

Haverford Town Hall



Panel One: Media and Foreign Policy

Panelists: Barbara Crossette, Columnist, UN Wire
Former UN Bureau Chief, New York Times

Christopher Hedges, Author, War is a Force that Gives Us Meaning
Former Correspondent, New York Times

Thomas Ginsberg, Staff Writer, Philadelphia Inquirer

Barbara Crossette: Opening Remarks

BC: With this ten minutes, if I can, I would like to focus on what I work on most closely now, and that is events surrounding the United Nations. I would suggest that this is a very important time to be paying close attention to the American policies as they develop, in regards to bringing the United Nations back into Iraq.

There are several things that are happening here, and not all of them are being reported. I think at the moment the issue of most concern really is the lack of context and a lack of history in this administration and particularly some people in this administration in Washington who have a very low regard for the United Nations and have made great efforts over the last year and before to really undercut its reputation, before realizing that they were going to need it, and that the rest of the world was going to hang in there and hold out for United Nations involvement – if not direction of the redevelopment of Iraq after June 30th.

On the surface we are hearing from the administration that the United Nations will be given whatever word it is that they use now, a “vital role” in Iraq, but under the surface, a lot of things are festering that are worrying. If this Iraq experience is going to be a good one, the United Nations [sic]...

There have been a number of articles in the past few weeks and months about corruption within the Oil for Food Program, which for those of you who don't know, was devised after Iraq went under sanctions in 1990 following the invasion of Kuwait, and it was originally devised to keep Iraq under sanctions until it came across with all of its weapons of mass destruction. Thinking that this would be a short period, perhaps a few months and in 1991 it was reinforced in the ceasefire. Chris [Hedges] was around there around this time, and knows how these things worked on the ground.

It took until 1995-1996 to get the Iraqis to agree to this program. From the beginning they were allowed to buy any medicines or food that they needed, but they said they had no money. So the idea was that they would be allowed to sell oil on a controlled basis, and the UN would put the money in an escrow account, and out of that account they could buy civilian goods. So that's a brief history, and it really got going in 1997. The only time I've been to Baghdad was in 1998, and it (Oil for Food Program) was still in its early days. But the price of oil suddenly went up, and the Iraqis had lots and lots of money to spend.

Now, in 2001, a story I wrote was on the front page of the [New York] Times about kickbacks and commissions and surcharges and the kinds of things the Iraqis were trying to do to siphon off money from this Oil for Food Program. We don't have time here to go into detail, but you can ask questions if you are interested about this later. The point was that this was always known, and it was reported to the Security Council by the Secretary-General, though he didn't use the word "kickback." He used the word "surcharges" and then other people within the UN told myself and other reporters that they were fully aware that this was happening. People from the business world were telling reporters that people had no idea how much money the Iraqis were raking off.

Suddenly, now that the UN is in line to go back to Iraq in a big way, this is all surfacing again. Some of the reporting is downright disingenuous, suggesting that the UN never knew about it, or turned a blind eye to it, or was not capable of dealing with it. Again, there is almost no effort to go to the UN itself and find out, or even to do research in the UN archives, though it isn't easy! Ask anyone who has tried it. But this is just one area. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee is looking into a way to hold hearings, all kinds of accusations are being made about Kofi Annan, and his son having worked there as well.

What I am suggesting is that a lot of these things are piling up, and they are going to make the UN look bad, just at the time when the United States is going to have to rely very much on the UN. The UN is a very complicated thing, as you know, it is not a building in New York, it is everything; it is health, it is education, it is cultural preservations, it has all sorts of things in its various agencies. But the UN took such a beating over the last year from certain people within this administration who were really gratuitously insulting to a variety of UN staff, that the UN is very unwilling to go back to Iraq and work for the American government, as someone recently told me. So while these kinds of Oil for Food allegations may be true – being primarily that some people working for the UN may have taken money meant for the Iraqis on the side – there is not much evidence. There are some documents that have surfaced in Baghdad, and were published there first, which had a long list of people, including the head of the Oil for Food Program, that had been given sort of a voucher that he could cash in on oil, that sort of thing.

