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Thesis

The latter half of the 20th century caused a dramatic paradigm shift in American war time policy and public opinion of wars. Wartime policy went from being the noble cause of world good in World War Two to vile and dastardly in Vietnam. Today our nation has never been so split on the issues of military policy. Some of the most conservative people today claim that all of the military actions we have engaged in have been justified while many liberal Americans argue that every war since WW2 has been an expression of American Imperialism. Today the public seems confused on how they should react to war policy and the politicians that created those policies. My question is what happened? How did our nation go from radical public support to the demonizing of the American War Cause and back again all over the span of half a century? To determine an answer the historical perspective will be key so that will be the focus of this paper; beginning with WW2, through Vietnam, into the Gulf War and concluding with a brief look at modern day events. Ultimately, this paper is meant to address the huge censorship policy paradigm shift that occurred between WWII and the conclusion of the Vietnam War. The latter half of this paper will, then, address how that paradigm shift directly impacted American foreign policy in the Gulf War and the War on Terror.

What is Censorship?

Since this entire paper revolves around censoring, or the lack of, it seems prudent to begin by defining what a censor is: “a person who examines books, movies, letter, etc., and removes things that are considered to be offensive, immoral, harmful to society, etc.¹ According to this definition there are two elements of a censorship: a reason to remove materiel and someone to, actively, find the removable materiel. Typically, the only entity that could or would

want to censor on a large scale is the government. Different forms of local censorship have always existed in America and the censorship of Americans was a major factor in the American Revolution. On August 5, 1735, forty years before the American Revolution, John Zenger was arrested for speaking out against the Governor of the New York Province, William Cosby. Cosby led a harsh rule over the colony of New York and he was quick to attack any dissenting opinions. When Zenger published a newspaper, The New York Weekly Journal, that was critical of Cosby’s rule the Governor had Zenger arrested and put on trial. Censorship was a common abuse by English regional power national news as the Juror’s in New York found in unanimous favor of Zenger and acquitted him of all responsibility. For the first time in America’s short history the people had asserted their right to publish as they please.

**Sedition Act**

After this case no law makers were able to censor the publications of any Americans on a large scale until 1918 with the passage of the Sedition Act of 1918. The Sedition act was an extension of the Espionage act passed in 1917. Both acts were designed to address the growing concern of modern technology and the infiltration of German spies during World War One. Americans were encouraged to limit their own free speech to prevent vital information from falling to the hands of the enemy. This bill was a call for Americans to censor themselves but the act also had the strength of enforceability. Under the Sedition Act to “willfully utter, print, write, or publish any disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language about the form of the Government of the United States” was illegal. This act allowed for the conviction of anyone that

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would speak out against the government during times of war. The act would go on to ban any actions that might prevent the production of war materials. President Wilson knew that the war America was in the largest war we had ever faced against the most formidable opponent we had ever faced. Policy makers were looking to do anything and everything to give America a military advantage. Furthermore, American high command knew that espionage was becoming more and more important in international warfare. Keeping the American military complex running was vital.

How Censorship began at home

Schenck v. United States was the first Supreme Court case that addressed that established what the government can do to support a war effort. In this case Schenck was sending leaflets to thousands of people encouraging them not to support the American war effort against the German empire. Those leaflets were targeted at adult males at or near draft-able age. He was, subsequently arrested under the Sedition Act of 1918 on the grounds of conspiring against the American war effort. Though Schenck himself was not a well-known public figure he was a prominent member of the American Socialist party and he used that support to bring the case all the way before the Supreme Court.

Under the presiding Judge Holmes, Schenck was found guilty. The court referenced both the case Aikens v. Wisconsin and Gompers v. Bucks Stove & Range Co. to illustrate the idea that there are times and circumstances that make a normal act something harmful to the public. "The question in every case is whether the words used are used in such circumstances and are of such a nature as to create a clear and present danger that they will bring about the substantive evils

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that Congress has a right to prevent." In this case and in future cases supporting a war effort holds enough weight as to merit a suspension of first amendment rights; furthermore attempting to subvert a war effort by manner of speech or publication can bring about such a substantive evil that you may be prosecuted and receive either jail time or a monetary fine as established under the Espionage Act. The constitutionality of the Sedition Act would be challenged again in *Debs v. United States, Abrams v. United States* and others but the Supreme Court upheld the law every time; leading to the conviction of over 800 in just 1919.6

At the conclusion of World War I the Sedition Act, and modern censoring, had stood the test of enactment and survived the scrutiny of the Supreme Court Justices. The federal government was given the ability to practice censorship, unilaterally, when at war. Then the world went to war again and the President needed to call upon his people once again.

**World War II**

**Executive Order 8985**

With the intention of protecting America from foreign threats on December 19, 1941 President Franklin D. Roosevelt established what was known as the Office of Censorship.7 It was the first time in American history that one, specific agency was responsible for the censoring of material that might be considered harmful to the American war effort against Germany and Japan or materiel that could endanger American lives. This office and its new director were given "absolute discretion” in what was to be censored and what was to be allowed. This office was


responsible for the censorship of any correspondence going in or out of any U.S. border and the office closely monitored what was reported by outside news sources. This office was also responsible for a blockage of non-supportive propaganda. In this time period anything that was seen to oppose the war effort was seen as a grave threat; unfortunately, this meant that no record was kept on how much effort was put towards addressing legitimate threats to security v. anti-war propaganda. Those against this effort stood opposed on the ground that this executive order was unconstitutional because it violated the people's Freedom of Speech and Freedom of the Press. In response FDR issued a statement that included these key points: “All Americans abhor censorship, just as they abhor war. But the experience of this and of all other Nations has demonstrated that some degree of censorship is essential in wartime, and we are at war... It is necessary to the national security that military information which might be of aid to the enemy be scrupulously withheld... the Government has called upon a patriotic press and radio to abstain voluntarily from the dissemination of detailed information of certain kinds.” This temporary department, created at the beginning of World War 2, would come under no more fire from the American public.

