

PLRC *Pacific Life Research Center*

631 Kiely Boulevard * Santa Clara, CA 95051 * Phone 408/248-1815 * Fax 408/985-9716 * E-mail bob@plrc.org

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UNDERSTANDING THE “WAR ON TERRORISM”: THE CULT OF PATRIOTISM

Part 1 – Creating Your Own Social Reality¹

Compiled by Bob Aldridge

The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of the country. ... We are governed, our minds are molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of. This is a logical result of the way in which our democratic society is organized. Vast numbers of human beings must cooperate in this manner if they are to live together as a smoothly functioning society. ... In almost every act of our daily lives, whether in the sphere of politics or business, in our social conduct or ethical thinking, we are dominated by the relatively small number of persons ... who understand the mental processes and social patterns of the masses. It is they who pull the wires which control the public mind.

– Edward L. Bernays, *Propaganda* (1928)

Propaganda has always been used by rulers to mold the thoughts and actions of their people. Nothing has been more effective at rallying the populace behind a ruler’s agenda than patriotism. The word patriotism has become a buzz word with many meanings. What I describe in this paper as the “Cult of Patriotism” is not to be construed as synonymous with true patriotism – the latter being deserved loyalty to a just government, which is probably more idealistic than reality today.

True patriotism is good. It gives a country spirit. A true patriot seeks the well being of not only his/her own country, but of all countries. Mohandas Gandhi wrote: “It is not [patriotism] that is evil, it is the narrowness, selfishness, exclusiveness which is the bane of modern nations which is evil. Each wants profit at the expense of, and rise at the ruin of, the other.”² For a leader to practice this evil, he or she must rally the people’s support. Nothing is more effective for that purpose than the Cult of Patriotism.

¹This paper is part of a series on understanding why we are fighting terrorism. There is nothing new in it that hasn’t been published elsewhere, and of course the coverage is not comprehensive. The purpose of this paper is to compile some pertinent information together so that a pattern can be seen. In this Part 1 of a series on manipulating public opinion to form the Cult of Patriotism, I will discuss how a cult leader must create his/her own social reality. BA

²Cited in Kripalani, p. 153.

America has always had a Cult of Patriotism. Under various administrations this Cult has wavered in intensity – at times more relaxed, and at other times fired up to peak tempo. Particularly in times of war the tempo rises. That is the case today under the George W. Bush administration. The purpose of this paper is to illustrate propaganda techniques that are being used to fuel the Cult of Patriotism in America today.

In their book, *Age of Propaganda*, Pratkanis and Aronson devote one chapter to describing “How To Become A Cult Leader.”³ They point out that most people think of a cult as a form of religion but that is not a complete definition. “Today, cults can be centered on a range of issues,” they say, “including the occult, race, politics, therapy, and self-help, as well as religion and spirituality. The term cult is used to describe a pattern of social relations within a group.”⁴ The Cult of Patriotism is a political cult. The Bush administration is using it to muster support for the War on Terrorism. The technique for accomplishing this is nothing more than propaganda in its most profound sense. In the following discussions – in this paper and in subsequent papers in this series – I will paraphrase extensively from Pratkanis and Aronson. I’ll then apply these definitions to contemporary events being used to foster the Cult of Patriotism.

In an earlier paper I have shown how the War on Terrorism is really Pax Americana – a war to establish a global empire in which American interests are of paramount priority and are met to the fullest.⁵ It was kicked into high gear by the 9-11 attack – the Pearl Harbor of the 21st century. Then, sustaining the momentum of Pax Americana – i.e. the wars against Afghanistan and Iraq along with putting human rights on the back burner – has required consent from a huge majority of the US population. That was accomplished through an ingenious “public relations” campaign using tried and proven techniques. I will discuss seven techniques, as outlined by Pratkanis and Aronson, which are being used to nourish this nationwide Cult of Patriotism. Those techniques are:

1. **Create your own social reality.** (To be discussed in this paper.)
2. Create a granfalloon.⁶
3. Create commitment through a rationalization trap.
4. Establish the leader’s credibility and attractiveness.
5. Send members out to proselytize for the unredeemed.
6. Distract members from thinking “undesirable” thoughts.
7. Fixate members vision on a phantom.

One may think they would never be taken in by such tactics. Most people believe that cult members are weak or foolish. That is not the case. Research shows that most people who join cults have

³Pratkanis and Aronson, Chapter 36, pp. 302-317.

⁴Pratkanis and Aronson, p. 306

⁵See PLRC-030503 – *Understanding the “War on Terrorism”*: “Pax Americana” and Preemptive Force.

⁶Granfalloon is a term coined by Kurt Vonnegut in his satirical classic, *Cat’s Cradle* (1963). Creating a granfalloon – a proud and meaningless association of human beings – will be discussed in the next paper, the second in this series.

middle-class backgrounds, are fairly well educated, and are not seriously disturbed prior to joining.⁷

In the English edition introduction of French sociologist Jacques Ellul's 1962 book, translator Konrad Kellen explains that most people are easy prey to propaganda "because of their firm but entirely erroneous conviction that it is composed only of lies and 'tall stories' and that, conversely, what is true cannot be propaganda. But modern propaganda ... operates instead with many different kinds of truth – half truth, limited truth, truth out of context." Kellen then explains that a "second basic misconception that makes people vulnerable to propaganda is the notion that it serves only to change opinions. That is one of its aims, but ... more importantly, it aims to intensify existing trends, to sharpen and focus them, and, above all, to lead [people] to *action* (or ... to non action ... to prevent them from interfering)."⁸ (Emphasis his)

To address the false notion that educated people will not be "taken in" by propaganda, Kellen points out: "On the contrary, [Ellul] says, education, or what usually goes by that word in the modern world, is the absolute prerequisite for propaganda. In fact, education is largely identical with what Ellul calls 'pre-propaganda' ..."⁹ Ellul believes intellectuals are more susceptible than others to modern propaganda techniques because 1) they read the most second-hand, unverifiable information, 2) their compelling need to have an opinion for everything make them easy prey to the misinformation offered by propaganda, and 3) they feel capable of judging things for themselves. "They literally need propaganda."¹⁰

I had originally planned to deal with all seven of these propaganda techniques in one paper. I soon discovered that doing so would result in too lengthy a document for palatable consumption. Therefore, I have broken this discussion into a series of consecutive papers. In this part I will address the first element that a political cult leader must do – create his/her own social reality.

