CHANGING ROLE OF MASS MEDIA IN AMERICAN ELECTORAL POLITICS: A STUDY OF PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, 2004 AND 2008

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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled "**Changing Role of Mass Media in American Electoral Politics: A study of Presidential Elections, 2004 and 2008**" submitted by me for the award of the degree of Masters of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University id my own work. The dissertation has not been for any other degree of this university or any other university.

Tanushree

CERTIFICATE

We recommend that the dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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PREFACE

Media in America plays a powerful role in shaping political beliefs. Depending on the type of media several point of views are expressed almost hourly. Therefore the organization of the study responds to the need for the analytical discussions of the various perspectives of the mass media occurring during the campaigns. It would also try to compare the campaigns of the presidential elections of George. W.Bush (2004) and barrack Obama (2008). For instance study is based on the contention that with the advent of newer technology every year, there are new powerful tools adding in to the communication field. While in 2004, print media and television media dominated the opinion making process the 2008 election witnessed the rise of the internet and the social networking sites as major factors in election process.

There are four research questions on which the study would revolve. The first question is: *How has the growth of mass media impacted the electoral campaigns presidential candidates?*. The second questions is : *What are the electoral consequences of "media effect" on voters and are the vote surges linked positive an dnegative stories about the candidates?* Third question is on ownership patterns that *how is ownership of media linked to political parties.?*and the fourth question is about *the similarities and dissimilarities of the bush (2004) and Obama (2008) campaigns?*

The hypothesis of present study discusses that media portrayals significantly affect media's perception of presidential candidates. The mass media, more than political parties helps to mobilize people in order to induce voter turnout. Media also influences through publication of negative Vs positive stories on presidential candidates as the presidential elections are been won and lost by small percentage of voters.

The study discusses in total five chapters. The chapters speak about the evolution and growth of media and electoral process. It would provide a background to the rise of American media coverage to presidential elections and examine how successful it has

been in shaping beliefs of the society. The chapter two mentions about powers like media effect and agenda framing and study the impact and consequences of media stories on the psychology of voters. The third chapter states about the media ownership patterns evolved in the country and try to understand the ling between ownership and coverage. The chapter four is about coverage and campaign about the winning candidates of 2004 and 2008 and finally chapter five conclusively sum up the present study.

CHAPTER-1

Evolution and Growth of American Media and Politics – An Overview

Mass Media plays important role in U.S. elections. It would be hard to overestimate the importance of mass media in the U.S. electoral process. National television networks reach 99 percent of all American homes, making contact across the entire socio-economic spectrum. Cable news stations, radio and television talk shows, newspapers, news magazines and Internet sites all provide voters with information about the candidates. The content and emphasis of their coverage are among the most powerful factors in determining how voters perceive the candidates and the issues. Not only media but candidates also make optimum use of the media to pursue their political agendas. Taking all into consideration, this chapter would provide the background to the rise of American media, the origin of election coverage and examine how successful it has been in shaping the belief of the American society.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of the media in elections. Journalist and political analyst *Walter Lippmann* once pointed out that Americans rarely experience politics firsthand; rather, they develop "pictures in their heads," nearly all of which are provided by the media. The media fulfill a variety of vital functions during an election campaign. Not only are they the primary source of information about the candidates and their platforms, but they also serve as "watchdog," scrutinizing the campaigns and exposing any misdeeds. In addition, the media give the campaign discourse some structure by emphasizing certain issues and events over others. (Kahn and Kenney 2002: 24)

A brief outline of the US media system is necessary as an introduction to the main theme and how media portrayal of candidates affects electoral outcome in the U.S. The US has 1,800 daily newspapers, 8,800 weeklies and 10,000 magazines of all types. The country has 10,000 radio and 900 television stations. America thus has large numbers of media outlets but, in fact, relatively few owners--more than half the dailies and a third of radio and television stations, are owned by chains or conglomerates. The country has four large

commercial television networks--American Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), Fox Television --and the publicly-owned Public Broadcasting System, modelled in part on the BBC (David Morgan 1995: 33)

Who Are the Media?

Journalistic news organizations include both print (such as local daily newspapers) and traditional broadcast (network operations such as ABC, CBS, and NBC News), as well as the cable networks that broadcast news twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week (for example, MSNBC, CNN, and Fox News). Nearly all U.S. news organizations are either privately owned corporations or are owned by huge multinational corporations. Advertising provides most of their revenue. Thus to varying degrees all but a handful of news organizations are motivated to deliver audiences to advertisers, even though, in theory, a wall still separates the advertising and editorial functions.

Another new type of media, the Internet, which came much later in the picture served primarily as an electronic means of delivering text-based information. The most popular websites on internet are hosted by traditional news organizations such as CNN and the *Washington Post*. Although an increase in high-speed Internet connections is helping providers to overcome the technological constraints on providing video, most political sites rely primarily on text illustrated by still photos.

Evolution of the American Media

The media have not always been such central, independent players in the electoral process. Until the 1840s, the major press outlets were sponsored by the two political parties. Thus during the election season, the Republican papers would report only the news that was favorable to their candidates while openly attacking the opponents. Federalist (and later Whig) papers also use to do the same.

Newspaper audiences began to expand with the technological advances and economic changes that characterized the "*commercial media*" phase of the media's evolution which

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ran from the 1840s until the 1920s. Fostered in part by advances in high-speed printing technology and literacy, mass-circulated *"penny press"* newspapers became widely available. The advent of the telegraph in the mid-1800s allowed reporters to instantly transmit news items that had previously been sent by mail. Eventually, the innovation led to the creation of the *Associated Press* the nation's first wire service. Newspapers were now independent commercial entities, no longer reliant on the political parties for funds. With broader "mass" audiences to satisfy, most publishers began to shift their emphasis to the more sensational aspects of politics. Journalism began to clean up its act and professionalize during the Progressive era and into the early twentieth century. It was not until then that journalists seriously attempted to cover politics *objectively*.

In the 1950s and 1960s, television emerged as the primary source of political news. Suddenly, the visual aspects of politics became paramount. After the first televised debate between presidential candidates in 1960, television viewers gave the victory to the more "telegenic" John F. Kennedy, the Democratic candidate, while radio listeners favored the Republican candidate, Richard Nixon. Presidential nominating conventions became television events and it emerged as the primary source of information about politics for most Americans.

By this time, the media were perceived to be so powerful that scholars were using terms like "mass media election." (Patterson 1993: 145). . Indeed, journalism itself was now a prestigious profession. News organizations stepped up their investigative journalism efforts, producing more Watergate-type scandal stories. They also began to report unsavory details about politicians' personal lives, including charges of adultery, and to offer more interpretation and analysis rather than straight-facts reporting. Overall, negativity pervaded news coverage of elections, politicians, and public affairs in general (Patterson 1993: 145). This aggressive approach to covering politics contrasted sharply with the "lapdog journalism" practiced by previous generations of journalists, who were more likely to report what they were told by official sources (Sabato 1993: 28). Today, News organizations continue to spend an inordinate amount of time covering scandal and the private lives of politicians.

Origin of the Relationship between American Presidency and News Media

All presidents have valued the press. They have not necessarily liked the people who report or who publish or air the news, but they have understood that the media is an important vehicle for reaching the public. When the first president, George Washington (1789–1797), needed to explain to the public his rationale for leaving his presidency, he did so through the press. His farewell address was not spoken directly to Congress nor was it even presented as a speech. Instead, at President Washington's request it was published as a communication to the people in Pennsylvania's Daily American Advertiser on September 19, 1796 which was nation's capital at that time which confirmed his regard for the press. His successors also have recognized the same value. When President Ronald Reagan addressed the American public at the end of his eight years in office, he delivered a televised farewell speech from the Oval Office. He too chose the media as the vehicle to deliver his message to the people collectively.

At the start of the nineteenth century, 202 newspapers were being published nationwide (Mott 1962: 98). Between 1901–1932, covering the administration of Theodore Roosevelt through that of Herbert Hoover, saw the White House become a distinct beat for the press. Presidents began to hold regular meetings with reporters to receive their questions, and the position of presidential press secretary was established and the operating procedures of the office were developed. When Franklin D. Roosevelt became president, the modern period in president-press relations began.

Origin of Press Coverage: 1789–1860

In 1789, the federal government's first year, press access to the government was extremely limited. After American independence, state legislatures generally were not open to the public nor was the Continental Congress. Verbatim reports of congressional debates were not available until the Congressional Globe provided them for both houses beginning in 1851 (Ritchie 1991: 36) Presidential opponents came to see the news media as a major venue. Partisans acquired a means to oppose the president and his programs.

Congress was their stage, but their line to the public was through the media. According to political scientist **Richard Rubin**, "newspapers formed around leadership blocs linking political leaders to their mass constituencies"(Rubin 1981: 12).

Presidents and their Newspapers

Thomas Jefferson, foresaw the need for an outlet to carry his voice beyond the center of government. Jefferson recommended to Samuel Harrison Smith, the owner of the Philadelphia newspaper the *Independent Gazetteer*, to establish a newspaper in Washington that would become the new administration's official voice and on October 31, 1800, he published the first issue of the *National Intelligencer*, which began as a four-page paper appearing three times a week. Once Jefferson became president (1801–1809), the fledgling newspaper became the official channel for information coming from the executive branch of government. With no rivals in the new town, the Intelligencer established its roots to dominate an industry that would inevitably grow. James Madison (1809–1817) continued the governmental role of the Intelligencer, as did James Monroe (1817–1825) and John Quincy Adams (1825–1829). The Intelligencer thereby served as the president's agent until President Andrew Jackson (1829–1837) moved first to the *United States Telegraph* and then in 1830 to the *Washington Globe* (Mott 1962: 26). President Martin Van Buren (1837–1841) continued the presidential association with the Globe. The Intelligencer came back into favor with William Henry Harrison (1841), John Tyler (1841–1845), although not for all of his term, and Millard Fillmore (1850–1853). *The Washington Union*, a new paper, was favored by President James K. Polk (1845–1849), Franklin Pierce (1853–1857), and James Buchanan (1857–1861). Yet another paper, *the Washington Republic*, was created when President Zachary Taylor (1849–1850) took office. Other papers, then, sprouted up in Washington during the terms of the thirteen presidents from 1801 to 1860, but none lived so long or was so closely associated with the institutions of government as the Intelligencer, which firmly established its reputation as the most reliable reporter of congressional debates. According to historian *William Ames*, the federal government paid the newspapers to print proclamations, advertisements for bids, and other notices, as well as official documents such as treaties.

Some of the documents were copied by other papers, thereby enhancing the importance of a news source (William Ames 1972: 35). Local and state newspapers regularly used information from the Intelligencer in their pages.

Birth of the Washington Press Corps

With a twofold increase in the national population between 1790 and 1820 , newspapers found themselves catering to an expanding audience. Concurrently, the Republican coalition began to break, and regional differences and splits over trade and tariffs began to surface. The result was that editors outside Washington were no longer willing to rely solely on the Intelligencer for news and views of the national government. By the 1820s correspondents from around the country were being sent to report on the government— the first Washington correspondents had arrived. It was not until the late nineteenth century that the White House had news people assigned to it permanently.

Congressional press galleries came into being in the 1840s. James Gordon Bennett, publisher of the *New York Herald*, sought congressional floor space for his stenographers and was granted some desks in what was called a "Reporters' Gallery." Created in July 1841, the gallery was located above the vice president's chair in the Senate. Here began the formal press's coverage of government institutions in Washington.

The outbreak of the Mexican War in 1846 put news organizations on notice that the news must be provided as quickly as possible. Papers in the East incurred greater expenses because of gaps in the railroad system to get information out of the South. The cost was so high that several news organizations joined forces to share both the news and the expenses incurred in gathering it. In May 1848, six papers assembled at the offices of the *New York Sun* to form an informal association to share foreign news. In 1856 a more formal association with the same membership became incorporated; it was known as the New York Associated Press.

The President as a News Story

Down the road from the Capitol, the press was beginning to take an increased interest in the president. On the eve of the Civil War, the Associated Press assigned a correspondent, Henry Villard, to shadow the newly elected Abraham Lincoln (1861–1865). Villard was to supply the Associated Press with regular dispatches about events in Springfield, which "was to become for time the center of political gravitation." (Villard 1904: 140).

In the case of President Andrew Johnson (1865–1869), many reporters talked with him before his impeachment trial. Both the president and the press recognized the benefits their relationship. Between 1860 and 1901, the availability of information about the president changed from episodic to routine. But gradually with the cutting of political ties between newspaper editors and presidents, press relationships had become less cozy. Gone were the days when a president could expect the counsel of an editor on the release of information. Instead, there was an emphasis on recording presidential statements and views. The interview replaced the edited speech. This innovation became a distinctive characteristic of American reporting. The modern presidential interview has its roots in Andrew Johnson's presidency. In October 1865, Col. A. K. McClure of the Franklin Repository of Chambers-burg, Pennsylvania, interviewed President Johnson (Mott 1962:370.).

Development of White House Press Operations

The president's staff was quite minimal during the late nineteenth century. Unfortunately, White House staff positions, including the position of private secretary, held little allure for would-be appointees. Yet President Garfield was wise enough to know that the man who holds that place can do very much to make or mar the success of an administration and ought to be held in higher estimation than Secretary of State.Candidates for the position shared neither his enthusiasm nor his confidence. Dan Lamont, Grover Cleveland's secretary, counted among his responsibilities that of dispensing routine scheduling and other discretionary information to the press. For the first time, the White

House staff was at the heart of the news operation. Meanwhile, the interest in presidential activities was building. In 1896 William W. Price of the Washington Evening Star became the first correspondent to be based at the White House, and he brought to his beat a different approach than those of his predecessors.

The importance of news organizations to William McKinley's administration was presaged in his 1896 campaign. President McKinley (1897–1901) used the press to carry his advertisements and to report on his prepared speeches, which carefully enunciated his campaign themes. In addition, McKinley was the first presidential candidate to be filmed (Gould1980, 344)

By 1898, one year into the McKinley administration, White House routines for dealing with the press were in place, White House facilities were being made available on a regular basis for the exclusive use of reporters.By the end of the McKinley administration, the staff was clipping information and editorial opinion from newspapers for the president's daily perusal. Moreover, the release of major presidential messages and speeches had been coordinated so that all newspapers and press services would receive equal treatment. By the time of McKinley's assassination in 1901, the following procedures were in place: presidential speeches and texts were distributed regularly to news organizations on an equal basis; permanent space was available for reporters in the White House; senior staff were responsible for the president's press relations; the White House was involved in making arrangements for the press traveling with the president; a press briefing was held daily; a rudimentary news summary was prepared for the president to read; and a press corps was assigned to cover the White House. These procedures remain at the heart of the arrangements provided today for those covering the president (Herrnson 2005: 25).

The President Meets the Press: 1901–1932

Many of the formal structures and tacit understandings that underlie today's relationship between the president and the news media were shaped significantly in the period from

1901 to 1932. Four important developments marked this period. First, the president became a central actor in a federal government expanding its scope of activity. A second development of this period was the establishment of the presidential press conference as an instrument through which the president could inform and respond to the Washington press corps. Third, in this era the White House press staff, headed by a presidential press secretary, became fully responsible for handling the president's daily relations with news organizations and for servicing the news needs of a White House press corps. And, fourth, the presidency became an important institution for prominent news organizations to cover regularly (Herrnson 2005: 27).

America's entry into World War I stimulated President Wilson to establish a special vehicle to coordinate publicity information. The Committee on Public Information became the first sustained effort to coordinate White House information with that from the executive branch departments and agencies.

Succeeding presidents Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover relied primarily on press conferences to communicate their messages to the public but added professional speechwriters and use of the radio to the presidential communications arsenal. President Warren Harding (1921–1923) hired speechwriter. (http://www.whitehousehistory.org)

Judson Welliver, who proved so successful that President Calvin Coolidge kept him on. Coolidge (1923–1929) was the first president to give his State of the Union message not only in person but also on radio. Recognizing that the new medium allowed him to speak directly with the citizens of the country and communicate both his persona and his brand of leadership, Coolidge began to broadcast a monthly radio program in 1924. President Herbert Hoover (1929–1933), too, used radio but preferred it only for traditional occasions such as the State of the Union address. "Radio as a presidential tool would not and could not come into its own until it was realized that only speeches prepared exclusively with an unseen radio audience in mind would make possible full exploitation of the medium," Cornwell suggested. Presidential radio would have to wait for Franklin

Roosevelt to shape fully its contours into a powerful force to promote programs and policy.

News Coverage of Elections

Election stories would focus on the candidates' issue positions and report facts about the candidate—such as personal histories and past political decisions—that would help voters to assess leadership qualities. Campaigns are important elements of political coverage in the media. During an election year campaign news constitutes between 13 percent (in newspapers) and 15 percent (on television) of news stories (Graber 1987: 125). The content and style are remarkably uniform (Graber 1987: 130)

Once the campaign is under way, candidates rarely make major changes in their policy platforms. And if they do, they risk being portrayed as unprincipled. Driven by the need to be consistent, stay "on message," and avoid mistakes, candidates tend to stick with the same basic speech. That speech usually contains much of the information that voters need about the candidate's broad principles and his or her specific issue positions. But the reporters assigned to cover the campaign have heard the speech dozens and dozens of times. Once they have reported it once, it is no longer news.

