### Advocacy

#### I Affirm the resolution that Resolved: In a Democracy, a free press ought to prioritize objectivity over advocacy

### Definitions

#### In order to understand what it means to affirm, we must define key words in the resolution.

#### As defined by the Collins Dictionary, prioritize means to

Collins Dictionary No Date [Collins Dictionary, No Date, "Prioritize definition and meaning," Collins Dictionary, [https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english/prioritize]/Kankee](https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english/prioritize%5D/Kankee)

Prioritize Word forms: prioritizes, prioritizing, prioritized 1. TRANSITIVE VERB if you prioritize something, you treat it as **more important** than other things. Prioritize your own wants rather than constantly thinking about others. 2. TRANSITIVE VERB If you prioritize the tasks that you have to do, you decide which are the most important and do them **first**. Make lists of what to do and prioritize your tasks.

One of the most pertinent questions on the topic is the objective meaning of terms like objectivity (often thought to be synonymous with terms like neutrality, fairness, and balance) and advocacy (which often is defined as “non-objective”). Some scholars of journalism do believe objectivity can be objective given striking differences between individual journalist’s interpretations and practice of objective reporting, rejecting objectivity outright. Others think current journalistic practices aren’t objective despite claims by the media of its objective coverage. Here are definitions of both objectivity and advocacy for context:

#### Objectivity in journalism is fact-based, non-subjective reporting

**McLaughlin 16** [Greg McLaughlin, senior lecturer in media and journalism at the University of Ulster, 2016, “Journalism, Objectivity and War,” The War Correspondent, https://sci-hub.se/https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt19qgf0x.7]/Kankee

objectivity under fire Objectivity in journalism has come under serious critique from academics (Glasgow University Media Group, 1976; Lichtenberg, 1996; Streckfuss, 1990; Parenti, 1993). They suggest in various ways that the news media do not simply report and reflect our social world but that they more or less play an active part in shaping, even constructing it; that they represent sectional interests rather than society as a whole.2 When these criticisms are leveled at journalists, their traditional defence is their practice of objectivity but what does it mean to be objective in journalism in the first place? According to Michael Schudson (1978), **objectivity** is based on the assumption that a series of ‘**facts**’ or truth claims about the world can be **validated** by the rules and **procedures** of a professional community. The **distortions** and **biases**, the subjective value judgements of the individual or of particular interest groups, are **filtered out** so that among journalists at any rate, ‘The belief in objectivity is a **faith in** “**facts**”, a **distrust** of “**values**”, and a **commitment** to their **segregation’** (p. 6). Gaye Tuchman refers to this method as ‘a **strategic** **ritual’**, a method of newsgathering and reporting that protects the journalist from charges of bias or libel (1972, p. 661ff). Radical critiques measure journalistic claims to objectivity against analyses of how the news media produce and represent their version of reality according to sectional interests. Bias is not in the eye of the beholder but is structured within the entire news process; the news filters and constructs reality according to a dominant or institutional ideology (Glasgow University Media Group, 1976). ‘What passes for objectivity’, for American scholar Michael Parenti, ‘is the acceptance of a social reality shaped by the dominant forces of society – without any critical examination of that reality’s hidden agendas, its class interests, and its ideological biases’ (1993, p. 52). It is the difference respectively between the journalist as the professional, instutionalised reporter and the journalist as the partial eyewitness and writer. John Pilger points to the transparency of this ideology of professionalism, especially in a public service broadcaster like the BBC whose coverage of domestic and foreign crises has demonstrated its true agenda and its true allegiances: These people waffle on about objectivity as if by joining that institution or any institution they suddenly rise to this Nirvana where they can consider all points of view and produce something in five minutes. It’s nonsense and it’s made into nonsense because the moment there’s any kind of pressure on the establishment you find reporters coming clean, as they did after the Falklands. They were very truculent: ‘These were our people, our side. And now we’ll get back to being objective’. It’s the same with the term ‘balance’. I mean censorship for me always works by omission. That’s the most virulent censorship and what we have is an enormous imbalance one way, ...the accredited point of view, the sort of consensus point of view which has nothing to do with objectivity, nothing to do with impartiality and very little to do with the truth.3 The pressure to pursue objectivity in reporting has had serious consequences for journalism as a form of factual writing. James Cameron thought that ‘objectivity in some circumstances is both meaningless and impossible.’ He could not see ‘how a reporter attempting to define a situation involving some sort of ethical conflict can do it with sufficient demonstrable neutrality to fulfil some arbitrary concept of “objectivity”.’ This was not the acid test for Cameron who ‘always tended to argue that objectivity was of less importance than the truth, and that the reporter whose technique was informed by no opinion lacked a very serious dimension’ (1967, p. 72). There are, however, alternative forms of journalism that subvert the very notion of objectivity: the ‘New Journalism’ of the 1960s and what has been called ‘honest journalism’, described as a compromise between the blind assumption of impartiality and ideological commitment. War and alternative journalisms

#### Advocacy means to favor a specific viewpoint

**Cambridge Dictionary No Date** [Cambridge Dictionary, No Date, "advocacy," [https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/advocacy]/Kankee](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/advocacy%5D/Kankee)

public support for an idea, plan, or way of doing something:

However, despite internal disagreements, most journalists generally agree that journalistic objectivity aspires to having news reports’ depiction of what occurred as being close as possible to what actually happened, focusing on facts over opinions and values. Lofty as that goal may be, there are still two major hiccups of note that cause the line between objectivity and advocacy to be blurry.

(1) Though reality itself is objective given the actual existence of one set of true facts, individuals’ perceptions and interpretations of what is real isn’t. Journalist’s attempts to make objective conclusions about what actually happened may come to drastically different beliefs about those facts and what they entail. One may say one’s view of what is objective is within itself subjective.

(2) Reporters often use statements from eyewitnesses to an event as testimony to what happened during an event – these eyewitnesses may advocate a specific belief about what happened. Given the reporter themselves isn’t advocating anything, and is just using the testimony of someone else, they could in effect be advocating something while saying their reporting is objective.

(3) Reporters quoting both sides of a story can falsely conflate both sides of having equal weight on an issue in the form of false balance. This is explained further in neg contention 1.

What’s also important to note is that journalist’s adherence to objectivity has drastically changed over time. Originally, most journalism was subjective and partisan, but slowly became more and more objective to expand to a wider audience (and sell more papers), which led to several decades of strong journalistic ethics until the 1990s. With the rise of the internet and Fox News, objectivity again became lackluster.

### Value/Criterion

#### My value in today’s debate is Democracy.

#### Democracy’s legal definition reads,

https://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Democracy

DEMOCRACY, government. That form of government in which the sovereign power is exercised by the people in a body, as was the practice in some of the states of Ancient Greece; the term representative democracy has been given to a republican government like that of the United States.

#### Prefer it

#### It’s directly in the resolution, the framers intended for us to debate Democracy

#### It’s measurable, we can directly gauge when the power is exercised through the body of people

#### Democracy is a prerequisite to other values, without Democracy almost every other value is impossible to implement.

#### The Criterion is Utilitarianism

#### Utilitarianism’s Legal Definition Reads…

The Free Dictionary by Farlex, https://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Utilitarianism#:~:text=In%20Jurisprudence%2C%20a%20philosophy%20whose,happiness%2C%20wealth%2C%20or%20justice.

**Utilitarianism**

***In***[**Jurisprudence**](https://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/jurisprudence)**, *a philosophy whose adherents believe that law must be made to conform to its most socially useful purpose. Although utilitarians differ as to the meaning of the word* useful, *most agree that a law's utility may be defined as its ability to increase happiness, wealth,  or justice.***

#### Prefer it

#### The Criterion creates a clear ballot, whichever side can prove the opponent’s side of the argument causes more substantial and/or frequent consequences should win

#### The Criterion is measurable and flexible, it is not meant to skew the debate Aff of Neg, rather create the fairest playing grounds for both teams

#### Combined, my value and criterion will be how you, the judge, evaluate today’s debate round. With that being said, let’s move into two reasons a free press in a democracy should prioritize

### Contention 1 – Democracy

#### The death of the fairness doctrine caused a massive decline in media trust by proliferating fake news and favoring opinion-based journalism over facts

**Peltin 21** [Bradley L. Peltin, JD candidate at the University of Iowa College of Law with a B.A. in Political Science and History at the University of Wisconsin, 2021, “In the Public Interest: The Proliferation of Opinion-based T.V. News Content and the FCC’s Ability to Regulate Post-Fairness Doctrine,” SSRN, https://deliverypdf.ssrn.com/delivery.php?ID=143119101106099074120066000114104064029078039067056007087005122097103100090075108077049049044034012025110028109021127014015096049001036077001002080102100087094107070085026028026093086021126104007102124093027017097105095104105001088066071023005085127021&EXT=pdf&INDEX=TRUE]/Kankee

