an hour of this attack over 5000 men, women and children were dead from chemical weapons containing a range of pathogens which were dropped on them. If Washington and London are genuinely concerned about Iraq's WMD, why did they continue to supply him with the means to acquire them for 18 months after the attack on Halabja?

Initially, the US blamed Iran for the Halabja attack, a particularly cynical ploy given Saddam had also used chemical weapons against Teheran's forces during their nine-year conflict in the 1980s. In fact Washington continued to treat Saddam as a favoured ally and trading partner long after the attack on Halabja was exposed as his handiwork. At the time, the Reagan Administration tried to prevent criticism of Saddam's chemical attack on the Kurds in the Congress and in December 1989, George Bush Senior authorised new loans to Saddam in order to achieve the "goal of increasing US exports and put us in a better position to deal with Iraq regarding its human rights record ." Surprisingly, the goal was never reached. In February 1989, eleven months after Halabja, John Kelly, US Assistant Secretary of State, flew to Baghdad to tell Saddam Hussein that "you are a source for moderation in the region, and the United States wants to broaden her relationship with Iraq." (Scott Burchill *Counterspin: Pro-War Mythology* January 28, 2003 *Sydney Morning Herald*)

According to the reports of a Senate Banking Committee, the "United States provided the government of Iraq with 'dual-use' licensed materials which assisted in the development of Iraqi chemical, biological and missile-system programs. According to the report, this assistance included "chemical warfare-agent precursors; chemical warfare-agent production facility plans and technical drawings; chemical warfare-filling equipment; biological warfare-related materials; missile fabrication equipment and missile system guidance equipment." These technologies were sent to Iraq until

December 1989, 20 months after Halabja. (Scott Burchill Counterspin: Pro-War Mythology January 28, 2003 Sydney Morning Herald)

According to William Blum that all biological materials were exported to Iraq by private American suppliers, including Bacillus Anthracis (cause of anthrax), Clostridium Botulinum (a source of botulinum toxin), Histoplasma Capsulatum (causes disease which attacks lungs, brain, spinal chord and heart), Brucella Melitensis (bacteria which attacks vital organs) and other toxic agents. The US Senate Committee said “these biological materials were not attenuated or weakened and were capable of reproduction,” and it was later discovered that “these microorganisms exported by the United States were identical to those the United Nations inspectors found and removed from the Iraqi biological warfare program” (Blum 2002, pp.121-2). After the recent leaking in Germany of Iraq’s 12,000 page declaration of its weapons program, it is now known that at least 150 companies, mostly in Europe, the United States and Japan, provided components and know-how needed by Saddam Hussein to build atomic bombs, chemical and biological weapons (for the list, see [http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2003/*BLOWN MEASURE*01/22/1042911434942.ht=ml](http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2003/*BLOWN%20MEASURE*01/22/1042911434942.ht=ml) Always willing, we’re off to war again). Unsurprisingly, the US was keen to excise these details from Iraq’s report before its wider dissemination to non-permanent members of the Security Council (Newsday (US), 13 December, 2002; The Independent (UK), 18 and 19 December, 2002; Scotland on Sunday (UK), 22 December, 2002).

Historian Gabriel Kolko claims that “the United States supplied Iraq with intelligence throughout the war [with Iran] and provided it with more than \$US5 billion in food credits, technology, and industrial products, most coming after it began to use mustard, cyanide, and nerve gases against both Iranians and dissident Iraqi Kurds” (Kolko 2002, p.34). If the US is genuinely concerned by Saddam’s WMD, why did Donald Rumsfeld (then a presidential envoy for President Reagan, currently President George W. Bush’s Defence Secretary) fly to Baghdad in December 1983 to meet Saddam and normalise the US-Iraq relationship, at a time when Washington new Iraq was using chemical weapons on an “almost daily” basis against Iran (Washington Post, 30 December, 2002)? Why were no concerns about the use of these weapons raised with Baghdad? Saddam has been successfully deterred from using WMD against other states with WMD. There is no reason to believe this situation has changed or will. (Scott Burchill Counterspin: Pro-War Mythology January 28, 2003 Sydney Morning Herald)