CREATE YOUR OWN SOCIAL REALITY

Without some form of censorship, propaganda in the strict sense of the word is impossible. In order to conduct a propaganda there must be some barrier between the public and the event. Access to the real environment must be limited, before anyone can create a pseudo-environment that he thinks is wise or desirable.

– Walter Lippmann¹¹

What Lippman is talking about in that quote is isolating the Cult members from the real world. To do this for the Cult of Patriotism, within the greater social sphere of America and the world, the Bush administration has employed various devices. The topmost of these is control of information released by government departments and agencies. In the following discussion I will elaborate on how this control is applied with a few prime examples.

⁷Pratkanis and Aronson, p. 305.

⁸Ellul, pp. v - vi.

⁹Ellul, p. vi.

¹⁰Ellul, p. vi.

¹¹Cited in Ewen, p. 152.

George W. Bush has been put in the White House chiefly through the power of large corporations who, in turn, expect favored treatment by the administration. As pointed out above, the main agenda of the Bush administration has been to fulfill the concept of Pax Americana. After a feeble attempt to gain control of Caspian Basin oil through negotiations, the administration saw the opportunity to create a new enemy and muster the American people behind a new war – the War on Terrorism. I have outlined the secrecy and deception surrounding the start of that war on 11 September 2001 in a previous paper.¹² Investigation of that event is now in the hands of an independent panel of experts – the 9-11 Commission -- which was at first strenuously opposed by the Bush administration, then reluctantly agreed to.

The 9-11 Commission.

Ever since it began, the 9-11 Commission has been stonewalled by administrative secrecy. The central issue has been how much the President knew before 9-11, and that would be indicated in documents called the Presidential Daily Briefs. A compromise to avoid a court subpoena was to provide limited access by three commissioners and their staff director. This four-man team requested to see 360 Presidential Daily Briefs (PDBs) but White House lawyer Alberto Gonzales only allowed 24 to be seen by all four – one commissioner and the staff director reviewed all 360. The team were allowed to make brief summaries of the PDBs but the White House has objected to some of the wording and will not allow the summaries to be shared with the other commissioners. That means the information will not be included in the commission's final report. The 9-11 Commission ostensibly became infuriated, and started grousing about a subpoena to obtain this information and put it before the public. But that was not to happen. The 9-11 commission buckled under again and accepted a 17-page abstract of the team's summaries. Commissioner Timothy J. Roemer expostulated: "You either say you didn't have warning prior to 9/11 and you let us see the documents, or you shouldn't claim that. To say there's nothing in the PDBs that gave the president warning and then put together an agreement that only allows one or two commissioners to see the PDBs is not defensible."¹³ But that is the way the Bush administration creates its own social reality of innocence.

Meanwhile, the 9-11 Commission faces a legislative deadline of 27 May 2004 to complete its work. Due to having been obstructed by the White House from performing its function, and not having been fully funded and staffed for the first six months, an extension has been requested. Such an extension was at first vigorously opposed by the administration but in early February Bush, again reluctantly and under pressure, agreed to a 2-month extension – to 26 July 2004. That must also be approved by Congress and there is resistance there that makes an extension unlikely. Some lawmakers and many of the surviving families of 9-11 victims want a longer extension. Charles Lewis, founder of The Center for Public Integrity, reports: "When the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press surveyed the post-September 11th landscape, the First Amendment watchdog concluded that the government had embarked on 'an unprecedented path of secrecy' that stifled the press' and public's right to know."¹⁴

¹²See PLRC-040116 – *Understanding the "War on Terrorism": Engineering Public Opinion – Part-2 - Pearl Harbor and 9-11.*

¹³Cited in Eggen, 11 February 2004.

¹⁴Lewis.

By keeping the lid on incriminating documents concerning 9-11, *the administration continues to impose its self-styled social reality.*

The Invasion of Iraq.

The next big event about which the Bush administration has been striving to control information and foster the cult of patriotism. has been to the invasion of Iraq. Iraq has the second largest known oil reserve in the world. Control of that country is a necessary step on the road toward Pax Americana. In his January 2003 State-of-the-Union address, Bush said Saddam Hussein “had biological weapons sufficient to produce over 25,000 liters of anthrax ... had materials sufficient to produce more than 38,000 liters of botulinum toxin ... had the materials to produce as much as 500 tons of sarin, mustard, and VX nerve agent ... had upwards of 30,000 munitions capable of delivering chemical agents ... had several mobile biological labs ... had an advanced nuclear weapons development program, had a design for a nuclear weapon and was working on five different methods of enriching uranium for a bomb.”¹⁵ Never mind that these assertions were all said in the past tense – the public didn’t notice. But in his more recent 2004 State-of-the-Union speech – now that Iraq is under US control, sort of – Bush was less specific. He said: “Already, the Kay report identified dozens of weapons of mass destruction-related program activities and significant amounts of equipment that Iraq concealed from the United Nations.”¹⁶ The Kay report did no such thing.

David Kay was sent to Iraq by the Bush administration to find those weapons of mass destruction that neither the UN inspectors nor the US Army search teams could locate. Kay had a \$900-million – almost a billion-dollar – budget and hundreds of inspectors. He finally gave up, saying “I don’t think they existed.”¹⁷ Kay is now supporting an independent commission to investigate the justification for invading Iraq. This has been an embarrassment and the President has been pressured into agreeing with an independent study.

Unlike the 9-11 Commission which was created by a Congressional resolution, the WMD panel – formally known as the Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction – was created by Presidential order with no help sought or desired from Congress. That means the panel will have no subpoena power and its members will be chosen by the President. It will investigate only the intelligence community, not what the White House did with the intelligence after receiving it. Since a report is not due until 31 March 2005, critics say the investigation is being used to stall discussion of Iraq war justification until well after the November 2004 elections.