So the UN was already sort of wary of working with the United States, from the Secretary-General on down, and now this will come and continue to poison the

atmosphere. Whatever happens, there seems to be an inability on both sides to separate out. If there must be an investigation, and there will be, fine, but let's focus on the other side also. I think this is something that is worth looking into as you read up on the transition in Iraq at the end of June.

Two quick other things. I think it is fairly obvious that the UN inspectors in Iraq were correct. Hans Blix's new book is out now, I have not read it yet since it has just arrived, but he has said that there is no way that anyone thought that Iraq was clean, and not untrustworthy. No one trusted the regime of Saddam Hussein, or thought it was anything less than a terrorist organization running a country. But the fact is that the inspectors were plodding away with the system they had, and they were pulled out not once, but twice. Once by the Clinton administration before a bombing run, and a second time by the Bush administration just before the second war in Iraq. Now we are finding that if more credence had been given to some of these UN inspectors, who were very measured – they knew what they didn't have. They had concerns and fears and suspicions, but they didn't have the goods. And this is exactly what, one year later, everyone else is finding out. It is a little more complicated, but that suffices for now.

The other thing I wanted to address is the reporting from Iraq. Washington in particular simply leaves out the fact that the United Nations, until the bombing that killed Sergio Viero de Mello and the second bombing when most of the foreign UN workers were pulled out, that there are Iraqis risking their lives working for the UN doing a lot of things. The UN has done an awful lot. The Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq is taking credit for the rebuilding and restructuring of schools, ports and so on, but in fact, UNICEF, with Japanese money and other funds outside the system, have done enormous work in schools, have translated books and had them purged of past propaganda, all sorts of people have been involved, including UNESCO, which since 1991 has been monitoring Iraq for things like the pilfering of archeological treasures and things of this nature.

What I am suggesting is that as the U.S. moves closer to a point when the United Nations has to come back into Iraq, see what you can find and demand better background information, more insightful and contextual reporting on this, so that the UN is not so easily set up for a fall by this administration, if that is what some people would like to do. It sounds insane to do this, because if the U.S. wants to withdraw, though not totally, with grace, the UN will have to go in there with its head high, and with some backing from the United States, as well as the other nations. That will make a difference in the psychology in Baghdad, to know that the UN is there with this kind of strength.

Christopher Hedges: Opening Remarks

CH: Thank you. I would like to address in the time that I have, the abject failure on the part the American media to cover the arguments and purported evidence that led us into the War in Iraq and why briefly I think that happened. Iraq is a country that I know very well. I spent a lot of time with the Kurds in the north. I first went there in 1988 at the end of the Iran-Iraq War. I covered the Gulf War. I went into occupied Kuwait with 1st

Battalion Marines, and then went into Basara and hooked up with Shiite Rebels until I was captured by the Iraqi Republican Guard and held prisoner. I also covered the aftermath of the Iraq War, including the highly successful effort by the UN inspection teams to destroy the weapons stockpiles, including stockpiles of biological and chemical agents that were in artillery shells.

I think we must first point out that by the end of the Gulf War and certainly in the years that took place immediately after the war, Iraq was severely downgraded as a military power. Far more weapons were destroyed by the UN inspection teams than were ever destroyed by coalition forces in the war. The tragedy of the situation we face now in Iraq is that the UN sanctions, despite the corruption on the Oil for Food Program, which Barbara correctly mentions, and despite the leakage that they were of course selling oil to Iran and everything else warped. The policy of containment warped. It turns in retrospect that the assumptions and conclusions made by the UN inspection teams were correct and we were wrong. The US media, and I think almost without exception although there were a few people, including Walter Pincus of the Post, by and large failed to give a voice to credible dissidents within the administration or within the United Nations who had a vast field of knowledge and expertise and did not believe the charges being leveled against Iraq by most people in the Bush Administration to justify the War.