E) Censorship & Controlling Media Freedom to Conceal the Truth

Robert Fisk stated :But the journalistic resources being laid down in the region are enormous. The BBC alone has 35 reporters in the Middle East, 17 of them “embedded” - along with hundreds of reporters from the American networks and other channels - in military units. Once the invasion starts, they will lose their freedom to write what they want. There will be censorship. And, I’ll hazard a guess right now, we shall see many of the British and American journalists back to their old trick of playing toy soldiers, dressing themselves up in military costumes for their nightly theatrical performances on television. Incredibly, several of the American networks have set up shop in the Kurdish north of Iraq with orders not to file a single story until war begins - in case this provokes the Iraqis to expel their network reporters from Baghdad. The orchestration will be everything, the pictures often posed, the angles chosen by “minders”, much as the Iraqis will try to do the same thing in Baghdad. (Robert Fisk, The War of Misinformation has Begun, March 16, 2003 Independent)

His son is likely to use the same sort of tactics to blind one of the world’s freest and most influential media establishments. Running the show for President George Bush is the man who manipulated global

perceptions of the first Gulf war for Bush Sr. Dick Cheney, then defence secretary and now vice-president, Cheney is likely to buffalo the New York Times, the Associated Press, CNN and others ready to bend to US government censorship.

Cheney made sure it was just as bad for the rest of the pool. When the ground war started, the defence secretary declared a “media blackout”, blocking all reports. After the war, General Norman Schwarzkopf and his aides revealed that the blackout was ordered because of fears that Saddam would use chemical weapons on allied forces. Potential news reports of soldiers writhing in agony from a cloud of sarin nerve gas had spooked the president and his commanders. “No pictures of that,” said General Richard Neal, who directed ground operations during the war. (Patrick J. Sloyan, What I Saw Was a Bunch of Filled-in Trenches with People’s Arms and Legs Sticking Out of Them February 14, 2003 Guardian)

Walter Pincus Fearing that local politicians and returning exiles have bullied their way onto the air, often to promote themselves and sometimes to incite violence, the 101st commander, Maj. Gen. David H. Petraeus, said in a telephone interview from his Mosul headquarters that he is considering putting a U.S. Army officer and a translator in the station to monitor what goes on the air. “I want to be certain that nothing is shown that would incite violence in a city that was extremely tense when we took over two-and-one-half weeks ago, and which still has folks who are totally opposed to what we’re doing and are willing to do something about it,” Petraeus said.

The problem U.S. forces in Mosul face over media control is one that will have to be dealt with in all major Iraqi cities in which radio and television stations were previously run by the now-deposed government. Petraeus said the problem of the local station’s content had been raised with him only recently, but that he nonetheless had ordered its manager and employees be paid. He said he has been working with lawyers and others to determine the circumstances that would keep programming off the air. “Yes, what we are looking at is censorship,” he said, “but you can censor something that is intended to inflame passions.” Part of his concern arises from his experiences in Bosnia, where local television was frequently used to inflame people. (Walter Pincus, US General May Censor Iraqi TV Station’s Programs, **May 9, 2003** *Washington Post*)

Already, the American press is expressing its approval of the coverage of American forces which the US military intends to allow its reporters in the next Gulf war. The boys from CNN, CBS, ABC and The New York Times will be “embedded” among the US marines and infantry. The degree of censorship hasn’t quite been worked out. But it doesn’t matter how much the Pentagon cuts from the reporters’ dispatches. A new CNN system of “script approval” – the iniquitous instruction to reporters that they have to send all their copy to anonymous officials in Atlanta to ensure it is suitably sanitised – suggests that the Pentagon and the Department of State have nothing to worry about. Nor do the Israelis.

Indeed, reading a new CNN document, “Reminder of Script Approval Policy”, fairly takes the breath away. “All reporters preparing package scripts must submit the scripts for approval,” it says. “Packages may not be edited until the scripts are approved... All packages originating outside Washington, LA (Los Angeles) or NY (New York), including all international bureaus, must come to the ROW in Atlanta for approval.” The date of this extraordinary message is 27 January. The “ROW” is the row of script editors in Atlanta who can insist on changes or “balances” in the reporter’s dispatch. “A script is not approved for air unless it is properly marked approved by an authorised manager and duped (duplicated) to burcopy (bureau copy)... When a script is updated it must be re-approved, preferably by the originating approving authority.” Note the key words here: “approved”

and “authorised”. CNN’s man or woman in Kuwait or Baghdad – or Jerusalem or Ramallah – may know the background to his or her story; indeed, they will know far more about it than the “authorities” in Atlanta. But CNN’s chiefs will decide the spin of the story. CNN, of course, is not alone in this paranoid form of reporting. Other US networks operate equally anti-journalistic systems. And it’s not the fault of the reporters. CNN’s teams may use clichés and don military costumes – you will see them do this in the next war – but they try to get something of the truth out. Next time, though, they’re going to have even less chance .(Robert Fisk How the News Will Be Censored in This War , February 25, 2003 Independent).