In the meantime, the Bush administration has come up with a new diversion tactic in an election year. It is trying to sidetrack the public’s focus to a new space program that will send a man to Mars. The “President’s Commission on Moon, Mars, and Beyond” is a catchy title that ought to create some sort of fabricated social reality – or unreality – in this high-tech age. The “Beyond” probably refers to “Beyond Iraq.” According to Jim Mullins, senior fellow at the Center for International Policy in

¹⁵State of the Union Address, 2003.

¹⁶State of the Union Address, 2004.

¹⁷Cited in Mullins.

Washington, D.C., this is “an obvious attempt to divert America’s attention from the emerging cascade of information exposing the lies and deception that led us into preemptive war on Iraq.”¹⁸

Being reminded of US fatalities in Iraq, which now exceed 500, is not something that fosters support for the Bush administration’s military adventurism. Consequently, the return home of flag-draped coffins is no longer met by friends or viewed on television. Those coffins now arrive at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, under cover of darkness and heavy perimeter guard. No press or photographers are allowed. “No family members are present. There are no young children to feel sad or confused.”¹⁹ And, consequently, there is no grisly message to the public that might reduce support for America’s occupation of that oil-rich country.

American fatalities are not the end of the story. Iraqi fatalities have been systematically not reported by the Bush administration. They are significant. Civilian casualties alone in Iraq are counted to exceed 10,000 as of early February 2004.²⁰ This count is the number of civilian deaths attributable to the war that are registered by a group of “leading academics and campaigners” called Iraq Body Count. Iraq Body Count does not register a death unless it is confirmed by at least two media outlets. That is being “careful, but necessarily incomplete. It registers only civilian deaths – “no one knows Iraqi military deaths to the nearest 20,000 ...”²¹ Delving into these numbers would not create the type of reality a cult leader wants his members to believe.

Another area the administration is trying to mask from the public is how much more the war in Iraq will cost. The fiscal year 2005 military budget of \$401.7 billion is a seven percent increase over the previous year. Yet it is not the entire story. Future costs of military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan are conspicuously missing. White House authorities say it can’t be determined until after January 2005. That is an alarming omen. It means that whatever that price tag is, it is much too sensitive to be brought up during a presidential election year.

Meanwhile, Pratkanis and Aronson offer one more bit of advise to cult leaders: “When it comes to teaching your social reality, here is one additional point to keep in mind: Repeat your message over and over and over again. Repetition makes the heart grow fonder, and fiction, if heard frequently enough, can come to sound like fact.”²² How often have we heard the phrase “Saddam Hussein was a threat to America!”? – or, “Removing Saddam Hussein was the right thing.”? *That is how the Bush administration creates its own social reality.*

¹⁸Mullins.

¹⁹Evans.

²⁰This does not include another 3,000 civilian deaths in Afghanistan. So far, in the War on Terrorism, the total civilian deaths inflicted by US and “coalition” forces exceeds 13,000. The total inflicted by terrorists, counting the 9-11 fatalities, is slightly under 3,500.

²¹Quotation in this paragraph from Randall.

²²Pratkanis and Aronson, p. 309.

Cheney's Energy Task Force.

The Bush administration also tried to create its own reality regarding the National Energy Policy of the United States. On 29 January 2001, as one of the its first major actions, the new administration created a cabinet-level task force chaired by Vice President Cheney to prepare an energy policy. On 16 May 2001, this task force submitted its final report to the President, a report that contained over 100 recommendations for executive action or legislation, including increased oil and gas drilling on public land and a new look at nuclear power.

By April 2001 it was reported by various media that this task force met privately with representatives from energy companies who were major contributors to the administrations election campaign.²³ This prompted ranking members of the House Energy and Commerce Committees to request a General Accounting Office (GAO) investigation on the process used to develop the National Energy Policy, who had been consulted by the task force, and what topics were discussed at the meetings. The GAO reports:

... we initiated contact with the Office of the Vice President (OVP) ... From the outset OVP did not respond to our request for information, including descriptive information on the process by which the National Energy Policy report was developed, asserting that we lacked statutory authority to examine [task force] activities. We were also denied the opportunity to interview staff assisting the Vice President on the [task force] effort. ... The Vice President denied us access to virtually all requested information ...²⁴

Having met with almost total non-cooperation from the Vice President and the White House, the GAO filed suit in the US District Court for the District of Columbia on 22 February 2002. During these proceedings, and others to be discussed below, seven government agencies were ordered to turn over documents, but these had about a third of the pages censored out.²⁵ Nothing came from the White House that would answer the primary questions on the process and who acted as advisors.²⁶ Then on 9 December 2002, the district court threw out the GAO's case on jurisdictional grounds without even addressing the merits of GAO's authority to audit and evaluate task force activities or to obtain access to task force records. By this time both Houses of Congress were dominated by Republicans and the GAO was pressured not to appeal the district court's decision.

That was not the end of matters. While the GAO lawsuit was going on, other parties were taking the Vice President to court. On 17 July 2001, a public interest law firm called Judicial Watch announced that it was suing Cheney under the Federal Advisory Commission Act and the Freedom of

²³These advisors were "principally petroleum, coal, nuclear, natural gas, and electricity industry representatives and lobbyists. To a more limited degree, they also obtained information from academic experts, policy organizations, environmental advocacy groups, and private citizens." (GAO-03-894, p. 5).

²⁴GAO-03-894, p. 2.

²⁵The agencies which turned over thousands of pages of documents were the Departments of Energy, Interior, Transportation, Commerce, and Agriculture, as well as the Environmental Protection Agency and the Office of Management and Budget.

²⁶77 pages were received from the Vice President's office but they did not address the central questions. According to the GAO, these pages contained trivial cost information – such as a meal receipt or telephone bill – and were "of little or no usefulness." (GAO-03-894, p. 5.)

Information Act. Judicial Watch expressed concerns “that energy policy is being made in secret by individuals and interests with a financial and political stake in particular policies.”²⁷

Amid accusations that the administration was forming policy with advice from vested interests with no input from environmentalists, White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer and others on 22 January 2002 insinuated that the Sierra Club had been consulted. A week later the Sierra Club cleared up this misinformation with a press release saying its members were only allowed to meet with Cheney’s task force after the energy plan was drawn up and released.

