

show that compared to other media corporations, PBS programs are more professionally produced, cover many different viewpoints, and offer more educational and enlightening shows to provide audiences with useful and varying information sources. Individual member stations are often innovative and diverse in their programming to meet local needs and interests.

PBS also provides a regular evening national newscast, the 1-hour-long *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*. Although the show traditionally has the lowest audience of any regular network newscast, the program has a regular following, and Jim Lehrer is considered a professional and respected journalist.

Hyun Jung Yun

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PENTAGON PAPERS, THE

The Pentagon Papers, a 7,000-page classified study commissioned by U.S. Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara in 1967, detailed U.S. involvement in Vietnam by tracing policies and decision making in Indochina from the 1940s to 1968. *The Pentagon Papers* became public knowledge on June 13, 1971, with the debut of a series of articles in *The New York Times* by journalists Neil Sheehan and Hedrick Smith. By day three of the series, Attorney General John N. Mitchell requested *The New York Times* cease publication of *The Pentagon Papers*. The *Times* refused. Over the next few days, a series of court decisions addressing the right of the press to publish information and the right of the government to control information in the name of national security ensued. The case reached the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled on June 30, in *New York Times Co. v. United States* (1971), that the government could not exercise prior restraint without threatening the rights of the press under the First Amendment. *New York Times Co. v. United States* (1971), also known as the *Pentagon Papers* case, was the first of its kind, as it tested the nature of the relationship between a free press and the government.

Soon after the court ordered suspension of the *New York Times* series, *The Washington Post*, and then the *Boston Globe*, began publishing articles on *The Pentagon Papers*. Both newspapers received court orders to stop publication. Clearly *The New York Times* was not the only newspaper with access to *The Pentagon Papers* and finding the source of the leak became a major focus for the government. Within days, Daniel Ellsberg was identified as the leak. On June 28, he surrendered himself to the authorities and was charged with possession of unauthorized materials. In the early 1960s, Ellsberg had worked for the Defense Department in Vietnam, and by the late 1960s, he was with an independent think tank, the RAND Corporation. Through this association, he had access to *The Pentagon Papers*. By 1971, disillusioned with U.S. policies in Vietnam, Ellsberg sent photocopies of *The Pentagon Papers* to *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and more than a dozen other newspapers. The charges against Ellsberg were dropped on May 11, 1973, on grounds of governmental misconduct.

The fallout from *The Pentagon Papers* lasted for months after initial publication and set the stage for continued investigative journalism during Watergate. *The Pentagon Papers*, as a landmark case about the relationship between the government and the press, reflected a time when the government was being questioned and the right of the public to know was being preserved.

Kaylene Barbe

See also First Amendment; Press Freedom; Watergate

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PEOPLE'S CHOICE, THE

To this day, the study known as the People's Choice has influenced academic discussion far beyond the field of political communication. In sociology, the study is

regarded as methodological spadework, in political science as the first systematic explanation for voting behavior, and in communicational science as the beginning of the empirical research on media effects. Thus, the study is a milestone for any of these disciplines.

Methodically, Paul Felix Lazarsfeld (1901–1976) continued to develop for People's Choice the instrument of the descriptive survey in order to explain differences between and changes of attitudes. From the constituency of the Erie County community in Ohio, he took a representative sampling that was divided into four evenly composed groups of 600 persons each. One of these groups was interviewed once a month over a period of 7 months during the presidential election campaign of Franklin D. Roosevelt and Wendell Wilkie in 1940 in order to trace individual developments. The other three groups were used for monitoring purposes by interviewing them once, but not at the same time—a groundbreaking design ("panel technique").

The substantial output of this study can be summarized in three theses:

1. *Political predispositions*. Social structures explain voting decisions. The assumption is that the decision for a vote can be explained by considering three lines of conflict: city/country, socioeconomic status, and religion. "Social characteristics determine political preference" (p. 27). Through an "index of political predisposition," the interviewees were grouped into different classes that permitted for prognostication about their voting decisions. The election campaign had the following effects:

- The primary political orientation of more than half of the interviewees is reinforced during and by the election campaign ("reinforcement effect").
- The political orientation of 14% is not activated until the election campaign, but this orientation can be predicted from their positions in the social structure ("activation effect").
- Only a small number (8%) undergoes conversion of its previously stated party preference during the election campaign; these are usually unconcerned people with little interest in politics ("conversion effect").