What does change from day to day are the "horse race" aspects of the election: who is ahead and who is behind; the tactics and strategies being employed by both sides to improve their positions in the polls; competitive campaign events (such as debates) that pit one candidate against the other; and conflicts and confrontations between the candidates. These subjects get the lion's share of coverage. Not only do the horse race elements possess the novelty that static issues positions lack, but they also are relatively easy to prepare within the constraints of standard news-gathering practices. Professional norms dictate that reporters base their stories on hard facts; poll results, advertising campaigns, and campaign expenditures seem to fit that criterion. Late in the 1992 election, when the media began portraying President George Bush as a candidate in trouble, such stories were based on hard evidence: several polls showing that Bush's popularity with the voters had slipped below Bill Clinton's after the

party conventions .Even horse race stories get pushed aside, though, when a scandal emerges. To many critics, the media seem to have an insatiable appetite for stories that involve a candidate who is embroiled in scandal. Even among mainstream news outlets, the hunger has grown. The pattern of news coverage that accompanies an emerging scandal is what *Larry J. Sabato* calls a media "feeding frenzy"— that is, "the press coverage attending any political event or circumstance where a critical mass of journalists leap to cover the same embarrassing or scandalous subject and pursue it intensely, often excessively, and sometimes uncontrollably."[18] Election campaigns, for all their emphasis on integrity and leadership, are an ideal context for the emergence of political scandals, as evidenced by the subjects of some of the most famous feeding frenzies: Bill Clinton's affair with Gennifer Flowers, which surfaced during the 1992 Democratic primaries; the mental health history of Thomas F. Eagleton, which emerged immediately after he was selected to be Democrat George Mc-Govern's running mate in 1972; and Republican Richard Nixon's "secret fund" in 1952. In all of these cases, the intense media scrutiny had a serious impact on the dynamics of the election, with some candidates (Clinton and Nixon) more successful at parrying the charges than others (Eagleton).

It is clearly understood that the media exert a powerful influence on the national agenda and on how issues are understood and framed. Although there is much research that confirms that influence, there is also good evidence that the media have little influence on people's positions on the issues. That is, the media tell us what to think about but not what to think (Graber 1984:182)

Media Polls

It is no secret that election news coverage tends to focus on the "game" or horse race aspects of a campaign—who is ahead, who is behind, who has momentum, who is losing steam. For this, most of the part, they rely on poll results.

Election polls attempt to measure the opinions, behavior, and other relevant characteristics of the voting population by surveying a cross section of members (called a representative sample) of that population. Campaigns typically hire small political firms to conduct the polls used to guide strategic decision making, but many news

organizations also do their own polls, frequently in collaboration with well-established, independent firms such as Gallup, Roper, and Harris.

The media use poll results to prepare news stories that not only estimate who is winning, but also attempt to explain *why*. So in addition to questions about voting intentions, a respectable media poll will include questions designed to tap into voters' views on particular issues, their issue priorities, and their general feelings about the candidates and their performance as elected officials. The poll also record demographic characteristics such as gender, race, education, and income.

Public Gaffes and the Media

Candidates themselves may trigger a feeding frenzy when they make a glaring public gaffe. During the second debate of the 1976 election, President Gerald R. Ford ended a rambling answer to a foreign policy question by arguing there was "no Soviet dominance of Eastern Europe." Despite the mistake, polls taken immediately after the debate indicated that a plurality of voters thought Ford had won the event. But the media pounced on what came to be known as Ford's "Free Poland" gaffe. The media also pounced on Vice President Dan Quayle's "potato(e)" gaffe during the 1992 campaign. Quayle, participating in a spelling bee held at a grade school in New Jersey, mistakenly corrected a student who spelled *potato* without an *e*. In 2000 Vice President Al Gore spent much of the race fending off the effects of the public comments he made about inventing the Internet. More recently, news coverage of the 2004 Democratic nomination campaign homed in on Howard Dean's remark that he wanted to be "the candidate for guys with Confederate flags on their pickup trucks." Dean's campaign then collapsed after the media feeding frenzy surrounding "The Scream"—a speech-ending rallying cry he delivered to supporters after a disappointing finish in the Iowa caucuses. On TV, the gesture came across as a demented, shrieking yowl. Broadcast news outlets played "The Scream" repeatedly for the next two days, late-night television comics had a field day, and countless Internet outlets posted manipulated versions of the video clip on the Web.Not all gaffes and potentially scandalous events trigger a feeding frenzy. In 1996 the *Washington Post* killed a story that would have publicized allegations that Robert

Dole had an extramarital affair with a Washington, D.C., woman while serving in the Senate. This decision was made despite the objections of several *Post* reporters and editors, who argued that the allegations belied Dole's campaign attacks on Clinton's morality and character.[19] In the closing days of the 2000 election, reports that George W. Bush had been arrested in 1976 for driving under the influence of alcohol garnered widespread media attention, but the coverage never reached the level of "frenzy." Both investigations emerged in the elections' final days and weeks, perhaps making some editors and producers wary about breaking stories that might influence the results.

Editorial Endorsements

In the final days or weeks of the election, most newspapers use their editorial pages to endorse one candidate for each office, sometimes even for minor races. Historically, Republican candidates for president have received more endorsements than Democrats (Graber 2001:65), perhaps reflecting the conservative tendencies of newspaper owners and editors. When Bill Clinton obtained the majority of editorial endorsements in 1992, he was the first Democrat to do so since Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964 (Alger 1996: 23). In 2004 Kerry gained slightly more endorsements in part by picking up support from many of the newspapers who endorsed Bush over Gore in 2000 (Greg Mitchell 2004: 45).

Do endorsements affect election results? According to one study, they seemed to help Clinton get more votes in 1992 (Beck 2001: 23; Dalton 2001: 4; Huckfeldt 2002: 25). In 2004 the languishing candidacy of North Carolina senator John Edwards got a shot in the arm when he was endorsed by the *Des Moines Register,* which was followed by a surprising second-place finish in the Iowa caucuses. In elections below the presidential level, newspapers tend to give more coverage to candidates they endorse. (Graber 2001: 156) One recent study of U.S. Senate elections suggests that endorsements can actually shape voters' preferences through a two-step process. When a newspaper endorses a candidate, it tends to cover the endorsed candidate more favorably on the *news* pages. This "slanted" positive news coverage is associated, in turn, with more positive evaluations of the endorsed candidate among voters (Kahn and Kenney 2002:34)

In summing it all, the news media have played a powerful and pivotal role in U.S. elections. Media not only shape particular attitudes and voting behavior, also they serve as the primary communication link between candidates and voters. One can easily say, that this relationship between press and politics is very symbiotic. Both cannot survive without each other, which history has also witnessed.

Role of Media in American Democracy

In the broadest sense, the media embraces the television and film entertainment industries, a vast array of regularly published printed material, and even public relations and advertising. The "press" is supposed to be a serious member of that family, focusing on real life instead of fantasy and serving the widest possible audience. A good generic term for the press in the electronic age is "news media." The emphasis in this definition is on content, not technology or delivery system, because the press -- at least in developed countries -- can be found these days on the Internet, the fax lines, or the airwaves.

A self-governing society, by definition, needs to make its own decisions. It cannot do that without hard information, leavened with an open exchange of views. Abraham Lincoln articulated this concept most succinctly when he said: "Let the people know the facts, and the country will be safe."

Some might regard Lincoln's as a somewhat naive viewpoint, given the complexities and technologies of the 20th century; but the need for public news has been a cornerstone of America's system almost from the start.

Thomas Jefferson felt so strongly about the principle of free expression he said something that non-democrats must regard as an absurdity: "If it were left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter." The implication of those words is that self-governance is more essential than governance itself. Not so absurd, perhaps, if you had just fought a war against an oppressive government.

In the wake of America's successful revolution, it was decided there should indeed be government, but only if it were accountable to the people. The people, in turn, could only hold the government accountable if they knew what it was doing and could intercede as necessary, using their ballot, for example. This role of public "watchdog" was thus assumed by a citizen press, and as a consequence, the government in the United States has been kept out of the news business. The only government-owned or -controlled media in the United States are those that broadcast overseas, such as the Voice of America and Public Broadcast Service (PBS). By law, this service is not allowed to broadcast within the country. There is partial government subsidy to public television and radio in the United States, but safeguards protect it against political interference (Bartels 1996: 35)

Because the Constitution is the highest law in the land, any attempts by courts, legislators and law enforcement officers to weaken protected liberties, such as free expression, are generally preventable. Fairly simple in theory, but how has all this worked out?

Although the concept of a free press is challenged and defended every day in one community or another across the land. The American press has always been influential, often powerful and sometimes feared, but it has seldom been loved. As a matter of fact, journalists today rank in the lower echelons of public popularity. They are seen as too powerful on the one hand, and not trustworthy on the other.(Bartels 1996: 87)

In its early days, the American press was little more than a pamphleteering industry, owned by or affiliated with competing political interests and engaged in a constant war of propaganda. Trust was not an issue. What caused the press to become an instrument for democratic decision-making was the variety of voices. Somehow, the common truth managed to emerge from under that chaotic pile of information and misinformation. A quest for objectivity was the result (Krimsky 1998: 89)

Many critics have questioned whether there is such a thing as "objectivity." Indeed, no human being can be truly objective; we can only *seek* objectivity and impartiality in the pursuit of truth. Journalists can try to keep their personal views out of the news, and they

employ a number of techniques to do so, such as obtaining and quoting multiple sources and opposing views.

The question is whether the truth always serves the public. At times, the truth can do harm. If the truthful report of a small communal conflict in, say, Africa, leads to more civil unrest, is the public really being served? The journalistic purists - often those sitting in comfortable chairs far from conflict - say it is not their job to "play God" in such matters, and that one should not "shoot the messenger for the message."

If, however, one takes the rigid view that the truth always needs to be controlled -- or Lenin's dictum that truth is partisan -- the door is wide open for enormous abuse, as history has demonstrated time and again. It is this realization (and fear) that prompted Jefferson to utter that absurdity about the supreme importance of an uncensored press.

What Jefferson and the constitutional framers could not have foreseen, however, was how modern market forces would expand and exploit the simple concept of free expression. While media with meager resources in most developing countries are still struggling to keep governments from suppressing news that Westerners take for granted, the mass media in America, Britain, Germany and elsewhere are preoccupied with their role as profitable businesses and the task of securing a spot on tomorrow's electronic superhighway. In such an environment, truth in the service of the public seems almost a quaint anachronism.

Is the capitalist drive an inherent obstacle to good journalism? In one sense, the marketplace can be the ally, rather than the enemy of a strong, free media. For the public to believe what it reads, listens to and sees in the mass media, the "product" must be credible. Otherwise, the public will not buy the product, and the company will lose money. So, profitability and public service can go hand in hand. What a media company does with its money is the key. If it uses a significant portion of its profits to improve its newsgathering and marketing capabilities and eliminate dependence upon others for its survival (e.g. state subsidies, newsprint purchases, or access to printing facilities), the product improves, and the public is served. If it uses its profits primarily to make its

owners rich, it might as well be selling toothpaste. The assumption in this argument is that the public overwhelmingly wants to believe its news media, and that it will use this credible information to actively and reasonably conduct its public affairs. Unfortunately, that assumption is not as valid as it was in simpler times. In affluent societies today, media consumers are seeking more and more entertainment, and the news media's veracity (even its plausibility) is less important than its capacity to attract an audience.

When one talks about an independent media, it is necessary to include financial independence as a prerequisite, in addition to political independence. The American revenue-earning model of heavy reliance on advertising is highly suspect in many former communist countries, but one has to weigh the alternatives. Are government and party subsidies less imprisoning? If journalists are so fearful of contamination by advertiser pressure, they can build internal walls between news and business functions, similar to those American newspapers erected earlier in this century.

If they are fearful of political contamination of the information-gathering process, they can build another wall separating the newsroom from the editorial department -- another important concept in modern American journalism.

The problem in many new democracies is that journalists who once had to toe the single-party line equate independence with opposition. Because they speak out against the government, they say they are independent. But haven't they just traded one affiliation for another? There is little room for unvarnished truth in a partisan press.

Though nearly 60 percent of the world's nations today are declared democracies -- a monumental change from a mere decade ago -- most of them have nevertheless instituted press laws that prohibit reporting on a whole array of subjects ranging from the internal activity and operations of government to the private lives of leaders. Some of these are well-intentioned efforts to "preserve public stability." But all of them, *ALL* of them, undermine self-governance. The watchdog role of the free press can often appear as mean- spirited. How do the government and public protect themselves from its excesses? In the United States, it is done in a variety of ways. One, for example, is the use of

"ombudsmen." In this case, news organizations employ an in-house critic to hear public complaints and either publish or broadcast their judgments. Another is the creation of citizens' councils which sit to hear public complaints about the press and then issue verdicts, which, although not carrying the force of law, are aired widely.

Last, and most effective, is libel law. In the United States, a citizen can win a substantial monetary award from a news organization if libel is proven in a court of law. It is much harder for a public official or celebrity than an ordinary citizen to win a libel case against the press, because the courts have ruled that notoriety comes with being in the limelight. In most cases, the complaining notable must prove "malice aforethought."

There is nothing in the American constitution that says the press must be responsible and accountable. Those requirements were reserved for government. In a free-market democracy, the people ultimately decide as to how their press should act. If at least a semblance of truth-in-the-public-service does not remain a motivating force for the mass media of the future, neither free journalism nor true democracy has much hope, in my opinion.

The nature and use of new technology is not the essential problem. If true journalists are worried about their future in an age when everyone with a computer can call themselves journalists, then the profession has to demonstrate that it is special, that it offers something of real value and can prove it to the public. There is still a need today -- perhaps more than ever -- for identifying sense amidst the nonsense, for sifting the important from the trivial, and, yes, for telling the truth. Those goals still constitute the best mandate for a free press in a democracy.

The Media and Civic Literacy

The Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard University recently published a report titled "Restoring the Bond: Connecting Campaign Coverage to Voters." One of the lessons learned from the 1988 presidential campaign, the report finds, is that journalists have contributed to the alienation and anger among voters.

"If a single overriding theme emerges from this work, it is a concern that campaigns have become distant from the concerns of voters, that a 'disconnect' has developed between the electorate and their prospective leaders — and that journalism, rather than bridging the gap, has helped create and sustain it."

The Center's report also criticized the prevailing "insider" approach to campaign coverage; the media's focus on political strategy and advertising over substance; and the tendency for the production demands of television to determine the way candidates and issues are presented and discussed during presidential campaigns. "In practice," the report concludes, "this means that the public is losing its grip on the democratic process."

According to the arguments set forth by Shanto Iyengar, the breakdown of public confidence in media reportage is a result of the way campaigns are framed. *"Nowhere is the debilitating influence of episodic framing on political accountability more apparent than in presidential election campaigns . . . [which] guarantee that coverage of the issues and the candidates' policy proposals will receive minimal attention."*

There has been an effort, at least on the part of some journalists, to be more issue-specific during the 1992 campaigns, as witnessed by a wealth of articles and debates about how to improve public discourse. Everette Dennis, executive director of the Gannet Center for Media Studies at Columbia University, suggests in his book *Reshaping the Media* that reporting standards are moving toward more analysis and thematic coverage.

There is more context today as we see coverage of national trends. We are also witnessing better efforts to connect fragments of news into patterns of continuity. This is the opposite of what Lord Tennyson described when he warned about "fragments of singular instance." Public affairs reporting in newspapers and in broadcasting is more conscious of time and of protracted governmental decisions. It now traces the long evolutionary flow in the decisions of government that do not often lend themselves to immediacy and the quick news fix, but need continuity and follow-up.

Political Consequences of the News Media

Ultimately, however, there has been very little written about the political consequences of media reporting. The failure to see journalism as a democratic *means* rather than an *end* unto itself is perhaps symptomatic of the gulf between the press and the public. Surveying the available research on the political effects of mass media, Paul Burstein at the University of Washington points out that politics is only important insofar as *"political actions have important consequences. Sociologists must know this, at some level, but when studying politics they assiduously avoid focusing on consequences."* Politics is routinely taken to mean campaigns, elections, and the affairs of big government. Exceedingly few sources refer to the media's role in facilitating public politics. If democracy requires more of us than the act of casting a vote, the media scarcely reflect that notion. As Christopher Lasch puts it: *"What democracy requires is public debate, not information. . . . Unless information is generated by sustained public debate, most of it will be irrelevant at best, misleading and manipulative at worst. . . ."* Much of the press, in its eagerness to inform the public, has become a conduit for the equivalent of junk mail. But critics of this claim, such as Paul Light, associate dean of the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota, maintain, that it is up to the citizens to determine the agenda.

The problem, of course, is on the consumer side of the ledger. Having more analysis, and the financial protection that might go with it, is hardly useful if voters choose to watch Geraldo, Oprah, Maury, Phil and Sally instead. . . . Much as we focus on the supply side of the equation, the problem with American politics appears to reside on the demand side, whether voters either want the information we elites value or not.

Even when the media does offer substance and analysis, it may still not offer citizens a basis for choice or action. Acting together requires dialogue, and that is something the news media rarely if ever provide or engender. As passive recipients of information, we are simply an audience to what Bill Moyers has called the "monologue of televisual images." In *Images of Education*, media critic George Kaplan sums up the problem:

Many of today's serious documentaries are thoughtful presentations that leave us informed and healthily curious. They refute the stereotyped contention that television has helped make us a less reflective people with shorter attention spans. As a general proposition, though, they do not impose moral and intellectual choices on us. They usually leave us unmoved and unchallenged.

