

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 4 – Establishing the Leader’s Credibility and Attractiveness¹

Compiled by Bob Aldridge

Leaders couldn’t be expected to have a rational dialog with their constituents about essential ideals like justice, or law and order. That would be too unwieldy, would take too long, and wouldn’t insure the desired outcome. Instead, they should find just the right word or image to capture the popular imagination, the way they had in rallying a nation to war. The ideal medium through which to exercise such symbols ... could make clear in an instant who were the good guys and who the bad, which ideas were worthy of loyalty and which should inspire anger.

– Walter Lippman²

Propaganda has always been used by rulers to mold the thoughts and actions of their people. Nothing has been more effective in drumming up patriot emotions. “Patriotism” has become a buzz word with many connotations. What I describe in this paper as the “Cult of Patriotism” is not to be confused with true patriotism – the latter being deserved loyalty to a just government. The “Cult of Patriotism” is an emotional pseudo patriotism that is divisive.

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. Even a leader struggling in the opinion polls can be raised to greater popularity by introducing a common “enemy.” That is the case today under the George W. Bush administration.

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 4 of a seven-part series on manipulating public opinion to form the “Cult of Patriotism,” I will discuss how a cult leader must create his/her own credibility and attractiveness. BA

²Quoted in Tye, p. 95..

In their book, *Age of Propaganda*, Pratkanis and Aronson devote a chapter to describing “How To Become A Cult Leader,” in which they outline seven techniques for doing so.³ They are:

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

These techniques are nothing more than propaganda in its most profound sense. Most people believe that cult members are weak or foolish. That is not the case. Research shows that most people who join cults have middle-class backgrounds, are fairly well educated, and are not seriously disturbed prior to joining.⁴ It is a subtle seduction that is being used to mobilize America. Let me now address the fourth technique – establishing the credibility and attractiveness of the cult leader.

ESTABLISH THE LEADER’S CREDIBILITY AND ATTRACTIVENESS

The people have always some champion whom they set over them and nurse into greatness. ... This and no other is the root from which a tyrant springs; when he first appears he is a protector. ... In the early days of his power he is all smiles, and he salutes everyone whom he meets. ... When the tyrant has disposed of foreign enemies by conquest or treaty, and there is nothing to fear from them, then he is always stirring up some war or other, in order that the people may require a leader.

– Plato, *The Republic* (Book VIII, pp. 565-566)

Cults are very much oriented toward a leader. The Cult of Patriotism is no exception. Its leader is the President of the United States. His credibility is very fragile to events and those events must be closely controlled or his credibility will fall. Therefore, it is important that he avoid criticism and second guessing. The leader must remain unblemished and above rebuke.

The Bush administration got off to a precarious start. After winning the Florida elections by a mere 537 votes, and amid accusations of voter disenfranchisement and other election fraud, the Florida Supreme Court decided there should be a recount. But on 9 December 2000, with Gore gaining on Bush, the US Supreme Court stopped the recount and appointed George W. Bush the 43rd President of the United States.

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

⁴Pratkanis and Aronson, p. 305.

Most Americans thought this was a sham and that the recount should have continued. Bush's approval rating was as low as 46% according to FOX News Poll.⁵ Something was needed to enhance this new leader's credibility.

That something came in the eighth month of the administration, on the 11th of September, 2001. Terrorists attacked the twin towers of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon with hijacked passenger planes. Immediately before the attack, Bush's approval rating had come up to 50-55%. After the attack it shot up to 81- 90%. The Gallup poll showed the higher number. There is much disagreement regarding the extent of complicity the administration had regarding 9/11, but whatever there was, the event provided the needed public relations boost for a floundering president.

Approval ratings were still high when US forces blasted into Afghanistan. There was international support for this war and a high majority of Americans supported it. Nevertheless, the short public attention span became jaded to the sensationalism of fighting. By the time Operation Anaconda concluded major military operations in Afghanistan, the Gallup Poll showed public approval had dropped to 79%. This was consistent with the other polls taken and higher than some. Only FOX News showed a higher rating and that was only by one percentage point.

The next year (March 2002 to March 2003) was spent preparing the public for a war against Iraq. There was, and continues to be, strenuous debate over the justification the administration presented for that war, along with a significant loss of support from international allies. I have covered these details in other papers and will not repeat them here. During this year-long period, Bush's approval ratings continued to decline. Just before the actual warfare started in Iraq, the Gallup Poll showed that only 58% of the people approved of how the government was run. (ABC News and CBS News showed the highest ratings – each at 67%.)



Navy pilot Lt. Ryan Phillips and President Bush prior to takeoff. Source: The White House.



Bush speaking on USS Abraham Lincoln with "Mission Accomplished" banner hanging in background. Source: The White House.

⁵This was the lowest approval rating determined. The range among several polls (Gallup, ABC, CBS, FOX, Newsweek, Time/CNN, and Zogby International) was 46 to 57%. (Polling Report.com)

Something was needed to change this declining trend and enhance the leader's credibility and attractiveness. White House PR crews came up with what is now called Bush's "Top Gun" act. Instead of announcing from the oval office that major military operations in Iraq had been completed, or from some other traditional location, the president would make that announcement from an aircraft carrier at sea. Furthermore, he would make a sensational appearance on that carrier. The *USS Abraham Lincoln*, returning home, was chosen as the site. In addition to glamorizing a "Top Gun" leader, this stunt would also signify a transition of American forces from conquerors to police in order to open the way for other countries to help foot the bill.

With a crew aboard anxious to see their families after a tour of duty in the Iraq war, the *Abraham Lincoln* was delayed for a day just off the southern California coast so Bush could make his PR splash. On 1 May 2003 a Navy Viking S-3B made a tailhook landing on the carrier while TV cameras ground away. Bush emerged in flight togs and helmet, giving a dramatic thumbs-up sign. In the well-publicized speech that followed, Bush announced to a cheering crew that major military operations in Iraq were completed. Behind him hung a banner proclaiming "Mission Accomplished."

The "Mission Accomplished" banner has since been mocked because no weapons of mass destruction were found in Iraq. At first the President claimed to have no connection with the banner being placed there. Later the White House did acknowledge a link with the banner. But during a press conference on 28 October 2003, six months after the event, the story changed again. Bush told reporters that the banner was put up by the crew to indicate their mission in Iraq was accomplished. That explanation was immediately challenged because it didn't surface during all the months of questioning and ridicule about accomplishing a mission when the violence continues.⁶ The Top Gun act didn't work out as well as expected.



Thanksgiving 2002 in Iraq with the Troops
Source: The White House.

However, the carrier landing and Top Gun speech did boost the leader's credibility a little in the public eye, at least temporarily. Gallup Polls made a slight rise to 69%. But then the ratings started sliding again. By mid-October, Gallup showed that only a 56% majority approved of the way Bush was running the country. The rising casualties coupled with failure to find either weapons of mass destruction or a linkage between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaida were taking their toll on loyalty to the Cult of Patriotism. Chief political advisor Karl Rove and the White House spin doctors needed something more to re-charge their leader's credibility. In mid-October, just a few weeks after Hillary Clinton announced

⁶On 1 May 2003, when Bush announced that major combat operations were complete, there had been 114 US troops killed in combat in Iraq. By Memorial Day 2004, 893 had died. That says nothing about the thousands of Iraqi troops killed or the tens of thousands of civilian fatalities.



Bush speaking to Troops in Iraq on Thanksgiving Day 2003. Source: The White House.

she would visit Iraq, Bush's PR specialists came up with an extraordinary plan – the commander-in-chief would actually visit the battlefield.