Primarily, the Office of Censorship focused its efforts on targeting publications of known and established news sources, even down to small town publications. The censors would, mainly, look for information that directly had to do with the war but even things like weather reports were discouraged. The prevailing belief was that even the smallest bit of information could be used by the enemy against America. For example, most local weather reports were censored because weather forecasts are useful in planning bombing raids. Though the effectiveness of this department has been heavily debated, the fact remains that there has been no conclusive evidence
that vital information was saved from enemy hands by censorship. This lack of consensus could speak as much to the program’s success as it does to the programs failures.

Censorship of the media in WW2: forced compliance

Under the Office of Censorship very strict rules were made to prevent Americans from giving away any information that could be useful to the foreign powers. Primarily, the Office of Censorship was looking to stop information that had more impact on military strategy. Today most news agencies would announce the completion and maiden voyage of a new Air Craft Carrier or a new Battleship but this is exactly the sort of information the censors were trying to prevent. The censoring effort in America was broad in nature and had only two expressed rules: The stories “must be accurate and they could not help the enemy.”

With wording this broad and a lack of definition on what could “help the enemy” the Office was left alone to work with the Department of Justice in censoring any news story they deemed harmful. In some cases their work seemed focus too closely on unimportant matters. On August 17, 1942, Eleanor Roosevelt casually mentions that the Office of Censorship had “written me a very stern letter about my remarks on the weather” in her popular column, My Day.

Common practice was to not report on the weather so that any Japanese attacking fleet would not know if the skies would be clear when they planned to attack. Most people today would question whether or not the daily weather was an issue of pressing national concern but, surprisingly, the Constitutionality of the policies of the Office of Censorship was rarely ever questioned.

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What made the Censorship of World War II so successful was that censors put every effort in convincing media personalities to censor themselves as opposed to forceful censorship by prosecution.

Censorship of the media in WW2: self-censorship

The soldiers of the war were expected to give their all to fight for democracy and against fascism and our people at home had no less expectation. World War 2 was, perhaps, the last Great War that rallied the entire nation. Men would go to fight and women found work. All people were expected to join the war effort; the ultimate honor for all Americans was to support the war. Journalists felt this same conviction. All of America was together and united in the war effort; including those responsible for reporting on the war. “On one hand, World War II was perhaps the most newsworthy event of the century… On the other hand, no nation can fight a modern war be refusing to exercise some control of information.” 10 Information was seen as a weapon that could be manipulated and used by the enemy. Reporters saw their duty to the war effort being fulfilled by acting as a watchdog to prevent any intelligence from falling into the hands of the enemy.

In World War 2 many reporters were allowed into highly sensitive area’s so that they could record and document what was going on but there was a responsibility on the reporters that prevented them from publishing anything that might jeopardize the American war effort. This responsibility came from the Office of Censorship and from the conscience of the individual reporter. There was such as atmosphere of support that most news voices censored themselves willingly. One such reporter was named Don Anderson. Don Anderson was the publisher of the

"Wisconsin State Journal" at the outbreak of the war. Though he was too old to go overseas and fight he still felt compelled to do what he could to support the war. In this case he would review news articles and look for any posts that violated censorship policy. When he found those he would work with the reporter to correct the stories while still making head turning news. Don Anderson was one unsung hero of the World War 2 home front but this one instance is of just one man but thousands of reporters across America shared his feelings.

Another more well-known example of a well-intentioned reporter doing his duty is William Laurence. William won the coveted Pulitzer Prize in Reporting in 1946. One year after the conclusion of the Second World War. He was awarded this Prize because of his eye-witness accounts of the “development, production, and significance.” of the Atomic Bomb. He witnessed the targeting of Nagasaki and was recording the day by day occurrences of the Manhattan project. This New York Times reporter was allowed into one of the most secretive American military projects in history. He had no formal affiliation with the government but he was well known for his writing prowess. This reporter was inside of one of the most significant projects in history but chose not to release a word of the story until after the conclusion of the war because he had an ingrained sense of duty to the nation. This reporter saw his part in the war effort as keeping a secret and that patriotism led him to stay silent for months after the use of the first weapon. Reporters had and were instilled with such a sense of duty that the breaks in censorship were so few and insignificant that no arrests were ever made. Reporters were not the only ones doing their part on the home front.

Propaganda

Linked to the idea of willful censorship the Federal government began helping prominent movie makers create propaganda films to support the war instead of making something that might be seen as unsporting. One particularly famous movie creator was Walt Disney. Disney created a number of cartoons directed at describing Nazi’s and Japanese as heartless monsters. One of which went on to win an Oscar as the best animated film for 1943. Every American was called upon to support the war effort in some way or another. Walt Disney recognized the importance of winning the war on the home front so he agreed to, and committed 90% of his studio to making only war propaganda during the early years of the war. No official policy mandated Disney’s actions but the actions were made just the same as part of a sense of duty to the war effort.