II. BLURRING THE LINE BETWEEN FACT AND OPINION ON TV Americans still overwhelmingly believe that the media is important to the functioning of our **democracy**, yet polling suggests that Americans do not think that television news media is adequately performing this important responsibility.203 In fact, Americans’ trust in the news media has been on a **downward trajectory** for a number of **decades**.204 Reaching a high of 72% in 1977 (the last data point before the Fairness Doctrine’s repeal),205 the number of Americans having a great deal/fair amount of trust in the news media **plummeted** to a low of just 32% in 2016 206 – before slightly recovering to 40% in 2020; but when focusing solely on television news, **only** **18%** of Americans had a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in it in 2020.207 There are indications that an important contributor is the change in the content and presentation of television news over the past few decades. Part II of this Note explores current attitudes towards the news media and the consequences that arise from such attitudes. Section II.A discusses the proliferation of opinion-based programming, including the difficulty many news consumers have in distinguishing opinion from fact. Section II.B examines the nexus between the expansion of opinion-based content in newscasts and the consumer’s perception of bias, resulting in the erosion of trust in the media. Section II.C examines how consumers have reacted to the influx of opinion-based programs. Section II.D explains how the FCC has not historically been equipped to handle the question of unethical journalistic practices or media bias because it would be viewed as censorship, for which the FCC is prohibited from practicing. A. The Proliferation of Opinion-based News Content With the **elimination** of the **F**airness **D**octrine in 1987, the **community trustee** model of broadcasting where broadcasters were seen as having a “special responsibilities to ensure democratic discourse,”208 gave way to a **free market** model.209 In the free market model, “**one-sided** opinions spread over the airwaves,” news began to be **tailored** to viewership ratings, and “‘boring but important’ issues” were left on the editing room floor.210 “**Firewalls** that once **strictly** separated news from opinion [were] **replaced** by **hopelessly** **blurred** lines. Once-**forbidden** practices such as editorializing within straight news reports, and the inclusion of **opinions as if fact**, [became] not only tolerated; [but] **encouraged**.”211 These changes have led to the current state of affairs where opinion and fact are so **intermingled** that Americans have difficulty **distinguishing** between the two. A recent Pew study found that when given a series of factual and opinion statements, only 44% of adults aged 18-49 and only 25% of adults ages 50 and over were able to correctly identify all of the opinion statements. 212 The study was done to see “whether members of the public can recognize news as factual – something that’s capable of being proved or disproved by objective evidence – or as an opinion that reflects the beliefs and values of whoever expressed it.”213 Furthermore, the public is also becoming aware of this problem. In a 2017 Gallup study, 66% of respondents indicated that they believed the news wasn’t being reported objectively and that the news media “did not do a good job letting people know what is fact or opinion.”214 B. The Integration of Opinion-Based Content may be Behind the Perception of Bias and the Erosion of Public Trust in the News. Chief complaints among news consumers are those of bias or inaccuracy. This encompasses complaints of “overly sensational coverage, bias in the reporting and selection of stories, an expansion of news sources promotingan ideological viewpoint. . . and inaccurate reporting. . . .”215 In 1989, only 25% of Americans perceived the news to be plagued by a ‘great deal’ of bias.216 Between 1996 and 2007, that number hovered around 30% before increasing sharply to 37% in 2012 and 45% in 2017. 217 This perception has become such a problem “that less than half of U.S. adults can name a single objective news source.”218 The pollsters at Gallop posit that the “[i]ncreased perceptions of bias may be a major reason behind the erosion in media trust. . . .”219 Additionally, there appears to be a **correlation** between the **low trust** in the news media, the sharp uptick in perceived **bias**, and the integration of opinion-based content,220 including social media,221 into newscasts. This is unsurprising since “[p]ast research suggests that the way information is presented can shape perceived **credibility** of news.”222 Since the elimination of the **F**airness **D**octrine, broadcasters are believed to have had considerably more **flexibility** in their programming as it was no longer required to consider **multiple sides** of a given issue.223 Radio was the first medium to explore opinion-based political programs, and with its success, television soon followed.224 These opinion-based, prime-time programs have long been mainstays of cable networks,225 but over the last decade, opinion has **seeped** into nearly all cable news programs. Pew Research Center studied both cable and broadcast news in 2007 and in 2012; they found that while the traditional nightly news broadcasts on network TV remained relatively the same, programming on cable news channels “changed **significantly**”.226 Cable prime time programming, which had for a while been opinionheavy, was found to feature “the most lopsided ratio of opinion to traditional reporting (70% of the newshole to 30%).”227 But, Pew found that commentary/opinion outweighed factual reporting in both the morning and midday timeslots as well (on a ratio of 56% to 44% and 59% to 41% respectively).228 A more comprehensive report by the RAND Corporation supports these findings. In their report, RAND found that between 1989 and 2017, the reporting styles of broadcast networks “remained constant” although they did find a “gradual shift” from “precise and concrete language” to more “unplanned speech, expression of opinions, interviews, and arguments.” 229 For cable news networks, it was found that from 2000–2017, there was “a **dramatic** and **quantifiable** shift toward subjective, abstract, directive, and argumentative language and content based more on the expression of opinion than on reporting of events.”230 While acknowledging that additional studies needed to be done, the RAND study concluded that the trends toward opinion-based programming “might influence trust in the news media”.231 C. Responses to Opinion-based Programming Besides the fact that Americans are trusting the news media less, the habits of the viewing public have also changed. On one hand, many of those with strong political opinions eagerly tune into cable news programs because they mainly agree with the opinions and narratives being promulgated.232 Since the information on their chosen newscast generally conforms to these viewers’ existing beliefs, they believe it to be true (even when it’s not).233 This is supported by data showing that viewers are “more likely to classify both factual and opinion statements as factual when they appealed most to their side.”234 This also means, however, that people may be “vulnerable to false claims that confirm what is familiar but may be wrong.235 But others are tuning out, growing skeptical of nearly every news item they see or read.236 They are tired of the “ranting,” the pundits “bickering”, and the “news stories that verge on opinion.”237 While some have reverted back to the broadcast networks or local news,238others have stopped consuming news altogether.239 “Many people are **numb** and **disoriented**, **struggling** to discern what is real in a sea of **slant, fake and fact**.”240 D. The FCC Historically has been Prohibited from Intervening to Remedy Unethical Journalistic Practices or Bias as Intervention is now Seen as Unlawful Censorship.

#### A post-truth focus on alternative facts causes a US decline to fascism and the death of democracy

**Palley 21** [Thomas Palley, US economist with a master's degree in international relations and a PhD in economics from Yale University, and former chief economist for the United States-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 2021, “Proto-Fascism Unleashed: How the Republican Party Sold its Soul and now Threatens Democracy,” Political Economy Research Institute, [https://peri.umass.edu/publication/item/1460-fascism-unleashed-how-the-republican-party-sold-its-soul-and-now-threatens-democracy]/Kankee](https://peri.umass.edu/publication/item/1460-fascism-unleashed-how-the-republican-party-sold-its-soul-and-now-threatens-democracy%5D/Kankee)