After announcing that he would spend Thanksgiving Day with his family and close friends at his Crawford, Texas ranch, Bush secretly boarded Air Force One on the Wednesday evening before Thanksgiving 2003. With only a select few media reporters aboard, he flew to Iraq and landed at Baghdad International Airport on Thanksgiving evening under cover of darkness.⁷ Only a few top White House aides and his family, plus the selected reporters, knew of the plan. It was not told to the public until Air Force One was back in the air and on its way home. At this time Bush's approval rating was only 51%. American deaths had risen to 300 – more than twice the number when major combat operations were declared ended – with 60 deaths in November alone.

Bush did not leave the Baghdad Airport during his two-hour stay in Iraq. He did his granfalooning in a hangar where some 600 specially-selected troops were assembled for Thanksgiving dinner. Wearing an Army workout jacket with insignia of the troops' unit, he gave what

David Livingstone described as “a soundbite-friendly speech rich in flag-waving rhetoric and practical vagaries. Speaking in short, broad generalities ... for purposes of ostensibly expressing gratitude ... Bush's words served instead both to perpetuate illusions and to inculcate fear. The President's repetitive mantra of ‘terror,’ ‘danger,’ ‘freedom,’ and the like ...”⁸

Former White House administration official Mary Matalin extolled Bush's visit to the war zone: “This was effective, because it captured something about the president that people know is true, that he really cares about the soldiers and gets emotional when he sees them.”⁹ But Elaine Johnson has a different perspective. Her son, Darius, was killed when a Chinook helicopter was shot down on the 2nd of November 2003. She wondered why the president hadn't bothered to attend her son's funeral or to send a message to her and her family. “Evidently my son wasn't important enough to him dead for him to visit the family or call the family,” she said. And then added: “As long as my son was alive he was important, because he sent him over there to fight a war.”¹⁰

⁷Some reports say the Bush arrived in Baghdad early in the morning and that the troops were rousted out of bed before dawn for Thanksgiving dinner at 6:00 AM. But the time difference between Texas and Iraq coupled with flight time support an evening arrival.

⁸Livingstone, 28 November 2003.

⁹Quoted in Allen, 4 December 2003.

¹⁰Quoted in Littwin, 25 November 2003.

David Livingstone suggested that rather than spending the time on a junket to Baghdad, Bush “could have spent his time and energy visiting the families of the soldiers who have died. Or, he could have stopped in at any VA hospital, where he might have a word or two with young men and women who have given arms, legs, eyes, ears, or other valuable body parts in service to Bush and Haliburton.”¹¹ The Baghdad excursion wasn’t very successful in raising the leader’s credibility. The polls only went up four percentage points.

Then America turned the corner into 2004. By February the Cult leader’s confidence polls were hovering around 50%.¹² That was absolutely no way to start out an election year. It became important that public attention be diverted away from domestic problems where Bush was dogged by a faltering economy and huge unemployment. The emphasis must be shifted to Bush’s strongest issue – that of a war president which established his popularity in the wake of 9/11. The Cult of Patriotism had to be stimulated.

White House PR experts came up with a week-long “media blitz” leading up to the first anniversary of invading Iraq. The “main message of the week is that the nation is ‘more secure’ because of the capture of Hussein.”¹³ A “dangerous regime with a history of aggression and links to terror organizations is no longer in power,” said Jim Wilkinson, Assistant National Security Advisor.¹⁴ Never mind that this message is all phrased in the past tense of a decade ago. Never mind that the people were lied to in order to get the war started. Never mind that the invasion of Iraq actually sparked massive terrorist activity in that country. Never mind all that – just remember that Saddam was an evil man.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld kicked off the “war-week events” with one of his town hall meetings on March 12th. Members of Bush’s “War cabinet” were featured on talk shows and media interviews. Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham and the National Security Council held a “show and tell” at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, showing centrifuge parts and other equipment from Libya’s former nuclear weapons program. Meanwhile a ship carrying the remainder of Libya’s nuclear-weapons-making gear docked at an east coast port. The message revealed plainly that preventing Libya from becoming a nuclear power was all the result of a strong American leader. No mention of the hundreds of American lives and tens of thousands of Iraqi lives that were lost in the process.¹⁵

The Republican dominated House of Representatives planned a mid-week four-hour debate and vote on a resolution saying the world is better off since Saddam was removed from power. The resolution did not mention weapons of mass destruction except for the gassing by Saddam of his own Kurdish people in the north. On Wednesday, US Government TV stations reminded people in the Middle East of that 1998

¹¹Livingstone, 28 November 2003.

¹²Gallup, 51%; ABC and CBS, 50%; FOX and Newsweek, 48%; Time, 54%; and Zogby International, 49%.

¹³Allen, 14 March 2004.

¹⁴Quoted in Allen, 14 March 2004.

¹⁵Quoted phrases in this paragraph from Allen, 14 March 2004.

gassing of the Kurds, killing some 5,000, and illustrating that Saddam did indeed once have weapons of mass destruction. Again, no mention that the US helped him acquire those weapons or that the US did not condemn the use of those weapons at the time – either against the Kurds or Saddam’s opponents in the Iran-Iraq war. No mention that since the first Gulf war Saddam had been forced to dismantle all those weapons of mass destruction programs. Again, just remember that Saddam was an evil man.

The grand finale of the week was when the president and first lady ate lunch with the troops at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and then visited wounded soldiers at Walter Reed Army Medical Center – reported by the administration to be the third visit in six months. On Friday evening Bush gave a major speech from the East Room of the White House.

That was all a waste of time. Opinion polls remained essentially unchanged – some went up one percentage point but others dropped proportionately. There were just too many facts, and too many informed people, for the skewed propaganda to have any effect. The felony leaking of Valerie Plame as a CIA operative wouldn’t go away. Neither would the Vice President’s connection with Enron and the California energy crisis, his secret energy board, and his continued connection with Haliburton. Soon there was the Ahmed Chalabi scandal, when it was discovered that this top US puppet in Iraq had been sending secret information to Iran and possibly other Middle East countries.

Then at the end of April 2004 the big scandal broke –photos showing torture and mistreatment of war prisoners in Iraq’s Abu Ghurayb (also spelled Abu Ghraib) prison by US guards. Damage control; was activated immediately. First it was claimed that just a few renegade military police were responsible. But additional and more damaging photos continued to appear. The International Red Cross officials reminded the world that they had months before warned of widespread torture by US troops. Whistleblowers came forth with more grisly stories. Major General Antonio Taguba, head of the Army’s major investigation into Abu Ghurayb, told Senate investigators in May that “abuse of prisoners by the American military and intelligence agencies was systemic.”¹⁶ The London *Observer*, in a well-documented article, states: “The United States government, in conjunction with key allies, is running an ‘invisible’ network of prisons and detention centres in which thousands of suspects have disappeared without trace since the war on terror began. ... Few escape the ghost network of detention facilities, which range from massive prison camps such as that at Guantanamo Bay to naval vessels in the Indian Ocean, so accounts of life within the new gulag are rare.”¹⁷

By the end of May Bush’s approval rating had sunk to 47% according to Gallup, with some polls registering as low as 42%.

But there was still more to come. Back in 2002, commanders at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba complained that conventional interrogation methods were not obtaining the desired results. Word then leaked out that top lawyers in the Defense and Justice Departments put together a 100+ page memo outlining how far interrogators could go with the use of torture. Written by the Justice Department’s Office of Legal Counsel,

¹⁶New York Times Editorial; 12 May 2004.