I became involved in the Iraqi debate very early. My book, *War is a force that Gives us Meaning*, essentially talks about the poison that war is and what it does to individuals and societies that are caught up in it. In the Fall of 2002, when the Administration was arguing that the Iraqi regime had made a successful effort to reconstitute its nuclear weapons program. If we remember the famous line, “we can’t wait for the smoking gun to become a mushroom cloud.” This by that winter turned out to be completely false. One of the key pieces of evidence was that the Iraqi Regime had tried to buy enriched uranium from Niger. It turned out of course to be a forged document, and not even a well forged document. The signatures on the document included that of a foreign minister who had not been a foreign minister in Niger in over a decade.

So then the argument of course began to switch towards Weapons of Mass Destruction and links to Al Qaeda. There was a great deal of opposition to the clear drive on the part of this intellectual or ideological cobble within the Bush Administration to go into Iraq and within the Pentagon and the intelligence community. In fact, in October of 2002 there were a series of high-level resignations in the CIA over this issue, yet we didn’t give voice to them. And the question that has to be asked is why? I look back on our coverage in the build-up to the war and feel that we failed the American people deeply, and I think that we bear some of the culpability for the mess that we have stumbled into in Iraq.

I think that the primary reason that the Press failed us as a public is that we got caught up in the intoxication of war itself. Fear is a powerful bonding agent. I think certainly media organizations based in New York felt that after 9/11. There was a timidity within the press that made it difficult for dissident voices to speak out because they were attacked as being traitors. That came home to me several times, not only in public speaking engagements where I was heckled, but at one point I was booed off the stage after

delivering a commencement address, in which I said things like ‘ this is a war of liberation, but it’s a war of liberation by Iraqi’s against American occupation.

In terms of the media itself (Wall Street Journal and of course the cable news networks like Fox), when you look back on the history of war reporting in any country, we are not an exception, you see this rush to patriotism, this call for unity, especially in moments of extremity, this mythic narrative of war. The narrative of heroism, duty, honor...all the abstract terms that once you land into the middle of a combat situation are rendered hollow, if not obscene. These things create a kind of national euphoria. What happened after 9/11 sadly was a kind of folding in on ourselves as a nation, where we engaged in the worst kind of blind patriotism, which was very thinly guised self-exaltation. We began to speak with the same kind of simplicity of fanaticism as those who were at raid against us so that we called them the Barbarians and they called us the infidels.

And the tragedy of this - I was actually based in Paris at the time covering Al Qaeda, working very closely with the French - was that we had garnered a great deal of empathy and a great deal of good will, not only in Europe but even in the Middle East. You may recall Le Monde saying “We’re all Americans Now.” But we proceeded to squander it. And it was heartbreaking to watch us squander it because as powerful as we are we cannot exist as a nation without allies, as we are finding out now in Iraq. When foreign policy is reduced to the narrowest forms of self-interest, especially when you are as wealthy and powerful as we are, you garner enemies, if not in might then certainly in size that can ultimately bring your own destruction. Instead of reaching out and building the kinds of coalitions, not only within the United Nations but throughout the Middle East that I think would of done so much more to make us more secure, we built an alliance against terror. A kind of troika against terror with Ariel Sharon and Vladimir Putin. Two men who do not shrink from senseless and gratuitous killings in places like Chechnya and the Israeli occupied territories. And I think in the eyes of most the world we have become the company we keep.

