

## Chapter 2

# What Happened to Journalism?

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How could they do it? How could an American government provoke a war opposed by millions in the United States and billions around the world, a humanitarian and political disaster foretold by history and foreseen by an array of specialists? How could the United States preemptively attack another country, reversing the ideals for which the nation once stood: justice, fairness, democratic process, restraint, compassion, and the rule of law? More fundamentally, how could American journalism ease the way for that reversal so obviously that two of the country's most important newspapers themselves in effect apologized two years later for their work? What happened to journalism?

If politics is the art of war in a "civilized" society, the news is its first battlefield, where issues are fought and often decided. Despite democratic and constitutional roots, the news itself has fundamentally transformed, to the point that in 1972, the British sociologist Philip Schlesinger observed that the news had become "the exercise of power over the interpretation of reality."<sup>1</sup> Assuming that Schlesinger was correct, the case of Iraq reaffirms that those who master the conventional wisdom master the news and, with it, the politics and direction of the nation. Indeed, the disaster of Iraq is a milestone by which one can observe the trajectory of journalism. If the ship of state sails on a sea of conventional wisdom, then whoever controls the sea masters the voyage. The ship of state, therefore, is propelled not by statecraft but by a mastery of political communication.

In this chapter, I will demonstrate how pervasive this type of communication has become by reviewing some of the guiding principles of political strategist Karl Rove,<sup>2</sup> and by examining the coverage of the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* during the early Iraq War. Rove, who serves as deputy chief of staff to President George W. Bush, is among the best-known practitioners of political communication in the United States. Dubbed "Bush's Brain" and "Boy Genius" by biographers,<sup>3</sup> Rove is inheritor of a legacy of political communication dating to World War I, when George Creel deployed it to unify Americans and the Western allies to defeat the Central Powers. Creel in the course of his work concluded that people live not by a philosophy, but by catchphrases, or what we now call the conventional wisdom.<sup>4</sup> Rove understood that the same may apply to journalists.

When Rove taught a course titled “Politics and the Press” at the University of Texas, Austin, one afternoon he declared to students, “The press are like sheep. . . . We’re more dependent on the press, and they’re uniquely unable to see.”<sup>5</sup> For Rove, herding the sheep begins by controlling debate and image, and stopping the opposition in its tracks, whether during election campaigning, or in office-holding. In January 2001, before the Bush presidency began, Rove outlined three goals while making the rounds of Washington post-election Republican private receptions and luncheons: to cultivate new Republican voters, especially minority voters and most especially Hispanics; to roll back the legacy of the New Deal; and to construct so many obstacles to Democratic success that a liberal resurgence would be impossible.<sup>6</sup> The plan fundamentally politicized the federal bureaucracy, and discouraged dissent in the strongest terms. Yet it’s the careful use of campaign media, both broadcast and narrowcast, that partly distinguishes a Rove campaign. His approach was delineated by one of the guest speakers he invited to address the class in Austin, television specialist Mark McKinnon. According to McKinnon, negative ads, in particular, can have a powerful effect, especially on undecided voters. Although almost everyone claims to hate negative ads, they change votes, and using them, he said, “is fair game.” Among the examples of negative ads McKinnon screened for the class was the “revolving door” commercial produced by the George H.W. Bush campaign in 1988 to attack Governor Michael Dukakis as soft on crime. The commercial showed supposed prisoners filing in to a state penitentiary for incarceration, only to turn around and immediately come out again through a revolving door. The ad implied that Dukakis furloughed two-hundred-sixty-eight first-degree murderers, who went on to rape or brutalize still more victims. McKinnon and Rove focused on the commercial’s visual effectiveness, ignoring the false implication of the message. The actual number of Massachusetts inmates furloughed during the Dukakis administration who escaped to do violent harm was one.<sup>7</sup> Sometimes, as Rove said another day in class, it doesn’t matter what the story is, if you can promote the right picture.

