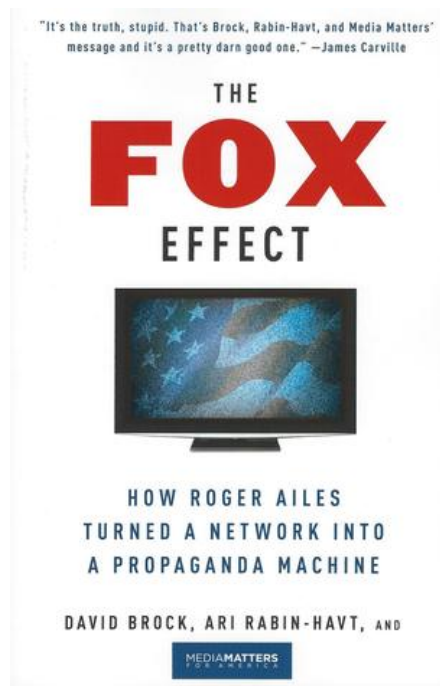




The Fox Effect: How Roger Ailes Turned a Network into a Propaganda Machine

David Brock , Ari Rabin-Havt , MediaMatters.org

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Based on the meticulous research of the news watchdog organization Media Matters for America, David Brock and Ari Rabin-Havt show how Fox News, under its president Roger Ailes, changed from a right-leaning news network into a partisan advocate for the Republican Party.

The Fox Effect follows the career of Ailes from his early work as a television producer and media consultant for Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, and George H. W. Bush. Consequently, when he was hired in 1996 as the president of Rupert Murdoch's flagship conservative cable news network, Ailes had little journalism experience, but brought to the job the mindset of a political operative. As Brock and Rabin-Havt demonstrate through numerous examples, Ailes used his extraordinary power and influence to spread a partisan political agenda that is at odds with long-established, widely held standards of fairness and objectivity in news reporting.

Featuring transcripts of leaked audio and memos from Fox News reporters and executives, *The Fox Effect* is a damning indictment of how the network's news coverage and commentators have biased reporting, drummed up marginal stories, and even consciously manipulated established facts in their efforts to attack the Obama administration.

The Fox Effect: How Roger Ailes Turned a Network into a Propaganda Machine Details

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Sally says

It's hard not to use the cliché adjective "frightening" to describe the revelations in *The Fox Effect*. For example, Fox "News" head (and former legendary Republican operative) Roger Ailes can send a memo saying, for example, to start stigmatizing the Affordable Health Care Act as "government-run health care", and almost immediately, all Fox "News" personnel, including those who insist they are legitimate journalists and deserve to be taken seriously, change their language to conform to Roger Ailes' directive.

Media Matters for America (MMfA) is an organization that analyzes right-wing media in general, but over the last 10 years, since FNC began seriously challenging the major networks on its way to establishing its present dominance, MMfA has spent more and more of its resources exposing the deceptive practices of FNC. MMfA Founder David Brock and MMfA Vice-President Ari Rabin-Havt, the authors of *The Fox Effect*, and their research staff, describe the astonishing rise to power within the Republican Party, and over the American electorate as a whole, of Roger Ailes' television network. (In response, FNC commentators actively attacked Brock, Rabin-Havt, and the MMfA organization, as could be expected.)

Through years of painstaking research, MMfA has documented how FNC has come to function purely as a propaganda machine for the Republican Party. Roger Ailes rules with an iron fist, firing anyone who doesn't literally toe the party line. Ailes takes part in deciding what stories get little or no coverage, such as the vast amount of time George W. Bush spent on vacation during his presidency when Republicans bash Obama for taking even a few days off. Ailes rules the decisions about what topics the FNC manufactures, churns, then bashes the "main-stream media" for ignoring, such as the Obama administration's nonexistent "war on Christmas". Even the owner of the network, News Corp., and its infamous head, Rupert Murdoch, profess disagreement, at times, with the extreme views that Roger Ailes promotes through FNC. But Murdoch almost never intervenes, probably because FNC is so financially lucrative.