In 1941 there existed a different culture, one that was in support of America's involvement in the war and one that recognized the importance of everyone doing their part to support our soldiers. Roosevelt held the same view that there are times where personal liberties and luxuries must be put on hold so that all of the nation’s focus could be directed towards addressing the crisis at hand. But there also existed a culture of fear. This order was signed only a few days after the attack on Pearl Harbor and a country was gripped with fear and outrage over the unprovoked attack by Japan on the Hawaiian Island. When war-makers would try to apply these same principles to the Vietnam War they would not be met with the same praise.

**Vietnam**

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In World War II the media was closely watched by the federal government but there was also an air of willful compliance and self-censorship. According to a Gallup poll taken in 1943 44% of Americans held the belief that the Government went “not far enough” in asking people to make sacrifices for the war.” Compare that radical support of World War II to 61% of people “describing Vietnam as a mistake” in 1971.13 In World War II America alone lost 418,000 men14 but the National Archives reports that we only lost 58,220 men15 in Vietnam. Why was there so much less support for the war in Vietnam than there was for the war against Germany or Japan?

The simple answer is Vietnam changed how Americans saw war at home. Vietnam was the first war that was not subject to regular censorship.16 In every war leading up to Vietnam, America had to rely on radio, fuzzy black and white and newspapers for all of their information on whatever war effort happened to be going on at the time. The 1960’s was a new age; an age of color TV. With modern technology the war was being projected right into the screens of the American public. Every day they could turn on the news and see pictures of Napalm explosions and dead Americans. As President Nixon remarks in his Memoirs: “In each night’s TV news and each morning’s paper the war was reported battle by battle, but little or no sense of the underlying purpose of the fighting was conveyed… More than ever before, television showed the terrible human suffering and sacrifice of war. Whatever the intention behind such relentless and literal reporting of the war, the result was a serious demoralization of the home front, raising the question whether America would ever again be able to fight an enemy abroad with unity and

strength of purpose at home.”  

All wars before Vietnam had involved human death and destruction but this was the first time in American history that the horrors of war were brought home.

Walter Cronkite

All major news companies bringing the stories of Vietnam home to the American people but one reporter stood out among the rest: Walter Cronkite. Walter Cronkite was the chief news anchor for the CBS evening news from 1962 to 1981. He reported on almost every major world development from the 60’s to the 80’s and was referred to as the “most trusted man in America” on more than one occasion. A significant portion of his time in the reporters chair was spent reporting on the daily occurrences of Vietnam. The reporters from CBS and Walter himself would try to get as close to the action as possible; interviews from field officers and recordings following soldiers into battle were a common occurrence. The ultimate result was that what was seen by American viewers at home were hundreds of bodies, mostly Vietnamese and some American, which depicted a losing war. Americans at home were led to believe that the Vietcong were far stronger than anticipated and that the average American soldier was no match.

In 1968, in the wake of the Tet Offensive, Cronkite visited Vietnam and came home with a disturbing report. “For it seems now more certain than ever, that the bloody experience of Vietnam is to end in a stalemate…it is increasingly clear to this reporter that the only rational way out then will be to negotiate, not as victors, but as an honorable people who lived up to their pledge to defend democracy, and did the best they could.” In less than one minute most all of the

public support for the war was gone. Just weeks after this broadcast President Lyndon B. Johnson announced that he would not seek a second term. Though the war would not end for another seven years the Federal Government seemed powerless to sway public opinion. From 1968 the media would do all it could to stop the Vietnam war effort; climaxing with the release of the United States – Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967: A Study Prepared by the Department of Defense, better known as the Pentagon Papers.

**Pentagon Papers**

On June 13th, 1971 the New York Times posted the first article in a series that would come to rewrite the role of the news in war. Leading up to this point strict censorship was in place in an effort to protect those fighting the war in Vietnam.\(^{19}\) This article was a leak that included parts of a 7,000 page classified government publication that outlined all American involvement in Vietnam. Some of those pages were copied and delivered to a reporter from the New York Times. The Times jumped on the story immediately and began writing articles aimed at getting this information to the American people. By the third article the United States Government had filled a restraining order on the Times but the reporters were found innocent in the Supreme Court case *New York Times Co. v. United States.*

Most of the information leaked in the Pentagon Papers was relatively unimportant history of the region and military strategy. But some of what was leaked was evidence indicating the Presidents Truman, Eisenhower, JFK and Johnson had all, intentionally, misled the public on the status of America in the Vietnam War. This caused a huge uproar of the American people in regards to the war effort as a whole. This one leak of classified material jeopardized the entire American war effort and was a major factor to the loss of Vietnam. In 2011 the full document

was declassified and analyst would come to learn that the information leaked was, essentially, accurate but lacked many important details that could have significantly harmed the American war effort. Overall what was given to the press was a very narrow view of government papers on the region. In this instance the New York Times put more emphasis on publishing what was the fastest and most popular story at the time than on national security. All of what was turned over to the Times was reported; including military strategy. Luckily for the soldiers in Vietnam, what was reported was out of date and irrelevant to the current status of the war at the time. It what was leaked included information on current troop positions or strength than many Americans may have died, needlessly.

New York Times v. United States

Though the leaking of the Pentagon papers had no direct impact on the war effort it led to a landmark Supreme Court case: *The New York Times v. United States*. In this case President Nixon received word of the partial release of the Pentagon Papers and the intention to release the remainder. In less than a week the newspaper was served with a restraining order that claim any more publications would cause irreparable harm to the United States. The New York Times disagreed with the Nixon administration and the case was seen before the Supreme Court on June 26, 1971. Within four short days the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the newspaper company and changed all of the rules for war time reporting overnight. In the opinion of Justice Black: “every moment’s continuance of the injunctions against these newspaper amounts to a flagrant, indefensible, and continuing violation of the First Amendment.” This landmark decision indicated that the enforcement of the Sedition Act was in violation of the First Amendment.