That right picture, or what politicians call the “message” resembles what journalists and communication researchers call the *frame*. The frame is an organizing focus, which like a picture frame limits and focuses attention on what one sees, while screening out everything else. Framing is central to supplying the context for a story. According to Robert Entman, “The frame in a news text is really the imprint of power—it registers the identity of actors or interests that competed to dominate the text.”<sup>8</sup> In journalism, the most frequent sources of frames are government institutions and officials, “authoritative sources,” who dominate the news,<sup>9</sup> partly because prominence is a principal news value. Through widely reported political speeches, and through basic themes reiterated in editorials and op-ed essays, prominent individuals and institutions such as the Heritage Foundation and Cato Institute can dominate “the underlying definition of the situation [that] permeates the texture of news reporting.”<sup>10</sup> Indeed, those sources who set storytellers’ agendas are the most important framers of all. And in American journalism, no source is more important than the president, and the presidency. In the face of such source power, even open-minded journalists end up excluding sources and subjects who deviate from the conventional wisdom of officialdom. As one researcher explained, “media unwittingly have set themselves up as the guardians of consensus.”<sup>11</sup> Therefore, issues and points of view that deviate

from the officially articulated consensus become inherently political because “they revolve around some people’s assessments of other people’s behavior.”<sup>12</sup> The question is then, who has the power to set the rules? Just as the assigning of deviance requires the assertion of social power, so does avoiding it on the receiving end. The assignment of deviance or stigma amounts to a contest of power—a stigma contest—with superior power winning the right to assign deviance, and to dodge it. As another researcher put it, “The key to understanding deviance lies not in specific kinds of acts and individuals but rather in this deviantizing process.”<sup>13</sup>

### **Framing War**

The deviantizing process, and the power of frames to shift the conventional wisdom is never greater than in time of war. Because national defense is a nation’s first priority, politicians regularly invoke it to achieve political solidarity. Political communication moved from adolescence to maturity when President Woodrow Wilson named newsman George Creel to head the government’s propaganda effort during World War I. Creel’s results were so effective at home that once the Axis powers were subdued, the residual energy of his efforts focused on Russia, which the United States proceeded to invade. Congress, fearing the deploying of so effective a political weapon at home, forbade spending public funds for its use after the war. The power of Creel’s work is reflected in the work of Walter Lippmann, perhaps the twentieth century’s most influential American journalist. During World War I, Lippmann became part of the U.S. Army’s military propaganda effort abroad, and was aware of the extent of propaganda at home. Nonetheless, Lippmann post-war seemed confident that propaganda’s domestic effects could be expunged, and that the news could be strengthened to help citizens self-govern. To that end, Lippmann in 1920 wrote *Liberty and the News*, in which he prescribed the elements of objectivity and a disciplined profession.<sup>14</sup>

Two years later, Lippmann reversed course, his belief in objectivity apparently shaken by a growing understanding of the power Creel had unleashed. By the time he published *Public Opinion* in 1922, Lippmann concluded, “The knowledge of how to create consent will alter every political calculation and modify every political persuasion.”<sup>15</sup> In the 1960s, the Canadian communication theorist Marshall McLuhan declared that the medium is the message – that is, the form of the medium in which communication takes place limits and shapes the message to the point that it effectively becomes the message. Improving on McLuhan, Karl Rove has demonstrated that while the medium counts, it’s the conventional wisdom that media both reflect and shape – that less obvious code of values and beliefs that underlie what we do and how we behave, of which journalism is both first-line indicator and shaper – that delimits how minds and hearts respond.

Rove explained to the class in Austin that elections are won by simplifying issues, making choices stark, controlling the battle before it begins, and attacking when advantage is clear. An essential step for a successful campaign, he said, is the process of constructing conceptual divisions—issue wedges—to uncouple traditionally Democratic issues from their moorings in social history, and to redefine them to favor the Republican right. When students noted that these issues appeared to center on race, wealth and especially class, Rove quickly chastised them for engaging in “class warfare.” In other words, when challengers suggested Rove had fuzzed the issues, he changed the subject and counterattacked the challengers, blaming *them* for practicing “class warfare.” In short, Rove simplified issues by snapping them from the context in

which they developed, blunted debate by changing the subject and attacking opponents, and redefined the issues in terms that favored his candidate.

If “core principles” guide his campaign frames, Rove made it clear that polls determine how he plays them. “Democrats were the first to use polls, but Republicans perfected them, for campaigns and policy-making!”<sup>16</sup> Once one masters the metrics of polling, one can track the impact of messages (and one’s opposition) with precision sufficient to retool the message, until one attains the desired response. Similarly, campaign debates, he claimed, are the subject of innumerable “weird preparations,” incredibly detailed, unbelievably arcane, and all to be carefully controlled. He outlined some of the details, then listed rules for debate which covered message production and control. Rove’s strategy began with debate and mastered the rhetorical: he seized on an opponent’s greatest strength, transformed it into utter loss, and inserted that loss into the conventional wisdom, to maximum effect.