One time that Murdoch did, slightly, rein in Ailes occurred when FNC began vigorously supporting the nascent Republican group dubbed the Tea Party. When FNC commentators promoted fund-raising rallies at which admission was charged for events where their own network's hosts were the featured speakers, News Corp. decided FNC had gone too far. The FNC hosts pulled out of their speaking commitments, although they continued to endorse the rallies, and encouraged guests on their shows while on the air to urge viewers to donate money to the Tea Party and its candidates. The change was window-dressing, at best.

What should be done about Fox "News"? The only problem with this book, I felt, was that after scaring the living daylights out of the reader, it offers almost no method to cleanse our society of this toxic communication pollution. If people want to attend a rally at which extreme views are expressed, so be it. That is a right we all cherish as fundamental to our democracy. But, I believe that, in some respects, the airwaves are similar to the air we breathe, and should be protected in the way that smoking is banned in bars and restaurants. There are many places in which Fox "News" blares from TV screens over which I have no control. I should not be subjected to this demonstrably dishonest propaganda.

Also, where information is presented on air as being accurate, but can be proven to be false, and where evidence exists to prove that the staff of FNC knew, or should have known, that it was false, FNC should be prosecuted for deceiving the public. The basis for such prosecution, in my opinion, is that, as an apparently authoritative source of information, they have a burden to ensure that their programming is trustworthy.

Also, they are using airwaves that, being a valuable and limited resource necessary for the functioning of society, I believe are like a public utility and should be subject to government regulation.

Obviously, as long as there is a Republican majority in the House of Representatives, and enough senators to filibuster any Senate bill, these proposals would go nowhere. But I do believe that our future as a democratic society rests on improving the political atmosphere, and that requires pollution controls that would necessitate cleaning up Fox "News". If you don't believe me, read *The Fox Effect*.

Larry Rolfes says

This book should be required reading for anyone who depends on Fox as their news source. It points out, using many specific examples, why Fox New is less a news organization than a propaganda machine.

Ray says

This book is most likely to inspire a number of "hated it" as well as a number of "loved it" responses, since it discusses one of our most sensitive topics, e.g., partisan politics. The Country seems to be as polarized as it's ever been, and ideologues from the left and the right are sure to weigh in on this book.

The left and the right seem to battle like prosecutor and defense counsel in the criminal trials. And like trial lawyers who only present one side of an argument, and will offer theories which support their side as "facts", political party loyalists or spokespersons seem to be doing the same. And that's the basic premise of this book.

David Brock points out how Fox has become the broadcast voice of the Conservative Movement in this country. It's hard to argue against that. Most of the recent and current GOP candidates for President, with the notable exception of Mitt Romney, have been commentators on the Fox network. It'll be a long time before a prominent Democrat or Liberal will host a show on Fox.

Brock doesn't argue that people of any political persuasion shouldn't have the right to speak and be heard, but does make the case that a constant theme from only one perspective, and the selective use of facts, is better defined as propaganda than as news. As in civil or criminal trials, prosecuting attorneys are expected to pursue their case with vigor, but their duty is to refrain from improper methods calculated to produce a wrongful conviction. Instead, they are expected to use every legitimate means to produce a just outcome. And Brock, a converted conservative, feels that these same principles should apply to television networks as well. He provides examples where Fox hosts have gone beyond "legitimate means", and provide one sided points designed not to inform, but to reinforce their views. He notes that the "fair and balanced" slogan Fox executives use in describing their network is valid if meant to mean that Fox provides a voice which is designed to balance the more liberal voices of the mainstream media. In that regard, viewers of the Fox Network, as the more conservative members of society, will agree with the Fox executives that they bring balance to political discussions. And those more left or centered will disagree with that viewpoint, and find Brock's book to be a voice of reason.

Brock also points out how the popularity of the Fox Network, and it's constant theme supporting conservative views, has prevented politicians from agreeing to compromises, for fear of being criticized by the Network voices. Ultimately, the inability to compromise, or to hear the other's views and be able to find common ground leads to roadblocks and inaction. And in politics, that contributes to the extremely unfavorable view of Congress over these past few years. And that may well also account for the growing number of voters, especially those in the 18 to 34 year-old group, who consider themselves to be neither Democrat nor Republican.