F) Hackers Attacking Websites to Black Out Alternative Voices

Hackers have replaced the news website of Arab satellite TV network al-Jazeera with a stars-and-stripes logo saying “Let Freedom Ring”. Both the Arabic site, at (<http://www.aljazeera.net>), and the English- language version at (<http://english.aljazeera.net>) could not be accessed on Thursday. Users who tried to log onto the site found a message that read, “Hacked by Patriot, Freedom Cyber Force Militia” beneath a logo containing the U.S. flag. “This broadcast was brought to you by: Freedom Cyber Force Militia,” the site said. “God bless our troops!!!” (Reuters March 28, 2003) Websites which host alternative views, and/or views that contradict U.S. foreign policy are no longer tolerated on the Internet and are systematically coming under hacker attack and political pressures to “relocate.”

YellowTimes.org (<http://www.yellowtimes.org>) has for the past six months withstood intense hacker attacks as it publishes views that directly question, criticize, and berate the U.S. official line regarding the impending invasion of Iraq. For its part, YellowTimes.org is committed to continuing its ethos in providing its hundreds of thousands of monthly visitors with alternative news and views, and is not taking the recent shutdown lightly. “This setback is not going to stop us from speaking out against leaders and governments who commit gross injustices against humankind,” said Marquardt. (Firas Al-Atraqchi, Saving Private Lynch Story Flawed Stifling the Voice of Reason February 10, 2003,Scoop)

Daniel, the wire service veteran, was part of the 1991 pool system. About 150 American journalists, photographers and film crews were scattered among attacking units. Their reports were supposed to be fed to a rear headquarters and then shared by hundreds of journalists from around the world. “They wouldn’t let us see anything,” said Daniel, who has seen just about everything there is to see in war. Not a single eyewitness account, photograph or strip of video of combat between 400,000 soldiers in the desert was produced by this battalion of professional observers. Most of the grisly photos from Desert Storm seen today were the work of independent journalists who raced to the “Highway of Death” north of Kuwait, where war planes had destroyed thousands of vehicles in which Iraqi soldiers had fled after the start of the ground war. The area was free of the military handlers who routinely interrupted interviews to chastise soldiers into changing their statements while reporters stood back, or forcibly removed film from cameras that captured images deemed offensive by an Army public affairs officer. (February 14, 2003,Guardian)

The U.S.-led administration threatened to fine or close down any newspapers that incite violence or endanger the security of coalition troops or any ethnic or religious group. They will also shut down any publications supporting Saddam Hussein’s Baath Party. Moreover, Coalition forces raided a

distribution center of *Sadda-al-Auma* newspaper in Najaf, two hours from the capital. They questioned the staff and seized copies of an edition that ordered Iraqis to join the resistance against Americans.

The Americans defend their decision and consider it necessary for keeping Iraq safe and free of violence. They say the news papers lack responsibility and professionalism, and that they fabricate information. For example, one paper accused a coalition soldier of raping a woman and wrote that troops can see women naked through their night vision goggles. Administrator L. Paul Bremer claimed at a news conference last week that Americans were not trying to hamper free speech. "It is intended to stop ... people who are trying to incite political violence, and people who are succeeding in inciting political violence here," he said. The Iraqi press has had different reactions to the order. *Sadda-al-Auma* has continued to publish anti-imperialist and anti-American articles after the raid. (Fariba Nawa, US Curtails Iraq's Newfound Media Freedoms June 27, 2003 *Village Voice*)

C) The Unreported Cost of War

US military casualties from the occupation of Iraq have been more than twice the number most Americans have been led to believe because of an extraordinarily high number of accidents, suicides and other non-combat deaths in the ranks that have gone largely unreported in the media. Since May 1, when President George Bush declared the end of major combat operations, 52 American soldiers have been killed by hostile fire, according to Pentagon figures quoted in almost all the war coverage. But the total number of US deaths from all causes is much higher: 112.