Certainly 1/5 of the world’s population are Muslim, most of whom I’ll remind you are not Arab. These people view us through the prism of Iraq, Palestine, and Chechnya. In an age where news has become entertainment, where especially electronic media makes no effort to cover seriously foreign issues, credible coverage on these issues is lost on the American public. It should, as a nation, have given us a great deal of pause, when even those countries that share our values did not support us (i.e. the European Democracies). This isolation, which is reinforced by a corrupted and degraded media, is one that is very dangerous. In Thucydides history, when he writes about the destruction of the Athenian Empire and Athenian Democracy, he begins by chronicling how Athens began as a tyrant abroad, before Athens became imposed to tyranny at home. That is what destroyed Athenian democracy was Athens itself. And, it’s always dangerous to make parallels with the ancient world because they believed in slavery, infanticide, subjugation of women and everything else. Nevertheless, there are lessons to be learned in the decline of past Empires, and I think this is a good example, and I think we’re well on the road to it.

The situation that we find ourselves in now is one where we are so isolated and so bereft of support, and have of course gone on to inflame huge sections of the Middle East. Iraq has essentially become a kind of shooting gallery for militants who find Iraq a convenient place to carry out target practice against American soldiers. I'm not sure how, certainly alone, we're going to be able to pull ourselves out of the morass that we've put ourselves into.

Thomas Ginsberg: Opening Remarks

TG: Thank you very much. Last week I attended a luncheon in Philadelphia where the U.S. Labor Secretary was giving a speech to a group of Korean immigrant merchants and businesspeople. She basically gave a fairly predictable speech defending administration policy on jobs and economic recovery and so-forth, and then she said something that made me listen a little closer. She said that she had just come back from Iraq, where things were going quite well, and that you would never know this by reading the U.S. media. I thought that was interesting, that the labor secretary would get involved in media criticism in the middle of her speech, but it actually is, from what we can tell, fairly routine now. It's an election year, and the cabinet is fanning out around the country, and the routine seems to be to beat up on the press for the coverage of foreign affairs, particularly coverage of Iraq.

It drives home the point, at least for me, that the administration does believe that the media does have a lot of influence over what the public thinks on foreign affairs, even as they try to control it. But I think the role the media plays in foreign policy is very different at the local and state level, where most people actually get their news. I dug out some circulation numbers that I think are instructive here. Last year, the top five newspapers in this county that cover foreign news, and put foreign news on their front page, and run analysis and commentary where foreign policy really is hashed out, had a total circulation of 7.1 million daily last year. Total daily news publication last year – all papers – was 49 million, which means that 85 percent of newspaper readers in this country are not reading the newspapers where foreign news and foreign affairs are reported.

We can discuss the quality of the reporting that we get, and that is very valid, but the fact is, most people aren't even listening. I think this is something we have to bear in mind. Foreign policy, in this country, is not democratized. It has always been formulated by the elites, by the policymakers, and is not something the public generally has a role in. That, I think, is one of the problems.

The hometown media is failing this country when it comes to foreign news. I am speaking on this subject because even though I worked for AP [Associated Press] for many years abroad, an organization that never questioned its commitment to foreign news, I work now at an organization, the Philadelphia Inquirer, where we have to basically battle almost every day to make sure that foreign news is a part of our coverage. This is not a battle that some of the major publications, certainly the New York Times or the AP, ever have to deal with at that level.

It has gotten better recently. I think that before 9/11, for the past decade, a lot of local editors probably could be excused for losing their focus. Various administrations certainly did, and the country itself lost its focus, I think, about foreign policy and its place in the world. But after 9/11, I think it is completely inexcusable, and unfortunately, it has continued.

Just as the Afghan war was beginning in 2002, I had a conversation with one of our senior editors, who is no longer with the paper, and asked him what he thought would become of our foreign coverage, during and after this Afghan war, and his response to me was: All news is local, so we'll see. In fact, he was right. All news is local, but his problem was that his conception of local was wrong. I think 9/11 should have shown all editors that this was true, and this has not happened.