In conclusion of the above discussion it can be stated that in established democracies, broadcast journalists whose medium is often mandated to provide impartial reporting of politics at election time are confronted with the problem of balance when reporting election campaigns. Balance is problematic to define yet remains an assumption behind allegations of political bias in the news at election time. If the principle of balance in reporting on contending parties and candidates is strictly adhered to, then it conflicts with the journalistic principle of objectivity which drives story selection. News values provide objective criteria by which editors determine what stories end up in the news. If television news is responsible for presenting arrange of political voices at election time, then normal news values will need to be suspended to some extent in order to accomplish these objectives. Research on television news has shown that the principle of balance, while applied during election campaigns in a number of established democracies, has been operationalized quite differently. Some of the earliest research on media and elections in the U.S. stemmed from a concern about media bias having an impact on electoral outcomes, as it had in Nazi Germany. Paul Lazarsfeld and his colleagues compared radio and press reporting on the presidential candidates in the 1940 U.S. election, and found that Roosevelt had a visibility advantage in the news by a margin of 3:2 in quantitative terms, but the tone of the news actually favored Wilkie by a margin of 2:1, illustrating the independence of measures of degree and of direction of attention, as noted above.

Whatever its positive or negative effects, exposure to the news media does influence public awareness of elections. In a study of the 1988 Southern "Super Tuesday" regional primary, researchers found exposure to all media to be positively and significantly related to voter awareness of the campaign, as well as to voter perceptions of increased campaign

activity and perceptions of increased Southern political prominence. Exposure to partisan political information was found to be significantly related only to perceptions of increased campaign activity (Walker, 1990).

Educators need more information about the role of television in elections, and particularly how television influences young voters. Among future voters, television appears to affect their political attitudes. A study examined the political views of 10- to 17-year olds and their parents before and after the 1988 election. While parents' attitudes seemed to be the greatest influence upon the political socialization of the younger children, television appeared to be the greatest influence upon the older ones (Sears and Weber 1988 :43).

The effect of media coverage of elections is visible on the local level as well. Newspaper stories and advertisements can raise public awareness of municipal and school board elections; to the extent that voter turnout increases as a result (Luttbeg, 1988: 154). Interestingly, a study of Philadelphia voters suggests that media reliance (defined as identification of a particular medium as one's main source of campaign information) is unrelated to campaign knowledge and activity (Rosenberg and Elliot, 1989: 76).

Between 1972 and 1988, there was an increasing tendency among the major news outlets to report on the content of the political advertisements themselves. By presenting segments of negative ads during newscasts, such news reports may have had the effect of promoting the candidates whose commercials were being discussed and legitimizing political advertising as a basis for political decision making (Garner, et al. 1990: 87)

Thus one can definitely say that the mass media definitely and strongly impacts the electoral campaigns of presidential elections and it has been very successful in shaping the beliefs of the American society.

Chapter-2

Media Effect and Agenda Setting

Mass Communication plays an important role in any society. It is defined in "Mass Media, Mass Culture" as the process whereby professional communicators use technological devices to share messages over great distances to influence large audiences. Within this process the media, which can be a newspaper, a book and television, takes control of the information we see or hear. The media then uses gate keeping and agenda setting to control access to news, information, and entertainment. Gate keeping is a series of checkpoints that the news has to go through before it gets to the public. Through this process many people have to decide whether or not the news is to be seen or heard. Some gatekeepers might include reporters, writers, and editors. After gate keeping comes agenda setting.

Agenda Setting as defined in " Mass Media, Mass Culture" is the process whereby the mass media determine what we think and worry about. Walter Lippmann, a journalist first observed this function, in the 1920's. Lippmann then pointed out that the media dominates over the creation of pictures in our head, he believed that the public reacts not to actual events but to the pictures in our head. Therefore the agenda setting process is used to remodel all the events occurring in our environment, into a simpler model before we deal with it. Researchers Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw have then followed this concept. The term agenda setting was the coined by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972 in their Chapel Hill study (1968), in the context of election campaign, where politicians seek to convince the voters about the party's most important issues. Agenda setting theory argues that the media are more successful in telling the people "WHAT IS TO THINK ABOUT" than telling them "WHAT TO THINK". This hypothesis is based on whole series of studies showing a correspondence between the order of importance given in the media to issues and order of significance attached to same issues by the public and politicians. Over the period of time according to this theory the very priorities accorded by the media to issues become the public priorities as well. One of the most critical aspects in the concept of an agenda setting role of mass communication is the time frame for this phenomenon. In addition, different media have

different agenda setting potential. Agenda setting theory seems quite appropriate to help in understanding the persuasive role of media e.g.: Political communication. McCombs and Shaw described the agenda setting function in their book *Emergence of American Political Issues* .In this book the authors point out that there is abundantly collected evidence that editors and broadcasters play an important part as they go through their day to day tasks in deciding and publicizing news. According to them; " This impact of the mass media- the ability to effect cognitive change among individuals, to structure their thinking- has been labeled the agenda-setting function of mass communication".

Agenda Setting has two levels, as mentioned in *Theories of Communication,* the first level enacts the common subjects that are most important, and the second level decides what parts of the subject are important. These two levels of agenda setting lead path into what is the function of this concept. This concept is process that is divided into three parts according (Rogers and Dearing 1996: 98). The first part of the process is the importance of the issues that are going to be discussed in the media. Second, the issues discussed in the media have an impact over the way the public thinks, this is referred as public agenda. Ultimately the public agenda influences the policy agenda.

Questions concerning the mass media's impact on society are as old as the media themselves. According to the agenda-setting theory, mass media sets the agenda for public opinion by highlighting certain issues. In studying the way political campaigns were covered in the media, Shaw and McCombs found that the main effect of the news media was to set an agenda, i.e. to tell people not what to think, but what to think about as opposed to persuasion or attitude change. Agenda setting is usually referred to as a function of mass media and not a theory (McCombs & Shaw 1972: 143). Opposing views and conflicting research results have led to different conclusions ranging from minimal-effects to powerful mass media. During the last three decades the notion of agenda-setting has probably provided the most influential and fertile paradigm in media and communications research. When mass media emphasize a topic, the audience/public receiving the message will consider this topic to be important (Cohen 1963: 25; McCombs and Shaw 1972:106).More recent and less developed is the study on the

relation between the media and the political agenda. No longer the public's priorities but rather the political priorities are considered as being the result of media impact.

Do the mass media determine the political agenda? If one is interested in the media's impact on politics this is probably one of the most basic questions that can be raised. Television news offers numerous cues about salience – the opening story on the newscast, length of time devoted to the story, etc. These cues repeated day after day effectively communicate the importance of each topic. In other words, the news media can set the agenda for the public's attention to that small group of issues around which public opinion forms. The principal outlines of this influence were sketched by Walter Lippmann in his 1922 classic, Public Opinion, which began with a chapter titled *"The World Outside and the Pictures in Our Heads."* As he noted, the news media are a primary source of those pictures in our heads about the larger world of public affairs, a world that for most citizens is "out of reach, out of sight, out of mind." What we know about the world is largely based on what the media decide to tell us. More specifically, the result of this mediated view of the world is that the priorities of the media strongly influence the priorities of the public. Elements prominent on the media agenda become prominent in the public mind. Social scientists examining this agenda-setting influence of the news media on the public usually have focused on public issues. The agenda of a news organization is found in its pattern of coverage on public issues over some period of time, a week, a month, an entire year. Over this period of time, whatever it might be, a few issues are emphasized, some receive light coverage, and many are seldom or never mentioned. The media agenda presented to the public results from countless day-to-day decisions by many different journalists and their supervisors about the news of the moment.

According to Stefaan Walgrave ,Peter Van Aelst, Stefaan Walgrave, setting up an empirical media and political agenda-setting study always implies making six basic design choices. As per them, carefully charting these design differences is elementary to explain why some studies established the existence of strong media effects while others

denied the media to have any impact at all and, thus, is a prerequisite for making progress with political agenda-setting.

(1) The first choice relates to the polity to be examined, be it national or sub national. An overwhelming majority of the available studies was carried out in the US and focused on the US presidential or congressional agenda. Apart from the US there are only a handful Dutch and Canadian political agenda-setting studies.

(2) Second, there is the media agenda: which media are investigated and associated with the political agenda? Most studies relied on TV and/or newspaper data. By and large, measuring the media agenda has been a fairly standardized process with most researches adopting similar sampling and coding procedures.

(3) As political agenda-setting studies never take all issues into account, the third choice regards the specific issues to examine. Media matter for some issues, but much less for others. Issue selection is, probably, the dimension in which political agenda-setting studies, and agenda-setting in general, have made most progress. Obtrusive and unobtrusive issues, for example, foster different agenda-setting dynamics.

(4) Fourth, there is the methods choice and how to account for time. Political agenda-setting implies a time gap between issue coverage and issue adoption by political actors. Some studies relied on time-series designs, to be preferred because better capable of tapping causality, yet other researches were cross-sectional or were based on interviews. The available time-series studies differentiated strongly in terms of time units and time gaps.

That leaves two design choices they believe to be the most crucial and the least looked into: which political agendas to take into account and what time period to examine? Intertwined they can explain most of the diverging outcomes.

(5) The definition and measurement of the political agenda is far from standard, but differs in almost all studies at hand. There appears to be no such thing as the political agenda but rather an archipelago of different loosely associated political agendas. All these agendas are run by specific political actors, they have their

own logic and obey particular rules. This affects their susceptibility for media coverage. Political agenda choice, hence, deserves to be at the heart of the political agenda-setting debate.

(6) In terms of time period, previous studies took diverging periods into consideration. Some studies were campaign studies focusing on media and political agendas during the months, mostly weeks, before the polls. Others examined routine political times sometimes stretching out over a prolonged time period. They believe that both election and non-election periods times are fundamentally different and that behavior of political actors, and their reaction on media coverage, follows different logics in both periods. That is why both types of studies, electoral and routine times, yielded diverging outcomes.

In short: political agendas and time periods, they argue, are the most crucial design choices to be made and can account for a large part of previous studies' contradicting results. Moreover, these dimensions have been almost completely neglected in the research literature. Hardly any available study really problematizes the option for this or that political agenda, or for a certain time period. Putting political agendas and time periods center stage brings order in the apparent chaos of media and political agenda-setting research and generates better hypotheses whom and when the media might influence.

Agenda Framing

In the ever-expanding body of media effects research, relatively little attention has been paid to how news is framed, and still less has been written on the political consequences of media frames. A frame is the central organizing idea for making sense of relevant events and suggesting what is at issue. News and information has no intrinsic value unless embedded in a meaningful context which organizes and lends it coherence. News stories can be understood as narratives, which include information and factual elements, to be sure, but also carry an implicit message. The medium, in the case of news coverage,

is the ultimate message. As James Britton writes:*"Experience is kaleidoscopic: the experience of every moment is unique and unrepeatable. Until we can group items in it on the basis of their similarity we can set up no expectations, make no predictions: lacking these we can make nothing of the present moment".*

To identify frames, the informational content of news reports is less important than the interpretive commentary that attends it. While this is true of journalism in general, it is especially evident in television news which is replete with metaphors, catchphrases, and other symbolic devices that provide a shorthand way of suggesting the underlying storyline. These devices provide the rhetorical bridge by which discrete bits of information are given a context and relationship to one another.

Shanto Iyengar, professor of political science and communication studies at UCLA, has pioneered the research in the framing effects of news coverage on public opinion and political choice. He explains that viewers are "sensitive to contextual cues when they reason about national affairs. Their explanations of issues like terrorism or poverty are critically dependent upon the particular reference points furnished in media presentations."The frames for a given story are seldom conscientiously chosen but represent instead the effort of the journalist or sponsor to convey a story in a direct and meaningful way. As such, news frames are frequently drawn from, and reflective of, shared cultural narratives and myths and resonate with the larger social themes to which journalists tend to be acutely sensitive.

Shaping Political Agenda

Shanto Iyengar looks at *why* people think what they do about politics in *Is Anyone Responsible?* But the theories and premises of his research are derived in large part from his 1987 book *News That Matters* (co-authored with Donald Kinder). In the book, he examines *how* people think about politics, suggesting that television determines what masses believe to be important issues largely by paying attention to some problems and

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ignoring or paying minimal attention to others. " In the late 1960s, Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw began studying the agenda-setting capacity of the news media in American presidential elections. They were especially interested in the question of information transmission — what people actually learn from news stories, rather than attitudinal changes, the subject of earlier research. Their research precipitated a stream of empirical studies that underscored the media's critical role as vehicles of political information.

In their 1977 book, *The Emergence of American Political Issues,* McCombs and Shaw argued that the most important effect of the mass media was "its ability to mentally order and organize our world for us." The news media "may not be successful in telling what to think," the authors declared, "but they are stunningly successful in telling us what to think about."McCombs and Shaw also note that the media's tendency to structure voters' perceptions of political reality in effect constitutes a bias: "to a considerable degree the art of politics in a democracy is the art of determining which issue dimensions are of major interest to the public or can be made salient in order to win public support."

The presidential observer Theodore White arrived at the same conclusion in his landmark book, *The Making of a President:* "The power of the press in America is a primordial one. It sets the agenda of public discussion; and this sweeping political power is unrestrained by any law. It determines what people will talk and think about — an authority that in other nations is reserved for tyrants, priests, parties and mandarins."

Contradicting Results

Starting with McCombs & Shaw's Chapel Hill study (1972) media and communications researchers have been investigating the media's impact on the public's priorities for a long time. Numerous studies all over the world established firm correlations between the media's and the public's priorities (McCombs and Shaw 1993: 243; Dearing and Rogers 1996 :54; Ghanem 1996: 29)

Within political science too, agenda-setting is a frequently used model. Political scientists draw on agenda-setting to describe and explain how political institutions on different levels and with different functions (government, parliament, civil servants, political parties…) determine their priorities, give attention to or ignore issues, and do, or do not, take decisions or take a stance concerning these topics (Cobb and Elder 1971: 121; Kingdon 1984: 34; Laver and Budge 1992: 65;Baumgartner and Jones 1993: 126; Klingemann, Hofferbert et al. 1994: 187).

Political scientists' agenda-setting research focuses mainly on endogenous political factors and they ascribe the presence of issues on the agenda of a certain political actor (e.g. government or congress), to the influence of another political actor (e.g. political party or the president) or to issues on the same agenda in a preceding period.

The bulk of agenda-setting studies was conducted by media and public opinion scholars and focused on media and public opinion and not on media and politics. The number of studies explicitly focusing on the political agenda and the media remains limited (Rogers, Dearing et al. 1993: 34). The outcome of these investigations was mixed and both scholars, in communications and in political science, seemed to stick to their core business: "If media scholars are, by and large, much taken with the agenda-setting power of the press, many scholars of traditional political institutions seem less impressed" (Bartels 1996: 46).According to the scholors, the impact of the media on the political agenda, is limited. Walker, for example, pointed out that *The New York Times*, concerning the three innovative safety laws passed in the US Senate from the 1950s onwards, simply followed the legislative process in stead of leading it (Kingdon 1984: 65; Protess and McCombs 1991:87)

Some of these scholars also speculate the limited power of the media, according to them it is due to their short attention span always running from one crisis to another hence diluting their impact on the slower workings of democracy (Kingdon 1984: 87). Another weakness of the media is its propensity to highlight the most spectacular stories (Herman 1993: 48), while these stories tend to take place at the end of the policy-making process,

and not at the beginning. Except for specific issues like foreign policy for special kinds of journalism like investigation journalism (Dearing & Rogers 1996: 127), and for some uncommon and non-routine crisis situations the media's political agenda-setting impact is limited, these scholars affirm.

Other researchers, in contrast, claimed the existence of strong media bearings on the political agenda. In their influential overview of agenda-setting research., state that "The mass media often have a direct influence on the policy agenda-setting process". Among the founding fathers of the political science tradition of studying agendas, Cobb & Elder (1971: 909) stated more than 30 years ago: "The media can also play a very important role in elevating issues to the systemic agenda and increasing their chances of receiving consideration on institutional agendas." Edwards & Wood (1999:205) established an independent media impact on the foreign and the domestic agenda of the US president. Trumbo (1995: 23) closely examined the rise and fall of the global warming issue from 1985 till 1992 and concluded that the media played a considerable role in the heightening of policy attention for the issue. Baumgartner and colleagues found a firm relationship between media attention and US congressional attention for four domestic issues and concluded "… that the media help create situations that make increased government attention almost unavoidable" (Baumgartner, Jones et al. 1997: 56).

Most of the scholars who actually found strong media bearings on political agendas defined their political agenda in a symbolic manner. The US presidential agenda, for example, was defined as containing all issues about which the president spoke in public (speeches, press briefings) or communicated about to the public (press releases, press officers' briefings) venting the president's opinion on the issue of the day. Not surprisingly those scholars found firm correlations between the presidential agenda and media content. Those presidential outlets are explicitly targeting the media and try to respond to media cues in order to get the line of the day out. In fact, these studies only substantiated a relationship between the media agenda and the media-targeted political communication of a core political player. But a US president's communication is for the most part mere symbolic, showing that he cares about an issue and that he is busy

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handling it. Many of his public utterances have no policy consequences whatsoever. Edwards & Wood note that while US president Ronald Reagan, for example, was publicly communicating a lot on educational issues he did hardly implement any educational policy (Edwards and Wood 1999; 231). We could even define a symbolic agenda as consisting of those issue mentions by politicians for which getting into the media is the only aim: (reaching) the media is the message. A similar point was made by Pritchard and Berkowitz in their longitudinal account of crime coverage and its political responses. They assert that the media are able to influence the symbolic agenda – "... *those lists of issues that require visible but not necessarily substantive action on the part of the policymakers*" – but that media systematically fail to impact what they call the resource agenda, that is "... those lists of issues that require substantive action, including the possible allocation of resources" They conclude as follows: "*Symbolic agendas are inherently more flexible than resource agendas. It is fairly simple for policy makers to hold a news conference, issue a press release, or make proposals for reform. It can be quite difficult for them to shift resources from one priority to another.... Resource agendas seem to be more resistant to media influence than are symbolic agendas.*" (Pritchard and Berkowitz 1993: 28).