The other unreported cost of the war for the US is the number of American wounded, 827 since Operation Iraqi Freedom began. Unofficial figures are in the thousands. About half have been injured since the president's triumphant appearance on board the aircraft carrier USS Lincoln at the beginning of May. Many of the wounded have lost limbs. The figures are politically sensitive. The number of American combat deaths since the start of the war is 166 - 19 more than the death toll in the first Gulf war. The passing of that benchmark last month erased the perception, popular at the time Baghdad fell, that the US had scored an easy victory. (Julian Borger, *The Unreported Cost of War: At Least 827 American Wounded* August 4, 2003 *Guardian*) "If civilians die because they were placed in front of military targets, the moral responsibility for their harm will rest with those who put them there," the daily said. "While in the near term we are likely to endure some nasty TV images, in the long run this US determination will save both Iraqi and American lives." In a separate editorial, *The New York Times* said the United Nations "should become the overall trustee of Iraqi sovereignty in the period before Iraqis themselves resume control." Only then can the United States prove "that its intentions are altruistic" and "begin to heal the transatlantic rift." (Matthew Riemer, *US Media Misleading Public on Iraq Casualties* July 23, 2003 *YellowTimes*)

Media outlets have been spinning the information on U.S. casualties in a most curious way. Instead of regularly updating viewers and listeners concerning the number of killed and injured U.S. servicemen and women since the beginning of the war in Iraq, an insidious and disingenuous distinction is being emphasized more than ever: that of the "combat deaths" and the "non-combat deaths." Phrases like "hostile fire," "friendly fire," and "in-action deaths" are now commonplace in Washington's and the media's handbook of propaganda and euphemisms.

News agencies are constantly making the above distinction, reporting the number of U.S. soldiers killed by "hostile fire" as well as those killed in other ways but only keeping a running tabulation of

those who have lost their lives in combat. Updates are almost unheard of regarding the number of casualties resulting from non-fatal injuries.

As of July 21st, 233 U.S. soldiers have died and over 1000 have been injured since Operation Iraqi Freedom began. Yet the media focuses only on those killed by “hostile fire” as if those killed in other ways or those simply injured are less important. An Internet search will reveal a thousand stories about the numbers killed by “hostile fire” to every one that offers the complete details (Matthew Riemer, US Media Misleading Public on Iraq Casualties July 23, 2003 YellowTimes)

Another half-truth being perpetuated by various news agencies is that more U.S. soldiers have died in the current war in Iraq than in the first. This is true for “hostile fire” deaths only but not for total deaths: as already mentioned, 233 have died so far in Operation Iraqi Freedom while 299 died in Operation Desert Storm. While many reporters do make this distinction, many don’t. The most conspicuous example again took place on NPR on July 21st when Diane Rehm, host of the eponymously named talk show, said in a painstakingly clear and simple sentence that more U.S. soldiers have died this time around than in Desert Storm. And then she stopped speaking and the show went to a break. No qualifying statement, no explanation, no insidious distinctions, nothing. Maybe she was unaware of these facts, but a host of a popular, national talk show has no excuse for such ignorance. So, at the very least, she passed on false information to millions of listeners.

The importance of these partial truths and media spin are significant for two reasons: one apolitical, one political.

First and foremost, the obfuscation of U.S. casualties by very wide swaths of the media is a disservice to the U.S. armed forces, their families, and the American public. Whether or not one considers U.S. servicemen and women heroes without equal, respectable people just doing their jobs, or patriots who have been duped to serve the geopolitical interests of a fairly undemocratic bureaucracy called the U.S. government, shouldn’t change the fact that all of their lives are of equal value.

How does the mother who lost her son to friendly fire or a truck accident feel as the media constantly chatters about “combat deaths” and about how “these deaths” are putting pressure on President Bush and Paul Bremer? Does she wonder if her son’s death is putting pressure on anyone or has forced others to reconsider what’s happening in Iraq? Does her son’s life matter as much? Or is her son half way in between an Iraqi and an American killed by hostile fire on a scale of their worth? And what about all the injured who go unmentioned? It’s hard to imagine a soldier claiming that his life was not changed forever because of the war, but many have had their lives changed in the most horrible ways. These soldiers are now paraplegics and cripples, blind and deaf, or learning to live with artificial limbs. Are not these victims part of the “cost of war” as well?

