

## Iraq War: Create Stories and Media

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### ABSTRACT

*Media has a significant role over the world. Because of technological devices, media is an extension of the information source without any limitation of time and space; therefore, television, radios, and the Internet allow us to reach any information that we wish inside our own time and space. This paper wants to draw attention to the Iraq war and how the media functions. It was apparent that the media distorted the reality to support the Capitalist regime through the war. Therefore, the power elite tries to control media, and they use media to manipulate people's ideas. Therefore, in this hypermedia world, the power elite has a chance to influence the ideas of audiences and create their realities. So, this paper will use three photo images and verbal signs to show that during the Iraq war the power elite (the U.S.) created a story for history for the world, and Iraqis under the name of liberty.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Iraq, War, The U.S., Media, Create Stories, Liberty, Power Elite, Capitalism, Reality*

### INTRODUCTION

In this new technological or hyperreal world, media plays a significant role. Because of technological devices, media is an extension of the information source without any limitation of time and space; therefore, television, radios, and the Internet allow us to reach any information that we wish inside our own time and space. In the so-called information age, media plays a significant part in people's daily life. In other words, the media is a part of people's life. Thus, this paper wants to draw attention to the Iraq war and how the media functions. It was apparent that the media distorted the reality to support the Capitalist regime through the war. Therefore, the power elite tries to control media, and they use media to manipulate people's ideas. Therefore, in this *hypermedia* world, the power elite has a chance to influence the ideas of audiences and create their realities. Such as the representation of the Iraq war belonged to the U.S. power system. So, this paper will use three photo images and verbal signs to show that during the war the power elite creates a story for history for the world and Iraqis under the name of liberty.

The power elite can control and organize societies. As Frank W. Elwell points out power elite are:

Government, Military and Corporations. These institutions have become larger, more powerful, and more centralized in their decision making. Together, the leaders of these institutions have become a unified elite who, while not omnipotent, are formidable. The elite occupy the key leadership positions within the bureaucracies that now dominate modern societies, the positions in which the effective means of power are now located. Thus their power is rooted in authority, an attribute of social organizations, not of individuals. The bureaucracies of state, corporations, and military have become enlarged and centralized and are a means of power never before equaled in human history. These hierarchies of power are the key to understanding modern industrial societies. For these hierarchies are the very basis of power, wealth and prestige in modern times.

The paragraph implies that the power elite is government, who made the rules, military, which defends people from enemies. Because of the corporations, the power elite manipulates the rules over people to preserve the regime of Capitalism. In other words, the power elite has enough authority to organize people's lives and ideas. During the war, the sculpture of Saddam Hussein's head was fallen down by Iraqis and U.S. Marines. Watching TV and reading different magazines proves that the power elite can control people and media.

From another point of view, according to John Fiske signifier, signified and sign are man-made:

The signifier is a physical object, e.g. a sound, printed word or image. The signified is a mental concept (bearing no necessary relationship to the signifier). The sign is the associative total which relates the two together.---- There can be no signifier distinct from a signified and neither of these can exist outside the construct we call a sign. All three elements of this composite construct, then, are determined by our culture, or are in some sense, man-made.

In other words, the written and the visual text are man-made that the paper will analyze both of them for the next part.

## PHOTO ANALYSIS

Above, the visual sign shows the picture of Saddam's sculpture:



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PHOTO 1: An Iraqi man (bottom right) watches Cpl. Edward Chin of the 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines Regiment, cover the face of a statue of Saddam Hussein with an American flag before toppling the statue in downtown in Baghdad, Iraq, on April 9, 2003. Jerome Delay

The picture symbolizes the face of the power elite because, in Iraq, Saddam was the symbol of power, which connected with rigid principles that are traditional. Because of this, the U.S. military, which related to the government, destroyed Saddam's regime. At the beginning of the war, Saddam fell into ruins because of the technology, guns, soldiers, and the government's commands.

In addition, as Alex Von Tunzelmann mentions in his newspaper article:

During the invasion of Iraq, the *pulling down* of a statue was also an attempt to create a story about history. One of the way to create stories are related with discourses. The power elite made its rules by using the discourse as Jenny Pinkus, directly used a quota from Foucault's to define discourse in her essay of *Foucault* "ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledge and relations between them. Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning.

These lines entail that discourse is a way to construct and organize human beings' lives. Discourses use language as a tool to construct new ideologies and realities. It is possible to see the significance of the discourse during the war, because everyone has sat in front of their machines (TV, radio and Internet) like robots and watched the news about the war in Iraq.

