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From the use of posters in WW1 to the use of promotions in political campaigns, propaganda has come in many shapes and forms (American Historical Association). Post-WW2, the advancements of technology has allowed for propaganda to become more accessible. Through the examination of the United States' media coverage of the Iraq War, it will become evident that news coverage after WW2 has remained propagandistic. Following 9/11, the United States was placed into the spotlight of the media world, and it opened the opportunity for President George W. Bush and his administration to make a move.

Prior to the initial start of the Iraq War in 2003, the Bush administration was looking for an opportunity to seek re-election and to deflect the failings of his government from the years before (Kellner). Using US broadcasting the Bush administration was able to produce strong arguments for public support of the invasion of Iraq. Bush shared to the public that the need for the invasion was based on four ideals; Saddam Hussein was an undeterrable aggressor; Iraq was connected to al-Qaeda (a group predominantly associated with 9/11); Iraq was seeking to acquire nuclear weapons; and Iraq was in possession of weapons-of-mass-destruction (WMDs) (Lewandowsky et al.). Although three out of the four arguments made were factually incorrect, Bush, through his emotionally led approaches of speech, was accepted and endorsed by US media (Lewandowsky et al.; Seaton and Wu). This action indicated how the view of warfare has become an issue of how people respond to the misinformation and disinformation that is

presented to them. For the Bush administration, this disinformation allowed for peace to be undermined and an increase for the readiness of war to occur (Lewandowsky et al.).

Similarly, during the lead-up to the invasion of Iraq, the news had released 2,500 editorial cartoons that were used as a propaganda technique to dehumanize the enemy. 95% of these cartoons contained Saddam Hussein or the Iraqi military in a desensitising manner (Lewandowsky et al.). The use of this newspaper propaganda allowed for Bush to frame a 'Global War' as a "conflict between civilization and barbarianism" (Lewandowsky et al.). By framing the invasion as a response to terrorism, it projected the image that the invasion needed to occur to protect society from an existing threat. Furthermore, it indicated the justification for the mobilization of resources and the offence invasion of foreign countries. The US government's use of war framing allowed for the propaganda angle that was needed in the media to help recruit new soldiers for the "War against America" (Lewandowsky et al.). Bush's good vs. evil angle-invoked media support which aided the march to war (Kellner). Likewise, with the lack of on-air wide-ranging debate, there was no analysis nor commentary for the public to argue whether they were for or against the military action. It, therefore allowed for the Bush administration to be supported in their conquest by the public because of their propagandic means. Following the occurrence of these actions on March 19, 2003, the Iraq War began and inflicted a global media event that was broadcast throughout the world (Haynes and Guardino).

The Iraq War began following a dramatic American attempt against Iraq, where many missiles were aimed at targets in Baghdad. The event was quite a spectacle for the media as the target locations were where Hussein was living. It related to the propagandistic values that were set in place through the Bush administration. By attacking Iraq and equivalently Hussein, it provided Western audiences with a positive outlook as the attack was a "powerful assault on

evil” (Kellner). However, this point of view was not transparent, as many Arab audiences viewed the American invasion as an “attack on the body of Arab and Muslim people” while many European audiences also viewed the invasion as an illegal assault on Iraq (Kellner; Rostam and Haverkamp). However, due to US coverage being heavily one-sided with only “16% of the Iraq coverage...focused on Iraqis”, most of the American public did not see this side of the war. (Pew Research Center; Rostam and Haverkamp).

During the conflict, the US had about 500 journalists on the frontlines to provide immediate coverage which allowed for battlefield images to be brought directly to different audiences (Rostam and Haverkamp). Despite the direct contact, American broadcasting networks including *Fox*, *NBC*, and *CNN*- provided “propaganda and one-sided patriotism” (Kellner). Many of these broadcasting networks were linked with the Pentagon and the Bush administration which allowed for the spread of propaganda and misinformation. Through 24/7 cable networks and the three major broadcasting networks- *Fox*, *CNN*, and *NBC*-the Iraq War was portrayed in a completely different view than other countries. In comparison to the BBC as well as Canadian media outlets, the US tended to ignore Iraqi casualties and the negative features of the war. Instead, they focused on patriotism, propaganda, and achievements and heroism of US troops (Kellner). News networks outside the US, however, did the opposite. Both the British BBC and the Canadian CBC, for example, showcased the true nature of the war, which included Arab outrage, Iraqi citizen casualties, anti-war protests, and the other horrors of war (Kellner). The lack of truth presented to American citizens through news media coverage, allowed for misinformation and propaganda to spread which presented negative impacts on audiences.

In an analysis of *The New York Times* by Dimitrova and Strömbäck, it was noted that the coverage of the Iraq War seemed to “trivialize the human cost of war” (Rostam and Haverkamp).

This view of the Iraq War corresponds with the feelings of 11 Iraqi immigrants of Vancouver, Canada, who were surveyed about the North American media coverage in Iraq. The group agreed that American media coverage was one-sided and tended to highlight US military involvement as opposed to the humanitarian crisis that was occurring for Iraqi citizens. It was also noted that they highlighted a lack of sensitivity of North American media toward Muslim issues (Rostam and Haverkamp). Through this survey, three dominant themes of North American media during the Iraq War emerged: negative portrayal, biased reporting, and images of the war. The participants of the survey indicated that during news reports Iraq was often “misrepresented, demonized or belittled” (Rostam and Haverkamp). Similarly, due to the propagandistic nature of the US coverage of the news, participants felt that North American media was “biased, military-focused, and lacking social, cultural or political context” which attributed to the “exaggeration of the war in Iraq” as a play-by-play coverage (Rostam and Haverkamp). Both aspects played a part in the 30 different images and stories that the participants remembered to have seen that fell into the categories of US military, Iraq civilians, or Iraqi society and culture. The reaction of these images varied in negativity, from anxiety to disgust but displayed the lack of trust that was placed into the North American media coverage (Rostam and Haverkamp.). However, these participants were not the only ones who felt these negative reactions to the US’ propagandistic media coverage.

In the months following the initial invasion of the war, American forces failed to uncover credible evidence of the WMDs or any indications for its development. This contradicted the Bush administration’s initial arguments for the attack on Iraq, which had been heavily supported by the media. Similarly, the Center for Public Integrity discovered that there were 935 false statements regarding the threats from Iraq, which had been broadcasted with little

to no investigation into their credibility (Hayes and Guardino). Consequently, it led to a period of intense scrutiny for critics and news practitioners due to the perception that mainstream media had “failed in the responsibility to democracy” (Haynes and Guardino). However, despite the fault of many broadcasting networks, not every platform was in the wrong. Some American newspaper reporters who were embedded into the conflict chose to provide more vivid accounts of the situation which they described as “friendly fire” (Kellner). These reporters sought to get their information from the troops on the ground as opposed to the military commentators who often “repeated the lies and propaganda” of the Bush administration and the Pentagon (Kellner). Despite the “shock and awe” slogan that showcased the Iraq War as a media spectacle, there were outside forces that did work to provide the truth as opposed to one-sided propagandistic views (Kellner).

The Iraq War was a heavily covered media spectacle that ultimately presented the US as a military superpower that was fighting against terrorists. However, through the one-sided, propagandistic view of American broadcasting, it was hard for the true context of war to come to light. Through the failure of mainstream news media to fact-check the Iraq War, it is evident that news coverage after WW2 has remained propagandistic. As the world changes and engages in conflict, the methods for public attention remain the same as the use of propaganda in any form correlates to the actual victory of warfare: the capture of public support and perception (Lewandowsky et al).

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