¹⁷Burke, 13 June 2004.

it said that “torturing suspected al Qaeda members abroad ‘may be justified’ and that international laws against torture ‘maybe unconstitutional if applied to interrogation’ conducted against suspected terrorists.”¹⁸ *The Wall Street Journal* reported that at the core of the memo “is an exceptional argument that because nothing is more important than ‘obtaining intelligence vital to the protection of untold thousands of American citizens’ normal strictures on torture might not apply.”¹⁹ In the 1 August 2002 memo “written for the CIA and addressed to White House Counsel Alberto R. Gonzales, the Justice Department defined torture in a much narrower way, for example, than does the US Army, which has historically carried out most wartime interrogations.”²⁰

Attorney General John Ashcroft refused to release the 2002 memo to Congress. He told the legislators: “There is no presidential order immunizing torture.”²¹ Well, of course not. What president would be so naive as to document a war crime with a presidential order. The process was much more subtle.

A 6 March 2003 draft of the 2002 Memo did reach the public eye. It was classified “secret” but only if the attachment was included. Of course it wasn’t. Nevertheless, the attachment apparently went directly to the crux of the torture issue. According to *The Wall Street Journal* it listed “specific interrogation techniques and whether Mr. Rumsfeld himself or other officials must grant permission before they could be used.”²² Documents and witness testimony indicates that Rumsfeld did approve the use of dogs to intimidate prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, along with at least five other high pressure techniques which were not among the Army’s standard interrogation methods.²³ Bush had declared that prisoners at Guantanamo were not covered by Geneva Convention protections.

But, even according to this convoluted interpretation of international law, prisoners in Iraq did enjoy Geneva Convention protection. So, even by its own policy, events took a more disastrous turn for the Bush administration when in early September 2003 Major General Geoffrey D. Miller, commandant of Guantanamo Bay, along with senior aides from the CIA and Defense Intelligence Agency, visited Iraq’s Abu Ghurayb jail. Prior to that there had been no formalized interrogation rules for prisoners in Iraq. The commanding general of Abu Ghurayb quoted Miller as saying “they are like dogs and if you allow them to believe at any point that they are more than a dog then you’ve lost control of them.”²⁴ But the day after Miller and company left, interrogation options were issued which closely match those of Guantanamo Bay.

¹⁸Allen and Priest, 9 June 2004.

¹⁹Bravin, 7 June 2004.

²⁰Priest and Smith, 8 June 2004.

²¹Quoted in Schmidt, 9 June 2003.

²²Bravin, 7 June 2004.

²³See Smith and White, 12 June 2004.

²⁴Quoted in BBC News, 15 June 2004.

On 10 September 2003, Lieutenant General Ricardo S. Sanchez, the senior US military officer in Iraq issued an order entitled *Interrogation and Counter-Resistance Policy*. It allowed “letting senior officials in a Baghdad jail use military dogs, temperature extremes, reversed sleep patterns, sensory deprivation, and diets of bread and water on detainees whenever they wished, according to newly obtained documents.”²⁵ Some 32 interrogation tactics were approved. But some officials in the US Central Command objected so Sanchez revised his directive on October 12th. He removed several items and required that prison officials obtain his permission to use the remainder. Some of the high pressure methods that remained were “taking someone to a less hospitable location for interrogation, manipulating his or her diet, imposing isolation for more than 30 days, using military dogs to provoke fear, and requiring someone to maintain a ‘stress position’ for as long as 45 minutes.”²⁶

The unfolding of such inhumane treatment went against everyone’s perception of American values and the blame was creeping closer to the top. There is still more. So far, only seven enlisted personnel have been charged with crimes although some officers have been reprimanded and shuffled. Pfc Lynndie England, whose picture featured prominently in some of the first torture photos obtained, claims that military intelligence officials ordered her military police unit to soften up detainees prior to being interrogated. Her defense attorneys have “compiled a list of 100 potential witnesses stretching from the halls of power in Washington, D.C., to the sand-swept vistas of Iraq. By putting top government officials like Vice President Dick Cheney on the witness list, England’s attorneys are serving notice that in defending their client, they will attempt to put on trial the Bush administration’s policies on intelligence gathering from detainees.”²⁷

Embarrassment for Bush comes from even higher up. Brigadier General Janis Karpinski, who was in charge of the military police who run Abu Ghurayb and other jails in Iraq, has been suspended from duty but not charged with any crime. She told BBC News she was “Being made a ‘convenient scapegoat’ for abuse ordered by others.”²⁸ She says that Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez, the top US commander in Iraq, should be asked what he knows about the torture. She explained that military intelligence took over part of Abu Ghurayb to make it more like the interrogations at Guantanamo Bay. She continued that the military police unit the accused soldiers belonged to were too green in Iraq to stage a picture taking spree at night on their own, and believes the more damaging truth will come out during each individual’s court marshal.

The administration was not sitting still during this. Washington’s PR experts launched a broadside of activity aimed at diverting public attention and improving the Cult leader’s credibility. Attorney General John Ashcroft on 26 May 2004 announced that “intelligence reports and public statements of people associated with Al Qaida suggested that the terrorist group was ‘almost ready to attack the United States’ and

²⁵Smith and White, 12 June 2004.

²⁶Smith and White, 12 June 2004.

²⁷Lash and Fuoco, 13 June 2004.

²⁸BBC News, 15 June 2004.

harbored a ‘specific intention to hit the United States hard’.”²⁹ He said this assault could happen within the next few months.

This warning, which could have rallied “patriots” behind the Chief had it been taken seriously, was immediately assailed as a scare tactic. First, FBI Director Robert S. Mueller III somewhat undercut his boss’ announcement with a more conservative assessment, saying: “For the next few weeks we have reason to believe there is a heightened threat to the US interests around the world.”³⁰ There was good reason for a heightened threat globally because of the upcoming June summit meeting in Turkey, the July European soccer tournament in Portugal, and the August Olympics in Greece. But the FBI had no elevated warnings in the US. Police and firefighter union leaders, in a partisan statement, accused Ashcroft of timing his announcement to divert people’s attention from Bush’s plummeting approval ratings.

And then the inevitable anonymous official offered his opinion: “There’s no real new intelligence, and a lot of this has been out there already. There’s really no significant change that would require us to change the alert levels of the country.”³¹ That sounds like someone from the Department of Homeland Security because they are the ones that change the color-coded warnings. As a matter of fact, just the day before Ashcroft’s announcement, Department of Homeland Security officials said they had no new information about any attack threat. Of course there are other anonymous officials who voiced support for Ashcroft’s statement, but they offered only vague generalities.

It took only two days for NBC News to discover that Ashcroft’s “credible intelligence from multiple sources”³² indicating that Al Qaida’s plans for attacking the US were 90% complete was a fabrication. Terrorism experts said no credible Al; Qaida operative said that. Rather, they claim, that information came from the discredited Abu Hafs al-Masri Brigades. “This particular group is not taken seriously by Western intelligence,” said terrorism expert M.J. Gohel of the Asia-Pacific Foundation, an international policy assessment group. “[Abu Hafs al-Masri Brigades] does not appear to have any real field operational capability. But it is certainly part of the global jihad movement – part of its propaganda wing, if you like. It likes to weave a web of lies; it likes to put out disinformation so that the truth is deeply buried. So it is a dangerous group in that sense, but it is not taken seriously in terms of its operational capability.”³³ The FBI also reluctantly admitted that Abu Hafs al-Masri Brigades was the source of Ashcroft’s information.³⁴

²⁹Stevenson and Lichtblau, 27 May 2004.

³⁰Quoted in Stevenson and Lichtblau, 27 May 2004.

³¹Quoted in Stevenson and Lichtblau, 27 May 2004.

³²Quoted in Myers, 28 May 2004.