2. *Opinion leadership*. Political preferences are mediated by communication in homogeneous groups. The social structure forms separate social networks. The communication in these social homogeneous groups is of determining significance, especially the

interaction between the "opinion leaders" who are intensively involved in the election campaign and the "opinion followers" in the according network. Both types are distinguished by psychological and communicative variables, that is, willingness of articulation. So in all social groups there are "opinion leaders." They provide orientation for the followers, that is, they mediate "interpretations" and exert social pressure, for example, in their families or at work. For this reason the group specific opinions are intensified—including those of who will win the election ("bandwagon effect").

3. *Two-step flow*. Media messages have limited effects—mediated by the opinion leaders. Because of the group communication, latent political predispositions become apparent in the citizens. They are the selection pattern with which the media messages are filtered ("protective screen"). The opinion leaders follow the media in a comparatively intensive manner; they arrange the election propaganda according to the pattern of analysis and pass them on afterward. The authors are able to show that those who follow politics in the media very intensively change their opinions very rarely; their positions were also confirmed by messages that were intended to achieve the absolute opposite. Conversely, the more someone is susceptible to change, the less she or he is likely to be reached. The authors find interpersonal communication by far more effective than media communication; they see the reason for this in advantages such as flexibility, trust, and commitment: "more than anything else people can move other people" (p. 158).

All three results have to a great extent formed the understanding of public opinion. *The explanations for voting decisions out of the social structure* became the groundwork for election prediction models. Compared to competing approaches, the sociostructural explanation has lost ground as traditional social relationships are dissolving and thus the regular constituencies decrease and the volatile voting potential increases. The hypothesis of *the relevance of group communication* has been reviewed many times and developed to the network approach. The hypothesis of *the twofold relativized media influence* (through social structures and interpersonal communication) has dominated the discussion, until in the 1970s long-term and specific—for example, cognitive—media effects became the center of empirical research. In this process, a central

role is played by television, which is imputed with a comparatively high credibility and suggestive power and therefore with a higher influence on voting decisions than the press and the radio.

Gerhard Vowe

See also Mass Political Behavior; Voter Behavior

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PERÓN, JUAN (1895–1974)

Juan Domingo Perón (1895–1974) was three times an Argentine president, from 1946 to 1955 (reelected) and from 1973 until his death. He founded one of the most relevant political movements in Latin America, Peronism, as institutionalized in the Justicialista Party. Perón and his second wife, Eva Duarte, are credited with achieving a better quality of life for the poorest sectors of Argentines. Opponents define him as populist and a dictator.

Perón began his political career in Argentina as a member of the military government that came into power in 1943. In charge of the Department of Labor, Perón agreed with the positions held by labor unions, socialists, and other political groups that represented his voting base. As a result of his growing influence, the government arrested him. He had to be released because of his followers' claims upon their occupation of Mayo Square in Buenos Aires. After that event, Mayo Square would become a key place for demonstrations and the mobilization of campaigns.

During his presidency, he strengthened ideas of political sovereignty, economical independence, and social justice and introduced most of them in the new Constitution of 1949. Benefits for the working class, nationalization of public services, and industrialization projects gave Perón the support of workers and industrial sectors, as well as internal and external rejection from dominant classes. Perón articulated that the country's international politics and his party's ideological orientation was a "third position," a different and alternative way beyond capitalism and communism.

His government took control over many newspapers and radio stations and carried out an intensive use of them. The conservative press objected to this media policy. In 1951, the first television transmission in Argentina took place. This media emerged as a government development project under private administration. During election times the role of propaganda was influential at improving the success of his direct, and highly charismatic communication with population. Perón began the trend of government advertising in Argentine politics. National campaigns establishing social reforms and presentation of public works received widespread official promotion.

The military coup d'état of 1955 resolved his proscription. He lived in exile in Madrid until he was allowed to return to Argentina in 1973. During his absence, the country experienced political censorship from the military dictatorship, which forbade the publication as well as any kind of public statement related to Perón and his political ideas. Upon his return, the right and left wings of the Peronist Party disputed the leader's favor. The confrontations divided public opinion and put the country into a situation of violence and insecurity. After his death, the power came into the hands of his third wife and vice president, María Estela Martínez, until she was withdrawn in 1976 by the last military coup d'état in Argentina.