In the meantime, the Sierra Club on 25 January 2002 joined Judicial Watch as a co-plaintiff in the suit against Cheney and his task force. The litigation demanded a full accounting of which private industrialists helped craft the National Energy Policy introduced in May 2001.

On 5 March 2002, in response to the FOIA lawsuit by Judicial Watch and the Sierra Club, a federal judge ordered the seven energy companies described above to release thousands of documents concerning Cheney’s energy policy. The following May 23rd Federal Judge Emmet Sullivan, over White House objections, ruled that the lawsuit could continue. In explaining his ruling on July 11th he stated that Cheney and the White House were seeking a ruling from him that “would eviscerate the understanding of checks and balances between the three branches of the government on which constitutional order depends.”²⁸

Later in 2002 Judge Sullivan ordered Cheney to turn over the documents from the energy task force or provide a list of the documents and justify why each one was being withheld. The White House appealed the case, claiming the Constitution granted the administration immunity from having to divulge that information. The US Court of Appeals rejected the Bush administration’s appeal, saying that Cheney had no legal grounds for refusing the judge’s order.

Then the White House appealed to the US Supreme Court – the same US Supreme Court that appointed George W. Bush to the White House some two years earlier. The high court agreed on 15 December 2003 to hear Cheney’s reasons for keeping the papers secret. The hearings will take place during the spring of 2004 with a decision by the court by the end of June.

A scandal arose the following month. It turns out that Cheney and Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia are long-time friends. Eyebrows raised when on 5 January 2004, just weeks after the Supreme Court had accepted the Cheney appeal, the two of them went along together on a hunting trip in Louisiana. This prompted the *Los Angeles Times* to publicize the event. Scalia rejected any conflict of interests, saying: “I do not think my impartiality could reasonably be questioned.” He added: “Social contact with high-level executive officials have never been thought improper for judges who may have before them cases in which those people are involved in their official capacity, as opposed to their personal capacity.”²⁹

Then it was confirmed that the two didn’t just happened to meet at the hunting resort. Scalia flew to Louisiana on “Air Force 2” as an invited official guest of Cheney. New York University law

²⁷Cited in Environmental Media Service, 25 July 2002.

²⁸Cited in Environmental Media Service, 25 July 2002.

²⁹Cited in *Mercury News*, 20 January 2004.

professor Stephen Gillers says this “means Scalia is accepting a gift of some value from a litigant in a case before him.”³⁰

Two ranking members of the Senate’s Judiciary and the Governmental Affairs Committees did not buy this compartmentalization of an individual’s personality. On January 22nd they requested Chief Justice William Rehnquist to explain supreme Court procedures that allowed Scalia and Cheney to spend several days duck hunting together. More specifically, they requested “canons, procedures, and rules” on the recusal of justices from cases in which “their impartiality might reasonably be questioned.” They added: “When a sitting judge, poised to hear a case involving a particular litigant, goes on vacation with that litigant, reasonable people will question whether that judge can be a fair and impartial adjudicator of that man’s case or his opponent’s claims.”³¹

The *Los Angeles Times* reported that “Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist said the high court does not have a formal policy or rules for reviewing decisions by justices on whether to withdraw from a case.”³² However, federal law states that “any justice or judge shall disqualify himself in any proceeding in which his impartiality might be questioned.”³³

Meanwhile, Cheney still claims immunity from a subpoena. Justice Department lawyers, who are representing Cheney and the White House, argue that “judicial power cannot extend to ordering the Vice President to disclose details about the way the President gets advice.” Judicial Watch filed papers countering that “Cheney’s claims to immunity were laughable after a 1997 Supreme court decision that discovery could proceed against then-President Bill Clinton in a case brought by sexual-harassment accuser Paula Jones.”³⁴

By continuing to hide the secrets on how US energy policy was formed, *the administration continues to impose its self-styled social reality.*

Closing Access to Government Documents.

The Bush administration has also severely crippled the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) which became law in 1966. The only records that could be withheld from the public were those classified for national security or involving trade secrets, personnel or medical issues. Attorney General Janet Reno in October 1993 ordered that when in doubt, release it. She informed FOIA officers that if someone sued because information was withheld, the Department of Justice would no longer defend them.

Eight years later the Bush administration changed the trend toward openness in government. In 2001, right after the 9-11 attack, Attorney General John Ashcroft issued a memorandum which effectively

³⁰Cited in Savage and Serrano.

³¹Cited in *Mercury News*, 23 January 2004.

³²Savage and Serrano.

³³Cited in Savage and Serrano.

³⁴Paraphrased quotations from Cornwell.

instructed that when in doubt, don't release it. He also promised legal cover for officers who withheld information. It is getting very difficult to obtain information through FOIA requests.

To further seclude government records, Bush on 1 November 2001 signed Executive Order 13233 entitled "Further Implementation of the Presidential Records Act." This Act, passed in the wake of the Watergate scandal, made records from Presidents and Vice Presidents publicly available twelve years after they left office. Now, under Bush's order, "former presidents or their heirs may veto the release of their presidential papers, as may the sitting president – a decision that vested George W. Bush with authority to block release of his father's papers, or even those of Bill Clinton."³⁵ Although this brought strong objections from both democrats and republicans, the order remained in effect. Steven Hensen, president of the Society of American Archivists, wrote: "How can a democratic people have confidence in elected officials who hide the records of their actions from public view?"³⁶

Then on November 8th, Ashcroft's Justice Department said it would no longer publicize the number of people being detained in the US. That was followed by Bush's November 13th Military Order allowing terrorist suspects to be tried by military tribunals and in secret from the public. The final act of 2001 was a White House statement citing "the president's constitutional authority" to withhold information from Congress under certain circumstances and the CIA director's responsibility to "protect intelligence sources and methods *and other exceptionally sensitive matters*."³⁷ (Emphasis added)

Immigration authorities issued orders on 18 April 2002 that names of federal detainees in state jails are not to be released, even if this conflicts with state law.