Marcella Wigg says

3.5 stars

I think I read this book a bit too late for it to feel all that immediate, as four years have elapsed between the present depicted here and the present I inhabit. I wish I had read this earlier, as the events of 2008-2010 would have felt far more immediate in the lead-up to the 2012 presidential race than they do now.

Nevertheless, the focus of this book remains relevant: Fox News, far from its "fair and balanced" slogan, has long been a journalistically unreliable mouthpiece of the Republican party. In addition to documenting the numerous pieces of misinformation spread by Fox in the 2008 campaign cycle and the early days of Obama's presidency, the authors also do a good job of highlighting the split in the Republican Party between establishment figures like Karl Rove and the radical, hardline Tea Partiers, an issue that remains pertinent with Boehner's resignation as Speaker of the House and Paul Ryan's hesitancy to assume the tenuous and stressful role of speaker in such a polarized environment.

(Side note: Boehner's prevention of Congressmen from attending Glenn Beck's Israel conference explains pretty well why Beck is so obsessed with proving Boehner's alcoholism...)

I knew Fox News was very far from being objective, but I didn't know anything about Roger Ailes, and so it was very informative to learn his own political history. Fascinating that the network has become such a kingmaker for the Right, especially for the marginalized/fringe whose views aren't accepted by the establishment. At times, this became a bit repetitive and slow, and I didn't buy all the blame heaped at Fox's door (yes, Sarah Palin's bullseye chart was tasteless, but she was hardly advocating the Giffords shooting. However, I generally found it very convincing and am fascinated to see how the Fox essentialness to Republicans is playing out in 2016.

Lance Eaton says

Though Fox viewers are not likely to read this...they are in desperate need of doing so...they are so poorly misinformed of their "fair and balanced" station. And that's not to say all media doesn't have severe limitations...but Fox just goes beyond the pale...

Malcolm Frawley says

This analysis of how Roger Ailes morphed Fox News from an arguably standard cable news vehicle into a propaganda machine for the more extremist edge of the Republican Party (Tea Party anyone?) is sobering reading. The irony of Trump blathering endlessly on about "fake news" while venerating the network that actually invented it is, sadly, little more than a sick joke. The strategy was simple enough - seize on an unverified rumour (aka lie) that could be used against a prominent Democrat, deliberately ignore any opportunity to verify it, then repeat it over a variety of programmes often enough for it to become true. Example? Obama is not an American citizen & a Muslim to boot. Both accusations were unverified, & easily refuted, but each lasted for years & I have no doubt that soldered-on Trump supporters still believe them to be true. Fox also began a habit of inviting Republicans who were standing for office to appear on its programmes to explicitly seek donations from viewers. Incredible. Published in 2012, before Trump was anything more than a attention-seeking property developer & reality TV 'star' (so nothing much has changed

there) it does not include Ailes' shameful departure from Fox under a deluge of sexual harassment claims. Fortunately, for him, his severance cushion amounted to many squillions of dollars. So next time you hear any right wing nut job moan about the 'liberal media' remind them that the most successful cable news programme in the U.S. deliberately promotes conservative (to say the least) values & denigrates anyone even remotely liberal. Want to stoke your reserves of outrage & fury? Read this book.

Adam says

That moment when you are in the middle of reading this book and your father unknowingly and coincidentally sends you the antithesis, Primetime Propaganda by Ben Shapiro for Christmas!

— Objective Investigative journalism is imperative to the functioning of a society. I'm thrilled there are people out there calling these pathetic assholes on their shit and I'm glad to have learned some of the terrible shit Beck, Ailes and others have done that I previously was not aware of but I wanted more analysis. When you read accounts like this of lying, cheating, and law breaking you can assume and discern it's for greed and power and "winning" and fame and fortune and drama and ratings and so on, but I always wish I could hear confessional analysis from the horse's mouth or at least some deeper musings on the why from undeniably unbiased scientific economic, philosophical, and psychological experts (not pundits).

