form their own views, perhaps even provoked by an absurdly controlled state media, but they are not free to have those views expressed and aggregated by the political heuristics through media outlets that typically give public opinion common meaning and power.

Response to W. Lance Bennett's Review of *Television, Power, and the Public in Russia*

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— Ellen Mickiewicz

W. Lance Bennett is rightly pessimistic about a state with government-run mass media, on the one hand, and unchecked corruption, on the other. The massive and partially acknowledged corruption operates menacingly at all levels of society, a phenomenon mainly of the post-Soviet period. And the situation is bound to worsen as the economic crisis grows. However, it is unlikely that this decade of rampant corruption is the source of most heuristics that Russians use, for the derivation and content of shortcuts to navigate news tend to be drawn from early experiences under Soviet rule.

Bennett's response is accurate in its understanding of the work done by Russian viewers to make sense of messages, but his understanding of Russians' store of heuristics is circumscribed, perhaps because he has drawn mainly from American applications. Soviet-era-derived heuristics are very widely in use there and have some powerful results. One such heuristic, in which Russians viewers appear more sophisticated than American counterparts, is the trade-off. Americans require prodding to consider it. Russians *expect* trade-offs, and if there are none in a news story, viewers supply them—a dozen or more. A second heuristic born in the Soviet era is the weakness of a "positive" news story. Positive stories lack credibility both with college graduates and viewers who have not gone beyond high school.

Election stories were universally detested in the groups, Viewers want coverage to show candidates' programs for the future and accountability after the election. They see all election stories over time and from local to national offices as the same incomprehensible bare-knuckle brawling.

Bennett notes the broad spread of opinions across the groups and that is a valid observation, as is his conclusion that the prevention of a more public opinion is a goal of the regime, something more openly and viciously imposed during the Soviet years. Yet in my book, there is a striking example showing a type of public opinion with no apparent formal organization. In polls in the 1980s, voters choosing the ballot line "against all" were rural, older, and with little education. Now, they are more young, urban, and at upscale jobs. Since 1997, "against all" votes received more than all but four parties, and in almost one-third of the single-member districts came in first or second. Even Vladimir Putin's pick in St. Petersburg was forced into a runoff. This mounting protest vote ended when the state Duma, led by the party favored by the president, removed the against-all ballot line in 2006 and abolished single-member constituencies.

Russians are graduates of the Soviet school of life. That life was supposed to be uniform throughout the country. Of course it was not, but the commonalities across a vast area and large population were such that it is not surprising that their heuristics were related to those many generations of experience.

When the Press Fails: Political Power and the News Media from Iraq to Katrina.

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— Ellen Mickiewicz, *Duke University*

It takes a vacuum for the American mainstream press to seize an opening to perform its vital role. And it takes a crack in what the authors portray as an edifice of official secrecy, lying, intimidation, and retribution for the mainstream press to do its job—holding public officials to standards of accountability.

W. Lance Bennett, Regina G. Lawrence, and Steven Livingston have written an accessible, valuable, and thoroughly cogent study of the American press during one of the most critical times in the history of the country. It is appropriate for academics, their students, and anyone who wonders why coverage of our foreign policy appears to be so close to the government's version. *When the Press Fails* convincingly displays the logic by which the elite press ceded its power, integrity, and mission as watchdog *voluntarily* to an administration bent on taking the country to an ill-advised war based on knowingly faulty evidence. With stories in the papers aligned with official policy, it was thus impossible to offer a counterframe—a strong challenging interpretation or characterization.

Framing research is a productive approach to the study of mass media, and it has been well applied to research about foreign policy by Robert Entman (*Projections of Power: Framing News, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy,* 2003). Equally helpful is indexing research, developed by Bennett himself, which has provided the theoretical framework for studies of other wars. Jonathan Mermin, for example (*Debating War and Peace: Media Coverage of U.S. Intervention in the Post-Vietnam Era,* 1999), found the press similarly ordering its stories in light of government policy.

The chief players in this book are those who hold power and "the mainstream press [which] sets the tone for public discourse even though peripheral outlets often contain a diversity of competing and often more encompassing information" (pp. 58–59). Myriad sources of information surface