Moreover, during the war in Iraq, the American power elite used the media and manipulation strategies as discourses to create war stories. The reason is that sometimes the power structure ignored some of the actual events about the war; hence they created their realities, as one can see during the Iraq war as Boris Johnson mentions that "They had different perspectives, different understandings of right and wrong. But those statues teach us about our past, with all its faults. To tear them down would be to lie about our history, and impoverish the education of generations to come." (Twitter,2020).

In addition, as Fair (2003) describes in his essay "Official Story vs. Eyewitness Account" Pentagon producing its meaning:

A recent Washington Post article describing the killing of civilians by U.S. soldiers at a checkpoint outside the Iraq town of Najaf proved that "embedded" journalists do have the ability to report on war in all its horror. But the rejection by some U.S. outlets of Post correspondent William Branigin's eyewitness account in favor of the Pentagon's sanitized version suggests that some journalists prefer not to report the harsh reality of war. The Pentagon version was the one first reported in U.S. media – sometimes in terms that assumed that the official account was factual. "What happened there, the van with a number of individuals in it...approached the checkpoint," reported MSNBC's Carl Rochelle (3/31/03). "They were told to stop by the members of the 3rd infantry Division. They did not stop, warning shots were fired. Still they came on. They fired into the engine of the van. Still it came on, so they began opening fire on the van itself.

These words display the real face of Capitalist regime, which is the U.S. The power did not allow media to explain the real stories about the war. Put it another way, during the war the

U.S. directed the media according to their benefit. Thus, this shows that by using social media, signs and codes the capitalist system constructed their own realities and stories.

For the Capitalist regime, the vital thing is to organize people lives and to control their thoughts to get more money and power as Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari mention in their book, entitled *Anti-Oedipus Capitalism and Schizophrenia*:

Capitalist is indeed the body without organs of the capitalist, or rather of the capitalist being. But as such, it is not only fluid and petrified substance of money, for it will give to the sterility of money the form whereby money produces money. It produces surplus value, just as the body without organs reproduces itself, puts forth shoots, and branches out to the farthest corners of the universe. It makes the machine responsible for producing a relative surplus value, while embodying itself in the machine as fixed capital. (10).

It means that for the Capitalist regime, the critical thing is to produce money for getting power. Accordingly, as we saw during the war, the regime-controlled by the U.S. soldiers and Iraqis bodies and organs, like machines or guns, to win the war and get more oil to be more powerful and wealthy. As Arundhati Roy entails in his essay of "Buy One, Get One Free":

Vandals plundered shops, offices, hotels, and hospitals. American and British soldiers stood by and watched. They said they had no orders to act. In effect, they had orders to kill people, but not to protect them. Their priorities were clear. The safety and security of Iraqi people was not their business. The security of whatever little remained of Iraq's infrastructure was not their business. But the security and safety of Iraq's oil fields were. Of course they were. The oil fields were "secured" almost before the invasion began.

These words entail the real power of Capitalist regime. The reason is that during the war U.S. commanded soldiers to secure oil fields instead of Iraqis. Their aim was reach oil and get money. Also, this shows that power elite aim was provide the continuity of Capitalist regime.

On the other hand, the capitalist regime connects power and discourses, as Jenny Pinkus implies in her article. For Foucault, discourse and power have a connection through language: "Power is exercised within discourses in the ways in which they constitute and govern individual subjects." These lines demand that discourse is a base of a power structure. The reason is that through language, as Wittgenstein states that "this language-game is **big** played" (39) With the way of discourse, one can construct the rules to control and manipulate people, which are the primary way of the power elite to reach their own goals, which are more money and power.

For example, as can be seen above the photo 2 and in the article "Bushwarns militants who attacks U.S. troops in Iraq Gephardth: Stop the 'phony, macho rhetoric." Sean Loughlin states Bush's words: "We're not leaving until we accomplish the task," Bush said Wednesday." It means that with this sentence, Bush gives command to the soldiers that they have to win the war and take Iraq. In other words, they do not have another possibility. Thus, in this way he governs soldiers with his words, which is a kind of language game (Wittgenstein, 39) to encourage soldiers and change the real story of the war.



PHOTO 2: President George W. Bush declared an end of major combat in Iraq as he speaks aboard the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln off the California coast on May 2, 2003. ASSOCIATED PRESS.

