

Politics and the media: a crisis of trust

Politics



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The overall topic of the article 'Politics and the Media: A Crisis of Trust?' is the crisis of trust that was created by misleading information, which came from both the media and Downing Street reports. There are many debates within the article, for example: The propaganda battle; Downing Street's war with BBC; The Hutton Inquiry. James Stanyer is a well known lecturer from Loughborough University. A key part of his research concerns the transformation of political communications.

His current book 'Modern Political Communication' examines some critical recent developments in the fast changing political communication systems of the US and the UK and the democratic consequences. The topic and the work is still relevant today, because it's based on recent important events that shaped the face of politics and had a tremendous impact over all the world not just the UK. For instance, everything is related to the Iraq war, which involved many different countries, mostly the ones in NATO.

Most of the author's work is related to recent events that focus on political communication systems of the United Kingdom and United States. Recent controversial political communication, like the dossier published by UK government on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction led him to write this article. He is not the only one that treated this subject with great attention, also James Humphreys treats this subject with great interest in his article 'The Iraqi Dossier and the Meaning of Spin'.

The article's main points are related in a chronological fashion, starting before the Iraq war with 'The Propaganda Battle' where the author makes an argument based on polls, which emphasizes the fact that even though many

efforts were made by the government to persuade the public in favor of the war, the Prime Minister's attempt to 'spin' public opinion was unsuccessful "If Tony Blair's spin offensive had any impact, it was counter-productive in terms of his approval rating, which fell during this period. ...]people who approved of the way he was handling the Iraq crisis fell from 36% to 30% . "(2003, 422) The next chapter looks at how the media covered the war and the public's viewing habits during this period. Given the fact that the war could actually be watched 24/7; the audience of the evening news shortly rocketed. People became more interested in this particular subject that led to 85 % of the people saying they are interested or very interested in the matter.

The third chapter 'more speed than accuracy' the author argues that 'In all wars it's difficult to get an instant complete picture of developments on the battlefield, as information received is often fragmented and/or deliberately distorted' (2003, 424). Another important argument is that, due to the abundance of information, the competition between mass-media companies started and the author clearly highlights that the accuracy of information became a main problem. False information was sometimes spread quickly. The following chapter approaches the theme of media management operation.

The purpose of this operation was to provide the world's news media with the latest information on the conflict and the staff consisted of a team of military and civilian information officers. Stanyer also adds that the coalition tried to control journalists, but due to the far more sophisticated technology used today, which is way easier to use and cheaper than few years ago, they

<https://assignbuster.com/politics-and-the-media-a-crisis-of-trust/>

failed to do so. The government tried to persuade people into believing that 'this was a humanitarian act of liberation' not a conquest, however, this objective was also unsuccessful.

In the fifth chapter, the author analyses the public support for the war. The proportion of the public approving British participation in military action rose by 30% at the beginning of March. The author strengthens his affirmation providing poll results obtained by MORI and ICM. Not only the public support for the war increased, but also its satisfaction regarding Tony Blair's job. However his surge in popularity didn't last for long. After the fog of war cleared, an accusation war erupted between BBC and the Downing Street.

This 'war' had a lot of negative results; the most important one was Dr Kelly's suicide, which was considered by many news papers a victim of the Downing Street/BBC feud. At the core of the last paragraph stand the outcomes of the Hutton Inquiry, for example: Alastair Campbell, The News-Management System, BBC News Reportage and Tony Blair. In his book 'What the Media Are Doing to our Politics' Jhon Lloyd(2004; 206) quotes an anonymous member of the British Labor government who observes ' The press is immensely competitive ...

As a result of this ... I don't feel media report the news. They only report the news through a prism of sensation, scandal and confrontation. The news as such is not sufficiently interesting' Alastair Campbell, a well known spokesperson of Britain's former Prime Minister Tony Blair, blamed the BBC for taking 'a one-way road to cynicism. When it dominates most judgments,

the media's dominant role becomes the erosion of confidence in politics (Lloyd, 2004, 92).

This subject is brought up in an more interesting research by Kess Brants and Jo Bardoel in 'Death Duties : Kelly, Fortuyn and their Challenge to Media Governance' Where they examine two different cases with similarities from two different countries 'Although they share several characteristics, the public outcry strong words about journalistic performance following the Kelly case in the UK and the Fortuyn case in the Netherlands have resulted in different responses and governance rearrangements.

Both cases led to a crisis in trust, Albeit that in the UK government lost trust in the BBC, while the public did not, at least not in the public broadcaster, it probably strengthened an already existing political cynics among public' (2008, 485) . Dominic Wring also argues 'Kelly's death refocused media attention away from the government's agenda, and an anxious Blair hastily announced Hutton would conduct an inquiry into the tragedy. The subsequent report formally vindicated the government, but it's one sided nature, only served to deepen the nature' (2005, 382).

Lloyd, Kess & Bardoel and Dominic Wring and most sources have the same point of view as James most of them have sustained their arguments with clear evidence . All these authors mainly make the same argument as James Stanyer, highlighting once more the political communication system and the crisis of trust that occurred in the United Kingdom. The argument constructed by James Stanyer is mostly clear and very well structured, sustained by credible and relevant information.

Each point of view he approaches is carefully and gradually strengthened with evidence, in consequence, leaving no room for further interpretation. Taking into consideration the fact that he based his entire work on the transformation of political communications in advanced industrial democracies, is, therefore, no surprise, the lecturer knows how to make his point and to convince the audience of the verisimilitude of the facts on view.

I strongly agree with the writers way of thinking upon the problem above mentholated. To conclude with, the events that occurred in 2003 emphasized an already existing public distrust of government communication. The author's merit resides in the fact that he successfully succeeded in creating an article which treats a large area of material in a relatively small piece of work. This lack of trust is for certain well justified, people can now hardly distinguish between what is true and what has been manipulated.