Her offenses were twofold. First, denying Donald Trump’s dishonest claim to have won the November 2020 election. Second, voting for Trump’s impeachment for his role in promoting the insurrection of January 6, 2021. Cheney’s dismissal marks another step for the U.S. down the road to **fascism**, and echoes with the Germany’s Nazi experience grow louder every day. With her dismissal, the Republican Party has **officially** accepted Trump as their “**Fuhrer**” and shown itself to be entirely beholden to him. The party has also accepted Trump’s “**Big Lie**” and all that it implies for democratic politics. The lie claims the election was stolen, which implies President Biden **lacks legitimacy** and should be **overthrown**. In effect, Republicans have tacitly invited further **insurrection**. Worse yet, acceptance of the “Big Lie” implicitly signifies the Republican Party’s **rejection** of **rule of law** and a turn to the politics of **will power**. Trump’s lie has been disproven by numerous election audits and multiple court cases, all of which have dismissed his claim regarding the election being stolen. By rejecting those audit findings and **court** decisions, the Republican Party has effectively rejected the rule of law as the basis for settling political disputes. In its place, it has tacitly **embraced** fascist politics, which views **democracy** as being for the weak and advocates **seizing power** by force of will, using **whatever means** **necessary**. 3. Triumph of the will Fascist political thinking emphasizes will power, and that turn to the politics of will power is now evident in the Republican Party’s **nationwide** effort to **systematically** **rig** elections via a combination of extreme gerrymandering and voter suppression. The goal is to stack the electoral deck by making it harder for African Americans, minorities, and the poor to vote. Measures include making it more difficult or costly to vote by reducing the number of polling stations, eliminating postal vote drop boxes, reducing polling hours, and lengthening polling station wait times by reducing the number of voting machines. Additionally, Republicans are requiring ID that poorer people are either less likely to have (e.g. a driving license) or is relatively more costly and difficult for poor people to get. The justification for this suppression of voter turnout is **unproven** claims of voter fraud. Republicans prefer to exclude millions of legitimate voters in the name of possibly preventing a few illegal votes. In effect, legal voters are being de facto **deprived** of the right to vote by placing **hoops they cannot jump**. All of this is being done knowing that those groups disproportionately vote Democratic. Moreover, it is all being done within the law as it is done in states where Republicans control the legislature and Governorship. That prevention of voting by use of law is exactly how “**Jim Crow**” worked in the Southern United States to disenfranchise African Americans, which is why the current Republican effort has been labelled Jim Crow 2.0. Though little known, **takeover** from within the law is also how Adolf **Hitler** gained **permanent power** in Nazi Germany. Although the largest party in the Reichstag, the Nazis did not have a **majority**. At Hitler’s request, on March 23, 1933, the German Parliament passed the Enabling Act that gave Hitler **dictatorial** powers. It was supposed to expire in four years, but by then conditions of **democracy** had been **destroyed** in Germany. The debate over the act took place under conditions of intimidation. The Nazis had already arrested all Communist and many Social Democratic members of parliament. The Catholic Church (to its lasting shame) endorsed the act in exchange for a promise its liberties and property would be protected. Its political ally, the Center Party, provided the votes needed to pass the act. That tragic history resonates with the current moment when the Republican Party is stepping up **legal** **means** to rig elections by **electoral exclusion**. The big lesson from the Nazi era is it shows how the worst of **dictatorships** can emerge from within the law. That is an often forgotten lesson of European history where fascism, for the most part, was **voted into office**. The balance of this essay argues that, for forty years, the Republican old guard has fostered political practices and beliefs conducive to fascism. The structure of the argument is illustrated in Figure 1. At the center is fascism which emerges from within the law, is carried across the winner’s line by the Big Lie, and rests on a politics that celebrates triumph of the will. The political conditions for this are the **death** of aspiration to **truth-telling**, belief that a greater purpose justifies actions which are above the law, and belief that politics should be practiced as total war. Those political conditions are mutually reinforcing, as illustrated by the bi-directional arrows. That reinforcing character adds to momentum. Most dangerous of all is that once these practices and beliefs have taken hold they are **extremely difficult** to reverse. Of course, there is also much more to the rise of fascism. In particular, there is an essential economic dimension, with the rise of fascism always being associated with economic distress or disappointment. That aspect is beyond the scope of the current essay which is focused on political practices and beliefs, particularly how the Republican Party has fostered practices and beliefs conducive to fascism. 4. The germination of the fascist seed in the U.S. It is comforting and tempting to attribute the current danger to just Donald Trump. If that were true it would alleviate any wider responsibility, and particularly any responsibility on the part of U.S. political culture and the U.S. political system. However, the reality is the fascist seed **germinated** in U.S. politics long ago, but only now has it become so visible that it is possible to speak of it. A cruel aspect of history is that the unspeakable only becomes speakable once it has happened. Before then **it is dismissed as impossible**. For instance, twenty years ago the U.S. responded to the 2001 Twin Towers attack with passage of the Patriot Act (2001), the Homeland Security Act (2002), and an illegal murderous invasion of Iraq (2003). The World War II memorial was inaugurated by President George W. Bush on May 29, 2004. It looks as if it was designed by Albert Speer who designed the Nazi Party rally grounds in Nuremberg. Back then saying the U.S. was walking the road to Weimar was dismissed as ridiculous. That is despite the open use of the term “Homeland” in the Homeland Security Act, which resonates with the fascist language of “Fatherland” and is so alien to U.S. political linguistic culture. At that time, such things could only be said in fiction – and they were said by Philip Roth (2004) in his prescient novel The Plot Against America. The driving force behind the U.S. drift to fascism has been a Faustian bargain made by the old guard Republican elite which is now being dismembered by Trump. That dismemberment is the payback which the old guard thought it would never have to make. The bargain had Republicans pandering to prejudice by pushing “red meat” politics that advocated nationalism, xenophobia, racism, abolition of abortion, and white conservative cultural values. In return, they got votes that enabled them to push their agenda of tax cuts plus a deregulated economy favorable to business and profits. For almost forty years, beginning with the folksy charm of Ronald Reagan, the old guard persistently fed its political base that diet. And for forty years the formula worked, with Republicans setting the U.S. political agenda as evidenced in bi-partisan support for both the neoliberal economic policy regime and the neocon foreign policy regime. As with Faust, the bargain eventually came due. Tremors first appeared in the Republican presidential primaries of 2016 which saw Donald Trump crush the old guard’s favored son, Florida Governor Jeb Bush, the son of former President George H. Bush and brother of former President George W. Bush. However, once Trump had won the nomination, the old guard went all in on his election. Likewise, they stayed all in on his presidency, embracing the passage of the 2017 tax cuts and defending Trump in his first impeachment trial for abuse of power and obstruction of Congress. Most also stayed with Trump, albeit reluctantly, immediately after the November 2020 election despite his lies about the election being stolen. The old guard only broke more substantively with Trump after the January 6, 2021 insurrection. However, by then it was too late as the old guard no longer controlled the Republican Party, whose base had been transformed by the forty year “red meat” diet. Instead, the base now swore allegiance to Trump, in whom they see an alter-ego with which they can wholly identify: a rich vulgar billionaire, a transgressor (e.g. pussy grabber and conman) who gets away with it, and a demagogic amoralist who is willing to deliver the punitive intolerant social and cultural agenda they want. 5. Death of the aspiration to truth telling The emergence of the fascist threat in the U.S. has been a long slow process. That process is marked by three key developments, the first of which is the death of the aspiration to truth telling. The death of that aspiration has **destroyed** the basis for agreement on what constitutes fact. Over the last several years there has been much chatter about fake news. The phenomenon of fake news is associated with the internet and new communication and social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. It rose to prominence after the 2016 election when Hillary Clinton and the Democrats tried to deflect blame for their defeat on to Russian internet trolls who had posted fake news stories that had supposedly swung the election. The phenomenon was even larger in the 2020 election, but now the fake news stories were associated with home-grown right-wing extremist groups. The problem of internet fake news is real. The internet provides a platform for rapid far-reaching dissemination of highly **tendentious** or outright **fake** material, which can be **plausibly** presented in ways that make it **difficult to detect**. As such, the internet and social media have become the whipping boy for fake news. However, that storyline is a form of fake news in itself. First, it misses the story of Fox News which is broadcast by the enormously influential “old technology” Fox TV network. Second, it miss- es the story of why so many Americans have **rejected** traditional news sources, why they have such an appetite for fake news, and why they are so vulnerable to fake news. Those questions compel recognition that fake news did not emerge from a vacuum. Instead, it emerged from an environment in which many viewers had been primed to receive **partisan** one-sided news presentations, and where they had lost both the **capacity** to check and the **desire** for checked news. Fox News is a **critical** part of that story in two ways. First, it contributed to the prepping and transformation of the Republican base into what it has become. Second, it points to the original sin which birthed the conditions enabling a player like Fox News to become dominant. Metaphorically speaking, Fox News is the bridge that connects where we are now with where we came from, and it also illuminates how we got here. As regards the prepping and transformation of the Republican base, Fox News has skillfully and entertainingly fostered **extremism** in the base for over **twenty-five** **years**. The founding CEO was Roger Aisles, a former Republican media consultant and CNBC executive. Aisles set the tone and direction of the network which has been built on favorable reporting of conservative causes and the Republican party, combined with **persistent** **denigration** of the Democratic Party and liberal causes. It has supported the **incremental** takeover of the Republican Party by its more extreme elements, while simultaneously encouraging its viewership to become more **extreme** and **hostile** to the Democratic Party. Leading Fox News personalities include Lou Dobbs, Sean Hannity, and Tucker Carlson, all of whom are widely recognized to be aligned with what used to be the extreme wing of the Republican Party. Fox has been enormously successful, ranking as the top-rated cable news network in 2019 and received by 87 million U.S. households (90 percent of television subscribers). Its viewer demographic leans significantly older, and a 2013 Gallup poll reported 94 percent of Fox News viewers either identified with or leaned toward the Republican Party. Academic studies uniformly agree that it has an extreme pro-Republican bias, and exposure to Fox News increases the Republican vote share. Some go so far as to characterize it as an **extension of the Republican Party**, delivering news that borders on agitprop (agitation **propaganda**).1 The bottom line is that Fox News has played a critical role transforming the news and political reporting culture, and prepping Americans to be receptive and welcoming of extremist fake news. In effect, it prepared the ground in which internet based fake news could seed so easily. But just as fake news did not develop in a vacuum, so too Fox News did not develop in a vacuum. That leads to the other side of the bridge and the original sin that birthed today’s conditions. The **decisive measure** was the Federal Communication Commission’s (FCC) **elimination** of the “**F**airness **D**octrine” in 1987. The doctrine had been introduced in 1949. It required holders of broadcasting licenses to present controversial issues of public importance and to do so in a manner that was, honest, equitable, and balanced. In short, it was a **restraint** on exactly the **corrosive** type of news and political reporting that Fox News introduced, and which opened the ugly **Pandora’s box** of fake news. The attack on the Fairness Doctrine was led by conservative libertarian and business interests. Business viewed it as an expense and a restraint on lucrative commercial possibilities offered by the infotainment market, in which news is twisted into entertaining partisan half-truths and opinions are presented as fact. Both business and libertarians sold their attack on First Amendment grounds (i.e. unconstitutional restriction of speech), and on grounds that market developments meant consumers had a multitude of news possibilities against which they could check for truth. The doctrine’s elimination unleashed a **demon** that has only gotten worse over time. Fox News was the beginning of the journey: fake news was the destination. And the same arguments that justified repeal of the Fairness Doctrine now service the cause of fake news. “Truth” is impossible. That is because we are always dogged by our own subjectivity, and there are also deep epistemological limits to knowing. However, if truth is impossible, we can still aspire to it via a culture and institutions that promote “truth telling”. The Fairness Doctrine sought to do that in its own imperfect way. It sought to combine freedom with the obligation to **restrain subjectivity** via **equitable** **balanced** reporting. The Republican Party of Ronald Reagan (i.e. the old guard) tore down that structure, using libertarian myths about what people are capable of and simultaneously denying their limitations. In denying those limitations they have ended up jeopardizing liberty. The corrosive effect is visible in the practices of Fox News and fake news, but the damage goes far deeper. The Republican old guard loved to bleat about liberal relativism as part of the “red meat” diet it fed its political base. Liberal relativism is a philosophical discourse that recognizes the inescapable presence of subjectivity and limits to knowing. However, liberals then pair it with pluralist practice that uses reason and rules of evidence as a way of restraining the nihilistic aspects of relativism. At the individual level, the liberal also tacitly embraces existentialism, whereby the individual begins by acknowledging she is responsible for her existence (i.e. for her own life). That frame puts the individual at center stage in a context in which freedom can flourish. Republicans, under the guise of libertarianism, have done the exact opposite. Rather than recognize the reality of relativism, they have pedaled absolutism. The simplicity of absolutism sells well politically, but it does not void the reality of the problems (subjectivity and limits to knowing) identified by relativism. Instead, it covers over the problems and promotes conflict. With absolutism, each person’s truth can claim to be “the truth”, leaving society at loggerheads. The only resolution of that impasse is the **force of will**, which Nietzsche embodied metaphorically in his construct of the “uberman”. The truth that prevails is whatever the most powerful will asserts it to be. Fake news is truth if it is allowed by the prevailing will, and so too is the Big Lie. In sum, the Republican Party old guard’s vilification of relativism, assertion of absolutism, and destruction of a culture of aspiration to truth telling are the original sin that birthed the order in which fake news and the Big Lie can claim to be truth. That new order betrays the past and threatens the future. Now, it is force of will that will determine whether the Big Lie prevails or a culture of truth telling is restored. 6. A greater purpose above the law