All strong impact conclusions were based on enquiries that examined symbolic political agendas, that is: a political actor's public communication about an issue without having necessarily a tangible policy consequence. Politics is made by different political actors ranging from institutional (parliament, government) to non-institutional actors (political parties, interest groups). All these actors have their own agenda, some of them even master several agendas which are more or less independent from one another.

Elections and Political Times

Elections campaigns are seen as ever more crucial for electoral success. More and more 'floating' voters make up their mind in this short period just before the ballot (Panebianco 1988: 45).In the struggle to determine the public agenda in campaign times; the media play a crucial role. Many agenda-setting studies, starting with the classic Chapel Hill

study, focus on campaign periods to analyze the influence of the media on the public agenda (Shaw and McCombs 1977: 65). In recent years also the relationship between the media and the political agenda entered the focus of campaign students (Semetko, Blumler et al.1991: 51). These studies examine to what extent media and political parties are interacting during the campaign: did the political parties manage to set the media and the public agenda or did parties rather follow media leads?

Contrary to the mixed results of routine time studies, the outcomes of campaign studies are less contradictory: in contrast to the former studies agree that media's impact on politics is limited or even absent. Norris et al. (1999: 56), for instance, concluded that in the 1997 British election campaign the media failed to set the party agenda, and vice versa. The issues most reported in the media were not the ones that were most prominent on the priority list of the major parties. This led the researchers to conclude that "Journalists and politicians were marching to different beats in the election". At first sight, these results seem to contradict the studies on the US presidential campaign of 1992. Dalton and colleagues showed that media and major candidates were on the same track and their issue agendas resembled each other very well. However, the authors found little evidence that the media were responsible for this agenda convergence (Semetko, Blumler et al.1991: 51). To summarize: parties clearly influence the media agenda, but the media have hardly any effect on the party agenda (Brandenburg 2004:187).

How can the minimal political agenda-setting power of the media in campaign periods be explained? Why do the media seem to set effectively the agenda in normal times, at least according to some studies, while they tend to follow the political agenda in election times? Knowing that during campaigns the political agenda is merely a symbolic agenda, and media's impact is much larger when it comes to symbolic agendas, these limited effect results are even more startling. The short period that is being studied in campaign studies can be part of the explanation. Media-effects often work slow drip by drip over a prolonged period of time and take time to percolate through. (Norris, Curtice et al 1999: 87) Agenda-setting studies in non-election times covering a longer period are better placed to grasp these slower cumulative effects than campaign studies spanning per

definition a short time frame. Most political agenda's are per definition slower than the fast evolving media-agendas. However, this can not explain why even daily political agenda's like press conferences or press releases seemed little influenced by the media agenda. If it is claimed that the electoral context radically changes the behavior of both players, media and politicians and, hence, that political agenda-setting dynamics are different in campaign times compared to routine times.

First: the composition of the, normally, multilayered and complex political agenda changes dramatically and central actors like government and parliament make place for political parties who become extremely active proselytizers in campaign times. Dalton and colleagues (1998) state that the agenda-setting role of the media is smaller exactly because parties and candidates are much more vigorously trying to influence the public agenda. Their whole behavior and all their actions are aimed to set the agenda and to dominate the public debate. In fact, substantial political agendas are simply nonexistent in election times: government and parliament are not meeting, and if they do all their deeds are (interpreted as being) inspired by the upcoming elections. The rich and layered assortment of mutually connected political agendas so typical for routine times is narrowed down to merely the party agenda.

During a campaign parties have daily press conferences, create their own (campaign) events, and indefatigably flood the media with press releases. To draw media attention candidates and parties continuously make strong statements. The public too is directly targeted with ads, flyers and canvassing. In some countries with a strong public television tradition parties even receive free air time to communicate directly with their voters. (Semetko 1996: 56). Thus: in election times political actors are much more aggressive agenda-setters and this limits the agenda- setting capacities of the media.

Second: The media devote more attention to politics in campaign times which opens opportunity windows for political actors. Election campaign periods also differ from routine periods because of the different structure of the news (Semetko, Blumler et al 1991: 145). During campaigns the share of political news surges on TV as well as in

newspapers. Although a lot of the surplus media attention can be labeled as 'horse race' coverage (Semetko, Blumler et al 1991: 145), this does not mean that all issue coverage is brushed aside by who is leading and who is losing the race (Just, Crigler et al. 1996: 87). There is plenty of room for parties and candidates to get their substantial message across. In short: the process of gate keeping is less stringent for (national) politicians in the weeks before an election compared to non-election periods. The media gates are wide open for any politician with a message.

Third: Media are less autonomous and their coverage is more balanced in election times. In recent decades the media have become, in general, a more autonomous actor less depending on politics. Several scholars asserted that the modern media are no longer driven by a political, but rather by their own 'media logic'. Media attention is drawn, more than in the past, by what attracts the audience (Altheide and Snow 1979: 231). However, this does not mean that there are not any restrictions. Mainly in election times certain rules, traditions and practices regarding fairness and balance limit the sovereign role of the media (Semetko 1996: 65). More than in routine times, both politicians and the public are sensitive for unfair coverage or an unbalanced share of attention. The US media seem to be more active and independent, less inclined to follow the political agenda faithfully (Semetko, Blumler et al. 1991:98). They feel less obliged to give full attention to the daily activities and statements of the political parties.

To summarize, there are several reasons for the media to have less impact on the political agenda in election than in non-election times. Parties and candidates are more active in spreading their message and the media are desperately searching for political news to fill extra pages and minutes devoted to the elections.

As they are closely monitored some media, especially public television, try harder to be impartial and neutral during campaigns. That the media's political agenda-setting role is limited in election campaigns does not imply that the media cannot play an important role in the campaign nor that they cannot codetermine the outcome. The media, for instance, most probably fuel the personalization of politics and contribute to a 'candidate centered

politics' (Swanson and Mancini 1996: 154) or even to 'personality politics' (Hart 1992: 76). Politicians consider the media as crucial for electoral success and adjust their style and discourse to the laws of modern media. However, this does not seem to imply that politicians' substantial agendas are determined by the media and let the media decide which issues to stress during the campaign.

Scores of public agenda-setting studies, starting with McCombs and Shaw's (1972) seminal trigger article, established close links between public opinion and media (Dearing and Rogers 1996:165). Whether these studies were convincing or not is not important, what matters here is that political actors believe that TV news and newspapers determine the public's issue priorities. Political actors do not primarily react on media coverage itself but on (presumed) public opinion. In other words: political actors anticipate the expected media impact on the public and build their political strategy on that premise (Eichhorn 1996: 87). Whether media coverage is considered as a cause of public opinion, media leading the public, or rather as a consequence, public leading the media, is not important either as long as political actors consider the media as an indicator of the public's needs and wishes. Effective public agenda- setting is not a prerequisite for political agenda-setting. The more politicians believe in the media's political almightiness, the more they are inclined to embrace media topic and the mightier the media are. Some studies, indeed, confirm that political actors tend to equate media with public opinion. Cook and colleagues showed experimentally that policy makers do think that media affect the public's issue priorities and that they gain their understanding of public opinion through the media (Cook, Tyler et al. 1983: 87). Paradoxically, the less direct evidence on public opinion available via opinion polling, the more politicians will take media's influence on public opinion for granted and the more they will consider the media as a good indicator, a proxy, of what the public cares for (Kennamer 1992: 76). This would mean that especially in poll-free societies political actors tend to consider the media as mirroring public opinion, they simply have no other way of finding out the public's preferences. Consequently media might be more influential in these polities than in polities permeated with constant polling and public opinion navel-gazing. Linsky showed that even in the US, a country with a long and vibrant polling tradition, political

authorities have the propensity to identify media coverage with public opinion and to take their cues on the public's priorities from the media and not from polling, although widely available (Linsky 1986: 124). In a similar vein, Pritchard speculates that the poll boom in the US in the 90s might have diminished the political role of the press (Pritchard 1992: 87). Once one accepts that media and public opinion are associated, it is natural for politicians to follow the media. Priming, for example, makes political actors to be evaluated by the public based on the issues put forward by the media and, consequently, politicians do their best to impress the people regarding media issues and to display their commitment (Iyengar and Reeves 1997: 213).. Not reacting on mediatized topics might be considered as incapacity or, worse, indifference. As a result, politicians tend to adopt media issues, if not by solving the issue with real policy measures than, at least, by showing that they are aware of it, that they care, and that they are busy dealing with it. Their reaction, hence, is often more symbolical than substantial. In a sense, it is more important for political actors to communicate about an issue than what to communicate about it. The basic message is: we are on top of this and decisively handling it. The interplay between media and public opinion not only incites political actors to take on media issues, it also stimulates them to embrace these issues as soon as possible. Since the media are often their sole means to reach out to the public and since the media's issue attention cycle is short (Pritchard 1992: 252), political actors tend to react almost immediately. The quicker their reaction, the higher the chance they can get the line of the day out in the press, get their face on TV and connect with the public. Instant issue adoption maximizes media exposure. Put otherwise: if it is not possible to react promptly on media exposure it makes no sense to react on the media at all, since public and media will have long forgotten about the issue by then. Summarizing the main arguments so far, it can be asserted that (1) political actors tend to take over issues from the media for several reasons, but the most important is that media is (supposedly) associated with public opinion and that, by reacting, they can prove their responsiveness to the public's needs. (2) This political adoption does not mean that there will be tangible policy measures as most reactions are merely verbally because symbolic reactions involve fewer costs (and might be as effective). Finally it can be argued that (3) if political actors react, they will in principle do this with the shortest delay possible since the attention span of

media and public is short lived. The three are closely associated. For example, if political actors react swiftly this will probably not imply much more than a symbolic gesture. Promptness and incidence are closely linked too: if it is impossible to react immediately it might be better not to react at all.

Media Agendas: All media equal political agenda setters?

By and large, measuring the media agenda has been a fairly standardized process with most researches adopting similar sampling and coding procedures (Dearing & Rogers 1996: 129). Many political agenda setting studies included TV and newspaper or magazine data at the same time. But does all news carry the same political agenda setting power? Among public agenda setting scholars, the debate on the power of print and electronic media is far from settled. Some scholars claim the primacy of newspapers, while others believe in the power of TV (Eilders 1997: 87; Shaw & McCombs 1977: 76).. Among the political agenda setting students, Bartels (1996) found that the political effect of a national newspaper like *The New York Times* differs from the impact of local newspapers, which, in turn, have different effects than national TV network news. Interesting enough, he demonstrates that the major institute of the American press, The New York Times, is not directly in?uencing U.S. Congress but only indirectly via intermediation of ABC news. This indirect in?uence of newspapers (and radio) on television reporters is con?rmed in a number of other studies and labeled as intermediary agenda setting (Roberts & McCombs 1994: 45). Daily contact between the journalists and the competitive media environment created a high degree of convergence between different media outlets regarding issues and sources. Despite of this intermediary in?uence, several studies found diverging TV and news paper political agenda setting effects on political agendas (Kleinnijenhuis 2003: 142;Trumbo 1995: 57). These different outcomes, though, did not spark a systematic debate about contingency effects of media outlets. One can speculate that newspapers, due to their in-depth and complete coverage, might be more able to affect policy makers. Another possibility is that politicians themselves, due to the more ?exible and easier processing of paper material, are personally more exposed to newspaper than to TV news and, hence, are more affected

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by newspapers than TV (Fuchs & Pfetsch 1996: 75). Yet, if politicians consider TV to have bigger an impact on the public's priorities, even if they themselves only watch it rarely, TV's impact on politics could increase as political actors anticipate TV's public agenda setting effects. Eilders states that for the media to have a strong impact on politics, a high Congruence of the different media outlets is required. Only if all media are focusing on the same issue (focusing), frame it in a similar way (consonance),and if they do so with perseverance ,can the media be expected to strongly impact the political agenda (Eilders 1997:189). These conditions for strong media effects are hardly ever met. Most of the time, issue emphasis is scattered, issues are framed differently, and coverage is short lived and ephemeral. The most powerful media effects are, hence, probably restricted to events that can be portrayed by the media as pervasive crisis situations (Paletz 1998: 56). Pack journalism (journalism that is practiced by reporters in a group and that is marked by uniformity of news coverage and lack of original thought or initiative) presses politicians to deal with an unwanted situation at once and to speed up the decision process (Sabato 1991: 89). Of course, journalists can not turn every event in to a crisis. A spectacular closing down of a big factory is more appropriate than a general rise of unemployment ?gures (Brosius & Kepplinger 1992: 234). Cobband Elder (1971) de?ned such events as "focusing events" and argued that the absence of focusing events could block an issue's rise on to the political agenda. When spectacular event or crises are absent, news media do not act uniformly. In this case, the kind of medium plays a role: Reliable and respected news outlets have more impact than marginal and dubious news sources (Bartels 1996: 34).

Time Period: Elections versus Nonelection Times

A ?nal research choice regards the time period in which political agenda setting takes place. Some previous studies were basically campaign studies focusing on media and political agendas during the months, mostly weeks, before the polls. Others examined routine political times often stretching out over a prolonged time period. Some authors coined the concept of the permanent campaign to refer to the fact that politicians, also in routine times, incorporate campaign insights and tactics in their communication (Nimmo 1999: 198). The behavior of political actors, their reaction on media coverage, and even

the dynamics of media coverage itself follow different logics in both periods. Following the classic public agenda setting studies, in recent years, campaign students started focusing on the relationship between the media and the political agenda Brandenburg 2002: 176) . These studies examine to what extent media and political parties are interacting during the campaign: do the political parties manage to set the media agenda or do parties rather follow media leads? Although campaign studies, compared to routine-time studies , draw upon the same political agenda setting model, situate themselves within the same research tradition, refer to the same founding fathers of agenda setting, and largely rely on the same research design matching media content with measures of political attention, there appears to be hardly any dialogue between both strands of political agenda setting research. Only a handful of studies mention, aside, that campaign and routine times might foster different agenda setting dynamics, but these studies remain vague about how this different dynamic might be conceptualized (Dalton,Beck,Huckfeldt,&Koetzle 1998: 194). The scholarly segregation of both types of political agenda setting studies is partly explained by the fact that campaign studies tend to focus on political party agendas only and more speci?cally on parties' campaign communication: press brie?ngs, party manifestoes, stump speeches, and staged events. Contrary to the mixed results of routine-time studies , the outcomes of campaign studies are less contradictory: During campaigns ,the media's impact on candidates' and parties' agendas is limited or even absent. Norris et al. (1999), for instance, in the U.S. presidential campaign of 1992, media and candidates were on the same track, but there was little evidence that the media were responsible for this agenda convergence . Especially in election times, certain rules, traditions, and practices regarding fairness and balance limit the media's sovereign role (Semetko 1996: 43). More than in routine times, both the politicians and the public are sensitive to unfair coverage or a unbalanced share of attention..The U.S. media in particular seem to be more active and independent (Semetko etal., 1991: 176). The media's political agenda setting role in election campaigns is limited does not imply that they do not affect the out come at all. The media can follow the agenda of party A more closely than that of party B, give more attention to issue X than to issue Y. The agenda setting power of journalists in election times lies

more in their discretion to include or exclude information of political actors than in their autonomous selection of issues. (Butler 1998: 86 ;VanPraag & Brants 1999: 65).

To be sure, besides agenda setting, the media can in?uence politics in many other ways during the campaign. Political issue adoption: Incidence, type, and promptness studying the media's impact on the political agenda imply four basic research choices. Political agenda setting is contingent upon a number of conditions: the kind of media and issues under study and the political agenda and the time period under investigation. Yet, ascertaining the contingency of media power is not enough to constitute a theory of the media and political agenda setting. Infact, most political agenda setting studies implicitly claim that media coverage mechanically leads to political attention: Political actors adopt media issues simply because they are covered. But this claim is not anchored in any behavioral theory of political actors.

Summing Up
The pictures in people's minds about the outside world are significantly influenced by the mass media, both what those pictures are about and what those pictures are. The agenda-setting effects of the mass media also have significant implications beyond the pictures created in people's heads. In the original, traditional domain of agenda-setting, the salience of public issues, there is considerable evidence that the shifting salience of issues on the media agenda often are the basis for public opinion about the overall performance in office of a public leader. In turn, the salience of a leader in the news also is linked with whether an individual holds any opinion at all. At the second level of agenda-setting, the salience of affective attributes intertwined with the public's cognitive pictures of these leaders represents the convergence of attribute agenda-setting with opinion formation and change. Beyond attitudes and opinions, the pictures of reality created by the mass media have implications for personal behaviors, ranging from college applications to voting on election day.

CHAPTER-3
Media Ownership Patterns

A democratic society of any substantial size is unthinkable without the mass media. Without some form of institutionalized news media, citizens could not obtain the information necessary to evaluate political leaders, to access social conditions, and to judge the desirability or undesirability of alternative public policies. Given the essential role of the news media in democratic governance, concerns about who wields media power in media American politics has been a critical issue since colonial times. The importance of press combined with mergers in the media and the entertainment industries, leaves many critics warning about the media concentration. From General Electrics to Westinghouse to Disney Corporation, large conglomerates have been taking control of the mass media in the United States. Thirty years ago, half of their media revenues were generated by 46 large media corporations (Bagdikian 1992: 17). Today 6 largest media owing companies produce half of the media's revenues. Critics argue that one of the reason this consolidation of mass media has not called into question more often because the American public's main sources of news and information has been dominated by corporations with incentives to remain silent about the dangers of media consolidation (Agrawal, Anup, and Knoeber 1996: 87).Not only this, since these media organizations are not less then any business organizations in terms of money and power, they donate huge amount of donations in the name of funding to political parties and presidential elections. This clearly give them a slant, in terms of power and authority if their party candidate won the elections and the cycle would be vice versa.