Of all the communicators Rove discussed, no one except Ronald Reagan drew the adulation he heaped on legendary broadcast advertising man Tony Schwartz, who created the most famous ad in American political history. In 1964, Schwartz worked for the campaign of President Lyndon B. Johnson, who was running against Republican Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona. In the “Daisy commercial,” Schwartz tied Goldwater’s reputation for shooting from the hip, his threat to use nuclear weapons in Vietnam,<sup>17</sup> and his support for escalating the war directly to Americans’ Cold War fears of a nuclear holocaust. The commercial showed a peaceful, colorful scene of a charming little blonde girl gently plucking the petals of a daisy, then froze the frame in reverse black and white, like a negative. With the camera focused tightly on the child’s face, an announcer spoke over her image with the countdown to a thermonuclear explosion. As the mushroom cloud billowed on screen, reflected in her eyes, Lyndon Johnson’s voice warned: “These are the stakes! To make a world in which all of God’s children can live, or to go into the dark. We must either love each other, or we must die.” Another voiceover then declared, “Vote for President Johnson on November third. The stakes are too high for you to stay home.”<sup>18</sup> The commercial aired as a paid advertisement only once, on the then-dominant CBS television network. It then ran wild, for free, on newscasts and public affairs programs across the country, dominating attention and crystallizing differences between the candidates, even as it skillfully misrepresented the candidates’ differences. By seizing a few salient facts known about Goldwater and attacking with the projection of Johnson’s own developing policy, the commercial effected a kind of communication jiu-jitsu, pulverizing Goldwater’s candidacy. The same style became evident in the attack of the “Swift Boat Veterans” on Senator John Kerry, President Bush’s opponent, in 2004, and the genesis of the phrase uttered by Condoleezza Rice: “We don’t want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud.”<sup>19</sup>

Although the Clinton administration had warned the new Bush administration about al Qaeda, foreign policy at the outset didn’t figure high on the Bush agenda. During the second presidential debate with Vice President Al Gore, Bush declared that he wanted to “avoid nation-building,” a logical tack for someone with little experience beyond the Rio Grande. On the other hand, in January 2001 Vice President Dick Cheney, who was Secretary of Defense during the first Gulf War, had, “a deep sense of unfinished business about Iraq,” and asked outgoing Secretary of Defense William S.

Cohen for briefings for Bush on Iraq. The president didn't seem to respond vigorously, even after he received a CIA warning about imminent terrorist attack in August 2001, while he vacationed for thirty days at his ranch in Crawford, Texas.<sup>20</sup>

Four days after 9/11, Bush and his national security experts met at Camp David, where they discussed targets for response. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Undersecretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz suggested three targets: al Qaeda, Afghanistan's Taliban, and Iraq. Wolfowitz pressed for attacking Iraq. Two months later, on Nov. 21, 2001, Bush took Rumsfeld aside and asked him to secretly begin building war plans for Iraq. By January, in his state of the Union speech, Bush declared Iraq, Iran, and North Korea an "axis of evil," and by June, at West Point, he declared a new doctrine of preemptive attack.<sup>21</sup> Despite former National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft's arguing there was no evidence of a build-up of arms on the part of Iraq, an apparent "victory" in the offing in Afghanistan, prodigious war planning for Iraq, and the positioning of divisions of U.S. troops encircling Iraq led those in the military and the press to surmise that we would be going to war, even before Congress approved. Meanwhile, the administration changed the nation's intelligence structure to get the answers it wanted.<sup>22</sup> In August 2002, Douglas Feith's Office of Special Plans, a separate intelligence and strategy unit, was set up formally at the Pentagon.<sup>23</sup> Feith and his subordinates, especially Bill Luti, a former Navy officer allied with administration hawks and a former aide to Cheney, "were essentially an extra-governmental organization, because many of their sources of information and much of their work were in the shadows," said Gregory Newbold, the Marine general who was then operations director for the Joint Chiefs of Staff. "It was also my sense that they cherry-picked obscure, unconfirmed information to reinforce their own philosophies and ideologies."<sup>24</sup> Former Lieutenant Colonel Karen Kwiatkoski said the process was like "picking the rotten cherries, the absolutely rotten stuff that the CIA had pulled out and thrown away. I mean these were the nasty cherries that were down on the floor, and they picked them up and used them because they fit what they wanted to hear."<sup>25</sup>

