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Firstly, there is little doubt that a complex apparatus of media control exists in this country. Not one so obvious as existed in Soviet Russia, for example, but a system of control all the same. One can see this as an incidental result of market economics - media outlets are consolidating and downsizing, there are not enough reporters to appropriately research stories and therefore what we get served in our daily papers is little more than a transcription of a State Department briefing or some corporate press release. Add to this a for-profit news company's focus on the bottom line and a fear of getting sued for libel and we get a conservative reporting approach that focuses on "official" sources like politicians and business leaders. No men in Black in this analysis, just a result of doing business as business.

Of course, one can take a much more Orwellian view, especially if one knows that CNN had Army Intelligence operators preparing news stories during the Kosovo bombing, or that their head of reporting on foreign affairs was married to the deputy Secretary of State. In any other country, we'd see that as evidence that CNN was little more than a propaganda machine. However, the idea of U.S. based news sources being propaganda machines goes against our ideology. Ideology, the famous linguist Noam Chomsky once said, is what is taken to be truth irrespective of the facts.

Furthering ideology is exactly why Hitler is kept alive. The ideology of ultimate evil and ultimate good. Hitler plays ultimate evil, and because the U.S. defeated him, we play ultimate good. If a State Department official tells us, via the New York Times, that the leader of Uzbekistan is evil, we want proof. Evil is a pretty serious charge, and sounds sort of biblical and fuzzy. However, if we say he is The Next Hitler, we've just proven "evil." The strangest example I have seen of this was during the bombing of Kosovo, when Albanians were fleeing on trains to the safety of Macedonia. Images of people packed into trains were repeatedly shown in the news media, and references to the holocaust were both explicit and implied. Quickly cemented into the American mind was the idea of Serbs being Nazis. This then justified the bombing that prompted the exodus in the first place, and completely overlooked the difference between riding on a train to a safe country, and riding on a train to a death camp.

I'm not suggesting that Milosovic is not evil,

by the way, but I do question the selective application of the Hitler analogy and terms like "dictator." I question why we hear about massacres in Yugoslavia but not in Indonesia. I wonder why we call Saddam Hussein "another Hitler" because of decades old attacks on the Kurds, yet we routinely let Turkish planes and helicopters break our no-fly-zones in Northern Iraq so that they (the Turks) can attack the same Kurds we are supposedly protecting from Hussein.



Ideology becomes very interesting to watch in the case of Iraq. On top of the ideology that America is the defender of freedom and human rights around the world (we bombed or invaded half a dozen countries in the last ten years, and in none of those countries has freedom or respect for human rights increased. Still, this ideology lives on) we see the ideology of the two party system. Official support for Iraq ended over a decade ago and this problem now spans two Clinton administrations and the presidencies of both Bush the Elder and Bush the Lesser. This means

that after our most recent bombing foray, we've been subject to a very narrow debate that essentially centers around who's fault it is that we still have to deal with Saddam Hussein. Democrats blame Bush the Elder for "not taking care of the job the first time" and Republicans blame Clinton for being too busy with cigars and interns to properly take care of Hussein.



No one, however, blames the United States for installing him in the first place. No one blames the West for supplying him with his "weapons of mass destruction" that we wanted him to use against Iran. The "debate" around Iraq follows a very narrow line intended to advance one's political party. It is as narrow and misguided as the debate of Vietnam was in the mainstream

media of the sixties and seventies. The question was whether or not we could win in Vietnam, whether or not we were using enough force. It's only much later that people can question whether we had a legitimate right to be there at all. It's difficult for Americans to question the ideology that says the United States can interfere in the affairs of any other country any time it wants to, so long as it believes it is doing it for the right reasons. Even now, people still refer to Vietnam as a war or a conflict, never an invasion. It was an invasion when the Soviets sent forces to Afghanistan. It was a police action when we did it in Vietnam.

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