

The Decline and Fall of Media Caused By Silicon Valley Manipulations

By [Elise Cooper](#)

Slanted is the third book by Sharyl Attkisson. As with her other two, it is a refreshing read. It is nice to know that there are still independent journalists who put fact over opinion, and she is one of those. To no one's surprise, she talks about the shift in the news, from a focus on reporting the facts to pushing a narrative on the American people. American Thinker had the privilege of interviewing her.

The emphasis of the book is on "the Narrative," a phrase describing how powerful interests shape the news and information online. This strategy includes discouraging certain questions, presenting information in a slanted fashion, sometimes reporting false information, and giving facts out of context. When Donald Trump was elected, Attkisson says it exposed this strategy and a shift in journalism like never before. "The media at large announced it was committed to undermining and ultimately removing Trump from office, which only served to prove his point about their bias."

In her chapter entitled "Narrative by Proxy," she discusses how today's perverted form of journalism rationalizes inserting personal opinions into straight news reporting. Further, reporters find themselves accused of bias if they simply "aren't overtly anti-Trump or are fair in their reporting."

It becomes obvious that reporters' questions for Biden versus President Trump were like day and night. The standards they had for the president were so completely different from those for Biden. Take for example the Yahoo reporter who asked this of Biden: "What do you see as the biggest threat to your transition, given President Trump's unprecedented attempt to obstruct and delay a smooth transfer of power?" What he did was editorialize before asking a question. Attkisson says, "It's no accident that reporters are asking one-sided, hostile questions of Trump but softball questions to the other side. Too often, reporters are no longer trying to get at the truth; they are trying to advance a particular narrative or 'take' on a story. This means they serve as willing vessels for propaganda and talking points."

In the book, she talks about the media's overt abandonment of objectivity. "Trump exposed bias, flaws, and weaknesses in the news media, causing its members to lose their collective minds," she writes. Just take the news conference by Vice President Pence on November 19 and the one by President Trump on November 26, where they did not take any reporter's questions. There was no recognition that Trump has been the most press-accessible president in history. Instead, the press was rude as reporters showed outrage over this departure. Yet when Biden routinely fails to take questions, they have no such reaction. "Trump probably took more questions than any other President in U.S. history," remarks Attkisson. "I also think that Joe Biden probably took fewer questions and was more hidden than any other presidential candidate in our time. And yet there was almost no criticism of that."

Attkisson had a great suggestion. "Trump could have made an interesting point if he had used a press availability to read aloud, verbatim, questions the media had asked Biden at his last availability, in stark contrast to the questions asked of Trump, and then answered them."

Another chapter in the book delves into "The Verbiage of the Narrative: Lies, Evidence, and Bombshells," explaining that journalism "standards exist in the first place— not just to afford fair treatment to people we like. They are also supposed to ensure fairness and accuracy when we cover those whom we don't like, don't agree with, or even believe are liars. In fact, that is when our standards matter most. Trump tested our ability to prove how committed we are to staying true to our mission of journalists. And we failed. Across the nation, news-reporting positions today are filled

by supposedly talented journalists assigned the singular task of serving up the narrative of Trump-as-a-liar over and over again, rather than reporting news stories."

The perfect example is his interview with Leslie Stahl on *60 Minutes*.

The narrative went something like this: Trump: "We created the greatest economy in the history of our country, and the other side was coming in." Stahl then cut him off, stating, "You know that's not true." The President shot back, "It is totally true." Stahl said, "no," before pressing Trump on the question again.

Attkisson told *American Thinker*, "Reporters' strategies are markedly different when interviewing President Trump versus political figures they like or agree with. With Trump, they are often looking for a confrontational moment designed to create a moment or get attention for the interviewer. In contrast, I think, a good interview that elicits information will include a mix of questions that are challenging along with questions designed to allow the interviewee to speak and be heard. The interviewer should not attack an interview subject as if they have a personal stake in the question, or as if they have personal distastes for the interviewee."

Another chapter is about CNN, "The Cable Narrative Network." Attkisson feels that the network has transformed from "a relatively unbiased news source into the notoriously slanted vehicle." She sees that the people running CNN are not content to report the news; instead, "their goal is to tell readers and viewers what to think. And to punish those who refuse to toe the line by ridiculing their work, leveling personal attacks on them, and even censoring their objectionable views and opinions."

There are two recent examples, both involving CNN's White House reporter, Kaitlan Collins. On November 20, White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany, after taking five questions, walked out of the news conference. Collins screamed at her, then getting a response from McEnany: "I don't call on activists." Then, over Thanksgiving, Collins tweeted, with a picture, "The crew that got President Trump to answer his first questions in over three weeks. Proud to be part of it."

Another chapter titled "Pundits and Polls" exposes polls for their bias. People should wonder why no information is ever given regarding the questions asked. Attkisson stated, "A lot of people probably do not put much thought into how polls work and their relationship with news organizations. When news outlets or companies commission polls, they get to decide what questions are asked, how they are phrased, and what headlines are chosen from the results. Polls are used to advance 'The Narrative' rather than as legitimate measures of public opinion. Remember: polls are commissioned by news organizations. They get to decide whether to release them."

Taking it one step farther, why are the networks allowed to act as the Electoral College by calling the election? "I agree with the premise of your question," Attkisson tells me. "In the light of all the challenges and unanswered questions, it would have made sense for the media not to weigh in with their own personal opinions, declaring the whole thing to be over so quickly. I don't see any journalistic benefit or any benefit to the public for reporters to take a stand on something that's in dispute, rather than report what various sides are saying. When reporters step in and advocate, the public begins to think the media have their thumb on the scale. It is perfectly fair for a journalist to say something like 'experts think Joe Biden will be the next president.' But for the journalists themselves to make that proclamation, or to call a race over, is crossing a line. They should not be predicting future outcomes or telling a political figure what course of action he should take."

It is no wonder that about 80% of Americans view the press as biased. Sharyl Attkisson in *Slanted* exposes this. "In my book, I spoke with many current and former top network news executives, reporters, and producers. I asked the question, is the death of the media as we once knew it murder or suicide? I ask that question because a lot of people blame President Trump for widespread mistrust in the media today. People say Trump is at fault for attacking the press and calling us the 'enemy of the people.' But to a person, the journalists and executives I spoke to — who

generally describe themselves as progressive or left-leaning — surprisingly said that we are to blame for our own demise. Most everyone said, 'It is our fault. We have done it to ourselves.' And I have to agree."