Why it has not happened, we can all venture a number of guesses. I think that it is probably time for local editors to come up to it and to realize that their role is changing. The standard defense is that for most local newspapers, it is not their market. They leave it to the New York Times, or CNN, or the AP, but a lot of that is changing. The Internet has completely changed the definition of what a local readership is, because your local readership doesn't need anyone anymore, they can go straight around you. Satellite television changes that. The ethnic media circulation is exploding around the nation, while mainstream media circulation is falling. So the media, and in particular, I mean the second, third and fourth tier media that is below the national outlets, have a role that they have shirked, in my opinion.

Now, readers bear some of the blame themselves. Poll after poll shows that they express less interest in foreign affairs, and when it comes to actually reading it, it is very low on their list. I think that reflects what is happening in lifestyle and everything else that has changed for people.

The final point would be that war has traditionally been a time when people increase their interest in news and what is happening in the world around them, but we see that this hasn't happened so much now, and it makes me wonder if we are in some kind of war. If it is a war against terrorism, as Bush likes to call it, and we don't have any readers for this war, something has gone really wrong with our media coverage.

Thank you.

Question and Answer Session

Q1: My question is for Mr. Ginsberg. Mr. Ginsberg, you said that foreign policy is not democratized, and that the lack of public involvement is a problem. Why is public involvement in foreign policy important?

TG: Policy, first of all, is not generally made by the public. The public gets involved behind certain aspects of an issue, and it is up to the policymakers to interpret that and

formulate that into policy. You're not probably going to see news articles breathlessly reporting the latest nuance in the values and the interest of what the public wants, and that explains [sic] from an active input from the public.

However, I think that when the government makes policy without a good sense of legitimacy from the public, it becomes even more elitist, perhaps, than it already tends to be sometimes in foreign policymaking if it gets too detached from what the public wants. There is always going to be distance between what the policy is and the participation level of the public, but a great distance, or a cutoff can't be good for what an administration needs, even in the short term in what an administration needs to sustain itself with public support.

CH: News is not what the public wants. That is called advertising. There is a terrible confusion now on the part of many. It is not our job to give the public what it wants. I covered the war in Kosovo. We know from readership surveys that not a lot of people were reading in the lead up to the war, those stories, as was probably true before with the war in Bosnia. But the New York Times, because they realized that what was happening in Bosnia and Kosovo was an important story, repeatedly ran those stories at great cost – running a foreign bureau, especially in wartime is very expensive – and gave them prominent play on the front page.

Now, if we had gone out and asked the readers what they wanted, there would not have been any Kosovo stories at all. The tragedy is that I think that has become the ethos. I do think that there is a great divide now, between the electronic media, broadcast media and the print media. I look at Tom and Barbara and myself, and I think we are all sort of blacksmiths – what we do is almost an anachronism in the world of media.

I worry that there is a kind of creeping erosion even within the print media. I think see it in the print media. So, our job, and I felt my job as a foreign correspondent, was to get the story and get it out. I can't be responsible if you want to sit and blow your mind out watching MTV all day. I, as a reporter, at least can do my job, and I think that news organizations – and one must remember that these institutions, these broadcast institutions were given the airwaves as a public trust, because they would give us news, they would report news – and that of course, has vanished.

I am sure that Barbara has seen the same thing, but when I began covering the war in El Salvador in the early 1980s, all of the networks had bureaus, and they all had reporters there and camera crews. The reporters spoke Spanish, and they went out everyday. They were a little too addicted to the “bang-bang”, but that is the problem with TV. They produced stories and put it on the evening news. That is gone now. That does not exist. Those bureaus don't even exist anymore. At this point, I don't see that what we do has any correlation to what “TV reporters” who are essentially celebrities and actors, do. The gulf has become that wide, and I find that we in print are very, very beleaguered.

BC: I just wanted to go back to the essence of the question. We all know that we are a country that has so much power in every possible way that every other country in the

world has got to watch us and to worry about us. So for this enormous country that is so highly educated and well-fed, and god knows has no great problems – or maybe not enough problems – to make us focus, despite 9/11.