Cheney, together and separately with his national security aide, I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, made repeated trips to the CIA to frame the intelligence-gathering. Ultimately, CIA Director George Tenet produced the rushed National Intelligence Estimate that the administration wanted, even though it contradicted the best advice of the intelligence apparatus set up to guide American foreign policy. The same month, chief of staff Andrew Card announced formation of the White House Iraq Group (WHIG), whose members included Rove, Karen Hughes, Mary Matalin, Jim Wilkinson, speechwriter Michael Gerson, legislative liaison Nicholas Calio, National Security Adviser Rice, her then-assistant Stephen Hadley, and Scooter Libby. Dominated by the political operatives, the group met regularly in the White House Situation Room. The Situation Room setting for WHIG's exercise in spin confirmed that in the Bush White House, politics and national security policy were one. By August 26, Cheney declared there was no doubt Iraq had WMDs, and claimed that the intelligence proved it.<sup>26</sup> The administration had marginalized the formal intelligence community in order to come up with the answers it wanted. Meanwhile Feith's operation, and administration policy advisor and hawk Richard Perle, attacked those who didn't fall into line. In a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed article on September 4 Rove associate Michael Ledeen suggested that in addition to Iraq, the governments of Iran, Syria, and Saudi Arabia should be

overthrown. But the main push was planned to commemorate the one-year anniversary of September 11.

On September 8, on NBC's *Meet the Press* with Tim Russert, Cheney declared that those who doubted the threat of Iraq hadn't "seen all the intelligence that we have seen,"<sup>27</sup> effectively trumping the intelligence community. On CNN the same day, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice told CNN, "There will always be some uncertainty about how quickly (Saddam) can acquire nuclear weapons. But we don't want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud." The words echoed in the *New York Times* lead story the same day.<sup>28</sup> The cumulative impact of the White House Iraq Group push clarified two years later when the *Times* and the *Post* publicly deconstructed their work in the run-up to the war. The *Times* found its coverage was not as rigorous as it should have been. It recounted a series of articles "that depended at least in part on information from a circle of Iraqi informants, defectors and exiles bent on 'regime change' in Iraq, people whose credibility has come under increasing public debate in recent weeks...Complicating matters for journalists, the accounts of these exiles were often eagerly confirmed by United States officials convinced of the need to intervene in Iraq." Bush Administration officials acknowledged that they sometimes fell for bad information from the exiles. The *Times* said its page one articles on October 26 and November 8, 2001 had cited Iraqi defectors describing a secret Iraqi camp where Islamic terrorists were trained and biological weapons produced. The problem, the *Times* reported, was that, "These accounts have never been independently verified."<sup>29</sup>

Another front page *Times* story December 20, 2001, cited an "An Iraqi defector who described himself as a civil engineer" who "said he had personally worked on renovations of secret facilities for biological, chemical and nuclear weapons in underground wells, private villas and under the Saddam Hussein Hospital in Baghdad within the last year." The article continued:

Knight Ridder Newspapers reported last week that American officials took that defector—his name is Adnan Ihsan Saeed al-Haideri—to Iraq earlier this year to point out the sites where he claimed to have worked, and that the officials failed to find evidence of their use for weapons programs. It is still possible that chemical or biological weapons will be unearthed in Iraq, but in this case it looks as if we, along with the administration, were taken in. And until now we have not reported that to our readers.<sup>30</sup>

The *Times*' September 8, 2002 lead story, the article said, concerned aluminum tubes the administration advertised as components for the manufacture of nuclear weapons fuel, and claimed this was supported by American intelligence, with cautions about the story "buried deep, 1,700 words into a 3,600-word article. Administration officials were allowed to hold forth at length on why this evidence of Iraq's nuclear intentions demanded that Saddam Hussein be dislodged from power...The *Times* gave voice to skeptics of the tubes on January 9, when the key piece of evidence was challenged by the International Atomic Energy Agency. That challenge was reported on Page A10, though it might well have belonged on page A1."<sup>31</sup> Another story April 21, 2003 cited an Iraqi scientist who claimed Iraq destroyed chemical weapons just before the war

began, or sent them to Syria, and had been cooperating with al Qaeda. The Iraqi official turned out to be in military intelligence. “The *Times* never followed up on the veracity of this source or the attempts to verify his claims.”<sup>32</sup>

