

1994

The Military and the Media: Why the Press Cannot Be Trusted to Cover a War

Pascale Combelles

William V. Kennedy

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Recommended Citation

Combelles, Pascale and Kennedy, William V. (1994) "The Military and the Media: Why the Press Cannot Be Trusted to Cover a War," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 47 : No. 4 , Article 19.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol47/iss4/19>

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characteristic of all agencies—bridging gaps in data with personal opinion, taking into account only what can be formally accounted for or identified, and dealing with uncertainty by using what you know about your own side to make up for what you do not know about the other.

He also states that national-level intelligence products are guilty of “aggressive ignorance,” that is, ignorance of basic facts coupled with a lack of curiosity. Finally, Codevilla charges the policymakers with the responsibility of stressing integrity in the analysis process, even if it tells them what they do not want to hear.

In Part III, Codevilla recommends fixes for intelligence problems and makes suggestions for restructuring for the 1990s. Just when the reader has lost all hope for the intelligence community, he is assured that the system can be fixed and made worthy of the superpower-type policies it must support. Codevilla brings the reader back to the fundamentals and offers basic guidelines for research and analysis, collection, counterintelligence, and covert action.

All in all, Codevilla’s book is one of solid scholarship. I can find fault in only one regard—on occasion he shows his political bias and makes sweeping generalizations. In a discussion of CIA involvement in South Vietnam, he states that the “liberals in America,” when in charge of “government at any level,” are likely to hire “likeminded folk and exclude others.” Surely, most readers would agree that liberals and conservatives alike are guilty of that—that’s politics. He expresses utter disapproval of the McNamara era

by saying that where military officers before McNamara were the type to get the job done first and discuss it later, all since McNamara have been reduced to systems analysts. The Colin Powells, William Crowes, Norman Schwarzkopfs, and James Stockdales probably would take issue with that. Regardless of political persuasion, once such a bias emerges, readers feel a vague unease as to whether they are getting the “straight scoop” elsewhere in the work. Although minor, this fault should have been caught in the editing process.

Overall, Codevilla’s *Informing Statecraft* is an excellent work. It reads like a novel, yet it is sure to become one of the most useful reference books in the libraries of anyone who works with or benefits from intelligence. I will return to it again and again. Read it at your first opportunity.

JULIE NEUMANN
Major, U.S. Air Force

Kennedy, William V. *The Military and the Media: Why the Press Cannot Be Trusted to Cover a War*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1993. 167pp. \$45

Few in the military consider reporters qualified to cover military affairs. Though a reporter for the past seventeen years, William Kennedy shares that view. In *The Military and the Media*, Kennedy argues that the press does not invest enough in the defense beat for accurate assessment of military affairs. Reporters, he says, “begin the Pentagon assignment innocent of any prior contact with or instruction about the

130 Naval War College Review

military whatsoever and receive as little as possible thereafter.”

Kennedy argues that as a result the military must tightly control reporters on the battlefield because their incompetence can put lives and operations at risk. Noting that the Associated Press sent its theater critic to the Gulf War, Kennedy states: “Ten months after the war [AP] still [did not] understand that when the press sends a drama critic to cover a war, the closely controlled pool system is the only means of assuring the safety of both the reporter and the military.”

Finally, according to Kennedy, reporters’ incompetence enables the military to manipulate both them and the public. In this regard, Kennedy thinks the media fails in its responsibility to act as a watchdog over governmental actions. He believes that defense journalists, in general, have “neither the organization nor the training to comprehend stories that, given timely exposure, could lead to the savings of millions and ultimately billions of dollars.” Kennedy argues that since the U.S. government has erected the “right to lie” as its way of doing business and uses the classification system to hide embarrassing truths, journalists need better training to dig up the truth behind official lies.

Despite some interesting proposals, however, Kennedy obscures his thesis by his own biases and prejudices. First of all, *Military and the Media* is an angry diatribe against the press. The author qualifies the press as “an elitist, extravagantly paid, anti-military” institution, and thinks that “its reliance on English, sociology, and political

‘science’ majors simply cannot cope with the pace and the intricacies of the twentieth century.” In the same vein, he believes that an “absurd mass of ill-informed, genuine, quasi-genuine and outright fake journalists have plagued every U.S. military operation since Vietnam.” With such statements, Kennedy provides a good example of what he is critiquing the press for: making judgments founded on impression rather than careful inquiry.

Moreover, Kennedy asserts that the press missed two essential lessons from the Gulf War. First, it failed to understand (much less report) that early in August 1990 nuclear weapons provided the only usable U.S. defense against an Iraqi assault in Saudi Arabia; second, following official statements, it attributed the victory to a “daring armored assault” and neglected to report that air cavalry units provided the decisive element for victory. These views are open to reasonable disagreement and to this reviewer reflect more Kennedy’s own opinion (if not bias) than any media incompetence.

I also fault Kennedy on his methodology and research. He draws his general conclusions from oddly selected cases rather than any systematic treatment, and even in these cases he ignores well recognized sources. In his chapter on Vietnam, for example, Kennedy does not even mention Peter Braestrup, Daniel Hallin, William Hammond, or John Mueller—all major contributors to the analysis of the media’s role in Vietnam.

Though he does make sound recommendations to improve the media’s defense coverage, his work is weakened

by his own prejudices and such obnoxious statements as that "the author has been able to anticipate every major trend, every major weakness in U.S. national defense."

PASCALLE COMBELLES
Université de Toulouse

Atkinson, Rick. *Crusade: The Untold Story of the Persian Gulf War*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1993. 575pp. \$24.95

In war, history is seldom generous to the vanquished—nor is it always kind to the victor, as evident in this work by Rick Atkinson. Written to answer the question "What really happened?" the narrative draws upon a wide array of after-action reports, personal interviews, and investigative reports. Not surprisingly, then, *Crusade* contains a degree of journalistic sensationalism that focuses on personality quirks and interservice bickering, sometimes at the expense of thoughtful analysis.

Atkinson concentrates almost exclusively on the period following George Bush's decision to launch a war against Iraq, and although the subtitle suggests new information, much of it has been repeatedly told. Many will readily recognize the dialogue regarding the special operation forces in Iraq, the multiple cases of fratricide, and the debate over the efficacy of the Patriot air defense systems; but less known, and not as well covered by Atkinson, are the contributions of the U.S. Navy and that of the Arab members of the coalition. What Atkinson does bring to the reader, however, is detail on frustrations

within the coalition headquarters and some excellent accounts of personal combat.

By far the most interesting aspect of *Crusade* is Atkinson's provocative analysis of the political and military personalities who waged the one-sided conflict. According to the author, the war enabled George Bush to rise above the limitations of his character and political philosophy to become, briefly, an extraordinary man. Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney fares equally well in Atkinson's chronicle. At times a reluctant supporter of Schwarzkopf, Cheney developed a special partnership with Joint Chiefs chairman Colin Powell, one that evolved into a total commitment to the armed forces in pursuit of military and political victory.

Like most observers, Atkinson has his personal heroes. Seventh Corps commander Frederick Franks emerges as the personification of the American Army. To many admirers, the author among them, Barry McCaffrey represents the officer *par excellence*: bright, articulate, and flamboyant. First Marine Expeditionary Force commander Walt Boomer and air campaign chief Chuck Horner also receive honorable mention for their monumental contributions to allied victory. And of course there is Powell, the ultimate Clausewitzian strategist who manages a temperamental theater commander and serves as the brakeman to ensure political leaders use their military force in a humane and judicious manner.

Towering over all the decision makers, however, is the enigmatic figure of Norman Schwarzkopf. Long known for his fiery temper and