³³Quoted in Myers, 28 May 2004.

³⁴It is not intended to imply that no terrorist threat exists. There are undoubtedly plans in the works to attack the US again. The point here is that Ashcroft has hyped the threat for political purposes.

Well, conjuring up fear of the terrorists failed on that try. But let's move along on the calendar. Memorial Day was coming up. That event is always a golden opportunity to drum up some pseudo patriotism. Especially with dedication of the World War II Memorial in the Capitol Mall scheduled. That was a unifying war as no other had been. As described in the *San Diego Union-Tribune*: "All Americans joined in the war. The military draft spared few families with young men. Women stepped in to replace men taken by the draft or to join up themselves. On the homefront we endured rationing and paid for the war through income taxes raised tenfold – to a top rate of 91%."³⁵ This was a good time to remind Americans they are supposed to support the leader during wartime. (Of course the high income taxes – especially the excess profits tax – would not be mentioned.)

The World War II Memorial was authorized by Congress in May 1993 and construction began on 4 September 2001 – exactly one week before the 9/11 attack. Dedication week was scheduled during May 27-30th of 2004 with the actual dedication ceremony on May 29th. Bush gave a very eloquent speech which properly memorialized the World War II generation. But he did manage to get in a few plugs on how people today should be supporting his war on terrorism. Regarding unity behind the war, Bush said: "When it mattered most, an entire generation of Americans showed the finest qualities of our nation and of humanity." With an apparent reference to curtailment of civil liberties by the Patriot Act, the leader said: "Men who considered themselves learned and civilized came to believe that free institutions must give way to the severe doctrines and stern discipline of a regimented society." To illustrate how successful wars require the sacrifice of the entire society he pointed out that "Americans had to work and save and ration and sacrifice as never before. ... this was a people's war and everyone was in it." Then Bush added: "With all our flaws, Americans at that time had never been more united. And together, we began and completed the largest single task in our history."³⁶ Yes, Bush's speech was very inspirational. It stimulated the pseudo-patriotic feeling of nationalism amid the display of military might.³⁷ It probably served to rally many in the Cult of Patriotism around the present task of ridding the world of terrorists.

Prior to the WWII Memorial dedication, Bush had given a speech on May 24th at the Army War College in which he proposed demolition of Abu Ghraib prison. Sydney Blumenthal, a former Clinton White House advisor summed up this talk: "Bush's principle analogy conflates Al Qaida and Saddam Hussein into a common threat of 'weapons of mass destruction' and a 'totalitarian political ideology' that is 'not an expression of religion' ..."³⁸ A military strategist at the Army War College told Blumenthal: "They haven't known what they've been doing since the statue of Saddam came down. Bush's speech was a vision speech with no connection of facts on the ground. That seems to be the limit of his understanding and ability. Even Vietnam doesn't look so bad in retrospect."³⁹ This military expert's remarks hinged around a report

³⁵Quoted in Goldsborough, 31 May 2004.

³⁶All quotations in this paragraph are from Remarks of President George W. Bush.

³⁷I classify nationalism as a false patriotism because true patriotism transcends the selfish interests of a nationalist mentality.

³⁸Blumenthal, 3 June 2004.

³⁹Quoted in Blumenthal, 3 June 2004.

released by the Army War College's Strategic Studies Institute the night before Bush's speech. It warned: "Prospects for creating a stable, prosperous, and democratic Iraq are problematical, and observers and decision makers should not be misled by false analogies to American state-building successes in Germany and Japan after World War II."⁴⁰

Following the WWII Memorial dedication, and despite the warning from the Army War College's report, Bush continued to compare his war on terror to World War II. "Our goal, the goal of this generation, is the same," Bush told graduates of the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs on June 2nd. "We will secure our nation and defend the peace through the forward march of freedom," he continued.⁴¹ Unfortunately for the administration, the polls still showed low public support.

Then a very fortuitous event occurred for Bush's propaganda campaign. On 5 June 2004 former President Ronald Reagan succumbed to pneumonia. Without seeming to do anything that wasn't expected anyway, Reagan was memorialized with a full presidential state funeral – a week-long event with many opportunities to pump some substance into the deflating Cult of Patriotism. During that time the air waves and newsprint was monopolized by the latest ceremony extolling Reagan and the Office of President, and by inference, George W. Bush who now occupies that office.

From all the praise bestowed on the Reagan legacy a casual observer could mistake him for a saint. But he was, after all, the forerunner of modern-day neoconservatives. He was a neocon by the strictest definition, having once been a democrat who supported Roosevelt's New Deal and then transforming into a staunch conservative republican. But the accolades did not mention support for sponsoring political violence in Nicaragua from bases in Honduras and Costa Rica⁴², snubbing and boycotting the World Court⁴³, the Iran-Contra scandal⁴⁴, support of the mujahideen⁴⁵ in Afghanistan⁴⁶, the 14 April 1986 retaliatory bombing of

⁴⁰Quoted in Blumenthal, 3 June 2004.

⁴¹Quoted in USINFO.STATE.GOV

⁴²Some critics say this amounts to state sponsorship of terrorism to overthrow a democratically-elected government.

⁴³In the case of *Nicaragua vs. United States*, the World Court sanctioned the US for "unlawful use of force" and sponsoring paramilitary activity in and against Nicaragua." The US was ordered to pay billions of dollars (estimated at between \$20-30 billion) which is still owed. The US dismissed the finding as partisan and irrelevant. (Quotations from *Wikipedia*.)

⁴⁴An elaborate plan, contrary to acts of Congress, to sell arms to Iran (at the same time the US was supporting Iraq in the Iran-Iraq war) and use the proceeds to support Contras guerrillas in the bloody Nicaraguan civil war.

⁴⁵Holy warriors.

⁴⁶This led to the rise of bin Laden's organization and the Taliban.

Libya from a British airfield, support for Saddam Hussein after he used chemical weapons⁴⁷, invading Grenada, and supporting Jonas Savimbi in the Angola civil war.

Neither did the eulogies delve into Reagan's significant tax cuts for the rich (from a top of 70%) with a corresponding reduction in spending for the poor⁴⁸, greater deficit spending and a tripling of the national debt, a massive military buildup, and closing mental health facilities while governor of California.⁴⁹

No, the week of memorializing Reagan as a lover of freedom and democracy never mentioned any of the bad things. What it did do was temporarily raise Bush's foreign policy approval ratings to 57% according to a PEW poll on early June – that is up from PEW's 45% a month earlier. But that was only temporary.

It was only temporary because in mid-June the 9/11 Commission⁵⁰ moved public attention away from Reagan's funeral and back to the war on Iraq. Bush's hand-picked commission on June 16th released a preliminary staff report on Iraq stating: "We have no credible evidence that Iraq and Al Qaida cooperated on attacks against the United States."⁵¹ With no weapons of mass destruction found in Iraq, that kicked the sole remaining justification for going to war – Saddam's alleged assistance to Al Qaida – in the trash heap. But the administration was quick to respond in an attempt to maintain its sinking credibility.

Bush came out strong in his defense the next day: "This administration never said that the 9/11 attacks were orchestrated between Saddam and Al Qaida. We did say there were numerous contacts between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaida."⁵² White House Communications Director Dan Bartlett added that there is no contradiction with the staff report because Bush never made an explicit link between Saddam Hussein and

⁴⁷The Reagan administration provided weapons and intelligence information to Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war. Illegal deals also supplied Saddam with chemical and biological materials. By the summer of 1983 it was globally known that Saddam had used chemical weapons against Iran, and by November 1983 against his own Kurdish population in northern Iraq. Nevertheless, Reagan sent Donald Rumsfeld as a special envoy to Iraq where he met with Saddam on 20 December 1983 (to discuss alternative oil export routes) and again in March 1984 (to discuss obtaining Export-Import Bank credits for Iraq).