Malvina Rodriguez

See also Perón, María Eva Duarte de

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PERÓN, MARÍA EVA DUARTE DE (1919–1952)

María Eva Duarte de Perón, well known as "Evita," was the second wife of President Juan Perón and the first female politician in Argentina whose fame extended beyond the country's borders. Bestowed with a mythic image by the worker class, Evita is credited

with improving social conditions for marginal sectors and furthering women's civic and political rights.

Evita was born in a humble family and moved at a very young age to Buenos Aires, where she aimed to become an actress. A few years later she became a popular radio presenter. She was early a labor activist as the head of the union for radio employees. Her speeches demonstrated her natural talent before big audiences, a charismatic approach to the masses, and an effective rhetorical style. Eva met Juan Perón at a fundraising rally for victims of an earthquake in 1944.

As a first lady, she created a foundation that financed and executed social projects for housing, health, education, and sport, in order to improve the quality of life of the country's poorest. She was well known for paying attention to people's individual demands in her government's office. Eva Perón is also credited with achieving suffrage rights for women in 1947. She encouraged female political participation by organizing and leading the feminine branch of the Peronist Party. As a result, the nation chose its first female deputies and senators in the 1951 elections.

Eva Perón influenced not only the government's propaganda machinery but also the official press. Her role as an intermediary with labor union delegations, as mediator in governmental conflicts, and her social and philanthropy activities found widespread media coverage. Nevertheless, the conservative and anti-Peronist media as well as some intellectual circles carried out a strong opposition to her behavior. Her image as a beautiful, intelligent, and powerful woman seduced not only her Argentinean supporters but also world public opinion. By visiting some European nations in 1947 she largely demonstrated her political capacity of negotiating strategic agreements for the Argentinean geopolitical position in the postwar scenario.

In 1951, Eva turned down a vice-presidential nomination, and as a victim of cancer, died the next year at the age of 33. Evita was mourned at a public mass with long vigils held all over the country. Argentinean Worker Unions and a Latin American Labor Federation petitioned the pope for her canonization. Her corpse was embalmed, and during the military dictatorships and Perón's proscription, was the object of political disputes between her relatives, supporters, and enemies and was moved to different destinations. Evita's life provoked several controversial responses. A martyr and religious image corresponds to the "Lady of Hope," supported by worker classes and orthodox Peronists. The Black Myth, sustained by the upper middle classes and anti-Peronists, characterizes her as

a prostitute and ambitious person; and the Peronist left perceives her as a revolutionary woman.

Malvina Rodriguez

See also Perón, Juan

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PEROT, ROSS (1930–)

H. Ross Perot is a prominent business and civic leader, best known for running as a third party U.S. presidential candidate in 1992 and 1996 and for founding the Reform Party of the United States of America (RPUSA) in 1995.

Following his education at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, and a brief stint in the U.S. Navy, Perot went to work at International Business Machines (IBM) as a salesman. After a successful career in sales, Perot left IBM in 1962 to form his own data processing company, Electronic Data Systems (EDS). In 1984, Perot sold EDS to General Motors (GM) for billions in cash and stock options.

In 1979, while Perot was still in control of EDS, two of the company's employees were arrested and imprisoned in Iran. Perot financed a rescue mission, led by retired U.S. Army Special Forces Colonel Arthur "Bull" Simons, that proved successful.

In the same year, Perot headed the Texas War on Drugs Commission, at Texas Governor Bill Clements' request. In 1982, Perot served on a commission charged with improving public education in Texas. In February 1992, Perot announced on the *Larry King Live* television program that he would be challenging then-President Bush in the presidential election that fall. His platform held stances in favor of balancing the federal budget, strengthening gun control legislation, and expanding the War on Drugs.

Perot's campaign surged in the postconvention period, with polls showing him leading Bush and Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton in June. However, in July, Perot announced he was dropping out of the race after negative media attention and the selection by the

individual students—are examples of synergistic innovations that offer an optimistic view of the prospects for democratic renewal.

These strategies have all proven to be successful, and they are all based on the premise that political socialization is not a matter of top-down influence. Youth are themselves the most important agent of civic development. When they actively interact with family members, friends, and media, the result is civic empowerment rather than the passive internalization of attitudes and behavior handed down by elders.