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Amendment and that news sources may publish leaked information as they pleased. This one court case opened the door for all modern “whistleblowers” to publish their stories while the nation was still at war.

**Protests**

Small scale protests of the Vietnam War began in 1965 on some college campuses but they remained relatively small and ineffective until 1968. With the launch of the Tet Offensive in Vietnam and the increasingly negative reports from correspondents like Walter Cronkite the Protest movement began to gather pace. Powerful images of soldiers, like John Kerry, coming back from Vietnam and throwing their medals away in protest began to ignite the nation further.21

The protests climaxed in Chicago.22 On August 26-29th, 1968 riots broke out in front of the Democratic National Convention. The purpose of this convention was to pick the next Democratic candidate for President in response to President Johnson’s announcement to not seek a second term. The demonstration, comprised mostly of students, marched on the convention center where they were met with almost 28,000 members of different types of law enforcement.23 On Wednesday of the protest, what would become known as the Battle of Michigan Ave. occurred. With TV camera’s rolling the police were caught brutally beating protesters. By the end of the day every major new station was showing images of police brutality directed to those advocating for peace. The war in Vietnam was losing more and more ground at home. The effort to break up the protestors only pushed more people away from the Vietnam War effort.

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Historians use the common term “lost in the living room” to refer to the new phenomenon that was a huge American backlash against the Vietnam war effort because of what information news reporters were sending home to the American people from the Vietnam front. James Reston was a writer for the popular newspaper *The Telegraph* in 1975; he sums up the effects of the media in the Vietnam War in these two sentences. “The reporters and the cameras were decisive in the end. They brought the issue of the war to the people, before the Congress or the courts, and forced the withdrawal of American power from Vietnam.” \(^{24}\) The end of the Vietnam war was determined by the Americans at home, watching from their TV’s, instead of by those fighting the war as it should have been. The Vietnam war was never the unwinnable war that Americans are led to believe today. The war was lost in the living rooms and in the resolve of the American public due completely to the influence of private news corporations.

**The Gulf War**

The first Gulf War was America’s chance at redemption. In the wake of Vietnam the Bush administration knew full well that the American people would not support another televised war with heavy casualties. \(^{25}\) The Bush administration also recognized that the media had the ability to be a powerful tool. With almost no regulations stopping what was transmitted into American homes the reporters in the field were left free reign.

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The American people were wary to enter into any foreign conflict after the fiasco that Vietnam turned into but the actions of the Iraqi Dictator, Saddam Hussein, demanded a response. The redemption was found in a swift and easy war that liberated the sovereign nation of Kuwait. But this war ushered in a new form of news coverage. In World War II and Vietnam the information was recorded overseas and then might take weeks to get back to New York for broadcast. In 1991, at the outbreak of the Gulf War, the world was a much different place. In 1991, satellite technology brought images of the fighting as it happened in real time.\textsuperscript{26} Reporting after the fact was a thing of the past. On January 16, 1991 viewers at home watched a war unfold as it happened. CNN’s John Holliman and Peter Arnett were on station, in Baghdad, as the first American missiles struck targets in Iraq that were less than a mile away from the hotel they were housed in.\textsuperscript{27} The correspondents would go on describe the multiple explosions they experienced and then bounce back to the main anchor in New York for more information. Because of the speed of the broadcast all information was speculated based on what was going on outside of the hotel room. As the story would unfold from various sources in New York, Washington DC, Bagdad, and Saudi Arabia the reporters would update their story. Story development was taking place in real time, on the air. About seven minutes into the report, as Peter Arnett, described a city with no power around him, a loud noise was broadcasted worldwide before the reports on station knew what was happening. That noise was the first bomb of the second wave of what would come to be known as the “Shock and Awe” aerial bombardment campaign that was taking place.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{28} “The Gulf War.” 20\textsuperscript{th} \textit{Century Battlefields}. Discovery Channel Documentary.
Battle Plan

President George H. W. Bush and General Schwarzkopf were in total agreement; this war could not be another Vietnam. After Kuwait was invaded the United Nations was in unanimous approval of flexing their muscles and removing the Iraqi forces. But the White House had such an air of fear that they pushed for restraint. Giving Saddam Hussein a generous ultimatum to retreat peacefully; the President was hesitant to put any boots on the ground near Kuwait or Iraq. This fear was portrayed to General Schwarzkopf and the pressure was on for him to find a way to win the war without American Casualties. For months General Schwarzkopf refused to send coalition forces into Kuwait or Iraqi for fear of American casualties and the following media backlash. Instead, his strategy was to try avoiding a ground confrontation all together. He launched a four month long, comprehensive air bombing strategy aimed at destroying so many Iraqi soldiers that Saddam would recognize the futility of trying to resist.

Initial Success

To counter the growing fears of another Vietnam the Bush administration made a brilliant move. Instead of trying to clash with the media on what was occurring the Bush administration took advantage of the growing media sensationalism by feeding it. In an odd reverse manner of propaganda the Department of Defense would turn over images of the attack sometimes within hours of it taking place. This ingenious strategy would allow the Pentagon to control what was going out to the American public without putting limits on what was being reported. General Norman Schwarzkopf would hold regular press conferences in an attempt to portray the war as “bloodless.” One of the most famous of those was the “Luckiest Man in Iraq,” this video shows an Iraqi bridge being targeted by an F-16 fighter jet. In the video we see the cross-hairs of the
laser sight planted firmly on the target bridge as an Iraqi car casually drive over the bridge, blissfully unaware of the 2,000lb bomb already falling towards him. A few seconds later he would have felt a large shock and seen a tremendous fire-ball in his rear view mirror. Though we know that this case was isolated and the coalition was launching around the clock fighter missions these small showings were still effect at convincing the public at large that this war was as bloodless as possible. But these press conferences had an inherent level of dishonesty; American Generals were being directed to sell the war to people back home. The Bush Administration was so afraid of another media backlash, as experienced in Vietnam, that everything going out was carefully chosen to imply that technology and the American soldiers had come so far that they did not even need to kill to win a war. The first Gulf War was, perhaps, the most carefully managed media in history without imposing regulations.