⁴⁸In connection with social program cuts, Reagan's budget director Davis Stockman was ridiculed when he wanted to classify ketchup as a vegetable for the federal school lunch program.

⁴⁹As governor, to make his promised budget cuts, Reagan dismantled California's ten public psychiatric hospitals and proposed community-based housing and treatment to replace them – but funding was not forthcoming. Thousands of mentally ill patients were dumped into the streets, with the most dangerous ending up in jail. He exacerbated the problem as president when he cut the Department of Housing and Urban Development to help offset his massive military buildup. This resulted in American homelessness, a problem virtually nonexistent during the 1970s, spiraling to some 2 million by the time Reagan left office.

⁵⁰The 9/11 Commission is formally known as the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States.

⁵¹Quoted in Scheer, 22 June 2004. Also see Landay, 17 June 2004.

⁵²Quoted in Pincus and Milbank, "Bush Reasserts Hussein-Al Qaida Link," 17 June 2004. Also see Jehl, 18 June 2004. Also see Yen, 17 June 2004.

9/11. He said: “Just because Al Qaida and Iraq may not have collaborated in a specific attack on 9/11 does not mean that there’s not a relationship or past relationship between Iraq and Al Qaida.”⁵³

This began the debate which Robert Scheer described as “playing cheap semantic tricks to justify one of history’s great bait-and-switch operations, arguing that they never said explicitly that Iraq was collaborating with Al Qaida to harm the US.”⁵⁴ Notice the past tense used in both quotations. Bartlett uses the term “relationship or past relationship.” The debate then delves into the failed attempts to cooperate during the 1990s – definitely past tense. I have covered them in a previous paper.⁵⁵ Nothing has changed, and the contacts never developed into cooperation, so I will not repeat that information here.

What I want to do first is address the times the Bush administration actually *did* try to connect Iraq with 9/11, and how that affected public opinion in regard to invading Iraq. It is in reconciling these instances with the 9/11 Commission’s staff report that White House spinmasters are pursuing in order to maintain, or try to maintain, their leader’s credibility and attractiveness.

In late 2001, Cheney said it was “pretty well confirmed”⁵⁶ that a meeting between Mohammed Atta (the chief hijacker on 9/11) and a senior Iraqi intelligence officer took place in Prague, Czech Republic, in April 2000 – prior to the 9/11 attacks. But the 9/11 staff disagreed: “We have examined the allegation that Atta met with an Iraqi intelligence officer in Prague on April 9th. Based on the evidence available – including investigations by Czech and US authorities, plus detainee reporting – we do not believe that such a meeting occurred.”⁵⁷ The Commission also pointed out that Atta was in Florida at the time the meeting was supposed to have taken place. Cheney changed his “pretty well confirmed” to admitting the meeting could neither be proved nor disproved, “We just don’t know,” he said.⁵⁸ But that lack of knowledge didn’t keep him from persuading the public to believe there was collaboration.

Cheney said on NBC’s *Meet The Press* that “we will have struck a major blow right at the heart of the base, if you will, the geographic base of the terrorists who had us under assault now for many years, but most especially on 9/11.”⁵⁹ Well, perhaps he was referring to the entire Middle East but the implications are pretty plain that he wanted everyone to believe he was referring to Iraq.

⁵³Quoted in Froomkin, 17 June 2004.

⁵⁴Scheer, 22 June 2004.

⁵⁵See PLRC-030503 -- *Understanding the “War on Terrorism”: “Pax Americana” and Preemptive Force*, pp. 10-13.

⁵⁶Quoted in Pincus and Milbank, “Bush Reasserts Hussein-Al Qaida Link,” 17 June 2004. Also quoted in Scheer, 22 June 2004.

⁵⁷Quoted in Scheer, 22 June 2004.

⁵⁸Quoted in Shenon and Stevenson.

⁵⁹Quoted in Scheer, 22 June 2004. Also quoted in Pincus and Milbank, “Bush Reasserts Hussein-Al Qaida Link,” 17 June 2004.

There is more to this discussion of a relationship between Saddam and 9/11. I will quote Thomas H. Keen, one of Bush's fellow republicans and hand-picked by Bush to chair the 9/11 Commission. He said the commission's staff found "that there is no credible evidence that we can discover, after a long investigation, that Iraq and Saddam Hussein were in any way part of the attack on the United States."⁶⁰ Nevertheless, it was a publicly- and congressionally-perceived link between Saddam and 9/11 that allowed the war on Iraq. Robert Scheer writes: "The administration was perfectly happy when more than four out of five Americans polled, as we went to war, said that they believed Saddam Hussein had something to do with the destruction of the World Trade Center towers."⁶¹ In September 2003, on NBC's *Meet The Press*, Cheney said "I think it's not surprising that people make that connection" between Saddam and September 11th.⁶² True, he's not saying there is a link, but his innuendo certainly implies there is. And the Bush administration took exactly zero steps to correct any misunderstanding.

Quite the opposite. Bush needed a legal need to invade Iraq. He had to show a connection between Iraq and 9/11 in order to justify the war. Public Law 107-243 – called the "AUTHORIZATION FOR USE OF MILITARY FORCE AGAINST IRAQ RESOLUTION OF 2002" – was passed on 16 October 2002. Section 3 of that joint resolution is what authorizes Bush to use armed force against Iraq (see Appendix-A). Narrowing down further, Section 3(b) spells out what the president must determine before exercising these war powers.⁶³ Paragraph 1 under that subsection says that diplomacy and working with the UN must be certified as insufficient to protect our national security. Paragraph 2 requires that any "necessary actions" are to be taken against "international terrorists and terrorist organizations, **including those nations**, organizations, or persons who planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001."⁶⁴ To attack the nation of Iraq, Bush had to certify that it had "planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001."

Bush had to certify to Congress in those words in order to justify using the war powers Congress had authorized. And that is exactly what he did. In his 18 March 2003 Presidential Letter advising Congress that he was invoking war powers against Iraq, Bush quoted that Section 3(b) in its entirety. (See Appendix-B) Journalist Mimi Hall summed it up succinctly: "Bush said that the war was permitted under legislation authorizing force against those who 'planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001'."⁶⁵ The leader cannot say, without destroying his credibility, that his administration never claimed there was a relationship between Iraq and 9/11. But he certainly tried.

⁶⁰Quoted in Pincus and Milbank, "Bush Reasserts Hussein-Al Qaida Link," 17 June 2004.

⁶¹Quoted in Scheer, 22 June 2004.

⁶²Quoted in Hall, 17 June 2004.

⁶³Section 1 merely gives the legal citation for this resolution, Section 2 declares the support for US diplomatic efforts, and Section 4 (the last section) outlines how the president must report progress to congress.

⁶⁴Public Law 107-243, Section 3(b), Paragraph 2 (partial).

⁶⁵Hall, 17 June 2004.

Now I will turn to just a link between Iraq and Al Qaida (excluding 9/11) which Bush and his administration adamantly insist exists. Even as late as June 14th, two days before the staff report was released, Cheney claimed a link between Saddam and Al Qaida. Then, immediately after the staff report came out on June 16th, Bush stood firm and emphatically proclaimed: “There was a relationship between Iraq and Al Qaida.”⁶⁶ After a cabinet meeting Bush told reporters: “The reason I keep insisting that there was a relationship between Saddam and Al Qaida is because there was a relationship between Saddam and Al Qaida.”⁶⁷ (He still uses the past tense but, nevertheless, what he says is not true. None of the contacts during the 1990s developed into anything that could be called a relationship.)