Bush signed the Homeland Security Act into law on 25 November 2002. The Department of Homeland Security began operations the following January 24th. Three days later the new cabinet-level department issued its own regulations regarding FOIA requests.

On 20 February 2003, Bush signed the 2003 Consolidated Appropriations Resolution which had an amendment to hold government data on gun sales secret for various reasons, including homeland security.

Millions of 25-year-old classified documents were scheduled to be de-classified and released by 17 April 2003. A month earlier, on March 25th, Bush signed Executive Order 13292 which delayed their release until the end of 2006. This Order also allowed FOIA officers to re-classify information that had been de-classified, and when in doubt about specific information, to classify it. Thomas Blanton, executive director of the nonprofit National Security Archive, noted that this was "one more signal from on high to the bureaucracy to slow down, stall, withhold, stonewall."³⁸ This order removes a provision that says don't classify if there is significant doubt, thus giving the government more authority to classify "sensitive" (i.e. embarrassing) information and to re-classify material that had been "inappropriately declassified."³⁹

³⁵Lewis.

³⁶Cited in Lewis.

³⁷Cited in Homefront Confidential (4th Edition), p. 5 under "A Chronology of Events."

³⁸Cited in Lewis.

³⁹Cited in Milbank and Allen.

In an executive order Bush added to the list of officials and agencies who can stamp documents secret – a designation designed to protect national security. Now such purely domestic agencies as the Department of Agriculture, Department of Health and Human Services, and the Environmental Protection Agency can wield the national security classification stamp.

Bush implemented a new national space policy whereby more government surveillance would be done by commercial satellites. This also gave the administration control over the distribution of photos taken from those commercial satellites.

The internet is a great source for information. The Bush administration has also made its imprint there. Following 9-11, government agencies were ordered to purge all potentially sensitive information from their websites. At least fifteen federal agencies have complied. This resulted in hundreds of thousands of pages being deleted. OMB Watch noted in an October 2002 paper: “It is no longer possible for families and communities to get data critical to protecting themselves – information such as pipeline maps (that show where they are and whether they have been inspected), airport safety data, environmental data, and even documents that are widely available on private sites today were removed from government sites and have not reappeared.”⁴⁰

Libraries suffered a similar fate. The *Los Angeles Times* reported on 18 November 2001 that the Government Printing Office ordered some 1,300 libraries nationwide “to destroy government records that federal agencies say could be too sensitive for public consumption.”⁴¹ One example is a “federal directive issued to US libraries instructing them to destroy a CD-ROM survey of government information on dams and reservoirs.”⁴² In addition, when the public uses reading rooms at federal agencies they “must now make an appointment and be escorted by an employee to ensure that information is not misused.”⁴³

The student newspaper at the University of Michigan, *The Michigan Daily*, made a cogent observation: “While it is frightening that the government would consider such Orwellian information controls, it is even scarier that the general public is not much more upset about it. Many Americans, buying into the rhetoric of ‘safety’ are all too eager to exchange their rights for a sense of false security.”⁴⁴

I will close this section on shutting off access to government information with a humorous story. David Brancaccio of PBS Television, in the course of his duties, called the Department of Homeland Security for their address. The receptionist was hesitant – she stalled and stonewalled. When pressed a little harder she finally blurted out: “Our physical location is something I am not obligated to give.”⁴⁵

⁴⁰Cited in Lewis.

⁴¹Lichtblau.

⁴²*The Michigan Daily*.

⁴³Lichtblau.

⁴⁴*The Michigan Daily*.

⁴⁵Cited in Moyers.

By drawing the curtains tight around government operations, *the administration continues to impose its self-styled social reality.*

Controlling Information Harmful to Industry.

It started on 20 January 2001, in the afternoon of Bush's inauguration. Newly appointed White House Chief of Staff, Andrew Card,⁴⁶ ordered federal agencies to freeze more than 300 pending regulations issued by the Clinton administration. "The regulations affected areas ranging from health and safety to the environment and industry." Ostensibly to allow new appointees to review these pending regulations, the "process, as it turned out, expressly precluded input from average citizens. Inviting such comments, agency officials concluded, would be 'contrary to the public interest.'"⁴⁷

Large corporations are significant supporters of political candidates. Although they often contribute to both of the main parties to present a facade of impartiality, and possibly to cover all contingencies, they donate more heavily to candidates who are most likely to help business ventures. So it is for political survival, if not vested interests, that corporate donors must be protected. Therefore, a friendly business climate is part of the social reality the administration must create.

Shocking news reached the public on 11 January 2004. An article in the St Louis *Post-Dispatch* began with this sentence: "Under a new proposal, the White House would decide what and when the public would be told about an outbreak of mad cow disease, an anthrax release, a nuclear plant accident or any other crisis."⁴⁸ This proposal would give the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB)⁴⁹ control over health, safety, and environmental information released by the various government agencies. This means that individual federal agencies will no longer immediately release their own warnings to the people. We will not be immediately warned directly by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) that hormone replacement therapy could cause breast cancer in women; or that anti-arryhmic drugs are useless and in fact dangerous; or that a certain batch of green onions from Mexico are causing a hepatitis outbreak. These warnings will first have to wind their bureaucratic way through the White House to be screened for potential political effects or undue hardship on industry.

Michael Taylor, former deputy commissioner of the FDA, warned that it is dangerous to have OMB involved in sending out warnings on imminent health hazards. He observed: "OMB's proposal says it gets to weigh in on any agency statement that would have a significant impact on an industry. Any FDA warning or recall would have that nationwide impact. So should the FDA commissioner have to go to Graham⁵⁰ for permission to warn people about tainted green onions? ... Speed is often

⁴⁶Andrew Card is a former lobbyist for General Motors.

⁴⁷Quotation in this paragraph from Schmitt and Pound.

⁴⁸Schneider.

⁴⁹The OMB was created in 1970 to evaluate for the President all budget, policy, legislative, regulatory and management issues originating from the various government departments and agencies.