New Technologies

Satellite communications gave war correspondents the ability to broadcast the events of the war as the happened and the sounds and images of the war would go through the camera and to the Televisions of viewers around the world with no editing to speak of. Many of those images were taken from the second major technological development: Night Vision. Military tactics taking advantage of the dark was nothing new to warfare but this was one of the first time those tactics could be caught on film. For the first time in history accurate images of Stealth Bombers unleashing their payloads on an unsuspecting defense were broadcasted in real time. New laser sights for explosives called “Smart Bombs” were used frequently to perform “Surgical Strikes;” the idea conveyed to the American people was that America’s technology was so advanced that

they could destroy a building inside a residential neighborhood without damaging anything around it. The United States quickly established itself in the war as being vastly, technologically, superior. The constant and normal use of precision guided bombs were recorded from the planes dropping those bombs and, within hours, handed over to the media.

Myth of the Bloodless war was shattered

On February 12, 1991 the Bush administration was happy with current direction of the war and the public was content with the belief that the war was on track. Then, early in the morning, the entire war changed. As part of a routine mission, two stealth bombers flew over Bagdad airspace and dropped two laser guided bombs down the ventilation shaft of what they believed to be a major military headquarters; they were wrong. The hardened bunker was not, in fact in use by senior members of Iraqi command; it was in use by civilians trying to avoid the air raids. In one moment 40 civilians died, mostly children, and over 400 were injured. Needless to say, the media went into frenzy. Images of bodies, gross disfigurement, and distraught families came flooding into the American homes within the hour. Speculations on how many were hit or killed ranged from just 40 to over 1,000 as reporters were trying to ascertain what, exactly, happened. This was the worst blunder of the war and it shatters the careful illusion that the Bush Administration had built. Within hours, reporters are at the White House demanding answers. “They bombed a bunker. The Pentagon said it was possibly used by senior officials; actually, there were 350 women and children killed. The coverage of that bombing forced the Pentagon to reassess what it was doing in Iraq.”


the new technology of war was so advanced that our armed forces were virtually, impervious to miscalculations like this. The problem with this technology is that it still relies upon a human operator calling the attacks; meaning that there was a level of uncertainty and error in every bomb strike. Under intense public pressure, the White House ordered a stop to all air raids against military targets near civilian centers. Overnight, any Iraqi soldier inside any city had a free pass to operate as they please.

Further Escalation

Like a cornered animal, Iraq would continue to escalate the war by lashing out against other nations in an attempt to provoke a premature attack. On January 29, 1991 breaking news flashes fend around the world. Under the watch of a lone drone operator, Iraqi troops crossed the Saudi border and captured the city of Khafji. The drone pilot noted the exact moment Iraqi forces crossed the border for every American to see on their nightly news. The Iraqi occupation lasted only three days but led to sharp criticism of American tactics from Saudi high command. The Saudi ruler, King Fahd, believed that the American air forces were far too slow to respond and this inaction indicated a lack of respect to Saudi Arabia. In reality, this slow response had more to do with the fear of a miscalculation than any disrespect to Saudi Arabia.

Close to Saddam’s attack against Saudi Arabia, he also launched a number of scud missiles at the nation of Israel. Throughout the seven week war world wide news flashes would show mounting casualties of Israeli innocent citizens. For weeks the attacks on Tel Aviv, Israel would continue with little American response. Under intense pressure from the public, impatient

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coalition members and Israel the White House finally created a ground attack battle plan and
time table.

End War

After months of Air bombardments General Schwarzkopf, reluctantly, began his ground
campaign. Coalition tanks and soldiers burst across vast stretches of desert toward the waiting
Iraqi army. But they were not met with the harsh resistance that was expected. Instead news
camera’s sent home images of a broken army. Mass surrendering’s were normal and many
Americans were able to push all the way in Kuwait city without firing a shot. Upon arrival they
were greeted as heroes by a population that survived four months under brutal Iraqi occupation.
But this easy victory presented a brand new problem to the Bush Administration. No war analyst
believed that the Iraqi front line in Kuwait would break so easily. In response to grim
predictions, General Schwarzkopf attacked into Iraq proper just after his attack into Kuwait.

This second attack was meant to swing around the Iraq flank and crush the bulk of Iraq’s
army in between two fronts. This strategy would have obliterated their forces over the span of a
few months and prevented Iraq from causes any more problems in the region. Unfortunately, this
was not to be. The Iraq troops were completely demoralized and shell shocked from the long air
campaign. Their lines crumbled and many fled en mass. By the time Kuwait city fell almost none
of the bulk of Saddam’s forces had been engaged. Though demoralized, his army was intact.
This was a major problem for the coalition powers. They wanted to win a decisive victory that
would prevent Iraq from ever being able to stir up trouble again. In an effort to catch the
retreating forces a huge number of air strikes were directed to one small strip of road. This would
come to be known as the “Highway of Death.”