Two days after the 9/11 staff report was released, the State Department website posted two releases obviously aimed at misleading the public. The first was an op-ed article written by Stephen J. Hadley, Deputy National Security Adviser, for *USA Today*. Entitled “NSC Official Says Commission Confirms Links Between Iraq and Al Qaida,” it was published by the State Department that same day.⁶⁸ The key word is “Links.” Hadley describes those “links” as “suspicious ties and contacts between Iraq and Al Qaida” during the 1990s to explore possible cooperation. He quotes Commission Chairman Thomas Kean as confirming “There were contacts between Iraq and Al Qaida, a number of them, some of them a little shadowy. They were definitely there.”⁶⁹ But contacts to explore cooperation are not credible evidence that cooperation actually took place.

Hadley then paraphrases 9/11 Commission Vice Chairman Lee Hamilton as saying “the commission does not disagree with the administration’s assertion that there were connections between Al Qaida and Saddam Hussein’s government.”⁷⁰ Then Hadley drops it there. He does not mention Hamilton’s full comment as reported in *The New York Times*: “... the commission has found evidence of repeated contacts between Iraqi officials and the Qaida terrorists ... But [Hamilton] said the panel had been unable to document any ‘collaborative relationship’ between Iraq and the terror network – against the United States or any other target.”⁷¹ Then to emphasize his point, Hamilton said the committee had no credible evidence “of any collaborative relationship – period.”⁷²

Then Hadley, in his pro-Bush op-ed piece, brings up the often-repeated story about Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who was once associated with Al Qaida. He says Zarqawi and “nearly two dozen Al Qaida

⁶⁶Quoted in Jehl, 18 June 2004.

⁶⁷Quoted in Pincus and Milbank, “Bush Reasserts Hussein-Al Qaida Link,” 17 June 2004. Also in Scheer, 22 June 2004.

⁶⁸Hadley, 18 June 2004.

⁶⁹Quoted in Hadley, 18 June 2004.

⁷⁰Hadley, 18 June 2004.

⁷¹Shenon and Stevenson, 19 June 2004

⁷²Quoted in Shenon and Stevenson, 19 June 2004

associates” were in Baghdad before the fall of Saddam’s regime. This assertion has been discussed and disqualified many times. No evidence was found to indicate Zarqawi worked with the Iraqi government. To say that being in Baghdad was proof of Iraqi collaboration with Al Qaida is tantamount to saying that America also collaborated because some 9/11 hijackers took training in US flight schools and lived in the US.

In the final statement of his article Hadley signs off with a series of untruths: “The president did not order the liberation of Iraq in retaliation for 9/11. He sent American troops to Iraq to remove a grave and gathering threat to America’s security. Because he acted, Iraq is free, and America and the world is safer.”⁷³ Let me analyze that statement. **Falsehood #1:** The president had to certify that the “nation” of Iraq was connected to 9/11 in order to invoke his war powers, as discussed above. **Falsehood #2:** Iraq posed no grave and gathering threat to America’s security. That was all fabrication. No weapons of mass destruction exist in Iraq. **Falsehood #3:** America and the world are not safer. The war on Iraq has recruited more oppressed people to hate the US. When Secretary Powell was finally forced to revise his 2003 report on terrorism, it showed that terrorism had increased and the hatred generated by invading Iraq contributed significantly to that increase.

Now I will turn to the second June 18th release on the State Department website, which I mentioned above. This one is a transcript of an interview by journalist Michael Medved of Secretary Powell which took place the previous day. Powell repeated the undisputed and overstated fact that “there were clear connections and ties over time between Al Qaida and the Hussein regime.”⁷⁴ Then he poses a couple questions that have sinister connotations: “The question is, well, how strong were those contacts? Were they responded to on the Iraq side? And what we have been saying is that there were such contacts, and I don’t think that’s in dispute, frankly.”⁷⁵ What did he say? Of course the contacts aren’t in dispute, they have been discussed *ad infinitum*. But he left his questions dangling with their false implications. Walter Pincus and Dana Milbank set the record straight: “Bush said the contacts between Iraq and Al Qaida provided proof of a relationship. [but] The report ... said that all relevant classified information that it reviewed showed that the contacts that took place between Iraq and Al Qaida officials never led to cooperation.”⁷⁶

Another story the administration has been telling repeatedly is regarding a terrorist camp in northern Iraq. When Powell told the United Nations about a terrorist group operating in Iraq, he was referring to the Ansar al-Islam cell which had at one time received some help from Al Qaida. But Ansar al-Islam was located in the autonomous Kurdish territory of northern Iraq where Saddam had no control. Conversely, it was in the northern no-fly zone patrolled by the US.

Later when Cheney was on CNBC he deplored the media not accurately reporting the commission staff’s findings: “What they [the commission] were addressing was whether or not they [Iraq] were involved in

⁷³Hadley, 18 June 2004.

⁷⁴Powell, 18 June 2004.

⁷⁵Powell, 18 June 2004.

⁷⁶Pincus and Milbank, “Bush Reasserts Hussein-Al Qaida Link,” 17 June 2004.

9/11. They did not address the broader question of a relationship between Iraq and Al Qaida in other areas, in other ways.”⁷⁷ But Commission spokesperson Al Felzenberg set the record straight with a very direct statement: “We found no evidence of joint operations or joint work or common operations between Al Qaida and Saddam Hussein’s government, and that’s beyond 9/11.”⁷⁸

In the June 17th interview on CNBC, Cheney was asked if he knew information about an Iraq-Al Qaida link that the 9/11 Commission did not know. His reply was: “Probably.”⁷⁹ This prompted Chairman Kean and Vice Chairman Hamilton of the Commission to call on Cheney “to turn over any intelligence reports that would support the White House’s insistence that there was a close relationship between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaida.”⁸⁰ Hamilton commented: “It sounds like the White House has evidence that we didn’t have. I would like to see the evidence that Mr. Cheney is talking about.”⁸¹ And Kean indicated that he “was surprised by Mr. Cheney’s comments and would be ‘very disappointed’ if the White House had not shared intelligence information about Al Qaida ...”⁸² Cheney’s office declined to comment on the request for information.

The Bush administration consistently and adamantly repeat information about exploratory meetings in the 1990s which failed to result in cooperation. One journalist comments “It’s the Big Lie technique – never flinch in the face of truth.”⁸³ Andrew Kohut, who directed the early-June Pew Research poll, believes Bush will be able to keep Iraq and Al Qaida tied in the public mind where about half the population believe the connection has been proved. He explains: “So many people believe it because he’s saying it. Bush’s hanging tough on this gives him the credibility he has.”⁸⁴

One outside advisor to the White House said the issue of an Iraq relationship to Al Qaida would become prominent in the presidential election race. “They feel it’s important to their long-term credibility on the issue of the decision to go to war,” the advisor said. “It’s important because it’s part of the overall view that Iraq is part of the war on terror. If you discount the relationship between Iraq and Al Qaida, then you discount the proposition that it’s [the war] part of the war on terror. If it’s not part of the war on terror, then what is it – some cockeyed adventure on the part of George W. Bush?”⁸⁵

⁷⁷Quoted in Milbank, 20 June 2004.

⁷⁸Quoted in Milbank, 20 June 2004.

⁷⁹Quoted in Shenon and Stevenson, 19 June 2004.

⁸⁰Shenon and Stevenson, 19 June 2004.

⁸¹Quoted in Shenon and Stevenson, 19 June 2004.

⁸²Shenon and Stevenson, 19 June 2004.

