

MANUFACTURING CONSENT

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The Political Economy of the Mass Media

EDWARD S. HERMAN

NOAM CHOMSKY

With a new introduction by the authors

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To the memory of Alex Carey
and
Herbert I. Schiller

“The Iran-contra scandals were blamed on the President’s easygoing habits, though the people had every opportunity to know this was his way of doing things or not doing before he put him in the White House, not once but twice.”—*James Reston*

“They who have put out the people’s eyes, reprove them of their blindness.”—*John Milton*

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Introduction

THIS BOOK CENTERS IN WHAT WE CALL a “propaganda model,” an analytical framework that attempts to explain the performance of the US media in terms of the basic institutional structures and relationships within which they operate. It is our view that, among their other functions, the media serve, and propagandize on behalf of, the powerful societal interests that control and finance them. The representatives of these interests have important agendas and principles that they want to advance, and they are well positioned to shape and constrain media policy. This is normally not accomplished by crude intervention, but by the selection of right-thinking personnel and by the editors’ and working journalists’ internalization of priorities and definitions of newsworthiness that conform to the institution’s policy.

Structural factors are those such as ownership and control, dependence on other major funding sources (notably, advertisers), and mutual interests and relationships between the media and those who make the news and have the power to define it and explain what it means. The propaganda

model also incorporates other closely related factors such as the ability to complain about the media's treatment of news (that is, produce "flak"), to provide "experts" to confirm the official slant on the news, and to fix the basic principles and ideologies that are taken for granted by media personnel and the elite, but are often resisted by the general population.¹ In our view, the same underlying power sources that own the media and fund them as advertisers, that serve as primary definers of the news, and that produce flak and proper-thinking experts, also, play a key role in fixing basic principles and the dominant ideologies. We believe that what journalists do, what they see as newsworthy, and what they take for granted as premises of their work are frequently well explained by the incentives, pressures, and constraints incorporated into such a structural analysis.

These structural factors that dominate media operations are not all controlling and do not always produce simple and homogeneous results. It is well recognized, and may even be said to constitute a part of an institutional critique such as we present in this volume, that the various parts of media organizations have some limited autonomy, that individual and professional values influence media work, that policy is imperfectly enforced, and that media policy itself may allow some measure of dissent and reporting that calls into question the accepted viewpoint. These considerations all work to assure some dissent and coverage of inconvenient facts.² The beauty of the system, however, is that such dissent and inconvenient information are kept within bounds and at the margins, so that while their presence shows that the system is not monolithic, they are not large enough to interfere unduly with the domination of the official agenda.

It should also be noted that we are talking about media structure and performance, not the effects of the media on the public. Certainly, the media's adherence to an official agenda with little dissent is likely to influence public opinion in the desired direction, but this is a matter of degree, and where the public's interests diverge sharply from that of the elite, and where they have their own independent sources of information, the official line may be widely doubted. The point that we want to stress here, however,

is that the propaganda model describes forces that shape what the media does; it does not imply that any propaganda emanating from the media is always effective.

Although now more than a dozen years old, both the propaganda model and the case studies presented with it in the first edition of this book have held up remarkably well.³ The purpose of this new Introduction is to update the model, add some materials to supplement the case studies already in place (and left intact in the chapters that follow), and finally, to point out the possible applicability of the model to a number of issues under current or recent debate.

Updating the Propaganda Model

The propaganda model, spelled out in detail in chapter 1, explains the broad sweep of the mainstream media's behavior and performance by their corporate character and integration into the political economy of the dominant economic system. For this reason, we focused heavily on the rise in scale of media enterprise, the media's gradual centralization and concentration, the growth of media conglomerates that control many different kinds of media (motion picture studios, TV networks, cable channels, magazines, and book publishing houses), and the spread of the media across borders in a globalization process. We also noted the gradual displacement of family control by professional managers serving a wider array of owners and more closely subject to market discipline.

All of these trends, and greater competition for advertising across media boundaries, have continued and strengthened over the past dozen years, making for an intensified bottom-line orientation. Thus, centralization of the media in a shrinking number of very large firms has accelerated, virtually unopposed by Republican and Democratic administrations and regulatory authority. Ben Bagdikian notes that when the first edition of his *Media Monopoly* was published in 1983, fifty giant firms dominated almost every mass medium; but just seven years later, in 1990, only twenty-three firms occupied the same commanding position.⁴

Since 1990, a wave of massive deals and rapid globalization have left the media industries further centralized in nine transnational conglomerates—Disney, AOL-Time Warner, Viacom (owner of CBS), News Corporation, Bertelsmann, General Electric (owner of NBC), Sony, AT&T-Liberty Media, and Vivendi Universal. These giants own all the world's major film studios, TV networks, and music companies, and a sizable fraction of the most important cable channels, cable systems, magazines, major-market TV stations, and book publishers. The largest, the recently merged AOL-Time Warner, has integrated the leading Internet portal into the traditional media system. Another fifteen firms round out the system, meaning that two dozen firms control nearly the entirety of media experienced by most US citizens. Bagdikian concludes that “it is the overwhelming collective power of these firms, with their corporate interlocks and unified cultural and political values, that raises troubling questions about the individual's role in the American democracy.”⁵

Of the nine giants that now dominate the media universe, all but General Electric have extensively conglomerated within the media, and are important in both producing content and distributing it. Four of them—Disney, AOL-Time Warner, Viacom, and News Corporation—produce movies, books, magazines, newspapers, TV programs, music, videos, toys, and theme parks, among other things; and they have extensive distribution facilities via broadcasting and cable ownership, retail stores, and movie-theater chains. They also provide news and occasional investigative reports and documentaries that address political issues, but the leaders of these pop-cultural behemoths are mainly interested in entertainment, which produces large audiences with shows like ABC TV's *Who to Be a Millionaire* and CBS-TV's *Survivor*, or with movies like Disney's *Lion King* that also make possible the cross-selling “synergies” that are a focal point of their attention and resources.

Important branches of the media such as movies and books have had substantial global markets for many years, but only in the past two decades has a global media system come into being that is having major effects on

national media systems, culture, and politics.⁶ It has been fueled by the globalization of business more generally, the associated rapid growth of global advertising, and improved communications technology that has facilitated cross-border operations and control. It has also been helped along by government policy and the consolidation of neoliberal ideology. The United States and other Western governments have pressed the interests of their home-country firms eager to expand abroad, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank have done the same, striving with considerable success to enlarge transnational corporate access to media markets across the globe. Neoliberal ideology has provided the intellectual rationale for policies that have opened up the ownership of broadcasting stations and cable and satellite systems to private transnational investors.

The culture and ideology fostered in this globalization process relate largely to “lifestyle” themes and goods and their acquisition; and they tend to weaken any sense of community helpful to civic life. Robert McChesney notes that “the hallmark of the global media system is its relentless, ubiquitous commercialism.”⁷ Shopping channels, “infomercials,” and product placement are booming in the global media system. McChesney adds that “it should come as no surprise that account after account in the late 1990s documents the fascination, even the obsession, of the world’s middle class youth with consumer brands and products.”⁸ The global media’s “news” attention in recent years, aside from reporting on crusades such as “Operation Allied Force” (the NATO war against Yugoslavia) and on national elections, has been inordinately directed to sensationalism, as in their obsessive focus on the O.J. Simpson trial, the Lewinsky scandal, and the deaths of two of the West’s supercelebrities, Princess Diana and John F. Kennedy, Jr.

Globalization, along with deregulation and national budgetary pressures, has also helped reduce the importance of noncommercial media in country after country. This has been especially important in Europe and Asia, where public broadcasting systems were dominant (in contrast with the United States and Latin America). The financial pressures on

public broadcasters has forced them to shrink or emulate the commercial systems in and programming, and some have been fully commercialized by policy change or privatization. The global balance of power has shifted decisively toward commercial systems. James Ledbetter points out that in the United States, under incessant right-wing political pressure and financial stringency “the 90s have seen a tidal wave of commercialism overtake public broadcasting,” with public broadcasters “rushing as fast as they can to merge their services with those offered by commercial networks.”⁹ And in the process of what Ledbetter calls the “mailing” of public broadcasting, its already modest differences from the commercial networks have almost disappeared. Most important, in their programming “they share either the avoidance or the defanging of contemporary political controversy, the kind that would bring trouble from powerful patrons.”¹⁰

Some argue that the Internet and the new communications technologies are breaking the corporate stranglehold on journalism and opening an unprecedented era of interactive democratic media. And it is true and important that the Internet has increased the efficiency and scope of individual and group networking. This has enabled people to escape the mainstream media’s constraints in many and diverse cases. Japanese women have been able to tap newly created Web sites devoted to their problems, where they can talk and share experiences and information with their peers and obtain expert advice on business, financial, and personal matters.¹¹ Chiapas resisters against abuse by the Mexican army and government were able to mobilize an international support base in 1995 to help them publicize their grievances and put pressure on the Mexican government to change its policies in the region.¹² The enlarged ability of Bolivian peasants protesting against World Bank privatization programs and user fees for water in 2000, and Indonesian students taking to the streets against the Suharto dictatorship in Indonesia in 1998, to communicate through the Internet produced a level of publicity and global attention that had important consequences: Bechtel Corporation, owner of the newly privatized water system in Bolivia that had quickly

doubled water rates, backed off and the privatization sale was rescinded; the protests and associated publicity, along with the 1998 financial crisis, helped drive Suharto from office.¹³

Broader protest movements have also benefited from Internet-based communication. When the leading members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) attempted in 1998 to push through in secret a Multilateral Agreement on Investment that would have protected further the rights of international investors as against the rights of democratic bodies within states, the Internet was extremely valuable in alerting opposition forces to the threat and helping mobilize an opposition that prevented acceptance of this agreement.¹⁴ Similarly, in the protest actions against the WTO meetings in Seattle in November 1999 and the IMF and World Bank annual gatherings in Washington, DC, in April 2000, communication via the Internet played an important role both in organizing the protests and in disseminating information on the events themselves that countered the mainstream media's hostile portrayal of these protests.¹⁵

However, although the Internet has been a valuable addition to the communications arsenal of dissidents and protesters, it has limitations as a critical tool. For one thing, those whose information needs are most acute are not well served by the Internet—many lack access, its databases are not designed to meet their needs, and the use of databases (and effective use of the Internet in general) presupposes knowledge and organization. The Internet is not an instrument of mass communication for those lacking brand names, an already existing large audience, and/or large resources. Only sizable commercial organizations have been able to make large numbers aware of the existence of their Internet offerings. The privatization of the Internet's hardware, the rapid commercialization and concentration of Internet portals and servers and their integration into non-Internet conglomerates—the AOL-Time Warner merger was a giant step in that direction—and the private and concentrated control of the new broadband technology, together threaten to limit any future prospects of the Internet as a democratic media vehicle.

The past few years have witnessed a rapid penetration of the Internet by the leading newspapers and media conglomerates, all fearful of being outflanked by small pioneer users of the new technology, and willing (and able) to accept losses for years while testing out these new waters. Anxious to reduce these losses, however, and with advertisers leery of the value of spending in a medium characterized by excessive audience control and rapid surfing, the large media entrants into the Internet have gravitated to making familiar compromises—more attention to selling goods, cutting back on news, and providing features immediately attractive to audiences and advertisers. The *Boston Globe* (a subsidiary of the *New York Times*) and the *Washington Post* are offering e-commerce goods and services; and Ledbetter notes that “it’s troubling that none of the newspaper portals feels that quality journalism is at the center of its strategy...because journalism doesn’t help you sell things.”¹⁶ Former *New York Times* editor Max Frankel says that the more newspapers pursue Internet audiences, “the more will sex, sports, violence, and comedy appear on their menus, slighting, if not altogether ignoring, the news of foreign wars or welfare reform.”¹⁷

New technologies are mainly introduced to meet corporate needs, and those of recent years have permitted media firms to shrink staff even as they achieve greater outputs, and they have made possible global distribution systems that reduce the number of media entities. The audience “interaction” facilitated by advancing interactive capabilities mainly help audience members to shop, but they also allow media firms to collect detailed information on their audiences, and thus to fine-tune program features and ads to individual characteristics as well as to sell by a click during programs. Along with reducing privacy, this should intensify commercialization.

In short, the changes in politics and communication over the past dozen years have tended on balance to enhance the applicability of the propaganda model. The increase in corporate power and global reach, the mergers and further centralization of the media, and the decline of public

broadcasting, have made bottom-line considerations more influential both in the United States and abroad. The competition for advertising has become more intense and the boundaries between editorial and advertising departments have weakened further. Newsrooms have been more thoroughly incorporated into transnational corporate empires, with budget cuts and a further diminution of management enthusiasm for investigative journalism that would challenge the structures of power.

Over the past dozen years, sourcing and flak have also strengthened as mechanisms of elite influence. Media centralization and the reduction in the resources devoted to journalism have made the media more dependent than ever on the primary definers who both make the news and subsidize the media by providing accessible and cheap copy. They now have greater leverage over the media, and the public relations firms working for these and other powerful interests also bulk larger as media sources. Alex Carey, Stuart Ewen, John Stauber, and Sheldon Rampton have helped us see how the public relations industry has been able to utilize journalistic conventions to serve its-and its corporate clients'-ends.¹⁸ Studies of news sources reveal that a significant proportion of news originates in public relations releases. There are, by one count, 20,000 more public relations agents working to doctor the news today than there are journalists writing it.¹⁹

The force of anti-communist ideology has possibly weakened with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the virtual disappearance of socialist movements across the globe, but this is easily offset by the greater ideological force of the belief in the "miracle of the market" (Reagan). The triumph of capitalism and the increasing power of those with an interest in privatization and market rule have strengthened the grip of market ideology, at least among the elite, so that regardless of evidence, markets are assumed to be benevolent and even democratic ("market populism" in Thomas Frank's phrase) and nonmarket mechanisms are suspect, although exceptions are allowed when private firms need subsidies, bailouts, and government help in doing business abroad. When the Soviet economy stagnated in the 1980s, it was attributed to the absence of markets; when

capitalist Russia disintegrated in the 1990s, this was blamed not on the now ruling market but on politicians' and workers' failure to let markets work their magic.²⁰ Journalism has internalized this ideology. Adding it to the residual power of anticommunism in a world in which the global power of market institutions makes nonmarket options seem utopian gives us an ideological package of immense strength.