Highway of Death
In the final days of the Gulf War Iraqi troops were retreating from Kuwait in any form available; mostly in the form of stolen Kuwaiti civilian cars. Those retreating soldiers were a primary target of American battlefield commanders because of an expressed end-war goal was the complete destruction of the Iraqi military. Engaging those soldiers was an integral part of the American battle plan. Imagine the surprise of American commanders as their scouts reported seeing Iraqi regulars abandoning their posts, loading into stolen civilian vehicles and then setting out upon one vast stretch of six lane highway that ran from Kuwait City to Basra, Iraq. The same road used in their invasion was meant to be their means of escape but that was not at all what came. Instead all available fighters and bombers were redirected to target the vehicles on this one stretch of road. Thousands of pounds of bombs were dropped and thousands of Iraqi troops were killed. Not a single vehicle reached Iraq and the Iraqi soldiers had no chance at survival. Soon after the bombings the media complex went back into frenzy. Live images of destroyed cars, huge craters and burnt bodies began circulating in America. The mission that was meant to cripple Iraq’s fighting strength turned into a massacre by political media slants. The media fallout was immense and the White House was under massive pressure to end the war. The next day, George H. W. Bush succumbed to the pressure and announced an end to hostilities.\footnote{Thompson, Mark. “Highway (of Death) Robbery.” \textit{Time Magazine}. May 3, 2012. Web. 17 Mar. 2014.}

Legacy

The primary objective of the Gulf War, the liberation of Kuwait, was met with almost no friendly casualties. An abused and victimized people were set free by this UN joint mission. But this war failed to meet its secondary objective: the removal or weakening of Saddam Hussein. Before and After the Gulf War Saddam Hussein was the despot in control of Iraq. A few short years later America would be called upon again against Iraq. Perhaps, what was more definitive
about the Gulf War was the place the media holds in relation to foreign policy. In this war we saw all of the effects of Vietnam and how public opinion of a war can dictate how the commanders fight that war. In this case the Bush administration put such a high value on preventing American casualties that we allowed Iraqi soldiers to occupy and desecrate Kuwait for four months longer than necessary. We had learned our lessons from Vietnam well; American bodies on TV will not be tolerated and the Government was powerless to stop what was shown. General Schwarzkopf did everything in his power to make this a “bloodless” but he was still prevented from using all of his available military options. One event stopped Schwarzkopf from bombing in cities and one event forced President Bush to end the war. Unlike any previous war, the TV camera had more control over the fight than the Generals.

**War on Terror**

September 11, 2001

Moving into the modern century America finds itself in the middle of a whole new kind of war. After the attacks of 9/11 our nation has been on a mission to address the violence of global terrorism and bring justice to those responsible. In this new form of war old distinguers have been stripped away. We are being targets by rough and nation-less enemies that want only to kill Americans. In that we have seen some remarkable success and two invasions in an attempt to dismantle the terrorist network. Though the effectiveness of our current and past policies are something of debate this war has shown, more than ever, the effectiveness of American media. On the fateful day of September 11, 2001 news stations worldwide showed images of the second plane hitting the World Trade Center. These terrorist attacks shocked the world and images were in the American home before the White House was released from Code Red lockdown.\(^\text{34}\) Most

\(^{34}\) *NBC Special Report.* September 11, 2001.
everyone old enough to remember the attacks can recall where they were exactly when it happened. This speaks to the staggering speed at which stories are published today.

Media Sensationalism

The problem today is that the modern media does not play by the same rules that it did back in 1942. Today the main priority is to publish the story the fastest because whoever gets the story out the fastest gets the viewers and viewers mean ratings. Gone are the days where stories would require a careful fact checking process before being printed and gone are the days where anchors would wait on a story for weeks sometimes to let what was happening develop. Now news is instantaneous and Americans at home expect news to continue to be instantaneous if not faster. With the advent of new technology including the internet and smart phones we have 24 hour access to news outlets. Most high school and college students today spend reading news on Facebook than they doing watching the evening news on TV. This leads to inaccurate reporting, a lack of editing, and an uneducated public.

Osama Bin Laden

Consider the death of famous terrorist leader Osama Bin Laden. In this case, after years of searching the CIA finally located Bin Laden’s hiding place in Pakistan. It was believed that he had been hiding out and under surveillance for months before the White House authorized a raid to kill or capture the terrorist. On May 1, 2011 President Obama announced the demise of Osama Bin Laden and according to one writer for CNN the “Internet and social media began to

explode.” Just CNN reported nearly 130,000 Facebook recommendations in relation to their news post and a new Twitter record was set with an average of 3,400 messages per second in relation to Osama Bin Laden. In less than a few hours the news had spread across the entire country. The problem was that most initial articles announcing his death were wrong. Not wrong that he was dead but they would release information taken from hearsay sources without and fact checking. For example, some reports claimed that he had been shot with just two bullets; others claimed he had been shot “several times” and others claimed he had been shot with “Over a hundred bullets.” The problem is that none of these stories are credible and Supreme Court recently determined that the CIA did not have to give any picture over. So no one outside of CIA high command and the soldiers that did the shootings could possible know how many times he was shot but numbers were reported just the same. In less than a year Hollywood cashed in on the story with the popular movie: *Zero, Dark, Thirty*. Again this story was sold as a documentary but was built entirely on speculation. News companies are making stories and posted them faster than ever, without editing and without thinking of whether or not they should release them.