⁸³Scheer, 22 June 2004.

⁸⁴Quoted in Milbank, 20 June 2004.

⁸⁵Quoted in Shenon and Stevenson, 19 June 2004.

The truth will be found that it's not a cockeyed adventure. There is a very special reason for the war and it's not a war against terror. That point was brought very clearly to public attention when another bombshell rocked the White House, deflecting attention from the 9/11 Commission staff report but plummeting Bush's credibility ratings still further. It actually started in early May 2004, when the Walt Disney Company blocked its Miramax subsidiary from distributing a film with the uncanny name of *Fahrenheit 9/11*.⁸⁶ The film was made by Michael Moore, a man who gained respect through a previous film – *Bowling For Columbine* – in which he challenged corporations regarding gun control. Moore amuses most people with his political humor, offends some with his blunt language, startles many with his allegations, and insults a few with his satire. But his research of facts is meticulous. Lea Barnes, who considers herself a moderate republican, said after seeing *Fahrenheit 9/11*: "I trust Michael Moore. He can be out there a bit, but he's for the common man."⁸⁷

Moore was somewhat well known up to that time through two previous films and a couple books. But the Disney rejection upped his public image – when you try to censor something, the people want it all the more. However, Moore became a household name later that month when his film won the Cannes *Palme d'Or* (The Golden Palm) for the best film, and Moore became the grand winner of the festival.⁸⁸ *Fahrenheit 9/11* received the longest standing ovation in the festival's history – variously reported from 15 to 20 minutes.

Moore had no trouble finding a distributor. After Disney backed out, the Weinstein brothers (Harvey and Bob – both heavy donors to the democratic party) reneged from Miramax and bought the rights. Along with two other companies – Lions Gate Entertainment Corporation and The Independent Film Channel – they started up Fellowship Adventure Group to distribute the film.

In my opinion, Moore's facts are accurate and credible. His film is a source of valuable and critical information. The manner in which those facts are presented, however, utilizes some potent propaganda techniques to get the public's attention. Moore employs humor and emotion to teach facts. But he makes no secret of it. His agenda is very transparent – to get Bush out of the White House.

It was probably during World War I that the persuasive value of movies became useful on a large scale. Stuart Ewen delved into this phenomenon in his book *PR! A Social History of Spin*. He describes the advent of motion pictures as a "sea change in the capacity to touch the inner life of an audience, to transfigure the physics of perception ..."⁸⁹ Ewen then quotes from what he describes as "a popular encyclopedia of modern technological wonders, published in 1915" to describe the effect of movies:

⁸⁶According to the Center For American Progress, Disney's CEO Michael Eisner directed its Miramax Division not to distribute *Fahrenheit 9/11*. Eisner is a Bush campaign contributor. Also, Jeb Bush, the governor of Florida and the president's brother, is a trustee for the Florida state employees pension fund, which in turn owns 7.3 million shares of Disney stock.

⁸⁷Leclercq, 29 June 2004.

⁸⁸Conservative critics have charged that the award was a political slap at America from the French (the festival takes place in Cannes, France). But of the 9 jury members (judges), only one was French. Of the remaining, four were American and one was British. So it can be said that the jury had a majority from the "Coalition of the Willing," and every juror supported the decision for the award.

⁸⁹Ewen, p. 114.

Here, at last, is the magic of childhood – appearances, apparitions, objects possessed of power of movement and of intelligence. ...

For the motion picture does for us what no other thing can do save a drug. ... It eliminates the time between happenings and brings two events separated actually by hours of time and makes them seem to us as following each other with no interval between them.⁹⁰

The effect of these time-phase presentations in a motion picture documentary was illustrated by a letter-to-the-editor of the San Jose *Mercury News*. Robert White of Tracy, California, wrote: “As a lifetime republican I was skeptical of Michael Moore’s *Fahrenheit 9/11*, but went to see it anyway, expecting a heavy dose of over-the-top banter ... What I saw, however, was a compelling assembly of facts and testimony taken directly from our nation’s collective experiences and a clear indictment of our government’s behavior before and since the 9/11 tragedy. ... Thank you, Michael Moore, for waking us up.”⁹¹

Another part of what Ewen calls the “visual rhetoric of filmmaking,” which develop a film’s potential for persuasion, are the “Techniques of cinematography (camera movement, the conscious use of close-ups, medium- and wide-shots, the expressive play of shadow and light) and editing (cross-cutting, montage, and the use of the dissolves) each provided captivating vehicles for leading the eye and mind toward specific ways of seeing the story unfold.”⁹² Ivy L. Lee, an early corporate public relations mad who worked for the Rockefeller family in 1914, summed it up: “It is not the facts alone which strike the popular mind, but the way in which they take place and in which they are published that kindle the imagination. ...”⁹³

What we are talking about here is the power of images and the technique for presenting them. It is the old adage that “a picture is worth a thousand words.” The power of images in Moore’s film was illustrated when a journalist told Cannes jury president Quentin Tarantino the film lacked “cinematic qualities.” Tarantino rebutted: “You’re talking about pretty pictures. This film is made up of images. When a US soldier is shown with an [Iraqi] captive whose head is in a hood, that is not a pretty picture, but it is a powerful image.”⁹⁴

One commentator who points out that even people who dislike Moore’s “hardcore lefty vision of the world” still credit him with presenting an “incredibly cohesive and emotionally stirring piece of work,” says that: “The movie breaks little news. What it does, however, is string together old news in a way that fits Moore’s ideological perspective.”⁹⁵

⁹⁰Cited in Ewen, p. 114.

⁹¹White, 2 July 2004.

⁹²Ewen, p. 114.

⁹³Cited in Ewen, p. 81.

⁹⁴Cited in Ebert, 24 May 2004.

⁹⁵Neal, 25 June 2004.

White House communications director, Dan Bartlett, said the film “was so outrageously false it’s not even worth comment,” even though he hadn’t seen the film.⁹⁶ But the administration’s PR experts were acutely aware of the hazards *Fahrenheit 9/11* posed to Bush’s credibility ratings. They were wise enough not to meet the challenge head-on. Instead, they employed the technique Edward L. Bernays, another corporate public relations pioneer, used extensively – don’t say it yourself, let someone else say it for you. Front organizations were set up to do just that.

One of these is “Move America Forward” and it has orchestrated a letter-writing campaign to theaters not to show Moore’s film. “Move America Forward” was established by the political public relations firm of Russo, Marsh and Rogers in Sacramento. Chairman of “Move America Forward” is Howard Kaloogian, who was previously chairman of the “Defend Reagan Committee” and the “Recall Gray Davis Committee.”⁹⁷ The PR firm of Russo, Marsh and Rogers also advised the “Recall Gray Davis Committee.”⁹⁸

One disparaging article about the film by staff writer Glenn Lovell of the San Jose *Mercury News* was titled “Subpar Propaganda.” After claiming to be a fan of Moore’s “powerful plea for gun control” in the academy award winning movie, *Bowling With Columbine* (purportedly establishing his credentials as an unbiased critic), Lovell berated *Fahrenheit 9/11*: “I found this all-out assault of Bush and his response to the terrorist attacks of Sept 11 to be so smug in its position, so cavalier in its documentation, that I left feeling more hoodwinked than enlightened.”⁹⁹ Then Lovell describes each segment of the film in the most derogatory terms. But he didn’t specifically identify one salient fact as incorrect. He didn’t objectively dispute the truth of any depicted event. Lovell’s article was typical of propaganda by innuendo. So far, although there has been criticism of Moore’s style and presentation, the truthfulness of events portrayed has not been found faulty by even one critic.

