



[Print Now!](#) | [Close Window](#)

## Manipulating Perceptions

**By Byron A. Ellis**

*TBWT Contributor*

*Article Dated 10/9/2002*

It is interesting to observe the media portrayal of Saddam Hussein. It is similar to how the press portrayed Manuel Noriega, the former Panamanian "Strong man." Noriega was a Bush 1 adventure; and during that period, the media often portrayed him wielding a machete. Today, the media visually portrays Hussein wielding a rifle. Such portrayals of adversaries brandishing weapons heightens, and contributes to, the public perception of a threat.

The media also uses negative portrayals towards young black men, portraying them in handcuffs, or under police escort. The purpose of negative visual portrayals is to influence the public's mindset, to create an attitude that demonizes the object. Thus, the constant repetition of negative images aid in the formation of public opinion that facilitates incarceration of blacks and the potential annihilation of Iraqis. Attitude is an individual general evaluation of an object, and individuals evaluate objects based on available information.

According to reference group theory, group member's attitude toward non-members is a function of the amount of perceived threat. Non-members are those that do not meet the members' definitional criteria of membership, and these definitional criteria are often arbitrary and embedded in obscure historical socio-cultural features. Therefore, in the absence of diversity in the press, bias reporting is unavoidable. However, is it beneficial for the public to consume biased (one-sided) information? Will it lead to manipulation?

The current tendency for centralized information regarding Iraq is dangerous for our democracy. Information from multiple sources is necessary for sustaining democracies. Therefore, the press ought not to rely only on the administration for their source of information. The public should know that Iraq is more than one man. Moreover, that there are real human, moral, and economic costs to the conflict. What value does the administration place on the lives of those that will die because of their hostility?

Perhaps, Paul's exhortation is useful here. He admonishes us "not return evil for evil", and to be careful that what we do is right in the eyes of everyone. Moreover, that we should not take revenge, but leave room for God's wrath. Paul continues to tell us that God assures us that revenge is His alone, and instead of seeking revenge, we should give food and drink to our enemies in need. Finally, he unequivocally, states that we should not let evil overcome us; rather we should use good to overcome evil (RO 12:17-21). Clearly, the word of God is the absolute truth. Therefore, anyone acting contrary to the Word is wrong and Christians should not follow him or her.

<http://athena.tbwt.com/content/print.asp?articleid=1727>

10/10/2002

Likewise, Jesus tells us that the policy of an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth is wrong (MT 5:38). He understood that such policy is un-Christian; and that anyone that practices it, rejects His message. Christians cannot accomplish their mission, bringing converts to the kingdom, through violence. So let us not be deceived by the deceiver and let our silence condemn us.

An objective press, free from manipulation, would obtain first hand knowledge of the threat that the government purports to be eminent, rather than broadcasting sound bites of information emanating from the sources that want to go to war. Moreover, it would seek to ascertain the true motivation of the advocates of war. Could it be that the advocates of war are unable to handle the U.S. economy?

We should not to equate successful leadership with the ability to create conflict or go to war. Conflict and war are failures of leadership and both create economic instability. Let us not detract from our internal economic problems by identifying a common enemy abroad that we can whip up on with weapons of mass destruction.

Of course, if we banned all weapons of mass destruction the world would be better off. Therefore, the idea of inspections to eliminate these weapons is good. However, to target only certain countries for elimination of their weapons of mass destruction is hypocritical. Our aim should be to eliminate these weapons from all countries. What weapons will the U.S. use against Iraq?

Clearly, there are alternate solutions, other than war, that could mitigate the conflict. Thus, we have a moral obligation to investigate and apply non-war solutions. And, true Christians must align their actions with the word of God. Thus, God tells us to leave all vengeance to Him. Moreover, Jesus in replying to Peter tells us that we should forgive our brother not seven times as Peter thought, but rather seventy-seven times (MT 18:21-22). So, whom shall we believe, God or man?

Thus, the preemptive doctrine is not of Christ, because Christ is a forgiving God. If He had a preemptive doctrine, none of us would have the opportunity to praise God in the kingdom of heaven. Fortunately, He does not require us to adhere to a chaotic and an illogical doctrine that justifies a first strike by anyone that perceives a threat. Thus, under this convoluted doctrine, evil men can justify all human atrocities based on their perceived threat.

**Copyright © 2002 The Black World Today.**  
All Rights Reserved.

**The Black World Today**  
729 East Pratt St., Baltimore, MD, 21202  
Phone: 410 521 4678 | Fax: 410 521 9993  
Email: editors@tbwt.com