⁵⁰John Graham is administrator of the OMB's Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs. He was formerly head of Harvard's Center for Risk Analysis, whose research was funded primarily by corporations. He

essential. If you discover that a heart valve is defective and killing people and can't issue a recall until the White House has weighed in on the issue, people could die."⁵¹

Besides taking charge of all the public warnings – and consequently slowing them down and watering the content – the proposed policy will also have the OMB manage all scientific and technical reviews. These so-called peer reviews will cover all major plans, guidelines, proposed regulations, and announcements which are now being prepared by the various government agencies.

Industry is delighted with the proposal regarding peer review which has often resulted in tighter control over products and processes. The White House is also outspoken about wanting to reduce the regulatory burden on industry. OMB's John Graham said revising the peer review "is a major priority for this administration."⁵²

The OMB defends its action by saying it has been ordered by Congress to take "a greater role in evaluating what the agencies do."⁵³ What Congress required in the Information Quality Law was that OMB oversee the quality of information released by federal agencies. It didn't mandate OMB to assume the releasing of that information. Winifred de Palma, regulatory affairs council for Public Citizen⁵⁴, explained: "OMB has no statutory or other expressed legal authority to impose this type of control on the agencies. If the plan is implemented, it will mean that political considerations, and not public health, will be the administration's primary public concern in the deciding whether to release health and safety information to the public in emergency situations."⁵⁵

Another perk for industry is the Homeland Security Act. This allows manufacturers to voluntarily report "critical infrastructure information" (transportation, communication, energy, etc.) to the Department of Homeland Security, ostensibly to promote protection by sharing critical operating information. The catch is that, once shared, this information is kept from the public and cannot be used in a lawsuit against the company, even by a government watchdog agency. This has been called a "get-out-of-jail-free card, allowing companies worried about potential litigation or regulatory actions to place troublesome information in a convenient 'Homeland Security' vault."⁵⁶ It has now been proposed that this anti-disclosure provision be extended to all government agencies.

By protecting the interests of corporate donors, *the administration continues to impose its self-styled social reality.*

has also written and edited books critical of peer review.

⁵¹Cited in Schneider.

⁵²Cited in Schneider.

⁵³Cited in Schneider.

⁵⁴Public Citizen is a consumer advocacy organization founded by Ralph Nader in 1971.

⁵⁵Cited in Schneider.

⁵⁶Schmitt and Pound.

Control of the Mass Media.

Tantamount to understanding the Bush administration and its activities is understanding that virtually every US administration since at least World War II has been under the influence of America's industrial powers. Industry donates heavily to political campaigns and industry expects fair return for investment. The real constituency of the US government is business. When the term "national security" is mentioned, it can be translated to read "corporate security." At no time in recent decades has this relationship of business and politics been more pronounced than with the Bush administration.

I am making this point to illustrate that when large corporations have control – monopoly – of the media, they are in a position to put a spin on election campaigns which favors their preferred candidates. It is then possible, in the see-saw cycle of politics, for the elected administration to fulfill an agenda of enhancing business interests – to in turn create the climate in which the largest business interests can acquire a greater monopoly. In short, this control of the media makes it possible to apply the propaganda that creates the Cult of Patriotism.

French sociologist Jacques Ellul aptly points out that "without the mass media there can be no modern propaganda. But we must point to a dual factor necessary ... They must be subject to centralized control on the one hand, and well diversified with regard to their products on the other." Ellul then elaborates: "To make the organization of propaganda possible, the media must be concentrated, the number of news agencies reduced, the press brought under single control, and radio and film monopolies established. The effect will be still greater if the various media are concentrated in the same hands."⁵⁷ Had Ellul written that today, instead of 1962, he would also have included the television and cable media, and the internet.

Today, five large conglomerates control the media of America. They are General Electric (GE), Time Warner, The Walt Disney Company, Viacom, and News Corporation.⁵⁸ I will briefly itemize each one.

General Electric (GE) owns three broadcasting networks: NBC, Paxson Communications, and Telemundo Communications Group. It owns and operates 14 major television stations throughout the US, owns three cable channels (Bravo, CNBC, and MSNBC), and owns the NBC Digital Media. GE also has an alliance with Microsoft, owns several New York sports teams, has equity interests in many popular websites, and has holdings in many more cable interests.⁵⁹

Time Warner merged with America On-Line (AOL) in 2000 and is now touted as the largest media company in the world. The company owns Turner Broadcasting and the Warner Brothers television network. It owns several cable channels, including CNN, and has equity interests in many more. Time Warner also owns Time Life Books (with its 27 subsidiaries), Metro Sports (Kansas City), Time Warner Inc.-Magazines (consisting of *Time*, *Fortune*, *Money*, *People*, *Sunset*, *Field & Stream*, *Outdoor Life*, *Popular Science*, and 35 other magazines/publishing groups), the Warner Music group

⁵⁷Ellul, p. 102.

⁵⁸To see a breakdown of broadcast networks and cable interests owned by these five corporations, see "Who Controls the Media."

⁵⁹For a complete summary of General Electric ownership and holdings see "Who Owns What: General Electric."

and other joint ventures in music, and online publishing/services. All of this does not include Warner Brothers Consumer Products, theme parks, film production, sports, and more.⁶⁰

The Walt Disney Company has gone far beyond Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck. It now owns the ABC Television Network, owns and operates ten major television stations across the US, owns 66 leading radio stations, and owns/has equity shares in many domestic and international cable channels. The company also owns the Walt Disney Internet group (with 19 subsidiaries) and Disney Interactive (computer software, video games, music). Disney is also involved in book and magazine publishing, movie/television/theatrical productions and distribution, financial and retail ventures, sports franchises, theme parks and resorts.⁶¹ In February 2004, Comcast made a \$56 billion offer to buy The Walt Disney Company. On February 16th the Disney board of directors voted unanimously to reject the offer as too low. Comcast is now planning to make a hostile bid offer of \$48 billion directly to the shareholders at their 3 March 2004 meeting.