### Contention 2 – War Reporting

#### Objective reporting deters government propaganda – past lackluster reporting allowed the invasion of Iraq without proper justification or media oversight

**Ryan and Switzer 9** [Michael Ryan, educator at the School of Communication at the University of Houston, and Les Switzer, professor in the School of Communication, adjunct professor in the Department of History, and co-director of the Center for Critical Cultural Studies at the University of Houston, 2009, “Propaganda and the subversion of objectivity: media coverage of the war on terrorism in Iraq,” Taylor and Francis, [https://sci-hub.se/https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17539150902752721?journalCode=rter20]/Kankee](https://sci-hub.se/https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17539150902752721?journalCode=rter20%5d/Kankee)

More than 2400 terrorist actions against American citizens and interests were recorded from 1983 to 1998. In almost every case, the preferred counterterrorism response was law enforcement. The government used military force in response to only three incidents – the bombings by bin Laden’s followers of two US embassies in East Africa in 1998; the attempt by Iraq to assassinate former President George H. W. Bush in Kuwait in 1993; and the bombing by Libya of a West German discotheque in 1986 (Malvesti 2001). The US news media played a **critical role** in **selling** the **invasion** of Iraq to the American public as an appropriate response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. We argue that (1) traditional principles of **objectivity** are **incompatible** with the dissemination of propaganda from any source; that (2) the media **failed** to employ principles of objectivity in covering the build-up to war; and that (3) the media **endorsed** the Bush administration’s **exploitation** of propaganda techniques to rally public support for war. The media generally have not acknowledged this failure in **professional ethics** – even as some isolated, though influential, media now do acknowledge lapses in judgement in covering news about Iraq. We offer a few suggestions about what journalists could have done differently. The framers of the US Constitution singled out the press for special protection under the First Amendment because they believed unfettered information and commentary were integral to a healthy democracy. The American people should reasonably expect nothing less than the press’s best efforts to provide accurate and complete news and commentary in the service of a burgeoning democratic state. Clearly, this means the press must challenge and not legitimise state propaganda. For its part, the press has a moral covenant with the people to do its very best to keep them informed, from stories about Little League baseball games to stories about war and peace. As international communication scholar Majid Tehranian puts it, ‘Without free and vigorous debate among competing views, no nation can achieve the level of integrated unity and determination necessary for democratic societies to act on public issues’ (Tehranian 2002, p. 79). It may seem naïve to suggest that the media have a **moral covenant** with the people – given the media’s poor coverage of the Bush administration, the war in Iraq and other issues – but we argue that the American people must expect more of the press and we propose a reasonable ethical standard by which the media can be judged. Journalists must decide which of an infinite number of events and issues are important for an audience to know about, and they must describe (or reconstruct) each event or issue as accurately, clearly and completely as possible. Ethical journalists can accomplish these goals when they use a strategy embodied in the principles of objective journalism. Examples of stories by journalists who use an objective approach may be found – in the past and even in contemporary news coverage of the war on terrorism in Iraq – in newspapers like The Christian Science Monitor and The New York Times, and in network television newscasts by people like Tim Russert and Tom Brokaw, but they are rare. Warren Strobel, Jonathan Landay and John Walcott, for instance, wrote a story refuting the Bush administration’s claim that Saddam Hussein had purchased special aluminium tubes for centrifuges to enrich uranium, possibly for nuclear weapons (Strobel et al. 2002). The Knight Ridder trio challenged the administration sources, and much of the media’s coverage, by reporting new evidence from different sources showing the administration’s story was false. Objectivity in news and commentary Many critical scholars believe that objective journalism has been misused and/or abused by journalists to such an extent that it is no longer relevant when discussing how the media might better portray the world to their audiences. We do not agree. An objective approach must be rehabilitated in an ongoing effort to re-establish and re-impose ethical standards for today’s journalists. We recognise that many journalists assume they merely mirror or reflect the news and do not play a major role in representing these realities to their readers, listeners or viewers. We also recognise that objectivity – which often is framed inadequately as merely giving equal time or space to (only) two sides of an issue – is the traditional strategy journalists claim they employ in this quest for truth. We argue for an alternative perspective. First, as journalists we can never be benign or neutral observers, because there is no fixed meaning in the world we are writing about to re-present. Second, as journalists we have essentially abandoned the largely unwritten standards that comprised the foundation of an objective approach to news reporting and writing. A news event or issue cannot be separated from its mediated image. While the media may reflect our world, the act of mediation itself is constitutive of the world that the media reflect. The journalist’s voice is always present in any given news report, and in this way the journalist represents the world of news to the news audience. Even a journalist covering a Little League baseball game may have strong feelings because he or she was a star or a dud or never played. These feelings may colour that journalist’s stories about Little League, just as a religious background may colour a journalist’s stories about the use of foetal stem cells in medical research. We do not argue that individuals can always control these feelings, for they cannot. But we do argue that an objective approach helps journalists and others produce more accurate, complete and impartial representations of reality.

The movement toward objectivity began in the Enlightenment and gained momentum as scientists began to unravel the mysteries of the natural world. Galileo and Copernicus, for example, showed that the Earth circled the Sun and was not the centre of the Universe. Georges-Louis Buffon and James Hutton demonstrated that the Earth was considerably older than the few thousand years implied by The Bible, and Charles Darwin, of course, popularised the notion of evolution by natural selection. Journalism – which was jingoistic, mean, partisan and politicised in early America – began to change in the late 1830s as the penny press made news available to the masses, and editors and writers sought new ways to conceive and package news in their quests for new readers and advertisers. As the scientific method became the dominant narrative in communicating knowledge, more and more journalists began to incorporate the scientific perspective, and to emphasise factual information, in their own work (Mindich 1998).Many journalists began seeking increased power and prestige by defining journalism as a profession and by aligning journalism with a less partisan and more objective approach. This approach was seen as a way to increase profits, and an objective strategy helped drive journalistic practices with the emergence of a mass, popular press beginning in the 1880s and the 1890s (Streckfuss 1990, p. 973). Objectivity was not viewed as a way to guarantee neutrality, but as a way to compensate for the human inability to be objective (Ryan 2006). As early as 1867, Haney & Co., Publishers, produced for literary and newspaper writers a book describing principles that were later seen as fundamental to an objective approach. Newspapers that strive to be profitable must not reflect political or other interests; they must report news, not opinions (Haney’s Guide to Authorship 1867, p. 85). Further, when a newspaper writer quotes an authority, he (sources and writers typically were men) must ‘do so fairly, and copiously enough to do him justice’ (p. 44). When reporting public records, a writer ‘should chronicle the facts, but not give opinions’, and when covering meetings, a writer should report ‘fairly and honestly as a matter of news, giving his personal views in another portion of his paper’ (p. 92). A more formal definition of an objective approach to journalism in America was proposed by journalism professor Charles G. Ross: News writing is objective to the last degree. . . . The viewpoint of the news writer must be that of the unprejudiced, but alert, observer. He must approach his story with a mind open to the facts and he must record the facts unvarnished by his own preferences and opinions. (Ross 1911, pp. 17–18, 20) The meaning of objectivity was refined as journalism practice matured and journalism training evolved during much of the 20th century. Journalism ‘played a significant role in the secularisation of American public life’, as sociologist Richard Flory notes, ‘by spreading ideas adopted from other institutional spheres of knowledge-production to the general public [and by offering] a modern, scientific perspective, appropriate to the age’ (Flory 2003, p. 397). This perspective, media ethicist Stephen Ward observes, ‘can be the practices of common sense or the technical methods of scientific research’ (Ward 2004, p. 17). The overarching goal of one who uses an objective approach is to describe those realities deemed to be newsworthy as accurately as possible. The philosophical underpinnings for objectivity are clarity, accuracy and completeness in identifying, gathering and reporting information; willingness to find and consider new evidence and alternative explanations; scepticism toward authority, the powerful and the self-righteous; initiative in finding answers and solutions and ways to expose lies and deception; impartiality, fairness and disinterest in reporting; refusal to serve any political, social, religious, cultural or scientific agenda; imagination, creativity and logical consistency; honesty about personal preferences and idiosyncrasies; communality in sharing findings; and verification of findings in subsequent reports. None of this excludes analysis and interpretation in information collection and writing, as some critics charge. Early admonitions to ‘keep your own opinion out of your stories’ referred to personal opinion unsupported by evidence. They did not refer to evidencebased analysis and interpretation that could be used to guide story selection, information collection, reporting, writing and editing. The standards of an objective approach apply to commentary as well as to news. This does not mean commentary must not contain opinion. It does mean those opinions must be clearly labelled and well supported by evidence gathered using the techniques of an objective approach. The opinions expressed certainly should not be based on faulty or incomplete information that could ultimately lead to poor decision-making (Ryan 2001, 2006). Ethical journalists honour the principles of objectivity – whether they call it pragmatic objectivity, epistemological objectivity, good journalism or something else – because their output will be transparent, rational, coherent, logical and factual. The approach requires a journalist, or anyone else, to follow the evidence to reasonable conclusions. ‘Objectivity is part of our culture’s attempt to say what knowledge is and how to pursue truth in the many domains of inquiry’, Stephen Ward (2004) argues. ‘Objectivity, properly understood, is a bulwark against authoritarianism in belief and practice. It is a defense against an obscurantism that allows the clever to manipulate the naïve or vulnerable’ (p. 318). The focus of media ethics typically has been on the individual journalist, but that focus is too narrow when the individual must function within an organisation buffeted by all kinds of pressures from government, advertisers, peers and the community. In many cases, the interests and concerns of the media corporation itself may place undue burdens on journalists who work in this environment. Nevertheless, these pressures do not abrogate ‘the ethical imperative of journalism to maintain its standards’, as Ward (2004) notes. ‘Awash in media, the public needs a core of objective news reporting. It needs quality news organizations that serve as islands of credible, verified reporting in a sea of bias and opinion’ (p. 325). Propaganda strategies and the run-up to war