Secondly, and finally, this deception is significant for the anti-war movement and, more broadly and accurately, the large and inherently diverse cross-ideological, international resistance to U.S. hegemonic bullying in the Middle East, if only because it seeks to lessen the perceived impact of the war—and now occupation—upon the feelings and beliefs of the American public and, to a much lesser degree, the international community. All individuals opposed to the U.S. occupation of Iraq should highlight this “oversight” on the part of the media so as to make others more aware of the actual impact of this poorly conceived, designed, and executed unnecessary war and occupation. (Matthew Riemer, US Media Misleading Public on Iraq

Pseudo Events :

Controlling the briefings

Controlling the briefings, the videos and the press during Desert Storm was an extension of US policy started by President Ronald Reagan and his defence chief, Caspar Weinberger. It was Weinberger, an anglophile, who admired Margaret Thatcher's manipulation of the media during the Falklands war, which led directly to her political revival in 1982. A year later, Weinberger took control of the US media when Reagan found himself in a deepening hole in Lebanon.

On October 23 1983, 241 US Marines died after a truck laden with explosives destroyed a makeshift barracks at Beirut airport. The massacre suddenly focused attention on the ageing actor's foreign policy decisions as the reports and pictures showed the removal of American bodies. Within 48 hours of the bombing, the president dispatched the first wave of 5,000 American troops to Grenada in the Caribbean

(Patrick J. Sloyan, What I Saw Was a Bunch of Filled-in Trenches with People's Arms and Legs Sticking Out of Them, ,Guardian February 14, 2003)

The typical Washington press briefing—whether from the White House or Pentagon—generally displays one dominant characteristic: a notable lack of useful or new information. As of late, the presence of a barely disguised hostility and contempt towards the attending reporters is also quite noticeable. Reporters are at least half the reason why press briefings are usually a waste of time—Washington's press corps simply ask the most meaningless, non-confrontational questions imaginable. What is worse is when, after the fact, correspondents or pundits talk about how the reporters in attendance “pressed the issue” or “touched sensitive areas.” Such comments further obscure the fact that the real questions are not asked and powerful figures in Washington are not held accountable for what they say.(Matthew Riemer, Pentagon Press Briefing: Farce, Charade and Deception ,March 21, 2003 Yellow Times)

Paul Starr, Robert Kuttner and Harold Meyerson wrote: The suspicion will not die that the Bush administration turned to Iraq for relief from a sharp decline in its domestic political prospects. The news had been dominated for months by corporate scandals and the fall of the stock market, and the November elections were shaping up as a referendum on the Republican's handling of domestic social and economic issues. Investigative reporters had turned their attention to Dick Cheney's role at Halliburton and George W. Bush's sale of his Harken Energy shares just before the stock collapsed.

Then, like magic, these questions disappeared from the headlines as the administration refocused the nation's attention on war with Iraq. No new information about Saddam Hussein's efforts to acquire nuclear weapons and no actions taken by Iraq seem to have precipitated this shift. The Iraqi regime has not changed since early in the Bush administration, when its great priority was building a missile defense shield, nor even since the 2000 election, when Bush said he would emphasize “humility” in foreign policy and opposed nation building. (American Prospect October 21, 2002)

- **The political power of the United States as a sole and monolithic power in the world makes its might and word as the only voice which must be heard.**

Fairness of covering the Iraq war

Russ Baker compares the difference between Anglo, American and European mass media coverage of Iraq war:

In general, for the Brits, war coverage offers an opportunity to corral facts and to ask tough questions about hugely consequential events. For the Americans, it is a chance to present an “exciting” story within narrow limits. Compared with the BBC’s studied neutrality, Fox (broadcasting globally its original stateside programming, complete with Brit Hume, Mort Kondracke et al.) comes across as a kind of Gong Show of propaganda. The result is a myopic vision of war that proves alternatively nerve-racking, boring or uplifting, but in the aggregate effectively sanitizes events and numbs the audience. Watching Fox, Serbs see a striking similarity to something in their own recent past: “Why, it’s just like TV here under Milosevic!” The privately owned Fox is actually more gung-ho in its support of the war than US government entities like Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, which has filed many balanced dispatches. Fox anchors report everything Arabs do with an audible sneer, while treating every official US pronouncement, no matter how self-serving, as gospel.