Michael McDevitt

See also Deliberation; Kids Voting USA; New Media Technologies; Party Identification; Political Engagement; Political Knowledge; Rock the Vote; Youth Voting

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POLITICAL SPIN

See SPIN, POLITICAL

POLITICAL TRUST

See POLITICAL DISAFFECTION

POLITICS, POLICY, POLITY

How much do the terms *politics*, *policy*, and *polity* differ from one another and how helpful is their distinction for the research on political communication? In Anglo-American technical terminology, each of these terms describes a different nuance of the political.

- *Polity* is used in the sense of “community.” The term comes from the Greek word *polis* and includes not only the city state, but also other forms of politically organized societies such as the nation-state and the empire.
- *Politics* describes the theory and practice of the power struggle between the players inside the polity. It constitutes the core of the political system.
- *Policy* aims at the planned formation of social domains such as economy, environment, or education through collectively binding decisions (“policy making”). With this functional perspective the output and outcome respectively come to the fore and provide the opportunity to differentiate between individual political domains (e.g., social policy, foreign policy) and individual phases of the policy cycle (from the articulation of interests to the evaluation of policy).

The English terms have entered the German technical terminology as foreign words and constitute general common distinctions of the generic term *Politik*. However, as three coequal dimensions of the political, the terms are referred to one another more systematically and are disassociated more explicitly than it is the case in the Anglo-Saxon technical terminology:

- *Polity* describes the formal dimension of *Politik*. It includes the framework of institutions, that is, the political order in which political action has to take place. One example is the competences of individual governmental authorities specified in the constitution.
- *Politics* describes the process-related dimension of *Politik*, the conflict about decisions between the political players, for example, between the parties.

- *Policy* describes the substantial dimension of *Politik*; that is, the organization of individual social problem areas through obliging decisions, for example, about the distribution of resources.

This differentiation has proven quite helpful in the research on political communication. The three dimensions are used in order to distinguish between political attitudes. *Attitudes* can refer to individual policies such as the introduction of the Euro or the environmental policy of the government. Or they refer to single players and their debates, for example, the competition between parties or the predominance of interest groups (“politics”). Or attitudes are analyzed that refer to the political system in general, such as contentment with democracy as a form of government or with the possibilities to influence political decisions (“efficacy”). This, then, is tangent to the dimension of polity.

In *content analyses* of political media offerings, it is also helpful to distinguish which range the media dedicate to substantial political problems (e.g., effects of tax laws), to political conflicts (e.g., conflict in the government), and to general questions of the political order (e.g., constitutional conformity of a regulation).

Different *explanatory approaches* for phenomena of political communication, such as the political agenda or the framing of certain issues, are the result of this distinction. When, for example, it is to be explained why a conflict is pictured differently in two nations, the respective functional requirements and possibilities can be the cause or the different institutional general conditions or the respective miscellaneous disputes of the political actors.

Gerhard Vowe

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POLITICS, THE

See ARISTOTLE

POLLS

Polls are a useful method for collecting information about the public's opinions, attitudes, and behavior in a variety of political contexts. Good-quality polling results in information that describes these attributes of a relevant population to which inferences can be drawn from the sample of the respondents who were interviewed. Polls and surveys are employed by political campaigns, news organizations, and interest groups who want to understand the public's reactions to actual or potential events in order to develop strategy, report on current events, or contribute to the development of public policy.

A *poll* is a form of data collection that typically involves a sample of respondents, drawn to represent an underlying relevant population, who are asked a standardized series of questions in a fixed form. The results are analyzed for the entire sample, with inferences drawn back to the population from which it was drawn, as well as for specific subsamples that represent subgroups in the population. In some cases, the relevant population is well known and easily operationalized, as in the case of “adults age 18 and over residing in telephone households.” But in other cases, the relevant population has to be constructed during the course of the interview, as in the case of “likely voters.”

Polls and the news media have been closely linked ever since the start of commercial polling in the 1930s. In this initial period, many pollsters built the commercial, private side of their businesses by having a relationship with news organizations that would distribute the results of their polls of public opinion and build the visibility of their firms. This was true of George Gallup, who produced a syndicated newspaper column, and Elmo Roper, who started out doing quarterly polls for *Fortune* magazine. They anchored their public work around their performances during presidential election campaigns; their general success in estimating those outcomes, leaving aside the 1948 election, validated the method and increased its public acceptance. In the 1960s, major news organizations

who, in 1854, reported to the *London Times* on the Crimean War, is regarded as the first protagonist of modern war coverage. During the following violent conflicts, war coverage changed considerably. Innovations in media technology, economic interests, the abuse of journalism for political purposes as well as information and entertainment desires of the audience represent characterizing factors of war coverage.