Related concerns came to a focus at the *Washington Post*, which conducted its own equally painful review. There, the review reported, some reporters had lobbied for greater prominence for stories that questioned the administration’s evidence for going to war and complained to senior editors, but had little impact. According to the newspaper’s review, “The result was coverage that, despite flashes of groundbreaking reporting, in hindsight looks strikingly one-sided at times.” Some editors gave the impression that with the reality of going to war, contrary information was superfluous. In retrospect, said Executive Editor Leonard Downie Jr., “we were so focused on trying to figure out what the administration was doing that we were not giving the same play to people who said it wouldn’t be a good idea to go to war and were questioning the administration’s rationale. Not enough of those stories were put on the front page. That was a mistake on my part.”<sup>33</sup>

The nation’s two top newspapers for political intelligence even-handedly and unequivocally outlined that they had been utterly misled, and had thereby utterly misled their readers. Key editors and reporters from both publications described how they effectively acquiesced in that misleading with an administration determined to go to war in Iraq, and publicly acknowledged the extent to which they had been misled only two to three years after.

### **The Broader Campaign**

During a July 2005 Army War College *Media Day*, participants debated whether journalism and journalists should be used as tools in information warfare in the war in Iraq. One study that was not cited that day focused on the work of the White House Iraq Group. Reviewing its work, U.S. Air Force Colonel Sam Gardiner (retired) wrote:

From my research the most profound thread is that WMD [weapons of mass destruction] was only a very small part of the strategic influence, information operations and marketing campaign conducted on both sides of the Atlantic. My research suggests there were over fifty stories manufactured or at least engineered that distorted the picture of Gulf II for the American and British people. I’m not writing about a conspiracy. It is about a well run and networked organization. My basic argument is that very bright and even well intentioned officials found how to control the process of governance in ways never before possible.<sup>34</sup>

The influence strategy, according to Gardiner, aimed to define the conflict as a struggle between good and evil; declare Iraq behind the attack on the World Trade Center; dominate the news 24/7 by saturating media time and space, staying on message ahead of the news cycle, managing expectations, and accelerating the process, no matter how bad the story; keep the message consistent daily between Qatar, Pentagon, White House, and London; and use information to attack and punish critics.<sup>35</sup>

The following list identifies a chronology of significant media stories to illustrate Gardiner’s points:

*Anthrax scares:* When Anthrax was found in the United States and Britain, the two nations' intelligence sources cited evidence of the involvement of Iraq in these activities. According to Gardiner, "If a story supports policy, even if incorrect, let it stay around. Based upon what went before, as we moved into marketing of the war, we would have expected to see . . . the creation of stories to sell the policy; we would have expected to see the same stories used on both sides of the Atlantic. We saw both."<sup>36</sup>

*Dirty bombs:* The Iraqi National Congress, led by Ahmed Chalabi, in June 2002 arranged for an interview with Khidhir Hamza, someone who said Iraq was working on a radiation weapon. Hamza was quoted by the White House and by President Bush as implying that Iraq was going to train terrorists to use a radiation weapon. Unnamed "officials" gave additional background interviews to media outlets in which they said radiation weapons were one of the things that kept them awake at night.<sup>37</sup>

*Child soldiers:* In December 2002 the State Department put out a paper warning that there might be fighting from some children as young as ten, and it cited training classes for children ages ten to fifteen. In fact, there were no reports of anyone encountering units of fighting children soldiers.<sup>38</sup>