It is astonishing that there was such an interest in foreign affairs and then it went right back down. One would have thought that in a democracy that is also the world's most powerful country that the people are going to have to shape up and get involved. That would be the argument I would give you.

I agree with what everybody else said, that it is very difficult. It is difficult because foreign policy tends to be kaleidoscopic, and so you can get one community in Massachusetts, for example, interested in policy in Southeast Asia, because a lot of Cambodian immigrants have settled there, or, take your pick – Florida for Cuba, or whatever you want. This is what happens, and it tends to happen on other issues as well, and it also happens that sometimes people with good public relations skills can gear up some lobby in the U.S. to push something. Often it is in the business world.

What was missing after the end of the cold war, though, was any kind of comprehensive look at where the United States was going. We had emerged with this enormous power, people turning into democracies right and left, pumpkins into coaches, but the idea was that the U.S. dropped the ball. We were sliding into an era when the media, and even the print media, were interested in celebrities, and sometimes celebrities covering celebrities – a lot of journalists became celebrities, which wasn't a good thing – and we stopped covering institutions.

Old timers who did State Department reporting complain that there is no longer somebody there under the mattress, kind of finding out how people are thinking and where the country is going. It is more now an issue of whether Colin Powell is getting along with Condoleezza Rice or Donald Rumsfeld, and that is interesting too, but my god, this huge, almighty county, you would think we might need and want to be better informed about what we are doing ourselves and what they are doing in our name.

Q2: Mr. Hedges you speak about the myth of war and I wonder where do you think this comes from? Do you think the media perpetuates this myth? If so, is it fair to say that because the Europeans have possibly evaded this myth of war, has the media done a different job? And finally, whose responsibility is it to break this myth of war to educate the public? Is it the media's? Is it the government's?

CH: Having covered and lived for most of my adult life in countries that were disintegrating and going into war or were in the midst of war, I don't think the myth is peculiar to the US. I think the myth is something that grips every country that I've been in, and one of the things after having spent 20 years of my life outside of the US and then coming back in time for 9/11. I watched us imbibe huge gulps of this very dark elixir. And I found it very similar to what I had seen in other wartime societies.

The myth of war? The myth of war is like the creation myth of a tribe or a nation, and believing in the myth is an intoxicating experience, and I think you can see it in small ways if you look at the coverage of the war in Iraq. What did the coverage consist of on the cable news channels? It consisted of primarily retired military people reveling in the power of our weapons. How far a cruise missile could go and what its explosive capacity was and its accuracy. Of course we never saw what these weapons were doing on the other end.

It became war as arcade game, but it also was a way by which we could identify with the power of these weapons and I think by extension our own power. The myth of war is very enticing. Violence itself is enticing. You learn that when you cover conflict. Human beings like to destroy, and they like to destroy not only things but other human beings. When unit discipline breaks down and one walks away from conflicts, especially in places where I've been like in Africa and other places where there is no formal command structure with a great deal of respect for a well-disciplined military or the Roman cohort. When that discipline breaks down, the sentiment of the crowd is such that people even look like they are on drugs. They are completely whipped up.

The disparity between what happens on the battlefield and the image of the battlefield is so vast. You see it with veterans that come back. There's no shortage of great memoirs. Whether its Sledge or No Birds Sang, they're all there. But we don't want to hear it because it's so painful. You find that people that come back and bear witness from what they've seen in war often stop speaking, not simply because its hard to speak about but because the people that weren't there don't want to hear it. They would rather believe in this notion of honor and glory, and patriotism and greatness. All of which after 30 seconds of combat is exposed as a huge lie. And that leads to the kind of alienation from those who were in combat and those who were never there.

