



Expert Available To Discuss News Coverage Of Iraq War On Five-Year Anniversary

Media Contact: [Lori Wright](#)

603-862-0574

UNH Media Relations

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DURHAM, N.H. – Joshua Meyrowitz, professor of media studies at the University of New Hampshire, is available to discuss news coverage of the Iraq War in conjunction with the five-year anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Iraq on March 19.

He can be reached at 603-862-3031 (office), 603-868-5090 (home) and joshua.meyrowitz@unh.edu.

Meyrowitz has conducted research about how the war has been covered by the news media, including the period just prior to the invasion when the Bush Administration was making its case for war. He also can discuss the challenges faced by U.S. journalists covering the war, and how changes in the news industry have limited the ability of war reporters.

In discussing the limits of mainstream journalists trying to cover the war, Meyrowitz cites the following:

- Corporate mergers that have resulted in a handful of companies controlling hundreds of news outlets.
- Corporate focus on maximizing profits and minimizing costs that has led to reductions in the size of news staffs and news bureaus.
- Declining freedom of the press within the newsroom, and the pressure to constrain news coverage in order to avoid costly investigative journalism and to minimize conflicts with advertisers or the interests of corporate owners.
- Constriction of the range of alternative views because of the heavy reliance on press conferences, press releases, wire reports, news services and pool coverage.
- Heavy reliance on “authoritative” sources (typically high-ranking government and military officials).
- Pressure from government officials to agree to rules that limit press freedom, such as embargoes and restricted areas of access.
- Focus on “entertainment value” of news in order to boost circulation and ratings.
- Pressure to draw on familiar and comforting narratives about America in the world.

Meyrowitz stresses that historically the reliance on official sources, such as high-ranking government officials, has resulted in false war stories reported by the mainstream press. For example, in 1953 the U.S. government said Iranians had spontaneously revolted against their prime minister and called for the return of the Shah, according to Meyrowitz.

In reality, the CIA organized a coup to overthrow a secular democracy that wanted to nationalize Iranian oil fields. The United States installed the dictatorship of the Shah of Iran, trained his secret police, and kept him in power until the 1979 Iranian Revolution. At that point, the United States shifted its support to Iraq, covertly supporting Saddam Hussein's

invasion of Iran, he says.

“These kinds of stories – all later corrected in the mainstream media – received much less attention than the original disinformation, came too late to change the policies supported by the false claims, and have only rarely displaced the phony stories in the public’s collective memory of U.S. military actions,” according to Meyrowitz.

Joshua Meyrowitz is a professor of media studies in the Department of Communication at the University of New Hampshire. He is the author of “No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior.” He teaches courses on mass communication, news analysis, media and communication theory, media criticism, and media research.

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