*Private Jessica Lynch:* On April 3, 2003, fourteen days into the Iraq War, the *Washington Post* reported that one Private Jessica Lynch had "sustained multiple gunshot wounds" and also was stabbed while she "fought fiercely and shot several enemy soldiers . . . firing her weapon until she ran out of ammunition."<sup>39</sup> Lynch, a nineteen-year-old army clerk from Palestine, West Virginia, was captured when her company took a wrong turn just outside Nasiriya and was ambushed. Nine of her comrades were killed. Lynch was taken to the local hospital, at the time full of Fedayeen, where she was allegedly held against her will. Eight days later, she was rescued by colleagues who were reported to have risked their lives to save her. The same day, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld told reporters, "We are certainly grateful for the brilliant and courageous rescue of . . . Pfc. [Private First Class] Jessica Lynch, who was being held by Iraqi forces in what they called a "hospital." An April 5 Central Command briefing reported that air support "in coordination with conventional forces from the Marine Corps and the Air Force and the Army were able to successfully rescue Private First Class Jenifer (sic) Lynch out of a hospital and irregular military headquarters facility that was being used by these death squads in Nasiriyah and successfully return her to U.S. hands."<sup>40</sup> By the afternoon of April 3, when Rumsfeld and General Myers gave their press briefing, the story on the street was that she was America's new "Rambo." In contrast, the BBC online<sup>41</sup> describes the Lynch tale as "one of the most stunning pieces of news management ever conceived."

As the BBC perceived, the American strategy was to ensure the right television footage by supplying reporters with video footage shot and edited by military videographers. This Pentagon strategy can be traced to Hollywood producers, notably the man behind *Black Hawk Down*, Jerry Bruckheimer, who advised the Pentagon on the primetime television series *Profiles from the Front Line*, which followed US forces in Afghanistan in 2001, an approach adopted and developed on the battlefield in Iraq.

*Weapons of Mass Destruction:* In February, 2002, Joseph Wilson, a former Ambassador to the African nation of Gabon who earlier worked as a U.S. diplomat in Baghdad, was sent to Niger to investigate the reports that Iraq was getting nuclear weapons grade uranium from that country. He reported to the CIA that these



allegations were groundless. Nevertheless, in January 2003, and despite Wilson's fact-finding, President Bush declared in his State of the Union speech that "The British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa."<sup>42</sup> Behind the scenes, Wilson sought to correct the record – and when he could not, on July 6, 2003, he published an op-ed in the *New York Times* laying out concern that "If... the information [he compiled] was ignored because it did not fit certain preconceptions about Iraq, then a legitimate argument can be made that we went to war under false pretenses."<sup>43</sup>

The op-ed resulted in attacks on Wilson for publicly challenging the administration's claims as to Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, after a March 7, 2003 International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) commission report declared that documents discovered that supposedly authenticated the uranium sale were, instead, forgeries. According to the *New York Daily News*, the job of the White House Iraq Group was "to make the case that Saddam Hussein had nuclear and biochemical weapons." But so determined was the White House Iraq Group to win its argument, *News* reporters wrote in re-examining the case two years later, "that it morphed into a virtual hit squad that took aim at critics who questioned its claimed. . . . One of those critics was former Ambassador Joseph Wilson. . . . His punishment was the media outing of his wife, CIA undercover intelligence officer Valerie Plame."<sup>44</sup>

### **What Happened to Journalism?**

The summer, 2004 soul-searching self-reports by the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* summarized journalistic shortcomings that misled the American people and the world. They did not, however, note that the problem is not isolated, but is a recurring problem and, likely, a defect inherent in the ties between American journalism and politics. Indeed, the same phenomenon occurred during the early years of the war in Vietnam. Then, too, the front page of the *New York Times* and other newspapers reflected the Johnson administration message that American naval vessels had been attacked in the Gulf of Tonkin, providing the artifice by which President Johnson secured a similar Congressional resolution, not a declaration of war. In Vietnam, too, the *Times* confined dissenting views to its inside pages, just as it had in the run-up to and the early stages of the war in Iraq.

In short, official sources prevailed—not only in escalating the war, but in framing the opposition. The great journalist I.F. Stone once warned that all governments lie.<sup>45</sup> The question is: can mainstream journalism ever see it in time? On that point, history is not sanguine, because government in wartime always has the upper hand. Just after World War I, reviewing the willingness of governments to propagandize their citizenry, and the citizenry's inclination to accept it, Walter Lippmann quoted his colleague Frank Cobb of the *New York World*:

For five years there has been no free play of public opinion in the world. Confronted by the inexorable necessities of war, government conscripted public opinion . . . they goose-stepped it. It sometimes seems that after the armistice was signed, millions of Americans must have taken a vow that they would never again do any thinking for themselves. They were willing to die for their country, but not willing to think for it."<sup>46</sup>