Concern with news coverage of media consolidation is one aspect of a broader apprehension about the influence of corporate ownership over news content. For example in 1980, the Los Angeles Times chose not to report on a $2 Billion tax paid water project in California that its corporate owner, The Times Mirror Company , stood to benefit from, yet the project was deemed important enough to warrant coverage in the New York Times. The second example comes from Herman and Chomsky who argue that US news coverage of politics in El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua during the early 1980s was

biased to favor the interests of American Business and governmental elites (Herman and Chomsky 1988 :165).

The issue resolves around the idea that those who control the media control what information people do and don't have access to. If you have an ownership group who is very bias towards, or against a certain argument, or cause, then the media that they own will only give one side of the story. According to Free Press "But these massive conglomerates — like General Electric, Time Warner and News Corporation — only care about the bottom line, not serving the public interest. And allowing these few firms too much control over the flow of news and information is dangerous for our democracy".

Who owns what in America

In the early years of American democracy the "free press" was all that stood between corporate interests, government corruption and the public. Local papers, TV stations and radio outlets were owned mostly by local individuals with an interest in their community. Suddenly the old rule that one corporation could not own all of the town's news outlets was gone. Companies like Clear Channel Communications suddenly began to buy up every radio station, TV outlet and newspaper in major markets, effectively controlling everything that people read, watched and heard. The pattern of media consolidation has increased during the last eight years to the point that now only a few corporations control the news that we watch. With such powerful platforms they are able to drown out independent media and control public opinion and government policy.

Electronic and Entertainment Industry

Among the largest media conglomerate today is AOL, which bought out Time Warner for $160 billion early.   Before the merger, AOL was the largest Internet service provider in America.

Time Warner Inc, with 1997 revenues of more that $13 billion, was the second largest of the international media leviathans when it was bought by AOL. Levin, chairman and

CEO of Time Warner, had bought Turner Broadcasting System in 1996 from Ted Turner, who had been one of the few Gentile entrepreneurs in the media business. Ted Turner, as the company president, is the number three man at the new AOL, after Case and Levin.When Ted Turner media maverick, made a bid to buy CBS in 1985, there was a panic in media boardrooms across the nation. Turner had made a fortune in advertising and then had built a successful cable-TV news network, CNN, with over 70 million subscribers.

Time Warner's subsidiary HBO is the country's largest pay-TV cable network. Until the purchase in May 1998 of PolyGram by Edgar Bronfman, Jr., Warner Music was America's largest record company, with 50 labels, the biggest of which is Warner Brothers Records.

Warner Music was an early promoter of "gangsta rap". Through its involvement with Interscope Records (prior to Interscope's acquisition by MCA), it helped to popularize a genre whose graphic lyrics explicitly urge blacks to commit acts of violence against whites. In addition to cable and music, Time Warner is heavily involved in the production of feature films (Warner Brothers Studio, Castle Rock Entertainment, and New Line Cinema) and in publishing. Time Warner's publishing division is the largest magazine publisher in the country with magazines like *Time, Sports Illustrated,People, Fortune.*

Another largest media conglomerate , with revenues of $23 billion, is the Walt Disney Company. The Disney empire, described by one media analyst as "a control freak," includes several television production companies (Walt Disney Television, Touchstone Television, Buena Vista Television), its own cable network with more than 100 million subscribers altogether. As for feature films, the Walt Disney Motion Pictures Group, under Walt Disney Studios, headed by Joseph E. Roth, includes Touchstone Pictures, Hollywood Pictures, and Caravan Pictures. Disney also owns Miramax Films, run by the Weinstein brothers, who have produced such ultra-raunchy movies such as The Crying Game, Priests, and Kids.Disney Company was takeover by Eisner in 1984. In August 1995, Eisner acquired Capital Cities/ABC, Inc., which owns the ABC Television Network, which in turn owns ten TV stations outright in such big markets as New York,

Chicago, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Houston. In addition, it has 225 affiliated stations in the United States and is part owner of several European TV companies ABC's also has a controlling share of Lifetime Television and the Arts & Entertainment Network cable companies with 67 million subscribers each. ABC Radio Network owns 26 AM and FM stations, again in major cities such as New York, Washington, and Los Angeles, and has over 3,400 affiliates.

Although primarily a telecommunications company, Capital Cities/ABC earned over $1 billion in publishing in 1997. It owns seven daily newspapers, Fairchild Publications (*Women's Wear Daily*), Chilton Publications (automotive manuals), and the Diversified Publishing group.

Another on the list, revenues of just over $13 billion, is Viacom, Inc. Viacom, which produces and distributes TV programs for the three largest networks, owns 13 television stations and 12 radio stations. It produces feature films through Paramount Pictures, headed by Jewess Sherry Lansing. Redstone acquired CBS following the December 1999 stockholders' votes at CBS and Viacom.

Its publishing division includes Simon & Schuster, Scribner, The Free Press, and Pocket Books. It distributes videos through over 4,000 Blockbuster stores. It is also involved in satellite broadcasting, theme parks, and video games. Viacom's chief claim to fame, however, is as the world's largest provider of cable programming, through its Showtime, MTV, Nickelodeon, and other networks. Since 1989, MTV and Nickelodeon have acquired larger and larger shares of the juvenile television audience. Redstone, who actually owns 76 percent of the shares of Viacom.

MTV pumps its racially mixed rock and rap videos into 210 million homes in 71 countries and is the dominant cultural influence on white teenagers around the world. Nickelodeon, with about 65 million subscribers, has by far the largest share of the four-to-11-year-old TV audience in America and also is expanding rapidly into Europe. Most of its shows do not yet display the blatant degeneracy which is MTV's trademark, but

Redstone is gradually nudging the fare presented to his kiddie viewers toward the same poison purveyed by MTV.

Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, which owns Fox Television Network, 20th Century Fox Films, and Fox 2000, is the next largest mega media corporation in the country, with $11 billion. News Corporation also owns the New York Post and TV Guide.

The big three in television network broadcasting used to be ABC, CBS, and NBC. With the consolidation of the media empires, these three are no longer independent entities.

With such enormous money accumulation, these media organization try to buy power and authority in the country. They make donations, funding to political parties for gaining the influence. Here is a brief data about the current state who owns what in United States of America, it shows the magnitude of these large media empires and their donations to presidential election campaigns:

GENERAL ELECTRIC - NBC -In 2000 it donated $1.1 million to George W Bush for his election campaign.

TV Holdings:

- NBC: Owns outright 13 stations and many affiliates, Market penetration: 28% of US households.
- NBC Network News: Owns The Today Show, Nightly News with Tom Brokaw, Meet the Press, Dateline.
- CNBC business network, MSNBC 24-hour cable and Internet news service (co-owned by both NBC and Microsoft); Court TV (co-owned with Time Warner), Bravo (50%), A&E (25%), History Channel (25%).
- The MS in MSNBC stands for Microsoft (Bill Gate's Microsoft donated 2.4 million in 2000 to get George W Bush elected.)

WESTINGHOUSE / CBS INC. - Westinghouse Electric Company, part of of the large Nuclear Utilities Business Group of British Nuclear Fuels. A group with very strong ties to the Bush Administration.

TV Holdings:

- CBS: Owns outright 14 stations and over 200 affiliates in the US.
- CBS Network News: 60 minutes, 48 hours, CBS Evening News, CBS Morning News.
- Country Music Television, The Nashville Network.
- Group W Satellite Communications.

DISNEY - ABC -Disney-ABC donated $640,000 to George W Bush's 2000 political campaign.

TV Holdings:

- ABC: includes 10 stations outright, many affiliates, Penetration in the market: 24% of US households.
- ABC Network News: Prime Time Live, Nightline, 20/20, Good Morning America.
- ESPN, Lifetime Television (50%), as well as smaller holdings in A&E.
- Disney Channel/Disney Television, Touchtone Television.

Other Major Media Holdings.

- Miramax, Touchtone Pictures.
- Major Magazines: Jane, Los Angeles Magazine, Discover.
- Three recording labels, twelve major local newspapers.
- Hyperion books.
- Infoseek search engine.

TIME-WARNER -Time Warner (formerly AOL Time Warner) is one of the world's largest media companies, headquartered in the Time Warner Center in New York City. Formerly two separate companies, Warner Communications, Inc. and Time Inc.,

(along with the assets of a third company, Turner Broadcasting System, Inc.) form the current Time Warner, with major operations in film, television and publishing. In 2000 they donated 1.6 million to George Bush's political campaign. America Online (AOL) acquired Time Warner which was the largest merger in corporate history.

TV Holdings:

- CNN, HBO, Cinemax, TBS Superstation, Turner Network Television, Turner Classic Movies, Warner Brothers Television, Cartoon Network, Sega Channel, TNT, Comedy Central.
- Largest cable system owner with an estimated 13 million households.
Media Holdings.
- HBO Productions, Warner Home Video, New Line Cinema, Castle Rock, Looney Tunes, Hanna-Barbera.
- Music: Atlantic, Elektra, Rhino, Sire, Warner Bros. Records, EMI.
- Thirty three major magazines including Time, Sports Illustrated, People Magazine, In Style, Fortune, The Book of the Month Club, Entertainment Weekly, Life Magazine, DC Comics, MAD Magazine.

NEWS CORPORATION LTD. / FOX NETWORKS – Chairman of News Corporations, Rupert Murdoch owe numerous donations to political campaigns. He is also on Board of Directors of Phillip Morris who donated 2.9 million to Bush's campaign.

Television Holdings:

- Fox Television: includes 22 major and many affiliate stations, Penetration into more than 60% of US households.
- Fox International: extensive worldwide cable and satellite networks include British Sky Broadcasting (40%); VOX, Germany (49.9%); Canal Fox, Latin America; FOXTEL, Australia (50%); STAR TV, Asia, IskyB, India; Bahasa Programming Ltd., Indonesia (50%); and News Broadcasting, Japan (80%), major owner of DirecTV.

- The Golf Channel (33%).

Other Major Media Holdings:

- Twentieth Century Fox, Fox Searchlight.
- 132 major newspapers (113 in Australia alone) including the New York Post, The London Times and The Australian.
- Owns 25 magazines including TV Guide and The Weekly Standard.
- Owns HarperCollins books.

Other Major Corporation Holdings around the word:

- Sports: LA Dodgers, LA Kings, LA Lakers, and National Rugby League.
- Ansett Australia airline, Ansett New Zealand airlines.

It's no surprise that corporate robber baron Rupert Murdoch is a major Bush supporter but who else owns Fox News? Prince Al-Walid bin Talal owns 5.5% of Fox News. Prince al- Walid bin Talal stated recently that he used his influence to change Fox's headlines (Herman and Chomsky 1988 :165). During the riots in Muslim neighborhoods in France Fox was using the term "Muslim Riots" to describe rioting by Muslim youths and Prince bin Talal claims that called Fox News had them change the title of the story to "Youth Riots". In another instance, where supposedly conservative Fox News should have been up in arms, was the deal by a United Arab Emirates holding company to buy U.S. ports. Suddenly Fox went from being against the deal to very supportive of a deal that would have put US container ports in foreign hands. A U.A.E. sovereign wealth fund also owns major shares of Fox.

Regulation for Concentration and ownership

The U.S Government regulates print media and electronic media differently. The Federal Communication Commission (FCC) is an independent U.S. Government agency directly responsible to Congress. It was established by the Communication Act of 1934 and is

charged with regulate interstate and international communication radio , television ,wire, satellite and cable. The FCC is directed by five commissioners appointed by the president and confirmed by the senate for five years term. The Federal Communication (FCC) has been regulating since commercial radio first came on the scene in the 1920s. Its stated purpose is to prevent the emergence of dominant media monopolies by establishing limits on the ownership of radio, television, and satellite and the cable broadcasting outlets It is an important factor in U.S. telecommunication policy. The FCC took over wire communication regulation from the Interstate Commerce Commission. The FCC's mandated jurisdiction covers the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. possessions. However, the FCC also provides varied degrees of cooperation, oversight, and leadership for similar communications bodies in other countries of North America.

The FCC has an estimated 2011 budget of US$335.8 million which is entirely funded by regulatory fees, and has a proposed budget of US$354.2 million for 2012, which will also be fully derived from regulatory fees. It has 1,898 "full-time equivalent" federal employees (FCC Website).

Prior to 1927, public airwaves in the United States were regulated by the United States Department of Commerce and largely litigated in the courts as the growing number of stations fought for space in the burgeoning industry. The Federal Radio Act of 1927 (signed into law February 23, 1927) nationalized the airwaves and formed the Federal Radio Commission (later named the Federal Communications Commission, or FCC) to assume control of the airwaves.

The Communications Act of 1934 refined and expanded on the authority of the FCC to regulate public airwaves in the United States, combining and reorganizing provisions from the Federal Radio Act of 1927 and the Mann-Elkins Act of 1910. It empowered the FCC, among other things, to administer broadcasting licenses, impose penalties and regulate standards and equipment used on the airwaves.

In 1975, the Federal Communications Commission adopted a rule called the newspaper / broadcast cross-ownership ban which prohibited a newspaper and a broadcast or radio station from being co-owned if located in the same market. Over forty newspaper / broadcast cross-owned properties were grandfathered into place when the rule was established. For the last 30 years, this rule has not been changed despite repeated findings by the FCC since 1996 that it needs to be reviewed and revised (Ruschmann 2005: 164).

Telecommunication Act of 1996

The Telecommunication Act of 1996 was the first major overhaul of telecommunication law in more than 60 years (Goldfarb 1996: 154). To achive the Act's goal of opening the telecommunication market to competetion , Congress authorizes the FCC to take deregulatory steps to eliminate the barrier that dicourage entry to new competitors.The Congress also required the commision to review its rules every two years and repeal those that were no longer needed.The rationale behind media ownership rule was that they are important safeguard, ensuring public's first amendment rights and providing for the diverse media marketplace of ideas, essential for democracy, yet most media ownership rules are decades old and have not been updates since the 1970s, when cable televison in America was still in its infancy and the internet was non existant. The loosening of restriction on television ownership cleary stood to benefit those newspaper owning companies that had substantial investments in TV stations,while providing no benefir or even a competative disadvantage to companies which has little or no financial interset in television (Nuechterlein and Weiser 2005: 157).

As the first major overhaul of telecommunication law since 1934, The Telecommunication Act of 1996 affected almost every facet of media and communication in the Unites States. Prior to this act, indiviual companies or ownership groups were prohibited from owing 12 television stations nationwide or owing stations that collectively reached over 25 percent of country's viewers. The act eliminated the first of these restrictions entirely and raised the limit from 25% to 35 %. The legistlation also required the FCC to consider relaxing " duopoly rule" which limited each broadcaster to

one television station per market, extented the FCC's liberal waiver policy regarding the rule barring commen ownership of television and radio stations in a market to the top 50 markets, and permitted comman ownership of broadcast and cable system (Stern 1996: 178).

Taken as a whole the Telecommunication Act of 1996 was highly favourable for corporations with interest in television and radio broadcasting. Chief among those that benefit from this bill were corporations that were close to exceeding ownership exceeding ownership restrictions in television and radio broadcasting.It is not surprising that these corporations lobbied extensively for certain provisions to be included in the final Bill. For example in May of 1995, the 'Big Three" networks (ABC,CBS and NBS) along with Group W (Westinghouse which now owns CBS), filed a 400 page economic analysis with the FCC calling for economic relaxation of broadcast ownership limits and an end to the ban owning on a radio and television station in the same market (McAvoy and West 1995:134). .Senator Larry Pressier (R South Dakota), who served the Telecommunication subcommittee, called the measure the "most lobbied bill in the history" (Carney 1995:38). While the legislation is complex and covers a wide rage of regulatory issues ,the 1996 telecom bill opened a new avenues of profit for corporations with television and radio interests.

Asconcentration of media increases, the influence of expanding media conglomerates increases simultaneously.Senator earnest Holling (D-South Carolina),objecting to a Republican proposal to expand the television ownership caps above 35 % of the national market, said owning such a large share of the television market " would be better than being president of United States (Carney 1995:131).

Because the Mass Media is the main source of information for the American people, it is extremely important that it provide diversity of news and information. Meaningful political discourse can only take place if the public is provided with wide range of ideas and opinions. Compunding these problems is the similarities of interests of the large

conglomorates that are increasingly in control of the media, and those intrestes reflect in their presentation.

In 2003, the Commission adopted new media ownership rules, which included the relaxation of the newspaper / broadcast cross-ownership ban. In its place, the FCC adopted general cross-media ownership limits. The Third Circuit in 2004 remanded the media ownership rules back to the FCC. The Third Circuit endorsed the FCC's conclusion that newspaper-owned broadcast stations produce local news in higher quantity and with better quality than other stations based on evidence obtained from the forty markets of grandfathered newspaper / broadcast crossed-owned properties. However, the Court found the FCC had "not sufficiently justified its particular chosen numerical limits for local television ownership, local radio ownership or cross-ownership of media within local markets." The Third Circuit also held that the FCC properly decided to retain some limits on cross-media consolidation to ensure diversity in the local marketplace, but it found flaws in the "Diversity Index" the FCC used to support its cross-media limits. In 2005, the Supreme Court denied an appeal by newspapers and broadcasters to review the Third Circuit's decision.