The current scholarly understanding of war coverage is mainly based on case studies. Every new war, extensively covered by Western media, induced a batch of respective analyses. Although a comprehensive theory on war coverage does not exist, there are numerous empirical findings on war coverage enabling insights into its effects on political communication. When exploring the production of media content, above all the relation between war coverage and the information management of security policy is, besides the characteristics of war reporters, the focus of scientific attention. International discussions center on, among other aspects, the legitimacy of the secrecy of military information, the chances of the so-called peace journalism as well as the significance of public relations instruments such as censorship or "embedded" journalism.

For the scholarly examination of war coverage, content analyses of media contents constitute the main part of research activities. The results show that, in the initial phase of a war, the subject dominates nearly the entire coverage. Already after a short time, however, the extent of coverage returns to a normal level: The war is again subject to the usual competition of topics. Long-lasting conflicts as well as wars not corresponding to the criteria of news selection are, on the other side, marginalized in coverage. Whether a war is considered worth being covered or is left unnoticed depends, among other criteria, on the involvement of so-called elite nations, the possibility of follow-up communication referring to domestic events, the degree of surprise, the visualization of an event, and the cultural, political, and economic proximity.

The findings of media effect studies show that communication on war attracts considerable attention on the part of the audience, at least at the beginning of a conflict. This leads to ambivalent reactions: uncertainty, depression, anxiety, but also—depending on the respective conflict—satisfaction that finally something was done. The audience's interest, however, fades with the increasing length of the war, as recipients tend to be unresponsive toward events not concerning them personally. Furthermore, research

shows that in the United States the public approval of the president, the Congress, and the military considerably increases at the beginning of a conflict. After a certain time, however, the results of this "rally effect" (deriving from "rally-around-the-flag") decline, and the valuation of the political class reaches the pre-war level.

It is disputed whether media coverage generally may contribute to the ending or the enforcement of wars. On the one hand, the media are used to stimulate a patriotic public opinion; on the other hand, the media are attributed the potential to promote peace efforts. In any case the increasing global character of the public communication system has changed the quality of political action. However, the coverage in war situations obviously seems to shape the symbolic agenda more than the actual political decision-making process. The significance of war coverage for the political process increases if politicians are not able to compare the media content to other sources of information. War coverage is especially relevant in phases of decision making and if there is a dissent in the decision-making center.

Even if wars between territorial states become less likely in the 21st century, the numerous existing conflicts indicate that an age of worldwide peace is not imminent. Therefore, war coverage will remain considerably relevant not only as a basis for decision making in democratic societies but also as an object of professional attempts by political public relations to abuse its role in society. It is doubtful whether journalism is sufficiently prepared to appropriately meet these challenges. Especially with regard to war coverage, the erosion of the established news journalism is obvious. This can be seen clearly when looking at the propagandistic coverage of the attacks of the United States and its allies on Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003) by many U.S. media which once had been considered as the ideal of objective journalism. On the other hand the increasing public criticism of war coverage may contribute considerably to the improvement of quality in war coverage.

Martin Löffelholz

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WAR OF THE WORLDS, THE

On October 30, 1938, between 8 p.m. and 9 p.m., CBS broadcast the radio play *The War of the Worlds*. The script by Howard Koch was based on the novel of the same name by H. G. Wells, written in 1897; the director of the radio play was the then unknown Orson Welles. The broadcast became a milestone in media history, causing the emergence of many myths. At the same time, it is also a milestone of media research because the discourse in communication science constantly refers to it.

The radio play is about an invasion of the planet Earth by Martians. The first part of about 40 minutes depicts the futile fight of resistance against the invaders. In the second part of about 20 minutes, a survivor describes how he managed to escape and how he discovers that the invaders have died due to terrestrial bacteria.

The radio play stands out because of its numerous and, for 1938, novel plot devices which create an impression of authenticity. It is structured in such a way that elements of different genres (reportage, news, press conference, interview, etc.) are combined in a dramatic manner, clouding the fictive character of the production. Only three times—in the beginning, middle, and end—is the program clearly identified as a radio play. In a resourceful manner it shows the possibilities of the new medium of radio, which is to create a feeling of direct presence.