**Changing targets in the War on Terror**

The War on Terror is an increasing problem that the American government is having a harder and harder time dealing with. The problem that now exists is the public’s demand for transparency and information coupled with an ever increasing list of potential terrorist targets. In the past the nation would only worry about protecting information that was in direct regards to


the military establishment. Now civilian centers are being targeted more than military bases because access to information on commercial structures and practices are much more available to the enemies of the state than military procedures are. “Information once considered innocuous—such as structural data for stadiums, bridges, and public works—is now considered to have an intelligence value for terrorists.”39

**Impact of leaks**

In the modern era we have seen a disturbing trend on sensitive information being giving or leaked to media sources. Those leaks can have a significant impact on the battlefield and can lead to deaths of our armed soldiers. This threat became clear in the recent government scandal involving Edward Snowden.40 In one of the largest security breaches in United States history, Snowden, leaked thousands of NSA documents out of secret computers and to the public. In these documents details were discussed on how the NSA tracked individuals and what people were being targeted. These documents identified hundreds of people currently under surveillance by the NSA and the controversy that surrounds the event is that many of those being watched are U.S. citizens. Some of those citizens even include members of the federal government.

Snowden hailed himself and was hailed by most media sources as a "whistleblower" that did a tremendous service to the American dream. Though he viewed himself as a public hero for transparency in government he did flee to Russia and is on temporary asylum in the Communist state. No one can deny that Snowden's actions did some good and his message was important.

There must be a check on government to prevent a breach in our personal liberties. But there still


exists quite a problem with whistleblowers like Snowden. The problem is that the American public is not the only group of people that can see what is posted on the internet or show on American TV. Jack Shafer, in a writing for *Foreign Affairs* magazine illustrates the unintended consequences of whistleblowing. "The leaking of troop placements, battle plans, communication codes, the status of the nation's code-cracking efforts, the capabilities of some weapons systems, or details about ongoing military operations can damage national security and even result in the deaths of U.S. military personnel." The fact is security breaches like this can have a huge effect on military strategy and the effectiveness of our strategy. As Americans we can, often, forget that when we go to war with another nation they will do anything to defeat us. That includes watching our TV and looking up American webpages because modern news reporting does not hesitate to show things that could be compromising to domestic security or the safety of our troops abroad.

Furthermore, leaks place Americans at home in harm’s way. One of the most terrorist targeted institutions is that of the airlines. Al Qaeda forces targeted American airlines in the attacks of September 11th and the fear of another terror attack from the skies is very real and it was in this industry that one of the most famous leaks ever occurred. On December 8, 2009 the TSA inadvertently published its Screening Procedures. These documents quickly found themselves completely unencrypted and posted on the popular leak site: WikiLeaks. It is still there to download today. Most all of the world has access to the same internet that we do. When a security leak is posted on an American website anyone and everyone in the world can access it.

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When your enemy is more interested in a body count than a military advantage the old forms of defense no longer apply. The question on every policy makers mind is: How do we protect our citizens while still giving them the liberties they are entitled to?

**Conclusion**

**Lessons from the Research**

Finally I arrive at the difficult but undeniable conclusion that the current free press model is not working. The influence of the media is only growing the accuracy of that media is only diminishing. As we saw in Vietnam and even more so in the first Gulf War the military is reliant upon popular support. Every President since Richard Nixon has been terrified of what was the Vietnam effect. The fear is that a war with significant American or civilian casualties will lose public support so fast that that America at home would stop supporting it. In both Vietnam and the Gulf War all it took to bring the American war machine to a grinding halt was a drop in public opinion. In Vietnam as opinion dropped, recruitment numbers dropped. As the public pushed back against the war the pressure was on to bring more and more soldiers home. De-escalation was a forced priority of the Nixon administration due to a lack of support from famous media icons like Walter Cronkite and others. With the most “trusted man in America” advocating against the war and significant information leaks like the Pentagon Papers the Vietnam War changed from a difficult situation into an impossible situation. A similar situation nearly developed in the Gulf War as public opinion dropped at the sight of collateral damage. In this war the Bush White house had to order the use of less effective battle tactics in order to appease influential critics in the media. When the Amiriya bunker was bombed the political fallout almost ended the war outright. To George H. W. Bush’s credit, he was able to convince the American people to stay behind the war but at the cost of allowing his air forces to engage
targets within cities. But the media frenzy was not to be placated for long; American coverage of the fallout of the “Highway of Death” was directly led to the end of the Gulf War. Finally, the issue of media sensationalism is causing huge problems in the War on Terror. Today the list of potential terrorist targets is always growing and leaks are causing more problems for America than ever before. The Federal Government is powerless stop these leaks because of the Supreme Court findings in *New York Times Co. v. United States* and sensationalist media is more motivated than ever to support these leaks. All these factors taken together prove, without a doubt, the current Wartime reporting methods must stop; for the betterment of all Americans.

**Ideological View**

For our generals to wage an effective war they must be free to use every resource available and cannot be deterred by the grim realities of war. As Americans were must recognize and support that truth. We cannot expect our soldiers to win without using bullets and we cannot expect victory without a cost. War is one of the most horrible actions any nation can take against another nation. To do so must be done with the utmost care and conviction. If the President and Congress are to choose war than both them and the American public must be confident in the ideals they are supporting and the goals of the war. When America landed on the beaches of Normandy we did so with the knowledge that nothing would be easy and no ground would be just given to them. Still the Marines pushed on up the beach toward the German positions because they and the American people were of one mind; united against their enemies in Germany and Japan. It was unity that gave the colonist strength to fight the British and it was unity that gave the Marines the strength to storm the beaches of Okinawa. Americans at home recognized the importance of that unity while at war and so they restrained themselves from divulging information. Self-censorship was vital to the World War II war effort and the ideals
behind that censorship was what won the war. Today we are sorely lacking in the unity that once made us strong. Because of the anti-war influences like Cronkite; Vietnam was lost in the living room and the Gulf War was controlled by the living room. Instead of doing their part to support the soldiers at war, Americans sat in judgment and protest from behind the proxy of a news anchor and a Television screen.