The FCC is now charged with tackling media ownership rules again, and it is likely to craft new rules consistent with its reading of the Third Circuit's decision. In June 2006, the FCC adopted a Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking seeking comment on how to address the issues raised by the Third Circuit Court. The Notice also opens up a comprehensive quadrennial review of all media ownership rules as required by Congress. The notice invites comment on "how the Commission should address newspaper/broadcast cross-ownership issues."

Nevertheless, the vast extent of the manipulation of the media under the sway of business interests has been harshly revealed in the statement of John Swainton, Chief of Staff of the *New York Times.* "There is not one of you who would dare to write his honest opinion," he reprimanded his colleagues at his retirement party in September.
"The business of a journalist now is to destroy the truth, to lie outright, to pervert, to vilify, fall at the feet of Mammon and sell himself for his daily bread. We are tools,

vessels of rich men behind the scenes, we are jumping jacks. They pull the strings; we dance. Our talents, our possibilities and our lives are the properties of these men. We are intellectual prostitutes. "

Propaganda Model of Mass Communication

The propaganda model is a conceptual model in political economy advanced by Edward Herman (Professor Emeritus of Finance at Wharton School in the University of Pennsylvania) and Noam Chomsky (Institute Professor of Linguistics and Philosophy at MIT), that states how propaganda, including systemic biases, function in mass media. The model seeks to explain how populations are propagandized and how consent for various economic, social and political policies are "manufactured" in the public mind due to this propaganda.

The theory points that the way in which news is structured (through advertising, media ownership, government sourcing and others) creates an inherent conflict of interest which acts as propaganda for undemocratic forces. According to the propaganda model, the media is conditioned by the profit-orientated considerations of corporate elites. Herman and Chomsky have forwarded their propaganda model of the media in terms of five 'filters' that act to limit what the media reports in accord with governmental and corporate interests.

Ownership

According to the model, the size, and profit-seeking imperative of the dominant media corporations is said to create a bias. Herman and Chomsky argue that since mainstream media outlets are currently either large corporations or part of conglomerates (*e.g.* Westinghouse or General Electric), the information presented to the public will be biased with respect to these interests. Such conglomerates frequently extend beyond traditional media fields, and thus have extensive financial interests that may be endangered when certain information is widely publicized. According to this

reasoning, news items that most endanger the corporate financial interests of those who own the media will face the greatest bias and censorship.

Funding

The second filter of the propaganda model is funding generated through advertising. Most newspapers have to attract and maintain a high proportion of advertising in order to cover the costs of production; without it, they would have to increase the price of their newspaper. According to this filter, the news itself is nothing more than "filler" to get privileged readers to see the advertisements which makes up the real content, and will thus take whatever form is most conducive to attracting educated decision-makers. Stories that conflict with their "buying mood", it is argued, will tend to be marginalized or excluded, along with information that presents a picture of the world that collides with advertisers' interests. The theory argues that the people buying the newspaper are themselves the product which is sold to the businesses that buy advertising space; the news itself has only a marginal role as the product.

Sourcing

The third of Herman and Chomsky's five filters relates to the sourcing of mass media news: "The mass media are drawn into a symbiotic relationship with powerful sources of information by economic necessity and reciprocity of interest." According to this filter, even large media corporations such as the BBC cannot afford to place reporters everywhere. They therefore concentrate their resources where major news stories are likely to happen: the White House, the Pentagon, 10 Downing Street, and other centralized news "terminals". Business corporations and trade organizations are also trusted sources of stories considered newsworthy. Editors and journalists who offend these powerful news sources, perhaps by questioning the veracity or bias of the furnished material, can be threatened with the denial of access to their media life-blood - fresh news. Thus, the media become reluctant to run articles that will harm corporate interests that provide them with the resources that the media depend upon.

This relationship also gives rise to a "moral division of labor", in which "officials have and give the facts," and "reporters merely get them". Journalists are then supposed to

adopt an uncritical attitude that makes it possible for them to accept corporate values without experiencing cognitive dissonance.

Flak

The fourth filter is 'flak', described by Herman and Chomsky as 'negative responses to a media statement or [TV or radio] program. It may take the form of letters, telegrams, phone calls, petitions, law-suits, speeches and Bills before Congress, and other modes of complaint, threat and punitive action'. Business organizations regularly come together to form flak machines. Perhaps one of the most well-known of these is the US-based Global Climate Coalition (GCC) - comprising fossil fuel and automobile companies such as Exxon, Texaco and Ford. The GCC was started up by Burson-Marsteller, one of the world's largest public relations companies, to attack the credibility of climate scientists and 'scare stories' about global warming. flak is characterized by concerted and intentional efforts to manage public information.

Anti Communism and Fear

The fifth and final news filter that Herman and Chomsky identified was 'anti-communism'. *Manufacturing Consent* was written during the Cold War. Chomsky updated the model as "fear", often times as 'the enemy' or an 'evil dictator', including dictators such as Colonel Gaddafi, Saddam Hussein, or Slobodan Milosevic. This is exemplified in British tabloid headlines of 'Smash Saddam!' and 'Clobba Slobba!' (Cromwell 2002: 155). The same is said to extend to mainstream reporting of environmentalists as 'eco-terrorists'. *The Sunday Times* ran a series of articles in 1999 accusing activists from the non-violent direct action group Reclaim The Streets of stocking up on CS gas and stun guns. (Cromwell 2002: 155).

Anti-ideologies exploit public fear and hatred of groups that pose a potential threat, either real, exaggerated, or imagined. Communism once posed the primary threat according to the model. Communism and socialism were portrayed by their detractors as endangering freedoms of speech, movement, the press, and so forth. They argue that such a portrayal was often used as a means to silence voices critical of elite interests.

The propaganda model is important to discuss any type of news bias because, the model cleary shows how that the mainstream media, as elite institutions, commonly frame news and allows debate within the parameters of elite interests; and that where the elite is really concerned and unified, ordinary citizens are not aware of their own stake in an issue or are immobilized by effective propaganda, the media serves elite interests uncompromisingly (Cromwell 2002: 155).

Roots of the Problem

According to Californian Law Review the problem is very complex and stems for the existence of systematic series of barriers impeding minority obstruction. The barriers can be divided into two groups: (1) Obstruction that makes it difficult for minorities to gain the pre-requisites to media ownership- primarily inadequate experience and lack of financing; and (2) regulatory fetters that compound such problems, which primarily results from general bias against any new entrant into the broadcasting industry. The most important obstacle confronting a prospective minority owner is, of course money. Not only are initial capital requirement high, but also FCC requires potential requires potential licensees to demonstrate that they successfully can operate a station for a year without advertising revenues. Lack of broadcasting experience is another problem for minorities because the FCC has stated that media management experience is of "substantial importance" to applicants. Media experience is also necessary to convince lending sources that the applicant is a good loan risk with a predictable chance of business success.

Finally even if potential minority owners succeed in overcoming the barriers presented by experience and initial financing requirements, difficulties may arise that minority-owned stations attempt to secure operating revenues through advertising sales.

Summing Up

Only the news can provide the public with the information it need to participate meaningfully in democratic government, a press that systematically slant the news to

further its own business objectives threatens to undermine the very function of democracy. Newspapers that stood to gain from the proposed loosening of TV ownership caps offered their readers favorable coverage of the proposed changes, with positive consequences outnumbering negative consequences. But the coverage of this issue owned by companies that did not stand to gain was overwhelming unfavourable

In addition to this, knowing very little of what the public thinks, the FCC and its researchers have shied away from determining how media professionals view the issue of media ownership. Lack of research on professionals' opinion of media ownership stems from their fear of reprisal. Journalists, freelancers and independent producers have been relatively silent on the topic of media ownership. Given the choice between blacklisting and continued work opportunities, media professionals would prefer to keep quiet. The media ownership debate is not a fight over deregulation, Major media players previously relied on heavy regulation in order to make a profit. When they have benefited from protectionism, they called for deregulation. The Fox network is a case in point. Launched in 1987, seven years prior to a deregulatory policy trend, Fox allied with independent, non-affiliated stations. These stations survived and thrived due to the Financial Interest and Syndication Rule, a regulatory measure designed to prevent major networks from controlling off-network rights to programs. This syndication greatly expanded the number of independent stations.

Continuing government deregulation of the telecommunications industry has resulted, not in the touted increased competition, but rather in an accelerating wave of corporate mergers and acquisitions that have produced a handful of multi-billion-dollar media conglomerates.

Whenever Americans watch television, whether from a local broadcasting station or via a cable or satellite dish; whenever see a feature film in a theater or at home; whenever listen to the radio or recorded music, whenever read a newspaper, book, or magazine — it is very likely that the information or entertainment Americans receive was produced and/or distributed by one of these mega media companies.

CHAPTER-4

Coverage and campaigns of winning candidates in 2004 and 2008

The media in the United States are businesses and follow the dictates of business practice. This means that the media will perform in predictable ways and follow routines of news gathering, production, and presentation. Successful political campaigns are generally those that understand and use media routines and derive themes that resonate through them. Media routines are not neutral; they have clear and often deleterious effects on campaigns and on politics in general.

Campaigns are important elements of political coverage in the media. During an election year campaign news constitutes between 13 percent (in newspapers) and 15 percent (on television) of news stories, (Graber 1987). and its content and style are remarkably uniform. (Judy Trent and Robert Friedenberg, 1991) Candidates, of course, play to the routines, and coverage is a major consideration of the contemporary campaign. Nearly everything a candidate does is geared toward the media, especially television. Not only have appearances on Larry King and other talk shows and televised town hall meetings become standard, but personal appearances are orchestrated with television in mind. Failure to respect deadlines and the need for interesting visuals and fresh news is certain to relegate a candidate to the status of also-ran. The media have, in many ways, replaced the parties as sources of political information, providers of political ideology of candidates (Anthony Broh 1983). Through both news and entertainment forums, the media exert a powerful influence on the national agenda and on how issues are understood and framed (Shanto Iyengar 1987).

2004 Campaign

The 2004 U.S. presidential election was a close, hard-fought election campaign that cost candidates and interest groups more than one billion dollars, much of it spent in efforts by candidates to get their message through the media to the voters. It was also a battle fought in an ever more complex media environment that continues to change with the Internet gaining users and traditional news media losing viewers and readers. A study by the Pew

Research Center based on a daily tracking survey on how Americans used the Internet during the 2004 campaign found that 75 million Americans percentage of the adult population and 61% of online Americans—used the Internet to get political news and information, an increase of more than 50% between 2000 and 2004. As with previous presidential elections, the news coverage was analyzed and criticized by a wide variety of pundits, pollsters, politicians, scholars, radio talk show hosts, television commentators, and others.

The United States presidential election of 2004 was the United States' 55th quadrennial presidential election. It was held on Tuesday, November 2, 2004. Republican Party candidate George W. Bush defeated Democratic Party candidate John Kerry, the then-junior U.S. Senator from Massachusetts. Foreign policy was the dominant theme throughout the election campaign, particularly Bush's conduct of the War on Terrorism and the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Just eight months into his first presidency, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 suddenly transformed Bush into a wartime president. Bush's approval ratings surged to near 90%. Within a month, the forces of a coalition led by the United States invaded Afghanistan, which had been sheltering Osama bin Laden, suspected mastermind of the September 11 attacks. By December, the Taliban had been removed as rulers of Kabul, although a long and ongoing reconstruction would follow, severely hampered by on-going turmoil and violence within the country.

Campaign issues

Bush focused his campaign on national security, presenting himself as a decisive leader and contrasted Kerry as a "flip-flopper." Bush's point was that Americans could trust him to be tough on terrorism while Kerry would be "uncertain in the face of danger." Bush also sought to portray Kerry as a "Massachusetts liberal" who was out of touch with mainstream Americans. On the other hand Kerry's was running with the slogans like "Stronger at home, respected in the world." This advanced the suggestion that Kerry would pay more attention to domestic concerns; it also encapsulated Kerry's contention that Bush had alienated American allies by his foreign policy (Kennedy 2005: 98).

According to one exit poll, people who voted for Bush cited the issues of terrorism and moral values as the most important factors in their decision. Kerry supporters cited the war in Iraq, the economy and jobs, and health care (Kennedy 2005: 98).

Issue of War

The 2004 presidential election offered the media a variety of issues on which to comment. As the election progressed, many media pundits believe the issue of the war in Iraq would take center stage, but America's various media outlets proved these pundits wrong. Unlike other wartime elections, these media outlets took a long detour around framing the war in Iraq as a political issue. In fact, it seemed as if this particular war was avoided throughout the majority of the election. Through the process of agenda-setting, the various media outlets (mainly television news programs) reported on a selected group of political issues, along with a variety of issues that seemed to lack political undertones altogether. One issue lacking in this area is the war record of both major candidates. Although this issue received a great deal of coverage throughout the 2004 presidential election, the issue itself leads one to question the role of the media as a purveyor of relevant information (Britton 2005).

Although the reasons for the media's deference of a discussion on the war in Iraq to a discussion of the candidate's war records are difficult to explain, some possibilities do present themselves in retrospect. One possibility is the lack of focus on the part of the presidential candidates themselves. Throughout the majority of the campaign, neither candidate seemed to designate a clear solution to the problem of war; while the debates did seem to draw some attention to the war itself, the candidates never discussed their solutions in detail. As the debates progressed, they seemed to offer a sense of clarification through the ways in which the candidates communicated to their audience, but this clarification diminished at the close of each debate, leaving the audience to question whether the each candidate's proposed solution was any different than that of his opponent. Due to the lack of resolution between each candidate, the various media outlets attempted to bring the topic of war into their discussion by a different means. The focus

on the war record of each candidate could possibly be the tactic that was chosen (Britton 2005).

Another possibility could be the other topics discussed by the media along their detour away from the topic of the war in Iraq. Along this detour, the various media outlets discussed a variety of domestic issues including such topics as same sex marriage and social security. This focus on domestic issues, while directing the public's attention away from the war, seems to work as a way of distinguishing between the opinions of the two dominant candidates. The two issues mentioned above are topics that were disagreed upon by these candidates. Unlike the solution to the war in Iraq, these domestic issues seem to be a simple way for the media outlets to discuss the differences between each candidate instead of their similarities or uncertainties (Patrick 2005: 98).

Yet another possibility could be the effect television has had on campaigns since its introduction; television forces its viewers to focus on the candidate's personality rather than his stance on the issues. Although the war in Iraq was perceived to be the dominant issue in the 2004 election, the focus on each candidate's war record, and ultimately their (debatable) war hero persona leads the media's audience to focus on the candidate as a personality rather than as a person with valid opinions on the issues at hand. The case of each candidate yielded a different result, but the effect of this news coverage eventually led to the same result: the voter was left questioning the candidates' past indiscretions instead of their present political aspirations (Patrick 2005: 104).

John Kerry's wartime record was first discussed in his speech at the Democratic National Convention. In this speech he of his accomplishments during the Vietnam war, attempting to invoke a sense of heroism and honor. Shortly after this presentation, a group of Vietnam veterans gave a presentation of their own. In two short nationally presented television ads, these Swift Boat veterans denounced the heroism and honor that Kerry attempted to present in his convention speech. A series of ads developed by Kerry's campaign group made an effort to combat these ads with scenes of Kerry at war and an undertone of patriotism (Anthony 2006: 76).

The ad battle between the Swift Boat veterans and the Kerry team soon became a topic of discussion among the various media outlets. In an attempt to deliver a balanced presentation, television news programs discussed both sides of the controversy, leading to a negative view of both parties associated. This battle of opinion permeated news coverage for a substantial amount of time; once the first ad battle began to fade from news coverage, the Swift Boat crew introduced another spot denouncing Kerry's heroic persona and the process began again.

George W. Bush's war record was introduced in a very different manner. Due to the heightened interest in Kerry's war efforts, CBS news delved into the records concerning Bush's period in the National Guard. This research proved to be near fatal for the renowned anchor at CBS, Dan Rather. The documents presented by Rather on prime-time news questioned Bush's sincerity in regards to his military service. When these documents proved to be false, the credibility of Dan Rather, as well as CBS, came into question.

The reports on John Kerry's war record began with a cynical look at both parties involved. If the ads of both parties had not been discussed by the television media, the results would have probably worked in favor of the Swift Boat vets. The ads presented by this group of men questioned a politician (i.e. a man that was probably in question in the minds of television spectators to begin with). The consequence of the media's intervention into the accusations of the Swift Boat veterans led to a questioning of the integrity of these men as well. When the reliability of both groups involved is examined, the opinions proposed by either group seem to become implausible to their audience. The result of this judgment on the part of the television audience was therefore a general untrustworthiness of the opinions of all parties involved regarding the issue at stake. The Bush example yielded similar results. The initial report by Dan Rather resulted in the questioning of Bush's honesty; the falsity of Rather's sources resulted in the questioning of Rather's honesty (Anthony 2006: 110).

Both instances discussed above illustrate the ways in which television media draws attention to the personality, or more precisely, moral character of each presidential candidate. Although the topic of each example rotates around the war efforts of each man, the underlying frame of each report revolves around his honesty. The Swift Boat ads, and later the news coverage of the resulting ad war, brings Kerry's integrity into question, just as Dan Rather's report attempted to do with George Bush. Although the intention of each story was to eventually lead the television audience to question the morality of each candidate, these reports led to very different results.