The use of propaganda techniques is not consistent with a journalism that is defined by an objective approach to news. Journalists who use an objective approach seek to construct reality as accurately as they can, while those who use propaganda – as defined by communication ethicist Elspeth Tilley (Tilley 2005) – typically seek to bend reality to their own purposes. Tilley, who refined a propaganda index through analysis of the Australian government’s terror information package, defines propaganda as: communication that uses a specific set of rhetorical devices and cognitive heuristics to make claims or assertions, and to generalize (often unstated) broader assumptions from those claims, without providing evidence. [Labelling], particularly once it has become widely accepted as having a certain meaning and connotation, means evidence is not presented and examined on each occasion, but taken as ‘read’. (p. 70) Ethical communicators, especially in times of crisis, use ‘pluralist, evidence-based communication styles that offer data, research, history, context, and point readers to verifiable sources of information’ (Tilley 2005, p. 70). Propagandists typically serve someone’s narrow agenda, make claims that are not evidence-based, spread lies and deception, supply incomplete or misleading information, serve authority figures, and deny or hide their own interests and prejudices. Journalists who are committed to an objective approach do none of these things. We argue that America’s news media **endorsed** propaganda devices used by the Bush administration to generate public approval for invading Iraq. The focus is on propaganda devices that constitute Tilley’s propaganda index. The categories are described as bandwagon, glittering generality, transfer positive (positive qualities of something transfer to something else), transfer negative (negative qualities of something transfer to something else), name-calling, manifest destiny and plain folks. We report the results of several studies of media coverage of the run-up to the invasion of Iraq, but our primary focus is on our own study of editorials published in the ten largest US daily newspapers, which we searched for these propaganda devices:1 The Wall Street Journal, USA Today, The New York Times, Los Angeles Times, The Washington Post, Daily News (New York), Chicago Tribune, Newsday, Houston Chronicle and The Dallas Morning News. 2 The focus is on the 27 days preceding the invasion – 22 February–20 March 2003. Ninety-one editorials related to the invasion. Results were broken down into two time periods, 22 February–6 March and 7 March–20 March. The dividing point is 7 March, when Hans Blix, the chief UN weapons inspector, reported that Iraq, though increasingly cooperative, was not in full compliance with UN mandates. The question was whether this news was reflected in the editorials and whether more or fewer propaganda devices were used as war approached (Ryan and Switzer 2008). These newspapers and other media used six of Tilley’s seven propaganda devices, according to our research and other studies. Only the plain-folks technique seems to be missing from the propaganda armoury. Propaganda strategy 1: getting on the bandwagon The news media clearly supported the Bush administration’s effort to create a bandwagon effect (Table 1) – defined as an attempt to show that ‘everyone, most people, many people or any large collectivized group of people such as our school, our company, or our neighborhood thinks a particular, singular, and uniform way’ – to make it appear that all patriotic Americans supported the proposed invasion (Tilley 2005, p. 72). Part of this effort was the attempt to create the perception that there were only two options regarding Iraq, ‘use military force’ or ‘do nothing’ (defined as anything short of an invasion). Since few journalists or commentators seemed prepared to argue that the United States should do nothing, the bandwagon favouring a military option rolled freely from the beginning. Editorials in the ten largest US newspapers helped move the war wagon along. Seventy-nine editorials (and all ten newspapers) simply assumed Iraq would be invaded, as shown in Table 1, with more making that assumption in Period 2 (following the Blix report) than in Period 1. Forty-eight editorials (in seven newspapers) supported military intervention. Seven newspapers backed the war editorially: The Wall Street Journal, Newsday, The Dallas Morning News, USA Today, Daily News (New York), Chicago Tribune and The Washington Post. Three did not call for war, but they did not oppose it either: The New York Times, Los Angeles Times and Houston Chronicle. Not a single editorial attempted to slow the bandwagon by opposing military intervention; only five editorials counselled sacrifice by the public and only seven suggested caution. Ten of these twelve editorials were published only after it was clear the United States would invade Iraq. The bandwagon effect was supported by editorial writers who said urgent action was required – even after 7 March 2003. The newspapers frequently posed the question, repeated incessantly by Bush and other war advocates: How much time does this evil man need? Their frustration was captured in the president’s statement, ‘[H]ow much time do we need to see clearly that he’s not disarming? As I said, this looks like a rerun of a bad movie and I’m not interested in watching it’ (International Information Programs 2003). Most agreed with USA Today: Pretending that more time would prompt Hussein’s cooperation or conjure up a strong-willed international community ignores 12 years of history. It also perpetuates the kind of wishful thinking that got the world where it now stands.3 (USA Today 2003, p. 14a) Few in the media seemed to notice that Hussein was complying with UN directives or that Bush kept raising the bar for peace – first that Hussein must allow weapons inspectors, then that he must allow them in his palaces, then that he must list his weapons and ‘be cooperative’ and finally that Hussein and his sons must leave Iraq. A few editorial writers suggested that the embargo against Iraq, weapons inspections and diplomatic efforts were working, but most ultimately agreed with the president that ‘doing nothing’ was not an option. In this binary world, **war was the only option**. The bandwagon effect also was supported in other publications. Photographs of troops and military hardware published in news magazines before the invasion created an image of a determined, powerful nation ready for war: The analysis suggests that newsmagazine photographs primarily serve established narrative themes within official discourse: that published photographs most often offer prompts for prevailing government versions of events and rarely contribute independent, new or unique visual information. (Griffin 2004, p. 381) Photographs of human suffering, property damage and American casualties were accessible to viewers of news media like Al Jazeera, the Arab television and Internet network. Al Jazeera did show images of innocent civilian casualties, who were called martyrs, and of American and coalition war prisoners and casualties, who often were called invaders. American media outlets might have used such images – had they not self-censored themselves by stereotyping Al Jazeera and the Arab media in general as a propaganda tool of the terrorists – and framed them as part of a more comprehensive and accurate depiction of war. Military strikes were assumed from the start to be part of the US response. ‘The New York Times,’ for example, ‘constructed and celebrated heroes and bolstered leaders as they responded to the crisis. It **mobilized** for war and warned of a foreboding future, of suffering and sacrifice to come’ (Lule 2002, p. 286). The words ‘war’ and ‘terrorism’ were linked, and they constituted a mantra in network television’s pre-invasion coverage: ABC News broadcast eighty-six stories that contained the terms ‘war’ and ‘terrorism,’ CBS News aired ninety-six such segments, NBC News broadcast 133, CNN televised 316, and National Public Radio aired 166. The US print press available in the Lexis-Nexis archive published a total of 5,814 articles that mentioned the two terms. (Nacos 2002, p. 146) The New York Times, The Washington Post, and other individuals and media outlets – in unprecedented fashion – eventually acknowledged their coverage was flawed. Editors at The New York Times, for instance, ‘found a number of instances of coverage that was not as rigorous as it should have been. . . . Looking back, we wish we had been more aggressive in re-examining the claims as new evidence emerged – or failed to emerge’ (From the Editors 2004, p. 10a). The New York Times and The Washington Post acknowledged that reporters relied too heavily on sources who had vested interests in war or who had no knowledge of what was happening in Iraq. ‘Complicating matters for journalists,’ according to The New York Times, ‘the accounts of these exiles were often eagerly confirmed by United States officials convinced of the need to intervene in Iraq.’ Assertions by war advocates were **unchallenged** – or contradictory information was **buried**. Official claims got **prominent** play, ‘while follow-up articles that called the original ones into question were sometimes buried. In some cases, there was no follow-up at all’ (From the Editors 2004). Patrick E. Tyler’s story of 6 February 2003, according to Daniel Okrent, The New York Times’ public editor, ‘all but declared a direct link between Al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein’. The link would never be confirmed because there was no link. ‘Other stories pushed Pentagon assertions so **aggressively** you could almost sense epaulets sprouting on the shoulders of editors’ (Okrent 2004, Week in Review, 2). The bandwagon rolled on. The Washington Post also gave favoured treatment to pro-war news, according to staff writer Howard Kurtz: ‘Some reporters who were lobbying for greater prominence for stories that questioned the administration’s evidence complained to senior editors who, in the view of those reporters, were unenthusiastic about such pieces.’ Pentagon correspondent Thomas Ricks noted: ‘There was an attitude among editors: Look, we’re going to war, why do we even worry about all this contrary stuff ?’ (Kurtz 2004, p. 20a). Jessica Yellin, former White House correspondent for MSNBC, said in May 2008: ‘The press corps was under **enormous** pressure from corporate executives, frankly, to make sure that this was a war that was presented in a way that was consistent with the **patriotic fever** in the nation and the president’s high approval ratings.’ As Bush’s approval ratings went up, so did pressure from news executives to produce positive stories about Bush. Yellin said: ‘They would edit my pieces, they would push me in different directions, they would turn down stories that were more critical and try to put on pieces that were more positive.’4 There were isolated instances in which journalists reported evidence and made arguments that might have slowed the bandwagon. One example was The New York Times’ response to the 7 March report of Blix: ‘[T]he report of the inspectors on Friday was generally devastating to the American position. They not only argued that progress was being made, they also discounted the idea that Iraq was actively attempting to manufacture nuclear weapons’ (The New York Times 2003, p. 12). Most responses were like that of the Daily News (New York), however, which said the report contained ‘even more excuses’ (Daily News (New York) 2003a, p. 24).