However, the real story is different as photojournalist Patrick Baz mentions the real events with the photo images:



PHOTO 3: Iraqis hit a statue of Saddam Hussein with their sandals in Baghdad on April 9, 2003. (AFP / Patrick Baz)



PHOTO 4: Iraqis watch a statue of President Saddam Hussein falling in Baghdad's al-Fardous (Paradise) Square, April 9, 2003. (AFP / Patrick Baz)

“The image was all the more strong because there wasn’t an American soldier in sight. Just the locals expressing what they felt about their country’s long-term dictator. I could hardly believe my luck -- I was the only photographer around (this was a time before smartphones and social media, when such an image would instantly be transmitted to the world by whoever happened upon the scene).” (Baz & Celerier, 2018). Then, he wanted to send his photo, but “I saw an US soldier first place an American flag over the face of a huge Saddam statue in the square. He then took it off, following orders from an officer. Other soldiers attached a cable around the statue, its other end attached to a tank. Eventually the tank pulled the statue down. Before it did, an Iraqi man kept hitting the statue as a small crowd watched. Later, people would say that the small size of the crowd showed that the move wasn’t a sign of popular will. But it took a lot of courage for civilians to go out in the streets like that, in the middle of a war. Or, as the old Arab proverb says, “When you’ve spent your life in a cage, freedom is a crime.” It means that power elite changed the story and “that statue had to come down, to mark the day. My fixer was visibly moved. For him, as for a lot of people who had lived under the regime, it was Iraqi pride that fell along with the Saddam effigy. For me, what counted was the statue that Iraqis had themselves brought down, a bit earlier in the day.” (Baz & Celerier, 2018).

Another man-made sign is Time magazine. It used the head of Saddam in the shape of X with the red color.



PHOTO 3: When The Cheering Stops, Jubilation and chaos greet the fall of Saddam's regime, leaving Iraqis and Americans puzzling over how to rebuild the nation, By Nancy Gibbs Monday, Apr. 21, 2003.

On this cover page, the picture of Saddam symbolizes the death of Saddam and its old regime in Iraq. In addition, this picture symbolizes the power of the U.S. because of the importance of the oil fields, and the U.S. found financial support to get more money and support its Capitalist regime. In addition, the red cross on Saddam face represents the dangerousness. In other words, he was dangerous because of the oil fields.

## CONCLUSION

In general, the power elite uses the media according to their intention. On the one hand, as in different periods, the power elite had an opportunity to use media according to their benefits and manipulate their ideas to people, such as in Nazi's Germany. One may say, this was the first event that the media used as a propaganda machine, and they tried to affect people's minds by using the media, especially the radio as Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky mentions in *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, "It traces the routes by which money and power are able to filter out the news fit to print, marginalize dissent, and allow the government and dominant private interests to get their messages across the public." (2) On the other hand, again, during the Gulf War, people used media differently. At this time, they used TV, journals, and radio simultaneously.

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However, in 2003 in the *hypermedia* war of Iraq, the power elite used different technological devices, and audiences lived the war with soldiers. Thus, these historical events show that the media used to give information to people and control their ideas. The reason is that Bush and the media suggest that Saddam was responsible for the September 11 events as a propaganda model. In the essay of "Pro-war Propaganda Machine Media Becomes Branch of War Effort" by Anthony Arnove claims that:

But the media have given Bush a free pass to use September 11 as a pretext for a war against Iraq. "As a bogus rallying cry, 'Remember 9/11' ranks with 'Remember the Maine' of 1898 for war with Spain or the Gulf of Tonkin resolution of 1964," *Nation* journalist William Greider recently wrote. Greider points out that, according to a *New York Times*/CBS News survey, 42 percent of Americans believe that Saddam Hussein was directly responsible for the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. And 55 percent believe that Saddam directly supports al-Qaeda, according to an ABC News poll. There's no evidence for either belief. But here's one question that you won't hear the media asking: How have we contributed to spreading these myths, which we then report as evidence of people's support for war?

These words suggest that because of the media, people accepted that Saddam was responsible for the attack on September 11. Nonetheless, there is no evidence to prove this attack. However, it is a kind of manipulation method that media is taken part in to construct a new reality over people's minds to take support from people about the war. Moreover, these lines entail that the U.S. propagandized the attack of September 11 to persuade people that Saddam was guilty of winning the war.

From the different perspectives, it is possible to see the likenesses between the U.S. and Saddam. In Iraq, Saddam controlled Iraqis to get benefits, be more powerful, and earn much more money by using religion. However, at the same time, America is a Capitalist country with freedoms and technological advances. Thus, for new advances or benefits, America destroyed Iraq.

Consequently, this essay tried to explore the problematic position of media during the Iraq war. Media played a significant role. Because of the media, the U.S. made people stay in front of their TV screen, listen to the radio and follow the news from social media. The news came faster and made us a robot, which sat in front of the TV. Thus, the news created codes that we believe and accept as accurate. However, some of them are not real. They are only a language game for the power elite to get more oil and money are power at the end. Thus, finally, the U.S. aims were to use the media to persuade people that this war was necessary for Iraqis. However, its real purpose is to spread its power and the ideology of capitalism. In other words, by using the media, the U.S. tried to find support for the Iraq war and made up their own stories as a history for their political and economic benefits.

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