These changes, which have strengthened the applicability of the propaganda model, have seriously weakened the "public sphere," which refers to the array of places and forums in which matters important to a democratic community are debated and information relevant to intelligent citizen participation is provided. The steady advance, and cultural power, of marketing and advertising has caused "the displacement of a political public sphere by a depoliticized consumer culture."²¹ And it has had the effect of creating a world of virtual communities built by advertisers and based on demographics and taste differences of consumers. These consumption- and style-based clusters are at odds with physical communities that share a social life and common concerns and which participate in a democratic order.²² These virtual communities are organized to buy and sell goods, not to create or service a public sphere.

Advertisers don't like the public sphere, where audiences are relatively small, upsetting controversy takes place, and the settings are not ideal for selling goods. Their preference for entertainment underlies the gradual erosion of the public sphere under systems of commercial media, well exemplified in the history of broadcasting in the United States over the past seventy-five years.²³ But entertainment has the merit not only of being better suited to helping sell goods; it is an effective vehicle for hidden ideological messages.²⁴ Furthermore, in a system of high and growing inequality, entertainment is the contemporary equivalent of the Roman "games of the circus" that diverts the public from politics and generates a political apathy that is helpful to preservation of the status quo.

It would be a mistake to conclude from the fact that the public buys and watches the offerings of the increasingly commercialized media that

the gradual erosion of the public sphere reflects the preferences and free choices of the public either as citizens or consumers. The citizenry was never given the opportunity to approve or disapprove the wholesale transfer of broadcasting rights to commercial interests back in 1934,²⁵ and the pledge made by those interests, and subsequently by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) itself, that public service offerings would never be buried in favor of the entertainment preferred by advertisers, was never fulfilled.²⁶ The public is not sovereign over the media—the owners and managers, seeking ads, decide what is to be offered, and the public must choose among these. People watch and read in good part on the basis of what is readily available and intensively promoted. Polls regularly show that the public would like more news, documentaries, and other information, and less sex, violence, and other entertainment, even as they do listen to and watch the latter. There is little reason to believe that they would not like to understand why they are working harder with stagnant or declining incomes, have inadequate medical care at high costs, and what is being done in their name all over the world. If they are not getting much information on these topics, the propaganda model can explain why: the sovereigns who control the media choose not to offer such material.

Updating the Case Studies

In the case studies presented in chapters 2 through 6, we examine the differences in treatment of situations broadly similar in character, except for the political and economic interests at stake. Our expectation is that news as well as editorial opinion will be strongly influenced by those interests and should display a predictable bias. We would anticipate, for example, that an election held by a client-state government favored by us officials would be treated differently by the media than an election held by a government that us officials oppose. It will be seen in chapter 3 that in the important elections analyzed there this dichotomous treatment and bias was displayed to an extraordinary degree.

Worthy and Unworthy Victims

In chapter 2, we compare the media's treatment of victims of enemy states and those of the United States and US client states. Our prediction is that the victims of enemy states will be found "worthy" and will be subject to more intense and indignant coverage than those victimized by the United States or its clients, who are implicitly "unworthy." It is shown in chapter 2 that a 1984 victim of the Polish Communists, the priest Jerzy Popieluszko, not only received far more coverage than bishop Oscar Romero, murdered in the US client-state El Salvador in 1980; he was given more coverage than the aggregate of one hundred religious victims killed in US client states, although eight of those victims were US citizens.

This bias is politically advantageous to US policy-makers, for focusing on victims of enemy states shows those states to be wicked and deserving of US hostility; while ignoring US and client-state victims allows ongoing US policies to proceed more easily, unburdened by the interference of concern over the politically inconvenient victims. It is not a credible reply that difficulty in getting evidence on "unworthy" victims can account for the application of such a gross double standard, as an alternative press with meager resources has been able to gather a great deal of material on their mistreatment from highly credible sources, such as major human rights organizations and church representatives.²⁷ Furthermore, only political factors can explain the differences in *quality* of treatment of worthy and unworthy victims noted throughout this book, illustrated in chapter 2 by the more antiseptic reporting of the abuse of unworthy victims (even US women raped and murdered in El Salvador) and the greater indignation and search for responsibility at the top of the case of worthy victims.

That the same massive political bias displayed earlier in the coverage of Popieluszko and the hundred religious victims in Latin America continues today is suggested by the media's usage of the word "genocide" in the 1990s, as shown in the accompanying table. "Genocide" is an invidious word that officials apply readily to cases of victimization in enemy states, but rarely if ever to similar or worse cases of victimization by the United States itself or

allied regimes. Thus, with Saddam Hussein and Iraq having been us targets in the 1990s, whereas Turkey has been an ally and client and the United States its major arms supplier as it engaged in its severe ethnic cleansing of Kurds during those years, we find former us Ambassador Peter Galbraith stating that “while Turkey represses its own Kurds, its cooperation is essential to an American-led mission to protect Iraq’s Kurds from renewed genocide at the hands of Saddam Hussein.”²⁸ Turkey’s treatment of its Kurds was in no way less murderous than Iraq’s treatment of Iraqi Kurds, but for Galbraith, Turkey only “represses” while Iraq engages in “genocide.”

Mainstream Media Usage of “Genocide” for Kosovo, East Timor, Turkey, and Iraq

COUNTRIES DATES	1. NO. OF TIMES WORD APPLIED TO SERBS, TURK, ETC.2	NO OF EDS/ OP-EDS DOING THE SAME	NEWS ARTICLES	FRONT PAGE
1. Serbs Kosovo 1998–1999	220	59	8	41
2. Indonesia/ East Timor, 1990–1999	33	7	17	4
3. Turkey/ Kurds, 1990–1999	14	2	8	1
4. Iraq/Kurds, 1990–1999	132	51	66	24
5. Iraq Sanctions, 1991–1999	18	1	10	1

1. Mainstream media used in this tabulation, based on a Nexus database search, were the *Los Angeles Times*, the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Newsweek*, and *Time*.
2. The numbers in columns 2 and 3 do not add up to the total in column 1, which also includes letters “World Briefings” and summary items.

The table shows that the five major print media surveyed engage in a similar biased usage, frequently using “genocide” to describe victimization

in the enemy states, but applying the word far less frequently to equally severe victimization carried out by the United States or its allies and clients. We can even read who are US friends and enemies from the media's use of the word. Thus, with the United States and its NATO allies warring against Yugoslavia in 1999, allegedly in response to that country's mistreatment of the Kosovo Albanians, official denunciations of that mistreatment flowed through the media, along with the repeated designation of the abuses as "genocidal." The same pattern applies to the Iraqi regime's abuse of its Kurdish population—after it had ceased to be a US ally²⁹—an enemy state, official denunciations, harsh sanctions, and parallel media treatment.

On the other hand, Turkey and Indonesia have long been US allies and client states and recipients of military and economic aid. In consequence, and just as the propaganda model would predict, the media not only gave minimal attention to the severe abuse of the Kurds by Turkey throughout the 1990s, and to the Clinton administration's lavish help to Turkey's implementation of that ethnic-cleansing program, they rarely applied the word "genocide" to these Turkish operations.

Similarly, the word was not often applied to the Indonesian mistreatment of the East Timorese, who were subjected to another wave of terror as Indonesia tried to prevent or defeat a UN-sponsored referendum on independence in 1999. The United States, after helping Suharto take power in 1965 in one of the great bloodbaths of the twentieth century,³⁰ and after supporting his dictatorship for thirty-two years, also gave him crucial military and diplomatic aid when he invaded and occupied East Timor from 1975–31. In 1999, as Indonesia attempted to prevent the independence referendum in East Timor by violence, the United States maintained its military aid programs and refused to intervene to stop the killing, on the ground that what is happening "is the responsibility of the government of Indonesia, and we don't want to take that responsibility away from them" (as stated by Defense Secretary William Cohen in a press conference of September 8, 1999). This was long after Indonesia

had killed thousands and destroyed much of East Timor. Shortly thereafter, under considerable international pressure, the United States invited Indonesia to leave the devastated country.

We have shown elsewhere that in 1975 and later the US media treated the East Timorese as unworthy victims, saving their attention and indignation for the almost simultaneous killings under Pol Pot in Cambodia. The victims of Pol Pot, a Communist leader, were worthy, although after he was ousted by the Vietnamese in 1978, Cambodians ceased to be worthy, as US policy shifted toward support of Pol Pot in exile.³² The East Timorese remained unworthy in the 1990s, as the table suggests.

As the leader of the faction insisting on harsh sanctions against Iraq following the 1991 Persian Gulf War, the United States itself was responsible for a very large number of Iraqi civilians deaths in the 1990s. John and Karl Mueller assert that these “sanctions of mass destruction” have caused the deaths of “more people in Iraq than have been slain by all so-called weapons of mass destruction [nuclear and chemical] throughout all history.”³³ A large fraction of the million or more killed by sanctions were young children; UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy pointed out that “if the substantial reduction in child mortality throughout Iraq during the 1980s had continued through the 1990s, there would have been half a million fewer deaths of children under five in the country as a whole during the eight year period 1991 to 1998.”³⁴ However, as these deaths resulted from US policy, and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright declared on national television that these 500,000 child deaths were “worth it,”³⁵ we would expect the US media to find these victims unworthy, to give them little attention and less indignation, and to find the word “genocide” inapplicable to this case. The table shows that this expectation was realized in media practice.

The case for severe media bias suggested by the usage of genocide shown in the table is strengthened by the fact that, despite the great media attention to and indignation over the abuse of the Kosovo Albanians by the Serbs in 1998–1999, this mistreatment was almost certainly less

severe than that meted out to the Kurds in Turkey in the 1990s and to the East Timorese by the Indonesian army and paramilitary forces in East Timor in 1999. Deaths in Kosovo on all sides in the year before the NATO bombing were estimated by US and other Western sources to number no more than 2,000, and the Serb assault and expulsions that followed and accompanied the NATO bombing campaign also appear to have resulted in deaths in the low thousands (an intensive postwar search for graves had yielded some 3,000 bodies by August 2000, not all of them Albanian civilians or necessarily victims of the Serbs).³⁶ Deaths in the Turkish war on the Kurds in the 1990s were estimated to be 30,000 or more, a large fraction Kurdish civilians, with refugee numbers running to 2 to 3 million. In East Timor, where the Indonesian military organized and collaborated with a paramilitary opposition to a UN-sponsored independence referendum held on August 30, 1999, an estimated 5,000 to 6,000 East Timorese civilians were slaughtered even before the referendum vote that rejected Indonesian rule, which unleashed a furious Indonesian army-paramilitary assault on East Timorese.³⁷

The double standard reflected in the politicized use of “genocide” is applicable to the treatment of news events more broadly, with the media regularly focusing on the abuse of worthy victims and playing down or neglecting altogether the plight of unworthy victims. As an illustration, we may consider the contrasting media treatment of the alleged killing of some forty Albanians by the Serbs at Racak, Kosovo, on January 15, 1999, and the Indonesian army-militia killing of “up to 200” East Timorese at Liquica in East Timor on April 6, 1999.³⁸ The former was seen as useful by US officials,³⁹ who were trying to ready the US and Western publics for an imminent NATO attack on Yugoslavia. Although the facts in the Racak killings, which occurred in the course of fighting between the Serbian military and Kosovo Liberation Army insurgents within Yugoslavia, were and remain in dispute—and recent evidence raises further doubts about the NATO-KLA account of events there⁴⁰—the deaths were immediately denounced and featured by US and NATO officials as

an intolerable “massacre.” The US mainstream media did the same and gave this reported massacre heavy and uncritical attention.⁴¹ This helped create the moral basis for the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia that began on March 24, 1999.

The Liquica killings of East Timorese seeking refuge in a Catholic church by Indonesian-organized militia forces were indisputably a “massacre,” apparently involved many more victims than at Racak, and it took place in a territory illegally occupied by a foreign state (Indonesia). It was also neither a unique event nor was it connected to any warfare, as in Kosovo—it was a straightforward slaughter of civilians. But US officials did not denounce this massacre—in fact, active US support of the Indonesian military continued throughout this period and up to a week after the referendum, by which time 85 percent of the population had been driven from their homes and well over 6,000 civilians had been slaughtered. The U.S. mainstream media followed the official lead. For a twelve-month period following the date of each event, the mentions of Racak by the five media entities cited in the table exceeded mentions of Liquica by 4.1 to 1 and mentions of “massacre” at the two sites was in a ratio of 6.7 to 1. The greater length of accounts of the Racak event elevates the ratio to 14 to 1 as measured by word count. Newsweek, which mentioned Racak and its “massacre” nine times, failed to mention Liquica once.

Thus, with the cooperation of the media, the Racak killings were effectively used by US officials to ready the public for war, not only by their intensive coverage but also by their taking the official allegations of massacre at face value. In the same time frame, the media’s treatment of the indisputable massacre at Liquica was insufficient in volume or indignation to mobilize the public, in accord with the US policy of leaving the management of events in East Timor to the US ally Indonesia.

Legitimizing Versus Meaningless Third World Elections

In chapter 3 we show that the mainstream media have followed a government agenda in treating elections in client and disfavored states. In El

Salvador in the 1980s, the US government sponsored several elections to demonstrate to the US public that our intervention there was approved by the local population; whereas when Nicaragua held an election in 1984, the Reagan administration tried to discredit it to prevent legitimization of a government the administration was trying to overthrow. The mainstream media cooperated, finding the Salvadoran election a “step toward democracy” and the Nicaraguan election a “sham” despite the fact that electoral conditions were far more compatible with an honest election in Nicaragua than in El Salvador. We demonstrate that the media applied a remarkable dual standard to the two elections in accord with the government’s propaganda needs.

This same bias is apparent in the press treatment of more recent elections in Cambodia, Yugoslavia, Kenya, Mexico, Russia, Turkey, and Uruguay. Cambodia and Yugoslavia were the only two of these seven ruled by a party strongly objectionable to US policy-makers, and it is in these cases that the New York Times warned of serious problems: As regards Cambodia, it asserted that “flawed elections are worse than none” and that “the international community must proceed cautiously, lest a rigged election give Mr. Hun Sen a veneer of legitimacy.”⁴² In reporting on the Yugoslavian election of September 2000, in which US officials intervened openly to prevent the reelection of Slobodan Milosevic, the *Times* and media in general repeatedly warned of the possibility of fraud and a rigged election.⁴³ In the case of Kenya, where US policy toward the ruling government was ambivalent, here also the *Times* was skeptical of election quality, noting that “holding elections is not enough to assure democratic government” and stressing the need for “an independent electoral commission less bound to political parties” and “independent broadcast media, allowing opposition voices to be heard outside election periods.”⁴⁴

But in the other four elections, organized and won by governments strongly favored by the US State Department, there were no suggestions that “flawed elections are worse than none” and no featuring of the threat of fraud; the importance of an independent electoral commission

and broadcast media was not pressed, and in each case the election was found to be a step toward democracy and hence legitimizing.