Amongst the marines that I was with that went into Kuwait, the organization that they despised most above all was CNN. Detested it. Soldiers do not fight for all these abstract, silly notions that you see in John Wayne movies. They fight for each other. It's a very personal thing, and in that unit you are almost fused into one body. Ultimately, what makes it extremely painful to look at and to deal with, is that it exposes our own capacity for evil. And when you look at writings by Bettelheim or Primo Levi, you see that this fundamentally is what killed them (they both committed suicide) and what they struggled with. They understood how easy it was to become a guard at Auschwitz. How thin that line was. That our own capacity for atrocity, for evil, and even relishing and finding a thrill in killing, is something that we all share, and that's the most disturbing thing about having been at war. That line between the oppressors and the oppressed, between the killer and the victim, is razor thin. And in conflicts I've seen where those roles switched (Bosnia), it took minutes maybe for those who had been under the boot of oppression to begin horrific slaughter and repression against those who had repressed them.

I think the reason the myth is so prevalent is, one it makes us feel good, it makes us feel noble, it gives us a purpose in life, it makes us feel powerful. And twined with that is that

seeing the reality of war is so dark and so disturbing because it exposes something within us that we prefer not to look.

Tom Ginsberg's response Q2

TG: In a sense of this myth, I think journalists are victims just as much as anyone else. When I was a young reporter before I went overseas, I was working in New York as an editor at the Associated Press. And in a conversation I was having with the foreign editor at the time I made the comment that "I'll probably never be a real foreign correspondent until I've covered a war." And he said, "you think covering war is hard, try covering peace." What he meant was, war grabs people's attention. And that's what gets in the paper and what gets put into the news on TV, and that's been one of our downfalls.

Even getting a detailed story about how peace is going is sometimes difficult to get in front of people, or even to get editors interested can sometimes be difficult. This myth is a streak of human nature that runs through everyone, and we have to constantly step back and realize what we are doing. We should be giving people what they need and what we think they should know, because what they want isn't necessarily doing it.

3rd. Question: Addressed to Mrs. Crossette:

Mrs. Crossette, my question draws from your article in Great Decisions but it is open to everyone, in Europe we see an increased public engagement in foreign policy, which coincides with the politicization of the print media in that each paper has its slant. Where as here there is not as much engagement in foreign policy from the public, but we have a large independent media that people generally don't take advantage of. Is there a way to balance the two and obtain increased engagement of the public here without increasing politicization, which contributes to misconceptions?

BC: We were talking about this earlier, that you come to accept that newspapers in most of the world are often aligned with political parties, or militias or whatever. One of the great tragedies of a partisanship, particularly in this country, is the intensifying of political partisanship to a point that it perhaps threatens the independents. I think we maintain our independence by the diversity within the publications and within the media. That you can have columnists who can write extremely partisan pieces, you can have reporters who write what they see, you can have editorial comment on suggested policies, which is perhaps the best way to keep an independent media independent, by allowing lots of voices inside.

Once again, it's the privilege and the luxury of a big news organization with a lot of money. I agree that the reporting of television people on the ground has dropped significantly so you don't even get a difference of opinion sometimes within a big media company, but you do still with the best of the press.

A great attribute of American journalism, is that there is such a variety of broadcasting, publication and now internet out there that if you want to take an extremely radical

position, right or left, or wherever you want to go, there is some publication that will cater to that. I'm talking about real advocacy magazines and newspapers that are available and easy to find, and most importantly they are not repressed. I think one of the reasons people often go to the internet is for two reasons. One, if you are interested in a particular region of the world you're not going to find it in the mainstream press of that day, so you have to go onto the internet to find that information. And the same I think with political views. The danger of that is that in many cases its not news, its just opinion, and we just hope that people know the difference.

There is so much freedom to publish here and it is so cheap to do it on the Internet and desktop publishing and other things. There is still an awful lot of space for debate. All the more pity for there not being more debate on foreign policy. I think in Europe, if you live in Europe you just know what the paper represents and you just accept that it's got an ideology. One of the interesting things that exists in other cities of the world is that you can choose from an array of papers, where as in New York you're down to just one or two newspapers. It's the ability and the range and the freedom to publish here that preserves the independence, not any particular media organization alone.