Propaganda strategy 2: the glittering generality Glittering generalities are words and phrases that support a position without evidence (Table 1). These include: positive-sounding euphemisms (e.g., collateral damage and friendly fire for civilian or owntroop deaths . . .); broadly affirmative unverifiable adjectives (e.g., state-of-the-art, hightech); . . . vagaries (e.g., significantly increasing or highly trained, where the level of increase or training is not defined); subjective adjectives or adverbs (beautiful, stunning) which give positive effect without evidence. (Tilley 2005, p. 72) All were used by the media in the run-up to the war in Iraq. Sixty-three editorials published by the ten largest US newspapers we studied, for example, cited destroying Hussein’s unconventional weapons as a main reason for war, as shown in Table 1. But there was no credible evidence that he had such weapons or that he could deliver them against the United States or its allies. No editorial in any newspaper questioned whether Hussein had weapons of mass destruction – all assumed he did. Other reasons cited in support of the invasion included: to change the regime, 21; Saddam is ‘bad,’ twelve; to bring freedom to the Iraqis, eleven; to make the world safer, ten; to defend the country, eight; and to combat terrorism, six. The two reasons that resonated particularly well with many Americans, especially conservative Christians, were that Saddam is evil and must go and that America must fight to bring freedom to Iraq (Ryan and Switzer 2008). All of these are empty euphemisms that had little empirical support before the invasion, but they ultimately began to appear to be – and to be portrayed in the media as – hard evidence supporting an invasion. In fact, the Bush administration manufactured and cherry-picked evidence supporting the invasion. A glaring example was former Secretary of State Colin Powell’s speech to the United Nations when he sought approval for a resolution authorising military action against Iraq. Powell promised to show in his UN speech on 5 February 2003 that Hussein was secretly trying to produce weapons of mass destruction: We know that Saddam’s son, Qusay, ordered the removal of all prohibited weapons from Saddam’s numerous palace complexes. We know that Iraqi government officials, members of the ruling Baath Party and scientists have hidden prohibited items in their homes. Other key files from military and scientific establishments have been placed in cars that are being driven around the countryside by Iraqi intelligence agents to avoid detection. (US Secretary of State Colin Powell addresses the UN Security Council 2003) Powell presented photographs purporting to show that components of weapons of mass destruction were being moved; he maintained Iraq had failed to account for all weapons of mass destruction amassed in the 1990s; he said Iraq had mobile facilities for making biological weapons; he cited the purchase by Iraq of aluminium tubes to construct centrifuges used to enrich uranium; and he claimed Iraq had helped Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda acquire gases and poisons. These were all positive statements supporting an invasion, but they were mostly false or misleading. A compliant media deemed the speech a success. Powell, USA Today asserted in its news columns, ‘forcefully laid out newly declassified evidence of Iraq’s efforts to develop and conceal chemical, biological and nuclear weapons, as well as new signs that an al-Qaeda terrorist cell was set up in Baghdad last year’ (Nichols 2003, p. 1a). The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette claimed in an editorial that Powell’s speech ‘was far more powerful than anyone had predicted’ and that ‘Powell did produce the proverbial “smoking gun”’ (Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 2003, p. 1b). Propaganda strategy 3: transferring positive qualities The media clearly used the transfer positive technique (Table 2) – the ‘process of association whereby the “good” of one thing rubs off onto something else’ (Tilley 2005, p. 72). They praised and made heroes of Western leaders, victims, survivors and rescue workers. ‘This shift of focus [in the days immediately following 11 September 2001] from victims to heroes helped to effect a transition from death to life, and it coincided with the rhetorical shift from shock to sorrow to patriotism’ (Kitch 2003, p. 219). Political and military leaders were portrayed as heroes – to their benefit. ‘The construction of political leaders as heroes . . . can legitimize the actions of those leaders and buttress their authority at critical times. The [New York] Times’ portrayal of President Bush as “a leader whom the nation could follow” offered implicit (and politically important) support for the administration’s response to September 11’ (Lule 2002, p. 284). President Bush elevated his own status by: attacking the ‘evil’ of the terrorists, using the word five times in his first statement on the September 11 terror assaults, and repeatedly portraying the conflict as a war between good and evil in which the United States was going to ‘eradicate evil from the world’ and ‘smoke out and pursue . . . evil doers, those barbaric people’. (Kellner 2002, p. 144) The media also used the transfer positive device by relying on spokespersons like former Secretary of State Colin Powell and former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, as shown in Table 2. In addition, they relied on a host of military analysts who often agreed with the administration’s militaristic worldview and who would benefit financially from a war in Iraq. The paid analysts ‘often got more airtime than network reporters, and they were not merely explaining the capabilities of Apache helicopters. They were framing how viewers ought to interpret events’ (Barstow 2008, p. 1a). Two of the analysts were Barry R. McCaffrey and Wayne A. Downing, who worked for NBC. They were members of an advisory board for the Committee for the Liberation of Iraq, ‘an advocacy group created with White House encouragement in 2002 to help make the case for ousting Saddam Hussein. Both men also had their own consulting firms and sat on the boards of major military contractors’ (Barstow 2008, p. 1a). Two problems, however, did arise during the run-up to war. First, Bush’s heroic image had tarnished somewhat by the time it became obvious the United States would invade Iraq (roughly a month before the invasion) and, second, several major religious denominations expressed opposition to the proposed war. These difficulties had to be dealt with if the selling of the invasion were to succeed. Editorials in the ten largest newspapers employed two strategies. First, they seized on former British Prime Minister Tony Blair as the hero in hopes that his ‘positive outlook’ would rub off onto the war effort. Blair, like other members of the coalition of the willing, was lauded for standing his ground in the face of considerable political opposition at home. Second, editorials began to distinguish between Bush’s efforts to get international support for the war, which they said fell short, from the idea of war. Negative descriptors of Bush were far more common after 6 March 2003, when Bush was trying, and largely failing, to rally international support and to secure a new UN resolution, particularly in newspapers that did not call for an invasion: The New York Times, Los Angeles Times and Houston Chronicle. Bush was described in the editorials as confused, unfocused, cavalier, high-handed, disingenuous, reckless, wrongheaded, inflexible and too hasty. The main substantive concerns were that Bush’s diplomatic efforts were clumsy and ineffective, 14; that he did not explain clearly the costs and risks of war, 13; that he did not make the reasons for war clear, nine; that he dismissed critics’ concerns about the war, eight; and that he alienated allies, six. This excerpt from the Los Angeles Times is typical: But Bush and his advisors also bear much responsibility for the impasse that threatens to wreck the system of collective security that emerged out of World War II. Bush’s disregard for international treaties and his heavy-handed diplomacy have infuriated America’s allies, turning friends into foes. (Los Angeles Times 2003a, p. 14b) Most newspaper editorials, because of larger concerns, tended to ignore or to explain away Bush’s mistakes and inconsistencies. Newsday, which supported the war, wrote: ‘Whatever diplomatic mistakes and political missteps he made in getting there, Bush has taken a stand on Iraq from which he cannot back off without damaging his office and the credibility of the nation itself’ (Newsday 2003, pp. 25a, 26a). The opposition to the invasion expressed by many Christian denominations and individuals was more problematic. Many moderate and progressive Christians, as well as many conservative evangelicals, were uncomfortable with a war of choice, or what Bush and the news media called a ‘preemptive’ war – one in which the United States, acting in self-defence, would respond militarily to a proven threat (weapons of mass destruction). Many Americans, Christians and non-Christians, recognised that Bush was really proposing a ‘preventive’ war in which the United States, acting as an aggressor, would launch military strikes against a sovereign nation that might pose an unspecified threat at some unspecified time in the future (Dean 2004, pp. 132–136). But a preventive war would not satisfy the criteria set by Christians like Saint Augustine as early as the 5th century – it was not a just war.5 Many religious leaders refused to endorse a preventive war in Iraq, even though many members of their congregations did. Bob Edgar, head of the National Council of Churches, noted: ‘While we may have been silent then [before the war in Afghanistan], we certainly don’t think the way to get rid of terrorism is to bomb every government. Even bad governments’ (Gibson 2002, p. 6 opinion). The US Conference of Catholic Bishops sent to Bush on 13 September 2002 a letter stating: We respectfully urge you to step back from the brink of war and help lead the world to act together to fashion an effective global response to Iraq’s threats that conforms with traditional moral limits on the use of military force. (Letter to President Bush from Catholic Bishops 2002) The media dealt with the problem of Christian opposition by embracing Christians like Charles Colson (the Nixon administration’s chief counsel and one of the infamous Watergate Seven), who said: ‘Out of love of neighbor . . . Christians can and should support a preemptive strike, if ordered by the appropriate magistrate to prevent an imminent attack’ (Colson 2002, p. 72).6 Like the Bush administration, they also used another powerful propaganda technique: They essentially ignored the criticism. They gave enough coverage to show they made a good faith effort, but not enough to have an impact on the march to war. None of the editorials in the ten largest newspapers mentioned the calls by the major religious denominations or by Pope John Paul II for a peaceful solution and they ignored, downplayed or denigrated the marches and petitions of ordinary Americans against the impending invasion.

