



## CNN's collapse is now complete

### Description

USA: It all began 42 years ago — Ted Turner's creation of a 24/7 news network that would exist on something called cable TV. Few believed it could succeed.

And, for its first decade, CNN largely chugged along but wasn't seen as a game-changer or ?a true competitor to big broadcast news entities based in New York in the form of CBS, NBC and ABC. That all changed when war broke out between the United States and Iraq in 1991.

On the night war exploded over Baghdad, CNN was the only news organization that was able to broadcast from the city under siege as the U.S. onslaught began, all courtesy of the CNN team's ability to convince the Iraqi government to grant them a line out of the city to broadcast?, one that the competition could not secure.

[“How CNN Won the War”](#) was the glowing headline from The Washington Post on a story that perfectly chronicled the events that led to CNN officially becoming a major player. And off it went.

Until 2002, CNN was ?No. 1 in the cable news race. But competition that hadn't existed before [ended its dominance forever](#), primarily in the form of Fox News and, to a lesser extent, MSNBC. Despite the ratings results, CNN continued to carry itself as a credible, facts-first network of integrity that leaned heavily on solid reporting with a sprinkling of opinion and infotainment mixed in via programs such as “Larry King Live” and “Crossfire.”

In 2013, the network hired former NBC Universal President [Jeff Zucker](#) to take the reins as ratings continued to be below average at best. This gave Zucker a mandate to radically change the network from its journalistic roots of more than three decades — the months-long wall-to-wall coverage of a missing Malaysian airliner being an early example.

But two years later, the move to insert heavy doses of partisan opinion into its news reports only accelerated when former [President TrumpDonald TrumpTrump says Joe Rogan should ‘stop apologizing’ amid controversy over podcastFox News host Brian Kilmeade hits Trump on Arizona election claim: ‘That’s an outright lie’Nikki Haley: Pence ‘did what he thought was right’ on Jan. 6MORE](#)

— a Zucker hire at NBC for “The Apprentice” — jumped in to the 2016 presidential race. At first, CNN bear-hugged Trump’s every move. (Hillary Clinton’s giving a speech somewhere? Screw it. Let’s show an empty Trump podium with chyrons stating “Trump to speak soon” instead.) The real estate mogul’s 17 Republican challengers never had a shot; Trump blotted out the sun in terms of media coverage ?on his way to winning the nomination.

At that point, Zucker and CNN began to worry. Because while it was a ratings boon for the network to make Trump the centerpiece, there was growing concern that the guy could actually beat Hillary and become the nation’s 45th president. So Zucker unleashed the hounds, but it was too late. Trump would go on to shock the world in November 2016.

Undeterred, CNN decided there would be [no honeymoon period](#) for the new president. Talk ?about Russian collusion handing Trump the White House began even before the inauguration. And after the nonstop Trump-bashing, Harvard University concluded that CNN led the way, along with Zucker’s former home of NBC, in giving Trump [93 percent negative coverage](#) in his first 100 days.

For the next four years, CNN served as the leading media resistance to Trump, throwing objectivity out the window. And after [President BidenJoe BidenFox News host Brian Kilmeade hits Trump on Arizona election claim: ‘That’s an outright lie’Putin says proposals made in Macron talks are possible as ‘basis’ for further stepsBiden to appoint son of late Sen. John McCain to Naval Academy board MORE](#) got elected, the network cheered the new president as it had throughout the entire campaign while still making Trump a prime centerpiece for over-the-top negative coverage despite ?his being out of office.

But as much as CNN tried to resurrect its lead character — who was banned from social media and largely off the grid for the year — his absence ?clearly showed the network was a one-trick partisan pony. Ratings fell [90 percent overall](#) when comparing January 2021 to January 2022. That’s hard to do.

Which brings us to the events of this week: Zucker released a statement saying he had to resign because of a consensual affair with an executive named Allison Gollust. WarnerMedia apparently has a rule against this, so Zucker — instead of a slap on the wrist for a benign offense — simply had to go abruptly.

Nobody believed this excuse. Turns out they may have had plenty of reason to be skeptical.

Per [several reports](#), Zucker and Gollust allegedly advised then-New York Gov. [Andrew CuomoAndrew Cuomo feels ‘vindicated,’ won’t rule out another run for officeCNN’s collapse is now completeCNN faces new questions about post-Jeff Zucker futureMORE](#) (D) — the older brother of then-?CNN anchor [Chris CuomoChris CuomoAndrew Cuomo feels ‘vindicated,’ won’t rule out another run for officeCNN’s collapse is now completeCNN faces new questions about post-Jeff Zucker futureMORE](#) — on what to say during his COVID-19 daily briefings in the spring of 2020. They [also reportedly told](#) Cuomo how to respond to and how to criticize Trump, to make it more compelling TV. (Gollust is a former communications director for Andrew Cuomo.)

Let’s unpack all of this:

In the spring of 2020, the country was in a horrific place. Businesses shut completely; people were scared. There were no COVID-19 therapeutics, no vaccines. Hospitals ?were overwhelmed, thousands were dying ?each day. If ?ever there was a time for news organizations to educate and

inform the public, this was it.

Instead, Zucker apparently believed it was the perfect time to exploit the situation for political gain and to help the network's ratings.

Andrew Cuomo benefited from briefings that made him? appear to be the adult in the room ?regarding COVID-19 and Trump ?appear to be the villain. ?Cuomo got a \$5.1 million book deal as a result.

Chris Cuomo and Zucker/Gollust/CNN benefited from [marathon interviews](#) with ?Cuomo's governor/brother, which [didn't touch](#) the governor's alleged nursing home scandal. Ratings soared.

So, was Zucker's departure ?simply about a consensual relationship with a co-worker? One might be forgiven for questioning that.

Moving forward, what's next for CNN when the company falls under the [Discovery Channel umbrella](#) later this year? Let's hear from its soon-to-be largest shareholder, John Malone of Liberty Media.

"I would like to see CNN evolve back to the kind of journalism that it started with, and actually have journalists, which would be unique and refreshing," [Malone said](#) in an interview that recently aired on CNBC.

The collapse of CNN is now complete: 9 out of 10 viewers, gone. Its top-rated anchor, ?Chris Cuomo, gone. Its network president, gone. Its integrity in shambles.

?Oh, and new management coming in that is signaling big-time changes ... changes that may bring CNN back to the proud network it once was before Jeff Zucker destroyed it.

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1. Economy-Business-Fin/Invest
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### Tags

1. CNN
2. Ted Turner

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