It is said that 90 percent of viewer perceptions are based on visual stimuli, not actual content, and Fox certainly grasps this. When carrying the daily briefing from Centcom, Fox divides its screen. Only a small video window with sound is devoted to the briefing. In a larger window, context-less military activity unfolds, tanks fire and vehicles roll. In the upper left corner is Fox’s omnipresent American flag, and at the bottom the news ticker, which further distracts from serious concentration or analysis. Outside the United States, viewers are deprived of CNN’s star studio personas, Aaron Brown, Bobbie Batista, et al. The CNN International crew, beaming from London and other locales, is generally more balanced and professional than their stateside compatriots. But CNN International still does poorly in conveying the horror of war or providing a persuasive sampling of world opinion.

There’s also a huge skepticism gap. The American outfits bother little or not at all to frame the conflict in terms of the stated rationale: alleged weapons of mass destruction and terrorist ties. On CNN, newsbar items scroll by announcing the discovery of possible weapons of mass destruction, only to unceremoniously cancel the claims later. The British networks air far more footage of the situation inside places that coalition forces are attacking, providing a much better sense of what it is like to be a civilian caught up in the terror of the moment. SkyNews, like Fox, is owned by the jingoistic Rupert Murdoch, and like Fox, it exhibits unabashed support for the British troops it accompanies—although without the embarrassingly aggressive, egregiously hostile tone of Fox. Fox, and CNN to a lesser extent, seem in a hurry to brush off stories about problems, miscalculations, consequences: friendly fire, civilian casualties and the exposure of Iraqi civilians to Saddamite reprisals, all subjects extensively treated by the Europeans. By comparison, when the bodies of the first British casualties arrived back in England, Sky ran the caption, “None of 10 who returned were killed by enemy.” Generally, the fellows with the “credentials” on CNN and Fox, especially the “military experts,” alternate between belaboring the yawningly obvious and exhibiting partisanship. “The goal of that bombing was to ‘degrade’ those targets,” said one presumably well-paid former officer. BBC in particular, and SkyNews to a lesser extent, seem to encourage on-air anchors to ask reasonably tough questions and give time to smart, savvy, blunt civilian analysts.

Of all the news channels available here, my personal favorite is the multilingual, pan-European independent news channel, Euronews. Its coverage of the war in Iraq has no marketing-department spin; it is simply labeled "The War in Iraq." We see no correspondents or anchors. We don't even know the names of those who offer the rigorously neutral narration over the raw-edged footage. Euronews also runs a feature called "No Comment," in which footage from inside and outside Iraq, collected from a wide variety of sources, airs without any narration or commentary at all. Guess which news show consistently provides the best insight and emotional comprehension of unfolding events? No comment. (Russ Baker. The US Vs. The UK April 11, 2003Nation)

Michel Moutot wrote:"They consider themselves to be an American news organisation covering a war that America is involved in," explained Alex Jones, director of the Joan Shorenstein Centre on the Press at Harvard University. "They have made the calculation that they want to make this kind of demonstration of support for America on this, despite any kind of journalistic cost," she said.

For Geneva Overholser, a journalism professor at Missouri University, the US media and especially the television networks have overstepped the mark. "This goes right at the heart of our credibility. We are supposed to present the facts fairly and without favoritism. It's not benign. It has a real cost. If we think that the press is supposed to be fair and balanced, then does that cease to be true during war time?" she asked. "I think not. They think that in doing so they will win approval, but they will win it at the cost of thumbing their noses at an important journalistic principle, which is we're not supposed to be espousing any viewpoint," she said.