Viacom owns CBS, the United Paramount Network (UPN, or simply Paramount), and MTV. It also owns 39 major television stations, 16 cable channels, and 178 radio stations. The company is also involved in Television production and distribution, film production (Paramount pictures and Paramount Home Entertainment), book publishing (Simon & Schuster with its eight subsidiaries). In addition, Viacom owns Blockbuster Video, Paramount Parks, Famous Players theater chain, United Cinemas International (50%), and Famous Music.⁶²

News Corporation (owned by international media entrepreneur Rupert Murdoch) owns the Fox Broadcasting Company. In addition it owns 34 television stations and 29 cable channels, and three film industries (20th Century fox, Fox Searchlight Pictures, and Fox Television Studios). Regarding the print media, the company owns the *New York Post*, five British newspapers (including *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*), 20 Australian newspapers, and five US magazines. It also owns the HarperCollins publishing empire with its 29 subsidiaries (including Avon, HarperTorch, William Morrow Cookbooks, and Joanna Cotler children's books). News Corporation is involved in many other things such as sports teams (Los Angeles Dodgers, New York Rangers & New York Knicks, Los Angeles Kings hockey team and Los Angeles Lakers basketball team), Staples Center, Festival records, and more.⁶³

This clout by a handful of giant corporations is appalling. Independent Party Congressman Bernie Sanders capsulized this predicament.

The average American does not see his or her reality reflected on the television screen. ... despite 41 million people with no health insurance and millions more underinsured, we spend far more per capita on healthcare than any other nation. ... the average American worker is now working longer hours for lower wages than 30 years ago, and we have lost millions of decent paying manufacturing

⁶⁰For a complete summary of Time Warner ownership and holdings see "Who Owns What: Time Warner."

⁶¹For a complete summary of The Walt Disney Company ownership and holdings see "Who Owns What: The Walt Disney Company."

⁶²For a complete summary of Viacom ownership and holdings see "Who Owns What: Viacom."

⁶³For a complete summary of News Corporation ownership and holdings see "Who Owns What: News Corporation."

jobs. Where are the TV programs addressing our \$360 billion trade deficit, or what our disastrous trade policy has done to depress wages in this country? ... workers who are in unions earn 30 percent more than non-union people doing the same work. ...

The United States has the most unfair distribution of wealth and income in the industrialized world, and the highest rate of childhood poverty. There's a lot of television promoting greed and self-interest, but how many programs speak of the "justice" of the richest 1 percent owning more wealth than the bottom 95 percent? Or of the CEOs of major corporations earning 500 times what their employees make?

If television largely ignores the reality of life for the majority of Americans, corporate radio is just plain overt in its right-wing bias. In a nation that cast a few million more votes for Al Gore and Ralph Nader than for George Bush and Pat Buchanan, there are dozens of right-wing talk show programs. [Names some] – these are only a few of the voices that day after day pound a right-wing drumbeat into the heartland of this country.⁶⁴

And from a left perspective there is – well, no one. ...⁶⁵

The current monopoly of media is deplorable enough, but industry and the Bush administration want more. Interaction between business and government was recently illustrated by events involving the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) chaired by Michael K. Powell. Ever since 1941 the government has been evolving rules to control media ownership. The 1996 Telecommunications Act requires the FCC to review these rules biennially and modify them to comply to the best public interests. On 2 June 2003, after 20 months of review and only one – only one! – public hearing, the FCC in a 3-2 split along party lines changed three major aspects of media ownership rules.⁶⁶ A fourth change was made by default by not reinstating an existing rule.⁶⁷

1. At present a company cannot own a television station and a newspaper in the same market area (community). The new rule will allow cross ownership if there are 9 or more television stations in the same area. If the area has 3 or fewer television stations, cross ownership between TV and newspapers would still be banned. Between 4 and 8 TV stations in an area, some restrictions would apply.
2. At present a company cannot own a quantity of stations that will reach more than 35 percent of the national audience. The new rule will put the cap at 45 percent.
3. At present a company can only own two stations in a market area where there are at least eight other competing stations, but only one can be among the four largest stations in that area. The new rule will allow owning three TV stations (if only one is among the top four) in a large market area where there are at least 18 stations. Below that they can still own two but only if there are at least five TV stations in the area (reduced from eight).
4. The FCC did not reinstate a rule prohibiting ownership of local television stations by a cable company.

⁶⁴Radio was largely deregulated in 1996.

⁶⁵Sanders.

⁶⁶The two republicans on the FCC in addition to chairman Michael Powell are Kathleen Q. Abernathy and Kevin J. Martin. The two democrats on the panel are Michael J. Copps and Jonathan S. Adelstein.

⁶⁷See Kirkpatrick.

The number of radio stations in a market area (community) is still limited to eight, and no mergers are allowed among any of the top four networks – ABC, CBS, NBC, and FOX.

FCC majority panel members defend their action as necessary because, they claim, the internet, satellite broadcasting, and cable television are making it harder for traditional broadcast networks to compete. But that claim ignores facts derived in a national poll by PEW Research Center released on 11 January 2004. The poll shows that TV is overwhelmingly the No. 1 source of news and political information today, and that TV and newspapers together provide four-fifths of the source for news and information. The FCC gave radio and the internet two to three times the importance that the PEW survey indicated. Even then, the internet's importance is questionable because the web sites most frequently visited for news and information are those of the traditional media. Gene Kimmelman, senior policy director for Consumer Union, remarks: "Because of the importance of mass media in the democratic debate, the FCC must devise ownership rules based on clear and consistent facts about market realities, not selective, inconsistent concepts that don't pass the laugh test."⁶⁸

The four biggest networks (ABC, CBS, NBC, and FOX) along with the leading newspaper chains (Gannett, Tribune, Hearst, Media General, and Belo) are in favor of the FCC changes. News Corp. (Owner of FOX) and Viacom (owner of CBS, Paramount and MTV), in particular, supported the higher TV ownership cap because they have already exceeded the old one. They can each reach close to 40 percent of American households.