Although the media's use of framing introduced controversy concerning the integrity of each candidate and their claim of heroism during wartime, the assumed effect of each report seemed to diminish as the stories unfolded. While it is difficult to predict the amount of impact these reports had on the results of the 2004 election, these examples exemplify the ways in which the media use framing to persuade their audience on various issues. The proposed reasons for the discussion of the candidates' war records instead of the actual war discussed above introduce a small number of examples of the ways in which the media seems to skirt the issues involved in presidential campaigns. The way in which television media seemed to avoid the topic of war is an interesting example of the ability of the media to manipulate its audience into perceiving issues as important, when, in all actuality, some topics may be fairly trivial (Druckman 2005: 122).

As long as there has been an American press, American elections have been fought in the media. Throughout the campaign, Democrats complained about an unholy alliance of Fox News, Matt Drudge, Sinclair Broadcast Group, Rush Limbaugh et al., who former contender Al Gore charged constituted a G. O. P. "fifth column" within the press. The flak came from both sides. During their last debate, President Bush chided John Kerry, *"I'm not so sure it's credible to quote leading news organizations,"* nodding toward moderator Bob Schieffer of CBS. It was a not-so-subtle allusion to the bungled 60 Minutes story about Bush's National Guard service, which the President's backers saw as proof that the media had it in for him (Parkin 2005: 132).

The 2000 Florida debacle, a still fresh memory in 2004, was more than a neutral foul-up to Gore supporters. The premature call for Bush was first made at Fox News, where Bush's cousin John Ellis was analyzing exit polls (Poniewozic 2004). That became the model for the liberals' pro-Bush-bias narrative: a core of Bushite media was pushing G.O.P. spin, attacks and talking points, and cowing the mainstream media into running with it. "The media are a kind of prisoner of the fear of being labeled liberal," says Eric Alterman, author of What Liberal Media? "This gives the right enormous license to mislead."

In the conservatives' parallel anti-Bush-bias narrative, of course, mainstream journalists were biased. Its fifth column consisted of snooty élitist media that disdained Bush's intelligence, faith and policies--a fixation culminating in Dan Rather's report, which questioned Bush's Guard service on the basis of documents that the network later had to acknowledge may have been forged. Bernard Goldberg, a former CBS correspondent and the author of Bias and Arrogance, two broadsides against liberal bias, says the suspect documents in the CBS report "made it through all their checkpoints. Why is that? Because they wanted it to be true." The media élite were even willing to endanger lives for Kerry, if one believes Drudge's insinuation that ABC News held back a purported al-Qaeda tape threatening an attack bigger than 9/11 for fear of its effect on the election (ABC aired the tape the next night).

The goal of the most partisan media critics, seems, was less to become satisfied with coverage than to be continually, strategically dissatisfied with it, the better to pressure it in their direction. Their goal may be not so much to smash the Matrix as to give their side more influence within it. During August and September 2004, there was an intense focus on events that occurred in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Bush was accused of failing to fulfill his required service in the Texas Air National Guard. However, the focus quickly shifted to the conduct of CBS News after they aired a segment on 60 Minutes Wednesday introducing what became known as the Killian documents. Serious doubts about the documents' authenticity quickly emerged, leading CBS to appoint a review panel that eventually resulted in the firing of the news producer and other significant staffing changes.

Meanwhile, Kerry was accused by the Swift Vets and POWs for Truth, who averred that "phony war crimes charges, his exaggerated claims about his own service in Vietnam, and his deliberate misrepresentation of the nature and effectiveness of Swift boat operations compels us to step forward." The group challenged the legitimacy of each of the combat medals awarded to Kerry by the U.S. Navy, and the disposition of his discharge.

In the beginning of September, the successful Republican National Convention along with the allegations by Kerry's former mates gave Bush his first comfortable margin since Kerry had won the nomination. A post-convention Gallup poll showed the President leading the Senator by 14 points.

Debates

Three presidential debates and one vice presidential debate were organized by the Commission on Presidential Debates, and held in the autumn of 2004. As expected, these debates set the agenda for the final leg of the political contest.

The first debate was held on September 30 at the University of Miami, moderated by Jim Lehrer of PBS. During the debate, slated to focus on foreign policy, Kerry accused Bush of having failed to gain international support for the 2003 Invasion of Iraq, saying the only countries assisting the USA during the invasion were the United Kingdom and Australia. Bush replied to this by saying, "Well, actually, he forgot Poland" . Later, a consensus formed among mainstream pollsters and pundits that Kerry won the debate decisively; strengthening what had come to be seen as a weak and troubled campaign. In the days after, coverage focused on Bush's apparent annoyance with Kerry and numerous scowls and negative facial expressions. On October 5, the Vice Presidential debate was held between Dick Cheney and John Edwards at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, and was moderated by Gwen Ifill of PBS. An initial poll by ABC indicated a victory for Cheney, while polls by CNN and MSNBC gave it to Edwards.

The second presidential debate was held at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, on October 8, moderated by Charles Gibson of ABC. Conducted in a town meeting format, less formal than the first Presidential debate, this debate saw Bush and Kerry taking questions on a variety of subjects from a local audience. Bush attempted to deflect criticism of what was described as his scowling demeanor during the first debate, joking at one point about one of Kerry's remarks, "That answer made me want to scowl."

Bush and Kerry met for the third and final debate at Arizona State University on October 13. 51 million viewers watched the debate which was moderated by Bob Schieffer of CBS News. However, at the time of the ASU debate, there were 15.2 million viewers tuned in to watch the Major League Baseball playoffs broadcast simultaneously (Kenneth 2006).

2008 campaign

The overly long 2008 primary season produced two dissimilar nominees with distinctly different platforms vying for the office of president of the United States: Republican Senator John McCain and Democratic Senator Barack Obama. Abetted by the media and led by Karl Rove, Republican strategists employed spin to divert voters' attention from accurately assessing candidates' actual differences on policy issues by reinventing the records and credentials of both candidates and reducing good governance to voters' attitudes on abortion, gay rights, race, and religion — in short, cultural identity. Observers watched as media journalists and political strategists transformed voters' views of Senator Obama from a "post-racial" or "a-racial" politician — one whom more middle-class white voters found appealing than African American voters — into "the black candidate," despite these latter voters' misgivings about Obama's "blackness," given his biracial origin and white upbringing. Until March 2008, most media coverage of Obama focused on his viability among African American voters. Many reporters asked whether Obama was "black enough," claiming that he represented mainstream issues rather than issues important to racial minorities (Malcomson 2004: 34; Crouch 2006: 235; Zeleny 2006: 87; Bacon 2007: 145 ; Younge 2007:32). Obama significantly trailed Hillary Clinton in support among African Americans, who were unconvinced of his ability to

advance their interests, until former President Bill Clinton's racial gaffes while campaigning for Hillary Clinton on the eve of the South Carolina primary: he took African American votes as fait accompli and dismissed their contributions to civil rights.

After African American voters shifted their support in response to the Clintons' contentious introduction of race into the campaign, Hillary Clinton strategists launched a "no holds barred" and "everything is fair game" attack on Obama, targeting white blue-collar voters in western Pennsylvania, eastern Ohio, and West Virginia through the use of euphemisms, fear, and cultural division (race, religion, class, and gender). When it became clear that Obama would secure the nomination, Republican strategists seized the Clinton gauntlet and "playbook," employing code words and double entendres such as "the working class," "real Americans," and "Joe six-pack" — a.k.a. gun-hunting white men — and emphasizing dialectics that distorted Obama's ethnicity as an Arab Muslim and his membership in a church whose pastor preached liberation theology as radical nationalism. The McCain campaign promulgated an onslaught of negative ads that reinvented Senator McCain as the experienced, non-elitist, pro-life, anti-immigration conservative maverick and Senator Obama as the inexperienced, elitist, liberal terrorist sympathizer who could not be trusted. After the nomination, McCain became the "change candidate" who "put people first," appropriating Obama's bottom-up "Yes We Can," "One America," "Hope for Change" campaign strategy, which the Clintons had earlier dubbed "fairy land"(Lashley: 2009)

The actual role that race would play in the 2008 presidential election was difficult to ascertain, and voters of all races feared the Bradley Effect (the over-estimation of white voter support of an African American candidate, first noted in the loss of California gubernatorial candidate Tom Bradley in 1982) — a voting paradox that would compel voters under cover of secrecy to choose a candidate based on racial identification instead of issue identification and professional qualifications.

Assessing white voters' actual perceptions was more difficult. On the record, pollsters found support for black candidates overstated because many white voters are reluctant to admit racially tinged sentiments. In an interview with New York Times journalist Adam

Nagourney, Michigan Republican Chairman Saul Anuzis said, *"[McCain has] become accustomed to whispered asides from voters suggesting they would not vote for Mr. Obama because he is black ...[but] we honestly don't know how big an issue it is"* (Nagourney 2008). Harold Ickes, a Hillary Clinton campaign strategist, admitted, *"If [Obama] were white, this would be a blowout. I think the country has come a long, long way since the 1960s ...but if you talk to people in certain states they say [it is] because of the color of his [Obama's] skin"* (Nagourney 2008). However, many voters disturbed by the spinning of race in the campaign circulated their views on the Internet.

Major Issues of the Campaign

Iraq

The unpopular war in Iraq was a key issue during the campaign before the economic crisis. John McCain supported the war while Barack Obama opposed it. (Obama's early and strong opposition to the war helped him stand out against the other Democratic candidates during the primaries, as well as stand out to a war-weary electorate during the general campaign).John McCain's support for the troop 'surge' employed by General David Petraeus, which was one of several factors credited with improving the security situation in Iraq, may have boosted McCain's stance on the issue in voters' minds. McCain (who supported the invasion) argued that his support for the successful surge showed his superior judgment, whereas Obama (who opposed the surge) argued that his opposition to the invasion that preceded the surge showed his. However, Obama was quick to remind voters that there would have been no need for a "surge" had there been no war at all, which he then used to question McCain's judgment as well.(Nagourney 2008)

Bush's unpopularity

Entering 2008, and in fact for much of his second term, George W. Bush was unpopular. Polls consistently showed that only twenty to thirty percent of the American public approved of his job performance. In March 2008, Bush endorsed McCain at the White

House, but Bush did not make a single appearance for McCain during the campaign. Bush appeared at the 2008 GOP convention only through a live video broadcast. He chose not to appear in person due to disaster events in the Gulf of Mexico in the aftermath of Hurricane Ike. Although he supported the war in Iraq, McCain made an effort to show that he had disagreed with Bush on many other key issues such as climate change.

Change vs. Experience

Before the Democratic primaries had even begun, the dichotomy of change versus experience had already become a common theme in the presidential campaign, with Senator Hillary Clinton positioning herself as the candidate with experience and Obama embracing the characterization as the candidate most able to bring change to Washington. Before the official launch of her campaign, aides for Clinton were already planning to position her as the 'change' candidate, as strategist Mark Penn made clear in an October 2006 memo titled "The Plan." In his presidential run announcement, Obama framed his candidacy by emphasizing that "Washington must change." In response to this, Clinton adopted her experience as a major campaign theme. By early and mid-2007, polls regularly found voters identifying Clinton as the more experienced candidate and Obama as the "fresh" or "new" candidate. Exit polls on Super Tuesday found that Obama won voters who thought that the ability to bring change was the most important quality in a candidate, who made up a majority of the Democratic electorate. By a margin of about 2-1, Clinton was able to make up for this deficiency by an almost total domination among voters who thought experience was the most important quality. These margins generally remained the same until Obama clinched the Democratic nomination on June 3.

John McCain quickly adopted similar campaign themes against Obama at the start of the general election campaign. Polls regularly found the general electorate as a whole divided more evenly between 'change' and 'experience' as candidate qualities than the Democratic primary electorate, which split in favor of 'change' by a nearly 2-1 margin. Advantages for McCain and Obama on experience and the ability to bring change, respectively, remained steady through the November 4 election. However, final pre-election polling

found that voters considered Obama's inexperience less of an impediment than McCain's association with sitting President George W. Bush, an association which was rhetorically framed by the Obama campaign throughout the election season as "more of the same".

McCain appeared to undercut his line of attack by picking first-term Alaska governor Sarah Palin to be his running mate. Palin had been governor only since 2006, and before that had been a council member and mayor of Wasilla. Nonetheless, she excited much of the conservative base of the GOP with her speech at the 2008 Republican National Convention, a group that was initially lukewarm toward McCain's candidacy. However, media interviews suggested that Palin lacked knowledge on certain key issues, and they cast doubt among many voters about her qualifications to be Vice President or President. In addition, because of Palin's conservative views, there was also concern that, while she would bring conservatives to McCain, she would also alienate independents and moderates, two groups that pundits observed McCain would need to win the election.

The economy

Polls taken in the last few months of the presidential campaign and exit polls conducted on Election Day showed the economy as the top concern for voters. In the fall of 2008, many news sources were reporting that the economy was suffering its most serious downturn since the Great Depression. During this period, John McCain's election prospects fell with several politically costly comments about the economy.

On August 20, John McCain said in an interview with Politico that he was uncertain how many houses he and his wife, Cindy, owned; "I think— I'll have my staff get to you." Both on the stump and in Obama's political ad, "Seven", the gaffe was used to portray McCain as unable to relate to the concerns of ordinary Americans. This out-of-touch image was further cultivated when, on September 15, the day of the Lehman Brothers bankruptcy, at a morning rally in Jacksonville, Florida, McCain declared that "the fundamentals of our economy are strong," despite what he described as "tremendous turmoil in our financial markets and Wall Street." With the perception among voters to the contrary, the comment appeared to cost McCain politically.

On September 24, 2008, after the onset of the 2008 financial crisis, McCain announced that he was suspending his campaign to return to Washington to help craft a $700 billion bailout package for the troubled financial industry, and he stated that he would not debate Obama until Congress passed the bailout bill. Despite this decision, McCain was portrayed as not playing a significant role in the negotiations for the first version of the bill, which fell short of passage in the House. He eventually decided to attend the first presidential debate on September 26, despite Congress' lack of immediate action on the bill. His ineffectiveness in the negotiations and his reversal in decision to attend the debates were seized upon to portray McCain as erratic in his response to the economy. Days later, a second version of the original bailout bill was passed by both the House and Senate, with Obama, his vice presidential running mate Joe Biden, and McCain all voting for the measure.

All the aforementioned remarks and campaign issues hurt McCain's standing with voters. All these also occurred after the economic crisis and after McCain's poll numbers had started to fall. Although sound bites of all of these "missteps" were played repeatedly on national television, most pundits and analysts agree that the actual financial crisis and economic conditions caused McCain's large drop in support in mid-September and severely damaged his campaign.

Campaign costs

The reported cost of campaigning for president has increased significantly in recent years. One source reported that if the costs for both Democratic and Republican campaigns were added together (for the presidential primary election, general election, and the political conventions), the costs have more than doubled in only eight years ($448.9 million in 1996, $649.5 million in 2000, and $1.01 billion in 2004). In January 2007, Federal Election Commission Chairman Michael E. Toner estimated that the 2008 race would be a $1 billion election, and that to be taken seriously, a candidate would have needed to raise at least $100 million by the end of 2007 (Federal Election Commission).

Although he had said he would not be running for president, published reports in 2007 indicated that billionaire and New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg had been

considering a presidential bid as an independent with up to $1 billion of his own fortune to finance it. Bloomberg ultimately ended this speculation by unequivocally stating that he would not run.

With the increase in money expenditures, many candidates did not use the public financing system funded by the presidential election campaign fund check off. John McCain, Tom Tancredo, John Edwards, Chris Dodd, and Joe Biden qualified for and elected to take public funds throughout the primary process. Major Democratic candidates Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama chose not to participate in the public financing system.

Internet campaigns

Howard Dean collected large contributions through the Internet in his 2004 primary run. In 2008, candidates went even further to reach out to Internet users through their own sites and such sites as YouTube, MySpace, and Facebook.

Democratic Party candidate Barack Obama created a broad grassroots movement and a new method of campaigning by courting and mobilizing activists, donations, and voters through the Internet. It was part of a campaign that mobilized grassroots workers in every state. Obama also set fundraising records in more than one month by gaining support from a record-breaking number of individual small donors.

On December 16, 2007, Ron Paul collected $6 million, more money on a single day through Internet donations than any presidential candidate in US history.

Anonymous and semi-anonymous smear campaigns, traditionally done with fliers and push calling, also spread to the Internet. Organizations specializing in the production and distribution of viral material, such as Brave New Films, emerged; such organizations have been said to be having a growing influence on American politics.

Campaign Advertising

Campaign advertising of both candidates spun the facts gratuitously. Obama's ads relentlessly characterized the McCain platform as the continuation of the failed policies

of the Bush administration, while McCain's ads distorted Obama's board membership that included former radical activist Bill Ayers on an education project funded by the Annenberg Foundation (a prestigious nonpartisan philanthropic organization), his lack of national-level government experience, and his popular support among youth and celebrity voters. Most national polls conducted during the closing weeks of the campaign found that negative ads proliferated by the McCain campaign turned voters off. Furthermore, in a July 2008 study of media coverage of the election campaign, media analyst Robert Lichter concluded that Obama received more negative coverage than McCain on TV network evening news shows, reversing Obama's lead in good press during the primaries. In his book on the American voter, popular historian Rick Shenkman (2008:76) raises the question Just How Stupid Are We? Setting aside the unflattering implications of the book's title, would a more attentive, more politically engaged electorate make the United States a healthier democracy. Using opinion surveys to study the attitudes and voting behavior of the US electorate, sociologist Paul Lazarsfeld (in Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954:198) concluded that electoral choices are "relatively invulnerable to direct augmentation" and are based more on faith than conviction and wishful expectations rather than careful prediction of consequences."