It is a stroke of luck for communication science that the *Princeton Radio Research Project* analyzed listeners' reactions to the broadcast. That is why we reliably know about some of the events that took place after the broadcast and do not have to refer to the lurid recounts by the press, which exaggerated the individual reactions to a mass panic—a distortion which to

this day has obstinately stayed in the collective memory. As a psychologist, Cantril was interested in the variance of the reactions to the radio play and how they can be explained. On the basis of different data sources, the study shows that about 6 million people listened to the whole program or parts of it. The lynchpin of the reception was the estimate of authenticity of the program by listeners. Twenty-eight percent of the listeners thought the program authentic. Of these, 70% were scared; the rest described themselves after the event as calm. Thus, about 1.2 million were excited. In interviews, the various reactions to the experiences became obvious. One group was naive. Its members did not doubt the authenticity of the broadcast but responded in different ways: Some were paralyzed by fear, some tried to flee, and so on. In contrast, the uncertain tried to get a picture of the character of the program through different checks. This in turn led to different reactions. The research produced a complex network of different types of perception and action. The differences cannot alone be explained by the broadcast's high quality and the cultural unfamiliarity with the medium of radio. This would have affected all the recipients just as would the overall historical context (the imminent perils of war, economic situation, etc.). According to the results of the study, the following factors are of greater relevance:

- Differences in the amount of time the program was listened to and in the additional programs tuned in to
- Differences in personality, especially in "critical ability" and "susceptibility" or "suggestibility," which are again connected to educational background, religious belief, and mental stability
- Differences in the situation of reception (the behavior of present persons and the anticipation of non-present ones)

The study reveals the complex network of personal, social, cultural, and media factors which can cause an incident such as a panic. Thus, it is irreproducible to use this media event in order to illustrate a model of intense direct media effects.

The radio play was not only Orson Welles's breakthrough, it also gave rise to many post-productions, among others a TV movie by Joseph Sargent reenacting the production and the effects of the radio play.

Gerhard Vowe

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WARREN COMMISSION

See KENNEDY ASSASSINATION

WASHINGTON POST, THE

The Washington Post is the largest daily newspaper published in the Washington, D.C., area and one of the largest in the United States. Its coverage focuses on political affairs, especially on the workings of the White House and the government. Together with *The New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Post* is part of the elite media in the United States, reporting trends and topics that tend to influence other media's publishing agendas. It is also well known for its role in the Watergate affair, which led to President Richard Nixon's resignation in 1974.

The newspaper was founded in 1877 by Democratic politician Stilson Hutchins and was the first newspaper to have a Sunday edition. It is currently owned by the Washington Post Company, which also owns the news magazine *Newsweek* and several other media outlets. By 2006, *The Washington Post* had won 22 Pulitzer prizes and numerous other awards.

In June 1971, the newspaper joined *The New York Times* in publishing excerpts from a leaked government report known as *The Pentagon Papers*. It was ordered by the U.S. Justice Department to stop publishing the secret documents, but the U.S. Supreme Court reversed the government's injunction a week later.

In June 1972, reporters Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward started an investigation into the arrest by police of five men accused of burglary and break-in into the Watergate office building in Washington, D.C. The reporters soon discovered that the presumed burglars were former CIA agents attempting to plant listening devices in the headquarters of the Democratic National Committee. Bernstein and Woodward's investigation became known as the Watergate scandal and continued for about 2 years, during which the two reporters were able to trace a connection between the break-in and Richard Nixon's campaign fundraising committee. The continuous reporting of *The Washington Post* into the Watergate affair culminated in Nixon's resignation in 1974 and was rewarded with a Pulitzer Prize for Public Service in the following year.

The main criticism against *The Washington Post* is its liberal bias. Although the newspaper's current policy is not to endorse political candidates, it has a history of endorsing Democratic candidates rather than Republicans.

Monica Postelnicu

See also *Pentagon Papers, The*; Watergate

Further Readings

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WATERGATE

Watergate, an apartment complex in Washington, D.C., was the site of a botched burglary of Democratic National Committee (DNC) offices on June 17, 1972, perpetrated by nonaligned covert operatives—known as the Plumbers—working for President Richard M. Nixon, who had originally won the presidency in 1968 with law and order as a major plank in his platform. The name of the apartment complex became synonymous with the journalism that doggedly pursued the president's cover-up of the break-in and with Nixon, the only president in U.S. history to resign.