In a recent editorial, New York Times journalist Sheryl McCarthy wrote: "The network news shows aren't covering the war, they're promoting it. Their message is that the United States is powerful and righteous, that we're prepared to give Saddam a good whipping, and that everybody who opposes us is a suspect." US media experts and monitors cite the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington as a watershed in terms of the media's behavior. "Since the September 11 attacks, we've seen it come out more and more. It gives an impression of taking sides, It was a problem before September 11, but it was so much intensified after that," said Rachel Coen, an analyst with the NGO Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR). "Newscasters literally started wrapping their reports in the colors of the US flag. Many in the media are confusing their awakened patriotism with their journalistic duty," she said. (Michel Moutot, US News Networks, Are They Biased? March 27, 2003 , Middle East Online)

Patrick J. Sloyan **wrote** :censorship imposed by Bush, Cheney and Colin Powell, chairman of the joint chiefs of staff. The court ruled the suit moot - the war was over - but invited the press to try again so that the issue might be settled. It never was.

The media was more duped than cowed. Cheney won over some people with the promise that places in the pool would give them an advantage over competitors. For instance, a Washington Post pool reporter kept to himself all details of a US Marine operation for exclusive use by the Post and, later, a book.

For independent journalists, life was much more difficult. More than 70 operating outside the pool system were arrested, detained, threatened at gunpoint or chased from the front line. Army public affairs officers made nightly visits to hotels and restaurants in Hafir al Batin, a Saudi town on the Iraqi border. Reporters and photographers would bolt from the table. The slower ones were arrested.(Patrick J. Sloyan , "What I Saw Was a Bunch of Filled-in Trenches with People's Arms and Legs Sticking Out of Them", February 14, 2003Guardian)

CNN – AMERICA’S PRAVDA by Geoff Bowie

It’s truly fantastic that the western media can speak so disparagingly and self-righteously about the censorship of the media in totalitarian or ‘rogue’ states. And it’s fascinating that it manages to present itself as the standard bearer of freedom of the press and a keystone of democracy – all this when the western media has to be the greatest ideological noise machine of all time. CNN is a standout example of the media Gordian knot throttling progress toward any form of broader-based participatory democracy. (Geoff Bowie ,CNN – AMERICA’S PRAVDA)

The network also resorts to a bit of coarse ideological manipulation. One spot features an image of Saddam Hussein wearing a black suit and hat, and with one hand firing a rifle into the air. Frame by frame examination indicates that CNN ‘doctored’ this shot. If Saddam even fired the rifle, it must not have had the punch CNN was looking for. In this shot a few frames, before the ‘firing’ of the rifle have been tinted and a fade to white was inserted for 3 frames to enhance (or invent) the gun’s explosion. (Geoff Bowie ,CNN – AMERICA’S PRAVDA). This kind of blunt treatment of an image of a political enemy would once have been considered the worst kind of propaganda. Now, it’s probably accepted humorously as an example of CNN’s Hollywood showmanship and corporate chutzpah. In our media cynical society we’re on a first name basis with a character called ‘Saddam’ in the latest version of an “Axis of Evil” video game.

The Hollywoodization of the news on CNN goes beyond fictionalizing the Iraqi leader. It includes type casting of the network’s journalists and hosts. Larry King, with his suspenders, big raspy voice and avuncular manners, Aaron Brown’s mellifluous warmth, Connie Chung’s razor-edged beauty, Tucker Carlson’s New England debating class brash, Lou Dobbs, Wolf Blitzer and company are like references from pop culture that run from Norman Rockwell, to Citizen Kane, to Mr. Deeds Goes to Washington, to Neuromancer and some comic books. ‘Reporters as characters’ is an essential element of CNN’s ‘branding’ strategy. (Geoff Bowie ,CNN – AMERICA’S PRAVDA). The shoddy journalism, the uncritical stance to US government policy, the contempt for reality, understanding, and the consciousness of the viewer expressed in CNN’s packaging of the news as another kind of entertainment genre, might be interpreted as a government/media conspiracy to keep the public dazed and confused. But the feeling watching CNN suggests something closer to what Harper’s magazine editor Lewis Lapham states when he describes America as “ ... a country that possesses the power to poison the earth without possessing either the means or the desire to know itself.” CNN’s well-heeled executives and network staff feel so much on the same side as the government, and share so strongly a ‘we’re-all-in-this-together’ unity, the station simply doesn’t see any need to be too strenuous about an ‘arm’s length relationship’ to government. And they would probably consider it artificial and bad for business too, if CNN bothered too much with objectivity, disinterested inquiry, and critical analysis from diverse points of view. (Geoff Bowie ,CNN – AMERICA’S PRAVDA)