The outcome of the 2008 US presidential election

Despite the polarizing politics of cognitive dissonance, Barack Hussein Obama won the 2008 US presidential election. After polling places closed on Election Day, there was little evidence of either a Bradley effect or an abandonment of the Democratic Party by PUMAS members. Voters crossed over to Obama in increasing numbers as the economy melted down, Sarah Palin's qualifications proved vulnerable, and the McCain campaign faltered and winnowed his base. Many "post-machine" and "machine" Democrats and Independents of all races voted for Obama primarily because of his stances on the policy issues and voters' desire for change and inclusiveness; additionally, voters hoped to reclaim US foreign policy stature and to halt economic decline. Clearly, the election of Barack Obama — an election characterized by tumultuous enthusiasm and a massive turnout, unseen since 1968, that mobilized broad and diverse cross-sections of American

voters, including the middle class, racial/ethnic minorities, the poor, and other marginalized segments of the electorate — signals the need for new studies of voting behavior. Studies will also need to address the extent to which the election was affected by the Obama campaign's unprecedented but highly successful Internet-driven campaign-finance strategy (Lashley 2009).

How the Press reported the campaign

According to the study by the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism, the media coverage of the race for president has not so much cast Barack Obama in a favorable light as it has portrayed John McCain in a substantially negative one, according to a new study of the media since the two national political conventions ended. For Obama during a period, just over a third of the stories were clearly positive in tone (36%), while a similar number (35%) were neutral or mixed. A smaller number (29%) were negative. For McCain, by comparison, nearly six in ten of the stories studied were decidedly negative in nature (57%), while fewer than two in ten (14%) were positive.

Among the findings of the study:

- Coverage of Obama began in the negative after the conventions, but the tone switched with the changing direction of the polls. The most positive stories about him were those that were most political—the ones focused on polling, the electoral map, and tactics.

- For McCain, coverage began positively, but turned sharply negative with McCain's reaction to the crisis in the financial markets. As he took increasingly bolder steps to try and reverse the direction of the polls, the coverage only worsened. Attempts to turn the dialogue away from the economy through attacks on Obama's character did hurt Obama's media coverage, but McCain's was even more negative.

- The economy was hardly a singular lens through which the media perceived the race. Though it was the No. 1 campaign topic overall, five out of the six weeks other topics were bigger, and in the end it accounted for not much more of the campaign newshole (18%) than assessments of the candidates in the four debates (17%).

- Horse race reporting, once again, made up the majority of coverage, but less so than earlier in the contest or than in previous elections. Since the conventions ended, 53% of the newshole studied has focused on political matters, particularly tactics, strategy and polling. That is more than twice as much as the coverage focused on policy (20%). This focus on tactics and horse race grew in the last three weeks as both campaigns became more negative in their rhetoric.

Allegations of media bias

Significant criticism was leveled at media outlets' coverage of the presidential election season. At the February debate, Tim Russert of NBC News was criticized for what some perceived as disproportionately tough questioning of Democratic presidential contender Hillary Clinton. Among the questions, Russert had asked Clinton, but not Obama, to provide the name of the new Russian President (Dmitry Medvedev). This was later parodied on *Saturday Night Live*. In October 2007, liberal commentators accused Russert of harassing Clinton over the issue of supporting drivers' licenses for illegal immigrants.

On April 16, ABC News hosted a debate in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Moderators Charles Gibson and George Stephanopoulos were criticized by viewers, bloggers and media critics for the poor quality of their questions. Many viewers said they considered some of the questions irrelevant when measured against the importance of the faltering economy or the Iraq war. Included in that category were continued questions about Obama's former pastor, Senator Hillary Clinton's assertion that she had to duck sniper fire in Bosnia more than a decade ago, and Senator Obama's

not wearing an American flag pin. The moderators focused on campaign gaffes and some believed they focused too much on Obama. Stephano poulos defended their performance, saying "Senator Obama was the front-runner" and the questions were "not inappropriate or irrelevant at all."

In an op-ed published on 2008 April 27 in *The New York Times,* Elizabeth Edwards wrote that the media covered much more of "the rancor of the campaign" and "amount of money spent" than "the candidates' priorities, policies and principles." Author Erica Jong commented that "our press has become a sea of triviality, meanness and irrelevant chatter." A Gallup poll released on May 29, 2008 also estimated that more Americans felt the media was being more hard on Hillary Clinton than they were towards Barack Obama.

The Project for Excellence in Journalism and Harvard University's Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy conducted a study of 5,374 media narratives and assertions about the presidential candidates from January 1 through March 9, 2008. The study found that Obama received 69% favorable coverage and Clinton received 67%, compared to only 43% favorable media coverage of McCain. Another study by the Center for Media and Public Affairs at George Mason University found the media coverage of Obama to be 72% negative from June 8 to July 21 compared to 57% negative for McCain.[181] An October 29 study found 29% of stories about Obama to be negative, compared to 57% of stories about McCain being negative.

An October 22, 2008 Pew Research Center poll estimated 70% of registered voters believed journalists wanted Barack Obama to win the election, as opposed to 9% for John McCain. Another Pew survey, conducted after the election, found that 67% of voters thought that the press fairly covered Obama, versus 30% who viewed the coverage as unfair. Regarding McCain, 53% of voters viewed his press coverage as fair versus 44% who characterized it as unfair. Among affiliated Democrats, 83% believed the press fairly covered Obama; just 22% of Republicans thought the press was fair to McCain.

Summing Up

The media, when it comes to the reporting of politics "generally has become more sensational. As the line between news and entertainment becomes more indistinct, the news media bear the brunt of public dissatisfaction" (Bennett, Rhine, Flickinger, 2001,: 166).Some scholars (Sutter 2001) boldly claim that a bias media is a failure of the "news market." This adds to the importance of focusing on the national media and these accusations of bias reporting is that "liberal bias in the national news market is of concern since the national media have a greater impact on the political agenda than these other outlets do" (Sutter 2001: 441). There have been many accusations as well as a number of studies that show today's media are very powerful in persuading or changing attitudes and opinions of its audiences on matters of policy and politics found "compelling evidence that editorial slant influences voters' decisions" (Druckman & Parkin, 2005: 1030). The evidence that newspaper content can shift public images of the presidential candidate also suggests that the press performs a persuasive role as well as an information function. More than just framing events, the press provides political cues that may significantly influence the opinions of readers. (Dalton, Beck & Huckfeldt, 1998: 124).As far as the term "bias", it is defined as "an inclination, disposition, leaning or prejudice for or against a person, group or thing" (Severin & Tankard 2001: 106). John Merrill in 1965 broke down bias into six categories: (1) attribution bias, (2) adjective bias, (3) adverbial bias, (4) outright opinion, (5) contextual bias, and (6) photographic bias. (Merrill 1965 :102) Bias has also been defined as "systematic, differential treatment of the quoted or paraphrased assertions of election campaign opponents in news stories" (Fico & Cote 1999: 127). Fico & Cote broke down bias into two components: fairness and balance. Fairness is defined as "the presence of quoted or paraphrased assertions by sources supporting both" candidates (Fico & Cote 1999: 127). Balance is determined from three elements: (1) how equally their assertions were treated in terms of total column inches of story space, (2) how equally their assertions were treated in terms of first-paragraph lead position in stories; and (3) how equally their assertions were treated in terms of story position in paragraphs 2 through 5. (Fico & Cote, 1999: 12)

CONCLUSION

As Walter Lippmann has rightly opined that the Media conjure up an image in the minds of people and the people start relating with that image and thus it may be construed that media influences and shape the political future of the Country. George Washington farewell address was not spoken directly to Congress nor was it even presented as a speech. Instead, at President Washington's request, it was published as a communication to the people in Pennsylvania's *Daily American Advertiser*. Theodore Roosevelt use to hold regular meetings with reporters to receive their questions. At his time, position of presidential press secretary was also established and the operating procedures of the office were developed. Thomas Jefferson, foresaw the need for an outlet to carry his voice beyond the center of government Jefferson recommended his friend Samuel Harrison Smith, to establish a newspaper in Washington that would become the new administration's official voice. When Franklin D Roosevelt became president, the modern period in president-press relations began.

Evolution of Media in US had been slow but steady. Up till 1840s the major press outlets were sponsored by the Political Parties. There were Republican and Federalist Papers. With the advancement of technology, In the period of 1840s to 1920s, the commercialization of newspapers took place. During this phase, the now commercial media got a new term "Penny Press". This phase received a great deal of attention from media scholars and analysts.

The advent of telegraph and high industrialization introduced Progressive Era in the twentieth Century media. By 1950s the television became the primary source of information. From 1960 onwards, in particular after John F.Kennedy's and Nixon's presidential debates that was viewed by several Americans, media scholars coined a new term "Mass Media Elections".

More diversification in media took place in rapid phase after 1960. Journalism became specialized field of study. Politics and Money joined hands and introduced media to a

new dimension of power and negative influence. In twentieth Century the news coverage of elections became a "Horse Race". Their was widespread recognition from both voters and candidates that the mass media impacted the electoral campaigns of the Presidential elections.Not only that several studies found that without campaign through the media candidates could not make pervasive contact information with the voters.

Slowly the media became so powerful that it began to build agendas. In agenda setting function the media broadly control the access to news, information, entertainment and finally during the election times for the political actors. According to a study (Rogers, Dearing et al. 1993: 34) the fact that the Media's political agenda setting role is limited in election campaign, does not in any manner imply that the media can not play significant role during campaigns or the they cannot determine the outcome. Yet another aspect that was emphasizes was that the media personalizes the politics.

Various public agenda setting studies starting with McCombs and Shaw's (1972) established close links between public opinion and media. The political actors anticipate the expect media impact on public and then thereafter build their political strategies on those grounds. The more politicians believe in the media's political might, the more they are inclined to embrace the media's focus topic andcontribute to the strength of the media.The study found that the scholars in the field used empirical and case study method to finally establish the media effect on elections.

Cook and colleagues proved experimentally how policy makers that media effect the public issues and how they gain they gather their understanding of public opinion through media. Ironically, lesser the direct evidence on public opinion available, the more politicians take media's influence on public opinion as granted. There was evidence particularly during wartime, the use and impact on the political actors was considerable.

Linsky showed that even in U.S, a country with grate polling tradition, political authorities have inclination to identify media coverage with public opinion and they take their ideas on public priorities from the media and not from polling. Scholars like

Priming has also stated how political actors are evaluated by the public on the basis of issues put forward by the media and therefore consequently how the politicians do their best to impress the people about the media issues. The politicians tend to adopt media issues, if not for solving the issues with real policy measure then at least by showing that they are aware of it and that they are busy dealing with it. The interplay between media and public opinion not only encourage political on the media issues, actors to take on the media issues, it also stimulates them to take these issues as soon as possible. The sooner their reaction, the higher the chance that they can get the line of the day out in the press or get their faces on T.V. Instant issue adoption maximizes media exposure.

Thus, in conclusion in can be sated that (1) Political actors take over the issues from media, importantly for the reason that media is supposedly associated with public opinion. (2) This political adoption does not mean that their will be substantial policy measure because most of the reactions are symbolic. (3) If political actors react, they do so with shortest of delay because the attention span of media and public is short lived.

The study also compares the election campaigns of 2004 and 2008. It was found that with the advent of newer technology every year, there are new powerful tools adding in the communication field. In 2004 elections the print media and television media dominated the opinion making process, however with 2008 elections it was observed that the internet and the social networking sites plays a major role. This shift in the type of media also effected the content and delivery of message to the voter.

 The 2004 was the first in which the Internet played a significant role as a medium for campaigning and for raising money. Former presidential hopeful Howard Dean, governor of the small state of Vermont, used his Web site to form a network of thousands of enthusiastic volunteers. Before dropping out of the race, Dean raised more money than his opponents in the Democratic primaries and received favorable media coverage for demonstrating the political power of the Internet.

The study also found evidence that there is increasing recognition that mass media are politically voted and biased from the voters. A survey released in June of 2005 by The Pew Research Center found that 60% of Americans view news organizations as politically biased, an increase from 53% two years before. (The Pew Center, 2005). The survey also reported that 72% of the American public believes that the media favor one political party over the other instead of treating all parties equally. This percentage was the largest ever found in Pew trends since the mid-1980s (The Pew Center, 2005).

On the other hand, throughout the 2oo8 democratic primaries race, critics have contended that the media were besotted with Barack Obama's candidacy; Hillary Clinton made the accusation first, most memorably in a debate during the primaries in late February. The evidence suggests something more complicated than that. Coverage of Obama since the conventions has been more positive than negative.

In all, 36% of stories about Obama have been positive, vs. 35% that have been neutral. And 29% have been negative (Pew Research Centre 2008).It was more positive than George Bush received in his two victories in 2000 and 2004.And in the next period (Sept. 24-28), when Obama prepared to debate while McCain suspended his campaign and both candidates returned to Washington for a White House meeting, Obama enjoyed his most decidedly positive coverage of the race. Nearly half of all stories about Obama were clearly positive in tone (47%), while less than one-in-ten were clearly negative (8%).

Some of that positive coverage was related to evidence that the financial crisis was aiding Obama. "Recent economic woes have given Democrat Barack Obama a clear lead over Republican John McCain," declared a story posted on AOL News on Sept. 24, citing a 9-point lead for Obama in a new Washington Post/ABC News poll.

"The integration of technology into the process of field organizing is the success of the Obama campaign," says Sanford Dickert, who worked as John Kerry's chief technology officer for the 2004 campaign. "But the use of technology was not the end-all and be-all in this cycle. Technology has been a partner, an enabler for the Obama campaign, bringing the efficiencies of the internet into the real-world problems of organizing people in a distributed, trusted fashion."

Obama's use of the Internet targeted 18 to 29 years olds, the age group most reliant on new media for political information about the election. Obama's campaign managers understood that the reason younger voters tended to ignore politicians was because politicians tended to ignore issues which most concerned them, which is why Obama received such a positive reaction from America's youth.

Through forums and social websites such as MySpace and Facebook, Obama built relationships with his supporters, and would-be supporters. He developed an upfront, personable and face-to-face quality that gave his supporters a sense of security and trust, which inspired them to rally others in their local communities. The supporters of Obama themselves formed a nation-wide community. The Internet provided useful and effective tools, such as the Neighbor-to-Neighbor tool on (My.BarackObama.com), allowing them to reach a large number of people in a short time in their own community, which in turn led to campaign rallying for more Obama support. Online communication led to Obama supporters engaging in social activities such as sign making and door-to-door petitioning for Obama support, as well as simply discussing their opinions about policies and issues they supported along with Obama.

The Obama web campaign used consumer marketing to target individuals with customized information to their predicted interests. Political communication to viewers was based on data collected about them. This data was collected by volunteers, surveys on the website and records of consumption habits. More detailed surveys were requested and received through email. Records of consumption habits helped the campaign make predictions about people based on statistical models. People received messages tailored close to their beliefs. Marketing based on consumer data also enabled effective grassroots organizing through the website. Data gathered from the website indicated who the most dedicated constituents were; the website tracked how often a person visited and when. The campaign team then targeted and encouraged activists in contested, winnable areas, such as through the website program Neighbor-to-neighbor.

All of his policies were made available online, and updates were sent to the subscribers of his political party via email and text message, ultimately making him the most technology savvy and "hip" candidate to date, thus increasing his popularity among youth voters.An

unprecedented communication strategy was the "online call tool". Over one million calls were made from residential, personal laptops and desktops.

The freedom of thought and expression is the pivot around which the free and prosperous democracy revolves. The media plays an important role in maintaining such freedom of expression and thus thereby gives any democratic sovereign its most needed centre. The media though is so essential but if it becomes omnipotent then its despotism can ruin the very foundation of democracy and also the freedom of thought and expression for which it is born.

In U.S. similar such thinks is happening because the media stands consolidated in hands of few major media monarchs. The media in U.S. therefore has shrunk to dangerously limited cue profit making conglomerate.

The Federal Communication Commission (FCC) was established in the year 1934 to regulate interstate and international communication radio , television ,wire, satellite and cable Ever since its birth FCC is on a slow track of deregulation. The Telecommunication Act of 1996 very categorically elucidates the derogatory steps taken by the FCC by enhancing the ownership groups owing 25 % to 35 % and thus intern favored the limited few media giants. Thereafter, the major media houses further demanded more deregulation and as result of which in 2003 the commission adopted new media ownership rules, which included the relaxation of the newspaper / broadcast cross-ownership ban.

As per the California Law Review there are two root problems of the ownership pattern in U.S.: (1) The minority channels have been imposed with very heavy license fee, which they find extremely difficult to manage and therefore their elimination becomes a very strong possibility. (2) The regulatory fetters also impede the growth and prosperity of new entrants in media.

The aforesaid exhibit how despotic the media has become and how millions of minds are being influenced by a very limited few. There is vicious circle between the masses, the politicians and the media. The billions of dollars media monarchs feed the politicians and the politicians reciprocate by giving benevolent reforms. The masses to an extent are nearly deduced the status of a puppet. Over the years the mutual symbiotic nexus between the media and the politics has grown outgrown democracy and ironically is threatening the sovereign/masses for which it actually was born. There is imminent need for decentralization of media and dilution of nexus between media and politics so that a true democratic nation can be cherished. Yet one may note in conclusion that U.S Media have continually evolved both in form and content. They have embraced newer technologies and formatted the messages accordingly to the requirements of the fast century.

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