Marvin says

This is one of those books that preaches to my personal choir. The fact that Fox News is far from "Fair and Balanced" should not surprise any intelligent person. A few years ago, Robert Greenwald's excellent documentary Outfoxed covered much of this material. Yet this book by the people at Media Matters goes a step further. They show how by 2009, Fox News developed from a "news" provider with biased reporting and questionable standards to an unabashed supporter and organizer for the Republican Party and other conservative groups. It is a good account of how Fox News developed. However, I hoped for a bit more quality in its writing. Nonetheless I still recommend it for its research and message.

Three and a half stars.

Support real news not Faux News

Kevin says

Paints a pretty clear and convincing argument that Fox is "opinion journalism masquerading as news." Outright lies and distortions are common practice for most all of Fox's contributors. This book seems to be a justification of the maxim attributed to Joseph Goebbels, "If you repeat a lie often enough, it becomes the truth." ... taking smears and distortions originating from marginal news sources and interest groups and repeating them ad nauseam until they became "fact" to a receptive segment of voters. Fox is basically the tail trying to wag the dog.

I love that a quarter of this book's volume are pages citing sources. About the exact opposite of what Fox does. If you can't cite a source, then you're just making shit up.

The reason I'm not rating this higher is because it focused on Roger Ailes, who is no longer with Fox. Covered his views, his activities before Fox, and involvement with Fox. Obviously written before Ailes stepped down/got fired from Fox. Still an interesting read about the philosophy of Fox. Little indication that Fox will be changed much with Ailes' departure since the culture has probably been engrained there now. If I would have read it prior to Roger Ailes' resignation and before the 2016 elections, it would have gotten a four stars.

Either way, Fox seems to strictly be a propaganda machine. Such a shame that so many people give them credibility. They deserve more criticism than what they are getting, for sure.

“You can produce a cable television network with people who talk nicely and are articulate and are blonde and look good on television and say provocative things. But it is not based on any discovery or intent to get to the bottom of something.”

Bob Anderson says

So Media Matters for America (a non-profit that analyzes and corrects conservative media misinformation) gets criticized a lot for harping on Fox News. The same organization also claims to be disappointed that they have to spend so much of their time and effort correcting the record of the most widely viewed and respected of conservative media outlets, simply because of the volume and consequence of what Fox puts out. This is their book length analysis of how Fox News has achieved its current status as a more sinning than sinned against conservative force. The subtitle labels Fox a propaganda machine, but I'm not sure if that's entirely accurate. A propaganda machine is commonly a division of some organization or government that the propaganda is designed to benefit, but Fox's history, especially its involvement in the 2016 Republican presidential primary, which this book does not cover, show the network to be less a subservient arm than a mover and shaker in and of itself. It would not be inaccurate to say that Fox News is the dominant force behind what American conservatives believe and care about, more so than any radio show, website, politician, or even the GOP itself; the tail is wagging the dog.

The Fox Effect tracks the network's journey from “fair and balanced” to “the balance”, using accounts of office politics and scheduling decisions, coupled with recaps of the various sins Media Matters has chronicled in the past. Fox News hosts declaring Obama a failed president in his first week feature here, as does the tension between Murdoch and Ailes for control of Fox's soul. Fox's complicity and eagerness to spread and even create false news narratives is on display throughout, and the hits only end because of the inherent limitations of time and space. Fox News has continued in much the same way since this book's publication (in 2012), and shows absolutely no sign of stopping anytime soon. Perhaps the day will come when we don't regularly see polls showing that watching Fox News makes you objectively less informed than someone who never seeks out any source of news, but until that day, it's best to be vaccinated against this infection. Give this book a read.

Jim Razinha says

I have to disclose that I have been crying for Fox News, or as I often refer to them, "MockNews", to drop the "Fair and Balanced" tag for a long time or at least do what Vince McMahon did and embrace the lie as entertainment, so I read this book with an admitted bias. I'm glad there is Media Matters to watch these guys and call their BS. Oh, I do think they (Media Matters) can be a bit zealous at times...and nitpicking, but one

has to admire the people who crawl into the cesspool that is Fox News every day and hopefully retain a bit of optimism.