Another conservative group, which campaigns vigorously against democratic candidates, is “Citizens United.” It’s president, David N. Bossie, filed a complaint with the Federal Election Commission against Moore’s film which could significantly reduce advertisement of Moore’s film.. The complaint:

... alleges that broadcast advertisements for the film, which include visual images and sound clips of President George W. Bush and other candidates for Federal elective office, qualify as “electioneering communications” under [Federal Elections Campaign Act] if they are broadcast within 30 days prior to the Republican National Convention or 60 days prior to the general election. The undersigned contends that Respondents are about to violate the Act because the Ads will be funded by corporate and foreign money; expenditures for the ads will not be reported to the Federal Election Commission; and the ads will not include the required disclosure statements.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶Quoted in *The Progress Report*, 25 June 2004.

⁹⁷What Really Happened.

⁹⁸What Really Happened.

⁹⁹Lovell, 25 June 2004.

¹⁰⁰Before the Federal Election Commission.

Ironically, just two years earlier, Bossie said his group feels “FEC [Federal Election Commission] rules and regulations are abhorrent ... they restrict the American people’s ability to have an influence on politics.”¹⁰¹

In another action apparently to hinder distribution of *Fahrenheit 9/11*, the Carlyle Group has combined with two other investors to buy out Loews Cineplex Entertainment for \$1.46 billion.¹⁰² Founded by Marcus Loew in 1904, Cineplex started as a nickelodeon in New York and is now the third largest movie theater chain. Carlyle Group is one of the world’s largest equity firms for which former President George H.W. Bush was a consultant. Many from former republican administrations have been directors, including James Baker, Colin Powell, and former British prime minister John Major.¹⁰³ Moore’s documentary was slated to show at 59 Loews theaters on opening day.

Another point of contention is that the Motion Picture Association of America gave Moore’s movie an “R” rating. One commentary on this rating states: “Tom Ortenberg, president of the company releasing the film, argued that 15- and 16-year olds, who might end up fighting in the war on terrorism, should be able to see the film, which shows the true cost of war – gravely wounded Iraqi citizens and US troops. ... Moore argues that the movie needs to be seen by the widest possible audience to give the public a glimpse of the reality of war.”¹⁰⁴ There are those who argue that more violence and worse language has been used in PG-13 movies, and that if a PG-13 rating were applied to Moore’s movie the future military recruits would have a chance to see what they are enlisting for. But that would certainly make life tougher for military recruiters, which is getting difficult as it is.

If anything, the conservative efforts to sidetrack the film only made people more curious. And the movie did, apparently, have the effect that neoconservatives feared. Even before the first public showing, the leader’s credibility ratings started dropping. A *Washington Post/ABC News* poll published June 22nd showed his overall approval ratings were below 50%. In addition, 55% disapprove of how the Bush administration is handling Iraq and 59% said the war was not worth fighting. A *CNN-USA Today- Gallup* poll found that 54% of the people think the war on Iraq was a mistake, and more than half say it has made the US less safe from terrorism.

After the premier of *Fahrenheit 9/11*, things got worse for the leader. A *New York Times/CBS News* poll, taken June 23-27, reduced Bush’s approval rating to 42% – the lowest point in his administration. 60% said the war was not worth fighting. Even his own party is becoming disenchanted. One republican from California said: “We attacked a sovereign nation, and we went in there and we did things that the United States shouldn’t have done. I feel that we went after the wrong people, and it’s unacceptable, and it’s

¹⁰¹Quoted in *The Hill* (Washington, D.C.), 12 June 2002. Cited in *The Progress Report*, 25 June 2004.

¹⁰²The other two investors in the buy-out are Bain Capital and Spectrum Equity. Present owners of the theater chain are Onex Corporation and Oaktree Capital Management.

¹⁰³For a more thorough treatment of The Carlyle Group, see PLRC-040116, *Understanding the “War on Terrorism”: Engineering Public Opinion; Part 2 – Pearl Harbor and 9-11*, pp. 52-54.

¹⁰⁴*The Progress Report*, 25 June 2004.

absolutely ridiculous that innocent people are dying over there in Iraq, and our troops are dying for a cause that is not just.”¹⁰⁵

Another republican in Pennsylvania said: “I watch the news quite a bit, and I’m kind of thinking it’s getting these terrorists motivated to do more. Whether it’s their religious beliefs or it’s us trying to step into their country, I just get that feeling that they feel that we’re stepping into where we shouldn’t be, and it’s inciting them. It’s stimulating them to be more aggressive in getting us out.”¹⁰⁶

We can rest assured that the White House propaganda team will strain their utmost to rescue their leader. At the time of this writing, the spin doctors seem to be suggesting a successful transition of government to the Iraqis. That may be Bush’s last hope. Whether that will be successful is problematical. Leaders in the new Iraqi government being hand-picked by the US seems to be fomenting a civil war in that country.

In addition, old skeletons are finding their way out of the proverbial closet. Testimony now directly connects Rumsfeld with approving torture in Iraq. News is breaking regarding tens of billions of Iraqi reconstruction dollars that have not been spent to rebuild infrastructure. And the 9/11 Commission’s final report is due out in weeks. Rupert Cornwell predicts a bleak outcome: “... not since Harry Truman in 1948 has an incumbent president been so low in the polls at this stage and still won a second term.”¹⁰⁷

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APPENDIX-A
PUBLIC LAW 107-243, SECTION 3
AUTHORIZATION FOR USE OF MILITARY FORCE
AGAINST IRAQ RESOLUTION OF 2002
16 OCTOBER 2002

SEC. 3. AUTHORIZATION FOR USE OF UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES.

(a) **AUTHORIZATION.**—The President is authorized to use the Armed Forces of the United States as he determines to be necessary and appropriate in order to—

- (1) defend the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by Iraq; and
- (2) enforce all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq.

(b) **PRESIDENTIAL DETERMINATION.**—In connection with the exercise of the authority granted in subsection (a) to use force the President shall, prior to such exercise or as soon thereafter as may be feasible, but no later than 48 hours after exercising such authority, make available to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President pro tempore of the Senate his determination that—

- (1) reliance by the United States on further diplomatic or other peaceful means alone either (A) will not adequately protect the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by Iraq or (B) is not likely to lead to enforcement of all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq; and
- (2) acting pursuant to this joint resolution is consistent with the United States and other countries continuing to take the necessary actions against international terrorist and terrorist organizations, including those nations, organizations, or persons who planned, authorized, committed or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001.

(c) **WAR POWERS RESOLUTION REQUIREMENTS.**—

- (1) **SPECIFIC STATUTORY AUTHORIZATION.**—Consistent with section 8(a)(1) of the War Powers Resolution, the Congress declares that this section is intended to constitute specific statutory authorization within the meaning of section 5(b) of the War Powers Resolution.

- (2) **APPLICABILITY OF OTHER REQUIREMENTS.**—Nothing in this joint resolution supersedes any requirement of the War Powers Resolution.

APPENDIX-B
PRESIDENTIAL LETTER
18 MARCH 2003



For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
March 19, 2003

Presidential Letter

Text of a Letter from the President to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate

March 18, 2003

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Consistent with section 3(b) of the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002 (Public Law 107-243), and based on information available to me, including that in the enclosed document, I determine that:

- (1) reliance by the United States on further diplomatic and other peaceful means alone will neither (A) adequately protect the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by Iraq nor (B) likely lead to enforcement of all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq; and
- (2) acting pursuant to the Constitution and Public Law 107-243 is consistent with the United States and other countries continuing to take the necessary actions against international terrorists and terrorist organizations, including those nations, organizations, or persons who planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH