



The Uncensored War: The Media and the Vietnam

By Daniel C. Hallin

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Vietnam was America's most divisive and unsuccessful foreign war. It was also the first to be televised and the first of the modern era fought without military censorship. From the earliest days of the Kennedy-Johnson escalation right up to the American withdrawal, and even today, the media's role in Vietnam has continued to be intensely controversial. The "Uncensored War" gives a richly detailed account of what Americans read and watched about Vietnam. Hallin draws on the complete body of the *New York Times* coverage from 1961 to 1965, a sample of hundreds of television reports from 1965-73, including television coverage filmed by the Defense Department in the early years of the war, and interviews with many of the journalists who reported it, to give a powerful critique of the conventional wisdom, both conservative and liberal, about the media and Vietnam. Far from being a consistent adversary of government policy in Vietnam, Hallin shows, the media were closely tied to official perspectives throughout the war, though divisions in the government itself and contradictions in its public relations policies caused every administration, at certain times, to lose its ability to "manage" the news effectively. As for television, it neither showed the "literal horror of war," nor did it play a leading role in the collapse of support: it presented a highly idealized picture of the war in the early years, and shifted toward a more critical view only after public unhappiness and elite divisions over the war were well advanced. The "Uncensored War" is essential reading for anyone interested in the history of the Vietnam war or the role of the media in contemporary American politics.

A groundbreaking study of the media's influence on the Vietnam War

·Overturns the conventional notions about the media's role in the war

·Draws directly on a huge body of newspaper and TV coverage



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Editorial Review

Review

"A first-rate book which throws new light on the topic...based on scholarly analysis of what actually was published and broadcast, judged in the context of historical events.... The first serious revisionist history of the role of the press in Vietnam."--*The Washington Post Book World*. "The value of Hallin's study lies not only in his research but also in his grasp of the real failure of American journalism in Vietnam--a failure to give its readers or viewers even the most rudimentary understanding of the real issues and true nature of the war."--*The Philadelphia Inquirer*. "This splendid study of the way the media actually covered the war is among the best and most important books published on the war in Vietnam."--*History Book Review*

From the Inside Flap

"The role of the U.S. press in the Vietnam war, the subject of persistent controversy for more than a decade, raises important issues for journalism, government and American society as a whole. Here is a first-rate book which throws new light on the topic rather than generating more passion and which is based on scholarly analysis of what actually was published and broadcast, judged in the context of historical events."

--Don Obardorfer, *Washington Post Book World*

"A rigorous look at media coverage and performance. . . . This is a book worth reading--must reading for those who have made up their minds about the press and Vietnam. It may change some minds, or at least open them up a bit."

--Col. Wallace B. Eberhard, *Military Review*

"Hallin's well-written, important study shows the real meaning of press-government relations during the Vietnam era is to be found not in their controversies, but in the failure of historical understanding common to both sides."

--Arnold R. Isaacs, *Philadelphia Inquirer*

About the Author

Daniel C. Hallin is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of California, San Diego.

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