In turn, further reflecting on American journalism's capacity to be misled, Lippmann wrote: "If I lie in a lawsuit involving the fate of my neighbor's cow, I can go to jail. But if I lie to a million readers in a matter involving war and peace, I can lie my head off, and, if I choose the right series of lies, be entirely irresponsible. Nobody will punish me."<sup>47</sup>

That American politics and journalism continue to reflect this flaw in the case of Iraq nearly a century later suggests that American politics and journalism retain the deepest structural fault. The 2004 *Times* and *Post* mea culpas, if helpful, do not ameliorate a finding that the misleading of American media remains an active and continuing function of the U.S. government. Perhaps, for the sake of political advantage, as Karl Rove noted, it doesn't matter what the story is, if you can promote the right picture.<sup>48</sup> Yet the evidence is that American journalism and Americans have again been misled into a needless conflict that has inflicted an unthinkable toll at home and abroad. What happened to American journalism in Iraq appears to be that an administration intent on its own aims employed highly refined tools of mass deception, trumped up evidence, and lied to mislead journalists and citizens. When adversaries are systematically harassed or eliminated by political or other intimidation, and American journalism continues to accept their subjugation and its own, what purpose does the First Amendment serve, except as epitaph to hundreds and thousands of war dead?

#### Notes

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1 Philip Schlesinger, "The Sociology of Knowledge" (paper presented to the British Sociological Association Mass Communication Group, Polytechnic of Central London, London, U.K., March 24, 1972), 4

<sup>2</sup> Bill Israel, *Stealing Reality: The Rise of the Right, the Fracture of News, the Lessons of Karl Rove* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007), in press.

<sup>3</sup> James Moore and Wayne Slater, *Bush's Brain: How Karl Rove Made George W. Bush Presidential* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2003); and Lou Dubose, Jan Reid and Carl M. Cannon, *Boy Genius: Karl Rove and the Brains Behind the Remarkable Triumph of George W. Bush* (New York: Perseus Books Group, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> George Creel, "Public Opinion in War Time," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 68 (July 1918); 185-193.

5. Israel, *Stealing Reality*, chapter 1, in press.

6. Tom Hamburger and Peter Wallsten, *One Party Country: the Republican Plan for Dominance in the 21st Century* (Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley and Sons, 2006), 87.

7. Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Dirty Politics: Deception, Distraction, and Democracy*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 19. The commercial was not only highly effective, but highly misleading.

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8. Robert Entman, "Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm," *Journal of Communication* 43, no.4 (1993); 55.
  9. Leon V. Sigal, *Reporters and Officials: the Organization and Politics of Newsmaking* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath, 1973).
  10. Graham Murdock, "Political Deviance: the Press Presentation of a Militant Mass Demonstration." in *The Manufacture of News: Social Problems, Deviance and the Mass Media*, Rev. ed. ed. Stuart Cohen and Jock Young, (Constable: London; Sage: Beverly Hills, 1981), 208.
  11. Jock Young, "Beyond the Consensual Paradigm: A Critique of Left Functionalism in Media Theory," in *The Manufacture of News: Social Problems, Deviance and the Mass Media*, Rev. ed. ed. Stuart Cohen and Jock Young, (Constable: London; Sage: Beverly Hills, 1981), 329.
  12. E.M. Schur, *The Politics of Deviance: Stigma Contests and the Uses of Power* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1980), xi.
  13. Schur, 5.
  14. Walter Lippmann, *Liberty and the News* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920), 83-94.
  15. Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: Macmillan, 1922), 158.
  16. Israel, *Stealing Reality*, chapter 2, in press.
  17. "Peace Little Girl" in "The Living Room Candidate: Presidential Campaign Commercials 1952-2004," *American Museum of Moving Images*. [http://livingroomcandidate.movingimage.us/election/index.php?nav\\_action=election&nav\\_s ubaction=D&campaign\\_id=168](http://livingroomcandidate.movingimage.us/election/index.php?nav_action=election&nav_s ubaction=D&campaign_id=168) (13 June 2007).
  18. Ibid.
  19. Condoleezza Rice, CNN, September 8, 2002.
  20. Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 30.
  21. Ricks, 38.
  22. Craig Unger, "The War They Wanted, the Lies They Needed," *Vanity Fair*, July 2006, 92.
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