

Nov 04, 2016 by **Robert Berger**

An Editor's Opinion on Op-Eds ^[1]

For 20 years I was editor of the Op-Ed page of the Los Angeles Times. I thought I tried to maintain balance on the page, but of course some would disagree that I did so.

I never, never would have published an article by John Yoo, the Justice Department's author of critical underpinnings for the legal case supporting torture at Guantanamo and other such extraordinary violations of international law effected by the Bush administration. (See the recent article by Jane Mayer in The New Yorker). The current management of the Times has published several of Yoo's Op-Eds without compunction.

It's an interesting question: Which regime at the Times Op-Ed better upheld principles of journalism? The "Limited Open Door" of today? Or the "There are bright lines we do not cross" of my era?

I defend my own approach, of course. Before you endorse the page's current approach as demonstrating openness to a wider range of views -- and I'm certainly not saying that all views from the left are excluded these days -- recall that Robert Scheer's column was dropped from the Times, a move hardly justified by his quality of his insights into this misbegotten war.

John Yoo and his views of the law have done incalculable damage to the standing of this nation in the world. The notion of public diplomacy has been removed from the roster of tools available to this nation because all the world now knows what this nation stands for and how far it will go beyond the bounds of accepted behavior. The rule of law no longer applies in our relations with other nations, and it no longer applies in our handling of combatants.

An Op-Ed page, out of respect for principles of balance, should not give voice to this sort of descent into Hades.