Propaganda strategy 4: transferring negative qualities Transfer negative (Table 2) is defined as a process of casting individuals or groups in a bad light by associating them directly or by implication ‘with negative incidents, places, people, or symbols’. The negative qualities ‘rub off’ on ‘the issue being discussed or discredit by implication an opposing viewpoint’ (Tilley 2005, p. 72). France, attacked in 45 editorials, was the prime target, followed by Russia, 19; Germany, 13; and the United Nations, eight. ‘Weapons inspectors’ were criticised in eight editorials, as shown in Table 2. The editorials also attacked individuals like French President Jacques Chirac and Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin and German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder. Writers typically associated those who did not support the war wholeheartedly with ‘bad’ people. The Daily News (New York) managed to associate just about everyone with ‘appeasers’ when it wrote of Blix’s 7 March report: France and the other eager appeasers should stop their excuse making and do what comes naturally to them: retreat. Unfortunately, they are being handed even more excuses, courtesy of Hans Blix. The chief UN arms inspector . . . is wrapping everything in such carefully parsed language, he’s playing right into the hands of the cave-in crowd. (Daily News (New York) 2003a) The Wall Street Journal, in a particularly harsh editorial, managed to associate former Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle with the despised French. The last line was, ‘The next time Mr. Daschle says he wants to “work with the President”, at least we’ll know which country’s President he’s referring to’ (The Wall Street Journal 2003, p. 14a). Many of the ten largest newspapers used the transfer negative device in attacking domestic critics of the war. They typically noted that critics had the right to protest, but they clearly wanted to intimidate and silence the protesters, often by casting them as ‘friends’ or ‘dupes’ of the evil terrorists. The Daily News (New York) said that opponents of the war were ‘determinedly blind to the facts’ or were ‘sadly ignorant of them’ and it stereotyped them as ‘peaceniks’ and ‘peacemongers’ (Daily News (New York) 2003b, p. 34). Mackubin Owens denounced in The Providence Journal (RI) ‘the lunatic ravings of those who hide behind the Constitution while trying to destroy it, and whose perspective is not that different from the pathological hatred and fanaticism that motivates Osama bin Laden’ (Owens 2001, p. 7b). Some of the guilt-by-association charges were levelled in clever, backhanded ways. The Dallas Morning News, for instance, chastised Mexican President Vicente Fox for failing to support war against Iraq publicly. The Dallas Morning News noted that Mexico, a member of the UN Security Council, can ‘decide for itself whether to authorize war’. However: Having enlisted to help maintain the world’s security, Mexico should demonstrate it takes that responsibility seriously by supporting the United States. Having thrust itself onto the world stage, it should act with all the courage, wisdom and foresight that its role requires. (The Dallas Morning News 2003, p. 22a) Mexico would not be acting with ‘courage, wisdom and foresight’, presumably, were it to associate itself with ‘them’ by voting against war. The media dutifully reported Bush’s assertion that Iraq had obtained uranium from Africa during his State of the Union speech on 28 January 2003: ‘The British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa.’ The uranium, yellowcake plutonium from Niger, could be enriched to make a nuclear weapon: Imagine those 19 hijackers with other weapons and other plans – this time armed by Saddam Hussein. It would take one vial, one canister, one crate slipped into this country to bring a day of horror like none we have ever known. (President delivers ‘State of the Union’, 2003) The media had to report Bush’s use of this propagandistic statement, but they failed to report that the charge had been discredited months before the president’s address and there was no evidence that Hussein was linked to al-Qaeda or the 9/11 attacks. The FBI later determined that two employees in the Niger Embassy had forged the documents and passed them to an Italian national for sale to contacts in the international intelligence community (Isikoff and Corn 2006, pp. 89–90). A few journalists did use an objective approach in providing credible coverage of antiwar perspectives. Knight-Ridder’s Strobel, Landay and Walcott (Strobel et al. 2002), who have already been mentioned, refuted the story about Iraq’s alleged purchase of aluminium tubes to enrich uranium. Some newspapers also published stories like Kim Campbell’s (2003) in The Christian Science Monitor, Laurie Goodstein’s (2003) in The New York Times and David Gibson’s (2002) in the Sunday Star-Ledger of Newark about religious opposition or indifference to the potential war. And some publications transcended some of the propaganda by showing they were at least aware of the potential impact a preventive attack by the good people (Americans) would have on the demon people (Muslims). The Los Angeles Times wrote, for example, that: Throughout the Middle East, a postwar occupation of Iraq would become part of the myth of an American empire come to wreak havoc on the Muslims. This refueled resentment would not make the world safer. It would not make the streets at home safer. (Los Angeles Times 2003b, p. 14b) Propaganda strategy 5: name calling Name calling (Table 2) seems in this study closely related to transfer negative, but it is treated as a separate category. Name calling is defined as ‘negative or “bad” labels or stereotypes (e.g., terrorists, extremists, fanatics, ferals, “rent-a-crowd”) that encourage a summary negative response without examining history, complexity, or evidence related to an issue’ (Tilley 2005, p. 72). The ultimate insult was to label someone a terrorist, whether the accuser had any evidence or not, and it was the most frequently mentioned pejorative name in the editorials of the ten largest newspapers. The terrorist was defined and described by the Bush administration, the media and war advocates as signifying an individual or group as evil, irrational and without goals – and as someone who, without evidence, could be detained indefinitely by the US government. This use of ‘terrorist’, under the definition that prevailed in the United States after 9/11, essentially stops conversation and makes it difficult to find the causes of terrorist behaviour, which is an important step in developing a responsible response to an attack. Saddam Hussein – whose name was mentioned 84 times, often without rancour, in the editorials we studied – was not often demonised as a terrorist, although his name was associated with terrorism. The writers of editorials published in the ten largest newspapers frequently settled for names that carried less emotional baggage than terrorist, the primary one (used 25 times) being dictator. Names that seemed to carry more emotion than dictator, but less than terrorist, were also used, the most favoured being tyrant, murderer and madman, as shown in Table 2. He was also called a monster, bully, thug, megalomaniacal, torturer, aggressive, psychotic, liar, cruel, terror-monger, beastly, deceptive, dirty and dastardly. Propaganda strategy 6: manifest destiny Manifest destiny – especially as used by American politicians since the beginning of the 19th Century – is the ‘deterministic invocation of God (of any kind or faith), destiny, fate, natural processes, or universal design, to lend support to an argument; removal of accountability for an idea or issue from individuals and attribution of responsibility to deterministic “greater forces”’ (Tilley 2005, p. 72). George Bush and Tony Blair tried in 2002 to rally support for the invasion of Iraq by asserting that it was the West’s destiny to protect future generations. They cited a report by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that predicted in a ‘new’ intelligence study that Hussein could have a nuclear weapon within six months. ‘I don’t know what more evidence we need,’ Bush proclaimed. ‘We owe it to future generations to deal with this problem.’ In fact, the ‘new’ report was published in the 1990s, not in 2002, and the IAEA did not say Iraq could have a nuclear capability within six months of September 2002. It said Iraq could have had a nuclear capability within six months to two years at the time of the Persian Gulf War in 1991. Journalists could have discovered from the IAEA that Iraq’s nuclear weapons program was destroyed between 1991 and 1998 (Cirincione et al. 2004, pp. 22–23). The media also alluded to manifest destiny when they portrayed the 9/11 attacks as an assault only against the United States: This portrayal ‘precluded other sorts of framing such as “an attack on the West” which might have appeared had we seen the spontaneous street demonstrations of shocked and saddened people in Berlin, Copenhagen, Paris, London, and other parts of the world’. More than 1000 victims of the World Trade Center attack were not US citizens and many of the businesses were international. ‘But ours was an American story’ (Uricchio 2001). Print and electronic media across the United States used slogans such as ‘War on America’ and ‘America’s New War’, suggesting this was a US problem and that it was America’s destiny to solve it (Kellner 2002, p. 147; Nacos 2002, ch. 5). The media dutifully reported Bush’s incessant invocations of God as he attempted to generate support for war. They reported comments like, ‘the terrorists hate the fact that . . . we can worship Almighty God the way we see fit’, and the United States will ‘eradicate evil from the world’ (Kellner 2002, p. 144). The media typically did not greet such expressions with the scepticism they deserved and they rarely noted that many religious leaders viewed the circumstances much differently. God was invoked directly one time and indirectly five times in editorials published in the ten largest newspapers. None suggested that Bush used the word ‘God’ for propaganda purposes. Bush and the media also invoked manifest destiny in their use of words like ‘freedom’ and ‘liberty’. In their analysis of the Bush administration’s use of freedom and liberty, communication scholars David Domke, Kevin Coe and Robert Tynes found that editorial writers for 20 US newspapers echoed Bush’s rhetoric: ‘“Freedom” and “liberty” language and emphasis on these values as universal norms significantly increased . . . after September 11; these shifts over time paralleled the patterns of the president’s communications’ (Domke et al. 2004, p. 23). About 30% of the editorials they studied referred to freedom and liberty after 9/11, and half of those emphasised freedom and liberty as universal norms. What journalists should have done Journalists would have served the public better in the run-up to the invasion if they had adhered to principles of objectivity that were once a tradition in journalism. Had writers, editors and commentators followed these tenets, they would have challenged the dichotomous choices posed by the war advocates. They would have questioned whether there were only two options regarding Iraq, ‘do nothing’ or ‘use military force’, and whether such options as tightening the embargo or giving weapons inspectors more time were viable. They would have challenged the assertion that those who were not ‘with us’ were ‘with the terrorists’. They would have noted that one could oppose a US policy of violence and not be ‘with’ the terrorists. They would have questioned the use of ‘terrorist’, a term that has no intrinsic meaning, and challenged its use as a substitute for thinking. Terrorists were not defined as the powerless attacking the powerful who may have wronged them, as individuals who committed violent acts because they believed they had no other alternatives, as individuals who were foreigners to the Arab–Muslim communities in which they were embedded or as individuals who had legitimate grievances (Ryan and Switzer 2008, p. 304). The media, the Bush administration and war advocates made sure questions were seldom raised about the individuals who participated in the 9/11 attacks or about those who were called terrorists and held without trial following the attacks. The use of ‘terrorist’ and phrases like ‘death cults’ to describe groups and individuals: conveniently allows us to dismiss their obvious and usually explicit political goals as simply a mask for their irrationality. It encourages us to believe that those who oppose us for our actions are ‘in love with death’ rather than being governed by beliefs as important to them as ours are to us. By doing so it indulges us in waging ‘war’ on the manifestations of terrorism rather than dealing with its causes. (Steel 2004, p. 13) Journalists were **shamefully** **careless** about **relying** on **partisan** sources. Officials in the Bush administration selected facts that supported war, particularly those suggesting Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, and **ignored** evidence suggesting war was **problematic**. Journalists were dealing with an administration whose public dishonesty was perhaps unprecedented – a reality that was clear in a report produced in 2004 by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, which documented a long list of the lies the Bush administration told about the war in Iraq (Cirincione et al. 2004). The report showed the administration **lied** about Iraq’s **w**eapons of **m**ass **d**estruction, about its missile program, about its contact with terrorists and about UN inspectors’ findings. Journalists committed to an objective approach could have **exposed** most of these **lies**. They certainly would not have disseminated them without caveats attached and without noting the pattern established by war advocates of emphasising facts that supported an invasion and discarding facts that did not. Journalists could have maintained an objective stance by interviewing scholars and consulting easily accessible texts concerned with the methods and goals of international terrorism, including the role of the media in facilitating terrorism. They could have interviewed Muslims, who thought the terrorists’ goals were correct even though their tactics were wrong, and US religious leaders who opposed the war. They could have displayed more prominently the views of those who suggested alternatives to war – such as giving aggressive diplomacy and weapons inspections more time, and tightening the embargo that would have made it impossible for Hussein to ship or to use unconventional weapons – if he had them. ‘Administration assertions were on the front page’ of The Washington Post, says Pentagon reporter Thomas Ricks. ‘Things that challenged the administration were on A18 on Sunday or A24 on Monday’ (Kurtz 2004, p. 20a). Journalists using an **objective** approach would not have attacked or ignored dissent, as the Daily News (New York) did when it said: ‘the dumb-and-dumber crowd, led by France and Germany, want to give Saddam yet more time. They floated a lily-livered proposal that would extend the futile inspections for at least another five more months’ (Daily News (New York) 2003c, p. 36). Nor would they have written, as syndicated columnist Max Boot did in Newsday, that war protesters are ‘making war more – not less – likely’ (Boot 2003, p. 39a). Journalists committed to an objective approach would have reported that the impending war might trigger a resurgence of Muslim religious fundamentalism in Iraq and elsewhere. They would have noted the potential impact a war might have on the broader struggle over fundamentalism within Islam and its consequences for the war against terrorism. They might have argued that those responsible for the 9/11 attacks would welcome such an invasion in the ongoing effort to rally Muslim support for their crusade against Western culture. One of the ironies in an era of ironies is that Hussein was the truth-teller and that those who were attacked for proposing that the United States ‘do nothing’ were in fact suggesting valid alternatives. Hussein had already dismantled his weapons program and he did not have weapons of mass destruction, a fact that he repeated constantly and that was verified by repeated UN inspections. The problem for Hussein was that he could not prove a negative proposition (just as a defendant at trial cannot, and is not required to, prove innocence). Bush and his cohorts did not feel the need to prove Hussein had the weapons they assumed he did. The mainstream news media accepted the administration’s rationale for going to war **without** serious **question**. Indeed, they **legitimised** and assigned **credibility** to Bush’s assertions by **disseminating** them **without challenge** and by **ignoring** or **attacking** contrary information. Whether or not the invasion of Iraq was justified in the war against terrorism is a question that will occupy the nation for decades, for the way in which the United States wages war tells much about the American mindset. The morality of preemptive or preventive wars against non-threatening nations is a legacy this generation of American warriors will leave for future generations to consider. Conclusions The most critical period to date in defining the war against terrorism was 11 September 2001–8 October 2003. The United States faced real choices: to respond to terrorism with military violence and the invasion of sovereign nations or to respond using a myriad of other methods outlined above that excluded state-sanctioned violence. The ethics of the profession demands that journalists – especially during a period of crisis – help identify and evaluate options, encourage an environment of calm determination and help government make the best decisions in the interests of the nation as a whole. This study suggests the US news media between 9/11 and the invasion of Iraq did not fulfil their **ethical obligations** to the American people or to the international community. Objectivity – the key, we argue, to maintaining an ethical standard in journalism – was almost **completely** **abandoned**. Although there were notable exceptions, the news media embraced the techniques of propaganda, consciously or unconsciously, to support an administration that was determined to **exploit** the fear of terrorism to rally public support for the **invasion**. News and editorial writers and editors amplified ‘the views of **fear-mongering** leaders who may **stampede** populations into approval of war or the removal of civil rights for minorities’ (Ward 2004, p. 327). The media have not, for the most part, acknowledged their responsibility for helping to create and maintain an environment in which no alternative to war was seriously considered. Much has been written about instances of failed media coverage, but individual media have not explained why they abandoned their own ethical standards, and they have done little to reassure readers and viewers they will behave differently the next time a US President tries to use fear to rally the people in a time of real or manufactured crisis (Isikoff and Corn 2006, Rich 2006, Ricks 2006, Ryan 2005). It is not at all clear that many journalists even understand these failures. When Knight Ridder White House correspondent Bill Douglas, a panellist at a 2005 conference, heard someone call the press corps a mouthpiece for the administration, he said: ‘Do not call us mouthpieces because that pisses me off more than anything’. When The Washington Post acknowledged that some of its war coverage was not up to standard, executive editor Leonard Downie, Jr said: People who were opposed to the war from the beginning and have been critical of the media’s coverage in the period before the war have this belief that somehow the media should have crusaded against the war. They have the mistaken impression that somehow if the media’s coverage had been different, there wouldn’t have been a war. (Kurtz 2004, p. 20a) The Washington Post also dismissed as unimportant the revelation from an IAEA official that Hussein had not tried to purchase yellowcake plutonium from Niger. The newspaper said the charge was not ‘central to the case against Saddam Hussein, and it did not even form part of Secretary of State Colin Powell’s recent presentation to the Security Council’ (The Washington Post 2003, p. 22a), a presentation that Powell later said is a blot on his record. Unethical coverage, and a refusal to explain that coverage, can have great impact on the media’s effectiveness as a catalyst for decision-making. Good decisions are based on solid information shared widely within a community. When the media lose credibility because of poor and unethical performance, the body of shared knowledge is suspect, and consensus and ‘right’ answers are harder to achieve. The loss of credibility does not do much for a news organisation’s bottom line, either.

