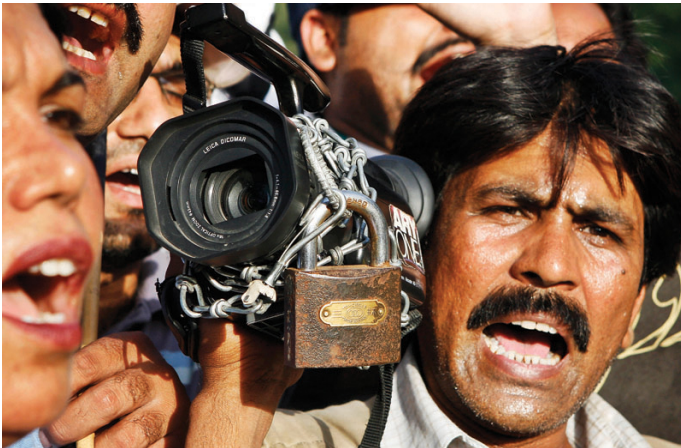


COLUMBIA JOURNALISM REVIEW

Opening Shot



PAKISTANI JOURNALISTS PROTEST PRESIDENT MUSHARRAF'S CRACKDOWN ON THE MEDIA. Swift and widespread criticism forced Musharraf to back down. The United States is not totally immune to cracking down on a free press. Come up with three examples where the American press has come under attack since the Bush Administration came to power in 2001. Discuss the ramifications of the examples you cite.

Talking Points

IT'S NO SECRET that the press is under frequent attack these days, but sometimes it seems as if the danger lurks as much from within the walls of the fourth estate as it does from the outside.

In this issue, for example, CJR finds that new stewardship of two of the nation's most distinguished newspapers, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, could potentially render both unrecognizable from their halcyon years.

In his regular monthly column, "On The Contrary," Michael Massing writes that television news broadcasts have abandoned the notion that Memorial Day is supposed to be a memorial to lost soldiers. In this case, they have no one to blame but themselves.

Should it be a surprise then that a poll of journalists who left the *Dallas Morning News*, and in some cases the field of journalism, are generally happier than those who remained? What do these and other stories bode about the future of our profession?

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IT'S HIS NATURE, P. 4:

What *is* Rupert Murdoch's nature when it comes to journalism? Why do you think he wants to purchase *The Wall Street Journal*? How important a newspaper is the *Journal*, not only within the world of finance, but outside as well? Should the Bancroft family sell it to him? Why or why not? What would you do if you were in the family's shoes?

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES: Read the June 5 article that is referred to in the story. What does it indicate about the way Rupert Murdoch controls his news outlets? What does it portend for the *Journal*? Read the *Journal's* editorials over a week. Then read a week's worth of editorials in two other newspapers owned by Murdoch. Are the Murdoch-owned newspapers more conservative or more liberal than the *Journal*? If Murdoch takes control of the *Journal*, what impact do you think he would have on its editorial policy? Select any two American newspapers purchased by Murdoch's News Corp and research their histories. How did he change both papers after they came under his control? Did he improve or diminish the quality of the newspapers? Explain.

MEMORIAL DAY MUSH, PP. 14-16:

Do you agree or disagree with Massing's argument that the broadcast press does a poor job covering stories related to Memorial Day? Explain. Why do you think the press has generally been reluctant to cover more realistic stories related to the holiday? Who benefits and who is harmed by the softer coverage? Explain. Is it unpatriotic or

disrespectful to look more deeply into questions about the war in Iraq around Memorial Day? **ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES:** Create a list of Memorial Day stories and explain how you would cover them. If possible, write and report one of them (even if it is long past the holiday).

PRISONER 345, PP. 23-27:

According to the "Opening shot" on p. 3, "the truth about al-Haj is hard to discern." What are the questions about him and his activities? Do you think the charges against him are credible? Why or why not? If the charges are not true, what would be the motive of bringing them and of keeping al-Haj in prison?

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES: Why have some members of the Bush Administration voiced their displeasure at Al Jazeera? Research the network's broadcasts. Do you think those complaints are justified? Place the treatment of al-Haj in the context of the Bush Administration's general attitude toward the press. What are the restrictions placed on the press regarding the treatment and trials of prisoners at Guantánamo? How has the Bush Administration justified its policies regarding the prisoners? Assess the impact the procedures have had on the Bush

Administration's anti-terror efforts, on the press coverage of the prisoners, and on the way the United States is viewed around the world.

BRIAN TIERNEY'S GRAND EXPERIMENT, PP. 28-32:

What is the grand experiment referred to in the title? What are the potential pitfalls of Tierney's policies regarding the *Inquirer*? Do you think he ultimately will be successful with the paper, journalistically and financially or both?

What is the so-called wall between a newspaper's advertising and editorial departments? Who benefits when it is not breached? What is the danger when it is? Do Tierney's sponsored columns breach that wall? Why or why not? What do you think would happen if a columnist wanted to write a column criticizing the column's sponsor? **ADDITIONAL**

ACTIVITIES: Find recent copies of the *Inquirer* (or read it online). Try to find copies of the paper from last year or the year before. Compare them. What's new and different about the paper? Is it improved? Why or why not? What would you do differently if you were in charge of the paper?

BURNING THE VIRTUAL SHOE LEATHER, PP. 38-44:

Can coverage of what is essentially a make-believe world be considered real journalism? Explain. What are the lines between real and fake journalism when covering Second Life? When does the line get crossed? Would you want to be assigned a Second Life beat? Why or why not? Is it important for reporters covering Second Life to learn its users' real identities? Why or why not? On page 43, Peter Ludlow says that everyone wears a mask. Is that true? As a reporter in the real world, what can you do to see beneath an interview subject's mask?

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES: Go on Second Life and sample the various news outlets. Is what they do journalism? Rate each of the news providers. Which do you think does the best job? Why? As a class, set up your own news coverage of any aspect of Second Life. Afterward, discuss the challenges of the job and how they compare with covering the real world.

Quick Takes

1) After reading "Hyphen Heaven" (p. 10), come up with five *Time*-style hyphenated descriptions of yourself and your journalism professor.

2) Read a book or article by David Halberstam. Why do you think his work is so popular? Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of his reporting and writing.

3) Select any three statistics from the "By the Numbers" box on page 36. What do they have to say not only about the *Dallas Morning News*, but also about the future of print journalism in general?

4) Read a sample of Mary Heaton Vorse's work and discuss what you like and don't like about it. How well does it hold up today? Explain. Compare her work to that of someone who writes on a similar topic today. Why do you think most contemporary newspapers don't have labor columnists? Come up with five ideas for what you think are important labor stories.

5) Write an essay that assesses the impact of the Valerie Plame scandal on the First Amendment and on journalism in the United States.

Between the Lines

1) Read the letter by Lisa Aug on page 6. Do you agree with her thinking about the current failures of print journalism? Why or why not?

2) Comment on the statistics on page 11 about the percentage of people 13-24 who read magazines and who use them to find out what is cool. Do you? Which do you think are the hippest magazines on the market? Why?

3) Does the article "Damage Report" (p. 33) change your thinking about a career in print journalism? If so, how? If not, why not?

4) Do you agree or disagree with Robert Novak's defense (p. 57) of his role in the Valerie Plame leak and his characterization of the scandal as a "trivial incident"? Explain.

5) What is your response to the questions posed in the last paragraph of "The Fourth of July" (p. 62)?