In the case of Mexico, long subject to one party (PRI) rule, but supported by the US government over the past several decades, the *Times* has regularly found the Mexican elections encouraging, in contrast with past fraudulent ones which, at the time, the editors also contrasted ably with those in the more distant past! It has featured expressions of benevolent intent and downplayed structural defects and abuses. Thus, in its first editorial on the 1988 election that brought Carlos Salinas de Gortari to power, the *Times* noted that prior elections were corrupt (the PRI “manipulated patronage, the news media and the ballot box”), but it stressed that PRI candidate Salinas “contends” that political reform is urgent and “calls for clean elections.”⁴⁵ The editors questioned whether “his party” will “heed his pleas” a process of distancing the favored candidate from responsibility for any abuses to come. In the editorials that followed, the *Times* did not suggest possible ongoing electoral fraud’ “manipulated patronage” or media controls and bias, although this election was famous for a convenient “computer breakdown” in the election aftermath, which turned Carlos Salinas from an expected loser into a winner. Just three years later, however, at the time of the 1991 election, the editors stated that “as long as anyone can remember, Mexican elections have been massively fraudulent” as it prepared readers for new promises of a cleanup.⁴⁶ But all through this period and later, the *Times* (and its media rivals) did not focus on fraud or call these elections rigged; in both news stories and editorials they portrayed these deeply flawed elections as steps toward democracy and legitimizing.

In the 1983 Turkish election, held under military rule, with harsh censorship and only three parties “led by politicians sympathetic to the military government” allowed to run, the *Times* found that “Turkey Approaches Democracy.”⁴⁷ Similarly, in Uruguay’s 1984 election, under another military regime that jailed the leading opposition candidate and also refused to allow a second major candidate to run, but organized

by a government approved by the us State Department, the *Times* once again found that “Uruguay is resuming its democratic vocation...the generals are yielding to the infectious resurgence of democracy in much of Latin America.”⁴⁸

The Russian election of 1996 was important to the United States and its allies, as Boris Yeltsin, the ruler who was carrying out their favored policies of privatization and the integration of Russia into the global financial system, was seriously threatened with defeat. The Yeltsin government had presided over a 50 percent fall in national output and large income declines for 90 percent of the population, while the hugely corrupt privatization process provided windfalls to a small minority, including an important criminal class. The social welfare and health care systems had disintegrated under Yeltsin’s rule, contributing to a startling rise in infectious diseases and mortality rates. Just before the 1996 election campaign, Yeltsin’s popularity rating was 8 percent. That he could win reelection in such circumstances suggests—and reflects—a seriously flawed election.

However, with the Yeltsin regime strongly backed by the us government and its Western allies, the *New York Times* once again found this election “A Victory for Russian Democracy” and so did the us mainstream media in general. For that paper of record, electoral flaws were slighted or ignored, and its editors declared the very fact of holding an “imperfect” election “a remarkable achievement.”⁴⁹ The same bias was evident in reporting on the March 2000 Russian election, won by Yeltsin’s anointed heir and former KGB operative Vladimir Putin. Putin had built his popularity by conducting a brutal counterinsurgency war against Chechnya, and his electoral success rested heavily on the fact that the powerful state tv and radio stations campaigned furiously on his behalf and denigrated and gave no broadcasting time to his opponents. A September 2000 expose of the Putin election campaign by the expatriate *Moscow Times*, based on a six-month investigative effort, uncovered compelling evidence of election fraud, including ballot stuffing, ballot destruction, and the creation of 1.3 million “dead souls” inflating

the election rolls.⁵⁰ The US mainstream media, however, never found any evidence of fraud at the time of the election, and they have been reluctant to report the findings of the *Moscow Times* study.⁵¹ Putin is another “reformer” like Yeltsin, supported by the West, so that it follows once again that for the mainstream media a flawed election—hardly admitted to be flawed—remains better than none.⁵²

The KGB-Bulgarian Plot to Assassinate the Pope

During the Reagan era (1981–88), there was a concerted effort to demonize the Soviet Union, in order to support a major arms buildup and a new, more aggressive policy in the Third World and globally. The Soviet Union was described as an “Evil Empire” and accused of sponsoring international terrorism as well as abusing its own and client-nation peoples.⁵³ When the would-be assassin Mehmet Ali Agca shot Pope John Paul II in Rome in May 1981, this provided the basis for one of the most successful propaganda campaigns of the Cold War era.

Although the pope’s assailant was a Turkish fascist and member of a violently anti-left party in Turkey, after a seventeen-month stint in an Italian prison Agca “confessed” that he had been hired by the x and Bulgarians. This confession was convenient, fitting well the interests of the dominant Italian parties anxious to discredit the powerful Italian Communist party as well as the Reagan administration’s “Evil Empire” campaign. It was extremely suspicious for other reasons, coming so belatedly, and after numerous visits to Agca by Italian secret service representatives, judges, and papal agents, all with a political ax to grind, and with the secret service notorious for ideological extremism and willingness to doctor evidence.⁵⁴

But the mainstream media accepted this story with astonishing gullibility—the possibility of coaching and pressure on Agca to name the KGB and Bulgarians, much discussed in the Italian media, was almost never mentioned as even a theoretical possibility. And the weakness of the alleged Soviet motive, the sheer stupidity of the enterprise if Soviet based, and the complete lack of confirmatory evidence was almost entirely ignored by the

media (as described in chapter 4). When the case was lost in an Italian court in 1986, despite a substantial Italian government investment and effort, for the us mainstream media this merely reflected the peculiarities of the Italian system of justice; the continued absence of hard evidence led to no reassessment of the case or reflections on their own role.

In the years that followed, two developments threw some light on the case. One is that the Soviet and Bulgarian archives were opened up, and Allen Weinstein of the Center for Democracy gained permission from Bulgarian authorities in 1991 for members of his investigative commission to look at the Bulgarian Interior Ministry's secret service files. After a stint in Bulgaria, Weinstein returned home having failed to locate any confirmatory evidence of Bulgarian or KGB involvement. The *Los Angeles Times*, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Newsweek*, and *Time*, each of which had reported Weinstein's initiative and impending trip to Bulgaria in 1991, all failed to inform their readers of his negative findings.⁵⁵ Later in 1991, at Senate hearings on the confirmation of Robert Gates as head of the CIA, former CIA officers Melvin Goodman and Harold Ford testified that the CIA's analysis of the Bulgarian Connection had been seriously compromised and politicized in support of the Reagan era anti-Soviet propaganda campaign. Goodman testified that not only had the CIA found no evidence of Soviet or Bulgarian involvement in the shooting, but that based on the CIA's "very good penetration of the Bulgarian secret services" its professionals had concluded that a Bulgarian Connection did not exist.⁵⁶

This testimony, which was a brutal *coup de grâce* to the claims of a connection, put the media on the spot. It was now clear that in their enthusiastic support of the plot they had seriously misled their readers and performed badly as news purveyors and analysts, although serving well the propaganda needs of their government. But as in 1986, after the case against the Bulgarians was dismissed in an Italian court for insufficient evidence, none of them felt any obligation to explain their failures and apologize to their readers. They reported the CIA revelations tersely,

with some still claiming that while the connection had not been proved it had not been disproved either (ignoring the frequent impossibility of proving a negative).⁵⁷ But in general the mainstream media moved quickly on without reassessing their performance or the fact that they and their media colleagues had been agents of propaganda.

The New York Times, which had been consistently supportive of the connection in both news and editorials, not only failed to report Weinstein's negative findings from the search of the Bulgarian files, it also excluded Goodman's statement on the CIA's penetration of the Bulgarian secret services from their excerpts from his testimony. The Times had long maintained that the CIA and the Reagan administration "recoiled from the devastating implication that Bulgaria's agents were bound to have acted only on a signal from Moscow."⁵⁸ But Goodman's and Ford's testimony showed that this was the reverse of the truth, and that CIA heads William Casey and Robert Gates overrode the views of CIA professionals and falsified evidence to support a Soviet linkage. The Times was not alone in following a misleading party line, but it is notable that this paper of record has yet to acknowledge its exceptional gullibility and propaganda service.

VIETNAM, LAOS, AND CAMBODIA: Vietnam: Was the United States a Victim or an Aggressor?

In chapters 5 through 7, we show that media coverage of the Indochina wars fits the propaganda model very well. The United States first intervened in Indochina immediately after World War II in support of French recolonization, after which it carried out a twenty-one-year effort (1954-75) to impose a government in the southern half of Vietnam that US officials and analysts consistently recognized as lacking any substantial indigenous support, and in opposition to local nationalist-though Communist-forces that were understood to have a mass base US leaders operated on the belief that their overwhelming military might would not only enable them, but entitled them, to force submission to a minority government of US choice.

By normal word usage this would make the US effort in Vietnam a

case of “aggression.” The mainstream media, however, rarely if ever found us policy there to be other than highly moral and well intentioned, even if based on miscalculation of its costs—to us (see chapter 5). The media readily accepted that we were protecting “South Vietnam”—a us creation ruled by a dictator imported directly from the United States—against somebody else’s aggression, vacillating in their identification of the aggressor between North Vietnam, the Soviet Union, China, or the resistance in South Vietnam engaging in “internal aggression”! It is compelling evidence of the propaganda service of the mainstream media that throughout the war they accepted this basic propaganda assumption of the war managers, and from that era up to today, we have never found a mainstream editorial or news report that characterized the U.S. war against Vietnam, and then all of Indochina, as a case of aggression.

After the United States terminated the military phase of the war in 1975, it maintained and enforced an eighteen-year boycott of the country that it had virtually destroyed. According to Vietnamese estimates, the war had cost them 3 million killed, 300,000 missing, 4.4 million wounded, and 2 million harmed by toxic chemicals; and its land was left ravaged by bombs and Rome plows as well as chemical weapons. With 58,000 killed, the U.S. death toll from the war was under one-tenth of 1 percent of its population; Vietnam’s death toll was 17 percent of its population, and only Vietnam’s people were attacked by chemical warfare and had their countryside devastated.

Nevertheless, U.S. officials and the mainstream media continued to view the U.S. role in the war as creditable, the United States as the victim. President George Bush stated in 1992 that “Hanoi knows today that we seek only answers without the threat of retribution for the past.”⁵⁹ That is, the Vietnamese had done things to us that might justify retribution on our part, but we only seek answers regarding our men missing in action.⁶⁰ New York Times foreign affairs commentator Leslie Gelb justified classifying Vietnam an “outlaw” on the grounds that “they had killed Americans.”⁶¹ This reflects the common establishment view, implicit in Bush’s

comment, that nobody has a right of self-defense against this country, even if it intervenes across the ocean to impose by force a government that the people of that country reject.

U.S. Chemical Warfare in Indochina

It is also of interest how the media have treated the massive use of chemicals during the Vietnam War and the horrifying aftermath for the victim country. In 1961 and 1962 the Kennedy administration authorized the use of chemicals to destroy rice crops in South Vietnam—in violation of a U.S. tradition as well as international law (Admiral William Leahy, in response to a proposal to destroy Japanese rice crops in 1944, stated that this would “violate every Christian ethic I have ever heard of and all known laws of war”).⁶² Between 1961 and 1971, however, the U.S. Air Force sprayed 20 million gallons of concentrated arsenic-based and dioxin-laden herbicides (mainly Agent Orange) on 6 million acres of crops and trees, besides using large quantities of the “super tear gas” CS and vast amounts of napalm and phosphorus bombs.⁶³ An estimated 13 percent of South Vietnam’s land was subjected to chemical attacks. This included 30 percent of its rubber plantations and 36 percent of its mangrove forests, along with other large forest areas, destroyed by toxic chemicals in programs that included multiple “large-scale intentional effort[s] combining defoliation with incendiaries to produce a forest fire in South Vietnam.”⁶⁴ A 1967 study prepared by the head of the Agronomy Section of the Japanese Science Council concluded that US anticrop warfare had already ruined more than 3.8 million acres of arable land in South Vietnam, killing almost 1,000 peasants and over 13,000 livestock.⁶⁵ This policy of attempting to force enemy capitulation by destroying its food supply was not only contrary to the rules of war,⁶⁶ it was notable in that it “first and overwhelmingly affected small children.”⁶⁷

Laos was also subjected to chemical attacks in 1966 and 1969, directed at both crops, and vegetation along communication routes. And in Cambodia, some 173,000 acres of rubber plantations, crops and forests were

heavily sprayed with Agent Orange in the spring of 1969.⁶⁸ The Cambodian government complained bitterly at the violation of its neutrality by this inhumane and illegal action, but Cambodia was too small and weak for its voice to be heard or for it to be able to mobilize a legal or other defense. Although the U.N. General Assembly did strongly condemn the use of chemical agents as contrary to international law by an 83-to-3 vote in 1969,⁶⁹ it was powerless to act against the United States, and there was no “international community” mobilization to halt its use of chemical warfare in Cambodia or elsewhere in Indochina. During the Vietnam war, the use of chemicals was reported and criticized in the U.S. media when first disclosed in 1966, but the subject was quickly dropped. The illegality of chemical warfare and a policy of starvation, and their effects on the victim population, were virtually unreported. There were exceptions, such as Orville Schell, Jr.’s 1971 *Look* magazine article “Silent Vietnam: How we invented ecocide and killed a country,” but they were rare indeed. After the war, because of the effects of Agent Orange on U.S. soldiers, there was some coverage of this chemical warfare campaign; but the vastly greater impact on the direct targets of this warfare in South Vietnam remained close to invisible. Of 522 articles in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Newsweek*, and *Time* during the 1990s that mentioned Agent Orange and xxxii INTRODUCTION Vietnam together, the vast majority focused on the harm done to U.S. service personnel; only nine articles acknowledged the targeting of food crops (thirty-nine mentioned forest cover alone as the target); only eleven discussed in any detail the impact on Vietnamese and the Vietnamese environment; only three characterized the use of Agent Orange as a “chemical weapon” or “chemical warfare;” and in only two articles was it suggested that its use might constitute a war crime.

The *Wall Street Journal* did have a lead story on this topic in February 1997, reporting that as many as 500,000 children may have been born with dioxin-related deformities and that birth defects in the South were four times those in the North.⁷⁰ The article did acknowledge U.S. responsi-

bility for this disaster but contended that “the United States, emotionally spent after losing the war, paid no heed.” But the United States did pay heed to the flight of the “boat people” and was not too exhausted to enforce a vigorous boycott of the target of its aggression, even if it took no responsibility whatever for the condition of its victims.

The large-scale application of chemical weapons, and napalm, in Vietnam was confined to the South. One reason for this was that North Vietnam had a government with links to other countries, so that the use of these barbarous and illegal weapons against it would have been widely publicized. South Vietnam was occupied by the United States and its client regime, so that the victimized people of the South were voiceless and could be treated with unlimited savagery. This of course contradicted the claim that we were protecting them against aggression, but the media not only underplayed the savagery, they failed to call attention to the contradiction and its significance. New York Times journalist Barbara Crossette did report that the U.S. failure to get involved in studying the effects of chemical warfare in Vietnam had been unfortunate, because as this country had used it heavily in the South but not in the North, this made Vietnam a controlled experiment in the effects of dioxin on humans from which much could be learned of benefit to ourselves.⁷¹ But neither Crossette nor any other mainstream reporter had anything to say about the fact that the United States had used dioxin only on the ones it was allegedly protecting against aggression, nor did they suggest that this constituted a serious war crime, or that this country might have an obligation to help those it had victimized.

During the 1980s, the Reagan administration mounted a major propaganda campaign over alleged victims of “Yellow Rain” in Cambodia and Laos, claiming that chemical warfare had been employed there by the Soviet Union through its Vietnam proxy. This propaganda effort eventually collapsed following the U.S. Army’s own inability to confirm this warfare and, more important, the finding that the alleged Yellow Rain was bee feces, not chemicals.⁷² Nevertheless, this campaign re-

ceived vastly more publicity than the real and large-scale chemical warfare carried out by the United States in Indochina. The wall Street Journal, which had heavily featured Yellow Rain and expressed the greatest indignation at this display of Communist evil, never mentioned the U.S. employment of chemicals in that area during its Yellow Rain campaign. The Journal's publisher, Peter Kann, eventually wrote that the Vietnam war record had clarified "who were the good guys and who were the bad guys," definitively shown by "the poisoned fields of Laos" (his euphemism for Yellow Rain).⁷³ In short, Kann places the massive real-world use of chemical warfare by the United States in Orwell's black hole and demonstrates Communist evil by purring forward the discredited claim of Yellow Rain that his paper has still not admitted to be fraudulent.

But the more important facts are these: that with the help of the media, the Soviet Union was effectively linked to the use of this ugly weapon, based on false evidence; while by treating the real and large-scale use of chemical weapons in Indochina by the United States in very low key up to this very day, the media have helped convey the impression that this country is a moral force on this issue and opposes use of this terrible weapon. U.S. leaders have opposed the use of chemical warfare by enemy states-but it is a different manner when they choose to use such weapons themselves, or when a client state does the same.⁷⁴

Rewriting Vietnam War History

There have been thousands of books written on the Vietnam War,⁷⁵ and that war has been a brooding omnipresence in the U.S. culture since its end in 1975. For the dominant elite the war represents an era in which resistance to national policy and the associated rise of formerly apathetic sectors of society caused a "crisis of democracy."⁷⁶ Those unruly sectors and the dissidents are seen as having damaged the cultural and political framework and imposed unreasonable impediments to the use of force, the latter referred to as the "Vietnam syndrome." Within the unruly sectors and among the dissidents, of course, the "Sixties" are viewed as an

era of liberation, of cultural and moral advance, and a temporary surge of democratization.

The propaganda model would lead us to expect mainstream media retrospectives on the war to reflect elite perspectives, portraying the 1960s as a dark age and the U.S. role in the war as, at worst, a case of good intentions gone awry. Focusing here on their treatment of the war over the past decade, we see that the media have mainly repeated and elaborated several apologetic themes already entrenched by the end of the war.

One theme has been that the U.S. intervention was justified by the fact of “communism on the march” (editorial, *Washington Post*, April 30, 2000). It was argued from the beginning that the Communist advance in Vietnam was part of a global communist conspiracy, a position maintained in the face of the split and hostility between China and the Soviet Union, tension between China and North Vietnam, and the absence of any evidence that North Vietnam was anybody’s tool. In his book *In Retrospect*,⁷⁷ former Defense Secretary Robert McNamara admits that he and his colleagues made a serious error on this point. But neither he nor the other establishment figures who have used this argument have ever questioned the U.S. right to intervene by force to stop the “march of communism” in a country where the Communists had led a nationalist revolution, were recognized by all official and nonofficial authorities to command the support of a large majority of the population, and where their defeat would require open aggression, mass killing, and the virtual destruction of a distant society.

Closely related was the theme that we were protecting “South Vietnam” and the “South Vietnamese,” who “let the Americans take over the fighting” (editorial, *Washington Post*, April 30, 1995). A subtheme of this line is that we “let down” the South Vietnamese. But as noted earlier, South Vietnam as a political entity was a U.S. concoction and the U.S. war managers recognized that most of the southern population supported the side the United States was fighting. This explains why the main thrust of U.S. violence was directed to the South, where napalm, B-52

bombing raids, chemical warfare, the institutionalized killing of civilians, and a scorched-earth policy were used to destroy the base of the popular movement. 78 We also noted earlier that this ferocious U.S. assault on the South—which contradicted the claim that we were protecting South Vietnamese—remains invisible in the U.S. media. Another important theme in the mainstream media for many years has been the notion that the United States was the victim in the Vietnam war, the Vietnamese the cruel villains. This remarkable inversion of reality has been accomplished by two processes: first, by a massive suppression of evidence on the consequences of the war for the Vietnamese; and second, by demonizing the victims, based in large measure on “the national beatification of POWs [prisoners of war] and the myth of POWs as martyrs still being tortured by Vietnam.” 19

The only Vietnamese allowed modest attention in the media have been those mobilized to fight the U.S. war and who were “let down”; 80 the vast numbers killed or damaged by the U.S. assault have been treated as “unworthy victims.” The overwhelming preoccupation of officials, journalists, pundits, and intellectuals with media outreach has been on U.S. victims and the effects of the war on this country. Robert McNamara’s widely publicized book, supposedly a mea culpa and moral tract, is notable for the fact that his notion of the war’s “high costs,” and the error and guilt he feels, extend only to U.S. lives and the effects of the war on “the political unity of our society.” 81 He offers neither regrets, moral reflections, nor apologies for his country having invaded, mercilessly bombed, ravaged the land, and killed and wounded millions of innocent people in a small distant peasant society in pursuit of its own political ends.

In a remarkable cultural process, also, the victims have been turned into the villains. As we describe in chapter 5, in an attempt to prolong the war President Richard Nixon seized on the question of the adequacy of Vietnamese accounting for our military personnel who were captured (POWs) and those missing in action (MIAs). He succeeded in keeping the war going, and some 16,000 more U.S. soldiers and untold numbers

of Vietnamese died in the further fighting in the purported interest of missing pawns. But although there has never been any credible evidence that a single POW was hidden by the North Vietnamese, this claim became an article of faith and a cult that dominated U.S. policy toward Vietnam for many years.⁸²

The myth also became the basis of popular culture accounts in movies such as *The Deer Hunter*, *Uncommon Valor*, *Rescue 101*, *W. W. The Escape*, and *Missing in Action*, in which Rambo-like heroes slaughter evil Vietnamese as they save our betrayed and tormented POWs. These movies turned history on its head. As Vietnam war historian H. Bruce Franklin points out, "America's vision of the war was being transformed. The actual photographs and TV footage of massacred villagers, napalmed children, Vietnamese prisoners being tortured and murdered, wounded GI's screaming in agony, and body bags being loaded by the dozen for shipment back home were being replaced by simulated images of American POWs in the savage hands of Asian communists."⁸³ The powerful cultural myth of abused POWs as the central feature of the Vietnam war not only allowed the war to be extended; it helped justify the U.S. failure to aid its victim in accord with end-of-war promises and it provided the basis for an eighteen-year economic war against the victim country. It also functioned as a potent agent of militarization and force weakening the "Vietnam syndrome."

In his recent book *Vietnam and Other American Fantasies*, H. Bruce Franklin, who had previously exposed the fallacies and cult qualities of the POW-MIA myth, addressed this issue once again, as well as other fantasies (such as the claim that the antiwar activists often spit at returning veterans).⁸⁴ Franklin's book was reviewed in the *Los Angeles Times* but was otherwise only twice mentioned in passing in the U.S. mainstream press. On the other hand, a book by Michael Lind, *Vietnam: The Necessary Evil*,⁸⁵ which explains that the war was justifiable because communism was on the march, U.S. "credibility" was at stake, and the Vietnamese communists were cruel and ruthless—demonstrated in part by their refusal to

surrender and consequent responsibility for those killed by U.S. bombs!- was treated differently. It received forty-four reviews and was mentioned twenty-seven other times in the mainstream media, and Lind was given Op-Ed space in both the New York Times and the Washington Post, among other opportunities.

In his review of Lind's book, Vietnam War historian Uoyd Gardner noted that any U.S. "credibility" problem that arose in connection with the Vietnam war was a creation of the war managers themselves and flowed from their own decisions; and Gardner also comments, after analyzing a series of Lind arguments in defense of the war, that "the evidence simply washes away his positions like a sand castle on the beach."⁸⁶ But Lind was saying what the elite wants said, and Franklin was not, so that mainstream media treatment followed accordingly.

Laos

Laos's Plain of Jars was subjected to some of the heaviest bombings of civilian targets in history, especially after 1968, when Washington was compelled under domestic pressure to enter negotiations with North Vietnam and had to terminate its bombing there. It turned to Laos, although that small peasant country was a marginal factor in the wars; but Nixon and Kissinger could hardly leave U.S. bombers inactive. Overall, some 2 million tons of bombs were dropped on Laos. These raids wiped out 353 villages and killed thousands of civilians, and they continue to kill now, as the Plain was saturated with hundreds of millions of "bombies"-tiny antipersonnel weapons specifically designed to kill and maim. With their 20-to-30 percent failure-to-explode rate, they remained as potential killers, and their casualty rate is still high, estimates running from hundreds to 20,000 or more per year, half of them deaths and half of the victims children. ⁸⁷ There have been efforts to deal with this humanitarian catastrophe. The British-based Mines Advisory Group (MAG) has been trying to remove the lethal objects, but the British press reports that the United States is "conspicuously missing from the handful of western organizations that have followed

.\1AG," though it has finally agreed to train some Laotian civilians.⁵⁸ The British press also reports, with some annoyance, that the United States has refused to provide.\1AG specialists with "render harmless procedures," still treated as a state secret for weapons three decades old. ⁵⁹ The U.S. mainstream media have treated in very low key the continuing human toll suffered in Laos and have maintained almost complete silence concerning the U.S. non-cooperativeness in attempts to alleviate a crisis dating back to the "secret war" against Laos, which again was "secret" only by tacit propaganda service of the mainstream media (see chapter 6).

Cambodia Important changes have occurred in Cambodia since 1988, including Vietnam's withdrawal from that country, elections held under UN auspices, and the death of Pol Pot. We noted in chapter 7 that, after the Vietnamese had ousted Pol Pot in December 1978, although the United States and its allies had denounced Pol Pot as "another Hitler" committing "genocide," they quickly became his supporter, allowing him to retain Cambodia's UN seat and otherwise aiding and protecting him in his Thailand refuge. Vietnam was severely punished by harsh sanctions and by U.S. support for a Chinese invasion to teach Vietnam a lesson. Of having terminated Pol Pot's atrocities! President Carter's National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski stated in 1979 that "I encouraged the Chinese to support Pol Pot. I encouraged the Thai to help D.K. [Democratic Kampuchea, Pol Pot's forces]. Pol Pot was an abomination. We could never support him but China could."⁹⁰

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, as the Vietnamese sought to end their isolation by exiting from Cambodia, but insisted as a condition for withdrawal that Pol Pot and his Khmer Rouge be excluded from returning to power, the United States objected, and insisted, with eventual success, that the Khmer Rouge be included as a contestant party in the post-occupation settlement. ⁹¹ \

Xlhat dominated U.S. policy and led to its support of Pol Pot was the classic rule that the enemy of my enemy (Vietnam) is my friend, and perhaps also the new tilt toward China, also hostile toward Vietnam. The support of Pol Pot was awkward, given the prior denunciations of his policies, but

the mainstream media handled it with aplomb, and the U.S. public was almost surely completely unaware that the United States had become his ally and supporter. (The explicit statement of support by xxxviii INTRODUCTION Brzezinski quoted above was never mentioned in the New York Times, the Washington Post, or Newsweek; it was quoted once in both the Los Angeles Times and Time.) However, in the late 1990s, after Vietnam had left Cambodia and U.S. officials' anti-Vietnam passions had subsided, and Pol Pot was no longer a useful instrument of anti-Vietnam policy, U.S. officials and pundits rediscovered Pol Pot's and the Khmer Rouge's villainy and candidacy for war crimes trials. The media handled the previous "tilt" toward Pol Pot mainly by evasion, essentially blacking out the years 1979-95, or vaguely intimating that the U.S. had supported him for reasons of "realpolitik," but avoiding both details on the nature and magnitude of support as well as any reflections on the morality of backing "another Hitler." The New York Times's summary of "Pol Pot's Rise and Fall" (April 17, 1998) lists for "1979-1990: Pol Pot and Khmer Rouge are given refuge at Thai border where they fight back against the Vietnamese." "Given refuge" is misleading: they were given economic and military aid and political support by the United States and its allies. The Times's main reporter on Cambodia in early 1998, Seth Mydans, repeatedly blacked out mention of U.S. support, referring to "the decade-long civil war that followed" Pol Pot's ouster (April 13), and a nineteen-year "guerrilla insurgency in the jungles of western and northern Cambodia" (April 17). The Boston Globe, New York Times, Washington Post, and Los Angeles Times, editorializing on the death of Pol Pot on April 17, 1998, were uniformly indignant over his crimes and regretful at his escape from justice, but all avoided mentioning the long U.S. support of the criminal—as well as the U.S. contribution to the first phase of a "Decade of Genocide."⁹² The Washington Post blacked out the inconvenient fifteen-year period of support of Pol Pot with this summary: "After the nightmare of Khmer Rouge rule and genocide, the United States and its allies pumped millions of dollars into Cambodia to help rebuild and to hold. It is enlightening to

compare the media's treatment of Pol Pot and Indonesian leader Suharto, who was also in the news in 1998, as Indonesia suffered a financial crisis that—along with popular resistance to the dictatorship—eventually led to his ouster. Pol Pot was described in the editorials and news columns of April 1998 as “crazed,” a “killer,” “war criminal,” “mass murderer,” “blood-soaked,” and as having engineered a “reign of terror” and “genocide.” But in 1998 and 1999, and in earlier years as well, while Suharto was occasionally referred to as a “dictator” and running an “authoritarian” regime, he was never a “killer” or “mass murderer” or one responsible for “genocide.” The terminological double standard is maintained reliably throughout the mainstream media.⁹⁴ Less obvious but equally interesting is the difference in willingness to identify the responsible parties for the killings of Pol Pot and Suharto. In the case of Pol Pot, there is no uncertainty or complexity: editorials and news articles uniformly make him and the Khmer Rouge leadership clearly and unambiguously responsible for all deaths in Cambodia during the period 1975–78. He was the “man who slaughtered two million” (USA Today), “the executioner” (Boston Globe) who “presided over the deaths” of his victims (Washington Post), “the man who drove Cambodia to ruin” (New York Times). But in Suharto's case, we move to an ambiguous responsibility, which means none at all: in the New York Times, for example, “a 1965 coup led to the massacres of hundreds of thousands of supposed communists” (editorial, Aug. 23, 1996), where we have no agent doing the killing; or “a wave of violence that took up to 500,000 lives and led Suharto to seize power from Sukarno in a military coup” (Seth Mydans, Aug. 7, 1996), where the massacre not only has no agent, but is falsely situated before the takeover of power by Suharto. In a later piece, Mydans states that “more than 500,000 Indonesians are estimated to have died in a purge of leftists in 1965, the year Mr. Suharto came to power” (April 8, 1997). Note the passive voice, never used in connection with Pol Pot, the word “purge” instead of “slaughter” or “massacre,” and the continued failure to identify the agent. In the case of East Timor, also, the Times is

uncertain about the source of the killing: "This is one of the world's sadder places, where 100,000 to 200,000 people died from 1974 in a brutal civil war and the consequent invasion through combat, execution, disease and starvation...." (Steven Erlanger, Oct. 21, 1990). In addition to the lack of a clear agent, this sentence seriously misrepresents the facts—the civil war was short and left small numbers dead; and the invasion was not "consequent" to a brutal civil war, except in Indonesian propaganda. Another important difference in the treatment of the "worthy" victims of Pol Pot and the "unworthy" victims of Suharto is in the willingness to explain away the killings. With Pol Pot, as we describe in chapter 7, the background of the first phase of the genocide was completely blacked out in the mainstream account—there is no qualification to Pol Pot's responsibility as a killer because his forces had undergone terrible damage and sought vengeance for the crimes they had suffered; nor are any deaths in Pol Pot's years of rule to be explained by the starvation and disease already pervasive in April 1975. No, the only mentionable background is his Paris training and Communist fanaticism. But with Suharto we encounter a whole new world of contextualized apologetics. For many years the main protective formula was that the 1965--66 killings were "a result of a failed coup," which "touched off a wave of violence," or followed an "onslaught from the left."⁹⁵ This formula, invoked repeatedly, suggests that the mass killings were provoked and thus maybe justified by a prior "onslaught." The writers never explain why a failed coup could possibly justify a large-scale slaughter, but the hint is left hanging. In more recent years, usually in connection with the explanation and rationalization of the continuation of a dictatorship, the media regularly juxtaposed political repression with "stability" and "growth": "the signs of his success are everywhere," although Suharto has brought these gains "by maintaining a tight grip on power and suppressing public criticism and political opposition."⁹⁶ These statements, from the *New York Times*, offer a kind of context that the paper never gives to Castro, let alone a Pol Pot, and it shows an apologetic that runs deep. This apologetic extends to the Suharto

invasion and occupation of East Timor. For years, New Thrk Times reporters have claimed that Indonesia invaded in the midst of a civil war,⁹⁷ when in fact that civil war was over well before the invasion. The paper's news coverage of East Timor actually fell to zero as the Indonesian attacks and killings in East Timor reached a deadly peak in 1977-78, a slaughter that elsewhere would be called "genocidal." And although Indonesia occupied East Timor in violation of standing UN. rulings till its induced exit in 1999, the paper's reporters repeatedly referred to East Timor as a "disputed province" and East Timorese resistance as "separatist," thereby internalizing and explicitly legitimizing the aggression and occupation.⁹⁸ The bias and gentle treatment of Suharto and the Indonesian government in the media is once again correlated with US. policy support that dates back to the military coup and slaughters of 1965. These were greeted with enthusiasm by US. officials-then Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara referred to the events as one of the "dividends" of U.S. support for the Indonesian military-and the "boiling bloodbath" (Time) and "staggering mass slaughter" (New Thrk Times) were also seen in the media as a "gleam of light" (James Reston in the New Thrk Times).⁹⁹ U.S. military and economic aid and diplomatic protection continued throughout the years of the Suharto dictatorship, and the media's finding him a good genocidist followed accordingly. *New York Times* reporter David Sanger differentiated Suharto and post- 1990 Saddam Hussein-before 1990 he was a U.S. ally-saying "Mr. Suharto is not hoarding anthrax or threatening to invade Australia." "That is, Suharto's invasion, mass killing, and long illegal occupation of East Timor is given zero weight, and his slaughter of somewhere between 500,000 and 2 million people within Indonesia some years back is also INTRODUCYION xli not mentioned. This tells us all we need to know about how good and bad genocidists fare in the Western propaganda system. FURTHER APPLICATIONS In his book *Golden Rule*, political scientist Thomas Ferguson argues that where the major investors in political parties and elections agree on an issue, the parties will not compete on that issue, no matter how strongly the public

might want an alternative. He contends that for ordinary voters to influence electoral choices they would have to have "strong channels that directly facilitate mass deliberation and expression."¹⁰¹ These would include unions and other intermediate organizations that might, through their collective power, cause the interests of ordinary voters to be given greater weight in the political system. The propaganda model, and the institutional arrangements that it reflects, suggests that the same forces that preclude competition among the parties on issues on which the major investors agree, will also dominate media choices and rule out "mass deliberation and expression" on those issues. For example, polls regularly indicate that, except in periods of war and intense war propaganda, the public wants a smaller defense budget and favors a spending shift from defense to education and other civil functions.¹⁰² But because the major investors agree that a large defense budget is desirable, the two dominant parties compete only on whether the one or the other is stinting on military expenditures, with both promising to enlarge it (as both George W. Bush and Al Gore did in the presidential election campaign of 2000). And the mainstream media do the same, limiting debate to the terms defined by the two parties and excluding deliberation and expression of the position that large cuts are desirable. The alternative presidential candidate, Ralph Nader, called for such cuts, but the media denied him a voice on the issues, some of them explicitly defending his exclusion from the presidential debates on the grounds that the options afforded by the two parties sufficed.¹⁰³ The U.S. corporate community has favored an immense defense budget...currently more than five times the size of that of a steadily weakening Russia, the second biggest spender—because of the great benefits its members derive from military spending. These include weapons and other contracting business, direct and indirect subsidies in research,¹⁰⁴ and the role played by military power in supporting the global economic expansion in which many U.S. transnational corporations are active.

INTRODUCTION participants and beneficiaries. Business also benefits from the market-opening actions of trade agreements and from the

supportive operations of the WTO, the World Bank, and the IMF. But these trade agreements and the activities of the international financial institutions have generated controversy and political struggle, because while their benefits to business are dear, their costs are borne heavily by workers forced to compete in a global job market. Furthermore, globalization and trade agreements strengthen the political as well as the economic power of the corporate community, in part because they shift decision-making authority from democratic polities to bankers and technocrats who more reliably serve the transnational corporate interest. Here also, as in the case of defense versus civilian-oriented budgets, polls show a sharp dichotomy between corporate and public preferences, with the latter generally hostile to the agreements and institutional arrangements favored by business. 105 The propaganda model fits well the media's treatment of this range of issues. Consider, for example, their coverage of the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the subsequent Mexican financial crisis and meltdown of 1994--95. Polls taken before its enactment consistently showed substantial majorities opposed to NAFTA and later to the bailout of investors in Mexican securities but the elite in favor. Media editorials, news coverage, and selection of "experts" in opinion columns were heavily skewed toward the elite preference; their judgment was that the benefits of NAFTA were obvious, were agreed to by all qualified authorities, and that only demagogues and "special interests" were opposed. 106 The "special interests" who might be the "losers" included women, minorities, and a majority of the workforce. 107 The media dealt with the awkward fact that polls showed steady majority opposition to the agreement mainly by ignoring it, but occasionally they suggested that the public was uninformed and didn't recognize its own true interests. 108 The effort of labor to influence the outcome of the NAFTA debates was sharply attacked in both the New York Times and the Washington Post, with no comparable criticism of corporate or governmental (U.S. and Mexican) lobbying and propaganda. And while labor was attacked for its alleged position on these issues, the press refused

to allow the actual position to be expressed. 10Q In December 1994, only eleven months after NAFrAwent into effect, Mexico suffered a major financial crisis, including a massive flight of capital, a devaluation of the currency, and a subsequent bailout by the IMF that required Mexico to carry out painful deflationary measures. Despite the fact that the meltdown occurred within a year of the introduction of NAFTA, which the media had portrayed as ushering in a prospective INTRODUCTION xliii golden age of economic advance, they were unanimous that NAFTA was not to blame. And in virtual lock-step they supported the Mexican (investor) bailout, despite poll reports of general public opposition in the United States. Experts and media pundits and editorialists repeatedly explained that one great merit of NAFTA was that it had "locked Mexico in" so that it couldn't alter its overall policy direction or resort to controls to protect itself from severe deflation and unemployment. They were oblivious to the profoundly undemocratic nature of this lock-in, made more questionable by the fact that it had been negotiated by a Mexican government that ruled as a result of electoral fraud. 11o More recently, when the growing global opposition to the policies of the WTO, the IMF, and the World Bank led to mass protests at the WTO conference in Seattle in November and December 1999, and then at the annual meeting of the IMF and the World Bank in Washington, D.C., in April 2000, media coverage of these events was derisive and hostile to the protesters and almost uniformly failed to deal with the substantive issues that drove the protests. The media portrayed the Seattle protesters as "all-purpose agitators" (U.S. News & World Report), "terminally aggrieved" (Philadelphia Inquirer), simply "against world trade" (ABC News), and making "much ado about nothing" (CNN), but the bases of the protesters' grievances were almost entirely unexplored. 11l Similarly, in the case of the Washington, D.C., protests, the media repeatedly reported on activists' attire, looks, body odors, fadism, and claimed a lack of "anything that can coherently be called a cause" (Michael Kelly, journalist, Washington Post), and they continued their refusal to address issues. 112 There were many informed protesters with

coherent agendas at Seattle and Washington—including reputable economists, social theorists, and veteran organizers from around the world¹¹³—but the media did not seek them out, preferring to stereotype antiglobalization activists as ignorant troublemakers. On op-ed pages, there was a major imbalance hostile to the protesters. TV bias was at least as great, and often misleading on the facts. In his November 29, 1999, background on the WTO, Dan Rather explained that the organization had ruled on many environmental issues, implying that those rulings were protective of the environment when in fact they generally privileged trade rights over environmental needs. Another notable feature of media reporting on both the Seattle and Washington, D.C., protests, and a throwback to their biased treatment of the protests of the Vietnam War era (1965-75),¹¹⁴ was their exaggeration of protester violence, their downplaying of police provocations and violence, and their complaisance at illegal police tactics designed to limit all protestor actions, peaceable or otherwise.¹¹⁵ Although the Seattle police resorted to force and used chemical agents against many nonviolent protesters well before a handful of individuals began breaking windows, both then and later the media reversed this chronology, stating that the police violence was a response to protester violence. In fact, the vandals were largely ignored by the police, while peaceful protesters were targeted for beatings, tear gas, torture with pepper spray, and arrest.¹¹⁶ One New York Times article went so far as to claim that the Seattle protesters had thrown excrement, rocks, and Molotov cocktails at delegates and police officers; the Times later issued a correction acknowledging that these claims were false.¹¹⁷ Dan Rather, who had falsely alleged that the protesters had “brought on today’s crack-down” at Seattle, later suggested that the Washington protesters were possibly “hoping for a replay of last year’s violence in Seattle,” setting this off against “those charged with keeping the peace” who “have other ideas.”¹¹⁸ In their eighty-seven-page report, *Out of Control: Seattle’s Flawed Response to Protests Against the World Trade Organization*, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) stated that “demonstrators [in

Seattle] were overwhelmingly peaceful. Not so the police.” The response of the Seattle police to the protests was characterized by “draconian” violations of civil liberties, including widespread use of “chemical weapons, rubber bullets and clubs against peaceful protesters and bystanders alike.” But NBC, ABC, CBS, CNN, and the New York Times and Washington Post all ignored the release of the ACLU’s finding³, which ran counter to their own uniformly pro-police and anti-protester line. The media’s reversal of chronology and inflation of the threat of activist violence, and their low-keyed treatment of numerous illegal police actions designed to instill fear in those wanting to protest peacefully,¹¹⁹ provided the enabling ground for both police violence and serious restrictions on free speech. These increased in scope and sophistication between Seattle and Washington, and were then applied to squelch protest at the Republican and Democratic conventions in Philadelphia and Los Angeles in July and August 2000.¹²⁰ The corporate media’s hostility to the goals of the protests, closely aligned with that of the rest of the corporate establishment, caused their devotion to the First Amendment to flag in a way it never has when their own rights and privileges have been at stake. As is suggested by the media’s treatment of NAFTA and of labor’s right to participate in its debates, as well as the media coverage of Watergate, COINTELPRO, and major events in the earlier history of labor-management conflict (the Haymarket affair, the Homestead strike, the post-World War I “red scare”),¹²¹ the propaganda model applies to domestic as well as foreign policy issues. Labor has been under renewed siege in the United States for the past several decades, its condition adversely affected by the deflationary policies of the early 1980s, corporate downsizing, globalization, a vigorous business campaign to defeat unions, and government support of, or indifference to, the damage being inflicted on unions and workers. There was a major drop in union membership from the beginning of the Reagan era, with union density falling from 25 percent in 1980 to 14.5 percent in 1996 (and only 10.2 percent in the private sector). This reflected weakened labor bargaining power and was accompanied by sig-

nificant concessions in wages and benefits, more onerous working conditions, and greater worker insecurity. President Reagan's firing of 11,000 striking air-traffic controllers in 1981 "put the government seal of approval on strike-breaking and a new era of industrial relations opened."¹²² But you would hardly know this from reading or listening to the mainstream media. An exceptional 1994 *Business week* article noted that "over the past dozen years ... U.S. industry has conducted one of the most successful union wars ever," helped by "illegally firing thousands of workers for exercising their right to organize," with unlawful firings occurring in "one-third of all representation elections in the late '80s."¹²³ But this successful war was carried out quietly, with media cooperation. The decertification of unions, use of replacement workers, and long, debilitating strikes like that involving Caterpillar were treated in a very low key manner. In a notable illustration of the applicability of the propaganda model, the nine-month-long Pittston miners' strike that began in April 1989 was accorded much less attention, and less friendly treatment, than the Soviet miners' strikes of the summer of that same year.¹²⁴ From 1977 through 1999, while the incomes of the top 1 percent of households grew by 84.8 percent and the top 10 percent by 44.6 percent, the bottom 60 percent lost ground and the income of the lowest 20 percent fell by 12.5 percent.¹²⁵ Real hourly earnings of production and nonsupervisory employees (i.e., the 80 percent of the workforce that holds working-class jobs) fell by 4.8 percent between 1973 and 1999.¹²⁶ This, along with the adverse trend of social indicators in the same period,¹²⁷ suggests that the welfare of the majority declined in this era of high employment, a "new economy," and a spectacular upswing in the stock market. In its euphoria phase, which ended abruptly with the collapse of the dot.com market in 1999 and 2000, the mainstream media hardly noticed that only a minority had been the beneficiaries;¹²⁸ they briefly discovered this issue only under the impetus of Pat Buchanan's right-wing populist outcries during the 1996 presidential election campaign. In the 2000 electoral campaign, once again the two major party candidates said nothing about the

failure of the majority to be lifted in the supposed “rising tide” that would benefit everybody; only Ralph Nader and other marginalized candidates did, and as noted, the dominant media found that the agenda of the major parties was all that they could ask for. Another striking application of the propaganda model can be seen in the media’s treatment of the chemical industry and its regulation. Because of the industry’s power, as well as the media’s receptivity to the demands of the business community, the media have normalized a system described by Rachel Carson in *Silent Spring* as “deliberately poisoning us, then policing the results.”¹²⁹ Industry is permitted to produce and sell chemicals (and during the 1990s, bioengineered foods) without independent and prior proof of safety, and the “policing” by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has been badly compromised by underfunding and political limits on both law enforcement and testing. A major National Research Council study of 1984 found that there was no health hazard data available for 78 percent of the chemicals in commerce, and an Environmental Defense Fund update found little change had occurred a dozen years later. The federal government’s National Toxicology Program tests about ten to twenty chemicals a year for carcinogenicity (but not for the numerous other possible adverse effects of chemicals); but meanwhile five hundred to a thousand new chemicals enter commerce annually, so our knowledge base steadily declines.¹³¹ This system works well for industry, however, as it wants to sell without interference, and leaving virtually all of the research and testing for safety in its hands, with its members to decide when the results are worthy of transmission to the EPA, is a classic “fox guarding the chickens” arrangement. The system has worked poorly for the public, and its inadequacy has been reinforced by the industry’s power to influence, sometimes even capture, the EPA.¹³² Nevertheless, the industry often contends that the safety of chemicals is assured by EPA (or FDA) regulation,¹³³ which industry does its best to keep weak and which, as noted, has failed to deal in any way with the great majority of chemicals in the market. With the media’s help, the chemical industry has also gained wide

acceptance of its view that chemicals should be evaluated individually on the basis of an analysis of their risks to individuals and individual tolerances. But it is very hard to measure such risks and tolerances for humans---controlled experiments are not possible, damage may show up only after many years, the forms of damage are hard to know in advance, chemicals may interact with others in the environment, they may be bio-INTRODUCTION xlvii accumulative, and the breakdown products of chemicals may have their own dangers. Furthermore, if thousands of chemicals enter the environment, many long-lasting, bioaccumulative, and interacting with other chemicals, a public policy that ignores their additive and interactive effects on people and the environment is deeply flawed and irresponsible. Policy based on the "precautionary principle," bitterly opposed by the chemical industry, with the support of the U.S. government,¹³⁴ would not allow chemicals to enter the environment without full testing, would prohibit the use of chemicals that accumulate in human tissues and whose breakdown products are threatening or unknown, and would compel the use of nonthreatening alternatives for untested and known-to-be-risky chemicals where such alternatives can be found or developed at reasonable cost.¹³⁵ In successfully avoiding application of the precautionary principle, industry spokespersons have argued that the existing system is based on "sound science." But science does not tell us that industry has any right to put chemicals into the environment that have any risk at all, let alone telling us what risks are acceptable--these are political decisions. Furthermore, if the chemicals in the environment have not been tested for all the variables that are relevant to social choices, such as their long-term effects on immune systems and reproduction as well as any cancer threat, and the effects of their breakdown products on the environment--and none of them have been so tested--the political, not scientific, basis of "sound science" is evident. The chemical industry has produced, and long denied any harm from, innumerable products--from tetraethyl lead in gasoline and PCBs in batteries to asbestos, DDT, and Agent Orange--that are now well established as seriously harmful, only

withdrawing them (often only from domestic use) under overwhelming legal and regulatory pressure. For the products they have wanted to sell, they have always found scientists who would testify to their harmlessness (or that claims of harm were not scientifically proven). There has been a consistent sharp difference between the results of industry-sponsored science and those of independent researchers working the same terrain.¹³⁰ And there have been numerous cases of fraud in industry testing, industry use of testing labs that arranged the data to find industry products acceptable, and political manipulation to weaken regulatory standards.¹³⁷ Despite these industry abuses of science, the media have largely accepted the industry's claim that it supports "sound science," in contrast with its critics' use of "junk science." From 1996 through September 1998, 258 articles in mainstream newspapers used the phrase "junk science"; but only 21, or 8 percent, used it to refer to corporate abuses of science, whereas 160, or 62 percent, applied it to science used by environmentalists, other corporate critics, or tort lawyers suing corporations (77, or 30 percent, didn't fit either of these categories).¹³⁸ In short, the media have internalized industry's self-legitimizing usage, just as they have normalized a status quo of caveat emptor (buyer beware) rather than of safety first. The media have also regularly gotten on board in dismissing concerns about chemical threats as unwarranted "scares," such as the alleged scares over dioxin and the danger of Alar on apples. But these and other scares often turn out to be based on genuine health hazards.¹³⁹ Meanwhile, the media rarely report and examine in any depth the frequent evidence of the inadequacy of regulation and testing and of the real costs of chemicalization of the environment.¹⁴⁰ For example, the International Joint Commission (IJC), a joint Canadian-U.S. venture dating back to 1978, was given the formidable task of trying to halt the flow of toxic chemicals into the Great Lakes. It reports each year that it is failing, and since 1992 has called for the ending of the manufacture of chlorine as essential to fulfilling its task. The national media virtually ignore this appeal, and the IJC's U.S. cochairman Gordon Durnil has

remarked that "we have a societal problem about how to deal with this, but 90 percent of the population doesn't even know there is anything to worry about."¹⁴¹ We believe that the propaganda model helps understand this lack of knowledge. In the health insurance controversy of 1992-93, the media's refusal to take the single-payer option seriously, despite apparent widespread public support and the effectiveness of the system in Canada, served well the interests of the insurance and medical service complex.¹⁴² The uncritical media reporting and commentary on the alleged urgency of fiscal restraint and a balanced budget in the years 1992-96 fit well the business community's desire to reduce the social budget and weaken regulation.¹⁴³ The media's gullibility in accepting the claim of a Social Security system "crisis," which would require policy action some thirty-seven years ahead if certain conservative guesses were true and a number of easy corrections were ruled out, served the interests of conservative ideologues anxious to weaken a highly successful government program and a security industry eager to benefit from the partial or full privatization of Social Security.¹⁴⁴ The applicability of the propaganda model in these and other cases, including the media's handling of the "drug wars," seems clear.¹⁴⁵

CONCLUDING NOTE The propaganda model remains a useful framework for analyzing and understanding the workings of the mainstream media—perhaps even more so than in 1988. As we noted above, the changes in structural conditions that underlie the model, and that we believe strongly and often decisively influence media behavior and performance, have tended to increase the model's salience. We noted in the Preface to the first edition and in chapters 2 and 3, in reference to the media's coverage of the wars and elections in Central America in the 1980s, that the media's performance often surpassed expectations of media subservience to government propaganda demands. This was at least equally true of their performance in covering the 1991 war against Iraq and NATO's war against Yugoslavia in 1999, as we have described earlier and briefly in regard to Yugoslavia and in detail elsewhere.¹⁴⁶ In our conclusion to the first edition, we emphasized that,

as the negative performance effects of the media result primarily from their structure and objectives, real change in performance calls for substantial changes in underlying media organization and goals. In the years since 1988, structural changes have not been favorable to improved performance, but it remains a central truth that democratic politics requires a democratization of information sources and a more democratic media. Along with trying to contain and reverse the growing centralization of the mainstream media, grassroots movements and intermediate groups that represent large numbers of ordinary citizens should put much more energy and money into creating and supporting their own media—as they did with the Independent Media Centers brought into existence during the Seattle and Washington, D.C., protests of 1999 and 2000. These, and other nonprofit community-based broadcasting stations and networks, and a better use of public-access channels, the Internet, and independent print media, will be essential for the achievement of major democratic social and political successes.

Notes to Introduction 1. On a number of issues, such as trade agreements, health care, and the appropriate size of the military budget, there is a sharp division between media personnel and the elite on the one hand and the general population on the other hand, as we discuss below under “Further Applications.”

INTRODUCTION 2. This was even true in the Soviet Union, where the media’s disclosure of inconvenient facts on the Afghan war caused the Soviet defense minister to denounce the press as unpatriotic; see Bill Keller, “Soviet Official Says Press Harms Army,” *N.Y. Times*, January 21, 1988.

3. For an account of critiques, and the present writers’ replies, see Noam Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions* (Boston: South End Press, 1989), appendix I; Edward S. Herman, “The Propaganda Model Revisited,” in *The Myth of the Liberal Media* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999).

4. Ben Bagdikian, *The Media Monopoly*, 6th ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), p. xxi.

5. *Ibid.*

6. Edward S. Herman and Robert McChesney, *The Global Media* (London: Cassell, 1997).

7. Robert McChesney, *Rich Media, Poor Democracy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), p. 108.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 109.

9. James Ledbetter,

"Public Broadcasting Sells; (Out?)," *The Nation*, December 1, 1997. 10. Ibid. 11. Stephanie Strom, "Japanese Sites for Women Aim for Empowerment," *New York Times*, December 25, 2000. 12. Mark Fineman, "Military Can't Outflank Rebels in War of Words," *Los Angeles Times*, February 21, 1995; Leonard Doyle, "Rebels Try to Advance via Internet," *The Independent*, March 7, 1995. 13. Jim Shultz, "Bolivia's Water War Victory," *Earth Island Journal*, September 22, 2000; "Bolivia-The Last Word," April 13, 2000, JShultz@democracyar.org; "How the Internet Helped Activists," *Straits Times* (Singapore), May 25, 1998; Marshall Clark, "Cleansing the Earth," *Inside Indonesia* (October-December 1998). 14. Madelaine Drohan, "How the Net Killed the .MAL," *Globe and Mail*, April 29, 1998. 15. Kayte Van Scoy, "How Green Was My Silicon Valley," *PC/Computing*, March 1, 2000; Keith Perine, "Power to the (Web-Enabled) People," *Industry Standard*, April 10, 2000. See also "Further Applications" below. 16. James Ledbetter, "Some Pitfalls in Portals," *Columbia Journalism Review* (November-December 1999). 17. Quoted in ibid. 18. Alex Carey, *Taking the Risk out of Democracy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997); John Stauber and Sheldon Rampton, *Toxic Sludge Is Good for You* (Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press, 1995); Stuart Ewen, *PR: A Social History of Spin* (New York: Basic Books, 1996). 19. Mark Dowie, "Introduction," Stauber and Rampton, *Toxic Sludge*. 20. See Stephen Cohen, *Failed Crusade: America and the Tragedy of Post-Communist Russia* (New York: Norton, 2000). See also Thomas Frank, *One Market Under God* (New York: Doubleday, 2000). 21. Kevin Robins and Frank Webster, *Times of the Technoculture* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 127. 22. Patricia Aufderheide, "Journalism and Public Life Seen Through the Internet," in Aufderheide, *The Daily Planet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); Joseph Turow, *Breaking Up America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997). 23. Herman and McChesney, *Global Media*, chapter 5. 24. On the ideological messages borne in commercials, see Erik Barnouw, *The Sponsor* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), part 2, chapter 1. 25.

See Robert McChesney, *Telecommunications, Mass Media, and Democracy* (New York: Oxford, 1993). 26. See Herman, *Myth of the Liberal Media*, pp. 32-33. 27. For some dramatic evidence on the mainstream media's neglect of these credible sources, see below, pp. 76-79. 28. Peter Galbraith, "How the Turks Helped Their Enemies," *New York Times*, February 20, 1999. 29. During the 1980s, when Saddam Hussein was an ally and recipient of U.S. aid, his use of chemical weapons against the Kurds in Iraq, which killed thousands in 1988, did not interfere with support by the Bush administration, which continued up to the moment of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on August 30, 1990. See Mark Phythian, *Arming Iraq: How the U.S. and Britain Secretly Built Saddam's War Machine* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1997); Miron Rezun, *Saddam Hussein's Gulf Wars: Ambivalent Stakes in the Middle East* (Westport Conn.: Praeger, 1992). 30. The CIA itself designated the 1965-66 slaughters in Indonesia as "one of the worst mass murders of the 20th century" (quoted in Robert Cribb, ed., *The Indonesian Killings of 1965-1966 [Monash Papers on Southeast Asia, no. 21, 1991]*). The figure of 500,000 victims in this slaughter, given by the head of Indonesian state security, must be taken as an absolute minimal figure. For other estimates that run up to 2 million, see Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman, *The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism* (Boston: South End Press, 1979), pp. 208-9; Benedict Anderson, "Fetru's Dadi Ratu," *New Left Review* (May-June, 2000). 31. Former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Patrick Moynihan brags in his autobiography of how back in 1975 he protected Indonesia from any effective international action that might have interfered with its aggression: "The Department of State desired that the United Nations prove utterly ineffective in whatever measures it took [regarding the Indonesian invasion of East Timor]. This task was given to me, and I carried it forward with no inconsiderable success." He added, without the slightest expression of regret, that within a few weeks 60,000 people had been killed in this aggression that he was protecting. *A Dangerous Place* (New York: Little, Brown, 1978), p. 19. 32. For accounts of this

shift, see John Pilger, *Hidden Agendas* (London: Vintage, 1998), pp. 33-34; Chomsky, *Necessary Truths*, pp. 109-10. For the earlier media treatment of Indonesia in East Timor, see Washington Connection, pp. 129-204. 33. John and Karl Mueller, "Sanctions of Mass Destruction," *Foreign Affairs* (May-June 1999), p. 43-44. 34. UNICEF, "Iraq Surveys Show a Humanitarian Emergency," Press Release, August 12, 1999. 35. Leslie Stahl interviewing Madeleine Albright, "60 Minutes," CBS News Transcript, May 12, 1996. 36. Many KLA and Serb fighters died in Kosovo, and civilians were killed by NATO bombs and military actions not aiming to kill civilians. See Jonathan Steele, "Figures Put on Serb Killings Too High," *Guardian* (August 18, 2000). For a fuller discussion, Noam Chomsky, *A New Generation Draws the Line* (London: Verso, 2000), chapter 3. 37. John Taylor, *East Timor: The Price of Freedom* (London: Zed, 1999). See also Arnold Kohen, "Beyond the Vote: The World Must Remain Vigilant Over East Timor," *Washington Post*, September 5, 1999. 38. The source is Western investigators on the scene, including U.S. military personnel: Ian Murdoch, "Horror Lives on for Town of Liquica," *The Age* (Australia), April 8, 1999; Barry Wain, "Will Justice Be Served in East Timor?" *Wall Street Journal* (Asia edition), April 11, 2000. 39. On the importance of Racak as a basis for mobilizing U.S. allies and the public for war, see Barton Gellman, "The Path to Crisis: How the United States and Its Allies Went to War," *Washington Post*, April 18, 1999; Madeleine Albright referred to Racak as a "galvanizing incident" (quoted in Bo Adam, Roland Heine, and Claudius Technau, "I Felt that Something Was Wrong," *Berliner Zeitung*, April 5, 2000). 40. See Edward Herman and David Peterson, "CNN: Selling Nato's War Globally," in Philip Hammond and Edward Herman, eds., *Degraded Capability: The Media and the Kosovo Crisis* (London: Pluto, 2000), pp. 117-19. More recently, three Finnish forensic experts, who were members of a panel that examined the bodies found at Racak, disclosed that their team found no support for the alleged mutilations by the Serbs, and the data presented in the article casts further doubt on the claim that all the victims were executed.

0. Raina et al., "Independent Forensic Autopsies in Armed Conflict Investigation of Victims from Racak, Kosovo," *Forensic Science International*, vol. 16 (2001), pp. 171-85.) It is a notable fact that the OSCE has not yet seen fit to release the original forensic report from which this article's data is drawn. 41. Herman and Peterson, "CNN: Selling Nato's War Globally;" 42. Editorial, "Election Risks in Cambodia," *New York Times*, November 28, 1997; 43. "Gathering Storm in Serbia?" editorial, *washington Post*, September 11, 2000; "Repudiating Mr. Milosevic," editorial, *New York Times*, September 26, 2000. 44. Editorial, "Kenya's Flawed Election," *New York Times*, December 31, 1997; 45. Editorial, "Mexico's Radical Insider," *New York Times*, July 3, 1988. 46. Editorial, "The Missing Reform in Mexico," *New York Times*, August 24, 1991. 47. Editorial, "Turkey Approaches Democracy," *New York Times*, November 11, 1983. 48. Editorial, "Victories for Voters in Latin America: Uruguay's Slow Boat to Democracy," *New York Times*, December 1, 1984. 49. Editorial, "A Victory for Russian Democracy," *New York Times*, July 4, 1996. 50. "And the Winner Is?" *MOSCOW Times*, September 9, 2000. See also Matt Taibbi, "OSCE-The Organization for Sanctioning Corrupt Elections," *The Exile*, Issue no. 18/99, September 14-28, 2000. 51. Of the major mainstream media, only the *Los Angeles Times* addressed its findings, with the article "Russia Election Chief Rejects Fraud Claims in Presidential Vote" (September 13, 2000); a title that features the rejoinder of Russian officials, not the charges themselves. For a discussion of this article see Taibbi, "OSCE". 52. On the overall atrocious mainstream media reporting on the Russian economic and social collapse, as well as on the elections, see Stephen Cohen, *Failed Crusade*, chapter I. 53. The Soviet Union did undoubtedly mistreat its own and client-state peoples, although the treatment of Russians by the Western-backed "reformers" since 1991 has hardly been an improvement. However the charge of sponsorship of international terrorism was inflated and hypocritical given the West's support of its own very impressive terror networks. See Edward Herman, *The Real Terror Network* (Boston: South End Press, 1982); Noam

Chomsky; *Pirates and Emperors: International Terrorism in the Real World* (New York: Claremont Research, 1986). 54. See Edward S. Herman and Frank Brodhead, *The Rise and Fall of the Bulgarian Connection* (New York: Sheridan Square Press, 1986), chapter 5. 55. The only mainstream report on Weinstein's return with "no startling revelations" (i.e., nothing), was R. C. Longworth, "Probe into '81 Pope Attack Shon of Funds," *Chicago Tribune*, May 6, 1994. 56. See "The Gates Hearings: Excerpts from Senate Hearing of Nomination of C.I.A. Chief," *New York Times*, October 2, 1991. 57. See Edward S. Herman and Howard Friel, "Stacking the Deck" on the Bulgarian Connection, *Lies of Our Times* (November 1991); Michael Ross, "Gates Corrupted CIA Intelligence, Ex-Officials Say," *Los Angeles Times*, October 2, 1991; Benjamin Weiser, "Papal-Shooting Analysis: Case Study in Slanting?" *Washington Post*, October 1, 1991. 58. Editorial, "The Fingerprints on Agca's Gun," *New York Times*, October 30, 1984. 59. Barbara Crossette, "Hanoi Said to Vow to Give M.I.A. Data," *New York Times*, October 24, 1992. 60. For many years U.S. officials used the claim that Vietnam had not accounted for all U.S. prisoners of war and M.I.A.s to justify hostile actions toward that country. This is discussed later in this Introduction, under "Rewriting Vietnam War History," and in the main text, pp. 240-41. 61. Leslie Gelb, "When to Forgive and Forget: Engaging Hanoi and Other Outlaws," *New York Times*, April 15, 1993. 62. Quoted in William Buckingham, Jr., *Operation Ranch Hand: The Air Force and Herbicides in Southeast Asia*, (Washington: U.S. Air Force, 1982), p. 82. 63. See Arthur Westing, ed., *Herbicides in war: The Long-Term Ecological and Human Consequences* (Stockholm: SIPRI, 1984), pp. 5ff.; Hatfield Consultants Ltd., *Development of Impact Mitigation Strategies Related to the Use of Agent Orange Herbicide in the Huoi Hilly, Viet Nam*, vol. I (West Vancouver, B.C., April 2000). 64. Buckingham, *Operation Ranch Hand*, p. 127. 65. Cited in Seymour Hersh, *Chemical and Biological Warfare* (Indianapolis: Babbs-Merrill, 1968), p. 153. See also J. B. Neilands et al., *Harvest of Death: Chemical Warfare in Vietnam*

and Cambodia (New York: Free Press, 1972). 66. First use of chemicals is contrary to the Geneva Protocol of 1925, and food crop destruction violates numerous international rules of war. The latter was even illegal according to the rules laid out in the U.S. Army's own field manual in use during the Vietnam war. See Edward Herman, *Atrocities in Vietnam* (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1970), pp. 81-83. 67. Harvard University physician Jean Mayer, "Crop Destruction in Vietnam," *Science* (April 15, 1966). 68. Alistair Hay, *The Chemical Scythe: Lessons Of 2,4,5-T and Dioxin* (New York: Plenum Publishing, 1982), pp. 187-94. 69. General Assembly Resolution 2603A (XXIV), December 16, 1969, "viewed with horror" and strongly condemned the U.S. chemical war. 70. Peter Waldman, "Body Count: In Vietnam, the Agony of Birth Defects Calls an Old War to Mind," *Wall Street Journal*, December 12, 1997. 71. Barbara Crossette, "Study of Dioxin's Effect in Vietnam Is Hampered by Diplomatic Freeze," *New York Times*, August 19, 1992. 72. Matthew Meselson, Julian Robinson and Jeanne Guillemin, "Yellow Rain: The Story Collapses," *Foreign Policy* (Fall 1987), pp. 100-117; Edward S. Herman, "The *Wall Street Journal* as a Propaganda Agency," in Herman, *Myth of the Liberal Media*, pp. 103-10. 73. Peter Kann, "Clinton Ignores History's Lessons in Vietnam," *Wall Street Journal*, September 9, 1992. 74. "When Saddam Hussein used chemical weapons against Iran and his indigenous Kurds in the 1980s, the Reagan and Bush administrations made no protests and continued to treat him as a valued ally. It was only after he invaded Kuwait in 1990 that he became a menace and his possession of "weapons of mass destruction" was deemed intolerable. See citations in note 29 above. 75. In 1999, Uoyd Gardner found that the Barnes & Noble Web site contained 1,920 titles on some aspect of the Vietnam war and over 8,000 out-of-print and used books on that topic. "Going Back to Vietnam for a Usable Past," *Newsday*, November 14, 1999 (a review of Michael Lind's *Necessary War*). 76. For this viewpoint, see Michael Crozier, Samuel Huntington, and Joji Watanuki, *The Crisis of Democracy* (New York: New York University Press, 1975). 77. Robert McNamara, In *Retrospect: The Tragedy and Les-*

sons of Vietnam (New York: Vintage Books, 1996). 78. For details and analysis of this onslaught on the people of South Vietnam, see Eric Bergerud, *The Dynamics of Defeat* (Boulder, Colo: Westview, 1991); Chomsky and Herman, *Washington Connection*, chap. 5; Bernard Fall, "2000 Years of War in Vietnam," *Horizon* (Spring 1967), reprinted in Fall, *Last Reflections on a War* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967); Jeffrey Race, *War Comes to Long An* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971); Jonathan Schell, *The Military Hall An Account of Destruction in Quang Ngai and Quang Tin* (New York: Vintage, 1968). 79. H. Bruce Franklin, "Antiwar and Proud of It," *The Nation*, December 11, 2000. INTRODUCTION: 14 80. Both *Time* and *Newsweek*, in their twenty-fifth-anniversary retrospectives on the war, featured the exit at war's end and the "desperate South Vietnamese" seeking escape from "the invading North Vietnamese." Douglas Brinkley, "Of Ladders and Letters," *Time*, April 24, 2000; also, Evan Thomas, "The Last Days of Saigon," *Newsweek*, May 1, 2000. A 1995 *Washington Post* editorial speaks of the Vietnam war as a "defeat to the Vietnamese. They bled, died and finally fled in great numbers from a Communist regime. ... " (April 30, 1995), characteristically not allowing the vast majority of people in South Vietnam to be "South Vietnamese." 81. McNamara, *In Retrospect*, p. 319. 82. Full analyses of this history, and the lack of evidence, are provided in H. Bruce Franklin, *M.F.A., or, Mythmaking in America* (Brooklyn, N.Y: Lawrence Hill Books, 1992), and *Vietnam and Other American Fantasies* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000). 83. Franklin, *Vietnam and Other American Fantasies*, p. 183. 84. For a discussion, which stresses the underreported dissident movement within the armed forces, see *ibid.*, pp. 61-62. 85. Michael Lind, *The Necessary War* (New York: Free Press, 1999). 86. Gardner, "Going Back to Vietnam for a Usable Past." 87. Barry Wain, "The Deadly Legacy of War in Laos," *Asian Wall Street Journal*, January 24, 1997; Ronald Podlaski, Veng Saysana, and James Forsyth, *Accidental Massacre: American Air-Dropped Bombers Have Continued to Maim and Slaughter Thousands of Innocent Victims, Mainly Children, for the Last 25 Years in Indochina*

(Humanitarian Liaison Services, Warren, Vr. 1997). These three authors, who have worked in Laos, believe the official figure of 20,000 annual casualties is too low. 88. Daniel Pruzin, "US. Clears Laos of the Unexploded," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 9, 1996. 89. Keith Graves, "US. Secrecy Puts Bomb Disposal Team in Danger," *Sunday Telegraph*, January 4, 1998. 90. Quoted in Strobe Talbott, "Defanging the Beast," *Time*, February 6, 1989. 91. See Ben Kiernan, "The Inclusion of the Khmer Rouge in the Cambodian Peace Process: Causes and Consequences," in Kiernan, ed., *Genocide and Democracy in Cambodia* (New Haven: Yale Council on Southeast Asia Studies, 1993), pp. 199-272. 92. A study sponsored by the Finnish government was titled *Kampuchea: Decade of the Genocide* (London: Zed, 1984). It included the years 1970-74, when the United States was heavily bombing the Cambodian countryside, as part of the decade of genocide. This study was ignored in the US. mainstream media. 93. "Cambodia's Dictator," editorial, *washington Post*, February 10, 1998. 94. See Edward Herman, *Myth of the Liberal Media*, chapter 16, "Suharto: The Fall of a Good Genocidist"; Edward Herman and David Peterson, "How the New York Times Protects Indonesian Terror in East Timor," *Z Magazine* (July-August 1999). On the massive scale of the Suharto killings, see note 30 above. 95. For these and other citations, see Herman, *Myth of the Liberal Media*, chapter 16. 96. Seth Mydans, "Indonesia's Rising Prosperity Feeds a Parry for Democracy," *New York Times*, June 21, 1996. 97. Herman and Peterson, "How the New York Times Protects Indonesian Terror." 98. Ibid. 99. James Reston, "A Gleam of Light," *New York Times*, June 19, 1966. 100. David Sanger, "Indonesia Faceoff: Drawing Blood Without Bombs," *New York Times*, March 8, 1998. 101. Thomas Ferguson, *Golden Rule* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 28-29. 102. For a major study, see Steven KuH, "Americans on Defense Spending: A Study of US. Public Attitudes," *Report of Findings*, Center for Study of Public Attitudes, January 19, 1996. On public opposition [to excessive defense spending even during the Reagan era, see Thomas Ferguson and Joel Rogers, *Right Turn* (New York: Hill

&Wang, 1986), pp. 19–24. 103. The two major parties offer voters “a clear-cut choice,” so there is “no driving logic for a third-party candidacy this year,” according to the editors of the New York Times: “Mr. Nader’s Misguided Crusade,” June 10, 2000. 104. Especially after World War II, the military budget, and therefore the taxpayer, financed a very large fraction of the basic science that underpinned advances in the aircraft, computer, and electronics industries, the Internet economy, most of the biotech industry, and many others. 105. On the public opposition to the NAFTA agreement, see Herman, *Myth of the Liberal Media*, pp. 185–86. A Business week/Harris poll in early 2000 revealed that only 10 percent of those polled called themselves “free traders”; 51 percent called themselves “fair traders” and 37 percent “protectionists.” “Harris Poll: Globalization: What Americans Are Worried About,” Business April 24, 2000. 106. For more extended accounts, see Herman, *Myth of the Liberal Media*, chapter 14; Thea Lee, “False Prophets: The Selling of NAFTA,” Briefing Paper, Economic Policy Institute, 1995; John McArthur, *The Selling of “Free Trade”* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2000). 107. Thomas Lueck, “The Free Trade Accord: The New York Region,” New York Times, November 18, 1993. 108. Editorial, “NAFTA’s True Importance,” New York Times, November 14, 1993–109. On the refusal of the administration to allow any labor inputs in arriving at the NAFTA agreement, contrary to law, and the media’s disinterest in this as well as any other undemocratic features of the creation of this and other trade agreements, see Noam Chomsky, *World Orders Old and New* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 164–78. 110. See Herman, *Myth of the Liberal Media*, pp. 183–85. III. Citations from Seth Ackerman, “Prattle in Seattle: WTO coverage Misrepresented Issues, Protests,” EXTRA.” (January–February 2000), pp. 13–17. 112. Rachel Coen, “For Fress, Magenta Hair and Nose Rings Defined Protests,” EXTRA.” (July–August 2000). An exception at the time of the Washington meetings and protests was Eric Pooley’s “IMF: Dr. Death?” Time, April 24, 2000. INTRODUCTION Ivii 113. See Walden Bello, “Why Reform of the WTO Is the Wrong Agenda” (Global

Exchange; 2000). 114. Edward P. Morgan, "From Virtual Community to Virtual History: Mass Media and the American Antiwar Movement in the 1960s," *Radical History Review* (Fall 2000); Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980). 115. Rachel Coen, "Whitewash in Washington: Media Provide Cover as Police Militarizes," *EXTRA* (July-August 2000); Ackerman, "Prattle in Seattle"; Neil deMause, "Pepper Spray Gets in Their Eyes: Media Missed Militarization of Police Work in Seattle," *EXTRA!* (March-April 2000). 116. Coen, Ackerman, and deMause items cited in note 115. 117. Nichole Christian, "Police Brace for Protests in Windsor and Detroit," *New York Times*, June 3, 2000. 118. CBS Evening News Report, April 6, 2000. 119. Zachary Wolfe, National Lawyers Guild legal observer coordinator, concluded that "police sought to create an atmosphere of palpable fear," and that anyone even trying to hear dissident views ran a risk of police violence "just for being in the area where speech was taking place." Quoted in Coen, "Whitewash in Washington." 120. See Rachel Coen, "Free Speech Since Seattle: Law Enforcement's Attacks on Activists," *EXTRA*, November-December 2000. 121. See Frank Donner, *Protectors of Privilege: Red Squads and Police Repression in Urban America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Elizabeth Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise: The Business Assault on Labor and Liberalism, 1945-60* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994); William Puetter, *Through Jaundiced Eyes: How the Media View Organized Labor* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992). 122. Kim Moody, *Workers in a Lean World* (London: Verso, 1997), p. 24. 123. Aaron Bernstein, "The Workplace: Why America Needs Unions, But Not the Kind It Has Now," *Business Week*, May 23, 1994. 124. See Jonathan Tasini, *Lost in the Margins: Labor and the Media* (New York: FAIR, 1990), pp. 7-9. 125. Jared Bernstein, Lawrence Mishel, and Chauna Brocht, "Any Way You Cut It: Income Inequality on the Rise Regardless of How It's Measured," Briefing Paper, Economic Policy Institute, 2000. 126. Lawrence Mishel, Jared Bernstein, and John Schmitt, *The State of Working America, 2000-2001* (Ithaca: Cornell

University Press, 2001), p. 120. 127. Marc Miringoff and Marque-Luisa Miringoff, *The Social Health of the Nation: How America Is Really Doing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). This study shows that an index of social health indicators moves with GDP until the mid-1970s, after which GDP continues to grow but a "social recession" ensues, with only a slight interruption in the early 1990s. 128. See, among others, Gerald Baker, "Is This Great, Or What?" *Financial Times*, March 31, 1998; Richard Stevenson, "The Wisdom to Let the Good Times Roll," *New York Times*, December 25, 1999. There were, however, occasional cautionary notes, as in Anne Adams Lang, "Behind the Prosperity, Working People in Trouble," *New York Times*, November 20, 2000. 129. Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett, 1962), p. 183. 130. See Dan Fagin and Marianne Lavelle, *Toxic Deception: How the Chemical Industry Manipulates Science, Bends the Law, and Endangers Your Health* (Secaucus, N.J.: Birch Lane Press, 1996), chapters 4, 5. 131. Joe Thornton, *Pandora's Poison: Chlorine, Health, and a New Environmental Strategy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000), p. 100. 132. Fagin and Lavelle, *Toxic Deception*, chapters 4, 5; Edward Herman, "Corporate Junk Science in the Media," chapter 17 in Herman, *Myth of the Liberal Media*, pp. 240-44. 133. The publicity director of Monsanto, Phil Angell, stated that "our interest is in selling as much of [a bio-engineered product] as possible. Assuring its safety is the E.D.A.'s job." Quoted in Michael Pollan, "Playing God in the Garden," *New York Times Magazine*, October 25, 1998. 134. At the January 2000 meeting on the biosafety protocol, the U.S. government's insistence on "good science," while the European Union was urging application of the precautionary principle, almost broke up the meeting. Andrew Pollack, "130 Nations Agree on Safety Rules for Biotech Food," *New York Times*, January 30, 2000; Pollack, "Talks on Biotech Food Turn on a Safety Principle," *New York Times*, January 28, 2000. 135. For a good discussion of the case for application of the precautionary principle, see Thornton, *Pandora's Poison*, chapters 9-11. 136. Fagin-Lavelle, *Toxic Deception*, chapters 3-5;

Herman, "Corporate Junk Science," pp. 232-34, 137-138; Fagin-Lavelle, *Toxic Deception*, chapter 3; Herman, "Corporate Junk Science," pp. 232-34, 138. Herman, "Corporate Junk Science," p. 235, 139. *Ibid.*, pp. 245-48, 140. *Ibid.*, pp. 234-44, 141. *Ibid.*, p. 240; see also Thornton, *Pandora's Poison*, chapter 9, 142. John Canham-Clyne, "Health Care Reform: Not Journalistically Viable," *EXTRA*, July-August 1993; Canham-Clyne, "When 'Both Sides' Aren't Enough: The Restricted Debate over Health Care Reform," *EXTRA!* January-February 1994; Vicente Navarro, *The Politics of Health Policy: The U.S. Reforms, 1980-1994* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 143. See Bagdikian, *Media Monopoly*, pp. xxvii-xxix, 144. See Dean Baker and Mark Weisbrot, *Social Security: The Phony Crisis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 145. Noam Chomsky, *Detering Democracy* (London: Verso, 1991), pp. 114-21, 146. Noam Chomsky, "The Media and the War: What War?" in Hamid Mowlana et al., *Triumph of the Image: The Media's War in the Persian Gulf: A Global Perspective* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1992); Douglas Kellner, *The Persian Gulf TV War* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1992); Chomsky, *The New Military Humanism* (Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press, 1999); Edward Herman, "The Media's Role in U.S. Foreign Policy: The Persian Gulf War," in Herman, *Myth of the Liberal Media*, chapter 12; Philip Hammond and Edward Herman, eds., *Degraded Capability: The Media and the Kosovo Crisis* (London: Pluto, 2000). Preface to *THIS BOOK*, WE SKETCH OUT A "PROPAGANDA MODEL" AND apply it to the performance of the mass media of the United States. This effort reflects our belief, based on many years of study of the workings of the media, that they serve to mobilize support for the special interests that dominate the state and private activity, and that their choices, emphases, and omissions can often be understood best, and sometimes with striking clarity and insight, by analyzing them in such terms. Perhaps this is an obvious point, but the democratic postulate is that the media are independent and committed to discovering and reporting the truth, and that they do not merely reflect the world as powerful groups wish it to be perceived. Leaders of

the media claim that their news choices rest on unbiased professional and objective criteria, and they have support for this contention in the intellectual community.² If, however, the powerful are able to fix the premises of discourse, to decide what the general populace is allowed to see, hear, and think about, and to “manage” public opinion by regular propaganda campaigns, the standard view of how the system works is at serious odds with reality.) The importance of propaganda in what Walter Lippmann referred to as the “manufacture of consent” has long been recognized by writers on public opinion, propaganda, and the political requirements of social order.⁴ Lippmann himself, writing in the early 1920s, claimed that propaganda had already become “a regular organ of popular government,” and was steadily increasing in sophistication and importance.⁵ We do not contend that this is all the mass media do, but we believe the propaganda function to be a very important aspect of their overall service. In the first chapter we spell out a propaganda model, which describes the forces that cause the mass media to play a propaganda role, the processes whereby they mobilize bias, and the patterns of news choices that ensue. In the succeeding chapters we try to demonstrate the applicability of the propaganda model to the actual performance of the media. Institutional critiques such as we present in this book are commonly dismissed by establishment commentators as “conspiracy theories,” but this is merely an evasion. We do not use any kind of “conspiracy” hypothesis to explain mass-media performance. In fact, our treatment is much closer to a “free market” analysis, with the results largely an outcome of the workings of market forces. Most biased choices in the media arise from the preselection of right-thinking people, internalized preconceptions, and the adaptation of personnel to the constraints of ownership, organization, market, and political power. Censorship is largely self-censorship, by reporters and commentators who adjust to the realities of source and media organizational requirements, and by people at higher levels within media organizations who are chosen to implement, and have usually internalized, the constraints imposed by proprietary and

other market and governmental centers of power. There are important actors who do take positive initiatives to define and shape the news and {Q keep the media in line. It is a "guided market system" that we describe here, with the guidance provided by the government, the leaders of the corporate community, the top media owners and executives, and the assorted individuals and groups who are assigned or allowed to take constructive initiatives.¹ These initiators are sufficiently small in number to be able to act jointly on occasion, as do sellers in markets with few rivals. In most cases, however, media leaders do similar things because they see the world through the same lenses, are subject to similar constraints and incentives, and thus feature stories or maintain silence together in tacit collective action and leader-follower behavior. The mass media are not a solid monolith on all issues. Where the powerful are in there will be a certain diversity of tactical judgments on how to attain generally shared aims, reflected in media debate. But views that challenge fundamental premises or suggest that the observed modes of exercise of state power are based on systemic factors will be excluded from the mass media even when elite versus over tactics rages fiercely. We will study a number of such cases as we proceed, but the pattern is, in fact, pervasive. To select an example that happens to be in the news as we write, consider the portrayal of Nicaragua, under attack by the United States. In this instance, the division of elite opinion is sufficiently great to allow it to be questioned whether sponsorship of a terrorist army is effective in making Nicaragua "more democratic" and "less of a threat to its neighbors." The mass media, however, rarely if ever entertain opinion, or allow their news columns to present materials suggesting that Nicaragua is more democratic than El Salvador and Guatemala in every non-Orwellian sense of the word;² that its government does not murder ordinary citizens on a routine basis, as the governments of El Salvador and Guatemala do;³ that it has carried out socioeconomic reforms important to the majority that the other two governments somehow cannot attempt;⁴ that Nicaragua poses no military threat to its neighbors but has, in fact, been subjected to con-

tinuous attacks by the United States and its clients and surrogates; and that the U.S. fear of Nicaragua is based more on its virtues than on its alleged defects.¹⁰ The mass media also steer clear of discussing the background and results of the closely analogous attempt of the United States to bring “democracy” to Guatemala in 1954 by means of a CIA-sponsored invasion, which terminated Guatemalan democracy for an indefinite period. Although the United States supported elite rule and helped to organize state terror in Guatemala (among many other countries) for decades, actually subverted or approved the subversion of democracy in Brazil, Chile, and the Philippines (again, among others), is “constructively engaged” with terror regimes on a global basis, and had no concern about democracy in Nicaragua as long as the brutal Somoza regime was firmly in power, nevertheless the media take government claims of a concern for “democracy” in Nicaragua at face value.¹¹ Elite disagreement over tactics in dealing with Nicaragua is reflected in public debate, but the mass media, in conformity with elite priorities, have coalesced in processing news in a way that fails to place U.S. policy into meaningful context, systematically suppresses evidence of U.S. violence and aggression, and puts the Sandinistas in an extremely bad light.¹² In contrast, El Salvador and Guatemala, with far worse records, are presented as struggling toward democracy under “moderate” leaders, thus meriting sympathetic approval. These practices have not only distorted public perceptions of Central American realities, they have also seriously misrepresented U.S. policy objectives, an essential feature of propaganda, as Jacques Ellul stresses: The propagandist naturally cannot reveal the true intentions of the principal for whom he acts.... That would be to submit the projects to public discussion, to the scrutiny of public opinion, and thus to prevent their success.... Propaganda must serve instead as a veil for such projects, masking true intention.¹³

Ixii PREFACE The power of the government to fix frames of reference and agendas, and to exclude inconvenient facts from public inspection, is also impressively displayed in the coverage of elections in Central America, discussed in chapter 3, and throughout the analysis of particular cases in