

RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS



Manufacturing Consent

Edward S Herman & Noam Chomsky

Manufacturing Consent

The Political Economy of the Mass
Media

**EDWARD S. HERMAN
and NOAM CHOMSKY**

With a new afterword by Edward S.
Herman



THE BODLEY HEAD
LONDON

This eBook is copyright material and must not be copied, reproduced, transferred, distributed, leased, licensed or publicly performed or used in any way except as specifically permitted in writing by the publishers, as allowed under the terms and conditions under which it was purchased or as strictly permitted by applicable copyright law. Any unauthorised distribution or use of this text may be a direct infringement of the author's and publisher's rights and those responsible may be liable in law accordingly.

Version 1.0

Epub ISBN 9781407054056

www.randomhouse.co.uk

Published by The Bodley Head 2008

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Copyright © Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky 1988
Introduction © Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky
2002 Afterword © Edward S. Herman 2008

Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman have asserted their right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 to be identified as the authors of this work

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, resold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition, including this condition, being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

First published in Great Britain in 2008 by The Bodley Head Random House, 20 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 2SA

www.rbooks.co.uk

Addresses for companies within The Random House Group Limited can be found at:

www.randomhouse.co.uk/offices.htm

The Random House Group Limited Reg. No. 954009

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 9781847920706

The Random House Group Limited supports The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), the leading international forest certification organisation. All our titles that are printed on Greenpeace approved FSC certified paper carry the FSC logo. Our paper procurement policy can be found at www.rbooks.co.uk/environment



Typeset in Fournier MT by Palimpsest Book Production Limited, Grangemouth, Stirlingshire

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, St Ives PLC

Contents

[Cover Page](#)

[Title Page](#)

[Copyright Page](#)

[Dedication](#)

[By the Same Authors](#)

[Tables](#)

[Introduction to the 2002 Edition](#)

[Preface](#)

[1 A Propaganda Model](#)

[2 Worthy and Unworthy Victims](#)

[3 Legitimizing versus Meaningless Third World Elections:
El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua](#)

[4 The KGB-Bulgarian Plot to Kill the Pope: Free-Market
Disinformation as “News”](#)

[5 The Indochina Wars \(I\): Vietnam](#)

[6 The Indochina Wars \(II\): Laos and Cambodia](#)

[7 Conclusions](#)

[Afterword to the 2008 Edition](#)

[Appendix 1](#)

[The U.S. Official Observers in Guatemala, July 1-2, 1984](#)

[Appendix 2](#)

[Tagliabue's Finale on the Bulgarian Connection: A Case Study in Bias](#)

[Appendix 3](#)

[Braestrup's *Big Story*: Some "Freedom House Exclusives"](#)

[Notes](#)

[About the Author](#)

[Index](#)

TO THE MEMORY OF ALEX CAREY

AND

HERBERT I. SCHILLER

By the same authors

*The Political Economy of Human Rights:
The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism*

*The Political Economy of Human Rights 2:
After the Cataclysm*

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 they put him in the White House, not once but twice.

James Reston

They who have put out the people's eyes, reproach them of their blindness.

John Milton

Tables

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

[1-1 Financial Data for Twenty-four Large Media Corporations \(or Their Parent Firms\), December 1986](#)

[1-2 Wealth of the Control Groups of Twenty-four Large Media Corporations \(or Their Parent Companies\), February 1986](#)

[1-3 Affiliations of the Outside Directors of Ten Large Media Companies \(or Their Parents\) in 1986](#)

[1-4 Experts on Terrorism and Defense on the “McNeil-Lehrer News Hour,” January 14, 1985, to January 27, 1986](#)

[2-1 Mass-Media Coverage of Worthy and Unworthy Victims \(1\): A Murdered Polish Priest versus One Hundred Murdered Religious in Latin America](#)

[2-2 The Savageries Inflicted on Worthy and Unworthy Victims, as Depicted in the *New York Times*](#)

[2-3 Mass-Media Coverage of Worthy and Unworthy Victims \(2\): A Murdered Polish Priest versus Two Murdered Officials of the Guatemalan Mutual Support Group](#)

[3-1 Topics Included and Excluded in the *New York Times*'s Coverage of the Salvadoran Election of March 25,](#)

1984

3-2 Topics Included and Excluded in the *New York Times's* Coverage of the Nicaraguan Election Planned for November 4, 1984

3-3 Topics Included and Excluded in the *New York Times's* Coverage of the Nicaraguan Election of November 4, 1984

Introduction to the 2002 Edition

This book centers in what we call a “Propaganda model,” an analytical framework that attempts to explain the performance of the U.S. 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 allcontrolling 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 U.S. 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 Wants 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 fund-raising 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 “malling” 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, D.C., 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 U.S. officials would be treated differently by the media than an election held by a government that U.S. officials oppose. It is 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 U.S. 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 Archbishop Oscar Romero, murdered in the U.S. client-state El Salvador in 1980; he was given more coverage than the aggregate of one hundred religious victims killed in U.S. client states, although eight of those victims were U.S. citizens.

This bias is politically advantageous to U.S. policymakers, for focusing on victims of enemy states shows those states to be wicked and deserving of U.S. hostility; while ignoring U.S. and client-state victims allows ongoing U.S. 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 U.S. women raped and murdered in El Salvador) and the greater indignation and search for responsibility at the top in 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 U.S. 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 U.S. 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."

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 U.S. 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 U.S. ally²⁹—an enemy state, official denunciations, harsh sanctions, and parallel media treatment.

Mainstream Media Usage
of “Genocide” for
Kosovo, East Timor, Turkey, and Iraq¹

	1. NO. OF TIMES WORD APPLIED TO SERBS, TURKS, ETC. ²	2. NO. OF EDS,/OP-EDS DOING THE SAME	3. NEWS ARTICLES	4. FRONT PAGE
COUNTRIES/DATES				
1. Serbs/Kosovo 1998-1999	220	59	118	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.

On the other hand, Turkey and Indonesia have long been U.S. 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 U.N.-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 U.S. 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 U.S. 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 U.S. 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 U.S. 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