Smaller TV stations, affiliates of the big networks, oppose the new rules. Their representative organization, the National Association of Broadcasters, says that as the networks get bigger the smaller affiliates will have less say in what they broadcast – it would be harder to produce local news programs and to reject network shows. They say it is all about money. The *Los Angeles Times* explains: "Big networks want to buy more TV stations so that they can extricate themselves from long-term contracts to pay affiliated TV stations to air network programming. Affiliates want to preserve those compensation packages and prevent large networks from squeezing them out of large markets."⁶⁹

Congress was also disturbed by the new FCC rules. Both houses were drafting legislation to roll back the national media ownership cap. Then in November 2003 a compromise was reached between Congress and the White House that would limit any one network to only reaching 39 percent of Americans. That, of course, was hailed by News Corp. And Viacom because they won't have to divest to meet the old 35 percent limit. That compromise became law on 22 January 2004 as an amendment to the \$820 billion omnibus appropriations bill.

Consumer advocates appealed the FCC's new ownership rules. In September 2003 the 3rd US Circuit Court of Appeals in Philadelphia blocked the FCC changes until the court could examine the issues. That case has not been settled at the time of this writing. Although the issue of national media ownership has now been defined by Congressional action, local media ownership is still a critical issue.

⁶⁸Cited in Cooper and Herold.

⁶⁹Shiver, Simon, and Sanders.

Let me now make an overall comparison for a given market area (community):

At present a company can own eight radio stations, a cable operator, and a daily newspaper. Or, it can own the eight radio stations and a TV station. An owner of a TV station cannot at the same time own a local newspaper or a cable company. The one exception is that in areas that have eight or more TV stations, a company can own two TV stations providing only one of them is in the top-rated four. Even then the company cannot own a newspaper or cable company at the same time. Overall, the maximum number of households in the nation a network is allowed to reach with all its media ownership is 39 percent.

The new rule will allow a company to own eight radio stations, a cable operator, a daily newspaper, and a TV station in a given market area. If the area has at least five TV stations, a company can own two TV stations along with all the rest. If the area is a large metropolis with at least 18 TV stations, the company can add a third TV station to its ownership package. In all cases where multiple TV stations are owned, only one can be among the top-rated four. The overall number of households a network can reach nationally is 39 percent.

In addition, by not reinstating the rule prohibiting a cable company from owning a local TV station, a rash of new mergers are shaping up. Comcast cable operator is negotiating a merger with the Walt Disney Company, owner of ABC. Time Warner Cable could merge with General Electric in ownership of NBC. It would also be possible for the third cable operator, Echostar, to merge with Viacom which owns CBS, Paramount, and MTV.

I have said above that the FCC changes are motivated by monopoly and money. But that reason is not exclusive. There is another aspect. The FCC, an agency of the administration, passed regulations which were largely unpopular with even the administration's own republican party in order to help its business constituency gain more power over the public mind, and thus engineer support for the basic corporate-government goal – Pax Americana. In his dissenting decision, FCC commissioner Jonathan Adelstein sums up the prognosis if the large networks garner greater control of the local media:

... This is the most sweeping and destructive rollback of consumer protection rules in the history of American broadcasting. ... I dissent, finding today's Order poor policy, indefensible under law, and inimical to the public interest and the health of our democracy. ... this Order simply makes it easier for existing media giants to gobble up more outlets and fortify their already massive market power. ... It may take a while for the public to feel the full effects... But people will notice every time a new merger goes through that eliminates a voice in the community. Their anger will flash as they surf through their channels only to find more sensationalism, commercialism, crassness, violence, homogenization and noticeably less derisious coverage of news and local events ...

In smaller markets, say the town of Great Falls, Montana with a population of 56,690, under new rules one entity could own the cable company, the dominant television station, the dominant newspaper, and multiple radio stations. Is this safe for democracy?⁷⁰

Through control of the mass media, *the administration and its constituents continue to impose their self-styled social reality.*

⁷⁰Adelstein.

CONCLUSION

This discussion has touched some highlights of how the Bush administration, through propaganda techniques, excessive secrecy and media manipulation, is forming its own social reality for the Cult of Patriotism in America. This presentation is not complete by any means. Other areas not covered are such things as names of immigrants suspected of terrorist connections who have been secretly deported, names of prisoners and activities at America's offshore prisons at Guantanamo Bay and in the Middle East/Central Asia, critical specific health and safety information (such as for tires and vehicles, quality and vulnerability of drinking water, chemical hazards in communities, airline and transportation safety), excessive use of the "states secrets" privilege and invoking "national security" in federal courts, safeguards against chemical and biological terrorism, pharmaceutical information, missile defense and other military activities, use of an illegal line-item veto by merely rejecting provisions in a bill when signed by the President, single-source contracts awarded in secret, non-disclosure agreements signed by people who have access to "sensitive" information, hiring and promotion of minorities, critical information about global warming, embedded reporters in war zones, and more. The list of specifics seems inexhaustible.

In a previous paper on the history of propaganda,⁷¹ I showed how mass transportation, mass communication, and mass marketing started developing at an exponential rate after the Civil War. Along with that came the Vanderbilts, the Goulds, the Fisks, the Rockefellers, the Carnegies and the Morgans. They built their empires with their "public be damned" attitude. Then I explained the trust-busting years prior to World War I and how the big companies found loopholes to continue their monopolies. Corporations made a comeback in popularity during the war and on through the 1920s. But the stock market crash of 1929, and the depression years that followed, created an anti-business sentiment that pervaded the nation, and big business has ever since been striving to regain their previous potency. Through mergers and buy-outs since the 1960s, corporate power has increased significantly. Now, with the open and unabashed quest for Pax Americana, business interests and their representatives in government are blatantly exerting pressure to engineer popular consent for their global ambitions. They are creating the Cult of Patriotism.

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GLOSSARY

ABC	American Broadcasting Company.
AOL	America On-Line.
CBS	Columbia Broadcasting System.
CEO	Chief Executive Officer.
CNN	Cable News Network.
FCC	Federal Communications Commission.
FDA	Food and Drug Administration.
FOIA	Freedom Of Information Act.
GAO	General Accounting Office.
GE	General Electric.
NBC	National Broadcasting Company.
OMB	Office of Management and Budget.
OVP	Office of the Vice President.
PDB	Presidential Daily Brief.
PBS	Public Broadcasting System.
PR	Public Relations.
TV	Television.
UPN	United Paramount Network.