Two *Washington Post* reporters, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, investigated the burglary, in which the Plumbers were planting listening devices in the office of DNC chairman Lawrence F. O'Brien, and their gumshoe work kept the story alive. *The New York Times*, led by the reporting of Seymour Hersh, also probed the illegal activity. Eventually, in the spring of 1973, when the Senate began to investigate the incident, the news operations of the three major television networks and PBS made coverage of the congressional hearings must-see TV. The coverage made stars of Senator Sam Ervin of North Carolina and Congressman Peter Rodino of New Jersey, chairs of the two committees investigating Watergate.

A year later, Rodino's House Judiciary Committee recommended three articles of impeachment against Nixon for abuse of power, obstruction of justice, and contempt of Congress. Then the full House voted 410-4 to begin impeachment hearings. Nixon, with flagging support from his core in the Republican Party, decided to resign on August 8, 1974, rather than face impeachment. The investigations into the matter led to more than 70 convictions, including members of Nixon's cabinet and White House staff.

Bernstein and Woodward, supported by their boss, Ben Bradlee, pursued the story of the burglary, originally reported by police reporter Alfred E. Lewis, and discovered a connection to the White House and the president's reelection committee. Early in the *Post* investigation, the reporters found that one of the burglars, James McCord, who said he had been in the CIA, was connected to E. Howard Hunt, a former CIA officer who was listed as being in the White House. The *Post* duo scrutinized public records and benefited from an anonymous source named "Deep Throat," who turned out to be the assistant director of the FBI, W. Mark Felt, whom Woodward had met briefly while he was in the Navy. Felt told Woodward to follow the money and the story would unfold. Woodward found that a check for \$25,000, a donation to the Committee to Re-elect the President, was in the bank account of one of the burglars.

The White House consistently told the country that Deep Throat's information was false or misleading, although there was speculation that the source was inside the inner circle. It must be noted that Felt had been in line to replace J. Edgar Hoover, but when the long-time FBI director died in May 1972, Nixon chose L. Patrick Gray as his successor.

Reporters for the *Post*'s Metro section, Bernstein and Woodward were unfamiliar with how the upper

echelons of the federal government functioned and had to learn as the story unfolded. They faced extreme resistance from the White House. However, damaging evidence came from Felt, other FBI agents, and eventually some of Nixon's aides.

So convincing was the work of the *Post* reporters, as well as that of the *Times*' Hersh, the *Los Angeles Times*' Jack Nelson, and CBS's Dan Rather, that Watergate is seen as the crowning moment of 20th-century U.S. journalism. Most historians agree that the reporters had a hand in Nixon's downfall, although a debate continues over the degree of the journalistic role in the unseating of the president. Many in the FBI did not look kindly on the president and his men, and the fact that the Republicans did not have control of Congress also left Nixon vulnerable. Woodward himself has said the press did not cause the president to resign, though Rather has claimed that the cover-up would have been successful if journalists had been silent. Furthermore, technology had a role in Nixon's demise as he had recorded his Oval Office conversations on a reel-to-reel machine. The tapes, which Nixon tried to block from public hearing but were finally turned over to Watergate trial Judge John J. Sirica by the U.S. Supreme Court on July 24, 1974, showed that the president's denials that he had any knowledge of wrongdoing were false.

Perhaps an equally important historical point for journalism was the relative unresponsiveness of the press in the early days of the story. Overall, newspapers, wire services, magazines, and broadcast companies assigned only 15 of 433 Washington-based reporters to cover Watergate in the first six months of the story. The news media before Watergate tended to be less skeptical of public servants. Accordingly, journalists gave Nixon a free pass for months.

Even if some academics are skeptical about the role the *Post* reporters had in bringing down a president, adversarial investigative journalism became a mainstay in the U.S. media for decades. This included the rise of television investigative news shows, starting with CBS's *60 Minutes*. Relentlessly pursuing the facts of a case became the chief function of such reporting, and journalists began to focus on the how and why of stories, not merely the superficial details. This approach was in sharp contrast to another popular form of the day, the "new journalism," which also attempted to go in-depth, but in a subjective manner.

For its work on Watergate, the *Post* received the Pulitzer Prize for Public Service in 1973. According