That said, Brock puts together a cogent and well cited indictment of Roger Ailes and his political machine masquerading as a "news" organization. Fans of Fox won't see the unedited clips, or the critical analyses in the links for what they are, but that's to be expected of the sheeple. Media Matters does catch the other outlets, but Fox is like the proverbial fish in a barrel. The book presents the observations clearly, and with little inflammatory editorializing. At least, I saw little. But then, I probably wouldn't. Anti-sheeple.

The people who need to read this book won't. And the people who *really* need to read it wouldn't understand. More's the pity. Be afraid. Be very afraid of Ailes and crew.

Lisa Mitchell says

This book is my first review on GoodReads and I hope I'm going about this properly.

The Fox Effect: How Roger Ailes Turned a Network into a Propaganda Machine was a read that was unsettling and saddening for me. To see, and in a way, relive...the evolution of propaganda news and its cycles chronicled (and sourced) the way this book does was close to overwhelming. It made me question the overall affect of what this type of discourse is doing to America's society and democracy as a whole. When the systematic injection of lies and distortion (with little effort of serious rebuttal) is introduced on a 24/7 news cycle to an electoral audience of millions, and then made legitimate by repetition...the realization of the damage this causes....it just makes my head spin.

Good book, a really, really good book...it inspired me to actually write a review (and maybe something even longer in the near future:).

Bookworm says

"Fox BAD!" is the most basic gist of the book. Co-written by David Brock, Ari Rabin-Havt and Media Matters, the book is essentially a publication of what MM puts out. While personally I would side with MM than Fox, the book just wasn't very well-written and I didn't care for the bias. I suppose I should have known that this book would be biased considering that the Media Matters logo appears on the cover, but I was thoroughly bored by the text.

The book follows a series of events and breaks down where the authors see bias. This runs from the election to the rise of the Tea Party to the MA special election of Scott Brown vs. Martha Coakley. Although interesting as an idea, again I was thoroughly bored by most of what the authors wrote. It read a little too much as propaganda and I suppose I was just too cynical to enjoy it.

It's worth reading for anyone interested in politics, regardless of the political affiliation. And while this book looks at things from a Democratic/liberal/lefty point of view, conservative/Republican/right people still might find it of interest to see how MM breaks down and attacks what they see as problems with Fox's reporting.

Good if you're interested in politics, but I'd strongly recommend you just borrow it from the library or buy it on sale/clearance if you must.

Jennifer Jacobs says

I just finished reading this book and only one word comes out to my mind: comprehensive!

Written by David Brock and mediamatters, this book is packed with interesting political information! A fact check version of Zeitgeist if you will, Brock lays out lies of Fox News and even more, blunt shameless manipulation, distortion of facts and selective 'news' backed up by numerous notes and references.

This book is packed with evidence based research yet not one page in it is boring!

This book gives a very brief chapter on Roger Ailes' past, his racist inclinations and Fox News beginnings, we learn how Fox overtook CNN as the number 1 network in the next chapter, 2 more chapters are devoted to Fox News sycophancy for the Bush administration!

But the book really becomes much more interesting after page 70 as Obama era begins, the book chronicles obstructions by Fox news during his candidacy and esp once he got elected!

The book covers Obamacare debate in very depth. How Fox News, led by Ailes hampered the Obama agenda of giving affordable health care to all and how the death of sen. Kennedy due to brain cancer brought Fox news into attack mode resulting in the loss of super majority for the Democrats in special senate election.

The book covers the tea party phenomenon in depth, it covers the time period between 2009-2011 esp the midterms and those parts are very entertaining for any political junkie!

The book however gets to its best when it covers Glenn Beck, who has unabashedly worked to divide Americans and dupe GOP racist paranoid base! It has interesting stories on how Beck's repeated use of Nazis in describing Obama made many Jews angry and Rabbis complained to Ailes who didn't even give a damn about Beck's blatant Anti-Semitic retorts!

Definitely a must read for political junkies!

5 stars!

Jason says

I have not read this book yet. But neither has the person who slapped a one-star review upon it. So let's just go ahead and re-set the ratings. It's got a knee-jerk one-star rating and a knee-jerk five star rating. Now, what does it actually deserve?