#### Media plays a critical role over public opinion, which can prevent wars

**Eilders 5** [Christiane Eilders, senior researcher in political communication at the Hans Bredow Institute for Media Research, 12-2005, “Media under fire: Fact and fiction in conditions of war,” International Review of the Red Cross, [https://www.corteidh.or.cr/tablas/a21917.pdf]/Kankee](https://www.corteidh.or.cr/tablas/a21917.pdf%5D/Kankee)

Strategies of information control Although the media might lack autonomy and tend to follow parliamentary consensus, warring parties **cannot** rely on an automatically supportive media attitude. It goes without saying that they constantly develop new information control strategies to ensure that the media do not counteract their views. For warring parties the public perception of the objectives of war and the actual warfare, i.e. public opinion on the war itself, is an **existential resource** of modern warfare. Nowadays wars cannot be waged without public support. The less the United States relied on the compliance of its allies during the Iraq intervention, the more it endeavoured to convince its own public of the need for that war.14 In doing so, media coverage plays a decisive role. Not only is public opinion expressed in the media, it is also produced and **regulated** through the **media**. By keeping media coverage under control, it is possible to sway the general public towards **affirmation** or **rejection** of the war. The US withdrawal from Vietnam had been attributed to far too lax media coverage by military circles. The images of civilian **victims**, of the **inhumanity** of warfare and of US **casualties** had been blamed for the fact that the American public deprived the government of their backing for the war. This reasoning cannot be verified scientifically,15 but it led to a very creative handling of new forms of censorship by the military.16 Just recently, a major shift could be observed in the US strategy for wartime communication.17 Military-based “information operations” have replaced the better known foreign policy measures of “public diplomacy.” The US army has started to consider information as a discrete military feature, now that various military conflicts have shown that military superiority can no longer be converted outright into political superiority. The so-called information doctrine of 1998 finally made information a foremost priority of all military actions. Under the generic term “information operations” military and media instruments were merged. The high-tech concept of electronic warfare now also includes information security, public relations and perception control as well as instruments of public diplomacy. The idea is to modify perceptions among elites, soldiers and civilians and get them to understand that war is fought in people’s minds rather than on the battleground. Information is now supposed to preserve other military resources. The resulting military management of information is concerned either with domestic or foreign stakeholders in politics or society or with the warring parties involved. The most important objectives are legitimation, deterrence and camouflage. To achieve these objectives various approaches are adopted: besides securing one’s own chain of information and commands, the regulation and selection of flows of information are reckoned to be decisive for military superiority during war and in times of peace. Disruption of the opposing side’s information processes through information overload is considered just as essential as systematic deception and force multiplication through communication. Mass media are utilized for all these strategies: embedded journalists, the planning and implementation of media campaigns on military issues and the building of military TV stations are only a few examples of such use. The new strategies have proved successful, at least in the short run. During the 2003 Iraq war, for example, the US army took only one tenth of the number of prisoners it took in the 1991 Gulf war — as this time many Iraqi soldiers refrained from joining in the hostilities. Szukala also shows, however, that the successful regulation of intensified and systematized media relations gives rise, at least in the long run, to the problem of a “growing credibility gap.”18 The strategy of embedded journalism

### Underview

#### In conclusion, to truly see what a Democracy ought to do, we must view this round through a lens of Utilitarianism. By using this lens to view the round it is imperative that we prioritize objectivity over advocacy, for beyond just the views of Utilitarianism itself, but the preservation of Democracy as a whole.