In short, views that offer an informed critical analysis of the Bush administration’s foreign policy, particularly with regard to the Middle East, are not part of the national conversation in the United States. And until Americans can have that conversation with themselves they will not be equipped to converse with the rest of the world about the relative legitimacy or otherwise of their government’s actions but will instead continue to retreat into a combination of belligerence, bemusement, defensiveness and demagoguery. (Gary Younge, Now Dissent Is ‘Immoral’ , June 2, 2003, Guardian)

Under these circumstances the brouhaha that has consumed the American media over the past three weeks about the transgressions of a few reporters at the New York Times seem particularly to have been blown out of all proportion. The Times, one of the nation’s most respected newspapers, fired a reporter, Jayson

Blair, last month after it discovered that he had fabricated and plagiarised several stories. Last week one of the paper's star writers, the Pulitzer prize-winning Rick Bragg, resigned after a story that carried his name turned out to have been reported largely by a freelancer.

True, both stories raise important, if very different, issues about journalistic integrity and editorial checks and balances. It's true too that both tales are engaging - Bragg because of his status, Blair because of his self-destructive personality traits and his apparent inability to stop digging now that he is in a hole. "I fooled some of the most brilliant people in journalism," he boasted recently. (Gary Younge, Now Dissent Is 'Immoral' , June 2, 2003, Guardian)

But neither amount to a national crisis in journalism. And while more revelations might claim senior scalps at the Times, they hardly point to an implosion of values there either. Any schadenfreude from this side of the Atlantic is particularly misplaced as, where factual accuracy and accountability is concerned, American newspapers are far superior to their British counterparts.

But where diversity of opinion and willingness to challenge their political establishment is concerned, they are currently lacking. To what extent this is just the American media reflecting the preoccupations and values of their readers is a moot point. Most Americans did support the war. Today, polls show, 55% approve of Bush's handling of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and two-thirds believe the war on Iraq has helped the war on terrorism. The three words most likely to be associated with Bush are "honest", "good" and "leadership". Gary Younge, Now Dissent Is 'Immoral' , June 2, 2003, Guardian)

And yet there is a sizable minority, just too small to be considered mainstream but far too large to be regarded as fringe, who disagree. Coming a close fourth on words to describe Bush was "arrogant". About a quarter of Americans believe efforts to bring stability to Iraq are going badly and more than a third believe the Bush administration overestimated Iraqi weapons, most believing it did so to build support for the war. Such views may not be reflected on a national scale, but they are dominating heated local conversations throughout the country.

America is not exceptional in this regard. The last place you would look for incisive coverage of Northern Ireland would be the British media and similar criticisms could be made of French journalism during the Algerian war. Political establishments in powerful nations rarely tell the truth about power and their media are often only too happy to collude. "Only when lions get to write history," says the African proverb, "will hunters cease to be heroes." Gary Younge, Now Dissent Is 'Immoral' , June 2, 2003, Guardian)

Where America does differ is in the nature of industry and the war it is engaged in. The American media industry is dominated by just a few companies. AOL Time Warner, to name but one example, owns among many other things, Time magazine, Fortune, Life, Sports Illustrated, CNN, Comedy Central, Warner Brothers Pictures and Black Entertainment Television. With the head of the Federal Communications Commission, under Michael Powell (son of secretary of state Colin Powell), set to relax ownership rules later this month this consolidation and the lack of choice that goes with it will get worse before it gets better. And with a war that is endless against a foe that is stateless (terror has no nationality), invisible (it could be anyone) and ubiquitous (they could be anywhere), the potential for these media distortions to become both pervasive and permanent is very real indeed. Gary Younge, Now Dissent Is 'Immoral' , June 2, 2003, Guardian)

Fearing the contamination of the pool of domestic information, many Americans have voted with their remote controls and browsers. American audience figures for BBC World news leapt 28% in the first few

weeks of the war, elevating its Baghdad correspondent, Rageh Omaar, to sex symbol status. Meanwhile, American visitors to the websites of the BBC and progressive news organisations such as the Guardian have risen exponentially since September 11.

In Summary, I believe that the objective media should enter every home and give the viewer a chance to evaluate the situation that is being projected on his screen. Until this is attained, the Americans are put in the shadow from the truth by their own media.

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