**Christian Values**

Many proponent of this system would say that the media is just reporting what they perceive and the responsibility of finding the truth is in the hands of the viewer. But those proponents are severely underestimating the power of words. “Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person.” James, brother of Jesus, recognized the power of words and we must also recognize the power of words. The news anchors and reports are meant to educate the viewers on world events; they are the teachers. No biblical scholar disputes that teachers will be judged more strictly on the grounds of leadership. Those in these high positions of influence must take responsibility for their actions and their influence. One of the great follies of our time is a general underestimation of the power of words.

Secondly, Christians must never accept untrustworthy sources. In the instance of the Osama Bin Laden reporting modern media sensationalism have proven itself to be far less than trustworthy. Stories today are televised with little to no fact checking or editing to speak of. Still today the eternal truths of Jesus’s words ring true. “Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with

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much.” If modern reporting allows for some falsehoods and accepts inaccuracies than how can we trust them with any level of integrity? Relative accuracy is not acceptable; only truth can be tolerated.

Finally, we must recognize that there are times when we can do something but that does not mean we should. The biblical principle described by the Apostle Paul still speaks truth because it points to the fact that the publishing of dead soldiers and civilians in Vietnam and the Gulf War was permissible that does not mean it was beneficial. Publishing stories of current events is not immoral in itself but news stations must take responsibility when those stories lead, directly, to a greater societal evil. To say that reporters in 1968 did not know that their reports would lead to riots in the streets are the abuse of returning soldiers is inaccurate. Those news stations were aware of what response each story would receive and stories are carefully crafted today to elicit as much emotional response as possible. The slant of news reports in Vietnam were so detrimental to morale, public opinion and America’s image that they should have been stopped just on the grounds that no public good came of them.

**Policy Recommendation**

I recommend that the United States should re-adopt the Office of Censorship that was created in World War II. This office should not have the power to prosecute harmful dissenters, but instead should have the expressed goal of helping reports as it did in World War II. This office would reach out to reports and work with them to insure the protection of American interests worldwide and would strive to restore accuracy to the reporting sphere. Titled the Office of Foreign Affairs Reporting, it would be responsible for proctoring any images taken by the military and then distributing everything it could to the appropriate sources. This department

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would strive to maintain transparency in Government while still protecting those that need protection. The goal of this Office would be to provide support and be helpful; not to deter free speech.

Furthermore, modern journalist must return to the status of utmost integrity. In this the formal adoption of a code of ethics should be standard in the reporting spheres. Many journalists already belong to societies that enforce strict moral rules on stories reported. Membership in groups like the “Society of Professional Journalists”\(^{45}\) should be a standard requirement for a new hire. In an age of instant news access the importance of ethical reporter is more important than ever.

I would also move to reverse the decisions of New York Times Co. v. United States. Leaks are a significant problem in America today and they are only going to get worse as Cyber Warfare escalates. The Justice Department must be able to convict all those that would, willfully, publish compromising information. Every step should be taken to protect our soldiers fighting on the front lines against the enemies of this great nation. The warriors called upon to protect our freedom might not be wearing combat boots or even be part of our armed forces. As terror targets American citizen more and more the front lines are going to be ATF agents, CIA agents, FBI agents and police officers. We must do everything in our power to keep those people safe and keeping them safe means keeping them secret. Just as Batman’s secret identity must be kept, the secret practices of these national defenders must be kept out of the hands of those that wish to do us harm. Leaks must be found and stopped with the upmost efficiency and urgency.

Finally, I advocate for the creation of policies that forbid military planners and officers from have direct interaction with the media. The coverage of a war should not impact the tactics of that war. Military commanders should exists and operate above the politics of that war. Their

only goals should be meeting the primary objectives of whatever operation is set before them. They should be able to strive to end the war as quickly as possible with as few losses as possible. Their tactics should never be impacted by what is being reported or the fickle opinions of politicians looking for re-election. General Patton and General MacArthur were so effective because they never stopped to care about how the public perceived them. They pushed toward their goals with courage and used every option available to them. When our nation chooses to go to war they must do so with confidence in the soldiers and commanders entrusted to fight the battle.

Fundamentally, I agree with the basic premise that there are times when individual goods must be put on hold to achieve the greater good of society. We have a moral duty to protect our nation and to protect our soldiers; even if that means willingly surrendering some of our freedoms of expression. The greater good at stake here is our ability to make war effectively; in his memoirs Richard Nixon questioned whether or not America would ever be able to engage in warfare effectively again. Forty-years later that question remains heavy on my mind. Without change I very much doubt that America could ever win another war on the scale of World War II simply because the media presence would show a broken front and ruin our resolve. I also believe the words of FDR in 1941 are still accurate today: “All Americans abhor censorship, just as they abhor war.”46 This paper is an attempt to reconcile two evils that America is staunchly against. In a perfect world this discussion would never need to take place because they would be no war and no need for censorship. In a good world we could allow for unlimited discourse

because we would all be of one mind even in the face of trials. But we do not exist in a perfect world or even a good world; we live in a broken world.

Works Cited


Glenn Greenwald, Ewen MacAskill and Laura Poitras in Hong Kong


